The Strategic Nimzo-Indian

Ivan Sokolov

Volume 1: A Complete Guide to the Rubinstein Variation
The Strategic Nimzo-Indian
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New In Chess 2012
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Foreword

My research on the Nimzo-Indian Defence started in the mid-1980s. A few factors contributed to this.

In Yugoslavia at the time, there was a widely studied analytical work by Mikhail Botvinnik, a trilogy of his own games. Nimzo-Indians were regularly featured in these games - like for example in his World Championship matches against Vasily Smyslov, but also in many other games by Botvinnik.

Svetozar Gligoric was a big protagonist of the Nimzo with 4.e3 and an active player at the time, and his games were always closely followed in Yugoslavia.

Sometime in these years I also received a number of books: on the finals of the Soviet Championships of the 1950s (featuring games by Efim Geller, Alexander Kotov et al), David Bronstein's *Zürich 1953*, and Gligoric's game collection *I play against pieces*, with many Nimzo games with the moves 4.e3 and 4.a3 analysed in them.

At that time I was starting to build a 1.d4 repertoire. From a practical point of view, employing the Nimzo-Indian with the white pieces (contrary to the Queen's Indian) made my opening preparation considerably easier since now I did not have to study so many different opening variations, like the Vienna Variation, the Ragozin, the Semi-Tarrasch, etc.

Some of my first successes, like winning the Yugoslav championship in 1988 and the Crown Group in Biel that same year, I can ascribe to a considerable extent to my wins in the 4.e3 Nimzo Indian. Later on, perhaps the most beautiful moment of my career was when I beat Garry Kasparov in Wijk aan Zee 1999 - also with a Nimzo-Indian with 4.e3.

Starting from 1985, I have broadened my knowledge of the 4.e3 lines over the years, and ultimately I played all of them with white. It always seemed to me that for White 4.e3, the Rubinstein Variation, or 4.a3, the Sämisch Variation, were the most logical, the most classical (although in theoretical manuals the 'Classical Variation', also known as the 'Capablanca Variation', is considered to be the one with 4...c2) ways for White to meet the Nimzo-Indian.

With 4.e3 (the Rubinstein Variation) White plays a natural developing move, ignoring for the time being Black's bishop on b4 and keeping his options open.

With 4.a3 (the Sämisch Variation) White forces Black to execute his 'threat' of taking on c3 and double White's b- and c-pawns. In return for this doubled pawn, White is to build a strong pawn centre. This always seemed more important to me than the 'meaningless' weakness of White's c4 pawn. Of course this preference is purely personal! Rather often, White also starts with 4.e3 and at a later stage, i.e. usually a move or two later, he plays a2-a3, transposing to Sämisch positions.
The original idea of this book was to cover both the 4.e3 and the 4.a3 lines. During the process of analysing and writing, it transpired that I had underestimated the quantity of the material, and that the 4.e3 variation alone was going to considerably exceed the originally earmarked total number of pages! It was therefore decided that the Sämisch Variation will be dealt with in a separate book, which will be published in the beginning of 2013.

White has many different options to fight in the Rubinstein Variation. He can develop his knight to e2 early (with the bishop still on f1), or later (after playing \( \text{d3} \)), or he can develop the knight to f3 (which is the most popular) – he can play with an isolated pawn, or with connected hanging pawns in the centre, or establish a central pawn symmetry, etc, etc.

Black, on the other hand, can choose between an early bishop fianchetto with 4 ... b6, a line loved by great players like Smyslov and Fischer, or 4 ... c5, attacking the white centre right away, or the flexible 4 ... 0-0, which is the most played in recent top tournaments. The choices that are made on both sides are – or should be – motivated by the players' preferences for certain pawn structures that arise further on in the respective lines. Understanding the pawn structures and the strategic rules that are connected with them is more crucial than a纯 rehashing of variations here.

A majority of pawn structures in the 4.e3 lines and their related strategic choices I have tried to explain in my book Winning ChessMiddlegames (New In Chess 2009). I strongly advise the reader to study the strategic ins and outs of the respective pawn structures, and find out where his own preferences lie before taking the final decision as to which line to pick up for his personal opening repertoire.

In this book I have tried (successfully, I hope) to explain the ideas in the Nimzo-Indian with 4.e3 and to give an objective view of the state of affairs in this opening, irrespective of my personal preference for the white side.

I hope that you, reader, will enjoy this book and that you will be able to successfully employ the knowledge you gain from it in your tournament play.

Ivan Sokolov
January, 2012
Part I

4.e3 Various

4...\textit{c}c6

4...b6

4...c5
Chapter 1.1

Taimanov – 4...\( \text{c6} \)

4...\( \text{c6} \) is the move favoured by the former World Championship candidate, Russian grandmaster Mark Taimanov. Black develops his knight slightly unnaturally (after all his c-pawn is still on c7!), but on the other hand he has ideas of central counterplay with ...e6-e5, and also there are some other peculiarities related to this early knight development (see the comments to 5.e2 in particular). The move does not equalize for Black, and a well-prepared white player has several interesting ways to get to an opening advantage.

5.\( \text{f3} \)

The philosophy behind this natural developing move is in some ways similar to the one behind 5.\( \text{d2} \) (which is also a headache for Black): White develops, hoping that later on it will transpire that Black had better moves than 4...\( \text{c6} \).

- Former World Champion Botvinnik considered 5.e2 to be the best move for White here. The idea behind it is relatively simple: White hopes to get a favourable version of the 4.e3 0-0 5.e2 d5 line. Well, the fact that the black knight is already committed to \( \text{c6} \) indeed limits Black, but on the other hand the fact that Black still has not castled is convenient for him here, since he gets the possibility to create counterplay by pushing his h-pawn. Strangely enough, this idea was not considered by Botvinnik in his analyses. Therefore, I would disagree with the assessment of the 6th World Champion as to 5.e2 being White’s best move, since he did not analyze this idea and so most of the lines given in his Secret Notebooks are wishful thinking for White.

A) One typical Taimanov counterplan for Black is 5...e5. This does not equalize: 6.d5 Taking space is the best here: 6.a3 \( \text{xc3+} \) 7.xc3 exd4 8.exd4 d5 9.c5 h6 10.b5 0-0 11.0-0 f5 12.f3 e8 13.g4 h7 14.f4 a6 15.a4 was
played in Botvinnik-Sokolsky, Moscow ch-URS 1944. If White has any advantage here (which I doubt), it is very small. Black should play ...Ec8 with ...b7-b5 to follow (solving the a4-e8 diagonal pin and obtaining active play).

6...Ec7 7.a3 bxc3+ 8.bxc3 d6

9.Ed3! It is clever to delay the e-pawn push here. After 9.e4 0-0 10.g3 Ec8 11.Eg2 f5 12.exf5 Exxf5 Black had counterplay in Lilienthal-Kotov, Moscow 1945. 9...Ef5 Black decides to lose a tempo to provoke White's e3-e4 push, but due to this loss of time, Black will not be on time with his kingside counterplay. 9...0-0 10.Wc2 looks good for White, since it is not possible for Black to organize his standard counterplay on the kingside (like in Lilienthal-Kotov, see 9.e4). 10.e4 Ed7 11.h3 h6 12.Ee3 Eh7 13.g3 0-0 14.f4 exf4 15.gxf4 with a clear advantage for White in Smyslov-Hecht, Hamburg Echtt 1965;

B) 5.d5 6.a3 White can also play 6.cxd5 exd5 7.g3, trying to play it smart and get a favourable version of the line 4.e3 0-0 5. Ed2 d5 6.cxd5 exd5 7.g3, since Black's knight is already developed to c6 and he cannot play ...c7-c5. However, the black king is still on e8, which offers him a counterplay possibility in 7...h5 8.h3 Ef5 followed by ...Wd7, with a complicated game where Black is not worse.

B1) 6.Ef8 Original, but not enough for equality. 7.Eg1!? Equally original. White can also obtain an opening advantage by playing the 'stereotype' 7.cxd5 exd5 8.b4 Ed7 9.g3 Ef5 10.Eg2 Ef7 11.0-0 0-0 12.f3 a5 13.b5 Ed6 14.e4 dxe4 15.fxe4 as in Geller-Taimanov, Budva 1967. 7...g6 8.Ef3 Ed7 9.b4 We have here a Grünfeld, of the type Makagonov Variation (6.b4), where putting the knight on c6 is not considered the best plan for Black. White is indeed better: 9...0-0 10.Eb2 a6 11.Ee2 dxc4 12.Exc4 Ec8 13.Ed4 Ed6 14.Ed3 as in Graf-Zeller, Heringsdorf 2000;

B2) 6.Ee7 (the main line for Black according to Botvinnik's Secret Notebook) has the disadvantage that it does not control the f4-square:

B21) In the case of 7.Eg3 Black gets good counterplay, using his regular counterplan in this position – the h-pawn push: 7...h5 8.cxd5 exd5 9.Ed3 h4 10.Ef1 h3 11.g3 0-0 12.Ed2 Eg4? This move is difficult to understand. It costs Black two tempi, while the white pawn is not bad on f3. Black is (at least) about equal after 12...Ee8. 13.f3 Ec8 14.b4 a5 15.b5 Db8 16.0-0 c5 17.bxc6 bxc6 18.Ed4 Ea6 An exchange of
light-squared bishops is per definition always strategically good for Black in this pawn structure. The game was later drawn, Botvinnik-Taimanov, Moscow ch-URS 1951;
B22) 7.cxd5 exd5

In his Secret Notebook, the alternatives given for Black are:
B22111) Preparation of a c-pawn push by moving the knight from c6 (a clear indication that something has gone wrong): 9...\(a5\) 10.f3! Or 10.0-0 c6 11.e4 \(\textsf{\texttt{b6}}\) 12.b4 \(\texttt{d4}\) 13.e5 \(\texttt{xe8}\) 14.fxd5, winning;
B22112) Or 9...\(b8\) 10.f3!
B22113) 9...\(f5\) 10.g4 \(\texttt{e6}\) 11.xe6 fxe6 12.0-0 \(\texttt{d7}\) 13.f4 Here White indeed had an advantage and went on to win in Botvinnik-Taimanov, USSR-ch20 playoff, 1952;
B2212) The other idea is 9.d3 with h2-h3 and \(\texttt{f3}\) to follow. The game now has a strategically different character, the following being an instructive example: 9...\(e8\) 10.0-0 \(\texttt{f8}\) 11.h3 \(\texttt{e7}\) 12.\(\texttt{f3}\) c6 13.\(\texttt{d2}\) \(\texttt{d7}\) 14.g4! Not allowing Black to play \(\texttt{f5-d6-e4}\). 14...g6 15.xg6 fxg6! Black makes this decision in order to be able to better regroup his pieces. 16.\(\texttt{ael}\) \(\texttt{f7}\) 17.\(\texttt{g2}\) \(\texttt{d7}\) 18.f3 Preparing e3-e4. 18...c5 Black's standard strategic reply in such positions. White now regroups, going for an f-pawn push. 19.\(\texttt{e2}\) a6 20.\(\texttt{e2}\) \(\texttt{c6}\)? It was better to keep his bishop on the c8-h3 diagonal, controlling the f5-square, and play 20...b5. 21.g5! \(\texttt{h5}\) 22.f4 \(\texttt{xd4}\) 23.exd4 \(\texttt{d7}\) 24.\(\texttt{f5}\) with a white initiative on the kingside as in Kortchnoi-Mukhutdinov, Sverdlovsk 1957.
B222) Black's attempt to develop his queenside quickly with 8...\(f5\) also does not equalize:
B2221) 9.\(\text{e}2\)! For the time being this is the right place for the light-
squared bishop. 9...\(\text{d}7\) 10.\(\text{b}4\) 10.\(\text{f}3\)
brings White nowhere after 10...\(\text{e}4\)
11.\(\text{xe}4\) \(\text{dxe}4\) 12.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{d}6\). 10...0-0
11.\(\text{d}2\) The immediate 11.f3 and g2-g4 is probably more precise. In such posi-
tions, where White is planning his g-pawn advance, I prefer to keep the sec-
ond rank open in order to have a possible \(\text{a}2-\text{g}2\) rook transfer. It is useful to
take note of this! 11...\(\text{fe}8\) 12.0-0 \(\text{f}8\)
13.f3 \(\text{b}6\) 14.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{b}6\) 15.\(\text{g}4\) \(\text{xd}3\)
16.\(\text{d}3\) and White had an advantage in Giorgadze-Rashkovsky, Ubeda 1996;

B2222) Or 9.\(\text{b}4\) \(\text{d}7\) 10.\(\text{b}3\) \(\text{d}8\)
11.\(\text{e}2\)! with a better game for White.
An instructive positional mistake was committed by White in the then high-
profile game Ivkov-Pachman, Beverwijk 1965, with 11.\(\text{d}3\)? (yes, the black
bishop may look active on f5, but in this central pawn structure, as in almost all
QGD Exchange Variation positions, the light-squared bishops exchange is
strategically almost invariably good for Black! On the other hand, an exchange
of dark-squared bishops is favourable for White. These long-term strategic
rules are determined by the central pawn structure) 11...0-0 12.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{fe}8\)
13.0-0 \(\text{xd}3\) 14.\(\text{xd}3\) \(\text{f}5\)! 15.\(\text{f}4\)
\(\text{d}6\) 16.\(\text{cxd}5\) \(\text{xd}5\) 17.\(\text{xd}5\) \(\text{f}6\)
and with the help of a tactical motif, Black will capture on f4, give White a
doubled f-pawn, take a pawn on d4 with the knight (getting his pawn back)
and be slightly better;

B3) 6...\(\text{d}6\)! is the best retreat here:

B31) In case White plays 7.\(\text{g}3\), hoping to get a favourable version of 4.e3
0-0 5.\(\text{e}2\) d5 6.\(\text{a}3\) \(\text{d}6\) 7.\(\text{g}3\), then Black makes use of the fact that he still
hasn't castled and obtains active play:

7...\(\text{b}5\)!. As we have already learned this is a standard counterplan for Black here.

8.\(\text{xd}5\) If 8.\(\text{d}3\), Black proceeds with
8...h4 9.\(\text{ge}2\) h3 10.\(\text{g}3\) dxc4 11.\(\text{xc}4\)
e5 with an unclear game. 8...\(\text{xd}5\)
9.\(\text{d}3\) h4 10.\(\text{f}1\) Or 10.\(\text{ge}2\) h3.
10...\(\text{e}7\) 11.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{f}5\) 12.\(\text{h}3\) 0-0-0 and
Black was already slightly better in Kharlov-Rashkovsky, Moscow 1992;

B32) 7.c5 Analogously to the line
4.e3 0-0 5.\(\text{e}2\) d5 6.\(\text{a}3\) \(\text{d}6\) 7.c5.
Well, the black knight on c6 is actually (very often) in the spirit of the position
here, while due to the fact that he still hasn't castled, Black retains possibilities
of immediate active central play, and also of the h-pawn push (see Gurevich-
Kogan below). 7...\(\text{e}7\) 8.b4 White
takes space on the queenside. Black has easy equality in the event of 8.f4 a5!
9.\(\text{b}1\) b6 10.b4 axb4 11.axb4 \(\text{b}5\)
12.\(\text{bxc}5\) 0-0 13.\(\text{g}3\) \(\text{a}6\), as in Milov-
Rashkovsky, Moscow 2002:

B321) 8...0-0 9.f4
the 3.e4 \( \text{d}c6 \) line of the QGA). Black’s main counterplay ideas are:

a) kingside counterplay, or

b) counterplay against the white centre with \( \text{...c}7-\text{c}6 \).

White probably has some advantage, though in this type of pawn structure the tables can turn easily:

C21) If \( 10.\text{\#}g5 \text{ h}6 \) 11.\#h4 a6 12.\#c2 Black creates kingside counterplay with 12...\#g5! This is a standard plan in such positions – readers should take note of it. 13.\#g3 \#g6 14.a3 \#d6 15.\#d1 \#h5 16.h3 \#f4 17.\#e3 \#d7 18.\#c3 \#f6 19.0-0-0 0-0-0 20.\#he1 g4 21.h4 \#b8 22.\#b1 \#c5 Well played by Black, he had a good game in Bareev-Rashkovsky, Kazan 1995;

C22) In the event of 10.a3 \#d6 11.\#g5 h6 12.\#h4, apart from following the \( \text{...g}5/...\#g6 \) plan just shown in Bareev-Rashkovsky, Black can also choose another standard plan here (often also seen in the Queen’s Gambit Accepted with 3.e4 \#d6): 12...c6 13.\#xc6 bxc6 14.0-0 \#e6 15.\#cl 0-0 It is difficult for White to prove that Black’s c6 pawn is weak here, since Black has counterplay against White’s b2 pawn. 16.\#a4 \#xa4 17.\#xa4 g5? A tactical oversight. The immediate 17...\#b6, focusing on White’s b2 pawn weakness, would have given Black a nice game, e.g. 18.b4 a5. 18.\#g3 \#b6 19.\#d4! Most likely missed by Black when he played 17...\#g5?. 19...\#xb2 20.\#xe6 fxe6 21.\#c4 Due to Black’s bad pawn structure on the kingside, White was better and eventually won in Lipnitsky-Borisenko, Moscow ch-URS 1950;

C23) 10.\#b3, pinpointing Black’s misplaced \#b6, looks like the most accurate reaction: 10...\#c5 Retreating the bishop to d6 may be an option to consider. 11.a4 a5 12.0-0 0-0 13.\#g5 h6 14.\#h4 Due to Black’s unfortunate knight on b6, White has some advantage. 14...\#d7 14...c6, immediately hitting the white centre, was arguably better, though White seems to have some edge after 15.\#ac1. 15.\#ac1 \#b4 16.\#c2 \#c5 17.\#c4 \#d7 18.\#fd1 \#e8 19.\#b5 and White had an advantage in Beliavsky-Gostisa, Maribor 1996.

C3) Black has a logical alternative in 6...\#xd4 7.\#xd4 d5

Here White has to make the correct strategic decision: 8.c5! Such moves are in general not easy to find in over-the-board play – and I would advise the reader to take note!

C31) Black has also tried 8...\#xc3+ 9.bxc3 h6, preventing White’s pin along the h4-d8 diagonal, however White had a pleasant advantage here as well after 10.0-0 0-0 11.\#g3 b6:

C311) 12.\#f3 bxc5 13.\#a3 \#e8?! 13...\#xd4!, sacrificing the exchange, is probably what Pachman wanted to do here when he repeated this line a year later against Gligoric. 14.\#xc5 \#g4 15.\#f4 \#e7 16.\#ab1 and White had an obvious advantage in Szabo-Pachman, Havana 1965;

C312) 12.\#a3 \#e8 13.\#f3 \#g4 Gligoric plays similarly to Szabo. 14.\#f4 \#e7 15.\#ae1 \#e6 16.\#c1
Black has many different ways to be slightly worse here: 9...\texttt{w}f6 10.\texttt{d}d3 \texttt{xc}3 11.\texttt{x}xc3 \texttt{e}e8 12.0-0 dxc4 13.\texttt{xc}4 \texttt{e}5 14.d5 \texttt{d}d8 15.\texttt{ac}1 and White was clearly better in A. David-Abergel, Paris 2004.

5.\texttt{d}d2 looks like a relatively simple road to a white opening advantage.

\bullet The immediate 5.\texttt{d}d3 is also often played. It offers White good prospects of an opening advantage:
  
  A) In case of 5...0-0 White has a pleasant option in 6.\texttt{e}e2 d5 7.\texttt{xd}5! exd5 and due to the black knight's premature development to c6, White has a favourable version of the 4.e3 0-0 5.\texttt{d}d3 d5 6.cxd5 exd5 7.\texttt{e}e2 line;

  B) 5...d5 6.a3 White wants to force a favourable Sämisch-type Nimzo. Since Black has already played ...d7-d5, targeting White's c4 pawn weakness (which is typical black counterplay in the Sämisch) is no longer possible. If White opts for 6.\texttt{e}e2 dxc4 7.\texttt{xc}4 0-0 8.0-0 \texttt{e}5, this transposes to 4.e3 0-0 5.\texttt{d}d3 d5 6.\texttt{e}e2 dxc4 7.\texttt{xc}4 \texttt{e}5 8.0-0 \texttt{c}6 and will be analysed there (White has a small advantage).

6...\texttt{xc}3+?! Playing into White's hands. Black should have opted for 6...dxc4! 7.\texttt{xc}4 \texttt{d}d6 8.\texttt{f}3 0-0 9.0-0 \texttt{e}5 with good play – compared to Portisch-Andersson (see our main line)

White was not in time with \texttt{b}5 in order to prevent Black's central counterplay with ...\texttt{e}6-e5. 7.\texttt{xc}3 White now has a favourable Sämisch. 7...\texttt{e}5 8.\texttt{e}e2 \texttt{e}4 9.\texttt{b}1 dxc4 10.\texttt{g}3 \texttt{a}5 11.\texttt{xe}4 \texttt{b}3 12.\texttt{xf}6+ \texttt{xf}6 13.\texttt{a}2 \texttt{d}d7 14.0-0 0-0-0 15.\texttt{e}4 \texttt{b}8 16.\texttt{e}3 and White was better in I. Sokolov-Eslon, Stockholm 1987/88;

C) 5...\texttt{e}5 Black follows one of the main ideas of the Taimanov Variation – central counterplay with the push ...\texttt{e}6-e5. 6.\texttt{e}e2 6.a3!? is an option to explore for White (very few games have been played with it) – trying to get a favourable Sämisch Variation:

C1) 6...\texttt{xc}3+?! 7.\texttt{xc}3 d6 simply leads to a favourable version of the Sämisch Nimzo for White, as he has not even had to spend a tempo on a2-a3;

C2) 6...d5 7.\texttt{xd}5 \texttt{xd}5 8.e4 Black's \texttt{d}5 is now forced to a rather unfortunate square. 8...\texttt{b}6 In case of 8...\texttt{f}6? 9.d5, due to the threat of 10.\texttt{a}4+ Black would have been forced to enter the line 9...\texttt{xc}3+ 10.\texttt{xc}3 \texttt{e}7, which is clearly better for White due to the absence of Black's dark-squared bishop and the mobility of White's central pawns. 9.d5 \texttt{e}7

One of the standard pawn structures in the Taimanov Variation (as already mentioned, we also see this structure in
Part J: 4.e3 Various

the 3.e4 \( \diamond c6 \) line of the QGA). Black's main counterplay ideas are:

a) kingside counterplay, or
b) counterplay against the white centre with ...c7-c6.

White probably has some advantage, though in this type of pawn structure the tables can turn easily:

C21) If 10.\( \diamond g5 \) h6 11.\( \diamond h4 \) a6 12.\( \mathcal{W}c2 \) Black creates kingside counterplay with 12...g5! This is a standard plan in such positions – readers should take note of it. 13.\( \diamond g3 \) \( \diamond g6 \) 14.a3 \( \diamond d6 \) 15.\( \diamond d1 \) h5! 16.\( h3 \) \( \mathcal{F}f4 \) 17.\( \diamond e3 \) \( \mathcal{L}d7 \) 18.\( \diamond c3 \) \( \mathcal{W}f6 \) 19.0-0-0 0-0-0 20.\( \mathcal{W}e1 \) g4 21.h4 \( \mathcal{B}b8 \) 22.\( \mathcal{W}b1 \) \( \diamond c5 \) Well played by Black, he had a good game in Bareev-Rashkovsky, Kazan 1995;

C22) In the event of 10.a3 \( \diamond d6 \) 11.\( \diamond g5 \) h6 12.\( \diamond h4 \), apart from following the ...g5/...\( \diamond g6 \) plan just shown in Bareev-Rashkovsky, Black can also choose another standard plan here (often also seen in the Queen's Gambit Accepted with 3.e4 \( \diamond c6 \)): 12...c6 13.\( \mathcal{D}xc6 \) \( \mathcal{B}xc6 \) 14.0-0 \( \diamond e6 \) 15.\( \mathcal{W}c1 \) 0-0-0 It is difficult for White to prove that Black's c6 pawn is weak here, since Black has counterplay against White's b2 pawn. 16.\( \diamond a4 \) \( \mathcal{D}xa4 \) 17.\( \mathcal{W}xa4 \) g5? A tactical oversight. The immediate 17...\( \mathcal{W}b6 \), focusing on White's b2 pawn weakness, would have given Black a nice game, e.g. 18.b4 a5. 18.\( \diamond g3 \) \( \mathcal{W}b6 \) 19.\( \diamond d4! \) Most likely missed by Black when he played 17...g5?. 19...\( \mathcal{W}xb2 \) 20.\( \mathcal{D}xe6 \) \( fxe6 \) 21.\( \diamond c4 \) Due to Black's bad pawn structure on the kingside, White was better and eventually won in Lipnitsky-Borisenko, Moscowch-URS 1950;

C23) 10.\( \mathcal{W}b3 \), pinpointing Black's misplaced \( \diamond b6 \), looks like the most accurate reaction: 10...\( \diamond c5 \) Retreating the bishop to d6 may be an option to con-

sider. 11.a4 a5 12.0-0 0-0 13.\( \diamond g5 \) h6 14.\( \diamond h4 \) Due to Black's unfortunate knight on b6, White has some advantage. 14...\( \mathcal{D}d7 \) 14...c6, immediately hitting the white centre, was arguably better, though White seems to have some edge after 15.\( \mathcal{A}c1 \). 15.\( \mathcal{A}c1 \) \( \diamond b4 \) 16.\( \mathcal{W}c2 \) \( \mathcal{D}c5 \) 17.\( \diamond c4 \) \( \mathcal{D}d7 \) 18.\( \mathcal{W}d1 \) \( \mathcal{W}e8 \) 19.\( \diamond b5 \) and White had an advantage in Beliavsky-Gostisa, Maribor 1996.

C3) Black has a logical alternative in 6...\( \mathcal{D}xd4 \) 7.\( \mathcal{D}xd4 \) d5

\[\text{Diagram}\]

Here White has to make the correct strategic decision: 8.c5! Such moves are in general not easy to find in over-the-board play – and I would advise the reader to take note!

C31) Black has also tried 8...\( \mathcal{D}xc3+ \) 9.\( \mathcal{B}xc3 \) h6, preventing White's pin along the h4-d8 diagonal, however White had a pleasant advantage here as well after 10.0-0 0-0 11.\( \diamond g3 \) b6:

C311) 12.\( \mathcal{W}f3 \) bxc5 13.\( \diamond a3 \) \( \diamond e8?! \) 13...\( \mathcal{D}xd4! \), sacrificing the exchange, is probably what Pachman wanted to do here when he repeated this line a year later against Gligoric. 14.\( \mathcal{D}xc5 \) \( \diamond g4 \) 15.\( \mathcal{W}f4 \) \( \diamond e7 \) 16.\( \mathcal{A}b1 \) and White had an obvious advantage in Szabo-Pachman, Havana 1965;

C312) 12.\( \diamond a3 \) \( \diamond e8 \) 13.\( \mathcal{W}f3 \) \( \diamond g4 \) Gligoric plays similarly to Szabo. 14.\( \mathcal{W}f4 \) \( \diamond e7 \) 15.\( \mathcal{A}e1 \) \( \diamond e6 \) 16.\( \mathcal{W}c1 \)
bxc5 17.\( \text{Qxc5} \) \( \text{Wd7} \) 18.\( \text{Wc2} \) h5 19.\( \text{Re5} \) and again White had a clear advantage in Gligoric-Pachman, Havana 1966. By some miracle, Pachman survived both these games.

C32) \( \text{8...0-0 9.0-0} \) \( \text{\textit{Exc3}} \) 10.\( \text{bxc3} \) b6 10...h6 11.\( \text{Qg3} \) would lead to lines shown above, in the comment after 8...\( \text{\textit{Exc3}} \). 11.\( \text{Qg5} \) h6 12.\( \text{Qh4} \) The pin is now unpleasant for Black and in order to solve it, he allows the white knight an excellent outpost on d4. 12...\( \text{bxc5} \) 13.dxc5 \( \text{\textit{Qe5}} \) 14.\( \text{Qd4} \) \( \text{\textit{Qg6}} \) 15.\( \text{\textit{Qxg6}} \) \( \text{fxg6} \) 16.\( \text{\textit{Ae1}} \) and White was better and went on to win in Geller-Taimanov, Moscowch-URS 1952.

\( \text{8...Qf6} \) \( \text{h6} \) 12.\( \text{Qe4} \) \( \text{Qe3} \) a5 17.\( \text{Qad1} \) Due to his beautiful pawn centre, White was better in Avrukh-Rashkovsky, Biel 2001;

\( \text{6.\textit{Qd2 e5?!}} \) (6...0-0 with e5 to follow is more accurate) 7.d5 Now, due to the \( \text{\textit{Wxa4+}} \) threat, Black has to take on c3 immediately. 7...\( \text{\textit{Qxc3}} \) 8.\( \text{\textit{Qxc3}} \) \( \text{Qe7} \) 9.\( \text{\textit{Qd2}} \) 0-0 10.\( \text{\textit{Qd3}} \) c6 11.dxc6 \( \text{\textit{Qxc6}} \) 12.\( \text{\textit{Qe4}} \) and White had some advantage in Gulko-Rashkovsky, Baku 1977.

\( \text{6.\textit{Qd3}} \)

Another logical idea is 6.\( \text{Qc2} \), obtaining a favourable version of the 4.\( \text{Qc2} \) Nimzo:

\( \text{6...d6} \) Or 6...d6, when we get the type of play from the 4.\( \text{Qc2} \) \( \text{Qc6} \) line: 7.\( \text{Qd2} \) e5 8.dxe5 \( \text{\textit{Qxe5}} \) 9.\( \text{\textit{Qxe5}} \) dxe5 10.a3 \( \text{\textit{Qxc3}} \) 11.\( \text{\textit{Qxc3}} \) \( \text{Wxe7} \) 12.\( \text{\textit{Qe2}} \) c5 13.0-0 b6 14.\( \text{\textit{Qa1!!}} \) a5! 15.f4 (opening diagonal a1-h8 for the \( \text{\textit{Qc3}} \)) 15...\( \text{\textit{Qe4}} \) 16.\( \text{\textit{Qd3}} \) \( \text{\textit{Qxd3}} \) 17.\( \text{\textit{Wxd3}} \) e4 18.\( \text{\textit{Wc2}} \) \( \text{\textit{Qad8}} \) 19.\( \text{\textit{Qd1}} \) h6 20.h3. The bishop is better than a knight and Black’s e4 pawn is a lia-

\( \text{5...0-0} \)

In case of the 'modest' 5...d6:

\( \text{6.\textit{Qe2}} \) is enough for an advantage: 6...e5 7.0-0 White threatens \( \text{\textit{Qd5}} \), so Black has to take on c3. 7...\( \text{\textit{Qxc3}} \) 8.\( \text{\textit{bxc3}} \) 0-0 9.\( \text{\textit{Qd2}} \) We now have a typical Nimzo position with a full centre and double c-pawns, which is favourable for White since Black does not have his regular counterplay against a weak c4 pawn. 9...\( \text{\textit{Qe8}} \) 9...e4 10.f3 opens up the position for White's bishops, which will gradually achieve an advantage. 10.f3 Black does not like the prospect of an unfavourable standard Nimzo position with a full centre and double c-pawns, which would arise after \( \text{\textit{Qb3}} \) followed by e3-e4. He wants to change the character of the game. 10...d5 11.\( \text{Qb3} \) b6 12.\( \text{\textit{Qd2}} \) \( \text{\textit{Qa6}} \) 13.cxd5 \( \text{\textit{Qxe2}} \) 14.\( \text{\textit{Wxe2}} \) \( \text{\textit{Wxd5}} \) 15.e4 \( \text{\textit{Wd7}} \) 16.\( \text{\textit{Qe3}} \) a5 17.\( \text{\textit{Qad1}} \)
Part I: 4.e3 Various

bility. White had an advantage and went on to win in Donner-Pachman, Havana 1964. 7.a3 \(\texttt{xc3+} 8.\texttt{xc3} \) White has a favourable version of the 4.\(\texttt{c2} d5 5.a3 \(\texttt{xc3} 6.\texttt{xc3} \) Nimzo. 8...a5 9.b3 a4 10.b4 \(\texttt{d7} 11.\texttt{b2 dxc4} 12.\texttt{xc4} \) and White was better in Donner-Taimanov, Havana 1967.

6...d5 7.0-0

Black here has to aim for central counterplay with the push ...
e6-e5.

7...dxc4

7...a6 8.\(\texttt{e2} \) looks favourable for White. If 8.a3, Black plays for central counterplay with 8...dxc4 9.\(\texttt{xc4} \) \(\texttt{d6} \), with ...
e6-e5 to follow.

8.\(\texttt{xc4} \) \(\texttt{d6} \)

9.\(\texttt{b5!} \)

Black is OK in the event of 9.e4 e5 10.d5 \(\texttt{e7} \), with the type of counterplay often seen in the 3.e4 \(\texttt{c6} \) QGA.

9...e5

If 9...\(\texttt{e7} \), due to his better pawn structure White has a clear advantage after 10.\(\texttt{xc6 bxc6} 11.e4 e5 12.dxe5 \(\texttt{xe5} 13.\texttt{xe5} \) \(\texttt{xe5} 14.\texttt{e3} \texttt{e8} 15.\texttt{f4} \) \(\texttt{e6} 16.\texttt{e1} \texttt{b8} 17.\texttt{e2} \texttt{b4} 18.f3 \) as in T. Petrosian-Nei, Tallinn 1983.

10.\(\texttt{xc6 exd4} 11.exd4 \)

White could take a pawn, but due to his bishop pair Black has some play after 11.\(\texttt{xb7} \texttt{xb7} 12.exd4 \texttt{e8} \).

11...bxc6 12.\(\texttt{g5 h6} 13.\texttt{h4} \)

His better pawn structure (Black’s queenside structure is damaged) grants White an advantage here.

13...g4 14.h3 \(\texttt{h5} \)

15.g4 \(\texttt{g6} 16.e5 \texttt{xe5} 17.dxe5 \texttt{xd1} 18.e5d1 \)

White was clearly better and went on to win in Portisch-Andersson, Prague 1970.

**Conclusion**

As we see from the material, White has a number of promising options to gain an opening advantage in the Taimanov Variation. Mostly, White’s advantage is based on the fact that Black’s move 4...\(\texttt{c6} \) (with his c-pawn still on c7) turns out to be premature. It is important for White to know and understand comparable lines in order to be able to take advantage of the nuances of the position related to this premature knight development.
Chapter 1.2

Early ...b6 Lines – 4...b6 5.f3

5.f3 is a continuation championed by Vadim Milov. GM Milov has indeed been playing this offbeat line for many years, and with good results. However, he did not find many high-rated white followers, so we still have relatively little top-level games with this line and most of the theory is based on Milov’s games.

The positions very often either get a Benoni pawn structure, or Black executes Blumenfeld-type ideas. After 5.f3 White plans to follow up with e3-e4, building a strong centre. A drawback of 5.f3 is the fact that White stays behind in development. In order to obtain counterplay based on his advantage in development, Black has to act forcefully and open up the centre, achieving active piece play. In general 5.f3 is a risky idea for White, as things can easily go wrong.

5...0-0

Bringing his king to safety and opening up the centre on the next move is perhaps Black’s best option. Many other moves have been tried here in practice:

- 5...c6

This development is often seen in the Sämisc Variation:
A) In case of 6.e4 Black gets excellent Sämisch-type play after 6...a6 (the piece sac 6...Qxe4? does not work after 7.fxe4 Wh4+ 8.We2) 7.Qd3 e5 (7...Qxd4? is a blunder due to 8.Wa4 Qa5 9.b4 Qxc4 10.bxa5 Qxf3+ 11.Qxf3) and now:

A1) 8.a3 is a thematic pawn sacrifice, which in this particular position does not work for White: 8...Qxh4+ 9.Wc2 Qd6 10.a3 Qxd4 11.e5 Qe7 12.f4 0-0 13.Qe2 Qe2 14.Wxe2 Qxe8 15.Qf1 or 15.0-0 d5 15...d5! 16.exf6 Whx6 17.Wb2 Whxb2 18.Qxb2 Qxc4

A2) 8.d5 Qa5 9.Wb2 Qxc3+ 10.bxc3 Qc6, a typical Sämisch idea, gives Black a good game.

B) 6.Qd3! With this move order White achieves harmonious development and Black has problems to equalize here. 6...Qxc3+ Or 6...e5 7.Qge2 0-0 8.0-0 Qxd4 9.exd4 Qa6 10.Wa4 Qxc3 11.Qxc3 Qa5 12.Qd1 Qb7 13.d5 with a clear white advantage in Hoffman-Garcia Palermo, Villa Gesell 1997; White also keeps an advantage after the arguably best 6...Qa6 7.Qge2 Qa5 8.b3 d5 9.cxd5 Qxd3 10.Wxd3 Qxd5 11.0-0 Qxc3 12.Qxc3 0-0 13.Qb2 c5 14.Qe2. 7.bxc3 Qa6 8.e4 Qa5 9.We2 d6 10.f4 Qd7 11.Qf3 This is now a Sämisch Variation which is going wrong for Black. 11...Qa4 12.Qd2 0-0-0 13.0-0 h6 14.Qb1 Qb8 15.e5 Qe8 16.f5 White has achieved all his strategic ids and is much better. 16...Qc8 17.Qxe6 fxe6 18.exd6 Qxd6 19.c5 Qf5 20.Qf3 Qc6 21.Qe5 and White soon won in Hoffman-Panno, Buenos Aires 1996;

Black can also enforce a Benoni- or Blumenfeld-type battle with 5...c5 6.d5:

A) 6...Qa6 7.e4 and now:

A1) 7...exd5

A11) In the case of 8.exd5 Black has a tactical solution: 8...Qxe4 9.Qxe4 Qxa6 9.Qxf6 Qxc3 10.bxc3 Qxc3+ 11.Qd2 Qxd2+ 12.Qxd2 Qg5+ 13.Qc2 Qxa6 14.We2+ Qd8 15.Wxa6 Qc4 is better for Black. 9.Qxc3+ 10.bxc3 Qh4+ 11.g3 Qxe4+ 12.Qf2 Qxh1 13.Qg2 Qxh2 14.Qg5 0-0 15.Qh4 Qe8 White is just not in time to capture the black queen. 16.Qd2:

A111) 16...Qe5? A strange mistake. 17.Qe1 and White went on to win in Milov-Sutovsky, Israel 1997;

A112) Black could have won with 16...d6 17.Qe1 (17.Qf3? Qe2+) 17...Qe1 18.Qe1 Qd7 19.Qf3 Qe5! (the only defence, but sufficient) 20.Qxh2 Qd3+;

A12) But White recaptures with 8.exd5!, with some advantage;

A2) After 7...Qf6 8.Qh3 d6 9.Qd2 exd5 10.exd5 Qxf1 11.Qxf1 Qbd7 12.a3 Qxc3 13.Qxc3 White had a good Benoni in Milov-Romanishin, St Vincent Ech 2000.

B) 6...Qxc3+ 7.bxc3 d6 8.e4 with a typical Nimzo pawn structure, better for White; Black does not have his regular counterplay against the white c4 pawn, while White will get the upper hand on the kingside. 8...Qe7 9.Qe2
Chapter 1.2: Early ...b6 Lines – 4...b6 5.f3

 bd7 10. @g3 @f8 11. @d3 h5 12. h4
e5 13. @g5 @h7 14. @e3 g6 15. @b1
@g8 16. @f1 @b8 17. @b2 @d7 18. @f2
@d8 19. @e3 ½-½ Milov-Gonzalez
Zamora, Merida 2006;

C) 6...0-0:

C1) In an older practical example, Black had compensation for a pawn af­
after 7. @h3 b5 8. dxe6 fxe6 9. cxb5 d5
10. @f2 c4 11. @e2 a6 12. bxa6 &xa6
13. a3 @e7 (13...@d6, with compensa­
tion, looks more active) 14. b3 @xb3
15. @xb3 @bd7 16. 0-0 @c5. Black is
active, though he probably does not
have enough for the pawn, Miles-De
Firmian, Reykjavik 1986;

C2) 7. @ge2 b5 8. dxe6 fxe6 9. cxb5
d5

10. @d2 d4 Very direct. 10...a6 and
10...@bd7 are options. 11. @xd4 @xd4
12. @e4 @xd2+ 13. @xd2 White's
pieces look clumsy, but this is tem­
porary and it is difficult for Black to take
advantage of it. 13...a6 A tactical option
is 13...@d5!? 14. @c4 e5 15. @xe5 @e3
16. @b3+ @h8 17. @cl @d7. 14. @a4
e5 15. @g3 @h8 16. @d3 @bd7 17. @a3
@b6 18. @c4! It is good for White to
force ...@xb5, eliminating the possibility
of ...axb5 and thus securing a post
for the knight on c4. The actual game
went 18. @c1 @b7 19. @c4 @d8
20. @d6 axb5 unclear Rakhmanov-

Volokitin, Rijeka Ech 2010. 18...@xb5
19. 0-0 with a pleasant advantage for
White;

● 5...@h5 is another Sämisch motif.
6. @h3 f5

7. @d3 7. @d2 0-0 8. @c2 @h4+ 9. g3
@e7 10. 0-0-0 @b7 11. @e2 d6
12. @hgl @f6 13. @df1 e5 was unclear
in Milov-Wells, Lausanne 2003. 7...0-0
8. 0-0 @c6 8...@xc3, forcing the dou­
bling of c-pawns, looks more in har­
mony with this system. 9. @c2 @f6
10. @e2 @e7 11. a3 a5 12. @d2 and
White was better in Ernst-Heinemann,
Germany Bundesliga 2009/10.

● Yours truly had a bad experience in
this line with black: 5...@a6 6. @d2 A
good, useful move. 6...0-0 7. @e4 @h5
8. @d3 @b6 8. @d3 @f6 9. @e5 @d5 unclear.

7. @d3 7. @d2 0-0 8. @c2 @h4+ 9. g3
@e7 10. 0-0-0 @b7 11. @e2 d6
12. @hgl @f6 13. @df1 e5 was unclear
in Milov-Wells, Lausanne 2003. 7...0-0
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8. @d3 @b6 8. @d3 @f6 9. @e5 @d5 unclear.

7. @d3 7. @d2 0-0 8. @c2 @h4+ 9. g3
@e7 10. 0-0-0 @b7 11. @e2 d6
12. @hgl @f6 13. @df1 e5 was unclear
in Milov-Wells, Lausanne 2003. 7...0-0
8. 0-0 @c6 8...@xc3, forcing the dou­
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mony with this system. 9. @c2 @f6
10. @e2 @e7 11. a3 a5 12. @d2 and
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this line with black: 5...@a6 6. @d2 A
good, useful move. 6...0-0 7. @e4 @h5
8. @d3 @b6 8. @d3 @f6 9. @e5 @d5 unclear.

7. @d3 7. @d2 0-0 8. @c2 @h4+ 9. g3
@e7 10. 0-0-0 @b7 11. @e2 d6
12. @hgl @f6 13. @df1 e5 was unclear
in Milov-Wells, Lausanne 2003. 7...0-0
8. 0-0 @c6 8...@xc3, forcing the dou­
bling of c-pawns, looks more in har­
mony with this system. 9. @c2 @f6
10. @e2 @e7 11. a3 a5 12. @d2 and
White was better in Ernst-Heinemann,
and ends up with a stranded knight and weak light squares. 12...dxe5 13.dxe5 fxg3 14.hxg3 \( \mathsf{\textit{W}} \)g5 15.\( \mathsf{\textit{Q}} \)e2! g6 16.f4 \( \mathsf{\textit{W}} \)f5 17.\( \mathsf{\textit{W}} \)xf5 exf5 18.\( \mathsf{\textit{Q}} \)g2 c6 19.b3 A sad story for Black. White won easily in Milov-I. Sokolov, Istanbul Ech 2003.

6.e4 c5

- Black does not equalize after 6...\( \mathsf{\textit{Q}} \)a6

7.\( \mathsf{\textit{Q}} \)g5! White has kept a mobile pawn centre and the h4-d8 pin is unpleasant for Black (in Milov-De Firmian, Essen 1999, Black was slightly better after 7.\( \mathsf{\textit{Q}} \)h3 \( \mathsf{\textit{Q}} \)c6 8.\( \mathsf{\textit{Q}} \)d3 e5 9.d5 \( \mathsf{\textit{Q}} \)a5 10.\( \mathsf{\textit{W}} \)e2 \( \mathsf{\textit{Q}} \)xc3+ 11.bxc3 d6 12.\( \mathsf{\textit{Q}} \)g5 h6 13.\( \mathsf{\textit{Q}} \)h4 g5 14.\( \mathsf{\textit{Q}} \)g3 \( \mathsf{\textit{Q}} \)c8). 7...h6 8.\( \mathsf{\textit{Q}} \)h4 c5 If 8...d6 9.\( \mathsf{\textit{Q}} \)c1 and White keeps his pawn structure intact, with a space advantage. 9.a3 \( \mathsf{\textit{Q}} \)xc3+ 10.bxc3:

A) Better was 10...d6 and after 11.f4

11...e5! Wrong is 11...g5? 12.fxg5 \( \mathsf{\textit{Q}} \)xe4 because of 13.\( \mathsf{\textit{Q}} \)d3 and Black's king is too open. 12.dxe5 dxe5 Now White has to exchange queens. 13.\( \mathsf{\textit{W}} \)xd8 \( \mathsf{\textit{W}} \)xd8 14.fxe5 g5 15.\( \mathsf{\textit{Q}} \)xg5 hxg5 16.exf6 \( \mathsf{\textit{Q}} \)d7 Black is active, and should hold. However, it is not easy to make this choice in practice;

B) 10...\( \mathsf{\textit{Q}} \)c6? It is a mistake to allow the e4-e5 advance in this version. 11.e5 g5 12.\( \mathsf{\textit{Q}} \)f2 \( \mathsf{\textit{Q}} \)e8 13.h4 Black's problem here is that his king is open. 13...f5 14.\( \mathsf{\textit{W}} \)xg5 hxg5 15.\( \mathsf{\textit{Q}} \)h3 \( \mathsf{\textit{W}} \)f7 16.f4 and White was clearly better and soon won in Milov-Sulava, Geneva 2004;

- In the event of 6...\( \mathsf{\textit{Q}} \)c6 White has a nice space advantage after 7.\( \mathsf{\textit{Q}} \)ge2 \( \mathsf{\textit{Q}} \)a6 8.a3 \( \mathsf{\textit{Q}} \)e7 9.\( \mathsf{\textit{Q}} \)g3 \( \mathsf{\textit{Q}} \)e8 10.b4 \( \mathsf{\textit{Q}} \)b7 11.\( \mathsf{\textit{Q}} \)e2 f5 12.exf5 exf5 13.\( \mathsf{\textit{Q}} \)d5 \( \mathsf{\textit{Q}} \)h4 14.0-0 as in Kortchnoi-Hamann, Buenos Aires ol 1978;

- Should Black opt for 6...d5

A) In practice 7.e5?! has been tried: 7...\( \mathsf{\textit{Q}} \)fd7 7...\( \mathsf{\textit{Q}} \)h5!, threatening 8...\( \mathsf{\textit{W}} \)h4+, looks unpleasant for White. 8.cxd5 exd5 9.a3 9.f4. 9...\( \mathsf{\textit{Q}} \)xc3+ 10.bxc3 f6 11.exf6 \( \mathsf{\textit{Q}} \)xf6 12.\( \mathsf{\textit{Q}} \)d3 \( \mathsf{\textit{Q}} \)a6 13.\( \mathsf{\textit{Q}} \)e2 13.\( \mathsf{\textit{Q}} \)xa6 looks more logical, sending the black knight to a6: 13...\( \mathsf{\textit{Q}} \)xa6 14.\( \mathsf{\textit{Q}} \)e2. 13...\( \mathsf{\textit{Q}} \)xd3 14.\( \mathsf{\textit{W}} \)xd3 \( \mathsf{\textit{Q}} \)c6 Black now transferred his knight to c4 and had a good game in Korobov--Tukhaev, Alushta 2010.

B) White is better after 7.cxd5 exd5 8.e5

11...e5! Wrong is 11...g5? 12.fxg5 \( \mathsf{\textit{Q}} \)xe4 because of 13.\( \mathsf{\textit{Q}} \)d3 and Black's
Chapter 1.2: Early ... b6 Lines – 4... b6 5.f3

8...\(\text{Q}h5\) Or 8...\(\text{Q}d7\) 9.f4 c5 10.a3. 9.g3! c5 10.a3 \(\text{Q}a5\) 11.f4 Black has problems. 11...\(\text{cx}d4\) Or 11...g6 12.\(\text{Q}g2\). 12.b4 \(\text{dx}c3\) 13.\(\text{Wh}xh5\) \(\text{Q}a6\) 14.\(\text{Q}f3\).

7.d5

7.a3 \(\text{Q}a5\) does not change much (7...\(\text{Q}xc3\)+ 8.bxc3, steering into a Sämisch-type position, is also a possibility for Black).

7...b5!

This Blumenfeld-type move looks logical and good for Black here.

Another tried option is 7...d6, to decide on a pawn push later. I have to admit that the immediate 7...b5 looks more logical to me — Black has an advantage in development and therefore has to act quickly. 8.\(\text{Q}ge2\)

A) In the event that Black opts for Blumenfeld-style play with 8...b5, White has some interesting responses:

A1) Should White accept the gambit, Black gets good compensation: 9.a3 \(\text{Q}a5\) 10.\(\text{dx}e6\) \(\text{Qxe}6\) 10...\(\text{fxe}6\) definitely comes into consideration. 11.\(\text{cx}b5\) d5 12.\(\text{ex}d5\) \(\text{Qxd}5\) 13.\(\text{Q}d2\) and now:

A11) 13...\(\text{Q}f6\) 14.\(\text{Q}f4\) \(\text{Q}f5\) 15.\(\text{Q}e2\) \(\text{Me}8\) 16.\(\text{g}4\):!

A111) 16...\(\text{Q}d3\) fails to 17.\(\text{Q}x}d3 \(\text{Wxd}3\) 18.\(\text{Q}e4\) \(\text{Qxe}4\) 19.\(\text{fxe}4\) \(\text{Wxe}4\)

20.0-0 \(\text{Wd}4+\) 21.\(\text{Qf}2\) \(\text{Qxd}2\) (or 21...\(\text{Q}e4\) 22.\(\text{Qe}1\) 22.\(\text{Qf}3\) \(\text{Qe}3\) 23.\(\text{Wxd}4\) \(\text{cx}d4\) 24.\(\text{Qe}1\) and White wins;

A112) The game Alexandrov-Jankovic, Dubai 2009, continued 16...\(\text{Q}g6\) 17.\(\text{Qx}g6\) \(\text{hx}g6\) 18.0-0 and Black had no compensation for the sacrificed pawn.

A12) 13...\(\text{Q}b6\)! 14.\(\text{Q}xd5\) Or 14.\(\text{Wc}2\) a6 15.0-0-0 \(\text{axb}5\) 16.\(\text{Qxb}5\) \(\text{Qc}6\) and Black takes over the initiative. 14...\(\text{Qxd5\) 15.\(\text{Q}c3\) \(\text{Qe}8\) Black has at least enough compensation for the pawn. 16.\(\text{Wd}2\) a6 17.0-0-0 \(\text{Q}b3\) 18.\(\text{Qxd}8\) \(\text{Qxd}8\);

A2) White may try: 9.\(\text{dx}e6\) \(\text{Qxe}6\) Here, 9...\(\text{fxe}6\)!, with good play for Black, is probably more accurate: 10.a3 \(\text{Q}a5\) 11.\(\text{cx}b5\) d5. 10.\(\text{cx}b5\) d5 11.\(\text{exd}5\) \(\text{Qxd}5\) and now White has the move 12.\(\text{Qf}2\)!

A3) 9.\(\text{Qf}4\)! e5 Yes, Black has won a tempo, but he has also lost his dynamic possibilities in the centre. 10.\(\text{Qe}2\) White has a space advantage and is better here. 10...\(\text{bx}c4\) 11.\(\text{Qg}3\) \(\text{Qe}8\) 12.\(\text{Qxc}4\) f5 13.\(\text{exf}5\) \(\text{Wh}4\) 14.\(\text{Qe}2\) \(\text{Qxc}3+\) 15.\(\text{bx}c3\) \(\text{Qxf}5\) 16.0-0 \(\text{Qg}6\) 17.\(\text{Qd}3\) \(\text{Qxd}3\) 18.\(\text{Wxd}3\) \(\text{Qd}7\) 19.\(\text{Qe}4\) and White went on to win in Milov-Zelcic, Ohrid Ech 2001.

B) 8...\(\text{ex}d5\)

...
Black opts for a Benoni type position.

9.cxd5

B1) In case of 9...\(\text{\(\text{a6}\)}\)

White seizes the initiative:

B11) Less straightforward, but definitely possible is 10.a3 \(\text{\(\text{a5}\)}\). The immediate 10...\(\text{\(\text{\text{x}c3}\)}\)+ gives Black a better version of the game. 11.\(\text{\(\text{b1}\)}\) \(\text{\(\text{\text{x}c3}\)}\)+ 12.\(\text{\(\text{\text{x}c3}\)}\) \(\text{\(\text{\text{x}f1}\)}\) 13.\(\text{\(\text{\text{x}f1}\)}\) \(\text{\(\text{\text{e}8}\)}\) 14.\(\text{\(\text{\text{f}2}\)}\) a6 15.\(\text{\(\text{\text{\text{g}1}\)}\) b5} 16.\(\text{\(\text{\text{f}4}\)}\) \(\text{\(\text{\text{h}5}\)}\) 17.\(\text{\(\text{e}3\)}\) \(\text{\(\text{\text{d}7}\)}\) 18.b4 In this Benoni-type structure, White has the advantage, Milov-Zelcic, Cannes 2006;

B12) 10.g4! and now:

B121) An active attempt like 10...\(\text{\(\text{\text{x}e2}\)}\) 11.\(\text{\(\text{\text{x}e2}\)}\) \(\text{\(\text{\text{f}d7}\)}\) 12.g5 f5 (or 12...f6 13.h4) does not equalize after 13.exf5! \(\text{\(\text{\text{x}f5}\)}\) 14.f4±;

B122) 10...\(\text{\(\text{\text{f}d7}\)}\) 11.\(\text{\(\text{\text{g}3}\)}\) \(\text{\(\text{\text{x}f1}\)}\) 12.\(\text{\(\text{\text{x}f1}\)}\). It is difficult for Black to obtain active counterplay. White is better, e.g. 12...\(\text{\(\text{\text{e}5}\)}\) 13.f4 \(\text{\(\text{\text{g}6}\)}\) 14.h4 \(\text{\(\text{\text{x}c3}\)}\) 15.bxc3 \(\text{\(\text{\text{f}6}\)}\) 16.\(\text{\(\text{\text{g}5}\)}\) Black is in serious trouble. 16...\(\text{\(\text{\text{x}e3}\)}\) 17.\(\text{\(\text{\text{d}2}\)}\) \(\text{\(\text{\text{d}3}\)}\)+ 18.\(\text{\(\text{\text{e}2}\)}\) \(\text{\(\text{\text{x}e2}\)}\)+ 19.\(\text{\(\text{\text{x}e2}\)}\) \(\text{\(\text{\text{d}8}\)}\) 20.h5 \(\text{\(\text{\text{f}8}\)}\) 21.\(\text{\(\text{\text{c}3}\)}\) with a winning advantage for White.

B2) 9...\(\text{\(\text{\text{h}5}\)}\). Black employs a typical Benoni idea. 10.g4!? Interesting play by Milov. White will not be able to castle now, but on the other hand he is gaining a lot of space. 10...\(\text{\(\text{\text{h}4}\)}\)+ 11.\(\text{\(\text{d}2}\)

B21) My computer's proposal 11...f5! may look a bit strange. Yes, White's king is in the middle and it is a principled decision to open up the position, but on the other hand a piece is a piece. A refutation is hard to find: 12.gxf5 White may also try to be smart and get himself in trouble with 12.exf5 \(\text{\(\text{\text{x}d7}\)}\) 13.gxh5 \(\text{\(\text{x xf}5\)}\) 14.\(\text{\(\text{\text{c}2}\)}\) \(\text{\(\text{\text{f}3}\)}\). 12...\(\text{\(\text{\text{x}e4}\)}\) 13.\(\text{\(\text{\text{f}e4}\)}\) 13.f4 \(\text{\(\text{\text{g}4}\)}\). 13...\(\text{\(\text{\text{x}e4}\)}\) 14.\(\text{\(\text{\text{g}3}\)}\) \(\text{\(\text{\text{d}4}\)}\)+ 15.\(\text{\(\text{\text{c}2}\)}\) \(\text{\(\text{\text{x}c3}\)}\)! 16.bxc3 \(\text{\(\text{\text{a}4}\)}\)+ 17.\(\text{\(\text{\text{d}2}\)}\) \(\text{\(\text{\text{f}4}\)}\)+ 18.\(\text{\(\text{c}2\)}\) \(\text{\(\text{\text{a}4}\)}\)+ with a draw by perpetual check;

B22) 11...\(\text{\(\text{\text{f}6}\)}\) 12.\(\text{\(\text{\text{e}1}\)}\) \(\text{\(\text{\text{x}e1}\)}\)+ 13.\(\text{\(\text{\text{x}e1}\)}\). Now, with the queens gone, the white king is no longer a target. White has more space and is better. 13...\(\text{\(\text{\text{d}7}\)}\) 14.\(\text{\(\text{\text{g}3}\)}\) a6 15.\(\text{\(\text{\text{f}2}\)}\) \(\text{\(\text{\text{g}6}\)}\) 16.h4 b5 17.\(\text{\(\text{\text{e}2}\)}\) \(\text{\(\text{\text{e}5}\)}\) 18.a3 \(\text{\(\text{\text{a}5}\)}\) 19.h5 \(\text{\(\text{\text{b}8}\)}\) 20.g5 with White's advantage in Milov-Short, Baku 2007.

B23) 11...\(\text{\(\text{\text{e}8}\)}\) 8.\(\text{\(\text{\text{g}e2}\)}\) exd5 9.cxd5 d6 10.\(\text{\(\text{\text{g}3}\)}\) \(\text{\(\text{bd7}\)}\) again results in a Benoni which is good for White after 11.\(\text{\(\text{\text{e}2}\)}\) a6 12.a4 \(\text{\(\text{\text{f}8}\)}\) 13.0-0 \(\text{\(\text{\text{g}6}\)}\) 14.\(\text{\(\text{\text{d}2}\)}\) \(\text{\(\text{\text{a}5}\)}\) 15.\(\text{\(\text{\text{b}1}\)}\) \(\text{\(\text{\text{d}7}\)}\) 16.\(\text{\(\text{\text{b}4}\)}\) \(\text{\(\text{\text{c}b4}\)}\) 17.\(\text{\(\text{\text{b}4}\)}\) as seen in Milov-Ovetchkin, Moscow 2002.

8.e5

Should White just calmly develop with 8.\(\text{\(\text{\text{h}3}\)}\), then Black opens up the centre favourably: 8...\(\text{\(\text{\text{b}c4}\)}\) 9.\(\text{\(\text{\text{c}c4}\)}\) exd5 The
Chapter 1.2: Early $b_6$ Lines – 4...$b_6$ 5.f3

Inaccurate 9...$\text{Wa}_5$?! 10.$\text{Qd}_2$ $\text{a}_6$ led to a white advantage after 11.$\text{Qxa}_6$ $\text{Wa}_6$ 12.$\text{Qf}_4$ e5 13.$\text{Se}_2$ d6 14.0-0 in Milov-Carron, Switzerland 2008. 10.$\text{Qxd}_5$ $\text{Qxd}_5$ Also good is 10...$\text{Qc}_6$. 11.$\text{Qxd}_5$ $\text{Qa}_6$ 12.$\text{Qf}_4$ 12.$\text{Qxa}_8$? is not good due to 12...$\text{Wh}_4+$ 13.$\text{Qd}_1$ $\text{Qc}_6$. 12...$\text{Qc}_6$ The situation of the white king is still a problem that needs to be solved. Black's pieces are developed and well-coordinated – he has an excellent game.

A relatively recent practical example was also OK for Black: 8...$\text{Qe}_8$ 9.$\text{dx}_e6$ $\text{fxe}_6$ 10.$\text{cx}_b5$

- 10...$\text{Qd}_5$?;
- In case of 10...$\text{Wh}_4+$ 11.$\text{g}_3$ $\text{Wd}_4$ 12.$\text{Qxd}_4$ $\text{cx}_d_4$ 13.$\text{a}_3$ $\text{Qa}_5$ 14.$\text{b}_4$ $\text{Qc}_7$ 15.$\text{Qe}_4$ (15.$\text{Qd}_3$ is unclear after 15...$\text{Qxe}_5$! 16.$\text{Qe}_4$ $\text{dx}_c_3$ 17.$\text{Qxa}_8$ $\text{Qc}_7$ 18.$\text{Qe}_4$ $\text{Qxb}_5$) 15...$\text{Qxe}_5$ 16.$\text{Qb}_2$ $\text{Qb}_7$ 17.$\text{Qd}_3$ White has some advantage;
- Another viable option for Black is 10...a6 11.$\text{f}_4$ $\text{ax}_b_5$ 12.$\text{Qd}_3$ $\text{c}_4$ 13.$\text{c}_2$ $\text{d}_5$ 14.$\text{f}_3$ $\text{Qc}_6$ with an unclear game, which was later drawn in Radjabov-Istratescu, Antalya 2004.

9.$\text{Qe}_3$ $\text{bx}_c_4$ 10.$\text{f}_4$ $\text{ex}_d_5$ 11.$\text{Qxd}_5$ $\text{Qc}_6$ 12.$\text{a}_3$ $\text{Qa}_5$ 13.$\text{Qxc}_4$ $\text{Qb}_7$

Again Black has active play.

8...$\text{Qh}_5$? A new proposal (Black threatens 9...$\text{Wh}_4+$). In general White’s position looks over-extended – he has taken a lot of space, but he does not have the development to support it.

**Conclusion**

White's 5.f3 is an unusual way to tackle the 4.e3 $b_6$ line. With exact play, Black will become active and things may easily get risky for White.
Chapter 1.3

Smooth Development – 4...b6 5.♘d3 ♘b7 6.♗f3

With 5.♘d3 and 6.♗f3 White develops smoothly, but it will take more time for him to occupy the centre with his pawns.

6...0-0

- Interesting for Black is 6...♗xc3+ 7.bxc3 ♘e4 8.♕e2. White has to prevent a bishop swap, otherwise Black gets easy play. 8...0-0 9.0-0 c5 10.♗d2

10...♘b7 10...♗g6!? is definitely an option to consider. 11.♗b3 d6 12.f3 ♗bd7 13.e4 e5 14.a4 a5 We have here a standard Nimzo structure with a full centre and double c-pawns – I have written in detail on the strategic pros and cons of this structure in my book Winning Chess Middlegames. 15.d5 ♘e8 16.g4 This pawn advance takes space, but also weakens the f4-square. 16...♗f8 17.♗e1 ♗g6 18.♗g3

18...♗d7 Black's play can be improved with 18...h5! 19.h3 h4 20.♗h2 ♗h7 followed by ...♗g5, ...♗f6, ...♗f4, and
Black is better. 19.\textit{f}2  \textit{wh}4 20.\textit{f}b1 \textit{a}6 21.\textit{f}a1! The knight is heading for f5! 21...\textit{f}f6 22.g5 \textit{d}8 23.\textit{c}2 and White went on to win in Borisenko-Smyslov, Moscow ch-URS 1950.

Alternatively, 6...\textit{e}4 7.0-0 and now:

A) Taking the pawn with 7...\textit{d}xc3?! 8.bxc3 \textit{xc}3 9.\textit{b}1 \textit{c}6 10.\textit{b}3 \textit{a}5 11.e4 is dubious for Black, as White has a great centre and the \textit{a}5 is really badly placed! But Black managed to survive the white onslaught and win in Gligoric-Larsen, Lugano 1970;

B) 7...\textit{d}xc3 leads to a standard Nimzo position with a full centre and doubled pawns, where general strategic understanding will matter more than any concrete lines one may try to prepare: 8.bxc3 \textit{f}5 Again, taking a pawn on c3 does not serve Black well. After 8...\textit{d}xc3 9.\textit{c}2 \textit{xf}3 10.gxf3 \textit{g}5+ 11.h1 \textit{h}5 12.\textit{g}1 \textit{xf}3+ 13.\textit{g}2 \textit{f}5 14.\textit{a}3 \textit{e}4 15.\textit{f}1 \textit{g}8 16.\textit{e}2 16...\textit{wh}3 17.\textit{f}3 \textit{f}6 18.d5 \textit{f}7 19.e4 Black was soon slaughtered in Keres-Spassky, Riga Candidates’ 1965. 9.\textit{d}e1 0-0 10.\textit{f}3

B1) 10...\textit{f}6 leads to White’s advantage after 11.a4 d6 12.\textit{c}2 \textit{c}6 13.d5 \textit{exd}5 14.\textit{cxd}5 \textit{e}5 15.\textit{c}4 \textit{fd}7 16.\textit{e}2 \textit{c}5 17.\textit{d}4 \textit{c}8?! — it was better to fix the queenside with 17...a5 18.a5

B2) 10...\textit{g}5 is probably the best retreat: 11.\textit{wh}2 \textit{f}6 12.\textit{c}2 d6 13.a4 \textit{d}7 19.\textit{wc}2, Elianov-Postny, Copenhagen 2010;

B2) 10...\textit{g}5 is probably the best retreat: 11.\textit{we}2 \textit{f}6 12.\textit{c}2 d6 13.a4

13...\textit{c}6 Black is fine in this sharp position. 14.\textit{a}3 \textit{g}6 15.\textit{f}4 \textit{e}4 16.\textit{xe}4 \textit{fxe}4 17.c5 \textit{fd}8 Gelfand-Vallejo Pons, Leon 2010. Delaying the capture is also possible:

C) 7...\textit{f}5 and now:

C1) Black is OK in case of 8.\textit{wc}2 \textit{xc}3 9.\textit{bxc}3 0-0 10.\textit{d}2 \textit{wh}4 11.\textit{f}3 \textit{xd}2 12.\textit{xd}2 \textit{c}6 13.\textit{ab}1 d6 14.\textit{e}4 \textit{xe}4 15.\textit{xe}4 \textit{a}5 16.\textit{xb}7 \textit{xb}7 17.\textit{be}1 \textit{ae}8 as in I. Sokolov-Cu. Hansen, Novi Sad ol 1990;

C2) 8.\textit{xe}4 \textit{fxe}4 9.\textit{d}2 led in an old classic to a sharp struggle, ending in victory for Black after 9...\textit{xc}3 10.\textit{bxc}3 0-0 11.\textit{g}4\textit{f}5 12.d5 \textit{g}5
19.\textit{c3 c3} 20.\textit{f5 h4} 21.\textit{f6+} As a matter of fact, this does not damage Black’s structure. Black soon gets a mating attack going. 21...\textit{gxf6} 22.\textit{xd3 h6} 23.\textit{h3 f7} 24.\textit{f2 g8} 25.\textit{f1}

25...\textit{xg2}!! 26.\textit{xg2} \textit{h3} 27.\textit{e4 g6} 0-1 Gligoric-Larsen, Havana 1967;

C3) 8.\textit{e5 f6} is rarely played and should not worry Black;

C4) 8.\textit{e2 0-0} Or immediately 8...\textit{d6}. 9.\textit{a3 d6} This idea worked OK for Black in a number of practical examples:

C5) 8.\textit{d5} This attempt to break the coordination of Black’s pieces brings White nothing here. 8...\textit{xc3} 9.\textit{bxc3}

9...\textit{a6}! This is a standard plan in such positions: Black ignores White’s pawn on d5 and brings his knight to c5. 10.\textit{d4 c5} 11.\textit{xe4 fxe4} 12.\textit{a3 0-0} 13.\textit{xc5 bxc5} 14.\textit{e2 exd5} 15.\textit{b1 wce8} 16.\textit{cxd5 a6} 17.\textit{e1 d3}

Black was fine and went on to win in Gligoric-Timman, Bugojno 1980.

6...\textit{xc3} 7.\textit{bxc3 e4} and 6...\textit{e4} are certainly playable for Black. I have taken 6...0-0 7.0-0 c5 as the main line, simply because this looks like relatively simple equality.

7.0-0 c5 8.\textit{a4}

To force Black to take a decision in the centre, however White’s knight is now on the edge of the board and this will be felt in most of the lines.

\begin{itemize}
  \item In case of 8.\textit{d2}
  \item A) An easy way to equality is 8...\textit{d6} 9.a3 \textit{xc3} 10.\textit{xc3}
\end{itemize}

10...\textit{e4} and Black is doing fine here:

A1) White’s idea to keep his bishop pair at any cost led to an opening catastrophe after 11.\textit{e1 d7} 12.\textit{d2 f5} 13.\textit{wce2} (13.\textit{f3}) 13...\textit{xd2} 14.\textit{xd2 wce4}. Now comes a true shocker: 15.\textit{c3}??
15...\texttt{Bxg2}! and already on move 15 White was totally lost in Donner-Spassky, Beverwijk 1967;

A2) 11.\texttt{Bxe4 Bxe4} 12.\texttt{Bd2 Bb7} 13.dxc5 bxc5 14.\texttt{Bg4 e5} with a complicated game, which Black eventually won in Gligoric-Darga, Beverwijk 1967.

B) Black can also go for an isolated pawn-type position, though then White has in my opinion prospects of an opening advantage with 8...\texttt{cxd4} 9.exd4 d5 10.cxd5 \texttt{Bxc3} or 10...\texttt{Bxd5} 11.bxc3 \texttt{Bxd5} 12.\texttt{Be1}.

\textbullet{} 8.a3 \texttt{Bxc3} 9.bxc3 \texttt{Be4} leads to positions similar to 6...\texttt{Be4} lines, with the difference that White has spent a tempo on 8.a3, forcing Black to take \texttt{Bxc3}.

\textbullet{} In the event of 8.\texttt{Be2}, the simplest way for Black to equalize is 8...\texttt{Bxc3}! (8...\texttt{cxd4} 9.exd4 \texttt{Bxc3} 10.bxc3 or 8...\texttt{Bxe8} 9.\texttt{Bd1} cxd4 10.exd4 \texttt{Bf8} 11.\texttt{Be5} proved to be better for White) 9.bxc3 \texttt{Be4}!

8...\texttt{cxd4}

This looks the most natural here and should lead to equality. Black's main alternative is 8...\texttt{Bxe7} 9.a3 \texttt{Bxa5}, which leads to a complicated strategic struggle, with a slight advantage for White.

9.exd4

Probably best.

The idea to be clever with 9.a3 actually gives Black additional tactical possibilities. The drawback of the immediate 9.cxd4 recapture is that the black bishop can now retreat to f8 in one go, while White is still likely to play the movea2-a3.

\textbullet{} 9...\texttt{Bd6} 10.exd4 And now we see a motif we will see many times in this line:

10...\texttt{Bxf3}? This mostly works for Black. 11.\texttt{Bxf3 Bc6} 12.\texttt{Bc3} 12.\texttt{Bd1 Bd4} 13.\texttt{Bxh7+ Bxh7} 14.\texttt{Bxd4 Be5} 15.\texttt{Bxe4 d6} was better for Black in Lukacs-Kortchnoi, Austria tt 1995/96 - again the displaced white \texttt{Bxa4}. 12...\texttt{Be5}

A) Now with 13.c5 White can try to make use of his \texttt{Bxa4}. This likely leads to a draw: 13...\texttt{Bc7} The simple 13...\texttt{exd4} 14.cxd6 dxe3 15.\texttt{Bxe3 Bxe8} 16.\texttt{Bh3 Bb5} also leads to equality. 14.d5 \texttt{e4} 15.\texttt{Bxe4 Bf5} 16.\texttt{Bf4 g6} 17.\texttt{Bd3 Bh4} 16...\texttt{g6} 17.\texttt{Bf4 Bg5} 18.\texttt{Blh4 Bxe4} 19.\texttt{Bxe4 Bxc5} 20.\texttt{Bxc5} \\texttt{Bxe5} 21.\texttt{Bxc5 Be8} 22.\texttt{Bd3} 22.\texttt{Bc4 Bxe5} 22...\texttt{Bxh2+} 23.\texttt{Bxh2 Bc7+};

B) 13.d5? runs into the standard trick 13...\texttt{e4} 14.\texttt{Bxe4 Bf5};

C) 13.dxe5 \texttt{Bxe5} 14.\texttt{Bxe2 Bg4} 14...\texttt{Bc7} 15.\texttt{Bf3 Be8} was played in Parker-Wells, England tt 2009/10. 15.\texttt{Bf3 Bxe3} 16.\texttt{Bxe3 Bxe8} 17.\texttt{Bf3 Bf5} with approximately equal chances.

\textbullet{} Also OK for Black is 9...\texttt{Bxe7} 10.exd4
Part I: 4.e3 Various

10...\textit{\texttt{xf3}}! With the white knight displaced on a4, Black has reason to go for direct play in the centre. 10...\textit{\texttt{c7}} is an old move, played a lot in the 1950s, that gives White a slight advantage. 10...d6 aims for regular hedgehog positions. As usual it leads to complicated play, with probably some edge for White. 11.\textit{\texttt{xf3}} \textit{\texttt{c6}} 12.\textit{\texttt{e3}} 12.d5 \textit{\texttt{e5}} 13.\textit{\texttt{e2}} \textit{\texttt{c7}} 14.\textit{\texttt{f4}} \textit{\texttt{d6}} 15.\textit{\texttt{c3}} \textit{\texttt{f3+}} 16.\textit{\texttt{xf3}} \textit{\texttt{xf4}} was slightly better for Black in Chatalbashev-Nisipeanu, Krynica 1998. 12...e5 13.d5 e4 14.\textit{\texttt{xe4}} \textit{\texttt{e5}} 14.\textit{\texttt{f3}}! it is difficult for Black to prove compensation, compared to the same position with the black bishop on e7 (14.\textit{\texttt{f4}} \textit{\texttt{d6}} transposes to Speelman-Ivanchuk from the 9.a3 \textit{\texttt{e7}} line – the fact that here the white pawn is on a2 instead of a3 is not relevant) 14...\textit{\texttt{xc4}}? does not work due to 15.\textit{\texttt{g5}};

C) 12...\textit{\texttt{e7}} 13.a3 \textit{\texttt{d6}} 14.\textit{\texttt{c3}} \textit{\texttt{g6}}

19...\textit{\texttt{g6}} 19...f5 looks fine for Black. 20.\textit{\texttt{c3}} \textit{\texttt{xd6}} with equality in Speelman-Ivanchuk, Roquebrunerapid 1992.

9...\textit{\texttt{e8}}

• Now with Black's bishop still on b4, after 9...\textit{\texttt{xf3}} 10.\textit{\texttt{xf3}} \textit{\texttt{c6}} 11.\textit{\texttt{e3}},

11...e5 does not work that well for Black: 12.d5 and now:

A) 12...\textit{\texttt{d4}} is better for White after 13.\textit{\texttt{g3}} \textit{\texttt{e8}} 14.f4;

B) In the case of 12...e4 13.\textit{\texttt{xe4}} \textit{\texttt{e5}} 14.\textit{\texttt{f3}}! it is difficult for Black to prove compensation, compared to the same position with the black bishop on e7 (14.\textit{\texttt{f4}} \textit{\texttt{d6}} transposes to Speelman-Ivanchuk from the 9.a3 \textit{\texttt{e7}} line – the fact that here the white pawn is on a2 instead of a3 is not relevant)

15.\textit{\texttt{ad1}}! Black is fine in the event of 15.\textit{\texttt{b5}} e4! 16.\textit{\texttt{xe4}} \textit{\texttt{h4}} or 15.\textit{\texttt{g5}} \textit{\texttt{e7}}. 15...h6 15...\textit{\texttt{e8}}? fails to 16.\textit{\texttt{g5}} \textit{\texttt{e7}}? 17.d6. 16.\textit{\texttt{b5}}! The actual game continued 16.g3 \textit{\texttt{e8}} 17.\textit{\texttt{fe1}} \textit{\texttt{e8}} 18.\textit{\texttt{e4}} \textit{\texttt{xe4}} 19.\textit{\texttt{exe4}} \textit{\texttt{c5}} 20.b4 \textit{\texttt{exe3}} 21.\textit{\texttt{exe3}} d6 22.\textit{\texttt{f1}} \textit{\texttt{f8}} with equality in Radjabov-Kallio, Leon Ech-tt 2001. 16...e4 With the white rook on d1, this trick does not work any longer. 17.\textit{\texttt{xe4}} \textit{\texttt{h4}} 18.\textit{\texttt{h3}} \textit{\texttt{xe4}} 19.\textit{\texttt{d4}}! Two black knights are hanging (19...f5 20.\textit{\texttt{xd6}} \textit{\texttt{xd6}} 21.\textit{\texttt{d4}}), so White regains a piece and stands better.

• With the black bishop still on b4, 9...\textit{\texttt{c7}} does not work well after 10.\textit{\texttt{g5}} \textit{\texttt{g4}} (or 10...\textit{\texttt{e4}} 11.\textit{\texttt{c5}})
11.d5! b5 12.h3! $e5 12...bxc4? fails to 13.$e4 f5 14.d6, winning a piece. 13.cxb5 $xd5 13...$xd3 14.$xd3 $xd5 15.$c1 was arguably a better option, though the problems with the undeveloped $b8 remain. 14.$c1 $xf3+ 15.$xf3 $a5 16.$h5 f5 17.$c3 $b7 18.a3 $d6 19.fdl Black has problems to synchronize his pieces. White was clearly better in V. Babula-Timman, Germany Bundesliga 1998/99.

- White easily gets an advantage in case of 9...d5 10.c5 bxc5 11.a3 c4 11...$a5 12.$xc5 is highly advantageous for White – his dominant knight on $c5 paralyses Black’s kingside, while the other knight is ready to jump to e5. White is also excellently positioned to launch an attack on Black’s king, who has almost no defenders. After the text, Kortchnoi’s recipe looks the most direct and best: 12.$xh7+, seriously damaging Black’s kingside while also temporarily sending Black’s knight to a lousy square.

10.a3

In case of 10.$g5 the best for Black is Portisch’ idea 10...h6! 10...$e7 11.$e1 h6 12.$f4! $f8 13.$c1 d6 14.$h3 $bd7 15.$c3 is a hedgehog position which is slightly better for White, as in Hungaski-Adams, Los Angeles 2011;

- 11.$xf6 $xf6 12.c5 bxc5 13.dxc5 (13.a3? c4) 13...d6 can only be better for Black;

- 11.$h4 $xf3! 12.$xf3 $c6 It is important that the white bishop is on $h4 and the black pawn on h6! 13.$e3

13.$xf6 $xf6 14.$xf6 gxf6 15.$e4 f5 16.$xc6 dxc6 17.$c3 $ad8 was slightly better for Black as White’s d4 pawn is a clear target, Visier Segovia-Portisch, Las Palmas 1972. 13...$e7! Black now has a strong tactical threat in 14...$g4, which White cannot prevent. 13...e5 14.d5 $e4? does not work after 15.$xe4! $e5 16.$b3! 14.$ad1 $c8 14...$g4 15.$xe7 $xe7 is also fine for Black – again note White’s stranded knight on a4! 15.$c3 Or 15.$g3 $b4. 15...$g4 and Black is fine.

10...$f8

This is the main drawback of the postponement of a2-a3 – now Black’s bishop arrives on f8 in one go.
11...e1

In the event of 11...f4

- Black gets easy equality with the as yet unplayed 11...xf3! 12...xf3 c6. This standard motif works here as well – again, this is a tactical position and White is temporarily a piece down – the misplaced a4! 13...e5 c8 followed by ...d7-d6 – Black is fine;
- A recent high-level try was 11...d6 12...e1 bd7 13.c1 g6 Bologan is about to demonstrate an interesting idea. With 13...e5 14...xe5 xf3 15...xf3 xe5 16...xe5 dxe5 Black managed to keep the balance in Carlsen-Karjakin, Medias 2011. 14.h3?

14...c3!, bringing the knight back into play, was necessary – with some advantage for White. 14...e5! Black is already better; as we will soon to see a4 proves to be a horrible square for White's knight. 15...xe5 dxe5 16...xe5 h5 17...xf1 xf4 18...xd7 xd7 19...d7 xe1 20...e1 c6 Yes, the a4 is terribly badly placed! 21...xf8 xa4 22.g3 h5 White's f8 is trapped. 23...h7 h7 and Black won in Potkin-Bologan, Olginka 2011.

11...xf3!

This move hasn't yet been played either, but our standard tactical motif works here as well. Black also had the option to enter a standard hedgehog-type position with 11...d6 12...c3 bd7. In my opinion such positions should be slightly better for White, provided he places his bishop on the h2-b8 diagonal, e.g. 13...f4 g6 14...h3. White has to be careful not to allow the pawn break ...e6-e5. He will advance his queenside pawns and should have the advantage.

12...xf3

12...c6

White's centre is shaky, and his a4 is completely out of play. White can easily get in trouble here – or perhaps he already is.

13...e3

The pawn sac 13...g3 xd4 14.g5 does not seem to work after 14...e7! 15.ad1 c6 16.c3 c8 17...h4 g6.
13...e5 14.d5

14...g5 dxd4 15.wg3 fails to 15...h6! and now 16.xh6?? blunders a piece due to 16...e4 followed by ...f5.

14...e4!

A standard resource here, which works well again.

15.xe4 d5

If Black is not ambitious, he can also opt for the alternative 15...xe4 16.dxc6 dxc6.

16.wf4 f5

Here also, good is 16...xe4 17.wxe4 c8.

17.wg5 xg5 18.xg5 h6

With ...xc4 to follow. Black has an excellent game.

Conclusion

Black's choice in this line is often a matter of taste and many true Nimzo players may find the 6...xc3 7.bxc3 e4 line (which is interesting and deserves more tests) or the 6...e4 line more in the 'Nimzo spirit'. I think that 6...0-0 7.0-0 c5 offers Black easy equality. White's main and most dangerous move is 8. g4. Now I think that Black should play 8...xd4 and aim for ...xf3 followed by ...c6 and ...e6-e5 and central play, laying the finger on the temporarily misplaced white g4 – Black should get easy equality here. Black players looking for complications may opt for a hedgehog set-up, though I think that there White should be somewhat better – provided he develops his bishop to f4 and is careful to prevent tactics with the push ...e6-e5, as happened for example in Potkin-Bologan.
Chapter 1.4

Romanishin’s 4...b6 5.\(\texttt{c}e2\) c5

This rather unusual concept (which, by the way, can also arise after the move order with 4.e3 c5 5.\(\texttt{c}e2\) b6) is a brainchild of Ukrainian grandmaster Oleg Romanishin. Most of the time, the pawn structure and type of play of a Benoni occurs. The main idea behind 5...c5 (at least this is what I think) is to keep dynamic tension in the position and to confuse matters. However, it does not equalize and a well-armed white player has a number of promising options at his disposal.

6.a3 \(\texttt{a}a5\)

White has two main moves here: 7.\(\texttt{b}b1\) and 7.\(\texttt{d}d2\). Both look logical and both offer White good prospects of an opening advantage. Perhaps 7.\(\texttt{b}b1\) gives a more forcing character to the game.

7.\(\texttt{b}b1\)

\(\cdot\) 7.\(\texttt{d}d2\)

Compared to 7.\(\texttt{b}b1\) this does not threaten b2-b4 immediately, but on the other hand it solves the problem of the pin along the a5-e1 diagonal and creates the possibility of a d4-d5 push:

A) 7...\(\texttt{a}a6\)

\(A1)\) 8.f3 is a move which is in general less logical than an immediate knight development. However, it can be played
and the way to equality for Black is far from obvious. One example from my own practice continued 8...0-0 9.\( \texttt{g}3 \) \( \texttt{b}7 \) 10.\( \texttt{d}3 \) \texttt{cx}d4 11.\texttt{ex}d4 \( \texttt{x}c3 \)

12.\texttt{bxc}3! A standard decision. It is good for the reader to notice that in this particular set-up (with the \( \texttt{cx}d4 \) \texttt{ex}d4 trade already happened and the black knight on a6) it is, almost as a rule, always better for White to recapture on c3 with the pawn, because White does not risk the creation of an isolated pawn (after Black's \( \ldots d7-d5 \)), and the \( \texttt{d}2 \) will remain active on the c1-h6 diagonal, while the weakness of the c4 pawn is, due to the misplaced \( \texttt{a}6 \), extremely difficult for Black to target. 12...\texttt{d}5 13.0-0 Another standard positional option for White is 13.\texttt{cx}d5 \texttt{ex}d5 14.0-0 \( \texttt{c}7 \) 15.\texttt{e}1. It is good for the reader to keep in mind that such positions are almost invariably slightly better for White. 13...\texttt{dx}c4 14.\texttt{xc}4 \( \texttt{c}8 \) 15.\texttt{we}2 \( \texttt{b}8 \) Black's misplaced knight returns into play – at a cost of two tempi. 16.\( \texttt{d}3 \) \texttt{bd}7 17.\texttt{a}4! \texttt{w}c7 18.\texttt{a}5 White gets rid of his a-pawn weakness, while creating a b-pawn weakness for Black – another standard positional decision that is worth taking note of. 18...\texttt{d}5 19.\texttt{axb}6 \texttt{axb}6 20.\( \texttt{a}4 \) \( \texttt{c}6 \) 21.\texttt{a}3 \texttt{a}8 22.\texttt{h}f1 \texttt{h}a3 23.\texttt{x}a3 and White had a small but steady advantage in I. Sokolov-Cebalo, Aalborg 1991; A2) 8.\texttt{g}3 is probably the most logical move. White's knight is developed to a natural square while the black knight on a6 is misplaced, and if White finishes his development normally with \( \texttt{d}3 \) and 0-0 (let alone the \( \texttt{d}4-d5 \) pawn push) he will be better. 8...0-0 9.\texttt{d}3 \texttt{d}5 10.\texttt{cx}d5 \texttt{cx}d5 11.\texttt{ex}d4 \( \texttt{xc}3 \) 12.\texttt{bxc}3 \texttt{w}d5 13.\texttt{we}2 Again this typical pawn structure situation, the misplaced black \( \texttt{a}6 \) – White is better. The play that follows is a textbook example: 13...\texttt{c}7 14.\texttt{e}4 \( \texttt{ce}8 \)

15.\texttt{c}4! \texttt{w}d4 16.\texttt{c}3 \texttt{w}7 17.\texttt{d}1 \texttt{w}c7 18.0-0 \( \texttt{b}7 \) 19.\texttt{xf}6+ \( \texttt{xf}6 \) 20.\( \texttt{xf}6 \) \texttt{gx}f6 21.\( \texttt{h}h7+! \) \texttt{h}8 22.\texttt{w}h5 \texttt{fd}8 23.\texttt{w}h6 \texttt{ab}8 24.\texttt{d}3 \texttt{xd}3 25.\texttt{xd}3+ \texttt{g}8 26.\texttt{h}h7+ \texttt{h}8 27.\texttt{d}1 1-0 Kharlov-Jaracz, Biel 1997. A3) The other standard knight square is f4: 8.\texttt{f}4 \texttt{b}7 9.\texttt{d}3 0-0 and now: A3 1) White can hope for an opening advantage after 10.\texttt{d}5!?: 10.\texttt{c}7 11.e4 \( \texttt{xc}3 \) 12.\texttt{xc}3 \texttt{ex}d5 13.\texttt{ex}d5! \texttt{w}7+ 13...\texttt{e}8+ 14.\texttt{f}1 \texttt{e}4? runs into 15.\texttt{w}h5! \texttt{g}6 16.\texttt{wh}6 \texttt{xc}3 17.\texttt{h}5!, winning. 14.\texttt{we}2 \texttt{ae}8 15.0-0 \texttt{we}2 16.\texttt{xe}2 \texttt{e}4 17.\texttt{le} and thanks to his bishop pair and space surplus, White has an obvious advantage; A3 12) 10...\texttt{xc}3 11.\texttt{xc}3 \texttt{ex}d5 12.\texttt{xd}5! Exact play is necessary; in the
Part I: 4.e3 Various

event of 12.cxd5 Qc7 White would have to sacrifice a pawn on d5.

12...Qxd5 13.cxd5 and now:

A31 12) White is better in the event of 13...Qc7 14.Qh5 or 14.e4 14...g6
15.Qh6 f6 16.e4;

A31 12) 13...Qg5 14.Qc2 h6
15.0-0-0 – with two strong bishops White should have good attacking prospects on the black monarch here.

A32) Less direct, but also quite OK for White is 10.0-0d5 11.cxd5 exd5

and here White's play can be improved with 12.f3!. Now, strangely enough, it is not easy to find a satisfactory continuation for Black. In practice 12.Qb5 Qxd2 13.Qxd2 Qd7 14.Qc3 Qc7 15.Qad1 We7 was tried, with approximate equality in Volkov-Gajewski, Khanty-Mansiysk 2007. 12...Qc7 12...We8? fails to 13.Qb5! We7 14.dxc5! bxc5
16.axb4 We8 17.Qd4 with a positional advantage for White.

A knight on a6 is hardly a perfect piece, so naturally black players have tried different moves here:

B) 7...0-0 8.Nb1 Threatening b2-b4 and forcing Black to develop his b8 knight (White had other options in 8.Qf4!? or 8.d5?):

B1) 8...Qc6 leads to play similar to 7...Qc6, e.g. 9.d5 and now:

B11) In case of 9...Qe5 10.Qg3 (also good is 10.Qf4 with similar ideas) 10...We7,

White has a tactical solution in 11.d6!

(white had other options in 11.b4 cxb4
12.d6? would have been wrong due to 12...bxc3! 13.dxe7 cxd2+ 14.Qe2 Qe8) 11...Qxd6 12.b4 cxb4 13.Qb5
and Black does not get enough for the piece after 13...Qd3+ 14.Qxd3 Qxd3
15.axb4;

B12) 9...exd5 is therefore more or less forced: 10.cxd5 Qe5 11.Qg3
White has a double threat of b2-b4 or f2-f4 – life is difficult for Black. His general problem here is that he is not sufficiently developed to justify his dynamic play. 11...c4 12.f4 Qxc3 Or 12...Qeg4 13.h3. 13.Qxc3 Qeg4 14.e4
White can also take a pawn with 14.Qxf6 Qxf6 15.Qxc4.

B2) 8...We7 9.d5 Qa6 transposes to 8...Qa6 9.d5 We7, apart from the fact that White has options in 9.Qf4 or 9.Qg3;

B3) 8...Qa6 and now:

B31) White has an option in 9.Qf4, but this does not bring any opening advantage after 9...cxd4! 10.exd4 Qxc3
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11.\(\text{\textit{g}}\)xc3 If 11.bxc3, Black equalizes with 11...e5! (the white knight on f4 is now under attack – this is one of the main disadvantages of placing it on f4 instead of g3 in this line. The other drawback is that the knight is not able to jump to f5 in some lines) 12.dxe5 \(\text{\textit{e}}\)e8 13.\(\text{\textit{d}}\)e2 \(\text{\textit{c}}\)e5 14.0-0 \(\text{\textit{b}}\)b7. 11...d5

B32) 9.\(\text{\textit{g}}\)g3 is more to the point and leads to a white advantage:

9...d5 Or 9...\(\text{\textit{b}}\)b7 10.\(\text{\textit{d}}\)d3 d5 (taking a pawn with 10...\(\text{\textit{a}}\)xg2 11.\(\text{\textit{g}}\)g1 \(\text{\textit{b}}\)b7 is something which your computer may tell you to be good for Black, however I would not advise it, since White gets strong compensation after 12.d5)

11.cxd5 cxd4 12.exd4 \(\text{\textit{g}}\)xc3 13.bxc3 \(\text{w}\)xd5 14.\(\text{b}\)e2 \(\text{\textit{c}}\)c7 15.f3 with the better game for White in Lautier-Beliavsky, Ubeda 1997. 10.cxd5 cxd4 11.exd4 \(\text{\textit{c}}\)xc3 12.bxc3 Recapturing bxc3 rather than with the bishop, connecting the pawns in the centre, is a standard decision here. 12...\(\text{\textit{w}}\)xd5 13.\(\text{\textit{e}}\)e2 \(\text{\textit{b}}\)b7 We have a position similar to Lautier-Beliavsky – only Beliavsky is White here. Black’s problem, as usual in this line, is his misplaced knight on a6. 14.f3 \(\text{\textit{b}}\)b8 15.0-0 \(\text{\textit{c}}\)c6 16.\(\text{\textit{d}}\)d3 and White had some advantage in Beliavsky-Sax, Hungary tt 1997/98;

B33) With 9.d5 White aims for a Benoni-type position:

B331) 9...\(\text{\textit{b}}\)b7 is not often played, but it is an option for Black. Now:

B3311) 10.d6? is a possibility to consider – though this pawn push is strategically always a far-reaching decision;

B3312) An interesting idea is 10.\(\text{\textit{x}}\)xc3! In general I personally am more in favour of putting a knight on g3 rather than f4 in this line. 10...\(\text{\textit{d}}\)d5 Black probably has to go for a pawn, as 10...\(\text{\textit{e}}\)e8 11.d6! looks promising for White – it will really take Black time to develop! 11.\(\text{\textit{g}}\)xc3 exd5 12.cxd5 \(\text{\textit{a}}\)xd5

13.\(\text{\textit{g}}\)xg7 \(\text{\textit{c}}\)xg7 14.\(\text{\textit{x}}\)xa6 \(\text{\textit{e}}\)e3 15.fxe3 \(\text{\textit{x}}\)xa6 16.\(\text{w}\)a4 and due to Black’s open king White has good compensation for the sacrificed pawn;

B3313) 10.e4? is not good for White, failing on tactical grounds: 10...\(\text{\textit{e}}\)x5 11.cxd5 \(\text{\textit{a}}\)xe5 11.exd5 \(\text{\textit{b}}\)e8 is good for Black since it takes White too long to develop. 11...\(\text{\textit{a}}\)xc3 12.\(\text{\textit{b}}\)xc3 \(\text{\textit{e}}\)e4! 13.\(\text{\textit{a}}\)xe4 \(\text{\textit{e}}\)e8 14.\(\text{g}\)g4 h5! 15.\(\text{w}\)f4 Or 15.\(\text{w}\)f5 \(\text{\textit{f}}\)f6 15...\(\text{\textit{c}}\)c7 and Black will win back his invested material with interest;

B3314) 10.\(\text{\textit{f}}\)f4 \(\text{\textit{e}}\)e7 11.\(\text{\textit{d}}\)d2 \(\text{\textit{c}}\)xc3 12.\(\text{\textit{b}}\)xc3 \(\text{\textit{e}}\)e4 13.\(\text{\textit{f}}\)f3 \(\text{\textit{c}}\)xc3 and here after 14.bxc3 Black’s play can be improved with 14...\(\text{\textit{e}}\)e8!, running away from White’s tempo moves d6, dxe7!
14...d6 is inferior after 15...dxe6 \( \mathcal{Q}xf3 \) 16.exf7+ \( \mathcal{W}xf7 \) 17.\( \mathcal{W}xf3 \) \( \mathcal{W}xc4 \) 18.\( \mathcal{W}d5+ \) \( \mathcal{W}xd5 \) 19.\( \mathcal{Q}xd5 \), while in practice 14...\( \mathcal{W}f6 \) 15.0-0 e5 16.\( \mathcal{Q}h5 \) \( \mathcal{W}d6 \) has been tried. Black's \( \mathcal{W}d6 \), \( \mathcal{Q}b7 \) and \( \mathcal{Q}a6 \) coordinate very poorly - well, actually not at all. With 17.g4! White seized the initiative on the kingside in Volkov-Nestorovic, Struga 2007. - 15.0-0 15.d6?! no longer works after 15...\( \mathcal{W}xf3 \) 16.gxf3 \( \mathcal{W}f6 \). 15...e5 16.\( \mathcal{Q}h5 \) d6 and Black should improve his knight with ...\( \mathcal{Q}b8-\mathcal{Q}d7 \) and gradually equalize.

B332) 9...d6 is a standard move, but it does not immediately attack the white centre. In general in this line, White has more space, whereas Black has a temporary lead in development. Should White manage to develop harmoniously, he would simply be better thanks to his space advantage. 10.f3 \( \text{exd5} \) 11.cxd5 \( \mathcal{Q}h5 \) An attempt to create tactics. 12.g3! Simple and strong. 12...f5 13.\( \mathcal{Q}g2 \) \( \mathcal{Q}d7 \) 14.0-0 b5

B333) 9...\( \mathcal{W}e7 \) The problem of this queen development is that after White places his knight on g3, tactics may appear later on related to a \( \mathcal{Q}f5 \) jump with tempo. 10.\( \mathcal{Q}g3 \) and now:

B3331) In the event of 10...\( \mathcal{Q}c7 \) White has two original ideas he can try:

B33311) Black has good Benoni-type play in case of 11.\( \mathcal{Q}d3 \) \( \text{exd5} \) 12.\( \mathcal{Q}xd5 \) \( \mathcal{Q}xe2+ \) 13.\( \mathcal{W}xd2 \) \( \mathcal{Q}cxd5 \) 14.\( \text{cxd5} \) d6 15.0-0 h5!;

B33312) Interesting is the exchange sacrifice 11.b4!? \( \text{cxb4} \) 12.axb4 \( \mathcal{Q}xb4 \) 13.\( \mathcal{Q}xb4 \) \( \mathcal{W}xb4 \) 14.\( \mathcal{Q}ce4 \) \( \mathcal{W}a3 \) 15.\( \mathcal{Q}xf6+ \) \( \mathcal{W}xf6 \) 16.\( \mathcal{Q}h5 \). The white knight on h5 is a monster, and the black king is exposed - all this for only an exchange. It looks like a reasonable deal for White. 16...\( \mathcal{Q}e8 \) 16...f5 17.g4! 17.\( \mathcal{Q}e2 \) White also has other plans, but this looks the most logical to me. 17...a5 18.0-0 a4 19.e4 and White has good attacking prospects;

B33313) 11.\( \mathcal{W}f3 \) \( \mathcal{Q}xc3 \) Black can try to improve with 11...b5!? , a standard way to tackle White's centre. 11...d6?! is a blunder due to 12.b4. 12.\( \mathcal{Q}xc3 \) In general, after such a transaction White is always better. The bishop on c3 is very strong, and it is not easy for Black to create counterplay. 12...\( \text{exd5} \) 13.\( \text{cxd5} \) \( \mathcal{Q}e8 \) 14.\( \mathcal{Q}f5 \) White is no longer happy with a positional, structural advantage after

15.b4! A pawn sacrifice in the spirit of the position. This motif is good to remember. 15...\( \text{cxb4} \) 16.axb4 \( \mathcal{Q}b6 \) After 16...\( \mathcal{Q}xb4 \) 17.\( \mathcal{Q}d4 \) White would have had sufficient compensation. 17.\( \mathcal{W}h1 \) \( \mathcal{Q}c7 \) 18.e4 Due to his surplus in space, White had some advantage in Onischuk-Pelletier, Cap d’Agde 2002;
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14.\( \square xf6 \) \( \square xf6 \) 15.\( \checkmark xf6 \) and decides to go in for the kill. 14...\( \square e4 \) 15.\( \checkmark xf6! \) \( \checkmark xb1+ \) 16.\( \checkmark d2 \) \( \square e4 \) 17.\( \checkmark g3 \) \( \checkmark xd5+ \) 18.\( \checkmark c1 \) g6 19.\( \checkmark h6+ \) \( \checkmark f8 \) 20.\( \checkmark xc7 \) and White won in Kortchnoi-D. Gurevich, Pasadena 1983.

B333 1) 10.\( \checkmark d6 \) 11.\( \square e2 \) White wants to play e3-e4. 11...\( \checkmark x c3 \) Again, such a transaction is normally a sign that Black cannot see real dynamic possibilities for himself. 12.\( \checkmark x c3 \) exd5 13.cxd5 \( \checkmark c7 \)

14.\( \checkmark xf6 \) White opts for a relatively safe advantage. 14.\( \checkmark f3 \), keeping the c3 bishop on the board, was another possibility. 14...\( \checkmark xf6 \) 15.0-0 a5 16.e4 \( \checkmark d7 \) 17.f4 White has a good Benoni here. 17...\( \checkmark b5 \) 18.\( \checkmark xb5 \) \( \checkmark xb5 \) 19.\( \checkmark f2 \) \( \checkmark d7 \) 20.\( \checkmark d2 \) c4 21.\( \checkmark e1 \) b5 22.e5 With his central pawns rolling, White was better and he soon won in Grachev-Lutsko, Ohrid 2009.

C) 7...\( \checkmark a6! \)? is an interesting idea, rarely tried in practice:

8.\( \checkmark a4 \) In the case of 8.\( \checkmark b1 \) \( \checkmark xc3 \) 9.\( \checkmark xc3 \) 0-0 10.b4 d5! 11.bxc5 bxc5 12.dxc5 \( \checkmark bd7 \) 13.c6 \( \checkmark e5 \) Black has dynamic play. 8...\( \checkmark xc3 \) 9.\( \checkmark xc3! \)? Probably an improvement on the current (limited) theory. Here the actual game went 9.\( \checkmark xc3 \) 0-0 10.dxc5 bxc5 11.\( \checkmark e2 \) d5 with a later draw in Kortchnoi-Van der Wiel, Amsterdam 1987. Now:

C1) White has an edge in the event of 9...\( \checkmark e4 \) 10.dxc5 \( \checkmark xc3 \) 10...\( \checkmark xc5?! \) does not work after 11.\( \checkmark c2 \) \( \checkmark xc4 \) 12.\( \checkmark xg7! \) 11.\( \checkmark xc3 \) bxc5 12.\( \checkmark e2 \) or 12.\( \checkmark e4 \) \( \checkmark c7 \) 13.\( \checkmark d1 \) 0-0 14.\( \checkmark d6 \) 12...\( \checkmark b7 \) 13.0-0 0-0 14.\( \checkmark d1; \)

C2) 9...\( \checkmark x d4 \) 10.\( \checkmark x d4 \) \( \checkmark e4 \) 11.\( \checkmark b4 \) also looks better for White;

C3) 9...0-0 10.dxc5 bxc5 11.\( \checkmark g3 \) The bishop is well placed on c3, White should be better. Anyhow, 7...\( \checkmark a6 \) deserves more practical tests;

D) 7...\( \checkmark c6 \) In general it is obviously better to develop the b8 knight to c6 rather than a6, however it has some disadvantages here: White starts rolling his pawns and Black loses too much time. Still, exact play is required from White: 8.d5 exd5 9.cxd5 \( \checkmark e5 \) 10.\( \checkmark g3 \)

10...0-0 The 'solid' 10...d6?? horribly blunders a piece due to the standard 11.b4 cxb4 12.axb4 \( \checkmark xb4 \) 13.\( \checkmark a4+. \) It is good to remember, almost as a rule
for black players in this line: 'Do not touch the d7 pawn with your king still on e8!' 11.\(\text{\textit{\text{c}2}}\) More direct is 11.\(\text{\textit{\text{b}1}}\), creating the immediate threat of \(\text{b}2\)-\(\text{b}4\), disrupting Black’s development (and transposing to 7...0-0 8.\(\text{\textit{\text{b}1}}\) \(\text{\textit{\text{c}6}}\!\)): 11...c4 12.f4! is better for White. 11...d6 12.0-0 a6 13.e4 f4 was an option to be considered. 13...\(\text{\textit{\text{e}8}}\) 14.\(\text{\textit{\text{c}2}}\) \textit{d}7 15.\(\text{\textit{\text{h}1}}\)? As we will soon see, the white king is far from comfortable on \textit{h1}. In general White is losing precious time, trying to ‘place his pieces perfectly’ to support the pawn advance – and meanwhile Black’s pieces are also getting perfectly placed! White will suffer a very instructive defeat in this game. 15...b5 16.\(\text{\textit{\text{a}e1}}\)

\[\text{\textit{\text{d}fg}4!}\] Here this standard Benoni motif works excellently. Actually it’s even better here than in a regular Benoni, since Black’s bishop will quickly reach the \textit{a7-g1} diagonal. 17.\(\text{\textit{\text{h}3}}\) \(\text{\textit{\text{wb}4}}\) 18.\(\text{\textit{\text{g}l}}\) Yes, the king was far from perfect on \textit{h1}. 18...\(\text{\textit{\text{xf}2!}}\) 19.\(\text{\textit{\text{xf}2}}\) 19.\(\text{\textit{\text{wh}5}}\) would lose to 19...\(\text{\textit{\text{hxh}}3+}}\) 20.\(\text{\textit{\text{xh}3}}\) c4 21.\(\text{\textit{\text{e}3}}\) \(\text{\textit{\text{xh}3}}\). 19...c4 20.\(\text{\textit{\text{e}3}}\) \textit{f5!} More files and diagonals must be opened. Black is playing very well. 21.\(\text{\textit{\text{xf}}5}\) \(\text{\textit{\text{xf}}5}\) 22.\(\text{\textit{\text{g}l}}\) \(\text{\textit{\text{wg}3}}\) 23.\(\text{\textit{\text{f}4}}\) \(\text{\textit{\text{wh}4}}\) 24.\(\text{\textit{\text{xe}5}}\) \(\text{\textit{\text{xf}5!}}\) 25.\(\text{\textit{\text{wd}2}}\) \(\text{\textit{\text{dx}5}}\) The smoke has cleared, Black is a pawn up and also has a better position. Black won easily in Beliavsky-Grosar, Grize 1996.

The immediate 7.\(\text{\textit{\text{g}3}}\) without the inclusion of 7.\(\text{\textit{\text{b}1}}\) \(\text{\textit{\text{x}a}6}\) does not pose problems for Black and leads to an unclear game: 7...\(\text{\textit{\text{b}7}}\) 8.d5

A) 8...\(\text{\textit{\text{ex}d}5}\) 9.\(\text{\textit{\text{x}g}2}\) \textit{a6!} Here, with his knight still on \textit{b8}, Black has this interesting possibility, leading to dynamic play:

A1) White can be greedy with 10.b4 \(\text{\textit{\text{xb}4}}\) 11.a\(\text{\textit{\text{xb}4}}\) \(\text{\textit{\text{x}b}4}\) 12.\(\text{\textit{\text{xd}5}}\) \(\text{\textit{\text{xd}5}}\) 13.\(\text{\textit{\text{x}d}5}\) and may end up being sorry after 13...0-0! 14.\(\text{\textit{\text{x}a}8}\) \(\text{\textit{\text{xf}6}}\). White is already in trouble. 15.\(\text{\textit{\text{d}2?}}\) 15.0-0 \(\text{\textit{\text{xc}6}}\) 16.\(\text{\textit{\text{x}f}8+}}\) \(\text{\textit{\text{x}f}8}\) 17.\(\text{\textit{\text{x}a}6}\) \(\text{\textit{\text{x}c}3}\), with a better game for Black, was probably best under the circumstances. 15...\(\text{\textit{\text{xc}6}}\) 16.\(\text{\textit{\text{x}f}8+}}\) \(\text{\textit{\text{x}f}8}\) 17.\(\text{\textit{\text{x}a}6}\) \(\text{\textit{\text{xb}4}}\) 18.\(\text{\textit{\text{x}a}7}\) \(\text{\textit{\text{d}3+}}\) 19.\(\text{\textit{\text{d}1}}\) \(\text{\textit{\text{xf}2+}}\) 20.\(\text{\textit{\text{c}2}}\) \(\text{\textit{\text{xh}1}}\) and Black won in Kir. Georgiev-Wojtkiewicz, Odorheiu Secuiesc Zonal 1995;

A2) 10.\(\text{\textit{\text{cx}d}5}\) \(\text{\textit{\text{xc}3+}}\) 11.\(\text{\textit{\text{cx}c}3}\) 0-0 12.b4 Trying to cut off the black bishop with \textit{b4-b5}. 12...\(\text{\textit{\text{c}4}}\) 13.\(\text{\textit{\text{f}4}}\) \(\text{\textit{\text{d}6}}\) 14.\(\text{\textit{\text{bx}c}5}\) \(\text{\textit{\text{bx}c}5}\) 15.\(\text{\textit{\text{xf}2}}\) \(\text{\textit{\text{bd}7}}\) 16.\(\text{\textit{\text{xe}1}}\) \(\text{\textit{\text{b}8}}\) 17.\(\text{\textit{\text{e}4}}\) \(\text{\textit{\text{wa}5}}\) In this dynamic position, Black had sufficient counterplay in Shirov-I. Sokolov, Pardubice 1994.

B) Black also gets good counterplay with the standard 8...b5 idea, attacking the white centre: 9.b4?! A risky attempt
to punish Black for his last move, however the 'regular' 9.\( \text{g2} \) also brings White no advantage, since 9...\text{bxc4} 10.0-0 0-0 11.\text{e4} \text{e8} \) is, compared to Wojtaszek-Granda (see 7.\( \text{b1} \) \text{a6} 8.g3), a favourable version for Black. 9...\text{xc4} 10.\text{dxbl} b3+ 11.\text{d2} \text{d4} A 'human' move. The computer suggestion 11...0-0 12.\text{g2} \text{xd2}+ 13.\text{xd2} \text{a6} \) is good for Black, e.g. 14.\text{d6} \text{b6} 12.\text{ec3} \text{xd2} and now:

B1) 13.\text{xd2} d6 14.\text{d4}? White has a disastrous idea in mind... 14...\text{xd5} 15.\text{g2} \text{d7} 16.\text{xb3}?? A terrible blunder in a difficult position. 16...\text{d4}! 0-1 Milanovic-Ivanisevic, Zupanja 2007;

B2) White missed a promising continuation in 13.\text{d6}+! \text{e7} 13...\text{f8} 14.\text{xd2} 14.\text{xb7}.

C) If Black is trying to equalize in a game with a positional character, then he may consider 8...\text{e4}. It is often a matter of style, but I think that both 8...\text{xd5} and 8...\text{b5} offer Black more than the text. 9.\text{g2} \text{c3}+ 10.\text{xc3} \text{xc3} 11.\text{bxc3} \text{e5} 12.0-0 \text{d6} 13.\text{e4} \text{d7} and in Sargissian-Jussupow, Germany Bundesliga 2005/06, Black was in considerably better shape than in Gelfand-Aronian, where 7.\text{b1} \text{a6} were included.

As we have seen, there is hardly a single line with 7.g3 where the non-inclusion of 7.\( \text{b1} \) \text{a6} favours White, so if White wants to fianchetto his bishop (which is definitely a line to consider), he is better off including 7.\( \text{b1} \) \text{a6}.

7...\text{a6}

Forcing the black knight to a6 is, next to the tactics with b2-b4, the main idea behind 7.\( \text{b1} \). Black's knight on a6 is badly placed in many lines and has to return to b8 in order to develop to one of the more natural squares d7 or c6. Another important tactical point behind White's desire to force the black knight to a6 is the fact that in many lines it will be easier to push d4-d5, since after the ...\text{exd5} \text{cxd5} exchange the white bishop on f1 will be hitting the knight on a6, making it impossible for Black to collect the white pawn on d5.

In the event of 7...\text{we7}

8.\text{d2}! Black does not really have a good move:

- 8...\text{a6} 9.\text{g3} \text{b7} 10.\text{d5}! 0-0 10...\text{c7} fails to 11.\text{b4}! \text{cxb4} 12.\text{ce2} \text{a6} 13.\text{xb4} \text{xb4} 14.\text{b3} \text{c6} 15.\text{xc6} \text{xd2}+ 16.\text{xd2} \text{we7} 17.\text{e2} \text{c7} 17...\text{e4} with harmonious development and a space advantage - a dream scenario for White in this line;

- 8...\text{a6} Now White has a tactical motif worth taking note of: 9.\text{b4}! \text{cxb4} 10.\text{xb4} \text{cxb4} 11.\text{xb4} \text{we7} 12.\text{b5} \text{we7} 13.\text{c7}+ \text{d8} 14.\text{e8} \text{xc4} 15.\text{c3} \text{xf1} 16.\text{xf1} \text{d5} 17.\text{b5} and here White's play can be improved with 17...\text{d7} 18.\text{ci1}! and Black is in bad shape (the actual game finished peacefully after 18.\text{d6} \text{we7} 19.\text{b5} \text{wb7} 20.\text{d6} \text{we7} 21.\text{b5} \text{h4} Onischuk-Rogozenco, Skopje 2002): 18...\text{g8} Or 18...\text{g8} 19.\text{a3} \text{xa8} 20.\text{d6}+
Port 1:

4.t3 Various

Part 1: 4.e3 Various

8.\d2

White plays what looks like a good hybrid of the \d1 and \d2 set-ups.

* Building a centre with 8.f3 has its logic, but White remains behind in development and Black gets tactical possibilities. I am personally not in favour of a central pawn push while White is lagging behind in development:

A) 8...0-0 The black king is moved to safety (away from the \wa4 check), so Black's next move will be ...d7-d5. 9.d5 Should White advance 9.e4, then Black responds with 9...d5! 10.e5 \e8 11.cxd5 exd5 12.\f2 \ec7 with ...f7-f6 to follow, when Black is OK, as in Granda Zuniga-Ibarra Jerez, Barcelona 2008. Now:

A1) In the event of 9...d6 White should continue with 10.\g3!, excluding ...\h5 motifs: 10...\we7 11.e4 \d7 12.\f2 An easier road to a white advantage seems to be 12.\d2 followed by \e2 and castling. 12...\xc3 13.bxc3 \c7 14.\d3 e5 with a Sämisc Nimzo-type pawn structure, with the peculiarity that the black knight is on c7 (normally it is on a5 or e7). White had a slight advantage in Alexandrov-M. Socko, Wroclaw 2009;

A2) 9...\e8 10.\f2

The idea behind this move is to remove the king from the pin along the e-file and also the one along the a5-e1 diagonal, trying to force Black to make an early decision to swap his a5 bishop for the knight on c3. The move 10.d6!? is always double-edged in such positions, however it certainly deserves attention; 10.\g3 \b7 11.\f2 followed by e3-e4 should be better for White – note that the white pawn on d5 cannot be taken since the black knight on a6 is hanging. 10...exd5 11.cxd5 d6 12.\g3 \xc3 13.bxc3 \c7 14.c4 b5 15.e4 In this Benoni-type position, a dark-squared bishop is an important piece. White was better in Alexandrov-Serper, New York 1998;

A3) 9...\h5 does not provide Black with enough dynamic possibilities after 10.g3! f5 11.\g2 \f6 12.0-0 \xc3 13.\xc3 exd5 14.\xd5 (14.cd5 also looks good) 14...\c7 15.e4 \cx d5 16.\xd5 d6 17.b3 with an advantage for White in Gelfand-Aronian, Leon 2010;

A4) 9...exd5 10.cxd5 b5 10...\b7! 11.e4 \e8 would transpose to 8...\b7. Now:

A41) 11.\f2 b4 12.\b5 Here the actual game continued 12...d6 13.e4 \b6 14.axb4! \xb4 15.\ec3 \e8

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16.g4! c6 17.a3 a6 18.a4 b8
19..xa6 xa6 20..xa6 a5 21..f4
a5 22..c5 and White was better in
Black’s play can likely be improved with
12...b8! 13.axb4 bx4 14..c3
a6 15.e4 Now Black has the tactical
motif 15...c4!, luring the white bishop
to c4 — so it would hang after a ...
h4 check: 16..xc4fxd5!
A42) Another possibility for White is
11.e4 c6 12.g3 b4 13.axb4 xb4
A421) 14.b5? did not end well for
White after 14...b3+ 15..d2 dx5
16..d6 e6 17..c8 17..g5 fails to
17...e3! 17...xc8 18..d3 e3 and
Black soon won in Johannessen-Zelcic,
Bled ol 2002;
A422) 14.a4! takes square b6 away
from the black bishop; 14...b3+ 15..f2.
B) An interesting alternative for Black
is 8..b7 9.e4 0-0. Again, with his
king on e8 Black should as a rule not
consider touching his d7 pawn. After
9...d6?! 10.b4 cxb4 11.axb4 a6
12..xb4 cxb4 13..a4+ w7
14..xb4+- White soon won in
Peralta-Luconi, Mendoza 2008. 10.d5
exd5 11.cxd5

In this Benoni-type position, White has
advanced his centre while being behind
in development. This is exactly what I
dislike about White’s play! Black has
plenty of tactical possibilities. In the
notes below I will give just a few. By the
way, in this particular position having
his bishop on d2 would have been con­siderably more useful for White than
having his rook on b1:
B1) In the event of 12..d2 c4!
13.g4? Black has 13...xc3 14..xc3?
14.bxc3 d5 14...xe4! 15.fxex
xe4+ 16..e2 c5 17..f2 w5 with
a winning attack;
B2) Or 12..f2 c4! and now:
B21) 13..d4 c5 14..xc4? fails to
14...xc3 15..xc3 fxe4+! 16..xe4
e4+ 17..f1 or 17..g1 c3
17...xc3 18..d3 xb1 19..xb1
Wh4 20..b2 w4+ 21..g1 c4 and
Black wins;
B22) Or 13..b5 c5 14..g3
fxe4+! 15.fxex e4+ 16..g1
16..xex4 A xe4 with compensation
16..w6 17..e3 w5 and White starts
losing material;
B23) 13..e3 c8 14..g3 Again,
14..b5 c5 15..d6 fails to
15...cxe4+ 16..xe4 exf4 17..xe4
xe4 with a black advantage. 14...c5
15..e2 w7 Black simply has plenty of
tactics. 16..d4 16..f5?! w5 17..d4
runs into 17...c6 17..f4 18.fxex
19..xe4 w xf5+. 16...g6! Taking away
an important square from the white g3
knight. 17..e1 b3 and Black is better.
B3) 12..g3? cxd5;
B4) 12.g3 b5 13..g2 b4 14.axb4
cxb4 15.0-0 a6 16.g4 d6 17..g5
c3 18..a1 b6 19..h1 c4 20.wd2
and in Shulman-Nisipeanu, Yerevan ol
1996, I guess White was quite happy
that his draw offer was accepted.

11..e8 (11...h5!? is in the spirit of
the position and a viable option for
Black here).
As we have seen from the tactical motifs, White’s concept of fighting for a dominant pawn centre, while seriously lagging in development, is at least very risky, and fundamentally not sound. In general, Black has plenty of dynamic possibilities after 8.f3 and also Black gets the kind of play he is trying to get in this line, so it makes much more sense for White to investigate other options.

With 7.\textbf{b}1 \textbf{a}6 included, rather promising for White is 8.g3. The inclusion of 7.b1 a6 is just favourable for him. His rook on b1 is mostly well placed, while the black knight is bad on a6. This line has recently been favoured by Gelfand, Grachev and Wojtaszek, scoring excellently for White:

A) Black does not equalize with 8...cxd4 9.exd4

9...\textbf{b}7 10.d5. Due to White’s threat of b2-b4, Black is (at this move or the next one) forced to take on c3: 10...\textbf{x}c3+

In the case of 10...exd5 11.\textbf{g}2 \textbf{xc}3+ 12.\textbf{x}c3 \textbf{we}7+ 13.\textbf{e}3 White regains the pawn on d5, with favourable play.

11.\textbf{x}c3 \textbf{c}8 12.\textbf{e}2 exd5 13.\textbf{cx}d5 \textbf{c}7 14.0-0 \textbf{cx}d5 Taking the pawn is a principled decision for Black here, though, and also a rather risky one. 14...0-0 15.\textbf{f}3 is better for White due to his space advantage:

A1) 15.\textbf{xd}5!? White goes for a tactical sequence, going for the black king that is stuck in the middle. 15...\textbf{xd}5 16.\textbf{a}6 \textbf{c}6 17.\textbf{b}7

17...\textbf{x}c1? This logical move is probably a crucial mistake. 17...0-0!, bringing the king to safety, was necessary, and after 18.\textbf{xc}6 dxc6, with an excellent bishop on d5 Black has good chances to hold.

18.\textbf{xc}1 \textbf{xb}7 19.\textbf{wd}6 \textbf{d}5 20.f4 h5? Probably missing White’s 22nd move, but with his king stuck in the middle Black’s position was already difficult. 21.\textbf{f}e1+ \textbf{e}4 22.\textbf{c}7! Creating the terrible threat of 23.\textbf{b}7. Black is lost. 22...\textbf{h}4 22...\textbf{h}6 23.\textbf{b}7; or 22...\textbf{b}8 23.\textbf{xe}4+. 23.\textbf{g}4 h3 24.\textbf{g}5 1-0 Grachev-Salgado Lopez, Moscow 2010;

A2) Also quite promising for White is 15.\textbf{b}5 \textbf{we}7 Black loses the exchange after 15...0-0 16.\textbf{d}6 16.\textbf{e}1 0-0. Black’s position looks rather shaky, however it is difficult for White to find a decisive blow:

A21) 17.\textbf{f}1 \textbf{e}4 17...\textbf{c}5 18.b4 \textbf{wc}2 19.\textbf{b}2 and due to the threat of \textbf{d}6 White will collect the pawn on a7, with a large advantage in the endgame (bishop pair, 2 vs 1 pawn majority on the queenside). 18.\textbf{xa}7 18.\textbf{d}4. 18...\textbf{ce}8 19.\textbf{d}4 Due to his 2 vs 1 queenside pawn majority White has an advantage;
A22) 17.\textbf{\textit{d}}3 \textbf{\textit{c}}5 Black hopes to escape by tactical means. 18.b4 \textbf{\textit{xb}}4 19.a\textbf{\textit{x}}b4 After 19.\textbf{\textit{xb}}4? \textbf{\textit{d}}5 Black regains material due to the \ldots \textbf{\textit{x}}c1 motif. 19.\ldots \textbf{\textit{d}}5 20.\textbf{\textit{f}}3 \textbf{\textit{a}}6 20...a6?? is a blunder due to 21.\textbf{\textit{d}}6. 21.\textbf{\textit{xa}}7 \textbf{\textit{xd}}3 22.\textbf{\textit{xd}}3 \textbf{\textit{xd}}3 23.\textbf{\textit{x}}c8 \textbf{\textit{xb}}1 24.\textbf{\textit{e}}7+ \textbf{\textit{h}}8 25.\textbf{\textit{e}}3 with a better ending for White.

B) 8...\textbf{\textit{b}}7 9.d5 and now:

B I) The standard method to attack White's centre with 9...b5 does not bring Black equality after 10.\textbf{\textit{g}}2 bxc4 11.0-0 0-0 12.e4 and now:

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B I1) 12.\textbf{\textit{e}}8 Black delays the decision in the centre, which as we will see offers White some extra possibilities:

B I11) 13.\textbf{\textit{dx}}e6! White correctly judges that he has an advantage with the changed pawn structure. 13...\textbf{\textit{xe}}6 13...\textbf{\textit{xe}}6 14.\textbf{\textit{w}}4 is favourable for White, due to his better structure on the queenside. 14.\textbf{\textit{g}}5 By eliminating Black's f6 knight, White releases the pressure on his e4 pawn. 14...\textbf{\textit{h}}6 15.\textbf{\textit{xf}}6 \textbf{\textit{xf}}6 16.\textbf{\textit{wa}}4+ \textbf{\textit{b}}8 17.\textbf{\textit{f}}4 \textbf{\textit{c}}6 18.\textbf{\textit{xc}}4 \textbf{\textit{b}}6 19.\textbf{\textit{cd}}5 White was better and went on to win in Wojtaszek-Granda Zuniga, Burguillos 2010;

B I12) 13.\textbf{\textit{g}}5!? is also good, since White is better after 13...\textbf{\textit{h}}6 14.\textbf{\textit{xf}}6 \textbf{\textit{xf}}6 15.\textbf{\textit{wa}}4 \textbf{\textit{wd}}8 15...\textbf{\textit{b}}6? 16.\textbf{\textit{xd}}7 16.\textbf{\textit{fd}}1;

B I2) Probably a better idea here is to try to determine the central situation immediately with 12...\textbf{\textit{ex}}d5. White has some advantage, but the position remains complicated: 13.\textbf{\textit{e}}5! In the event of 13.\textbf{\textit{ex}}d5 \textbf{\textit{e}}8 14.\textbf{\textit{wa}}4 Black plays 14...\textbf{\textit{h}}6!, preventing \textbf{\textit{g}}5, followed by ...d7-d6 and Black is fine. 13...\textbf{\textit{g}}4 14.\textbf{\textit{xd}}5 \textbf{\textit{xd}}5 14...\textbf{\textit{c}}7 is inferior after 15.\textbf{\textit{f}}4. 15.\textbf{\textit{xd}}5 \textbf{\textit{we}}7 16.\textbf{\textit{f}}4 \textbf{\textit{we}}6 16...\textbf{\textit{xc}}7 'forces' White to take the black pawn on c4 — something White does not really mind: 17.\textbf{\textit{xc}}4 \textbf{\textit{we}}6 18.\textbf{\textit{xe}}6 fxe6 19.\textbf{\textit{h}}3 \textbf{\textit{h}}6 20.\textbf{\textit{e}}3 with an advantage. 17.\textbf{\textit{h}}3 \textbf{\textit{h}}6 18.\textbf{\textit{g}}4 Black's problem is his knight on h6, however it is a temporary problem and the rest of his position is quite OK. 18...\textbf{\textit{c}}7 19.\textbf{\textit{xe}}6 \textbf{\textit{dx}}e6 20.\textbf{\textit{f}}5 Another option is 20.\textbf{\textit{e}}4. It is not easy to say whether White has enough of a dynamic potential to capitalize on Black's misplaced \textbf{\textit{h}}6.

B I2) 9...\textbf{\textit{e}}4 10.\textbf{\textit{g}}2 \textbf{\textit{xc}}3+ 11.\textbf{\textit{xc}}3! A good decision. White eliminates the black e4 knight in order to quickly advance his central pawns. 11.bxc3 f5 would have been unclear. 11...\textbf{\textit{xc}}3 12.bxc3 d6? This allows White to deprive Black from his castling rights. After 12...0-0, probably the best move, White keeps an advantage with 13.0-0 (threatening dxe6) 13...e5 14.\textbf{\textit{f}}4 d6 15.a4! followed by a4-a5. Please note the extremely bad position of the \textbf{\textit{a}}6. 13.\textbf{\textit{wa}}4+ \textbf{\textit{c}}7 14.0-0 \textbf{\textit{c}}7 15.e4 \textbf{\textit{e}}8?! It may look ugly, but Black would have been better advised to keep his act together by blocking the position with 15...e5 16.\textbf{\textit{f}}4 f6. 16.\textbf{\textit{e}}5! and Black's position collapsed in Gelfand-Aronian, Leon 2010.

● Again, an option White may consider is to develop his knight to g3, though I would personally prefer this develop-
Part I: 4.e3 Various

ment in the version with 7.\( \text{d2} \) \( \text{a6} \) rather than 7.\( \text{b1} \) \( \text{a6} \): 8.\( \text{g3} \) \( \text{b7} \) 9.\( \text{f3} \) The pawn sacrifice 9.\( \text{d3} \) \( \text{xc3} \)+! 10.bxc3 (now White must take back with the pawn – this is one of disadvantages of 7.\( \text{b1} \) \( \text{a6} \) compared to 7.\( \text{d2} \) \( \text{a6} \)) 10...\( \text{xg2} \) 11.\( \text{g1} \) \( \text{b7} \) 12.e4 \( \text{d6} \) was tried in Kortchnoi-Timman, Ubeda 1997, and is rather risky for White. 9...\( \text{h5} \) White has a standard type of advantage, as we have already seen in a number of similar positions in this line, after 9...0-0 10.\( \text{d3} \) \( \text{cxd4} \) 11.\( \text{exd4} \) \( \text{xc3} \)+ 12.\( \text{bxc3} \) d5 13.\( \text{cxd5} \) \( \text{xd5} \) 14.\( \text{d2} \) 10.e4 \( \text{xc3} \)+ 11.\( \text{bxc3} \) \( \text{h4} \) 12.\( \text{e2} \) We now have a Sämisch Nimzo-type pawn structure with the black knight on a6 definitely misplaced. Now the weak white pawn on c4, Black’s main object for counterplay in the Sämisch Nimzo, is difficult to target. 12...\( \text{h3} \) 13.\( \text{g5} \) 13.\( \text{gxh3} \)? is a gross blunder on account of 13...\( \text{xe4} \). 13...\( \text{w7} \) 14.\( \text{f4} \) d6 15.\( \text{g3} \) 15.\( \text{gxh3} \)? deserved attention now. 15...0-0-0 16.a4 \( \text{b8} \) 17.a5 \( \text{bd7} \) 18.\( \text{gxh3} \) \( \text{h5} \) 19.\( \text{e3} \) White was better and went on to win in Kotov-Keres, Moscow ch-URS 1951.

8...\( \text{b7} \) 9.\( \text{g3} \)

Again White opts for this natural developing move. More direct was 9.\( \text{d5} \):

9...\( \text{exd5} \) 10.\( \text{xd5} \) 0-0 11.\( \text{f4} \) White may also sacrifice a pawn, an idea that was already given earlier, with 11.\( \text{g3} \)? \( \text{xc3} \) 12.\( \text{xc3} \) \( \text{xd5} \) 13.\( \text{g7} \) \( \text{g7} \) 14.\( \text{xa6} \) (again it comes in handy for White that Black’s knight is on a6) 14...\( \text{xe3} \) 15.\( \text{fxe3} \) \( \text{xa6} \) 16.\( \text{wa4} \). 11...\( \text{we7} \) 11...\( \text{xc3} \) 12.\( \text{bxc3} \). 12.\( \text{c4} \) \( \text{c7} \) 13.0-0 This looks like a favourable Benoni for White. Play may continue: 13...\( \text{a6} \) 14.\( \text{b4} \) \( \text{xb4} \) 15.\( \text{a4} \) \( \text{b5} \) 16.\( \text{axb4} \) \( \text{xc4} \) 17.\( \text{bxa5} \) \( \text{b5} \) Or 17...\( \text{ab8} \) 18.\( \text{b4} \) \( \text{d6} \) 19.\( \text{b6} \); 17...\( \text{xd5} \)? loses to 18.\( \text{b4} \) \( \text{d6} \) 19.\( \text{b6} \) \( \text{we4} \) 20.\( \text{d2} \) \( \text{ad8} \) 21.\( \text{f3} \) \( \text{we5} \) 22.\( \text{c3} \). 18.\( \text{b6} \) White is better.

9...\( \text{xd4} \)

9...0-0 10.\( \text{d5} \)? Transposing to 9.\( \text{d5} \)+ or 10.\( \text{d3} \), since 10...\( \text{xc2} \) is, to say the least, rather risky for Black after 11.\( \text{g7} \) \( \text{b7} \) 12.\( \text{d5} \) followed by e3-e4.

10.\( \text{exd4} \) \( \text{xc3} \) 11.\( \text{bxc3} \)

A standard decision here, which I already explained on a number of occasions. White is well advised in this particular position to take with the pawn, strengthening the centre and keeping his dark-squared bishop on the c1-h6 diagonal.

11...\( \text{h5} \)
An often-seen idea for Black to try to embarrass the white knight on g3. But it also creates a kingside weakness for Black (the g5-square!) and does not solve his opening problems.

12.h4
His misplaced knight on a6 is again Black's problem here.

12...c8?

13...a4
The knight cannot move from a6, while White also threatens to push c4-c5.

13...a8 14.g5 c8 15.f3 c7
16.d3 c6 17.c2 d5 18.cxd5 cxd5 19.0-0

White was better in Lautier-J. Polgar, Cannes rapid 2001.

Conclusion

As we have seen, White has a number of promising possibilities to fight Black's 5...c5. The line I have given as the main one is just one of the possibilities for White to get an opening advantage. It may well be that the d4-d5 push for White (given in the above notes) will appeal even more to some readers.

5...c5 does not objectively equalize for Black and its main purpose is to try and take White into less-explored territory.
Chapter 1.5

The Early Knight Jump – 4...b6 5.♘e2 ♘e4

5.♘e2 is one of the two main moves for White (the other one is 5.♗d3). In my opinion, this is arguably the most dangerous move for Black and it should lead to a white advantage.

5...♘e4

One of the two major deviations from the main 5...♗a6. The other frequently played deviation is 5...c5 (it should be noted that this line also very often arises from the 4.e3 c5 5.♘e2 b6 move order).

Another often-played deviation from the main 5...♗a6 is 5...♗b7. However, in my opinion this move does not seriously hinder White to get an opening advantage and therefore I decided not to give this line independent status. Below I will give some of the most important lines. In general White gets more space, keeping a healthy pawn structure.

6.a3
A) 6...d6 The main idea behind this move is — well... to confuse matters. It is definitely not enough for equality and White has a few promising options here.

A1) In case of 7.Wd3 Black gets sufficient play after 7...c5 8.e4. In the Benoni-type positions that would arise after 8.d5, White’s queen is better placed on c2, hence 7.Wc2 is a better move. 8.cxd4 9.exd4 0-0 10.Qg5 h6 11.Qh4 Qe5 Black has indeed managed to confuse White with his opening experiment and he now had a good game in Bareev-Morozevich, Moscow 2004;

A2) Should White decide to build a centre with 7.f3, this leads to sharp play after 7...Qh5!. In the Benoni-type position arising after 7...c5 8.d5 exd5 9.cxd5 Qe5 10.g3 White has an advantage because of the clumsy position of the black bishop on e5: 10...0-0 11.Qg2 d6 12.f4 Black is now forced to give his dark-squared bishop, which diminishes his chances of counterplay in a Benoni-type position. In the sharp position after 12...Qxc3+ 13.Qxc3 Qbd7 14.g4! c4 15.g5 Qe8 16.0-0 Qc5 17.e4 White was better and went on to win in Granda Zuniga-Iturrizaga Bonelli, Burguillos 2010. 8.e4 and now:

A21) In case of 8...0-0 9.g3 (9.g4 leads to a good game for Black after 9...Wh4+ 10.Qd2 Qg3 11.Qxg3 Qxg3 12.Qc2 Qf2) 9...f5 10.Qg2, the position looks slightly favourable for White after 10...fxe4 11.Qxe4 Qe7 12.0-0;

A22) After 8.Wh4+ 9.Qd2 0-0 10.Qc2 the position is sharp and unusual and looks unclear.

