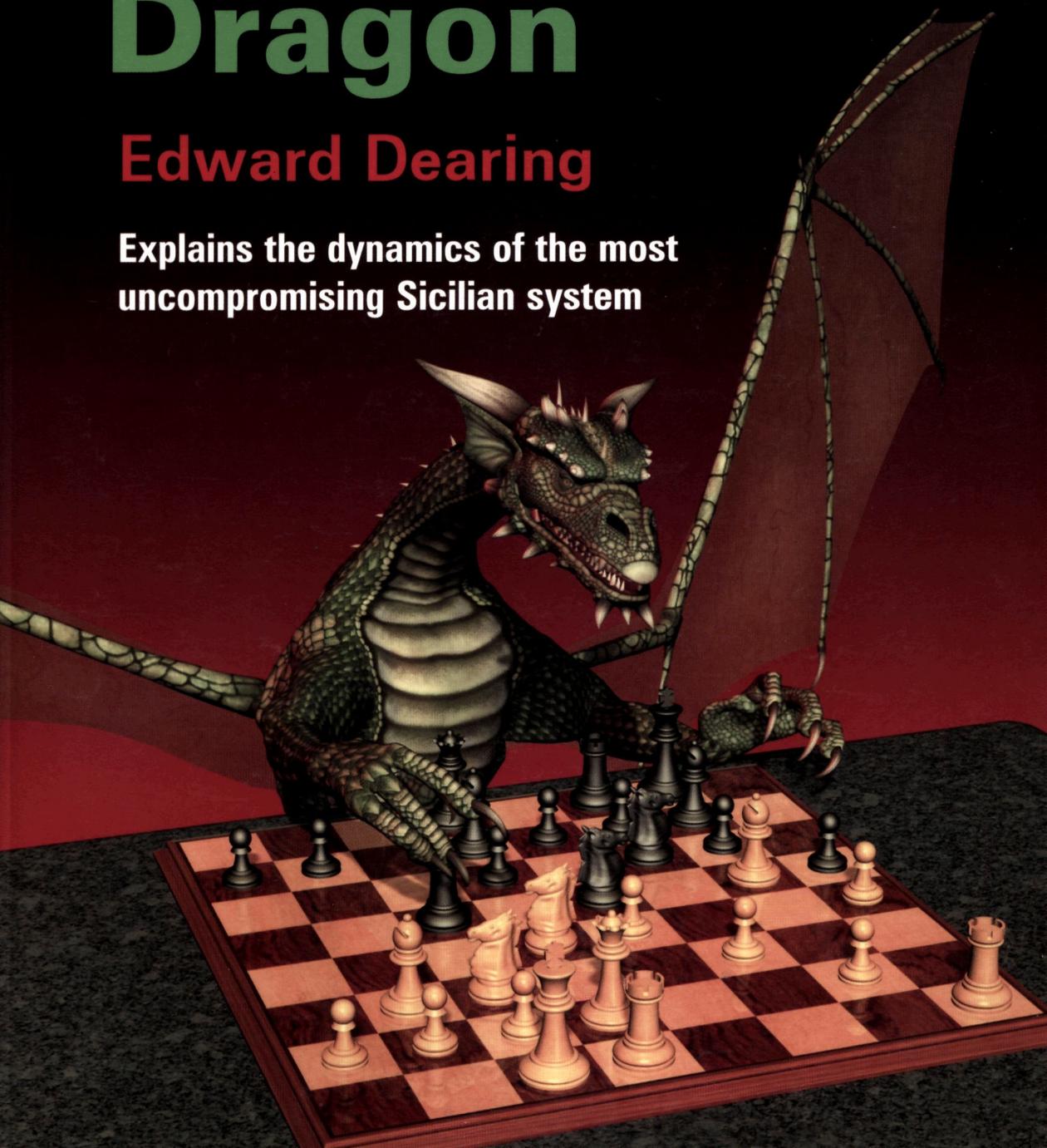


GAMBIT

Play the Sicilian Dragon

Edward Dearing

**Explains the dynamics of the most
uncompromising Sicilian system**



Play the Sicilian Dragon

Edward J. Dearing

GAMBIT

First published in the UK by Gambit Publications Ltd 2004

Copyright © Edward Dearing 2004

The right of Edward Dearing to be identified as the author of this work has been asserted in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out or otherwise circulated in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

A copy of the British Library Cataloguing in Publication data is available from the British Library.

ISBN 1 904600 17 4

DISTRIBUTION:

Worldwide (except USA): Central Books Ltd, 99 Wallis Rd, London E9 5LN.

Tel +44 (0)20 8986 4854 Fax +44 (0)20 8533 5821. E-mail: orders@Centralbooks.com

USA: Continental Enterprises Group, Inc., 302 West North 2nd Street, Seneca, SC 29678, USA.

For all other enquiries (including a full list of all Gambit chess titles) please contact the publishers,

Gambit Publications Ltd, P.O. Box 32640, London W14 0JN. E-mail: info@gambitbooks.com

Or visit the GAMBIT web site at <http://www.gambitbooks.com>

Edited by Graham Burgess

Typeset by John Nunn

Printed in Great Britain by The Cromwell Press, Trowbridge, Wilts.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Gambit Publications Ltd

Managing Director: GM Murray Chandler

Chess Director: GM John Nunn

Editorial Director: FM Graham Burgess

German Editor: WFM Petra Nunn

Contents

| | |
|---|-----|
| Symbols | 4 |
| Acknowledgements | 5 |
| Dedication | 6 |
| Bibliography | 7 |
| Introduction | 8 |
| 1 Yugoslav Attack: 12th Move Alternatives for White | 23 |
| 2 12 ♕g5 | 34 |
| 3 Soltis Variation: 13th Move Alternatives | 40 |
| 4 13 ♖b1 | 48 |
| 5 13 ♕h6 | 61 |
| 6 13 ♕g5 ♜c5: Unusual 14th Moves for White | 77 |
| 7 The Main-Line Soltis Variation: 14 f4!? | 85 |
| 8 14 g4 with 15 ♕xf6 or 15 h5 | 93 |
| 9 15 f4!?: The Ultimate Main Line | 98 |
| 10 The Karpov Variation: 14 ♖b1 | 113 |
| 11 12 ♖b1: A Modern Emphasis on Prophylaxis | 123 |
| 12 Alternative Approaches to the 9 ♕c4 Yugoslav for Black | 133 |
| 13 9 0-0-0 d5: White Takes the Pawn | 149 |
| 14 White Plays 9 0-0-0 and 12 ♕d4! | 159 |
| 15 9 0-0-0 d5: White Maintains the Central Tension | 175 |
| 16 Black's Alternatives after 9 0-0-0: 9...♗xd4 and 9...♕d7!? | 193 |
| 17 9 g4!?: A Positional Approach | 203 |
| 18 The Classical Dragon | 209 |
| 19 6 ♕c4: An Improved Classical? | 228 |
| 20 6 f4: The Levenfish Variation | 238 |
| 21 The Fianchetto Variation | 245 |
| Index of Variations | 254 |

Symbols

| | |
|--------------|----------------------------------|
| + | check |
| ++ | double check |
| # | checkmate |
| !! | brilliant move |
| ! | good move |
| !? | interesting move |
| ?! | dubious move |
| ? | bad move |
| ?? | blunder |
| +− | White is winning |
| ± | White is much better |
| ± | White is slightly better |
| = | equal position |
| ∞ | unclear position |
| ∓ | Black is slightly better |
| ∓ | Black is much better |
| −+ | Black is winning |
| Ch | championship |
| Cht | team championship |
| Wch | world championship |
| Wcht | world team championship |
| Ech | European championship |
| Echt | European team championship |
| ECC | European Clubs Cup |
| Ct | candidates event |
| IZ | interzonal event |
| Z | zonal event |
| OL | olympiad |
| jr | junior event |
| wom | women's event |
| KO | knockout event |
| rpд | rapidplay game |
| tt | team tournament |
| sim | game from simultaneous display |
| corr. | correspondence game |
| adv | advanced chess (man + machine) |
| 1-0 | the game ends in a win for White |
| 1/2-1/2 | the game ends in a draw |
| 0-1 | the game ends in a win for Black |
| (<i>n</i>) | <i>n</i> th match game |
| (<i>D</i>) | see next diagram |

Acknowledgements

The actual writing of this book took place between August 2003 and September 2004, but the information, analysis and ideas were assimilated over the better part of a decade. There are a lot of people to whom I am indebted.

Friends and Family

First and foremost I would like to thank my good friend Karl Mah. Karl and I have been close friends since we were children and throughout the years he has been a constant source of advice, guidance and support in all aspects of my life.

I would also like to thank my mother, Maureen Ann Dearing, for her love and support over the years, and for believing in me even when there was little reason to do so.

I owe a perpetual debt of gratitude to Simon Browne and Sandy McPhoenix for their guidance, friendship, and love. And for their constant fussing over my sleep pattern, drinking, studying, diet, partying...

More generally, I owe thanks to Richard Lloyd, Mathew Kenny, Andrew Cheuk, Gordon Cheuk, Piers Cummings, Alex Jones, Beron Arencibia, Kevin McVetis, Michael Hubbard and Michelle Taylor for more things than there is space to add.

Cambridge Friends

I owe a specific debt of gratitude to Dr Munday and Professor Deakin for their kindness, encouragement and guidance throughout my undergraduate degree. Oh yeah, and for teaching me law and stuff. I am also thankful to Dr Catherine Seville, one of the smartest, coolest, best-dressed women on the planet, for getting me through intellectual property law!

Max-Justus Benedikt Rohrig (Max) has been one of my closest friends throughout the last four years, and has been forced to endure more conversation about this book than either of us care to recall. Cheers for constantly bailing me out of trouble!

Seyda Duman ('Shades') deserves specific acknowledgement for actually text-messaging me her acknowledgement request: "Btw I think I should get a mention in your book. Dedicated to Shades for being lovely. Because I am :) xxx." More seriously, when we haven't been trying to kill each other (and even when we have) Shades has always been there for me and always asks about the book, so I am very grateful to have her in my life.

I also want to thank the rest of the Cambridge crew for their friendship and support (in no particular order): Gerald, Giles, James, Mikey, Drew, Karen, Stu, India Forsyth (gorgeous, looks like Audrey Hepburn), Blanche Richards, Justin Curran (seriously J, get a haircut!), Jamie McClelland, Roman Townsend, and Simon Ellis.

Last, but certainly not least, I would like to thank Gerald and all the Peterhouse Porters, for keeping me out of trouble over the years, and generally taking care of everyone.

Oxford Friends

I would like to thank the members of B3 and, in particular, Chris "mainstream" Briely (likes Britney Spears, Hollywood blockbusters, Irish women and online gambling; dislikes "arty things"), Iain "blind Japanese tourists think I look like Hugh Grant" Shaw (handsome enough, but looks

nothing like Hugh Grant), Laura Cushnie (once met Bill Clinton; quite tall, very pretty), Tracey Neuman (makes good pancakes, likes Boots), Adam Hannah (Irish, but very intelligent; still owes Chris money for the dog racing), Cathy Pearce (very chilled), Julian Burns (likes to be called JJ), Robin Mailer (cheeky), Ben Rusch (one of the smartest people on the planet, but only between the hours of 1 a.m. and 9 a.m.) and Fred Bosanquet (funniest person I have ever met!). Special thanks go out to Mike Twomey, for making an otherwise dull year very entertaining indeed.

Chess Friends

I would like to thank Richard Palliser for his advice and guidance on the process of actually writing a chess book, and for lending me various texts and resources over the years.

I would also like to thank Angus Dunnington for advising me on the various formatting and technical aspects of using *ChessBase*, and for suggesting I write a book on the Dragon in the first place!

More generally, I would like to extend my thanks to Peter Wagner (for doing a great job with the Cambridge team), Ben Purton (for reminding me that I should be working on the book, not going outside – ever!), Nathan Alfred, David Garner, and finally Alex McFarlane (for always being rude to my face, but kind behind my back).

Finally I would like to extend my thanks to the team at Gambit Publications. They have been patient and encouraging, despite the fact that this book is already months overdue, and I doubt it would be half the text it is without their guidance and input.

Dedication

To Joelle Mary Del Rose, you make me smile on the inside.

Bibliography

Books

- Golubev, M., *Easy Guide to the Dragon*, 1999, Gambit/Everyman, London.
- Gufeld, E. & Stetsko, O., *The Complete Dragon*, 1997, Batsford, London.
- Gufeld, E. & Stetsko, O., *The Ultimate Dragon Volume 1: The Rauzer Attack*, 2001, Batsford, London.
- Gufeld, E. & Stetsko, O., *The Ultimate Dragon Volume 2*, 2001, Batsford, London.
- Gufeld, E. & Schiller, E., *Secrets of the Sicilian Dragon*, 1998, Cardoza Publishing.
- Lalić, B., *Trends in the Sicilian Dragon Volume 2*, 1997, Trends Publications, London.
- Lawton, G. et al., *Tony Miles "It's Only Me"*, 2003, Batsford, London.
- Levy, D.N., *The Sicilian Dragon*, 2nd Edition, 1976, Batsford, London.
- Levy, D.N., *The Sicilian Dragon: Classical and Levenfish Variations*, 1981, Batsford, London.
- Mayer, S., *The Soltis Variation of the Yugoslav Attack*, 1995, Hypermodern Press, San Francisco, California.
- Miles, A. and Moskow, E., *Sicilian Dragon: Yugoslav Attack*, 1979, Batsford, London.
- Motwani, P., *S.T.A.R. Chess*, 1998, Gambit, London.
- Nunn, J. & Gallagher, J., *Beating the Sicilian 3*, 1995, Batsford, London.
- Sapi, L. & Schneider A., *Sicilian Dragon: Yugoslav Attack*, 1989, Batsford, London.
- Sapi, L. & Schneider A., *Sicilian Dragon: Classical and Levenfish Variations*, 1991, Batsford, London.
- Schneider, A. *Sicilian Dragon: Classical and Levenfish Variations*, 2000, Caissa Chess Books, Kecskemet.
- Schneider, A., *Sicilian Dragon: The Yugoslav Attack*, 2000, Caissa Chess Books, Kecskemet.
- Shereshevsky, M. & Slutsky L., *Mastering the Endgame Volume 1*, 1991, Pergamon, Oxford.
- Tiviakov, S., *B75-76 Monograph*, 1995, Šahovski Informator.
- Ward, C., *Winning With the Dragon*, 1994, Batsford, London.
- Ward, C., *Winning With the Sicilian Dragon 2*, 2001, Batsford, London.

Journals

New In Chess Yearbooks 1-71, as appropriate.

Electronic Resources

ChessBase Magazine 1-99

Mega Database 2001

MegaCorr 2003

Rogozenko, D., *Sicilian Dragon 2: B75-B79*, 2004, ChessBase.

Informator 1-89, Šahovski Informator

Schneider, A., *The Dragon for Experts*, 2002, ChessBase.

The Week in Chess, weekly electronic updates.

Chris Ward's monthly Dragon column, published by www.chesspublishing.com.

Ultrabase 2002.

Introduction

Part 1: The Background to *Play the Sicilian Dragon*

In late 1997 my good friend, IM Angus Dunnington, suggested that I should consider writing a book on the Sicilian Dragon. I had just achieved my first IM norm in the World Under-18 Championship, and the Dragon had played an essential part in my brief success. Angus had been my coach during that tournament, and although I was rather flattered by his suggestion, I dismissed it out of hand. A few factors discouraged me. In the first place, the Dragon was my main opening with Black, and I had been working hard to perfect it for the last few years, so the notion of publishing my work before I had even played it tended to put me off. Moreover, there was the fact that I was a rather lazy adolescent in certain respects. Working hard for school had never much appealed to me as a child, and little had changed by this stage. If I was interested in a task, I would apply myself to its completion implacably, but the challenge of actually writing a book bore far too much similarity to academic study to evoke the necessary attention and enthusiasm that such a task demands.

Fortunately, perhaps, things change. Shortly before my seventeenth birthday rolled around, I developed an unlikely interest in law. I found a school that would let me study it at a pre-university level and quickly became quite engrossed in the subject. My interest in law sparked secondary interests in economics and politics, which evoked a further interest in economic and political history, and very soon it seemed there was no time for chess. With some reluctance I played less and less, devoting most of my time to my studies and the rest to my friends. Eventually it got to the stage where I wasn't playing any chess at all. In hindsight it seems quite bizarre that, despite not playing

active chess, I continued to study theory. Not in every opening I played, just the Dragon. Every week I would download *The Week in Chess*, have a look through the Dragon games, and then update *Mega Database* in ChessBase. When in London, I would stop by the Chess & Bridge Centre and leaf through the *New In Chess* Yearbooks. Rarely buying them, just checking to see how my favourite opening was doing.

Needless to say, I could not abstain from active chess forever. During my first year of university, my friends IM Karl Mah, FM Nathan Alfred and David Garner cajoled me into playing for the university team more and more, and the following summer I played my first International Master tournament for several years. I was a little rusty, and finished in third place, missing out on my second IM norm. Enthused by the familiar excitement of tournament play, I decided to try my luck in the IM section of the 2001 Paks Cup a few days later. This time my play was a bit more solid, and I finished first equal, drawing my last-round game quickly to secure my second IM norm and a definite share of first prize. The next time I played was a year later, in the Smith & Williamson Young Masters 2002. I finished first equal there too, achieving my third IM norm.

Understandably, you may be wondering what any of this has to do with the Dragon. Well, from anybody else's perspective, relatively little. However, from my own perspective these results carry a particular significance because, in each of these events, it was the Dragon that secured my success in several critical games. Any affection I felt for the opening before these events was consolidated and enhanced by the success that the Dragon had brought me during them.

That brief history brings me to the reason why I am writing this book. Having graduated from both my undergraduate and postgraduate studies in law, it is about time I got a proper job,

which will largely preclude me playing much chess. In light of this I felt it would be nice to put together a book of my thoughts, analysis and experiences with the Dragon, so perhaps the next generation of young fire-breathers will be inspired as I was. What follows is a brief synopsis of how this book came to be, what I set out to achieve in writing the text, and an explanation of which resources I found (and continue to find) most instructive and helpful.

A Tale of Two Dragons

One stormy night I found myself in the small Scottish town of Hawick. The penultimate round of the Scottish Championship had finished a few hours earlier and I was attempting to find something to interest me on the book-stall. I wasn't planning on buying anything, but there was certainly nothing else to do. Quite by chance my opponent for the next day, a young international master by the name of Jonathan Rowson (who has now gone on to become a strong grandmaster) walked by. Upon seeing me leafing through a copy of Chris Ward's *Winning With the Dragon*, he immediately exclaimed "Oh no, Eddie, not more openings...". We had just spent two weeks in Poland together, where Jonathan had won a silver medal in the European Under-18 Championship. During the event we shared a room and I had endured a constant barrage of "Dvoretsky this..." and "Dvoretsky that..." (I understand that Jonathan now owns signed copies of each of Dvoretsky's books). More out of desperation to avoid a lecture than anything else, I abruptly interrupted Jonathan and told him I was preparing for tomorrow. He took some amusement in this and suggested that the Dragon would be a good choice.

Although the sarcasm was hardly lost on me, I did wonder if he was right. Having just played two long tournaments together, Jonathan knew my black repertoire inside out, and could really make me suffer in the Najdorf or the Kalashnikov Sicilian. I considered buying Ward's book, but was somewhat reluctant because, well, I already owned it. I had won a copy several months earlier as a best game prize and promptly deposited it on the floor of my mother's car. Notwithstanding the enormous waste of expenditure

(£15 is a lot to a fourteen-year-old) I eventually purchased my second copy, and then retired to my hotel room to see if the Dragon was any good.

To my surprise, I found that I couldn't stop reading Chris Ward's book. Chris explains the themes and ideas with fluent clarity, and the illustrative games were just fantastic. Eventually I stopped playing through them and just kept reading, and by 4.45 a.m. I had practically finished the entire book. It was with some excitement that I set it aside to close my eyes, but it was with even more excitement that I opened them to find I had overslept and my game was already underway! Like a bewildered imbecile I pulled on some jeans and a jumper and ran over to the playing hall. After the customary handshake the game got under way, and sure enough a Dragon position quickly arose on the board. Back then my memory wasn't so full of superfluous nonsense, so I remembered the theory clearly and banged out my moves with confidence. At around move 15 Jonathan sank into a deep sleep, but when he awoke he fired off a series of moves (which turned out to be home preparation) and forced me into a clearly worse endgame. As it turned out, I played my best chess of the tournament in that ending, and by a curious twist of fate even managed to win the game.

After that I was hooked. Not so much by the result, but by what I had read in Chris Ward's book. The sheer dynamism inherent in Black's position could give rise to not only exciting tactical outbursts, but also beautiful positional exchange sacrifices and intriguing endgames in which Black could play for a win despite being an exchange, a piece or even a rook, down! And perhaps best of all ... the Dragon was theoretically sound too!

Thereafter my results with the Dragon were excellent for a time, but eventually the variations recommended by Ward began to develop problems. In one particular line of the Yugoslav Attack, I lost two games in rapid succession, which horrified me because, at this stage in my career, they were the only two Dragon games I had ever lost! Realizing that I had to improve my understanding of the theoretical aspects of the Dragon, I purchased three further books. The first was a work on the Yugoslav Attack by

the Hungarian masters Sapi & Schneider; although groundbreaking in its time, this was by then rather dated and of little use to me. The second book was entitled simply *B75-76*, and was an Informator Monograph written by Tiviakov, arguably the world's leading expert on the Dragon at that time. Although *B75-76* consisted almost entirely of analysis, with little explanation whatsoever, this actually proved very useful, and my old copy still contains scribbles of my early analysis in the margins of many of its pages. Finally, there was a book entitled *The Soltis Variation of the Yugoslav Attack*, by Steve Mayer, an American National Master. This book was astoundingly good. Mayer had clearly worked tirelessly to compile an enormous text dealing exclusively with one variation of the Yugoslav Attack, and examining all sub-variations thereof in meticulous detail.

Having now acquired four sizeable texts on the Sicilian Dragon, I realized that one could easily become lost working one's way through the complications. Working on the presumption that order would breed clarity, I began studying the most basic positions in the Yugoslav Attack first, researching and analysing why the most obvious methods of attack for White should fail. Once I was done with the most obvious chapters, I moved on to the more complex lines, discovering therein refinements by each side of their respective attacking and defensive ideas. Interestingly I noticed two patterns. The first was a timeline. In Mayer's work, the chapters detailing White's basic attacks are to be found at the start of the book, and as you progress through the book the ideas become more and more complicated. Notably, the dates when the main games of each chapter were played tend to correspond roughly with the position of their respective chapters in the book. The basic attacks took place in the early games with the Dragon, and are therefore in the early chapters, and as time progressed each refinement of White's approach to the Dragon seemed to bring with it a new chapter.

The second pattern I noticed was conceptual. Whilst the basic ideas of the Dragon are as simple as most other openings, if one tries to study Dragon theory in abstract (i.e. without first consolidating one's knowledge by studying the lines that have preceded the variation in

question), then the logic underlying Black's solution is difficult to grasp. Die-hard theoreticians may disagree with me on this point, perhaps maintaining that the most important thing is to learn the solution itself, but I firmly believe that most challenges to the Dragon can be solved over the board, even in immensely complicated positions. Finding the key to a difficult Dragon position will rarely require a player to analyse countless variations with inordinate depth and clarity, but rather to know the type of thing that you should be looking for in the first place. I will attempt to build on this theory below, but for the time being I would just like to reassure the reader that you will not have memorize the entirety of this book in order to play the Dragon like a GM!

A Horse of a Different Colour

Every author hopes that their book will be different. Well, perhaps not every author, but most people who write on a subject that holds some significance to them personally will endeavour to bring something new and original to that text.

In my case I have tried to do a few things differently. The first decision I faced was the choice of whether to use a selection of complete illustrative games, or to employ a 'tree' format, including only the information relevant to the particular branch in question. The illustrative games approach makes for easier and more enjoyable reading, but I decided upon the 'tree' approach because I believe it enables the author to include far more information. I also believe that the tree format makes it easier for the reader to find things, harder to miss variations when preparing, and easier to digest complex theory (because it can be logically divided into its requisite sections and then digested in chunks).

Notwithstanding my decision to use the tree format, I have included full or large parts of games in the accompanying notes where I believe that they illustrate a particular theme, or are particularly instructive. This is more true of Chapters 13-17 (which deal with the more positional lines of the Yugoslav Attack), and Chapters 18-21 (which deal with White's quieter alternatives, including the Classical, Fianchetto

and Levenfish variations), than it is of the first twelve chapters, which deal exclusively with the main-line Yugoslav Attack.

The second issue I faced was whether to write a book on the Dragon as a whole, or to produce a text that focused exclusively on a set repertoire. This was less of a difficult decision; the prospect of writing an encyclopaedic volume on the Dragon in its entirety seemed frightfully boring, and who on earth would read it? Even the largest of works could only realistically provide detail in breadth, and room for explanatory content would be very limited indeed. Perhaps most importantly, nowadays almost everybody has a database, so finding details of some obscure theoretical line rarely requires subject-specific texts.

However, whilst the encyclopaedic approach was clearly out of the question, my own experiences with the Dragon led me to query whether the 'repertoire' approach also has its problems. The theory on the Dragon is now relatively stable, and we can all breathe a sigh of relief that the Dragon of the 1970s and 1980s, which was refuted one week but rehabilitated the next, is now very much a creature of fiction. That said, lines do develop problems, and if the reader hopes to play the Dragon at international level, then there may well be times when you need to find new solutions or switch between subvariations. For this reason, I have tried to make this work slightly more expansive than a typical repertoire book. Where Black has a popular alternative to the line I am recommending, I have tried to mention that alternative in sufficient detail either to enable the reader to play it simply based on the notes provided, or to direct the reader to a source which provides appropriate coverage. This is particularly true when I suspect that White's play can be improved and will cause Black problems in the future.

A related problem for Dragon players is that, because there are so many interesting lines in the Dragon, very often one can find oneself clueless as to which variation to adopt. For example, in the main-line Yugoslav Attack with 9...c4, Ward recommends the 10...a5!? variation, but Kasparov played the Soltis Variation against Anand in their 1995 World Championship match, Topalov and Shirov seem to play some nameless variation

involving 10/11...xd4, Fedorov has been playing some obscure line with an early ...b8, and now Golubev is playing some bizarre line called the Chinese Dragon. Which line should you play? The obvious answer is that there is no right or wrong answer; each of these lines has its own particular strengths and weaknesses. Enlightened? I thought not. That's the sort of problem a keen Dragon player faces quite frequently, and unfortunately it can take a lot of time and research to discover why you should or should not play a particular line. In light of this difficulty I have tried to devote some space to justifying my particular recommendations by reference to the problems that Black experiences with the alternatives. That way, if you do wish to switch lines, you know what you have to look out for.

The third way in which I tried to make this book slightly novel was to change the order in which the material appears. As mentioned above, in the main-line Yugoslav Attack there is a rough correlation between the time ideas were tried, and their relative complexity in relation to White's other methods of attack. As time has progressed, White's attacking ideas have constantly been rebuffed and White has then had to refine his play with more sophisticated methods. In light of this observation I have endeavoured to arrange Chapters 1 to 11 in an order which corresponds with the sophistication of White's approach. Each subsequent chapter will tend to borrow ideas from its predecessor and then try to build upon those ideas. In order to gain a full appreciation of the underlying logic of each side's approach, I would recommend the reader study these chapters in the order in which they appear. Obviously this could be quite time-consuming, or even impractical, and I doubt I would have the discipline to avoid just dipping in and out of those parts that interested me, but I firmly believe this is the best approach.

Chapter 12 is very much a standalone chapter, dealing with Black's popular alternatives to the Soltis Variation.

Chapters 13-16 deal with the Yugoslav Attack with 9 0-0-0, my main recommendation against which is 9...d5. Once again, the order in which they appear has been specifically arranged to create a conceptual hierarchy, so the

positions arising in Chapter 15 are far more accessible once one has studied the positions that arise in the main line of Chapter 14. Chapter 16 deals with the alternatives to 9...d5. The themes and structures that arise bear a definite similarity to those that arise in Chapter 17, which deals with the old 9 g4 variation, and so obviously it may be useful to study these chapters in conjunction with one another.

Chapters 18-21 deal with White's quieter attempts against the Dragon. The most important section to study here is Chapter 18, Part 1, which illustrates Black's various approaches to the positions where White castles kingside. The themes detailed there are covered in the context of the Classical Dragon, but can also be applied to the positions that arise in Chapters 19-21.

Finally, although this book will appear as a tidy little volume, prior to this project, it was essentially a selection of scraps of paper, held together by a rubber band in a big blue folder. Over the years I tried to ensure that I made notes whenever I was studying the Dragon, simply because there is so much theory that an idea particular to one variation can often be easily mistaken to apply to another variation entirely. Well, that and because I have no memory for detail! Although organized enough to write my thoughts down, I was rarely motivated enough to find a pad of paper. Indeed, the critical analysis that I believe solves Black's problems in Chapter 7 was actually written on the back of a paper napkin in a bar in Spain!

I have tried to include all of my original analysis in this book. There were occasions when I was writing the book where I found that theory had moved on in certain places without me noticing, perhaps finding a better solution to the one in my notes. This proved particularly true of sidelines that have proved more fashionable in correspondence chess than practical play in recent years. Where such developments have occurred, or if my original analysis was in some way flawed, I have obviously omitted it.

I also had an analysis engine running in the background when I was working within ChessBase. Often this proved very useful, but I was interested to note that analysis engines have surprising difficulty in coping with Dragon positions. Very often they are totally wrong in their

assessments, either because their materialistic 'mentality' leads them astray, or because they have difficulty dealing with the unusual positional compensation which Black obtains in many of the more sophisticated sacrificial lines.

If in Doubt, Look to the Stars!

Whenever I study an opening, the first thing I do is try to find somebody really good who already plays it, and then flick through their games to get a feel for the way that they handle the opening. I never used to do this, but then again things are much easier now. With databases it only takes a few seconds to compile this information, and yet the rewards can be far greater than several hours spent memorizing theory.

In the Dragon there are some names that you simply have to look out for. At the top of the list is Ukrainian grandmaster Mikhail Golubev. Although not the absolute strongest exponent of the Dragon, Golubev is undoubtedly the most creative. His imaginative innovations have influenced, shaped and revolutionized Dragon theory over the last ten years. When searching for an answer to a problem in the Dragon, Golubev's games or annotations are very often my first port of call. The reader may also be interested to note that a few years ago Golubev put together an excellent little book entitled *Easy Guide to the Dragon*.

A rising star in the Dragon world is Moldavian GM Dorian Rogozenko. Rogozenko has played a considerable number of critical games in the Dragon recently, and also writes the B70-79 (the ECO codes for the Sicilian Dragon) column for *ChessBase Magazine*, which is excellent. The English chess-player Peter Chapman recently informed me that Rogozenko has produced two CDs dealing with the Dragon. I was preparing for my exams at the time the CDs were released, which is why they slipped my attention, but I have now acquired a copy of the B75-79 CD, dealing with the Yugoslav Attack. The CD seems a little light on explanation (although perhaps I am just looking in the wrong place – I am not a fan of e-books, etc.) but the theory content is first rate, and unrivalled in any other product I have seen on the market.

Another player to keep an eye on is English GM Chris Ward. As well as being a talented

dancer (see, you learn something new every day...) Chris is the author of *Winning With the Dragon*, editions I and II (both of which are excellent), and the monthly Dragon columnist for www.chesspublishing.com. If you know who he is coaching, it can often be a good idea to keep an eye on their games too. I remember a while back Chris shared an idea that he was saving for GM John Nunn with his student Desmond Tan. By pure coincidence, Desmond played Nunn in a rapidplay event the following weekend, and used the line Chris had shown him to beat his first super-GM (giving away all of Chris's preparation in the process ... d'oh!).

In terms of other players to watch out for, super-GMs Topalov, Ivanchuk and Shirov occasionally play the Dragon, and GM Fedorov, who is willing to employ the Dragon even against the world elite, can also be a real force to watch. GMs Alterman, Ki.Georgiev and Tiviakov are frequent exponents who made very valuable contributions to Dragon theory in the 1990s. Kramnik and Svidler don't tend to play the Dragon where White has the option of the Yugoslav Attack, but they frequently transpose into the less critical lines (i.e. the lines covered in Chapters 18-21) from Classical Sicilian variations.

Finally, there is the man himself, Garry Kasparov. Dragon fans the world over rejoiced when Kasparov used the Dragon to defeat Anand in 1995. To many there could be no greater stamp of approval than the repeated use of the Dragon in a world championship match. In actual fact, I wasn't too surprised by Kasparov's choice. I mean, obviously I was a bit surprised, but prior to the match I noticed that Anand had generally scored badly against the Dragon, so I wondered if Kasparov might consider it. I had also noticed that Topalov and Tiviakov seemed to have made some promising discoveries for Black in the critical main line of the Yugoslav Attack, and at that time White was having real problems against the Dragon, so in many respects the Dragon was a logical choice under the circumstances. Unfortunately, following the match Kasparov immediately returned to his beloved Najdorf, but every now and again he occasionally uses the Dragon as a surprise weapon against Anand. I know that sounds strange, but for some reason Anand is the only person he

plays it against! Their most recent Dragon encounter was at the Linares 2003 tournament; the game can be found in Chapter 19.

Part 2: Understanding The Dragon, The Basics

As you may have gathered from the first part of the introduction, in many respects I was in two minds as to what type of book *Play the Sicilian Dragon* should be. I very much wanted the book to be of use to professional players on account of the dense theoretical content, and yet accessible to club players because of the explanatory content. I am no longer sure whether it is really possible to achieve this balance, but I have tried my best to do so. Another dichotomous problem was that, on the one hand I was tempted to write a book about the themes and ideas that the Sicilian Dragon pawn-structure facilitates, but on the other hand the sheer volume of opening theory that I had to cover in order to ensure that the text was comprehensive severely limited the space for such discussion. In order to reconcile this apparent conflict, I have included a section below, briefly dealing with the main ideas and directing the reader to the sections of the book that deal with each concept in more detail.

Move-Order

1 e4 c5 2 ♖f3

It is currently a popular option to delay the development of the king's knight in favour of 2 ♘c3 when after 2...♘c6 White intends to transpose to an Open Sicilian via 3 ♖f3 (or 3 ♘ge2) and 4 d4, but with the added benefit of having excluded some of Black's defensive options. Fortunately, these move-order tricks don't really affect Dragon players because 3 ♖f3 can be met by 3...g6 4 d4 cxd4 5 ♘xd4 ♙g7 6 ♙e3 d6, when Black will play 7...♗f6 and 8...0-0, leading back to normal Dragon channels.

2...d6

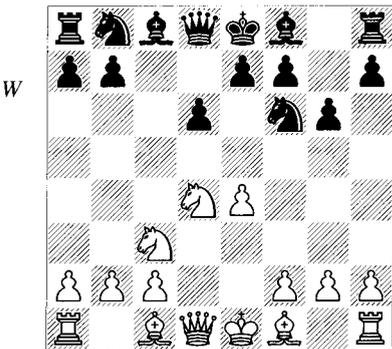
The first point to note is that, if Black is to ensure he reaches a 'pure' Dragon set-up, he must meet 2 ♖f3 with 2...d6. The natural alternative is to play 2...♘c6, but this allows White

to avoid the main-line Dragon; e.g., 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♖xd4 g6 5 c4! ♗g7 6 ♗e3 ♜f6 7 ♜c3 when the inclusion of 5 c4 enables White to establish a firm grip on the d5-square (the so-called Maroczy Bind set-up). This line is known as the 'Accelerated Dragon', because Black fianchettoes the dark-squared bishop slightly earlier than in the traditional Dragon. The Accelerated Dragon is of course playable for Black, but his winning chances are considerably reduced, and the nature of play is different in many respects. Another point to note is that, after 2...♜c6, Black cannot reach the Dragon via the move-order 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♖xd4 ♜f6 5 ♜c3 d6 because 6 ♗g5 steers the game into a Richter-Rauzer variation (6...g6 would now be met by 7 ♗xf6, ruining Black's pawn-structure), while 6 ♗c4 also precludes 6...g6, on account of 7 ♜xc6 bxc6 8 e5!, when 8...dxe5 loses to 9 ♗xf7+!, winning the black queen.

3 d4 cxd4

If Black wishes to avoid White's sidelines with 4 ♗xd4!? or 4 ♜xd4 ♜f6 5 f3! (White delays the development of the b1-knight in order to play 6 c4, reaching a Maroczy Bind structure of a type similar to that seen in the Accelerated Dragon) then Suba's move-order 3...♜f6 4 ♜c3 cxd4 merits consideration. Now 5 ♗xd4 can be answered by 5...♗d7 (5...♜c6 6 ♗b5 transposes to the main line of the 4 ♗xd4 variation, which is fine for Black, but there is quite a bit of theory to learn) when 6...♜c6 will follow, and it is by no means clear what the queen is doing on d4. The negative side to this move-order is that Black has to consider alternatives to 4 ♜c3, such as 4 dxc5 or 4 e5, although Black should be OK in either case.

4 ♖xd4 ♜f6 5 ♜c3 g6 (D)



6 ♗e3 ♗g7

Not 6...♜g4? 7 ♗b5+ +-.

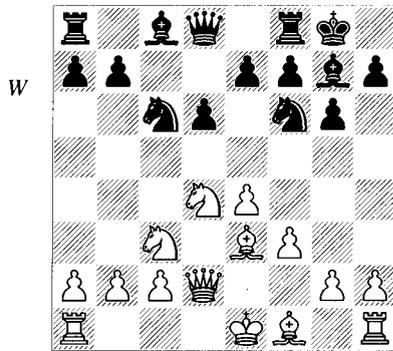
7 f3 ♜c6 8 ♗d2 0-0

We have reached the starting position of the Yugoslav Attack.

Pawn-Structure

Over the years I have noticed that Dragon theoreticians often write about Black's 'Dragon' pawn-structure with great enthusiasm, emphasizing that, so long as the e7-pawn remains on its starting square, Black's d6-pawn is not weak (as, in some circumstances, it can be in the Najdorf or Scheveningen variations). Furthermore, because the e7-pawn has not been committed to e5, Black's d5-square is not weakened (as it is in the Sveshnikov and Kalashnikov variations of the Sicilian Defence) and the dark-squared bishop can come to g7, where it occupies its optimum diagonal.

1 e4 c5 2 ♜f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♖xd4 ♜f6 5 ♜c3 g6 6 ♗e3 ♗g7 7 f3 ♜c6 8 ♗d2 0-0 (D)



These virtues are of course true, and their inherent strength becomes particularly obvious in the endgame. However, I suspect that it is a little misleading to emphasize the strength of Black's pawn-structure without also discussing the cost at which it is achieved.

The starting point in this analysis is to acknowledge that solidity can breed rigidity. Although Black's pawn-structure remains solid, his control over the centre is minimal. Black would like to organize a central pawn-break with ...d5, but this is difficult to achieve without the support of a pawn on e6. Unfortunately, playing ...e6 chronically weakens the d6-pawn, because the bishop on g7 is unable to support it.

A further deficiency can be witnessed in the fact that, by playing ...g6, Black has weakened his kingside pawn-structure (giving White's h-pawn an obvious target) and also loosened control of the kingside dark squares, g7 and h6.

With these points in mind, we can surmise that Black's principal difficulty lies in the fact that he may struggle to organize a central pawn-break, but at the same time he has weakened his kingside, inviting a wing attack. The dilemma is now obvious: White's strongest method of play is to attack on the wing, and in accordance with traditional doctrine, Black should meet this with a counterstrike in the centre, but unfortunately that option is generally unavailable on account of Black's rigid pawn-structure. Fortunately, Black has other resources at his disposal (pawn sacrifices, counter-attacks on the queenside, exchange sacrifices, ... the list goes on) so his position is by no means bad. The important point is simply to recognize the inherent risk of passivity that Black's structure gives rise to.

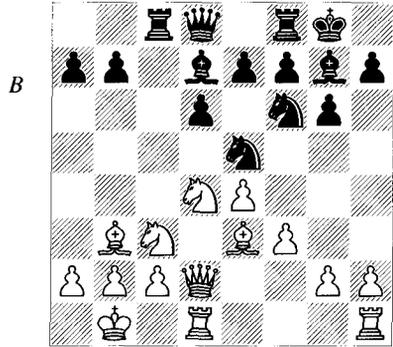
The Prophylactic Problem

The prophylactic problem is a relatively new concept for the Dragon: because Black's play depends primarily upon piece-play rather than pawn-breaks, there is the potential for Black to reach a quasi-zugzwang situation. This would occur, for example, when Black's pieces reach their optimum deployment, but no pawn-breaks are available. The inevitable consequence is that Black must move a piece that either worsens his position, or does not really improve it much.

This is a difficult concept to appreciate fully when considered out of context, so by way of illustration, consider the following.

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 g6 6 ♙e3 ♙g7 7 f3 ♘c6 8 ♚d2 0-0 9 ♙c4 ♙d7 10 0-0-0 ♝c8 11 ♙b3 ♘e5 12 ♚b1 (D)

White's last move takes a prophylactic measure which is intended to inhibit the natural development of Black's pieces. The first point to note is that now 12...♚a5 is bad on account of 13 ♘d5, when 13...♚xd2 drops a pawn to 14 ♘xe7+. 12...a5 gains some space on the queenside but is probably bad for Black because of 13 a4, stunting Black's queenside



counterplay on account of the backward b-pawn. Finally, 12...b5 simply loses a pawn. This means that Black must consider moving one of his minor or major pieces, the obvious choice being 12...♘c4. Unfortunately, theory currently considers this questionable on account of 13 ♙xc4 ♝xc4 14 g4! b5?! 15 b3 when, if Black retreats the rook to c8, the b5-pawn drops, but retreating to c5 runs into 16 ♘e6!, winning an exchange.

These points illustrate that, in certain circumstances, Black can face serious problems where White gradually improves his position with useful moves like 12 ♙b1, but Black does not have a constructive move of equivalent worth. In actual fact, matters are by no means as simple as this short synopsis may suggest. Black does have a good non-committal move in the form of 12...♝e8!?. A full examination of the analysis and theory surrounding these plans can be found in Chapter 11.

The Exchange Sacrifice when White Castles Queenside

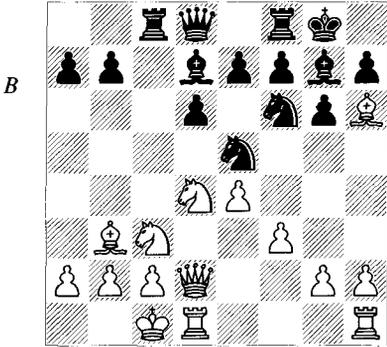
In the Yugoslav Attack, the cornerstone of Black's defensive resources is the positional exchange sacrifice on c3, shattering White's queenside pawns. White's basic plan is relatively simple: march the h-pawn down the board, open the h-file, exchange the dark-squared bishops, and then somehow checkmate the black king. Black has already weakened his kingside pawn-structure by playing 5...g6, so a straight pawn-race down opposing wings will generally favour White. In light of this problem, Black relies on a strategy of attacking with pieces, rather than pawns. Part of this strategy is to sacrifice the c8-rook on c3 at some point, shattering

White's queenside structure and forcing White to take defensive measures. There follows a high-class illustrative example of this theme:

Geller – Korchnoi

Moscow Ct (2) 1971

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 g6 6 ♙e3 ♙g7 7 f3 0-0 8 ♖d2 ♘c6 9 ♙c4 ♙d7 10 ♙b3 ♙c8 11 0-0-0 ♘e5 12 ♙h6 (D)



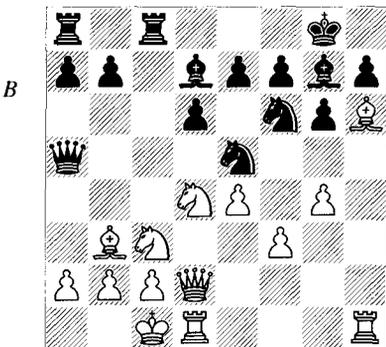
12... ♙xh6! 13 ♖xh6 ♙xc3! 14 bxc3 a5! 15 a4 ♖c7 16 ♖e3 ♖c5 17 ♘d2 ♙xa4 18 ♙a1 ♙xb3 19 cxb3 d5 ♢

In this example, the black queen was able to generate some useful threats on the queenside, but very often taking the queens off and going into a 'Dragon endgame' can be even more effective.

D. Holmes – Ward

London Lloyds Bank 1991

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 g6 6 ♙e3 ♙g7 7 f3 0-0 8 ♖d2 ♘c6 9 ♙c4 ♙d7 10 h4 ♖a5!? 11 h5 ♘e5 12 ♙b3 ♘xh5 13 0-0-0 ♙fc8 14 g4 ♘f6 15 ♙h6 (D)



15... ♙xh6! 16 ♙xh6 ♙xc3! 17 ♖xc3 ♖xc3 18 bxc3 ♙c8 19 ♘d2 ♙g7 20 ♙h4 g5! 21 ♙h2 ♙c5

Black has a clearly better endgame. This encounter continued 22 ♙e1 e6 23 ♙e3 a5 24 a3 a4 25 ♙a2 ♙b5 26 ♘xb5 ♙xb5 27 ♙h1 ♙b2 28 ♙a1 h5 29 gxf4 ♘xh5 30 c4 ♘f4 31 ♙c3 ♙b6 32 ♙b1 ♙xb1 33 ♙xb1 ♘g2 34 ♙c2 ♘h4 35 f4 gxf4 36 ♙h2 ♘hf3 37 ♙f2 ♙h6 38 ♙a2 ♙h5 39 c5 dxc5 40 ♙c4 ♙h4 41 ♙f1 ♘g5 42 ♙h2+ ♙g4 43 ♙g2+ ♙h5 44 ♙h2+ ♙g6 45 ♙d3 f3 46 ♙h4 f2 47 ♙f1 ♘ef3 0-1.

It may seem somewhat strange that Black can sacrifice an exchange, swap off the queens, and then win an endgame material down. I have to admit, the first time I saw this type of idea I was rather shocked that Black could 'get away' with such antics. However, I was quite young then, and my perspective was very much one of 'rook = 5 points, knight = 3 points, etc.'. I now appreciate that things are rarely so simple, least of all in the Dragon. I mentioned above, when discussing Black's pawn-structure, that the real strength of Black's structure would be most evident in the endgame. As the encounter Holmes-Ward illustrates, the combination of Black's perfect pawn-structure with White's crippled structure operates to inhibit the movement of White's rooks. Black's pieces have far more energy, moving effortlessly around the board, dancing into White's weaknesses and inducing further concessions.

The concept of valuing pieces in relation to their 'energy' or dynamic potential is very important in the Dragon and will be examined throughout the book. One further point that I would like to emphasize is that valuing pieces by reference to their dynamic potential is not limited to positions in which Black has sacrificed the exchange on c3, but is relevant to any situation in which the pawn-structure inhibits the movement or coordination of one side's forces.

One further point to consider when entering these 'exchange-sac' endgames is the structural circumstances pertaining that may make the material imbalance more or less favourable to Black. In the original edition of *Winning With the Dragon*, I recall Ward explaining that he feels far more comfortable sacrificing an exchange when Black has already captured a white

pawn on the kingside (usually the h-pawn, which may have been sacrificed to open the h-file for White's major pieces). Obviously an extra pawn always helps, but I would like to refine this theory by submitting that the 'exchange-sac' endings are most effective where White has compromised his kingside pawn-structure in some respect. If White's kingside pawns remain on h2, g2, f3 and e4, then the resulting endgames will be less favourable to Black because (1) White's kingside is devoid of weaknesses and therefore impenetrable; and (2) White can advance the pawns at a timely moment, perhaps forcing an opening of the position with something like f4 followed by e5. If White succeeds in opening the position, the scope (or 'energy') of his rooks will be enhanced considerably, making it more difficult for Black to justify the material imbalance.

Discussion of the plans and complications relating to the typical c3 exchange sacrifice will crop up throughout the book, but a thorough examination is included in Chapter 1, Line A.

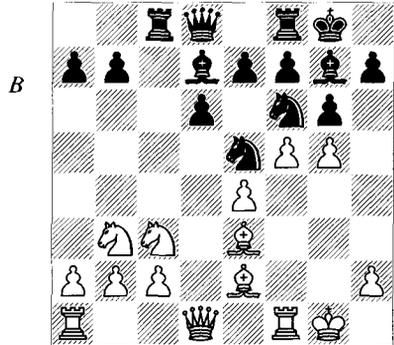
The Exchange Sacrifice when White Castles Kingside

The standard exchange sacrifice on c3 is also possible where White has castled kingside. Obviously, the safer position of the white king makes the sacrifice on c3 less attractive than in the Yugoslav variations, but Black should not be too discouraged by this factor. There follows a very well-known example of such an exchange sacrifice:

Fuglsang – Petursson Copenhagen 1997

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♘c3 g6 4 d4 cxd4 5 ♘xd4 ♙g7 6 ♘b3 ♘f6 7 ♙e2 0-0 8 0-0 d6 9 ♙e3 ♙e6 10 f4 ♙c8 11 f5 ♙d7 12 g4 ♘e5 13 g5 (D)
13... ♙xc3! 14 bxc3
14 gxf6 ♙xe3 15 fxg7 ♙xg7 –+.
14... ♘xe4 15 fxg6 hxg6 16 ♙e1 ♘xc3 17 ♙d4 ♘xe2+ 18 ♙xe2 ♙c8 19 ♙f4 ♙c6 –+ 20 ♙f1 ♘f3+ 21 ♙f2 ♘xd4 22 ♘xd4 ♙d5 23 ♙b5 ♙xd4+ 24 ♙xd4 ♙f5+ 0-1

In this example, there were specific tactical themes which justified the exchange sacrifice, in particular the fact that Black could follow

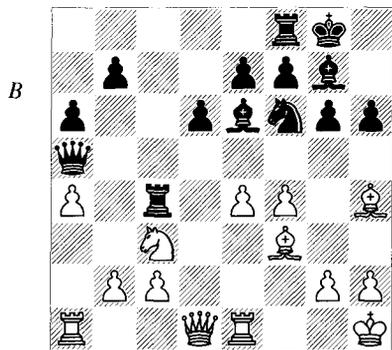


13... ♙xc3 with 14... ♘xe4, when White's c3-, f5- and g5-pawns were weak and the opening of the centre left White's king exposed and vulnerable.

As a general rule I have found that the effect of the c3 exchange sacrifice is enhanced when White has already played the move f4. The significance of having the pawn on f4 is that, when Black follows up the exchange sacrifice with ... ♘xe4, White cannot then eject the knight from e4 using the f-pawn (i.e. by playing f3) and Black can consolidate the knight's position on e4 by playing ... f5. An example:

T. Upton – Dearing Scottish Ch 1996

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 ♘f6 4 ♘c3 cxd4 5 ♘xd4 g6 6 ♙e2 ♙g7 7 0-0 0-0 8 ♙g5 ♘c6 9 ♘b3 a6 10 a4 ♙e6 11 f4 ♘a5 12 ♙h1 ♙c8 13 ♘xa5 ♙xa5 14 ♙f3 ♙c4 15 ♙e1 h6 16 ♙h4 (D)



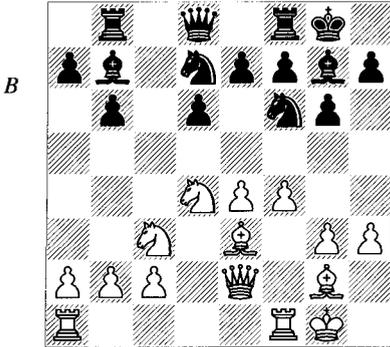
16... ♙g5! 17 ♙g3 g4 18 ♙e2 ♙xc3! 19 bxc3 ♘xe4 20 ♙xg4 ♘xc3!?

Even stronger is 20... ♘xg3+! 21 hxg3 ♙xc3 22 ♙b1 ♙xg3 –+.

21 ♙f3 ♙d5 22 ♙d3 ♙e4 23 ♙d2

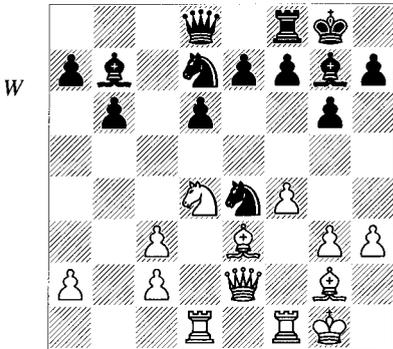
Now simply 23...f5 gives Black a definite advantage.

A further aspect of exchange sacrifice positions where White has committed himself to playing f4 is that this may actually weaken White's king position on the a8-h1 diagonal.



D. Adams – Dearing
British Ch (Scarborough) 2004

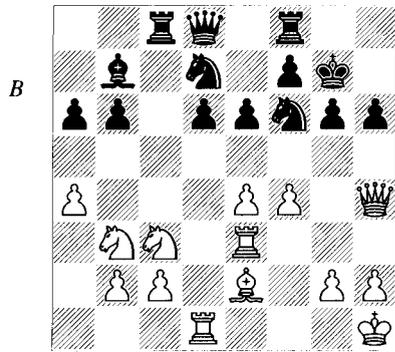
I now played 12...♖c5 13 ♔f2 ♔a6! 14 ♖db5 ♗d7, when White's pieces were getting in a tangle, but I want to use one of the lines that I analysed to illustrate how the move f4 can weaken White's king position on the long diagonal. Suppose I had instead continued 12...♖c8 13 ♖ad1 (13 e5 is actually stronger, but I just want to use the following analysis to illustrate the theme in question). Now Black has 13...♖xc3! 14 bxc3 ♖xe4 (D), when White is quite clearly in trouble.



If White instead attempts to safeguard the e4-point by 13 ♔f2, Black has the surprising resource 13...♖xc3 14 bxc3 ♗a8!, when White has serious problems safeguarding his centre;

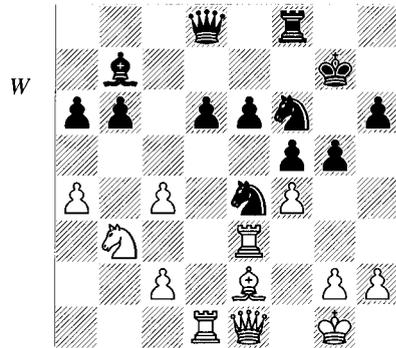
e.g., 15 ♖a1 ♖c5. Note that once the e4-pawn drops, the light squares surrounding the white king will suddenly become rather vulnerable.

One final point to note about these exchange-sacrifice positions is that Black sometimes has to be careful about his queenside pawns. The theory outlined above maintains that Black's knight (or bishop) will be superior to White's rook where the pawn-structure inhibits the rooks' mobility, but this obviously cannot be as sound in circumstances where Black has somehow weakened his queenside pawn-structure. Consider the following example:



Sammalvuo – Dearing
Budapest 2004

Black now continued with the familiar motif 25...♖xc3! 26 bxc3 (26 ♖xc3 ♖xe4 27 ♗xd8 ♖xd8 28 ♖f3 ♖c8 29 c3 f5 gives Black excellent play in the endgame) 26...♖xe4 27 ♗e1 f5 28 c4 ♖df6!? (28...e5! ♞) 29 ♔g1 g5 (D).



30 ♖d4 ♖e8?! (30...♗c8 is stronger) 31 fxg5 hxg5 32 ♗b4! and the weakness of my b6-pawn gave me some problems.

to use White's own pawn as a protective barrier for the black king, e.g.:

19 h5 gxf5 20 exf5

20 h6 ♖h8 21 exf5 a5 also left Black's position rock-solid in Grünfeld-Cu.Hansen, Jerusalem 1986.

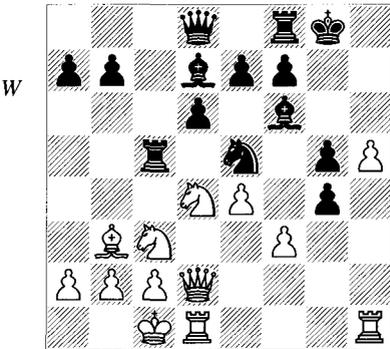
20...♖xc3 21 bxc3 a5 22 h6 ♖h8 23 ♖f4 a4

Black is much better and went on to win.

Example 3

Walek – Sluka
Czech Cht 2001

1 e4 c5 2 ♖f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♜xd4 ♜f6 5 ♜c3 g6 6 ♖e3 ♖g7 7 f3 0-0 8 ♞d2 ♜c6 9 ♖c4 ♖d7 10 0-0-0 ♜c8 11 ♖b3 ♜e5 12 h4 h5 13 ♖g5 ♜c5! 14 g4 hxg4 15 ♖xf6?! ♖xf6 16 h5 g5! (D)



With this move, Black seals the kingside, the white h-pawn proving a permanent obstruction to White's major pieces.

17 ♜d5 ♜xd5!

This illustrates a further defensive theme. Very often Black will sacrifice an exchange on d5 in order to preserve his dark-squared bishop, which performs both offensive and defensive functions on the dark diagonals.

18 exd5 gxf3! 19 ♜hg1 g4! 20 ♜df1 ♞b6

Finally we observe a third element in Black's defensive strategy – the switch from defence to offence on the kingside. It is quite common in the Yugoslav Attack for White to fuel his attack by sacrificing pawns on the kingside, but in the Soltis Variation, each time Black captures a pawn it inevitably draws Black's own pawns further and further up the board. On the one hand Black has to be careful in case this exposes his king, but on the other hand these connected

passed pawns can prove a dangerous weapon! Black is clearly better and went on to win.

Obviously there exists a vast array of other defensive methods and schemes at Black's disposal, and these will be examined throughout the book.

Dragon Endgames

There are a variety of typical Dragon endgames, but a lengthy discussion of each type is clearly beyond the scope of an opening manuscript. It seems quite common for Dragon players to reach an ending and assume that the dust has settled and they are at least equal on account of their impeccable pawn-structure. Very often this is true, but not always, and one game in particular stands out in my memory as illustrating the potential dangers that Black can face through careless play.

Short – Sax
Hastings 1983/4

1 e4 c5 2 ♖f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♜xd4 ♜f6 5 ♜c3 g6 6 ♖e3 ♖g7 7 f3 ♜c6 8 ♞d2 0-0-0 9 g4 ♖e6 10 0-0-0 ♜xd4 11 ♖xd4 ♞a5 12 a3 ♜fc8 13 h4 ♜ab8 14 ♜d5 ♞xd2+ 15 ♜xd2 ♜xd5

15...♖xd5!/? is also possible, and may be better as Black's light-squared bishop has only very limited scope in these types of endgames.

16 ♖xg7 ♜e3?! 17 ♖d4 ♜xf1 18 ♜xf1

No doubt Sax entered this variation on the presumption that the opposite-coloured bishops would guarantee a drawn ending. Unfortunately, White still has enough pieces on the board to generate some pressure: the dark squares around the black king are dreadfully weak, and if White can somehow open up the kingside, he will enjoy definite attacking chances.

18...b6 19 g5!

With this move, White fixes the g6-pawn, ensuring that Black will not be able to meet h5 with ...g5, thereby keeping the kingside closed. Once White opens the h-file, the black king will inevitably come under some pressure on account of the weak dark squares.

19...h5!

Preventing White from playing 20 h5 himself.

20 f4 ♖h3 21 ♜ff2 ♜c6 22 f5 ♜e8 23 b3 ♜g4 24 ♜b2 a6 25 a4 b5 26 axb5 axb5 27 ♜c3 ♜c5 28 f6! ♜c6 29 ♜d5 exf6 30 ♜xf6 ♜xe4 31 ♜xb5 ♜c8 32 ♜d2 ♜f8 33 c4 ♜e8 34 ♜bd5 ♜xh4 35 ♜xd6 ♜xd6 36 ♜xd6 ♜d7 37 c5 1-0

Black lost on time, but his position is hopeless in any case.

This particular encounter is the exception rather than the rule. In general, most of these types of endgames tend to end in draws, although Black does win his fair share of them. The important point to note is that White's temporary space advantage does give him some chances to generate an initiative if Black is careless in his handling of the position. Endings of this nature are examined in detail in the notes to Chapter 17.

Early Deviations

In the analysis that concludes this introductory chapter I have included a few of White's early deviations from mainstream theory. I suppose I should have included these lines elsewhere, but they don't really merit an independent chapter, and their ideas are quite distinct from those covered in most of the main chapters. Although neither of the lines presented here is particularly dangerous, it is definitely worth playing through Black's recommended responses as they do crop up in practical play from time to time.

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 g6

Now:

- A: 6 ♘d5?! 21
- B: 6 ♘g5! 21
- C: 6 ♘e3 ♘g7 7 f3 ♘c6 8 ♘c4 0-0 9 ♜e2 22

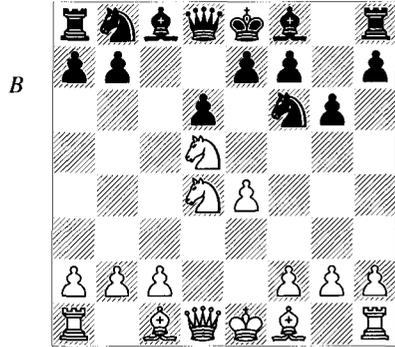
A)

6 ♘d5?! (D)

The only thing this little trick has going for it is that it is perhaps not as bad as it looks! Provided Black steers clear of 6...♘xe4 7 ♘b5+ ♘d7 8 ♜e2 ± he should be fine.

6...♘g7 7 ♘xf6+

Also possible is 7 ♘b5+ ♘d7 8 0-0 ♘c6! 9 ♘b3 a6, when 10 ♘e2? ♘xe4! 11 ♘e3 0-0 12 ♘b6 ♜c8 13 ♘d4 ♘xd4 14 ♘xd4 ♜d8 15 ♜e1



e6 16 ♘e3 ♘xf2! gave Black a decisive advantage in J.Littlewood-R.Pert, British League (4NCL) 1999/00.

7...♘xf6 8 ♘h6 ♜b6! 9 c3

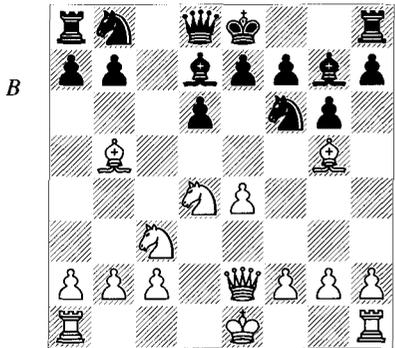
In an earlier game Andrew Smith had tried 9 ♘b5+ ♘d7 10 ♘xd7+ ♘xd7 11 c3 ♜xb2 12 0-0 ♜xc3 13 ♘b5 ♜c4 14 a4 ♘xa1 15 ♜xa1 ♘e5 16 f4 ♜c5+ 17 ♜h1 ♘g4 18 h3 (18 ♜xh8+ ♘d7 19 ♜xa8?? ♘f2+ 20 ♜gl ♘h3++ 21 ♜h1 ♜gl+ 22 ♜xg1 ♘f2# Ward) 18...♘f6 19 e5 dxe5 20 fxe5? ♘d5 21 e6 f6 → A.Smith-Ward, Ramsgate 1989.

9...♜xb2 10 ♘b5+ ♘d7 11 ♜c1 ♜a3 12 0-0 a6 13 ♘a4 ♜c5 14 ♜d2 b5 15 ♘b3 ♘b7 16 ♜fe1 ♘b6 17 f4 ♜d8 18 ♜h1 ♜h5

→ A.Smith-Tiviakov, Isle of Man 2001.

B)

6 ♘g5! 7 ♘g7 7 ♘b5+ ♘d7 8 ♜e2 (D)



This active piece deployment was dubbed by Golubev the 'Vitolin's Attack'. White develops his pieces with maximum energy, intending to castle queenside and then break open the centre and exploit Black's lagging development. However, although White's pieces are developing at

quite a pace, their positioning is somewhat superficial, and it will not be long before Black begins pushing them back. If Black exercises a little care over the next few moves, he will achieve an entirely acceptable position.

8...0-0 9 0-0-0 ♖a5

White now has four options:

a) 10 ♖he1 a6! 11 ♖b3 ♖xb5 12 ♗xa5 ♖xe2 13 ♖xe2 ♗c6 = Bednarski-Ernst, Hamburg 1981.

b) 10 h4 ♖xb5 11 ♖xb5 ♖xb5 12 ♗dxb5 ♗bd7 13 ♗c7 ♖ac8 14 ♗7d5 ♖fe8 gave Black a solid and acceptable position in Frolov-Oesterle, Debrecen 1990.

c) 10 ♖b1 a6 11 ♖xd7 (11 ♖xf6 axb5 12 ♗b3 ♖a7 13 ♖xg7 ♗xg7 14 a3? b4! 15 axb4 ♗c6 16 ♗d5 ♖fc8 17 ♖e3 ♖a2+ 18 ♗c1 ♗e5!, Vitoliņš-Shirov, Riga 1988) 11...♖xg5 12 h4 ♖a5 13 ♖h3 ♗c6 14 ♗b3 ♖c7 15 f4 b5 16 ♗d5 ♗xd5 17 exd5 ♗a5 18 ♗xa5 ♖xa5 19 ♖d2 ♖xd2 20 ♖xd2 ½-½ Blodshtein-Fedorov, Voskresensk 1993.

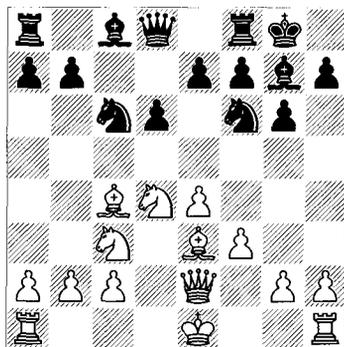
d) 10 f4 ♖g4 11 ♗f3 ♗c6 12 ♖b1 (12 e5!? dxe5 13 fxe5 ♗d7 14 ♖xc6 bxc6 15 ♖xe7 ♖fe8 16 ♖d6 ♗xe5 17 ♖he1 ♖e6 ♢ Lakos-Dekić, Szombathely 1997) 12...♗h5 (also of interest is 12...♖fc8!? 13 ♖xf6 ♖xf6 14 ♗d5 ♗b4, which gave Black reasonable chances in T.Horvath-Jovcić, Stara Pazova 1984) 13 ♗d5 e6 14 ♖xc6 bxc6 15 ♖d2 (15 ♗e7+?! ♗h8 16 e5 h6 17 ♖h4 ♗xf4 18 ♖e4 ♖xf3 19 ♖xf3 dxe5 and Black wins, Vitoliņš-Smirin, Kuldiga 1987) 15...♖xd2 16 ♗e7+ ♗h8 17 ♖xd2 h6 18 ♖h4 ♗xf4 was at least slightly better for Black in Yurtaev-Petrakov, Kstovo 1994.

C)

6 ♖e3 ♖g7 7 f3 ♗c6 8 ♖c4 0-0 9 ♖e2 (D)

This unusual move is a favourite of Jonny Hector, and has even been used by the likes of Anand on occasion. However, it seems rather bizarre for White to adopt a Yugoslav formation, but then to forego opportunities of attacking on the kingside in favour of more positional channels. Also, if White castles kingside then he reaches a quasi-Classical formation with the queen on e2 and the pawn on f3, neither of

B



which is particularly beneficial in established Classical lines.

9...♗a5 10 ♖d3

10 ♖b3 e5! 11 ♗db5 a6 12 ♗a3 ♗xb3 13 axb3 d5! 14 ♖g5 d4 15 ♗d5 ♖e6 16 ♖xf6 ♖xf6 17 ♗xf6+ ♖xf6 18 ♗c4 ♖ac8 19 0-0 ♖c6 20 ♖fc1 ♖fc8 ♢ El Kher-Ward, Copenhagen 1998.

10...a6!?

This is my preference, but 10...♖d7 11 0-0 ♖c8 is equally playable.

11 0-0

11 0-0-0 b5 12 ♖f2 (12 g4 e5!? 13 ♗b3 ♖e6 14 h4 ♖c8 15 ♖b1 ♖xc3!? 16 bxc3 ♗c4 17 ♖c1?! h5! 18 ♖g5 hxg4 19 h5 ♗xe4!! 20 ♖xe4 ♖xg5 is much better for Black, Sylvan-Ward, Copenhagen 1997) 12...b4 13 ♗ce2 e5 14 ♗b3 ♖e6 15 ♖b1 ♗xb3 16 cxb3 a5 17 ♖b5 ♖b8 18 ♖a4 d5 is a good deal better for Black, Berkvens-Tiviakov, Zwolle 2000.

11...b5

Or 11...♖d7!? 12 ♖f2 ♖c8 13 ♖ae1 ♗c4 14 ♖c1 ♖c5 15 ♗h1 ♖ac8 16 ♗b3 ♖xf2 17 ♖xf2 b5 18 ♗d1 ♗e5 19 ♖f1 d5 20 exd5 ♗xd5 ♢ Hector-Ward, Copenhagen 1998.

12 ♖ad1

12 ♗b3 ♖e6 13 ♗xa5 ♖xa5 14 ♖f2 ♖c7!? (14...b4 looks sensible) 15 ♖b6 ♖c6 16 ♖d4 b4 17 ♗e2 gave Black a respectable position in Hector-de Firmian, Copenhagen 2002.

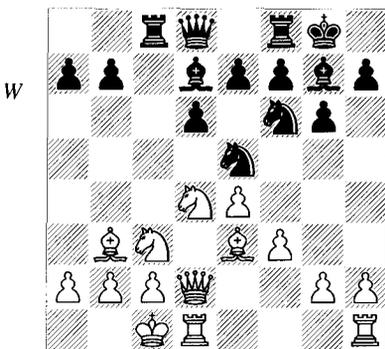
12...e5 13 ♗b3 ♖e6 14 ♖f2 ♗c4 15 ♖c1 ♖c7 16 ♗h1 ♖c6 17 ♖h4 h6 18 f4 exf4 19 ♗d4 ♖c5 20 ♗xe6 fxe6 21 ♖xf4 ♗e5 22 ♖g3

Hector-Aagaard, Copenhagen 2002. Now Ward suggested that 22...♗fg4!? is strong.

1 Yugoslav Attack: 12th Move Alternatives for White

I have resisted the temptation to delve directly into the wonderful complications that constitute the main line of the 9 ♟c4 Yugoslav Attack, and instead decided to focus on White's early deviations. It may prove useful to take the time to play over some of the lines in this chapter as, at club level at least, they occur far more frequently than the pure main lines that commence on move 14. However, perhaps more importantly, the main lines of the Dragon as they currently stand have arisen as a process of evolution over several decades of raw analysis and refinement thereof. Consequently, if one attempts to study the pure main lines as an abstraction of the theory on the Dragon as a whole, one risks sacrificing memorization for understanding. The lines examined in the next few chapters represent an essential foundation, detailing the various themes and strategies in a pure form that cannot be so readily applied to the sharper main lines.

1 e4 c5 2 ♞f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♞xd4 ♞f6 5 ♞c3 g6 6 ♟e3 ♟g7 7 f3 ♞c6 8 ♞d2 0-0 9 ♟c4 ♟d7 10 0-0-0 ♞c8 11 ♟b3 ♞e5 (D)



This represents the starting position for the main-line Yugoslav Attack. The main line now is 12 h4 (Chapters 3-10), but White has several

alternatives, of which 12 ♟g5 is important enough to merit a chapter of its own (see Chapter 2). The flexible 12 $\text{♞b1}!$? has come to be of such importance that I have decided to adopt an unnatural methodology in structuring the material. Five years ago, 12 ♞b1 would have been dealt with in Chapter 3, but it has since become clear that the broader potential of this move encompasses themes and complications that can only be fully understood when studied in conjunction with the absolute main lines. For this reason I have decided to deal with 12 ♞b1 in Chapter 11, i.e. only once I have covered all of the ideas and strategies that are present in Chapters 1-10. Returning to the position at hand, we shall consider these five moves in this chapter:

- A: 12 $\text{♟h6}!$ 23
- B: 12 g4 27
- C: 12 $\text{♞de2}?$ 31
- D: 12 $\text{♞he1}!$? 31
- E: 12 $\text{♞e2}!$? 32

A)

12 $\text{♟h6}!$ ♟xh6 ! 13 ♞xh6 ♞xc3 14 bxc3

Black now has two options:

- A1: 14... ♞a5 23
- A2: 14...a5!? 26

The former is the standard main line.

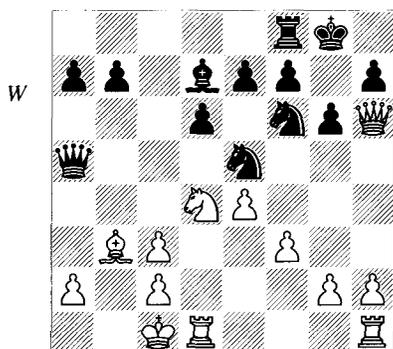
A1)

14... ♞a5 (D)

15 ♞b2

Or:

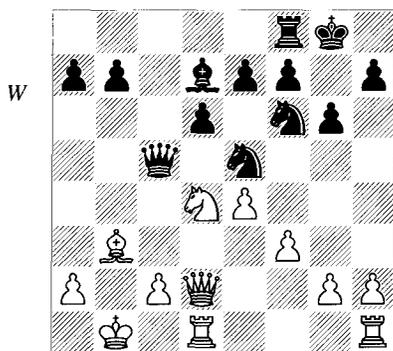
- a) 15 $\text{♟d2}!$? just speeds up White's demise: 15... ♞c8 16 ♞e3 (16 ♞e2 ♟b5 ! ♣) and now:
 - a1) 16... ♞eg4 17 ♞e1 (17 fxc4 ♞xc3 18 ♞xc3 ♞xe4 + →) 17... ♞xc3 + 18 ♟e2 ♞e3 19 ♞xc3 ♞xc3 20 ♞d3 (White can try 20 ♞dg1 e5 21 ♞b5 ♟xb5 + 22 ♟d2 ♞ed5 ♣ but this appears



comfortable for Black) 20... Bxd3 21 cxd3 Qxg2 and now Schneider gives 22 Bc1 e5! 23 Qc2 Qf4+ \mp , but 22 Bg1! is stronger: 22... Qf4+ 23 Qe3 e5 24 Qe2 and it is by no means clear that Black can speak of any advantage whatsoever.

a2) Steele-Dearing, Essex 1997 concluded 16... Qc5 17 Bhe1 a5 18 Qe2 Qa3! (avoiding the queen exchange and, at the same time, precluding the creation of a flight-square on a2 for the light-squared bishop in the event of an attack by the black a5-pawn) 19 Qg5 a4 20 Qd5 Qxd5 21 exd5 Qc4+ 22 Qd3 Qf5+ 0-1. This appears even stronger, although White's play could of course be improved.

b) 15 Qb1?! Qxc3! 16 Qd2 Qc5 (D). As we saw in the introduction, structurally Black could consider simply exchanging queens here and going into an ending where his superior pawn-structure would offer him strong positional compensation for the exchange. However, in this particular position White has not even initiated his kingside attack, and consequently Black is entirely justified in avoiding the exchange and instead going after the white king.



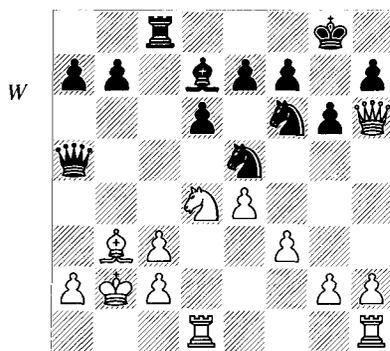
b1) 17 c3 a5! threatens ...a4, with a view to diverting the light-squared bishop from the

a2-g8 diagonal and securing c4 as an outpost for the powerful black knight. Thereafter the dark squares surrounding the white king will appear chronically weak. 18 Bc1 a4 19 Qd1 (19 Qc2 Qc4 20 Qe2 Qb6+ 21 Qb3 Bc8 -+ ; 19 Qd5 e6 20 Qxb7 Bb8 -+) 19... Qc4 20 Qe2 Qa3+ 21 Qb2 Bc8 \mp Avgousti-Izquierdo, Lucerne OL 1982. The black pieces dominate the board – indeed White is close to paralysed: Black can gradually expand on the queenside with ...b5-b4, break in the centre with ...e5 and ...d5 (thereby bringing the f6-knight into the fray), or even increase the pressure on the dark squares to terminal capacity via the manoeuvre ... Qc4+ , Qa1 Qa3 , when the pressure on c1, c3 and b2 should prove more than enough to decide the game in Black's favour.

b2) 17 Bhe1 Bc8 18 f4 Qc4 19 Qxc4 Qxc4 20 Qd3 Qc5 also looks rather good for Black; e.g., 21 Bd2? (21 Qa1 tucking the king aside is almost certainly a more prudent course, but even here White must exercise serious caution: 21...b5 22 e5 Qd5 23 exd6? Qc3 24 Qb3 Qa3 \mp) 21... Qb4+ 22 Qb3 a5 23 e5 Qf5 24 Qd4 Bc4 -+ .

b3) 17 Qe2 was the more cautious continuation of Sun Chuyao-Wei Chengpeng, China 2001, where Black played 17...a5, but I would consider it more astute to bring the remaining rook into the battle with 17... Bc8 before setting off after the b3-bishop: 18 Qd4 Qa5 19 f4 Qc6 20 Qe3 Qb4 21 Qc3 (21 e5?! dxe5 22 fxe5 Qg4 \mp) 21... Qa5 and now 22 Qd5 Qxd5 23 Bxd5 Qc4 24 Qd3 Qa3+ 25 Qa1 Bc3 26 Qd2 (26 Qd4? Qxb3!) 26... Qc4 27 Qd4 Qc6 28 Bg5 Qxe4! looks very good for Black indeed. Note that 29 Qxe4? loses immediately to 29... Bxb3! once again.

15... Bc8 (D)



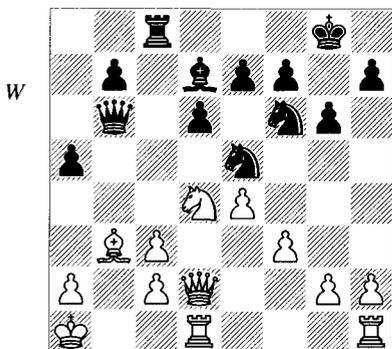
16 ♖d2

16 ♖e3 meets with similar treatment to that applied by Black in the main line: 16...♗b6! 17 ♖a1 ♗c5 18 ♜b1 (18 h4 a5 19 h5 a4 20 hxg6!? axb3! ♠) 18...a5 19 ♔d5?! (it seems White is eager to jump before he is pushed...) 19...♗xd5?! (one might presume that the thematic 19...b5! should constitute a considerable improvement; for example, after 20 f4 ♗eg4 21 ♗e1 both 21...♗xd5 and 21...b4!? look good for Black) 20 exd5 ♜c7 and now instead of 21 ♜he1 ♗xd5 22 f4 ♗c6 ♠ Alcaraz Lopez-Lozano, Buenos Aires 1976, 21 ♜hd1! ♗xd5 22 f4 ♗c5 23 fxe5 dxe5 looks better for White.

It should also be noted that 16 ♗e2?! once again runs into 16...♔b5! and after 17 ♗d4 ♗xc3+ 18 ♖b1 ♗c4 19 ♔xc4 ♜xc4 20 ♗d2 ♗a3 Black maintains a comfortable initiative, Pliaskina-Alagulian, Moscow 1997.

16...♗b6

In light of the difficulties that Black has been encountering following 18 f4! in the main line of this variation, I would suggest that 16...♗c5!? may prove a more accurate approach for Black. By placing the queen on c5, Black ties both the white king and queen to the defence of the c3-pawn, clears the path for ...a5-a4, as in the main line, yet at the same time preserves a degree of control over the e5-square, thereby discouraging plans with f4 and e5.

17 ♖a1 a5 (D)**18 f4!**

Alternatives:

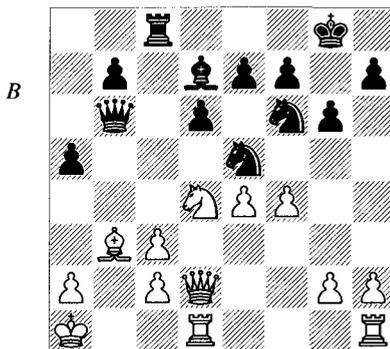
a) 18 a3 ♗c5 19 ♖b2 a4 20 ♔a2 has occurred in practice before, and now one would submit that Black's accurate plan is to arrange an exchange of light-squared bishops by means of 20...♔b5! followed by ...♔c4, after which

the c4-square will come to constitute a devastating outpost within the white camp.

b) 18 ♔d5?! only helps Black to gain control of the c4-square. 18...♗xd5 19 exd5 ♗c4 20 ♗c1 e5! 21 dxe6 fxe6 22 h4?! e5 23 ♗e2 ♗f2 24 ♜de1 ♗e3 25 ♗d2 ♔f5 ♠ Toth-Angantysson, Siegen OL 1970.

c) 18 ♜b1 ♗c5 19 ♗e2 and now Al Subaihi-Vescovi, Moscow OL 1994 continued 19...b5 20 ♗d4 ♗c7 21 a3 ♗c6 22 ♗d2 a4 23 ♔a2 ♗a5, when Black was in good shape. However, one wonders whether Black could immediately throw a cat in amongst the pigeons with 19...♗f2!?. A couple of sample variations: if 20 ♜hg1 then 20...b5 21 ♗d4 ♗xe2 22 ♜be1 ♗xf3! 23 ♜xe2 ♗xd4 24 cxd4 ♔g4 when 25 ♜e3 a4 26 e5 ♗d7 27 e6 (27 exd6 axb3 28 dxe7 ♗f6 29 axb3 ♔e6 ♠) 27...♗f6 28 exf7+ ♖f8 29 ♔e6 ♔xe6 30 ♜xe6 ♜xc2 31 ♜ge1 ♗d5 is good for Black, while 25 ♜f2 ♗xe4 26 ♜xf7 a4 27 ♜xe7+ axb3 28 ♜xe4 bxc2 29 ♜c1 ♔f5 is highly unclear, although notably Fritz considers this position good for Black. Alternatively it should be noted that 20 f4 runs into 20...♗xe4 21 ♗e1 ♗g4 22 ♔d5 ♗e3 23 ♔xb7 ♜c7 24 ♔xe4 ♗xe4 ♠.

We now return to 18 f4! (D):

**18...♗eg4!?**

This seems an unfortunate necessity. It is perhaps appropriate to pause at this point and consider the positioning of the black knights. Had White already committed himself to h4, the black knights would constitute a formidable blockading force on the kingside. However, in the current position White retains the potential to play h3, forcing the g4-knight to h6, and then to follow up with g4, threatening to fork the knights on f6 and h6 and providing an

unwelcome impetus for evasive action. Instead 18...♟c4 meets with 19 ♖d3 ♜c5 20 ♜xc4 ♜xc4 21 ♙xc4 ♞xc4 22 ♞he1 when White threatens e5, breaking open the centre and Black is left struggling to demonstrate sufficient compensation: 22...♙c6!? 23 ♟xc6 bxc6 24 ♞d4 ♞xc3 25 ♟b2 ♞c5 26 c4 ±.

19 ♞he1

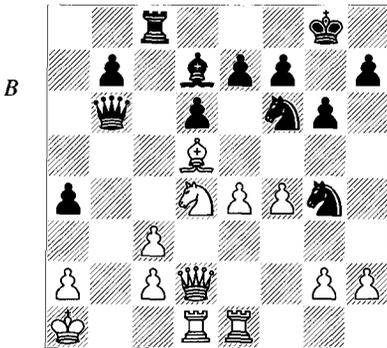
19 h3? ♟xe4 ♣.

19...a4

If 19...e5 then 20 ♟f3 a4 21 fx5 dx5 22 ♙d5 ±.

20 ♙d5 (D)

Superficially 20 ♙xf7+ looks very strong. However, 20...♟xf7 21 e5 ♟d5 22 e6+ ♙xe6 23 ♞xe6 ♜c5! 24 ♞de1 ♜xc3+ 25 ♜xc3 ♞xc3 leaves the white pieces in a tangle.



20...e6

20...♜c5 does not seem to solve Black's problems either. For example, 21 h3 ♟xd5 22 exd5 ♟f6 23 ♞xe7 ♟f8 24 ♞de1 ♜xc3+ 25 ♜xc3 ♞xc3 26 g4 sees Black an exchange down, struggling to defend his own forces, and slowly being suffocated on the kingside.

21 ♞b1 ♜a7

21...♜c7 is no better: 22 ♞xb7 ♜xc3+? 23 ♜xc3 ♞xc3 24 ♟b2 ♞c5? 25 ♞xd7! and White wins.

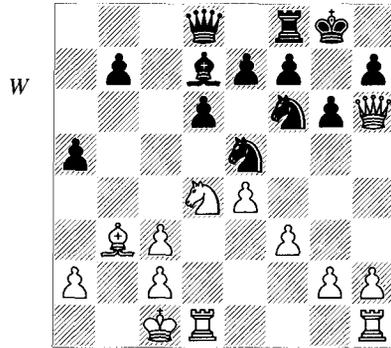
22 ♙xb7 ♞c7 23 e5 ♞xb7 24 exf6 ♟xf6 25 ♟f3 ♞xb1+ 26 ♞xb1 ♜c7 27 ♜d4 ♟e4 28 c4 ♙c6 29 ♜b6 ♜e7 30 ♜xc6 ♜f6+ 31 ♟e5

+- Kekov-Kniazev, Saratov 1999.

A2)

14...a5!? (D)

In light of the problems that Black has been experiencing in the main line, I would like to



offer Korchnoi's move, 14...a5, as a sound alternative. Black immediately threatens 15...a4, harassing the light-squared bishop. White has two methods of meeting this threat:

A21: 15 a3 26

A22: 15 a4 26

A21)

15 a3 a4 16 ♙a2 ♜a5 17 ♜e3

17 ♜d2 is also possible, when Gufeld analyses 17...♞c8 18 ♟b2 ♜b6+ 19 ♟a1 ♜a5 20 ♟b2 as leading to a draw, although clearly either side could resolve to play for more.

17...♞c8

Now:

a) Gelemerov-Nesis, corr. 1991 saw White blunder immediately with 18 ♟d2? ♟eg4!! 19 ♜e1 (19 fxg4 ♞xc3! runs into 20 ♜e1 ♞xa3+ 21 ♟e2 ♙xg4+ 22 ♟f2 ♜e5 -+) 19...♜xc3+ 20 ♟e2 ♜xa3 21 ♞a1 ♜e3+ -+.

b) 18 c4 ♟xc4 19 ♙xc4 ♞xc4 20 ♞d3 and now instead of the cautious 20...♜c5 (Meijers-Stillger, Goch 1997), Black does best to get things rolling immediately with 20...b5!. For example, 21 ♞hd1 b4 22 g4 bxa3 23 ♞xa3 ♜c5 looks at least slightly better for Black: although White remains the exchange for a pawn up, his structure is littered with weaknesses and his forces coordinate poorly.

A22)

15 a4 ♜c7

Now:

a) 16 ♟d2?! ♞c8 17 ♟e2 (17 ♟e2 b5! 18 ♞a1 bxa4 19 ♙xa4, Okike-Johnston, British League (4NCL) 1998/9, and now Black can simply play 19...♟c4+ 20 ♟e1 ♙xa4 21 ♞xa4

♖b6 ♜ 17...♙xa4 18 ♜he1 ♙d7 19 ♖f1 a4 20 ♙a2 ♜xc3 ♜ Maalla-Prevot, Cappelle la Grande 1995, although White later held the draw.

b) 16 ♖e3 ♖c5 and then:

b1) 17 ♖d2 ♙xa4 18 ♜a1 and now as well as 18...♙xb3 (Geller-Korchnoi, Moscow Ct (2) 1971), Geller proposes 18...♙e8, thereby facilitating the manoeuvre ...♙d7-b6 which, if achieved, will grant Black a dominating initiative on the queenside. Alternatively Jandovsky-Turner, Klatovy 1996 continued 18...♙d7 19 h3?! a4 20 f4 axb3 21 fxe5 and now 21...b2! 22 ♜ab1 dxe5 23 ♙f3 ♖b5 would have yielded Black a decisive advantage.

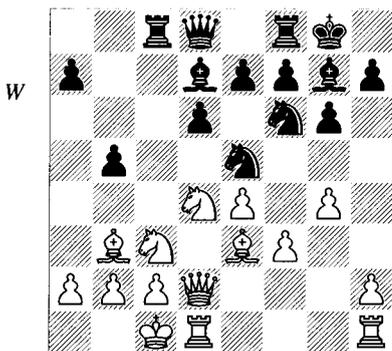
b2) 17 ♜he1 is no better: 17...♙xa4 18 f4 (18 ♙xa4?? meets with 18...♙c4 followed by 19...♖a3+ and ...♖b2#) 18...♖a3+ 19 ♖d2 ♙eg4 20 ♖g3 e5! 21 ♙xa4 ♖xa4 22 ♙f3 d5 23 fxe5 ♙xe4+ 24 ♜xe4 dxe4 and in Ziska-Jakobsen, Århus 1988, White decided he had suffered enough.

B)

12 g4?!

With this move White seeks to preclude Black utilizing the defensive pawn advance to h5, while at the same time advancing his own attack on the kingside. Unfortunately, White simply lacks the time to justify such indulgence.

12...b5 (D)



Now White has two options:

- B1:** 13 h4 27
B2: 13 g5 29

A word on alternatives:

a) 13 ♙cxb5? leaves Black clearly better after 13...♙xf3! 14 ♙xf3 ♙xb5 ♜.

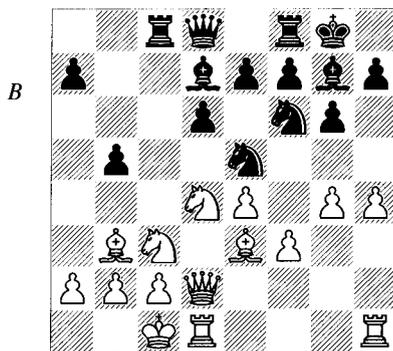
b) 13 a3!? is rather uncommon and unnecessarily weakens the queenside. 13...a5 and now:

b1) If 14 g5 then rather than the established 14...♙h5 given by Mayer, simply 14...b4!? appears promising and logical: 15 ♙ce2 ♙h5 16 axb4 axb4 17 ♖xb4?! (17 ♙g3?! ♖a5 ♜ is already close to losing for White) 17...♜a8 18 ♖b1 ♜a6 gives Black powerful compensation on the queenside. Similarly, 15 axb4 axb4 16 ♙a2 ♙h5 17 ♙xb4 ♖a5 offers Black powerful compensation in the form of greater mobilization and attacking chances.

b2) 14 h4?! fails to acknowledge that, having already played g4 and weakened the queenside with a3, with best play White's position will never be able to sustain a successful kingside attack. 14...b4 15 axb4 axb4 16 ♙a2 (16 ♙b1 ♖a5 17 h5 ♙c4 18 ♙xc4 ♜xc4 19 hxg6 fxg6 20 g5 ♙h5 21 ♙b3 ♖a6 ♜; White's attack is going nowhere, but Black plans ...♜fc8 combined with moves such as ...♙e6/a4, and ...♖a2/a4, when White's queenside appears chronically weak) 16...♜a8 17 ♖xb4 ♜a5! 18 h5 ♖a8 19 hxg6 hxg6 20 g5 ♜b8 21 ♖e1 ♙xe4! 22 fxe4 ♜xa2 23 ♙xa2 ♖xa2 24 b3 ♜c8! +-.

B1)

13 h4 (D)



13...a5!?

When faced with this variation in practice, 13...b4! has been my own preference. White has a number of options, none of which should appeal to the sane mind:

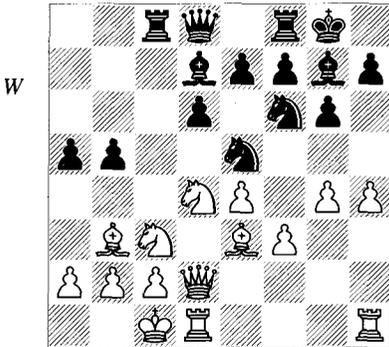
a) 14 ♙ce2 has been a rare guest in tournament play; Black has a number of attractive options. For example, 14...a5 15 ♙h6 a4 ♜ 16 ♙d5 and now 16...♙xh6!? 17 ♖xh6 e6! 18

♙b7 ♚b8 19 ♙a6 ♚b6 20 ♙d3 ♜xd3+ 21 ♚xd3 e5 traps the white knight in the middle of the board.

b) 14 ♜b1 a5 15 a3 (Mayer points out that 15 h5 runs into the simple 15...a4 16 hxg6 axb3, when Black should emerge from the attack unscathed and with an extra bishop to his credit) 15...bxa3 16 ♜xa3 ♚b6 17 ♙a2 ♚b7 18 ♚g2 ♚b8 19 c3 ♚fc8 ♠ Mortensen-I.Karlsson, Esbjerg 1984.

c) 14 ♜d5 is perhaps White's best, and certainly the most popular in practice. 14...♜xd5 15 ♙xd5 e6 16 ♙b3 a5 17 ♙g5 (17 a3?! a4 18 ♚xb4 axb3 19 ♚xb3 ♜c4 -+; 17 h5 at least constitutes the principled approach, even though it is far too slow to prove a threat to the black king: 17...a4! 18 hxg6 axb3 19 gxh7+ ♜h8 20 axb3 ♚a5 and Black wins) 17...♚c7 18 h5 was the continuation of Z.Hernandez-Nejansky, Bento Goncalves 2000, which notably White won. However, instead of the slow 18...♚c5, as played in the game, simply 18...a4! immediately should prove strong for Black.

We now return to 13...a5!? (D):



14 h5

Other options are not better:

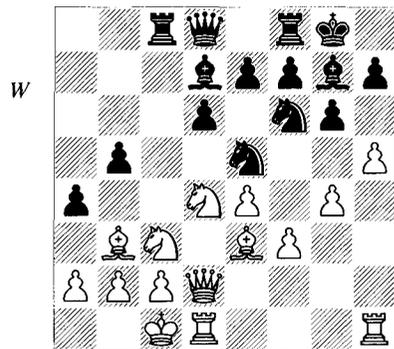
a) 14 g5 ♜h5!? (an immediate 14...b4! may be even stronger) 15 f4 b4 16 ♜a4 ♙xa4 (Black displaces White's light-squared bishop and thereby gains control of the vital c4-square and, equally importantly, acquires White's dark-squared bishop via a knight fork) 17 ♙xa4 ♜c4 18 ♚d3 ♜xe3 19 ♚xe3 ♚b6 20 ♚d2 ♚c4 ♠ Ortiz Fernandez-Martinez Martin, Mondariz Balneario 2000.

b) 14 a3 b4 15 axb4 (15 ♜a4 bxa3 16 bxa3 ♙xa4 17 ♙xa4 ♜c4 18 ♚d3, Brudnova-Cedikova, Svetla 1994, and now 18...♚b6! is much

better for Black) 15...axb4 16 ♜b1 ♜c4 17 ♙xc4 ♚xc4 18 b3 ♚c7 19 h5 ♚c8 20 ♚h2 e5 21 ♜f5 ♙xf5 22 exf5 ♚a8 23 g5 ♜xh5 24 f6 ♚fc8 25 ♚xb4 and now instead of 25...♚xf3 26 ♙b6, which allows White to complicate matters, simply 25...♙f8! cements Black's advantage.

c) 14 a4?! immediately forfeits command of the position to Black: 14...bxa4 15 ♜xa4 ♙xa4 16 ♙xa4 ♜c4 17 ♚d3 ♚b6 18 b3 ♜xe3 19 ♚xe3 ♚c5 20 ♚d3 ♜xg4 21 fxg4 ♙xd4 -+ Borkowski-Riemersma, Porabka 1987. Note that 22 ♚xd4?? loses immediately to 22...♚xc2#.

14...a4 (D)



15 ♙d5

As Mikhalevski points out, the intermediate 15 hxg6 fails to 15...axb3!:

a) 16 gxh7+ has been played, but has only the merit of being marginally superior to the alternative examined below. Edvardsen-Lauridsen, Bergen 2001 continued 16...♜h8 17 axb3 ♚a5 18 ♙h6 ♙xh6 19 ♚xh6 b4 20 ♜b1 ♚c5 21 ♚d2 (21 g5 ♜xe4 22 fxe4 ♜g4 23 ♚h3 ♚xg5+ 24 ♜d2 ♚a8 -+) and now 21...♜xf3 22 ♜xf3 ♜xe4 is clearly better for Black.

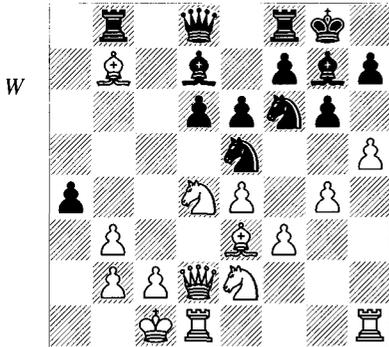
b) Practical play has also seen 16 g5 tried in this position, but now everything looks good for Black! 16...fxg6! (this is Mikhalevski's preference, but 16...♜e8 17 gxf7+ ♚xf7 18 ♚h2 ♚xc3 19 ♚xh7+ ♜f8 20 g6 ♚xe3 proved decisive in Vasquez-Duban, Badalona 2000, and even the immediate 16...bxa2!? appears very strong for Black) 17 gxf6 bxa2! 18 ♜xa2 ♙xf6 ♠.

15...b4 16 ♜ce2 e6!?

Mikhalevski, annotating for *ChessBase Magazine*, gives the line 16...♜xd5!? 17 exd5 b3 18 axb3 axb3 "with a dangerous attack". I would second that opinion – indeed White already

appears in desperate trouble, and I personally consider this position to be clearly better for Black.

17 ♖b7 b3! 18 axb3 ♜b8 (D)



19 hxg6?!

Mikhalevski suggests that 19 ♖a6 offers White more hope. After 19...axb3 he provides the following variations:

a) 20 hxg6 fxg6 21 ♜xb3 ♜xf3 22 ♜xd6 ♜xg4 23 ♖a7 ♜f6 24 ♜ed4 (24 e5 runs into the spectacular 24...♜gxe5!! 25 ♖xb8 ♜c4! 26 ♜xf8+ ♜xf8 27 c3 ♖b5! 28 ♖xb5 ♜g5+ ♚) 24...♜bd8 25 ♖b6, which he assesses as unclear. Unclear is certainly a valid assessment, but even here it seems that Black's resources are superior. 25...♜f2 26 ♖xd8 (26 ♜hf1 ♖b5! 27 ♜xe6+ ♜xe6 28 ♜xe6 ♜xd1+ 29 ♜xd1 ♖h6+ 30 ♜b1 ♜xd1 31 ♖xb5 ♜b8 ♚) 26...♜xd8 27 e5 ♜xe5 28 ♜df1 ♜eg4 29 ♖c4 ♜h8 30 ♜hg1 ♜e3 ♚.

b) 20 ♜xb3 ♜xf3 21 ♜xd6 ♜xg4 22 ♖a7 ♜f6 23 e5?! (23 ♜c3 ♜bd8 24 ♖b6 appears to be a better try, when the position remains highly unclear) 23...♜gxe5! ♚. Black threatens the decisive 24...♜d3+, unleashing a mate threat from the queen and the Dragon bishop on the long dark diagonal.

19...fxg6 20 g5?!

Again 20 ♖a6 offered more hope of salvation.

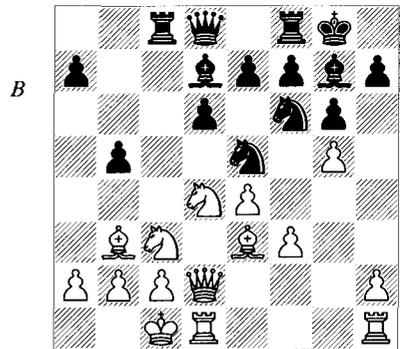
20...♜h5 21 f4 ♜xb7 22 fxg5 ♖xe5 23 bxa4 ♖xa4 24 ♜c3 ♖d7 25 ♜b3

Now instead of 25...♜a8?!, as played in the game Helving-V.Mikhalevski, Ramat-Aviv 1999, Mikhalevski provides the following analysis: 25...♜g3?! 26 ♜he1! (26 ♜h4 ♜f1 27 ♜d3 ♜xe3 28 ♜xe3 ♜f3!) 26...♜xc3 (26...♜b4! appears even stronger than Mikhalevski's main

line, the threat being simply to capture on e4 immediately) 27 ♜xc3 ♜xe4 28 ♜c4! ♜c7! 29 ♜xc7 (29 ♜xe4 ♜xb3) 29...♜xc7 30 ♜d4! d5!? 31 ♜d2 ♜d6! 32 ♖f4 ♜f5 ♚.

B2)

13 g5 (D)



13...b4?!

Although this rare move had been played before, an insight into its true worth was only really brought to light by Steve Mayer's seminal work, *The Soltis Variation of the Yugoslav Attack*, which was actually the book which inspired much of my passion for the main-line Dragon. 13...♜h5 is the traditional main line in this position. I have resolved not to allocate time and space to the analysis of this line for two reasons: firstly, I consider 13...♜h5 inferior to 13...b4 and therefore superfluous to the purposes of this text; and secondly, it has already been analysed extensively by a number of highly competent authors and I therefore have less by way of original analysis to contribute. However, in the event that problems with the analysis presented here do arise post-publication, I would like to refer the reader to the game Short-Topalov, Linares 1995, which was analysed extensively by Topalov (*Informator*) and by Bönsch (*ChessBase Magazine*).

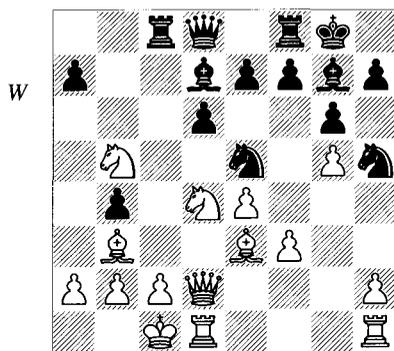
14 ♜ce2

The first point to note about 13...b4 is that 14 gxf6? loses immediately to 14...bxc3 -+. Other alternatives:

a) 14 ♜d5?! ♜xd5 15 ♖xd5 e6 16 ♖b3 a5 ♚.

b) 14 ♜b1 ♜h5 15 ♜xb4 a5 followed by 16...a4 ♚ Mayer.

c) 14 ♖cb5 ♗h5 (D) and now:



c1) 15 f4 ♗c4 16 ♙xc4 ♜xc4 17 ♚d3 ♜c5 leaves the white knight on b5 in trouble. 18 a4 bxa3 19 ♗xa3 ♚b8 already looks very good for Black.

c2) 15 ♚xb4 is of course a possibility that must be checked, but I seriously doubt White has time to chase pawns on the queenside: 15... ♜b8 16 ♚a4 ♚e8 17 c4 ♚c8 18 ♗c2 a6 19 ♗a7 ♚b7 20 ♚a5 ♙e6 leaves White in enormous difficulties.

c3) 15 ♗xa7 ♜a8 16 ♗ab5 ♗xf3!? (Black has an interesting alternative in 16... ♚a5!?: after 17 ♚e2 ♜fb8 18 c4 bxc3 19 ♗xc3 ♙c8 20 ♗d5 ♚d8 Black is well poised for queenside action and can justifiably contemplate ... ♙a6, clamping down on the a6-f1 diagonal, with the intention of achieving an invasion on c4 or d3) 17 ♗xf3 ♙xb5 18 ♗d4 ♙a4 19 ♚xb4?! (realizing that his kingside attack has come to nothing, White goes pawn-grabbing on the queenside, but Black rapidly whips up dynamic compensation, suggesting that greater caution should have been exercised; 19 ♙d5!?: is better, with chances for both sides) 19... ♙xb3 20 ♚xb3 ♚d7 21 ♜hf1 ♜ab8!?: (21... ♚g4!, hitting the e4-pawn while the white queen remains tied to the protection of the a2-pawn, also looks very good) 22 ♚d3 ♙e5 (the point of this move evades me; perhaps Black wanted to free g7 so as to re-route the knight to queenside via g7 and e6; not a bad plan by any means, but in any case the immediate 22... ♜fc8 is perhaps more to the point) 23 ♗b3 ♚a4 24 a3 ♜fc8 25 ♗b1 ♜c4 26 ♙d4 (this lets the knight back in to the attack, but it is difficult to see what other constructive moves White has at his disposal) 26... ♗f4 27 ♚d2? (White cracks under the pressure; 27

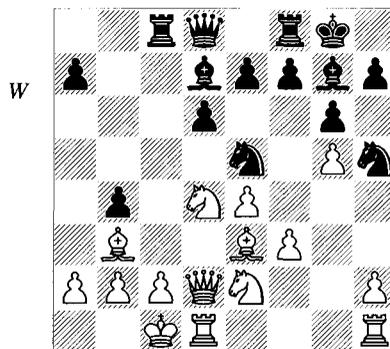
♚f3 is a better try) 27... ♜xd4!! 28 ♗xd4 ♚xa3 29 c4 ♙xd4 30 ♚xd4 ♗e2 (the rest is easy) 31 ♚d2 ♗c3+ 32 ♗c1 ♗a2+ 33 ♗b1 ♗c3+ 34 ♗c1 ♚a1+ 35 ♗c2 ♗xd1 36 ♜xd1 ♜xb2+ 37 ♗c3 ♚a3+ 0-1 Azadmanesh-Molinari, Dutch U-16 Ch (Leiden) 1999.

d) 14 ♗a4 and now there is an important divide:

d1) 14... ♗h5 is given by Mayer with the idea of 15 ♚xb4 a5?! (15... ♜b8 16 ♚a3 ♚a5 17 ♗c3 ♚xa3 18 bxa3 ♜fc8 seems to my mind a more prudent course; despite being a pawn down, Black's superior structure and coordination ensure that he is at least equal in this ending) 16 ♚b6? (this is rather compliant; more testing is 16 ♚e1, when 16... ♚e8? allows 17 ♗b6 ±) 16... ♚e8 ±.

d2) Instead I much prefer the dynamic idea 14... ♗xe4!?, when 15 fxe4 ♚a5 ± 16 a3 ♜b8!?: (16... ♙xa4 17 ♚xb4 ♚xb4 18 axb4 ♙xb3 19 ♗xb3 ♜c4 is also good for Black, but the text-move keeps the attack on a direct track to the white king!) 17 axb4 ♜xb4 18 c3 ♜xb3! 19 ♗xb3 ♚xa4 ± leaves White's position in ruins.

14... ♗h5 (D)



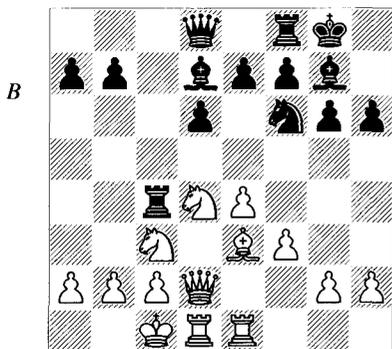
15 ♗g3

This is obviously the critical line. In annotating Short-Topalov, Linares 1995 for *ChessBase Magazine*, Bönsch gives 15 ♚xb4?! as clearly better for White and the reason that Topalov avoided 13...b4. However, this assessment is clearly incorrect: 15...a5! 16 ♚a3 (16 ♚d2? a4 17 ♙d5 e6 ± 18 f4?! exd5 19 fxe5 dxe5 20 ♗f3 d4 →) 16...a4! (spot the theme...) 17 ♙d5 (17 ♙xa4? ♗c4 →) 17...e6 (17... ♚c7!?: ±) 18 ♙b7 ♗c4 19 ♚c3 ♗xe3 20 ♚xe3 ♜b8 21 ♙a6 0-1 Vanek-Gschwendtner, Czech Cht 1987/8. 21... ♚b6 wins a piece.

This is the only move that has occurred in practice, and it is clear that Black needs an improvement! Alternatives:

a) 14...♗a5?! 15 ♖b3 ♗e5 16 f4 ♗e6 17 e5! ±.

b) 14...h6?! is rarely a move that one should play in the Yugoslav Attack, but the fact that White has moved his bishop twice in the opening (and now is compelled to move it a third time) may justify this slightly unorthodox approach. 15 ♙e3 (D) brings about exactly the same position as on move 13, except that now it is Black's move, but against this must be weighed the consideration that he has already committed himself to the potentially weakening pawn move, ...h6. Care must be exercised as chances are finely balanced:



b1) 15...♗c7 16 ♖db5 ♗a5 17 ♖a3 ♖cc8 18 ♖d5 ♗xd2+ 19 ♖xd2 ♖xd5 20 exd5 ± sees White well centralized for the ending while Black is still organizing his forces.

b2) 15...♗a5?! runs into 16 ♖b3, a move that White wishes to play in any case as preparation for a future e5 central pawn-break.

b3) The prophylactic 15...♗h7 has something to be said for it. Having committed himself to ...h6, Black will inevitably have to play this move at some point (e.g. if White plays ♖b3, removing the threat to the d4-knight and thereby renewing the threat to the h6-pawn), and, given that Black's position is in no immediate danger, taking time out to consolidate while White reveals his plans may later prove beneficial. Nevertheless 16 ♗d3 ♗c8 17 g4 ♙e6 18 h4 looks better for White.

b4) 15...♗b8! 16 ♖b3 ♗h7 17 ♙d4 ♙e6 18 ♖d5 ♙xd5 19 exd5 ♗c7 20 ♖e2 ♖c8 21 c3 b5 22 ♖de1 ♖e8 23 ♗b1 a5 gives rise to a situation

in which, although White has more space, Black has organized his forces well, so that progress in the centre and the kingside will be difficult for White to achieve; at the same time, Black has a clear plan of conducting counterplay against the queenside and the potentially weak d5-pawn. Objectively the position is perhaps equal, but in practice one would expect the chances to be with Black.

15 e5?!

The immediate 15 ♙xf6! looks much stronger. The queen is rarely well-placed on b6 in the Dragon, and this is especially the case where White has a knight on c3 and a bishop on d4/g5, threatening to capture the knight on f6 and then fork the bishop and queen. 15...♙xf6 (15...exf6 16 ♖d5 ♗a6 17 ♗b1 f5 18 c3 fxe4 19 ♖xe4 is also better for White) 16 ♖d5 ♗xd4 (16...♗a6 17 ♖xf6+ exf6 18 ♗b1 ±) 17 ♗xd4 ♙xd4 18 b3 ±.

15...dxe5 16 ♖b3 ♙e6 17 ♙e3 ♗c7 18 ♖b5 ♗c6 19 ♖a3 ♖h4

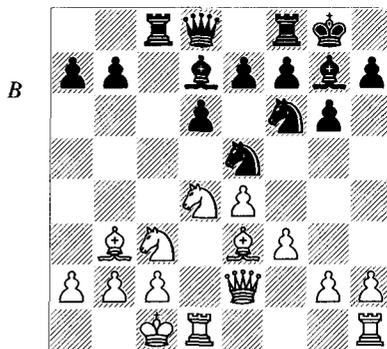
19...♖a4 is also better for Black.

20 ♖c5

Now instead of 20...♖d5?! as played in Nygren-R.Pert, Brattas Skole 2000, after which White gained a decisive advantage with the simple 21 ♖xe6 ♖xe3 22 ♖xg7 ±, Black can improve with the provocative 20...♙xa2!. Note that 21 b3 is refuted by the simple 21...b6! 22 ♖d7 ♙xb3, when White's position is in tatters.

E)

12 ♗e2?! (D)



Although surprisingly common in practical play, this move poses no real problems to Black. Indeed by moving the queen a second time,

White is effectively a tempo down on Line C at the end of the Introduction (page 22).

12...a6!?

Most works treat this as the main line, but 12...♞a5 is equally common:

a) 13 h3 a6 14 f4 and now instead of 14...♘c6 15 g4 b5 16 ♘xc6 ♙xc6 17 ♙d4 b4 18 ♘d5 ♙xd5 19 exd5 ♜c7 20 ♞e3 1/2-1/2 Ciemnyjewski-Bohnsack, Bargteheide 1988, 14...♜xc3! 15 fxe5 dxe5 16 bxc3 ♘xe4 looks as though it offers Black tremendous compensation. For example, 17 ♞e1 ♘xc3 18 ♘f3 ♞a3+ 19 ♘d2 e4 20 ♘d4 ♘xd1 21 ♞xd1 ♜d8 22 ♘e1 ♙b5 appears terrible for White.

b) 13 h4 h5 14 ♘d5 ♘xd5 15 ♙xd5 b5 16 ♘b1 ♘c4 ♢ Bednikova-Pina Sierra, Oropesa del Mar U-14 girls Wch 1999.

c) 13 g4 and now:

c1) 13...♜c7 is given an exclamation mark by Mayer, but I am not so sure about 14 g5!? when 14...♜xc3 meets with 15 gxf6 ♜xe3 16 ♞xe3 ♙xf6 17 f4 ± and 14...♘h5 or 14...♘e8 runs into 15 ♘d5 forking the c7-rook and the e7-pawn.

c2) Perhaps the immediate 13...♜xc3! is a good try in this position. 14 ♙d2 (14 bxc3 ♞xc3 15 ♘b1 ♜c8 offers Black good compensation for the exchange) 14...♘d3+ 15 ♞xd3 (15 ♘b1 ♘xb2 16 ♘xb2 ♘d5! ♢) 15...♜xd3 16 ♙xa5 ♜xd1+ 17 ♜xd1 =.

d) 13 f4 ♙g4 14 ♘f3 ♘xf3 15 gxf3 ♜xc3 16 fxf4 (16 bxc3 ♘xe4! -+) 16...♜xb3 ♢.

13 g4 (D)

Alternatives:

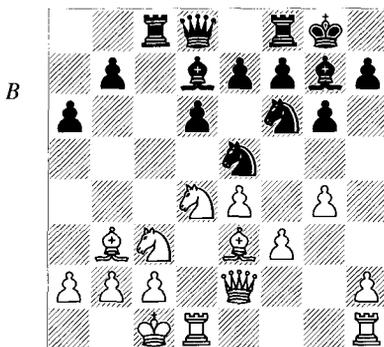
a) 13 h4 h5 14 g4 and now Mayer suggests that 14...♘fxg4! is Black's best option, with a likely transposition to positions reached below.

b) 13 f4 ♘eg4 14 h3 (14 ♙g1?! ♙h6! 15 g3 e5 ♢ Mayer) 14...♘xe3 15 ♞xe3 ♘h5 16 ♘de2 (1/2-1/2 J.Fridjonsson-Levy, Örebro 1966) gives rise to an unclear position with chances for both sides.

c) 13 h3 b5 14 f4 ♘c4 15 ♙xc4 ♜xc4 16 g4 ♜xc3 17 bxc3 ♘xe4 ♢ H.Bull-Svendsen, Gausdal 2000.

13...b5

Once again, I rather like Black's position after the immediate 13...♜xc3! 14 bxc3 ♞a5. Note that these structures offer Black much more when White has already committed himself to the weakening g4 pawn advance, which



in many instances rules out a freeing central pawn-roller with f4 and e5.

14 h4

Or:

a) 14 a3?! ♜xc3 15 bxc3 ♞a5 16 ♘b2 ♜c8 ♢.

b) 14 g5 ♘h5 and now:

b1) 15 ♘d5 e6! (immediately putting the question to the intrusive white beast) 16 ♘b6 (16 ♘c3 b4 17 ♘b1 a5) 16...♞xb6 17 ♘xe6 ♞b8 18 ♘xf8 ♜xf8 ♢.

b2) 15 ♜hg1 and now instead of 15...♘c4 as occurred in Murariu-D.Stein, Lahnstein 1999, Black might consider 15...b4 16 ♘d5 a5 17 f4 a4 18 fxe5 axb3.

14...♘fxg4 15 fxf4 ♙xg4 16 ♞g2 ♙xd1

Considered an error by Mayer, who instead follows the game Meiers-Geste, USSR 1983, which continued 16...h5 17 ♜hg1 (why not simply move the d1-rook?) 17...♜xc3 18 bxc3 ♞a5 19 ♘b1 ♘c4? (19...♙xd1! immediately is stronger, transposing to the main line) 20 ♙c1 ♙xd1 21 ♜xd1 ♞xc3. This position has been assessed as clearly better for Black. I am not so sure, but Black certainly has great compensation on the dark squares.

17 ♘xd1 h5

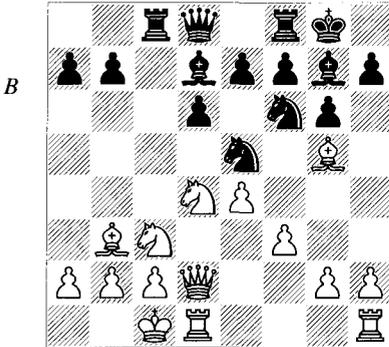
Now:

a) Strangely, Mayer gives 18 ♘f5? an exclamation mark; it in fact appears to be a blunder. 18...gxf5 19 ♞g5 (the immediate 19 ♜g1 is promptly corked by 19...♘g4 20 exf5 ♞d7 21 ♞e4 d5! 22 ♙xd5 ♜fd8 ♢) 19...e6 20 ♞xh5 f4 21 ♜g1 ♞f6 22 ♙d2 ♜c5 ♢ Veerman-Zult, Haarlem 1996.

b) Better is the patient 18 ♜g1!, when White really does threaten ♘f5. However, it is by no means clear that Black is any worse – indeed for once he is even material up!

2 12 ♖g5

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3
g6 6 ♙e3 ♙g7 7 f3 ♘c6 8 ♖d2 0-0 9 ♙c4 ♙d7
10 0-0-0 ♖c8 11 ♙b3 ♘e5 12 ♙g5!? (D)



This unusual move has proved surprisingly popular over the years and poses Black some original problems.

12...♘c4!

12...♖a5!? is Black's main alternative in this variation, but most authorities consider it inferior to the main line presented here, and in any case it is well documented in other works. White now has three main options, of which only the last is considered even satisfactory:

- A: 13 ♖e2?! 34
- B: 13 ♖d3?! 34
- C: 13 ♙xc4 35

It should also be noted that 13 ♖e1?! has seen some action in recent years, albeit without good cause. 13...b5 (13...♖a5?! falls into the familiar trap 14 ♙xf6! ♙xf6 15 ♘d5) 14 ♙xf6 and now instead of 14...exf6?! as in Caporalle-Figueiredo, Brazil 1999, simply 14...♙xf6 15 ♘d5 ♙g7 16 ♖h4 ♖c8 is slightly better for Black.

A)

13 ♖e2?! ♘xb2! 14 ♙xb2 ♖xc3 15 ♙xf6

15 ♙xc3?! ♖a5+ 16 ♙b2 ♖xg5 was at least slightly better for Black in Kuliabin-Boros, Budapest 1994.

15...♖xb3+ 16 axb3 ♙xf6 17 c3

Now Black has a choice of lines:

a) 17...♖b6 18 f4 and here 18...♖c5! was given as clearly better for Black by Miles & Moskow. Alternatively, Nunn-Mestel, Birmingham 1976 continued 18...e5 19 fxe5 ♙xe5 20 ♖d3 ♖c8 21 ♖hf1 ♙e6 22 ♖c1 ♙c4 23 ♖h3 ♖c7, at which point Attila Schneider regards Black as clearly better and in possession of "good attacking possibilities". This may be a little optimistic, but Black is certainly OK and may even be slightly better. Rather than wasting time as he does in the game, it seems more logical to set about creating threats on the queenside by an immediate advance of the a-pawn. 24 ♖fd1 ♖c5 25 ♖c2 ♙g7 26 ♖a1 ♖c7 27 ♖a4 a5 28 ♖e3 ♙g8 29 b4 ♖c5 30 ♙c1 axb4 31 ♖a8+ ♙g7 32 ♘f5+ ♙f6 33 ♖h6 ♙e6 and now Miles and Moskow give the improvement 34 ♘d4+! ♙xd4 35 cxd4 ♖a5 36 d5+ ♘d7 37 ♖xa5 ♖xa5 38 ♖h3+ ♙e7 39 ♖xc4 with a clear advantage for White.

b) 17...a5 18 f4 ♖c7 19 ♖he1 ♖c8 20 ♖e3 e5 21 fxe5 ♙xe5 and now 22 ♖d3 b5 23 ♖c1 ♖c5 24 ♘f3 ♙f4 25 ♖c2 ♙e6 26 ♘d4 ♙e5 27 ♘xe6 fxe6 28 ♖h3 ♙h8 29 ♖f1 b4 30 ♖f7 h5 31 ♖xe6 a4 32 ♖b7 ♖a8 33 ♖f7? bxc3+ 34 ♙b1 ♖g1+ 35 ♙a2 axb3+ 36 ♙xb3 ♖b1+ 37 ♙c4 ♖c8+ 38 ♙d5 ♖d1+ 39 ♙e6 ♖g4+ 40 ♙e7 was the course of Westerinen-Tarjan, Torremolinos 1974. As Mayer points out, Black is completely winning after 40...♖xe4 but unfortunately he lost on time.

B)

13 ♖d3?! b5 14 ♖he1 ♖e8!?

Black overprotects e7 and thereby enhances the black queen's mobility, which might otherwise be impeded by the threat of White capturing on f6 and following up with ♘d5. In such circumstances, if e7 is unprotected but for the f6-bishop, then Black is forced to surrender either his Dragon bishop or the e7-pawn. For

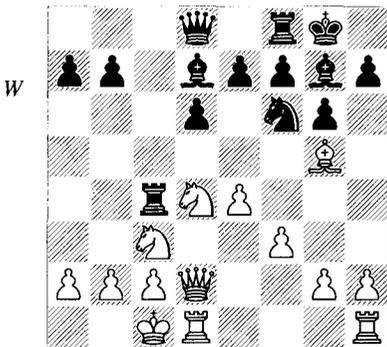
example, Schneider gives the careless move 14...♖a5?! as leading to a clear advantage to Black after 15 h3?! ♗c5 16 f4?! ♗fc8 17 ♖xc4? bxc4. Black certainly is better in this line (although, let's face it, White could not have been more helpful if he had been paid!), but Schneider seems to have entirely missed the point of Watson's move. That point is that 15 ♖xf6! ♖xf6 16 ♗d5 ♗c5 17 ♗xf6+ exf6 stops Black's attacking chances in their tracks and leaves White with a clear structural advantage.

15 f4 b4 16 ♗d5 ♗xd5 17 ♖xc4 ♗b6 18 ♖a6 ♗c5 19 ♖b3 ♖c7 20 ♖b1 e5 21 fxe5 dxe5 22 ♗f3 ♖a4 23 ♖xb4 ♖xc2+ 24 ♖a1 ♖xd1 25 ♗xd1

Black is clearly better, although subsequent inaccuracies saw the result swing in White's favour in Byrne-Watson, London 1991.

C)

13 ♖xc4 ♗xc4 (D)



Black now threatens a common tactic involving a discovered attack on the d4-knight: 14...♗xe4! 15 fxe4 ♗xd4 ♠. White now must choose between two options:

C1: 14 ♗b3!? 35

C2: 14 e5 35

14 ♖d3 ♗c5 15 h4 is a minor alternative that was tried in Koschinski-Thannheiser, Germany tt 1991, but Black should now have played 15...h5! holding up White's progress on the kingside. In light of the fact that White has already conceded his light-squared bishop and misplaced his queen on d3, I would be surprised if Black had anything to fear in this position.

C1)

14 ♗b3!?

With this move White regroups his pieces, avoids any tactics involving the loose d4-knight and clears the d-file, threatening 15 e5 dxe5? 16 ♖xf6 ♖xf6 17 ♖xd7.

14...♖e6 15 e5 ♗e8

Now:

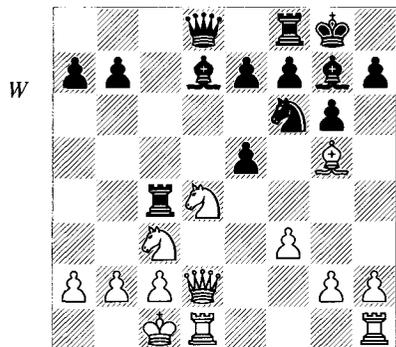
a) 16 ♗he1 ♖c7 17 ♗b5 ♖b6 18 ♗a3 ♗c7 19 ♖e3 ♖a6! 20 exd6 ♗xd6 21 ♗c5 ♗xc5 22 ♖xc5 ♗c4 23 ♗xc4 ♖xc4 24 ♖b4 and now 24...♖xa2 is given by Attila Schneider and I.Farago as unclear, but after 25 ♖a3 Black will struggle to prove compensation. Far better is 24...♖h6+!, as noted by G.Kosanović, after which Black once again holds the advantage.

b) 16 exd6 ♗xd6 17 ♗b5 (17 ♖e7 ♖xe7 18 ♖xd6 ♖f6 is some old analysis by Attila Schneider and I.Farago; Black's activity provides dynamic compensation; for example: 19 ♗he1 ♗xc3! 20 bxc3 ♖xc3 ♠) 17...♖b6 18 ♗xd6 exd6 is given as clearly better for Black by Mikhail Golubev. Povah-Watson, London 1979 continued 19 ♖e3 ♖a6 20 ♖b1 ♖f5 21 ♗d4 ♖xd4 22 ♖xd4 ♖xc2+ 23 ♖xc2 ♗xc2 24 ♖xc2 ♖xa2 25 ♖c3 b5 26 ♗xd6 b4 27 ♖d4 ♗c8+ 28 ♖d2 ♖c4 29 ♗a1 ♖c2+ 30 ♖e3 ♗e8+ 31 ♖f4 ♖c7 32 ♗a6 ♖c1+ 33 ♖g3 ♖g5+ 34 ♖h3 ♗e2 35 ♗ac6 ♖xg2+ 36 ♖h4 ♖xh2+ 37 ♖g5 ♖g3+ 0-1.

C2)

14 e5 dxe5 (D)

14...♗e8 is an alternative that has received some attention in recent years, but most analysts now concur that the line 15 ♗d5! f6 16 exf6 offers White better chances.



The main line now divides:

C21: 15 ♖b3 36

C22: 15 ♖de2 37

15 ♖db5 is an inferior option which is well met by 15...♗b6, when the threat to the b5-knight ensures that Black has everything in order; for example, 16 ♙xf6 ♙xb5 17 ♖d5 ♗e6 18 ♖xc7+ ♖h8 19 ♙xg7+ ♖xg7 with a slight advantage for Black.

C21)

15 ♖b3 ♗c7 16 ♖b5

This is regarded as the main line of this subvariation. 16 ♙xf6 is the alternative. Then:

a) 16...♙xf6!? has not been given by any sources, but it is worth noting that by recapturing with the bishop Black has a tactic that avoids the need to sacrifice the exchange. Thus 17 ♖b5 can be met by the cool 17...e6! when 18 ♖xc7? loses to 18...♙g5, winning the white queen.

b) 16...exf6 17 ♖b5 ♙f5 18 ♖xc7 ♗xc7 19 ♖b1 ♗c8 20 ♖a1 ♙e6 21 ♗he1 f5 22 ♗d6 ♗c4 23 ♗d3 ♗a4 24 ♗d2 h6 25 h3 ♗c6 26 ♖b1 ♗b4 27 g4 e4 28 fxe4 fxc4 29 hxc4 ♙e5 30 ♗d8+ ♖g7 31 ♗a5 ♗xa5 32 ♖xa5 ♗b6 33 ♖b3 ♙xc4 34 c3 h5 35 ♖c2 h4 36 ♖d3 h3 37 ♖d4 h2 38 ♗h1 ♙f4 39 ♗g2 ♙h3 40 ♗f2 ♙g3 41 ♗fxh2 1/2-1/2 Niedermaier-Schmidt, Bavaria 1986.

After the text-move (16 ♖b5), Black must elect between the daring 16...♙f5, and the safe 16...♗c8. Objectively the latter is probably superior, but the former offers more winning chances.

C211: 16...♙f5!? 36

C212: 16...♗c8! 36

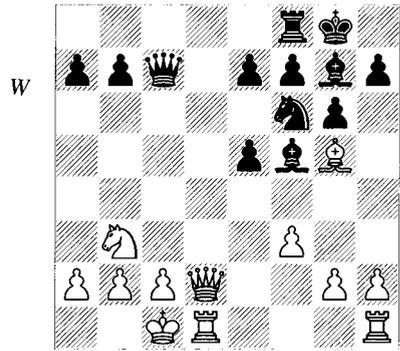
C211)

16...♙f5! 17 ♖xc7 ♗xc7 (D)

Now White has tried various possibilities. Some examples:

a) 18 ♖b1 ♗c8 19 ♖a1 and now:

a1) 19...♙e6 20 h4 (20 ♙h6 has been ventured in recent practice, but surprisingly nobody has responded with the obvious 20...♙xh6! 21 ♗xh6 ♗xc2 ♖) 20...h5 (20...♖d5!? brought Black rapid success in its sole outing: 21 h5 f6 22 ♙h4 ♗c4 23 hxc6 hxc6 24 ♙e1 f5 25 ♗h4



e4 26 fxe4 fxe4 27 c3 ♗a4 28 ♖d4 ♖xc3 29 bxc3 ♗xc3 30 ♗e2 ♗c2 0-1 Sareen-Konguvel, Calcutta 1999) 21 c3 a5 22 ♖c1 a4 23 a3 ♖d5 24 ♙e3 ♖h7 25 g4 ♖xe3 26 ♗xe3 hxc4 27 h5 g5 28 h6 ♙f6 29 ♗e4+ ♖h8 30 fxc4 ♗c4 31 ♗he1 b5 32 ♗b7 ♙xc4 33 ♗e4 ♗e6 34 ♗f1 ♗c4 35 ♗xc4 bxc4 36 ♗a8+ ♖h7 37 ♗e4+ ♖xh6 38 ♖e2 ♙xe2 39 ♗xe2 e4 40 ♗h2+ ♖g7 41 ♗h1 ♗c8 42 ♗h7+ ♖f8 43 ♗xe4 e6 44 ♗f1 ♖g7 45 ♗h1 ♖f8 1/2-1/2 Sion Castro-Romero, Leon 1989.

a2) 19...♖e8!. I must confess a certain fondness for this move. Black does not waste time advancing on the queenside or reorganizing his bishops, but instead rapidly manoeuvres the knight to c4 via d6, opening up the h8-a1 and h7-b1 diagonals for his bishops and attacking the queenside with pieces rather than pawns. 20 c3 ♖d6 21 ♗f2 ♖c4 22 ♗d5 b6 23 ♗hd1 a5 24 g4 ♙e6 25 ♗d3 h6 26 ♙c1 a4 27 ♖d2 ♖xd2 28 ♗xd2 ♗c4 29 ♗d8+ ♗xd8 30 ♗xd8+ ♖h7 31 b3 axb3 32 ♙b2 e4 33 fxe4 ♗a4 34 a3 ♙xc3 35 ♗xe7 ♙xb2+ 36 ♖xb2 ♗xe4 0-1 Kamber-Prszak, Prague 1991.

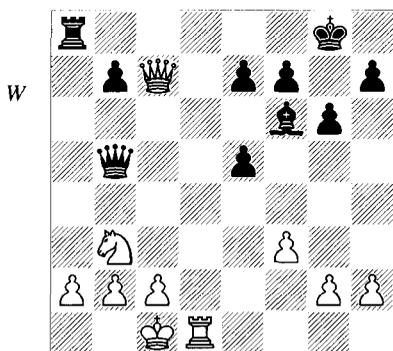
b) 18 g4 ♙e6 19 ♗he1 (19 ♙xf6 exf6 20 ♖b1 and now instead of the hasty 20...e4, as played in A.Horvath-Aronian, Bratislava U-12 Wch 1993, the more reserved 20...f5 preserves the balance; if instead White tries 19 h4, then 19...e4!/? shatters his kingside pawn-chain and guarantees Black active counterplay) 19...♗c8 20 ♖b1 ♖d5 21 ♗e2 ♖b6 22 ♙h6 ♖c4 23 ♗c1 ♙h8! ♖ leaves White a pawn down in a position where an advantageous course of progress is by no means obvious.

C212)

16...♗c8!

This is the main line and is widely regarded as guaranteeing Black at least equality.

17 ♖xa7 ♖a8 18 ♖xf6 ♖xf6 19 ♖xd7 ♖b6
20 ♖b5 ♖fd8 21 ♖c7 ♖xd1+ 22 ♖xd1 ♖xb5
(D)



This position has been reached several times in practice, and hitherto there has been no evidence to contradict the widely held opinion that Black is doing well. Some practical examples:

a) 23 ♖b1 ♖e2 24 ♖d7 e4 25 ♖c1 ♖xg2 26 ♖xb7 ♖a4 27 b3 ♖xf3 28 ♖d3 (28 bxa4?? runs into 28...♖c3 -+) 28...♖xa2 29 ♖xa2 ♖f1 30 ♖d8+ ♖g7 31 ♖c8 ♖xc1 32 ♖g8+ ♖h6 33 ♖h3+ ♖g5 34 ♖g2+ ♖h5 35 ♖h3+ ♖h4 36 ♖c8 ♖f4 37 ♖c3 ♖f5 38 ♖g2 ♖a5+ 39 ♖b2 ♖e5 40 ♖h3 g5 41 ♖b1 g4 42 ♖e3 ♖g5 43 ♖c5 ♖xe3 44 ♖xe5+ ♖h4 45 ♖xe4 ♖g1 46 ♖xe7 ♖xh2 47 ♖xf7 h5 48 ♖d7 g3 49 ♖d2 ♖h3 50 ♖d3 ♖g4 51 ♖d4+ ♖f3 0-1 Fuzishawa-Santhosh, ICCF e-mail 1998.

b) 23 a3 and now 23...♖g7 is given as equal by Sapi & Schneider, and this is also cited by Mayer, but 23...♖e2 may be even stronger for Black. Note that 24 ♖xb7? loses to 24...♖g5+.

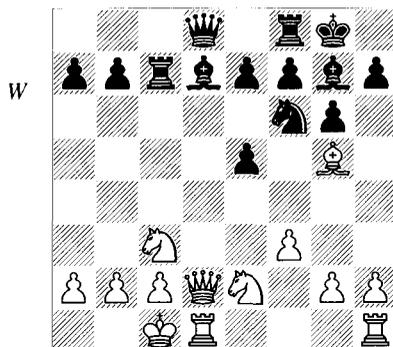
c) 23 ♖d8+ ♖xd8 24 ♖xd8+ ♖g7 25 ♖d3 ♖b6 (25...♖a4! 26 ♖b1 ♖h4 ♣) 26 ♖f1 ♖g5+ 27 ♖b1 f5 28 a4 ♖f6 29 ♖e1 ♖c6 30 ♖b4 e4 31 fxe4 fxe4 32 ♖b5 ♖d6 33 ♖e2 ♖c6 34 a5 ♖e5 35 h3 ♖f6 36 ♖e3 ♖c4 37 ♖e1 ♖e5 38 ♖c1 ♖d4 39 c3 ♖d5 40 ♖e2 ♖f4 41 ♖c2 ♖e6 1/2-1/2 Brustman-Sadkiewicz, Slupsk 1992.

C22)

15 ♖de2

This represents White's most exacting attempt.

15...♖c7 (D)



White now has two options:

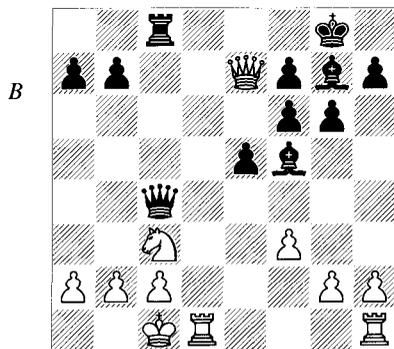
C221: 16 ♖xf6 37

C222: 16 ♖b5 38

C221)

16 ♖xf6 exf6 17 ♖b5 ♖f5 18 ♖xc7 ♖xc7
19 ♖c3 ♖c8 20 ♖b1

20 ♖d6 has also been tried here. 20...♖c4 21 ♖e7 (D) and now:



a) 21...h5?! 22 ♖d8+ (22 ♖xb7 may be more critical when, by comparison with the variations examined above, Black's dark-squared bishop is a lot further away from the battleground) 22...♖xd8 23 ♖xd8+ ♖h7 24 ♖d5 ♖c7 25 ♖e4 ♖e6 26 ♖c5 ♖d8 27 h4 ♖h6+ 28 ♖b1 f5 29 ♖d6 ♖f8 30 ♖xb7 ♖b8 31 ♖c6 e4 32 ♖c5 (32 fxe4 looks more critical) 32...♖g7 33 ♖b7 ♖xb7 34 ♖xb7 exf3 35 gxf3 ♖d5 36 ♖d6 ♖xf3 37 ♖h3 ♖g4 38 ♖h1 ♖g8 39 c4 f4 40 c5 f3 41 ♖c2 f2 42 c6 ♖e5 43 ♖c4 ♖f3 ♣ 1/2-1/2 Pikula-Kosanović, Niš 1996. The game hardly seems representative of Black's best options.

b) I would prefer the immediate 21...♖f8!?, after which White must tread carefully:

b1) 22 ♖xf6? loses on the spot to 22...♗f4+ 23 ♖d2 ♜xc3 24 bxc3 ♙a3+ 25 ♖d1 ♙xc2+ –+.

b2) 22 ♖xb7 is met by 22...♙b4 when White is again some distance from defusing the black initiative:

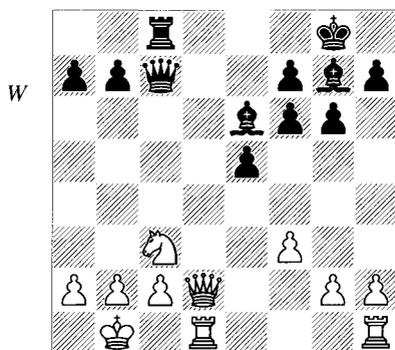
b21) 23 ♖d5, offering a queen exchange, is neatly dodged by 23...♗c7, when Black's activity provides dangerous compensation: 24 ♖b3 ♙xc3 25 ♖xc3 (25 bxc3 ♜b8 26 ♖a3 ♖b6 ♠) 25...♖b7 26 ♖d2 ♖a6 27 ♖b1 ♜xc2 28 ♖xc2 ♙xc2+ 29 ♖xc2 ♖xa2 ♠.

b22) Similarly, 23 g4 runs into 23...♙xc2! (23...♙e6 24 ♖e4 ♙xc3 25 ♖xc4 ♜xc4 26 bxc3 ♜xc3 27 ♖d3 ♜xd3 28 cxd3 ♙xa2 29 ♖d2 ♙d5 30 ♖e3 is better for White) 24 ♖xc2 ♙xc3 25 ♖b1 ♙d4, which offers Black good compensation.

b3) 22 ♖d8 ♜xd8 23 ♖xd8 ♖g7 24 ♖d1 ♙b4 25 ♖e4 ♙xe4 26 fxe4 and now Black can choose between picking up the a2-pawn or the e4-pawn, both of which offer Black decent chances.

20...♙e6 (D)

20...♙f8 is perhaps a less natural alternative, but it did bring rapid success in its sole outing: 21 g4 ♙e6 22 ♖e4 ♙e7 23 ♜he1 ♖c4 24 b3 ♖a6 25 c4 f5 26 gxf5 ♙xf5 27 ♖a1 ♖a3 28 ♖b2 ♖a5 29 ♖d6?? ♙xd6 0-1 Cabello Fernandez-Bajo Gutierrez, Gijon 2000.



21 ♖e4?

21 ♖d6 ♖c4 ∞; 21 g4! is given by Alterman as White's best option in this position: 21...f5 22 gxf5 ♙xf5 23 ♖e4 ∞.

21...♖c4!

21...f5 may be premature: 22 ♖g5 ♙c4 23 ♖d7 h6 (23...♖c5 keeps the tension and perhaps maintains the balance) 24 ♖xc7 ♜xc7 25

♖d8+ ♙f8 26 ♖h7 ♖xh7 27 ♜xf8 is slightly better for White.

22 b3 ♖c6 23 c4 f5 24 ♖g5 ♙xc4!!

24...♙h6? 25 f4 ±.

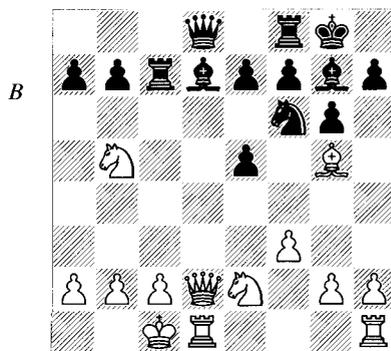
25 ♖c1

The only move; not 25 bxc4? e4 26 ♖d5 ♖b6+ 27 ♖b5 ♖f6 –+.

So far, we have been following Kindermann-Georgiev, Dortmund 1991. Now Georgiev suggested 25...♖f6! 26 ♜xc4 ♖d8 27 ♖c3 (27 ♖c1 e4 28 ♖c2 b5 29 ♖c5 ♖d4 –+; 27 ♖xh7 ♖xh7 28 ♖c3 ♖g5 intending ...e4 ♠; 27 ♖e4 fxe4 28 ♖e3 exf3 29 ♖xf3 ♖d6 ♠) 27...♖xg5 28 ♜c8 e4 29 ♖c7 ♜xc8 30 ♖xc8+ ♙f8 31 ♖c2 exf3 32 gxf3 ♖e3 33 ♜f1 h5 ♠.

C222)

16 ♖b5 (D)



16...♙f5!?

The unexplored 16...♖c8!?! constitutes a serious threat to this system. Most sources consider 16...♙f5!?! to be Black's only response. Only Hungarian IM Attila Schneider's 2000 work considers this logical – and perhaps superior – alternative. This idea originates with Istvan Almasi, who suggested it to Schneider on the basis that, if 16...♖c8 is the best move against 15 ♖b3 ♖c7 16 ♖b5, where the knight is situated on a more active square, then there is no obvious reason why it should not also be considered satisfactory against the less active 15 ♖d2 ♖c7 16 ♖b5. Some sample variations: 17 ♖xa7 (17 ♙xf6 ♙xb5 is at least equal for Black) 17...♜a8 18 ♙xf6 exf6 19 ♖xd7 and now:

a) Schneider condemns 19...♖b6 on the basis of 20 ♖b5 ♜fd8 21 ♖c7, when he continues

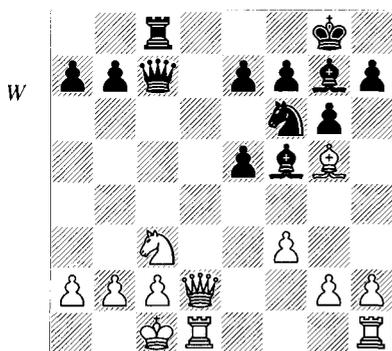
21...♖xd1+ 22 ♜xd1 ♜xb5 23 ♘c3 ±, but Black can improve with 21...♜e3+ 22 ♖b1 ♜dc8 23 ♜xb7?! (23 ♜d7 is better) 23...♜xe2 24 ♘c3 (24 ♜c1 ♜ab8) 24...♜xg2 ♣ when, although material is balanced, White's forces are tied to the protection of his kingside pawns, while progress on the queenside will be difficult without exposing the king to further danger.

b) 19...♜a5 20 ♘b5 ♜fd8 21 ♜xb7 (21 ♜c7 ♜xd1+ 22 ♜xd1 ♖h6+ 23 f4 ♜xb5 ♣ Schneider) 21...♜db8 22 ♜c6 ♜xb5 and "Black has excellent attacking chances against the weakened opposing king" – Attila Schneider.

17 ♘xc7 ♜xc7 18 ♘c3

18 ♖b1 was tried in Balinov-G.Mohr, Graz 1998, which continued 18...♜c8 19 ♜c1 h5 20 ♜he1 b5 21 ♘g3 ♖e6 22 ♜e3 ♘d5 23 ♜d3 and now 23...♜c4! would have ensured that Black retained good compensation.

18...♜c8 (D)



19 ♖b1

19 ♜he1 occurred in Wahls-Alterman, Manila OL 1992 which rapidly transposed to the main line. However, White is not obliged to

accept a transposition, and Alterman mentions the following independent courses: 19...b5 (19...♘e8!? is given by Alterman with the idea of ...♘d6-c4) 20 g4!? ♖e6! (20...b4? 21 gxf5 bxc3 22 ♜xc3 ♜xc3 23 bxc3 gxf5 24 ♜xe5 e6 25 ♜a5 ♘d5 26 ♜dx5 exd5 ±; 20...♖xc2 is also inferior: 21 ♜xc2 b4 22 ♜e3 ±) 21 ♘xb5 ♜b6 (21...♜c4? 22 ♘c3 ♘d5 23 ♜e4 ±) 22 ♘c3 e4! 23 ♖e3 (23 fxe4 allows 23...♘xg4 when Black has good compensation; 23 ♖xf6 is met by 23...♖xf6 24 ♜xe4 ♖xa2! ∞ Alterman) 23...♜a5 24 ♘xe4?! (24 ♖d4 looks like a better try for White) 24...♜xa2. Alterman assesses this position as unclear, but White must step very carefully indeed: 25 ♘xf6+ ♖xf6 26 ♜b4 ♖b3 27 ♜xb3! ♜xb3 28 ♜d8+ ♖g7 29 ♜xc8 ♖xb2+ 30 ♖d2 ♜d5+ 31 ♖e2 ♜d6 ♣.

19...b5 20 ♜he1 b4 21 ♘e4 ♘xe4! 22 fxe4 ♖e6 ♣

22...♖g4 allows White time to play 23 ♜c1 followed by c3, activating his rooks and creating counterplay on the queenside.

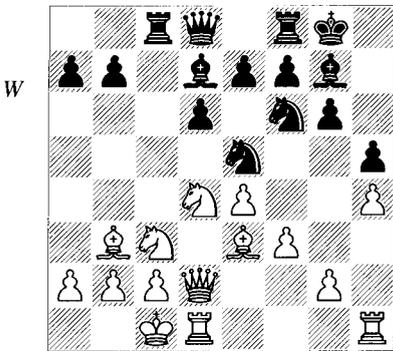
23 ♜xb4

23 ♜e3?? f6 24 ♖h4 ♖h6 -+; 23 ♜c1!? a5 24 c3 b3 25 a3 ♜d8 26 ♜f2 ♖c4 ♣.

So far we have been following Wahls-Alterman, Manila OL 1992. Now Alterman and Vaisman, annotating for *Informator* 55, give 23...♜xc2+! 24 ♖a1 ♜xg2 25 ♜d2! (25 ♜c1 ♜xc1+ 26 ♖xc1 h6! intending ...♜xh2 ♣; 25 ♜xe7 h6! 26 ♖f6 ♜xh2 ♣) 25...♜xd2 (only move) 26 ♜xd2 f6 27 ♖e3 a6 ♣. Although Black's Dragon bishop current looks more like its French counterpart, this is but a temporary inconvenience, and White's remaining weak pawns on e4 and h2 will ensure that Black enjoys a very comfortable endgame.

3 Soltis Variation: 13th Move Alternatives

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♞xd4 ♘f6 5 ♗c3
 g6 6 ♙e3 ♙g7 7 f3 ♗c6 8 ♖d2 0-0 9 ♙c4 ♙d7
 10 0-0-0 ♞c8 11 ♙b3 ♗e5 12 h4 h5! (D)



This is the starting position of the Soltis Variation of the Yugoslav Attack. Black takes time out from his own operations on the opposite wing to block White's progress on the kingside. Attempts to open the h-file must now involve the sacrificial advance g4, perhaps followed by a further pawn sacrifice on h5 combined with an exchange sacrifice. As was observed in the introduction to this text, it is notable that very often these aggressive sacrifices do little to further White's cause: although Black's kingside pawns may be drawn forward, they remain on the board, blocking White's avenues of attack and, not uncommonly, generating dangerous attacking chances for Black on the kingside if left untended to. White now has four possibilities:

- A: 13 ♞dg1?! 40
- B: 13 g4?! 42
- C: 13 ♗de2 47
- D: 13 ♗d5 47

13 ♙g5 represents the starting point of the main lines of the Soltis Variation, and is addressed in Chapters 5-10. 13 ♞b1 is dealt with in Chapter 4.

A)

13 ♞dg1?!

I began studying the Soltis Variation in December 1995, and my first opportunity to try it out came almost three months later during the February Cambridge Chess Congress. After much thought my opponent played 13 ♞dg1?!, after which I was at something of a loss. When studying the Soltis Variation I had worked almost exclusively from Steve Mayer's text, but I was distinctly aware that this particular line had been situated in the early chapters, and it was now nearly three months since I had skimmed over those! Panic set in. What was I to do? The first thing I did was remind myself that I was already at least equal, if not better. The logic behind this conclusion was simple: on the one hand, if 13 g4 is too slow, then 13 ♞dg1, giving Black time to initiate play on the queenside, should definitely be too slow; on the other hand, I was conscious that in modern practice White has abandoned such moves in favour of 13 ♙g5, and even there struggles to prove an advantage; the obvious conclusion is that Black must have already found a convincing response to 13 ♞dg1?! in order to confine it to the category of 'minor alternatives'. My intuition was screaming for me to smack out 13...♞a5. However, aware that this was the first time I had played this variation, I decided to employ a more methodical approach, which has since served as my template for solving opening problems in the Dragon. Starting from the queenside, I began examining each of Black's possible plans in turn:

a) 13...a5 14 a4 leaves Black with a gaping hole on b5, and after 14...♗c4 15 ♙xc4 ♞xc4 16 b3 ♞c8 17 ♗db5 while Black is OK, his attacking prospects on the queenside have been severely curtailed.

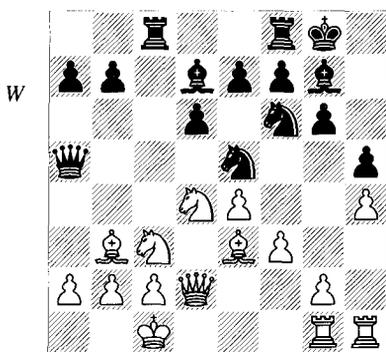
b) 13...b5 14 ♖dxb5 does not appear to achieve much; why sacrifice a pawn that will be instrumental in the attack when there is no immediate necessity to do so?

c) 13...♗c4!? is a relatively standard treatment in most ...♗c8 lines, but having weakened the kingside with ...h5, I was reluctant to use precious time exchanging pieces when White had already aligned his heavy forces on the h- and g-files. I visualized 14 ♗xc4 ♗xc4 15 g4 hxg4 16 h5 ♖xh5 17 fxg4 ♗f6 and now 18 ♗h2 ♗xc3! looked good for Black, but I was concerned about 18 ♗f5! when either capture leaves Black hopelessly exposed on the g-file, and allowing White to capture on g7 with the knight really is not a viable option. Alternatively, if I retreat the bishop with 18...♗h8 then 19 ♗xh8+ ♖xh8 20 ♗d4 sees me getting mated in the sort of circumstances that put people off the Dragon for life!

d) By this point I was growing rather nervous and began contemplating drastic measures such as 13...♗c4, which actually is not as bad as it looks: 14 ♗xc4 ♖xc4 15 ♗d3 ♖xe3 16 ♗xe3 gives Black some compensation for the exchange in the form of the bishop-pair, but I would still rather be White.

Having satisfied myself that the alternative plans were unconvincing, I returned to my move of preference...

13...♗a5! (D)



Logic and necessity seem to dictate that this is Black's most promising move: Black activates the queen, threatens a reasonable exchange sacrifice on c3, lends horizontal support to the kingside via the fifth rank, connects the rooks, and creates leverage for the advance of the b-pawn.

14 g4

Alternatives:

a) 14 ♖b1 ♗c4 15 ♗xc4 ♗xc4 transposes to note 'a' to White's 15th move in Chapter 4.

b) 14 ♗g5!? is similar to 13 ♗g5 in the main line, with the exception that one would expect ...♗a5 to be of more use than ♗dg1. 14...♗c5 15 g4 (one subtle difference between this position and the position ordinarily reached in the main line is that, with the queen on a5, the e7-pawn is unprotected; this may allow the tactic 15 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 16 ♗d5 ♗xd2+ 17 ♖xd2, which would ordinarily be good for White, but in this particular position Black has a trick that preserves both his dark-squared bishop and the e7-pawn: 17...♗c4+! 18 ♗xc4 ♗xd4 19 ♖xe7+ ♖g7 20 ♗b3 ♗xg1 ♠) 15...hxg4 16 f4 ♗c4 17 ♗d3?! (this gives Black time to mobilize all his forces; 17...♗xc4 is better, although Black should still be fine) 17...♗fc8 18 ♗de2 ♖xb2! (a typical motif in such positions; now White is lost) 19 ♖xb2 ♗xc3 20 ♗xc3 ♗xc3 21 ♗xc3 ♖xe4 22 ♗xg7+ ♖xg7 23 ♗xe7 ♗c3+ 24 ♖b1 ♗d2+ 25 ♖c1 ♖xb3+ 26 axb3 ♗e3+ 27 ♖d1 ♗xe7 0-1 Barahona-Moreno, Peru 1997. Notably, White only made one obviously bad move in this game. Very often that is all it takes in the Dragon!

c) 14 ♗h6 ♗c4!? (playing 14...♗xh6! 15 ♗xh6 ♗xc3 16 bxc3 ♗xc3 at once looks comfortably better for Black) 15 ♗xc4 ♗xc4 16 ♗xg7 ♖xg7 and then:

c1) 17 g4?! Iatrino-Galdelli, Rome 1997, and now Black should play 17...♗xc3 18 ♗xc3 (18 bxc3 ♗xa2 should be better for Black; 18 ♗b3 ♗xc2+ 19 ♖xc2 ♗xa2 20 ♗a1 ♗c8+ ♠) 18...♗xc3 19 bxc3 hxg4 with a clear advantage in the endgame.