A3) The standard plan for White to take space with 7.d5 can apply here as well, and looks better for White:

A31) 7.c6 8.g3 e5 8...exd5 9.Qg2±. 9.Qg2 a5 10.0-0 Qa6 11.Bb1 We7 The black position looks a little strange and unhealthy. 12.h3 12.Ba4 Qc7 13.e4 is also good. 12...0-0 13.g4! cxd5 14.Qg3 g6 15.cxd5 15.g5 looks good for White. 15...Qc7 16.f4 In this messy position, White had the initiative and went on to win in Kacheishvili-Bosiocic, Moscow 2008;

A32) 7...We7 8.g3 h5 9.h3 Ha6 10.Qg2 exd5 11.Qd4 g6 12.cxd5 Qc5 13.0-0 Be4 14.Qb5 and White had the better game in Shulman-Kovalyov, Montreal 2008.

A4) 7.Qg3 more or less justifies Black’s plan and leads to unclear consequences after 7...h5 8.d5 We7! In an old Gligoric game, White got an advantage after the premature 8...h4 9.Qge4
Part I: 4.e3 Various

\[ \text{\textit{Pan I:}} \]

4.e3 Various

\[ \text{\textit{Pan I:}} \]

10.f4 \( \text{\textit{\&xc3+ 11.\&xc3 exd5}} \)

12.cxd5 d6 13.\&e2 \&bd7 14.0-0 \&e7

15.\&f3 0-0 0 16.b4, Gligoric-Mazzoni, Enschede 1963. 9.\&e2 h4

10.\&h5 Black is better in the event of 10.\&ge4 \&xe4 11.\&xe4 exd5

12.\&xd6+ \&xd6 13.\&f3 h3 14.g3 \&c6. 10...\&xh5 11.\&xh5 h3 12.g3

\&e5 Or 12...\&a6; Black is definitely not worse in this sharp position.

A5) 7.\&c2 is perhaps the most straightforward road to a white advantage:

A51) White has a standard space advantage in the case of 7...0-0 8.e4 e5

9.d5 a5 (Black is in bad shape if he plays 9...\&c5? 10.b4 \&d4 11.\&xd4 exd4 12.\&b5 \&xe4 13.\&d3) 10.\&g3; 7...c5 8.d5 exd5 9.cxd5 0-0

9...\&xd5?? is a blunder due to 10.\&xd5 \&xd5 11.\&d1 \&g5 12.e4.

10.\&g3 \&e8 10...\&xd5?? is again a blunder in view of 11.\&xd5 \&xd5

12.\&d3 \&g5 13.e4. 11.\&e2 \&e5 11...\&xd5?? now fails to 12.\&f3 \&e5

13.\&d2. 12.e4 d6 13.0-0 a6 14.f4 \&d4+ 15.\&h1 b5 16.\&f3 It is obvious

that this Benoni is favourable for White.

16...c4 17.\&f5 \&c5 18.g4! and White won in the attack in Peralta-Kovalyov, Sabadell 2010.

Other, more traditional moves for Black also do not equalize:

B) 6...\&xc3+ 7.\&xc3 and now:

B1) In the event of 7...d5 White can choose between:

B11) 8.b3 0-0 9.\&b2 \&bd7 10.\&d3 c5 It is risky to take the pawn on g2

with 10...dxc4 11.bxc4 \&xg2 12.\&g1. For the sacrificed pawn, White has

good attacking prospects on the kingside. 11.0-0 \&e7 12.\&e2 For harmonious and dynamic play, Black is simply

missing his bishop on d6. 12...dxc4 13.bxc4 e5 14.d5 e4 15.\&c2

\&a6 16.a4 \&fe8 17.\&b5 and White

was better in M. Gurevich-Gelashvili, Korinthos 1998;

B12) Or determining the central pawn structure immediately: 8.cxd5

exd5 8...\&xd5 keeps the bishop on b7 active, but with this open centre,

White's bishop pair brings advantages. The type of positions that arise resemble

the Petrosian Variation of the Queen's Indian, though without the

white knight on f3 and the black dark-squared bishop, and are favourable for

White, for example: 9.\&b5+ \&d7

10.0-0 0-0 11.\&xd5 \&xd5 12.\&a4

\&f6 13.f3 a6 14.\&e2 \&d6 15.\&d1,

followed by e3-e4, with a white advantage.

9.b4 White has a space advantage

on the queenside and for Black to de

velop any meaningful kingside coun
terplay he would need a dark-squared

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bishops on d6. Also, Black's bishop on b7 is (as often seen in these structures after the cxd5 exd5 swap) passively hitting its own pawn on d5. 9...0-0 10.Qd3 Qbd7 11.0-0 In order to get some activity, Black has to accept the creation of an isolated pawn. 11...c5 12.bxc5 bxc5 13.Qb1 Without his dark-squared bishop it is difficult for Black to create adequate play to balance his isolated pawn on d5 (to be created after dxc5), so White had the advantage in Gligoric-Andersson, Wijk aan Zee 1971.

B2) 7...0-0 and now:

B21) 8.d5 White takes more space. This plan is standard in these lines.

B211) 8...c6 is now a standard plan to undermine White's centre, however White will keep his space advantage: 9.e4cxd5 10.exd5 exd5 11.cxd5 Qe7+ Or 11...Qe8+ 12.Qe2 Qa6 13.0-0 Qc5 14.Qe3 with an advantage for White. Please note that in this position Black would have been better off with his light-squared bishop developed to f5 instead of b7. 12.Qe3 Qe5 13.Qc4Qc8 14.Qa2 Qa6 15.Qd4 Due to his space advantage White was better in Benjamin-Adianto, San Francisco 1991;

B212) 8...Qe7 9.Qe2 d6 10.0-0 c6 Again we see this common plan to undermine the white centre. 11.dxe6 Qxe6 12.b3 Qbd7 13.Qb2 Due to his bishop pair and space surplus, White was better in Euwe-Capablanca, Amsterdam 1931.

B22) Also good for White is the 'modest' 8.Qd3 c5. Black strives for active play in a Benoni-type pawn structure. 8...d5 would lead to positions seen above (under 7...d5). 9.d5 b5 A standard plan here. Black tries to make use of his bishop on b7. If 9...exd5 10.cxd5 a6 11.e4 d6 12.0-0 Qbd7 13.a4 we get a typical Benoni pawn structure, with White having a bishop pair and Black missing his dark-squared bishop. Any Benoni player would know that Black needs to exchange the light-squared bishop and keep his dark-squared one! Indeed, with a Benoni bishop on g7 this position would have been fine for Black, but here White has a dream Benoni.

13...Qc7 14.Qe2 Qf8 15.Qg3 c4 Truly amazing! Black is playing a regular Benoni, as if his dark-squared bishop was indeed parked on g7. For the information of the younger generation: Trifunovic, who played black here, was a member of the Yugoslav Olympic team and was considered a strong player at the time. 16.Qc2 b5 17.Qe3 b4 18.Qc1 a5 19.Qd4 Qa6 20.Qf5 and White had a massive advantage and eas-
ily won in Bronstein-Trifunovic, Amsterdam ol 1954. 10.0-0 bxc4 11.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{xc}}}4 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{exd5}}} 12.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{xd5}}} \texttt{\textbf{\textit{c6}}}

And here White could have obtained a big advantage with 13.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{b4}}}! In the actual World Championship match game White had a small advantage after 13.b3 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{xd5}}} 14.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{xd5}}} \texttt{\textbf{\textit{b8}}} 15.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{b2}}} \texttt{\textbf{\textit{e7}}} 16.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{g4}}} \texttt{\textbf{\textit{g6}}} 17.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{xb7}}} \texttt{\textbf{\textit{xb7}}} 18.b4 a5 19.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{c3}}} axb4 20.axb4 cxb4 21.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{xb7}}} \texttt{\textbf{\textit{f8}}} 22.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{f8}}} \texttt{\textbf{\textit{h4}}} 23.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{f3}}} \texttt{\textbf{\textit{c7}}} 24.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{d4}}} Black managed to draw this inferior position in Botvinnik-Bronstein, Moscow Wch m-13 1951. 13...\texttt{\textbf{\textit{xb4}}} Or 13...\texttt{\textbf{\textit{e5}}} 14.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{b2}}}! d6 (14...\texttt{\textbf{\textit{xc4}}} fails to 15.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{xf6}}}+ \texttt{\textbf{\textit{gxf6}}} 16.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{g4}}}+ \texttt{\textbf{\textit{h8}}} 17.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{xc4}}} and White’s monster on b2 will soon create deadly threats on the a1-h8 diagonal) 15.bxc5. 14.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{a2}}} \texttt{\textbf{\textit{d5}}} 15.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{xd5}}} Due to his excellent bishop pair White has a massive advantage here. 15...\texttt{\textbf{\textit{ba3}}} Black is mated in case of 15...a5? 16.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{g4}}} g6 17.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{f4}}} followed by \texttt{\textbf{\textit{h6}}} 16.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{xa3}}} and Black loses an exchange: 16...\texttt{\textbf{\textit{e8}}} 17.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{b3}}}.

C) 6...\texttt{\textbf{\textit{e7}}} and now:

C1) An option for White is to be happy with his current space advantage and continue developing with: 7.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{d4}}} 0-0 8.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{d3}}} d6 9.0-0 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{bd7}}} 10.b3 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{e8}}} 11.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{b2}}} \texttt{\textbf{\textit{f8}}} 12.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{c2}}} Black is ready and likely to play ...e6-e5 next, so the prophylactic 12.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{fe2}}} made sense for White. 12...e5 13.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{fe2}}} d5? This radical central solution blunders a pawn. Better was to continue along ‘Indian’ lines with 13...g6. 14.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{xd5}}} \texttt{\textbf{\textit{xd5}}} 15.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{xd5}}} \texttt{\textbf{\textit{xe5}}} 16.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{xe5}}} \texttt{\textbf{\textit{xe5}}} 17.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{f4}}}! \texttt{\textbf{\textit{b7}}} 18.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{h7+}}} \texttt{\textbf{\textit{h7}}} 19.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{h5+}}} \texttt{\textbf{\textit{g8}}} 20.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{xe5}}} White won a pawn and later the game in Kharlov-Legky, Cappelle la Grande 1999;

C2) 7.d5 This standard way for White to take a space advantage is the most common continuation here. 7...0-0

C21) White can also decide to fianchetto his light-squared bishop with 8.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{e4}}} d6 9.g3. Again, White has more space, harmonious development and simply stands better. 9...c6?! This standard plan to undermine the white centre has a tactical flaw here. 10.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{dxe6}}} \texttt{\textbf{\textit{xe6}}} 11.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{d4}}} \texttt{\textbf{\textit{c8}}} 12.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{g2}}} White could have gotten more out of the position with 12.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{h3}}}! e5 13.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{e6}}} \texttt{\textbf{\textit{e8}}} 14.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{c7}}} \texttt{\textbf{\textit{d8}}} 15.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{xc8}}} \texttt{\textbf{\textit{xc8}}} 16.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{e6+}}} with a clear advantage. 12...\texttt{\textbf{\textit{e5}}} 13.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{f5}}} \texttt{\textbf{\textit{a6}}} 14.0-0 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{c5}}} 15.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{e3}}} and White was better in Euwe-O’Kelly de Galway, Groningen 1946;

C22) The immediate fianchetto with 8.g3 definitely comes into consideration;

C23) 8.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{g3}}} and now:

C231) 8...d6 9.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{e2}}} c6 10.e4 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{a6}}} 11.0-0 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{c7}}} 12.dxc6 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{xc6}}} 13.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{f4}}} The
The Early Knight Jump - 4...b6 5.\(\text{c}2\) \(\text{e}4\)

black knight on c7 is a bit strange in this hedgehog position, Furman-Veresov, Soviet Union 1967;

C232) 8...\(\text{e}8\) 9.\(\text{e}2\) and now:

C2321) In case of 9...exd5 10.cxd5 c6 White can decide to "play for the maximum" with 11.d6! \(\text{f}8\) and now:

C23211) Thanks to his good dark-square control Black gets compensation for an exchange after 12.e4 c5 13.f3 \(\text{e}6\) 14.\(\text{f}4\) (or 14.\(\text{d}5\) \(\text{e}8\) 15.\(\text{c}4\) \(\text{xd}6\) 16.\(\text{xe}6\) \(\text{dxe}6\) 17.\(\text{xd}6\) \(\text{wd}6\) 18.\(\text{e}3\) \(\text{c}6\) 19.\(\text{xd}6\) \(\text{xd}6\)) 14...\(\text{e}8\) 15.\(\text{c}4\) \(\text{c}6\) 16.\(\text{f}5\) g6!;

C23212) 12.0-0! Sacrificing a pawn. It will take Black quite some time to collect the d6 pawn and regroup his pieces. This type of sacrifice is standard here and usually gives White good compensation. 12...\(\text{e}6\) 13.e4 \(\text{xd}6\) 14.\(\text{c}2\) Black needs to make a couple of moves with his clumsy rook on d6, a couple of tempi to spend, and White gets a strong kingside initiative. Christiansen-Dzindzichashvili, Denver-USA 1998.

C2322) 9...\(\text{f}8\) 10.e4 d6 11.0-0 \(\text{bd}7\) 12.\(\text{e}3\) c6 13.\(\text{wd}2\) \(\text{c}8\) 14.\(\text{dxe}6\) \(\text{fxe}6\) 15.\(\text{f}4\) \(\text{we}7\) 16.\(\text{rd}1\) \(\text{cd}8\) 17.\(\text{h}1\) \(\text{wf}7\) 18.\(\text{c}2\) This is sort of a standard situation in this line. The black pieces are flexible, White is harmoniously developed and he has a space advantage, as in Kasparov-Kramnik, Moscow 2001.

C233) 8...b5

This active attempt to change the character of the game still does not equalize. But after other tries White is just better due to his space advantage.

C2331) Now, probably for White the easiest road to an advantage and also, at least in my opinion, principled and in the spirit of the position, is 9.e4. In my base I have found only one game with this line, an open tournament battle between, I think, two amateurs. The game was very interesting: 9...exd5 10.cxd5 b4 11.\(\text{xb}4\) \(\text{xb}4\) 12.\(\text{d}3\) c6 Trying to undermine the white centre and open up the position. 13.0-0 \(\text{xc}3\) 14.\(\text{bc}3\) cxd5

C23311) 15.exd5 Sacrificing a pawn with an original plan in mind. 15...\(\text{xd}5\) 16.\(\text{a}4!\) \(\text{c}6\) 17.\(\text{h}4\) \(\text{e}8\) 18.\(\text{g}5\) White could have taken the
Part I: 4.e3 Various

black queen and would have been better after 18...gxh7+! hxh7 19.Wxh5 Wxh4 20.Wxh4. 18...h6 19.gxh6! White's attack looks crushing, but Black has his trumps. 19...Re5! Black is mated in case of 19...gxh6?? 20.Wd2. 20.Re4 g5! Black is resourceful in defence. 21.Re5 gxh4 22.Re6 Wxh6 23.Wg4+ Re8 24.Re5 24.Rh5! was better, with a white advantage. 24...Re6! 25.Re4 Probably only now did White realize that after 25.Wxh4 Wxh4 26.Re6 a5 Black's a-pawn will be very fast. 25...a5 with a sharp game that Black eventually won, Jelling-J. Nielsen, Aarhus 1990;

C23312) White could have continued with: 15.e5 Re4 15...Re8? loses to 16.a3 d6 17.Re7+ Re7 18.Wb1+. 16.Wg4 White can consider playing the same idea with the inclusion of 16.Wb1 Re6. 16...g6 17.Re4 dxe4 18.Re5 f5 19.exf6 with a clear advantage for White.

definitely be a lot of readers that would prefer to simply collect the pawn. 10...c5 11.f3 After 11.Re6 Re6 12.e4 Wc7 13.Re5 Wb7 14.e5 Re4 White was behind in development and Black had compensation in Botvinnik-O'Kelly de Galway, Groningen 1946. 11...d5 12.Re3 12.exd5 exd5 13.Re2, with the possibility to jump with the g3 knight to f5, looks logical. 12...d4? This is wrong — definitely a miscalculation. Black had to keep the central tension with 12...Re6. 13.exd4 exd4? This sacrifices (or gives away?) material for nothing. Black had to opt for 13...a6 14.Re3 cxd4 15.Re2. 14.Re3 cxd4 15.Re6 16.Rb4! Crushing Black's dreams. 15...Re8 16.c5 and White soon won in Grigorian-Kupreichik, Moscow 1976.

As we have seen from this material, 5...Re7 is risky for Black and far from equal. In general White has easy, logical play to obtain an advantage, with a number of promising possibilities.

Back to our main move 5...Re4.

6.f3!? A rather direct plan. White takes a space advantage by advancing his central pawns. In the process he is not afraid of the creation of doubled c-pawns. This plan is logical and fits perfectly into White's principles in the 4.e3/4.a3
Chapter 1.5: The Early Knight Jump – 4...b6 5.\textit{\textgreek{d}}e2 \textit{\textgreek{d}}e4

Nimzo. Nevertheless, this continuation is still relatively unexplored and most theory books still consider 6.\textit{\textgreek{d}}d2 and 6.\textit{\textgreek{w}}c2 to be the main lines. It is interesting that after 6.\textit{\textgreek{w}}c2 (considered in many books to be the main line) we often get a totally different pawn structure, and then White often plays according to the plans and ideas of the Classical 4.\textit{\textgreek{w}}c2 Nimzo. I would agree that White has a good chance for an opening advantage in both the 6.\textit{\textgreek{d}}d2 and 6.\textit{\textgreek{w}}c2 lines (which I have both played with white over the years). However, 6.f3 is quite direct and seems, at least to me, to lead to a typical Nimzo-type advantage for White: more space, a strong, dynamic pawn centre, harmonious piece development, and all this for the typical Nimzo price of doubled c-pawns. This looks like a reasonable deal for White. Let's have a look at the old mainlines 6.\textit{\textgreek{d}}d2 and 6.\textit{\textgreek{w}}c2:

1) 6.\textit{\textgreek{d}}d2 With this move White fights for the e4-square and also prevents the creation of doubled c-pawns. Its drawback is that it costs White his bishop pair, and the majority of white players who prefer the 4.e3/4.a3 Nimzo find their bishop pair valuable. 6...\textit{\textgreek{w}}xd2 7.\textit{\textgreek{w}}xd2

in most lines the black bishop will retreat from b4 to e7, when the position will resemble certain Queen's Indian lines where White has more space and looks visually better, but in reality it is difficult to transform his space advantage to anything tangible:

A) 7...\textit{\textgreek{b}}b7 Developing the bishop to its most natural square.

A1) 8.a3 \textit{\textgreek{e}}7

Regarding the strategic battle, the position is almost identical to the 7...0-0 line – see the comments to Chiburdanidze-Adams below (p. 62). White can choose between taking space with d4-d5 and determining the central pawn structure, or continuing development with \textit{\textgreek{f}}4. Black should have satisfactory play in those lines. It is also indicative that Botvinnik believed in Black's chances here.

A11) Let's have a look at the direct 9.d5.

A111) In practice (including Botvinnik's games) 9...0-0 has been played. Some grandmaster games continued 10.g3, and now:

A1111) 10...d6 Probably positionally the most logical move. 11.\textit{\textgreek{g}}2 e5 12.0-0 \textit{\textgreek{d}}7 13.f4 g6 This is the type of position where it would not hurt Black to have an extra move with his king still on e8; in other words, delaying castling makes sense for Black in this line. 14.\textit{\textgreek{a}}ae1 \textit{\textgreek{f}}6 In the event of 14...f5,
White opens the centre favourably with the standard 1.e4! 15.g4 After 15...e4 Black equalizes by forcing a favourable trade with 15...d5! 16.d3 e4 17.xe4 c8. The position with light-squared bishop versus light-squared bishop with this pawn structure (White c4/d5 vs Black c7/d6/e4) is OK for Black. 15...g7 with some advantage for White in the complicated game Volkov-Moiseenko, Sochi 2004.

Once more it is important to note here that due to the fact that only one pair of light pieces has been exchanged so far, White has good chances for a promising kingside attack.

Alternatives are:

A1112) 10...c5 Botvinnik loved this move in such positions. I have my reservations — once the centre is opened, any e4-e5 push will now be considerably stronger. 11.h3 e5 12.f4 exf4 13.gxf4

Here White should have continued with the thematic 20.e5!, when Black is in serious trouble. The actual game continued 20.cxb5 c4 21.wc2 c5. Black has obtained an attack on the queenside and went on to win a beautiful game in Szabo-Botvinnik, Oberhausen Ech-tt 1961:

A11121) 20...b6 21.e6 f5 The kingside is temporarily closed and Black’s g7 is attacking with full force. However, the g7 has little support in its attacking quest, while White will open the black kingside by sacrificing on f5, a typical motif in such positions — readers please take note! White is simply quicker. 22.cx b5 22.xf5 xc4 23.e7 is also dangerous. 22..c4 23.wxe2 and Black does not have any good moves: 23...xf5 Or 23...f6 24.g2. 24.xf5! xf5 25...77 f6 26.xg7+ xg7 27.wxb2 and White wins.

A11122) Or 20...fxe5 21.xf7! A standard Benoni motif. 21.f5 also gives White a strong attack. 21...xf7 22.e6+ e7 23.fx e5 and Black is under a devastating attack.

A1113) If 10...exd5 White responds with 11.xd5!, keeping an unpleasant advantage. In the actual game Black was doing fine after 11.g2 c6 12.cxd5 c5 13.0-0 d6 14.b4 d7 15.ab1 a6 16.f3 c8 17.f4 e5 with good
Benoni-type play in D. Gurevich-De Firmian, Estes Park ch-USA 1986;

A1114) Black can try to use De Firmian’s idea by starting with 10...c6?!, however, it’s a risky concept since White does take a lot of space after 11.d6 Qg5 12.Qg2 Wc8 (perhaps first 12...f5) 13.f4 Qd8.

A112) 9...e5 is according to Botvinnik’s notebook the best for Black, and I would agree, since Black closes the centre, while on the other hand it may make sense for him to delay castling and keep his options open. 10.g3 c5 Again, Botvinnik likes this move. He even gives it an exclamation mark, with which I disagree. The pawn on c5 means a considerable positional risk here, and in many lines it would simply be better on c7. The correct set-up is 10...d6 11.Qg2 Qd7. 11.Qg2 d6

12.g4! The correct way to proceed. White (Winants) plays a model game here. Botvinnik’s analyses continue 12.0-0 (?!–I. S. No reason for White to hurry with castling, this early kingside castling limits his attacking possibilities) 12...Qd7 13.f4 exf4! =, according to Botvinnik – well, it’s obvious that Botvinnik’s variations and conclusions are derived from the plans seen in the game Szabo-Botvinnik, given above. As can be seen from Winants’ game and also from my notes to Szabo-Botvinnik, White’s attacking possibilities are plentiful and the analyses and evaluations by the 6th World Champion a little... wishful thinking. 12...Wd7 13.h3 White is harmoniously developed and has a number of logical attacking plans, while for Black it is difficult to find counterplay. 13...h5 14.0-0-0 Qa6 15.Qg3 h4 16.Qe4 Qc7 17.f4 White’s position plays itself, for Black the situation is already bad. 17...exf4 18.exf4 f5 This attempt at counterplay only speeds things up. 19.gxf5 Wxf5 20.Qd6 Qd8 21.Qg5 Qe8 22.Qe6+ Qxe6 23.dxe6 Qb8 24.Qb5 Qf8 25.Qxd6 1-0 Winants-Pedersen, St Vincent tt 2005.

A12) 9.Qf4 It’s very difficult to say which plan is better for White. Anyhow, there is clearly a different philosophy behind the two plans. With 9.Qf4 White develops, keeping all options open and not giving Black a clear plan, while with the 9.d5 push White tries to seize the initiative with direct play, but also determines the situation in the centre and gives Black a clear plan of action. 9...Qg5 Trying to play actively. 9...d6 or 9...0-0 were other options, transposing to 7....0-0 type positions. 10.Qd3 0-0 In the event of 10...Qxf4 11.exf4 Qxg2? Black falls under attack after 12.Qg1 Qb7 13.Qxg7 Wf6 14.Qg3 11.0-0 Qxf4 12.exf4 d5
13...cxd5! This is often a standard strategic decision in this type of position, so it is useful for the reader to take note! The actual game continued 13.c5 bxc5 14.dxc5 d4 with sufficient counterplay for Black, Rodriguez Vargas-I. Sokolov, Barcelona 1992. 13...exd5 14.fxe1 Due to the central pawn structure, White's bishop dominates its black colleague. At least for quite some time to come, White's kingside pawn majority outweighs Black's queenside majority. Black, on the other hand, has no weaknesses. A good idea for Black is to try and exchange all the rooks along the e-file. White has a small advantage.

A2) In practice the immediate 8.d5 a6!? has also been tried. Some time ago this was the attempt by yours truly to take advantage of the fact that the moves 8.a3 e7 have not been played, and to speed up the development of Black's queenside. 8...e5 would likely transpose to our main line after 9.a3 e7. 9.a3 Forcing Black to take an immediate decision with his bishop. In case of 9.g3, Black gets adequate counterplay after 9...c5 10.g2 a6!? (by introducing an exchange sacrifice Black looks for active play) 11.e1 c4 12.d4 xe2 13.ee2 c3 14.xc3 0-0 15.b4 a4 16.c2 b5 17.dxe6 fxe6 18.axa8 wxa8 with a complicated game where, due to White's exposed king, Black had compensation for the sacrificed exchange in Bareev-I. Sokolov, Madrid 1994. 9...xc3 Forced. No matter what your computer program may tell you, 9...e7? 10.b4 is not to be recommended for Black because his knight will remain passive on a6 for a long time.

10.xc3 c5 11.d1 a5 12.b4 A forced decision for White. Should Black manage to play ...a5-a4 and secure his knight on c5, then he would get an excellent game. 12...xb4 13.axb4 a6 14.b5 0-0 15.e2

White has a space advantage, however he has yet to castle and Black has no meaningful weakness – so Black's position is playable. I remember, now 15 years ago, Adams being very negative about Black's prospects after losing this game to Shirov (see below), but his objectivity may well have been influenced by his disappointment about the result:

A21) If Black aims just to equalize, then he can consider 15...exd5 16.cxd5 c5 17.dxc6 17.d6d6 brings White only trouble after 17...xb4 18.xb7 wb8. 17...xc6 18.d6 18.0-0! runs into 18...g5. 18...c7 19.0-0 f6 Black's d7 pawn weakness is not meaningful here, and he should hold this position without much difficulty;

A22) 15...e7! This principled decision forces sharp tactical play where the tables can easily turn. 16.d6 A more or less forced decision. Black's queenside is weak and discoordianted, White on the other hand has problems with his kingside and uncastled king:

A221) 16.g5 17.dxc7 xg2 18.f1 c6! In the actual game, Black went wrong with 18...xh2?. After 19.d6 Wh6 20.g1 White was better and went on to win in Shirov-Adams, Leon 1995.
Chapter 1.5: The Early Knight Jump – 4...b6 5.\( \Box e2 \) \( \Box e4 \)

19.\( \Box d6 \)! Again, White’s queen is well placed on d6 in this position. Taking material with 19.c8\( \Box \)?! \( \mathcal{H} \)xc6 20.\( \Box d6 \) \( \Box d8 \) 21.b5 \( \Box c5 \) 22.bxc6 dxc6 is, to say the least, very risky for White: his king is in the middle, there is a terrible d-file pin and Black already has two pawns for the piece. Running away from the d-file pin with 23.\( \mathcal{W} b2 \) is bad for White after 23 ... \( \mathcal{W} xh2 \) 24.\( \mathcal{W} xb6 \) \( \mathcal{W} e5 \).

19...\( \mathcal{L} c8 \) with a sharp and rather unconventional position;

A222) Another option was: 16...\( \mathcal{C} x d6 \) 17.\( \mathcal{W} x d6 \) 17.\( \Box x d6 \) leads to a messy position after 17...\( \mathcal{L} x g2 \) (17...d5 leads to a draw after 18.\( \mathcal{C} x d5 \) \( \mathcal{W} x d6 \) 19.\( \mathcal{D} x e6 \) \( \mathcal{W} x d2+ \) 20.\( \mathcal{L} x d2 \) \( \mathcal{D} x e6 \)) 18.\( \mathcal{G} g1 \) \( \mathcal{D} d5 \).

17...\( \mathcal{W} g5 \) 18.\( \mathcal{L} g1 \) A strange position. White has lost his right to castle and his kingside is weak, while Black has problems with his weak queenside and badly placed knight on a6.

Black also has other moves:

B) 7...\( \mathcal{D} c6 \) is a move which looks a bit awkward to me, though Black held a draw in a relatively recent top-level game: 8.a3 \( \mathcal{E} e7 \) 9.\( \mathcal{D} f4 \) \( \mathcal{G} g5 \) 10.\( b4 \) White can consider as an improvement 10.\( \mathcal{D} e2 \) followed by 0-0, deciding later on how to advance his pawns. 10...\( \mathcal{B} b7 \) 11.\( d5 \) Black gets counterplay in the event of 11.\( \mathcal{D} e2 \) a5. 11...\( \mathcal{D} e5 \) 12.\( \mathcal{D} c1 \) 0-0 13.\( \mathcal{D} e2 \) a5! This is a standard black reaction in these positions. If White advances his b-pawn, he loses the c5-square, and if he leaves his b4 pawn where it is, Black will open the a-file for his rook. 14.0-0 \( \mathcal{A} x b4 \) 15.\( \mathcal{A} x b4 \) \( \mathcal{X} f4 \) 15...\( \mathcal{G} g6 \) 16.\( \mathcal{D} h5 \)! is better for White. 16.\( \mathcal{X} f4 \) \( \mathcal{G} g6 \) 17.\( \mathcal{F} f e1 \) c6! This standard way to undermine the white centre, which we have already seen in some other lines, applies here as well. 18.\( \mathcal{G} g3 \) \( \mathcal{C} x d5 \) 19.\( \mathcal{C} x d5 \) \( \mathcal{E} e7 \) 20.\( \mathcal{F} f 3 \) White had a rather symbolic advantage and the game was later drawn in Nakamura-Short, London 2009;

C) 7...0-0 is a flexible, logical move. Black castles and decides later on a further course of action. 8.a3 \( \mathcal{E} e7 \) and now:

C1) In the event of 9.\( g3 \) Black gets good play after 9...\( \mathcal{E} a6 \) 9... \( \mathcal{D} b7 \) 10.d5 d6 11.\( \mathcal{G} g2 \) e5 is perhaps less dynamic, but definitely playable. 10.\( \mathcal{G} g2 \) \( \mathcal{C} c6 \) 11.b3 \( \mathcal{A} a5 \) 12.\( \mathcal{W} c2 \) c6 13.0-0 \( d5 \) and Black is at least OK. Please note that compared to certain lines in the Queen’s Indian Fianchetto Variation, the white knight is here on e2 instead of f3, which is clearly disadvantageous for White. If the knight were on f3, it would have been able to jump to the favourable e5-square, protecting c4 and hitting square c6, while currently the knight on e2 has very little future;

C2) White can also opt for the standard advance 9.\( d5 \).
Then, after 9...e5 Black creates a standard Old Indian/King's Indian type of play on the kingside. Actually, it is quite useful for Black that his light-squared bishop is still on c8, since after the central blockade with 9.d5 e5, this bishop belongs on the c8-h3 diagonal. 10.g3 d6 11.d3 f5 12.0-0 g6 13.f4 d7 Black has a perfect Old Indian position. 14.0-0 h5! Black is already slightly better. White does not like the way the game is going and opens up the centre, for which he is not ready at the moment. 15.e4? h4 16.g3 h6 17.f2 ltb3 18.f4 and Black was a sound exchange up in Shirov-De Firmian, Tilburg 1993; C3) 9..f4

White's problem is that Black has a bishop pair and no weaknesses, so the space advantage White has at the moment is difficult to make direct use of. Actually, should White advance his pawns and should the centre get blocked, then Black would create counterplay which is typical for certain lines of the Queen's Indian Defence. 9...d6 More flexible looks 9...b7, when after 10.d3 he may (apart from 'regular' moves like 10...d6) consider 10...g5!? 11.h5 xg2 12.g1 f3, which is risky for both sides. 10.d3 d7?! Probably missing the coming tactical sequence. 10...b7 followed by ...d7 was better, with a typical Queen's Indian pawn structure which is definitely playable for Black. 11.c2 h6 After 11...f6 it is quite possible that Black did not like 12.g4!. 12.e4 b8 13.b5!

Black probably missed this motif - now he is in trouble. 13...f6! Black sacs the exchange in order to get active play, which is a good practical decision under the circumstances (Michael Adams was always very good at taking practical decisions!). 13...a6? 14.a7 b6 15.xb7 x b7 16.c6 is bad for Black, losing material after 16...e8 17.e4!. 14.xa7 xe4 15.c6 we8 16.x b8 b7 17.d5 17.a6 was the other way to get out with the knight. Black does not have sufficient compensation for the exchange. 17.exd5 18.cxd5 g5 19.0-0 f6 20.c6 x f4 21.exf4 xd5 22.ac1 xf4 23.fel Black does not have sufficient compensation, though matters remained complicated and Black ultimately won in Chiburdanidze-Adams, Lucerne Wch-tt 1997.

D) 7...d5 in general I think that, after the ...d7-d5 push and the cxd5 exd5 exchange, as regards pawn structure the position resembles the Tartakower/Bondarevsky Variation of the Queen's
Chapter 1.5: The Early Knight Jump – 4...b6 5.\(\text{\textnormal{\textcolor{red}{e}}}_2 \text{\textnormal{\textcolor{red}{e}}}_4\)

Gambit Declined, and should be slightly better for White. For a black player looking for a dynamic game it is probably better to opt for an Indian type of set-up with d6/e5.

\[8.\text{cx}d5 \text{ex}d5 9.a3 \text{\textnormal{\textcolor{red}{e}}}_7\]

In this Tartakower/Bondarevsky QGD-type position, White's e2 knight will travel to f4. It is not easy to say whether it is better for him to have his knight on f3 (a usual square for the g1 knight in that variation) or f4, which sometimes also happens in lines where the development of the g1 knight is delayed. 10.g3

Also possible is 10.\(\text{\textnormal{\textcolor{red}{f}}}_4\) c6 11.\(\text{\textnormal{\textcolor{red}{d}}}_3\) 0-0 12.0-0. 10..c6 11.\(\text{\textnormal{\textcolor{red}{g}}}_2\) \(\text{\textnormal{\textcolor{red}{d}}}_7\) 12.0-0 0-0 13.\(\text{\textnormal{\textcolor{red}{b}}}_4\) a6 14.\(\text{\textnormal{\textcolor{red}{f}}}_4\) \(\text{\textnormal{\textcolor{red}{f}}}_6\) 15.\(\text{\textnormal{\textcolor{red}{d}}}_3\) \(\text{\textnormal{\textcolor{red}{f}}}_5\) 16.\(\text{\textnormal{\textcolor{red}{e}}}_5\) and White had some advantage in Kharlov-Kortchnoi, Kazan tt 2001.

E) 7...a6 is relatively seldom played, and after 8.a3 \(\text{\textnormal{\textcolor{red}{x}}}_c3\) 9.\(\text{\textnormal{\textcolor{red}{x}}}_c3\) d5 10.b3 \(\text{\textnormal{\textcolor{red}{c}}}_6\) 11.\(\text{\textnormal{\textcolor{red}{e}}}_2\) the position as regards pawn structure is identical to the line 4.e3 b6 5.\(\text{\textnormal{\textcolor{red}{e}}}_2\) a6 6.a3 \(\text{\textnormal{\textcolor{red}{x}}}_c3\) 7.\(\text{\textnormal{\textcolor{red}{x}}}_c3\) d5, with the difference that White's c1 bishop and Black's f6 knight have been exchanged. Logically (at least I think so), with the white bishop pair eliminated, this trade should make equality a bit easier to achieve for Black. However, White still has a little more space, his c3 knight is better placed than Black's c6 knight, and also White's bishop is superior to its black colleague in this pawn structure, so White does keep a small advantage.

11...dxc4 12.\(\text{\textnormal{\textcolor{red}{b}}}_1\) 0-0 13.0-0 \(\text{\textnormal{\textcolor{red}{e}}}_7\) 14.\(\text{\textnormal{\textcolor{red}{f}}}_d1\) \(\text{\textnormal{\textcolor{red}{d}}}_7\) 15.bxc4 \(\text{\textnormal{\textcolor{red}{f}}}_d8\) 16.\(\text{\textnormal{\textcolor{red}{c}}}_2\) and White was a bit better in Epishin-De Firmian, Copenhagen 2002.

\(\text{\textnormal{\textcolor{red}{c}}}_2\) is considered the main line after 5...\(\text{\textnormal{\textcolor{red}{e}}}_4\) in many books. White attacks e4 and is ready, after a double exchange on c3, to recapture with the queen, preserving the pawn structure. Very often, at least in the line considered by present theory to be the main line here, the position resembles the Nimzo line with 4.\(\text{\textnormal{\textcolor{red}{c}}}_2\) 0-0 5.a3 \(\text{\textnormal{\textcolor{red}{x}}}_c3\) 6.\(\text{\textnormal{\textcolor{red}{x}}}_c3\) b6 7.\(\text{\textnormal{\textcolor{red}{f}}}_3\) \(\text{\textnormal{\textcolor{red}{b}}}_7\) 8.e3, with similar motifs. Naturally, the (big) difference is the fact that the f3 and f6 knights will be immediately exchanged here. In the mentioned 4.\(\text{\textnormal{\textcolor{red}{c}}}_2\) line, the black knight on e4 provides him with tactical motifs, while on the other hand a white knight on f3 stops sorties by the black queen to h4 or g5. It is difficult to say who has a 'good version of the 4.\(\text{\textnormal{\textcolor{red}{c}}}_2\) line' by the early knight swap.

A) Sometimes Black starts with 6...f5 and this provides White with a very interesting opportunity, casting doubts on the accuracy of 6...f5:

\[\text{\textnormal{\textcolor{red}{f}}}_d1 \text{\textnormal{\textcolor{red}{d}}}_7\]

A 1) White can try an idea similar to our chosen main line (6.f3) with 7.f3 \(\text{\textnormal{\textcolor{red}{x}}}_c3\) (in case of 7...\(\text{\textnormal{\textcolor{red}{x}}}_c3+\), the best
for White is to continue in the spirit of
the Sämisch Variation with 8.bxc3 ½f6
9.½g3 followed by ½d3 and e4)
8.bxc3 ½d6 9.e4 0-0:

A11) 10.e5 This pawn advance looks logical, but White’s problem is that a follow-up, developing initiative on the kingside (and that is the part of the board where White should look for his chances here!), will be difficult. 10...½e7 11.½f4 d6! Black now opens the centre to his advantage. 12.exd6 ½xd6 13.½d3 c5 14.d5 e5 15.½e2 ½h4+ 16.g3 ½h3 Black had good play and went on to win in Knaak-Timman, Amsterdam 1974;
A12) White can try to improve with 10.exf5!? and now:
A121) In case of 10...½xf5 11.½e4 ½c6 12.½g3 ½f7 13.½d3 White gets good attacking prospects on the kingside;
A122) While the pawn sacrifice 10...½b7!? leads to totally different play which may not be to everyone’s taste, for instance: 11.½xe6 ½h4+?! Better is 11...dxe6! with a complicated game. The forced sequence that now follows favours White after 12.g3 ½h5 13.½g2 ½xf3 14.½f4 ½xf4 15.½xf4 dxe6 16.0-0 ½xg2 17.½xg2;
A123) 10...exf5 11.½f4 c5 12.d5! Taking space and limiting Black’s counterplay. White’s c4 pawn cannot prop-

erly be attacked here, so it is only an academic weakness. 12...½f6 Or 12...½e8+ 13.½f2 13.½d3 It is not easy for Black to finish his development harmoniously here, so White should have some advantage.
A2) In most of the games we see 7.a3 ½xc3+ 8.½xc3 ½b7 and this transposes to 6...½b7 7.a3 ½xc3 8.½xc3 f5;
A3) Just like in the case of 6...½b7, White can also just continue his development with 7.½f4. However, with a pawn on f5 instead of his bishop on b7, Black has some advantages – see under 6...½b7 the same position with the bishop on b7 instead of the pawn on f5, and compare the difference! The following game is a good illustration.

7...c5 8.½d3 cxd4! 9.exd4 ½xc3 10.bxc3 ½d6 Black is harmoniously developed here, White’s c4 pawn remaining a weakness, while for White it is difficult to develop dynamic play in compensation for his pawn weakness. It may sound strange, but Black is probably already slightly better;
A3 1) Should White continue ‘nor-
mal’ development with 11.0-0 then Black is slightly better after 11...½c7 12.g3 (or 12.½h5 0-0) 12...0-0 13.½b1 ½c6. Salov probably did not like this position and therefore chose to start a kingside attack;
A32) 11...\textit{e}2 But this attack has no chance of success: 11...0-0 12.h4 \textit{b}7 13.e5 \textit{f}6 13...\textit{c}7 is also good. 14.h3 \textit{c}6 Black is better, White has no choice but to continue with his kingside 'attack'. 15.b1 \textit{a}6 16.h5 \textit{f}7 17.h4 \textit{e}7! 18.g3 g6 19.g5 \textit{x}g5 20.xg5 \textit{x}e8! Next is ...e6-e5, and the white position will collapse. 21.d2 e5 22.g3 \textit{x}c4 and Black soon won in Salov-Tirunman, Amsterdam 1996.

A4) 7.g3! An interesting idea, tried in only one grandmaster game so far. 7...\textit{x}c3 Should Black opt for 7...\textit{b}7 8.g2 0-0 9.d2 \textit{d}6 10.xb7 \textit{x}b7, the fianchettoed knight on b7 is a far from perfect piece. 8..\textit{x}c3 \textit{b}7 9.d5 \textit{b}5 A standard plan to undermine White's centre, also seen in many other lines. If Black plays 9...0-0 instead, White is better after 10.g2 e5 11.d2 d6 12.a3 \textit{x}c3 13.xc3. White will undermine the black pawn centre with f2-f4 and his bishop on c3 is very strong.

A41) The actual game went 10.g2 \textit{bxc}4 11.0-0 0-0 12.d1 e5 13.f1 13.b3! d6 14.bxc4 was still a road to a slight advantage. 13...d6 14..\textit{x}c4 \textit{d}7 and Black was at least equal in Donner-Tinman, Wijk aan Zee 1975;

A42) 10.d2! improves on the current (very limited) theory. White solves the pin along the a5-e1 diagonal, he can capture with his bishop on c3 and with another bishop on c4, he may castle queenside and also threatens 11.xb5. White is clearly better here. 10..\textit{x}c3 11..\textit{x}c3 0-0 Going for material with 11..exd5? 12.xf5 d4 loses after 13.xd4 \textit{x}h1 14.xh5+ \textit{f}8 15.xf5+ \textit{e}8 16.xg7. 12.0-0-0 12.g1 with similar ideas; the greedy 12.wb3 also came into consideration. 12..\textit{e}7 13.g1 and White has excellent attacking prospects: 13..b4 is answered with 14.d6. Based on the analyses given here, I would not be surprised if 7.g3! put 6...f5 out of business.

B) 6...\textit{b}7 and now:

B1) A very interesting option, in the spirit of our main line, is 7.f3!? Strangely enough, this move is rarely seen in practice. The idea is the same as in the our main line, and with the white queen on c2 and the black bishop on b7 this version could well be favourable for White. 7..\textit{x}c3 8..\textit{x}c3 \textit{e}7 The position now resembles our main line, with the difference that the white queen is on c2 and the black bishop on b7. In general this should favour White, since the queen can be useful on c2, while for Black the main counterplan is to attack White's c4 pawn with the bishop on a6, so Black may likely have to place his bishop on a6 anyhow. 9.e4 0-0 10.g3 \textit{d}6
Part I: 4.e3 Various

B11) The only test in grandmaster practice continued 11.\( \text{Qe}2 \). I honestly have to admit that I don’t understand that White places the bishop on an inactive square like e2 in this position, instead of on the logical d3-square. With the bishop on d3, apart from hitting h7 after an e4-e5 push, White also has the possibility of \( \text{We}2 \) to defend his weak c4 pawn. 11...\( \text{e}5 \) Black should have stuck to the plan with 11...\( \text{Qa}5 \) followed by ...\( \text{Qa}6 \), with a good game. 12.\( \text{Qe}3 \) \( \text{Qg}5 \) 13.\( \text{Wd}2 \) \( \text{h}6 \) 14.0-0 \( \text{d}6 \) 15.\( \text{f}4 \)! White has now built up a serious initiative on the kingside and Black will be too busy to ‘remind’ White of his weak pawn on c4. 15...\( \text{exf}4 \) 16.\( \text{Qxf}4 \) \( \text{g}6 \) 17.\( \text{Qd}3 \) \( \text{We}7 \) 18.\( \text{Qf}3 \) \( \text{Qae}8 \) 19.\( \text{h}4 \)! \( \text{Qxf}4 \) 20.\( \text{Qxf}4 \) \( \text{Qg}7 \) Now comes a textbook tactical execution: 21.\( \text{Qh}5 \)\(! \) \( \text{Qh}7 \) Or 21...\( \text{gxh}5 \) 22.\( \text{Qg}3 \)\(+ \) \( \text{Qh}7 \) 23.\( \text{e}5 \)\(+ \). 22.\( \text{Qf}6 \)\(+ \) \( \text{Qg}7 \) 23.\( \text{Qaf}1 \) and White won in Milov-Friedel, Oak Brook 2007;

B12) White should be careful not to advance his central pawns too soon with 11.\( \text{e}5 \)?.

A big centre is a big responsibility and it may collapse after 11...\( \text{d}6 \) 12.\( \text{f}4 \) (or 12.\( \text{Qd}3 \) \( \text{dxe}5 \)) 12...\( \text{dxe}5 \) 13.\( \text{fxe}5 \) \( \text{Qxd}4 \)! 14.\( \text{cxd}4 \) \( \text{Qb}4 \)\(+ \) 15.\( \text{Qd}2 \) \( \text{Wxd}4 \) 16.\( \text{Qd}1 \) \( \text{Wxe}5 \)\(+ \). Black already has three pawns for a piece and White’s development is far from finished;

B13) 11.\( \text{Qd}3 \) White has the advantage here, since in reaction to the regular Sämisch plan to attack the weak c4 pawn with 11...\( \text{Qa}5 \) 12.0-0 \( \text{Qa}6 \), White continues with 13.\( \text{e}5 \) \( \text{h}6 \) 14.\( \text{Wf}2 \). Another important plus for White is that compared to the regular Sämisch Variation, here White’s a-pawn is still on a2, so Black does not have the ...\( \text{Qb}3 \) jump;

B2) Another move that definitely deserves attention is 7.\( \text{Qf}4 \). White develops and ignores Black’s knight on e4 for the time being, knowing that Black will soon have to make the decision to take on c3 anyway. The history of this line on grandmaster level started in 1995, when I faced it with black against Russian grandmaster Scherbakov (see game below) and was lucky to escape with a draw. In 1996 I used it with white against Kortchnoi, who was not so lucky! Then the line established itself and other grandmaster encounters followed, however 7.\( \text{Qf}4 \) is still relatively unexplored and there remains a lot to discover:

B21) In case of 7...0-0 8.\( \text{Qd}3 \) \( \text{f}5 \) 9.0-0 \( \text{Qxc}3 \) (9...\( \text{Qxc}3 \) 10.\( \text{bxc}3 \) with \( \text{f}3 \) to follow favours White) 10.\( \text{bxc}3 \) \( \text{Qd}6 \) 11.\( \text{Qb}1 \) (11.\( \text{e}4 \)\(! \) is to be considered) 11...\( \text{Qxf}4 \) 12.\( \text{exf}4 \) \( \text{Qf}6 \) 13.\( \text{Qe}3 \) \( \text{Qh}6 \) 14.\( \text{f}3 \) White does have doubled c- and
f-pawns, but he also has more space and it’s not easy for Black to create counterplay. White was better and went on to win in I. Sokolov-Kortchnoi, New York 1996;

B22) Should Black decide to copy Timman’s idea against Salov (given above under 6...f5 7.२f4), then things are different here and White manages to seize the initiative: 7...c5 8.२d3 cxd4 9.exd4 ४xc3 10.bxc3 ४d6 11.0-0 ४xd5 16.४d6 ४f7. Now 14...१xc5? fails to 15.४xf5 – already a standard motif!

B23) 7...f5 Probably Black’s most active move, and critical for the evaluation of 7.२f4! 8.२d3 ४h4 In the event of 8...c5 9.0-0 ४xc3 White has a nice tactical motif in 10.f3!, preserving the pawn structure and obtaining a better game: 10...d2 11.४xd2 ४xd2 12.४xd2 0-0 13.४ad1 cxd4 14.exd4 – White has more space, a better pawn structure, and his knight on f4 is excellent, Timman-Ward, Reykjavik 2006.

9.0-0 ४xc3 10.bxc3 g5:

Now, compared to Salov-Timman, it appears that the pawn on f5 is more useful for Black here than the bishop on b7, since with the pawn on f7 he would have been able to castle. Now Black has to spend a tempo on ...f7-f5, and this gives White the opportunity to seize the initiative: 11...f5 On 11...४c7, 12.४h5 is unpleasant. 12.c5 Also promising is 12.a4!? ४c7 13.g3 and now with his king uncastled and still on e8, Black cannot stop the advance of White’s a-pawn with 13...४c6? since White has 14.४xf5! exf5 15.४d5 ४c8 16.४e1+ ४e7 17.४xe7 ४xe7 18.४xf5, winning: 18...४xc4 19.४xe7+ ४xe7 20.४g5+ ४d6 21.४e5+ ४c6 22.४f4. 12...४xc5 13.४b1 ४c6 13...४c7 14.dxc5 ४xc5? fails to 15.४xf5!. 14.dxc5 Less convincing is 14.d5 ४xf4 15.४xf4

B231) In reply to 11.f3!? Black continues with 11...१xf4 (White is better in case of 11...४f6 12.g3 ४h6 13.४g2 followed by e3-e4) 12.४xe4:

B2311) Should Black now decide to take a pawn, White would have strong compensation after 12...५xe3 13.४xe4 ४xe4 (or 13...५xe4 14.४e2) 14.४f4 ४xd3 15.४xd3;

B2312) 12...f3! Sacrificing a pawn. 13.४xf3 ५xe4 14.४xe4 ४c6 15.४h1 0-0-0 16.४a3 ४a5 White has a weak pawn on c4 and an exposed king; Black has compensation for the pawn.

B232) 11.४e2 ४f6 My above-mentioned game continued 11...४g 12.४g3 ४g5 13.e4! f4 14.४xf4 ४f3+ 15.४xf3 gxf3 16.४h1 ४xf4 17.e5! ४h4
18. \( \text{De}4 \) \( \text{Dxe}4 \) 19. \( \text{Dxe}4 \) \( \text{Cc}6 \) 20. \( \text{Ag}1 \) with a clear advantage for White, Scherbakov-I. Sokolov, Ljubljana tt 1995. 12.\( \text{f}3 \) and now:

**B2321)** 12...\( \text{g}4 \)? is premature due to 13..\( \text{g}3 \! \! \! \) and due to various tempo-winning moves the black queen does not have a good square: 13...\( \text{Wh}6 \) Or 13...\( \text{Wh}5 \) 14.\( \text{Df}4 \) 14.\( \text{e}4 \);

**B2322)** 12...\( \text{Bg}8 \)

13.\( \text{d}5 \) 13..\( \text{g}3! \) \( \text{Wh}5 \) 14.d5 is a possible improvement. 13...\( \text{g}4 \) 14.\( \text{Dd}4 \) Should White keep the g-file closed with 14.\( \text{f}4 \) \( \text{g}3 \) 15.\( \text{h}3 \), then Black will continue 15...\( \text{Da}6 \) 16.\( \text{Da}3 \) \( \text{Dg}4 \). 14...\( \text{gx}f3 \) 15.\( \text{Dxf}3 \) \( \text{Wb}5 \) Black has good counterplay. 16.\( \text{Da}3 \) \( \text{Dxd}5 \)! Other options were 16...\( \text{c}6 \) 17.\( \text{Dxe}6? \) \( \text{c}5! \) or 16...\( \text{c}5 \).

17.\( \text{Dxf}5 \) \( \text{Dxc}4 \) Black’s pieces are excellently coordinated against the white king and White is in trouble here. 18.\( \text{e}4 \) \( \text{Cc}6 \) 19.\( \text{e}5 \) \( \text{Gg}4 \) 20.\( \text{e}6 \) 20.\( \text{Dae}1 \) 0-0-0 21.\( \text{e}6 \) fails to 21...\( \text{Dce}5! \) 22.exd7+ \( \text{Dh}8 \) and Black wins in a kingside attack. 20...\( \text{De}3 \) Here Black should have played 20...\( \text{d}6! \) followed by ...\( \text{Dce}5 \) or ...\( \text{De}7 \), with a strong attack – note that White’s \( \text{Da}3 \) is totally out of play.

21.exd7+ \( \text{Dd}8 \) 22.\( \text{Wc}4 \) \( \text{Dxf}5 \) 23.\( \text{De}5 \) with tactics starting to work for White in Lautier-Wedberg, Harplinge 1998.

**B3)** 7.\( \text{a}3 \) \( \text{Dxc}3+ \) 8.\( \text{Dxc}3 \) This is the position I was referring to when I said that play here resembles the Nimzo with 4.\( \text{Wc}2 \) 0-0 5.a3 \( \text{Dxc}3 \) 6.\( \text{Wxc}3 \) b6 7.\( \text{Df}3 \) \( \text{Db}7 \) 8.e3. White’s main strategic (and also tactical) plan is to push \( \text{d}4-\text{d}5 \), taking more space and opening the a1-h8 diagonal for his dark-squared bishop. Apart from the mentioned Nimzo 4.\( \text{Wc}2 \) line, we also see the same motif in the Bogo-Indian: 3.\( \text{Df}3 \) \( \text{Db}4 \) 4.\( \text{Db}2 \) \( \text{b}6 \) 5.a3 \( \text{Dxd}2 \) 6.\( \text{Wxd}2 \) \( \text{Db}7 \) 7.e3.

**B31)** 8...\( \text{Dxc}3 \) is seldom played and there are no particular advantages Black gets from taking on \( \text{c}3 \) immediately. One example from my own practice continued: 9.\( \text{Wxc}3 \) 0-0 10.\( \text{b}3 \) \( \text{Wh}4 \) 11.\( \text{Db}2 \) \( \text{f}6 \) 12.d5! The standard motif which we will see repeated over and over again in this line. 12...\( \text{Dxd}5 \) 13.\( \text{Dd}1! \) This tactical motif is also seen in the \( \text{Wc}2 \) Nimzo and \( \text{Db}2 \) Bogo lines I mentioned. 13...\( \text{d}4 \)

Should Black try to hang to his extra pawn, then White would soon be better: 13...\( \text{c}6 \) 14.\( \text{cxd}5 \) \( \text{cxd}5 \) 15.\( \text{Dc}7 \) \( \text{dc}6 \) 16.\( \text{Dg}3 \) \( \text{Dxc}3 \) 17.\( \text{hxg}3 \). After \( \text{Dc}2-\text{Df}3 \) White will likely recapture the d5 pawn, with a better game; 13...\( \text{dc}4?! \) fails to 14.\( \text{Dd}4 \) \( \text{Wh}5 \) 15.\( \text{Wxc}4+ \) and \( \text{Wxc}7 \).

14.\( \text{Dxd}4 \) \( \text{Wh}5 \) 15.\( \text{De}2 \) \( \text{Wc}6 \) White has the advantage of having more space and the bishop pair. 15...\( \text{Wg}6?! \) Black goes for a queen excursion which will bring him little good. 16.\( \text{Dg}4 \) \( \text{Wb}1+ \) 17.\( \text{Dd}1 \) \( \text{Cc}6 \)
18.0-0 \textit{W}f5 19.\textit{E}g3 White had a kingside initiative and went on to win in I. Sokolov-Kortchnoi, Novi Sad ol 1990;
B32) 8...f5 is the main continuation for Black:

Objectively speaking, White is underdeveloped and central action is still premature. One unpleasant practical experience of mine is instructive:
9...\textit{xc}3 10.\textit{xc}3 and now:
B3211) 10...\textit{f}6?! has been tried, but is not accurate. Due to Black's damaged kingside pawn structure White is better in the ending after 11.\textit{xf}6 (also better for White is 11...\textit{d}2) 11...\textit{gf}6 12.b4;
B3212) 10...\textit{e}7 and now:
B32121) To 11.b4 Black has a standard reaction worth remembering: 11...a5!, when White is simply stuck between a rock and a hard place. Pushing b4-b5 surrenders the important c5-square, while allowing ...axb4 will mean the rooks are exchanged and White has to worry about his pawn on b4 after, for example, ...\textit{a}6. Moving the rook to b1 solves the problem of the weak b4 pawn, but then after ...axb4 Black's a8 rook gets an open file. White is probably better after 11...\textit{exd}5 12.\textit{xd}5 \textit{xd}5 13.\textit{b}2 0-0 14.\textit{xc}7 followed by \textit{d}1;

B32122) After 11.\textit{We}5, which in itself looks strange - White has not developed a single piece and is moving with his queen - 11...d6 12.\textit{xe}6 \textit{xe}6 13.\textit{xe}6 \textit{e}7 Black is not worse;
B32123) Should White opt for 11.b3?!, this pawn would be unpleasantly hanging after 11...\textit{exd}5 12.\textit{xd}5 \textit{xd}5 13.\textit{xc}7 \textit{e}6;
B32124) 11.\textit{xe}6 This opens the diagonal of Black's bishop, however other options are not advantageous for White either. 11...\textit{xe}6 12.b3 12.\textit{e}2, in order to castle and get an approximately equal game, was not a bad idea. 12...\textit{d}7 13.\textit{b}2 \textit{e}5! Black gains space. 14.0-0-0 A good decision. The black king will be safe on the queenside, while Black plans to roll his pawns on the kingside. 15.b4 With the black king castled queenside, there is no longer the ...a7-a5 reaction to this pawn push. 15...\textit{he}8 16.\textit{f}3 \textit{h}4 Simply 16...\textit{g}5 was an option, with a black advantage.
17.\textit{e}1 Looking for counterplay with 17.c5 has the drawback that after 17...\textit{bc}5 18.\textit{xc}5 \textit{xc}5 19.\textit{xc}5 \textit{xd}1+ 20.\textit{xd}1 \textit{d}8+ 21.\textit{c}2 \textit{a}4+ Black has a draw at least. 17...\textit{h}6! 18.\textit{b}1 \textit{g}5 19.\textit{f}2 \textit{e}4 20.\textit{e}2 \textit{f}4 and Black was better and won easily in I. Sokolov-Cu. Hansen, Groningen 1991.
B322) 9.b3
9...0-0 Should Black delay castling with 9...\textit{We}7 10.\textit{b}2 d6, then after the standard 11.d5! \textit{xc}3 12.\textit{xc}3 \textit{d}7 13.\textit{e}2 \textit{f}6 14.0-0 0-0 15.\textit{ad}1 \textit{ae}8 16.\textit{b}2 \textit{h}8 17.\textit{be}1 \textit{f}7 18.\textit{af}1 \textit{e}7 19.f3, with more space and an excellent dark-squared bishop, White was better (note that Black's \textit{b}7 is passive) and went on to win in Wojtaszek-Istratescu, Kallithea 2009. 10.\textit{b}2 d6

B3222) 11.d5 and now:

B32221) Black may try 11...\textit{d}7, when he is doing OK in the case of 12.\textit{xe}4 \textit{fx}e4 13.\textit{xe}4 (or 13.dxe6 \textit{dc}5) 13...\textit{c}5 14.\textit{ce}2\textit{xd}5;

B32222) 11...\textit{xc}3 12.\textit{wc}3 \textit{e}5 12...\textit{e}7!? comes strongly into consideration since after 13.dxe6 \textit{dc}6 Black will collect the e6 pawn and have a good game. 13.f4 Another option is the calm 13.\textit{e}2 followed by 0-0 and f2-f4.

B3221) An idea to explore is 11.0-0-0?! \textit{d}7 12.f3. White is delaying d4-d5. 12...\textit{xc}3 13.\textit{wc}3 \textit{e}7 14.\textit{b}1 \textit{c}6? An important mistake which will simply prove to be a loss of tempo. Better was 14...a5 with the idea of ...c7-c5, ...a5-a4, to open up White's kingside. 15.\textit{d}3 \textit{f}6 16.h3 \textit{c}5 17.\textit{he}1 \textit{xd}4 17...a5 is now less convincing after 18.d5 a4 19.dxe6 \textit{xe}6 20.b4. 18.\textit{xd}4 \textit{d}7 19.d5 e5 20.g4 \textit{f}4 Black must have thought that if he kept the kingside closed it would not be possible for White to make a pawn break. 21.h4 \textit{ae}8 22.\textit{wc}2 \textit{g}6 23.h5 \textit{g}5 24.h6 \textit{c}7 25.b4! By now Black must have realized that White will execute the push c4-c5, and the \textit{b}2 will come to life. 25...a5 26.\textit{fs} axb4 27.axb4 \textit{c}8 28.c5! The black position collapses. 28...\textit{xc}5 29.\textit{bx}c5 \textit{wc}5 30.\textit{xb}x7+! \textit{h}8 31.\textit{xc}5 dxc5 32.\textit{g}6 and White won in Giorgadze-Kurajica, Bosnia i Herzegovina 1998;

13...\textit{d}7 14.\textit{d}3 \textit{wh}4+ 15.g3 \textit{wh}6 15...\textit{wh}3 was possible, forcing White to explore options of castling queenside. 16.0-0 In case of 16.0-0-0 with the idea h2-h3, g2-g4, Black plays 16...c6, opening his bishop. 16...\textit{c}6 Activating the \textit{b}7. 17.\textit{dx}c6 \textit{xc}6 18.\textit{wc}2 \textit{ae}8?! A speculative pawn sacrifice. A logical alternative was 18...\textit{xf}4 19.\textit{xf}4 \textit{ae}8 20.\textit{ae}1 \textit{wh}5, after which both sides have a diagonal to worry about. 19.\textit{xf}5 \textit{dc}5 To 19...\textit{xf}4 White responds with 20.\textit{xf}4! with the threat of \textit{xd}4 and then \textit{h}4. 20.b4 Stronger was 20.\textit{ad}1!, when Black would find it difficult to prove compensation:

B322221) 20...\textit{a}4 21.\textit{hx}h7+ \textit{hx}h7 22.\textit{hx}h7+ \textit{he}7 23.\textit{xc}5 and White ultimately managed to win this ending in Kortchnoi-Botvinnik, Moscow 1960;
B322222) Better was 20...exf4!
21.exf4 (21.bxc5?? loses to 21...fxg3)
21...e6 22...xe6+ wxe6;
6...xc3 7.bxc3 e7

8.e4

First advancing the central pawn and then developing the e2 knight. White can also first develop the knight, the advantage of that move order being that should Black attack the knight with his h-pawn, the former can jump to e4.
8...g3 c6 9.d3 and now:
A) 9...h5

10.0-0 White can also postpone castling and go for 10.w2 h4 11.e4 a6 12.f2 a5 13.e4. 10...h4 11.e4 a6;
A1) 12.f4 would lead to approximate equality after 12...a5 13.f5 exf5 14.xf5 g6 15.h2 0-0 (Black may consider taking the pawn on c4:
15.xc4 16.xc4 xc4 17.wf1 d5 18.xf7 d6! 19.xd6+ xd6, followed by castling queenside) 16.d2 d5 17.e2 xc4 18.xc4 xc4 19.xc4 dxc4 20.xc4 (the move 20.e4 looks like a possible improvement) 20...c5 and the game was later drawn in Ashley-Adams, New York 1996;
A2) 12.w2 a5 13.d2 13.f2 followed by e3-e4 is a logical alternative. 13...d5 14.xd5 xd3 15.wxd3 xd5 16.c4 16.h3, fixing the kingside, and only then deciding whether to push the c- or the e-pawn, was a possibility. 16...d7 17.b2 0-0 It's not easy to say whether Black should be happy with his pawn on h4, or if he would have been better off with his h-pawn on its initial square, Jussupow-Handke, Altenkirchen 2001.
B) 9...a6 10.0-0 10.e4 would transpose to our main line. Shirov is focused on pushing his f-pawn first.

10...a5 11.w2 c6 In the event of 11.d6 I guess Shirov's idea was to push 12.f4. After 11...c6:
B1) In case of 12.e4 Black seems to be doing reasonably well in the complications after 12...d5 13.exd5 cxd5 14.h5:
B11) In the event of 14...g6, tactics turn out to favour White after
Part 1: 4.e3 Various

15.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{d}g7+}} \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{d}}d7} \) 16.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{c}xd5}} \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{d}xd3}} \)
17.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{d}xe6+}} \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{f}xe6}} \) 18.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{w}xd3}} \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{f}f6}} \) 19.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{b}5+}} \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{e}7}} \) 20.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{g}5}} \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{x}g5}} \) (20...\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{f}7?}} \) is a blunder due to 21.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{xf6}} \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{w}xf6}} \)
22.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{d}7+}} \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{e}7}} \) 23.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{w}xe7+}} \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{e}xe7}} \) 24.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{f}e1}} \) 21.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{a}e1}} \);

B12) 14...\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{c}c4!}} \) 15.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{x}g7+}} \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{d}d7}} \);

B2) 12.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{f}4}} \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{d}5}} \) 13.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{c}xd5}} \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{d}xd3}} \)
14.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{w}xd3}} \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{exd5}}} \) 15.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{f}5}} \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{h}5}} \) with a complicated game, which is probably, due to the temporarily stranded knight on a5, somewhat favourable for White, as in the encounter Shirov-Adams, Las Palmas 1994.

8...\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{c}c6}} \) 9.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{g}3}} \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{a}6}} \)

With this move order, after 9...\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{h}5}} \) White can choose either 10.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{e}2}} \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{h}4}} \) 11.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{f}1}} \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{a}5}} \) 12.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{e}3}} \) or 10.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{e}5}} \).

10.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{d}d3}} \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{a}5}} \) 11.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{w}e2}} \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{d}6}} \) 12.0-0

12...\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{w}d7}} \)

Black follows the regular Sämisch Nimzo plan, as if his knight was on f6 and the e7 bishop did not exist. In this situation White often misses the important tempo move e4-e5, developing an initiative. Disturbing the white knight with 12...\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{h}5?}} \) now runs into a terrible attack after 13.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{f}4!}} \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{h}4}} \) (or 13...\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{g}6}} \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{f}5}} \) 14.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{h}5!}} \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{g}6}} \) 15.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{g}7+}} \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{f}8}} \) 16.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{xe6+}} \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{f}xe6}} \) 17.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{f}5}} \) and with the stranded \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{a}6}} \) and \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{a}5}} \), the black king does not have enough defenders on its side:

- 17...\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{e}xf5}} \) 18.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{xf5}} \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{xf6}}} \) 19.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{g}5!}} \) and White wins: 19...\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{g}7}} \) On 19...\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{xf5}}} \) 20.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{xf5}} \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{xf5}}} \) 21.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{e}6}} \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{xe6}}} \) 22.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{xf5}} \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{f}7}} \) 23.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{f}7+}} \);

- 17...\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{g}7}} \) 18.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{xf5}} \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{g}8}} \) On 18...\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{xf6}}} \) 19.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{e}5}} \) wins. 19.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{d}2}} \) and White wins in the attack: 19...\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{f}6}} \) 20.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{e}5}} \).

13.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{f}4!}} \)

With energetic play White obtains a strong initiative. The game continued: 13.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{b}1?}} \) As usual in such positions White has to use his extra space and his frequent advantage in development to develop an initiative before his pawn structure deficiencies start to be felt. 13...\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{h}5!}} \):

A) 14.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{e}1?!}} \) One more 'regular', timid move... 14...\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{h}4}} \) 15.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{f}1}} \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{c}5}} \) White
has missed his opportunities to take the initiative and now, due to his better pawn structure, Black was already slightly better in I. Sokolov-Johansen, Manila ol 1992: 16.\texttt{e}3 \texttt{e}8\texttt{?}.

B) For better or worse, White probably had to opt for the piece sacrifice 14.\texttt{f}4! \texttt{h}4 15.\texttt{h}5 \texttt{g}6 16.\texttt{g}7+ \texttt{f}8 17.\texttt{x}e6+ \texttt{x}e6 18.\texttt{d}5 (18.\texttt{f}5 loses to 18...\texttt{g}xf5 19.\texttt{x}xf5 \texttt{xc}4 20.\texttt{xc}4 \texttt{xc}4 21.\texttt{f}3 \texttt{c}6).

13...\texttt{a}4 14.\texttt{f}5 \texttt{xc}4 15.\texttt{fxe}6 fxe6 16.\texttt{h}5 \texttt{g}8

17.\texttt{f}4

White is better. If 17...0-0-0 18.\texttt{e}6! \texttt{xe}6?? Black's queen is trapped after 19.\texttt{b}5 \texttt{c}4 20.\texttt{g}4+.

**Conclusion**

The line I have chosen as the main line here is still relatively new and there is a lot to explore. The pawn structure pattern and the general plans resemble the Sämisch Variation of the Nimzo-Indian. A player who understands the ins, the outs and the dynamics of the classic Nimzo with a full centre and a doubled pawns structure is likely to prevail. I have explained the strategic principles of these positions in depth in my book *Winning Chess Middlegames*. For white players who are not happy with this pawn structure (and this is a matter of personal preference!), there are plenty of possibilities, as I have explained under 6.\texttt{d}2 and 6.\texttt{c}2. I have allocated a lot of space to both 6.\texttt{d}2 and 6.\texttt{c}2 because to me it is impossible to say which of the three continuations 6.\texttt{f}3, 6.\texttt{d}2 or 6.\texttt{c}2 is the best for White – or the most dangerous for Black.

In general, the 5...\texttt{e}4 line leads to a kind of battle that is strategically complicated, not exactly forced, with many options. White is probably better, but Black has his trump and the tables may turn. This variation is fully playable for Black. 5...\texttt{b}7 on the other hand is inferior and definitely not sufficient for equality.
Chapter 1.6

The Slow 4...b6 5.\( \text{d}e2 \) \( \text{a}6 \) 6.a3 \( \text{e}7 \)

Since the World Championship match Botvinnik-Smyslov, 1954, 5...\( \text{a}6 \) is considered to be the main move for Black. With 6...\( \text{e}7 \) Black keeps his bishop pair. However, this strategy costs precious time.

7.\( \text{f}4 \) d5 8.cxd5 \( \text{x}f1 \)

9.dxe6!

For many years (since the times of Botvinnik, Keres, Smyslov et al) this piece sacrifice has been analysed, with the final conclusion that with accurate defence by Black White does not get enough and may easily land in trouble. The old games and published analyses supported that opinion. Prior to writing this book, I never took the time to seriously check the consequences of 9.dxe6! and decided to believe established old theory. Then, in the summer of 2010, when I was already working on this book, I talked to Jan Timman about this position and he opined that the old analyses might not hold and, based on the new games, Black might be in trouble here. Jan had had a Dutch team competition game, which never found its way to a database, where he faced 9.dxe6 and realized that the move was stronger than he thought. He landed in a difficult position and later luckily escaped with a draw. This made Timman seriously analyse the position, coming to the conclusion that 9.dxe6 might even refute the whole line. I definitely agree with his opinion that
9.dxe6 is critical, and therefore it is my main line.
For the sake of reference, I give some important games with the old main line 9...exf6 10.g4 (Botvinnik’s idea in the 1954 World Championship):

- 10...g5! An important strategic idea, improving on Smyslov’s play. 11.Qd3 h5 12.Qxh5 Qxh5 13.Qe5 A more recent example was also good for Black: 13.Wf3 Wd7 14.Qe5 g4 15.Wxf6 Qxf6 16.Qxd5 cxd5 17.Qg1 c6 18.Qxg4 Qxh2 19.Qg8+ Qf8 20.Qe2 Qh4 21.Qd1 0-0 0-0 22.Qd2 Qe6 23.Qxd8+ Qxd8 and due to his better pawn structure (both sides have a dark-squared bishop, which favours Black here), Black was slightly better and went on to win in Hillarp Persson-Su.B. Hansen, Malmö/Copenhagen 2005. 13...c6 14.Wf3 Qc8 15.h3 Qbd7 16.e4 Qxe5 17.dxe5 g4 18.Wf4 Qe4 19.Oxe4 dxe4 20.Qxe4 Wd6 with an excellent game for Black in Filip-Pachman, Prague Zonal 1954. This game was played just after the World Championship match in 1954 – this variation being a hot theoretical topic at the time.

9...Qa6 10.exf7+ Qxf7

11.e4!!
According to the old theory this is one of two possibilities for White here.
- The other one was 11.Qb3+, when after 11...e8 12.Qe6
  A) 12...Wd6? is a mistake, losing after 13.e4
  A1) 13...Qc8 14.Qb5 Wc6 15.Qxc7+ Qd7 16.d5 – an opening catastrophe for Black; White soon won in Hooper-Donner, Hastings 1951/52;
  A2) 13...Qc6 also loses: 14.Qxg7+ Qd7 Or 14...Qd8 15.Qf4 Qd7 16.Qe6+ Qc8 17.d5. 15.Qb5 The black bishop on a6 stops White from castling and it is a good idea to exchange it. 15...Qxb5 15...Qa5?? 16.Wh3+. 16.Qxb5 Qd8 Other moves do not help Black either, e.g.
  16...Qxd4?? 17.Wf3+ Qe6 18.Qe6++; 16.Qag8 17.Wf5+ Qd8

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Part 1: 4.e3 Various

18.e5  \textit{d}7 19.exf6; or 16...\textit{e}8 17.\textit{f}5  \textit{e}6 18.\textit{x}c6. 17.\textit{f}4  \textit{d}4 18.\textit{d}3  \textit{d}7 19.\textit{x}d4  \textit{xd}4 20.\textit{e}6+  \textit{d}7 21.\textit{xd}4 with a winning position;

B) 12...\textit{d}7! Indeed, White’s initiative proves to be of a temporary character: 13.\textit{x}g7+  \textit{d}8 14.\textit{e}6+  \textit{e}8
In his \textit{Secret Notebooks}, Botvinnik opines that this position is better for Black, and he was right. 15.d5  \textit{b}7 16.\textit{f}4 16.e4? loses to 16...\textit{x}e4 17.\textit{xe}4  \textit{xd}5 18.\textit{c}3  \textit{xe}6 19.\textit{x}h8+  \textit{b}7 and White falls under a deadly attack. 16...\textit{d}6 17.e4  \textit{e}8 18.f3  \textit{x}f4 19.\textit{xf}4  \textit{xd}5 White does not have nearly enough for the sacrificed material. Black was better and went on to win in Volkov-Vitiugov, Tomsk 2006;

- A fresh idea in the position, 11.g4?!, does not work:

A) White is doing well in the event of 11...g5?! 12.\textit{b}3+  \textit{e}8 13.\textit{e}6  \textit{d}7 14.h4  \textit{b}7 (14...\textit{x}g4 15.hxg5) 15.hxg5!  \textit{x}h1 16.\textit{xf}6  \textit{xf}6 17.g5  \textit{d}8 18.e4. White has only two pawns for a rook, but has full domination thanks to his monster on e6. Black is in serious trouble here, for example: 18...\textit{c}6 19.d5  \textit{e}5 20.f4  \textit{f}3+ 21.\textit{f}2  \textit{h}6 22.g6  \textit{h}4+ 23.\textit{f}1  \textit{c}6 24.f5  \textit{xd}5 25.\textit{xd}5  \textit{c}8 26.g7  \textit{g}8 27.\textit{xb}6 and White should win this position;

B) But after 11...\textit{b}7! 12.\textit{b}3+  \textit{e}8 13.\textit{e}6  \textit{d}7 14.\textit{g}1  \textit{d}8 Black is getting coordinated, and White’s initiative is not worth a piece.

11...c5

Active counterplay in the centre is considered Black’s main chance here. This is probably the critical moment, since later on it is difficult to find an improvement for Black. He has a weak king, but does have a lead in development, so his strategy should be to give back his extra piece, keep the white king in the middle (i.e. the black bishop should stay on a6) and quickly obtain active play.

Moves that do not work for Black are:

- 11...\textit{d}7?! 12.e5  \textit{c}6 13.\textit{xf}6  \textit{xf}6 14.\textit{e}3  \textit{d}7 15.\textit{c}1! — apart from being a pawn up, White also has the better game here;

- 11...\textit{c}6? is a blunder due to 12.\textit{b}3+!, forcing the black king to a very unfortunate square: 12...\textit{e}8 13.\textit{a}4  \textit{b}7 14.d5 and White wins;

- In my opinion the critical move, which may save Black’s cause here, is 11...\textit{c}4!, protecting for the time being the weak light squares in Black’s camp.
12.e5 12...a4? does not work for White due to 12...xd4 13.e3 b5! 14.axb5 xe4. 12...c6! Black returns the piece, hoping to have enough compensation for the pawn. 12...d5? loses to 13.e6 g8 14.cxd5 xd5 15.h5+... 13.e3! White is in no hurry to get his piece back. In the event of 13.a4?! a5! 14.exf6 xf6 15.e3 e8 Black would indeed get excellent compensation as White has problems with his king in the middle:

A) 13.d6 forces White to get his material back and hence opens the position, but White is clearly better after 14.b3! a6 15.exf6 xf6 16.g4 h6 (16...xf6 17.d5) 17.xh6 xf6 18.e3;
B) 13.e8!

Playing for harmonious development. Here, matters are not easy for White. Eventually, he does have to get his piece back. However, taking on f6 would open the e-file, the white king cannot castle and Black would have active play. Initial analyses support the assumption that Black has sufficient compensation:

B1) If 14.e2! Black has four alternatives:

B11) White is clearly better in case of 14...xe5 15.c2! f3+ (15...xe2 16.dxe5 a6? 17.b3+ wins) 16.xf3 d5 17.g1;
B12) On 14...xe2? 15.xe2 xd4 16.c4+ wins;
B13) Or 14...c5 15.c2 xe2 16.dxc5 xe5 17.xe2 g5 18.h5! (18.d1 gxf4 19.axd8 axd8 20.0-0 fxe3) 18.d3+ 19.xf1 xc5 20.d1 xe7 21.cf6 xf6 22.h4 and White is better;
B14) 14...d5! is probably the only move for Black.
B142) 15.c2 and now:
B1421) 15...a5 does not seem to equalize after 16.b4 (16.xh7!?) 16...e2 17.e2 b7 18.xh7;
B1422) 15...xe2! 16.xe2 d7 Now the knight on c6 heads for e6: 17.xh7 g4 18.c2 d8 19.0-0 c6 with a sharp game.
B141) Another logical move for White is 15.d1. Black responds with 15...b5! and now it is difficult for White to continue his attack, for example 15...xe2?! is not good due to 16.b3! and White is clearly better after 16...a5 17.xd5+ xd5 18.xd5 c4 19.c7. 16.c4 The direct attempt 16.b3! does not work after 16...xe2 17.xe2 d7 followed by ...d8-e6; 16.0-0?, finishing development, deserves attention. 16.bxc4 17.a4 g5! An important move in Black’s defence. If 17...b8 White is better after 18.xc4 c6 19.c3. 18.xd5 xd5 19.0-0 White
does threaten ♗c3 or ♙f4 and has
some compensation, but after all Black
is a rook up;

B2) 14.♗c1 g5! Again an important
move. 14...♗d5? fails to 15.♕xd5
♕xd5 16.♗xc6! ♕xc6 17.♗b3+ ♘d5
18.♕xd5, winning. 15.♗xf6 The white
knight is badly placed on h3 after
15.♕h3 h6 16.exf6 ♘xf6. 15...♗xf6
15...gx6? 16.♕h5+. 16.♘e2 Or
16.♘h5 ♗xd4. 16...♗xf6 17.♗xc4 ♘a5
17...fxe3 18.♗xc6 exf2+ 19.♗xf2 looks
better for White. 18.♗c2 ♘xc4 Also OK
for Black is 18...fxe3 19.♗xc7+ ♘e7
20.♗xe7+ ♕xe7 21.fxe3 ♗g7 22.e4
♗e8 23.e5 ♕xe5 24.dxe5 ♕xe5. 19.♗xc4+
♗g7 20.♗xf4 ♘xd4 21.♘e6+ ♘xe6 22.♗xe6 ♗d3
and White still has to castle. The position
is very sharp, with many possibilities. Also
it is likely that I have missed something,
however this should be the way for
Black. If the line is to hold, 11...♗c4!
should be the move.

12.e5! 

An important improvement on the old
theory. Black is in serious trouble now.
White will get his piece back and re-
main a healthy pawn up.

• 12.d5?! ♗d6 13.♗e6 assures White
of an excellent knight on e6, however
this powerful knight does not get

enough support of the other white
pieces here: 13...♗e7 14.f4 ♘bd7
15.♗f3 ♘he8 16.g4 ♘f8 17.f5 ♘g8
18.♕f4 ♗d6+ 19.0-0-0
A) 19...♗b5 20.g5 ♗b4 and Black was
better and soon won in Hovhannisian-
Leenaerts, Eupen 2008;

B) Probably stronger was 19...♗e5
20.♗g3 ♘xe6 21.♗xe6 (or 21.♗xe5
♗xe5 22.♗xe5 ♗g5+ 23.♗b1 ♘d3+
24.♗a1 ♘d4 and Black wins)
21...♗d3+ 22.♗xd3 ♘xf4+ 23.♗xf4
♗xd3 24.♗d5 ♗b7 25.g5 ♘a6! and
Black wins;

• Old theory was based on 12.♗e3
♗c6 12...g5!? may be an improvement.
This move often throws White off bal-
ance in this line. 13.♗b3+ 13.e5? is
bad due to 13...♕xd4 14.exf6 ♘xf6
and Black is much better. 13...♗c4
14.♗d1?! White can improve with
14.♗a4 ♗c8 15.e5 ♗g4 16.e6+ ♗g8
17.d5. 14...♗d6! 15.e5 ♘xe5 16.♗xe5
♗xe5 17.♗d5 ♗e8 There is a material
balance, with Black having the better
game due to his bishop pair, in Lom-
bardy-Keres, Mar del Plata 1957.

12...♗e8

• 12...♗xd4 looks logical, but does
not work after 13.e6+! ♗g8 14.♗f3
♗c6 15.♗xc6 and Black does not get
nearly enough compensation for his
pawn deficit.
Chapter 1.6: The Slow 4...b6 5.\(\text{Q}e2\) \(\text{Q}a6\) 6.a3 \(\text{Q}e7\)

15...\(\text{Q}d8\) Or 15...\(\text{Q}c8\) 16.\(\text{Q}f3\) \(\text{Q}c4\) 17.\(\text{Q}e3\). 16.\(\text{Q}e3\) \(\text{Q}e5\) 17.\(\text{Q}a4\) g5 18.\(\text{Q}h3\) g4 19.\(\text{Q}g5\) \(\text{Q}d5\) 20.0-0-0 White is winning. 20...\(\text{Q}xe3\) 21.\(\text{Q}xd8+\) \(\text{Q}g7\) 22.\(\text{Q}d7\) 1-0 Kharlov-Zaja, Warsaw Ech 2005;

In case of 12...\(\text{Q}c6\) 13.\(\text{Q}xf6\) \(\text{Q}xf6\) it may seem that Black has active play compensating for the sacrificed pawn, however with a precise series of moves White gets a winning advantage:

14.\(\text{Q}b3+\) c4 15.\(\text{Q}a4\) \(\text{Q}e8+\) 15...\(\text{Q}e8+\) 16.\(\text{Q}e3\) \(\text{Q}a5\) 17.0-0 followed by \(\text{Q}ad1\), and White is a healthy pawn up; or 15...\(\text{Q}xd4?\) 16.\(\text{Q}xa6\) \(\text{Q}c2+\) 17.\(\text{Q}e2\). 16.\(\text{Q}e3\) \(\text{Q}a5\) 17.\(\text{Q}c2!\) White correctly trusts his calculation. Black gets good compensation after 17.\(\text{Q}xe8+\) \(\text{Q}xe8\) 18.0-0-0 \(\text{Q}c8!\). 17...\(\text{Q}b3\) 18.\(\text{Q}d1\) \(\text{Q}xd4\) 19.\(\text{Q}xd4!\) \(\text{Q}xd4\) 20.\(\text{Q}f5+\) \(\text{Q}f6\) 21.\(\text{Q}d5+\) \(\text{Q}f8\) 22.0-0 Black's pieces are terribly disorganized, and his king is in the middle. 22...\(\text{Q}d8\) 23.\(\text{Q}e6+\) \(\text{Q}e7\) 24.\(\text{Q}xd8\) \(\text{Q}xd8\) 25.\(\text{Q}c5+!\) \(\text{Q}xc5\) 26.\(\text{Q}xc5+\) \(\text{Q}f7\) 27.\(\text{Q}xa7+\) \(\text{Q}e7\) 28.\(\text{Q}xa6\) and White won in Kacheishvili-Friedel, ICC 2009 – excellent play by White.

12...\(\text{Q}xd4?!\) has not been tried in practice. It does not work for Black due to various reasons: 13.\(\text{Q}b3+\) \(\text{Q}e8\):

A) 14.\(\text{Q}xf6\) 14...\(\text{Q}xf6\) 15.\(\text{Q}b5\) The black king is weak on e8 – White is clearly better. 15...\(\text{Q}c7+\) Or 15...\(\text{Q}d7\) 16.a4; 15...\(\text{Q}xb5\) is also not good after 16.\(\text{Q}xb5+\) \(\text{Q}d7\) 17.\(\text{Q}b3\) 16.\(\text{Q}d1\);

B) White is also better after 14.\(\text{Q}e6\) \(\text{Q}d7\) 15.\(\text{Q}xg7+\) \(\text{Q}d8\) 16.\(\text{Q}f4!\) 16.\(\text{Q}e6+??\) loses to 16...\(\text{Q}c8\) 17.\(\text{Q}xf6\) \(\text{Q}xf6\) 18.\(\text{Q}e4\) \(\text{Q}e8\) and Black wins. 16...\(\text{Q}e8\) Or 16...\(\text{Q}c8\) 17.\(\text{Q}xf6\) \(\text{Q}xf6\) 18.\(\text{Q}d5\) \(\text{Q}xg7\) 19.\(\text{Q}cl+\). 17.\(\text{Q}e6+\) \(\text{Q}c8\) 18.\(\text{Q}e4\) \(\text{Q}c6\) 19.\(\text{Q}c1\) with a strong attack.

13.\(\text{Q}e3\) \(\text{Q}c6\) 14.\(\text{Q}b3+\) c4 15.\(\text{Q}a4\) \(\text{Q}a5\) 16.\(\text{Q}xf6\) \(\text{Q}xf6\) 17.0-0

The smoke has cleared, White is a healthy pawn up.

17...\(\text{Q}d6\) 18.\(\text{Q}fd5\) \(\text{Q}b7\) 19.\(\text{Q}xf6\) \(\text{Q}xf6\) 20.d5

With an extra pawn and an excellent position, White soon won in Aronian-Medvegy, Germany Bundesliga 2004/05.

**Conclusion**

9.dxe6 is critical and will establish itself as the new main line. Practical tests of 11...\(\text{Q}c4\) will be important for the viability of this line for Black – at least I do not see satisfactory improvements elsewhere.
Chapter 1.7

Exchange – 4...b6 5.\&e2 a6 6.a3 \&xc3+

With 6...\&xc3+ Black gives up his bishop pair (as usual in the Nimzo!), but on the other hand obtains quick development.

7.\&xc3 d5

White supports his c4 pawn and prepares (after a3-a4) the deployment of his bishop to the a3-f8 diagonal. This is the most logical and also by far the most played move here;

● A serious alternative is 8.\&f3. This idea is often seen in the 4.e3 b6 line. White prevents Black from capturing on c4, controls the e4-square (so Black cannot jump ...\&e4) and will follow up with an advance of the g-pawn. With this sharp plan White definitely takes risks and the tables can turn easily. To lovers of the g-pawn advance in this position, my advice is to also analyse my proposal of 9.g4!? which has not been played in practice yet—see the comments below:

A) 8...\&b7 – with the white queen on f3 and his subsequent g-pawn push, the h1-a8 diagonal becomes rather important. 9.g4 c5 Central counterplay is logical. 10.dxc5 and now:

A1) 10...\&c8?! would lead to a white advantage after 11.cxd5, when:

A11) 11...\&xd5 is a blunder due to 12.\&e4 followed by \&d6;

A12) Should Black try to be tactical with 11...exd5 12.\&b5+ \&f8 13.g5 d4, the tactics would work for White after 14.c6 \&xc6 14...\&xc6?? loses to
15. gxf6, 15. axc6 wxc6 16. wxc6 axc6 17. exd4 17. e2 d5 18. exd4, hanging on to the extra pawn, is also possible. 17... axd4 18.0-0 White has a clear initiative;
A13) 11... wxc5 12. e4 axd5 13. exd5 0-0 13... axd5? would lose a piece to 14. g2. 14. axf6 d6 15. g2 and White is a clear pawn up.
A2) 10... bxc5 looks playable for Black and should be tried in practice as an improvement;
A3) 10... dbd7!? Black plays for quick development. 11. axd5 exd5 and now:

A31) 12. db5 has been tried in practice. Black had an excellent game after 12... 0-0! 13. c6 he5 14. wxf4 axc6 15.0-0 d4 16. axc6 axc6 17. axd4 b5 in Aronian-Istratescu, Antalya 2004. 17... e8 also looks good;
A32) 12. cxb6! probably improves on existing theory. 12... wxb6 13. g2 h8 14. w3 d4 This pawn push is necessary, otherwise White castles and consolidates. 15. axd4 we6+ 16. axf6 axg2 17. axg2 axg2 17... dxb2 18.0-0 wxb4 19. ab1 is slightly better for White. 18.0-0 18. d1!?, trying to keep the extra pawn, is also possible. 18... axe3 19. fxe3 wxe3+ 20. h1 0-0 21. e1 w3 22. axd5 be8 23. e7+ bh8 24. d5 Due to the strong passed d-pawn, White has the initiative here;
B) In practice 8... 0-0 has also been tried:

B1) 9. e2 led to quick equality and a draw after 9... c5 10. dxc5 dbd7 (10... bxc5 is definitely a good option) 11. axd5 axe2 12. axe2 axc5 13. b4 db3 14. ab1 axc1 15. axc1 axd5 1/2-1/2 Taimanov-Spassky, Baku ch-URS 1961;
B2) 9. b4 and now:
B21) 9... c5 10. e2 wc8 Black has a lead in development, hence it makes sense to open up the centre and look for a tactical skirmish with 10... ac6!? 11. b5 axd4. 11. dxc5 bxc5 12. b5 db7 13. w3 dbd7 14.0-0 c6 15. axd5 axd5 with a balanced game in Hort-Mednis, Madonna di Campiglio 1974;
B22) 9... bxc6 is another possibility, since White cannot get tactical with 10. axd5?! axf1 11. dxe6?! axe6 (11... ac4, keeping the white king in the middle, also gives good compensation) 12. axf1 d5 13. we4 axc3 14. axe6+? (14. w6 was better) 14... w8 15. wc6 because of 15... ac5! 16. bxc5 af6 17. wb7 bxc5 and White is in trouble.
B3) 9. g4 This push is a principal follow-up on White's previous move.
B31) 9... db7 is arguably the most logical reply: 10. g5 de4 11. axe4 dx e4 12. w3 f5
B311) 13.\hfill d2! It is a good idea for White to keep the kingside files closed because it is Black who will get play there if they are opened. 13...\f5 14.h4 \w6 14...f4 15.\g4. 15.\e2 \d7 16.0-0-0 White has the advantage of the bishop pair – especially the dark- squared one placed on c3 will be strong –, mobile central pawns (c4, d4), and Black has rather limited counterplay here. White was better and went on to win in Aronian-Istratescu, Antalya 2004.

B312) A wrong strategic decision is 13.gxf6? since Black indeed gets tremendous play on the kingside files: 13...\xf6 14.\d2 \g6 15.\f4 \d7 16.\c3 e5! 17.\f5 17.dxe5 \c5. 17...exd4 18.\xd4 \e7 19.\h3 \c5 20.\xc5 \bxc5 21.\d7 \e5 White's f2 and h2 pawns are weak, and are clear targets. 22.0-0-0 \f8 23.\d2 \g6 24.\d1 \h5 25.\g2 \h6 26.\g1 \h4 White is losing material. 27.\f1 \x1 28.\x1 \xf2 and Black won easily in Mamedyarov-Istratescu, Antalya 2004. White lost that game because of his wrong strategic choice on the 13th move.

B32) 9...\c6, supporting the d5-square and keeping the bishop on the a6-f1 diagonal, may look a bit passive, but it is difficult to find an advantage for White: 10.b3 \b7 and now:

B321) If 11.g5 \e8 12.\xd5 (12.h4 \d6 is OK for Black) 12...\xf1 13.\xc6 \a6 White gets his material back and will be a pawn up, but his pawn structure is overextended and he is behind in development, so Black has strong compensation;

B322) 11.\b2 \xc4 12.\xc4 \c5 13.g5 \e8 with a sharp game in Bernasek-Stocek, Ostrava ch-CZE 2010;

B33) 9...\c8!? can be a good alternative and a possible improvement on 9...\b7. Black is now very flexible:

B331) If White goes for the direct 10.g5 Black is very active after 10...\e4 11.\xe4\xe4 12.\g4\c5 13.\xc5 13...\d7! White would have been better in the case of 13...\bxc5 14.\d2 \d7 15.\c3;

B332) 10.\g1 \b7 11.g5 \xc4! In the original game, White was better after 11...\e4 12.\xe4 \xe4 13.\h5 \d7 14.\d2 \c5 15.\c3 \xd4 16.\xd4
Chapter 1.7: Exchange - 4...b6 5...e2 a6 6.a3 xc3+
e5 17.g3 followed by h3 in Renet-Winants, Budel Zonal 1987. 12.e4 f6 7. For the time being White’s kingside attack isn’t going anywhere, while Black will get active counterplay in the centre by means of ...c7-c5 or ...e6-e5.

So 9...wc8 is probably better than 9...b7.

- Transactions like 8.cxd5 xf1 9...xf1 exd5 are good for Black. It is good for the second player to exchange light-squared bishops in these pawn structures. 10.f3

10...c6?! A strange move. The natural 10...0-0 11.f2 c5 followed by ...c6 is fine for Black. 11.f2 0-0 12.e1 e8 13.g1 w7 14.b3 Axd8 15.a2! This rook transfer, standard in such positions, is good for White here as well. 15...a5 16.d2 c6 17.b2 White is harmoniously developed, now he prepares the push e3-e4. 17...e6 18.a2! d7 19.c1 f6 20.c3 b7 21.d3 w6 22.a4a5 23.f2 followed by e3-e4, with a small plus for White, Mecking-Najdorf, Buenos Aires 1970;

- Taking space on the queenside with b4 is logical, however Black should be able to equalize:

  A) In the event of 8...0-0 9.b5 b7 White can opt for an interesting pawn sacrifice with 10.a4?! The position is bal-
Part I: 4.e3 Various

10...c5! White has a small advantage in the case of 10...\textit{\textit{d}d7} 11.\textit{\textit{w}xc4} \textit{\textit{w}c6} 12.\textit{\textit{w}xc6+} \textit{\textit{d}xc6} 13.\textit{\textit{d}d2}. 11.\textit{\textit{d}xc5} \textit{\textit{b}xc5} 12.\textit{\textit{w}xc4} \textit{\textit{d}bd7} 13.0-0 0-0 14.\textit{\textit{b}xc5} \textit{\textit{\textit{x}c}8} One practical example went 14...\textit{\textit{w}a5} 15.\textit{\textit{\textit{d}a}4} \textit{\textit{\textit{b}ab}8} 16.\textit{\textit{e}a2} \textit{\textit{\textit{\textit{d}e}5} 17.\textit{\textit{w}c2} \textit{\textit{\textit{f}c}8} 18.\textit{\textit{\textit{b}b}2} with White's advantage in Najdorf-Evans, Sao Paulo 1978. 15.\textit{\textit{\textit{d}a}4} Or 15.\textit{\textit{c}6} \textit{\textit{w}b6}. 15...\textit{\textit{\textit{x}c}5} and a draw is the most likely result.

8...0-0

The best move according to Botvinnik (and I agree with him here), the immediate 8...c5, is rarely played, however White cannot take direct advantage of it:

- 9.a4 White wants to place his bishop on a3 immediately, using the fact that the black king is still on e8. With precise play by Black, however, this does not lead to a white advantage:
  A) 9...\textit{\textit{\textit{c}c}6}? is a mistake: 10.\textit{\textit{\textit{a}a}3!} \textit{\textit{c}xd}4 11.\textit{\textit{\textit{b}b}5} \textit{\textit{e}e}4 12.\textit{\textit{\textit{c}c}d}5 The position opens up and now the black king on e8 is a problem. 12...\textit{\textit{d}xe}3 12...\textit{\textit{\textit{e}x}d}5 13.\textit{\textit{e}xd}4. 13.\textit{\textit{\textit{f}f}3} \textit{\textit{\textit{e}e}5} 14.\textit{\textit{f}xe}4 \textit{\textit{w}h}4+ 15.\textit{\textit{g}g}3 \textit{\textit{w}f}6 16.\textit{\textit{\textit{d}d}d}6+? The wrong check. It was necessary to keep the knight on b5, locking in the a6 bishop. The simple 16.\textit{\textit{\textit{a}a}2} \textit{\textit{\textit{f}f}3}+ 17.\textit{\textit{\textit{e}e}2}, with a piece up, was an easy win. 16...\textit{\textit{d}d}8 Now it's a draw. White has to give perpetual check. 17.\textit{\textit{\textit{x}f}7+} \textit{\textit{\textit{e}e}8} 18.\textit{\textit{\textit{d}d}6}+ \textit{\textit{\textit{d}d}8} 19.\textit{\textit{\textit{b}b}7+} \textit{\textit{\textit{e}e}8} 20.\textit{\textit{\textit{d}d}6+} \frac{1}{2} \frac{1}{2} Avrukh-Manor, Ramat Aviv 2000.
  B) Correct was 9...\textit{\textit{\textit{c}c}d}4! 10.\textit{\textit{w}xd}4. If 10.\textit{\textit{\textit{e}x}d}4 \textit{\textit{\textit{c}c}6} 11.\textit{\textit{\textit{c}b}5} 0-0 White is behind in development and may easily find his centre vulnerable: 12.\textit{\textit{\textit{a}a}3} (12.\textit{\textit{\textit{e}e}3} \textit{\textit{\textit{x}b}7}) 12...\textit{\textit{e}e}8 13.\textit{\textit{\textit{d}d}6} \textit{\textit{\textit{e}e}7}; 13...\textit{\textit{e}e}5! is also interesting. 10...\textit{\textit{\textit{c}c}6} 11.\textit{\textit{\textit{d}d}2} \textit{\textit{\textit{\textit{d}x}c}4} 12.\textit{\textit{\textit{b}b}5} \textit{\textit{\textit{x}b}5} 13.\textit{\textit{\textit{a}a}5} 14.\textit{\textit{\textit{d}x}c}4 0-0 Black will take \textit{\textit{\textit{d}xc}4} and the position will be about equal. White’s advantage is highly symbolic, if he has any.

- Probably best for White is 9.\textit{\textit{\textit{d}c}5} \textit{\textit{\textit{b}c}5} 10.\textit{\textit{\textit{e}e}2} White players looking for early adventures should investigate 10.g4?! 10...0-0 11.0-0, transposing to the line 8...0-0 9.\textit{\textit{\textit{e}e}2} c5 10.\textit{\textit{\textit{d}c}5} \textit{\textit{b}c}5 11.0-0 (Hort-Kaplan), which is better for White.

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

- In the event of 9.a4

A) Black immediately attacks the white centre with 9...c5! and gets a good game: 10.\textit{\textit{\textit{a}a}3} \textit{\textit{\textit{d}c}4} 11.\textit{\textit{b}c}4
  A1) The exchange sac 11...\textit{\textit{\textit{c}d}4}!? 12.\textit{\textit{\textit{e}x}d}4 (or 12.\textit{\textit{\textit{d}f}8} \textit{\textit{\textit{x}f}8} 13.\textit{\textit{\textit{e}d}4} \textit{\textit{\textit{c}c}6}) 12...\textit{\textit{\textit{c}c}6} 13.\textit{\textit{\textit{d}f}8} \textit{\textit{\textit{x}f}8} (13...\textit{\textit{\textit{g}g}8} 14.d5) just does not work after 14.\textit{\textit{\textit{d}d}3}! (14.\textit{\textit{\textit{e}e}2? \textit{\textit{d}d}8 is good for Black after 15.d5 \textit{\textit{\textit{b}b}4} 16.\textit{\textit{\textit{d}d}2} \textit{\textit{\textit{\textit{e}x}d}5} 17.\textit{\textit{\textit{d}d}5} \textit{\textit{\textit{d}e}5} 18.\textit{\textit{\textit{d}d}1} \textit{\textit{\textit{e}e}8}! and Black wins) 14...\textit{\textit{\textit{d}d}8} 15.0-0 \textit{\textit{\textit{d}d}4} 16.\textit{\textit{\textit{b}b}5} \textit{\textit{e}5} 17.\textit{\textit{\textit{b}b}1} \textit{\textit{\textit{c}c}5} 18.\textit{\textit{\textit{d}d}4} \textit{\textit{\textit{d}d}4} 19.\textit{\textit{a}a}5! and White is better;
  A2) 11...\textit{\textit{\textit{c}c}6} and now:
  A21) 12.\textit{\textit{\textit{d}c}5} is approximately equal after 12...\textit{\textit{\textit{b}c}5} 13.\textit{\textit{\textit{d}d}8} (otherwise Black plays ...\textit{\textit{\textit{d}d}5} 13...\textit{\textit{\textit{d}f}d}8) 14.\textit{\textit{\textit{\textit{d}c}5} White would be taking risks.
with 14.\( \text{b}5 \text{ b}7 \) 15.\( \text{xc}5 \text{ e}4 \) 16.\( \text{a}3 \) a6. 14...\( \text{a}5 \) 15.\( \text{e}7 \text{ dc}8 \) 16.\( \text{xf}6 \text{ xf}6 \);

A22) 12.\( \text{b}5 \) keeps the central tension:

A221) Again, the exchange sac just does not seem to work: 12...\( \text{cxd}4 \) 13.\( \text{xd}4 \) 13.exd4? is a blunder due to 13...\( \text{xb}5 \) 14.\( \text{xb}5 \) (or 14.\( \text{xf}8 \text{ xf}8 \)) 14...\( \text{xd}4 \) 15.\( \text{xd}4 \)\( \text{xd}4 \) 16.\( \text{xf}8 \text{ c}2+ \) and Black wins. 13...\( \text{xd}4 \) 14.\( \text{xf}8 \text{ xf}8 \) 15.\( \text{xd}4 \) 15.exd4? \( \text{xc}4 \). 15...\( \text{d}8 \) 16.\( \text{b}2 \text{ c}5 \) 16...\( \text{e}4 \) 17.\( \text{a}3 \) 17.\( \text{a}5 \) \( \text{xc}4 \) 18.\( \text{xc}4 \) \( \text{xc}4 \) 19.\( \text{xb}6 \text{xb}6 \) 20.\( \text{f}3 \)\( \text{d}1 \) 21.\( \text{f}2 \) and White has consolidated, remaining an exchange up;

A222) 12...\( \text{b}7 \) 13.\( \text{e}2 \) Here Black’s play from the World Championship match Botvinnik-Smyslov (which still constitutes the theory of this line) can be improved:

A2221) The abovementioned World Championship game went 13...\( \text{xe}4 \) 14.\( \text{f}3 \)! White trades the \( \text{e}2 \) for Black’s \( \text{c}6 \) here and then advances \( \text{f}2-\text{f}3 \), e3-\( \text{e}4 \), occupying the light squares in the centre. This is a useful plan to learn and remember. 14...\( \text{g}5 \) 15.\( \text{xc}6 \) By exchanging off the knight on \( \text{c}6 \), White takes Black’s pressure off his \( \text{d}4 \) pawn. 15...\( \text{xc}6 \) 16.\( \text{f}3 \)

White wants to take control of the light squares and advance his pawn centre.

16...\( \text{a}6 \) 17.\( \text{c}3 \) \( \text{f}5 \) A logical move. Unfortunately for Black, White’s central pawn advance is stopped only temporarily. It was better to opt for a tactical solution with 17...\( \text{xf}6 \)! 18.0-0 \( \text{f}8 \) and now after the obligatory 19.\( \text{e}2 \), Black can force a draw by perpetual after 19...\( \text{xf}3+ \) 20.\( \text{xf}3 \) \( \text{g}5+ \) 21.\( \text{f}2 \) (with 21.\( \text{h}1 \)? White can only get in trouble after 21...\( \text{xf}3 \) 21...\( \text{h}4+ \) 22.\( \text{g}1 \) 18.0-0 \( \text{f}6 \) 19.\( \text{d}3 \) White prepares his central advance. 19.a5!?, damaging Black’s queenside pawn structure, was also logical. 19...\( \text{f}8 \) 20.\( \text{d}5 \) \( \text{f}7 \) 21.\( \text{e}4 \) White’s central pawns are starting to roll. 21...\( \text{exd}5 \) 22.\( \text{cxd}5 \) \( \text{d}7 \) 23.\( \text{b}2 \) White’s bishop on \( \text{b}2 \) will become a monster 23...\( \text{e}5 \) 24.\( \text{e}2 \) \( \text{f}4 \) 25.\( \text{d}1 \) \( \text{b}5 \) 26.\( \text{f}2 \) \( \text{c}4 \) 27.\( \text{xb}5 \) \( \text{xb}5 \) 28.\( \text{w}d2 \) White was clearly better and went on to win in Botvinnik-Smyslov, World Championship match, 1957 (13);

A2222) Better is 13...\( \text{a}6 \)! and now:

A22221) 14.\( \text{xc}5 \) leads to a forced draw: 14...\( \text{xb}5 \) Black may get ambitious with 14...\( \text{bxc}5 \) 15.\( \text{dc}3 \) (15.\( \text{d}6 ?? \) is a blunder due to 15...\( \text{a}5+ \) 16.\( \text{f}1 \) \( \text{ad}8 \); or 15.\( \text{xc}5 ?? \) loses to 15...\( \text{a}5+ \) 16.\( \text{f}1 \) \( \text{fd}8 \) 15...\( \text{a}5 \) 15.\( \text{xb}5 \) \( \text{xc}5 \) 16.\( \text{wd}8 \) \( \text{fxd}8 \) 17.\( \text{bxc}6 \) \( \text{xc}6 \) 18.\( \text{xc}5 \) \( \text{xa}4 \);

A22222) 14.\( \text{c}3 \)
Part 1: 4.e3 Various

Now the exchange sac works for Black:
14...cxd4! 15...xf8 xf8 16.exd4
17...xf8 17...xd4 18.0-0
is a blunder due to 18...e4 and Black wins.
17...xc5 18.0-0 d8 19...c2
Black has one pawn for the exchange, a fantastic knight on d4, kingside attacking possibilities – these assets are worth more than an exchange here.
20...b2 g5 21.g3
21...c5 and Black is better.
B) 9...c6?!, preparing to attack the white centre with ...e6-e5, is also possible and was actually, amongst others, played by Fischer:
B1) 10...b2 does not suffice and can only be better for Black after 10...dxc4
11.bxc4 a5 12...b5 c6 13...a3 e7
14...c2 c5 15...e2 cxd4 16.exd4 f6
17.0-0 c6 18...f3 d5 as in Addison-Fischer, New York ch-USA 1965;
B2) The 'brilliant' idea 10.cxd5?
xf1 11.dxc6? xg2 12.g1 xc6
13.e4? xe4 14...h6 leads to disaster after 14...h4;
B3) 10...a3?! does not look logical in itself – Black prepares the ...e6-e5 break, so what does White do? He forces Black’s rook to the excellent e8-square: 10...e8 11...e2 e5 12.dxe5
xe5 13...xd5 xxd5 and now:
B31) In the event of 14.cxd5? xe2
15...xe2 (15...xe2 loses a pawn to 15...xd5 16.0-0 xb3) 15...g5
16.f1 d8 White's pieces are horribly undeveloped and discoordinated – way too high a price for one miserable pawn. Black went on to win in Petursson-Seul, Clichy 1991;
B32) After 14...xd5 h4 15...d4
16.exd4 xc4 17.bxc4 dxc4 Black was a clear pawn up in Lautier-Akopian, Enghien les Bains 2001.
B4) Ideas like 10.a5?! are interesting and here it leads to an unclear game after 10...dxc4 11.axb6 axb6 12.bxc4 e5
13.d5 a5 14...e2 e8;
B5) 10...e2! This developing move (White is seriously behind in development!) is the only road to advantage for White, who can actually easy get in trouble here.
B51) The thematic 10...a5 does not fully equalize after 11...e8 12.0-0
13...b5 e4 14...d3. A sharp continuation was 14.f3 xb5 15...e4
16.exd5?! (Perhaps 16...c2) 16...exd5 17...g4 b8? (17...dxc4!, sacrificing the exchange, looks strong) 18...f3 xb3 19...xf7+ h8 20...h5 and White had a dangerous attack in M. Gurevich-Liu Dede, Jakarta 1996;
B52) In the event of 10...d7 White's chances are to be preferred after 11.0-0 d8

B521) The thematic idea 12.a5! can be tried here. Play may continue:
12...dxc4 13.axb6 13.\(\mathcal{d}d2\) e5!
13...axb6 14.bxc4 \(\mathcal{a}5\) Or 14...e5
15.d5 \(\mathcal{a}5\) 16.\(\mathcal{a}4\). 15.\(\mathcal{w}c2\) An option is
15.\(\mathcal{a}4\). 15...\(\mathcal{w}c6\) 16.\(\mathcal{w}a4\) \(\mathcal{b}7\)
17.\(\mathcal{w}xc6\) \(\mathcal{a}xc6\) 18.\(\mathcal{a}3\) \(\mathcal{b}7\) 19.\(\mathcal{f}3\) and
this complex ending should be better
for White;

B522) With 12.\(\mathcal{a}5\) \(\mathcal{a}5\) 13.\(\mathcal{a}2\)
dxc4 14.bxc4 c6 15.\(\mathcal{a}3\) c5 16.\(\mathcal{w}c2\)
(16.dxc4 \(\mathcal{e}7\) was equal in
Alexandrov-Akopian, New Delhi/Tehran
2000) White should keep a space
advantage and central tension: 16...\(\mathcal{b}7\)
17.\(\mathcal{f}d1\) In general, this entire variation
is about White trying to keep his space
advantage and to keep his pawn centre
intact, and Black trying to use his lead
in development to break the white cen­
tre and get active play.

B53) 10...\(\mathcal{e}e8\) Preparing ...e6-e5.
11.0-0 Again 11.\(\mathcal{a}5!\) should be consid­
ered. To me it’s a bit strange that this
logical idea, often seen in similar pawn
structures, has not been used by White
in practice here. 11...e5 The central
counterplay attempt 11...dxc4 12.bxc4
\(\mathcal{a}5\) can be solved by White with a
standard knight pirouette: 13.\(\mathcal{b}5\) c6
14.\(\mathcal{a}3\). This manoeuvre is a standard
way for White to protect his weak c4
pawn in this line. 14...\(\mathcal{c}8\) 15.\(\mathcal{d}2\)
White has protected his weakness on
c4, he has more space, the bishop pair,
and was slightly better in I. Sokolov-
Bosman, Netherlands tt 1997. 12.\(\mathcal{f}3!\)
Provoking ...e5-e4, which is a standard
way to combat similar problems in this
line. White takes the dynamic element
out of the position and remains with a
better pawn structure. 12...e4 13.\(\mathcal{e}2\)
and White has a great Reversed French.

C) 9...dxc4 leads to a white advantage
after 10.\(\mathcal{a}3\) \(\mathcal{e}8\) 11.bxc4 \(\mathcal{a}6\)
12.\(\mathcal{e}2\):

C1) 12...\(\mathcal{w}d7\) 13.0-0 \(\mathcal{e}d8\) 14.\(\mathcal{w}c2\)
\(\mathcal{a}5\) 15.\(\mathcal{b}5\) With the bishop on a3
this is a standard way for White to solve
the problem of his weak pawn on c4.
Should the knight be attacked with...
c7-c6, it will jump to d6. 15...\(\mathcal{b}7\)
If 15...\(\mathcal{e}8\) (preparing ...c7-c6), then
16.\(\mathcal{b}4\). 16.\(\mathcal{f}3\) White has a space
advantage while his centre is not vulnera­
ble, as in Malakhatko-De Firmian,
Gjovik 2009;

C2) Or 12...e5 13.d5 Trying to pro­
voke ...e5-e4 with 13.\(\mathcal{f}3?\) is wrong
now due to 13...\(\mathcal{w}d7!\) 14.dxe5 \(\mathcal{e}e5\)
15.\(\mathcal{w}xd7\) \(\mathcal{xf}3+\) 16.gxf3 \(\mathcal{xd}7\).
13...\(\mathcal{a}5\) 14.\(\mathcal{b}5\) and White was better
in Avrukh-Barsov, Antwerp 1999;
In view of the abovementioned analyses
(especially Black’s exchange sac),
9.\(\mathcal{e}2\) is a better move than 9.a4. With
9.a4 White further delays his develop­
ment, which is per definition risky and
may land him in trouble, as in the given
variation.

When I was analysing material for
this book, one simple question crossed
my mind: if white players love the
move g2-g4 here so much, why do they
play f2-f3 first? Why not immediately
9.g4?! ? To my surprise this move has
not been tried in practice at all, so there
is a lot to explore. I shall give a few logi­
cal lines — at least what I think that
could be a logical run of play:
A) 9...c5 An immediate counterattack in the centre is always a typical response to a wing action. 10.g5 0e4 11.0xe4 dxe4 12...b2! White will have a lot of tactics connected to this strong bishop on the a1-h8 diagonal. 12.dxc5 brings, after a relatively forced sequence, just a very slight advantage in the ending, though it should be drawn: 12...d7 13.exb6 axb6 14...b2 0c5 15...xd8 0fxd8 16.b4 0d3+ 17...xd3 exd3 18...d2 0xc4 19...hc1 b5 20.a4. 12...0xg5 13.dxc5
A1) The ‘tempo-gaining’ 13...0d8?

B) Black may also choose to immediately open the a8-h1 diagonal with 9...dxc4:
B1) Throwing in 10...f3 does not bring White any advantage:
B11) 10...bd7 11.bxc4 c5 with a sharp game;
B12) Also possible is the sharp 10...d5!? 11.bxc4 (11...xc4 0b7) 11...xc3 12...xa8 e5 and in this type of position, White can easily suffer an opening catastrophe.

B2) 10.bxc4 0b7 11...g1 0d6 12.g5 0e4 13...xe4 0xe4 14...g4 After the ‘inventive’ 14...g4 0f5 15...f4 White’s rook looks a bit funny on f4, but this also has some advantages – the game is messy. 14...f5 15...g3 and perhaps White has a small edge;
C) If 9...b7 10...g2 White should be slightly better; 10...g1 is another possibility.

9...dxc4

- The major alternative to 9...dxc4 is 9...0c6 10.0-0 (10.a4 transposes to 9.a4 0c6 10...e2), which is a bit better for White:
A) To 10...a5 White responds with

B) White has a clear advantage after 12...dxc4 13.b4 0b7 14...g5. It is a good idea to provoke ...h7-h6 – for sacrifices with 0hxh6 later on. 14...h6 15...f4! followed by 0d2. Black’s 0a6 and 0b7 are horribly placed. In case of 15...h4 Black has the surprising and interesting 15...xe4!, viz.: 16...xd8
\[ \text{Chapter 1.7: Exchange - 4...b6 5.\textit{Q}e2 \textit{a}6 6.a3 \textit{Bxc3 +} } \]

\[ \text{\textit{Qxc3 17.\textit{Wc2 \textit{Qxe2} + 18.\textit{Wxe2 Bfxd8. Black has collected many pawns and has an excellent fortress.}} } \]

B) 10...\textit{dxc4} and now:

B1) 11.\textit{bxc4 a5 12.\textit{wa4 We8 13.\textit{Bb5 Wd7 14.\textit{Bb1 Mac8 15.\textit{Da2 c6}} } } \\

Now the original game continued 16.\textit{Cc3 c5 17.\textit{Wxd7 Qxd7 18.\textit{Bb5 Qxb5 19.Qxb5 a6 20.Bbb1 cxd4 21.Qxa5 d3! (an important zwischengezug, securing a knight outpost on c5) 22.Qxd3 bxax ½-½ Jussupow-Istratescu, Switzerland tt 2008. 16.\textit{Qd6?!} may be an improvement: 16...\textit{Wxd6 17.c5 Black seems to be OK in the ending after 17.Qxa5 bxax 18.c5 Qb5! 19.Qxb5 cxb5 20.cxd6 a6 21.Qfcl Qf8. 17...Qb5 18.Qxb5 cxb5 19.Qxa5 bxc5 20.dxc5 This looks better for White: 20...\textit{Wd3 21.\textit{Bxb5 Qe4 22.\textit{Bb4;}} } } \\

B2) An interesting idea is 11.\textit{Bb1}!?. To 11...\textit{a5}??, White plans to respond with b2-b4, winning material: 11...\textit{Wd7 11...Qd5 12.\textit{Qd2} is better for White. 12.\textit{Wd2 Qfd8 13.\textit{Ad1 Mac8 14.b4 Qb7 15.\textit{Bxc4 e5 16.d5 Qe7 17.e4 Qe8 18.b5 Qd6 19.Qd3 f5 20.f3 Hf8 21.a4 Hf7 22.Qa3 f4 23.Hbc1 and draw agreed in a better-for-White position in Ivkov-Andersson, Stockholm 1970; } } \\

\[ \text{\textit{Q}f9...c5 10.\textit{dxc5 bxc5 11.0-0 With hanging pawns in the centre Black misses a dark-squared bishop - White is better. 11...\textit{We8 12.\textit{Bb2 Qd8}} } \]

13.\textit{cxd5!} Perfect timing. 13...\textit{Qxd5} In the event of 13...\textit{exd5}, unpleasant is 14.\textit{Cc1 Qxe2 15.\textit{Wxe2 Qbd7 16.Qa4!} and Black does not have a good answer to the threat of \textit{Qxf6}. 14.\textit{Wc2 With the better pawn structure and a strong \textit{Qb2}, White had the advantage in Hort-Kaplan, Hastings 1975/76; } } \\

\[ \text{\textit{Q}6 If 9...\textit{Qbd7}?! 10.0-0 c5 Black’s d6-square is now weak and White is better after 11.a4! Hf8 12.\textit{Bb5 cxd4 13.exd4 e5 14.\textit{Qd6 Hf8 15.\textit{Qa3} as in Avrukh-Bunzmann, Biel 1999. } } \]

10.\textit{bxc4 Qc6 11.a4} \\

The immediate 11.\textit{Qb5} may initially look good for White after 11...\textit{Qa5 12.\textit{Qd2 c6 13.\textit{Qxa5 bxa5}.}} \\

After all, Black has a double a-pawn. However Black is active and gets a good

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Part I: 4.e3 Various

game: 14...c3 c5 15.a4 cxd4! 16.exd4 w6d6 17.0-0 w6ad8 White cannot maintain his structural advantage. 18.w2d2 w6xd4 19.w6xa5 w5e4 20.w6c3 w6c6 21.w6b5 w6b6 22.w6xb6 axb6 23.w6fd1 w6e4 ½-½ Botvinnik-Smyslov, Moscow Wch (m-7) 1957.

11...w6d7

If 11...w6a5 White uses a well-known theme (already mentioned earlier): 12.w6a3 w6e8 Or 12...c5 13.w6b5. 13.w6b5 Should the white knight be attacked, it will jump to d6. White was better in Donner-Kupper, Venice 1967.

12.w6b5 w6fd8

13...w6b2!

Here, playing for the known 'jump to d6' theme does not work so well for White after 13.0-0 w6a5 14.w6a3 c6 15.w6d6 c5! 16.w6xc5 bxc5 17.w6b5 w5e7 and Black is OK.

13...w6a5 14.w6c2 c6 15.w6a3

As often happens in this line, White has more space and the bishop pair advantage. If he manages to keep his pawn centre intact, he is likely to be better.

15.w6e7 16.0-0 c5 17.w6b5 w6b7 18.w6a3 w6c6

It probably made sense to play 18...a6!? 19.w6c3 w6c7 now that White’s c4 pawn is targeted, so White cannot keep his pawn centre intact and has to take on c5, which in general should bring Black closer to equality. 20.w6xc5 bxc5 21.w6fd1 h6 22.w6ab1 White has just a small advantage.

19.w6fd1 a6 20.w6c3 w6b4 21.w6b3 a5 22.w6b5

The white knight returns to its excellent post.

22...h6 23.w6b2 w6ac8 24.w6ac1

Conclusion

In his Secret Notebook Botvinnik concludes here that White is better, and he is right. The position is strategically complicated, with many positional and tactical nuances. With precise play, however, White should have some advantage in this line. In the actual game the Patriarch was less accurate with 24.w6f3 and after 24...w6xd4 25.w6xd4 w6b5 26.w6f1 w6g5 Black had kingside counterplay in Botvinnik-Smyslov, 7th match game, Moscow 1957.
Chapter 1.8

The Nimzo Knight Move – 4...b6 5.\(\text{\#}e2\) \(\text{\#}a6\)

6.\(\text{\#}g3\)

Arguably this is the most logical, the most 'Nimzo' move. White is ready to gain space with the e3-e4 push and does not mind the doubling of his c pawn, should Black take on c3. 6.\(\text{\#}g3\) is a rather straightforward way for White to fight for an opening advantage in this line, and is in my opinion probably the most dangerous for Black.

6...

\(\text{\#}xc3+\)

Black would like to play ...d7-d5, but he cannot here because 6...d5?? blunders a piece to 7.\(\text{\#}a4+\). So Black first has to take on c3. Black has a range of other possibilities here, however (in my opinion at least) none of them equalizes.

- Black can try to disturb the white knight on g3 with an immediate 6...

\(\text{h}5\).

A) Now it is not wise for White to ignore Black's h-pawn advance with 7.\(\text{\#}d3?!\), since after 7...

\(\text{h}4\) 8.\(\text{\#}e2\) \(\text{\#}b7\)

9.0-0 9.\(\text{\#}d6\) (9.\(\text{\#}g1!!\) can be tried here)

9...\(\text{h}3\) 10.g3 \(\text{\#}f3!\) 11.\(\text{\#}c2\) \(\text{\#}c6\) only Black can be better (Smejkal-Hort, Luhacovice 1971);

B) 7.\(\text{h}4\) Now for the assessment of the position it is important to establish who profits from the inclusion of 6...h5 7.\(\text{h}4\). On the one hand, the white knight on g3 is vulnerable after Black's ...

\(\text{\#}d6\) and has to be either protected with \(\text{\#}h3\) or moved back to e2; on the other hand, should Black castle kingside, then the inclusion of ...h5-h4 may have weakened the pawn structure around his king. 6...h5 is one of the most critical lines after 6.\(\text{\#}g3\) and its assessment is important for the entire variation:
B1) 7...\texttt{\textbf{\textit{dxc3+}}}? 8.bxc3 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{d5}}} is not the way for Black to take advantage of the 6...\texttt{\textbf{\textit{h5}}} 7.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{h4}}} inclusion, because compared to the regular 6...\texttt{\textbf{\textit{dxc3}}} 7.bxc3 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{d5}}, this inclusion can only benefit White here:} 9.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{f3}}} \texttt{\textbf{\textit{b7}}}. Or 9...\texttt{\textbf{\textit{c6}}} 10.e4 dxe4 11.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{x}}xe4} \texttt{\textbf{\textit{dxe4}}}. 12.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{w}}xe4} with a clear white advantage in Bouwmeester-Hecht, Hengelo 1970. 10.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{d3}}} c5 11.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{cxd5}}} \texttt{\textbf{\textit{wxd5}}}. 12.e4 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{w}}xd8} 13.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{g5}}}. Black would definitely have preferred to have the pawns on h7 and h2 here. 13...\texttt{\textbf{\textit{cxd4}}} 14.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{c}}b5+!} \texttt{\textbf{\textit{c6}}} 15.e5! and White soon won in Gligoric-Rubinetti, Palma de Mallorca Interzonal 1970.

B2) 7...\texttt{\textbf{\textit{b7}}} The bishop returns to the a8-h1 diagonal in order to stop e3-e4 and also prepare ...\texttt{\textbf{\textit{c7-c5}}}, since White's reply d4-d5 would now lose a pawn. With the bishop on b7 Black can also play ...\texttt{\textbf{\textit{d6}}}, hitting the \texttt{\textbf{\textit{g3}}}, since White would not have \texttt{\textbf{\textit{cge4}}}. White has a range of possibilities here:

B21) 8.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{d2}}} is a useful developing move; deciding later on his course of action is rather logical for White here. 8...\texttt{\textbf{\textit{d6}}} The most logical reply. In practice 8...a5 has also been played, and after 9.a3 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{d6}}}. I do not see any reason for Black to include 8...a5 9.a3, because in my opinion it can only benefit White - square b4 in his camp is covered, which is useful, Black may get a 'hole' on b5, which is also useful for White, and advantages for Black I do not see, so there is no point in analysing 8...a5. 8...a6 has also been played, and this makes more sense than 8...a5, however it's a bit slow and White is better after 9.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{w}}c2}. White has a clearly good version of the 8.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{w}}c2} line.

B211) 9.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{h3}}} is a standard way for White to defend the g3 knight in this line, which also make use of the fact that the white h-pawn is on h4. White's rook on h3 may look a bit clumsy, but actually in many lines this rook is actively deployed in a kingside attack. 9...\texttt{\textbf{\textit{c6}}} There is one practical example with 9...a6, which is too slow: 10.d5! exd5 11.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{cxd5}}} \texttt{\textbf{\textit{wxd5}}}. 12.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{xh5}}} \texttt{\textbf{\textit{e5}}}. 13.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{xd5}}} \texttt{\textbf{\textit{cxd5}}}. 14.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{c3}}} \texttt{\textbf{\textit{xc3+}}} 15.bxc3 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{b7}}}. 16.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{xg7+}}} and White had a material advantage and a better position in Cherepkov-A. Ivanov, Minsk 1985.

Here White can force rather concrete play with 10.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{b5}}} (the positional choice is 10.f3): 10...\texttt{\textbf{\textit{e7}}} 11.d5! Again, please notice that with 8...a5 9.a3 included this position would have already been almost winning for White. 11...\texttt{\textbf{\textit{exd5}}} 12.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{cxd5}}} \texttt{\textbf{\textit{cxd5}}}. White has plenty of tactics for the sacrificed pawn. 13.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{f5}}} \texttt{\textbf{\textit{f6}}}. White gets a winning advantage in the case of 13...\texttt{\textbf{\textit{g6}}}? 14.e4 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{f6}}} 15.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{xex7}}} 14.e4 \texttt{\textbf{\textit{de7}}}. 15.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{bd6+}}}! \texttt{\textbf{\textit{cxd6}}} 16.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{cxd6+}}} \texttt{\textbf{\textit{e8}}} 17.\texttt{\textbf{\textit{w}}b3!} \texttt{\textbf{\textit{e5}}}
18.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{c}}}c3} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{d}}}7c6} 19. \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{0}}}0-0-0} followed by \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{f}}}2-f4} or \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{a}}}xb7}. White gets his material back, while his attack continues.

B212) In practice \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{g}}}ge2} c5 10.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{d}}}5} has also been tried. White has to go for Benoni-type play. The neutral 10.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{w}}}c2} is wrong here because of 10...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{c}}}c6} 11.a3 cxd4 12.exd4 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{a}}}c8} 13.b4 a5 14.b5 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{e}}}e7} 15.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{w}}}d3} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{f}}}f5} 16.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{g}}}g1} (White has made too many moves with his g1 knight, and is seriously behind in development) 16...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{b}}}b8} 17.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{f}}}f3} d5 and Black was clearly better in Obodchuk-Onischuk, Poikovsky 2002. 10...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{w}}}e7} It is useful to note that Black's situation would have been rather bad here had the moves 8...a5 9.a3 indeed been included. The Benoni-like 10...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{e}}}exd5} 11.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{d}}}xd5} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{a}}}xd5} 12.cxd5 is slightly better for White, when 12...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{c}}}cxd5}?? would be a terrible blunder, losing a piece to 13.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{c}}}c1} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{b}}}b4} 14.a3. 11.e4

11...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{e}}}exd5} 12.exd5 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{e}}}e5} 13.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{w}}}c2} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{g}}}g4} 14.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{e}}}e4} f5 15.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{g}}}g5} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{f}}}f7} 16.f3 White's play can probably be improved with 16.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{e}}}e4} c3 and only then \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{f}}}2-f3}, when White is slightly better. Black has created a few kingside weaknesses, while his \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{b}}}b7} is a 'dead piece' for the time being. 16...\textit{x}xe4 17.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{f}}}xg4} 0-0 18.0-0-0 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{a}}}a6} 19.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{c}}}c3} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{a}}}ae8} with a messy game in Del Rio Angelis-Cornette, La Roda 2009. Again is useful to notice how convenient the inclusion of 8...a5 9.a3 would have been for White;

B22) An interesting alternative is 8.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{w}}}d3}??, threatening the immediate 9.e4, and now:

![Diagram]

B221) In case of 8...c5 9.a3 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{w}}}xc3+} 10.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{w}}}xc3} d6 11.b3 we have a sort of 4.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{w}}}c2} line type of position, with the white knight on g3 instead of f3 and the inclusion of ...h5-h4. 11...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{b}}}bd7} 12.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{b}}}b2} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{w}}}c7}! Delaying castling in order to be able to capture on g2 should White immediately develop \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{e}}}e2}, and also targeting the g3-square. White is better in the event of 12...0-0 13.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{e}}}e2} followed by 0-0. 13.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{f}}}f3} In order to castle, White has to weaken the g3-square. 13...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{d}}}d5} 14.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{f}}}f2} 0-0 15.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{e}}}e2} We have a position where White is not happy with his king on \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{f}}}2}, but Black is also not happy with his pawn on h5;

B222) 8...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{d}}}d5} 9.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{c}}}xd5} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{e}}}exd5} 10.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{w}}}c2} c5 10...g6??, taking away square f5 from the white g3 knight, deserved attention, in order to be able after 11.a3 to retreat 11...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{d}}}d6}, hitting White's g3 knight and making use of the fact that the white pawn is already on h4. The immediate 10...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{d}}}d6}?! is, to say the least, very risky for Black after 11.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{f}}}f5} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{f}}}f8} 12.e4! dxe4 13.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{g}}}g5} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{d}}}d7} 14.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{e}}}e3} with a white initiative. 11.a3, and now 11...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{c}}}cxd4} was not an easy decision for Black. In the
Part I: 4.e3 Various

case of 11...\(\text{\check{}}\text{x}c3+\) 12.\(\text{\check{}}\text{xc}3\) \(\text{\check{}}\text{bd}7\) 13.\(\text{\check{}}\text{e}2\) Black would have definitely preferred to have his h-pawn back on h7. 12.\(\text{\check{}}\text{xb}4\) \(\text{dxc}3\) 13.\(\text{bxc}3\) Delaying the capture on c3 with the developing move 13.\(\text{\check{}}\text{e}2\) is always an interesting option in positions like this (regardless whether the black pawn is on h7 or h5), since White always get tremendous compensation due to his powerful bishop pair after 13...\(\text{\check{}}\text{xb}2\) 14.\(\text{\check{}}\text{xb}2\) \(\text{\check{}}\text{e}5\) 16.\(\text{c}4!\) \(\text{\check{}}\text{e}8\) A principled decision. Black is playing for a central break. It is understandable that he was worried about his kingside in the event of 16...\(\text{\check{}}\text{xc}4\) 17.\(\text{\check{}}\text{xc}4\) \(\text{dxc}4\) (17...\(\text{\check{}}\text{c}8\) falls to 18.\(\text{\check{}}\text{xc}2!\) followed by \(\text{\check{}}\text{d}5\) 18.\(\text{\check{}}\text{xc}4\) \(\text{\check{}}\text{d}7\) 19.\(\text{\check{}}\text{f}4\) 17.\(\text{c}5!\) \(\text{bxc}5\) 18.\(\text{bxc}5\) \(\text{d}4!\)

Necessary! This game was a principled, quite spectacular battle, which is why I give it almost in full: 19.\(\text{\check{}}\text{d}6!\) If 19.\(\text{\check{}}\text{xd}4\) \(\text{\check{}}\text{e}4\) with good compensation for Black. 19...\(\text{dxe}3\) 20.\(\text{f}4!\) White's knight on d6 is paralysing Black and must stay there. 20.\(\text{\check{}}\text{xb}7??\) would be a blunder due to 20...\(\text{\check{}}\text{xf}2+\) 21.\(\text{\check{}}\text{xf}2\) \(\text{\check{}}\text{d}4\) 22.\(\text{\check{}}\text{g}1\) \(\text{\check{}}\text{e}7\) 23.\(\text{\check{}}\text{h}3\) \(\text{\check{}}\text{xb}7\) and Black has got his piece back. 20...\(\text{\check{}}\text{d}4\) 21.\(\text{c}4!\) Please take note of the attacking power of the \(\text{\check{}}\text{b}2\), \(\text{\check{}}\text{c}4\), \(\text{\check{}}\text{d}6\), \(\text{\check{}}\text{c}2\) pieces – here Black would really have preferred to have his h-pawn back on h7. 21...\(\text{\check{}}\text{e}7\) Or 21...\(\text{\check{}}\text{d}5\) 22.\(\text{\check{}}\text{xd}5\) \(\text{\check{}}\text{xd}5\) 23.\(\text{\check{}}\text{c}4\). 22.\(\text{\check{}}\text{g}6!\) Life would have been so much easier for Black with his h-pawn at its starting position! 22...\(\text{\check{}}\text{e}4!\) Cool defence. 23.\(\text{\check{}}\text{g}5\) Black gets a winning advantage in case of 23.\(\text{\check{}}\text{xf}7+?\) \(\text{\check{}}\text{f}8\) 24.\(\text{\check{}}\text{xe}4\) \(\text{\check{}}\text{xe}4\) 25.0-0 \(\text{e}2\) 26.\(\text{f}e1\) \(\text{\check{}}\text{c}7\) 23...\(\text{e}2\)

24.\(\text{h}3!\) The \(\text{h}1\) joins the attack! 24...\(\text{c}b8\) 25.\(\text{c}c3\) \(\text{\check{}}\text{c}2\) 26.\(\text{g}3\) Please note the perfect attacking harmony of the \(\text{\check{}}\text{c}3\), \(\text{\check{}}\text{c}4\), \(\text{\check{}}\text{d}6\), \(\text{\check{}}\text{f}5\) and \(\text{\check{}}\text{g}3\) pieces. On the other hand, Black's e2 pawn protects White's king on e1 excellently. 26...\(\text{\check{}}\text{f}8\) 27.\(\text{\check{}}\text{g}4!\) \(\text{h}xg4\) 28.\(\text{h}5\) followed by h5-h6, and Black's position collapsed in Knaak-Bronstein, Tallinn 1979. An impressive game! 8.\(\text{\check{}}\text{d}3\) is a serious alternative for White, and black players willing to employ 7...h5 should subject this move to thorough analysis – my proposal of 10...\(\text{g}6?!\) should be one of the points of investigation.

B23) Another interesting alternative is 8.\(\text{\check{}}\text{c}2\). The idea of this move is similar to that of 8.\(\text{\check{}}\text{d}3\), but it has some deficiencies, as the squares d4 and g3 are not covered. 8...\(\text{\check{}}\text{e}7\) Black can try to improve with 8...\(\text{\check{}}\text{d}6\) 9.\(\text{\check{}}\text{h}3\) (if 9.\(\text{\check{}}\text{ge}4\) \(\text{dxe}4\) 10.\(\text{\check{}}\text{xe}4\) \(\text{\check{}}\text{e}7\) White cannot conveniently defend his h4 pawn) 9...\(\text{\check{}}\text{c}6\) 9.e4\(\text{\check{}}\text{c}6\) 10.\(\text{\check{}}\text{d}1\)
10...d6 White has an advantage in the event of 10...e5 11.dxe5 Qxe5 12.Qe2 g6 13.f4. 11.d5 There is no reason for White to hurry with this pawn push. It looks more natural to first develop. White’s play can be improved with 11.Qe2 when he has a space advantage and is better, for example: 11...e5 12.Qf5 g6 13.Qxe7 Wxe7 14.d5 Qd4 15.Qe3 Qxe2 16.Wxe2. 11...Qe5 12.Qge2 exd5 13.cxd5 c5 14.dxc6 Qxc6 15.Qd4

B23) Here Black could have opted for 15...Qxe4! with complications:

16.Qxc6 White has no compensation for the sacrificed material in the event of 16.Qxe4? Qxe4 17.Qb5+ Qf8 18.0-0 Qxh4. 16...Qc3 17.Qd8 Qxd1 18.Qb7 Qg4! 19.Qb5+ Qf8 20.0-0 Qxf2 21.0xf2 0xf2 22.Qxf2 Qxh4+.

B231) 15...Qd7 16.Qe2 and White had some advantage in Ogaard-Bronstein, Reykjavik 1974.

B24) Amongst other white alternatives, the move which probably deserves the most attention, 8.a3, is rarely played but not without venom. Black can choose between the standard 8...Qd6 retreat or the Sämisch-type 8...Qxc3+ 9.bxc3 c5 With the inclusion of ...h5-h4, this is a strange Sämisch. The position is new and for a white player willing to enter unexplored territory this can be an interesting option;

7.e4 is White’s principled follow-up on 6.Qg3. In general White has to be energetic in this line. Black has three logical options here, however none equalizes:

A) 7...Qc6:

A1) 8.Qd3 A logical developing move. White uses the tactical motif that 8...Qd4? blunders a piece to 9.Wa4 Qa5 10.b4. Now White has harmonious development and is better:

A1.1) 8...d5 Here Black is going to have similar problems to those in the 7...d5 line. 9.Qxd5 Qxd5 10.Wxd3 exd5 11.e5 Qe4 12.a3 Qxc3+ 13.bxc3 f5

B25) The pawn sacrifice 8.Qd3?! Qxg2 9.Qg1 Qb7 is rather speculative and, objectively, probably not good.

• An often-played continuation here is 6...Qe6. Black brings his king to safety, later deciding on his course of action. With precise play White is better here: 7.e4 Black is fine in the case of 7.Qd3 d5; 7...c5 is also OK.
Again it is important for White to keep his knight on the board and exchange his e4 knight: 14...\(\text{Q}xe2\) \(\text{Q}a5\). Here also, 14...\(\text{Q}g5\) has a direct drawback: it simply loses a pawn after 15.\(\text{W}b5\) \(\text{Q}a5\) 16.\(\text{Q}xg5\) \(\text{W}xg5\) 17.\(\text{W}xd5+\). 15.\(\text{h}4\)! White threatens 16.\(\text{f}3\), the black knight on e4 is trapped. 15...\(\text{Q}b3\) 16.\(\text{Q}b1\) \(\text{Q}xc1\) 17.\(\text{Q}xc1\) \(\text{f}4\). The only way to save the knight, but now Black simply loses a pawn for no compensation. 18.\(\text{W}f3\) \(\text{W}e7\) 19.\(\text{c}4\) 20.\(\text{c}xd5\) \(\text{c}xd5\) 21.\(\text{Q}xf4\) \(\text{W}d7\) 22.\(\text{g}3\) \(\text{W}b5\) 23.\(\text{W}e2\) and White went on to win in Portisch-Spassky, Moscow 1967; A12) In case of 8...\(\text{e}5\) 9.\(\text{d}5\) White gets nice Sämiscl-type play: 9...\(\text{Q}a5\) 9...\(\text{Q}xc3+\) 10.\(\text{bxc}3\) \(\text{Q}e7\) 11.\(\text{Q}g5\) is better for White; 11.\(\text{h}4\) is also OK. 10.\(\text{W}e2\) \(\text{Q}xc3+\) 11.\(\text{bxc}3\) 20 12.\(\text{Q}f5\) \(\text{Q}e8\) 13.\(\text{f}4\)! White gets a strong kingside attack, while Black’s \(\text{Q}a5\) and \(\text{Q}a6\) are ‘sleeping in a different hotel’. 13...\(\text{W}c7\) 14.\(\text{fxe}5\) \(\text{W}xe5\) 15.0-0 \(\text{f}6\) 16.\(\text{Q}f4\) \(\text{W}xc3\) 17.\(\text{Q}ac1\) \(\text{W}a3\) The \(\text{W}a3\), \(\text{Q}a5\), \(\text{Q}a6\), \(\text{Qa}8\) are all piled up on the a-file. 18.d6 and White had a winning attack in Spassky-Hübner, Munich 1979. A2) White players looking for tactical trouble may opt for the sharp 8...\(\text{Q}g5\)!? \(\text{h}6\) 9.\(\text{h}4\). I do not really see the point of this mess, since 8.\(\text{Q}d3\) is just better for White. For reference I will give a few lines. Anyone who actually decides to play this with white should analyse the consequences deeply. However, black players willing to enter this line had better have a clear idea what to do here, because looking for a solution over the board can prove a difficult exercise: A21) 9...\(\text{hxg}5\)? leads to disaster after 10.\(\text{hxg}5\) and Black is probably already lost: 10...\(\text{g}6\) Or 10...\(\text{Q}xd4\) 11.\(\text{e}5\). 11.\(\text{e}5\) \(\text{Q}h7\) 12.\(\text{W}g4\) \(\text{Q}g7\) 12...\(\text{Q}xg5\) fails to 13.\(\text{Q}e4\) \(\text{Q}e7\) 14.\(\text{Q}xg5\) \(\text{Q}xg5\) 15.\(\text{Q}e4\). 13.\(\text{Q}h5+\) \(\text{gxh}5\) 14.\(\text{W}xh5\) \(\text{Q}h8\) 15.\(\text{W}h6+\) \(\text{Q}g8\) 16.\(\text{Q}d3\) and White soon won in Vaisser-Dautov, Baden-Baden 1995; A22) If 9...\(\text{Q}xd4\)? White continues with 10.\(\text{e}5\) and Black has a terrible position: 10...\(\text{Q}c6\) 10...\(\text{hxg}5\) loses to 11.\(\text{hxg}5\) and Black falls under a deadly attack. 11.\(\text{Q}xf6!\) \(\text{gx}f6\) 12.\(\text{W}g4+\) \(\text{Q}h8\) 13.\(\text{W}f4\) and Black is mated: 13...\(\text{Q}h7\) 14.\(\text{Q}d3+\) \(\text{f}5\) 15.\(\text{Q}xf5\); A23) 9...\(\text{d}6\) is the best move: 10.\(\text{Q}c1\) \(\text{hxg}5\) 11.\(\text{hxg}5\) \(\text{g}6\) 12.\(\text{gx}f6\) \(\text{W}xf6\) 13.\(\text{a}3\) \(\text{Q}xc3\) 14.\(\text{Q}xc3\)! White firmly believes in his attack. Now: A231) In case of 14...\(\text{Q}xd4\) White seems to have a winning attack again after 15.\(\text{W}d2\) \(\text{Q}b7\) 16.\(\text{Q}h5\) \(\text{W}e5\) 17.\(\text{W}h6\) \(\text{Q}fd8\) 18.\(\text{f}4\)! \(\text{W}h8\) 19.\(\text{W}g5\) \(\text{Q}f8\) 20.\(\text{h}3\) \(\text{Q}c2+\) 21.\(\text{Q}e2\) \(\text{W}xb2\) 22.\(\text{Q}f6\) \(\text{Q}d4+\) 23.\(\text{Q}e1\) \(\text{W}c1+\) 24.\(\text{Q}f2\) \(\text{W}d2+\) 25.\(\text{Q}g1+\) \(\text{Q}c6\) 26.\(\text{Q}h7\) 26.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{W}a5\) 27.\(\text{f}5\) also looks winning. 26...\(\text{W}d4+\) 27.\(\text{Q}h2\) and the black king cannot escape the mating net; A232) 14...\(\text{W}xd4\) 15.\(\text{Q}c1\) \(\text{Q}fd8\) 16.\(\text{Q}e2\) White is attacking with literally all his pieces and it is difficult to defend this, especially in a practical game. 16...\(\text{W}e5\) 17.\(\text{W}h6\) \(\text{W}g7\) 18.\(\text{W}f4\) \(\text{Q}f8\) 19.\(\text{c}5!\) \(\text{Q}xe2\) 20.\(\text{Q}xb6\) \(\text{Q}b5\) 21.\(\text{bxc}7\)
Chapter 1.8: The Nimzo Knight Move - 4...b6 5.\texttt{\textregistered}e2 \texttt{\textregistered}a6 6.\texttt{\textregistered}g3

\texttt{\textregistered}d7 22.a4! \texttt{\textregistered}xa4 23.e5 \texttt{\textregistered}b5? Necessary was 23...\texttt{\textregistered}xe5+! 24.\texttt{\textregistered}xe5 dxe5 25.\texttt{\textregistered}h8+ \texttt{\textregistered}e7 26.\texttt{x}a8 \texttt{x}c7 27.\texttt{\textregistered}e4 \texttt{\textregistered}b5. 24.exd6→ More effective was 24.\texttt{\textregistered}f6 \texttt{\textregistered}g8 25.\texttt{\textregistered}e4, followed by \texttt{\textregistered}dh3, and Black is mated. 24...g5 Or 24...f5 25.\texttt{\textregistered}e4. 25.\texttt{\textregistered}e3 There must have been a terrible time scramble here. 25...a6 26.\texttt{\textregistered}e4 \texttt{\textregistered}e5 27.\texttt{\textregistered}c5 \texttt{\textregistered}x}d6 28.\texttt{\textregistered}h8+ \texttt{\textregistered}e7 29.\texttt{\textregistered}x}g5+ 1-0 Khalifman-Wahls, Germany Bundesliga 1994/95. The ultimate truth about this game is important for the assessment of the aggressive 8.\texttt{\textregistered}g5!? h6 9.h4 line. B) Another possibility is to opt for a Benoni type pawn structure with 7...c5 8.d5 d6 After 8...\texttt{\textregistered}e8 9.f3 d6 10.\texttt{\textregistered}e2 \texttt{\textregistered}xd5 11.cxd5 \texttt{\textregistered}xe2 12.\texttt{\textregistered}xe2 \texttt{\textregistered}b5 13.0-0 a6 14.a4 \texttt{\textregistered}bd7 15.axb5 \texttt{\textregistered}b6 16.bxa6 \texttt{\textregistered}xa6 17.\texttt{\textregistered}xa6 \texttt{\textregistered}xa6 18.\texttt{\textregistered}g3 White was better in Kortchnoi-Short, Madrid 1995.

9.\texttt{\textregistered}e2 \texttt{\textregistered}xd5 10.\texttt{\textregistered}xd5 Also possible is 10.\texttt{\textregistered}xd5 with similar type of play (or just a transposition) to Kortchnoi-Short (see above). 10...\texttt{\textregistered}xc3+ 11.\texttt{\textregistered}xc3 \texttt{\textregistered}bd7 12.0-0 \texttt{\textregistered}e8 13.\texttt{\textregistered}a4 \texttt{\textregistered}b7 14.\texttt{\textregistered}c2 \texttt{\textregistered}e5 15.\texttt{\textregistered}f4 \texttt{\textregistered}g6 16.\texttt{\textregistered}d2 \texttt{\textregistered}c8 17.\texttt{\textregistered}ae1 \texttt{\textregistered}d7 18.f4 h6 19.\texttt{\textregistered}d3 White has more space. His advantage was small but quite steady in Portisch-Reshevsky, Santa Monica 1966;

C) 7...d5 forces a different pawn structure. In order to get an advantage White has to play accurately: 8.\texttt{\textregistered}xd5 \texttt{\textregistered}xc3+ 9.bxc3 \texttt{\textregistered}xf1 10.\texttt{\textregistered}xf1 \texttt{\textregistered}xd5 11.e5 \texttt{\textregistered}e4

An important moment. It is useful for White here to exchange the \texttt{\textregistered}c1 for Black's \texttt{\textregistered}e4 and keep the \texttt{\textregistered}g3 and \texttt{\textregistered}b8 on the board, because then White's space advantage will tell. How does White do this?

12.\texttt{\textregistered}d3! Petrosian's idea. In practice 12.\texttt{\textregistered}e2 f6! has been tried, which is good for Black; or 12.f3 \texttt{\textregistered}x}g3+ 13.hxg3 f5 14.exf6 \texttt{\textregistered}xf6 and Black holds the balance. Due to the specifics of the pawn structure, \texttt{\textregistered}e vs \texttt{\textregistered}c is not really advantageous for White here. 12...f5 The diagonal b1-h7 has been closed, so Black wants to swap the knights on g3 next. 13.\texttt{\textregistered}e2! No way! White keeps his knight and exchanges the bishop. 13...\texttt{\textregistered}g5 In the event of 13...c5, Black loses a piece without sufficient compensation after 14.f3 \texttt{\textregistered}c6 15.h4! followed by \texttt{\textregistered}g1 and fxe4.

14.\texttt{\textregistered}x}g5! Mission accomplished. It is important to understand that in this structure, with White having a space advantage, in the event of \texttt{\textregistered}e vs \texttt{\textregistered}c Black can achieve a light-square blockade, while with \texttt{\textregistered}e vs \texttt{\textregistered}c this would be mission impossible for Black here. 14...\texttt{\textregistered}x}g5 15.g3 The white knight heads to an excellent post on f4. 15...\texttt{\textregistered}h6 16.\texttt{\textregistered}f4 White had a huge advantage and went on to win in T. Petrosian-Butnorius, Riga tt 1975. An
instructive positional lesson from Petrosian.

* Should Black play 6...c5, then White can choose a Benoni-type structure with 7.d5 exd5 8.cxd5 Qxf1 9.Qxf1 0-0. White had a big advantage after 9...Qxc3 10.bxc3 0-0 11.e4 d6 12.Qf4 Qe8 13.Qf5 in Smyslov-Littlewood, Hastings 1969/70. 10.e4 d6 11.Qf4 Qe8 12.f3 Qxc3 13.bxc3 and Black’s d6 pawn was a terrible weakness in Lautier-Leitao, New Delhi/Teheran 2000.

* There is also the active attempt 6...Qc6 7.e4, when:
  
  A) 7...e5? led to an opening disaster for Black after 8.dxe5 Qxe5 9.f4 Qc6. Perhaps only now did Black realize that 9...Qxc4 drops a piece to 10.Qa4. 10.e5 Qg8 11.Qg4 g6 12.Qd2 and White won quickly in Furman-Tsekhovsky, Soviet Union 1971.

  B) White is also better in the event of the ‘improved version’ 7...h5 8.h4. The standard tactic 8.Qd3? does not work here for White after 8...Qxd4 9.Qa4 h4 10.Qf1 h3! 8...e5 9.a3

  7.bxc3 d5 8.Qa3

The most played move here. White develops his bishop to a natural square and also stops Black from castling. White has also a number of other possibilities to fight for an opening advantage:

* The main alternative to 8.Qa3 is 8.Qf3. This is an improved version of 8.cxd5, because if White later takes cxd5, Black would have no time for Qxf1 because of the zwischenzug dxe6. Now:

  A) White is better in case of 8...Qd7?! 9.cxd5 exd5 10.Qxa6 Qxa6 11.Qe2 Qb8 11...Qa4? is bad on account of 12.e4 0-0 13.e5 with a large advantage. 12.0-0 0-0

And here White can improve on the existing theory with 13.f3! preparing e3-e4. White wants to take the maximum out of the position. 13.c4, with some advantage for White, is known from Bronstein-Portisch, Budapest 1961. 13...c5 In the event of 13...Qc6 White continues with 14.Qd2 Qe8 15.Qae1 followed by e3-e4. 14.e4! White’s pawn centre is rolling and Black is in serious trouble here. 14...dxe4 Or 14...cxd4 15.e5. 15.fxe4 cxd4 Now standard (easy) tactics are working for White. 16.Qxf6 Qxf6 17.Qh6 Qc6 18.Qf5 and White has a winning attack;

  B) 8...0-0 is the main, and the most logical, move for Black here.

  B1) 9.e4?! may look good, but does not work well. Actually Black is better!

  B11) It is good to know that 9...Qxc4? is not only inferior, but even a losing move for Black! It actually loses by force(!) after 10.Qg5 h6 11.h4! This
standard attacking move works very well for White here. Black's king simply does not have enough defenders. 11.e5 is unclear after 11...\textit{d}d5 12.\textit{d}xf6 \textit{w}xf6 13.gxf6 \textit{w}xf6, while 11.\textit{d}d2? turned out to be good for Black after 11...\textit{d}bd7 12.e5 \textit{d}d5 in Saidy-Fischer, New York ch-USA 1965. 11...c6 12.\textit{h}5 Also winning should be 12.\textit{d}d1 \textit{c}6 13.\textit{h}5. 12...\textit{d}bd7 13.e5 \textit{h}xg5 14.hxg5 \textit{c}7 15.\textit{f}6+! \textit{d}xf6 16.gxf6 \textit{d}b7 Black is mated even more quickly after 16...\textit{d}d5 17.\textit{w}g4 \textit{d}xf6 18.exf6 \textit{g}6 19.\textit{h}6 \textit{w}f5 20.\textit{w}f4. 17.\textit{w}g4 \textit{d}xf6 18.\textit{w}h3 \textit{d}h5 19.\textit{w}xh5 \textit{f}6 20.\textit{e}e2 \textit{d}e4 Black prevents mate, but loses everything. 21.\textit{w}h8+ \textit{g}7 22.\textit{h}5+ \textit{g}6 23.\textit{w}h7+ \textit{d}e8 24.\textit{d}xg6+ \textit{d}xg6 25.\textit{w}xg6+ \textit{d}d7 26.\textit{w}e4! and Black loses at least a rook;

B12) 9...dxe4! 10.\textit{x}e4 \textit{x}e4 11.\textit{x}e4 \textit{d}d7! and Black is already better. It is important to notice that very often, in order to have the necessary dynamic possibilities in the position, White simply needs a knight. 12.\textit{d}a3 Or 12.\textit{d}d3 \textit{f}5 13.\textit{w}e2 \textit{c}5. 12...\textit{e}8 13.\textit{d}d3 \textit{f}5 14.\textit{w}x8 \textit{d}c6 15.\textit{w}xe8+ \textit{d}xe8 16.0-0 \textit{d}a5 and Black was better and went on to win in Portisch-Fischer, Santa Monica 1966.

B2) 9.cxd5! The best move. Black is forced to immediately recapture on d5:

B21) The zwischenzug 9...\textit{f}f1? is a blunder because of 10.dxe6, which is one of the main points behind 8.\textit{w}f3;

B22) In the event of 9...\textit{xd}5 10.\textit{x}a6 \textit{x}a6 11.\textit{w}e2 \textit{c}8 12.0-0 White is going to execute either f2-f3, e3-e4 or c3-c4 and will be better. 12...\textit{e}8 13.c4 is better for White. 13.f3 Simple chess. White will push e3-e4, gain space and stand better. 13...\textit{c}xd4 14.\textit{c}xd4 \textit{c}4 For the time being Black can prevent White from playing e3-e4 with 14...\textit{b}b4, however White is better after 15.\textit{d}d2 \textit{c}6 16.\textit{d}ac1 \textit{w}e6 17.\textit{d}d3 \textit{f}d8 18.\textit{d}c2. 15.\textit{w}xc4 dxc4 16.e4 \textit{f}d8 16...\textit{b}b4 fails to 17.\textit{a}3 a5 18.\textit{ab}1. 17.\textit{a}5 \textit{d}d7 18.\textit{g}5 \textit{e}e8 19.\textit{f}c1 and White had a clear advantage in Bouwmeester-Mednis, Siegen ol 1970;

B23) 9.\textit{w}xd5 10.e4 \textit{w}a5

The evaluation of this position is important for the assessment of the 8.\textit{w}f3 line. If White is better here (which I think he is), then he obtains an opening advantage also with 8.\textit{w}f3 and the line merits more attention.

B231) One entertaining game continued 11.e5 \textit{d}b7 11...\textit{d}d5! merits investigation. 12.\textit{d}d3 \textit{f}e4 12...\textit{d}d5 13.\textit{d}d2. 13.\textit{x}e4! \textit{x}e4 14.\textit{w}xe4 Entering an interesting tactical sequence. 14.\textit{w}e3 looks better for White. 14...\textit{w}xc3+ 15.\textit{d}d1 \textit{d}d8 16.\textit{d}d3 \textit{w}xa1 17.\textit{w}e2 \textit{w}xa2+ 18.\textit{w}d2 \textit{c}6 19.\textit{w}c6 and White was better in P. Littlewood-Christiansen, Hastings 1981/82;

B232) 11.\textit{w}xa6 \textit{w}xa6 12.\textit{g}5 \textit{d}bd7 13.\textit{w}e2 \textit{w}e2+- Black may consider keeping the queens on the board, but White looks a bit better then. 14.\textit{w}xe2 c5 15.a4 \textit{f}c8 16.\textit{h}c1 This is a standard position where, due to his space advantage (strong centre) White is better.
White's follow-up play is quite instructive: 16...\(\text{Qf8}\) 17.f3 Strengthening the centre and releasing the g3 knight from its defending duties. 17...\(\text{Qe8}\) 18.\(\text{Qf4}\) cxd4 19.cxd4 \(\text{Qe7}\) 20.\(\text{Qf1}\) The knight heads to e3 - a standard manoeuvre. 20...\(\text{Qd8}\) 21.\(\text{Qcb1}\) \(\text{Qc4}\) 22.\(\text{Qd3}\) \(\text{Qac8}\) 23.a5! The 2 vs 1 queenside pawn majority structure is OK for Black, however a lone b6 pawn will be a weakness. 23...\(\text{Qc2}\) 24.\(\text{Qd2}\) \(\text{Qd6}\) 25.\(\text{axb6}\) axb6 26.\(\text{Qe3}\) White was clearly better in this ending and went on to win in Knaak-Wahls, Baden-Baden 1992. 8.\(\text{Qxd5}\) The immediate 8.\(\text{Qxd5}\) is not impressive for White after 8...\(\text{Qxf1}\)! 9.\(\text{Qxf1}\) \(\text{Qxd5}\), because he has to spend extra tempi on solving his \(\text{Qf1}\) problem. Compared to 8.\(\text{Qf3}\) 0-0 9.\(\text{Qxd5}\) it looks logical that here, with his king on f1, White should have a worse version.

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10.\(\text{Qd3}\) \(\text{Qbd7}\) With the pawn still on c7, 10...\(\text{Qc6}\) does not really look logical, as his regular counterplay here is ...c7-c5, attacking the white centre. It was played in an earlier game between the same opponents, where White was better after 11.e4 \(\text{Qd7}\) 12.\(\text{Qg5}\) \(\text{Qg8}\) 13.\(\text{Qe2}\) f6 14.\(\text{Qc1}\) \(\text{Qe7}\) 15.\(\text{Qd1}\) h5 16.f3 h4 17.\(\text{Qf1}\) 0-0 0-0 18.\(\text{Qa3}\) \(\text{Qg6}\) 19.\(\text{Qa6+}\) \(\text{Qb8}\) 20.\(\text{Qe3}\) \(\text{Qh5}\) 21.\(\text{Qf4+}\) 22.\(\text{Qf2}\) exd5 23.exd5 \(\text{Qe5}\) 24.\(\text{Qd4}\) g5 25.\(\text{Qad1}\) in Gligoric-Portisch, Torremolinos 1961. 11.e4 \(\text{Qa5}\) 12.\(\text{Qd5}\) 13.\(\text{Qc4}\) White takes a lot of responsibility, playing with an advanced pawn centre and his king uncastled on f1. 13...\(\text{Qb4}\) 14.\(\text{Qb3}\) \(\text{Qc6}\) 15.\(\text{Qb2}\) 0-0 16.\(\text{Qc3}\) \(\text{Qa6}\) 17.\(\text{Qb5}\) \(\text{Qb7}\) 18.\(\text{Qe1}\) \(\text{Qfd8}\) 19.\(\text{Qh4}\) \(\text{Qf8}\) 20.\(\text{Qe4}\) \(\text{Qe7}\) 21.\(\text{Qh5}\) \(\text{Qf5}\) 22.\(\text{Qf4}\) \(\text{Qxg3+}\) 23.\(\text{Qxg3}\) c5 White had problems with his pawn structure and eventually lost in Gligoric-Portisch, Wijk aan Zee 1975.

8...\(\text{Qxc4}\)

The evaluation of 8...\(\text{Qxc4}\) is based on the famous game Portisch-Fischer played 40 years ago and it seems that this verdict still holds, so in modern practice we see very little of 8...\(\text{Qxc4}\). Here are some basic lines: 9.e4 \(\text{Qd7}\) 10.\(\text{Qe2}\) \(\text{Qc6}\) 11.\(\text{Qwc2}\) 0-0 0-0 Risky play by Black. White has a strong centre and the pair of bishops and actually, after transferring his knight to e3 he will have good chances to get his material back. 12.0-0 The immediate 12.\(\text{Qf1}\), followed by \(\text{Qe3}\), is definitely an option. 12...\(\text{Qb5}\) 13.\(\text{Qfd1}\) h4 14.\(\text{Qf1}\)

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14...\(\text{Qh5}\) 15.d5! \(\text{Qe5}\) 16.dxe6 \(\text{Qe8}\) 16...\(\text{Qxe6}\)? drops a piece to 17.\(\text{Qxh5}\) \(\text{Qxh5}\)? 18.\(\text{Qxd8+}\) \(\text{Qxd8}\) 19.\(\text{Qd1+}\). 17.\(\text{Qxd8+}\) \(\text{Qxd8}\) 18.\(\text{Qxh5}\)! A good decision. 18.\(\text{Qa4}\) looks strong, but Black sacrifices a piece and gets a strong
kingside attack after 18...\(f4\)!
19.\(\text{wx}a6+\) \(b8\). 18...\(\text{xb}5\) 19.\(f4\)!
19.\(\text{c}3\) \(20.\text{ex}f7\) with a large advantage, Portisch-Fischer, Siegen ol 1970.

In the event of 14.\(\text{a}5\) White is clearly better after 15.\(\text{b}4\) \(c6\)
16.\(\text{xa}5\)!. White should not allow counterplay like after 16.\(\text{f}3\) \(h5\)
17.\(\text{e}3\) \(f4\) 18.\(\text{f}1\) \(h5\)! as in Najdorf-Donner, Wijk aan Zee 1971.

16...\(\text{xa}5\) 17.\(\text{f}3\) \(h3\) 18.\(e5\) \(d5\) 19.\(g3\).

9.\(\text{xc}4\) \(dxc4\)

10.\(\text{wa}4\)!

Arguably the safest road to an advantage. White gets his pawn back and
heads for a slightly better ending. White players who are not happy with that and
are willing to advantage in complications, should analyse: 10.0-0
\(\text{wd}7\) 11.\(\text{b}1\) 11.e4 \(\text{wb}5!\) 12.\(\text{b}1\) \(wa6\)
13.\(\text{c}1\) \(c6\) looks OK for Black.

11...\(h5\) 12.\(h4\) Strangely enough, the inclusion of these two moves will not resul
in chances for Black on the kingside at all. 12...\(\text{wc}6\) 13.e4 \(\text{bd}7\) 14.d5!
\(\text{wb}7\) 14...\(\text{ex}d5!\)? 15.\(\text{ex}d5\) \(\text{xd}5\)
16.\(\text{e}1+\) \(d8\) is a computer-type proposal, difficult for a human to play, and
I believe that after 17.\(\text{wa}4\) a6 18.\(\text{ed}1\) \(\text{we}6\) White has nothing better than a
draw with 19.\(\text{ae}1\) \(\text{wd}5\) 20.\(\text{ed}1\).

15.\(\text{dx}e6\) \(\text{fxe}6\) 16.\(\text{wa}4\) 0-0-0 17.\(\text{xc}4\)
Material is equal, and the position is complicated. White’s chances are probab
ly better. 17...\(\text{bb}8\) 18.\(\text{fd}1\) \(\text{e}5!\)?
19.\(\text{wb}5!\) 19.\(\text{xe}6\) \(\text{de}8\). 19...\(\text{c}6\)
20.\(f3\) \(a6\) 21.\(\text{g}5\) and White was better

10...\(\text{wd}7\) 11.\(\text{xc}4\) \(\text{wc}6\)

Should Black decide to avoid the ending and keep the queens on the board, then
White is better after 11...\(\text{h}5\) 12.\(h4\) \(\text{c}6\)
13.e4 0-0-0 14.\(\text{we}2\) \(\text{b}8\) 15.\(\text{c}1\). This
bishop transfer back to the c1-h6 diagonal (heading for g5) is one of the stan
dard plans for White in this line.

15...\(\text{g}4?\) Introducing a piece sac, which won’t work. 16.\(f3\) \(\text{xd}4\)
17.\(\text{cxd}4\) \(\text{xd}4\) 18.\(\text{b}1\) Black’s attack is
of a temporary nature. 18...\(\text{e}5\)
19.\(\text{e}3\) \(\text{d}3+\) 20.\(\text{f}1\) \(\text{e}5\) 21.\(\text{h}3\)
\(\text{d}7\) 22.\(\text{g}1\) \(\text{hd}8\) 23.\(\text{f}1\) White had
survived the direct onslaught and with his material advantage went on to win
in Gligoric-Speelman, Lucerne ol 1982.

12.\(\text{xc}6+\) \(\text{xc}6\)

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

The evaluation of this ending is important for the evaluation of the 8.\(\text{a}3\)
line, and perhaps for the entire 6.\(\text{g}3\)
line. Many top-level games have been played from this position, the general
opinion being that White does have some advantage. In my opinion this evaluation still holds.

13...0-0-0

- In the event of 13...a5 White is better after 14.Ac1 Ac8 15.e4 c5 16.d5. This pawn structure with dark-squared  \( \Box + \Box \) vs 2\( \Box \)s is better for White.

6...0-0 17.0-0 exd5 18.cxd5 White's two strong central pawns will be more powerful than Black's 3 vs 1 majority.

18...Af8 19.Af1  \( \Box \)d7 20.f4 b5 21.Af5 and White was better in Spassky-Szabo, Amsterdam 1973;

- Black can provoke White's central pawns to move with 13...e5. However, this is not bad for White and he was better after 14.d5 a5 15.Ac1 h5

16.Ab2  \( \Box \)d7 17.0-0 f6 18.Aa3 (this change of diagonals by the bishop is quite normal in this line) 18...g6

19.Ae4 Ac8 20.c5 and White was better in Spassky-Hübner, Solingen 1977.

14.Ac1

- Another possibility, which actually looks quite logical, is 14.0-0 \( \Box \)b7

15.Afc1 Ad7 16.f3 Ae8 17.Ac2 f5

18.Ae2 Af6 19.Ab2 More space, no weaknesses and play on the queenside – White is better. 19...Af8 20.Ac3 Ae7 21.a4 Ae8 22.a5 and White was better in Spassky-Hübner, Solingen 1977.

- 14.Ae2 is also a reasonable option. White simply looks a bit better here.

14...Ab7 15.Ae2 h5


16.f3

An interesting decision. A standard answer would have been to stop Black's h-pawn advance with 16.h4, with a slightly better game for White.

16...h4 17.Ab1 Ah5 18.Ab2 Aa5

18...Aa5 looks more consequent.

19.e4 b5 20.Ac3

White had an advantage in Ivanchuk-Timman, Hilversum (m-2) 1991.

**Conclusion**

White has better chances in the 6.Ac3 line. Black needs an improvement, or fresh ideas, in the material supplied above.
Chapter 1.9

The Original Rubinstein - 4...c5 5.\(\text{\textit{d}e2}\)

With the early 5.\(\text{\textit{d}e2}\), White gives pawn d4 as well as the knight on c3 extra protection, and thereby prevents Black from playing the Hübner Variation. The drawback is that the bishop on f1 is temporarily locked in, so often in this line White puts the e2 knight on g3 and modestly develops his bishop to e2.

5...cxd4

- 5...d6 is an inferior move. White has a number of ways to get an advantage after this: 6.a3 White can also obtain an easy, risk-free advantage with 6.dxc5 dxc5 7.\(\text{\textit{w}xd8+}\) \(\text{\textit{d}xd8}\) 8.\(\text{\textit{d}d2}\) \(\text{\textit{e}e7}\). On e7 the black king will turn out to be unfortunately placed, but it could not stay on d8 forever. 9.\(\text{\textit{f}f4}\) b6 10.a3 \(\text{\textit{a}a5}\) 11.b4! cxb4 12.axb4 \(\text{\textit{xb}4}\) 13.\(\text{\textit{cd}5+}\) \(\text{\textit{d}xd5}\) 14.\(\text{\textit{xd}5+}\) exd5 15.\(\text{\textit{xb}4+}\) f6 16.cxd5 with a large advantage for White in Smyslov-Stoltz, Bucharest 1953.

6...\(\text{\textit{a}a5}\) and now:

A) 7.\(\text{\textit{g}3}\) 0-0 8.d5! \(\text{\textit{e}e8}\) 9.\(\text{\textit{e}e2}\) \(\text{\textit{xc}3+}\) 10.bxc3 \(\text{\textit{wa}5}\) 11.\(\text{\textit{d}d2}\) \(\text{\textit{bd}7}\) 12.0-0 \(\text{\textit{b}6}\) 13.e4exd5

14.cxd5! Very often in such positions it is much better for White to be a pawn down and have the long a1-h8 diagonal open for his d2 bishop, rather than not to sacrifice anything and have the doubled c-pawns. I have explained this phenomenon in my comments on the game Keres-Spassky in my book
Part I: 4.e3 Various

Winning Chess Middlegames. 14...\(\text{\textit{\textbf{xe4}}\}\) 15.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{xe4}}\}\) 16.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{d3}}\}\) \(\text{\textit{\textbf{h4}}\}\) The rook on h4 prevents a direct onslaught on the black king, but this rook now remains out of play. On 16...\(\text{\textit{\textbf{e8}}\}\) comes 17.c4 \(\text{\textit{\textbf{a6}}\}\) 18.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{h5}}\}\) with a winning attack – note that Black’s \(\text{\textit{\textbf{a6}}\}\) and \(\text{\textit{\textbf{b6}}\}\) are out of play. 17.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{e2}}\}\) 17.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{c4}}\}\) \(\text{\textit{\textbf{a4}}\}\) 18.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{a4}}\}\) \(\text{\textit{\textbf{e1}}\}\) \(\text{\textit{\textbf{d7}}\}\) 20.f4 and it would take a long time for the \(\text{\textit{\textbf{h4}}\}\) to return into play. 17...\(\text{\textit{\textbf{d7}}\}\) 18.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{c4}}\}\) \(\text{\textit{\textbf{a4}}\}\) 19.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{f4}}\}\) \(\text{\textit{\textbf{f5}}\}\) \(\text{\textit{\textbf{fel}}\}\) and White went on to win in Gligoric-Hort, Moscow 1963;

B) 7.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{xb1}}\}\) 0-0 8.b4 \(\text{\textit{\textbf{c7}}\}\) 9.g3 is also better for White: 9...\(\text{\textit{\textbf{cxd4}}\}\) 10.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{exd4}}\}\) \(\text{\textit{\textbf{bd7}}\}\) 11.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{g2}}\}\) \(\text{\textit{\textbf{b6}}\}\) 12.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{b3}}\}\) as in Volkov-Chepukaitis, St Petersburg 1997.

C) 7.g3 is another idea for White here.

\(\text{\textit{\textbf{5...d5}}\}\) is the most common alternative to \(\text{\textit{\textbf{5...cxd4}}\}\). It is definitely playable; the resulting positions (in the main line here) are isolated pawn structure-related. White should have a small advantage. 6.a3 (6.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{cxd5}}\}\) \(\text{\textit{\textbf{xd5}}\}\) is good for Black) and now:

A) 6...\(\text{\textit{\textbf{cxd4}}\}\) leads to positions with a stable, risk-free advantage for White: 7.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{xb4}}\}\) 7.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{exd4}}\}\) \(\text{\textit{\textbf{e7}}\}\) 8.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{c5}}\}\) 0-0 is also possible, though it leads to more complicated play, where White’s advantage is far from risk-free and the tables can easily turn. 7...\(\text{\textit{\textbf{dxc3}}\}\) 8.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{xc3}}\}\)

B) 6...\(\text{\textit{\textbf{a5}}\}\) has been tried and it can be played, though it remains passive for Black and this is not to every black player’s taste. 7.dxc5 \(\text{\textit{\textbf{dxc4}}\}\) 8.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{xd8+}}\}\) \(\text{\textit{\textbf{xd8}}\}\) 8...\(\text{\textit{\textbf{xd8}}\}?! is an inferior move after 9.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{d2}}\}\) e5 10.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{e4}}\}\) \(\text{\textit{\textbf{c6}}\}\) 11.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{g3}}\}\) and Black’s c4 pawn falls. 9.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{d4}}\}\) \(\text{\textit{\textbf{bd7}}\}\) 10.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{xc4}}\}\) \(\text{\textit{\textbf{xc5}}\}\) 11.f3 a6 12.b4 \(\text{\textit{\textbf{cd7}}\}\) 13.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{e4}}\}\) \(\text{\textit{\textbf{e5}}\}\) 14.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{a2}}\}\) as in Aronian-V. Babula, Germany Bundesliga 2004/05.

C) 6...\(\text{\textit{\textbf{xc3+}}\}\) is the most played move here: 7.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{xc3}}\}\) \(\text{\textit{\textbf{cxd4}}\}\) 8.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{exd4}}\}\)

C I) Keeping the central tension with 8...\(\text{\textit{\textbf{c6}}\}\) has proved not to equalize: 9.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{c5}}\}\) 0-0 The positions after 9...\(\text{\textit{\textbf{xe4}}\}\) 10.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{d3}}\}\) \(\text{\textit{\textbf{xc3}}\}\) 11.bxc3 have also proved to be better for White. 10.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{f4}}\}\) This bishop is heading for d6. 10.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{e2}}\}\) also leads to a white advantage. 10...\(\text{\textit{\textbf{e4}}\}\) 11.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{xe4}}\}\) dxe4 12.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{d6}}\}\) \(\text{\textit{\textbf{e8}}\}\)
Here White can try the as yet unplayed 13...\(\text{c4}\) White demonstrated an original idea with 13\(\text{Cc1}\) \(\text{d7}\) 14\(\text{Cc3}\)? \(\text{e7}\) 15\(\text{g4}\) (the point behind 14\(\text{Cc3}\)) 15...\(\text{d5}\) 16\(\text{g3}\) in Kortchnoi-Landenberge, Lenzerheide 2006.

C11) 13...\(\text{a5}\)+ 14\(\text{b4}\) 14\(\text{f1}\) \(\text{d7}\) 15\(\text{h4}\) is also possible. 14...\(\text{xb4}\) 15.0-0 and White has strong compensation: the e4 pawn is likely to fall, and Black has problems developing.

C12) 13...\(\text{f6}\) 14.0-0 \(\text{xd4}\) Or 14...\(\text{xd4}\) 15\(\text{Ce1}\). 15\(\text{Cc2}\) \(\text{f5}\) 16\(\text{Mad1}\) \(\text{f6}\) 17\(\text{b4}\) with strong compensation for White, for example 17...\(\text{d7}\) 18\(\text{b3}\) \(\text{d4}\) 19\(\text{g3}\).

C2) 8...\(\text{dx4}\) leads to isolated pawn-type positions: 9...\(\text{c4}\) 10.0-0 \(\text{Cc6}\)

11\(\text{e3}\) Black’s main problem, and the reason that White has an advantage here, is that – yes, Black initially manages a good d5-square blockade, at least in most lines, however he does not have active counterplay and White has time to increase his central pressure or develop a kingside attack. White’s dark-squared bishop normally goes via f4 to either the e5- or the g5-square. In almost all lines White has a favourable version of the regular isolated pawn positions:

C21) 11...\(\text{b6}\) and now:

C211) 12\(\text{f3}\) is probably White’s best here. 12...\(\text{b7}\) 13...\(\text{d3}\) 13\(\text{wh3}\) \(\text{e7}\) 14\(\text{ad1}\) is one of the standard set-ups, tried with success in a number of games.

C2111) 13...\(\text{wh7}\) has the drawback that the black queen may be hanging on d7 and hence White would threaten the d4-d5 push, for example: 14\(\text{wh3}\) \(\text{e7}\) 14...\(\text{xd4}\)? is a horrible blunder due to 15\(\text{ad1}\) \(\text{e5}\) 16\(\text{xf4}\). 15\(\text{g5}\) \(\text{g6}\) 16\(\text{xf6}\) \(\text{gxf6}\) 17\(\text{ad1}\) The immediate 17.d5 is also good: 17...\(\text{xd5}\) 18\(\text{ad1}\) \(\text{ad8}\) 19\(\text{e4}\) – White regained his sacrificed pawn and had a superior pawn structure in Vaganian-A. Petrosian, Telavi 1982. 17...\(\text{ad8}\) 17...\(\text{fd8}\) was necessary. 18\(\text{f6}\) \(\text{c7}\) 19\(\text{xg6}\) \(\text{hxg6}\) 20\(\text{wh6}\) In order to avoid mate, Black must give his queen. 20...\(\text{cc6}\) 21\(\text{e4}\) \(\text{xe4}\) 22\(\text{xe4}\) \(\text{xe4}\) 23\(\text{f4}\) \(\text{f5}\) 24\(\text{wC7}\) and White went on to win in Alexandrov-Vekshenkov, Sochi 2004;

C2112) 13...\(\text{c8}\) 14\(\text{ad1}\)
14...\textit{a}c7 The 'useful' 14...h6? is asking for trouble: 15.\textit{w}g3 \textit{oh}8 16.\textit{wh}3! \textit{axh}6 is an unpleasant threat, while 16...\textit{eg}8? loses to 17.d5! exd5 18.f5 d4 19.\textit{axd}4 \textit{axd}4 20.\textit{xc}8 \textit{xc}8 21.\textit{we}3. 15.\textit{wb}3 Placing the queen on h3 is a standard attacking pattern here. 15...\textit{ee}7 Now comes the pin along the h4-d8 diagonal. 16.g5 \textit{ge}6 17.\textit{wg}3! Now the black rook is disturbed. 17...\textit{dd}7 18.d5! A standard motif for White here. Now:

C2111) If 18...\textit{axd}5 19.\textit{bb}5 \textit{cc}7 (19...\textit{dd}6? loses an exchange to 20.\textit{xf}6 \textit{gf}6 21.\textit{ee}4) 20.\textit{xf}6 \textit{gf}6 21.\textit{aa}4 White will take \textit{axd}5, regain his pawn and have the better game;

C2112) 18...\textit{exd}5 19.\textit{ff}5 \textit{ee}7 20.h4 20.\textit{xf}6 \textit{gf}6 21.h4 looks promising. 20...\textit{cc}7 21.\textit{xcc}7 \textit{xc}7 22.\textit{fe}1 \textit{ee}7 Black has escaped the worst, but he still has problems. 23.\textit{bb}5 \textit{fe}8 24.\textit{xc}7 \textit{xc}7 25.\textit{hh}3 \textit{cc}8 26.\textit{xc}8 \textit{xc}8 27.\textit{xa}7 \textit{cm}2 28.b4. White won this ending in Kasparov-Psakhis, Murcia (m-6) 1990.

In this line, White has favourable isolated pawn positions and Black does not equalize.

C212) 12.\textit{wd}3 is another often played move. 12...\textit{bb}7 Botvinnik gives in his notes 13.\textit{ff}d1!. I am not impressed with this move, and to me White's rooks look more natural on e1 and d1. 13.\textit{e}d1 was played in many games, amongst others Kortchnoi-Karpov, World Championship match, 1978. 13...\textit{a}5?! A dubious Botvinnik suggestion; on a5 the knight is strange in this line. Normally it goes to e7. 14.\textit{a}2 \textit{wc}8 15.\textit{gg}5! Now indeed, White is clearly better. 15...\textit{cc}6 16.\textit{ff}3; C213) 12.\textit{ee}1?! In combination with an opening of the position with the d4-d5 break this leads to a small, safe white advantage, though probably the most likely result is a draw. 12...\textit{bb}7 13.\textit{aa}2

And White is ready to push d4-d5:

C2131) 13.\textit{dd}7 14.d5 \textit{exd}5 15.\textit{xd}5 \textit{xd}5 16.\textit{xd}5 \textit{dd}8 17.\textit{wd}7 \textit{xd}7 18.\textit{ad}1 The bishop pair is an advantage in this type of ending. White went on to win in Knaak-Lautier, Novi Sad 1990;

C2132) 13...\textit{ee}7 solves the issue of the d4-d5 break, but it puts Black under an unpleasant pin. 14.\textit{gg}5 \textit{ed}5 15.\textit{ee}4;

C2133) The neutral 13...h6 14.d5 14.\textit{ff}3 \textit{bb}8 was played in M. Gurevich-Andersson, Leningrad 1987. 14...\textit{exd}5 15.\textit{xd}5 leads to a standard white advantage, when Black's counterplay attempt 15...\textit{e}5? does not work due to 16.\textit{axh}6!;

C2134) 13...\textit{cc}8 14.d5 \textit{exd}5 Or 14...\textit{xd}5 15.\textit{xd}5 \textit{exd}5 16.\textit{xd}5. 15.\textit{gg}5 Black has counterplay in the event of 15.\textit{xd}5 \textit{ee}5!. 15...h6 16.\textit{xf}6 \textit{xf}6 17.\textit{xd}5 with a small advantage for White.

For white players who want to play it very safe, while retaining winning chances, 12.\textit{ee}1 is an interesting option.

C22) Another move for Black is 11...h6. The idea behind this is that
Black plays a useful move, while White still cannot play $\text{W}f3$. Here, Black also has his common problem in this line — a lack of active counterplay. Perhaps the most natural move is $12.\text{Be}1$ (12.\text{a}2 or 12.\text{W}d3 moves have also been played): $12...\text{Be}7$. In the event of $12...\text{b}6$ White can, amongst other things, choose a standard favourable transaction in the centre with 13.d5, and now after 13...\text{a}5 14.\text{a}2 \text{exd}5 15.\text{c}xd5 \text{b}7 16.\text{c}3 \text{W}c8 17.\text{W}a4 \text{Wf}5 18.\text{W}f4 \text{Wh}5 19.\text{d}4 \text{W}g6 20.\text{W}g3 \text{W}xg3 21.\text{hx}g3 White had an obvious advantage and went on to win in Dydyshko-Macieja, Lubniewice 2003. 13.\text{f}f4 \text{W}g6 13...\text{d}7 14.\text{e}5 \text{g}6 transposes to the text. 14.\text{e}5 \text{d}7 15.\text{d}3 White threatens to damage Black's kingside pawn structure with $\text{W}xg6$ and obtain a long-term advantage. 15...\text{a}xe5 16.\text{d}xe5 \text{d}5 17.\text{c}xd5 \text{exd}5 18.\text{W}b3 \text{a}6 19.\text{a}d1 Black's d-pawn is more of a target than an asset here. White has possibilities of a kingside attack by developing a battery with $\text{W}b1/$\text{W}d3 and rolling his kingside pawn majority. Black cannot develop any meaningful counterplay; 

- For $5...\text{b}6$ please see under 4.e3 \text{b}6 5.\text{d}2c5.

6.\text{exd}4 0-0

The most played move here. The coffeehouse pawn sacrifice 6...\text{b}5? does not work here — it doesn't even come close: 7.\text{cxb}5 \text{a}b7 8.a3 \text{e}7 9.\text{c}4 \text{d}6 10.\text{e}2 \text{bd}7 11.0-0 \text{W}b8 12.a4 \text{h}5 13.d5 \text{e}5 14.\text{c}xh5 \text{c}xh5 15.\text{c}xh5 \text{g}6 16.\text{e}2 with a winning advantage for White in Smirnov-Dobrov, St Petersburg 2005. 6...\text{d}5 This leads to messy positions, but it does not equalize. 7.c5

- 7...\text{c}6 8.a3 \text{a}5 9.b4 \text{c}7 10.g3 Black's counterplay is related to the push ...\text{e}6-\text{e}5. 10...\text{e}5 11.\text{g}2 \text{g}4 12.f3 \text{f}5 13.0-0 0-0 14.\text{g}5! Increasing the pressure on the d5-square is unpleasant for Black (14.\text{b}5 \text{b}8 15.\text{d}xe5 \text{dxe}5 16.\text{d}ed4 \text{d}3 was played in Polugaevsky-Spassky, Tbilisi-URS 1959);

- The tactical 7...\text{e}5 soon crystallizes into a positional advantage for White:

A) Less clear is 8.\text{dxe}5 \text{d}4: 81) 9.\text{d}4 0-0 10.e6 \text{fxe}6! 10...\text{f}6 11.\text{ex}f7+ \text{xf}7 12.\text{e}2 \text{e}4 13.0-0 \text{xc}3 14.\text{bxc}3 \text{xc}3 15.\text{c}2 \text{xe}2+ 16.\text{w}xe2 was better for White in Morovic Fernandez-Browne, Linares (Mex) 1994. 11.\text{w}xg4 \text{e}5 12.\text{d}e6 \text{w}f6 is at least OK for Black;

A2) 9.e6! 0-0 Black can try to improve with 9...\text{fxe}6?! 10.\text{w}d4 \text{xc}3+ 11.\text{c}x3 \text{f}6. 10.\text{w}d4 \text{xc}3+ 11.\text{c}x3 \text{ex}6 12.\text{b}5 \text{c}6 13.\text{c}6 \text{bxc}6 14.\text{h}3 \text{w}f6 15.\text{c}2 \text{xd}4 16.\text{xd}4 \text{e}5 17.\text{b}3 \text{d}7 18.\text{d}2. The white knight is excellently placed on d4 here, so White had a very small advantage. The game was later drawn in Onischuk-Browne, Philadelphia 2004.

B) 8.a3 \text{xc}3+ 9.\text{c}3 \text{exd}4 10.\text{w}xd4 0-0 11.\text{b}5 \text{d}7 11...\text{c}6 12.\text{xc}6 0-0 leads to positions where thanks to his strong blockade on d4 White has a small advantage. 12.0-0
4.e3 Various

\[ \text{\textasciitilde} \text{xb5 13.\textasciitilde} \text{xb5} \text{ \textasciitilde} \text{c6 14.\textasciitilde} \text{d3 Or} 14.\text{\textasciitilde} \text{f4} \text{\textasciitilde} \text{e4 15.\textasciitilde} \text{e3 14...\textasciitilde} \text{e4} \]

15.\text{\textasciitilde} \text{e3} White is a bit better. 15...\text{a6} 16.\text{\textasciitilde} \text{c3} \text{\textasciitilde} \text{xc3 17.bxc3} \text{\textasciitilde} \text{e5 18.\textasciitilde} \text{f5} \text{ \textasciitilde} \text{e8 19.\textasciitilde} \text{ab1} \text{ \textasciitilde} \text{c7 20.\textasciitilde} \text{d4} \text{ White's doubled c-pawns are less of a target than Black's b7 and d5 pawns. White had pressure and went on to win in Knaak-Browne, Palma de Mallorca 1989.} \]

\[ \text{\textasciitilde} \text{e4 8.\textasciitilde} \text{d2} 8.g3?! \text{ was only played in one Kortchnoi game. The antidote should be 8...\text{\textasciitilde} \text{xe4! 9.\textasciitilde} \text{d2} \text{\textasciitilde} \text{xd2 10.\textasciitilde} \text{xd2 b6.}} \]

A) Perhaps the easiest for White is 8...\text{\textasciitilde} \text{xd2 9.\textasciitilde} \text{xd2.} 

\[ 
\begin{array}{c}
\text{\textasciitilde} \text{e5 10.\textasciitilde} \text{c3! 10...h4 10...\text{\textasciitilde} \text{xd4 11.\textasciitilde} \text{a4+} 11...\text{\textasciitilde} \text{c6 12.\textasciitilde} \text{d1 followed by \textasciitilde} \text{c3, and White should be better. 9...\text{\textasciitilde} \text{xc3 10.\textasciitilde} \text{xc3! \textasciitilde} \text{h4 10...\textasciitilde} \text{xd4 11.\textasciitilde} \text{a4+;} strangely enough Botvinnik does not consider 10...0-0, though White should have an advantage after 11.\text{\textasciitilde} \text{xe4 dxe4 12.\textasciitilde} \text{e3 f5 13.g3} \text{\textasciitilde} \text{e7 14.\textasciitilde} \text{c4 \textasciitilde} \text{d5 11.\textasciitilde} \text{e3 and White is better according to Botvinnik - I would agree.}}}
\end{array}
\]

7.a3 \text{\textasciitilde} \text{e7}

White has two main moves here: 8.\text{\textasciitilde} \text{f4 and 8.d5.}

8.\text{\textasciitilde} \text{f4}

This leads to positions where White has a small but stable positional advantage.

\[ \text{\textasciitilde} \text{f4! 9.a3. Botvinnik's line goes 9.a3 9.\text{\textasciitilde} \text{xe4 dxe4 10.\textasciitilde} \text{xb4 \textasciitilde} \text{xb4 11.\textasciitilde} \text{a4+}} \]

B) Another possibility is 8...\text{\textasciitilde} \text{c6. Botvinnik's line goes 9.a3 9.\text{\textasciitilde} \text{xe4 dxe4 10.\textasciitilde} \text{xb4 \textasciitilde} \text{xb4 11.\textasciitilde} \text{a4+}} \]

[Diagram]

White's next will be 10.a3 and Black will have a principal choice of taking ...\text{\textasciitilde} \text{xc3, after which White takes back with the knight and later develops a kingside initiative by pushing his f-pawn, or retreating with the bishop to a5 and after White proceeds with b2-b4 the bishop goes to c7, when Black keeps his bishop pair, but White's queenside pawn advance is dangerous. Many games have been played in this line - most of them in the late 1970s to the late 1990s - and to me White seems to be better;}

9...\text{\textasciitilde} \text{c5 (it has been established that in case of 9...\textasciitilde} \text{e8 10.d6! \textasciitilde} \text{f8 11.g3 Black's pieces get terribly discoordi-}
nated in the process of collecting White's d6 pawn, for instance: 11...\(\text{Ke}6\) 12.\(\text{Ke}f4\) \(\text{K}h5\) 13.\(\text{K}e3\) \(\text{K}x d6\) 14.\(\text{K}b3\) \(\text{Ke}6\) 15.\(\text{K}f2\) \(\text{K}f6\) 16.0-0 and for the price of only one pawn White has an immense lead in development, also Black's \(\text{K}d6\) is rather clumsy: 16...\(\text{Ke}6\) 17.\(\text{K}ad1\) d6 18.\(\text{K}d4\) \(\text{K}x d4\) 19.\(\text{K}xd4\) and White's initiative was worth more than a pawn in Gelfand-Tiviakov, San Sebastian 2006):  
A) 10.\(\text{K}d4\) d6 11.\(\text{K}e2\) a6 12.0-0 \(\text{K}bd7\) was played in a number of top games, where Black was doing fine;  
B) 10.\(b4\)

An important moment!  
B1) 10...\(\text{K}b6\) leads to a white advantage after 11.\(\text{K}a4!\);  
B11) 11...\(\text{K}e8\) 12.\(\text{K}x b6 axb6\)  
B111) Here, an old idea of Anthony Miles deserves full attention: 13.d6?!  
With the white pawn on d6, the \(\text{K}c8\) will be locked in for quite some time.  
13...\(\text{K}e4\) 14.\(\text{K}b2\) \(\text{K}c6\) 14...\(\text{K}h4\) 15.\(\text{K}d4\).  
15.\(g3\) \(\text{K}e5\) 16.\(\text{K}g2\) \(\text{K}c4\) 17.\(\text{K}d4\) \(\text{K}x b2\) 18.\(\text{K}x e4\) 1-0 Miles-Arnason, Oslo 1984;  
B112) 13.\(\text{K}h3!\) is the beginning of another interesting idea:  
B1121) 13...\(\text{K}e5\) Taking the white d-pawn would again prove to be too expensive for Black. 14.\(\text{K}b2\) \(\text{K}x d5\) 15.\(\text{K}c2\) \(\text{K}c6\)  
16.\(g4!\) The point behind 13.\(\text{K}h3\). Again Black's rook is terrible in the middle of the board. 16...\(\text{d6}\) 17.\(\text{K}g2\) \(\text{K}e6\) 18.0-0 \(\text{K}c8\) 19.\(\text{K}f4!\) White is in no hurry to collect the rook. 19...\(\text{K}g5\) 20.\(\text{K}x e6\) \(\text{K}xe6\) 21.\(f4\) \(\text{K}g6\) 22.\(\text{K}e2\) \(\text{e}5\) 23.\(b5\) \(\text{K}d4\) 24.\(\text{K}x d4\) \(\text{K}x d4\) 25.\(g5\) and White had a winning advantage, as the black rook still has no place to go. An excellent game by Malaniuk! Malaniuk-Tunik, Yalta 1996;  
B1122) 13...\(\text{d6}\) 14.\(\text{K}e3\) \(\text{K}e4\) (or 14...\(\text{K}f5\) 15.\(\text{K}g3\)) leads to a white advantage:  
B11221) 15.\(\text{K}g3\) \(\text{K}d7\) 16.\(\text{K}g2\) \(\text{K}e7\) 17.\(\text{K}d4\), followed by 0-0 (directly 17.0-0? is a blunder due to 17...\(\text{K}x f2\));  
B112211) 15.\(\text{K}d4\) is not clear after 15...\(\text{K}d7\) 16.\(\text{K}f4\) \(\text{K}e7\) 17.\(\text{K}b5\) \(\text{K}g3!\) 18.\(\text{K}x g3\) \(\text{K}x e3\)+ 19.\(\text{K}x e3\) \(\text{K}x e3\)+ 20.\(\text{K}f2\) \(\text{K}b3\) 21.\(\text{K}x c3\)! was better for White after 21.\(\text{K}h1\) \(\text{K}x c1\) 22.\(\text{K}x c1\) \(\text{K}f6\) 23.\(g4\), Karjakin-Bruned, Dresden Ech 2007) 21.\(\text{K}h1\) \(\text{K}x b1\) 22.\(\text{K}x b1\) \(\text{K}f6\) 23.\(\text{K}c1\) \(g5\).
Part I: 4.e3 Various

B12) Or 11...d6 12.\(dxb6\) \(axb6\) and now:

B121) 13.\(\textit{g}3\);
B1211) 13.\(\textit{E}e8+\) 14.\(\textit{e}2\) \(\textit{e}5\) was seen in an old-time classic. Just like in Gelfand-Tiviakov above, Black collects the \(d\)-pawn, but the price is too high: Black’s rook is badly placed and White has a lead in development. 15.\(\textit{b}2\) \(\textit{xd}5\) 16.\(\textit{w}c1\) \(\textit{xc}6\) 17.0-0 \(\textit{e}5\) 18.\(\textit{we}3\) \(\textit{e}6\) 19.\(\textit{h}3\) b5 20.\(\textit{ac}1\) \(\textit{d}7\). The tactical 20...\(\textit{c}4\) does not solve the problems after 21.\(\textit{xc}4\) bxc4 22.\(\textit{xc}4\) \(\textit{e}5\) 23.\(\textit{xe}5\) \(\textit{xc}4\) 24.\(\textit{d}d1\) \(\textit{d}5\) 25.\(\textit{wd}4\) \(\textit{b}3\) 26.\(\textit{xe}7\) \(\textit{xd}1\) 27.\(\textit{f}5\) 21.\(\textit{fe}1\) Black’s \(\textit{d}5\) is terribly placed here. White went on to win in Torre-Karpov, London 1984;

B1212) 13...\(\textit{w}e7+\) 14.\(\textit{e}2\) \(\textit{we}5\) 15.\(\textit{b}1\)! Again White will lose his \(d\)-pawn, however his compensation will be excellent. On 15.\(\textit{e}3\) \(\textit{g}4\) equalized in Cu. Hansen-Winants, Antwerp 1993. 15.\(\textit{xd}5\) Or 15...\(\textit{xd}5\) 16.\(\textit{b}2\) \(\textit{we}6\) 17.\(\textit{wd}2\) \(\textit{c}6\) 18.0-0. 16.0-0 \(\textit{c}6\) 17.\(\textit{b}2\) White will regain the pawn and have a superior position.

B122) 13.\(\textit{c}3\) is an old Gligoric move, also good enough to get an edge: 13...\(\textit{f}5\) 14.\(\textit{e}2\) \(\textit{e}4\) 15.\(\textit{xe}4\) \(\textit{xe}4\) 16.0-0 \(\textit{wd}6\) 17.\(\textit{a}2\) \(\textit{g}6\) 18.\(\textit{f}3\) \(\textit{f}1\) 19.\(\textit{d}2\) \(\textit{d}7\) 20.\(\textit{b}2\) \(\textit{f}5\) 21.\(\textit{w}e1\) \(\textit{w}g5\) 22.\(\textit{b}5\) \(\textit{b}5\) 23.\(\textit{f}2\) Gligoric-Nikolic, Subotica-YUG 1984;

B123) 13.\(\textit{h}3\) \(\textit{e}8\) (or 13...\(\textit{f}5\) 14.\(\textit{g}3\)) 14.\(\textit{e}3\) is also possible, trying to transpose to 11...\(\textit{e}8\).

B2) 10...\(\textit{d}6!\) is Black’s best move: 11.\(\textit{g}3\) \(\textit{e}8\) 11...\(\textit{e}5\) 12.\(\textit{g}2\) \(\textit{d}6\) 13.0-0 \(\textit{a}5\) is also OK for Black. 12.\(\textit{g}2\) \(\textit{e}5\) 13.0-0 \(\textit{a}5\) It is a good idea to provoke \(b4-b5\) and secure the c5-square for his knight. 14.\(\textit{b}5\) \(\textit{d}6\) 15.\(\textit{h}3\) \(\textit{fd}7\) 16.\(\textit{f}4\) \(\textit{f}6\) 17.\(\textit{a}2\) \(\textit{c}5\) 18.\(\textit{g}4\) \(\textit{g}6\) and Black was fine in Sadler-Topalov, Tilburg 1998.

C) 10.\(\textit{a}4\) In my opinion this is the most testing move here.

C1) 10...\(\textit{d}6\) Now this retreat does not produce the same result, since White is better after 11.\(\textit{g}3\) \(\textit{e}8\) 12.\(\textit{g}2\). It is not easy for Black to develop harmoniously:

C11) 12...\(\textit{w}e7\) 13.\(\textit{e}3\) \(\textit{g}4\) 14.\(\textit{d}4\) \(\textit{b}6\) 15.\(\textit{c}3\) \(\textit{a}6\) 16.\(\textit{c}1\). White wants to simply play 17.\(\textit{c}2\) and 0-0. Black’s main problem is his undeveloped knight, still stuck on \(b8\). 16.\(\textit{h}3\) \(\textit{h}6\) is less clear. 16...\(\textit{e}5\) 17.0-0 \(\textit{d}3\) 18.\(\textit{c}2\);

C12) 12...\(\textit{b}5\) 13.\(\textit{c}3\) \(\textit{b}4\) 14.\(\textit{axb}4\) \(\textit{xb}4\) 15.0-0 \(\textit{a}5\) 16.\(\textit{d}4\) \(\textit{a}6\) 17.\(\textit{c}1\) \(\textit{xe}1+\) 18.\(\textit{w}e1\) \(\textit{b}7\) and for Black his development was still a problem in Shulman-Rubenchik, Philadelphia 2003.

C2) 10...\(\textit{b}6\) 11.\(\textit{xc}5\) 11.\(\textit{ec}3\) or 11.\(\textit{b}4\) \(\textit{d}6\) 12.\(\textit{ec}3\) brings White nowhere. 11...\(\textit{bxc}5\) 12.\(\textit{c}3\)

\[\text{12...\(\textit{e}8+\) 12...\(\textit{d}6!\) leads to a white advantage after 13.\(\textit{e}2\) \(\textit{bd}7\) 14.0-0 \(\textit{b}7\) 15.\(\textit{f}4\) \(\textit{b}6\) 16.\(\textit{b}1\) a5 17.\(\textit{a}4\) \(\textit{fe}8\) 18.\(\textit{b}5\). Now we have a typical Volga/Benko gambit pawn structure, Black without counterplay and without his g7 bishop. White went on to win in Vaisser-Milov, Paris 1994. 13.\(\textit{e}2\) \(\textit{a}6\)\]

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Chapters 1.9: The Original Rubinstein – 4...c5 5.\( \mathcal{D} \)e2

This trade is a good idea for Black here because it becomes easier for him to manoeuvre with his pieces. 14.0-0 \( \mathcal{D} \)xe2 15.\( \mathcal{D} \)xe2 d6 The assessment of this position is in my opinion important for the assessment of the whole 8.d5 line! We have a Wolga/Benko gambit pawn structure, where Black does not have his usual dark-squared bishop on g7, so common sense tells us that White should have an advantage.

16.\( \mathcal{D} \)f4 \( \mathcal{W} \)b6 Here Black can try to improve with 16...\( \mathcal{D} \)bd7?? 17.\( \mathcal{D} \)xd6 \( \mathcal{W} \)b6 18.\( \mathcal{D} \)f4 \( \mathcal{W} \)xb2 19.\( \mathcal{D} \)g3 g6! Weakening his king, but also limiting White's \( \mathcal{D} \)g3. White should be better, though Black has counterchances: 17.\( \mathcal{D} \)g3 \( \mathcal{D} \)bd7 18.\( \mathcal{D} \)f5 This knight is strong. White went on to win in Neverov-Berzinsh, Prerov 2001. This line should be analysed more deeply – it may revive the popularity of the 8.d5 line!

\( \mathcal{D} \)g3 is not dangerous for Black after

8...d5 9.cxd5 \( \mathcal{D} \)xd5 10.\( \mathcal{D} \)g2 \( \mathcal{D} \)xc3 11.bxc3 \( \mathcal{D} \)c6. Black was fine in a number of games, Kortchnoi being the only strong player playing this with white.

8...d5

By far Black's main move here.

8...d6 is passive and inferior: 9.\( \mathcal{D} \)e3 9.\( \mathcal{D} \)xe2 also leads to White's advantage; Black lands in passive hedgehog-type positions in the event of 9...\( \mathcal{D} \)bd7 10.\( \mathcal{D} \)e2 \( \mathcal{W} \)e8 11.0-0 \( \mathcal{D} \)f8 12.b4 \( \mathcal{D} \)g6 13.\( \mathcal{D} \)xg6 hxg6 14.\( \mathcal{D} \)f3 as in Lautier-Cvitan, Ohrid Ech 2001, or, a similar story: 9...a6 10.\( \mathcal{D} \)e2 \( \mathcal{D} \)bd7 11.0-0 b6 12.\( \mathcal{D} \)f3 \( \mathcal{D} \)b8 13.\( \mathcal{D} \)d3 \( \mathcal{W} \)c7 14.\( \mathcal{A} \)c1 \( \mathcal{A} \)b7 15.d5! e5 16.\( \mathcal{D} \)b4 \( \mathcal{D} \)f8 17.\( \mathcal{D} \)c6 \( \mathcal{H} \)bc8 18.b4 \( \mathcal{D} \)f8 19.b5 with a large advantage for White in Milov-Cmilyte, Mainz 2004. 9...e5 10.dxe5 Or 10.\( \mathcal{D} \)fd5 \( \mathcal{D} \)c6. 10...\( \mathcal{D} \)xe5 11.\( \mathcal{D} \)fd5

The positional patterns are clear. White has a slight advantage in this symmetrical central pawn structure where he has the upper hand. Most of White's advantage is based on the fact that due to the central pawn structure his light-squared bishop is superior to Black's. It may look as if the position is rather drawish and that White's optical advantage will quickly evaporate, but this assumption would be wrong here. White actually has a long-term advantage and Black has a hard task ahead to equalize.

11.\( \mathcal{D} \)d3
Also possible, though less often played is

11.\( \text{d}e2 \text{c}6 12.0-0 \text{g}5 13.\text{f}f3 \text{xf4} \)

14.\( \text{xf4} \text{f}5 15.\text{wd2} \text{wd7} 16.\text{h}3. \)

White had a standard type of small, long-term advantage which we often see in such positions, and went on to win in Sargissian-Tiviakov, Tripoli 2004.

\[ 11...\text{c}6 12.0-0 \text{g}5 \]

This leads to a small but stable advantage for White. Other moves also do not equalize. Often played is 12 ... \( \text{f}6 \)

13.\( \text{e}3 \text{g}6 \)

\[ \bullet \ 14.\text{c}c1: \]

A) 14...\( \text{xd4}?! \) needs more analysis; at least matters do not look clear to me:

15.\( \text{xd4} \) The exchange sac 15.\( \text{xe6}+ \text{g}7 \)

16.\( \text{d}x\text{e}6 \text{g}5 17.\text{d}x\text{d}3 \text{xc1} \)

18.\( \text{wx}c1 \) does not look convincing after

18...\( \text{f}5 \) 19.\( \text{wh}6 \text{f}7 \) 20.\( \text{e}5 \text{c}7 \)

21.\( \text{g}4 \text{c}2. 15...\text{xd4} 16.\text{fxg6} \text{xf2+} \)

17.\( \text{h}x\text{f2} \text{xg6} 17...\text{fxg6}?! \) opens up Black’s king position and is not good:

18.\( \text{wd4} \text{f}7 \) 19.\( \text{x}d5 \text{f}5 \) 20.\( \text{e}1 \) h5

21.\( \text{e}2 \text{c}8 22.\text{e}7 (\text{Black’s \( \text{f}5 \) is doing nothing}), \) and White easily won in V. Gaprindashvili-Aroshidze, Tbilisi 2002.

A1) 18.\( \text{xd5} \text{e}6 19.\text{f}6+ \text{g}7 \)

20.\( \text{we}1 \text{c}8 21.\text{xc8} \text{wc8} 22.\text{we}5 \)

\( \text{bd}8 23.\text{h}4 \) and White has initiative;

A2) Or 18.\( \text{c}3 \text{wd6} 19.\text{wd}4 \text{xe8} \)

20.\( \text{xd}5 \text{e}1+ 21.\text{xf1} \text{e}5! \) Black is lost in the event of 21...\( \text{xf1}+?? \)

19.\( \text{h}4! \text{d}7 \) If Anand has to play such a move, it is not a good sign. 20.\( \text{a}2 \) and White had a clear advantage in Timman-Anand, Wijk aan Zee 2000;

B) In the event of 14...\( \text{g}7 \), probably best is 15.\( \text{b}1 (15.\text{xc5} \text{e}7 16.\text{b}3 \text{b}6 17.\text{xc3} \text{is less clear}) 15...\text{e}7 \)

16.\( \text{b}8 \text{b}8 17.\text{f}3 \) and White has a standard, risk-free advantage: 17...\( \text{wb}6 \)

18.\( \text{b}4 \text{e}6 \)

\[ 22.\text{xf1} 22.\text{xf6}+ \text{g}7 \) and White does not have more than a draw: 23.\( \text{e}8+ \text{g}8 24.\text{xc}5 \text{xe}5 25.\text{d}6 \text{e}6; \)

A3) 18.\( \text{d}4 \text{e}6 19.\text{h}4 \text{b}6 20.\text{c}5 \text{ac}8 21.\text{b}4 \text{xc}5 22.\text{xc}5 \text{wb}1+ 23.\text{h}2 \text{w}6 24.\text{h}5 \text{e}4! 25.\text{xe}4 \text{d}x\text{e}4 26.\text{xe}6 \text{e}3! \) with a draw.

C) 14...\( \text{d}6 15.\text{b}1 \) Timman rightly follows a similar set-up to the one he successfully employed against Anand. 15.\( \text{c}5 \) is less clear. 15...\( \text{e}6 16.\text{e}1 \text{fe}8 17.\text{wd}6 \text{ac}8 18.\text{h}3 \text{b}6 19.\text{b}4 \)

White’s advantage is long-lasting. His \( \text{f}4 \) is excellently placed, and Black will be forced into passive defence. 19...\( \text{a}5 \)

20.\( \text{b}5 \text{a}7 21.\text{a}4 \text{xc}1 22.\text{xc}1 \text{c}8 \)

23.\( \text{a}2 \text{d}7 24.\text{xc}3 \text{g}7 25.\text{wc}1 \text{and White went on to win in Timman-Ravi, Amsterdam 2000. \)

\[ \bullet \) Perhaps a safer way to get an advantage (because it avoids the 14.\( \text{c}1 \text{xd}4 \) line) is 14.\( \text{c}1 \text{d}6 15.\text{g}3 \text{g}7 \)

16.\( \text{c}1 \text{e}7 17.\text{e}1 \text{h}5 18.\text{b}3 \) and
White's pressure on d5 is obviously stronger than Black's on d4. Black now blundered with 18...\texttt{g}4 19.f3 \texttt{d}d7

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

20.\texttt{x}h5! gxh5 21.f4 \texttt{b}6 22.e7 \texttt{e}6 Or 22...\texttt{w}xd4+ 23.e3 \texttt{x}d1+ 24.xd1 \texttt{c}6 25.d4 and White had a winning advantage (Black's d5 and h5 pawns are very weak) and easily won after 23.c5 \texttt{f}6 24.e7 in Bruzon Bautista-Hess, Barcelona 2010.

13.e1

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

13...\texttt{xf}4

Exchanging White's excellently placed \texttt{f}4. But this brings on other problems. 13...h6 14.c2 is also better for White, while in case of 13...\texttt{d}6 White can choose between two good options: 14.g3 \texttt{d}7 15.h4 \texttt{f}6 16.e3 \texttt{e}7 17.h5 \texttt{f}5 18.f3 \texttt{xe}3 19.xf6+ \texttt{w}xf6 20.xf6 \texttt{gf}6 21.xe3 and White went on to win this endgame in Sargissian-Teplitsky, Calvia ol 2004; or 14.e6 \texttt{xe}6 15.xg5 \texttt{wd}7 16.e1. Such positions are always a bit better for White. Only a swap of the light-squared bishops could change this, but there is no way Black can force that, while the trade of the black knight for White's dark-squared bishop would not change anything. In a \texttt{d}3 vs \texttt{e}6 position White will always be better. 16.f8 \texttt{e}8 17.f5 \texttt{f}5 18.xe8+ \texttt{xe}8 19.b4 and White was a bit better and later won in I. Sokolov-Epishin, Groningen 1997.

14.xf4 \texttt{w}6 15.e5 \texttt{xe}5

16.xe5 \texttt{e}6 17.d2 \texttt{d}ad8 18.e1

An excellent scenario for White: a dominant bishop, e-file control, a strong rook on e5, pressure on the d5 pawn. Black was facing a prolonged, passive, unpleasant defence in a game where only two results were likely in Kramnik-Leko, Budapest 2001.

\begin{center}
\textbf{Conclusion}
\end{center}

White has an advantage in the lines with 4.e3 c5 5.g2 and in the past couple of years, the lines presented here have seen a decline in popularity among black players. The ball is in Black's court.
Chapter 1.10

Development ♘d3 with ♘e2 – 4...c5 5.♘d3

In this move order, White develops his knight to e2 and thereby prevents Black from playing the Hübner Variation. In the middlegame we are now likely to see White playing an isolated pawn position with his knight on e2 instead of the more usual f3. There are pros and cons to this: the knight can no longer jump to e5, however it can jump to f4. Also, as we will see later in some lines, the white queen can be more easily transferred to the kingside; mostly to h3, sometimes to g3.

5...♗c6

Black can also play 5...0-0 6.♘e2 d5 and like most of the time in these lines we will get transpositions:

7.a3 7.cxd5 cxd4 8.exd4 would transpose to lines analysed below. Now:

- 7...♖xc3+ 8.bxc3 8.♖xc3? – at first glance it may seem strange that such a logical move deserves a question mark: 8...cxd4 9.exd4 dxc4 10.♘xc4 ♗c6 11.♘e3 b6 and White is a full tempo down compared to the well-known line 4.e3 c5 5.♘e2 d5 6.a3 ♘xc3 7.♘xc3 cxd4 8.exd4 dxc4 9.♘xc4 ♗c6 10.♗e3 0-0 11.0-0 b6. We have lots of similar transpositions/comparisons in the Rubinstein Nimzo, and therefore, for a player planning to employ this variation in practice, it is important to go through preferably all the lines – not only the ones he plans to play – so it will be easier to compare and quickly notice comparisons, advantages/disadvantages and transpositions! 8...dxc4
Chapter 1.10: Development $\mathcal{d}3$ with $\mathcal{e}2 - 4...c5 5.\mathcal{d}3$

9.\texttt{xc4} $\mathcal{wc}7$ — this will transpose to the line 4.e3 0-0 5.\texttt{d}3 d5 6.a3 \texttt{xc}3 7.bxc3 dxc4 8.\texttt{xc}4 c5 9.\texttt{e}2 $\mathcal{wc}7$, where Black obtains equality.

\* 7...dxc4 8.\texttt{xc}4 $\mathcal{cx}d4$ 9.\texttt{xb}4 dxc3 10.\texttt{xd}8 $\mathcal{xd}8$ 11.\texttt{xc}3 Now White has a small advantage. The doubled b-pawns are good for White here, since they ensure a-file pressure.

11...$\mathcal{lc}6$

12.b5 $\mathcal{e}5$ 13.\texttt{e}2 $\mathcal{d}3+$ 14.\texttt{xd}3 $\mathcal{xd}3$ 15.\texttt{e}2 $\mathcal{d}8$ 16.e4 with a small advantage for White in Ivkov-Vaganian, Vrnjacka Banja 1971.

6.\texttt{e}2

The point of this variation.

6...cxd4 7.exd4 d5

We are at a crossroads here. White can decide to play an isolated pawn position with his light-squared bishop (initially) placed on the b1-h7 diagonal, or allow Black to take ...dxc4, when the white bishop will be (initially) placed on the a2-g8 diagonal. Most of the time White's light-squared bishop keeps switching between the b1-h7 and a2-g8 diagonals in this line, and for a good understanding of these positions it is definitely advisable to study both the 8.cxd5 and the 8.0-0 lines.

8.cxd5

So, the other logical move for White is 8.0-0 dxc4. Black can also play 8...0-0 and then 9.\texttt{g}5 dxc4 10.\texttt{xc}4, or 9.a3 dxc4 10.\texttt{xc}4, or 9.cxd5 $\mathcal{xd}5$, transposes to the analysed lines. 9.\texttt{xc}4 0-0

Here White has a couple of options at his disposal, with similar plans. He can either build up a $\mathcal{w}d3$/\texttt{c}2 battery and then play \texttt{g}5, trying to weaken Black's kingside, which is a regular plan in isolated pawn positions; or transfer, the moment Black's bishop moves from c8 to b7, his queen to h3; or, if Black weakens himself with ...h7-h6, try to sacrifice the c1 bishop on h6. The pawn push d4-d5 is normally not dangerous for Black in this particular line:

\* 10.a3 looks like the most logical continuation here. The pawn on a3 perfectly fits in the system, while Black has to decide what to do with his b4 bishop:

A) Giving the bishop pair with 10...\texttt{xc}3 11.\texttt{xc}3 and playing for the immediate central break 11...e5 does not equalize: 12.\texttt{g}5 $\mathcal{wd}6$ 13.\texttt{e}1 $\mathcal{g}4$ 14.f3 $\mathcal{e}6$ Here this is a standard way to neutralize White's light-squared bishop, however the weakness of the e-pawns are going to remain in Black's camp. 15.\texttt{xe}6 $\mathcal{xe}6$
A1) 16.\( \texttt{\textsf{x}} \texttt{xf6} \) 16...\( \texttt{xf6} \) 17.\( \texttt{f3} \) 18.\( \texttt{e4} \) 19.\( \texttt{d5} \) 20.\( \texttt{xd5} + \texttt{f7} \) 21.\( \texttt{d1} \) - due to the weakness of Black's e5 pawn White was better and went on to win in Kortchnoi-Salov, New York 1996;

A2) Also good for White was 16.\( \texttt{b3} \! \texttt{!} \). Black has problems: 16...\( \texttt{exd4} \? \) This definitely does not solve Black's problems, however the position is unpleasant for him. White remains a clear pawn up in case of 16...\( \texttt{d5} \) 17.\( \texttt{xb7} \) \( \texttt{ab8} \) 18.\( \texttt{a6} \) \( \texttt{b6} \) (or 18...\( \texttt{b2} \) 19.\( \texttt{dxe5} \) \( \texttt{xe5} \) 20.\( \texttt{xc6} \) \( \texttt{xe2} \) 21.\( \texttt{d2} \! \texttt{!} \) \( \texttt{b6} \) 22.\( \texttt{f1} \) 19.\( \texttt{d3} \) \( \texttt{b3} \) 20.\( \texttt{dxe5} \) \( \texttt{exe5} \) 21.\( \texttt{e4} \) 17.\( \texttt{f4} \) 18.\( \texttt{xe6} \!) 18.\( \texttt{xe6} \) is less convincing after 18...\( \texttt{c5} \) 19.\( \texttt{xf6} \) \( \texttt{xc3} + \) 20.\( \texttt{h1} \) \( \texttt{gxf6} \) 21.\( \texttt{xf6} \) \( \texttt{e5} \) 18...\( \texttt{d3} \) Or 18...\( \texttt{dxc3} \) 19.\( \texttt{xf6} \) \( \texttt{gxf6} \) 20.\( \texttt{d1} \) 19.\( \texttt{ad1} \) \( \texttt{e8} \) 20.\( \texttt{xf6} \) \( \texttt{gxf6} \) 21.\( \texttt{e3} \) \( \texttt{e5} \) 22.\( \texttt{d4} \) with \( \texttt{f3-f4} \) to follow. Black loses his d3 pawn, White has a winning advantage.

B) 10...\( \texttt{e7} \) was another option, after which we get a regular isolated pawn struggle: 11.\( \texttt{d3} \) \( \texttt{a6} \) 12.\( \texttt{a2} \) \( \texttt{b5} \) 13.\( \texttt{g5} \) \( \texttt{b4} \) 14.\( \texttt{b1} \) \( \texttt{g6} \) 15.\( \texttt{xb4} \) \( \texttt{xb4} \) 16.\( \texttt{xd2} \) Now Black can develop 'regularly' with 16...\( \texttt{b7} \). Instead he chooses a move which allows his rook to control the seventh rank, and allows his bishop to enter play via a6.

16...\( \texttt{a7} \) I am not convinced of the correctness of this plan. 17.\( \texttt{a4} \) White aims to transfer this knight to the c5-square, which is probably the main drawback of Black's early advance with the b-pawn. The knight will be well placed on c5, while the third rank is now 'cleaned and free' for a rook lift. 17...\( \texttt{a5} \) 18.\( \texttt{c5} \) \( \texttt{a6} \) 19.\( \texttt{d1} \) \( \texttt{c4} \) 20.\( \texttt{a3} \) ! This rook lift is a standard plan for White in such positions. 20...\( \texttt{e8} \) 21.\( \texttt{g3} \) \( \texttt{d5} \) 22.\( \texttt{h4} \) and White had the initiative on the kingside and went on to win in Vaganian-Kir. Georgiev, Lvov 1984;

C) 10...\( \texttt{d6} \) 11.\( \texttt{d3} \) 11.h3, preparing \( \texttt{g5} \), was another option in this position. In the event of 11...\( \texttt{h6} \) White will play 12.\( \texttt{e3} \) followed by \( \texttt{d2} \), with ideas of sacrificing on \( \texttt{h6} \). 11...\( \texttt{b6} \) 12.\( \texttt{d1} \) \( \texttt{h6} \) This move does prevent the pin by \( \texttt{g5} \), but it also creates a target for a dangerous piece sacrifice. I am personally not fond of \( \texttt{h7-h6} \) here. 12...\( \texttt{b7} \) was to be preferred, especially because 13.\( \texttt{g5} \) is not yet possible because of 13...\( \texttt{xh2} + \). 13.\( \texttt{e4} \) ! Now we see the effects of Black's premature decision to play \( \texttt{...h7-h6} \). 13...\( \texttt{b7} \) 13...\( \texttt{e7} ? \) is not good on account of 14.\( \texttt{xf6 +} \) \( \texttt{xf6} \) 15.\( \texttt{e4} \) \( \texttt{b7} \) 16.\( \texttt{d3} \) 14.\( \texttt{xd6} \) \( \texttt{xd6} \) 15.\( \texttt{f4} \) \( \texttt{d7} \) 16.\( \texttt{h3} \)!
A standard queen transfer in this line – preparing the $\text{xh6}$ sacrifice, while the queen is also well placed on the h3-c8 diagonal, where it supports the d4-d5 thrust.

C1) 16...$\text{d5}$?! This is really asking for trouble. Now the time is ripe for 17.$\text{xd6}$! $\text{hx6}$ 18.$\text{wxh6}$ $\text{ce7}$ 19.$\text{d3}$ Black is now in serious trouble. 19...$\text{f5}$ 19...$\text{g6}$ 20.$\text{h3}$ $\text{fc8}$ loses to 21.$\text{exd5}$ $\text{xd5}$ 22.$\text{f4}$. 20.$\text{g5}$!! 20.$\text{g3}$+ $\text{hxg3}$ 21.$\text{g5}$+$\text{h7}$ is not more than perpetual check. 20...$\text{g7}$

21.$\text{h3}$ with a sharp position in which White had compensation for the sacrificed material in Kortchnoi-Ivanchuk, Yalta 1995. Stronger was 21.$\text{g3}$! $\text{f6}$ 22.$\text{wh6}$ $\text{f7}$ 23.$\text{xd5}$ $\text{xd5}$ 24.$\text{f4}$ and White has a lot of attacking potential on the kingside, while the g-file pin is terrible for Black, for instance: 24...$\text{xe4}$ 25.$\text{h5}$ $\text{af8}$ 26.$\text{el}$ $\text{f5}$ 27.$\text{f4}!$ $\text{f6}$ 28.$\text{g6}$ $\text{xg6}$ 29.$\text{exg6}$ $\text{wd6}$ 30.$\text{wh8}$+$\text{f7}$ 31.$\text{e5}$+$\text{xe5}$ 32.$\text{xf8}$+$\text{xf8}$ 33.$\text{dx5}$ with a won ending for White.

C2) Correct was 16...$\text{a5}$ 17.$\text{a2}$ and now:

C21) 17...$\text{ac8}$? allows the thematic 18.$\text{xd6}gxh6$ 19.$\text{wh6}$ sacrifice;

C22) While in the case of 17...$\text{d5}$ White also proceeds with 18.$\text{xd6}gxh6$ 19.$\text{wh6}$ $\text{f6}$ (19...$\text{f5}$? is a blunder due to 20.$\text{b4}$ $\text{c6}$ 21.$\text{g6}$+) 20.$\text{b4}$ $\text{c6}$ 21.$\text{d3}$ $\text{wh7}$ 22.$\text{wd2}$ and White has a strong attack for the sacrificed piece;

C23) 17...$\text{d5}$! Exchanging a part of White's attacking potential. 18.$\text{xd6}$. 18.$\text{e5}$ is approximately equal after 18...$\text{we7}$ 19.$\text{xf6}$ $\text{fxe6}$ 20.$\text{xd5}$ $\text{exd5}$.

C23 1) 19.$\text{a2}$ $\text{gxc6}$ 19...$\text{d5}$?? blunders to 20.$\text{c3}$. 20.$\text{wh6}$ $\text{e4}$ 21.$\text{f3}$ $\text{d6}$ 22.$\text{g5}$+$\text{h7}$ with a draw by perpetual check. 19.$\text{g3}$ may turn out to be over ambitious after 19...$\text{h5}$:

C232 1) 20.$\text{g5}$ $\text{c4}$ 21.$\text{f4}$ $\text{f6}$ 22.$\text{hxh5}$ $\text{a3}$! An important move, not allowing White to strengthen his attack with a rook lift. After 22...$\text{gxh6}$? Black falls under a terrible attack after 23.$\text{axc1}$. 23.$\text{ac1}$ $\text{xc1}$ 24.$\text{ac1}$ $\text{h6}$ 25.$\text{h3}$ $\text{a2}$ and White's remaining rook gets exchanged, so White runs out of attacking potential;

C232 2) 20.$\text{g4}$ $\text{c4}$! Controlling the d3-square, thus not allowing a rook lift. Black falls under attack in the event of 20...$\text{d5}$? 21.$\text{wh5}$ $\text{hxh6}$ 22.$\text{d3}$. 21.$\text{f4}$ $\text{f5}$ 22.$\text{wh5}$ $\text{hxh6}$ 23.$\text{ac1}$ $\text{h6}$ 24.$\text{h3}$ $\text{f6}$ and Black should repel the white attack, keeping his material advantage.

• Another way is to first improve the queen, which is now possible with the
Port 1: 4.e3 Various

knight on e2 instead of f3: 10.\texttt{Wd3} b6 11.\texttt{Qg5} \texttt{Qe7} 12.\texttt{Ad1} \texttt{Qb7} 13.\texttt{Wh3} \texttt{Qb4} 14.a3 \texttt{Qbd5} 15.\texttt{d3}

Up to here we've had a logical run of play from both sides.

A) Now, however, with 15...g6? Black made a crucial mistake, losing the exchange: 16.\texttt{Qh6} \texttt{Qe8} 17.\texttt{b5}

A1) 17...\texttt{Wd6} Black has to part with his e8 rook. 18.\texttt{Qxe8} and White was a clear exchange up in Milanovic-Munizaba, Zlatibor 2006;

A2) 17.\texttt{Qd7} does not solve Black's problems after 18.\texttt{Qf4!} (more precise than 18.\texttt{Qxd5} \texttt{Qxd5} 19.\texttt{Qf4} due to 19...\texttt{a6}!) 18...\texttt{Qxf4} (18...\texttt{a6?} 19.\texttt{Qxe6}) 19.\texttt{Qxf4} \texttt{a6} 20.\texttt{d5!} and White wins.

B) Correct was 'not to be afraid of ghosts' and play 15...\texttt{b6}. Now White's best is 16.\texttt{Qxh6}. 16.\texttt{Qc1} \texttt{Qc8} does not look like an improvement, because there is no follow-up with a kingside attack: 16...\texttt{Qxh6} 17.\texttt{Wxh6} and after 17...\texttt{Qe8} White has to make a draw by perpetual check: 18.\texttt{Qg5+} Otherwise Black plays ...\texttt{Qf8}. 18...\texttt{Qh8} 19.\texttt{Wxh6}.

White can also decide to first move his bishop closer to a possible \texttt{Wd3}/\texttt{Qc2} battery, however since the move a2-a3 will likely have to be played anyway, White could also have waited with the decision to play 10.\texttt{Qb3}, perhaps later opting for \texttt{a2} instead.

A) 15...\texttt{Qd5}?! unnecessarily allows the immediate h4-h5 advance and makes White's life easy: 16.h5 \texttt{Qd6} An option to consider was 16...\texttt{Qh4} 17.h6 g6. 17.\texttt{Qg4} f5 18.\texttt{Qh3} \texttt{Qge7} 19.\texttt{Qg5} 19.h6 g6 20.\texttt{Qg5} is better for White. 19...\texttt{Wd7} 20.\texttt{Qe1} Strangely enough, White keeps reframing from 20.h6. 20...\texttt{Qf7} 21.\texttt{Qad1} with an advantage to White in Bronstein-Pigusov, Reykjavik 1994;

B) Correct was 15...\texttt{Qc8}!, keeping the tension. It is difficult for White to proceed actively on the kingside. Black has a pleasant and probably slightly better position, since after 16.\texttt{Qg5} h6! (White has a kingside attack in case of 16...\texttt{Qd5} 17.\texttt{Qe4}) 17.\texttt{Qxf6} (or 17.\texttt{Qe3} \texttt{Qd5} 18.h5 \texttt{Qh4} and Black is better) 17...\texttt{Qxf6} 18.\texttt{Qxe6} tactics are not exactly working for White: 18...\texttt{Qh4} 19.\texttt{Wxg6} \texttt{Qc6} 20.d5 \texttt{Qxe6} and now 20...\texttt{fxe6} was also possible, as 21.\texttt{dxe6}?? is a horrible blunder due to 21...\texttt{Qxf2+}. 118
Chapter 1.10: Development d3 with e2 - 4...c5 5...d3

• White can also first pin the black knight and then decide on his course of action: 10...g5. Now with correct play Black has a good game:
  A) 10...e7 11.c1 w5 12.wd2 d8 13.a3 d7 14...f1 e8 may look logical, but White retains possibilities of a kingside attack, while Black's position is relatively passive. 15.a2 h6 Black now has to consider white sacrifices on h6, and this is a general drawback of this move. 16.e3 d6 17.h3 Preparing the sacrifice. An option was 17.d5. 17...ac8 18.xh6! The correct decision. 18...gxh6 19.wxh6 dh7 20.b1 20.d5 was also strong: 20...f8 21.w4 exd5 22.b1. 20...f5 21.b4 wc7 22.wxe6+ wf7 23.xf5 bc7 24.e4 With a material advantage (four pawns for a bishop) while the attack continues, White had a decisive advantage and soon won in Kamsky-Beliavsky, Linares 1994; B) 10...h6 Perhaps best. Again, the timing of this move is very important in these positions. 11.h4 If 11.e3 Black plays 11...d5. 11...e7 12.b3 b6 13.wd3 b7 14.a3

18.wd1 Black has a good game. A draw was agreed in Akobian-Gulko, Seattle 2003. Black could also have decided to play on for a win.

8...xd5

• For 8...xd5 please refer to 4.e3 0-0 5.d3 d5 6.cxd5 exd5 7.e2 c5 8.a3 cxd4 9.exd4;
• 8...xd5 is rarely played. It does not look natural and does not equalize: 9.0-0 wb5 10.e4 10.f4 followed by e4 is a natural option. 10...xe4 11.xe4 d6 12.f4 xf4 13.xf4 xd1 14.fxdl d7 15.d5 exd5 16.xd5 0-0-0 17.h3 17.ac1 is better, since in the event of 17...g5, 18.d3 is unpleasant for Black. 17...g5 18.h5 e6 and Black managed to hold this inferior ending in Milov-Yudasin, Philadelphia 2007.

9.0-0

White can also postpone castling and first provoke a pawn weaknesses on Black's kingside. This strategy can also backfire on White.

9.a3:

• Another option is 9...e7. After 10.c2 0-0 11.wd3 g6 this can lead to very sharp positions if White opts for

12.h4! A very direct approach, good for the reader to take note of, as it can
be used more often in this type of position! Black has to adhere to the old basic rule: wing attack should be countered in the centre!

Black is doing fine in the case of 12.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 13.bxc3 e5 14.$\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{A}e8$ 15.$\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 16.$\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{W}d6$.

A) 12...e5! The direct, principled reaction, involving a sacrifice. The position is razor-sharp, and for both sides it is easy to go wrong. Black has his trumps and is not inferior. 13.$\mathbb{D}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 14.$\mathbb{W}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 15.f3

15...$\mathbb{R}c8$! Black's play is energetic and in the spirit of the position. His bridges have already been burned with 12...e5! and in order to keep the initiative, Black must be ready to sacrifice more. 16.$\mathbb{W}xg4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$! Excellent play. With a further sacrifice Black opens up the white king's position.

A1) Taking the knight is rather dangerous for White: 17.$\mathbb{W}xe5$

18...$\mathbb{Q}g5$! The original game went 18...$\mathbb{W}xc2$?. In his attempt to keep the initiative, Black sacrificed one piece too many: 19.$\mathbb{W}xc2$ $\mathbb{Q}d3+$ 20.$\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{W}d5$ 21.$\mathbb{Q}g1$! (only move) 21...$\mathbb{E}e8$ 22.$\mathbb{Q}h6$! (weaving a mating net around the black king) 22...$\mathbb{W}xg3$ 23.$\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{W}xh1$ 24.$\mathbb{W}xd3$ $\mathbb{W}h2$ 25.$\mathbb{W}e2$ and White soon won in Knaak-Christiansen, Thessaloniki ol 1988. 19.0-0 Wrong is 19.$\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{W}a5+$! 20.$\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f3+$ 21.$\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 22.$\mathbb{W}a4$ $\mathbb{W}b6$. 19...$\mathbb{Q}xc1$ 20.$\mathbb{Q}xc1$ $\mathbb{W}d2$ 21.$\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{E}xg4$ 22.$\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{W}d4+$ 23.$\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}f2+$ 24.$\mathbb{W}h2$ $\mathbb{g}4+$ 25.$\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}f2+$ and a draw could have been the outcome of this exciting game.

B) The other possibility is 12...$\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 13.bxc3 e5, when White gets compensation for the sacrificed pawn after 14.$\mathbb{W}g3$ (Black had a perfect Grünfeld-
Chapter 1.10: Development $\text{d}3$ with $\text{c}2 - 4\ldots \text{c}5 \ 5. \text{d}3$

type position after 14. $\text{w}d2 \ \text{exd}4 \ 15. \text{cx}d4 \ \text{f}6 \ 16. \text{b}2 \ \text{e}8 \ 17. \text{f}1 \ \text{e}6 \ 18. \text{d}1 \ \text{b}6 \ 19. \text{c}3 \ \text{c}4 \ 20. \text{d}3 \ \text{a}6$ and Black was better in Milov-Onischuk, Biel 1996. 14...$\text{exd}4 \ 15. \text{h}5 \ \text{d}6 \ 16. \text{f}4 \ \text{xf}4 \ 17. \text{xf}4$

B1) 17...$\text{e}8+ \ 18. \text{f}1 \ \text{g}5 \ 19. \text{h}6$ with sharp play;

B2) Or 17...$\text{w}f6 \ 18. \text{hx}g6 \ \text{hx}g6 \ 19. \text{d}5 \ \text{e}5+ \ A$ terrible blunder would have been 19...$\text{e}6+?? \ 20. \text{f}1 \ \text{xd}5 \ 21. \text{x}g6 and White wins.

10...$\text{d}6$ With a strategic decision coming up, this is probably the easiest way to counter White's aggressive pre-casting plans. 10...$\text{c}2$:

A) 10...$\text{xc}3! \ A$ good strategic idea.

11.bxc3

11...$\text{e}5! \ Black is fine, and White has some tough strategic decisions to make:

A1) If 12. $\text{d}5$, White's central pawns are excellently blocked: 12...$\text{e}7 \ 13.0-0 \ 0-0 \ 14.\text{c}4 \ \text{w}7$ with a good game for Black;

A2) Maintaining the status quo also does not bring White any opening advantage: 12.0-0 0-0 13. $\text{e}3 \ \text{exd}4 \ 14.\text{cx}d4 \ \text{d}7$ or 14...$\text{wh}4$ and Black is OK;

A3) 12.$\text{w}d3$ Trying to weaken the black kingside. 12...$\text{g}6! \ Black is not afraid of his in this case rather hypothet-
plan would not really help) 21...\(\text{d6} 22.\text{xf4} \text{exe6} 23.\text{exe6 fxe6} 24.\text{we3} \text{d5} \) and Black won easily in Milov-Arnold, Philadelphia 2008. 18...\(\text{b8} 19.\text{ff3} \) The immediate 19.\(\text{h5}!\) was another way to continue the attack. 19...\(\text{c7} 20.\text{h5} \text{d7} 21.\text{h4} \) All White's pieces are participating in the attack and Black's position is about to crack. Kamsky is playing a model game. 21...\(\text{f6} 21...\text{f6} 22.\text{hxh6+} \text{xf6} 23.\text{d5!} \) would transpose to the game. 22.\(\text{hxh6+} \text{xf6} 23.\text{d5!} \) Black's position now collapses. 23...\(\text{xe4} 23...\text{xd5} \text{loses to} 24.\text{xd5} \text{xd5} 25.\text{dxe6} \text{exd5} 26.\text{f6+} \text{xf6} 27.\text{xe8+} \text{exe8} 28.\text{we6} \text{c1+} 29.\text{h2} 24.\text{dxe6} \text{f5} 25.\text{d8} \text{d8} 26.\text{d1} 1-0, Kamsky-Short, Linares 1994.

B2) Another option was to play for a pin along the a4-e8 diagonal with 15.\(\text{c1} \text{b7} 16.\text{a4c8} 17.\text{fd1}.

In order for Black to get out of this pin, he has to sacrifice a pawn, however he gets the bishop pair and has enough compensation to keep the balance: 17...\(\text{xd6} 18.\text{xc6} \text{c6} 19.\text{xc6} \text{xc6} 20.\text{xa6} \text{wa8} 20...\text{d7}, \) keeping the queens on the board, was perhaps more active, but very likely Anand judged that in the ensuing pawn-down endgame due to his strong light-squared bishop he would easily make a draw, and he was right. 21.\(\text{xa8} \text{xa8} 22.\text{c3 c8} 23.\text{c1} \text{b7} 24.\text{xd5 c1+} 25.\text{xc1} \text{xd5} \) and Black easily kept the draw in Gelfand-Anand, Shenyang 2000. I have to admit that I don't understand why Anand refrained from repeating the plan of 10...\(\text{xc3} \) followed by \(\text{e5}, \) which he used against me in a London rapid event five years earlier.

9...\(\text{d6} \) Black first retreats his bishop before deciding on the next step.

Another logical option is 9...0-0.

Now, a considerable number of lines (after 9...\(\text{d6} \) or 9...0-0) can transpose into each other:

A) 10.\(\text{b1} \text{e7} 10...\text{e8}, \) following the plans shown further on under 10.\(\text{c2} \text{e8}, \) is an option. 11.\(\text{fd3 g6} 12.\text{f3} \) This is one of the standard plans for White in this line. The queen
is transferred to f3, the bishop will arrive on e4 and White will exert pressure along the h1-a8 diagonal.

12...\text{\texttt{e}c3} 13.\texttt{bxc3} \texttt{d}d7 14.\texttt{e}e4 \texttt{c}c8 15.\texttt{d}d1

15...f5 This weakens Black's kingside pawn structure. 15...\text{\texttt{a}a}5! followed by \texttt{c}c6 was an idea to consider. Should White decide to take a pawn with 16.\texttt{x}xb7, Black would have good compensation after 16...\text{\texttt{a}a}xb7 17.\texttt{w}xb7 \texttt{c}c6. 16.\texttt{d}d3 \texttt{a}a5 17.\texttt{h}h6 \texttt{f}f7 18.\texttt{e}e3 \texttt{c}c4 19.\texttt{x}xc4 \texttt{xc}c4 20.\texttt{e}e1 \texttt{w}c8 21.\texttt{g}g5 Exchanging dark-squared bishops is in general a correct strategic decision here. Another option was 21.\texttt{f}f4, keeping Black's e6 weakness under control. 21...e5 Solving the weakness of the e6 pawn, however Black's king remains exposed. 22.h4 \texttt{exd}4 23.cxd4:

A1) If Black keeps the bishops on the board (which is in general advisable) with 23...\texttt{d}d6, White keeps pressure with 24.h5 or 24.\texttt{ac}1;

A2) 23...\texttt{wd}8 24.\texttt{ac}1 \texttt{xx}g5 25.\texttt{hx}g5 White's knight will dominate the black bishop here. 25...\texttt{xc}c1 26.\texttt{xc}c1 \texttt{f}4 27.\texttt{xf}4 \texttt{wg}5 28.\texttt{dd}3 \texttt{w}e3 29.\texttt{xe}3 \texttt{f}5 30.\texttt{e}e5 — with two connected passed pawns in the centre, White was better and he went on to win in Salov-Timman, Sanghi Nagar 1994.

B) 10.\texttt{c}c2 looks to me more logical than 10.\texttt{b}b1:

B1) 10...\texttt{e}e8 prepares the bishop's retreat to f8 (the advantage of 10.a3, forcing the immediate bishop retreat, is that it does not allow this plan). 11.\texttt{w}d3 \texttt{g}6 12.\texttt{d}d1 \texttt{fb}8 13.\texttt{w}f3 \texttt{g}g7 14.\texttt{d}e4 \texttt{h}6 A rather complex battle begins. Black's knight on d5 is well placed and his king is also reasonably safe, but White does have a bit more space and Black has slight problems developing his queenside. 15.\texttt{d}d2 \texttt{e}7 15...b6, planning ...\texttt{b}b7 or ...\texttt{a}a6, may be an improvement. 16.\texttt{b}3 \texttt{d}d7 17.\texttt{g}3 \texttt{ed}8 18.a3 \texttt{e}e8 19.\texttt{w}h3! Preparing a tactical trap. 19...\texttt{w}f8 20.\texttt{ac}1

The position is probably slightly better for White. Here Black blundered with 20...\texttt{ac}8? 21.\texttt{xd}5! \texttt{exd}5 22.\texttt{b}4 and White won after 22...\texttt{d}d7 23.\texttt{xf}8 \texttt{x}h3 24.\texttt{gg}7 \texttt{exe}4 (24...\texttt{g}xg7 loses a pawn after 25.\texttt{c}c5) 25.\texttt{f}6 \texttt{dd}6 26.d5! \texttt{a}5 27.\texttt{e}7 \texttt{xc}1 28.\texttt{xc}1, I. Sokolov-Abramovic, Pula ch-YUG 1988;

Other logical possibilities for Black are:

B2) 10...\texttt{e}e7 11.a3 \texttt{xc}c3 12.\texttt{bc}c3 \texttt{d}d7 13.\texttt{e}e1 \texttt{g}6 14.\texttt{f}4 14.\texttt{g}3 was probably a better square for the knight. 14...\texttt{f}6 15.\texttt{b}1 \texttt{b}6 16.d5 An unusual positional decision which brings White nothing. Yes, he will get a dominant
Part I: 4.e3 Various

knight, but he has also destroyed his pawn structure. 16.\( \square h5 \square h8 \) 17.\( \square h6 \) \( \square e8 \) 18.\( \square g3 \) was probably more in the spirit of the position. 16...\( \text{exd5} \)
17.\( \text{x} d5 \text{e} 6 \) 18.\( \text{c} 4 \text{g} 7 \) and Black was at least equal in Timman-Seirawan, Brussels 1988;

B3) Or 10...\( \text{d} 6 \) 11.\( \text{e} 4 \), transposing to positions analysed under 9...\( \text{d} 6 \)
or 9...0-0 10.a3 \( \text{d} 6 \).

C) 10.\( \text{w} c2 \), with the queen behind the bishop, simply feels like a wrong type of battery here: 10...\( \text{h} 6 \) 11.a3 \( \text{d} 6 \)
12.\( \text{e} 4 \text{c} 7 \) 13.\( \text{d} 1 \text{w} h4 \)

14.\( g3 \) \( \text{w} h5 \) 15.\( \text{d} 4 \text{c} 3 \) 15.\( b4 \) \( e5 \) is better for Black. 15...\( \text{e} 5 \) 16.\( \text{xc} 3 \) \( \text{xc} 3 \) Or 16.bxc3 \( e5 \) 17.\( d5 \text{a} 5 \) 18.d6 \( \text{b} 6 \)
19.d7 \( \text{xd7} \) 20.\( \text{h} 7+ \text{w} h8 \) 21.\( \text{xd7} \) \( g6 \). 16...\( e5 \) with an excellent game for Black, Speelman-M. Gurevich, Munich 1992.

D) Another option is to first build the bishop+queen battery on the b1-h7 diagonal by 10.a3 \( \text{d} 6 \). Black can also transform the game into a structure with connected hanging pawns in the centre with 10...\( \text{xc} 3 \) 11.bxc3 \( \text{d} 6 \) 12.c4.
11.\( \text{e} 4 \text{c} 7 \) 11...\( \text{e} 7 \) is another possibility, transposing to another analysed line. 12.\( \text{c} c2 \) The character of the play is still far from forced, and there are plenty of options for both sides. The game we are following, however, has a logical run of play and illustrates the possibilities in the position. Another possibility was 12.\( \text{g} 5 \) \( f6 \) 13.\( \text{d} 2 \) or 13.\( \text{h} 4 \).

12.\( \text{w} h4 \) 13.\( h3 \text{h6} \) 14.\( \text{d} 3 \text{d} 8 \)

15.\( \text{d} 2 \)! An interesting idea. White decides that he needs a knight on f3 after all. 15...\( \text{f} 6 \) 16.\( \text{f} 3 \) \( \text{w} h5 \) 17.\( \text{f} 4 \) \( \text{xf} 4 \) 18.\( \text{xf} 4 \) \( \text{wa} 5 \) 19.\( \text{f} 6+ \) \( \text{w} c7 \) 20.g3 \( b6 \)
21.\( \text{ac} 1 \text{b} 7 \) 22.\( \text{b} 3 \) All of a sudden Black has problems due to his weak e6-square. 22...\( \text{d} 6 \)

And here in Kortchnoi-Jussupow, Ubeda 1997, White missed 23.\( \text{xe} 6 \)! \( \text{xe} 6 \)
24.\( \text{xe} 6 \) \( \text{xe} 6 \) 24...\( \text{w} e7 \) 25.\( \text{f} 4+ \) 25.\( \text{xe} 6+ \) \( \text{h} 8 \) (or 25...\( \text{f} 8 \) 26.\( \text{h} 4 \))
26.\( \text{h} 4 \) \( g5 \) 27.\( \text{g} 6+ \) \( \text{g} 7 \) 28.\( \text{e} 5 \) \( \text{h} 8 \)
29.\( \text{w} f 5 \) and White wins;

Another possibility for Black (which does not seem to equalize) is 9...\( \text{f} 6 \). A slightly odd-looking move. Black removes his knight from the centre in order to better protect his kingside and
also not to allow White the possibility to timely take on d5 and, after Black takes ...exd5, create a favourable pawn symmetry in the centre.

10.\textit{c}2:

A) In case of 10...\textit{d}6? Black would likely be a tempo down compared to the game after 11.\textit{g}5! 0-0 (11...\textit{x}h2? never works due to 12.\textit{x}h2 \textit{g}4+ 13.\textit{g}3 \textit{w}xg5 14.f4 \textit{w}h5 15.\textit{h}1 and White wins a piece) 12.a3 followed by 13.\textit{d}3;

B) 10...\textit{e}7 11.a3 and now:

B1) Should Black try to be ‘clever’ and develop his queenside, while keeping his king in the centre to avoid giving White kingside targets, this does not quite work for Black, as the following game aptly shows: 11...a6 12.\textit{d}3 b5 13.\textit{d}1 \textit{b}7 14.\textit{g}3 \textit{d}6 15.\textit{h}3 As often in this line, the white queen is excellently placed on h3. 15...\textit{e}7 16.\textit{g}5 \textit{d}7 17.\textit{xf}6gf6

B2) 11...0-0 12.\textit{d}3 b6 13.\textit{g}5 g6 14.\textit{ad}1 \textit{b}7

B21) My own practical experience in this line went as follows: 15.h4 A standard move in isolated pawn positions, regardless whether the white knight is placed on e2 or on f3. 15...\textit{c}8 16.\textit{f}4

16...\textit{d}5? Black is obviously getting nervous about the d4-d5 break and takes radical measures to prevent it. After the text, however, the pawn structure in the centre is going to transform from one with an isolated pawn to a symmetrical centre where due to his more active bishop, e-file control, and attacking possibilities on the kingside, White has a clear advantage. It is very important that the dark-squared bishops are exchanged so that White can later build up central domination via the e5-square, as we will soon see! It was necessary for Black to keep active counterplay with 16...\textit{a}5! followed by 17...\textit{c}4. This is likely to have been
Cebalo's plan when he repeated the line against Tisdall six years later, but he was surprised when White pulled out his novelty first and played 15.\textit{Wh}3!. 17.\textit{fxd}5 \textit{hxg}5 18.\textit{hxg}5 \textit{exd}5 19.\textit{Wh}3 \textit{a}5 Now we have a typical central pawn symmetry where White has the upper hand due to the fact that his light-squared bishop is better placed than its black colleague and White's d4 pawn is on a dark square, while Black's d5 pawn is on a light square, as a result of which, next to his middlegame advantage, the light-squared bishops also provide White with a long-term advantage in the endgame. This transition from an isolated pawn to a favourable central pawn symmetry is one of the typical pawn structure transformations which I have dealt with extensively in my book \textit{Winning Chess Middlegames}.

20.\textit{Ad}3! Preventing the only source of Black's counterplay. Now:

\textbf{B211)} If 20...\textit{c}4 21.\textit{xc}4\textit{xc}4 (or 21...\textit{dxc}4 22.d5) 22.\textit{He}1, White is clearly better as Black's bishop on b7 is very passive;

\textbf{B212)} 20...\textit{a}6

21.f4! In order to stop the mating attack Black will have to compromise his pawn structure. 21...\textit{wd}6 22.\textit{Wh}4 \textit{fs} Otherwise f4-f5 comes, with devastating effect. 23.\textit{He}1 The time has come to take the e-file. 23...\textit{c}6 24.\textit{b}1! The bishop will be more effective on the a2-g8 diagonal. 24...\textit{d}8 25.\textit{He}3 25.\textit{a}2 is also strong. 25...\textit{e}6 26.\textit{He}5 Due to the fact that the dark-squared bishops are gone the white rook could stay 'forever' on e5, and White had a clear advantage in I. Sokolov-Cebalo, Pula ch-YUG 1988.

\textbf{B22)} 15.\textit{Wh}3! Again the white queen will be excellently placed on h3. 15...\textit{c}8 16.\textit{He}1 \textit{a}5 17.\textit{f}4! Increasing the pressure and creating tactical possibilities like the d4-d5 break or the \textit{ex}e6 sacrifice. White's pieces are well placed and they coordinate excellently. Black's a5 knight is poorly placed on the edge of the board.

\textbf{B221)} Trying to bring the knight back does not work: 17...\textit{c}4 Black has to worry about 18.\textit{b}3 (18.d5!? \textit{xd}5 19.\textit{xe}6 also looks good) and now 18...\textit{xb}2? loses to 19.\textit{He}1! (in the event of the seemingly more logical 19.\textit{d}2? Black has a beautiful tactical solution in 19...\textit{h}5! 20.\textit{xe}6 \textit{yg}5 21.\textit{xd}8 \textit{xd}2). 19...\textit{xd}4 19...\textit{xa}3 fails to 20.\textit{b}5; 19...\textit{h}5?? now loses immediately to 20.\textit{xe}6. 20.\textit{xe}6! \textit{xc}3 21.\textit{xc}3 \textit{xc}3 22.\textit{xf}8 and White should win this endgame;

\textbf{B222)} 17...\textit{d}5 18.\textit{xc}7 \textit{xe}7 18...\textit{xf}4? is bad due to 19.\textit{Wh}4 \textit{c}7 20.\textit{f}6.
Chapter 1.10: Development $\textit{d}3$ with $\textit{e}2 - 4...c5 5.\textit{d}3$

19. $\textit{e}4$! By exchanging the light-squared bishops White prepares the $\textit{d}4-\textit{d}5$ break. 19...$\textit{xe}4$ 20. $\textit{x}e4$ Black still does not have time to bring his stranded a5 knight back into play;

B222 1) 20...$\textit{xf}5$?! 21. $\textit{d}5$! $\textit{e}5$ 22. $\textit{h}5$! $\textit{f}6$ 23. $\textit{d}6$ and White soon had a winning advantage in Tisdall-Cebalo, Moscow 1994 – note that the stranded knight on a5 still hasn’t returned into play;

B222 2) 20...$\textit{d}5$ was a better defence, but it does not solve Black’s problems: 21. $\textit{wh}6$! $\textit{f}6$ 22. $\textit{xf}6+$ $\textit{xf}6$ 23. $\textit{h}5$ $\textit{wh}8$ A queen fianchettoed on h8 can never be good. 24. $\textit{d}3$ Again, with the rook lift White brings extra force into the attack. 24...$\textit{c}6$ 24...$\textit{c}4$ loses to 25. $\textit{f}3$ $\textit{f}6$ 26. $\textit{xe}6$ $\textit{gxh}5$ 27. $\textit{e}7$. 25. $\textit{f}3$ $\textit{f}6$ 25...$\textit{f}5$? loses to the prosaic 26. $\textit{xe}6$ $\textit{xd}4$ 27. $\textit{gxg}6+$. 26. $\textit{we}3$ $\textit{d}8$ 27. $\textit{f}4$ $\textit{e}8$ 28. $\textit{h}4$ with a huge advantage for White.

10. $\textit{e}4$ $\textit{e}7$ 11. a3 0-0 12. $\textit{c}2$

12...$\textit{wc}7$

Here 12...$\textit{wb}6$ has also been tried. Black is aiming for active play, however after 13. $\textit{wd}3$ $\textit{g}6$ White does not have a deadly jump with his knight to e4, so Black could have considered 13...$\textit{d}8$. 14. $\textit{dd}1$ $\textit{dd}8$ 15. $\textit{wf}3$ It’s not easy to advise a clever plan for Black here.

- 15...$\textit{d}7$ looks logical, but then White has an initiative after 16. $\textit{b}4$! (16. $\textit{h}6$ $\textit{ac}8$ 17. $\textit{b}3$ $\textit{a}5$ 18. $\textit{xd}5$ exd5 19. $\textit{c}3$ $\textit{e}6$ is about equal):
  A) 16...$\textit{a}5$ 17. $\textit{b}5$! An interesting and thematic pawn sacrifice – readers take note! 17...$\textit{xb}5$ 18. $\textit{b}1$ $\textit{a}6$ 19. $\textit{h}6$ White has excellent attacking possibilities and strong compensation for the sacrificed pawn. Play may continue: 19...$\textit{ac}8$ 20. $\textit{d}3$ $\textit{a}7$ 21. $\textit{c}4$ $\textit{c}b4$ 21...$\textit{e}5$? loses to the prosaic 22. $\textit{dx}5$ $\textit{e}6$ 23. $\textit{bd}5$ exd5 24. $\textit{f}6+$. 22. $\textit{xb}4$! Due to the weak black king, tactics are going to work for White here. 22...$\textit{axb}4$ 23. $\textit{xc}5$ $\textit{a}4$ 23...exd5? loses to the prosaic 24. $\textit{f}6+$ $\textit{h}8$ 25. $\textit{xd}5$. 24. $\textit{f}6+$ $\textit{h}8$ 25. $\textit{xb}7$! $\textit{f}5$ 26. $\textit{g}5$ $\textit{xd}5$ 27. $\textit{wh}3$! $\textit{gg}5$ 28. $\textit{g}5+$ $\textit{g}7$ 29. $\textit{wh}7+$ $\textit{f}6$ 30. $\textit{wh}7+$ $\textit{gg}5$ 31. $\textit{f}4+$ $\textit{h}6$ 32. $\textit{d}3$ and White wins;
  B) Or 17. $\textit{b}3$ $\textit{e}8$ (White is clearly better in the event of 17...$\textit{xb}4$ 18. $\textit{xd}5$ exd5 19. $\textit{f}6+$) 18. $\textit{h}6$ with a kingside attack for White.

- 15...$\textit{e}5$?! Black decides to open up the centre and aim for active counterplay, but his position cannot support this activity at the moment. 16. $\textit{g}5$ $\textit{f}6$ 17. $\textit{b}3$! Black was probably hoping for 17. $\textit{b}3$? $\textit{g}4$! 17...$\textit{xb}3$ 18. $\textit{xb}3$ $\textit{xd}4$ 19. $\textit{xd}4$ $\textit{xd}4$ 20. $\textit{xd}4$ exd4 21. $\textit{xf}7$ and White was better in Salov-Timman, Sanghi Nagar 1994.
13.\textit{\textbf{W}}d3 \textit{\textbf{A}}d8 14.\textit{\textbf{Q}}g5

This move looks flashy, but it brings White nothing in particular.

I do not quite understand why white players have not followed Salov's plan from the example Salov-Timman given above, where Black played 12...\textit{\textbf{W}}b6.

14.\textit{\textbf{A}}d1 g6 Black now threatens 15...\textit{\textbf{Q}}cb4. The immediate 14...\textit{\textbf{Q}}cb4? is a blunder due to 15.axb4 \textit{\textbf{Q}}xb4 16.\textit{\textbf{Q}}f6+ \textit{\textbf{Q}}xf6 17.\textit{\textbf{W}}xh7+ \textit{\textbf{Q}}f8 18.\textit{\textbf{Q}}e4 with a huge, probably winning advantage for White. 15.\textit{\textbf{W}}f3

White wants to play \textit{\textbf{Q}}h6 and \textit{\textbf{A}}ac1. Active counterplay is not easy to find, so Black may follow a plan devised by Timman (in an improved version) with 15...\textit{\textbf{e}}5!? . However, it does not equalize:

- Following Salov with 16.\textit{\textbf{Q}}g5 \textit{\textbf{Q}}f6:
  - A) 17.\textit{\textbf{W}}b3 no longer brings White any advantage: 17...\textit{\textbf{A}}d6 18.\textit{\textbf{d}}xe5 \textit{\textbf{d}}xe5 18...\textit{\textbf{Q}}xe5 19.\textit{\textbf{Q}}f4 is better for White. 19.\textit{\textbf{A}}xd8+ \textit{\textbf{Q}}xd8 20.\textit{\textbf{f}}3 \textit{\textbf{Q}}e6 21.\textit{\textbf{Q}}xe6 \textit{\textbf{Q}}xe6 22.\textit{\textbf{Q}}e3 \textit{\textbf{A}}d8 23.\textit{\textbf{A}}c1 23.\textit{\textbf{Q}}xa7?? \textit{\textbf{A}}d2 blunders a piece. 23.\textit{\textbf{W}}b8 White does have the bishop pair, but this advantage is of an academic nature here - the position is about equal;
  - B) 17.\textit{\textbf{Q}}b3?! can be a way to get in trouble: 17...\textit{\textbf{Q}}g4! 18.\textit{\textbf{Q}}xf7+ 18.\textit{\textbf{W}}e3 \textit{\textbf{Q}}d5. 18...\textit{\textbf{Q}}h8 18...\textit{\textbf{Q}}g7? 19.\textit{\textbf{Q}}b3. 19.\textit{\textbf{W}}e3 \textit{\textbf{Q}}xd4! 19...\textit{\textbf{Q}}xd4? fails to 20.\textit{\textbf{Q}}xd4! \textit{\textbf{Q}}xd1 21.\textit{\textbf{G}}e6 \textit{\textbf{Q}}xd4 22.\textit{\textbf{W}}h6 \textit{\textbf{Q}}f8 23.\textit{\textbf{Q}}xc7 \textit{\textbf{Q}}xh6 24.\textit{\textbf{Q}}xh6. 16.\textit{\textbf{Q}}b3! \textit{\textbf{Q}}e6 17.\textit{\textbf{Q}}h6 White threatens \textit{\textbf{Q}}xd5 followed by \textit{\textbf{Q}}f6. The immediate 17.\textit{\textbf{Q}}xd5? is wrong because of 17...\textit{\textbf{Q}}xd5 18.\textit{\textbf{Q}}f6+ \textit{\textbf{Q}}xf6 19.\textit{\textbf{W}}xf6 \textit{\textbf{A}}d6. 17...\textit{\textbf{f}}5 18.\textit{\textbf{Q}}g5 \textit{\textbf{Q}}xg5 19.\textit{\textbf{Q}}xg5 \textit{\textbf{e}}4 20.\textit{\textbf{W}}h3 Black's king is vulnerable, so it makes sense to keep the queens on and go for an ending, however 20.\textit{\textbf{W}}g3 \textit{\textbf{W}}xg3 21.hxg3 \textit{\textbf{A}}d7 22.\textit{\textbf{g}}4! also looks slightly better for White. 20...\textit{\textbf{A}}d7 21.\textit{\textbf{A}}c1 \textit{\textbf{W}}b6 22.\textit{\textbf{A}}d2 White's chances are to be preferred. White players can explore this idea further.

14...\textit{\textbf{g}}6 15.\textit{\textbf{Q}}b3

15.\textit{\textbf{W}}f3 \textit{\textbf{f}}8 15...\textit{\textbf{f}}6 was also possible.

16.\textit{\textbf{A}}d1 \textit{\textbf{g}}7 17.\textit{\textbf{h}}4 \textit{\textbf{h}}6 18.\textit{\textbf{Q}}e4 \textit{\textbf{e}}7 19.\textit{\textbf{Q}}c3 \textit{\textbf{d}}7 20.\textit{\textbf{h}}5 \textit{\textbf{g}}5 21.\textit{\textbf{Q}}xd5 \textit{\textbf{d}}xd5 22.\textit{\textbf{W}}d3 and here in Milov-Sharavdorj, Las Vegas 2006, Black should have played the natural 22...\textit{\textbf{f}}5 with a better game.

15...\textit{\textbf{f}}6

Black can also first transfer his bishop to g7: 15...\textit{\textbf{f}}8 16.\textit{\textbf{A}}d1 \textit{\textbf{g}}7

- Here 17.\textit{\textbf{W}}h3 is not efficient:
  - A) The immediate 17...\textit{\textbf{h}}6 gives White tactical possibilities: 18.\textit{\textbf{Q}}e4 \textit{\textbf{W}}b6? Or 18...\textit{\textbf{h}}7? 19.\textit{\textbf{Q}}g5; correct is 18...\textit{\textbf{a}}5! 19.\textit{\textbf{Q}}xh6 \textit{\textbf{e}}5! 20.\textit{\textbf{W}}f3 \textit{\textbf{Q}}xb3 21.\textit{\textbf{Q}}xg7 \textit{\textbf{Q}}xd4 22.\textit{\textbf{Q}}xd4 \textit{\textbf{Q}}xg7 23.\textit{\textbf{Q}}b5 \textit{\textbf{W}}e7 with approximate equal-
Chapter 1.10: Development $\text{d}3$ with $\text{d}2 - 4...\text{c}5$ $5...\text{d}3$

and $\text{f}5$. Black was better and went on to win in Milov-Gelfand, Biel 1997.

16.\text{d}1 $\text{f}8$ 17.\text{f}4 $\text{d}e7$

In the stem game White made a mistake with 18.\text{we}3? $\text{d}5!$ 19.\text{xd}5 $\text{exd}5$

With a symmetrical pawn centre, which after 20.\text{f}3 $\text{we}3$ 21.\text{f}xe3 $\text{f}6$ 22.\text{ac}1 $\text{f}5$ 23.\text{h}3 $\text{h}5$ 24.\text{c}3 $\text{g}5$ was favourable for Black, who went on to win in Kamsky-Karpov, Elista 1996.

18.\text{ac}1

In a strange way the knights are now placed as in most isolated pawn positions.

20.\text{ac}8

With a complex struggle in an isolated pawn position, with mutual chances.

This position may look dynamically balanced. However, here Black executes a nice strategic idea worth remembering: 24...$\text{c}6!$ 25.\text{c}4 $\text{a}6!$ 26.\text{cl} $\text{b}5$

and with the light-squared bishops exchanged, White's dynamic play starts to disappear and the weakness of his isolated pawn starts to be felt, while the black knights are superbly placed on d5

Conclusion

Choosing the side (with or against an isolated pawn) is mostly a matter of taste. Personally I have played these positions with white, and have preferred the side with the isolated pawn. As we have seen, an isolated pawn position is the most likely to arise in this line. White's king's knight is initially developed to e2 instead of f3, which has its pros and cons. Most of the lines are not entirely forced and it is important for both sides to remember and understand the plans, motifs and structural transformations. These positions are dynamic and chances are mutual. An all-round player with a good eye for tactics as well as a feeling for positional nuances is likely to prevail.
Part II

4...0-0 Minor Lines

5. \texttt{\textit{d}e2}

5. \texttt{\textit{d}d3}
Chapter 2.1

Reshevsky's Set-up – 5.\textit{\texttt{\textcolor{red}{d}}\texttt{e}}2 d5 6.a3 \textit{\texttt{\textcolor{red}{d}}\texttt{d}}6

First we take a little side-step. After
\begin{itemize}
\item 4.e3 0-0 5.\textit{\texttt{\textcolor{red}{d}}\texttt{e}}2
\end{itemize}

\begin{itemize}
\item 5...d5
\end{itemize}

It should be mentioned that Black has one viable alternative to the main move, and that is 5...\textit{\texttt{\textcolor{red}{e}}\texttt{e}}8!?.
This continuation is a rare guest in grandmaster practice, however the move deserves more attention, definitely for black players willing to venture into a relatively unexplored position at an early stage of the game. The idea behind 5...\textit{\texttt{\textcolor{red}{e}}\texttt{e}}8 is to play 6...d5 next.

Should the bishop on b4 be attacked, which normally happens, then it can retreat to f8. The main idea for Black is to get a favourable version of the 5...d5 6.a3 \textit{\texttt{\textcolor{red}{e}}\texttt{e}}7 lines, because the rook developed on e8 fits very much into Black's system, while the bishop is better placed on f8 than on e7. It is far from easy for White to demonstrate a safe advantage here. Should Black indeed play ...d7-d5, then he has a good game and a favourable version of the 5...d5 lines. So White has to take space – and this gives Black counter-chances. 6.a3 \textit{\texttt{\textcolor{red}{f}}\texttt{f}}8 Now in order to fight for the advantage White has to take space.