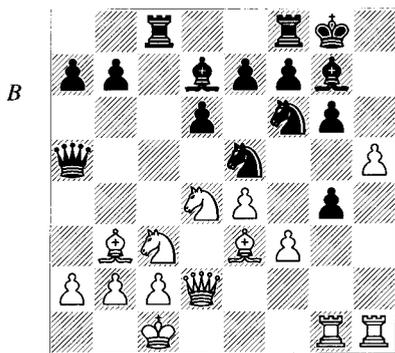
c2) 17 ♗b3 is better, stabilizing the queenside.

14...hxg4! 15 h5 (D)

15 ♗h6 was met with the cautious 15...♗h5 in Guimaraes-del Rey, Algarve 1998, but Black missed the chance for 15...♗xh6! 16 ♗xh6 ♗xc3 17 bxc3 ♗xc3 when he is clearly better: 18 ♗e2 ♗a1+ 19 ♗d2 ♖xf3+ is winning for Black.

15...♗xc3!

Odeev's novelty, which ensures Black the better game. 15...♗xh5!? was Black's choice in the earlier game de Firmian-Kudrin, Gausdal



1982, which is considered by transposition in note 'a' to White's 15th move in Line B2.

16 bxc3

16 ♖xc3 ♖xc3 17 bxc3 gxh5 ♣.

16...♗xf3!!

Having shattered White's queenside, Black strikes again before White has time to consolidate, stripping away the white pawn-centre and plunging forward toward the defenceless white royalty.

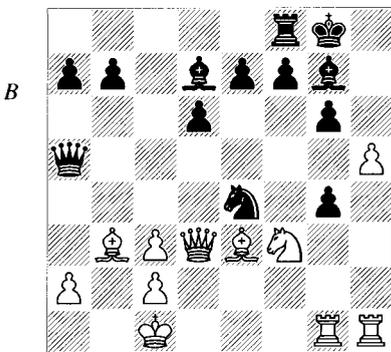
17 ♗xf3 ♗xe4 18 ♖d3 (D)

In *Informator 44*, Odeev provides the following variations:

a) 18 ♖d5? ♖a3+! 19 ♗d1 ♗xc3+ 20 ♗d2 ♗xd5 21 ♗xd5 ♖c3+! -+.

b) 18 ♖e2? ♖a3+! 19 ♗d1 ♗xc3+ 20 ♗d2 ♗xe2 21 ♗xe2 gxf3+ 22 ♗f2 ♗f5! 23 hxg6 e6! -+.

c) 18 ♖e1?! ♖a3+ 19 ♗d1 ♗xc3+ 20 ♗d2 ♗xa2! 21 ♗d4 ♖b4+ 22 ♗e2 ♗c3+ 23 ♗d3 ♗xd4 24 ♗xd4 ♗b5+ 25 ♗e3 e5! -+.



18...♖a3+!

18...♗xc3? is bad for Black, but not because of 19 ♖xg6 as suggested by Mayer, which runs into 19...♗f5! -+ but rather because of 19 hxg6!.

19 ♗d1

19 ♗b1? walks head-first into the flames: 19...♗xc3+ 20 ♗a1 ♗xa2+ -+.

19...♗xc3+ 20 ♗e1 ♗f5! 21 ♖c4 d5

Not 21...gxf3? 22 hxg6! ±.

22 ♖f4 ♖a6! ♣

22...gxf3'?' 23 ♖xf5'!' gxf5 24 h6 is given by Odeev as winning for White after 24...♗d8?? 25 hxg7 +-, but I don't understand what's wrong with simply 24...♖a6! 25 ♗h2 ♖e6, when Black should win easily.

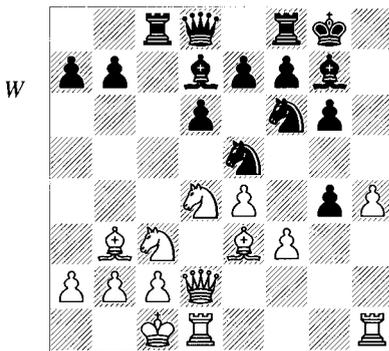
Black now finishes White off easily: 23 ♗h2 gxf3 24 ♖xf3 (24 ♖xf5? gxf5 25 h6 f2+! 26 ♗xf2 ♖e6! 27 ♗f3 f4! 28 hxg7 ♗c8 -+) 24...♖e6! (intending ...♗d4) 25 ♗f1 a5! -+ 26 a4 b5 27 ♗d2 ♗e4! 28 ♖h3 bxa4 29 ♗xc3 axb3 30 ♗xg7 ♗xg7 31 ♖xb3 ♖f6+ 32 ♗e1 ♗c8! 0-1 Pjaeren-Odeev, corr. 1987.

B)

13 g4?!

This constitutes a direct attempt at refutation. White unreservedly plunges forth with his kingside pawns, but as we shall see, such unimaginative play is unlikely to be tolerated by Black.

13...hxg4! (D)



The most principled response: Black simply takes the material and calls White's hand. White now has two main options, neither of which should promise an advantage:

B1: 14 f4!? 43

B2: 14 h5 44

Minor alternatives:

a) 14 ♗dg1 was given an outing in Dehnen-Emunds, Münster 1987, which Black eventually

won after some speculative adventures. A sound line here is 14...♖a5 15 f4 ♘c4 16 ♗xc4 ♜xc4 17 ♘b3 ♖h5!?! (17...♖c7 is also good) 18 ♗d4 ♜fc8 ♠.

b) 14 ♗g5 ♘c4 15 ♖d3 should be dealt with in the standard manner: 15...♘a5 16 f4 (16 h5 ♘xb3+ 17 ♘b3 ♘h5 18 ♘d5 f6! is good for Black) 16...♘xb3+ 17 axb3 (17 ♘b3 ♘h5! leaves White all dressed up with nowhere to go; note the suddenly precarious position of the g5-bishop: 18 ♖b1? f6!) and now Schneider gives 17...♖a5 18 h5?! gxh5 with a large advantage for Black.

c) 14 ♗h6!?! ♘h5! 15 ♗xg7 ♖xg7 16 f4 ♘c4 17 ♗xc4 ♜xc4 18 ♘d5 e5 19 ♘e2 ♗e6 left Black in good shape in Rohde-Soltis, New York 1977.

B1)

14 f4!?

White takes time out to deflect Black's knight from the kingside, and in doing so introduces the possibility of advancing the e- or f-pawns, the former operating to crack open the centre and deflect the f6-knight, the latter functioning as a means of attacking the g6-pawn and weakening Black's kingside pawn-structure. However, there are also serious drawbacks to this advance: playing f4 temporarily closes the c1-h6 diagonal, entirely abandons any notion of recapturing the g4-pawn, and obliges White to give up one of his bishops for Black's e5-knight (an important point when one considers that, realistically, White may need both bishops if he is to be successful in his attack).

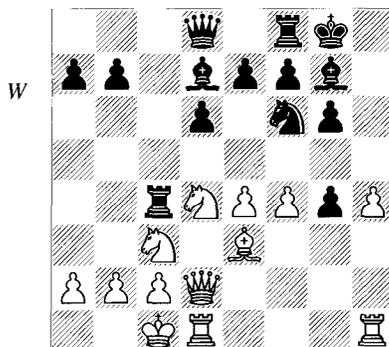
14...♘c4 15 ♗xc4

Alternatives:

a) 15 ♖d3 was tried in Olthof-Vanherizeele, Belgium 1985, and now rather than pursuing the stereotypical course of simply capturing White's dark-squared bishop on e3, Black correctly judged that the nature of this particular position dictates that the b3-bishop is actually the more important attacking unit. 15...♘a5! 16 f5 ♘xb3+ 17 axb3 ♖a5 18 h5 and at this point the players agreed to a draw. However, as Schneider points out, Black is simply much better after the obvious 18...♖a1+ 19 ♘b1 (19 ♗d2 ♖xb2 -+) 19...gxh5, when White is two pawns down with no attack and no compensation.

b) 15 ♖e2 was tried in Gara-Gomboc, Balaton 1996, but instead of 15...b5!?! which was by all means playable, Black could have simply pursued a similar strategy to that illustrated against 15 ♖d3, via 15...♘a5.

15...♜xc4 (D)



White has now tried:

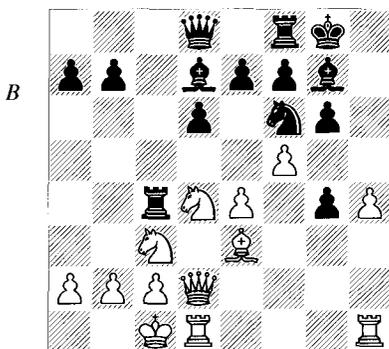
B11: 16 f5?! 43

B12: 16 e5 44

16 h5 was tried in Penttila-Upero, Lahti 2000, and should be met by the simple 16...♘h5, transposing to note 'b' to White's 15th move in Line B2.

B11)

16 f5?! (D)



This looks dangerous, but in fact leaves Black spoilt for choice:

a) 16...♜xc3!?! is a rather adventurous (albeit thematic) resource that has been neglected by most sources. After 17 ♖xc3 ♘xe4 18 ♖d3 gxf5 19 h5 ♖a5 20 a3 e5 21 h6 ♗f6 22 ♘b3, Cervera Procas-Flores Escuin, Zaragoza 1998

was agreed drawn, but 22...♖b5! gives Black a tremendous advantage.

b) 16...♖a5 has been the solution most commonly opted for. Some examples:

b1) 17 fxg6 fxg6 (the immediate 17...♖xc3! cuts down White's options, and also seems clearly better for Black: 18 ♖xc3 ♖xc3 19 gxf7+ ♖xf7 20 bxc3 ♖xe4 ♣) 18 ♖d3 (18 ♖b3 ♖a6 19 ♖g5 ♖fc8 20 ♖de1 ♖e6 21 ♖b1 ♖f7 22 e5 dxe5 ♣ Payares-Angelini, St Lorenzo 1995) 18...♖xc3 19 bxc3 ♖xa2 20 ♖d2 ♖a5 21 ♖c4+ ♖h7 22 ♖e6 ♖c8 23 ♖c5 dxc5 24 e5 ♖h5 25 ♖f7 ♖f5 26 ♖hf1 ♖d8+ 27 ♖e2 ♖g3+ 28 ♖f2 ♖f8 29 ♖xe7 ♖xf1 30 ♖g5 ♖g3 31 ♖xg3 0-1 Pierdant Gonzalez-Angelini, St Lorenzo 1995.

b2) 17 ♖g5 ♖xc3 (17...♖xe4!! 18 ♖xe4 ♖xa2 19 c3 ♖xd4 20 fxg6 ♖f5 -+ is even stronger) 18 ♖xc3 ♖xa2 19 ♖de1 ♖c8 20 ♖d3 ♖a1+ 21 ♖d2 ♖xb2 22 ♖b1 ♖xe4+ 23 ♖xe4 ♖xd4+ 24 ♖xd4 ♖xd4 25 ♖xb7 ♖xf5 26 ♖c1 g3 27 ♖e3 ♖xe3+ 28 ♖xe3 ♖xc2 0-1 Pikler-Peredy, Budapest 1994.

c) 16...gxf5!? is a rather speculative move suggested by my little buddy Fritz, who absolutely loves it. Having spent some time on the position it seems that Black is also doing well in this variation, but in light of the convincing alternatives, there is no need to devote space to yet another alternative that is good for Black. I include this passage simply as an illustration of the sheer extent of Black's resources in this variation.

B12)

16 e5 ♖h5 17 ♖d3

17 e6!? ♖xd4! 18 exf7+ ♖xf7 19 ♖xd4 ♖xf4 ♣ Mayer.

17...♖c8!? 18 exd6 exd6 19 ♖cb5 ♖xb5 20 ♖xb5

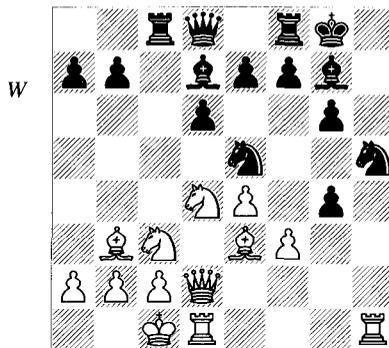
Now:

a) 20...♖xf4 21 ♖xf4 ♖xf4 22 ♖xd6 ♖c6 ♣.

b) 20...♖e6!? 21 f5 gxf5 22 ♖xd6 (Mariasin-Litvinov, Minsk 1981) 22...♖b4 23 c3 (23 b3 ♖d8 -+) 23...♖xa2 ♣.

B2)

14 h5 ♖xh5 (D)



15 ♖h6

Alternatives:

a) 15 ♖dg1 ♖a5 16 ♖h6?! ♖xc3 17 bxc3 (17 ♖xg7 ♖xc2+! 18 ♖xc2 ♖c8+ 19 ♖d1 ♖xd2+ 20 ♖xd2 ♖xg7 21 fxg4 ♖xg4 -+ 22 ♖e3 ♖f6 23 ♖c1 ♖c5 24 ♖hg1 ♖d7 25 ♖f5+ ♖f8 26 ♖d4 ♖eg4+ 27 ♖f3 ♖e5+ 28 ♖e3 ♖eg4+ 29 ♖f3 ♖h5 30 ♖c7 ♖h3+ 31 ♖g2 ♖h2+ 32 ♖g3 ♖h5+ 0-1 de Firmian-Kudrin, Gausdal 1982) 17...♖xh6 18 ♖xh6 ♖xc3 19 ♖b1 ♖xd4 and now:

a1) 20 fxg4 ♖xg4 21 ♖xg4 ♖xg4 22 ♖xg6+ ♖g7 23 ♖xh5 ♖f2?! (23...♖e5! ♣) 24 ♖e1 ♖g3 25 ♖f1 e6 26 ♖xf2 ♖xf2 27 ♖g5+ 1/2-1/2 Dimitrijević-Brkić, Maribor 2003.

a2) 20 ♖d1 ♖c3 21 f4 e6 22 f5 exf5 23 ♖xd6 (Kariz-Barth, Bela Crkva 1983) 23...♖c4 -+.

b) 15 f4 ♖c4 16 ♖xc4 ♖xc4 17 f5 ♖a5 has seen White suffering awfully:

b1) 18 ♖b1 ♖xc3 19 bxc3 ♖c8 (19...♖g3 20 ♖h2!) 20 fxg6 fxg6 21 ♖b3 ♖xc3 22 ♖xc3 ♖xc3 23 ♖xa7 ♖c6 24 ♖he1 ♖g3 25 ♖d2 ♖a4 26 ♖b3 ♖c6 27 ♖d2 ♖a4 28 ♖b3 ♖c4 29 e5 ♖xe5 30 ♖xe5 dxe5 31 ♖b8 ♖e4 32 ♖d8+ ♖f7 33 ♖xe5 g3 34 ♖d4 g2 35 ♖e3 ♖xb3 36 axb3 ♖c3 37 ♖g1 ♖f3 0-1 Chase-Vigorito, New England 1993.

b2) 18 fxg6 fxg6 19 ♖d3 ♖xc3 20 bxc3 ♖xa2 21 e5 dxe5 22 ♖xg6 exd4 23 ♖xh5 ♖a1+ 24 ♖d2 ♖xc3+ 25 ♖c1 ♖xe3+ 26 ♖b1 ♖f6 27 ♖h7+ ♖f7 28 ♖d5 ♖b6+ 0-1 Prelog-Kodrić, Slovenia 1991.

15...e6!

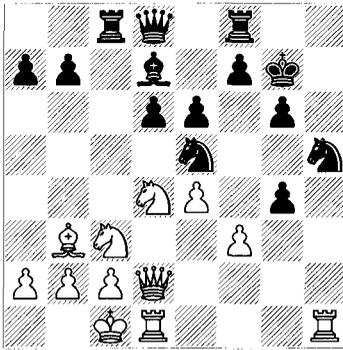
This move constitutes an important defensive resource, and is the reason why White rarely ventures 13 g4 nowadays.

16 ♖dg1

Or:

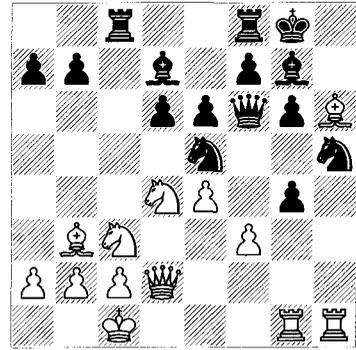
a) 16 fxc4 ♗xh6 17 ♖xh6 ♜xg4 18 ♖d2 ♔g7 transposes to line 'b1'.

b) White can also try the immediate 16 ♗xg7 (D), which at least has the virtue of maintaining some tension in the position:



37 ♖b2 d5 38 ♜d3 ♖e4 39 ♖d2 ♔g6 40 c3 bxc3+ 41 ♖xc3 ♖g3 42 ♖c2 d4 43 b4 ♖ee3 44 b5 ♖g5 45 b6 ♖b5 46 ♖g2+ 0-1 Fedorowicz-Petursson, Reykjavik tt 1990.

16... ♖f6 (D)



b1) 17 fxc4?! ♜xg4 18 ♖dgl (18 ♜f3 ♖f6 19 ♖h3 occurred in Dean Kawamura-Farrell, Saratoga 1997, and now 19... ♖f4 is but one possibility that looks good for Black: 20 ♖xf4 ♜xf4 21 ♖h4 f5 22 ♖xd6 ♗c6! ♢) 18... ♜gf6 (practice has also shown 18... ♜hf6 to be good for Black) 19 ♖e2 (19 ♜de2 ♖e7 20 ♜d1 ♖h8 ♢ Rigo-Trabattoni, Reggio Emilia 1981; 19 ♖g2 ♖h8? {19... ♖b6! ♢} 20 ♜ce2? {20 ♗xe6!} 20... ♖e8 21 ♖f3 ♖c5 22 ♜f4 ♜xf4 23 ♖xf4 e5 24 ♖f3 ♖xh1 25 ♖xh1 exd4 26 ♖f1 ♖e7 27 ♖f2 ♗b5 28 ♖e1 ♖e5 0-1 Glick-Levy, Hatfield 1991) 19... ♖h8 20 ♖f3 ♖a5 21 ♖b1 ♖e5 22 ♖e3 ♖f4 23 ♖d3 ♜g3 24 ♖xh8 ♖xh8 25 ♖e1 ♜gxe4 26 a4 ♜d2+ 0-1 J.Farrand-Bloch, London 1978.

17 ♗xg7

Or:

a) 17 ♗g5?, attempting to trap the queen, runs into 17... ♜xf3! +-.

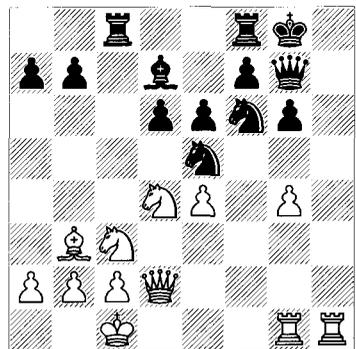
b) 17 fxc4? allows Black to liquidate with 17... ♗xh6! 18 ♖xh6 ♖f4+ 19 ♖xf4 ♜xf4 ♢ 20 ♖f1 g5 21 ♜db5 ♗xb5 22 ♜xb7 ♜e2+ 23 ♖b1 ♜g3 24 ♜xd6 ♖c6 25 ♜xb7 ♜xh1 26 ♖xh1 ♖b8 27 ♜a5 ♖c5 0-1 Primavera-Seminara, Acasusso 1994.

c) 17 ♖b1 seeks to avoid the traps detailed above, but 17... ♜c4 18 ♗xc4 ♖xd4 19 ♖xd4?! ♗xd4 was already winning for Black in Ilyin-Bezman, Perm 1997.

17... ♖xg7 18 fxc4

18 f4 ♜c4 19 ♗xc4 ♖xc4 20 ♜de2 ♗c6 ♢.
18... ♜f6 (D)

b2) 17 ♖dgl!? is perhaps better than the alternatives, but was dealt a solid blow in its sole outing, and has not been tried since: 17... ♖h8 18 fxc4 ♜f6 19 g5 ♜h5 ♢ 20 ♖h3 ♖c5 21 ♜f3 ♖e7 22 ♖f1 ♖f8 23 ♜xe5 ♖xe5 24 ♖f6 ♖h8 25 ♖hf3 ♗e8 26 ♗a4 ♖xg5 27 ♖xg5 ♜xf6 28 ♗xe8 ♖xe8 29 ♖h3 ♖h8 30 ♖xh8 ♖xh8 31 e5 ♜d5 32 ♖xe7 ♜xe7 33 exd6 ♜c6 0-1 Calvo-Sosonko, Clare Benedict 1974.



b3) 17 f4 was the only GM attempt in this line in recent years, but as the following game illustrates, White may as well have abandoned the variation entirely: 17... ♜c4 18 ♗xc4 ♖xc4 19 ♜de2 ♗c6 20 ♖d3 b5 21 ♖b1 ♖f6 22 ♖hf1 ♖c8 23 f5 exf5 24 exf5 ♗f3 25 fxc6 ♖xg6 26 ♖xf3 gxf3 27 ♖xf3 ♖8c5 28 b3 ♖h4 29 a3 a5 30 ♖g1 ♖g5 31 ♖d1 b4 32 axb4 axb4 33 ♜d5 ♖e4 34 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 35 ♜c1 ♜f4 36 ♜xf4 ♖xf4

19 ♖h4

19 g5 has also been tried, and after 19... ♜h5 White has tried the following options:

a) 20 ♖xh5 gxh5 21 ♔f5 (21 ♖h1 ♖g6 ♠) 21...exf5 22 ♔d5 ♔f3 23 ♔f6+ ♗h8 24 ♖d1 fxe4 25 ♔xh5 ♖d4 0-1 Wibe-Hakki, Gausdal 1980.

b) 20 ♔ce2 ♔c4! 21 ♖b4 (21 ♖d3 b5 22 ♖xh5 gxh5 23 ♔f4 ♖c5 ♠ E.Berg-Asauskas, Erevan jr Wch 2000) 21...a5! 22 ♖xb7 ♔e5! ♠ (Miles points out that Black now plans ...a4 or ...♔d3+ and ...♔c5) 23 c3 ♔d3+ 24 ♗b1 ♔c5 25 ♖b6 (25 ♖a7 ♖a8 26 ♖c7 ♖a6 followed by ...♖c8 wins the white queen) 25...♖e5 -+ (b6 and e4 are weak) 26 ♙c2 ♖b8 27 ♖xa5 ♖xb2+ 28 ♗xb2 ♔d3+ 0-1 Ljubojević-Miles, Brussels 1986.

c) 20 ♖e2 ♖c5 21 ♖f1 ♖fc8 22 ♔de2. The problem with White's position is not so much one crippling weakness but rather the lack of weaknesses within the black position. Whereas Black can steadily improve his position and mount an attack on the queenside, it is hard to orchestrate an obvious plan for White. 22...♙b5!/? (22...b5!, commencing the standard queenside attack against the white bishop, seems a better approach) 23 ♔xb5 ♖xb5 24 ♔g3?! ♔c4! 25 ♙xc4 ♖xb2+ 26 ♗d1 ♖b1+ 27 ♗d2 ♖b4+ 28 c3 ♖xc4 -+ Cernousek-Tupy, Plzen 1997.

d) 20 ♔f5?! exf5 21 ♔d5 ♔f3 22 ♖xh5 gxh5 23 ♔f6+ ♗h8 24 ♖d1 fxe4 25 ♔xh5 ♖d4 26 ♖h1 ♖xd1+ 27 ♗xd1 ♔xg5 0-1 Sampouw-Sosonko, Indonesia 1982.

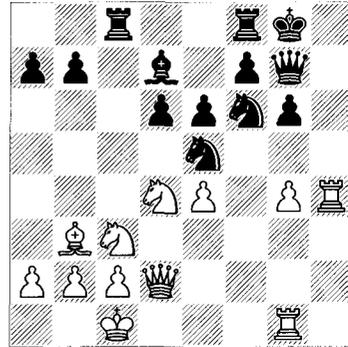
e) 20 ♖h3! seems to be White's best continuation: 20...♔c4 21 ♙xc4 ♖xc4 22 ♔de2 (22 ♖d3! is better: 22...♖fc8 23 ♔b3 ♖e5 24 ♖xd6 ♙e8 25 ♖d8 ♖f4 26 ♖xf4 ♔xf4 27 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 28 ♗d2 ♗f8 29 ♗e3 ♔h5 30 ♔d4 ♖c5 1/2-1/2 Yeo-Hodgson, British League (4NCL) 2001/2) 22...♖e5 23 ♖xh5 gxh5 24 ♔f4 ♖fc8 25 ♔xh5 ♗f8 26 g6 ♗e7! 27 ♖g5 ♖d4 28 ♖f4 fxg6 29 ♖xg6 ♗d8 (evidently it is not too late for queenside castling by hand!) 30 ♖g7 ♖c5! 31 ♔f6 ♖f5!! -+ 32 ♖xd7+ ♗c8 33 ♖d2 ♖f1+ 34 ♔d1 ♖xd2+ 35 ♗xd2 ♖d4+ 36 ♗c3 ♖dxd1 37 ♖f7 ♖f3+ 38 ♗b4 ♖df1 39 ♖f8+ ♗c7 40 ♔e8+ ♗d7 0-1 Bellin-Sznepik, Wijk aan Zee 1974.

We now return to 19 ♖h4 (D):

19...g5!

Black attacks the white rook on h4 and, in the process, utilizes an excellent defensive resource, preventing White from playing g5 himself and freeing the g6-square for defensive purposes. Furthermore, once the queens are

B



exchanged, the split pawns fixed on e4 and g4 will prove painfully fragile.

19...♖c5!/? 20 g5 ♔h5 21 ♔ce2 ♔c4 22 ♙xc4 ♖xc4 23 e5?! ♖xe5 24 ♖xh5 gxh5 25 g6 f5 is given by Mikhail Golubev as an interesting alternative that deserves attention.

20 ♖h3

20 ♖h2?! ♖xc3!/? 21 ♖xc3 ♔xe4 22 ♖e3 d5 23 ♗b1 ♖c8 24 c3 ♗f8 25 ♔e2? (25 ♔f3?! ♔xf3 26 ♖xf3 ♖e5 ♠ Sapi & Schneider) 25...♔f3 0-1 Hedlund-Diel, corr. 1983. However, one must note that White's play here was very, very bad.

20...♖c5

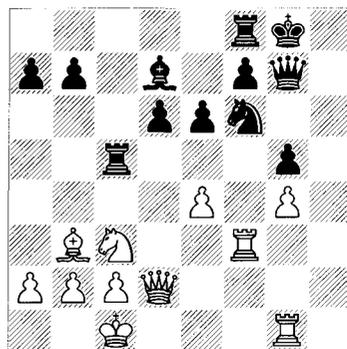
20...♖xc3!/? 21 ♖xc3 ♔xe4 followed by ...d5 has been suggested by both Barillaro and Sapi & Schneider as leading to a satisfactory game for Black.

21 ♔f3

Doubling rooks by 21 ♖gh1 achieves little: 21...♖fc8 22 ♔f5? (a pinch optimistic, I'm sure you'll agree) 22...exf5 23 ♖xd6 ♔g6?! (23...♔xe4!) 24 exf5? (24 gxf5) 24...♖5c6 25 ♖d2 ♔h4 26 ♖xh4 gxh4 27 g5 ♙xf5 28 gxf6 ♖xf6 29 ♔d5 ♖e5 30 ♖g5+ ♗f8 31 ♔e3 ♖g6 0-1 M.Marković-Kosanović, Stara Pazova 1986.

21...♔xf3 22 ♖xf3 (D)

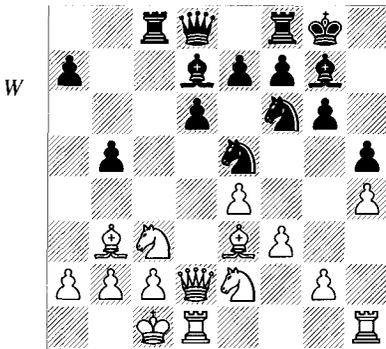
B



And now rather than letting enthusiasm get the better of us with 22...♖xc3?! 23 ♖xc3 ♗xe4 24 ♖e3 ♘c6 25 ♖h3 ♖e5 26 ♖f1 ♘g7 27 ♖h5 ♖g8 28 c3 ♘f8 29 ♖h7 ♖g7 30 ♖h8+ ♖g8 31 ♖h7 ♖g7 32 ♖h8+ ♖g8 1-0 D'Amore-Kinlay, Caorle 1981, Black should opt for the steady 22...♘c6! 23 ♖xd6 ♖xc3 24 bxc3 ♗xe4 which gives rise to an unclear position in which White's structural deficiencies more than compensate for his extra exchange.

C)

13 ♗de2 b5 (D)



14 ♘xa7

Or:

a) 14 ♘h6 a5 15 ♘xg7 ♘xg7 16 a3 b4 17 axb4 axb4 and now 18 ♗b1 ♖a5 19 ♖d4 ♘a4 20 ♘xa4 ♖xa4 21 b3 ♖xb3 -+ was Nieland-Karason, corr. 1989. Instead, 18 ♗a2 going after the b-pawn is marginally better, yet still problematic for White: 18...♖a8 19 ♖xb4 ♖c7 20 ♗b1 ♖fb8 21 ♖c3 and now instead of 21...♖b7 22 ♖d4 ♖a7 as in Djondras-Stratmann, Hessen 1999, the immediate 21...♖a7 offers Black excellent compensation for the loss of the b-pawn.

b) 14 ♗f4 a5 15 a3 (Stadlober-Krumphals, Schwarzach 2000) 15...b4 16 axb4 axb4 17 ♗cd5 ♗c4 18 ♘xc4 ♖xc4 appears good for Black: 19 ♗b6 ♖c7 20 ♖xb4 ♖b7 21 ♗fd5 ♗xd5 22 exd5 ♖c7 followed by ...♖fb8.

14...b4

14...♗c4 has also scored well for Black in practice.

15 ♗d5 ♗xd5 16 exd5 ♖a5 17 ♘d4

Haag-Miles, Birmingham 1975. Now Miles recommends 17...♖c7! as clearly better for

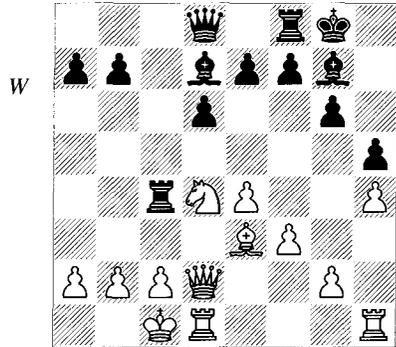
Black, who plans to swing the f8-rook into the attack on a8 or c8, and to utilize a4 or f5 as an attacking post for the light-squared bishop.

D)

13 ♗d5 ♗xd5 14 ♘xd5

14 exd5 a5 15 a4 ♖e8! left White in difficulties in M.Schlosser-Ballmann, Gausdal jr Wch 1986, which continued 16 ♖xa5 ♖a8 17 ♖b4 ♘xa4 ♢.

14...♗c4 15 ♘xc4 ♖xc4 (D)



16 g4

16 ♗b3 ♖c7 17 ♘d4 ♖c8 18 c3 b5 gave Black a slight advantage in Schoof-Zyla, Germany tt 1990.

16...♖a4

16...hxg4 is a viable alternative, and now with 17 h5 g3!! Black drains the white attack of its dynamism by removing the h2-square from the white queen. 18 h6 ♘e5 19 b3 ♖c8 20 h7+ ♘h8 21 ♘g5 was the course of Povah-Hindle, England 1975, and now Polugaevsky and Gufeld recommend 21...♖b6 22 ♘xe7 ♖fe8 23 ♘g5 ♖c5 24 f4 ♘g7 ♢.

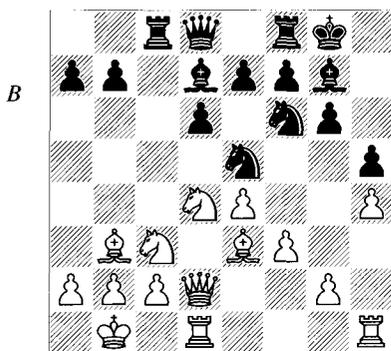
17 a3

17 ♗b1 ♖a5 is slightly better for Black, Povah-Cooper, England 1977.

Now (after 17 a3) in E.Holland-Hodgson, London 1988 Black went wrong with 17...b5?! 18 gxh5 b4 19 hxg6 bxa3 20 gxf7+ ♘xf7 21 b3 a2 22 ♗b2 ±. Instead, 17...hxg4! appears much stronger. For example, 18 h5 ♖a5 19 ♖h2 gxh5 20 ♗f5 ♘xf5 21 ♖d5 runs into the spectacular 21...♖xd5!! 22 exd5 ♖c8 23 ♖xh5 (23 c3 ♘xc3 24 bxc3 ♖xc3+ 25 ♗b2 ♖axa3! -+) 23...♖xc2+ 24 ♗d1 ♘g6 ♢.

4 13 ♔b1

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 g6 6 ♙e3 ♙g7 7 f3 ♘c6 8 ♚d2 0-0 9 ♙c4 ♙d7 10 0-0-0 ♚c8 11 ♙b3 ♘e5 12 h4 h5 13 ♔b1 (D)



A Karpov-style waiting move. White reasons that immediate assaults on the kingside will not yield him an advantage, and consequently prepares his attack by side-stepping his king to a safer square. If Black does not take action now, then White is ready to proceed with his attack on the kingside, secure in the knowledge that tricks on the c1-h6 diagonal are ruled out. Employing the course of reasoning described in the previous chapter, we can see that 13...a5 runs into 14 a4, 13...b5 simply loses a pawn, and 13...♗a5 runs into 14 ♘d5! when the e7-pawn drops. That only leaves the obvious...

13...♘c4

In actual fact 13...♚e8 is also possible here. Indeed this position can arise almost by force via the move-order 12 ♔b1! ♚e8 13 h4 h5. Black can therefore, if he so chooses, skip this chapter and elect instead always to meet ♔b1 with ...♚e8. However, those lines are more difficult for Black than the variations presented in this chapter, and consequently there is little reason to encourage White to enter them.

14 ♙xc4

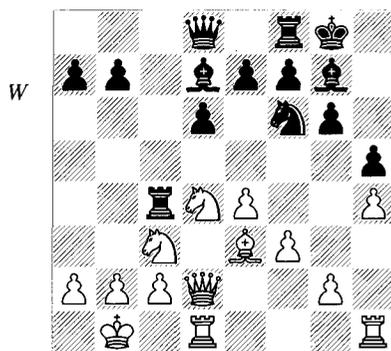
14 ♗d3 is as senseless as ever; for example, 14...♘xe3 15 ♗xe3 and now Black has a number of attractive options:

a) 15...♚c5 16 ♚he1 (16 ♗d3 ♗b8 17 ♘de2 a5 18 a4 b5 19 axb5 ♙xb5 20 ♘xb5 ♚xb5 21 ♘c3 ♚b4 22 e5 ♘d7 23 ♘d5 ♘xe5 24 ♘xe7+ ♔h7 25 ♗xd6 a4 26 ♗xb8 ♚fxb8 ♠ Campora-Martinez Martin, Dos Hermanas 1998) 16...b5 17 ♘dxb5 ♗b6 18 ♘d4 ♚b8 19 ♗d3 ♗b7 20 ♘de2 ♙c6 21 ♔a1 (21 e5!? may be better, as 21...♚xe5 allows 22 ♗xg6! although even here the absence of White's dark-squared bishop will make progress difficult for him) 21...♘d7 22 f4 a5 23 ♘d4 a4 24 ♘xc6 ♗xc6 25 ♘xa4 ♚a5 26 ♘c3 ♘c5 27 ♗c4 ♘xb3+ 28 cxb3 ♚c5 29 ♗d3 ♙xc3 30 bxc3 ♚xc3 31 ♗d5 ♗c7 32 ♚e2 ♚c1+ 33 ♔b2 ♗c3+ 0-1 Pritchett-Miles, British Ch (Torquay) 1982.

b) 15...♗a5 16 ♘de2 ♗c5 17 ♗d3 b5 was fine for Black in Yilmaz-Pazos, Dubai OL 1986.

c) 15...♗b6 16 ♘d3 ♗c5 17 ♗g5 ♔h7 18 f4 (18 ♘de2?! b5 19 ♘d5 ♘xd5 20 ♗xd5 ♗f2 21 ♘f4 ♙h6 ♠ Modena-Lotti, corr. 1980) 18...♙h6 19 ♗g3 b5 20 ♚c1 e5 21 fxe5 dxe5 22 ♘f3 ♙f4 23 ♘g5+ ♔g7 24 ♗f3 ♙g4 ♠ Larsen-Westertinen, Halle 1963.

14...♚xc4 (D)



White has four main options (of which only the latter two offer any real chance of an advantage) and a host of minor alternatives:

- | | | |
|-----------|----------------|----|
| A: | 15 g4?! | 50 |
| B: | 15 b3 | 52 |
| C: | 15 ♘b3 | 53 |
| D: | 15 ♘de2 | 56 |

Minor alternatives:

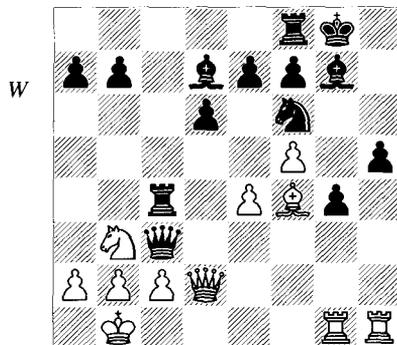
a) 15 ♖dg1. This lateral shuffle should be looking rather familiar by now. As may be clear from earlier examples in the text, an early ♖dg1 in the Yugoslav Attack is invariably indicative that the player with the white pieces does not know the theory and, having committed himself to entering into what is known to be a heavily attacking variation, now wishes to minimize his risks by bolstering his support for the kingside pawns before commencing the attack. As with the examples in previous chapters, this too shall prove far too slow. 15... ♖a5 and now:

a1) 16 ♖de2 ♖fc8 17 ♖h6 ♖h8 18 g4 ♖e6 19 e5 ♖xg4 20 fxg4 ♖xe5 21 ♖h3 ♖xc3 22 a3 ♖xc2 23 ♖xc2 ♖xc2 24 ♖xc2 ♖xg4 25 ♖e3 ♖xe2 0-1 Kawaciukova-Kuliabin, Budapest 1994.

a2) Similarly bad is 16 ♖b3 ♖c7 17 ♖h6 (17 g3?! ♖c8 18 ♖g2 b5 19 ♖hg1 b4 20 ♖d5 ♖xd5 21 exd5 ♖f5 22 ♖c1 a5 ♣ Kalvokore-sis-Pantelidis, Ermoupoli 1996) 17... ♖xh6! 18 ♖xh6 ♖xc3 19 bxc3 ♖c8 (Black now possesses dangerous compensation on the queenside; note that the weak position of the white bishop on b3 {which might ordinarily be attacked by ...a5-a4} has been exchanged for a further weakening of the c4-square and White's pawns on c2 and a2; it is also noteworthy that White's kingside attack loses much of its force when stripped of the support of the b3-bishop) 20 ♖d2 a5 21 g4 hxg4 22 h5 a4! (White's attack has failed to draw blood on the kingside, and now he must tend to his shattered queenside structure) 23 hxg6? (White attempts to bluff his way to counterplay; instead it was necessary to move the b3-knight, but as Schneider points out, Black would in any case be clearly better after 23 ♖d4 ♖xc3 24 ♖xc3 ♖xc3 25 hxg6 fxg6 ♣) 23...axb3 24 g7 bxa2+ 25 ♖b2 ♖h7 (Black has a winning advantage, which he now converted into victory with a strong series of moves) 26 ♖g2 gxf3 27 ♖gh2 f6! 28 ♖xh7 a1 ♖+! 29 ♖xa1 (29 ♖xa1 ♖a8+ 30 ♖b2 ♖b6+ 31 ♖c1 ♖a1#) 29... ♖b6+! (cutting the a1-rook off from the kingside) 30 ♖c1 ♖xh7 31 ♖h2+ ♖xg7 0-1 Petrasch-Kurz, Ansbach 1985.

a3) 16 g4 hxg4! (16... ♖xc3 17 bxc3 hxg4!?) 17 h5 gxh5 appears to be viable for Black in this position on account of the activity of the black queen and rook. Play might continue 18

♖b3 (18 fxg4 ♖xg4 19 ♖f5 ♖xc3 20 ♖xc3 ♖xc3 21 bxc3 e6 22 ♖xd6 ♖d8 23 e5 ♖d7 ♣) 18... ♖e5 19 f4 ♖e6 20 f5 ♖e5 21 ♖f4 ♖xc3!! (D).



22 bxc3 ♖xe4 gives Black fantastic compensation for the queen. For example, 23 ♖d3 ♖xc3+ 24 ♖b2 ♖xf4 leaves Black with two bishops and four pawns for the queen (he is actually material up!), and a powerful ongoing attack to boot.

b) 15 ♖d5 ♖xd5 16 exd5 ♖b6 (16... ♖c7 has also been employed effectively, in particular by GM Marin, but my preference is for the text-move) 17 c3 ♖a5 18 g4 (18 ♖b3? ♖f5+ 19 ♖a1 ♖xa2+! 20 ♖xa2 ♖a4# is a nice trick that was first pointed out by Sapi and Schneider in their 1989 ground-breaking work on the Yugoslav Attack; 18 ♖e2 ♖fc8 19 g4 ♖xd5 20 gxh5 ♖f5+ 21 ♖xf5 ♖xf5+ 22 ♖d3 ♖xh5 ♣ Nikogosian-Dautov, Leningrad 1982) 18... ♖xd5 19 gxh5 ♖xh5 20 ♖g5 e5 21 ♖e2 exd4! 22 ♖xc4 dxc3 23 bxc3 ♖c8 24 ♖e2 ♖f5+ 25 ♖b2 ♖xc3 0-1 Pogats-J.Sax, Hungarian Ch 1972.

c) 15 ♖d3 ♖c8 and then:

c1) 16 ♖he1 ♖a5 17 ♖b3 ♖c7 18 ♖g5! (18 ♖d4 would be a more consistent approach) 18... ♖e6 19 ♖d4 ♖c4 20 ♖d2 was fine for Black in Rieke-Fleck, Bundesliga 1983/4, who eventually won.

c2) 16 ♖de2 is a move that has been advocated by Yudasin with the idea of playing 17 ♖d4 and then either launching a kingside attack with 18 g4, or with a view to consolidating White's position in the centre with 18 ♖f4 and ♖d5. The continuation 16... ♖e6 17 b3! (17 ♖f4 ♖c4) 17...a6 is assessed by Yudasin as unclear, but I doubt Black has anything to fear from this variation.

d) 15 ♖e2 should not worry Black; e.g., 15...♙xc3 (for those who would prefer to exercise a little more restraint at such an early point in the game, 15...♖c8!? is a viable alternative; e.g., 16 ♗d2 ♗e8!? 17 ♖f2 a6 18 ♘de2 b5 19 ♗d4 e5! 20 ♗e3 b4! ♞ Smajlović-Abbasova, Tallinn girls Ech 1997; although Black was able to demonstrate an effective strategy in this game without sacrificing the exchange on c3, I sincerely doubt I would have shown the same restraint) 16 bxc3 ♖c7 17 ♗d2 ♗c8 18 ♖a1 a6 19 ♖b1 e5 20 ♘b3 ♗e6 21 ♗hd1 d5 22 exd5 ♘xd5 23 c4 e4+ → Salazar-Love, Dubai OL 1986.

e) 15 ♘ce2 is far too restrained to prove a source of consternation for Black. 15...b5 16 c3 (16 ♗h6?! e5 17 ♗xg7 ♖xg7 18 ♘b3 d5 19 exd5 ♗f5 ♞ is old analysis by Gufeld dating back to the 1970s) 16...♖b8 17 ♘b3 ♗fc8 18 ♘ec1 ♖c7!? (18...b4! looks rather tempting to me, but there is no need to rush) 19 ♘d3 a5 ♞. We are following Tsheshkovsky-Gufeld, Daugavpils 1978, which eventually ended in a draw, but most Dragon theorists agree that Black is comfortably better in this position.

A)

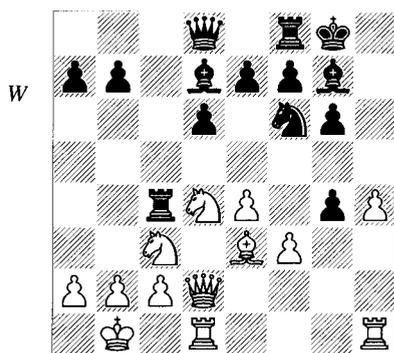
15 g4?!

As a sprightly junior I was constantly confronted with pleasant surprises such as 15 g4. Indeed so persistent were my opponents in their attempts to throw material at my kingside, that I recall speculating whether the notion of calculating variations to a decisive conclusion escaped them quite entirely. Perhaps these were merely the precocious speculations of youth, yet nonetheless, even today I would maintain that those facing the Dragon are often overcome by the temptation to flirt with the absurd by simply lurching forward on the kingside, inspired by a vague recollection that Fisher opined that such a method should constitute the refutation of the Dragon. Not that I am complaining.

15...hxg4! (D)

Of course... well, I suppose after my last remarks I would appear rather silly suddenly to switch to the defensive. White now has two options:

- A1: 16 f4** 50
A2: 16 h5 50



A1)

16 f4 ♙xc3!?

Perhaps this is a little premature. My preference would more likely lean towards 16...♖c7 preparing a sacrifice on c3 that will force White to recapture with a pawn and, most likely, take the queens off into a favourable ending. Thereafter 17 h5?! ♙xc3! looks very good for Black: 18 ♖xc3 ♖xc3 19 bxc3 ♘xe4 ♞; Black should win this ending very comfortably. A similar theme appeared in an old correspondence game: 16...♖a5 17 ♘b3 ♖a6!? 18 h5 ♗fc8 19 hxg6?! ♙xc3 0-1 Buzzoni-Fiori, corr. 1987.

17 ♖xc3 ♘xe4 18 ♖b3

Thus far we have been following Rachel-Flasik, Zilina 1997. Now 18...♖b6 appears to give Black a good ending. For example: 19 ♘f5 (19 ♖xb6 axb6 should be considered a good ending for Black despite the doubled b-pawns; the most influential factors in the position are White's shattered kingside pawns and poor coordination, and Black's dynamic potential to generate a set of connected passed pawns on the kingside) 19...♘c3+! 20 ♖xc3 (20 bxc3 ♖xb3+ 21 axb3 ♗xf5 22 ♗d4 ♗c8 once again leaves Black with superior chances in the ending) 20...♗xf5 21 ♗xb6 ♗xc3 22 ♗a7 ♗f6 ♞.

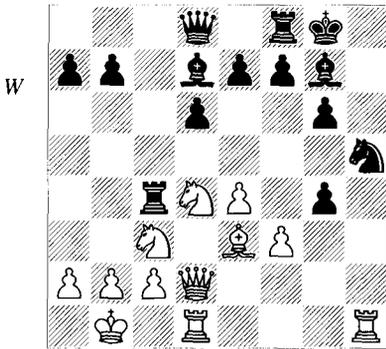
A2)

16 h5

Once again White is seized by the creative impetus (spot the sarcasm?).

16...♘h5 (D)

Another easy move for Black, but things are about to become a little trickier as practical play has seen White undertake no fewer than five courses of attack from this position.



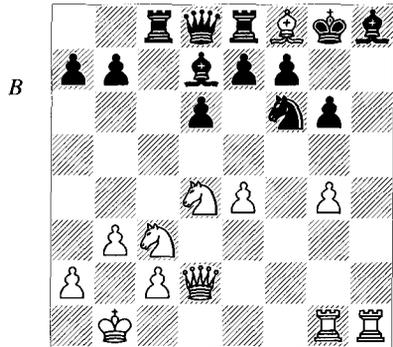
a) 17 ♗f5!? proved successful in Heymann-Werner, Dresden 1996, but after 17...♙xf5 18 exf5 ♖xc3 19 bxc3 ♗a5 20 ♙d4, instead of 20...♙xd4 as played in the game, Schneider points out that Black is at least equal after 20...♗xf5 21 ♙xg7 ♖xg7 22 fxg4 ♗xg4 23 ♗e3 ♖e8 24 ♗xa7 ♗f3 ♣.

b) 17 ♖xh5!!. Only kidding, this just loses to 17...gxh5. Schulze-Busch, Niederrhein 1997 now continued 18 ♖h1 e5!? 19 ♗de2?! gxf3 20 ♗g3 ♙g4 21 ♗xh5 ♙xh5 22 ♙h6? (22 ♖xh5 is obviously a better try, but in any case White is not getting anywhere fast: 22...♗d7 23 ♙h6 f6 24 ♗d5 ♗g4 25 ♖h1 ♗g2 26 ♗d1 ♖xc2 puts an abrupt end to White's antics) 22...♖d4 23 ♗h2 ♙g6 24 ♙xg7 ♖xg7 25 ♗h6+ ♖f6 26 ♗h4+ ♖e6 27 ♗g4+ ♖e7 28 ♗d5+ ♖xd5 29 exd5 when Black was simply a piece and two pawns up.

c) With 17 ♖dgl White attempts to bring his last piece into the attack, the underlying concept being to orchestrate a sacrifice on h5 and then somehow crack open the g-file (perhaps by throwing in a subsequent ♗f5 and ♙h6 to loosen the barricades) thereby unleashing the latent potential of the g1-rook. A further point which should be noted is that White is not threatening to successfully capture the black pawn on g4. Now:

c1) 17...♖e8?!. I rather like this little move: Black calmly takes a move out to protect his e7-pawn (in the event of a subsequent ♗d5 from White), provide the king with an escape square in the unlikely event that White should be able to deliver check on h7 with his queen, and to free the dark-squared bishop to retreat to h8 should White find a way to play ♙h6, threatening an exchange of dark-squared bishops. The reason I have described the move as

dubious is because, in this exact position, it is simply too slow. 18 b3!. If White is going to continue his attack successfully on the king-side, it is a prerequisite that he displaces the black rook from c4, thereby freeing the e3-bishop from the obligation of protecting the white knight on d4. 18...♖c8 19 fxg4 ♗f6 20 ♙h6 ♙h8 21 ♙f8!! (D).



This represents a common method of attack for White in the Yugoslav Attack: by sacrificing the dark-squared bishop White suddenly opens the h-file, catching Black unawares. Black cannot move his own bishop from h8 because it has nowhere to go, and by the same measure Black cannot avoid White sacrificing the h1-rook for the Dragon bishop, thereby removing Black's key defensive piece. 21...♖xf8 22 ♖xh8+! ♖xh8 23 ♗h6+ ♖g8 24 ♖h1 ♗h5 25 gxh5 g5 and now instead of 26 ♗xg5+, as in Zvan-Cetina, Bled 2001, 26 ♗f3! provides a satisfying conclusion to an impeccably played attack; e.g., 26...f6 27 ♗xg5 fxg5 28 ♗xg5+ ♖h7 29 ♗g6+ ♖h8 30 ♗h6+ ♖g8 31 ♖g1+ ♖f7 32 ♗g6#.

c2) With 17...♗c8!, Black reinforces his protection over the g4-pawn (thereby hopefully averting the type of disaster we witnessed in line 'c1') and amplifies the pressure on the c-file. In particular, note that Black is now threatening to execute the standard counter-attacking measure of sacrificing on c3, but at the same time has temporarily precluded the b3 manoeuvre utilized by White in the last example to reduce Black's pressure on the d4-knight by displacing the c4-rook. 18 ♗d5 (18 fxg4 ♙xg4 19 ♗d5 ♖e8 20 ♖h4 e6 21 ♗c3 f5 22 ♗db5 ♗c6 ♣ Hardicsay-Herndl, Oberwart 1984) 18...♖e8 19 fxg4 ♙xg4 20 c3 and now instead of 20...e5?!

as played in Struk-Bozinović, Budapest 2000, I rather like the look of the unusual 20...f5!?, cementing Black's position on the kingside, or perhaps 20...e6!? with the idea of 21 ♖xg4 exd5, when suddenly the e8-rook is transformed from defender to attacker!

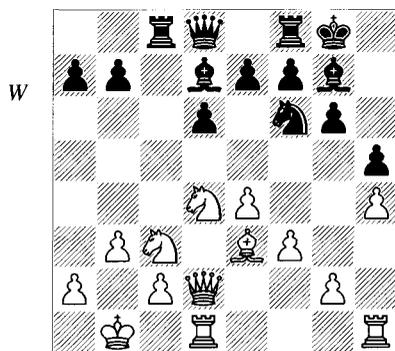
d) 17 fxc4 allows Black to transpose to line 'c2' with 17...♗xg4 18 ♖d1 ♖c8 19 ♘d5 ♗e8.

e) 17 ♘d5 and now 17...gxf3 18 ♘f5 ♗xf5 19 exf5 e6 20 ♗g5 ♖d7 21 ♖xh5 ♗d4 22 ♘f6+ ♗xf6 23 ♗xf6 gxh5 24 ♖g5+ 1-0 was Niemela-Pirttilahti, Vantaa 1991, but Black can improve with 17...e6 18 fxc4 exd5 19 gxh5 dxe4 20 ♖h2 g5 21 h6 ♗f6 when, although the position remains unclear, Black's position appears solid.

B)

15 b3 ♖c8 (D)

15...♖c5? is a natural enough response that runs into the nasty trick 16 ♘e6! fxe6 17 ♗xc5, when 17...dxc5 is inadvisable on account of 18 e5!.



Now:

B1: 16 ♘de2 52
B2: 16 ♘d5 52

B1)

16 ♘de2 b5 17 ♗d4

17 ♘d5 ♘xd5 18 exd5 a5 19 ♗d4 ♗xd4 20 ♖xd4 ♖c7 was quite comfortable for Black in Horvat-Brkić, Pula 2001.

17...e6!

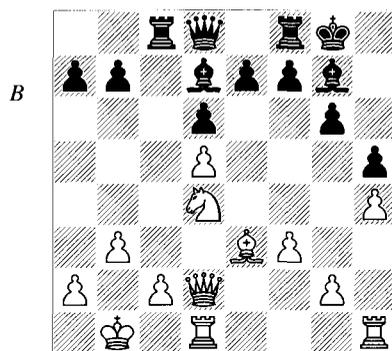
Generally speaking it is rarely a good idea to play ...e6 so early in the Dragon because it risks leaving the d6-pawn chronically weak.

However, in this particular position Black is fully justified: by playing ...e6 Black takes control of the d5-square, thereby removing it from the white knights and making it difficult for White to force an exchange of dark-squared bishops – something which most would consider a necessity now that the dark squares surrounding the white king have been weakened. Furthermore, having circumvented White's only plan in the position, there is a sudden and noticeable difficulty in trying to formulate a new plan for White: a kingside attack is largely ruled out, a policy of exchanging pieces in the centre seems impossible to implement with any effect, and the consequences of bursting open the centre seem favourable only to Black. By contrast, other than the d6-pawn Black has no real weaknesses, and his pieces are all well positioned to continue the attack on the queenside.

18 ♖c1 (18 ♗xf6 ♖xf6 19 ♖xd6 ♗fd8 ♠ A.Schneider) 18...♖a5 (18...a5!? also looks good for Black) 19 ♗e3 ♖a3 20 ♘d1 e5 21 ♗h6 ♗xh6 22 ♖xh6 ♖c6 23 c3 d5 24 ♘f2 dxe4 25 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 26 fxe4 ♗e6 27 ♖c2 ♗xb3 28 axb3 ♖a6 → Gagliardi-Basin, Rome 1990.

B2)

16 ♘d5 ♘xd5 17 exd5 (D)



This position is similar to the line where White plays 15 ♘d5, which is at least equal for Black in any case. However, the additional weakening of the queenside dark squares enhances Black's counterplay.

17...b5 (also good is 17...♖c7 18 c4 b5 19 cxb5 ♖b7 20 ♗h6 ♖xd5 21 ♗xg7 ♘xg7 22 ♖b2 ♘g8 23 ♖he1 ♗fe8 24 a4 a6 25 bxa6 ♖a5

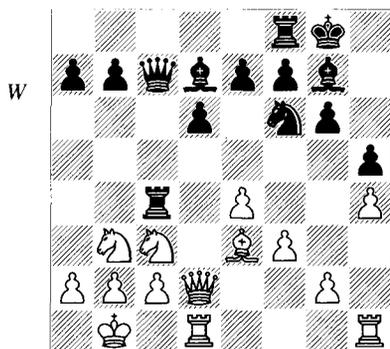
26 f4 ♖b8 ♠ Murey-Kudrin, Beersheba 1984)
 18 g4 ♖c5 19 ♗e6 ♖xd5 20 ♗xd8 ♖xd2 21
 ♖xd2 hxg4 22 ♗b7!? ♗c6 23 ♗xd6 exd6 24
 ♖xd6 ♗xf3 25 ♖f1 ♖e8 26 ♗d4 ♗xd4 27 ♖xd4
 f5 ♠/♠ Murey-Mestel, Hastings 1982/3.

C)

15 ♗b3

This is the first of the two main lines.

15...♖c7 (D)



16 ♗d4!

The optimum placement for White's dark-squared bishop is opposing Black's bishop on the long diagonal. Other moves promise little:

a) 16 ♗h6!? ♗xh6 17 ♖xh6 ♖c8 leaves Black comfortably positioned for action on the queenside: 18 ♖d2 b5 19 ♖c1 a5 20 g4?! a4 21 ♗d4 ♖c5 22 ♗f5?! (22 ♗ce2 ♠) 22...gxf5! → 23 gxf5 ♖xc3 24 bxc3 ♖xc3 25 ♖h6 a3 26 ♖cg1+ ♗g4 27 ♖c1 ♖c4 0-1 Ferreiro-Komljenović, San Sebastian 1993.

b) 16 ♗g5 ♗e6 and then:

b1) White struggles after 17 ♗h6?! ♖c8 18 ♗xg7 ♗xg7 19 ♗d4 ♗d7 20 ♖c1 ♖b6 21 ♗b3?! a5 22 ♗d5 ♗xd5 23 ♖xd5 a4 24 ♗d2 ♖d4 ♠ Rogado-Moura, Lisbon 1993.

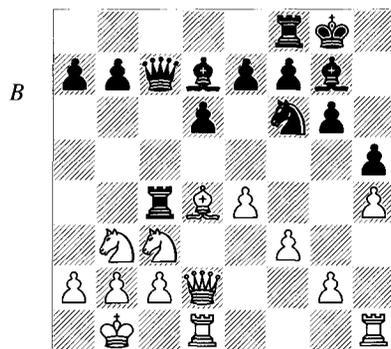
b2) 17 g4 and now 17...♖c8!? 18 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 19 gxf5 ♖xc3 20 bxc3 ♗xc3 occurred in Lidkopin-Flink, Swedish League 1988, and is cited by Golubev as "acceptable for Black". It may well be acceptable for Black, but I much prefer the look of the immediate 17...♖xc3 18 bxc3 hxg4, when White is a lot further away from demonstrating any advantage on the kingside and Black has netted the g4-pawn, shattering White's kingside and leaving the pursuance of the queenside pawns until later.

b3) 17 ♗b5 ♖b6 18 ♗5d4 ♖fc8 19 ♗e3 (19 ♗xe6!? ♖xc2! looks dangerous for White, when 20 ♖xc2?! ♖xc2 21 ♗xc2 fxe6 gives rise to a position in which Black's queen and pawn create a material balance with White's two rooks, but the black forces coordinate with great harmony and should therefore be given preference) and now:

b31) 19...♖a6 looks like a sensible option. In Elgabry-Sameeh, Tanta 2000 White now blundered with 20 ♖a5? ♖xd4! 21 ♗xd4 ♗xb3 22 ♖xa6 ♗xc2+ 23 ♗a1 bxa6, but 20 ♗xe6 ♖xc2 21 ♖a5! fxe6 22 ♖xa6 bxa6 23 ♖c1 ♖xc1+ 24 ♖xc1 ♖xc1+ 25 ♗xc1 might give White an edge in the endgame.

b32) 19...♖c7 20 ♗xe6 fxe6 21 ♖c1 and now 21...d5!? was unclear in Metz-S.Farago, Budapest 1995, which eventually ended in a very exciting draw. However, I much prefer the more reserved 21...b5, when chances remain dynamically balanced.

We now return to 16 ♗d4! (D):



16...♗c6

It is slightly unusual for Black to place his light-squared bishop on c6 in the Yugoslav Attack, if for no other reason than because it bears down on White's kingside rather than the queenside. Instead, 16...♗e6?! has long been distrusted on account of the line commencing with 17 g4 (17 ♖e3 and 17 ♖he1 have also been seen in practice, but neither should warrant particular apprehension on Black's part), but Makarychev has attempted to cast doubt upon this assessment. Now:

a) 17...♖c8 was the move originally relied upon by Dragon players, but its merits are now widely discredited: 18 gxf5 ♗xh5 19 ♖dg1 (19 ♖hg1 is also good) 19...♗h7 (the counterstrike

19...♞xc3?! yields little in this position: 20 bxc3 a5 21 ♞g5 a4 22 ♞xh5! axb3 23 cxb3 gxh5 24 ♞g1 +- Diaz-Serrano, Camaguey 1974) 20 ♟xg7 ♟xg7 21 ♞d4 ± Tukmakov-Sosonko, Amsterdam 1974.

b) Black can try 17...hxg4!?, which was Makarychev's contribution to this variation, and in his analysis in *Informator 68* he attempted to revive the entire 16...♟e6 system. 18 h5 gxh5 (18...♞xh5?? 19 ♟xg7 ♟xg7 20 ♞xh5 gxh5 21 ♞g5+ +-) 19 ♟xf6! (Schneider criticizes this move on the basis that after 19 ♞g5, 19...♞xd4 turns out {unsurprisingly, one would submit} to be bad for Black; however, simply 19...♞c8 keeps the position alive and promises Black a fair share of the chances) 19...exf6 (forced as 19...♟xf6? loses immediately to 20 ♞xh5 ♞xc3 {20...♞c8 21 ♞dh1 ♞xc3 22 ♞h2! +-} 21 ♞g5+! +-) and now:

b1) 20 ♞xh5? (this was the move analysed by Makarychev, but it is not White's best) 20...♞c8 21 ♞dh1 ♞xc3 22 bxc3 (22 ♞h2? ♟f8 ♞ lets Black slip away and consolidate) 22...♞xc3 and now:

b11) 23 ♞xc3 should, according to Makarychev, be considered a mistake on account of 23...♞xc3 24 fxg4 ♟xg4 25 ♟d5 f5! 26 ♞xd6 (26 exf5 ♟f3 ♞; 26 ♞g1! goes unmentioned by Makarychev; this looks like White's best in the position, and certainly seems to recast the assessment as one of unclear) 26...fxe4 27 ♞d8+ ♟f8 28 ♞d4 (28 ♞g1 f5 29 ♞d4 ♟f7 ♞) 28...♞g3! ♞.

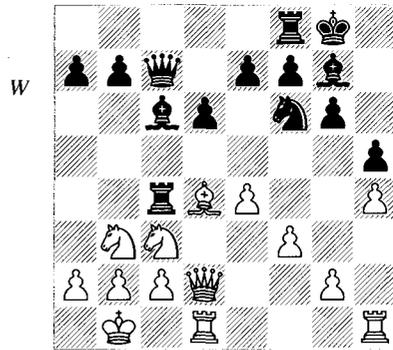
b12) 23 fxg4 ♟xg4 24 ♟d5 f5 25 ♞xc3 ♟xc3 also looks fine for Black.

b13) 23 f4 is considered best by Makarychev; e.g., 23...♞xd2 24 ♞xd2 ♟xa2+. In this position, Berelovich-Brodsky, Russia 1996 concluded in a draw, but the aforementioned analysis (published in *Informator 68*) demonstrates that some care is still required of White if he is to maintain the equilibrium. For example: 25 ♟b2? loses to 25...f5+ 26 e5 dxe5, and 25 ♟xa2 ♞xc2+ 26 ♟b3 ♞xd2 27 ♞5h4 (27 ♞g1 ♞e2 28 ♞xg4 ♞xe4 29 ♟c2 f5 30 ♞xf5 ♟f8 31 ♞fg5 ♟f6 32 ♞g8+ ♟e7 33 ♞b8 ♞b4 also appears promising for Black) 27...f5! 28 exf5 ♞g2 ♞ is also bad for White. Best appears to be 25 ♟c1!? intending f5, shutting out the dark-squared bishop; then 25...f5! 26 exf5 (26 ♞xf5 ♟e6 27 ♞g5 ♟f8 28 f5 ♟d7 29 ♞xg4 ♟a4 30

c4 ♟e5 may be White's best, although even here Black is comfortably holding his own) 26...♟d5 27 ♞g1 ♟f6 (27...♟f8?? 28 f6 +-) 28 ♞xg4+ ♟f8 looks fine for Black.

b2) John Nunn indicates that 20 ♞b5! followed by ♞xh5 is very good for White (note that White must play ♞b5 at once or else ♞b5 can be met by ...♞xc2). After ♞d4 White will be very solid on the queenside. 20...♞b6 21 ♞xh5 gxf3 22 ♞dh1 f2 23 ♞5d4 ♞xd4 24 ♞xd4 and now both 24...♞a6 25 ♞xf2 and 24...♟xa2+ 25 ♟c1 look winning for White (Nunn).

We now return to the position after 16...♟c6 (D):



17 ♞e2

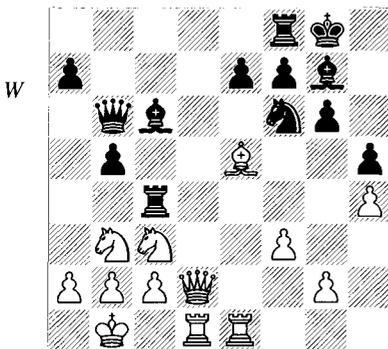
Other moves have not fared well for White:

a) 17 g4? is the most direct approach, but proves far too slow: 17...e5!. Although Black should normally refrain from this central strike, certain structural considerations justify it in this position: in return for the entombment of Black's dark-squared bishop he forces White's own dark-squared bishop from the a1-h8 diagonal, and thereby facilitates the capture on g4, shattering White's kingside pawns. Black reasons that White's forces are too poorly coordinated to pose a serious threat on the kingside, and if White fails to deliver mate, Black will simply be left with several pawns to his credit. Now:

a1) 18 ♟xa7 has been tried, but one must question if this self-indulgence can really be justified: 18...b5 19 g5!? ♞xe4 20 ♞xe4 ♞xa7 21 ♞e2?! (21 ♞xd6 or 21 ♞a5 gives White more chances to maintain the balance) 21...d5 22 ♞d6 ♞a8 +- Fernandez-Rodriguez, Havana 1984.

a2) 18 ♖e3 hxg4! 19 h5 gxf3! (this was Soltis's improvement over his earlier game Popovych-Soltis, New York 1971, which continued 19...♗xh5?! 20 ♖dg1 ♗f4 21 ♖h2 ♖c8 22 ♖xg4 b5 23 ♖h4 ∞; after the text-move White's attack promptly fails and he finds himself struggling to survive) 20 h6 (20 hxg6 fxe6 21 ♗d5 ♖xd5 22 exd5 ♗g4 → Hartmann-Mestel, The Hague 1975; 20 ♖dg1 is way too slow and runs into 20...♗xe4 →) 20...♗xe4 21 hxg7 (21 ♗xe4 ♖xe4 22 hxg7 ♖xc2 23 gxf8 ♖+ ♗xf8 24 ♗a1 ♖xd2 25 ♗xd2 ♢ Pieretti-Perilli, corr. 1985) 21...♗xd2+ 22 ♗xd2 ♖g4 23 gxf8 ♖+ ♗xf8 24 ♗b3 (24 ♖hf1 d5 25 ♗xf3 d4 26 ♖h6+ ♗g8 27 ♗e2 ♖xf3 28 ♖xf3 ♖g2 29 ♖e1 ♖c6 30 ♖g3 ♖h2 0-1 Bella-Avolio, corr. 1981; 24 ♖h3 d5 25 ♖h6+ ♗g8 26 ♗xf3 d4 27 ♗e2 ♖e4 28 ♖d2 ♖xf3 29 ♖xf3 ♖c6 30 ♖f1 g5 0-1 Popovych-Soltis, New York 1976) and now instead of 24...♗e7?! as in Plater-Ropstorff, Krakow 1938, simply 24...f2! → is immediately decisive.

b) 17 ♖he1!? b5 18 e5 (18 ♗d5 ♖xd5 19 exd5 occurred in Lupo-Pecis, Italy 1985, which White eventually won, but instead of the game continuation of 19...♖a4, which placed the rook rather offside, a more astute continuation might be 19...♖c8! 20 c3 a5 when Black is generating counterplay on the queenside, but White is well positioned in the centre; I would assess the chances as dynamically balanced) 18...dxe5 19 ♖xe5 ♖b6 (D) and then:



b1) 20 ♗d4 b4 21 ♗ce2 and now instead of the crazy 21...♗e4, which occurred in Cervellati-Lotti, corr. 1978, I rather like the idea of 21...♖d8 when White's queen comes under unpleasant pressure to take up a safer position. Unfortunately none of the squares available are

entirely optimal: 22 ♖g5 (22 ♖e3 ♖b7 23 ♗c1 ♖d5! allows Black to generate enormous activity in the centre) 22...♖a4 when 23 b3? fails to 23...♖c5 24 bxa4 ♗h7! ♢.

b2) 20 ♖d4 ♖c7 21 ♖e2 (21 ♖e5 ♖b6 22 ♖d4 ♖c7 23 ♖e5 1/2-1/2 was the peaceful conclusion to Boudre-Koch, Hilversum 1993) and now 21...e6 22 ♖e5 ♖b6 23 ♖d6 (23 ♗d2! also looks strong, when the c4-rook suddenly finds itself precariously short of safe squares) 23...♖d8 24 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 25 ♖d1 ♗d5 26 ♖xg7 ♗xg7 27 ♗e4 ♖a8 28 ♗d4 ♖b6 29 ♗g5 ♗g8 30 ♖e5 ♖c5 31 ♗a1 ♗c3 32 ♖f6 ♖xg5 33 ♗xe6 1-0 was the course of Zeziulkin-Bobras, Koszalin 1999. However, Black's play can be improved, in particular by 21...♖e8, keeping a tighter watch over his dark squares. The position then remains rather tense: White is well centralized but has no obvious course of progress, whereas Black is rapidly improving his position and has no obvious weaknesses.

c) With 17 ♖e3!?, White sets about undertaking the thematic central thrust e5, while simultaneously trying to gain time by attacking the a7-pawn. Needless to say, Black should not be distracted by the apparent 'threat' of White voluntarily opening the a-file. The most recent example of this line provides a convincing demonstration of how Black should dispatch such 'creative' efforts from the white forces: 17...♖c8! (17...♗d7 was seen in King-Hentschel, corr. 1985, but White quickly gained the upper hand with the obvious 18 ♖xg7 ♗xg7 19 g4!) 18 ♖xa7?! (consistent, yet certainly less than virtuous) 18...♗d7!. It transpires that the a7-pawn was not unprotected after all: Black now threatens 19...b6, winning White's bishop, and the only available retreat is 19 ♖d4 which was met with 19...e5 20 ♖a7 b6 ♢ in Dimitrov-Korneev, Vendrell 1996.

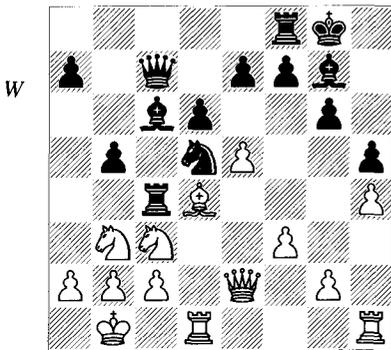
17...b5 18 e5

18 g4?! e5! 19 ♖e3 hxg4 20 ♗d2 ♖xc3 21 bxc3 gxf3 22 ♖xf3 ♖d7!? (22...♗xe4!? 23 ♗xe4 f5 ♢ appears to be even stronger than the game continuation) 23 ♖dg1 ♖xc3 24 h5 ♖c8 25 hxg6 ♖xc2+ 26 ♗a1 ♖e6 27 gxf7+ ♗f8 28 ♗b3 ♖c3+ 29 ♗b1 ♖xb3 30 axb3 ♖xb3+ 31 ♗a1 ♖c2 0-1 Bella-Petrillo, corr. 1984.

18...♗d5! (D)

18...dxe5?! 19 ♖xe5 ♖b6 20 ♗d2 ♖c5 (the alternative 20...♖b4 21 a3 was even worse for

Black in Moraza-Le Blancq, Thessaloniki OL 1984) 21 ♖d4 b4 22 ♜b3 was rather difficult for Black in Van der Poel-Van Haastert, Enschede 1996.



19 exd6 ♖xd6 20 ♜xd5 ♗xd5 21 ♗xg7

21 ♖d2 e6 22 ♗xg7 ♜xg7 23 ♜d4 ♖fc8 24 g4 ♖h8! 25 ♜xb5 ♖b4 26 ♜a3 and now, rather than 26...♗xf3?! 27 ♜xc4 ♖xc4 28 b3 ♖c5 29 g5 ♖c8 1/2-1/2 Kaplan-Miles, Hastings 1975/6, Sapi & Schneider correctly pointed out that 26...♖xd2! 27 ♖xd2 ♖f4 28 g5 and now 28...♖xf3 guarantees Black an advantage in the endgame. I would have instinctively played 28...♗xf3, keeping the rook on f4 to prevent White from playing ♜c4, while at the same time tying the h1-rook to the protection of the h4-pawn, but both captures are good.

21...♜xg7 22 ♖e3 e6 23 ♖xa7 ♖a4 24 ♖e3 ♖fa8 25 a3 ♖g3!

Now:

a) According to Miles, if 26 ♖g5 then Black regroups with 26...♖c7, intending 27...b4, with growing pressure on the queenside.

b) 26 ♜c5 ♖xh4 27 ♖xh4 ♖xh4 28 ♜d7 ♖d8? (28...♖c8 is stronger) 29 ♖e5+? (Nunn points out that 29 ♖c3+! is very good for White) 29...♜h6 30 f4 ♗xg2 31 ♖d2 ♗c6 32 ♜c5 f6 33 ♖e3 ♖xd2 34 ♖xd2 ♖h1+ 0-1 Tsheskovsky-Miles, Riga IZ 1979.

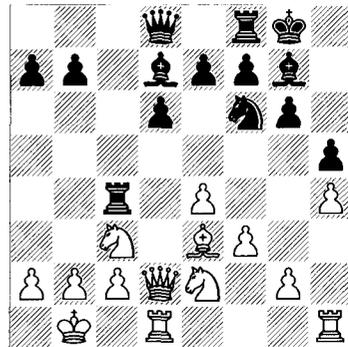
D)

15 ♜de2 (D)

This is the second main line.

With this move White adopts a far more positional approach, and one that has found favour with the likes of GMs Anand, Glek, Yudasin and, in particular, Patrick Wolff. By

B



retreating the knight to e2 White fortifies his grip on the centre and precludes Black's most common defensive resource, the exchange sacrifice on c3. Having stabilized the position White will set about either strengthening his grip on the centre, via ♜f4-d5, play for an attack on the kingside via ♗d4 followed by g4, or seek to exchange off the Dragon bishop via ♗h6, with a view to gradually suppressing any counterplay on the queenside.

15...b5!

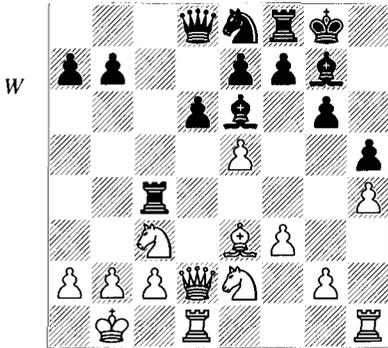
Practice has demonstrated that this is clearly the main line, but Black does have alternatives.

a) Note that 15...♖c7?! is dubious in this position on account of 16 b3! ♖c6 17 ♜d5 ♜xd5 18 exd5, when 18...♖xc2?! 19 ♖xc2 ♗f5 20 ♖d3 +- proved decisively favourable to White in Glek-Kotsur, USSR Cht (Azov) 1991.

b) 15...♗e6, although relatively unexplored, has scored well in practice. For example:

b1) 16 ♜f4 and now 16...♖c8 17 g4 ♜h8 18 gxh5 ♜xh5 19 ♜xh5 gxh5 20 ♖hg1 ♗xc3 21 ♗d4+ 1-0 was Armino-Glaser, Germany 1995, but Black's play was terrible. A superior course of development would be 16...♖d7, followed by 17...♖fc8, with plenty of counterplay on the queenside. It should perhaps be noted at this point that, as a general rule, where White adopts a strategy of infiltrating the d5-square with a knight, the black queen is rarely well-placed in the Dragon on c7, b6 or c8. On c7 or b6 the queen risks being harassed by the c3/f4-knight via the manoeuvre ♗xf6 followed by ♜d5, and on c8 the queen fails to protect the e7-point, meaning that White can occasionally add momentum to his attack via a timely ♜d5, which consequently forces Black to take time out from his counter-attacking or defensive manoeuvres to defend the e7-point.

b2) 16 e5 ♖e8 (D) and then:

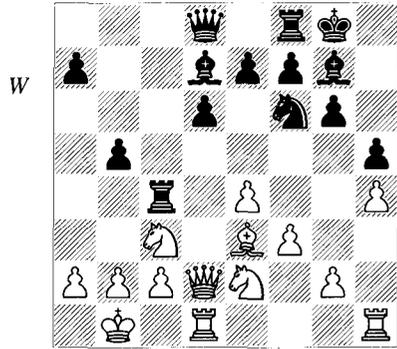


b21) 17 exd6 ♖xd6 18 ♗h6 ♖a5 was comfortable for Black in Petschar-Schneider, Vienna 1982, which continued 19 ♗xg7 ♖xg7 20 ♖f4 ♖fc8! 21 ♖xe6+ fxe6 22 ♖e2 ♖f5 23 ♖d4 ♖f6 24 c3 e5 25 ♖c2 ♖xh4. Sapi & Schneider assess this position as unclear, whereas Mayer believes it to be better for Black. I first prepared this line when I was 15 years old and, looking back at my notes, I concluded that I preferred Black in this position. Now I am rather undecided – yes, Black is a pawn up, but he suffers from severe structural weaknesses, and following 26 ♖he1 White appears to have good compensation in the form of the weak pawn on e5 (which ties down the black queen), the slightly misplaced rook on h4, and the weakness of the d5-square, which may soon provide an outpost for the white queen or a troublesome white knight, via the manoeuvre ♖e3/b4-d5, after which the e7-pawn may also prove to be a weakness.

b22) 17 ♗h6 ♗xe5! (a familiar theme: White lunges forward with ♗h6, but Black elegantly side-steps the threatened exchange of bishops, off-loading the clumsy f8-rook in return for the acquisition of unrivalled dominance on the h8-a1 diagonal) 18 ♗xf8 ♖xf8 19 ♖c3 (19 b3!?) 19... ♖a5 20 ♖d4? and now instead of 20... ♖c7 21 ♖xe6+ 1/2-1/2 Sax-Sosonko, Wijk aan Zee 1981, simply 20... ♗xd4! is winning for Black: 21 ♖xd4 ♖xc3 22 ♖xc3 ♖xa2+ 23 ♖c1 ♖a1+ 24 ♖d2 ♖xh1 25 ♗e4 ♖f6 0-1 Salamero Pelayo-Gallego Jimenez, Zaragoza 1997.

We return to 15...b5! (D).

White now has three alternate approaches to choose from, as well as a number of minor alternatives:



| | | |
|------------|---------|----|
| D1: | 16 e5!? | 58 |
| D2: | 16 ♖f4 | 58 |
| D3: | 16 ♗h6 | 59 |

Otherwise:

a) 16 ♖d5 ♖xd5 17 exd5 ♗f5 (17... ♖a8!?) is an interesting idea in this position, preventing 18 ♗d4 on account of the threat of 18... ♖xd5, and with the idea of proceeding 18 ♖c1 ♖fc8 ♖ followed by 19... ♗f5 with a very nice position indeed) 18 ♖c1 e6! 19 ♖d4! (19 dxe6 ♖f6! gives Black a dangerous attack) 19... ♖f6! 20 dxe6 ♖xd4 21 exf7+ ♖xf7 22 ♗xd4 ♖xd4 ♖ Saborido Bua-Cubero Ferreiro, La Coruña 1999.

b) 16 g4 was a success in its one and only outing to date, but Black's play can be improved: 16...b4 (16...hxg4! 17 e5 gxf3 18 exf6 fxe2 19 ♖xe2 ♗xf6 just looks very good for Black) 17 ♖d5 ♖xd5 18 exd5 hxg4 19 h5 gxf3 20 ♖d4 ♖c7?! (20... ♖a5! looks better, when White has problems with his d5-pawn) 21 b3 ♖c3 22 ♗h6 ♖c8 23 ♗xg7 ♖xg7 24 hxg6 fxg6 25 ♖dg1 ♗e8 26 ♖e6+ 1-0 Hernandez-Lozano Martin, Malaga 2001.

c) 16 ♗g5?! has had just a few outings, with little success; for example, 16...b4 17 ♖d5 ♖xd5 18 exd5 ♗f5 19 ♖c1 ♖b8 20 ♖g3 b3 21 ♖a1 bxc2 0-1 Sommer-Munoz, Erevan wom OL 1996.

d) 16 ♗d4 proved popular for a while until Tiviakov issued the fantastic response 16...e5! 17 ♗e3 (17 ♗xa7?! is adequately countered by 17... ♖a5 ♖ when Black's queenside counterplay more than compensates for the slight material deficit) 17...b4 18 ♖d5 ♖xd5 19 ♖xd5 ♖c6 (Wolff believes that this position is already slightly better for Black, while the alternative approach, 19... ♗e6 20 ♖xd6 ♖a5 21 ♖c1 ♖fc8

22 ♖b3 ♖b5, has also been assessed as favourable to Black) and here:

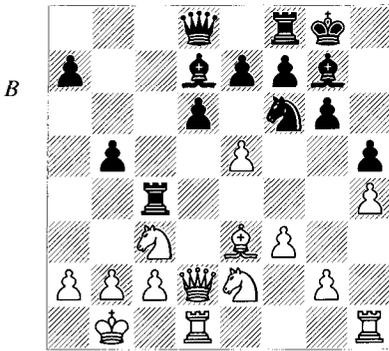
d1) 20 ♖d2 ♖a5 21 c4 ♜xc4 22 ♖d5 and now rather than 22...♜c7, which eventually led to a draw in Yudasin-Lahav, Israel 1996, the more active 22...♙b5 followed by 23...♜fc8 gives Black clearly better chances.

d2) 20 c4 ♖c7 21 b3 (if 21 c5 then 21...♙e6 22 cxd6 ♖b7 23 ♖d3 ♙c4!? 24 ♖d2 ♜d8 is clearly better for Black) 21...a5 22 ♜d2 (22 c5 ♖a7 23 ♖d2 a4 24 cxd6 ♖a6 gives Black an ongoing attack) 22...a4 23 ♜c1 ♙e6 24 ♖d3 ♜c8 25 ♜cc2 ♖a5 26 ♖c1 ♖a8 (26...♙f8!? intending 27...♖a8 is interesting) 27 bxa4 ♖xa4 28 ♖b3 (28 ♖b3 ♙f8 29 ♙f2 ♖a6 wins for Black) 28...♖a6 (28...♖a5 29 ♖d3 ♜ac8 30 ♖b2 ♢) 29 ♖xb4 and Black has a pleasant choice: 29...♙xc4 30 ♜b2 ♙f8 31 ♜dc2 d5 ♢ Anand-Tiviakov, Tilburg 1992, or 29...♙h6!? 30 ♖b3 (the only move; 30 ♙xh6 runs into 30...♙b6 -+) 30...♙xe3 31 ♖xe3 ♙xc4 ♢.

e) 16 b3 ♜c8 transposes to Line B1 above.

D1)

16 e5! (D)



This represents a rather dangerous option for White.

16...dxe5

16...♙e8 is an obvious alternative for Black that has never been tried. Liberzon gave 17 exd6 (17 ♙h6 ♙xe5! ♢ is enthusiastically professed by Liberzon, not that I disagree with him) 17...♖xd6 18 ♙h6 as slightly better for White, which looks about right.

17 ♙g5

17 ♖e4 ♖xe4 18 fxe4 and now rather than 18...♜c7, as in Figiel-Karpik, Naleczow 1986

(which appears to be solid enough in any case), I have contemplated whether Black can get away with the pawn-grab 18...♙xe4!? with the idea of 19 ♖xd7 ♖xd7 20 ♜xd7 ♜xe3, or 19 ♖d3 ♖a8 20 ♖c3 ♜d4!? 21 ♙xd4 exd4 22 ♖xb5 e5, when Black's central pawn-mass and bishop-pair offer him tremendous compensation for the exchange.

17...b4!?

This move may represent an important development in this variation. Previously 17...♜c7 had been the only move played. Then 18 ♙xf6 exf6! (18...♙xf6?! 19 g4 is generally considered to be clearly better for White) 19 g4 ♖e8 20 gxh5 ♙e6 21 ♜dg1 b4 (21...f5!? was recommended by Hartston, but I am by no means convinced that it is superior to the text-move) 22 ♖e4 f5 23 h6 fxe4 (23...♙h8 24 h7+ is good for White) 24 hxg7 ♖xg7 25 h5 ♙xa2+!? (25...♙h8?! 26 hxg6 fxg6 27 ♜xh8 ♖xh8 28 fxe4 ±) 26 ♖xa2 ♖a4+ 27 ♖b1 ♜d8 28 ♖xd8?! (this leads to a draw, but Hartston pointed out that 28 ♖d4! may continue the white attack: 28...♜xd4 29 ♖h2 and now 29...♖f6! is given by Miles and Moskow as the only move to keep the game alive, when 30 hxg6 b3! 31 ♖h8+ ♖e6 32 cxb3 ♖xb3 33 ♖e8+ ♖f6 34 ♖h8+ leads to a perpetual check) 28...♖xc2+ 29 ♖a1 ♖a4+ 30 ♖b1 ♖c2+ 1/2-1/2 Liberzon-Miles, Haifa OL 1976.

18 ♖d5

If 18 ♙xf6 then Black can interject with 18...bxc3! 19 ♖xd7 (19 ♖xc3 ♜d4! is much better for Black) 19...♖b6 20 ♖xc3 ♜b8 21 b3 exf6 ♢.

18...♖xd5 19 ♖xd5 ♜c7

♢ Rettore-Bonaccorsi, Saint Vincent 1999.

D2)

16 ♖f4 b4 17 ♖cd5 ♖xd5 18 ♖xd5 ♙e6

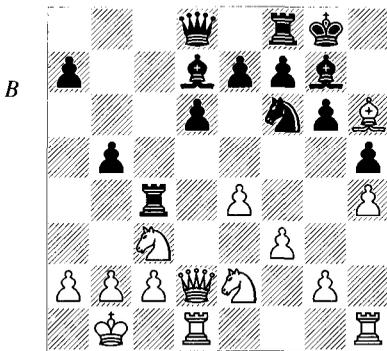
Now:

a) 19 ♙g5 should be met by 19...♙xd5 20 exd5 ♖c7 when 21 ♜he1?! runs into the fantastic 21...♙c3!. Kjetzæe-Geisler, 2nd Bundesliga 1988/9 continued 22 ♜xe7 (22 bxc3 bxc3 23 ♖c1 ♜b8+ 24 ♖a1 ♖a4 -+ is rather embarrassing for White) 22...♙xd2 23 ♜xc7 ♜xc7 24 ♙xd2 a5 25 ♙f4 ♜d7 26 c3 bxc3 27 bxc3 ♜e8 28 ♜d2 ♜e1+ 29 ♖b2 ♖f8 30 ♖a3 ♖e7 31 ♜b2 ♜c7 32 ♖a4 ♜c4+ 0-1.

b) 19 ♖h6 represents a more principled approach. 19...♙xd5 20 ♙xg7! (20 exd5 ♖c7 21 ♙xg7 ♗xg7 22 ♖e2 a5 = 23 b3?! ♛c3 24 ♛d4 ♛c8 ♢ Torre-Antonio, Manila 1998) 20...♗xg7 21 ♖xd5?! (correctly assessed by Schulz as dubious in *ChessBase Magazine*; 21 exd5 is superior – then White is perhaps a touch better due to his space advantage and the stunted e7-pawn) 21...♖c7 22 ♛d2 (22 ♖d2 ♛c8 23 ♛c1 ♖a5 ♢ Sessler-Weiss, Germany tt 1992/3) 22...♛c8 23 ♖d3 ♖c5 24 ♙f1 ♖e5 25 ♙ff2 a5 26 b3 ♛c3 27 ♖d5 ♛c5 28 ♖xe5+ ♛xe5 29 ♛d3 ♛ec5 30 ♛fd2 ♗f6 31 ♛d5 ♙xd5 32 ♙xd5 ♛c5 33 ♛d3 ♗e5 → Hernandez-Braga, São Paulo 1977.

D3)

16 ♖h6 (D)



16...♖a5

This was Kasparov's choice in his 1995 world championship match with Anand, but prior to this game practice had focused almost entirely on 16...b4 (note that 16...♙h8 would be rather a good idea, were it not for 17 e5 dxe5 18 ♗e4 ♛c7 19 ♙xf8 ♖xf8 20 ♖a5 ± Kaplan-Miles, Hastings 1975/6) 17 ♙xg7 ♗xg7 18 ♗d5 ♗xd5, when White has a choice of recaptures:

a) 19 ♖xd5 ♙e6 and now:

al) 20 ♖g5 ♛c5 21 ♖e3 (21 ♖d2 ♖a5 22 b3 ♛fc8 23 ♛c1 ♖a3 24 ♖d4+ and now rather than the weakening 24...f6 of Erschbaumer-Dinser, Bozen 1998, simply 24...♗g8 leaves Black with a very comfortable position) 21...♖a5 22 ♗c1 ♛fc8 23 ♛d2 ♖a4 24 b3 ♖c6 left Black with all the chances in From-Eletsky, Copenhagen 1991.

a2) 20 ♖d2 ♖a5 21 ♗d4 ♛c5 22 b3 ♖a3 23 ♖c1 ♖xc1+ 24 ♛xc1 ♙d7 25 ♗b2 e5 26 ♗e2

f5 27 exf5 ♙xf5 28 ♛hd1 d5 29 ♛d2 d4 30 ♗g3 ♗f6 31 ♛e1 ♛fc8 32 ♗e4+ ♙xe4 33 ♛xe4 1/2-1/2 was the course of Borngässer-Sosonko, Ostend 1975, although in the final position Black is clearly the only player who could consider pressing for the full point.

b) 19 exd5! has been White's main try for an advantage, and the only one to yield him respectable results. 19...♖b6! (prior to this, practice had focused on 19...♖a5 20 b3! ♛c5 {20...♛c7 21 g4 ♛h8 22 ♗g3 ♛hc8 23 ♛h2! ± Wolff-Kudrin, USA 1991}) 21 g4 ♛fc8 22 ♖d4+ ♗g8 23 ♛d2 ± Wolff-Ki.Georgiev, Biel IZ 1993) 20 b3 ♛c7 21 g4 ♛fc8 22 ♗d4 (22 ♛c1 ♖f2! gives Black counterplay) 22...♛c5 23 gxh5 ♙xd5 24 hxg6 e5! (24...fxg6 25 ♛hg1 ♛h8 26 ♛g5! is rather dangerous for Black). We are currently following the game Glek-Kveinys, Bad Godesberg 1995. In *Informator 63*, Glek now indicates that 25 ♗f5+ ♙xf5 26 ♖xd5 ♖c7! 27 ♖xf7+ leads to a roughly equal ending, but analysing a little further, I am sure that 27...♖xf7 28 gxf7 ♙xc2+ 29 ♗b2 ♙xd1 30 ♛xd1 ♛c6! should be at least a little better for Black on account of his superior pawn-structure and more active pieces. Glek also gives 25 gxf7 ♛xd4 26 ♛dg1+ ♗xf7 27 ♖h6 ♗e7! 28 ♖g5+ ♗e6 29 ♖g6+ ♗d5 30 h5 as offering compensation for White. Personally, I would rather have the extra piece!

17 ♙xg7

17 g4 hxg4 18 h5 gxf3! appears unlikely to bring White much success. For example, 19 ♙xg7 ♗xg7 20 hxg6 fxg6 21 ♖h6+ ♗f7 22 ♗f4 ♛g8 when it is clear that White's attack has gone as far as it can and the chances now rest with Black.

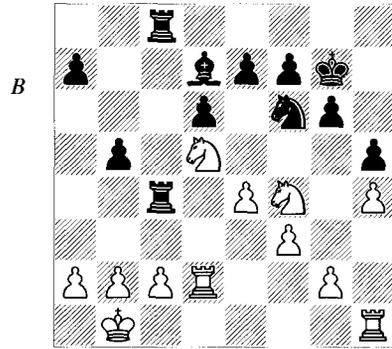
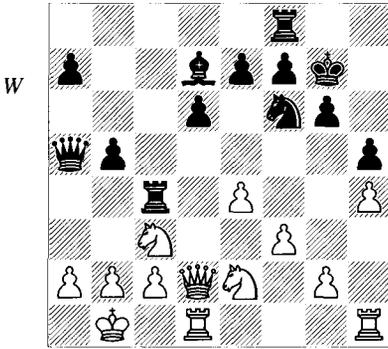
17 ♗d5! has also been seen in practice. Play might continue 17...♖xd2 18 ♗xe7+ ♗h7 19 ♙xd2 ♗xe4! (19...♛e8 20 b3 ♛c5 21 ♙f4 ♙f8 22 ♙xd6 ♙xe7 23 ♙xc5 ♙xc5 ∞ is more to my liking, but the text-move is also interesting) 20 b3 ♗xd2+ 21 ♙xd2 ♛c5 22 ♙xd6 ♛e5 23 ♙xd7 ♛xe2 when Black's activity promises him decent chances in the endgame.

17...♗xg7 (D)

18 ♗f4

Alternatives:

a) 18 ♖g5 ♛fc8 (18...♖c7!? 19 ♗f4 e6! 20 g4 ♛c5 was already close to winning for Black in Prol Medeiros-Braga, São Paulo 1999) 19 e5



dxe5 20 ♖xe5 ♗e6 21 ♖xb5 ♖c7 gives Black good compensation for the pawn.

b) 18 g4 has done rather well in practice, but perhaps surprisingly nobody has tried the obvious 18...hxg4 19 h5 gxh3 20 hxg6 fxg6 which, given that White has little chance of delivering mate, appears to be better for Black.

c) 18 ♘d5 ♖xd2 19 ♗xd2 ♘xd5 20 ♗xd5 ♗fc8 21 c3 f5!? 22 b3 ♗c4c5 23 ♗xc5 ♗xc5 24 exf5 ♗xf5+ 25 ♗b2 gave Black good play in Abdel Aziem-Hakki, Cairo 2003.

d) 18 ♘c1 is a suggestion of Gufeld's that has gone untried for almost 20 years. His idea is to follow up with ♘b3, attacking the black queen, and then play ♘d5, and g4, the culmination of which he anticipates will give White a slight advantage. Nevertheless 18...♗fc8 19 ♘b3 ♖b6 looks to be at least equal for Black, and I doubt Kasparov even contemplated this plan as a possible problem when he was preparing for Anand.

18...♗fc8 19 ♘cd5 ♖xd2 20 ♗xd2 (D)

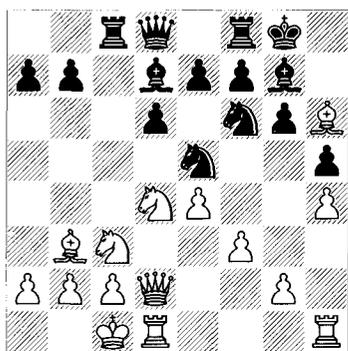
The game is equal, Anand-Kasparov, New York Wch (11) 1995. At this point Kasparov offered a draw, but Anand declined. The position is objectively equal and of little theoretical value, but I shall include the rest of the game

because of its instructional value: 20...♘xd5 21 ♘xd5 ♗f8 22 ♗e1 ♗b8 (Benjamin describes this as "a mysterious rook move" and indicated that 22...♗e6 may have been a more logical choice; it has been speculated that Kasparov's choice may be explicable on the basis that Anand had already turned down a draw-offer in an equal position, and Kasparov now sought to play some slow waiting moves in anticipation of the possibility that Anand might over-press and make an error – just as Karpov did in the landmark 47th game of his first match with Kasparov) 23 b3 (if 23 ♗e3 then Black might consider 23...a5 24 ♗a3 a4 just creating some pressure on the queenside) 23...♗c5 24 ♘f4 ♗bc8 25 ♗b2 a5 26 a3 ♗g7 27 ♘d5 ♗e6! 28 b4? (Kasparov gave 28 ♘xe7 ♗e8 29 b4 axb4 30 axb4 ♗c4 31 ♘d5 ♗xd5 32 ♗xd5 ♗xb4+ 33 ♗c1 f5 34 ♗xd6 fxe4 35 ♗d2 as maintaining equality) 28...axb4 29 axb4 ♗c4 30 ♘b6?? (an awful blunder which loses at once, but as Kasparov subsequently demonstrated, White was in trouble in any case: 30 c3 ♗xd5 31 exd5 ♗f6 ♠; or 30 ♘xe7 ♗8c7! 31 ♘d5 ♗xd5 32 ♗xd5 ♗xc2+ 33 ♗b1 ♗xg2 34 ♗c1 {34 ♗xb5 ♗c3 ♠} 34...♗xc1+ 35 ♗xc1 ♗f2 ♠) 30...♗xb4+ 31 ♗a3 ♗xc2! 0-1.

5 13 ♖h6

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 g6 6 ♙e3 ♙g7 7 f3 ♘c6 8 ♚d2 0-0 9 ♙c4 ♙d7 10 0-0-0 ♚c8 11 ♙b3 ♘e5 12 h4 h5 13 ♙h6!?

(D)



In many respects 13 ♙h6 represents White's most logical approach. Having accepted that an immediate and direct attack on the black king may prove futile, White decides that a more prudent strategy would be to exchange the minor pieces which most aid Black's defence – starting with the Dragon bishop! Once this exchange has been made, Black's kingside is rendered more vulnerable to an incursion on the h-file, while, by virtue of the same measure, Black's counter-attacking chances on the queenside are diminished considerably. Needless to say, this is a line that you must take seriously. Fortunately, practice and theory have evolved to the point where Black is considered to be comfortably holding his own in this variation. Originally Black would continue 13... ♙xh6 14 ♚xh6 ♚xc3 15 bxc3 and then follow up with either 15... ♚a5 or 15... ♚c7. For a time both of these lines yielded good results, but now they are deemed ineffectual on account of some refined play by White, in either case commencing with 16 ♙b1!. A noteworthy development in this line has been the move 15... ♚c8!? – a central theme of which is to discourage a g4 advance from White, cracking open the weakened black kingside. This has received little practical

attention, but I will examine it below by way of an alternative to my main recommendation, 13... ♘c4.

A: 13... ♙xh6!? 61

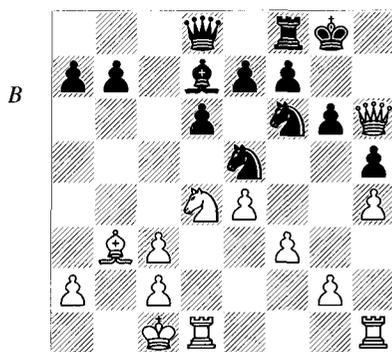
B: 13... ♘c4! 66

A)

13... ♙xh6!?

Before proceeding with a detailed discussion of my primary recommendation, I would like to spend a little time taking the reader through that which has traditionally been regarded as the main line. I would urge the reader to at least briefly play over some of the variations presented in Line A, as they embody attacking and defensive themes that are pertinent to so many lines of the Yugoslav Attack. In any case, when I was first studying the Dragon I found it enormously helpful to review these lines, if for no other reason than to gain an understanding of why Black is thought to be struggling in this variation.

14 ♚xh6 ♚xc3! 15 bxc3 (D)



Black can now choose between these three options:

A1: 15... ♚c7 62

A2: 15... ♚a5 62

A3: 15... ♚c8!? 63

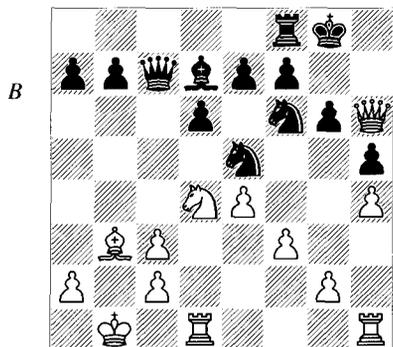
The third of these is relatively unexplored, while the first two are under some pressure.

A1)

15...♖c7

This was for a long time the main line of the 13 ♘h6 variation – Black threatens to capture on c3, while at the same time retaining the option of advancing with ...a5-a4 to harass the light-squared bishop on b3. Unfortunately this line seems a little too slow for Black.

16 ♖b1! (D)



16...♗c8!

16...♗xc3? is discussed in Line A2 via the move-order 15...♗a5 16 ♖b1 ♗xc3?.

In order to understand the subtle ideas that underlie the variation with 15...♗c8!? (considered below) it is necessary to be aware that, with the black queen placed on c7, 16...a5? is bad for Black on account of 17 f4! ♖f5g4 (17...♗c4 is strongly met by 18 f5!) 18 ♗g5 a4 19 fxg4 axb3 20 cxb3 ♖f2 (20...dxe5 21 ♖f5 e6 22 ♗h6+ was good for White in Hübner-Miles, Bundesliga 1986/7, and similarly 20...♗e5 21 ♗xe7 is also good for White) 21 e6 ♗xe4 22 ♗h6 ♗xc3+ 23 ♖b2 ♗xd1+ 24 ♗xd1, which is well known to be advantageous to White; for example, 24...♗e8 25 exf7+ ♗xf7 26 ♗e6! ±.

17 g4! a5 18 ♖f5!

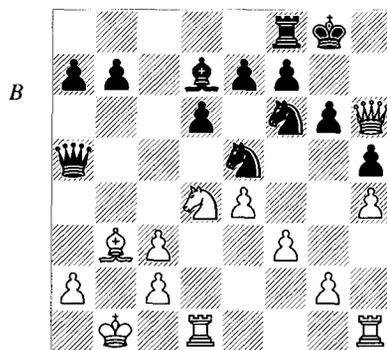
Now Renet-Kudrin, St Martin 1991 continued 18...♗xf5 (18...gxf5 19 gxf5 leaves the black king defenceless) 19 exf5! (19 gxf5!? a4! is less clear) 19...♗xc3 (19...a4 20 ♗xa4 ♗xc3 21 ♗b3 ♗c4 22 ♗c1 ± Golubev) 20 fxg6 ♗c4 21 ♗c1 (21 gxf7+!? ♖xf7 22 ♗c1 a4 23 ♗d3 ♗b4 24 ♗a3! is pointed out by Golubev; presumably White is better) 21...a4 22 ♗xc4 ♗xc4 23 a3 ♗c5 24 ♗d3 ♗b5+ 25 ♖a2 ♗c4+ 26 ♖a1 ±.

A2)

15...♗a5

This move came to prominence largely as a result of the problems associated with the earlier preference, 15...♗c7.

16 ♖b1! (D)



Other moves leave Black at least equal, but given that I cannot recommend this line at present, I will not waste space discussing them. Should the reader wish to investigate this line further, I can fully recommend Chapters 11-14 of Steve Mayer's *The Soltis Variation of the Yugoslav Attack*, which contain detailed coverage.

16...♗c8

Instead 16...♗xc3? does all it can to accommodate White's plan; for example, 17 ♗e2! ♗b4 (17...♗c5 18 g4 a5 19 ♖f4 e6 20 ♗xh5 +- Oltenau-Necinger, Romania 1984) 18 ♗d4 ♗b6 19 ♗hd1 a5 20 ♖f4 a4 21 ♗xg6 ♗xg6 22 ♗xd6! ♗b5 23 ♗xg6+ ♖h8 24 ♗h6+ ♖g8 25 ♗6d5 ♗xd5 26 ♗xd5 1-0 Horvath-Scheichel, Balatonszeplak 1971.

Interestingly, 16...b5!? is recommended as Black's best by Gallagher in *NCO*, but no analysts prior to the publication of *NCO* considered the move adequate and the consistent lack of interest would suggest to me that this assessment is a little over-optimistic. I suspect that 17 g4 ♗xc3 18 g4h5 should grant White an advantage.

17 g4

Now:

a) 17...hxg4? is hardly to be recommended: 18 h5 ♗xh5 19 ♗xh5 g4h5 20 ♗h1 +- Mayer.

b) 17...♗xc3 is recommended by Mayer as Black's strongest here. Practice hitherto has indicated that best play should continue 18 g4h5

♖c4 (if 18...♗xh5, 19 ♖hg1! ± is strong) 19 ♖xc4 ♖xc4 20 ♗d3 ♖b4+ (20...♖a5 21 ♗b3 ♖xh5!?) 21 ♗b3 ♗xh5 22 ♖g1! (only this move promises White an advantage) 22...♖b6 23 ♖g2! (the tempting 23 ♖g5?! is met by 23...♖f2! = Le Conte-Lotti, corr. 1989) 23...♗h3 24 ♖gd2 ♖e6 25 ♖e3 ♖xc3 26 ♖xe3 ♗f4 (26...♗g7 27 ♗d4 ♖c7 28 ♖b2 ± Mainka-Koch, Dortmund 1989; White eventually ground out the win after 64 moves) and now Golubev's suggestion of 27 e5! looks better for White.

c) Attila Schneider maintains that 17...♖c4 is Black's best move. 18 ♗d3! (18 ♖xc4 ♖xc4 19 gxh5 ♖xc3 transposes to line 'b', but the text-move appears to be even better) and now:

c1) Golubev pointed out that 18...♖c5 19 ♗f5! is winning for White.

c2) 18...hxg4 19 h5 is known to be better, if not winning for White.

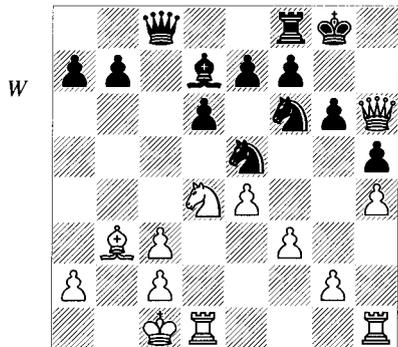
c3) 18...♖a3 (most theoreticians agree that this is best) 19 ♖xc4 ♖xc4 20 e5! dx e5 (not 20...♗d5? 21 gxh5! ♗xc3+ 22 ♖xc3 ♖xc3 23 hxg6+-) 21 ♗e6!.. This move represents a discovery of my editor and fellow Cantabrigian, FM Graham Burgess. Given that Golubev actually cites Burgess's discovery in his text *Easy Guide to the Dragon*, and that Fritz (even running on my humble computer) takes only a few seconds to spot the move, one does wonder how it slipped Schneider's attention. 21...fxe6 22 ♖xg6+ ♖f8 23 g5 ± (Burgess).

c4) However, those looking to rehabilitate this variation should investigate Kosanović's preferred move 18...b5!?. Golubev considers the move 'difficult to recommend', and I am not going to disagree, but it is worth noting that practice is yet to demonstrate a refutation of the move, although I should imagine this is only because exponents of the white side have lacked sufficient opportunities to try to refute it!

A3)

15...♖c8! (D)

This subtle move was introduced by the correspondence player Postema. The idea is to maintain control over the e6-square, thus emasculating the dangerous advance e5-e6, which effectively refuted this variation when Black played 15...♖c7. An effective method of extracting an edge for White has yet to be shown.



A31: 16 ♖b2!? 63

A32: 16 g4 64

A33: 16 ♖b1 65

Minor alternatives:

a) 16 ♗e2 a5 17 f4 ♗fg4 18 ♖g5 a4 19 fxe5 (19 ♗d5!? e6 20 fxe5 exd5 21 e6 ♖xe6 22 exd5 ♗d7 ∞) 19...axb3 20 cxb3 ♖b5 21 ♖d2 ♖xe2 22 ♖xe2 ♖xc3+ 23 ♖b1 ♖xe5 (23...♗xe5!?) 24 ♗d5 1/2-1/2 Wedberg-Nesterov, New York 1992.

b) 16 ♖e3 a5 17 a4 (17 ♗e2? a4 18 ♗d5 ♖b5 {the immediate 18...e6! is also good, when the d5-bishop is suddenly conspicuously short of squares} 19 ♗f4 e6 20 ♖b6 ♖a6 wins for Black) 17...♖c5 18 ♖he1 and now instead of 18...♗c4 as in Kavitha-Gara, St Lorenzo 1995, 18...♖xa4! is at least slightly better for Black.

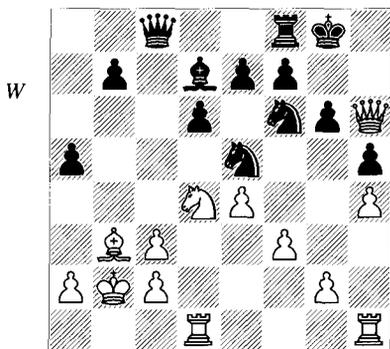
c) 16 f4?! ♖xc3! 17 ♖b1 (17 fxe5? ♖a1+ 18 ♗d2 ♖xd4+ 19 ♖c1 ♖a1+ 20 ♗d2 ♗xe4+ 21 ♖e3 ♖c3+ 22 ♗d3 ♖c5+ 23 ♖xe4 ♖c6+ 24 ♗d5 ♖c4+ 0-1 Kleisch-Hockendorf, Furstenwalde 1983) 17...♗c4 18 ♖xc4 ♖xc4 19 f5 ♖b4+ 20 ♖a1 ♖c3+=.

A31)

16 ♖b2!?

This is usually considered to be inaccurate because, if Black successfully gangs up on c3 he may be able to capture with check. Alternatively, if Black ever plays ...♗c4+, White will be forced to either move the king or weaken his queenside by conceding the b3-bishop. However, with the queen potentially misplaced on c8, the f8-rook cannot join in the attack, and consequently the magnitude of the aforementioned problems is considerably diminished.

16...a5! (D)



Now:

a) 17 a3 (if White has to play this move so early it is often a sign that things are not going to plan) 17...a4 18 ♖a2 ♗c5 19 ♗d2 ♜c8 20 ♜h1 ♘c6 (20...♗b6+!? 21 ♖a1 ♗c5 22 ♖b2 =) 21 ♘xc6?! bxc6 ≠ 22 ♜b1 ♞b8+ 23 ♖a1 ♞xb1+ 24 ♞xb1 ♗xa3 25 ♞b2 ♖g7 26 ♖b1 ♗c5 27 ♗d4 ♗a5 28 ♗b4 ♗e5 29 ♗xa4 ♗g3 30 ♞b7 ♗xg2 ≠ Zvan-Kodrić, Ljubljana 1996.

b) 17 f4!? has scored well in practice. For example, 17...♘c4+ 18 ♖xc4 ♗xc4 and now:

b1) 19 f5 ♘g4?! (19...♜c8 20 ♜d3 ♘g4 is better, when 21 ♗g5 can be met by 21...♘f2) 20 ♗g5 ♜c8 21 fxg6 ♖xc3+ 22 ♖b1 ♘f6 23 ♜d3 +– Korosec-Cordero, e-mail 1998.

b2) 19 ♞h1 ♜c8 20 ♜d3 and here:

b21) 20...♜c5!? 21 f5 ♘g4 22 ♗f4 f6?! (the alternative 22...♘e5 is better, but 23 ♗g3 still looks as though it could be tricky for Black) 23 ♗d2 ♖e8 24 fxg6 ♖xg6 25 ♘b3 ♖f7 26 ♜d4 ♗b5 27 ♖a1 ♘e5 28 ♘xc5 1-0 Sauermann-Keller, corr. 1993.

b22) 20...e5! looks stronger; e.g., 21 fxe5 dxe5 22 ♘b3 ♖b5 (or 22...♖e6) 23 ♗g5 ♗c7 24 ♞f3 ♘g4 when Black has full compensation for the exchange.

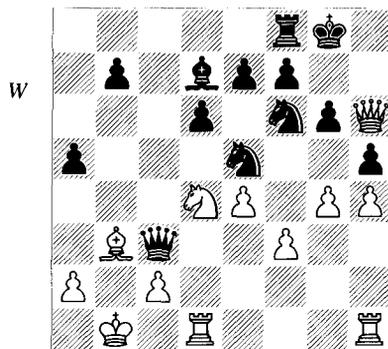
c) 17 a4 ♘c4+ 18 ♖a1 ♗c5 19 ♗c1 e5!? (19...♘b6, hitting the weak white pawns on a4 and c3, may be stronger; another good option is simply 19...♜c8, building up pressure on the queenside – with the white queen on c1 Black can take his time without worrying about the safety of his own king) 20 ♘b5?! (20 ♘f5!?) 20...♖xb5 21 axb5 d5 ≠ 22 ♖xc4 ♗xc4 23 ♗a3 dxe4 ≠ Helenius-Karhunen, Finland 1993.

A32)

16 g4

Play now transposes into a branch of the 15...♗c7 variation, but one that is well-known to promise White little.

16...♗xc3 17 ♖b1 a5 (D)



Now:

a) 18 a3 a4 19 ♖a2 ♗xa3 20 gxh5 ♗b4+ 21 ♖c1 (21 ♖a1 a3 22 ♗c1 ♗c3+ 23 ♖b1 ♘h5 ≠ Rocha-Kristiansson, Siegen OL 1970) 21...a3 22 ♖b3 ♗c3 23 hxg6 ♗a1+ 24 ♖d2 ♗xd4+ 25 ♖c1 ♗b2+ (25...a2 26 ♖xa2 ♗a1+ 27 ♖d2 ♗xa2 28 g7 ♘xf3+ looks very good for Black) 26 ♖d2 ♘xf3+ 27 ♖e2 was given by Van der Tak as leading to unclear play, but he missed that 27...♘d4+! 28 ♖f1 ♖b5+ 29 ♖g1 ♗c3 is very strong for Black.

b) 18 a4?! b5!. This is an important theme in these types of positions: Black sacrifices the a- and b-pawns to displace White's pieces and open lines on the queenside; e.g., 19 axb5 a4 20 ♖a2 (20 ♖xa4? ♞a8 +–) 20...a3 21 ♗c1 ♖xb5 +–.

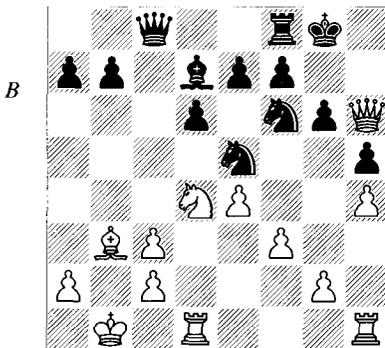
c) 18 ♘f5? ♖xf5 19 gxh5 a4! 20 fxg6 (20 ♖xa4? ♘c4 +–) 20...axb3 21 gxf7+ ♖xf7 +– Chrolavicius-Findlay, Toronto 1983.

d) 18 gxh5 a4 19 hxg6 (19 ♘e2?! ♗xf3 20 hxg6 axb3 21 g7 bxc2+ 22 ♖a1 cxd1 ♗+ 23 ♞xd1 ♘g6 +– Gopal-Carlsson, Goa 2002) 19...axb3 20 cxb3 fxg6 21 h5 (21 ♞hg1? is too slow: 21...♖f7 22 h5 gxh5 23 ♞g7+ ♖e8 24 f4 ♘d3 +– Goichberg-Soltis, USA 1970) 21...g5! (Black keeps the kingside closed and thereby shuts out White's major pieces, utilizing the over-extended h5-pawn as covering protection for the black king; alternatively, 21...♘h5 22 ♞xh5! gxh5 23 ♞gl+ ♖g4 24 ♘e6 ♗d3+ 25 ♖a1 ♞f7 26 fxg4 is a safe route to equality given by pretty much every book on the Dragon) 22 ♗xg5+ ♖h7 23 ♗d2! (White is on the verge

of being severely worse; after other moves White has quickly been worse: 23 ♖h2 ♖g8 24 ♗f4 ♘c6 25 ♘f5 ♙xf5 26 ♗xf5+ ♘h8 27 ♖c2 ♗c3 28 ♖xd6!? ♘d4 29 ♖xd4 ♗xd4 30 ♖c8 ♘e8 31 e5 ♗d2 32 ♖c2 ♖g1+ 33 ♘b2 ♗d4+ 34 ♘a3 ♖g8 35 ♖c4 ♗d5 36 ♗f4 ♗e6 37 h6 b5 38 ♖c2 ♗g6 39 ♖h2 ♘c7 40 h7 ♖a8+ 41 ♘b2 ♘d5 42 ♗e4 ♖xa2+ 0-1 Miljanić-Kosanović, Belgrade 1988; 23 ♘f5 ♙xf5 24 ♗xf5+ ♘h8 25 ♗g5 ♘xf3 26 ♗h6+ ♘h7 27 ♖hf1 ♖f6 28 ♗c1 ♘d2+ → Wilk-Zeihser, corr. 1989) 23... ♗xd2 24 ♖xd2 ♘xf3 25 ♘xf3 ♘xe4 26 ♖c2 ♖xf3 27 ♖c7 was Golubev-Dautov, USSR 1985, and now Golubev indicated that 27... ♙c6! is clearly better for Black.

A33)

16 ♘b1 (D)



This is the main line, and the move that one would expect to test the validity of 15... ♗c8.

16... a5 17 f4

17 g4?! a4 offers Black good counterplay.

17... ♘fg4 18 ♗g5 a4 19 fxe5

As per usual 19 ♙d5 is well met by 19... e6 when White's light-squared bishop is looking a little lost in the black territory.

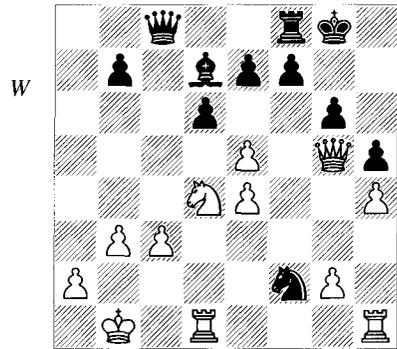
19... axb3 20 cxb3

This move is most testing. Other moves should not worry Black:

a) 20 exd6 can be answered by the simple 20... bxa2+ 21 ♘b2 exd6, when 22 ♘f5 ♗c7 23 ♘e7+ ♘g7 24 ♘d5 ♗a5 25 ♖hf1 ♙e6 26 ♗d2 ♙xd5 27 ♗d4+ ♘g8 28 exd5 ♖c8 is very good for Black; e.g., 29 ♖f4 ♖c5 30 ♘a1 ♖xc3 31 ♖df1? ♘e3 32 ♖af2 ♘xc2+ 33 ♖xc2 ♖xc2 34 ♗d3 ♗d2 35 ♗a3 ♗d4+ 0-1 Castano-Clavijo, Medellin 2000.

b) 20 axb3 ♘f2 21 ♘f5 ♙xf5 22 exf5 ♗xc3! = Ninov-Markholev, Bulgaria 1992.

20... ♘f2 (D)



If the black queen were now on c7 White could commence favourable complications with the thrust 21 e6, but here the pawn is simply captured. Instead White has to grope around elsewhere in search of an advantage. His options include the following:

a) 21 ♘b2 dxe5 22 ♗xe5 ♙g4 23 ♘f3 ♖d8! was very comfortable for Black in Marik-Civin, Chrudim 1993. White now played 24 ♘c2 and instead of 24... ♙xf3 I can't see anything wrong with the simple 24... ♘xh1 when Black appears to be in fine shape.

b) 21 ♗xe7 sees White demolishing the black pawn-centre and tying the black queen to the bishop on d7, but Black's activity seems enough to hold the balance: 21... ♘xe4! 22 ♖hf1 ♘xc3+ 23 ♘b2 ♘xd1+ 24 ♖xd1 dxe5 25 ♗xe5 ♙g4 26 ♖e1 ♗d7 27 a4 ♗d8 28 g3 ♗b6 29 ♖c1 ♖d8 30 ♖c4 1/2-1/2 Stefansson-Petursson, Iceland 1995.

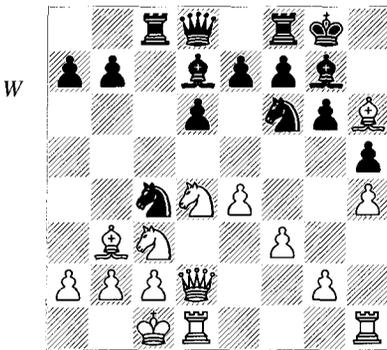
c) 21 exd6 is again convincingly answered by 21... ♘xe4! when 22 ♗f4 ♘c3+ 23 ♘b2 ♘xd1+ 24 ♖xd1 exd6 25 ♗xd6 ♙g4 26 ♖c1 ♗d8 27 ♗xd8 ♖xd8 was very comfortable for Black in Lozano-Clavijo, Duitama 1999.

d) 21 ♘f5!? appears to be a rather dangerous lunge at the black kingside, but the white forces lack the coordination to justify such indulgence. It seems that best play is now 21... ♙xf5 22 exf5 ♘e4! (only move) 23 ♗f4 (23 ♗xe7 ♘xc3+ 24 ♘b2 ♘xd1+ 25 ♖xd1 ♗xf5! 26 exd6 ♗f2+ is given by Postema as yielding equality) 23... ♘xc3+ 24 ♘b2 ♘xd1+ 25 ♖xd1 dxe5 26 ♗xe5 and now instead of 26... ♖d8 27 fxg6, which was the continuation

of the stem game Diepeveen-Postema, corr. 1990, and is at least slightly better for White after 27...fxg6 28 ♖d5!, Black should prefer Shishkov's fine recommendation 26...♙c6 which is either equal or perhaps slightly better for Black. The only practical example of this line that I have been able to unearth continued 27 ♙xe7 ♙xg2+ 28 ♖b1 gxf5 29 ♙c5 ♙e4+ 30 ♖a1 ♖e8 31 ♙g1+ ♖h7 32 ♙g5 ♙g4 33 ♖g1 ♙xg5 34 ♖xg5 ♖e5 35 ♖xh5+ ♖g6 36 ♖g5+ ♖f6 37 ♖g1 f4 0-1 Carandell Robuste-Castello Benavent, corr. 1991.

B)

13...♗c4! (D)



This is the new main line and by far Black's most solid resource. It is also my principal recommendation.

Black reasons that, while his counter-attacking chances may well be diminished by the exchange of dark-squared bishops, this may be compensated for by the exchange of a further pair of minor pieces, thereby limiting the attacking potential of the white strategy.

14 ♗xc4 ♖xc4 15 ♗xg7

Other moves do not yield White any advantage:

a) 15 ♗de2!? ♙a5 16 g4!? was tried in Feierlein-Bade, Berlin 1987, and now simply 16...hxg4! looks fine for Black; e.g., 17 h5 gxf3 18 ♗xg7 ♖xg7 19 hxg6 fxg6 20 ♙h6+ ♖f7 21 ♗f4 ♖e8 22 ♗xg6 ♖g8 ♞.

b) 15 ♙g5?! ♖c5! 16 ♙e3 ♖xc3 17 bxc3 ♗xh6 18 ♙xh6 ♙a5 (note that the structure that has arisen is equivalent to that which arises after 13...♗xh6 14 ♙xh6 ♖xc3, but with the fundamental difference that the conventionally

cohesive bishop on b3 has been exchanged for Black's knight on e5, thereby emphasizing White's queenside weaknesses) 19 ♖d3?! (19 ♖b2 is better) 19...♙xa2 20 ♗d2 ♙a5 21 g4? hxg4 22 h5 gxf3 23 hxg6 ♙g5+ 24 ♖e1 f2+ 25 ♖f1 ♙xh6 26 ♖xh6 ♗xe4 27 c4 fxg6 0-1 Kirsch-L.Karlsson, Metz 1986.

15...♗xg7

White now has five principal tries:

- | | | |
|------------|---------|----|
| B1: | 16 ♗de2 | 66 |
| B2: | 16 ♗d5 | 66 |
| B3: | 16 ♖he1 | 68 |
| B4: | 16 ♖b1 | 69 |
| B5: | 16 g4 | 73 |

B1)

16 ♗de2 ♙a5 17 ♖b1

17 g4 hxg4 18 fxg4 ♗xg4 19 ♖d1 and now Black should continue 19...♖fc8 ♞ (avoiding 19...b5?! 20 h5!).

17...♖fc8 18 ♗d5

White decides to simplify into an ending, albeit one which promises him little. 18 ♙e3 has also been tried, after which 18...♖4c5 19 ♗d4 was played in Genkin-Plass, Germany tt 1997/8, which eventually ended in a draw, but rather than 19...♙c7 – which left White better – Black should prefer the more direct 19...♗a4 20 a3 (20 ♗b3 ♗xb3 21 cxb3 {21 axb3 is met in the same manner} 21...b5 22 a3?! b4! 23 ♗a2 bxa3 24 b4 ♙b6) 20...♖xc3! 21 bxc3 ♙c5 22 ♖a2 (22 ♖b2?! e5!) 22...e5! 23 ♗f5+ gxf5 24 ♙g5+ ♖f8 25 ♙xf6 ♙c4+ 26 ♖b1 ♙xc3 ♞.

18...♙xd2 19 ♖xd2 ♗xd5 20 exd5 ♖f6!

The presumptuous black king marches forward, secure in the knowledge that the decision to precipitate exchanges has eased the danger.

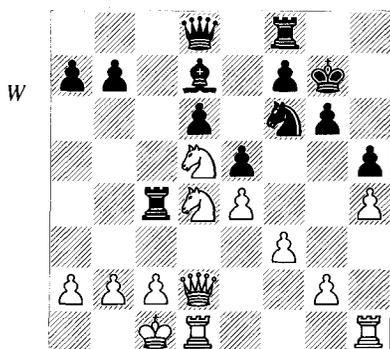
21 ♗c3 ♗f5 22 g3 b5 23 a3 a5 24 ♖e1 b4 25 axb4 axb4 26 ♗e4+ ♗xe4 27 fxe4 ♖e5

♞ Schreiber-Komljenović, Zaragoza 1994.

B2)

16 ♗d5 e5! (D)

With the dark-squared bishops exchanged, Black realizes that it is now safe to stake his claim in the centre, the consequent weakness of the d6-square being amply compensated for by the activity of Black's pieces. White now has two options:



B21: 17 ♖b3 67

B22: 17 ♖e2 67

B21)

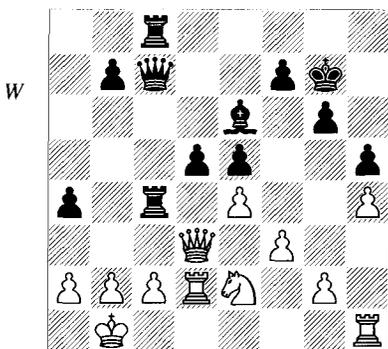
17 ♖b3 ♖xd5 18 ♖xd5 ♖c7

18...♖c6 19 ♖a5 ♖e6 also appears to be satisfactory for Black, as 20 ♖xa7? ♖c7 ♗ is clearly out of bounds.

Now (after 18...♖c7):

a) 19 c3 ♖c6 20 ♖b1 ♖e6 21 ♖d2 ♖c8 (the alternative 21...f5 22 exf5 ♖xf5+ 23 ♖a1 ♖e6 24 ♖c1 ♖a6 also looked reasonable for Black in Schwerlick-Pellegrinon, ICCF e-mail 2000, although he later lost) 22 ♖c1 1-0 is the conclusion given to the game Ivanovskis-Romanelli, corr. 1995 (perhaps the game was abandoned at this point?), but Black is clearly doing very well here; e.g., 22...b5 23 g4?! b4 24 cxb4 ♖c2 25 ♖d3 hxg4 ♗.

b) 19 ♖d2?! doesn't really achieve much. Siil-Kukk, e-mail 1999 continued 19...♖e6 20 ♖d3 a5! (threatening to drive the b3-knight to a1) 21 ♖b1 a4 22 ♖c1 ♖c8 23 ♖e2 d5! (D).



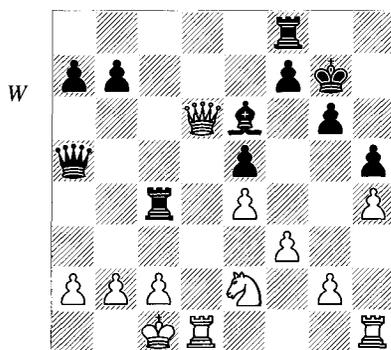
24 ♖c1 (24 exd5 ♖f5 ♗) 24...dxe4 25 fxe4 ♖c6 26 ♖g3 a3 27 ♖f1 ♖d4 28 ♖e3 axb2 29

♖df2 ♖xa2+ 30 ♖xa2 ♖a6+ 31 ♖xb2 ♖b4+ 32 ♖c1 ♖a1+ 33 ♖d2 ♖xc2+ 34 ♖xc2 ♖b2+ 35 ♖d3 ♖a3+ 36 ♖c4 ♖a4+ 37 ♖d5 ♖d7+ 38 ♖xe5 f6+ 0-1.

c) 19 ♖d2 ♖c8 20 c3 ♖c6 21 g4 ♖h8! (by this prophylactic measure, Black at once defuses White's attack on the kingside, and simultaneously threatens to commence counterplay there by virtue of an attack on the h4-pawn) 22 ♖dg1 ♖d8 23 g5 ♖e6 (now that the kingside is effectively sealed off from White's major pieces, Black is free to undertake aggressive play on the opposite wing) 24 ♖b1 ♖b6 25 ♖c1 ♖hc8 26 ♖a1 ♖c5 27 ♖g2 ♖a5 28 ♖b1 d5 29 exd5 ♖xd5 30 ♖e1 ♖dc5 31 ♖a1 ♖a5 32 b4 ♖d5 33 ♖b2 a5 34 a3 ♖g8 35 ♖b3 axb4 36 axb4 ♖d3 37 ♖c2 ♖xb3 38 ♖xb3 ♖e6+ 39 ♖b2 ♖a8 0-1 Vehi Bach-Komljenović, San Sebastian 1993.

B22)

17 ♖e2 ♖xd5 18 ♖xd5 ♖e6 19 ♖xd6 ♖a5 (D)



Now:

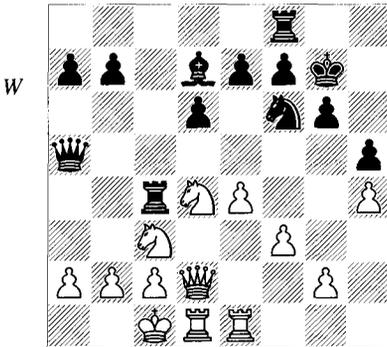
a) 20 a3 ♖fc8 21 c3 (21 ♖d2 ♖4c6 22 ♖d3 b5 23 f4 b4 24 fxe5 ♖c4 looked good for Black in Gunawan-Granda, Guayaquil 1982) 21...♖4c6 22 ♖b4 ♖a6 (22...♖c7 23 ♖d2 ♖c4, with the advances ...a5 and ...b5 to follow, also appears strong) 23 ♖d2 ♖b6 24 ♖e7 ♖c4 25 ♖hd1 ♖a2 26 b4 ♖xa3+ 27 ♖b2 ♖bc6 28 ♖b1 (28 ♖d3 was swiftly dispatched in its only outing: 28...♖8c7 29 ♖e8 ♖a1+ 30 ♖b1 ♖xc3+ 31 ♖xc3 ♖xc3+ 32 ♖xc3 ♖xc3+ 33 ♖d1 ♖a2 34 ♖c1 ♖d3+ 35 ♖e1 ♖e3+ 36 ♖d1 ♖b3+ → Milher-Frank, corr. 1998) 28...♖a2+ 29 ♖xa2 ♖b3+ 30 ♖c1 ♖xa2 31 ♖xe5+ ♖g8 32 ♖d2 ♖a1+ 33 ♖c2 ♖a6 34 ♖c1 ♖xc3+?? (how

unfortunate – Black simply misses a tactic and blunders a rook! Something like 34...♖a3 would leave Black the exchange up and clearly better, if not winning) 35 ♖xc3 ♜c6 36 ♜d8+ 1-0 Westerinen-H.Müller, Germany tt 1989/90.

b) 20 ♘c3 ♜fc8 (20...♜xc3 21 bxc3 ♖xc3 22 ♖d3 ♖a5 23 a3 ♜c8 24 ♖b2 ♖b6+ 25 ♖a1 ♖a5 26 ♖b2 ♖b6+ 1/2-1/2 Yurtaev-Nadyrkhanov, Bishkek Z 1993) 21 ♜d3 ♜4c6 22 ♜d5? (unfortunate, but 22 ♖e7 ♙xa2 also looks rather good for Black; e.g., 23 ♘xa2?! ♖xa2 24 ♖xe5+ ♖h7 and White cannot protect against the threats of 25...♖a1+ and 25...♜xc2+) 22...♖xd5 23 ♖xd5 ♙xd5 24 exd5 ♜c4 25 ♜e1 f6 g3 b5 27 a3 a6 28 ♜e2 ♜d4 29 ♜e3 ♖f7 0-1 Herbrechtsmeier-Groiss, corr. 1985.

B3)

16 ♜he1 ♖a5 (D)



Here White has tried three approaches:

B31: 17 ♜e3 68

B32: 17 ♖b1 68

B33: 17 ♘b3 69

B31)

17 ♜e3 ♜fc8 18 ♜d3

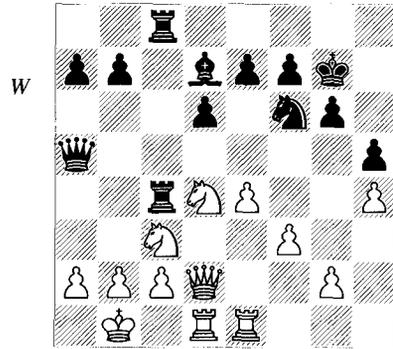
Now:

a) 18...b5?! 19 ♘b3?! (19 ♘cxb5 ♖b6 is critical; Black has some compensation, but maybe not enough) 19...♖c7 20 ♜d4 (20 e5 dxe5 21 ♖xd7 ♘xd7 22 ♖xd7 b4! 23 ♖xc7 ♜4xc7 24 ♘d5 ♜xc2+ 25 ♖b1 ♜xg2 ♯) 20...♙e6 21 ♖b1 b4 22 ♜xc4 ♙xc4 leaves Black better, Olim-Henao, St Martin 1993.

b) 18...a6 may be necessary, preparing the ...b5 advance.

B32)

17 ♖b1 ♜fc8 (D)



Now:

a) 18 ♘b3 ♖a6! 19 e5 dxe5 20 ♜xe5 b5 21 ♜xe7 b4 22 ♘e4 ♜xc2 23 ♖g5 (23 ♖d4 ♙f5! is better for Black) 23...♙f5! (Black must be careful here as 23...♘xe4?! runs into 24 ♜xf7+! ♖xf7 25 ♖xd7+ ♖g8 26 ♜d8+, which is clearly better for White) 24 ♘d4 ♜2c5! 25 ♘xf5+ (Alterman, in *Informator* 62, points out that 25 ♘e6+? is convincingly refuted by 25...♖xe6 26 ♜xe6 ♙xe4+ 27 ♜e4 ♜xg5 28 hxg5 ♘xe4 29 fxe4 ♜e8 30 ♜d4 ♜e5 –) 25...♜xf5 26 ♖e3 ♜d5 27 ♜e1 ♖c4 28 ♖b3 (28 ♜c1 ♜d1! 29 ♜xf7+ ♖xf7 30 ♘d6+ ♖xd6 31 ♜xc4 ♜xc4 –) Alterman) 28...♘xe4 29 fxe4 ♖xb3 30 axb3 ♜d2 31 ♜f1 ♜f8 32 e5 ♖g8 33 g3 ♜d3 was at least slightly better for Black in Apicella-Alterman, Cap d'Agde 1994, which Black eventually won.

b) 18 ♜e3, over-protecting the c3-square, has also been tried. 18...a6 19 ♖d3 (the alternative 19 ♖e1 ♖e5 20 ♜ed3 b5 21 g3 b4 22 ♘ce2 d5 23 exd5 ♘xd5 was very comfortable for Black in Grichkevitch-Komljenović, Las Palmas 1995, although the game was eventually drawn) 19...♖c5 20 ♜d2 ♜c7 21 ♘de2 ♙b5 22 ♘xb5 ♖xb5 23 ♘c3 ♖e5 24 ♖f1 b5 25 ♖e1 a5 26 ♘d5 ♘xd5 27 ♖xd5 ♖f6 ♯ Dely-Pavlov, Hamburg Echt 1965.

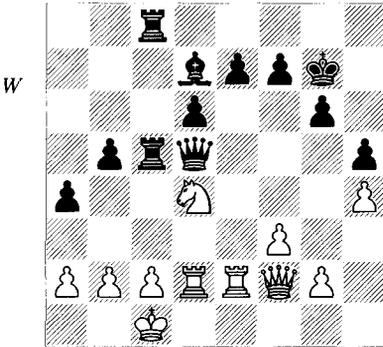
B33)

17 ♘b3 ♖c7

The careless 17...♖a6?! runs into 18 e5! dxe5 19 ♜xe5 ±.

18 ♖e3

18 ♖g5!? gave rise to a very pretty correspondence game: 18...b5 19 ♖d2 ♙c8 20 ♙ee2 a5 (things are already looking rather promising for Black) 21 ♗d5 ♗xd5 22 exd5 a4 23 ♗d4 ♗c5 24 ♗e3 ♗xd5 25 ♗f2 ♙4c5 (D).



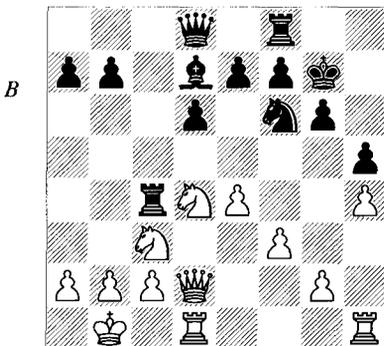
26 ♗e6+ ♗xe6 27 ♙xe6 ♙xe6 28 a3 ♙b3 29 c3 ♙c4 30 g3 ♙8c5 31 ♙d3 ♙e5 32 ♗d2 ♙cc5 33 ♗f2 ♙cd5 34 ♙d2 ♙c4 35 ♙d4 ♙xd4 36 ♗xd4 f6 37 g4 ♙d5 (through some very creative play indeed, Black has managed to create a mating-net in the middle of the board; if White were now to retreat with 38 ♗f2, 38...♙b3 would win on the spot!) 38 ♗a7 ♗f7 39 b3 axb3 40 ♗e3 hxg4 41 fxg4 ♙e5 42 ♗f3 ♙e1+ 43 ♗b2 ♙e2+ 44 ♗b1 b2 45 h5 ♙d2 0-1 Koskinen-Rinkis, corr. 1996.

18...♙c8 19 ♙d4 b5 20 ♙xc4 ♗xc4 21 ♗d4 ♗xd4 22 ♗xd4 b4 23 ♗d1 e5

Black is comfortably equal, although in Steller-Hein, Schleswig Holstein Ch 1988 he subsequently got involved in unnecessary tactics and blundered a pawn.

B4)

16 ♗b1 (D)



Black now has two options:

B41: 16...♗b6 69

B42: 16...♗a5 70

The latter is the main line, while the former is a new idea.

B41)

16...♗b6

This move has only been tried a few times, but so far results have been promising:

a) 17 g4!? hxg4 (17...♙fc8!? 18 ♗d5 ♗xd5 19 exd5 hxg4 20 h5 ♗xd4 21 ♗xd4+ ♙xd4 22 ♙xd4 gxf3 ♞) 18 h5 and now:

a1) 18...gxh5?? should be avoided: 19 ♗g5+ ♗h8 20 ♙xh5+ ♗xh5 21 ♗xh5+ ♗g8 22 ♗g5+ ♗h8 23 ♙h1# brings the game to a swift conclusion.

a2) 18...♙fc8!? is the most thematic approach for Black to take, and seems to result in a draw: 19 hxg6 fxg6 20 ♗h6+ ♗f7 21 ♗d5 (21 ♗b3 gxf3 ♞) 21...♗xd5 (this permits White a perpetual check, yet is sadly necessary as 21...♙c5? loses to 22 ♗xf6 exf6 23 ♗h7+ ♗e8 24 ♗g8+ ♗e7 25 ♙h7#) 22 ♗h7+ ♗f6 23 ♗h4+ (attempts to play for more seem likely to backfire on White: 23 fxg4? ♗c3+! 24 ♗a1 ♗xd1 25 ♙f1+ ♗f2 26 ♙xf2+ ♗e5 and Black wins) 23...♗f7 24 ♗h7+ with a draw by perpetual check.

a3) 18...♙xd4! (this appears strongest) 19 ♗xd4 ♗xd4 20 h6+ ♗h7 21 ♙xd4 gxf3 22 ♗c1 g5 23 ♗d2 g4 24 ♗e3 ♙c8 (24...♙g8!? 25 ♗d5 ♗xd5+ 26 exd5 f5 27 ♙c4 e5 28 dxe6 ♙c6 29 ♙d1 ♗xh6 30 ♙xd6 ♗g5 31 ♙f4 ♙h8 32 ♙fd4 ♙h2 33 ♙d1 ♙e2+ 34 ♗d3 g3 35 ♙d8 ♙xe6 0-1 was Hausmann jr-Rook, corr. 1990, while 24...♙c6!? also looks promising) 25 a4 ♙c5 26 ♗d5 ♗g8 27 c3 e5 28 ♙d2 ♙e6 29 ♗b4 ♙c4 30 ♙xd6 ♗f6 31 ♗d5 ♙xe4+ 32 ♗d3 ♙xd5 33 ♙xf6 ♙f4 34 ♙xf4 exf4 35 ♗d2 ♙c4 36 b3 g3 0-1 Fritz-Junior, 2000.

b) 17 e5 dxe5 18 ♗b3 has been given as unclear by an anonymous source, but 18...♙fc8 19 ♙he1 a5! looks very good for Black.

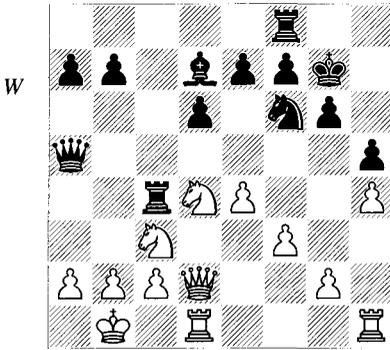
c) 17 ♗ce2 ♙fc8 has also been given as unclear, but the only matter concerning this position that remains unclear is how White is going to maintain equality.

d) 17 ♗de2 has also been played, but it seems unlikely that White will be able to obtain

an advantage with such passive play. 17...♙e6 (17...♙b4!? and 17...♙fc8 are equally playable) 18 b3 ♗fc8 gave Black a decent position in Ansari-Perona, Bandar Seri Begawan 2001.

B42)

16...♙a5 (D)



This is the starting position of the main line. We now consider:

B421: 17 g4!? 70

B422: 17 ♘d5 71

B423: 17 ♘b3 72

Only the last of these should realistically pose Black problems.

Note that 17 ♘ce2 promises White nothing: 17...♙e5!? (17...♙xd2 18 ♗xd2 b5 also looks fine for Black) 18 b3 ♗c7 19 c4 b5 20 ♘xb5 ♙xb5 21 cxb5 ♙xb5 22 ♗c1 ♗fc8 23 ♗xc7 ♗xc7 24 ♗c1 ♗xc1+ 25 ♘xc1 ♙e5 (25...a5!?) 26 ♘d3 ♙d4 was at least equal for Black in Bosch-Mah, Copenhagen 1999. The young English talent subsequently made a few errors that gave White some chances on the queenside, but stern resolve eventually saw him through to claim the full point.

B421)

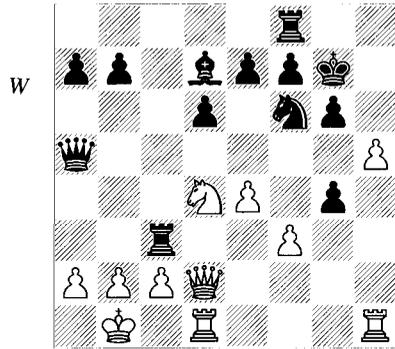
17 g4!?

Obviously this continuation is critical. It was thought that practice had demonstrated that White's chances would be enhanced by preparatory retreat 17 ♘b3, displacing the queen from its strong position on a5, but the validity of this assertion is now dubious, so the immediate launch of the g-pawn must merit attention.

17...hxg4 18 h5 ♗xc3 (D)

Unfortunately 18...♘xh5? is out of bounds in this position: 19 ♘f5+! ♙xf5 20 ♗xh5 ♗h8 21 ♗xh8 ♘xh8 22 ♙h6+ ♘g8 23 ♘d5 1-0 was the abrupt conclusion to Kuchatova-Vifleem-skaia, Russian wom Ch (Elista) 1996.

18...♗h8 is also possible, but it seems less reliable in this position than it is in other lines with 13 ♙h6; for example, 19 hxg6 ♗xh1 20 ♗xh1 fxg6 21 f4 (21 ♘b3! looks a lot stronger, when 21...♙b6, 21...♙c7 and 21...♙a6 can all be met by the powerful 22 ♘d5 ♘xd5 23 ♙h6+ stripping the black kingside of its defensive resources) 21...♘e4 22 ♙h2 ♘xc3+ 23 bxc3 ♙h5 24 ♙g2 ♙c5 25 ♙h2 1/2-1/2 Silin-Kling, corr. 1997.



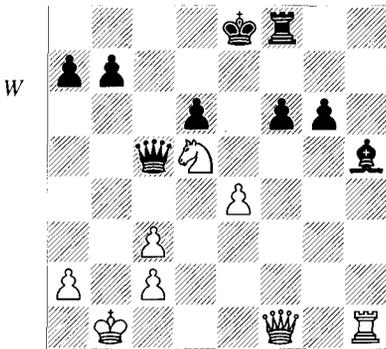
19 hxg6 fxg6 20 bxc3 ♘f7 21 fxg4 ♙xg4 22 ♗df1!?

22 ♗de1 contemplates a future e5 pawn-break, attempting to shatter Black's compact structure. Black can meet this with 22...♗c8 (note that 22...e5?! would be premature due to 23 ♘b3 ♙b6 24 ♙g5, when Black's forces are poorly coordinated; however, 22...♙e5 appears to be a good alternative), when 23 e5 dxe5 24 ♙g5 ♙b6+ (24...♙xc3 25 ♙xe5 ♙c5 26 ♙e3 ♙b4+ 27 ♘c1 ♗c3 is a safe continuation that grants Black approximately equal chances) 25 ♘b3 (25 ♘c1? exd4 26 ♗h7+ ♘h7 27 ♗xe7+ ♘f8 leaves White a lot of material down and lacking a conclusive combination) 25...♙f5 26 ♗xe5 ♗xc3 27 ♗he1 (27 ♗xf5 gxf5 28 ♙xf5 ♙e3 is at least equal for Black) and now 27...e6! is probably best, solidifying Black's structure, but 27...♗xb3+ 28 axb3 ♙xb3+ 29 ♘a1 ♙c3+ 30 ♘a2 ♙xc2+ 31 ♘a3 e6 also looks very good for Black. The complications have given rise to a position in which Black has

two pieces and four pawns in exchange for White's two rooks. However, the qualitative value of Black's material far exceeds the quantitative. Progress for White will be difficult, his heavy material proving cumbersome and clumsy, whereas Black's agile pawns and minor pieces possess fantastic prospects.

22...♖e8! 23 ♖g2 ♗h5 24 ♘e6
24 e5!?

24...♗g8 25 ♗xf6 exf6 26 ♘f4 ♖g5 27 ♖f1
♖c5 28 ♘d5 ♗f8 (D)



Now:

a) 29 ♘xf6+ ♘d8! leaves White awkwardly struggling to break the pin of the f8-rook to the f1-queen.

b) 29 ♖h3 and then:

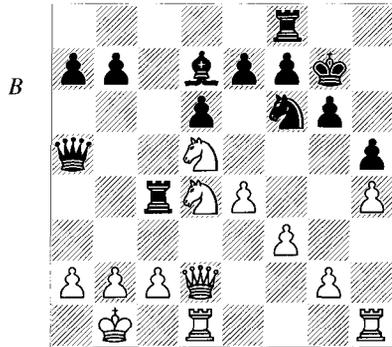
b1) 29...♖b5+ 30 ♖a1 ♖d7 31 ♖e3 ♖a4 32 ♗f1 ♘d8 33 ♖h6 ♖e8 ± Svetushkin-Potapov, Patras 2001.

b2) 29...♘d8!?, heading for the hills, may be an improvement. Black is a pawn up with a superior structure, but the strong outpost for White's knight on d5, combined with the fragile position of the black king, balances out the chances here. The presumptuous 30 ♖e6 can be met with 30...♖b5+ 31 ♖c1 ♖d7! when Black's position suddenly becomes clearly preferable. Meanwhile 30 ♖h4 should simply be met by 30...♖c8! with a view to answering 31 ♘xf6 with 31...♖xc3.

B422)

17 ♘d5 (D)

With this move White seeks a slightly better endgame, reasoning that an exchange of the queens and f6-knight will leave the d4-knight a superior minor piece to the d7-bishop.



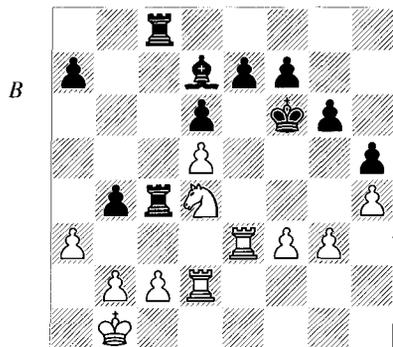
17...♖xd2 18 ♗xd2 ♘xd5

Black also has the option of maintaining the current pawn-structure, which does have the benefit of maintaining flexibility while at the same time avoiding an immediate weakening of the e7-pawn. One practical example continued: 18...♗e8 19 b3 ♗c5 20 c4 ♘xd5 21 cxd5 (if 21 exd5, then 21...b5! is a suitable counter-strike) 21...♗ec8 22 ♖b2 a5 23 ♗c2 ♗xc2+ 24 ♘xc2 f5! 25 exf5 ♗xf5 26 ♘e3 ♗c5 27 a3 ♖f6 28 b4 axb4 29 axb4 ♗c7 30 f4 ♗e4 1/2-1/2 Pozdniakov-Razuvaeva, St Petersburg 1997.

19 exd5 ♗fc8 20 ♗e1 ♖f6 21 g3

This protects the h4-pawn, thereby freeing the d4-knight to jostle for position, but also gives Black time to whip up some counterplay on the opposite wing. 21 b3 ♗c5 22 ♘e2 ♗f5 23 ♗c1 b5 24 ♖b2 a5 = Stepanov-Dearing, Menorca U-16 Wch 1996.

21...b5 22 ♗e3 b4 23 a3 (D)



23...a5

Black has a slight advantage. Kalod-Macieja, Presov 2000 continued: 24 ♘b3 (Konikowski suggests that 24 axb4 axb4 25 ♘b3 ♖ is a better try, but one which is nevertheless slightly better for Black) 24...bxa3 25 ♘xa5 (25 bxa3? a4 26

♠d4 ♖8c5 -+) 25...♗a4 (Konikowski points out the line 25...a2+!? 26 ♖xa2 ♖xc2 27 ♖xc2 ♖xc2, when the d5-pawn is rendered weak in the ending and the b-pawn is going to have a difficult time gaining momentum) 26 ♖xa3 ♖xa3 27 bxa3 ♖a8 28 ♠b3 (28 ♠c4 ♠b5 29 ♖d4 ♠xc4 30 ♖xc4 ♖xa3 31 ♖f4+ ♠g7 ♖) 28...♖xa3 29 ♠b2 ♖a4 30 ♠c3 ♠b5 31 ♖d4 ♖a7 32 ♖f4+ ♠g7 (32...♠e5!? 33 ♖xf7 ♠xd5 34 ♖g7 ♠e8 ♖ Rogozenko) 33 ♠b4?! ♠d7 34 ♠c3?! ♖a2 ♖ 35 ♠e4 ♠f5 36 ♖e2 ♠f6 37 ♠d4 ♖a1! 38 ♠xf5 gxf5 39 ♖g2 ♖a3+ 40 ♠d4 ♖xf3 -+ 41 c4 ♖a3 42 ♖g1 e5+ 43 dxe6 fxe6 44 ♖g2 ♠e7 45 ♖g1 e5+ 46 ♠d5 ♖a5+ 47 ♠c6 ♖c5+ 0-1.

B423)

17 ♠b3 ♖c7

This is certainly the main line, but alternatives have been tried. 17...♖b6 enjoyed a successful first outing: 18 ♠d5 ♠xd5 19 exd5 ♖fc8 20 ♠d4 ♖8c5 21 ♖g5 e5 22 ♠b3 ♖xc2 23 g4 ♖e2 24 ♖d2 f6 25 ♠xc5 ♖xc5 26 ♖xe2 fxg5 27 hxg5 ♖xd5 28 ♖eh2 ♖xf3 29 gxh5 gxh5 30 ♖xh5 ♠f5+ 31 ♠a1 ♠e4 0-1 Komljenović-Saenz Narciso, Pamplona 2000. 17...♖e5!? was tried by the creative Australian GM Ian Rogers. The line is interesting, but I don't really trust it, and consequently I am reluctant to devote space to it here.