What is quite important here is that the character of the game changes. The resulting middlegame positions often resemble some strange French (in the event of 7.e4) or a Benoni (in the event of 7.d5). Anyhow, these middlegame positions are far removed from the typical Rubinstein Nimzo, which can be annoying for some white players.
7.e4 is probably the most principled move. 7...d5 Now in a lot of positions, French motifs will appear. 8.e5 8.g3? is wrong due to 8...c5! and the centre is opened in Black’s favour, for example: 9.dxc5 âxc5 10.e5 âfd7 11.b4 âb6 12.c5 âc7 13.f4 f6; in case of 8.g5 dxe4 9.xe4 âe7 10.xf6 âxf6 11.wd2 we get some strange French-like positions. 8...âfd7 and now:

A) 9.cxd5 is probably the most logical. 9...exd5

A1) White is too much behind in development to be able to afford 10.âxd5?! c5;

A2) If 10.âe3 Black opens up the centre with 10...c5 and gets excellent play after 11.f4 âc6 – the centre will be opened. Black has a number of sacrificial motifs:

A21) 12.dxc5 âxc5 12...g5!? looks good for Black. 13.âxc5 âxc5 14.b4 âe6 14...d4?! 15.âxd5 15 âxd5 was better. 15...âed4 16.âe3 âe6 17.âxd4 âxd4 White has problems to finish development and Black has excellent compensation. White here blundered with 18.âc4? (18.âc1) and Black got a winning advantage after 18...âxc4 19.âxc4 âd5 in Nemet-Dizdar, Liechtenstein 1988;

A22) Or 12.g3 cxd4 13.âxd4 âxe5 14.fxe5 âxe5;


A3) 10.f4 âb6 Trying to control the light squares. 10...c5!? also looks principled. 11.g3 âf5 12.âg2 âd7 13.h3 âh5 14.b3! Preparing an interesting idea. 14...âwe6 14...g6!? 15.âa2 âg7 deserved attention, in order to stop White’s idea. Now the h8-square is covered and mating ideas along the h-file do not work that well. 15.âa2! âd7 16.g4! hxg4 17.âg3 gxh3

Here the game went 18.âf1 âg4 19.f5 âc6 20.âxg4 âxc3+ 21.âd2 âxe5 22.dxe5 âxe5+ 23.âe2 âxb3 with sharp play in Navara-Kulaots, Heraklio Ech-tt 2007. White should have continued 18.âxh3! âxh3 19.âab2 g6 20.âxh3 âg7 21.f5!;

A31) 21...âxf5? loses to 22.âh5 âxe5 (or 22...âg6 23.âxf5 âxh5 24.âxh5, winning) 23.âxf5 (Black does not have a good discovered check) 23...âg6+ 24.âd1 âf6 25.âf3;

A32) 21...âc6 22.âce2 Black will have to sacrifice a piece on e5; White is
better. I have given what I thought to be the most relevant games and ideas. We have still relatively few games in this line, there is a lot to explore.

Other options besides taking on d5 are:

B) Sacking a pawn with 9.b4 dxc4 10.Qf4 Qb6 11.Qe3 and hoping for compensation looks dubious;

C) Advancing the pawns: 9.c5 f6 10.Qxe4 b6 11.b4 White has taken a lot of space, however his king is in the middle and Black will likely strike with a French-type piece sac. 11...a5 Or 11...fxe5 12.fxe5 bxc5 13.bxc5 Qxc5 14.dxc5 Qxc5. 12.Qe3 fxe5 12...Qb7 13.h4 followed by Qh3 is probably better for White. 13.fxe5 axb4 14.axb4 Qxa1 15.Wxa1 Qc6 16.Wa4 Qxe5 17.dxe5 bxc5 18.bxc5 Qxc5 and Black had good, French-like compensation for the sacrificed piece in Ravia-I. Botvinnik, Ramat Aviv tt 2000;

The other principled decision for White is to take space: 7.d5 d6 In the event of 7...a5 8.g3 Qa6, an Old-Indian type position which is favourable for White arises after 9.Qg2 Qc5 10.b3 c6 11.0-0 cxd5 12.cxd5 e5 13.Qb1, as in M. Gurevich-Stocek, Antalya Ech 2004. 8.g3 8.Qg3 does not bring White any advantage. Black gets dynamic counterplay after 8...c6 9.Qe2 exd5 10.cxd5 Qxd5 11.Qxd5 cxd5 12.Qf3 Qc6 13.0-0 g6.

A) 8.c6 9.Qg2 exd5 10.cxd5 c5 11.0-0 g6 12.e4 Qbd7 Here we have a fianchetto Benoni position with the white knight on e2 instead on f3. Black had good, typical Benoni counterplay in Ivanchuk-Khenkin, Sochi tt 2010. I doubt that 7.d5 gives White any advantage. I think the main practical reason why there are many games with 7.d5 is the fact that white players prefer to copy the line 4.e3 b6 5.Qe2 Qb7 6.a3 Qe7 7.d5. The version which we have here, with the rook already on e8, the bishop on f8 and another bishop still undecided on c8, is way more flexible, and favourable for Black;

B) Also possible is 8...exd5 9.cxd5 c5 10.Qxe4. If White doesn’t take, he will simply be a tempo down compared to our 8...c6 line. 10...Qb6 11.Qg2 d5 In order for White to be better here, he would have to prove Black’s c6 pawn to be weak, or provoke Black to play ...c6-c5 and then prove d5 weak – which is a difficult task here - Black has a good game. 12.0-0 Qbd7 Black has a good, active position after 12...Qa6. Actually White can easily get worse here. 13.Qd4 Qe5 and now:

B1) 14.b4!? Qa6 and Black was at least OK in Jobava-Oleksienko, Moscow 2008;

B2) It's not easy to explain why Jobava refrained from the relatively forced 14.f4! Qc4 15.Qxc6 Qb6 16.Qxd5 Qxd5 17.Wxd5 Qxe3 (17...Qxe3? fails to 18.Qh1) 18.Qxe3 Wxe3+ 19.Qh1 Qb7 20.b4 – after all White is a pawn up.

C) Another option for Black is 8...Qbd7. One practical example finished in a disaster for White: 9.Qg2 Qe5 10.b3 exd5 11.cxd5
Chapter 2.1: Reshevsky’s Set-up — 5. \( \text{d}e2 \) d5 6.a3 \( \text{d}6 \\

11...\text{g}4 12.f4 \text{c}ed7 13.\text{c}c2 \text{xe}2 14.\text{xe}2 Inventive, but is it any good? 14.c6 15.\text{xc}6 bxc6 White should be careful here. 16.e4? A big centre is sometimes a big responsibility. 16.\text{e}1 d5 17.\text{f}1, accepting that the opening did not go according to plan, was better. 16...\text{c}5 17.\text{c}3 d5! 18.e5 \text{g}4 19.\text{d}d4 f6! The position opens up — White’s king on e2 is a recipe for disaster. 20.\text{xc}5 \text{xe}5 21.\text{f}3? In such positions it is actually quite normal to go from bad to worse. 21...e4+ 22.\text{e}2 \text{xc}5 and Black soon won in Avrukh-Carlsson, Turin ol 2006. • If a player like Shirov ever gets to face this line as White, then I would not be surprised to see one of the following two suggestions appearing on the board, both of which have not been tried in practice yet as far as I now: 7.g4?! \\

A similar idea is often seen in different positions. It is sharp, it involves a lot of risk for both sides, and there’s a lot to explore. Play may continue: 7...\text{xg}4 8.\text{g}1 Or 8.\text{g}3. 8...\text{h}4 Or 8...f5 9.e4; it is also possible to be really greedy with 8...\text{xh}2, when White has compensation after 9.\text{g}2. 9.\text{g}3 Or 9.\text{g}3. 9...d6 10.h3 \text{h}2 11.\text{g}2 \text{xb}3 12.\text{f}xg3 \text{f}6 13.\text{f}4; • 7.\text{f}4!? is the other ‘Shirov style’ idea. After 7...d5 White can again try 8.g4 and now: \\

A) 8...\text{xc}4 9.g5 \text{d}5 10.\text{xc}4\text{xc}3 11.\text{xc}3\text{g}5 12.h4 with sharp play; \\

B) 8...c5!? hitting in the centre, is also an option. White can choose between 9.\text{xc}5 or 9.g5 \text{e}4 10.\text{xe}4 \text{dxe}4 11.\text{xc}5. \\

6.a3 \( \text{d}6 \\

7.\text{g}3 \\

Standard theory regards 7.c5 as the main move. However, in that line I do not see any advantage for White, and therefore I have chosen to examine 7.\text{g}3 more closely. Black has a number of logical possibilities here. We still have relatively few top-level games on the subject (considerably less than with 7.c5), so there is a lot to explore. In the case of the main 7.c5 \text{e}7, we have a pawn structure identical to the Orthodox Queen’s Gambit 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.\text{c}3 \text{f}6 4.\text{f}3 \text{e}7 5.\text{f}4 0-0
Part II: 4...0-0 Minor Lines

6.e3 0bd7 7.c5. The obvious difference is that here the white bishop is still on c1 instead of on the active f4-square, and the knight is on e2 instead of on the good f3-square where it controls e5. Black's plan is similar to the Orthodox Queen's Gambit: he wants to exchange the light-squared bishops, and also, if Black gets the possibility, it is good for him to execute the ...e6-e5 push. White has failed to show any advantage here. I have analysed this position for quite some time and do not have any ideas which may change the current theoretical verdicts here. Below are some relevant games. To a reader who disagrees with me, I would advise to also consult the database for his study.

There is an instructive game by the 11th World Champion, reflecting the different aspects of this positional struggle. Fischer did not fight for equality, he obviously wanted to win and therefore he complicated matters. It wasn't all objectively correct, but he got his way with a complicated game. I like this game, which shows a lot of pros and cons of the position, and thought it should be published here: 9...bxc5? For Black to equalize it was better to exchange both the a- and the b-pawn.

10.bxc5 a6 11.xa6 0xa6 12.0-0 0b8 13.d2 dc6 In general, after the swap of the light-squared bishops the black knight is well placed on c6 in this line. 14.0d4 0b7 15.0d3 a5 16.f3 0fd8 17.0f1 0e8 18.0d4 18..0f6 19.0b7 0e4 20.0e1

8.b4 b6 Probably the most precise. In general it is a good idea for Black, after exchanging the light-squared bishops, to leave, if possible, square c6 vacant for his b8 knight, where it can support counterplay with ...e6-e5. 8...c6 is the other move for Black here, which is also OK. 9.df4 Putting the knight on g3 does not promise anything, as there is no way for White to conveniently push f2-f4 or e3-e4 (9.xg3 a5 10.xd2 c6 11.xe2 a6 12.0-0 0bd7 13.xc2 0c7 14.xfcl 0b7 with equality, I. Sokolov-Adams, London 2009):

20.g5!? 21.xe5 xxe5 22.xe5 0xa4 23.xa4 0dc8 24.xab1 0f8 25.xb5 0e8 26.xb2 26.g4±. 26..a4 27.0f1 f6 28.0d3 xxe5 29.xxe5 0e6 30.xe6 White has been playing very well, neutralizing Black's counterplay attempts. 30..0d7 31.xa7 0f8 32.c6+ 0e8 33.xe2 0d8 34.xa5 0f6 35.xb5 xxa5 36.xa5 0f2+ 37.xe1 0b2 38.xb8 38.xc7+!± 0xc7 39.xc7 0b1+ 40.xe2 0b2+ 41.0d1. 38...0f7 39.xd8 xxb5 40.xc7? 40.0d7+ 0e8 41.0b4. 40..0b1+ 41.xe2 0c1
42.\textit{d}d7+ \textit{g}g6 43.\textit{e}e5 \textit{h}x\textit{c}6 44.\textit{h}g7+ \textit{h}h\textit{e}\textit{6} 45.\textit{g}g4 \textit{f}c2+ 46.\textit{f}e1 \textit{h}f2 47.\textit{h}h3 \textit{d}d3+ 48.\textit{d}d1 \textit{c}c3 49.\textit{g}g2 \textit{a}xa3 50.\textit{e}e7 \textit{d}xe\textit{5} 51.\textit{d}xe\textit{5} \textit{a}a1 52.\textit{d}xe\textit{6}+ \textit{g}g7 53.\textit{a}a6 \textit{a}3 54.\textit{c}c2 \textit{f}f7 55.\textit{h}h6? 55.\textit{f}f6+ \textit{g}g7 56.\textit{b}b3. 55...\textit{e}e1 56.\textit{a}a7+ \textit{e}e6 57.\textit{d}d3 \textit{e}e3+ 58.\textit{a}a2 \textit{d}d4 59.\textit{a}a7 \textit{h}h3 0-1 Saidy-Fischer, New York ch-USA 1960/61 – this game is typical for Fischer's style in that period;

\textbullet Enough for equality is 9...c6 10.\textit{e}e2 \textit{b}b\textit{d}7 Or 10...a5 11.\textit{d}d2 \textit{a}a6 (it's always good for Black to exchange lightsquared bishops here) 12.0-0 \textit{b}b\textit{d}7 13.\textit{f}f3 \textit{c}c7 14.\textit{w}c2 \textit{e}e2 15.\textit{e}e\textit{c}e2 \textit{a}a7 16.\textit{d}d3 \textit{a}x\textit{b}4 17.\textit{a}x\textit{b}4 \textit{a}a8 and the game was soon drawn in Tomashevsky-Yakovenko, Moscow 2009. 11.\textit{b}b2 Like Fischer, Topalov also decides to keep the a-pawns.

11...\textit{b}xc5 12.\textit{b}xc5 \textit{w}d7 13.0-0 \textit{b}b8 14.\textit{b}b1 e5 Standard counterplay.

15.\textit{d}d3 \textit{e}xe4 16.\textit{e}xe4 \textit{a}a5 17.\textit{c}c2 \textit{e}e8 and Black had a good game and eventually won in Milov-Topalov, Ajaccio 2004;

\textbullet 9...a5

Black wants to exchange the a- and b-pawns and the light-squared bishops – then the game would be equal.

A) 10.\textit{b}b1 \textit{a}x\textit{b}4 11.\textit{a}x\textit{b}4\textit{c}6 Black can be ambitious here and, like Fischer,

keep square c6 free for his knight:

11...\textit{b}xc5 12.\textit{b}xc5 \textit{a}a6 13.\textit{c}c2 \textit{a}a6 14.\textit{w}d3 \textit{a}b8 15.0-0 \textit{c}c6 followed by ...e6-e5, with active play for Black.

12.\textit{e}e2 \textit{a}a6 13.0-0 \textit{a}a6 14.\textit{d}d3 \textit{a}a6 15.\textit{b}b2 \textit{c}c7 16.\textit{c}c3 \textit{a}e8 17.\textit{f}f3 \textit{a}a7 18.\textit{h}h1 \textit{b}xc5 19.\textit{b}b5 \textit{a}a8 If anybody is better here, it's not White. In such positions, in general Black's only potential problem is the weakness of his c6 pawn, but it is difficult for White to target. The game was later drawn in Epishin-Kasparov, Moscow 2004;

B) Or 10.\textit{b}b2 c6 11.\textit{b}b2 \textit{a}a6 12.0-0 \textit{a}a6 13.\textit{a}a6 \textit{b}b7 14.\textit{a}a6 15.\textit{f}f6+ \textit{g}g7 16.\textit{h}h1 \textit{b}xc5 17.\textit{b}b5 \textit{a}a8 with approximate equality in Graf-Kir. Georgiev, Calvia 2004;

C) In the case of 10.\textit{d}d2 Black can also decide to play actively: 10...\textit{a}x\textit{b}4 11.\textit{a}x\textit{b}4 \textit{a}a1 12.\textit{w}x\textit{a}a1 \textit{c}c6 and now:

C1) 13.\textit{w}a4 e5 14.\textit{w}xc6 \textit{e}e4 15.\textit{w}b7 \textit{c}c8 was probably a move repetition, since 16.\textit{w}b8 can be risky for White after 16...\textit{e}e4 17.\textit{w}f4 \textit{e}e4 18.\textit{c}c3 \textit{b}b4 19.\textit{d}d2 \textit{g}g5! 20.\textit{h}h5 \textit{e}e4. 15...\textit{d}d5 15...\textit{d}d5 is also OK. 16.\textit{w}e5
Part II: 4...0-0 Minor Lines

\( \text{Qxf}4 \) 17.\textit{Wxf}4 \textit{Qxc}5 and Black is definitely not worse;

C3) 13.\textit{Wb}2 \textit{bxc}5 14.\textit{bxc}5 \textit{e}5 15.\textit{dxe}5 \textit{Qxe}5 16.\textit{Qxd}5 \textit{Qxd}5 17.\textit{Wxe}5 \textit{Qxf}4 18.\textit{Wxf}4 \textit{Qxc}5 is again at least OK for Black.

7...\textit{c}5

This logical push I will take as the main move. Black also has a number of other viable options at his disposal:

\begin{itemize}
  \item 7...\textit{c}6 is often a standard move in these positions, however it is a bit passive here:
  \begin{itemize}
    \item A) In practice 8.\textit{Qe}2 has been tried, which is also interesting in connection with my proposal for White's 10th move. 8...\textit{Me}8 9.0-0 \textit{Qbd}7 and now White should have followed the plans from certain Slav positions with 10.\textit{c}5!? (the actual game went 10.b4 a5 11.b5 c5 12.\textit{dxc}5 \textit{Qxc}5 13.\textit{Wc}2 b6 14.\textit{Qf}3 \textit{Qb}7 15.\textit{cxd}5 \textit{exd}5 16.\textit{Qb}2 \textit{Qc}8 with a dynamic balance in Bitalzadeh-Nisipeanu, Sarajevo 2010) 10...\textit{Qc}7 11.f4 White takes space and eliminates Black's counterplay with ...e6-e5. 11...b6 12.b4 a5 13.\textit{Qd}2 The position is strategically very similar to 7.c5 lines, however due to specifics of this position White is better here;
    \item B) 8.\textit{Qd}3 \textit{e}5 9.\textit{cxd}5 \textit{exd}4 10.\textit{exd}4 \textit{Me}8+ 11.\textit{Qe}2 \textit{cxd}5 12.0-0 \textit{Qc}6 led to a quick draw in Graf-J. Polgar, Benidorm rapid 2003;
    \item C) 8.e4!? is my proposal to improve White's play. This new idea should be explored:
      \begin{itemize}
        \item C1) 8...c5 9.e5 \textit{cxd}4 10.\textit{exf}6 dxc3 11.\textit{fxg}7 looks risky for Black;
        \item C2) 8...\textit{Qxg}3 9.\textit{hxg}3 \textit{dxe}4 9...\textit{Qxe}4?? is a terrible blunder, losing to 10.\textit{Qxe}4 \textit{dxe}4 11.\textit{Wh}5 \textit{h}6 12.\textit{Qh}6. Now:
          \begin{itemize}
            \item C21) The direct attempt 10.g4 may lead to a forced draw after 10...e5 11.g5 \textit{Qg}4 (11...\textit{exd}4? 12.\textit{gxh}6 \textit{Qxf}6 13.\textit{Qxe}4) 12.d5 \textit{e}3 13.\textit{Qxe}3 \textit{Qxe}3 14.\textit{Wh}5 \textit{Qc}2+ 15.\textit{Qd}2 \textit{Qf}5 16.\textit{Qd}3 \textit{Qx}a1 and now:
              \begin{itemize}
                \item C211) 17.\textit{Wxh}7+ \textit{Qxh}7 18.\textit{Qxh}7+ \textit{Qh}8 with perpetual check;
                \item C212) A possibility to investigate is: 17.\textit{Qxf}5?! \textit{h}6 18.\textit{gxh}6 Or 18.\textit{Qe}4. 18...\textit{Qb}3+ 19.\textit{Qe}1 \textit{g}5 20.\textit{Qe}4.
              \item C22) After 10.\textit{Qf}4 White has good compensation for the sacrificed pawn: bishop pair, control of the dark squares, open h-file, possibilities of a kingside attack, more space, etc.
                \begin{itemize}
                  \item C3) 8...\textit{dxe}4 9.\textit{Qg}xe4 \textit{Qxe}4 10.\textit{Qxe}4 \textit{Qe}7 11.f4 White has to stop the ...e6-e5 break. 11.\textit{Qe}3? is not good due to 11...\textit{f}5! 12.\textit{Qc}3 \textit{f}4 13.\textit{Qc}1 \textit{e}5. 11...\textit{Qd}7 12.\textit{Qe}2 and now:
                    \begin{itemize}
                      \item C31) 12...\textit{Qf}6 13.\textit{Qxf}6+ \textit{Qxf}6 14.\textit{Qe}3 \textit{c}5 14...\textit{Wb}6 15.\textit{Wd}2 \textit{Qd}8 16.\textit{Qd}1 \textit{c}5 does not work for Black after 17.\textit{dxc}5 \textit{Qxd}2 18.\textit{Qxb}6; or 14...\textit{b}5 15.\textit{c}5 with similar play to 12...\textit{b}5. 15.\textit{dxc}5 \textit{Qxb}2 16.\textit{Wxd}8 \textit{Qxd}8 17.\textit{Qb}1;
                      \item C32) 12...\textit{b}5 It's not easy for Black to get active play. 13.\textit{c}5 Black's c8 bishop is a very bad piece; White is better here.
                    \end{itemize}
                \end{itemize}
            \end{itemize}
        \end{itemize}
    \end{itemize}
\end{itemize}
\end{itemize}
A) In a number of grandmaster games, White played 8.cxd5, which is definitely not the critical move here, as after 8...exd5 Black simply gets a good version of the 6...e7 line (please see under 4.e3 0-0 5.Qe2 d5 6.a3 Qe7 7.cxd5 exd5), as the bishop is already on d6. 9.Qd3 Black can play analogously to Karpov-Byrne (please see under 6...e7 7.cxd5 exd5 8.Qg3 c5) with 9...c5. Black can also follow one of the standard plans with 9...a5 10.0-0 c6 11.Wc2 Qa6 – again, compared to the line 6.a3 Qe7 7.cxd5 exd5, it is advantageous for Black to have his bishop already on d6. 10.dxc5 Qxc5 11.0-0 Qc6 12.b4 Qb6 Threatening ...d5-d4. 13.Qa4 Qc7 14.Qb2 Qg4 and Black has a good game;

B) The regular developing move 8.Qd3 also comes into consideration. In the event that Black makes use of his rook on the e-file by immediately pushing 8...e5 (perhaps a more precise move order is 8...dxc4 9.Qxc4 e5 10.0-0 exd4 11.exd4 Qc6 in order to eliminate White’s option of 9.Qxd5):

B1) White can enter an isolated pawn position: 9.0-0 dxc4 The reversed French-type positions arising after 9...e4 should be favourable for White. 10.Qxc4 exd4 11.exd4 Qc6 Black should be OK here. We have a position similar to the line 4.e3 0-0 5.Qd3 d5 6.Qe2 dxc4 7.Qxc4 e5 8.0-0 exd4 9.exd4 Qc6 10.a3 Qd6, which was slightly better for White, but here the white knight is already on g3, which stops the developing move ...Qf5. On the other hand White’s pawn on d4 is now hanging. As again we have a comparable position to a different line and a transposition, studying the different lines of the 4.e3 system is very useful, even if you do not plan to play them!

12.Qe3 Qg4 13.Wf3 Wf6 – this is about equal;

B2) Another interesting option for White is 9.Qxd5 Qxd5 10.cxd5 exd4 11.0-0 Qxg3 11...dxe3 12.Qxe3 is safer, though due to his space advantage White probably has a small plus here. 12.fxg3 Opening the f-file is necessary for White here. 12...Wxd5 12...dxe3?? is a terrible blunder due to 13...Qxh7+ Wh7 14.Qh5+ Qg8 15.Qxf7+ Qh7 16.Qf4. 13.Wc2 Qh5 14.Qf4! White has the initiative. 14...dxe3 15.Qh4;

C) 8.c5 forces Black to make a strategic choice:

C1) In the event of 8...Qe7 White should have a favourable version of the 7.c5 Qe7 line, since 8...Qe8 is not an accurate move there;

C2) While in the case of 8...Qf8 White can choose between 9.f4, stopping ...e6-e5, and 9.Qe2 e5 10.0-0, which looks somewhat better for White;

C3) 8...Qxg3 9.hxg3 e5
Now Black has executed ...e6-e5, but White has the advantage of the bishop pair. 10.dxe5 White opens the a1-h8 diagonal, trying to make use of his dark-squared bishop. In the event of 10.\textit{\textsc{c}}e2 \textit{\textsc{c}}c6 11.b4 a6 12.f3 h5 Black keeps the tension in the centre and is doing fine. 10...\textit{\textsc{dxe5}} If White consolidates, then his dark-square control should secure an advantage for him. Black has a lead in development and the ...d5-d4 push, plus tactical possibilities. It seems that White can consolidate, keeping the advantage:

\textbf{C31)} 11.b4! White can continue development and has no reason to fear the immediate ...d5-d4 thrust. 11...\textit{\textsc{c}}c6 12.\textit{\textsc{b}b2} d4

13.\textit{\textsc{e}2}! Black has dynamic possibilities, however his initiative seems to gradually evaporate. 13.\textit{\textsc{b}b5}? is a blunder due to 13...\textit{\textsc{g}e4} 14.f3? \textit{\textsc{dxe3}}+ 15.\textit{\textsc{f}f2} \textit{\textsc{d}e4+}. 13...\textit{\textsc{g}4} 14.\textit{\textsc{exd4} \textit{\textsc{e}e8}} 15.f3 \textit{\textsc{f}f5} 16.\textit{\textsc{wd2} \textit{\textsc{d}d5}} 17.\textit{\textsc{g}4} \textit{\textsc{g}6} 18.\textit{\textsc{f}f2} Black obviously has some compensation. Is it worth a pawn? Probably not.

Other moves promise White no advantage:

\textbf{C32)} 11.\textit{\textsc{e}e2} \textit{\textsc{c}c6} Stopping the white queenside pawn advance with 11...a5 does not work well after 12.g4! \textit{\textsc{c}c6} 13.f4 \textit{\textsc{e}e8} 14.g5 \textit{\textsc{f}f4} 15.\textit{\textsc{dxe4} \textit{\textsc{x}xe4}} 16.\textit{\textsc{f}f3} (or 16.\textit{\textsc{d}d3}), winning an exchange.

\textbf{C321)} 12.b4?! is not accurate here because of 12...\textit{\textsc{d}d4}! and Black is better: 13.\textit{\textsc{b}b5} 13.\textit{\textsc{exd4} \textit{\textsc{w}xd4}}. 13...\textit{\textsc{d}d5} 14.\textit{\textsc{f}f3} \textit{\textsc{g}g4}! The tactical point behind 12...\textit{\textsc{d}d4}!. 15.\textit{\textsc{x}xg4} \textit{\textsc{dxe3}} 16.\textit{\textsc{w}e2}? \textit{\textsc{d}xe3}, giving the queen, is the only move. 16...\textit{\textsc{d}xe4} 17.\textit{\textsc{w}xg4} \textit{\textsc{d}e5}! 18.\textit{\textsc{w}e2} \textit{\textsc{d}d3+} 19.\textit{\textsc{f}f1} \textit{\textsc{f}f4}, winning.

\textbf{C322)} 12.0-0 C3221) Now Black equalizes with 12...\textit{\textsc{d}d4} 13.\textit{\textsc{b}b5} \textit{\textsc{exe5}} 14.\textit{\textsc{xd4} \textit{\textsc{exe4}}} 15.\textit{\textsc{exd4} \textit{\textsc{d}d5}};

\textbf{C3222)} Risky is 12...a5 13.\textit{\textsc{b}b3} \textit{\textsc{a}e4}, since after 14.\textit{\textsc{b}b2} \textit{\textsc{exe5}} White can decide whether to play for compensation with 15.\textit{\textsc{c}c1} or to go for an exchange with 15.\textit{\textsc{a}a4}.

- In my own practice on top level, I recently faced 7...\textit{\textsc{bd7}}. This move allows White to exchange his g3 knight for Black's d6 bishop and is not enough for equality. 8.\textit{\textsc{cxd5}!} \textit{\textsc{exd5}} 9.\textit{\textsc{f}f5} \textit{\textsc{b}b6} 10.\textit{\textsc{xd6}} A strategic rule, useful to remember, is: in this pawn structure, exchanging a knight for Black's dark-squared bishop is ALWAYS good for White! Exchanging a knight for Black's light-squared bishop is not nearly as advantageous a transaction for White – sometimes it may even help Black to obtain easier development. 10...\textit{\textsc{w}xh6} 11.\textit{\textsc{d}d3} \textit{\textsc{e}e6}
12.a4! Disrupting Black’s development.
12...Af8 13.a5 Ac8 14.Ac2 Ad7 15.f3 Ad6 16.g4! This kingside pawn advance is more typical of the Sämisch Variation of the Nimzo – again it turns out to be useful to know the similarities and standard plans in the different Nimzo variations! 16...Ac8! Black goes for active counterplay. 17.g5 Ah5 18.Axh7+ Ah8 19.Ad3

A) 19...c5?! 20.dxc5 d4 If 20...Axc5, 21.Aa4 is unpleasant for Black. 21.cxd6! dxc3 22.bxc3 Ac4 Black does not have enough attacking power to compensate for the sacrificed pawns. 23.Ae4 Ah3 24.Aa4! White’s rook comes in as an important defensive piece, while it also poses direct threats against the black king. 24...Axc5 25.Ag1 f6 26.Ad4 White had a clear advantage and went on to win in I. Sokolov-Yakovenko, Poikovsky 2010;

B) Better was 19...Af5! 20.0-0 The greedy 20.Axd5? fails to 20...Axd3 21.Axd3 Af5 20...c5

Black can also decide to stop White’s queenside pawn advance with 7...a5. However, though it is a useful move in many lines, at this very moment it costs Black some time and it also weakens square b5, should isolani-type positions ever arise on the board, which is likely to happen.

11...Ad7?! This is ‘very deep’. The side playing with an isolated pawn should, as a general rule, try to keep as many pieces on the board as possible, and there was no for reason for Black to deviate from this standard principle
here. There was nothing wrong with the natural 11...\( \text{e}6 \) followed by \( \text{...} \text{bd}7 \) and \( \text{...} \text{c}8 \), with an excellent game for Black. 12.0-0 \( \text{xb}5 \) 13.\( \text{xb}5 \) \( \text{wb}6 \) 14.\( \text{c}3 \) \( \text{bd}7 \) 15.\( \text{d}2 \) \( \text{ac}8 \) 15...\( \text{we}6 \), moving away from the tempo-gainer \( \text{a}4 \), looks OK. 16.\( \text{ac}1 \) \( \text{c}6 \) 17.\( \text{a}4 \) \( \text{b}5 \)? Slowly but surely, Black is working on the discoordination of his own pieces. 17...\( \text{wc}7 \) was better.

White is now better.

18...\( \text{xc}5 \)? This is a real mistake. 18...\( \text{xc}5 \) 19.\( \text{c}3 \) was better for White, but not the end of the world.

19.\( \text{f}5 \)? Now all sorts of tactical threats appear. 19...\( \text{c}7 \) 20.\( \text{wc}3! \) \( \text{wd}7 \) 21.\( \text{we}5 \) - White had a large advantage and soon won in Jobava-Almasi, Wijk aan Zee B 2006;

D) 8.b3 White continues his development. Some of the drawbacks of 7...a5 (weak b5-square) will soon become apparent. 8...c5 Definitely not the only move, but arguably the most logical.

9.\( \text{xc}5 \)\( \text{xc}5 \) 10.\( \text{b}2 \)\( \text{c}6 \)

11.\( \text{xd}5 \) 11.\( \text{b}5 \) looks slightly better for White. 11...\( \text{exd}5 \) 12.\( \text{b}5 \) If White now manages \( \text{e}2 \), 0-0 and \( \text{c}1 \), he will have a good version of a 'fighting against an isolani' position and would be better, so Black needs to take concrete action. 12...\( \text{g}4 \) 13.\( \text{e}2 \) \( \text{xe}2 \) 14.\( \text{we}2 \)d4

15.0-0! 15.\( \text{d}1 \) \( \text{wd}5 \) should be about equal. 15...\( \text{wb}6 \) In case of 15...\( \text{dxe}3 \) 16.\( \text{fxe}3 \) White has threats against the black king, for example: 16...\( \text{ad}5 \) 17.\( \text{gf}5 \) (also possible is 17.\( \text{ad}1 \) \( \text{g}5 \) 18.\( \text{xd}5 \) \( \text{xe}3+ \) (18...\( \text{xd}5 \) 19.\( \text{f}5 \)) 19.\( \text{h}1 \) \( \text{xd}5 \) 20.\( \text{xe}3 \) \( \text{xb}5 \) 21.\( \text{xf}7 \) \( \text{xf}7 \) (21...\( \text{xe}3 \) 22.\( \text{f}4 \) \( \text{xf}7 \) 23.\( \text{f}5 \)\( \text{h}8 \) 24.\( \text{d}6 \) 22.\( \text{f}5 \) \( \text{xe}8 \) 23.\( \text{g}5 \)\( \text{f}8 \) 24.\( \text{h}6 \)+) 17...\( \text{xe}3 \) 18.\( \text{xe}3 \) \( \text{wb}6 \) 19.\( \text{ae}1 \) \( \text{xe}3+ \) 20.\( \text{xe}3 \) \( \text{xb}5 \) 21.\( \text{g}3 \)\( \text{f}6 \) 22.\( \text{xf}6 \) 16.\( \text{ac}1 \) White is better. Again, the central tension is difficult for Black to resolve, for example 16...\( \text{dxe}3 \) 17.\( \text{xf}6 \) e\( \text{xf}2 \+ \) 18.\( \text{h}1 \) \( \text{xf}6 \) 19.\( \text{h}5 \).

The usual alternatives are:

- 7...\( \text{b}6 \) has rarely been played - once by Topalov in a rapid game: 8.\( \text{xd}5 \) With Black already committed to the fianchetto of his light-squared bishop, it looks logical for White to force a central exchange. 8.e4?! does not achieve
Chapter 2.1: Reshevsky's Set-up – 5.\( \text{d}2 \) d5 6.a3 \( \text{d}6 

the desired effect after 8...\( \text{d}xe4 \) 9.\( \text{g}xe4 \) dx\( \text{e}4 \) 10.\( \text{xe}4 \) \( \text{b}7 \) 8.ex\( \text{d}5 

9.\( \text{e}2 \) 9.d3 should be better for White compared to my game with Vitiuugov – see under the 6.a3 \( \text{e}7 \) 7.cxd5 ex\( \text{d}5 \) 8.\( \text{f}4 \) line. The white knight is probably better on g3 than on f4. 9...\( \text{e}8 \) 10.0-0 c6 11.b4 a6 12.\( \text{b}2 \) \( \text{bd}7 \) 13.\( \text{wc}2 \) with some advantage in Graf-Topalov, Benidorm 2003.

In the event of 7...\( \text{d}xc4 \) 8.\( \text{xc}4 \) c5 (which for some reason is not played in grandmaster practice), after 9.dxc5 (9.d5 is premature, as after 9...\( \text{e}5 \) Black is doing well) 9...\( \text{xc}5 \) 10.0-0 we have one of those pawn symmetry positions which are slightly better for White due to his slightly superior development. However, actually mostly in these positions Black gradually equalizes and the game ends in a draw. So although this line can definitely be played (and I am surprised not to see more games with it) and it will likely gradually lead to equality, it is not to everyone's taste to defend a slightly inferior position with rather limited winning chances from the very beginning.

10.\( \text{c}2 \) \( \text{bd}7 \) 11.0-0 b6 transposes to Piket-Adams with 6.a3 \( \text{e}7 \) 7.\( \text{g}3 \) c5, where Black indeed equalized.

8.dxc5 \( \text{xc}5 \) 9.b4

An important moment for Black. As often happens also in the Tarrasch, both bishop retreats look logical.

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

In the event of 9...\( \text{b}6 \) we have a practical example where White boasts an advantage. It looks reasonably straightforward, so probably 9...\( \text{b}6 \) is not a way to equality for Black: 10.\( \text{a}4 \) \( \text{c}7 \) 11.\( \text{b}2 \) \( \text{c}6 \) 12.cxd5 Delaying the decision in the centre with 12.\( \text{b}3 \) does not bring anything, because Black gets active with 12...\( \text{g}4 \) 13.\( \text{e}2 \) \( \text{h}4 \) 14.\( \text{xg}4 \) \( \text{xg}4 \) 15.cxd5 ex\( \text{d}5 \) 16.\( \text{xd}5 \) a5 with approximate equality, as in Graf-Tischbierek, Germany Bundesliga 2003/04. 12.ex\( \text{d}5 \) So we again have an isolated pawn position. White is achieving nice development here and is slightly better. Should Black capture 12...\( \text{xd}5 \) then White has a solid advantage after 13.\( \text{c}1 \) 13.\( \text{e}2 \) \( \text{e}7 \) 14.0-0 \( \text{d}8 \) 15.\( \text{c}1 \)

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White is harmoniously developed here. Apart from positional moves like $\text{Cc}5$, he also threatens the direct $16.\text{xf}6 \text{xf}6 17.\text{b}5$. Counterplay for Black is not easy to find. Black resorts to a standard tactical motif which does not quite work: $15...\text{d}4! 16.\text{exd}4 \text{xe}5$ Or $16...\text{xf}4 17.\text{Cc}2 \text{d}6 18.\text{f}3$ and should Black recapture the d4 pawn, then he lands in a lost endgame: $18...\text{xd}3$ (even worse is $18...\text{xd}4? 19.\text{xd}4 \text{xd}4 20.\text{xd}4 \text{xd}4 21.\text{e}2) 19.\text{hx}g3 \text{xd}4 20.\text{xd}4 \text{d}4 21.\text{xd}4 \text{xd}4 22.\text{fc}1 \text{f}5 23.\text{c}7. 17.\text{dxe}5$! Not a difficult decision. There will be a material balance with full white domination. $17...\text{xd}1 18.\text{fxd}1 \text{e}8 19.\text{b}5 \text{d}8 19...\text{xe}5??$ is a blunder due to $20.\text{xe}5 \text{xe}5 21.\text{d}8. 20.\text{c}5 \text{e}6 21.\text{ce}4 \text{f}4 22.\text{f}3 \text{e}6 23.\text{d}6$ and White was better and went on to win in Volkov-Balogh, Moscow 2007.

14...$\text{e}6$? Missing or underestimating White's next. $14...\text{g}6 15.\text{b}2$ would give White a small plus. $15.\text{h}5!$ Now Black's position quickly deteriorates. $15...\text{e}5 16.\text{b}5 \text{a}5 17.\text{f}4! \text{c}7 18.\text{f}5!$ All of a sudden White has a mating attack. $18...\text{d}6 19.\text{g}4! \text{xb}2+ 20.\text{f}2 \text{e}5 21.\text{d}2 1-0$ Graf-Hoffmann, Germany Bundesliga 2004/05.

11.\text{b}2 \text{c}6

10.cxd5

White can also first develop his bishop to b2: $10.\text{b}2$, however after $10...\text{a}5$ ($10...\text{c}6$ is also possible) $11.\text{b}5 \text{xc}4 12.\text{xc}4 \text{bd}7 13.0-0 \text{b}6 14.\text{d}3 \text{e}5 15.\text{e}2 \text{g}4 16.\text{f}3 \text{e}6 17.\text{fd}1 \text{e}8$ White's advantage (if any) was symbolic in Chernin-Granda Zuniga, Pamplona 1991.
Black threatens the standard ...d5-d4 push. White has two logical options to stop it:

12.\( \text{Qb5} \)

12.\( \text{Qe2} \) may look clumsy, however it’s just for one move, and Black has no tactics to take advantage of it – \( \text{Qd4} \) will be next. 12 ...\( \text{Qe8} \) 13.\( \text{Qd4} \) a5 14.b5 \( \text{Qe5} \) 15.\( \text{Qe2} \) d7 16.0-0 \( \text{Qc8} \) with a balanced position.

12 ... a5

Now White has to take.

13.bxa5 \( \text{Qxa5} \)

Black is temporarily ahead in development.

14.\( \text{Qe2} \) c4 15.\( \text{Qd4} \)

White seems to have a small advantage. It is logical for Black to capture the a-pawn. White will regain his pawn and have a small advantage. The following lines look like a natural run of play:

15.\( \text{Qxa3} \)

Or 15 ...\( \text{Wxa5}+ \) 16.\( \text{Qc3} \) e6 17.0-0 b5

If 17 ...\( \text{Qxa3} \) White regains the pawn, with a better game, after 18.\( \text{Qb5} \) b4 19.\( \text{Qxa3} \) \( \text{Qxa3} \) 20.\( \text{Qb1} \) followed by \( \text{Qxb7} \). 18.\( \text{Qd3} \) Threatening 19.\( \text{Qf5} \).

18 ...\( \text{Qxa3} \) 19.\( \text{Qxb5} \) \( \text{Wxb5} \) 20.\( \text{Wxb5} \) \( \text{Qxb5} \) 21.\( \text{Qxb5} \) Many pieces have been exchanged and Black has a weak isolated pawn on d5, but he should definitely be able to make a draw. However, White is still a bit better and can safely continue pressing.

16.0-0 \( \text{Qd7} \) 17.\( \text{Qxa3} \) \( \text{Qxa3} \)

17 ...\( \text{Qxa3} \) is a blunder due to 18.\( \text{Qxf6} \) and Black would have to recapture on f6 with the pawn, destroying his structure.

18.\( \text{Wb3} \) e7 19.\( \text{Wxb7} \)

Despite this relatively simplified position, White is still a bit better and the position is far from a dead draw.

**Conclusion**

In my opinion, Black can equalize against White’s main set-up with 7.c5 \( \text{Qe7} \) 8.b4 b6 9.\( \text{Qf4} \), with either 9 ...c6 or 9 ...a5. Leveling the game is harder for the second player if White plays 7.\( \text{Qg3} \). Now, 7 ...c6 is rather passive, and after 7 ...c5 White can force a position with a black isolani on d5, which can be effectively blocked on d4, giving White something to play for.
Chapter 2.2

The Retreat to e7 – 5.\( \text{\textit{e2}} \) d5 6.a3 \( \text{\textit{e7}} \)

I have not analysed 6.cxd5 exd5 as a separate line, because this variation runs very much along the lines of 6.a3 \( \text{\textit{e7}} \) 7.cxd5 exd5 8.g3, often in a good version for Black, because if White plays a2-a3, Black does not have to retreat to e7 and usually puts his bishop on d6 or f8. I think the main reason why white players sometimes play 6.cxd5 is the fact that those players have problems finding an advantage for White in the 6.a3 \( \text{\textit{d6}} \) line.

6...\( \text{\textit{e7}} \)

7.cxd5

The most common and arguably the most logical move here. White seeks to define a pawn structure of the Orthodox Queen's Gambit, Exchange Variation type – with the obvious difference that White's bishop is still on c1.

- An often-played alternative is 7.\( \text{\textit{f4}} \). White delays the decision in the centre, first developing and then planning to determine the centre at the most convenient moment. Practice has shown that 7.\( \text{\textit{f4}} \) does not bring White any particular advantages compared to the main line 7.cxd5. There are some pros and cons, which we will see in the lines below, however I am convinced that White has better chances of an opening advantage in the main line 7.cxd5.
A) Black can equalize by taking advantage of the fact that White has not taken on d5, and swapping central pawns: 7...dxc4 8...xc4 c5 A sound, logical approach. White now has a strange QGA type of position, with a knight on f4 instead of the regular f3. In the games played with this line, White did not manage to demonstrate a road to an advantage so far:

A1) 9.0-0 cxd4 10.exd4 c6 11.e3 c5:

A1.1) 12.d3 does not lead to an advantage for White: 12...c7 13.wf3 c6 14.g3 g6 15...f6 c8 – Black had a fine version of an isolated pawn-type position and was at least equal in Avrukh-Finkel, Ramat Aviv 1999;

A1.2) More logical seems 12.b3 c7 13.d5 and after the subsequent central exchanges 13...bxd5 14.cxd5 exd5 (14...xd5 15.cxd5 exd5 16.cxd5 looks a bit better for White) 15.cxd5 c6 16...e7+ wc7 17.e1 White has a tiny advantage, for instance: 17...a8 18.wc1 w7 19.b3, though a draw is the most likely result.

A2) 9.d5 This pawn push could be a way to justify the position of the knight on f4 – however, Black is doing fine. Just like most of the time in the regular QGA with the white knight on f3, this early pawn thrust does not bring White the desired result. 9...exd5! Keeping the position closed with 9...e5 may look like a tempo win, however White has the advantage after 10...e2 e8 11.b3 d6 12.b2 d7 13.0-0 f5 14.wc2 a6 15.a4 b6 16.f4! (a typical strategic plan in these pawn structures) 16...f6 17.d1 e4 18...c3 c7 19...f2 (preparing another standard idea) 19...h8 20.g4 and White had the advantage in Hellsten-Brynell, Gothenburg 2006. 10...fxd5 cxd5 11.e5 d7 Black plays a plan known from the regular QGA. 12.0-0 d6 13.e4 xd5 14.wxd5? This definitely does not help White. 14.exd5, with an approximately equal game, was better; or 14...xd5. 14...wb6 15...d3 c6 16...g3 White has lost a couple of tempi with his queen and has also opened the position for Black’s bishops. 16...f8 Black was better and went on to win in Christiansen-Emms, Germany Bundesliga B 1997/98.

B) In case Black opts for the constructive developing move 7...c8,
B1) Black will open up the position and, due to his advantage in development, get great play in the event of 9.c5 e5;

B2) 9.b5 a5 9...e5!? is also interesting. 10.cxd5 It is too late for White to keep the position closed: 10.c5 b6 11.c6 a6 12.a4 b4 13.d2 e5 14.dxe5 d4 and White’s position collapses. 10...d6!

B3) 9.cxd5! This quashes Black’s hopes of immediate dynamic possibilities and leaves him with an awkwardly placed knight on c6 in a well-known pawn structure. 9...exd5 10.cxd5 exd5 11.e2 is also a small white plus. 10...exd5 11.e2 We have a known pawn structure. Black will have to spend time improving his c6 knight, hence White has a slight advantage.

C) 7...b6 does not equalize:

8.cxd5 The black bishop will be placed on b7, so it is useful for White to define the central pawn structure here, closing the h1-a8 diagonal. 8...exd5 9.e2 Where to put the light-squared bishop is often a matter of taste for White in these positions. 9.d3 is the alternative, later followed by f2-f3 and g2-g4. 9...b7 10.f3 Black is likely to play ...c7-c6 anyway. The subsequent e3-e4 push will not bring White any advantage, so the merits of this move are questionable. White could have claimed a small opening advantage after 10.0-0 d6 11.b4 c6 12.b1. 10...c6 11.0-0 d6 12.e4 dxe4 13.dxe4 dxe4 14.dxe4 d7 The position is now about equal. 15.g3 f6 16.h2 g7 17.b5 h5 18.xh5 c5 and later a draw was agreed in Svetushkin-Movsesian, Germany Bundesliga 2009/10.

D) Black mostly plays 7...c6 here. White now has a number of viable choices:

D1) Taking space on the queenside with 8.b4 may look logical, but White is behind in development. Black gets sufficient counterplay with central action:

D11) 8...bd7 (preparing ...e6-e5) 9.c5 Only Black can be preferred in the event of 9.cxd5 cxd5 10.d3 b6 11.a2 d7 12.0-0 c8 as in Hort-Evans, San Antonio 1972.
keeps central control in the case of 12...hxg6 13.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{d2}}} b6 14.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{a4}}} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{d7}}} 15.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{d4}}} bxc5 16.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{x}}xc5} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{x}}xc5} 17.bxc5. 13.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{e2}}} b6 The white knight must remain on c3 in order to control Black’s \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{d4}}} jump – hence White cannot keep central control. 14.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{cxb6}}} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{axb6}}} 15.0-0 c5 16.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{f3}}} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{e6}}} with a nice game for Black;

D112) 11...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{e8}}} and now:

D1121) Opting for a tactical skirmish with 12.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{cxd5}}} results in messy positions, where Black is not inferior: 12...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{xd5}}} 13.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{xd5}}} 13.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{exe5}}}? fails to 13...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{h4}}}. 13...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{h4}}} 14.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{f4}}} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{wff6}}} Now we have a typical story – White is a pawn up and needs ‘just one move’ to consolidate. 15.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{e2}}} g5! 16.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{xex5}}} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{wxe5}}} 17.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{h5}}} g4 18.g3 18.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{g3}}} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{wff6}}}. 19.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{f1}}} a5. 18...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{e7}}} 19.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{f4}}} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{wCc3}}}+ 20.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{f1}}} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{e5}}} It is not easy for White to connect his pieces. Black has many ideas – ...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{f6}}}, or ...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{ad8}}} or ...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{a7-a5}}} – and is likely to regain his material;

D1122) 12.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{e2}}} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{f8}}} 13.0-0 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{f5}}} It would be wrong for Black to assume that he has oceans of time. If White re- groups his pieces and achieves central control – i.e. control of the d4-square + the intact a3/b4/c5 pawn chain – White would have the advantage, as the following game demonstrates: 13...g6 14.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{a4}}} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{g7}}} 15.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{d4}}} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{g4}}}!! This provokes of \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{f2-f3}}} and ‘weakening’ of White’s e3-square plays into White’s hands here. 16.f3 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{d7}}} 17.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{b2}}} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{e7}}} 18.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{d2}}} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{xd8}}} 19.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{wc3}}} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{c8}}} 20.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{ad1}}} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{f7}}} 21.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{d1}}} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{f8}}} 22.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{b3}}} – White has regrouped his pieces harmoniously and had the advantage in Hort-Shamkovich, Tbilisi 1970.

Something to consider for Black is to start immediate action to destroy White’s queenside pawn chain with 13...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{b6}}} 14.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{a4}}} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{b5}}}!. Now White has an awkward choice between taking on e5, giving up his bishop pair, or allowing the black knight on the nice c4 post: 15.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{c3}}} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{c4}}} 14.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{a4}}} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{b5}}} 15.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{cxb6}}} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{axb6}}} 16.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{d4}}} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{fd7}}} 17.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{b2}}} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{g6}}} 18.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{d3}}} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{e4}}} 19.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{h5}}} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{c5}}} and Black had an excellent (probably better) game in Hort- Ivkov, Zagreb 1970.

D12) Black can also aim for counterplay with ...e6-e5: 8...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{d6}}} 9.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{h5}}}

We have seen this plan in a number of 4.e3 Nimzo lines and I’ve never been fond of it. White spends a considerable amount of time to achieve... what? 9.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{c5}}} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{c7}}} 10.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{d3}}} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{bd7}}} 11.f4 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{e4}}} is fine for Black. 9...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{xb5}}} 9...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{bd7}}}, asking White whether it was smart to spend four tempi exchanging his g1 knight for its black counterpart, was an option. 10.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{xb5}}} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{e5}}} 11.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{cxd5}}} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{xd4}}} 12.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{exd4}}} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{cxd5}}} 12...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{d7}}} with likely equality after
13.\(\text{d}3\) (it would have been risky for White to try to hang on to his extra pawn) 13...\(\text{f}6\) 14.\(\text{h}4\) \(\text{e}8\)+ 15.\(\text{e}3\) \(\text{cxd}5\) 16.0-0 \(\text{h}6\). 13.\(\text{xd}5\) \(\text{c}6\) Black is ahead in development and had compensation for the pawn in Van Wely-Barsov, Netherlands 1998; by the way, it’s typical for Loek to take such pawns.

D2) Should White decide to first prepare the development of his queenside bishop with 8.\(\text{b}3\), then Black again gets enough counterplay with the standard ...e6-e5 break. 8...\(\text{bd}7\) The pawn structure resembles the Meran Variation, only with the white knight on f4. Probably, the only advantage of this is that White controls the d5-square. The disadvantages are clear: the knight does not control the e5-square and Black’s central break ...e6-e5 is easier to execute. I am personally not fond of either 8.\(\text{b}4\) or 8.\(\text{b}3\) for White. Black’s central break is easy to execute and Black simply gets a good game:

D21) In case of 9.\(\text{b}2\) Black follows his standard plan: 9...\(\text{dxc}4\) 10.\(\text{bxc}4\) e5 11.\(\text{dx}e5\) The attempt to keep the pawn centre intact with 11.\(\text{d}3\) turns out wrong after 11...\(\text{ex}d4\) 12.\(\text{ex}d4\) \(\text{e}8\) 13.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{b}6\) 14.\(\text{e}5\) c5 and should White follow up with the ‘principled’ 15.\(\text{d}5?\) \(\text{d}6\) 16.f4, then Black wins after 16...\(\text{g}4!\) 17.\(\text{x}g4\) \(\text{h}4+\) 18.\(\text{f}1\) \(\text{xe}5\) 11...\(\text{xe}5\) 12.\(\text{we}2\) \(\text{w}a5\) 13.\(\text{wa}4\)

It is already clear that things are not developing according to plan for White. On 13.\(\text{e}2\) comes 13...\(\text{f}5!\). 13...\(\text{w}b6\) 14.\(\text{d}1\) \(\text{g}6\) 15.\(\text{w}g6\) \(\text{hx}g6\) 16.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{d}7\) Taking the white bishop pair. 17.0-0 \(\text{c}5\) 18.\(\text{wc}2\) \(\text{xd}3\) 19.\(\text{wd}3\) \(\text{xe}6\) and Black was better in Milos-Lafuente, Santos 2006;

D22) 9.\(\text{d}3\)
Now Black has $11...g5!$. Maybe this motif was missed by both players, since in the event of $11...cxd5$? White wins a pawn with $12.\text{cxd5.} 12.\text{cxd5} 13.\text{cxd5} 14.\text{cxd5} \text{cxd5} 15.\text{cxd5} \text{cxd8}$

Black has a lead in development and is better. $16.\text{e2?}$ only makes things worse for White after $16...b6$;

D223) $9...\text{d6}$ Black prepares his central break, while White has a dilemma – what to do with his knight on f4?

D2231) $10.\text{f3}$ This cannot be good. White wastes too much time, and Black gets a dream Meran-type position: $10...e5 11.cxd5 \text{cxd5} 12.b5 \text{b8} 13.dxe5 \text{b5} 14.g3 \text{fg4} 15.d4 \text{Wh4}$ and Black was better in Hort-Scheeren, Wijk aan Zee 1983;

D2232) Good advice is, however, difficult to give, since if $10.\text{f3} e5 11.dxe5 \text{bxe5} 12.cxd5 \text{cxd5}$ (or $13.\text{wxd5} \text{cxd4} 14.\text{exd4} \text{wd8} 15.\text{ff4} \text{cxd4} 16.\text{wxd4}$) $13...\text{cxd5}$ White's pieces are clumsy in this isolated pawn position – the white d3 knight should be on f3.

The plans with $8.b4$ or $8.b3$ are luxuries White cannot afford here. Black simply plays for a quick ...e6-e5 and gets an excellent game.

D3) The neutral developing move $8.\text{d2}$ can't be bad, but it can't pose Black problems either: $8...\text{bd7} 9.\text{cxd5}$

D31) $9...\text{cxd5} 10.\text{d3} \text{d6} 11.\text{f3} \text{e8} 12.g4$ Now White goes for a type of play he often aims for in the $7.\text{f4}$ line. $12...\text{w7} 13.g5 \text{e4}$ With the black knight firmly on the e4-square, it is far from easy for White to organize a meaningful attack on the kingside, while Black has a relatively straightforward plan on the other side of the board. $14.b4 b5!$ ...

D32) Also possible is $9.\text{xd5} 10.e4 \text{cxd6} 11.e5 \text{c5} 12.\text{cxd4} 13.\text{cxd4} \text{b8!}$; Black transfers his knight to c6 and is doing fine (13...\text{c5} 14.\text{cxd4} \text{cxd4} 15.\text{cxd4} was better for White in Smyslov-Lukacs, Rome 1988).

D4) $8.\text{d3}$ is the logical follow-up on $7.\text{f4}$.

White continues development and delays the decision in the centre.

D41) $8...\text{xc4}$ After White has spent a tempo on $\text{d3}$, Black takes on $\text{c4}$ and wants to make the standard ...e6-e5 push. This is probably the most solid. $9.\text{xc4} \text{bd7} 10.\text{c2}$ There is a general opinion that transactions like $10.\text{c2} fxe6 11.\text{xe6} \text{we8} 12.0-0 \text{g6} 13.\text{xf8} \text{xf8}$ are not good for White. He is behind in development, and Black's pieces are harmonious. $10...e5 11.\text{fe2} \text{xc4} 12.\text{cxd4}$ The position again resembles certain Meran variations. $12...\text{e5} 13.\text{e2} \text{c5} 14.\text{f5g6} 15.\text{g3f4}$
Part II: 4...0-0 Minor Lines

D411) 16.0-0 A strange, completely non-Shirovian decision. 16...\(\text{\textit{\textbf{a}xe2}}\)
17.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{c}xe2}}\) \(\text{\textit{\textbf{w}e7}}\) Now Black has an easy game. 18.b3 \(\text{\textit{\textbf{f}ad8}}\)
19.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{b}b2}}\) \(\text{\textit{\textbf{f}e8}}\)
20.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{d}d4}}\) \(\text{\textit{\textbf{d}d6}}\) 21.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{h}h3}}\) \(\text{\textit{\textbf{ed7}}}\)
22.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{g}e2}}\) \(\text{\textit{\textbf{w}e4}}\) 23.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{a}acl}}\) \(\text{\textit{\textbf{w}xc2}}\) 24.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{x}xc2}}\) \(\text{\textit{\textbf{a}e5}}\) If somebody is better here, it is not White, (Shirov-Kramnik, Dortmund 1998). The fact that Grischuk did not want to follow Kramnik's play and opted for 8...\(\text{\textit{\textbf{d}d6}}\) (see line D43 below) indicates that Grischuk probably did not like some of the lines connected with 16.f3.

D412) Much more in Alexey's style (at least the way I understand it) would have been 16.f3, keeping the light-squared bishops on the board: 16...\(\text{\textit{\textbf{e}e6}}\) and now White can try:

D412 1) To take space with 17.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{b}b4}}\)
18.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{a}a4}}\) with a sharp position which is difficult to play for both sides and should be tested in practice;

D412 2) 17.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{a}a4}}\) \(\text{\textit{\textbf{d}d6}}\) 18.0-0
18.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{c}c5?!}}\) \(\text{\textit{\textbf{xc}xc5}}\) 19.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{w}xc5}}\) \(\text{\textit{\textbf{d}d3+}}\)
20.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{a}xd3}}\) \(\text{\textit{\textbf{w}xd3}}\) is good for Black. 18...\(\text{\textit{\textbf{b}b5}}\)
18...\(\text{\textit{\textbf{w}e7}}\) 19.f4 \(\text{\textit{\textbf{ed7}}}\) 20.e4 looks better for White. 19.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{c}c5}}\)
18...\(\text{\textit{\textbf{w}xc5}}\) 20.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{a}d3}}\) 21.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{a}xd3}}\) \(\text{\textit{\textbf{w}xd3}}\) 22.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{h}h4}}\) looks about equal.

Black also has other plans at his disposal on move 8:

D421) 8...\(\text{\textit{\textbf{a}bd7}}\)

D421 1) If 9.0-0 Black continues with the standard 9...\(\text{\textit{\textbf{d}xc4}}\) 10.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{a}xc4}}\)

D421 11) 10...\(\text{\textit{\textbf{a}b6?!}}\) 11.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{b}b3}}\) c5
12.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{d}xc5}}\) \(\text{\textit{\textbf{a}xc5}}\) does not equalize after 13.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{a}d3}}\) \(\text{\textit{\textbf{e}e7}}\) 14.e4 \(\text{\textit{\textbf{d}d7}}\)
15.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{c}e3}}\) \(\text{\textit{\textbf{e}e8}}\)
16.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{a}e5}}\) \(\text{\textit{\textbf{w}c7}}\) 17.f4! 17.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{a}xd7}}\) \(\text{\textit{\textbf{f}fxd7}}\) was equal in Drozdovskij-Miroshnichenko, Konya tt 2010;

D421 2) 10...e5 11.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{f}fe2}}\) \(\text{\textit{\textbf{exd4}}\) and Black has a good version of our main line 8...\(\text{\textit{\textbf{d}xc4}}\).

D422) 9.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{c}xd5}}\) and now:

D422 1) 9...\(\text{\textit{\textbf{d}xd5}}\) 10.e4 is in general the kind of position White aims for in this line;

D422 2) In the event of 9...\(\text{\textit{\textbf{c}xd5}}\) we have a position which optically may look like a small plus for White, but in reality most of the times gradually becomes equal, and a draw is a likely result:

D422 2 1) 10.0-0 b6 Now we have a type of play which gradually becomes equal: 11.b3 \(\text{\textit{\textbf{b}b7}}\) 12.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{b}b2}}\) a6 13.a4 \(\text{\textit{\textbf{b}b4}}\) 14.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{w}e2}}\) \(\text{\textit{\textbf{w}e7}}\) The position is about equal. 15.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{f}fc1}}\) \(\text{\textit{\textbf{f}fc8}}\) Black's pieces were harmoniously placed for the dynamic 15...\(\text{\textit{\textbf{e}e5}}\) 16.dxe5 \(\text{\textit{\textbf{xe5}}\) 17.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{f}f5}}\) \(\text{\textit{\textbf{ad8}}\), with good play. 16.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{c}c2}}\)
17.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{a}a2}}\) \(\text{\textit{\textbf{xc2}}\) 18.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{a}xc2}}\) \(\text{\textit{\textbf{d}d6}}\)
19.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{d}d3}}\) \(\text{\textit{\textbf{c}c6}}\) with approximate equality in Zhang Pengxiang-Akobian, Manila 2006;

D422 2 2) In the event of kingside aggression by White, which is the most principled way to fight for an advantage here, Black responds with equally principled central action: 10.g4!? e5
11.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{f}fxd5}}\) \(\text{\textit{\textbf{xd5}}\) 12.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{a}xd5}}\) \(\text{\textit{\textbf{exd4}}\) 13.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{f}fxd4}}\) \(\text{\textit{\textbf{f}fxd4}}\) 14.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{e}e3}}\) 14.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{f}fxd4}}\) is bad on account of 14...\(\text{\textit{\textbf{xf6}}}\) 15.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{a}a5+}}\)
16.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{f}f1}}\) \(\text{\textit{\textbf{d}d8}}\) 14...g6 15.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{e}e2}}\) \(\text{\textit{\textbf{e}e6}}\) Due to White's weakened kingside and his lag in development, Black has compensation for the sacrificed pawn.
D4223) 9...exd5 is the most common capture here. 10.g4 Compared to the 8...d2 line and the game Morovic-Rogers (see above) White has a favourable version – that is why 8...d2 makes little sense. The position is now sharp and strategically complicated. 10...d6 In case of 10...e8 11.f3 d6 White achieves his strategic objectives: 12.c2 f3 13.h4 d6 14.h5. Notice that White’s play as regards the pawn structure and the placement of the knight on f4 resembles certain exchange variations of the Queen’s Gambit. The only difference is that the bishop is on c1, which has its pros and cons. The central counter 15.c5 is a principled response to White’s kingside activity. 16.dxc5 bxc5 17.b4 d5 18.b2 and White had some advantage in Popov-Lovkov, St Petersburg 2010.

11.h3 A solid approach, but it costs time. Alternatives were 11.g5 d6 12.c2 dxe4 13.dxe4 xg5 14.f3; or 11.f3!? with similar plans to the exchange lines of the Queen’s Gambit. To me these two alternatives, 11.g5 and 11.f3, look critical for the evaluation of this sideline. 11...d6 12.f3:

D42231) 12...e7?!:

D422311) 13.0-0?! 13...e8 14.g2 e4 15.c2 d5! This typical central action creates good counterplay for Black. His pieces are harmonious. Almost as a rule, Black should not be worried about playing with an isolated pawn here. 16.dxc5 c5 17.c2 d7 18.b4 d6 19.d3 d5 with an excellent game for Black in Banikas-Georgiadis, Ioumenitsa 2007;

D422312) It is difficult to explain why White refrained from the natural 13.g5!. Black has to continue actively with 13...d4, however White is better after 14.dxe4 dxe4 15.dxe4 dxe4 (15...c7?! looks troublesome for Black after 16.h5 d6 17.d5+ gxf6 18.xf+ h8 19.e4 followed by d3, or 19.d2) 16.dxf4 d5 17.d6 White also had an option, as mentioned above, in 17.d3 d6 18.g3 d5 19.d2.

D42232) More logical looks 12...e8! and in case of 13.g5 d6 14.dxe4 dxe4 15.dxe4 d5! Black can regain a pawn with 15...xg5 16.dxf4 16.dxf4 d5 17.d6 18.d3 d7. However, to me this position looks somewhat preferable for White after 18.d3 d5 19.d2. 16.dxe6 d6 17.0-0 d4 18.d4 c5 Black is ahead in development, and the white kingside is potentially weak – Black has plenty of compensation for the sacrificed pawn.

D43) Black can also first play 8...d6!? which at first sight may look less logical than 8...dxc4 or 8...d7, but it has some advantages and looks sufficient for equality: 9.0-0 If 9.cxd5 cxd5 Black’s b8 knight can immediately be deployed to c6. 9...dxc4 10.dxc4 d7 Now Black aims for the standard ...e6-e5. 11.a2 e5 12.h5 This manoeuvre fails to impress here as well. 12.d4 e5 13.xh5 d5 14.e4 d4 and Black was at least OK in Shulman-Grischuk, Khanty-Mansiysk 2005;
• Another alternative for White, 7.\textit{g3}, is not dangerous for Black.

Probably his easiest way to equality is 7...c5 8.dxc5 dxc4 9.\textit{c2} Otherwise the ending is completely equal. 9...\textit{bd7} 10.\textit{xc4} \textit{xc5} 11.0-0 \textit{b6} 12.\textit{d1} \textit{b7} 13.b4 \textit{e7} 14.\textit{b2} a5 with an approximately equal position in Piket-Adams, Wijk aan Zee 2001.

7...\textit{exd5}

By far the most common response. White has a number of different continuations here. This particular variation has been present in top-level tournaments for the last 70 years or so, and many different plans have been tried. The first principled choice White has to decide on is where to put his f1 bishop. Something can be said for both decisions; placing it on d3 or sometimes e2, or fianchettoing it on g2. In case White chooses to fianchetto the bishop, then the relatively new and still unexplored idea of 8.h3 followed by g2-g4 should definitely be given more practical tests. If White chooses to place his bishop on d3, then a principled decision has to be taken as to where to place the e2 knight: g3 or f4. If White develops his bishop to d3 and a knight to f4, then the strategic battle is similar to the variation 4.e3 0-0 5.\textit{d3} d5 6.cxd5 exd5, analysed in another part of this book (see 'Independent 4.e3 Lines'). Black’s general counterplan in all those lines is to play for ...c7-c5, and also often isolated pawn positions arise. Play is in general not forced, the plans and a general understanding of the strategic nuances of the position are the key. Also, a mixture of different strategic plans is often seen. It is difficult to say which plan is ‘best for White’ or ‘the most dangerous for Black’. My personal preference is 8.f4 or 8.h3, but it is a matter of taste.

In case of the alternative 7...\textit{xd5}:

• According to the current state of affairs White obtains an opening advantage with 8.\textit{d2}, a logical, flexible developing move, keeping many options open.

A) 8...\textit{d7} is also a logical developing move. 9.g3
The white bishop will be well placed on g2, in this line White can often get an excellent version of the Catalan.

A1) 9...b6 0xd5! White correctly decides to force the advantageous pawn structure. Compared to the variations discussed under 8.0xd5, here White obviously has a very good version – his 0d2 was a logical move very much in accordance with the system, while Black’s ...b7-b6 is far from the best set-up in this line. 10...exd5 11.g2 0f6 12.0-0 0e4 13.c1 0b7 14.wc2 0c8 15.fd1 0d6

Opting for hanging pawns in the centre with 15...c5?! lands Black in trouble after 16.dxc5 bxc5 17.0f4.

A perfect strategic position for White. Black has problems with his structural queenside weaknesses (the weak c6 pawn), while due to the fact that the knights and dark-squared bishops have been exchanged, Black has no chance to create counterplay on the kingside.

20...0c7 21.a4 0c8 22.a5 0a6 23.a1 0b5 24.dcl 0e8 25.axb6 axb6 26.f1! Exchanging bishops makes it easier to target Black’s weak queenside.

26...0xf1 27.xf1 0b8 28.a6 White was clearly better and soon won in Ponomariov-Kramnik, Wijk aan Zee 2003 – instructive play by Pono. Other moves for Black do not equalize:

A2) 9...0f6 10.g2 e5 and now:

16...b4! In the present pawn structure (often seen in various Rubinstein Nimzo lines), exchanging the dark-squared bishops is ALWAYS good for White. 16...wxf6 17.c3! As said, if he wants to launch a minority advance on the queenside in order to create weakness in Black’s camp it is strategically almost always good for White to exchange all four knights and end up with only a pair of light-squared bishops + major pieces on the board. 17...0xc3 18.wxc3 c6 19.xd6 wxd6 20.b4
A21) Black gets active play in the event of 11.d5 \( \boxtimes b6 \) 12.e4 c6 13.\( \boxtimes b3 \) cxd5 14.exd5 \( \boxtimes g4 \) Or immediately 14.\( \boxtimes f5 \). 15.h3 \( \boxtimes f5 \) 16.\( \boxtimes e3 \) \( \boxtimes d3 \). B. Socko-Wiedenkeller, Khanty-Mansiysk 2010;

A22) 11.0-0 \( \boxtimes d4 \) trying to limit White's g2 bishop with 11...c6 is logical in itself, but it does not solve Black's problems: 12.\( \boxtimes c2 \) exd4 13.\( \boxtimes x d4 \) \( \boxtimes b6 \) 14.\( \boxtimes a d1 \) \( \boxtimes c5 \) 15.\( \boxtimes e4 \) \( \boxtimes x d4 \) 16.\( \boxtimes b4 \) \( \boxtimes e8 \) 17.\( \boxtimes x d4 \) \( \boxtimes x d5 \) 18.\( \boxtimes d6 \) \( \boxtimes e5 \) 19.\( \boxtimes c4 \). Things have gone very wrong for Black: White has the bishop pair, a kingside pawn majority that is about to roll, and better developed pieces in general. The game did not last long and the final tactics were entertaining: 19...\( \boxtimes e8 \) 20.\( \boxtimes c1 \) \( \boxtimes c7 \) 21.\( \boxtimes d6 \) \( \boxtimes d7 \) 22.e4 \( \boxtimes b6 \) 23.\( \boxtimes c5 \) \( \boxtimes c7 \) 24.\( \boxtimes d6 \) \( \boxtimes d8 \) 25.\( \boxtimes b5 \) cxb5 26.\( \boxtimes f4 \) 1-0 Malakhov-P.H. Nielsen, Istanbul Ech 2003. 12.\( \boxtimes x d4 \) \( \boxtimes e5 \) 13.\( \boxtimes c2 \) c5 14.\( \boxtimes f3 \). I was physically present at this game. Aronian played very fast in the opening – obviously this was a case of deep opening preparation. 14...\( \boxtimes x f5 \) 15.\( \boxtimes x f5 \) \( \boxtimes x d2 \) 16.\( \boxtimes x e5 \) \( \boxtimes d6 \) 17.\( \boxtimes f5 \) \( \boxtimes x b2 \) 18.\( \boxtimes f c1 \) \( \boxtimes a d 8 \)! All Black's queenside pawns are weak and White is likely to end up with an extra pawn – 4 vs 3 on the kingside. In the event of 18...\( \boxtimes a b 8 \) White’s central pawns start to roll after 19.\( \boxtimes a b 1 \) \( \boxtimes a 3 \) 20.e4 \( \boxtimes f e 8 \) 21.\( \boxtimes b 5 \) \( \boxtimes a 6 \) 22.f4. 19.a4 Also possible was 19.\( \boxtimes a b 1 \) \( \boxtimes a 3 \) 20.\( \boxtimes x b 7 \) \( \boxtimes f e 8 \) 21.\( \boxtimes b 5 \). 19...c4 20.\( \boxtimes a b 1 \) \( \boxtimes a 3 \) 21.\( \boxtimes c 2 \) \( \boxtimes e 5 \) 22.\( \boxtimes b 5 \) \( \boxtimes c 5 \) 23.\( \boxtimes e 2 \) a6 24.\( \boxtimes x c 4 \) – White was better and indeed ended up with an extra pawn (4 vs 3 on the kingside) in Aronian-Gelfand, Merida 2005. After prolonged defence, Gelfand saved the game.

A3) 9...\( \boxtimes 5 b 6 \)?! is not to be recommended. Particularly the knight on b6 is stupidly placed. 10.\( \boxtimes g 2 \) c5 11.0-0 \( \boxtimes f 6 \) 12.dxc5 \( \boxtimes x c 5 \) 13.\( \boxtimes c 2 \) \( \boxtimes e 7 \) 14.\( \boxtimes f d 1 \) \( \boxtimes b 8 \) 15.\( \boxtimes b 5 \) \( \boxtimes d 7 \) 16.\( \boxtimes a 5 \) with a clear white advantage in Harikrishna-Tiviakov, Pamplona 2005;

A4) 9...\( \boxtimes f 6 \) also does not equalize: 10.\( \boxtimes g 2 \) \( \boxtimes d 7 \) 11.e4 \( \boxtimes x c 3 \) 12.\( \boxtimes x c 3 \) c5 13.0-0 \( \boxtimes b 5 \) 14.\( \boxtimes e 1 \) \( \boxtimes c 8 \) 15.d5 \( \boxtimes d 5 \) 16.exd5 \( \boxtimes d 6 \) 17.\( \boxtimes f 4 \) Harikrishna-Maletin, St Petersburg 2009.

In practice the following moves have also been tried:

B) 8...\( \boxtimes x c 3 \)
Chapter 2.2: The Retreat to e7 – 5.\( \mathcal{Q}e2 \) d5 6.a3 \( \mathcal{Q}e7 \\

15.bxc5 We have exactly the same pawn structure and also a very similar set-up of pieces in the Petrosian Variation of the Queen’s Indian (1.d4 \( \mathcal{Q}f6 \) 2.c4 e6 3.\( \mathcal{Q}f3 \) b6 4.a3 \( \mathcal{Q}b7 \) 5.\( \mathcal{Q}c3 \) d5 6.exd5 \( \mathcal{Q}xd5 \) 7.\( \mathcal{Q}d2 \) \( \mathcal{Q}e7 \) 8.\( \mathcal{W}c2 \) 0-0 9.e4 \( \mathcal{Q}xc3 \) 10.\( \mathcal{Q}xc3 \) c5 11.dxc5 bxc5 12.\( \mathcal{Q}d3 \) \( \mathcal{Q}d7 \)). The big difference is that here the white knight is on g3, which gives White the possibility to advance his f pawn. 16.\( \mathcal{Q}c4 \) \( \mathcal{Q}d7 \) 17.f4! Black has problems. 17...\( \mathcal{Q}b6 \) 18.\( \mathcal{Q}e2 \) \( \mathcal{Q}f6 \) This will lose a pawn, however otherwise White plays \( \mathcal{Q}h5 \). 19.\( \mathcal{W}d1 \) \( \mathcal{Q}d4+ \) 20.\( \mathcal{W}xd4 \) cxd4 21.\( \mathcal{W}d2 \) \( \mathcal{Q}c8 \) 22.\( \mathcal{W}xd4 \) \( \mathcal{W}xd4+ \) 23.\( \mathcal{Q}xd4 \) and Black did not have nearly enough compensation for the pawn in Aronian-Anand, Calvia ol 2004. Since Aronian and Sargissian work together, those two games were probably their joint preparation in this line.

C) 8...c5

9.dxc5 White can obtain a pleasant position with 9.\( \mathcal{Q}xd5 \) \( \mathcal{W}xd5 \) 10.\( \mathcal{Q}f4 \) \( \mathcal{W}d8 \) 11.dxc5 \( \mathcal{Q}xc5 \) 12.\( \mathcal{W}c2 \) \( \mathcal{Q}d6 \) 13.\( \mathcal{Q}d3 \) e5 14.\( \mathcal{Q}e2 \) followed by \( \mathcal{Q}c3 \) and \( \mathcal{Q}g3 \), similar to Sargissian-Tiviakov above. 9...\( \mathcal{Q}xc5 \) 10.g3 \( \mathcal{Q}xc3 \) 11.\( \mathcal{Q}xc3 \) \( \mathcal{Q}d7 \) 12.\( \mathcal{Q}d4 \) e5 Perhaps better was 12...\( \mathcal{Q}c6 \). 13.\( \mathcal{Q}b3 \) \( \mathcal{Q}c6 \) 14.\( \mathcal{W}xd8 \) \( \mathcal{W}xd8 \) 15.\( \mathcal{Q}g1 \) White is slightly better here. 15...\( \mathcal{Q}d6 \)?! Now White gets a substantial advantage, however also after the arguably better 15...\( \mathcal{Q}d7 \) 16.\( \mathcal{Q}xc5 \) \( \mathcal{Q}xc5 \) 17.\( \mathcal{Q}xe5 \) \( \mathcal{Q}f3 \) 18.\( \mathcal{Q}e2 \) \( \mathcal{Q}d3+ \) 19.\( \mathcal{Q}xd3 \) \( \mathcal{Q}xd3 \) 20.g4 followed by \( \mathcal{Q}g3 \), with an extra pawn, White retains winning chances. 16.\( \mathcal{Q}a5 \) \( \mathcal{Q}c7 \) 17.\( \mathcal{Q}xc6 \) \( \mathcal{Q}xc6 \) 18.\( \mathcal{Q}g2 \) \( \mathcal{Q}d6 \) 19.\( \mathcal{Q}e2 \) and in this Catalan-type position, White was clearly better in Navara-Berg, Heraklio Ech-tt 2007.

\( \mathcal{Q} \) In his Secret Notebook, Botvinnik had a high opinion of 8.\( \mathcal{Q}xd5 \). However, in all fairness and with all respect for the former World Champion, the knight capture does not look logical, since after 8...\( \mathcal{Q}xd5 \) we have exactly the same pawn structure as after 7...exd5, so now in order to approve 7.\( \mathcal{Q}xd5 \) we have to believe that the absence of a pair of knights should improve White’s chances here. I am not convinced of this. The absence of both knight pairs should probably improve White’s situation, since he can roll his pawns on the queenside, while for Black it would not be easy to organize active counterplay. With one pair of knights left on the board, Black still has enough pieces to organize active play:

A) 9.g3

A1) 9...\( \mathcal{Q}e8 \) is always a useful move for Black here. Play may continue: 10.\( \mathcal{Q}g2 \) c6 11.0-0
Part II: 4...0-0 Minor Lines

11...\(\textbf{\textit{g5}}\)?! The bishop is not going to do much on \(\textit{g5}\), so this does not look like a good way to proceed. 11...a5 looks more logical. 12.b4 \(\text{\textit{d7}}\) 13.b5 \(\text{\textit{b6}}\) 14.bxc6 bxc6 Black now has the weak \(\textit{c6}\) pawn to worry about. 15.\(\text{\textit{d2}}\) \(\text{\textit{a6}}\) 16.\(\text{\textit{e1}}\) \(\text{\textit{c4}}\) 17.\(\text{\textit{c1}}\) The black knight on \(\textit{c4}\) is active, but there is no clear follow-up, while the \(\textit{c6}\) pawn remains a weakness. White had some advantage (Botvinnik gives a huge advantage for White, which is probably over-optimistic) in Botvinnik-Averbakh, training game, Soviet Union 1956;

A2) Another option is to first develop the \(\textit{b8}\) knight. This possibility was chosen by Botvinnik himself playing this position with black. 9...\(\text{\textit{d7}}\) 10.\(\text{\textit{g2}}\) \(\text{\textit{f6}}\) 11.0-0 White will try to combine the queenside pawn push, with the aim to create a pawn weakness for Black on \(\textit{c6}\), with a central push \((\textit{f2-f3,e3-e4})\) in order to try to take advantage of his kingside pawn majority. But Black is well developed, he has a healthy pawn structure and enough counterplay:

A21) 11...\(\text{\textit{d6}}\) 12.\(\text{\textit{c3}}\) \(\textit{c6}\) 13.b4 a6 14.\(\text{\textit{e1}}\) \(\text{\textit{e8}}\) 15.\(\text{\textit{b2}}\) \(\text{\textit{f8}}\) 16.\(\text{\textit{d3}}\) \(\text{\textit{e6}}\) Now White starts playing for the central pawn push. This idea would have been more unpleasant for Black with two extra knights on the board.

14...a5! The start of a standard plan — readers take note! 15.\(\text{\textit{a4}}\) \(\text{\textit{c7}}\) 16.\(\text{\textit{d2}}\) \(\text{\textit{xb4}}\) Normally the position after 16...b5 17.\(\text{\textit{c5}}\) \(\text{\textit{xc5}}\) 18.\(\text{\textit{bxc5}}\) is slightly better for White if he manages to play \(\textit{f2-f3}\), preserving the bishop on \(\textit{d2}\) and keeping possibilities of a central/kingside pawn push. But now Black is in time with 18...\(\text{\textit{e4}}\), after
which the position should be about equal: 19...Qc1 Qg5! 20.h4? (a positional mistake worth remembering) 20...Qe4. Now the knight can no longer be kicked from e4 and Black is better. 17.Qxb4 Qe4 18.Wb3 b5! A typical solution here. Both sides have weak pawns to worry about. 19.Qxb2 Qxb4 20.axb4 Qf5 21.Qd3 Qd2 22.Wc3 Qxd3 23.Wxd2 Qc4 and the game was later drawn in Uhlmann-Unzicker, Moscow 1956.

A3) In the event of 9..a5, stopping White’s immediate queenside pawn advance, White would focus on pushing his central pawns. 10.Qg2 c6 11.0-0 Qd7 12.Wc2 Qf6 13.Qd2 Qe8 14.f3 Qf8 15.Qae1 Wb6 16.Wh1! Always a useful move here. 16...Qc5 Otherwise White pushes e3-e4. 17.Qc1 cxd4 18.Qxd4 Qd7 19.Qfe1 Mac8 20.Qc3 Wa7 21.Wd2 – White has an excellent knight on d4, a perfect bishop on c3, the possibility of a g-pawn push on the kingside. Black does not have any regular counterplay to compensate for his isolated pawn. White was clearly better in Efimov-Komarov, Reggio Emilia 1996/97.

B) 9.Qg3 does not bring White anything after 9...Qe8 10.Qd3 Qd7 11.0-0 (perhaps White should have considered 11.b4) 11...a5 12.Qd2 Qf6 13.Qc1 Qd6 14.f3 b6 (Black prepares to roll his queenside pawns, obtaining good counterplay) 15.We1 c5 16.Wf2 Qa7 17.Qf5 Qf8 18.Wb4 c4 19.Qc2 Qxf5 20.Qxf5 b5 with a good game for Black in Gligoric-Reshevsky, New York 1952. The choice of a square for the knight is connected with two rules that mostly apply in such positions, and which are therefore useful to remember:

C) 9.Qf4

This looks more logical than Qg3, because

i) Black has to spend time on ...c7-c6 in order to develop his knight to d7, and

ii) White keeps the possibility to roll his g-pawn. However, with a pair of knights exchanged this pawn push is less dangerous for Black. Naturally, purely dogmatic rules do not exist in chess, or in any case it would be wrong to take any rule as such, but for the reader it should be useful to note that:

i) White pushing his a- and b-pawns with the ultimate goal to create a weakness on c6 is more powerful without knights on the board because then it is more difficult for Black to create kingside counterplay and also Black cannot put his knight on c4, hampering White’s queenside action, while

ii) White’s kingside pawn push (f2-f3, g2-g4) is more powerful with all four knights on the board because White needs pieces in the attack and also, with more pieces on the board Black may lack manoeuvring space.

9...c6 10.Qd3 Qd7

C1) 11.0-0 a5 12.Qd2 Qf6 13.f3 c5 14.Qe2 Wb6 15.Qc3 cxd4?! Accepting a slightly inferior position for no apparent reason. 15...Qe8, keeping the central tension, looks more logical. 16.Qxd4± ½-½ D. Byrne-Reshevsky, New York 1955;
C2) Another continuation is 11.b4 2f6 12.0-0 a6 13.f3 2e8 14.g4. The presence of two more knights on the board would have improved White’s attacking chances here. 14...2d6 15.2f2? 15.a5 16.b5 c5 17.g2 cxd4 18.exd4 2c7 19.2e2 2e6 White’s pieces lack coordination. 20.2e1 2d7 21.f4?! Square e4 is now surrendered and pawns cannot go back. 21...2f6! 22.f5 2d7 23.2b1 2e4 Black was firmly in control and went on to win in Reshevsky-Balashov, Lone Pine 1980.

- In the event of 8.g3 Black equalizes with 8...2xc3 9.2xc3 c5.

8.2f4

- Immediately taking space on the queenside with 8.b4 is one of the most popular moves here. The idea is to stop ...c7-c5 and then develop the knight to g3. First 2g3 and later b2-b4 would be more desirable, but in the event of 8.2g3 Black plays 8...c5! 9.2e2 (Black has an excellent isolated pawn position after 9.dxc5 2xc5 10.0-0 2c6, as he will quickly execute ...d5-d4) 2c6 10.0-0 cxd4 11.exd4 2e6 with equality in Karpov-R. Byrne, Montilla 1976, which was soon drawn:

A) 8...2f5 Black immediately places his bishop on an active square. The drawback of this move is that the bishop will be vulnerable as White has f4-f5 ideas.

A1) In one of the top games that have been played, Black was fine after 9.f3 2h6 10.2g3 2g6 11.2d3 2d6 12.2f5 2c6 13.2c2. Should Black exchange one of his bishops for the white knight in such positions, then as a general rule it is better to exchange his lightsquared bishop and keep the dark-squared one. 13...2xf5 14.2xf5

14...a5! Creating counterplay – this can be used as one of the standard plans for Black. 15.b5 2e7 16.2h3 2b7 17.g3 c5! 18.bxc6 bxc6 19.0-0 c5 Black is active and has no reason to worry about the creation of an isolated pawn here. 20.dxc5 2xc5 21.2h1 2g5 22.2g2 2c8 and Black had a good game in Aronian-Adams, Wijk aan Zee 2006;

A2) 9.2g3 2g6

A21) 10.2e2 2e8 11.0-0 2d6 12.f4 Black’s g6 bishop will be locked out for quite some time, however White does create some pawn weaknesses in his own camp. 12...2h6 13.f5 2h7 14.2d3 Here we have a position that is difficult to assess and to play. I would personally prefer White, but I could easily be wrong, Milov-Adams, Kemer tt 2007;

A22) An interesting plan for White here is 10.h4!? 2h6 11.f5. He could also
keep a pawn on h4 and immediately exchange the bishops with 11...\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{xd}3\) (Black was perhaps not obliged to take and could play 11...\(\text{bd}7\)). 12.\(\text{wx}d3\) \(\text{e}8\) 13.\(\text{f}5\) \(\text{f}8\) 14.\(\text{g}4\) \(\text{wd}7\) 15.\(\text{f}3\). Now with a pawn still on h4 White threatens g4-g5 immediately.

11...\(\text{h}7\)
12.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{xd}3\) 13.\(\text{wx}d3\)

White's g3 knight comes to f5 on the next move and will be well placed there. I think that white players should investigate this idea more closely.

B) An often-played move here is 8...c6, a standard decision in such positions: 9.\(\text{g}3\) \(\text{e}8\) 10.\(\text{d}3\) and now:

B1) Not enough for equality is 10...a5 11.\(\text{b}5\) c5, after which the following game took a rather original course: 12.0-0 \(\text{g}4\) 13.\(\text{f}3\) \(\text{e}6\) 14.\(\text{f}4\) \(\text{g}4\) 15.\(\text{wd}2\) \(\text{c}8\). One might argue that with all these tempo losses with the black bishop, the position should be clearly advantageous for White. White is indeed better, but Black has a solid position.

16.\(\text{wa}2\) \(\text{cx}d4\) 17.\(\text{ex}d4\) \(\text{wb}6\) 18.\(\text{ge}2\)

Preparing an unusual knight transfer. The alternative was 18.\(\text{e}3\). 18...\(\text{g}4\) Ah, again a bishop move. However, Black has no space to manoeuvre his pieces.

19.\(\text{a}4\) \(\text{wd}6\) 20.\(\text{ec}3\) The push f4-f5, locking out the g4 bishop, looks unpleasant - so...

20...\(\text{c}8\) 21.\(\text{b}6?\) 21.\(\text{f}5!\) followed by \(\text{f}4\) would have given White a clear advantage. 21...\(\text{d}7!\) Of the last 10 moves Black played 7 with his light-squared bishop. But this is a good move. Black will exchange his bishop for White's a4 knight and automatically get more space to manoeuvre his pieces.

22.\(\text{f}5\) \(\text{xa}4!\) 23.\(\text{xa}4\) \(\text{c}6\) 24.\(\text{f}4\) \(\text{wd}7\) 25.\(\text{b}5\) \(\text{e}4\)

How greatly things have changed in just a few moves - the white knight on a4 is misplaced, the pawn on f5 suddenly seems to have advanced too far, square e4 is weak - Black had an excellent game in Aronian-Van Wely, Germany Bundesliga 2004/05.

B2) 10...\(\text{bd}7\) 11.0-0 White will try a combination of plans: the queenside pawn advance and the central push:

B21) With 11...\(\text{b}6\) Black prepares the transfer of his knight to d6, which is a good square. However, Black remains relatively passive and White's chances are to be preferred: 12.\(\text{bb}1\) a6

In case Black opts for one of his standard plans with 12...a5, White will also respond with a standard decision: 13.\(\text{bxa}5\) \(\text{xa}5\) 14.\(\text{b}3\) \(\text{a}8\) 15.a4 \(\text{c}7\) 16.\(\text{a}3\) with a somewhat better game for White. Practice has shown that in this type of position the weakness of Black's b7 pawn is more of a worry than White's weak a4 pawn. 13.a4 \(\text{e}6\)

14.a5 Fixing Black's queenside and preparing a knight transfer to c5 is a standard
Plan for White in this pawn structure – this plan is often seen in the Exchange Variation of the Orthodox Queen’s Gambit. 14...\(\text{c}c8\) 15.\(\text{d}a4\) \(\text{d}d6\) 16.\(\text{c}c5\) \(\text{c}c8\) White has an excellent knight on \(\text{c}5\) and also his three pawns, with the \(\text{c}5\) knight, control Black’s four pawns, so virtually White is a pawn up and he can prepare (with \(\text{f}2-\text{f}3\)) the \(\text{e}6\)-pawn push. White had a long-lasting advantage in Navara-Kramnik, Prague 2008;

B22) In the event of 11...\(\text{b}6\) the bishop on \(\text{b}7\) will be passive – this does not equalize:

B221) One practical example continued 12.\(\text{w}f3\) \(\text{b}b7\) 13.\(\text{f}f5\) \(\text{g}6\)? A terrible mistake. Correct was 13...\(\text{f}f8\) when after 14.\(\text{g}g3\) \(\text{g}6\) White cannot take Black’s bishop pair with 15.\(\text{d}d6\) \(\text{x}d6\) 16.\(\text{w}x\text{d}6\) because now Black has a motif worth remembering, as it often works in these positions: 16...\(\text{e}e5\)! followed by ...\(\text{e}e8\), and White’s queen is trapped. 14.\(\text{h}h6+\) \(\text{g}7\) 15.\(\text{e}4\)! Opening the centre, White brings the \(\text{c}1\) knight into play and continues the attack. 15...\(\text{d}x\text{e}4\) 16.\(\text{d}x\text{e}4\) \(\text{w}c8\) 17.\(\text{c}c4\) \(\text{h}h8\) 18.\(\text{g}g5\) \(\text{d}d5\) 19.\(\text{x}d5\) \(\text{x}d5\) 20.\(\text{e}e1\) \(\text{f}f6\) 21.\(\text{w}h3\) and White had a winning attack (take note of Black’s totally misplaced \(\text{b}7\) and \(\text{w}c8\)) in Milov-Gavrikov, Switzerland 2004;

B222) 12.\(\text{b}b1\) \(\text{b}b7\) 13.\(\text{a}4\) \(\text{a}5\) 14.\(\text{b}xa5\) \(\text{a}xa5\)

15.\(\text{d}d2\) Here we have again a standard position where Black’s \(\text{b}6\) pawn is more of a weakness than White’s \(\text{a}4\) pawn, hence White is a bit better.

B23) In case of 11...\(\text{a}5\) White uses a standard plan to achieve a small advantage: 12.\(\text{b}x\text{a}5\) The position after 12.\(\text{b}5\) \(\text{c}6\) 13.\(\text{a}4\) \(\text{b}6\) 14.\(\text{b}b2\) \(\text{b}b7\) is OK for Black. 12...\(\text{a}xa5\) 13.\(\text{a}4\) followed by \(\text{b}1\), \(\text{d}2\). Black’s \(\text{b}\)- pawn weakness is, as pointed out earlier, more of a worry than White’s \(\text{a}\)- pawn weakness (Karpov was a virtuoso in demonstrating such advantages). Should Black get rid of his weak \(\text{b}\)- pawn with 13...\(\text{b}5\), then White focuses on the weakness on \(\text{c}6\) with 14.\(\text{d}d2\) \(\text{b}xa4\) 15.\(\text{a}xa4\);

B24) A logical plan for Black here, which I would recommend to try, is 11...\(\text{f}f8\). The knight travels to \(\text{e}6\), attacking the \(\text{d}4\)-square and making it difficult for White to push his pawns in the centre. 12.\(\text{f}3\) \(\text{a}5\) 13.\(\text{b}1\) 13.\(\text{b}xa5\) was another (often recommended) option, which here has the slight drawback than White’s \(\text{p}3\) pawn is on \(\text{f}3\), so in some lines the \(\text{e}3\)-square could become vulnerable. 13...\(\text{e}e6\) 14.\(\text{c}e2\) \(\text{f}8\) 15.\(\text{h}1\) \(\text{a}xb4\) 16.\(\text{a}xb4\) \(\text{g}6\) Black has a good, harmonious, flexible position. Now White executes his plan: 17.\(\text{e}4\)

17...\(\text{d}xe4?!\) Black could have obtained excellent play with 17...\(\text{h}5!\) 18.\(\text{e}5\) \(\text{h}4\)
Chapter 2.2: The Retreat to e7 − 5. \( \text{d}e2 \) d5 6. a3 \( \text{d}e7 \\

19. exf6 \( \text{w}xf6 \) 20. \( \text{d}e4 \) dxe4 21. fxe4 \( \text{w}d8 \) and now Black is better after 22. d5 cxd5 23. exd5 \( \text{g}5 \) 24. \( \text{d}f4 \) h3. 18. fxe4 \( \text{g}7 \) 19. \( \text{c}4 \)! The bishop is well placed on c4, White's mobile pawn centre is strong and difficult to target. White was better in Milov-Renet, Switzerland tt 2006; B25) 11. \( \text{d}6 \) is one of the logical continuations: 12. f3 Black is fine in the case of 12. b5 c5 13. a4 b6 14. \( \text{a}3 \) \( \text{b}7 \) 15. a5 bxa5 16. \( \text{f}5 \) \( \text{f}8 \) as in Salov-Timman, Sanghi Nagar 1994. 12... a5 13. \( \text{b}1 \) axb4 14. axb4 \( \text{b}6 \) 15. \( \text{c}e2 \) \( \text{f}8 \) 16. \( \text{h}1 \)

and here in Milov-almawi, Corsica 2005, Black could have obtained excellent play with 16... h5!. As mentioned above in Milov-Renet, this is a standard plan which often works for Black in such positions. White's knight on g3 is well placed and it is annoying for him when this knight gets disturbed. 17. e4 \( \text{x}g3 \)! 17... h4 18. e5. 18. \( \text{x}g3 \) h4 19. e5 hxe3 20. fxe6 \( \text{d}8 \)! 21. \( \text{f}4 \) 21. fxg7?? is a horrible blunder due to 21... \( \text{w}h4 \) 22. gxf8 \( \text{w}+ \) \( \text{xf}8 \) 23. h3 \( \text{e}xh3 \) and White is mated. 21... \( \text{w}xf6 \) 22. \( \text{x}g3 \) \( \text{f}5 \).

C) Flexible development with 8... \( \text{bd}7 \) and \( \text{e}8 \), keeping all options, is relatively little tried here, but it is definitely a viable option for Black.

- One of the main moves, and formerly the main line here, is 8. g3. White fianchettoes his bishop and then has a combination of plans:
  i) pushing the centre with f2-f3 and e3-e4;
  ii) pushing the kingside pawns with f2-f3 and g2-g4;
  iii) keeping the kingside intact and opting for a queenside pawn advance with b2-b4;

iii) most of the time we see a combination of the abovementioned plans. In the 8.g3 line in general, there are very few forced lines. We simply have a tough strategic battle ahead and a player mastering initiative, space, and central tensions is likely to prevail. I personally think that in the 8.g3 line, Black has a good game and actually the tables can turn easily:

A) Black normally aims for flexible development with 8... c6. With the text he is ready for a knight transfer to c7. 9. \( \text{g}2 \) a6 10. \( \text{d}2 \) Or 10.0-0 \( \text{c}7 \) 11. f3 c5 with approximate equality in Gyimesi-Epishin, Parnu 1996. 10... \( \text{c}7 \) 11. \( \text{c}2 \) g6

12. f3 \( \text{e}6 \) Black is also doing fine after 12... c5 13. dxc5 \( \text{xc}5 \) 14. \( \text{b}5 \) \( \text{e}6 \) 15. b4 \( \text{b}6 \) 16. \( \text{b}2 \) \( \text{d}7 \) 17. \( \text{bd}4 \) \( \text{c}8 \) 13. \( \text{a}4 \) White is temporarily stopping ... c6-c5, trying to combine
different plans. 13...\textit{g}e8 14.0-0 a5
15.\textit{g}h1 b5 Black's standard counterplay works excellently here. 16.\textit{d}c3
\textit{g}a6 17.\textit{f}e1

17...c5 18.\textit{d}xc5 \textit{xc}5 White has to be careful to keep the balance. 19.b4 \textit{axb}4
20.\textit{xb}4 \textit{xb}4 21.\textit{e}eb1 \textit{xc}5 22.\textit{xb}5
\textit{xb}5 23.\textit{a}xa8 \textit{xa}8 24.\textit{xb}5 \textit{a}7 with approximate equality in Karpov-
Piket, Monaco blind 1999. What I personally dislike about the 8.g3 line from
the white side is the fact that the \textit{g}2 is very passive for quite some time.
Black also has a number of other natural ways at his disposal to develop his
pieces:

B) 8...\textit{bd}7 is often played here: 9.\textit{g}2 \textit{b}6 10.0-0 \textit{e}8 In case of
10...a5 White often responds with 11.a4, leaving a hole on b4, however he will play b2-b3 and limit the black
b6 knight: 11...\textit{e}8 12.f3 c5 (standard counterplay) 13.g4 (a standard
kingside advance) 13...h6 14.b3 \textit{d}7 15.\textit{d}xc5 \textit{xc}5 16.\textit{wd}3 \textit{c}8 17.\textit{d}2
\textit{c}6 (Black's knight was doing nothing on b6 and had to be improved. This prepares a transfer to a better
square) 18.\textit{d}d4 \textit{bd}7 with a complex game in Spassky-Gurgenidze, Moscow
ch-URS 1957. 11.\textit{f}4 \textit{f}8 12.\textit{h}1 Starting with the immediate 12.a4 was probably more to the point. 12...\textit{f}5

13.a4 Again White is not worried about the hole on b4. 13...a5 14.f3 h6
15.\textit{d}3 \textit{c}4 16.\textit{e}1 c6 17.b3 \textit{d}6
18.\textit{a}3 The exchange of a dark-squared bishop is strategically good for White here. 18...\textit{h}7
19.\textit{wd}2 \textit{c}7 and White had a slight advantage in Szabo-Smyslov, Amsterdam Candidates 1956;

C) Very similar to 8...c6 is 8.a5
9.\textit{g}2 c6 (Black prepares a knight transfer to c7) 10.0-0 \textit{a}6 11.b3 \textit{e}8
12.\textit{h}1 \textit{f}8 13.\textit{f}4 \textit{f}5 14.f3 h6
15.\textit{a}2 b5! (this queenside pawn advance is a good standard counterplan in
this line. 16.\textit{ce}2 \textit{h}7 17.g4 \textit{e}7 18.\textit{g}3 \textit{d}6 19.\textit{d}3 c5 and Black had
demonstrated a model counterplan in Sasikiran-Landa, Moscow 2006;

D) Always a useful move for Black is 8...\textit{e}8.

This rook development fits almost any of Black's plans: 9.\textit{g}2 and now:

D1) 9...c6 10.0-0 \textit{bd}7 10...a5, with the idea ...\textit{a}6-\textit{c}7, or the plan with ...
\textit{a}6, ...b5 was possible. 11.b4 This move allows the black knight on c4. I
would personally prefer keeping the possibility of b2-b3 for White in order
to limit the black knight. 11...\textit{b}6
12.f3 a5 13.\textit{b}1 \textit{c}4 The knight is well
placed on c4, Black had a good game in M. Gurevich-Delchev, Metz 2002;
Chapter 2.2: The Retreat to e7 - 5...d5 6.a3 e7

D2) 9...f8 10.0-0 c6 11.f4 f5
Black opts to develop his bishop on the b1-h7 diagonal. This is often seen here. 12.f3 h6 13.e1 In case of the immediate 13.g4 h7 14.h4 Black plays 14...d7 15.w1 e7. 13...d7 14.g4 h7 15.h4 d6 16.g5 White's play is very direct, however Black has harmonious development and is ready to start counterplay.
16...d7 17.e4 dxe4 18.fxe4 c5! 19.d5 h5 20.hxg5 w5! 21.e6 w6 22.d7 d6 23.xa8 xa8 24.e2 e8 Due to her good control of the dark squares in the centre, Black had excellent compensation for the exchange in Grachev-T. Kosintseva, Biel 2009.

A relatively new line, which has not often been played but looks like an attempted improvement on 8.g3 is 8.h3?

White prepares g2-g4, after which he will fianchetto his bishop to g2, while his kingside pawn advance will be faster, and also Black does not have the developing possibility f5.

A) 8...d7 9.g4 b6 10.g2 c6 11.b3 This position looks like a favourable version of the 8.g3 line for White. 11...e8 12.0-0 c7 13.a2 e8

14.f3 White is not likely to carry through e3-e4, as square e3 is now weakened. The game is now steered into a version of 8.g3 with White arguably having an extra tempo with his pawn on h3 instead on h2, which is, if anything, definitely not a big deal. So the merits of 14.f3 are questionable. 14.f4, preventing the counterplay with ...c6-c5, is an option to investigate more closely. 14...c5 Black's standard counterplay. 15.dxc5 xc5 16.d4 d7 17.a4 a5 This pawn structure is often seen in the 8.g3 line. 18.e2 d6 19.f4 b4 20.e2 c8 On b6 the knight was limited with White's pawn on b3, so, as often seen in the 8.g3 line, Black improves his knight. There was a complicated battle ahead in Predojevic-Bruzon Bautista, Khanty-Mansiysk 2010;

B) A principled decision for Black is to start central counterplay with 8...c5. However, White seems to be better after 9.dxc5 xc5 10.g4 c6 11.g2 e6 11...d4? was just a pawn up for White after 12.a4 e7 13.exd4 e6 14.ac3 ed5 15.0-0 Ivanisevic-Urkedal, Tromso 2010. 12.g5 h5 Black does not have enough for the pawn after 12...e4 13.xe4 dx4 14.wxd8 xd8 15.xe4. 13.h4;

8...c6 9.d3

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Part II: 4...0-0 Minor Lines

We have again a strategic battle, which is regularly seen with this pawn structure. White will castle and then try to execute one of the regular plans:

A) pushing pawns in the centre with f2-f3, e3-e4;
B) pushing pawns on the kingside with f2-f3, g2-g4;
C) pushing pawns on the queenside with b2-b4, Bb1, and a3-a4;
D) combining several of these plans.

Black keeps his pieces harmonious and flexible, ready to respond.

9...\(\text{\texttt{\textd6}}\)

Placing the dark-squared bishop on the h2-b8 diagonal is one of the regular plans for Black here.

- Developing his kingside rook and then transferring the b8 knight to e6 is also a logical plan: 9...\(\text{\texttt{\texte8}}\) 10.0-0 \(\text{\texttt{\textd7}}\) 11.f3 \(\text{\texttt{\textf8}}\) 12.b4 \(\text{\texttt{\texte6}}\)

13.\(\text{\texttt{\textf6}}\) As mentioned earlier, due to the fact that White has more space it is often useful for him to keep all four knights on the board here. 13...\(\text{\texttt{\textb6}}\) The immediate 13...a5 deserved attention. 14.\(\text{\texttt{\textb1}}\) a5 15.\(\text{\texttt{\textxa5}}\) A regular strategic decision in these pawn structures, already shown in similar positions in this line. White considers that Black’s b6 pawn will be more of a weakness than White’s a4 pawn. White also has the black c6 pawn to target. This strategic plan we also often see in some lines in the Tartakower/Bondarevsky Variations of the Orthodox Queen’s Gambit. In general it would have been better for White to have his f3 pawn back on f2 now, in which case e3 would have been better defended. 15...\(\text{\texttt{\textxa5}}\) 16.a4 \(\text{\texttt{\textd6}}\)

17.\(\text{\texttt{\texth1}}\) c5 This solves the potential weakness on c6, but leaves Black with an isolated pawn – a frequently seen transformation of the pawn structure here. 18.\(\text{\texttt{\texte5}}\) 19.\(\text{\texttt{\textxc5}}\) \(\text{\texttt{\textxc5}}\) 20.\(\text{\texttt{\textd4}}\) \(\text{\texttt{\textb7}}\) In the event of 20...\(\text{\texttt{\textxd4}}\) 21.exd4 Black would have got rid of his isolated pawn weakness, but then, in a transformed symmetrical centre White would have the upper hand due to:

  i) his bishop pair;
  ii) the weakness of Black’s b6 pawn;
  iii) the predominance of White’s light-squared bishop above its black colleague – and it is not easy for Black to conveniently exchange these bishops.

21.\(\text{\texttt{\textce2}}\) \(\text{\texttt{\texta8}}\) 22.\(\text{\texttt{\texte3}}\) \(\text{\texttt{\textc7}}\) 23.\(\text{\texttt{\textb2}}\)

Black does not have adequate piece play to compensate for the weakness of his isolated pawn. White was better in I. Sokolov-Nikcevic, Sarajevo 2010.

- Stopping White’s queenside pawn advance and transferring the b8 knight to c7 is a frequently seen plan here – we did follow the same plan, amongst others, in the 8.g3 line: 9...a5 10.0-0 \(\text{\texttt{\texta6}}\) Looking for immediate central counterplay with 10...\(\text{\texttt{\texte8}}\) 11.\(\text{\texttt{\textf3}}\) c5?? simply blunders a pawn after 12.\(\text{\texttt{\textxc5}}\) \(\text{\texttt{\textxc5}}\) 13.\(\text{\texttt{\textfxd5}}\). This actually happened in Ponomariov-Bacrot, Villarrobledo 2009. 11.\(\text{\texttt{\textf3}}\) \(\text{\texttt{\textxc7}}\).

There was an interesting high-profile game played more than 50 years ago in this line, which excellently shows the strategic problems and the pros and cons of this position:
**A)** 12.\textit{We1} White plays for a kingside attack. 12...c5 13.\textit{Wf2} \textit{De6} 14.\textit{De2} White is preparing a kingside pawn push, so he would like to keep all four knights on the board. 14...\textit{Dd7} 15.\textit{Dg4} \textit{Wb6} 16.\textit{h4} \textit{Cc6} 17.\textit{g5} \textit{De8}

Here we have one of the typical situations in this line. White has executed his kingside pawn push, taken space on the kingside, but... now what? A direct attack on the black king is not in sight, while Black does have counterplay, and should the kingside be opened with, for example, ...f7-f6, then the white king may find himself under attack.

18.\textit{Dd1} Preparing 19.\textit{Dxc5} \textit{Dxc5} 20.b4. 18...\textit{a4} 19.\textit{Cc2} \textit{Wd7} Removing the black queen from a tempo in case the b-file opens. 20.\textit{Dd1} \textit{Dd6} 20...\textit{Dd8} was probably a better move. 21.\textit{e4!} Sensing the right moment to open the centre. 21...\textit{cxd4} 22.\textit{Dxd5} \textit{Dd8} and now:

A1) 23.\textit{Dg2} Removing the king from a different kind of tactic along the a7-g1 diagonal is a logical move. 23...\textit{Dc8} 24.\textit{Dd3} f5! As expected, Black opens up the f-file. 25.\textit{Dxf6} \textit{Dxf6} with a sharp game, eventually ending in a draw, in Polugaevsky-Tal, Riga ch-URS 1958;

A2) Concrete calculation, however, supports 23.\textit{Dxd4} \textit{Dxd5} 24.\textit{Exd5}.

24.\textit{Dxe6}? is bad due to 24...\textit{Db6} 25.\textit{Dd4} \textit{De6} and the pin along the a7-g1 diagonal is terrible for White. 24...\textit{Dxd4} 25.\textit{Df3} \textit{Dxf3}+ 26.\textit{Dg2}! It is important for White to keep the dark-squared bishops on the board here. 26...\textit{Wa5} 27.\textit{Wxh4} f5 28.\textit{Df4} \textit{Cc7} 29.\textit{Dc1} and White is probably a bit better.

B) An alternative to be considered was 12.\textit{Dh1} \textit{De6} 13.\textit{Dc2}. The transaction 12...c5 13.\textit{Dxc5} \textit{Dxc5} 14.e4 is one of the standard plans for White, worth remembering. White voluntarily allows Black to exchange his isolated pawn, however in the resulting position White's light-squared bishop will be excellently placed on e4: 14...\textit{dxe4} 15.\textit{Dxe4} \textit{Dxe4} 16.\textit{Dxe4} and White is almost invariably slightly better in such positions.

10.0-0 \textit{De8} 11.\textit{f3}

**11...b6**

* To me this plan always looked a bit passive; however, proving an advantage for White is far from easy. Also logical is to exert pressure along the b8-h2 diagonal by 11...\textit{Dc7}.

A) But White gets an advantage after 12.\textit{Dd2}!, preparing the immediate e3-e4 push. 12...\textit{Db7} Taking a pawn with 12...g5?! 13.\textit{Df4} \textit{Dxh2}+
14. \textit{f1h1}, followed by e3-e4, Black weakens his own king terribly and White gets a tremendous initiative for only one little pawn. 13. e4 and now:

A1) If 13... \textit{w6} White can choose between 14. \textit{w6} \textit{f2} or 14. \textit{f2} e4 15. \textit{f2} e4


A3) 13... \textit{xf4} 14. \textit{wxf4} \textit{w6} and here White has a pleasant choice between sacrificing a pawn with 15. \textit{e3} \textit{xb2} 16. \textit{f1c1} with excellent compensation, or transforming the central pawn structure into a central pawn symmetry where he has the upper hand with 15. \textit{exd5} \textit{cxd5} 16. \textit{cxd5} \textit{cxd5} 17. a4! \textit{f8} 18. a5;

B) Other plans White has at his disposal are 12. \textit{h3} \textit{bd7} 13. \textit{f2} e4, planning the e3-e4 push; or a kingside pawn advance with 13. \textit{g4}?!?, or again a preparation of the e3-e4 push with 13. \textit{d2}?!?

- If Black decide to create doubled f-pawns for White with 11... \textit{xf4} 12. \textit{exf4}, these positions are almost invariably slightly better for White. He has more space and his kingside pawns are controlling a lot of squares, while it is difficult for Black to make practical use of his 4 vs 3 queenside pawn majority. One good illustration is: 12. \textit{xf4} b6 A good strategic decision. It is good for Black to exchange the light-squared bishops here. 13. \textit{f5} \textit{a6} 14. \textit{wxa6} \textit{xa6} 15. \textit{w4} \textit{b8} 16. \textit{f4} b5 17. \textit{d1} \textit{c2} was also possible. 17... \textit{b7} 18. \textit{g4} \textit{h6} 19. \textit{h1} It is not easy for Black to find active counterplay here. 19... \textit{b6} 20. \textit{a6} Perhaps more precise was 20. \textit{g2}. 20...c5 Looking for active central counterplay, but this may cost Black a pawn. 21. \textit{xc5} \textit{xc5} 22. \textit{d2} \textit{f6} 23. \textit{f1c1}:

A) 23... \textit{c4} loses a pawn to 24. \textit{exd5} \textit{cxd5} 25. \textit{d5} \textit{g1}+ (or 25. \textit{f1} 26. \textit{xb5} \textit{c2} 27. \textit{f1}) 26. \textit{xc1} \textit{xd5} 27. \textit{d2} and now, due to fact that the rook on a8 is undefended, 27... \textit{xc2}?? is a terrible blunder due to 28. \textit{xb2} \textit{xf3}+ 29. \textit{g2};


24... \textit{c4} 25. \textit{d5} \textit{d5} 26. \textit{d5} \textit{g1}+ 27. \textit{xc1} \textit{d5} 28. \textit{e2}.

12. b4

Preventing a bishop swap on a6.

12... \textit{b7}

White is slightly better in the case of 12... \textit{a6} 13. b5 \textit{cxb5} 14. \textit{xb5} \textit{xf4} 15. \textit{exf4} (again we have a position where White’s double f-pawns are actually fine) 15... \textit{d7} 16. \textit{a4} (it is a
good idea for White to send the black bishop to the passive b7-square) 16...b7 17.d2 c6 18.c3 a6 19.e2.

13.a1

13.f2 a5 14.a1 transposes to the game.

13...a5

The critical moment.

14.f2

- White prepares the standard push e3-e4. An improvement on the game could be 14.c2! axb4 15.axb4. White’s idea is c2, followed by e3-e4. 15...bd7 Taking a pawn with 15...c7 16.c2 g5? 17.h3 xh2+ 18.h1 is not to be advised for Black. 16.c2

A) 16...e7 17.g3 g6 18.e4

Black now has to sacrifice a piece for three pawns: 18.xb4 19.e5 xe5 20.xe5 c5+ 21.h1 xe5 The assessment of this position is related to White’s ability to create a kingside attack. Should White be better here, then 14.c2 is an improvement on the game;

B) Another option is 16.xf8 and after the relatively forced sequence 17.e4 dxe4 18.fxe4 f4 19.xf4 a6

20.e5 xd4 21.xd4 xd4+ 22.h1

B1) 22...h5? is a mistake due to 23.bd1 xb4 24.xh7+ f8 (or 24...h8 25.f5) 25.g5 xe5 26.xf7+! (26.g6 also wins) 26...xf7 27.g6+ f8 28.f1+ f4 29.xf4, which is winning for White;

B2) 22...d5 23.xh7+ h8 24.d2 Black’s king is open, White has the bishop pair; White should be better.

- The often-seen positional transaction 14.bxa5 xa5 15.a4 a6, generally favourable for White, does not quite work here. Black conveniently exchanges the light-squared bishops, after which White’s e3 pawn is a weakness.

14...xb4 15.axb4 a6 16.a2

- My original idea was 16.e4.
A) However, after 16...\texttt{axb4} 17.e5 \texttt{AXBd} 18.\texttt{wxzd} \texttt{a6} 19.\texttt{cd2} \texttt{xe5} 20.\texttt{dxe5 Axe5} I realized that the resulting position is actually very good for Black. After the similar piece sacrifice given in the line with 14.\texttt{ce2} White had more pieces on the board and much better chances to create a kingside attack;

B) In the game I thought that 16...\texttt{dxex4} 17.fxe4 \texttt{xb4} 18.\texttt{Ac4} (18.\texttt{g5}?! \texttt{xd3} 19.\texttt{xf6} gxf6 20.\texttt{xd3} \texttt{a3}) was very good for White. However, Black has 18...\texttt{Axe4}! 19.\texttt{xf7}+ (19.\texttt{xf7}? fails to 19...\texttt{Aa6}! 20.\texttt{d7}+ \texttt{xc4} 21.\texttt{xd8} \texttt{axd8})

19...\texttt{b8} 20.\texttt{exe8} \texttt{exe8} with good compensation for the exchange, e.g. 21.\texttt{exe4} \texttt{exe4} 22.\texttt{f4} c5 23.\texttt{f3} \texttt{e6} 24.\texttt{g3c4};

- 16.\texttt{b5}\texttt{b4} is fine for Black.

16...\texttt{wc7} 17.h3

17...\texttt{c5}

Black’s standard decision here.

18.bxc5 bxc5 19.\texttt{Ac3} \texttt{c6} 20.dxc5 \texttt{xc5} 21.\texttt{b5} \texttt{e6}

This position is about equal, and the game was later drawn in I. Sokolov-Vitiugov, Poikovsky 2010.

\textbf{Conclusion}

This is one of the oldest lines of the 4.e3 Nimzo, with a great many games played. As we have seen, there are many different possibilities for both sides, so a line given as 'the main line' does not have to be 'main' at all. I advise the reader to study the material, trying to understand the general plans and the strategic motifs/rules, and then apply the lines he feels the most comfortable with.
Chapter 2.3

The Baguio Variation – 5.♘d3 c5 6.d5

Black players willing to avoid 4.e3 c5 5.♗e2 lines, while also not being happy with 4.e3 0-0 5.♗d3 d5 6.cxd5, often choose this move order. The drawback of this black move order is that, next to 6.♗f3 or 6.a3 transposing to the main lines, White has an independent opportunity in 6.d5!?

Now the character of the game changes and we get positions totally atypical for the Nimzo-Indian. We actually get positions resembling the Benoni or the Blumenfeld Gambit with the difference that the black bishop is (strangely) on b4 instead of g7 (as in the Benoni) or d6/e7 (as in the Blumenfeld). This white attempt to opt for an independent route and change the character of the game from the very beginning was introduced on top level by Kortchnoi (it is typical for Kortchnoi’s style) in his World Championship match against Karpov in Baguio City in 1978. Though the variation is sharp and interesting, it has not found many followers and we still have relatively few grandmaster games here. In principle Black has two ways to react:

A) To opt for a Blumenfeld Gambit-type position, which is our main line and also Karpov’s choice in the abovementioned World Championship match with Kortchnoi;

B) Or to opt for Benoni-type play – with the difference that the black bishop is on b4; later it is often transferred to b6. This line often resembles the Snake Benoni.

The position is complicated and for both sides there is a lot to explore. I personally have a feeling that both the Benoni- and Blumenfeld-type positions are perfectly playable for Black. However, we still have very few games in this line, the position is complicated and the chosen approach is largely dependent on personal preference.
6...b5
The Blumenfeld Gambit idea.
- Benoni-type play can be reached by 6...exd5 7.cxd5 and now:
  A) Black players have (so far) not often ventured into 7...Qxd5 8.Qxh7+ Qxh7 9.Qxd5, for unclear reasons.

Black's kingside is weakened, however it is difficult for White to take advantage of this. Also, White misses his central pawns. In the practical examples that have been played so far Black was doing fine. The position is unbalanced and the tables can easily turn here: 9...Qc6 10.Qf3 Most of the time this position was reached via a different move order. Black has to retreat his king to g8 and also has to play ...d7-d6 in order to develop his c8 bishop. These two moves are universal here. With his Q on b4 Black has to decide as to when to take on c3 (as most of the time he does) and this timing can sometimes be important. It is OK to take on c3 early, though delaying it sometimes gives Black the option to jump to d4 with his knight:
  A1) After 10...d6, for White ideas to keep his king in the centre or castle queenside do not appear to be working, for example:
    A11) 11.e4 Qg8 12.Qh5 Qxc3+ 13.bxc3 Qe7 14.Qg5 Qf5;
    A12) 11.Qd2 Qg8 12.0-0-0 Qe6 13.Qh5 f6;
    A13) 11.Qg5+ Qg8 12.Qd2 Qf6 13.h4 Qe6 14.Qd3 Qf5! 15.e4 15.Qxf5 Qxf5 followed by ...f7-f6.

A14) 11.0-0 Qxc3 12.Qxc3 Qg8 13.e4

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went on to win in Gligoric-Larsen, Niksic 1983;

A14(2) The 'more logical' 13...\( \mathcal{Q}e6 \) is also playable, though White now gets attacking prospects on the kingside:

14.Wh5 f6 15.\( \mathcal{Q}f4 \) \( \mathcal{Q}e5 \) 16.\( \mathcal{Q}xe5 \) dxe5 17.\( \mathcal{Q}h4 \)

A14(21) 17...\( \mathcal{Q}f7 \) 18.Wg4 \( \mathcal{W}c7 \)
19.\( \mathcal{Q}f5 \) \( \mathcal{Q}c4 \) 20.Wf1 \( \mathcal{W}e8 \) 21.\( \mathcal{Q}e3 \) \( \mathcal{Q}e6 \)
22.h4! White should try to keep all four rooks on the board. 22.\( \mathcal{Q}d1 \) led to equality after 22...\( \mathcal{Q}ad8 \) 23.\( \mathcal{W}d3 \) \( \mathcal{Q}xd3 \)
24.\( \mathcal{Q}xd3 \) c4 25.Wg6 \( \mathcal{B}b8 \) 26.\( \mathcal{Q}d1 \) b5
27.h4 b4 28.cxb4 c3 and in Antoshin-Spassky, Leningrad 1957, Black's queenside counterplay soon forced White to give perpetual check on the kingside. 22...\( \mathcal{Q}ad8 \) 23.h5 and White has a risk-free kingside initiative here;

A14(22) In the event of 17...\( \mathcal{W}d3 \) 18.\( \mathcal{Q}ae1! \) the silicon brain easily defends the black position, though I would not be surprised if White's attack can be improved:

A14(221) 18...\( \mathcal{Q}c4?! \) was tried in practice and is not good after 19.\( \mathcal{Q}g6! \) (19.\( \mathcal{Q}f5 \) \( \mathcal{W}f7 \) 20.h4 \( \mathcal{W}d2 \) was played in Knaak-Adamski, Halle 1981) 19.\( \mathcal{W}fd8 \)
(19...\( \mathcal{W}e8? \) loses immediately to 20.\( \mathcal{Q}d1 \) \( \mathcal{W}e2 \) 21.Wh8+ \( \mathcal{Q}f7 \) 22.\( \mathcal{Q}d7+ \) \( \mathcal{Q}e6 \) 23.\( \mathcal{W}h3+! \) 20.\( \mathcal{Q}e7+ \) \( \mathcal{Q}f8 \) 21.\( \mathcal{Q}f5 \) \( \mathcal{Q}g8 \) 22.f4 and White should win in the attack here;

A14(222) 18.\( \mathcal{W}xc3 \) A typical computer move, not fearing anything on the kingside. 19.\( \mathcal{Q}e3 \) \( \mathcal{W}d2 \) White seems to have many different draws, but not more. 20.\( \mathcal{Q}d1 \) Or 20.\( \mathcal{Q}g3 \) \( \mathcal{Q}f7! \)
21.\( \mathcal{W}xg7+ \) \( \mathcal{Q}xg7 \) 22.\( \mathcal{Q}f5+ \) \( \mathcal{Q}g8 \) 23.\( \mathcal{Q}e7+ \) \( \mathcal{Q}g7 \) with perpetual check.

20.\( \mathcal{W}xa2 \) 21.\( \mathcal{Q}g6 \) \( \mathcal{W}d8 \) 22.Wh8+ \( \mathcal{Q}f7 \)
23.\( \mathcal{Q}xe5+ \) \( \mathcal{Q}xe5 \) 24.\( \mathcal{W}f3+ \) \( \mathcal{Q}e7 \) Or 24...\( \mathcal{Q}f5 \) 25.\( \mathcal{W}xf5+ \) \( \mathcal{Q}e6 \) 26.\( \mathcal{Q}xe5+ \)
\( \mathcal{Q}xe5 \) 27.Wh7+ \( \mathcal{Q}e6 \) 28.Wg6+ \( \mathcal{Q}e7 \)

29.Wg5+ with a perpetual. 25.Wxg7+ \( \mathcal{Q}f7 \) 26.Wf6+ \( \mathcal{Q}e8 \) with a perpetual.

A2) Black can also opt for 10...\( \mathcal{Q}g8 \)
11.0-0 Rushing things with 11.Wh5?!
plays into Black's hands: 11...d5
12.\( \mathcal{Q}g5? \) \( \mathcal{Q}f5 \) and Black is better.

A21) 11...d6 12.e4 \( \mathcal{Q}g4 \) 13.\( \mathcal{Q}g5: \)
A211) 13.\( \mathcal{Q}xc3 \) 14.bxc3 \( \mathcal{W}e7 \) transposes to Gligoric-Larsen;

A212) Moves like 13...\( \mathcal{W}f6 \) are not good for Black here, since he should play for ...f7-f6, hitting White's well-placed knight on g5. 14.\( \mathcal{W}d3! \) 14.h3 \( \mathcal{Q}e6 \) 15.\( \mathcal{W}xd6? \) blunders an exchange after 15...\( \mathcal{Q}c4 \). 14.\( \mathcal{Q}e5 \) 15.\( \mathcal{Q}g3 \) White has improved his queen, while his knight on g5 remains well placed;

A213) 13...\( \mathcal{Q}d4 \) leads to complicated play where Black is not worse, White's \( \mathcal{W}d5 \) is vulnerable and it will take him a few tempi to place it on a better square.

A22) Should Black change his development concept and opt for 11...\( \mathcal{Q}e7 \)
12.\( \mathcal{W}h5 \) d5, then White gets some advantage after 13.e4! \( \mathcal{Q}xe4 \) (13...\( \mathcal{Q}xc3?? \) is a horrible blunder due to 14.\( \mathcal{Q}g5 \))
14.\( \mathcal{Q}d1 \) \( \mathcal{W}b6 \) 15.\( \mathcal{Q}xe4 \) \( \mathcal{Q}f5 \) 16.\( \mathcal{Q}d6 \)
\( \mathcal{Q}g6 \) 16...\( \mathcal{Q}c2 \) 17.\( \mathcal{Q}f4! \) \( \mathcal{Q}xd1? \) fails to 18.\( \mathcal{Q}xd1 \) f6 19.\( \mathcal{W}g4 \) and White gets a winning attack — note that Black's bishop on b4 is totally out of play here.

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Part II: 4...0-0 Minor Lines

A3) The immediate capture on c3 is perfectly playable: 10...\( \mathcal{Q}\)xc3+ 11.bxc3 d6 12.e4 \( \mathcal{Q}\)g8 13.\( \mathcal{Q}\)g5 and now:

A31) 13...\( \mathcal{Q}\)e7 is better for White since his e-pawn will be exchanged for Black's f-pawn and hence Black's kingside will become more vulnerable. 14.\( \mathcal{W}\)d3 f6 15.\( \mathcal{Q}\)f4 d5 16.0-0 b6 17.\( \mathcal{W}\)ad1 \( \mathcal{Q}\)b7 18.e5 \( \mathcal{W}\)d7 19.exf6 gxf6 19.\( \mathcal{W}\)xf6 20.\( \mathcal{Q}\)fe1 \( \mathcal{W}\)f7 21.\( \mathcal{Q}\)h4 and due to Black's kingside weaknesses, White had the advantage in Stohl-Polak, Olomouc 1997;

A32) 13.\( \mathcal{W}\)a5 14.0-0 \( \mathcal{Q}\)g4 15.\( \mathcal{Q}\)f1 \( \mathcal{Q}\)ae8 is at least fine for Black. 16.\( \mathcal{Q}\)e1 \( \mathcal{W}\)c7.

B) 7...h6 8.\( \mathcal{Q}\)c2 and now:

B1) 8...d6 is probably the most natural move here: 9.\( \mathcal{Q}\)e2 a6 In the event of an immediate 9...b5 White is better after 10.a4, since 10...\( \mathcal{Q}\)b7?! does not work due to 11.a5 \( \mathcal{Q}\)xd5 12.0-0 \( \mathcal{Q}\)b7 13.e4. Black has problems to finish development here, his bishop on b4 is totally misplaced while 'active' actions like 13...d5? only make matters worse for Black after the simple 14.e5 \( \mathcal{Q}\)e4 15.f3. 10.a3

White is following a regular Benoni plan, however with Black's bishop now on b4, which will soon be transferred to b6, we will get a position very similar to Snake Benoni lines where Black transfers his bishop to b6 via ...\( \mathcal{Q}\)d6-c7-b6. In this complicated position Black has a good game.

I would suggest a different plan for White here: to try to take advantage of the fact that we are playing a Benoni pawn structure while Black's bishop is still on b4. It is not a great piece here, and there is no real point in forcing it to the better square b6, therefore: 10.0-0 \( \mathcal{Q}\)bd7 11.b3 (on b2 the white bishop will be a monster) 11...b5 12.\( \mathcal{Q}\)b2 \( \mathcal{W}\)e8 13.\( \mathcal{Q}\)g3 and White's bishops are very well placed, anticipating a further kingside attack, which cannot be said for their disharmonious black colleagues on b4 and c8. 10...\( \mathcal{Q}\)a5 11.\( \mathcal{B}\)b1 b5 11...c4 is also possible and would have forced a different pawn structure. 12.b4 \( \mathcal{B}\)b6 13.0-0 \( \mathcal{Q}\)bd7 14.\( \mathcal{Q}\)g3 \( \mathcal{C}\)xb4 The immediate 14...\( \mathcal{Q}\)e5, keeping options open, was more flexible, since Black has no reason to fear 15.bxc5 due to 15...\( \mathcal{Q}\)xc5 and Black's pieces are excellently coordinated. His dynamic play at least counterbalances the power of White's central pawns. 15.\( \mathcal{A}\)xb4 \( \mathcal{Q}\)e5 with a good game for Black in Milov-Psakhis, Torshavn 2000.

B2) To try to play actively and do without 8...d6 does not solve Black's problems: 8...b5 9.\( \mathcal{Q}\)e2 \( \mathcal{W}\)e8

B2 1) 10.f3 c4 Otherwise White builds up a strong centre with e3-e4
Chapter 2.3: The Baguio Variation – 5. \( \text{d}3 \) c5 6. \( \text{d}5 \\
and castling, with an advantage. 11.0-0 \( \text{c}5 \) 12.\( \text{xb}5 \) \( \text{W} \text{b}6 \) 13.\( \text{ec}3 \) \( \text{xe}3+ \) 14.\( \text{xe}3 \) \( \text{xe}3 \) 15.\( \text{wd}4 \) \( \text{xd}4 \) 16.\( \text{xd}4 \) White had the advantage and went on to win in Eingorn-F. Levin, Bad Wörishofen 2004;
B22) Or 10.0-0 \( \text{xc}3 \) 11.\( \text{xc}3 \) \( \text{b}7 \\
12.c4! If 12.\( \text{f}4 \) \( \text{d}6 \) followed by ...\( \text{bd}7 \), White’s knight on f4 does not look natural. It would be better to have it on g3 in this position. 12...\( \text{xc}4 \) 13.\( \text{c}3 \) \( \text{a}6 \) 14.\( \text{a}3 \) \( \text{c}7 \) 15.\( \text{e}4 \) and White has a great Benoni.
Another Benoni style option is 6...\( \text{d}6! \)

8.\( \text{cxd}5 \) \( \text{xd}5 \) 9.\( \text{xc}h7+ \) \( \text{xc}h7 \) 10.\( \text{xd}5 \) \( \text{c}6 \) White’s knight cannot jump from e2 to g5;
B) While in case of 7.\( \text{c}2 \) White will simply be a tempo down compared to 6...\( \text{h}6 \) lines;
C) 7.\( \text{f}3 \) \( \text{exd}5 \) 8.\( \text{cxd}5 \) An important moment. 8...\( \text{bd}7 \) 8...\( \text{g}4! \), either swapping the light-squared bishop for White’s f3 knight, which would have been a typical Benoni-type decision, or using the fact that square g6 is vacant and transferring the bishop via h5 to g6, could be an improvement here. 9.0-0 \( \text{e}8 \) 10.\( \text{e}1 \) \( \text{a}6 \) 11.\( \text{e}4 \) White is slightly better here, because compared to the 6...\( \text{exd}5 \) 7.\( \text{cxd}5 \) \( \text{h}6 \) line from the abovementioned game Milov-Psakhis, White’s knight is well placed on f3 instead of e2. 11...\( \text{f}8 \) Black is following Snake Benoni patterns. 12.\( \text{a}3 \) \( \text{a}5 \) 13.\( \text{h}3 \) \( \text{g}6 \) 14.\( \text{b}1 \) \( \text{b}5 \) 15.\( \text{b}4 \) \( \text{b}6 \) 16.\( \text{e}3 \) with a small advantage for White in Milov-Sargissian, Batumi Ech 2002.

7.\( \text{dxe}6 \) \( \text{fxe}6 \) 8.\( \text{cxb}5 \)
Now we have a Blumenfeld Gambit-type position with the black bishop on b4. Play is complicated, with mutual chances.

8...\( \text{b}7 \)
Another option is 8...\( \text{a}6 \).
Part II: 4...0-0 Minor Lines

- White can consider 9...d3?! axb5 10...xb5 b6 11...e2 or 11.a4 11...c6 12.0-0 to put a knight on f3 instead of on e2 – just like in the Blumenfeld Gambit;
- 9...e2 d5 10.0-0

A) 10...e5 Very direct, but probably not best. 11.a3 axb5 11...a5? is not good due to 12.b4! cxb4 13.axb4 14...b3 15.e4 and due to the pin along the a2-g8 diagonal (Black played ...e6-e5 too early) White has a massive advantage: 15...e6 16.exd5 17...c4 loses a piece for Black. 12...xb5 and now:

A1) 12...xc3 is not an easy move to play: 13.bxc3 a6 14.b1 d6 15.c4 d4 16.g3 16...c6 After 16...d3? Black would end up losing the d-pawn after 17.e4; while 16...e4? is a terrible blunder due to 17.exd4 cxd4 18...f5. 17.a4 with a clear advantage for White, as Black’s compensation for the sacrificed pawn is far from enough, Kortchnoi-Karpov, Baguio City 1978.

However, Black’s alternatives are not really attractive:

A2) 12...b7 13.axb4! xa1 14.bxc5 and b2-b4, and White is better;

A3) Or 12...a5 13.e4 A human approach. My engine suggests 13.f4?! e4 14.b1 followed by b2-b4, fighting for the d4-square and obtaining an advantage. 13...d4 14.a4 xe4 Or 14...bd7 15.b4. 15.d3 d5 16.c2 d6 17.xc5 and Black does not have enough compensation for the pawn.

B) An option to investigate further is

10...xb5 11.axb5 b7 12.a3 a5

Trying to be ‘smart’ with 12...bd7?! leads to a white advantage after 13.b1 a5 14.b4. 13.b1 c7 and now:

B1) 14.g3 d4! The most direct; Black’s bishops are beautifully placed. 15...e2 h5 A standard way to embarrass the white knight on g3. 16.exd4

16...d5! The immediate 16...h4? is not precise due to 17.dxc5 hgx3 18.hxg3 and with four pawns for a piece White should be better here. 17.f3 h4 18.g4! An important zwischenzug. 18.b6 19.h1

B11) 19...d4 20.d3

B111) 20...c6 21.c4 d7 22.f2

The position remained complicated, however White coordinated his pieces and went on to win in Timman-Kuijpers, Leeuwarden ch-NED 1980;

B112) 20...h3!? could have led to an interesting queen sacrifice: 21.c4 21.g3 a6 looks OK for Black. 21...hxg2 The queen sac is not forced; 21...c6 or 21...d7 are also possible.

22.xd5 gxh2 23.xf1 cxd5.

B12) Black had a promising alternative in 19...h5! 20...xb8
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20...h3! 21.\textit{d}3 h2 22.\textit{x}g2 \textit{xe}b8

23.\textit{h}g3 \textit{xd}4 and Black has strong compensation, which is at least worth the sacrificed pawn, for example:

24.\textit{c}4 Or 24.\textit{x}h5 \textit{wh}5 25.\textit{g}3 \textit{xf}3 26.\textit{xf}3 \textit{xf}3+ 27.\textit{xf}3 \textit{xb}5.

24...\textit{g}5 25.\textit{xe}6+ \textit{h}8 26.\textit{f}5 \textit{be}8

27.\textit{e}4 \textit{xf}3! 28.\textit{xf}3 \textit{xe}2+

29.\textit{xf}2 \textit{xe}2+ B2) 14.b4

This would have been positionally sound, but most probably Timman did not like 14...\textit{hx}h2+ (14...c4 15.f4 \textit{ac}6 16.\textit{xc}6 \textit{xc}6 17.\textit{d}4 is better for White) 15.\textit{hx}h2 \textit{g}4+ 16.\textit{h}3!

16.\textit{g}3? is a mistake due to 16...\textit{xf}2

17.\textit{xf}2 \textit{g}5+. Now:

B2 1) 16...\textit{xf}2? loses to 17.\textit{xg}4 \textit{hx}g4 18.\textit{h}3 \textit{g}5 19.\textit{xf}8+ \textit{xf}8

20.\textit{xf}1+ \textit{g}8 21.\textit{wh}2;

B2 2) While 16...\textit{xf}2+ 17.\textit{xf}2 \textit{xf}2 fails to 18.\textit{e}4;

B23) 16...\textit{g}5 17.\textit{f}4 \textit{xf}4 18.\textit{xf}4 \textit{wh}5+ 19.\textit{g}3 \textit{wh}2+ 20.\textit{xg}4 The winning attempt 20.\textit{f}3 looks rather risky after 20...d4+ 21.e2 \textit{xg}2.

20...\textit{xg}2+ 21.\textit{h}4 \textit{wh}2+ with a draw by perpetual check.

9.\textit{f}3 d5

The most natural, and probably the best for Black here.

9...\textit{c}7

This has a tactical point, but leads to a white advantage after 10.\textit{d}2! L Black was hoping for 10.0-0? \textit{xc}3! (the immediate 10...\textit{g}4? is not accurate due to 11.\textit{xh}7+ \textit{h}8 12.\textit{e}4! \textit{xf}3

13.\textit{d}6! \textit{a}5 14.\textit{xf}3) 11.\textit{xc}3 \textit{g}4

12.\textit{xh}7+ \textit{h}8 13.\textit{e}4 \textit{xf}3 14.\textit{g}3 \textit{e}5. 10...\textit{e}5?! 11.\textit{e}4! Now the tactics connected with the open a2-g8 diagonal work for White. 11...d5 12.\textit{ed}5 \textit{e}4

13.\textit{c}4 \textit{d}6 14.\textit{g}5 \textit{bd}7 15.0-0 and White soon won in T. Petrosian-Hernandez Onna, Las Palmas 1980.

10.0-0 \textit{bd}7 11.\textit{e}2

White wants to transfer his knight to g3 in order to support e3-e4. In general this push is a standard way in the regular Blumenfeld to tackle Black's dominant pawn centre. Here things should logically be easier for White since Black's bishop is on b4 instead of d6.
Another possibility is 11.\textit{d}2 \textit{e}5 (or 11...\textit{h}8 12.\textit{g}5 \textit{e}7 13.f4, while 11...\textit{we}7 12.a3 \textit{a}5?? is a blunder due to the prosaic 13.\textit{xd}5) 12.\textit{g}5 \textit{e}7 13.\textit{f}5 \textit{d}4 14.\textit{exd}4 \textit{cxd}4 15.\textit{xd}7 \textit{xd}7 16.\textit{b}3+ \textit{h}8 17.\textit{d}5 \textit{xd}5 18.\textit{xb}4 \textit{gx}5 19.\textit{xd}5.

11...\textit{we}8

Or 11...\textit{e}5 12.\textit{f}5.

12.\textit{g}3 \textit{e}5 13.\textit{f}5 \textit{g}6 14.\textit{h}3 \textit{a}6

15.\textit{g}5

White goes for the exchange (it's typical for Kortchnoi to snatch material), however Black gets good compensation. An option was 15.\textit{e}4!, when matters are far from rosy for Black, for instance

15...\textit{dxe}4 (or 15...\textit{d}4 16.\textit{b}3+ \textit{h}8 17.a3 \textit{a}5 18.\textit{h}6 \textit{axb}5 19.\textit{a}4!) 16.\textit{bxa}6 (or 16.\textit{g}5 \textit{axb}5 17.\textit{e}6 \textit{c}4 18.\textit{h}6 - this is definitely an improved version of the exchange win in the game. 16...\textit{xa}6 17.\textit{g}5 \textit{xf}1 18.\textit{xf}1

Now Black is temporarily an exchange up, however his pieces are uncoordinated (the stupid bishop on b4), his light squares are terribly weak and his pawn structure is damaged. White will get back his invested material with handsome dividends.

15...\textit{AXB}5 16.\textit{e}6 \textit{c}4 17.\textit{d}2 \textit{c}5 18.\textit{c}7 \textit{we}7 19.\textit{xa}8 \textit{xa}8

In this complicated position Black had compensation for the sacrificed exchange in Kortchnoi-Karpov, Baguio City Wch (m-7) 1978.

\textit{Conclusion}

6.\textit{d}5!? leads to complicated positions where the Nimzo character of the position changes and the game starts to resemble the Benoni or the Blumenfeld Gambit. There are plenty of unexplored options, the position is rather dynamic and the player who is able to better understand (or better adjust to) the nuances of play in the Benoni or the Blumenfeld, which are very different from the regular Nimzo lines, is likely to be victorious.
Chapter 2.4

Hübner Variation – 5.\textit{d3} c5 6.\textit{f3} \textit{c6} 7.0-0 \textit{xc3} 8.bxc3 \textit{d6}

This Hübner Variation, as it is called in most theoretical manuals, was very popular in the 1980s, when in most tournaments it was Black's prime choice, while for some reason nowadays it is less frequently seen in practice. Black has a positionally sound set-up and the variation is perfectly playable for him. White has more space, however he also has doubled c-pawns and, once the central pawn structure is closed, the white bishop pair can often prove to be inferior to the black knights. A general understanding of positions with doubled c-pawns and a full centre is crucial here. I have dealt with the strategic pros and cons extensively in my book \textit{Winning Chess Middlegames}. There are not many forced lines, as general understanding is more important. Below I give the main plans and the ways play mostly develops.

\textbf{6...\textit{c6}}

Black can enter into the Hübner Variation via different move orders and Black indeed also often does this via the move order 4...c5 5.\textit{d3} \textit{c6} 6.\textit{f3} \textit{xc3} 7.bxc3 \textit{d6}. In practice White has tried to exploit the fact that in this version the two sides have not yet castled – however, without producing anything substantial. Ultimately, the vast majority of games simply transposed to our main variation after both sides castled. Here I will also touch on a few deviations: 6...b6 for Black and 7.d5 for White, both of which are not often played, however it is good to know these playable alternatives.

After 6...b6 the game may transpose to other \ldots b6 lines; for example 7.0-0 \textit{b7} transposes to 4.e3 b6 5.\textit{d3} \textit{b7} 6.\textit{f3} 0-0 7.0-0 c5. However White also has the option of 7.d5!?.

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This gives the game an independent character and is an attempt by White to take advantage of this move order.

**7...exd5 8.cxd5** and now:

A) **8...h6:**

A1) **9.d6??** is a lousy move which is aimed to slow down Black's development, but in reality it only surrenders vital squares and makes Black's development easier! After **9...�xc3+ 10.bxc3 b6 11.c4 d5 12.�xe4 dxc4 13.0-0 0-0** Black was better in Vaisser-Bauer, Auxerre ch-FRA 1996;

A2) White can also sacrifice a pawn: **9.0-0 0-0 10.bxc3 ��f6 11.e4 ��e7 12.e5 d5 13.0-0 h5 14.0-0 h4 15.0-0 f5**! It is probably clever for Black to push this pawn immediately, because White is soon going to build a \( \text{W}+\text{B} \) battery on the b1-h7 diagonal and then Black will have to deal with the problem of the mate threat on h7. **14.exf6 \( \text{Wxf6} \) 15.��b1 ��c6 15...�b7 leads to an unclear position after 16.��d2 \( \text{W}+\text{B} \) 17.��b3! ��e6 18.��b1; Black should consider the drastic central decision 15...d5! 16.cxd5 \( \text{W}+\text{B} \) 16.��b2** White has enough compensation for the sacrificed pawn (beautiful bishops). **16...\( \text{W}+\text{B} \) 17.��e5 ��xe5 18.��xe5 ��e6 19.\( \text{W}+\text{B} \) as in Knaak-Chernin, Palma de Mallorca 1989;**

A3) But a stronger pawn sac is **9.e4!** – the most principled and strongest for White!

A31) Taking the pawn with **9...�xe4** is rather risky in this line. Black simply loses too much time and gets terribly behind in development! This proves to be highly dangerous, even though it was played by a number of very strong players. **10.��xe4 ��f6+ 11.0-0 ��e8 12.��d2 f5 13.0-0** Defending the pawn with **13.f3?!** is not in the spirit of the position and Black has an excellent game after **13...��a6** as in Gelfand-Ivanchuk, Linares 1994. **13...��f5**

A311) **14.c4 d6 15.��b2 \( \text{W}+\text{B} \) 16.f3! ��h3 17.��e2 e3 18.��e4 \( \text{W}+\text{B} \) 19.��a4!** An excellent move. White's three pawns easily hold Black's four pawns on the queenside – White's pawn deficit is not felt at all here, while the a1 rook is going to be transferred via a3 to an excellent post on e3. **19...��d7 20.��a3** Material equality is going to be established, after which White has a better position. **20...��e5** With the direct threat of ...\( \text{W}+\text{B} \), Black wants to prevent White from taking on e3. **21.��h1?!** Here White could have obtained a large advantage with **21.��xd6! \( \text{W}+\text{B} \) 22.��xe3. 21...��xh1 with complicated play in Aronian-Kramnik, Nice rapid 2010;
A312) White has a strong alternative in 14.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{w}}g4!} d6 14 \ldots \textit{\textbf{\texttt{g}}5?!} 15.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{w}}}xg5 hxg5 16.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{e}}}1 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{b}}}7 17.c4 is obviously better for White. 15.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{g}}}6 and Black has terrible problems to develop. White has many tactical motifs and Black is likely to lose an exchange:

A3121) 15...\textit{\textbf{\texttt{e}}}e5? is bad on account of 16.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{c}}}c4! \textit{\textbf{\texttt{f}}}5 (16...\textit{\textbf{\texttt{e}}}xd5? loses to 17.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{w}}}xe4 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{b}}}7 18.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{e}}}e3) 17.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{h}}}5 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{w}}}f6 (17...\textit{\textbf{\texttt{e}}}xd5? 18.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{e}}}e3) 18.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{e}}}xe5 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{w}}}xe5 19.g4\textit{\textbf{\texttt{c}}}8 20.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{w}}}xe5dxe5 21.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{e}}}e1;

A3122) 15.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{d}}}d7 16.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{e}}}xe4 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{f}}}8 17.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{d}}}f6+.

A32) Taking the pawn with 9...\textit{\textbf{\texttt{e}}}e8 10.0-0 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{c}}}xc3 11.bxc3 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{e}}}e4 is rather risky as well:

A321) 12.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{e}}}e1 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{f}}}6 13.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{e}}}xe8+ \textit{\textbf{\texttt{e}}}xe8 14.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{f}}}4 White had a promising alternative in 14.c4! followed by \textit{\textbf{\texttt{b}}}b2. In general in this pawn structure, White has excellent long-term compensation thanks to his space surplus and his beautiful pair of bishops, and the lack of the b-pawn is not really felt. It is also important to point out, as I did in similar positions in my book \textit{\textbf{\texttt{W}}}inning Chess \textit{\textbf{\texttt{M}}}iddlegames, that in this particular type of pawn structure White is better off being a pawn down rather than having doubled c-pawns, because now the a1-h8 diagonal is open for his dark-squared bishop. Therefore it would have been more principled for Timman to play 14.c4! and place his bishop on the a1-h8 diagonal. 14...d6 15.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{d}}}d2 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{g}}}4 16.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{a}}}xh6 This forces a draw. 16...\textit{\textbf{\texttt{a}}}xf3 17.gxf3 gxh6 18.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{w}}}xh6 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{w}}}f6 19.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{h}}}h7+ \textit{\textbf{\texttt{h}}}8 20.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{g}}}xg6+ \textit{\textbf{\texttt{g}}}8 21.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{h}}}h7+ \frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2} Timman-Gelfand, Moscow 1992; 1

A322) White has an interesting alternative in 12.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{b}}}b2 d6 13.c4 with strong compensation, which in my opinion is worth more than a pawn. Should Black opt for a tactical defence with 13...\textit{\textbf{\texttt{g}}}4, then White has a strong attacking idea in 14.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{e}}}1 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{g}}}5

15.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{d}}}d2! and Black is in trouble:

A3221) 15...\textit{\textbf{\texttt{x}}}x5? fails to 16.h4! \textit{\textbf{\texttt{e}}}4?! 17.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{c}}}c3! \textit{\textbf{\texttt{e}}}5 (17...\textit{\textbf{\texttt{f}}}6 loses to 18.hxg5 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{e}}}xd3 19.gxf6 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{x}}}xe1+ 20.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{e}}}xe1 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{w}}}xf6 21.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{e}}}xe8+ \textit{\textbf{\texttt{f}}}7 22.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{e}}}e1) 18.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{x}}}xd3 19.f4 and White wins;

A3222) 15...\textit{\textbf{\texttt{f}}}xf3+ 16.gxf3 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{h}}}5 and here White has the nice tactical motif 17.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{f}}}6!.

B) Should Black opt for 8...\textit{\textbf{\texttt{b}}}7?! 9.e4 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{e}}}e8 10.0-0 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{c}}}xc3 11.bxc3 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{e}}}e4?! then White sacrifices his e-pawn and gets, as often in this line, a tremendous attack. One old game by Donner excellently demonstrates White’s attacking potential: 12.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{e}}}xe4 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{e}}}xe4 13.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{g}}}4 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{e}}}5 14.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{w}}}h5 \textit{\textbf{\texttt{h}}}6 15.\textit{\textbf{\texttt{w}}}xf7\textit{\textbf{\texttt{h}}}8

16.f4! \textit{\textbf{\texttt{e}}}7 Or 16...\textit{\textbf{\texttt{e}}}xd5 17.f5! with a winning attack for White. 17.c4! The
reader is again well advised to note all the advantages of the central pawn structure for White: his bishop will be a killer on the a1-h8 diagonal, while the central pawn structure (white pawns on c4/d5; black d6/c5) completely cuts off all activity of the black bishop on b7. 17...hxg5 18.Wh5+ Wh8 19.fxg5 g6 20.Wxg6+ Ag7 21.Wf5 We8 22.Bb2 1-0 Danner-O'Kelly de Galway, Palma de Mallorca 1967;

C) 8...Qxd5?! 9.Qxh7+ Qxh7 10.Wxd5 is a good version for White of the line 4.e3 0-0 5.Qd3 c5 6.d5 exd5 7.cxd5 Qxd5 8.Qxh7 Qxh7 9.Wxd5 Qc6 10.Qf3, since here 10...b6 is not the best for Black.

• An idea black players should investigate more closely is 7...Qb7 8.e4 b5! The verdict on this line is based on Portisch' catastrophe against Donner (see B2), but Black’s play can be improved! 9.e5 Recently 9.0-0 bxc4 10.Qxc4 Qxc3 11.bxc3 Qxe4 12.Wd3 Qf6 13.Qg5 exd5 14.Qxd5 Qxd5 15.Qxf6 Wxf6 16.Wxd5 Qa6 17.Qe5 was tried, after which White had compensation, but not more, in Peralta-Barrientos, Khanty-Mansiysk 2010. 9...bxc4! 10.Bb1 Qxd5

11.Qxh7+! This standard sacrificial idea is the point behind White’s play. 11...Qxh7 12.Qg5+ and now:

A) In the event of 12...Qg6 things get very messy, however it simply looks rather risky for Black:

A1) 13.Qg4 f5 14.Qg3 Qa5 15.Qxe6+ Qf7 16.Qxg7+ Qxe6 17.0-0 and White should have at least a draw, perhaps more;

A2) Another option is 13.Qc2+ f5 14.h4. It is, however, difficult to say whether White’s attack is worth the sacrificed material: 14...Qe8! 14...Qh8 15.g4! looks good for White. 15.h5+ Or 15.Qf1 Qh8 16.g4. 15...Qh6 16.Qf1 Qxc3 17.Qxc3 Qc6 White has many discovered checks, many options, however not a lethal one;

B) 12...Qg8! This line, leading to a sacrifice of the black queen, is a strong tactical option. 13.Wh5 Wg5! 14.Qxg5 Qxc3 15.a3 Here Black has an important improvement on existing theory: 15...Qa5! The actual game continued 15...Qe4+? 16.axb4 Qc6 17.Qe3 Qxb4 18.0-0 Qc2 19.Qac1 – Black did not have nearly enough compensation and White soon won in Donner-Portisch, Wijk aan Zee 1968. 16.Qd2 This seems to be doing the job for White and is obviously the reason why Portisch refrained from 15...Qa5!. 16...Qd5! White’s pieces now appear to be poorly placed, allowing Black a number of tempi. 17.Qxa5 Qd3+ 19.Qf1 Qc6 20.Qc3
20...\(\text{dxe5}\)! The black knight on d3 is a monster, and White’s pieces are badly synchronized. Black has at least compensation here. The game may continue 21.dxe5 f6 22.exf6 exf6 23.f3 e5 White is under a very strong attack — in theory Black is behind in material, however in practice all black pieces are well developed and working excellently — based on the pieces in play Black is massively ahead! 24.g1 e4 25.fxe4 dxe4 26.w3 d5 Black has total domination and a winning advantage. White’s rooks on a1 and h1 are totally out of play — what counts are the pieces in play!

This line is important for the theory and the assessment of the 6...b6 7.d5!? line. In my opinion, 7...\(\text{b7}\) 8.e4 b5! is the best way for Black to combat 7.d5!?. This line is underestimated by theory and is Black’s best option here — by far better than capturing the e4 pawn, which by the way has been played by Kramnik, Ivanchuk and Gelfand and which I have given as the main line.

- After 7...\(\text{b5}\) 8.dxe6 fxe6 9.cxb5 d5 White is a tempo up compared to the line 4.e3 0-0 5.d3 c5 6.d5 b5, as in Gustafsson-Svetushkin, Sarajevo 2010;

To avoid mainstream theory, 7.d5 is an option to consider. However Black has no problems and should obtain easy equality: 7...\(\text{dxe7}\) Black can also opt for a transposition to another line with 7...exd5 8.exd5 \(\text{xd5}\) 9.dxd5+ \(\text{xd5}\) 10.dxd5. This transposes to 4.e3 0-0 5.d3 c5 6.d5 exd5 7.cxd5 \(\text{xd5}\) 8.dxd5+ \(\text{xd5}\) 9.exe4 10.d3, which by the way is OK for Black (see this line in Chapter 2.3).

The text was played by, amongst others, Kasparov and his game against Ponomariov looks like a safe choice for Black. 8.e4 d6:

- 9.wc2! is an option White may consider;

- 9.h3 \(\text{xc3+}\) 10.bxc3 e5 transposes to a regular (OK for Black) Hübner Variation;

- 9.d2 exd5 10.exd5 10.cxd5?! leads to a Benoni in a good version for Black after 10...\(\text{dxe8}\) 11.0-0 \(\text{g6}\) 12.d1 \(\text{g4}\) 13.h3 \(\text{f5}\). 10...\(\text{f5}\) 10...\(\text{g6}\) 11.0-0 \(\text{g4}\) is also possible, and led to equality in Vitiugov-Ponomariov, Kallithea tt 2008. 11.wc2 \(\text{d7}\) 12.0-0 \(\text{d3}\) 13.wxd3 \(\text{f5}\) 14.wxf3 \(\text{xf5}\) 15.hf1 \(\text{dxe8}\) 16.\(\text{ac1}\) h5 Black has a good game. 17.dh1 a6 18.b3 b5 19.b3 \(\text{d8}\) 20.dg5 \(\text{h4}\) The game was later drawn in Ponomariov-Kasparov, Linares 2003.

7...\(\text{xc3}\) 8.bxc3 d6
We have entered the Hübner Variation.

**9.e4**

This is one of White's main continuations here, the other two being 9.\textit{e}1 and 9.\textit{d}d2. White now takes space and tries to build on this, however he runs the risk of blockading the centre too early and not being able to further improve his position, while Black will improve his by manoeuvring his pieces.

- **9.e4** e5 10.\textit{d}d2 is an interesting plan for White, often played by Alexandrov. White tries to be flexible, keeping his options open, which is in general strategically correct in such positions!

  A) 10...b6 11.a4 \textit{d}7 11...\textit{a}6?! looks strange here, since Black is not going to collect White's c4 pawn, while on a6 the bishop will be passive: 12.d5 \textit{a}5 13.e4 g6 14.g3 \textit{d}7 15.\textit{h}4 White is obviously better. Now Black sacrificed or blundered a pawn with 15...\textit{f}5? 16.exf5 gxf5 17.\textit{xf}5 \textit{h}8 18.\textit{d}3 and White easily won in Alexandrov-Kovalenko, Samara 2011. 12.\textit{a}3 In these lines the white bishop on a3 is often less stupid than it looks, for now Black cannot take the pawn on d4 as White is then hitting on d6; also White will now quickly connect his rooks. 12...\textit{c}8 13.\textit{w}c2 \textit{h}8

14.\textit{f}4! A standard plan for White. I am personally more inclined towards this plan and this method to apply pressure on Black's centre, rather than pushing e3-e4 and going for a quick central blockade with d4-d5, since I think it is clever for White to keep his pawn centre mobile! By the way, you can see that players who understand these positions, like Alexandrov and Sadler, seem to agree with me! 14...\textit{exf}4 15.\textit{exf}4 \textit{h}5 16.d5 \textit{a}5 For the time being, both Black's \textit{a}5 and White's \textit{a}3 are out of play. However, the \textit{a}3 will rejoin the play considerably sooner! 17.\textit{f}1! Freeing the e1-square for the a1 rook, so the \textit{a}3 can quickly return into play. 17...\textit{f}5 18.\textit{ae}1 \textit{w}6 19.\textit{c}1 White's pieces are all in play, now he has to prepare the push g2-g4; a plan often seen in similar Benoni pawn structures. 19...\textit{ce}8 20.\textit{f}3 \textit{c}8 21.\textit{xe}8 \textit{xe}8 22.g4! Note that Black is virtually a piece down as his \textit{a}5 is totally out of play! 22...\textit{fxg}4 23.\textit{g}5 \textit{a}6 In the event of 23...g6, White's attack crashes through after 24.\textit{f}5 \textit{xf}5 25.\textit{x}f5 \textit{f}8 (or 25...\textit{xf}5 26.\textit{xf}5 \textit{g}6 (on 26...\textit{e}1+ 27.\textit{g}2 \textit{x}c1 28.\textit{f}2 wins) 27.\textit{f}2 with a winning attack) 26.\textit{d}3. 24.\textit{h}7 \textit{xc}4 25.\textit{d}3 \textit{xd}5 In case of 25...\textit{xd}3 26.\textit{wd}3 g6 White again opens the black kingside with 27.\textit{f}5. As with the terribly misplaced \textit{a}5 Black is virtually a piece down, most of White's kingside attacks will crash through in such positions. 26.\textit{c}4? White missed a very simple win with 26.\textit{b}5! (threatening to take the \textit{w}e8 and to give mate on h7) 26...\textit{e}4 27.\textit{xe}4 - a pity, as Sadler had played the game so well! 26...\textit{e}4! Probably missed by White. 27.\textit{xe}4 \textit{f}5 Black is no longer worse (28.\textit{d}3 \textit{c}4) and the
game was later drawn in Sadler-Tiviakov, Oslo 2011;

B) In the event of 10...dxe8 White can now close the centre with 11.d5

At first glance Black seems to be doing fine. However White has a strong standard piece sacrifice (also often seen in other systems) in 16.d4! and after 16...exd4 17.exd4 White is likely to regain his material investment and then win some more. 12...d5! This bishop will be strong on d5.

14.f4! White is playing well, putting pressure on Black's centre while preserving his own dynamic possibilities! 14...d8 15.e4 d7 16.fxe5 dxe5 17.a3 White's d5 is strong, so Black will have to take it, improving White's pawn structure. 17...d6 18.d2 dxd5 19.cxd5 dfe8 20.a4! d5 21.b3 d7 22.dxe5 dxe5 23.c4 The diagonal a1-h8 is open and White's bishop will be a monster there. 23...f6 24.b2 d7 25.g3 White was clearly better and he won in Alexandrov-Damljanovic, Vrnjacka Banja 2005 – instructive play by Alexandrov;

11...d7 11...e4 12.dxe4 dxe4 13.dxc6 bxc6 14.f3 leads to standard positions which are a bit better for White. 12.e4 The drawback of the move ...d8 in such positions is that although it induces extra pressure on White's centre and often forces White to close it, as here, with d4-d5 and e3-e4, the rook has to retreat to f8 again so Black loses two tempi! 12...h8 13.f1 Another positive side of the move d1 is that this square has become vacant. 13...g8 14.g3 d8 15.d2 b6 16.b1 d7 17.b2 Black's two main counterplans ...b7-b5 and ...f7-f5 have been prevented, at least for the time being, so White can improve his position. 17...d7 18.d1 d8 19.f3 d8 20.h1 d7 21.f2 and White went on to win with a kingside action in Alexandrov-Ibrahimov, Dubai 2005;

C) 10...d8, in order to create counterplay with ...f7-f5, is logical, but Black is just not in time: 11.b3! b6 In the event of 11...f5 12.dxc5 dxc5 13.dxc5 d6 (13...e7? fails to 14.a3 b6 15.a4) 14.b3 d6 15.a4 d8
Part II: 4...0-0 Minor Lines

D) White is better in case of 10...cxd4 11.cxd4 exd4 12.exd4 Qg4. Taking the pawn on d4 is, to say the least, rather risky: 12...Qxd4 13.Qb2 Qc6 14.Qe4 Qxe4 (14...Qe5 15.Qxe4 Qe6 (15...Qe5 16.c5) 16.Wc2 Wh4 17.Qad1 Qad8 18.Wc3. 13.f3 Qh5 14.Qb3 Qc8 15.Qf5 Qc7 16.Qg5 White was better and went on to win in Alexandrov-Parligras, Dresden Ech 2007;

E) 10...Qg4 11.h3 Qh6 looks like a strange plan for Black. Okay, it prepares the push ...f7-f5 just like 10...Qe8, but (also like 10...Qe8) it allows the white bishop to go to d5. 12.Qe4! f5 13.Qd5+ Qh8 14.Qb3 cxd4 14...Wxe7? loses material to 15.dxc5 dxc5 16.Qa3.

15.exd4! The actual game went 15.cxd4 e4 16.f3 Qb4!. Black stood well and went on to win in Alexandrov-Dvoirys, Samara 2011. 15...e4 16.Qxh6 gxh6 17.f3 and White is clearly better, see 17...Wg5 18.fxe4 fxe4 19.Wd2.

The above games by Alexandrov and the one by Sadler are definitely material that white players should study.

Another flexible plan for White is 9.Qd2 e5.

A) Now the immediate closure of the centre with 10.d5 does not bring White any advantage: 10...Qe7 and now:

A1) 11.Wc2 g6! Controlling square f5 and limiting White’s Wc2/Qd3 battery is important here, while White will not manage to take advantage of the seemingly weak dark squares around the black king. Perhaps better-looking, but in fact less good is 11...h6 12.Qb1 b6 13.h3 Qe8 14.f4 f5 (or 14...exf4 15.exf4 15.Qxf4!? f5 16.Qf3 Qf6 17.Qh4) 15.e4! exf4 16.exf5 Qxf5 17.Qxf4 g6 18.Qe4 Qeg7 19.Wf2 – White had good kingside attacking prospects and went on to win in Hort-Christiansen, Wijk aan Zee 1982. 12.a4

12.Qh5! Threatening ...f7-f5. 13.f4 exf4 14.exf4 Qf6! 14...f5 is not good now due to 15.Qf3 and White will continue with Qd2 and Qa1, a later timely g2-g4 push and a kingside attack. 15.Qf3 Qf5 16.Qe1 Qd7 17.h3 h5 Black has good kingside control. 18.Wf2 Qe8 19.Qd2 Qxe1+ 20.Qxe1 Wf8 21.Qh4 Qe8! 22.Qxe8 Wxe8 23.Qxf5 Qxf5 24.Qxf5 gxf5 White has to be careful not to land in a lost position here and is just in time to save the game. 25.Wg3+ Qf8 26.Wg5 Qe4 27.Wh6+ Qg8 28.e1 Wxa4 29.Qh4 Wd1+ 30.Qh2 Qd2 31.Qg5+ 1/2–1/2 Spassky-Timman, Hilversum 1983;

A2) In the event of 11.f3 Qf5 12.e4 Qd7 13.Wc2 Qh5 14.g3 f5 15.exf5 Qxf5 16.Qe4h6 17.Qd2 Wd7 we have
on the kingside a pawn structure which resembles some King's Indians. Black is mostly fine here since the presence of his knight on g7 instead of the bishop, which would have been a passive piece in similar King's Indian lines, is positive for him and also White's doubled c-pawn does not allow him regular queenside play starting with the push b2-b4. Black went on to win in Pinter-Timman, Las Palmas Interzonal 1982;

A3) Similar to the above line with 11.f3 is 11.e4 h6 12.e1 h7 13.f1 f5 14.exf5 xf5 15.g3 xd3 16.wxd3 wd7 17.a4 f6 18.a5 af8 19.f3 f5 – again Black was fine and went on to win in Balashov-Vaganian, Odessa ch-URS 1989.

B) A move like 10.de4 should not scare Black. One top-level encounter continued 10...b6 11.f3 b7 12.g3 h8 13.d5

13...e4! Again this standard motif works well here. 14.xe4 e5 15.wf4 a6 16.d1 g5 17.wg5 h8 18.h6 xg3 19.hxg3 xe4 and White had no compensation for his material disadvantage in Kamsky-Anand, Sanghi Nagar 1994;

C) With 10.hb1 White tries to keep his pawn centre flexible and to keep his options open:

C1) Tactical solutions like 10...we7 11.d5 e4 12.xe4 xe4 13.dxc6 bxc6 have been proved to lead to a white advantage: 14.wc2 f5 15.fd3 g5 16.d7 f4 – White later executed the push e3-e4 and had an advantage in Bareev-Van der Wiel, Wijk aan Zee 1995;

C2) In the event of 10...xe8 White can now close the centre with 11.d5 xe7 12.e4 The black rook will have to return to f8, so as usual here, the move ...xe8 proves to be a loss of two tempi for Black. 12...b6 13.eb2 g6 14.e1 f8 15.f1 b4 16.f3 d7 17.g3 h6 18.xf2 White is playing a textbook game. 18...b8 19.xe3 a6 20.xf5 xf5 21.exf5 e7 22.g4 with a white initiative in Bareev-Short, Geneva 1996;

C3) 10...b6 11.h3

Also possible is 11.wc2 d7 12.h3 wc8 13.f4 exd4 14.cxd4 xe8 15.xf3 xb4 16.xb4 (this exchange sacrifice is often seen in similar positions) 16...xb4 17.e4 b5 18.c5 dxc5 19.dxc5 h6 20.xd4 c6 21.e5 d5 22.f5 – in this messy position White had compensation for the sacrificed exchange, Bareev-Timman, Wijk aan Zee 1995.

C31) 11...d7 12.f4!

C311) In case of 12...exd4 13.cxd4:

C311.1) 13...d5 now loses a pawn for no compensation after the simple 14.xc5 bxc5 15.cxd5 xd5 16.xh7+ xh7 17.wh5+ g8 18.wxh5;
C3112) 13...\texttt{b}4 fails to a standard exchange sacrifice: 14.\texttt{xb}4 \texttt{cxb}4 15.e4 White's tremendous pawn centre, supported by a powerful pair of bishops, is clearly worth more than the exchange here;

C3113) In the event of 13...\texttt{cxd}4 White's standard reaction, here and in similar positions, is 14.e4. White has a strong mobile pawn centre (excellent pawns on e4, f4), while Black's extra pawn on d4 is not of much value and is actually likely to fall;

C3114) 13...\texttt{Re}8 14.\texttt{Wf}3 \texttt{We}7 15.d5 \texttt{\texttt{b}4} Here the standard exchange sac again works for White: 16.\texttt{xb}4 \texttt{cxb}4 17.e4 White had the initiative and went on to win in Korobov-Polak, Plovdiv tt 2010;

C312) 12...\texttt{exf}4 13.\texttt{xf}4 \texttt{We}7 14.\texttt{Wf}3 White now gets what he wants. 14...\texttt{Mac}8 15.\texttt{Wf}1 \texttt{De}8 16.\texttt{g}3 \texttt{g}6 17.\texttt{d}2 \texttt{g}7 18.\texttt{f}1 \texttt{f}5

C33) 11...\texttt{Re}8 12.d5 leads to a small white plus, as the black rook is likely to have to retreat to f8, losing tempi. The tactical attempt 12...\texttt{e}4? 13.\texttt{xe}4 \texttt{xe}4 14.\texttt{dxc}6 \texttt{xc}3 does not work due to 15.\texttt{h}5! \texttt{g}6 16.\texttt{Wh}6 \texttt{\texttt{xb}1} 17.\texttt{b}2 \texttt{f}6 18.\texttt{h}xg6! \texttt{hxg}6 19.\texttt{Wx}6+ \texttt{f}8 20.\texttt{xf}6 and White wins.

- White has an entertaining option, which unfortunately does not work (!), in 9.\texttt{\texttt{g}5} \texttt{h}6 In case of 9...\texttt{e}5 White has an interesting idea in 10.\texttt{f}4 \texttt{h}6 11.d5! \texttt{hx}5 12.\texttt{f}5 \texttt{g}4 13.\texttt{e}5 \texttt{\texttt{b}5} 14.\texttt{h}xg5 15.\texttt{hxg}5 16.\texttt{f}5 \texttt{a}5 17.\texttt{b}3 \texttt{xg}4 18.\texttt{a}2 \texttt{W}7 19.\texttt{a}5 \texttt{b}6 20.\texttt{c}4 \texttt{h}5 21.\texttt{c}3! \texttt{We}7 22.\texttt{f}1 \texttt{f}6 23.\texttt{h}4 \texttt{g}6 24.\texttt{f}2 and White soon won in Handke-Heika, Bad Wörishofen 2003. 10.\texttt{f}4? This tactical idea seems not to work here. 10.\texttt{\texttt{e}4} leads to approximate equality. 10...\texttt{hx}5 11.\texttt{fx}5

19.\texttt{e}4! \texttt{De}6 20.\texttt{\texttt{f}5} \texttt{xf}4 21.\texttt{xf}4 \texttt{cxd}4 22.\texttt{Wd}5+ The game is decided. 22...\texttt{g}7 Or 22...\texttt{Wf}7 23.\texttt{\texttt{xd}6} 23.\texttt{\texttt{xd}6} \texttt{\texttt{We}3}+ 24.\texttt{h}2 \texttt{W}f6 25.\texttt{f}4 \texttt{We}8 26.\texttt{f}x\texttt{g}6 \texttt{hx}g6 27.\texttt{h}6+ 1-0 I. Sokolov-Winants, Netherlands tt 1994/95;

C32) Anticipating White's action with 11...\texttt{h}6! makes sense for Black here, since now 12.\texttt{\texttt{f}4} can be well answered with 12...\texttt{ex}d4 13.\texttt{cxd}4 \texttt{d}5!;

11...\texttt{d}7! The actual game was a sad story for Black: 11...\texttt{Re}8 12.\texttt{Wf}5 \texttt{g}6 13.\texttt{h}6 \texttt{e}5? (a terrible mistake; 13...\texttt{We}7 14.\texttt{f}4 \texttt{f}5 was necessary) 14.\texttt{\texttt{xd}6} and Black resigned, Sjoberg-Ornstein, Stockholm 1993. 12.\texttt{Wf}5 \texttt{f}5 13.\texttt{f}3 The e8-square is now vacant for the black queen. 13...\texttt{We}8! 14.\texttt{Wf}4 \texttt{Wg}6 and White's attack will be repelled, leaving Black ahead in material.

9...\texttt{\texttt{e}5} 10.\texttt{d}5
Chapter 2.4: Hübner Variation – 6.\( \Box f3 \) \( \Box c6 \) 7.0-0 \( \Box xc3 \) 8.bxc3 d6

A good example of stereotype play which promises White nothing is 10.h3 h6 11.\( \Box e3 \) b6 12.a4 \( \Box e8 \) 13.d5 \( \Box e7 \) 14.a5 \( \Box g6 \) 15.\( \Box e1 \) \( \Box d7 \) 16.axb6 \( \Box xb6 \) 17.\( \Box h2 \) a5 – if somebody is better here, it is not White, Timofeev-Tomashevsky, Taganrog 2011.

10...\( \Box e7 \) 11.\( \Box h4 \)

This plan is often employed here: White prepares a quick f2-f4, while also his knight can now jump to f5.

11...h6

● 11...\( \Box e8 \) (preparing f5) 12.\( \Box f5 \) is better for White;
● Black has a good alternative in 11...\( \Box g6 \) 12.\( \Box f5 \), leading to unclear positions that are acceptable for Black: 12...\( \Box e8 \) and now:
  A) After 13.\( \Box b1 \) one game went well for Black: 13...h6 14.\( \Box f3 \) \( \Box b8 \) Black prepares the ...b7-b5 push, his regular counterplan in positions like this. 15.g3 \( \Box h7 \)!

15...\( \Box h7 \)!

Preparing 16...\( \Box e7 \), which was not possible immediately due to 17.\( \Box xh6 \) 16.\( \Box h4 \) \( \Box e7 \) 17.\( \Box e3 \) \( \Box f8 \)!

Preparing ...f7-f5, another standard counterplan. 18.\( \Box f5 \)! This retreat is clearly a sign that things are not rosy for White. 18...\( \Box xf5 \) 19.\( \Box e4 \) \( \Box d7 \) 21.\( \Box g2 \) b5! Please pay attention once more to this standard counterplan. 22.\( \Box h1 \) \( \Box f6 \) Black was clearly better and White’s position soon collapsed in Jussupow-Epishin, Dortmund 1994;

B) Or 13.\( \Box g3 \) \( \Box f5 \)! 14.\( \Box e4 \) \( \Box f6 \) It is important that White cannot stop the ...e5-e4 push, which is always liberating for Black. 15.\( \Box b1 \) e4 16.\( \Box c2 \) \( \Box d7 \) 17.\( \Box a4 \) \( \Box e7 \) 18.\( \Box xh7 \) \( \Box e5 \) and Black had a good game in Lesiege-Frolov, Biel 1993;

C) 13.\( \Box f3 \) h6 14.\( \Box g3 \) \( \Box h7 \)! Black follows Epishin’s play, shown above in the 13.\( \Box b1 \) line. 15.\( \Box h4 \) \( \Box e7 \) 16.\( \Box e3 \) \( \Box f6 \) 17.\( \Box d2 \) \( \Box d7 \) 18.\( \Box h2 \) \( \Box b8 \) and Black was fine in Peralta-Bruzon Bautista, Montcada 2008;

D) Wrong is 11...\( \Box h8 \)? due to 12.f4!. White’s standard plan works very well here. 12...\( \Box g6 \) Now Fischer’s recipe (see the next note) does not work, due to the fact that ...h7-h6 has not been played and hence White has the pinning move \( \Box g5 \). 13.\( \Box xe5 \) \( \Box xe5 \) 14.\( \Box g5 \) h6 15.\( \Box xf6 \) gxf6 16.\( \Box d2 \) \( \Box g7 \) 17.\( \Box f5+ \) \( \Box f5 \) 18.\( \Box xf5 \) \( \Box g8 \) 19.\( \Box f1 \) \( \Box h7 \) 20.\( \Box g6 \) and White had a large advantage in Gligoric-Keene, Hastings 1973/74.

12.\( \Box f3 \)

A standard set-up.

● Another interesting way to continue is 12.f3!? and now:
  A) Black can consider 12...\( \Box h5 \) 13.g3 \( \Box h3 \) 14.\( \Box e1 \) \( \Box d7 \) 15.\( \Box b1 \) f5 16.\( \Box xf5 \)

(16.\( \Box b2 \) f4) 16...\( \Box xf5 \) 17.\( \Box g2 \) \( \Box a8 \)
18...b2 with sharp play. Strangely enough this kingside play resembles play in the King's Indian – Black is in general OK in these positions;

B) 12...g5 13.Qf5 Qxf5 14.exf5 Qd7 15.Qd2 Qg7 16.g4 Probably Black thought that White would not be able to break open the kingside. 16...Qh8 17.Qb1 Qb8 18.Qg2 a6 19.a4 Hindering counterplay with ...b7-b5. 19...b6 20.Qh1 Qh7 21.Wc2 Qb7 22.Qe3 Wf6 23.h4 gxh4 24.Qxf2 Qg5 25.Qxb4 Wd8 26.Qb1 Qf6 27.Qe3 b5 28.axb5 axb5 29.Qg3! Bxc4 30.Wh2! – White broke open the kingside and soon won in Gelfand-Short, Dos Hermanas 1997.

• A famous classic went 12.f4

12...Qg6! (a revolutionary idea at the time!) 13.Qxg6 fxg6 14.fx e5 dxe5 15.Qe3 b6 – a typical example of the position becoming too static for White, as a result of which Black’s Q+Q are stronger than White’s bishop pair. Black went on to win in Spassky-Fischer, Wch m-5 Reykjavik 1972.

12...Qg6 13.Qf5 Qxf5

This does not equalize here. Black can consider the standard plan 13...Qh7! 14.Qb1 Qe7. Here White can try to use the fact that he has not yet played g2-g3 and continue with 15.Qxe7+ Wxe7 16.Qg3! Qh8 17.f4. After 17...f6 18.h4 b6 19.f5 Qd7 we have complex position – Black will prepare counterplay with the push ...b7-b5, while White will try to carry through the advance g4-g5.

14.Wxf5!

It is a good decision to take with the queen here. Due to his space advantage, White stands better and he can continue to improve his position. Black’s problem is that he lacks counterplay.

In the event of 14.exf5

Black has a tactical solution in 14...e4! This pawn sacrifice is thematic, it often works and White always has to reckon with it in these positions. The black knight now gets an excellent post on e5, the e-file gets opened, which is in Black’s favour, and the second player now takes over the initiative. 15.Qxe4 Qe5 16.We2 Wa5 17.Qd2 In the event of 17.f4, Black calmly continues with 17...Qfe8!. 17...Qfe8 17...Wa4 also looks good. 18.Qc2 Wa6 19.Qb3 Qxd5 White needs to take urgent measures to survive here, and he understands this: 20.Qxe6! An attempt to bail out with a perpetual check. 20...Qxb6 21.f4 21.Wd2 Qf6 22.Wxh6 d5. 21...Qxc4 22.Wh5 Qg7 23.Qf3 Qh8 Black could consider 23...Qe4?! 24.Qg3+ Qf8. 24.Qe1 Qf8 25.Qg3 Qe8 26.Qg8+ Forcing a draw by
perpetual check. 26.\textit{\texttt{Nx}}e8+ \textit{\texttt{N}}xe8 27.\textit{\texttt{W}}e2+ \textit{\texttt{Cc}}e3 28.\textit{\texttt{W}}xe3+ \textit{\texttt{N}}xe3 29.\textit{\texttt{W}}xe3+ \textit{\texttt{D}}d8 30.\textit{\texttt{Q}}xf7 was an ambitious attempt. 26...\textit{\texttt{Nx}}xg8 27.\textit{\texttt{W}}xh6+ \textit{\texttt{G}}g7 28.\textit{\texttt{W}}h8+ \textit{\texttt{G}}g8 29.\textit{\texttt{W}}h6+ draw, Potkin-S. Zhigalko, Olginka tt 2011.

14...\textit{\texttt{Q}}h7 15.\textit{\texttt{Ab}}1 \textit{\texttt{W}}e7 16.g3 \textit{\texttt{Ac}}8

17.h4

White has curbed Black's counterplay and will continue to gain space.

17...\textit{\texttt{Cc}}7 18.\textit{\texttt{Ab}}2 \textit{\texttt{Wd}}7 19.\textit{\texttt{Q}}g2

Passive defence is also not easy to advise because White would prepare the push f2-f4 and start to roll his pawns on the kingside.

19...\textit{\texttt{Q}}xf5 20.exf5 \textit{\texttt{Q}}h8 21.\textit{\texttt{Q}}e2 f6 22.\textit{\texttt{Q}}h5! \textit{\texttt{D}}d8 23.\textit{\texttt{Q}}e1 \textit{\texttt{Q}}f7 24.\textit{\texttt{Q}}f3 \textit{\texttt{Q}}d7 25.\textit{\texttt{Q}}e4 \textit{\texttt{Q}}f8 26.\textit{\texttt{Q}}e3 \textit{\texttt{Q}}h7 27.\textit{\texttt{Q}}e1 \textit{\texttt{Q}}d8 28.\textit{\texttt{Q}}b3\textit{\texttt{Q}}c8 29.\textit{\texttt{Q}}a3!

Black now faces a difficult decision.

29...a6

29...b6 30.\textit{\texttt{A}}a6 followed by a4-a5 is also unpleasant for Black, and the passive 29...\textit{\texttt{Q}}aa8, while keeping Black's queenside pawn structure intact, does not prevent much. White can play 30.\textit{\texttt{A}}b6 and then advance his kingside pawns.

30.\textit{\texttt{A}}ab3 \textit{\texttt{Q}}c7 31.\textit{\texttt{A}}b6 \textit{\texttt{Q}}f7 32.g4

Black remained doomed to passive defence, and White went on to win in Hort-Adamski, Polanica Zdroj 1977.

Conclusion

In this move order, Black has an interesting deviation in 6...b6!?, since after 7.d5!? (7.0-0 \textit{\texttt{Q}}b7 transposes to regular ...b6 lines) Black has a good game after 7...\textit{\texttt{Q}}b7 8.e4 b5! - the complications connected with a sacrifice of the black queen seem to work for him. The mainstream line in 6...b6!? 7.d5!? is good for White.

The Hübner Variation is a sound positional choice and it leads to a complicated strategic battle. Understanding Nimzo positions with a full centre and doubled pawns is a must for both sides. I have dealt extensively with these in my book \textit{\texttt{WinningChess Middlegames}}.

With 9.\textit{\texttt{Q}}e1 e5 10.\textit{\texttt{Q}}d2 as well as 9.\textit{\texttt{Q}}d2 e5 10.\textit{\texttt{Q}}b1, White postpones the decision in the centre, keeps the central pawn tension and is not in a hurry to push the central pawns. This appeals more to me than the immediate 9.e4 followed by 9...e5 10.d5, which is preferred by many strong players. I have taken 9.e4 as the main line, though 9.\textit{\texttt{Q}}d2 and 9.\textit{\texttt{Q}}e1 should get equal merit, so the choice is a matter of taste.
Chapter 2.5

Fixing the Centre – 5.\( \diamond \)d3 d5 6.cxd5

This is one of the independent lines in the system (6.\( \diamond \)f3 transposes to the main lines examined below). White wants to first determine the pawn structure in the centre and only then does he develop his g1 knight.

6...exd5

More or less a must, as 6...\( \mathbb{N} \)xd5 and 6...\( \diamond \)xd5 are both clearly inferior.

7.\( \diamond \)e2

The starting position of this line. It is a good idea to try and understand the strategic plans and nuances here. White has a number of different plans:

i) Preparing and starting a kingside pawn advance with f2-f3 and g2-g4;

ii) Playing for a central pawn thrust with f2-f3 and e3-e4, or just e3-e4 (with the other pawn still on f2);

iii) Playing for a queenside minority pawn advance (which does not often happen) and

iii) Combining the abovementioned plans (this happens often lately and is our main line).

Black has as his general counterplans:

i) either to advance his b- and c-pawns on the queenside;

ii) or to keep his c-pawn on c6 and prepare kingside tactics, which we see considerably less often.

The following general rules should apply (see next page):
Chapter 2.5: Fixing the Centre – 5.\( \text{d3} \) d5 6.\text{cxd5}  

- exchanging the light-squared bishops is good for Black;  
- exchanging the dark-squared bishops is good for White;  
- exchanging any of the white knights for Black’s dark-squared bishop is good for White;  
- the creation of an isolated pawn on d5 is mostly not dangerous for Black.

Usually, the move order with 4...0-0 5.\( \text{d3} \) d5 6.\( \text{e2} \) transposes to our main line. Black has however an independent possibility in 6...dxc4 7.\( \text{xc4} \) e5.

The resulting positions resemble the Queen’s Gambit Accepted, with the difference that the white knight is developed on e2 instead of f3 and that Black has lost some tempi: he has played ...e5 in two moves and also the bishop on b4 will have to return to d6 or e7.  
White should indeed opt for QGA-type play, entering positions with an isolated pawn. Black does not equalize in this line.

11.\text{g3}  

It is clever for White to keep, at least for the time being, his pawn on e3, because as long as White controls the f4-square it is more difficult for Black to get active counterplay on the kingside.

11.e4 strongly resembles the QGA line 1.d4 d5 2.c4 dxc4 3.e4 \( \text{c6} \) 4.\( \text{e3} \) \( \text{f6} \) 5.\( \text{c3} \) e5 6.d5 \( \text{e7} \) 7.\( \text{c4} \) \( \text{g6} \), where Black has active counterplay on the kingside: 11...a6 12.b4 \( \text{g6} \) 13.f3 \( \text{h5} \) 14.\text{e3} \text{h4} 15.\text{h1 h5} \text{ and Black was doing fine in Turov-Sakaev, Linares 2001. 11...\text{f5} In the event of 11...\text{g6}, the advantages for White of keeping his pawn on e3 are apparent: the f4-square is under control and Black does not get his usual kingside counterplay. Now:  

A) 12.\text{d2} a6 13.\text{c1} \text{h8} 14.\text{a2} \text{g4} 15.h3 \text{gh6} 16.\text{c4} and White was better in Hellsten-Baklan, Plovdiv Ech-tt 2003;  

B) 12.\text{ge4} \text{xe4} 13.\text{xe4} \text{e7}  
Freeing the d6-square for the knight, however Black's c7 pawn will remain a target and also it will be difficult for Black to develop any meaningful counterplay. 14.\text{a2} a5 15.\text{d2} \text{d6}
16.\(\text{g}3\) \(\text{e}8\) 17.\(\text{c}1\) \(b6\) 18.\(\text{e}4\) No black knights are likely to jump to f4 any longer, so White can safely play e3-e4 and claim his space advantage. 18...\(\text{a}7\) 19.\(\text{b}3\) \(\text{g}5\) 20.\(\text{a}4\) \(b5\) 21.\(\text{b}3\) \(\text{xd}2\) 22.\(\text{xd}2\) \(\text{d}7\) 23.\(\text{f}e1\) \(\text{e}7\) 24.\(\text{c}2\) \(\text{b}8\) 25.\(\text{w}e3\) \(\text{ab}7\) 26.\(\text{e}c1\) Black’s c7 pawn is a permanent weakness here. While had a solid advantage, perhaps small, but rather long-term, in Bluvshtein-Tiviakov, Montreal 2009.

\(\bullet\) 8...exd4 Now in order to fight for an opening advantage White has to play an isolated pawn position:

A) 9.exd4

A1) Should Black decide to bring his knight to b6, controlling the d5-square, White has an opening advantage after 9...\(\text{bd}7\) 10.a3 \(\text{e}7\) 11.\(\text{a}2\) \(\text{b}6\) 12.\(\text{f}4\) or 12.\(\text{e}1\) \(\text{fd}5\) 13.\(\text{f}4\);

A2) 9.\(\text{c}6\) 10.\(\text{b}3\) \(\text{f}5\) 10...\(\text{h}6\), preventing the \(\text{g}5\) pin, was an option. 11.a3 and now:

\[ \]

A21) White has harmonious development and is better after 11...\(\text{e}7\) 12.\(\text{f}4\), while ideas like 12.g4? also come into consideration here;

A22) 11...\(\text{d}6\) This type of position normally arises from the Queen’s Gambit Accepted, with the difference that here the white knight is on e2, which is perhaps a little less active than on the ‘regular’ f3. However, White is also two tempi up. The QGA line I am talking about is 1.\(\text{d}4\) \(\text{d}5\) 2.\(\text{c}4\) dxc4 3.e3 \(\text{e}5\) 4.\(\text{c}4\) exd4 5.exd4 \(\text{f}6\) 6.\(\text{f}3\) \(\text{d}6\) 7.0-0 0-0 8.\(\text{c}3\) \(\text{c}6\) 9.h3 – compared to this line White has in our version a pawn on a3 (Black has lost time with \(\ldots\)\(\text{b}4\)-\(\text{d}6\)), which is favourable. Also, Black has lost an extra tempo playing \(\ldots\)\(\text{e}5\) in two moves, so White should be better here. 12.\(\text{g}5\) Ideas like 12.g4? now fail to 12...\(\text{x}g4\) 13.\(\text{hx}g4\) \(\text{g}4\) and Black gets a devastating attack. 12...\(\text{h}6\) 13.\(\text{h}4\) \(\text{e}7\) 14.\(\text{e}1\) \(\text{e}4\) Trying to exchange a few pieces is in general a reasonable idea for Black, however it does not equalize. 15.\(\text{x}e7\) \(\text{xe}7\) 16.\(\text{f}4\) and White was better in Altermann-Wells, Groningen 1997;

B) Black has a good game in the case of 9.\(\text{xd}4\) \(\text{bd}7\) 9...\(\text{a}6\) 10.\(\text{wc}2\) \(\text{b}5\) 11.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{c}5\) does not solve Black's problems, because his queenside is actually vulnerable: 12.\(\text{f}5\) \(\text{a}7\) 13.\(\text{a}4\)! \(\text{xc}3\) 14.\(\text{xc}3\) \(\text{b}4\) 15.\(\text{d}1\) \(\text{d}7\) 16.\(\text{b}2\) \(\text{b}7\) 17.\(\text{f}3\) followed by \(\text{cxb}4\). White opens up the a1-h8 diagonal for his dark-squared bishop, the knight is on the excellent post f5 and Black has no counterplay. White had a massive advantage and soon won in Bogoljubow-Colle, Bled 1931; 9...\(\text{c}5\) 10.\(\text{db}5\) \(\text{c}6\) was an option. 10.a3 Black is also fine after 10.\(\text{wc}2\) \(\text{e}5\) 11.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{e}7\). 10...\(\text{xc}3\) 11.\(\text{bxc}3\) \(\text{e}5\) 12.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{e}7\) (the immediate 12...\(\text{c}5\) is also OK) with \(\ldots\)\(\text{c}7\)-\(\text{c}5\) to follow, and Black was doing fine in Serper-Loginov, Tashkent 1992.

During the time I was writing this book and had already submitted the current line to the publisher, I played a tournament in St Peterburg and got the idea that White can perhaps try to obtain a favourable version of one of the posi-
tions in this line by introducing the following move order: 7.a3!? \( \text{\textbf{d6}} \) In the case of 7...\( \text{\textbf{e7}} \) White continues with the regular set-up of \( \text{\textbf{ge2}} \) and castling, while the black bishop is passive on \( \text{e7} \).

8.\( \text{\textbf{b5}} \) \( \text{\textbf{e7}} \) 9.\( \text{\textbf{c2}} \)

The purpose behind White's move order is to provoke ...\( \text{\textbf{c7}} \)-\( \text{\textbf{c6}} \) and later, after Black plays ...\( \text{\textbf{e7}} \)-\( \text{\textbf{d6}} \) (because the bishop is passive on \( \text{e7} \)), White will get a favourable version of this line. 9...\( \text{\textbf{c6}} \) 10.\( \text{\textbf{c3}} \) \( \text{\textbf{e8}} \) 11.\( \text{\textbf{ge2}} \) \( \text{\textbf{d6}} \) Black plays as I had hoped for, so White gets a favourable version of one of the lines shown below. Black refrains from creating an isolated pawn position and hence his regular queenside counterplay is now going to be replaced with kingside action. However, Black is not going to have sufficient attacking potential on the kingside to support this action.

The correct decision was 11...\( \text{\textbf{c5}} \)! (as a rule Black should not be afraid of an isolated pawn position here) 12.\( \text{\textbf{xc5}} \) \( \text{\textbf{xc5}} \) and Black has harmonious development – the position is dynamically balanced with mutual chances, the isolated pawn on \( \text{d5} \) being a rather academic weakness here. 12.\( \text{\textbf{h3}} \) A useful precaution. 12.0-0 \( \text{\textbf{xh2+}} \) would transpose to the Kasparov-Computer match, please see below. 12...\( \text{\textbf{e7}} \) 13.0-0 \( \text{\textbf{e4}} \) 14.\( \text{\textbf{f3}} \) \( \text{\textbf{f5}} \)

Black looks for tactical, dynamic solutions, however he is underdeveloped and will soon run out of dynamic possibilities. 15.\( \text{\textbf{b1}} \) \( \text{\textbf{h4}} \) 16.\( \text{\textbf{xe4}} \) \( \text{\textbf{xe4}} \) 17.\( \text{\textbf{xe4}} \) If he gets greedy with 17.\( \text{\textbf{c2}} \) White may end up being sorry after 17...\( \text{\textbf{xh3}} \) 18.\( \text{\textbf{gxh3}} \) \( \text{\textbf{e6}} \) 19.\( \text{\textbf{f2}} \) \( \text{\textbf{xh3}} \). 17...\( \text{\textbf{dxe4}} \) 18.\( \text{\textbf{c4+}} \) \( \text{\textbf{h8}} \) 19.\( \text{\textbf{d2}} \) \( \text{\textbf{d7}} \) 20.\( \text{\textbf{b4}} \) It is important to trade off Black's strong dark-squared bishop. As regards pawn structure, White has a good version of a Reversed French. 20...\( \text{\textbf{xb4}} \) 20...\( \text{\textbf{c5}} \) 21.\( \text{\textbf{dxc5}} \) \( \text{\textbf{xc5}} \) 22.\( \text{\textbf{xc5}} \) \( \text{\textbf{xc5}} \) 23.\( \text{\textbf{b4}} \) costs Black a pawn: 23...\( \text{\textbf{d3}} \) (or 23...\( \text{\textbf{e6}} \) 24.\( \text{\textbf{b5}} \) \( \text{\textbf{d7}} \) 25.\( \text{\textbf{f4}} \) 24.\( \text{\textbf{xd3}} \) \( \text{\textbf{exd3}} \) 25.\( \text{\textbf{xd3}} \). 21.\( \text{\textbf{xb4}} \) \( \text{\textbf{b6}} \) 22.\( \text{\textbf{f7}} \) \( \text{\textbf{f8}} \) 23.\( \text{\textbf{a5}} \) After this standard rook lift White has a winning advantage. The pawn on \( \text{e4} \) will fall and the black king is very vulnerable. 23...\( \text{\textbf{e7}} \) 24.\( \text{\textbf{e5}} \) \( \text{\textbf{d6}} \) 25.\( \text{\textbf{xe4}} \) and White soon won in I. Sokolov-Sharafiev, St Petersberg 2010.

7...\( \text{\textbf{e8}} \)

The most flexible move. Another option is to start immediate central activity with 7...\( \text{\textbf{c5}} \).

I personally think that pushing ...\( \text{\textbf{c7}} \)-\( \text{\textbf{c5}} \) with the black bishop still on \( \text{b4} \) does not equalize, but of course opinions differ. 8.0-0 The most precise. White develops and waits for Black to put his knight
on c6. If White immediate plays 8.a3, then after 8...cxd4 9.exd4 (please note that now 9.axb4 dxc3 10.b5 does not work because the black knight is not on c6 for the tempo) 9...Qxc3+ 10.bxc3 b6 11.0-0 Black has an extra possibility in 11...Qa6, trying to exchange the light-squared bishops, which is good for Black in these positions. 12.Qc2 (White declines the exchange, but now the bishop on a6 is active) 12...Qbd7 13.Qe1 Qe8 14.Qf4 Qc8 with a dynamic balance in Christiansen-Tal, San Francisco 1991. 8...Qc6 If Black decides to keep his knight on b8 and makes another useful move with 8...Qe8, then White plays 9.a3 cxd4 10.exd4 Qd6 11.Qb5 and gets the advantage of the bishop pair, since on 11...Qf8?! 12.Qf4 is unpleasant. 9.a3 cxd4 9...Qxc3 10.bxc3 is a favourable version of the Sämisch Variation for White, since Black no longer has the plan with ...b7-b6 and ...Qa6. Now:

A) Taking a pawn is not really an option: 11...Qxb2 12.Qxb2

A1) If 12...Qb4?, White simply gets back his pawn and has a clearly better game after 13.Qxh7+ Qxh7 14.Qa3. Taking an exchange is also tempting, though Black may survive: 13.Qa3 Qxd3 14.Qf8 Qxf2 15.Qxf2 Qxf8 16.Wd4 and now if 16...a5 there is 17.Qxf6 gxf6 18.Qf4. 16.Wd4 a5

A2) 12...Qb8 13.Qf4 and White has a strong initiative, clearly worth more than a pawn.

B) 11...Qe5 12.Qxc3 White is better here — it is not easy for Black to create active counterplay to compensate for the isolated pawn and also White’s double b-pawns are very handy here; square c6 is under control and White has the a-file open for his rook:

B1) Tactical counterplay with 12...Qg4 13.f3 (13.Qe2 Qxe2 is again a trade of the light-squared bishops which Black should be happy with) 13...d4 does not really work for Black in view of 14.Qxh7+! Qxh7 15.Wxd4 Wxd4 16.exd4 Qxf3+ 17.gxf3 Qe6. Naturally Black has drawing chances, but a pawn is a pawn;

B2) 12...Wc7 13.Qe2 Qd8 14.Qa4 This rook transfer is typical here. 14...b6 15.Wd4 Qb7 16.f3 and White was better in Salov-Gligoric, Belgrade 1987;

B3) 12...Qe6 13.Qe2 Qc4 14.b3 Qd6 15.Qb2 Qe8 16.Qa4 with a white advantage in Milov-Campora, Santo Domingo 2003.

Another option for White is to play in a symmetrical pawn position where he has the upper hand: 10.exd4 Qd6 In the event of 10...Qxc3 11.bxc3, the black knight is already on c6 and he does not have the plan with ...b7-b6, Qa6 any longer, so compared to Christiansen-Tal, here it is more difficult for Black to create counterplay, while White’s attack is relatively easy to develop. 11...Qe7 12.Wc2 Qd7 13.Qg5 Qg6 14.f4! h6 15.Qxf6 Wxf6 16.f5 Qe7 17.Qg3 Qc8 18.Qf4 Qd6 19.Qf2 Qfe8 20.Qh5 Wd8
21.\textxcancel{\textxtextit{D}}xg7! White had a decisive attack and soon won in Kasparov-Tal, Brussels 1987. 11.f3 White has a slight advantage here. The pawn on f3 is controlling the e4-square and at the same time White is preparing the push g2-g4, which is a typical way to attack on the kingside in such positions. At the same time White may also, when convenient, play \textxcancel{\textxtextit{D}}f4 – White should keep the light-squared bishops on the board here, but exchanging the dark-squared ones is good for him.

\textbf{8.\textxcancel{\textxtextit{D}}d2}

White is trying to combine different plans, keeping his options open. Due to recent successes of grandmasters Milov, Alexandrov and yours truly this continuation is rather popular at the moment. The old main move was 8.0-0 and now:

\textbullet 8...\textxcancel{\textxtextit{D}}f8

\begin{figure}
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\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{ch2_25_diagram1.png}
\end{figure}

A) 9.a3 a5 10.\textxcancel{\textxtextit{D}}h1 \textxcancel{\textxtextit{D}}a6 11.f3 11.\textxcancel{\textxtextit{D}}f4, preventing the counterplay with ...c7-c5, and then f2-f3 followed by the central push e3-e4 or the one on the kingside (g2-g4), deserves practical testing. 11...\textxcancel{\textxtextit{D}}c7 12.\textxcancel{\textxtextit{D}}xf4 \textxcancel{\textxtextit{D}}xc5 13.\textxcancel{\textxtextit{D}}xc5 14.e4 Probably White's best here – he opens up the centre, having more active pieces in the resulting position. 14...\textxcancel{\textxtextit{D}}xe4 15.\textxcancel{\textxtextit{D}}xe4 \textxcancel{\textxtextit{D}}xe4 16.\textxcancel{\textxtextit{D}}xe4 \textxcancel{\textxtextit{D}}xd1 17.\textxcancel{\textxtextit{D}}xd1 \textxcancel{\textxtextit{D}}b5 18.\textxcancel{\textxtextit{D}}d3 \textxcancel{\textxtextit{D}}f8 19.\textxcancel{\textxtextit{D}}f4 White had a very slight advantage, but Black gradually equalized and drew in Kramnik-Leko, Dortmund 2001;

B) Interesting is 9.\textxcancel{\textxtextit{D}}f4?!, trying to find for the time being a more useful move than a2-a3, since Black's bishop has already returned to f8. 9...\textxcancel{\textxtextit{D}}c6 10.f3 \textxcancel{\textxtextit{D}}d6 and White gets an improved version of the line 4.e3 0-0 5.\textxcancel{\textxtextit{D}}e2 d5 6.a3 \textxcancel{\textxtextit{D}}d6 7.cxd5 exd5 8.\textxcancel{\textxtextit{D}}f4 \textxcancel{\textxtextit{D}}e8 9.\textxcancel{\textxtextit{D}}d3 c6 10.0-0 \textxcancel{\textxtextit{D}}d6 11.f3 – White is now to move and (obviously) there are better moves than 11.a3.

10...\textxcancel{\textxtextit{D}}bd7 11.\textxcancel{\textxtextit{D}}h1 is also a good version for White of the aforementioned variation;

\textbullet 8...\textxcancel{\textxtextit{D}}b6 is also one of Black's options. White can start action on the kingside:

9.f3 \textxcancel{\textxtextit{D}}b7

\begin{figure}
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\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{ch2_25_diagram2.png}
\end{figure}

A) 10.g4 c5 11.a3 cxd4 12.exd4 \textxcancel{\textxtextit{D}}f8 13.\textxcancel{\textxtextit{D}}f4 This kind of position should be slightly better for White – it is impor-
tant for him that the light-squared bishops are on the board;

B) A way to try to combine different plans would be 10.a3 \( \text{Qf8} \) 11.b4 Black now went for his standard counterplay with 11...c5 12.bxc5 bxc5 13.\( \text{Qb1} \). Black's bishop on b7 is passive, but its white colleague on c1 is also merely defending the e3 weakness. 13...\( \text{Wc8} \) 14.\( \text{Wb3} \) d6 15.\( \text{Wc2} \) Qb7d7 16.a4 \( \text{Wb8} \) On this or one of the next moves, Black probably had to push 16...c4. 17.a5 The advanced a-pawn is useful for White here. 17...\( \text{Bb4} \) 18.\( \text{Qd2} \) \( \text{Bxb1} \) 19.\( \text{Bxb1} \) \( \text{d6} \) 20.\( \text{Bb5} \) \( \text{Bb8} \) 21.\( \text{Qg3} \) g6 22.\( \text{Qxc5} \) \( \text{Qxc5} \) 23.\( \text{Wc2} \) \( \text{Qd3} \) 24.\( \text{Wxd3} \) \( \text{Bxb5} \) 25.\( \text{Bxb5} \) and White was better in I. Sokolov-Sunye Neto, New York 1996.

\( \text{8...Qd6} \)

A) 9.f3 Preparing the pawn push g2-g4, and vacating the f2-square for the white queen. The positions arising here are strategically complicated, as this whole line is, with Black having satisfactory counterplay. 9...c5

\( \text{10.We1} \) Or 10.a3 \( \text{Qc6} \) 11.\( \text{Wf2} \) a6 12.a4 \( \text{Qc4} \) b5 13.g4 b4 14.axb4 \( \text{Qxb4} \) 15.\( \text{Qa4} \) \( \text{d7} \) 16.g5 \( \text{Qxa4} \) 17.\( \text{Qxa4} \) \( \text{d7} \) – the light-squared bishops are exchanged, which is almost always favourable for Black in such positions because it is now very difficult for White to create any meaningful threats on the kingside. Hence Black had a favourable game in M. Gurevich-Hjartarson, Akureyri 1988. 10...\( \text{Qc6} \) 11.\( \text{Wf4} \)

A1) 11...\( \text{Qe7} \) 12.\( \text{Wf2} \) a6 13.\( \text{g4} \) b5 14.\( \text{Qg3} \) b4 15.\( \text{Qce2} \) a5 16.g5 \( \text{Qd7} \) 17.f4 \( \text{Qa6}! \) Black exchanges the 'correct' bishop and, as said, his counterplay becomes easier and White's kingside attack less dangerous. 18.\( \text{Qxa6} \) \( \text{Qxa6} \) 19.\( \text{Qf8} \) 20.f5 \( \text{Qd6} \) Black has a comfortable game, while it still takes White some time to create tangible threats on the kingside. 21.\( \text{Qd2} \) \( \text{Wb6} \) 22.\( \text{Qg2} \) \( \text{cxd4} \) 23.\( \text{Qxd4} \) \( \text{Qg3} \) 24.\( \text{Qg3} \) \( \text{Wxd4} \) 25.\( \text{Wd4} \) \( \text{Qxd4} \) and White had to return the pawn and managed in M. Gurevich-Polugaevsky, Reggio Emilia 1991/92;

A2) 11...h6?! It is a good idea for Black to keep his pawn on h7, because with his kingside pawn structure intact, White's prospective pawn advance is considerably less dangerous. 12.g4 a6 13.\( \text{Wd2} \) b5 14.\( \text{Qg3} \) e6 15.\( \text{Qce2} \) c8 16.\( \text{Qd2} \) \( \text{Wb6} \) 17.\( \text{Qad1} \) b4 18.\( \text{Qbl} \) a5 19.\( \text{Qh1} \) \( \text{c7} \) 20.h4 \( \text{Wc6} \) 21.\( \text{Qgl} \) \( \text{Qc7} \) 22.\( \text{Qg2} \) \( \text{Qxd4} \) 23.\( \text{Qxd4} \) \( \text{Qd7} \) 24.\( \text{Qf4} \) \( \text{Qxf4} \) 25.\( \text{Qxf4} \) \( \text{Qb6} \) 26.h5 \( \text{Qd7} \) 27.g5 White had an attack and went on to win in Giorgadze-Hjartarson, Yerevan 1996;

A3) 11...\( \text{Qe7} \) 12.\( \text{Qb5} \) \( \text{Qg6} \) 13.\( \text{Wf2} \) \( \text{Qf8} \) 14.\( \text{Qxc5} \) \( \text{Qxc5} \) 15.b3 \( \text{Qd7} \) 16.\( \text{Qbd4} \) c8 17.\( \text{Qd2} \) \( \text{Qe5} \) 18.\( \text{Qc2} \) \( \text{Wb6} \) a standard type of position (which can arise from a number of openings) – Black has active piece play and the potential weakness of the isolated pawn on d5 is of a rather academic nature, Black had a nice game in Gelfand-Kotronias, Halkidiki 1993.

B) 9.a3 is in itself definitely a useful move (positionally sound and preparing b2-b4 in many lines), but Black has already returned his bishop and
there should be a more direct way for White to proceed. Perhaps one of the most embarrassing losses for White in the e3 Nimzo happened in this line:

B1) 9...\(\text{\=g}4!?\) This move contains more venom than it looks. 10.h3? White is clearly underestimating Black’s tactical possibilities – the kind of mistake which has caused Van Wely to lose many more games. 10...\(\text{\=f}4!\) was correct, with prospects of an opening advantage.

10...\(\text{\=h}2!\) 11.\(\text{\=e}1\) \(\text{\=f}3+\) 12.gxf3 \(\text{\=g}5+\) 13.\(\text{\=h}1\) \(\text{\=h}4\) Now it’s becoming clear that Black’s attack is considerably more dangerous than initially anticipated:

B11) In case of 14.\(\text{\=g}1\) Black does not have to make a draw with 14...\(\text{\=g}5+\), but can continue the attack with 14...\(\text{\=x}h3!\) 15.f4 \(\text{\=g}4\) 16.\(\text{\=a}4\) \(\text{\=e}6\) 17.\(\text{\=g}3\) \(\text{\=h}6!\) 18.\(\text{\=e}8+\) \(\text{\=f}8\) 19.\(\text{\=x}d5\) \(\text{\=c}6!\) 20.\(\text{\=e}4\) 20.\(\text{\=x}a8\) \(\text{\=f}3\) and 21...\(\text{\=w}1\) mates. 20...\(\text{\=h}2+\) 21.\(\text{\=f}1\) \(\text{\=e}8!\) 22.\(\text{\=x}e8\) \(\text{\=f}3;\)

B12) 14.\(\text{\=f}4\) \(\text{\=x}h3\) 15.\(\text{\=c}x\text{d}5\) \(\text{\=e}6!\)

Removing the white knight from \(f4\) and opening the \(b8-h2\) diagonal for his bishop. White had most likely missed one of these tactical blows, though there is no longer a defence here. 16.\(\text{\=x}e6\) \(\text{\=f}5+!\) 17.\(\text{\=g}1\) \(\text{\=h}2+\) 18.\(\text{\=f}1\) \(\text{\=g}3!\) Finishing the game in style. White is mated, 0-1 Van Wely-Acs, Hoogeveen 2002.

B2) Another well-known game continued 9...c6 10.\(\text{\=c}2\) An option is 10.h3; it is useful to notice that in the case of 10.\(\text{\=f}4?!\) White would simply be a tempo down in the well-known line 4.e3 0-0 5.\(\text{\=e}2\) d5 6.a3 \(\text{\=e}7\) 7.\(\text{\=c}x\text{d}5\) \(\text{\=x}d5\) 8.\(\text{\=f}4\) c6 9.\(\text{\=d}3\) \(\text{\=e}8\) 10.0-0 \(\text{\=d}6\). 10...\(\text{\=x}h2+!\) An unlikely computer decision. 11.\(\text{\=x}h2\) \(\text{\=g}4+\) 12.\(\text{\=g}3\) \(\text{\=g}5\) 13.\(\text{\=f}4\) \(\text{\=h}5\) 14.\(\text{\=d}2\) \(\text{\=h}2+\) 15.\(\text{\=f}3\) \(\text{\=h}4\) 16.\(\text{\=x}xh7+\) A winning attempt was 16.g3! \(\text{\=h}2+\) 17.\(\text{\=f}2\) \(\text{\=g}4+\) 18.\(\text{\=e}1\). 16...\(\text{\=h}8\) Now the draw is forced. 17.\(\text{\=g}3\) \(\text{\=h}2+\) 18.\(\text{\=f}2\) \(\text{\=g}4+\) 19.\(\text{\=f}3\) \(\text{\=h}2+\) 1/2-1/2 Kasparov-Deep Junior, New York 2003.

C) If 9.\(\text{\=d}2\) then simplest is 9...c5 10.\(\text{\=x}c5\) \(\text{\=x}c5\) 11.\(\text{\=c}1\) \(\text{\=c}6\) 12.\(\text{\=b}5\) \(\text{\=e}6\) 13.\(\text{\=b}4\) \(\text{\=d}7\) 14.\(\text{\=c}3\) \(\text{\=e}4\) and Black had a good game in Piket-Gelfand, Wijk aan Zee 2002;

D) 9.h3 was an Epishin favourite. White eliminates Black’s various kingside tactics, however Black gets good play after 9...\(\text{\=b}7\) (after an immediate 9...c5 White probably gets some advantage: 10.\(\text{\=x}c5\) \(\text{\=x}c5\) 11.b3 \(\text{\=c}6\) 12.\(\text{\=b}2\) \(\text{\=e}6\) 13.\(\text{\=c}1\) 10.\(\text{\=w}2\) a6 11.\(\text{\=d}1\) c5! (Black correctly judges that he will get plenty of play for the sacrificed pawn)

12.b3 b5 13.\(\text{\=x}c5\) \(\text{\=x}c5\) 14.\(\text{\=x}d5\) \(\text{\=x}d5\) 15.\(\text{\=x}d5\) \(\text{\=e}5\) 16.\(\text{\=f}6+\) \(\text{\=w}6\) 17.\(\text{\=d}4\) \(\text{\=f}5\) 18.\(\text{\=w}1\) \(\text{\=g}6\) 19.\(\text{\=h}1\) \(\text{\=e}4\) as in Epishin-Khenkin, Bratto 2001.
8...\(\text{Qf8}\)

Black prepares the standard \(...c7-c5\). This is again the most flexible move here. Options are:

- \(8...\text{a5}\) Black prepares \(...b7-b6\) followed by \(...\text{a6}\), however this just takes too much time and does not equalize.

9.\(\text{Ac1}\) \(\text{b6}\) In order to exchange the 'right' bishops, but it looks dubious because it is time-consuming and White is not forced to oblige. 10.0-0 \(\text{a6}\) 11.\(\text{b1}\) Black's bishop on \(a6\) is placed considerably worse than its white counterpart. 11...\(\text{d6}\) 12.\(\text{e1}\) Removing the pieces from the \(a6-f1\) diagonal and preparing central action. 12...\(\text{c5}\) 13.\(\text{g3}\) \(\text{xd4}\) On 13...\(\text{c6}\) White plays 14.\(\text{dx}c5\) \(bxc5\) 15.\(\text{a4}\), forcing 15...\(\text{c4}\), a move Black prefers not to play here. White has a standard advantage due to his better pawn structure. 14.\(\text{exd4}\) \(\text{xe1}\+\) 15.\(\text{xel}\)

Now the pawn structure in the centre has been transformed into a favourable pawn symmetry for White due to his lead in development. I have explained such pawn structure transformations, resulting in a favourable symmetry, in my book *Winning Chess Middlegames*.

15...\(\text{c6}\) In order to finish his development, Black decides to sacrifice a pawn — otherwise White would have played \(\text{Qf5}\) and \(\text{g5}\), developing an initiative. 16.\(\text{xd5}\) and now:

A) 16...\(\text{xd4}\)? is a blunder due to 17.\(\text{xf6+}\) \(\text{gf6}\) (17...\(\text{xf6}\) 18.\(\text{e4}\) \(\text{e3}\) 18.\(\text{e3}\) and White gets a winning attack after 18...\(\text{xg3}\) 19.\(\text{xf3}\) 20.\(\text{h4}\).

B) 16...\(\text{xd5}\) 17.\(\text{xc6}\) \(\text{xd7}\) 18.\(\text{c1}\) White could have sacrificed a rook and gone for the kill with 18.\(\text{e4}\)!! \(\text{xc6}\) 19.\(\text{xe7+}\) \(\text{xel}\) 20.\(\text{e5}\) \(\text{xel}\) 21.\(\text{e4}\) and White obviously has a strong attack. I found it difficult to calculate the exact consequences of this sacrifice and decided to keep my material advantage instead. 18...\(\text{e6}\) 19.\(\text{d1}\) \(\text{f4}\) 20.\(\text{e3}\) \(\text{h5}\) 21.\(\text{c2}\) White was a sound pawn up and went on to win in I. Sokolov-Naiditsch, Poikovsky 2010.

- If 8...\(\text{d6}\) is a logical move in itself. Black returns his bishop to a more active square, but the drawback is that after 9.\(\text{c1}\) White annoyingly threatens \(\text{b5}\), which forces either \(...\text{a7-a6}\) or \(...\text{c7-c6}\):

A) 9...\(\text{c6}\) is in general positionally sound, however it takes longer to create counterplay, or perhaps we should say the counterplay is less straightforward, than with the regular \(...c7-c5\). 10.\(\text{g3}\) \(\text{bd7}\) 11.0-0 \(\text{f8}\) 12.\(\text{f3}\) \(\text{c5}\)?! Black is combining too many different plans. Creating counterplay with 12...\(\text{h5}\) was
an option, when White would probably have to play 13.\( \triangle g e 2 \), getting away from tempi with \( ... h 5 - h 4 \) and preparing \( e 3 - e 4 \).

A1) 13.\( \triangle b 5 \) leads to a pawn sacrifice: 13...\( \triangle x g 3 \) 14.\( h x g 3 \) c4 15.\( \triangle c 2 \) The actual game went 15.\( \triangle b 1 \) \( w b 6 \) 16.\( \triangle c 3 \) \( w x b 2 \) 17.e4 dxe4 18.fxe4 \( \triangle g 4 \) 19.\( w e 1 \) \( a d 8 \) 20.\( \triangle e 3 \) \( h 5 \) 21.e5 \( \triangle g 4 \) 22.\( \triangle e 4 \) unclear, Milov-Almasi, Bastia 2005. 15...\( w b 6 \) 16.\( \triangle c 3 \) \( w x b 2 \) 17.\( \triangle b 1 \) \( w a 3 \) 18.e4 dxe4 19.fxe4 with excellent compensation for White;

A2) White could have gained a relatively safe advantage with 13.\( d x c 5 \) \( \triangle x c 5 \) 14.\( w e 1 \) and now 14...\( \triangle g 6 \) 15.\( \triangle b 5 ! \) \( \triangle d 7 \) 15...\( \triangle e 7 \) looks awkward; Black does not get enough play to compensate for his isolated pawn after 16.\( \triangle a 4 \) \( \triangle d 6 \) 17.\( \triangle c 3 \). Now White has a tactical solution in 16.\( \triangle x d 5 ! \), winning a pawn.

B) 9...a6 and now:

B1) The standard 10.a3?! preparing b2-b4, fails to impress here, as White has already spent time on \( \triangle d 2 \) and \( \triangle c 1 \) and this is too slow to combine the plans. 10...b6 Black is preparing his regular counterplay with ...c7-c5. Now White embarks on a bizarre plan: 11.\( w b 3 \)?! This prevents Black’s immediate pawn advance on the queenside, however Black is preparing \( ... c 7 - c 5 \) with the most natural moves and very soon White’s pieces will be discoordinated and badly placed. Most likely White now realized that the position after 11.b4 c5 12.dxc5 bxc5 13.bxc5 \( \triangle x c 5 \) is very fine for Black. 11.0-0 had to be played, finishing development. 11...\( \triangle b 7 \) 12.0-0 \( \triangle b d 7 \) 13.\( \triangle a 4 \)?! \( w e 7 \) 14.\( \triangle g 3 \) g6 15.\( \triangle f e 1 \) \( a b 8 \) 16.\( b b 1 \) c5 17.\( \triangle c 3 \) A clear admission that White’s plan of stopping Black’s queenside counterplay has utterly failed. 17...b5 White’s knight stands in the way again and travels to another unfortunate square. 18.\( \triangle a 2 \) \( \triangle e 4 \) and Black was better in Alexandrov-Abramovic, Budva 2002;

B2) 10.0-0

B21) 10...b5 11.\( \triangle f 4 ! \) With the black knight still on b8, White hits on the d5 pawn, disrupting Black’s development. 11...\( \triangle b 7 \) 12.\( w f 3 \) \( \triangle e 4 \) The resource Black was counting on:

B211) The actual game saw 13.\( \triangle e 1 \) \( w g 5 \) 14.a4:

B2111) 14...b4?? Black does not get the point behind White’s last two moves and commits a terrible blunder. 15.\( \triangle x d 5 ! \) and Black realized that after 15...\( \triangle x d 5 \) 16.\( \triangle x d 5 \) \( w x d 5 \) comes 17.\( \triangle c 4 \) and since he will lose not only the d5, but also the one on b4 or c7, he
resigned in I. Sokolov-Khenkin, Belgium tt 2010/11.

B2112) Correct was 14...c5! and now White's pieces start to look clumsy: the knight is shaky on f4, the queen could get under attack on f3 should White take on c5 and the a8-h1 diagonal is opened, and White's rooks are disconnected. Black takes over the initiative: 15.g3 Or 15.axb5 cxd4 16.bxa6 cxd3 17.\(\text{\text{d}}\)b5 dxe3. Tactics also favour Black after 15.h4 \(\text{\text{w}}\)xh4 16.g3 \(\text{\text{w}}\)f6 17.dxc5 \(\text{\text{e}}\)xc5 18.\(\text{\text{d}}\)cxd5 \(\text{\text{g}}\)g5 19.\(\text{\text{d}}\)xc5 \(\text{\text{e}}\)xc5 20.axb5 axb5 21.\(\text{\text{f}}\)f6+ \(\text{\text{w}}\)xf6 22.\(\text{\text{w}}\)xb7 \(\text{\text{w}}\)c6 23.\(\text{\text{w}}\)xc6 \(\text{\text{d}}\)xc6 24.\(\text{\text{d}}\)xb5 \(\text{\text{e}}\)ec8; or 15.dxc5 \(\text{\text{e}}\)xc5. 15...b4 16.h4 \(\text{\text{w}}\)f6 17.\(\text{\text{c}}\)c2c4.

B212) 13.\(\text{\text{d}}\)fd1! \(\text{\text{g}}\)g5 In the case of 13...\(\text{\text{c}}\)xd2 14.\(\text{\text{c}}\)xd2 c6 15.\(\text{\text{d}}\)dc2 \(\text{\text{d}}\)d7 16.g3 White has a standard long-term positional advantage due to his pressure on the weak black c6 pawn.

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\includegraphics[width=0.8\textwidth]{chessboard.png}
\end{center}

During the game I thought that this position was fine for Black, but White has an unexpected tactical solution here: 14.\(\text{\text{d}}\)fxd5! That's it! During the game I did realize that the d5 capture was a tactical possibility, which I was also able to execute due to my opponent's error, but I failed to see this one. 14...\(\text{\text{c}}\)xc3 14...\(\text{\text{c}}\)xd5?? 15.\(\text{\text{d}}\)xe4 \(\text{\text{d}}\)xe4 16.\(\text{\text{d}}\)xe4 \(\text{\text{w}}\)h4 is a blunder due to the prosaic 17.\(\text{\text{f}}\)f6+; while 14...\(\text{\text{c}}\)xd2? simply loses a pawn to 15.\(\text{\text{d}}\)e7+ \(\text{\text{w}}\)xe7 16.\(\text{\text{w}}\)xb7. 15.e4! The point of White's play. 15...\(\text{\text{c}}\)xb2+ 16.\(\text{\text{c}}\)xb2 \(\text{\text{h}}\)h4+ 17.\(\text{\text{g}}\)g1 \(\text{\text{c}}\)xd1 18.\(\text{\text{c}}\)xc7 Going for the maximum. Also possible is 18.\(\text{\text{d}}\)c7 \(\text{\text{c}}\)c6 19.\(\text{\text{w}}\)xd1 \(\text{\text{c}}\)xd4 20.\(\text{\text{d}}\)xa8 \(\text{\text{d}}\)xa8 21.\(\text{\text{e}}\)e3 with an advantage. 18...\(\text{\text{d}}\)xd5 19.\(\text{\text{c}}\)xd5 White's active rook on c7, his passed d-pawns and his bishop pair provide more than enough compensation here. 19...\(\text{\text{f}}\)f2+ Black cannot finish his development after 19...\(\text{\text{f}}\)f8 20.\(\text{\text{w}}\)xd1; while if 19...\(\text{\text{w}}\)f6 Black gets mated after 20.\(\text{\text{c}}\)e4! \(\text{\text{w}}\)xf2+ 21.\(\text{\text{d}}\)h2. 20.\(\text{\text{w}}\)xf2 \(\text{\text{f}}\)xf2 21.\(\text{\text{c}}\)xf2 \(\text{\text{d}}\)d8 22.\(\text{\text{d}}\)b4 and White is better.

B22) Another option is to first develop the knight: 10...\(\text{\text{c}}\)bd7? and after 11.\(\text{\text{d}}\)g3 (11.\(\text{\text{f}}\)4 is another plan) play:

B221) 11...b5

B2211) 12.\(\text{\text{c}}\)b1 has been played in practice: 12...g6?! Better is 12...\(\text{\text{b}}\)b7. 13.\(\text{\text{c}}\)ce2?! Not taking the tactical chance of 13.e4! \(\text{\text{c}}\)xe3 14.fx3 dxe4 15.\(\text{\text{g}}\)g5, which looks good for White. 13...\(\text{\text{b}}\)b7 14.f3 c5 15.\(\text{\text{c}}\)e1 b4 16.\(\text{\text{f}}\)f2 a5 17.\(\text{\text{c}}\)e1 \(\text{\text{w}}\)e7 and Black had a good game in Alexandrov-Prasad, Kolkata 2004;

B2212) 12.\(\text{\text{c}}\)ce2!, preparing to either develop the d2 bishop to a5 or play \(\text{\text{w}}\)e1, \(\text{\text{b}}\)b4 and swap the dark-squared bishops, which is a good transaction for White here:

B22121) 12...\(\text{\text{c}}\)b7 13.\(\text{\text{c}}\)e1 followed by \(\text{\text{c}}\)b4, or 13.\(\text{\text{a}}\)5;

B22122) 12...\(\text{\text{b}}\)b6 13.b3 with a white edge;

B222) Or 11...b6 12.\(\text{\text{f}}\)f3 Black is fine in the case of 12.f3 c5 13.\(\text{\text{c}}\)ce2 \(\text{\text{b}}\)7 14.\(\text{\text{c}}\)e1 \(\text{\text{b}}\)8 15.\(\text{\text{f}}\)f2 \(\text{\text{c}}\)8 16.\(\text{\text{c}}\)h1 g6 17.\(\text{\text{c}}\)d1 \(\text{\text{w}}\)e7, Alexandrov-Zhang Zhong, Poikovsky 2004. 12...\(\text{\text{f}}\)f8 13.\(\text{\text{f}}\)f3 \(\text{\text{b}}\)7 14.\(\text{\text{f}}\)f4
White's play looks a bit strange, however he is anticipating Black's next move: on 14...g6 there is 15.\( \text{Q} \)h6, and 14...c5 runs into 15.\( \text{Q} \)d6. White is also trying to trade his f5 knight for Black's f8 bishop, which is in general a good transaction for him here. 14...\( \text{c} \)c8 Or 14...g6 15.\( \text{Q} \)h6+ \( \text{g} \)g7 16.e4! dxe4 17.\( \text{c} \)c4 \( \text{d} \)d6 18.\( \text{h} \)h4 \( \text{e} \)e7 19.\( \text{Q} \)g5 with attack. 15.f3 c5 Or 15...\( \text{h} \)h5 16.\( \text{W} \)g4. 16.\( \text{W} \)g5 If 16.\( \text{d} \)d6 White's queen gets trapped after 16...\( \text{x} \)xd6 17.\( \text{W} \)xd6 \( \text{e} \)e5 followed by ...\( \text{e} \)e8. 16...\( \text{h} \)h8 with a complicated game. I would personally prefer White, but this is a matter of taste.

B23) Another standard plan is 10...b6 followed by ...\( \text{b} \)b7 and ...c7-c5. 11.f3 and now:

B23 1) In the case of 11...c5 12.\( \text{W} \)e1 \( \text{c} \)c6

13.\( \text{W} \)h4 A standard plan, worth remembering, in these positions. White first lures Black's bishop to e7 (a less active post than d6) and then develops his queen to f2. 13...\( \text{c} \)c7 14.\( \text{W} \)f2 b5 Tactics would work for White after 15.dxc5! (the actual game saw 15.\( \text{Q} \)g3 b4 16.\( \text{c} \)ce2 \( \text{W} \)b6 with approximate equality, Alexandrov-Lekic, Jahorina 2003) 15...\( \text{c} \)e5 16.\( \text{f} \)f4

B23 11) 16...\( \text{x} \)c5 17.\( \text{x} \)xb5 g5 18.\( \text{W} \)g3 \( \text{f} \)f4 19.\( \text{h} \)h5! The tactics related to the weak f6-square are deadly for Black here. 19.\( \text{W} \)xc5 may lead to a draw after 19...gxf4 20.\( \text{Q} \)h7+ \( \text{h} \)h7 21.\( \text{W} \)xf4 \( \text{a} \)xb5 22.\( \text{f} \)xg4 \( \text{W} \)d6 23.\( \text{b} \)xb5 \( \text{a} \)a6 24.\( \text{W} \)xd5 \( \text{W} \)xd5 25.\( \text{W} \)f5+ \( \text{g} \)g7 26.\( \text{W} \)f6+ \( \text{g} \)g8 27.\( \text{W} \)g5+ with perpetual check;

B23 111) 19...\( \text{x} \)e3 loses to 20.\( \text{x} \)c5 \( \text{xf} \)1 (or 20...\( \text{x} \)dx3 21.\( \text{x} \)e3 \( \text{e} \)e3 22.\( \text{W} \)xd5) 21.\( \text{x} \)xf1 \( \text{x} \)d3 22.\( \text{W} \)xd5;

B23 1112) 19...\( \text{x} \)d3! 20.\( \text{W} \)c5 \( \text{axb} \)5 Or 20...\( \text{x} \)c5 21.\( \text{c} \)c7!. 21.\( \text{W} \)xc8 21.\( \text{x} \)g4? is not good due to 21...\( \text{c} \)c5 22.\( \text{f} \)f6+ \( \text{x} \)xf6 23.\( \text{W} \)xf6 \( \text{a} \)e4 24.\( \text{W} \)f3 \( \text{xa} \)2 25.h3 \( \text{xb} \)2. 21...\( \text{W} \)xc8 22.\( \text{x} \)g4 \( \text{xe} \)6 23.\( \text{a} \)c3 Black has to return the exchange. 23...\( \text{x} \)c3 24.bxc3 with an extra pawn and weaknesses around Black's king;

B23 12) Or 16...\( \text{x} \)d3 17.\( \text{x} \)d3 \( \text{c} \)f5 18.\( \text{f} \)f4 \( \text{x} \)c5 19.\( \text{x} \)d5 19.\( \text{x} \)b5 is also better for White. 19...\( \text{x} \)d5 20.\( \text{x} \)c5 \( \text{xf} \)4 21.\( \text{e} \)f4 \( \text{W} \)d3 Due to the opposite-coloured bishops Black has drawing chances, but White is a clear pawn up;

B23 122) 11...\( \text{a} \)b7 12.\( \text{W} \)e1 \( \text{bd} \)7 13.\( \text{W} \)f2 As already mentioned, 13.\( \text{W} \)h4 could be an improvement here, and after 13...\( \text{e} \)7, when the bishop is placed on a less active square, returning the queen to f2. 13...c5 14.\( \text{c} \)b1 \( \text{c} \)c8 15.\( \text{h} \)h1 b5 16.\( \text{x} \)c5 \( \text{x} \)c5 17.\( \text{d} \)d4 b4 18.\( \text{c} \)ce2 \( \text{a} \)5 19.\( \text{c} \)d1 g6 20.\( \text{c} \)c1 \( \text{e} \)7

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was at least equal for Black in Alexandrov-Rajkovic, Budva 2003.

Black can also push his c-pawn with the bishop still on b4, like on the previous move. As White I am personally happy to exchange my c3 knight for Black's b4 bishop, but opinions differ.

8...c5 9.a3 \(\text{\textit{xc3}}\) 10.\(\text{\textit{xc3}}\) c4 11.\(\text{\textit{c2}}\) \(\text{\textit{c6}}\) 12.0-0

White now plays for the strategic f2-f3, e3-e4 pawn advance in the centre, while Black tries to stop it, or at least slow it down, and plays for a pawn advance on the queenside. The position is sharp and timing is crucial.

A) Black can first improve his queen with 12...\(\text{\textit{d6}}\) and after 13.\(\text{\textit{g3}}\) advance 13...a5:

A1) The merits of 14.a4 are questionable. Yes, White stops Black's queenside pawn advance, but on the other hand the black knight now gets to b4 where it will be well stationed: 14...\(\text{\textit{b4}}\) 15.\(\text{\textit{b1}}\) \(\text{\textit{d7}}\) 16.\(\text{\textit{e2}}\) \(\text{\textit{g4}}\) Black should not be worse after 16...\(\text{\textit{e7}}\).

17.\(\text{\textit{f3}}\) \(\text{\textit{ac8}}\) 18.e4 dxe4 19.\(\text{\textit{xe4}}\) b6 with complicated play in Alexandrov-Magerramov, Dubai 2003; 19...\(\text{\textit{f6}}\) also deserved attention, leading to an unclear game;

A2) 14.\(\text{\textit{e1}}\) \(\text{\textit{e6}}\) 14...b5 15.e4 is good for White. 15.b3 Stopping Black's queenside pawns. Entering a race with 15.f3 b5 16.e4 dxe4 17.fxe4 is questionable, since Black sacrifices a piece with 17...b4! 18.e5 \(\text{\textit{xe5}}\) 19.dxe5 \(\text{\textit{wx}}d1\) 20.\(\text{\textit{axd1}}\) bxc3 21.exf6 cxb2. 15...\(\text{\textit{xb3}}\) 15...b5 16.bxc4 bxc4 17.f3 is good for White, as Black has no counterplay with ...b5-b4. 16.\(\text{\textit{xb3}}\) b5 17.f3 h5 18.\(\text{\textit{b1}}\), followed by \(\text{\textit{f2}}\), looks somewhat better for White.

B) 12...a5 Going for an immediate queenside advance, which is probably the most logical here.

B1) In a game with Onischuk, Alexandrov played 13.a4. Like in the above game against Magerramov, Black's knight will now be well placed on b4. 13...\(\text{\textit{b4}}\) 14.\(\text{\textit{b1}}\) \(\text{\textit{e4}}\)!

B11) Probably only now did White realize that after 15.f3 \(\text{\textit{xc3}}\) 16.bxc3 Black sacrifices a piece with 16...\(\text{\textit{xe3}}\) (of course not 16...\(\text{\textit{c6}}\)? 17.e4 and White has a dream position) 17.\(\text{\textit{wd2}}\) and now:

B111) 17...\(\text{\textit{we7}}\) is less accurate on account of 18.\(\text{\textit{xf4}}\) g5 19.\(\text{\textit{h5}}\) \(\text{\textit{a6}}\) (19...\(\text{\textit{e2}}\)? is a blunder due to 20.\(\text{\textit{xf6}}\)+) 20.\(\text{\textit{xe4}}\) \(\text{\textit{d3}}\) 21.\(\text{\textit{xd3}}\) \(\text{\textit{xd3}}\) 22.\(\text{\textit{ab1}}\);

B112) 17...\(\text{\textit{e8}}\)! 18.\(\text{\textit{xb4}}\) \(\text{\textit{xb4}}\) and Black's connected passed b- and c-pawns are at least worth a piece here.

B2) Therefore Alexandrov opted for 15.\(\text{\textit{e1}}\) b6. The immediate 15...\(\text{\textit{f5}}\) was an option to consider. 16.\(\text{\textit{a3}}\)? If 16.f3 then 16...\(\text{\textit{d6}}\) followed by ...\(\text{\textit{f5}}\); but White had a better possibility in 16.\(\text{\textit{f4}}\)! and now White will play f2-f3, chasing the black knight away. Here it becomes difficult for Black to place his bishop on the b1-h7 diagonal, since 16...\(\text{\textit{f5}}\) blunders a pawn to 17.f3 \(\text{\textit{d6}}\) 18.\(\text{\textit{xb4}}\) \(\text{\textit{xb4}}\) 19.\(\text{\textit{xd5}}\).

16...\(\text{\textit{f5}}\) 17.b3 In the case of 17.f3 \(\text{\textit{d6}}\) 18.\(\text{\textit{xf5}}\) \(\text{\textit{xf5}}\) 19.e4 White prob-
ably did not like his position after 19...\texttt{We}7. Obviously here the absence of light-squared bishops strongly works in Black’s favour – because of the weak d3-square in White’s camp, among other things. 17...\texttt{Ac}8 18.bxc4 \texttt{Ac}4 Black was better and went on to win in Alexandrov-Onischuk, Poikovsky 2002.

B2) 13.b3 Improving on the earlier game. 13...b5 A strategically different kind of game arises after 13...cxb3 14.\texttt{Xxb}3 b5. It is often a matter of taste – I would personally rather prefer to play this type of position with black, rather than allowing bxc4. 14.bxc4 dxc4 Trying to keep dynamic possibilities on the queenside. If 14...bxc4 White should be better after 15.\texttt{Xg}3 followed by \texttt{Xe}1 and f3, preparing to roll his e-pawn. 15.\texttt{f}4 White prepares the advance of his centre pawns, while it is far from easy for Black to advance his queenside – hence White is probably better here:

B21) The ‘active attempt’ 15...\texttt{De}4? simply blundered a pawn: 16.\texttt{Xxe}4 \texttt{Xxe}4 17.d5 \texttt{De}5 18.\texttt{Wb}1 \texttt{Xf}5 19.\texttt{Xxb}5 in Alexandrov-Malakhatko, Batumi Ech 2002;

B22) White is better after 15...\texttt{Xb}8 16.d5 \texttt{De}5 17.\texttt{Xb}1;

B23) Perhaps Black should have tried 15...\texttt{Xe}6 16.\texttt{Xe}1 \texttt{Wd}6 (16...b4 17.\texttt{a}4)

17.\texttt{Xxe}6 (messy is 17.d5 \texttt{Xxd}5 18.\texttt{e}4 \texttt{Wxf}4 19.exd5 \texttt{Xg}4 and the tactical skirmish may peter out to a draw after for example 20.f3 \texttt{Xxe}1+ 21.\texttt{Xxe}1 \texttt{cd}4 22.\texttt{e}4 \texttt{Xb}3 23.\texttt{g}3 \texttt{Wd}6 24.fxg4 \texttt{Xxa}1 25.\texttt{Xxa}1 \texttt{Xe}8 26.\texttt{f}3 b4 27.axb4 axb4 28.\texttt{Xg}7 c3 29.\texttt{Xc}3 bxc3 30.\texttt{Xc}3) 17...\texttt{Xxe}6! 18.\texttt{e}4 \texttt{Wd}7;

9.\texttt{Ac}1

This rook development is aimed against the immediate ...c7-c5, because White takes dxc5 and then plays 11.\texttt{b}5, achieving an advantage.

- In the case of 9.0-0 Black is advised not to be afraid of an isolated pawn position – as I argued, here these positions are in general OK for Black.

A) So he should play 9...c5! 10.\texttt{dxc}5. 10.\texttt{Ac}1 is perhaps a better way for White to fight for an opening advantage. Now 10...b6 transposes into 9.\texttt{Ac}1 b6 10.0-0 c5, which is our main line. 10...\texttt{Xc}5 11.\texttt{Ac}1 \texttt{Ac}6 12.\texttt{b}5 \texttt{b}6 Black’s pieces are well coordinated and the isolated d5 pawn is a rather academic weakness here. The position is about equal. 13.\texttt{Ac}3 13.\texttt{bd}4 \texttt{Ad}7 14.\texttt{Ac}3 \texttt{De}4 with equality, was (by transposition) Piket-Gelfand, Wijk aan Zee 2002, see page 199. 13...\texttt{g}4 13...\texttt{g}4 14.\texttt{bd}4 \texttt{Wd}6 15.\texttt{f}3 \texttt{d}7 16.\texttt{h}3 \texttt{Xxe}2 15.\texttt{Xxe}2\texttt{De}4;
B) White is better in the event of 9...b6 10.\( \text{\&f4} \) c5 11.\( \text{\&f3} \) This position is similar to our main line, with the big difference that White has castled instead of playing \( \text{\textbf{c1}} \), which wins time and is therefore in his favour. 11...\( \text{\&b7} \) 11...\( \text{\&g4} \) 12.\( \text{\&g3} \). 12.\( \text{\&fd1} \) 12.\( \text{\&ad1} \) \( \text{\&a6} \) is unclear. Black has problems to develop his \( \text{\&b8} \) knight, for instance: 12...\( \text{\&c6} \) 13.\( \text{\&fxd5!} \) \( \text{\&xd5} \) 14.\( \text{\&xd5} \) \( \text{\&cxd4} \) 14...\( \text{\&xd4} \) 15.\( \text{\&f6+} \) \( \text{\&xf6} \) 16.\( \text{\&xb7} \) \( \text{\&e6} \) 17.\( \text{\&c3} \) is nice for White as his bishop pair is working excellently. 15.\( \text{\&f5} \) g6 16.\( \text{\&f6+} \) \( \text{\&h8} \) 17.\( \text{\&f4} \) \( \text{\&h6} \) The only move: 17...\( \text{\&e6} \)? 18.\( \text{\&xh7} \) or 17...\( \text{\&e7} \)? 18.\( \text{\&h4} \). 18.\( \text{\&xh6} \) \( \text{\&xf6} \) 19.exd4 and White is a pawn up, since with 19...\( \text{\&xd4} \)? 20.\( \text{\&c3} \) Black would step into a terrible pin, resulting in material loss.

- 9.\( \text{\&c2} \) does not promise an opening advantage after 9...b6 10.a3 c5 11.dxc5 bxc5 12.0-0 \( \text{\&c6} \) 13.\( \text{\&fd1} \) \( \text{\&e5} \) 14.\( \text{\&b5} \) \( \text{\&d7} \) 15.\( \text{\&xd7} \) \( \text{\&xd7} \) 16.\( \text{\&e1} \) \( \text{\&b7} \) 17.\( \text{\&f4} \) \( \text{\&ad8} \) as in Chiburdanidze-Bojkovic, Belgrade 1996.

9...b6

Black plans ...c7-c5 and ...\( \text{\&a6} \) (it's always good for him to exchange light-squared bishops), obtaining equality.

10.\( \text{\&f4} \) c5 11.0-0 \( \text{\&a6} \) 12.\( \text{\&xa6} \) \( \text{\&xa6} \)

13.\( \text{\&f3} \)

A critical moment. Perhaps White has better chances for an opening advantage after 13.dxc5!? bxc5 14.\( \text{\&f3} \):

- 14...\( \text{\&c7} \) is inferior after 15.\( \text{\&a4!} \) \( \text{\&e4} \) 15...g5 is the initial suggestion of some engines, but after the simple 16.\( \text{\&e2} \) this looks rather suspect for Black, as his kingside has really been weakened. 16.\( \text{\&a5} \) and Black’s connected central pawns start to look shaky;

- 14...d4 15.exd4 cxd4 16.\( \text{\&cd5} \) \( \text{\&xd5} \) 16...\( \text{\&b8} \) is a horrible blunder: after 17.\( \text{\&xf6+} \) \( \text{\&xf6} \) 18.\( \text{\&c6} \) 17.\( \text{\&xd5} \) Black’s passed d-pawn has been blocked and stopped for the time being), while White has his 2 vs 1 majority on the queenside – all endings will be favourable for White.

17...\( \text{\&c8} \) White has an advantage in the case of 17...\( \text{\&b8} \) 18.b3 \( \text{\&b5} \) 19.\( \text{\&f4} \) \( \text{\&be5} \) 20.\( \text{\&c4} \) 18.g3! The white knight has to travel to the perfect blockading square \( \text{d3} \), but definitely not immediately: 18.\( \text{\&f4?} \) \( \text{\&xf6} \). After the text it is not easy to organize active counterplay. 18...\( \text{\&c5} \) Or 18...\( \text{\&c5} \) 19.\( \text{\&f4} \) \( \text{\&xf6} \) 20.\( \text{\&g2} \) and the white knight travels to \( \text{d3} \). 19.\( \text{\&b4} \) \( \text{\&d7} \) 20.\( \text{\&xc5} \) \( \text{\&xc5} \) 21.\( \text{\&xc5} \) \( \text{\&xc5} \) 22.\( \text{\&f4} \) This knight will be a great blockader on \( \text{d3} \) – White is
better here. This 13.dxc5 idea is interesting and should be tested in practice.

13...cxd4

13...c7 14.dxc5 bxc5 15.Qa4 is better for White and transposes to positions mentioned above (13.dxc5!? bxc5 14.Qf3 Qc7 15.Qa4!).

14.exd4

Here in my game with Adams we suffered from mutual blindness: 14.Qxd5? Qe4 15.Qcd1

15...Qc7? Black returns the favour, and now White's idea pays off. 15...g5! was the way to continue. I had thought (as had, luckily for me, Adams) that after 16.Qh5 Qxd5 17.Qc3 White gets an attack with many tactical motifs, compensating for the sacrificed piece. However those tactics evaporate rather quickly after 17...We6! 18.Qxd4 (or 18.Qxd4 Qxc3 19.Qf6+ Qg7 20.Qxe8+ Qxe8 21.bxc3 Qc5) 18...Qg6 and White wins. 16.Qxc7 Qxc7 17.exd4 Qc4 18.Wb3 Wxb3?! An unnecessary pawn sacrifice. Black should have played 18...Qxd4 19.Qe3 Qb4 20.Qxb4 Qxb4 21.Qd5 (or 21.Qd7 Qf6 22.Qb7 Qe7) 21...Qd6 when White has a very small advantage. 19.axb3 Qxd2 20.Qxd2 Qb4 21.Qd3 - White was a pawn up and went on to win in I. Sokolov-Adams, Khanty-Mansiysk ol 2010.

14...Qc7

White may seem to be a bit more active, however Black has exchanged the 'right' (light-squared) bishops and an equal game and a likely draw is on the horizon.

**Conclusion**

As we have seen, this variation is strategically complicated. There are a number of plans for both sides, and not that many really forced lines. Understanding positional subtleties and central tension, and being able to combine different strategic plans are the key to success in this line.
6.a3 is the defining move of this chapter. The idea behind this move order is to force Black to take on c4 early (i.e. after 6...\xc3 7.bxc3) and allow White some independent possibilities. Should Black decide after 6...\xc3 7.bxc3 to play 7...c5, then White replies 8.cxd5 and after 8...exd5 we have transposed to a Sämisch line, which some white players may favour (including yours truly) and some black players may not like. You will find more about this in the second volume of this series, on the Sämisch.

6...\xc3+

By far the most common. 6...\xc4 is more of a surprise weapon, rarely played and not enough for equality:

\* 7.\xb7\xb7+ does not bring an opening advantage to White:

A) 7...\xb7! 8.\xc4 \xc6 9.\xb3 \xb4 10.0-0 \xb6 11.\xe5 \xb7 12.\xc4 c5 13.\xc4 \xe5 14.e4 \xc5 Milov-A. Sokolov, Switzerland tt 2001;

B) 7...\xb7 is inferior: 8.\xc4 \xc6 9.\xb3 \xb4 Or 9...e5 10.\xe5 \xe5 11.dxe5 \xd1+ 12.\xd1 \xe5 13.\xb2 \xe8 14.f4 and Black did not have sufficient compensation for the sacrificed pawn in Milov-A. Sokolov, Switzerland tt 1998. 10.0-0 c5 11.\xe5 \xe7 12.\xc4 \xd7 13.e4! \xc4 14.\xd4 and White was clearly better in T. Petrosian-Sosonko, Biel Interzonal 1976, since 14...\xe5? would fail to the prosaic 15.\xd3 \xa1 16.e5+ \xc8 17.exf6.

\* 7.\xc4 \xb6
Chapter 2.6: The Forcing 6.a3 - 5.\texttt{Qd3} d5 6.a3

A) Practice has seen $8.\texttt{Qf3} \texttt{Qc6}$ $9.\texttt{Qb5}$ In the case of $9.0-0$ e5 $10.d5$ $\texttt{Qe7}$ $11.e4$ a6 Black gets counterplay. These positions are similar to some lines in the QGA with $2...\texttt{dx}c4$ $3.e4$ $\texttt{Qc6}$. $9...e5$ $10.\texttt{Qxc6} exd4$ $11.exd4$ Taking a pawn with $11.\texttt{Qxd4} bxc6$ $12.\texttt{Qxc6} \texttt{Wd7}$ $13.\texttt{Qd4}$ is, to say the least, dangerous for White after $13...\texttt{Qa6}$ $14.\texttt{Qa4} \texttt{Qc8}$, with his king stuck in the middle. $11...\texttt{bxc6}$ $12.0-0$ $\texttt{Wd5}$ with approximate equality in Christiansen-Tal, Moscow izt 1982;

B) Botvinnik's recommendation is the as yet unplayed $8.b4!$ with some advantage for White. Botvinnik was probably right - further analysis supports his opinion: $8...e5$ $8...a5$ $9.b5$ c5 does not equalize after $10.bxc6$ bxc6 $11.\texttt{Qf3}$ c5 $12.d5$. $9.dxe5 \texttt{Qxe5}$ $10.\texttt{Qb2}$ Black has no good retreat squares for his b2 bishop. $13...\texttt{Qf5}$ Or $13...\texttt{Qe}5$ $14.\texttt{Qf3} \texttt{Qf5}$ $15.\texttt{Qxe5} \texttt{Qxe4}$ $16.\texttt{Qc1}$. $14.\texttt{Qd5} \texttt{Qxa3}$ $14...c6?$ fails to $15.\texttt{Qxb2}$ $\texttt{Qxd5}$ $16.\texttt{Qd6}$. $15.\texttt{Qxb7} \texttt{Qa6}$ $16.\texttt{Qf3}$ $\texttt{Qxb4}$ $17.\texttt{Qxa8}$ White has won an exchange, and Black has a long fight for a draw ahead.

7.bxc3

This is an independent move order. Should Black take $...\texttt{dx}c4$ here, then due to the current move order we get independent lines, which is handy for a white player who is willing to fight for an opening advantage, while still avoiding a whole bunch of main lines. Should Black decide on $7...c5$, then play transposes to the Sämisch Variation after $8.cxd5$ exd5 - you will find this position in the Sämisch volume.

7...\texttt{dxc4}

Practice has also seen $7...c6$. Black wants to play $...b7-b6$ followed by $...\texttt{Qa6}$ and exchange the 'right pieces' - the light-squared bishops. If White takes on d5, Black will naturally always recapture with his c6 pawn. $8.\texttt{Qf3} b6$

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$9.cxd5$ cxd5 $10.\texttt{Wc2} \texttt{Qb7}$ $11.0-0$ $\texttt{Wc8}$ $12.a4 \texttt{Qa6}$ $13.\texttt{Qb5}$! An important move. White will now execute the $c3-c4$ push under favourable circum-
Part II: 4...0-0 Minor Lines

stances. One of my games went 13...a3\[\text{?}a3\]\[\text{a}\]x\[\text{d}\]e3 14...\[\text{w}\]xd3 e\[\text{e}\]e8 15...\[\text{f}\]c1 (White will manage to push c3-c4, but unfortunately he will exchange too many pieces in the process and Black will gradually equalize) 15...c6 16...d2 a5 17.c4 \[\text{w}\]a6 18...b4 \[\text{d}\]xc4 19...\[\text{d}\]xc4 dxc4 20...\[\text{w}\]xc4 \[\text{w}\]xc4 21...\[\text{d}\]xc4 \[\text{c}\]d5 22...\[\text{d}\]d2 \[\text{a}\]c8 23...\[\text{a}\]c1 \[\text{d}\]xc4 24...\[\text{d}\]xc4 f5 25.f3 \[\text{e}\]e7 26...\[\text{f}\]f2 \[\text{e}\]e7 27...\[\text{d}\]xc7 \[\text{d}\]xc7 28.e4 fxe4 29...\[\text{f}\]f4 \[\text{g}\]f7 with a drawn ending in I. Sokolov-Movsesian, Sarajevo 2007.

13...\[\text{x}\]b5 13...\[\text{d}\]e4 does not improve things for Black after 14...\[\text{d}\]a3 followed by \[\text{f}\]c1 and c3-c4. 14...b5 a5 15...\[\text{a}\]a3 \[\text{e}\]e8 16...\[\text{f}\]c1 and c3-c4 – White has a clear advantage;

• The following gambit idea deserves practical tests: 9...a4? \[\text{a}\]a6
  
  A) 10.a5 Forcing Black to immediately capture with the pawn on c4. 10...\[\text{d}\]xc4 10...\[\text{d}\]xc4? is wrong due to 11...\[\text{d}\]xc4 dxc4 12.axb6 and Black is forced to capture 12...\[\text{w}\]xb6, leaving him with a lousy pawn structure on the queenside. 11...\[\text{d}\]c2 c5 12.e4 \[\text{d}\]xd4 13.cxd4 The position is sharp, it looks to me that White has compensation for the sacrificed pawn: 13...\[\text{c}\]c6? 14.e5 \[\text{d}\]d5 runs into the standard sacrifice 15...\[\text{x}\]h7+! \[\text{x}\]h7 16...\[\text{g}\]g5+ and White wins after 16...\[\text{g}\]g6 (or 16...\[\text{g}\]g8 17...\[\text{h}\]h5) 17.h4! \[\text{f}\]f4 18...\[\text{g}\]g4;

  B) Another possibility is 10...\[\text{e}\]e2 11...\[\text{e}\]e5 dxc4 12...\[\text{c}\]c2 \[\text{d}\]bd7 13.f4 c5. Black opens the diagonal for his bishop. White has strong compensation and is likely better in the case of 13...\[\text{d}\]xe5 14...\[\text{x}\]xe5 \[\text{d}\]d5 15.0-0! (the threat is 16...\[\text{x}\]h7+) 15...\[\text{w}\]g5 16...\[\text{c}\]c1. Play may continue 16...f5 17.exf6 (17.e4 \[\text{e}\]e3 18...\[\text{e}\]e2 f4) 17...\[\text{x}\]xf6 18.e4 \[\text{g}\]g4 19...\[\text{x}\]g4 \[\text{x}\]g4 20.e5 \[\text{f}\]f8 21...\[\text{x}\]f8+ \[\text{x}\]xf8 22...\[\text{e}\]e4 \[\text{b}\]b7 23...\[\text{f}\]f3 \[\text{h}\]h6 24...\[\text{x}\]h6 gxh6 25.a5! \[\text{f}\]f7 26.a6! \[\text{a}\]a8 27...\[\text{e}\]e2 b5 28...\[\text{g}\]g4 \[\text{e}\]e7 29...\[\text{f}\]f1 \[\text{g}\]g7 30...\[\text{f}\]f6 c5 31...\[\text{d}\]xc5 \[\text{d}\]d5 32...\[\text{f}\]f2 and White should win this. 14...\[\text{g}\]g4 with an unclear game.

8...\[\text{d}\]xc4 c5

Here White has an extra possibility:

9...\[\text{c}\]c2

• 9...\[\text{f}\]f3 is not a problem for Black in this move order: 9...\[\text{w}\]c7 10...\[\text{a}\]a2 Trying to be ‘inventive’ and take advantage of the move order with 10...\[\text{w}\]d3 ?! \[\text{c}\]c6 11.e4?! would lose a pawn without sufficient compensation after 11...cxd4 12...\[\text{x}\]d4 \[\text{a}\]a3 13...\[\text{x}\]xe4; if 10...\[\text{e}\]e2 (hoping to transpose to Botvinnik-Furman, see below), Black is fine after 10...b6 (10...\[\text{c}\]c6 would transpose to the mentioned game) 11...\[\text{b}\]b2 \[\text{b}\]b7. 10...\[\text{b}\]b7? In the case of 10...\[\text{d}\]c6,
White can take advantage of the move order (his king is still on e1!) with 11.\textbf{wc2}! (11.0-0 would have transposed to one of the main lines) 11...e5 12.d5 e4 13.\textbf{d2} \textbf{e7} 14.c4 \textbf{f5} 15.\textbf{b2} (the b2 bishop is a monster, and Black's e4 pawn is shaky - White is better) 15...\textbf{d6} 16.h3 \textbf{h5} 17.\textbf{c3} \textbf{e8} 18.\textbf{bl} b5 19.g4 \textbf{h7} 20.\textbf{xe4} and White won easily in Milov-Niklasch, Deizisau 2001. 11.0-0 \textbf{b6} 12.\textbf{we2} White cannot temporarily keep the queen on d1 and try to be clever and prevent Leko's plan with the move order 12.\textbf{b2} \textbf{b7} 13.\textbf{c1?} due to 13...\textbf{g4}. 12...\textbf{b7} 13.\textbf{b2}\\n\textbf{\textbullet} 9.\textbf{b2}? Botvinnik himself gives a '!' to this move. In general it looks a bit strange for White to develop his c1 bishop while his knight is still on g1, and therefore our main line 9.\textbf{e2} looks more logical. Here:

A) In the case of 9...\textbf{c6} White takes advantage of the move order and obtains an advantage after 10.\textbf{f3} \textbf{wc7} 11.\textbf{e2}! - exclam given by Botvinnik. 11.0-0 transposes to one of the main lines, which we will deal with later in the book. 11...\textbf{d8} 12.\textbf{wc2} e5 13.\textbf{dxe5} \textbf{xe5} 14.\textbf{c4} The bishop pair – both of them working – and the 4\textit{A} vs 3\textit{A} kingside majority are White's trumps here, Botvinnik-Furman, Moscow-URS 1955;\\n
B) Another option is 9...\textbf{wc7}. Now White faces the dilemma of where to put his bishop:

B1) 10.\textbf{e2} Botvinnik often liked to retreat his bishop to e2 in such positions. 10...b6 11.\textbf{f3} \textbf{b7} 12.\textbf{c4} \textbf{bd7} 13.\textbf{c1} \textbf{fd8} 14.0-0 \textbf{xd4} 15.\textbf{exd4} \textbf{f4} 15...\textbf{g4}?. 16.\textbf{e1} \textbf{f3} 17.\textbf{e5} \textbf{g6} 18.\textbf{xg6} \textbf{xg6} 19.\textbf{wb3} \textbf{ac8} 20.\textbf{fl} \textbf{c4} 21.\textbf{we3} \textbf{xc3} and a draw was agreed in Botvinnik-Unzicker, Munich 1958;\\n
B2) Another World Champion played 10.\textbf{d3}, which looks more promising to me: 10...b6 11.\textbf{we2} \textbf{c6} 12.e4 White wants too much, too soon. Other options, and possible improvements, were 12.f4 \textbf{b7} 13.\textbf{f3} \textbf{e7} 14.\textbf{d2}; or 12.\textbf{f3} \textbf{b7} 13.0-0. 12...e5! 13.\textbf{d5} \textbf{a5} 14.\textbf{h3} \textbf{c4} 15.\textbf{c2} \textbf{d7} 16.\textbf{f3} \textbf{c5} 17.0-0 \textbf{a6} 18.\textbf{e1} \textbf{fd8} Black is fine here, and a draw was agreed in T. Petrosian-Najdorf, Buenos Aires 1979.

C) 9...\textbf{a5} Black wants to take advantage of the fact that White's king is still on e1 with a diagonal pin.
Among the current strong grandmasters, Vadim Milov is the one who has experimented most with this line.

C1) 10.\textit{Wd2} Again, according to Botvinnik (!) this is best. Modern theory does not share the former World Champion's opinion. 10 ... \textit{Qbd7}

Botvinnik's line is a little strange: 10 ... \textit{Qd4}?! 11.\textit{Wc2} \textit{Qd6} (the merits of this knight pirouette are unclear; actually the knight was better on f6) 12.\textit{Qd3} e5 (??) 13.\textit{Qe2} (why not 13.\textit{Qxe5}?) 13 ... exd4 14.\textit{Qxh7}+ \textit{Qh8} 15.0-0 is better for White. 10 ... b6 looks good for Black. The advantages of White's queen being on d2 are not obvious to me – OK, White can recapture on d4 with his c3 pawn, but this costs oceans of time. 11.\textit{Qc1} b5 12.\textit{Qd3} \textit{Qb7} 13.\textit{Qf3} \textit{Qc8} – Black had a pleasant position and went on to win in Milov-Tiviakov, Buenos Aires 1996. After this game Milov abandoned Botvinnik's 10.\textit{Wd2} recommendation and started playing 10.\textit{Qf3};

C2) He came to the conclusion that 10.\textit{Qf3} is best for White after all: 10 ... \textit{cxd4} 11.\textit{exd4} b6 11 ... \textit{Qbd7} 12.0-0 e5!? deserves attention, though after 13.\textit{Qe1} exd4 14.cxd4 it does look somewhat better for White:

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C2.1) 12.\textit{a4} Preventing Black from playing ...b6-b5 after the exchange of light-squared bishops, and securing the c4-square. While this is positionally correct, it takes time. White still has not castled, so it is probably not realistic to believe in a white advantage with this approach. 12 ... \textit{Qa6} 13.\textit{Qd2} \textit{Qxc4}! In the event of 13 ... \textit{Qc8} 14.\textit{Qxa6} \textit{Wxa6} 15.\textit{c4} \textit{Qbd7} 16.0-0 \textit{Wa5} 17.\textit{Qe1} White cannot roll any of his hanging pawns at this point, however he has more space and also it is not easy for Black to organize active counterplay: 17 ... \textit{Qc7} 18.\textit{Qe3} with some advantage for White in Milov-Lautier, Biel 1996. 14.\textit{Qxc4} \textit{Wxa6} 15.\textit{Qe3} 16.\textit{Qxe2}+ 17.\textit{Qf1} \textit{Qad8} 18.\textit{d5} exd5 19.\textit{Qxf6} gxf6 20.\textit{Qxd5} \textit{Qe7} 21.\textit{d6} \textit{Wc5} 22.\textit{Wg4}+ \textit{Qf6} 23.\textit{Qf5} \textit{Qe8} is not going to work for White, as he is too far behind in development. 16.\textit{Wxe2}+ 17.\textit{Qxe2} \textit{Qac8} 18.\textit{c4} \textit{Qa5} 19.\textit{Qac1} A complex position for both sides to play. 19 ... \textit{Qc7} The actual game continued 19 ... \textit{Qb3}?! 20.\textit{Qc2} \textit{Qc6} 21.\textit{Qb1} \textit{Qa5} 22.\textit{Qa3} \textit{Qd8} 23.\textit{Qb4} \textit{Qb7} 24.\textit{Qd1} \textit{Qd6} 25.\textit{f3} h5 26.\textit{a5} with advantage for
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White in Milov-Kishnev, Germany 1996/97. 20.\(\text{c}c2\) Another option is 20.\(\text{h}d1\) \(\text{f}c8\) 21.\(\text{d}5\) \(\text{e}4\). 20...\(\text{f}c8\) 21.\(\text{b}h1\) 21.\(\text{a}3??\) is met by 21...\(\text{d}5\). 21...\(\text{e}8\) 22.\(\text{a}3\) with a dynamic balance: 22...\(\text{b}3\) 23.\(\text{d}1\) \(\text{a}5\) and now if White is ambitious with 24.\(\text{d}5??\), Black has 24...\(\text{f}6;\)

C22) One of Milov’s less fortunate opening experiments in this line went 12.\(\text{0-0}\) \(\text{a}6\) In this type of position (like, by the way, in many other lines in 4.e3 and 4.a3 Nimzos) it is strategically always good for Black to exchange the light-squared bishops. 13.\(\text{d}3??\) This is wrong, it just costs time. The lightsquared bishops will be exchanged anyway, and also square c4 will be lost in the process. This is an important moment for the evaluation of the 9...\(\text{b}2\) line. Correct was 13.\(\text{x}a6\) \(\text{x}a6\) 14.\(\text{d}2!\) (square c4 is important here – if White’s pawn is to stay on c3, then the b2 bishop becomes a big pawn) 14...\(\text{c}6\) (14...\(\text{b}5??\) is bad due to 15.\(\text{a}4\) 15.\(\text{c}4\) and with tactical ideas related to a d4-d5 push followed by \(\text{xf}6\), damaging Black’s kingside structure, White can still hope for an opening advantage. This is probably White’s best chance in this line and it’s a bit surprising that Milov did not try this in practice, as it combines with ideas he had already tried – this is just a better version for White. 13...\(\text{e}8\) 14.\(\text{c}1\) \(\text{x}d3\) 15.\(\text{x}d3\) \(\text{b}5!\) Now the bishop on b2 will be a big pawn for quite some time. 16.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{bd}7\) and due to White’s structural weaknesses on the queenside Black was already better in Milov-Granda Zuniga, Buenos Aires 1996. Milov has subsequently stopped playing this line with white, most likely having arrived at similar conclusions.

This position can also be reached via the move order 5...\(\text{c}5\) 6.a3 \(\text{xc}3+\) 7.\(\text{bxc}3\) \(\text{d}5\) 8.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{dxc}4\) 9.\(\text{x}c4\).

9...\(\text{w}c7\)

Considered by most sources to be the main move for Black here. He has two other reasonable options at his disposal: • 9...\(\text{e}5\) is not often played. However, it requires a very precise reaction from White:

10.\(\text{a}4!!\) The most dangerous reply. Black is at least equal in the case of 10.\(\text{0-0}\) \(\text{c}6\) 11.\(\text{b}2\) (or 11.\(\text{a}4\) \(\text{cxd}4\) 12.\(\text{cxd}4\) \(\text{exd}4\) 13.\(\text{a}3\) \(\text{e}8\) 14.\(\text{xd}4\) \(\text{xd}4\) 15.\(\text{xd}4\) \(\text{xd}4\) 16.\(\text{exd}4\) \(\text{e}6\)) 11...\(\text{e}6!\) This is often a good strategic solution for Black in these positions, and it is worth remembering. 12.\(\text{xe}6\) \(\text{fxe}6\) 13.\(\text{b}3\) \(\text{d}5!\) 14.\(\text{c}4\) \(\text{a}5!\) 15.\(\text{cxd}5\) \(\text{xb}3\) 16.\(\text{a}1\) \(\text{exd}4\) 17.\(\text{dxe}6\) \(\text{e}8\) 18.\(\text{xd}4\) and a draw was agreed in Ibragimov-Lobron, Bad Wiessee 1998.
After 18...\text{\textipa{x}x}e6 only Black can play for a win.

A) If Black tries to gain a tempo on the c4 bishop with 10...\text{\textipa{w}}c7 he may find himself in trouble after 11.\text{\textipa{a}}a3!. Black would have a pleasant position after 11.\text{\textipa{d}}d3 \text{\textipa{x}}d4 12.\text{\textipa{e}}xd4 \text{\textipa{x}}d4 13.\text{\textipa{c}}xd4 \text{\textipa{f}}f5! 11...\text{\textipa{c}}xd4

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\caption{Diagram 12.\text{\textipa{c}}xd4! The point behind White's play.}
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12.\text{\textipa{c}}xd4! The point behind White's play.

A1) White has a standard, small but steady endgame advantage due to his bishop pair in the event of 12...\text{\textipa{d}}d8 13.\text{\textipa{c}}c1 \text{\textipa{e}}d4 14.\text{\textipa{d}}xd4 \text{\textipa{a}}5+ 15.\text{\textipa{w}}d2 \text{\textipa{x}}xd2+ 15...\text{\textipa{w}}xa4? 16.\text{\textipa{e}}e7 \text{\textipa{e}}4 is a terrible blunder, losing to 17.\text{\textipa{b}}b5! \text{\textipa{w}}xb5 18.\text{\textipa{d}}xb5 \text{\textipa{x}}xd2 19.\text{\textipa{x}}d8. 16.\text{\textipa{d}}xd2 \text{\textipa{c}}6 17.\text{\textipa{b}}b2;

A2) 12...\text{\textipa{w}}xc4 13.\text{\textipa{c}}c1 \text{\textipa{w}}e6 13...\text{\textipa{w}}d5? loses an exchange without any compensation after 14.\text{\textipa{a}}xf8 \text{\textipa{h}}3? 15.\text{\textipa{d}}xe5. 14.\text{\textipa{d}}xe5! 14.\text{\textipa{a}}xf8? is wrong due to 14...\text{\textipa{a}}xf8 15.\text{\textipa{d}}xe5 \text{\textipa{e}}8 16.\text{\textipa{c}}d4 \text{\textipa{g}}4 17.0-0 \text{\textipa{w}}xd1 18.\text{\textipa{f}}xd1 \text{\textipa{a}}6 and Black is better. 14...\text{\textipa{e}}8 14...\text{\textipa{w}}xe5? 15.\text{\textipa{a}}xf8. 15.\text{\textipa{f}}4 Black's pieces lack all coordination and White will get back his sacrificed material with huge dividends. 15...\text{\textipa{d}}d7 15...\text{\textipa{w}}g4 would lose to 16.f3 \text{\textipa{f}}5 17.\text{\textipa{c}}d5 \text{\textipa{c}}6 18.\text{\textipa{e}}xc6. 16.\text{\textipa{w}}c2 \text{\textipa{c}}6 Or 16...\text{\textipa{a}}6 17.\text{\textipa{a}}xf8 \text{\textipa{f}}xf8 18.\text{\textipa{w}}xh7. 17.\text{\textipa{w}}c5 wins.