18 g4 (D)

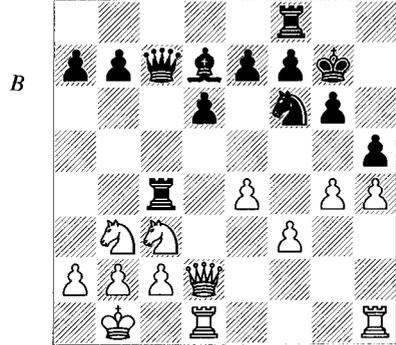
Alternatives:

a) 18 ♠e2 ♖c8 19 c3 b5 20 ♖e3 a5 21 ♠f4 a4 22 ♠d2 e5 23 ♠d3 ♖c6 24 ♠b4 1/2-1/2 Marjanović-Tatai, Rome 1988.

b) 18 ♖he1 ♖c8 19 f4 (19 ♖c1 a5 20 ♠d4 ♖b6 21 ♠de2 a4 was comfortable for Black {who eventually won} in the game Skjoldager-Buhl, Hedehusene 1993) 19...♠g4 20 ♖c1 a6 21 ♖e3 b5 22 a3, and now instead of 22...♠d7, which was strongly met by 23 ♠d5 in Egger-Jiravorasuk, Erevan OL 1996, 22...b4! appears promising.

18...hxg4

Black has an important alternative approach in 18...♖xc3!?. This is a recent development which, although of little significance to the overall assessment of this variation, does give the reader an interesting alternative to explore. Unless otherwise stated the annotations presented



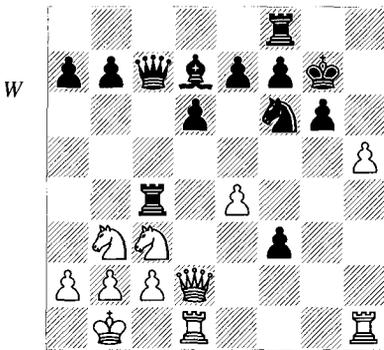
below are based on Aroshidze's analysis, as published in *Informator* 87. 19 bxc3 (19 ♖xc3 ♖xc3 20 bxc3 hxg4 ♖) 19...hxg4 20 h5 (20 fxg4 ♠xg4 21 ♖df1 ♖c8 is at least slightly better for Black) 20...gxf3 and now:

a) 21 ♖dg1 ♖h8! (21...♠xe4 22 ♖d4+ ♠f6 23 ♖e3 ♠g4 24 hxg6 fxg6 25 ♠d4 is given by Aroshidze as unclear, but 25...e5 26 ♖xg4 ♖b6+ 27 ♠a1 ♠xg4 28 ♠e6+ ♠f6 29 ♖xf3+ ♠xe6 30 ♖xf8 ♠e3 looks fine for Black) 22 hxg6 ♖xh1 23 ♖xh1 fxg6 ♖.

b) 21 hxg6 fxg6 22 ♖dg1 (22 ♖df1 ♠g4 23 ♠d4 ♖c8 ♖; 22 ♖h6+ ♠f7 23 ♖d3 ♠g4 is given as unclear by Aroshidze, but I doubt Black can really be any worse here; 22 ♠d4!? ♠f7 23 e5 dxe5 24 ♠xf3 ♠f5 25 ♠g5+ ♠g8! is very complicated; Black looks as though he should be OK, but by the same measure White's chances are enhanced in this position by the activity of his pieces, the well-placed knight on g5, and the draughty surroundings of the black king; I think I will probably have to agree with Aroshidze in concluding that this position is best assessed as unclear) 22...♖g8 and at this point Aroshidze's analysis ends with the enlightening conclusion that the position is unclear. In *The Week in Chess*, I found the continuation of the game that he is analysing: 23 ♖g3 ♠xe4 (23...♠c6!? could be an improvement, as 24 ♠d4 ♠f7 25 ♠xc6 ♖xc6 26 ♖xf3 ♠e8 leaves Black in good shape, with that trusty g-pawn ready to roll) 24 ♖h6+ ♠f7 25 ♖xf3+ ♠f6?! (I am not so sure about this one; perhaps 25...♠f5 is stronger, as 26 ♠d4 ♠xc3+! 27 ♠b2 ♖b6+ is definitely better for Black, and White does not appear to have any other immediate threats) 26 ♖hf1 ♠g4 (26...♠e8!?) 27 ♖g3 ♠e6 28 ♖fg1 ♠f5 29 ♠d4 ♠e4 30 ♖f1 ♖c4 31 ♖f4 ♠d5 32 ♠c1 e5?! (32...♖xa2!) 33 ♖h7+!? (33

♙f2! ♖xa2 34 ♖g5 =) 33...♙g7 34 ♖xg7+ ♗xg7 35 ♖f5+ ♗h7 36 ♙xc4 ♙xc4 37 ♖xd6 ♙d5 38 c4 ♙c6 39 ♖f7 e4 40 ♖d8 ♗h6 41 ♖xc6 bxc6 42 ♙a3 g5 43 ♙xa7 g4 44 ♙d2 g3 45 ♙a3 ♖h5 46 ♙e3 g2 47 ♙e1 ♗g5 48 ♙g1 ♖f4 49 ♗e3 ♗g4 50 ♗xe4 ♗g3 51 a4 ♖e6 52 ♗e5 ♖c5 53 a5 ♗f2 54 ♙a1 g1 ♙ 55 ♙xg1 ♗xg1 56 ♙d6 ♖b7+ 57 ♗xc6 ♖xa5+ 58 ♗b5 ♖b7 59 c5 ♗f2 60 ♗c6 ♖a5+ 61 ♗b5 ♖b7 62 ♗b6 ♖d8 63 ♗c7 ♖f7 64 c6 ♗e3 65 ♗d7 ♖e5+ 66 ♗d6 ♖xc6 67 ♗xc6 ♗d4 1/2-1/2 Aroshidze-Loetscher, Baku 2002.

19 h5 gxf3! (D)



Now three moves have been tried:

a) 20 ♖d4!? ♙xc3! 21 hxg6 fxg6 22 bxc3 ♖b6+ 23 ♗c1 ♙a5 24 ♖xf3 ♖xa2 25 ♖h6+ ♗f7 26 ♖g5+ ♗e8 27 ♖xg6+ ♗d8 28 ♖g7 ♙g8 29 ♙h8 ♙xh8 30 ♖xh8+ ♗c7 was already comfortable for Black in Cayford-Prizant, corr. 1996, but now the untimely 31 ♙e1 was answered by 31...♙a4! 32 ♙e2 ♖c4 33 ♗d2 ♙xc2 ♣.

b) 20 hxg6?! (immediately releasing the tension in this manner gives the black king a flight-square on f7, and therefore jeopardizes the success of White's attack) 20...fxg6 21 ♙dg1 ♗f7 22 ♖g5 ♗e8 23 ♖xg6+ ♗d8 and then:

b1) 24 ♖g7 ♙e8! (24...♙g8 25 ♙h8 unnecessarily complicates matters) 25 ♙f1 ♙xc3 26 bxc3 ♖xc3 27 ♖g3 ♖xe4 28 ♖xf3 ♙c6! 29 ♖h3 ♖e5 30 ♙e1 ♖c3+ 31 ♗a1 ♖e2+ 32 ♗b1 ♙xh1 33 ♖xh1 ♖c3+ 34 ♗a1 ♖h8 0-1 R.Webb-Mah, Highgate 1997. It is noteworthy that White only had to draw to achieve his first IM norm, whereas Black's success in this critical game brought him his own first IM norm.

b2) 24 ♖h6!? ♙f7 25 ♖e3 ♙e8 26 ♙f1 b5?! (26...♖g4 looks stronger; e.g., 27 ♖xa7 b6 28

♖a6 ♖e3 when the position is highly unclear) 27 ♙xf3 b4 28 ♖d5 ♖xd5 29 exd5 ♙xf3 30 ♖xf3 ♖c8 31 ♙g1 ♖c7 1/2-1/2 Oliveira-Deforel, corr. 1999.

c) 20 ♙dg1 f2! (this defensive resource saves Black from otherwise inevitable difficulties; prior to the discovery of this move, the leading game in this line was Short-Fleck, Bundesliga 1986/7, which continued 20...♙g8 21 hxg6 fxg6 22 ♖d5 ♖d8 23 ♖d4 e6 24 ♖f4 ♗f7 25 ♖xf3 ♖xe4 26 ♙h7+ ♗e8 27 ♖d3 ♖c3+ 28 bxc3 ♖b6+ 29 ♗c1 ♙xf4 30 ♙xg6 ♙g8 31 ♙gg7 ♙xf3 32 ♙e7+ ♗d8 33 ♙xd7+ ♗c8 34 ♖c4+ ♗b8 35 ♖b4 ♗a8 36 ♖xb7 ♙f1+ 37 ♗b2 ♙b8 38 ♖xb6 1-0) 21 ♖xf2 ♙xc3 22 bxc3 ♖xc3 is assessed by Nunn as equal. Perhaps unclear would be a better assessment, but in any case Black should be holding his own. The only game I can find that has progressed this far is a correspondence game from 1989 which has hitherto evaded the existing Dragon authorities. That game continued: 23 hxg6 fxg6 24 ♖h4 ♖e3?! (24...♗f7! 25 ♖g5 ♙g8 is fine for Black) 25 ♙e1 ♖f3?! (25...♖c3 would probably still be OK for Black, but now things go quickly downhill) 26 e5! dxe5 27 ♙xe5 ♗f7 28 ♙he1 ♙e8 29 ♖c5 ♙f5 30 ♖c4+ ♗f8 31 ♖e6+ ♙xe6 32 ♙xe6 g5 33 ♖c7 ♖d5 34 ♖e5 ♖c3+ 35 ♗a1 ♖a4 36 ♙g6 1-0 Schendel-Pinardi, corr. 1989.

B5)

16 g4 hxg4 17 h5

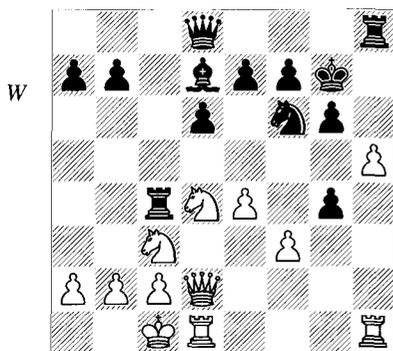
17 f4 has been tried a couple of times with mixed results. Black's best is probably 17...♙a5 (17...e5!? 18 fxe5 dxe5 19 ♖f5+? {19 ♖de2 is more sensible, when matters remain unclear, although by no means unfavourable to White} 19...♙xf5 20 exf5 ♖xd2+ 21 ♙xd2 gxf5 22 h5 ♙h8 23 ♖d5 ♙xh5 24 ♙xh5 ♖xh5 25 ♖e3 ♙f4 0-1 Gagne-Snyder, e-mail 1996) 18 ♖b3 ♖c7 19 ♙he1 and now rather than 19...♙c6?! 20 ♖d3 ♙d7, as in Acher-Aidaoui, Montlucon 1997, simply 19...♙c8 leaves Black with a comfortable position.

17...♙h8! (D)

17...♖xh5? runs into 18 ♙xh5!

18 hxg6

This capture is absolutely necessary if White is to continue his attack. Other possibilities are tame:



a) 18 h6+ ♖h7 blocks the kingside, leaving White material down with no effective method of continuing the attack; e.g., 19 fxg4 (19 f4 ♖c7 20 ♜he1 ♜c5 21 ♖e3 ♜c8 22 ♘d5? ♜xc2+ 23 ♖b1 ♘d5 24 exd5 ♙f5 ♢ Riccio-Falcone, Asigc 1986) 19... ♙xg4 20 ♜df1 (20 ♜dg1 ♖b6 21 ♖f4 ♖xd4 22 ♜xg4 ♜hc8 23 ♜g3 b5 24 ♜d3 ♖e5 25 ♖xe5 dxe5 was easily concluded in Black's favour in Adam-Feletar, Szombathely 2003) 20... ♖a5 21 ♘b3 ♖e5 22 ♘d5 ♜xe4 23 ♘xf6+ exf6 24 c3 ♜c8 25 ♖b1 ♙f5 26 ♖a1 ♜e2 27 ♖d4 ♜e8 28 a3 ♙e6 29 ♖b4 ♖d5 30 ♘c1 ♜e4 0-1 Oijala-Jouhki, Mikkeli 1999.

b) 18 fxg4 ♙xg4 19 hxg6 fvg6 20 e5 dxe5 21 ♘e6+ ♙xe6 22 ♖xd8 ♜xd8 23 ♜xd8 ♙f5 gives Black a better endgame.

18...fxg6 19 f4

Or:

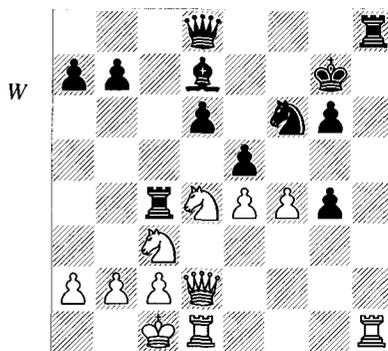
a) 19 fxg4 ♙xg4 20 e5 dxe5 21 ♘e6+ ♙xe6 22 ♖xd8 ♜xd8 23 ♜xd8 ♙f5 24 ♜b8 ♜c7 25 ♜bh8 g5 26 ♜h2 a6 27 ♜e2 e4 1/2-1/2 Lizarraga-Aguilar, IECG e-mail 2001, although the chances are quite clearly with Black in the final position.

b) 19 ♜dg1 ♖c8!? (19... ♜xh1! 20 ♜xh1 ♖b6 21 ♖h6+ ♖f7, initiating the familiar king-walk, looks promising) 20 ♘d5 e5 21 ♘xf6 ♜xh1 22 ♜xh1 ♘xf6 23 ♘b3 gxf3 24 ♖xd6+ ♙e6 25 ♜h7 (Trbojević-Ljubić, Makarska 1994) 25... ♜xe4! -+.

c) 19 e5 gives rise to the type of endgame that should by now be becoming increasingly familiar: 19...dxe5 20 ♘e6+ ♙xe6 21 ♖xd8 ♜xd8 22 ♜xd8 gxf3 -+ Diaz-Vinzani, Paris 1998.

19...e5! (D)

This central strike is the cornerstone of Black's strategy: having extinguished White's attack on the kingside, Black puts a stop to any



ideas of White blasting open the centre with e5, and at the same time displaces White's important knight on d4. White now has two options:

B51: 20 ♘de2 74

B52: 20 fxe5 75

B51)

20 ♘de2 ♜xh1

20... ♘xe4 21 ♜xh8 ♖xh8 was analysed by Nizynski, who gave the line 22 ♖d3?! ♘xc3 23 ♖xc4 ♘xe2+ 24 ♖xe2 ♖h6 as unclear, but unfortunately 22 ♘xe4! ♜xe4 23 ♖xd6 is just good for White.

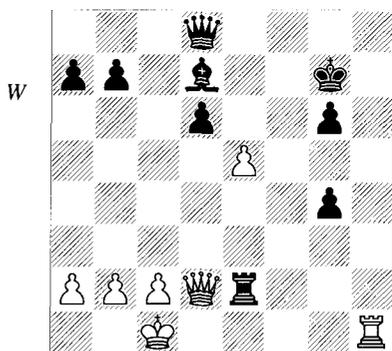
21 ♜xh1 ♘xe4 22 ♘xe4

22 ♖d3? runs into 22... ♜xc3! 23 ♘xc3 ♘f2 -+.

22... ♜xe4 23 fxe5

Nizynski gives 23 ♘g3?! ♜xf4 24 ♖xd6 ♖e8 25 ♜e1 ♜d4 (Fritz likes the look of 25... ♖e6 26 ♖b8 ♙c6, and I tend to agree with him) 26 ♖c7 ♖f7 27 ♖xe5+ ♖f6 ♢.

23... ♜xe2! (D)



This excellent move allows Black to maintain the balance. Now:

a) 24 ♖xe2 ♖g5+ and here:

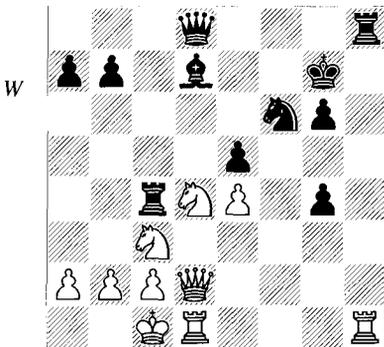
a1) 25 ♖b1!? (White reasons that the continued presence of the queens on the board increases his chances of drawing) 25...♚xe5 26 ♚d2 (having already moved the white king away from the centre, it would be entirely inconsistent to exchange queens now) 26...♙c6 27 ♚h6+ ♖f7 28 ♚f1+ ♙f3 29 ♚h4 ♖g7 30 ♙e1 g5 31 ♚f2 g3 32 ♚g1 ♙e4 33 a3 b6 34 ♙e2 d5 35 ♖a1 ♚f4 36 c4 g2 37 ♚f2 ♚e5 and Black wins, Shim Ng Min-Jobe, IECC e-mail 1999.

a2) 25 ♚d2 ♚xd2+ 26 ♖xd2 dxe5 27 ♖e3 (27 ♚g1 leads to much of the same: 27...♖f6 28 ♖e3 ♖g5 29 ♖e4 ♖h4!, as does 27 c4 ♙c6 28 ♚g1 ♙f3 29 ♖e3 ♖f6 30 b4 ♖e6 31 ♚c1 a6 32 a3 ♙c6 33 ♚b1 ♖d6 34 ♚d1+ ♖c7 1/2-1/2 Druet-Poli, corr. 1992) 27...♙c6 28 ♚g1 ♙f3 was assessed as equal by Nizynski. His conclusion appears sound: 29 ♖f2 e4! 30 ♙e1 ♖f6 31 ♖g3 ♖e5 32 c3 ♖f5 =. White's pieces are tied to the task of blockading Black's pawns, but by the same measure, Black lacks any obvious path of penetration, and must be mindful of the potential of White's queenside majority.

b) 24 ♚h6+ ♖f7 25 ♚h7+ (or 25 ♚f4+ ♖g7 26 ♚h6+ 1/2-1/2 with a draw by repetition in Gysi-Ortiz Elias, corr. 2001) 25...♖e6 26 ♚xg6+ ♖xe5 27 ♚h5+ ♖f4 28 ♚xd6+ ♖f3 29 ♚d5+ (White must still exercise care because 29 ♚f5+? allows 29...♙xf5! 30 ♚xd8 ♚xc2+) 29...♖f4 was Sax-Dely, Budapest 1971. It seems that White must be content with a perpetual check – all lines lead to a draw.

B52)

20 fxe5 dxe5 (D)



21 ♖de2!

It is generally agreed that this is White's best choice. Alternatives:

a) The presumptuous 21 ♖e6+?! betrays short-sighted materialism for which White will inevitably suffer in the long term. 21...♙xe6 22 ♚xd8 ♚xd8 23 ♚xd8 ♖xe4 was originally analysed by Helgi Olafsson and assessed as granting Black compensation for the material. This is perhaps a misnomer, as Black has not sacrificed anything – material is level and Black has three passed pawns! Indeed, in the six games that I have dug up on this position White has scored a resounding 0/6!

b) The alternative retreat 21 ♖b3 gives Black a choice of approaches:

b1) 21...♚h3 22 ♚hf1 ♚f3 23 ♚xf3 (23 ♚d6 ♚e8 24 ♖c5 ♚d4 25 ♖d5 ♚xd1+ 26 ♚xd1 ♖xd5 27 exd5 ♙c8 is assessed by Schneider as offering chances for both sides, the prospective march of the g-pawn compensating for White's central dominance) 23...gxf3 24 ♚h1 ♚b6 (24...♖g4! looks stronger, guarding against invasion on the h6-square and bolstering the f-pawn's intended advance) 25 ♖d5 ♖xd5 26 ♚h6+ ♖f7 27 ♚h7+ ♖f6 28 ♚h8+ ♖e6 29 exd5+ ♖d6 30 ♚b8+ ♚c7 31 ♚f8+ ♖xd5 32 ♚xf3+ e4 33 ♚d1+ ♖e6 34 ♚f8 1-0 Tarantino-Rodriguez Martin, corr. 1995.

b2) 21...♚e8 is an attempt to keep things tight at the back, and brought Black success in its only outing: 22 ♚h8 ♚xh8 23 ♚d3 b5 24 ♖d5 ♙e6 25 ♖xf6 ♖xf6 26 ♚d6 ♚h6+ 27 ♖b1 ♚f4 28 ♖c5 ♚xc5 29 ♚xc5 g3 (White has achieved all that he can from his exertions, but now he is faced with the fresh task of stifling that dangerous g-pawn) 30 ♚f8+ ♖g5 31 ♚e7+ ♚f6 32 ♚xf6+ ♖xf6 33 ♚g1 g5 34 ♚xg3 g4 (having stopped the first g-pawn, White is confronted with the same nightmare all over again; still, that will teach him to sacrifice his own g-pawn so carelessly!) 35 ♖c1 ♖g5 36 ♖d2 ♖f4 37 ♚g1 g3 38 ♖e2 ♙g4+ 39 ♖e1 ♙f3 40 b3 b4 41 ♖d2 g2 42 ♖d3 ♙xe4+ 43 ♖e2 ♖g3 44 ♖e3 ♙xc2 45 ♚c1 ♙f5 0-1 Mamedov-Aronian, Paris 1994.

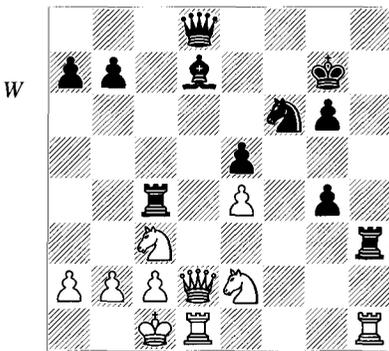
21...♚h3

21...♚c8!? has also been shown to constitute a valid alternative. Then:

a) 22 ♚h8 ♚xh8 23 ♚g5 ♚h6 24 ♚xh6+ ♖xh6 25 ♖g3 ♙c6 26 ♚d6 ♖g5 27 ♖d5 ♚f8 0-1 J.Azevedo-M.Santos, corr 1991.

b) 22 ♖g5 ♗e7 23 ♘g3 (23 ♜f1 ♜c8 24 ♘g3 ♘d5 25 ♖xe7+ ♚xe7 26 ♜d6 ♙c8 1/2-1/2 Popikov-Martishin, corr. 1992, although I certainly prefer Black here) 23...♙xh1 24 ♙xh1 ♜h8 25 ♜d1 (25 ♘h5+? can be countered with the strong 25...♙f7!, when 26 ♘g3 ♙xh1+ 27 ♘h1 ♖c5 leaves White in trouble; similarly, 25 ♙xh8 ♙xh8 26 ♖h6+ ♙g8 27 ♖xg6+ ♖g7 28 ♖xg7+ ♙xg7 has been correctly assessed as granting Black a superior ending) 25...♙c8 and now Yudasin-Smirin, Norilsk 1987 was agreed drawn. In his annotations of the game (presented in *Informator 44*) Smirin explains that Black intends to dissolve the tension on the kingside by playing 26...♘d5, offering a queen exchange. He assessed the position as unclear and also offered the following variations: 26 ♘f5+ (if instead 26 ♘b5 with the idea of 27 ♘d6, Black can implement the aforementioned tactical resource, 26...♘d5! 27 ♖d2 ♘f4 28 ♘d6 ♙e6 29 ♖c3 ♙f6! – as Mayer points out, Smirin's assessment of unclear may be a little generous to White, as Black's position appears preferable here) 26...♙xf5 27 exf5 ♖f7 28 fxg6 ♖e6!.

We now return to 21...♜h3 (D):



22 ♖g5?!

22 ♜f1 should be preferred, when White retains better chances to maintain the balance; e.g., 22...♜f3 23 ♙h1 (23 ♙xf3?! gxf3 24 ♘g1 {24 ♘g3 ♜d4 25 ♖g5 ♙xd1+ 26 ♘d1 is also better for Black} 24...♜d4! 25 ♖e3 f2! 26 ♖xf2 ♘xe4 ♣) 23...♙h3 24 ♙h1 ♜f3 25 ♙h1 =.

22...♖e8! 23 ♙xh3

If White now attempts to revert to the lines examined above with 23 ♜f1 Black has the strong response 23...♘h7! 24 ♖d2 (24 ♙xd7+ ♖xd7 25 ♖xe5+ ♙h6 26 ♘f4!?) 24...♙c8 (24...♙e6 is also interesting; for example, 25 ♖d6 ♙f7 26 ♖a6 27 ♜d6 ♘g5 28 ♖a5?! ♜f3 29 ♜fd1 ♘xe4 30 ♜d7 ♘xc3 31 ♘xc3 ♜d4 ♣ De Souza-Henao, Merida 1993) 25 ♖d5 ♙c6 ♣ Georgiev.

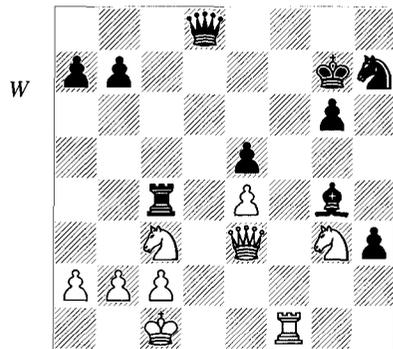
23...g3 24 ♘g3 ♘h7! 25 ♖e3

Kiril Georgiev mentions the lines 25 ♘h5+? ♙h8 –+ and 25 ♙xd7+ ♖xd7 26 ♘h5+ ♙h8! (26...♙f7 27 ♖h6 g3 28 ♙xh7+ ♙e6 29 ♖g6+ ♙e7 30 ♘d5+ ♙d8 intending ...♙c8-b8 ♣) 27 ♖xe5+ ♙g8 28 ♖g3 ♙c6 29 ♘d5 ♖d6 intending 30...h2 –+.

25...♙g4 26 ♜f1

26 ♙g1 ♖f7 27 ♜f1 ♖e7 28 ♖xa7 ♖g5+ 29 ♙b1 ♙c7 30 a4 ♜d7 31 a5 ♙e6 32 ♖g1 ♜f7 33 ♜d1 ♖g4 34 ♘ce2 ♘g5 35 ♖c5 ♘f3 36 b4 ♖g5 37 ♖c3 h2 38 b5 ♙g4 39 ♙h1 ♘d2+ –+ Gaponenko-Pogonina, Istanbul wom Ech 2003.

26...♖d8 (D)



27 ♘d5

27 ♖xa7 ♖d4! 28 ♖xb7+ ♙h6 –+.

27...♖g5! 28 ♙b1

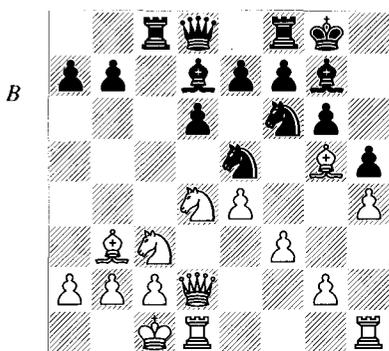
28 ♖xg5 ♘xg5 29 ♘e3 ♘xe4 30 ♘h1 ♙e6 31 ♘xc4 ♙xc4 32 ♙e1 ♙d5 33 ♙e3 ♘g5 34 ♘g3 h2 35 ♙xe5 ♘e4 –+.

28...♜d4 29 ♖c3 ♜d1+ 30 ♙xd1 ♙xd1 –+ 31 ♘e3 ♙f3 32 ♘ef1 ♖f4 33 a4 ♘g5 34 ♖c7+ ♘f7 35 ♖d7 ♙g2 36 ♖d3 ♖f2 37 ♙a2 ♖f3! 38 ♘h2 ♖xd3 39 cxd3 ♙f6 40 ♙b3 ♙g5

0-1 Sax-Ki.Georgiev, Burgas 1992.

6 13 ♗g5 ♖c5: Unusual 14th Moves for White

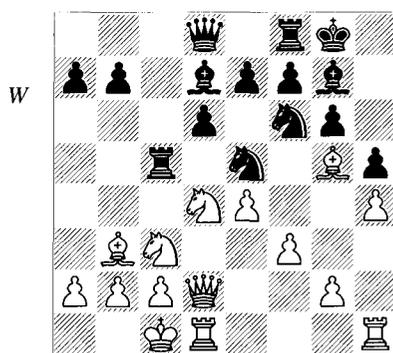
1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♗f6 5 ♘c3 g6 6 ♗e3 ♗g7 7 f3 ♘c6 8 ♖d2 0-0 9 ♗c4 ♗d7 10 0-0-0 ♖c8 11 ♗b3 ♘e5 12 h4 h5 13 ♗g5 (D)



When direct attempts to break through on the kingside failed, White looked to refine his attacking methods by first repositioning the dark-squared bishop on g5. With 13 ♗g5 White achieves several things. Firstly, he exerts pressure along the h4-d8 diagonal, both enhancing the strength of a future f4 and e5 break, and preparing the move ♘d5 with maximum effect. Secondly, White threatens to capture the f6-knight, thereby facilitating the removal of a key defender at an appropriate moment, and consequently maximizing the potential impact of the advance 14 g4. Thirdly, White gains some space within his own camp, improving the coordination of his pieces so that now the move ♖he1 functions to directly supplement the strength of White's central pawn-roller. Also note that the advance 14 f4 is now more attractive because 14...♗eg4 does not hit White's dark-squared bishop (which would usually be on e3), and, with the bishop safely posted on g5, Black's standard counterplay with 13...♘c4 strikes thin air, as White can gracefully side-step the black knight's attack with 14 ♖e2, attacking the now

misplaced c4-knight and forcing it to retreat. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, with 13 ♗g5 White asks Black how he intends to improve his position. White has played a slow but flexible move, improving the position of his own pieces in anticipation of the forthcoming tussle, but Black must now find an equally constructive move. This is easier said than done, as 13...a5 is met by 14 a4, 13...b5 loses a pawn, 13...♖a5 leads to an inferior version of the 10...♖a5 line, and 13...♘c4 is met by 14 ♖e2!. Indeed things looked rather grim for Black until finally, in 1976, Sosoenko discovered the fantastic...

13...♖c5! (D)



With 13...♖c5 Black copies White's strategy of incrementally improving his position before committing to a direct attack. In a similar fashion to the g5-bishop, the c5-rook performs several useful functions. Firstly, 13...♖c5 enhances Black's attacking resources: the rook supports the advance 14...b5 (thereby commencing play on the queenside), protects the black queen should Black wish to move it to a5, and opens up some space for the black pieces, facilitating the doubling (or even tripling!) of the major pieces on the c-file. Secondly, the c5-rook also performs lateral defensive functions. From c5

Black can sacrifice the rook for White minor pieces that advance to d5, f5 or g5 if necessary. However, by the same measure Black retains the potential to execute the traditional exchange sacrifice on c3. One should also note that Black now has greater protection over the e5-square, thereby discouraging the white central pawn-roller with, e.g., 14 f4 and 15 e5. Finally, the rook on c5 also indirectly protects the g5- and h5-squares, limiting White's methods of gaining access to the black kingside with his major pieces.

White now has many continuations from which he can choose, of which 14 f4!? shall be considered in Chapter 7, 14 g4 is the subject of Chapters 8 and 9, while Karpov's prophylactic 14 ♖b1!? is discussed in Chapter 10. This chapter rounds up the minor alternatives, none of which promise White much chance of an advantage. These are:

- A:** 14 ♙xf6?! 78
B: 14 ♘d5 78
C: 14 ♘de2 79
D: 14 ♗dg1?! 80
E: 14 ♖he1 80

Note that 14 ♗e2?! can be answered by the thematic 14...♙xc3! 15 bxc3 ♗a5 (15...♗c7 16 ♗e3?! ♗c8 17 ♘e2 a5 18 a4 b5 ♠ Abreu-Mestel, Mexico 1978) 16 f4 ♗xc3 17 ♖b1 ♘c6 ♠ Gutierrez-Henao, Santa Fe de Bogota 1988.

A)

14 ♙xf6?!

This exchange is premature to say the least. Not only does White surrender the bishop-pair, but he undermines his own attack (it is now harder to remove Black's dark-squared bishop) and enhances Black's attacking chances because the Dragon bishop will now go unchallenged on the open board.

14...♙xf6

Now:

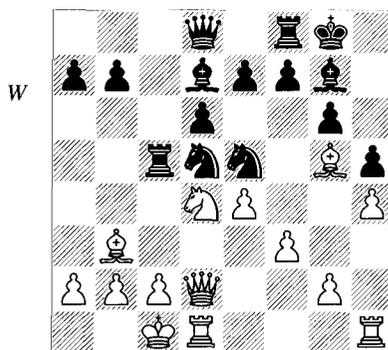
a) 15 f4 ♘c4 16 ♗d3 b5 17 e5 ♙g7 18 ♖he1 ♗a5 (18...♙g4!? ♠) 19 e6 ♙xe6 20 ♗xe6 occurred in Pieper-Visetti, Aachen 1982, and now 20...♙xd4 looks good for Black.

b) 15 ♖b1 ♘c4 16 ♙xc4 ♗xc4 17 ♘ce2 b5 ♠ left White struggling to find a plan in Sanchez Almeyra-Perera, Las Palmas 1989. Generally

speaking, in the Yugoslav Attack White needs at least one of his bishops to conduct an effective offensive.

B)

14 ♘d5 ♘xd5 (D)



15 ♙xd5

15 exd5 a5 16 a3 a4 17 ♙a2 and now:

a) 17...b5 (this seems a little pointless in this position as Black has already achieved all that he requires in terms of queenside pawn advances) 18 g4 hxg4 19 h5 ♘xf3 20 ♘xf3 gxf3 21 ♙e3 ♙f5!? (21...♗c8 appears safer) 22 ♙xc5 dxc5 23 hxg6 ♙xg6 24 c4? (White opens the queenside, enhancing those raking black bishops and justifying Black's sacrifice) 24...bxc4 25 ♙xc4 ♗b6 ♠ 26 ♗h2 ♗b8 27 ♗d2 ♗b7?! (27...♗d6!? looks pretty good, as the resulting ending must favour Black) 28 d6! exd6 29 ♗g1 ♖f8 30 ♖d1 d5 31 ♙xd5 ♗d7 32 ♖c1 c4 33 ♗xg6 fxg6 34 ♗f4+ ♗f6 35 ♗xf6+ ♙xf6 36 ♖c2 ♙g7 37 ♗d1 ♗xd5 38 ♗xd5 f2 39 ♗d1 g5 40 ♗f1 ♙d4 41 ♖d1 g4 42 ♖e2 g3 43 ♖f3 ♙xb2 44 ♖xg3 ♙d4 45 ♖f3 ♖f6 46 ♖e4 ♙a7 47 ♖d5 c3 48 ♖c4 c2 49 ♖d3 ♖e5 50 ♖xc2 ♖e4 51 ♖c3 1/2-1/2 Odeev-Blodshtein, Voroshilovgrad 1989.

b) I prefer 17...♗e8, intending 18...♗b6, increasing Black's activity on the queenside.

15...♘c4

Now:

a) 16 ♗e2 ♘xb2! 17 ♖xb2 ♗xd5 18 exd5 ♗b6+ 19 ♖c1 ♙xd4 20 ♗c4 ♗b2+ 21 ♖d2 ♗c8 22 ♗b3 ♗xc2+ 23 ♗xc2 ♙c3+ 24 ♖e3 ♗xc2 0-1 Reshetnikov-Kosteev, corr. 1990.

b) 16 ♗d3 ♙b5! 17 ♘xb5 ♘xb2 18 ♗b3 ♗a5 19 c4 (Mayer points out that 19 ♘d4 ♘xd1 20 ♗xd1 e6 is also favourable to Black)

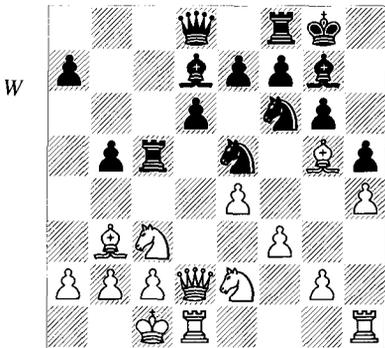
19...♜fc8 20 ♘a3 ♘xd1 21 ♙xd1 e6 22 ♖xb7 ♜b8 23 ♖d2 ♞c7 24 ♘b5 ♞xb7 25 ♖e3 a6 26 ♖xc5 dxc5 27 ♘d6 ♞xb3+ 28 axb3 ♜d8 0-1 Krupkova-Tobias, Prague 1992.

c) 16 ♖xc4 ♜xc4 17 ♘b3 ♖a4 18 ♙b1 ♞c7 19 ♜c1 ♜c8 was already very good for Black in Budde-Röthig, Münster 1987.

C)

14 ♘de2 b5 (D)

A good alternative is 14...a5 15 a4 (15 ♖xf6 ♖xf6 16 f4 ♘c4 17 ♖xc4 ♜xc4 18 e5 ♖g7 19 exd6 ♖g4 20 ♞e3 exd6 ♞ Pinkas-Emunds, Germany tt 1994/5) 15...b5 16 ♘xb5 ♖xb5 17 axb5 ♜xb5 18 ♘c3 ♜b8 19 ♞e2 ♞c7 ♞ Jorge-N.Saeed, Thessaloniki OL 1984.



White now has two main approaches:

C1: 15 ♖e3 79

C2: 15 ♖xf6 79

Minor alternatives:

a) 15 ♙b1 a5 16 a4 b4 17 ♘b5 ♖xb5 18 axb5 a4 19 ♖xa4 ♞a5 20 b3 ♘c4 21 ♞c1 ♘a3+ 0-1 S.From-P.Jakobsen, Denmark 1992.

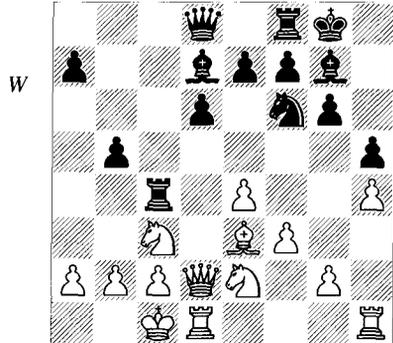
b) 15 ♘d5 ♘xd5 16 ♖xd5 ♘c4 is slightly better for Black.

c) 15 ♞e3 a5 16 a4 bxa4 17 ♘xa4 ♖xa4 18 ♞xc5 (Schulz, in *ChessBase Magazine*, points out 18 ♖xa4 ♞b6 ♞) 18...♖xb3! (18...dxc5? 19 ♜xd8 ♜xd8 20 ♖xa4 =) 19 ♞xc5 ♖c4 → Mariano-Myo Naing, Yangon 1998.

C1)

15 ♖e3 ♘c4 16 ♖xc4 ♜xc4 (D)

This has occurred in quite a few games. White has now tried:

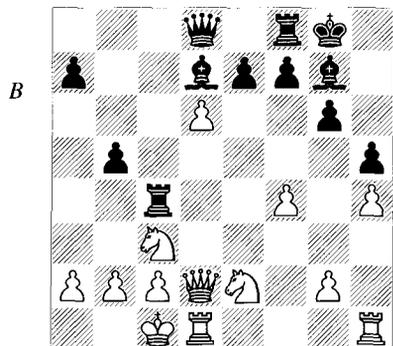


a) 17 ♖d4 ♞a5 (17...e5!? looks interesting; e.g., 18 ♖e3 b4 19 ♘d5 ♘xd5 20 ♞xd5 ♞c7 21 ♜d2 ♜c8 22 ♞d3 d5! ♞) 18 ♙b1 b4 (18...♜fc8 runs into 19 ♖xf6 ♖xf6 20 ♘d5 ♘d5 ♘xd5 20 ♖xg7 ♖xg7 21 ♞xd5 ♜c5! 22 ♞d2 ♜fc8 23 ♘d4 ♞c7 ♞ Pascual Perez-Otero, Cuba 1997.

b) 17 e5!? was tried in Nolsø-Sylvan, Copenhagen 1998. Black gained an acceptable position after 17...♘e8, but I wonder whether 17...dxe5!? might be better. Presumably Black was concerned that the bishop on d7 is pinned to the queen on d8, and that White might try to dislodge the protecting f6-knight with something like 18 ♖g5 (note that 18 ♘d5 can be met with the simple 18...♘xd5 19 ♞xd5 ♞c7, when the threat of 20...♜xc2+ and 21...♜xe2 prevents White from capturing on d7), but then 18...b4! looks good; e.g., 19 ♖xf6 bxc3!.

C2)

15 ♖xf6 ♖xf6 16 f4 ♘c4 17 ♖xc4 ♜xc4 18 e5 ♖g7 19 exd6 (D)



Now:

a) 19...♙g4 20 ♖xb5 exd6 21 ♖xd6 ♜c6 22 ♖e4 ♜b6 23 c3 ♜fc8 24 ♖4g3 ♜a6 25 ♜del ♜xa2 26 ♖d4 ♜d8 27 ♜e5 ♙xe5 28 fxe5 ♜c4 0-1 was the course of Whitehead-Miles, Lone Pine 1980, but line 'b' appears even more convincing for Black.

b) 19...♙f5 20 dxe7 (20 ♜d5 exd6 21 ♖d4 ♜c5 22 ♜b3 ♙g4 23 ♜d2 a6 24 ♖d5 ♜e8 is at least slightly better for Black, Liang Jirong-Mestel, USSR 1980; also bad for White is 20 ♖g3 ♙g4 21 dxe7 ♜xe7 22 ♜del ♜b4 23 a3 ♜a5 24 ♖b1 b4 ♢ Zheliandinov-Rogozenko, Lvov 1995) 20...♙xe7 21 ♖d5 ♜c5 22 ♖e3? ♜xe3 0-1 Gscheidlen-Kurz, Bundesliga 1986/7.

D)

14 ♜dg1?! b5 15 g4

This move at least has the benefit of being consistent. Instead, 15 ♖d5 ♖xd5 16 ♙xd5 ♜b6!? 17 ♙e3 (17 ♙xe7 runs into 17...♜xd5 18 exd5 ♖c4 19 ♜d3 ♙xd4 --) 17...♜xd5 18 exd5 ♖c4 19 ♖c6 ♙xb2+ 20 ♖d1 ♖xe3+ 21 ♖e2 ♙xc6 22 dxc6 ♖c4 23 ♜d5 ♜e3+ 24 ♖d1 ♜c1+ 25 ♖e2 ♜xc2+ 0-1 was Best-Dearing, Cambridge 1996.

15...hxg4 16 h5 ♖xh5 17 ♖d5 ♜e8 18 ♙xh5 gxh5 19 ♜h2 ♜xd5 20 ♙xd5 ♜b6 21 ♙e3 e6

Now:

a) 22 ♜xh5 is very bad: 22...exd5 23 ♖f5 ♙xf5 24 ♙xb6 ♙g6 25 ♜h1 axb6 26 ♜d1 ♖xf3 27 ♜xd5 ♜xe4 0-1 Llaneza Vega-Martinez Martin, Palencia 1999.

b) 22 ♖f5 ♜d8 23 ♜xh5 exf5 24 f4 ♙c6 25 fxe5 ♙xd5 26 exf5 ♙f3 0-1 Wiesmann-Schacht, Bundesliga 1985/6.

E)

14 ♜he1 b5! (D)

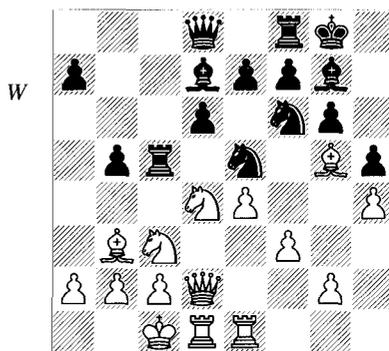
The exclamation mark is for directness, but equally playable is 14...♜a5!? 15 ♖b1 ♜e8! (15...♜fc8?! is inaccurate on account of 16 ♖d5! ♜xd2 17 ♜xd2 ♖xd5 18 exd5 ♖c4? 19 ♙xc4 ♜xc4 20 ♜xe7 ±) 16 f4 (16 ♖de2, with the idea of 17 ♖f4, can be adequately answered by 16...♙e6! 17 ♖f4 ♖c4 18 ♙xc4 ♙xc4 ♢ when 19 b3? is a mistake on account of 19...♙xb3!; 16 ♖d5 ♜xd2 17 ♜xd2 ♖xd5 18 exd5 ♖c4! is also comfortable for Black) 16...♖c4! (16...♖c6 17 e5! dxe5 18 ♙xf7+!! ♖xf7 19 ♖b3 ♜b4 20

♖xc5 ♜xc5 21 ♙xf6 +-; 16...♖eg4 17 e5! +-) 17 ♙xc4 ♜xc4 and now:

a) 18 ♖b3 is well met by 18...♜a6 19 e5 ♖g4 20 exd6 (Ki.Georgiev points out that 20 ♖d5?! is inaccurate because of 20...dxe5! 21 ♖xe7+ ♜xe7 22 ♙xe7 ♙f5 23 ♜c1 exf4 --) 20...♙xc3 21 bxc3 e6! 22 ♙e7 ♜ec8 ♢ Ki.Georgiev.

b) 18 e5 ♖d5! 19 ♖xd5 ♜xd5 with an equal position.

c) 18 ♙xf6! is best, and now Beliavsky-Ki.Georgiev, Wijk aan Zee 1985 continued 18...♙xf6 19 ♖d5 ♜xd2 20 ♖xf6+ exf6 21 ♜xd2 f5 22 b3 ♜c3 23 ♜d3 ♜xd3 24 cxd3 fxe4 25 dxe4 ♙f5 26 ♖xf5 gxf5 27 e5 1/2-1/2. Black is perhaps slightly better in the final position.



White now has two main lines from which to choose:

E1: 15 f4 80

E2: 15 ♖b1 82

15 g4 has only been tried once, albeit successfully and by a strong GM, but I doubt Black was worse from the opening. 15...hxg4 (the alternative 15...a5!? was suggested by Sapi & Schneider, but remains untested) 16 f4 ♖c4 17 ♙xc4 bxc4 18 e5 ♜b6 19 ♙xf6 ♜b8!? (Fritz gets very excited about the immediate 19...exf6, when 20 e6 lacks the punch that it had in the game) 20 ♜g2 exf6 21 e6 fxe6 22 ♜xg4 e5 23 ♜xd7 ♜xb2+ 24 ♖d2 exd4 25 ♖e4 was Grünfeld-Partos, Biel 1981, and now 25...d3! looks strong, with the idea of 26 ♖xc5 ♜b4+ 27 ♖e3 ♜xc5+ 28 ♖f3 dxc2 --.

E1)

15 f4 ♖c4 16 ♙xc4

If White is to justify his approach he must act swiftly. The time for incremental improvement has passed:

a) 16 ♖d3 ♜b6 17 ♖xf6?! ♖xf6 18 ♘d5 ♜xd5! (this common resource is a good example of the lateral protection granted by 13...♜c5!) 19 exd5 ♖g4 20 c3 ♜c8 21 ♘c6 ♖xd1 22 ♜xd1 ♜f2 23 ♖xc4 ♜xf4+ 24 ♖b1 bxc4 25 ♜h3 ♜c7 ♢ Levy-Findlay, Chicago 1983.

b) 16 ♜e2 ♖g4 17 ♘f3 ♘h7!? 18 f5?! ♘xg5 19 hxg5 ♘xb2! 20 f6 ♘xd1 21 fxg7 ♘xc3 22 gxf8 ♜+ ♜xf8 23 ♜e3 a5 24 e5 a4 25 exd6 exd6 0-1 Cabrera Moreno-Komljenović, Zaragoza 1997.

16...♜xc4!

16...bxc4?! runs into 17 ♖xf6! ♖xf6 (or 17...exf6 18 ♘f3 ♜c6 19 e5 ±) 18 e5 and now the greedy 18...♖xh4? fails to 19 ♜h1 ♖g3 (19...dxe5 20 ♘f3 wins for White) 20 ♘e4 +-, while 18...dxe5 drops a piece to 19 ♘f3! exf4 20 ♜xd7 ♜a5 21 ♜xe7 ± (Karpov). 18...♖g7 was played in the famous game Karpov-Sosonko, Tilburg 1979, where Karpov unleashed the fantastic resource 19 e6!, shattering the Dragon pawn-structure: 19...♖c8 (19...♖xd4 20 exf7+ ♜xf7 21 ♜xd4 ♜f8 22 g3 is clearly better for White on account of Black's weak pawn-structure) 20 exf7+ ♜xf7 21 ♘e6 ♖xe6 22 ♜xe6 ♜a5 23 ♜e3! ±.

17 e5

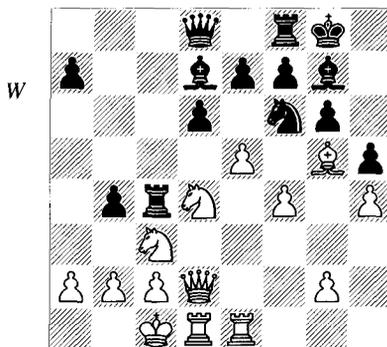
17 ♖xf6 has been played surprisingly often, but it is not very good. 17...♖xf6 18 e5 ♖g7 and now:

a) 19 ♖b1 ♖g4 20 ♘f3 ♜b8 21 ♘d5 ♜e8 22 ♜e3 (22 exd6 exd6 23 ♜xe8+ ♜xe8 24 ♜e1 ♜e4 ♢) 22...♖xf3 23 gxf3 e6 24 exd6 ♜d8 25 ♘e7+ ♖h7 26 ♜d3?! ♜d4 27 ♜e3 ♜xd6 0-1 Boisvert-MacLeod, corr. 1983.

b) 19 f5 b4 20 ♘d5 dxe5 21 ♜g5 ♖h7 22 ♘f4 ♜e8 23 ♜xe5 ♖f6 24 ♜xf6 exf6 25 ♜xe8 ♜xe8 26 b3 ♜c5 27 ♘d3 ♜a5 28 ♘xb4 ♖xf5 29 ♘dc6 ♜c5 30 ♘d5 and 0-1 Bargel-Civin, Cesky Brod 1996.

c) 19 ♘cxb5 is critical, but the late Tony Miles illustrated the defects of the move in a fine victory over John Nunn: 19...♜b8! 20 ♘c3 dxe5 21 fxe5 ♖g4 (21...♖xe5? 22 ♜xe5 ♜xe5 23 ♘f3! ±) 22 ♜d3 ♜c5 23 ♘f3 ♖xf3 24 ♜xf3 ♖xe5 25 ♜d3 ♜fc8 26 ♜f1 ♖f6 ♢ Nunn-Miles, London 1980.

17...b4! (D)



18 exf6

18 ♜d3!?! may actually prove a preferable move-order. 18...♜xd4! 19 ♜xd4 bxc3 and now 20 exf6 transposes to the main line, but 20 ♖xf6?! is quite clearly bad for White: 20...exf6 21 ♜xd6 ♜a5 22 ♜xd7 ♜xa2 23 bxc3 fxe5 24 ♜xe5 (24 fxe5? ♖h6+ -+; 24 ♜d3 exf4 ♢; 24 ♜e4 ♜a3+ 25 ♖d2 ♜a5 26 ♖e2 ♜xc3 27 ♜d3 ♢ Valeriani-Poli, corr. 1989) 24...♖xe5 25 fxe5 ♜a1+ 26 ♖d2 ♜a5 27 ♜e7 ♜c8 28 ♜b4 ♜d8+ 0-1 Feigelson-Chernov, USSR 1984.

18...bxc3

18...exf6!?! is recommended by Mayer as a strong alternative for Black, thereby circumventing the complications of the main line. Dravnieks-Edelstein, corr. 1983 continued 19 ♜d3 ♜xc3 20 bxc3 bxc3 21 ♜xc3 ffg5 22 hxg5 ♜b6, which is unclear to say the least. In any case the point is largely academic because White can sidestep this possibility by simply employing the move-order commencing with 18 ♜d3.

19 ♜d3

19 ♜e2?! ♜b6 20 bxc3 ♜xd4 21 fxg7 ♜xd1+ 22 ♜xd1 ♜e8 was very comfortable for Black in Popovych-Fedorowicz, New York 1982.

19...♜xd4 20 ♜xd4

20 fxe7? ♜b6.

20...exf6 21 ♜xd6 ffg5 22 ♜xd7

22 bxc3?! ♜a5 23 ♜d5 ♜xc3 0-1 was the swift conclusion of Chen-Pope, San Francisco 1986.

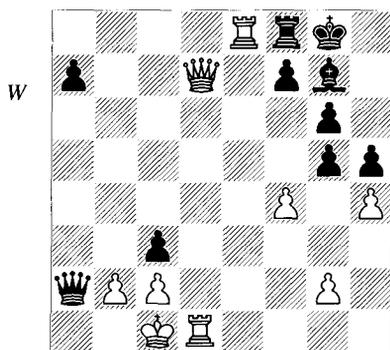
22...♜a5 23 ♜e8

23 ♜d5?! is a clumsy attempt to protect the queenside; e.g., 23...♜b4 24 ♜b3 ♜xf4+ 25 ♖b1 ♜b8 -+.

23...♜xa2! (D)

I consider this superior to 23...♜b4, which has traditionally formed Black's main attempt

in this position. Play then continues 24 ♖xf8+ ♜xf8 25 bxc3 ♜xf4+ (25...♜xc3 26 ♖d4! ± Lukov-Savchenko, Katowice 1990) 26 ♜b2 ♜g7 27 a3! (27 hxg5? ♜b4+ 28 ♜c1 ♜xc3 would leave White wondering why he had always been told that rooks were worth more than bishops!) 27...♜b8+ 28 ♜c1 (28 ♜a2! may be stronger, giving the king some cover) 28...♜g3 29 ♖d3 ♜xg2 30 ♖d8+ ♜h7 31 hxg5 h4 32 ♖d5 ♜g1+ 33 ♜b2 ♜b6+ 34 ♜a2 ♜c7 35 ♜b2 ♜b6+ 36 ♜b3 ♜c5 37 ♜xf7 ♜xg5 38 ♜xa7 ♜b5+ 39 ♜c1 ♜g5+ 40 ♜b2 ♜b5+ 41 ♜a1 ♜f5 42 ♖d7 ♜xd7 43 ♖xd7 g5 44 a4 h3 45 ♜b2 h2 46 ♖d1 g4 0-1 Musanti-Felgaer, Villa Ballester 2000. Although Black won this game, the position around move 27 was highly unclear and undoubtedly White can improve at various points.



24 ♖xf8+ ♜xf8

This move is probably superior to the creative 24...♜h7 25 bxc3 ♜a1+ 26 ♜d2 ♜xc3+ 27 ♜e2 ♜xc2+ 28 ♜f1 (28 ♜f3! is stronger) 28...♜c4+ 29 ♜g1 ♜xf8 30 hxg5 ♜xf4 31 ♖f1?? ♜c5+ 32 ♜h1 ♜xf1+ 0-1 of Nimtz-Goebel, Germany tt 1991.

25 bxc3 gxf4 26 ♜e8 ♜a3+! 27 ♜b1 ♜xc3 28 ♖d8 ♜b4+ 29 ♜c1 ♜a3+

29...a5! is perhaps a more serious winning attempt, when White may face some difficulties in the endgame.

30 ♜b1

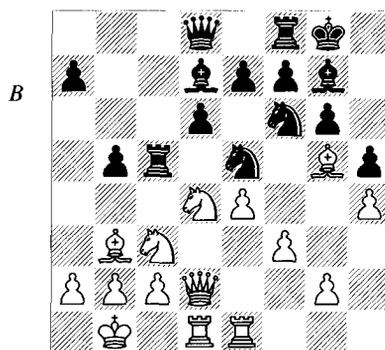
30 ♜d2 is mentioned by Mayer as a possible winning attempt for White, but I think this may prove a shade optimistic because after 30...♜g7 31 ♜e2 a5 the position looks comfortable for Black.

30...♜b4+ 31 ♜c1 ♜a3+ 32 ♜b1 ♜b4+

1/2-1/2 Rowley-Kudrin, Palo Alto 1981.

E2)

15 ♜b1 (D)



15...a5

Or:

a) 15...♖e8 is equally playable, and is considered by transposition in the note to Black's 15th move in Line B4 of Chapter 10.

b) For those readers who are interested in unexplored side-lines, 15...♜c4 has yielded Black promising results in practice. After 16 ♜xc4 Black has tried:

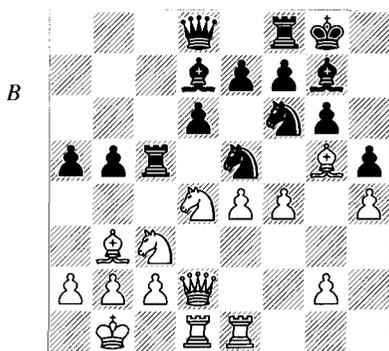
b1) 16...♜xc4 17 e5 (17 ♖d3 ♜b8! was comfortable for Black in Spice-R.Pert, London 1993) 17...b4 (17...dxe5! may also have something to be said for it) 18 exf6 (18 ♖d3 ♜xc3 19 bxc3 ♜d5 – Golubev) 18...exf6 19 ♜d5 fxc5 20 ♜b3 ♜e6 21 hxg5 a5 22 ♜e3 ♖f4 23 ♜d5 ♖f5 24 ♜f6+ ♜xf6 25 gxf6 ♜xf6 26 ♜xd6 a4 27 ♜c1 ♖b5 28 ♖d4 ♜g5 29 ♖d2 ♖f6 30 ♖d4 ♜g5 31 ♖d2 ♖f6 1/2-1/2 Mnatsakanian-Sapi, Budapest 1990.

b2) 16...bxc4!? 17 e5 (17 ♜h6 ♜b6 18 ♜xg7 ♖b8 19 ♜c1 ♜xg7 20 ♜de2 ♖c7 21 ♜d5 ♜xd5 22 exd5 was Solozhenkin-Shevelev, Leningrad 1990, and now Mayer's suggestion of 22...♜cb7 seems to leave Black with a comfortable position) 17...dxe5 18 ♜xf6 (this is critical; other moves favour Black; for example, 18 ♜de2? ♖c7 ♖ or 18 ♜db5 a6 19 ♜a3 ♖c7 20 ♜xf6 exf6 21 ♜d5 c3! 22 ♜xc3 ♜b8 23 ♜d5 ♖b7 24 ♜c4 ♜e6 ♖ Lorenzana-Reyes, 1996) 18...♜xf6 (if 18...exf6?!, then 19 ♜db5 is strong) and now, rather than 19 ♜db5? a6 20 ♜a3 ♖c7 21 ♜d5 {Kriventsov-Kozhurov, Russia 1992} 21...c3! 22 ♜xc3 ♜xh4 23 ♖xe5 ♜b8 ♖, White should play the thematic 19 ♜e6! fxe6 20 ♖xd7 ♖xd7 21 ♖xd7 ♜xh4 22

♚h1 followed by ♖e4. Although Black is temporarily two pawns up in this ending, Black's rotten structure and White's superior pieces leave Black fighting for a draw.

16 f4 (D)

Other moves do not impress; e.g., 16 a4 bxa4 17 ♔xa4 ♖c4 ♢ O'Neill-Roiz Baztan, Asturia 1996 or 16 a3 b4 17 axb4 axb4 18 ♖d5 ♖xd5 19 ♔xd5 ♖c4 20 ♚d3 ♖b6 ♢ Jahnz-Raabe, Pinneberg 1996.



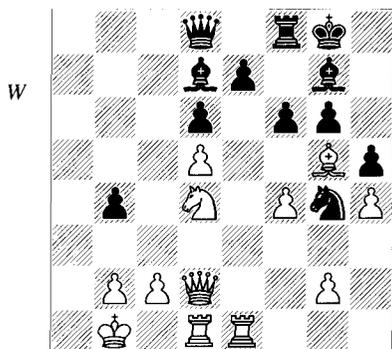
Now Black has a choice of attractive options:

| | |
|------------------|----|
| E21: 16...♖eg4!? | 83 |
| E22: 16...♖c4! | 84 |

E21)

16...♖eg4!? 17 e5!

This move is absolutely necessary if White is going to attempt to prove an advantage; the alternatives hold promise only for Black; e.g., 17 a3?! b4 18 axb4 axb4 19 ♖d5 ♖xd5 20 ♔xd5 ♚xd5! 21 exd5 f6! (D).



This clever sequence traps White's dark-squared bishop in a fashion that will become very familiar over the next few chapters. 22

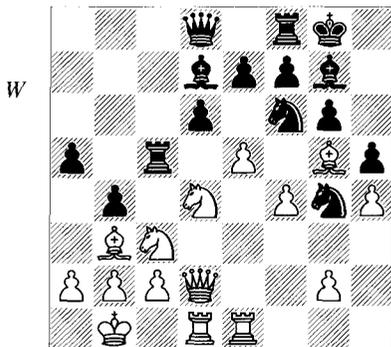
♖c6 ♔xc6 23 dxc6 fxg5 24 hxg5 ♚c7 ♢ Santoroman - Koch, Angers 1990.

Also bad is 17 a4? bxa4 18 ♖xa4 ♔xa4 19 ♔xa4 ♚b6 20 b3 ♚b8 21 ♚e2 ♚b4 22 ♖a2 ♖xe4 23 ♚xe4 ♚c4 24 c3 ♚xa4+ 25 ♖b2 ♚xb3+ 26 ♖xb3 ♚xe4 0-1 M.Fischer-Niehaus, Bundesliga 1990/1, and 17 f5? a4 18 ♔d5 b4 ♢.

17...b4!

Note that 17...a4?! is bad on account of 18 ♔xf6 (18 ♔xf7+!? ♚xf7 19 e6 as in Tornai-I.Horvath, Budapest 1994, also looks very good for White) 18...exf6 19 e6! axb3 20 e7 ± Ernst-Aagaard, Copenhagen 1991. 17...dxe5?! is known to be bad both on account of 18 fxe5 ♖xe5 (18...♚xe5 19 ♖c6!) 19 ♚xe5 ♚xe5 20 ♖f3 and 18 ♔xf6 ♔xf6 19 ♖dxb5 ♔xh4 20 ♚f1 ♖f6 21 fxe5 ± Helenius-Yrjölä, Helsinki 1988.

Back in 1995 Mayer predicted that, if there were to be a future for 16...♖eg4, it lay in 17...b4! (D). Nine years later it is clear that he was right! Now:



a) It is clear that the obvious move 18 exf6 leaves White in trouble after 18...bxc3!: 19 fxe7 cxd2 20 exd8 ♚ dxel ♚ 21 ♚xe1 (21 ♔xf7+ ♖h7 22 ♚xe1 ♚xd8 23 ♔xd8 ♔xd4 24 ♚e7 ♔f5 25 ♔b6 ♖e3 ♢) 21...♚xd8 22 ♔xd8 ♔xd4 ♢ Krivonogov-Aniukhin, Ukraine 1994.

b) However, Black also has to reckon with 18 ♖a4!?. After 18...♔xa4 19 ♔xa4 (19 exf6 exf6 20 ♔xa4 fxg5 21 hxg5! ♔d5 22 ♚e4 ♚b6 23 ♖c1 ♚c5 24 ♔b3 ♚a8 ∞) 19...dxe5 20 ♖c6 ♚c7! (Aniukhin gives this as Black's only move, but 20...♚xd2 21 ♖xe7+ ♖h7 22 ♚xd2 exf4 also looks comfortable for Black) 21 fxe5 ♖xe5 (21...♖d5 22 ♔b3?! ♖c3+! 23 bxc3 ♚xc6 is assessed as unclear by Aniukhin, which it is!) 22 ♖xe5 ♚xe5 23 ♔f4 ♖g4 24 ♔b3 ♚a7 25

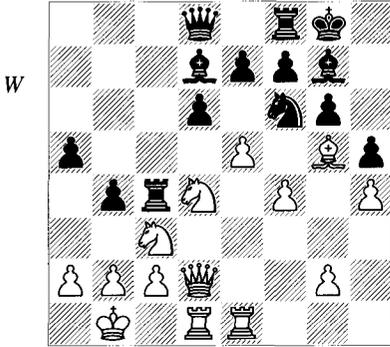
♙xe5 ♜xe5 when Black has compensation for the exchange – Aniukhin.

E22)

16...♜c4! 17 ♙xc4 ♜xc4

It is generally accepted that the alternative capture 17...bxc4 is dubious.

18 e5 b4! (D)



19 ♜b5

This move was introduced by Santo-Roman in his game with Moingt at Cannes 1993. For some time this represented White's critical try, and Black must be well prepared here. Other moves:

a) 19 ♜d3 ♜xc3! 20 bxc3 ♜d5 21 ♜b5 ♜xc3+ 22 ♜xc3 bxc3 23 ♟a1 ♙f5 24 ♜a6?! and now instead of the dubious 24...f6?!, which was played in Santo-Roman – Koch, France 1991, Golubev indicated that 24...♙xc2! ♞ is very good for Black; e.g., 25 ♜xd6 (25 ♜c1 ♙f5) 25...♜xd6!! 26 exd6 ♙d1!! (26...♙d3? 27 dxe7! ±) 27 ♟b1 (27 ♞e5 c2 28 ♜c6 ♞b8 29 a4 exd6 –+) 27...c2+ 28 ♟c1 ♙b2+! 29 ♟xb2 ♞b8+ –+.

b) 19 ♜ce2? ♜e4 20 ♜d3 d5 ♞.

c) 19 exf6!? exf6 20 ♜d3 ♜c8 21 ♜d5 ♟h8 22 f5 fxg5 23 fxg6 ♙g4 is unclear according to Hübner.

19...dxe5!

Now:

a) 20 ♜f3 is harmless due to 20...♜c8! 21 ♜a7 (21 b3 ♜xc2 22 ♜xc2 ♙f5 23 ♜d3 ♜xc2+ 24 ♟xc2 e4 –+; 21 ♙xf6 ♙f5 22 ♜c1 ♜d8! –+). Now:

a1) In *Informator* 63, Marin mentions the possibility 21...♜c7!? 22 fxe5 ♙f5 (22...♜xa7? 23 exf6 exf6 24 ♙e3 and White wins) 23 ♜b5 ♜c5!? (I am not so sure about this move; Black might also consider investigating 23...♜xc2 24 ♜xc7 ♜xd2+ 25 ♟a1 ♜xd1+ 26 ♜xd1 ♜g4 ♞ or 23...♜b7, when 24 exf6 is inadvisable on account of 24...♜xc2! –+) 24 ♜bd4 ♜e4 25 ♜e2, which he assesses as unclear. However, after 25...♜c8 Black's position appears preferable.

a2) Santo-Roman – Marin, Belfort 1995 continued 21...♜a6 22 fxe5 (22 ♙xf6 ♙f5 23 ♙xg7 ♜xc2 24 ♜xc2 ♙xc2+ 25 ♟xc2 ♟xg7 26 ♜d7 ♞a8 –+; 22 ♜xe5 ♜xc2 23 ♜xc2 ♙f5 24 ♜d3 ♜xa7 ♞) 22...♙f5 23 exf6 ♜xc2 24 ♜xc2 (24 fxe7?? ♞xb2+ 25 ♟a1 ♞b1#) 24...♙xc2+ 25 ♟xc2 exf6 26 ♙e3 ♞a8 27 ♜d7 (27 ♟b1 ♞xa7 28 ♙xa7 ♜xa7 ♞) 27...♜e6 28 ♜c7 ♜xa2 29 ♙d4 a4 30 ♞e7 a3 31 ♜xf7 and here Bologan pointed out that 31...♙h8! should be winning for Black; e.g., 32 ♜b5 b3+ 33 ♟c1 ♜a1+ 34 ♟d2 axb2 –+.

b) 20 ♙xf6 promises White little: 20...♙xb5 21 ♙xe5 f6 22 ♜xb5 ♜xd2 23 ♜xd2 fxe5 24 fxe5 ♙xe5 ♞.

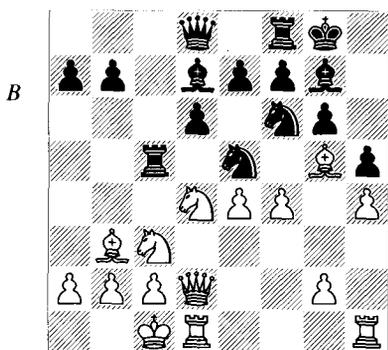
c) 20 fxe5!? is more dangerous: 20...♜d5 21 ♜d3 (21 ♜d6 ♜c3+! 22 bxc3 bxc3 23 ♜d3? ♜xd4 0-1 Florescu-Rogozenko, Romania 2001) 21...♜c5 22 ♜d6 ♜b8 and now:

c1) 23 ♜e4 ♜cc8 24 e6 fxe6 25 ♜b3 a4 26 ♜bc5 ♜c3+ 27 ♜xc3 bxc3 28 b3 ♜xc5 29 ♜xd7 axb3 0-1 Vaczi-Van der Ploeg, corr. 2002.

c2) 23 ♜b3 instigates a speculative queen sacrifice; e.g., 23...♜c3+!? 24 bxc3 ♜xc3 25 ♙xe7! ♜xd3 26 ♜xd3 ♜c7 27 ♙xf8 ♙xf8 with an unclear position, Van Kempfen-Poli, corr. 1995.

7 The Main-Line Soltis Variation: 14 f4!?

1 e4 c5 2 ♗f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♖f6 5 ♖c3 g6 6 ♗e3 ♗g7 7 f3 ♖c6 8 ♗d2 0-0 9 ♗c4 ♗d7 10 0-0-0 ♜c8 11 ♗b3 ♖e5 12 h4 h5 13 ♗g5 ♜c5 14 f4!?! (D)



This immediate central thrust is White's most dangerous 'central plan'. Although slightly unorthodox in nature, 14 f4!?! does boast of a fantastic pedigree, the leading expert on it being GM Janis Klovan's, while other exponents have included the likes of Anand, Kamsky, Ivanchuk, Miles and Adams. However, having stated that this line has been popular, I should also indicate explicitly that 14 f4!?! has not managed to maintain its popularity. Interestingly, a consultation of the opening texts that deal with 14 f4 reveals little by way of explanation for the line's decline; indeed most works seem to indicate that White retains good chances of an advantage. Notwithstanding the fact that most texts seem to prefer White's chances after 14 f4, Black has at least two reasonable options that grant him good play. I first did some serious preparation on this line in 1996, and I quickly got the opportunity to unleash it on an unsuspecting opponent. However, one year later I suffered a discouraging reversal at the hands of that very same opponent. Angry and frustrated, I returned to my figurative drawing board and eventually

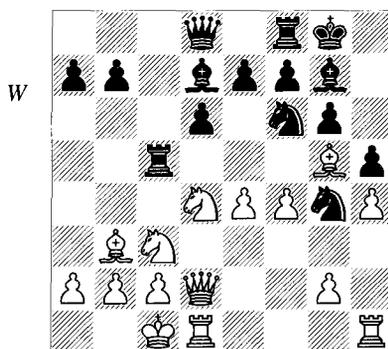
came up with the line that I will present below as my main recommendation. I have faith in my old analysis and, if it is correct, the true assessment of this line may be that the most White can hope for is a draw by perpetual check. Let's take a look at Black's options:

A: 14...♗eg4!?! 85

B: 14...♖c4! 86

A)

14...♗eg4!?! (D)



For those looking for a relatively unexplored alternative to the highly theoretical 14...♖c4, this might be just what you are looking for! Although I believe 14...♗eg4 to be inferior to the main line, it does lead to tense and interesting positions which offer ample winning chances.

15 ♜he1

Black's original response in this position was 15...b5?! but this is now known to be poor because of 16 e5!, when 16...dxe5 17 fxe5 b4 (17...♗xe5 18 ♜xe5 ♜xe5 19 ♖f3!) 18 ♖e4! was good for White in Kveinys-Raud, Volgograd 1985, and 16...b4 17 ♖e4 ♖xe4 18 ♜xe4 d5 (18...dxe5 19 ♖f3) 19 ♜e2 f6 (19...a5 20 e6!) 20 ♗xf6!! left White clearly better in Petelin-Altman, USSR 1988.

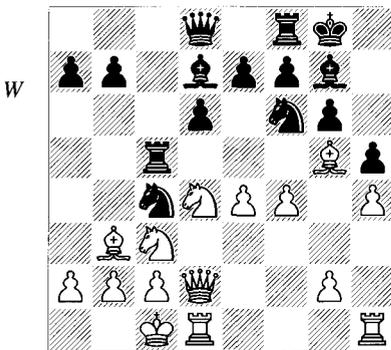
15...♖a5

Now:

- a) 16 ♖xf6 ♖xf6 17 e5 ♖xh4 ∞.
- b) 16 ♖f3 ♖c6 17 ♖b1!? (17 ♖d5 ♖xd2+ 18 ♖xd2 ♖e8 19 c3 b5 1/2-1/2 Oll-Shabalov, Tbilisi 1989) 17...♖c8 (17...♖xc3!? 18 ♖xc3 ♖xc3 19 bxc3 ♖xe4 looks good for Black) 18 e5 dxe5 19 fxe5 ♖xe5 20 ♖xe5 ♖xe5 21 ♖f4 ♖xe1 22 ♖xe1 ♖d5 23 ♖d2 ♖xc3+ ♠ Wegener-Farago, Budapest 1993.
- c) 16 ♖b1 ♖fc8 17 f5 (17 ♖f3 ♖xc3 18 bxc3 ♖c6 19 ♖xf6 ♖xf6 20 e5 dxe5 21 fxe5 was good for White in Kamsky-Basin, Minsk 1988, but Black can improve with 17...♖c6!, transposing to line 'b') 17...gxf5 18 ♖xf5 ♖xf5 19 exf5 ± Ivanchuk.
- d) 16 f5!?! gxf5 (16...♖h7!?) 17 ♖xf5 ♖xf5 18 exf5 ♖e8 (18...♖c7!?) 19 ♖d5 ♖xd2+ 20 ♖xd2 ♖f8 ± 21 a4 b6 22 ♖b1 ♖xd5 23 ♖xd5 ♖f6 24 ♖xc5! (24 c3?! ♖ec8! ♠) 24...bxc5!? 25 c3 ♖b8 26 ♖c2 ♖g7 27 ♖d5 ♖e5 28 ♖e4 a5 29 b4?? (29 ♖f4 ±) 29...cxb4 30 cxb4 axb4 31 ♖b3?! e6! → 32 fxe6 fxe6 33 ♖xe5!?! (33 ♖xe6 ♖xg5 34 hxg5 ♖d3!), and now rather than 33...♖xe5? (Kamsky-Ivanchuk, Buenos Aires 1994) Black can gain a decisive advantage with 33...dxe5! 34 ♖e4 ♖xg5 35 hxg5 ♖c8! (35...♖d8? 36 a5 ♖d1 37 ♖b2! =) 36 a5 ♖c1 37 ♖xb4 ♖e1 → (the notes given here are based on Ivanchuk's annotations for *Informator* 62).

B)

14...♖c4! (D)



This move is my main recommendation. Schneider considers 14...♖c4 dubious for Black but does not seem to indicate why; perhaps he

meant to describe the move as interesting but something got misprinted along the way.

15 ♖d3

White's main alternative is 15 ♖xc4 ♖xc4 with the following possibilities:

- a) 16 e5 ♖g4! 17 ♖f3 ♖h7 18 ♖d5 (if 18 exd6, Mayer indicates that 18...♖xg5 19 dxe7 ♖xe7 gives Black good play for the pawn) 18...♖xg5 19 hxg5 (19 ♖xc4 ♖xf3 ♠ Mayer) 19...♖c8 20 ♖d3 ♖e6 21 ♖a5 ♖xf4 22 exd6 23 ♖xa7 ♖f5 24 ♖d5 ♖e4 25 ♖f6+? ♖xf6 26 gxf6 ♖e2 27 ♖c3 ♖xc2+ 0-1 Arias-Henao, Bogota 1992.

b) 16 ♖he1 was tried for the first time in a recent tournament game; judging by the course of that encounter I doubt it will be tried again: 16...b5 (16...♖g4!?) 17 ♖f3?! (17 e5 must be a better try) 17...b4 18 ♖xf6? (18 ♖d3 is necessary, but 18...♖c8 or even simply capturing on c3 is better for Black) 18...bxc3 19 ♖d3 cxb2+ 20 ♖b1 ♖a4 → Bittencourt-Braga, São Paulo 2001.

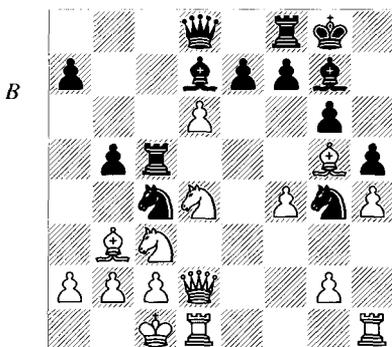
c) 16 ♖d3 ♖xc3! (16...♖c5 17 e5 ♖g4 18 ♖f3 ♖f5 19 ♖e3 ♖a5 20 ♖xf6 exf6 21 exd6 was at least slightly better for White in Ziatdinov-Galakhov, USSR 1985; however, in *Informator* 40 Ziatdinov suggested that the text-move is a significant improvement for Black, and 11 years later this was put to the test...) 17 bxc3 ♖a5!?! (there is nothing wrong with this move *per se*, but I much prefer Ziatdinov's suggestion 17...♖g4!, after which I believe Black has an indisputable edge) 18 ♖b2 ♖g4 19 ♖de1 ♖c8 20 ♖e3 ♖d7! (heading for that weak a4-square, control of which will guarantee dominance of the queenside) 21 ♖xe7?! ♖c5 22 ♖b5 ♖c7 23 ♖g5 ♖d7 24 ♖e2 ♖a4+ 25 ♖c1 ♖xc3 26 ♖d3 ♖xa2+ 27 ♖d1 ♖b4 28 ♖d2 ♖xd4 29 ♖b3 ♖xc2 30 f5 ♖a4 31 ♖g3 ♖e3+ 32 ♖e2 ♖b5+ 33 ♖f3 ♖xf5 34 exf5 ♖c6+ 35 ♖f4 ♖e5+ 36 ♖e3 ♖xg3 0-1 Nokso Koivisto-Hamalainen, Naantali 1996.

Before returning to the text, note that if 15 ♖e2? Black has the dynamic blow 15...♖g4 16 ♖f3 (16 ♖d3 ♖xd1 17 ♖xd1 ♖g4 18 ♖e1 ♖f2 → Dubbs-Takeuchi, corr. 1995) 16...♖xb2!, which leaves White in a bit of a pickle; e.g., 17 ♖xb2 ♖a5 18 ♖b1 (trying to block the long diagonal with 18 e5 does not help either; e.g., 18...♖xc3+ 19 ♖b1 dxe5 20 ♖d3 ♖a5 21 fxe5 ♖xf3 22 ♖xf3 ♖xe5 → Thiel-Aramil, St Paul

2000) 18...♖xe4+ 19 ♖c1 ♗c3 20 ♗xc3 ♖a3+ 21 ♖d2 ♗xc3+ 0-1 Engqvist-Sandström, corr. 1989.

15...♗g4!?

Initially introduced by Stavić, this novel knight move now represents Black's best resource in this position. For a long time 15...b5 was Black's main response, but continual refinements have led me to believe that Black is now struggling in this variation. Here is a brief summary of the important lines: 16 e5 ♗g4 (16...♗d5? 17 exd6 ♗xb2 18 ♖xb2 ♗xc3 19 ♖e4 +-; 16...dxe5? 17 ♗xf6! ♗xf6 18 ♗dxb5 ♗xb2 19 ♖xg6+ ♗g7 20 ♖xb2 ♖c8 occurred in Klovans-Gufeld, Daugavpils 1978, and now Golubev points out 21 ♗d6! ±) 17 exd6 (D) and then:



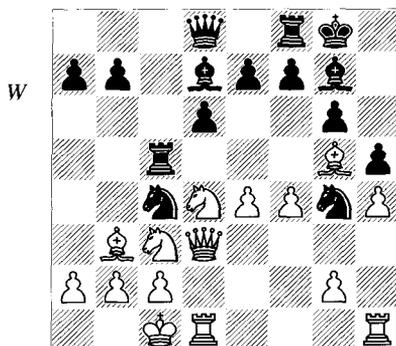
a) 17...♗xg5 was thought to be reasonable for Black until the game Rocha-Langier, Mar del Plata 1989, where White unleashed the excellent move 18 fxg5!, when 18...♗f2 19 ♖e2 ♗xd1 20 ♗xd1 ♗xd6 21 ♗cxb5! ♗xb5 22 ♗xb5 ♗xb5 can now be met by 23 ♗xf7+! as 23...♖xf7 24 ♖f3+ is winning for White.

b) 17...♗f2 18 ♖f1 ♗xd1 19 dxe7 ♖a5 20 exf8 ♖+ ♖xf8 21 ♖xd1 ♗xb2 22 ♗e6+! ♗xe6 23 ♖d6+ ♖g8 24 ♖xc5 ♗xb3 25 ♗e4! +- Miles-Veerman, Utrecht 1986.

c) 17...♗xd6 18 ♖xg6! (Hellers's move {although others are also promising}, which probably leaves White better) 18...♗c4 (18...♗f2? 19 ♗h6 ♗e8 20 ♗e6! ± Golubev) 19 ♖e4 (19 ♖xh5!?) 19...♗f2 20 ♖xe7 and now 20...♗xg5 21 ♖xd8 ♗xd8 22 hxg5 ♗xh1 23 ♗c6 ♗xc6 24 ♗xd8+ ♖h7 leaves Black with a bad end-game according to Klovans. However, Golubev pointed out that Black may be able to improve over his play here with 20...♖c8 (as in

Rak-Muschalek, corr. 1998), when the situation is less clear.

We shall now return to the position after 15...♗g4! (D):



16 ♗xc4

This is clearly the main line, but practice has also seen White experimenting with a few alternatives in recent years:

a) 16 ♗d5 and now:

a1) 16...♗e8! with the idea of 17 ♗xc4 ♗f2 18 ♖b3 ♗xh1 19 ♗xe7+ ♗xe7 20 ♗xf7+ ♖h8 21 ♗xg6 ♗f2 22 ♖f3 ♗xg5 0-1, as in Cilloniz Razzeto-Goncalves, 1998, is interesting.

a2) 16...♗xd5! was originally suggested by the creative English GM James Plaskett. This exchange sacrifice is generally quoted as Black's prescribed antidote in this position. 17 exd5 ♗xb2! (this was Plaskett's main idea, but alternatives have also held up well in practice; e.g., 17...♗a5 18 ♗he1 ♗xb3+ 19 axb3 ♗f2 20 ♖d2 ♗xd1 21 f5 {sadly necessary: if White were to recapture on d1 Black would play 21...f6! trapping the g5-bishop} 21...♗xb2 22 ♗xe7 ♗d3+! 23 ♖xd3 ♖a5 24 ♗f1 ♖a3+ 25 ♖d2 ♗e8 ± Perez-Karabiyik, e-mail 1997) 18 ♖xb2 ♗f2 19 ♖e3 ♗xd1+ 20 ♗xd1 f6 21 c3 fxg5 22 hxg5 ♖b6 23 ♖xe7 ♗g4 24 ♗e6 ♖f2+ 25 ♖a3 ♗xe6 26 ♖xe6+ ♖h7 27 ♖xd6 ♗f7 28 ♖b4 ♗xf4 29 c4 a6 30 ♗d2 ♖e3 0-1 Cilloniz Razzeto-Benz, corr. 1998.

b) 16 ♗h1, preventing the fork on f2, simply permits an alternative fork with 16...♗ce3. Play might then continue 17 ♗d5 ♗xd5 18 ♗xd5 ♗xd1 19 ♗xd1 ♗f2 ±.

c) 16 ♖e2 and then:

c1) 16...♗xb2! is an interesting sacrifice; e.g., 17 ♖xb2 ♖b6 18 e5 dxe5 19 fxe5 ♗fc8 20

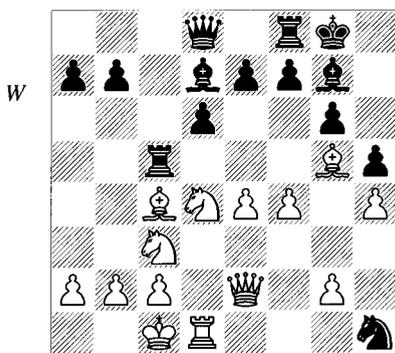
♭e4 ♖xe5 21 ♗c1 (if 21 ♗f3, then 21...♙f5 looks strong) 21...♗xg5 (21...♙f5!? 22 ♭xf5 gxf5 23 ♗f3 ♖xe4 is also interesting) 22 ♭xg5 ♙xd4 gave Black good play in Siggi-Flavio Pompeo, corr. 2002.

c2) 16...b5 17 e5 dxe5 18 ♭dxb5 ♭b6 (18...♭ge3!? may be better) 19 a4 (19 ♭d6! looks stronger, when White must be better) 19...♗e8 20 ♭e4 ♙xb5 21 axb5 ♖xb5 22 f5 gxf5 23 ♭g3 ♖xb3 24 cxb3 f6 25 ♙d2 f4 26 ♭e4 ♗f7 27 ♖h3 ♭d5 28 ♖d3 ♭de3 29 ♙xe3 ♭xe3 30 ♖d2 ♗g6 31 ♭c5 ♙h6 32 ♖d8 ♙xd8 33 ♙xd8+ ♗h7 34 ♖d7 f3 35 gxf3 ♭d5+ 0-1 Lorenzana-Ramirez, corr. 2002.

16...♭f2 17 ♗e2

Some recent correspondence games have seen White experimenting with 17 ♗f1!?, but I doubt that it is better than the main line. 17...♭xh1 (17...♭xd1! may be stronger, when White has to deal with the triple threats of 18...♙xd4, 18...♖xc4 and 18...♭xc3) 18 ♙b3 ♭g3 19 ♗e1 ♖xg5 20 hxg5 ♙g4 21 ♭f3 ♙xf3 (21...♙xc3 22 ♗xg3 ♙g7 23 f5 gxf5 24 exf5 ♙xf5 25 g6 e6 26 gxf7+ ♖xf7 27 ♗xd6 ♗f6 28 ♗d8+ 1/2-1/2 Gerzina-Kariz, corr. 1999) 22 gxf3 h4 23 f5 ♙xc3 24 bxc3 ♗a5 25 ♖d5 ♗a3+ 26 ♗b1 e6 27 fxe6 fxe6 28 ♖d3 ♗c5 29 ♙xe6+ ♗g7 30 ♗d2 ♭f1 31 ♗e1 ♭g3 32 ♗d2 ♭f1 1/2-1/2 Matsuura-Guimaraes, Vitoria Taca Cidade 1998.

17...♭xh1 (D)



18 ♙b3!?

Most theoreticians agree that this timely retreat is White's best option, but with the exception of 18 ♭d5, White's alternatives have received little attention.

a) 18 f5 ♭g3 (I suppose 18...gxf5!? is also possible, with the idea of 19 ♭xf5 ♙xf5 20

exf5 ♭g3 followed by 21...♭xf5, or 19 ♖xh1 ♙xd4) 19 ♗d3 b5 was given as unclear by Bangiev, although Black's chances appear entirely satisfactory.

b) 18 ♭d5 should not worry Black; e.g., 18...♖xd5! (18...♭g3 19 ♗d3 ♙xd4 20 ♗xd4 ♗h7, threatening 21...f6! trapping the bishop, is also interesting; note that 21 ♙xe7? is met by 21...♖xd5!, while 21 ♭xe7 allows 21...♖xg5!) 19 ♙xd5 ♗b6 20 ♖xh1 (20 c3 ♖c8 21 e5 ♙g4 22 ♭f3 ♭g3 23 ♗c2 e6 ≠ A.Hansen-Eriksson, corr. 1991) 20...♙xd4 21 c3 ♖c8 22 ♗c2 e6 ≠ Mironenko-Stavich, USSR 1988.

c) 18 ♭f3 ♭g3 19 ♗d3 ♙xc3 20 bxc3 ♗a5 is assessed as unclear by Mironenko and Bangiev. The culmination of their analysis does leave Black with a very comfortable position, but the alternatives 20...b5!? with the idea of 21 ♙d5 ♗a5!? (21...♖xc3 also looks strong) 22 ♙xe7 ♖xd5 23 ♗xd5 ♭e2+ 24 ♗d2 ♭xc3 ≠ and 20...♗h7 preparing the standard 21...f6, also merit attention.

18...a5!

When I first considered this line in 1996 I initially rejected 18...a5, as all commentators and analysts have since done, on the basis that if White replies 19 a4 a gaping weakness on b5 is opened up, creating an outpost for White's knights, when it seems that Black's queenside counterplay has been largely precluded. However, by 1998 I had changed my assessment of 18...a5, instead concluding that if Black is to generate real winning chances on the queenside he must be able to exploit more than merely the weakness on c3. White has already weakened his kingside with the pawn advance 14 f4, and consequently the exchange sacrifice on c3, if executed in such a manner that would permit Black's knight on h1 to escape, should provide Black with good counterplay. Before continuing with our analysis of the main line, I would like to take the reader through Black's alternatives in this position.

a) 18...♗b6! (D) is the move that has proved the main focus of attention in this line.

When I was first preparing this variation I rejected this move on the basis of the game Klován-Tiviakov, Groningen 1991, which seemed to be given as better for White in Mayer's text on the Dragon (which was the only one covering this line that was available to me at the

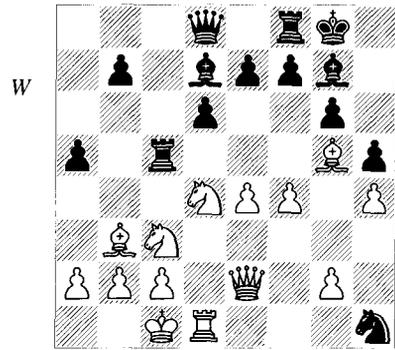
♘h3 was good for Black in Rosin-Kratochwil, corr. 1994) 24...♙xf3 25 gxf3 ♘h3 was given as equal by Tiviakov, although it should be noted that Black retains a vastly superior pawn-structure in the endgame.

a332) 20 hxg5 ♙xc3 21 ♖xh1 (21 bxc3?! ♗f2 22 ♖e1 ♗xe1 23 ♗xe1 ♘g3 24 ♘d4 ♖g7 25 ♖d2 ♗c8 26 ♖d3 ♗c5 27 ♙d5 b6 28 ♘b3 ♗c7 29 c4 e6 30 ♙a8 ♙c8 31 e5 dxe5 32 ♗xe5 ♙a6 33 ♘d2 ♘f5 ♣ Gunzburg-Vescovi, Caioba U-18 1994) 21...♙b5 22 ♖d1 ♗e3+ 23 ♖b1 ♙g7 24 ♘h4 ♙e2! leaves Black with a very comfortable position. 25 ♖c1!? was Anand's first attempt in this position, but it brought him no advantage; e.g., 25...♗xc1+ 26 ♖xc1 ♘h7 27 f5 gxf5 28 exf5 1/2-1/2 Anand-Georgiev, Reggio Emilia 1988. Anand subsequently attempted to improve with 25 ♖e1 ♖d4 26 c3 ♙d3+! 27 ♖a1!? ♗xe4 28 ♖d2 ♙c4! 29 ♗e1 ♖c6 30 f5?! (better is 30 ♗xe7 ♙xb3 31 axb3 ♗e8!, which is equal according to Tiviakov in *Informator* 47) 30...♙e5 31 fxxg6 ♙xb3 32 axb3 ♙g3! 33 g7! ♗e8 34 ♗h1 ♙xh4 35 ♗xh4 ♖xg7 36 ♖d4+? e5 37 ♗f2? d5! +- 38 ♗f3 (38 ♗xh5 ♖a6+ 39 ♖b1 ♗g6+; 38 ♖e2 ♖a6+) 38...e4 39 ♗xh5 ♖a6+! 40 ♖b1 ♗g6 41 ♗h6+ ♗xh6 42 gxh6+ ♖g6 43 ♖c2 (43 c4 ♖g5 44 g3 e3 45 ♗h1 dxc4 46 bxc4 e2 47 ♗e1 ♖xh6; 43 h7 ♗h8 44 c4 ♗xh7 45 ♗xh7 ♖xh7 46 cxd5 ♖g6 47 ♖c2 ♖f5 48 ♖c3 ♖e5 49 ♖c4 f5 50 g3 a5) 43...f5! and Black eventually ground out the win in Anand-Tiviakov, Moscow 1989.

b) 18...♙g4!? was my original attempt to improve over 18...♖b6. I initially played it against John Anderson and quickly gained a considerable edge. 19 ♘f3 ♘g3 (19...♙xc3?! 20 bxc3 ♖h7 21 f5 ♘g3 22 ♖e1 ♙xf5 23 ♗xg3 ♙xe4 24 ♗e1 d5 25 ♙e3 ♗c6 26 ♘g5+ ♖g8 27 ♙d4 ± J.Anderson-Savelev, corr. 2000) 20 ♖e1 ♖h8 and now 21 ♗xg3?! f6!, trapping the bishop on g5, gave me a good position. Two years later, John improved with 21 f5! gxf5 22 ♗xg3 and now I felt it necessary to try 22...♗xc3! 23 bxc3 fxe4 24 ♗e1 f6! (24...exf3?! 25 ♙xe7 ±) 25 ♗xe4?! (25 ♙e3! is much better; John was understandably worried about 25...e5 {e.g., 26 ♘d2 f5} but simply 26 ♘h2 with the idea of capturing on g4 leaves White clearly better) 25...fxg5 26 ♘xg5 when 26...♖e8! (I actually played the awful move 26...d5?? and promptly resigned after 27 ♗xg4 hxg4 28 ♖d3

1-0 J.Anderson-Dearing, Southend 1998) 27 ♖e3 e5 gives Black reasonable chances.

We now return to 18...a5! (D):



19 a4

This is commonly given as White's best in this position. For example, Golubev comments that after 19 a4 ♖b6 20 f5 the insertion of White's favour. I would tend to agree with this assertion, but I am inclined to disagree that the move 19...♖b6 is necessary because, as Mayer correctly points out, "the insertion of such committal moves as 18...a5 19 a4 undoubtedly generates other possibilities for Black." More on that later; first, a quick look at White's main alternative, 19 f5. This was Michael Adams's choice in his 1990 encounter with Tiviakov at Oakham. The move has been widely criticized, although notably neither of the players condemned it to the degree that subsequent analysts have. Black of course follows up with the consistent 19...a4!. Now:

a) 20 ♙xf7+? ♖xf7! should be winning for Black.

b) 20 ♙d5 was played in Adams-Tiviakov, Oakham jr 1990. Black then chose 20...♖e8 and subsequently won a game in which both sides missed chances to improve, but the post-game analysis revealed that Black actually has a much stronger resource in the form of 20...a3! 21 ♖e3 (if 21 fxxg6?, Tiviakov points out 21...♙g4 22 gxf7+ ♖h8 ♣) and now 21...axb2+ 22 ♖b1 (22 ♖xb2 ♖b6+ 23 ♙b3 ♗c4!) 22...♖a5 23 ♘b3 ♗xc3 24 ♘xc5 ♗xc5! leaves White in difficulties.

c) 20 ♘xa4!? is perhaps best; for example, 20...♙xa4 21 ♙xa4 ♘g3 22 ♖d3 (22 ♖e3 ♗c4 ♣; 22 ♖f3 ♗c4 ♣) 22...♙xd4! 23 ♗xg3 and now

Golubev's suggestion of 23...♙e5!? looks best, when the position is probably unclear.

19...♙g4 20 ♘f3 ♗xc3!

I initially rejected 20...♗xc3! on the basis that 19...♗xc3 and 20...♘g3 had not worked in the analogous position, with the pawns still on a2 and a7 respectively, naïvely accepting that there was no reason why it should be much better here. However, I have discovered a recent correspondence game that may indicate that I was too hasty in my judgement. The point of my main-line analysis is that the inclusion of the moves 18...a5 19 a4 enhances Black's counter-attacking possibilities, and therefore it was perhaps foolish of me to discard this possibility without further consideration. After 21 bxc3, 21...♗xc3! merits consideration. For example, 22 ♗xh1 ♖b6! (in this position this move is rather obvious as it threatens 23...♗xb3, but it never even occurred to me because at the time I was reflecting on Black's options, I analysed these types of positions primarily with the a-pawns still on their initial squares!) 23 ♖b2 (23 ♖b5 looks like White's obvious rebuke in this position, but Black can now instigate the standard resource 23...♗xb5 24 axb5 ♗xb3! 25 cxb3 ♙xf3 26 gxf3 f6 27 ♙h6 ♗c8+ 28 ♖d2 ♖h7, when he will recover the sacrificed piece with a decent endgame) 23...♗fc8. Black just piles on the pressure, bringing every piece into the attack. An interesting feature of which the reader may wish to take note is that White's problems in this position stem from his poor coordination, and his forces are poorly coordinated predominantly because of his poor pawn-structure – there is a natural correlation between the two: the bishop on g5 is locked out of play by the pawns on f4 and h4; the knight on f3 is pinned to the white queen because the black bishop occupies a powerful post on g4, again because White's poor pawn-structure facilitates this. Indeed even if the knight on f3 were not pinned, it is noteworthy that it still could not move to h4, g5, e5, d4 or d2! Now:

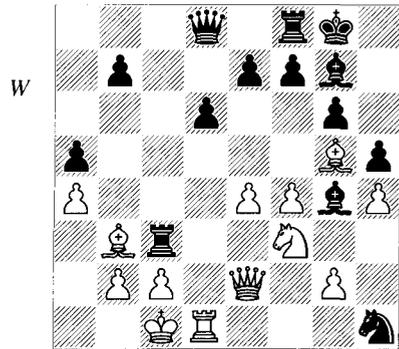
a) 24 ♖a2? ♙e6 25 ♖a1 ♖b4 0-1 L.Hernandez-Makarczuk, IECC e-mail 2001.

b) 24 ♗d1?! runs into 24...♗xc2+! 25 ♗xc2 ♗xc2+ 26 ♖xc2 ♖g7 with 27...f6 to follow.

c) On 24 ♗c1 Black has the powerful move 24...♙e6! bringing the last piece into the attack and redirecting force from the h5-d1 diagonal

to the g8-a2 diagonal. Now 25 ♖b5 is well met by 25...♗f2 (note that 25...♗xb5 with the idea of 26...♙xb3 and 27...f6, and 25...♗c7 – tripling up on c2 – are also good) 26 ♙xe6? ♗xc2+ –+.

We now return to 20...♗xc3 (D):



21 bxc3 ♗c7 22 ♗xh1

After this, the best White can hope for is a draw. In my search for improvements I considered 22 ♖e1!?, but 22...b5! gives Black good chances; e.g., 23 axb5 a4 24 ♙d5 (24 ♙xa4? ♗a8 –+) 24...e6 25 ♙a2 ♖c5! ♚.

22...♗xc3 23 ♗f1!

This move is absolutely necessary. Obviously, 23 ♖d2?? allows 23...♖a1#, while 23 ♗d1?! is the more obvious choice, but this significantly improves Black's winning chances:

a) 23...♖a1+ 24 ♖d2 ♖c3+ is obviously a safe course that guarantees Black a draw.

b) 23...♗c8! threatens 24...♗xb3, recovering the invested piece. If a win is imperative, this move may have to be chosen, although clearly it entails more risk. Then:

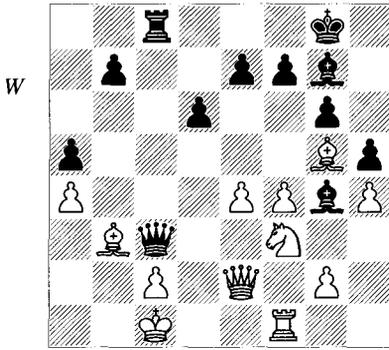
b1) 24 ♖d3?! ♖b2+ 25 ♖d2 ♗c3 26 ♖b5 ♙e6! ♚.

b2) 24 ♖b5! may be White's best; for example, 24...♖h8!? 25 ♙xe7! (25 ♗d3?! is strongly met by 25...♖a1+ 26 ♖d2 ♖h1!) 25...♖b2+ 26 ♖d2 ♗xc2+ 27 ♙xc2 ♖c3+ 28 ♖e2 (28 ♖c1 ♖a3+ =) 28...♗xc2+ 29 ♗d2 ♖xe4+ 30 ♖f2 ♖xe7 when Black has compensation for the material.

b3) 24 ♗d3 ♖b2+ 25 ♖d2 (25 ♖d1?! b5! 26 axb5 a4 is clearly better for Black, as 27 ♙xa4 runs into 27...♖a1+ 28 ♖d2 ♖xa4) 25...b5 26 axb5 (alternatively, 26 ♖d1 bxa4 27 ♙xa4 ♖b4+ 28 c3 ♙xc3+ 29 ♖e3 f6 sees Black recover the piece with a clear advantage) 26...a4 27 ♖e3 axb3 28 ♗xb3 ♖a2 –+.

23...♖c8 (D)

23...♗a1+ 24 ♔d2 ♕c3+ again leads to a draw by perpetual.



W

24 ♗b5?!

After 24 ♔d1! Black may be forced to take the perpetual, as no obvious method of continuing the attack presents itself.

24...♔h7 25 ♖xe7

The alternative 25 ♖d1 can be met with 25...♖e6! (25...♖xf3!?) as 26 ♖d3 ♗b2+ 27 ♔d2 ♖c5! 28 ♗xb7? runs into 28...♖xc2+! -+; 25 ♔d1 f6! again leaves Black better.

25...♖xf3! 26 gxf3

26 ♖xf3?? ♗e1#.

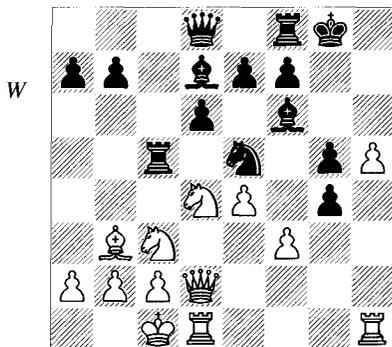
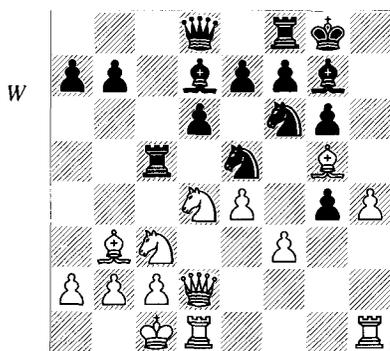
26...♖c5 27 ♗xb7 ♗b2+! 28 ♔d1 ♖xc2! -+

Conclusion

Although 14 f4 was once considered dangerous, Black now has several suitable responses. Line A (14...♖eg4!?) is largely unexplored, and will suit players who wish to keep the emphasis on theory to a minimum. White is perhaps a bit better with best play, but the positions are so highly unclear that even super-GMs can mishandle them in practice. My personal preference has always been for Line B (14...♖c4!). Black's chances in the main line of that variation appear to be excellent. My own discovery 19...♖g4 20 ♖f3 ♖xc3! guarantees Black at least a draw, but by the same measure, White too may be able to force a draw by repetition in some lines. If this is an unsatisfactory result for Black then it may be worth considering the correspondence player Makarczuk's idea of 20...♖xc3!? 21 bxc3 ♖xc3, which definitely gives Black good winning chances.

8 14 g4 with 15 ♖xf6 or 15 h5

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 g6 6 ♙e3 ♙g7 7 f3 ♘c6 8 ♚d2 0-0 9 ♙c4 ♙d7 10 0-0-0 ♝c8 11 ♙b3 ♘e5 12 h4 h5 13 ♙g5 ♜c5 14 g4 hxg4 (D)



It is now well established that White's prospects in this position lie almost exclusively with the move 15 f4 (see Chapter 9). However, in this chapter we consider two sidelines:

- A: 15 ♙xf6 93
- B: 15 h5!? 94

A)

15 ♙xf6

By exchanging on f6 White hopes to push through the h5 advance without having to sacrifice further material on the kingside. However, by 'sacrificing' his dark-squared bishop, White cedes control of the long diagonal to the Dragon bishop, and also enhances Black's defensive resources.

15...♙xf6 16 h5?!

16 f4 ♘c4 and now 17 ♚e2 ♚c8! transposes to Line C23 of Chapter 9, and 17 ♚d3 b5 to Line B4 of that chapter. These are both main lines.

16...g5! (D)

This timely advance represents a thematic defensive resource for Black in positions where White has conceded his dark-squared bishop prematurely. With this move, Black side-steps

White's kingside assault, using White's clumsy advance of the h-pawn to seal the black king safely away. There are three other points I would like to make at this point: firstly, note that 16...g5 would have been possible in this position even if Black's bishop were still placed on g7, because 17 ♚xg5 could be met by 17...♘d3+ 18 cxd3 ♝xg5 winning the queen; secondly, as well as sealing the kingside, the move 16...g5! takes control of the f4-square, thereby detracting from the impact of a prospective f4 advance, which would otherwise dislodge the knight from e5; finally, it should not escape the reader's attention that Black now threatens 17...gxf3, creating two very advanced, connected passed pawns. While Black should take care not to open the kingside to his detriment, the acquisition of two connected passed pawns would give *Black* attacking chances on the kingside!

17 ♘d5

The thematic 17 f4? has also been played, but it is close to losing on the spot: 17...gxf4 and now 18 ♚xf4? is out of the question on account of 18...♘d3+ 19 ♜xd3 ♙g5 → winning the white queen.

17...♝xd5!

17...e6 is also possible, but the text-move is superior.

White now has two options:

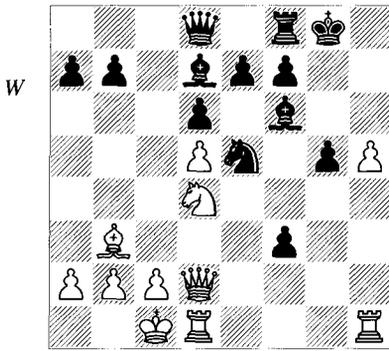
a) 18 ♙xd5 gxf3!. Black has also tried a few other moves, but this seems best. Practice has now witnessed:

a1) 19 ♖df1 e6 20 ♙b3 g4 21 ♗b1 a5 22 a4 ♙g5 23 ♜f2 ♗h7 24 ♜g3 ♚g8 25 c3 ♜f6 26 ♙d1 ♙f4 + Krueger-Wellner, corr. 1988.

a2) 19 ♙xb7 ♜b6 (the direct 19...g4!?, as occurred in Gottschlig-Iodice, corr. 1992, also appears strong) 20 ♙d5 and now instead of 20...e6 which brought Black success in Ziegert-Pohle, corr. 1990, simply 20...♗b8 21 ♙b3 a5 22 a4 ♙xa4 is very good for Black.

a3) 19 ♜hg1 g4 20 ♙b3 ♗h7 21 ♜b4 ♜b6! (in such positions the exchange of queens only serves to emphasize Black's advantage in the endgame) 22 ♜xb6 axb6 23 ♙d5 ♙g5+ 24 ♗b1 ♙e3 25 ♚ge1 ♙xd4 26 ♚xd4 f2 27 ♜f1 g3 28 ♚dd1 ♙h3 0-1 Sandhoefner-Amann, Oberwart 1998.

b) 18 exd5 gxf3! (D) gives rise to a situation in which Black's compensation parallels that considered in the variations above.



I have uncovered numerous correspondence games that have, for all practical purposes, commenced from this position. Most of these games are littered with mistakes, so I have chosen a brief selection of the more instructive examples (below) with which to illustrate Black's ideas and resources in this variation.

b1) 19 c3 g4 20 ♗b1 (20 ♙c2 e6 21 ♗b1 ♙g5 22 ♜e1, Baier-Jobe, corr. 1999, and now 22...♜f6! ♢) 20...♜b6 21 ♙c2 ♗c4 22 ♜c1 ♚c8 23 ♗f5? ♗a3+ 24 ♗a1 ♚xc3! 25 ♗xe7+ ♗f8 0-1 Koval-Berman, corr. 1985.

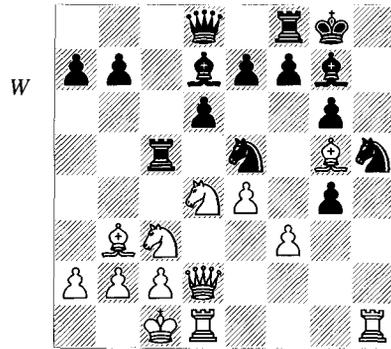
b2) 19 ♚dg1 g4 20 ♜f4 (20 ♗b1 ♜b6 21 c3 ♚c8 22 ♜f4 a5 23 ♗f5 a4 24 ♚xg4+ ♗xg4 25 ♜xg4+ ♗h8 26 h6 ♙xf5+ 27 ♜xf5 ♚g8 28 ♙d1 a3 29 ♚h2 ♜g1 30 ♚d2 ♚g2 0-1 Rusak-Newton, IECG e-mail 1997; 20 c3 e6 21 ♗b1 ♙g5 22 ♜c2 ♜f6 23 ♜e4 f2 24 ♚f1 exd5 25 ♙xd5 g3 26 ♗c2 ♗g4 27 ♗b3 ♗e3 28 ♚a1 g2

0-1 Trzeciak-Boonet, corr. 1993) 20...♗h7 21 ♗b1 (the lurching 21 ♗f5 has also been tried here, but a few accurate moves rapidly secure Black a decisive advantage: 21...e6! 22 ♗e3 ♙g5 + 23 ♜d4 ♜b6! 24 ♜xb6 axb6 25 ♗d2 exd5 26 ♙xd5 ♙c6 27 ♙xc6 bxc6 28 b3 d5 29 c3 c5 0-1 Simkin-Kochetov, corr. 1995) 21...♚g8 22 c3 (22 ♗a1 ♙g5 23 ♜e4+ ♗h6 24 c3 ♜c8 25 ♙a4 f5 26 ♜b1 ♚f8 {26...b5!? 27 ♙xb5 ♙xb5 and now not 28 ♗xf5+? ♗h7 29 ♗xd6+ ♙d3!, but 28 ♗xb5 ♙e3 is unclear} 27 ♙xd7 ♜xd7 28 ♗e6 ♚f6 29 ♗xg5 ♗xg5 30 h6 ♚f8 31 ♜e1 ♗g6 32 h7 ♗g7 33 ♜e3 ♗h8 = Berman-Homenko, corr. 1985) 22...♙g5 23 ♙c2+ ♗h6 24 ♗f5+ ♙xf5 25 ♜xf5 ♚g7 26 ♚xg4 1/2-1/2 Wesolowski-Riemer, corr. 1988.

b3) 19 ♜hg1 g4 20 ♚df1 (20 ♜f4 e6 21 ♗b1 ♙g5 22 ♜e4 f5! 23 ♜e1 exd5 24 ♙xd5+ ♗h7 ♢ Zlatin-Rissanen, corr. 1990) 20...♜b6 21 c3 ♚c8 (21...a5 22 a3 ♚c8 23 ♗b1 a4 24 ♙a2 ♚xc3 25 ♜xc3 ♗d3 ♢ Krcmarik-Rakay, corr. 1995) 22 ♗b1 a5 23 a4 ♚c4 24 ♗a2 ♗f8 25 ♗xf3 ♙xa4 26 ♙xc4 ♗xc4 27 ♜c1 gxf3 28 ♚xf3 ♙b3+ 0-1 Frantsev-Hamilton, corr. 1984.

B)

15 h5 ♗xh5 (D)



White now has two serious options:

- B1: 16 f4** 95
- B2: 16 ♗d5** 95

Minor alternatives:

a) 16 ♚xh5!? gxh5 and here:

a1) 17 ♚h1 ♗c4 18 ♙xc4 ♚xc4 19 ♙h6 and now 19...♜a5? 20 ♙xg7 ♗xg7 21 ♗f5+! ♙xf5 22 ♜g5+ 1-0 was the rather tragic end of the game Kiltti-Hallenberg, Espoo 1997, but

simply 19...e6 or even 19...♖f6 is favourable for Black.

a2) 17 ♖h2 falls for the now-familiar trick 17...♘d3+ 18 ♖xd3 ♖xg5 ♢ Yarmoliuk-Beletsky, Kiev 2000.

a3) 17 ♘d5! ♖xd5 is similar to Line B2, but White has already sacrificed the exchange on h5.

b) 16 ♖h6 e6 17 ♖dg1 ♖f6 (17...♘xf3!? also looks strong) 18 ♖b1 ♘xf3 (18...♘c4!? 19 ♖xc4 ♖xd4) 19 ♘xf3 ♖xh6 20 ♖xh6 was played in Sasirekha-Gara, Szeged 1994, and now 20...gxf3 21 ♘d5 exd5 22 ♖xh5 ♖g7 would have secured Black's advantage with minimal effort.

B1)

16 f4 ♘c4

Black must be aware that White now has four possibilities at his disposal:

a) 17 ♖d3 b5 transposes to Line B3 of Chapter 9.

b) 17 ♖xc4 ♖xc4 18 ♘de2 b5 19 f5 and now rather than 19...♖c6 as in Vermeer-Turin, corr. 1988, Golubev recommends 19...b4! 20 ♖d3 ♖xc3! as good for Black.

c) 17 ♖e2 could be met by 17...♖c8, transposing to Line C22 of Chapter 9, but in this particular position Black has the strong exchange sacrifice 17...♖xg5! 18 fxxg5 ♘e5! 19 ♖xh5?! (apparently White does better to try 19 ♖e3 e6 20 ♘db5 ♖xb5 21 ♘xb5 ♘f3! 22 ♘xd6 ♖xg5 23 ♖xg5 ♘xg5 ♢ Serper) 19...gxxh5 20 ♖h2 g3! ♢ Kaikumov-Serper, USSR 1986.

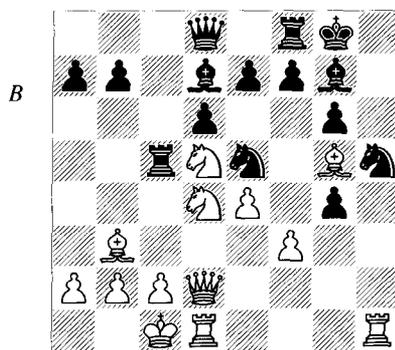
d) 17 ♖f2 b5 (17...♘a5!?) 18 ♘d5 ♖e8 19 f5 a5 and then:

d1) 20 ♖h4 ♖xd5 21 exd5 and now rather than 21...♘xb2? as in Kravtsov-Soloviov, Russia 1999, Soloviov recommends 21...♖b6! 22 fxxg6 fxxg6 23 c3 (in light of Black's next move, perhaps 23 ♖xc4 should be considered here) 23...b4!! 24 ♖xc4 bxc3 25 bxc3 ♖c5 ♢.

d2) 20 fxxg6 fxxg6 21 ♘f5!? gxf5 22 ♖xh5 ♖xb2+ 23 ♖b1 ♖g7 24 exf5 is assessed by Soloviov in *Informator 75* as granting White compensation for the material. Personally, I would prefer Black in this position on account of 24...a4! opening up the queenside, but undoubtedly both sides may have improvements earlier.

B2)

16 ♘d5 (D)



At this critical juncture, theory has focused on two defensive options for Black: the safe 16...♖e8 and the exchange sacrifice 16...♖xd5. My own analysis focused primarily on the latter move (which objectively seems superior), and so I shall confine my coverage to it. If the reader is uncomfortable with this option, or if problems with my selection are subsequently uncovered, I would direct the reader to Mayer's or Golubev's works, which contain ample coverage of 16...♖e8.

16...♖xd5 17 ♖xd5 ♖b6!

I originally intended to recommend 17...gxf3 as an alternative here, on the basis of some old preparation, but analysis by Golubev has now shown this move to be dubious. I have examined his analysis and can't fault it, so I will confine my coverage to the main line! For the record, the problem line runs: 18 ♘f5! (note that Mayer's suggestion of 18 ♖h6 is fine for Black after 18...e6!) 18...♖xf5 19 exf5 ♖b6 and now, rather than 20 ♖h6? ♘c4! or 20 c3 ♘g3!, Golubev's suggestion is 20 ♖b3! with the intention of answering 20...♘g3 with 21 ♖h2! and 20...♘c4 with 21 ♖d5 ♘e3 22 ♖xf3 ♘xf5 23 ♖xh5 ♘d4 24 ♖xd4 ♖xd4 25 ♖xe7 ±.

18 ♖b3

18 c3 e6 (after 18...gxf3 Golubev's suggestion of 19 ♖xe7!? looks strong) 19 ♖b3 (19 fxxg4!? was employed successfully in August-Baranowski, corr. 1990, but instead of continuing 19...exd5 Black should prefer 19...♘g3!) 19...gxxf3 20 ♖h6 ♖c5 (20...♖c8 21 ♖xh5 gxxh5 22 ♖g5 ♘g6 23 ♘f5! guarantees White an

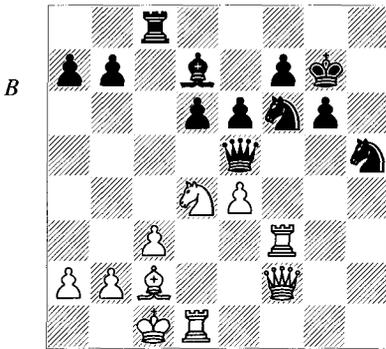
advantage, Nikogosian-Raud, Leningrad 1982) 21 ♖xg7 ♗xg7 22 ♜h3 and now:

a) 22...♙c6 23 ♙d5 ♜h8! (23...exd5? 24 ♜xh5! +-) 24 ♙xc6 (24 ♙xe6!? ♙xe4 is messy, but Black appears to be in reasonable shape) 24...bxc6 25 ♗xf3?! and then:

a1) 25...♗c4?! 26 ♜d4+ ♜xd4 27 cxd4. Even here Black should be fine, but in Dobrovolsky-Ornstein, Trnava 1983 things went rapidly awry: 27...f5 28 e5 d5 29 ♗g5 ♗f4 30 ♜xh8 ♗xh8 31 ♜h1+ ♗g8 32 b3 ♗b6 33 ♗d2 ♗h5 34 ♜c1 1-0.

a2) The excellent shot 25...♗d3+!! seizes the advantage. For example, 26 ♜xd3 ♗f4 27 ♜xd6 ♜xd6 (27...♜e3+ is also interesting) 28 ♜xd6 ♜xh3 29 ♗e5 c5!? ♠.

b) 22...f2!?, using the f-pawn as “a deflection sacrifice to gain time to organize” the defence, is Mayer’s main recommendation in this line. His analysis continues 23 ♜xf2 ♗g4 24 ♜d2 ♜c8 25 ♜f3 ♜e5 26 ♙c2 ♗gf6 27 ♜f2 (D), reaching a position from Hellsten-Edelstein, corr. 1985, which he considers to be unclear.



Material is roughly equal here (Black has two pawns for the exchange), and Black also has pressure against the white e4-pawn and potential breaks in the centre or the queenside. In fact this position is actually quite instructive. Let us consider Black’s various plans in turn:

1) Black could play ...b5, ...a5, and eventually ...b4, creating pressure on the queenside. However, on the other hand, it is not clear what Black will achieve by this. Delivering mate is almost certainly out of the question, and opening lines on the queenside could increase the mobility of White’s rooks (by creating entrance points in the black camp) and weaken Black’s

queenside pawns, or even create a potentially dangerous queenside majority for White (e.g. if the white c-pawn is ever traded for the black a- or b-pawn).

2) Black could attempt to orchestrate the capture of the e4-pawn under favourable circumstances. Obviously bagging another pawn would be great, and would leave Black well placed to get those central pawns rolling, but there are potentially detrimental aspects to this plan also. For example, by capturing on e4 Black may have to concede the f6-knight for White’s light-squared bishop (which is currently rather hemmed in), and there is also the risk that such a capture would leave Black’s remaining pieces poorly coordinated (e.g. the h5-knight). I am aware that this explanation perhaps appears a little abstract, so I shall try to build on it below.

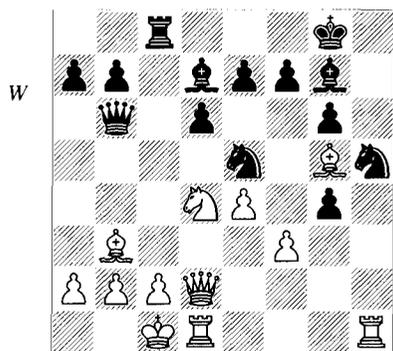
3) Black could undertake action on the kingside. Psychologically this is a harder plan to instigate than the others for two reasons. Firstly, Black has spent the game defending his kingside and awaiting the opportunity to initiate a counterstrike on the opposite wing, so resolving to attack on the kingside would now involve a considerable shift in perspective. Secondly, Black’s king is actually on the kingside, and therefore any attack in that district would involve a weakening of the black king position, which seems almost counterintuitive given that we have spent the last 15 moves securing the king’s safety! However, when viewed in abstract, such a plan is perfectly logical:

- It appears that the black kingside is solidly defended because of the intense concentration of black pieces there, but this is only half the story. The true source of Black’s solidity is not the pieces, but rather the squares which they control: Black currently controls f6, g6, h6, f5, g5, h5, f4 and g4. Advancing the g-pawn to g5 would gain control of the h4-square and intensify control of the f4-square (perhaps facilitating ...♗h5-f4), and the subsequent advance ...g4 would secure control of the additional squares f3, g3 and h3.
- A breakthrough on the queenside seems unlikely, and the c8-rook currently enjoys only a limited role in Black’s operations. However, if we could place the black rook on the open h-file or behind an advancing g-pawn

its influence would be increased exponentially.

- The black king, while well-guarded, has had a rather easy time of things. When formulating our strategy we should not forget that the king can also constitute a useful defender (as well as a 'defendee'). Consequently it makes sense to relocate the king to e7 (via f8), freeing up the g-file for the rook, and fortifying the protection of the d6-pawn. Incidentally, if for some reason we can't perform the aforementioned manoeuvres (for example, if White's next move were 28 ♖df1, tying the king to the protection of the f6-knight) then it may still be possible to implement our strategy via another route. Thus we could play 28...♖h8 followed by ...g5, and ...♖h6-g6, setting up a similar attacking formation. Note that in these speculations the presence of the pawn on e4 actually has operated to stifle White's operations by keeping the e-file and the b1-h7 diagonal closed.

18...♖c8 (D)



19 ♖xe7

This is White's only attempt for an advantage. Other moves quickly lead to trouble:

a) 19 ♖f5 gxf5 20 ♖xh5 ♖c4 21 ♖h2 ♖xb2+ 22 ♖b1 ♖e5 23 f4 ♖a3+ 24 ♖c1 g3 25 fxe5 (25 ♖h3 ♖xc2+ 26 ♖xc2 ♖b2+ 27 ♖d2 ♖f2+ 28 ♖d3 ♖b5#) 25...gxh2 26 ♖xe7 ♖xb3 0-1 Kr.Georgiev-Komljenović, Biel 1989.

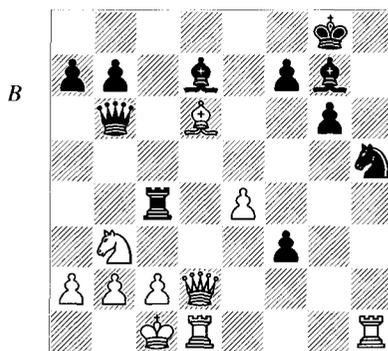
b) 19 f4 ♖c4 20 ♖d3 ♖a5! 21 f5 ♖xb3+ 22 axb3 ♖xd4 23 ♖xd4 ♖xd4 24 ♖xd4 f6 25 ♖h4

gxf5 26 exf5 ♖xf5 27 c3 ♖c6 28 ♖f2 ♖g7 29 ♖d2 e5 30 ♖xd6 0-1 Molina Barrera-Alford, Mexico 1999.

c) 19 ♖h6 ♖f6 20 ♖g5 ♖g7 (20...♖d3+!? 21 ♖b1 ♖xd4 or 20...gxf3!? would let Black fight for more) 21 ♖h6 1/2-1/2 Yu Ting-Charbonneau, Oropesa del Mar 2000.

d) 19 ♖xh5? gxh5 20 ♖h6 ♖d3+! -- Paoli-I.Farago, Budapest 1982.

19...♖c4 20 ♖xc4 ♖xc4 21 ♖b3 gxf3 22 ♖xd6 (D)



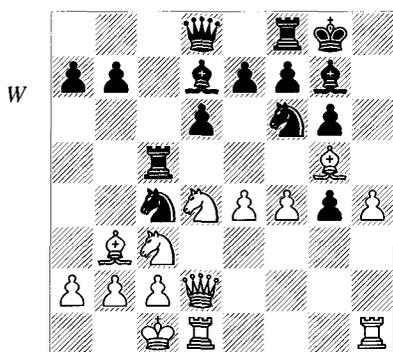
Now:

a) 22...♖xe4!? is possible; for example, 23 ♖c5 ♖f6 24 ♖d4 ♖xd4 25 ♖xd4 and now rather than 25...♖g5+ as occurred in Sehner-Seppour, Bundesliga 1985/6 (which was actually fine for Black), perhaps Black can try for an immediate edge with 25...♖xd4! 26 ♖xd4 f2!, when Black's fantastic bishops and powerful kingside pawns provide excellent compensation; for example, 27 c3 ♖g3 28 ♖hf1 ♖e4 29 ♖d3 ♖g4 30 ♖c2 ♖h6 31 c4 f5 32 ♖b3 b6.

b) 22...♖c6! was assessed by Golubev as yielding Black 'good play'. Linders-Schenning, corr. 1988 continued 23 ♖d3 (23 e5 ♖e4 24 c3 ♖g3 is slightly better for Black) 23...♖b5 (23...♖xe4! may be even stronger) 24 ♖he1 ♖a4 25 ♖xf3 ♖xa2 26 ♖a3 ♖h6+ 27 ♖e3 ♖xb3? (27...♖g5 or 27...f5 preserves Black's advantage) 28 ♖d8+ ♖g7 29 ♖f8+ ♖h7 30 ♖xf7+ ♖g7 31 ♖xg7+ ♖xg7 32 ♖xb3 ♖xf8 33 ♖xf8 ♖xe4 34 ♖f2 ♖c7 35 c3 g5 and was eventually drawn in 50 moves.

9 15 f4!?: The Ultimate Main Line

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 g6 6 ♙e3 ♙g7 7 f3 ♘c6 8 ♖d2 0-0 9 ♙c4 ♙d7 10 0-0-0 ♖c8 11 ♙b3 ♘e5 12 h4 h5 13 ♙g5 ♖c5 14 g4 hxg4 15 f4 ♘c4 (D)



This position represents what came to be regarded as the modern main line of Soltis Variation in the mid-1990s. However, my use of the term ‘modern’ is something of a misnomer in this context: most professionals handling the white pieces currently steer clear of these lines because Black’s defensive resources have simply proven too powerful. Following 15...♘c4 White has three options, only the last of which gives White any real chance to fight for an advantage:

- A: 16 ♙xc4 98
- B: 16 ♖d3 98
- C: 16 ♖e2 104

A)

16 ♙xc4

White captures on c4 immediately, thereby gaining time to launch an attack in the centre immediately. Unfortunately (well, not for us!) Black is already a pawn up and is well placed to meet any central strike.

16...♖xc4 17 e5

Other possibilities leave White in difficulties:

a) 17 ♖d3?! runs into 17...♖xc3!

b) 17 ♖e2 meets with a similar treatment; e.g., 17...♖xc3! 18 bxc3 ♖a5 19 ♘b3 ♖xa2 20 e5 ♙a4 21 exf6 exf6 22 ♘d4 fxg5 23 hxg5 ♙xd4 24 ♖xd4 ♖a1+ 25 ♘d2 ♖xh1 26 ♖xa4 g3 27 ♖e1 g2 28 ♖a1 ♖h2 0-1 Schwetlick-Schulz, Nakensdorf 1995.

17...♘h5! 18 ♖d3

Several commentators have described this move as forced, which is understandable given the alternatives: the immediate 18 exd6? runs into 18...♖xd4 (I imagine the more obvious 18...f6 may be even stronger) 19 dxe7 ♖xd2 20 exd8 ♖ ♖xd1+ 21 ♖xd1 ♖xd8 22 ♙xd8 ♙c6 when the bishop-pair, the passed g-pawn and White’s weak kingside pawns combine to provide Black with a decisive advantage according to Sherzer. Similarly the ambitious lunge 18 ♘d5 can be reprimanded accordingly with 18...f6 19 exd6 exd6 → as in Rodriguez-Granara Barreto, Montevideo 1999, when the g5-bishop found itself condemned.

18...♖xd4! 19 ♖xd4 ♙c6 20 ♘d5

20 ♖he1 f6 21 ♖c4+ ♘h8 22 ♙xf6 exf6 23 ♖xd6 ♖e7 24 ♘d5 ♙xd5 25 ♖xd5 ♙h6 → Siedler-Pantaleoni, corr. 1990.

20...f6 21 ♖c4 ♘h8 22 f5 fxg5 23 fxg6 ♖f4!

Black is clearly better according to Gojković, whose annotations for *Informator 42* continue as follows: 24 ♖d3 e6 25 hxg5 ♣ (25 ♘f6 ♙xf6! →), 24 ♖e2 e6 25 hxg5 ♖xg5 26 ♖xh5+ ♖xh5 27 ♘xf4 ♖g5 ♣, and 24 ♘xf4 gxf4 ♣.

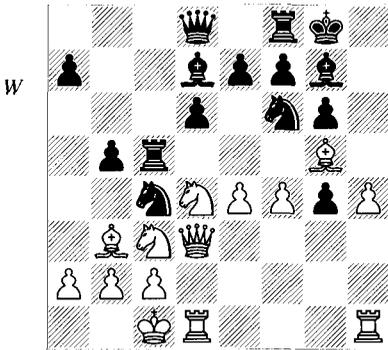
B)

16 ♖d3

When the line with 15 f4 first became popular, White’s attention focused primarily upon this logical queen move: White preserves his light-squared bishop so that it can participate in an attack on the black king, attacks the knight on c4, and increases the potential strength of the central break e5 by keeping queen and rook doubled on the d-file. White also creates the potential threat of subsequently capturing on g6

with the white queen (e.g. because the b3-bishop pins the f7-pawn to the black king).

16...b5 (D)



White now has these options:

- B1:** 17 e5 99
B2: 17 f5 100
B3: 17 h5 101
B4: 17 ♟xf6 102

In terms of minor alternatives it is worth noting 17 ♞dxb5?. Black should be ever vigilant of such captures when playing these lines, as there is a risk that Black can suddenly find himself missing an important pawn and with a piece on c4 hanging (which, incidentally, is the case here!). Fortunately, most of the time these cheeky pawn-grabbing antics don't work, either because they leave the e4-pawn insufficiently protected, or because they allow Black to exact some retribution on the old h8-a1 diagonal: 17...♞xb2! 18 ♟xb2 ♞xe4 19 ♟xe4 ♟xb5 20 ♞d4 ♟c6 21 ♞d5 ♟xd5 22 ♟xd5 ♟a5 23 ♟c1 ♟xd4 24 ♟b3 ♟g7 25 ♟xe7 ♟c3 26 ♞e1 ♟a1+ 27 ♟d2 ♟c3+ 0-1 Bendana Guerrero-Isaev, corr. 1988.

B1)

17 e5 (D)

Black has tried various approaches here, but the direct approach seems best:

17...dxe5! 18 ♞dxb5

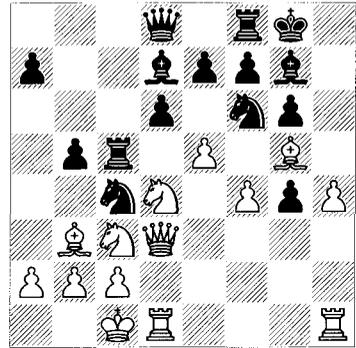
18 ♟xf6 ♟xf6 transposes to Line B4.

18...♞xb2!

18...♟c8!? has also yielded Black satisfactory results in this line, but objectively the text-move is probably preferable.

19 ♟xb2

B



If 19 ♟xg6 then 19...e6 20 ♟xf6 fxg6 21 ♟xd8 ♞xd1 ♠.

19...e4! 20 ♟d2

20 ♟d4? runs into 20...♟xb5 21 ♟xf6 ♟xf6 22 ♟xd7 ♟xd7 23 ♞xd7 ♞c5 —+.

After the text-move (20 ♟d2), Black must choose between four equally unclear options:

a) 20...♟xb5 gives rise to an endgame in which Black has good compensation for the exchange according to Habermehl; e.g., 21 ♞xb5 ♟xb5 22 ♟xd8 ♞d7+ 23 ♟b1 ♟xd8 24 ♟xe7 ♞e8 with compensation.

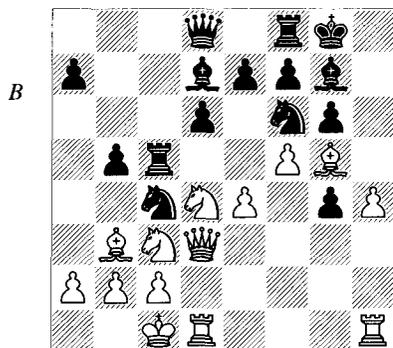
b) Moingt's 20...♞d5 throws more wood on the fire. Moingt maintains that Black is winning after 21 ♟xd5 ♟xb5 22 ♟xf7+ ♟xf7 23 ♟xd8 ♟xc3+ 24 ♟c1 ♞xd8 25 ♟xd8 e3 —+ and this analysis is cited with apparent approval by Mayer. However, White's play in this line was rather compliant, and I suspect something like 21 ♟c1! could give Black problems, because 21...e3 can be met by 22 ♟xd5! ♞xd5 23 ♞xd5, when White has a rook and two knights for the queen, and may well be better.

c) 20...♟b6! is Schneider's preference, and may well be best. The only practical example with it went 21 ♞d4 ♞fc8 22 ♞ce2 a5! ♠ 23 a4 ♟xa4 24 ♟xf6 ♟xf6 25 ♟a2 ♞xc2+ 26 ♟xc2 ♞xc2+ 0-1 Atri-Vescovi, Moscow OL 1994.

d) 20...e3!? 21 ♟d3 e2 (21...♟xb5!? is also interesting; play might continue 22 ♟xd8 ♞xd8 23 ♞xd8+ ♞e8 24 ♟xe7 ♞xc3 25 ♟c1 e2 when Black's passed e- and g-pawns provide definite compensation) 22 ♟xe2 (22 ♞d2? ♟a8 23 ♞e1 ♟xb5 24 ♟xg6 ♟c4 25 ♟xc4 ♞xc4 26 ♟d3 ♞e4 wins for Black, Cordes-Jakobsen, Esbjerg 1986) 22...♟a5 (22...♞d5! looks stronger, although things are still very unclear) 23 ♟xe7 ♞e4 24 ♞xd7 ♟xb5 25 ♟xf8+ ♟xf8 26 ♞xf7+ ♟e8 27 ♞c7+ 1-0 Lacey-Jobe, corr. 1999.

B2)

17 f5 (D)



With this kingside thrust White abandons all notions of delivering mate down the h-file and instead focuses on generally cracking open the black kingside. Theory has established that Black now has two satisfactory responses.

17...♞e5

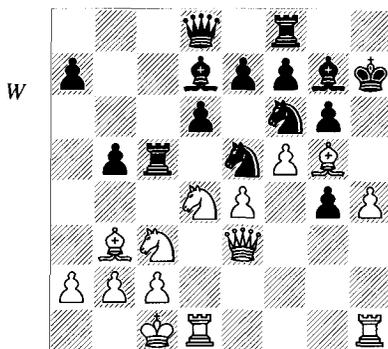
The other option is 17...gxf5:

a) 18 ♞xf5? ♞xf5 19 exf5 ♞xb2! (surprisingly this thematic blow goes unmentioned by all sources; however, Attila Schneider does demonstrate an advantage for Black by alternative means following 19...♞d7 20 ♜df1 ♜fc8 ♠ with the threat of 21...♞xb2) 20 ♞xb2 ♞xc3! -+. If 21 ♞xc3 then 21...♞e4 wins the queen.

b) 18 exf5 ♞c8!. With this move Black enhances the pressure on the c-file and, more immediately, creates the threat of capturing the f5-pawn. White must defend f5 and has a choice of which rook to deploy to the task: 19 ♜df1 (19 ♜hf1 ♞e5 20 ♞e3 ♞xc3 21 ♞xc3 ♞xc3 22 bxc3 ♜c8 23 ♞e2 ♞f8 24 ♞d5 1/2-1/2 Sax-Georgiev, Montreal 1986) 19...♞e5 (19...♞d5 has also been played with good results; to the best of my knowledge the move 19...b4!? has never been played in either practical or correspondence chess, but if I were faced with this position over the board this is the move that would most appeal to me, and I would submit that it deserves serious consideration) 20 ♞e3 ♞xc3!? 21 bxc3 (21 ♞xc3 ♞xc3 22 bxc3 ♜c8 23 ♞b2 a5 gives Black excellent compensation for the exchange) 21...a5 22 h5 ♞h7 23 h6 ♞h8 24 ♞xf6 ♞xf6 25 ♜h5 ♞c5 26 ♜g5 a4 27 ♜g7+ ♞h8 28 ♞e6 fxe6 29 fxe6 ♞c6 30 ♜f5 ♞d5 0-1 Jandovsky-Hadraba, corr. 1987.

18 ♞c3 ♞h7!? (D)

18...b4! is probably best: 19 ♞d5 (19 ♞xf6 ♞xf6 20 ♞d5 gxf5! 21 ♞xf6+ exf6 22 exf5 a5 ♠ Kulozewski-Nizynski, Poland 1986) 19...♞xd5 20 ♞xd5 gxf5 21 ♞h6 (21 ♞xf5 ♞xf5 22 exf5 ♞a5 23 ♞b3 ♜fc8 24 ♜d2 ♞c4 25 ♞xc4 ♞xc4 ♠ Simola-Froberg, Finland 1996) 21...e6 22 ♞b3 ♞f6 23 ♞g5 f4 24 ♞e1 (24 ♞xf4 ♞f3! -+) 24...♞g6 25 ♞e7 ♜fc8 ♠ Bakalarz-Pekarek, Myslowice 1985.



The text-move was Curt Hansen's contribution to this variation. It caused quite a stir at the time (prophylaxis and whatnot), but I suspect it is probably not Black's best. I include it here because it embodies a particularly memorable example of how Black can employ the king in its own defence.

19 h5?!

Better is 19 fxg6+! ♞xg6 20 ♜df1, which gave rise to an unclear position in Rachels-Rao, USA jr Ch 1986; although Black eventually won I suspect White may have been better at various points.

19...gxf5!

Black sidesteps the oncoming attack, using White's h-pawn as a shelter for the black king, and breaking up White's centre. Now:

a) 20 exf5 ♞xc3 21 bxc3 a5 22 h6 ♞h8 23 ♞f4 (23 a3!? is probably White's best here; 23 ♞xf6? ♞xf6 24 ♞c4 ♞c8 25 ♜h5 a4 26 ♞e6 ♞xc3 27 ♞xd7 ♞c4 0-1 Gasseholm-E.Pedersen, corr. 1986) 23...a4 24 ♞xe5 axb3 25 ♞xf6 ♞xf6 26 axb3 e5 27 ♞c4 exd4 28 ♞xg4 ♞c6 29 ♜h2 ♜g8 30 ♞h5 ♞d5 31 cxd4 ♞a5 32 ♜h4 ♞xh4 33 ♞xh4 ♞a1+ 0-1 Mortensen-Cu.Hansen, Danish Ch 1986.

b) 20 h6 ♞h8 reveals another important aspect of the repositioning of the black king on

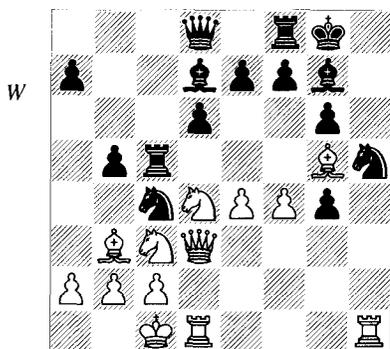
h7: were the king still on g8, White could disrupt the black kingside with the advance h7+, but with the king on h7, this is no longer an issue. 21 exf5 a5 22 ♖e4 ♗xe4 23 ♜xe4 ♜a8 24 ♜xa8 ♜xa8 25 ♙xe7 a4 26 ♙xd6 axb3 27 ♗xb3 ♜xc2+ 28 ♜xc2 ♙xf5+ 29 ♜d2 ♗c4+ 30 ♜e1 ♙c2 ♢ Grünfeld-Cu.Hansen, Jerusalem 1986.

c) 20 ♗xf5 ♙xf5 21 exf5 and now instead of 21...♜xc3, sacrificing the exchange, which was played in Olofsson-M.Johnson, corr. 1999, the more restrained 21...♗f3 hitting the white bishop on g5 and the pawn on f5, may be more prudent.

B3)

17 h5 ♗xh5 (D)

17...♜xg5 is also playable, but the text-move is stronger.



18 ♗d5

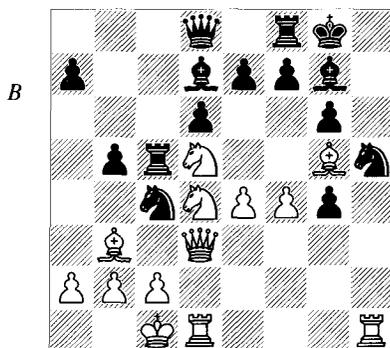
Minor alternatives:

a) 18 f5 can be met by the surprising blow 18...♙xd4! 19 ♜xd4 e5!, which should give Black a decisive advantage; for example, 20 ♙xd8 exd4 21 ♙e7 dxc3 22 ♙xd6 (22 ♙xf8 ♜xf8 --) 22...cxb2+ 23 ♜b1 ♗xd6 24 ♜xd6 ♜g7! (24...♙c6?? 25 ♜xg6+ ♗g7 26 f6 +-) 25 ♜xd7 ♗f6 26 ♜a7 (26 ♜e7 gxf5 27 e5 ♗d5 --) 26...♗xe4 27 fxg6 ♗d2+ 28 ♜xb2 ♗xb3 29 axb3 ♜xg6 0-1 Rodriguez-Hernandez, Bayamo 1984.

b) 18 e5 appears consistent and strong, but 18...dxe5! leaves White in trouble because although the thematic 19 ♗dxb5 exf4 20 ♙xc4 ♜xg5 21 ♜xd7 ♜xd7 22 ♜xd7 picks up an extra piece for White, this is at the cost of three pawns, and Black has an enormous advantage

in the form of his five(!) connected passed pawns on the kingside: 22...f3 23 ♜f1 ♙h6 24 ♜d1 ♗g3 25 ♜g1 ♗f5 26 ♜d3 ♜h5 27 ♗d5 f2 28 ♜f1 g3 29 ♗xe7+ ♗xe7 30 ♜xg3 ♗f5 31 ♜xg6+ ♜h7 32 ♜xh6+ ♜xh6 33 ♜d2 0-1 Juarez Flores-Henao, Medellin 1987.

We now return to 18 ♗d5 (D):



In light of the inadequacy of the alternatives, 18 ♗d5 quickly became White's main line of attack in this variation. Black now has two equally adequate responses:

B31: 18...♗xf4! 101

B32: 18...f6! 102

B31)

18...♗xf4! 19 ♙xf4 e5 20 ♙g3

Other moves are inferior:

a) 20 ♙h6 ♙xh6+ 21 ♜b1 ♜g5 22 ♜xh6 ♜xd5 23 exd5 ♜xh6 24 ♗xb5 ♗d2+ 25 ♜xd2 ♙xb5 26 c4 ♙d7 27 ♜c3 g3 -- Zanon-Iodice, corr. 1990.

b) 20 ♜g3? exf4 21 ♜xf4 ♗e5 22 ♜b1 a5 is much better for Black, Ady-W.Watson, London 1985.

20...exd4

20...♜g5+ is also strong; e.g., 21 ♜b1 ♜xd5 22 exd5 exd4 23 ♙xc4 bxc4 24 ♜e2 d3 25 cxd3 ♜b8 26 d4 c3 27 b3 ♙f5+ 28 ♜d3 ♜c8 29 ♜c2 ♙xd4 0-1 Sket-Djordjević, corr. 1987.

21 ♙xc4 bxc4 22 ♜d2 ♜xd5!

22...♜e8 is also strong, but the text-move strikes directly at the heart of the matter, removing White's last dangerous piece and giving the black bishops and pawns a free rein throughout the centre.

23 exd5 ♙f5 24 ♜h2 g5 25 ♙xd6 ♜e8

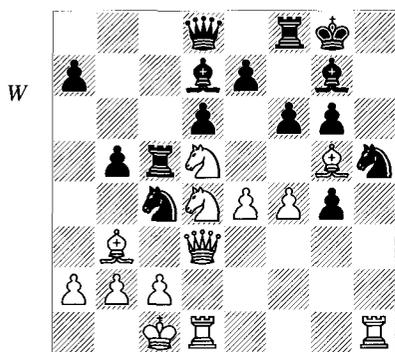
Now:

a) Schneider mentions that 26 ♞df1 is well met by the stunning 26... ♞e4 !. However, this just seems to drop a piece to 27 ♞xf5 . Perhaps 26... ♞a5 ! would be better. Now 27 ♞xf5 ? allows a sneaky back-rank mate on e1, so White may have to try something like 27 ♞b1 guarding a2, but now 27... d3 ! or 27... ♞xd5 looks very good for Black.

b) 26 ♞de1 and now in Qi Jingxuan-Speelman, Taxco IZ 1985, White eventually won after 26... d3 ?. Instead, Sapi & Schneider suggest 26... ♞e4 ! 27 ♞xe4 ♞xe4 28 ♞e1 f5 ♣.

B32)

18... f6 ! (D)



This move is my personal preference, although it is not clear that it is any stronger than 18... ♞xf4 .

19 ♞h4

Alternatives:

a) 19 e5 ♞xd5 ! 20 ♞xg6 (20 ♞xc4 bxc4 21 ♞xc4 e6 22 f5 ♞xe5 0-1 Tiemann-Oldhof, corr. 1986) 20... ♞e8 ! 21 ♞e4 ♞xd4 22 ♞xd4 fxg5 is winning for Black, Zyla-Grabarczyk, Warsaw 1990.

b) 19 ♞e3 ? fxg5 20 ♞xc4 bxc4 21 ♞xc4 d5 ! 22 ♞xd5 ♞xd5 23 exd5 ♞xf4 → Jakirić-Sirota, Melbourne 1998.

19... e6

Now:

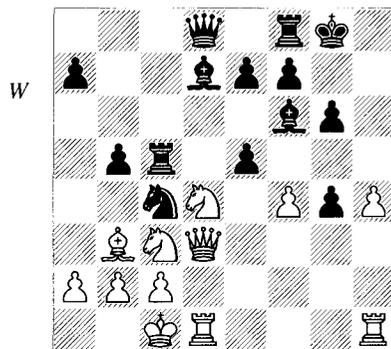
a) 20 ♞e3 is the most common continuation. Play should continue: 20... ♞xf4 21 ♞f1 ♞xe3 (21... g5 !? as in Da Fonseca-Bernardino, corr. 1995, may be even stronger) 22 ♞xf4 ♞xd1 ! 23 ♞xe6 ♞xe6 24 ♞xe6 ♞f7 25 ♞xd1 when Marković's 25... g5 ! 26 ♞f2 (26 ♞e3 ♞c7) 26... ♞e7 ! (26... gxh4 ? 27 ♞xc5 !) 27 ♞xf7 +

♞xf7 28 ♞g3 ♞xe4 29 ♞xd6 ♞c6 → is probably strongest.

b) 20 ♞c3 ♞h6 (the immediate 20... ♞xf4 is also strong; e.g., 21 ♞f1 ♞h6 22 ♞xc4 ♞e2 + 23 ♞b1 ♞xc3 + 24 bxc3 bxc4 25 ♞g3 ♞b6 + → Kapić-McLeod, corr. 1987) 21 ♞de2 ♞xf4 22 ♞xf4 ♞xf4 + 23 ♞b1 ♞xb2 0-1 Tobor-Herbrechtsmeier, corr. 1981.

B4)

17 ♞xf6 ♞xf6 18 e5 dxe5 ! (D)



Now:

B41: 19 ♞de2 102

B42: 19 ♞dxb5 103

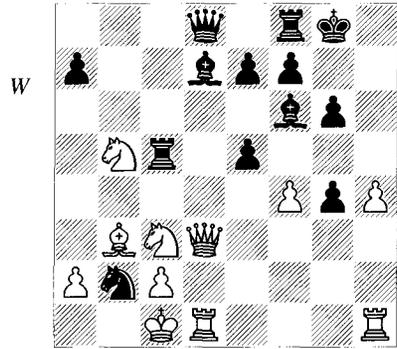
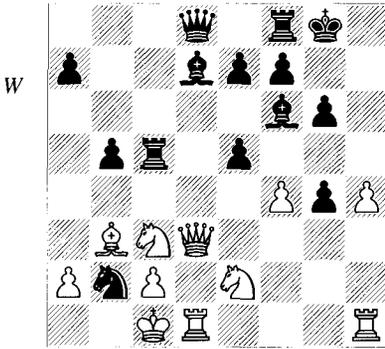
B41)

19 ♞de2 ♞xb2 (D)

Given that White's last move appears to have been executed with the specific intention of ruling out a b2-sacrifice by reinforcing the c3-knight, I am naturally sceptical of just going ahead anyway! Perhaps 19... exf4 !? is a better try. This move has never been tested in practice, but it carries some justification – Black's chances in these positions often revolve around getting those connected passed pawns rolling, and d7 is in trouble anyway, so why not sac the bishop and get on with queening process? The critical line must be 20 ♞xd7 ♞xd7 21 ♞xd7 f3 22 ♞g3 and now an interesting fantasy variation runs 22... ♞e5 !? 23 ♞ge4 (23 ♞ce4 ♞c7 !) 23... g3 ! 24 ♞xc5 ♞f4 !+ 25 ♞b1 g2 26 ♞dd1 ♞d2 + 27 ♞al f2 →.

20 ♞xb2

20 ♞xg6 + ♞g7 21 ♞xb2 (21 ♞e4 ♞xc2 +) 21... exf4 ♣. Although White is currently a piece



up, Black has two powerful pawns as compensation, and it is only a matter of time before Black picks up the knight on c3.

20...exf4 21 h5 g5

Now:

a) 22 ♖g6+ ♜h8 23 ♖h6+ (23 ♙xf7 ♜xf7 24 ♖xf7 b4 25 ♜xd7! also gives rise to a draw by perpetual check) 23...♙g8 24 ♖g6+ =.

b) 22 ♜b1 e6 23 ♘e4 ♜e5 24 ♘d4 ♙c8 25 ♘c6 (25 ♜hg1!? may be better) 25...♖xd3 26 ♘xf6+ ♙g7 27 cxd3 ♙xf6 28 ♘xe5 ♙xe5 29 d4+ ♙f6 30 h6 g3 31 d5 g2 32 ♜hg1 f3 33 ♜d2 e5 34 ♙c2 g4 35 ♜f2 ♙g5 36 ♙e4 ♙f4 37 ♙xf3 gxf3 38 ♜gxg2 ♙f5+ 39 ♜b2 e4 40 ♜g7 e3 0-1 Vidican-Teichmann, corr. 1990. Very unclear indeed!

B42)

19 ♘dxb5 ♘xb2! (D)

Mayer prefers Santos's move 19...♙xb5!?, seemingly asserting that it may refute this line entirely. It is definitely a good move, but I am not convinced that I would choose it over 19...♘xb2 if I had to play this position with Black, and I would submit that practical worth is what is really important here. Besides, grabbing that pawn on b2 is likely to give your opponent a nasty shock!

After 19...♘xb2! things get very complicated. White has tried three moves:

a) 20 ♖xd7 ♘xd1 ♢.

b) 20 ♜xb2 exf4 and here:

b1) 21 ♖xd7 ♖xd7 22 ♜xd7 ♜xb5 23 ♜c7 f3 -+.

b2) 21 a4 ♖c8 22 ♜c1 (not 22 ♖xd7? ♜xc3 23 ♘xc3 ♖xc3+ 24 ♜c1 e6! -+) 22...♙f5 (22...♜xc3!? 23 ♖xg6+ ♙g7 24 ♘xc3 ♖xc3 25 ♜xd7 ♖a1+ 26 ♜d2 ♖xh1 -+) 23 ♘e4

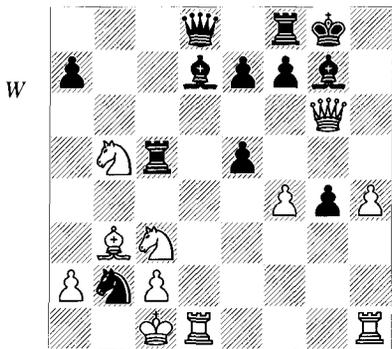
♙xe4 24 ♖xe4 ♖f5 25 ♖xf5 ♜xf5 is much better for Black.

b3) 21 ♜b1 e6 22 ♖xd7 ♖xd7 23 ♜xd7 ♙xc3 24 ♘d6 ♜e5 25 ♜c7 ♙d4 26 h5 gxh5 27 ♜c4 ♙c5 28 ♘e4 ♙e7 29 ♘f2 ♜f5 0-1 Heid-siek-Traut, corr. 1989.

b4) 21 ♖xg6+ is nothing, as 21...♙g7 22 h5 loses material to 22...♜xb5 23 h6? ♜xb3+.

b5) 21 ♜c1 is White's best move, and now Black's best is probably 21...♙g7 22 ♖xd7 (22 ♘e4 ♜xb5 23 ♘xf6 {23 ♖xd7 ♖xd7 24 ♜xd7 a5 25 ♘xf6 ♙xf6} 23...♙xf6 24 ♖d4+ e5 25 ♖xa7 ♜a5 26 ♖xd7 ♖xd7 27 ♜xd7 e4 -+ is analysis by Habermehl) 22...♖xd7 23 ♜xd7 ♙xc3 24 ♘xc3 ♜xc3 25 ♜xe7 ♜e3! ♢ Bernard-Habermehl, corr. ICCF 1992.

c) 20 ♖xg6+ ♙g7 (D) and Black now needs to be aware of three possibilities:



c1) 21 h5 ♜c6!? (this is given by Moingt as forced, but most sources have observed that 21...♜h8 is also good for Black) is considered by Moingt to be clearly better for Black; for example, 22 ♖g5!? (22 ♜d6 exd6 23 h6 ♖f6 24 ♖xg7+ ♖xg7 25 hxg7 ♙xg7 26 ♜xb2 exf4 ♢; 22 ♘d6 exd6 23 h6 ♖f6 24 ♖xg7+ ♖xg7 25 hxg7 ♙xg7 26 ♜xb2 exf4 ♢) 22...♘xd1 23 h6

♙xh6 24 ♙xh6 e6! 25 ♚xg4 ♘xc3 26 ♘xc3 ♚b6 ♣.

c2) 21 ♘e4?! has been met various ways, but none are as decisive as Golubev's 21...♙xc2+! 22 ♘xc2 ♘xd1 ♣, when 23 ♙xd1 can be met by 23...♚c8+ 24 ♘b1?! ♘f5 -+.

c3) 21 ♘xb2 exf4 and then:

c31) 22 h5? ♙xb5 23 h6 ♙xb3+ -+.