B) 10...\text{\textipa{c}}6! Now precise play is required. 11.\text{\textipa{a}}a3 \text{\textipa{e}}d4 12.\text{\textipa{e}}xd4 12.\text{\textipa{c}}xc5?! \text{\textipa{x}}e3! is better for Black. 12...\text{\textipa{e}}8 Black tries to equalize, using a tactic. 13.\text{\textipa{c}}xc5 \text{\textipa{e}}4 However, after 14.0-0 \text{\textipa{c}}xc5 15.\text{\textipa{e}}xc5 \text{\textipa{w}}g5 16.\text{\textipa{w}}b3 White retains some advantage.

Another main move is 9...\text{\textipa{c}}6. With precise play White should be able to get an advantage: 10.a4! \text{\textipa{w}}c7 11.\text{\textipa{a}}a3 \text{\textipa{b}}6

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\caption{Diagram 12.0-0 \text{\textipa{d}}d8 13.\text{\textipa{d}}d3 13.\text{\textipa{c}}c1?! fails to the standard 13...\text{\textipa{e}}5 14.\text{\textipa{a}}a2 \text{\textipa{a}}6. 13...\text{\textipa{e}}5 14.\text{\textipa{w}}c2 \text{\textipa{e}}6 White is better in case of 14...\text{\textipa{a}}5 15.\text{\textipa{d}}xe5! \text{\textipa{w}}xe5 16.\text{\textipa{e}}4 15.\text{\textipa{g}}3 15.\text{\textipa{e}}xc5 \text{\textipa{a}}5. 15...\text{\textipa{a}}5! 16.\text{\textipa{e}}4 Or 16.\text{\textipa{e}}xc5 \text{\textipa{b}}xc5 17.\text{\textipa{e}}4 \text{\textipa{e}}4 18.\text{\textipa{e}}xe4 \text{\textipa{b}}3!; if 16.\text{\textipa{e}}xe5? there is the zwischenzug 16...\text{\textipa{a}}b3! and Black is better after 17.\text{\textipa{w}}e2 \text{\textipa{w}}xe5. 16...\text{\textipa{c}}xd4! and Black has nothing to worry about, for example: 17.\text{\textipa{c}}xf6+ \text{\textipa{g}}x f 18.\text{\textipa{e}}xd4 Or 18.\text{\textipa{e}}xh7+ \text{\textipa{g}}7 19.\text{\textipa{c}}x d4 \text{\textipa{w}}xc2 20.\text{\textipa{c}}xc2 \text{\textipa{c}}xc8. 18...\text{\textipa{e}}xd4 19.\text{\textipa{e}}xh7+ \text{\textipa{g}}7 20.\text{\textipa{c}}xd4 \text{\textipa{c}}xc2 21.\text{\textipa{c}}xc2 \text{\textipa{c}}xc8;

B) 12.\text{\textipa{w}}c2?! is known from a classic game. It's not a good move: 12...\text{\textipa{d}}d8 13.\text{\textipa{c}}c1 \text{\textipa{a}}5 14.\text{\textipa{a}}a2 \text{\textipa{c}}d4 14...\text{\textipa{a}}6 is already better for Black. 15.\text{\textipa{c}}xd4 \text{\textipa{c}}xc2 16.\text{\textipa{c}}xc2 \text{\textipa{d}}d7 17.\text{\textipa{c}}c3 \text{\textipa{d}}c8 18.\text{\textipa{d}}d2 \text{\textipa{c}}xc4+ 19.\text{\textipa{c}}xc4 \text{\textipa{c}}xc4 Black was slightly better and White struggled to make a draw in Botvinnik-Reshevsky, Moscow URS-USA 1946;
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C) 12.\textit{c}c1! The best move (my own invention – I found this idea in 2006) and probably the only real danger for Black in this line. I will share the fruits of my analysis here, giving the most relevant lines as the file is too big to publish it all. The position is complex and sharp, so White can also easily get in trouble here.

12...\textit{d}d8 13.\textit{g}g3! Vacating the e2-square for the c4 bishop in case Black jumps \ldots\textit{e}e5. 13...\textit{e}e5 Here my practical experience, i.e. the game in which I introduced 12.\textit{c}c1, went 13...\textit{b}b7 14.0-0 \textit{e}e5 15.\textit{e}e2 \textit{g}g6 16.\textit{w}b3 \textit{f}ac8 17.\textit{f}d1 \textit{d}d5 18.\textit{w}b1 \textit{c}c6 19.\textit{b}b5 \textit{w}b7 20.f3 \textit{c}c6 21.\textit{d}xc5 \textit{x}xd1+ 22.\textit{x}xd1 \textit{b}xc5 23.e4 (White has a standard small advantage) 23...\textit{a}a6 24.\textit{f}f1!! \textit{w}a7 25.a5 with advantage for White in I. Sokolov-Leko, Odessa ACP Cup 2007. 14.0-0 \textit{b}b7 Because of the c-file pin Black cannot start by taking on d4 and opening the c-file. 15.\textit{d}d3! A good prophylactic move, which promises White an advantage.

C1) With 15...\textit{a}a5 Black puts his knight on the edge of the board.

a5 White gets a strong attack against the black king which more than compensates for the sacrificed pawn, for instance: 20.\textit{g}g4+ \textit{h}h8 21.\textit{w}h4 21.\textit{h}h5 \textit{g}g8 22.\textit{w}h4 is also possible. 21...\textit{c}c6 22.\textit{e}e2! Preventing the \ldots\textit{b}b3-\textit{d}d4 manoeuvre and thus keeping the black knight misplaced. 22...\textit{g}g8 22...\textit{d}d2? 23.\textit{f}fd1 \textit{ad}8 24.\textit{x}xd2 \textit{x}d2 25.\textit{f}f5 wins; or 22...\textit{c}c4 23.\textit{f}f5 \textit{e}e5 (23...\textit{c}c8? 24.e5 wins) 24.f4 \textit{g}g6 25.\textit{h}h6 \textit{g}g8 26.\textit{f}f3 and Black gets mated. 23.\textit{f}fd1 \textit{g}g6 24.\textit{d}d5 \textit{w}e8 25.\textit{h}h5 \textit{g}g8 26.e5 and White has a winning advantage.

C2) 15...\textit{e}e7 is a logical move, covering the f5-square, however, in many lines due to the white bishop placed on a3 this knight is hanging on e7. The move does not quite equalize: 16.\textit{w}c2 \textit{d}d7 Or 16...\textit{w}d7 17.\textit{b}b5 \textit{e}e6 (if 17...\textit{c}c6 then 18.\textit{d}xc5; 18.dxe5 \textit{g}g4 19.\textit{f}fd1 \textit{w}e6 is OK for Black) 18.\textit{d}xc5 \textit{b}xc5 19.e4 is pleasant for White. 17.\textit{b}b5 \textit{c}c6 18.\textit{f}fd1 \textit{ad}8 19.\textit{f}f1 Again, this position is easier to play for White.

C3) If 15...\textit{ac}8 16.\textit{e}e1 \textit{e}e7 17.\textit{w}c2 it seems that if both sides play useful moves and delay immediate action, White should be able to find more of those useful moves.

C4) 15...\textit{c}xd4 16.\textit{c}xd4 \textit{exd}4

White sacrifices a pawn to open the centre with 16.e4! \textit{exd}4 17.\textit{cx}d4 \textit{xb}2 \textit{dd}8 19.\textit{xf}6 \textit{gx}f6. Due to Black’s damaged pawn structure on the kingside and Black’s erratic knight on
Part II: 4...0-0 Minor Lines

17.e4! 17...f5 dxe3 is not clear — actually, according to my analyses, of which due to a lack of space I publish only a small part and the most important points, it leads to a draw by perpetual. 17...w4 18...f5 White has strong compensation, the more so since 18...xe4 fails to 19.xc6 wxf5 20.c7 aab8 21.f3 w4 22.xb7 we3+ 23.h1 xb7 24.xe4 a7 25.c1 wc3 26.d2 wa3 27.wel! with a big advantage for White.

10.a2

The most common retreat.

In practice 10.d3? has also been tried, and given the fact that 10.a2 does not seem to promise White an opening advantage, attention may turn to this alternative retreat. Practical examples are relatively scarce — I will give a few relevant ones.

10...c6 and now:

A) White players can decide to stop ...e6-e5 by playing 11.f4?!, rolling his pawns immediately, but while he is still underdeveloped and with the other pawn still on e3 this means taking a considerable positional risk. We have very few games here — one of them continued 11...b6 12.0-0 b7 13.g3

B) 10-0 e5

13...e7! A good positional idea worth remembering. 14.wel 14.e4? is not good due to 14...cxd4 15.cxd4 wc3 16.e3 a6 and White loses a pawn for nothing; 14.w2 is better than the text, however Black has excellent play after 14...f5 15.e4 xg3 16.hxg3 h5!; 14.c4 is perhaps White's best here. 14...f5! 15.e4 Should White take a pawn with 15.xf5 exf5 16.xf5 then Black gets fantastic compensation after 16...e4, with full control of the light squares in the centre, while White's c1 bishop is completely dead. 15...xg3 16.hxg3 wc6 and Black won the e4 pawn in Koblencs-Bondarevsky, Leningrad 1949;

B1) 12.e4?! If White is to find something in this line, it has to be connected to this type of sacrifice. Though in general it is known to be sound in these positions, here it just seems not to work
as it should: 12...cxd4 13.cxd4 exd4 14.b3 In order to play f2-f4 White has to stop 14...g4. 14...e8 15.Qd3 Qe5 Trading off the blockader/attacker on d3 makes perfect sense. 16.Qf4 White correctly trades off the other bishop. 16...d7 17.Qxe5 Qxe5 One practical example shows the kind of fight we can expect here: 18.f4 Wa5 19.e5 Qd5 20.Qh5 h6 21.Qe4 This looks dangerous, however White’s attacking potential is probably just not enough. 21...e7 22.Qf3 Qe3 23.Qg3 Wh8 24.Qg5 Or 24.Qd6 Wh8. 24...Qb5? The position is sharp and such mistakes happen in the heat of the battle. Correct was 24...Qc6! when the white attack runs out of steam: 25.e6 f5 26.Qd6 (or 26.Qf6 Wh8 27.Qg6 Wh6f) 26...Qc3. 25.e6! f5 26.Qxf5 Qxf5 27.Wxf5 Qxe6 28.Qf6? Returning the compliment. 28.Qf2, defending the d3 bishop, would have won. 28...Qe1+ 29.Qh2 Qxd3 30.Wxa5 Qxa1 With a knight on f2 White would have had Qxd3 here – now it’s a different story. 31.Qd2 Qxa3 32.Qh5 Qg8 and Black soon won in Lein-Hjartarson, Reykjavik 1990.


1 10...e5 attacks the white centre immediately and does not allow possibilities like 11.f4?! However, since the 11.f4 option is rather risky for White, there is no reason to stop it, hence 10...Qc6 is probably a better move order.

After the text move White has an extra option:
A) 11.0-0 Qc6 would transpose to 10...Qc6; 11.e4?! is not to be advised for Black on the grounds of 12.Qc2. 12.Qb1 is sometimes even better because it allows Qa2-type transfers. I have dealt with those extensively in my book Winning Chess Middlegames. 12...Qc6 13.f3 cxd4 14.cxd4 efx3 15.Qxf3 Qg4 16.Qxf6! A typical, textbook sac. 16...gxf6 17.Qd3 Whxd8 18.Qxh7+ Qf8 19.Qf4 and White soon won in Keene-Toth, Rome 1979;

B) 11.dxe5 Qxe5 12.Qc2 Qe6 13.Qg3 c4 14.Qe2 White will try to push his kingside pawn majority and for that purpose the bishop on c1 is well placed. 14...Qbd7! A good idea. The knight heads for the d3-square. 15.0-0?! White had to push his pawns immediately: 15.e4 Qc5 16.f4 Wh7 17.0-0, with reasonable chances for an advantage. 15...Qc5! 16.f4 Wh7?! Correct was 16...Qd5!, controlling the light squares, when Black is better: 17.f5 (or 17.Qd1 Qc6 18.Qf3 Qd5 19.Qxd5 Qd5 20.e4 Qf6 21.e5 Qd5 and the c5 knight will enter d3, while White cannot coordinate his pieces) 17.Qd7 18.Qf4 Qa4. 17.e4 Qb3 18.Qb1 Qc5+ 19.Qh1 with
White's advantage in Hort-Sosonko, Hastings 1975/76.
So, naturally 10.d3 can be tried — but it does not look like a move Black should be worried about.

10...b6 11.0-0 a6
As usual Black tries to take control of the light squares, and he would welcome the exchange of light-squared bishops.

12.e1 c6 13.g3

13...fd8!
The correct rook. Placing the a-rook on d8 does not equalize, at least this is what I think. I have one good practical example here: a game against Judit Polgar, which I ultimately lost, but White's play can be improved. I will share some analysis of this game with the reader to prove my case: 13...ad8 14.b2 and now:

• 14...a5 works less well for Black:

15.e4! c4 16.xc4 xc4 17.cl cxd4 18.cxd4 With the rook on f8, 18...e8 does not work — so White gets the possibility to target the black king, for example: 18...d7 Or 18...h6 19.e5 d5 (19...xe5?? blunders a piece to 20.f4) 20.g4 followed by h5. 19.e5 d5 20.g4 h8 21.h5 g8 22.g5 c8 23.ad1! An extra attacking piece is needed on the kingside.

23...xa3 24.ad3 c2 25.ed1 On 25.h3 Black defends with 25...f5! (25...xe1? runs into 26.f6 x6 27.exf6 and Black gets mated) 26.exf6 xe1!. 25...wa4 26.h3 with a winning attack;

• 14...e5 Black correctly decides to play for central pressure. 15.wc2 d7 16.ad1 ffd8

Black has achieved maximum pressure on d4, however the white pawn cannot be conveniently taken and White has a number of useful moves to improve his position — more than Black in any case. 17.h3! c4 Black cannot find any useful moves and releases part of the central tension, which should play into White's hands. In the case of 17...cxd4 18.cxd4 exd4 White is better after 19.exd4 followed by f5; or he can opt for 19.e4, a motif we have already seen in these lines, with excellent compensation.
A) In the game itself I made a mistake playing 18.a4?. In general this is a logical move, opening the a3-f8 diagonal for the dark-squared bishop, however I forgot that now the b4-square is unprotected in some important lines: 18...\( \text{fxe8} \)\! Black wants to gain space by pushing ...e5-e4. The game is now unclear. 19.\( \text{a3} \) 19.e4 now never works (thanks to my previous move!) because of 19...exd4 20.cxd4 \( \text{b}4 \); 19.\( \text{e}4 \) was possible. 19...e4 20.\( \text{b}1 \) \( \text{b}5 \)! The rook has done its work on the d-file and moves to an attacking position. 21.\( \text{e}2 \) \( \text{g}5 \) 22.\( \text{f}4 \) \( \text{c}8 \)! – Black had active play on the kingside in I. Sokolov-J. Polgar, Hoogeveen 2006. Further on in the game, I did a number of stupid things and eventually got mated;

B) 18.\( \text{b}1 \)! The bishop has done its work on the a2-g8 diagonal and has to be immediately transferred to a new attacking post. 18...g6 White gets an obvious advantage in the case of 18...h6 19.e4 \( \text{b}7 \) 20.d5 \( \text{e}7 \) 21.a4 \( \text{e}8 \) 22.\( \text{a}3 \). 19.\( \text{c}1 \)! Ready to take advantage of the newly created weaknesses in Black's camp. 19...\( \text{b}7 \)

\[
\text{20.e4! Time to open up the a1-h8 diagonal. 20...exd4 21.cxd4 \( \text{b}4 \) 22.bxd4 \( \text{b}4 \) 23.\( \text{f}5 \)! \( \text{xe}4 \) 23...gxf5 24.\( \text{g}5+ \) \( \text{f}8 \) 25.\( \text{xf}6 \) is not to be ad-
\]

vised for Black. 24.\( \text{h}6+ \) \( \text{f}8 \) 25.\( \text{xf}6 \) \( \text{xe}1+ \) 26.\( \text{xf}6 \) \( \text{xe}1 \) There is material equality on the board, however Black's king is very weak and White's attack continues, for instance 26...\( \text{d}6 \) 27.\( \text{c}3 \) \( \text{c}6 \) 28.f3 a5 29.\( \text{g}4 \).

14.\( \text{b}2 \) \( \text{a}5 \)

14...\( \text{e}5 \)? is a terrible blunder due to 15.\( \text{a}4 \).

15.e4

White has taken the centre, and now Black trades the 'right pieces', i.e. the light-squared bishops.

15...\( \text{c}4 \) 16.\( \text{x}c4 \)

White cannot try to be 'smart' with 16.\( \text{c}1 \)? as this will cost him dearly after 16...\( \text{xa}2 \) 17.\( \text{xa}2 \) cxd4 18.cxd4 \( \text{c}4 \) 19.\( \text{c}2 \) \( \text{xd}4 !. \)

16...\( \text{xc}4 \) 17.\( \text{c}1 \) cxd4 18.cxd4

White is hoping to get a kingside attack, as in the comments to the line 13 ...\( \text{d}8 \) 14.\( \text{b}2 \) \( \text{a}5 \) – see the comments to the game Sokolov-Polgar. However Black has a simple solution to the problem, an idea found by Jonathan Speelman:

18...\( \text{e}8 !\)

Getting away from tempo-gains.
Part II: 4...0-0 Minor Lines

19.e5
It is difficult to think of something else for White.

19...d5!
19...cxe5 20.f4 f6 leads to a messy position.

20.Wg4 Wd7
Black is at least equal.

21.e2

21...f6 22.Wf3xc8 23.exf6 cxf6

24.Wf4 e5 25.dxe5 cxe5 26.Wxe5 cxe5 27.Wf4
Due to the potential weaknesses around Black's king it is not realistic for Black to expect to take profit of his 2 vs 1 queenside majority. White has to keep the queens on the board. A draw was agreed in I. Sokolov-Almasi, Sibenik tt, 2008.

Conclusion
It is difficult to find an improvement for White in our main line – at least I did not manage to find one – so most likely, if there is any scope for improvement White has to analyse the alternatives 9.b2 instead of our main line 9.e2, or 10.d3 instead of our main line 10.a2. In both cases, a good general understanding of the main 4.e3 lines (4.e3 0-0 5.d3 d5 6.f3 c5 7.0-0 dxc6 8.a3 xxc3 9.bxc3 dxec4 10.xc4) will be of great help.
Part III

The Main Line
4...0-0 5.\d3 d5 6.\f3

6...b6

6...c5
Chapter 3.1

The Delayed Fianchetto – 6...b6

This line was popular in the 1980s & 1990s. It has not often been seen in recent years. It may also arise via the 4...b6 move order.

While the 6...b6 line is playable for Black, White has three promising ways to reply. The main continuation I propose in this book is by far not the main line for White, but I simply think that it leads to a white advantage.

The positional option is an advance of the queenside pawns, which is a line favoured by some experts on the white side, like Gligoric, Jussupow and Knaak. White’s queenside advance is regarded as one of the two main theoretical lines here, and in my opinion with precise play it should lead to an advantage for White.

The third line for White, which some theoretical manuals consider to be the main line, is related to a kingside attack; see for example Shirov-Giri below. In my opinion this leads to complicated positions, where it often transpires that White’s kingside attack is far from easy to develop and Black has good counterchances.

7.a3!

With this move order White gives Black a choice: either to take on c3, which does not equalize, or to allow White to push his pawn to e4 early, which is also unpleasant for Black. Strangely enough this move order, which I think is the best for White, is relatively rarely played.

In case White opts for the queenside advance, play may continue as follows:

7.0-0 8.a3 Or 8.cxd5 exd5 9.a3.

8...d6 8...xc3 9.bxc3 dxc4 transposes to the 7.a3 xc3 line. 9.cxd5 exd5

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10.b4 There are a few general strategic rules here that are good to know:
- swapping the dark-squared bishops favours White;
- a swap of the light-squared bishops is fine for Black;
- Black has two main ideas for counterplay: one is to push ...c7-c5 if opportunity allows, the other is the knight jump to e4 and the creation of a kingside attack;
- White’s plan is to advance his queenside pawns. If he does it right, he should get an advantage in my opinion.

A) 10...\(\text{b}d7\) 11.\(\text{b}3\) 11.b5 has also been played in some games. 11...\(\text{a}6\) 12.a4 \(\text{w}e7\) 12...\(\text{e}8\) 13.\(\text{a}3\) g6 leads to a standard long-term advantage for White after 14.b5 a5 15.\(\text{ac1}\) \(\text{w}e7\) 16.\(\text{xd6}\) \(\text{cxd6}\) 17.\(\text{c}2\) as in Gligoric-T. Petrosian, Bugojno 1982:

A1) 13.\(\text{b}1\) \(\text{fd8}\) In the case of 13...\(\text{e}4\)

White has a strong exchange sacrifice in 14.\(\text{xd5}\) \(\text{xd5}\) 15.\(\text{x}d5\) \(\text{c}3\) 16.\(\text{b}3\) \(\text{x}b1\) 17.\(\text{xb1}\) g6 18.b5 \(\text{axb5}\) 19.\(\text{xb5}\) \(\text{e}6\) 20.e4 and White easily won from this position in Onischuk-Yermolinsky, Las Vegas 2001.

A11) 16.\(\text{bc1}\) is not convincing after 16...\(\text{axb5}\):

A111) 17.\(\text{xb5}\) \(\text{e}4\) 18.\(\text{w}c2\) \(\text{d}6\) and Black was fine in Kasimdzhanov-Vallejo Pons, Linares 2005;

A112) Or 17.\(\text{xb5}\) \(\text{c}5\) 18.\(\text{xd6}\) \(\text{w}d6\) 19.\(\text{a}3\) (19.\(\text{xc5}\) \(\text{xc5}\) 19...\(\text{a}6\) and Black is at least OK.

A12) 16.\(\text{fc1}\)! White’s king’s rook belongs on the c-file here, leading to White’s advantage:

A121) 16...\(\text{xb5}\) 17.\(\text{xb5}\) \(\text{c}5\) In the case of 17...\(\text{b}4\) 18.\(\text{f}5\) c6 19.\(\text{c}3\) \(\text{xc3}\) 20.\(\text{xc3}\) the dark-squared bishops are exchanged, the weakness of Black’s b6 pawn is much more of a problem than White’s a4 weakness, and Black’s counterplay with ...c7-c5 is not happening – a perfect scenario for White! 18.\(\text{xd6}\) \(\text{xd6}\) 19.\(\text{a}3\) \(\text{a}6\) 20.\(\text{f}5\) Contrary to similar positions we will see in this line, Black’s b- and c-pawns are obvious targets here and Black has problems. Here White’s
queenside advance should lead to an advantage, but as usual, accurate play is required;

A122) Or 16...b6 17.b3. White has no reason to hurry in this position – he has more useful moves than Black.
17...c6 18.e5! dxe5 19.dxe5 dxe4 19...wx5?! runs into 20.bxa6 axa6 21.d5 and c7 will fall. 20.dxe4 dxe4 21.d4 and Black’s c7 weakness will tell.

A2) White is also better after 13.a3

14.f1! White has to choose the right moment for pushing b4-b5; Black does not have any direct counterplay and White has the advantage. The immediate 14.b5 and 14.f1 15.b5 have been tried on a high level and brought White nothing. 14...f8 15.b5! The right moment; now this leads to a white advantage.

B) Black may also start with 10...a6, which will likely transpose to the same:
11.wb3 w7

B1) 12.b1 cbd7 13.a4 transposes to 10...c7, and leads to positions favourable to White;

B2) Here 12.b5 has also often been played, but in my opinion White should not hurry with this push.
12...cxb5 12...a5? allows a standard positional transaction which is favourable for White after 13.a4 c7 14.a3. The dark-squared bishops are going to be exchanged, while Black has not been able to create any counterplay. In this type of position, White has a long-term and risk-free advantage. 13.xb5 c7 14.d7 Here Black is quick with his counterthrust ...c7-c5 and can therefore easily afford to allow White to trade his c3 for the d6. 13...c6?! was played in some games, but this does not make much sense here. Black’s main counterplay is related to the advance ...c7-c5 and the c6 now simply stands in the way. 14.b2

14...c5! and now:

B21) Should White keep his pawn on d4 and continue 15.xd6 wd6 16.f5, then Black gets excellent play after 16...c4 17.w2 fe8!. This leads to a promising exchange sac. 17...g6 18.xd7 wxd7 was played in Jussupow-Timman, Linares Candidates’ 1992, where White won a complicated game. 18.e5 If White does not jump to e5, Black will play ...e4. 18...xe5 19.xe5 xe5 20.xe5 wx5 Black certainly has enough compensation, perhaps more. 21.ab1 xa6 22.b4 c6;

B22) 15.dxc5 bxc5 16.xd6 wxd6 Black’s b7 is taboo, because the white queen does not get out after the simple
...f6. Black already has an excellent game, which is soon going to become even better. Such developments are exactly what White should avoid in this line! 17...c3...a6 Yes, the exchange of the light-squared bishops is strategically OK for Black in this line. 18...xd1...xd3 19...xd3 f6 Black is better and he’s improving his position fast. 20...c1
It is good to notice that Black’s central pawns are excellent, while White’s a-pawn is only a target. 20...c4 21...d1...c5 White will be forced to sacrifice the exchange. 22...c2...d3 23...xf6 gxf6? This decision is very hard to explain, even more so coming from a player with a fine positional feeling like Dautov. Black voluntarily destroys his own pawn structure. After 23...xf6 White would also have been obliged to give an exchange, but Black’s kingside pawn structure would have remained intact. 24...xd3...xd3 25...d3...a3 26...xa3...xa3 27.g3 and Black’s damaged pawn structure White managed to survive in Jussupow-Dautov, Nussloch 1996.
C) Interesting is 10...e4!? though this does not equalize:
C1) 11...b5...e7 12...c2...d7!
(12...a6, played in Jussupow-Hübner, Germany Bundesliga 1995/96, does not equalize after 13...e5! c6 14.f3) is fine for Black, since it is risky for White to take the pawn: 13...xc7...xc7 14...xc7...c8 15...a6 The white knight is terribly placed. 15...c3 16...b5...d6 17...e5 f6 and Black’s compensation is worth a pawn at least;
C2) 11...b3 and now:
C21) 11...xc3 12...xc3...e7 13...b2...d7 14.b5 a6 15.a4axb5

16.axb5 This transaction is OK for White, since Black cannot conveniently push his c-pawn. It is also good to note here that White’s situation would have been truly superior had he also managed to exchange the dark-squared bishops. 16...f6 17...e5...e4 18...c2 with some advantage for White in Gavrikov-Salov, Irkutsk 1986;
C22) Or 11...e8 12...b2...e6 13...ad1...h6 14...e5...xc3 and White is slightly better after 15...xc3 – not 15...xc3? since Black wins by force with 15...xe5 16.dxe5...h4 17.h3
Part III: The Main Line 4...0-0 5.\textit{d}d3 \textit{d}5 6.\textit{\textit{f}f}3

17...\textit{d}4! 18.\textit{c}c4 \textit{x}x\textit{g}2! (not 18...\textit{d}xc3? 19.\textit{xf}7+ \textit{h}8 20.\textit{d}d5 \textit{c}6 21.\textit{f}f3 and White went on to win after some complications in Polugaevsky-A. Sokolov, France tt 1992) 19.\textit{xd}4 \textit{e}4! (the point) 20.\textit{xf}7+ \textit{h}8 21.\textit{fd}1 (21.\textit{xe}4 \textit{wh}h3 mates) 21...\textit{c}6 and White will collapse to the mating attack.

- White can also choose an aggressive set-up, though in that case matters are rather unclear: 7.\textit{cxd}5 \textit{exd}5 8.0-0 \textit{\textit{b}b7} 8...\textit{e}e8 9.\textit{e}e5! leads to a version that is favourable for White. 9.\textit{e}e5 \textit{\textit{d}d}6 This is Black’s main move here. Other moves are rightly considered inferior.

10.\textit{f}4

The point behind White’s set-up. The dominant \textit{\textit{e}e}5 is strongly defended and White will try to get a kingside attack. Black however has his chances, as he can hit White’s \textit{d}4- and \textit{e}4-squares.

10...\textit{c}5 We have here a very messy position, which still needs further investigation.

A) In the old main line after 11.\textit{\textit{f}f}3 \textit{\textit{c}c}6 12.\textit{\textit{h}h}3

A1) 12...\textit{\textit{g}g}6 13.\textit{\textit{h}h}1 is considered to give White good attacking prospects, one recent example being 13...\textit{a}6 (13...\textit{e}e8 is another move that has been played) 14.\textit{d}d2 \textit{cxd}4 15.\textit{\textit{xc}c}6 \textit{\textit{xc}c}6 16.\textit{\textit{ex}d}4 \textit{\textit{e}e}4 17.\textit{\textit{xe}e}4 \textit{dxe}4

18.\textit{f}5 A standard way for White to develop his attack here. 18...\textit{\textit{e}e}8 19.\textit{fxg}6 \textit{hxg}6 20.\textit{xf}7! \textit{\textit{xf}7} 21.\textit{\textit{wh}7}+ \textit{\textit{e}e}6 22.\textit{d}d5+! \textit{\textit{xd}5} 23.\textit{\textit{wh}h}3+ \textit{\textit{f}f}7 24.\textit{\textit{xd}5} \textit{\textit{xe}5} 25.\textit{\textit{wh}h}7+ \textit{\textit{e}e}6 26.\textit{\textit{w}xg}6+ \textit{\textit{xd}5} 27.\textit{\textit{d}d}1 \textit{\textit{d}d}4 28.\textit{\textit{c}c}3 \textit{\textit{c}c}5 29.\textit{b}b4+ \textit{\textit{b}b}5 30.\textit{\textit{xd}4} \textit{\textit{wc}7} 31.\textit{\textit{wh}5}+ 1-0, Peralta-Gonzalez Garcia, Sabadell 2010;

A2) 12...\textit{\textit{e}e}7 blunders an exchange after 13.\textit{\textit{d}d}7 \textit{\textit{g}g}6 14.\textit{\textit{xf}8}, already known from Simagin-Razuvaev, Moscow 1967;

A3) David Navara recently came up with 12...\textit{h}6!? 13.\textit{\textit{ff}3 This seems to lead to a forced draw. Players who are willing to enter this from either side, I would advise to take some serious time to analyse the complications after 13.\textit{g}4?.

13...\textit{cxd}4 14.\textit{\textit{ex}d}4 \textit{\textit{xd}4} 15.\textit{g}5 \textit{hxg}5 16.\textit{\textit{fxg}5} \textit{\textit{wc}8} 17.\textit{\textit{d}d}7! \textit{\textit{e}e}4! (17...\textit{\textit{wd}7}?? is a blunder due to 18.\textit{\textit{wh}7}+) 18.\textit{\textit{e}e}3. 13...\textit{cxd}4 14.\textit{\textit{ex}d}4 \textit{\textit{xd}4} 15.\textit{\textit{g}g}3 \textit{\textit{h}h}8 16.\textit{\textit{f}f}5 \textit{\textit{xe}e}5
Chapter 3.1: The Delayed Fianchetto – 6...b6

17...\textbf{fg7}! This forces a draw. 17...\textbf{fg7}
Or 17...h5 18.\textbf{we3} \textbf{xg7} 19.\textbf{wh6+}
with a draw. 18.\textbf{wh6+} \textbf{gh8} 19.\textbf{gh5+}
\textbf{gh8} 20.\textbf{wh5+} \textbf{g6} 21.\textbf{fg5+} \frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}
Peralba-Navara, France tt 2011.

B) 11.\textbf{bd2} The latest idea for White
in this line. 11...\textbf{c6} 12.\textbf{de2} The point
behind Shirov's idea. White's d4 pawn
will be defended by the bishop, while
the white knight travels to g3. 12...\textbf{c8}
13.\textbf{c3} \textbf{de7} 14.\textbf{g3}

14...\textbf{de4} With this knight jump, Black
regularly 'breaks' White's attack in this
line. 15.\textbf{xexe4} \textbf{xexe4} 16.\textbf{we4f5} 17.\textbf{wh3}:

B1) 17...c4 18.d5! \textbf{c5}? Going after
an unimportant pawn; 18...b5.
19.\textbf{ad1}! \textbf{xexe1}+ 20.\textbf{wh1} Now things
have gone wrong for Black. 20...\textbf{xexe5}
20...\textbf{c5} does not save Black: 21.\textbf{xexe4}!
\textbf{exe4} 22.\textbf{we6+} \textbf{gh8} 23.d6. 21.\textbf{xf5}
White has too many attackers, and
Black's king has no defenders!
21...\textbf{xf4} 22.\textbf{h6+} \textbf{xh6} 23.\textbf{we6+}

18...\textbf{g6} and White's attack does not seem
to work: 19.\textbf{ad1} 19.e6 \textbf{d5} 20.\textbf{ad1}
\textbf{we7} 21.\textbf{wh6} \textbf{cd8}. 19...\textbf{d5} 20.e6
\textbf{we7} 21.\textbf{wh6} \textbf{cd8} and Black wins.
The set-up with 9.\textbf{e5} and 10.f4 leads
to sharp positions. White does have an
attack, but he should also acknowledge
that there is a risk and that the tables can
easily turn.

7...\textbf{d6}

The other option is 7...\textbf{xc3+} 8.bxc3
dxc4 9.\textbf{xc4} \textbf{b7} 10.0-0 c5 11.\textbf{b2}
\textbf{bd7}

12.\textbf{d3} Now the strategic fight is about
the e4-square. Should White manage to
execute the push e3-e4 and build a nice
centre, then he will be better – and it
seems as if he does: 12...\textbf{c7} 13.\textbf{e1}
Part III: The Main Line 4...0-0 5...d3 d5 6...f3

\( \texttt{e4} 14...\texttt{f1!} \) and next is \( \texttt{d2} \), kicking Black’s bishop out:

- White achieves his strategic objectives in the case of 14...\texttt{ac8} 15...\texttt{d2} \( \texttt{b7} \) 16...\texttt{e4} 16...\texttt{c1} followed by e3-e4 is also good. 16...\texttt{xd4} 17...\texttt{xd4} \texttt{wc2} 18...\texttt{b1} \texttt{b8} 19...\texttt{b5} \texttt{f8}

20...\texttt{we2} White has a central pawn majority, the advantage of the bishop pair, the black queen is far from perfect on \( c2 \) – so White was better in Potkin-Shimanov, St Petersburg 2009;

- 14...\texttt{e5} Central counterplay. 15...\texttt{d2} \( \texttt{g6} \) 16...\texttt{e4} \texttt{xd4} 16...\texttt{ad8} 17...\texttt{d5} \texttt{e8} 18...\texttt{c4} leads to a white advantage after 18...\texttt{d6} 19...\texttt{a4} \texttt{de8} 20...\texttt{a3} \texttt{f5} 21...\texttt{xf5} \texttt{xf5} 22...\texttt{d3} as in Kortchnoi-Hübler, Manila Interzonal 1990. 17...\texttt{xd4exd4}

22...\texttt{c4!} This knight will be a monster on \( d6 \). The original game continued 22...\texttt{f4} \texttt{ad8} 23...\texttt{g4} and White went on to win in Potkin-Mosharov, Belgorod 2010. 22...\texttt{ad8} 23...\texttt{d6} followed by f2-f4, with an obvious white advantage.

8...\texttt{e4!}

The point behind 7...\texttt{a3!} – Black’s bishop is still on \( c8 \) and White can execute this pawn push.

8...\texttt{dxe4} 9...\texttt{xe4} \texttt{bd7}

Keeping the bishop with 9...\texttt{e7??} leads to a passive position for Black: 10...\texttt{xf6+} \texttt{xf6} 11...\texttt{e4} \texttt{c6} 12...\texttt{e3} \texttt{g6} 13...\texttt{h4} with a white attack in Knaak-Schöneberg, Leipzig 1986.

10...\texttt{b3} 11...\texttt{xd6} \texttt{xd6}

White has more space and the bishop pair – he should be better here.
12. \( \texttt{g5} \)

12. \( \texttt{e1} \) \( \texttt{c7} \) 13. \( \texttt{f4} \) is another way.

12. \( \texttt{h6} \) 13. \( \texttt{h4} \) \( \texttt{d5} \) 14. \( \texttt{cxd5} \) \( \texttt{xd5} \)

This isolated pawn position should favour White, who now develops a swift, instructive kingside attack and wins the game in style.

15. \( \texttt{e1} \) \( \texttt{c7} \) 16. \( \texttt{e5} \) \( \texttt{fc8} \)
17. \( \texttt{e3} \) \( \texttt{b7} \) 18. \( \texttt{d2} \) \( \texttt{xe5} \)
19. \( \texttt{dxe5} \) \( \texttt{d5} \) 20. \( \texttt{e4f} \) \( \texttt{f8} \)
21. \( \texttt{ae1} \) \( \texttt{c5} \) 22. \( \texttt{g4} \)

All white pieces are involved in the kingside attack, while Black’s king has no defenders.

22. \( \texttt{c7} \)

23. \( \texttt{h7!} \)

The threat is 24. \( \texttt{h6!} \).

23. \( \texttt{g5} \) 24. \( \texttt{g3!} \)

This leads to a piece sacrifice.

24. \( \texttt{f5} \) 25. \( \texttt{exf6} \) \( \texttt{h7} \)

26. \( \texttt{h4!} \)

Blasting away the bastions around Black’s king.

26. \( \texttt{gxh4} \)

A beautiful line that shows White’s attacking potential is 26. \( \texttt{f7} \) 27. \( \texttt{hxg5} \) \( \texttt{hxg5} \) 28. \( \texttt{wg5} \) \( \texttt{c2} \)

29. \( \texttt{wg7+!} \) \( \texttt{xg7} \) 30. \( \texttt{xg7+} \) \( \texttt{e8} \)
31. \( \texttt{xe6+} \) \( \texttt{d8} \)
And now:

- 32.f7 is only a draw by perpetual check after 32...\textit{\texttt{d}1+ 33.\textit{h}2 \textit{h}5+;}
- While 32.\textit{g}8+? allows the black king to escape by 32...\textit{d}7 33.\textit{d}6+ \textit{c}7;
- 32.\textit{h}2!! and despite being a full queen up Black cannot prevent the decisive 33.f7. 32...\textit{d}1 Hoping for a perpetual with 33...\textit{h}5+. 33.\textit{g}8+ \textit{d}7 34.\textit{d}6+ \textit{c}7 35.\textit{xd}5+ and White wins.

27.\textit{xh}4 \textit{c}6 28.\textit{c}1 \textit{d}7 29.\textit{hx}6 \textit{c}8

\textbf{Conclusion}

Strangely enough, the only strong players favouring 7.a3! were Kortchnoi, new European Champion (2011) Potkin and the old 4.e3 System expert Knaak – but the idea deserves more attention!

The standard positional pawn advance on the queenside should also be good for a white advantage.

The set-up with 9.\textit{e}5 and 10.\textit{f}4 leads to sharp positions.
This move is a viable alternative to the common 8...\( \text{\textbullet}\text{c}3 \). Many famous players have decided to avoid main lines by choosing this option as Black. Black does not want to determine the central pawn structure, he still keeps his bishop pair and wants to take on c3 under better circumstances, when it will create double c-pawns for White. Obtaining an opening advantage is far from easy for White and according to the current 'official state of affairs' Black obtains satisfactory play. I have an interesting new idea for White which naturally needs to be further analysed and checked in practice, and have chosen this to be my main line here.

9.cxd5!

To my mind this is the most consequent way for White to fight for an opening advantage in the 8...\( \text{\textbullet}\text{a}5 \) line. Other moves have also often been tried in practice: 9.\( \text{\textbullet}\text{e}2 \) or 9.\( \text{\textbullet}\text{a}4 \) do not pose any danger for Black. 9.h3 is also a way for White to attain some advantage, but it is less direct than 9.cxd5. About 9.\( \text{\textbullet}\text{e}2 \) and 9.\( \text{\textbullet}\text{a}4 \) I have nothing to add to current known theory and I will give some games for the sake of reference. 9.h3 may look innocent and unpretentious, but is actually quite complicated. 9.cxd5 is the most aggressive way for White to combat 8...\( \text{\textbullet}\text{a}5 \), in many cases producing direct play.

With a knight jump to e2 or a4 White removes his knight from c3, hence Black cannot capture ...\( \text{\textbullet}\text{xc}3 \) after White takes dxc5 and create doubled c-pawns, and therefore White now threatens dxc5, forcing Black to take a decision in the centre. However, at first sight these knight jumps to e2 or a4 do not look like something Black should be worried about.
Part III: The Main Line 4...0-0 5.\( \text{d}3 \text{d}5 6.\text{f}3 \\

- 9.\text{e}2 looks more logical to me because on e2 the knight has more prospects than on a4. White now gets ready to open up the centre. This move was tested in the famous 1st game of the Spassky-Fischer match in Reykjavik, 1972, and did not offer White a glimpse of an opening advantage. Modern theory supports this verdict. 9...\text{dxc}4 This move, chosen by Fischer, is the soundest way to equalize. To an ambitious black player who wants to complicate matters, I would advise to investigate the isolated pawn positions arising after 9...\text{cxd}4 10.\text{exd}4 \text{dxc}4 11.\text{xc}4 \text{h}6. 10.\text{xc}4 \text{b}6 Again the most solid. Black more or less enforces a symmetrical pawn structure. More complicated is 10...\text{we}7 11.\text{g}3 \text{d}8 12.\text{we}2 \text{cxd}4 13.\text{exd}4 \text{h}6 14.\text{e}3 \text{d}7 15.\text{ad}1 \text{e}8 16.\text{a}2 \text{ac}8 with sharp play in an isolated pawn position, which is unusual in that a5 is not a common square for Black's dark-squared bishop in isolated pawn structures.

One game continued 17.\text{b}1 \text{d}5 18.\text{wd}3 \text{f}5!. A standard way to stop White's kingside attack. 19.\text{c}1 \text{wf}6 20.b4 \text{b}6 21.\text{b}2 a6 22.\text{fe}1 \text{c}7 23.\text{a}2 \text{ce}7 - Black was doing fine and went on to win in Simagin-Hort, Moscow 1963. 11.\text{xc}5 \text{wd}1 12.\text{xd}1 \text{xc}5 13.b4 \text{e}7 14.\text{b}2

14...\text{d}7! During the game Spassky probably had pleasant memories of 14...\text{b}6 15.\text{f}4 \text{b}7 16.\text{g}5! \text{d}8 17.\text{ac}1 \text{h}6 18.\text{g}xe6! \text{fxe}6 19.\text{xe}6 \text{c}8 20.\text{b}3 \text{f}7 21.\text{xf}8 \text{xf}8 22.\text{xc}8+ \text{xc}8 23.\text{c}1 \text{d}6 24.\text{f}3, when the white kingside pawns started to roll and he soon obtained a winning advantage in Spassky-Krogius, Riga ch-URS 1958. 15.\text{ac}1 \text{fd}8 16.\text{ed}4 \text{xd}4 17.\text{xd}4 \text{a}4 18.\text{b}3 \text{xb}3 19.\text{xb}3 \text{xd}1+ 20.\text{xd}1 \text{c}8 with total equality, normally a dead draw, in Spassky-Fischer, Reykjavik Wch 1972.

- Another option for White is 9.\text{a}4, forcing Black to take on d4, reaching an isolated pawn structure. White's passive knight on a4 will have to be moved to c5, but it is far from comfortable there with Black's b-pawn still on b7. I've never been fond of 9.\text{a}4, as it simply does not look natural. 9...\text{cxd}4 10.\text{exd}4 \text{dxc}4 11.\text{xc}4

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A) In case of the immediate 11...\(\text{c}\text{c}7\) the h4-d8 diagonal pin remains unpleasant for Black after 12.\(\text{g}\text{g}5\) h6 13.\(\text{h}\text{h}4\text{b}\text{b}6\) 14.\(\text{c}\text{c}3\) \(\text{b}\text{b}7\):

A1) Not 15.\(\text{e}\text{e}4?!\) due to 15...g5 16.\(\text{d}\text{d}x\text{g}\text{g}5\) 16.\(\text{f}\text{fxg}5??\) is a blunder due to 16...\(\text{d}\text{d}x\text{e}4\). 16...h5! 17.\(\text{d}\text{d}x\text{g}5\) and White’s compensation looks dubious;

A2) But 15.\(\text{a}\text{a}2\) followed by \(\text{e}\text{e}1\) gives White some advantage.

B) With 11...\(\text{d}\text{d}5\) Black solves the problem of the pin, but also removes a defender from his king: 12.\(\text{d}\text{d}3\) \(\text{c}\text{c}7\) 13.\(\text{e}\text{el}\) b6 14.\(\text{e}\text{ec}3\) \(\text{e}\text{e}3\) 15.\(\text{b}\text{bc}3\) \(\text{w}\text{f}6\) 16.\(\text{g}\text{g}5!\) \(\text{w}\text{h}6\) 17.h3 \(\text{w}\text{h}5\) 18.\(\text{w}\text{e}4\) \(\text{b}\text{b}7\) 19.\(\text{d}\text{d}3\) \(\text{a}\text{a}5!\) Sacrificing a pawn is the only solution here. 19...g6? takes away a vital retreat square from the black queen after 20.\(\text{e}\text{e}2\). 20.\(\text{w}\text{w}x\text{h}7+\) \(\text{w}\text{w}x\text{h}7\) 21.\(\text{x}\text{x}h7+\) \(\text{w}\text{xh}8\) 22.\(\text{e}\text{e}4\) \(\text{x}\text{xe}4\) 23.\(\text{x}\text{xe}4\) and due to the weakness of White’s c3 pawn and Black’s domination of the c4-square, Black had good chances to hold in Gligoric-Barczay, Skopje 1970;

C) 11...\(\text{e}\text{e}7!\) This knight heads to f5 or g6. One of the ideas behind this move is also to cover the h4-square from there, so in the case of a pin with \(\text{g}\text{g}5\), White’s bishop won’t have the retreat to h4 after ...h7-h6. 12.\(\text{c}\text{c}5\) White has temporarily improved his knight, however on c5 it isn’t doing much either. 12...\(\text{f}\text{f}5\) 13.\(\text{f}\text{f}4\) \(\text{c}\text{c}7\) 14.\(\text{e}\text{e}5\) b6

15.\(\text{a}\text{a}6\) The white knight has moved from a4 to a6 – not much of an improvement! White has spent four moves to ‘develop’ his knight from b1 to a hopeless square. 15...\(\text{d}\text{d}6\) 16.\(\text{w}\text{e}2\) \(\text{b}\text{b}7\) 17.\(\text{ad}1\) \(\text{d}\text{d}5\) Black has the standard piece coordination in an isolated pawn position, while White’s knight on a6 is totally misplaced and looks ridiculous. Black was better and went on to win in Gligoric-Polugaevsky, Amsterdam 1970.

The ‘modest’ 9.h3 is more dangerous for Black than it looks. White plays a move which is useful in general. He covers the g4-square and now threatens 10.cxd5 followed by dxc5, since compared to 9.cxd5 lines Black does not have the pin by ...\(\text{g}\text{g}4\).

A) In case Black goes for an isolated pawn structure with 9...\(\text{c}\text{c}4\) 10.exd4 dxc4 11.\(\text{xc}\text{c}4\) \(\text{b}\text{b}6\) White gets an advantage after 12.\(\text{e}\text{e}3\) \(\text{e}\text{e}7\) 13.\(\text{d}\text{d}3\) \(\text{d}\text{d}7\) 14.\(\text{g}\text{g}5\). This pin is often annoying and is the main drawback of Black’s deployment of his dark-squared bishop to b6. Black is fine in the case of 14.\(\text{ad}1\) \(\text{c}\text{c}6\) 15.\(\text{e}\text{e}5\) h6. 14...\(\text{c}\text{c}6\) 15.\(\text{ad}1\) \(\text{g}\text{g}6\) 16.h4! Black’s knight on g6 has to be hit before his pieces achieve harmony. The actual game continued 16.\(\text{a}\text{a}2?!\) h6 17.\(\text{c}\text{c}1\) \(\text{d}\text{d}5\) and Black was better in Taimanov-Krogius, Leningrad ch-URS
1960. 16...\(\text{Rc8}\) 16...h6 is well answered with 17.h5. 17.\(\text{Rc2}\) \(\text{wc7}\) 18.\(\text{xf6}\) gxf6 19.d5;

B) The logical developing move 9...\(\text{We7}\), protecting the c5 pawn, does not fully equalize:

- B1) 10.\(\text{Wc2}\)
  - B11) 10...\(\text{Ad8}\)? is a mistake, since Black is left with a weak queenside pawn structure as well as a weak kingside after 11.\(\text{cx d5}\) \(\text{cx d4}\) 11...\(\text{ex d5}\)? 12.\(\text{dxc5}\). 12.\(\text{dxc6}\) dxc3 13.\(\text{b4}\) \(\text{b6}\) 14.e4! h6 15.\(\text{Wc3}\) bxc6 16.e5 \(\text{d5}\) 17.\(\text{Wc4}\) a5 18.\(\text{We4}\) and White went on to win in A. David-Landa, Kallithea tt 2008;
  - B12) White gets the upper hand in a central pawn symmetry in the case of 10...\(\text{cx d4}\) 11.\(\text{cx d5}\) \(\text{ex d5}\) 11...\(\text{dx c3}\) 12.\(\text{dxc6}\) bxc6 13.b4 is better for White (similar to David-Landa, see above). 12.\(\text{ex d4}\) h6 13.\(\text{Wc1}\) \(\text{ce6}\) 14.\(\text{df4}\) Due to his better developed pieces, the e-file, and the presence of the light-squared bishops in connection with a favourable d4-d5 central pawn structure, White has the advantage here. I have dealt with such positions in detail in my book *Winning Chess Middlegames*;
  - B13) 10...\(\text{b6}\)?! fails to the more or less forced tactical sequence 11.\(\text{cx d5}\) \(\text{ex d5}\) 12.\(\text{dxc5}\) bxc5 13.\(\text{b4}\)! cxb4 14.\(\text{Wxb4}\) Dxd5 15.\(\text{Wxh7+}\) \(\text{Wxh8}\)

16.\(\text{Wc6}\) \(\text{b7}\) 17.\(\text{Wb5}\) \(\text{b6}\) 18.\(\text{Wb1}\). The black king is also vulnerable and he cannot develop enough initiative on the kingside to compensate for the lost pawn. 18.\(\text{Wf6}\) 19.\(\text{Wd3}\) \(\text{g6}\) and now 20.\(\text{Wd2}\) or 20.\(\text{Wb3}\), and White is better;

- B14) 10...\(\text{dxc4}\) 11.\(\text{Wxc4}\) \(\text{cx d4}\) 11...\(\text{e5}\) does not equalize after 12.\(\text{dxc5}\) \(\text{Wc5}\) 13.\(\text{Wxe4}\) \(\text{xe4}\) 14.b4! \(\text{We7}\) 15.\(\text{Wxe4}\) \(\text{c7}\) 16.\(\text{b2}\) and in Graf-Zeller, Deizisau 2005, White stood better.

12.\(\text{ex d4}\) \(\text{Wd8}\) 13.\(\text{Wd1}\) \(\text{b6}\) 14.\(\text{Wc3}\):

B141) 14...\(\text{cd7}\) does not equalize after 15.\(\text{d5}\) (15.\(\text{Wg5}\) is also good, with the standard annoying pin along the h4-d8 diagonal) 15...\(\text{ex d5}\) 16.\(\text{Wxb6}\) \(\text{axb6}\) 17.\(\text{Wxd5}\) \(\text{cx d5}\) 18.\(\text{Wxd5}\);

B142) 14...\(\text{d5}\) allows White to transform the pawn structure into a favourable pawn symmetry: 15.\(\text{cx d5}\) \(\text{cx d5}\) 16.\(\text{Wxd5}\) \(\text{g6}\) 17.\(\text{Wc1}\) The position may look almost equal, but it is not quite so. In such positions, Black may find himself one move short of equality for a very long time, eventually losing. 17...\(\text{Wd6}\) 18.\(\text{Wd2}\) \(\text{c7}\) 19.\(\text{Wg5}\) \(\text{f6}\) 20.\(\text{Wh4}\) \(\text{Wf8}\) 21.\(\text{Wc1}\) White was better in Graf-Pelletier, Calvia ol 2004. Please note again that the vulnerability of Black's d5 pawn, contrary to White's d4 pawn, plays an important role here.
B2) White players have also tried 10.\( \text{We}2 \) \( \text{Dd}8 \). 10...b6!? is a plan Black may consider – the 'strange' bishop on a5 can actually be annoying for White in many cases, and is stronger than it looks. 11.\( \text{Dd}1 \) a6 White plays a model game from here. 12.\( \text{cxd}5 \)! Forcing a favourable version of known structures. 12...\( \text{exd}5 \) 13.\( \text{dx}c5 \) \( \text{Dxc}3 \) 14.\( \text{bxc}3 \) \( \text{Wxc}5 \) 15.a4! \( \text{De}6 \) 16.\( \text{Da}3 \) \( \text{Wa}5 \) 16...\( \text{Wxc}3 \) 17.\( \text{Db}2 \) followed by \( \text{Dxf}6 \) will permanently damage Black’s queenside. 17.\( \text{Dd}4 \) Black does not want to tolerate White’s knight on d4: 17...\( \text{Dxd}4 \) 18.\( \text{cx}d4 \) White’s pawn structure improves. 18.\( \text{De}4 \) 19.\( \text{Wb}2 \) \( \text{Dd}7 \) 20.\( \text{f}3 \) \( \text{Df}6 \) 21.\( \text{Ac}5 \) White was clearly better and went on to win in Kortchnoi-B. Vladimir, Tashkent 1958; 

C) 9...\( \text{dx}c4 \) This move has recently been played by Michael Adams, with success. 10.\( \text{cx}c4 \) and now:

C1) 10...\( \text{We}7 \) 11.\( \text{Dd}3 \) Other possibilities are 11.\( \text{Wc}2 \) or 11.\( \text{We}2 \), likely transposing to other favourable lines for White, analysed here. 11...\( \text{Dd}8 \) 12.\( \text{De}4 \) \( \text{De}4 \) 13.\( \text{Dxe}4 \) \( \text{Gb}6 \) Black may try to improve with 13...\( \text{cx}d4 \) 14.\( \text{ex}d4 \) \( \text{Dxd}4 \)? 15.\( \text{Dxd}4 \) \( \text{Gb}6 \) 16.\( \text{Wc}2 \) \( \text{ex}d4 \) 17.\( \text{Dh}7+ \) \( \text{Gh}8 \) 14.\( \text{Wc}2 \) \( \text{cx}d4 \) 15.\( \text{Dh}7+ \) \( \text{Gh}8 \) 16.\( \text{De}4 \) \( \text{dx}e3 \) 17.\( \text{Dxe}3 \) \( \text{Dxe}3 \) 18.\( \text{fx}e3 \) and White was better in Potkin-Ragger, Moscow 2010;

C2) In the case of 10...\( \text{Dd}7 \) White follows the same plan as after 10...\( \text{We}7 \): 11.\( \text{Dd}3 \) \( \text{We}7 \) 12.\( \text{De}4 \) \( \text{Dxe}4 \) 13.\( \text{Dxe}4 \) \( \text{cx}d4 \) 14.\( \text{ex}d4 \) White has more space and Black has some concrete problems, as we shall soon see. 14...\( \text{h}6 \) Eliminating motifs such as \( \text{Dhx}7+ \) and \( \text{Gg}5+ \). 15.b4! Now Black’s pieces are clumsy. 15...\( \text{Gb}6 \) 16.\( \text{b}5 \) \( \text{Da}5 \) 17.\( \text{Ae}4 \) \( \text{Df}6 \) 18.\( \text{Da}3 \) \( \text{Wf}6 \) 19.\( \text{Ab}4 \) White was better and went on to win in Kortchnoi-Ljubojevic, Tilburg 1987;

C3) If 10...a6 White gets the advantage by following his already regular plan: 11.\( \text{Dd}3 \) \( \text{We}7 \) 12.\( \text{De}4 \) \( \text{cx}d4 \) 13.\( \text{ex}d4 \) \( \text{h}6 \) 14.\( \text{b}4 \) \( \text{Dxe}4 \) 14...\( \text{Gb}6 \) 15.\( \text{Ab}2 \) \( \text{Dd}8 \) 16.\( \text{Ac}5 \) is better for White, as here his knight is strong on c5. 15.\( \text{Dxe}4 \) \( \text{Gb}6 \) 16.\( \text{Ab}2 \) \( \text{Dd}8 \) 17.\( \text{Bc}1 \) Black has no good way to exert further pressure on White’s isolated pawn. White has d4-d5 motifs and has a general advantage in development and space;

C4) 10...\( \text{cx}d4 \) 11.\( \text{ex}d4 \) \( \text{Gb}6 \) transposes to 9...\( \text{cx}d4 \) 10.\( \text{ex}d4 \) \( \text{dx}c4 \) 11.\( \text{Dxc}4 \) \( \text{Gb}6 \) – please see the above comment on Taimanov-Krogius;

C5) 10...\( \text{h}6 \) is the move favoured by Michael Adams. Black makes a useful move, permanently preventing all annoying pins along the h4-d8 diagonal and waiting for White to show his cards. 11.\( \text{Dd}3 \) 11.\( \text{Dd}3 \)?! was still possible. 11...\( \text{cx}d4 \) 12.\( \text{ex}d4 \) \( \text{Cc}7 \) and here:

CS1) Practice has seen 13.\( \text{Dd}1 \) b6 (13...\( \text{De}7 \) is a possibility) 14.\( \text{d}5 \) \( \text{ex}d5 \) 15.\( \text{Dxd}5 \) \( \text{Gd}6 \) 16.\( \text{Dxc}7 \) \( \text{Dxc}4 \) 17.\( \text{Wc}2 \) \( \text{Dxc}7 \) 18.\( \text{Wxc}4 \) \( \text{Dac}8 \) 19.\( \text{Df}4 \) \( \text{Wf}7 \) White’s advantage (\( \text{G} \) vs \( \text{D} \)) is at best highly symbolic, the game was soon drawn in Potkin-Adams, Rijeka Ech 2010;
Part III: The Main Line 4... 0-0 5...d3 d5 6...d3

C52) 13...e1 The e-file looks like a logical place for the king's rook here:

C521) 13...e7 14...e5! The drawback of the early ...e7. The game continued 14...d2 b6 15...ad1 ...b7 16...e5 a6; Black was fine and went on to win in Del Rio Angelis-Adams, Spain tt 2009. 14...b6 15...f3 White has attacking chances on the kingside: 15...b8? 15...ed5 was necessary, though White retains a kingside initiative. 16...xh6! ...b7 17...f4 ...g6 17...gxh6? 18...xf6 ...f5 19...g4. 18...e3 ...xe5 White collects too many pawns after 18...gxh6 19...xg6 fxg6 20...xh6. 19...xe5 gxh6 20...ad1 with a probably winning advantage for White;

C522) 13...b6 looks more accurate to me, since 14.d5 leads to equality after 14...exd5 15...xd5 ...xd5 16...xd5 (16...xd5 ...e6) 16...b7? It is quite possible that Adams preferred to keep the game more complicated. Adams has demonstrated a sound and viable way for Black, but on move 13 I would prefer ...b6 to his 13...e7.

9...exd5 10...xc5 ...xc3 11...xc3

At the moment White has a lousy pawn structure, but he does have the bishop pair and is a pawn up - a lousy pawn that is going to fall, but still it's a pawn. Also White may get to play c3-c4 and then his pawn structure will improve.

11...g4

This has been established as Black's main move here. The alternative 11...wa5 does not equalize:

- 12...c2 ...xc5 The alternative 12...e8 is even worse after 13.c4 ...xc5 14...b2! dxc4 15...xf6 gxf6 16...xh7+ ...g7 17...e4 ...e6 18...ab1 ...ab8 19...xc6! (the correct trade here) 19...xc6 20...d4 ...c7 21...fc1 and White won easily in Gipslis-Golombek, Zagreb 1965. 13.a4! A standard plan to activate the ...c1. 13...e8 14...a3 ...a5 15...fb1 Also good was 15...ab1 ...c7 16.c4. 15...c7 16.c4 White improves his pawn structure and opens further diagonals for his bishops. 16...xc4 17...xc4 ...e6 18...c2 and due to his strong bishop pair White had an undisputed advantage in Landau-Flohr, Bournemouth 1939;

- Also good for White is 12...b1 ...xc5 13...b5 ...e7 14.c4a6
15.\textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{b}}}}\textbf{\textit{x}}\textbf{\textit{d}}5!} A standard exchange sac here, but for some strange reason Bronstein refrained from the text and continued 15.\textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{b}}}}\textbf{\textit{\textit{b}}}}2? dxc4 16.\textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{c}}}}\textbf{\textbf{c}}\textbf{\textit{\textbf{c}}}} b5 17.\textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{e}}}}\textbf{\textbf{e}}2 \textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbf{f}}}}\textbf{\textit{\textbf{f}}}}5, after which Black had an excellent game in Bronstein-Moiseev, Moscow ch-URS 1951. 15...\textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{c}}}}\textbf{\textbf{x}}\textbf{\textit{d}}5 16.\textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{c}}}}\textbf{\textbf{x}}\textbf{\textit{d}}5 \textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbf{e}}}}\textbf{\textbf{e}}5 17.\textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{c}}}}\textbf{\textbf{x}}\textbf{\textit{e}}5 \textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbf{w}}}}\textbf{\textbf{e}}5 18.\textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{w}}}}\textbf{\textbf{b}}3}
\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.8\textwidth]{chess_board.png}
\end{center}
His excellent bishop pair and central rolling pawns ensure White an advantage here.

- Interesting is 12.c4!? In the practical test of this move Black fell for 12...\textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{w}}}}\textbf{\textbf{c}}3? Correct was 12...dxc4! 13.\textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{c}}}}\textbf{\textbf{x}}\textbf{\textit{c}}4 \textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbf{w}}}}\textbf{\textbf{x}}\textbf{\textbf{c}}5. 13.\textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{c}}}}\textbf{\textbf{x}}\textbf{\textit{d}}5! \textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbf{w}}}}\textbf{\textbf{x}}\textbf{\textbf{a}}1
\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.8\textwidth]{chess_board.png}
\end{center}

14.\textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{w}}}}\textbf{\textbf{c}}2! 14.dxc6 \textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbf{w}}}}\textbf{\textbf{c}}3. 14...\textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{a}}}}\textbf{\textbf{a}}5 15.e4 Black is a rook up, but his queen is trapped. 15...\textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{d}}}}\textbf{\textbf{d}}7 16.\textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{b}}}}\textbf{\textbf{b}}2 \textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbf{a}}}}\textbf{\textbf{a}}2 17.\textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{d}}}}\textbf{\textbf{d}}4!:
A) 17...\textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{f}}}}\textbf{\textbf{c}}8 18.\textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{a}}}}\textbf{\textbf{a}}1 and White had a winning advantage in the game Novotelnov-Smyslov, Moscow ch-URS 1951;
B) The lesser evil was 17...\textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{a}}}}\textbf{\textbf{a}}4 18.\textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{w}}}}\textbf{\textbf{c}}3 \textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbf{f}}}}\textbf{\textbf{e}}8 (instead, 18...\textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{b}}}}\textbf{\textbf{b}}3 loses to 19.\textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{c}}}}\textbf{\textbf{f}}5) 19.\textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{b}}}}\textbf{\textbf{b}}1 \textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbf{c}}}}\textbf{\textbf{c}}4 20.\textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{w}}}}\textbf{\textbf{x}}\textbf{\textbf{a}}5 though the situation is far from good for Black since 20...\textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{e}}}}\textbf{\textbf{x}}\textbf{\textbf{e}}4 loses to 21.\textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{c}}}}\textbf{\textbf{c}}1.

Now White is at a crossroads. The position is complicated, many different ideas have been tried here for both sides in the past 70 years.

Here I shall give what I consider to be the most important lines/games and some suggested improvements. The position is rich with ideas and there is a lot to discover. The idea I give as the main line is certainly one of the lines to spend more time studying.

12.\textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{b}}}}\textbf{\textbf{b}}1!

- Also interesting, and played in just a few games, is 12.a4!? Putting the pawn on a4, offering the \textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{c}}}}\textbf{\textbf{c}}1 deployment to a3, is almost always good in this line.

A) In the case of 12...\textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{e}}}}\textbf{\textbf{e}}5 13.\textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{e}}}}\textbf{\textbf{e}}2 \textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbf{f}}}}\textbf{\textbf{x}}\textbf{\textbf{f}}3+ 14.\textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{f}}}}\textbf{\textbf{x}}\textbf{\textbf{f}}3 (14.\textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{g}}}}\textbf{\textbf{x}}\textbf{\textbf{f}}3? blunders an exchange, since after 14...\textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{h}}}}\textbf{\textbf{h}}3, 15.\textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{e}}}}\textbf{\textbf{e}}1? fails to 15...\textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{e}}}}\textbf{\textbf{e}}4) 14...\textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{f}}}}\textbf{\textbf{x}}\textbf{\textbf{f}}3 15.\textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{w}}}}\textbf{\textbf{f}}3
\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.8\textwidth]{chess_board.png}
\end{center}
White is slightly better here. It will take Black time to regain his pawn and should White manage to execute c3-c4, then his pawn structure will improve and also his bishop will become more


active, for example: 15...\textit{c}c8 or 15...\textit{w}d7 16.\textit{b}b2 followed by c3-c4. 16.\textit{d}d1 \textit{e}e8 17.\textit{a}a3;

B) In the event of 12...\textit{e}e8 White continues with the useful 13.\textit{b}b1. Moves like \textit{b}b1 and a3-a4 are almost invariably useful for White in this position;

C) 12...\textit{w}a5 13.\textit{w}c2 \textit{xf}3 14.gxf3 \textit{e}e5 15.\textit{e}e2 \textit{f}c8 16.\textit{a}a3 A typical story for this line is now going to develop. Black has to spend time regaining the pawn, meanwhile White will push c3-c4 (strategically almost ALWAYS good for White here), improving his pawn structure and opening diagonals for his bishops. 16...\textit{d}d7 17.\textit{f}b1 \textit{w}c7 18.c4 Mission completed: the diagonals are open and the bishops are superior to Black’s knights here. 18...dxc4

\textbf{19.\textit{w}xc4} The most precise. White has a clear advantage here. The actual game continued 19.\textit{xc}c5, which by the way is also good for White: 19...\textit{xc}5 20.\textit{c}c1 b6 21.\textit{b}b2 (as often happens in these Nimzo lines, the \textit{b}b2 becomes a monster) 21...\textit{w}e7 22.\textit{w}f5 \textit{c}c6 23.\textit{h}h1 \textit{d}d8 24.\textit{b}b5 \textit{cd}6 25.\textit{g}g1 and thanks to his bishop pair and open g-file White had the initiative and went on to win in Korotylev-Landa, Serpukhov 2007. 19...b6 fails to 20.cxb6! \textit{xc}4 21.\textit{xc}c4 \textit{xc}4 22.b7 \textit{e}e8 22...\textit{b}b8? 23.\textit{d}d6 wins. 23.\textit{d}d6 and White regains his sacrificed piece, remaining a clear pawn up. 12.a4 is definitely a move that deserves more attention and practical testing.

- A strategically good move, which as I have explained is almost always good in these positions, is 12.c4. In many books this is considered to be White’s main move here.

However, due to the fact that White is behind in development, Black manages to create tactical, dynamic play:

A) 12...d4 may look very logical, but does not equalize:

A1) Practice has seen 13.\textit{b}b1 and now: A1 1) White is better in the case of 13...\textit{e}e5

\textbf{14.\textit{b}b2! 14.exd4 \textit{xf}3! 15.gxf3 \textit{xd}4 with approximate equality was Gligoric-Szabo, Beverwijk 1967.}
Chapter 3.2: Reykjavik Line - 6...c5 7.0-0  \( \text{c6} \) 8.a3 \( \text{a5} \)

14...\( \text{\texttt{\textasciitilde x d3}} \) In the case of 14...\( \text{\texttt{\textasciitilde x f3}} + \) 15.gxf3 \( \text{\texttt{\textasciitilde h3}} \) White goes for a standard exchange sac with 16.\( \text{\texttt{\textasciitilde x d4}} \), obtaining a massive advantage. 15.\( \text{\texttt{\textasciitilde x d3}} \) \( \text{\texttt{\textasciitilde x f3}} \) 16.gxf3 dxe3 17.\( \text{\texttt{\textasciitilde x d8}} \) \( \text{\texttt{\textasciitilde x f2}} + \) 18.\( \text{\texttt{\textasciitilde x f2}} \) \( \text{\texttt{\textasciitilde fxd8}} \) 19.\( \text{\texttt{\textasciitilde xf6}} \) gxf6 20.\( \text{\texttt{\textasciitilde x b7}} \) and White should win this ending;

A12) Tactics also work for White after 13...\( \text{\texttt{\textasciitilde x f3}} \) 14.\( \text{\texttt{\textasciitilde x f3}} \) \( \text{\texttt{\textasciitilde e5}} \) 15.\( \text{\texttt{\textasciitilde x f5}} \) \( \text{\texttt{\textasciitilde e8}} \) (15...dxe3 16.\( \text{\texttt{\textasciitilde x e3}} \) \( \text{\texttt{\textasciitilde x d3}} \) 17.\( \text{\texttt{\textasciitilde f d1}} \) 16.\( \text{\texttt{\textasciitilde x d4}} \) \( \text{\texttt{\textasciitilde x d4}} \) 17.\( \text{\texttt{\textasciitilde e2}} \) \( \text{\texttt{\textasciitilde x c5}} \) 18.\( \text{\texttt{\textasciitilde x b7}} \) \( \text{\texttt{\textasciitilde w c6}} \) 19.\( \text{\texttt{\textasciitilde b5}} \) \( \text{\texttt{\textasciitilde x c4}} \) 20.\( \text{\texttt{\textasciitilde c5}} \) \( \text{\texttt{\textasciitilde d6}} \) 21.\( \text{\texttt{\textasciitilde x h7}} + \) \( \text{\texttt{\textasciitilde x h7}} \) 22.\( \text{\texttt{\textasciitilde x c6}} \) \( \text{\texttt{\textasciitilde x e2}} \) 23.\( \text{\texttt{\textasciitilde x d6}} \) with a sound pawn up in the ending;

A13) But we reach a position where White is a pawn up, but has a bad pawn structure after 13...dxe3! 14.\( \text{\texttt{\textasciitilde x e3}} \) \( \text{\texttt{\textasciitilde x f3}} \) 15.gxf3 \( \text{\texttt{\textasciitilde c7}} \). Black has good, dynamic play against White’s damaged kingside structure here.

A2) 13.\( \text{\texttt{\textasciitilde e2}} \)! This is a clear-cut road to a white advantage. 13...\( \text{\texttt{\textasciitilde e4}} \)

B) 12.\( \text{\texttt{\textasciitilde e5}} \)!

B1) Botvinnik’s old idea of 13.\( \text{\texttt{\textasciitilde x d5}} \) does not work due to a recent discovery:

12...\( \text{\texttt{\textasciitilde e5}} \)!

B11) In the original game Black quickly got into trouble after 13...\( \text{\texttt{\textasciitilde x f3}} + \) 14.gxf3 \( \text{\texttt{\textasciitilde h3}} \) 15.e4!

13.\( \text{\texttt{\textasciitilde f3}} \) ! 14.\( \text{\texttt{\textasciitilde x f3}} \) \( \text{\texttt{\textasciitilde h3}} \) 15.e4!

B12) 13...\( \text{\texttt{\textasciitilde x f3}} \) ! 14.gxf3 \( \text{\texttt{\textasciitilde x d5}} \)!

The point behind Botvinnik’s idea: for the ‘sacrificed’ exchange White gets a formidable pawn centre and a monster bishop pair to support it. 15...\( \text{\texttt{\textasciitilde d7}} \) 16.\( \text{\texttt{\textasciitilde x h1}} \) 16.\( \text{\texttt{\textasciitilde e1}} ? \) \( \text{\texttt{\textasciitilde f6}} \)!. 16...\( \text{\texttt{\textasciitilde x f1}} \) 17.\( \text{\texttt{\textasciitilde x f1}} \) \( \text{\texttt{\textasciitilde x c5}} \) 18.\( \text{\texttt{\textasciitilde e3}} \) b6 19.e5 \( \text{\texttt{\textasciitilde d7}} \) 20.f4 and White soon won in Botvinnik-Averbakh, Moscow 1955;

B12) 13...\( \text{\texttt{\textasciitilde x f3}} \) ! 14.gxf3 \( \text{\texttt{\textasciitilde x d5}} \)!

Black is in no hurry to regain his pawn and keeps tactical possibilities. Trying to regain the pawn immediately with 14...\( \text{\texttt{\textasciitilde x d5}} \) is inferior due to 15.\( \text{\texttt{\textasciitilde e2}} \) \( \text{\texttt{\textasciitilde x c5}} \) 16.\( \text{\texttt{\textasciitilde b2}} \) and in a number of
games White achieved an opening advantage thanks to his bishop pair. 15...d2 Black gets an excellent game in the case of 15...e4 g5+ 16...h1 c3 17...d4 xe4 18...xe4 h5 19...g2 g6 20...b2 and White has to hope that Black has nothing better than 20...h4+ 21...g3 f5+ 22...g2 h4+ with a draw. 15...xe3! 16...xh7+ xh7 17.xe3 g5+ 18...h1 xe3 19...c2+...d3 20...g2 g6 21...d1...f5 Material is equal, but Black has a superior pawn structure, and without its light-squared colleague the b2 is not very effective here. Black went on to win in Jussupow-Landa, Germany Bundesliga 2008/09.

B2) 13...e2 solves the pin along the h5-d1 diagonal, but it does cost time, which White cannot afford to lose here. 13...xc4 14...d4? White will soon discover that his queen is badly placed on this ‘dominant’ square. 14...e8 Also good for Black is 14...e7 15...xc4 dx4 16...xc4 xf3 17.gxf3 c8 18...b2 xc5 19.xf6 gxf6. 15...xc4 e4 16...b2 xf3 17.gxf3 xc4 and Black was better in Pinter-Landa, France 2005;

B3) 13...b2 Probably the best for White. Now:

B31) 13...xc4 lands Black in a simple pawn-down ending after 14...c4 dx4 15...xd8...xd8 16...c1 xf3 (or 16...e6 17...d4 d5 18.f3 followed by e3-e4) 17.gxf3 dxc4 18...xc4 as in Hillarp Persson-Landa, Dresden 2007;

B32) 13...dx4 also does not equalize: 14...xh7+...xh7 15...xd8...xf3+ 16.gxf3...xd8 17...g4...g5 Black has some compensation, but probably not enough. 18...f1...e4 19...d4 f5 20...ab1...d7 21.f3;

B33) 13...xf3! The only way. 14.gxf3 ...h3

Entering a sharp tactical exchange.

B331) 15...e1 does not promise White any advantage:

B3311) 15...e4

Now 16.f4? was a terrible mistake, giving away too many light squares around the white king and leading to disaster after 16...h4 17...f3 (or 17...e2 xc5) 17...d2 18...e2 dx4 19...c2...d8 in Gligoric-Ivkov, Zagreb 1965. Better was 16...e5!...g5+ 17...g3...g3 18...g3 dx4 19...xc4...xc5 20...c1...x3 21.g4.

B3312) But Black has better: 15...c8! 16...cx5 16...d4?...e4 17...e5 and White is a tempo down compared to the previous line. 16...xd5 17...f1 17...xf6 gxf6 is usually a good solution for Black in such positions. 17...h5 18...h3...h3
White is hoping to hang on to his extra pawn. In general this is a good idea, and $d4$ is also a good piece, however White's king remains weak and he does not manage the desired $h1$ followed by $g1$. 19...$xd8 20.$e2 $d7! 21.$ad1 White gets mated in the case of 21...$c6 21...$h6 21...$c6 is also good here, but no longer winning: 22.$h1! $h6 23.$e5 with equality. 22.$c1 $f8 with a fine game for Black in Spoelman-Adams, Germany Bundesliga 2010/11;

B332) 15.$h1!? is Gligoric' idea, which amounts to an exchange sacrifice.

Though such exchange sacrifices are typical for these positions and also the idea looks sound, it does not look as if White gets more than adequate compensation:
15...$xc4 16.$xc4 $xf1 17.$xf1

B3321) An earlier Gligoric game saw 17...$d2 18.$xf6 18.$d4, with play similar to Gligoric-Nicevski below, also looks promising for White. 18...$xf6 19.$h3 $c3 Now it is difficult to blame Gligoric for being human and going for a forced draw with 20.$g1+ $h8 21.$d3 $xd3 22.$h6 $g6 23.$xg6 fxg6 24.$e4 ½-½ Gligoric-Keller, Zürich 1961; and not finding over the board the computer idea 20.$f1!! when White is better: 20...$ac8 Or 20...$h8 21.$d5. The bishop is taboo as 20...$xc4?? is a terrible blunder due to 21.$g1+ $h8 22.$h6. 21.$d5 $f5 21...$xc5 22.$g1+ $h8 23.$e4 $h5 24.$f5 $xf5 25.$xf5 $e5 26.$d7= 22.$h6 $h8 23.$xb7 $cd8 24.$d5! B3322) 17...$c8 18.$d4

18...$c6 18...$b6!, exchanging the b-for the c-pawn and opening the c-file for his rook, looks sensible here. 19.$g2 $e8?! 20.$f4 $c8 21.$d5 $xc5 22.$xc5 $xc5 23.$xb7 and White managed to convert his minimal material advantage in Gligoric-Nicevski, Novi Sad 1975.

B333) 15.$xd5 $xd5 15...$e4!? leads by force to a position where White will have compensation for the sacrificed exchange, though a draw is a likely result:
Part III: The Main Line 4...0-0 5.\d3 d5 6.\f3

16.f4 \wdx5 17.f3 \xf1 18.ex4 \wdx1 19.xd1 a6 20.b1 ac8 21.d4 c7. 16.xf6 xf6 Due to his exposed king, White does not have time to take \xh7+. 17.h1

24...e8 25.xb7 e7 with a draw ten moves later in Beliavsky-Tal, Riga 1975;

B3332) 19.e2 and now, due to his safer king, White has some advantage after 19...\wxc5 20.\wb3 (relatively recent grandmaster practice has seen 20.a4 f5 21.h4 e7 22.e4 g6 23.c4 ac8 24.d5 c3 25.g3 with some advantage for White in Agrest-Milov, Antalya 2004) 20...e7 21.e4;

\bullet 12.d2 does not promise White anything: 12...xf3 13.gxf3 e5 14.e2 c8!

B3331) 17...\add8 18.g1+ h8 19.e2 \wxc5 White's advantage, based on his safer king, may look rather symbolic here, but still it looks better to play this position as White. 19...\wdx1 20.axd1, with a pawn up in the ending, was played in Portisch-Tal, Bled Candidates' 1965;

B3332) Interestingly, ten years later Tal played the other rook to d8: 17...\fd8 18.g1+ h8

B33321) The actual game continued 19.e4 Perhaps this was the move Tal had been worried about. 19...g2+ 20.xg2 g5+ 21.h1 xd1 22.axd1 \xxc5 23.d5 \wxf8 24.d7 24.xh7 \wh6! 25.e4 g8.

15.h1 \xc5 16.b1. Now the actual game continued 16...\xc6 17.\wc5 c4 18.g1 \wfe8 19.\xc4! dxc4 20.e4 (\c1 now soon becomes a monster) 20...d7 21.e3 c5 22.d4 f6 23.f4 g6 (or 23...d3 24.f3) 24.f3 b6 25.g3 \ad8 26.bgl and with a dominant bishop and doubled rooks on the g-file, White had the initiative and went on to win in Stein-Krogius, Kiev 1960; but after 16...b6 Black is at least OK.

\bullet 12.e2 solves the pin along the h5-d1 diagonal, but it also loses time and is not sufficient to obtain an opening advantage: 12...\wc7 13.b1 e4 14.c2 ac8 15.b2
White wants to execute his standard strategic plan – the push c3-c4. 15...\( \text{c}a_{5} \) Also good for Black is 15 ... \( \text{w}x_{c}5 \), since tactics work for him in the case of 16.c4? b5! 17.\( \text{d}d_{4} \) \( \text{xd}4 \) 18.\( \text{exd}4 \) \( \text{xa}_{3} \) 19.c5 \( \text{c}3 \). 16.\( \text{d}d_{3} \) \( \text{xc}5 \) 16...\( \text{c}4 \) – with White’s ‘dead’ \( \text{b}2 \) only Black can be better here, while the exchange sacrifice 17.\( \text{d}d_{4} \) \( \text{ed}2 \) 18.\( \text{x}h_{7}+ \) \( \text{h}8 \) does not look impressive, again because of White’s passive \( \text{b}2 \). 17.\( \text{d}d_{4} \) \( \text{f}6 \) 18.a4 \( \text{c}4 \) 19.\( \text{c}1 \) \( \text{xe}5 \) 20.\( \text{b}5 \) 20.\( \text{e}1 \) \( \text{h}5 \), followed by ...\( \text{g}6 \). 20...b6 with an unclear position in Stein-Tal, Kislovodsk 1966 (eventually won by White).

17.\( \text{g}2! \) \( \text{c}6 \) 18.\( \text{g}1! \) \( \text{c}8 \) 19.\( \text{d}2 \) \( \text{c}4 \) 20.\( \text{d}4 \) \( \text{xc}5 \) 21.\( \text{h}1 \) \( \text{c}6 \) 22.e4! The \( \text{c}1 \) is entering the battle. 22...\( \text{e}8 \) 23.\( \text{h}6 \) \( \text{g}6 \) 24.\( \text{exd}5 \) \( \text{xe}2 \) 25.\( \text{dxc}6 \) and White soon won in T. Petrosian-Banik, Tbilisi tt 1951;

- In the event of 12...\( \text{e}7 \), White plays 13.\( \text{c}2 \), since Black’s queen cannot come to \( \text{h}3 \).

13.h3

- 13.\( \text{c}2 \)? leads to a well-known opening catastrophe for White after 13...\( \text{xf}3 \) 14.\( \text{xf}3 \) \( \text{h}3 \) 15.\( \text{e}2 \) \( \text{e}5 \) 16.\( \text{d}1 \) \( \text{fd}8! \) 17.\( \text{xb}7 \)

17...\( \text{e}4! \) 18.\( \text{d}4 \) 18.fxe4 also does not save White, due to 18...dxe4 19.\( \text{b}3 \) \( \text{h}8 \) followed by ...\( \text{f}3+ \). 18...\( \text{g}6 \), and ...\( \text{h}4 \) with mate cannot be stopped, so White resigned in Sadler-Pelletier, Germany Bundesliga 2003/04.

12...\( \text{c}8 \)

Theory wrongly considers that this move, based on the idea after 13.\( \text{c}2 \) that we will see in the game Sadler-Pelletier (viz. the comment to 13.h3 below), solves all Black’s problems.

- 12...\( \text{c}7 \) has been tried in practice. It leads to a white advantage after 13.\( \text{c}2 \) \( \text{ac}8 \). In the case of 13...\( \text{xf}3 \) White plays like in the featured game – only in a favourable version. 14.a4 14.\( \text{d}4 \) is an option to consider. 14...\( \text{xf}3 \) 15.\( \text{xf}3 \) \( \text{e}5 \) 16.\( \text{e}2 \) \( \text{d}7 \) Now White gets everything ready for activity along the g-file.
An interesting idea is 13.\(\text{wa}4\)!? \(\text{xf}3\) 14.\(\text{gx}f3\) \(\text{e}5\) 15.\(\text{e}2\) and now in the case of 15...\(\text{e}8\) White may follow the idea from Petrosian-Bannik (see the above comment after 12...\(\text{wc}7\)) with 16.\(\text{g}2\).

13...\(\text{h}5\) 14.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{d}8\) 15.\(\text{b}2\) \(\text{e}4\)

This position is considered to be very good (slightly better) for Black, however White can here improve on the existing theory:

16.\(\text{wc}2!\)

The idea is simple: White wants to execute the strategically favourable c3-c4 push, improving his pawn structure and opening the long diagonal for his dark-squared bishop.

Known is 16.\(\text{d}2\)? \(\text{xe}2\) (strategically it is in principle almost always good for Black to exchange the light-squared bishops here!) 17.\(\text{w}e2\) \(\text{xc}5\) and Black was already somewhat better and went on to win in Panno-Averbakh, Buenos Aires ARG-URS 1954.

16...\(\text{xc}5\)

16...\(\text{g}6\) does not solve Black’s problems, viz. 17.\(\text{h}4!\) \(\text{xc}5\) 18.\(\text{xg}6\) \(\text{hxg}6\)

19.\(\text{c}4!\) \(\text{d}4\) 20.\(\text{f}3\) \(\text{dxe}3\) 21.\(\text{d}5\) \(\text{e}6\)

The only sensible move. 21...\(\text{e}7\)? runs into 22.\(\text{wc}3\) \(\text{f}5\) 23.\(\text{fxe}3\) \(\text{a}4\) 24.\(\text{xf}7\)++; while 21...\(\text{exf}2\)++? is a horrible blunder due to 22.\(\text{xf}2\).

- 22.\(\text{fxe}3\) and due to his dominant bishop pair White has good attacking prospects and a clear advantage;
- White may also look for more with 22.\(\text{wc}3\) \(\text{xf}2\) 23.\(\text{xf}2\) \(\text{d}7\) 24.\(\text{e}1\) (24.\(\text{b}1\) \(\text{cd}4\)) 24...\(\text{cd}8\) (White has sacrificed only one pawn and Black is rather passive. 24...\(\text{cd}4\) blunders to 25.\(\text{d}2\)!, and 24...\(\text{wc}7\) runs into 25.\(\text{xf}7\) \(\text{xf}7\) 26.\(\text{xe}6\)) 25.\(\text{h}4!\) \(\text{wc}5\) 26.\(\text{h}5\) \(\text{gxh}5\) 27.\(\text{e}5\) \(\text{h}4\) 28.\(\text{g}5\) and White has a devastating attack;

17.\(\text{c}4!\)

White executes his standard plan.

17...\(\text{g}6\) 18.\(\text{wc}3\) \(\text{d}4\)
If Black is to suffer, he might as well take an exchange. 18...f6? 19.cxd5 £e7 20.bxc1 b6 21.c4 £h8 22.fdl is just bad for him.

**19.exd4 £xa4 20.Wb3 £xb1**

White is a sound pawn up after 20...£xb2 21.xb2 £xd4 22.xd4 £xd4 23.Wxb7.

21.Wxa4

The bishop pair, a mobile pawn centre, more space and better piece coordination provide White with ample compensation for the exchange. For players interested in this line this should be one of the positions to analyse. I will give just a few lines to support my case.

21...£e8!

Black activates his rook with this zwischenzug. White is better in the case of 21...£e4 22.d5! £xf3 23.xf3 £e7 24.b4! Wd7 25.c3 f6 26.g4 £c7 27.e6+.

**22.Wd1 £a5**

22...£f5 23.c3 looks favourable to White.

**23.d5**

White has obvious compensation. Play may continue:

23...£f5

Black cannot solve his problems with 23...£xc4? 24.xc4 £xc4 25.xb1 £xd5 either, since the black king turns out to be vulnerable after 26.d1 £h5 27.d4, or 26... £b5 27.d4 £a4 28.f5, or 26... £e4 27.a1.


White has strong attacking potential.

26...£b3 27.Wf4 £c5 28.b1

**Conclusion**

The main line and also the other lines given after 9.cxd5! are critical to determine the viability of 8...£a5. Other 9th moves by White are not dangerous for Black.
Chapter 3.3

The Flexible 6...c5 7.0-0 2c6 8.a3 2xc3 9.bxc3 2c7

9...2c7 is one of the two main moves for Black here, the other being 9...dxc4, which we will cover in the next chapters. Black develops his queen to the most natural square and keeps his options open. In itself 9...2c7 is more flexible than 9...dxc4 — provided Black is not worried about 10.cxd5.

10.2b2

According to current theory this developing move is causing Black the most problems at present, so it will be our main line here. Personally, I also like the move. White places his bishop on the long a1-h8 diagonal, keeps his options open and now plans, for example, to favourably open the centre for his bishop pair with cxd5 and c3-c4. Of course, playing 10.2b2, White should not mind the variation 9...dxc4 10.2xc4 2c7 11.2b2, since Black can transpose to this line with 10...dxc4 11.2xc4. Talking about 9...dxc4 10.2xc4 2c7 transpositions, we may also reach this position via 9...2c7 10.2c2 dxc4 11.2xc4 or 9...2c7 10.a4 dxc4 11.2xc4 — both lines are dealt with under 9...dxc4 10.2xc4 2c7 in the next chapter. Other lines White can consider to get to an opening advantage in the 9...2c7 variation are 10.cxd5 exd5 11.a4 or 10.cxd5 exd5 11.2h4. Black should be aware of these; the rest are not dangerous for him.

● One of the peculiarities of the 9...2c7 line is that White can now define the central pawn structure by playing 10.cxd5 exd5. We see this pawn structure in different Nimzo variations, for example the Sämisch — 4.a3 2xc3 5.bxc3 0-0 6.f3 d5 7.cxd5 exd5 8.e3 c5 9.2d3 followed by 2e2, so in that position White’s knight is already on e2
and his f-pawn on f3, making the push e3-e4, which is crucial for White in these positions, considerably easier to achieve. Here White has to spend some time to prepare this thrust.

There are a few general strategic rules in this position which are useful to know:

I. An exchange of light-squared bishops is favourable for Black here because White's light-squared bishop is his attacking potential; after a swap of these bishops Black has more room to manoeuvre his pieces; last but not least, after White removes his knight and prepares e3-e4, this central thrust is considerably less dangerous for Black with the light-squared bishops swapped;

II. Should White achieve e3-e4 in a favourable way, with his light-squared bishop still on the board, he will get a kingside initiative and almost invariably have better chances.

A) 11.a4 this is one of White's main moves here. His dark-squared bishop can now be deployed on a3, controlling the a3-f8 diagonal, while any black attempt to roll his queenside pawns will now be delayed by the pawn on a4:

A1) 11...c4 12.\( \text{dxc} \text{c} \) 12.e8 is less flexible than the immediate 11...\( \text{e} \text{e} \) 8, and anyway, now after 13.\( \text{a} \text{a} \) 3, White transposes to 11...\( \text{e} \text{e} \) 8 12.\( \text{a} \text{a} \) 3 c4

13.\( \text{c} \text{c} \) 2, while 12...\( \text{g} \text{g} \) 4 13.\( \text{e} \text{e} \) 1 \( \text{d} \text{d} \) 3 14.\( \text{x} \text{f} \) 3 \( \text{d} \text{d} \) 7 15.\( \text{h} \text{h} \) 1 followed by \( \text{g} \text{g} \) 1 is favourable to White;

A2) 11...\( \text{e} \text{e} \) 8 12.\( \text{a} \text{a} \) 3 c4 13.\( \text{c} \text{c} \) 2

A21) The standard knight jump 13...\( \text{e} \text{e} \) 4 proved to be insufficient for equality:

14.\( \text{xe} \text{e} \) 4! This is not a standard strategic decision for White, but it happens to be working in this case, since White will now quickly push e3-e4: 14...\( \text{xe} \text{e} \) 4 15.\( \text{d} \text{d} \) 2:

A211) 15...\( \text{h} \text{h} \) 4 Black was probably hoping that this rook position would help him create counterplay on the kingside – well, it is not to be. 16.\( \text{g} \text{g} \) 3 \( \text{h} \text{h} \) 6 17.e4 \( \text{a} \text{a} \) 5 18.\( \text{e} \text{e} \) 1! \( \text{e} \text{e} \) 6 19.\( \text{e} \text{e} \) 3 \( \text{d} \text{d} \) 4 20.\( \text{xe} \text{e} \) 4 \( \text{w} \text{h} \) 5 21.\( \text{h} \text{h} \) 4 \( \text{d} \text{d} \) 5 22.\( \text{wh} \text{h} \) 5 \( \text{hx} \text{h} \) 5 Black's 'active' rook proves to be hopelessly stranded. 23.\( \text{h} \text{h} \) 1 \( \text{h} \text{h} \) 6 24.\( \text{d} \text{d} \) 6 and White had a big advantage in Kamsky-Almasi, Groningen 1995. 24...\( \text{b} \text{b} \) 6 25.\( \text{b} \text{b} \) 5;

A212) 15...\( \text{e} \text{e} \) 8 16.e4 is also better for White:

A2121) 16...\( \text{d} \text{d} \) 4 17.\( \text{e} \text{e} \) 1! Forcing the black bishop to f5. 17.\( \text{xc} \text{c} \) 4? fails to 17...\( \text{b} \text{b} \) 4!. 17...\( \text{f} \text{f} \) 5 18.\( \text{xc} \text{c} \) 4 \( \text{ad} \) 8 18...\( \text{b} \text{b} \) ?? is a terrible blunder due to 19.\( \text{e} \text{e} \) 3. 19.\( \text{e} \text{e} \) 3 \( \text{c} \text{c} \) 8 20.\( \text{wh} \text{h} \) 5 \( \text{a} \text{a} \) 5 21.\( \text{xa} \text{a} \) 5 \( \text{xa} \text{a} \) 5 22.d5 A passed d-pawn, the excellent blocker \( \text{e} \text{e} \) 3 – White has a number of positional ad-
vantages here. 22...b6 23.b4 b7 24.a5 f5 25.axb6 axb6 26.a7 b5 27.g3 – White has a dominant position and was better in Lautier-Kramnik, Monaco blind 1998;

A2122) 16...e6 17.e1 dxe4 18.xe4 d5 19.g4 e6 20.g5 g6 21.f5 d8 22.e4 and White has some advantage.

A22) In the case of 13...a5, a standard move in Nimzo Ragozin structures, White has an active plan with 14.c1:

16.d2! Black has good Ragozin-type play, with the white bishop on a3 instead of somewhere on the kingside, after 16.xe4 dxe4 17.d2 g5. 16...xc3 White has an advantage in the case of 16...f5 17.f3 xd2 18.xd2 xc2 19.xc2 followed by e3-e4. 17.f3;

A2121) The tactical solution 17...xd4! does not seem to work after 18.exd4 e2+ 19.xe2 xe2 20.f1 b6 (or 20...d7 21.g3 d2 22.b1) 21.c5 f6 22.g3, and now: 22...xc2 23.xc2 b6 24.fxg4 bxc5 25.d1 cxd4 26.f5! xf5 27.xf5 d3 28.e7+ f8 29.xd5, while 22...ae8 does not work due to 23.xe2 xe2 24.f1 xc2 (or 24...xf3 25.e1!) 25.xg4;

A2122) 17...d7 18.b2 Black's knight on c3 is trapped. 18...g6 19.xg6 19.a3 brings White just a small plus after 19...a2 20.axa2 c3 21.b3 cxb2 22.bxb2. 19...hxg6 20.xc3 c7 21.e4 White has excellent attacking prospects against Black's weak kingside by rolling his pawns and transferring his knight via f1 to e3, while it will take Black a long time to create meaningful play on the other side of the board.

A2213) The logical tempo move 15.b1 actually does not bring the desired result since Black can ignore the
attack on his b7 pawn. 15...\(\text{\textit{De}}\) 4 16.\(\text{\textit{D}}\) b5 \(\text{\textit{W}}\) d8 17.\(\text{\textit{D}}\) d2 \(\text{\textit{X}}\) xc3 18.\(\text{\textit{X}}\) xh7+ \(\text{\textit{X}}\) xh7 19.\(\text{\textit{W}}\) xc3 If White had time to flick in f2-f3, he would have an undisputed advantage here, even though your computer engine may try to tell you something else! 19...\(\text{\textit{X}}\) e2! By sacrificing a pawn, Black activates his bishop. 20.\(\text{\textit{X}}\) e1 \(\text{\textit{D}}\) d3 21.\(\text{\textit{X}}\) x b7 Black's bishop on d3 is controlling White's e1 rook. White could not convert his extra pawn in Korotylev-Almasi, Moscow 2007;

A222) 14...\(\text{\textit{De}}\) 4 15.\(\text{\textit{X}}\) e4! This non-standard decision works well for White here, since he plays for a quick e3-e4 push. The idea is identical to Kamsky-Almasi – see above under 13...\(\text{\textit{De}}\) 4. 15...\(\text{\textit{X}}\) e4 16.\(\text{\textit{D}}\) d2 \(\text{\textit{X}}\) e8 17.e4 \(\text{\textit{X}}\) e6 18.e5 In order to develop a kingside initiative as quickly as possible, White sacrifices a pawn. However, this sac was not necessary – White would have had an advantage after the calm 18.\(\text{\textit{W}}\) c2. 18...\(\text{\textit{X}}\) xa4 19.f4 \(\text{\textit{X}}\) f5 20.\(\text{\textit{F}}\) f2 f6 21.\(\text{\textit{W}}\) b2 \(\text{\textit{D}}\) d8

As regards pawn structure, this position is very similar to the Ragozin Variation and White now starts a knight transfer that is often seen also there. 22.\(\text{\textit{D}}\) f1! The knight will be excellently placed on e3. 22...\(\text{\textit{W}}\) d7 23.\(\text{\textit{D}}\) e3 \(\text{\textit{D}}\) d3 The black bishop interferes in White's business considerably less here than for example in Korotylev-Almasi – see above under 14...\(\text{\textit{De}}\) 4 in this line. 24.h3 b6 25.\(\text{\textit{W}}\) d2 and White had good compensation for the sacrificed pawn and went on to win in a kingside attack in Korotylev-Grischuk, Moscow 2004.

A23) 13...\(\text{\textit{G}}\) 4 is one of the standard plans for Black in this line, however the doubling of f-pawns is not something White should fear here. 14.\(\text{\textit{W}}\) e1 and now:

A231) 14...\(\text{\textit{F}}\) f5 Black wants to transfer his bishop to g6 and execute a favourable trade of light-squared bishops. Please note once more the importance of this strategic motif for Black and the need to prevent it as White. 15.\(\text{\textit{W}}\) h4

A2311) 15...\(\text{\textit{G}}\) g4 Black wants to prevent White from playing f2-f3 and rolling his pawns. 16.g3 \(\text{\textit{G}}\) g6 17.\(\text{\textit{X}}\) xg6 hxg6

18.\(\text{\textit{W}}\) d2 \(\text{\textit{D}}\) a5 19.\(\text{\textit{X}}\) e1 White is in a hurry to start rolling his central pawns. Another option was 19.\(\text{\textit{X}}\) b1. 19...\(\text{\textit{F}}\) 6 20.f3 \(\text{\textit{D}}\) b3 21.\(\text{\textit{W}}\) d1 \(\text{\textit{A}}\) a5 Black goes for the a4 pawn. 22.\(\text{\textit{D}}\) b4 22.\(\text{\textit{X}}\) x b3? is not good due to 22...\(\text{\textit{X}}\) c3. 22...\(\text{\textit{W}}\) x a4 23.e4 The e-pawn is rolling, but White has had to sacrifice a pawn in order to achieve this. 23...a5 24.\(\text{\textit{X}}\) d6 \(\text{\textit{E}}\) e6 with a complicated game, which was eventually drawn in Gelfand-Elianov, Astrakhan 2010. A possible improvement for White is 18.\(\text{\textit{W}}\) e2!? \(\text{\textit{W}}\) d7 (if 18...f5
Part III: The Main Line 4...0-0 5...d3 d5 6...f3

Black has no convenient way to take the e-pawn after 19.e4! 19...ab1.
The evaluation of this game is important for the 10.cxd5 exd5 11.a4 line.

A2312) Practice has also seen

15...e6:

A23121) 16.f3 eae8 17.e4 dxe4 18.fxe4 g4 18...dxe4? is a blunder
            due to the obvious 19.d5. 19.g3 This position favours White, as in
            Jussupow-Hjartarson, Munich 1993;
            A23122) White can also opt for
            16...f5 eae8 17.f3 and now he seems
            to be better after 17...g5 18.g4! (18.e4
            g6!) 18...g6 19...xg6 hxg6 20.c2
            e6 21.e4! dxe4 22.fxe4 d8 (or
            22...eae8 23.wg3) 23.d1.
            A232) As mentioned before, in this
            line White is not worried about a possible
            doubling of his f- and g-pawns.

14...xf3 15.gxf3 w6

16.zh1 16.g2!? , followed by g1,
            zh1, g3, definitely deserves attention. 16...zh3 17.w64 d5 18.d5 g6
            19.b1 b6 20.b5 d6 21.g5 f6
            22.f5 wh4 23.g1 w8 24.c2
            White controls vital squares, his d3 is
            strong, and he still has the possibility to
            advance his central e-pawn. White was
            better and eventually won in Kasim-
            dzhanov-Ivanchuk, Skanderborg 2003;
            A233) 14...e4 is well answered by
            15...h4 followed by f2-f3.

B) Another idea for White is to move
            his knight from f3, preparing the cen-
            tral advance f2-f3 and e3-e4, while also
            running away from Black's ...g4 and
            the pin along the h5-d1 diagonal. For
            many years, 11...h4 was considered to
            be White's main move.
            Black has tried a number of moves in
            this position:

B1) 11...c4?! 12.c2 e4 may look
            active, but actually does not equalize.
            Black's 'active' e4 is soon going to be
            kicked back and White will achieve
            harmonious development, ready to
            achieve his strategic objective: the
            advance f2-f3/e3-e4. 13.we1
            B11) 13...d8 14.g3 h3 15.g2
            wa5 After 15...f5 16.f3 d6 17.a4
            d7 18.a3 White gets ready to push
            his e-pawn, or his g-pawn, since Black
            will soon have to take ...xg2. White
            had the advantage in Tolush-Averbakh,
            Riga ch-URS 1958. 16.b2 f5 17.f3
            d6 18.f2 xg2 19.xg2 White will
            now play a2-a3, place his bishop on a3
            and then prepare either the e3-e4 or the
            g2-g4 push, achieving a favourable
            game. The problem for Black that we
            often see in these positions is that when
            it comes to manoeuvring, it turns out
            that White has more useful moves and
            ways to improve his position, Furman-
            Averbakh, Riga ch-URS 1958;
B12) Sending White’s bishop to b2 with 13...\textit{b}a5? will prove to be a tempo loss: 14.\textit{b}2 \textit{d}8 The downside of 13...\textit{b}a5? now becomes apparent. In the case of 14...f5 White simply carries through his central pawn advance with 15.f3 \textit{d}6 16.a4 (as usual here, White’s dark-squared bishop goes to the a3-f8 diagonal, disrupting Black’s pieces) 16...\textit{f}6 17.\textit{a}3 \textit{f}7 18.e4 \textit{x}e4 19.fx.e4 \textit{x}f1+ 20.\textit{x}xf1 \textit{e}6 21.\textit{b}1 \textit{c}7 22.\textit{c}3 White was clearly better and soon won in Van der Stricht-Doocy, Antwerp 2010. 15.f3 Square c3 is now covered by \textit{b}2, so Black does not have ...\textit{x}c3, and everything goes smoothly: 15...\textit{e}1 16.\textit{x}d2 \textit{b}xh4 17.e4 \textit{e}6 18.\textit{a}a1 f5 19.a4! As usual in this line White places his bishop on a3, taking control of the f-file. 19...\textit{f}xe4 20.\textit{a}3 \textit{f}7 21.\textit{x}e4 \textit{h}5 22.\textit{x}f7 \textit{x}f7 23.\textit{f}1 dxe4 24.\textit{x}e4 \textit{e}8 25.\textit{f}4 White had a clear advantage and went on to win in Lautier-Kramnik, Monaco blind 1997.

B2) Provoking a kingside weakness with 11...\textit{g}4? loses too much time, and also White’s kingside will prove not to be weak after all: 12.g3 c4 13.\textit{c}2 \textit{e}8 14.\textit{e}1 White has easy, straightforward play here. 14...\textit{f}5 15.f3 \textit{h}6 16.e4 Mission accomplished. 16...\textit{x}e4 17.\textit{x}h6 \textit{x}h6 18.\textit{x}e4 A perfect situation for White: the f2-f3/e3-e4 march has been accomplished, Black’s kingside is weakened, White’s light-squared bishop is still on the board and on c2 it is an attacking monster – a strategically won game for White in Gligoric-Vukovic, Ljubljana 1960;

B3) The developing rook move 11...\textit{e}8 is indeed a logical way to proceed, but still it does not equalize since it does not distract White from executing his usual plan of f2-f3 and e3-e4:

\textbf{12.f3 b6} Should Black play 12...\textit{d}8 to try to target the knight on h4, White plays 13.\textit{a}2 followed by g2-g3, \textit{e}2, \textit{g}2 (if needed), preparing e3-e4 and as usual in these positions it will transpire that White has more useful moves and ways to improve his position than Black. 13.\textit{a}2 A standard rook manoeuvre here – it is handy for White to keep his second rank free. 13...a5 14.\textit{e}2 \textit{b}7 15.\textit{b}2 \textit{ad}8 16.\textit{e}1 g6 17.g4 \textit{c}8 18.\textit{f}2 White is improving his position while Black is not doing anything in particular. 18...\textit{e}7 19.\textit{h}3 \textit{a}6 Strategically, trading the light-squared bishops is good for Black, but here there is a tactical problem. 20.\textit{x}a6 \textit{x}a6 21.e4! Black’s king has no defenders and once the white pawns start to roll here, the end is very near for Black. 21...\textit{x}e4 22.\textit{x}e4 \textit{c}4 23.\textit{x}f6 \textit{xe}2 24.\textit{c}1 and White won in Portisch-Hort, Niksic 1978;

B4) Trying to disturb White’s natural development with the immediate 11...\textit{w}a5 is interesting and has its merits, though it does lose time and probably does not fully equalize. It is often not easy for White to decide where to place his dark-squared bishop in this line:

\textbf{B41} 12.\textit{d}2
\textbf{B411} In case of 12...c4 13.\textit{c}2 \textit{e}4:
White has the possibility 14.f3! \( \square \text{xd2} \) 15.\( \square \text{xd2} \) Please note that a trade of White’s dark-squared bishop for Black’s knight is strategically good for White here. The \( \square \text{f6} \) was controlling the e4-square and now the central pawn advance becomes easy to achieve for White. 15...\( \text{wd8} \) 16.g3 \( \text{hb3} \) 17.\( \text{fb1} \) \( \text{b8} \) 18.a4 White wants to first curb Black’s potential queenside counterplay with ...b7-b5. The immediate 18.e4 was also possible. 18...a6 19.\( \text{b2} \) \( \text{e8} \) 20.\( \text{ab1} \) \( \text{a5} \) 21.\( \text{f2} \) \( \text{d7} \) 22.e4 and White was better in Lesiège-Onischuk, Koszalin 1999;

B412) 12...\( \text{e4} \) 13.\( \text{e1} \) Now 13.f3? is a blunder due to 13...\( \text{xd2} \) 14.\( \text{xd2} \) cxd4 15.exd4 \( \text{xd4} \) 16.\( \text{xb7} \) 17.\( \text{xd4} \) g5 13...c4

14.\( \text{c2} \) Here White had the interesting possibility 14.\( \text{xe4?} \) dxe4 15.f3 g5 16.fxe4 gxh4 17.\( \text{xb7} \) with good compensation for the sacrificed piece.

14...\( \text{wd8} \) Another option was 14...\( \text{xc3} \) 15.\( \text{xc3} \) \( \text{d8} \), reaching an unbalanced position which is difficult to assess. My intuition tells me that White should be preferred, however my engine likes Black! 15.g3 \( \text{h3} \) 16.\( \text{g2} \) f5 17.f3 \( \text{d6} \) 18.\( \text{d2} \) \( \text{d7} \) 19.\( \text{h1} \) \( \text{ae8} \) 20.\( \text{g1} \) \( \text{g2} \) 21.\( \text{e2} \) \( \text{e6} \) and again we have a strategic battle typical for this line, as in Lesiège-Spraggett, Brantford 2001.

B42) The other option is 12.\( \text{b2} \) \( \text{e8} \):

B421) After 13.\( \text{e1?} \) c4 14.\( \text{c2} \) \( \text{e4} \) 15.\( \text{c1} \)

Black beautifully demonstrated the minuses of White’s current set-up and executed an excellent strategic plan with 15...\( \text{d8} \)! 16.g3 g5! 17.\( \text{xg2} \) g4! Black’s knight on e4 is now a monster and to get rid of it White either has to agree to the strategically bad trade \( \text{xe4} \), which is always favourable to Black, or to weaken his kingside with 18.f3 \( \text{g5} \) 19.\( \text{fxg4} \) \( \text{h3} \) + 20.\( \text{f1} \) \( \text{g5} \). White’s \( \text{b2} \) is proving to be a dead piece here. 21.\( \text{f4} \) \( \text{xg4} \) 22.\( \text{d2} \) \( \text{f5} \) Once more: trading the light-squared bishops is strategically always good for Black in this line! 23.\( \text{g2} \) \( \text{xf4} \) 24.\( \text{xf4} \) Or 24.exf4 \( \text{g6} \) 24...\( \text{g2} \) 25.\( \text{g2} \) \( \text{c2} \) 26.\( \text{xc2} \) \( \text{f5} \) Black has masterfully provoked several pawn weaknesses on White’s kingside, then executed all the...
favourable trades and now has a huge advantage in the ending, his knight being obviously superior to White’s terrible dark-squared bishop. Black went on to win in Lautier-Kramnik, Tilburg 1997;

B422) 13.\textit{We}1 \textit{\textbf{d}7} Or 13...\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{e}}4}} 14.f3 \textit{\textbf{d}6} 15.\textit{\textit{\textbf{f}2}} followed by e3-e4. 14.\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{f}3}}}! White has some advantage here. 14.f3 \textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{e}7}}} is OK for Black. 14...c4 15.\textbf{xc}2 \textbf{\textit{xf}5} 16.\textbf{\textit{\textbf{xf}5}} g6 17.\textbf{\textbf{c}2} \textit{\textbf{e}6} 18.f3 \textbf{\textit{\textbf{ae}8}} 19.\textbf{\textbf{c}1} Again, White will prove to have more useful moves than Black and prepare his central pawn push, with the better game. I have to warn readers that in many such positions computer engines like Black – do not blindly trust them! Most of the time matters are less rosy for Black than computers initially indicate.

B5) With 11...\textit{\textbf{e}7}

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{ch03_03.png}
\end{center}

Black controls the f5-square, ready, when the situation allows, to play ...\textit{\textbf{f}5}, and also stopping White’s f2-f3/e3-e4 advance for the time being since with 12.f3?? White would now blunder a piece to 12...g5.

B51) There is no reason for White to hurry with 12.g3. Black now forces a good trade with 12...\textit{\textbf{h}3} 13.\textit{\textbf{g}2} \textit{\textbf{f}5}!. I repeat once more: it is good for Black to trade the light-squared bishops in this line! 14.f3 \textbf{\textit{\textbf{x}d}3} 15.\textbf{\textit{\textbf{w}d}3} \textbf{\textit{\textbf{ac}8}} 16.\textbf{\textbf{d}2} \textbf{\textit{\textbf{fe}8}} 17.\textbf{\textit{\textbf{a}2}} \textbf{\textit{\textbf{c}6}} 18.\textbf{\textit{\textbf{e}1}} \textbf{\textbf{b}6} 19.\textbf{\textit{\textbf{d}1}} \textit{\textbf{a}5} and Black had an excellent game in Gligoric-Larsen, Milan 1975;

B52) Preparing a rook transfer along the second rank would normally be good prophylaxis for White, but here there is a direct problem: 12.\textbf{\textit{\textbf{a}2}?!} \textbf{\textit{\textbf{g}6}!} A good trade for Black. 13.\textbf{\textit{\textbf{xf}6}} 13.\textbf{\textit{\textbf{f}5}?} fails to 13...\textit{\textbf{e}4}. 13...\textbf{\textit{\textbf{h}xg}6} 14.f3 \textit{\textbf{f}5}! Black is working on a second favourable trade! 15.\textit{\textbf{e}2}! White realizes the necessity to keep the light-squared bishops on the board. 15...\textbf{\textit{\textbf{ac}8}} 16.g4 \textit{\textbf{d}7} 17.\textbf{\textbf{b}2} b6 With the knights traded (and it’s important that Black has traded off the c6 knight!) it is difficult for White to carry through his central pawn advance. Black had a good game in Jussupow-A. Sokolov, Riga Candidates’ 1986;

B53) 12.a4 is a standard move that prepares the deployment of his dark-squared bishop to the a3-f8 diagonal:

B531) White is better in the case of 12...\textit{\textbf{e}6} and now 13.\textbf{\textbf{a}3}. One practical test went 13.\textbf{\textit{\textbf{w}e}1} \textbf{\textbf{ac}8} 14.f3 \textbf{\textit{\textbf{xd}4}}. It’s risky, but perhaps worth it to be greedy with 14...g5. 15.\textbf{\textit{\textbf{xd}4}} \textbf{\textit{\textbf{w}c}3} 16.\textbf{\textbf{a}3} \textbf{\textit{\textbf{fe}8}} 17.\textbf{\textit{\textbf{wb}1}} White is better here. Naturally he should not blunder a pawn with 17.\textbf{\textit{\textbf{xc}3}?} \textbf{\textit{\textbf{xc}3}} 18.\textbf{\textbf{b}5} \textit{\textbf{c}6} (the threat is 19...g5) 19.g4 \textbf{\textit{\textbf{xe}3}} and Black was better in Van Wely-Khalifman, Hoogeveen 2002;

B532) 12.c4 13.\textbf{\textit{\textbf{c}2}} \textbf{\textit{\textbf{g}6} 14.\textbf{\textbf{f}5} \textbf{\textit{\textbf{e}4} 15.\textbf{\textbf{g}3} \textbf{\textit{\textbf{xg}3}!} A correct strategic decision. In the case of 15...f5 White obviously keeps his knight: 16.\textit{\textbf{e}2}! \textit{\textbf{e}6} 17.f3 \textit{\textbf{d}6} 18.\textbf{\textit{\textbf{a}3} \textbf{\textit{\textbf{ae}8} 19.\textbf{\textit{\textbf{w}d}2}} with a standard position, favourable for White, as in Donner-Pachman, Varna ol 1962. 16.\textbf{\textit{\textbf{h}xg}3} Here, unfortunately, in Donner-Parma, Amsterdam 1965, the
players agreed to a draw. In a number of lines, the doubled g-pawns make the f2-f3/e3-e4 advance less favourable for White.

As we have seen from the material supplied, 11.\( \texttt{\textit{h4}} \) leads to a complicated strategic struggle.

C) 11.\( \texttt{h3} \) does not pose problems for Black: 11...c4 11...\( \texttt{\textit{e7}} \)!! is a mistake...

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{Diagram 1}
\end{array}
\]

due to 12.dxc5!. This is often a good strategic decision for White and it is worth remembering: 12...\( \texttt{\textit{\textbf{W}c5}} \) 13.a4! \( \texttt{\textit{\textbf{He8}}} \) 14.\( \texttt{\textit{\textbf{Aa3}}} \) \( \texttt{\textit{Wxc3}} \) 15.\( \texttt{\textit{\textbf{Dd4}}} \) \( \texttt{\textit{\textbf{Dd7}}} \) 16.\( \texttt{\textit{\textbf{Wb1}}} \)!!! (for the price of one pawn, White has complete domination) 16...\( \texttt{\textit{\textbf{Cc7}}} \) 17.\( \texttt{\textit{\textbf{Cc1}}} \) \( \texttt{\textit{\textbf{Cc6}}} \) 18.a5! (textbook play by White) 18...a6 19.\( \texttt{\textit{\textbf{Wb6}}} \) \( \texttt{\textit{\textbf{Wb6}}} \) 20.axb6 (Black is a pawn up and... completely lost – his position collapses) 20...\( \texttt{\textit{\textbf{Dd7}}} \) 21.\( \texttt{\textit{\textbf{Exe7}}} \) \( \texttt{\textit{\textbf{Exe7}}} \) 22.\( \texttt{\textit{\textbf{Dxc6}}} \) \( \texttt{\textit{\textbf{Bxc6}}} \) 23.\( \texttt{\textit{\textbf{Dxe5}}} \) 24.\( \texttt{\textit{\textbf{Cc7}}} \) and White won in Balashov-Dizdar, Berlin West 1988. 12.\( \texttt{\textit{\textbf{Cc2}}} \)

12...\( \texttt{\textit{\textbf{Ee7}}} \)!! Black prepares a strategically favourable trade! 13.a4 \( \texttt{\textit{\textbf{Fs5}}} \) 14.\( \texttt{\textit{\textbf{Aa3}}} \) \( \texttt{\textit{\textbf{Ee4}}} \)!! Kortchnoi strangely refrains from 14...\( \texttt{\textit{\textbf{Fe8}}} \) followed by the bishop swap and...\( \texttt{\textit{\textbf{Ee4}}} \), with a good game for Black. It is important to notice that the pawn on h3 does not help White here, since due to the weakness of square g3 Black’s knight will be more difficult to evict from e4. 15.\( \texttt{\textit{\textbf{Hh4}}} \) \( \texttt{\textit{\textbf{Ee6}}} \)

C1) 16.\( \texttt{\textit{\textbf{Ff4}}} \)?! With this move White takes an enormous positional responsibility. 16...f6 17.\( \texttt{\textit{\textbf{Ff5}}} \) \( \texttt{\textit{\textbf{Ff7}}} \) 18.\( \texttt{\textit{\textbf{Wf1}}} \) \( \texttt{\textit{\textbf{Fe8}}} \) with a good game for Black in Gligoric-Kortchnoi, Palma de Mallorca 1968.

C2) Correct was 16.\( \texttt{\textit{\textbf{Bb1}}} \)!!, provoking 16...\( \texttt{\textit{\textbf{Ff5}}} \). Now Black’s e5-square is weak. 17.\( \texttt{\textit{\textbf{Ff3}}} \) \( \texttt{\textit{\textbf{Ff6}}} \) 17...\( \texttt{\textit{\textbf{Dxc3}}} \)?? is a blunder due to 18.\( \texttt{\textit{\textbf{Db4}}} \). 18.\( \texttt{\textit{\textbf{Dxe7}}} \)!! 18.\( \texttt{\textit{\textbf{Ee5}}} \) \( \texttt{\textit{\textbf{Gg6}}} \). 18...\( \texttt{\textit{\textbf{Wxe7}}} \) 19.\( \texttt{\textit{\textbf{Wb2}}} \) followed by...\( \texttt{\textit{\textbf{Ee5}}} \).

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{Diagram 2}
\end{array}
\]

- White sometimes also plays 10.\( \texttt{\textit{\textbf{Hh3}}} \) with the idea after 10...dxc4 11.\( \texttt{\textit{\textbf{Dxc4}}} \) to transpose to the line 9...dxc4 10.\( \texttt{\textit{\textbf{Dxc4}}} \) \( \texttt{\textit{\textbf{Wc7}}} \) 11.\( \texttt{\textit{\textbf{Hh3}}} \). However, the text move is not part of any direct plan.

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{Diagram 3}
\end{array}
\]

Black does not have to take on c4 and can play the useful 10...\( \texttt{\textit{\textbf{Ee8}}} \)!!, which proves 10.\( \texttt{\textit{\textbf{Hh3}}} \) to be harmless. After 11.\( \texttt{\textit{\textbf{Db2}}} \) \( \texttt{\textit{\textbf{Aa5}}} \) 12.\( \texttt{\textit{\textbf{Dxd5}}} \) \( \texttt{\textit{\textbf{Exd5}}} \) Black has achieved a good version of our main line 9...\( \texttt{\textit{\textbf{Wc7}}} \) 10.\( \texttt{\textit{\textbf{Dh2}}} \) \( \texttt{\textit{\textbf{Aa5}}} \) 11.\( \texttt{\textit{\textbf{Dxd5}}} \) \( \texttt{\textit{\textbf{Exd5}}} \), where 12.\( \texttt{\textit{\textbf{Hh3}}} \) \( \texttt{\textit{\textbf{Ee8}}} \) is obviously
not the best follow-up for White. 13...\(\text{dxe}5\) c4 14...\(\text{c}c2\) \(\text{e}4\) The game is about equal here. 15...\(\text{wh}5\) g6 16...\(\text{wh}6\) \(\text{xf}5\) White would have been better off with his pawn still on h2. 17.f3 \(\text{g}3\) 18...\(\text{xf}5\) Black has achieved the strategically good swap of light-squared bishops! 18...\(\text{xf}5\) 19...\(\text{w}f4\) \(\text{ac}8\) 20.e4 f6! 21...\(\text{d}xg6\) h\(\text{xg}6\) 22...\(\text{w}c7\) \(\text{xc}7\) 23...\(\text{exf}5\) gxf5 24.a\(\text{d}1\) \(\text{c}e7\) 25...\(\text{f}2\) b5 This ending was drawn in Yakovenko-Leko, Astrakhan 2010.

- 10.a4 is not something which should worry Black, since he can play 10...\(\text{dx}c4\) 11...\(\text{xc}4\) transposing to the 9...\(\text{dxc}4\) 10...\(\text{xc}4\) \(\text{wc}7\) line, where 11.a4 is far from best for White - please see under 9...\(\text{dxc}4\) 10...\(\text{xc}4\) \(\text{wc}7\).

- In the case of 10...\(\text{wc}2\) Black also takes 10...\(\text{dx}c4\) 11...\(\text{xc}4\), transposing to the line 9...\(\text{dxc}4\) 10...\(\text{xc}4\) \(\text{wc}7\).

10...\(\text{a}5\)

The most common continuation here. Black wants to force White to take \(\text{c}xd5\), defining the pawn structure in the centre and opening the diagonal of the c8 bishop. Other moves are rarely played and do not equalize:

- 10...\(\text{d}d8\) is a logical developing move, however it is not yet clear what is the best place for the king rook: e8 or d8, and this development seems premature. 11...\(\text{we}2\).

11...\(\text{a}5\) Black will come around to ...\(\text{a}5\) anyway. In the case of 11...b6 White executes a prime idea behind \(\text{b}2\), opening diagonals for his bishops: 12...\(\text{xd}5\) ex\(\text{d}5\) 13.c4 dx\(\text{c}4\) 14...\(\text{xc}4\) ex\(\text{d}4\) 15...\(\text{d}d1\) \(\text{c}e7\) 16...\(\text{a}4\) \(\text{d}d4\) 17...\(\text{xa}4\) \(\text{xc}4\) 18...\(\text{b}2\) \(\text{e}8\)


12...\(\text{d}d2\) The alternative is to play similarly to the 10...\(\text{a}5\) line with 12...\(\text{xd}5\) ex\(\text{d}5\) 13...\(\text{d}e5\) 12...\(\text{b}6\) 13...\(\text{xd}5\) ex\(\text{d}5\)

14...\(\text{f}3\) White prepares his regular central pawn advance. 14...\(\text{e}8\) 15...\(\text{e}4\) White has achieved his strategic objectives, his central pawns are rolling, his pawn chain is well supported by the \(\text{b}2\) (this bishop may look passive, but is actually a useful piece here) and the \(\text{d}3\) is well placed to support the attack (note once more the importance of White’s light-squared bishop in these positions). White was better and went on to win in a kingside attack in Dambacher-Jobava, Plovdiv 2010.

- In the case of 10...\(\text{e}8\), which is also rarely played, White may continue 11...\(\text{e}1\) (11...\(\text{e}2\) is one of the options) and after 11...\(\text{a}5\) (11...\(\text{d}c4\) 12...\(\text{xc}4\) e5 13.h3 transposes to a type of position seen under 9...\(\text{dxc}4\) 10...\(\text{xc}4\) \(\text{wc}7\)): A) 12...\(\text{d}d2\) followed by \(\text{xd}5\) and \(\text{c}3\)-\(c4\) is better for White;

B) 12...\(\text{xd}5\) \(\text{ex}d5\) leads to a complicated game: 13...\(\text{e}5\) \(\text{e}5\) 13.c4 does not bring White anything after 13...\(\text{dxc}4\) 14...\(\text{xc}4\) \(\text{xc}4\) 15...\(\text{xc}4\) b6; while in the case of 13...\(\text{xc}5\) Black has 13...\(\text{c}4\!), stopping \(\text{c}3\)-\(c4\) and limiting the power of the \(\text{b}2\). 13...\(\text{c}4\) The exchange sac 13...\(\text{xe}5\) does not work well here after 14...\(\text{dx}e5\) \(\text{xe}5\) 15...\(\text{a}4\) followed by \(\text{f}4\). 14...\(\text{c}2\);
Part III: The Main Line 4...0-0 5...d3 d5 6...f3

B1) The attempt to replicate the 10...a5 line with 14...e4 is not so clever. It may seem like an excellent version for Black, but the rook is not always good on e8. 15.a4! Now 15.f3? would be a mistake, since Black would indeed get an excellent version of our main line after 15...d6 16.a4 f6. 15...f6? fails to 16...h5! f8 17.f3;

B2) 14...c6! This presents White with an unpleasant choice, since moves like 15.f4 carry a big positional responsibility and aren’t easy to play, while 15.xc6 xc6 gives Black a favourable version of Geller-Nikitin (see the main line 13...a5 below), since his rook is already on e8 and White cannot play f3.

11.cxd5 exd5

12.e5

12.d2?! is wrong here, since Black has the forced manoeuvre 12...g4 13.g3 b6! 14.c2 h6 15.h4 c4 16.e2 f5 and Black had an excellent game in Lugovoi-Alexandrov, Sochi 2004.

12.c4

This strategic decision determines the central pawn structure for the rest of the game. Black has two other options at his disposal here, and black players looking for improvements on existing theory should analyse those possibilities:

- With 12...c6 Black aims to exchange his passive a5 for White’s central e5, while keeping the central pawn tension, hence making it more difficult for White to carry through the push e3-e4. 13...xc6

A) In the case of 13...xc6 White opens up diagonals for his bishops with the standard 14.c4 xd4 (or 14...dxc4 15.xc4 b5 16.d5 b6 17.xf6 bxc4 18.c3 f5 19.e1 d3 20.g4 f6 21.e4) 15.cxd5 xd5 16.c1! (this is more accurate than 16.xd4 f5) 16...f5 17.c4 and on his next move White takes on d4 with queen or bishop, and has the advantage due to his bishop pair;

B) 13...bxc6 and now:

B1) One example from grandmaster practice continued: 14.a4 c4 15.c2 e8 15...g4? comes into consideration. 16.h3 White prevents ...g4, but now there is a hole on g3. Note that this is the biggest drawback of White’s move h2-h3 in these lines! 16...e4 17.f3 g3 18.e1 f5 19.d2 d7 20.a3 e6 with approximate equality and a later draw in Pelletier-A. Sokolov, Basel 2004;

B2) Opening diagonals with 14.c4 works as well: 14...b8 Black has to
create activity against White's potentially weak king:

B21) 15.\textit{wc2} \textit{dg4} 16.\textit{g3} \textit{wd6} 17.\textit{dx5} \textit{wh6} 18.\textit{h4} g5 This bold attack does not produce a satisfactory result for Black after 19.\textit{cxd5} \textit{gxh4} 20.\textit{d4} \textit{hxg3} 21.\textit{fxg3};

B22) White can also play 15.\textit{hb1} \textit{dg4}. Black now goes for his regular counterplay: 16.\textit{g3} \textit{wd6} 17.\textit{dx5} \textit{wh6} 18.\textit{h4} \textit{dx4} 18...g5?? creates no threats here and is a blunder due to 19.\textit{cxd5} \textit{gxh4} 20.\textit{wf3}. 19.\textit{d4}! and White has some advantage.

Another alternative for Black is 12...\textit{e8}!? However with precise play by White this does not equalize:

A) 13.\textit{ec1} transposes after 13...\textit{c4} 14.\textit{ac2} to the comments on 10...\textit{e8} 11.\textit{ac1} \textit{da5} 12.\textit{cxd5} exd5 13.\textit{de5} — please see above;

B) 13.\textit{a4}? This natural move, which prepares the standard deployment of the \textit{b2} to \textit{a3}, is a mistake here due to a nice positional exchange sacrifice:

13...\textit{xe5}! 14.\textit{dx5} \textit{xe5} If the white a-pawn were on \textit{a3}, he would still have the \textit{wa4}-\textit{wf4} manoeuvre here. 15.\textit{h3} 15.\textit{wf3}? blunders an exchange after 15...\textit{ab3}. 15...\textit{c4}! Black's control of the b3- and d3-squares will prove crucial. 16.\textit{ac2} \textit{fs}! The basic strategic rule that the exchange of the light-squared bishops is favourable for Black in this line still applies! 17.\textit{e1} \textit{xd2} 18.\textit{xc2} \textit{xb3} 19.\textit{ad1} \textit{e8} 20.\textit{f3} \textit{c5} 21.\textit{d4} \textit{d3} 22.\textit{e2}? It would have been clever for White to realize the danger and return the exchange with 22.\textit{xd3}!. 22...\textit{h5}! Now it's too late. 23.\textit{e4} \textit{hf4} 24.\textit{d2} \textit{f5} and White's position soon collapsed in Potkin-Wang Hao, Ningbo 2010.

C) 13.\textit{f3}!

C1) The exchange sac 13...\textit{xe5} does not work well for Black here: 14.\textit{dx5} \textit{xe5}

15.\textit{e4} \textit{xe4} 16.\textit{xe4} \textit{e6} 17.\textit{e1} White's queenside pawn structure is damaged and the \textit{b2} is passive, but still White has a minimal material advantage and is a bit better here.

However, White has an advantage after the alternatives:

C2) 13...\textit{c6} 14.\textit{c4} Or 14.\textit{xc6} bxc6 15.\textit{wd2} and White prepares e3-e4, with an advantage. 14...\textit{cxd4} 15.\textit{xc6} \textit{dx4} 15...\textit{bxc6} 16.\textit{xd4}. 16.\textit{xc4} \textit{xc6} 16...\textit{dxe3} is a blunder due to 17.\textit{e5}. 17.\textit{c1} \textit{e6} 18.\textit{e2} \textit{d5} 19.\textit{xd4} and the bishop pair guarantees White an advantage here.

D) Another road for White to an opening advantage is 13.\textit{e2} c4

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14.\( \text{c2} \) \( \text{d4} \) 15.\( \text{a4}! \) White wants to prove that having the rook on e8 is not always good for Black. 15.f3 \( \text{d6} \) followed by ...f7-f6 would give Black a favourable version of our main line. 15...f6 16.\( \text{w} \)h5! Attacking the rook on e8, which is the point behind the postponement of 15.f3:

D1) 16...\( \text{f} \)f5!? looks fancy, but is not easy to refute, for instance: 17.\( \text{w} \)xf5 fxe5 18.\( \text{ad} \)1 \( \text{e} \)b3 19.\( \text{x} \)xe4 19.f3 \( \text{xf} \)6. 19...dxe4 20.\( \text{w} \)xe4 exd4 21.\( \text{w} \)d5+ \( \text{w} \)f7! Black gets excellent compensation for the sacrificed pawn in the ending.

D2) 16...\( \text{e} \)e6 17.f3 fxe5 18.\( \text{f} \)xe5 \( \text{x} \)f7 19.\( \text{w} \)e2 The centre is now opened in a favourable way for White: 19...dxe4 20.\( \text{x} \)xe4 exd4 21.\( \text{xd} \)d4 \( \text{w} \)d7 Or 21...\( \text{g} \)g6 22.\( \text{d} \)d5+. 22.\( \text{c} \)c2

13.\( \text{c} \)c2

Retreating the bishop to b1 is seldom played (not at all yet in grandmaster practice), but does have some pluses. It will be easier for White to transfer his \( \text{a} \)a1 via the second rank to the kingside:

13.\( \text{b} \)b1

Black now probably has to follow his regular plan in this line: 13...\( \text{e} \)e4 14.f3 \( \text{d} \)d6 15.\( \text{a} \)a4

- 15...f6 16.\( \text{a} \)a3 \( \text{e} \)e8 17.\( \text{g} \)g4 \( \text{x} \)xg4 18.fxg4 \( \text{xe} \)3

Now White gets a kingside attack similar to our main line: 19.g5! Please note the importance of White’s well-placed bishop on a3 and the passivity of Black’s \( \text{a} \)a5. 19...\( \text{x} \)xg5 20.\( \text{g} \)g4 \( \text{h} \)h6 20...\( \text{e} \)e4 is not good due to 21.\( \text{e} \)e6+ \( \text{h} \)h8 22.\( \text{x} \)xe4 \( \text{x} \)e4 23.\( \text{x} \)xd5. Now:

A) 21.\( \text{a} \)a2 followed by \( \text{af} \)2 gives White a strong attack;

B) Also promising for White is the relatively forced 21.\( \text{xd} \)d6 \( \text{xd} \)d6 22.\( \text{w} \)f5 \( \text{g} \)g6 23.\( \text{f} \)f7+ \( \text{h} \)h8 24.\( \text{x} \)xg6 \( \text{e} \)e7 25.\( \text{f} \)f5 \( \text{e} \)e6 26.\( \text{x} \)xe6 \( \text{xe} \)6 27.\( \text{f} \)f7 \( \text{e} \)e3 28.\( \text{a} \)a1 \( \text{xc} \)3 (or 28...\( \text{xe} \)1 29.\( \text{x} \)xe1 \( \text{h} \)h8 30.\( \text{a} \)a5 and White collects d5, with a clear advantage) 29.\( \text{xd} \)d5 \( \text{d} \)d3 30.\( \text{f} \)f6 \( \text{xd} \)d4 31.\( \text{xb} \)b6+ \( \text{g} \)g7 32.\( \text{d} \)d6

Therefore, 12.\( \text{b} \)b1?! is definitely a move that can be regarded as an alternative.