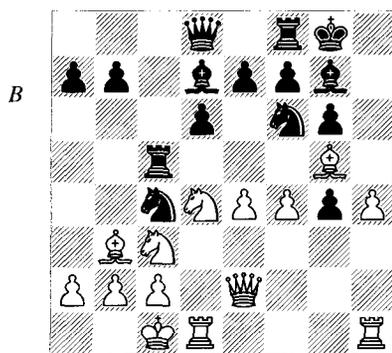
c32) 22 ♘d4? ♚a5 23 ♙d3 ♚b4! ♣.

c33) 22 ♘c1! is supposed to be the critical move, but Black should still be better provided he finds the excellent 22...♚c8!; e.g., 23 ♘xa7 (23 ♚d3 ♘f5 24 ♘d5 ♘xd3 25 ♘xe7+ ♘h8 26 ♘xc8 ♘xc2! 27 ♘xc2 ♙fxc8 28 ♘a3 ♙c3 -+ and 23 ♙xd7 ♚xd7 24 ♙d1 ♚c8 are good for Black) 23...♚c7 24 ♘ab5 ♘xb5 25 ♘xb5 ♙xb5 26 ♚xg4 ♚e5 27 ♙hg1 ♘h8 28 ♙d3 e6 29 ♘d2 (29 ♘d1 ♙c8 with an attack) 29...f3!! -+ Lavrentiev-Efremov, corr. 1996. The analysis on this sub-variation is based on Efremov's notes in *Correspondence Informator* 72.

c34) 22 ♘b1 ♚a5! 23 ♙xd7 ♙xc3 24 ♚xg4 (24 ♘xc3 ♚xc3 25 ♘xf7+ ♙xf7 26 ♙d8+ ♙f8 27 ♚e6+ ♘h7 28 ♚e4+ ♘h6 -+) 24...♙xb5 25 ♙d5? (25 ♙g1 ♙g3 26 ♙xg3 fxg3 -+) 25...♙xb3+ 26 axb3 ♚xd5 27 ♙g1 ♚e5 0-1 Delanoy-Moingt, Belgium 1993. My notes on this line are based on Moingt's annotations in *Informator* 59.

C)

16 ♚e2 (D)



For some time this position marked the start of the theoretical battle, with Black's attention focusing almost exclusively on the traditional retort 16...b5. However, Tiviakov's 16...♚c8! seems to have put exponents of the white side

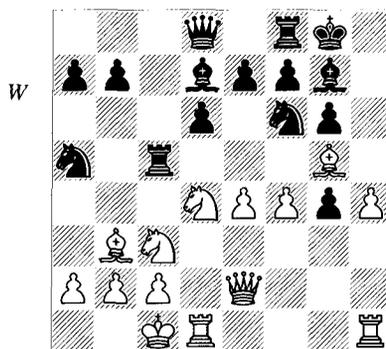
off this line permanently (perhaps unjustly). Around the same time that Tiviakov was popularizing 16...♚c8, Ivanchuk was revitalizing the rare 16...♘a5!? and it is this underused line that we shall focus on as our 'unexplored alternative'.

C1: 16...♘a5!? 104

C2: 16...♚c8! 106

C1)

16...♘a5!?



This move was rehabilitated with some success by Ivanchuk. To the best of my knowledge there is no qualitative reason why it has not caught on; from a purely academic perspective it seems entirely respectable. Perhaps the lack of popular focus can be explained by reference to the rapid and immense popularity that 16...♚c8 gained at around the same time.

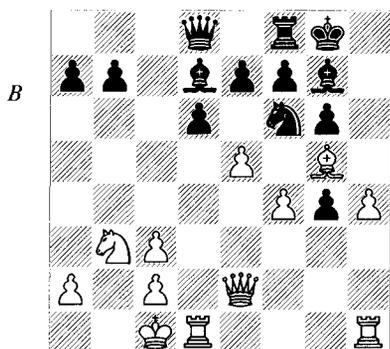
17 e5!

The only real try for White. Other moves promise little:

a) 17 ♘b1 can be met by 17...♘h5!? (the only practical example of this position was Molina Barrera-Vasilev, Golden Sands 2000, which continued 17...♙e8; Black eventually won, but the text-move seems stronger) 18 ♘d5 (18 e5 and 18 f5 can both be met by 18...♘g3!) 18...♘xb3 (18...♙e8!? also looks good) 19 ♘xe7+ ♘h7 20 ♘xb3 ♙xg5 21 hxg5 ♚xe7 ♣.

b) 17 f5 gxf5!? (17...♘b3+ 18 ♘xb3 ♙xc3! 19 bxc3 gxf5 looks very good for Black) 18 exf5 ♘xb3+ 19 axb3 ♙xf5!? 20 ♘xf5 ♘xf5 21 h5 ♚a5 22 ♚b5 ♚xb5 23 ♘xb5 ♙c8 was clearly better for Black in Ramos-Medrano, corr. 1994, although he later went wrong and lost.

17...♖xb3+ 18 ♖xb3 ♗xc3 19 bxc3 (D)



As theory currently stands, this position appears to represent the critical point of the variation. Black is an exchange for a pawn down, and 19...dxe5? 20 fxe5 would give White a decisive advantage. However, White's queenside pawns are shattered, and for the moment capturing on f6 would bring about the loss of White's dark-squared bishop via 20 exf6 exf6, so if Black can simply untangle he should be in excellent shape. Prior to the game Smirin-Ivanchuk, Paris PCA rpd 1994, existing theory had witnessed only 19...♗c7, after which White can gain a potentially decisive advantage with 20 h5! (Mohr-Barić, Bled 1992). The move that changed all this was...

19...♗c6!

Ivanchuk's excellent discovery hits the rook on h1, threatens 20...♗f3, winning back the exchange, protects d6, and gives the knight fresh squares on e4 and d5.

20 ♖hf1

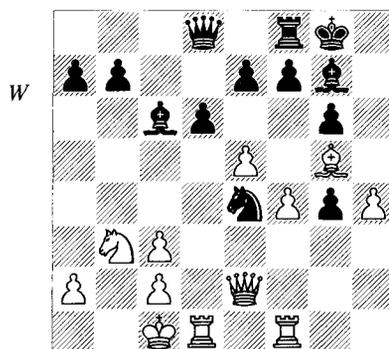
Alternatives:

a) 20 exf6 exf6 21 ♖hf1 ♗f3 22 ♖xf3 gxf3 23 ♗xf3 ffg5 24 hxg5 ♗c7 ♞. This analysis (and much of the subsequent analysis of this line) is based on the annotations of the Hungarians Istvan and Zoltan Almasi, in *New in Chess Yearbook 36* (hereafter 'Almasi').

b) 20 exd6 exd6 21 ♖hf1 ♗c8 (21...♗e8!? may be stronger; for example, 22 ♗xe8 ♗xe8 23 ♗xd6? ♖e4 with 24...f6 to follow, trapping the g5-bishop) 22 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 23 ♗xd6 ♗f3 24 ♗d3 ♗xc3 25 ♗xc3 ♗xc3 26 ♖d2?! ♗e2 (26...♗b4!? ♞) 27 ♗g1 ♗e8 28 ♖b1 ♗a5 29 ♖d2 ♗c7 30 ♗d7 ♗xf4 31 c3 ♗f3 and Black wins, Pogonina-Korobov, Nizhny Novgorod 1999.

c) 20 ♗he1 ♗f3 21 ♗e3 ♗xd1 22 ♗xd1 ♗e8! 23 e6!? fxe6 24 ♖d4 ♖d5 25 ♗xc6+ ♗f7 26 ♗d3 ♖xf4 (26...♖xc3!? or 26...♗xd4 may be stronger) 27 ♗xf4 ♗xd4 28 ♗xf7+ ♗xf7 29 ♗xd4 e5 ♞ Anchetay Tejas-Venegas Ocampo, Yucatan 1999.

20...♖e4 (D)



Now:

a) 21 ♗xg4 ♖xc3 (21...♗c8!? 22 ♗xc8 ♗xc8 23 exd6 exd6 24 f5 ♗b5 25 ♗fe1 ♖xc3 26 ♗xd6 ♖xa2+ 27 ♖b1 ♖c3+ 28 ♖c1 gxf5 gives Black good chances) 22 ♗xd6 ♖xa2+ 23 ♖b1 ♖c3+ 24 ♖b2 ♗e8 25 ♗d4 ♖b5 26 ♗dd1 f6 27 ♗e6+ ♖h8 (27...♗f7 or 27...♗f7 may be stronger) 28 h5 gxh5 29 exf6?! (29 ♗h4) 29...exf6 and Black is winning, Van Essen-Skulason, corr. 2001.

b) 21 exd6 ♖xc3! 22 ♗c4 (the Almasi brothers mention 22 ♗xe7 ♖xa2+ 23 ♖b1 ♖c3+ 24 ♖c1 f6! 25 ♗e6+ ♖h8 ♞) 22...♖xa2+ 23 ♖b1 ♖c3+ 24 ♖c1 ♖a2+ 25 ♖b1 ♖c3+ 26 ♖c1 ♗b6 (26...♗b5! 27 dxe7 ♗xe7 28 ♗xe7 ♗xc4 29 ♗xf8 ♗xf1 ♞) 27 dxe7 ♗c3+ 28 ♗d2 ♖a2+ (28...♗e8!?) 29 ♖b1 ♖c3+ 30 ♖c1 ♖a2+ 31 ♖b1 ♖c3+ 32 ♖c1 ♖a2+ 1/2-1/2 Bravo-Pelikian, São Paulo 1995.

c) 21 ♗d3 f6 22 ♖d4 ♗a5 23 ♖xc6 ♗a3+ 24 ♖b1 bxc6 25 ♗xe4 (25 ♖a1 ♖xc3 26 ♗c4+ d5 27 ♗b3 ♗xb3 28 axb3 ♖xd1 29 ♗xd1 ffg5) 25...♗b8+ 26 ♗b4 ♗xb4+ 27 cxb4 ffg5 → Almasi.

d) 21 ♗c4 d5 and now:

d1) 22 ♗d4 f6 23 ♗fe1 (23 c4 ffg5 24 cxd5 ♖g3 25 ♗f2 ♖xf1 26 dxc6 ♗c7 ♞) 23...fgg5 24 ♗xe4 ggh4 ♞ Almasi.

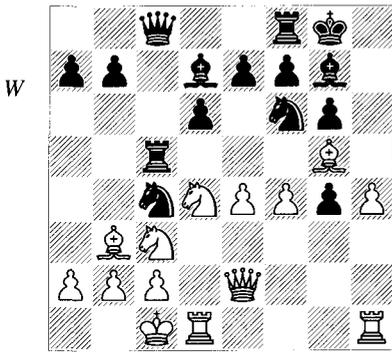
d2) Attila Schneider mentions 22 ♗b4? f6 23 c4 ffg5 24 cxd5 ♗xd5 25 c4 ♗xf4 26 ♗xf4 gff4 27 ♗xd5 ♗c7, which he assesses as clearly

better for Black on account of his powerful connected passed pawns on the kingside.

d3) 22 ♖xe4 dxe4 23 ♜xd8 ♜xd8 24 ♙xe7 ♜d7 25 ♙g5 ♙f8! 26 ♘d4 ♙c5 27 f5 (27 ♘xc6? ♙a3+ 28 ♖b1 bxc6 29 ♖a1 e3 wins for Black) 27...♙xd4 28 cxd4 and now rather than 28...gxf5?! as played in Smirin-Ivanchuk, Paris 1994, according to the Almasi brothers Black can maintain an advantage with 28...♜xd4! 29 fxg6 fxg6 30 e6 ♜d6 31 e7 (31 ♜f6 ♙e8) 31...♜e6 32 ♖d2 e3+ 33 ♙xe3 ♜xe7 34 ♙xa7 g3 ♞.

C2)

16...♜c8! (D)



Prior to the discovery of 16...♜c8 Black relied almost exclusively on the traditional move 16...b5, which gives rise to razor-sharp positions which are still considered unclear in many respects. So why is 16...♜c8 so special? Well, there are a number of hidden attributes to the move.

Firstly, Black places the queen behind the c5-rook, doubling up on the c-file. This has the dual effect of defending the currently attacked knight on c4, and creating the immediate threat of 17...♘xb2 and 18...♜xc3.

Secondly, Black sidesteps the indirect pressure on the d-file and on the h4-d8 diagonal. This draws the sting from any subsequent e5 pawn-breaks by White.

Thirdly, Black enhances the protection of a potential weak point on his kingside. A traditional pawn-thrust in these types of positions is f5, with a view to opening up Black's defensive 'box'. By placing the queen on c8 Black perfectly coordinates the d7-bishop, the c5-rook,

and the c8-queen in the protection the tender f5-square.

Finally, Black also increases control of the c8-h3 diagonal, lending extra protection to the g4-pawn. Scottish GM Paul Motwani, in his excellent book *S.T.A.R. Chess*, even goes so far as to contemplate the long-term possibility of Black playing ...g3, and following up with ...♙g4.

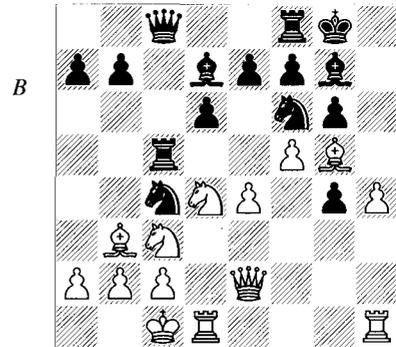
Returning to our analysis of the position after 16...♜c8, White now has three possibilities:

- C21: 17 f5** 106
- C22: 17 h5** 108
- C23: 17 ♙xf6!** 109

17 ♙xc4 has also been played, but it carries no independent significance. Its sole outing continued 17...♜xc4 18 e5?! (18 ♙xf6 ♙xf6 transposes to Line C231) 18...♜xc3 19 bxc3 and now 19...♘d5! looks very strong for Black.

C21)

17 f5 (D)



When 16...♜c8 first came to light, 17 f5 was White's principal attempt at a refutation, which perhaps betrayed an initial lack of understanding regarding the finer points of 16...♜c8, as a primary objective of Black's 16th move was to discourage 17 f5!

17...♘xb2!

This is now firmly established as Black's most popular method of countering 17 f5, and notably it is entirely consistent with Black's plan of doubling on the c-file. In case any problems should occur in this line (or if you simply fancy something a shade slower), it should not

be forgotten that in the original 16...♖c8 game Tiviakov actually played 17...e5!?. Then:

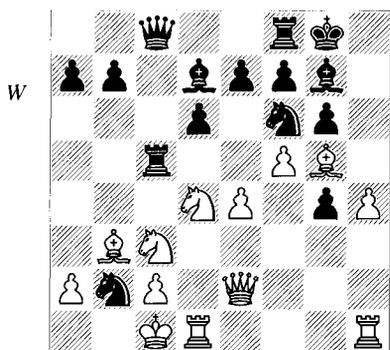
a) 18 fxe6 fxe6 19 ♖hf1 (19 ♖hg1 ♖h7 20 ♗xf6 ♖xf6 21 ♖xg4? e5; 19 ♗xf6?! ♖xf6 20 ♖xg4? e5) 19...♖h7 20 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 21 ♗xc4 ♖xc4 22 e5 is unclear.

b) 18 ♗db5 ♗xb5 19 ♗xb5 ♖xb5 and here:

b1) 20 ♗xc4 ♖b4! 21 b3!?! (21 ♗xf6 ♖xc4 ♖; 21 b3 ♖xc4! 22 bxc4 gxf5 23 exf5 ♖xf5 24 ♖hf1 ♖e4 25 ♖d2 ♗h5! 26 ♗h6 ♗f4 27 ♗xg7 ♖xg7 ♖ Toloza-Valanzvela, Chile 1996) 21...b5 22 a3 bxc4 23 axb4 cxb3 ∞.

b2) 20 ♗xf6! ♗xf6 21 ♗xc4 ♖b4 22 ♗d5 (22 ♖xd6 ♖xc4 ♖; 22 b3!?! b5 23 a3 {23 ♗xb5 gxf5; 23 c3 bxc4 24 cxb4 cxb3+ with an attack; 23 ♖xd6 bxc4 24 ♖xf6 cxb3} 23...♖xc4 24 bxc4 ♖c5 leaves Black with good compensation for the exchange) 22...gxf5 23 ♖df1 f4 (only move) 24 ♖hg1 ♖e8 25 ♖xg4+ ♖f8 26 ♖g3 ♖d4 27 ♖d3 ♖xd3 28 ♖xd3 ♗xh4 and the opposite-coloured bishops gave rise to a dynamically balanced position in Yudasin-Tiviakov, Groningen PCA 1993, although Black eventually won after some errors from White.

We now return to 17...♗xb2! (D):



In this position White has tried two main moves:

C211: 18 ♗xf6? 107

C212: 18 ♖xb2 108

The surprising 18 fxe6 has also been tried, but 18...♗xd1 19 ♗xf7+ (19 gxf7+ ♖h8 20 ♗xd1 ♖e5! ♖) 19...♖xf7 20 gxf7+ ♖xf7 is clearly better for Black.

C211)

18 ♗xf6? ♗xd1!

This is probably best, and has been assessed by Bönsch as clearly better for Black, but it is noteworthy that Motwani prefers to avoid the complications with the simple but strong line 18...♗xf6!?! 19 ♖xg4 ♖g7 20 ♖hg1 (20 ♗xf7 ♖xf7 21 ♖xg6+ ♖f8 22 ♖hg1 ♖g7 → Ubilava; 20 ♖xb2 ♖xc3 ♖ Almasi; 20 ♖dgl ♖xc3 21 ♗xf7 ♗d3+ and 22...♗e5 ♖ Gershon) 20...♖h8 21 ♗xf7 (21 ♖g2 ♖h6 Gershon; 21 h5 g5 22 ♗f3 ♖xc3 23 ♗xg5 ♖xb3! 24 axb3 ♗xd1 → is given by Ubilava in *Informator* 66) 21...♖xf7 22 ♖xg6+ ♖f8 23 ♖xb2 ♖xc3 24 e5 ♗xf5! 0-1 Mohr-Ubilava, Linares 1996.

19 ♖xg4

White goes for complications. Instead, 19 ♗xg7 ♗xc3 20 ♖xg4 ♖xg7 21 h5 ♗xf5 22 exf5 ♖xf5 23 ♗e6+! ♖g8 24 hxg6 fxe6 25 ♖h3 ♖f1+ leads to an ending where I prefer Black.

19...exf6 20 ♖g1

Almasi gives the following variations: 20 ♗xd1 gxf5 21 ♖g3 ♖h8 ♖; 20 ♖xg6 ♖c4! 21 ♖g2 (21 ♗xc4 ♖xc4 22 ♖g2 ♖xc3 23 ♖g1 ♖a1+ 24 ♗d2 ♖xd4+ → followed by 25...♖e3+ and 26...♖h6, when Black is two bishops up; 21 ♖g4 ♗f2!) 21...♗e3! 22 ♖g3 ♖xc3 23 ♖g1 ♗xf5 24 ♖g4 ♗g3! →.

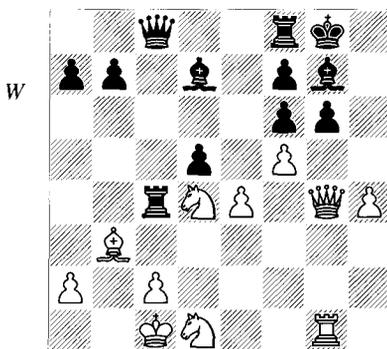
20...♖c4!

Be sure to avoid 20...♖xc3?? 21 ♖xg6 +-.

21 ♗xd1

21 ♗d5 appears problematic but is well met by 21...♗h6+ 22 ♖xd1 (22 ♖b1 ♖xd4 23 ♗e7+ ♖h8 24 ♗xc8 {24 ♗xg6+ ♖h7 25 ♗xf8+ ♖xf8 →} 24...♗c3+ 25 ♖b2 ♖xc8 26 ♗xf7 ♗xf5 →) 22...♖xd4+ 23 ♖e1 ♖g7 →.

21...d5! (D)



After this excellent counterstrike Black is completely winning. Some sample variations:

a) 22 exd5 ♙xf5 23 ♖f4 and now 23...♗h7! or 23...♞e8 keeps a definite advantage.

b) 22 ♙xc4 ♖xc4 23 ♖b3 (23 exd5 ♖xa2 {with the idea of 24...♙h6+!}) 24 ♖e3 ♙h6 25 ♖g3 ♞e8 26 ♖e6 ♖xd5 -+) 23...dxe4 24 ♖f4 ♙xf5 25 ♖e3 ♖c3 26 h5 (26 ♖xf5? gxf5 27 ♖h6 ♖e1+! -+) 26...♞c8 27 ♗b1 ♙e6 28 hxg6 f5 -+ Almasi.

c) 22 h5 ♞xd4 23 hxg6 fxg6 24 ♖xg6 ♞f7 left Black a rook to the better in Oll-Topalov, Moscow OL 1994.

C212)

18 ♗xb2 ♞xc3 19 fxg6

Alternatives:

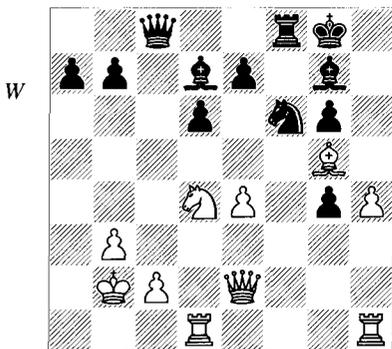
a) 19 ♙xf6 ♙xf6 20 fxg6 ♙e6 21 ♙xe6 fxe6 ♢.

b) Thorhallsson suggests that 19 h5 can be met by 19...♖xh5 20 fxg6 ♞xb3+ 21 axb3 fxg6 when Black has three pawns for the exchange, or 19...♖xe4 20 ♖xe4 ♙xf5 'with an unclear position'. I would definitely prefer Black in either of these lines.

19...♞xb3+! 20 axb3

After 20 cxb3, 20...fxg6 was slightly better for Black in Bianchi-Hedrerera, corr. 1996, while 20...♖c5 21 gxf7+ ♞xf7 also gave Black a good position in Luers-Goncalves, corr. 1998.

20...fxg6 (D)



Topalov assesses this position as giving Black compensation for the material, although most commentators go further. The Almasi brothers and Golubev believe that Black is slightly better, and Gershon (in *ChessBase Magazine* 57) seems to think that White is already close to the brink!

21 ♞he1

Gershon gives 21 h5 ♖xh5 22 ♙xe7 ♖g3 23 ♖h2 ♖xh1 24 ♙xf8 ♖xf8 25 ♖xh1 ♖f2 -+.

21...♖c5!?

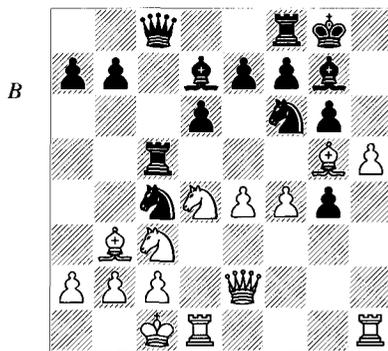
Now:

a) Gershon analyses 22 c3!? d5! 23 exd5 (23 e5 ♖e4 24 ♖c2 ♙xe5 -+; 23 ♙xf6 exf6 24 ♖d3 dxe4 25 ♖xe4 ♞c8 26 ♗b1 ♙f5 27 ♖xf5 ♖xf5 28 ♖xf5 gxf5 29 ♖d7 f4 ♢) 23...♖xd5 24 ♖d3 (24 ♖c4 ♞f2+ 25 ♙d2 ♖xc4 26 bxc4 ♖b6 -+) 24...♖xc3 25 ♖xe7 ♖a4+! 26 ♗b1 ♙f5! 27 ♖xf5 ♖xf5 28 ♖d7 ♖f2! 29 ♙d2 (29 ♖e6+ ♗h7 30 ♞e2? ♖f1+ 31 ♗c2 ♖c5 -+) 29...♖f6 30 ♖e6+ ♖xe6 31 ♞xe6 ♖c5 -+.

b) 22 ♖c4+?! (this move may betray a fundamental misunderstanding of the position: White reasons that Black's attacking chances will be reduced in the ending, but now White is simply confined to a clearly worse endgame!) 22...♖xc4 ♢ 23 bxc4. Now rather than the loose 23...♞c8, which allowed White to generate chances with 24 e5 in Fogarasi-Palkovi, Budapest 1996, Gershon recommends 23...♞f7!? 24 e5 dxe5 25 ♞xe5 g3 26 c3 g2 27 ♞e1 ♖g4!, intending to regroup with 28...♖e5, which he assesses as clearly better for Black.

C22)

17 h5 (D)



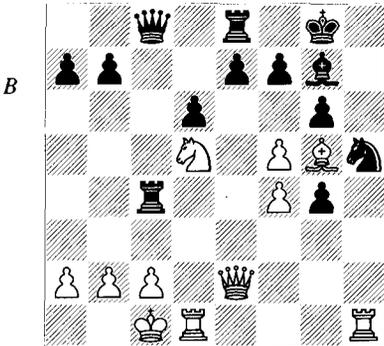
This direct attempt to blow Black off the back of the board must be taken seriously, but so long as Black keeps a cool head he should be fine.

17...♖xh5

Black should now be aware of four sub-variations:

a) 18 ♙xc4!? is given by Pavlović as White's best in *Informator* 67. Pavlović gives some brief

lines and concludes that the position is unclear, but Motwani examines this position in some detail in *S.T.A.R. Chess*, determining that Black is actually much better in all lines. The comments which follow are my own, but the analysis is Paul's unless I indicate otherwise. 18...♖xc4 19 ♘d5 ♜e8 20 ♘f5 (!' according to Pavlović) 20...♙xf5 21 exf5 (*D*) and now Black has two promising options according to Motwani:



a1) 21...e6!? 22 ♘e7+ ♜xe7 23 ♙xe7 d5!? (Paul doesn't mention the obvious 23...exf5!? but there is certainly something to be said for it; e.g., 24 ♙xd6 ♘g3 25 ♖h2 ♘xh1 26 ♜xh1 f6 when Black is two pawns up) 24 fxg6 (24 ♜xh5 gxh5 25 f6 ♖c7!) 24...♘g3 25 ♖h2 and now Motwani concludes his analysis of this line with the rather peculiar 25...♘xh1 26 ♖xh1 fxg6, missing that instead 26 ♖h7# would have delivered mate! I suspect this may just be a notation error, as 25...fxg6! pretty much transposes, because the g3-knight is immune on account of Black's threat against c2.

a2) 21...♘g3 22 ♖h2 ♘xh1 23 ♜xh1 and now Pavlović considers only 23...♖xc2+, while Motwani prefers 23...♖xf5! 24 ♘e3 (24 ♘xe7+? ♜xe7 25 ♙xe7 ♖xf4+ -+; 24 ♙xe7? ♖xc2+ 25 ♖xc2 ♖xd5 -+; 24 ♖h7+ ♙f8 25 ♙h6?? ♖xc2#) 24...♙e4 25 ♘xc4 ♜c8! (25...♖xc4? 26 ♖h7+ ♙f8 27 ♙h6 ♖d4 28 ♖h8#) 26 ♘a3 g3! 27 ♖h7+ ♙f8 "threatening 28...g2 29 ♜g1 ♖e3+" – Motwani.

b) 18 f5 ♘a5 (this move has scored very well for Black in practice although the thematic 18...♘b2!? definitely merits consideration) 19 ♖xg4 (19 ♘d5 ♘b3+ 20 ♘b3 ♜xd5! 21 ♜xd5 ♘g3 22 ♖h2 ♘xh1 23 ♙xe7 ♙c6 24 ♜d4 gxf5 wins for Black, Vrban-Armanda, Pula 1998) 19...♘b3+ 20 axb3

♜xc3 21 ♜xh5 gxh5 22 ♖xh5 ♙xd4 23 bxc3 ♖xc3 24 ♜h1 ♙xf5! (an important theme to note: Black sacrifices a piece in order to guard h7 for one move, but in doing so he buys himself the time to create an escape square on f8; as an illustration of this point, note that the immediate 24...♜c8 loses to 25 ♖h7+ ♙f8 26 ♙h6+ ♙e8 27 ♖g8# precisely because Black's escape route via the d7-square is blocked) 25 exf5 ♜c8 26 ♖h7+ ♙f8 27 f6 exf6 28 ♙h4 ♙e5 29 ♙e1 ♖b2+ 30 ♙d1 ♖b1+ 31 ♙d2 ♙f4+ 32 ♙e2 ♖xc2+ 33 ♙f1 ♖xb3 0-1 Bakh-tadze-T.Petrosian, Batumi 2003.

c) 18 ♘d5!? practically wins an exchange, and consequently deserves our attention, although interestingly I could only find two examples where White played this way, one a practical one and one a correspondence game:

c1) 18...♜xd5 19 exd5 b5 20 f5 ♙xf5 21 ♙xc4 bxc4 22 ♘c6 ♜e8 23 ♖xc4 (23 ♘xe7+ ♙f8!) 23...♖b7 24 b3 e5 (24...e6!?) 25 ♘a5 ♖b6 26 ♖a4 ♜c8 27 ♘c6 ♙f8 28 ♙b2 ♖c5 29 c4 g3 30 ♖a3 ♖f2+ 31 ♙a1 g2 32 ♜hg1 ♜xc6 33 dxc6 ♙g7 34 ♙c1 ♘f4 0-1 Redon-Vassia, corr. 2000.

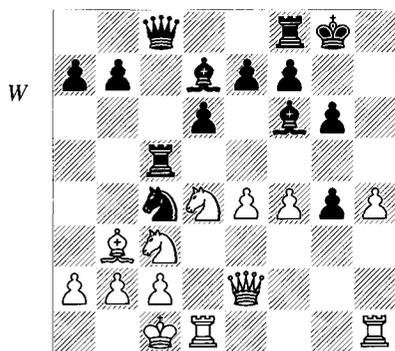
c2) 18...♜e8 19 ♘xe7+ ♜xe7 20 ♙xe7 ♘g3 21 ♖d3 ♘xh1 22 ♜xh1 b5 (22...♖e8!?) 23 e5?! dx5! 24 ♙xc5 ♖xc5 25 fxe5 ♖xe5 26 c3 ♖d5 27 ♜e1 ♙h6+ 28 ♙c2 0-1 Mozaliov-Kravtsov, Moscow 1998.

d) 18 ♘f5 ♙xf5 19 exf5 ♖xf5! (19...♘b2?! 20 fxg6! is thought to be good for White) 20 ♜xh5 ♘a5! (20...gxh5 21 ♙xc4 ♙xc3 22 bxc3 ∞ Hodgson) 21 ♜hh1 ♘b3+ 22 axb3 f6! 23 ♙h4 ♖xf4+ 24 ♙b1 ♜e5 ♢ Pavlović-Hodgson, Ubeda 1996.

C23)

17 ♙xf6! ♙xf6 (*D*)

As should be clear by now, it is rarely sensible for White to concede his dark-squared bishop in the Yugoslav Attack, but in this instance the position of the black queen on c8 and the bishop on f6 carries the implication that White can follow up with 18 ♘d5 (hitting e7 and f6) and Black cannot retreat the bishop from f6 because of the threat to e7. Equally there is no convenient facility for defending the f6-bishop, so it is probable that Black will have to recapture on f6 with the e-pawn, thereby



fracturing his usually impeccable structure. However, as we shall see, it is not all bad news: Black is still a pawn up (which never hurts), the concession of White's dark-squared bishop largely rules out mating attacks, and all these exchanges take up a lot of time, allowing Black to organize his forces in anticipation of the forthcoming middlegame. Let's take a look at White's possible follow-ups:

C231: 18 ♗xc4 110

C232: 18 h5 111

C233: 18 ♖d5 111

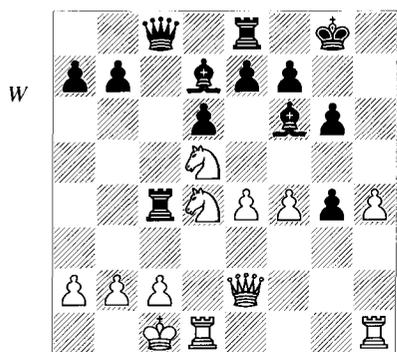
After 18 f5 most players seem to have responded with the almost automatic 18...b5, not realizing that 18...♗b2! leads us back into familiar territory: the note to Black's 18th move in Line C211 to be precise, which is good for Black.

C231)

18 ♗xc4 ♗xc4 19 ♖d5

19 e5 ♗g7 20 ♖b1?! ♗xc3 21 bxc3 ♗xc3 is much better for Black, Angelov-Vasilev, Tsar-evo 2001.

19...♗e8! (D)



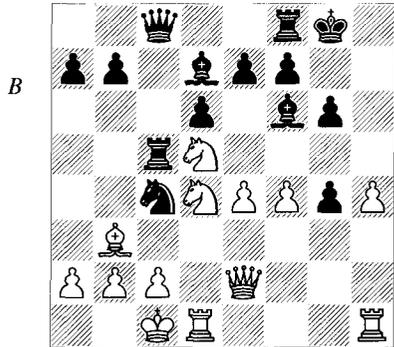
A dual-purpose move. Black realizes that White was threatening to follow up with 20 e5, hitting the bishop on f6, and therefore protects the e7-pawn so that the bishop will be able to retreat to g7. By the same measure 19...♗e8 anticipates the opening of the centre after 20 ♗xf6+ exf6, after which the rook will be perfectly placed for the middlegame. White has the following possibilities:

a) 20 h5?! gave White nothing but trouble after 20...g5!? 21 e5 ♗c5 ♖ in I.Almasi-Payen, Budapest 1991, but Almasi suggests that Black had something far stronger in the form of 20...♗xd4! 21 ♗xd4 ♗xd4 22 hxg6 ♗a4! 23 b3 (23 ♗h2 ♗xc2+! -+; 23 c3 fxg6 24 ♗h2 ♗d1+ -+) 23...fxg6 24 ♗h2 ♗xd5! 25 ♗h7+ ♖f8 26 exd5 ♗c3 27 bxa4 ♗a1+ 28 ♖d2 ♗d4+ 29 ♖e1 ♗xd5 ♖.

b) 20 e5 is White's most consistent follow-up, but Black has a strong retort in the form of 20...♗c5!. This excellent move is a discovery of Schulz, and is currently considered Black's best in the position. 21 exf6 (practically forced; other moves rapidly leave White in trouble: 21 ♗xf6+ exf6 22 ♗b3 ♗c6 -+; 21 ♗b3 ♗xd5 22 ♗xd5 ♗c6 -+; 21 ♗e4 dxe5 22 fxe5 ♗f5 23 ♗xf5 gxf5 24 ♗xf6+ exf6 -+) 21...♗xd5 22 fxe7 ♗e6 (22...♗c5!? is Motwani's suggestion here, with the idea 23 ♗e3 ♗h5 "intending ...d5 or ...♗e6 followed by ...♗e7") 23 ♗xe6 ♗xd1+ 24 ♗xd1 ♗xe7 (24...♗xe6 25 ♗xe6 fxe6 26 ♗xd6 ♗xe7 gives rise to an unclear ending) 25 ♗xg4 ♗xe6 26 ♗xe6 (26 f5!?) 26...♗xe6 reaches a complex rook ending in which I believe Black's chances are preferable on account of his well-placed rook, White's weak kingside pawns, and the fact that Black's king is closer to the action than White's.

c) 20 ♗xf6+ exf6 21 h5 g5! 22 fxg5 (Motwani points out that 22 f5 d5 is good for Black) 22...♗c5! (a neat trick: Black keeps the kingside closed with 21...g5, and then activates the queen with tempi by first hitting the knight on d4 with 22...♗c5, and then following up by capturing on g5 with check!) 23 ♗d3 (23 ♗e3 ♗xg5 forcing an exchange of queens, was good for Black in Krejci-Voller, Plzen 1997) 23...♗xg5+ 24 ♖b1 d5! (an excellent move: Black protects the c4-rook, attacks the e4-pawn and removes the weak d6-pawn; furthermore, after White captures on d5 Black's f-pawns can

suddenly spring to life, combining with the g-pawn for a powerful charge on the kingside) 25 exd5 ♖xd5 26 ♖hf1 (this is probably stronger than the 26 h6 f5 27 b3 ♖xd4 28 ♖xd4 29 ♖xd4 ♗c6 ♣ of Van Kempen-M.Johnson, corr. 1997) 26...f5 27 a3 b5 28 b3 ♖c7 29 ♖f4 ♖ec8 (29...♖e4!? may be stronger) 30 ♖e2 ♖xc2 1/2-1/2 Alvebring-Simmelink, IECG 2002. In the final position Black has a perpetual check draw, but he could have tried for more with something like 30...♖c5!?



C232)

18 h5 ♖xb2!? 19 hxg6

Or:

a) 19 ♖d5?! ♖xd5! 20 hxg6 ♖c3 21 ♖h2 ♖h3 22 gxf7+ ♖xf7 23 ♖xh3 gxh3 24 ♗xd5 ♖xd1 25 ♖xd1 ♗xd4 26 ♖xd4 e6 0-1 Kulczewski-Raczkowski, corr. 1998.

b) 19 ♖xb2 has never been played, but I suspect this is where White should focus if he is looking for an improvement in this line; e.g., 19...♖xc3 20 e5!.

19...♖xc3 20 f5

20 gxf7+ ♖xf7 21 ♗xf7+ ♖xf7 22 e5 ♖xd1 23 exf6 ♖e3 +-.

20...♖xb3 21 ♖xg4 fxe6

21...♗g7? 22 ♖h8+!! +-.

22 ♖xg6+ ♗g7 23 ♖h7+

23 ♖h7? ♖f7 24 ♖e6 ♗xe6 25 fxe6 ♖d3+! 26 ♖xd3 ♖b1+ 27 ♖d2 ♖f2+ 28 ♖e3 ♖c5+ -+.

23...♖f7 24 ♖h5+ ♖g8 25 ♖h7+

25 ♖dgl? ♖d3+ 26 ♖d2 ♖c3+ -+.

25...♖f7 26 ♖g6+ ♖g8

1/2-1/2 Gonzalez-Bruzon, Cuba 2002. The notes to this game are derived from Hernandez and Ibarra Padron's annotations for *Informator* 85.

C233)

18 ♖d5 (D)

This represents White's most consistent follow-up, maintaining the b3-bishop for attacking and defensive purposes. Black has three good responses:

a) 18...♖e8!? has received relatively little attention. Then 19 ♗xc4 ♖xc4 transposes to Line C231. There are alternatives, of course

(namely the immediate 19 h5 or 19 ♖xf6+ exf6 20 h5), but in practice White has failed to demonstrate an advantage with any of them. Rather than devoting space to this line here I will leave it to the reader to research this variation further if it should prove of interest.

b) 18...♖xd5 has been awarded an exclamation mark by several sources. Although thematic, it does concede an exchange (perhaps unnecessarily) and therefore might be considered unduly risky when Black has two other perfectly good responses. Nevertheless, there is nothing known to be wrong with this move (and it was played by Topalov against Ivanchuk!) so there is good reason to recommend it. 19 exd5 b5 and now:

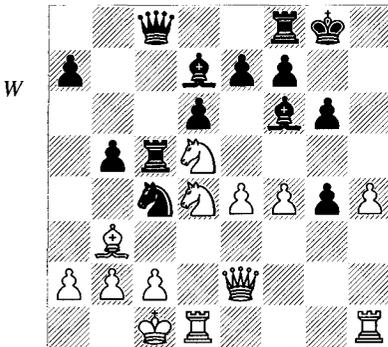
b1) 20 ♖b1 was met by 20...a5 in Pham Chuong-Ramirez, Iraklion 2002, but perhaps Black can act more swiftly with 20...♖c5 21 ♖e4 ♖c8 as 22 h5?! runs into 22...♖xb2!; e.g., 23 ♖xb2 ♖c3+ 24 ♖b1 ♗f5 with advantage to Black.

b2) 20 h5 g5 21 fxe6 (21 ♖e4 ♖a5?! gave White the advantage in Kozlova-Slepankova, Moravia 1996, but Black's play can be significantly improved by 21...gxf4! 22 ♖xf4 ♖c5 23 ♖e4 ♗g5+ 24 ♖b1 f5) 21...♗xg5+ 22 ♖b1 f5 23 ♖d3 (23 ♖e6? ♗xe6 24 ♗xc4 bxc4 25 dxe6 ♖f6 -+) 23...f4 24 ♗xc4 ♖xc4 0-1 was Ivanchuk-Topalov, Belgrade 1995. In *ChessBase Magazine* 51 Schulz goes on to analyse 25 ♖g2 ♖h8 26 ♖e1 (26 ♖e4? ♗f5 -+) 26...b4! 27 ♖e4 (27 ♖e6 ♗xe6 28 ♖xe6 f3 29 ♖f2 g3 30 ♖xg3 f2 -+) 27...♗f5! 28 ♖xf5 ♖xe4 29 ♖xe4 ♖xf5 -+.

b3) 20 ♗xc4!? bxc4 21 c3 is a controversial position. Gufeld & Stetsko assert that this is "an unclear position, but it is obvious that Black's attack fully compensates for the exchange".

Golubev, by comparison, simply states that “White can fight for an advantage!”. Only Attila Schneider analyses further, offering the variation 21...♖a6 (perhaps 21...♜c5 is stronger – Black is not going to mate White on the queenside, so it seems logical to keep his forces focused in the centre) 22 a3 (22 ♖b1 looks better to me) 22...♞b8 23 h5 g5 24 h6?! (24 ♜f2? gxf4 25 ♜xf4 ♖b7 ♞) 24...gxf4 ♞ “with good tactical chances for Black”. That is certainly so, but I am curious to know what Schneider had in mind against 24 f5 or 24 ♞hg1, as both of them look rather good for White.

c) 18...b5 (D) is probably Black’s best option, taking into account the risky and unclear nature of line ‘b’ and the lack of practical tests of line ‘a’. The general consensus is that there is no clear way for White to prove an edge after this move, and meanwhile Black maintains material equality, thereby ensuring a minimal risk factor. White now has two approaches:



c1) 19 h5 g5! 20 ♙xc4 (20 f5 ♞xd5 21 exd5 ♙xf5 22 h6 g3!? 23 ♜e1 ♙g4 24 ♞d3 ♜c5 25 c3 g2 26 ♞g1 ♜xd5 left Black in excellent shape in Kubach-Habermehl, corr. 1999) 20...bxc4 21 ♜e3 ♞xd5! 22 exd5 gxf4 23 ♜xf4 was assessed by Zoltan Almasi as unclear in his annotations to Z.Almasi-Payen, Budapest 1991. In that game Black then committed an inaccuracy with 23...♖h7?!. Instead Almasi suggests that Black should press on with 23...c3. Five years later this was tried in a correspondence game, which continued 24 ♞hf1?! (24 ♜c6!? may be a better try) 24...♜c4 25 bxc3 (25 b3 ♜xd5) 25...♜xa2 26 ♖b3 ♙xc3 27 ♞d3 ♙f6 28 ♖d1 ♞c8 29 ♞f2 a5 30 ♞g3 a4 31 c4 ♞xc4 0-1 Mukherjee-Schutt, corr. 1997.

c2) 19 ♜xf6+ exf6 20 h5 g5 21 ♜f2 (21 fxg5 fxg5 22 h6 ♜e8 23 h7+ ♖h8 24 ♞d3 ♜e5 25 c3 f5! 26 exf5 ♜f4+ 27 ♖b1 ♙xf5 28 ♜xf5 ♜xf5 29 ♙c2 ♜xd3 30 ♙xd3 ♞d5 ♞ Maia-Vassia, corr. 2000) 21...♞d8 22 h6 ♜e7 23 ♞de1?! gxf4 24 ♜xf4 ♜e5 25 ♜f2 g3! 26 ♜g1 ♜f4+ 27 ♖b1 ♜d2+ 28 ♖a1 ♜xe4 ♞ 29 ♜e2?! ♜g4 30 ♞d4 ♞e5 31 ♜c3? ♜xc3 32 ♜xc3 b4 33 ♞d2 g2 0-1 Kazarova-Krasilnikov, Ekaterinburg 1997.

Conclusion

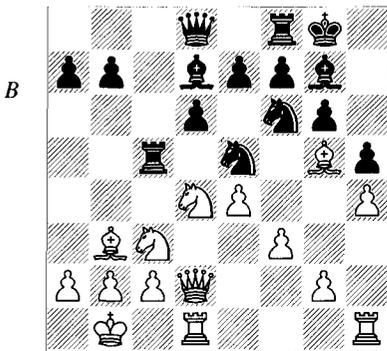
This has been a rather hefty chapter, and if you have managed to get this far without feeling at least a little lost, then you are doing very well indeed. Alternatively, if you are anything like me, you probably looked at the page count and skipped straight to the back of the chapter for a quick synopsis of what is going on in this line. Well, the good news is Black is doing very well indeed. The bad news is that Black is doing so well in these lines that it is putting Open Sicilian players off the ultimate main lines of the Soltis Dragon entirely!

Line A, 16 ♙xc4, is pretty self-explanatory, and Black is doing very well here. Line B runs 16 ♞d3 b5 and now 17 ♙xf6 ♙xf6 18 e5 dxe5! is probably the most critical, but Black also seems to be doing very well in all of those lines.

16 ♜e2 is undoubtedly White’s most testing line. For those who wish to steer clear of lots of theory, Ivanchuk’s 16...♜a5!? is certainly a worthy choice. At present White has not demonstrated any way to maintain an edge against this interesting sideline. However, my personal preference has always been for the main line with 16...♜c8. Black seems to be doing well in all lines of that variation, but perhaps of particular import is the line 17 ♙xf6! ♙xf6 18 ♜d5. It seems that most authors who deal with these lines of the Dragon now recommend Topalov’s exchange sacrifice 18...♞xd5, which is indeed a respectable choice that has yielded Black good results. My only reservations regarding 18...♞xd5 are in relation to the line 19 exd5 b5 20 ♙xc4!? bxc4 21 c3, when it seems that Black’s compensation is less clear than in other lines. For this reason I rather prefer the lines with 18...b5, which appear to be very good for Black.

10 The Karpov Variation: 14 ♔b1

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3
 g6 6 ♗e3 ♗g7 7 f3 ♘c6 8 ♖d2 0-0 9 ♗c4 ♗d7
 10 0-0-0 ♜c8 11 ♗b3 ♘e5 12 h4 h5 13 ♗g5
 ♜c5 14 ♔b1!? (D)



This subtle and seemingly quiet move was popularized by Karpov during the 1980s, and has two dominant purposes. Firstly, if White is to undertake action on the kingside, then many of Black's defensive counter-measures are now ruled out or undermined. Some examples:

- Black can no longer rely on tricks on the c1-h6 diagonal (often used to facilitate an exchange of queens).
- The occasionally annoying ...♘d3+, followed by a capture on g5, is ruled out.
- In the event that Black sacrifices the exchange on c3, shattering White's queenside pawns, the king is better placed on b1 for defensive purposes.
- If Black plays, e.g., 14...♖a5, then White can reply with 15 ♘d5, when 15...♖xd2 allows White to insert 16 ♘xe7+ before recapturing on d2. This is possible now whereas formerly (i.e. with the king on c1) Black would have captured on d2 with check.

From a second perspective, 14 ♔b1 can also be regarded as a waiting move. Thus far both sides have deployed their pieces to their optimal squares, and so rather than commencing a possibly premature attack on the kingside, White improves the position of his king and, by

implication, sets Black the question of whether he has a slow move of equivalent worth with which he can improve his own position. Depending upon how Black responds, White can then choose to attack the kingside, or resort to a central plan with 15 ♜he1.

After 14 ♔b1 Black can choose between two moves, the traditional 14...b5 (the direct approach!), or the prophylactic 14...♜e8. I have played both moves with success, but I suspect that 14...b5 is far riskier than 14...♜e8. The current state of theory dictates that, with best play, White may be able to force the position with 14...♜e8 via a different move-order (examined in Chapter 11 – 12 ♔b1!). The broader implication of this is that my main recommendation against 14 ♔b1 has to be 14...♜e8. Nevertheless, theory doesn't stand still, and Black has other options against 12 ♔b1, so I will also examine 14...b5 in outline. There is an enormous amount of material on 14...b5, so the lines I present below should serve simply as a guide to subvariations which I believe represent Black's best.

A: 14...b5 113
B: 14...♜e8! 116

A)

14...b5 15 g4

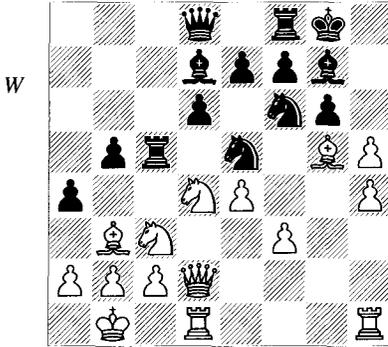
Of course 15 ♜he1 is also possible here. Indeed most texts deal with 15 ♜he1 in their coverage of 14 ♔b1, but I feel that the ensuing plans bear a more natural connection to the 14 ♜he1 line, and so I have dealt with this system in Chapter 6 (Line E2).

15...a5

15...hxg4?! was for a long time thought to be losing for Black. Some recent developments suggest that Black may actually be doing OK here, but I have never devoted much time to this move, and I don't see any point in engaging in analysis of unduly risky deviations.

16 gxf5 a4!? (D)

Black can also play 16...♖xh5 here, but I am more sceptical of its worth. In particular, I suspect that White should be able to prove an advantage after 17 ♖d5! ♜e8 and now either 18 a3 ♖c4 19 ♗g2! (on current evidence 19 ♗f2!? also looks pretty good) or 18 ♖f4.



White has several options here:

- A1: 17 ♖xf7+?! 114**
A2: 17 h6! 115

Or:

a) 17 ♖d5 is considered a little slow, and Black is known to obtain good play after both 17...b4 and 17...♖xh5.

b) 17 hxg6 axb3 18 gxf7+ ♜xf7 19 cxb3 b4 20 ♖a4 (Larsson-M.Johnson, corr. 1996) 20...♖xa4 ♠.

c) 17 ♖xf6 ♖xf6 18 ♖d5 e6 19 hxg6 exd5 20 h5 and then:

c1) 20...♜xc3 and now rather than the traditional move 21 bxc3, I believe that White should take a look at 21 ♗h6!? fxg6 22 hxg6 ♗e7 23 bxc3 dxe4 (23...♗g7 24 ♗h5 +- Stoinev) 24 g7! (Golubev mentions only 24 ♜dg1 ♗g7, after which Black is fine) 24...♖xg7 25 ♜dg1 ♗f6 26 ♗h7+ ♖f7 27 fxe4 ♖g4 28 ♜xg4! ♖xg4 29 ♗h5+ ♗g6 30 ♜f1+ ♖f6 31 ♗d5+ ♖e7 32 ♖c6+ ♖e8 33 ♗e6# (1-0) Borocz-Berezcki, Budapest 2000.

c2) 20...fxg6!? is probably Black's best move, and players interested in using this line as Black might be well-advised to investigate it further (notably Golubev has played it, which is a significant stamp of approval!).

c3) 20...♖g5 is a main line in its own right. I believe Black is holding his own here, but there is already a wealth of information on this position (which I don't believe is critical) so I won't

waste further space on it here. If the reader is interested in further researching these lines, Golubev's text contains a brief but very detailed summary.

A1)

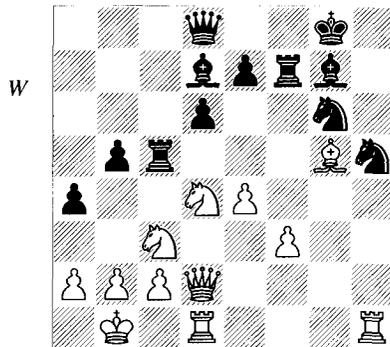
17 ♖xf7+?!

This move was, for some time, given far more respect than it deserved.

17...♜xf7

17...♖xf7 was originally assumed to be forced. While it is now regarded as good for Black anyway, I believe that the text-move is also advantageous. Anyway, play continues 18 hxg6+ (18 f4 b4!) 18...♖xg6 19 h5 ♖e5 20 h6 (20 ♗g2 ♜g8! 21 h6 ♖h8 22 f4 ♖c4 23 ♗h2 ♖xb2 24 ♜dg1, A.Schmidt-Za.Varga, Germany 1991, and now Golubev recommends 24...♗a5! ♠) 20...♖c4! 21 ♗g2 ♖h8 22 h7 (22 ♜dg1 ♜g8 ♠) 22...♗a5 23 ♖xf6 (23 ♖c1? a3! → Ivanović-Kosanović, Stara Pazova 1988) 23...♗b4! 24 ♖b3 axb3 25 cxb3 ♖xf6 26 ♖d5 ♜xd5 → Sorri-Lecroq, corr. 1989.

18 hxg6 ♖xg6 19 h5 ♖xh5! (D)



I prepared this move some time ago when I realized that 20 ♜xh5 could be answered by 20...♖f4, but it was first discovered by Kosanović, and has since been endorsed by Attila Schneider. Notably, Mayer and Golubev seem less convinced by the move. White now has two options:

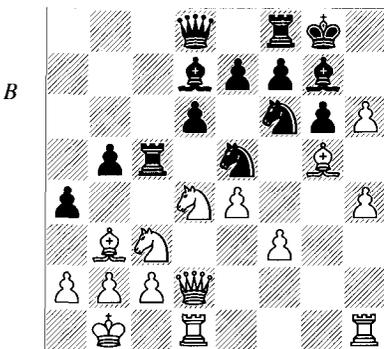
a) 20 ♜xh5 ♖f4! 21 ♜h4 (21 ♖xe7!? ♗xe7 22 ♜xc5 dxc5 23 ♖dxh5 is a line given by Mayer {possibly quoting Kosanović; it's not clear}, but Black is better in any case) 21...♜xg5 22 ♜xf4 ♜xf4 23 ♗xf4 e5 24 ♗h4 exd4 25 ♖d5. In this position it seems as though White

may have compensation for the piece: Black cannot conveniently break the pin on the h4-d8 diagonal, White threatens f4 winning the rook, the knight on d5 is well placed, and Black's king is a bit airy. However, Black has one more trick up his sleeve: 25...♙e8!. Now White is just lost. By placing the bishop on e8 Black intends 26 f4 ♖g1! 27 ♜xd8 (without check!) 27...♞xd1#. Furthermore, the bishop can now come to g6, f7 or h5 to aid with the defence. In short, Black simply has more bits than White. 26 a3 ♙f6 27 ♞h1 ♙g6 28 ♜h6 ♙g7 → was V.Balogh-Dearing, Budapest 2001. It is rare that I ever get to win a game purely on the basis of opening preparation, but this is one of my favourites – my analysis stopped at 28...♙g7 and I won a few moves later.

b) 20 ♞dg1 ♗hf4 21 ♙xf4 ♗xf4 22 ♗d5 ♗h3 and now Schneider's analysis runs 23 ♞g3 e6 24 ♗e3 ♗g5 25 ♗g4 ♜e7 26 ♗h6+ ♙xh6 27 ♞xh6 ♞g7 28 ♜h2 ♗f7 29 ♞xg7+ ♗xg7 30 ♞h7+ ♗f8 with a clear or winning advantage to Black. Instead White's best may be 23 ♞g6 e5! 24 ♗f5 ♞xf5 25 ♞xh3 (25 ♞xd6 ♞f7 26 ♗b6 ♞c7 27 ♞xh3 ♞b7 must be OK for Black; 25 exf5 ♙xf5 ♣) 25...♞g5 26 ♞xg5 ♙xh3 27 ♞g3 ♜h4 28 ♜h2 ♞xd5 29 exd5 ♜d4 ♣.

A2)

17 h6! (D)



This move has long been underestimated by theoreticians. If White follows up with sufficient vigour then Black may find himself on the ropes very quickly indeed!

17...♙h8 18 h7+

After 18 ♙d5, 18...♗h7! gives Black good play, although 18...b4 is also interesting.

18...♗xh7

18...♗xh7 19 h5 is winning for White.

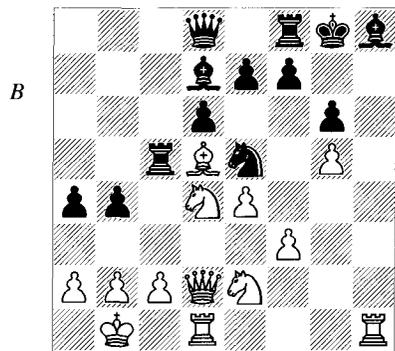
19 ♙d5

19 ♗d5 ♗f6! Golubev.

19...b4

Those searching for an improvement over the main line may be interested to know that 19...♗c4 20 ♜g2 (20 ♙xc4 ♞xc4 and now 21 ♙e3 or 21 ♗f5!?) is probably most accurate) 20...♗xb2!? 21 ♙xe7 ♜xe7 22 ♜xg6+ ♙g7 23 ♞dg1 ♜e5 24 f4 ♗h8! gave Black good chances in Butterworth-Clews, IECG 2002.

20 ♗ce2 ♗xg5 21 hxg5 (D)



21...♙g7!?

As we are about to see, 21...e6 is strongly met by 22 ♞xh8+, so it makes some sense to take the time to preserve the g7-bishop, especially given that it is of fundamental importance in the defence of the black king here.

21...e6 is the move examined by all sources, when White has three tries:

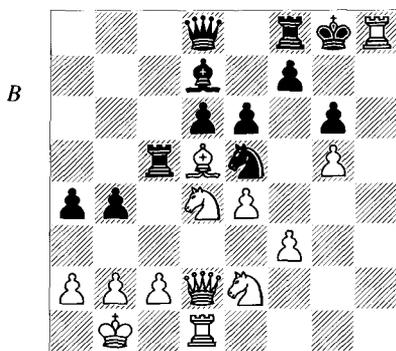
a) 22 ♜f4 ♙g7 23 ♜h4 ♞c8 24 f4 exd5 25 f5 f6! was fine for Black in J.Anderson-W.Taylor, corr. 1994.

b) 22 ♗f4 ♙g7 23 ♗dxe6 fxe6 24 ♗xe6 ♙xe6 25 ♙xe6+ ♗f7 is assessed as unclear by almost all sources. 'Unclear' assessments in openings like the Dragon tend to leave me a little uneasy (especially by people playing the black side!). After all, who wants to spend hours learning the theory, prepare for an opponent in exhausting detail, only to reach a razor-sharp position which could be winning, losing, or who knows what in between?! Unfortunately, unclear seems to be the only realistic assessment, but nevertheless we should at least take a look at what White can throw at us in this position:

b1) 26 f4 was played in the stem game of this line: 26...♖e8 27 ♖xd6 ♗xd6 28 ♜xd6 ♕f8 29 ♖a6 a3 30 e5 axb2 31 ♙b3 ♕xe5! 32 fxe5 ♜xc5 ♠ Gild.Garcia-Kudrin, Salamanca 1989.

b2) 26 ♖h2!? ♖e8 27 ♜xd6 ♗e7 28 ♙d5 ♕f8 (28...♗c7!? may be better) 29 ♖e6 ♗c7 30 ♗xc7 ♜xc7 31 ♜xg6 ♜ec8 32 ♖h2 was better for White in Barlow-Bennett, IECG e-mail 1996.

c) 22 ♜xh8+! (D).



22...♕xh8 23 ♕f4! (astonishingly this obvious continuation is neglected by all authors other than Golubev, and even he neglects to offer any proper analysis of it!) 23...♕g7 (Black must take measures to defend his king as White is only four moves away from mate; for example, 23...exd5 24 ♗h2+ ♕g7 25 ♗h6+ 1-0 Mirabile-Kessler, corr. 1994) and after the strong 24 ♙xe6!, Black could be in a lot of trouble; e.g.:

c1) 24...♗e7 25 ♕h5+! ♕g8 26 ♕f6+ wins for White.

c2) 24...♕xf3 25 ♕xf3 fxe6 26 ♗xd6 ♗c7 27 ♗d4+ e5 28 ♕xe5! ♜xe5 29 ♕d3 ± Efimenko-Bromberger, Balatonlelle 2000.

c3) 24...♙c6 seems like Black's only reasonable option, intending to meet 25 ♙d5 with 25...♙d7, when White should probably continue 26 ♕g2 (26 ♗xb4 ♗xg5; 26 ♙e6 ♙c6) 26...♗b6 27 ♕e3 and counterplay for Black is very difficult to come by.

We now return to the text-move (21...♙g7), where Black also seems to have problems:

a) 22 ♕f4?! ♖e8!? (22...e6 transposes to note 'b' to Black's 21st move) and then:

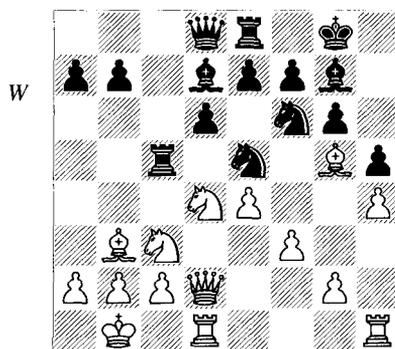
a1) 23 ♕fe6?! (Golyak-Podlofsky, corr. 1994) 23...fxe6!; for example, 24 ♕xe6 ♜xd5! 25 ♗xd5 ♗a8! ♠.

a2) 23 ♗h2 e6 24 ♗h7+ ♕f8 25 ♕fxe6+ fxe6 26 f4 ♕g4 (Warzecha-Herbst, corr. 1994) and White can maintain equality with accurate play.

b) 22 f4! appears rather strong: 22...e6 (or 22...♕c4 23 ♗d3 ♗c7 and now 24 f5 intending 25 ♗h3 looks very strong for White) and now Nunn points out that 23 fxe5 exd5 24 ♕f4 ♖e8 25 ♗h2 is winning for White.

B)

14...♖e8! (D)



| | | |
|------------|----------------|-----|
| B1: | 15 f4 | 117 |
| B2: | 15 g4 | 117 |
| B3: | 15 ♙h6 | 118 |
| B4: | 15 ♜he1 | 119 |

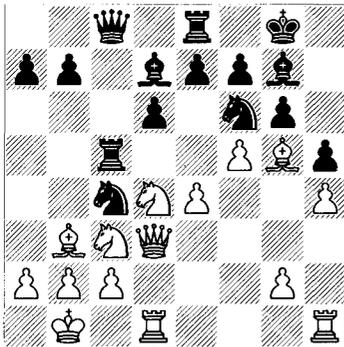
White has one other option, in the form of 15 ♕de2?!. This passive regrouping move has been played surprisingly often in practice. In general I suspect that White tends to make such moves in the Dragon when he is 'drifting', i.e. White is out of theory and unsure how to proceed: perhaps an immediate attack on the kingside would play into Black's preparation, but White vaguely remembers that the central plans don't really promise any advantage. Caught by his own indecisiveness White settles for a solid-looking waiting move ... and gets blown away by Black; e.g., 15...b5! 16 ♙xf6 ♙xf6 17 f4 ♕c4 18 ♙xc4 ♜xc4 19 e5 ♙g7 20 exd6 ♗b8 (20...♙f5 21 d7 ♜f8 22 ♕g3 was played in Nurkiewicz-Sosnicki, Poraj 1997, and now 22...♙xc3 23 bxc3 ♙g4 is very good for Black; e.g., 24 ♕e2 ♜c7 and the d7-pawn drops) 21 dxe7 ♜xe7 22 ♕d5 ♖e8 23 b3 ♙g4! 24 ♜he1 ♜ce4 ♠ J.Lopez Martinez-Mah, Murek U-18 Ech 1998.

B1)

15 f4

This is a pretty logical try by which White attempts to achieve an improved version of the 14 f4 variation. Surprisingly, this has received relatively little attention in practice, although on the evidence available Black has fared well. Play usually continues:

15...♗c4 16 ♖d3 ♗c8 17 f5 (D)



17...♗e5

This is probably best, although I once tried the prophylactic 17...♗h7!? with success: 18 fxg6+ fxg6 19 ♗xc4 ♗xc4 20 ♗xf6?! ♗xf6 21 ♗f3 ♗b4 22 e5 dxe5 23 ♗e4 ♗f5 24 ♗fg5+ ♗g7 ♠ Weeber-Dearing, Essex League 1997. Despite the fortuitous outcome of the game, White's play could undoubtedly have been improved at numerous points.

18 ♗e2 ♗h7

18...♗xc3!? 19 bxc3 gxf5 20 exf5 ♗xf5 21 ♗xf5 ♗xf5 with compensation.

19 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 20 ♗d5

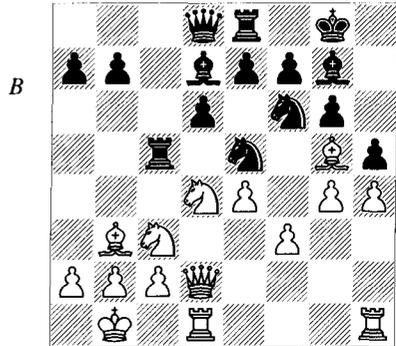
20 g4 hxg4 21 ♗d5 ♗g7 22 fxg6+ was played in Large-W.Watson, London rpd 1991, and now rather than 22...fxg6?! Mayer recommends 22...♗xg6! with an unclear position.

20...♗g7 21 ♗f4 e6 22 fxg6+ fxg6 23 ♗xh5 gxh5 24 ♗xh5+ ♗g8 25 ♗f5 ♗c4 26 ♗xc4 ♗xf5 27 ♗xf5 ♗xc4 28 ♗g6 ♗b5 29 c3 ♗f8 30 ♗d2 ♗e5 31 ♗e1 ♗e8 32 ♗g5 ♗xg5 33 hxg5 ♗e5 34 ♗c2 ♗g6 35 ♗b3 ♗g3 36 ♗h1 ♗xe4

0-1 Moura-M.Donnely, corr. 1999.

B2)

15 g4 (D)



This is obviously a critical test of Black's play.

15...hxg4 16 h5

White can also try two other moves:

a) 16 ♗xf6?! ♗xf6 17 f4 (17 h5 g5 18 fxg4 ♗xg4 19 ♗df1 ♗a5 20 ♗e3 ♗xc3 21 ♗xc3 ♗xc3 22 bxc3 ♠ Miettinen-Goncalves, corr. 1998; 17 ♗d5 ♗xd5!? 18 ♗xd5 ♗b6 19 ♗b3 a5 20 f4 ♗c6 was Kaplan-Komljenović, Oviedo rpd 1993, which Mayer assesses as granting Black compensation for the material) 17...♗c4 18 ♗xc4 ♗xc4 19 e5 dxe5 20 fxe5 ♗xe5 21 ♗de2 ♗c7 22 h5 e6 23 hxg6 ♗f6 24 gxf7+ ♗xf7 25 ♗df1 ♗g7 26 ♗h5 ♗f8 27 ♗g1 ♗f5 28 ♗h4 ♗c4 29 ♗d1 ♗f6 30 ♗e3 ♗xh4 31 ♗xf5 exf5 0-1 Bremond-Koch, French Cht 1989.

b) 16 f4 ♗c4 17 ♗e2 (17 ♗d3 ♗c8 18 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 19 h5 g5 20 fxg5 ♗xg5 21 ♗hg1 ♗e5 gave Black good play in Joshi-Konguvel, Calcutta 1997, and 17 ♗xc4 ♗xc4 18 ♗d3 ♗c8 19 f5 ♗xe4!! 20 ♗xe4 gxf5 21 ♗e3 ♗c5 22 ♗de2 ♗xe3 23 ♗xe3 ♠ gave Black three very good pawns for the piece in A.Richard-Gould, corr. 1999) 17...♗c8 18 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 19 ♗d5 (19 h5 was met by 19...gxh5 in L.Fernandez-Hua, Canada 2003, which was eventually drawn but White could have improved his play significantly at various points; instead of voluntarily opening up the kingside, Black should keep a cool head and play the thematic 19...g5, keeping the defence tight) 19...♗g7 20 f5 e6 21 fxe6 fxe6 22 ♗e3 ♗xe3 23 ♗xe3 a5 24 a4 b5! 25 ♗xb5 ♗xb5 26 axb5 ♗xb5 27 ♗g3? a4 → Lehnberger-Fleurackers, corr. 1999.

16...♗xh5

Now:

a) 17 ♗h6 e6! 18 ♗d1 ♗xf3 19 ♗xf3 gxf3 20 ♗xg7 ♗xg7 21 ♗xd6 ♗g5 (for those seeking a quieter life, 21...♗c7 22 ♗d4+ ♗f6 23

♖e3 ♜h5 24 ♜xh5 ♜xh5 25 ♜xf3 ♜e5 gave Black a good position in Costa-Brkić, Oropesa del Mar 2001) 22 ♜d4+ (critical is 22 ♜xg5 ♜xg5 23 ♜xd7 ♜d8 24 ♜c7 f2 25 ♜f1 ♜d2 26 a3 ♜e1+ 27 ♜a2 ♜xf1 28 ♜xd8 ♞/♞, when the f2-pawn is worth at least a piece) 22...♜f6 23 e5 ♜xe5 24 ♜xd7 ♜xg1+ 25 ♜xg1 f2 26 ♜c1 ♜e1 27 ♜c4 ♜f6 28 ♜d4 ♜h8 29 ♜f1 ♜h1 30 ♜e4 ♜xe4 31 ♜xf2 ♜g4 0-1 L.Kaplan-Mestel, Oviedo rpd 1993. A fantastic game by the English GM!

b) 17 ♜d5 gave rise to more Mestel magic following 17...♜xd5!? 18 exd5 ♜xf3 19 ♜xf3 gxf3 20 ♜dg1 ♜f5 21 ♜e3 ♜b6 22 ♜xf3 ♜d4 23 ♜c1 ♜e4 24 ♜h3 ♜xh1 25 ♜xh1 ♜e4 26 ♜f1 f5 27 ♜g1 ♜f7 28 ♜f1 a6 29 ♜c4 ♜c8 30 ♜b3 ♜e5 31 ♜a1 ♜h8 32 ♜d1 ♜f6 33 c3 ♜h2 34 ♜c1 ♜g4 35 ♜d3 ♜g3 0-1 in B.Martin-Mestel, London 1994.

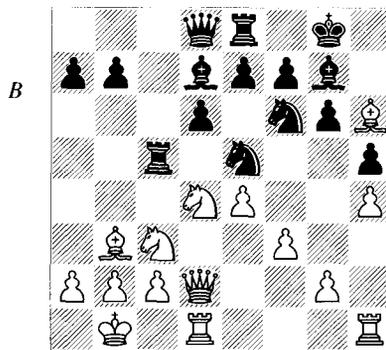
c) 17 f4 ♜c4 18 ♜d3 b5 19 f5 is unclear. Now Mayer suggests the surprising 19...♜xd4 20 ♜xd4 e5, claiming that Black is winning. Unfortunately, 21 ♜xc5 is now probably winning for White because, unlike the analogous position from the 14 g4 variation, when Black now captures on g5 it will not be with check any more! Instead, Attila Schneider's suggestion of 19...♜b6 "with good attacking chances for Black" seems closer to the mark. The following variation tends to corroborate Schneider's opinion: 20 ♜d5?! (20 ♜dg1 a5!; 20...♜xb2!?) is also interesting) 20...♜xd5 21 exd5 ♜xd4 22 ♜xd4 ♜xd4 23 ♜xd4 ♜xf5 ♞.

d) 17 ♜xh5 gxh5 18 ♜h2 ♜g6!, hitting the g5-bishop, gives Black good play; e.g., 19 ♜d5 (19 ♜xh5 ♜xg5! 20 ♜xg5 e6 21 ♜xg4 ♜f6 22 ♜g3! ♜e5 was very comfortable for Black in Glimbrant-M.Pavlović, Barbera del Valles 1994) 19...♜xd5! 20 ♜xd5 ♜b6 21 c3 (21 ♜xh5 e6! 22 ♜b3 ♜xd4 → Pavlović) 21...e6 22 ♜b3 a5 23 fxg4 h4 24 ♜e3 a4 25 ♜c2 a3 ♞ Enders-Cao Sang, Budapest 1995.

B3)

15 ♜h6 (D)

This was Ponomariov's choice in his 2001 FIDE World Championship qualifying match with Tiviakov, and while it should therefore be treated with respect by Black, there is no reason for it to be feared. The old theory on this line was



that Black could simply retreat with 15...♜h8, but nowadays this is considered to be inferior. Instead Black must choose between 15...♜c4 and 15...♜a5.

15...♜a5

This was Tiviakov's preference when he faced Ponomariov in the 2001 FIDE World Championship. Alternatively:

a) 15...♜h8?! was originally recommended by Mayer, but the theory of this line has developed rapidly over the last few years and 16 g4 is now known to be good for White; e.g., 16...a5 (16...hxg4? 17 h5! gxh5 18 ♜g5+ ♜h7 19 ♜xh5! or 16...♜a5 17 g5 ♜h7 18 f4 ♜c4 19 ♜d3 ♜a3+ 20 ♜c1 e6 21 ♜ce2 d5 22 exd5 exd5 23 f5 ♜xc2 24 ♜xc2 ♜xf5 25 ♜xf5 ♜xa2 26 ♜fd4 ♜a1+ 27 ♜d2 ♜a5+ 28 ♜c3 ♜c4 29 ♜b3 ♜b4 30 ♜c1 ♜xc3 31 bxc3 ♜xc3 32 ♜df1 d4 33 ♜h3 a5 34 ♜hf3 ♜a3+ 35 ♜d1 ♜e7 36 ♜d2 ♜d7 37 ♜xf7 ♜g4+ 38 ♜f3 ♜xd2 39 ♜xg4 1-0 Z.Almasi-Golubev, Kreuzberg 2003) 17 gxh5 ♜xh5 18 f4 ♜g4 19 f5 ♜xc3 20 bxc3 a4 and now rather than the incorrect 21 fxg6 of Finn-Mestel, Hastings 1991/2, which let Black gain the upper hand, White has a much stronger move in the form of 21 ♜xf7+! ♜xf7 22 ♜g5 ♜e5 23 fxg6+ +-.

b) 15...♜c4 16 ♜xc4 ♜xc4 transposes to Chapter 11, Part 2.

16 ♜xg7 ♜xg7 17 ♜he1

Now Black has two options:

a) In the aforementioned encounter, Tiviakov's preference was 17...♜ec8 18 f4 ♜eg4 19 ♜f3 ♜c6 20 ♜g5 ♜e8 21 ♜d4 ♜8c6 22 f5 ♜xc3! 23 bxc3 ♜e5 24 fxg6 ♜xg6 25 ♜f3 ♜c5. In annotating this game for *ChessBase Magazine* 86 Rogozenko offers the following insightful assessment of the position: "The presence of many pawn weaknesses in White's

position and the absence of a clear plan give Black good compensation for the exchange. Still the position remains quite dangerous for either side and Black must be careful not to allow White to activate the pieces and take the initiative. On the other hand Black's plan is simple – to advance queenside pawns and keep an eye on White's e5 advance." Let's take a look at how the game developed. 26 ♖e3 ♗c7 27 ♜de1 e5 (27...a5? 28 e5! – Rogozenko) 28 ♗d2 a5 29 a4 b5 30 ♔g5 (30 axb5 ♙xb5 would further open the queenside and allow Black to activate his light-squared bishop to good effect) 30...bxa4 31 ♙a2 ♗b6+!? (Rogozenko suggests that the immediate 31...♔xh4 may have been better, as it is currently in White's interests to shelter the king on a1 in any case) 32 ♖a1 a3 33 ♗c1 ♔xh4 34 ♜g3 ♔g6 35 ♗xa3 and now rather than the time-trouble blunder 35...♔h7?, Rogozenko suggests that Tiviakov had a significant improvement in the move 35...♗c6!? with the idea of 36 ♜f3 h4 37 ♜ef1 ♔xe4 38 ♔xe4 ♗xe4 39 ♙xf7 ♙c6, when Black has good counterplay.

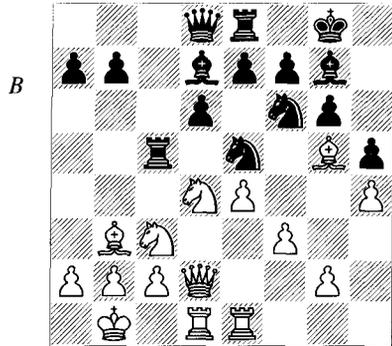
b) 17...b5!? 18 f4 ♔c4 19 ♙xc4 bxc4 20 ♔f3 was played in Enders-Adla, Cappelle la Grande 1997. Black now played too slowly with 20...♙g4 21 ♗d4, after which White retained the initiative. A better option would have been to generate immediate counterplay against the white king with 20...♜b8, when 21 ♖a1 ♗b4 22 ♜b1 ♜a5 keeps the struggle very much alive. Note the following variation: 23 ♗d4 ♜b6 (or 23...♗c5!? 24 ♗xc5 ♜xc5 25 ♜bd1 ♙g4 =) 24 e5? (24 a3 ♜ba6 25 ♔a2 ♗c5 is better) 24...♜ba6! 25 exf6+ exf6 26 ♜e7 ♜xa2+ 27 ♔xa2 ♜xa2+ 28 ♖xa2 ♗a5#.

B4)

15 ♜he1 (D)

15...♗a5!?

Most sources now regard this as the main line, but its popularity is the after-effect of Kasparov employing it in his 1995 match with Anand. At the moment 15...♗a5 remains in theoretically excellent shape, but for comprehensiveness I would like to give a brief mention to the traditional reply 15...b5. For those interested in something fresh and unexplored, I can also comment that 15...♗c8!? has been the



subject of some recent attention and has been scoring well in practice. There has not been much top-level interest in the move (probably because Black is fine in the main lines already!) and I have never done any work on it, so I'll leave it to the reader to discover the subtleties of 15...♗c8 and tell me all about them!

After 15...b5 16 f4 ♔c4 17 ♙xc4 Black has two interesting options:

a) From a purely psychological perspective it feels most 'natural' to recapture on c4 with 17...bxc4!? thereby opening the b-file up, keeping the rook comfortably situated on c5, and removing the b5-pawn from the attack of the white knights. However, in contradistinction to these qualities, we must acknowledge that the c4-pawn now obstructs the path of the major pieces on the c-file, in particular ruling out any exchange sacrifices on c3. Similarly, Black has also lost the option of dislodging the c3-knight from its defensive functions via the pawn advance ...b4. Of course, these observations are a shade too general for the Dragon, so let's see what some proper analysis reveals! 18 e5?! (this is the only move that has seen a practical outing, and indeed it is the natural continuation; however, in light of what follows I think exponents of the white side should turn their attention to 18 ♙xf6!? ♙xf6 19 e5 ♙g7 20 e6 fxe6 21 ♔xe6 ♙xe6 22 ♜xe6 ♖f7 23 ♜de1 when, although the position remains unresolved, I would rather have the white bits!) 18...♗b6! (the unusual 18...♔d5!?! deserves more attention than it has received; 19 exd6 ♗b6 is good for Black, so 19 ♔e4 should be considered, but then 19...dxe5 looks like an enterprising option for Black) 19 exf6?! (Mayer prefers 19 ♙xf6 exf6 but I still prefer Black after, e.g., 20 exd6 ♜b8 21 ♗c1 f5 22 ♜e7 ♜a5 ♢) 19...♜b8 20 ♗c1

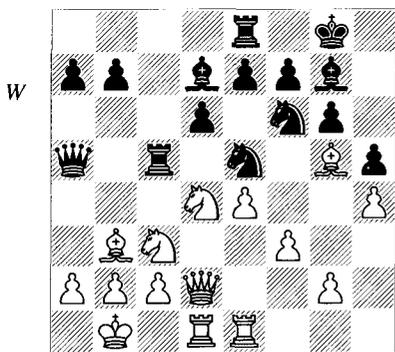
exf6 21 ♖e7 ♗d8 22 ♗e3 fxc5 23 hxg5 was Glimbrant-Komljenović, Andorra 1991, which Black eventually won following some reckless tactics (initiated by 23...♖e5?!), but Sievers suggests that Black could count on a safe advantage following the simple 23...♗b6! ♞.

b) 17...♗xc4 18 e5 b4! and now:

b1) 19 exf6 bxc3 20 ♗d3 ♗xd4! 21 ♗xd4 exf6 22 ♗xd6 (22 ♗xe8+ ♗xe8 23 ♗xd6 ♗xd6 24 ♗xd6 fxc5 →) 22...♗xe1 23 ♗xe1 ♗b6! 24 ♗xb6 axb6 25 ♗d1 ♗f5 26 ♗d8+ ♗h7 27 b4 fxc5 28 fxc5 ♗e5 ♞ Delchev-Chatalbashev, Pamporovo 2001.

b2) 19 ♗cb5 ♗b6 (19...dxe5 has never been played though certainly deserves attention, but 19...♗d5 20 ♗xd6! is known to be good for White) 20 b3 ♗c5 21 ♗xd6 ± occurred in Justnes-Sievers, Sas van Gent 1990, which was eventually drawn. However, Sievers later wrote that he believed himself to be clearly worse at this point, and looking at the position I guess we should take his word for it.

We now return to the position after 15...♗a5 (D):



White has two options:

B41: 16 f4!? 120

B42: 16 a3! 121

B41)

16 f4!? ♗c4 17 ♗xc4

17 ♗d3 ♗ec8 has never been played, but look at Black's major pieces! Any true Dragon player would be itching to play this position. Note that 17 ♗e2? leaves the c3-knight unprotected, allowing 17...♗xb2! ♞.

17...♗xc4 18 ♗b3

White has two other possibilities:

a) 18 e5 ♗d5 has been mentioned by various sources, with the implication that Black is fine, which seems correct.

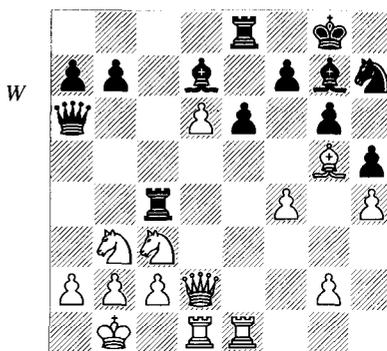
b) 18 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 19 ♗d5 ♗xd2 20 ♗xf6+ exf6 21 ♗xd2 f5 22 b3 (objectively 22 e5!? may be a bit better, but Black should still be fine; e.g., 22...dxe5 23 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 24 fxe5 ♗f8 25 c3 was Draba-Kartik, IECG e-mail 2001 {eventually drawn}; now Black should play 25...♗c6, activating his last piece and solving all his problems in the ensuing endgame) 22...♗c3 23 ♗d3 ♗xd3 24 cxd3 fxe4 25 dxe4 ♗f5 26 ♗xf5 gxf5 27 e5 1/2-1/2 Beliavsky-Ki.Georgiev, Wijk aan Zee 1985.

18...♗a6 19 e5

19 f5 gxf5!.

19...♗g4!

19...♗h7 was tried in Bologan-Golubev, Eforie Nord 2000, which turned out to be one of those games that charms the crowd and fascinates the analysts for years afterwards. As is so often the case with such games, inaccuracy induces necessity, which in turn evokes resourcefulness in the players. Bologan continued 20 exd6 and now rather than 20...♗xg5?!, which rapidly landed Black in trouble, both Golubev and Rogozenko independently suggested that 20...e6! (D) is an improvement, giving rise to an unclear situation.



The idea of 20...e6 is evidently to stabilize the centre, and to retain the option of playing 21...f6, trapping the g5-bishop. I am not entirely convinced that I would feel comfortable playing either side of this position, but if I had to pick one I would rather be Black. My reasoning would be as follows: on the one hand White is well-developed, with a safe king, centralized major pieces, and an extra pawn in

hand. However, the problem that White will face here is simply making progress – the g5-bishop is at risk of being trapped, the b3- and c3-knights are essentially misplaced on the queenside (although they perform a defensive function, there is essentially nowhere for them to go), and White lacks any immediate pawn-breaks or access routes into the black position. On the other hand, Black has (for the moment at least) defused White's central pawn-roller plan and has clear plans of trapping the g5-bishop, or commencing queenside action by doubling rooks on the c-file, and perhaps advancing the b-pawn to b4. Perhaps this is all academic, as 19...♗g4 may be superior in any case. However, Golubev, a font of knowledge on the Dragon, preferred 19...♗h7, so perhaps there are problems with the main line that are yet to be uncovered. In any case, hopefully these notes should provide the reader with grounds for future research should the necessity arise.

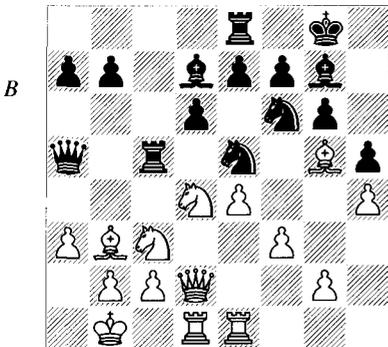
We return to 19...♗g4. Now:

a) 20 ♖d5 dxe5 (20...f6!? 21 exf6 exf6 22 ♗e7+ ♖h7 23 ♖d3 ♜xe7 24 ♜xe7 ♗f5 25 ♖xd6 ♗xc2+ 26 ♖a1 ♖xd6 27 ♜xd6 ♜e4! is given by Beliavsky as 'unclear', but Black appears to be doing quite well here) 21 ♗xe7+ ♜xe7 22 ♗xe7 ♗f5, with attacking chances for Black, is some old analysis that was given by Beliavsky.

b) 20 exd6 ♗xc3 21 bxc3 e6! 22 f5!? (22 ♗e7 ♜ec8 ♢ Ki.Georgiev) 22...gxf5 23 ♗f6 (23 g3 f6 24 ♗f4 ♜ec8 –+ Bottini-Iodice, corr. 1988) 23...f4 24 ♗e5 ♖b5 25 ♗xf4 ♜ec8 leaves Black with an initiative (Golubev).

B42)

16 a3! (D)



Although this little pawn nudge hardly appears scary, many may agree that this was perhaps Anand's best attempt to prove an edge against Kasparov's Dragon in their 1995 match, and all credit to the chap, he did establish a clear advantage and probably should have won the game! However, Kasparov blundered next move, and much of the good press concerning 16 a3 was tainted by the fact that Anand should have won. In fact, it was not long before English GM Julian Hodgson worked his creative magic to reveal that Black has nothing to fear from this line.

16...♖a6!

16...b5? was Kasparov's amusing blunder in a critical game against Anand. I say amusing because it falls into a trick that most club players see once and are thereafter conscious to avoid. The familiar motif is of course 17 ♗xf6!, when Kasparov was left with no choice but to ruin his pawn-structure with 17...exf6 since 17...♗xf6 runs into 18 ♖d5, simultaneously attacking the queen on a5 and the bishop on f6. If Black then plays 18...♖xd2 White would of course interpose 19 ♗xf6+, ruining Black's pawn-structure and reaching an endgame that should be close to winning for White.

17 f4

Alternatives:

a) 17 ♖d5 has been played in a couple of correspondence games, but it doesn't look too threatening; for example, 17...♗xd5 18 ♗xd5 (18 exd5 has also been tried, but 18...♗a4, 18...b5 and 18...♗c4 all appear satisfactory for Black) 18...♗c4 19 ♗xc4 ♜xc4 20 ♖e3 ♜ec8 21 ♗h6 (21 ♗xe7?? ♖b6 –+ Runtng) 21...♗xd4 22 ♜xd4 ♜xc2 23 g4 hxg4 24 ♜b4 ♜2c4 0-1 Lovejoy-Juradowitch, Australian corr. Ch 1999.

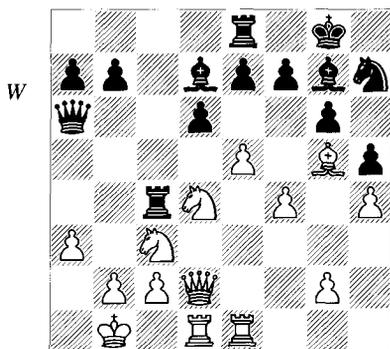
b) 17 ♗h6!? ♗h8 appears to be fine for Black because White's major pieces are all temporarily diverted from the kingside. Progress for White in such positions such will generally prove quite exacting.

17...♗c4 18 ♗xc4

18 ♖d3 is inadvisable due to 18...♗g4 19 ♜e2 (19 f5 ♗f2 20 ♖g3 ♗xd1 21 ♜xd1 ♢ Kudela-Buraschi, ICCF e-mail 1999) 19...f6 20 e5 fxg5 (20...dxe5 is also good) 21 e6 ♗c6 22 ♗xc4 ♜xc4 23 ♖xg6 ♜f8 24 ♖xg5 ♖b6 25 ♗b3, which is given by Runtng as unclear, but 25...♜xc3! 26 bxc3 ♖b5 looks good for Black.

18...♖xc4 19 e5 ♘h7 (D)

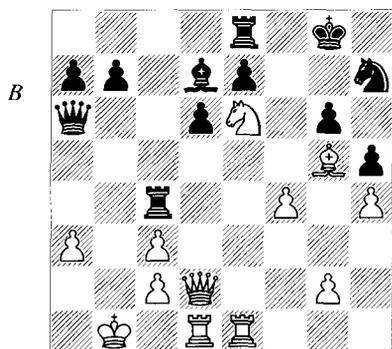
It is interesting to note that this particular manoeuvre is only possible because the rook is on e8, defending the e7-pawn. Also interesting is 19...♘g4!?, e.g., 20 e6 ♙xe6 21 ♘xe6 ♙xc3 22 bxc3 ♖xa3 23 ♘d4 ♖a4.



We now have two possibilities:

a) 20 ♘d5 ♙g4 (20...♘xg5 21 hxg5 dxe5 22 fxe5 ♙g4 23 ♖c1 ♖c5 is unclear) 21 ♘f3 (21 ♘xe7+ ♗f8 22 exd6 ♘xg5 23 ♖e3 ♘e6 24 ♘xe6+ ♙xe6 25 d7 ♖d8 26 ♘xg6+ fxg6 27 ♖xe6 ♖xe6 28 ♖xe6 ♗f7 ♚ Ruch-Goncalves, corr. 1998; 21 ♙xe7!? may deserve attention) 21...♘xg5 22 hxg5 dxe5 ♚.

b) 20 e6. Hitherto we have been following the game Smirin-Hodgson, Ischia 1996. At this point Hodgson played 20...♙xe6?!. In *Informator* 67, Hodgson suggests that 20...fxe6!? is very promising for Black, and provides some of the following variations: 21 ♘xe6 ♙xc3 22 bxc3 (D) and now:



b1) 22...♖a4! 23 ♖d3 (23 ♘d4 ♖xa3 24 ♘b3 ♙f5 -+; 23 ♘c7 ♖b6+ -+) 23...♖xd3 24

cxd3 ♘xg5 25 hxg5 ♙xe6 26 ♖xe6 ♗f7 is much better for Black.

b2) The forthright 22...♖xa3!? intending 23...♖a4 (with mate to follow) may also be very strong; e.g., 23 ♖d3 ♖xc3 24 ♖xg6+ ♘h8 25 ♙h6 ♙xe6! 26 ♖xe8+ (26 ♙g7+ ♖xg7 27 ♖xe8+ ♙g8 -+) 26...♙g8 27 ♖g6 ♙f7 28 ♙g7+! (28 ♖d3 ♖b4+ 29 ♗c1 ♖b2+ 30 ♗d2 ♖d4 -+) 28...♖xg7 29 ♖xg7+ ♗xg7 30 ♖xe7 ♖b4+ ♚.

Conclusion

The Karpov Variation remains a popular choice at all levels, possibly because the inherent flexibility of 14 ♗b1 gives White ample scope to direct the game into both positional and tactical channels. The traditional main line is 14...b5 (dealt with in Line A), when 15 g4 a5 16 gxh5 a4 17 ♙xf7+ has traditionally been White's main choice. I believe that Black is doing very well after both the standard 17...♗xf7, and my own preference, 17...♖xf7. In either case Black has excellent chances. Far more critical, in my opinion, is 17 h6! ♙h8 18 h7+ ♘h7 19 ♙d5 b4 20 ♘ce2 ♘xg5 21 hxg5 e6 22 ♖xh8+!, when White has excellent chances of an advantage. If Black is to survive in this line then I believe he has to try 21...♙g7, which is yet to be the subject of serious analysis or even be given an outing in over-the-board chess.

If Black is determined to play the Soltis Variation then White may be able to encourage Black to play 14...♖e8 (Line B) by adopting the move-order 12 ♗b1 ♖e8 (12...♘c4 13 ♙xc4 ♖xc4 14 g4 currently looks good for White – see Chapter 11, Part 1) 13 h4 h5 14 ♙g5 (14 ♙h6 is Chapter 11, Part 2) 14...♖c5, which transposes to the lines considered in Line B of this chapter. However, this is not necessarily a bad thing as Black seems to be holding his own very well in the 14...♖e8 lines. Anand's 15 ♖he1 does not seem to bring White any advantage, and 15 g4 does not seem to come to much either. Perhaps most critical is Ponomarev's 15 ♙h6, but Black seems to be doing OK after Tiviakov's 15...♖a5, and if problems develop here then Black always has the option of transposing to Chapter 11, Part 2 with 15...♘c4 16 ♙xc4 ♖xc4.

variation. I am simply indicating that current evaluations favour White, and that those defending the black side would be well advised to enter these lines thoroughly prepared. Personally I will be sticking with 12...♖e8!? for the time being.

A: 14...b5?! 124

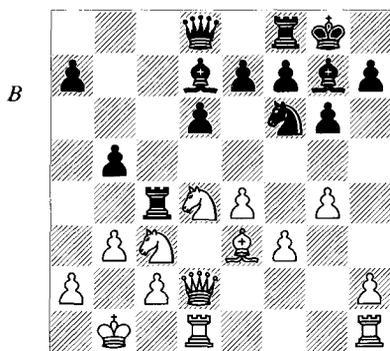
B: 14...♖a5 125

C: 14...♖c7!? 126

D: 14...♖b8 127

A)

14...b5?! 15 b3! (D)



This is the move that has been causing Black so much trouble. White attacks the c4-rook, effectively driving it back into the black camp (c8 usually) so that it obstructs the development of the f8-rook, and then White cheekily pockets the b5-pawn. With the c8-rook occupying the ideal square for the f8-rook, Black's counterplay simply seems to come too slowly. Let's take a look at some lines.

15...♖c8

Alternatives:

a) 15...♖c5? is a natural move that lots of people have been tempted by. Unfortunately, it quickly loses to 16 ♘e6! fxe6 (16...♗xe6 17 ♗xc5 ♖a5 18 ♗d4 +-) 17 ♗xc5 dxc5 18 e5 +-.

b) 15...b4!? is the creation of Scottish Dragon enthusiast Andrew Burnett.

b1) The only outing I am aware of continued as follows: 16 ♘ce2?! ♖c8 17 ♖xb4?! (17 ♗h6 is an improvement that was found in the post-match analysis, and is good for White according to Scott Fraser; I am not so sure about this – doesn't 17...e5 leave the d4-knight a little

short of squares?) 17...♖c7 18 g5 ♘h5 19 c4 a5 20 ♖e1 a4 21 ♘g3 axb3 22 axb3 ♖a8 23 ♗d2 ♖a7 24 ♖b2 ♗xd4 0-1 S.Fraser-A.Burnett, Glenrothes 2003.

b2) I have to wonder why White didn't just chop the rook with 16 bxc4 as 16...bxc3 17 ♖xc3 ♖b6+ 18 ♘b3! does not leave White in any obvious danger. Note that 18...♘xe4 19 ♖xg7+ ♗xg7 20 ♗xb6 ♘c3+ 21 ♗a1 is just clearly better for White. Perhaps Black could play something slower, such as 18...♖a6 followed by 19...♖c8 and 20...♗e6, rounding up the fragile c4-pawn. However, after 19 ♗d4 I still much prefer White.

16 ♘dx5 ♖a5

Black has also tried 16...a6 on occasion, but 17 ♘d4 ♖c7 18 ♘de2 ♗e6 19 ♗d4 left White with an extra pawn, a solid position and a comfortable advantage in Goloshchapov-Korobov, Nizhny Novgorod 1999.

17 ♘d5

17 a4 was the move that White originally relied upon to prove an advantage, but the text-move seems even more convincing.

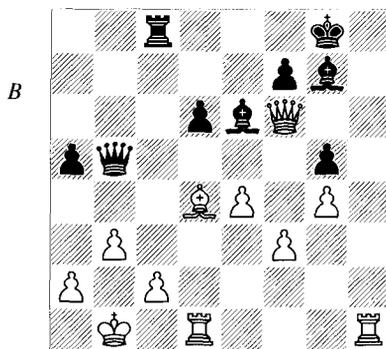
17...♖xb5

Black is hardly spoiled for choice as 17...♖xd2 18 ♘xe7+ ♗h8 19 ♖xd2 ♖ce8 20 ♘f5 gxf5 21 ♘xd6 was clearly better for White in Santo-Roman – Lafont de Sent, France 2000. Similarly, 17...♖d8 18 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 19 ♘d4 a5 20 h4 a4 21 h5 axb3 22 cxb3 is also clearly better for White.

18 ♘xe7+ ♗h8 19 ♘xc8 ♖xc8 20 ♗d4!

20 g5, sending the f6-knight offside, led to a convincing victory in Rowson-A.Burnett, Edinburgh 2000, and represents a good alternative to the text-move.

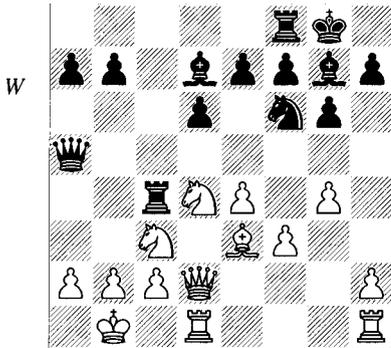
20...♗e6 21 h4 ♗g8 22 h5 a5 23 hxg6 hxg6 24 ♖f4 g5? 25 ♖xf6!! (D)



1-0 Graf1-S.Farago, Budapest 2001. Even with a move in hand, the eventual mate on h8 is inevitable!

B)

14...♖a5 (D)



This is perhaps the most natural of Black's responses, and there is authority to suggest that Black can hold his own quite comfortably here.

15 ♖b3

This is White's most common choice. Other moves:

a) 15 ♖d5?!, attempting to win the e7-pawn, actually leaves White in trouble; e.g., 15...♗xd2 16 ♖xe7+?! (16 ♖xf6+?! ♙xf6 17 ♖xd2 ♖fc8 ♞; 16 ♖xd2 ♖xd5 17 exd5 ♖fc8 =) 16...♙h8 17 ♖xd2 ♖e8 18 g5 (18 ♖ef5 gxf5 19 ♖xf5 ♙xf5 20 gxf5 d5! 21 b3 ♖cc8 22 ♙d4 dxe4 23 ♖g2 exf3 24 ♖xg7 ♙xg7 25 ♖g1+ ♙h6 26 ♙xf6 f2 0-1 Gravel-Bluvshstein, Canada 2002; 18 b3 ♖c3 19 g5 ♖xe4 20 fxe4 ♖xe3 21 ♖d5 ♖3xe4 22 ♖f6 ♙xf6 23 gxf6 ♖f4 24 ♖e2 ♖f2 0-1 Vik Hansen-Paulsen, Norway 2003) 18...♖xe4! (not 18...♖h5? 19 ♖d5 ±) 19 fxe4 ♖xe7 ♞.

b) 15 g5, driving the f6-knight to h5 before implementing the same theme as in line 'a', may deserve attention; e.g., 15...♖h5 16 ♖d5 ♗xd2? 17 ♖xe7+ ♙h8 18 ♖xd2 ±.

15...♗a6

Instead:

a) Note that the natural 15...♗c7?! just gives White another chance to hit the black queen and pick up the a7-pawn while he is at it; e.g., 16 g5 ♖h5 17 ♖d5 ♗d8 18 ♙xa7! ♙e6 19 ♙d4 ± Kunte-Moylan, Canberra 2000.

b) Chris Ward, writing in his column for www.chesspublishing.com, pointed out that

15...♗d8!?! is not as silly as it looks; e.g., 16 e5 ♖e8 17 exd6 ♖xd6 18 ♖d5 (18 ♖e4 ♖xe4! 19 fxe4 ♙xg4 =) 18...♙c6 19 ♖he1 (19 ♖xe7+?? ♗xe7) 19...♙d5 20 ♗xd5 ♗c7 21 ♙c5 ♖c8 22 ♙xd6 exd6 23 c3 ♙e5 24 h3 a6 25 ♖e4 1/2-1/2 Wells-Afek, Herzliya 1998. Although 15...♗d8 may not be as silly as it looks, it does appear slightly odd, and you won't catch me playing it before it has undergone further tests!

16 e5

Or 16 ♙h6!?! ♖fc8 and now:

a) Schulz mentioned 17 h4!?! ♙h8 18 h5 but did not consider 18...♙xg4, which actually looks quite good; for example, 19 hxg6 (19 fxg4 ♖xc3 20 bxc3 ♖xe4 21 ♗d3 ♖xc3+ 22 ♙c1 ♗a3+ 23 ♙d2 ♖xd1 24 ♖xd1 ♗xa2 ♞) 19...hxg6 20 fxg4 ♖xc3 21 bxc3 (21 ♙f8 ♖xg4!) 21...♖xe4 appears good for Black.

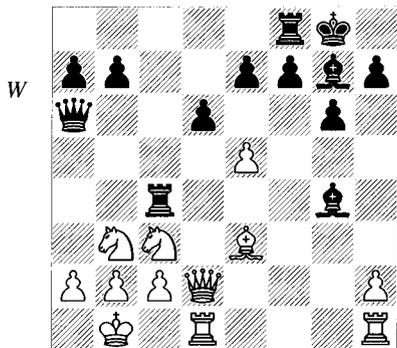
b) 17 ♙xg7 ♖xg7 18 e5!?! (this is critical; 18 h4 was played in Slobodjan-Malakhov, Poland 1999, which Black eventually won, but the game was unclear throughout) 18...♖e8 (18...dxe5? 19 g5 and 18...♖xg4 19 fxg4 ♙xg4 20 ♖de1 are both very good for White) 19 ♖he1 and White is definitely a bit better.

16...♖xg4

16...♖e8 17 ♖d5 leaves Black struggling to defend the e7-pawn, while 16...dxe5 17 g5 ♙f5 18 gxf6 ♙xf6 19 ♖c5 ♗c6 20 ♖5e4 probably doesn't give Black enough for the piece.

17 fxg4 ♙xg4 (D)

17...♙xe5? 18 ♖d5 ♖e8 19 h3! ± Bauer-Van Wely, Enghien les Bains 2001.



Now White has tried two approaches:

a) 18 exd6 and then:

a1) 18...♙xd1 19 dxe7 ♙xc2+ 20 ♗xc2 ♖e8 21 ♖d1! ♗e6 (21...♙xc3 22 ♖d8! ♖c8 23 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 24 bxc3 ♗e6 25 ♙c5 ±; 21...♖xe7?? 22

♖d8+ ♕f8 23 ♕h6; 21...♕f6 22 ♕c5! {22 ♖c5!? ♖c6 23 ♖5e4 ♕xc3 24 ♖xc3 ♖xe7 25 ♕xa7 b6 26 ♕b8} 22...♖c6 {22...♕xe7? 23 ♖e1 +-} 23 ♕d4!?! ±} 22 ♕c5 ± Svidler-Golubev, Baden 2002.

a) 18...♕xc3 could well be Black's best chance: 19 bxc3 ♕xd1 20 dxe7 (it may be better to play 20 ♖xd1!? ♖xd6 21 ♖xd6 exd6, which should be assessed as 'unclear' according to Golubev, but slightly better for White following 22 ♕xa7 according to Rogozenko; I should imagine the correct assessment is somewhere in between) 20...♕xc2+ 21 ♖xc2 ♖e8 22 ♖d1 (22 ♕c5? ♖c6 ♢) 22...♖xe7 23 ♖d8+ ♖g7 24 ♖d2 ♖h4 25 ♖f2!?! (25 ♕g5 ♖e2 26 ♕xh4 ♖xd2 27 ♖xd2 leaves the position balanced on account of White's open king position) 25...♖he4 26 ♕d4+ ♖h6 27 ♖d2+ ♖h5 28 ♖d5+ f5 29 ♖c1 and now 29...♖f1? 30 ♕f6! left Black with a lost position in Visweswaran-Abu Sufian, Dhaka 2004, but simply 29...♖e1 followed by 30...♖7e2 gives Black excellent chances to fight for the full point.

b) 18 ♖df1 dxe5 (18...♕xe5 19 ♖d5 ♖e8 has been suggested as an improvement over the text-move by Rogozenko, but even here Black looks much worse after, e.g., 20 ♕d4 ±) and now both 19 ♕h6 ♖e6 20 h4 ♕xh6 21 ♖xh6 f6 22 ♖d2 ♖d4 23 ♖de4 ♖f7 24 ♖hg1, Jakubowski-Wojcieszyn, Poland 2001, and 19 ♖hg1 ♕f5 20 ♕h6 ♕xh6 21 ♖xh6, Kaïumov-Soloviov, Ukraine 2002, look good for White. Indeed, in both games White managed to coordinate his knights well and eventually notch up the full point. In light of this one can't help but wonder whether Black might be better off just capturing the c3-knight at some point (effectively going a rook for three pawns down) and then attempting to get those kingside pawns rolling. However, this would be a speculative endeavour to say the least!

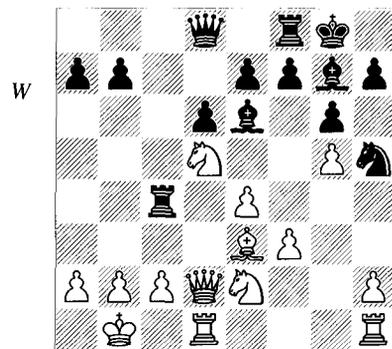
C)

14...♖c7!? 15 g5 ♖h5 16 ♖d5 ♖d8 17 ♖e2! ♕e6!?

This is the main line of the 14...♖c7 variation, but it is interesting that super-GM and Dragon expert Fedorov recently preferred 17...e6. This move first gained notoriety in 1995, but the attention it received wasn't the positive kind –

Dragon expert Alterman used it against Kolev ... and was convincingly beaten! There has been little in the way of improvements over the aforementioned game in the last nine(!) years, but perhaps Fedorov has something up his sleeve. Let's have a look at some variations: 18 ♖df4 (the critical choice; 18 ♖b4 was the move played in the Fedorov game, which continued 18...d5 19 b3!? ♖c8 20 exd5 a5 21 ♖d3!? exd5 22 ♕d4 ♖e8 23 ♕xg7 ♖xg7 24 ♖d4 ♖f5 25 ♖xf5 ♕xf5 26 ♖he1 ♖xe1 27 ♖xe1 a4 ♢ Kaïumov-Fedorov, Dubai 2003, but White's play can obviously be improved at various points) 18...♖xf4 19 ♖xf4 ♖c6 20 h4 ♖c7 21 h5 ♖c8 22 ♖c1 ♖a6 (22...♖c3 23 hxg6 hxg6 24 ♕d4 ♖xf3 25 ♕xg7 ♖xg7 26 ♖h2 +-; 22...b5 23 hxg6 hxg6 24 ♕d4 ♖xc2 25 ♖xc2 ♖xc2+ 26 ♖xc2 ♖xc2 27 ♕xg7 +-) 23 hxg6, Kolev-Alterman, Burgas 1995. Korchnoi assesses this as clearly better for White.

We now return to 17...♕e6!?! (D):



18 ♖g3

This is the move most players have focused on, but some alternatives are also of interest:

a) 18 ♖d3 has also been played, when 18...♕xd5 (only move) 19 exd5 ♖a4 20 ♖b5 ♖a5 21 ♖xa5 ♖xa5 22 ♖g3 gave Black an uncomfortable endgame in Tiviakov-Alterman, Beijing 1997. Note that the players in this game were two of the leading Dragon exponents in the world.

b) 18 ♕xa7!?! is the move that put me off this variation for Black, but strangely a number of strong players have opted for alternative moves, so perhaps I am missing something. 18...♕xd5 (Tiviakov once tried to open more lines on the queenside with 18...b6 but after 19 ♕xb6 ♖a8 20 b3 ♕xd5 21 exd5 ♖h4 22 c3 ♖b8

23 ♗e3 ♖a4 24 ♗c2 ♖a3 25 ♘c1 his initiative had petered out and his knight on h5 was looking rather lonely in Ehlvest-Tiviakov, Port Erin 1998) 19 ♗xd5 ♗c7 20 c3 ♖c8 (20...♖a8 21 ♗b6 ♗c8 22 ♗d4 ± Zesch-Sommer, Leutersdorf 2000) 21 ♗d4 ♗xd4 22 cxd4 b5 23 ♖c1 ± Bologan-Chatalbashev, Bourbon Lancy 1998.

Returning to 18 ♘g3, capturing on g3 opens the h-file and leaves Black highly susceptible on the kingside, so instead practice has focused on...

18...♗xd5

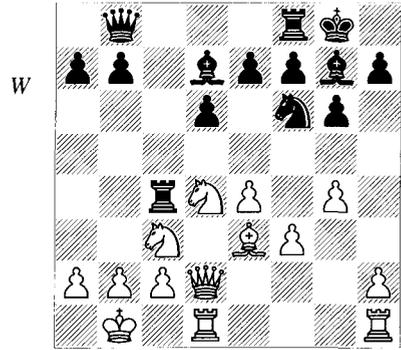
Now White has tried the following:

a) 19 exd5 ♗d7 20 b3 ♖c7 21 ♘xh5 (21 ♗xa7 ♖fc8 22 ♖c1 ♘g3 23 hxg3 ♗f5 24 f4 is unclear, although I think I prefer White here) 21...gxf5 22 ♗d4 (22 ♗d3 ♖fc8 23 ♖d2 a5! with an attack) 22...♗xd4 23 ♗xd4 ♖fc8 24 ♖d2 (24 c4!? b5 25 cxb5 ♗xb5 ∞) 24...♗f5 25 ♖c1 b5 26 f4 a5 27 ♖e2 ♖c5 28 ♗d2 ♖xd5 29 ♗xa5 e6 ½-½ Svidler-Van Wely, Wijk aan Zee 1999.

b) Also possible is 19 ♗xd5 ♗c7 20 ♘xh5 (20 ♗d3 ♖c8 21 ♖d2 ♖b4 22 b3 ♗a5 23 ♘xh5 gxf5 24 ♖c1? ♗c3 0-1 Fernandez Torre-Martin Gonzalez, Barcelona 2000) 20...gxf5 21 c3 (Korneev's attempted improvement; 21 ♗d2 ♖c8 22 ♖c1 ♗c6 23 c3 ♗b5 24 ♖a1 ♖c6 25 ♗d5 was played in Socko-Bohras, Poland 1999, which White eventually won, but at this stage Black seems to be doing fine, and Ward recommends 25...♗a4!?, pointing out that 26 b3? fails to 26...♖xc3! 27 bxa4 ♖xc1#) 21...b5 22 a3 ♖c8 23 hfg1 ♖f8! (this may be forced as 23...b4 24 g6 hxg6 25 ♖xg6 e6 26 ♖xg7+ ♖xg7 27 ♗xh5 ♖f8 28 e5! is winning for White) 24 ♗d4 ♖xd4? 25 cxd4 ♗c2+ 26 ♖a1 ♗a4 27 e5 ♗a6 28 ♖c1 1-0 Korneev-Migens Romero, Spain 2004. Black needs an improvement here. Obviously exchanging on d4 is bad, but dislodging the white queen from d5 should also be on Black's list of priorities. I would suggest investigating 22...♖d8 (with the idea of 23...e6) or 24...a5, allowing White to exchange the dark-squared bishops, but also requiring White to demonstrate a means of progression (which is by no means obvious).

D)

14...♗b8 (D)



Given the problems that Black has been experiencing with 14...♗a5 and 14...♗c7, attention has switched to this groovy-looking queen shuffle. It has scored reasonably in practice, but I am yet to be convinced that Black can equalize.

15 h4

Or:

a) 15 g5!? has received relatively little attention, but it may actually be quite good. Notably, 15...♘h5 16 b3 ♖cc8 17 ♘d5 ♖fe8 18 ♘e2 ♗e6 19 ♘g3 ♗xd5 20 exd5 ♗c7 21 ♘xh5 gxf5 22 f4 a5 23 f5 appeared clearly better for White in Zhao Zong Yuan-Carlsson, Athens jr Wch 2001, although the game was eventually drawn.

b) 15 b3 ♖cc8 (15...♖c5?! 16 g5 ♘h5 17 ♘d5 ♖e8 18 ♘e2 ♖c6 19 ♘g3 ± Polzin-Ahn, Bundesliga 2000/1; 15...♖xc3 16 ♗xc3 ♖c8 17 ♗b4 ± Rogozenko) 16 ♘de2 ♗c6 17 ♗h6 ♗xh6 18 ♗xh6 ♗c7 19 h4 d5 20 exd5 ♘xd5 21 h5 ♘xc3+ 22 ♘xc3 e5 23 ♖d3 b5 24 a3 a5 gave Black strong counterplay in Moreno-Y.Gonzalez, Varadero 2000.

15...♖fc8 16 h5 ♖xc3

16...♗xg4 17 hxg6! is known to be good for White.

17 bxc3 ♗c7 18 hxg6 fxg6 19 ♘b3

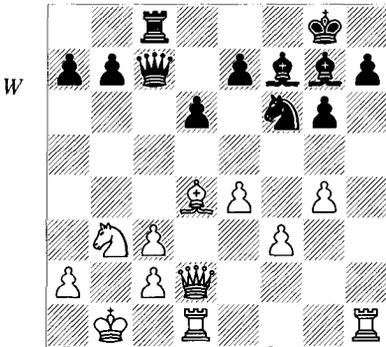
It may actually be better to play 19 ♗h6, when 19...♗h8 20 ♗g5 ♗xc3 21 ♗xc3 ♖xc3 22 ♖d3 ♖xd3!? 23 cxd3 ♘xg4 24 fxg4 ♗xd4 25 ♗xe7 ♗xg4 26 ♗xd6 h5 was the bizarre continuation of Manakova-Gaponenko, Elista wom OL 1998. I feel that White must be better here, but on the other hand Black's bishop-pair and kingside pawns are mobile, and she did go on to win this game, so perhaps matters are not that clear. In any case, you wouldn't catch me getting this position as Black on purpose!

19...♙e6

19...♙xc3?! 20 ♖xc3 ♜xc3 21 ♔d3! ♜c8 22 ♙xa7 ♙b5 23 ♜d2 ♘d7 24 ♙d4 occurred in Mortensen-Mikhalevski, Copenhagen 2000, and although the game was eventually drawn, Rogozenko justifiably assesses this position as clearly better for White.

20 ♙d4 ♙f7 (D)

20...a5!? has actually scored very well for Black in practice, but this seems to have more to do with practical errors than the actual quality of the move itself.



21 g5

Tseshkovsky-Kopionkin, Presov 2000 deviated with 21 ♖h2 e5 22 ♙e3 a5 23 ♖d2 a4 24 ♘c1 d5 25 g5 ♘e8 26 exd5 ♘d6 27 ♜h4 e4! 28 ♜xe4 (28 fxe4 ♘c4 29 ♖d3 ♘a3+ -+) 28...♙xc3 29 ♖d3 ♖a5 30 a3 ♘b5 31 ♘a2 ♘xa3+ 32 ♙c1 ♘xc2 33 ♘xc3 (33 ♖xc2? ♙b2+; 33 ♙xc2? ♙d4+! -+ 34 ♙b1 ♖b6+) 33...♘e1 34 ♖c4 ♜xc4 35 ♜xc4 ♘xf3 36 ♜c8+ ♙g7 37 d6 ♖b4 38 d7. Black now blundered with 38...a3, but Rogozenko (in *ChessBase Magazine*) suggests that Black's play can be improved by 38...♖a3+ 39 ♙c2 ♙b3+! 40 ♙b1 (40 ♙d3? ♖d6+ -+) 40...♙a2+ 41 ♘xa2 ♖b3+ 42 ♙c1 ♖xe3+ 43 ♙b1 ♖b3+, when he secures a draw by perpetual check.

21...♘h5 22 ♙xg7 ♘g7 23 f4 a5 24 ♜h3 a4 25 ♘c1

25 ♘d4? ♖c4 26 ♖h2 ♖xa2+ 27 ♙c1 a3, with strong counterplay, is a line given by Rogozenko.

25...♖d7!

This excellent move facilitates the re-coordination of Black's forces. First the queen attacks the h3-rook and then, given the opportunity, Black will follow up with 26...♖e6, hitting the

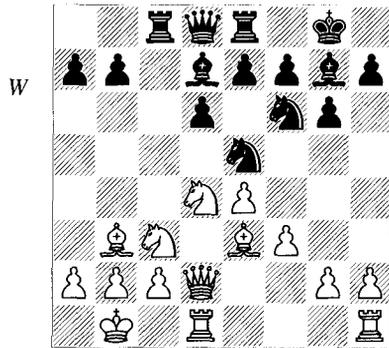
a2- and e4-pawns, and then 27...♜c4, intensifying the assault on White's centre.

26 ♜dh1 ♘h5 27 f5 ♜c4! 28 fxg6 hxg6 29 ♜xh5 gxh5 30 g6 ♖b5+ 31 ♙a1 ♙e6 32 ♖h6 ♖e5 33 ♖h7+ ♙f8 34 ♘e2 ♙e8 35 g7 ♙d7 36 g8 ♖ ♙xg8 37 ♖xg8 ♜xe4 =

We have been following the game Ganguly-Abu Sufian, Doha 2003, which finished in a draw by perpetual check a few moves later.

Part 2: Refined Prophylaxis

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 g6 6 ♙e3 ♙g7 7 f3 ♘c6 8 ♖d2 0-0 9 ♙c4 ♙d7 10 0-0 ♜c8 11 ♙b3 ♘e5 12 ♙b1 ♜e8!?
(D)



The difficulties associated with the traditional 12...♘c4 variation have necessitated innovation elsewhere, and the apparently calm 12...♜e8 has now firmly established itself as the main line of the 12 ♙b1 variation. Yet what, one may ask, is the point of 12...♜e8? An entirely reasonable question in light of the fact that it is by no means obvious how this move in any way furthers Black's objective of generating counterplay on the queenside. In terms of a suitable explanation, it is perhaps useful to classify the virtues of 12...♜e8 into two sub-categories: necessity and prophylaxis.

Necessity: if Black wishes to avoid the 12...♘c4 variation, then he is rather limited in terms of alternate strategies: White's 12 ♙b1 prevents 12...♖a5 due to 13 ♘d5, 12...a5 is probably bad for Black because of 13 a4, stunting Black's queenside counterplay on account of the backward b-pawn, and 12...b5 simply loses a pawn. The inevitable conclusion is that

12...♞e8 is just about the only sensible move that Black has left.

Prophylaxis: even though 12...♞e8 may be Black's only reasonable alternative to 12...♜c4, that is not to say that it is a weak move. On the contrary, there is a plethora of potential justifications for this cute little move.

Firstly, although 12...♞e8 may appear to be a 'slow' move to have to play in the Dragon (an opening which is essentially concerned with rapid, high-risk tactical battles), this is merely a psychological barrier. The reasoning underlying White's decision to play ♖b1 in the Yugoslav Attack was extensively examined in Chapter 10, the essence of the strategy being for White to enhance his kingside attack by first making his king safe. Black's decision to play 12...♞e8 represents a degree of reasoning by analogy: White takes a move to fortify his king-position, and so Black does the same – in the event of a major-piece invasion down the h-file, Black will now have an escape-square for his king on f8.

Secondly, 12...♞e8 enhances the mobility of Black's other pieces. Black now has the option of meeting ♟h6 with ...♟h8, preserving his dark-squared bishop on the long diagonal, while leaving White's own dark-squared bishop a little offside on h6. Similarly, Black can now play ...♞a5 safe in the knowledge that tricks based on ♜d5 will not threaten the e7-pawn.

Finally, the rook may actually play an attacking role on e8. If White employs a 'central roller' strategy (involving f4 and e5), then White may have to use the e5-pawn to capture on f6 or d6 at some point, and when Black recaptures with ...exf6/d6, the e8-rook will suddenly find itself in occupation of a critical central file. A related aspect of analysis is that, in variations where Black does not recapture on f6/d6 immediately, if White should follow up with d/fxe7, the white pawn on e7 will no longer attack the f8-rook, and instead will be blockaded by it.

Much of the foregoing may seem rather abstract, but hopefully these points will be substantiated as the second part of this chapter develops. Before looking at some lines, I would just like to add that, if the reader has not considered the preceding chapters, then it may be constructive to do so before examining the second half of this chapter in great detail. Many of the

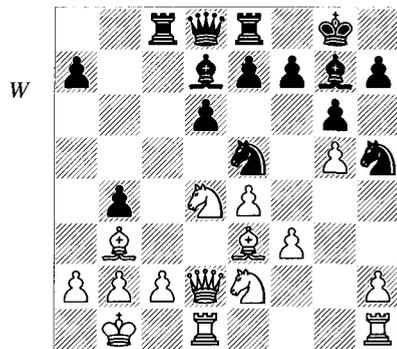
positions that arise in the 12...♞e8 variation are analogous to positions that arose in the last few chapters, the only difference being that White has his king on b1 instead of c1, and that Black's rook is on e8 instead of f8. Anyway, enough of this conjecture, let's take a look at the fun stuff!

13 h4

This is the main line, but White also has some important alternatives:

a) 13 ♟h6 ♟hx6!? (13...♜c4 14 ♟xc4 ♞xc4 15 ♟xg7 ♜xg7 16 h4 h5 transposes to the main line) 14 ♞hx6 ♞xc3 15 bxc3 gives Black similar compensation to that reached in the line 12 ♟h6?! ♟hx6! 13 ♞hx6 ♞xc3! 14 bxc3, but here White has a somewhat improved version because he has gained the move 12 ♖b1, which is more useful than Black's 12...♞e8. Nevertheless Black seems to have reasonable chances; e.g., 15...a5 16 a3 ♞b6 17 ♖a1 ♞c5 18 ♞c1 b5 19 ♞b2 ♞a8 20 ♟a2 h5!? 21 h4 ♞b8 22 ♞he1 e6 23 f4 ♜eg4 24 c4 e5 25 ♜b3 ♞c7 26 fxe5 dxe5 27 ♜d2?! b4 ♚/♚ Al Sayed-Hakki, Dubai 2004.

b) 13 g4 b5 14 g5 (14 ♜cxb5 ♟xb5 15 ♜xb5 ♜xf3 16 ♞e2 ♜e5 17 ♜xa7 ♞b8 18 ♟d4 ♜fd7 19 ♜b5 ♞a5 gave Black some compensation in Gofshtein-Cebalo, Genoa 1998; the position remains highly unclear, although notably Cebalo did go on to win) 14...b4 15 ♜ce2 ♜h5 (*D*) and now:



b1) 16 ♞xb4? a5 17 ♞d2 a4 18 ♟d5 e6 19 ♟b7 ♞b8 20 ♟a6 ♞b6 –+ Rogozenko.

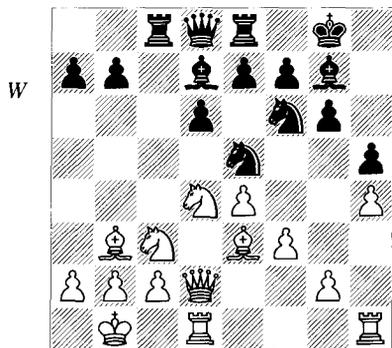
b2) 16 ♜g3 ♜xg3 17 hxg3 a5 18 ♞h2 (18 ♞h4 a4 19 ♟d5 e6 20 ♞h2 h5 21 gxh6 ♟f6 22 ♟b7 ♞b8 {22...♞c7!? may be better} 23 ♟a6 gave rise to a highly complicated and unbalanced position in Colin-Grafl, Aymavilles 2000) and now:

b21) 18...e6!? 19 ♖xh7+ ♕f8 20 f4 ♘g4 21 f5 ♘xe3 22 fxe6? (22 f6 ♙xf6 23 gxf6 ♖xf6 24 ♖h6+ ♕g8 25 ♖xe3 a4 recovers the piece, giving rise to an unclear position) 22...♙xe6 23 ♘xe6+ ♙xe6 24 ♙xe6 ♖xg5 25 ♙hf1 ♘xf1 26 ♙xf1 ♙c7 27 ♙b3? (27 ♖h4) 27...♖e5 28 c3 bxc3 29 ♙c2 ♖b5 0-1 Djukić-I.Marković, Budva 2002.

b22) 18...a4!? 19 ♖xh7+ ♕f8 20 ♙d5 e6 21 f4? (21 ♙b7! ♙c7 22 ♙a6 ♖a8 is unclear according to Rogozenko) 21...♘g4 22 ♘xe6+ ♙xe6 23 ♙d4 ♙xd4 24 ♙xd4 ♙xd5 25 ♙xd5 ♙xe4 26 ♙xd6 ♖xd6 27 ♖h8+ ♕e7 28 ♖xc8 ♘f2 → Ankerst-Cebalo, Bled 1999.

b3) 16 f4 ♘c4 17 ♙xc4 ♙xc4 18 b3 ♙c8 19 ♖xb4 ♖c7 20 ♖d2 (the alternative 20 c4 ♙b8 21 ♖c3 ♙ec8 gives Black compensation according to Rogozenko) 20...e5 21 fxe5 dxe5 22 ♘f3 ♙ed8 23 ♖c1 ♖b7 24 ♘d2 and now rather than 24...♙c6!? (Tomilova-Pogonina, Essentuki 2003), Rogozenko suggests 24...a5! ♠ in *Chess-Base Magazine* 93.

13...h5 (D)



14 ♙h6

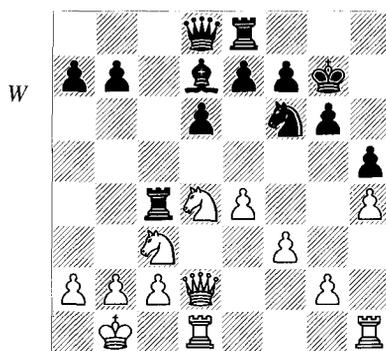
14 ♙g5 ♙c5 of course transposes to Line B of Chapter 10, but 14 ♙he1 is of independent significance; for example, 14...a6!? (14...♖a5 and 14...♘c4 are also possible) 15 ♙g5 (15 ♙h6 ♙h8 16 ♙g5 ♙g7 17 f4 ♘c4 18 ♖d3 b5 19 f5 ♕h7 20 ♘d5 1/2-1/2 Leventić-Feletar, Kaposvar 2001) 15...b5 16 f4 ♘c4 17 ♙xc4 ♙xc4 18 ♙xf6 ♙xf6 19 e5 ♙g7 20 b3 ♙c8 21 ♖e3 ♖c7 22 ♙d3 dxe5 23 fxe5 ♙g4 gives Black a slight advantage, Campora-Lalić, Catalan Bay 2003.

14...♘c4!

14...♙h8 15 g4 gives White a strong attack. An example which demonstrates White's potential: 15...hxg4 (15...♘c4 16 ♖e2 ♖c7 17

gxh5 ♘xh5 18 ♘db5! ♙xb5 19 ♘xb5 ♖c6 20 ♙d5 ♕h7 21 ♙c1 e6 22 ♙xh5+ gxh5 23 ♙xc4 ♖xc4 24 ♖xc4 ♙xc4 25 ♘d6 and White went on to win the endgame in Rowson-J.Shahade, Reykjavik 2002; 15...♖a5 16 ♙d1 ♖c5 17 gxh5 ♘xh5 18 ♙e3 ♘c4 19 ♙xc4 ♖xc4 20 ♙g5 ♕h7 21 ♘d5 f6 22 b3 ♖a6 23 ♖g2 fxg5 24 ♖xg5 ♙c5 25 ♙g1 ♙g4 26 ♙xg4 ♖f1+ 27 ♙c1 1-0 was Kodrić-Malakhov, Bled 2001) 16 f4 ♘c4 17 ♖e2 ♘a5 18 h5 ♘xb3 19 axb3 ♘xh5 20 f5 ♘g3 21 ♖h2 ♘xh1 22 ♙xh1 g3 23 ♖xg3 ♙xd4 24 ♖h4 (White is winning now) 24...e6 25 ♙g5 ♖xg5 26 ♖xg5 exf5 27 ♘d5 ♙c6 28 ♘f6+ ♕g7 29 ♙h7+ 1-0 Willemze-Molinari, Dieren 1999.

15 ♙xc4 ♙xc4 16 ♙xg7 ♕xg7 (D)



This position of course resembles the main-line position of the 13 ♙h6 Soltis Variation, covered in Line B of Chapter 5, the slight difference being the placement of the white king on b1 and the black rook on e8. I believe this should favour White slightly, but not to any material extent, and Black can certainly hold his own in these positions. The lines that follow represent a survey of the games and analysis that have come to light thus far, but this variation is still in its infancy, and so examples are limited. Readers playing this variation might therefore wish to familiarize themselves with the contents of Chapter 5, and then reason by analogy from the lines considered there.

A: 17 g4 131

B: 17 ♘d5!? 131

Alternatives:

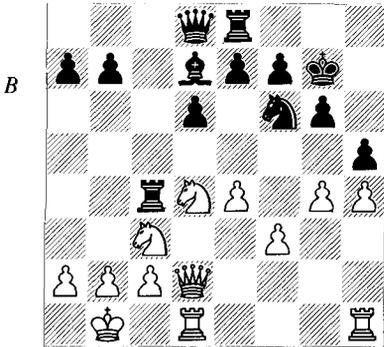
a) 17 ♙he1 ♖a5 18 ♘b3 ♖c7 19 ♘d5?! (the more solid 19 ♖f2 was played in Van der Wiede-Loetscher, Augsburg 2002; Black should

then choose 19...b5 with a pretty level position) 19...♟xd5 20 exd5 ♜xh4 was better for Black in Polzin-Reschke, Bundesliga 1997/8.

b) It should also be noted that Aseev has tried the 'Karpovian' 17 ♟de2, but his opponent reacted actively with 17...♞a5 18 ♟f4 ♜ec8 19 ♟cd5 ♞xd2 20 ♜xd2 ♟xd5 21 ♟xd5 ♟f8 22 b3 ♜4c5 23 a4 ♟e6, achieving a solid position and an eventual draw in Aseev-Nemtsev, Nizhny Novgorod 1998.

A)

17 g4 (D)



This is White's most direct approach to this variation, but it didn't work in Chapter 5 (with the king on c1) and it won't work here either!

17...hxg4 18 h5 ♜h8 19 fxg4

After 19 hxg6 fxg6 20 f4 Black should play 20...e5!, when an unclear position is reached (which, of course, is analogous to the main-line positions of Chapter 5 that are known to be fine for Black). Instead 20...♜h3?!, as played in Mullon-Derieux, Saint Lo 2001, should be avoided, since 21 e5 ♟h5 22 ♜xh3 gxh3 23 f5! leaves Black in immediate trouble.

19...♟xg4

19...♟xg4 20 hxg6 fxg6 21 b3 ♜c5 22 ♟d5 gives White the initiative.

20 hxg6 fxg6

20...♟xd1? 21 ♟f5+ +-.

21 ♟d5

A typical alternative here would be 21 e5!?, but by analogy with Chapter 5, 21...dxe5 22 ♟e6+ ♟xe6 23 ♞xd8 ♜xd8 24 ♜xd8 ♟f5 should give Black a very comfortable ride in the ensuing endgame.

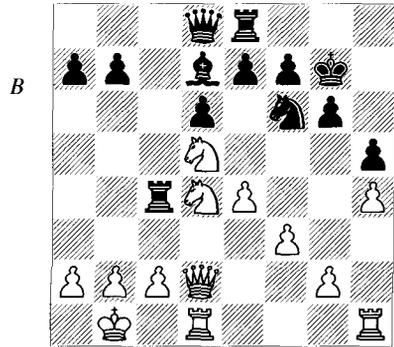
21...e5 22 ♜xh8 ♞xh8 23 ♞g5 ♟xd5

23...♞f8, trying to avoid a perpetual check and come out a pawn ahead, is obviously tempting, but Rogozenko correctly points out that 24 ♟xf6 ♞xf6 25 ♞xg4 ♜xd4 26 ♜h1! gives White compensation for the pawn, and leaves Black under unexpected pressure.

24 ♞xg4 ♜xd4 25 ♞d7+ ♟g8 26 ♞e8+
1/2-1/2 Sandipan-Motylev, Calcutta 2002.

B)

17 ♟d5!? (D)



This move may well represent White's best chance for a real advantage in this variation. Although White's last move may appear innocuous, it contains surprisingly more venom than most would expect. Indeed, Ponomariov used 17 ♟d5 in his match against Tiviakov *en route* to becoming the youngest player ever to win the FIDE World Championship, so the move deserves respect even at the highest levels, and we can expect to be seeing a lot more of it in the future.

17...e5

Surprisingly, the natural 17...♟xd5 actually leaves Black rather vulnerable on the kingside; e.g., 18 exd5 ♜c5?! 19 ♟b3 ♜c4 20 g4! hxg4 21 h5 ± and in Efimenko-Berndt, Bundesliga 2003/4, White went on to win by a decisive attack on the black king.

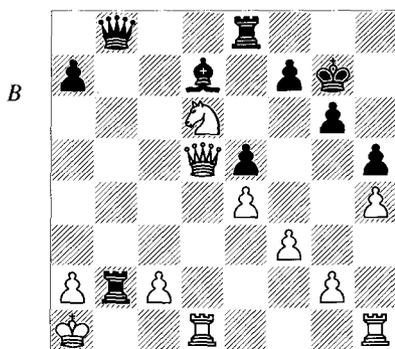
18 ♟xf6

This was the line that Ponomariov favoured against Tiviakov, but Ponomariov and Komarov, in annotating the game for *Informator 83*, provided the following lines, the last of which they consider superior to the text-move:

a) 18 ♟e2 ♟xd5 19 ♞xd5 ♜c6 leads to equality.

b) 18 $\text{c}5+$ $\text{d}5$ 19 $\text{e}5$ $\text{d}4$ 20 $\text{c}6$ $\text{d}5$ 21 $\text{c}6$ $\text{e}3$ is given as unclear, but Ponomariov does mention 21... $\text{c}4$ 22 $\text{f}6$ $\text{f}6$ 23 $\text{c}3$, when White is a pawn down, but his active pieces ensure that this will be quickly recovered. The likely consequence is a balanced ending.

c) 18 $\text{b}3$ is considered best by Ponomariov and Komarov. Their analysis continues 18... $\text{d}5$ 19 $\text{c}5$ $\text{d}6$ 20 $\text{a}5$ $\text{b}6$ 21 $\text{c}7$ (21 $\text{c}4$ $\text{e}6$ 22 $\text{d}3$ $\text{c}4$ 23 $\text{c}4$ is equal) 21... $\text{b}8$ 22 $\text{d}6$ $\text{b}2+$ 23 $\text{a}1$ (D), and now:



c1) 23... $\text{c}2$ 24 $\text{e}8+$ $\text{e}8$ 25 $\text{b}3$ $\text{c}7$ 26 $\text{b}1$ $\text{a}4$ 27 $\text{a}3$ $\text{c}4$ 28 $\text{b}8$ $\text{d}4+$ 29 $\text{b}1$ $\text{g}2$ 30 $\text{c}1$ $\text{d}7$ 31 $\text{b}4$ $\text{d}6$ 32 $\text{b}3$. This is where Ponomariov's analysis ends, with the assessment that White is better. This appears correct, but Black's strong piece activity, White's weak kingside pawns, and the vulnerable position of the white king do provide some compensation for the exchange. Black should probably play 32... $\text{d}4$ or 32... $\text{f}6$.

c2) 23... $\text{e}6$ 24 $\text{d}2$ $\text{b}4$ (24... $\text{a}4$ 25 $\text{c}4$ $\text{c}2$ 26 $\text{b}1$ $\text{d}2$ 27 $\text{b}8$ $\text{d}5$ 28 $\text{e}5$ $\text{e}7$ \pm) 25 $\text{d}3!$ (this is White's only chance to press for an advantage; note the following variations: 25 $\text{c}7?$ $\text{c}3$ -+; 25 $\text{c}1$ $\text{a}2+$ 26 $\text{a}2$ $\text{a}4+$ =; 25 $\text{hd}1$ $\text{a}4$ 26 $\text{c}4$ $\text{b}1+$ 27 $\text{b}1$ $\text{d}2$ 28 $\text{c}7$ $\text{f}7$ 29 $\text{a}4$ $\text{c}3+$ 30 $\text{b}2$ $\text{e}1+$) 25... $\text{a}4$ 26 $\text{a}3$ $\text{b}8$ 27 $\text{c}4$. This final position is assessed by Ponomariov as slightly

better for White, presumably on account of his extra c-pawn. However, it should be noted that it will be some time before White can make anything of this isolated pawn, and in the mean time Black can utilize his greater piece activity and the superior coordination of his pieces to generate counterplay.

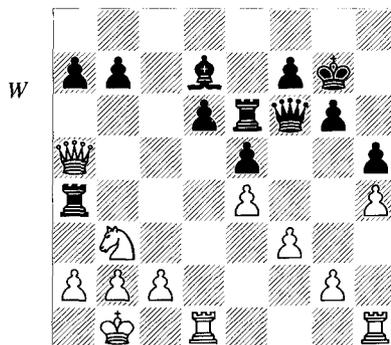
18... $\text{c}6$ 19 $\text{b}3$ $\text{e}6$

This awkward move is an unfortunate necessity if Black is to hold the d6-pawn. Note that 19... $\text{c}6$ is met by 20 $\text{a}5$ $\text{b}6$ 21 $\text{c}4$.

20 $\text{a}5$

20 $\text{g}4?$ runs into 20... $\text{c}3$, but Rogozenko's suggestion of 20 $\text{d}1!$? $\text{f}4!$ 21 $\text{c}4$ $\text{e}4$ 22 $\text{d}1$ \pm looks sensible, if a little compliant on Black's part!

20... $\text{a}4$ (D)



Now:

a) 21 $\text{c}3$ (this allows Black time to re-group and create some pressure of his own) 21... $\text{d}8$ 22 $\text{d}2$ $\text{b}6$ 23 $\text{c}1$ $\text{b}5$ 24 $\text{b}3$ $\text{a}6$ 25 $\text{hd}1$ $\text{d}8$ 26 $\text{g}3$ $\text{c}6$ 27 $\text{e}3$ $\text{b}6$ 28 $\text{c}6$ (28 $\text{e}1$ $\text{f}6$ 29 $\text{f}2$ $\text{c}3$ would be good for Black) 28... $\text{c}6$ 29 $\text{a}1$ $\text{f}5$ 30 $\text{e}2$ $\text{f}4$ 31 $\text{f}4$ $\text{e}2$ 32 $\text{e}2$ $\text{f}6$ 33 $\text{b}2$ $\text{c}6$ 34 $\text{d}3$ $\text{f}7$ 35 $\text{g}2$ 1/2-1/2 Ponomariov-Tiviakov, Moscow 2001.

b) 21 $\text{c}7!$? $\text{c}6$ 22 $\text{d}2$ places Black under more pressure, but Rogozenko pointed out that Black seems to have everything in order; e.g., 22... $\text{a}6$ 23 $\text{a}5$ $\text{e}7$ 24 $\text{d}8$ $\text{d}7$ 25 $\text{c}6+$ $\text{f}6$ =.

12 Alternative Approaches to the 9 ♘c4 Yugoslav for Black

In this chapter I wish to deal with three slightly different approaches to the 9 ♘c4 Yugoslav Attack, thereby giving the reader some background knowledge of the alternatives at Black's disposal and also providing some useful surprise weapons. The first alternative is the 10... ♖a5!? system, which was the first line I ever played against the 9 ♘c4 Yugoslav. Black focuses on rapid development and in practice this system scores very well. Chris Ward gives excellent coverage of the 10... ♖a5!? system in *Winning With the Sicilian Dragon 2*, so I will keep my coverage brief, focusing on the lines that I believe give Black the most trouble.

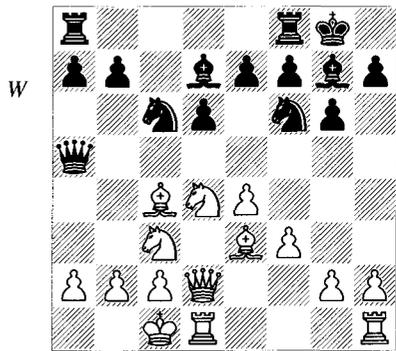
The second system is Topalov's 11... ♗xd4!? line. This system is best employed when White retreats the c4-bishop early and castles queenside before playing h4, which is convenient because it means that Black can pre-empt the potentially awkward lines involving 12 ♖b1 which were dealt with in Chapter 11.

The third and final system that we shall examine is the so-called Chinese Dragon, in which Black plays 10... ♖b8, angling for a rapid attack on the queenside with ...b5 and then either ...b4 or ...♗a5 with the idea of ...♗c4 or ...♗xb3. Although the Chinese Dragon is relatively new, and still very much in its formative stages, it has inspired an impressive following and the body of theory surrounding this line is rapidly expanding. At the time of writing there are no texts on the market that deal with the Chinese Dragon in any depth, so I decided that I would include a succinct section in this chapter just summarizing the main points of the variation and pointing out its theoretical strengths and weaknesses as they currently stand.

With the exception of the 10... ♖a5 variation, the alternatives examined here are very much in their infancy, and consequently may represent fertile pastures for new ideas.

Part 1: 9 ♘c4 Yugoslav with 10... ♖a5

1 e4 c5 2 ♗f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♗xd4 ♗f6 5 ♗c3 g6 6 ♖e3 ♖g7 7 f3 ♗c6 8 ♖d2 0-0 9 ♘c4 ♗d7 10 0-0-0 ♖a5!? (D)



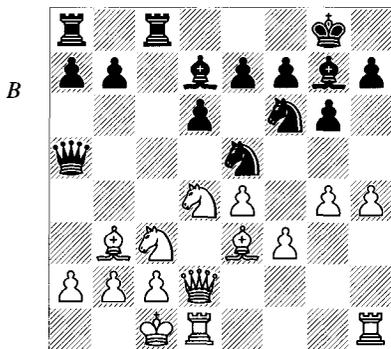
The 10... ♖a5 variation was very popular in the mid-1990s, partly as a consequence Chris Ward's endorsement of it in *Winning With the Dragon*. Black's strategy is to focus almost all of his efforts on the queenside, giving White something of a free hand on the opposite wing. Obviously, a straight pawn race will favour White, so instead Black focuses his energies on initiating favourable piece exchanges, often sacrificing a rook on c3 for positional compensation, or playing ...♗e5, ...b5 and ...♗c4, and then meeting ♘xc4 with ...bxc4, opening the b-file for Black's major pieces. I played this line for a while, and it still has its strict adherents (Cebalo for one), but currently the theoretical standing of 10... ♖a5 has fallen into disrepute, and even Chris Ward seems reluctant to play it.

11 ♘b3 ♖fc8 12 h4 ♗e5 13 g4!? (D)

Traditionally White's best move has been thought to be 13 ♖b1!? preventing 13...b5

(White just takes it, although Black does obtain some positional compensation in this instance) and intending to meet 13...♖c4 with 14 ♖xc4 ♗xc4 15 ♖b3 ♗a6 16 ♖d4, neutralizing Black's pressure on the long diagonal. In actual fact Black may now be OK in this variation, but a full examination of these lines is beyond the scope of this text.

At club level the most common move is 13 h5, but this allows 13...♗xh5 14 g4 ♖f6 15 ♖h6 ♖xh6!? (for reasons beyond the scope of this book 15...♗xc3 may actually be the preferable move-order) 16 ♗xh6 ♗xc3 17 bxc3 ♗xc3, when Black has excellent compensation for the exchange.



13...b5!?

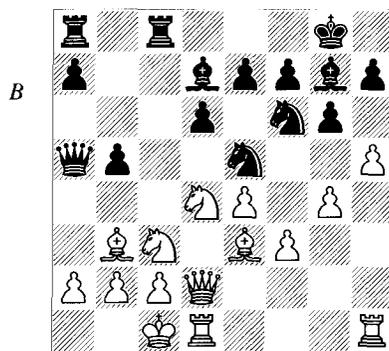
Probably best, as other moves quickly land Black in trouble:

a) 13...♖c4?! 14 ♖xc4 ♗xc4 15 h5! ♗ac8 (15...♗xc3 16 ♗xc3 ♗xa2 doesn't really give Black enough compensation for the exchange) 16 ♖b3 ♗a6 17 hxg6 and now 17...hxg6 (17...fxg6 18 e5! ♖e8 19 ♗h2 is perhaps better, but should also be good for White; Black has to try 19...h5 20 ♖d4 ♗xd4, when 21 ♗xd4 ♖xe5 22 ♗d2 is thought to be good for White) 18 e5! is difficult for Black; e.g., 18...dxe5 (18...♖xg4 19 fxg4 ♖xg4 20 ♗h2 ♖xe5 21 ♗h7+ ♖f8 22 ♖d4! is also good for White, as is 18...♖e8 19 ♗h2 +-) 19 ♖h6 ♖h8 20 ♖g5 ♖g7 21 ♖xf6 ♖xf6 22 ♗xd7 +-.

b) 13...♗c4?! was discovered by Veresov and is a fantastic move with enormous surprise value. Despite a brief burst of popularity a few years back, Black's optimistic sacrifice has not stood the test of time, and White should now be able to obtain a definite advantage without too much fuss. Best play continues 14 g5! (14

♖xc4? ♖xc4 15 ♗d3 ♗b4 16 ♖b3 ♖xe4! 17 ♖xe4 {17 fxg6 ♖xc3 18 ♗xc3 ♗xc3 19 bxc3 ♖xe3 -+} 17...♖xb2 18 ♗d5 ♖c4 is very good for Black indeed) 14...♖h5 (14...♗xd4 15 ♖xd4 ♖xf3 16 ♗f2 ♖xd4 17 ♗xd4, when Black is in trouble as 17...♖g4 runs into 18 ♗xf7+) 15 f4 ♗xd4 16 ♗xd4! ♖g4 17 e5 (Golubev suggests that 17 ♗d5 deserves attention) 17...♖g3 18 ♗he1 ♖f5 19 ♗d5 ♗xd5 20 ♖xd5 e6 21 ♖g1 exd5 22 ♖xd5 ♗b8 23 ♖xa7 was very good for White in Rodriguez Guerrero-Guerra Bastida, Linares 2003.

14 h5 (D)



Now:

| | |
|--------------|-----|
| A: 14...b4!? | 134 |
| B: 14...♖c4 | 135 |

A)

14...b4!?

15 ♖d5 ♖xd5 16 ♖xd5 (after 16 exd5 ♖c4 17 ♖xc4 ♗xc4 18 ♖b1 ♗xd5 19 ♗h2 White has good attacking chances according to Rogozenko) 16...♖c4 17 ♖xc4 ♗xc4 18 ♖b1 ♗ac8 19 hxg6 fxg6 20 ♗h2 h6! 21 ♗d2 intending 22 ♖b3 and 23 ♖xh6 looks a bit better for White, but Black's position is certainly playable.

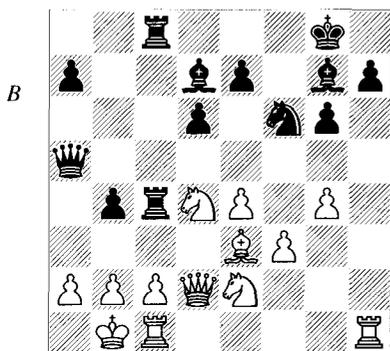
15...♖c4 16 ♖xc4 ♗xc4 17 ♖b1 ♗ac8 18 hxg6

18 ♗c1 ♖xg4! gave Black good chances in Semprun-Prada, Madrid 2003.

18...fxg6 19 ♗c1! (D)

Also common is 19 ♖f4 g5! 20 ♖fe2 (20 ♖h5 ♖xh5 21 ♗xh5 h6 is fine for Black according to Tolnai) 20...h6 21 ♖g3 ♗e5! 22 ♖gf5 (22 ♗f2 ♗xc2! 23 ♖xc2 ♖xe4 24 ♖d4 ♖xf2 25 ♖xe5 ♖xe5 -+) 22...♖xf5 23 gxf5 d5 24 ♗h1 ♖h5! 25 ♗g4 a5 (Tolnai rejects

25...♙xc2 due to 26 ♖xb4, but 26...♙xb2+ 27 ♖xb2 ♙b8 looks very good for Black) 26 ♖d3 ♘f6 27 ♙g2 dxe4 → Hazai-Tolnai, Hungary 1989. The annotations here are based on Tolnai's notes in *Informator* 47.



♖b7 27 ♗xe7+ ♜xe7 28 ♞xe7 +- Nunn-Ward, British League (4NCL) 1997/8.

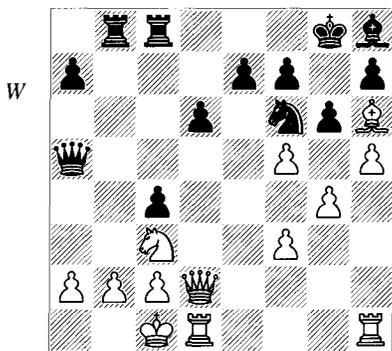
18 exf5!

18 gxf5?! ♗xh5 19 ♖dgl (19 ♜xh5!? just leads to a draw via 19...♙xc3! 20 ♞xc3 ♞xc3 21 bxc3 gxh5 22 ♖g1+ ♗h8 23 ♙g7+ 1/2-1/2 Lacasa Diaz-Van Haastert, Barcelona 2001), and now:

a) In *Winning With the Sicilian Dragon 2* Ward gives 19...♜ab8 20 ♜xh5 ♞b6 without further analysis. However, White is just winning here: 21 ♗e2! ♞xb2+ (21...c3 22 ♞d3 ♞xb2+ 23 ♗d1 ♞xa2 ±) 22 ♗d1 ♞a3 (or 22...♞a1+ 23 ♗c1) 23 ♜h3 ♜b1+ 24 ♗c1 ♙b2? 25 fxg6!! +-.

b) Fortunately, Black has a much stronger option in 19...♙xc3! 20 bxc3 (20 ♞xc3 ♞xc3 21 bxc3 ♗f6 ♞) 20...♜ab8! 21 ♞d4 (in his chesspublishing.com column Chris Ward mentions the pretty line 21 ♜xh5 ♜b1+! 22 ♗xb1 ♞b6+ 23 ♗c1 ♞xg1+ 24 ♗b2 ♜b8+ 25 ♗a3 ♞c5+ 26 ♗a4 ♞b5+ 27 ♗a3 ♞a5#) 21...♗f6 22 ♙g5 ♞e5 ♞.

18...♜ab8 (D)



19 hxg6

The most common move here is actually 19 ♞e3 with a transposition to the next note after 19...♞b4 20 hxg6, but this move-order may allow Black to play 19...♜xb2!? 20 hxg6 (20 ♗xb2 ♗xg4 +-) 20...hxg6 (20...fxg6 21 ♞e6#) 21 fxg6 ♗xg4! when White may have some problems.

19...fxg6

19...♞b4 20 ♞e3 leaves Black in trouble; e.g., 20...♞xb2+ 21 ♗d2 +-.

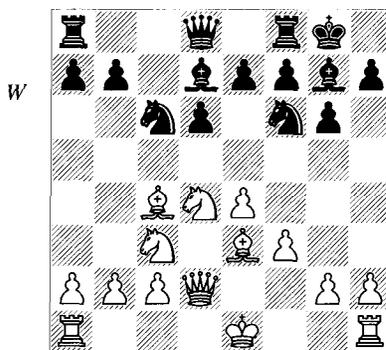
20 ♞e3 e5 21 g5 ♜xb2 22 ♗xb2 e4 23 ♗c1 ♗d5 24 ♜xd5

1-0 F.Moller-Norton, Copenhagen 2003.