- The inclusion of 15...\( \text{b} \)b3 16.\( \text{a} \)a2 is probably not that clever for Black after all, since on b3 his knight has little future, while White’s \( \text{a} \)a2 will now move to the kingside very quickly: 16...\( \text{f} \)f6 17.\( \text{a} \)a3

A) If 17...\( \text{e} \)e8, White proceeds with 18.\( \text{g} \)g4 \( \text{x} \)xg4 (18...\( \text{h} \)h5 19.\( \text{f} \)f2 \( \text{xe} \)3 20.\( \text{e} \)e2) 19.\( \text{fx} \)xg4 with plans similar to the 13.\( \text{c} \)c2 line, with the difference that the \( \text{a} \)a2 will reach f2 more quickly;
B) 17...fxe5 is a principled but dangerous decision. However Black no longer had 'safe' decisions at his disposal. 18.dxe5 dxe5 19.hf5 h6 20.f4 Wc5 21.cxb7

B1) 21...b6 Now White could have obtained a massive advantage with 22.f5! (the actual game continued 22.h1 and White emerged the winner out of the complications in Koffler-Berczes, Balatonlelle 2009) 22...Wxe3+ 23.Wf2 and 23...Wxe5 loses to 24.We1;

B2) Taking a pawn with 21...Wxe3+ brings Black into a different kind of trouble after 22.Wf2! (if 22.h1 Black is fine after 22...Wxc3 23.Wxd5 Wd4!) 22...Wxc3 23.Wxd5 Wd4 24.Wxd4 axd4 25.Ge1 and 25...Ge6 fails to 26.f5.

13...Ge4

In the event of 13...Sc6 White continues according to the standard pattern: 14.bxc6 Wxc6 Or 14...bxc6 15.f3! a6 16.b1 c5 17.a4 Ge8 18.Wd2 followed by G.a3. 15.f3 Ge8 16.Wd2

16...d7 17.Wf2 Wb6 18.a4 Sc6 19.Ga3 White's bishop on a3 is active, and the pawn structure is ready for the e3-e4 break, but... this pawn thrust still has to be executed. Geller plays it well: 19...Wc7 20.Gae1 Ge6 21.Gf5 Gce8

22.Wh4! Correctly judging that the pawn on a4 is a small price to pay for the achievement of the e3-e4 push. 22...Gxa4 23.Gb1! White's e-pawn is now ready to roll. 23...Ge6 24.e4 g6 25.e5 Gd5 26.f4 The pawns are rolling. White is playing a textbook game — note the excellent G.a3 and Gb1! 26...f5 27.exf6 Gxe1 28.Gxe1 Ge8 28...Wxf4 29.Wxf4 Gxf4 30.Ge7 and White's f-pawn will decide. 29.Wf1 Ge6 30.f5 Gxf6 31.g4! 1-0, Geller-Nikitin, Kislovodsk 1966 — an instructive win by Geller!

14.f3 Gd6

15.a4!

Opening the diagonal for White's dark-squared bishop. There is also a tactical nuance associated with this move. In general in this position there is one very important issue and it is related to two pieces that are momentary both
placed passively at the edge of the board: White’s \( \text{b}2 \) and Black’s \( \text{a}5 \). The future activity of these two pieces will determine the outcome of the battle. White’s bishop placed on a3 (which controls the f8-square) plays a crucial role if the f-file gets opened (please see the comments to the game Peralta-Graf further on) and White can then launch a strong attack without his lightsquared bishop. At the same time Black’s \( \text{a}5 \) remains out of play, which means that he is virtually a piece down while he is under a kingside attack. The question whether Black will be able to activate his \( \text{a}5 \) is crucial for his chances.

15.a4! is a relatively recent discovery. Other moves have not brought White an advantage in practice, though matters are complicated and there is scope for improvement.

- 15.h3 \( \text{g}5 \) 16.a4 \( \text{f}6 \) 17.\( \text{g}4 \) \( \text{f}8 \) 18.\( \text{a}3 \):
  - A) 18.\( \text{xc}2 \), usually a strategically good trade for Black, has a tactical drawback here: 19.\( \text{xc}2 \) \( \text{h}5 \) 20.\( \text{xf}6+! \) \( \text{gxf}6 \) 21.\( \text{g}6+ \) \( \text{g}7 \) 22.\( \text{wh}5 \) 22.\( \text{wh}g7+? \) \( \text{xg}7 \) 23.\( \text{xd}6 \) \( \text{xe}3 \) is good for Black. 22...\( \text{f}7 \) 23.\( \text{xd}5 \) and when White’s pawns start to roll here, it won’t be fun for Black;
  - B) 18.\( \text{xc}4! \) 19.\( \text{bx}4 \) \( \text{xe}3 \) 20.\( \text{wd}2 \) \( \text{a}8 \) 21.\( \text{a}1 \) \( \text{e}1 \) 22.\( \text{e}1 \) \( \text{g}6 \) – White’s bishops are strong and this compensates for the pawn, but not more. The game was later drawn in Piket-Alexandrov, Istanbul ol 2000.

- 15.\( \text{b}1 \) \( \text{g}6 \) 16.\( \text{a}4 \) 16.\( \text{h}3? \) \( \text{f}6 \) 17.\( \text{g}4 \) \( \text{b}3 \). 16...\( \text{f}6 \) 17.\( \text{g}4 \) 17.\( \text{a}3 \) \( \text{f}x \) \( \text{e}5 \) 18.\( \text{dx}5 \) \( \text{f}5 \). 17...\( \text{xc}4 \) 18.\( \text{fx}4 \) \( \text{g}7 \)

This is a moment where White’s play can probably be improved: 21.\( \text{b}2! \) The actual game continued with 21.\( \text{f}4 \) \( \text{f}7 \) 22.\( \text{f}1 \) \( \text{b}3! \) (the problem of the lousy \( \text{a}5 \) has been solved and... Black has a good game) 23.\( \text{xd}3 \) \( \text{cxb}3 \) 24.\( \text{xb}3 \) \( \text{e}4 \) 25.\( \text{xe}4 \) (this exchange sac is sufficient for equality, but not more) 25...\( \text{d}4 \) 26.\( \text{c}4 \) \( \text{c}8 \) with approximate equality in Lauter-Grischuk, Poikovsky 2004. 21...\( \text{f}7 \) 22.\( \text{a}1 \) \( \text{e}8 \) 23.\( \text{xd}6 \) \( \text{xb}6 \) 24.\( \text{e}4 \) \( \text{f}7 \) 25.\( \text{g}5! \) and White gets a strong attack on the kingside.

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

White threatens \( \text{e}3-\text{e}4 \) and so the knight on \( \text{e}5 \) has to be attacked. 15...\( \text{f}5 \) runs into a direct refutation:
16.e4! By the way, 16...a3 is also good for White: 16...dx2 17.wxc2 Qb3 (Black’s Qb3 is a lousy piece, out of play, while White’s a3 is active and strong – this determines the evaluation) 18.ae1 ad8 19.e4 wa5 20.g4 wxa4 21.axd6 axd6 22.Qe3 (please note the striking difference in activity between Black’s Qb3 and White’s Qe3!) 22...dxe4 23.fxe4 and White had a clear advantage in E. Levin-Alexandrov, St Petersburg 2008. 16...dx4 17.a3! f6 18.fxe4 fxe4 19...Qxe4 loses to 19.Qxe4 Qxe4 20.Qxf8 Qxf8 21.wg4 Qxc3 22. .e6+ Qh8 23.Qf3. 19.exf5 exd4 20.wxd4 White had a big advantage (note that Black’s knight is still on a5) and went on to win in Aronian-Shomoev, Sochi 2006.

16.a3!

This is the tactical nuance behind 15.a4!.

16...b8

Black runs away from the pin along the a3-f8 diagonal, threatening to collect White’s knight on e5.
● The other king’s rook move is 16...e8.

Now White continues:

A) 17.g4!

Black has exchanged White’s strong light-squared bishop, the black rook has an excellent post on e4 and cannot be disturbed, and White’s pawns are scattered, but due to the open f-file, the strong a3 controlling the vital e7- and f8-squares, and Black’s a5 being completely out of play, White seizes the initiative and gets a tremendous attack:

20.g5! Opening the f-file. 20...fxg5 21.Ma2 g4 Or 21...h6 22.Maf2 Qc6 23.wh5. 22.Maf2 It is difficult to believe that Black is lost here, but a defence (if it exists – which I doubt) is very difficult to find. 22...h6 23.Qf8+ Qxf8 24.Qxf8+ Qh7 25.wf1 wd7 26.Qf7 we6 27.Qf8 Qc6 The knight finally tries to get back into play, but it’s much too late. 28.Qxg7+ Qh8 29.Qf7 Qxe3 30.Qf6 Qe4 31.Qxh6+ and Black resigned on account of 31...Qg8 32.Qh8+ Qxh8 33.wf6+ with mate on g7 in Peralta-Graf, Deizisau 2009;

A2) Should Black decide to take the e3 pawn with 17...h5 18. .f2 Qxe3,
White gets strong compensation with 19.\(\text{Wd}2!\) (19.f4 is not accurate due to 19...\(\text{c}f5\) 20.\(\text{W}xh5\) \(\text{Wf}7\)) 19...\(\text{e}6\) 20.\(\text{a}e1\) and action will start on the kingside, while Black's pieces are sleeping on the other side of the board, the knight on a5 in particular.

Other white moves are possible, but less convincing:

B) In the event of 17.\(\text{xd}6?!\) \(\text{xd}6\) 18.f4

Black should opt for the principled 18...\(\text{fxe}5!\), after which it is difficult for White to prove his compensation, for instance: 19.\(\text{Exh}7+\) \(\text{eh}8\) 20.\(\text{c}c2\) \(\text{W}h6\) 21.dxe5 21.fxe5? fails to 21...\(\text{xe}3+\) 22.\(\text{eh}1\) \(\text{W}g5\). 21...\(\text{e}6\) 22.\(\text{Wf}3\) \(\text{b}3\) 23.\(\text{aad}1\) \(\text{f}7\).

The actual game continued 18...\(\text{g}6\) 19.\(\text{Exg}6\) \(\text{hxg}6\) 20.\(\text{Exg}6\) \(\text{exe}3\) 21.\(\text{W}h5\) \(\text{We}7\) 22.\(\text{W}x\text{d}5+\) \(\text{eg}7\) 23.\(\text{Wh}5\) (White obviously has compensation here) 23...\(\text{e}6\) 24.\(\text{a}e1?\) (a mistake; correct was 24.\(\text{W}h7+\) \(\text{eh}8\) 25.\(\text{W}h6+\) \(\text{Wg}7\) 26.\(\text{W}h5\) with \(\text{a}e1\) to follow; or 24.\(\text{W}x\text{a}5\), regaining the sacrificed piece) 24...\(\text{eg}8\) (missing the tactic 24...\(\text{eh}8!!\) 25.\(\text{W}x\text{a}5\) \(\text{ef}7\) 25.\(\text{f}2\) — White had the attack and won in Vazquez Igarza-Petkov, Collado Villalba 2008.

C) 17.f4!? is interesting and definitely better than 17.\(\text{xd}6\) \(\text{xd}6\) 18.f4.

White definitely has a strong attack, however it is not clear whether it yields him more than a draw:

C1) 17...\(\text{fxe}5\) When your opponent sacrifices something, the most principled answer is to take it. 18.\(\text{W}h5\) \(\text{g}6\) 19.\(\text{Exg}6\) \(\text{hxg}6\) 20.\(\text{W}x\text{g}6+\) \(\text{Wg}7\) 21.\(\text{W}x\text{d}6\) White's attack against Black's open king compensates for the sacrificed material. Here are some lines: 21...\(\text{b}3\) 22.\(\text{aad}1\) To cut off the \(\text{b}3\). 22.\(\text{a}e1\) is the other move. 22...\(\text{exf}4\) 23.\(\text{ef}3\) 23.\(\text{xf}4\) \(\text{e}6\). 23...\(\text{fxe}3\) 23...\(\text{Exe}3?\) is bad on account of 24.\(\text{W}d8+\) \(\text{eh}7\) 25.\(\text{xf}4\). 24.\(\text{f}3\) 25.\(\text{W}x\text{d}5+\) \(\text{eh}7\) 26.\(\text{f}1\) 26.\(\text{e}1\) seems to lead to a forced draw after 26...\(\text{xf}2\) 27.\(\text{h}3\) \(\text{ad}8\) 28.\(\text{W}a5\) \(\text{Wf}7\) 29.\(\text{W}x\text{g}4\) \(\text{f}3+\) 30.\(\text{eh}1\) \(\text{xe}1+\) 31.\(\text{eh}2\) \(\text{f}1+\) 32.\(\text{eh}1\) \(\text{g}3+\) 33.\(\text{eh}2\); 26.\(\text{h}3\) leads to an immediate draw after 26...\(\text{xd}1\) 27.\(\text{W}x\text{g}7+\) \(\text{eh}7\) 28.\(\text{W}g5+\) \(\text{eh}7=\)

26...\(\text{e}2\) 27.\(\text{e}1\) followed by \(\text{h}2-\text{h}3\);

C2) Practice has seen 17...\(\text{de}4\) 18.\(\text{W}h5\) \(\text{e}6\) 19.\(\text{exe}4\) \(\text{dxe}4\) 20.\(\text{f}5\) \(\text{f}7\) (20...\(\text{fxe}5\) is not good after 21.\(\text{xe}6\) \(\text{exe}6\) 22.\(\text{d}5\)) and now:

C21) 21.\(\text{xf}7\) \(\text{xf}7\) 22.\(\text{W}g4\) \(\text{b}3\)

23.\(\text{a}2\) This position is not easy to assess. White has attacking possibilities, his \(\text{a}3\) is for the time being better than Black's currently unemployed \(\text{b}3\), but Black has a good pawn structure and should the queens be ex-
changed, then the tables can turn – in such positions a queen exchange is in principle good for Black!

C22) 21...g6 d6 21...b3 can be an improvement, since Black meets 22.e5 with 22...a5. 22.f4 h6 23.g4 d5 24.f1 d7 25.h3 White had a strong attack and went on to win in Kovacs-Solomon, Budapest 2009 – note the black knight still stranded on a5!

In case Black takes the knight with 16...f4, White gets a strong attack for a minimal material investment after 17...dxe5 18.fxe5 19.a6 20.a7 White's kingside pawns are rolling and of course Black's knight is still on a5.

17.g4

17...xg4

In a very recent game, Movsesian, playing Black, was obviously caught off-guard in the opening, so it's likely that he looked for a solution over the board and decided on 17...e8. Black is now effectively a full tempo down compared to our main line and is obviously in serious trouble. 18.b1! h6 19.h7+ f8 20.g6 e7 20...e6 allows 21.e4. 21.b4 d7 and now White played 22.b2 e7 23.e1 and was better (note the excellent bishops) and went on to win in Vuckovic-Movsesian, Moscow 2011. This was good, but White had a strong and direct way in 22.e4 dxe4 23.fxe4 b3 (trying to trap White's queen – this is probably what scared Vuckovic off) 24.e5! a5 25.exd6 axb4 26.dxc7 a5 27.xa5

18.fxg4 b3

This knight jump is almost never a solution for Black. The knight mostly remains stuck on b3, controlling a few irrelevant squares, while the action is on the other side of the board.

19.a2!

The white rook is ready for a transfer via the second rank to assist in the kingside attack.

19...e8

In another practical example 19...e7 was played, which places Black's queen in a pin along the a3-f8 diagonal.

White could have made immediate use of this by playing 20.e4! dxe4 21.e1. Black is under several terrible pins, he has a bad position and has to choose between lesser evils: 21...f7 In the event of 21...c7 White gets a big advantage after 22.b2 h8 23.xd6 d6 24.e4, as 24...c5 loses to

\textbf{20.g51}

A standard idea for White in this line. Here it gives him a strong attack as well. Please note once more the difference between White's powerful bishops and Black's hopeless knights.

\textbf{20..f5}

20... \textbf{\textit{fxg5}} loses to 21. \textbf{\textit{h5}} \textbf{\textit{h6}} (or 21... \textbf{\textit{g6}} 22. \textbf{\textit{gxg6}}) 22. \textbf{\textit{g6}} \textbf{\textit{e4}} 23. \textbf{\textit{xe4}} \textbf{\textit{dx4}} 24. \textbf{\textit{xf2}}.

\textbf{21.\textbf{\textit{xf5}}}

21. \textbf{\textit{f3}} is also strong.

\textbf{21..\textbf{\textit{xf5}} 22.\textbf{\textit{xf5}}}

White has a big advantage. Crucial is that the power of his doubled rooks on the f-file cooperates excellently with the \textbf{\textit{a3}}, while Black has a hopeless \textbf{\textit{b3}}, Timofeev-Brkic, Bihac tt 2010.

\section*{Conclusion}

Black is experiencing a problem in this line at the moment. Should black players fail to find an antidote, then they will have to resort to 10... \textbf{\textit{dxc4}}, transposing to 9... \textbf{\textit{dxc4}} 10. \textbf{\textit{xc4}} \textbf{\textit{c7}} lines.
Chapter 3.4

Main Line – 9...dxc4 10...xc4 8c7 11...d3

From the less played moves, 11...d3 is definitely the main one to investigate. White has his chances to fight for an opening advantage, however Black gets sufficient play and should be able to keep the balance. The possibilities discussed in the chapters 3.5, 3.6 and 3.7 promise White considerably better chances for an opening advantage and the reader should focus his attention on them. I agree with the current theoretical verdict that Black is OK in the relatively less played lines (i.e. the lines other than 11...a2 (Chapter 3.5), 11.h3 (Chapter 3.6) and 11...b2 (Chapter 3.7) and have given here what I consider to be the most important games and opinions on the subject – trying to be concise, since I consider that Black currently has problems in the lines treated in the next three chapters and those lines are more important to focus on.

First a little side-step after the swap on c3.

9...dxc4

Apart from the main moves 9...dxc4 and 9...8c7, Black has three sidelines at his disposal here. These sidelines are occasionally playable, and have been used by a number of strong players, however they do not equalize. Let's have a look at them:

● 9...8e8 This regular developing move looks a bit passive here, since on the one hand it does not try to force White to make a decision in the centre,
and on the other hand it is still unclear where this rook will be needed, which is why a move like ... \( \text{wc7} \) looks more logical. However, White does not get more than just a small advantage:

A) 10.\( \text{b2} \) With this move White plans to take cxd5 and push c3-c4 next, opening the position for his bishop pair and more or less forcing Black to take on c4. 10...dxc4 11.\( \text{xc4} \) e5 I got this position recently and had a long thought here, looking for something concrete. Black's queen is still on d8, the f7-square is potentially weak – but White does not have a direct way to exploit this. In some lines the queen still being on d8 comes in handy for Black.

A1) 12.h3

1 2...\( \text{wb6!} \) This possibility, which had escaped my attention during the game, is one of the pluses of the queen still being on d8. 13.\( \text{wc2} \) \( \text{xe6} \) As usual in this positions, Black would like to exchange light-squared bishops. 14.\( \text{xe6} \) \( \text{xe6} \) 15.\( \text{g5} \) Now not happy with a modest advantage, White comes up with a wrong plan. He had to settle for a modest advantage with 15.\( \text{ab1} \) cxd4 16.cxd4 exd4 17.\( \text{xd4} \) \( \text{a6} \); or 15.\( \text{xe5} \) \( \text{xe5} \) 16.\( \text{xe5} \) \( \text{xe5} \) 17.c4. 15...\( \text{d6} \) 16.\( \text{dxe5} \) \( \text{xe5} \) 17.c4 \( \text{e8} \) 18.\( \text{ab1} \) \( \text{wc6} \) White's kingside threats do not work the way he has hoped. Black had a good game in I. Sokolov-Pöttsch, Aix-les-Bains Ech 2011;

A2) The ending after 12.\( \text{xe5} \) \( \text{xe5} \) 13.\( \text{dxe5} \) \( \text{xd1} \) 14.\( \text{axd1} \) \( \text{xe5} \) 15.\( \text{d8+} \) (15.\( \text{b5} \) \( \text{e6} \) 15...\( \text{e8} \) will likely end in a draw: 16.\( \text{xd1} \) \( \text{f8} \) 17.\( \text{f3} \) \( \text{e6} \) 18.\( \text{xa8} \) \( \text{xa8} \) 19.\( \text{xe6} \) \( \text{xe6} \) 20.\( \text{c4} \) \( \text{e7} \);

A3) Tactical solutions like 12.\( \text{g5} \) \( \text{f8} \) 13.\( \text{xf7?} \) do not work after 13...\( \text{xf7} \) 14.\( \text{dxe5} \) \( \text{xd1} \) 15.\( \text{axd1} \) \( \text{g4} \);

A4) 12.\( \text{b5} \) is in general a good antidote to these plans, but here the fact that the queen is still on d8 comes in handy: 12...\( \text{e4} \)

A41) 13.\( \text{d2} \) \( \text{d5!} \) followed by ...\( \text{g5} \), with a kingside initiative;

A42) 13.\( \text{e5?} \) is better for Black after 13...\( \text{xe5!} \) 14.\( \text{dxe5} \) (14.\( \text{xe8?} \) \( \text{d3} \) 14...\( \text{d7} \);

B) Another move is 10.a4.

This is one of White's standard plans here, however with Black's rook already on e8 this looks less logical to me. One practical example went well for White, though: 10...\( \text{c7} \) 11.\( \text{a3} \) \( \text{xc4} \) 12.\( \text{xc4} \) b6 13.\( \text{e2} \) \( \text{b7} \) Black has an OK version of the regular main lines. 14.\( \text{fd1} \) \( \text{h6} \) 15.\( \text{a6} \) A strange strategic decision. The exchange of light-squared bishops, as I have mentioned on a number of occasions, does not improve
B2) Black is about equal after 11...d2 e8 12.f1 c4 13...e2 c4;  
B3) Or 11.a4 c4 12.c2 e4;  
B4) Trying to follow the ideas of the line 9...c7 10...b2 a5 11.cxd5 exd5 12.e5 does not work that well here. Amongst other things, White's pawn on c3 hangs and in some tactical lines Black's queen, still on d8, protects d5. 11...e5 c4 12.c2 e4 13.f3

B41) White is better in the event of 13...d6 14.e4! White sacrifices a piece, obtaining a tremendous pawn chain. Copying ideas from the line 9...c7 10...b2 a5 11.cxd5 exd5 12.e5 with 14.a4 f6 15...a3? does not work here (d5 is protected!) after 15...fxe5 16.dxe5 f5!. 14...f6 15.exd5 fxe5 16.dxe5 b5 17.d6 e6 18.f4 and White has more than enough compensation;

B42) 13...xc3 14.e1 b5 15.d2 Wrong is 15.a4? d6 16...a3 f6 17...b4 due to 17...f5! 18.xf5 xf5 19.xf5+ xf8 20.xf8 xf8 21.g4 b3 and Black wins - the c-pawn decides. 15...b3! White is better in the case of 15...e6 16...b1 d6 17...xh7+. 16.xb3 cxb3 17.e1 b6 18.e3 e8! with a complicated game:  
B421) 19...b4 f5 20.g4 f6 21.xf5  
B422) If White gets greedy with 19.xd5?! he may easily be sorry after 19...e6 20.e5 f6 21.g4 c8 (21...c4?!) 22.xa7 c4 23.xc1 b5.

C) 10...e5 is probably the only way to get an opening advantage here: 10...dxc4 11.xc4 xc4 12.xc4 e8 White has a standard advantage in the case of 12...b6 13.f3 b7 14.e4 c8 15.e2. 13.e2 We now have the main line-type position with the f3 and the c6 off the board, which is probably a better deal for White than the f3-f6 swap. White seems to have a small advantage. 13.e5 14.b2 e4 Black decides to release part of the central tension. 14...f5?!

fails to the tactic 15.e4! cxe4 16.dxe5 (because of the e-file pin, the e5 pawn is taboo) 16...ad8 17.ad1 and White is better, for example 17...wa5 18.g4! g6 19.f4 with a winning advantage for White. 15.h3 f5

An important moment. White should secure the c3-c4 push before Black doubles on the c-file (15...e6 16.xe6 fxe6 17.c4 is better for White due to his favourable pawn structure.

C1) The actual game went: 16.xd1 ac8! Black is now fine. 17.a4 In the case of 17.a2 White is too late, since Black plays 17...c4! 17...xd4 18.xd4 f8d8 19.ad1 xd4 20.xd4 e6
21. \( \text{ex}e6 \text{fxe6} \) with equality. The game was later drawn in Thorbergsson-Fischer, Reykjavik 1960;

C2) 16. \( \text{a}2! \) followed by c3-c4, with a white advantage – please compare this to similar positions analysed in the section of the main line 9...dxc4 10. \( \text{xc}c4 \text{wc7} \) 11. \( \text{d}3 \).

- The third 'side option' for Black is 9...b6, a logical developing move which, however, does not put pressure on White’s centre. I think that in the old game Taimanov demonstrated the right way to proceed: 10. \( \text{xd}5 \text{exd5} \).

A) 11.a4 c4 12. \( \text{c}2 \text{g}4 \) 13. \( \text{e}1 \text{e}8 \)

14. \( \text{h}4! \) This is better than 14. \( \text{d}2 \).
14... \( \text{h}5 \) 15. \( \text{f}3 \text{g}6 \) 16. \( \text{xg}6 \text{hxg6} \) 17. \( \text{e}4 \text{xe}4 \) 18. \( \text{xe}4 \text{wd}7 \) 19. \( \text{g}5 \text{h}7 \) 20. \( \text{e}3 \) – White had a powerful and mobile pawn centre and a strong and well-coordinated bishop pair. He went on to win in Taimanov-Botvinnik, Moscow-URS 1952;

B) Also possible is: 11. \( \text{e}5 \text{b}7 \) 12. \( \text{b}2 \text{c}4 \) 12... \( \text{wc7} \), keeping the tension, looks more to the point. 13. \( \text{xc}6 \text{xc}6 \) 14. \( \text{c}2 \text{e}8 \) 15.a4 a5 16. \( \text{e}2 \text{e}7 \) 17. \( \text{f}1 \text{g}6 \) 18. \( \text{f}3 \) White has a small plus; Black’s knight pirouette does not help his cause. 18... \( \text{h}5 \) 19.e4 dxe4 20. \( \text{xe}4 \text{f}6 \) 21.e5 and White was better in Jussupow-Lobron, Munich 1992.

10. \( \text{xc}c4 \text{wc7} \)

There are two minor alternatives and it is good to mention them here.

- The first one is 10... \( \text{e}7 \).

The main drawback of this move, as we shall soon see, is that from e7 the queen does not defend the knight on c6, which, if White reacts correctly, renders Black’s counterplay with ...e6-e5 impossible:

A) 11.a4! This accurate reaction ensures an opening advantage for White. 11...b6 11...e5? blunders a pawn after 12. \( \text{a}3! \text{b}6 \) 13. \( \text{b}5! \) (this simple motif is the point behind White’s 11.a4! and the main reason why 10... \( \text{e}7 \) is not good for Black) 13... \( \text{b}7 \) 14. \( \text{xc}6 \text{xc}6 \) 15. \( \text{xe}5 \) 12. \( \text{e}1 \) Having eliminated Black’s counterplay with ...e6-e5, White is ready to roll his central pawns. Please note also that the \( \text{e}7 \) would stand in the way of Black’s manoeuvre ... \( \text{e}7-\text{g}6 \). 12... \( \text{b}7 \) Again, 12...e5? blunders a pawn to the aforementioned prosaic 13. \( \text{b}5 \) 13.e4 \( \text{h}6 \) Black has to prevent \( \text{g}5 \), with a very unpleasant pin. 14. \( \text{d}5! \text{fd}8 \) 15. \( \text{d}3 \text{a}5 \) 16.c4 \( \text{e}8 \) 17. \( \text{b}2 \text{a}6 \) 18. \( \text{wc}2 \) White has achieved all of his strategic opening objectives and has a massive advantage. 18... \( \text{ac}8 \) 19. \( \text{ad}1 \text{exd}5 \) 20. \( \text{exd}5 \text{wf}8 \) 21. \( \text{e}4 \) White has a
strong attack: all his pieces participate harmoniously while Black's a5 and a6 are completely out of play. 21...c7 Black solves the problem of his a6, but a5 remains at the edge of the board. 22.f4 c8 23.f7+ h8 24.e5 and White had a winning attack in Portisch-Miles, Tilburg 1981;

B) In some games an attempt was made to show the drawback of 10...e7 compared to 10...c7, with 11.e5, but this is far from clear and leads to complicated play where Black is not worse. 11...xe5 12.dxe5 d7 13.f4 Entering an ending with 13.d6 leads to a position where Black is fine: 13...xd6 14.exd6 d8 15.d1 b6 16.b3 d7 17.a4 c6. 13...b6 14.d3 d7 15.c4 d8 16.c2 a4 17.c3 c6 Black has developed his pieces harmoniously and he has decent counterplay, while for White it is far from simple to get his kingside attack started.

The second alternative is 10...b6. With simple means White now builds a strong pawn centre, with more space and the advantage of the bishop pair. 11.e1 b7

12.e4 cxd4 13.cxd4 h6 14.b2 Here White simply has a favourable version of the Petrosian Variation of the Queen's Indian — but with a black knight on f6 instead of a bishop on e7.

14.c8 15.d3 The standard 15.d3 is also good for White. 15...a5 16.a2 c7 Searching for counterplay with 16...b5 is better than the game continuation, but it does not suffice for Black to equalize after 17.d2 a6 18.f3. 17.d5 A standard central pawn break in these positions. 17.ac1, followed by d4-d5, is also good. 17...exd5 18.exd5 c2 19.xc2 xc2 20.xf6 gxf6 21.d4 White's passed d-pawn is dangerous, while Black's kingside pawn structure is seriously damaged. White had a clear advantage in Portisch-Rozentalis, Debrecen Ech-tt 1992.

11.d3

An often-played alternative is 11.b5

This move looks a bit odd, since Black can obviously immediately gain a tempo with ...a7-a6. Well, then White would retreat his bishop, hoping to prove that the fact that the a-pawn is now on a6 and does not control b6 any longer can be a drawback for Black. This theory has always looked rather far-fetched to me and I have never believed in it. Actually in many lines it can come in handy for Black that the pawn is already on a6 and is able to support the ...b7-b5 push. Black should not worry in this line. 11...a6
move is probably the most logical – yes, let White prove that the pawn on a6 is a drawback. Of the other options 11...b6 is not a way to reach equality since White can continue 12...e1 b7 13.e4 e7 14.d3 – please compare with the game Grischuk-Alexeev in Chapter 3.6 on 11.h3 b6 12.d3. White can follow Grischuk’s plan (the fact that here the white pawn is on h2 instead of h3 is irrelevant) and have an advantage; 11...d8 can be played, however Black would still have to follow the well-known paths, and then 11...a6 looks more logical and flexible.

A) 12.d3 is one of the two common moves for White here and in my opinion, if there is an advantage for White in this line it should be searched in 12.d3 rather than 12.e2. 12...e5
13.wc2 and now:

A1) 13...e8 is Black’s most common continuation here. 14.xe5 In the case of 14.e4 exd4 15.cxd4 g4 Black follows the ideas from the line 11.d3 e5 12.wc2 e8 13.e4 cxd4 14.exd4 g4 – his pawn being on a6 instead of a7 does not make a significant difference. 14...xe5 15.dxe5 wxe5 16.f3

A11) 16...b5 Black immediately advances his queenside pawn majority – this is actually one of the advantages of being provoked by 11..b5 to play...a7-a6 and such natural plans simply make 11..b5 look illogical. 17.e1 a4 b4 with queenside counterplay for Black. 17..e6 Black should always be careful with the move 17...c4 in this position, because it surrenders the dark squares and opens the g1-a7 diagonal for White’s c1: 18..f1 b7 19.e4 d5 20.d2 c4 21.e3 e6 22.a4 c6 23.a5 d8 24.b6 and White had some advantage in Rytvov-Spassky, Tallinn 1975. 18.e4 d8 19..f1
19.e3? is a blunder due to 19...b3. 19...c4 20.e3 xf1 21.xf1 d5
Black can also look for counterplay with 21...d7 (planning ...b6-c4) and if 22.c4 f5. 22.xc5 c8 Only Black can be better here. 22...xc3 is also possible. 23.wf2 xc3;

A12) Also possible is 16...d7 17.b1 (17..e1? runs into the tactic 17.a4! 18..b1 d8 with a better game for Black) 17..c6 18..e1 d8
19..f1 h5. Even though White has a kingside pawn majority, Black often advances his h-pawn, and sometimes also his g-pawn, in this line, creating counterplay on the kingside. In the following practical example White had a small advantage after 19...d7 20.e4 c4 (Black should always be careful with this move, since it opens the g1-a7 diagonal and allows White to place his bishop on the dominant d4-square) 21.e3, Kamsky-Tiviakov, Groningen 1995. 20.c4 b4 21.xb2 g5 22..f2 As often in this line, the black knight now gets transferred to a better square: 22...d7
23..bd1 f8 White does not have a clever way to advance his kingside pawn majority and Black has a good game.

A2) White should have an advantage in the case of 13...b5 14.a4 or 14.dxc5 and then 15.a4;
A3) A reasonable, viable alternative for Black is 13...\(\text{d}8!\).

It is difficult to prove anything tangible for White here.

A31) In case White plays the useful 14.\(h3\) Thanks to his pawn on a6, Black can continue 14...\(b5\) and has a good game (by the way, playing 14...\(\text{e}7\) with ideas similar to 11...\(\text{d}3\) is also possible – see the main line with the black pawn on a7), for example: 15.a4 \(c4\) 16.\(\text{e}2\) \(b7\) 17.\(a3\) exd4 18.exd4 \(\text{e}7\) followed by ...\(\text{g}6;\)

A32) 14.\(\text{b}2\) \(\text{g}4\) and now:

A321) 15.\(\text{g}5\) \(h6\) 16.\(\text{e}4\) is one of White's standard plans in these positions. I am not impressed by it. It is difficult for me to see that swapping a pair of knights should improve White's chances to gain an opening advantage here. 16...\(\text{xe}4\) 17.\(\text{xe}4\) \(\text{a}5\) Black has a good game and the tables can easily turn here. Practice has seen 17...\(\text{e}6\) 18.\(\text{f}4\) exf4 19.\(\text{xf}4\) \(\text{e}7\) 20.\(\text{x}f2\) \(\text{ac}8\) with an unclear game in Szabo-Gligoric, Buenos Aires 1955; 15.\(\text{dxe5}\) \(\text{xe5}\) 16.\(\text{dxe5}\) \(\text{dxe5}\) 17.\(c4\) \(\text{d}6\) Here we have a standard situation which in general looks advantageous to White, an evaluation based on his pawn majority on the kingside, the ability of his two-pawn minority to control Black's three-pawn majority on the queenside, and his active bishop on \(b2\), but in practice White's pluses are hard to turn into anything tangible, while Black slowly improves his position, eventually equalizing. 18.\(\text{xf5}\) \(\text{xf5}\) White would have an endgame advantage in the event of 18...\(\text{d}2\) 19.\(\text{xd2}\) \(\text{xd2}\) 20.\(\text{c3}\) \(\text{d}6\) 21.\(\text{xe4}\) \(\text{xe4}\) 22.\(\text{ab}1\) 19.\(\text{xf5}\) \(\text{e}8!\) A standard knight manoeuvre here. Tactics would work for White in the case of 19...\(\text{d}3?\) 20.\(\text{xc5}\) \(\text{ac}8\) 21.\(\text{b}6!\) \(\text{d}7\) 22.\(\text{xb7}\) \(\text{b8}\) 23.\(\text{c7}\) \(\text{dc}8\) 24.\(\text{a}5\) \(\text{xb2}\) 25.\(\text{ad}1\) and White is a pawn up. 20.a4 \(b6\) 21.\(\text{e}5\) \(\text{c}6\) 22.\(\text{c}2\) \(f6\) 23.\(\text{g}3\) \(\text{d}6\) 24.\(\text{f}3\) \(\text{f}7\) The position was about equal and later drawn in Radovici-Gheorghiu, Bucharest-ROM 1961.

B) The other common move is 12.\(\text{e}2.\)

B1) 12...\(\text{d}8\) 13.\(\text{c}2\) e5 14.\(\text{b}2\)

14...\(\text{g}4\) Please compare this position to the line 11.\(\text{b}2\) e5 12.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{d}8\) 13.\(\text{c}2\) \(\text{g}4\) in Chapter 3.7. Black is doing well there and so he is here. The fact that Black's pawn is on a6 instead on a7 does not make any significant difference. 15.\(\text{dxe5}\) The position after 15.\(h3\) \(h5\) 16.\(\text{xe5}\) \(\text{xe2}\) 17.\(\text{xe2}\) \(\text{xe5}\) 18.\(\text{e}5\) \(\text{xe5}\) 19.\(c4\) \(\text{e}6\) may look favourable for White due to his kingside pawn majority, but in reality
White has his weakness too (the c4 pawn) and Black can also create queenside counterplay based on his 3 vs 2 pawn majority, so chances are approximately equal. 15...\(\text{dxe5}\) 16.c4 \(\text{dx}f3+\) 17.gxf3 \(\text{h}3\) Probably the easiest for Black is to follow the plan from Khalifman-Kramnik, see 11.e2 e5 12.\(\text{xe2}\) \(\text{d}8\) 13.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{g}4\) 14.dxe5 \(\text{e}5\) 15.c4 \(\text{dx}f3\) (17...\(\text{h}5\) is also playable). 18.eb1 18.\(\text{f}d1\) \(\text{c}6\) would indeed replicate the abovementioned Kramnik game, the pawn on a6 being no particular disadvantage for Black. 18...\(\text{c}6\) 18...\(\text{e}7\) was tried in practice and is playable, however 18...\(\text{c}6\) looks more flexible and more to the point. 19.\(\text{h}1\) White prepares an initiative along the g-file – his main plan in this position. In the case of 19.\(\text{c}3\)

![Diagram](image1)

19...\(\text{e}8\)! Black follows Kramnik’s abovementioned plan. 19...\(\text{g}4\)! This tactical possibility is a drawback of the fact that White has not first placed his queen on c3. In the case of 19...\(\text{e}8\) 20.\(\text{g}1\) \(\text{d}7\) 21.\(\text{g}3\) \(\text{e}6\) White proves the point of keeping his queen on c2 by scoring a tempo with 22.\(\text{d}3\), provoking Black to weaken his kingside. 20.e4! 20.\(\text{g}1??\) is a terrible blunder due to 20...\(\text{e}3\) 21.\(\text{f}e3\) \(\text{d}2\). 20...\(\text{f}2\) 21.\(\text{g}1\) and here Black can force a draw with 21...\(\text{d}2\) (black players who are not happy with a draw should investigate the adventurous 21...\(\text{h}6\)? 22.\(\text{f}2\) f5) 22.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{e}4\) 23.\(\text{f}e4\) \(\text{g}6\) 24.\(\text{g}4\) \(\text{g}4\) 25.\(\text{f}2\) \(\text{g}2\) 26.\(\text{e}3\) \(\text{g}5\) with perpetual check;

B2) Also possible is 12...e5 13.\(\text{b}2\).

Now 13...\(\text{d}8\) usually transposes to 12...\(\text{d}8\), but Black may also decide to release the central tension with 13...\(\text{e}4\). As the reader will see in my comments in Chapters 3.5, 3.6 and 3.7, I think that after the central tension has been released in this and similar positions, it should be easier for White to execute his plans and he should have an advantage. 14.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{d}2\) is in 90% of cases the correct retreat square for the white knight’s, as from there it controls the vital c4- and e4-squares. 14...\(\text{f}5\) 15.a4 \(\text{d}8\) 16.\(\text{c}2??\) Running into a tactic. The correct 16...a3 would have led to a better position for White. 16...\(\text{c}8\) 17.\(\text{f}c1\) \(\text{d}4\) 18.\(\text{xd}4\) \(\text{d}4\) 19.\(\text{c}7\) \(\text{e}2\) 20.\(\text{f}1\) \(\text{c}1\) 21.\(\text{b}6\) \(\text{d}5\) 22.\(\text{a}5\) \(\text{d}3\) and Black was better in Portisch-Spassky, Mexico City m/4 1980.

The plan with 11.a4 \(\text{d}8\) 12.\(\text{a}3\)

is in general not dangerous for Black, and also runs into a tactical refutation: 12...\(\text{xd}4\) 13.\(\text{xd}4\) \(\text{d}4\) 14.\(\text{xd}4\) \(\text{xd}4\) 15.\(\text{c}1\) \(\text{d}5\) 16.\(\text{e}7\) \(\text{d}7\)
17.\textit{\textbf{Qxf6}} \textit{\textbf{gxf6}} White does not have enough for the sacrificed pawn. 18.f4 b6 19.\textit{\textbf{Wg4}}+ \textit{\textbf{Qf8}} 20.f5 e5 21.\textit{\textbf{Qc6}} \textit{\textbf{b7}} 22.e4 \textit{\textbf{Wd2}} 23.\textit{\textbf{Wh1}} \textit{\textbf{Qxc6}} 24.\textit{\textbf{Qxc6}} \textit{\textbf{Qad8}} 25.a5 \textit{\textbf{Wd1}} and Black was a sound pawn up in the endgame in Graf-Mosienko, Gothenburg Ech-\textit{\textbf{tt}} 2005;

\textbf{\bullet} In the case of 11.\textit{\textbf{Wxe2?!}} e5 12.d5 e4 White has a bad version of a known idea: 13.\textit{\textbf{Qxc6}} \textit{\textbf{Qg4}} 13...\textit{\textbf{Qg4}} 14.cxb7 \textit{\textbf{Wxb7}} 15.\textit{\textbf{Wb2}} \textit{\textbf{Wxb2}} 16.\textit{\textbf{Qxb2}} exf3 was somewhat better for Black in Hübner-Chandler, Biel 1987. 14.\textit{\textbf{g3}} \textit{\textbf{exf3}} 15.\textit{\textbf{Wxf3}} \textit{\textbf{Qe5}} 16.\textit{\textbf{Wxe4}} \textit{\textbf{Qxc4}} 17.\textit{\textbf{Qxc4}} \textit{\textbf{Wxc6}} Due to the weak light squares around White's king and the light-square weaknesses in White's camp, Black is obviously better.

11...\textit{\textbf{e5}} 12.\textit{\textbf{Wc2}} \textit{\textbf{Qe8}}

To threaten ...\textit{\textbf{e5-e4}} and force White's reaction.

\textbf{\bullet} Black also has the rather viable 12...\textit{\textbf{Qd8?!}}. This has been played considerably less than our main move 12...\textit{\textbf{Qe8}}, but it certainly deserves more attention. Just like after 11.\textit{\textbf{Qb5}} a6 12.\textit{\textbf{Qd3}} e5 13.\textit{\textbf{Wc2}} \textit{\textbf{Qd8}}, here it is also difficult for White to prove any tangible advantage:

A) In the case of 13.\textit{\textbf{Qb2}} Black is fine after 13...\textit{\textbf{Qg4}} 14.\textit{\textbf{Qg5}} h6 15.\textit{\textbf{Qe4}} \textit{\textbf{Qxe4}} 16.\textit{\textbf{Qxe4}} \textit{\textbf{Qa5}} or 16...\textit{\textbf{Qe6}};

B) 13.h3!?

17.\textit{\textbf{Qxf6}} \textit{\textbf{gxf6}} White prevents ...\textit{\textbf{g4}} and maintains the central tension. Now:

B1) White is better after the neutral (and in this case passive) 13...\textit{\textbf{h6}} 14.\textit{\textbf{Qb2}} b6 15.\textit{\textbf{Qad1}} \textit{\textbf{Qb7}} 16.\textit{\textbf{e4}} \textit{\textbf{Qd7}} 17.d5 \textit{\textbf{Qe7}} 18.c4 as in O'Kelly de Galway-Matanovic, Hastings 1953/54;

B2) In the case of 13...\textit{\textbf{b6}} White has a pleasant choice:

B21) 14.\textit{\textbf{Qe1!}} \textit{\textbf{Qb7}} Or 14...\textit{\textbf{h6}} 15.\textit{\textbf{Qb2}}. 15.\textit{\textbf{e4}} White is clearly better here, since 15...\textit{\textbf{exd4?}} leads to a large advantage after 16.e5 \textit{\textbf{Qd5}} 17.\textit{\textbf{Qxh7+}} \textit{\textbf{Qh8}} 18.\textit{\textbf{Qe4}};

B22) Or 14.\textit{\textbf{e4}} \textit{\textbf{exd4}} In case of a black non-reaction White gets his usual space advantage: 14...\textit{\textbf{b7}} 15.d5 \textit{\textbf{Qe7}} 16.c4 as in Tolush-O'Kelly de Galway, Hastings 1953/54. 15.\textit{\textbf{Qxd4}} \textit{\textbf{Qxd4}} 16.\textit{\textbf{Qxd4}} \textit{\textbf{Qd6}} 16...\textit{\textbf{exd4?}} fails to 17.\textit{\textbf{Qb2}} \textit{\textbf{Qd8}} 18.e5. 17.\textit{\textbf{Qb2}} \textit{\textbf{Qxd4}} 18.\textit{\textbf{f4}} \textit{\textbf{Qc5}} 19.\textit{\textbf{Qf2}} \textit{\textbf{b7}} 20.\textit{\textbf{Qf1}} followed by e4-e5, with a white initiative;

B3) 13...\textit{\textbf{Qe7}}! An important move, and the only way for Black to equalize. Black threatens ...\textit{\textbf{e5-e4}} and forces White to make a decision in the centre. Compared to Botvinnik's suggestion 12...\textit{\textbf{Qe7}}, the inclusion of 12...\textit{\textbf{Qd8}} 13.h3 improves Black's situation - his rook is well placed on d8, while White's pawn on h3 gives Black important tactical possibilities in some lines. 14.\textit{\textbf{Qxe5}} \textit{\textbf{Qxe5}} 15.\textit{\textbf{dxe5}} \textit{\textbf{Qxe5}} 16.\textit{\textbf{Qb2}}

Now the presence of the white pawn on h3 helps Black (or 16.e4 c4! 17.\textit{\textbf{Qxc4}} \textit{\textbf{Qxe4}} with approximate equality). 16...\textit{\textbf{Qxh3!}} 17.\textit{\textbf{Qxh3}} \textit{\textbf{Qg5+}} 18.\textit{\textbf{Qh2}} 18.\textit{\textbf{Qh1??}} \textit{\textbf{Qd5+}}. 18...\textit{\textbf{Qg4+}} 19.\textit{\textbf{Qh1}} \textit{\textbf{Qh4}} 20.\textit{\textbf{Qg2}} \textit{\textbf{Qg5}} 21.\textit{\textbf{Qh1}} \textit{\textbf{Qh4}} 22.\textit{\textbf{Qg2}} \textit{\textbf{Qg5}} \frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2} Van der Sterren-Sturua, Istanbul ol 2000.

\textbf{\bullet} Inaccurate is 12...\textit{\textbf{Qg4?!}} since after 13.\textit{\textbf{Qxe5}} \textit{\textbf{Qxe5}} 14.\textit{\textbf{dxe5}} \textit{\textbf{Qxe5}} 15.\textit{\textbf{f3}}
Chapter 3.4: Main Line – 9...dxc4 10.\textsf{\texttt{\textsf{\textsf{\texttt{g}}}c4 \textsf{\texttt{e}}7 11.\textsf{\texttt{d}}d3}

\textsf{\texttt{e6 16.\textsf{\texttt{e1}}} White gets a favourable version of known lines; 
\textbullet \textsf{\texttt{In}} his \textsf{\texttt{Secret Notebook}} Botvinnik gives as best 12...\textsf{\texttt{w}}e7! (?! – I.S.) Black’s rook is obviously more active on e8 than on f8, so it is difficult to agree with Botvinnik. 13.\texttt{\texttt{x}}xe5 \texttt{\texttt{x}}xe5 14.\texttt{\texttt{dx}}e5 \texttt{\texttt{we}}5 15.\texttt{\texttt{f}}3

15...\texttt{\texttt{w}}e7!= In his \textsf{\texttt{Secret Notebook}} Botvinnik evaluates this position as equal. 16.\texttt{\texttt{e}}4 \texttt{\texttt{d}}d7 This is supposed to be the point behind 15...\texttt{\texttt{w}}e7!, but things are not as rosy for Black as Botvinnik would have us believe. 17.\texttt{\texttt{e}}e2 The immediate pawn push 17.f4 is indeed premature after 17...\texttt{\texttt{c}}4 18.\texttt{\texttt{e}}e2 \texttt{\texttt{c}}5 19.e5 \texttt{\texttt{b}}3 20.\texttt{\texttt{b}}b1 \texttt{\texttt{c}}5+ 21.\texttt{\texttt{f}}h1 g6 and White now has to resort to 22.f5! \texttt{\texttt{x}}xf5 23.\texttt{\texttt{x}}xf5 gxf5 24.\texttt{\texttt{w}}xf5 \texttt{\texttt{xc}}1 25.\texttt{\texttt{g}}g5+ with a draw by perpetual check. 17...\texttt{\texttt{e}}e5 18.\texttt{\texttt{e}}3 Why not 18.f4?! White advances his pawn majority, taking space and opening diagonals for his bishop pair, and has the better game. 18...f5 with good play for Black – now he is justified in keeping his rook on f8! On the grounds of the suggested improvement 18.f4 White has the advantage and Botvinnik’s line does not equalize for Black.

13.\texttt{\texttt{x}}xe5

A standard plan in this line which we have already seen in various com-

ments. White exchanges a pair of knights and trades his d4 pawn for Black’s e5 pawn, hoping to demonstrate his advantages of the kingside pawn majority and the bishop pair. With correct play by Black, other moves do not offer White even a glimpse of an opening advantage – actually, he may easily become worse:

\textbullet \textsf{\texttt{13.e4}}

A tricky move which has served yours truly very well. It leads to forced complications. Provided the black player is well prepared and remembers the right reaction over the board, he has nothing to worry about and White can actually easily become worse: 13...\texttt{\texttt{e}}xd4! 13...\texttt{\texttt{g}}g4?! is not accurate, since after 14.\texttt{\texttt{x}}xe5 \texttt{\texttt{x}}xe5 15.dxe5 \texttt{\texttt{we}}5 White gets a good version of the 13.\texttt{\texttt{x}}xe5 line. 14.\texttt{\texttt{c}}xd4 and now:

A) White is better in the case of 14...\texttt{\texttt{c}}xd4:

A1) 15.\texttt{\texttt{e}}5 does not offer more than equality after 15...\texttt{\texttt{d}}d5 16.\texttt{\texttt{a}}h7+ \texttt{\texttt{h}}8 17.\texttt{\texttt{e}}e4 \texttt{\texttt{x}}xe5 18.\texttt{\texttt{w}}xc7 (18.\texttt{\texttt{a}}4?! brings White in trouble after 18...\texttt{\texttt{d}}d7 19.\texttt{\texttt{w}}xd4 \texttt{\texttt{c}}3 20.\texttt{\texttt{e}}e1 \texttt{\texttt{x}}f3+) 18...\texttt{\texttt{f}}xf3+ 19.\texttt{\texttt{f}}xf3 \texttt{\texttt{xc}}7 20.\texttt{\texttt{d}}d1 \texttt{\texttt{e}}e6 and a draw is the most likely result;

A2) 15.\texttt{\texttt{c}}cxd4 \texttt{\texttt{g}}g4 16.\texttt{\texttt{f}}f3 \texttt{\texttt{e}}e6 17.\texttt{\texttt{b}}b2 \texttt{\texttt{f}}f4 17...\texttt{\texttt{a}}ac8? is bad due to
the simple 18.h3 and Black's \( \text{Q}g4 \) does not have a good retreat square. 18.\( \text{W}c1 \) \( \text{W}d6 \) 19.\( \text{A}d1 \) White has a pawn majority on the kingside, harmonious pieces and a bishop pair in an open position – White is better.

B) 14...\( \text{Q}g4 \) Hitting the \( \text{Q}f3 \) and increasing the pressure on the d4-square. Now we get a tactical sequence:

B1) 15.\( \text{W}xc5 \) promises White nothing after 15...\( \text{A}xe4 \) 16.\( \text{A}xe4 \) 17.\( \text{Q}g5 \) (17.\( \text{A}e5 \) \( \text{Q}e6 \) is about equal):

B11) 17...\( \text{A}e7 \) was tried in the famous Candidates' tournament in 1953: 18.\( \text{W}c2 \) 18.d5 deserves attention. 18...\( \text{g}6 \) 19.\( \text{Q}e4 \) Again 19.d5 comes into consideration. 19...\( \text{A}f5 \) 20.\( \text{A}f6+ \) \( \text{Q}g7 \) 21.\( \text{W}d2 \) \( \text{X}f6 \) The black king is compromised. 22.d5 \( \text{A}d8 \) 23.\( \text{A}b2+ \) and White had an initiative in Bronstein-Euwe, Zurich Candidates' 1953;

B12) 17...\( \text{X}d4 \)! improves on the old theory: 18.\( \text{W}c2 \) \( \text{g}6 \) 19.\( \text{Q}b2 \) \( \text{W}f4 \)! An important move. Only Black can be better here. 20.\( \text{X}d4 \) Or 20.h4 h6. 20...\( \text{X}d4 \) 21.\( \text{W}c5 \) \( \text{Q}b3 \).

B2) 15.e5 \( \text{Q}xf3 \) 16.\( \text{exf}6 \) \( \text{X}d4 \) 17.\( \text{X}h7+ \) \( \text{Q}h8 \) 18.\( \text{X}g7+ \) \( \text{X}g7 \) 19.\( \text{Q}b2 \) \( \text{A}d8 \)! 20.\( \text{X}f3 \) \( \text{X}h8 \) Due to White's weak king, Black regains his piece and still has the better pawn structure. However, matters are far from simple: 21.\( \text{Q}h1 \)

B21) The immediate capture of the white bishop with 21...\( \text{X}xh7\)! may look logical, but it keeps the black king under an unpleasant pin along the a1-h8 diagonal and is not to be recommended. However, it does look logical and this mistake can be committed by the world's very best. My game against the famous 13th World Champion continued 22.\( \text{X}g1+ \) \( \text{W}h8 \) 23.\( \text{X}g3 \) \( \text{W}e5 \) 24.\( \text{X}g1 \)
B22) 21...\textit{\textbf{Qf8}}! The key move! Black removes his king from the pin along the a1-h8 diagonal. The \textit{\textbf{Qh7}} cannot go anywhere anyhow; Black will regain his material and will have a favourable game. 22.\textit{\textbf{We4}} White cannot try to be smart and run away with his king, keeping his extra piece, since Black is better after 22.\textit{\textbf{Qxd4}} \textit{\textbf{Qxd4}} 23.\textit{\textbf{Qfc1}} b6 24.\textit{\textbf{Qg2}} f6 25.\textit{\textbf{Qe4}} \textit{\textbf{Wxh2+}} 26.\textit{\textbf{Qf1}} \textit{\textbf{Qe5}}:

B221) 22...\textit{\textbf{f6}} 23.\textit{\textbf{Qxd4}} In the event of 23.\textit{\textbf{Wg6}} Black should continue 23...\textit{\textbf{Qxh7}}! 24.\textit{\textbf{Wxf6+}} \textit{\textbf{Qe8}} 25.\textit{\textbf{f4}} \textit{\textbf{Qd6}} 26.\textit{\textbf{Qe5+}} \textit{\textbf{Qd7}}. Black's king is reasonably safe, while its white colleague is vulnerable to attack, so Black has good compensation for the sacrificed pawn. 23...\textit{\textbf{Qxd4}} 24.\textit{\textbf{Wg6}} \textit{\textbf{Qxh7}} 25.\textit{\textbf{Wxf6+}} \textit{\textbf{Qf7}} 26.\textit{\textbf{Wxf7+}} \textit{\textbf{Qxf7}} 27.\textit{\textbf{Qc1}} c4 Black's queenside pawns will move fast, while White is way behind with his kingside counterplay. In this pawn-down double rook ending Black was clearly better and soon won in B. Vladimirov-Lisitsin, Leningrad 1955.

B222) Black can also regain his piece by playing 22...\textit{\textbf{f5}}. White has a number of checks, however Black runs away from them and has a better pawn structure, for instance: 23.\textit{\textbf{Wh4}} \textit{\textbf{Qxh7}} 24.\textit{\textbf{Wf6+}} \textit{\textbf{Qe8}} 25.\textit{\textbf{Wg6+}} Or 25.\textit{\textbf{Wf1+}}. \textit{\textbf{Qd7}} 25...\textit{\textbf{Wf7}} 26.\textit{\textbf{Qg3}} f4 27.\textit{\textbf{Wg4}} \textit{\textbf{Wh5}} 28.\textit{\textbf{Qe1+}} \textit{\textbf{Qf8}} 29.\textit{\textbf{Wxf4+}} \textit{\textbf{Qf7}} 30.\textit{\textbf{Wg4}} \textit{\textbf{Wf5}} 31.\textit{\textbf{Qe3}} \textit{\textbf{Qxf3}}. All in all, 13.e4 remains a good surprise weapon, but objectively nothing better than that – and White does run the significant risk of becoming worse.

\bullet In this position White can also resort to an often-seen plan in these positions with 13.\textit{\textbf{Qg5}} h6 14.\textit{\textbf{Qe4}} \textit{\textbf{Qxe4}} 15.\textit{\textbf{Qxe4}}

As I have commented on a number of occasions, I do not see why this knight swap should be favourable for White here. Black has a number of ways to get a good game. The simplest is 15...\textit{\textbf{exd4}}. Black players who are not happy with a draw should opt for 15...\textit{\textbf{Qa5}}, for example after 16.\textit{\textbf{Qd1}} c4 17.\textit{\textbf{Qb1}} \textit{\textbf{Qd7}} 18.\textit{\textbf{Qh7+}}? White already had difficulties, and the coming transaction does not improve his situation: 18...\textit{\textbf{Qh8}} 19.\textit{\textbf{Qf5}} (White forces a swap of the light-squared bishops, which in this pawn structure is ALWAYS good for BLACK!) 19...\textit{\textbf{Qxf5}} 20.\textit{\textbf{Wxf5}} \textit{\textbf{Qb3}} 21.\textit{\textbf{d5}} e4 and Black was better in Milic-V. Sokolov, Sarajevo ch-YUG 1958. 16.\textit{\textbf{cx4}} \textit{\textbf{cx4}} 17.\textit{\textbf{exd4}} \textit{\textbf{Wd6}} 18.\textit{\textbf{Qxc6}} \textit{\textbf{bxc6}} and a draw was agreed in Taimanov-Tolush, Leningrad 1957.

13...\textit{\textbf{Qxe5}} 14.\textit{\textbf{dxe5}} \textit{\textbf{Qxe5}}

15.f3
Here we have one of the typical positions in this line. White has a kingside pawn majority, he will try to roll these pawns (i.e. the e- and f-pawns) and gain space on the kingside and in the centre. White also has the bishop pair. His queenside pawns may look weak, but they are in practice difficult to target. Judging from the standpoint of common knowledge, White should have the advantage here. However, in practice his kingside pawns are difficult to start rolling. Black (depending on White's actions) may push his h- or even his g-pawn, and White's kingside may become vulnerable. Black's pieces are harmoniously placed and also in general Black should dominate on the queenside. It is important to notice that, though this may not seem logical, often in this line Black may get his chances on the kingside, while White may prove Black's queenside to be vulnerable. Probably the position is in dynamic balance. A large number of high-profile examples from practice confirm that verdict.

We can mention a few of what I think should be the principles of Black's play here:
- Black's bishop belongs on c6, since there it makes it difficult for White to roll his e- and f-pawns;
- Black should always be careful with pushing ...c5-c4 in these positions, as I mentioned in my earlier comments in this line;
- Once Black's c-pawn is on c4, the diagonal g1-a7 is opened and White gets excellent deployment possibilities for his dark-squared bishop (to the d4-square, for example);
- Natural places for Black's rooks (at least initially) are the d- and e-files;
- Black is in general advised to be careful with pushing his queenside pawns;
- On the kingside, Black pushing his h- or sometimes his g-pawn is, as we will see in the examples below, a standard way for Black to get counterplay;
- As in most 4.e3 Nimzo lines, a possible swap of the light-squared bishops should favour Black, although here the consequences are far less clear than in some other lines.

White's plan is to try gradually take more space, improve his dark-squared bishop and outplay Black. White should time the push of his e-pawn carefully, since it weakens the f4- and d4-squares and offers Black opportunities for counterplay.

15...\textit{d7}

Another often played move is 15...\textit{e6}, but in my opinion this is less precise since ...c5-c4 surrenders the d4-square and Black should be careful with this push. Playing the bishop to c6 (via d7) looks more appropriate to me here.

- One classic high-level example that excellently demonstrates Black's strategic objectives went 16.e4 \textit{d8} 17.\textit{e2} b6 18.a4 \textit{d7}. Black realizes that the bishop belongs on c6. 19.\textit{d1} \textit{c6} 20.\textit{x8d8} \textit{x8d8} 21.\textit{e3} b6 22.\textit{f2} \textit{h5}.

White has pushed e3-e4, so Black now targets the f4-square. 23.g3
23...g5! Pushing his g-pawn is one of Black's standard counterplans here: 24.\(\text{\underline{\text{b}}5}\) \(\text{\underline{\text{b}}7}\)! In view of the ...g5-g4 push and White's vulnerability on the h1-a8 diagonal, Black correctly preserves the light-squared bishops here! 25.\(\text{\underline{\text{d}}1}\) \(\text{\underline{x}}d1+\) 26.\(\text{\underline{\text{w}}x}d1\) \(\text{\underline{\text{x}}f6}\) The threat is 27 ...g4. 27.g4 \(\text{\underline{\text{w}}xc}3\) Black has a material advantage and he was better in Kar­pov-Spassky, Leningrad Candidates' 1974. 16.\(\text{\underline{\text{e}}1}\) \(\text{\underline{\text{d}}ad8}\) 17.\(\text{\underline{\text{b}}1}\) c4?! Black surrenders the d4-square! 18.\(\text{\underline{\text{f}}1}\) b6 19.e4 \(\text{\underline{\text{d}}}d7\) 20.\(\text{\underline{\text{e}}3}\) \(\text{\underline{\text{c}}5}\) 21.\(\text{\underline{\text{b}}d1}\) f6 22.\(\text{\underline{\text{d}}}d4\) and White had some advantage in Hort-Spassky, Reykjavik Candidates' 1977.

**16.\(\text{\underline{\text{e}}1}\)**

- White may also play 16.a4. Pushing the a-pawn is a standard plan here -- Black's queenside is less mobile and may become vulnerable more easily if White exchanges his a- for Black's b-pawn, and also White gains some space:
  A) 16...\(\text{\underline{\text{d}}ad8}\) 17.e4 \(\text{\underline{\text{c}}6}\) 18.\(\text{\underline{\text{c}}4}\) \(\text{\underline{\text{d}}7}\) 19.\(\text{\underline{\text{w}}b3}\) \(\text{\underline{\text{e}}ed8}\) 20.\(\text{\underline{\text{a}}2}\) \(\text{\underline{\text{h}}5}\) Standard counterplay. 21.g3 Black now decides to force a draw: 21...\(\text{\underline{\text{g}}x}g3\) 22.\(\text{\underline{\text{h}}x}g3\) \(\text{\underline{\text{d}}2}\) 23.\(\text{\underline{\text{x}}d2}\) \(\text{\underline{\text{x}}d2}\) 24.\(\text{\underline{\text{x}}d2}\) \(\text{\underline{\text{g}}g3}\) 25.\(\text{\underline{\text{h}}h1}\) \(\text{\underline{\text{h}}3}\) + 26.\(\text{\underline{\text{g}}1}\) \(\text{\underline{\text{g}}3}\) \(\text{\underline{\text{g}}3}\) \(\frac{1}{2}\) Portisch-Spassky, Geneva Candidates' (m-10) 1977;

- B) A number of strong players have played 16...\(\text{\underline{\text{ac}}8}\) here. Since ...c5-c4 surrenders d4 and is the kind of action Black should be careful with, I do not see much point in Black putting his rook on c8. I will give one high-level example to prove this. Readers who do not believe me, please consult the databases. 17.\(\text{\underline{\text{e}}1}\) 17.\(\text{\underline{\text{d}}1}\) also brought White success in some games. 17...\(\text{\underline{\text{ed}}8}\) 18.e4 \(\text{\underline{\text{d}}5}\) 19.\(\text{\underline{\text{d}}2}\) \(\text{\underline{\text{b}}6}\) 20.a5 c4 21.\(\text{\underline{\text{axb}}6}\) \(\text{\underline{\text{cxd}}3}\) 22.\(\text{\underline{\text{wx}}d3}\) \(\text{\underline{\text{e}}6}\) 23.\(\text{\underline{\text{we}}3}\) White's advantage is very small and a draw should be the normal outcome, however some pressure remains. 23...\(\text{\underline{\text{xb}}6}\) 24.\(\text{\underline{\text{eb}}1}\) \(\text{\underline{\text{wc}}5}\) 24...b5 was probably better. 25.\(\text{\underline{\text{xc}}5}\) \(\text{\underline{\text{bxc}}5}\) 26.\(\text{\underline{\text{e}}1}\) \(\text{\underline{\text{d}}7}\) 27.\(\text{\underline{\text{b}}5}\) and White managed to win this ending in Jussupow-Ivanchuk, Brussels Candidates' 1991.

- Play may also continue 16.\(\text{\underline{\text{b}}1}\) \(\text{\underline{\text{c}}6}\).
Part III: The Main Line 4...0-0 5...d3 d5 6...f3

B) 17.c4 d8 18.e1 h5 19.f1 h4
Black follows the abovementioned strategic principles. 20.e4 h5 White has pushed both his c- and e-pawns. Square d4 is now weak and Black could have considered 20...d7, to transfer his knight via f8-e6 to d4. 21.Wf2 We7 21...g5 might be too optimistic here; after 22.b2 We7 23.d3 Black has significantly weakened the a1-h8 diagonal and White's d3 is strong.
B1) After 22.e3 b6 23.Wb2 d6 Black had good play (again, on the kingside) in Gligoric-Larsen, Moscow 1956;
B2) This was the moment when White could have nibbled away at Black's queenside with 22.a4!. These are standard plans, useful for the reader to take note of! 22...b6 If 22...xa4 23.a1 followed by a7. 23.a5 bxa5 Black's c5 pawn is now weak. 24.e3 Wf6 25.xc5 Wf4 26.ed1 a4 White has the better pawn structure, but Black has counterplay, with tactical possibilities on the kingside and his passed a-pawn.

16...d8 17.a4 c6
Black has his standard development, and chances are about equal. Beliavsky plays a model game, masterfully executing all the strategic plans – I'd advise you to study this phase closely!

18.e4
White has weakened square f4, which offers Black counterplay.

Constitution

11.d3 does not pose great problems. With 11.e5 Black creates counterplay due to the threat...e5-e4. If White then exchanges on e5, Black puts his bishop on c6 and has sufficient counterchances. Provoking 11...a6 with 11.b5 does not bring White anything.

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11. a2 is one of White’s main moves in this position. White removes his bishop from c4 (where it can be attacked by the black queen) to a safer square, and prepares to move his central pawns. Now that the bishop has been moved to a2, Black no longer has the tempo-gaining ... a5 at his disposal (at the moment when it suits him).

11... b6

Probably this is not the best move for Black.

Most likely, best is 11... e5, immediately attacking White’s centre. Now, after 12. h3 we transpose to one of the other main lines: 11. h3 e5 12. a2 (Chapter 3.6). A lot of lines here transpose to each other or should be compared to each other in order to better understand the position – therefore I strongly advise the reader to go through all these lines – not only the one he plans to play!

Apart from the transposing move 12. h3, which is in my opinion the best move here, White also has a number of other possibilities at his disposal. These are not dangerous for Black, and actually the tables can easily turn:

A) To repeat once more, 12. h3 is the best move for White here, which transposes to 11. h3 e5 12. a2 (Chapter 3.6);

B) 12. c2 This move has often been tried. White wants to be smart and do without 12. h3, hoping to win one or at least half a tempo. However, 12. h3 (or 11. h3) is a useful move for White in this line and 12. c2 does not have the desired effect:

B 1) 12... g4 is the most common answer, and a good move although not the only one.

B 1 1) Now 13. d5? is a mistake after 13... e7 14. c4
Part III: The Main Line 4...0-0 5.\( \text{\textit{d}} \)3 \( \text{\textit{d}} \)5 6.\( \text{\textit{f}} \)3

14.\( \text{\textit{f}} \)e1!? This is an interesting idea of Portisch. White voluntarily retreats his knight, hoping to rout Black's \( \text{\textit{g}} \)4 and \( \text{\textit{e}} \)5 with his e- and f-pawns. But this takes too much time and is actually quite risky. 14...\( \text{\textit{e}} \)ad8 15.\( \text{\textit{f}} \)3 \( \text{\textit{e}} \)6 16.\( \text{\textit{c}} \)4 White prefers to keep the bishops, which may look paradoxical since his bishop will now be hitting his own pawn on c4, however it is a standard decision in this line since White hopes for a kingside pawn advance and later activity of his light-squared bishop on the b1-h7 diagonal. 16...\( \text{\textit{f}} \)e8 Black is well developed and has a good game. It will be far from easy for White to chase the knight from its central square without weakening his own pawns. In the actual game White's strategy paid off because Black was impatient to use his lead in development: 16...\( \text{\textit{a}} \)5? 17.\( \text{\textit{b}} \)2 \( \text{\textit{d}} \)2, losing an exchange and later the game after 18.\( \text{\textit{c}} \)1 \( \text{\textit{c}} \)d3 19.\( \text{\textit{c}} \)c3 \( \text{\textit{c}} \)xc3 20.\( \text{\textit{c}} \)xc3 \( \text{\textit{a}} \)xa2 21.\( \text{\textit{c}} \)xa2 \( \text{\textit{c}} \)xc4 22.\( \text{\textit{d}} \)d2 in Portisch-Sosonko, Tilburg 1978. 17.\( \text{\textit{b}} \)2 \( \text{\textit{h}} \)5! The h-pawn advance is a standard counter-plan here - the other often-seen plan is queenside play with ...\( \text{\textit{a}} \)7-\( \text{a} \)6 and ...\( \text{\textit{b}} \)7-\( \text{b} \)5. 18.\( \text{\textit{h}} \)3 \( \text{\textit{c}} \)8 19.\( \text{\textit{e}} \)4 \( \text{\textit{h}} \)4 and it is not easy for White to make progress, since 20.\( \text{\textit{f}} \)4? may cause his kingside to collapse after 20...\( \text{\textit{g}} \)6 21.\( \text{\textit{e}} \)5? \( \text{\textit{h}} \)5.

B2) Also interesting is 12...\( \text{\textit{e}} \)4,
which leads to complex and unbalanced positions, with mutual chances:

B21) With 13...g5 White hits e4 and f7 at the same time, which is useful, however the disadvantage is that Black can easily attack the knight with ...h7-h6. 13...f5 and now:

B211) Moves like 14.f4?! I do not like here. Black plays 14...e7 and will then hit the knight with ...h7-h6, sending it to h3 and then taking ...xh3, permanently damaging White’s kingside structure. 14...ac8 is also fine for Black and the immediate 14...h6 is probably also good, but it allows some unnecessary tricks like 15...f3;

B212) 14.f3 ae8

The move order is important here.

B2121) 15.a4! This move, not yet tried in practice, is perhaps the reason why 12...g4 is more precise than 12...e4. 15...h6 15...g6 16...xe4 leads to similar consequences. 16...xe4 xe4 17.fxе4 xe4 18...e2! White voluntarily puts his queen under the potential e-file pin, in order to be able to go to c4. If 18...d2 e7 19.a3 b6 20.f4 g6 21.f2 h8 followed by ...f5. 18...xd4 18...e7? loses a pawn after 19.a3 b6 20.dxc5 bxc5 21...c4. 19.xd4 19.cxd4 would probably ultimately lead to a drawish outcome after 19...b4 20.a3 d3 21...d2 xf1

22.xb4 a6 23.cc1 d7 24.xf8 xf8. 19...d5! The strong a2 has to be exchanged, after which most likely a draw is to be expected.

B2122) In the case of 15...xe4, B21221) 15...xe4 gives White prospects for an advantage after 16...xe4 xe4 17.f4 e7 18.b2 c4 (or 18...f6?! 19.e4!) 19...f1;

B21222) But Black plays 15...g6!. It is useful for him to keep the bishop here since he cannot exchange it for its white counterpart! 16.a4 If 16...e2 xe4 17...xe4 xe4 Black is fine. White has taken a structural risk and may easily become worse here. Also, compared to 15.a4! now the situation is different since Black has 16...h6 with good dynamic play after 17.h3 (the positional exchange sacrifice 17...xf6! definitely deserves attention, but it is not easy to say how strong White’s compensation is after 17...xf6 18...h3 xe4 19...f2 f5 20.f4) 17...xe4 18...f4 h7 – again, White has taken a positional risk with his pawn island c3/d4/e3.

B2123) The reckless attempt on the kingside with 15.g4? went very wrong very quickly for White after 15...g6 16.f4 xg4 17.f5 h5 18.f4 xd4 19.cxd4 d8 20...xe4 xd4 21.g2 e5 22.c3 df3+ and Black soon won in Beliavsky-Kupreichik, Minsk 1983.

B22) An option for White is 13.d2.
B22 1) But this does not create any problems for Black: 13 ... \( \text{e}6 \) The best. 14. \( \text{h}3 \) \( \text{e}6 \) Like in most main lines in the 4.e3 Nimzo, the exchange of light-squared bishops is good for Black here. Yes, he does lose some attacking potential on the kingside, but he now also has more space to manoeuvre his pieces.

15. \( \text{xe}6 \) \( \text{xe}6 \) 16. \( \text{b}2 \) \( \text{d}8 \) In the case of 16 ... \( \text{cx}d4 \) 17. \( \text{cx}d4 \) \( \text{w}d7 \) White can hope for an advantage after 18. \( \text{f}1 \) \( \text{ae}8 \) 19. \( \text{c}4 \) \( \text{d}5 \) 20. \( \text{e}5 \) 17. \( \text{fd}1 \)

17...\( \text{cx}d4 \) The nonchalant 17... \( \text{w}e7 \)? fails to 18. \( \text{dx}c5! \) \( \text{w}x\text{c}5 \) 19. \( \text{c}4 \) and suddenly Black has a problem with his weak e4 pawn: 19... \( \text{w}e7 \) 20. \( \text{x}f6 \) \( \text{gx}f6 \) 21. \( \text{f}1 \) and due to Black's damaged kingside structure White is better.

18. \( \text{cx}d4 \) \( \text{w}e7 \) Black is doing fine in these positions. He will have a powerful knight on d5 and good attacking prospects on the kingside, while it is difficult for White to find active play. Should a pair of knights be exchanged, then Black's strong knight on d5 will be superior to White's bishop, for example 19. \( \text{c}4 \) \( \text{d}5 \) 20. \( \text{e}5 \) \( \text{f}6 \)! and Black is better;

B22 2) Practice has seen 13... \( \text{f}5 \), which is more complicated, but should also be playable: 14. \( \text{f}3 \) The only way to fight for the opening advantage. White has no time for moves like 14. \( \text{b}2 \)? because Black plays 14 ... \( \text{g}4 \), provoking the weakening 15. \( \text{g}3 \). White had an option in the calm 14. \( \text{e}1 \), which brings nothing after 14 ... \( \text{e}7 \). 14... \( \text{ae}8 \) 15. \( \text{a}4 \) As the black rook on \( f8 \) is easy to target, it is clever for White to open the a3-f8 diagonal for his bishop. 15... \( \text{d}7 \) 16. \( \text{xe}4 \) \( \text{xe}4 \) 17. \( \text{xe}4 \) \( \text{xa}4 \) and now White should have continued with 18. \( \text{a}3 \) ! The actual game continued 18. \( \text{f}2 \) \( \text{g}6 \) 19. \( \text{a}3 \) (similar to 18. \( \text{a}3 \), but actually quite different) 19... \( \text{af}8 \) 20. \( \text{xc}5 \) \( \text{b}6 \) ! (White's \( \text{c}5 \) does not have a good retreat) 21.d5 (due to the fact that \( f7 \) hangs after 21...\( \text{xc}5 \) 22. \( \text{dx}c6 \) \( \text{w}x\text{c}6 \), White has this zwischenschlag, but it does not change the verdict) 21... \( \text{e}5 \) 22. \( \text{d}4 \) \( \text{g}4 \) 23. \( \text{d}2 \) \( \text{xe}3 \) 24. \( \text{xe}3 \) \( \text{xe}3 \) 25. \( \text{c}4 \) \( \text{d}6 \) 26. \( \text{b}5 \) \( \text{e}5 \) and White's passed d-pawn cannot make up for all the other pluses of Black's position. Black was slightly better in A. Schneider-Kir. Georgiev, Plovdiv Ech-tt 1983. 18... \( \text{g}6 \) 19. \( \text{xc}5 \) \( \text{fe}8 \) 19... \( \text{xe}3 \) ? is a blunder due to 20. \( \text{f}2 \) \( \text{fe}8 \) 21.d5. 20. \( \text{d}2 \) The queen is better here than on \( f2 \), as now after Black takes on \( e3 \), White's c3 pawn will be protected. 20... \( \text{xe}3 \) 21. \( \text{c}4 \) Accuracy is needed here: 21... \( \text{h}6 \) ! A useful, constructive move. 21... \( \text{b}6 \) ?!, for example, is not precise because the a4-e8 diagonal will now be weak after 22. \( \text{a}3 \) \( \text{h}6 \) 23. \( \text{b}5 \). One of the ideas of the text, apart from creating \( \text{l}u\text{ft} \) for the king, is to play ... \( \text{h}8 \) and ... \( f7-f6 \). White has the bishop pair and a passed d-pawn, but there is nothing in particular for him here: Black's pieces are harmonious, and he has dynamic counterplay. So, 12... \( \text{e}4 \) is definitely playable for Black, however 12... \( \text{g}4 \) gives him an easy and good game;

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C) One other option for White is the early central pawn push 12.d5?!. This brings White nothing – actually, he can now easily get in trouble: 12...e4 13.dxc6 13.Qd2? is bad on the grounds of 13...Qe5 14.c4 Qeg4, provoking 15.g3 which, in this pawn structure and particularly with the bishop on a2, is a serious weakening of White’s kingside.

13...Qg4! The best move for Black here. 13...exf3 14.Wxf3 Qg4 15.Wg3 Wxc6 is possible and definitely not bad for Black, but 13...Qg4 is more clear:

C1) 14.h3? can only land White in trouble:

C11) 14...Qh5? 15.g4! is good for White, for example: 15...Qxg4 If 15...Qad8 16.Qd2; or 15...exf3 16.gxh5 Wxc6 17.e4 Wxe4 18.Wd6. 16.Wd7!;

C12) But after 14...Qad8! 15.Wb3 exf3 16.Wxb7 W e5 17.c7 Qde8 18.Qb2 Wh5 Black has an attack on the kingside, while the only piece protecting the white king is the queen on b7.

C2) 14.cxb7 Qad8 15.Qa4 exf3 16.Qb1 fxg2 17.Wxg2 Qf5 18.Qb2 Qb8 – Black regained the pawn on b7 and had a good game due to White’s weakened kingside in Neverov-Dizdar, Dubai 2002.

• Another move tried in some games is 11...Qd8?!. It is difficult to say whether this rook will serve Black better on e8 or on d8. Most of the time e8 is better, therefore the text is not accurate and does not equalize. 12.Wc2 White’s plan is simple: he wants to push e3-e4, occupying the centre, followed by Qg5 or maybe e5 and Qg5:

A) The standard 12...e5? is not good here and shows the deficiencies of the premature 11...Qd8: 13.Qg5 Wh8

14.f4! Seizing the initiative. In the actual game White continued 14.d5 and had an advantage in Milov-Morales Rivera, Madrid 2002. 14...exd4 15.cxd4 h6 In the case of 15...cxd4 Black falls under a terrible attack after 16.e4 h6 17.e5 hxg5 18.exf6. 16.Qf3 Also good for White is 16.Qe4 Qxe4 17.Wxe4 cxd4 18.f5 with an attack.

16.cxd4 17.Qb2 We7 18.Qael dxe3 19.Qb1 Qe8 20.Qe5 and thanks to his monster bishops White has a strong attack;

B) 12...Qa5 13.Qe2 Qd5 14.Qd2 Black cannot stop White’s central pawn advance. 14...b6 15.e4 The most principled and the most direct. In the actual game White played 15.Qa1 Qb7 16.Qe5 Qf6 17.f3 with an advantage in Gulko-Gruenfeld, Philadelphia 1991. 15...Qf4 16.We3 Qg6

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4...0-0 5.\text{d}3 \text{d}5 6.\text{\text{f}}3

17.\text{h}4! and White has a large advantage, for instance: 17...\text{\text{a}}6 18.\text{h}5 \text{\text{x}}f1 Or 18...\text{f}8 19.\text{h}6. 19.\text{xg}6 \text{\text{c}}4 20.\text{gxf7+} \text{\text{xf7}} 20...\text{gf8} loses to 21.\text{g}5; and 20...\text{h}8 loses to 21.\text{e}5 followed by the lethal \text{g}6+. 21.\text{e}5 and White gets a material advantage: 21...\text{xd}4 Or 21...\text{wc}7 22.\text{xc}4 \text{xd}4 23.\text{e}2 \text{d}3 24.\text{g}4. 22.\text{h}3 \text{wc}7 23.\text{xc}4 Also good is 23.\text{xc}4. 23...\text{xc}4 24.\text{we}6+ Black has also tried other 11th moves, but they are not even close to equalizing. I refer to the databases and the already established conclusions regarding these inferior moves.

12.\text{e}1

Advancing the e-pawn is a logical plan. White also has other promising options, which is one of the reasons why I consider 11...\text{b}6 to be inferior to 11...\text{e}5:

- Developing another bishop first is also promising: 12.\text{b}2
  
  A) On the standard 12...\text{e}5

A1) Practice has seen 13.\text{h}3, which leads to an unclear position:

A11) In the actual game Black played the premature 13...\text{e}4?, releasing the pressure from White's d4 pawn too early, and quickly got into trouble: 14.\text{d}2 \text{a}6 15.\text{c}4! That's the difference! - White has now got what he wants. 15...\text{xd}4 16.\text{xd}4 \text{ad}8 17.\text{d}5 \text{e}5 18.\text{e}1! Black is losing material. 18...\text{fe}8 Or 18...\text{d}3? 19.\text{xf}6. 19.\text{xe}4 \text{xe}4 20.\text{xe}4 \text{xc}4 21.\text{xc}4 \text{xc}4 22.\text{d}4 and White won in Panno-Garcia Vera, Buenos Aires ch-ARG 1958;

A12) 13...\text{a}6 14.\text{e}1 \text{e}4 15.\text{d}2 \text{ad}8 Black keeps exerting pressure on the centre so that White's pawns cannot move, and has a good game.

A2) But due to the inclusion of 11...\text{b}6 12.\text{b}2, White has a nice idea: 13.\text{e}4!:

A21) Taking the pawn on \text{e}4 can lead to terrible consequences, for example: 13...\text{xd}4 14.\text{cxd}4 \text{xe}4 15.\text{wc}2 \text{f}6 15...\text{e}8? loses a piece to 16.\text{ae}1 \text{f}5 17.\text{h}4; or 15...\text{f}5? 16.\text{h}4 \text{f}4 17.\text{xf}5 \text{xf}5 18.\text{b}1 \text{e}8 19.\text{f}3. 16.\text{xc}5 with a winning advantage;

A22) 13...\text{xe}4 14.\text{e}1 \text{xc}3!? This piece sacrifice does not solve Black's problems either. 14...\text{d}6 leads to a difficult position for Black after 15.\text{xe}5 \text{f}5 16.\text{wc}2! \text{e}6 17.\text{g}5. 15.\text{xc}3 \text{xd}4 16.\text{d}2 Black does have three pawns for the piece, but White's pieces are active, with good attacking prospects on the kingside;

A23) 13...\text{g}4 The best move. 14.\text{d}5 \text{a}5 White has a standard advantage in the event of 14...\text{ad}8 15.\text{h}3 \text{h}5 16.\text{we}2 \text{a}5 17.\text{c}4. 15.\text{h}3 and now:

A231) With 15...\text{b}5 Black gets in trouble after 16.\text{g}4! \text{g}6 Black does not
get nearly enough activity for the piece after 16...\(\text{c}x\text{g}4\) 17.\(\text{h}x\text{g}4\) \(\text{c}x\text{g}4\) 18.\(\text{w}d3\). 17.\(d6\) \(\text{w}b7\) 17...\(\text{w}b8\)? 18.\(\text{c}x\text{e}5\) \(\text{c}x\text{e}4\) is a blunder due to 19.\(\text{d}x\text{g}6\) \(\text{h}x\text{g}6\) 20.\(\text{d}d5\). 18.\(\text{c}x\text{e}5\) \(\text{c}x\text{e}4\) 19.\(f3\) \(\text{d}d5\) is bad after 19...\(\text{c}c6\)? 20.\(g5\) \(\text{d}d7\) 21.\(\text{d}x\text{c}6\) \(\text{c}x\text{c}6\) 22.\(\text{d}d5\). 20.\(c4\) and White is clearly better with his strong \(\text{b}2\), his dominant knight, and his passed pawn;

A232) 15...\(\text{c}x\text{f}3\) 16.\(\text{w}x\text{f}3\) \(\text{c}4\) 17.\(a4\) White has more space and the bishop pair. His advantage is definitely not big as Black will improve his a5 knight, but it is stable;

B) 12...\(\text{a}6\) 13.\(\text{e}1\) \(\text{d}8\) 14.\(e4\)

14...\(e5?!\) Black wants to force events in the centre, however this will not be to his benefit. It was probably a better idea to try to maintain central tension with 14...\(\text{a}5?!\), though White’s chances should still be preferred after 15.\(\text{d}2\) followed by \(\text{c}1\) (15.\(\text{c}c1\) \(\text{h}6!\) is fine for Black) – it is not easy for Black to find active counterplay here, while White will eventually improve his position. 15.\(\text{d}5\) \(\text{e}7\) On 15...\(\text{c}4?\), 16.\(\text{a}4\) followed by \(\text{c}3\) is a standard problem for Black in these positions. 16.\(\text{c}4\) White has more space and a standard advantage. Due to White’s healthy pawn structure in combination with the extra space he commands it is difficult for Black to create serious counterplay. I will give a few more moves from this game, because it is rather instructive. Black is doing his best to create kingside counterplay and it even looks as if he succeeds, but this is just perception, and his initiative turns against him. 16...\(\text{g}6\) 17.\(g3\) \(\text{c}8\) 18.\(\text{d}2\) h5 19.\(\text{b}1\) h4 20.\(\text{f}1\) \(\text{d}7\) 21.\(\text{c}1\)

21...\(\text{h}3\) It looks as if Black is getting serious play on the kingside... 22.\(\text{a}2!\) Reader take note of these standard moves! 22...\(\text{d}6\) 23.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{h}7\) 24.\(\text{e}3\) \(\text{h}x\text{g}3\) 25.\(\text{f}x\text{g}3!\) \(\text{e}7\) 26.\(\text{f}2\) \(\text{f}6\) 27.\(\text{b}2\) and White is the one having an attack. He was clearly better and went on to win in Ibragimov-Akopian, Kazan tt 2001.

Another interesting option for White is 12.\(\text{w}e2?!\), a move that is, strangely enough, rarely seen in practice. The idea is the same as the one behind 12.\(\text{e}1\): White wants to advance his e-pawn.
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12...e5

Hitting the white centre, following a standard plan for Black in this line. Another possibility is to play in Queen's Indian style and accept a slightly inferior position after 12...b7 13.b2 a6d8 14.dfd1, the problem being that 14...e4 is always answered with 15...e1 and f2-f3, kicking the 'active' knight. 13.d5 e4 14.d2 14.dxc6? is bad due to 14...g4 0-0, Usachenko-Baklan, Brugge 1997. 14...e5 15.c4 g4 In practice the inferior 15...eg4? has been tried. This leads to definite problems for Black. White's queen is already on e2, protecting e3, so with this knight jump Black no longer provokes the weakening g2-g3: With the e3 pawn defended, 16.f4! is a standard decision here. White's pawn structure will now considerably improve! 16.exf3 17.gxf3 e5 18.h1 a6 19.g1 a8 20.b2. The b2 is a monster, the g1 perfectly placed, the a2 will get to b1 and join the attack, and White's central pawns are ready to roll — White was clearly better and won easily in Furman-Kondratiev, Leningrad 1952. 16.f3 exf3 17.gxf3 h3

Compared to 15...g4 Black has an extra tempo. White's problem is that Black will have temporary activity along the e-file. If White manages to neutralize that activity, his pawns will start to roll at some stage, and Black will be suffocated.

A) An interesting idea is 18...b2?!, sacrificing an exchange in order to harmonize his pieces: 18...xf1 19.xf1 Black has an exchange, but White has everything else — tremendous bishops, rolling central pawns, and the g-file for the attack. I would prefer White here;

B) The other, more 'materialistic' method is 18...f2 g6 19.b2 a8 20.xf6 Black is active after 20...f1. 20...xf6 The piece sac 20...f4 21.d1 xe3 is difficult to believe in.

A again, for 12.h3 — please see the line 11.h3 b6 12.a2.

12...e5 13.e4

In the case of 13.d5 we reach more or less by force an ending where White has perhaps a microscopic advantage, but it is likely to end in a draw: 13...e4 14.dxc6

A) 14...g4? does not work here due to 15...h5 (or 15...a8 16.wa4) 16.g4 xg4 (or 16...exf3 17.gxh5 w5 18.e4 xh5 19...d6) 17.wd7!

B) 14...exf3 15.xf3 e6 16.c4 g4 17.wf4 w5 18.b1 ac8 19...b2 To 19.h3 a strong response is 19...g5!. 19...xf4 20.exf4 h5 21.bcl xc6 as

- White can again choose to prevent the \( \text{g}4 \) pin and possible \( \text{g}4 \) jumps by playing \( \text{h}3 \). Here White has chances for an advantage, but play is complicated: \( \text{e}4 \)

A) \( \text{a}6! \) leads to equality. The knight wants to jump to \( \text{g}4 \) and be traded for Black's \( \text{f}6 \), but such a trade is something Black should not be unhappy about:

A1) One practical grandmaster encounter went \( \text{f}5 \). The bishop does not do much on \( \text{f}5 \) in this particular position. \( \text{b}8 \) Black pins White's queen, threatening to jump \( \text{e}5 \), and White runs away from it: \( \text{d}8 \) is one of the standard positional plans for Black, also possible here. \( \text{a}6! \) isxd4 \( \text{g}6 \) \( \text{g}4 \) \( \text{xe}4 \) \( \text{c}4 \) \( \text{h}6 \) \( \text{c}4 \) \( \text{h}8 \) \( \text{e}3 \) and White had the advantage in Spassky-Ghitescu, Varna 1958;

A2) \( \text{a}6! \) This looks to me like a simple solution. \( \text{g}4 \) \( \text{g}4 \) \( \text{a}4 \) \( \text{d}3 \) Black is at least OK, and White may easily get in trouble. \( \text{f}3 \) \( \text{f}8 \) Or \( \text{a}4 \) \( \text{h}8 \), with ...\( \text{f}7-\text{f}5 \) to follow. \( \text{a}7.\text{e}7 \)

B) \( \text{d}2! \) If there is an advantage for White in this line, it is with this

17...\( \text{g}6 \) (the black bishop is doing absolutely nothing on the kingside)

18...\( \text{b}3 \) \( \text{h}5 \) 19...\( \text{b}5 \) \( \text{h}4 \) 20...\( \text{h}5 \) 21...\( \text{f}1 \) and White was clearly better in Knaak-Kortchnoi, Baden-Baden 1995. A number of very strong players on the black side have fallen for the seemingly strong bishop, placing it first on \( \text{f}5 \), then transferring it to \( \text{h}5 \), and finally losing the game as a consequence of the passive bishop — compare this game to Anand-Bacrot, Nanjing 2010, seen under \( \text{h}3 \) (Chapter 3.6), where Bacrot lost in exactly the same way! \( \text{d}5! \) White is relying on the tactical motif that with the white knight on \( \text{d}2 \) Black's \( \text{e}4 \) pawn will be hanging at crucial moments. The actual game went \( \text{b}1 \) (White's strategy was very passive in this game) \( \text{f}8 \) \( \text{e}8 \) \( \text{b}2 \) \( \text{a}4 \) \( \text{c}4 \)!. Please note that exchanging a pair of knights is mostly good for Black here. Black was better and went on to win in Graf-Zeller, Deizisau 2001. \( \text{a}5 \) \( \text{e}5 \) \( \text{c}4 \)
The e4 pawn and the tactics around it prove to be a problem for Black in many lines and it seems to me that White is better here. I give the following lines to support this opinion: 16...b5 Principled play. Black immediately hits the white centre. 16...d3? is wrong due to 17.\( \text{dxe4} \) \( \text{wxe5} \) 18.\( \text{xf6}+ \) \( \text{wxf6} \) 19.\( \text{xd3} \) \( \text{xa1} \) 20.\( \text{b1} \) f5 21.\( \text{c2} \) \( \text{f6} \) 22.\( \text{b2} \) \( \text{d6} \) 23.e4 with a huge advantage for White; or 16...\( \text{fe8} \) 17.\( \text{b2} \) \( \text{d6} \) 18.\( \text{c2} \) \( \text{ad8} \) 19.\( \text{ad1} \) and things are not easy for Black here since 19...\( \text{d3} \) fails to the standard 20.\( \text{xe4} \) \( \text{xe1} \) 21.\( \text{xf6}+ \) \( \text{xf6} \) 22.\( \text{xel} \) \( \text{g6} \) 23.e4, again with a big advantage for White as his pawns are rolling and Black's extra exchange is irrelevant. 17.\( \text{b2} \) \( \text{ad8} \):

A) 18.\( \text{c1} \) seems to lead to a draw after 18...\( \text{bxc4}! \) 19.\( \text{xc4} \) \( \text{xc4}! \) (White is better after 19...\( \text{xc4} \) 20.\( \text{xc4} \) \( \text{d3} \) 21.\( \text{xf6} \) \( \text{gxf6} \) 22.\( \text{g4}+ \) \( \text{h8} \) 23.\( \text{xe4} \) and again his extra exchange will be little comfort for Black. 20.\( \text{xf6} \) \( \text{xd2} \) 21.\( \text{xd8} \) \( \text{xd8} \) 22.\( \text{xd2} \) \( \text{d3} \) 23.\( \text{c3} \) \( \text{xd5} \) 24.\( \text{ec1} \) h6 The strong \( \text{d3} \) and his passed pawn should guarantee Black a draw here; of course he should not blunder with 24...\( \text{c4} \)?? 25.\( \text{xc4} \); B2) 18.\( \text{xb5} \) \( \text{xb5} \) 19.\( \text{c1} \) \( \text{d3} \) Or 19...\( \text{fe8} \) 20.\( \text{d4} \) \( \text{c4} \) 21.\( \text{b1} \).

20.\( \text{xe4}! \) \( \text{xe4} \) 21.d6 \( \text{xd6} \) 22.\( \text{xe5} \) \( \text{xd1} \) 23.\( \text{xc7} \) and to earn the draw Black still has some work to do.

13...\( \text{g4} \)

This is a critical moment. After the text White's advantage is undisputed and we can only argue about how big it is.

- Black had an interesting possibility in 13...\( \text{cxd4}?! \) 14.\( \text{cxd4} \)

A) 14...\( \text{g4}?! \) is wrong and leads to a bad position: 15.\( \text{d5} \) \( \text{d4} \) 16.\( \text{b2} \) \( \text{xf3}+ \) 17.\( \text{xf3} \) \( \text{h5} \) 17...\( \text{h3} \)? loses to 18.\( \text{c1} \) \( \text{wd6} \) 19.\( \text{f4} \) 18.\( \text{c1} \) \( \text{wd6} \) 19.\( \text{ec6} \) \( \text{we7} \)

20.d6! The most accurate. Black does not have any good moves. The actual game continued 20.\( \text{wd3} \) \( \text{d7} \) 21.\( \text{e3} \) and White was better, though Black survived in Gulko-Antonio, Bled 2002. 20...\( \text{we8} \) 20...\( \text{wd7} \) fails to 21.\( \text{c7} \) \( \text{h3} \) 22.\( \text{e3} \) (White's next is
\textbf{Chapter 3.5: Main Line - 9...dxc4 10.\texttt{\texttt{Q}}xc4 \texttt{\texttt{W}}c7 11.\texttt{\texttt{Q}}a2}

\[\texttt{\texttt{Q}}xe5 \texttt{\texttt{Q}}xe4? \text{ is another blunder due to 23.fxe4 \texttt{\texttt{Q}}xe3 24.\texttt{\texttt{W}}xh5; 20...\texttt{\texttt{W}}d8 loses to 21.\texttt{\texttt{Q}}xe5 \texttt{\texttt{W}}e8 22.\texttt{\texttt{Q}}xf6 \texttt{\texttt{W}}xc6 23.\texttt{\texttt{Q}}d5 \texttt{\texttt{W}}d7 24.\texttt{\texttt{Q}}b2 (the threat is \texttt{\texttt{W}}d4) 24...\texttt{\texttt{Q}}h8 25.\texttt{\texttt{Q}}xa8 \texttt{\texttt{Q}}xa8 26.\texttt{\texttt{W}}d5. 21.\texttt{\texttt{Q}}c7 and White has a big advantage;}

\textbf{B) 14...exd4!} Now the situation looks very dangerous for Black, but it is difficult to find something concrete for White – at least I couldn’t. I will give some lines. On the other hand it is easy to understand the choice of Kramnik, who was Black in this game, to steer clear from this position, obviously being worried about his opponent Kasparov’s ‘home kitchen’:

\textbf{B1) Practice has seen 15.\texttt{\texttt{Q}}g5 \texttt{\texttt{Q}}g4 16.\texttt{\texttt{Q}}xf6 (or 16.\texttt{\texttt{c}}c1 \texttt{\texttt{W}}d6 17.\texttt{\texttt{W}}a4 \texttt{\texttt{Q}}d7) 16...\texttt{\texttt{Q}}xf6 17.h3 \texttt{\texttt{Q}}xf3 18.\texttt{\texttt{W}}xf3 \texttt{\texttt{W}}e5 19.\texttt{\texttt{R}}d1 \texttt{\texttt{H}}ac8 20.\texttt{\texttt{R}}d3 \texttt{\texttt{Q}}e7 21.\texttt{\texttt{R}}ed1 \texttt{\texttt{H}}c3 22.g3 \texttt{\texttt{Q}}g6 23.\texttt{\texttt{Q}}d5 \texttt{\texttt{R}}fc8 and Black was better in Knaak-Cs. Horvath, Dresden 1988;}

\textbf{B2) Another logical move is 15.\texttt{\texttt{W}}c2,}

\[\textbf{B22) 16.e5 \texttt{\texttt{Q}}xf3 17.exf6 Or 17.\texttt{\texttt{W}}xf3 \texttt{\texttt{Q}}d7 18.e6 \texttt{\texttt{Q}}c5. 17...\texttt{\texttt{Q}}h5 18.\texttt{\texttt{f}}xg7 \texttt{\texttt{X}}xg7 19.\texttt{\texttt{Q}}d5 \texttt{\texttt{H}}ac8 20.\texttt{\texttt{R}}b2 \texttt{\texttt{W}}d8.}

\textbf{B3) Or 15.\texttt{\texttt{Q}}g5 \texttt{\texttt{h}}6 (15...\texttt{\texttt{Q}}g4?! 16.e5! 16.e5 and now:}

\textbf{B31) 16...\texttt{\texttt{W}}xg5? loses to 17.\texttt{\texttt{W}}e6 \texttt{\texttt{W}}xf6 18.\texttt{\texttt{W}}h5;}

\textbf{B32) While 16...\texttt{\texttt{Q}}g4 fails to 17.\texttt{\texttt{Q}}xf7 \texttt{\texttt{W}}xf7 18.\texttt{\texttt{W}}f3 \texttt{\texttt{d}}3 (18...\texttt{\texttt{Q}}f8 loses to 19.\texttt{\texttt{W}}xf7 \texttt{\texttt{W}}xf7 20.\texttt{\texttt{Q}}f4 \texttt{\texttt{W}}e6 21.h3) 19.\texttt{\texttt{Q}}b2 \texttt{\texttt{h}}5 20.h3 \texttt{\texttt{Q}}b6 21.\texttt{\texttt{W}}xd3 (Black is under several terrible pins) 21...\texttt{\texttt{W}}h8? 22.\texttt{\texttt{Q}}xf7 \texttt{\texttt{W}}xf7 23.e6! \texttt{\texttt{Q}}xe6 24.\texttt{\texttt{W}}e3, winning;}

\textbf{B33) 16...\texttt{\texttt{Q}}xe5! is the only move: 17.\texttt{\texttt{Q}}f4 \texttt{\texttt{h}}xg5 18.\texttt{\texttt{Q}}xe5 \texttt{\texttt{W}}d8 and White has enough compensation for a draw, but not more.}

\textbf{B4) 15.e5 is probably the most logical move. 15...\texttt{\texttt{Q}}d7! Black wants to bring his knight to c5. Now:}

\textbf{B41) 16.\texttt{\texttt{W}}f4?! \texttt{\texttt{Q}}c5 17.\texttt{\texttt{Q}}xd4 \texttt{\texttt{Q}}xd4 18.\texttt{\texttt{W}}xd4 \texttt{\texttt{Q}}e6 can only be good for Black;}

\textbf{B42) 16.\texttt{\texttt{Q}}xd4 \texttt{\texttt{Q}}xd4 16...\texttt{\texttt{Q}}dxe5? is asking for trouble after 17.\texttt{\texttt{Q}}b2.}

\textbf{17.\texttt{\texttt{W}}xd4 \texttt{\texttt{c}}5 18.\texttt{\texttt{W}}d6 \texttt{\texttt{W}}xd6 19.exd6 \texttt{\texttt{Q}}e6 20.\texttt{\texttt{Q}}g5 \texttt{\texttt{Q}}xe2 21.\texttt{\texttt{Q}}xa2 f6 22.\texttt{\texttt{Q}}e3 \texttt{\texttt{W}}fd8 with a draw;}

\textbf{B43) 16.e6 \texttt{\texttt{W}}xe6 17.\texttt{\texttt{Q}}xe6}

\[\textbf{17...\texttt{\texttt{W}}h8 18.\texttt{\texttt{Q}}xd4 18.\texttt{\texttt{Q}}g5 \texttt{\texttt{W}}f6; 18.\texttt{\texttt{W}}c2? is a blunder due to 18...\texttt{\texttt{Q}}c5 19.\texttt{\texttt{Q}}g5? \texttt{\texttt{d}}3.}

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B431) Now 18...\( \text{c}d5 \) is not good due to 19.f4! \( \text{xd4} \) 20.\( \text{xe5} \) \( \text{c}6 \) (20...\( \text{c}c2 \)? loses to 21.\( \text{b}2 \) followed by \( \text{g}5 \)) 21.\( \text{wc}2 \) \( \text{d}6 \) 22.\( \text{d}5 \) \( \text{wh}6 \) 23.\( \text{g}5! \) followed by \( \text{b}2 \); 15.h3 \( \text{ad}8 \)

B432) 18...\( \text{xd4}! \) 19.\( \text{xd4} \) \( \text{c}5 \) and White has a certain optical advantage, but this will evaporate in a few moves and a draw is most likely result, see:

B4321) The enterprising 20.\( \text{h}6 \) does not bring White far. 20...\( \text{f}5 \) 20...\( \text{e}6? \) is a blunder due to 21.\( \text{h}4! \) \( \text{e}5 \) 22.\( \text{x}h7+ \) \( \text{g}8 \) 23.\( \text{xe}6+ \) \( \text{xe}6 \) 24.\( \text{h}8+ \) \( \text{f}7 \) 25.\( \text{wh}5+ \text{z} \) 21.\( \text{f}4 \) \( \text{ad}8 \) 22.\( \text{d}6 \) \( \text{xd}6 \) 23.\( \text{xd}6 \) \( \text{x}d8 \) 24.\( \text{d}1 \) \( \text{wc}6 \) 23...\( \text{xd}6 \) 24.\( \text{xd}6 \) \( \text{hd}8 \);

B4322) 20.\( \text{e}3 \) \( \text{e}6! \) 20...\( \text{d}8? \) 21.\( \text{b}2 \). 21.\( \text{xe}6 \) \( \text{xe}6 \) 22.\( \text{xe}6 \) \( \text{ad}8 \) 23.\( \text{f}4 \) \( \text{xf}4 \) \( \text{xf}4 \) with a draw.

14.dxc5!

14...bxc5

Garry Kasparov correctly judges that the text move offers him more than 14.d5, which just gives White a regular space advantage.

15.h3 \( \text{ad}8 \)

15...\( \text{c}6 \) does not solve Black’s problems; actually it only makes them bigger after 16.\( \text{xe}6 \) \( \text{fxe}6 \) 17.\( \text{e}3 \) \( \text{xe}4 \) 18.\( \text{c}2 \) \( \text{f}6 \) 19.\( \text{xc}5 \) \( \text{fd}8 \) 20.\( \text{g}5 \) \( \text{d}5 \) 21.\( \text{e}3 \) and due to his superior pawn structure White had a clear advantage in V.Babula-Kholmov, Pardubice 1997.

16.\( \text{we}2 \) \( \text{xf}3 \)

Or 16...\( \text{h}5 \) 17.\( \text{g}5 \) followed by \( \text{e}3 \) or \( \text{ed}1 \).

17.\( \text{xf}3 \)

White had a long-term advantage and went on to win in Kasparov-Kramnik, Linares 1997.

Conclusion

Some readers may be under the impression that White’s advantage is not that serious and that Black may equalize after a while. Actually, the position is very unpleasant for Black and I would advise the reader to look up the entire game and play it through, because Kasparov’s win is very instructive.

For the assessment of the variation, 11...\( \text{e}5 \) is probably better for Black than 11...\( \text{b}6 \) and after 12.\( \text{h}3 \) we will transpose to the line 11.\( \text{h}3 \) \( \text{e}5 \) 12.\( \text{a}2 \) analysed in Chapter 3.6. After 11...\( \text{b}6 \) White has interesting alternatives in 12.\( \text{b}2 \) and 12.\( \text{e}2 \). In our main line Black should consider 13...\( \text{xd}4 \) instead of 13...\( \text{g}4 \).
Chapter 3.6

Main Line – 9...dxc4 10.\textit{\textbf{x}}xc4 \textit{\textbf{w}}c7 11.h3

This is perhaps the most flexible continuation for White; a useful move, keeping all options open.

11...e5

Black has here a principal choice between attacking the white centre with the standard ...\textit{e}7-e5 pawn thrust and developing his bishop to b7 and playing according to Queen's Indian ideas. 

- For Black to decide already on the development of his king's rook is premature here, just as it was in some other lines, since it is not yet clear whether the \textit{\textbf{w}}f8 is more useful on e8 or on d8. Actually, developing the \textit{\textbf{w}}f8 to d8 and then continuing with ...\textit{b}7-b6 makes sense and mostly this simply transposes to 11...\textit{b}6 (though in that case the immediate 11...\textit{b}6 looks more logical), while 11...\textit{\textbf{w}}d8 in connection with the ...\textit{e}6-e5 push has clear disadvantages for Black, which is aptly illustrated in the following game: 11...\textit{\textbf{w}}d8 12.\textit{f}a2

A) Here 12...\textit{b}6 would transpose to 11...\textit{b}6 12.\textit{\textbf{w}}a2 \textit{\textbf{w}}d8;

B) 12...\textit{e}5? is a serious mistake. Please note that White's motifs demonstrated here are quite standard and often work for White in similar positions. 13.\textit{\textbf{w}}c2 \textit{\textbf{b}6

14.\textit{\textbf{g}5}! \textit{\textbf{w}}d7 15.\textit{dxe5}! \textit{\textbf{w}}xe5 16.\textit{f}4

Now White’s pawns will roll on the kingside and his attack will be swift:
16...\textit{We}e8 17.e4 \textit{La}6 18.\textit{Af}3 \textit{h}6 19.e5! \textit{hxg}5 20.exf6:

B1) Trying to create back-rank threats with 20...\textit{We}1+ 21.\textit{Wh}2 \textit{Fd}1 does not save Black: 22.\textit{Ad}2! \textit{Wh}1+ Or 22...\textit{Axd}2 23.\textit{Wg}6 \textit{Axg}2+ 24.\textit{Fxg}2 \textit{We}2+ 25.\textit{G}l. 23.\textit{Gg}3 \textit{Axd}2 24.\textit{Af}7+! \textit{Axf}7 25.\textit{Wxd}2 \textit{Wxa}1 26.\textit{Wd}7+ \textit{Axf}6 27.\textit{Fxg}5+ \textit{Gg}6 28.\textit{Ws}5+ and Black is mated;

B2) 20...\textit{Wd}8 21.\textit{Fxg}7 \textit{Ae}3 22.\textit{Wf}2 \textit{c}4 Yes, Black's bishop is excellent on d3 and White's \textit{Aa}2 is locked out... but at what price? 23.\textit{Ge}3 \textit{Wf}6 24.\textit{Axg}5 – White had a big advantage and soon won in Spassky-Bobotsov, Leningrad 1958.

Next to our main move 11...\textit{e}5, Black often chooses a Queen's Indian type of set-up with 11...\textit{b}6.

If we look at the pawn structure here, we will quickly realize that, apart from the white pawn being on h3 instead of h2 – which is mostly irrelevant – it is identical to the Petrosian Variation of the Queen's Indian: 1.d4 \textit{Af}6 2.c4 \textit{e}6 3.\textit{Af}3 b6 4.\textit{Ac}3 \textit{Ab}7 5.a3 \textit{d}5 6.cxd5 \textit{Ax}d5 7.e3 \textit{Ae}7 8.\textit{Ab}5+ \textit{c}6 9.\textit{Ad}3 \textit{Axc}3 10.\textit{bxc}3 0-0 11.0-0 \textit{c}5, for example. Compared to these positions, Black does not have his dark-squared bishop here and has a knight on f6 instead. White's general plan will be similar to the Petrosian QI: he will try to advance his central pawn majority and ultimately create a kingside attack.

The first impression might be that the presence of Black's \textit{Af}6 instead of his dark-squared bishop should favour White, but it is not that simple at all. With the \textit{Af}6 Black has better pressure on the e4-square and he can also manoeuvre his \textit{Ac}6 via e7 to g6, creating counterplay on the kingside. These advantages can be excellently seen in the game Gelfand-Beliavsky which is given below. This position has its own nuances and White should not make the mistake of thinking that simply copying the Petrosian Variation will automatically bring him an advantage here!

A) 12.\textit{Ab}2 transposes to the lines discussed under 11.\textit{Ab}2 (Chapter 3.7); B) 12.\textit{Aa}2 \textit{Fd}8 and now:

B1) Should White focus on gaining an advantage in the centre by immediately pushing his e-pawn with 13.\textit{Be}1 \textit{Ab}7 14.e4, then we will see the active counterplan behind Black's set-up, and the advantage of having \textit{Af}6 instead of \textit{Ae}7 as in the Petrosian QI: 14...\textit{Ae}7! 14...\textit{cxd}4 15.\textit{cxd}4 \textit{Axd}4?? blunders away a piece after the simple 16.\textit{Axd}4 \textit{e}5 17.\textit{Wc}2; while another 'tactical' idea, 14...\textit{Axe}4?, just lands Black in an inferior position after 15.\textit{Axe}4 \textit{Axd}4 16.\textit{Af}4 \textit{Wf}4 17.\textit{Ad}2 \textit{Axe}4 18.\textit{Axe}4 \textit{Af}5 19.\textit{We}2 \textit{h}6 20.\textit{Ae}1 as in the game Berkes-Babujian, Martuni 2009.

15.\textit{Ab}1 \textit{h}6 16.\textit{Ae}3 Here we see that compared to 12.\textit{Ae}3 from the game Grischuk-Alexeev in Variation C below, White is two tempi down, and that should matter. 16...\textit{Ac}8 17.\textit{Ae}2 \textit{Ag}6 18.\textit{Wb}1
18...\hbox{\texttt{h}}5! 19.\texttt{e}3 \texttt{hf}4 20.\texttt{f}1 \texttt{xd}4 21.\texttt{xd}4 \texttt{fs}! A standard idea for Black in these positions, worth taking note of. Black's pieces are coordinating excellently, while White's mighty centre will soon disappear:

B11) 22.\texttt{d}2 White is treading on thin ice. 22...\texttt{fxe}4 23.\texttt{xe}4 \texttt{f}7 23...\texttt{h}4 24.\texttt{c}c1 \texttt{b}8 was probably even better. 24.\texttt{g}3 \texttt{d}5 25.\texttt{g}2 \texttt{e}5 and Black was better and went on to win in Gelfand-Beliavsky, Munich 1994. This is a model game for this line, showing exactly the kind of counterplay Black should be happy to achieve and White should not allow!

B12) An option was 22.\texttt{exf}5 \texttt{exf}5 23.\texttt{e}5. Should White take the pawn with 23.\texttt{xf}5 then after 23...\texttt{x}f3 24.\texttt{gxf}3 \texttt{d}5 25.\texttt{e}4 \texttt{f}7 26.\texttt{x}f4 \texttt{x}f4 Black has strong compensation. White will be glad if he can keep the balance, as Black's \texttt{f}4 is powerful and White’s kingside pawn structure is horrible: 27.\texttt{ac}1 \texttt{dd}8 28.\texttt{xc}8 \texttt{xc}8 29.\texttt{d}5 \texttt{f}6. 23...\texttt{x}e5 24.\texttt{dx}e5 \texttt{xe}5 The mating idea 24...\texttt{xe}h3+? 25.\texttt{gxh}3 \texttt{c}6 is a blunder due to 26.\texttt{a}2!! \texttt{h}8 27.\texttt{f}3 \texttt{xf}3 28.\texttt{g}2. 25.\texttt{xb}6 and probably, luckily for White, Black has to settle for a draw with 25...\texttt{xb}h3+ 26.\texttt{h}1! \texttt{f}4 27.\texttt{e}3 \texttt{xf}2+ 28.\texttt{xf}2 \texttt{xf}2 29.\texttt{xb}7 \texttt{h}4+ 30.\texttt{g}1 \texttt{d}4+.

B2) 13.\texttt{b}2 A clever move. White develops, keeping open both options to gain a central advantage by pushing c3-c4 or e3-e4. 13...\texttt{b}7 14.\texttt{e}1:

B21) Should Black opt for 14...\texttt{e}7, then White can continue with 15.\texttt{c}8 16.\texttt{c}1 and now it is difficult to find an active plan for Black, since in the case of 16...\texttt{f}5?! White has a strong response in 17.\texttt{d}5!

B22) 14...\texttt{a}5 15.\texttt{c}1

Both sides have placed their pieces on natural squares, but as often happens in such positions, White has more scope for improvement: he can push his central pawns and take space in the centre:

B221) 15...\texttt{e}4 does not solve Black’s problems, since White plays 16.\texttt{e}5 followed by f2-f3;

B222) 15...\texttt{h}6 16.\texttt{d}2! White prepares e3-e4. 16...\texttt{e}4 17.\texttt{xe}4! \texttt{xe}4 18.\texttt{c}4 White is ready to take space in the centre and activate his \texttt{b}2, while Black's \texttt{a}5 is not doing much. 18...\texttt{b}7 19.\texttt{d}5! Black's position collapses. 19...\texttt{b}5 A futile attempt at counterplay – but really there is no good advise for Black here. 20.\texttt{g}4 \texttt{f}5 21.\texttt{g}6 \texttt{ex}d5 22.\texttt{xb}5 \texttt{c}4 23.\texttt{xf}5 and White soon won in Aronian-Naiditsch, Mainz Classic rapid 2009.

C) Another idea for White is to place his bishop immediately on the b1-h7
diagonal, supporting the e4-square. Here he will be two tempi up compared to the abovementioned game Gelfand-Beliavsky. 12.\textit{\text{\text{\text{d3}}} d3} \textit{\text{\text{d8}}} 13.\textit{\text{b2} e7} 14.\textit{e1 g6} A regular plan for Black here. However, White will coordinate his pieces in time and gain space in the centre, so Black will not get his desired counterplay. 15.e4\textit{b7}

The counterplay attempt 15...\textit{h5}? simply does not work after 16.\textit{d2} \textit{h4} 17.\textit{f1} followed by g2-g3. 16.\textit{d2}! Strengthening his control of e4 and also eliminating the idea of ...\textit{h5}. 16...\textit{d7} 17.\textit{f1} \textit{ad8} 18.\textit{e2} \textit{c6} 19.\textit{c4} The situation favours White in a relatively typical way. Both sides have developed their pieces to natural squares, but White has more space and hence more scope to improve his pieces. 19...\textit{c7} 20.\textit{ac1} 
\textit{h5} This counterthrust may easily turn into a weakening and a headache for Black. 21.\textit{e2}! \textit{h4} 22.e5 Surrendering d5 while taking the initiative on the kingside is also a standard plan for White in similar positions in the QIPetrosian Variation. 22...\textit{d5} 23.\textit{g4} \textit{de7} 24.\textit{d3} White was better and went on to win in Grischuk-Alexeev, Nalchik 2009;

\textbf{D}) Should White simply copycat one of the standard plans in the QIPetrosian QI with 12.\textit{e2} \textit{b7} 13.e4 then this turns out to be rather risky: 13...\textit{xh5}! 14.e5 In the case of 14.cxd4? we see a clear difference with the black knight on f6 instead of the bishop on e7 — after 14...\textit{exd4}! 15.\textit{xe4} \textit{a5} White has just blundered his e4 pawn. 14...\textit{a5} 15.\textit{xf6} 15.\textit{d3}? is bad on account of 15...\textit{xf3} 16.gxf3 \textit{d5}. 15...\textit{xc4} 16.\textit{e5} \textit{d3} Also possible is 16...\textit{c5}! 17.\textit{g3} g6 18.\textit{xd4} \textit{xd8} 19.\textit{e3} \textit{d5} and Black is doing fine. It is difficult for White to create mate threats: 20.f3 \textit{c4} 21.\textit{f2} \textit{ac8} 22.\textit{e1} \textit{h5}. 17.\textit{d4}! In the actual game, Black lost his way with 17...\textit{e4}? (White wants to mate Black on g7, and Black's control of the b1-h7 diagonal does not prevent this!) 18.\textit{h6}! gxh6 19.\textit{f1} \textit{c4} 20.\textit{xd4} \textit{xc3} 21.\textit{ad1} \textit{h8} Probably only now did Black realize that he is mated in the event of 21...\textit{g6} 22.\textit{f4} \textit{h8} 23.\textit{wh6} \textit{g8} 24.\textit{xc6+} etc 22.\textit{xe4} \textit{xa3} 23.\textit{f3}! and the black king is defenceless. White won in Shabalov-Stefansson, Winnipeg 1997. 18.\textit{g5} \textit{h8} Black should be able to withstand White's attack and then cash in on his material advantage.

\textbf{12.\textit{a2}}

\textbullet{} For 12.\textit{b2} see under 11.\textit{b2} e5 12.h3 (Chapter 3.7).

\textbullet{} A move that is rarely tried but which deserves attention is 12.\textit{e2}. 

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One of the very few practical examples continued: 12...e4 I doubt that releasing the central tension is Black's best option here. Another was to 'clean up' the centre with 12...cxd4!? 13.cxd4 exd4 14...xd4 (with his bishop on e2 White cannot consider 14.exd4 since now this bishop does not control the a2-g8 diagonal and Black will get a strong blockade on d5) 14...xd4 15...d8. White has a theoretical bishop pair advantage, but Black is active. Black can also increase the central pressure with 12...d8 since White's bishop has left the a2-g8 diagonal, ruling out g5 ideas. 13...d2 ...f5 14.a4 He8 15...a3 cxd4 16.cxd4 ...d7 and now:

A) White is better after 17...c1 ...d5 (17...xh3? simply does not work after 18.gxh3 ...xh3 19...d6) 18...c4 and now;

B) 17...e1 White is afraid of ...xh3 – but why? 17...d5 Black has a strong knight here, but White has his well placed ...a3 and good piece coordination, so the position cannot really be seen as a reversed French. 18...c4 d8 19...f1 The decision about the deployment of the ...d2 could have been postponed; White could have opted for the developing move 19...c1, with advantage. 19...e6 20...c1 ...db4 21...xb4 ...xb4 22...b5 ...c6 and White had a small advantage in Beliavsky-Dizdar, Slovenia tt 2001.

12...b6

Black wants to be flexible, playing a useful move and keeping his options open.

A) Just like in 11...c2 (Chapter 3.5) in a similar position, I believe that White's knight is better placed on d2, where it is hitting e4 and also controlling c4, than on h2, where White's main idea, to jump to g4 and trade the knight, does not bother Black. Many games have been played with 13...h2 and should the reader not agree with my judgement, then he can find more games with this line in the database. Here I will give what I believe to be the easiest way for Black to obtain satisfactory play - and beware, White can very easily become worse here. 13...a5! While the white knight is not controlling the c4-square and also not hitting e4 - i.e. not threatening with any central action, this looks very logical. The most frequent other moves are 13...f5 (played in many games, but not convincing) and 13...b6 (which also does not provide
Part III: The Main Line 4...0-0 5. \textit{d}3 \textit{d}5 6. \textit{f}3

Black with a clear road to equality). 14.\textit{f}3
Trading knights with 14.\textit{g}4?! brings White nowhere: 14...\textit{x}g4 15.\textit{hx}g4 \textit{b}6 (White’s play is not logical; his \textit{c}1 is passive, and opening the centre will be difficult since he has been so ‘clever’ to trade his knight, which from \textit{d}2 would have controlled the \textit{e}4- and \textit{c}4-squares) 16.\textit{f}3 (White is still trying to open the centre, but he does not have any pressure on the central squares to support this action. However White had little choice, since he ran the risk of being positionally suffocated) 16...\textit{a}6! 17.\textit{f}f2 \textit{d}3 18.\textit{fx}e4 \textit{xe}4 19.\textit{c}4 \textit{g}3 20.\textit{w}d2 \textit{x}g4 and Black was a sound pawn up in Milov-Johannessen, Torshavn 2000.

In the case of 14.\textit{we}2 Black has a good solution in 14...\textit{e}6!, a standard strategic solution in such positions to take note of!

A1) 14...\textit{b}6 Again, not the only move, but the simplest way to get a good position. 15.\textit{we}2

![Chessboard diagram]

White’s queen no longer controls the \textit{d}5-square, so Black goes for a standard strategic solution: 15...\textit{e}6! To repeat once more: in these positions a trade of the light-squared bishops is in principle OK for Black. 16.\textit{g}4 \textit{x}g4 17.\textit{fx}g4 \textit{c}6 18.\textit{wd}1 \textit{ad}8 White’s \textit{c}1 is passive and difficult to activate, Black is slightly better. 19.\textit{a}4:

A1) 19...\textit{c}4 20.\textit{rf}4 \textit{fe}8 21.\textit{w}f1 \textit{cx}d4 22.\textit{c}xd4 \textit{a}6 23.\textit{xc}4 \textit{xc}4 24.\textit{we}1 \textit{ad}5 and Black was better in Sturua-Tiviakov, Bugojno 1999;

A12) 19...\textit{xa}2 20.\textit{xa}2 \textit{c}4 was also fine for Black.

Other options for Black are:

A2) With the white queen on \textit{d}1, 14...\textit{cx}d4 15.\textit{cx}d4 \textit{e}6? is not good due to 16.\textit{d}5! \textit{we}5 17.\textit{xb}1! and now:

A21) 17...\textit{xd}5?? blunders material to 18.\textit{xb}5;

A22) 17...\textit{d}7 18.\textit{b}2 \textit{g}5 19.\textit{wd}2 with a clear advantage for White in Knaak-J. Horvath, Szirak 1985.

A3) 14...\textit{c}4, closing in White’s \textit{a}2, is playable.

B) 13.\textit{d}2! \textit{b}6 14.\textit{xb}2 Black is on a crossroads as to where to develop his bishop; every choice has a drawback for him. White is better here, either by pushing \textit{c}3-\textit{c}4 and \textit{d}4-\textit{d}5, gaining space and opening the \textit{a}1-\textit{h}8 diagonal for his bishop, or by simply playing on the queenside, which would have been impossible had he decided to retreat his knight to \textit{h}2 instead of \textit{d}2! 14...\textit{f}5 In the case of 14...\textit{b}7 White takes space and opens the \textit{a}1-\textit{h}8 diagonal for his bishop with 15.\textit{d}5 \textit{e}5 16.\textit{c}4 (Black’s \textit{e}4 pawn is now also a potential target – White’s next move may for example be \textit{b}1; White is better) 16...\textit{b}5 (this counterplay attempt does not help Black) 17.\textit{cx}b5 \textit{ad}8 18.\textit{d}6! (with this tactical solution, White secures a better ending) 18...\textit{wd}6 19.\textit{xe}4 \textit{xe}4 20.\textit{wd}6 \textit{ad}6 21.\textit{xe}5 \textit{xb}5 22.\textit{fc}1 \textit{xa}3 23.\textit{xc}5. Black’s a-pawn is likely to fall, White was better and won this endgame in Ushenina-E. Atalik, Konya 2010. 15.\textit{we}2
out the $\text{\textit{\texttt{Qe4}}}$.

22.\text{\textit{\texttt{Ra1}}} for the time being being Black has a good blockade on e5, but White has everything else, Acs-Hou Yifan, Paks 2007;

B22) The other option is 17...\text{\textit{\texttt{Qa5}}}.

B) Immediately gaining space with 13.d5 is probably best here. 13...\text{\textit{\texttt{Bad8}}}

B1) 14.\text{\textit{\texttt{We2}}} leads to unclear consequences:

B11) White is better in the case of 14...\text{\textit{\texttt{Qe7}}} 15.\text{\textit{\texttt{Qh4}}} 15.c4 \text{\textit{\texttt{Qg6}}} should also be somewhat better for White.

15...\text{\textit{\texttt{Qc8}}} 16.e4;

B12) The positional exchange sacrifice 14...\text{\textit{\texttt{Qxd5}}}! is probably OK for Black:

15.\text{\textit{\texttt{Qxd5}}} 16.\text{\textit{\texttt{b2}}} In the case of 16.c4 White gets problems defending his c4 pawn after 16...\text{\textit{\texttt{Qc3}}} 17.\text{\textit{\texttt{Qb2}}} \text{\textit{\texttt{Qe4}}} followed by ...\text{\textit{\texttt{Qf6}}} and if necessary \text{\textit{\texttt{Qd6}}}, ...\text{\textit{\texttt{Qe6}}} and ...\text{\textit{\texttt{Qf7}}}.

16...\text{\textit{\texttt{Qb6}}} followed by ...\text{\textit{\texttt{Qe6}}}, with good positional compensation for Black.

B2) 14.c4 $\text{\textit{\texttt{e4}}}$ 14...\text{\textit{\texttt{Qe7}}} 15.\text{\textit{\texttt{b2}}} \text{\textit{\texttt{Qg6}}} 16.\text{\textit{\texttt{Qd2}}} leads to a standard position which should be advantageous to White. Placing his knight on e4 does not solve Black’s problems now because it cannot stay there after 15.\text{\textit{\texttt{Qb2}}} f6 16.\text{\textit{\texttt{Qh4}}} $\text{\textit{\texttt{Qe7}}} 17.\text{\textit{\texttt{Qb1}}} and White is better after 17...\text{\textit{\texttt{Qd6}}} 18.\text{\textit{\texttt{Qxf5}}} \text{\textit{\texttt{Qxf5}}}.

15.\text{\textit{\texttt{Qh4}}} $\text{\textit{\texttt{Qc8}}} 16.\text{\textit{\texttt{b2}}} \text{\textit{\texttt{We7}}} 16...\text{\textit{\texttt{Qe5}}?? is a terrible blunder due to 17.d6. 17.f4

B21) 17...\text{\textit{\texttt{Qxf3}}} 18.\text{\textit{\texttt{Qxf3}}} \text{\textit{\texttt{Qe5}}} 19.\text{\textit{\texttt{Qg3}}} \text{\textit{\texttt{Qfe8}}} 20.\text{\textit{\texttt{Qf5}}} \text{\textit{\texttt{Qxf5}}} 21.\text{\textit{\texttt{Qxf5}}} \text{\textit{\texttt{Qfd7}}
13. d5

This move forces a change in the pawn structure.

- Another reasonable option at White’s disposal is 13. \( \text{dxe}1 \). This gives White the possibility to fight for an opening advantage, and after 13...e4 14. \( \text{dxe}2 \) it transposes to position analysed in Chapter 3.5 after 11. \( \text{a2} \) b6 12. \( \text{dxe}1 \) e5 13. h3 e4 14. \( \text{dxe}2 \).

- On the other hand, 13. \( \text{w}7 \)c2 does not bring White an advantage after 13...e4 14. \( \text{g}5 \) \( \text{a6} \), see:
  
  A) 15. \( \text{d}1 \) \( \text{ae}8 \) 16. \( \text{f}3 \) \( \text{d}3 \):

  A1) 17. \( \text{f}2 \) \( \text{h}6 \) 18. \( \text{xe}4 \) \( \text{hxg}5 \) 19. \( \text{xd}3 \) \( \text{xe}4 \) As often seen in similar positions, where things have not gone the way White has hoped, the \( \text{c}1 \) is passive, and Black has the better pawn structure and a marvellous knight on e4. Black was better and went on to win in Gelfand-Kortchnoi, Horgen 1994;

  A2) An option was to sacrifice the exchange with 17. \( \text{xd}3 \) \( \text{xd}3 \) 18. \( \text{xd}3 \) \( \text{a}5 \). White has some compensation, but not enough, one of his problems being the clumsy knight on g5, which can at any moment be attacked and sent packing with ...h7-h6.

  B) As the game continuation brought White nowhere, he could have considered another exchange sacrifice:

  15. \( \text{xe}4 \) ? \( \text{xe}4 \) 16. \( \text{xe}4 \) \( \text{xf}1 \) 17. \( \text{xf}1 \) \( \text{a}5 \) 18. \( \text{d}2 \)

  13...e4

13...d8? is a known mistake, due to 14.e4! – a typical trick here. White’s next move is \( \text{we}2 \) and he is better.

14. dxc6

Another attempt at an advantage is 14. \( \text{d}2 \) \( \text{e}5 \) 15. \( \text{c}4 \).

A1) 17. \( \text{f}2 \) \( \text{h}6 \) 18. \( \text{xe}4 \) \( \text{hxg}5 \) 19. \( \text{xd}3 \) \( \text{xe}4 \) In this structure (black pawns on c5 and e4, knight on e5 vs white pawns on c4, d5 and knight on d2) the black bishop is better on f5 than on a6 since it supports the e4 pawn, making it easier to jump with the knight to d3. Also it retains potential sacrificial threats on h3. However, potential kingside threats are difficult to materialize for Black. Once developed to b2 White’s bishop will be strong, and Black’s e4 pawn will be a target. White seems to have some advantage. 16. \( \text{b}2 \) \( \text{d}6 \) Or 16... \( \text{g}6 \) 17. \( \text{b}1 \) followed by \( \text{b}3 \). 17. \( \text{e}2 \):

  • If 17... \( \text{g}6 \) 18. \( \text{ad}1 \) followed by \( \text{b}1 \), with advantage to White. Now 18... \( \text{h}5 \) is a blunder due to 19. \( \text{xe}4 \);

  • 17... \( \text{d}3 \) 18. \( \text{c}3 \) White follows up with \( \text{ad}1 \), \( \text{b}1 \) and Black’s knight on d3 will likely turn from an asset into a liability soon.
14...exf3 15...xf3

15...a6

Another possibility is 15...e6. Now, again, White avoids the exchange of the light-squared bishop with 16.c4:

- 16...ac8 leads to some advantage for White in the endgame after 17.b2 \( \text{xc6} \) 18...xc6 bxc6 19...d1;
- 16...\( \text{e5} \) 17.b1 \( \text{e4} \) 18...g3 and now:
  A) In the event of 18...xc4 White should be better after 19.f3 \( \text{d3} \) 20...xc4 and now both 20...xb1 21.a6 and 20...xc4 21.b2 are unpleasant for Black;
  B) 18...xc6 19.b2 We have here a standard position where White hopes that his two pawns on the queenside will hold Black’s three, at least for some time, while his kingside pawn majority should make the difference. The \( b2 \) is also well placed here. White usually has some advantage in these positions. 19...f5 20.bd1 \( \text{f8} \) 21.f3 and now:
    B1) 21...g6 22.e4 White has a kingside pawn majority, a strong \( b2 \), and his \( a2 \) will come into play, while Black’s \( g6 \) is now passive. His hope for such a development was one of the reasons why White avoided the exchange of light-squared bishops here. White was better and went on to win in Alexandrov-Tunik, Zvenigorod 2008;
    B2) Another possibility was 21...c2 22.d5 \( g6 \), though after 23.e4 it looks like White has plenty of compensation in case Black takes the exchange. 23...xd5 24.cxd5 \( b5 \) 25.f2 followed by h3-h4.

16...e1

More to the point looks 16.c4 followed by \( b2 \), when White’s chances should be preferred.

16...b5

A possible improvement is 16...\( \text{e8} \) with the idea...\( \text{e4} \) followed by...\( \text{xc6} \).