Part 2: Black Plays

11...♞xd4

1 e4 c5 2 ♗f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♗xd4 ♗f6 5 ♗c3 g6 6 ♙e3 ♙g7 7 f3 ♗c6 8 ♞d2 0-0 9 ♙c4 ♙d7 (D)



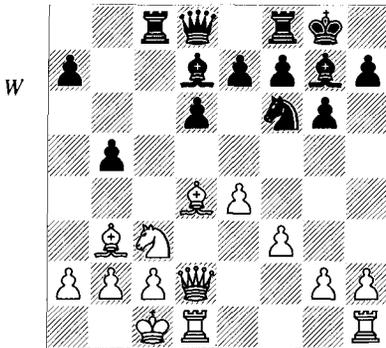
In this position White often plays 10 h4, after which 10...h5 leads us into the material covered in the first ten chapters. If White wishes to enter the lines contained in Chapter 11, then he must play either 10 ♙b3 immediately, or 10 0-0-0 ♜c8 11 ♙b3 intending 11...♗e5 12 ♗b1 ♗c4 13 ♙xc4 ♜xc4 14 g4, which currently appears to pose Black certain problems. If the reader is uncomfortable with the lines covered in Chapter 11, then he has an extra option of meeting 10 ♙b3 or 11 ♙b3 with 11...♗xd4, intending 12 ♙xd4 b5, with play against the c3-knight and the b3-bishop. Interestingly, the true potential of the lines covered in Chapter 11 was discovered by Topalov, who also had the Dragon in his black repertoire at that time. As part of that repertoire Topalov included the Dragon lines with an early capture on d4, thereby effectively avoiding his own creation on the white side. Topalov first unleashed his 11...♗xd4 ideas in a 1996 game with Nigel Short, and since then the ...♗xd4 systems have found their way into the Dragon repertoires of the some of the world elite.

10 0-0-0

After 10 ♙b3, 10...♜c8 11 0-0-0 (11 h4 h5) transposes to the main line, but Black does have a respectable alternative in 10...♗xd4 11 ♙xd4 b5, when the rook is actually well-placed on a8 in the event that White castles queenside, but White's best options involve castling kingside

and going for a positional edge. Unfortunately I don't have room to cover these lines, but they are definitely worthy of further investigation.

10...♖c8 11 ♖b3 ♘xd4!? 12 ♖xd4 b5!? (D)



White now has four primary continuations:

- A: 13 e5!? 137
 B: 13 ♖xa7!? 138
 C: 13 h4 139
 D: 13 ♘d5 140

Before moving on to analysis of the main continuations I would like to draw the reader's attention to the following minor alternatives:

a) 13 ♖b1?! a5 14 a3 (14 a4? bxa4 15 ♘xa4 ♖xa4 16 ♖xa4 ♖c4 17 ♖b3 ♘xe4 ♢ Kom-iagina-Zhumanbekova, Rybinsk 2001) 14...b4 15 axb4 axb4 16 ♘a2 ♖a5 17 ♖xb4 ♖a6 18 c4? (better is 18 ♖b6 ♖a8 19 ♖a7 ♖c6) 18...♖a8 19 ♖c2? ♖fb8 → Baragano Campa-Mamedov, Aviles 2002.

b) 13 g4?! a5 (13...b4 14 ♘d5 ♘xd5 15 ♖xg7 ♖xg7 16 exd5 a5 17 h4 a4 18 ♖d4+ f6 19 ♖c4 ♖c7 20 ♖d3 ♖b5 = Gretarsdottir-Jiretorn, Rethymon wom 2003) 14 a3 b4 15 axb4 axb4 16 ♘a2 ♖a8 (16...♖e6 17 ♖xe6 fxe6 18 ♖xb4 ♖a8 gives Black compensation according to Golubev and Aagaard [hereafter 'G&A'], while Fritz really likes Black after 18...♘d7!?) 17 h4? was Cominato Neto-Pinto Matienzo, Matinhos 1999, and now 17...♖e6! is very good for Black.

c) 13 ♖e3 b4 14 ♘e2 ♖a5 15 ♖xa7 (15 h4 ♖a4 with an attack) 15...♖c6! 16 ♖g1 ♖e6 (16...♖fc8! is also dangerous according to G&A) 17 ♘d4 ♖h6+ 18 ♖d2 (18 ♖b1? ♖xb3 19 ♘b3 ♖a4 wins for Black) and now rather than 18...♖xd2+ (Ljubojević-Ki.Georgiev, Belgrade 1997), Black can obtain a clear advantage

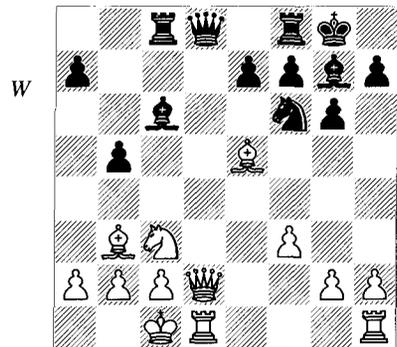
with 18...♖fc8! 19 ♘xc6 ♖xc6 20 ♖e3 ♖xb3 21 ♖xh6 ♖xa2 ♢.

A)

13 e5!? dx e5 14 ♖xe5

14 ♖xa7 ♖a5 (14...♖c7 15 ♖e3 ♖c6 16 ♖e2 ♖a5 17 ♖he1 b4 18 ♘b1 ♖d5 ♢ Epstein-J.Shahade, USA wom Ch (Denver) 1998) 15 ♖e3 b4 16 ♘d5 ♘xd5 17 ♖xd5 ♖b5 18 ♖b1 (18 ♖d2 ♖a6 19 ♖xb4 ♖c4 ∞ is better according to Abramović) 18...e6 19 ♖b7 ♖c6 20 ♖b6 ♖xb6 21 ♖xb6 e4 22 f4?! (22 ♖c5? exf3 23 ♖xf8 fxf2 24 ♖hg1 ♖xf8 →; 22 fxe4 ♖xe4 23 ♖hg1 ♢) 22...e3 ♢ A.Kovačević-Abramović, Yugoslavia 2001.

14...♖c6 (D)



15 ♖xd8

15 ♖e3 ♖a5 16 ♖d4 (16 a3 b4!; 16 ♖b1 b4 17 ♖xf6 ♖xf6 18 ♘d5 ♖xd5 19 ♖xd5 ♖c7 ♢ Günther-Kopylova, Bundesliga wom 2002/3; 16 ♖he1 b4 17 ♖xf6 ♖xf6 18 ♘d5 ♖xd5 19 ♖xd5 ♖c7 20 g4 e6 21 ♖d2 ♖fd8 ♢ Baches Garcia-Kolev, Badalona 2003) 16...♖fe8 17 ♖xf6 exf6 18 ♖f4 f5 19 ♘d5 ♖e2 20 g4? ♖xd5 21 ♖xd5 ♖exc2+! 22 ♖xc2 ♖xa2 → Bertholee-Tiviakov, Dutch Cht 2000.

15...♖fxd8 16 ♖xd8+

16 ♖b1 b4 17 ♖xf6 ♖xf6 18 ♘d5 ♖xd5 19 ♖xd5 ♖d6 ♢ Mastrovasilis-Macieja, Kallithea ECC 2002.

16...♖xd8 17 ♖d1 ♖c8

17...♖xd1+ and 17...♖h6+ are also playable, although Black should note that if he is going to exchange rooks on d1, White's better-placed king and queenside majority may give him a slight edge in the endgame.

18 ♘e2

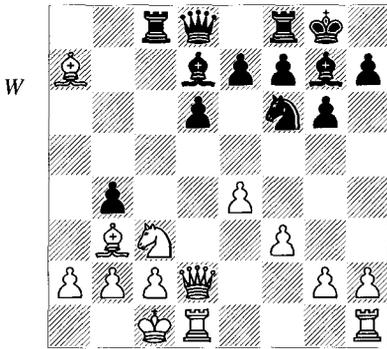
18 a4 a6 19 axb5 axb5 20 ♖e2 ♗h5 21 ♙xg7 ♜xg7 22 ♙d5 ♙e8 23 f4 ♙d7 24 ♙f3 ♗f6 was slightly better for White in E.Berg-Golubev, playchess.com 2004, according to G&A.

18...♗h5 19 ♙xg7 ♜xg7 20 ♙d5 ♙e8 21 b3 ♗f6 22 ♗g3 e6 23 ♙e4 h5 24 ♙d3 ♗d5 25 ♗e4 b4

Fidalgo Fernandez-Mamedov, Aviles 2002. Objectively this ending should be equal, but both sides still have opportunities to outplay their opponent.

B)

13 ♙xa7!? b4 (D)



14 ♗d5

14 ♗e2 ♞a5 15 ♙d4 ♙a4 16 ♙xa4 (16 ♞d3 ♙h6+ 17 f4 {17 ♙e3 ♙xb3 wins for Black} 17...♙xb3 18 ♞xb3 ♗xe4 ♣) 16...♞xa4 17 ♗b1 e5 (17...♞c6!?) 18 ♙e3 d5 19 exd5 ♗xd5 20 ♞xd5 ♞xc2+ ♣ Azadmanesh-Van de Mortel, Amsterdam 1998.

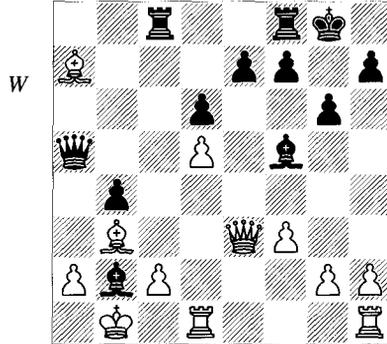
14...♗xd5 15 exd5

15 ♙xd5? ♞a5 (15...♙a4!? 16 b3 ♞c7 ♣) 16 ♙d4 ♙a4 17 b3 ♙b5 18 ♙xg7 ♜xg7 19 ♞d4+ ♜g8 ♣ 20 ♞b2 ♞c3 21 ♗b1 ♞fc8 22 ♞d2 e6 23 ♙c4 ♙xc4 24 bxc4 ♞8xc4 was agreed drawn in Pazdziora-Gomulka, Krynica 2001, but I can't think why – Black appears to have a decisive advantage.

15...♞a5 16 ♙d4

16 ♞e3?! ♙f5 17 ♗b1 (17 ♙d4 ♞xc2+!! 18 ♙xc2 ♞c8 is much better for Black) 17...♙xb2!! (D) (17...♙xc2+!?! might also be good according to Aagaard).

18 ♜xb2 ♞c3 19 ♞f2 was S.B.Hansen-Guseinov, Dos Hermanas ICC blitz 2004, and now

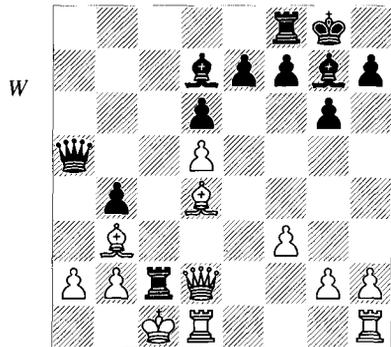


Aagaard gives the line 19...♞a3+ (19...♞fc8!? ♣) 20 ♙a1 ♞fc8 21 ♙d4 (21 ♞d2? ♞xb3 22 cxb3 ♞c1+ 23 ♞xc1 ♞xc1#) 21...♞xc2 22 ♙xc2 ♞xc2 23 ♞xc2 ♙xc2 24 ♙b2 ♞a5 25 ♞c1 b3 26 a3 ♞xd5 when Black is winning.

16...♙xd4!?

This move has actually never been played, but Golubev and Aagaard offer an excellent synopsis of its potential in their joint article for *New In Chess Yearbook 71*. Two other moves deserve consideration:

a) 16...♞xc2+!?! (D).



a1) 17 ♙xc2?! is very risky: 17...♞xa2 18 ♞e3 (18 b3? ♞c8 19 ♙xg7 ♙f5 –+ and 18 ♞f2? ♞c8 19 ♗d2 {19 g4 b3 –+; 19 ♙xg7 ♙f5} 19...♞xc2+ 20 ♜xc2 ♞c4+ 21 ♗d2 ♙xd4 22 ♞e2 ♙c3+! 23 ♙e3 ♞c5+ –+ are fatal for White) 18...♞c8 19 ♙xg7? (19 ♗d2! ♞c4 is unclear) 19...♙f5 (19...♙a4 may be even stronger) 20 ♞d3 ♞a1+ 21 ♗d2 ♞xh1 22 ♙d4 ♞xg2+ ♣ O'Donnell-Charbonneau, World Chess Network 2001.

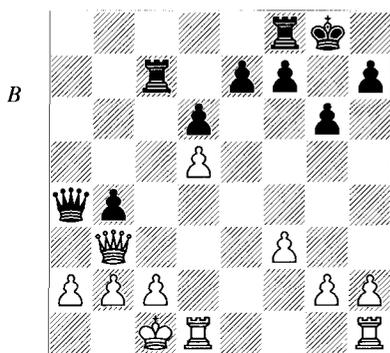
a2) Rogozenko suggested that White should prefer 17 ♞xc2 ♞c8 18 ♞xc8+ ♙xc8 19 ♙xg7 ♜xg7 20 ♗b1, when the two rooks may give him a slight edge.

b) 16...♗a4 17 ♖e3 ♗xb3 18 ♖xb3 ♗c7 19 ♗xg7 ♗xg7 20 ♖he1 ♖a8 21 ♖e4 was J. Shakhade-Kosintseva, Bled wom OL 2002, and now Golubev suggested that 21...♖c5! is best with an unclear position. Aagaard continues the analysis with 22 ♖e2 (22 ♖xb4 ♖xa2 is nice for Black, but 22 ♗b1 looks sensible) 22...♗f8!? 23 ♗b1 ♖ca7! 24 c3 ♖c8 25 ♖xb4 ♖a4 26 ♖b3 ♖xa2 27 ♗c2 ♖f5+ with an attack. However, White's play is open to improvement.

17 ♖xd4 ♗a4 18 ♖e3 ♗c7 19 ♗xa4

Aagaard gives 19 ♗b1 ♖a8 20 ♖he1 and now 20...♗xb3 21 ♖xb3 ♖ca7 22 ♖e4 ♖xa2+ 23 ♖xa2 ♖xa2 24 ♗c1 ♖8a5 25 ♖d3 ♖a1+ 26 ♗d2 ♖g1 with counterplay for Black. However, I think Black can do even better in this variation by playing 20...♖c3!! 21 bxc3 ♗xb3 22 ♗c1 (22 cxb3 ♖xa2+ 23 ♗c1 ♖xb3 24 ♗d2 ♖a2+ 25 ♗d3 ♖xc3+ 26 ♗e4 ♖e5+ 27 ♗d3 ♖a3+ →) 22...♖xa2 23 ♖d3 (23 ♖e2 ♗c4 →) 23...♖c8 (23...♗c4!? 24 ♖d4 b3 also looks good) 24 ♖xe7 bxc3 →.

19...♖xa4 20 ♖b3 (D)



20...♖xb3!?

G&A prefer 20...♖a5 21 ♖he1 ♖a8 22 ♖e4 ♖c5 23 ♗b1 (necessary in order to protect a2; e.g., 23 g4 ♖xa2 ♣ or 23 ♖xb4?! ♖xa2 24 ♖b8+ ♗g7 ♣/♣) 23...♖f2 24 ♖xb4 (24 g4 ♖ac8 25 ♖c1 ♖xc2 26 ♖xc2 ♖xc2 27 ♖xc2 ♖xf3 28 ♖xb4 ♖xd5 29 a4 is unclear) 24...♖ac8 25 ♖c1 ♖xc2 (25...♖xg2 26 ♖b8 ♖xh2 27 ♖xc8+ ♖xc8 28 ♖b7 ♖c5 is unclear according to Aagaard) 26 ♖xc2 ♖xc2 27 ♖b8+ ♗g7 28 ♖xc2 ♖f1+ 29 ♖c1 ♖xg2 30 ♖b3 ♖xh2 31 a4 and now Aagaard gave 31...♖f4?! 32 ♖a3 ♖f5+ 33 ♗a1 ♖xd5 34 a5 →. However, 31...♖d2 32 ♖a3 ♖a5! looks better. Black refrains from capturing on d5 for the time being, and instead holds

up White's a-pawn, creating time to advance the h-pawn or play ...♗f6-e5. I am not sure who is better in this line, but Black definitely has his chances; e.g., 33 ♖d1 h5 34 ♖d4 h4 35 b4 ♖b6 36 ♖e4 h3 →.

21 axb3 ♖fc8 22 ♖d2 ♖a8 23 ♖dd1 ♖a1+

23...♖ac8 gives Black a draw by repetition.

24 ♗d2 ♖a2

24...♖a5 25 c4 bxc3+ 26 bxc3 ♖xd5+ 27 ♗c2 might give Black some problems with White's queenside pawns.

25 ♖he1

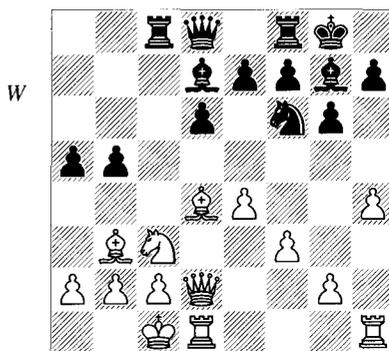
25 ♗c1 ♖c5! intending 26...♖ca5, 27...♖a1+ and 28...♖xd5+.

25...♖xb2 26 ♖c1 f5

Black has a slightly more comfortable rook ending.

C)

13 h4 a5 (D)



14 h5

This is White's most direct approach, but some other moves are also of interest:

a) 14 a4? bxa4 15 ♗xa4 ♗xa4 16 ♗xa4 ♖c4 17 ♗b3 ♗xe4! 18 ♖e3 ♖xd4 19 ♖xd4 ♗g3 ♣ Hunt-Gaponenko, Warsaw wom Ech 2001.

b) 14 a3 b4 15 axb4 axb4 and now:

b1) 16 ♗a2 ♗e6!? (16...♖a8 17 ♖xb4 ♖c7 gives Black plenty of compensation for the pawn) 17 ♗xe6 fxe6 18 ♗xb4 ♖a5 19 b3 (19 ♗b1 ♖c4 20 c3 ♖a8 21 ♖d3 ♖xd4 22 cxd4 {22 ♖xd4 ♗d5 is also much better for Black} 22...♖xb4 ♣ Zenishchev-K.Payne, corr. 2001) 19...♖a3+ 20 ♗b1 (20 ♗b2 ♖xb3 ♣) 20...♖a8 (20...♗h5!? is an interesting idea, as exchanging dark-squared bishops enhances Black's

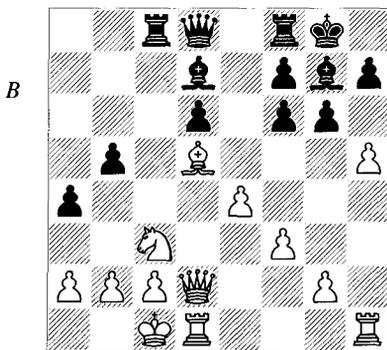
control over the queenside by removing White's key defender) 21 e5 ♖d5 ♣.

b2) 16 ♘d5 ♘xd5 17 ♙xg7 ♙xg7 18 ♚xd5 (after 18 exd5, 18...♚b6 19 ♚d4+ ♚xd4 20 ♚xd4 is slightly better for White according to Ward, who suggests 18...♚a5! as an improvement) 18...♙g8 19 ♚d4 ♚a5 20 h5 and now 20...e5 was bad for Black in Oliveira-Van de Mortel, Internet ICC 2000, so perhaps 20...gxh5 must be considered, because 21 g4 hxg4 (or 21...♚g5+!?) 22 fxg4 (22 ♚xh7 looks scary, but I can't see how White follows up) 22...♚c5 23 ♙d5 (23 ♚h5 ♚a1+ {23...♙xg4 may be even better}) 24 ♘d2 ♚xd1+ 25 ♘d1 ♙xg4+ ♣) 23...♚a4 24 ♚h2 ♙e6 ♣ looks good for Black.

c) 14 ♙xf6 ♙xf6 15 h5 and now 15...g5?! has been seen in practice and is known to be good for White, but G&A suggest that Black's play can be improved via 15...♙g7! (they in fact believe that Black's best is 15...♙xc3 16 bxc3 g5! 17 ♚xg5+ ♘h8 18 h6 ♚g8 19 ♚d2 ♚f8 20 ♚d4+ f6 21 ♚f2 ♚c7 22 ♚g3 ♚g8 23 ♙xg8 ♚xg8 24 ♚e1 ♚c4 with an unclear position, but I prefer the text-move) 16 hxg6 hxg6 17 ♚h2 e6 (17...a4? 18 ♚dh1 +-) 18 ♚xd6 ♚ff6!?, which is given by Golubev without an assessment, but I rather like Black here.

14...a4 15 ♙xf6 exf6 16 ♙d5! (D)

16 ♚xd6 axb3 17 ♚xd7 ♚a5 18 hxg6 hxg6 19 ♚d5 (19 ♚h3 ♚fe8 20 axb3 ♚a1+ 21 ♘b1 f5 -+) 19...f5 (19...♚xc3 20 bxc3 bxa2 21 ♘b2 f5 22 e5 ♚a8 23 ♚c5 ♙f8 = G&A) 20 e5 and now rather than 20...♚c4 (Berthelot-Prié, Nantes 2003), G&A suggest 20...♚xc3 or 20...bxa2, with equal chances in either case.



16...a3!

16...f5 17 hxg6 hxg6 18 g4 fxg4 (18...b4!?) 19 ♚h2 ♚e8 20 fxg4 ♚g5+ 21 ♘b1 ♚e7 22

♚df1 ♙e8 gives Black counterplay according to G&A.

17 hxg6

17 ♙b3!?

17...hxg6 18 ♙b3

18 g4 axb2+ 19 ♘b1 ♚a5 20 ♚h2 ♚fe8 21 ♘e2 ♙e6 ♣ G&A.

18...♙e6 19 ♙xe6

19 ♘b1 ♙xb3 20 cxb3 axb2 21 ♘xb5 f5 22 ♘xd6 ♚c1+ 23 ♚xc1 bxc1 ♚+ 24 ♚xc1 ♚ff6 with an attack on the dark squares – G&A.

19...fxe6 20 ♘xb5 ♚b6

20...axb2+!?

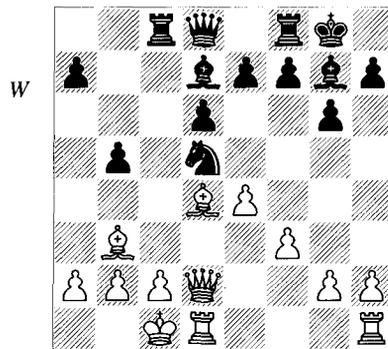
21 ♘xa3 f5 22 c3 ♚c6 23 exf5 gxf5 24 ♚de1 d5 25 g4 f4 26 ♚d3

1/2-1/2 Amorim Neto-Cordeiro, corr. 1998.

This whole line appears very unclear, and I would not be surprised if the future throws up big improvements for both sides.

D)

13 ♘d5 ♘xd5 (D)



14 ♙xg7

Or:

a) 14 exd5 ♙xd4 (14...a5!?, delaying the capture on d4, is an interesting idea) 15 ♚xd4 a5 16 a3 b4 17 a4 (17 axb4 axb4 {17...♚b8! with compensation}) 18 ♚xb4 ♚b8 gives Black good compensation) 17...♚e8 18 h4 (18 ♚he1 ♙xa4 19 ♙xa4 ♚xa4 ♣) 18...♙xa4 19 ♘b1 ♙xb3 20 cxb3 a4 21 h5 f6 (21...g5 is also good) 22 hxg6 ♚xg6+ ♣ Shirov-Topalov, Moscow 2001.

b) 14 ♙xd5 ♙xd4 15 ♚xd4 a5! (15...♚c7 16 c3 a5 17 ♘b1 ♚c5 {17...b4!}) 18 ♚he1 is slightly better for White, Short-Topalov, Novgorod 1996) 16 a3 (16 c3 b4! gives White

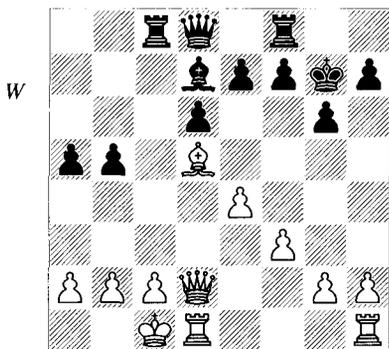
serious problems with his queenside; e.g., 17 c4? ♖c7 → intending 18...e6, winning the d5-bishop) 16...♖c7 17 c3 (17 ♖d2 is probably better, but I still prefer Black after 17...b4 18 axb4 axb4 19 ♖xb4 e6 20 ♖a2 ♖a8 with an on-going initiative) 17...b4! 18 axb4 e5 19 ♖e3 axb4 20 ♖d2 ♖c6 (20...bxc3+ 21 bxc3 ♖a4!?) 21 ♖xc6 ♖xc6 22 ♖e2 bxc3 23 bxc3 1/2-1/2 Hraček-Markowski, Budapest 2000. Although the players signed the peace here, Black could consider playing on with something like 23...f5 or 23...♖a8, while 23...♖xc3 24 ♖xc3 ♖xc3 25 ♖xd6 of course leads to a drawn endgame.

14...♖xg7 15 exd5!

This move seems slightly unnatural as it closes the b3-bishop's diagonal (making it vulnerable to Black's queenside pawns) and gives Black the f5-square for his own bishop. However, White also gains a semi-open e-file for a rook and enhances his attacking chances on the kingside by blocking Black's major pieces from lending their support laterally along the fifth rank. Notwithstanding these points, it seems at least as common for White to play 15 ♖xd5, with play continuing as follows:

a) 15...♖b6 16 h4 h6 (16...h5 17 g4 ♖h8 18 ♖f4 f6 19 ♖b1 a5 20 g5 1/2-1/2 C.Balogh-Kosanović, Novi Sad 2002, although White is better here) 17 g4 ♖c5 18 ♖b1 b4 19 ♖d4+ e5! = Zeziulkin-Markowski, Rowy 1999.

b) 15...a5 (D) and then:



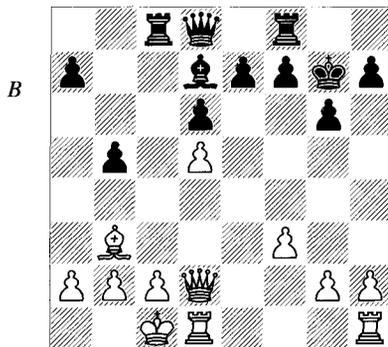
b1) 16 ♖d4+ f6 17 a3 ♖c5 18 ♖d2 ♖c7 19 ♖e1 ♖c8 20 ♖e2 ♖b6 21 ♖f2 b4 22 axb4 axb4 23 ♖d1 ♖a5 24 ♖e1 ♖xc2 0-1 Angeles Cano-Cabrera, Mancha Real 2003.

b2) 16 a3 ♖b6 (16...b4!?) 17 axb4 axb4 18 ♖xb4 ♖g8! 19 ♖d3 ♖b8 20 ♖d4 e6 with compensation, Gara-Agamaliev, Condom 2003) 17

♖b1 f6 18 c3 ♖c5 19 g4 ♖b8 20 g5 b4 21 gxf6+ exf6 22 cxb4 axb4 23 axb4 ♖b5 24 ♖d4 ♖d8! 25 ♖c1 ♖xb4 ♖/♖ Sadykov-Guseinov, Nakhchivan 2003.

b3) 16 h4 f6 (Black can also gain equality with other continuations; e.g., 16...e6 17 h5 {17 ♖b7 ♖b8 18 ♖c6 ♖xc6 19 ♖c3+ ♖g8 20 ♖xc6 ♖b6 =} 17...exd5 18 hxg6 hxg6 19 ♖h6+ ♖f6 20 ♖h4+ ♖g7 21 ♖h6+ ♖f6 = Rogozenko; 16...h6 17 ♖d4+ f6 18 a3 ♖c7 19 ♖d2 ♖c5 20 ♖b1 b4 21 axb4 axb4 22 ♖xc5 ♖xc5 23 ♖d4 ♖b8 = Armanda-Muse, Split 2000) 17 a3 b4! (17...♖c7 18 ♖b3 b4 19 a4 is unclear, Soloviov-Terentiev, St Petersburg 2002) 18 h5 g5 gives Black queenside counterplay according to Rogozenko.

We now return to 15 exd5! (D):



15...a5

15...♖b6!? 16 ♖he1 ♖fe8 17 g4 b4 18 ♖e4 a5 19 ♖c4 ♖b5 20 ♖xb5 ♖xb5 21 ♖de1 ♖c5 22 ♖d4+ ♖g8 ♖/♖ 23 ♖xe7 ♖xe7 24 ♖xe7 ♖xd5 25 ♖e8+ ♖xe8 26 ♖xd5 ♖e3+ 27 ♖d1 ♖g1+ 28 ♖e2 ♖xh2+ ♖ Radziejewicz-Kosanović, Budapest 2002.

16 a3 b4

16...♖b6 17 ♖he1! ♖fe8 (17...♖f5 18 g4 a4 19 gxf5 axb3 20 c3 ±) 18 g4 ± Maciejja-Rogozenko, Istanbul OL 2000, but 16...♖b8!? is also possible.

17 axb4 axb4 18 ♖xb4

18 ♖he1 ♖e8 19 ♖e4 ♖a5 20 ♖d4+ ♖g8 21 g4 ♖c5 (21...e5!?) 22 ♖de1 ♖a7 23 ♖d2 e5! 24 dxe6 ♖xe6 25 ♖e3 d5 26 ♖xb4 ♖a5 27 c3 d4 28 ♖xd4 and now 28...♖b8?! 29 ♖a4 ♖d8+ 30 ♖d4 ♖a5 31 ♖a4 ♖d8+ 32 ♖d4 1/2-1/2 was Zambrana-Perelshteyn, Brazil 2004, but Black's play can be improved via 28...♖b5! 29 ♖c2 (29 ♖a4? ♖d8+ →) 29...♖xb2 ♖.

18...♖g8

18...♖c5!? 19 ♖he1 ♖e8 20 ♖e3 ♖a8 also looks OK for Black, and led to a quick draw in Efimenko-Cheparinov, Oropesa del Mar 2001. The text-move repositions the black king in anticipation of a subsequent check on d4. By moving the king now, Black expands his options, so that an attack on the white queen cannot be met with check.

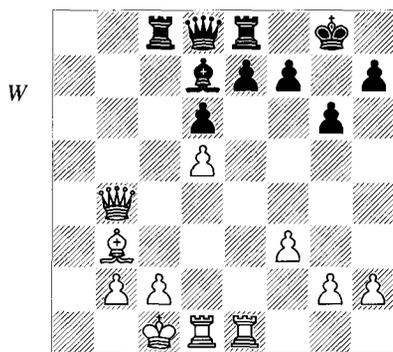
19 ♖he1

Alternatives:

a) 19 ♖d4 ♖c5 20 ♖d1 ♖a8 21 ♖d2 ♖b8 22 ♖e2 ♖a7 23 ♖f2? ♖xb3 0-1 Pelletier-Golubev, playchess.com 2004.

b) 19 h4 ♖b8 20 ♖c3 ♖b6 21 ♖d4 ♖fc8 22 ♖c4 ♖a7 23 ♖xc8+ ♖xc8 24 ♖e1 ♖a1+ 25 ♖d2 ♖xb2 26 ♖a1 ♖xa1 (26...♖g7!? 27 ♖xg7+ ♖xg7 gives Black an improved version of the game) 27 ♖xa1 ♖c7 with an equal position, Socko-T.Petrosian, playchess.com 2004.

c) 19 ♖d2?! e5! opens up an access-route to the kingside for Black's queen, and gets Black's pawns rolling in the centre. I much prefer Black's chances here, despite White's extra pawn.

19...♖e8 (D)**20 ♖d3**

20 ♖d4 ♖b8 (T.Petrosian has tried 20...♖c5!?, which also looks OK) 21 ♖c3 (21 ♖d2 ♖b6!? 22 ♖d1 ♖b5 23 ♖de4 ♖a7 24 h4 may have been a bit better for White in Macieja-Kulhanek, Czech Republic 2003) 21...♖b6 22 ♖d1 ♖b5 23 ♖b4? ♖e2+ 24 ♖xe2 ♖xb4 25 ♖xb4 ♖xb4 ♣ Timofeev-Mamedov, Dubai 2003.

20...♖b8 21 ♖d2

21 ♖c3 ♖b6 22 ♖d1 ♖b5 23 ♖d4 ♖ec8 24 ♖e3 ♖a5 25 ♖e4 (25 ♖xe7 ♖e8 followed by 26...♖a1+ looks good for Black) 25...♖c7 (also

interesting is 25...♖a1+ 26 ♖c1 ♖a6! 27 ♖xe7 ♖c4 intending 28 ♖xc4 ♖xc4, when White has serious coordination problems, and will have to give back at least one of the pawns) 26 ♖d4 ♖bb7 27 ♖4e3 ♖a6 28 ♖c3 ♖b4 29 ♖xb4 ♖xb4 30 ♖xc7 ♖d4+ 31 ♖c1 ♖f2 32 ♖xe7 ♖g1+ 33 ♖d2 ♖d4+ 34 ♖c1 ♖g1+ 35 ♖d2 ♖d4+ 1/2-1/2 Smirnov-Gashimov, Istanbul 2003.

21...♖c7!?

21...♖b6 22 ♖d1 ♖b5 (22...♖a7!? may be better) 23 c4 ♖d7 gave Black some compensation in De Vreugt-Mamedov, Istanbul 2003.

22 ♖d1

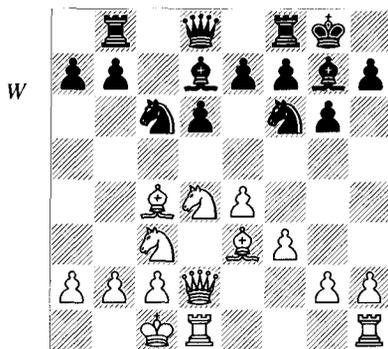
22 c4?! e5!? 23 dxe6 ♖xe6 with compensation.

22...♖b5 23 ♖c3 ♖a7

Black has compensation according to Rogozenko.

Part 3: The Chinese Dragon

1 e4 c5 2 ♖f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♖xd4 ♖f6 5 ♖c3 g6 6 ♖e3 ♖g7 7 f3 ♖c6 8 ♖d2 0-0 9 ♖c4 ♖d7 10 0-0-0 ♖b8!? (D)



This is the so-called 'Chinese Dragon'. This funny-looking move is fast becoming all the rage, but it is actually not a new idea at all. Apparently it was first played in the Soviet Union in the 1950s, but also enjoyed a brief patch of popularity in the 1970s amongst English Dragon enthusiasts. At that stage 10...♖b8 was basically a nameless entity (much like 1 f3, 2 ♖f2, a mocking opening currently popular amongst English juniors, but, well ... better) and was quickly forgotten. It was only in 2001 that Luc Henris re-introduced 10...♖b8 in a thought-provoking article for *New in Chess Yearbook* 62.

Henris dubbed the line the 'Chinese Dragon', and the name has stuck ever since. Black's basic idea is to play ...b5 and ...♗a5/e5-c4, and then meet ♖xc4 with ...bxc4, with play down the b-file. The Chinese Dragon is actually far more subtle than this synopsis suggests, and has to date attracted the attention of Dragon experts such as Mikhail Golubev, Chris Ward, Miso Cebalo and, most recently, Sergej Tiviakov.

A: 11 h4 143
B: 11 ♖b1 144
C: 11 ♖b3 145

Minor alternatives:

a) 11 g4 b5! 12 ♗dxb5 (12 ♖xb5? ♗xd4 13 ♖xd7 ♗xf3 →; 12 ♗cxb5 ♗e5 13 ♖e2 ♖xb5 14 ♗xb5 ♗xf3 15 ♖xf3 ♖xb5 ♢; 12 ♖b3 is best, when 12...♗a5 is probably most accurate, but the ambitious 12...a5! is also consistent with Black's strategy) 12...♗e5 13 ♖e2 ♖xb5 14 ♖xb5 ♗xf3 15 ♗e2 ♗xg4! 16 ♖xa7 ♖b7 17 ♗xf3 ♖xc3! 18 ♗xc3 (18 ♗xg4 ♖g7 ♢) 18...♖xa7 ♢.

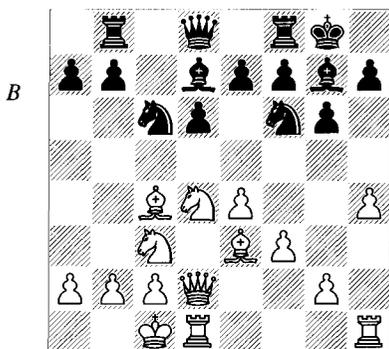
b) 11 ♗d5!? b5 12 ♗xf6+ (12 ♖e2 ♗e5 13 ♖h6 ♗c4 =) 12...♖xf6 13 ♗xc6 ♖xc6 14 ♖d5 ♗c7 15 ♖xc6 ♗xc6 16 ♖d4 ♖xd4 17 ♗xd4 ♖fc8 18 ♖d2 b4 19 ♖b1 ♖b5 20 ♖c1 a5 21 ♖d3 ♖c5 ♢ Ascic-Cebalo, Croatia 2004.

c) 11 ♗xc6 bxc6 12 ♖xa7 (12 ♖h6 ♗b6 is fine for Black, as is 12 e5 dxe5 or 12...♗d5!?) 12...♖b4 13 ♖b3 ♗a5 14 ♖e3 ♖fb8 gives Black good compensation.

d) 11 ♖h6 ♗xd4! 12 ♖xg7 ♗xf3 13 gxf3 (13 ♗h6 ♗g4 14 ♗f4 ♖xg7) 13...♖xg7 14 h4 ♗a5 ♢ Ward.

A)

11 h4 (D)



11...b5!

11...♗xd4?! 12 ♖xd4 b5 13 ♖b3 a5 14 ♖xf6! (14 e5 ±) 14...♖xf6 15 h5 is considered good for White.

After 11...b5 White has tried a range of approaches:

a) 12 ♗dxb5?! ♗e5 (12...♗a5 13 ♗d4 ♗b4 14 ♖b3 is also possible, but the text-move is probably better) 13 ♖e2 (13 ♗e2 ♗h5! 14 ♖f2 ♗a5 → Anka) 13...♗a5 14 ♗d4 ♖fc8! (in his article for *New in Chess Yearbook 71*, Emil Anka mentions the lines 14...♗b4?! 15 ♗b3 a5 16 ♗d5! ♗xd5 17 exd5 ♗b7 18 ♗xa5 ♖a8 19 ♗b6 ♗c8 20 ♗a5 ± and 14...♖e6!? 15 ♗xe6 ♖xb2!! 16 ♗a4 {16 ♖xb2 ♗xe4!} 16...♗xa4 17 ♖xb2 ♗xf3! 18 ♗c3 fxe6 19 ♗b3 ♗d5+ 20 ♖c1 ♗xb3 21 axb3 ♗xe3 22 ♖xf3 ♗xd1 23 ♖xd1 ♢) 15 ♗b3 (15 g4 ♖e6!? with the idea 16 ♗xe6? ♖xb2! 17 ♖xb2 ♗xe4! 18 fxe4 ♗d3+! → Rogozenko) 15...♖xb3! 16 cxb3 ♗xa2 17 ♗c2 ♗a5 ♢ Stanford-Anka, McMinnville 2004.

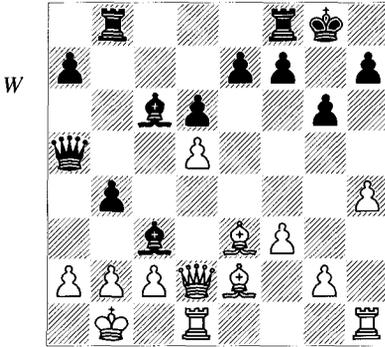
b) 12 ♗cxb5 ♗a5! 13 ♖e2 (13 ♗a3 ♗xc4 14 ♗xc4 ♗c7 15 b3 ♖fc8 gives Black good compensation; 13 ♗e2? e5 wins for Black) 13...e5 14 ♗xd6 exd4 15 ♖xd4 ♗c7 (15...♖e6!? may also be good according to Rogozenko) 16 ♖c3 ♗b7 17 e5 ♗h5 18 ♖a6 ♗xd6 19 ♗xd6 ♖h6+ 20 ♖d2 (Reeve-Mihelich, Los Angeles 2003) 20...♖xd2+! 21 ♖xd2 ♗a5 22 ♖c4 ♖b5 ♢ Rogozenko.

c) 12 ♗xc6?! ♖xc6 13 ♖e2 (13 ♖b3?! a5 14 ♖h6 {14 ♗d5 a4 ♢} 14...b4 15 ♗d5 {15 ♗a4 ♗e8 16 h5 ♖xh6! 17 ♗xh6 ♖xa4 18 hxg6 ♖xb3 19 gxh7+ ♖h8 ♢} 15...a4 16 ♖c4 ♖xd5 17 ♖xd5 e6 18 ♖xg7 ♖xg7 19 ♖c4 ♗c7 20 ♖d3 b3 21 axb3 ♖xb3 22 h5 a3 23 hxg6 fxg6 → Carvalho-Romero, Lisbon 1998; 13 ♖d3 b4 14 ♗e2 ♗a5 =) and now Black has two options:

c1) 13...♗a5!? 14 ♖b1? (14 ♗d5 ♗xa2 15 ♗xe7+ ♖h8 Ward) 14...b4 15 ♗d5 ♗xd5 16 exd5 ♖c3!! (D).

17 ♗c1 (17 ♗d3 ♖b5 →) 17...♖xd5 18 b3 (18 ♖xd5 ♗xd5 19 bxc3 bxc3+ 20 ♖a1 ♖b2 →) 18...♖fc8 → Toma-Cernousek, Frydek Mistek 2004.

c2) 13...b4 14 ♗d5 ♖xd5 15 exd5 ♗c7 16 h5?! (16 ♖b1 ♖fc8 17 ♖c1 {17 h5? ♗xd5! →} 17...♗b7 18 ♖cd1 is better according to English junior Tim Woodward, although Black still has the advantage) 16...b3 (16...♗xh5!?) 17



axb3 ♖xb3 18 ♔d4 ♜fb8 ♠ Borisek-Woodward, Budva U-18 Ech 2003.

d) 12 ♗b3 a5!? (12... ♖a5 transposes to Line C1) 13 ♘dxb5 a4!? 14 ♗xa4 ♜a5! (14... ♘e5!? was Luc Henris's original suggestion, but Anka suggests that White can obtain a clear advantage with 15 b3 ♜a5 16 ♘d5! ±) and now the following lines are of interest:

d1) 15 a3 ♘e5 16 b4 ♜a6 17 ♘c7 ♜b7 ♠.

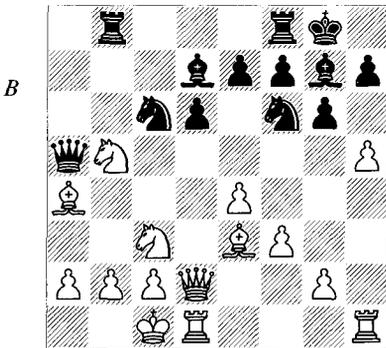
d2) 15 ♗b1 ♘e5 16 ♜d4 ♗xb5 17 ♗xb5 ♜xb5 18 ♘xb5 ♜xb5 19 ♜b6 ♜d7 ♠.

d3) 15 ♘d4 ♘d4 16 ♗xd7 ♜b4! ♠.

d4) 15 ♜e2?! ♘b4! 16 a3 ♗xb5 17 ♗xb5 ♘xe4! 18 fxe4 (or 18 axb4?? ♜a1+ 19 ♘b1 ♗xb2#) 18... ♗xc3 -+.

d5) 15 b3 ♜fc8 and now 16 ♘d5 is relatively best, when 16... ♖xb5! 17 ♜xa5 ♜xa5 18 ♗xc6 ♘d5 19 ♜xd5 ♜xa2 20 ♗xd7 ♜xc2+ 21 ♘d1 ♜c7! gives Black sufficient counterplay according to Anka.

d6) 15 h5! (D) is the only move to challenge Black's set-up.

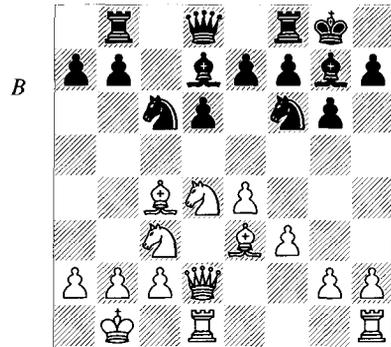


15... ♘e5 16 hxg6 (16 ♜e2 ♘hx5 ♠; 16 h6 ♗h8 17 ♘d5 threatens 18 ♘xe7# but Black should be OK via 17... ♜xd2+ 18 ♜xd2 ♘d5 19 ♜xd5 ♘c4 20 ♗d4 e6, when he has good

compensation according to Henris) 16... ♘c4 (16... ♗xb5 was played in Gagunashvili-Nikolaidis, Athens 2003, and now 17 gxf7+! would have given White a significant advantage according to Henris, who also proposed the text-move as an improvement) 17 gxf7+ (although this is White's most obvious move, 17 ♜d3!? ♘xb2 18 ♗xb2 hxg6 { 18... ♗xb5 is apparently also reasonable} 19 ♗d4! ♜fc8 and 17 ♜d4!? are analysed extensively by Anka in *NIC Yearbook 71*, with the conclusion that White should be slightly better, while 17 gxh7+?! supposedly leads to an unclear position) 17... ♗xf7 18 ♜d4! (18 ♜d3? ♘xb2! 19 ♗xb2 ♗xb5 20 ♗xb5 ♘d5 -+; 18 ♜e2? ♘xb2! -+) 18... ♖xb5!? (after 18... ♘xb2, 19 ♗xb2 ♘e4! ♠ is excellent for Black, but 19 ♜a7! looks decidedly more awkward) 19 ♗xb5 (19 ♜xc4 ♜b4 ♠) 19... ♗xb5 20 e5 ♘d7 21 ♜d5 ♘xe3 22 ♜xb5 ♜xb5 23 ♘xb5 ♗xe5 24 ♜d1 ♘c5 ∞ Anka.

B)

11 ♗b1 (D)



11...b5!?

This is the most principled continuation, but Black can also exercise some restraint with 11... ♘e5!?. Then:

a) 12 ♗e2!? was played in the game Bratović-D.Boros, Hungary 2002, and is probably superior. Black immediately went wrong with 12...a6, but Rogozenko suggests that Black's play could be improved via 12...b5!? 13 ♘dxb5 (13 ♘cxb5 ♜b7 14 ♘c3 ♜c7 with compensation; 13 ♗xb5? ♗xb5 14 ♘dxb5 ♘c4 ♠), which transposes to the main line.

b) 12 ♗b3 b5 13 g4 a5 (13... ♘c4!? ♠) 14 a3? (14 g5 ♘h5 15 f4!?! = Anka) 14...a4 15 ♗a2

b4 16 axb4 ♖xb4 17 g5 ♗xf3! 18 ♗xf3 ♗xe4
 → Martić-Cebalo, Pula 2002.

12 ♗dxb5

12 ♗xc6?! ♗xc6 13 ♗d5 b4 14 ♗e2 ♗xd5
 15 exd5 ♖b5 ♢ Aung Aung-Myo Naing, Bang-
 kok 2004.

12...♗e5

12...♗c8 is a suggestion of Rogozenko's. Black intends ...♗b7 and ...♖fc8, with counter-play on the queenside.

13 ♗e2 ♖a5 14 ♗d4

Or: 14 ♗xa7? ♖xb2+ 15 ♗xb2 ♗xe4! 16 fxe4 ♖b8+ →; 14 ♗xa7?! ♖b7 ♢ (Rogozenko).

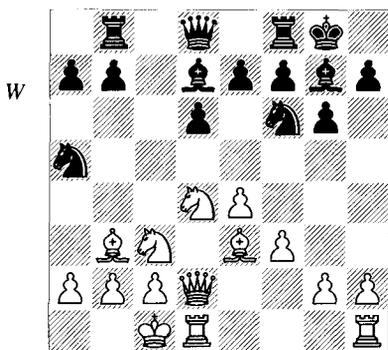
14...♖fc8

Black has compensation for the pawn, but the position remains unclear.

C)

11 ♗b3 ♗a5 (D)

11...♗e5?! is considered inaccurate on account of 12 f4!? ♗eg4 13 h3! ♗xe3 14 ♗xe3 ± Russell-Kafka, Goa 2002, when White's central dominance guarantees him an edge.



The text-move obviously avoids 12 f4, but also gives Black the additional option of simply taking off the b3-bishop. Now:

- C1: 12 h4** 145
- C2: 12 ♗h6!** 146

Minor alternatives:

a) 12 g4 b5 13 g5 ♗h5 14 ♗de2 (14 ♗b1 ♗c4 15 ♗xc4 bxc4 16 ♗a1 ♗b6 with the initiative, Castellanos-Garrido Dominguez, Seville 2004) 14...♗xb3+ 15 axb3 (15 cxb3 ♖c8 16 ♗b1 a5 17 ♗g3 a4 18 ♗xh5 gxh5 19 bxa4 ♗xc3 20 bxc3 bxa4 gives rise to an interesting position according to Wu) 15...b4 16 ♗d5 (16

♗a4 ♖a5 17 ♗d5 ♖a6 18 ♗g3 ♗c6 19 ♗d3 ♗b5 20 ♗d5 ♗xg3 21 hxg3 ♗e2 wins for Black) 16...♗e6 17 ♗d4 ♗xd5 18 exd5 (18 ♗xg7 ♗xg7 19 ♗xd5 ♖c8 20 f4 ♖b6 21 ♗b1 ♖c5 ♢/♢) 18...♖a5 19 ♖e3 ♖fc8 ♢ Sanchez Enrique-Li Wu, Kallithea U-14 Wch 2003.

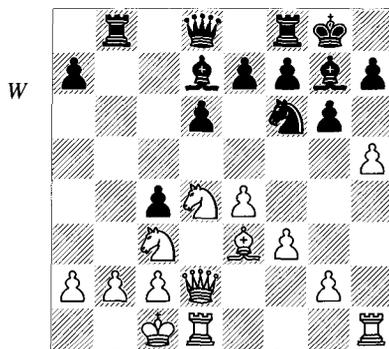
b) 12 ♗d5 ♗xd5 13 exd5 b5 14 ♗h6 ♗c4! 15 ♗xc4 (15 ♖g5!?) 15...♗xh6! 16 ♖xh6 bxc4 17 h4 ♖a5 18 h5 (18 ♗b1 ♖b6!? 19 h5 ♖fb8 20 b3 ♖a6 and 18 a3 c3 19 ♗b3 cxb2+ 20 ♗xb2 ♖fc8 both give Black a powerful attack) 18...♖xa2 19 ♗d2 ♖a5+ (19...♖xb2!?) 20 ♗e2 ♖xd5 21 hxg6 ♖e5+ 22 ♗f2 ♖g7 23 ♖xg7+ ♗xg7 24 ♖xh7+ ♗f6 (24...♗xg6!?) 25 ♖xf7+ ♖xf7 26 gxf7 ♗xf7 27 ♖a1 e5 28 ♖xa7 ♗e8 29 ♗e2 ♖xb2 gave Black a definite edge in the endgame in Farkas-Cernousek, Budapest 2003.

C1)

12 h4 b5 13 h5

13 ♗b1 ♗c4 (13...♗xb3 has been played here with some frequency, but is universally condemned by commentators due to 14 cxb3!, when it is difficult to see how Black will be able to make further progress on the queenside) 14 ♗xc4 bxc4 is similar to the main line, but with the important distinction that White gains the additional defensive resource 15 ♗a1! ♖b6!? 16 ♖b1 with an unclear position, as in Medvegý-Cernousek, Budapest 2004.

13...♗c4 14 ♗xc4 bxc4 (D)



15 hxg6

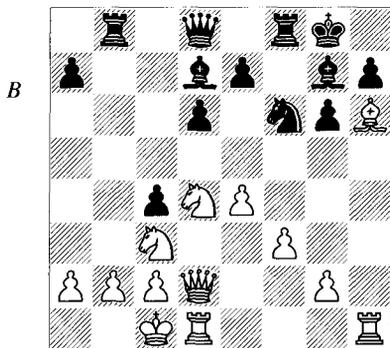
15 ♗d5?! ♗xd5 16 exd5 ♖b6 17 c3 ♖a5 18 ♗b1 (18 a3 ♖xd5 19 hxg6 fxg6 20 ♗h6 ♗xh6 21 ♖xh6 {or 21 ♖xh6 ♖f7 22 ♖dh1 e5! → T.Johansson-Tan, London 2003} 21...♖f7 22

♞h4 e5 wins for Black) was Nadenić-Matković, corr. 1980(!), and now Black should have played $18... \text{♞xd5}$ $19 \text{ h} \times \text{g6}$ (19 ♙h6 ♙xh6 $20 \text{ ♞xh6 g5!$ leaves White's queen trapped on h6) $19... \text{fxg6} \mp$.

Various commentators have suggested that White's best in this line is actually $15 \text{ ♙h6!?$, delaying the capture on g6 until a more opportune moment.

15...fxg6 16 ♙h6 (D)

16 ♞d5?! ♞xd5 17 exd5 ♞b6 18 b3 (18 ♞c3 ♞c5 and 18 c3 ♞a5 give White problems with his d5-pawn) $18... \text{♞a6}$ 19 ♖b1 ♙f5! 20 ♞xf5 ♙xb3+!! 21 cxb3 ♙xf5+ \rightarrow is a nice line given by Desmond Tan.



16...♞b6!?

This move looks good, but the most popular line is $16... \text{♞a5}$ 17 ♙xg7 ♖xg7 18 ♞h6+ ♖f7 (Henris suggests that $18... \text{♖g8!?$ is more accurate, and Ward pointed out that 19 ♞d5 ♙f7 20 ♞xf6+ exf6 $21 \text{ ♖b1 f5!?$ 22 exf5 ♙xf5 23 ♞xf5 ♞xf5 looks OK for Black) $19 \text{ g4!?$ (19 ♞de2?! ♞b4 20 ♞f4 ♖e8 21 ♞e3 ♞xb2+ $22 \text{ ♖d2 ♞b6} \mp$ Sciortino-G.Jones, Montecatini Terme 2003) $19... \text{g5}$ ($19... \text{♖e8!?$ 20 g5 ♞h5 intending 21 ♞xh7 ♞xg5+ is another consideration) 20 ♞f5! ♙xf5 21 ♞xg5! ♞b6 ($21... \text{♙xb2}$ 22 ♞xf5! ♞xf5 $23 \text{ exf5} \pm$) 22 exf5 (22 ♞xf5 also looks good) $22... \text{♞xb2+}$ 23 ♖d2 is better for White according to Rogozenko, who points out that White's immediate threat is 24 ♙xh7+ ♞xh7 25 ♞g6\# .

17 b3 cxb3 18 cxb3

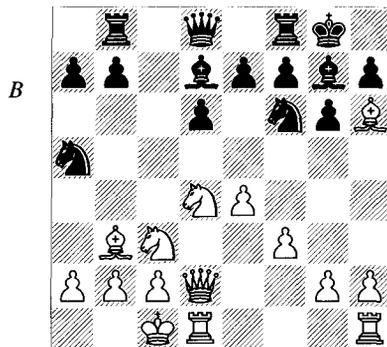
18 axb3 ♙xh6 19 ♞xh6 ♙f7! 20 g4 ♙c8 ($20... \text{e5}$ 21 ♞de2 ♙e6 is also possible) 21 ♖b2 ♞c5 $22 \text{ ♞de2 ♙b5} \mp$ Ward.

$18... \text{♙xh6}$ 19 ♞xh6 ♙bc8 20 ♖b2 ♙f7 21 g4 e5 22 ♞de2 ♙e6 23 g5 ♞d7 24 f4 exf4

Now 25 ♞xf4 ♙xb3!! is very strong for Black, while 25 ♞d4 ♞c5! \mp was Pg-Grafl, Hungary 2003.

C2)

12 ♙h6! (D)



As theory currently stands (and please remember the theory on this line is moving pretty fast!), the text-move represents White's best option.

12...b5

This is currently the main line of the Chinese Dragon, but Golubev has experimented with $12... \text{♞xb3+!?$, after which White has the following possibilities:

a) 13 axb3 b5 ($13... \text{♞a5}$ 14 ♖b1 ♙xh6 15 ♞xh6 b5 16 h4 b4 17 ♞d5 ♞xd5 $18 \text{ exd5 f6!?$ 19 ♙he1 ♙f7 when d5 is weak and Black can think about $20... \text{♙b6}$ and $... \text{♙a6}$) 14 h4 ♙xh6 15 ♞xh6 b4 16 ♞b1 e5 17 ♞e2 is suggested by Ward as giving Black a reasonable position. Indeed, I much prefer Black's chances here.

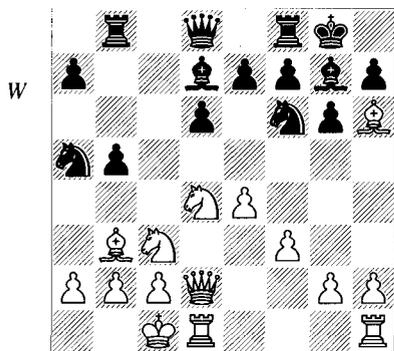
b) Ward also suggests that White could consider $13 \text{ ♞xb3!?$ keeping his queenside structure intact.

c) 13 cxb3 ♙xh6 14 ♞xh6 b5 and then:

c1) Golubev suggests that 15 ♖b1 is unclear, whereas Rogozenko assesses the position as slightly better for White. A recent example went $15... \text{b4}$ $16 \text{ ♞ce2 a5!?$ (I am not sure that this actually does too much; perhaps Black should consider focusing his play more on the centre) 17 g4 a4 18 bxa4 ♙xa4 19 b3 ♙d7 20 ♙hg1 ♞a5 21 ♞f5 ♙xf5 22 gxf5 with an unclear position, Kapkowicz-Köpcke, Bavaria 2003. White eventually won, but Black is not necessarily worse at this stage.

c2) 15 e5 dxe5! 16 ♖c6 ♗xc6! 17 ♗xd8 ♗fxd8 18 ♗d1! b4 (Golubev mentions the idea 18...♗dc8!?) 19 ♖b1 b4 20 ♖e2 e4 21 ♖d4 without assigning it any assessment; Ward continues this analysis with the variation 21...exf3! 22 ♖xc6 ♗xc6 23 ♗f4 e5 24 ♗xe5 ♗e8, which actually looks quite reasonable for Black; of course it is also possible to preserve the light-squared bishop with 21...♗b7) 19 ♗xd8+ ♗xd8 20 ♖b1 and now Black played 20...♖h5 with a highly unclear position in Djukić-Golubev, Bucharest 2002, but Golubev suggested that 20...♖d5 or even 20...e4! is superior.

We now return to 12...b5 (D):



13 h4

The most direct, but not necessarily the best. White has some interesting alternatives:

a) 13 ♖d5 ♗xh6 14 ♗xh6 e5! 15 ♖e2 ♖xb3+ 16 axb3 ♖xd5 17 ♗xd5 ♗e6 ♣.

b) 13 g4 gives Black three interesting responses:

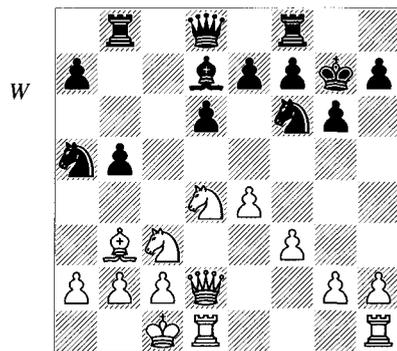
b1) 13...b4! 14 ♖d5 ♖xb3+ 15 ♖xb3 ♖xd5 16 ♗xg7 ♖xg7 17 exd5 a5 18 h4 gave White a clear advantage in Cheparinov-Banikas, Plovdiv Echt 2003, because Black's light-squared bishop is of little use in defending the king-side, or furthering the queenside attack. Black should try to avoid these types of positions like the plague!

b2) 13...♖c4! 14 ♗xc4 (14 ♗g5 ♗b6 is equal according to Rogozenko) 14...bxc4 15 ♗xg7 ♖xg7 16 ♖d5 ♖xd5 17 exd5 gave Black counterplay in Novak-Manicuta, Balatonlelle 2003. Note the fundamental difference between this position and the one reached in Cheparinov-Banikas above. In that game Black was clearly worse because the b4-pawn obstructed his major pieces. In this position Black has

counterplay because his major pieces have access to the b-file.

b3) 13...♗xh6! 14 ♗xh6 e5! (14...b4 15 ♖d5 ♖xb3+ {15...e6 16 ♖xf6+ ♗xf6!}) 16 ♖xb3 ♖xd5 17 exd5 e5 18 dxe6 ♗xe6 =) 15 ♖de2 b4 16 ♖d5 ♖xb3+ 17 axb3 ♖xd5 18 ♗xd5 ♗e6 ♣ Rogozenko.

c) 13 ♗xg7! ♖xg7 (D) and then:



c1) 14 ♗he1 b4 (14...♖c4!?) 15 ♖d5 e5 16 ♖e2 (16 ♖xf6 ♗xf6 =) 16...♖xb3+ 17 cxb3 ♖xd5 18 ♗xd5 (18 exd5? ♗f5 +-) 18...♗b6 19 ♖b1 was at least equal for Black in A.Kovačević-I.Marković, Budva 2003. Rogozenko points out that Black could now have considered the natural 19...♗e6 or even 19...♗h4 intending 20 h3! ♗f2!.

c2) 14 ♖d5! was suggested by Kovačević in his notes on this game for *Informator* 88 and is far more dangerous for Black. After 14...e5 (14...♖xd5 15 exd5 ±; 14...♖xb3+ 15 ♖xb3! {15 cxb3 e5 =}) 15...♖xd5 16 exd5 ± Kovačević; 14...♖c4 15 ♗xc4 bxc4 16 ♖xf6 and 14...♖e8 15 h4 both promise White at least a slight edge according to Rogozenko) Rogozenko points out 15 ♖xf6 ♖xf6 (15...♗xf6? 16 ♗xa5 exd4 17 ♗xa7 +-; 15...♖xb3+ 16 ♖xb3 ♗xf6 17 ♗xd6 ±) 16 ♖e2 ♖xb3+ 17 axb3 ♗b6 18 ♗h6 ±. Black is definitely in need of improvements in this line, and Rogozenko's analysis may embody a strong argument for preferring Golubev's 12...♖xb3+.

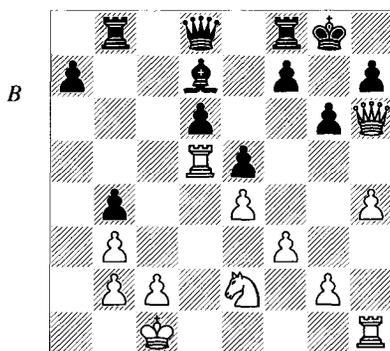
13...♗xh6! 14 ♗xh6 e5

14...b4 15 ♖d5 e5 allows 16 ♖f5! according to Ward.

15 ♖de2 b4 16 ♖d5 ♖xb3+ 17 axb3

17 cxb3 ♖xd5 18 ♗xd5 ♗e6 gave Black good play in L'Ami-Tiviakov, Leeuwarden 2004.

17...♖xd5 18 ♗xd5 (D)



18...♖b6!

18...♗e6 19 h5 ♖b7!? (19...♖c7 20 hxg6 fxg6 21 ♖xd6 ♖fc8 22 ♖c6! ♗xc6 23 ♗xh7+ ♗f8 24 ♗h6+ ♗f7 25 ♗h7+ ♗f6 26 ♗h4+ ♗f7 27 ♗h7+ ♗f6 led to a forced draw in Mariano Nelson-Li Wu, Kallithea U-14 Wch 2003) 20 ♖d3 and now 20...♗e7?! was played in Felgaer-Ward, Isle of Man 2002, but Ward later recommended 20...♗c7!. A recent outing with this idea continued 21 ♖hd1 (21 f4 ♖c8 ♠) 21...♖c8 22 ♖1d2 ♖b6 23 ♗d1 ♖c6 24 ♗g5!? ♖xc2 25 ♖xd6 ♖xd2+ 26 ♖xd2 ♗xb3+ and Black was much better in E.Berg-P.Carlsson, Hallstahammar 2003.

19 h5?!

Something like 19 ♗g3!? must be better, although after 19...f6 I don't see how White can improve his position much, whereas Black is just getting down to work!

19...g5! 20 ♖xd6 f6! 21 ♖hd1 ♖xd6 22 ♖xd6 ♗e7 23 ♖d2 a5

♠ Carvalho da Silva-da Costa Junior, corr. 2004. It is going to be a long time before White's queen moves anywhere!

Conclusion

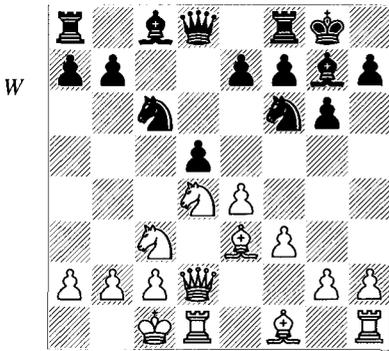
The Chinese Dragon is a conceptually rich and dangerous weapon. Although still in its infancy, the Chinese Dragon has attracted the attention

of many of the Dragon's chief exponents and offers Black excellent chances of playing for the full point, while at the same time avoiding the seemingly endless theory that accompanies the Soltis Variation. Those qualities aside, the notion of putting the rook on b8 with the sole idea of advancing the b-pawn still seems somewhat superficial to me. White probably can't do much damage with a direct attack on the black king, but if the last 11 chapters have taught us anything, it is that White's best methods of proving an advantage in the Dragon frequently depend upon first extracting a positional edge, and only pursuing a kingside attack if or when Black weakens his king position. To this end I would advise the reader to examine Kovačević's suggestion of 11 ♗b3 ♗a5 12 ♗h6 b5 13 ♗xg7 ♗xg7 14 ♗d5! in conjunction with Rogozenko's supplementary analysis. White's chances in this line appear favourable at this time, and this is an entirely logical conclusion to reach. Black has placed his rook on the relatively inactive b8-square (thus White should avoid opening the b-file by capturing on c4, and thereby justifying Black's play), and has moved a knight over to a5 (i.e. away from the kingside), so logically White should take this opportunity to exchange Black's f6-knight and g7-bishop, thereby stripping all of the defenders away from Black's kingside.

I hope that, when stated in these terms, it is clear why I find the clinical logic of Kovačević's suggestion so powerfully attractive. On the other hand, things aren't necessarily so bad for Black. Nobody has actually tried Kovačević's suggestion yet, and it clearly has not put Tiviakov or the rest of the Chinese Dragon clan off, so Black's play can probably be improved at some point. It is also worth noting that Black can avoid Kovačević's suggestion by following Golubev's idea at move 12 (12...♗xb3+!?), which also appears reasonable for Black.

13 9 0-0-0 d5: White Takes the Pawn

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 g6 6 ♙e3 ♙g7 7 f3 ♘c6 8 ♖d2 0-0 9 0-0-0 d5 (D)

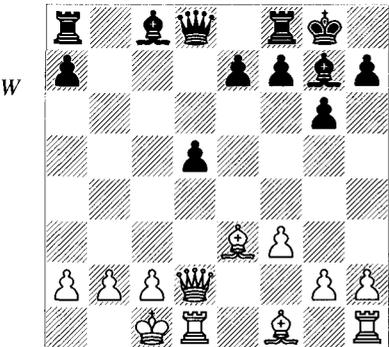


Black makes this logical thrust in the centre, seeking to exploit the drawback of White not playing ♙c4.

10 exd5 ♘xd5 11 ♘xc6

When 9...d5 first came to light, 11 ♘xd5 was played occasionally, but Black has a comfortable game in all lines; for example, 11...♖xd5 12 c4!? ♖d6 13 ♙e2 (13 ♘b5?! ♖xd2+ 14 ♙xd2 ♙f5 ♢ Kantor-J.Horvath, Budapest 1981) 13...♘xd4 14 ♙xd4 ♙d8 (I would be tempted by 14...e5 15 ♙c3 ♖a6 16 ♗b1 ♙f5+ 17 ♗a1 ♙ac8, when Black has strong counterplay) 15 ♙xg7 ♖xd2+ 16 ♙xd2 ♙xd2 17 ♗xd2 ♗xg7 with an equal position according to Attila Schneider.

11...♙xc6 12 ♘xd5 cxd5 (D)



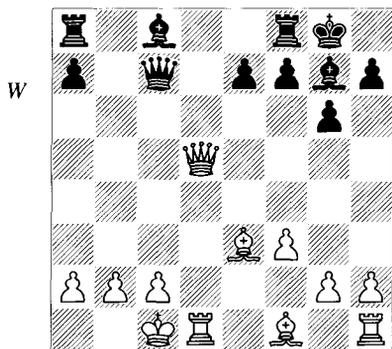
13 ♖xd5!

Having liquidated the central tension, White's only chance of an advantage rests in accepting Black's gambit and attempting to weather the storm and retain the extra pawn. Although acceptance is obviously the critical test of Black's gambit, the task that now lies before White is hardly enviable: in return for the pawn, Black has unobstructed dominance of the a1-h8 diagonal, good diagonals for his light-squared bishop to occupy from the e6- or f5-square (both of which bear down on White's king position) and, perhaps most importantly, semi-open b- and c-files that can be rapidly occupied by Black's major pieces, allowing them to coordinate perfectly with Black's raking bishop-pair. It should also be noted that Black's a-pawn can prove instrumental in various situations. If White plays b3 at some point, Black can advance ...a5-a4, with the idea of ...axb3, opening up the a-file for a major-piece invasion. Alternatively, circumstances often conspire to create situations where White's queen is placed on a3, guarding the b2-pawn, and Black finds it necessary to dislodge the white queen in order to continue the attack. Frequently the only way to achieve this is by placing a pawn on the a5-square, and then using the pawn to support the black queen on b4 (essentially threatening to capture the white queen on a3). If White exchanges the queens, then Black will recapture with the a5-pawn, opening up the a-file for a black rook on a8. It should also be noted that White is still behind in development – it will be some time before the f1-bishop and the h1-rook can be activated.

Before examining the main line, it should be noted that 13 ♙h6 enjoyed a brief spell of popularity in the early days of 9...d5, but now it is of primarily academic interest. Play might now continue: 13...♙xh6! 14 ♖xh6 ♙b8 (this gives Black a safe game with minimal risk, and is consequently preferred by leading Dragon theoreticians such as Tiviakov, Golubev and

Alterman; however, practice has also shown 14...♖a5 and 14...e5!? to be potentially dangerous alternatives) 15 h4 ♔f5 16 ♔d3 (this is White's best; in terms of alternatives, 16 g4? ♔xc2! 17 ♔xc2 ♖c7+ 18 ♔d3 {18 ♔b1 ♖xb2+} 18...♖xb2 ♢ is probably not what White wants, and after 16 h5, 16...♖b6 gives Black a good game, although 16...♔xc2 17 ♔xc2 ♖c7+ 18 ♔d3 ♖xb2 is also interesting) 16...♖b6 17 b3 ♖f6 18 ♔b1 e6 (18...♖fc8!? 19 h5 e6 20 hxg6 ♖xg6 21 ♔xf5 ♖xf5 22 ♔d3 ♖g6 23 ♖e3?! ♖xc2 24 ♔xc2 ♖xg2+ 25 ♔d2 ♖xh1 ♢ Loncar-Werther, Bozen 1992) 19 h5 ♖b7 20 hxg6 1/2-1/2, Kuzmin-Tiviakov, Belgorod GMA qual 1989. Black will recapture with 20...fxg6, allowing the b7-rook to defend the vulnerable h7-point, and thereby exhausting White's attacking options.

13...♖c7 (D)



14 ♖c5

This is White's only real attempt to fight for an advantage. Other moves are known to land White in hot water:

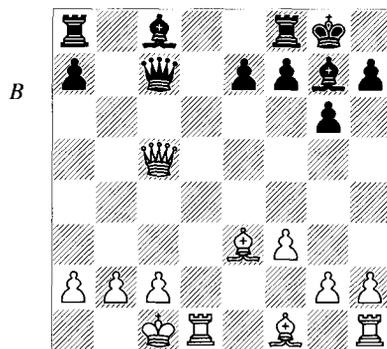
a) 14 ♖d2 ♖b8 15 ♔d4? ♔d8 16 ♖c3 ♖f4+ 17 ♔e3 ♖xe3+ 0-1 Sultanova-Kighikina, Rostov on Don 1996.

b) 14 ♖c4 relinquishes control of the fifth rank, and therefore is probably best met by the active 14...♖e5! 15 ♔d4? (objectively 15 ♖c3 is better, but Black has a very comfortable end-game after 15...♖xc3 16 bxc3) 15...♖f4+ 16 ♔b1 ♔e6 17 ♖c3 ♔fd8 18 g3 ♖xd4 → Pena Gomez-Torres Garrigos, Mondariz Balneario 2000.

c) 14 ♖xa8 is White's most obvious continuation. White will gain two rooks and a pawn in exchange for the queen. In most situations this material gain would be in White's favour, but

here Black's superior development and active pieces mean that White will struggle to maintain the balance. Play usually continues: 14...♔f5 15 ♖xf8+ ♔xf8 16 ♔d2 (16 ♔d3 ♖e5 17 ♔d2 ♔xd3 18 ♔xd3 ♖xb2 19 ♔xa7 f5 20 ♔e3 f4 21 ♔d2 ♖d4+ 22 ♔e2 ♖c4+ 23 ♔e1 ♖xc2 24 ♖f1 ♖xa2 ♢ Barkov-Manojlo, Alushta 1998) 16...h5! (objectively this is probably Black's best, although 16...♔e6 and 16...♖b8 also have their followers, and both have scored well in practice; by advancing ...h5 Black restricts White's pawn advances on the kingside and thereby secures the position of the bishop on f5 {for the time being at least}; importantly, Black also gives his king a flight-square on h7) 17 ♔e2 (17 ♔c4 ♔xb2+ 18 ♔xb2 ♖xc4 is much better for Black, Reduan-Devry, Jakarta 1997) 17...♖b8 18 b3 ♔c3 19 ♔d5 ♔e6 20 ♔d3 ♖b4 21 ♔b1 ♔f5 22 ♔d8+ ♔g7 23 ♔hd1 ♔f6 ♢ Stoliar-Beilin, Leningrad 1955.

We now return to 14 ♖c5 (D):



Here Black has a choice:

A: 14...♖b7 150

B: 14...♖b8!? 154

A)

14...♖b7

Now:

A1: 15 b3!? 151

A2: 15 ♖a3!? 152

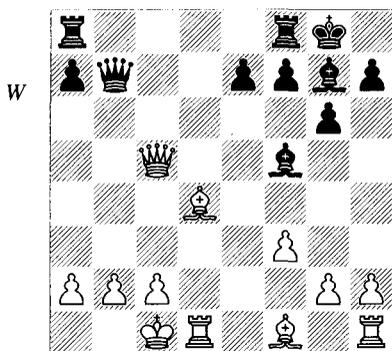
Although these two moves are well established as White's best chance of an advantage in this variation, a brief summary of the alternatives is warranted.

a) 15 ♖b5? is known to be poor on account of the simple 15...♖xb5 16 ♔xb5 ♖b8 17 ♔c4

♙xb2+ 18 ♖d2 a5, when Black already has the advantage.

b) 15 c3?! ♙f5 16 ♗b5 (16 ♙d3 ♖ab8 17 ♗a3 ♙xc3 18 b3, Hein-Bohnsack, Schleswig Holstein Ch 1988, 18...♗fc8 → Schneider) 16...♗c7 17 ♗c4 ♗e5 18 ♙d2 ♗fd8 19 f4 ♗a5 20 ♙e2? ♗ac8 and now 21 ♗a6 ♙xc3! 0-1 was Byvshev-Beilin, Leningrad 1955, and 21 ♗b3 ♗b8 22 ♗c4 ♗a3!! → is given by Gufeld and Nesis.

c) 15 ♙d4?! ♙f5 (D) and now:



c1) 16 ♙d3 ♗fc8 17 ♗a3 ♙xd4! 18 ♙xf5 ♗c3!! 19 ♙e4 (19 bxc3 ♙e3+ 20 ♗d2 ♗b8 ♢) 19...♗b6 20 bxc3 (20 ♗xe7 ♗xc2+ 21 ♙xc2 ♗xb2+ 22 ♖d2 ♗c3+ 23 ♖c1 ♗c8 → Tolnai-Perenyi, Budapest 1981) 20...♙e3+ 21 ♗d2 (Heuser-Hubert, Porz 1990) and now the simple 21...♗d8 22 ♗hd1 ♙xd2+ 23 ♗xd2 ♗g1+ gives Black a decisive advantage.

c2) 16 ♙xg7 ♗fc8! ♢ Bjerring-Summerscale, Groningen 1995.

c3) 16 ♗a3 ♗ac8 17 c4 (17 c3? ♙h6+ →) 17...e5 18 ♙e3 ♗c6 with the intention of doubling up on the c-file appears clearly better for Black.

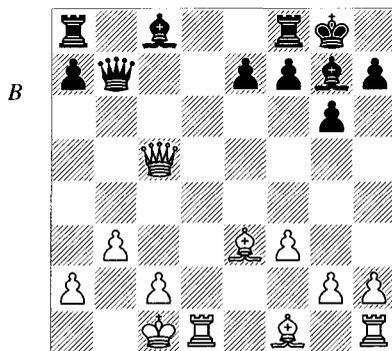
c4) 16 c4 ♗fc8 17 ♗a3 e5 18 ♙e3 ♗ab8 19 b3 ♙f8! ♢ 20 ♗xa7? ♗b4! 21 ♗d2 ♗c3+ 22 ♖d1 ♗a8 23 ♗b6 ♗cb8 → Le Thi Phuong Lieng-Demidenko, Budapest 1997.

c5) 16 ♗b5 ♗c7 17 ♗c5 (probably best, especially given that 17 ♗e2 ♗fc8 18 c3 ♙h6+ 19 ♙e3 ♗e5 → Sieber-Werner, Leipzig 1995 and 17 ♗c4 ♗f4+ 18 ♖b1 ♗fc8 19 ♙c5 ♗e5 20 ♙d4 ♗d6 0-1 Arutyunyan-Alagulian, Moscow 1998, certainly don't inspire confidence!) 17...♗f4+ (17...♗fc8 and 17...♗xc5 18 ♙xc5 ♗fc8 19 b4 a5 ♢ also look very good for Black) 18 ♙e3 ♗a4 19 ♗c4 ♗a5 20 ♗d5 (20 ♙d2

♗b6 21 ♗b4 ♗fc8 22 c4 ♗f2 23 ♗b3 ♗ab8 24 ♙e3 ♙xb2+ 0-1 Goldenberg-Roos, Germany tt 1998/9) 20...♗fc8 21 c3 ♗xc3+ 0-1 Demoulin-Neumann, Glorney Cup 1995.

A1)

15 b3!? (D)



This line represents White's only real alternative to 15 ♗a3, and given that recent developments have left White struggling in that line, we might reasonably expect theoreticians' attention now to shift toward 15 b3. There are positive and negative sides to this move. On the one hand, it may seem that it is unduly committal: White cuts out any possibility of playing c3 to block the long diagonal (which has been severely weakened), provides Black's a-pawn with a convenient target, and leaves the queen vulnerable on c5. It might also be argued that 15 b3 constitutes the concession of a tempo on the basis that, in the 15 ♗a3 line, Black often plays ...♗ab8 in order to induce White to play b3. On the other hand, 15 b3 may be necessary at some point anyway, so playing it immediately could be regarded as a pre-emptive measure. Furthermore, White does not waste time retreating the queen to a3 (where it is offside) and instead keeps the old girl centralized, where she can still cause Black some mischief. On balance, I am not convinced by White's arguments, but that is just my opinion.

15...♙f5 16 ♙d3!

The only move to test Black. Other moves fail to impress:

a) 16 ♗a5 ♗fc8 17 c4 ♗c6 18 ♙e2 occurred in Horton-Ellison, Oxford 1967, and now 18...♗e6! 19 ♗d2 ♗a6! with the threat of

20...♖a3+ looks very strong indeed; e.g., 20 ♔d4 ♖d8 –+.

b) 16 ♖b5 ♖c7 17 ♔d3 ♖c3 18 ♖c4 ♖b2+ 19 ♔d2 ♖ac8 0-1 Fuellgrabe-S.Hansen, Berlin 1996.

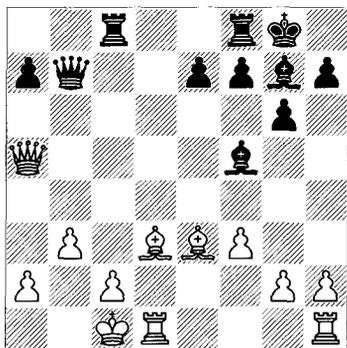
c) 16 ♔c4 ♖ac8 17 ♖d5? (17 ♖a3!? is a better try) 17...♖b4! –+.

16...♖ac8

16...♖fc8 17 ♖a5! ♖c6 18 ♔xf5 gxf5 19 c4! is known to be good for White.

17 ♖a5 (D)

Note that the presumptuous 17 ♖xa7 results in a draw by perpetual check following 17...♔xd3 18 ♖xb7 ♖xc2+ 19 ♔b1 ♖b2+ 1/2-1/2 Rõtšagov-Savchenko, Barnaul 1988.



17...♖c3! 18 ♔xf5 ♖xe3 19 ♔e4 ♖b8 20 g3

The apparently active continuation 20 ♖g5 ♖e2 21 ♖xe7?! leaves White in perilous condition following 21...♖b6! 22 a4 ♖e3+ 23 ♔b1 ♖c3 24 ♖a3 ♖b8 –+ Betts-Grizzaffi, IECG 2002. Black major pieces coordinate perfectly and his attack proved irresistible.

20...♖c8 21 g4

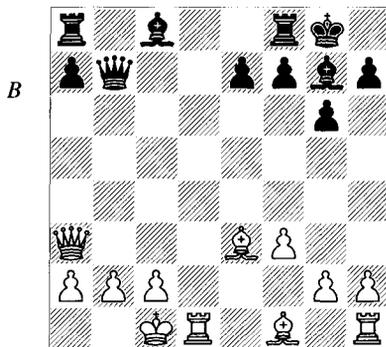
21 h4?! invites the crippling of White's king-side pawns via 21...h5! when it suddenly becomes difficult to suggest constructive moves for White. The principal encounter continued: 22 ♖hg1 a6 23 ♖d5?! ♖e6 24 ♖d8 ♖xd8 25 ♖xd8+ ♔h7 26 ♖c7 f5! 27 ♖c5 ♖c3 28 ♖d5 ♖b6 0-1 Smirin-Basin, Minsk 1985.

21...♖e2 22 h4 ♖b8 23 g5 ♖h2 24 ♖xh2 ♖xh2 25 ♖xa7 ♖f4+ 26 ♔b1 ♖e5 27 ♔c1 ♖f4+ 28 ♔b1 ♖e5 29 ♔c1

1/2-1/2 Psakhis-David, Andorra 1996.

A2)

15 ♖a3!? (D)



15...♔f5

15...a5 and 15...♖b8 have scored badly for Black, although interestingly Hodgson has used the unusual move 15...♖c7 with success. However, nobody has followed in his footsteps, and objectively Black can't really have time for this little queen shimmy.

16 ♔d3

Alternatives:

a) 16 ♔b1?! ♖ab8 17 b3 (Attila Schneider points out that 17 ♔c1? loses to the stunning 17...♔xc2+!! 18 ♔xc2 ♖fc8+ 19 ♔b1 ♖xc1+ –+) 17...♖fc8 18 ♔d3 ♖c6! –+.

b) 16 ♔c4 ♖fc8 17 ♔b3 a5 18 ♖d2 occurred in Ravinsky-Averbakh, Sverdlovsk 1951, and now Gufeld and Nesis suggest 18...e6! intending 19...a4 and 20...♔f8 with a clear advantage to Black.

c) 16 ♔a6!? is a real alternative. Indeed prior to Ivanchuk's discoveries in the 16 ♔d3 variation, 16 ♔a6 represented the main line of this variation. It has been established that play should continue 16...♖c7 17 ♖c5 ♖b6! 18 ♖xb6 (Gufeld and Stetsko point out that 18 ♖a3? runs into 18...♔xb2+! –+) 18...axb6 19 ♔d3 (19 ♔c4 has also been tried, but is generally considered inferior; for example, 19...♖fc8 20 ♔b3 ♖xa2! 21 ♖d8+ ♔xd8 22 ♔xa2 h5! 23 ♔b3 ♔f6 24 ♖e1 b5 with a very comfortable endgame for Black, Gusarov-Lapienis, Novosibirsk 1962) 19...♔xd3 20 ♖xd3 ♖xa2 21 ♖hd1 and now rather than 21...b5, which landed Black in hot water in Tolnai-Palkovi, Siofok 1990, Tiviakov indicated that Black should continue 21...♖xb2, when 22 ♖d8 f5 gives Black a good game.

16...♖ab8

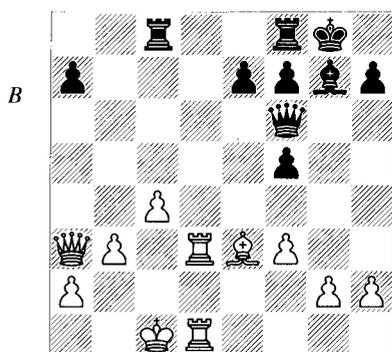
This is Fedorov's preference, but he hasn't been scoring so well with it of late (well, he

seems to have given up 14...♖b7 altogether!) so future developments here may instead focus on 16...♜f8 17 b3 a5, when the a8-rook may prove to be well-placed behind the advancing a-pawn.

17 b3 ♖c6!?

This unusual move may be Black's best option in the 14...♖b7 line, as other moves have simply led to disaster:

a) 17...♜bc8 18 ♙xf5 gxf5 19 ♜d3 ♖c6 20 c4 ♖f6 21 ♜hd1! (*D*).

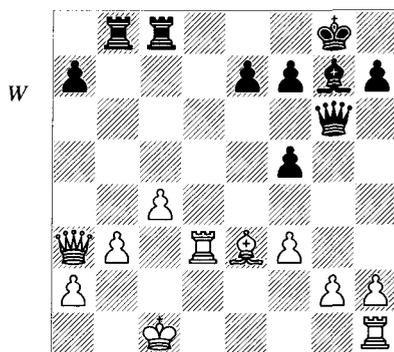


This occurred in the famous game Ivanchuk-Fedorov, Polanica Zdroj 2000. Ivanchuk's strategy in this game placed this whole variation in a temporary state of crisis: White concedes complete control of the a1-h8 diagonal to Black, but consolidates his position by keeping the queen on a3 (to guard a2 and b2), doubling his rooks on the d3- and d1-squares (so they control the only open file, guard the c3-square and also protect each other and the e3-bishop), and placing his pawns on b3 and c4, thereby inhibiting the scope of Black's rooks. In light of such wonderful coordination Fedorov simply found himself struggling on a pawn down without counterplay.

b) 17...♙xd3 18 ♜xd3 ♜fc8 perhaps offers some compensation, but the burden will be firmly on Black to demonstrate it. However, note that 19 c4? runs into 19...♜xc4+! ♠.

c) 17...♜fc8 18 ♙xf5 gxf5 was Fedorov's attempted improvement over his game with Ivanchuk, but Movsesian now simply repeated Ivanchuk's plan via 19 ♜d3, and after 19...♖c7 20 c4, etc., White achieved another smooth victory. The latest wrinkle in this variation is 19...♖c6!?, which opens up the possibility of swinging the black queen the full breadth of the

sixth rank in an attempt to create threats against the white camp. 20 c4 ♖g6! (*D*) (20...♖f6?! 21 ♜hd1! feels more natural, but essentially just takes us back to the problems of the Ivanchuk game considered above) and now:



c1) 21 ♜d2 is the obvious way of defending the g2-pawn, but Black seems to have plenty of resources, e.g.:

c11) 21...♖e6 22 ♖xa7 ♜a8 23 ♖b6 ♜c6! 24 ♜d8+ (24 ♖b7 ♜cc8 = Ernst) 24...♙f8 25 ♜xa8 ♖xb6 26 ♙xb6 ♖xb6 27 ♜d1 ♖h6+ 28 ♙b1 ♖xh2 29 ♜dd8 ♖h1+ 30 ♙b2 ♖xg2+ 31 ♙a3 ♖xf3 32 ♜xf8+ ♙g7 ∞.

c12) 21...♖f6!?! is also of interest, and may well offer Black chances to play for the full point.

c13) Rogozenko mentions 21...f4!, which has the point of opening the h7-b1 diagonal for the black queen, and creating the immediate threat of 22...♜xc4+ 23 bxc4 ♜b1#. White has to continue 22 ♙c5, when 22...♖f5! 23 ♙b4 ♖f6 24 ♜hd1 e6 leaves White rather tied up. Note that 25 ♖a5 ♖xb4 26 ♖xb4 ♖a1+ 27 ♙c2 ♖b2+ 28 ♙d3 ♖e5! threatens 29...♜d8+ and 30...♖b2#, so White has to repeat moves with 29 ♙c2 ♖b2+, etc.

c2) 21 ♜hd1?! ♖xg2 22 ♙d4! ♙xd4 23 ♜xd4 ♖xf3 24 ♖b2 ♖e3+ 25 ♙b1 e5 26 ♜d7 ♜c6 occurred in Pinter-Kanovsky, Balatonlelle 2001, and is assessed by Rogozenko as unclear (which it certainly is!).

c3) 21 f4?! ♖xg2 22 ♜g1 (22 ♜hd1?! ♜xc4+ 23 bxc4 ♙b2+ →) 22...♖e2 23 ♜c3 ♙h8 (23...♙f8!?! has only been played in one correspondence game, but has the point of guarding e7, and may in fact be superior; for example, 24 ♜xg7 ♜xc4 25 ♜xf7+ ♙xf7 26 ♜xc4 ♖xe3+ 27 ♙b2 ♖f2+ 28 ♙b1 ♜d8 29 ♖c1 ♜d2 0-1

Bezemer-Markowski, ICCF e-mail 2000) 24 ♖xg7! ♜xc4! (Zakharstov points out that after 24...♙xg7? 25 ♜xe7 +- Black is in a critical condition on the dark squares and 24...♗e1+ 25 ♙b2 ♗e2+ 26 ♙b1 ♗e1+ loses to the surprising 27 ♜c1! ♜xe3 28 ♖xf7 +-) 25 ♜xc4? (this natural move loses; 25 bxc4? also loses, to 25...♗e1+ 26 ♙c2 ♗b1+ 27 ♙d2 ♖b2+ -, but Zakharstov points out that 25 ♖xh7+! gives rise to an unclear position with roughly level chances; e.g., 25...♙xh7 26 ♜xc4 ♜xe3+ 27 ♙b1 ♖d8 28 ♗c5! ♖d1+ 29 ♙b2 ♗e6 30 ♜c2 ♗f6+ 31 ♙a3) 25...♜xe3+ 26 ♙b1 ♙xg7 27 ♗b2+ f6 28 ♗c2 (28 ♗g2+ ♙f7 29 ♗d5+ ♗e6 ♣) 28...♗e6 ♣ 29 ♗c6 ♗e4 30 ♗xe4 fxe4 31 ♖e6 ♖b4 and Black went on to win a convincing endgame in Zakharstov-Timofeev, Elista 2001.

18 ♙xf5

Other moves fail to impress: 18 c4? ♗f6 ♣; 18 ♙c4?! ♗f6 19 ♖d4 (19 ♙d4? ♗g5+) 19...♙h6! 20 ♙xh6 ♗xd4; 18 ♗c5 ♗f6 19 ♙xf5 ♗b2+ 20 ♙d2 gxf5 with an ongoing attack; and 18 ♗xe7 ♗c3 19 ♙xf5 gxf5 20 ♗c5 ♗b2+ 21 ♙d2 ♖fe8 is a line given by Thomas Ernst, which he assesses as offering Black compensation for the material. This may perhaps understate Black's chances – it seems to me that Black is on the verge of establishing a dominant advantage!

18...♗c3! (D)

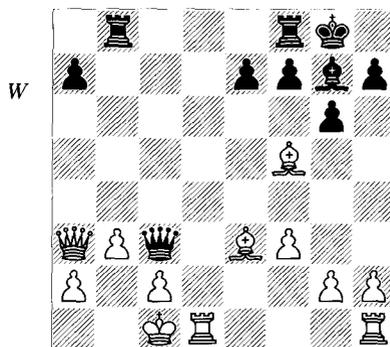
This wonderful move is yet another discovery that found its inception in the creative mind of Mikhail Golubev. Black is now a pawn and a piece down, with only the queen and the g7-bishop really participating in the attack, and yet amazingly Black is fine! Previously Black had always chosen 18...gxf5?! but invariably found himself quickly worse; e.g., 19 ♙d4 ♖fc8 20 c4 ♗h6+ 21 ♙b1 ♙xd4 22 ♖xd4 e5 23 ♖d6 ± Dubiel-Zaskalski, Poland 2000.

19 ♗c5!

19 ♙d3 ♖bc8 20 ♙f2 (20 ♖hf1 ♖fd8 21 ♖f2 ♖d5! 22 ♗a6 ♖c7 -+) 20...♖fd8! 21 ♙e1 ♗a1+ 22 ♙d2 ♖xd3+ 23 cxd3 ♙h6+ 24 f4 (24 ♙e2 ♖c2+ 25 ♙d2 ♗e5+ 26 ♙f1 ♙xd2 also wins for Black) 24...♙xf4+ 25 ♙e2 ♖c2+ 26 ♙f3 ♗f6 -+.

19...♗b2+ 20 ♙d2 gxf5 21 ♙e2

21 ♗xf5?! e6! (21...♗xa2 22 ♙e2 ♖xb3 23 ♙d4 ♗a6+ 24 ♙f2 ♖b5 25 ♗g4 e5 26 ♙e3



♖b2 27 ♗f5 ♗c8 ♣, which was played by Golubev in an Internet blitz game when he was first experimenting with this idea, also looks good) 22 ♗e4 f5! 23 ♗xe6+ ♙h8 ♣.

21...♖fc8

21...♖bc8!? 22 ♗xf5 ♖xc2+ 23 ♖d2 ♖xd2+ 24 ♙xd2 ♗xa2 is a sideline given by Golubev that also looks better for Black.

22 ♗xf5 ♖xc2+ 23 ♖d2 ♖xd2+ 24 ♙xd2 ♗xa2 25 ♖c1 ♗a6+

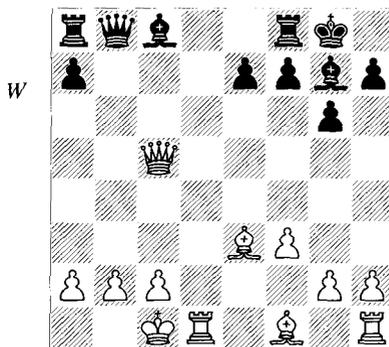
Ernst suggested that 25...e6!/? may be stronger; e.g., 26 ♗c5 ♗xb3 27 ♗xa7 ♗b5+ 28 ♙f2 ♖d8 29 ♗a5 ♣.

26 ♖c4 ♖d8 27 ♙e3 e6 28 ♗c2 ♗d6 29 ♖c8 ♗a6+

1/2-1/2 Handke-Polzin, Bundesliga 2001/2.

B)

14...♗b8!/? (D)



This surprising and almost unnatural move totally overshadowed the traditional 14...♗b7 for a time. Following the game Ivanchuk-Fedorov, Fedorov (and other leading Dragon theoreticians) turned to 14...♗b8 as a method of maintaining the black queen's activity. With the

queen on b7 Black's counterplay simply came too slowly in the face of Ivanchuk's ingenious plan, but with the queen on b8 Black retains the option of playing ...♖e5 at an opportune moment (thereby doubling up on the long diagonal and possibly also hitting the e3-bishop). Of course, the spotlight that has been placed on 14...♖b8 may now be dimmed as a consequence of Golubev's wonderful discovery of 17...♖c6 followed by 18...♖c3! in the critical line of the 14...♖b7 variation considered above, but for the time being 14...♖b8 remains very much in the spotlight, and a knowledge of the critical lines will certainly prove helpful if another crisis should pop up in the traditional main line.

As with 14...♖b7, White has two main responses and a few minor alternatives.

B1: 15 ♖a3 155

B2: 15 b3 156

Or:

a) 15 c3 ♗e6 16 ♖a3 ♖e5 17 ♗d4?! ♖g5+ 18 ♖b1 ♗f5+ 19 ♖a1 ♗fd8 20 ♖a4 e5 21 ♗f2? ♗d2! → Anচেইতা-জিরেটর্ন, Slovakia 2002.

b) 15 ♗d4 invites a repetition of moves following 15...♖f4+ 16 ♗e3 (16 ♖b1? ♗d8 →) 16...♖b8 17 ♗d4 ♖f4+ according to Attila Schneider.

B1)

15 ♖a3 ♗e6

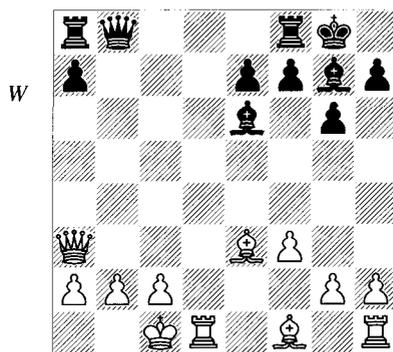
15...♗f5 is known to be bad on account of 16 g4! ♗e6 17 ♗a6!, taking the c8-square away from Black's rooks. Play might now continue 17...♖c7 18 ♗d4 ♗ab8 19 ♗xg7 ± Hovde-Herschel, corr. 1986.

However, 15...a5!? may be a good alternative, and has the point of preventing an awkward 16 ♗a6 (which would congest Black's major pieces) and preparing to offer an exchange of queens on b4 (which would leave the a2-pawn vulnerable to the a8-rook). Some lines:

a) 16 ♗d3 ♗e6 17 h4 (17 ♗e4 ♗a6 18 ♗d5?! ♗c8 19 ♗xe6 ♗xe6 20 ♗d3 ♖c7 21 c3 ♗xe3 22 ♗xe3 ♗h6 23 ♗he1 ♖e5 ± Dabrowska-Bednarska, Polish wom Ch 1994) 17...♗c8 18 h5 ♖b4 19 hxg6 hxg6 20 ♖xb4 axb4 21 ♗h4 ♗cb8 22 ♗f4 ♗c8 23 ♗e3 ♗a4 24 ♗d4? b3 0-1 Seps-Calzetta, Istanbul wom Ech 2003.

b) 16 ♗d4 ♗d8 17 ♗c3 (17 ♖c5? ♗f5 18 ♗c4 ♗c8 19 ♗d5 e6 wins for Black, Carlsen-Agnos, Norway 2002; Ward points out that 17 ♖xe7 ♗f5 leaves Black with a dangerous initiative) 17...♗h6+! 18 ♗d2 ♗xd2 19 ♗xd2 and now 19...♗f5 turned out well for Black in Danin-Kosintseva, Russia 2002, while Ward indicates that 19...♖e5!? may be even stronger, so Black certainly seems to be safely in the driving seat in this line.

We now return to 15...♗e6 (D):



16 ♗a6!

Other moves quickly land White in trouble:

a) 16 ♗d4 ♗d8 17 ♖e3 ♖d6 18 c3 ♗xa2 ± Drinovec-Barić, Slovakia 1991.

b) 16 ♖b1 ♗c8!? 17 ♗a6? ♗c3 18 ♗d8+ ♖xd8 19 bxc3 ♗b8+ 20 ♖c1 ♖c7 ±.

c) 16 ♗d3 ♖e5 17 ♗de1 (it is worth noting that 17 ♗he1 would drop White's h2-pawn to 17...♖xh2) 17...♗ab8 18 c3 ♗fc8 19 ♗c2 ♖b5 20 h4?! ♗c6! 21 ♗d1 ♗a6 22 ♗d3 ♗xa3 23 ♗xb5 ♗xa2 24 ♗f4 ♗xb5! 25 ♗d8+ ♗f8 26 ♗h6 ♗a1+ 27 ♖c2 ♗f5+ 28 ♖d2 ♗d5+! 0-1 Krivokapić-Dimitrijević, Obrenovac 2002. Now White resigned because 29 ♗xd5 runs into 29...♗xh6+ when Black will capture the h1-rook next and emerge two pieces up in the endgame.

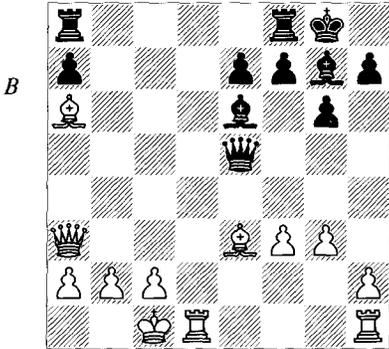
16...♖e5 17 g3!? (D)

This slow move looks a little passive, but as the alternatives below illustrate, it may well be justified. Indeed, White can't move the h1-rook without leaving the h2-pawn unprotected, nor can White play 17 ♗d4 without allowing 17...♖f4+ forcing a repetition or 17...♖g5+ followed by 18...♖xg2, so in essence 17 g3 serves the purpose of freeing up the h1-rook and the e3-bishop. In any case, none of White's

other options have proved particularly favourable:

a) 17 ♙d4 ♜g5 + 18 ♜e3 (18 ♚b1 ♙xd4 19 ♜xd4 ♜xg2) 18... ♜g2 gave rise to an unbalanced position in Abreu-Y.Gonzalez, Las Tunas 2001.

b) 17 ♚b1 ♜fd8 18 g3 ♙d5 19 ♙d4? ♙xa2 + 20 ♚xa2 ♜xd4 21 ♜xd4 ♜xd4 ♚ Maes-Bergez, Montpellier 2003.



17...♜ad8

White now has three possibilities:

a) 18 ♙c5 and now:

a1) After 18... ♚xa2 , 19 ♙xe7?? ♙h6 + 0-1 occurred in Neels-Hautot, Vielsalm 1997, but Rogozenko pointed out that 19 f4 ♙h6 20 ♜he1 is better, and indeed I prefer White here.

a2) I prefer the look of 18... ♜d5 , the idea being that the c5-bishop is immediately attacked. Black now has the possibility of 19... ♜b8 hitting b2, and even 19... ♜xb2 +, with the idea of 20 ♜xb2 ♙xb2 + 21 ♚xb2 ♜xc5 . 19 ♙xe7 runs into the surprising 19... ♜a5 , forking the queen and the a6-bishop. Perhaps White's best is 19 ♜xd5 , although 19... ♙xd5 20 ♙xe7 ♜b8 21 ♙d6 ♜xb2 + 22 ♜xb2 ♜xb2 leaves Black with an excellent endgame as his bishops are highly active, and White's pawns and king position remain vulnerable.

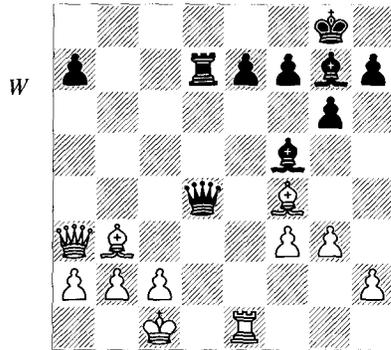
b) 18 ♙xa7?! ♜a8?! 19 ♙d4 ♜c7 20 ♙xg7 ♚xg7 21 ♜d4 (21 b4?! ♜e5 with an attack) 21... ♜fc8 gives Black good compensation according to Rogozenko.

c) 18 ♙f4 ♜f6 19 ♜he1 ♙f5 20 ♜xd8 ♜xd8 and now:

c1) 21 c3? blunts Black's power on the long diagonal, but considerably enhances the scope of the f5-bishop by weakening the b1-h7 diagonal, conceding control of the d3-square, and

essentially trapping the white king in the centre. Indeed, it may well prove to be a decisive error. 21... ♜b6! 22 ♙e3 ♙h6! 23 f4 (note that 23 ♙xh6? loses almost immediately to 23... ♜f2 -+) 23... ♜c6 24 ♙d2 (Rogozenko pointed out that 24 ♜xe7 loses to 24... ♜e8 25 ♜xa7 ♜e4 26 ♜e2 ♜b1 + 27 ♚d2 ♙c2! -+) and rather than 24... ♜d5 , which was played in Adams-Fedorov, Wijk aan Zee 2001 and is admittedly pretty good, according to Rogozenko Black can win immediately with 24... ♜d6 25 ♙f1 ♜d5 26 ♜e2 (26 ♜d1 ♜e4 -+) 26... ♜d3 -+.

c2) Instead Rogozenko suggests that White's optimal resource would be to bring the light-squared bishop back into play via 21 ♙c4 , and then to consolidate the queenside via 21... ♜c8 22 ♙b3 . I prefer 21... ♜d4 22 ♙b3 ♜d7 (D).



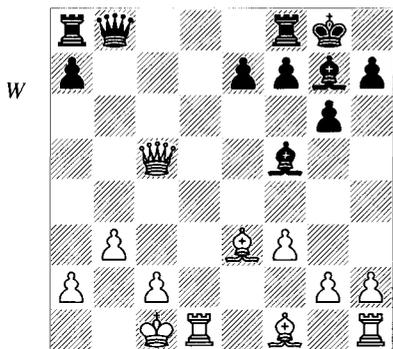
This centralization of the queen enables Black to maintain complete control of the d-file and threaten to infiltrate the white position by 23... ♜f2 . Furthermore, the d7-rook is perfectly placed to defend the vulnerable a7- and e7-pawns, and to support the black queen.

B2)

15 b3 ♙f5 (D)

16 ♙d3

This represents the infamous Ivanchuk treatment of this variation, but 16 ♙a6 has also been played, and has the point of depriving the f8-rook of its natural c8-square. Fortunately Black has a cunning resource: 16... ♜b6! 17 ♜xb6?! (this leaves White a lot worse so something like 17 ♙c4 is probably better; having said that, 17... ♜f6 18 ♜d4 ♜c6 19 ♜d2 ♜fc8 still gives Black pretty good compensation for the pawn according to A.Stein, presumably on the basis



that Black's a-pawn will be making its presence felt soon; also note that 17 ♙d3 ♚f6 is good for Black) 17...axb6 18 ♙d3 ♜xa2 19 ♙xf5 ? ♙c3 0-1 Cross-A.Stein, Los Angeles 1991.

16...♜c8 17 ♖a5

Ftačnik mentioned 17 ♚xe7 ? ♜e8 18 ♚g5 ♚e5 19 ♙xf5 ♚b2 + 20 ♙d2 gxf5 which he assesses as 'unclear'.

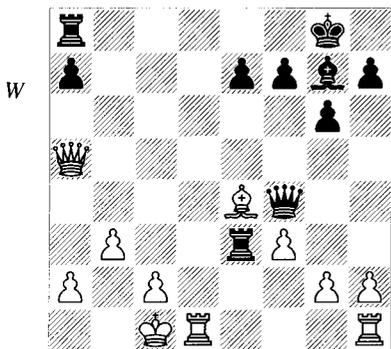
17...♙c3!

This was Julian Hodgson's contribution to this variation. Previously attention had focussed on 17...♙c3 although Black had faced practical difficulties after both 18 ♚b5 and 18 ♚a4 .

18 ♙xf5

This is the critical continuation. Hodgson, in *Informator 67*, points out that other moves should not trouble Black: 18 ♙d2 ? ♜xd3 -+; 18 ♙b1 ♙xd3 19 ♜xd3 ♜xd3 20 cxd3 ♚d6 =.

18...♜xe3 19 ♙e4 ♚f4! (D)



This brings us to what may well be considered one of the critical positions of the 14... ♚b8 variation. Although it is clear what White should *not* play in this position, it is by no means clear what he *should* play!

20 g3

The following continuations must also be considered:

a) 20 ♙xa8 ? was played in the well-known game Ivanchuk-Hodgson, Amsterdam 1996. Black now played 20... ♜xb3 ? which was losing after 21 ♚d2 ♚b8 22 ♙d5 +-, but Hodgson pointed out the fantastic 20... ♚d3 +! 21 ♙b1 !? (21 ♚d2 ♙c3 22 ♚xc3 ♜xc3 ♚) 21... ♚d4 22 ♚d8 + (22 c3 ♜xd1 + 23 ♜xd1 ♚xd1 + 24 ♙b2 ♚d2 + 25 ♙a3 ♙xc3 -+) 22... ♚xd8 23 ♜xd3 ♚xa8 24 ♚hd1 ♙f8 25 ♚d8 ♚b7 26 ♜e8 ♚b6 27 ♚dd8 ♚g1 + 28 ♙b2 ♚xg2 29 ♜xf8 + ♙g7 ♚, when Black has the better chances in the endgame.

b) 20 ♚d8 + ♜xd8 21 ♚xd8 + ♙f8 22 ♙b1 ♜e2 leaves Black with compensation of a thematically similar variety to the kind we examine in the main line, and most of the concepts considered there should be equally applicable here too.

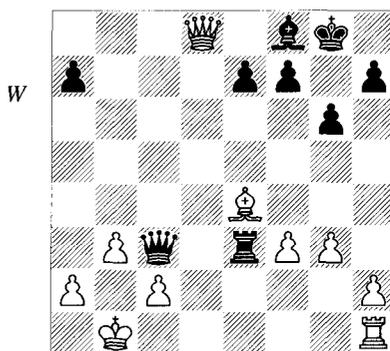
20...♚f6 21 ♚d8+

21 ♙xa8 gives rise to a perpetual check after 21... ♚b2 + 22 ♙d2 ♚d4 + 23 ♙c1 ♚b2 +.

21...♜xd8 22 ♚xd8+ ♙f8

This continuation was given by Hodgson with the assessment that Black retains compensation for the pawn. Since that analysis was published, this line has had a couple of practical outings, and it has to be said that Black has not fared badly.

23 ♙b1 ♚c3 (D)



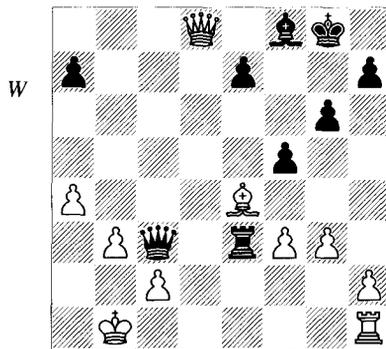
24 a4

Schulz, in his *ChessBase Magazine* annotations of Ivanchuk-Hodgson, mentions that 24 g4 !? ♜e2 gives Black sufficient compensation for the pawn, but nothing more. Presumably this is on the basis that Black's activity combines with White's dark-squared weakness to

guarantee counterplay, but that it will be impossible to generate anything substantive without the additional participation of Black's dark-squared bishop. On the other hand, while the f8-bishop is indeed tied down by White's queen, it will be difficult for White to make use of his queen without freeing the f8-bishop.

Returning to the position after 24 a4, we can see that White is a pawn up, but has some development problems. The weak dark squares provide White with an incentive to take the queens off, and while Black's active pieces and the opposite-coloured bishops give him reasonable chances, this must be weighed against White's powerful queenside pawn-majority in the ending. The obvious plan for Black here is to play 24...e6 with the idea of 25...♗g7 and 26...♙a3. Indeed Black tried this in Jansa-Wukits, Austria 1999, but after 25 ♖d1 Black discovered that he could not implement his plan without allowing White to force a queen exchange via 25...♗g7 26 ♗d4+. Instead it seems to me that Black must play more aggressively, thereby attempting to exploit the opposite-coloured bishops before White can play ♖d1. Thus:

24...f5! (D)



25 ♙b7

25 ♙d3 ♗g7 26 ♖f1 e5 27 ♗a2 ♖e2 28 ♙xe2? (28 ♖c1 is forced, but 28...♖xh2 must favour Black) 28...♗xc2+ 29 ♗a1 ♙b4! -+.

25...♗f7 26 ♗d7

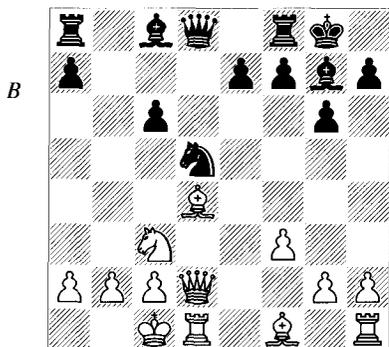
26 ♙d5+ e6 27 ♗d7+ ♗f6 28 ♗c6 ♙c5 ♢.

26...♖e2 27 ♙d5+ ♗f6 28 ♖c1 e6

Now 29 ♗c6 loses to 29...♗d2!!, while after 29 ♗e8 ♗g7 ♢ White will be in real trouble once the black king escapes to the safety of the h6-square.

14 White Plays 9 0-0-0 and 12 ♖d4!

1 e4 c5 2 ♗f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♗xd4 ♗f6 5 ♗c3
g6 6 ♗e3 ♗g7 7 f3 ♗c6 8 ♖d2 0-0 9 0-0-0 d5
10 exd5 ♗xd5 11 ♗xc6 bxc6 12 ♗d4! (D)



Now:

- A: 12...♗xd4!? 159
- B: 12...♗xc3!? 160
- C: 12...e5 162

Although 12...e5 is my main recommendation, I have also experimented with 12...♗xc3 and 12...♗xd4. Both moves are very interesting and have been played at the highest level, but there is some argument to suggest that they may be inferior to 12...e5. Nevertheless, before launching into the 12...e5 stuff, I would just like to provide the reader with the basics of the aforementioned alternatives, so that you have the option of playing them should the mood grab you.

A)

12...♗xd4!?

This move was introduced at GM-level by Ian Rogers. Exchanging off the Dragon bishop (especially with a weakened pawn-structure!) initially felt awkward and unnatural to me, but it has scored well in practice and has since been popularized by the likes of Fedorov and Hodgson.

13 ♖xd4

Black now has a choice:

a) 13...♖b6 (Rogers's solid move) 14 ♗a4! (14 ♗xd5?! cxd5 15 ♖xd5 ♗e6 16 ♖b5 ♖c7 17 ♖a4 ♖ab8 with the intention of swinging the f8-rook into c8, or doubling rooks on the b-file, gave Black excellent compensation in Xie Jun-Lalić, Hastings 1996/7) 14...♖a5 15 b3 ♗f5 and now White has tried a number of moves, but only 16 ♖c5! gives him good chances to secure a slight advantage; e.g., 16...♖xc5 17 ♗xc5 ♗c3 18 ♖e1 ♗xa2+ 19 ♖b2 ♗b4 20 ♗c4! (this is Van der Wiel's contribution to the theory of this variation, and it seems vastly superior to the natural 20 ♖xe7 ♖fe8 21 ♖xe8+ ♖xe8 22 c3 ♗d5 23 ♗a6 ♖e3 24 ♖c1 ♗f4 25 g3 ♗e2 26 ♖e1 ♗xc3 27 ♖xe3 ♗d1+ 28 ♖c1 ♗xe3 29 ♗b7, which was equal, and eventually led to a draw in Korneev-Summerscale, Groningen 1995) 20...♖fe8 (20...♗xc2 21 ♖xe7 is better for White because the a7-, c6- and f7-pawns are all weak, and a shortage of light squares renders the f5-bishop vulnerable to a potential g4 advance) 21 g4 ♗c8 (21...♗xc2 22 ♗a6!) 22 ♖e5 e6 23 ♗e4 ♖g7 24 ♖a5. This position arose first in Van der Wiel-Golubev, Germany 1999 and subsequently in Korneev-Gallego Jimenez, Spanish Cht (Vila Real) 2001. In the former game Black held a draw, but White missed opportunities to be better at several points, and in the latter game Black was gradually crushed. Despite the bad results it is possible that Black does have resources in this ending (he is, after all, a pawn up with a solid position!), so there may be scope for improvement here.

b) 13...♖c7 (Hodgson's slightly more refined idea) 14 ♗c4! (probably best, and certainly White's most popular approach; a variety of other moves have been tried but Shirov, Svidler and Korneev all seem to prefer the text-move) 14...♗b6 15 ♗e2 (this is the main line, but 15 ♗d3!? also looks good for White and has scored very well; this move was first played by the correspondence player Scacco, but has more recently been used to good effect

by Gdanski {to defeat Fedorov} and Degraeve) 15...♙e6 16 ♖c5 ♜fb8 (16...♜ab8 17 g3 ♘c8?! 18 f4 ♖b7 19 b3 ♘d6 20 ♙f3 ♜fc8 21 ♜he1 gave White a comfortable edge in Rõtšagov-Salmensuu, Finland 2000, although Black ultimately came out on top) 17 g3 ♖b7 (it is interesting to note that Tiviakov recently gave this line his seal of approval, deviating from established theory with 17...a5!?) 18 a4 ♘d7 19 ♖xe7 ♖b6 20 ♖a3 ♖e3+ 21 ♜d2 ♘c5 22 ♘e4 ♖xa3 23 bxa3 1/2-1/2 Fernandez Romero-Tiviakov, Seville 2003) 18 b3 ♘d5! (this is Fedorov's improvement over his earlier game with Shirov, which continued 18...a5 19 a4 ♘d5 20 ♘e4 ♘b4 21 ♙c4 ♙d5 22 ♜d4 ♖a7 23 ♖xa7 ♜xa7 24 f4 when supposedly White is a little better, but Black did not encounter any substantive problems in holding a draw in the ending) 19 ♜d4 ♘xc3 20 ♖xc3 a5 21 h4! h6 22 ♜a4 ♖b6 23 h5 g5 24 f4 was clearly better for White in Shirov-Fedorov, Wijk aan Zee 2001, although Black eventually managed to draw. Although this looks bad for Black, interestingly Fedorov repeated 18...♘d5 in 2003. His opponent picked a line that is clearly less challenging than Shirov's 21 h4! so we will just have to wait and see what improvements Fedorov has in store.

B)

12...♘xc3!?

This move was introduced at GM-level by GM Boris Alterman, and quickly gained a solid following. Indeed, from 1995 to 1997 this was my preferred line as Black. Unfortunately the popularity of this variation has now dwindled (I imagine this is largely on account of the games Kasparov-Topalov and A.Sokolov-Dunnington), but there is still a lot of unexplored territory, and plenty of room for improvement should the following variations capture the reader's interest.

13 ♖xc3 ♙h6+ 14 ♙e3

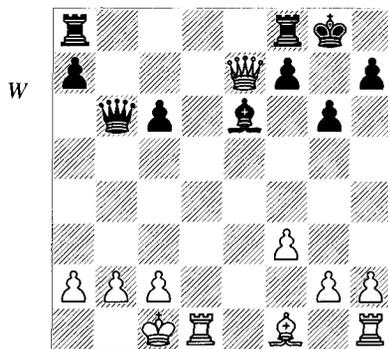
14 ♘b1?? e5 -+.

14...♙xe3+ 15 ♖xe3 ♖b6 16 ♖xe7

White must accept the pawn sacrifice as 16 ♖xb6 axb6 gives Black a very comfortable ending.

16...♙e6 (D)

17 ♖a3



Here there are three important options of which Black must be aware, but only the text-move really seems to challenge Black. Here are the two others:

a) 17 ♙d3 and now:

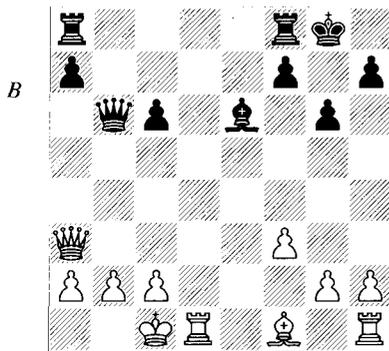
a1) The traditional recommendation in this line was 17...♖e3+?! but as my old friend Angus Dunnington was unfortunate to discover, White can sacrifice an exchange to force a position in which Black simply has to defend a difficult ending: 18 ♜d2 c5 19 ♖h4! c4 20 ♜e1 ♖c5 21 ♜xe6!! c3 (21...fxe6 22 ♙xc4 ±) 22 bxc3 fxe6 23 ♙c4 ♖g1+ 24 ♘b2 ♖b6+ (24...♜ab8+ 25 ♙b3 is similar) 25 ♙b3 ♜f7 26 ♜e2 ♜e8 27 ♖d4 ♜fe7 28 h4 ♖xd4 29 cxd4 ± A.Sokolov-Dunnington, France 1998.

a2) 17...♙xa2! 18 h4 (18 b3 is less challenging provided Black does not hesitate to play 18...♙xb3!; e.g., 19 cxb3 ♖xb3 20 ♙c2 ♖c3 21 ♜he1 ♖a1+ 22 ♘d2 ♖a5+ 23 ♘c1 ♖a1+ 24 ♘d2 ♖a5+ 25 ♘c1 1/2-1/2 L.Domínguez-Y.Gonzalez, Matanzas 1998) 18...c5 19 ♖e5 (Fritz likes Black after 19 h5 c4!, and 19 b3 ♙xb3 {19...♜fe8! may be even better} 20 h5 {20 cxb3? ♖xb3 ±} 20...♙a2 21 hxg6 ♖b1+ 22 ♘d2 ♖b4+ 23 ♘c1 looks like a draw by perpetual) 19...c4 20 ♙e4 ♖e3+ 21 ♜d2 ♜ab8 22 c3 and now in Adams-Karr, France 2000, Black played 22...♜xb2, and was indeed better, but perhaps the calmer 22...♜fd8 would be even more convincing; e.g., 23 ♖g5 (not 23 ♜hd1? ♜xd2 24 ♜xd2 ♜d8 25 ♖g5 ♖e1+ 26 ♘c2 ♙b1#) 23...♖xd2+ 24 ♖xd2 ♜xd2 25 ♘xd2 ♜xb2+ ±.

b) 17 ♖f6 ♙xa2! (the natural 17...♜fd8 is simply too slow here; e.g., 18 ♙d3 ♙xa2 19 ♜he1 ♜ab8 20 h4 ♖a5 21 ♙e5 ♙d5 22 h5 ♖a1+ 23 ♘d2 ♖xb2 24 hxg6 fxg6 25 ♙xg6! ± I.Gurevich-Petursson, St Martin 1992) 18 b3

♙xb3! 19 cxb3 ♖xb3 20 ♖d3 ♖b6 21 ♖b2 (21 ♙e2 ♖ab8 22 ♖a1 ♖f2 looks awkward for White and although 21 ♖d7 ♖c5+ 22 ♙d1 ♖ab8 23 ♙d3 ♖f2 24 ♖e1 ♖b2 25 ♖c3 ♖fb8 26 ♙c1 saw White showing strong resistance, this cannot have been a fun game to play and eventually White did slip up: 26...♖2b3 27 ♖d2 ♖h4 28 ♖e4 ♖f6 29 ♖a4 ♖c3+ 30 ♙c2 ♖c4 31 ♖dx a7? ♖b2+ 32 ♙d1 ♖xc2 0-1 Donchev-Ristić, Metz 1997) 21...♖fe8! 22 ♖xb6 axb6 23 ♖d1 ♖a1+ 24 ♙c2 ♖a2+ 25 ♙b3 ♖ea8! 26 ♖d8+ ♖xd8 27 ♙xa2 ♖d1 28 g3 g5 29 ♙b3 ♖d2 30 h4 1/2-1/2 Topalov-Ki.Georgiev, Burgas 1994.

We now return to 17 ♖a3 (D):



17...♖ad8

17...♖fd8 came to be regarded as the main line following the game Kasparov-Tiviakov, which is rather odd in a way since that game clearly showed that White can maintain an advantage with 18 ♙a6! (see line 'c'). Other moves fail to challenge Black's opening strategy, but are of general interest in relation to the main line, as numerous transpositions can occur.

a) The first point to note is that 18 ♙e2?! runs into 18...♙xa2, which is fine for Black.

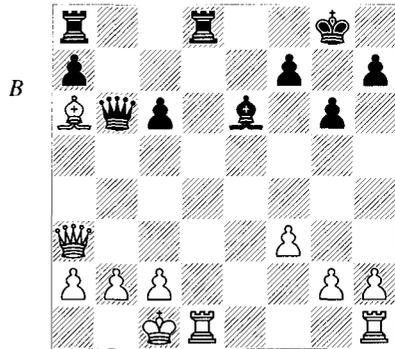
b) More challenging is 18 ♙d3 ♖d5, with the following possibilities:

b1) 19 ♖he1!? ♖a5 20 ♖c3 ♖xa2 21 b3 c5? (21...♖a5 ∞ is better) 22 ♖xe6! ♖xe6 (22...fxe6 23 ♙c4 +-) 23 ♙c4 ♖c6 24 ♙d5 ♖a6 25 ♙xa8 ♖a1+ 26 ♙d2 ♖d6+ 27 ♖d3 ♖f4+ 28 ♙e2 1-0 Rowson-Mah, British League (4NCL) 1998/9.

b2) 19 b3 ♖ad8 20 ♖de1?! ♖a5 21 ♖b2 c5 22 ♙e4 c4 ♢ 23 g4! ♖c8 24 bxc4 ♖d6 25 ♖f6 ♖xa2 ♢ 26 ♙d3 ♖b6 27 ♖c3 ♖d6?! (a time-trouble error; 27...♖b8! or maybe even 27...♖a4 is clearly better for Black) 28 ♖e4 ♖a3 29 ♖f6

♖a6 30 ♙d2 ♙xc4? 31 ♖xa6 ♙xa6 32 ♙xa6 ♖xa6 33 ♖he1 ♙f8 34 ♖le2 1/2-1/2 Antoniewski-Dearing, Menorca U-16 Wch 1996.

c) 18 ♙a6! (D) and now:



c1) 18...c5 19 ♙e2! c4 (Kasparov's subtle bishop manoeuvre has lured the c-pawn forward to a vulnerable position, but 19...♖ab8 20 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 21 ♖d1 is also clearly better for White) 20 f4 ♖d4 (20...c3 21 ♖xc3 ♙xa2 22 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 23 b3 +-) 21 ♖xd4 ♖xd4 22 g3 c3 (22...♖f2 23 ♖f3 ±) 23 ♖xc3 ♖xc3 24 bxc3 ♙xa2 and in Kasparov-Topalov, Amsterdam 1995, White went on to convert his extra pawn into victory in the ending.

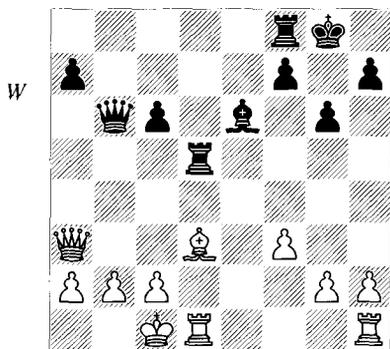
c2) Kasparov indicated that Black's best is 18...♖f2! 19 ♙b7 ♖ab8 20 ♙xc6 ♖xg2 21 ♖e3 (21 ♖xa7 ♖g5+ 22 ♙b1 ♖xb2+ 23 ♙xb2 ♖e5+ 24 c3 ♖b8+ 25 ♙c2 ♖e2+ 26 ♖d2 ♙f5+ 27 ♙e4 ♙xe4+ 28 fxe4 ♖xe4+ 29 ♖d3 ♖g2+ 30 ♖d2 ♖e4+ 31 ♖d3 ♖g2+ 32 ♖d2 led to a pretty draw in Peredy-Czebe, Balatonbereny 1997, but interestingly this entire game just follows the analysis provided by Kasparov in his *Informator* annotations) 21...♖xd1+ 22 ♖xd1 ♖xh2 23 ♖xa7 ♖f4+ 24 ♙b1 when White is a pawn up (and probably therefore slightly better) but has problems guarding the f3-pawn and getting the queenside pawns rolling, and meanwhile Black can begin rolling the h-pawn down the board.

18 ♙d3

It seems to me that 18 ♙a6 makes less sense now as 18...♖f2! (18...c5 19 ♙e2 would be similar to Kasparov-Topalov; note that the a7-g1 diagonal is very important to the black queen in this variation, and that Black should generally be reluctant to close it unless ...c4 will follow shortly with a disruptive effect on

White's forces) and now 19 ♖b7 does not hit a rook on a8, and 19 g4 ♖d5 (19... ♖xd1+ 20 ♖xd1 ♖d5 and 19... ♖fe8!? also come into consideration) 20 ♖df1 ♗d4 looks quite reasonable for Black.

18... ♖d5 (D)



Now:

a) 19 b3 ♖fd8 transposes to note 'b2' to Black's 17th move, above.

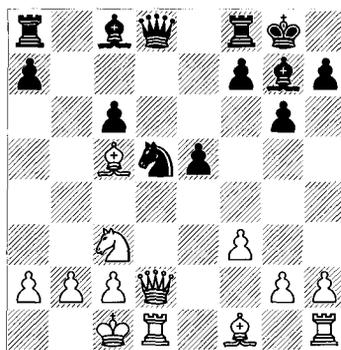
b) 19 ♗c3!? is of independent significance. Play might continue 19... ♖c5 20 ♗f6 ♖xa2 21 ♖he1 ♖d5 (21... ♖c4!? looks like a sound equalizer) 22 h4 ♖a5 23 b3 c5!? 24 ♗c3!? (24 ♗xb6 axb6 25 ♖xg6 looks like the sort of thing that might be better for White) 24... ♗b4 (24... c4!? 25 ♖xc4 ♖xc4 26 ♗xc4 ♗f6 intending 27... ♖a1+ merits investigation) 25 ♗xb4 cxb4 26 ♖b2 ♖c5 27 ♖d2 ♖e6 28 ♖a6 ♖b8 was Pelletier-Berndt, Bundesliga 1999/00, in which the players agreed to a draw shortly later.

c) 19 ♖he1 ♖a5 20 ♗c3 ♖xa2 21 b3 and now in Kasimdzhanov-Altman, Bad Wiessee 1997, Altman erred with 21... ♖a5, giving White an easier ending on account of his superior pawn-structure (although the game was eventually drawn). Instead Altman recommends 21... ♖a5 without further analysis. I suppose the position is best described as unclear. Rogozenko believes White's chances to be slightly better here (presumably on account of the superior pawn-structure), but I would be quite comfortable playing either side, so my own assessment should probably be closer to 'equal' or 'dynamically balanced' for those more excitable readers.

C)

12...e5 13 ♖c5 (D)

B



Black now has a choice:

C1: 13... ♖e8 162

C2: 13... ♖e6 167

C1)

13... ♖e8

This line often receives a somewhat bad press on the basis that Black instigates a temporary pawn sacrifice, but in return reaches an ending in which accurate play should give him a draw. That is one way of looking at the matter; another would be to say that White cannot accept the pawn sacrifice without giving Black excellent chances of equalizing. Continuing this line of reasoning, if White does not capture on d5, he is almost forced to play 14 ♖e4, which gives rise to a tense and highly complex struggle in which Black's practical chances are every bit as good as White's. Of course, whether you want to risk giving White the chance of an easy draw is a question which you yourself must answer by reference to the circumstances, but consider this: if White has played the Open Sicilian there is a good chance that he will want to play for the full point, and therefore it is surely illogical to avoid 13... ♖e8 simply on the basis that it risks early equality. To my mind, the odds are that most players will go in for the more combative 14 ♖e4. As should be clear from the points above, White has two principal options:

C11: 14 ♖xd5 163

C12: 14 ♖e4 165

Before proceeding with an analysis of the main continuations it is perhaps worth mentioning 14 ♖c4!?, which is one of those moves that everybody knows about, but nobody appears to want to discuss. Both Schneider's and

Gufeld & Stetsko's texts mention the move, but simply skip over the critical line with 14...♞h4! 15 ♖xd5 cxd5 16 ♞xd5, leaving the reader to be pleasantly surprised when this natural move materializes on the board. Tiviakov's Informator Monograph on B75-76 mentions 16 ♞xd5 but dismisses it as good for Black following 16...♙e6, and only Golubev's text unabashedly confronts the critical continuation. When I was first preparing this variation I contemplated what I should do if one of my prospective opponents were to play 14 ♖c4, but quickly concluded that 14...♞h4! (hitting the c4-bishop and preparing a possible ...♙h6, pinning the d2-queen to the white king) looked pretty good. I also thought that if White were to capture twice on d5, Black's open lines and activity would give him quite a bit of compensation for the pawn. However, when testing out 13...♞e8 on the ever-popular Internet Chess Club, it was not long before I came across 14 ♖c4 and discovered that matters are by no means so simple! Anyway, let's have a look at the line itself. 14...♞h4! (14...♞a5 15 ♖xd5 ♞xc5 16 ♞b4! is known to be good for White) 15 ♖xd5 (15 ♖xd5 ♞xc4 16 ♖c7 ♞xa2 17 ♞c3 ♙h6+ 18 ♙e3 ♙xe3+ 19 ♞xe3 ♞a1+ 20 ♖d2 ♞a5+ → Petursson) 15...cxd5 and now:

a) 16 ♖xd5 is the only move that most texts consider. However, Black has the aesthetically pleasing response 16...♞c4! 17 ♖e7+ ♖h8 18 ♞d5 ♞f4+ 19 ♖b1 ♙e6 20 ♞c6 ♞h4 21 ♖d5 ♞ec8 22 ♖c7 ♞ab8 23 b3 (23 ♙xa7 ♞xb2+! 24 ♖xb2 ♞b4+ → Petursson) 23...♞c4! 24 ♖d6 ♙f5 25 ♞c1 ♞c3 → Ernst-Petursson, Copenhagen 1981.

b) 16 ♞xd5 and now 16...♙e6 17 ♞e4 ♞g5+ 18 ♞e3 ♞xg2?! 19 h4 was better for White in Zapolskis-Pyhala, Espoo 1993, but perhaps rather than forcing the white queen to the e4-square (which is a desirable placing in any case) Black can play 16...♙f5!? 17 ♖e4 (17 g3 ♞h3!?) 17...♞ed8 18 ♖d6 ♙e6 19 ♞e4 ♞g5+ 20 ♖d2 ♙h6, when the awkward placing of White's pieces gives Black plenty of compensation, not least because White will struggle to break the pin on the h6-c1 diagonal without conceding material. In any case, although we can't be sure what Black's best line is in this variation, we can draw some comfort from the fact that super-GMs on the white side (such as

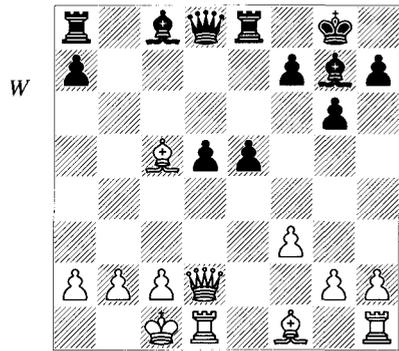
Shirov, for example) avoid 14 ♖c4 altogether, while leading exponents of the Dragon such as Tiviakov, Alterman and Golubev remain happy to play 13...♞e8 and permit 14 ♖c4.

C11)

14 ♖xd5

Looking at the position for the first time, it seems obvious that capturing twice on d5 must be the critical test of this variation. However, because the ensuing complications have been analysed in such detail (with the consistent conclusion that Black should eventually be able to recover his pawn and reach a drawn endgame) experience suggests that in fact White achieves relatively little by grabbing the d5-pawn.

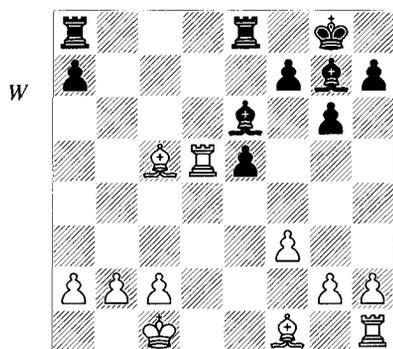
14...cxd5 (D)



15 ♞xd5

Having captured once on d5, White is more or less obliged to bank the pawn and take his chances in the endgame. There is an alternative in the form of 15 ♖b5, but it has proved rather more popular in correspondence than over-the-board chess, although personally I can't see why anybody would want to play it! Provided Black just ignores the attack on his e8-rook and instead secures the d5-pawn, his dominant centre and powerful bishop-pair will yield excellent compensation. Play might continue 15...♙e6! (15...d4 also looks good, if a little committal for my liking; for example, 16 ♙xe8 ♞xe8 17 ♖b1 ♙f5 18 ♞c1 ♞c8 19 ♙a3 ♞b5 20 h4 h5!? 21 ♞hg1 ♞d5 ♢ Dolmatov-Dorfman, Erevan 1982) 16 ♙xe8 ♞xe8 17 ♞a5 ♞c6 18 ♖d3?! d4 19 ♞e1 h5!? 20 ♞a3 ♙f5 21 ♞c2 ♞c8 22 b4 ♞f6 23 ♞b3 ♞g5+ 24 ♖b1 ♙h6 ♢ Hazai-Petursson, Tallinn 1981.

15...♖xd5 16 ♜xd5 ♙e6 (D)



17 ♜d6

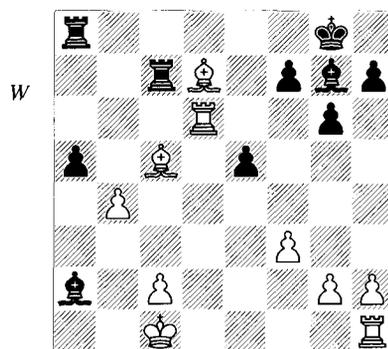
This is White's only real attempt at an advantage. 17 ♜d3 promises nothing; for example, 17...♙f5 (17...♙xa2!? 18 b3 ♜ec8 19 ♜d5 a5 20 ♖b2 a4 21 ♗xa2 axb3+ 22 ♗xb3 ♜a5 23 ♙c4 led to a draw in Tisdall-Keene, Århus 1983) 18 ♜a3 (18 ♜d1? ♜ec8 19 b4 a5 20 ♙d3 axb4 21 ♙xb4 ♙xd3 22 ♜xd3 ♜xa2 ♢ Lammens-Mah, Hengelo 1999) 18...♜ec8 19 ♜a5 ♙h6+ 20 ♗d1 (20 ♖b1 ♙f8 21 b4 ♜ab8 22 ♖c1 ♜xb4! 23 ♙xb4 ♜xc2+ 24 ♗d1 ♙xb4 25 ♜xa7 ♜d2+ 26 ♖c1 ♜c2+ 27 ♗d1 ♜d2+ 28 ♖c1 1/2-1/2 Malinarski-Slisser, Hooageveen 2003) 20...♜d8+ 21 ♙d3 ♙xd3 22 cxd3 ♜xd3+ 23 ♖c2 ♜d2+ ♢ L.Ličić-Jovičić, Yugoslavia 1985. Indeed, following 17...♙f5 White's best is actually 18 ♜d5 repeating the position, and often White will insert these moves in order to gain a little time on the clock.

17...♙xa2 18 b4

The natural 18 b3 is known to give White nothing. Black will advance the a-pawn and open up White's king position just in time: 18...♜ec8 19 ♜d5 a5 20 ♖b2 a4 21 ♗xa2 axb3+ 22 ♗xb3 ♜a5 23 ♙c4 (23 ♖b4 ♜axc5! 24 ♜xc5 ♙f8) 23...♜axc5 24 ♜xc5 ♜xc5 led to a draw in Gufeld-Kudrin, Hastings 1986/7.

Similarly 18 ♙d3 is a little too compliant, and actually risks exposing White to difficulties with his king; for example, 18...♙h6+ 19 ♗d1 ♜ab8 20 b3? (Attila Schneider pointed out that White can hold the position via 20 ♙a3! ♙f8 21 ♜a6 ♙xa3 22 ♜xa3 ♜xb2 23 ♗d2 ♜c8 =) 20...♜ec8 21 ♙xa7 ♜b7 22 ♙b6 ♙xb3! 23 ♖e2 ♙xc2 24 ♙a6 ♙b3! 25 ♙xb7 ♜c2+ with a winning position for Black, Wedberg-Kudrin, Copenhagen 1983.

18...a5! 19 ♙b5 ♜ec8 20 ♙d7 ♜c7 (D)



Now:

a) 21 ♙b6 ♜b7 22 bxa5 ♜xa5 and here:

a1) 23 ♙c8? ♙h6+! (Van der Wiel gives 23...♙f8 24 ♙xb7 ♜b5!!' as promising Black equality, but I am not so sure about 25 c4; e.g., 25...♜b1+ 26 ♖c2 ♜xh1 27 ♜d8 ♖g7 28 c5, when the presence of the c-pawn may complicate matters) 24 ♖b2 ♜b8 and I definitely prefer Black; 25 ♜hd1 can be met by 25...♙b5+ 26 ♗xa2 ♜a8+ or just 25...♙e3, picking up the pinned b6-bishop.

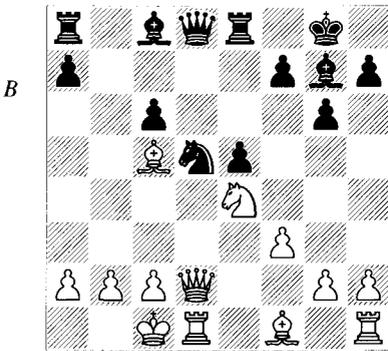
a2) 23 ♙xa5 ♙h6+ 24 ♗d1 ♜b1+ 25 ♖e2 ♙c4+ 26 ♖f2 ♜xh1 27 ♜c6 ♜f1+ 28 ♖g3 ♙f4+ 29 ♖h4 ♙e2 30 ♙d8 ♖g7 31 ♙f6+ ♖h6 32 ♙e7 ♖g7 33 ♙f6+ ♖h6 34 ♙e7 ♖g7 35 ♙f6+ 1/2-1/2 BleeS-Tiviakov, Haarlem 1999.

b) 21 ♜hd1 axb4 22 ♙c6 ♜f8 23 ♙xb4 f5 24 ♙a5 ♜cc8 25 ♙c3 (25 ♙b4 ♜c7 26 ♙a5 1/2-1/2 Copié-Simmelinck, corr. 2002) 25...♜f6 26 ♜d8+ ♜f8 27 ♜8d6 1/2-1/2 Siigur-Tilghman, corr. 2000.

c) 21 ♙c6 is quite possibly White's best attempt at an advantage. 21...♜ac8 22 b5 ♙f8 23 ♜hd1 ♙xd6 24 ♜xd6 ♜b8 25 b6 (25 ♙f2 ♙c4 26 b6 ♜cc8 27 ♖b2 ♙e6 28 g4 g5 29 ♖a3 ♖g7 30 h3 h6 31 ♙g1 ♖f8 32 ♙c5 ♖g7 33 ♙f2 1/2-1/2 Howell-Parker, Dublin Z 1993; although the position appears tense, neither side can realistically make progress without serious concessions) 25...♜cc8 26 ♙f2 ♙e6 (although it has never been played, Kruppa's suggestion of 26...♙c4!? has something to be said for it) 27 ♙e4 (Attila Schneider mentions the line 27 g4 g5 28 ♙e4 ♜c4 {28...a4 is also possible} 29 b7? {29 ♙g3 looks like a better try to me} 29...♜xe4! 30 fxe4 ♜xb7 31 ♙g3 ♜b5 ♢) 27...a4 28 b7 1/2-1/2 Kruppa-Tiviakov, Kherson 1991.

C12)

14 ♖e4 (D)



Now Black has a choice:

C121: 14...f5 165

C122: 14...♗c7!? 166

14...♖e6 actually transposes to Line C2 (13...♖e6 14 ♖e4 ♖e8), which seems fine for Black but does rather invite the question, “Why play 13...♖e8 in the first place and allow 14 ♖xd5?”.

C121)

14...f5

This was for a long time the main line of this variation, and with good reason as it took years for White to discover the best continuation. However, it now appears that White has ironed out the creases in his strategy and the emphasis is very much on Black to find an improvement.

15 ♖d6

15 ♖c4?! has also been played, but it seems that in this instance White is being a little too clever for his own good! 15...fxe4 16 fxe4 ♗h4 17 ♗d3 ♖h8 18 exd5 ♖f5 19 ♗e2 (19 ♗c3 cxd5 20 ♖xd5 ♖ac8 21 b4 e4 22 ♗g3 ♗f6 23 ♖d4 e3!! 24 ♖b3 ♗e7 25 ♖he1 ♗e4 26 ♖xg7+ ♖xg7 27 ♖e2 ♖g4 → I.Gurevich-Tiviakov, Singapore U-18 Wch 1990) 19...cxd5 20 ♖xd5 ♖ac8 21 ♖b3 (21 g3?! ♗e4! 22 ♖hd1 ♗xe2 23 ♖xe2 ♖e4 24 ♖a6 ♖xd5 25 ♖xc8 ♖xa2 ♢ Sax-Mestel, Hastings 1983/4) 21...♖e4 22 g3 ♗g5+ 23 ♖e3 ♗e7 24 ♖c5 ♗g5+ 25 ♖e3 ♗e7 26 ♖c5 ♗g5+ 1/2-1/2 Van der Wiel-Alterman, Internet 1995.

15...♖f8 16 ♖b5!

This excellent move is the only real test of Black’s set-up. Alternatives:

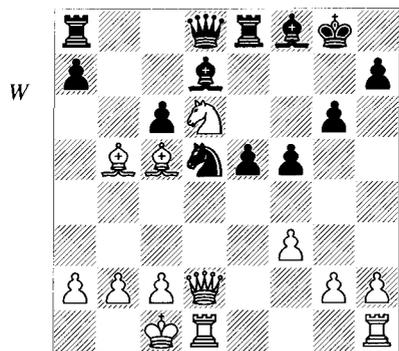
a) 16 ♖c4 ♖e6 17 ♖b7 ♗h4 18 ♖xd5 (18 ♖xf8 ♗xc4 19 ♖a3 ♗xa2 ♢ Mäki-Jadouli, Thessaloniki OL 1984) 18...cxd5 19 ♖xf8 ♖xf8 20 ♖c5 ♖f7 21 ♖he1 ♖ad8 gave Black good play in Fedorowicz-Sosonko, Lone Pine 1981.

b) 16 ♖xe8 ♖xc5 17 c4 ♗b6!? (17...f4 securing an outpost at e3 {and thereby creating the immediate threat of 18...♖e3} has been played more often, and may also be good) 18 ♖b1 ♖e3 19 ♖f6+ ♖f8 20 ♗d7 ♖xd1 21 ♖xh7+ ♖g8 22 ♖f6+ ♖f8 23 ♖h7+ led to a draw in Tiviakov-Ernst, Gausdal 1992.

c) 16 c4 is a move that must always be considered, if only because it often forces Black to sacrifice material in order to maintain his initiative. After 16...♖xd6 17 ♖xd6 ♗xd6 18 cxd5 cxd5 19 ♗xd5+ ♗xd5 20 ♖xd5 ♖e6 21 ♖xe5 ♖ac8+ 22 ♖d2 ♖ed8+ 23 ♖e3 ♖xa2 Black had a very comfortable position in Velimirović-Miles, Vrbas 1980.

16...♖d7 (D)

16...cxb5? 17 ♗xd5+ ♖e6 18 ♗xe5 leaves White very much on top.



17 ♖a4!

This recent discovery by de Firmian leaves Black under enormous pressure. Prior to this, numerous alternatives had been tried and tested, but Black seemed to be holding his own in all lines. For example:

a) 17 c4 ♖xd6 18 ♖xd6 ♖b6 19 ♖a6 (only move) 19...♖c8! is assessed by most sources as giving Black equal chances in this complicated position.

b) 17 ♖he1!? ♖e6 18 ♖b7 ♗c7 19 ♖a6 ♖c8 20 ♖xf8 ♖xb7 21 ♖xb7 ♗xb7 22 ♖a3 ♗a6! 23 ♖b1 (in *Informator 64*, Alterman

mentions 23 ♖d3 ♗xd3 24 cxd3; Bönsch, in *ChessBase Magazine* 50, also gives 23 g4? fxg4 24 fxg4 ♗c4 ♠; it seems to me that Black is doing rather well in all of these lines, but 23 h4 ♗c4 24 h5 ♗xa2 25 ♗h6 looks more testing, since Alterman's 25...♗d8? runs into 26 ♗h1!) 23...♗e8 24 ♗d3 ♗xd3 25 cxd3 (25 ♗xd3 e4 26 fx4 ♗xe4 ♠) 25...h5! 26 ♗c5 gave Black the better side of a draw in Ki.Georgiev-Alterman, Burgas 1995.

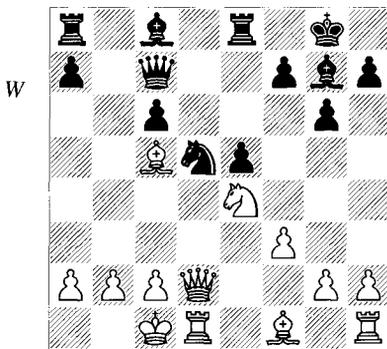
We return to the text-move (17 ♗a4). Now:

a) 17...e4?! left Black in serious trouble following 18 ♗b3! ♗xd6 19 ♗xd5+ cxd5 20 ♗xd5+ ♗e6 21 ♗xd6 in de Firmian-Ernst, Stockholm 2002.

b) Rogozenko suggests that Black's best hope rests in 17...♗c6. His analysis then continues 18 c4 (18 ♖b7?! ♗h4 hits the a4-bishop and threatens 19...♗h6 winning White's queen) 18...♖f6 19 ♖b7 ♗c8 20 ♗xf8 ♗xf8 21 ♗f2 ♗b4 22 ♖c5 ♗e7 23 ♖b1, with the conclusion that White is better. This seems correct since White's pieces coordinate far better than Black's do, and Black's fractured pawn-structure will make it difficult for him to generate counterplay. Black is definitely in need of an improvement following 17 ♗a4!.

C122)

14...♗c7!? (D)



This is the latest wrinkle in this variation. For the moment Black restrains his ambitions to break free with ...f5, and instead focuses on development. Depending upon how White now proceeds, Black may be able to achieve the ...f5 break under more favourable circumstances.

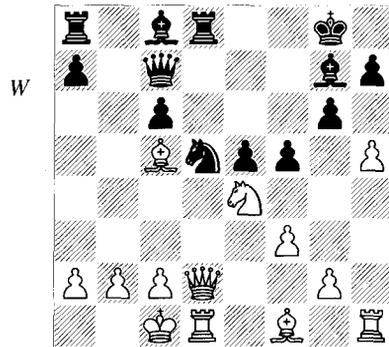
15 h4

15 g4 is another natural move, but 15...♗e6 16 ♗c4 transposes to note 'a2' to White's 15th move in Line c2, which is considered fine for Black.

15...♗d8 16 h5

This line remains relatively unexplored, and by way of alternatives, 16 ♗c4!? f5 17 ♖c3 ♗e6 18 h5 ♗a5!? and 16 g4!? f5!? 17 gxf5 gxf5 18 ♖g3 ♗f7 19 c4 ♗e6 are lines that Golubev considers in his *New in Chess* article on this variation.

16...f5! (D)

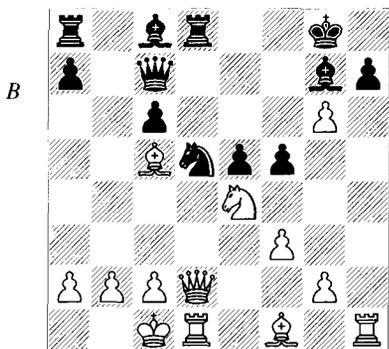


This is a critical juncture for Black, who has taken two moves to reposition his queen and rook, thereby taking control of the d6-square and precluding 17 ♖d6 (which is the move that presents Black with problems in the 14...f5 variation). However, White has taken advantage of those two moves by lunging forward on the kingside with an attack down the h-file. It's make or break time: either Black seizes counterplay at this point or White will blow him away! (Before returning to the text, please note that 16...h6? 17 hxg6 f5 18 ♖g3+- and 16...♗f5 17 hxg6 are both good for White.)

17 hxg6 (D)

In *New In Chess Yearbook* 65 Mikhail Golubev mentions 17 ♖c3!? ♗e6 18 hxg6 ♖xc3 19 gxh7+ ♖h8 20 ♗xc3 ♗xd1+ 21 ♖xd1 e4 with counterplay, and 17 ♖g5!? h6 with an unclear position. An internet game in this variation by Golubev continued 17 h6 ♗h8 18 ♖g5 ♗f6! 19 ♗c4 ♗b8 20 ♗b3 a5!? 21 a4 ♗xb3! 22 cxb3 ♖f4 (22...♖b4 also looks good) 23 ♗d6 ♗b6 24 ♖h3 ♖xh3 25 ♗xh3 ♗e6?! (25...♗e7! +- looks winning to me) 26 f4 exf4 27 ♗d3 ♗xb3 28 ♗e2 ♗c4 (28...♖f7!? ♠) 29 ♗a3 ♗xd3?? 30 ♗e8# (1-0) Volokitin-Golubev, playchess.com

2004. Despite the unfortunate result Black clearly appears to be doing very well in this variation.



17...fxe4!

17...hxg6? 18 ♘g5! ♜b8 19 ♙c4 +- Golubev.

18 fxe4

18 gxh7+? ♜h8 19 fxe4 ♙g4! is good for Black.

18...♙e6

This appears to be forced as 18...♙g4? 19 ♙c4! ♙xd1? 20 exd5 +- and 18...hxg6 19 ♖g5! ± look awful for Black.

19 exd5 cxd5 20 ♙a3

Golubev mentions 20 gxh7+ ♜h8 21 ♙e3 ♙f5 22 ♙h6 ♜ac8 with the assessment that Black has compensation for the material. Golubev also gives 20 ♙e3! without further analysis, but Black seems fine after 20...hxg6; e.g., 21 ♙h6 ♜ab8 22 ♙xg7 ♖xg7.

20...hxg6 21 g4?!

This is considered dubious by Golubev in *Informator 83*. He instead proposes 21 g3! with the idea of 21...♙f5 22 g4! ♙e4 (22...♙xg4 23 ♖h2!?) 23 ♙g2, but 23...♙xg2 24 ♖xg2 e4 25 ♖h3 ♙e5 looks OK for Black. The h-file appears a little draughty, but Black's queen and bishop look to have everything covered, and whereas White lacks any obvious plan of attack and the bishop may prove to be offside on a3, Black, on the other hand, can activate his a8-rook next move and then perhaps look toward making use of his mobile pawn-centre.

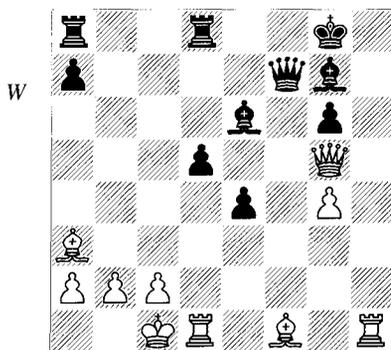
21...e4!

Golubev mentions 21...♙xg4 22 ♖h2 ♙xd1? (perhaps 22...♙f6 or 22...♖c6 would give Black better chances of survival) 23 ♖h7+ ♜f7 24 ♙d3 e4 25 ♜f1+ ♙f3 26 ♜xf3+ exf3 27 ♖xg6+

♙g8 28 ♖h7+ ♜f7 29 ♖h5+! ♙g8 30 ♙h7+ ♜h8 31 ♙f5+ +-.

22 ♖g5 ♖f7 (D)

22...♜ac8 23 ♜d2 ♖f7 24 ♙a6! ♙f6 is given by Golubev without any assessment. The obvious continuation is 25 ♖h6 ♜c7 26 ♜dh2, which looks good for White to me, as 26...♖g7 is met by 27 ♖f4 ♜f7 28 ♜h8+ ♖xh8 29 ♜xh8+ ♙xh8 30 ♖g5 simultaneously hitting the d8-rook and threatening to capture on g6 with check, after which the e6-bishop would hang.



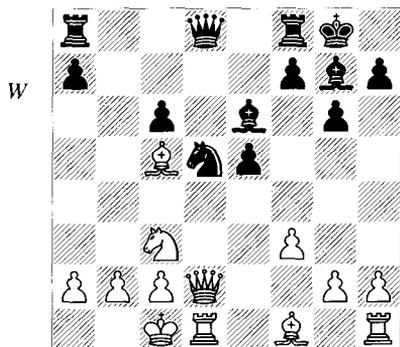
After the text-move (22...♖f7) we have two practical examples to work with:

a) 23 ♖h4 ♙e5 24 ♙e2 ♖g7 (24...d4!? 25 ♜df1 ♖g7 ♯) 25 g5 a5?! (I am not sure what this achieves; 25...♜ab8 26 b3 ♙f5 27 ♙g4 ♜bc8 28 ♖h3 ♖c7 looks more dangerous) 26 ♙g4 ♙f5 27 ♜df1 ♜f8 28 ♙xf5 ♜xf5 29 ♙xf5 gxf5 30 ♖h5 ♜b8 31 b3 ♜c8 32 g6 ± Handke-Polzin, Kreuzberg 2002.

b) 23 ♙e2 ♙f6! 24 ♖e3 (24 ♖h6 ♖g7) 24...d4! 25 ♖xe4 ♙d5 26 ♖d3 ♙xh1 27 ♜xh1 ♜e8 28 ♙f3 (Golubev mentions that 28 ♜f1! is better; e.g., 28...♙g7 29 ♙b1 ♜e3 30 ♖a6 ♜ae8 31 g5 ♜xe2 32 gxf6+ ♙g8 33 b3, when Black may still be better, but the f6-pawn and the dark-squared bishop guarantee White counter-play) 28...♜ad8! (28...♜e3? 29 ♙d5!! ♖xd5 30 ♖xg6+ ♙g7 31 ♖h7+ ♜f7 32 ♜f1+ ♜f3 33 ♖h5+!! ♖xh5 34 ♜xf3+ ± Golubev) 29 ♙e4 ♙g7 30 ♙b1 ♖e6 31 ♙f3 ♖e3 (31...♙e7!? ♯ Golubev) 32 ♙c5! ♖xd3 33 cxd3 ♜e3 34 ♙e4 ♜d7 35 a4 ♙e7 36 ♙c6 ♙xc5 37 ♙xd7 ♜d3 = Shirov-Golubev, Germany 2002.

C2)

13...♙e6 (D)



14 ♘e4

Minor alternatives:

a) 14 ♙xf8? ♜xf8 is actually very bad for White. Although White has 'won' an exchange, Black's g7-bishop now gains indisputable control of the dark squares, and Black currently threatens 15...♙h6 winning the white queen. 15 ♘xd5 (15 ♖b1 ♜b8 ♞) 15...cxd5 16 ♖b1 (16 ♜a5 ♜b8 17 ♞d3 d4 18 ♞a3 e4 19 fxe4 d3 20 ♞xd3 ♙xb2+ 21 ♖d1 ♙f6 22 ♖e1 ♜h6 ♞ Mariasin-I.Botvinnik, USSR 1984) 16...♜b8 17 c3 d4 18 c4 ♜b4 19 b3 a5 20 ♙d3 a4 21 ♖c2 axb3+ 22 axb3 ♙h6 ♞ Kurenkov-Slizhevsky, Nizhny Novgorod 1999.

b) 14 ♙c4!? is a rare continuation that promises White relatively little. Play might continue 14...♘xc3 15 ♜xc3 ♜g5+ 16 ♙e3 (16 ♖b1 e4 led to a quick draw in Kokkinos-Mestel, Tjentiste jr Wch 1975) 16...♜xg2 17 ♙xe6 fxe6 18 ♜xc6 ♞ac8 19 ♜e4 (19 ♜xe6+ ♖h8 20 c3 ♜b8 21 ♙d2 ♞fd8 22 ♞he1 ♜xf3 ♞ Barboza-Roselli Mailhe, Uruguay 1987) 19...♜xf3 20 ♞hf1 ♞f2! 21 ♜xg2 ♞cxc2+ 22 ♖b1 ♙xb2+ 23 ♖c1 1/2-1/2 Trifunović-Averbakh, Belgrade 1956.

14...♞e8

Back in the early days of the 9...d5!? variation, 14...♞b8 was all the rage, and led to numerous exciting and highly sacrificial games, often commencing with 15 c4 ♞e8, when Black sacrifices the d5-knight in order to iron out his central pawns and open up the white king for Black's rooks and bishops. However, the days of White greedily scoffing material are long gone, and nowadays it is well established that White's best line is 15 ♙c4 ♞e8 16 h4, developing all his pieces and aiming to restrict Black's play on the kingside. This system of play has long dissuaded me from playing the 14...♞b8 lines, but some Dragon players still have faith

in the old girl, and the American IM Vasich Rajlich has done particularly well with this variation.

15 h4

This move is White's principal challenge to Black's strategy, but there are a host of alternatives that also command respect:

a) 15 ♙c4!? is a real alternative to the main line. Black generally faces a choice of either transposing to the main line or choosing something off the beaten track. 15...♜c7 and now:

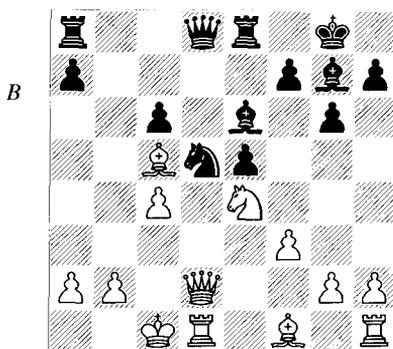
a1) 16 h4 h6 transposes to the main line after 17 g4 ♞ed8 18 g5 h5.

a2) 16 g4 and then:

a21) 16...♞ad8 17 ♜e1?! (17 ♜f2 is better according to Schulz, when the queen and bishop coordinate well and place pressure on the a7-pawn) 17...♘f4 18 ♙d6 ♜b6 19 ♙xe6 ♘xe6 20 ♞d3?! c5! 21 ♜c3 (21 ♜f2 f5) 21...f5 22 gxf5 gxf5 23 ♙xc5 ♜a6! 24 ♞xd8 ♞xd8 25 ♘d2 ♞c8 ♞ Moroz-Ovseevich, Donetsk 1998.

a22) 16...♞ed8 is interesting in that it applies the reasoning that, although this rook has already been moved once, it does relatively little on the e-file for the time being, and instead would be better placed on the d-file, leaving the a8-rook free to occupy the b-file. Indeed after 17 ♜f2 as in Gallagher-Elsness, Gausdal 2001, Ward points out that 17...♜a5 is now possible because the white queen no longer occupies the e1-a5 diagonal, and the a8-rook currently protects the a7-pawn. This queenside strategy (as opposed to the more common central strategy) certainly deserves further consideration.

b) 15 c4 (D) gives Black several acceptable responses:



b1) For those wishing to live dangerously I can propose 15...♞b8, which transposes to the

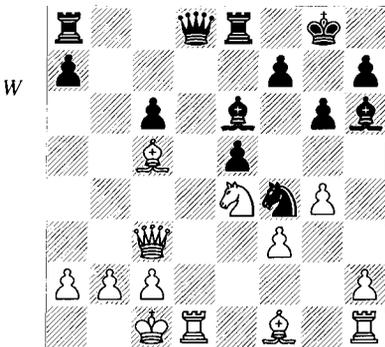
line 14...♖b8 15 c4?! ♗e8, mentioned in the note to Black's 14th move. It offers Black excellent practical chances.

b2) Also possible is 15...♖c7 16 ♖d6 ♖b6 17 ♖c5 ♖c7 18 ♖d6 ♖b6 (in Stertenbrink-W.Watson, Bundesliga 1988/9 Black tried to play for a win {and eventually did so after some adventures} with 18...♖d8 19 ♖a3 ♖b6 20 ♖xd8 ♗exd8 21 ♗xd8+ ♗xd8 22 b3 ♖h6+ 23 ♖c2 f5 =) 19 ♖c5 1/2-1/2 Ljubojević-Miles, Tilburg 1984.

b3) 15...♖b6 16 ♖c2 ♖h4 (16...♖d7 17 ♖a3 ♖a5 18 ♖e2 ♗ab8 was already better for Black in Grushevsky-Gufeld, Tashkent 1958, although interestingly Gufeld gave preference to the main text in his last book on the Dragon, so perhaps he considers 16...♖h4 to be superior to his own move) 17 ♖f2 ♖f4+ 18 ♖b1 f5 19 ♖d2 ♗ab8 20 g3 ♖g5 21 c5 ♖d5 22 ♖c4 e4 ♢ Zurakhov-Shianovsky, Kiev 1957.

c) 15 g4!? has the benefit of discouraging 15...f5, but is considered less accurate than 15 h4 on the basis that it entirely relinquishes control of the f4-square. Black can now solve all of his problems with 15...♖f4! when White has tried various alternatives, and yet each time without success.

c1) The natural 16 ♖c3?! runs into the surprising 16...♖h6! (D).



Black has the idea 17 ♗xd8 ♖e2++ followed by capturing on c3 with check and then picking up the d8-rook too. Note that White faces a peculiar difficulty as he cannot move his king without dropping the d1-rook. The only practical example of this position continued 17 g5 (17 ♖e3? ♖d5 →) 17...♖xg5 18 ♖xg5 ♖xg5 19 ♖b1 ♖d5 ♢ Van Riemsdijk-Felgaer, Mar del Plata 1999.

c2) 16 ♖xd8 ♗exd8 17 ♖a6 ♖d5 18 g5 ♖e6 19 ♖e7 ♗e8 20 ♖f6 ♖xe4 21 fxe4 ♖xf6 22 gxf6 ♖c5 23 ♖c4 ♗ad8 ♢ Antal-G.Jones, Millfield 2003.

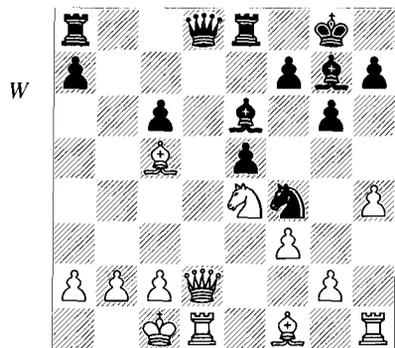
c3) 16 ♖e1 ♖c7 with an excellent position for Black. Indeed in the game Slobodjan-Altman, Bad Homburg 1996, White found nothing better than to repeat moves with 17 ♖d6 ♖b6 18 ♖c5 ♖c7 19 ♖d6 ♖b6 20 ♖c5 before agreeing to a draw.

15...h6

This is now arguably the main line of the 9 0-0-0 Dragon, but there are two other moves that should be discussed:

a) 15...h5 is popular, but I have never liked this move because it leaves the g5-square undefended, thereby detracting from the impact of a subsequent ...f5, because the white knight can then hop into an invasive g5 outpost. A further problem with ...h5 is that it weakens the black king position, in some variations inviting g4, opening lines on the kingside. 15...h6 avoids this latter problem by waiting for White to commit his pawns on the kingside, meeting h5 with ...g5, and g5 with ...h5. Also, note that the less provocative 15...h6 invites White to commit his kingside pawns in order to clarify the structure. In addition to taking time to achieve this, it is conceivable that White's exuberance will leave his kingside structure residually weakened should an endgame arise.

b) Tiviakov prefers the interesting continuation 15...♖f4!? (D):



b1) 16 ♖xd8 is far too compliant; for example, 16...♗exd8 17 ♗xd8+ ♗xd8 18 ♖e7 ♗b8 19 ♖f6 ♖d5 20 ♖xg7 ♖xg7 21 ♖c5 f6 with a comfortable ending for Black in Kuczynski-Rogozenko, Bundesliga 1996/7.

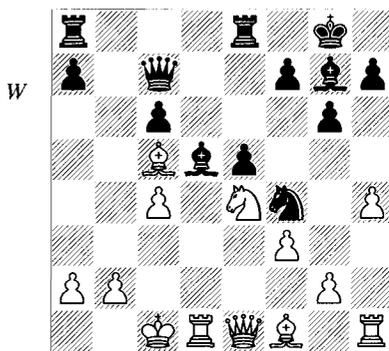
b2) 16 ♞d6? is a little too presumptuous, and is duly punished after 16... ♞e7 17 ♙c4? ♞d7 18 ♞f2 ♙h6! 0-1 Zawadzka-Tiviakov, Warsaw 2002. Note that Black threatens a devastating double check with 19... ♞d3++ , but that 19 ♙b1 drops the c4-bishop (because the d6-knight is pinned to the d1-rook) and 19 ♙e3 of course drops the d6-knight.

b3) 16 ♞f2! ? sidesteps the queen exchange, but relinquishes control of the a5-e1 diagonal, allowing 16... ♞a5 17 g3 (17 a3 gives Black time for 17... ♙d5 and 18... ♞e6 and ... ♞d4 with counterplay) 17... ♞xa2! ? (17... ♞d5 is also possible; e.g., 18 ♙c4 ♞c3! 19 ♞xc3 ♙xc4 with a good position for Black) 18 gxf4 exf4 when White may be in trouble despite the extra piece; e.g., 19 ♙d4 ♞ad8 (or 19... ♞ed8! ? 20 c3 ♞ab8 21 ♙d3 ♞a1+ 22 ♙b1 ♙a2 23 ♞c2 ♙b3) 20 c3 ♙b3 21 ♙d3 ♞a1+ 22 ♙b1 ♙xd1 23 ♞xd1 ♞xe4 24 fxe4 c5 --.

b4) 16 g3 ♞xd2+ 17 ♞xd2 ♞h5! threatens moves such as 18...f5 (hitting the e4-knight which is currently tied to the protection of the g3-pawn) and 18... ♙h6 , pinning and winning the d2-rook. 18 g4 ♞f6! (18... ♞f4 is also playable, but current theory suggests that White can hope to maintain an edge after either 19 h5 or 19 ♙a6 , so I am inclined to put my faith in the text-move) 19 ♙d3 (19 ♞g5? runs into 19... ♙h6 ; 19 ♞xf6+ ♙xf6 looks a little better for White because of Black's inferior pawn-structure, but I doubt that Black will face many problems after, for example, 20... ♙e7 , when the position is about equal) 19... ♞d7 (in Olafsson-Petursson, Reykjavik 1995, Black eventually equalized {and drew} with 19... ♙d5 20 ♞e1 ♞ad8 , but the text-move was played by Tiviakov against Leko {both of whom were presumably aware of this earlier game} and given that White failed to prove anything tangible in that encounter I believe we should give Tiviakov's move preference) 20 ♙e3 ♞b6 21 b3 ♞d5 22 ♙c5 a5 23 a4 ♞f4 24 ♞d6 ♞eb8 25 ♙c4 ♙d5 26 ♙xd5 1/2-1/2 Leko-Tiviakov, Wijk aan Zee 1996.

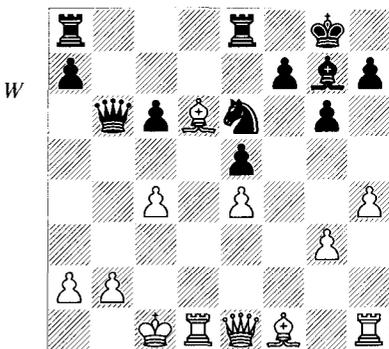
b5) 16 ♞e1! embodies a similar idea to 16 ♞f2 , but has the additional benefit of maintaining control of the e1-a5 diagonal. This, in my opinion at least, may well be the critical test of 15... ♞f4 . Play usually continues 16... ♙d5 (Rogozenko pointed out that 16... $\text{♞c7?!$ and 16... $\text{♞b8?!$ are both bad on account of 17 h5!;

for example, 16... $\text{♞c7?!$ 17 h5! ♞xh5 18 g4 ♞f4 19 ♞h4 h5 20 gxxh5 ♞xh5 21 ♞g5 ♞ad8 {21... ♙d5 22 ♞xh5 ♙xe4 23 fxe4 gxxh5 24 ♙c4 +- followed by 25 ♞g1 } 22 ♞xh5! ♞xd1+ 23 ♙xd1 ♞d8+ 24 ♙d3+-) 17 c4 ♞c7 (D), with the following possibilities:



b51) 18 ♙d6 ♞b6 19 cxd5 (19 g3 ♙xe4 20 fxe4 ♞e6 transposes to line 'b52') 19... cxd5 20 g3 dxe4 21 gxxf4 exf4 22 ♞h2 ♞e6! ? 23 ♙xf4 exf3 24 ♞d2 ♞b7 25 ♞d3 ♞e4 26 ♙d6 ♞d8 27 ♞b5 ♞c8+ 28 ♙c5 ♞ed4! 0-1 Raijmaekers-Vukosavljević, ICCF e-mail 2000.

b52) 18 g3 ♙xe4 19 fxe4 ♞e6 20 ♙d6 ♞b6 1/2-1/2 (D) was the game K.Müller-Rogozenko, Hamburg 2000. There is a lot of play left in the position, and Rogozenko analysed this position in some depth in *ChessBase Magazine* 76. Now:



b521) Clearly, 21 ♞h2 c5 22 ♙d5 ♞ad8 23 ♙xe5? ♞xd5 ♣ is good for Black.

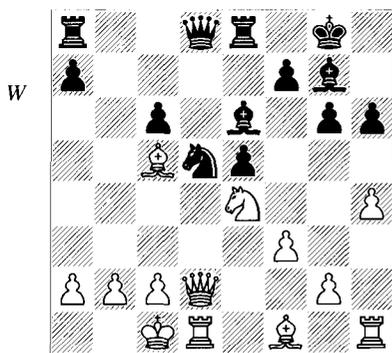
b522) 21 h5 c5 22 hxg6 hxg6 23 ♙d5 ♞ad8 24 ♞d2 ♙f6 25 ♙b1 ♞c6 26 ♙g2 ♞d4 is much better for Black, Raijmaekers-Santhosh, ICCF e-mail 2000.

b523) 21 ♞c3 c5 22 ♙d5 ♞ad8 23 ♙xe5 ♙xe5 24 ♞xe5 ♞d4 25 ♞xd8 ♞xd8 ♣; Black's

active pieces more than compensate for the pawn deficit.

b524) However, Rogozenko discovered the excellent move 21 c5!, sacrificing the c-pawn in order to activate the f1-bishop and gain counterplay on the a2-g8 diagonal. After 21...♗xc5 22 ♖c4 ♗e6 (22...♗b7 23 ♖b4 ♜ed8! 24 ♖c3 c5 25 ♖a3 and the strong light-squared bishop promises White sufficient compensation) 23 ♖c3 ♜ad8, 24 ♜f1! leaves White with compensation for the pawn. Note that Rogozenko also mentions 24 h5 ♗d4 25 hxg6 hxg6 26 ♖c5!, which he assesses as unclear, and 24 ♖xe5? ♖xe5 25 ♖xe5 ♖e3+ 26 ♖b1 ♗d4 ♚.

We now return to 15...h6 (D):



16 g4

This is probably the main line, but White has a number of interesting alternatives:

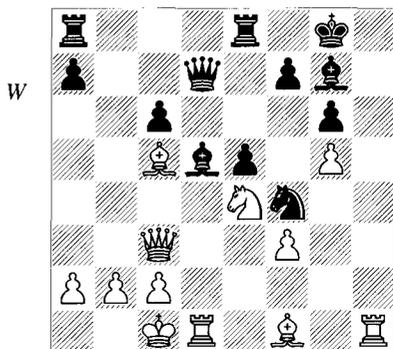
a) 16 ♖c4 allows Black to seize the initiative with 16...f5!; e.g., 17 ♗d6 (17 ♗c3 ♖a5! 18 ♗xd5? ♖xc5! ♚) 17...♜e7 18 g4 ♜d7 19 gxf5 gxf5 20 ♜dg1 ♖f6 21 h5 ♗f4 22 ♗e8 ♜xd2 23 ♗xf6+ ♖f7 24 ♖xe6+ ♗xe6 25 ♖xd2 ♗xc5 ♚ Sakharov-Gufeld, Tbilisi 1956.

b) 16 h5!?! seeks to clarify the pawn-structure immediately. After 16...g5, 17 g4 ♖c7 transposes to the main line, but also of interest is 17 c4!? ♖c7 (17...♗b6!?! 18 ♖c3 ♗d7 has been suggested as a more solid alternative) 18 ♖d6 (18 ♗xg5!?! hxg5 19 ♖xg5 f6 20 ♖g3 ♖h8 21 h6 definitely has something to be said for it; Black will need to be careful here) 18...♖b6 19 ♗xg5 hxg5 20 cxd5 (20 h6 ♖f6 ♚) 20...cxd5 21 ♖xg5 f6 22 ♖g6 (Pähtz-C.Gustavsson, Germany tt 1998/9) and now 22...♖xd6 23 h6 ♖c7+ 24 ♖b1 ♖f7 looks as though it leaves Black slightly better.

16...♖c7!

Although this is now regarded as Black's best, generally speaking the most beneficial quality for someone playing Black to possess is a firm understanding of all of Black's resources in these types of positions, and for this reason I have included the following examples:

a) 16...♗f4 17 ♖c3 ♖d5 18 g5!?! (18 ♖a3 as in McDonald-S.Hansen, Århus 1990 is also possible, but such quiet play should not trouble Black too much if he applies strategies consistent with those that we have examined elsewhere in the chapter) 18...hxg5!?! (this is risky, but other moves have left Black struggling in practice; e.g., 18...h5 19 ♖a3 ♖c7 20 ♗f6+! ♖xf6 21 gxf6 ♖c8 22 c4 ♖e6 23 ♜h2 ♖f5 24 ♜hd2 ♗e6 25 ♖d6 ♗d4 26 f4 ± J.Fernandez-Martin Gonzalez, Spain 1989; 18...♗e6 19 gxf6!?! ♖xh6+ 20 ♖e3 ± Chekhov) 19 hxg5 ♖d7 (D) and now:

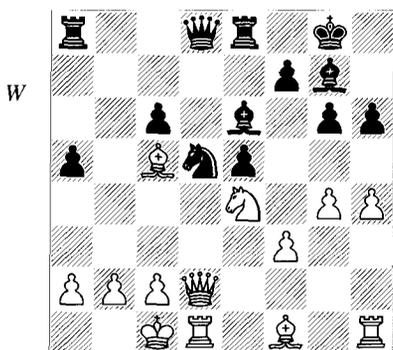


a1) It is thematic for White to reposition his queen out of harm's way with 20 ♖a3, but now 20...♖f5!?! places unexpected pressure on the g5-pawn, threatening 21...♖xe4 and 22...♖xg5. Play can now continue 21 ♗d6!?! ♖xg5 22 c4? (a little too ambitious; it may be better to bag the material with 22 ♗xe8 ♜xe8 23 ♖b1 ♖g3 24 ♜gl ♖xf3 25 ♖xf3 ♖xf3 26 ♜d7 a5, when Black has two pawns for the exchange, but I should imagine the critical factor is Black's three connected passed pawns on the kingside) 22...♗d3+ 23 ♖b1 ♗xb2!! 24 ♖xb2 ♖xf3! 25 ♗xe8 ♜xe8 26 ♖e3 ♖f5 0-1 Bauk-Maiorov, IECC 2001. With both rooks under attack and Black's bishops trained on the white king it is understandable why White decided to call it a day.

a2) 20 ♖d3 ♖f5 21 ♜dg1 ♜ed8 has been assessed as slightly better for White by Alvarez,

but this has not necessarily been confirmed by practical play; e.g., 22 ♖f6+ (22 ♙e7! looks better, but Black still seems to be OK; e.g., 22...♙xe4 23 fxe4 ♗xd3 24 cxd3 ♘e2+ 25 ♖c2 ♗d7 26 ♗a3 ♘xg1 27 ♗xg1 ♙f8, when White has a somewhat better pawn-structure in the ending, but I don't believe that Black would encounter much difficulty in holding the position) 22...♙xf6 23 ♙xf5 ♘e2+ 24 ♖d2 ♘xc3 25 ♖xc3 ♙xf3 26 ♗h3 ♙g7 27 ♙e7? e4+ 0-1 Sion Castro-Romero, Salamanca 1990. Black won a nice game here, but 18...hxg5!? has not attracted many followers, and I personally would be reluctant to play it without first doing some serious homework on it.

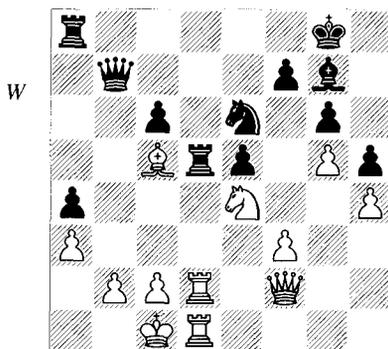
b) 16...a5 (D) is another thematic continuation.



Black removes the a7-pawn from the c5-bishop's view and creates the possibility of a subsequent ...♘b4 (e.g. if White hits the d5-knight with c4). Another interesting aspect of this little pawn advance is that it enjoys an unspoken relationship with White's light-squared bishop (currently on f1). The first point to note is that ...a5 rules out ♙a6, where the light-squared bishop occupies an unduly intrusive outpost. A second point is that if White attempts to cement his position on the queenside with ♙c4 and ♙b3, this will now invite ...a4. Finally, a subsidiary element of the black a-pawn's relationship with White's light-squared bishop is that, by advancing the pawn to a5 (when the bishop is on b3) Black often tempts White into blocking the a5-pawn with a4. This opens up a new possibility, namely ...♗ab8 followed by ...♗xb3, sacrificing the exchange to open up White's queenside. Speaking less generally, I have to admit that I am not too fond of

16...a5 in this position, if only because it does not achieve anything immediate and Black still has to activate his major pieces. Furthermore, I am slightly concerned that, following 17 g5 h5 18 a4, Black may have nothing better than 18...♗c7 19 ♙c4 ♗ed8 20 ♗f2, which in fact transposes to the important game Ehlvest-Marín (see the note to Black's 19th move) which is thought to be good for White. However, despite these criticisms of 16...a5, the move does indeed have a fine pedigree, and has scored well in practice. Here are some of the more instructive practical examples.

b1) 17 g5 h5 18 ♙c4 (18 a4 may be better, as mentioned above) 18...a4!? (consistent; after 18...♗c7 19 a4 ♗ed8 White can again play 20 ♗f2, transposing to the note to Black's 19th move; instead 20 ♗h2?! ♗ab8 21 b3 ♙f5 22 ♗d2 ♗d7 23 ♗hd1 ♗bd8 24 ♗f2 ♗b8 25 ♙a3 ♗a8 26 ♙b2 ♗b8 transpired in Perez Candelario-Y.Gonzalez, Cuba 2001, when it was quite clear that neither side was really making much progress, and the players eventually agreed a draw) and now 19 a3!? is probably best, and certainly the most natural, but Watson instructively demonstrates that it may give rise to a potentially serious weakening of the b3-square. Curious? Read on... 19...♗c7 20 ♙a2 ♗ed8 21 ♗f2 ♗b7 22 ♗d2 ♘f4 23 ♙xe6 ♘xe6 24 ♗hd1 ♗d5! (D).

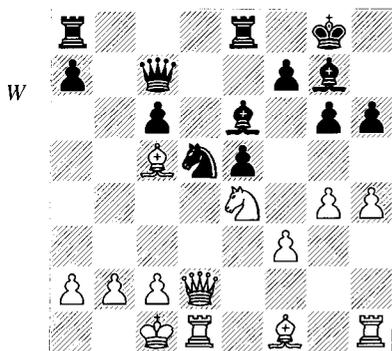


We will be seeing a lot more of this little move! Black blocks the d-file, hits the c5-bishop and prepares a doubling (or even tripling!) on the d-file. If White captures on d5 Black simply recaptures with the c-pawn establishing a powerful centre, so White's only recourse for dislodging the d5-rook is to lash out with c4. This leaves the c4-pawn weak, but perhaps far more

importantly, advancing the c2-pawn leaves the b3-, d3- and d4-squares very weak indeed. 25 c4 ♙xd2 26 ♚xd2 ♚b8 (26...♚b3!?) 27 ♚c2 ♘xc5 28 ♘xc5 ♚a7 29 ♘d7 ♚b3 30 ♚e4?! ♚f2! 31 ♙d2 ♚f1+ 32 ♙d1 ♚f2 33 ♙d2 ♚f1+ 34 ♙d1 ♚xf3 35 ♚xf3 ♚xf3 36 ♙d6 ♚f4 37 ♙xc6 ♙xh4 38 c5 ♚c4+ 39 ♘b1 h4 40 ♙d6 h3 41 ♙d2 ♙d4 42 c6 ♙xd2 43 c7 h2 44 c8 ♚+ ♘h7 45 ♘f6+ ♙xf6 46 ♚h3+ ♘g8 0-1 Kuczynski-W. Watson, Bundesliga 1993/4.

b2) 17 h5?! was played in Ye Jiangchuan-Zhu Chen, Beijing 1997, which continued 17...g5 18 a4 ♚c7 19 ♙c4 ♙ed8 20 ♚f2 ♙ab8 21 ♙d2 f5!. When I first played through this game I had to look twice at this move to believe it was correct. Black voluntarily opens up the kingside, leaving her e-pawn isolated and blockaded, and there is no obvious tactical justification for doing so. On the other hand, Black has correctly observed that with a white pawn on g4, Black will never be able to dislodge the e4-knight, and that an exchange of Black's f-pawn for White's g-pawn would give Black some use of the f-file, while leaving the f3-pawn isolated and potentially vulnerable. 22 gxf5 ♙xf5 23 ♙hd1 ♘h8 24 ♙a3?! (Schulz suggested that 24 b3!? may be better, but note that 24 ♙xd5? is bad because of 24...cxd5 25 ♙xd5 ♙xd5 26 ♙xd5 ♙xb2! 27 ♘xb2 ♚b7+ and Black is much better) 24...♙h7 25 ♘c5 ♚f7 26 ♙a2 ♙e8 27 ♚g3 ♚xh5 28 ♙xd5 cxd5 29 ♙xd5 ♙bc8 (29...♙f8!? ♣) 30 ♙d7 ♚g6 31 ♙ld2 h5!? 32 ♘b1 ♚f5 33 ♘e4 g4 ♣.

We now return to the position after 16...♚c7! (D):



25 ♖c5 ♗b7 26 ♗e3 ♘d5 27 ♗a3 ♙h7 28 c4 ♗a6!? 29 ♜c2 ♙f5 30 ♜c1 ♘f4 31 ♙e7 ♗a7 32 ♙a1 ♘e6 33 ♘f6+? ♙xf6! 34 ♙xf6 ♘d4 ± 35 ♙xe5 ♘b3+! 36 axb3 axb3 37 c5 ♗b7 38 ♙c4 ♗a7!! 39 ♙c3 ♗a8 40 ♙b4 ♙c2 0-1 Bertolucci-Oppici, corr. 1987.

18...♜d8

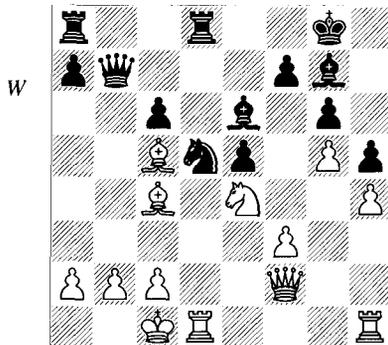
The general consensus is that this move is Black's best. 18...♜d8 is obviously more 'natural', but one has to ask what the other rook is then achieving on e8; for example, 19 ♗f2! ♜d7 (19...♘f4 20 ♙xe6 ♘xe6 21 ♙e3 ♗e7 22 ♜xd8 ♜xd8 23 c3 ♗b7 24 ♗e2 a6 25 ♜d1 ± Gallagher-Jo.Hodgson, British League (4NCL) 2000/1) 20 ♜d2 ♜ed8 21 ♜hd1 was Popović-Ki.Georgiev, Vršac 1987, and although Black eventually drew the game, both Psakhis and Popović correctly assessed the position as better for White.

19 ♗f2 ♗b7!? (D)

At the time of writing, established theory regards this unusual move as Black's best. Without the aid of some background knowledge of this position it is very difficult indeed to grasp the underlying subtleties of this quiet move, and I would therefore urge the reader to play over the game Ehlvest-Marin, Calcutta 1997, before proceeding to digest the analysis of 19...♗b7. That game continued 19...a5 20 a4 ♗b7 21 ♜he1! ♜ab8 22 b3 ♘f4 23 ♙xe6 ♘xe6 24 ♘f6+ ♙xf6 25 gxf6 ♜d5 (25...♘xc5 26 ♗xc5 ♜xd1+ 27 ♜xd1 ♗b4 28 ♗xe5 +-) 26 ♙d6 ±, but Black's play may be susceptible to improvements at various points. Note that 19...♘f4 is also bad for Black; e.g., 20 ♙xe6 ♘xe6 21 ♙d6 ♗b6 22 ♜d2 ♜d7 23 ♜hd1 ♜ad8?! (23...♗a6!? is recommended by Psakhis as a possible improvement, but I still prefer White) 24 ♗xb6! axb6 25 ♙e7! ± Psakhis-Komljenović, Andorra 1994.

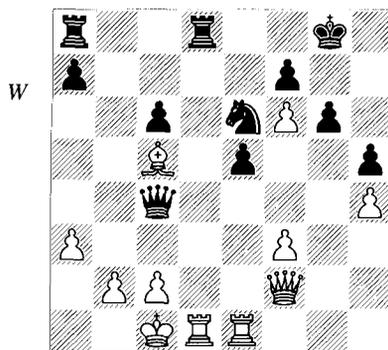
Now (after 19...♗b7):

a) 20 ♜d2 a5 21 a4 ♘f4 22 ♙xe6 ♘xe6 23 ♙d6 ♘d4 24 ♜hd1 ♜xd6! 25 ♘d6 ♗b4 26 ♘e4 ♜b8 27 c3 (27 b3? ♗a3+ 28 ♙b1 ♘xb3 29 cxb3 ♗xb3+ +- Rogozenko) 27...♘b3+ 28 ♙c2 ♗xa4 29 ♜d8+ ♜xd8 30 ♜xd8+ ♙h7 31



♙b1 ♗a1+ 32 ♙c2 ♗a4 33 ♙b1 1/2-1/2 Palackolev, Skopje 2002.

b) Given the significance of Ehlvest-Marin (above), it is obviously critical to consider the analogous 20 ♜he1. Taking into account the fact that the a-pawns on their original squares, Rogozenko pointed out (in *ChessBase Magazine* 88) that Black has an extra resource that allows him to generate counterplay: 20...♘f4 21 ♙xe6 ♘xe6 22 ♘f6+ ♙xf6 23 gxf6 and now rather than 23...♜d5, Black has 23...♗a6! hitting the a2-pawn, and if 24 a3, then 24...♗c4! (D) complicates matters greatly.



Black's e5-pawn remains weak, but Black's active queen now threatens to invade the white king's area with 25...♗a2, or to pick up the f6-pawn via 25...♗f4+ and 26...♗xf6. White's problems are amplified by the fact that he does not have time for 25 ♙b1 (dealing with both of the aforementioned threats) because the c5-bishop is also under immediate attack.

15 9 0-0-0 d5: White Maintains the Central Tension

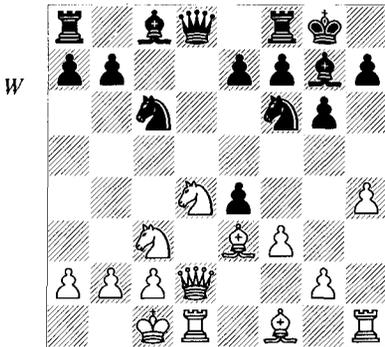
1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 g6 6 ♙e3 ♙g7 7 f3 ♘c6 8 ♚d2 0-0 9 0-0-0 d5

Now we consider:

- A: 10 h4!? 175
- B: 10 ♘xc6?! 175
- C: 10 ♖b1!? 177
- D: 10 ♚e1 186

A)

10 h4!? dxe4 (D)



11 h5

The critical move, but there are alternatives:

a) 11 fxe4 ♘g4! gave Black a good game in Tubis-Landau, Germany 1995.

b) 11 ♘xc6 ♚xd2+ 12 ♚xd2 (12 ♙xd2 bxc6 13 fxe4 ♘g4 14 ♚e1 ♙e6 ♚ Roux-Goulenok, Montigny 1999) 12...bxc6 13 ♘xe4 gave rise to an approximately equal ending in Murray Ortiz-Ericsson, Guarapuava 1995.

c) 11 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 12 fxe4 (Lindgren-Evertsson, Stockholm 1996) 12...♙xd4! 13 ♙xd4 ♙g4 leaves White in serious trouble.

d) 11 ♚f2!? ♚c7 12 h5 ♘xd4 (12...♘h5!?) 13 ♙xd4 exf3 14 hxg6 fxg6 15 ♚h4 (Marra-Vera, São Paulo 2004) and now 15...e5!? may prove awkward for White.

11...♘xd4 12 ♙xd4

Note that 12 hxg6?! e5! (the alternatives 12...♘e6 and 12...♘c6 are also good) 13 gxf7+ ♚xf7 14 ♙c4 ♙e6 ♚ is good for Black, and 12 h6 ♙h8 13 ♙xd4 exf3 14 gxf3 ♚a5 15 ♙c4 ♙f5 16 ♖b1 ♚fd8 gave Black a comfortable game in Escofet-Izquierdo, Uruguay 1982.

12...e5!

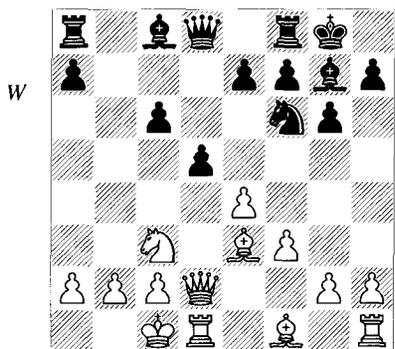
Now:

a) 13 ♙xe5 ♚xd2+ 14 ♚xd2 e3 15 ♚d3 ♘h5 16 ♙xg7 ♘xg7 17 ♚xe3 ♘g3 18 ♚g1 (Donchev-Semkov, Varna 1982) 18...♙e6 = Below.

b) 13 h6 exd4! (13...♚xd4?! 14 ♚g5 ♙h8 15 ♚xd4 exd4 16 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 17 fxe4 ♙e6 18 ♙d3 ± Baron Rodriguez-Medvegy, San Agustin 1997) 14 hxg7 ♚e8 15 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 16 fxe4 ♚f6 17 ♙c4 ♚xg7 18 ♚xd4 ♙g4 19 ♚d2 ♚xd4 20 ♚xd4 ♚e7 21 ♙d5 ♚c8 = Akopian-Tiviakov, USSR 1986. Black's superior pawn-structure ensures that he can look forward to the ending with confidence.

B)

10 ♘xc6?! bxc6 (D)



11 ♙h6

After 11 exd5, 11...♘xd5 transposes to Chapters 13 and 14, but for those with a passion for

gambits, 11...♖a5 may be of interest; e.g., 12 dxc6 ♗e6, when Black is two pawns down but enjoys active pieces, pressure against the queenside and will soon be in a position to recover the c6-pawn.

11...♗xh6 12 ♖xh6 ♖b6! 13 e5

Or:

a) 13 exd5 ♗b8! gives Black excellent compensation for the pawn; e.g., 14 b3 ♖a5 15 ♖d2 ♗d8 ♣.

b) The rare alternative 13 h4!? deserves attention; e.g., 13...♗b8 14 b3 ♖c5 15 ♖b2 dxe4 16 h5 g5 17 f4 ♗g4! and then:

b1) 18 ♖xf8+? ♖xf8 19 ♗d8+ ♖g7 20 h6+ ♗xh6 21 ♗h5 f6 → Petursson-Schütte, Bavaria 1998.

b2) 18 ♗xe4! ♗xh6 19 ♗xc5 gxf4 has never been played, but is definitely better; e.g., 20 ♗d7 ♗xd7 21 ♗xd7 e5! 22 ♗xa7 ♗f5, when it is not clear who is better. I prefer Black (I know, I know, **big** surprise! But there *is* a reason...) because White's kingside pawns are stunted and potentially weak, and the h1-rook and f1-bishop are currently out of play, whereas Black's f5-knight is a monster and can offer substantive support to an advance of the e-pawn. On the other hand, Black must be wary of White's a-pawn advancing, Black's c-pawn is vulnerable and if White could secure an outpost on the h1-a8 diagonal for his light-squared bishop, Black could be in real trouble.

13...♗d7 14 h4

This caveman, club-thumping approach is White's best chance in this position. Other moves lead to imminent disaster: 14 f4? ♖e3+ 15 ♖b1 ♗xe5 ♣ and 14 ♖f4? ♗b8 15 b3 ♖c7 16 ♗e1 f6 ♣.

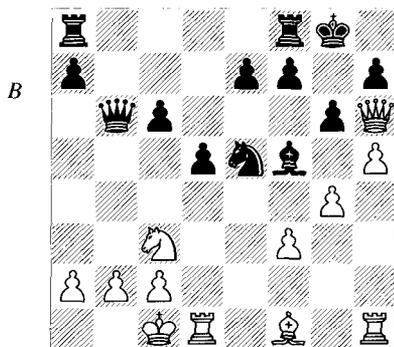
14...♗xe5! 15 h5 ♗f5 16 g4 (D)

16 hxg6 ♗xg6 ♣ deprives White of any constructive means of continuing his kingside attack.

16...f6!! 17 ♖f4

The idea of Black's play is revealed after 17 gxf5? g5 →, when Black will follow up with 18...♗f7, trapping the white queen. Black should also be aware of the alternative continuation 17 ♖d2 ♗xf3 (17...♗ab8!? 18 b3 is similar) 18 ♖f4 ♗ab8 19 b3 and now:

a) 19...♗xc2 20 ♗xc2! (20 hxg6 ♗xg6 21 ♖xf3 e5 gives Black good compensation for the piece) 20...♖f2+ 21 ♖b1 e5 22 ♖h6 which



is assessed by Rogozenko as unclear, but I think Black should be fine here after 22...♗d4! (22...g5? 23 ♗e4! +– Rogozenko) 23 ♗d3 ♗xb3! 24 hxg6 ♗d4+ 25 ♗b5 (25 ♗b5? ♖c2+ 26 ♖a1 ♖xc3+ 27 ♖b1 ♗xb5#) 25...♗xb5+ 26 ♗xb5 ♖c2+ 27 ♖a1 ♖c3+ =.

b) 19...♗xg4!? 20 hxg6 (20 ♖xg4!? ♖e3+ 21 ♖b2 ♗e5 gives Black three pawns for the piece, and appears fine tactically; e.g., 22 ♖e6+ ♗f7 23 hxg6 ♗c4+) 20...♖b4! ♣.

17...♗ab8

17...♗d7 was played in T.Schmitt-V.Werner, Germany tt 1993, and is also thought to be fine for Black.

18 b3

Note that 18 gxf5? loses to 18...♖xb2+ 19 ♖d2 ♗b4! → and 18 ♗a4!? ♖b4 (18...♖a5!?) 19 ♗d4 (19 ♖xb4 ♗xb4 20 gxf5 ♗xa4 21 hxg6 hxg6 22 fxg6 gives Black a clear advantage) 19...♖e1+ 20 ♗d1 ♗b4 (20...♖b4 repeats the position) 21 ♗xe1 ♗xf4 22 gxf5 ♗xa4 23 hxg6 hxg6 24 fxg6 ♗xa2 ♣ gives Black a favourable ending.

18...g5 19 ♖xf5 ♖c3+ 20 ♖b2 ♗f7

Black now threatens the cunning 21...e6!, trapping the white queen in the middle of the board; e.g., 22 ♖xe6 ♗c4+. White can approach the position in two ways:

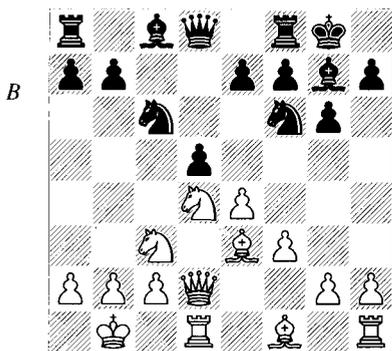
a) 21 ♗d3 e6 22 ♗he1 ♖xe1 23 ♖xh7+ (23 ♗xe1? exf5) 23...♗xh7 24 ♗xh7+ ♖xh7 25 ♗xe1 (Black holds a definite advantage in the ending due to his superior pawn-structure and White's weak f3-pawn) 25...♗b4 26 ♗e2 ♗xf3 27 ♗f1 was Rogovski-Golubev, Ordzhonikidze 2001, and now Ward pointed out that Black can consolidate his advantage with 27...♗e5! 28 ♗xf6 ♗e4!.

b) 21 ♗d3 ♗c4+ 22 ♖b1 and now rather than 22...♗a3+, as in Liutsko-Shabalov, USSR

1983, which promptly ended in a draw, Golubev indicated that 22...♖e1+! 23 ♜d1 (23 ♜d1? e6 →) 23...♖xc3 leaves Black with an enduring advantage.

C)

10 ♖b1!? (D)



This quiet little move embodies similar themes to the ones we encountered in Chapter 11. White reasons that his pieces already occupy their optimal squares, and so simply ‘passes’, inviting Black to find a constructive intermediate move before White decides how to resolve the central tension. At first sight there are no obvious waiting moves for Black, so the pertinent question is whether Black can resolve the tension himself. Clearly 10...dxe4? is out of the question because of 11 ♜xc6!, winning, and 10...e5 11 ♜xc6 bxc6 12 exd5 cxd5 13 ♜xd5 ♜xd5 14 ♖xd5 gives Black insufficient compensation for the pawn, so the emphasis falls on 10...♜xd4 (in actual fact Black has another interesting move, namely 10...♞b8, but we will come to that in a moment). Now 11 ♟xd4 dxe4 is absolutely fine for Black, but Milov’s amazing discovery 11 e5!! (temporarily sacrificing a piece or a pawn) poses Black unique challenges, which for a time appeared insoluble. Having laid the groundwork, now let’s look at the juicy stuff! Black has two options:

C1: 10...♜xd4! 177

C2: 10...♞b8!? 184

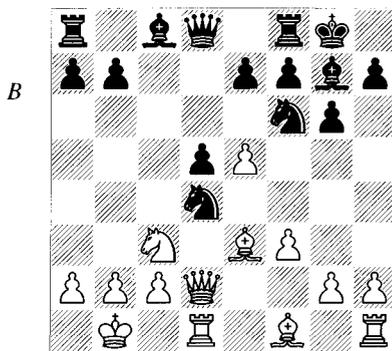
10...e6 is regarded as bad for Black on account of Istratescu’s move 11 ♟b5!, but maybe it isn’t so clear. The notes that follow are based on Istratescu’s annotations in *Informator 67*:

a) 11...♜xd4 12 ♟xd4 dxe4! 13 fxe4 a6 14 ♟e2 ♖c7 15 ♖g5! ♜d7 16 ♟xg7 ♜xg7 17 ♖e7! ♖d8 (17...b5 18 ♞hf1 ♞a7 19 ♟xb5! ±) 18 ♖xd8 ♞xd8 19 ♞d6 ♜f8 20 ♞hd1 ♜e7 21 ♜a4! ± Istratescu-Marin, Bucharest 1996.

b) 11...♜d7 12 exd5 ♜xd5 (12...exd5 13 g4! ±) 13 ♜xd5 exd5 14 ♜b3 ♟e6 15 h4! h5 16 ♜c5 ♖e7 17 ♞he1 and now Istratescu gives only the compliant 17...♖f6?!. After 17...d4!, it is by no means clear White is better.

C1)

10...♜xd4! 11 e5!! (D)



Black now has two possibilities:

C11: 11...♜xf3!? 177

C12: 11...♜f5! 178

Note that 11...♜d7 was quickly demonstrated to be bad: 12 ♟xd4 ♜xe5 13 ♖e3 ♜c6 14 ♟xg7 ♜xg7 15 ♜xd5 ♖a5 16 b4!! ± Milov-Golubev, Biel 1994.

C11)

11...♜xf3!? 12 gxf3 ♜h5

12...♜d7 13 ♜xd5 ♟xe5 14 ♟h3 ♟d6 15 ♟h6 ♜b6 16 ♜xb6 axb6 17 ♟xc8 ♞xc8 18 ♖d4 ± Volchok-Johnson, corr. 1999.

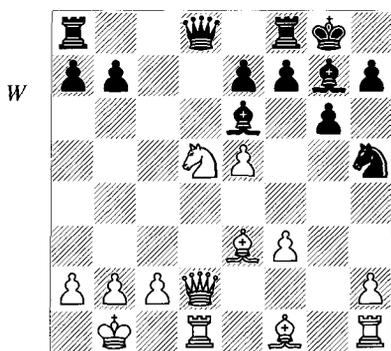
13 ♜xd5

Probably best. 13 f4 ♟g4 14 ♟e2 ♟xe2 15 ♜xe2 e6 was clearly better for Black in Rosten-Dearing, London 1996, but 13 ♖xd5 is interesting. In Palac-Hodgson, Erevan OL 1996, Black now exchanged queens on d5 but quickly found himself in a clearly worse ending, but in Lalić-Dearing, Blackpool 1997, I got to try out my preparation with 13...♟e6! 14 ♖xb7 ♖a5 15

♖b5 ♗xb5 16 ♜xb5 ♙xe5 17 ♜xa7 and now Bogdan thought that Black would be slightly better after 17...♙f4! 18 ♙xf4 (18 ♙f2? ♙b8; 18 ♙d4 ♖xa7! 19 ♙xa7 ♖a8) 18...♜xf4 19 ♜c6 ♙xa2+, whereas I think that the final position favours White. Perhaps we should have just switched sides at the outset!

13...♙e6 (D)

Korchnoi suggested 13...e6 14 ♜f6+ ♙xf6 15 exf6 ♗xd2 16 ♖xd2 b6 17 ♙h6 ♙b7 18 ♙xf8 ♜xf8 with the assessment that Black has compensation for the exchange. Even so, I think I would be reluctant to play this ending as Black.



14 f4

Or:

a) 14 ♙e2?! ♙xe5 15 ♙h6 ♙g7 16 ♙xg7 ♜xg7 17 ♗g5 f6 18 ♗h4 ♜f5 19 ♗e4 ♗c8 20 ♙c4 ♙f7 21 ♙b3 ♗c5 22 ♖hg1 ♜h8 23 ♜f4 e5 24 ♙xf7 ♖xf7 25 ♜e6 ♗b6 26 ♗d5 ♜e3 27 ♗d8+ ♖xd8 28 ♖xd8+ ♗xd8 29 ♜xd8 ♖e7! → Sowray-Dearing, London 1996. White resigned a few moves later because the d8-knight is trapped and will eventually be rounded up by the black king.

b) 14 ♙c4!? ♙xe5! and now:

b1) 15 ♗b4 ♙xd5 16 ♙xd5 (16 ♖xd5 ♗c7) 16...♗c7 17 ♗xb7 ♗xb7 18 ♙xb7 ♖ab8 19 ♙d5 ♖xb2+ 20 ♜c1 ♙b5 21 ♙b3 ♖b7 22 ♜b1 ♖c8 ♢ Trygstad-Dearing, Hallsberg 1997. For some reason this game has been recorded as a loss for me (probably by FIDE too, knowing my luck!) but I actually managed to win that one.

b2) 15 ♗e2 ♙d6 16 ♙h6 ♖e8 occurred in Van Blitterswijk-Willemze, Arnhem 1996, and eventually led to a draw. Rogozenko has since assessed this position as unclear, but I analysed this back in 1996 and I still believe I would be comfortable playing the black side here.

14...♙xd5 15 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 16 ♖xd5 ♙h6

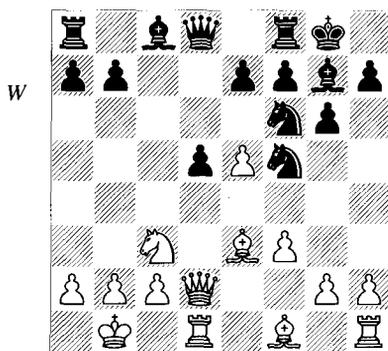
White now has two continuations:

a) 17 ♙c4 is natural; e.g., 17...♙xf4 18 ♙xf4 ♜xf4 19 ♖d7 ♖fc8!? (19...e6 20 ♖xb7 ♖fc8 21 b3 ♖c5 22 ♖d1 ♖xe5 23 ♖dd7 ♖f5 24 ♖xa7 ♖xa7 25 ♖xa7 gives rise to an ending that I once analysed in some detail with David Mosković; I believe we concluded that White's queenside pawns are just a little too quick, but the position is still very complicated) 20 ♙b3 ♜f8 21 ♖xb7 ♖c5 22 ♖b4 g5 23 h4 1/2-1/2 Hanison-Horton, corr. 1998.

b) 17 ♖b5 and now rather than 17...♖ad8? 18 ♙e2 (18 ♙g2 b6 19 ♖b4 f6 ♢) 18...b6 (or 18...♜xf4 19 ♖xb7 ±) 19 ♙xh5 gxh5 20 a4 ♖d7 21 ♖g1+ +- Wahls-Rogozenko, Hamburg 1996, André Schulz suggested 17...b6!? 18 ♖b4 ♖fd8 (Rogozenko proposed 18...f6 as another method of gaining counterplay) 19 ♙e2 ♜g7. White definitely has some initiative here, but Black's position is very solid and if he can unravel his kingside pieces, he should enjoy full equality.

C12)

11...♜f5! (D)



It was almost by virtue of a process of elimination that Black's attention finally came to rest on this subtle move.

12 exf6 ♙xf6

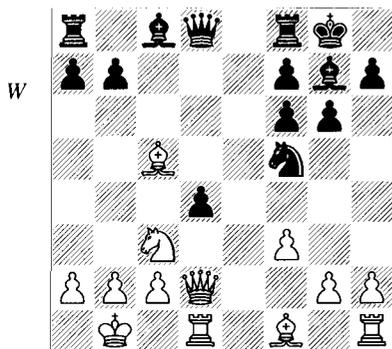
Interestingly, attention has recently been focused on the rather curious move 12...exf6!?. I sincerely doubt this can really guarantee Black equality, but so far results have been good. There follows a brief summary of White's options in this line:

a) 13 ♜xd5 ♜xe3 14 ♗xe3 ♙e6 15 ♙c4 ♖e8 (15...f5!? 16 c3 ♗h4) and now both 16

♖f4 ♜c8 and 16 ♖d2 a6 17 ♙b3 f5 18 h4 ♜c8 19 ♖g5 h6 20 ♖xd8 ♜cxd8 appear to be quite solid for Black. In either variation Black's main problem is that his queen is somewhat awkwardly placed on d8, and there are no other suitable squares for the lady. However, on the other hand, it is by no means obvious how White can exploit this with any immediacy.

b) According to Chris Ward, 13 ♖xd5 ♖xd5 14 ♗xd5 ♗xc3 15 ♗xe3 gives Black at least equal chances in the ending.

c) 13 ♙c5! is the critical test. 13...d4 (D) (13...♙e6 and 13...♜e8 have also been tried, but I don't trust either move and in practice results have been poor) and here White has two approaches:



c1) 14 ♙xf8 ♖xf8 and then:

c11) 15 ♗e2 ♗e3 16 ♜c1 ♗c4!? 17 ♖xd4 b5 18 c3 ♙f5+ 19 ♗a1 ♜d8 20 ♖f2 and here:

c111) 20...♜d2 21 ♖xa7 ♗xb2 22 ♗d4 ♗a4 23 ♗xb5? (23 ♗xf5! is critical, but even here Black appears to be OK; for example, 23...gxf5 24 ♙c4!? f4! with ...f5 to follow; e.g., 25 ♙b3? ♗xc3! 26 ♜xc3 f5 27 ♜hc1 b4 -+) 23...♗xc3!! 24 ♙c4 (Ward points out the pretty line 24 ♜xc3 ♜d1+ 25 ♗b2 ♜b1#, and note that 24 ♗xc3 ♖b4 -+ is also fatal) 24...♗xb5 25 ♖e3 ♙d3 0-1 was the aesthetically pleasing conclusion of Lahno-Jobava, Dubai 2004.

c112) Ward pointed out that Black has the stunning shot 20...♗xb2!! 21 ♗xb2? (21 ♗d4 looks forced, but 21...♗d3 22 ♙xd3 ♙xd3 is also good for Black) 21...♜d2+ 22 ♗a1 ♖a3, when White cannot stop the ensuing mate.

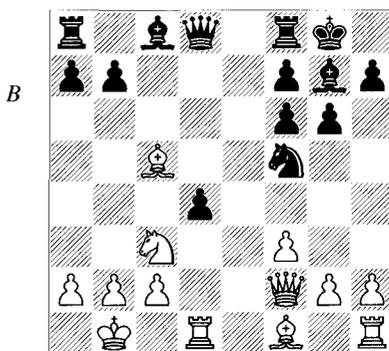
c12) Ward suggested that 15 ♗b5 may be more accurate, after which I have managed to unearth two examples of 15...♙e6 (15...♗e3 16 ♜e1 f5 17 ♗xd4 f4 is a line suggested by Ward,

but I would not be happy playing Black here). Black lost both games, but I am not convinced White was definitely better in either one. Take a look at the following:

c121) 16 ♙d3 ♗e3 17 ♜c1 (17 ♜de1! looks better) 17...♖c5 18 ♖a5 was Senff-S.Farago, Budapest 1997 and now I am not sure why Black didn't play 18...a6! 19 b4 (19 ♖c7 ♖d5 -+; 19 ♖a3 ♖e5 ♢) 19...♖e5 20 ♗c7 ♖xa5 21 bxa5 ♜c8 22 ♗xe6 fxe6 when the endgame is clearly better for Black.

c122) 16 ♗c7 ♜c8 17 ♗xe6 fxe6 18 ♖a5 e5 19 ♙d3 ♗e3 20 ♜d2 a6 21 ♖b6 ♖e7 (21...♖f7!?) and now 22 g4 was played in Lampe-Delovski, Germany 1997 (which White also won), but if Black were to activate the g7-bishop now with something like 22...♙h6, I believe he would have plenty of compensation for the exchange. White really needs to fracture the black pawn-structure, so perhaps something like 22 c3 would be preferable, but if Black had put his queen on f7 instead of e7, this would prevent checks on the a2-g8 diagonal and rule out such pawn-breaks.

c2) White can also ignore the f8-rook and instead go after the d4-pawn with 14 ♖f2 (D):

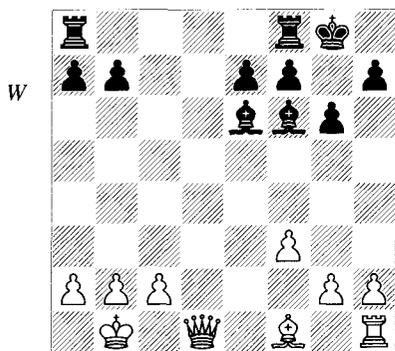


c21) 14...♜e8 15 g4 ♖c7 16 ♗e4 ♗e3 17 ♖xd4 f5 (Ward suggests 17...♗xf1!? 18 ♜xf1 f5; a logical continuation is then 19 gxf5 ♙xf5 20 ♜d2 ♙xe4 21 fxe4 ♜xe4, when Black has emerged from the complications with a good position) 18 ♖xe3 fxe4 19 ♜xe4 ♜xe4 20 fxe4 ♙xg4 21 ♙d3 ♖e5 22 c3 ♙e6 23 ♗a1 ♜c8 24 ♙d4 ♖a5 25 ♙b1 b5 26 ♙xg7 ♗xg7 27 h4 h5 28 ♜g1 ♜c4 29 a3 ♖c7 1/2-1/2 Willemze-Janssen, Wijk aan Zee 1996.

c22) Given that Black was willing to sacrifice the exchange last move, it seems logical

that a move such as 14...♖a5!?, hitting the c5-bishop and forcing White to capture the f8-rook, should come into consideration. A few sample variations: 15 ♗xf8 (15 ♗xd4 ♗e6 16 a3 ♗xd4 17 ♖xd4 f5 ♖) 15...♗xf8 16 ♗e4 (16 ♗b5 ♗e6 17 a3 a6 18 ♗xd4 ♗c5 ♖) 16...♗e6 17 b3 (17 a3 ♖b6 ♖ looks very awkward for White; e.g., 18 ♗a1 ♗e3 19 ♖d2 ♖c8 20 ♗d3 ♗xa3!! 21 bxa3 ♖c3! 22 ♗xc3 dxc3 wins for Black) 17...♖e5 18 ♗d3 ♗e3 19 f4 ♖a5 20 ♗xf6+ ♗g7 is highly unclear, but one would imagine that the weak dark squares guarantee Black good counterplay against the white king.

13 ♗xd5 ♖xd5!! 14 ♖xd5 ♗xe3 15 ♖d2 ♗xd1 16 ♖xd1 ♗e6 (D)



This whole queen sacrifice variation was introduced by Mikhail Golubev in a blitz game against Thomas Thiel in 1996, and Golubev subsequently collaborated with Sosonko to produce an article which detailed the concept in *New in Chess Yearbook 42*. The impact was breathtaking. Golubev's idea was an immediate worldwide success, with countless Dragon players abandoning all analysis of alternatives almost overnight, and jumping on the queen-sac bandwagon. Analysts are often predisposed to overreact to such stunning concepts, and in the aforementioned article Sosonko opined that "Golubev convincingly shows that Black has full compensation, and I believe his approach delivers an enormous blow to the fans of 10 ♗b1." Well, that sounds nice, but let's take a look at the position: in exchange for the queen, Black has a rook and a bishop (so is essentially 1 point behind in material), but his real compensation is primarily positional. Black's bishops occupy their optimal diagonals, and Black's next move will bring a rook to the d-file, hitting

the white queen and giving Black time to double rooks on the d-file, thereby obtaining dominant control of the only open file on the board. Black also has some intriguing ideas involving wonderful attacks on the white queenside, and these will be illustrated by the notes that follow. However, before delving into the theory of this variation, I would like to add that I have never been entirely convinced by Black's strategy. The first premise for my doubts is that Black's success rests on his ability to control his own side of the board, which means that he must be very careful to prevent the white queen from infiltrating. Interestingly, Black's unopposed dark-squared bishop means that kingside invasions are rarely threatening (they tend just to run out of steam), but if White can place his queen on a square such as a5, this tends to tie down Black's pieces to the defence of the queenside, making matters considerably more awkward.

The second aspect of this analysis is that Black's control of the position is dependant upon the perfect coordination of all of his pieces. Consequently, if White could exchange the light-squared bishops, Black's initiative would diminish considerably. It can be difficult to convince Black to acquiesce to such an exchange, but of equal importance is the notion of exchanging a pair of rooks. Once this occurs, Black's control of the d-file is of far less importance, if only because Black cannot commence operations anywhere else on the board without thereby relinquishing control of the d-file. The foregoing comments are just my general thoughts on the matter. In actual fact the solidity of Black's position may mean that Black is fine even following an exchange of rooks, and, in any case, this variation is a fantastic practical weapon that has proven very difficult for most 10 ♗b1 players to deal with. White now has two methods of development:

C121: 17 ♗d3 181

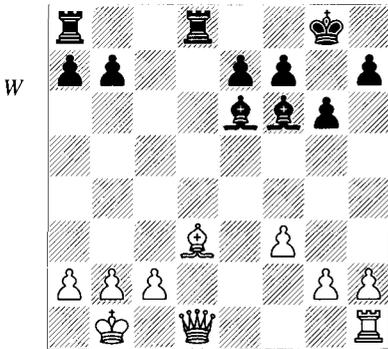
C122: 17 ♗b5 183

In addition to these methods I would just like to say a few words about the subtle 17 ♗e2!?. This move was first suggested to me by Jonathan Rowson at the Caledonian Masters in 1997. The idea is to control the d1-square so that 17...♖fd8 can be met by 18 ♖c1 ♖d6 19 ♖d1,

when Black cannot maintain control of the d-file and prevent an exchange of rooks. I suspect this position should therefore be slightly better for White, especially as White now retains the option of meeting 19...♖b6 with 20 c3!, blunting the scope of Black's dark-squared bishop. This line has never been played, and Black may well be able to hold a draw by permitting an exchange of rooks with, e.g., 19...♗ad8, but even then White's chances must be preferable, and he certainly has little chance of losing. One final point on 17 ♕e2. Initially I wondered whether Black might be able to circumvent White's plan of exchanging rooks by playing 17...♕g5!?, with the idea of taking the c1-square away from the queen and then following up with 18...♗fd8, but then perhaps 18 ♖e1 is strong, intending 19 ♖a5 (hitting the g5-bishop and putting pressure on the a7-pawn), which may be awkward for Black.

C121)

17 ♕d3 ♗fd8 (D)



18 ♖e2

This is White's most common choice here, but some other moves (18 ♖e1 in particular) merit consideration and pose Black unique problems:

a) 18 ♖c1 ♗d6 19 ♗d1 ♗ad8 20 ♕e2? ♗xd1 21 ♕xd1 ♕g5 → Golubev.

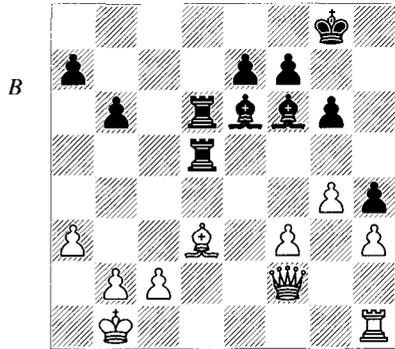
b) 18 h4 and then:

b1) 18...♗d4 19 h5 ♗ad8 20 hxg6 hxg6 21 ♖e2 ♖b4 22 b3 ♖b6 23 g4 a5 24 f4 a4 25 f5? axb3 26 cxb3 ♕xb3 27 axb3 ♖xb3+ → Thiel-Golubev, Senden blitz 1996.

b2) 18...♗d6!? is also worthy of consideration; e.g., 19 h5 ♖b6 20 b3 a5 21 a4 (21 hxg6

hxg6 22 ♖g1 ♗d6 23 ♖e3 ♗ad8 24 ♗d1 a4! = Volchok-Lecroq, corr. 1998) 21...♗d8 22 hxg6 hxg6 23 ♖g1 ♖b4 24 ♖c5?! b6 25 ♖e3 ♖bd4 26 ♗d1 b5! 27 axb5 a4 28 b6 axb3 29 c3 ♗xd3 30 ♗xd3 ♕f5 31 b7 ♗xd3 32 ♖f4 (Papp-Pashikian, Greece 1999), and now 32...♗d1+ 33 ♖b2 ♖b1+ 34 ♖a3 ♖a1+ 35 ♖b4 b2 36 b8♖+ ♕g7 wins for Black, despite the fact that White is two(!) queens up!

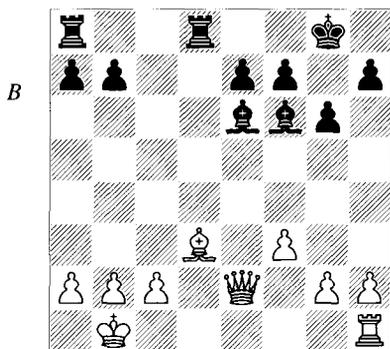
c) 18 ♖e1 ♗d6 19 ♖a5 b6 20 ♖e1 was an idea introduced in Adams-Ivanchuk, Dortmund 1998. White reasons that Black's queenside play relies on the manoeuvre ...♖b6, inducing b3, and then ...a5-a4. However, by forcing Black to play 19...b6, White has effectively ruled out the ...♖b6 manoeuvre altogether. The aforementioned encounter continued 20...♗c8 21 a3 ♗c5 22 g4 ♗cd5 23 ♖g3 (23 h4 h5 24 ♖g3 ♖f8 25 ♖e1 ♗c5 leaves Black with a solid position, and 23 ♖e2 ♖e5 24 ♖f2 ♗ed5 25 h4 h5 26 ♖e2 ♖e5 gives Black good counterplay; however, 23 ♖e3! ♗c5 24 ♖f2 would allow White to keep a slight advantage, according to Ivanchuk) 23...h5 24 h3? h4! 25 ♖f2 (D).



25...♗xd3!! 26 cxd3 ♗xd3 27 ♖e2 (Black now only has two bishops for the queen, but the positionally compromised nature of White's pawns actually allows Black to press for an advantage! Ivanchuk mentions 27 ♖c2 ♖b3 28 ♖b1 g5 ♢ and 27 ♖e1 ♖b3 28 ♖e2 ♕d5 ♢) 27...♖b3 28 ♗d1 g5! 29 ♗d2 (29 ♗d3 ♖xb2+ 30 ♖xb2 ♕xb2 31 ♖xb2 ♕c4 ♢) 29...♕g7 30 ♖e4 a5 31 ♖c1 b5 32 ♖d1 a4 33 ♖e1 ♕c4 34 ♖f2 e6 35 ♖c2 ♕d5 36 ♖d1 and now rather than 36...b4, which was played in Adams-Ivanchuk, Dortmund 1998, releasing the tension and allowing to White to draw quickly, in *Informator* 73 Ivanchuk provides extensive analysis to

show that 36...♙xb2! would have given Black good winning chances.

We return to 18 ♖e2 (D):



Black now has two rook moves to choose from:

- C1211:** 18...♖d4!? 182
C1212: 18...♖d6!? 183

C1211)

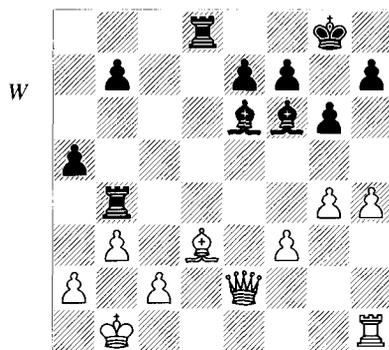
18...♖d4!?

I first played this variation when I was sixteen. At that time the theory of Golubev's wonderful queen sacrifice was still in its infancy, and it seemed to me to be logical to play 18...♖d4 when the centralized position of the rook inhibits White's ability to advance the f- or h-pawns without some preparation, and prevents 19 ♙c4, which might allow White to force an exchange of bishops, thereby reducing Black's initiative. In actual fact White can probably play 19 h4 in any case, as Black's safest response is then simply 19...♖ad8. My first outing with this variation arose during the World Under-18 Championship in Erevan 1997. Golubev had only just published his idea so it came as an enormous surprise to my opponent (and, to be honest, having not actually read the article but only glanced at it, I was rather surprised to find myself 'giving it a punt' with my first IM norm on the line!). That encounter developed as follows: 19 g4 (another of my opponents tried 19 ♖d1, when 19...♖ad8 20 b3?! a5 21 ♙c1 ♙g5+ 22 ♙b2 a4 23 c3 ♖d6 24 h4 ♙f6 25 g4 b5 26 ♙c2 ♖xd1 27 ♙xd1 b4 28 bxa4 was Goodger-Dearing, Edinburgh 1997, and now 28...♙xc3+ was probably best, when Black is at least slightly better) 19...♖ad8 20 ♖f1 (White concluded that

an h-pawn attack was unlikely to succeed, and so switched tack, planning instead to hassle the e6-bishop via f4-f5; given the copious amounts of time my opponent was expending I began to suspect that, without prior analysis, it is actually very difficult for White to formulate a constructive plan against this line) 20...♖b4 21 b3 a5 22 ♙e4 (on 22 f4? I had intended 22...a4 23 f5 axb3! 24 cxb3 {24 axb3 ♖a8 -+; 24 fxe6 bxa2+ 25 ♙xa2 ♖a8+ -+} 24...♙xb3 25 axb3 ♖xb3+ 26 ♙c1 ♖dxd3 -+) 22...♖bd4! 23 ♙xb7 ♖d2 24 ♖e1 a4 25 ♖c1 axb3 26 cxb3 ♖xh2! (when in doubt, grab a pawn!) 27 ♙e4? ♖dd2 28 ♙c2 ♙d5 29 f4 ♖he2 30 g5 ♙d4 31 ♖d1 ♖xc2 -+ Ribstein-Dearing, Erevan U-18 Wch 1997.

White's play can be improved significantly:
19 h4! ♖ad8 20 g4 ♖b4 21 b3 a5?! (D)

Perhaps Black should try something more subtle, such as 21...♖b6 or 21...♖bd4 anticipating White's next move. Black is not really in danger of being mated, so there is a lot to commend this more measured approach.



22 ♖e1!

This excellent move of David Mosковиć's is a big part of the reason I now prefer 18...♖d6 to 18...♖d4. If the rook had gone to d6, when I transferred it over to the b-file it would occupy the b6-square, thereby leaving the a-pawn free to advance. However, now the b4-rook finds itself in a kind of zugzwang – on the one hand the a-pawn is tied to the b4-rook, and therefore cannot advance, and yet on the other hand the b4-rook is tied to the a5-pawn and therefore cannot move! I believe that White is clearly better at this point, but as the game shows, Black's position still conceals some powerful resources.

22...♖c8 23 h5 g5 24 h6 b6 25 ♖d2 ♗d4 26 ♗e1 a4 27 ♗e4 axb3 28 axb3 ♗d6 29 f4? b5!!

Suddenly Black's d6-rook is free to swing over to the a-file, whereas the c8-rook and b5-pawn coordinate perfectly to facilitate ...♗c3, sealing the queenside and creating a mating-net. Mosković-Dearing, British League (4NCL) 1997/8 concluded 30 ♖g2 ♗d5 31 ♖c1 ♗c3 32 ♖d1 ♗a8 33 ♖e2 ♗xe4 34 ♖h3 ♗xd3+ 35 cxd3 ♗a2+ 36 ♖e3 ♗d4+ 37 ♖e4 ♗e2+ 38 ♖f5 0-1.

C1212)

18...♗d6!?

Nowadays there is some reason to question whether Black's rook may be over-extended on d4, and whether d6 might be a better square after all.

19 h4

Or:

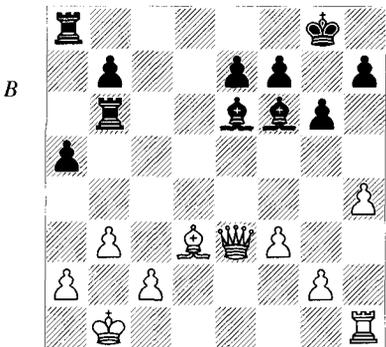
a) 19 ♗d1 ♗ad8 20 f4 ♗b6 21 b3 ♗bd6 22 g4 a5 23 ♗g1? (23 a4) 23...a4! ♠ Magomedov-Valenzuela, Elista OL 1998.

b) 19 ♗c4 ♗xc4 20 ♖xc4 ♗ad8 appears to be the only way of exploiting Black's refusal to occupy the d4-square, but the exchange of bishops comes at a price: now it will be almost impossible for White to force an exchange of rooks, and Black's dominance of the d-file cannot be easily challenged.

19...♗b6!?

As White has already declared his intentions on the kingside, an immediate attack on the queenside makes a lot of sense, especially as the rook may prove well-placed on a8.

20 b3 a5 21 ♖e3!?! (D)



21...♗d6! 22 h5

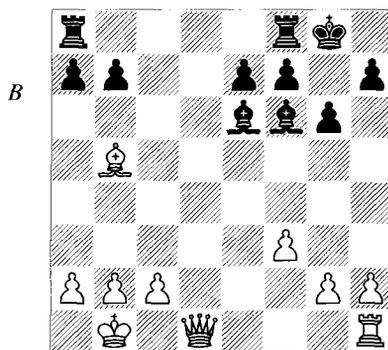
22 a4 ♗ad8 threatens 23...♗xb3, and 23 ♗e2 ♗f5 24 g4 ♗e6 25 ♖f2 ♗d2 looks good for Black.

22...a4 23 hxg6 hxg6

♠ Wang-Esses, corr. 1997.

C122)

17 ♗b5 (D)



17...a6

The immediate 17...♗fd8 is probably less accurate; e.g., 18 ♖e2 ♗d6 19 ♗d1 ♗b6 20 a4! ♗c8 (20...a6 21 ♖e3! ±) 21 a5, when it looks like Black should be in trouble, but Rogozenko found an excellent resource in 21...♗c4!:

a) 22 ♗xc4 ♗xb2+ 23 ♖c1 ♗b4 24 ♗d3 (24 ♗b3 ♗xb3 25 ♗d8+ ♗xd8 26 cxb3 = Petr-Cedikova, Cartak 2003) 24...♗b2+! 25 ♖d2 ♗c3+ 26 ♖e3 ♗d4+ 27 ♖f4 (27 ♖e4 ♗c3+) 27...♗e5+! 28 ♖e3 ♗d4+ = Rogozenko.

b) 22 ♖xc4 ♗xc4 23 axb6 (23 ♗d8+ ♖g7 24 axb6 ♗d4! =) 23...♗d4 24 ♗xd4 ♗xd4 25 bxa7 ♗xa7 and the opposite-coloured bishop ending is a dead draw, O'Donnell-Rogozenko, WCN 2000.

18 ♗a4 b5!

When I first analysed this position with my good friend IM Karl Mah we were tempted by the manoeuvre 18...♗fd8 19 ♖e2 ♗d4 20 ♗b3 ♗xb3 21 axb3 ♗ad8 when we believed Black's domination of the d-file should guarantee easy equality, and subsequent practice seems to have confirmed our assessment; e.g., 22 g3 ♖g7 23 f4 ♗d5 24 ♖f3 e6 25 ♗e1 h6 26 h4 h5 27 c3 ♗d3 28 ♖f2 ♗d7 29 b4 ♗d2 30 ♗e2 ♗d5 31 ♖c2 ♗d3 32 ♗e4 b5 33 ♗e3 ♗d5 34 ♖e2 ♗5d6 was Xie Jun-Alterman, Beijing 1997. It was clear that White was making no progress

and the players eventually agreed to a draw. The text-move, 18...b5, should also lead to a draw with best play, but the advancing queen-side pawns offer Black some additional chances of an advantage.

19 ♖b3 ♗xb3 20 cxb3

The alternative recapture is surprisingly bad for White: 20 axb3?! a5! 21 ♖d5 (21 ♖d3 a4 22 b4 a3 23 bxa3 ♜fc8 24 c4 bxc4 25 ♖e3 ♜d8 26 ♜c1 ♜d3 ♢ Kennaugh-R. Webb, British League (4NCL) 1998/9) 21...a4 22 ♖xb5 ♜fb8 23 ♖c5 axb3 ♢.

20...♜ad8!?

Also adequate is 20...♜fd8 21 ♖e2 ♜d6 (or 21...♜ac8! 22 ♜d1? ♜xd1+ 23 ♖xd1 ♖g5 -+ Camacho Penate) 22 ♜d1 ♜ad8 23 ♜xd6 ♜xd6 = Camacho Penate-J. Diaz, Cuba 1996.

21 ♖e2 ♖g5! 22 ♖e5

The only move; not 22 ♜d1? ♜xd1+ 23 ♖xd1 ♜c8 24 a4 ♜c1+ 25 ♖xc1 ♖xc1 26 ♖xc1 e5 27 ♖d2 f5 28 ♖c3 ♖f7 29 ♖b4 e4! -+ Delchev.

22...♖f6!

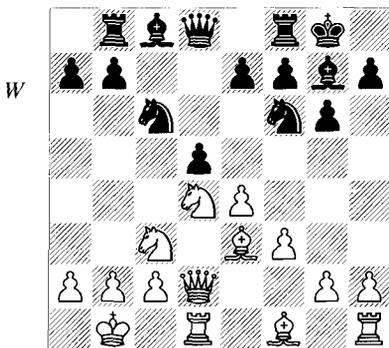
This move equalizes in the most clear-cut fashion, but in *Informator 69* Delchev gives the alternative lines 22...h6 23 h4 ♖f6 24 ♖e2 ♜d4 25 ♜d1 ♜xh4 26 ♖f2 and 22...♖h6 23 ♖xe7 ♜d2 24 ♖e1 ♜c8 25 ♖b7 ♜cc2 26 ♖b8+ ♖f8 27 ♜e8 ♜xb2+ =.

23 ♖e2 ♖g5 24 ♖e5 ♖f6

1/2-1/2 Lutz-Delchev, Pula Echt 1997.

C2)

10...♜b8! (D)



I first became aware of this unusual move in 1996 when I saw Demetrios Agnos win a nice game with it. At the time I was highly suspicious of the move (which does appear pointless!) and

I dismissed it practically without any analysis. A few months later I was between rounds at a London chess congress, and found myself discussing the 10 ♖b1 variation with my future team mate David Mosковиć. GM Aaron Summerscale was sitting nearby (having just beaten me!) and mentioned that he too had enjoyed some success with 10...♜b8. We chatted briefly and seemed to reach a general consensus that 10...♜b8 simply does not 'look' correct, and that White's best is probably simply to leave the knight on d4 and play something non-committal like 11 h4, when it is not clear what Black's last move has achieved. After that very few games were played with 10...♜b8, and certainly none that attracted my attention, but recently this has all changed: 10...♜b8 is back with a vengeance and scoring excellently! I still don't trust this line, but in light of its good results and the sudden burst of attention which it is receiving, I feel obliged to offer what coverage I can of the move.

11 ♖b3

This is probably White's most popular response, but I don't believe it is the best. The following alternatives are of interest:

a) 11 ♖f4 runs into 11...e5! 12 ♖xc6 bxc6 13 ♖g3 (13 ♖xe5 ♖xe4 14 fxe4 ♖xe5 ♢) 13...♖e6 ♢ O. Ivanov-Stets, Kharkov 2003.

b) 11 g4 e5 12 ♖xc6 bxc6 13 ♖xa7 ♜a8 14 ♖c5 ♖a5 15 ♖xf8 ♖xf8 16 g5?! d4! ♢ was good for Black in Areklett-Hersvik, Norway 1997.

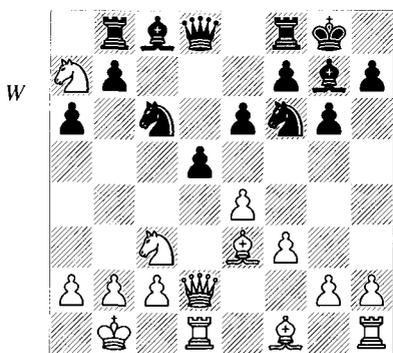
c) 11 ♖f2!? e5 12 ♖xc6 bxc6 13 ♖xa7 ♜b7 14 ♖c5 (14 ♖a6 ♜xa7 15 ♖xa7 ♖a5 is much better for Black, R. Young-G. Shahade, New York 2002) 14...♖a5 15 ♖e2 ♜e8 16 ♖c1 d4 17 ♖d3 ♖e6 18 a3 ♜eb8 19 ♖d2? ♖xc5 0-1 Bertholee-Los, Amstelveen 1994.

d) 11 ♖xc6?! simply justifies 10...♜b8 by opening the b-file: 11...bxc6 12 ♖xa7 (12 exd5? ♖xd5 ♢) 12...♜b7 13 ♖d4 (13 ♖e3 ♖e6 14 ♖a6 ♜b8 15 b3 ♖a5 16 exd5 cxd5 ♢ Manisse-Hucks, corr. 2001) 13...dxe4 14 ♖xe4? (14 ♖e1!? ♜d7! ♢) 14...♖xe4 15 fxe4 ♜d7 16 c3 e5 and Black wins, Dussart-Le Quang, Bagneux 1998.

e) 11 exd5 ♖xd5 12 ♖xd5 ♖xd5 13 ♖xc6 ♖xc6 is fine for Black; e.g., 14 ♖xa7? ♜a8 15 ♖e3 (15 ♖d4? ♜d8 -+) 15...♖a4 16 a3 ♖xb2! -+.

f) 11 ♖e2!? is an interesting idea; for example, 11...e5 (11...♟xd4 12 ♖xd4 {only move} 12...dxe4 13 ♖e3 looks quite awkward for Black; given that Black seems to need an improvement here, it may be worth investigating the obvious 11...e6!?) 12 ♟xc6 bxc6 13 exd5 cxd5 (13...♟xd5 14 ♟xd5 ♖xd5 15 ♖xd5 cxd5 16 ♖xd5 e4 17 b3 ♖b7 18 ♖d7 a5 19 ♖f4 ♖c6 20 ♖xb8 ♖xd7 21 ♖d6 ♖e8 22 fxe4 ♖c6 23 ♖c4 1-0 Pletanek-Binas, corr. 1996) 14 ♟xd5 ♟xd5 15 ♖xd5 was Kapnisis-Touloumis, Athens 1996, and now 15...♗f6, lining the queen and bishop up on the long diagonal, might give Black some compensation, but he will have to look for it.

g) 11 ♟db5!? is a surprisingly popular response – for some reason, players seem tempted by the notion of placing their g1-knight on a7 as quickly as possible! That said, it's not as silly as it sounds, but it probably is about as good as it looks! Play usually continues 11...a6 12 ♟a7 (12 exd5 axb5 13 dxc6 ♖xd2 14 ♖xd2 bxc6 15 ♖e1 ♖e6 16 ♖d3 ♖fd8 17 ♖e2 ♟d7 18 ♟e4 ♖a8 19 a3 ♟e5 1/2-1/2 Kulashko-Rice, corr. 1997, but Black's position is preferable; 12 ♟xd5 axb5 13 ♖b6 ♖d6 14 ♖c7 ♖e6 15 ♖xb8 ♟xb8 16 ♖xb5 ♟xd5 17 ♖xd5 ♖b6 ≠ Zapolskis-Berndt, Vilnius 1998) 12...e6 (D) and now:



g1) 13 h4?! ♖c7 14 exd5 (14 h5? d4 15 ♖xd4 ♟xd4 16 ♖xd4 ♟xh5 ≠) 14...♟xd5 15 ♟xd5 exd5 16 ♟xc6 (16 ♖xd5?? ♖d8 →) 16...bxc6 was better for Black in Naiditsch-Guseinov, Istanbul 2003.

g2) 13 exd5 ♟xd5! (13...exd5 14 ♟a4 ± Wahls-Agnos, Velden 1996) 14 ♟xd5 exd5 and now:

g21) 15 ♟xc6?! bxc6 16 ♖d4 ♖xd4 17 ♖xd4 ♖e7 18 ♖d3 ♖b4 19 c4 (19 ♖c3 c5 20

♖he1 ♖c7 =) 19...c5 20 ♖c3 (20 ♖xd5? ♖b7 21 ♖he1 ♖xe1 22 ♖xe1 ♖xd5 23 cxd5 leaves White an exchange down in an ending) 20...d4 21 ♖c1 ♖e6 22 ♖he1 ♖fb8 23 ♖e2 a5 ≠ David-Summerscale, Tel Aviv 1997.

g22) 15 ♖xd5 ♖xd5 (15...♗f6 16 ♖b3 ♖e6 17 ♖a3 ♖fd8 gives Black compensation for the pawn – Rogozenko) 16 ♖xd5 ♖e8 looks clearly better for Black.

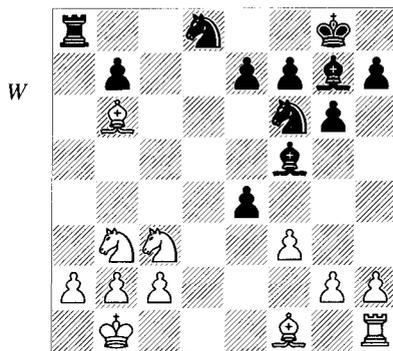
g23) 15 ♟xc8 ♖xc8 16 ♖xd5 ♖xd5 (another idea is 16...♗f6!? 17 ♖b3) 17 ♖xd5 ♟b4 18 ♖c5 ♖ce8 19 ♖d2 (19 ♖f2? ♖d4 wins for Black) 19...♖d8 ≠ looks awkward for White.

h) 11 h4! h5 (11...e5 12 ♟xc6 bxc6 13 exd5 cxd5 14 ♟xd5 ♖e6 15 ♖c4 ±) and then:

h1) 12 ♖h6!? dxe4? (12...♖xh6 13 ♖xh6 ♖b6 is much better; e.g., 14 ♟b3 dxe4 15 ♟xe4 ♟xe4 16 fxe4 ♖g4 with active counterplay) 13 ♟xc6 +– E.Pinter-Kukel, Bratislava 2001.

h2) 12 ♖e2 ♟xd4 (this move is described as dubious by Schulz, but his recommended alternative of 12...e5 13 ♟xc6 bxc6 14 exd5 ♟xd5, which he assesses as granting Black ‘counterplay’, just looks bad for Black; e.g., 15 ♟xd5 cxd5 16 ♖xd5 ♗f6 17 b3 ±; the long diagonal appears weak but Black has no immediate means of exploiting this) 13 ♖xd4 dxe4 14 ♗f4! ♖d7 15 fxe4 was already clearly better for White in Lutz-Agnos, Pula Echt 1997; e.g., 15...♖e8 16 ♖xa7 ♖a8 17 ♖d4!? ±.

11...dxe4 12 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 13 ♖xd8+ ♟xd8 14 ♖xa7 ♖a8 15 ♖b6 ♖f5 (D)



16 ♖e2

The alternative is 16 ♖b5 exf3 17 gxf3 ♟c6!? (17...♟e6!? is also interesting) 18 ♖xc6 (18 ♖d1 ♟d7 is unclear according to Rogozenko) 18...bxc6 19 ♖d4 (Black can halt the advance

of the a-pawn after 19 a4 ♖b8 20 a5 ♘d7! 19...♗d5 20 ♗xg7 ♗xg7 21 ♗e4 e5 22 ♗bc5 f6! 23 ♖d1 g5 24 c4 ♗e3 25 ♖d6 ♗xc4 26 ♖xc6. Thus far we have been following Jenni-Berndt, Bundesliga 2002/3, and now Rogozenko pointed out (in *ChessBase Magazine* 94) 26...♗d2+ 27 ♗c1 ♗xf3 28 ♖xf6 ♗xe4 29 ♗xe4 g4 ♚.

16...♗c6 17 ♖d1 ♗d7

Black has also tried 17...exf3 18 gxf3?! (18 ♗xf3 looks as though it should give White a slightly better ending, but 18...♗g4 19 h3 ♗ge5 complicates matters) 18...♗d7 19 ♗e3? (19 ♗d4 is necessary) and now, rather than 19...♖c8? as in Shabalov-Kudrin, USA Ch (Chandler) 1997, Schulz suggested (in *ChessBase Magazine* 61) that Black can obtain a clear advantage with 19...♗xc3! 20 ♗d3! (20 bxc3 ♗xc2+! -) 20...♗xd3 21 ♗xd3 ♗de5 22 ♖xc3 ♗xf3 ♚.

18 ♗d4

1/2-1/2 L.Milov-Ovseevich, Nikolaev 1995. Clearly there is a lot of play left in the position, but after 18...exf3 19 ♗xf3 ♗de5 Black is in excellent shape.

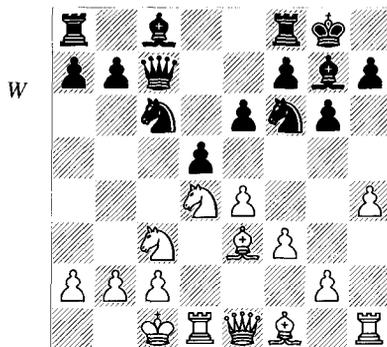
D)

10 ♖e1 e5

Black has a solid alternative in the form of 10...e6, and when I first began playing the Dragon, this little move was all the rage. I am not convinced that it promises Black full equality, and nor do I believe that it generates winning chances of the quality that Black can look forward to in the 10...e5 variation. White should probably continue 11 h4 (11 g4 e5! is known to be good for Black, as the inclusion of the move g4 weakens White's structure; e.g., 12 ♗xc6 bxc6 13 exd5 cxd5 14 ♗g5 ♗b7 15 ♗c4 is known to be good for White with the pawn on g2, but now Black has 15...d4! hitting the weak f3-pawn; e.g., 16 ♗e4 ♖c8 17 ♗b3 ♖b6 18 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 19 h4 ♖fd8 20 ♗b1 a5 21 g5 ♗g7 22 h5 ♖b8! ♚ Dvoiry-Tolnai, Balatonbereny ECC 1993) 11...♖c7 (D).

This is the starting position of the main line with 10...e6. White now has three options:

a) 12 exd5 ♗xd5 13 ♗xd5 exd5 14 ♖d2 ♖e8 15 h5 (15 ♗f4!? ♖b6 16 ♗b5 {16 ♗b3 a5 ♚} 16...a6 17 ♗c7 ♖c5 18 ♗d6 gives rise to a draw by repetition) 15...♖xe3! 16 ♖xe3 ♗xd4!



(this is Julian Hodgson's wonderful idea; previously Black had played 16...♗xd4, but this is bad on account of 17 ♖e8+! ♗f8 18 ♖xd4 ♗f5 19 ♖a4±) 17 ♖xd4 (17 ♖e8+?! is dubious here on account of the spectacular 17...♗g7 18 h6+ ♗f6 19 ♖xd4 {19 ♖h8+? ♗e7 20 ♖xd4 ♗f5 21 ♖xa8 ♗xd4 -+} 19...♗xd4 20 ♖h8+ ♗g5!! 21 ♖xd4 ♖f4+ 22 ♖xf4+ ♗xf4 with a very comfortable ending for Black) 17...♗xd4 18 ♖xd4 ♗f5 19 ♗d3 (Topalov pointed out that Black should meet 19 c3 with 19...♖g3) 19...♗xd3 20 ♖xd3 ♖e5 21 hxg6 hxg6 22 ♖d1 ♖d8 23 ♖d4 ♖xd4 24 ♖xd4 was Leko-Hodgson, Groningen 1996, which was eventually drawn. The isolated pawn ensures that White is a little better in the ending, but Black should not have too much trouble holding a draw if he now centralizes his king with 24...♗f8!.

b) 12 h5 ♗hx5 (12...♗xd4 13 ♗xd4 e5 14 ♗b5 ♖e7 15 ♗c3 ♗hx5 16 exd5 ♗d7 was better for White in Sirigos-Alterman, Komotini 1992, according to Kiril Georgiev) and now:

b1) 13 g4!? ♗xd4 (13...♗g3!? has also scored well for Black in practice) 14 ♗xd4 and here:

b11) 14...♗xd4!? 15 ♖xd4 ♖f4+ (15...♖g3 is unclear according to Alterman) 16 ♖d2?! (16 ♗b1 is better) 16...♗g3 17 ♖h3 d4 18 ♗b5 (18 ♖xg3 ♖xg3 19 ♖xg3 dxc3 20 bxc3 ♚) 18...a6 19 ♗xd4? (19 ♖xg3 ♖xg3 20 ♖xg3 axb5 21 ♗b1 ♚) 19...♗xf1 20 ♖xf1 ♖d8! was clearly better for Black in Spasov-Ki.Georgiev, Bulgaria 1995, according to Georgiev in *Informator* 64.

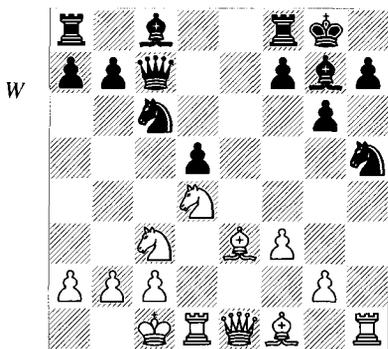
b12) 14...♖f4+ 15 ♗b1 (15 ♗e3 ♖xf3 16 ♖gl d4 17 ♗xd4 was Liss-Hartung Nielsen, Copenhagen 1996 and now 17...♗xd4 18 ♖xd4 ♖f4+ 19 ♗b1 e5 20 ♖d2 ♗f6 = gives Black equality according to M.Johnson in *ChessBase*

Magazine 56) 15...♙xd4 16 ♖xd4 ♗xf3 (the alternative 16...♗f6!? 17 ♙e2 ♗g7 18 ♗g1 e5 19 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 20 ♖xd5 ♙e6 21 ♖d3 h6 22 ♗d1 ♗g5 23 ♖d6 ♖ad8 was OK for Black in Overton-W.Taylor, corr. 1996) with the following possibilities:

b121) 17 ♙e2 ♗f6 18 ♖d3 (18 ♖d1 d4 19 ♗b5 ♗f4 20 ♗xd4 e5 ♢) 18...♗f4 19 ♖f3 d4 20 e5!? ♗xe5 21 ♗h4 h5! was fine for Black in Mainka-Bobras, Koszalin 1999; e.g., 22 gxh5!? (22 ♗e4 f6 → Schulz) 22...g5! 23 ♖g1 f6 24 ♖xf4 ♗h7 25 ♙d3+ ♗h6 26 ♖fg4 dxc3 27 ♗f2 ♙d7 is clearly better for Black according to Schulz in *ChessBase Magazine* 73.

b122) 17 ♗h4!? is critical; e.g., 17...♗f6 18 gxh5 ♗xd4 19 hxg6 h6! 20 ♗xh6 ♗g7 21 gxf7+ (21 ♗h2!?) 21...♖xf7 22 ♗h2 ♗h7 23 ♗g3+ ♖g7 24 ♗f3 dxe4 (Rogozenko suggested that 24...♖f7 may also be fine for Black) 25 ♗xe4 ♗f5 26 ♗e3 is given as slightly better for White by André Schulz, whereas Rogozenko seems to believe that Black is fine, providing the following analysis: 26...♙d7 27 ♙d3 (27 ♙c4 ♖f8; 27 ♙h3 ♗g6 28 ♗c5 ♖e8 29 ♗xd7 ♖xd7 30 ♖g1 ♗f7 31 a4 ♗f6 32 ♖f1 ♗xf1+ 33 ♙xf1 ♖d1+ 34 ♗a2 ♖xf1 35 ♗xa7 ♖e7 =) 27...♙c6 28 ♗h6 ♙xe4! 29 ♙xe4 ♗xe4 30 ♗h8+ ♗f7 31 ♖f1+ ♗f5!, when Black is at least equal.

b2) 13 exd5 exd5 (D) and now:



b21) 14 g4 ♗xd4 15 ♙xd4 ♗f4+= 16 ♙e3? ♗xf3 ♢.

b22) 14 ♗db5 ♗g3 15 ♗xd5 (other moves promise White little; e.g., 15 ♙f2 ♗f4+ 16 ♙e3 ♗g3 is equal according to Sosonko and Golubev in their annotations for *New in Chess Yearbook* 42; 15 ♗d2 ♙e6 is also equal, and 15 ♗xg3 ♗xg3 16 ♖g1 ♗f5 ♢ looks better for

Black) 15...♙e6 (15...♗xe1 16 ♖xe1 ♗g3 is unclear according to Kiril Georgiev) 16 ♗xg3 (16 ♗bc7 ♙xd5! 17 ♗xd5 ♖fe8) 16...♗xg3 17 ♖g1 ♖ad8 (17...♙xd5 18 ♖xd5 ♖ae8!? ♢) 18 ♗bc7 ♙xd5 19 ♗xd5 ♖fe8 20 ♙f2 ♗e2+ 21 ♙xe2 ♖xe2 with a slight advantage for Black, Korneev-Ristić, Metz 1995.

b23) 14 ♗xd5!? is an obvious move that is ignored or dismissed by many sources, but I sincerely doubt Black's position is as easy as certain commentators have suggested. In any case, it may well be White's best chance of an advantage in this variation, as other moves don't seem very promising (as we have seen). 14...♗e5 15 ♙c4 ♙e6 (White now has the option of a draw, but when faced with this position at the board, I felt that after 15...♖e8, given by various sources as 'unclear', Black's position was a little loose, and I was not sure what I should do if White simply intensified the central piece-mass with something like 16 c3!?, when I suspect Black must be worse) 16 ♙f2 ♗g5+ and then:

b231) 17 ♙e3 ♗e5 18 ♙f2 ♗g5+ 19 ♙e3 is the draw by repetition, as Black has nothing better than to repeat moves.

b232) With 17 ♗e3! ♗xe3+ 18 ♙xe3 White seeks a better endgame:

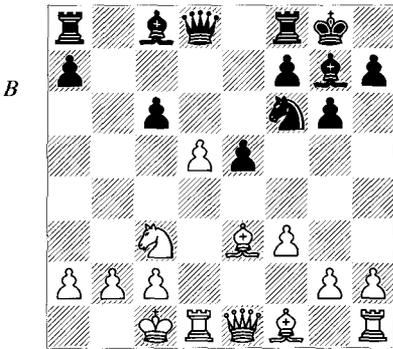
b2321) Now I played 18...♙xd5?! (actually this was move 20, because there had been one repetition) 19 ♙xd5 ♗g3 20 ♖he1 ♗xd4 21 ♙xd4 ♙xd4 22 ♖xd4 ♖ad8 23 ♖d3 ♖d7 24 ♙c4 ♖c7 25 ♙b3 and was considerably worse in the ensuing ending. The rest of the game is not really of theoretical interest, but I will include it anyway because it was my first ever Dragon game. 25...♗g7 26 ♗d2 h5! 27 ♖e5 h4 28 ♗e1 ♗f6 29 f4 ♖h8! 30 ♗f2 ♖h5 31 ♖d6+ ♗g7 32 ♖xh5 ♗xh5 33 ♗f3 ♖e7 34 ♙c4 b6 35 ♙d3 f5! 36 c4 ♗f6 ♢ 37 b4? ♗g4 → 38 g3 ♖e3+ 39 ♗g2 h3+ 40 ♗xh3 ♖xd3 41 ♖xd3 ♗f2+ 42 ♗g2 ♗xd3 43 a3 ♗f7 44 ♗f3 ♗b2 45 ♗e3 ♗xc4+ 46 ♗d4 ♗xa3 0-1 Rowson-Dearing, Scottish Ch 1995.

b2322) Black's play may be open to improvement via 18...♗xd4 19 ♙xd4 ♖fd8 20 ♙c5 (20 ♗e7+ ♗f8 21 ♙xg7+ ♗xg7 22 ♗d5 ♖ac8 was very comfortable for Black in Martin-Prieto, corr. 2001) 20...♙e5 21 ♖he1 ♙g3 22 ♖e4 ♗g7 23 ♙d4+ (23 ♙b3!?! ± is definitely more comfortable for White) 23...♗f8 24 ♙c5+

♖g7 25 ♔d4+ ♕f8 26 ♙c5+ ♖g7 27 ♔d4+ 1/2-1/2 Luther-Kabanov, Pardubice 2000.

c) 12 ♘db5 ♗a5! 13 exd5 (13 ♙c5 ♔d8 14 a3 b6! 15 b4 ♗a6 ♞) 13...exd5 14 h5 (after 14 a3 Black should probably play 14...♙e6 with balanced chances, as 14...a6? 15 ♗f2! left the black queen in sudden danger in Vallejo Pons-Romero, Linares 1998) 14...♙e8! 15 hxg6 fxg6! 16 ♗d2 (16 ♘d6? ♙e6 17 ♘xc8 ♗xc8 18 ♗d2 ♘b4! and Black wins; e.g., 19 ♔d4 ♗xc3! 20 ♙xc3 ♘e4!!) 16...♙e6 17 ♘d4 ♙f7 (the availability of this retreat reveals the purpose of 15...fxg6), and now 18 ♙f2 ♘e5 19 ♖b1 ♗ac8?! was bad for Black in Hellers-Ernst, Stockholm 1993, but in *Informator 61* Ernst points out that Black would enjoy equality after 19...♘c4 20 ♙xc4 dxc4 21 ♗he1.

11 ♘xc6 bxc6 12 exd5 (D)



12...♘xd5

The natural recapture is clearly 12...cxd5! and this line does have its adherents. However, I believe that White should be at least a little better after 13 ♙g5 ♙e6 14 ♙c4 ♗c7 15 ♙xf6 dxc4 16 ♙xg7 ♕xg7 17 ♘d5! ± (17 ♗e3?! ♗ab8 18 ♘e4 ♗b6 ♞ was Timman-Hodgson, Groningen 1996).

13 ♙c4

This is regarded as White's best move. However, alternatives are common, if entirely inferior:

a) 13 ♘xd5?! cxd5 14 ♙c5 ♙e6 ♞ is thematically similar to the concepts we examined in Chapter 14. If White captures on f8 Black's dark-squared bishop will become an unopposable force.

b) 13 ♙c5?! is an entirely natural move that simply fails for tactical reasons: 13...♙h6+! 14 ♖b1 ♘xc3+ 15 bxc3 ♗b8+! 16 ♖a1 ♗a5 17

♙xf8 (17 ♙b4 ♗b6 18 ♙c4 c5 19 ♙a3 ♗a5 20 ♙b2 ♙f5 21 ♗e2 ♙g7 22 ♙b3 ♗fe8 ♞ Boudre-Le Quang, Bagneux 2000) 17...♙xf8 (17...♙e6 18 c4 ♗xe1 19 ♗xe1 ♙d2 20 a4 ♙xe1 21 ♙a3 ♙c3+ 22 ♖a2 f5 ♞ Heinrich-Kopylova, Germany 2001) 18 ♙c4 e4! 19 fxe4 ♙g7 20 ♗d3 ♙a6 21 ♙xa6 ♗a3 0-1 Rada Equiza-Somalo Fernandez, Spain 2001.

c) 13 ♘e4?! is inaccurate as then Black is not obliged to develop his light-squared bishop to e6 in order to bolster the d5-point. Instead Black has the option of lashing out with an early ...f5 at various moments; e.g., 13...♗c7 14 ♙c5 ♗d8 15 g4 (15 ♙c4 f5!) 15...♙e6 16 ♖b1 ♘f4 (16...♗ab8!?) 17 ♙d6 ♗b6 18 c4 a5 19 h4 c5 20 ♙xc5 ♗a6 1/2-1/2 Khuzman-Rechlis, Tel Aviv 1996.

d) 13 h4 and now:

d1) Note that the natural response by analogy with Chapter 14 would be 13...h6?, but here this drops a pawn to 14 ♘xd5 cxd5 15 ♗d2 d4 16 ♙xh6 ±.

d2) In *Informator 68*, Bologan mentions that 13...♙e6 14 h5 is slightly better for White, but results have actually been good for Black after 14...♗e7!, an excellent multi-purpose move that not only rules out 15 ♙c5 and threatens 15...♘xe3, but also guards the h4-square, so White cannot suddenly swing his queen out to h4 and invade down the h-file. As far as I can see, this position has only arisen in two correspondence games, in which the best White could come up with was 15 hxg6 hxg6 16 ♘xd5 cxd5 17 ♗d2 ♗fc8 (17...♗fb8!?) 18 ♙h6 ♙f6 19 ♗a5 e4 20 b3 ♗c8 21 fxe4 ♗c5 0-1 Viard-Schmall, corr. 1995) 18 ♙g5 ♗b7 19 ♙h6 ♗ab8 20 b3 ♙f6 21 ♙g5 ♗e7 22 ♙xf6 ♗xf6 23 ♗h6 ♗g7 24 ♗xg7+ ♕xg7 ♞ Østergaard-Jimenez Alonso, corr. 2001.

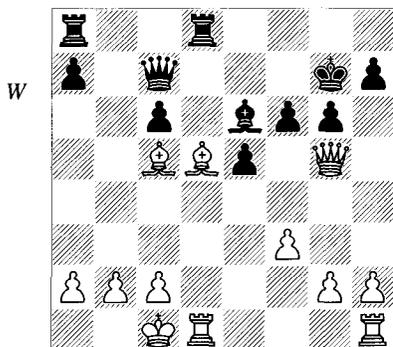
d3) 13...♗b8! is widely acknowledged as Black's most accurate response. 14 h5?! (14 ♙c4 ♙e6 15 ♘e4 is similar to the main line) 14...♗e7 15 hxg6?! (15 ♘xd5 cxd5 16 ♗xd5 e4 gives Black good compensation for the pawn according to Bologan) and now rather than the unfortunate 15...hxg6? 16 ♗xd5 cxd5 17 ♘xd5 ± Bologan-Motylev, Russia 1996, Black should play 15...♗b4! 16 ♘xd5 ♗xb2+ 17 ♘d2 ♗d8! with a strong initiative.

13...♙e6 (D)

14 ♘e4

b) 18 ♖b1 ♕c3+! (probably superior to the alternative 18...♙xg5!? 19 ♖xg5 f6 20 ♖h4 {the only move; 20 ♖d2 ♕f4 21 ♖c3 ♙xc4 22 ♖xc4 ♕xg2 ≠ Alterman} 20...♖f7 1/2-1/2 Wang Zili-Alterman, Beijing 1995) 19 bxc3 ♙xc4 20 ♖xc4 (20 ♙e3 ♙xa2+! 21 ♖c1 ♖a5!! 22 ♖b4! ≠ Alterman) 20...♙xg5 was Maliangkay-Borge, corr. 1998. The position is slightly better for Black according to Alterman in *Informator 64*.

18...♙xg5+ 19 ♖xg5 f6 (D)



20 ♖e3

No better is 20 ♖h4 cxd5 21 ♙e3 ♖ac8 ≠, and nor is 20 ♖d2 cxd5 21 ♙a3 (21 ♙e3 d4 22 ♙h6+ ♖g8 23 ♖b1 ♖ac8 24 g4 ♖c6 25 ♖f2 ♖d5 26 ♖d3 ♖a5 27 a3 ♖d5 -+ De Amorim Neto-Hedrrera, corr. 1997) 21...d4 22 ♖b1 a5 23 ♖he1 a4 24 ♖b4 ♖dc8 25 ♖d2 ♙f7 26 f4 ♖ab8 27 ♖xa4 ♖a8 28 ♖b4 ♖cb8 29 ♖d6 ♖xb2+ 30 ♖xb2 ♖c3+ 31 ♖b1 ♖xa3 0-1 Van der Weide-Golubev, Chemnitz 1998.

20...cxd5 21 ♖d2

21 ♖c3 ♖dc8 22 ♙b4 ♖xc3 23 ♙xc3 d4 24 ♙b4 ♙xa2 25 ♖d2 ♙e6 -+ Hegoburu-Brockbank, corr. 1995.

21...♖ac8 22 ♙a3

22 ♙b4 a5!? ≠.

22...d4

Lambert-Golubev, Germany tt 1996/7. Black is clearly better according to Golubev in *Informator 68*.

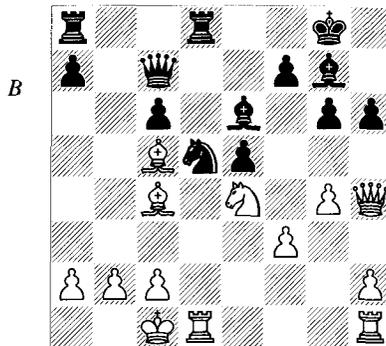
D3)

16 ♖h4 h6 17 g4 (D)

17...♖d7

Alternatives:

a) 17...♕f4 is known to be inferior in this variation, mainly because with the queen placed



on h4, White's control over the f6-square is increased.

b) The thematic 17...a5 has only been played a few times, but so far results have been promising; e.g., 18 g5 (18 a4 ♖ab8 is similar to the text-move) 18...h5 and then:

b1) 19 ♕f6+ ♕xf6 20 gxf6 ♙h6+ 21 ♖b1 ♙f5!? (21...♙xc4!?) 22 ♙e7 ♖d7 23 ♖hg1 ♖xd1+ (23...♖b6!?) 24 ♖xd1 ♖b6 25 ♖e1 ♙f4 26 h4 ♖b8 27 ♖c3 a4 28 a3 ♖f2 29 ♖d6 ♙e3 30 ♙xf7+ ♖h7 31 ♖c4? (31 ♖d8) 31...♖e1+ 32 ♖a2 ♖c1 33 ♙g8+ ♖h8 34 b4 ♙xc2 0-1 Simacek-Rottenborn, Plzen 1995.

b2) 19 a4 ♕f4 20 ♙xe6 ♕xe6 21 ♖f2 (21 ♙d6 ♖a7 22 ♖he1 ♖d7 23 ♖d3 ♖ad8 24 ♖ed1 ♕d4 25 ♙c5 ♖a6 26 ♙xd4 ♖xd4 27 ♖xd4 ♖xd4 28 ♖xd4 exd4 = Rogobete-Komljenović, Bavaria 2002) 21...♖d5 22 ♖he1?! ♕xc5 23 ♕xc5 ♖e7 24 ♕e4 ♖b4 25 b3 ♖d4 (25...♖b8!?) looks good) 26 ♖xd4 exd4 27 ♖d2 ♖a3+ 28 ♖d1 (28 ♖b1 d3 29 ♕f6+ ♙xf6 30 gxf6 dxc2+ 31 ♖xc2 ♖b8 ≠) 28...♖f8 29 ♖d3 ♖b8 30 ♖e2 ♖f4 31 ♖c4 ♖d8 ≠ Salai-Agnos, Pula Echt 1997.

c) The traditional approach for Black has been 17...♖ab8 18 g5 h5 19 ♖f2 ♖b7 20 b3 (20 ♙b3?! a5 21 a4 ♕f4 22 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 23 ♙xe6 ♕xe6 24 ♖e1 ♖d5 ≠) 20...a5 (in Lobzhanidze-Aronian, Erevan open 1996, Black chose to play with more restraint, simply consolidating his position in the centre: 20...♖d7 21 a4 ♖bd8 with a very solid position that can't be far from equality) 21 a4 ♕f4 (21...♙h3!?) is an unusual idea that was played in Lobzhanidze-Bauer, Bad Zwosten 1997; it is not clear whether planting the bishop on h3 is necessarily a good idea, but one can certainly see that it may become a thorn in White's side as the game progresses) 22 ♙xe6 ♕xe6 23 ♖xd8+ (23 ♙d6

♖bc8 24 ♘f6+ ♙xf6 25 gxf6 c5 26 ♙xe5 c4 27 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 gave Black good play for the pawn in Wolter-Hausrath, Germany tt 1993/4) 23...♖xd8 24 ♖d1 ♖d5 25 ♙a3 ♖d7 = de la Riva-Korneev, Manresa 1996.

18 g5 h5 19 ♖d2

19 ♘f6+!? ♙xf6 (19...♘xf6 20 ♙xe6 ♖xd1+ 21 ♖xd1 ♖d8 22 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 23 ♙c4 ♘d5 is probably equal, although perhaps White can drum up some chances) 20 gxf6 ♘f4 21 ♙xe6 ♖xd1+ 22 ♖xd1 ♘xe6 23 ♙d6 ♖a5 looks a bit better for White.

19...♖ad8 20 ♖hd1 ♘f4 21 ♙xe6 ♖xd2 22 ♖xd2 ♖xd2 23 ♘xd2

23 ♙xd2 ♘xe6 24 c3 ♖d7+ 25 ♙c2 ♘xc5 26 ♘xc5 ♖d5 27 ♘e4 ♖xa2 28 ♖h3 ♖a6 29 ♖d7 ♖e2+ 30 ♙b3 ♖b5+ 31 ♙c2 ♖e2+ 32 ♙b3 ♖b5+ 1/2-1/2 Luther-Tolnai, Budapest 1992.

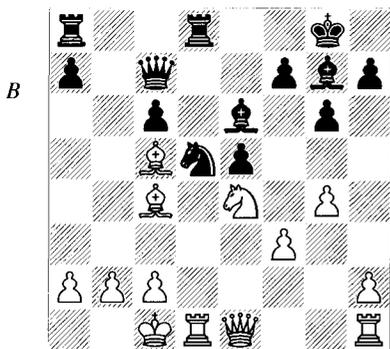
23...♘xe6 24 ♙e3

Schulz pointed out that 24 ♘e4? ♘xc5 25 ♘xc5 ♖a5 is better for Black.

After 24 ♙e3 it seems that Black has achieved full equality and can even consider pressing for more; e.g., 24...e4!? (24...♖d8 looks more solid) 25 ♘xe4 ♖e5 26 c3 ♖d5 27 a3 ♙e5 28 ♖f2 ♖d3 29 h4? (careless; according to Schulz, White is better after 29 ♖d2!? ♖f1+ 30 ♖d1 ♖xd1+ 31 ♙xd1 ♙xh2 32 ♙xa7) 29...♘f4 30 ♙xf4 ♙xf4+ 31 ♘d2 f6! 32 gxf6 g5 33 hxg5 h4 34 g6 ♙xd2+ 0-1 M.Hoffmann-Berndt, Bundesliga 1999/00.

D4)

16 g4 (D)



16...♘f4

16...h6 and now:

a) 17 ♖h4 transposes to Line D3.

b) 17 h4 is Line D1.

c) The immediate 17 g5!? is interesting, the idea being to induce 17...h5, reaching a pawn-structure that usually requires the inclusion of h4.

17 ♙xe6

The most common move. Alternatives:

a) After 17 ♖c3 Black faces an important choice:

a1) 17...♖d5!? 18 ♙b1 ♖ad8 is a really cute idea if White falls in with Black's plans by playing 19 ♙xd5 cxd5 20 ♙e3! (20 ♘g5 d4) 20...♖e7!? 21 ♖c5 ♖b7 22 ♖a3 ♖c6!? 23 ♖c3 ♖a8! 24 ♙xf4 ♖c8! 25 ♖a5 exf4 26 ♘g5 ♖b8! ♢ Xie Jun-Gufeld, Kuala Lumpur 1994. The notes here are based on Gufeld's annotations in *Informator 60*. In fact, White may be able to gain an advantage by simply playing around Black's central piece-mass, the problem being that, having achieved control of the d-file, it is not quite clear how Black will follow this up; e.g., 19 ♖de1!? h6 20 ♙e3! ♖e7 21 ♖hg1 ♙h8 22 h4 f5?! 23 gxf5 ♙xf5 (23...gxf5 24 ♘f2 intending 25 ♙xf4 ± Rogozenko) 24 a3 ♖xh4 25 ♙xa7 ♖5d7 26 ♙f2 ♖e7 27 ♖h1 ± Gdanski-Fedorov, Ohrid Ech 2001.

a2) 17...♙d5 and here:

a21) 18 g5 ♖d7 (18...♙e6!? 19 ♙e3 ♘d4 20 ♙b1 ♙xc4 21 ♖xc4 ♘xf3 22 ♖df1 ♘d4 is slightly better for Black, Mahesh Chandran-Gashimov, Nakhchivan 2003) 19 h4 ♖ad8 ♢.

a22) 18 ♙b1 ♖d7 19 ♙f2 h6 20 ♙h4 ♖e8 21 a3 (21 ♘f6+ ♙xf6 22 ♙xf6 ♙xc4 23 ♖xc4 {23 ♖xd7 ♙xa2+ 24 ♙xa2 ♖xd7 25 ♙xe5 ♖d5+ → Rogozenko} and now Black should play 23...♘d5, with ideas of ...♘e3) 21...♙xe4 22 fxe4 ♖d4 with good play for Black; e.g., 23 ♙d3 ♖b6 24 ♖hf1 (24 ♙f2 ♖xd3 →) 24...♘xd3 25 cxd3 ♖b5 26 ♖f2 ♖b8 27 ♖c2 ♙f8 with strong counterplay in Svidler-Alterman, Bad Homburg 1997.

b) 17 ♙d6? ♖xd6 18 ♘xd6 ♙d5 19 ♘b5 ♖b6 (19...♖b7!? 20 ♙xd5 cxd5 21 ♘c3 ♖b8 ♢) 20 ♘a3 (20 ♙xd5 cxd5 21 ♘c3 ♖b8 22 b3 d4 ♢ Penas Hernandez-Martin Canfran, Pareтана 2000) 20...♖b8 21 b3 ♖c5 → Simacek-Tupy, Plzen 1995.

17...♘xe6 18 ♙d6!

This is the only real challenge to Black's set-up; e.g., 18 ♖e3 ♖d5 19 c4? ♖xc5! 20

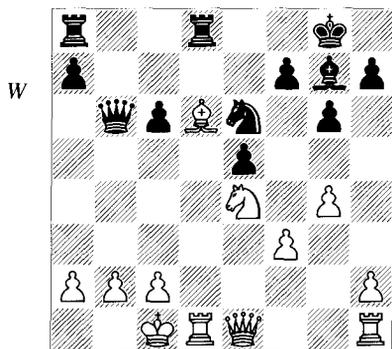
♠xc5 ♖b6 21 b4 ♖xb4 22 ♠xe6 ♖xc4+ 23 ♠d2 ♖xa2+ 24 ♠e1 ♖xe6 ♢ Liang Jinrong-Altman, Beijing 1995, or 18 ♠a3 ♜d5 19 ♖e3 ♜ad8 20 g5 ♖b6 21 ♖xb6 axb6 ♢ Simacek-Voller, Plzen 1995.

18...♖b6 (D)

18...♖b7!? is also possible:

a) 19 ♖h4 ♖a6 20 a3 ♖c4 21 b3 was Haensel-M.Koch, Hamburg 2001 and now rather than 21...♖e2 (which allows 22 ♠f6+), better is 21...♖a6 22 ♠b2 c5 23 ♠xc5 ♜dc8; e.g., 24 ♠e7 ♖c6 25 c4?! ♜ab8 with counterplay. However, White's play can definitely be improved at various points, and 24 ♜d6 looks awkward for Black.

b) 19 g5 ♠d4 20 ♜f1 ♠f5 21 ♠c5 ♖a6 22 a3 ♜d5 23 ♖f2 ♠d4 24 ♠b4 ♜b8 25 ♠b1 and now rather than 25...c5 (Dolmatov-Ricardi, Buenos Aires 1991), something solid such as 25...♜bd8 looks more reasonable for Black.



19 ♖c3!?

This is Bologan's improvement. 19 g5 ♜d7 (the natural 19...♠d4!? has been played by correspondence grandmaster and Dragon expert M.Johnson, and also seems to be reasonable for Black) 20 h4 ♜ad8 and although White later won in Beshukov-Olenin, Moscow 1996, Curt Hansen assesses Black's chances as fully equal at this point (*ChessBase Magazine* 56).

19...♠d4 20 ♠b1

20 ♜he1!? ♜d7 21 ♠c5 ♖a6 22 ♠b1 ♜ad8 23 ♖e3 is slightly better for White according to

Bologan, but Black's position is perfectly solid after, e.g., 23...♖c4 or 23...♜d5, so the onus is still on White to demonstrate why exactly Black is any worse here.

20...♜d7!

This move is Rogozenko's improvement over 20...♠b5 21 ♖b3 ♠xd6 22 ♠xd6 ♖c7 (22...♜d7!? is better according to Bologan) 23 ♖b7 ♖xb7 24 ♠xb7 ♜d5 25 c4 ± Bologan-Rogozenko, Chisinau 1998.

21 ♜d3

21 ♠c5 ♖c7 (21...♖b5 22 ♠xd4 exd4 23 ♖c5!?, Van der Weide-Sylvan, Copenhagen 1999) 22 ♠xd4 exd4 23 ♖c4 ♜b8 24 ♜d3 ♜d5!? was fine for Black in Rao-Mari Arul, Chennai 2004.

21...♖b5!?

This move appears to be an improvement over 21...♖d8 22 ♖c5 ♜c8 23 ♜hd1 ♠e6 24 ♖c3 ♠f4 25 ♠xe5? (Van den Doel-Van der Wiel, Wijk aan Zee 1998), when Schulz points out 25...♜xd3! 26 ♜xd3 ♖b6 27 ♜d1 ♠e2 28 ♠xg7 ♠xc3+ 29 ♠xc3 -+. By way of improvements, both 25 ♜3d2 = and 24 ♖f2!? are better.

22 a4

This move seems inaccurate. In *ChessBase Magazine* 88, Rogozenko points out that White can obtain a slight edge with 22 g5! ♜ad8 23 a4! ♖d5 24 ♠a3 ±. Rogozenko notes that 22 ♖c5 is unclear after 22...f5!? or 22...♜ad8, and 22 ♠c5 ♠e2 is also unclear, while 22 ♜hd1?? f5 -+ is winning for Black.

22...♖d5 23 ♠a3

23 ♠c5 f5 24 gxf5 gxf5 25 ♠g3 e4! gives Black an enduring initiative.

23...f5 24 gxf5 gxf5 25 ♠c5 e4! 26 ♠xd7 exd3 27 ♖xd3 ♜d8!

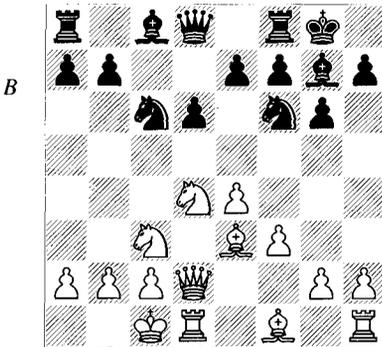
27...♠xf3!? 28 ♖xd5+ cxd5 29 ♜d1 d4 ♢ Rogozenko.

28 ♠c5 ♠xf3 29 ♖xd5+ ♜xd5 30 ♠d3 ♠e5!

Black enjoys a safe endgame advantage and went on to claim the full point in Nedev-Rogozenko, Skopje 2002.

16 Black's Alternatives after 9 0-0-0: 9...♞xd4 and 9...♞d7!?

1 e4 c5 2 ♖f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♗f6 5 ♘c3
g6 6 ♗e3 ♗g7 7 f3 ♗c6 8 ♖d2 0-0-0 9 0-0-0 (D)



In this chapter I shall briefly deal with Black's main alternatives to 9...d5, namely 9...♞xd4 and 9...♞d7. I have played both of these moves in the past, largely because they can offer fantastic practical chances to play for a win, and also because 9...d5 went through a brief period where Black was having serious problems in the 14 ♖xd5 variation. The 9...d5 variation is now in excellent shape, whereas the alternatives are now experiencing difficulties. However, there is a fundamental difference in the type of problems these variations are experiencing. In the 9...d5 line the difficulties were in one subvariation, were of a purely tactical nature, and were quickly resolved. However, the difficulties that Black encounters in the 9...♞d7 and 9...♞xd4 variations are as much strategic as tactical, and furthermore the difficulties that pervade these lines crop up in several of White's approaches to the position, meaning that numerous solutions may be needed before they can be considered entirely adequate. The analysis that I provide in this chapter is intended to illustrate the type of resources that these variations offer, and more importantly, to highlight those lines in which Black is having trouble.

This will hopefully give you a useful foothold upon which to base further analysis and investigation should either of these variations grip your interest.

A: 9...♞d7!? 193
B: 9...♞xd4 197

A)

9...♞d7!?

This is one of those moves that just 'feels' wrong. White has ignored the development of his f1-bishop, and in doing so weakened his control over the centre. However, instead of exploiting this, Black actually seems to fall in with White's plans, employing the same development scheme as he would have done had White instead played 9 ♗c4. The problem with this is, of course, that if Black now plays 10...♞c8, 11...♗e5 and 12...♗c4, then after 13 ♗xc4 ♞xc4 White will be two tempi ahead compared to the 9 ♗c4 variation. Nevertheless, matters are never that simple in the Dragon! In actual fact Black has no intention of acquiescing with moves such as 12...♗c4. Instead Black's counterplay will be based on resourceful pawn, piece and even rook sacrifices, leading to highly unbalanced positions in which anything can happen! Curious? Read on.

10 g4 ♞c8 11 h4 ♗e5 (D)

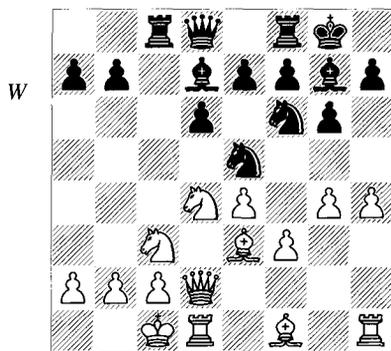
This is the starting position of the main line of the 9...♞d7 variation. White can now choose between two principal continuations:

A1: 12 h5 193
A2: 12 ♖b1 195

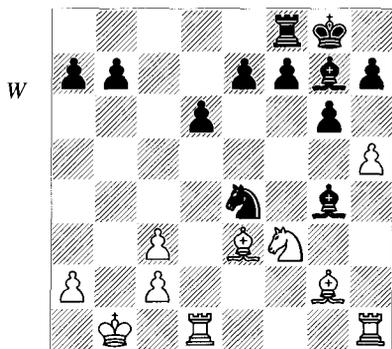
A1)

12 h5 ♖a5 13 ♗b3!

Best, but by no means the most common move:



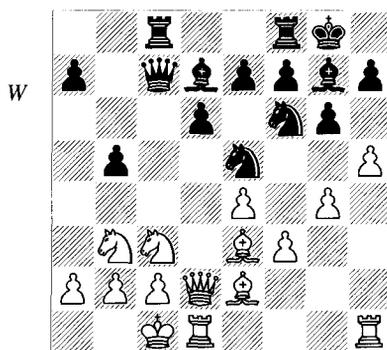
a) The early games in this variation often continued 13 ♖b1!, at which point Black would initiate the following fantastic trademark sequence: 13...♗xf3!! 14 ♗xf3 ♖xc3! 15 ♗xc3 (15 h6? ♗xe4 16 hxg7 ♗xd2+ 17 ♗xd2 ♖fc8 18 ♗xc3 ♖xc3 19 bxc3 ♗xg4 20 ♗g2 h5 21 ♖he1 ♗b6+ 22 ♗a1 e6 23 ♖d2 ♗xf3 24 ♗xf3 ♗xg7 25 ♖d4 ♗c5 26 ♖b2 b6 27 ♖ed1 d5 → Saravanan-Duncan, British Ch (Scarborough) 1999) 15...♗xc3 16 bxc3 ♗xg4 17 ♗g2 ♗xe4 (D).



18 ♖d3 ♗xc3+ 19 ♖b2! (19 ♖c1 ♗f5! and 19 ♖xc3 ♗xc3 20 hxg6 hxg6 21 ♗xa7 b6 both look good for Black) 19...♗d1+! (19...♖c8 20 h6! ♗f6 21 ♗d4 ♗e2 22 c3 ♗g3 was K.Müller-Ward, Bundesliga 1996/7, which ultimately ended in a draw but definitely gave the crowd their money's worth!) 20 ♗a3 (20 ♖c1 ♗xe3 21 ♖xe3 ♗h6 ♣; 20 ♖b3 ♗c6+ 21 ♖b4 ♗b2; 20 ♖b1 ♗c3+ 21 ♖b2 =) 20...♗b2 (also of interest is Ward's line 20...♗xe3!? 21 ♖xe3 ♖c8 22 ♖xe7 ♗xf3 23 ♗xf3 ♖c3+ 24 ♖b4 ♖xf3 25 ♖xb7 with an unclear position) 21 h6 ♗f6 22 ♖b3 ♗c4+ 23 ♖b4 was Gadjiilu-Shafiei, Teheran 1997, and now Shafiei recommends 23...d5!? 24 ♗xa7 ♖a8 as promising for Black.

b) 13 ♗e2!? gave rise to the following amusing miniature: 13...b5 14 ♗b3 ♗a6 (14...♗c7 transposes to the main line) 15 ♖b1 ♗c4 16 ♗xc4 bxc4 17 ♗d4 ♖b8 18 ♗a1 ♖b4 19 ♖b1?! (19 h6!) 19...♗xg4! 20 fxg4 ♗xe4 21 ♗xe4?? ♗xa2+! 0-1 McShane-Duncan, British League (4NCL) 1996/7. No wonder Chris Duncan likes this line so much!

13...♗c7 14 ♗e2 b5 (D)



This position is critical to the assessment of the 9...♗d7 variation, and in practice (especially GM and super-GM level) Black has scored excellently. However, I suspect that Black's position may be less favourable than other sources have suggested. White has the following possibilities:

a) The first point to note is that the b5-pawn is immune from capture: 15 ♗xb5? ♗xb5 16 ♗xb5 ♗xf3 ♣.

b) A second point to note is that Black's pressure down the c-file is actually very dangerous. For example, 15 ♗d4? b4 16 ♗d5 ♗xd5 17 exd5 ♗h6 wins for Black, as does 15 ♗h6? ♗xh6 16 ♗xh6 b4! →.

c) The move most commonly played in this position is 15 hxg6?, which has been the choice of super-GMs Morozevich and Asrian (both of whom lost, incidentally). However, it seems that it is an error, as 15...fxg6! (note that 15...hxg6? 16 ♗h6 +- is just winning for White) gives Black dangerous pressure down the f-file. Last move White only had to worry about Black's queenside pressure, but now suddenly Black's f8-rook has been brought into the fray. Not only is the rook active, but the f3-pawn is weak, and if f3 is compromised then the e4- and g4-pawns also suddenly become chronically weak. The following continuations are of interest:

c1) 16 g5? b4! is known to be clearly better for Black; e.g., 17 ♖b5 (17 ♜d5 ♜xd5 18 exd5 {18 ♜xd5+ e6} 18...♞xf3 19 ♞xf3 ♜xf3 ♠) 17...♞xb5 18 gxf6 ♞xe2 19 fxg7?! ♜xf3 20 ♜xe2 ♜xe3! → Asrian-Soloviov, St Petersburg 1999.

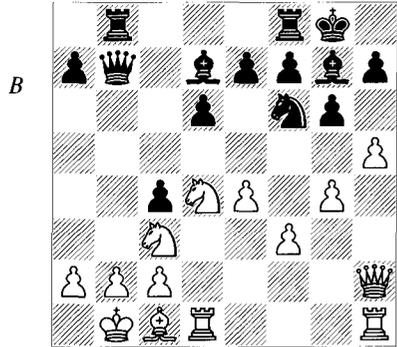
c2) 16 ♖b1? b4 17 ♜d5 ♜xd5 18 ♜xd5+ (18 exd5 ♜xf3 19 ♞xf3 ♜xf3 20 ♞d4 ♞xg4 21 ♞xg7 ♜xb3! 22 ♜h6? ♜xc2+ 23 ♖a1 ♜h3 → Schulz) 18...e6 (18...♞h8? 19 ♜xh7+ →) 19 ♜d2 (19 ♜xd6?? ♜xc2+ 20 ♖a1 ♜c4 →) 19...♞xf3 20 ♞xf3 ♜xf3 ♠ 21 ♞h6 ♞xh6 22 ♜xh6 ♞c6 → 23 ♜xb4 ♜f4 24 ♖a1? ♞xe4 25 c3 e5 26 ♜a3 ♜cf8 27 ♜d2 ♞c2 0-1 Morozevich-Fedorov, Krasnodar 1997.

c3) Relatively best is 16 ♞d4 b4 17 ♞xe5 (17 ♜d5 ♜xd5 18 exd5 a5 ∞ Fedorov) 17...dxe5 18 ♜b5 ♜b6 19 ♜xb4 a6 20 g5 ♞xb5 21 ♞xb5 axb5 22 gxf6 exf6, which led to a balanced position in Ceteras-Bauk, corr. 2001. Throughout these examples White's problem was not Black's threats down the c-file, but rather an inability to cope with the threats on the f-file because White's pieces are tied to the defence of the queenside. In essence this is just a very unusual example of the side with the advantage exploiting a second weakness. However, note that it was actually White who created his own second weakness, by opening the f-file. The inevitable question is therefore, "Can White find a way to improve his position without immediately capturing on g6?" Recent practice has witnessed White experimenting with 15 ♖b1, and so far the results have been excellent.

d) 15 ♖b1!? and now:

d1) Perhaps it seems most natural to play 15...b4 16 ♜d5 ♜xd5 17 exd5, but I am concerned that the absence of the knight from f6 may leave the black kingside a little short of defenders; e.g., 17...a5 (17...♜fe8 18 ♜h2!? a5 19 hxg6 fxg6 20 ♜dh1 a4 21 ♜d4 a3 22 ♜xh7! ♜c4 23 ♞xc4 ♜xc4 24 ♜b3 ♞xb2 25 ♞d4 → Tomescu-Piva, Porto San Giorgio 2003) 18 ♜d4! (18 ♜c1?! a4 19 ♜d4 ♜c4 20 ♞xc4 ♜xc4 21 ♜cd1 a3 22 hxg6 fxg6 23 ♜h2 h6! ♠ Hajnal-Rajlich, Budapest 2001) 18...a4 19 ♞h6 b3 20 cxb3 axb3 21 ♞xg7! bxa2+ 22 ♖a1 ♖xg7 23 hxg6 fxg6 24 ♜h6+ ♖f7 25 f4 → Hommik-Gornoi, corr. 2000.

d2) 15...♜c4 16 ♞xc4 bxc4 17 ♜d4 ♜b7 18 ♜h2 ♜b8 19 ♞c1! (D).



Black's problem here is how to make progress: White's last move entirely solidifies his queenside, and Black has no means of engineering a beneficial central pawn-break. Black now goes steadily downhill. 19...h6!? 20 hxg6 fxg6 21 b3?! (21 ♜e2!?) 21...cxb3 22 axb3 ♜fc8 23 ♜d3?! h5 (23...♜b4!) 24 gxh5 ♜xh5 25 ♜g2 ±. This was Palac-Lalić, Pula 2000, which White went on to win.

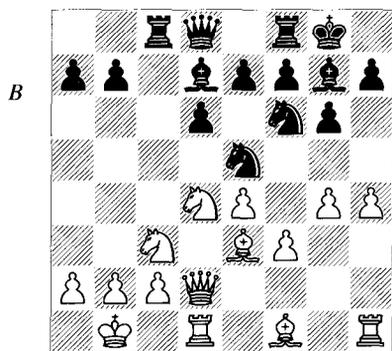
I am really not sure what to recommend against 15 ♖b1. 15...b4 certainly doesn't seem like a good idea, but then again Palac's treatment of Lalić's 15...♜c4 does not leave very much room for improvement. To compound these difficulties, none of the texts that recommend the 9...♞d7 line deal with 15 ♖b1, which is not really surprising, as most of the games detailed above were relatively recent encounters. On the other hand, Fedorov, Ward and numerous other strong players have employed this line in practice, so perhaps I am missing something, and Black actually has a big improvement up his sleeve (that happens a lot in the Dragon...). If you find something, let me know!

A2)

12 ♖b1 (D)

12...b5!

12...♜a5 13 ♞e2! (the thematic 13 ♜d5 is actually inaccurate here: 13...♜xd2! 14 ♜xe7+ ♖h8 15 ♜xd2 ♜ce8 16 ♜d5 ♜xd5 17 exd5 ♜xf3 ♠) 13...♜xc3 (13...♜c4 14 ♞xc4 ♜xc4 15 ♜b3 just leaves White a tempo ahead on the 9 ♞c4 variation) 14 ♜xc3 ♜xc3 15 bxc3 ♜c8 (15...♜xf3? 16 ♞xf3 ♞xg4 17 ♞xg4 ♜xg4 18 ♜he1 ♜xe3 19 ♜xe3 gives rise to an ending that is in keeping with the nature of this variation,

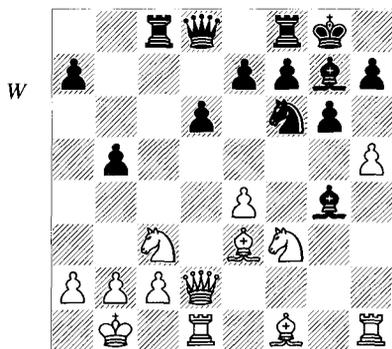


but here White's e- and h-pawns inhibit the advance of Black's kingside pawn-majority, and therefore White must be clearly better) 16 ♖b2 gave White a clearly better ending in Sutovsky-Hodgson, Oxford 1998. The problem with this ending (by comparison with other Dragon endings where Black has sacrificed an exchange on c3) is that White's kingside pawns are entirely intact and in no way compromised. The rest of this game vindicates this assessment: 16...♙e8 17 h5 ♞fd7 18 hxg6 hxg6 19 ♙h6! ♙f6 20 g5! ♙h8 21 ♞h2 ♞c4+ 22 ♙xc4 ♞xc4 23 ♙dh1 ♙e5 24 ♞h4 ♙g3 (Chris Ward notes the variation 24...a6 25 f4 ♙xd4 26 cxd4 ♞xd4 27 ♙g7!! ♞xg7 28 ♞h7+ ♞g8 29 ♞h8+ ♞g7 30 ♞1h7#) 25 ♞4h3 ♙e5 26 ♞e2 e6 27 f4 ♙h8 28 ♙f8 ♞xf8 29 ♞xh8+ ♞g7 30 f5 gxf5 31 exf5 exf5 32 ♞g3 1-0.

13 h5 ♞xf3!

13...b4?! 14 ♞d5 e6 (14...♞xd5 15 exd5 ♞a5 16 ♞b3 ±) 15 ♞xf6+ ♞xf6 16 g5 ♞d8 17 ♞h2 ♞e8 18 hxg6 hxg6 19 ♞h7+ ♞f8 20 ♞b5! is much better for White, Zambrana-Pazos Gambarrotti, Havana 2002.

14 ♞xf3 ♙xg4 (D)



15 ♙g2!

Probably best, but some other moves are also of interest:

a) In practice White's most popular response has been 15 ♞g2 ♞xc3 16 bxc3 ♞a5, and now:

a1) 17 ♙d4? e5 18 ♙e3 ♞xe4 19 ♞xg4 ♞xc3+ 20 ♞c1 ♞xa2+ 21 ♞b2 b4 22 c4 ♞a3+ 23 ♞c2 ♞c3+ 24 ♞b1 ♞b3+ 25 ♞a1 ♞c3 0-1 Savage-Duncan, British Ch (Nottingham) 1996 and Nunn-Savage, London rpd 1996(!). Chris Duncan later explained to me that Ben Savage only played this line against GM John Nunn because, having followed Nunn's own recommendation against Duncan, he couldn't work out where he went wrong. Evidently Nunn didn't know where Ben went wrong either!

a2) 17 e5 ♞e4 18 ♞xg4 ♞xc3+ 19 ♞c1 ♞xa2+ 20 ♞b2 b4 21 ♞d3 ♞c3 22 ♞b3 ♞b8 23 ♙b6 ♞xb6 → Hennigan-Duncan, Budapest 1993 was another convincing Dragon performance by English FM Chris Duncan.

a3) 17 ♞d3!/? seems far more challenging than earlier attempts, particularly as Black is a rook down for only two pawns. However, Black's real compensation is positional: it is very hard for White to coordinate his pieces or activate his rooks. 17...♙e6! 18 ♞d4 ♙xa2+!? 19 ♞c1 ♞c8 20 ♞f5 ♙f8! 21 ♙g5 ♞xc3 22 ♙xf6 exf6 23 hxg6 fxg6 24 ♞xc3 ♞xc3 25 ♙d3 ♙e6 26 ♞h6+ (this leads to a draw, but I was actually hoping for 26 ♞h2 h5! when Black is a rook down for four pawns, but probably has the better chances!) 26...♙xh6+ 27 ♞xh6 ♞e1+ 1/2-1/2 Tancsa-Dearing, Paks 2001. After the game we examined a whole host of deviations, but we only ever reached one conclusion – the position is highly unclear!

b) Black has experienced problems after 15 ♙e2!? b4 (15...♞a5? 16 ♞d5 ♞xd2 17 ♞xe7+ ♞h8 18 ♞xd2 ♞ce8 19 h6 +-) 16 ♞d5 (16 ♞b5!? ♞a5 17 ♞g5 h6 18 ♞xf7!? also looked very good for White in Rosten-Rudd, London 1998) 16...♞xe4 17 ♞xb4! and here:

b1) 17...♙f5 18 hxg6 e6 (not 18...♞b8? 19 ♞xb8! ♞xb8 20 ♞xe7+ ♞h8 21 ♞xh7#) 19 ♞h4 fxg6 20 ♞xf5 gxf5 21 ♞f4 ♞b8 22 ♙b5 ♞e8 23 a4 ± Gallagher-Summerscale, Cannes 1997.

b2) 17...e6 18 ♞xe4 ♙f5 19 ♞xf5!! exf5 (19...gxf5? 20 ♞hg1 ♞h8 21 h6 ♙xb2 22 ♞xb2 exd5 23 ♙d4+ f6 24 ♙d3 ±) 20 ♙xa7 ♞a8 21

♟d4 ± Rodriguez Cespedes-A.Hoffman, Linares 1997.

b3) 17...♞b8 18 ♞xe4 ♞xb2+ (18...♟xb2 19 ♟c4! +-; 18...♟f5 19 ♟xe7+ ♞xe7 20 ♞xe7 ♞xb2+ 21 ♟a1! +-) 19 ♟c1 ♟f5 20 ♞xf5 gxf5 21 h6 (21 ♞hg1 ♞xa2 22 ♟d4!! ±) 21...♞xa2 22 hxg7 ♞e8 is a line given by Ward, but White seems to be clearly better in this position; e.g., 23 ♟d4 e5 24 ♟c3 ♞e6 25 ♟d3 ♞a3 (25...e4 26 ♞xh7! +-) 26 ♟xf5 ♞g6 27 ♟xg6 fxg6 28 ♞h4 ♟xg7 29 ♟b2 1-0 De Sa-Bergmann, corr. 2000.

15...b4 16 ♟d5 ♟xe4 17 ♞xb4 e6

17...♞b8 18 ♞xe4 ♞xb2+ 19 ♟c1 ♟f5 20 ♞xf5! gxf5 21 h6 is a line given by Psakhis, with the assessment that White has an ongoing attack.

18 h6! ♟h8 19 ♞xe4 ♟f5 20 ♞xf5 exf5

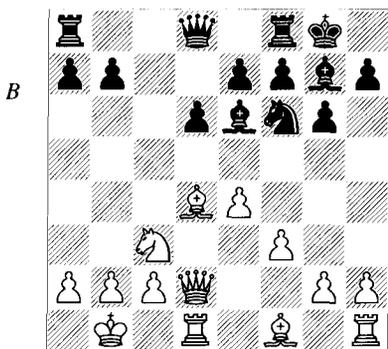
Psakhis gives 20...gxf5!? 21 ♞hg1 ♞e8 22 ♟g5 exd5 (22...♞b8 23 ♟h1!? ♟xb2 24 ♟xe6+ ♟g7+ 25 ♟c1 ♞xe6 26 ♞xg7+ ♟h8 27 ♟d4 +-) 23 ♟xd5 ♟f8 24 ♟xh7+ ♟e7 25 ♟g5+ f6 26 ♟h4 ♟d7 27 ♞g7+ ♟xg7 28 hxg7 +-.

21 ♟g5! f6 22 ♟c1 ♞e8 23 ♟d4 ♞a5 24 ♞h3!

+– Psakhis-S.Williams, Port Erin 2003.

B)

9...♟xd4 10 ♟xd4 ♟e6 11 ♟b1! (D)



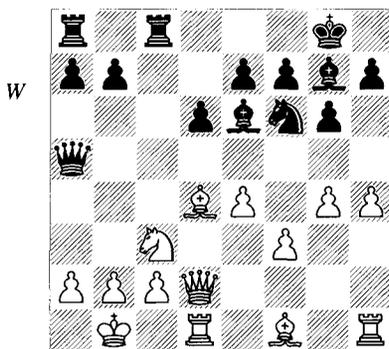
11...♞c7

The essence of White's idea is revealed after 11...♞a5? 12 ♟d5 ♞xd2 13 ♟xe7+. As a consequence of Black's decision to clarify the nature of the position so early with 9...♟xd4, he is more or less forced to deploy his queen to a5 and then either double rooks on the c-file, or position them on b8 and c8, and then advance

the b-pawn to create chances on the queenside. However, by precluding an immediate 11...♞a5 White cunningly gains the move 11 ♟b1 for free. The broader significance of this is that White will effectively obtain a position similar in many respects to the type which is reached in the 9 g4 variation (see Chapter 17), but with the major difference that White is effectively a tempo ahead.

12 h4 ♞fc8 13 h5!

I believe this move to be the critical test of this variation, but for a long time it has been overshadowed by the popularity of 13 g4, the idea being to meet 13...♞a5 with Ivanchuk's 14 ♞g5!?. After 13 g4 ♞a5 (D) Black should be aware of the following lines:



a) 14 a3 is possible. 14...♞ab8 15 h5 b5 and then:

a1) 16 h6!? ♟h8 17 g5? (17 ♟d5 is more or less forced, when I intended 17...♞xd2 18 ♞xd2 ♟xd5 19 exd5 ♟xd5!? 20 ♟xh8 ♟xf3 21 ♞h3 ♟xg4 22 ♞g3 ♟xh8 23 ♞xg4 with a highly unbalanced endgame ahead) 17...b4 18 ♟b5 ♞a4 19 gxf6 bxa3! → was Haslinger-Dearing, Millfield 2002. Black is entirely winning, but I offered a draw because I only needed half a point to gain my final IM norm and secure first place in the tournament (which I shared with IM Karl Mah).

a2) 16 hxg6 hxg6 17 ♞g5! (17 g5 b4! is good for Black) 17...♞c7 18 e5 ♟e4!! 19 fxe4 dxe5 20 ♟f2 b4 21 axb4 ♞xb4 22 ♞h3 ♞a5 23 ♟d5 ♞a4 with excellent attacking chances for Black.

b) 14 ♟d5 instigates an endgame that is typical of this variation, but Dragon players often choose to spice things up in the following manner: 14...♞xd2 15 ♞xd2!? (15 ♟xf6+ is safer)

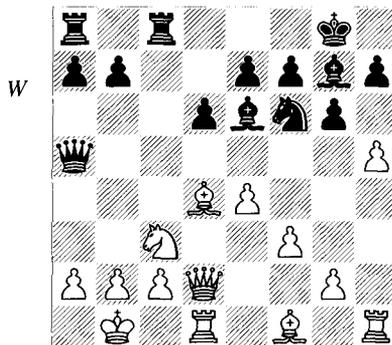
15...♗xd5 16 exd5 ♕xd5!? 17 ♖xg7 ♕xf3 18 ♖h3 ♖xg4 19 ♖g3 ♗xg7 20 ♖xg4 f5, when Black has three very mobile pawns for the piece, and excellent winning chances in the endgame.

c) 14 ♖g5!? offers a queen exchange, but accepting via 14...♖xg5 15 hxg5 ♗d7 16 ♖xg7 ♗xg7 drains Black's position of its dynamism. At first this ending was widely believed to be very good for White; now that assessment has been amended to a belief that White does have the better chances, but with the caveat that Black should be able to hold the ending with accurate defence. In any case, defending inferior endings is not why we play the Dragon, so most players will prefer the dynamic pawn sacrifice 14...b5!. I am not sure who exactly invented this wonderful little move, but it seems that many analysts were considering it at around the same time as an apparently obvious alternative to 14...♖xg5 (which was scoring terribly at that time). To my mind, the move's true creator was an eccentric, mild-mannered Scot by the name of Andrew Burnett, who has a particular passion for the Dragon. Andrew unleashed this move on IM Steve Mannion in the Scottish Championship long before I became aware of any analysis that had been published on it. Although Andrew went on to lose that game, I think he deserves a bit of acknowledgement for his creative play, so I am going to christen this the 'Burnett Variation'. Unfortunately, I am not going to analyse the Burnett Variation in any depth because it is no longer critical to the assessment of 9...♗xd4 (I shall instead devote the space to the now-topical 13 h5!). However, if the reader is interested in this variation then Chris Ward provides an excellent analysis of it in *Winning With the Sicilian Dragon 2*, and Attila Schneider also provides a good deal of original analysis on it. Returning to the position after 14...b5, White should continue 15 ♖xb5 ♖c7 16 ♖a4! ♖ab8 17 ♖a1! and now I believe that Chris Ward's move 17...♖b7! is best, but Schneider prefers 17...♖d7!?. Certainly after the former move Black has his full share of the chances, but I am not so sure about the quality of the latter.

13...♖a5 (D)

13...♗hx5? loses in the kind of fashion that gives Dragon players nightmares: 14 ♖xg7

♗xg7 15 g4 ♗f6 16 ♖h6+ ♗g8 17 e5! dxe5 18 g5 ♗h5 19 ♖d3 e4 20 ♖xh5 gxh5 21 ♗xe4 ♖f4 22 ♗f6+ exf6 23 ♖xh7+ ♗h8 24 ♖f5+ ♗g8 25 ♖h7+ ♗f8 26 ♖h8+ 1-0 Evans-Zuckerman, USA Ch (New York) 1966.



Now White has two approaches, both of which currently pose Black some serious problems:

B1: 14 h6!? 198

B2: 14 hxg6! 199

The natural 14 a3?! is actually inaccurate now as 14...♗hx5 15 ♖xg7 ♗xg7 16 g4 ♖xc3! 17 ♖xc3+ (17 gxh5 ♖c5 18 ♖d4+ f6 19 hxg6 hxg6 was fine for Black in L.Milov-Stisis, Biel 1994) 17...♖xc3 18 bxc3 ♗f4 gives Black a model exchange-sac Dragon ending.

It is also worth noting that White occasionally tries 14 ♖xf6? here, intending 14...♖xf6 15 ♗d5, but in this situation Black can cut across White's plans with 14...♖xc3! 15 ♖xc3 ♖xa2+ 16 ♖c1 ♖h6+ 0-1, as in Ruiz Gonzalez-Molander, Budapest 1999.

B1)

14 h6!?! ♖h8

14...♖xc3?! 15 ♖xc3 ♖xa2+ 16 ♖c1 ♖h8 17 ♖d3 ♖c8 (Psakhis-Yurtaev, Riga 1980) and now simply 18 ♖a3 ±.

15 a3

The immediate 15 ♖xf6?!, with the idea 15...♖xf6 16 ♗d5!, is actually bad here due to 15...♖xc3! 16 ♖xc3 ♖xa2+ 17 ♖c1 ♖xf6 ♞.

15...♗d7

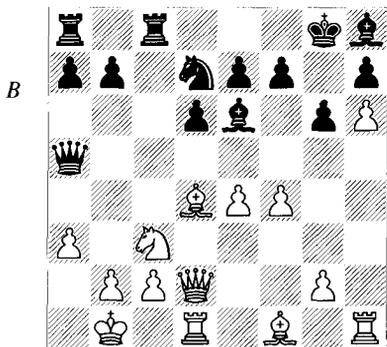
If 15...♖ab8 then the familiar trick 16 ♖xf6 ♖xf6 17 ♗d5 ♖xd2 18 ♗xf6+ gives White a clearly better endgame.

16 f4! (D)

This move has scored enormously well for White in practice, but some other moves also merit consideration:

a) 16 ♟xh8 ♟xh8 17 ♞d5 ♞xd2 18 ♞xd2 ♟xd5 19 exd5 ♟g8 20 ♞h4 ± Pulkkinen-Molander, Finland 2003.

b) 16 ♞d5 ♞xd2 17 ♞xd2 ♟xd5 18 exd5 ♟xd4 19 ♞xd4 f5!? (this wonderfully instructive move was first played by Chris Ward, and has several points to it; firstly, Black takes control of the e4- and g4-squares, thereby preventing 20 ♞e4 and discouraging White's plan of playing g4-g5, gaining space on the kingside; secondly, it frees the f7-square {allowing the black king to advance to a more active position}, and finally, Black's last move also blocks the h3-c8 diagonal, avoiding any inconvenience that might be caused by White later placing a bishop on h3) 20 g4 fxg4 21 fxg4 ♞e5 22 g5 ♞f3 23 ♞g4 ♞c5 24 ♟g2 1/2-1/2 Psakhis-Ward, Copenhagen 2000.

**16...♟xd4**

16...♟g4 17 ♟xh8!? (17 ♞d5 ♞d8 18 ♞e1 ♟xd4 19 ♞xd4 ± Klein-Jackwerth, corr. 1986) 17...♟xh8 (17...♟xd1 18 ♟g7! ♟g4 19 ♞d5! gives White a tremendous attack) 18 ♞d5 ♞xd2 19 ♞xd2 is much better for White, Livshits-Porat, Tel Aviv 2002.

17 ♞xd4 ♞f6

17...f6 18 ♟b5!? (18 ♞d5 ♟f8 19 ♟e2 ♞c5 20 ♞d2 ♟xd5 21 exd5 ♞b6 22 ♞he1 ± Stillger-Reschke, Wiesbaden 1992) 18...♞f8 (18...♞b6? 19 e5! ♞xc3? 20 exf6! +-; 18...♟f8? 19 ♟xd7 ♟xd7 20 e5 +-) 19 f5 ♞xc3! (19...gxf5 20 exf5 ♟xf5 21 ♟c4+ ♟h8 22 ♞he1 ♞c7 23 ♟a2 ♞g6 24 g4 +-; 19...♟f7 20 ♞d5 ♞d8 21 ♞d3!! ♞c5 22 ♟c4 ♞ac8 23 ♟b3 ± Morgado) 20 ♞xc3

♞xc3 21 bxc3 gxf5 22 exf5 ♟xf5 (Delchev-Radocaj, Pula 1998) and now simply 23 ♞he1 ♞g6 24 ♟d3! gives White the better chances.

18 f5!? gxf5 19 ♞d5 ♟xd5 20 exd5 ♞c5?!

This move has been played almost exclusively, but to my mind it seems more logical for Black to place his king in the corner, freeing up the g-file for one of his rooks; for example, 20...♟h8!? 21 ♞h5 ♞c5 22 ♞xc5 ♞xc5 23 ♞xf5 ♞g8 24 ♞e1 ♞c7 was Brod-Krebs, Austria 1993, when I actually prefer Black. White must be careful in this ending because the d5-, g2- and h6-pawns are all weak, and Black's knight seems superior to White's light-squared bishop.

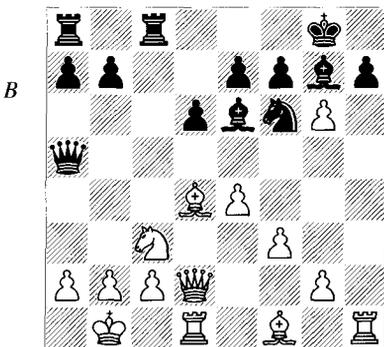
21 ♞d3

Now:

a) 21...♞e4 22 ♞e1 (22 ♟e2!?) 22...♞f2 23 ♞xe4! fxe4 24 ♞xe4 e5 25 ♞g4+ ♟f8 26 ♟d3 ± Wurschner-Hallengren, corr. 2001.

b) 21...♞f2!? 22 ♞h3 ♞c5 23 ♞f3 ♞h4 24 ♞xf5 ♞xh6 25 b4 ♞c7 26 ♟d3 ♞h5 27 ♞xh5 ♞xh5 28 ♞h1 ♞f6 29 ♞g3+ ♟h8 30 ♟xh7 ♞xh7 31 ♞gh3 looked awkward for Black in the game E.Pinter-Demeter, Slovakia 2002, and White did indeed win convincingly, but perhaps Black would still be OK after something like 31...♞ac8 32 ♞xh7+ ♟g8.

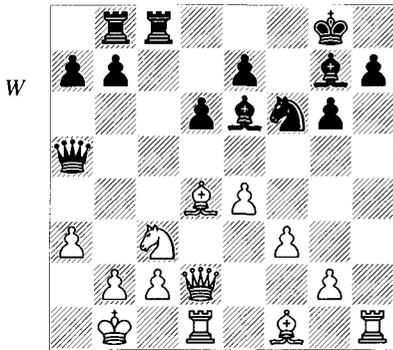
c) 21...♟h8 22 ♞xf5 ♞g8 23 ♞h3 ♞c8 24 ♞f2 ♞f8 25 ♟d3 ♞g5 26 ♟f5 ♞g8 27 g4 ♞d8 28 ♞f4 +- led to a convincing victory for White in Dolmatov-Vasiukov, USSR Ch (Vilnius) 1980/1.

B2)**14 hxg6! (D)****14...hxg6!?**

As a child I was always afraid to open the h-file in such positions, and much preferred the 'safer' alternative 14...fxg6, but in this particular position recapturing with the f-pawn introduces its own problems, which the lines after 15 a3 illustrate:

a) 15...♙f7 16 ♙xf6 exf6 (16...♙xf6 17 ♘d5 is even stronger for White, who will eliminate the bishop-pair) 17 ♘d5 ♖d8 18 g4 ♙ab8 19 f4 b5 20 f5 g5 21 ♙h3 ± Mannion-Stanojoski, Erevan OL 1996.

b) 15...♙ab8 (D) and then:



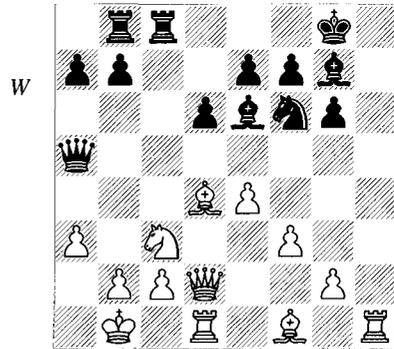
b1) White can achieve a safe edge with 16 ♙xf6 ♙xf6 17 ♘d5 ♖c5 (17...♖xd2 18 ♘xf6+ exf6 19 ♙xd2 ♙d8 20 ♙e2 ♙bc8 gives White an enduring advantage in the endgame) 18 ♘xf6+ exf6 19 ♙d3 ± Sutovsky-Trygstad, Gausdal 1995.

b2) 16 ♙d3 (keeping the queens on the board) 16...b5 (16...♙c4!? 17 ♙xf6 ♙xf6 18 ♘d5 ♖xd2 19 ♘xf6+ exf6 20 ♙xc4+ ♙xc4 21 ♙xd2 ±) 17 ♖g5 ♙f7 (17...♖c7 18 ♘d5 ♙xd5 19 exd5 b4 20 a4 b3 21 c3 ♖a5 22 ♙xh7 e5 23 ♙xg7+ ♙xg7 24 ♙xg6+ ♙f8 25 ♖xf6+ 1-0 Batenburg-Gernaert, Vlissingen 1996; 17...♙c4 18 ♙xc4+ ♙xc4 19 ♙xf6 ♙xf6 20 ♖d5+ ♙g7 21 ♙xh7+ ♙xh7 22 ♖f7+ ♙h6 23 f4 ♙h5 24 ♙h1+ ♙g4 25 ♖xg6+ ♙xf4 26 ♖f5+ 1-0 Mannion-Harkins, Turnkey 1998) 18 ♘d5 ♙xd5 19 exd5 ♙c4 (19...b4 20 ♙xh7! ♘h7 21 ♖xg6 ♘f6 22 ♙h1 +-) 20 ♙xg6 hxg6 21 ♖xg6 +- Zapata-Cabrera, Colombia 2001.

15 a3 ♙ab8 (D)

15...♙c4!? is a common alternative: 16 ♙h3 (16 ♙xc4 ♙xc4 17 ♙xf6 ♙xf6 18 ♘d5 ±) 16...b5 (16...♙xf1 17 ♙xf1 ♙c4 18 ♙fh1 ♙ac8 19 ♙xf6 ♙xf6 20 ♙h7 ♖b6 {20...♙g7? 21 ♙xg7+ ♙xg7 22 ♖h6+ ♙f6 23 ♘d5+ ♙e6 24

♖g5 +-} 21 ♖h6 ♖d4 22 f4 ♙g7 23 ♖h2 f5 24 e5 1-0 Schoen-Thorn Leeson, corr. 2001) 17 ♙xc4 ♙xc4 (17...bxc4 18 ♙dh1 ♙ab8 {Short-Velimirović, Banja Luka 1985} 19 ♙c1 ♙b7 20 g4 ♙cb8 21 ♖h2 +- Velimirović) 18 ♙dh1 e5 (18...♙ac8 19 ♙xf6! ♙xf6 20 ♙h7 +-) 19 ♙e3 ♙xc3 20 ♖xc3 ♙xc3 21 bxc3 d5 22 ♙g5 ± Van der Wiel-Van de Mortel, Wijk aan Zee 1996.



16 ♙d3!

Other moves are less convincing:

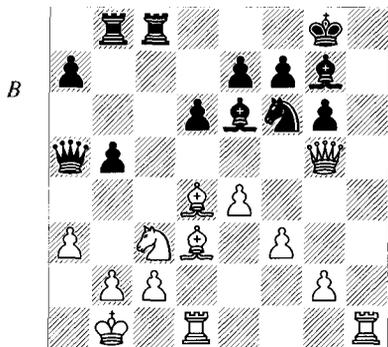
a) The traditional move 16 g4?! is inaccurate: 16...b5 17 ♖g5 ♖c7 18 e5 ♘d5 (Black has an exciting alternative in 18...♙e4!?) 19 exd6 ♘xc3+ 20 ♙xc3 (20 bxc3 ♖xd6!) 20...exd6 gave Black at least equality in Shevelev-Venediktov, Sverdlovsk Ch 1957.

b) 16 ♙e3!? and rather than 16...♘h5? 17 ♘e2! ♖xd2 18 ♙xd2 b6 19 g4 ♘f6 20 ♘f4 ♘d7?! 21 g5 ♘e5 22 ♘xe6 fxe6 23 ♙h3 ♙f7 24 ♙dh2 ♙h8 25 f4 ♘c4?! 26 ♙c1 ± Van der Wiel-Sievers, Bundesliga 1998/9, according to Sievers, Black should play 16...♘d7! 17 ♘d5 (17 ♙d4 ♙xd4!? {17...♘f6} 18 ♖xd4 ♙e5 ∞) 17...♖xd2 18 ♙xd2 ♙xd5 19 exd5 a6, when he retains a tenable position.

16...♙c4

For some reason 16...a6?! has proved a popular choice here, but it seems White can win by just doubling his rooks on the h-file and ploughing ahead: 17 ♙h4 (or 17 ♙h2) 17...b5 18 ♖g5 ♙c5 (Ward points out 18...♘h7? 19 ♙xh7 ♙xd4 20 ♙dh1 +- and 18...d5 19 e5 b4 20 axb4 ♖xb4 21 ♘a2 ♘h7 22 ♘xb4 ♘xg5 23 ♘xa6 +-) 19 ♙xc5 dxc5 20 ♖xc5 +- Bley-Jackwerth, corr. 1998.

The traditional main line of this variation was 16...b5 but this has all but died out on account of 17 ♖g5! (D).



White's last move introduces a theme that has caused Black many problems over the years. In a straight race down the opposing wings Black's attack will get there first, but 17 ♖g5 complicates matters. Not only does White bring the queen one move closer to the kingside, but he also pins Black's b5-pawn to the queen on a5, preventing 17...b4. Now if Black is to make progress on the queenside, he must either retreat the queen to a sub-optimal position, or somehow break the pin by blocking the fifth rank. As the following examples will demonstrate, Black is in real trouble here:

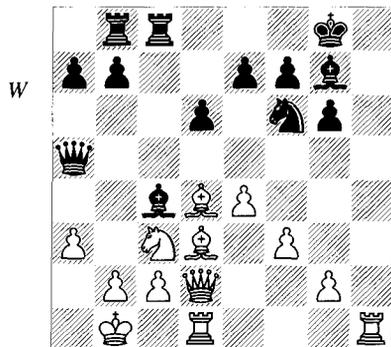
a) 17...♞c4 18 ♞xc4 ♜xc4 19 ♝d5 ♝xd5 20 ♞xg7 ♞xg7 21 ♞h6+ ♞f6 22 ♜xd5 e6 23 ♞g5+ ♞g7 24 e5 dxe5 25 ♞xe5+ 1-0 Sharif-Falcon, Lyons 1990.

b) 17...a6 18 f4 ♞b7 19 ♞h6 ♞c4 20 ♞dh1 ♞xd3 21 cxd3 e5 22 fxe5 b4 23 ♞h8+! ♞xh8 24 ♞xh8+ ♞xh8 25 ♞xf6+ ♞h7 26 exd6 ♞g8 27 ♝d5 +- Kuporosov-Jirovsky, Pardubice 1993.

c) 17...d5 18 e5 b4 (18...♝d7 19 ♝a2 ♞c7 20 f4 ♝c5 21 ♞xg6! +- Echavarría-Carvajal, Cali 2000) 19 ♝a2! (19 exf6? bxc3 20 fxg7 ♞xb2+ 21 ♞c1 ♞b1+! +-) 19...bxa3 20 exf6 ♞xb2+ (20...exf6 21 ♞d2 ♞a4 22 b4! ±) 21 ♞a1 ♞xf6 22 ♞xf6 ♞xa2+ 23 ♞xa2 ♞xc2+ 24 ♞b1 exf6 25 ♞h8+ ♞xh8 26 ♞xf6+ ♞g8 27 ♞xc2 1-0 Parligras-Draganić, Sozina SCG 2004.

d) 17...♞c7 18 e5! dxe5 19 ♞xe5 ♞c5 (not 19...♞b6 20 ♞xg6 +-) 20 f4 ♞b7 (20...b4 21 ♞xb8 ♞xg5 22 fxg5 bxc3 23 gxf6 {23 ♞xa7!} 23...♞xb8 24 fxe7 ♞xb2+ 25 ♞c1 ♞d7 26 ♞c4 1-0 Rios-Clavijo, Medellín 2000) 21 ♞xg6! fxg6 22 ♞xg6 ♞f7 23 ♞h8+!! 1-0 Van der Wiel-Sax, Plovdiv Echt 1983. White wins by force: 23...♞xh8 24 ♞xf7 ♞g8 25 ♞h1+ ♝h7 26 ♞h5.

We now return to 16...♞c4 (D):



17 ♞xc4

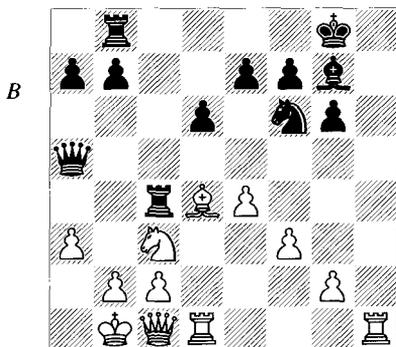
Or:

a) The natural 17 ♞xf6 ♞xf6 18 ♝d5 ♞xd2 19 ♝xf6+ can be neutralized by 19...♞g7 20 ♝h5+ gxh5 21 ♞xd2 ♞xd3 22 cxd3 ♞g6 23 g3 ♞c5 24 ♞dh2 ♞g8 25 f4 ♞f6 26 ♞xh5 ♞xh5 27 ♞xh5 ♞xg3 28 ♞c2 ♞e6 29 ♞b5 1/2-1/2 Van der Wiel-Reinderman, Netherlands 1995.

b) More challenging is 17 ♞e3!?, after which Black has investigated a number of continuations, but most have now been proven to be bad for Black. Without getting too distracted by all the analysis surrounding 17 ♞e3, I would like to mention that Golubev's old proposal 17...♝d7! 18 ♞xc4 ♞xc4 19 ♝d5 ♞xd2 20 ♞xd2 ♞e8 21 ♞xa7 b6 is probably Black's best. Golubev assesses the position as yielding Black compensation for the pawn, presumably on the basis that White will encounter difficulty extricating the a7-bishop. The only occasion on which this analysis has been tested was a correspondence game that continued 22 ♞d3 ♞a4 23 ♞xb6 e6 24 ♞c7 exd5 25 ♞xd5 ♝e5 26 ♞xd6 ♝c4 27 c3. At this point White has four solid pawns for the piece, but interestingly Black went on to win. I have included the remainder of the game largely because Black's hopes in the 17 ♞e3! line currently rest entirely on the shoulders of Golubev's 17...♝d7. 27...♞aa8 28 g4 ♞ed8 29 ♞f4 ♞dc8 30 ♞hd1 ♝xb2 31 ♞xb2 ♞xc3 32 ♞d8+ ♞xd8 33 ♞xd8+ ♞h7 34 ♞a2 ♞xf3 35 ♞d2 ♞c3 36 ♞xc3 ♞xc3 37 ♞d5 ♞h6 38 g5+ ♞h5 39 ♞e5 ♞g4 40 a4 ♞f4 41 ♞b5 ♞xe4 42 a5 ♞c6 43 ♞b3 f6 44 ♞b6 ♞c5 45 ♞b4+ ♞f5 46 a6 fxg5 47 a7 ♞a5 48 ♞a4 ♞xa7 49 ♞xa7 g4 50 ♞c2 g3 51 ♞a1 ♞f4 0-1 Cordovil-Lecroq, corr. Wch 1994.

17...♙xc4 18 ♖c1!! (D)

This fantastic move was the discovery of correspondence master Bennedik. The idea is surprisingly simple: White breaks the pin on the a5-e1 diagonal (threatening 19 ♕xf6 and 20 ♖d5) but at the same time keeps the queen on the c1-h6 diagonal, so it can sweep into h6 if the opportunity arises. In addition to these more obvious benefits, on c1 the queen protects the a3-pawn in the event that Black should sacrifice an exchange on c3, shattering the queenside pawns. Prior to Bennedik's discovery, this position was thought to be fine for Black; for example, 18 ♕xf6 ♕xf6 19 ♖d5 ♖xd2 20 ♖xf6+ (20 ♙xd2 ♖g7 =) 20...♖g7 21 ♖h5+ gxh5 22 ♙xd2 ♙c5 was a pinch better for White in M.Bauer-Naegele, Germany tt 1994/5, but almost all games that have reached this position have ended in draws. On the other hand, 18 ♖e3?! is bad because Black has the resource 18...e5! 19 ♕xa7 ♙a8 20 ♕b6 ♙xc3! 21 ♖xc3 ♖xb6 ♠.

**18...e6**

In *Informator 87*, Bennedik points out that 18...♙bc8? runs into 19 ♖d5! ♖xd5 (19...♙xc2 20 ♖xe7+ ♖f8 21 ♖f4! +-) 20 ♕xg7 ♖xg7 (20...♙xc2 21 ♖h6 f6 22 ♕xf6! +- Golubev) 21 ♙xd5 +- . Note that 18...e5 19 ♕e3 is clearly better for White.

19 g4 ♙bc8

The correspondence game in which Bennedik introduced 18 ♖c1 continued 19...b5 20 g5 (interestingly, an earlier correspondence game had already continued 20 ♖a2!? ♖c7 21 ♕c3 ♙c8 22 ♖g5 1-0 Martjukhin-Miller, IECG e-mail 2000, although Black's resignation was a bit premature) 20...♖h5 21 ♕xg7 ♖xg7? (21...♖xg7 22 ♖f4 b4 23 ♖xd6! ♙cc8 24 ♙d5!? ♖c7 25 ♖xc7 ♙xc7 26 ♙b5 - Bennedik) 22 ♙xh5! gxh5 23 ♖f4 ♖g8 24 g6! f5 25 ♙xd6 ♙xc3 26 ♖e5! ♙c7 27 ♖xe6+ ♖g7 28 exf5 b4 29 f4!? bxa3 30 ♙d7+ 1-0 Bennedik-Demian, ICCF Champions League 2002.

20 g5 ♖h5 21 ♕xg7 ♖xg7 22 ♙xd6 ♖e5?!

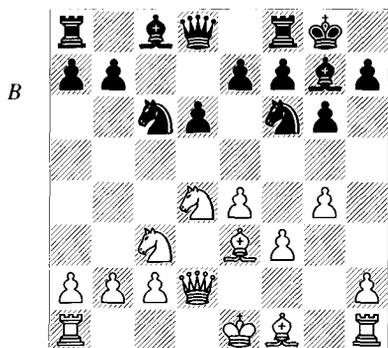
In *Informator 89*, Marković proposes the improvement 22...♙xc3!? 23 bxc3 ♖g3 24 ♙hd1 (Chris Ward also analysed this variation for chesspublishing.com, and gave 24 ♙e1 ♖e2! 25 ♖b2 ♖xc3+ 26 ♖a1 ♖xg5 27 ♙d3 ♖f6 28 ♙ee3 ♖a4 29 ♖xf6+ ♖xf6 with the assessment that Black may be able to hold his own in this ending because of his superior pawn-structure and active king) 24...♖e2 25 ♖b2 ♖xc3+ 26 ♖a1 ♖xg5. To be perfectly honest, I am not sure how to assess this position. I suspect that White should be able to coordinate his pieces and claim some kind of advantage, but this is easier said than done. In any case, even if White can get his house in order, it is still not obvious that he will be able to make too much progress against Black's solid position. The only game to test this position was, not surprisingly, a correspondence game which concluded 27 ♙xe6 ♖g8 28 ♙e8+ ♙xe8 29 ♖xc3 1/2-1/2 P.Dahl-Aguilar, IECG 2002. Very revealing. I guess we will just have to await further tests, but if you are tempted by 9...♖xd4, then 22...♙xc3!? definitely merits your attention.

23 ♖d2 b5 24 ♙d7 a5 25 f4 ♖c5 26 f5 exf5 27 ♙d5 ♖c6 28 exf5 b4 29 f6+ ♖g8 30 ♙d8+ ♙xd8 31 ♖xd8+ ♖h7 32 ♖d5 ♙xc2 33 ♖f8 ♙c1+ 34 ♙xc1 ♖xd5 35 ♖h6+

1-0 Parligras-Cebalo, Slovakia 2004.

17 9 g4!?: A Positional Approach

1 e4 c5 2 f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 fxd4 f6 5 c3 g6 6 e3 g7 7 f3 c6 8 d2 0-0 9 g4 (D)



9...e6!

The inferior 9...d4?! 10 e4 e6 11 h4! has long been known to be more problematic for Black.

White now has two options:

- A: 10 fxe6 203
 B: 10 0-0-0 205

Note that 10 h4 is probably inaccurate on the basis that Black's last move prepared the central counterstrike 10...d5!. Then:

a) 11 fxe6 fxe6 12 0-0-0 (12 g5 h5 f Miles) 12...a5 (Ward mentions 12...d4!? 13 e4 d4 14 fxd4 fxd4 15 fxd4 fxd4 16 fxd4 fxd4 17 g1 e3 18 bxc3 f3, with the assessment that Black is fine here) 13 exd5?! (13 h5? d4! 14 e4 f8 15 e3 d4 16 fxd4 fxd4 + leaves White blushing) 13...d5 14 d5 fxa2! 15 e7+ e7 16 c3 (Ramalho-Guimaraes, Lisbon 1999) 16...d5! f Ward.

b) 11 g5 h5 12 0-0-0 (12 fxe6 fxe6 f Miles) 12...d4 13 e4 dxe4 14 e7 fxd2+ (14...e7 also faired well in Raaste-Petursson, Dubai OL 1986) 15 fxd2 e7 16 e4 f8 = Psakhis-Smirin, Klaipeda 1988.

c) 11 0-0-0 d4 12 e4 dxe4 13 h5 exf3 14 f4 a5 15 h6 h8 16 g5 e8 1/2-1/2 Motylev-Klimentov, Briansk 1995. However, there is obviously lots of play left in the position, and

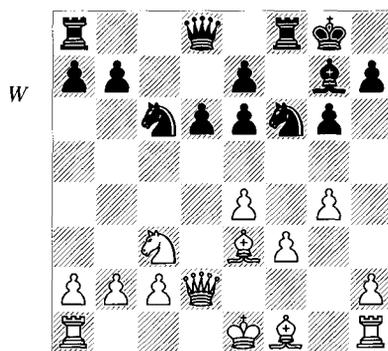
undoubtedly Motylev realized that Black is doing well here.

d) 11 exd5 e5?! 12 d5?! fxd5 13 fxc6 fxc6 f Gastmeyer-C.Mohr, Neumünster 1997.

e) 11 h5 fxd4 12 e4 dxe4 13 h6 (13 hxg6 fxg6 14 0-0-0 exf3 f) 13...h8 14 g5 e3! 15 e3 d5! 16 e4 fxc3 17 xh8 fxd2+ 18 fxd2 xa2! 19 e4 fd8 20 c3 d4 was Van der Wiel-Miles, Utrecht theme 1986, which the late English hero Tony Miles assessed as clearly better for Black (*Informator* 42).

A)

10 fxe6 fxe6 (D)



White has two ways of handling the position:

- A1: 11 e4 203
 A2: 11 0-0-0 204

A1)

11 e4 c8 12 b3 a5 13 0-0-0

Varga has also tried castling kingside here, but this does not appear dangerous: 13 0-0 b3 14 cxb3 d7! with good play for Black.

13...xb3+ 14 cxb3

14 axb3 c6 15 h4 d7 16 df1 was Varga-A.Schneider, Budapest 1991, and now Attila Schneider recommends 16...a5!? 17 h5 a4 18

hxg6 (presumably 18 bxa4 can be answered by 18...♙xc3! 19 ♖xc3 ♗xc3 20 bxc3 ♜xa4 ♞) 18...hxg6 19 ♗xa4 b5 20 ♗c3 ♜a1+ 21 ♗b1 ♜fa8 22 c3 ♜8a2 23 ♙d4 ♗c5 24 ♙xc5 ♖xc5 ♞.

14...♗d7 15 ♜hf1 ♙xc3

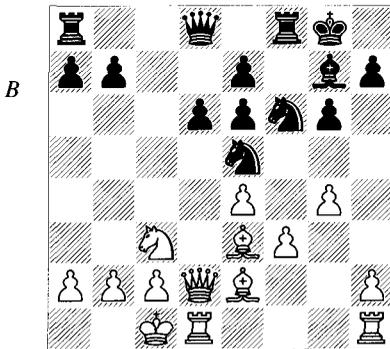
By analogy with Attila Schneider's analysis above, there is something to be said for the idea of advancing the a-pawn to create counterplay on the queenside. For example, 15...a5!? 16 ♗b1 ♙xc3!? 17 bxc3 a4 18 b4 ♗e5 (or 18...♖c6!?) looks quite awkward for White.

16 bxc3 ♗e5 17 ♙f4

This is Varga-Golubev, Romanian Cht 1997. Now Golubev recommended 17...♗d3+! 18 ♖xd3 ♜xf4 19 ♖e3! e5! with an unclear position.

A2)

11 0-0-0 ♗e5 12 ♙e2 (D)



12...♜c8

The less than obvious move 12...♜c8!? has actually scored very well for Black in practice:

a) 13 h4 ♗c4 14 ♙xc4 ♖xc4 15 h5 (15 ♙h6!? b5 16 ♙xg7 ♗xg7 17 ♗b1 looked OK for Black in Sharapov-Dumchikov, Kharkov 2002, although he went on to lose; perhaps Black should now play 17...b4 18 ♗e2 e5 19 h5 ♜ac8, leaving the f8-rook on the kingside for defensive measures) 15...♗d7 16 hxg6 ♗g2 was fine for Black in Balcerak-Tuncer, Schoeneck jr 1996. Note that the d7-knight can come to e5, joining with the f8-rook to threaten the weak f3-pawn, but also protecting the g6-pawn. Black can even consider 17...♙xc3, on the basis that a kingside attack can now be met by ...♗f7-e8-d7, when the

e7+e6+d6 pawn-shell provides an impenetrable shelter.

b) 13 ♙h6 ♙xh6 14 ♖xh6 ♖c5 15 h4 ♗h8!? 16 ♖d2 ♜ac8 17 ♗b1 b5 18 ♗xb5 ♗xf3 19 ♙xf3 ♖xb5 20 g5 ♗d7 21 ♙e2 ♖e5 gave rise to unclear play in Campora-Kudrin, Berne 1988, which eventually ended in a draw.

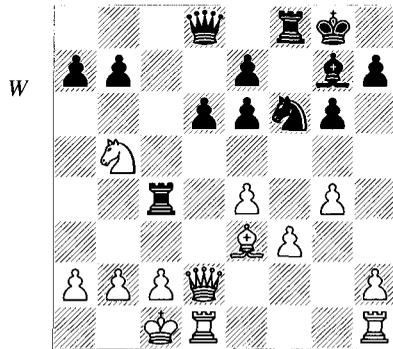
13 ♗b5

Alternatives:

a) Black should meet 13 ♙h6?! with the usual treatment: 13...♙xh6 14 ♖xh6 ♜xc3 15 bxc3 ♖a5.

b) 13 h4 ♖a5! 14 h5 b5 15 hxg6 (15 a3 ♗c4!? = Golubev) 15...b4! (15...hxg6 16 a3 ♗c4 17 ♙xc4 ♜xc4 18 ♙h6 ♜fc8 19 ♙xg7 ♗xg7 20 e5 dxe5 21 ♖h6+ ♗f7 22 ♗e4 ♜xc2+ 23 ♗b1 ♗xe4 1/2-1/2 Haimovich-Stisis, Israel 2002) 16 gxh7+ ♗xh7 17 ♗b1 ♖xa2 ∞ Travenec-Gezik, Slovakia 1995. Black has every reason to be confident in his position.

13...♗c4 14 ♙xc4 ♜xc4 (D)



15 ♗d4

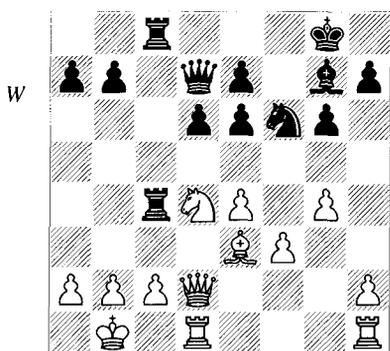
This is well established as the main line, but I am curious about 15 ♖d3!? ♜c8 (15...♜c8 16 ♗xa7 ♖c7 17 ♗b5 ♖c6 18 b3 or 18 ♗d4 looks good for White; 15...d5!? 16 ♖xc4 dxc4 17 ♜xd8 ♜xd8 appears to be a tricky ending for Black, but perhaps Black can generate some play against White's weak kingside pawns). Given that Black's counterplay in this position is based on the manoeuvre ...♗d7-e5, it seems logical that the best way to create problems for Black would be to circumvent this plan by 16 ♖b3!? (a similar idea is 16 ♗d4 ♖d7 17 ♖b3 d5!? 18 e5 ♗e8 19 f4 ± Hamalainen-Gamback, Helsinki 2001) 16...♖d7. By luring the black queen to d7, the f6-knight's route to activity is temporarily obstructed. Play might now continue 17

h4 ♖e8 18 ♜d4 (this is an interesting idea in all these positions; White has to be careful about the f3-pawn, but it is possible that in one of these lines White can just take the booty and run) 18...d5 19 h5 when although Black's position remains solid, potential trouble is looming on the kingside.

15...♙d7 16 ♖b1

16 ♙d3!? ♜fc8 17 ♜d2 b5 ∞ Alterman & Vaisman (*Informator* 53).

16...♜fc8 (D)



17 c3!

17 ♜c1 was played in Dolmatov-Alterman, Beersheba 1991. Black now went wrong slightly with 17...♖e8?!, but Alterman and Vaisman suggested that Black's play can be improved with 17...e5!? 18 ♖e2 e6 19 ♜hd1 ♙f8!. With the f8-bishop protecting d6, Black is free to pursue counterplay via 20...♙f7 (putting potential pressure on f3) and 21...♜d7, redirecting the pony to greener pastures on the queenside. Alterman and Vaisman assess the resulting position as unclear.

17...b5 18 h4 a5 19 h5 b4 20 cxb4 e5!?

Instead, 20...♜xb4?! 21 ♜c1! was clearly better for White in Z. Vuković-Aronian, Bucharest 1999, according to Vuković in *Informator* 75. 20...e5 is Golubev's suggestion, with the implication that the resulting position is unclear, which would appear to be the most appropriate assessment for this position.

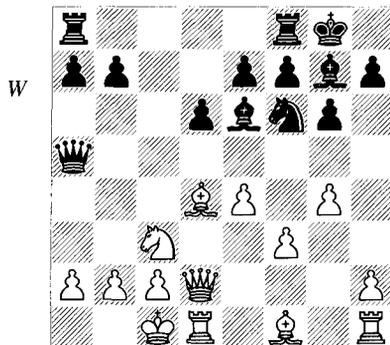
B)

10 0-0-0 ♜xd4 11 ♙xd4 ♙a5 (D)

Now:

B1: 12 ♖b1?! 205

B2: 12 a3! 207



B1)

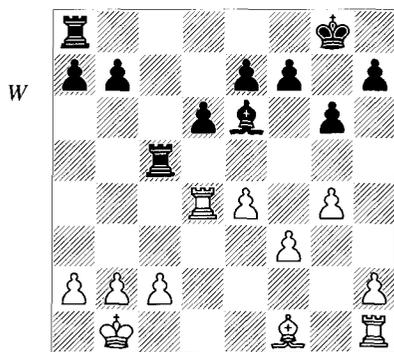
12 ♖b1!?

This move actually reaches a position similar to one we examined in Chapter 16, via the move-order 9 0-0-0 ♜xd4. However, there is a fundamental difference: here Black's queen has gone to a5 in one move and therefore it is Black's move in this position, not White's! This changes the assessment considerably.

12...♜fc8 13 a3

This move is necessary to guard a2; e.g., 13 h4? ♜xc3 14 ♙xc3 ♙xa2+ 15 ♖c1 ♙xg4 16 fxg4 ♙a1+ 17 ♖d2 ♖xe4+ 18 ♖e1 ♖xc3 19 ♜xa1 ♙xd4 gave Black a clearly better endgame in Strobel-Weiner, Germany tt 1975/6. A similar sequence occurs after 13 ♙xf6? ♜xc3 14 ♙xc3 ♙xa2+ 15 ♖c1 ♙xf6 ♢ Marley-R. Webb, London 1994.

However, White does have a respectable alternative in 13 ♜d5 ♙xd2 14 ♜xf6+ ♙xf6 15 ♜xd2 ♙xd4 16 ♜xd4 ♜c5 (D) which leads to a relatively standard Dragon endgame, and provides us with an opportunity to examine the importance of the each side's pawn-structure in the endgame. On the one hand, White has a potential queenside majority, control of the d-file and more space on the kingside. This allows him to set about a plan of gradual kingside expansion without being too alarmed by Black's counter-chances on the opposite wing. On the other hand, Black's pawn-structure is devoid of any weaknesses, whereas White's e4-, f3- and g4-pawns are all on the same colour as his bishop. This provides the black king with an opportunity to infiltrate the white pawn-structure via the route g7-f6-e5/g5-f4. I would like to illustrate some of Black's chances in such endgames with the following examples:



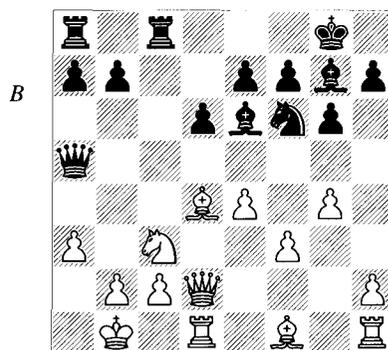
a) 17 $\text{f}2\text{g}5!$ (fixing the f3-pawn) 18 h4 h6 19 $\text{d}2\text{g}7$ 20 $\text{d}3\text{a}5$ 21 $\text{d}h2\text{f}6$ 22 a4 $\text{e}5$ 23 $\text{hxg}5\text{hxg}5$ 24 $\text{h}8\text{ac}8$ 25 b3 $\text{f}4$ 26 $\text{xc}8\text{xc}8$ 27 $\text{h}3\text{d}5$ 28 $\text{exd}5\text{exd}5$ 29 $\text{e}2\text{c}3$ 30 $\text{h}7\text{e}3$ $\text{Nagy-Parkanyi, Heves 1997}$. Note that Black simply allowed White to infiltrate down the h-file, safe in the knowledge that the black king was heading up the board anyway! However, it is also possible for Black to make use of the h-file in these endings, as the following example illustrates.

b) 17 c3 h5! 18 h3 (18 $\text{gxh}5\text{hxh}5$ followed by 19... $\text{g}7$ and 20... $\text{ah}8$, ganging up on the weak h2-pawn, gives Black good play) 18... $\text{g}7$ 19 $\text{e}2\text{h}8$ 20 h4!? (20 $\text{f}1\text{hxg}4$ 21 $\text{hxg}4\text{h}2$ f) 20... $\text{hxg}4$ 21 $\text{fxg}4$ $\text{Bosnjak-Cebalo, Pula 2000}$. White's e4-pawn is now isolated and weak, and the g4-pawn is also vulnerable. Furthermore, White's h1-rook is now tied to the defence of the h4-pawn. Black need only take care to avoid White creating an outside passed pawn by playing h5 at some opportune moment in the future.

c) 17 h4 $\text{g}7$ 18 $\text{b}4\text{b}6$ 19 $\text{g}5!$?. White realizes the dangers of passivity, and instead attempts to galvanize his kingside pawn-structure. White's last move was fundamentally important in that it prevented Black from playing 19... $\text{f}6$, and also precluded the plan of 19...h6 followed by 20...g5, fixing White's kingside pawn-structure. A further point to note is that White is now threatening to ease his defensive task by exchanging light-squared bishops via 20 $\text{h}3$. If Black is to generate any kind of an advantage here he must act quickly... 19...h6! (this illustrates the other way for Black to exploit the h-file) 20 $\text{b}5$ (20 $\text{h}3\text{hxh}3$ 21 $\text{hxh}3\text{hxg}5$ 22 $\text{hxg}5\text{hxg}5$ is also much better for Black) 20... $\text{xb}5$ 21 $\text{xb}5\text{h}8!$ 22 $\text{g}1$

$\text{hxg}5$ 23 $\text{hxg}5\text{h}2$ $\text{Bozanić-Cebalo, Croatia 2004}$.

We now return to 13 a3 (D):



13... $\text{ab}8$

Ward and Golubev both recommend playing 13... $\text{c}4!$? with the assessment that Black is fine, which is probably true. I am including the main line because, well, it is the main line, it's what I have always played, and it was Kasparov's choice against Anand.

14 $\text{d}5$

Or:

a) 14 h4? b5 15 h5? b4 -- . With an extra tempo in the bag, Black's attack is simply too fast.

b) 14 $\text{g}5\text{h}5$ 15 $\text{d}5\text{xd}2$ 16 $\text{xd}2\text{xd}5$ 17 $\text{exd}5\text{a}6$ was the well-known game Karpov-Dueball, Skopje OL 1972, in which Karpov (being Karpov) eventually ground out a nice win. However, at this point in the game Black is fine. Golubev pointed out that 18 $\text{a}7\text{a}8$ 19 $\text{e}3$, attempting to keep Black's knight locked out on h5, can be met by the simple 19... $\text{e}5!$, taking control of the f4-square.

14... $\text{xd}2$ 15 $\text{xd}2\text{xd}5$

15... $\text{xd}5$ does not appear to have been played very often in this precise position, but this move occurs in similar positions throughout the Dragon, and may well give Black more chances to generate winning chances in a less balanced ending.

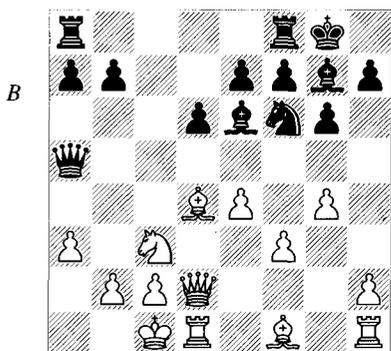
16 $\text{hxg}7\text{e}3$

$\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ Anand-Kasparov, New York PCA Wch (15) 1995. Wahls provided the following sample analysis of the final position: 17 $\text{d}4\text{xf}1$ 18 $\text{xf}1\text{a}5$ (18...b6 is also possible) 19 h4 (19 $\text{b}6$ appears awkward, but Black can free his queenside pawns via the manoeuvre 19... $\text{a}8$

and 20...♖a6, forcing the b6-bishop to retreat) and now 19...b5 20 h5 g5 or 19...♗f8 20 h5 ♗e8, in either case with a perfectly solid position for Black.

B2)

12 a3! (D)



12...♖ab8!

As a junior I wanted to give my opponents every opportunity to play a complicated middle-game (rather than one of the standard endings arising after White plays ♘d5), so I preferred to play the slower 12...♖fc8!?, hoping that White would be tempted into trying his luck with a kingside attack. Of course this rarely happened, and usually White just played 13 ♘d5, simplifying into an ending. However, if White does decide to go for it on the kingside, the critical line is 13 h4 ♖ab8 14 h5 b5 15 hxg6! (15 h6 is also interesting; Black's best responses are 15...b4 and 15...♗f8, but note that 15...♗h8 16 ♘d5! may give White an edge) 15...b4! (15...fxg6 16 g5! is also possible, but 15...hxg6?! 16 ♖g5! is thought to be good for White) 16 ♘d5! ♗xd5 17 g5!! with highly unclear play in which White has generally done quite well.

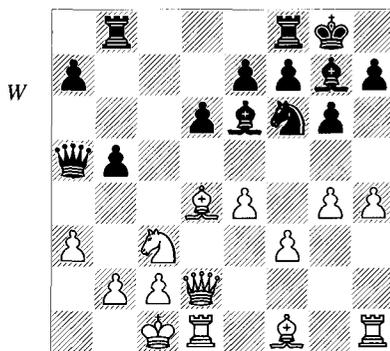
The text-move avoids all of these complications by speeding up the advance of the b-pawn.

13 h4

13 g5!? ♘h5! 14 ♗xg7 ♘xg7 15 h4 (interestingly, Khalifman has also faced 15 ♗b1 here; the following portion of that game provides a fine illustration of how Black should handle these types of positions: 15...♖fc8 16 ♘d5 ♖xd2 17 ♖xd2 ♗xd5 18 exd5 ♘f5 19 ♗h3 ♖c4 20 ♗e1 ♗f8 21 ♗e4 ♖bc8 22 c3 ♖8c7 23 ♖d3 h6 24 gxh6 ♘xh6 25 ♗c2 f5 26 ♖ed4

♘g8 27 b3 ♖xd4 28 ♖xd4 ♘f6 29 ♗f1 ♗g7 30 h4 ♖c5 31 c4 ♖c8 32 ♗d2 ♘d7 33 ♗e2 a5 34 ♗d1 ♗f6 35 ♗e3 ♖h8 36 ♗c2 ♗e5 37 ♗d1 ♘c5 38 a4 ♘a6 39 ♗c2 ♘b4 ♣ K.Müller-Khalifman, Germany tt 1992) 15...b5 (Khalifman indicated that 15...♖fc8 is actually superior, and Golubev then assesses the position as equal) 16 ♘d5 ♖xd2+ 17 ♖xd2 and now rather than 17...♗xd5?!, as played in Aseev-Khalifman, Erfurt 1991, Black should simply play 17...♖b7 with full equality according to Rogozenko.

13...b5 (D)



14 ♘d5

It has long been known that 14 h5 b4! is very good for Black; e.g., 15 ♘d5 (15 ♘e2 ♖a4 ♣; 15 ♘b1 ♖fc8 16 hxg6 fxg6 {16...hxg6!}) 17 g5 ♘h5 18 ♗xg7 ♗xg7 19 f4 ♗b3 20 ♗d3 ♖a4 21 ♖xh5 gxh5 22 ♖h1 was Popescu-Dumitrache, Creon 2000, and now Rogozenko points out that Black can win immediately with 22...♖xc2+! 23 ♗xc2 ♖c8 +-) 15...♗xd5 16 exd5 ♖xd5 17 axb4 ♖a2 18 c3 ♖fc8 19 hxg6 (19 h6 ♖xb4! +- Basoren-Erdogan, Turkey 1993) 19...hxg6 20 b5 e5 21 ♗f2 e4 22 ♗d4 (22 g5 ♘d5 23 ♖xd5 ♖a1+ 24 ♗c2 ♖xc3+ +-) 22...♘d5 23 c4 e3 24 ♖h2 ♖xc4+ 25 ♗xc4 ♖xc4+ 26 ♖c2 ♖c8 27 ♖h2 ♗xd4 28 ♖e2 ♘f4 0-1 Tonning-Reschke, Groningen 1995.

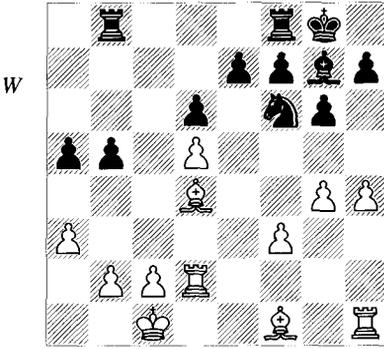
14...♖xd2+ 15 ♖xd2 ♗xd5!

The manoeuvrability of the f6-knight in the ensuing endgame makes it preferable for Black to part with his light-squared bishop.

16 exd5 a5 (D)

17 ♗b1!?

White repositions his king and waits for Black to commit himself to a plan. This strategy doesn't challenge Black in the least, but other



moves also give Black a very comfortable game. For example, 17 ♙h3 $\text{♜d7}!$? is fine for Black and 17 ♙e2 ♜d7 18 ♙xg7 (18 ♞e1 ♞fc8 19 b3 b4 20 ♙xg7 ♜xg7 was no problem for Black in Dolmatov-W.Watson, Sochi 1988) 18... ♜xg7

19 ♞e1 ♞fc8 20 ♙f1 ♜c5 21 ♚b1 ♞c7 22 b3 b4 23 a4 h6 24 ♜b2 g5 25 hxg5 hxg5 26 ♞e3 ♞h8 gave Black an excellent endgame in Dolmatov-Alterman, Burgas 1995. Although these endgames are inevitably quiet for the most part, Black does retain chances to enliven the position if White is even a little careless, as the following example illustrates: 17 $\text{c3}!$?! ♞fc8 18 b4 axb4 19 axb4 $\text{e5}!$ 20 dxe6 fxe6 21 ♚b2 e5 22 ♙f2 $\text{e4}!$ 23 ♙g2 ♜xg4 24 fxg4 ♙xc3+ 25 ♚c1 ♞a8 → Borriß-W.Watson, Bundesliga 1996/7.

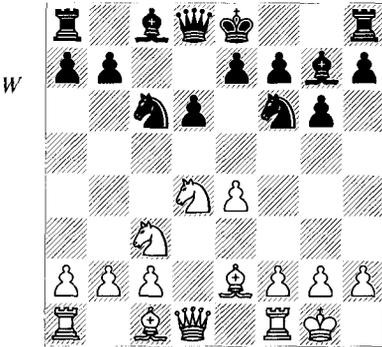
17... ♜d7 18 ♙xg7 ♜xg7 19 f4 h6 20 ♞h3 b4 21 a4 $\text{g5}!$ 22 hxg5 hxg5 23 ♙b5 ♜f6 24 fxg5 ♜xg4 25 c3 bxc3 26 ♞xc3 ♞b7 27 ♞dc2 ♜g6 28 ♞c7 ♞fb8 29 ♙a6 ♞xc7 30 ♞xc7 ♞b4 31 ♞c4 ♞b6 32 ♞c6 ♞b4 33 ♞c4

$\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ Timman-Nunn, Utrecht theme 1986.

18 The Classical Dragon

Part 1: The Classical Classical

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 g6 6 ♗e2 ♗g7 7 0-0 ♘c6 (D)



This position probably represents the typical starting point of the Classical Variation. I say 'probably' because the Classical is quite flexible in nature. There are several different types of Classical middlegame, each of which can often be reached via a number of move-orders. In terms of classification, I believe the best approach is to define the middlegames by reference to how White develops his c1-bishop. The most common way to develop the bishop is with 8 ♗e3, fortifying the d4-knight and preparing, for example, 9 ♖d2 and 10 ♙ad1. Having developed the bishop to e3 White then has to decide whether to stabilize the central tension by retreating the d4-knight (usually to b3), or simply to continue development and risk Black taking counter-measures in the centre (with, for example, a ...d5 pawn-break). Alternatively, if White decides not to play 8 ♗e3, then he must choose between leaving the bishop on c1 for the time being, or developing it to g5, thereby acquiring additional pressure on the h4-d8 diagonal. In either case, if the dark-squared bishop does not come to e3, then White

should usually retreat the d4-knight to b3, thereby avoiding tricks such as ...♘xe4, exposing the d4-knight to a double attack from the g7-bishop and the c6-knight. Before moving on to look at the theory of the Classical variation, I would like to bring the reader's attention to the fact that, in this latter part of the book (i.e. Chapters 18-21) I will be changing my approach slightly. In the earlier chapters I tried to be as thorough as possible with the lines I presented. The dangerous and often forcing nature of the Yugoslav Attack is such that I felt it necessary to try to include White's minor alternatives wherever possible. However, with the Classical, the 6 ♗c4 lines, the Levenfish and the 6 g3 variations, very often the play is not forcing in the early stages of the game, leaving both sides with a great deal of scope to define how they wish to approach the forthcoming middlegame. A consequence of this flexibility is that the positional plans and ideas are of far greater import than any particular forcing variations. In light of this observation, I am going to try to focus less on 'theory' and more on including games (or segments of games) that illustrate key themes or motifs within their respective variations.

A: 8 ♗e3 209

B: 8 ♘b3 218

A)

8 ♗e3 0-0 (D)

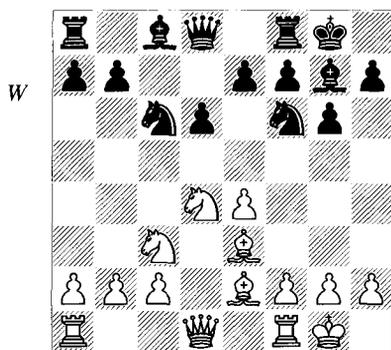
White now has two main approaches to the position: retreating the d4-knight or continuing development.

A1: 9 ♘b3 211

A2: 9 ♖d2 216

In addition to the main lines, Black should also be aware of three minor alternatives.

a) 9 ♘h1 is best met by 9...d5!. In general, if Black can achieve this pawn-break in the



opening without enduring any particular hardship, he should usually take the opportunity to do so. Very often the resulting positions will give Black full equality. Now:

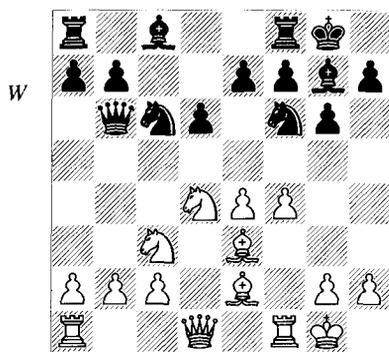
a1) 10 exd5 ♖xd5 (also of interest is the idea 10...♗b4!? 11 ♙c4 {11 ♗d2 ♗bxd5 12 ♖xd5 ♖xd5 13 ♙h6 =} 11...♗bxd5 12 ♖xd5 ♖xd5 13 ♙xd5 ♗xd5 14 c3 ♙d7 15 ♗f3 ♗xf3 16 ♖xf3, when the bishop-pair ensures Black a very comfortable endgame, Mandarin-Inkirov, Cannes 1992) 11 ♖xd5 ♗xd5 12 ♙f3 ♗a5 13 ♖xc6 bxc6 14 c3 (14 ♙xc6 ♗b8 ♢ is a typical theme in these variations: Black loses his weak c6-pawn, but gains time and activity on the queenside; in this particular variation White will not be able to hold on to his extra pawn for long) 14...♗b8 15 b4?! (15 ♗c1 is probably better, but Black still has some pressure) 15...♗a3 16 ♙xc6 ♙a6 17 b5 ♙xb5 18 ♙xb5 ♗xb5 19 ♗d7, Barreno-Husari, Novi Sad OL 1990. Objectively the position is probably equal, but if I were playing Black I would certainly fancy my chances of pressing for the full point, and indeed Black did go on to win this game.

a2) 10 ♖xc6 bxc6 11 e5 ♖e4! 12 ♖xe4 (12 ♖xc3 13 bxc3 ♗a5 ♢ Khalifman) 12...dxe4 13 ♗xd8 (13 ♙d4 ♗c7 leaves the e5-pawn in trouble) 13...♗xd8 14 ♗fd1 ♙e6 15 ♙d4 f5! 16 a4?! (16 exf6 ♙xf6 17 ♙xf6 exf6 =) 16...♗f7 17 a5 ♗xd4!! 18 ♗xd4 ♗b8! 19 f4?! exf3 20 ♙xf3 ♙xe5 ♢ Adams-Khalifman, Las Palmas 1993. Black has tremendous compensation for the exchange and went on to win.

b) 9 h3 is similar to 9 ♖h1, and should also be met by the thematic 9...d5! 10 exd5 (10 ♖xc6 bxc6 11 e5 is of course possible, and similar to Adams-Khalifman above) 10...♖xd5 (10...♗b4!? is also possible) 11 ♖xd5 ♖xd4!? (11...♗xd5 is also possible of course, and is

similar in nature to the lines examined in relation to 9 ♖h1 above; e.g., 12 ♙f3 ♗a5 13 ♖xc6 bxc6 and now White should probably play 14 c3 as 14 ♙xc6 ♗b8 is good for Black) 12 ♙xd4 (12 ♙c4 ♖f5!) 12...♗xd5 13 ♙xg7 ♗xd1 14 ♗axd1 ♖xg7 15 ♙f3 ♙e6 16 ♙d5 ♙xd5 17 ♗xd5 ♗fd8 18 ♗fd1 ♗xd5 19 ♗xd5 ♖f6 20 c4 ♗c8 21 b3 ♖e6 eventually led to a draw in L.Vajda-Paschall, Budapest 2004.

c) 9 f4 is a different matter entirely. Now 9...d5 is met by 10 ♖xc6 bxc6 11 e5, but Black has a strong reply in 9...♗b6! (D), which simultaneously attacks b2 and threatens 10...♖xe4 and 11...♖xd4. Then:



c1) 10 ♖f5? ♗xb2 11 ♖a4 ♗a3 12 c3 ♖xe4 13 ♙c1 ♖xc3 14 ♙xa3 ♖xd1 15 ♖xg7 ♖e3 +-.

c2) 10 b3? ♖xe4 11 ♖xe4 ♙xd4 12 ♙xd4 ♗xd4+ 13 ♗xd4 ♖xd4 ♢ Korluss-Herrmann, Sebnitz 1998.

c3) 10 ♖h1 ♖xe4 11 ♖xc6 ♗xc6 12 ♖d5 and now rather than 12...♗d7?! (Romanishin-Sosonko, Tilburg 1979), Karpov pointed out 12...♗e8 13 ♙f3 f5 ♢.

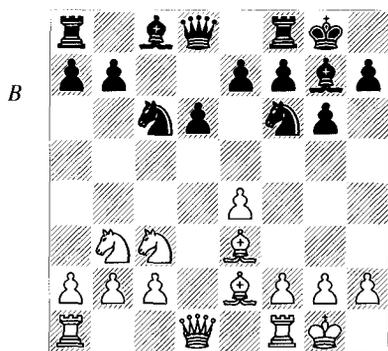
c4) 10 e5 dxe5 11 fxe5 ♖xe5 12 ♖f5 ♗xb2! 13 ♖xe7+ (13 ♖xg7? ♗xc3 leaves the g7-knight trapped) 13...♖h8 14 ♙d4 ♗b4! 15 ♙xe5 (15 ♖xc8 ♗d8! 16 ♖b5 ♗xc8 ♢ Ward) 15...♗xe7 16 ♗d4 ♖h5 ♢ L.Hansen-Aagaard, Tåstrup 1999.

c5) 10 ♗d3 ♖g4! 11 ♖d5 (11 ♙xg4 ♙xd4 12 ♙xd4 ♗xd4+ 13 ♗xd4 ♖xd4 14 ♙xc8 ♗fxc8 15 ♗f2 gives rise to an equal ending, although I have actually won this ending twice in long-play games) 11...♙xd4 12 ♙xg4 (12 ♖xb6?! ♙xe3+ 13 ♖h1 ♙xb6 14 ♙xg4 ♙xg4 ♢ Bosch-Landau, Amsterdam 1939; Black has three pieces in return for the queen and thus a

clear advantage) 12...♙xe3+ 13 ♖xe3 ♗xe3+ (Schneider suggests that 13...♗xb2!? may be even stronger) 14 ♜xe3 ♙xg4 15 ♜xg4 gave rise to an equal ending in a number of games. Grosar-Ward, Berne 1992 continued 15...♞ac8 16 ♜e3 f6 17 ♞ad1 ♜a5 18 ♞f2 ♙f7 19 e5 dxe5 20 fxe5 ♞fd8 21 ♞df1 f5 with full equality.

A1)

9 ♜b3 (D)



Now:

- A11: 9...a6!? 211
- A12: 9...♙e6 213

A11)

9...a6!?

When I was 15, I became very interested in plans involving an early ...a6 in the Classical Dragon. Part of this was curiosity (before I took up the Dragon my background in the Sicilian Defence had largely involved playing Najdorf and Scheveningen systems, where ...a6 is often integral to Black's middlegame strategy), but part of it came from my experiences in a line of the Classical where White delays castling kingside. That system runs 1 e4 c5 2 ♜f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♜xd4 ♜f6 5 ♜c3 g6 6 ♙e2 ♙g7 7 ♙e3 ♜c6 8 ♜b3 0-0 9 f4, and is dealt with in the second half of this chapter, 'Modern Interpretations of the Classical Variation'. The point I wish to make here is that I disliked playing 9...♙e6 10 g4 (the Rabinovich Attack) as Black, but really liked the lines after 9...a6 10 g4 b5. However, the problem with playing this way is that White doesn't have to commit himself to 10 g4, but can simply play 10 0-0 and then suddenly we

are back in the main-line Classical where Black has played 9...a6. Interestingly, Ward also recommends the 9...a6, 10...b5 approach against the Rabinovich Attack, but doesn't consider what Black should do if White simply switches plans and castles kingside at move 10.

10 f4

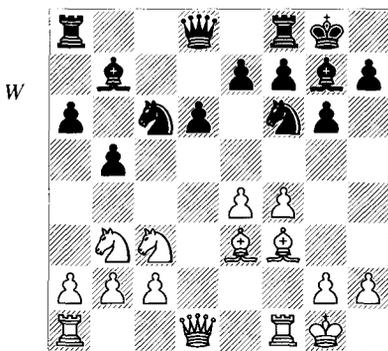
10 a4 ♙e6 gives Black an improved version of the main line as the inclusion of a4 and ...a6 favours Black, weakening the b4-square and creating the option of 11...♙xb3 12 cxb3, fracturing White's queenside pawn-structure.

10...b5 11 ♙f3

11 e5?! dxe5 12 ♙f3 ♖c7 13 fxe5 ♗xe5 14 ♙d4 ♜xd4 15 ♗xd4 ♗xd4+ 16 ♜xd4 ♞a7 17 a4 bxa4 18 ♞xa4 ♞c7 ♠ Kupreichik-Buscher, Germany tt 1991/2.

11...♙b7 (D)

Schneider prefers 11...♙d7 but I have always focused on the text-move.



W

Now:

- a) 12 e5 dxe5 and here:
 - a1) 13 ♜c5 exf4 14 ♜xb7 ♖c7 15 ♙xf4 ♗xb7 16 ♗e1 (16 ♗e2 ♞a8 {the immediate 16...b4!? followed by 17...♜d4 looks more forcing}) 17 a4?! b4 18 ♜d5 ♜d4! 19 ♜xf6+ ♙xf6 20 ♖c4 ♜xf3+ 21 ♞xf3 ♙xb2 ♠ Spielmann-O.Bernstein, St Petersburg 1909) 16...♞ad8 17 ♙h1 ♖c8 (17...b4!?) 18 ♙xc6 ♖xc6 19 ♗xe7 ♞fe8 20 ♖c7 ♗xc7 21 ♙xc7 ♞d2 22 ♞ac1 ♜e4 is much better for Black, Yakovich-Savchenko, Rostov 1993.
 - a2) 13 fxe5! looks stronger; e.g., 13...♜d7 14 e6 fxe6 15 ♙g4 ♜c5 (15...b4!? 16 ♙xe6+ ♙h8 17 ♜a4 ♞xf1+ 18 ♗xf1 ♖c7 19 ♙xd7 ♗xd7 20 ♜ac5) 16 ♙xe6+ ♙h8 17 ♖e2 and now rather than 17...b4 (Petrushin-Alterman, Rostov 1993), which seems a little loosening,

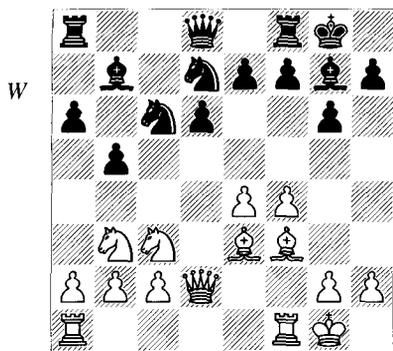
Black should play the solid 17...♖c7, with an unclear position.

b) 12 a3 ♖d7 13 ♖e1 ♗b6 14 ♖d1 (14 ♖e2 ♗c4 15 ♖xc4 bxc4 16 ♗d2 ♗d4 gives Black a slight advantage, Najera de Miguel-Lopez Colon, Las Palmas 1996) 14...♗c4 15 ♖c1 ♖b6+ 16 ♖h1 (Eretova-Sinka, Halle 1975) 16...e6 ♞ leaves Black definitely better.

c) 12 ♖e2 ♗d7 13 ♖ad1 b4 14 ♗a4 and now 14...♖c7 gives Black a solid position. Before moving on, I would just like to mention that Fritz absolutely loves 14...g5!?, the idea being 15 fxg5 ♗ce5, when the e5-knight is a rock. Personally I would think long and hard before playing something like 14...g5, but it is a groovy idea, and it would certainly surprise your opponent!

d) 12 ♗d5 ♗d7 13 ♗d4 ♗xd4 14 ♖xd4 ♖xd4+ 15 ♖xd4 e5 16 fxe5 ♖xd5 17 ♖xd5 ♖b6+ 18 ♖h1 ♗xe5 19 ♖e2 ♖ac8 gave Black a good game in Pierrot-Wojtkiewicz, Buenos Aires 1998.

e) 12 ♖d2 ♗d7 (D) and now:



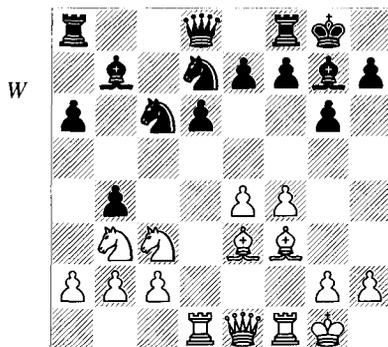
e1) 13 ♖ad1 ♗b6 intending 14...♗c4 looks fine for Black.

e2) 13 e5 and now 13...dxe5 14 ♖ad1 was good for White in Prasad-Mulla Jumma, Abu Dhabi 2002, but perhaps Black has an improvement in 13...♗b6; e.g., 14 exd6 ♗c4!

e3) 13 ♖f2 prevents 13...♗b6, but Black may have time to organize something else; e.g., 13...♗a5 (13...b4!?) 14 ♗xa5 ♖xa5 15 a3 ♖xc3 16 bxc3 ♖xc3 17 ♖d4 ♖c7 18 f5 ♗e5 19 h4 f6 ♞ W.Morrison-Wojtkiewicz, Washington DC 1999.

f) 12 ♖e1!? is a multi-purpose move: White frees the d1-square for the queen's rook, prepares e5, indirectly exerts pressure against the

a5-square, and also contemplates bringing the queen out to the kingside with 13 ♖h4. Black should play 12...♗d7 13 ♖d1 b4 (D) (after 13...♗b6?!, 14 ♗c5! is problematic for Black, and 14 e5!? may also be good too), and now:



f1) 14 ♗a4 ♖c7 15 c4 was perhaps a bit better for White in Sturua-Seres, Basle 2001, but Black's position remains solid.

f2) When I first analysed this position, I was more concerned about 14 ♗d5, making use of the queen's position on e1 to attack the b4-pawn. My analysis continued 14...a5 15 e5!? (necessary if White is to prove an edge; if White hesitates, Black will play 15...e6 or 15...♖xb2) 15...e6 (15...dxe5? 16 ♗b6+ -) 16 ♗f6+ ♗xf6, when White has a choice of two captures:

f21) 17 exf6 and then:

f211) 17...♖xf6!? 18 ♖d6 is possible, but I was worried about White playing something like 19 ♗c5 and 20 ♗d7, forking the queen and the f8-rook. However, looking at the position now, things don't seem so clear; e.g., 18...♖ac8 19 ♗c5 ♖a8 20 ♗d7 ♖xb2 (20...♖e7 21 ♖d2 ♖fd8 22 ♖d1 looks awkward for Black) 21 ♗xf8 ♖xf8 22 ♖d2 ♖xa2 23 ♖e2, when Black has a knight and two dangerous pawns for the exchange, but it is not clear whether the black queen will prove to be a strength or a weakness on a2. It is certainly a bit short of squares! Black should now consider 23...♖a4 (just moving the queen out of the line of fire) or 23...♗e7, with a view to exchanging light-squared bishops and planting the knight on d5 or f5.

f212) 17...♖xf6 18 ♗c5 ♖c7 (18...dxc5!? 19 ♖xd8 ♖fxd8 20 c3! looks good for White) 19 ♗xb7 ♖xb7 20 ♖xd6 ♖ac8 and White is possibly a bit better because of the bishop-pair, but has problems with his queenside pawns.

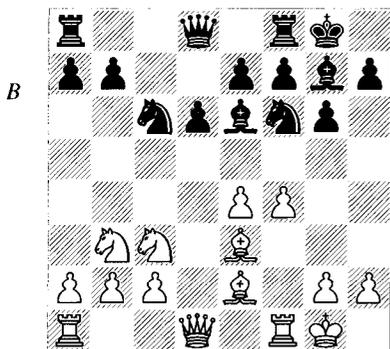
f22) 17 ♖xd6 ♜c8 18 exf6 ♗xf6 19 ♘c5 ♘d4 20 ♗xd4 (20 ♗xb7 ♜xc5 is good for Black; e.g., 21 ♜c6? ♜b5 ♚) 20...♗xd4+ 21 ♗xd4 ♜xc5 22 ♜e5 ♗d5! 23 ♗xd5 ♜ad8 24 ♘h1 ♜xd5 25 ♗xd5 and now 25...exd5 gives rise to an unclear position in which Black's isolated d5-pawn is more than compensated for by Black's active queen and the weakness of the c2-pawn. White must also be careful about his back rank. On the other hand, Black can also play more solidly with 25...♜xd5 26 ♜xd5 exd5 27 ♜d1 ♜c8 28 ♜d2 ♘g7 29 ♘g1 ♘f6, when a draw is the probable result.

Conclusions on 9...a6

This is definitely an interesting alternative to the main lines, and has the potential to yield Black a very attractive position indeed. Although there have not been many high-level encounters with 9...a6, I suspect that with accurate play White should probably be a bit better. In the main lines Black has full equality, so 9...a6 is best summarized as an interesting but ultimately inferior alternative.

A12)

9...♗e6 10 f4 (D)



10...♜c8!?

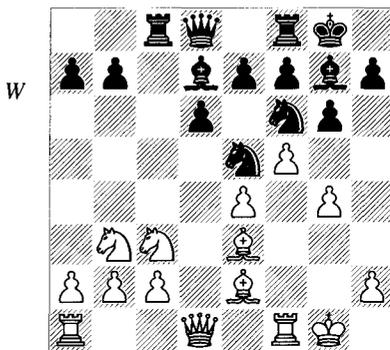
This rather modern interpretation of the Classical is fast becoming the absolute main line, with its popularity exploding during the 1990s, and continuing to grow throughout the 'noughties' (the 00s I suppose!). I believe that the popularity of this line owes much to GM Chris Ward's endorsement of it in *Winning With the Dragon*. That is certainly where I learnt of

it, and I have been playing it ever since. Before moving on, I would like to include a quick word on the alternatives. 10...♘a5 is the old main line of the Classical. It remains very popular, but I prefer the text. 10...♜c8 is another popular system. Black intends 11...♜d8 and either 12...♗g4 (to exchange light-squared bishops) or 12...d5, intending to meet 13 e5 by 13...♘e4, with decent counterplay. Although this system looks rather neat, I have never felt entirely comfortable on the black side, and therefore cannot recommend it.

11 ♘h1

Alternatives:

a) 11 f5 pushes the bishop back to d7, but essentially plays into Black's hands by ceding the e5-square and exposing the white kingside; for example, 11...♗d7 12 g4 (12 ♘h1 ♘e5 13 ♗d4 ♗c6 14 ♘d2 ♜a5 15 a3 ♜fd8 16 ♜e1 ♜c7 17 ♜g3 b6 18 ♜ae1 ♜b7 19 ♜h4 b5 20 b4 a6 gave Black good play in Kamber-Znamenacek, Prague 1991) 12...♘e5 (D) and now:



a1) 13 ♘d2 ♜xc3! 14 bxc3 ♗c6 and then:

a11) 15 ♗d4 ♘xe4 16 ♘xe4 ♗xe4 17 ♜e1 (17 ♗d3 ♗d5 18 g5 gxf5 19 ♗xf5 e6 20 ♗e3 ♘c4 21 ♗f4 ♜b6+ 22 ♜f2 ♘e3 0-1 Kotsur-A.Sokolov, Novgorod 1998) 17...♜c7 18 ♜f2 b6 19 a4 ♗a8 20 ♜fb1 ♜c6 ♚ Ortiz Aleman-Gallego Jimenez, Madrid 1994.

a12) 15 ♗xa7 ♘xe4 16 ♘xe4 ♗xe4 gives Black sufficient compensation according to Bönsch, in *ChessBase Magazine 50*.

a13) 15 ♗f3 ♘xf3+ (15...d5!? has also scored very well for Black in practice) 16 ♜xf3 d5! ♚ 17 ♗d4 (17 e5 d4 18 ♜g3 dxe3 19 exf6 ♜d5 20 ♘f3 ♗xf6 ♚) 17...dxe4 18 ♜h3 ♘g4! 19 ♗xg7 (19 ♜xg4 ♗xd4+ 20 cxd4 ♜xd4+ 21 ♘g2 e3+ --) 19...♘g7 20 ♘xe4? (20 ♘b3

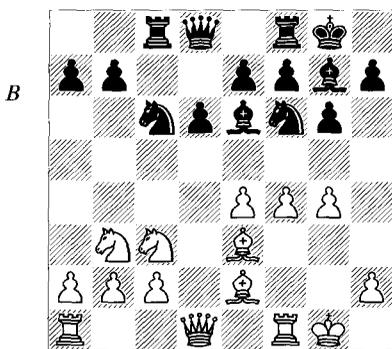
♖e5 ♣) 20... ♖b6+ 21 ♗f2 gxf5 0-1 Daniliuk-Malakhov, Elista 1995.

a2) 13 ♖xa7 ♜xc3 14 bxc3 and at this point 14... ♗xe4 gives Black good compensation according to Bönsch, but Black could also consider 14... b6 15 ♖d4 ♗c6 16 ♖xb6 ♖a8, as in Luukkonen-Molander, Jyväskylä 1998, when Black will pick up the a7-bishop with a clear advantage.

a3) 13 ♖d4 ♖c6 14 ♖xe5 dxe5 15 ♖xd8 ♜fxd8 16 ♖f3 ♖h6 17 ♜ad1 ♖e3+ was already better for Black in Lagerborg-Åkesson, Sweden 1999.

a4) 13 g5? ♜xc3! (of course!) 14 bxc3 (14 gxf6 ♜xe3 15 fxg7 ♗xg7 16 ♖d3 ♖b6 17 ♗g2 ♖c6 wins for Black, de la Torre-Logel, Vichy 2000) 14... ♗xe4 15 fxg6 hxg6 16 ♖e1 (16 c4 ♖c7!? {16... ♗c3 17 ♖d2 ♗xe2+ 18 ♖xe2 ♖g4 19 ♖g2 ♗xc4 ♣ Bromann-Lehtinen, Tjele 1998} 17 ♗d4 ♗c3 18 ♖e1 ♗xe2+ 19 ♖xe2 ♗xc4 ♣ Carlier-Soos, Lugano 1987) 16... ♗xc3 17 ♖d4 ♗xe2+ 18 ♖xe2 ♖c8 19 ♜f4 ♖c6 ♣ 20 ♖f1? (20 ♜af1 ♖e6 21 ♗f2 ♖d5 ♣ Arnold-Fehling, Endingen 1987) 20... ♗f3+ 21 ♗f2 ♗xd4 22 ♗xd4 ♖d5 23 ♖b5 ♖xd4+ 24 ♜xd4 ♖f5+ 0-1 Fuglsang-Petursson, Copenhagen 1997.

b) 11 g4 (D) and then:



b1) 11... a6!? 12 f5 (12 ♖f3 ♗a5 is similar to 11... ♗a5) 12... ♖xb3 13 axb3 ♗e5 14 g5 ♜xc3!? 15 bxc3 ♗xe4 16 ♖d4 ♗xg5 (16... gxf5!? 17 ♜xf5?! e6 ♣) 17 ♖d3 gxf5 18 ♖xf5 e6 gave Black good compensation in Flaisigova-Slepankova, Klatovy 1999.

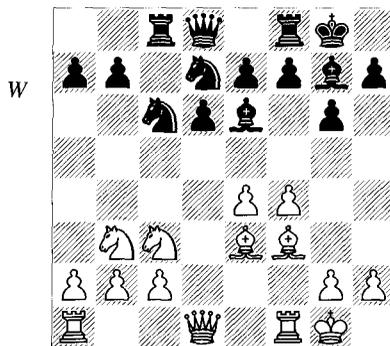
b2) 11... ♗a5 and now:

b21) 12 g5 ♜xc3 13 gxf6 (13 bxc3 ♗xe4 ♣) 13... ♜xe3 14 fxg7 ♜e8 15 ♖b5 ♗xb3 16 axb3 ♖b6 → Rivero-Zuckerfeld, Buenos Aires 1988.

b22) 12 f5 ♖c4 13 ♖d4 (13 ♗xa5 ♖xa5 14 g5 ♗d7 15 ♖xc4 ♜xc4 should be fine for Black; e.g., 16 ♗d5?! ♜xe4 ♣; 13 e5!? dxe5 14 ♖xd8 ♜fxd8 15 ♗xa5 ♖xe2 16 ♗xe2 ♜xc2 gives Black compensation according to Golubev) 13... ♖xe2 14 ♖xe2 ♗c6 15 ♖e3 ♗d7 gave Black a solid position in Simon-Varga, Győr 1991.

b23) 12 ♖d4 ♗c4 13 g5 ♗e8 14 ♖xg7 ♗xg7 left White with problems with the b2-pawn in Fabry-Gažik, Priedvidza 1978.

c) 11 ♖f3 ♗d7!? (D) (I am rather fond of this move, but 11... ♗a5 is the traditional approach, and has scored well for Black; 11... ♖c4 is also possible, and seems to be a favourite of English GMs Ward and Mestel). White has now tried a whole host of moves, so what follows is essentially a smattering of the more sensible examples:



c1) 12 ♖e1 ♗b6 13 ♜d1 ♗c4 14 ♖c1 ♗b4 (14... b5 15 ♗h1?! b4 16 ♗d5 ♗xb2 ♣ Baron Rodriguez-de la Villa, Mondariz 1997) 15 f5 ♖d7 16 ♖h4 ♖f6 17 ♖g3 ♖b6+ 18 ♗h1 ♗e3 19 ♖xe3 ♖xe3 20 ♜fe1 ♖h6 21 ♜e2 ♖e5 ♣ Babula-Veselovsky, Czech Republic 1996.

c2) 12 ♗d5?! ♖xb2 13 ♜b1 ♖g7 14 ♗d4 ♗xd4 15 ♖xd4 ♖xd4+ 16 ♖xd4 ♖xd5 17 exd5 ♗b6 ♣ Simandi-Veselovsky, Klatovy 1995.

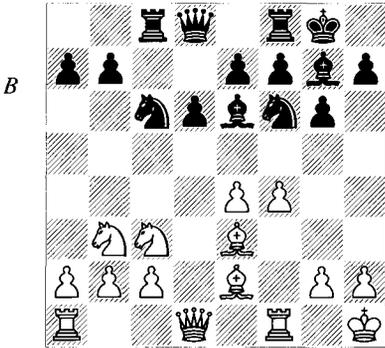
c3) 12 ♜b1 ♗b6 13 ♗d5 ♗c4 14 ♖c1 b5 15 c3 a5 (Schulz suggests 15... f5!?) 16 a3 (Unzicker-Alterman, Bad Homburg 1996), and now Schulz recommends 16... a4 17 ♗d4?! ♖xd5 18 exd5 ♗xd4 19 cxd4 ♖b6 ♣.

c4) 12 ♗d4?! ♖b6 13 ♗a4? ♖xd4 14 ♗xb6 ♖xe3+ 15 ♗h1 ♗xb6 ♣ Palmo-Lahtinen, Jyväskylä 1999.

c5) 12 ♗h1 ♗b6 13 ♖e2 ♗c4 14 ♖xc4 ♖xc4 15 ♜f2 f5!? 16 exf5 ♜xf5 17 ♗d4 ♗xd4

18 ♖xd4 ♜f8 19 ♖xg7 ♜xg7 20 ♜d2 ♜cf8 gave Black good play in Saren-Lahtinen, Finland 1989.

We now return to 11 ♖h1 (D):



11...a6

11...♖a5 is equally popular. A few lines:

a) 12 ♖xa7 ♖c4 13 ♖xc4 ♖xc4 14 ♜e1 b6 15 e5 ♖d7 16 exd6 exd6 17 ♜xd6 ♜a8 ♢ Dončević-Fleck, Bundesliga 1984/5.

b) 12 ♖f3 ♖c4 13 ♖c1 ♜b6 14 ♜e1 ♜fe8 = Lanc-Kolesar, Slovakian Cht 1994.

c) 12 e5 ♖e8 13 exd6 (13 ♖xa7!? deserves attention according to Golubev) 13...♖xd6 14 ♖d4 ♖ac4 15 ♖xg7 ♖xg7 16 ♖c5 was Cornette-S.Buckley, Oropesa del Mar U-14 Wch 1999, and now 16...♖xb2 17 ♜d4+ ♖g8 18 ♖xe6 fxe6 is very messy, but Black does have an extra pawn for the time being.

d) 12 ♖xa5 ♜xa5 13 ♖d4 (13 ♜d2?! ♜xc3 14 ♜xc3 ♜xc3 15 bxc3 ♖xe4 16 ♖d4 ♖xc3 17 ♖xg7 ♖xg7 ♢ Jokšić-Rajlich, Yugoslavia 2001) 13...♖c4 14 a3 e5 15 fxe5 (15 ♖e3 exf4 16 ♖xf4 ♖xe2 17 ♜xe2 d5 =) 15...dxe5 16 ♖f2 ♖e6 17 ♖d3 ♖h5 18 ♜e1 1/2-1/2 Svidler-Kramnik, Belgrade 1999.

e) 12 f5 and now:

e1) 12...♖c4!? 13 ♖d3 (13 ♖xa7!?) 13...a6 14 ♖a4 (14 ♜e1 ♖xd3 15 cxd3 ♖xb3 16 axb3 d5! = Kindermann-Cebalo, Munich 1989; 14 ♜e2 ♖xd3 15 cxd3 ♖xb3 16 axb3 d5 17 ♖g5 d4 18 ♖b1 ♖d7 ♢ B.Thipsay-Greet, British Ch (Scarborough) 1999) 14...♖d7 15 ♜d2 ♖xd3 16 cxd3 ♖xb3 17 axb3 d5! = was the (by now!) familiar course of Reuther-Ristić, Dortmund 1988.

e2) 12...♖c4 is also possible, but may be weaker; e.g., 13 ♖d4 ♖d7 14 ♖xc4 (14 ♖d2 ♖xb2 15 ♜b1 ♖a4 16 ♖xa4 ♖xa4 17 ♜xb7

♜xc2 ♢ Sax-Velimirović, Banja Luka 1981) 14...♜xc4 15 ♜d3 ♜c8 16 ♖xa7!? (16 a4 a6 17 a5 ♖c6 18 ♖b6 ♜e8 19 ♖d4 ♖d7 20 ♖xc6 ♜xc6 21 ♖d4 ♖e5 22 ♜e2 ♜d8 23 ♖d5 e6 24 f6 ± Luther-Leko, Munich 1992) 16...b6 17 ♜a6 (17 ♜e3? ♜c6 18 ♖d4 ♜c5) 17...b5! gave Black compensation for the pawn in Thipsay-W.Watson, Kuala Lumpur 1992 according to Thipsay (*Informator 54*), although whether it is sufficient is open to debate.

12 ♖f3

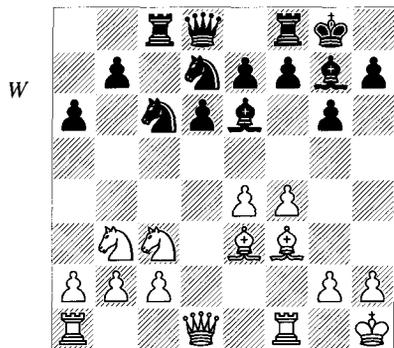
Or:

a) 12 f5 ♖d7 13 g4? ♖e5 14 g5 ♜xc3 15 bxc3 ♖xe4 → was the same old story in Kupreichik-Ruban, Nørresundby 1992, although obviously White can forego 13 g4? in favour of something less suicidal.

b) 12 a4 ♖a5 13 ♖xa5 (13 f5 is best met by 13...♖c4, while 13 ♖d4 ♖xb3!? 14 cxb3 e6 15 f5 ♖c6 16 fxe6 fxe6 17 ♖e3 ♜e7 18 ♜d2 ♖e5 19 ♜ad1 ♖e8 20 ♖g5 ♜xf1+ 21 ♜xf1 ♖f6 22 ♖f4 ♖f7 23 ♖c4 ♖e5 24 ♖e3 ♖f6 gave Black a reasonable position in Thipsay-Ward, British Ch (Torquay) 1998, although I am sure there are more ‘mainstream’ ways for Black to handle the position) 13...♜xa5 14 ♖d4 ♜b4 15 f5 ♖c4 16 ♖d3 e5 17 fxe6 fxe6 18 a5 ♖xd3 19 ♜xd3 ♖g4 20 ♖e2 ♖xd4 21 ♜xd4 ♜xd4 22 ♖xd4 e5 is much better for Black, Westerinen-Yrjölä, Finland 1993.

12...♖d7!? (D)

This move is my own preference here, but 12...♖a5 is also possible, as is 12...♖c4 13 ♜f2 b5 14 ♜d2 ♜c7 15 ♜g1 ♖d7 16 ♜ad1 ♜fd8 17 ♖g4!? (17 ♖d5 ♖xd5 18 exd5 ♖a5 would be more normal, with a roughly equal position) 17...♖e6 18 ♖d5 ♜b8 19 ♖xe6 fxe6 20 ♖b6 ♖xb6 21 ♖xb6 ♜f8 ♢ Ofstad-Gausel, Gausdal 1995.

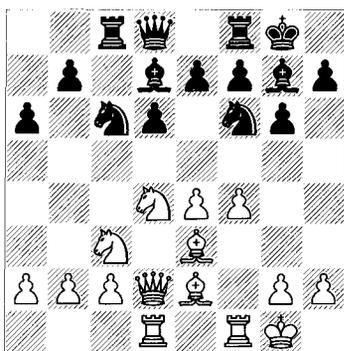


1905) 17...♞fd8 18 e5 ♖e8 19 ♙xc6 ♗xd6! 20 ♞b3?! ♞a6 ♢ Fegebank-Uhmeier, Bargteheide 1988.

b2) 13 fxe5 dxe5 14 ♙e3 ♞xd2 15 ♙xd2 ♞fd8 (15...♗d7 16 ♙e3 ♞fd8 17 ♞fd1 ♙f8 18 ♗d5 ♙c5 19 ♖f2 ♖f8 20 ♞d2 ♙xd5 21 ♞xd5 ♙xe3+ 22 ♖xe3 ♗b6 23 ♞xd8+ ♞xd8 ♢ Mariotti-Velimirović, Ljubljana 1975) 16 ♞ad1?! (16 ♙e3 ♙f8 17 ♞ad1 looks better) 16...♞d4! 17 ♙g5 (17 ♙e3 ♞c4! {17...♞b4 18 b3 ±} 18 ♙e2 ♞b4 ♢ Gulko) 17...h6 18 ♙xf6 ♙xf6 19 ♞xd4 exd4 20 ♗d5 ♙g5 21 ♞d1 ♞c8! gives Black a slight advantage, Illescas-Gulko, Leon 1992.

10...♞c8 11 f4 a6 (D)

This is the traditional interpretation of this variation, but Golubev advocated a different approach: 11...♗g4!? 12 ♗xc6 (12 ♙xg4 ♙xg4 13 ♞de1 ♙d7 is OK for Black, Gunsberg-Von Gottschall, Frankfurt 1887) 12...bxc6 13 ♙d4? (Golubev suggested that 13 ♙xg4 ♙xg4 is White's best continuation; he also gives 13 ♙xa7?' c5 14 ♗d5 ♙d4+ 15 ♖h1, but his 15...e6 looks odd due to 16 ♙b6; perhaps he meant 15...♗xh2 e6) 13...e5 (the alternative 13...♙xd4+ 14 ♞xd4 ♞b6 also looks fine for Black) 14 ♙xa7 (14 fxe5 c5!) 14...♞a5 15 ♙f2 ♗xf2 16 ♞xf2 exf4 17 ♞xd6 ♙e6 18 ♞xf4 ♞b8 19 ♞c1 ♞b4 ♢ Sizykh-Golubev, Alushta 1997. Obviously more tests are needed before a definite conclusion can be reached.



12 ♖h1

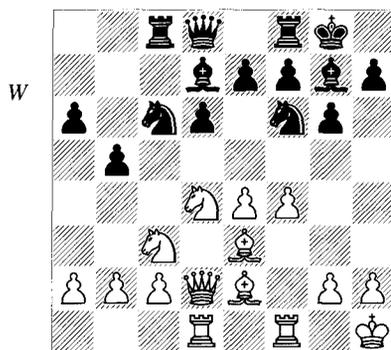
Or:

a) 12 ♗xc6 ♙xc6 13 ♙f3 ♞c7 14 ♞f2 (14 ♙d4 e6 15 ♞f2 b5 16 e5 dxe5 17 ♙xe5 ♞b7 is equal, Wittmann-Sax, Lucerne OL 1982) 14...b5 15 ♗d5 (15 a3 a5 16 ♗d5 is also possible) 15...♙xd5 (15...♗xd5 16 exd5 led to a quick

draw in Khalifman-Kupreichik, Sverdlovsk 1987) 16 exd5 ♗d7 17 c3 ♗b6 18 ♙e2 ♗c4 19 ♙xc4 ♞xc4 20 a3 f5!? 21 ♙b6!? ♞fe8 22 ♞e3? (22 ♞e2 looks better) 22...e5! 23 dxe6 (23 fxe5 ♞xe5 24 ♞d2 ♞ce8 ♢ Rogozenko) 23...♞xe6 24 ♞d3 d5 25 ♙d4? (an unfortunate blunder, but White is worse in any case; for example, 25 ♞xc4 dxc4 26 ♙d4 ♞d8 ♢) 25...♞e1+! 26 ♞f1 ♙xd4+ 27 cxd4 ♞xd3 28 ♞xd3 ♞e2 +- Dolezal-A.Hoffman, Buenos Aires 1998.

b) 12 h3 b5 13 a3 ♞c7 14 ♗b3 ♙e6 15 f5!? ♙xb3 16 cxb3 ♗e5 17 g4!? ♞c6 18 ♞d4 ♗fd7! 19 ♗d5 ♞fe8 gives Black equality according to Schneider.

12...b5 (D)



13 a3!?

13 ♙f3 ♞c7 14 ♗b3 b4 15 ♗d5 ♗xd5 16 exd5 ♗a5 is already slightly better for Black according to Rogozenko. Geller-Serper, Moscow 1995 continued 17 ♙d4 ♗c4 18 ♞xb4 ♙xd4 19 ♗xd4?! (19 ♞xd4 is better, although Black still seems to have some pressure) 19...♗e3 20 ♞d2 ♗xf1 21 ♞xf1 ♞c4 22 ♞e1 ♞xa2 +-.

13...♞c7

13...♗a5!? 14 f5 ♗c4 15 ♙xc4 ♞xc4 16 b3 was Hammar-L.Karlsson, Uppsala 1985, and now rather than 16...♞c5, which may allow 17 ♗e6, Black should play 16...♞c8 with an unclear position according to Feletar.

14 ♗b3

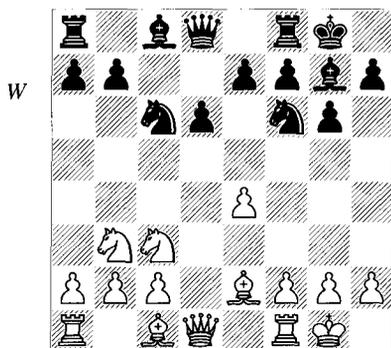
14 ♞e1 ♗a5! 15 ♞g3 (15 e5 dxe5 16 fxe5 ♞xe5 17 ♙f4 ♞c5 ♢) 15...♗c4 16 ♙xc4 ♞xc4 ∞ is a line given by Feletar. He also points out that 17 e5?! dxe5 18 fxe5 ♗g4 19 ♙f4 g5! 20 e6!? ♙xe6 21 ♗xe6 fxe6 22 ♞xg4 ♞xf4 23 ♞xf4 gxf4 is good for Black.

14...♞b8 15 ♙f3 ♙g4 16 ♙xg4 ♗xg4 17 ♙g1

Khalifman-Sadler, London 1991. White is a bit better according to Golubev, although the game eventually ended peacefully.

B)

8 ♖b3 0-0 (D)



Now:

| | | |
|------------|-------|-----|
| B1: | 9 ♖h1 | 218 |
| B2: | 9 ♖e1 | 219 |
| B3: | 9 ♖g5 | 221 |

Note that the immediate 9 f4?! is inaccurate as it allows Black to play 9...b5! without any further preparation, since 10 ♖xb5 ♗b6+ 11 ♖h1 ♘xe4 is good for Black.

B1)

9 ♖h1 a6

9...♖e6 is the traditional approach. From a theoretical perspective, Black is fine, but I feel more comfortable playing the 9...a6 lines. I was originally put off 9...♖e6 by the following points in particular: 10 f4 (10 ♖g5 actually transposes to a line of the 9 ♖g5 Classical that is thought to be fine for Black, but there is a consistency problem in that I am recommending 9 ♖g5 a6 rather than 9...♖e6) 10...♖c8 (10...♖c8 is also thought to be OK for Black, but again simply 11 ♖e3 gets us into another line of the Classical that is outside the scope of our repertoire) 11 f5 ♖d7 12 g4 (12 ♖g5!? is also interesting for White) and now 12...♘e5 13 g5 looks decidedly awkward for Black, and I don't entirely trust Golubev's recommendation of 12...gxf5!?

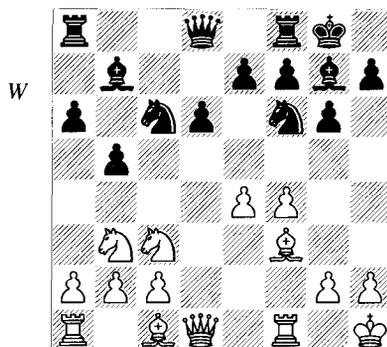
10 f4

10 a4 ♖e6 gives Black an improved version of 9 ♖h1 ♖e6 because the inclusion of a4 and ...a6 favours Black. 11 f4 and now:

a) 11...♖c8 12 ♖e3 (12 f5 ♖xb3 13 cxb3 ♘e5 14 fxg6 hxg6 gave Black a good position in Erenska-Jagodzinska, Konin 1990) 12...♘a5 with full equality.

b) The immediate 11...♖xb3!? is also an interesting concept; e.g., 12 cxb3 e6 13 ♖f3 ♗e7 (13...♖c8 14 ♖e3 ♖e8 15 ♖g1 ♗c7 16 ♖c1 ♗b8 17 ♖c2 1/2-1/2 Smirin-Ki.Georgiev, Burgas 1993) 14 ♖e1 ♘d7 15 ♖e3 ♖fd8 16 ♖e2 ♖ac8 17 ♖d2 ♘c5 18 ♖c1 ♘b4 19 ♖f2 b6 20 g3 ♖h8 21 ♖g2 f5!? 22 h4 e5! with an excellent position for Black, Kovalev-V.Georgiev, Batumi Echt 1999.

10...b5 11 ♖f3 ♖b7 (D)



12 e5?!

This is the critical test of Black's strategy, but it appears that White is overplaying his hand here as things seem to turn out well for Black. Other moves also promise little:

a) 12 ♖e3 is similar to the lines considered in Line A, via the move-order 8 ♖e3 ♘c6 9 ♘b3 a6, but with the important distinction that White has already taken a move to play ♖h1. While vaguely useful, this is hardly a critical test of Black's set-up, and he should proceed with the usual plan of ...♖c8 and ...♘d7-b6-c4, or lash out with ...b4 if appropriate.

b) 12 a4 b4 13 ♘d5 ♘xd5 14 exd5 ♘a5 15 ♗d3 ♖c8 16 ♘d4 ♗b6 17 ♖d1 ♗c5!?! 18 ♘b3 ♘xb3 19 ♗xb3 a5 20 c3 ♖a6 ♢ Boulay-Charbonneau, Montreal 1997.

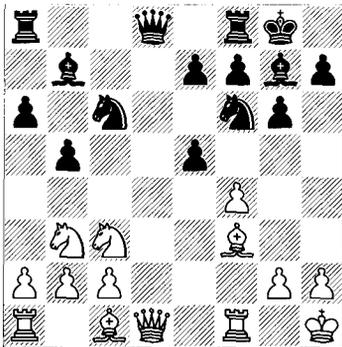
c) 12 ♗e2 b4 13 ♘d5 ♘xd5 (both 13...a5 and 13...e6 look like sensible alternatives) 14 exd5 ♘a5 15 ♘xa5 ♗xa5 16 ♖d1 (16 ♗xe7 ♖xd5 ♢) 16...♖fe8 17 a3 ♖ac8 gives Black a

slight advantage, Montiel-Verduga, Cienfuegos 1985.

d) 12 ♖e1 b4!? 13 ♘a4 (13 ♘d5) 13... ♗c7 14 ♙e3 ♘d7 15 ♚c1 a5 16 ♜f2 ♞ac8 17 ♞d2 (17 c3 or even 17 c4!? may be better) 17... ♘d8! 18 ♘d4 ♙xd4!? 19 ♙xd4 ♘e6 20 ♙e3 ♘ec5 (20... ♙c6!? 21 b3 ♗b7 appears tempting for Black) 21 ♘xc5 ♘xc5 22 c3 b3!? is unclear, Losev-Veselovsky, Smolensk 1992. Obviously there is plenty of scope for improvement on either side.

12...dxe5! (D)

I believe this move to be best, but Chris Ward has had some success with 12... ♘e8!? 13 ♙e3 (13 exd6 ♘xd6 14 ♘c5 ♚c8 15 ♙e3 ♙a8! 16 ♘xa6 ♗a5 {16... ♘c4!? also looks good; e.g., 17 ♗xd8 ♘xd8!}) 17 ♘c5 ♘c4 gave Black good play in Behncke-Gehrke, 2nd Bundesliga 1982) 13... ♚c8 14 ♘d5 dxe5 15 ♙b6 ♗d6 16 ♙c5 ♗e6 17 ♙a3 (Ward suggested that 17 ♘a5!? may be better, while Fritz likes 17 ♘xe7+ ♘xe7 18 ♙xb7 for White) 17... e4! 18 ♘c5 exf3!! 19 ♗xf3 (19 ♘xe6 fxg2+ 20 ♗xg2 fxe6 21 ♘b6 ♞d8 22 ♗e1 b4 23 ♗xe6+ ♔h8 → Ward) 19... ♗d6 20 ♘xb7 ♗b8 21 ♘c5 ♗a7 22 c3 ♘d6 23 ♘b3 ♘c4 24 ♙c5 ♗b7 25 ♗e2 ♞fe8 ♢ Rossiter-Ward, British League (4NCL) 1996/7.



13 ♘c5

13 fxe5 ♘d7 14 e6 fxe6 15 ♙g4 ♗c7!? 16 ♙xe6+ ♔h8 looks good for Black, whose bishops possess enormous potential on the open board.

13...♗b6 14 ♘xb7 ♗xb7 15 fxe5 ♘d7 16 e6

The only way to test Black's position. 16 ♙f4? ♘dxe5 17 ♙xe5 ♙xe5 18 ♗d5 ♙xc3 19 bxc3 ♞ac8 is simply good for Black.

16...fxe6 17 ♘e4

This works out badly for White, but he is in trouble in any case. Note the following variations: 17 ♙g5 ♘de5 18 ♙e4 b4 19 ♘e2 ♗xf1+ 20 ♗xf1 ♞f8 21 ♗e1 ♗b5 ♢; 17 ♙g4 ♘d4 ♢; and 17 ♗e2 ♘de5 ♢.

17...♞ad8 18 ♗e1 ♘de5 19 ♘g5 ♗c8! 20 ♗h4

20 c3 h6 21 ♘e4 ♘xf3 22 gxf3 ♢.

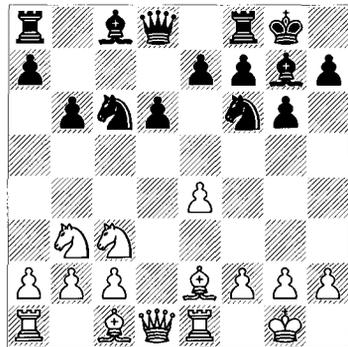
20...h6 21 ♘e4 ♘d4 22 ♙f4 ♘exf3 23 gxf3 e5 24 ♙xe5 ♙xe5 25 ♗xh6 ♙g7 26 ♗xg6 ♗f5 27 ♗g2 ♘xf3

0-1 Cherniaev-Serper, St Petersburg 1994.

B2)

9 ♚e1 b6!? (D)

9... ♙e6 10 ♙f1 a5!? is probably the main line of this variation, but I have a soft spot for the text-move. Although 9...b6 appears quiet and unassuming, Black is really just delaying the middlegame battle until he has developed all of his pieces. In the meantime, Black adopts a formation not dissimilar to a 'hedgehog' position, keeping his structure compact and free from weaknesses. For those readers interested in the 9... ♙e6 approach I can recommend Chris Ward's *Winning With the Sicilian Dragon 2*.



10 ♙f1

This is the most common move, but White does have alternatives:

a) 10 ♘d5 ♙b7 11 ♙f1 and now Black has scored well with several moves:

a1) 11...e6 12 ♘xf6+ ♙xf6 13 c3 ♗c7 14 ♙f4 (14 ♗g4 ♞ad8 15 ♙g5 ♗e7 16 ♙xf6 ♗xf6 = Hellsten-Andersson, Malmö 1995) 14... ♞ad8 15 ♚c1 a6 16 ♗d2 ♞fe8 17 c4 a5 18 ♙e3 a4 19 ♘d4 1/2-1/2 Fogarasi-Koch, Paris 1995.

a2) 11...♖c8 and then:

a21) 12 ♖g5 e6 13 ♜xf6+ ♜xf6 14 ♜xf6 ♜xf6 15 c3 ♜fd8 16 ♜e2 ♜e5 17 ♜ad1 h5 (17...♜c4 18 ♜c1 ♜e5 19 ♜b3 ♜c4 led to a repetition in David-Nataf, France 2000) 18 ♜d4 h4 19 ♜ed1 d5 20 exd5 ♜xd5 = Sitnikov-Permiakov, Prokoevsk 1998.

a22) 12 c3 ♜d7 13 ♖g5 f6!? 14 ♜c1 e6 15 ♜e3 ♜e7 16 f4 ♜c5 17 f5 ♜e5 18 ♜xc5 dxc5 19 ♜c4 ♜fd8 20 ♜b3 ♜d3 21 ♜xd3 ♜xd3 22 ♜f4 ♜cd8 23 ♜ad1 ♜xd1 24 ♜xd1 ♜xd1+ 25 ♜xd1 ♜xe4 ♢ Artsumanian-Shishkin, Kiev 1998.

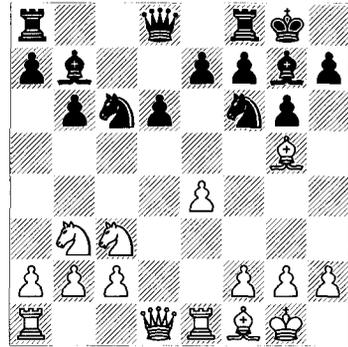
a3) 11...♜d7!/? (this is my own preference) 12 c3 e6 (12...♜e8 13 ♖g5 h6 14 ♜h4 g5 15 ♜g3 ♜ce5 16 ♜d2 e6 17 ♜e3 ♜f6 18 ♜ec4 ♜c7 19 ♜xe5 dxe5 20 ♜e2 {20 ♜b3?!? ♜h5! ♢ King} 20...♜ad8 21 ♜ad1 ♜e7 22 f3 ♜h5 23 ♜f2 ♜f4 24 ♜c4 ♜b8! 25 ♜b3 ♜ed7 26 ♜c4 ♜c6 1/2-1/2 Luther-Hickl, German Ch (Bremen) 1998) 13 ♜e3 ♜c5 14 ♜xc5 (14 f3 a6 15 ♜d4 b5 =; 14 ♜c4 d5 ♢ Bacrot) 14...bxc5 15 ♜a4 (15 g3 a5 16 ♜g2 ♜a6 17 f4 ♜c7 18 ♜c2 ♜ab8 19 h4 h5 20 ♜d2 ♜b6 21 ♜ab1 ♜d4 22 cxd4 cxd4 23 ♜a4 dxe3 24 ♜xe3 ♜b4 gave Black good play in A.Hernandez-Macieja, Curaçao 2002) 15...♜c7 16 ♜a6 (Arizmendi-Bacrot, Pamplona 1997/8) 16...♜ad8! ♢ Bacrot.

b) 10 ♖g5!/? h6 11 ♜h4 g5?! (11...♜b7 12 ♜d2 ♜h7 gives Black a position quite typical of this variation) 12 ♜g3 ♜d7 13 h4 ♜de5 14 hxg5 (14 ♜d2!/? g4 15 ♜ad1 ♢ Zagrebelny) 14...hxg5 15 ♜d2 ♜h6 16 ♜ad1 ♜h7 17 ♜d4!/? g4 18 ♜f4 ♜xd4 19 ♜xh6 ♜xe2+ 20 ♜xe2 ♜g8 21 ♜f4 f6 22 ♜d4 ♜e8 23 ♜f5 ♜xf5 24 exf5 (Zagrebelny-Barbero, Moscow OL 1994), and now Zagrebelny suggests that Black could finally equalize with 24...♖c8!. It seems to me that the problems that Black experienced in this example can be linked to two observations. Firstly, Black committed himself to the ...g5 advance without completing his development, meaning that he was not ready to exploit the positional gains that accompany this advance. Inextricably linked to the first observation is the second: by playing ...g5 too soon, Black weakened his kingside structure, allowing White to play 13 h4 and 14 ♜d2, undermining the g5-pawn.

10...♜b7 11 ♖g5 (D)

11...h6!/?

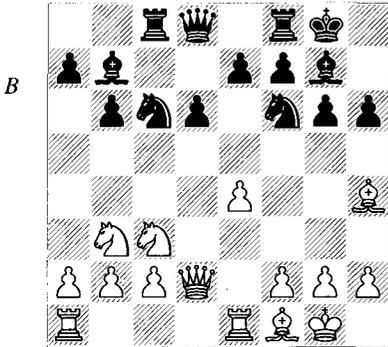
B



I like to play this move relatively early in these lines of the Classical for two reasons. Firstly, by hitting the bishop now, you determine its course for the rest of the game. If the bishop retreats to e3 then you no longer have to worry about pressure on the h4-d8 diagonal, and a subsequent ♜d5 move carries less power. On the other hand, if the bishop retreats to h4 then Black can consider playing ...g5 at some point. Not only does this open up the possibility of ...♜h5, with a view to capturing on g3, but it also takes control of the f4-square, so that if White plays f4, Black can capture (forcing White to recapture with a piece) and then take control of the e5-square with a knight or bishop. The second reason why I prefer to play ...h6 early on is because I like to avoid my dark-squared bishop being exchanged via, e.g., ♜d2 and ♜h6. Black can of course play ...♜e8 and then meet ♜h6 with ...♜h8, but this takes time that I would rather spend getting my other pieces active. These are just my preferences, and Black has a number of equally valid alternative approaches to the position. There follows a high-class example where Black delays ...h6. 11...♖c8 12 ♜b1!/? (12 ♜d2 ♜e8 13 ♜h6 ♜h8 14 ♜ad1 a6 leaves Black rock solid) 12...h6 13 ♜h4 a6 14 ♜d5 g5!/? 15 ♜xf6+ ♜xf6 16 ♜g3 ♜g7 17 a4 ♜d7 18 c3 ♜fd8 19 f3 e6 20 h4 ♜e5 21 ♜d4 ♜g6 (21...♜e7!/?) 22 hxg5 hxg5 23 ♜b3 ♜e5 24 ♜f2 ♜b8 25 ♜bd1 ♜g7 26 g3 ♜h8 27 ♜g2 ♜a8 28 ♜c2 ♜h5 29 ♜d2 ♜bh8 30 ♜e2 ♜xa4 ♢ Sashikiran-Ghaem Maghami, India 2003. Note how the flexibility of Black's position enabled him to fight on every front. White actually drew this in the end, but I suspect that had more to do with the fact that Sashikiran was handling the white bits than anything else!

12 ♖e3

The other way to play the position is of course 12 ♖h4 ♜c8 (12...♘h5!? 13 ♞b1 ♣d7 14 ♘d5 e6 15 ♙b5 ♞fe8 16 c3 exd5 17 exd5 ♞xe1+ 18 ♣xe1 ♘f4 19 dxc6 ♙xc6 gave Black a powerful position in Alonso-Romero, Spain 2003) 13 ♣d2 (*D*) and now:



a) 13...g5 14 ♙g3 ♘h5 15 ♞ad1 ♣d7 16 ♞e3 ♞fd8 17 ♙e2 ♘g3 18 hxg3 ♙e5 19 ♙b5 e6 gave Black a good position in Teodorescu-Nevednichy, Romanian Ch (Herculane) 1996.

b) 13...♘a5!? (this illustrates a method by which Black generates queenside counterplay) 14 ♙xf6 (14 ♞ad1 ♘b3! 15 axb3 g5 16 ♙g3 ♞xc3! 17 ♣xc3 ♘xe4 gives Black good compensation according to Volokitin) 14...♙xf6! 15 ♣xh6 (15 ♘xa5 bxa5 16 ♣xh6 ♞c5 with compensation) 15...♘c4! 16 ♙xc4 (16 ♘d5 ♙xb2 17 ♞ad1 was Jackova-Hagarova, Bulgaria 2003, and now 17...e6! 18 ♘f4 ♙g7 looks very good for Black) 16...♞xc4 17 ♞ad1 ♙g7 18 ♣g5 (or 18 ♣h4?! ♙xc3 19 bxc3 e5! ♣) 18...♙xc3! 19 bxc3 e5! ♣ Volokitin-Cu.Hansen, Esbjerg 2002.

12...♞c8 13 f3

13 ♣d2 ♘h7 14 f4?! ♘g4 ♣ Ftačnik.

13...♘h7 14 ♣d2 ♘d7 15 ♞ad1 ♣c7 16 ♘d5 ♣b8 17 c3 ♞fe8 18 ♣f2 e6 19 ♘f4 ♞cd8 20 ♞d2 ♘f6 21 c4 ♘e5 22 ♞c1

22 ♞ed1 ♙xe4! 23 fxe4 ♘xe4 24 ♣e2 ♘xd2 25 ♞xd2 ♞c8 ♣ Ftačnik.

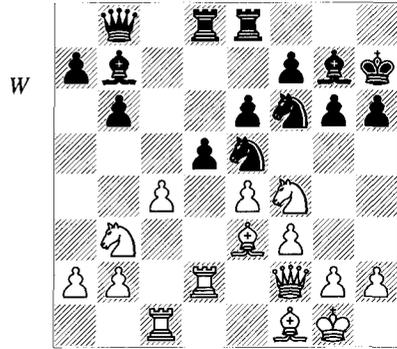
22...d5! (*D*)

Black has been calmly organizing his forces and finally explodes onto the scene with a central pawn thrust.

23 cxd5 exd5

Now:

a) 24 exd5 ♘xd5 (24...♘fg4!? 25 fxg4 ♘xg4 26 ♣f3 ♘xe3 27 ♙b5 ♞e5 28 ♙c6 ♘f5 is

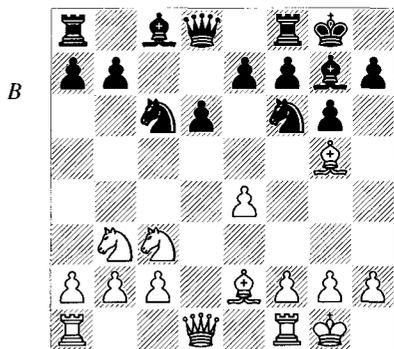


unclear – Ftačnik) 25 ♘xd5 ♞xd5 is at least equal for Black.

b) 24 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 25 exd5 ♞xd5 26 ♞xd5 ♙xd5 27 ♘d4 (27 ♙b5 ♞e7 28 ♙f4 ♣b7! ♣) 27...♣d8 28 ♙b5 (28 b3 ♘xf3+! 29 ♘xf3 {29 gxf3 ♙xd4 30 ♙xd4 ♣g5+ ++} 29...♙xf3 30 ♣xf3 ♞xe3 31 ♣xf7 ♞e7 ♣) 28...♙xa2! ♣ Meister-Fedorov, Moscow 2002. In *ChessBase Magazine* 88, Ftačnik points out that the e8-rook is immune from capture: 29 ♙xe8 ♘d3 30 ♘e6 (30 ♣d2 ♘xc1 31 ♙b5 ♣c7 32 b4 ♘b3 33 ♣xa2 ♘xd4 ♣) 30...♙xe6 31 ♞d1 ♙b3 32 ♞d2 ♙c4 33 ♙a4 ♣e7 34 ♞xd3 (34 ♣e2 ♘xb2 ++) 34...♙xd3 ♣.

B3)

9 ♙g5 (*D*)



9...a6

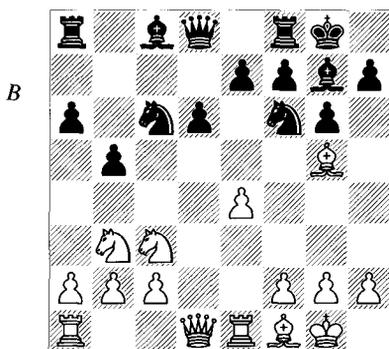
Black has another approach in 9...♙e6 10 ♘h1 (10 f4 b5! is strong) 10...♞c8 11 f4, but my own preference has always been for early queenside expansion via 9...a6 and 10...b5, with a view to fianchettoing the light-squared bishop.

10 f4

Or:

a) 10 a4 ♖e6 gives Black an improved version of the 9 ♖g5 ♖e6 variation. Play might continue 11 ♖h1 (11 f4 b5 12 axb5 ♖b6+! 13 ♖h1 axb5 14 ♖xa8 ♖xa8 15 ♖xb5 ♖xe4! ♢) 11...♖c8 12 f4 ♖a5, when 13 ♖d4 ♖c4 is fine for Black, and 13 f5 runs into 13...♖xb3 14 cxb3 ♖xc3! 15 ♖xf6 (15 bxc3 ♖xe4 was good for Black in Dolmatov-Gufeld, Daugavpils 1978) 15...♖xb3 16 ♖xg7 ♖xg7 17 ♖c4 ♖b4 18 ♖d5 ♖b6 19 ♖d2 ♖d4 20 ♖g5 f6 21 ♖g3 ♖xb2 22 ♖ac1 ♖c6 23 h4 ♖e5 24 ♖g4 ♖b4 25 ♖h3 ♖xa4 26 h5 g5 -+ Kasimdzhanov-Kramnik, Wijk aan Zee 1999 - a very smooth performance by the soon-to-be World Champion. White's best is 13 ♖xa5 ♖xa5, but Black is fine here.

b) 10 ♖e1 b5 11 ♖f1 (D) and then:



b1) 11...h6 12 ♖h4 e6!? 13 ♖d2 ♖c7 14 ♖ad1 (14 ♖xf6 ♖xf6 15 ♖xh6 ♖e5 gives Black compensation for the pawn - Miles) 14...♖d8 15 f4 ♖b7 16 a3 ♖ac8 ♢ 17 f5?! ♖e5 18 fxe6 fxe6 19 ♖d4 ♖e7 20 ♖f3 g5 ♢ 21 ♖f2 (21 ♖g3 ♖xf3+ 22 gxf3 d5! 23 e5 ♖h5 ♢) occurred in Adams-Miles, Tilburg 1993. In *Informator 59* Miles suggested that he could have now obtained a decisive advantage with 21...♖xc3! 22 ♖xc3 (22 ♖xe5 ♖cc8) 22...♖xe4 23 ♖xe4 (only move; 23 ♖b3 ♖xf2 24 ♖xf2 ♖f8 -+) 23...♖xe4 -+.

b2) 11...♖b7 12 ♖d5 (12 a4 is also possible) 12...♖d7 13 c3 h6 14 ♖h4 g5 15 ♖g3 e6 (15...♖ce5! = Damljanović) 16 ♖e3 ♖de5 17 ♖d2 ♖e7 18 f3 ♖b8!? 19 ♖a5 ♖d8 20 ♖ad1 ♖7g6 21 ♖xb7 ♖xb7 22 ♖f2 a5 gave Black a reasonable position in L.Arnold-Enders, Bundesliga 1996/7, and he went on to win.

c) 10 ♖h1?! achieves little in this position; e.g., 10...b5 11 a3 ♖e6 12 f4 ♖c8 and now:

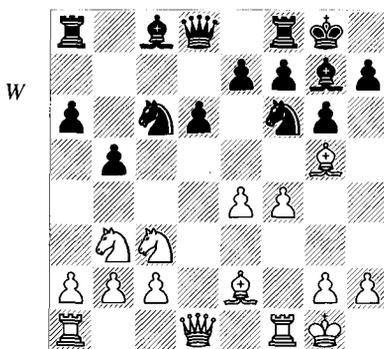
c1) 13 ♖d3 ♖e8 (13...♖a5!? 14 ♖xa5 ♖xa5 15 f5 ♖c4 16 ♖f3 b4 =) 14 ♖e1 h6 15 ♖h4 ♖c4 16 ♖d1 ♖c7 17 ♖f2 e5 18 fxe5 ♖xe5 19 ♖d4 d5! ♢ V.Knox-Ward, British Ch (Eastbourne) 1991.

c2) 13 ♖f3 and then:

c21) 13...♖d7 14 f5 ♖c4 15 ♖e2 (15 ♖f2 ♖xc3 16 bxc3 ♖ce5 ♢) 15...♖b6 16 ♖c1 (16 fxe6 hxe6 17 ♖e3 ♖xc3 18 bxc3 ♖a4 ♢) 16...♖d4 17 ♖xc4 ♖xc4 gave Black a good position in Mateo-B.Gonzalez, Santa Clara 2000.

c22) 13...♖c4 14 ♖e1 h6 15 ♖h4 e5 16 f5 (16 ♖g3 ♖e8 17 ♖d5 ♖xb3 18 cxb3 ♖xd5 19 ♖xd5 ♖d4 20 ♖ac1 ♖f6 21 ♖g4 ♖xc1 22 ♖xc1 exf4 23 ♖f2 f3 24 ♖xd4 ♖f4 25 ♖g1 ♖xd4 26 ♖xd4 ♖xg4 27 ♖xd6 f2 0-1 Van der Poel-Ward, Guernsey 1989) 16...♖xb3! 17 cxb3 ♖d4 18 g4? (18 ♖f2 d5! 19 exd5 {19 fxe6 ♖xf3 20 ♖xf3 d4 ♢} 19...♖xf5 20 ♖xe5 ♖g4 21 ♖e2 ♖xf2+ 22 ♖xf2 ♖h4 ♢ M.Johnson) occurred in Fuglsang-Ward, Copenhagen 1996. Now Johnson pointed out 18...♖xg4!! 19 ♖xd8 (19 ♖xg4 ♖xh4 20 f6 {20 fxe6 fxe6! 21 ♖xc8? ♖f2 -+} 20...♖xf6 21 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 22 ♖g1 ♖g5 -+) 19...♖f2+ 20 ♖g2 ♖xd1 21 ♖e7 ♖xb2! -+.

10...b5 (D)



11 ♖f3

11 a3!? prevents 11...b4 but gives Black time to complete his development and achieve an ideal set-up. 11...♖b7 (11...♖e6 is also possible, but the text-move feels more natural in this position) and now:

a) 12 ♖h1 ♖d7 13 ♖e1 (13 f5 was Smirin-Alterman, Israel 1994; Alterman suggests in *Informator 59* that he should now have played 13...♖ce5! 14 ♖e1 ♖c8 15 ♖h4 ♖e8 with an unclear position) 13...♖e8 14 ♖d1 b4 15 ♖d5 a5!

16 axb4 ♖xb4 17 ♗xb4 axb4 18 ♖xb4 ♖b6!
19 ♖xb6 ♗xb6 20 ♗d2 ♖a2 (20...♗xb2!?) 21
♖b1 h6 22 ♗h4 ♖c8 gave Black strong counter-
play in Yurtaev-Khachian, Teheran 1997.

b) 12 ♗f3 ♗d7 (12...a5!? 13 ♖h1 b4 14
axb4 axb4 15 ♖xa8 ♗xa8 16 ♗d5 e6 17 ♗xf6+
♗xf6 18 ♗xf6 ♖xf6 19 ♖xd6 ♖xb2 20 ♖c5
♖c3 21 ♖f2 ♖d8 ♯ Bistrić-Adorjan, Sarajevo
1982) 13 ♖e1 ♖c8 = Yurtaev-Aronian, Teheran
1997.

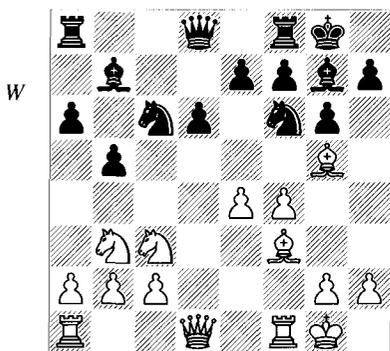
After the text-move (11 ♗f3) Black has a
choice of two attractive options:

B31: 11...♗b7!? 223

B32: 11...b4 224

B31)

11...♗b7!? (D)



12 ♖h1

Or:

a) 12 ♗d5 ♗d7 13 c3 (13 ♖b1 ♖e8 is similar
to the main line) and now:

a1) 13...♗b6 14 ♗a5!? looks as though it
may be awkward for Black.

a2) 13...f6 14 ♗h4 e6 15 ♗b4! ± (15 ♗e3
g5 16 ♗g3 gxf4 17 ♗xf4 ♗de5! gave Black excellent
play Gassouma-Blehm, Zagan jr Wch
1997) 15...♗c5?! 16 ♗xc6 ♗xc6 17 ♗d4 is
much better for White, Artsumanian-Brodsky,
Alushta 1999.

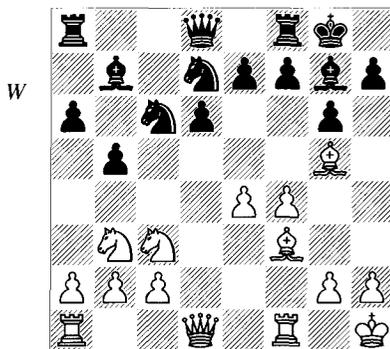
a3) 13...♖e8 14 ♖h1 a5 15 ♖d2 (Donev
suggested 15 a3 a4 16 ♗c1 intending ♗d3 and
♗3b4, with some pressure against Black's
queenside) 15...a4 16 ♗c1 (16 ♗d4 ♗xd4 17
cxd4 ♗b6 =) 16...a3 17 ♗d3 (17 b3? b4 ♯; 17
b4?! ♗b6 ♯) 17...axb2 18 ♖xb2 ♖c8! 19 ♖ac1
e6 20 ♗e3 (Xie Jun-Serper, Jakarta 1994), and
now Korchnoi suggested 20...♖a5! ♯ because

of the long-term weakness of White's a- and c-
pawns.

b) 12 a4 b4 13 ♗d5 ♗xd5 14 exd5 ♗a5
gives Black lasting pressure against the white
queenside. Note that 15 ♗xa5 ♖xa5 16 ♗xe7?
fails to 16...♖fe8 ♯ as the d6-pawn is immune.

c) 12 ♗h4 ♗d7 13 ♖b1 a5 14 a4 (not 14
♗xb5?? ♖b6+ -+) 14...bxa4 15 ♗xa4 ♗a6 16
e5? (16 ♖e1 =) 16...♗xf1 17 ♗xc6 ♖c8 18
♗xd7 (18 exd6 ♗f6 19 ♗b7 ♖b8 20 ♖xf1
♖xb7 21 ♗bc5 ♖a7 ♯) 18...♖xd7 19 ♖xf1? (19
♗b6 ♖b7 20 ♗d5 ♗e2 21 ♖d2 {21 ♗xe7+
♖xe7 22 ♗xe7 ♗xd1 23 ♖xd1 dxe5 24 ♗xf8
♗xf8 ♯} 21...♖fe8 22 ♗xe7+ ♖xe7 23 ♗xe7
♖xe7 24 ♖xe2 dxe5 ♯) 19...♖xa4 20 ♗xe7
♖xc2! 21 ♗xf8 ♗xf8 -+ V.Orlov-Svidler, St
Petersburg 1995. The notes here are based on
those by Bönsch for *ChessBase Magazine* 47.

12...♗d7 (D)



13 ♖b1

White prepares 14 ♗d5 by first protecting
the b2-pawn. This doesn't prove particularly ef-
fective, but other moves have not yielded White
much success either:

a) 13 ♖e1 a5 14 ♗xb5 (14 e5 dxe5 15 ♖d1
♖c8 16 ♗xb5 {16 ♖xd7 ♖xd7 17 ♗c5 ♖c8 18
♗d5 ♖e8 19 ♖f2? e4 ♯ Brylev-Losev, Moscow
1994) 16...a4 17 ♗c1 ♗c5 18 ♗d5 ♗d4 19
♗c3 ♗c6 20 fxe5 ♗xc2 21 ♖h4 ♗xg5 22
♖xg5 e6 23 ♗xb7 ♖xb7 24 ♗d3 a3 25 bxa3
♖xa3 26 ♗c5 ♖c7 27 ♗3e4 ♗e3 ♯ Mateo-
Aronian, Ubeda 2000) 14...a4 15 ♗d2 h6 16
♗h4 ♗c5 17 ♗c4 ♗a6 18 ♗ba3 ♗d4 19 ♖f2
♖c8 20 ♖d1 ♗xf3 21 gxf3 ♖c7 gave Black
good play in Tal-Gufeld, USSR 1977.

b) 13 a3 ♖e8!? 14 ♖b1 ♗b6 15 ♖e2 ♗c4 16
♗d1 ♗6a5 17 ♗c1 d5 ♯ Thorhallsson-Pigusov,
Reykjavik 1999.

13...♖e8 14 ♖d5 f6!

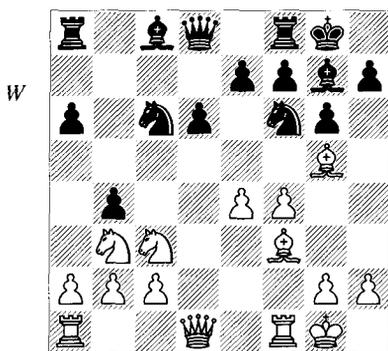
Although it was Peter Svidler who introduced this move, it was actually Vladimir Kramnik who originally recommended the idea. Black's plan is to gain time pushing the g5-bishop back, play 15...e6 to dislodge the d5-knight and then gain control of the e5-square for a black knight by playing ...g5 and forcing an exchange of White's f4-pawn.

15 ♖h4 e6 16 ♖e3 g5! 17 ♖g3

17 fxg5 fxg5 18 ♖g3 ♖de5 19 ♖h5 (19 ♖g4 ♖e7 ♞) 19...♞f8 20 ♖e2 ♖e7 21 c3 is unclear according to Svidler, in *Informator 67*.

17...gxf4 18 ♖xf4 ♖de5 19 ♖h5 ♞f8

Black is slightly better. Apicella-Svidler, Erevan OL 1996 continued 20 c3 ♖e7 21 ♖e2 (21 ♖d4 ♞ad8 22 ♖e2 ♖g6) 21...♖g6! 22 ♖g3 (22 ♖xg6 hxg6 23 ♖g4 g5 24 ♖g3 ♞ae8! ♞) 22...♖ce5 23 ♖d2 (23 ♖g4 f5 24 exf5 exf5 ♞) 23...♖h8 24 ♞f2 ♞ad8 25 ♞bf1 ♖h6 (Black intends ...♖g5 and ...♖h4, easing the congestion in his camp) 26 ♖g4?! ♖xg4 27 ♖xg4 d5! ♞.

B32)**11...b4 (D)****12 ♖a4**

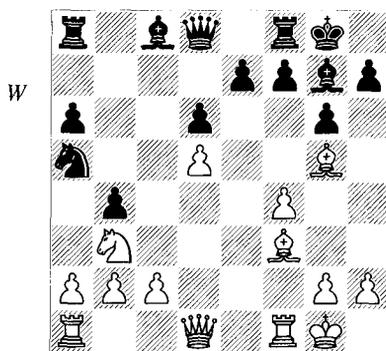
It is rarely nice to play a move like this, leaving the knight 'on the rim', but in this particular position White has little choice in the matter. Other moves can quickly leave White significantly worse:

a) 12 ♖e2? ♖b6+ 13 ♖h1 ♖g4 ♞ Apicella – Santo-Roman, Clichy 1993.

b) 12 e5 ♖b6+ (12...bxc3 13 exf6 exf6! is also good) 13 ♖h1 bxc3 14 exf6 exf6 15 ♖h4 cxb2 is much better for Black, Tagnon-Moingt, Paris 1990.

c) 12 ♖xf6 ♖xf6 13 e5 bxc3 14 exf6 cxb2 15 fxg7 ♖xe7 16 ♞b1 ♞b8 17 ♞xb2 ♖f5 gave Black a good position in S.Salov-Tolnai, Zurich 1993.

d) 12 ♖d5?! ♖xd5 13 exd5 ♖a5 (D) and here:

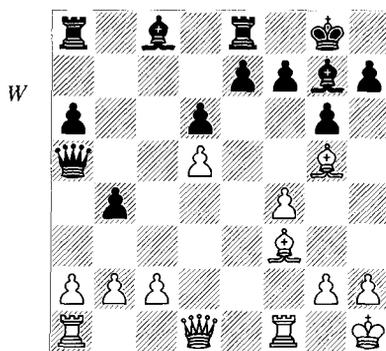


d1) 14 ♖d2 ♖c7 15 ♖h1 ♖f5 ♞ 16 ♖e4?! ♖c4 ♞ J.Kristiansen-Petursson, Reykjavik 1981.

d2) 14 ♞b1 ♖c4 15 ♖e2 ♖c7 16 ♖h1 (16 c3 a5 17 ♖d4 ♖a6 18 ♖f2 bxc3 19 bxc3 ♖a3 ♞ Magomedov-Torok, Budapest 1991) 16...♖f5 17 g4 ♖d7 18 f5 ♖e5 19 ♖e4 ♖b5 ♞ Zapata-Miles, Thessaloniki OL 1984.

d3) 14 ♖e2 ♖xb3 (14...♖c7 also looks sensible) 15 cxb3 ♖b6+ 16 ♖h1 ♞e8 17 ♞fe1 h6 was fine for Black in Ljubojević-Sosonko, Tilburg 1984.

d4) 14 ♖xa5 ♖xa5 15 ♖h1 (15 ♖c1 ♞a7! ♞ Donev-Novković, Dornbirn 1991) 15...♞e8 (D) and now:



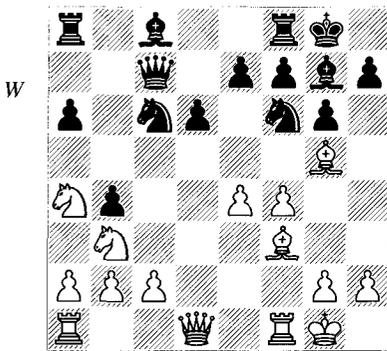
d41) 16 ♖c1 ♖b5 (16...♖f5!, as in del Rio Angelis-Romero, Leon 1997 also looks good; Black will play 17...♞ac8 and pressurize the c2-pawn) 17 ♞b1 ♖c4 18 ♞e1 ♖f5 19 b3 ♖c7 20

♞e2 ♞ac8 is much better for Black, Zelčić-Balinov, Makarska 1997.

d42) 16 ♞e1 ♟xb2 17 ♞b1 ♟c3 18 ♞xe7 ♞xe7 19 ♟xe7 ♞xa2 20 g4 ♟b7 ♢ Basanta-Tolnai, Saint John 1988.

d5) 14 ♞e1 ♟c4 15 ♞e2 ♞b6+ 16 ♞f2 ♞xf2+ 17 ♟xf2 a5!?! (17...♟f5 and 17...♟xb2 also look sensible) 18 ♟e2 ♟a6 19 ♟xc4 ♟xc4 20 ♟xe7 ♞fc8! 21 ♟xd6?! ♟xd5 22 ♟e5 ♞xc2+ ♢ Cirić-Petursson, San Bernardino 1991. Petursson must be particularly fond of playing against the 9 ♟g5 Classical, given that every second game I come across seems to have him winning convincingly from the black side!

12...♞c7 (D)



13 ♞f2

White has also tried:

a) 13 c4 ♟d7 14 ♟h1 (14 ♟h4 ♟b6 15 ♟xb6 ♞xb6+ 16 ♟f2 ♞c7 =>) 14...a5 15 ♞d2 (15 ♟h4 ♟h6!?! 16 g3 ♟b6 17 ♟xb6 ♞xb6 18 e5 is unclear according to Shirov and Rausis) 15...♟b6 16 ♟xb6 ♞xb6 17 ♟h4 (17 e5 dxe5 18 ♟xe7 ♟xe7 19 ♟xa8 a4 gives Black compensation for the exchange – Golubev) 17...a4 ♢ Gipslis-Shirov, Daugavpils 1990.

b) 13 ♞c1 a5! 14 ♞e1 ♟a6 15 c4 bxc3 16 ♟xc3 was Bashkov-Rechlis, Ostrava 1991. In *Informator 53*, Rechlis suggests 16...♞a7+ 17 ♟h1 ♟b4 18 ♟e2 ♞fc8! 19 ♟f1 a4 20 ♟a1 ♟xf1 21 ♞xf1 a3 with a clear advantage for Black.

c) 13 c3 ♞b8 14 ♞c1 ♟d7 15 ♟h1 a5 16 e5 dxe5 17 ♟xf6 exf6 18 cxb4 axb4 19 ♟ac5 ♟c8 20 fxe5 fxe5 21 ♟d5 ♟e7 22 ♟a6 ♞xc1 23 ♞xc1 ♟xa6 as in Zapata-Martin Gonzalez, Salamanca 1991, is unclear according to Golubev.

13...♟b7

13...♞b8 14 c3 ♟a5 15 cxb4 ♟xb3 16 ♞xb3 ♟c6 17 ♞c3 ♞a7 18 ♞e1 ♟d7 19 ♟c3 ♞xb4 was equal in Zapata-Kudrin, Titograd 1984 according to Ernst.

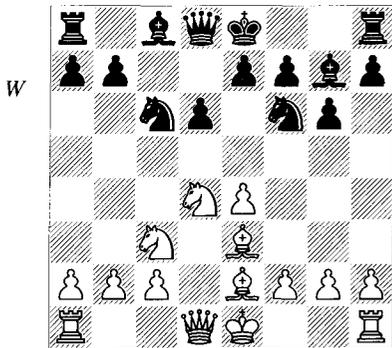
14 c3 a5 15 ♞d2 bxc3 16 bxc3!?

16 ♟xc3 is better, but Black has equalized in any case.

16...♟b8!?! 17 e5 dxe5 18 ♟xb7 ♞xb7 19 ♟bc5 ♞c7 20 ♞b1 ♟a6 21 ♟xf6?! ♟xc5 ♢ P.Gerber-Tolnai, Zurich 1988.

Part 2: Modern Interpretations of the Classical Dragon

1 e4 c5 2 ♟f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♟xd4 ♟f6 5 ♟c3 g6 6 ♟e2 ♟g7 7 ♟e3 ♟c6 (D)



The second part of this chapter is really intended to deal with aggressive lines that arise from a Classical Dragon move-order but really have little in common with the Classical itself. Although this may seem to have been stashed away at the end of a rather long chapter, please don't get the impression that these lines are unimportant. Lines A and B are rather obscure (in fact, I have never even faced them in a blitz game!), but they can prove dangerous. There isn't much theory on them so it is worth just skimming over the recommendations in case they do crop up in one of your games. Line C is a different kettle of fish entirely. White throws literally everything but the kitchen sink down the board at Black's kingside, and consequently this line can be very dangerous indeed.

- A: 8 ♖d2 226
 B: 8 h4 226
 C: 8 ♘b3 227

A)

8 ♖d2 0-0 9 0-0-0!?

This very unusual set-up was once used by Ivanchuk in a blindfold game with Anand (Monaco 1997). The position is of course very similar to the 9 0-0-0 Yugoslav lines that we covered in Chapters 13-16, but with the distinction that White has a bishop on e2 instead of a pawn on f3. This accelerates White's development, but it is not clear that it necessarily improves his position. The bishop may be misplaced on e2, and the omission of f3 weakens the e4-pawn and makes it harder for White to achieve g4 at a later stage. In *S.T.A.R. Chess*, Motwani suggests that Black's best response here is...

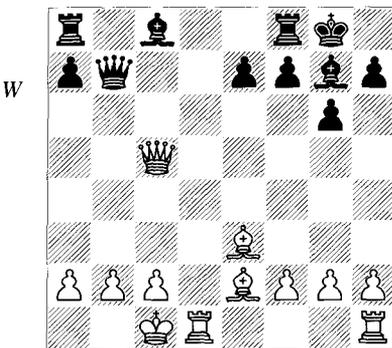
9...d5! 10 ♘xc6 bxc6 11 exd5

Motwani also mentions 11 e5 ♘d7 12 f4 e6, when Black intends ...c5 and/or ...f6, with counterplay against the white centre.

11...cxd5 12 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 13 ♖xd5 ♖c7 14 ♖c5

14 ♖xa8 ♙f5 15 ♖xf8+ ♗xf8 16 ♙d3 ♙e6 17 ♗b1 ♙d5 18 f3?! ♙xb2 19 ♗xb2 ♖e5+ 20 c3 ♖xe3 gives Black excellent chances – Motwani.

14...♖b7! (D)



This position highlights a central difference from the 9 0-0-0 Yugoslav lines: in those variations White has a pawn on f3, whereas here Black's last move now attacks both b2 and g2. White must concede material, leaving Black with all the benefits we saw in Chapter 13, but with equal material.

B)

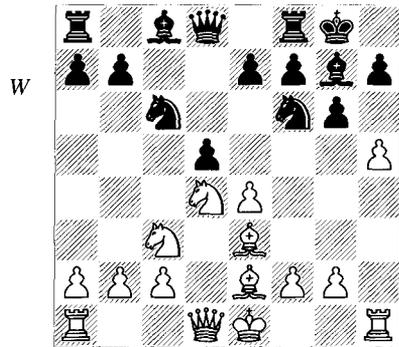
8 h4

This move has been championed almost exclusively by Smyslov. Despite the fact that it looks a little 'caveman-style', 8 h4 does indeed hold some venom, and Black should react actively.

8...0-0

8...h5 is probably the main line, but I feel as though this in some respect validates White's play. I would rather initiate an early pawn-break in the centre, thereby changing the nature of the game and forcing White to play something where a kingside attack is not a central theme of the arising positions.

9 h5 d5! (D)



10 hxg6

10 ♘xc6 bxc6 11 e5 ♘e4 12 ♘xe4 dxe4 13 ♙d4 ♖d5!? (13...♙e6! 14 ♖d2 c5 is similar to the lines examined below) 14 ♖d2 ♖d8 15 ♖d1 ♙f5 16 ♖e3 ♖e6 17 h6 ♙xe5 18 0-0 ♖d7 19 ♙xe5 ♖xe5 20 ♖d7 ♙xd7 21 ♖d1 ♙e8 22 ♖d4 f5 23 ♙c4+ ♙f7 24 ♙xf7+ ♗xf7 25 ♖b3+ ♗f6 ♯ Jakubovics-Duncan, England 1999.

10...hxg6 11 ♘xc6

11 exd5 ♘xd5 12 ♘xc6 bxc6 13 ♘xd5 ♖xd5 14 ♖xd5 cxd5 15 0-0-0 ♙b7 gave rise to an equal ending in Smyslov-Botvinnik, Moscow Wch (5) 1958, although Smyslov eventually won.

11...bxc6 12 e5 ♘e4 13 ♘xe4 dxe4 14 ♖xd8?!

14 ♖c1 ♙xe5 is better for Black, and 14 ♙d4 ♙e6 15 ♖d2 c5 16 ♙c3 ♖xd2+ 17 ♗xd2 ♖ad8+ 18 ♗e3 f5 19 exf6 exf6 20 ♖ad1 f5 gave Black full equality in de la Villa-Almeida, Andorra 1987.

14...♖xd8 15 ♕f4 ♖e6 16 ♜d1!?

White also finds himself in difficulties after 16 0-0 g5!?! (16...♜d5 17 ♖c4 ♜xe5 18 ♖xe5 ♖xc4 19 ♖xg7 ♖xf1 is also good) 17 ♖xg5 ♖xe5 ♢ Landtman-Van de Mortel, Netherlands 1994. White's best is probably Curt Hansen's recommendation 16 b3!?! intending 16...♜d5 17 ♖c4.

16...♜d5 17 ♜xd5 cxd5

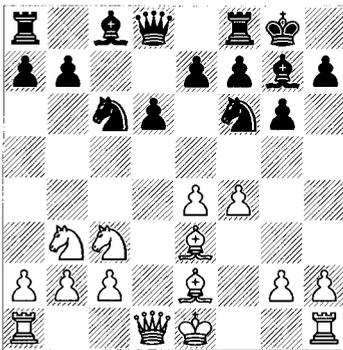
Now:

a) 18 c3!?! ♢ Cu.Hansen.

b) 18 ♖d2 d4 19 f3 e3+ 20 ♖c1 ♜c8 21 ♜d1 g5! 22 ♖xg5 (22 ♖g3 ♖f5 ♢ 23 ♖d3? e2 →) 22...♖xe5 23 b3 (23 ♖xe7 ♖f5 with an attack) 23...f6 24 ♖h4 ♖g7 ♢ Smyslov-Bacrot, Albert (3) 1996.

C)

8 ♖b3 0-0 9 f4 (D)



9...a6!?

9...♖e6 10 g4!?! initiates the so-called Rabinovich Attack (10 0-0 of course transposes to the main-line Classical, discussed in Part 1 of this chapter). Although a relatively rare guest in tournament play, this line should not be underestimated and Black can quickly find himself in serious trouble if he does not react accurately. My preference has always been to avoid this line by playing 9...a6, but I would just like to include a few pointers for those who are interested in 9...♖e6:

a) 10...d5!?! 11 f5 ♖c8 12 exd5 ♖b4 13 ♖f3 gxf5 14 a3 fxg4 is highly unclear, but not

necessarily bad for Black. On the other hand, GM Yakovich continues to play this way as White (with good results!) so there are certainly strong players who have faith in White's set-up.

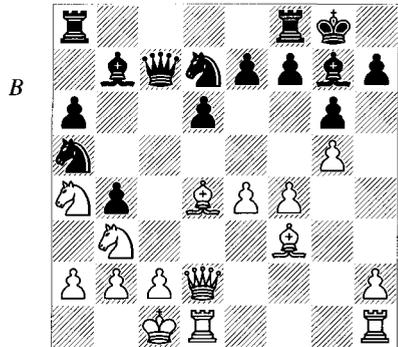
b) 10...♜c8 (this is more solid) 11 f5 (11 g5!?! ♖d7 12 ♜d2 ♖b6 13 0-0-0 {13 h4 ♖b4!?!} 13...♖b4 14 ♖b1 ♖c4 was acceptable for Black in Estrin-Veresov, Moscow 1962) 11...♖xb3 (11...♖d7 12 g5 ♖e8 may also be playable, if a little uncomfortable for Black) 12 axb3 d5 13 exd5 ♖b4 14 ♖f3 ♖fxd5! was fine for Black in Van der Weide-O'Sullivan, Islington 1972.

10 g4 b5 11 g5 ♖d7 12 ♜d2 b4!

12...♖b7 13 0-0-0 ♖a5 14 h4 ♜c8 15 ♖d5?! ♖xb3+ 16 axb3 e6 ♢ Schuh-Yurtaev, Oberwart 1991.

13 ♖a4 ♖b7 14 ♖f3 ♜c7 15 0-0-0 ♖a5 16 ♖d4 (D)

16 ♜xb4?! ♜fc8 17 c3 ♖c4 with an attack for Black.



16...e5! 17 fxe5 ♖xe5 18 ♖g2 ♖ac4! 19 ♜xb4 ♜fc8 20 ♖b1

Or: 20 ♖c3 ♜ab8 21 ♖a7 ♖c6 22 ♖xb8 ♜xb8 →; 20 ♜c3 ♖c6 ♢.

20...a5 21 ♜e1

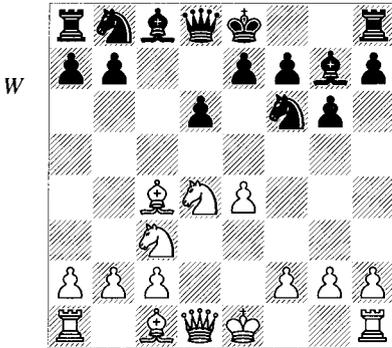
21 ♜c3 ♜c6! 22 ♖ac5 dxc5 23 ♖xc5 ♜ab8 →.

21...♖xb2! 22 ♖xb2 ♜xc2+ 23 ♖a1 ♜xg2 24 ♜g1 ♜c2 25 ♜d2 ♜c6 26 ♖c3 ♜b6 27 ♜g3 a4

0-1 V.Orlov-Sakaev, St Petersburg 1995. The notes to this game are based on Bönsch's annotations for *ChessBase Magazine* 47.

19 6 ♘c4: An Improved Classical?

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♗xd4 ♘f6 5 ♗c3 g6 6 ♘c4 ♘g7 (D)



This position is the general starting position of the 6 ♘c4 variation of the Dragon. The plethora of subtle nuances contained in this variation are by no means obvious. The first point to note is that White has several different piece arrangements which can be used in conjunction with the bishop on c4. White can play his dark-squared bishop to e3 or to g5, include or omit the move h3, leave the bishop on c4 for the time being, or drop it back to b3 immediately, or even transpose to a Yugoslav Attack with 8 ♘e3 and 9 f3. If that sounds confusing, you are undoubtedly going to be thrilled to learn that White can implement these plans via any number of related move-orders. On the other hand, the move-order shouldn't make too much difference to those of us defending the black side.

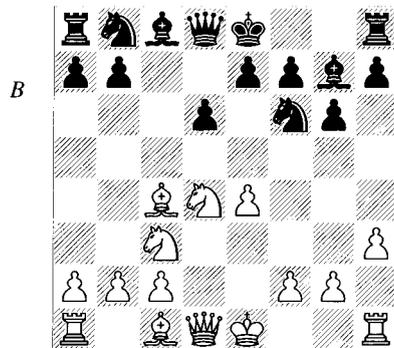
Black, for his part, also has deployment decisions to face. Black can place his b8-knight on c6 (where it exerts pressure on the centre and can come to a5) or d7, where it would not obstruct a fianchettoed bishop on b7 and could leap to c5, attacking a b3-bishop and pressurizing the e4-pawn. A further issue for Black is the placement of the c8-bishop: depending upon the system adopted, Black has options of developing it on either b7 or d7. Finally, Black faces the issue of whether to advance his b-pawn and,

if so, to decide whether b6 or b5 is the more appropriate square for the pawn. I am sure all of this sounds a little abstract at this juncture, but don't worry! Getting to grips with the finer points of this variation proves tricky for most people, myself included. In light of the fact that White can reach his favoured line of the ♘c4 variation via so many different move-orders, I am going to borrow an idea from Golubev's *Easy Guide to the Dragon*, and present this variation in three sub-sections, categorized by reference to the general formation that White adopts.

Before moving on to the main theory of this variation, I would just like to point out that Black must exercise a little care over his move-order here, as 6...♗c6? runs into 7 ♗xc6 bxc6 8 e5! dxex5? 9 ♘xf7+ +-.

Part 1: The Traditional Approach: White Plays ♘e3 and h3

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♗xd4 ♘f6 5 ♗c3 g6 6 ♘c4 ♘g7 7 h3 (D)

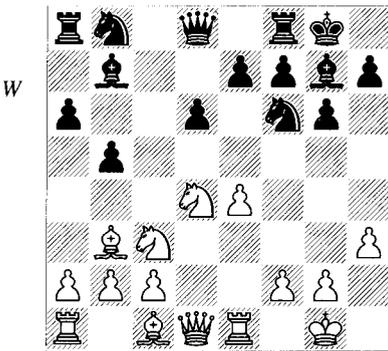


7...♗c6

Black also has the option of delaying the development of his queen's knight in favour of 7...0-0 immediately; e.g.:

a) 8 ♠b3 gives Black the extra option of playing 8...b6 intending 9...♠b7, 10...♟bd7 and 11...♞c8, with a rock-solid position for Black, who can contemplate setting up a hedgehog structure with moves such as ...a6, ...e6, ...♞c7 and ...♞fd8. Note that Black also often has the option of playing the traditional ...♞xc3 and ...♟xe4. Given the option I would definitely feel comfortable playing this line as Black.

b) 8 0-0 a6 9 ♠b3 b5 10 ♞e1 (10 a4 b4 11 ♟d5 e6 12 ♟xf6+ ♞xf6! 13 ♟f3 gave Black a reasonable position in Kerkhoff-Los, Netherlands 1994, and 10 ♟d5 ♠b7 11 ♟xf6+ ♠xf6 12 ♠h6 ♞e8 13 ♞e1 ♟d7 is also fine for Black) 10...♠b7 (D) and now:



b1) 11 ♟d5 ♟bd7 12 ♠g5 transposes to line 'b32'.

b2) 11 a4 bxa4!? 12 ♠xa4 (12 ♞xa4 ♟bd7 13 ♠d5 ♟xd5 14 exd5 ♟b6 15 ♞b4 ♞c7 = Nicholson-Watson, British Ch (Southampton) 1986) 12...♞c7 (12...e6!? 13 ♠g5 ♟bd7 14 ♞d2 ♞c7 15 ♠xd7 ♟xd7 16 ♠h6 ♠xh6 17 ♞xh6 ♟c5 = Nicholson-Hodgson, British Ch (Southampton) 1986, according to Golubev) 13 ♠g5 ♟bd7 14 ♠xd7 (14 ♟d5 ♟xd5 15 exd5 ♟e5 16 ♟c6 ♠xc6 17 dxc6 e6 18 ♠f4 ♞fd8 19 ♠xe5 ♠xe5 = J.Horvath-Sehner, Budapest 1987) 14...♞xd7 15 ♟b3 ♞ac8 16 ♞d3 ♞e6 17 ♞ad1 (17 ♟a5?! ♠a8 18 ♞xa6 ♟xe4 19 ♟xe4 ♠xe4 20 f3 ♞f5 21 ♠xe7 ♠d4+ 22 ♟h1 ♠xf3 → Ernst) was played in Pekarek-Ernst, Dortmund 1992. In *Informator 54*, Ernst suggests 17...♞c4 =.

b3) 11 ♠g5 ♟bd7 and then:

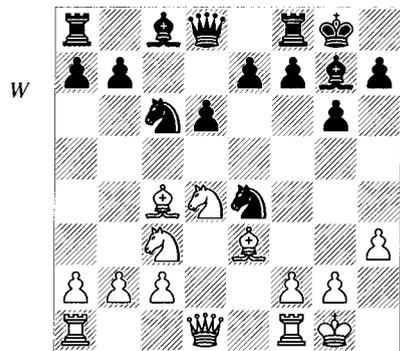
b31) 12 a4 b4 13 ♟d5 h6 (13...a5!? 14 ♞d2 ♞c8 15 ♠h6 ♠xh6 16 ♞xh6 e5! 17 ♟f3 ♠xd5 18 exd5 ♞e8 gave Black an excellent position in Zelčić-Tiviakov, Montecatini Terme 1994)

14 ♠h4 a5 15 ♞d2 e6 16 ♟xf6+ ♟xf6 17 f3 g5 18 ♠f2 ♟h5 19 ♞ad1 ♠e5 20 ♟b5 ♞e7 21 ♠d4 ♠g3 22 ♠f2 ♠e5 23 ♠d4 ♠g3 24 ♠f2 1/2-1/2 Kveinys-Pelletier, Essen 2001 is obviously OK for Black.

b32) 12 ♟d5 ♞e8 (12...e6 13 ♟xf6+ ♟xf6 was fine for Black in Lejlić-Hodgson, London 1994, and 12...♞c8 is also fully playable) 13 c3 ♞c8 (13...♟xd5 14 ♠xd5 ♞c7 15 a4 bxa4 16 ♞xa4 ♟c5 17 ♞a2?! e6 18 ♠xb7 ♞xb7 19 ♞e2 a5 20 ♞b5 ♞c7 was Klundt-W.Watson, Kecskemet 1988, which Watson assesses as slightly better for Black in *Informator 46*) 14 f3 ♟xd5 15 ♠xd5 ♞b6 16 ♠xb7 ♞xb7 17 ♟c2 ♟b6 with a slight advantage for Black, Kholmov-W.Watson, Sochi 1988.

8 ♠e3 0-0 9 ♠b3!

This move represents an important refinement in White's move-order. Instead, the more natural 9 0-0 allows 9...♟xe4! (D).



Although originally introduced by Pigusov in 1989, this dramatic blow was popularized largely by Shirov's fantastic win over Adams in 1991. I myself have always played this way on account of that game, and it was only when I came to write this chapter that I realized that Dragon expert Tiviakov consistently prefers 9...♠d7, transposing to the main lines.

a) Ftačnik recommended 10 ♟xe4 d5 11 ♟xc6 bxc6 12 ♠d3 dxe4 13 ♠xe4 ♞c7 14 c3, continuing 14...♠a6 15 ♞e1 f5 16 ♠d3! ±, when White may well be a little better on account of his superior pawn-structure, but it is not much of an edge, and in any event Black does not need to show his hand immediately. For example, it may be better to hold back on ...♠a6 and ...f5 in favour of, e.g., 14...♞b8 15 ♞e2 and now 15...♠e6 or 15...♞d8.

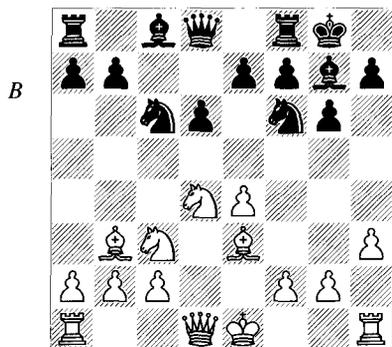
b) 10 ♖xf7+ ♗xf7!! 11 ♜xe4 ♜xd4 12 ♜xd4 e5 13 ♜e3 (13 ♖f3+? ♗e8! ♚) 13...d5 and now:

b1) 14 ♜g5+ ♗g8 ♚.

b2) 14 ♜g5 ♖d7 15 ♜c3 (15 ♖f3+? ♗e8 16 ♖b3 dxe4 17 ♖ad1 ♖e6 -+) 15...h6 16 ♜h4 d4 17 ♜e4 when Shirov assesses 17...♗g8 as ♚, whereas 17...♖c6 18 ♖e1 (18 ♖d3 ♗g8 19 ♖fe1 ♜e6 20 b3 ♖ac8 21 ♖ac1 b5 ♚ Lejlić-Brynell, Tjalfe 1995) 18...♜f5 19 f3 ♖ac8 20 c3 ♗g8 21 ♖b3+ ♗h7 ♚ Jansa-Hellers, Herning 1991.

b3) 14 ♜g3 is probably best: 14...♗g8 15 c3 ♜e6 16 ♜e2! (16 f4? d4! 17 cxd4 exf4 -+; 16 ♖e2 ♖h4 17 ♗h2 b6 18 ♖d2 h6 ♚ Peschardt-S.Hansen, Copenhagen 1995) 16...g5!? 17 ♖d2 h6 18 h4 gxh4 19 ♜xh6 ♖f6! 20 ♜g5?! ♖g6 21 ♜xh4 ♖f5! (intending 22...♖h5!) 22 f4 ♖g4! (22...♖h5? 23 ♜g5!) 23 ♜g5? ♖af8! ♚ 24 ♖f2 d4! 25 cxd4 exf4 26 ♜xf4 ♜c4 27 ♜e3 ♖xf2 28 ♜xf2 ♜xe2 0-1 Adams-Shirov, Biel 1991.

We now return to 9 ♜b3! (D):



Black has two options:

A: 9...♜d7 230

B: 9...♜a5! 232

A)

9...♜d7

Although I prefer the 9...♜a5 variation, Black must also be familiar with the 9...♜d7 lines as 9...♜a5 is less favourable where White delays the development of the c1-bishop, and White can essentially force a transposition.

10 0-0 ♖c8 11 f4

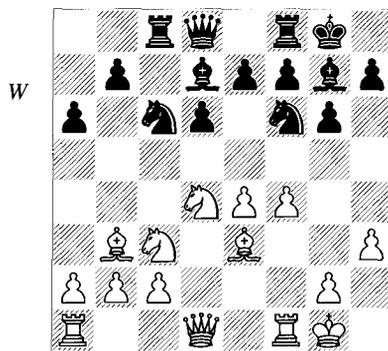
White has a common alternative in 11 ♖e1 ♜e5:

a) 12 ♖e2?! ♖xc3! 13 bxc3 ♜xe4 14 ♜d2 (14 f4 ♜xc3 15 ♖f1 ♜c6 16 ♖d3 ♖a5 17 ♜xc6 ♜xc6 18 ♜d4 ♜xd4+ 19 ♖xd4 e6!?) {19...♖e8 ♚} 20 ♖xe6? {20 ♖e3 ♜b5 21 ♖d3 ♖b6 ♚} 20...♜b5! 21 ♖e3 fxe6 22 ♖xe6+ ♗h8 23 ♖d1 ♖b6+ 0-1 Mitkov-Tiviakov, Mamaia jr Wch 1991) 14...♜xd2 15 ♖xd2 e6! 16 a4 ♖a5! 17 ♜b5 d5 18 ♖e3 a6 19 ♜d4 ♖c8 20 ♜e2 ♜c4 21 ♜xc4 ♖xc4 ♚ Aleksić-Tiviakov, Amantea 1991.

b) 12 ♖d2 ♜c4 13 ♜xc4 ♖xc4 14 ♖ad1 a6 15 ♜g5 (15 ♖d3 b5 16 a4 ♖b8 17 axb5 axb5 18 f3 ♖fc8 ♚ Nagy-Felegyhazi, Hajduszoboszlo 1995) 15...h6 16 ♜h4 g5 17 ♜g3 ♜h5 18 ♖e2 ♖xd4 19 ♖xh5 ♖xd1 20 ♖xd1 f5 gave Black good play in Farkas-Stoll, Budapest 1993.

c) 12 f4 ♜c4 13 ♜xc4 ♖xc4 14 ♖d3 (14 e5 is probably best met by 14...♜e8 with a probable transposition to the text) 14...♖c8! 15 e5 (15 ♖ad1 a6!? = Tiviakov) 15...♜e8 (15...dxe5!? 16 fxe5 ♜e8 17 ♖e4 e6 18 ♖xb7 ♜xe5 19 ♖xa7 ♜d6 gives Black some compensation for the pawn, but after 20 ♜f2 I doubt it is enough) 16 ♜f2 dxe5 17 fxe5 ♜c7 18 ♖ad1 ♖e8 19 ♜h4! and now rather than 19...h6?! (*Deep Junior*-Golubev, www.KasparovChess.com 2000), Mikhail Golubev, in his annotations for the website www.chess-sector.odessa.ua, suggested that Black should play 19...b5 immediately. Golubev does not offer an assessment of this position, but it looks as though it should be a bit better for White with accurate play. On the other hand, Black's position remains very solid, so there should be a tense struggle ahead.

11...a6 (D)



12 ♖f3

Alternatives:

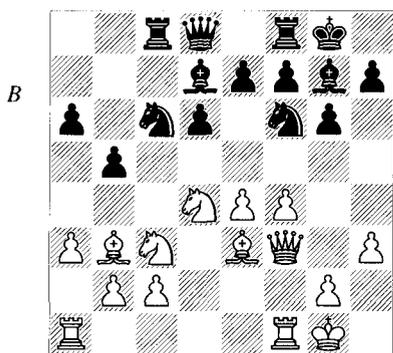
a) 12 e5?! dxe5 13 ♜xc6 ♖xc6! (13...♜xc6 14 fxe5 ♚) 14 fxe5 ♜h5 15 ♖f3 ♜xe5 16

♙xf7+ ♖g7 17 g4 ♖f6 ♠ Korneev-Tiviakov, Paris 1991.

b) 12 ♖f3!? has been played a few times. So far White's results have been quite good, but there really is not much to go on by way of serious analysis. Interestingly, Fritz likes 12...♗h5 and this has actually done OK for Black in practice; e.g., 13 ♖e1 ♗a5 14 g4 ♗xb3 15 axb3 ♗f6 16 e5 ♗e8 17 ♗d5 ♙e6 18 ♖a5 ♙xd5 19 ♖xd5 dxe5 20 ♖xd8 ♙xd8 21 fxe5 ♗c7 22 ♙ad1 ♗e6 = Guyot-Marzolo, Besançon 1998.

12...b5 13 ♙ad1

This move permits Black to continue his advance on the queenside, but White can also discourage 13...b4 with 13 a3 (D). Then:



a) Golubev likes 13...♖c7, but I am not convinced that the queen achieves very much on c7 in this particular position. Play might continue:

a1) 14 ♗xc6 ♙xc6 15 ♗d5 ♗xd5 16 exd5 ♙d7 17 c3 a5 18 ♙ac1 ♖b7 19 g4! b4! 20 axb4 axb4 21 ♙d4 e5! -+ 22 dxe6 ♙xd4+ 23 cxd4 ♖xf3 24 exf7+ ♖g7 25 ♖xf3 ♙xc1+ 0-1 Vasiliev-Golubev, Odessa 2001.

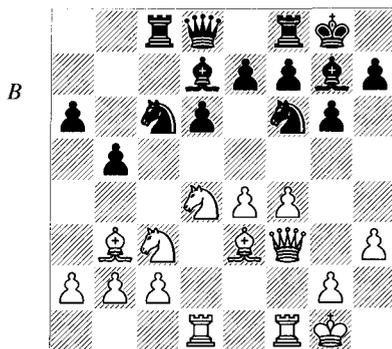
a2) 14 g4 ♗xd4 15 ♙xd4 ♙e6!? (15...♙c6! looks better) 16 ♙ad1 ♙c4!? 17 ♖f2 a5 18 f5 b4 19 ♗d5 (19 g5!? may be stronger) 19...♗xd5 20 exd5 bxa3 21 ♙xg7 ♖xg7 22 ♙xc4 ♖xc4 = King-Hodgson, British Ch (Morecambe) 1981.

a3) 14 ♙ad1! is White's best approach, keeping things simple: 14...♗a5 15 g4 (15 f5!? also looks dangerous; for example, 15...♗c4 16 ♙xc4 ♖xc4 17 g4 h6 18 h4 gxf5 19 exf5 ♙c6 20 ♗xc6 ♖xc6 21 ♖h3 ♗h8 22 g5 ♗g8 23 ♗d5 ± Yu Shaoteng-Tregubov, Wijk aan Zee 2002) 15...♗xb3 16 cxb3 ♙c6 (16...♖b7? 17 e5 ♖xf3 18 ♗xf3 ♗e8 19 ♗d5 +- Chistiakov-Taimanov, Leningrad 1951) 17 g5 ♗d7 18 ♗xc6 ♖xc6 19 ♗d5 ♖fe8 20 ♙c1 ♖b7 21

♙xc8 ♖xc8 22 ♙c1 ± Roesse-P.Bauer, Bundesliga 1988/9.

b) 13...♗a5!? is my preference. 14 ♙ad1 (14 ♙a2 ♗c4 15 ♙xc4 ♙xc4 16 ♙ad1 ♖c7 17 ♖fe1 e5!? 18 fxe5 dxe5 19 ♗de2 ♙c6 gave Black excellent play in Vass-Rajlich, Budapest 2001) 14...♗c4 (14...♗xb3 15 cxb3! brings Black's queenside counterplay to an abrupt halt) 15 ♙c1 ♖c7 16 ♗h1 e5! 17 ♗de2 ♙c6 18 f5 (18 ♙xc4 bxc4 19 fxe5 dxe5 20 ♙g5 ♗xe4! 21 ♗xe4 f5 ♠ Collins-McLean, Port Erin 1998) 18...h6 19 ♙xc4 bxc4 20 ♗d5 ♙xd5 21 exd5 e4! 22 ♖e3 g5 23 h4 g4 24 ♖g3 ♖fe8 25 ♙e3 h5 26 ♗f4 ♖e5 27 ♙d4 ♙ce8!! 28 ♙de1 (28 ♙xe5 ♙xe5 is of course critical, but the closed nature of the position ensures Black full positional compensation for the exchange; whereas White's rooks will struggle to develop activity, Black's pieces are all well-placed and can incrementally pressurize White's weak d5- and f5-pawns) 28...e3! 29 ♙xe5 dxe5 30 ♗xh5 (30 ♗e2 ♙h6 is very awkward for White according to Ward) 30...♗xh5 31 ♖xg4 ♗f6 32 ♖g3 ♖c5 33 ♙xe3 ♖xd5 34 ♖f3 e4 ♠ Hector-Tiviakov, Haninge 1992.

We now return to the position after 13 ♙ad1 (D).



13...b4 14 ♗xc6?!

Or:

a) 14 ♗ce2 ♖c7 (14...a5 15 e5 dxe5 16 ♗xc6 e4 17 ♗xd8 exf3 18 ♖xf3 ♙cxd8 19 ♙b6 ♙a8 = Valenti-Diaz, Teesside 1974 and 14...♗a5!? are also interesting) 15 g4 a5 16 g5 ♗h5 17 ♗xc6 ♙xc6 18 ♗d4 a4 19 ♙d5 ♙xd4! 20 ♙xd4 ♙b5 21 ♖f2?! e6 22 ♖xb4 ♖a5 -+ Afek-Prié, France 1999.

b) 14 ♗d5 is probably best, but 14...♗xd5 15 exd5 ♗xd4 16 ♙xd4 ♙xd4+ 17 ♙xd4 ♖b6,

as in D.Gross-Prié, Clichy 1998, should be fine for Black.

14...♙xc6 15 ♘d5 ♘xd5 16 exd5!? ♙b5 17 ♖f2 a5!?

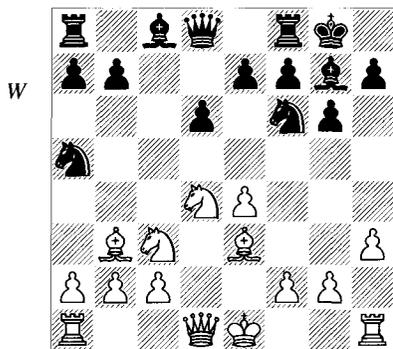
17...♙xb2!?! is also possible, and probably good for Black, but he instead decides to go after the b3-bishop, highlighting the drawbacks to 16 exd5, which effectively entombed the white bishop on b3.

18 a4 bxa3 19 bxa3 a4 20 ♙a2 ♖c3

♠ Z'berg-Golubev, Scuol 2001.

B)

9...♘a5! (D)



10 0-0

This is definitely the main line, but White also has the option of delaying castling in favour of immediate operations:

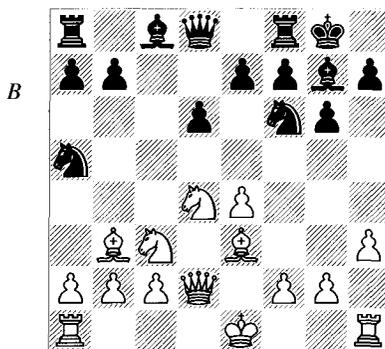
a) 10 f4 and then:

a1) 10...b6!? 11 e5! ♘h5 12 ♙d5 dxe5 13 fxe5 (13 ♙xa8? exd4 →) 13...♙a6!?! 14 ♖f3 (14 ♙xa8 ♖xa8 15 ♖f3 ♙b7 gives Black good compensation) 14...♖c8 15 0-0-0 (Chris Ward gives 15 g4 ♘g3 16 ♖xg3 ♖xc3 17 ♙xf7+ ♖xf7 18 bxc3 ♖d5 ♠) 15...♖xc3! 16 bxc3 ♖c8 17 ♘c6 (17 g4 ♖xc3 18 gxh5 is critical, when it is not clear who is better) 17...♘xc6 18 ♙xc6 ♘g3! 19 ♖xg3 ♖xc6 gave Black great compensation in Hector-Ward, Copenhagen 2002, and he went on to win.

a2) It may be safer to chop the b3-bishop off immediately; e.g., 10...♘xb3 11 axb3 b6 12 ♖f3 ♙b7 13 g4 ♖d7 (13...a6 14 g5 ♘h5 15 f5 ♖c8 16 0-0 ♙e5 17 fxg6 fxg6 18 ♖g4 ♘g3 19 ♘e6? ♖xf1+ 20 ♖xf1 ♖d7 21 ♖f3 ♘xe4 22 ♙d4 ♘xg5 0-1 Mitrović-I.Marković, Vrnjačka Banja 1996) 14 0-0-0 ♖ac8 15 g5 ♘h5 16 f5

♙xd4! 17 ♖xd4 ♖xf5 18 ♖g2 ♖e5 ♠/♠ Movsesian-Brodsky, Koszalin 1998.

b) 10 ♖d2 (D) was introduced by Nigel Short. White introduces the possibility of 11 ♙h6, exchanging the dark-squared bishops, and delays castling until it is clear which wing will prove a more appropriate home for the white king.

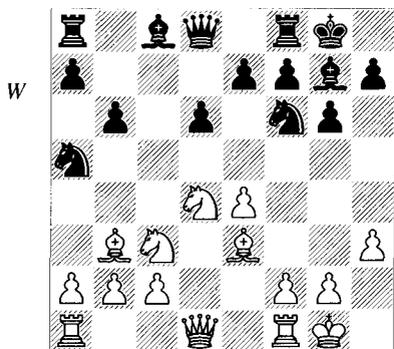


b1) The stem game in this variation continued 10...♙d7 11 ♙h6 ♖c8 12 ♙xg7 ♘xg7 13 ♖d3 (Short also mentions the possibility of 13 0-0-0!?! after which Black could consider changing the nature of the position with 13...e5 14 ♘f3 ♘xb3+ 15 axb3 ♖c6 or continuing in Dragon fashion with 13...b5!?) 13...a6 14 f4 e5! 15 ♘de2 ♖b6 16 0-0-0 ♙b5! 17 ♖f3 (17 ♘xb5 ♖xb5 =) 17...♙xe2 18 ♖xe2 ♘xb3+ 19 axb3 exf4 20 ♖hf1 and now rather than 20...♖a5? 21 ♖xf4, which favoured White in Short-Kramnik, Novgorod 1997, Short mentions 20...♘h5! 21 ♖d2 (21 ♖f3 ♖fe8 22 ♖d2 ♖e6 23 ♘d5 ♖d8 24 ♘xf4 ♘xf4 25 ♖xf4 ♖e7 = is given by Rogozenko in *ChessBase Magazine*) 21...♖fe8! 22 ♘b1! (22 ♖xd6?! ♖xd6 23 ♖xd6 ♘g3! intending 24 ♖xf4 ♖xc3 →) 22...♖e6 23 ♖f3 ♖c6 ♠ (*Informator* 70).

b2) A good alternative to Kramnik's approach is 10...♘xb3!?! 11 axb3 d5 12 e5 ♘e4 13 ♘xe4 dxe4 14 ♙f4 ♖b6! 15 ♖e3 f6! 16 ♖xe4 fxe5 17 ♙xe5 ♙f5 18 ♖d5+ (18 ♘xf5 ♖xf5 19 ♙g3 ♙xb2 20 ♖d1 ♙e5! - Alterman) 18...e6 19 ♖a5 ♙xe5 20 ♖xe5 ♙xc2! 21 ♘c2 (21 ♖e3! ♖b4+ 22 ♖c3 ♖xc3+ 23 bxc3 ♙d3 24 0-0-0 ♙a6 = Alterman) 21...♖xf2+ 22 ♘d1 ♖ac8! 23 ♖e4? (23 ♖xe6+ ♘g7 24 ♖e5+ ♘g8 =) and now rather than 23...♖fd8+?, as in Oll-Alterman, Beijing 1997, Alterman gives 23...e5! 24 ♘c1 (24 ♖d5+ ♖f7 ♠; 24 ♖a4 ♖fd8+ 25

♖c1 b5 26 ♖a6 ♖d4 27 ♖xg6+ ♖f8 wins for Black) 24...♗f4 25 ♖d5+ ♗f7 26 ♖e4 ♗fc7 27 ♖b1 ♖xc2 28 ♖d5+ ♖g7 29 ♖xe5+ ♖h6 30 ♖a4 ♖8c5 ♯. The annotations here are based on Alterman's comments in *Informator 70*.

10...b6 (D)



11 ♖e1

Alternatives:

a) 11 ♖d3 ♖b7 and now:

a1) 12 ♗d5?! ♗xb3 13 ♗xf6+ ♖xf6 14 axb3 d5 ♯/♯ Brunner-Velimirović, Novi Sad OL 1990.

a2) 12 ♖ad1 ♗xb3 13 axb3 a6 14 f3 ♖c7 15 ♖d2 b5 16 ♗fd1 b4 17 ♗a4 d5 ♯ Kholmov-Tibensky, Stary Smokovec 1996.

a3) 12 ♖g5 ♗xb3 13 axb3 a6 14 ♗fe1 h6 was already equal in J.Polgar-Topalov, Novgorod 1996, which continued 15 ♖d2?! (15 ♖h4 is better) 15...b5 16 f4 e6 17 ♖h2 ♖c8 18 ♖c2 ♖c7 19 b4 ♗fd8 20 ♗b3 e5! 21 fxe5 d5! 22 exd5 ♗xd5 23 ♖g3 ♗xb4 24 ♗f1 ♖e8! 25 ♖f4 g5! →.

a4) 12 ♖d5 ♖d7 13 ♖ad1 (13 ♖xb7 ♖xb7 14 ♖ad1 ♖ac8 15 ♗fe1 was Moldovan-Marín, Bucharest 1994 and now Marín suggests 15...a6! 16 ♗f3 b5 17 a3 ♗c4 18 ♖c1 ♖c7 ♯) 13...♖ac8 14 ♗fe1 a6 (the immediate 14...♗fe8!? as in Semenova-Wang Shuai, Budapest 2001, has the virtue of preventing White's next manoeuvre because White will have to take time to play a4) 15 a4! ♗fe8 16 ♖a2! (in *Informator 70*, Marín mentions 16 ♖e2 ♖xd5! 17 exd5 ♖b7 which looks equal, 16 ♗f3 ♗xd5 17 exd5 ♗c4 18 ♖c1 b5 19 axb5 axb5 which appears slightly better for Black, and 16 ♗de2 ♖xd5 17 exd5 ♗c4 18 ♖c1 b5 19 axb5 ♗e5! 20 ♖g3 axb5, when Black holds the initiative) 16...♖c7 17 ♗f3! ♗d7 18 ♖d4! ♗c4 19 ♖xc4 (19 ♖xg7

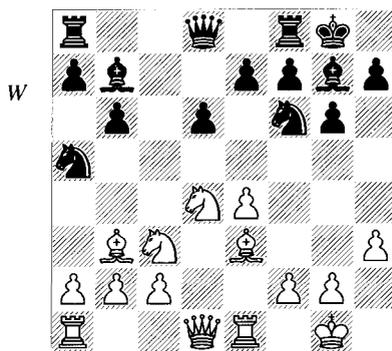
♖xg7 20 ♗d5 ♖xd5 21 exd5 ♗f6 22 ♖d4 b5 23 axb5 axb5 24 ♖e2 ♖c5 25 c3 = Marín) 19...♖xc4 20 ♖e3 ♖b4 21 ♖xg7 ♖xg7 22 ♖c1 ♗f6 was agreed drawn in Mitkov-Marín, Sitges 1997, but Marín suggests that 23 e5 dx5 24 ♗xe5 is a little better for White.

b) 11 f4 ♖b7 (11...♖a6!?) 12 ♖d3 ♖c8 13 ♖ae1 (13 ♗d5 ♗d7 14 c4? ♗c5 ♯ Della Morte-Felgaer, Peru 2001) 13...♖xc3 14 ♖xc3 ♗xe4 15 ♖d3 ♗xb3 16 axb3 e5 17 ♗e2 ♖a8 18 b4 ♗f6 19 ♗f2 ♗e4 20 ♗ff1 ♖e8 21 ♖h2 ♗f6 22 ♖g1 ♗d5 23 ♖d2 e4 24 ♖b3 e3 was very unclear in Mortensen-Kudrin, Copenhagen 1983. Black went on to win, and is certainly better in the final position, but White's play could undoubtedly have been improved at various points.

c) 11 f3 ♖b7 12 ♗f2 ♖c8!? 13 ♖f1 ♖a6 14 ♖e1 ♗c4 15 ♖xc4 ♖xc4 16 b3 ♖c8 17 ♗d5 ♗xd5 18 exd5 e5! 19 dx6 fxe6 20 c4 d5!? 21 cxd5 exd5 22 ♖c2 ♖d7 23 ♖d2 ♖fc8 = Hector-Rogozenko, Hamburg 2003.

d) 11 ♗d5 ♖a6 (11...♗xb3 12 ♗c6!? is definitely a trick to watch out for! Unfortunately for White, it doesn't quite work in this position: 12...♗xd5! 13 ♗xd8 ♗xe3 14 fxe3 ♗xa1 15 ♖d5 {Moraru-Milu, Alba Iulia 1997} 15...♖b7 16 ♖xb7 ♗fxd8 17 ♖xa1 ♖xb2 18 ♗f1 ♖f6 looks OK for Black) 12 ♗xf6+ ♖xf6 13 ♖e1 ♖d7 14 ♖d2 ♖ac8 15 ♖ad1 ♖c7 16 ♖g5 ♖h8 17 ♖e3 ♗fe8 18 ♖f3 ♗xb3 19 axb3 ♖b7 ♯ Iruzubieta Villaluenga-Komljenović, San Sebastian 1991.

11...♖b7 (D)



12 ♖g5!?

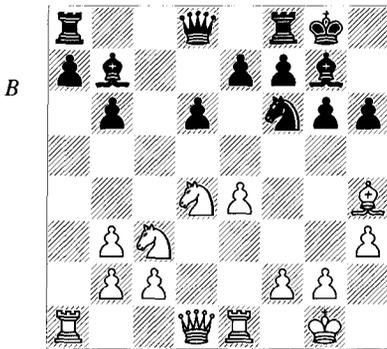
White resolves to move the bishop again, which perhaps indicates that it was misplaced on e3 in the first place. More obvious is 12 f3 a6 13 ♗d5 ♖c8 (13...♗xb3! 14 ♗xf6+ {14 axb3

♖xd5 15 exd5 ♙xd5} 14...♙xf6 15 axb3 d5! looks stronger) 14 ♖e6!? fxe6 15 ♙xb6 ♖xb3 16 ♙xd8 exd5 17 ♙xe7 ♖xa1 18 ♙xf8 was Burnoiu-Golubev, Bucharest 2002, and now 18...♙xf8! 19 ♖xa1 dxe4 looks good, although the position remains unclear.

12...♖xb3

This was Kasparov's choice in a recent game with Anand, but equally popular is 12...a6 13 ♖d5 e6 14 ♙xf6 ♙xf6 15 ♖xf6+ ♖xf6 16 c3 ♖ac8 17 ♖d3 ♖fd8 18 ♖g3 b5 19 ♖ad1 e5 20 ♖f3 ♖xb3 21 axb3 ♖e6 22 b4 f6 23 ♖h2 d5! 24 exd5 ♖xd5 25 ♖xd5 ♖xd5 ♢ Nieminen-Sutovsky, Port Erin 1999. Similar lines also occur with 12...h6 13 ♙h4 inserted.

13 axb3 h6 14 ♙h4 (D)



14...♖d7!

Before this move was introduced by Kasparov, Black had relied upon 14...a6 15 ♖d5 e6 (15...♖xd5 16 exd5 ±) 16 ♖xf6+ ♙xf6 17 ♙xf6 ♖xf6 18 ♖d2, but the resulting positions are slightly favourable to White, who can gradually improve his position by pressurizing the d6- and a6-pawns, with relatively little chance of losing. If Black can favourably open the position, then his light-squared bishop has enormous potential, but this is easier said than done, and in practice White has scored well from this position.

15 ♖d2

15 ♖d5? just loses a pawn to 15...♖xd5 16 exd5 g5 17 ♙g3 ♙xd5 ♢, and 15 f3 does not appear to place Black under much pressure: 15...♖fd8 16 ♖d2 e5!? 17 ♙xf6 ♙xf6 18 ♖db5 ♙g5 19 ♖d3 a6 20 ♖a3 b5 21 ♖d5 ♙xd5 22 ♖xd5 ♙f4 23 ♙e2 ♖ac8 24 b4 ♖a7+ 1/2-1/2 Naiditsch-Leko, Dortmund 2003.

15...♖h5!

An excellent concept! Kasparov takes the g3-square away from White's dark-squared bishop, preparing a timely ...g5 advance, and at the same time reveals the potential of the f8-rook, by introducing the possibility of ...f5!?

16 f3

16 ♖de2 g5 17 ♙g3 f5!? 18 exf5 ♖xf5 looks very nice for Black, whose bishops slice across the full length of the board.

16...e5!? 17 ♖de2

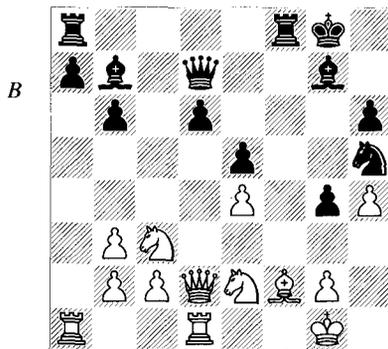
Rogozenko gave 17 ♖db5 d5 18 ♖xa7 (18 exd5 a6 19 ♖a3 b5 ♢) 18...d4 19 ♖cb5 f5 20 exf5, when Black has a strong initiative after either 20...♖xf5 and 21...♖af8, or 20...gxf5, when White's knights look very awkward and Black can already think about crashing through in the centre with 21...e4!

17...f5 18 ♖ed1!?

18 ♖ad1 looks more natural, but perhaps the rook has a purpose on the a-file.

18...fxe4 19 fxe4 g5 20 ♙f2 g4 21 h4 (D)

21 ♖xd6? ♖f7 22 ♙e3 (22 ♙h4 gxh3 23 ♖f1 ♖f4 24 ♖xf4 exf4 ♢) 22...gxh3 23 ♖f1 ♖f6! 24 g3 and now 24...♖xe4!? ♢ is given by Rogozenko, with the idea 25 ♖xe4? h2+ —, but 24...h2+ looks even stronger.



21...♖f4 22 ♖xd6 ♖f7

In terms of improvements, 22...♖xe2+!? 23 ♖xe2 ♖xd6 (or 23...♖f7 attacking f2 and e4) 24 ♖xd6 ♙xe4 certainly merits consideration.

23 ♖xf4! exf4 24 ♖d7 ♖xd7 25 ♖xd7 ♖f7 26 ♖d6 ♖h7 27 ♖ad1 ♖e8

27...♙xc3 28 bxc3 ♙xe4 29 ♖e1! allows White to hold the balance in an otherwise difficult ending.

28 ♖d7 ♖ee7 29 ♖xe7 ♖xe7 30 ♙d4 ♖d7 31 ♖d5 ♙xd5 32 ♙xg7 ♙c6

1/2-1/2 Anand-Kasparov, Linares 2003.

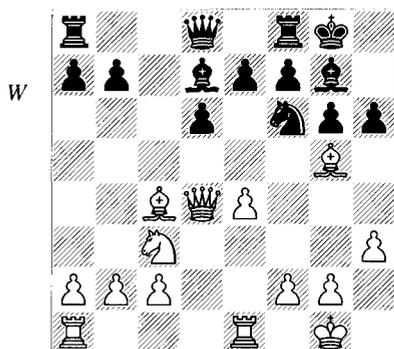
Part 2: White Plays h3 and ♖g5

1 e4 c5 2 ♖f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♗xd4 ♖f6 5 ♗c3
g6 6 ♖c4 ♗g7 7 h3 ♗c6 8 0-0 9 ♖e1

9 ♖b3 gives Black the option of transposing to the main line of this variation with 9...♗d7 10 ♖e1 (note that 10 ♖g5?! ♗xe4! is good for Black and 10 ♖e3 leads us back to the lines considered in Part 1) or trying 9...♗a5, although notably this should give White an improved version of the lines considered in the last part after 10 ♖g5, as often White has to commit the bishop to e3 (fortifying the d4-knight) and only later move it to g5.

9...♗d7 10 ♖b3

10 ♖g5?! is inaccurate due to 10...♗xd4! 11 ♖xd4 h6! (D).



Now:

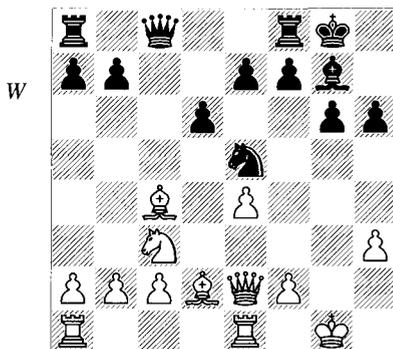
a) 12 ♖e3 concedes the important dark-squared bishop: 12...♗g4 ♖.

b) 12 ♖c1!? is probably best, but looks rather pathetic. After 12...♗c6 13 ♖d3 ♗d7 14 ♖g3 ♗h7 15 ♖h4 e6 16 ♖g3 ♗e5 Black was absolutely fine in Ljubojević-Anand, Monaco rpd 1998.

c) 12 ♖h4 g5 13 ♖g3 ♗h5 gave Black excellent play in Waller-Kieran, Witley 2000.

d) 12 ♖xf6 ♖xf6 13 ♖d3 and now Black simply has to be alert to avoid something like 13...♖c8? 14 e5!, as in Kengis-Kupreichik, Gistrup 1997, when the g6-pawn is suddenly under attack. 13...♖g7! is fine for Black.

e) 12 ♗d2? ♗g4 13 ♖d3 ♗e5 14 ♖e2 (14 ♖f1 ♖xh3! 15 gxh3 ♗f3+ 16 ♗g2 ♗xd2 →) 14...♖xh3!! 15 gxh3 ♖c8 (D) with the following possibilities:



e1) Ward mentions 16 ♗d3 ♖xh3 17 f4 ♗f3+ 18 ♗f2 ♗xd2 19 e5 (19 ♖xd2 ♖h2+ 20 ♗e3 ♖d4+! →) 19...♖h4+ 20 ♗e3 dxe5 21 ♗xd2 ♖xf4+ 22 ♗d1 f5 ♖.

e2) 16 ♖b3 ♖xh3 17 f4 ♖g3+ 18 ♗f1 (18 ♖g2 ♗f3+ → and 18 ♗h1 ♗f3 19 ♖g2 ♖h4+ → illustrate just how rapidly Black's initiative has become decisive) 18...♗g4 19 ♖g2 ♗h2+ 20 ♗g1 ♗f3+ 21 ♗f1 ♖xg2+ 22 ♖xg2 ♗xd2 23 ♗d5 e6 24 ♖ad1 exd5 25 ♖xd2 ♖xc3 26 bxc3 ♖ac8 27 ♖xd5 ♖xc3 28 ♖xd6 ♖xc2+ 29 ♗g3 ♖fc8 → McShane-S.Hansen, Copenhagen Politiken Cup 1999.

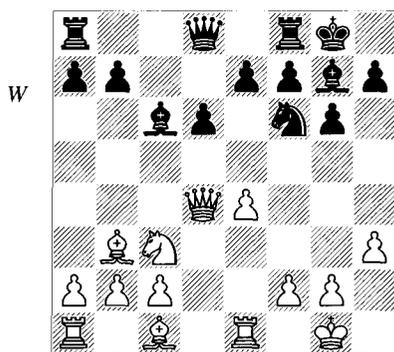
e3) Probably best is 16 ♗d5 ♖xh3 17 f4 ♖g3+ 18 ♗f1 ♗g4 19 ♖g2 ♗h2+ 20 ♗g1 ♗f3+ 21 ♗f1 ♗h2+ 22 ♗g1 ♗f3+ 23 ♗f1 ♖xg2+ 24 ♖xg2 ♗xd2 25 ♗xe7+ ♗h7 26 ♗d3 ♖fe8 27 ♗d5 ♖ac8 28 c3 (H.Hunt-Hodgson, British Ch (Scarborough) 1999) when White is a pawn down in a queenless middlegame, but retains chances of holding a draw because of the opposite-coloured bishops.

10...♗xd4!

This move represents a smooth equalizer for Black, but there may be occasions where Black wishes to maintain more tension in the position, and for this purpose 10...♖a5 deserves attention: 11 ♖e3 (11 ♗f3 ♖h5!? 12 ♖f4 ♖ad8 13 ♖e2 ♗a5 14 e5 dxe5 15 ♖xe5 ♗xb3 16 axb3 ♖xe5 17 ♖xe5 a6 = B.Kristensen-S.Hansen, Torshavn 1997) 11...♖fe8 12 f4 (12 ♖d2?! runs into 12...♗xe4! 13 ♗xc6 ♖xc3!! 14 bxc3 ♗xd2 15 ♗xe7+ ♖xe7 16 ♖xd2 ♖xe1+ 17 ♖xe1 ♖c6 18 ♖e7 d5 with a very comfortable ending for Black, J.Kristiansen-Borge, Danish Ch 1996) 12...♗xd4 13 ♖xd4 ♖c6 14 ♖d3 ♖ad8 15 ♖e3 b6 16 e5 dxe5 17 fxe5 ♗d5 18 ♖f2 ♖f8 19 ♗e4 h6 20 ♖ad1 ♖a6 gives rise to an unclear position in which it is not clear what is more

important: White's active space advantage or Black's structural superiority. McShane-Borge, Copenhagen Politiken Cup 1998 continued 21 c3 ♖a4 22 ♖d2 ♖xb3 23 axb3 ♖b7 24 ♖f3 ♖c8 25 ♖f2 ♖c7 26 ♖e3 ♖e6 27 ♖c1 ♖c7 28 ♖g3 ♖d5 29 ♖ef1 ♖xe5 ♞.

11 ♖xd4 ♖c6 (D)



12 ♖d1

White must move the queen in order to avoid 12...♗d5 and 13...♗xc3, shattering White's queenside structure, but there are two other retreat-squares that have been tried.

a) 12 ♖e3 e6 (12...♗d7 makes more sense when the queen is on d3, as 13...♗c5 would then gain a tempo on White's queen; nevertheless, the move is still playable; e.g., 13 ♖d2 ♗c5 14 ♖ad1 ♖c8 15 ♖d5 e6 16 ♖xc6 bxc6 17 ♖c1 was Kveinys-S.B.Hansen, Bundesliga 2001/2; White went on to win a long and complex game, but it is by no means obvious that he is any better at this stage) 13 ♖d3 d5 14 exd5 ♗xd5 15 ♗xd5 ♖xd5 16 ♖xd5 ♖xd5 17 ♖xd5 exd5 18 c3 (Ward mentions 18 ♖e7 ♖fe8! 19 ♖xb7 ♖e1+ 20 ♖h2 ♖e5+ 21 g3 ♖d4 22 ♖g2, when both 22...♖e2 and 22...♖ae8 give Black active compensation) 18...d4 19 cxd4 1/2-1/2 S.B.Hansen-Polzin, Bundesliga 2003/4.

b) 12 ♖d3 ♗d7 13 ♖e3 (13 ♖g5 h6 14 ♖e3 ♗c5 15 ♖xc5 dxc5 16 ♖g3 e6 17 ♖ad1 ♖a5 ♞ Freeman-Hummel, Murek U-16 Ech 1998) 13...♗c5 14 ♖xc5 dxc5 15 ♖ad1 gives rise to a pretty level position, where Black can take comfort in the fact that his well-placed bishop-pair will benefit him in any ensuing ending.

12...b5 13 ♗d5

13 ♖g5 a5 14 a3 (14 ♖d5!? ♖c8 15 ♖xc6 ♖xc6 16 ♗xb5 ♖c5 17 e5 {17 ♖xf6 ♖xf6 18

a4 ♖xb2 19 ♖b1 ♖g7 ♞) 17...♖xb5 18 exf6 exf6 19 ♖c1 f5 = Gofshtein) 14...♖c8 15 ♖d2 (15 ♗d5 e6 16 ♗xf6+ ♖xf6 17 ♖xf6 ♖xf6 18 c3 ♖f4 =) 15...♖e8 16 ♗d5 ♖xd5 17 exd5 ♗d7 18 c3 (Emms-de la Riva, Mondariz 2000) 18...a4 19 ♖c2 ♗b6 20 ♖e2 ♗c4 21 ♖ab1 (21 ♖xe7? ♖d7 22 ♖g4 ♖xg4 23 hxg4 ♖e5 24 ♖h4 ♗xb2 ♞) 21...♖d7 = Gofshtein.

13...a5 14 ♖g5

14 a3 ♗d7 (14...e6 15 ♗xf6+ ♖xf6 looks fine for Black) 15 ♖g5 ♖xd5 16 ♖xd5 ♖b8 17 ♖b1 b4 18 axb4 axb4 19 ♖g4 ♖e8 20 ♖h4 ♖f6 21 ♖xf6 ♗xf6 22 ♖b3 was a little better for White in S.Hansen-W.Watson, Bundesliga 1998/9.

14...♖xd5 15 ♖xd5 ♖b8 16 c3 h6 17 ♖d2 ♗d7 18 ♖e2 ♗b6 19 ♖ab1

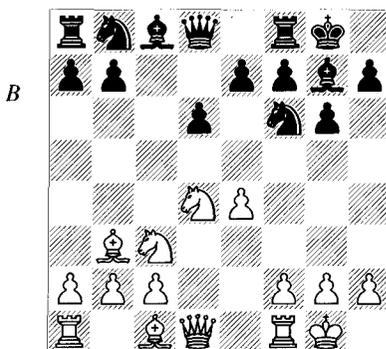
19 ♖xb5 ♗xd5 20 ♖xd5 ♖xb2 ♞/♞.

19...♖d7 20 a3 ♖fc8 21 ♖b3 ♗c4 22 ♖f4 ♖c5 23 ♖ed1 ♖c7

1/2-1/2 Wedberg-P.Carlsson, Sweden 2001. Although the players agreed a draw at this stage, Black has fully equalized and can look to the future with confidence.

Part 3: White Delays or Omits h3

1 e4 c5 2 ♗f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♗xd4 ♗f6 5 ♗c3 g6 6 ♖c4 ♖g7 7 0-0 0-0 8 ♖b3!? (D)



For the time being White delays h3 in favour of quicker development. This has two benefits: firstly, if White decides not to place his dark-squared bishop on e3, then the move h3 may prove relatively redundant in any case; secondly, if Black decides to delay 8...♗c6 in

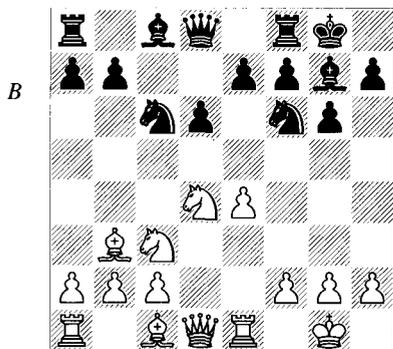
favour of the plan with 8...a6 and 9...b5 then White has an extra move with which to counter this plan.

8...♗c6

After 8...a6 9 ♖e1 b5, 10 a4!, as introduced in S.Hansen-Bang, Copenhagen 1993, is known to be good for White, but 8...b6!? 9 ♖g5 ♗b7 might be worth a try.

9 ♖e1!? (D)

9 h3 transposes to the lines considered in Parts 1 and 2.



9...♗g4!?

This unusual thrust certainly attempts to exploit the fact that White has not played h3, and Black has scored well with this line, which is more than can be said for the alternatives:

a) 9...a6 10 ♗xc6!? (10 ♖g5 would be more normal) 10...bxc6 11 ♖g5 h6 12 ♖h4 ♗h5 (12...♗d7 13 f4 ♗c5 14 ♖f2 ±) 13 f3 ♗h7 14 ♗d2 ♖e5 15 ♖f2 ♗a5 16 ♖ad1 ♖b8 (Short-Ivanchuk, Novgorod 1994) 17 ♖e3! g5 18 g3 ± Short.

b) 9...♖d7 10 ♖g5!?! has been used to good effect by Hector, but hitherto there have not

been sufficient practical examples to conclude whether White really gains anything by omitting h3 for the time being.

c) 9...♗xd4 10 ♗xd4 ♗d7 (10...b6 11 ♖g5 h6 12 ♖h4 g5 13 ♖g3 ♖b7 14 ♗d3 ± Komora-Ac, Slovakian Cht 1995/6) 11 ♗d3 ♗c5 12 ♗g3 ♖e6 13 ♖g5 h6 14 ♖e3 ♗xb3 15 axb3 b6 16 f4 ♗h7 17 ♖ad1 ♗c8 18 ♖d4 ♖xd4+ 19 ♖xd4 ♗c5 20 ♗f2 ± Hraček-Kulhanek, Pardubice 2003.

d) 9...♖g4 10 ♗d3! ♗e5 (10...♗xd4 11 ♗xd4 ♗d7 12 ♗d3 ♗c5 13 ♗g3 ♖d7 14 ♗h4 ♖e8 15 ♖g5 showed Black's activity to be only temporary in nature in Jansa-Jirovsky, Czech Republic 2002) 11 ♗f1! ♖d7 12 h3 ♖c8 13 f4 ♗c6 14 ♗f3 ♖e6 15 ♖e3 ♖xb3 16 axb3 a6 17 ♗f2 e6 18 ♖ad1 is at least a bit better for White, Hector-S.Hansen, Hamburg 2002.

e) 9...♗a5 10 h3 ♗xd4 11 ♗xd4 ♖d7 12 ♖d2 ♗h5 13 ♗d3 ♖fe8 14 a4 ♖ac8 15 ♖ad1 ♖c6 16 ♖e3 a6 17 f4 ♗h4 18 ♖f1 ♖f8 19 ♖d4 ± S.Hansen-Desbonnes, Badalona 1995.

10 ♗f3!?

10 ♗xc6 bxc6 11 ♖g5 ♗b6! 12 ♗d2 h6! 13 ♖h4 is fine for Black, but instead of now weakening the kingside with 13...g5 (Lane-Middelburg, Antwerp 1996), Black should keep things tight with 13...♗d4!.

10...♗a5

10...♗a5!?, with a view to chopping off the b3-bishop, is an attractive idea.

11 ♗d5 e6 12 ♗e3 ♗ge5!?

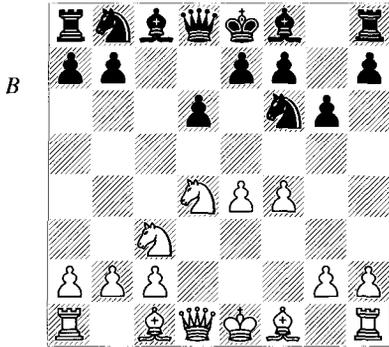
12...♗xe3 13 ♖xe3 ♖d8 is a more simplistic idea.

13 ♗xe5 dxe5 14 c3 ♗c7

The position is unclear, Matikozian-Shabalov, New York 2000.

20 6 f4: The Levenfish Variation

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♗xd4 ♘f6 5 ♖c3 g6 6 f4 (D)



This move introduces the Levenfish Variation. Once regarded as a sharp alternative to the mainstream Yugoslav lines, the Levenfish has now fallen into disrepute, with very few strong players placing their confidence in the line. However, although master-level chess has all but abandoned the Levenfish Variation, the line still contains a variety of cheap tricks, and it remains a popular choice at club level. Interestingly, I have found that those Open Sicilian players who favour f4 variations against the Najdorf, Scheveningen and Taimanov variations also exhibit an inclination to push the f-pawn against the Dragon. Why this is I can only guess, one argument being that playing 6 f4 lends their repertoires something by way of conceptual unity. In any case, a well-prepared Dragon player should blast the Levenfish off the board!

6...♗c6!

Black has to be careful here: 6...♗g7 7 e5! ♗g4? (or 7...dxe5? 8 fxe5 ♗g4 9 ♗b5+ ♖f8?? 10 ♗e6+ +-) 8 ♗b5+ is awful for Black because 8...♗d7 drops a piece to 9 ♖xg4. However, in recent years it has become clear that 7...♗h5 is playable for Black, and the ensuing positions are highly unclear. Notwithstanding that Black may indeed be holding his own after 7...♗h5!?, there is little need to become

distracted by these sidelines when the main line promises Black excellent play. Black also has alternatives in the form of 6...a6!?, which transposes to a line of the 6 f4 Najdorf Sicilian, and 6...♗bd7!?. Both lines are known to give Black a playable position, but the general consensus is that Black's chances in the 6...♗c6! variation are entirely satisfactory, thereby rendering it theoretically preferable to these minor alternatives.

| | | |
|----|---------|-----|
| A: | 7 ♗b3?! | 238 |
| B: | 7 ♗c4!? | 239 |
| C: | 7 ♗f3!? | 239 |
| D: | 7 ♗xc6 | 240 |
| E: | 7 ♗b5 | 243 |

A)

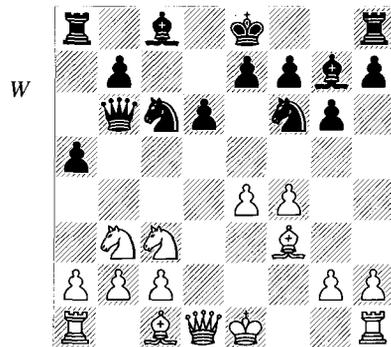
7 ♗b3?!

This move appears solid but is surprisingly dubious.

7...♗g7 8 ♗e2

8 ♗d3 a5! 9 a4 ♗g4 10 ♖d2 ♖b6 11 h3 ♗e6 ♗ leaves the b3-knight vulnerable.

8...♖b6! 9 ♗f3 a5! (D)



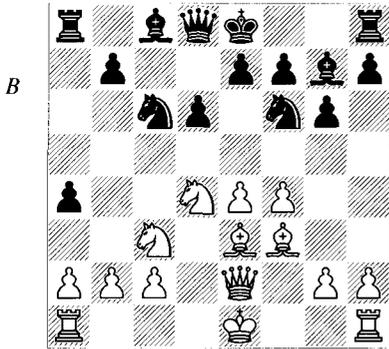
10 ♖e2

10 a4 blocks the advance of Black's a-pawn, but cedes control of the b4-square to an invasive black knight; e.g., 10...0-0 11 ♖e2 ♗b4 12 ♗b5 ♗e6 13 ♗d3d4 ♖fc8 14 ♗e3 ♗c4 15 ♖d2 ♗xb5 16 axb5 e5 17 ♗f5 and now Black has a

pleasant choice between 17...♖d8, as in Zai-chik-Lerner, Beltsy 1979, and 17...♗xc2+, as in Stefanov-Inkirov, Sofia 1984, in either case with a clear advantage to Black.

10...a4 11 ♖e3 ♗d8! 12 ♘d4 (D)

Not 12 ♘d2? a3 13 b3 ♗a5 ♠.



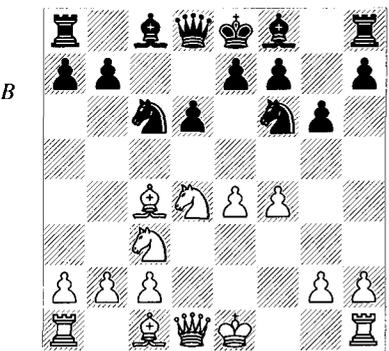
Black may now play:

a) 12...0-0 13 ♗b5?! a3! 14 b3 ♗a5 15 0-0 ♘g4! 16 ♖d2 ♘d4 17 ♘xd4 ♖xd4+ 18 ♗h1 ♖xc3 19 ♖xc3 ♗xc3 20 ♖xg4 ♖xg4 21 ♗xg4 ♗xc2 is much better for Black, Masserey-Inkirov, Geneva 1992.

b) 12...a3?! 13 ♘xc6 (13 b3 is answered by 13...♘xe4!) 13...axb2?! 14 ♖b1 (not 14 ♘d8? bxa1♗+ 15 ♗d2 ♗xh1 16 ♗b5+ ♖d7 -+) 14...bxc6 was Van Mil-Ghinda, Budapest 1986. Ghinda's annotations for *Informator 41* indicate that this line is also good for Black.

B)

7 ♖c4!? (D)



7...♗b6

Presumably White intends to meet 7...♖g7 with 8 ♘xc6 bxc6 9 e5, but this does not look

too dangerous: 9...dxe5 (9...♘d7!? 10 exd6 ♘b6 11 ♖b3 ♗xd6 also appears acceptable) 10 ♗xd8+ ♗xd8 11 fxe5 ♘g4 12 ♖xf7 ♖xe5 was messy but quite acceptable for Black in Ramadhar-C.Anderson, Port of Spain 1999.

8 ♘xc6

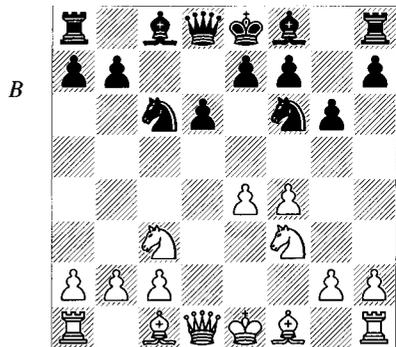
8 ♖e3? e5! 9 fxe5 dxe5 10 0-0 ♘xd4 11 ♖xf6 ♗xf6 12 ♘d5 ♗d6 13 ♖xd4 exd4 14 ♗xd4 f6!! 15 ♘xf6+ ♗d8! -+ is analysis by Attila Schneider.

8...bxc6 9 ♗d3 ♖g7 10 a4 ♗c5!? 11 ♖e3 ♗h5 12 ♖d4 0-0 13 0-0 e5! 14 fxe5 ♘g4 15 h3 ♘xe5 16 ♖xe5 ♖xe5

This is good for Black, Flores Alvarez-Canabrava, São Paulo 1960.

C)

7 ♘f3!? (D)



Although playable, this move does seem to waste time that could be better allocated to developing the rest of White's pieces. That said, the move is not without justification: White wants to stabilize the central piece tension, and reasons that the knight will be better placed on f3 than b3 in the forthcoming middlegame. White now intends to play 8 ♖d3, 9 0-0 and then 10 ♗e1 and ♗h4, with various speculations of commencing a kingside attack via f5, ♖h6 and ♘g5. Of course, this is all very general, and we are not going to let White get the chance to realize any of these goals!

7...♖g7 8 ♖d3

White can also attempt to position his bishop more actively with 8 ♖c4?! 0-0 (8...♗a5!? 9 ♖d2 0-0 10 ♖b3 ♖g4 11 h3?! ♖xf3 12 ♗xf3 ♘d4 13 ♗f2 ♘xb3 14 cxb3 ♗a6 15 ♗e2 ♗xe2+ 16 ♗xe2 ♖fc8 leaves Black a little better in the

endgame due to of his superior pawn-structure, Ljubojević-Hellers, Amsterdam 1986) 9 0-0 g4 10 h3 xf3 11 xf3 c8 12 $\text{d3}!$? (12 b3 makes more sense, but Black should be fine after 12... d4 or 12... d7 and ... c5 , in either instance with the intention of taking on b3 at an appropriate moment) 12... d7 13 h1 $\text{b4}!$? (13... c5 is more obvious) 14 d2 c5 15 ad1 d7 16 f5 cxd3 17 cxd3 d5 gave Black a very comfortable position in Felsberger-G.Mohr, Austria 1995.

8...0-0

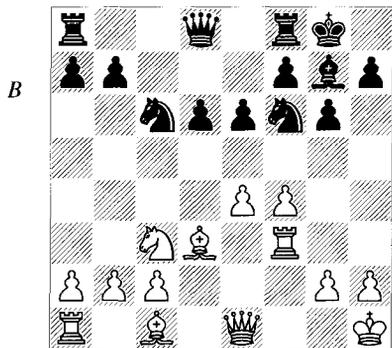
Black has a respectable alternative in 8... b6 , temporarily preventing White from castling: 9 e2 (9 h3!? prevents Black's plan of 9... g4 and 10... xf3 , but Black should be fine following 9...e5! 10 fxe5 dxe5 11 e2 0-0 12 f2 $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ Sax-Sosonko, London 1980) 9... g4 10 f2 $\text{xf2}+$ 11 xf2 0-0 = J.Polgar-Gulko, Kona 1998.

9 0-0 g4 10 e1 xf3 11 xf3 e6

11... c8 is similar; e.g., 12 $\text{h4}!$? e6 13 h3 h5! 14 f5 $\text{g4}!$ 15 xd8 fxd8 16 e2 b4 17 c3 xd3 18 xd3 xf5 19 xf5 e8 f Del Mundo-Henley, Las Vegas 1997.

12 h1 (D)

12 b3 c8 13 b2 b4 14 h1 d7 15 d1 c5 16 e5 cxd3 17 cxd3 dxe5 18 fxe5 c2 , with 19... d4 to follow, gave Black a comfortable position in Hector-Wells, York 2000.



12... c8 13 $\text{ff1}!$?

This move may seem slightly unusual, but it was the choice of Judit Polgar, and other moves have not brought White success either:

a) 13 e3 a6 14 d1 e7 15 a3 fe8 16 f2 c7 17 g1 b8 18 e2 d7 19 b4 b5 20 c3 d5 21 e5 f6 22 xf6 xf6 gave Black good play in Mrva-Rogozenko, Pardubice 1997.

b) 13 d2 d7 14 d1 c5 15 c1 d5!? 16 h3 xd3 17 cxd3 f5 18 e5 f7 19 d4 f8 20 g1 a6 21 g4 fxg4 22 fxg4 d7 23 e2 e7 24 g1 f5 25 f3 e7 26 g5 xg5 27 fxg5 a4 28 a3 c2 29 ad3 b1 0-1 Roofdhooff-Tukmakov, Antwerp 1993, was a powerful no-nonsense game by Tukmakov.

c) 13 f5 e5 14 h3 fg4 f Bönsch.

13... e8 14 f2 a6 15 f5 d7

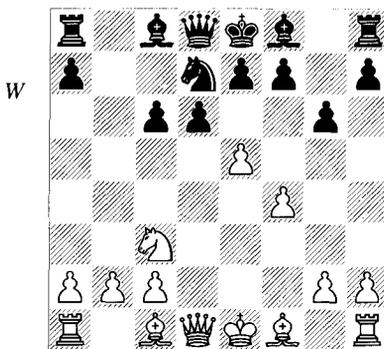
Black has an impenetrable position with excellent prospects, J.Polgar-Topalov, Leon 1996.

D)

7 xc6 bxc6 8 e5

8 d3 g7 (8... $\text{b6}!$? 9 b3 g7 10 a4 was Karasev-Savchenko, Leningrad 1989, and now 10... $\text{b4}+$ 11 c3 is unclear according to Golubev) 9 0-0 0-0 10 e1 b8 looks fine for Black.

8... d7 (D)



White now has three options:

- D1: 9 c4 240
 D2: 9 f3 241
 D3: 9 exd6 242

D1)

9 c4 $\text{b6}!$ 10 exd6

Or:

a) 10 b3 g7 11 e2 0-0 12 0-0 a5 13 e1 a4 14 c4 dxe5 15 fxe5 $\text{d4}+$ f Loehn-Glienke, Dudweiler 1996.

b) 10 d4 g7 11 0-0 0-0 12 b3 a6 13 e1 c5 14 e3 c4 f Averbakh-Lisitsyn, USSR U-16 Ch (Moscow) 1948.

c) 10 e2 g7 11 f3 c7 12 exd6 exd6 13 $\text{e2}+$ e6 14 f5 gxf5 15 0-0 was Velasquez

Ojeda-Valenzuela, Santiago 1995. In spite of White's energetic play, it is clear that Black has emerged from the opening with the preferable position.

10... ♖xd6

10... ♘xc4!? 11 ♖d4 ♘a3 12 bxa3 ♚g8 is highly unclear, but looks as though it may give Black good chances.

11 ♖xd6

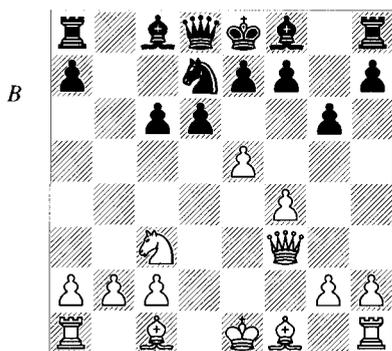
11 ♙d3 ♙g7 just leads to a standard middlegame where Black should be absolutely fine.

11...exd6 12 ♙d3 f5!? 13 0-0 ♙e6 14 b3 ♙g7 15 ♙b2 ♘f7 16 ♚ae1 a5 17 ♚e2 ♚he8

♚ Lipman-Fedorov, USSR 1968.

D2)

9 ♖f3 (D)



9... ♙g7

Black is really rather spoilt for choice here as, in addition to the main line, 9...d5 is playable, and 9...♖b6!?, although traditionally considered risky, may actually be far better than its reputation; e.g., 10 exd6 exd6 11 ♙e3 ♖xb2 12 ♙d4 ♖xa1+ 13 ♘d2 ♚g8! (13...♘e5 14 ♙xe5! dxe5 15 ♖xc6+ ♙d7 16 ♖xa8+ ♘e7 17 ♖d5 ♙g7 18 ♙b5 +-) 14 ♖xc6 ♚b8 15 ♙a6 ♖xh1 16 ♙xc8 was originally given as winning for White by none other than Levenfish, but Attila Schneider took this analysis further and pointed out that it is actually Black who is winning after 16...♙e7; e.g., 17 ♙xd7+ ♘f8 -+.

10 ♙b5

With this move, White attempts to orchestrate the capture of the c6-pawn with his light-squared bishop. Although White has the more direct option of capturing with the queen, in

practice this has led to nothing but trouble; e.g., 10 ♙e3 0-0 11 ♖xc6 ♚b8 12 0-0-0 dxe5 13 ♙xa7 ♚b7 14 ♖a4 exf4 15 ♘b5 ♘b6 16 ♖b3 ♖e8 17 ♙e2 ♙e6 18 ♖b4 ♘d5 ♚ Shaposhnikov – Bonch-Osmolovsky, Sochi 1952. Similarly, 10 ♖xc6 ♚b8 11 exd6 0-0! sees White falling dangerously behind in development: 12 ♙e2 ♙b7 13 ♖c7 ♙xg2!? 14 ♚g1 ♙a8 15 ♖xd8 ♚fxd8 16 dxe7 ♚e8 gives Black a serious initiative according to Attila Schneider.

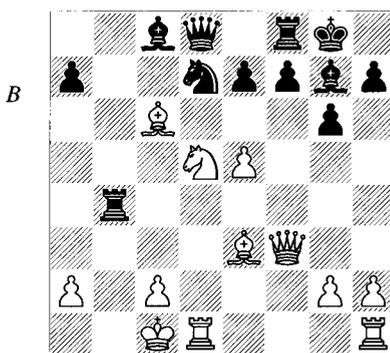
10... ♚b8

This move is probably Black's best; instead, 10...0-0!? 11 ♖xc6!? (Black also has to consider 11 exd6!? and 11 ♙xc6, which may prove to be superior to the game move) 11...♚b8 12 ♙e3 a6 13 ♙a4 dxe5 14 0-0-0 ♖a5 15 ♙b3 exf4 16 ♙xf4 ♚xb3 17 axb3 ♖a1+ 18 ♘d2 ♖xb2 gave rise to a highly unclear position in Bronstein-Vasiukov, USSR Ch (Tbilisi) 1959.

11 ♙xc6 dxe5 12 ♙e3 ♚xb2 13 0-0-0 ♚b4!?

Theory and practice have both generally focused on 13...e4 in this position, with play continuing 14 ♖xc4 ♙xc3 15 ♙xd7+ ♙xd7 16 ♚xd7 ♖xd7 17 ♖a8+ ♚b8 = Z.Marković-Kosanović, Palanka 2001. I believe that the text-move has been unduly neglected and may actually be far stronger.

14 fxe5 0-0 15 ♘d5 (D)



Now:

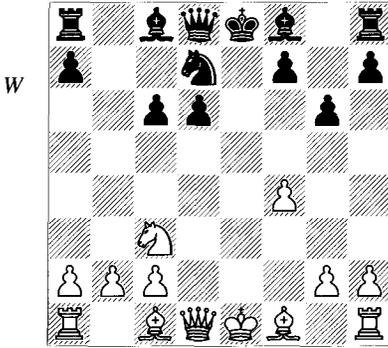
a) 15...♖a5!? 16 ♙xd7 (16 ♘xe7+ ♘h8 17 ♙xd7 ♖a3+ 18 ♘d2 ♙xd7 ♚) 16...♙xd7 17 ♘xe7+ ♘h8 18 ♚xd7 and now 18...♖b5 or 18...♚fb8, in either case with 19...♚b1+ to follow, appears awkward for White.

b) 15...♘xe5! 16 ♘xb4 ♖a5 17 ♖f4 ♘xc6 (17...♖a3+!? 18 ♘d2 a5! also looks good) 18 ♘xc6 ♖a3+ 19 ♘d2 ♖c3+ 20 ♘c1 ♖xc6 21 ♙d4 ♙f5 22 ♚d2 ♖a4 23 g4 ♖a3+ 24 ♘b1

♖b4+ 25 ♖c1 e5 26 ♖g3 exd4 0-1 Szafranski-Vassia, ICCF e-mail 2000.

D3)

9 exd6 exd6 (D)



10 ♖e3

10 ♖d4!? ♟f6 11 ♖e3 ♖e7 12 0-0-0 (active development is the only way for White to justify his play; if instead 12 ♖e2 0-0 13 ♖f3 d5 14 ♖d2, Black has 14...♖g4! ♢ 15 0-0-0 { 15 0-0!? ♖xf3 16 ♖xf3 ♖b8 17 b3 c5 is better for Black on account of his mobile pawn-centre } 15...♖e8 16 h3?! ♖xf3 17 gxf3 ♖d7 18 ♖d3 ♟h5 19 ♖dgl ♖d6 ♢ Klinger-Tukmakov, Szirak 1985) 12...0-0 13 h3 d5 (13...♖e6 14 g4 ♟d5! 15 ♟xd5 ♖xd5 16 ♖h2 ♖f6 17 ♖a4 ♖e8 18 ♖a3 ♖e7 ♢ Lanc-J.Horvath, Kecskemet 1982) 14 ♖d2 (14 ♟a4 ♟e4 ♢ 15 ♖d3? c5 → Nippgen-Klein, Oberursel 1972) 14...♖a5 15 a3? (15 ♖d4 ♖b8 is better) 15...♖xa3 16 ♟xd5 ♖xd2+ 17 ♟xd2 ♖xb2 18 ♟e7+ ♟g7 19 ♟xc6 ♟e4+ → De Jager-Middelburg, Zwolle 1995.

10...♖e7

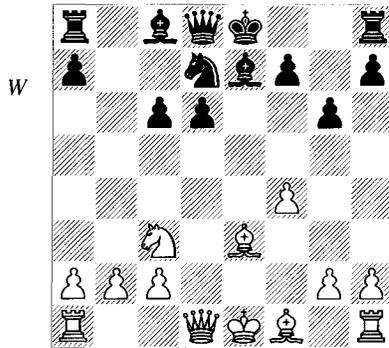
Black can also hold true to his original intention of fianchettoing his dark-squared bishop via 10...♟f6. White now has two options:

a) 11 ♖d2 ♖g7 12 0-0-0 d5 13 ♖c5 ♖e6 gives Black a solid structure, but his king remains trapped in the centre by the c5-bishop. There have been countless games in which this position has arisen, but White's key approach to this position appears to be 14 ♖d4!? ♖a5 (14...♖g8 15 ♖a4 ♖c7 16 ♖d3 ♟d7 17 ♖a3 ♟b6 18 ♖b4 ♖f8 19 ♖d4 ♖xa3 20 bxa3 ♖d6 ♢ Harkins-Shaw, Paisley 1995) 15 ♖b4 (Schneider believes that 15 g4 is good for White, but I am by no means convinced as 15...♖g8! looks

fine to me) 15...♖c7! 16 g3 ♖b8 17 ♖a3 ♖g8! 18 ♖a4 ♖b6 19 ♖g2 ♟d7 20 ♖d3 ♖f5 21 ♖e1+ ♟d8 22 ♖f3 ♖e8 23 ♖xe8+ ♟xe8 24 ♟d1 ♟c5 25 ♖e3+ ♟d8 26 ♖xc5 ♖xc5 27 c3 d4 28 ♖f3 ♖e4 29 ♖f2 dxc3 → Nunn-Miles, London 1982.

b) White has also tried castling kingside in this line, but practical results have been dismal; e.g., 11 ♖e2 ♖g7 12 0-0-0 13 ♖f3 d5 14 ♖c5 (14 ♟h1 ♖e8 15 ♖d4 ♖f5 16 g4?! ♖xg4! 17 ♖xg4 ♟xg4 18 ♖xg7 ♖h4 19 ♖d2 ♟xg7 → Perez de Villar-Martin Canfran, Paretana 2000) 14...♖e8 15 ♖e1 ♖e6 16 ♟e2 ♖a5 17 ♖d4 ♖ad8 (17...c5!? ♢) 18 ♖c3?! ♖b6+ 19 ♟d4 ♖f5 20 ♖d2 ♟e4 ♢ 21 ♖xe4 dxe4 22 ♖ad1 ♖g4 23 ♟h1 ♖xd1 24 ♖xd1 e3 0-1 Setien-Alvarez, Villa Ballester 1993.

We now return to 10...♖e7 (D):



11 ♖d2

This is definitely the critical continuation, but other moves have also been tried:

a) 11 ♖e2 0-0 12 0-0 ♟f6 13 ♖f3 (13 ♟h1 d5 14 ♖f3 ♖e6 15 ♟a4 ♖a5 16 b3 c5 ♢ Krajina-Serper, Vienna 1991) 13...♖a6!? 14 ♖xc6 ♖c8 15 ♖b5 ♖xc3 16 bxc3 ♖xb5 → Flaissigova-Cedikova, Hradec Kralove 1997.

b) 11 ♖f3 d5 12 0-0-0 0-0! 13 g4 (13 h4 ♟f6 14 ♖e2 h5 15 ♖g3 ♖f5 16 ♖d3 ♖d7 17 ♖d4 ♟g4 18 ♟a4 ♖d6 19 ♟c5 ♖c7! 20 ♖hf1 ♖xd3 21 ♖xd3 ♖fe8 22 ♟b1 ♟h6 ♢ Lindinger-Golubev, Hamburg 1999) 13...♖f6 14 ♖d4 (14 ♖d2 ♖b8 15 h4 ♟c5 16 g5 ♖g7 17 h5 ♖f5 ♢ Hennel-Demeter, Slovakia 2000) 14...♖xd4 15 ♖xd4 ♖b8 16 ♖d2 ♖b6 17 b3 ♖b4 18 ♖e2 ♟f6 19 g5 ♟h5 20 ♖f1 ♖g4! 21 ♖xg4 ♖xc3 ♢ Tarjan-Timman, Venice 1974.

c) 11 ♖d3 0-0 12 0-0 d5 13 f5 ♟e5 14 ♖h6 ♖e8 15 ♟h1 ♖d6 16 fxg6 hxg6 17 ♖f4 ♖b8 18

♖b1 ♖b4! 19 ♖d2 ♗xd3 20 cxd3 ♕f5 ♢ Jauhainen-Krogius, Jyväskylä 1991.

11...♗f6 12 0-0-0

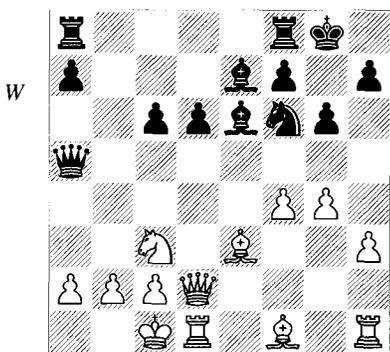
Other moves are inconsistent with White's play up to this point, and quickly lead to trouble. Thus 12 ♕c4 0-0 13 0-0-0 d5 14 ♕b3 ♕b4 15 a3 ♗e4 16 ♖d3 ♗xc3 17 bxc3 ♕xa3+ ♢ should have proved decisive in Gregory-Trent, Southend 1999, and 12 ♕e2 0-0 13 0-0 ♕f5 14 ♕f3 d5 15 ♗a4 ♕e4 gave Black a comfortable game in L.Kiss-Severgin, Nagykanizsa 1995.

12...0-0 13 h3

White had no success with 13 ♕d4 ♕e6 14 ♖e1 ♖b8! 15 a3 (15 h3 ♖c7) 15...♖c7 16 ♖h4 (16 ♗e4 ♗d5! ♢) 16...♗g4 17 ♖g3 c5 18 ♕g1 ♖b7 ♢ in Szily-Gereben, Budapest 1953.

13...♖a5 14 g4 ♕e6 (D)

14...♖b8 is also good; e.g., 15 b3 ♗d7 16 ♖b1 d5 17 ♗e2 ♖xd2 18 ♖xd2 ♗c5 19 ♗g3 a5 with a comfortable endgame ahead, Heidenfeld-Kramer, Beverwijk 1953.



After the text-move (14...♕e6) White has tried three moves:

a) 15 b3 d5 (15...♗d5 16 ♗xd5 ♖a3+ 17 ♖b1 ♕xd5 18 ♖h2 ∞ Juarez-Alvarez, Buenos Aires 1987) 16 ♕d4?! c5 17 ♕e5 d4 18 ♕xf6 ♕xf6 19 ♗a4 ♖c7 ♢ Pirttimäki-Mäki, Finland 1980.

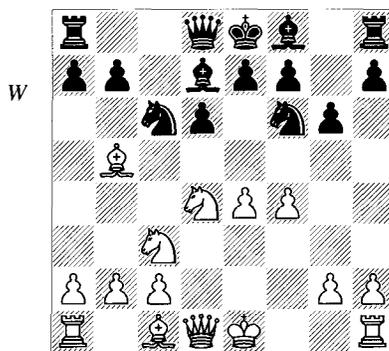
b) 15 ♕g2 ♖ab8 16 b3 d5 17 f5 ♕d7 18 ♖b1 ♕b4 19 ♕d4 ♗e8 20 fxc6 fxc6 21 ♖hf1 ♗c7 22 ♕e5 and now rather than 22...♗e6, allowing 23 ♕xd5 (Fuderer-Trifunović, Belgrade 1952), Black should keep his position solid with 22...♖fe8.

c) 15 ♖e1?! ♖fe8 16 ♕g2 ♖a6 17 ♖b1 (17 ♖e2 ♕c4 ♢) 17...♕c4 18 ♖g3 d5 19 ♕c1 (19 f5 ♕b4 →) 19...♖ab8 20 ♖a1 d4! 21 ♖xd4 ♕c5 (this move is fine, but in *ChessBase Magazine*

84, Rogozenko points out that 21...♗d5!? 22 ♕xd5 cxd5, intending 23...♕f6, merits attention; this line does indeed appear very strong for Black) 22 ♖dd1 ♖e2! 23 f5 (23 a3 ♖xc2 24 ♖b1 ♖f2 →) 23...♖be8 24 fxc6 hxc6 25 a3 ♖xc2 26 ♖d2? (26 ♖b1 ♢ is forced) 26...♖xd2 27 ♕xd2 ♕xa3! 28 bxa3 ♖xa3+ 29 ♖b1 ♕a2+ 30 ♖c2 ♖b3+ 31 ♖c1 ♕b1! 0-1 Perelshteyn-G.Shahade, New York 2001.

E)

7 ♕b5 ♕d7 (D)



8 ♕xc6

8 ♗f3 ♕g7 9 ♖e2 0-0 10 e5!? dxe5 11 fxe5 ♗g4 12 ♕f4 a6 13 ♕c4 ♕e6!? 14 ♕xe6 fxe6 gave Black excellent chances in Sax-Ivanović, Vrbas 1980. White's king remains in the centre, precluding the completion of his development, and in the meantime Black's rook is active on the f-file and the black minor pieces are gang-ing up on the weak e5-pawn.

8...bxc6

8...♕xc6 is also possible, but highly theoretical. The general consensus is that it is an entirely respectable alternative, but my own preference is for the text-move.

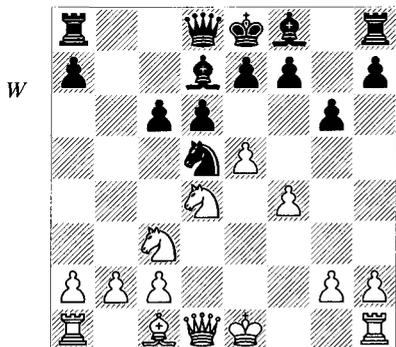
9 e5

9 0-0 ♖c7 10 h3 ♕g7 gave Black comfortable equality in Korchnoi-Spassky, Leningrad 1949.

9...♗d5!? (D)

Also possible is 9...dxe5 10 fxe5 ♗g4 11 e6!? (11 ♗xc6?! ♖b6! 12 ♗d4 ♕g7 13 ♗ce2 ♖d8 14 c3 ♗xe5 ♢; 11 ♕f4 ♕g7 12 ♖e2 ♖b8!?) hits b2 and e5, forcing White to jettison a pawn; White will inevitably acquire some pressure for the pawn, but the onus will be very much on

White to demonstrate sufficient compensation) 11...♙xe6 12 ♖f3 (12 ♗xe6 ♖xd1+ 13 ♗xd1 fx6 gave Black at least equality in Geller-Pogrebysky, Odessa 1949) 12...♗d7! 13 ♙f4 ♙g7 14 0-0-0 ♙d5 15 ♖e2 ♗f6! (15...0-0 16 ♗xc6!) 16 ♙e5 0-0 ♢ Altmae-Edelsvard, Sweden 1967.



10 ♗xd5

Or:

a) 10 exd6 ♗xc3 11 bxc3 c5! 12 ♗f3 (12 dxe7? ♖xe7+ 13 ♗e2 ♗d8! 14 ♖d3 ♙c6 15 ♖g3?! ♙g7 16 ♗f2 {16 0-0? ♖xe2 17 ♗e1 ♗d1 -+} 16...0-0 17 ♗e1 ♗fe8 ♢ Knebel-Wagman, corr. 1964) 12...♙g7 and now:

a1) 13 ♗e5! ♙e6 14 d7+! ♙xd7 15 ♖d5 ♙e6 16 ♖c6+ ♙d7 (16...♗f8!? 17 ♖xc5 ♖d5!) 17 ♖xc5 (17 ♖d5 ♙e6 =) 17...a6!? 18 ♙e3 ♗c8 19 ♖d4 ♖c7 ∞.

a2) 13 0-0 0-0 14 dxe7 ♖xe7 15 ♗e1 ♙e6 is at least equal for Black.

b) 10 ♗e4!? ♙g7 11 exd6 0-0! 12 0-0 exd6 13 ♗h1 (Black is better after 13 f5 ♖h4! 14 f6

♖xe4 15 fxg7 ♗fe8 16 ♙h6 ♗e3 ♢ Sanchez-Donguines, Greenhills 1996, and 13 ♗xd6? ♙g4! -+ is even worse) 13...♗f6! 14 ♗xd6 ♙g4 15 ♗f3 ♙xf3 16 gxf3 (16 ♗xf3 ♗e4 wins for Black) 16...♖c7 17 ♗c4 ♗ad8 18 ♖e2 ♗d5 1/2-1/2 Liublinsky-Moiseev, Moscow 1949. Attila Schneider rightly points out that Black is just better in the final position.

10...cxd5 11 ♖f3

11 exd6 e6 12 ♖e2 (12 0-0 ♖b6 {alternatively, 12...♙xd6 13 ♙e3 0-0} 13 ♗h1 ♙g7 14 c3 ♖xd6 15 ♗e1 0-0 ♢ Wienand-T.Hartmann, Germany tt 1986/7) 12...♙g7 13 c3 0-0 14 0-0 ♖b6 15 ♙e3 ♖xd6 16 ♗b3 ♗fc8 17 ♙d4 f6!? 18 ♗ae1 a5 19 ♗f2 a4 was at least equal for Black in Nikac-Inkirov, Niš 1994.

11...e6 12 ♙d2

12 0-0 ♙g7 13 ♙d2 ♖b8!? is also possible, but Black is very comfortable in any case.

12...dxe5 13 fx5 ♖h4+ 14 ♖f2 ♖e4+

14...♖xf2+ 15 ♗xf2 ♙c5 16 c3 f6!? gave Black a slightly better ending in Alexander-Dreyer, Dublin 1957.

15 ♖e3 ♖xg2!?

15...♖xe3+ 16 ♙xe3 ♙g7 17 ♗f3 0-0 18 ♙d4 ♗fc8 19 0-0-0 ♙b5 20 ♗he1 a5 gave Black a similarly comfortable ending in Chaplinsky-Tolush, USSR 1952.

16 0-0-0 ♗c8! 17 ♗dg1

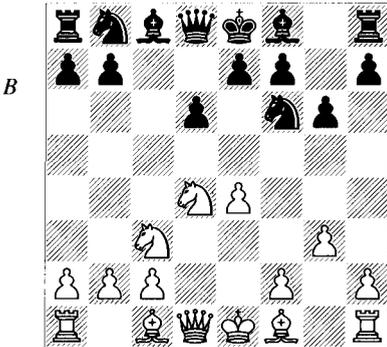
17 ♗f3? ♙a4 18 b3 ♙c5! ♢ Schneider.

17...♖e4 18 ♖xe4 dxe4 19 ♗e1 ♗c4

Black is at least slightly better according to Attila Schneider, who points out that the e4-pawn is currently immune from capture on account of 20 ♗xe4 ♙c6 -+.

21 The Fianchetto Variation

1 e4 c5 2 ♖f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♗xd4 ♖f6 5 ♗c3 g6 6 g3 (D)



6...♗c6!

Move-order can be very important in the early stages of the Fianchetto Variation. For example, the natural 6...♗g7 is actually bad on account of 7 ♗g2 ♗c6 8 ♗xc6 bxc6 9 e5! ±. While we are on the topic of move-orders, I should perhaps mention that the flexible nature of the Fianchetto Variation means that very often lines can transpose into one another. I have endeavoured to point out all major transpositions, but there may be some minor ones that you need to track down yourself, for which I apologize in advance. If you can't find a particular line, try rooting around the earlier/later parts of the chapter; I assure you they are all there!

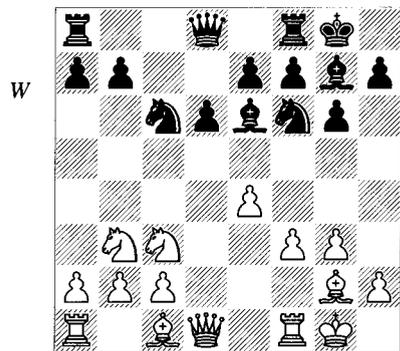
This chapter is divided into two parts. In the first we focus on White avoiding an exchange of knights on d4, while in the second we consider the consequences of allowing this exchange.

Part 1: White Preserves the d4-Knight

1 e4 c5 2 ♖f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♗xd4 ♖f6 5 ♗c3 g6 6 g3 ♗c6 7 ♗de2!

If White is going to move this knight, then e2 is definitely the square it should retreat to. As with most lines of the Dragon, Black's key central pawn-break is ...d5, and the g3 variation attempts to counter this by ganging up on the d5-square: the c3-knight and White's queen both aim at d5, the g2-bishop exerts similar pressure and the e2-knight can move to f4 (or, perhaps if White has already played ♗d5, to c3). Another aspect of 7 ♗de2 is that White can now consider fianchettoing his own dark-squared bishop by b3 and ♗b2, the idea being to neutralize Black's power on the long diagonal.

By way of alternatives, 7 ♗b3 is playable, but it is not clear how the b3-knight fits in with White's broader strategies in this variation; e.g., 7...♗g7 8 ♗g2 0-0 9 0-0 ♗g4! 10 f3 ♗e6 (D) with the following possibilities:



a) 11 ♗d5 a5! 12 a4 ♗b4! 13 ♗xb4 (13 f4? ♗fxd5 14 exd5 ♗f5) 13...♗b6+ 14 ♗d4 ♗xb4! 15 ♗xb4 axb4 ♖ Kasparov.

b) 11 f4 ♗d7 ♖ Kasparov.

c) Also possible is 11 ♗e3 ♗e5 (11...d5 ♖ Kasparov) 12 ♗d4 ♗d7 13 ♗c1 ♗c4 14 ♗f2 ♗c8 15 b3 ♗e5 16 ♗ce2?! ♗d3 17 ♗b1 ♗xf2 18 ♗xf2 e5 -- Premkumar-Koval, Parsippany 2001.

d) 11 ♗h1! b5!. In *Informator 48*, Kasparov now gives the following lines:

d1) 12 ♗d5?! a5! 13 a4 bxa4 14 ♗xa4 ♗d7 is slightly better for Black.

d2) 12 ♖e3 ♖c4 13 ♜f2 (13 ♜e1 d5 ♜) 13...b4 (13...d5? 14 ♜d2) 14 ♜d5 e6! 15 ♜xf6+ ♜xf6 ♜ 16 ♜xd6 ♜xb2.

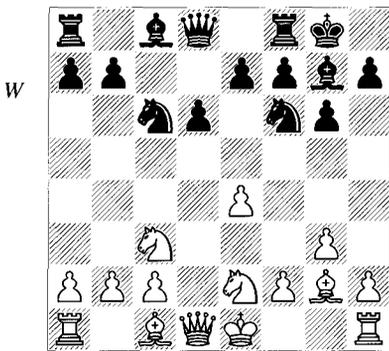
d3) 12 f4!? ♜c8! (12...♖c4? 13 e5 ±) 13 ♜d5 ♖h3 14 ♜xf6+ ♖xf6 15 ♖xh3 ♜xh3 16 g4 ♖g7 ∞.

d4) 12 a4!? bxa4! 13 ♜xa4 ♜d7 14 f4 ♜b6 15 ♜a1 a5! 16 ♜d5 (apparently best is 16 e5! ♜b4! 17 exd6 exd6! 18 ♜xa5 {18 ♖xa8?! ♜xa8+ 19 ♖g1 ♜c4 with an attack} 18...♜xa5 19 ♜xa5 d5, when Kasparov believes Black has good compensation for the pawn) 16...a4 17 ♜d2 ♖d7! ♜ 18 ♜a3?! (18 c3 ♜a5 ♜) 18...♜a5! 19 f5!? (19 g4 ♜xd5 20 exd5 ♜b6! ♜) 19...♜xd5 20 exd5 ♜b6! 21 fxc6 (21 g4? ♖xb2 22 ♜h3 a3 23 ♜e1 a2 24 ♜h4 h5 25 gxh5 gxf5 26 ♜g3+ ♖h7 27 ♜f3 a1 ♜ -) 21...fxg6! ♜ Damjanović-Kasparov, Belgrade 1989.

7...♖g7

For those readers who like slightly off-beat lines, I can suggest 7...b6 8 ♖g2 ♖a6, which was recommended by Ward in the original version of *Winning With the Dragon*, and with which I have also enjoyed good results. Alternatively, for the reader with fire in his belly, 7...♖d7!? 8 ♖g2 ♜c8, intending 9...♖h3, 10...h5, etc., with aspirations of mating White down the kingside, may inspire interest. Unfortunately I don't believe in the objective correctness of either of these systems, so I won't waste space dwelling on them. My point is simply that they are there if you want them.

8 ♖g2 0-0 (D)



White has now tried:

- A:** 9 b3?! 246
B: 9 h3 246
C: 9 0-0 248

A)

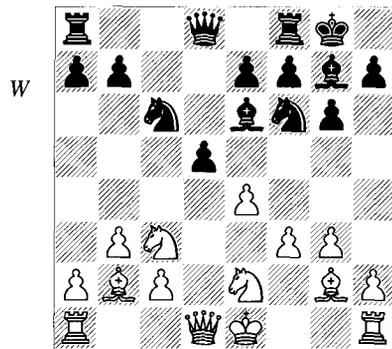
9 b3?! ♖g4! 10 f3

10 ♖b2 ♜e5 11 h3 (11 f4!?) 11...♖f3 12 0-0 ♜d7 13 ♜d2 b5 (13...♜ac8 14 ♜e3 ♖xg2 15 ♖xg2 ♜c6 = Tornai-Tian Tian, Budapest 2000) 14 ♜e3 b4 15 ♖xf3 ♜xf3+ 16 ♜xf3 bxc3 17 ♖xc3 ♜xh3 = 18 ♜f4 ♜c8 19 ♜ac1?! e5! 20 ♜g2 ♜xe4 21 ♜xe4 ♜xc3 ♜ Lukez-Winsnes, Sweden 2002/3.

10...♖e6 11 ♖b2

11 0-0 d5!.

11...d5 (D)



12 exd5

In *ChessBase Magazine* 66, Mikhalevski gives 12 ♜f4 dxe4 (12...♜a5!?) 13 ♜xe6 (13 ♜xd8 ♜axd8 14 ♜xe6 {14 ♜xe4 ♜xe4 15 ♖xg7 ♖xg7 16 ♜xe6+ fxe6 17 fxe4 ♜b4 ♜} 14...fxe6 15 fxe4 ♜b4) 13...fxe6 14 fxe4 ♜b6! ♜; e.g., 15 ♜a4? ♜e3+ 16 ♜e2 ♜g4! 17 ♖xg7 ♖xg7, when Black's advantage is far beyond dispute.

12...♜xd5

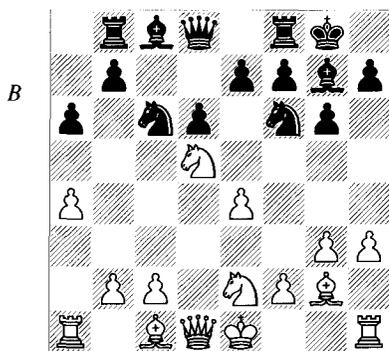
Now Maes-V.Mikhalevski, Vlissingen 1998 continued 13 ♜d2 ♜xc3! (13...♜a5!?) 14 ♖xc3 (14 ♜xd8 ♜fxd8 15 ♖xc3 {15 ♜xc3 ♜b4} 15...♖xc3+ 16 ♜xc3 ♜b4 17 ♜c1 ♜ac8 -) 14...♜xd2+ 15 ♖xd2 ♜fd8+ 16 ♖c1 ♖xc3 17 ♜xc3 ♜ac8! 18 ♜d1 ♜xd1+ 19 ♖xd1 ♜d4! 20 ♖d2 ♜d8 21 ♖c1 ♖f5 22 ♜e4 ♜c8 23 c4 b5 ♜.

B)

9 h3 ♜b8 10 a4 a6 11 ♜d5!?! (D)

This is a plan that has been championed by Matulović and Jansa. For the time being, White foregoes castling and instead focuses his attention on establishing a presence in the centre.

That said, White is going to have to move his king some time, so it can't be that great an idea! 11 ♙e3! ? is likely to transpose.



11...b5 12 axb5 axb5 13 ♙e3

13 ♙g5 ♗d7 14 ♚c1! \pm has been suggested by Matulović, but I don't see why Black should be worse here, and nobody has ever been inspired enough to try this line.

13...b4!

Although natural, it seems less accurate to play 13... ♗d7! ? 14 ♗d4 , and now:

a) 14... ♙b7 15 0-0 ♗de5 16 b3 b4 17 ♞a4 ♗xd4 18 ♙xd4 ♙xd5 19 exd5 ♚c7 20 ♞e1 ♙f6 21 ♞a7 ♚b7 22 ♚xb7 ♚xb7 23 ♚d2 ♞c8 24 ♞e4 ♚a8 25 f4 \pm Matulović-M.Marković, Yugoslavia 1991.

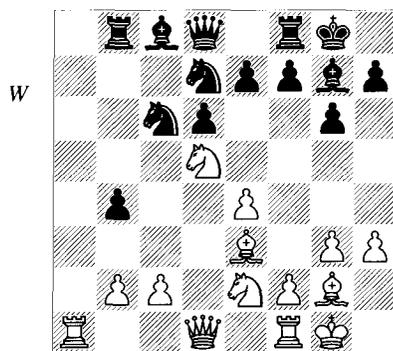
b) Black can also choose to simplify with 14... ♗xd4 15 ♙xd4 ♙xd4 16 ♚xd4 ♙b7 , when 17 ♗b4! ♚b6 18 ♚xb6 ♗xb6 19 0-0 ♞a8 20 b3 f5 was Matulović-Relange, Sabac 1998, which eventually ended in a draw. Atlas, in *Chess-Base Magazine*, suggested that instead of 21 exf5, White can preserve an advantage with 21 ♞ae1! ? f4 (21...fxe4 22 ♙xe4 ♙xe4 23 ♞xe4 e5 24 f4) 22 gxf4 ♞xf4 23 ♗d3 ♞ff8 24 f4 \pm .

14 0-0

14 ♗d4? was Jansa's attempt to improve over his earlier game against Mäki, but the improvement turns out to be worse! 14... ♗xd4 15 ♙xd4 ♗xd5 16 exd5 (16 ♙xg7? ♗e3! \mp) 16... ♙xd4 17 ♚xd4 ♙f5 18 ♗d2 (18 ♙e4 ♚c8! 19 ♗d2 ♞b5 20 f3 ♙xe4 21 fxe4 ♞c5 22 ♞ac1 ♞c4 23 ♚e3 e6 24 c3 exd5 25 exd5 ♚f5 26 ♗d3 ♚f2+ 27 ♚e2 ♚c5 -- Matulović-Zontakh, Sabac 1998) 18...e5! 19 dxe6 ♙xe6 20 ♞hd1 ♞c8 . In Jansa-Nevednichy, Krynica 1998, White now blundered with 21 ♙e1? ♞xc2! 22 ♞a8 ♚e7 23 ♞xf8+ ♚xf8 24 ♞a1 (24 ♚xd6 ♚xd6 25 ♞xd6

♚xb2 --) 24... ♚g7 25 ♞a8+ ♙c8 0-1, but note that 21 ♚xb4?! also loses; e.g., 21... ♞c4 22 ♚a5 ♚f6! 23 ♚b6 ♞fc8 24 c3 ♞xc3! 25 ♞ac1 ♞3c5! -- .

14... ♗d7 (D)



White now has four options:

a) 15 ♚c1 e6! 16 ♗df4 ♚c7 17 ♞a2 ♗f6! ? (17... ♗de5 18 ♗d3 ♗c4 19 ♙h6 ∞ Malakhov) 18 ♗d3 ♞d8 19 c4! ♙b7 20 b3 and now rather than 20... ♗d7 21 ♞d1! \pm Malakhov-Svidler, Russia 1997, in *Informator* 69 Malakhov and Vaisman recommend 20... ♗a5! 21 ♗d4! ♙xe4 22 ♙xe4 ♗xe4 23 ♗b5 ♗xb3! 24 ♗xc7 (24 ♚c2? ♗a1! 25 ♞fxa1 ♚xb5 \mp) 24... ♗xc1 25 ♞xc1! ? (25 ♙xc1 b3 26 ♞e2 ♗c3 27 ♞d2 ♗e4 =) 25...b3 26 ♞e2 ♗c3 27 ♞ee1 with an unclear position. In fact, I actually prefer Black after 27...b2!.

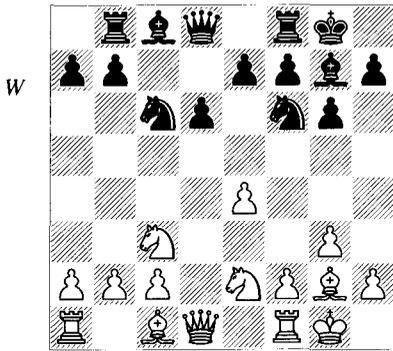
b) 15 ♗d4? ♙xd4! -- + 16 ♙xd4 e6 17 ♗e3 (17 ♗f4 e5 --) 17...e5 18 ♙a7 ♚b7 19 ♚xd6 ♗xa7! , Kamsky-Tiviakov, Daugavpils 1986. Amusingly, this was just Tiviakov's first of three wins with this trap!

c) 15 ♞a2 e6 16 ♗df4 ♚c7 17 b3 ♙b7 18 ♚d2 ♞a8 19 ♞xa8 ♞xa8 20 ♞d1 (Atlas suggested that 20 ♗d3! ? ♙a6 21 ♞d1 is better) 20... ♞a1! 21 ♗c1 ♙b2 22 ♗fe2 ♙a6 23 ♙h2 ♙xe2 24 ♗xe2 ♚xd1 25 ♚xd1 ♗c5 26 f4 e5 27 f5 ♗d7 28 ♚d2 ♗d4! 29 ♗xd4 exd4 30 ♙xd4 ♙xd4 31 ♚xd4 ♚c5! 32 ♚xc5 dxc5 was Jansa-Mäki, Pula Echt 1997. Black has no problems in this ending because White's pawns are all fixed on light squares (the same as his bishop), and Black has a clear plan of ... ♙g7-f6-e5 . If White ever plays g4, Black should fix White's pawn-structure with ...g5.

d) 15 ♚b1 appears to be less logical than defending the b2-pawn with 15 ♞a2 , but super-GM

Movsesian used this move with success against Shirov, so perhaps things are less clear than they might appear. 15...e6 16 $\text{d}4$ b3!? (with this move Black forces the issue, but I would prefer something quieter, such as 16... $\text{c}7$ or 16... $\text{d}e5$!?, after which Black has a perfectly acceptable position) 17 cxb3 $\text{c}5$ 18 $\text{c}1$ $\text{a}5$ (18... $\text{a}6$ 19 $\text{e}1$ $\text{c}7$ 20 $\text{d}2 \pm$ Ftačnik) 19 e5!! with advantage to White, Movsesian-Shirov, Polanica Zdroj 2000. For example, 19... $\text{xe}5$ 20 b4 $\text{xb}4$ 21 $\text{xc}5$ dxc5 22 $\text{xd}8$ $\text{xd}8$ 23 $\text{fd}3$ $\text{c}4$ 24 $\text{xb}4$ cxb4 25 $\text{a}2$ b3 26 $\text{c}3 \pm$.

C)

9 0-0 $\text{b}8!$ (D)

This initiates the main line of the Fianchetto Variation, which in my opinion represents Black's best approach.

10 a4!

It is in White's interest to restrain Black on the queenside. Now if Black wishes to achieve the ...b5 break, it will be at the cost of opening the a-file and activating White's a1-rook. Other moves are not much fun for White:

a) 10 b3?! b5 11 $\text{b}1$ (11 $\text{b}2$ b4 12 $\text{d}5$ $\text{xd}5$ 13 $\text{xc}7$ $\text{e}3!$ \mp Ki.Georgiev) 11...b4 12 $\text{d}5$ $\text{a}6$ 13 $\text{b}2$ $\text{d}7$ 14 $\text{xc}7$ $\text{xc}7$ 15 c4?! (15 $\text{e}1 =$) 15...bxc3 16 $\text{e}1$ $\text{c}5$ 17 $\text{exc}3$ $\text{d}3$ 18 $\text{e}2$ e6 19 $\text{e}3$ $\text{a}5$ 20 $\text{a}4$ $\text{c}5!$ 21 $\text{c}2$ $\text{fd}8$ 22 $\text{c}4$ $\text{c}7$ 23 $\text{ab}2?$ (bad, but White is also worse after 23 $\text{bc}1!$! $\text{xa}4$ 24 bxa4 $\text{b}4 \mp$ or 23 $\text{xc}5$ dxc5 24 $\text{e}1$ $\text{d}4 \mp$) 23... $\text{b}4$ 24 $\text{d}2$ $\text{xa}2$ 25 $\text{a}1$ $\text{xc}4$ 26 $\text{xc}4$ $\text{xb}3$ 27 $\text{axa}2$ $\text{xc}4$ 28 $\text{xd}6$ $\text{d}4$ 29 $\text{xd}8$ $\text{xd}8$ \rightarrow Condie-Ki.Georgiev, Dubai OL 1986.

b) 10 $\text{d}5$ b5 and now:

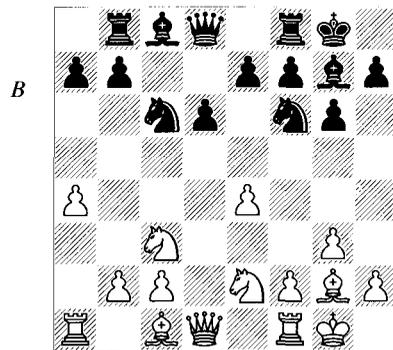
b1) 11 h3 is best, transposing to line 'c'.

b2) 11 $\text{g}5$ $\text{d}7$ 12 c3 h6 13 $\text{e}3$ $\text{b}7$ (another interesting idea is 13...a5 14 $\text{b}1$ e6 15 $\text{df}4$ $\text{c}7$ 16 $\text{d}4$ $\text{de}5$ 17 b3 $\text{a}6$ with good play for Black, Borsavolgyi-Turzo, Aggtelek 1995) 14 $\text{d}2$ $\text{h}7$ is fine for Black; e.g., 15 h3 (15 $\text{ad}1!$? is probably better) 15...a5 16 $\text{d}4$ e6 17 $\text{xc}6$ $\text{xc}6$ 18 $\text{f}4$ (Djingarova-Jap Tjoen San, Istanbul 2000), and now I very much like the look of 18... $\text{de}5$ with the idea of 19... $\text{c}4$. Black can even start to think about plans such as ... $\text{c}7$ -b7, ganging up on the e4-pawn, followed by a pawn-break with ...d5.

b3) 11 c3 is well met by 11...b4!; e.g., 12 cxb4 $\text{xb}4$ 13 $\text{xf}6+$ (13 a3 $\text{bxd}5$ 14 exd5 $\text{b}7$ 15 $\text{c}3$ $\text{d}7$ 16 $\text{e}1$ $\text{fc}8$ 17 $\text{e}3$ $\text{a}8$ 18 $\text{b}1$ a5 19 h3 $\text{b}7$ 20 g4 $\text{d}7$ 21 $\text{d}4$ e5! 22 $\text{e}3$ $\text{b}6$ 23 a4 $\text{c}4$ saw Black pressing for the advantage in Atlas-Tiviakov, Kallithea ECC 2002) 13... $\text{xf}6$ 14 $\text{e}3$ $\text{d}7$ 15 $\text{d}2$ $\text{a}6$ 16 $\text{fd}1$ $\text{c}2!$ 17 $\text{ab}1$ (17 $\text{xc}2$ $\text{xb}2 \mp$) 17... $\text{c}3$ 18 $\text{xe}3$ $\text{xb}2$ 19 e5 $\text{xe}5$ 0-1 Hnydiuk-Popov, Cappelle la Grande 2000.

c) 10 h3!? is a quiet alternative that has actually scored quite well for White in practice. Notwithstanding White's good results, Black is entirely fine; e.g., 10...b5 11 $\text{d}5$ e6 (11... $\text{d}7$ 12 c3 e6 13 $\text{b}4!$? $\text{xb}4$ 14 cxb4 was played in Salov-Serper, New York 1996; White subsequently won an eventful game, but Black's position is certainly OK here) 12 $\text{xf}6+$ $\text{xf}6$ 13 c3 b4 14 $\text{h}6$ $\text{e}8$ 15 $\text{d}2$ $\text{a}6$ 16 $\text{fe}1$ $\text{xe}2$ (16... $\text{de}5!$?) 17 $\text{xe}2$ bxc3 18 bxc3 $\text{e}5 \mp$ Kagan-Tarjan, Hastings 1976/7.

We now return to 10 a4! (D):

10...a6 11 $\text{d}5$

Note that 11 b3!? b5 12 axb5 axb5 13 $\text{b}2$ b4 14 $\text{a}4$ (14 $\text{d}5?$ $\text{xd}5$ 15 $\text{xc}7$ $\text{e}3 \mp$)

14...♙b7 gave Black comfortable equality in Atlas-Wirthensohn, Wohlen 1993.

White does, however, have a major alternative in the form of 11 h3 b5 12 axb5 axb5, when he can choose from three plans:

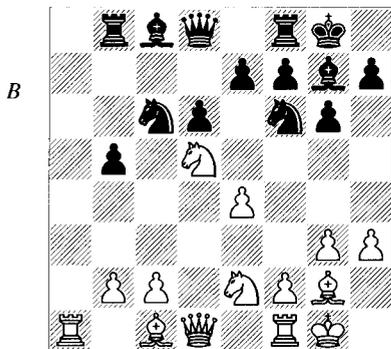
a) 13 ♖e3 b4 14 ♘d5 transposes to Line B.

b) 13 ♖g5 h6!? (the traditional formula of 13...♘d7!? is also possible; e.g., 14 ♖c1 b4 15 ♘d5 ♘c5 16 ♙h6 ♙a6 17 ♙xg7 ♗xg7 18 ♖d2 e6 19 ♘e3 ♖e7 20 f4 ♖fe8 21 ♖f2 ♙b5 22 b3 ♙xe2 23 ♖xe2 ♖ed8 24 ♖d1 ♖a8 was fine for Black in Kudrin-Ki.Georgiev, Wijk aan Zee 1985) 14 ♙e3 b4 15 ♘d5 ♘d7 16 ♖a2 (16 ♘d4? ♙xd4 17 ♙xd4 e6 ♢; according to Bangiev, 16 ♖b1! e6 17 ♘df4 is White's best here, although Black still has a very comfortable position) 16...e6 17 ♘df4 b3!? 18 cxb3 ♘c5 (18...♘b4!? 19 ♖a7 ♘c6 20 ♖a4 ♘b6 21 ♙xb6 ♖xb6 gives Black immediate equality according to Nevednichy, *Informator 81*) and then:

b1) 19 ♙xc5?! dxc5 20 ♘d3 ♖b6 21 ♘c3 ♖d8 ♢ 22 ♖b1 ♙xc3!? (22...c4! ♢) 23 bxc3 c4 24 ♘c1 cxb3 25 ♖b2 ♘a5 ♢ Brustkern-Bangiev, Germany 2001.

b2) Dragon expert Kiril Georgiev preferred 19 ♖c1!? in his game with Nevednichy, Yugoslavia 2001. After 19...♘b4 White was able to generate some pressure, so perhaps Black's best is Bangiev's suggestion 19...♘a5 20 b4 ♘cb3 21 ♖e1 ♘c4 with a good position for Black.

c) 13 ♘d5 (D).



Now:

c1) Black has scored well with 13...b4 14 ♖a2 (14 ♖a4 ♘d7 15 b3 ♙b7 16 ♙g5 h6 17 ♙e3 ♘c5 18 ♖a2 g5!? 19 ♖d2 e6 20 ♘xb4 ♘xb4 21 ♖xb4 ♙xe4 22 ♖d2 ♙xg2 23 ♗xg2 ♖a8 24 ♖xa8 ♖xa8+ ♢ Voigt-Rogozenko, Hamburg 2002) 14...e6 15 ♘xf6+ ♙xf6 16 ♙f4 ♘e5 17

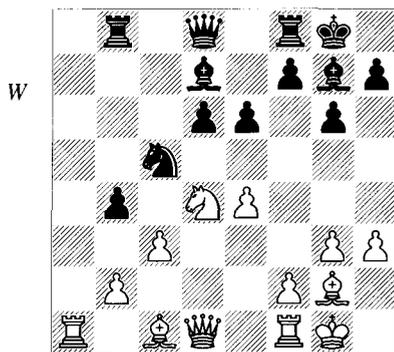
b3 ♖c7 18 ♖d2 ♖d8 19 ♖d1 = Rodriguez-Braga, Villa Gesell 1997.

c2) 13...♘d7!? keeps maximum tension in the position, thereby preserving optimum winning chances. White has now tried:

c21) 14 g4?! ♘c5 15 ♗h1 b4 16 ♘g3 b3!? (16...e6) 17 c3 ♙a6 18 ♖g1 e6 was already better for Black in Shevelev-Donaldson, Connecticut 2004.

c22) 14 f4 ♘b6 15 ♗h2 ♘c4 16 c3 e6 17 ♘e3 ♖b6 18 ♘c2 b4 gave Black good counterplay in Shevelev-Delchev, Linares open 1997.

c23) 14 c3 e6!? 15 ♘e3 ♘c5 16 ♘d4 ♙d7 17 ♘ec2 (17 b4? ♘a4!) 17...♘xd4 18 ♘xd4?! (Atlas suggested 18 cxd4 ♘b3 19 ♖a7 {19 ♖a3?! ♘xc1 20 ♖xc1 b4 ♢} 19...♘xc1 20 ♖xc1 b4, when Black can consider moves such as ...b3, ...♙b5 and ...♖b6) 18...b4 (D) and here:



c231) 19 ♙d2 ♘d3 20 ♖c2 bxc3 21 ♙xc3 ♘b4 =.

c232) 19 c4? ♙xd4 20 ♖xd4 ♘b3 21 ♖xd6 ♖b6! 22 ♖d3 ♘xa1 23 ♙e3 (23 ♙h6 ♙c6 ♢) 23...♖b8 24 ♖xa1 ♙c6 ♢ Sivokho-Sakaev, St Petersburg 1996.

c233) 19 ♙e3 ♖c8 20 ♖e2 e5 21 ♘c2 bxc3 22 bxc3 was played in An.Rodriguez-Sutovsky, Villa Martelli 1997, and now Atlas suggests 22...♘b3! with advantage to Black.

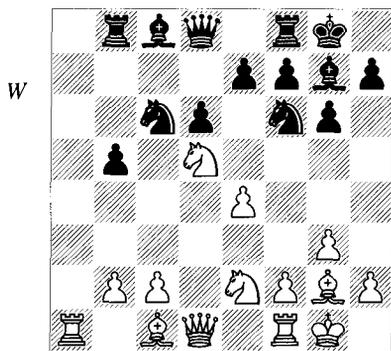
c24) 14 ♖a2 e6 when White has a choice of knight retreats:

c241) 15 ♘e3 ♘c5 (also noteworthy is 15...♖c7 16 ♖d2 ♘f6 17 g4 h6 18 f4 ♙b7 19 ♘g3?! ♖bd8 20 ♗h1 d5! 21 exd5 exd5 22 c3 d4! 23 cxd4 ♘xd4 24 ♙xb7 ♖xb7+ 25 ♖g2 ♖xg2+ 26 ♘xg2 ♖fe8 ♢ Spangenberg-Fiorito, Buenos Aires 1998) 16 ♙d2 (16 g4 ♙b7 17 ♘g3 ♖c7 18 f4 ♖a8 19 ♖xa8 ♖xa8 20 ♖d2 ♖a1 ♢ del Rio-Relange, Matinhos jr Wch 1994)

16...b4 17 b3 ♖a6 18 ♜e1 ♞c7 19 ♜f1 ♜a8 20 ♜c1 ♜b5 ♢ Giertz-Tatai, Zurich 1988.

c242) 15 ♜df4 ♞c7 16 ♜d2 ♜c5 17 ♜c1 ♜b7 18 ♜cd3 ♜a8 19 ♜xa8 ♜xa8 20 ♜e1 ♜a4 21 c3 ♜c5 22 ♞c2 ♜a5 23 ♜xc5 dxc5 24 ♜d3 c4 25 ♜b4 ♜d8 26 ♜g5 ♜d7 27 ♜d1 ♜b3 28 ♜e3 ♜f8 29 ♜f1 ♜c5 30 ♜xd7 ♞xd7 ♢ T.Horvath-Ki.Georgiev, Lvov 1984.

11...b5 12 axb5 axb5 (D)



13 ♜e3

White can also play more actively with 13 ♜g5 ♜d7:

a) 14 ♜a2!? h6 15 ♜d2 ♜b7 16 ♜c3 ♜de5 17 b3 e6 18 ♜b4 ♞b6 19 ♞d2 ♜fd8 = Gi.Hernandez-Serper, Chicago 1997.

b) 14 c3 h6 15 ♜e3 ♜b7 (15...e6 16 ♜b4!? ♜xb4 17 cxb4 left the b5-pawn weak in V.Georgiev-Alonso, Madrid 2001) 16 ♞d2 ♜h7 17 ♜a2 ♜a5 18 ♜d4 ♜c4 = Souleidis-Ebner, Greece 2003.

c) 14 ♞c1 is White's only try for an advantage. The above alternatives gave Black time to kick White's bishop back with 14...h6 and then follow up with ...e6, freeing his position. Black should now play 14...♜e8!:

c1) 15 ♜d1 ♜c5 16 ♜h6 (16 h3 b4 17 ♜e3 ♜d7 18 ♜d4 ♞c8 19 ♜xc6 ♜xc6 20 ♜d4 ♜xd5 21 exd5 ♞f5 22 g4 ♞d7 23 ♜xg7 ♜xg7 24 b3 ♜a8 = Al Modiahki-Tiviakov, Bled OL 2002) 16...♜h8 17 b4?! (17 ♜e3 ♜g4 18 f3 ♜d7 is better, with an unclear position) 17...♜xa1 18 ♞xa1 ♜e6 19 ♜df4 (19 f4 f6 20 ♞c3 ♜d7 21 g4 ♜c8 ♢) 19...♜e5! (only move) 20 ♜xe6 ♜xe6 21 f4 ♞b6+ 22 ♜h1 ♜a8 23 ♞c3 (23 ♞b2 ♜a2 24 ♞c3 ♜c8 -+) 23...♜ec8 24 ♞d2 ♜g4 25 ♜d4 ♜a2! -+ A.Ivanov-Ernst, Gausdal 1991.

c2) 15 h3!? ♜b7 16 ♜d1 ♞c8!? (16...♜a8 makes some sense) 17 ♜h6 ♜h8 18 ♜e3!? ♜a8

19 c3! ♜g7 20 ♜h6 ♜h8 21 ♜e3 ♜g7 22 ♜h6 ♜h8 23 ♜e3 ♜g7 24 ♜h6 ♜h8 25 ♜a3 ♜b6 26 ♜a2 ♜xd5 27 exd5 ♜e5 was Gi.Hernandez-Serper, Chicago 1997. The correct assessment of the resulting position is somewhere between equal and a modicum better for White. The game ended in a draw.

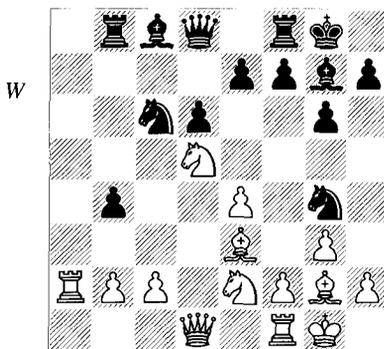
13...b4!

13...♜g4?! is bad on account of the surprising shot 14 ♜d4! ♜xe3 15 ♜xc6 ♜xd1 16 ♜xd8 ♜xb2 17 ♜c6 ♜b7 18 ♜dxe7+ ♜h8 19 ♜xc8 ♜xc8 20 e5! ± Popović-Ivanisević, Budva 2003, and even 13...♜d7?! 14 ♜d4! ♜xd4 15 ♜xd4 was better for White in J.Lauridsen-Kanefsch, Buenos Aires 1998.

14 ♜a2

14 ♜d4 ♜xd4 15 ♜xd4 ♜xd5 (15...e5!? 16 ♜a7 ♜b7) 16 exd5 ♜xd4 17 ♞xd4 ♜f5 =.

14...♜g4 (D)



15 ♜g5?!

In *Informator 65* Kramnik suggests 15 ♜d4! ♜xd4!? (15...♜xe3?! 16 ♜xc6 ♜xd1 17 ♜dxe7+! is awkward for Black) 16 ♜xd4 e5 17 ♜a7 ♜b7 as an improvement over White's play. Unfortunately, Kramnik did not provide an assessment in his annotations, presumably on the basis that the position remains tense and unclear.

15...h6 16 ♜c1

Better is 16 ♜d2 e6 17 ♜e3 ♜f6! ? =.

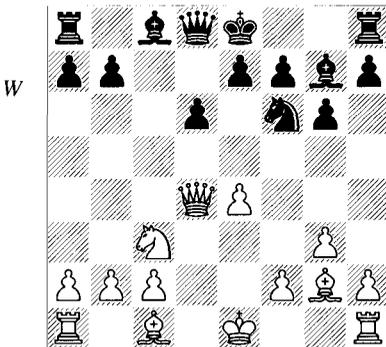
16...e6 17 ♜e3 b3! 18 cxb3 ♜ge5 19 ♜d2

Kramnik also mentions 19 f4?! ♜b4 20 ♜a3 (20 fxe5? ♜xa2 21 exd6 ♜xc1 22 ♜xc1 ♞b6) 20...♜ed3, 19 ♜a3 ♞b6! 20 ♜c4 ♜xc4 21 bxc4 ♜xb2 and 19 ♜c4 ♜b4 20 ♜a3 ♜ed3, when Black intends to break open the position with 21...d5!. Black appears to be doing well in all these lines.

After the text-move (19 ♖d2), Ivanchuk-Kramnik, Horgen 1995 continued 19...♗b6 20 ♖c3 (20 ♖a3 ♖a6 with initiative) 20...♖a6 21 ♗d2 ♖xe2! 22 ♗xe2 ♖d4 23 ♖xd4 (23 ♗d1?! ♗xb3 24 ♗xb3 ♖e2+! 25 ♖h1 ♖xb3 is much better for Black) 23...♗xd4 24 ♖d1 ♗c5 25 ♖a6? (25 ♖a3? ♖c6! ♖; 25 ♗d2! ♖fd8 26 ♖a6 ♖xb3 27 ♖xd6 ♖xd6 28 ♗xd6 ♗xd6 29 ♖xd6 => 25...♖xb3 26 ♖axd6 ♖xb2 27 ♖6d2 ♖fb8! 28 ♖c2! ♖8b3!? 29 ♖dd2? ♖xc2 30 ♖xc2 ♖b1+ 31 ♖f1 ♗b6 ♖.

Part 2: White Permits Simplification: 7 ♖g2

1 e4 c5 2 ♖f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♖xd4 ♖f6 5 ♖c3 g6 6 g3 ♖c6 7 ♖g2 ♖xd4 8 ♗xd4 ♖g7 (D)



9 0-0

White has little to gain from delaying castling:

a) 9 ♖e3?! 0-0 10 ♗d2 ♖g4 11 ♖f4 (11 ♖d4? ♖h6 12 ♗e2 {12 f4 e5} 12...e5 gives Black a clear advantage) 11...♖e5 12 ♖d5 ♖g4 (12...♖c4!?) 13 0-0 (13 ♖xe5 ♖xe5 14 ♗g5 ♖e6 ♖) 13...e6 14 ♖e3 (14 ♖c3?! ♖c4 15 ♗c1 ♖c8 16 h3 ♖xb2 17 hxg4 ♖xc3 18 ♖b1 ♖c4 19 ♖xb7 ♗a5 ♖) 14...♖f3+ 15 ♖xf3 ♖xf3 16 ♖xd6 b5! (an excellent move by Kasparov, removing the c4-square from the white knight and intending 17...♖e5; as an alternative, Kasparov also observes that 16...♖xe4 17 ♗b4 a5 18 ♗xe4 ♗xd6 would be slightly better for Black) 17 ♗d3 ♖xe4 18 ♗xe4 ♗xd6 ♖ Ivanchuk-Kasparov, Moscow OL 1994. The notes here are based on Kasparov's annotations for *Informator* 62.

b) 9 ♖g5!?! 0-0 10 ♗d2 ♗b6! 11 ♖b1 (11 ♖xf6?! ♖xf6 12 ♖d5 ♗xb2 ♖) 11...♖e6 12 0-0 ♖ac8 13 ♖fe1 ♖c4 gave Black a very comfortable position in Farah-Sorokin, Boca 1997.

9...0-0

White now has three principal continuations:

A: 10 ♗d3 251
B: 10 h3 252
C: 10 ♗b4 252

Minor alternatives:

a) 10 ♖g5 h6 11 ♖d2 ♖e6 is very comfortable for Black; e.g., 12 ♗d3 (12 ♖fe1 ♖d5 13 ♗a4 ♖b6 14 ♗b5 ♖c4 15 ♖c1 a6 16 ♗b4 b5 ♖ Movsesian-Shirov, Dordrecht 1999; 12 ♖h1 ♖g4 13 ♗d3 ♖e5 14 ♖e3 ♖c4 ♖ Priemov-Gershman, Kiev 1999) 12...♖c8 13 b3 a6 14 a4 ♖c7 15 ♖ac1 ♗d7 16 ♖fe1 ♖fc8 17 a5 ♖g4 ♖ Filipenko-Lerner, Rostov 1993.

b) 10 a4 ♖e6 11 ♗b4 a5!?! (11...♗c7 transposes to the note to Black's 10th move in Line C) is interesting; e.g., 12 ♗xb7 ♖d7 and now:

b1) 13 ♖b5 ♖c8 14 c3 ♖c4 (14...♖c5!?! 15 ♗a7 ♖c4 looks potentially awkward for White) 15 ♖d1 ♖b3 16 ♖g5 ♖xd1 17 ♖xd1 gave White some compensation for the exchange in Livshits-Greenfeld, Tel Aviv 2001. The game eventually ended in a draw.

b2) 13 ♗b5 ♖c8 14 ♖d1 ♖e5 15 ♗e2 ♖c4 16 ♖b1 (16 ♖d3 ♗d7 17 ♖d5 ♖xb2 18 ♖xb2 ♖xb2 19 ♖a2 ♖g7 ♖ An.Rodriguez-Milos, São Paulo 2004) 16...♖xb2 17 ♖xb2 ♖xc3 18 e5 was J.Horvath-Fabisch, Budapest 1995 and now Fritz likes the look of 18...♖a2!?. However, the game continuation 18...♖xb2 19 ♖xb2 ♖c4 20 exd6 exd6 also wasn't so bad for Black.

A)

10 ♗d3 ♖e6 11 ♖d5 ♖c8 12 c3 ♖e8

The most common approach, but Black can also try manoeuvring his knight to e5 immediately; e.g., 12...♖g4!?! 13 ♖f4 ♖e8 14 h3 ♖e5 15 ♖xe5 ♖xe5 16 ♖fd1 ♖c5 17 ♖ac1 ♗d7 18 ♖h2 ♗a4 19 a3 b5 with an excellent position for Black in Netzer-Nevednichy, Selestat 2000.

After the text-move (12...♖c8) White has tried three approaches:

a) 13 h3 ♗d7!?! (also interesting is 13...♗a5 14 ♖g5 ♖xd5!?! 15 exd5 e5 16 ♖fe1 ♖d7 17 g4 ♖c5 18 ♗c2 ♗a4 19 ♖xa4 ♖xa4 20 ♖e2 f5 21

♠d1 ♖f7 22 ♙c1 ♙f6, Vuličević-Benjamin, New York 1992) 14 ♖h2 ♗a4 15 ♙g5 ♜xd5 16 exd5 ♙f5 17 ♗d1 ♗xd1 18 ♖axd1 b5 19 ♗fe1 ♖f8 gave Black a nice ending in Arencibia-Dlugy, Havana 1985. In both of these encounters Black went on to win the endgame.

b) 13 ♙g5 allows Black to set about his favourite knight manoeuvre; e.g., 13...♜g4 14 ♖ad1 h6 15 ♙c1 ♗a5 16 a3 ♙d7 17 ♗e2 ♜e5 18 ♗fe1 ♙a4 19 ♖d4 ♙b5 20 ♗d1 ♜c4 21 h4?! e6 22 ♜e3 ♙xd4! 23 cxd4 ♜xe3 24 ♙xe3 ♙a4 25 ♗a1 ♖g7 ♢ F.Martinez-Mestel, Oviedo rpd 1993.

c) 13 ♙e3 ♗a5 14 h3 (alternatively, 14 a4 ♙xd5!? {14...♜xd5} 15 exd5 ♜g4 16 ♙d4 = Chistiakov-Taimanov, Leningrad 1955) 14...♗a4 15 ♗fe1 b5 16 ♙g5 ♜xd5 17 exd5 ♙f5 18 ♗d2 b4 19 c4 ♗c2 20 ♗xc2 ♙xc2 21 ♖ac1 ♙d3 22 ♗e3 ♙xb2 23 ♖xd3 ♙xc1 24 ♙xc1 ♖xc4 ♢ Teschner-Tal, Vienna/Baden Echt 1957.

B)

10 h3 ♙e6 11 ♗d1

11 ♗d3?! ♗c8! lands White in immediate trouble as it is impossible to defend against both 12...♙c4 and 12...♙xh3, and 11 ♗b4 ♗c8! 12 ♖h2 a5 13 ♗a3 b5! 14 ♜d5 ♙xd5 15 exd5 ♗xc2 ♢, as in Svidler-Gelfand, Polanica Zdroj 2000, is just as bad.

After the text-move (11 ♗d1) Black has tried three approaches:

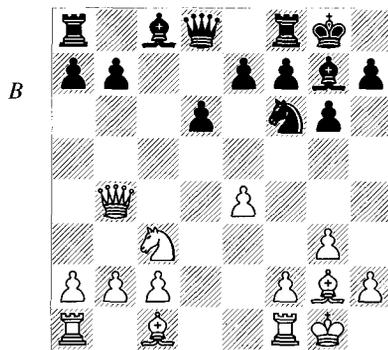
a) 11...♗d7!? 12 ♖h2 ♖ac8 (12...♙c4!? was also shown to be quite good in Inkirov-Delchev, Bulgaria 1995) 13 ♜d5 ♜xd5 14 exd5 ♙f5 15 c3 h5 16 a4 ♖c4! 17 ♗e1 ♙e5! 18 ♙f1?! ♗e4 19 ♖xe4 ♙xe4 20 f3 ♙f5 21 f4 ♙f6 22 ♙e3?! ♙e4! 23 ♙g2 (23 ♙xa7?! ♗f5 24 ♙e3 {24 ♙g2?! h4 ♢} 24...♙xd5 with the initiative – Scherbakov, *Informator* 54) 23...♙xg2 (23...♗f5? 24 g4 +-) 24 ♖xg2 ♗f5 left Black at least equal in Laketić-R.Scherbakov, Cheljabinsk 1991.

b) 11...♗a5 12 ♙e3 (12 a4 ♖ac8 13 ♗e1 ♗fe8 {13...♗c4!?!} 14 ♙d2 ♗b4 15 e5 dxe5 16 ♖xe5 ♗d4 17 ♖b5 b6 ♢ Voigt-Gikas, Dortmund 1992) 12...♖ac8 13 ♗d2 (13 ♙d4 ♖c4 14 ♜e2 ♗fc8 15 c3 = Coccozza-F.Gustafsson, Eksjö 1983) 13...♗fe8 14 ♖fd1 gave Black an entirely reasonable position in Rellstab-Mohrlok, 1962. Now 14...♜d7!, heading for c4 via e5 (or a4 via c5), or 14...♖c4 is best.

c) 11...♗c8!? embodies quite a nice idea; i.e., White is forced to defend the h3-pawn with 12 ♖h2, which gives Black an extra move with which to activate the queen via 12...♗c4! 13 a4 (13 ♜d5 ♜xe4 14 ♜xe7+ ♖h8 ♢) 13...♖ac8 14 a5 ♜d7 15 ♖a3 (Svidler, in *Informator* 65, considers 15 ♙d2!? to be best, when 15...♗c7 16 f4 ♙c4 17 ♗e1 e6 18 ♗f3 leads to an unclear position) 15...♗c7 16 f4 (16 ♙e3 ♜e5 ♢) 16...♙xc3! 17 ♖xc3 (17 bxc3 ♙c4 18 ♗e1 ♗c5! ♢) 17...♗xa5 18 f5 ♙c4 19 ♖f4 ♙a6! 20 fxg6 hxg6 21 ♖h4 ♖xc3! 22 ♙d2 ♗fc8! 23 ♙xc3 ♖xc3 24 ♗d2 and now 24...♗e5! 25 bxc3 ♙c4 ♢ was Makarychev-Svidler, Russia 1995, but 24...♜f6! is also good; e.g., 25 ♗h6 (25 bxc3 g5 26 ♖h6 ♖g7 +-; 25 ♗xc3 ♗xc3 26 bxc3 g5 27 ♖h6 ♖g7 +-) 25...♜h5 26 bxc3 ♗xc3 ♢.

C)

10 ♗b4 (D)



10...a5

Black has an alternative in 10...♗c7, but this is primarily of interest to those wishing to meet 10 a4 ♙e6 11 ♗b4 with 11...♗c7, rather than the speculative gambit 11...a5 (covered in note 'b' after Black's 9th move, above). Play now continues 11 a4 ♙e6, with the following possibilities:

a) 12 ♜d5 ♙xd5 13 exd5 ♗xc2 14 ♗xb7 ♗fe8 15 a5 ♜g4 16 ♗b4 ♜e5 17 ♙e3 ♖eb8 18 ♗h4 ♙f6 19 ♙g5 ♙xg5 20 ♗xg5 ♢ Popović-Timman, Zagreb 1985.

b) 12 ♙g5 ♖ac8 13 ♖fc1 a5! 14 ♗a3? (by way of improvement, Leko notes the line 14 ♗d4 ♜d5 15 ♜xd5 ♙xd4 16 ♜xc7 ♖xc7 17 c3 => 14...♜g4! ♢ 15 ♜d1 (only move; 15 ♜d5?

♙xd5 16 exd5 ♙d4 →) 15...♗e5 16 ♗e3 h6 17 ♙f4 ♗c6! 18 h4 (18 ♗d5 ♙xd5 19 exd5 ♗d4 20 ♖d3 ♖c4 ♢; 18 c3 g5 ♢) 18...♗d4 19 ♖d3 ♖c5 20 ♗d5 ♙xd5 21 exd5 ♖c4 22 ♖xc4 ♖xc4 23 ♙f1 was Spangenberg-Leko, Buenos Aires 1994. In *Informator 60*, Leko suggests that Black should now play 23...♖c5! 24 ♙e3 ♖xd5 25 c4 ♖c5 26 ♗d1 e5 27 ♙xd4 exd4 28 b3 d5 with distinctly better chances.

c) 12 a5 ♗d7 gives rise to the familiar white options:

c1) 13 ♗d5 ♙xd5 14 exd5 ♖xc2 15 ♙g5 (15 ♖xb7 ♗c5 16 ♖xe7 ♗b3 17 ♙e4 ♖c4 18 ♖b1 ♖ae8 ♢ Ernst, *ChessBase Magazine 40*) 15...♖xb2 16 ♖xb2 ♙xb2 17 ♙xe7 ♙xa1 18 ♖xa1 ♖fe8 19 ♙xd6 ♖ac8 20 ♙f4 ♗c5 (another idea is 20...b5!?) 21 ♙e3 ♗f8 22 ♖e1 ♖xe3 23 ♖xe3 ♖e8 led to an equal ending in Reinderman-Wojtkiewicz, Wijk aan Zee 1994.

c2) 13 ♙g5 ♖fe8 14 ♖fc1 ♗e5 15 ♗d5 ♖d7, as in Milošević-Petursson, Lugano 1989, is also equal.

c3) 13 ♙e3 ♗e5 14 ♗d5 (14 h3 ♖ac8 15 ♗h2 ♗c4 16 ♗b5 ♖d7 17 ♙xa7 ♙xb2 18 ♖ab1 ♙g7 19 f4 ♖d8 20 ♗d4 ♙d7 21 ♗b3 ♖c7 22 e5 dxe5 23 ♖xb7 ♙f5 ♢ Tisdall-Petursson, Gausdal 1987) 14...♙xd5 15 exd5 ♖fc8 16 c3 ♖d7 17 ♖fd1 h5 18 h3 ♖c7 19 ♙f1 ♖f5 20 ♙xa7 ♖xa7 21 ♖b6 ♗f3+ 22 ♗h1 ♖c4 23 ♖xa7 ♖h4 24 gxh4 ♖f4 25 ♗g2 ♗xh4+ 26 ♗g1 ♗f3+ 27 ♗g2 ♗h4+ 1/2-1/2 Kudrin-Tal, Titograd 1984.

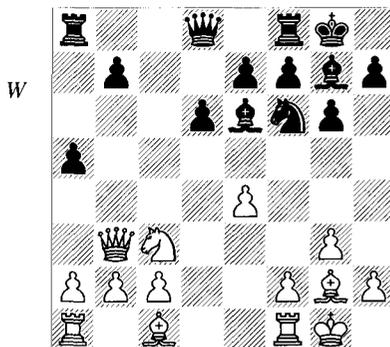
11 ♖b3

This is by far the most common move, but 11 ♖b5!? has also been played; e.g., 11...♖c7 (11...♖a6!? 12 a4 ♖c7 13 ♖e2 ♙g4 14 f3 ♙e6 15 ♗d1 ♖c6 ♢ Kaushansky-Benjamin, Chicago 1987) 12 a4 ♙d7 13 ♖b3 ♙c6 14 ♗d5 ♗xd5 15 exd5 ♙f5 with a comfortable game for Black, Livshits-Potapov, Alushta 2002.

11...♙e6! (D)

12 ♗d5

12 ♖xb7 ♗d7 (12...♙c4?! 13 e5! was strong for White in Nevostruev-Scherbakov, Russia 1998) and now Kramnik, in *Informator 71*, mentions 13 ♗d5 ♖b8 ♢ and 13 ♗d1 ♖b8 14 ♖a7 (14 ♖a6 ♙xc3 15 bxc3 ♖c7 ♢) 14...♗c5



15 e5 ♙xe5 ♢, while 13 ♖b5 ♖b8!? (13...♙xc3 14 bxc3 ♖c7 ♢ Kramnik) 14 ♖g5 h6 15 ♖e3 ♗e5 16 ♖b1 ♖c7 17 ♗d5 ♖xc2 18 ♗xe7+ ♗h7 19 ♖a1 ♙c4 ♢ was Neubauer-Marques, Brazil 2003.

12...a4! 13 ♖xb7 ♗xd5 14 exd5 ♙f5 15 ♙g5

Ftačnik suggests that White's play could be improved here with 15 c3!? a3! 16 ♖b3 axb2 17 ♖xb2 ♖a5 18 ♙d2, which he assesses as unclear. Although White is a pawn up, the a2-, c3- and d5-pawns are not only weak but also obstruct the coordination of White's pieces. Black's forces are fully developed and generate queenside pressure reminiscent of that acquired in the Benko Gambit. In conclusion, despite the slight material imbalance, Black's chances must be considered preferable here.

15...♖b8 16 ♖xb8 ♖fxb8 17 ♙xe7 ♖xb2 18 a3

18 ♙xd6 ♖xc2 19 ♖ad1 ♖xa2 ♢.

18...♖xc2

Now 19 ♖ad1 ♖a6 20 ♖fe1 ♙b2 and 19 ♖ac1 ♖xc1 20 ♖xc1 ♙b2 21 ♖c6 ♖e8 22 ♖c7 (22 ♙xd6?? ♖e1+ 23 ♙f1 ♙h3 →) 22...♙xa3 bear distinctly preferable chances for Black, while Adams-Kramnik, Wijk aan Zee 1998 concluded 19 ♖ae1 ♖a6 (19...♙e5!? 20 ♙e4 ♙xe4 21 ♖xe4 ♖a7 also looks good) 20 ♙e4 ♙xe4 21 ♖xe4 ♙b2 22 ♖fe1? (22 ♖e3 ♙d4 ♢) 22...♖c1! 23 ♖xc1 ♙xc1 24 ♙f6 ♖a8 25 ♖c4 ♙xa3 26 ♙d4 ♙c5! 27 ♙xc5 dxc5 28 ♖xc5 a3 29 ♖c1 a2 0-1. White resigned as 30 ♖a1 ♗f8 31 ♗g2 ♗e7 32 ♗f3 ♗d6 33 ♗f4 h6 34 ♗e4 ♖a4+ gives Black a won rook and pawn ending.

Index of Variations

Chapter Guide

1 e4 c5
2 ♟f3 d6
3 d4 cxd4
4 ♟xd4 ♟f6
5 ♟c3 g6
6 ♟e3

6 ♟e2 – Chapter 18
6 ♟c4 – Chapter 19
6 f4 – Chapter 20
6 g3 – Chapter 21
Other moves – Introduction
(Early Deviations)
6 ... ♟g7
7 f3 ♟c6
8 ♟d2

8 ♟c4 0-0 9 ♟e2 – Introduction
(Early Deviations)
8 ... 0-0
9 ♟c4

9 g4 – Chapter 17
9 0-0-0 d5 (other moves –
Chapter 16) 10 exd5 (other
moves – Chapter 15)
10...♟xd5 11 ♟xc6 bxc6 and
now:
a) 12 ♟xd5 – Chapter 13
b) 12 ♟d4 – Chapter 14
9 ... ♟d7
10 0-0-0 ♟c8
10...♟a5 – Chapter 12
10...♟b8 – Chapter 12
11 ♟b3 ♟e5
11...♟xd4 – Chapter 12
12 h4
12 ♟g5 – Chapter 2
12 ♟b1 – Chapter 11
Other moves – Chapter 1
12 ... h5
13 ♟g5

13 ♟b1 – Chapter 4
13 ♟h6 – Chapter 5
Other moves – Chapter 3
13 ... ♟c5

Now:
a) 14 f4 – Chapter 7

b) 14 ♟b1 – Chapter 10
c) 14 g4 hxg4
c1) 15 f4 – Chapter 9
c2) Other moves – Chapter 8
d) Other moves – Chapter 6

Introduction

(Early Deviations)

1 e4 c5 2 ♟f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4
♟xd4 ♟f6 5 ♟c3 g6
A: 6 ♟d5?! 21
B: 6 ♟g5!? 21
C: 6 ♟e3 ♟g7 7 f3 ♟c6 8 ♟c4
0-0 9 ♟e2 22

1: Yugoslav Attack: 12th Move Alternatives for White

1 e4 c5 2 ♟f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4
♟xd4 ♟f6 5 ♟c3 g6 6 ♟e3
♟g7 7 f3 ♟c6 8 ♟d2 0-0 9
♟c4 ♟d7 10 0-0-0 ♟c8 11
♟b3 ♟e5 23
A: 12 ♟h6?! 23 12...♟xh6! 13
♟xh6 ♟xc3 14 bxc3 23
A1: 14...♟a5 23
A2: 14...a5!? 26: 15 a3 26; 15
a4 26
B: 12 g4 27 12...b5 27: 13 h4
27; 13 g5 29
C: 12 ♟de2? 31
D: 12 ♟he1!? 31
E: 12 ♟e2?! 32

2: 12 ♟g5

1 e4 c5 2 ♟f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4
♟xd4 ♟f6 5 ♟c3 g6 6 ♟e3
♟g7 7 f3 ♟c6 8 ♟d2 0-0 9
♟c4 ♟d7 10 0-0-0 ♟c8 11
♟b3 ♟e5 12 ♟g5!? 34
12...♟c4! 34
A: 13 ♟e2?! 34
B: 13 ♟d3?! 34
C: 13 ♟xc4 35 13...♟xc4 35
C1: 14 ♟b3!? 35
C2: 14 e5 35 14...dxe5 35
C21: 15 ♟b3 36 15...♟c7 16
♟b5 36; 16...♟f5!? 36;

16...♟c8! 36
C22: 15 ♟de2 37 15...♟c7 37:
16 ♟xf6 37; 16 ♟b5 38

3: Soltis Variation: 13th Move Alternatives

1 e4 c5 2 ♟f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4
♟xd4 ♟f6 5 ♟c3 g6 6 ♟e3
♟g7 7 f3 ♟c6 8 ♟d2 0-0 9 ♟c4
♟d7 10 0-0-0 ♟c8 11 ♟b3 ♟e5
12 h4 h5! 40
A: 13 ♟dg1?! 40
B: 13 g4?! 42 13...hxg4! 42
B1: 14 f4!? 43 14...♟c4 15
♟xc4 ♟xc4 43: 16 f5?! 43; 16
e5 44
B2: 14 h5 44
C: 13 ♟de2 47
D: 13 ♟d5 47

4: 13 ♟b1

1 e4 c5 2 ♟f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4
♟xd4 ♟f6 5 ♟c3 g6 6 ♟e3
♟g7 7 f3 ♟c6 8 ♟d2 0-0 9 ♟c4
♟d7 10 0-0-0 ♟c8 11 ♟b3 ♟e5
12 h4 h5 13 ♟b1 48 13...♟c4 14
♟xc4 ♟xc4 48
A: 15 g4?! 50 15...hxg4! 50: 16
f4 50; 16 h5 50
B: 15 b3 52 15...♟c8 52: 16
♟de2 52; 16 ♟d5 52
C: 15 ♟b3 53
D: 15 ♟de2 56 15...b5! 56: 16
e5!? 58; 16 ♟f4 58; 16 ♟h6 59

5: 13 ♟h6

1 e4 c5 2 ♟f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4
♟xd4 ♟f6 5 ♟c3 g6 6 ♟e3
♟g7 7 f3 ♟c6 8 ♟d2 0-0 9 ♟c4
♟d7 10 0-0-0 ♟c8 11 ♟b3 ♟e5
12 h4 h5 13 ♟h6!? 61
A: 13...♟xh6!? 61 14 ♟xh6
♟xc3! 15 bxc3 61
A1: 15...♟c7 62
A2: 15...♟a5 62
A3: 15...♟c8!? 63: 16 ♟b2!?
63; 16 g4 64; 16 ♟b1 65

B: 13... c4! 66 14 xc4 xc4
15 xg7 xg7 66

B1: 16 de2 66

B2: 16 d5 66 16... e5! 66: 17
 b3 67; 17 e2 67

B3: 16 he1 68 16... a5 68:
17 e3 68; 17 b1 68; 17
 b3 69

B4: 16 b1 69

B41: 16... b6 69

B42: 16... a5 70: 17 $\text{g4!?$ 70;
17 d5 71; 17 b3 72

B5: 16 g4 73 16... hxg4 17 h5
 h8! 18 hxg6 fxg6 19 f4 e5!
74: 20 de2 74; 20 xe5 75

6: 13 g5 c5 : Unusual 14th Moves for White

1 e4 c5 2 f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4
 xd4 f6 5 c3 g6 6 e3
 g7 7 f3 c6 8 d2 0-0 9
 c4 d7 10 0-0-0 c8 11
 b3 e5 12 h4 h5 13 g5 77
13... c5! 77

A: 14 $\text{xf6?!$ 78

B: 14 d5 78

C: 14 de2 79 14... b5 79: 15
 e3 79; 15 xf6 79

D: 14 $\text{dgl!?$ 80

E: 14 he1 80 14... b5! 80

E1: 15 f4 80

E2: 15 b1 82 15... a5 16 f4
83: 16... $\text{eg4!?$ 83; 16... c4!
84

7: The Main-Line Soltis Variation: 14 $\text{f4!?$

1 e4 c5 2 f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4
 xd4 f6 5 c3 g6 6 e3
 g7 7 f3 c6 8 d2 0-0 9
 c4 d7 10 0-0-0 c8 11
 b3 e5 12 h4 h5 13 g5
 c5 14 $\text{f4!?$ 85

A: 14... $\text{eg4!?$ 85

B: 14... c4! 86

8: 14 g4 with 15 xf6 or 15 h5

1 e4 c5 2 f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4
 xd4 f6 5 c3 g6 6 e3
 g7 7 f3 c6 8 d2 0-0 9
 c4 d7 10 0-0-0 c8 11
 b3 e5 12 h4 h5 13 g5
 c5 14 g4 93 14... hxg4 93
A: 15 xf6 93

B: 15 $\text{h5!?$ 94 15... hxh5 94:
16 f4 95; 16 d5 95

9: 15 $\text{f4!?$: The Ultimate Main Line

1 e4 c5 2 f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4
 xd4 f6 5 c3 g6 6 e3
 g7 7 f3 c6 8 d2 0-0 9
 c4 d7 10 0-0-0 c8 11
 b3 e5 12 h4 h5 13 g5
 c5 14 g4 hxg4 15 f4 98
15... c4 98

A: 16 xc4 98

B: 16 d3 98 16... b5 99

B1: 17 e5 99

B2: 17 f5 100

B3: 17 h5 101 17... hxh5 18

d5 101: 18... xf4! 101;

18... f6! 102

B4: 17 xf6 102 17... xf6 18

e5 dxe5! 102: 19 de2 102;

19 dxb5 103

C: 16 e2 104

C1: 16... $\text{a5!?$ 104

C2: 16... c8! 106

C21: 17 f5 106 17... xb2!

106: 18 xf6? 107; 18 xb2

108

C22: 17 h5 108

C23: 17 xf6 109 17... xf6

109: 18 xc4 110; 18 h5 111;

18 d5 111

10: The Karpov Variation: 14 b1

1 e4 c5 2 f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4
 xd4 f6 5 c3 g6 6 e3
 g7 7 f3 c6 8 d2 0-0 9
 c4 d7 10 0-0-0 c8 11
 b3 e5 12 h4 h5 13 g5
 c5 14 $\text{b1!?$ 113

A: 14... b5 113 15 g4 a5 16

gxh5 $\text{a4!?$ 113: 17 $\text{xf7+?!$

114; 17 h6! 115

B: 14... e8! 116

B1: 15 f4 117

B2: 15 g4 117

B3: 15 h6 118

B4: 15 he1 119 15... $\text{a5!?$

119: 16 $\text{f4!?$ 120; 16 a3! 121

11: 12 b1 : A Modern Emphasis on Prophylaxis

Part 1: The Traditional

Approach

1 e4 c5 2 f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4
 xd4 f6 5 c3 g6 6 e3
 g7 7 f3 c6 8 d2 0-0 9 c4
 d7 10 0-0-0 c8 11 b3 e5
12 b1 123 12... c4 123 13
 xc4 xc4 14 g4 123

A: 14... $\text{b5?!$ 124

B: 14... a5 125

C: 14... $\text{c7!?$ 126

D: 14... b8 127

Part 2: Refined Prophylaxis

1 e4 c5 2 f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4
 xd4 f6 5 c3 g6 6 e3
 g7 7 f3 c6 8 d2 0-0 9 c4
 d7 10 0-0-0 c8 11 b3 e5
12 b1 128 13 h4 h5 14
 h6 c4! 15 xc4 xc4 16
 xg7 xg7 130

A: 17 g4 131

B: 17 $\text{d5!?$ 131 17... e5 18

xf6 xf6 132

12: Alternative Approaches to the 9 c4 Yugoslav for Black

Part 1: 9 c4 Yugoslav with

10... a5

1 e4 c5 2 f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4
 xd4 f6 5 c3 g6 6 e3
 g7 7 f3 c6 8 d2 0-0 9 c4
 d7 10 0-0-0 (10 b3 xd4
136) 10... c8 11 b3 $\text{xd4!?$
137 12 xd4 $\text{b5!?$ 137

A: 14... $\text{b4!?$ 134

B: 14... c4 135

Part 2: Black Plays 11... xd4

1 e4 c5 2 f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4
 xd4 f6 5 c3 g6 6 e3
 g7 7 f3 c6 8 d2 0-0 9 c4
 d7 10 0-0-0 (10 b3 xd4
136) 10... c8 11 b3 $\text{xd4!?$
137 12 xd4 $\text{b5!?$ 137

A: 13 $\text{e5!?$ 137

B: 13 $\text{xa7!?$ 138

C: 13 h4 139

D: 13 d5 140

Part 3: The Chinese Dragon

1 e4 c5 2 f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4
 xd4 f6 5 c3 g6 6 e3
 g7 7 f3 c6 8 d2 0-0 9 c4
 d7 10 0-0-0 $\text{b8!?$ 142

A: 11 h4 143

B: 11 b1 144

C: 11 b3 145 11... a5 145

C1: 12 h4 145

C2: 12 h6! 146

13: 9 0-0-0 d5: White Takes the Pawn

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 g6 6 ♙e3

♙g7 7 f3 ♘c6 8 ♗d2 0-0 9

0-0-0 149 9...d5 10 exd5

♘xd5 11 ♘xc6 bxc6 12 ♘xd5

cxd5 13 ♗xd5! ♗c7 14 ♗c5

150

A: 14...♗b7 150: 15 b3!? 151;

15 ♗a3!? 152

B: 14...♗b8!? 154: 15 ♗a3

155; 15 b3 156

14: White Plays 9 0-0-0 and 12 ♙d4!

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4

♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 g6 6 ♙e3

♙g7 7 f3 ♘c6 8 ♗d2 0-0 9

0-0-0 d5 10 exd5 ♘xd5 11

♘xc6 bxc6 12 ♙d4! 159

A: 12...♙xd4!? 159

B: 12...♘xc3!? 160

C: 12...e5 162 13 ♙c5 162

C1: 13...♙e8 162

C11: 14 ♘xd5 163

C12: 14 ♘e4 165: 14...f5 165;

14...♗c7!? 166

C2: 13...♙e6 167

15: 9 0-0-0 d5: White Maintains the Central Tension

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4

♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 g6 6 ♙e3

♙g7 7 f3 ♘c6 8 ♗d2 0-0 9

0-0-0 d5

A: 10 h4!? 175

B: 10 ♘xc6?! 175

C: 10 ♗b1!? 177

C1: 10...♘xd4! 177 11 e5!!

177

C11: 11...♘xf3!? 177

C12: 11...♘f5! 178 12 exf6

♙xf6 13 ♘xd5 ♗xd5!! 14

♗xd5 ♘xe3 15 ♗d2 ♘xd1 16

♗xd1 ♙e6 180

C121: 17 ♙d3 181 17...♗fd8

18 ♗e2 181: 18...♗d4!? 182;

18...♗d6! 183

C122: 17 ♙b5 183

C2: 10...♗b8!? 184

D: 10 ♗e1 186 10...e5 11

♘xc6 bxc6 12 exd5 ♘xd5 13

♙c4 ♙e6 14 ♘e4 ♗c7 15 ♙c5

♗fd8 189: 16 h4 189; 16 ♘g5?!

189; 16 ♗h4 190; 16 g4 191

16: Black's Alternatives after 9 0-0-0: 9...♘xd4 and 9...♙d7!?

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4

♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 g6 6 ♙e3

♙g7 7 f3 ♘c6 8 ♗d2 0-0 9

0-0-0

A: 9...♙d7!? 193 10 g4 ♗c8

11 h4 ♘e5 193: 12 h5 193; 12

♗b1 195

B: 9...♘xd4 197 10 ♙xd4

♙e6 11 ♗b1! ♗c7 12 h4 ♗fc8

13 h5! ♗a5 198: 14 h6!? 198;

14 hxg6! 199

17: 9 g4!?: A Positional Approach

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4

♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 g6 6 ♙e3

♙g7 7 f3 ♘c6 8 ♗d2 0-0 9 g4

203 9...♙e6! 203

A: 10 ♘xe6 203 10...fxe6 203:

11 ♙c4 203; 11 0-0-0 204

B: 10 0-0-0 205 10...♘xd4 11

♙xd4 ♗a5 205: 12 ♗b1?!

205; 12 a3! 207

18: The Classical Dragon

Part 1: The Classical Classical

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4

♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 g6 6 ♙e2

209 6...♙g7 7 0-0 ♘c6 209

A: 8 ♙e3 209 8...0-0 209

A1: 9 ♘b3 211: 9...a6!? 211;

9...♙e6 213

A2: 9 ♗d2 216

B: 8 ♘b3 218 8...0-0 218

B1: 9 ♗h1 218

B2: 9 ♙e1 219

B3: 9 ♙g5 221 9...a6 10 f4 b5

11 ♙f3 222: 11...♙b7!? 223;

11...b4 224

Part 2: Modern Interpretations of the Classical Dragon

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4

♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 g6 6 ♙e2

♙g7 7 ♙e3 225 7...♘c6 225

A: 8 ♗d2 226

B: 8 h4 226

C: 8 ♘b3 227

19: 6 ♙c4: An Improved Classical?

Part 1: The Traditional

Approach: White Plays ♙e3

and h3

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4

♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 g6 6 ♙c4 228

6...♙g7 7 h3 ♘c6 8 ♙e3 0-0 9

♙b3! 229

A: 9...♙d7 230

B: 9...♘a5! 232

Part 2: White Plays h3 and ♙g5

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4

♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 g6 6 ♙c4

♙g7 7 h3 ♘c6 8 0-0 235 8...0-0

9 ♙e1 ♙d7 10 ♙b3 ♘xd4! 235

Part 3: White Delays or Omits h3

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4

♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 g6 6 ♙c4 ♙g7

7 0-0 236 7...0-0 8 ♙b3!? ♘c6 9

♙e1!? ♘g4!? 10 ♘f3!? 237

20: 6 f4: The Levenfish Variation

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4

♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 g6 6 f4 238

6...♘c6! 238

A: 7 ♘b3?! 238

B: 7 ♙c4!? 239

C: 7 ♘f3!? 239

D: 7 ♘xc6 240 7...bxc6 8 e5

♘d7 240: 9 ♙c4 240; 9 ♗f3

241; 9 exd6 242

E: 7 ♙b5 243

21: The Fianchetto Variation

Part 1: White Preserves the

d4-Knight

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4

♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 g6 6 g3 245

6...♘c6 7 ♘de2! 245 7...♙g7 8

♙g2 0-0 246

A: 9 b3?! 246

B: 9 h3 246

C: 9 0-0 248

Part 2: White Permits

Simplification: 7 ♙g2

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4

♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 g6 6 g3 ♘c6

7 ♙g2 251 7...♘xd4 8 ♗xd4

♙g7 9 0-0 0-0 251

A: 10 ♗d3 251

B: 10 h3 252

C: 10 ♗b4 252

The Dragon is one of the key battlegrounds of modern chess, and a perennial favourite of ambitious chess-players of all standards.

Black develops his pieces so as to maximize the strategic pluses granted him in the Open Sicilian. If White is to expose a defect in the Dragon, it must be by a direct attack, and this leads to ferocious battles, with White trying to mate the black king along the h-file, while Black seeks to gain counterplay down the c-file and on the long diagonal. Many Sicilian themes are seen in their clearest form, with the ... xc3 exchange sacrifice particularly important. Even Dragon endgames tend to be very sharp, with Black often possessing a swathe of mobile pawns in return for an exchange, a piece, or even a whole rook.

In hazardous territory a guide is essential, and Edward Dearing has stepped up to offer his services. He explains at length the all-important general themes, and advises on how to choose plans and methods, drawing upon his many years of experience and study of the Dragon. Dearing also provides an up-to-date view of Dragon theory, including many new ideas and suggestions to help the reader tailor his Dragon repertoire to suit his own preferences.

Edward Dearing is an International Master, and one of Scotland's top players. He was equal first in the Smith & Williamson Young Masters in 2002, and has represented his country several times in World and European junior championships. He has a degree in law from Cambridge University. This is his first chess book.

Gambit Publications Ltd is:

Managing Director: Murray Chandler GM

Chess Director: Dr John Nunn GM

Editorial Director: Graham Burgess FM

For further information about Gambit Publications, write to us at:

Gambit Publications Ltd, P.O. Box 32640, London W14 0JN, England.

Or send an e-mail to: info@gambitbooks.com

<http://www.gambitbooks.com>

Other titles from Gambit Publications include:

King's Indian and Grünfeld: Fianchetto Lines

Lasha Janjgava

Anti-Sicilians: A Guide for Black

Dorian Rogozenko

The Queen's Indian

Jouni Yrjölä and Jussi Tella

The Nimzo-Indian: 4 e3

Carsten Hansen

The Slav

Graham Burgess

Play the Classical Dutch

Simon Williams

Play the 2 c3 Sicilian

Eduardas Rozentalis and

Andrew Harley

An Explosive Chess Opening Repertoire for Black

Jouni Yrjölä and Jussi Tella

The English Attack

Tapani Sammalvuo

£15.99

\$27.50

ISBN 1 904600 17 4



9 781904 600176 >