17.e4 \( \text{xc6} \) 18.g5 \( \text{e5} \) 19.f4 \( \text{h5} \) 20.xh5 \( \text{xh5} \)

21.h2 \( \text{f6} \) 22.f3

His kingside pawn majority and bishop pair guaranteed White an advantage in this ending in Alexandrov-Naiditsch, Turin ol 2006.

**Conclusion**

Based on the supplied analyses, White has reasonable prospects for an opening advantage in the 11.h3 line.
Chapter 3.7

Main Line – 9...dxc4 10.Qxc4 ♕c7 11.Qb2

White develops his bishop to a potentially promising diagonal and later decides on a follow-up. This move order has the advantage that it keeps the possibility of ♕b5 in store, in case Black pushes 11...e5. The evaluation of 11.Qb2 is also important in that it often arises from the moveorder 9.bxc3 ♕c7 10.Qb2 dxc4 11.Qxc4.

11...e5

This standard plan to immediately increase the pressure on White's centre is by far Black’s main move here. The most popular alternative is 11...b6. This move order is far from accurate, and White now easily gets an opening advantage with 12.Qe1 ♕b7 13.e4 ♕e7 14.Qd3. If we compare this position to Grischuk-Alexeev from 11.h3 in the previous chapter, we see that White is virtually a tempo up, since he has not played h2-h3 and can spend that tempo on a considerably more useful move. 14...Qg6 15.Qd2 ♕fd8 16.Qf1 as in Sadler-A. Sokolov, Monaco tt 1999 (please compare this to Grischuk-Alexeev from 11.h3 in Chapter 3.6).

12.h3

White prevents the pin with ...Qg4 (a natural place for Black's bishop in this line), which can be unpleasant, and plans to develop his queen to e2. Black here has a choice between advancing his e-pawn and thus releasing the pressure from White’s centre, or playing a
developing move or another constructive move that keeps the central tension. Well, it looks to me that either way, with accurate play White has an opening advantage in this line.

- An often-played alternative for White is 12.\(\text{Be}2\). White wants to solve the pin along the h5-d1 diagonal by bringing his bishop back. Also, with this bishop 'out of the way', White is ready to push his central pawns by d4-d5 followed by c3-c4. However, this plan does not bring White an opening advantage here. 12...\(\text{Ad}8\), further increasing the pressure on White centre, looks very logical and is considered Black's main move here. Also playable is 12...\(\text{Ag}4\) and now, in view of Black's planned ...\(\text{Ad}8\) with a pin on the d-file, White has to release the central pressure with 13.dxe5 \(\text{Ax}e5\) 14.c4 \(\text{Ax}f3+\) 15.\(\text{Bxf}3\) \(\text{Af}d8\) 16.\(\text{We}2\) \(\text{Ax}f3\) 17.\(\text{Wxf}3\) \(\text{Ad}8\) (this knight retreat is a standard manoeuvre which we often see in such positions – the knight retreats, to be transferred to a better square (usually via c7 to e6), while ...f7-f6 will be played in order to neutralize White's \(\text{Bb}2\)) 18.h4 \(\text{We}7\) 19.h5 (White has to look for chances on the kingside) 19...h6 20.\(\text{Ad}1\) b6 21.\(\text{Wg}4\) f6 22.\(\text{Ad}5\) \(\text{Ac}7\) and the position was approximately equal and the game was later drawn in Jussupow-Ehlvest, Riga 1995. 13.\(\text{Cc}2\) and now:

A) Releasing the pressure on White's centre with the push 13...\(\text{e}4\) only plays into White's hands. Now the reply 14.\(\text{Ag}5\) is not natural since White's bishop is on e2 and the knight jump no longer gains a tempo by hitting f7, so it brings no advantage to White after 14...\(\text{Af}5\) 15.\(\text{Cc}4\) (White's play is not coherent) 15...\(\text{Gg}6\) 16.\(\text{Wc}2\) \(\text{Ge}7\) 17.\(\text{Ch}3\) \(\text{Cc}8\) 18.\(\text{Cc}1\) \(\text{h}5\) and Black had a very good game in Balashov-Krogius, Rostov on Don 1971. But White does get an opening advantage after 14.\(\text{Dd}2\). In a huge majority of these lines, as the reader has also repeatedly seen in the chapters on 11.\(\text{Aa}2\) (3.5) and 11.\(\text{h}3\) (3.6), the knight retreat to d2, where it is hitting the vital c4- and e4-squares, is better than retreats to other squares. 14...\(\text{Df}5\) 15.\(\text{Cf}3\) White fortifies the d4-square, hitting Black's c5 pawn with tempo and preparing the standard c3-c4 push. Black does not have a satisfactory response to this simple plan. 15...b6 Releasing the central pressure by means of taking on d4 and opening the c-file does not help Black: 15...\(\text{Cxd}4\) 16.\(\text{Cxd}4\) \(\text{Cc}6\) 17.\(\text{Cc}1\) \(\text{Cc}8\) 18.\(\text{Cc}5\) (White has a clear initiative on the queenside, while Black has no counterplay) 18...\(\text{Wc}7\) 19.\(\text{Wb}3\) \(\text{Dd}8\) and in this position a draw (!) was agreed in Piket-Kramnik, Dortmund 2000. Respect for a strong opponent is obviously a powerful motif, since White would have had a clear and risk-free advantage after, say, 20.a4 followed by \(\text{Aa}3\). It is not easy to explain why Piket, with great respect for his opponent or not, gave a draw in this very advantageous position. 16.\(\text{Cc}4\) \(\text{Cxd}4\) 17.\(\text{Cxd}4\) \(\text{Cf}7\) 18.\(\text{Cc}3\) Here we have a typical position.
Due to his d-passer and his strong dark-squared bishop White has the advantage. Black's advanced e-pawn does not help him to generate counterplay — on the contrary, in many positions Black would have been better off with his e-pawn back on e6! For a good understanding of this line, it is important to note that this type of pawn structure (also with White's light-squared bishop exchanged for one of the black knights) almost ALWAYS favours White. We see this positional pattern, favouring White, very often in this line. 18...{ac8 19.{ac1 {f4 20.{g3 as in Jussupow-Beliavsky, Groningen 1994.

B) 13...{g4

Further increasing pressure on White's centre is a standard plan for Black, which has to be applied here. White now has to release the central tension and take on e5 — the inclusion of 14.h3 {h5 would in many lines favour Black here. 14.dxe5 {xe5 15.dxe5 {xe2 16.wxe2 {xe5 17.c4 {e6 leads to an equal position — Black has a good version of Jussupow-Ehlvest, see 12.e2 {g4 above. White can now open the a1-h8 diagonal for his {b2 and also keep his light-squared bishop with 15.c4 {xf3+ 16.gxf3, but this comes with the price of a damaged pawn structure on the kingside. White has no realistic possibility to use the g-file for an attack here. Black can easily parry this attempt and he will have no problems whatsoever. Actually the tables may turn, but if Black is just looking for simple equality, 16...{h5 will also. 16...{h3 17.{fd1 {c6 18.wc3

18...{e8! This is a standard knight manoeuvre which we have already seen in Jussupow-Ehlvest (see above). The knight goes via c7 to e6, while the f-pawn is pushed to f6, limiting White's activity on the long diagonal. The following game is instructive and shows how quickly things can go wrong for White here: 19.{h1 White plans an initiative along the g-file. 19...{e6! The bishop is no longer needed on h3 and can be moved to a better square. 20.{g1 f6 21.{g3 {d7 22.{ag1 {ad8 White has got nowhere. His g-file attack is not happening, Black firmly controls the d-file, his pieces are harmoni-
Part III: The Main Line 4...0-0 5.\(\text{\emph{d3}}\) d5 6.\(\text{\emph{f3}}\)

ously developed and furthermore, White is now in the awkward position that any of his pawn moves can create a weakness in his own camp. 23.\(\text{\emph{c1}}\) White realizes that his dark-squared bishop has no prospects on the a1-h8 diagonal and moves it to a 'better' place. 23...\(\text{\emph{f5}}\)! Threatening 24...\(\text{\emph{d3}}\) and provoking... 24.e4 Now the d4-square is weakened in White's camp. 24...\(\text{\emph{g6}}\) 25.h4 \(\text{\emph{c7}}\)! The knight travels to d4. 26.\(\text{\emph{f1}}\) \(\text{\emph{e6}}\) 27.\(\text{\emph{h3}}\) \(\text{\emph{h5}}\) 28.\(\text{\emph{hg3}}\) White's situation is hopeless. 28...\(\text{\emph{h8}}\) 29.\(\text{\emph{we3}}\) \(\text{\emph{d4}}\) Black had a big advantage and soon won in Khalifman-Kramnik, Linares 2000. Kramnik's play was very instructive and also it is interesting to see how Khalifman landed in such a hopeless position without making any obvious mistakes.

12...e4

Let's go through the other black moves here.

\(\bullet\) Probably the most common alternative is 12...\(\text{\emph{f5}}\).

Compared to the line 11.\(\text{\emph{h3}}\) e5 12.\(\text{\emph{a2}}\) \(\text{\emph{f5}}\) in the previous chapter, White cannot advance his pawns with 13.d5 and c3-c4 here, but he has another important resource at his disposal: the move \(\text{\emph{b5}}\), hitting Black's knight on c6 and increasing the pressure on Black's e5 pawn, forcing Black to take a decision in the centre:

A) In the case of 13.\(\text{\emph{a2}}\) Black gets a favourable version of the line 11.\(\text{\emph{h3}}\) e5 12.\(\text{\emph{a2}}\) \(\text{\emph{f5}}\) in Chapter 3.6, where instead of 13.d5, White plays 13.\(\text{\emph{b2}}\), and therefore 13.\(\text{\emph{a2}}\) is not the accurate way to proceed. 13...\(\text{\emph{ad8}}\) 14.\(\text{\emph{we2}}\) The advance 14.d5, connected with c3-c4, does not work because of 14...c4! 15.\(\text{\emph{xc4}}\) \(\text{\emph{e4}}\) and Black regains the material, while White is left with queenside pawn weaknesses – in particular the c-pawn:

A1) 14...\(\text{\emph{g6}}\)! is an important move here. The bishop moves to the h5-d1 diagonal, where the pin will be annoying for White. 15.\(\text{\emph{ad1}}\) Or 15.\(\text{\emph{fd1}}\) \(\text{\emph{h5}}\) with similar motifs. 15...\(\text{\emph{h5}}\)! In the case of 15...\(\text{\emph{fe8}}\) White gets his regular space advantage after 16.d5 and c3-c4, and should Black flick in 16...e4 then White is better after 17.\(\text{\emph{h4}}\) \(\text{\emph{e5}}\) 18.\(\text{\emph{xe6}}\) \(\text{\emph{hxg6}}\) 19.c4.

White is facing a difficult decision. The h5-d1 pin is unpleasant for him, and there is no way he can conveniently solve it:

A11) In the case of 16.\(\text{\emph{dxe5}}\) \(\text{\emph{xe5}}\) the following game excellently demonstrates the positional risks White is running in this type of pawn structure, and the strategic disaster that may hap-
pen should he (or in this case she) play carelessly: 17...\texttt{exd}8 \texttt{exd}8 18...\texttt{d}1 \texttt{exd}1+ 19...\texttt{xd}1 \texttt{fxf}3 20...\texttt{xf}3

20...c4! For the time being the \texttt{b}2 is just a big pawn and, well... its situation will not improve in this game: 21...\texttt{b}1 \texttt{d}7 22...\texttt{xd}7 \texttt{fxd}7 23...\texttt{f}4 \texttt{d}3 24...\texttt{xd}3 \texttt{cx}d3 25...\texttt{f}1 \texttt{b}6 26...\texttt{e}1 \texttt{c}4 27...\texttt{c}1 \texttt{f}5 A horrible positional disaster for White. His bishop is completely dominated by the black knight, actually his whole position is dominated by the \texttt{c}4! 28...\texttt{f}3 \texttt{f}7 29...e4 \texttt{b}5 30...\texttt{d}1 a5 31...\texttt{e}1 a4 and of course Black went on to win this endgame in Krush-Lie, Gausdal 2008;

A12) Should White try to solve the pin with 16...g4, Black now has a strong piece sacrifice (which is White's whole problem with this h5-d1 pin here!): 16...\texttt{exg}4! 17...\texttt{hxg}4 \texttt{xg}4 18...\texttt{b}1 \texttt{e}7 The pin along the h5-d1 diagonal is maintained, White's king is exposed, and his \texttt{b}2 is still passive – this is the kind of situation White should avoid.

A2) Practice has also seen 14...\texttt{fe}8.

A2) Now if White tries to 'save' a tempo and immediately plays 15...d5, then Black has a nice positional exchange sacrifice, which is a standard positional motif we have already seen in this book: 15...\texttt{exd}5! Interestingly, this sacrifice is not often played in such positions – which will probably change soon, since it is one of the first moves given by analysing engines! Yes, nowadays computers have developed a positional feeling! Anyhow, white players beware: this sacrifice mostly works for Black in this pawn structure: 16...\texttt{exd}5 \texttt{exd}5 17...\texttt{fd}1 \texttt{b}6 The nature of this positional sacrifice is clear – Black has already one pawn, White's pawn structure on the queenside is weak, the squares c4 and a4 in White's camp are weak, and also White's bishop is likely to remain passive due to Black's healthy pawn chain g7/f6/e5. 18...a6 19...c4 a5 20...\texttt{c}3 f6 21...\texttt{d}2 \texttt{b}4 and Black had excellent play with long-term positional compensation. He was slightly better here and went on to win in Kasimdzhanov-Alexeev, Elista 2008;

A22) But Black does not equalize after 15...\texttt{fd}1! \texttt{g}6. Black's best plan is still to transfer his bishop to the h5-d1 diagonal, but White is now in time: 16...d5 \texttt{e}7 Or 16...\texttt{a}5 17...c4 e4 18...\texttt{h}2. Due to the threat of \texttt{h}5 it is desirable for White to retreat his knight to h2 here, in order to be able to jump to g4. 17...c4 White has a standard small advantage here (bishop pair + space advantage).

B) 13...\texttt{we}2 is one of the two moves that promise White an advantage:

B1) Black can try to prevent \texttt{b}5 with 13...a6, which is why the move order starting with 13...\texttt{b}5 \texttt{ad}8 14...\texttt{we}2 (see B) might be the most accurate. Still, White should definitely prevent Black's ...b7-b5 and continue with 14...a4, when we are likely to get the kind of play seen in Timofeev-Tomashevsky (below under 14...\texttt{ac}1) – with a somewhat better position for White;
B2) A move like 13...h6?! is not accurate for Black here. After all, even if Black wants to move his \( \mathcal{A} f8 \), then White's \( \mathcal{A} g5 \) is not dangerous here since the f7 pawn can always be protected with \( \mathcal{A} g6 \).

B2) One practical example continued 14.\( \mathcal{A} a2 \) and here Black missed the exchange sacrifice which to us is already standard in these positions: 14...\( \mathcal{A} d8 \) 15.d5 \( \mathcal{A} x d5 \)! 16.\( \mathcal{A} x d5 \) \( \mathcal{A} x d5 \) with similar positional compensation as in Kasimdzhanov-Alexeev (see above).

The actual game continued 14...\( \mathcal{A} f e8?! \) 15.d5 \( \mathcal{A} a5 \) 16.c4 \( \mathcal{A} e4 \). This knight is strong on e4. White solved this problem instructively and radically with 17.\( \mathcal{A} b1 \) f6 18.\( \mathcal{A} x e4 \) \( \mathcal{A} x e4 \) 19.\( \mathcal{A} d2 \) \( \mathcal{A} c2 \) 20.\( \mathcal{A} c1 \) \( \mathcal{A} a4 \) 21.\( \mathcal{A} d3 \) b6 22.f4! White uses the momentum to open up the kingside before Black manages to transfer his knight from the passive a5 to the excellent square d6. 22...e4 23.\( \mathcal{A} x e4 \) \( \mathcal{A} e7 \) 24.\( \mathcal{A} f2 \) \( \mathcal{A} x e3 \) 25.\( \mathcal{A} g6 \) The passive \( \mathcal{A} a5 \) will not be back into play in time. White had a strong kingside initiative and went on to win in Graf-Sulskis, Moscow 2001.

B2) But White gets an easy advantage with 14.\( \mathcal{A} b5 \) e4 15.\( \mathcal{A} d2 \) a6 16.\( \mathcal{A} x c6! \) \( \mathcal{A} x c6 \) (or 16...bxc6 17.a4 with \( \mathcal{A} a3 \) to follow) 17.c4

Please note again that this type of position is almost ALWAYS better for White. His bishop is superior to its black colleague, Black's e4 pawn is a potential weakness, White's passed d-pawn can become strong, White's rook can be deployed on the b-file and Black's b-pawn will become a weakness. After for example 17...\( \mathcal{A} x d4 \) White gets an advantage with both 18.\( \mathcal{A} x d4 \), playing for a passed d-pawn - note also that if the knight is transferred via f1 to e3, which is rather likely, it will be an excellent piece there; and 18.\( \mathcal{A} x d4 \) - this bishop is very dominant here, Black's e4 pawn is a weakness and White will build up pressure along the b-file. These are repeating positional patterns in these lines and it is very useful to understand and remember them!

B3) 13...\( \mathcal{A} d8 \)

B3) One recent practical example is instructive for a better understanding of the strategic battle the two sides are facing here: 14.\( \mathcal{A} c1 \) \( \mathcal{A} f e8 \) A standard plan. 14...\( \mathcal{A} g6 \) followed by ...\( \mathcal{A} h5 \) was also something to consider for Black. 15.\( \mathcal{A} f d1 \) e4 Black decides to advance his e-pawn, releasing the central tension. In general this is no bad news for White and he should now have an advantage. I am more in favour of Black trying to hold the central tension as long as possible and releasing it only when it leads
to favourable consequences for him. 16.\textbf{d}2 Right now it is useful for White to force Black into the cxd4 cxd4 transaction – after the exchange of c-pawns we will then get a favourable situation for White – similar to, for example, Piket-Kramnik, Dortmund 2000, seen in the comments above. 16.a6 17.\textbf{a}2 17.a4 followed by \textbf{a}3 would bring White close to achieving his goal of forcing Black into the ...cxd4 cxd4 exchange, resulting in a white initiative on the queenside. 17...\textbf{e}6 18.\textbf{b}1

\begin{center}
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\end{center}

18...cxd4 A very important strategic moment! 19.exd4?! White obviously understands that with his c- and d-pawns rolling he will have an advantage, which is why he recaptures with his c3 pawn. However, what he definitely underestimated was that due to Black’s strong pressure on d4, White will not be able to conveniently push his c-pawn to c4. The correct decision was 19.cxd4! followed by a3-a4 and \textbf{a}3, when White would have an initiative on the queenside, while for Black adequate counterplay on the kingside is not easy to create. 19...\textbf{f}5 20.\textbf{e}1 In the case of 20.\textbf{f}1 White is just too late to place his knight conveniently on e3 and the black knight will travel unpleasantly to f4 via 20...\textbf{d}5. 20...\textbf{g}6 21.\textbf{b}3 a5! A sensible decision. Black provokes a3-a4, White will later have to play c3-c4 anyhow, and then the b4-square in the white camp will be a perfect place for the black knight. 22.a4 \textbf{d}5 23.c4 \textbf{f}4 24.\textbf{e}3 \textbf{b}4 25.\textbf{c}3 \textbf{f}6 and Black was better and went on to win in Timofeev-Tomashevsky, Ulan Ude 2009;

B32) 14.\textbf{b}5 With this standard move White forces a favourable pawn structure in the centre. 14...e4 15.\textbf{d}2 Now we have a type of position White should definitely not complain about. Black can choose between a number of different central pawn structures, however all of them favour White:

B321) 15.a6 16.\textbf{x}c6 \textbf{xc}6 17.\textbf{c}4 \textbf{e}8 18.a4 White was better and won later on in Lautier-Timoshenko, Moscow 2003;

B322) Not allowing White to take on c6 and placing his knight at the edge of the board with 15...\textbf{a}5 does not help Black. The squares c4 and b3 are well defended by the \textbf{a}2. 16.\textbf{c}4 \textbf{x}d4 17.\textbf{x}d4 Now we have a pawn structure which always favours White in this line, as already discussed. 17...\textbf{d}7 18.\textbf{e}3 18.\textbf{a}1 is also good. 18...a6 19.\textbf{x}d7 As we know, exchanging his light-squared bishop for one of Black’s knights is an OK transaction for White in this pawn structure – his remaining bishop is superior to Black’s, White’s passed d-pawn can become unpleasant, and Black’s e4 pawn is most likely a weakness here. 19.\textbf{x}d7 20.\textbf{a}1 \textbf{b}6 21.\textbf{c}3 \textbf{c}6 22.d5 \textbf{x}e3 23.\textbf{f}xe3 \textbf{e}7 24.\textbf{b}3 White had a clear advantage in this ending and went on to win in Kaidanov-Lerner, Moscow 2003.

C) The other move that promises White an advantage is 13.\textbf{b}5:
C1) 13...e4 14...d2 Again the best retreat for the knight. 14...a6 15...xc6 \(\text{\textit{Wxc6 16.c4 As in Potkin-Hernandez Carmenates, Havana 2010, this position with opposite-coloured bishops is favourable for White due to Black's potentially weak pawn on e4, White's passed d-pawn and the obvious difference in activity between the two bishops;}}\)

C2) Black can also delay the decision in the centre with 13...\(\text{\textit{d8}}\) (or 13...\(\text{\textit{ad8}}\)). However, White can play 14...\(\text{\textit{we2}}\) (Potkin-Corrales Jimenez, Havana 2010) and transpose to 13...\(\text{\textit{we2}}\) \(\text{\textit{d8}}\) 14...\(\text{\textit{b5}}\); in the case of 14...\(\text{\textit{xc6}}\) Black has the zwischenschug 14...\(\text{\textit{exd4!}}\).

D) 13...\(\text{\textit{a4}}\), to open the a3-f8 diagonal for the bishop, is one of White's standard plans in this line, but here, given the fact that \(\text{\textit{b2}}\) has been played just two moves earlier, it is not the most efficient way for White to get an opening advantage. Black has his trump in this complicated position: 13...\(\text{\textit{ad8}}\) 14...\(\text{\textit{a3}}\):

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{Diagram }
\end{array}
\]

D1) 14...\(\text{\textit{fe8}}\) 15...\(\text{\textit{c1}}\) Taking a pawn with 15...\(\text{\textit{xc5?}}\) is not a good idea for White here, since Black regains the material and gets a favourable game with 15...\(\text{\textit{e4}}\) 16...\(\text{\textit{d3}}\) \(\text{\textit{xc3!}}\) The pawn structure now undergoes drastic changes. 17...\(\text{\textit{xc3}}\) \(\text{\textit{xd3}}\) 18...\(\text{\textit{xd3}}\) 14...\(\text{\textit{e4}}\) 19...\(\text{\textit{b5}}\) \(\text{\textit{exf3}}\) 20...\(\text{\textit{xc5}}\) \(\text{\textit{fxg2}}\) 21...\(\text{\textit{fc1}}\) \(\text{\textit{wd7}}\) 22...\(\text{\textit{xdg2}}\) \(\text{\textit{e6}}\) White has c-file pressure and a formidable central pawn chain, however his kingside is weak and Black has good counterplay there, Sasikiran-Efimenko, Wijk aan Zee B 2009;

D2) My silicon friend likes sacrificing a pawn here with 14...\(\text{\textit{exd4}}\) 15...\(\text{\textit{xd4}}\) \(\text{\textit{fe8}}\) and after 16...\(\text{\textit{xc5}}\) \(\text{\textit{b6}}\) (16...\(\text{\textit{e4}}\) 17...\(\text{\textit{e1}}\) is better for White) 17...\(\text{\textit{a3}}\) \(\text{\textit{xd4}}\) 18...\(\text{\textit{xf7+}}\) \(\text{\textit{xf7}}\) 19...\(\text{\textit{xd4}}\) (in the case of 19...\(\text{\textit{xd4}}\) \(\text{\textit{e4}}\) Black should regain his pawn by taking on f3 and d4 and a draw would be the most likely result) 19...\(\text{\textit{c4}}\), yes, Black has some compensation, but is it worth a pawn here? I have my doubts;

D3) Black can also sacrifice an exchange for two pawns with 14...\(\text{\textit{exd4}}\) 15...\(\text{\textit{xd4}}\) 16...\(\text{\textit{xf8}}\) \(\text{\textit{fxe3}}\) 17...\(\text{\textit{e2}}\) \(\text{\textit{exf2+}}\) 18...\(\text{\textit{xf2}}\) \(\text{\textit{xf8}}\) There is a material equilibrium on the board. Due to the many open files White is perhaps slightly better, but a draw is the most likely result here.

\(\text{\textbullet}\) Should Black try to immediately secure the b5-square, this will cost him precious time and White now quickly opens the centre to his benefit: 12...\(\text{\textit{a6}}\) 13...\(\text{\textit{a2}}\) \(\text{\textit{b5}}\) 14...\(\text{\textit{xe5}}\) \(\text{\textit{xe5}}\) 15...\(\text{\textit{c4}}\) and White was better in Taimanov-Darga, Moscow ol 1956. It is important that after 15...\(\text{\textit{xf3+}}\) 16...\(\text{\textit{xf3}}\) \(\text{\textit{b7}}\) White plays 17...\(\text{\textit{fs5!}}\). The white queen may look exposed on this square, but there is no way for Black to take advantage of
Chapter 3.7: Main Line – 9. ... dxc4 10. Qxc4 Wc7 11. Qb2

this: 17... Wc6 18.f3 with an advantage for White.

● In the event of 12... b6

White continues with his regular set-up in this line, gaining a slight plus: 13. We2 e4 14. Qd2 Again, the best retreat square for the knight is d2. Of course we can argue about the size of the advantage, but these positions are certainly favourable for White. 14... Qb7 15. Qa2 Mad8 16. Hfd1 followed by Mad8. White can also opt for more direct play with 16.d5 Qxd5 17.c4 Qde7 18.Qxe4 Qg6 19.Qc3 and White's chances are favourable here too, as was seen in Boleslavsky-M. Levin, Kiev 1958. A slightly different version of the same idea is: 16.Qd1 Wc8 17.d5 Qa6 18.c4 Qxd5 19.Qxe4 Qde7 20.Qb1 f5 21.Qd6 Wf6 22.Qb5 as in Cherepkov-Spassky, Moscow ch-URS 1961.

● Moves like 12... Qd7 are not active and normally lead to positions similar to the ones examined, likely in a favourable version for White.

● The immediate 12... Me8 does not bring any particular advantages to Black, apart from giving White the extra possibility of Qg5.

13. Qd2

The retreat to d2 is, like in 90% of cases in these lines, the best for White here. 13.Qh2 can of course be played, but again, given the fact that Qg4 is not particularly dangerous for Black here, the retreat to d2 simply looks more natural to me, and it does lead to a white advantage.

13... Qa5

In the case of 13... Qe7 White proceeds with his regular plan:

● 14. Qa2 Qf5 15. c4 and White has his standard advantage.

● It is important to play the c4, d5 push, taking space and opening the long diagonal for his Qb2, in order not to end up stuck in a scenario like: 14.Qe1 Qf5 15.Qc1 Mad8

16.f3? White would like to favourably open the centre, but it's not going to happen. 16.Qf1 or 16.Qa2, following plans we have already seen, would still
have led to a white advantage. 16...\textit{g}6 17.\textit{a}2 \textit{He}8 Black is cleverly keeping the tension and White realizes that he has no means to force Black to take on \textit{f}3, so he hopes that a kingside pawn advance will bring him an advantage. Well, with the pawns on \textit{c}4 and \textit{d}5 instead of \textit{c}3 and \textit{d}4 this would be very true, but here it is a different story. 18.\textit{f}4 \textit{ef}d5 19.\textit{g}4 \textit{b}5! 20.\textit{f}1 \textit{c}4! White’s bishops are dead! 21.\textit{He}2 In the case of 21.\textit{f}5 \textit{xf}5 22.\textit{gx}f5 \textit{xf}5 Black is not a piece down – he is a piece up! Look at the \textit{a}2 and the \textit{b}2, two great ‘pawns’ completely out of play! 21...\textit{f}5 22.\textit{G}2 \textit{f}7 23.\textit{We}1 \textit{D}6 This is an excellent example of what not to do as White, or how to react as Black! 24.\textit{G}3 \textit{Cc}8 and Black was better and won later on in Furman-Ragozin, Kiev ch-URS 1954.

14.\textit{a}2 \textit{f}5

With 14...\textit{c}4 Black does temporarily close in the \textit{a}2, but White is now in time to open the centre favourably with 15.\textit{f}3! With 13...\textit{a}5 and 14...\textit{c}4 Black has lost time and therefore he cannot keep the central tension here as he did in the previous example Furman-Ragozin. 15...\textit{xe}3 This tactical solution does not equalize. 16.\textit{xe}4 \textit{xe}4 17.\textit{xe}4 \textit{G}3 18.\textit{f}3 \textit{xf}3 19.\textit{x}f3 – White’s central pawns are formidable and he had the advantage in Cherepkov-Tseshkovsky, Alma Ata ch-URS 1968/69.

15.\textit{c}4 \textit{He}8 16.\textit{d}5

A typical pawn structure, favourable for White, has arisen. White’s \textit{b}2 is strong, the passed \textit{d}-pawn has yet to be blocked (Black’s knight must be transferred from \textit{a}5 via \textit{b}7 to \textit{d}6), Black’s \textit{e}4 pawn can become a weakness, and White can also play for a kingside attack by opening the \textit{f}-file, as happened in the game.

16...\textit{d}7

17.\textit{f}4

With the black knight still on \textit{a}5, White feels that the time is right to advance on the kingside.

White would also be clearly better in the case of a slow build-up with 17.\textit{c}1 and \textit{b}1.

17...\textit{ex}f3 18.\textit{xf}3

It is very important for the evaluation of this position that the black knight is on \textit{a}5 instead of \textit{d}6. Black’s pawn structure is healthy, so White’s advantage is dynamic and temporary by nature. So White has to develop his initiative before Black activates his \textit{a}5 knight by bringing it to \textit{d}6.

18...\textit{g}6 19.\textit{h}4!

Provoking a weakening of Black’s kingside.

19...\textit{h}5

19...\textit{e}5 20.\textit{W}g3 is unpleasant for Black.

20.\textit{b}1
In this structure – certainly now, with Black’s pawn already on h5! – White would like to exchange the light-squared bishops as the \( \text{g6} \) is a good defending piece, also hitting the vital e4- and f5-squares.

20...\( \text{w} \text{d6} \) 21.\( \text{b} \text{c3} \text{b6} \)

This allows an exchange sacrifice that enables Black to solve the problem of his passive \( \text{a5} \).
White could have obtained a clear advantage with the relatively forced sequence 22.\( \text{f} \text{f5}! \) (the threat is 23.\( \text{e} \text{e4} \), since now White can recapture with his queen and c4 will be protected) 22...\( \text{e} \text{e5} \) 23.\( \text{w} \text{f4} \text{w} \text{f6} \) 24.\( \text{x} \text{g6} \text{w} \text{xf4} \) 25.\( \text{x} \text{xf4} \text{x} \text{g6} \) 26.\( \text{x} \text{xa5} \text{bxa5} \) 27.\( \text{g} \text{g3} \) and based on his superior pawn structure White has a big advantage here.

22...\( \text{b} \text{xe4} \) 23.\( \text{xe4} \text{xc4} \)

Black has some compensation for the exchange, though White remained better and went on to win in Kramnik-Tiviakov, Wijk aan Zee, 2001.

**Conclusion**

11.\( \text{b} \text{b2} \) leads to an opening advantage for White according to the above analyses, and it is also important in view of the transposition to the line with 9.\( \text{bxc3} \text{w} \text{c7} \) 10.\( \text{b} \text{b2} \text{dxc4} \) 11.\( \text{xc4} \).
Part IV

4...0-0 5.d3 d5 6.f3 c5 7.0-0 –
The Immediate 7...dxc4 8.xc4

8...e7
8...c6
8...cxd4
8...bd7
Chapter 4.1

Larsen Variation – 8...\(\texttt{c6}\)

Most of the time this move order transposes to the main lines after 9.a3 \(\texttt{xc3}\). However, Black has side options in 9...\(\texttt{a5}\) or 9...cxd4, and those options we will investigate here. A well-prepared white player should get an opening advantage. But first we will have a look at an interesting alternative.

8...\(\texttt{we7}\) To my knowledge, this move was been first played by Reshevsky, then picked up and successfully played over several decades on the very top level by Smyslov. Black aims for flexible development (typical for Smyslov) and keeps his options. Black’s usual plan is to follow up with an early development of his queen’s rook with ...\(\texttt{d7}\), ...\(\texttt{c8}\). The main drawback of this idea is that in the isolated pawn positions that arise after ...cxd4 exd4, Black’s queen on e7 and his bishop on a5 are not the best combination. Force Black to take on d4 at a suitable moment (which Black will try to delay) is not easy. In my opinion White should have an advantage after Gligoric’s move 10.\(\texttt{d3}\), while the queen development to e2 also offers prospects of an advantage. It should be mentioned that 8...\(\texttt{we7}\) has more or less completely disappeared from modern top tournaments.

- A few recent games have seen 9.\(\texttt{we2}\) \(\texttt{c6}\) 10.\(\texttt{d1}\) and now:
Chapter 4.1: Larsen Variation – 8...c6

A) After 10...h6 11.Qe5 Black can consider: 11...Qxe5 After 11...Qd8 12.Qxc6 Qxc6 13.a3 Qxc3 14.bxc3 e5 15.a4 exd4 16.cxd4 Qxd4 17.Qa3 Qe8 18.Qxd4 Qxd4 19.exd4, White had a long-term advantage due to his bishop pair in Kasimdzhanov-Baklan, Deizisau 2004. 12.dxe5 Qd7 13.f4 Qxc3 14.bxc3 Qb6 with ...Qd7 to follow;

B) 10...Qd8 11.a3 Qa5 12.Qa4!? White forces Black to take on d4, creating an isolated pawn position. I am generally not fond of moves like Qa4, but it seems to give White an advantage here: 12...cxd4 13.exd4 Qd5 14.b4 Qc7 15.Qg5! f6 16.Qd2 Black has problems to complete his development, and another problem are his weaknesses on the a2-g8 diagonal. 16...Qb6 17.Qxb6 Qxb6 18.Qc3 Qf7 19.d5! exd5 20.Qxd5 Qxd5 21.Qxd5 White was an exchange up and he won easily in Korobov-Baklan, Poltava ch-UKR 2006.

A) 10.Wd3! After years, even decades of experimenting with different ideas, this became Gligoric’s favourite in this line. It is a multifunctional move: White develops his queen and prepares Qe4, while also defending his Qc3, which comes in handy if he wants to play dxc5.

A1) 10...Qbd7 11.Qe4 and now:

A11) In case of 11...Qb6 White is better after 12.Qxf6+ Whxf6 13.Qd2 Qd8 14.Qd1 Black is running out of useful moves and he now takes on d4, creating an isolated pawn for White, however with his well-developed pieces White is very much ready for this: 14...cxd4 15.exd4 Qg6 Black’s queen is terribly placed here and will be an easy target. 16.Qb3! Qf6 17.Qf1 Qd7 and now the actual game went 18.Qe5? Qe4 19.Qf4 Qc6 and Black was slightly better in Gligoric-Bukic, Yugoslavia 1970, but White could have won on the spot with 18.Qe5! Wh5 Or 18...Wf5 19.Qxf7! Qxf7 20.Qe5 Qg4 21.h3 Qg6 22.Qxe6+. 19.Qxf7! Qxf7 Or 19...Qxf7 20.Qxe6+. 20.Qxe6

A12) 11...Qc7 Thus Black will have ...Qb6, but the fact that his bishop is placed on c7 has other disadvantages. 12.Qxf6+ Qxf6 13.Wc2! Highlighting the drawback of Black’s bishop being on c7. The actual game went 13.b4 cxd4 14.exd4 Qb6 15.Qg5 Qg6 16.Wxg6 hxg6 17.Qe2 Qd7, with a slightly better game for Black in Mecking-Panno, Palma de Mallorca Interzonal 1970. 13...b6 Otherwise it is
difficult for Black to develop.
13...cxd4? leads to a white advantage after the obvious 14...d3 with dxe7 to follow. 14...d3 h6 15...h7+ g8
16...e4 b8 17..b4 and White is better – again the pawn structure resembles those in Meran positions.
Other moves do not equalize either:

A2) 10...d8 11..e4 b6 12...xf6+ xf6 13..e4! The most direct. The Meran-like 13.b4!? cxb4
14.d2 is another idea. 13...e5 14.d5+ Gligoric-O'Kelly de Galway, Havana 1969;

A3) 10...a6 11..e4 b5 12...xf6+ xf6 Preserving the pawn structure with 12...xf6 loses a pawn after
13..e4 d7 14...d3 with 15.dxc5 to follow. 13.a2 Black's position is already difficult and his next move,
which opens the white ...c1, does not make things better. 13...cxd4?! 14..xd4 b7 15...h6 d8 Gligoric now executes excellently: 16..d5! c7
16...cxd5 loses to 17.d4 c7 18..e2. 17.b4 c7 18..f6 c8 19..f5! exf5 20..e7 b2 21.d6
b2 22...xf7+ b8 23...xf8 1-0 Gligoric-Planinec, Yugoslavia 1970.

B) White also has prospects of an advantage after the moves 10..d2 d8 11..e2.

The threat is dxc5, forcing Black to take on d4. 11...cxd4 White gets a clear advantage in case of 11...c7
12.dxc5 e5 13..xd5 b6 14..d4 h5 15...e7 d7 16..xf6 gxf6
17.fd1. 12..xd4! Entering an isolated pawn position is the only way for White to fight for advantage here.
Wrong is the timid 12..xd4 d7 (12...b6 is also good for Black) 13.e4?! c6 14...c6 dxc6 (Black is already better) 15.fd1 d4 16..f1
g4 17...f4 c7 and Black went on to win in Babula-Nisipeanu, Germany Bundesliga 2002/03.
12...c6 13..e3 bxc3 14.bxc3 b6 The central counterthrust 14...e5?! does not work: 15.dxe5 dx e5 16..d4 c6 17..e7 cxe7 18..g5 dxe5 19 удален, as in
Borisenko-Novopashin, Kiev 1960. 15..e5 15..b5 looks better for White – compare this position to the similar
pawn structure in different lines. 15...e5 16..dxe5 dxe5 17..d4 b6
18.f4! b7 19..f5 exf5 20..xf5 c8 21..h1 c7 22..h1 d6 23..a2 – White had attacking prospects and eventually won in Van der Werf-
Gjorgadze, Andorra 1997;

C) A similar idea is 10..e2 d7 (10..d8 11..d1 c6 transposes to 9..e2 d8 10..d1 c6 11.a3 a5) and now 11...d2.
Chapter 4.1: Larsen Variation – 8...c6

The threat is 12.dxc5. 11.exd4 12.exd4
Due to White's threat of d4-d5 Black has problems here. 12...c6 13.d5! cxd5
Here White had 14.dxe6!, simply winning a pawn. The actual game went 14.xc3 cxd5 15.xd5 xe5 16.d4
Wd8 17.xf8 xf8 18.xc1 c6; Black has a difficult time ahead since too many light pieces have been exchanged and his strong d5 does not fully compensate for the exchange loss, though Black eventually survived this in Borisenko-Kortchnoi, Kiev ch-URS 1964;

D) 10.Wc2 was an often played move here: 10...d7 and now:

D1) 11.d1 c8! By delaying the capture on d4, Black does not give White an opportunity to develop his c1 to g5. 12.d5 This pawn push is the most logical way to exploit the fact that Black has postponed taking on d4, but does not bring the desired effect: 12.xc3! 13.dxe6 If 13.d6 Wf8, followed by...

D41) 11...c6 12.e2 Only Black can be better after 12.d5 exd5 13.Pxd5 c6 14.xc5 xe5 15.xd6 Wc8 as in Taimanov-Smyslov, Havana 1964. 12.cxd4 13.cxd4 c6
14.xc1 c6 15.Wb1 g5 16.xc6 xxc6 17.b4 d8 18.xf1 c7 19.c1
Due to his bishop pair, White has the ad-
This move is a standard option for Black in these positions. Compared to 7.0-0 \( \text{d}c6 \) 8.a3 \( \text{a}5 \), Black has here already taken on c4, so the position has a different character. Black's problem is that White has more useful moves to improve his position, while an isolated pawn position after ...cxd4 exd4 is favourable to White because Black's bishop will always be a little odd on a5 (or b6) and Black's king can easily become vulnerable.

9...\( \text{a}5 \) used to be the favourite move of many great players – Bent Larsen, Lev Polugaevsky, Anatoly Karpov, to name just a few. However, in his game against Polugaevsky in the Candidates' match in 1974, Polugaevsky, who played this line many times with both colours, demonstrated the way to a white advantage and Karpov only survived by a miracle. This judgment still holds and hence 9...\( \text{a}5 \) is rarely played nowadays.

Another side option on move 9, apart from 9...\( \text{xc}3 \) (the most played move) 10.bxc3, which transposes to the main lines with 7.0-0 \( \text{d}c6 \) 8.a3 \( \text{xc}3 \) 9.bxc3 dxc4 10.\( \text{xc}4 \), is 9...cxd4.

White now has a choice between the small, lasting advantage of the bishop pair and a position with an isolated pawn or connected hanging pawns.
Either decision should bring White an opening advantage.

- **10.axb4**, though a standard decision for White in these lines, is for some reason rarely played here; a vast majority of games have seen 10.exd4. It looks to me that with his bishop pair White gets a better position without too much hassle here. One relatively recent example is 10...dxc3 11.bxc3 \(\mathbb{w}c7\) 12.\(\mathbb{w}b3\) b6 13.\(\mathbb{b}2\) \(\mathbb{b}7\) 14.\(\mathbb{e}2\) a5 15.\(\mathbb{f}c1\).

White's advantage may look very small, but on the other hand it is difficult for Black to either fully equalize or get active play. It should also be mentioned that the queenside pawn structure — White's b/c vs Black's a/b — favours White. 15...e5 16.\(\mathbb{c}4\) The useful prophylactic move 16.h3 was an option. 16...\(\mathbb{b}8\) 17.b5 \(\mathbb{e}7\) The tactic 17...e4!? does not seem to give Black sufficient kingside threats after 18.bxc6 \(\mathbb{a}6\) 19.\(\mathbb{b}3\) \(\mathbb{c}e2\) 20.\(\mathbb{d}4\) \(\mathbb{g}4\) 21.g3. 18.\(\mathbb{a}3\) \(\mathbb{c}e8\) 19.\(\mathbb{d}1\) \(\mathbb{d}5\) 20.\(\mathbb{w}4\) \(\mathbb{g}6\) 21.c4 \(\mathbb{b}7\) 22.c5 \(\mathbb{c}5\) 23.\(\mathbb{c}c1\) White's passed b-pawn is considerably more dangerous than Black's a-pawn. 23...e4 24.\(\mathbb{d}2\) \(\mathbb{e}5\) 25.\(\mathbb{x}c5\) White was better and went on to win in Alexandrov-Andersson, Bled ol 2002.

- **10.exd4**:
  
  A) In the case of 10...\(\mathbb{e}7\) we have a standard isolated pawn position, which seems to be favourable for White. Play may proceed: 11.\(\mathbb{e}1\) b6 12.\(\mathbb{f}4\) In this particular position White often places his bishop on f4 (by the way, there is nothing wrong with the standard \(\mathbb{g}5\) development), which gives him the extra option of placing his knight on g5 in some lines — please see the Petrosian game below.

12...\(\mathbb{b}7\) 13.\(\mathbb{a}2\) \(\mathbb{c}8\) 14.\(\mathbb{d}3\)

A1) In the event of 14...\(\mathbb{b}8\)?! White opts for the energetic 15.\(\mathbb{g}5\)! and now:

A11) 15...\(\mathbb{h}6\)? loses to 16.\(\mathbb{c}e6!\) \(\mathbb{c}e6\) 17.\(\mathbb{c}e6+\) \(\mathbb{f}7\) (17...\(\mathbb{h}8\) 18.\(\mathbb{c}c8\) and Black has no convenient way to recapture on c8) 18.\(\mathbb{x}b8\) \(\mathbb{x}b8\) 19.\(\mathbb{c}4\) \(\mathbb{f}8\) 20.\(\mathbb{c}f7+\) \(\mathbb{f}7\) 21.\(\mathbb{h}c7\) and Black loses too much material;

A12) 15...\(\mathbb{a}6\) This sends the white queen to an active square, but the situation is already very difficult for Black. 16.\(\mathbb{h}3!\) \(\mathbb{c}d4\) 17.\(\mathbb{e}4\) Even stronger was 17.\(\mathbb{c}e4!\) h6 18.\(\mathbb{c}f7\), winning. 17...\(\mathbb{d}3\) 18.\(\mathbb{e}3\) \(\mathbb{d}4\) 19.\(\mathbb{c}b8\) \(\mathbb{x}b8\) 20.\(\mathbb{c}f7\) — White was clearly better and went on to win in T. Petrosian-Ilivitsky, Sverdlovsk 1951.

A2) 14.\(\mathbb{d}7\) 15.\(\mathbb{d}1\) \(\mathbb{d}5\) 16.\(\mathbb{b}1\) White could have decided to transform the central pawn structure from an isolated pawn position into a favourable central pawn symmetry with 16.\(\mathbb{c}xd5\) exd5 17.\(\mathbb{e}3\). Especially due to the difference between the \(\mathbb{a}2\) and the \(\mathbb{b}7\)
White has a safe, long-term advantage here. 16...g6 17...h6 \(\text{Hf8}\) 18...e4 \(\text{xf8}\) 19...xf8 \(\text{xf8}\) 20...e5 \(\text{We7}\) 21...\(\text{Wg3}\)
and White had the initiative on the kingside and later won in Najdorf-Reshevsky, Buenos Aires 1953.

B) With 10...\(\text{xc3}\) Black creates connected hanging pawns in the centre for White. He plans to quickly target White's c3 pawn and execute the ...e6-e5 push, hoping to liberate his pieces and get active play: 11...bxc3 \(\text{Wxa5}\)

B1) In the event of 12...\(\text{we2}\), stopping ...e6-e5 but sacrificing a pawn, it looks likely that the game will finish in a draw by move repetition: 12...\(\text{xc3}\)! 13...d2 \(\text{c2}\) 14...d3 \(\text{Wxa4}\)! Targeting the d4 pawn – White has good compensation after 14...\(\text{b3}\) 15...g5. 15...b5. Black is definitely not worse in the case of 15...\(\text{fc1}\) \(\text{xd4}\) 16...\(\text{xd4}\) \(\text{xd4}\) 17...\(\text{b4}\) \(\text{d7}\)! 18...\(\text{xf8}\) \(\text{xf8}\). Now:

B11) If 15...\(\text{xd4}\) 16...\(\text{xd4}\) \(\text{xd4}\) 17...\(\text{b4}\) \(\text{d8}\) 18...\(\text{ad1}\) \(\text{Wb6}\) 19...\(\text{c5}\)
Black is forced to give his queen: 19...\(\text{xd1}\) 19...\(\text{Wxa5}\)? loses to a nice forced sequence: 20...\(\text{e1}\) \(\text{c7}\) 21...\(\text{e5}\) \(\text{a5}\) 22...\(\text{c3}\) \(\text{c7}\) 23...\(\text{xa7}\)! \(\text{e7}\) 24...\(\text{c5}\) \(\text{c7}\) 25...\(\text{b4}\)! (with Black's a7 pawn removed, his queen on b6 will no longer be protected) 25...\(\text{b6}\) 26...\(\text{c5}\) and wins. 20...\(\text{xd1}\) \(\text{xc5}\) 21...\(\text{d8+}\) \(\text{xf8}\) 22...\(\text{xf8}\)+ \(\text{xf8}\) 23...\(\text{d2}\) and Black

had problems to develop his queenside in Szabo-Ivkov, Budapest 1964;

B12) 15...\(\text{wc2}\)! Polugaevsky's idea. 16...\(\text{d3}\) White's compensation is far from convincing in the case of 16...\(\text{fc1}\) \(\text{Wxe4}\) 17...\(\text{e3}\) \(\text{d5}\). 16...\(\text{Wa4}\) with move repetition.

B2) In the event of 12...\(\text{b2}\) \(\text{e5}\)

B21) Releasing the central tension with 13...\(\text{e4}\) is not good: 14...\(\text{d2}\) \(\text{f5}\) 14...\(\text{g4}\)? turned out to be a tempo loss after 15...\(\text{e2}\) \(\text{f5}\) 16...\(\text{c4}\) \(\text{c7}\) 17...\(\text{e3}\) in Timman-Ligterink, Wijk aan Zee 1980. 15...\(\text{e2}\) ! The white knight heads to e3. 15...\(\text{ad8}\) 16...\(\text{c4}\) \(\text{c7}\) 17...\(\text{e3}\) \(\text{g6}\) 18...\(\text{b3}\) with a better game for White: two bishops, an excellent knight on e3 and mobile centre pawns – please compare this to the similar positions in the main line 7.0-0 \(\text{bc6}\) 8.a3 \(\text{xc3}\) 9.bxc3 dxc4 10...\(\text{xc4}\) \(\text{c7}\) 11...\(\text{b2}\);

B22) Better is 13...\(\text{g4}\)! 14...\(\text{b2}\) \(\text{xf3}\) 15...\(\text{xf3}\) \(\text{ad8}\) 16...\(\text{a2}\):

B221) When preparing this material I came across a spectacular game, which I could not resist showing here: 16...\(\text{d7}\) 17...\(\text{e2}\)! White prepares his entry on the e-file. 17...\(\text{d8}\) 18...\(\text{e1}\) \(\text{exd4}\) 19...\(\text{xd4}\) \(\text{b6}\) 20...\(\text{c3}\) \(\text{xd4}\) 21...\(\text{e7}\) \(\text{xe7}\) 22...\(\text{xe7}\) \(\text{xf5}\) 23...\(\text{xf7}\) White threatens a deadly discovered check, however things are far from simple. 23...\(\text{d1+}\) 24...\(\text{b2}\)
24...\text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{d}}6+? A crucial mistake. Correct was 24...\text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{g}}}}4+! 25.hxg4 \text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{d}}}}6+! 26.\text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{g}}}}3 (26.g3?? \text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{h}}}}6+) 26...\text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{x}}}}g3 27.\text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{d}}}}d7+ \text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{f}}}}8 28.\text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{x}}}}xg7+ \text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{e}}}}8 29.\text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{x}}}}xd6 \text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{f}}}}1+ 30.\text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{g}}}}1 \text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{d}}}}2+ 31.\text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{h}}}}2 \text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{f}}}}1+ with perpetual check. 25.g3} Now the white king takes off on a journey. White has to keep playing only moves, but his position is winning: 25...\text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{g}}}}4+ 26.\text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{g}}}}2 \text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{h}}}}4+ 27.gxh4 \text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{x}}}}h2+ 28.\text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{f}}}}3 \text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{x}}}}f3+ 29.\text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{e}}}}4!

29...\text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{e}}}}2+ Or 29...\text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{e}}}}1+ 30.\text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{d}}}}5! \text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{x}}}}xf7+ 31.\text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{d}}}}6! \text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{d}}}}d1+ 32.\text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{c}}}}5 \text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{b}}}}6+ 33.\text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{c}}}}6, winning. 30.\text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{f}}}}4 \text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{f}}}}1+ 31.\text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{g}}}}5 \text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{b}}}}6+ 32.\text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{g}}}}6 \text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{e}}}}5+ 33.\text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{w}}}}xe5 \text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{g}}}}1+ 34.\text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{w}}}}g5 Black has run out of checks, while White’s \text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{f}}}}7 will move with a deadly discovered check. 34...\text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{x}}}}xb2 35.\text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{x}}}}g7+ 1–0 A. Shashin-Kortchnoi, Leningrad 1973 – a truly spectacular king run!

B222) But after 16...\text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{c}}}}xd4! 17.\text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{c}}}}xd4 \text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{d}}}}xd4 18.\text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{d}}}}xd4 (18.\text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{w}}}}xb7 loses material due to 18...\text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{d}}}}d7! 19.\text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{b}}}}4 (the only retreat for the queen) 19...\text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{x}}}}xb4 20.axb4 \text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{d}}}}c2) 18...\text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{d}}}}xd4 19.\text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{w}}}}xb7 \text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{d}}}}d7 20.\text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{f}}}}3 \text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{f}}}}d8 White’s advantage is highly academic and a draw is the most likely result.

B3) The logical 12.\text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{d}}}}d2 (White’s next move is \text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{e}}}}1 with advantage, so Black has to push the e-pawn) 12...\text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{e}}}}5 13.\text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{b}}}}1! has not been tried in practice yet, but it seems to lead to a white advantage;

B4) 12.\text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{c}}}}c2 \text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{e}}}}5 13.\text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{e}}}}3 \text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{d}}}}xd4 14.\text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{d}}}}xd4! Black is fine in the event of 14.\text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{d}}}}xd4 \text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{e}}}}5. 14...\text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{d}}}}xd4 15.\text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{c}}}}xd4 The position is almost equal, but still not quite – Black still has problems to solve. 15...\text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{f}}}}5 16.\text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{b}}}}3 \text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{e}}}}4 17.\text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{e}}}}5 \text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{d}}}}5 18.\text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{d}}}}d7 \text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{x}}}}c4 19.\text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{xf}}}}6+ \text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{g}}}}xf6

20.\text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{c}}}}c4 Black’s kingside is weak and the queens are still on the board, White has a passed d-pawn – Black was facing a prolonged unpleasant defence and ultimately lost in Portisch-Larsen, Las Palmas 1972.

10.\text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{a}}}}a2!

A useful move. Should Black opt for an isolated pawn position by taking ...\text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{c}}}}xd4, 10.\text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{a}}}}a2 will be a useful move which perfectly fits in the system. If not, White will keep on improving his position and it will not be easy for Black to just play developing moves while maintaining the status quo. The other two often played moves in this position are 10.\text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{d}}}}3 and 10.\text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{d}}}}3. Since I think that Polugaevsky’s recipe against Karpov, i.e. 10.\text{\textsf{\textit{\textsf{a}}}}a2, is White’s best, I will give just the most important references to the other two moves. Readers who want to study them closer I refer to the databases and to established theory.

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10. \( \text{Wd3} \) \( \text{a6!} \)

Black's best. He prepares a pawn advance on the queenside.

A) 11. \( \text{Rd1} \) b5 12. \( \text{Ra2} \) \( \text{b6} \) Black improves his bishop, while maintaining the central tension. Releasing the central tension immediately with 12...c4 has been tried in many games, however in my opinion this is less precise than the text. In the event of 12...\( \text{b7} \) White has managed to prove some advantage, based on his bishop pair, in the positions arising after 13.dxc5 \( \text{xc3} \)

14. \( \text{Wc2!} \) \( \text{e7} \) 15. \( \text{Wxc3} \). 13. \( \text{Wc2!} \) If White maintains the status quo with 13.h3, Black now simply develops:

13...\( \text{b7} \) 14.dxc5 \( \text{Wxd3} \) 15.\( \text{Rxd3} \) \( \text{xc5} \) 16.b4 \( \text{e7} \) with equality in Kortchnoi-Polugaevsky, Moscow ch-URS 1973. 13...c4 The pawn structure now very much resembles the Meran Variation of the Slav — in a very good version for Black. 14.\( \text{Qe2!} \)

14. \( \text{We2} \) \( \text{e8} \) 15.\( \text{b3} \) cxb3 16.\( \text{Rxb3} \) \( \text{b7} \) 17.e4 \( \text{e5} \) (typical Meran play. Black's \( \text{b6} \) & \( \text{b7} \) are excellently placed) 18.dxe5 \( \text{Qxe5} \) — Black was better and went on to win in Portisch-Polugaevsky, Palma de Mallorca Interzonal 1970. 14...\( \text{Wc7} \) 15.\( \text{Qg3} \) \( \text{b7} \) 16.\( \text{Qd2} \) \( \text{ad8} \) 17.\( \text{Qc1} \) \( \text{e5} \) Again typical Meran play. 18.dxe5 \( \text{Qxe5} \) 19.\( \text{Qxe5} \) \( \text{Wxe5} \) 20.\( \text{Qc3} \) \( \text{We6} \) 21.\( \text{Qb1} \) g6 22.\( \text{We2} \) 22...h5! 23.\( \text{Qxf6} \) \( \text{Wxf6} \) 24.\( \text{Qe4} \) \( \text{c8}! \) and Black had a strong bishop pair, kingside activity and a queenside pawn majority (every ending will be superior for Black!) and he went on to win in Portisch-F. Olafsson, Wijk aan Zee 1969;

B) 11.dxc5 \( \text{Wxd3} \) 12.\( \text{Qxd3} \) \( \text{xc3} \) 13.bxc3 \( \text{a5} \) leads to equality;

C) 11.a4?! stops the queenside pawn advance, but does create a pawn weakness in White's camp: after 11...\( \text{b7} \) 12.dxc5 \( \text{We7} \) 13.e4 \( \text{xc5} \) 14.\( \text{Qe3} \) \( \text{Wh5} \) 15.\( \text{fff4} \) \( \text{ac8} \) 16.\( \text{ac1} \) \( \text{fd8} \) 17.\( \text{g3} \) \( \text{g8} \) Black was already better and went on to win in Portisch-Larsen, Porec Candidates' m-3 1968;

D) Should White opt for a Meran-like motif, the game is likely to be drawn after 11.\( \text{Qe4} \) b5 12.\( \text{xf6+} \) \( \text{xf6} \) 13.\( \text{We4} \) \( \text{b7} \) 14.d3 \( \text{g6} \) 15.dxc5 \( \text{b4} \) 16.\( \text{We5} \) \( \text{xe5} \) 17.\( \text{xe5} \) \( \text{xd3} \) 18.\( \text{xd3} \). This relatively forced final 6-7 move se-
quence looks very logical for both sides. 18..\textit{f}d8 — Black’s bishop pair and advancement in development compensate for the pawn deficit. A number of high-level games have been played from this position, ending in draws.

- **10...\textit{d}3** This move has an idea similar to 10...\textit{a}2, but in the isolated pawn positions arising after 10...\textit{cxd}4, the white bishop is probably better placed on \textit{a}2 than on \textit{d}3.

A) In the event of 10...\textit{e}7

White obtains an advantage with the energetic 11..\textit{e}4! \textit{cxd}4 12..\textit{b}4 \textit{b}6 13..\textit{b}5 \textit{b}8 14..\textit{xf}6+ \textit{xf}6 15..\textit{e}d4 \textit{h}6 16..\textit{b}2 (Black cannot develop his queenside) as in Portisch-Langeweg, Amsterdam 1969;

B) On 10...\textit{a}6 White can, apart from 11..\textit{b}1 transposing to our main line, also opt for the standard 11..\textit{e}4 \textit{cxd}4 12..\textit{e}d4 \textit{h}6 13..\textit{e}3 \textit{xe}4 14..\textit{xe}4 \textit{e}7 15..\textit{e}5

And Black has problems to develop his queenside: 15..\textit{d}5 16..\textit{b}3 \textit{c}7 17..\textit{ac}1 and White was better in Potkin-CorralesJimenez, Havana 2009.

C) 10...\textit{cxd}4 11..\textit{xd}4 \textit{b}6

With a move like 11...\textit{h}6 Black always has to be careful here, because it can offer White sacrificial motifs, for example 12..\textit{c}2 \textit{c}7 13..\textit{e}1 \textit{e}8 14..\textit{e}3 \textit{b}6 15..\textit{d}2 followed by \textit{ad}1 with the idea \textit{x}h6!.

12..\textit{e}3

C1) 12...\textit{d}5 and now:

C11) 13..\textit{xd}5 \textit{xd}5 Black should refrain from 13...\textit{xd}5?! 14..\textit{c}2 \textit{xd}4? 15..\textit{xd}4 \textit{xd}4 16..\textit{xh}7+ \textit{h}8 17..\textit{e}4 \textit{d}6 18..\textit{d}1 and White won in Gligoric-Wade, Hastings 1970/71.

14..\textit{h}3 \textit{d}6 White’s advantage is very small, the game was later drawn in Taimanov-Polugaevsky, Moscow-URS 1969;

C12) 13..\textit{g}5 \textit{f}6 14..\textit{e}3

14...\textit{ce}7 Black could also have opted for the dynamic 14..\textit{xe}3 15..\textit{xe}3 \textit{e}5. 15..\textit{c}2 \textit{xe}3 16..\textit{xe}3 \textit{g}6 17..\textit{c}4 \textit{f}5 18..\textit{fe}1 18..\textit{ae}1. 18...\textit{g}7 19..\textit{ad}1 \textit{d}7 20..\textit{h}1 \textit{c}8 with a dynamic balance in Polugaevsky-Karpov, Moscow Candidates 1974;

C2) Playing an early 12...\textit{h}6 has also another drawback, which can be clearly seen after 13..\textit{h}3 \textit{d}5 14..\textit{xd}5 \textit{exd}5:
We now have a central pawn symmetry, but the position is far from equal: 15.\(\text{c2}\) White will create a battery with \(\text{c2/ d3}\), which will be a difficult problem for Black since the pawn on \(\text{h6}\) is always hanging in case of \(\ldots g7-g6\). 15\ldots\text{d6} 16.\(\text{Re1}\) \(\text{c7}\) 17.\(\text{Cc1}\) \(\text{e6}\) 18.\(\text{Wd3}\) f5 Now the e5-square is terribly weak in Black’s camp. 19.\(\text{d2}\) \(\text{Fe8}\) 20.\(\text{a4}\) \(\text{f7}\) 21.\(\text{xc6}\) \(\text{bxc6}\) 22.\(\text{e5}\) and White had a winning advantage in Reshevsky-Szabo, Buenos Aires 1970.

10\ldots\text{a6}

Black decides to play a useful developing move and keep the tension.
• In case Black opts for an isolated pawn position with 10\ldots\text{xd4} 11.\text{exd4} \(\text{b6}\)

White is better after:
A) 12.\(\text{g5}\) h6:
A1) 13.\(\text{h4}\) does not work well, since the complications favour Black af-

17\ldots\text{f6}! 18.\(\text{c4}\) \(\text{c6}\)! 19.\(\text{fd1}\) \(\text{g6}\) 20.\(\text{h3}\) \(\text{c7}\) with a black advantage in Taimanov-Parma, Tbilisi 1973.

13\ldots\text{xe3}\) In the event of 13\ldots\text{ce7} White has the advantage after 14.\(\text{g5}\) \(\text{f5}\) 15.\(\text{xd5}\) \(\text{exd5}\) 16.\(\text{ac1}\) h6 17.\(\text{f3}\) \(\text{e7}\) 18.\(\text{h4}\) followed by \(\text{b1}\) — White will force Black to play \(\ldots f7-f5\) and then Black’s e5-square will be weak. 14.\(\text{fxe3}\) \(\text{e7}\) 15.\(\text{ac1}\) \(\text{d7}\) 16.\(\text{e4}\)
White is better here. Apart from the positional idea b2-b4, c5 and e5, he also has good attacking possibilities on the kingside, for instance: 16...c8 17.eg5 g6 18.\texttt{\textit{xc8 xc8} 19.e5 f5 20.exf7! \texttt{\textit{xf7} 21.xe6 \texttt{\textit{e7} 22.c5 with a large advantage for White.}

\textbullet In the event of 10...b6 we get a symmetrical pawn structure with White having an advantage in space and development: 11.dxc5:

A) 11...\texttt{\textit{xd1} 12.xd1 xc5 13.b4 e7 14.b2 b6 15.e5 d8 was played in Polugaevsky-F. Olafsson, Las Palmas 1974. 15...b7 16.d6 \texttt{\textit{xd6} 17.xd6 with an endgame advantage for White due to his bishop pair;

B) 11...xc5 12.b4 d6 13.b2 \texttt{\textit{e7} 14.c2 d7

The critical moment. 15.e4! The knight on f6 is protecting its king and has to be exchanged. We see a similar motif also in some lines of the Meran and the Queen's Gambit Accepted. After 15.fd1 in Polugaevsky-Karpov, Moscow Candidates’ 1974, Black gradually equalized with 15...e5! (Karpov had an excellent sense of danger — now White's e4 idea no longer works, while Black also transfers his knight to g6, bringing in an extra defender for his king) 16.g5 ac8 17.f4 g6 18.\texttt{\textit{e2 b8= 15...xe4 16.xe4 In order to protect his king Black will be forced to create a pawn weakness by playing ...f7-f6 or ...g7-g6. White has excellent attacking possibilities on the kingside here and has a clear advantage.}

\textbullet If 10...\texttt{\textit{e7} White is better after 11.\texttt{\textit{wc2 (threatening 12.dxc5, so Black is forced to make a decision) 11...\texttt{\textit{xd4} 12.xd4 d8 13.e4! (should Black exchange the knights on e4, then his kingside will be left without defenders and become vulnerable) 13...d5 (taking a pawn with 13...\texttt{\textit{xd4} 14.\texttt{\textit{xd4 xd4} is, to say the least, very risky after 15.g5) 14.b4! (White's control of the c5-square will be an important trump in this position) 14...b6

15.b2 d7 16.fel e8 17.c5 Black is passive, White was dominating and won easily in Jussupow-Lobron, Stockholm 2003.

11.b1!

White continues with his plan of improving his pieces while getting ready to play an isolated pawn position.

\textbullet In the event of 11.a4

A) 11...c4? is wrong, since Black will not manage to conveniently connect with ...b7-b5. White builds a formida-
ble centre and is clearly better, which is very aptly shown in an old Botvinnik game: 12.b3! cxb3 13...xb3 a5 14...b2 b6 15.e4 dxe7 16...f6 White is better, the Patriarch executes excellently: 16...g6 17.d5! e5 18.a1 b5 19.c5 d6 20.a3 The white knight travels to c6! 20...d7 21.hc1 we7 22.b4 b6 23.c6 White had a large advantage and easily won in Botvinnik-Kan, Moscow 1953.

B) 11...cxd4 2.exd4

In order not to become worse. White decides to get rid of his isolated pawn and simplifies with 19.d5 cxd5 20...xd5 exd5 21...xd5 a8 22.0-0

Polugaevsky-Karpov, Moscow Candidates' 1974.

11...d6 12...c2

With an accurate series of moves White achieves an opening advantage.

12...g6

Or 12...cxd4 13.a1 b6 (13...e5? is wrong due to 14.exd4 ...xd4 15...xd4 exd4 16...g5) 14.exd4

In this isolated pawn position the white side should be favoured. The fact that Anatoly Karpov, a past master in playing against an isolated pawn, decided not to return to this variation, confirms this verdict. Taking a pawn with 14...h6? would not be good since White gets a tremendous initiative for the small material investment after 15...xd4 h6 16...b4 e8 17...xf6+! xf6 18...xd4 h6 19.e3 h5 20...h7+...
White has more space, his pieces are better developed, and also Black's kingside structure has been compromised.

15...e5

Black tries to close the long diagonal and speed up his development, but this move has another drawback.

16.d1 w8 17.b5 axb5
18.axb5 f5 19.e2xb1
20.c7 b8 21.xa8 f5
22.b6

White was a sound exchange up in Polugaevsky-Karpov, Moscow Candidates’ 1974.

**Conclusion**

After 8...c6 9.a3 Black does best to transpose to the main lines. The independent option 9...cxd4 gives White the pleasant choice between playing with the bishop pair with 10.axb4, or playing against a black isolani or black hanging pawns. And after 9...a5, Polugaevsky’s clever regrouping with a2, b1 and c2 gives White promising play against Black’s kingside.
Chapter 4.2

Karpov Variation – 8...cxd4 9.exd4 b6

This is one of the most important theoretical lines of the 4.e3 Nimzo, the more so because exactly the same position can be reached via the Panov Attack in the Caro-Kann: 1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.c4 \( \square \)f6 5.\( \square \)c3 e6 6.\( \square \)f3 \( \square \)b4 7.\( \square \)d3 dxc4 8.\( \square \)xc4 0-0 9.0-0. Black has here no less than five theoretically established moves at his disposal and we will analyse all of them. A good general understanding of isolated pawn positions is a must for any player willing to master this line either from the white or the black side. Very often, transformations to pawn structures with hanging pawns in the centre (Black takes ...\( \square \)xc3 and White responds bxc3) or (less frequent in this line) with a central pawn symmetry (Black jumps ...\( \square \)d5, White takes \( \square \)xd5 and Black responds ...exd5) occur in this line. I have analysed this subject extensively in my book WinningChess Middlegames.

9...b6

This is considered to be Black’s main move here. 9...a6 has been popular lately, while three other moves are relatively less frequent nowadays:

- The alternative 9...\( \square \)c6 mostly transposes to another line after 10.a3, which in my opinion is White’s strongest reply. A relatively independent continuation here is 10.\( \square \)g5.
This does not promise White anything special, so I will give just a few examples of how play may proceed. As said, 10.a3! transposes to the line 7.0-0 dxc4 8.Qxc4 Qc6 9.a3 cxd4 10.exd4, which was analysed in the previous chapter. My conclusion in that line is that White is better, so players interested in 9...Qc6 please focus on that analysis. 10.Qe1 is also possible, likely transposing to one of the other two lines. 10...Qe7 We have here again transposed to the above-mentioned line with 7.0-0 dxc4 8.Qxc4 Qc6 9.a3 cxd4 10.exd4 Qe7, where I analysed that 11.Qe1 is White’s best move. 10...b6 is also possible, however if Black opts for the plan with ...b7-b6 and ...Qb7, then it is more flexible and more logical to start with 9...b6. The same goes for the option of ...b7-b6 on move 11. 11.a3 Moves like 11.Qc1 or 11.Qe1, with the idea to save time on a2-a3 and achieve an improved version of this line, have been tried in practice. They bring White no opening advantage; a2-a3 simply turns out to be a useful move for White in this line since the black bishop is on e7 now and cannot take on c3 anymore, changing the pawn structure. 11...a6 12.Wd3 b5 13.Qa2 Qb7 14.ad1 Qc8 15.Qfe1 A critical moment:

A) 15...Qe8? A mistake. Black allows White to execute a standard idea: 16.Qxf6! Qxf6 17.d5! Now the break with the isolated central pawn, so typical for these positions, comes with full force. 17...exd5 18.Qxe8+ Wxe8 19.Qxd5 Black is in big trouble here and his position quickly collapses. 19...Qd8 20.Qe1 Wf8 21.Wf5 Qa5 22.Qe5 g6 23.Wd7 Qxd5 24.Wxc8 1-0 Portisch-Bilek, Budapest ch-HUN 1975;

B) Correct was 15...b4 with complicated play, for example: 16.Qa4 bxa3 17.bxa3 Wa5 18.Qxf6 gxf6! 18...Qxf6 19.Qc5 is good for White. 19.Qc5 Qxc5 20.Qb1 f5 21.dxc5 Qfd8! 21...Wxc5?! 22.Qg5 allows White a strong kingside attack. 22.We3 Qe7 23.Qg5 Qxd1 24.Qxd1 Wa4 with a double-edged position.

Also popular here is 9...Qbd7.

The positions reached after this move often have to be compared to the line 7.0-0 dxc4 8.Qxc4 Qbd7, with the difference that here Black has already taken on d4, which gives White a slightly improved version in a number of lines. Black’s decision is on the other hand easy to explain, because in the mentioned line 7.0-0 dxc4 8.Qxc4 Qbd7 a lot of black players do not like the continuations 9.Wb3 or 9.a3 cxd4
Part IV: 4...0-0 5.\textbf{\textit{\textbf{\textit{d3}}} d5 6.\textbf{\textit{\textit{\textit{\textbf{f3}}} c5 7.0-0 – The Immediate 7...dxc4 8.\textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbf{x}}}}}c4

10.axb4. I would strongly advise the reader to pay serious attention to the lines with 7.0-0 dxc4 8.\textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbf{x}}}c4 \textit{\textit{\textbf{d}}}}bd7, especially 9.\textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbf{e}}}e2 b6 10.\textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbf{d}}}}}d1 cxd4 11.exd4, to compare and understand the differences.

A) 10.\textbf{\textit{\textbf{f}}}e1 b6 transposes to 9...b6 lines;
B) For 10.\textbf{\textit{\textbf{w}}}d3 please see under 7.0-0 dxc4 8.\textbf{\textit{\textbf{xe}}}c4 \textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbf{d}}}}bd7 9.\textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbf{w}}}d}3 cxd4 10.exd4;
C) White often plays 10.\textbf{\textit{\textbf{d}}}d3, a move which in my opinion brings White no opening advantage:

C1) 10...a6 is inferior: 11.\textbf{\textit{\textbf{e}}}e5 \textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbf{xe}}}}e5 12.\textbf{\textit{\textbf{d}}}xe5 \textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbf{d}}}}d7 13.\textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbf{f}}}f1} c5 14.\textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbf{e}}}e3} g6 14...\textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbf{d}}}}d7?? is a blunder due to the basic tactic 15.\textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbf{b}}}h4+!} \textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbf{g}}}xh4} 16.\textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbf{w}}}h5+} \textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbf{g}}}g8} 17.\textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbf{h}}}h3} f6 18.\textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbf{w}}}h7+} \textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbf{f}}}f7} 19.\textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbf{h}}}h6} \textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbf{g}}}g8} 20.\textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbf{g}}}g3}. 15.\textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbf{e}}}e4} \textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbf{xe}}}}e4 16.\textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbf{xe}}}e4} \textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbf{e}}}e7} 17.\textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbf{h}}}h6} with White’s advantage

Gligoric-Tolush, Leningrad 1957;
C2) 10...b6 11.\textbf{\textit{\textbf{a}}}a3

In general I am not impressed with this move here. 11.\textbf{\textit{\textbf{g}}}g5 is of course possible, however in that case it is better to start with 10.\textbf{\textit{\textbf{g}}}g5. 11...\textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbf{c}}}c3} 11...\textbf{\textit{\textbf{e}}}e7 is also playable, but the text is more to the point. 12.\textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbf{b}}}xc3} The pawn structure has now been transformed into one with connected hanging pawns in the centre for White. It is a very important difference here whether those white pawns are on c4 and d4, well supported by the rest of White’s army and with dynamic possibilities, or on c3 and d4, where in most cases they are a liability – definitely the c3 pawn. Anyhow, what I do not like for White after 11.a3 is: yes, White did force Black to make a decision, but he has spent a tempo with the a-pawn in order to achieve this structural transformation. As we will see in a number of lines, White has enough trouble getting an opening advantage here without spending tempi!

C21) 12...\textbf{\textit{\textbf{b}}}b7 is the best move. Indeed it looks the most logical to first develop the bishop and then decide how to target White’s c3 pawn.

C211) 13.\textbf{\textit{\textbf{e}}}e1 and now:

C2111) 13...\textbf{\textit{\textbf{c}}}c8 is probably the most natural reply. 14.\textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbf{d}}}d2}? White runs into a tactical motif worth remembering. 14.c4, with regular play with central hanging pawns, was the correct way to proceed. Again, a good general understanding of positions with hanging pawns in the centre is a must in order to master this line either as White or as Black. 14...\textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbf{c}}}c5}? Thus it comes in handy that the black queen is still on d8. All of a sudden White does not have a good solution. 15.\textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbf{e}}}e2} \textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbf{c}}}c4} 16.\textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbf{d}}}d2} 17.\textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbf{e}}}e2} \textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbf{f}}}xf3} 18.\textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbf{g}}}xf3} \textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbf{d}}}d6} 19.\textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbf{w}}}e3} \textbf{\textit{\textit{\textbf{f}}}d8} Due to White’s compro-
mised pawn structure Black was clearly better and went on to win in Donner-Andersson, Amsterdam 1973;

C2112) Also possible was 13...\textit{He8} 14.\textit{Gg5 wc7} 15.c4 \textit{Mac8} 16.\textit{He5 xe5} 17.\textit{dxe5}. An important moment and a motif to remember in such positions! 17...\textit{d7}? Allowing White to develop a kingside attack. The zwischenzug 17...\textit{wc6}! would have seriously disrupted White's attacking plans on the kingside. This is something of a standard motif in Black's counterplay arsenal in these positions. 18.\textit{Wh5 f8} 19.\textit{He3 wc6} 20.\textit{Gg3} White now has a serious kingside attack, however a terrible blunder ends the game abruptly: 20...\textit{xc7}?? Black seems to have no feeling for danger at all. 20...\textit{Gg6} was logical. 21.\textit{xe7}+! A schoolboy tactic. 21...\textit{xe7} 22.\textit{Gf6} and White won in Korobov-Macieja, Warsaw 2010.

C212) Another possibility is 13.c4 \textit{Cc8}

(less frequent) ...\textit{h5}-\textit{f4}. So it is far from clear what the best square is for the dark-squared bishop. Reader, take note of this, and take this into consideration when you have to decide where to develop your dark-squared bishop in such positions! In the event of 14.\textit{f4} Black's counterplay along the b8-h2 diagonal is prevented, however the position is balanced after 14...\textit{He8} 15.\textit{He1 f8} 14...\textit{wc7} 15.\textit{He1 wc4} Black has nice counterplay. 16.\textit{wd2 wc6} 16 ...\textit{h5} is also OK for Black. 17.\textit{Gxe5 xe5} Now Gligoric makes a decision that is difficult to explain. 18.\textit{dxe5}? White voluntarily worsens his own pawn structure. Also \textit{b2} is now badly placed, hitting its own pawn on e5. 18.\textit{exe5} was a normal response, very much in the spirit of the \textit{b2} development and with the rule to keep the centre dynamic in positions with hanging pawns. 18...\textit{wc6} Black is slightly better. 19.\textit{Gg5}? A blunder. After 19.f3 \textit{d7}, Black has a small plus due to White's compromised pawn structure. 19...\textit{h6}! White's queen does not have a good retreat. 20.\textit{Gg3 h5}! 21.\textit{Gg4 wg4+} 22.\textit{xg2 xg2} and Black was a sound pawn up, with White's pawn structure damaged in Gligoric-Balashov, Tilburg 1977.

C22) In the case of 12...\textit{wc7} White gets an advantage:
13.\textbf{d}2 Please notice that with the black queen on d8, such a move is not good because Black has the jump $\text{c}5$, as we have seen in Donner-Andersson! In the event of \textbf{13.e}1 Black can collect the pawn on c3: 13...$\text{W}xc3$! 14.$\text{f}4$ $\text{b}7$ 15.$\text{e}3$ $\text{c}6$ 16.$\text{c}1$ $\text{d}5$ and White's compensation was far from obvious in Gligoric-Mecking, Manila 1975. 13...$\text{b}7$ 14.$\text{e}1$ $\text{e}8$ 15.$\text{e}5$ $\text{d}8$ Or 15...$\text{xe}5$ 16.$\text{xe}5$ $\text{d}7$ 17.$\text{e}3$ with a white advantage in Vaganian-Farago, Vrnjacka Banja 1971. 16.$\text{f}4$! An important strategic decision, worth remembering. White firmly protects his dominant knight, also ready to (at given moment) attack Black's bastion with an f-pawn push at a given moment. White had the advantage and later won in Gulko-Lobron, Manila Interzonal 1990.

D) Logical, though not that often played is 10.$\text{g}5$. The following game was ingenious and entertaining: 10...$\text{h}6$ 10...$\text{xc}3$ 11.$\text{xc}3$ gets us again into the structure with connected hanging pawns in the centre, with the difference that White has not wasted a tempo on a2-a3 in order to 'convince' Black to capture on c3. In the case of 10...$\text{b}6$ play is likely to transpose to 9...$\text{b}6$ lines, though Black has to reckon with the possibility of 11.$\text{d}5$! here. 11.$\text{h}4$ $\text{a}5$ 12.$\text{c}1$ 12.$\text{e}1$ or 12.$\text{d}3$ were other moves. 12...$\text{x}c3$ 13.$\text{x}c3$ 13.$\text{b}xc3$ $\text{b}5$ 14.$\text{d}3$ $\text{b}7$ is fine for Black. 13...$\text{b}5$ 14.$\text{b}3$ and now:

D1) If 14...$\text{b}7$ White gets initiative after 15.$\text{e}5$ $\text{xe}5$ (15...$\text{b}4$ 16.$\text{xd}7$ $\text{xd}7$ 17.$\text{g}3$→) 16.$\text{xe}5$;

D2) 14...$\text{b}4$ 15.$\text{e}3$ The white rook starts its journey. 15...$\text{d}5$ 16.$\text{e}4$ $\text{b}7$ 17.$\text{f}e1$ $\text{f}6$

18.$\text{f}4$! and now:

D21) 18...$\text{g}5$? runs into 19.$\text{xf}6$ $\text{xf}6$ 20.$\text{e}5$ $\text{d}5$ 21.$\text{g}5$ and White gets a devastating attack;

D22) 18...$\text{h}5$ 19.$\text{g}4$ $\text{h}6$ or 19...$\text{d}6$ 20.$\text{e}5$. With the text Black is hoping for a move repetition, well...

D23) 18...$\text{d}5$! is probably best, though White retains attacking chances on the kingside after 19.$\text{e}5$ $\text{xb}3$ 20.$\text{xb}3$ 20.axb3 seems to lead to a draw after 20...$\text{g}5$! (20...$\text{xe}5$ 21.$\text{dxe}5$
\( \text{d5 22.g4 with a kingside initiative for White) 21.f3 gxf4 22.xf4 g7 23.g3+ h8 24.f4 g7=). \)

\( \text{20..xe5 21.dxe5 d5 22.g4 h8.} \)

E) 10.e2

To my mind, next to 10.g5 this is the most logical way to try to take advantage of Black’s decision to take on d4 early and then develop ...bd7, compared to the line 7.0-0 dxc4 8.xc4 bd7 9.e2:

E1) 10.a6 11.a4 11.d3 was an option here. 11..b6 12.d3 bd7:

E1.1) 13.xd5 This does not achieve the desired effect for White. 13...exd5 14.g5 wd6 15.e5 e4 16.f4 w7 17.f3 d6 18.f2 Perhaps Ivanchuk realized only now that the position after 18.wc2 g6 promises White less than he had hoped for. 18.f5 and the game was soon drawn in Ivanchuk-Speelman, Reykjavik 1991;

E1.2) A possible improvement for White is 13.g5, when after 13..e7 it looks as if White has a favourable version of certain lines with 7.a4 in the Queen’s Gambit Accepted. Taking a pawn with 13..xc3?! 14.bxc3 xc3 looks very risky for Black after 15.acl b4 16.e5. Taking another pawn with 15..xd4? simply loses by force after 16.xd4 xd4 17.e4 wd8 (if 17..d5 White gets a winning attack with the prosaic 18.xf6 gxf6 19.g4+ h8 20.h4) 18.h4 h6 19.xh6 gxf6 20.e3 and White wins;

E1.3) White can also keep the central tension with 13.d2.

E2) Black can also immediately develop his queenside knight, though White keeps an advantage: 10...b6 11.b3 d7 12.e5 c8 13.g5 c6 Taking a pawn with 13..xc3 is risky, to say the least, after 14.bxc3 xc3 15.g4. 14.ad1 e7 15.xc6 xc6 Correct was 15...bxc6 — yes, weakening his own queenside pawn structure, but not allowing the coming sequence. In the case of 15..bxc6 White would also have an advantage, because compared to similar positions from the Queen’s Gambit Accepted White’s pawn is still on a2 instead on a4, which is advantageous for White. After the text White executes an idea similar to the one in the game Portisch-Bilek shown above, though it is considerably less powerful here: 16.xf6! By eliminating the f6, Black’s control of the d5-square is weakened. 16..xf6 And now the central break with the isolated pawn: 17.d5 exd5 18.xd5 xd5 19.xd5 d6 20.xb7 White is better, but Black has good drawing chances. Now Black commits a decisive blunder: 20..e8?? 20..xd1 21.xd1 b6 was normal. 21.wxe8+ xe8 22.xd6 wb5 23.wd1 g6 24.wd5 l-o Onischuk-Macieja, Khanty-Mansiysk ol 2010;

E3) In reply to 10..b6 White has been scoring well with the typical central break 11.d5!. Please see under 7.0-0 dxc4 8.xc4 bd7 9.e2 cxd4 10.exd4 b6.

• The immediate 9..xc3 capture does not look logical.
There is no reason for such a hasty decision, or to believe that creating connected hanging pawns in the centre is automatically OK for Black. Therefore, 9...\textcolor{red}{\texttt{xc3}} is not often played on grandmaster level. I will give one high-level rapid game here: 10.bxc3 \texttt{c7} 11.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{g5}} b6 12.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{d2}} \texttt{d7} 13.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{e2}} \texttt{d7} 14.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{acl}} \texttt{a8} 15.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{fe1}} \texttt{fd8} 16.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{g5}}! Heading for the h2-b8 diagonal. 16...\textcolor{red}{\texttt{h6}} Sending White’s bishop to g3 does not really improve Black’s situation. 17.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{h4}} \texttt{e8} 18.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{g3}} \texttt{d8} It is obvious that Black’s plan has failed; White soon wins material. 19.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{b5}} \texttt{e4} 20.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{e5}} \texttt{xc3} 21.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{xc3}} \texttt{xc3} 22.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{xd7}}, Karpov-Morozevich, Prague 2002.

A move that has been popular with black players of late is 9...a6. At first glance this looks a bit unusual to me. Black seems to be trying to play a hybrid between the Nimzo and the Queen’s Gambit Accepted. White has a number of options at his disposal here, however a clear road to an opening advantage is yet to be found.

A) A logical continuation is the standard developing move 10.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{g5}} b5:

A1) 11.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{b3}} a7 12.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{we2}} After 12.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{c1}} \texttt{bd7} 13.\texttt{d5} \texttt{xc3} 14.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{xc3}} \texttt{xd5} 15.\texttt{xd5} exd5 16.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{d4}} White definitely had compensation for the sacrificed pawn, however for not more than a draw, in Hracek-Dautov, Germany Bundesliga 1996/97. The approach with an immediate development of the white queen to d3 does not seem to work that well: 12.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{d3}} \texttt{bd7} 13.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{ad1}} \texttt{c8} 14.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{fe1}} \texttt{wa5!} and Black was fine in E. Vladimirov-Barsov, Abu Dhabi 2001. 12...\textcolor{red}{\texttt{xc3}} Black judges, probably correctly, that a position where White’s connected pawns are fixed on c3 and d4 is sound for him. 13.\texttt{bxc3} \texttt{bd7} 14.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{e5}} \texttt{c7} 15.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{xd7}} \texttt{xd7} 16.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{a1}}

16...\textcolor{red}{\texttt{h6}} Black did not have to hurry with this move. 16...\textcolor{red}{\texttt{d5}} followed by ...\textcolor{red}{\texttt{b6}} looks fine for him. An important factor is that Black can always prevent White’s kingside onslaught by playing either ...f7-f6 or ...f7-f5. 17.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{d2}} \texttt{f6} (again I prefer the set-up with \textcolor{red}{\texttt{d5}} and \textcolor{red}{\texttt{b6}} for Black here), with a complicated game in which White emerged victorious in Sadler-Emms, Hove ch-GBR 1997;
A2) The other bishop retreat, 11.\textit{d}3, is less played. It may also arise from the move order 10.\textit{d}3 \textit{b}5 11.\textit{g}5, and leads to standard isolated pawn positions, where White is not at all better: 11...\textit{b}7 12.\textit{c}1 \textit{bd}7 13.\textit{b}1 \textit{c}8 14.\textit{e}1 \textit{e}7 15.a3 \textit{e}8 Black’s play can be improved with 15...h6! (it is important to send the white bishop to h4 here!) and after 16.\textit{h}4

Black has a rather unusual motif, which is good to remember, in 16...\textit{c}4! and White does not have a clever way to prevent damage to his kingside structure. Black is going to capture ...\textit{xf}3 and due to the weakness of d4 pawn, White will be forced to recapture with his g-pawn. It is important that the white bishop is on h4, as here 17.\textit{e}5 is not an option since Black takes ...\textit{xe}5 and White cannot recapture dx\textit{e}5 due to the hanging bishop on h4. After 17.\textit{a}2 \textit{xf}3! 18.gxf3 \textit{c}8 Black is better. 16.\textit{d}3 \textit{f}8 17.\textit{cd}1 \textit{wb}6 18.\textit{h}4 \textit{cd}8 19.\textit{e}5 \textit{d}6 Black did not fancy complications of the type 19...\textit{g}6 20.\textit{we}2 \textit{xd}4 21.\textit{xd}4 \textit{xd}4 22.\textit{xf}7. 20.\textit{e}3 \textit{d}5 21.\textit{we}2 and White had some advantage in I. Sokolov-Christiansen, Reykjavik 1998.

B) 10.a4

This position looks very similar (and often even transposes!) to the following 7.a4 line of the Queen’s Gambit accepted: 1.d4 d5 2.c4 dxc4 3.\textit{f}3 \textit{f}6 4.e3 e6 5.\textit{xc}4 c5 6.0-0 a6 7.a4 \textit{xc}4 8.\textit{xd}4 \textit{e}7 9.\textit{c}3 0-0. It is clear that Black is a tempo up here, because White has played first \textit{d}3 and then \textit{xc}4. However Black’s bishop is now placed on b4, which is not a perfect square; e7 is more natural in these isolated pawn positions. So we often see Black retreat the bishop to e7, and then we have exactly this QGA line.

B1) Perfectly playable, though some players would consider it perhaps passive given the resulting endgame and Black’s pawn weakness on e6 there, is 10...\textit{d}7 11.\textit{wb}3. This looks like the only way for White to get to some sort of plus. Black gets a perfect QGA in the case of 11.\textit{e}3 \textit{c}6 12.\textit{e}5 \textit{bd}7 13.\textit{xc}6 bxc6 14.\textit{we}2 a5 15.\textit{fc}1 \textit{b}6 16.\textit{d}3 \textit{wd}7 17.\textit{c}2 \textit{bd}5 as in Sadler-Shipov, Hastings 1998/99.

11...\textit{ac}6 12.d5 12.\textit{e}5? \textit{d}6 can only be better for Black. 12...\textit{exd}5 13.\textit{xd}5 \textit{e}6! 14.\textit{xf}6+ 14.\textit{xb}4? \textit{a}5 is also better for Black. 14.\textit{xf}6 15.\textit{xe}6 \textit{xe}6 16.\textit{xe}6 \textit{fxe}6 17.\textit{e}3 White’s plus (Black’s weak pawn on e6) should be of an academic nature and a draw is the most likely outcome here;

B2) Not good is 10...\textit{b}6?!
White can obtain a clear advantage more or less by force with 11...\texttt{Wb3}!. One practical example went well for Black: 11...\texttt{e2} \texttt{b7} 12...\texttt{f4} \texttt{c6} 13...\texttt{fd} 3 \texttt{e7}, with approximate equality, was seen in Sadler-Psakhis, Elista 1998. 11...\texttt{d6} Black has obvious problems in the case of 11...\texttt{e7} 12.d5, or he would lose a pawn for no compensation in the event of 11...\texttt{c6} 12.d5 \texttt{exd5} 13...\texttt{xd5} \texttt{xd5} 14...\texttt{xd5} \texttt{a5} 15...\texttt{xf7}+ \texttt{xf7} 16...\texttt{xb4} \texttt{b7} 17...\texttt{g5} \texttt{d5} 18.f3. 12...\texttt{g5} \texttt{b7} 13...\texttt{xf6} \texttt{gf6} 14.d5! This thematic pawn sacrifice gives White a sizeable advantage here. Not good is 14...\texttt{a2}? \texttt{c6} 15...\texttt{ad1} due to the simple 15...\texttt{a5}!. 14...\texttt{xc3} 15...\texttt{xc3} or 15...\texttt{xf6} or 15...\texttt{exd5} 16...\texttt{d3} \texttt{c6} 17...\texttt{d4} and White has excellent attacking possibilities, worth clearly more than a pawn. 16...\texttt{xd5} \texttt{exd5} 17...\texttt{d4} The white knight on d4 is a monster and Black's kingside structure is terribly damaged. White is clearly better.

B3 1) 10...\texttt{c6} 11...\texttt{g5} \texttt{h6} 12...\texttt{h4} and now Black has to retreat his bishop to e7 and so we get the above-mentioned QGA line. I would advise the reader to check this line in the original move order – this is useful for someone willing to delve deeper into this line. 12...\texttt{e7} 13...\texttt{e1} 13...\texttt{d2}, with the idea \texttt{ad1}, \texttt{e5}, is another plan in such positions, which has been tried in some games with the QGA move order:

B3 i) The immediate 13...\texttt{d5} does not quite equalize: 14...\texttt{xd5} \texttt{exd5} In the event of 14...\texttt{exh4} 15...\texttt{xc6} \texttt{bxc6} 16...\texttt{exh4} \texttt{wh4} 17...\texttt{e4} \texttt{ab8} 18...\texttt{d2} \texttt{d8} 19...\texttt{e3} \texttt{we7} 20...\texttt{c5} White has a position where, due to the pawn structure, his knight is superior to Black's bishop, as in Gelfand-Karjakin, Monaco rapid 2011. 15...\texttt{xe7} \texttt{xe7} 16...\texttt{b3}

White here has the typical upper hand in a central pawn symmetry, mainly due to the fact that Black is left with the light-squared bishop, which is inferior here due to the fact that Black's d5 pawn is on a light square. I have dealt extensively with this type of positions in my book Winning Chess Middlegames.

B3 2) 13...\texttt{b5}! does not equalize either: 14...\texttt{xe7} \texttt{xe7} 15.d5 Now Black takes a strategically risky decision, however trading everything off on d5 would lead to a typical risk-free advantage for White. 15...\texttt{f4} 16.d6 \texttt{f5} 17...\texttt{e4} \texttt{d7} and here White could have obtained a clear advantage with 18...\texttt{e5}. The actual game continued 18...\texttt{d2} \texttt{g6} 19...\texttt{d4} \texttt{c8} 20.b3 \texttt{gh4} 21...\texttt{xf5} \texttt{xf5} 22...\texttt{g3} \texttt{xg3} $\frac{1}{2}$-\$; Sargissian-Khairullin, Moscow 2010;
B33) 13...d7 14.We2 The ‘active’ 14.Qe5?! plays into Black’s hands after the simple 14...Qe8. After the text:

B331) White had the regular upper hand in a central pawn symmetry and a very small plus after 14...Qe8 15.Rad1 Qd5 16.Qxd5 exd5 (16...Qxh4 17.Qe4 Qf6 is also possible) 17.Qxe7 Qxe7 18.Qe5 in V. Babula-S. Atalik, Germany Bundesliga 2000/01;

B332) 14...Qd5 seems to equalize easily here:

B3321) 15.Qxe7 Qdxe7 should gradually lead to equality and a draw after 16.d5 (16.Rad1 Wb6 17.Qe5 Qxe5 18.Qxe5 Qc6 may easily become risky for White) 16...exd5 17.Qxd5 Qxd5 18.Qxd5 Wb6;

B3322) 15.Qxd5 Qxh4 is also fine for Black. In this double-edged position his chances are definitely not inferior: 16.Qe4 Qf6 17.Rad1 17.d5 Qd4. 17...Wb6 18.Qd1 It is not easy to find another active plan for White.

This certainly brings White nowhere – this knight swap only helps Black develop. 17.Qd3 looks like an improvement. 17...Qxe5 18.Wxe5 Qc6 19.Qd3 Qc8 and Black had a pleasant position in Topalov-Karjakin, Monaco blind 2011.

C) An interesting tactical option for White is the sacrifice 10.Qb3 b5 11.d5! Qxc3 12.Qxe6 Qa5 13.exf7+ Wh8 14.Qf4 Qc6. This has been tried in the rapid game Ivanchuk-Kramnik, New York 1994. While the sacrifice is interesting, it is difficult to believe that it promises White more than a dynamic balance, while it definitely carries a high degree of risk. Therefore Ivanchuk’s idea has not found followers;
D) 10.\(\text{d}5\) does not bring White anything due to the fact that Black has a nice positional exchange sacrifice after 10...\(\text{b}5!\) 11.\(\text{f}3\):

11...\(\text{xa}7\) 12.\(\text{d}3\) would allow White to develop a standard kingside initiative. 12.\(\text{x}a8\) \(\text{xe}5\) 13.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{xc}3\) 14.\(\text{xc}3\) \(\text{xe}2\) 15.\(\text{xb}8\) \(\text{wc}4\) This position has been played in a number of games. Black has excellent positional control (16...\(\text{d}5\) will be his next move) and a better pawn structure. White has to be careful to preserve the balance here;

E) Not often played is 10.\(\text{d}3\). However, it seems to lead to some advantage:

10...\(\text{b}5\) 10...\(\text{b}6\) 11.\(\text{a}3\) should lead to an isolated pawn position that favours White. 11.\(\text{a}4!\) The most testing and arguably the most logical continuation, likely leading to a certain advantage.

Other moves are not dangerous for Black: 11.\(\text{e}5\) \(\text{b}7\) 12.\(\text{g}5\) \(\text{e}7\) was a fine QGA for Black in Fedoseev-Lysyj, Taganrog 2011. 11...\(\text{bxa}4\) Black does not get any compensation for the pawn in the case of 11...\(\text{b}7\)? 12.axb5 axb5 13.\(\text{xa}8\) \(\text{xa}8\) 14.\(\text{xb}5\).

E1) 12.\(\text{xa}4\) is likely to lead to a level position after 12...\(\text{a}5\) 13.\(\text{e}3\) \(\text{a}6\) (it is strategically a good idea for Black to exchange light-squared bishops here; 13...\(\text{b}7\) 14.\(\text{e}5\) is a bit better for White) 14.\(\text{e}5\) \(\text{xd}3\) 15.\(\text{xd}3\) \(\text{a}6\) 16.\(\text{fc}1\) \(\text{d}5\);

E2) A road to a small white advantage seems to be: 12.\(\text{xa}4\) \(\text{a}5\) 13.\(\text{g}5\) \(\text{a}6\) Black trades the light-squared bishops, which is strategically OK for him. However, the weakness of his a-pawn will remain, and also his \(\text{b}8\) has yet to be developed. 13...\(\text{h}6\) 14.\(\text{h}4\) \(\text{bd}7\) 15.\(\text{e}5\) was pleasant for White in Iskusnikh-Voitsekhovsky, Tula 2001. 14.\(\text{e}5\) \(\text{h}6\) 15.\(\text{h}4\) \(\text{e}7\) 16.\(\text{e}1\) \(\text{xd}3\) 17.\(\text{xd}3\) \(\text{d}5\) 18.\(\text{xe}7\) \(\text{xe}7\) and now:

E21) In the event of 19.\(\text{d}5\)? White’s initiative is likely to evaporate and the game will probably end peacefully after 19...\(\text{xd}5\) (White gets a strong initiative after 19...\(\text{exd}5\) 20.\(\text{g}4\) followed by \(\text{g}3\) 20.\(\text{d}4\) \(\text{d}7\) 21.\(\text{c}6\) \(\text{b}6\) 22.\(\text{xd}5\) \(\text{exd}5\) 23.\(\text{e}7+\) \(\text{h}8\) 24.\(\text{xd}5\) \(\text{c}5\);
E22) 19.\textit{wb}5 gives some advantage to White since Black still has some problems developing – especially his \( \text{Qb8} \), and his a5 pawn is more of a weakness here than White's d4 pawn, Hübner-Assmann, Lugano 1989.

E3) 12.\textit{\text{dxe5}} is probably the most direct. White wants to hinder Black's development. 12...\textit{\text{b7}} and now:

E31) The game is likely to end peacefully in the case of 13.\textit{\text{g5}} \textit{\text{bd7}}! If Black plays 13...a3 14.\textit{\text{e4}} \textit{\text{xe4}} 15.\textit{\text{exe4}} \textit{\text{a7}} 16.bxa3 \textit{\text{e7}} 17.\textit{\text{f3}}, due to the excellently placed \textit{\text{e5}} and Black's problems to develop his \textit{\text{b8}}, White has an advantage, see 17...\textit{\text{fd7}} 18.\textit{\text{e3}}. 14.\textit{\text{xd7}} \textit{\text{xd7}} 15.\textit{\text{xf6}} \textit{\text{xf6}}

Very often in this line of the Nimzo, Black should not be afraid to allow White to damage his kingside pawn structure this way, since White has no way to exploit it. 16.\textit{\text{g4}}+ \textit{\text{h8}} 17.\textit{\text{h4}} f5 18.\textit{\text{f6}}+ \textit{\text{g8}} 19.\textit{\text{g5}}+ and White has nothing better than a perpetual check;

E32) 13.\textit{\text{xa4}}?! leads to an unclear pawn sacrifice: 13...\textit{\text{xd4}} 13...a5 14.\textit{\text{d1}} is a bit better for White. 14.\textit{\text{d1}}

E321) White is clearly better in the event of 14...\textit{\text{xe5}} 15.\textit{\text{xb4}} \textit{\text{d5}} (or 15...\textit{\text{c6}} 16.\textit{\text{f4}}) 16.\textit{\text{xd5}} \textit{\text{exd5}} 17.\textit{\text{f4}} \textit{\text{h5}} 18.\textit{\text{f3}} \textit{\text{bd7}} 19.\textit{\text{xa6}}

White has regained his sacrificed pawn and has the advantage of the bishop pair and the soon-to-be dangerous passed b-pawn;

E322) After 14...\textit{\text{wc5}} 15.\textit{\text{f4}} 15.\textit{\text{e3}} \textit{\text{we7}} 15...\textit{\text{e7}} 16.\textit{\text{ac1}} White has compensation. Whether it is enough for a pawn is not easy to say. Anyhow, 10.\textit{\text{d3}} deserves to be examined further.

F) 10.a3 is a logical continuation. White is forcing Black to either capture on c3, which is in the spirit of the position and done by most players, or retreat the bishop to e7, which gives White a favourable version of QGA lines. 10...\textit{\text{xc3}} In the event of 10...\textit{\text{e7}}, most probably the simplest way for White to get a favourable version of the QGA is 11.\textit{\text{a2}} b5 12.d5! with White's advantage, since 12...\textit{\text{exd5}} 13.\textit{\text{xd5}} \textit{\text{xd5}} 14.\textit{\text{xd5}} \textit{\text{a7}} 15.\textit{\text{e5}}! is unpleasant for Black, see 15...\textit{\text{bd6}} 16.\textit{\text{e1}}. 11.\textit{\text{xc3}} and now:

F1) 11...b5 12.\textit{\text{d3}} \textit{\text{b7}}

Here the following game of Alexandrov is rather instructive, showing the way for White to obtain an advantage. To me it is not obvious how Black's play can be meaningfully improved: 13.a4! A standard way for White to eliminate his own weak a-pawn and create a weak pawn for Black on b5. 13...\textit{\text{wd5}} 14.\textit{\text{xb5}} \textit{\text{xb5}} 15.\textit{\text{b1}} \textit{\text{c6}} 16.\textit{\text{e1}} \textit{\text{bd7}} 17.\textit{\text{e2}}! The queen transfer to f1 is an excellent idea here. White's queen will be defending the vital g2-square, while mounting the pressure on b5. 17...\textit{\text{a2}} 18.\textit{\text{xf1}} \textit{\text{g4}} 18...\textit{\text{wd6}} 19.\textit{\text{e5}} is obviously very good for White. 19.\textit{\text{e2}}! and now:

F11) In the case of 19...\textit{\text{xa8}} Black is in bad shape after 20.h3 \textit{\text{gf6}} 21.c4! \textit{\text{wh5}} (21...\textit{\text{bxc4}} loses an exchange to 22.\textit{\text{xa2}} \textit{\text{xa2}} 23.\textit{\text{xc4}}) 22.d5! \textit{\text{exd5}} 23.cxb5;
Part IV: 4...0-0 5.\xd3 d5 6.\xf3 c5 7.0-0 - The Immediate 7...\xc4 8.\xc4

F12) 19...\xc8 20.\xbbs! 20.h3 \xdgf6 21.c4 is no longer nearly so strong due to 21...\xc4 22.\xa2 cxd3 23.\xa3 \xf5. 20.\xe2 Or 20...\xb5 21.\xb5 \xb5 22.\xa2 \xf1+ 23.\xf1, and due to Black's back-rank weakness White remains a sound pawn up. 21.\xe2 \xb5 22.\xb5 White is a sound pawn up. 22...\xc3 Black hopes for a tactical escape. 23.\xd5 \xc1+ 24.\xe1 \xc5 25.\xd2 White was clearly better and went on to win in Alexandrov-Kunte, Dubai 2001.

F2) 11...\xc7 and now:

F2 1) In the event of 12.\xd3 Black is probably well advised to take the c3 pawn: 12...\xc3! 13.\xf4 This bishop will not do much on the h2-b8 diagonal. 13.\xd5 looks like a better attempt. 13...\xc6 14.\xe1 h6 It is difficult to find anything clear for White to compensate for the sacrificed pawn, so he is already looking for a bailout. 15.\xd6 \xd8 16.\xc7 \xd7 17.\xe3 17.\xb6 15 \xd5 18.\xc5 would not work for White after the simple 18...\xa5 19.\xc2 b6 20.\xd3 \xf6. 17...\xb2 18.\xe2 \xc3 Should Black be ambitious, then 18...\xa1 19.\xa1 \xc7 is an option to consider. 19.\xe3 \xb2 20.\xe2 \xc3 1/2-1/2 Nisipeanu-Karjakin, Medias 2011;

F22) 12.\xb2 b5 13.\xd3 and now:

F22 1) Interesting is 13...\xc3!?

F22 11) 14.\xb2 \xb3 15.d5

15...\xb7! The only move for Black. White wins quickly after 15...\xd5 16.\xf6 \xd6 17.\xd2 \xf7 18.\xb1 \xb4 19.\xb4 or 15...\xd5? 16.\xb7+! (again, reader, take note of this standard sacrifice and how often this idea is repeated in these lines) 16...\xb7 17.\xe4+ \xb8 18.\xd5 \xf5 19.\xb4. 16.\xd1

F22111) Taking another pawn with 16...\xd5 is not to be advised for Black, as after 17.\xb4 White has excellent bishops, a dominant knight and excellent attacking possibilities. This is often the outcome of the featured pawn sacrifice, which is one of White's standard ideas in these positions. I have dealt with this extensively in my book Winning Chess Middlegames. 17...\xa4 18.\xb5:

F221111) 18...\xb7 19.\xe3 19.\xd4 \xb8 20.\xd2, cutting off Black's queen on a4, is also a possibility. 19...\xb4 20.f3 \xb5 21.g4 \xb4 22.fxg4 \xb4+ 23.\xb3 \xb3+ 24.hxg3 f6 25.\xc1 followed by \xc7, and White wins;

F221112) 18...\xb4 19.\xd2 \xc5 20.\xb3 \xb5 21.g4 \xb3 22.\xb7! Black is in trouble here. 22...\xb3 23.\xe2 wins. 22112) 16...\xb7! 17.\xb1

17...\xb5! 18.\xb7+ \xb7 19.\xd5 \xd5 This is an unusual position, probably dynamically balanced.
F2212) Another possibility is 14.\( \text{a} \text{d}2 \) \( \text{w} \text{c}7 \) (14.\( \text{w} \text{c}6 \) 15.\( \text{ac}1 \)) 15.\( \text{ac}1 \) \( \text{w} \text{b}6 \) 16.\( \text{b} \text{b}4 \) \( \text{e} \text{e}8 \) 17.\( \text{c} \text{c}5 \) \( \text{w} \text{b}7 \) 18.\( \text{d} \text{d}5 \). White's pressure is obviously worth a pawn — whether it is worthwhile is not clear.

F222) 13...\( \text{e} \text{e}7 \) 14.\( \text{d} \text{d}2 \) \( \text{h} \text{h}4 \) 15.\( \text{a} \text{a}4 \) \( \text{b} \text{b}4 \? \) loses a pawn for next to nothing after 16.\( \text{a} \text{a} \text{a}7 \) \( \text{a} \text{a}7 \) 17.\( \text{g} \text{g}5 \) \( \text{g} \text{g}8 \) 18.\( \text{w} \text{x} \text{x} \text{a}4 \). 16.\( \text{a} \text{a}4 \)
White has a general positional advantage here, mainly because White's c-pawn will soon become dangerous, compared to Black's a-pawn which is likely to become a weakness soon. White also has the bishop pair and more space:

F2221) 16...\( \text{a} \text{a}5 \) 17.\( \text{a} \text{a} \text{a} \) To 17.\( \text{c} \text{c}4 \) Black has a good response in 17...\( \text{a} \text{a}5 \) !. 17...\( \text{a} \text{a} \text{a}6 \) 18.\( \text{a} \text{a} \text{a} \) \( \text{a} \text{a}4 \) 19.\( \text{c} \text{c}4 \) \( \text{a} \text{a} \text{e}8 \) 20.\( \text{a} \text{a}5 \) 20.\( \text{a} \text{a} \text{c}3 \) This is already enough for an advantage, but White has a specific idea in mind. 20...\( \text{a} \text{a} \text{e}5 \) 21.\( \text{a} \text{a} \text{e}5 \) \( \text{d} \text{d}7 \)

22.\( \text{a} \text{a} \text{h}7 \)\+ The point behind 20.\( \text{a} \text{a} \text{e}5 \)! This type of sacrifice is standard here, we see it often in these lines and the reader is advised to take note of it. 22...\( \text{a} \text{a} \text{x} \text{h}7 \) 23.\( \text{a} \text{w} \text{h}5 \) \( \text{a} \text{a} \text{x} \text{x} \text{h}7 \) 24.\( \text{a} \text{w} \text{h}3 \) \( \text{f} \text{f}5 \) 25.\( \text{a} \text{w} \text{h}7 \) \( \text{a} \text{a} \text{x} \text{f} \text{f}7 \) 26.\( \text{a} \text{e} \text{g} \text{g}3 \) \( \text{g} \text{g}8 \) 27.\( \text{a} \text{w} \text{g}6 \) \( \text{a} \text{a} \text{e}7 \) 28.\( \text{a} \text{a} \text{x} \text{b} \text{b}4 \) \( \text{a} \text{a} \text{d}8 \) 29.\( \text{a} \text{a} \text{e}6 \) \( \text{a} \text{w} \text{b}6 \) and now White spoils a well played game in a few moves:

30.\( \text{a} \text{w} \text{x} \text{e} \text{6} \) 30.\( \text{a} \text{d}1 \) followed by \( \text{a} \text{g} \text{d} \text{d}3 \) and \( \text{a} \text{a} \text{a}3 \), would likely have led to White's victory, since Black cannot disentangle. 30...\( \text{a} \text{e} \text{e}8 \) 31.\( \text{a} \text{w} \text{f} \text{f}5 \) \( \text{a} \text{d}4 \) 32.\( \text{a} \text{e} \text{e}1 \) ?\( \text{a} \text{x} \text{d}6 \) E. Vladimirov-Zagrebelny, Abu Dhabi 2001;

F2222) 16...\( \text{a} \text{a}5 \) 17.\( \text{a} \text{a} \text{a} \) \( \text{a} \text{a} \text{e}8 \) 18.\( \text{a} \text{c} \text{c}4 \) 18.\( \text{a} \text{a} \text{b} \text{1} \) \( \text{a} \text{e}8 \) 19.\( \text{a} \text{x} \text{e} \text{5} \) \( \text{a} \text{x} \text{e} \text{5} \) 21.\( \text{a} \text{a} \text{d}1 \) \( \text{a} \text{e} \text{8} \) 22.\( \text{c} \text{c}4 \) \( \text{a} \text{a} \text{f} \text{6} \) 23.\( \text{a} \text{a} \text{f} \text{1} \) \( \text{a} \text{a} \text{e} \text{5} \) with some advantage for White, due mainly to his bishop pair, in Graf-Chandler, Germany Bundesliga 2000/01. 18...\( \text{a} \text{f} \text{4} \) 19.\( \text{a} \text{a} \text{f} \text{4} \) \( \text{w} \text{f} \text{4} \) 20.\( \text{w} \text{e} \text{3} \) Due to his better pawn structure (Black's a-pawn is a weakness, while White's c-pawn is a dangerous passer) this is better for White. I am curious what Karjakin's idea was in case Nisipeanu had played 12.\( \text{w} \text{e} \text{2} \) — I wonder whether he intended 13...\( \text{a} \text{x} \text{c} \text{3} !? \) ? As we have seen, after 9...\( \text{a} \text{a}6 \) White has a number of possibilities, 10.\( \text{a} \text{a} \text{a} \) being probably the most direct and critical one.

10.\( \text{a} \text{g} \text{5} \) \( \text{a} \text{b} \text{7} \) 11.\( \text{a} \text{e} \text{1} \)

White has a number of possibilities here. The text has been established as the main line over the years. Other options also offer White possibilities to fight for an opening advantage:

- 11.\( \text{a} \text{a} \text{c} \text{1} \) In general this looks less logical to me than the rook development to
Part IV: 4...0-0 5.\( \text{\texttt{\textipa{d3}}} \) d5 6.\( \text{\texttt{\textipa{f3}}} \) c5 7.0-0 — The Immediate 7...dxc4 8.\( \text{\texttt{\textipa{xc4}}} \)

Very likely this is Black's best move in this position. As mentioned before, in this line we often see Black voluntarily taking ...\( \text{\texttt{\textipa{xc3}}} \), transforming White's pawn structure into one with connected hanging pawns, even when the bishop is not attacked with a2-a3. 13.\( \text{\texttt{\textipa{xc3}}} \) 13.\( \text{\texttt{\textipa{xc3}}} \) should not worry Black after 13...h6 14.\( \text{\texttt{\textipa{h4}}} \) \( \text{\texttt{\textipa{c8}}} \), since 15.\( \text{\texttt{\textipa{e5}}} \) is well met with 15...g5! 16.\( \text{\texttt{\textipa{g3}}} \) \( \text{\texttt{\textipa{e4}}} \). 13...\( \text{\texttt{\textipa{c7}}} \) Black has now forced a standard transformation from an isolated white pawn in the centre into connected hanging pawns in the centre, as we have seen many times in this line. 14.\( \text{\texttt{\textipa{d3}}} \) \( \text{\texttt{\textipa{g4}}} \! \)! A standard idea to achieve counterplay in this position. Please note that it is very important that White's dark-squared bishop remains on g5 (and hence \( \text{\texttt{\textipa{g3}}} \) is impossible), so in this line Black should always think twice when he wants to be 'clever' and throw in ...h6/\( \text{\texttt{\textipa{h4}}} \). 15.\( \text{\texttt{\textipa{e4}}} \) \( \text{\texttt{\textipa{xe4}}} \) 16.\( \text{\texttt{\textipa{we4}}} \) \( \text{\texttt{\textipa{gf6}}} \) 17.\( \text{\texttt{\textipa{we2}}} \) h6 18.\( \text{\texttt{\textipa{d2}}} \) \( \text{\texttt{\textipa{c8}}} \) 19.\( \text{\texttt{\textipa{c4}}} \) \( \text{\texttt{\textipa{b7}}} \) The position is balanced and the game was later drawn in Karpov-Psakhis, Benidorm 2002;

A3) 12.\( \text{\texttt{\textipa{e8}}} \) 13.\( \text{\texttt{\textipa{fd1}}} \) By placing the king's rook on d1 instead of e1, White takes advantage of the move order starting with 11.\( \text{\texttt{\textipa{c1}}} \) — and perhaps this is the only advantage of that move order. 13...h6 14.\( \text{\texttt{\textipa{h4}}} \) \( \text{\texttt{\textipa{c8}}} \) 15.\( \text{\texttt{\textipa{b5}}} \) Black is already suffering under unpleasant pins. 15...\( \text{\texttt{\textipa{xc3}}} \) 16.\( \text{\texttt{\textipa{xc3}}} \) \( \text{\texttt{\textipa{c7}}} \) 17.\( \text{\texttt{\textipa{e5}}} \) In order to prevent material loss Black is forced to weaken his kingside. 17...g5 18.\( \text{\texttt{\textipa{g3}}} \) \( \text{\texttt{\textipa{c8}}} \) 19.\( \text{\texttt{\textipa{h4}}} \) White ripped open Black's kingside and soon won in Ivanchuk-Ponomariov, Warsaw 2010. This example clearly speaks for Black's choice of 12...\( \text{\texttt{\textipa{xc3}}} \) in this line.

B) 11...\( \text{\texttt{\textipa{c6}}} \) 12.a3
12.\(\text{e}1\) is certainly possible, but see what I wrote under 11.\(\text{e}1\) \(\text{c}6\) 12.\(\text{c}1\).

B1) In the case of 12...\(\text{e}7\) 13.\(\text{w}d3\) \(\text{d}5\) White may transform the pawn structure into a central pawn symmetry where he has the upper hand, with 14.\(\text{x}d5\) \(\text{exd}5\) 15.\(\text{x}e7\) \(\text{xe}7\) 16.\(\text{fe}1\).

A standard transformation of the central pawn structure has taken place. Due to Black’s inferior \(\text{b}7\), which is hitting its own pawn on \(\text{d}5\) and is in general inferior to the white knight here, White has a small advantage. 16...\(\text{c}8\) 17.\(\text{h}4\) \(\text{h}6\) 18.\(\text{h}5\) \(\text{c}7\) 19.\(\text{b}5\) \(\text{x}c1\) 20.\(\text{x}c1\) \(\text{a}6\) 21.\(\text{a}4\) \(\text{xb}5\) Black has solved the problem of his inferior bishop, but the vulnerability of his queenside pawns gives White a safe advantage. 22.\(\text{x}b5\) \(\text{fs}\) 23.\(\text{g}3\) and White went on to win in Ivanchuk-Karpov, Linares 1991;

B2) 12...\(\text{x}c3!\) In connection with the plan that follows, this looks like a relatively simple solution for Black. 13.\(\text{x}c3\) \(\text{c}8\) 14.\(\text{a}2\)

Black’s solves his only problem, the pin along the \(\text{h}4\)-\(\text{d}8\) diagonal, by using a standard plan — readers, take note! 14...\(\text{e}7!\) Black has no reason to fear \(\text{xf}6\), doubling his f-pawns and damaging his kingside pawn structure, since with limited material left White cannot create any significant threats, while his isolated \(\text{d}4\) pawn remains a long-term target. 15.\(\text{x}c8\) \(\text{xc}8\) 16.\(\text{e}5\) Indeed, after 16.\(\text{xf}6\) \(\text{gx}f6\) 17.\(\text{e}1\) \(\text{d}8\) 18.\(\text{h}4\) \(\text{g}6\) 19.\(\text{g}4\) \(\text{f}5!\) White could find nothing better but to improve Black’s structure with 20.\(\text{x}g6\) \(\text{hx}g6\) 21.\(\text{f}4\) \(\text{d}7\) 22.\(\text{d}1\) \(\text{d}5\) and due to White’s weak \(\text{d}4\) pawn, Black had an obvious advantage in Illescas Cordoba-Short, Wijk aan Zee 1997. 16...\(\text{d}5\) 16...\(\text{g}6\) is also possible, as after 17.\(\text{xf}6\) \(\text{gx}f6\) 18.\(\text{g}4\) \(\text{d}8\) White failed to capitalize on Black’s compromised structure: 19.\(\text{d}5\) \(\text{fs}\) 20.\(\text{e}3\) \(\text{f}4\) 21.\(\text{g}4\) \(\text{h}5!\) 22.\(\text{h}6+\) \(\text{g}7\) 23.\(\text{xh}5\) \(\text{h}8\) 24.\(\text{x}f7\) \(\text{xf}7\) 25.\(\text{dx}e6+\) \(\text{f}6\) — the dust has cleared, Black soon won in Bareev-Adams, Frankfurt 2000. 17.\(\text{xe}7\) \(\text{xe}7\) White does not have enough dynamic potential to create anything serious, while his \(\text{d}4\) pawn remains a weakness, Radjabov-Karpov, Buenos Aires 2001.

We can conclude that 14...\(\text{e}7!\) solves Black’s problems. Actually White might have a hard time keeping the balance.

\(\bullet\) In the case of 11.\(\text{e}5\)
Part IV: 4...0-0 5.\( \text{\textipa{d}3} \) d5 6.\( \text{\textipa{f}3} \) c5 7.0-0 – The Immediate 7...\( \text{\textipa{d}xc4} \) 8.\( \text{\textipa{e}xc4} \)

Black often continues with:

A) 11...\( \text{\textipa{d}xc3} \) An important alternative is the exchange sacrifice 11...\( \text{\textipa{d}c6} \)!. I have taken 11...\( \text{\textipa{d}xc3} \) as the main move here, because the position mostly transposes to 11.\( \text{\textipa{d}e2} \) \( \text{\textipa{d}xc3} \) 12.bxc3 \( \text{\textipa{d}bd7} \) 13.\( \text{\textipa{d}e5} \) lines, the assessments of which are important for this whole line. 12.bxc3:

A1) 12...\( \text{\textipa{d}bd7} \) 13.\( \text{\textipa{d}e2} \) Transactions like 13.\( \text{\textipa{d}xd7} \) \( \text{\textipa{d}xd7} \) 14.\( \text{\textipa{d}xf6} \) \( \text{\textipa{g}xf6} \), as usual in this line, do not worry Black, since White is not able to take advantage of his weakened kingside: 15.\( \text{\textipa{d}e1} \) \( \text{\textipa{h}8} \) 16.\( \text{\textipa{f}l} \) \( \text{\textipa{ad}8} \) 17.\( \text{\textipa{g}4} \) \( \text{\textipa{g}8} \) 18.\( \text{\textipa{h}4} \) \( \text{\textipa{g}6} \) with approximate equality. Black actually has nice counterplay along the g-file and is definitely not worse here. The game was later drawn in Beliavsky-Volke, Germany Bundesliga 2004/05.

A11) 13...\( \text{\textipa{d}c7} \) 14.\( \text{\textipa{d}xd7} \) \( \text{\textipa{d}xd7} \) 15.\( \text{\textipa{d}a}1 \) \( \text{\textipa{c}6} \) Black provokes f2-f3 in order to close the white queen's route to g4 (please see also my notes on the deficiency of the 12...\( \text{\textipa{d}c7} \) move order) and eliminate White's active \( \text{\textipa{a}d3} \) (or \( \text{\textipa{b}3} \)). 15...\( \text{\textipa{ac}8} \)! 16.\( \text{\textipa{d}d3} \) was played in some games, where White indeed executed \( \text{\textipa{g}4} \) (Black is now too late to provoke f2-f3 with ...\( \text{\textipa{c}6} \)) and developed a sizeable kingside initiative. 16.f3

It is a good idea to take stock here and draw some general conclusions, as this is one of the standard positions in this line. White has more space and has the bishop pair, which is an advantage in this type of open position. White's dark-squared bishop is strong on the h4-d8 and h2-b8 diagonals; indeed White often plays \( \text{\textipa{h}4} \) voluntarily here in order to be able to move more freely on these diagonals. White's connected hanging pawns in the centre are mobile and cannot easily be blocked here. White will indeed move his bishop from c4 to d3 (or perhaps b3), then play c3-c4, and Black will have to reckon with either the c4-c5 or the d4-d5 break. Black has a healthy pawn structure, his king cannot easily be attacked.

Black's main counterplay idea should be to push ...e6-e5 at the right moment, undermining White's centre (actually trying to provoke d4-d5 and then build a strong blockade on the dark squares d6-c5).

All in all I think that White's chances are better in this position – at least I would prefer to play it with white, but the position is dynamic and Black definitely has his chances.

A111) In the case of 16...\( \text{\textipa{ac}8} \) White has an advantage after 17.\( \text{\textipa{b}5} \) 17.\( \text{\textipa{d}3} \) \( \text{\textipa{d}6} \) 18.\( \text{\textipa{c}2} \) h6 19.\( \text{\textipa{h}4} \) \( \text{\textipa{f}e}8 \) 20.\( \text{\textipa{g}3} \) \( \text{\textipa{e}7} \) 21.\( \text{\textipa{f}e}1 \) \( \text{\textipa{f}6} \) 22.\( \text{\textipa{d}2} \) was also more pleasant for White in Knaak-Vaissier, Szirak 1985. 17...\( \text{\textipa{d}6} \);

A1111) 18.\( \text{\textipa{f}d}1 \)! White prepares to roll his central pawns by c3-c4 with the threat of c4-c5. Black's position is not easy and he tries to solve his problems with a pawn sacrifice: 18...\( \text{\textipa{a}6} \)! 19.\( \text{\textipa{xa}6} \) \( \text{\textipa{xa}6} \) 20.\( \text{\textipa{xa}6} \) Black's problem here is that getting back his sacrificed pawn is not as easy as it seems:


Chapter 4.2: Karpov Variation - 8...cxd4 9.exd4 b6

All1111) 20...a8 21.\textit{We}2 \textit{Wd}5 does not work due to 22.\textit{Be}7 \textit{Mxa}2 23.\textit{Cc}4! \textit{Mxe}2 24.cxd5 and Black is in bad shape: 24...\textit{Me}8 or 24...\textit{Ma}8 25.\textit{Ma}1 \textit{Ecb}? 26.\textit{Mdc1} 25.\textit{Me}6;

All1112) 20...\textit{Wd}5

21.\textit{Be}7! \textit{Mfe}8 22.\textit{Cc}4 \textit{Wc}6 23.\textit{Wa}3! Black is in trouble here. He is not getting his pawn back. For some strange reason though, in our featured game White decided to return his extra pawn with 23.\textit{Ah}4 \textit{Ma}8 24.\textit{Wb}5 \textit{Wxb}5 25.cxb5 \textit{Mxa}2 and the game was soon drawn in Ivkov-Barczay, Polanica Zdroj 1969. 23...b5 23...\textit{Ma}8 fails to 24.\textit{Wd}6 \textit{Wxd}6 25.\textit{Mxd}6 \textit{Mxa}2 26.\textit{Cc}5. 24.cxb5 \textit{Wxb}5 25.\textit{Cc}5 followed by \textit{Wb}3. White is a sound pawn up.

All12) Another way is 18.\textit{Be}4. As said, White moves his bishop to h4 in order to be able to transfer it to g3 and attack the black queen if needed. 18...\textit{Ah}6 Again, Black is not worried about White's possibility to take \textit{xf}6 and damage his kingside pawn structure. White will not be able to take advantage of it, while Black would actually get counterplay along the open g-file. 19.\textit{Mfd}1 \textit{Wa}3 Black hits White's only weakness at the moment: pawn c3. 20.\textit{Wd}2 \textit{Ed}5 21.\textit{Cc}4 \textit{We}3+ 22.\textit{Wf}2 In the case of 22.\textit{Wf}2 Black has a strong response in 22...\textit{Wxd}2 23.\textit{Mxd}2 a6!

24.\textit{Ba}4 b5!, taking advantage of White's temporary back-rank problems. 22...\textit{Wh}6 with complicated play in Lautier-Aronian, ICC 2004.

All12) 16...\textit{Wd}6 17.\textit{Mfd}1 \textit{Mfe}8 Black prepares the standard counterthrust ...\textit{e}6-\textit{e}5, which is actually far from easy to realize, provided that White is careful. 18.\textit{Bb}3 White is ready to play c3-c4 and start rolling his pawns. 18...\textit{Ma}c8

19.\textit{Bh}4! White prepares \textit{g}3, disturbing the black queen – please take note of this standard plan again! 19...\textit{Wa}3 20.c4 a5 Black is looking for counterplay, but this move weakens his b6 pawn. 20...\textit{e}5 does not equalize due to the tactic 21.\textit{Cc}5! \textit{exd}4 22.\textit{Wd}3 \textit{Wh}8 23.\textit{Wxd}4 \textit{Qxc}5 24.\textit{Bx}f7 and thanks to his powerful bishop pair White is obviously better here.

All121) If 21.\textit{Cc}2 then 21...\textit{g}6 (21...\textit{e}5? would put Black in some terrible pins after 22.\textit{Bf}5 \textit{exd}4 23.\textit{Wf}2) 22.\textit{Be}4 \textit{Wa}6 followed by ...\textit{e}6-\textit{e}5;

All122) 21.\textit{Wc}2 promises White a safe advantage – at least it looks that way: 21...\textit{b}5! 21...\textit{e}5? does not work due to 22.\textit{Cc}5! followed by \textit{Wf}5; or 21...\textit{h}6 22.\textit{Md}3 \textit{Wf}8 23.\textit{Ba}4 and White is better – Black may soon regret playing 20...\textit{a}5. 22.\textit{Wb}1! \textit{bxc}4 23.\textit{Qxc}4 \textit{Qd}5 24.\textit{Qb}5 \textit{Bb}8 25.\textit{Md}3 Here Black has to go for a
queen sac: 25...\textbf{W}x\textbf{c}1+ 25...\textbf{W}f8? leads to a big advantage for White after 26.a4. 26.\textbf{W}x\textbf{c}1 \textbf{B}xb5 White is definitely better, but whether it is enough to win is a different question;

A1123) With 21.\textbf{W}d2 White should be better, however the situation remains dynamic: 21...\textbf{e}5 22.d5 \textbf{e}4 It would appear that Black obtains enough counterplay, however White's d-pawn will ultimately decide the battle. 23.\textbf{A}c3 \textbf{W}b4 24.\textbf{A}e3 \textbf{W}xd2 25.\textbf{A}xd2 \textbf{A}c5 26.fxe4 \textbf{A}xe4 27.\textbf{A}xe4 \textbf{Axe}4 28.\textbf{A}e2 \textbf{A}c5 29.\textbf{A}c2 \textbf{A}a6 30.\textbf{A}e5 \textbf{B}f8 31.d6 and White went on to win in Gelfand-J. Polgar, Wijk aan Zee 1998.

In general I think that White is better in this line and that Black has to explore the exchange sacrifice idea with 11...\textbf{c}6?! – see Variation D. White on the other hand may start with 11.\textbf{W}e2, as shown further on, and then Black does not have a clever way to avoid the positions just seen in Gelfand-Polgar.

A12) Black can also play 13...\textbf{c}8. After 14.\textbf{A}ac1 \textbf{W}c7, 15.\textbf{A}xd7 may simply transpose to one of the 13...\textbf{W}c7 lines, but this 13...\textbf{c}8 move order limits Black's choice. White can also decide to keep his knight on e5 and then we get a different kind of central pawn structure – and obviously a very different type of play: 15.\textbf{d}3 \textbf{Axe}5 16.dxe5:

A121) 16...\textbf{A}xe5?! Black goes for an interesting positional exchange sacrifice. 17.\textbf{c}7

17...\textbf{A}xe5?! Black decides to keep the queens on the board, however it was probably better for him to go for an endgame. After 17...\textbf{W}xe5! 18.\textbf{A}xf8 \textbf{W}xe2 19.\textbf{A}xe2 \textbf{B}xf8 Black has already one pawn for the sacrificed exchange, and he will get a beautiful knight on c5, while White's queenside pawn structure is seriously damaged – a draw looks to me the most likely outcome of this complex endgame. 18.\textbf{A}xf8 \textbf{B}xd3 19.\textbf{W}xd3 \textbf{B}xf8 20.\textbf{A}d1 \textbf{W}c6 21.f3 1-0 V. Babula-Speelman, Germany Bundesliga 1998/99;

A122) Another option for Black is 16...\textbf{W}c6, a zwischenzug he regularly has at his disposal in these positions. 17.f3 \textbf{W}c5+ 18.\textbf{h}1 \textbf{d}7

A1221) 19.\textbf{f}e1 White's \textbf{g}5 is well placed, controlling the important e7- and d8-squares in Black's camp. White also has hopes of a kingside attack. On the other hand, Black has the better (queenside) pawn structure. The position is not easy to play for either side, or to assess. I would personally prefer White, but this is a matter of taste; objectively both sides have their trumps;

A1222) Another possibility is 19.\textbf{f}4. Now the pawn on e5 is well defended
and also the attack on Black's king may happen more quickly, however the black bishop is now very strong on the a8-h1 diagonal. 19...h6 Otherwise White plays Wh5 and weakens Black's kingside. 20.Qh4 Again we have a complex position, both sides having something to hope for. I would personally prefer White, because it looks to me that his attacking potential on the kingside outweighs the weakness of his queenside structure, but the situation is complex and I may be wrong. White can force a draw, but not more, with 20.Qxh6 gxh6 21.Wg4+ Wh8 22.Wh3 Wh7. The 'active' 20.Wh5?? is a terrible blunder due to 20...Qxe5 21.fxe5 Wxe5 and Black wins.

A2) The immediate 12...Wc7?! should normally lead to an inferior version of 12...Qbd7 lines (see A2), for example:

A2.1) In the case of 13.Qc1 Qbd7 (Black has the possibility to prove that 12...Wc7 is a good move order by starting with 13 ...Qc6! here) White has a good version of the regular positions in this line and he was better after 14.Qxd7 Qxd7 15.Qb3 e5 This central pawn break is one of Black's standard counterplans here, however it does not achieve desired effect in this particular position. 16.Wg4! Wh8 17.Wh4 f6 18.Qc2 e4 19.Qd2 f5 20.Qf4 Wc6 21.c4 and White went on to win in Sadler-Cooper, England tt 1997/98;

A2.2) Or 13.Qb3 Qbd7 14.Qxd7 Qxd7 15.Qc1 and White transposes to Sadler's game above;

A2.3) 13.Qd3 Qbd7 14.Qxd7 Qxd7 15.Qc1, followed by Wg4, with a white advantage. Please note that compared to 12...Qbd7 13.We2 Wc7 14.Qxd7 Qxd7 lines, White will in the worst case simply be a tempo up, since he plays Wg4 in one go — apart from the fact that Black's timely ...Wc6, forcing White to play f2-f3 and close the white queen's route to g4, is not possible here. Hence 12...Wc7?! is simply not a good move order for Black.

B) In the case of 11...Qe7 12.Qe1 Qc6 White has the standard tactical trick 13.Qa6! Wc8 14.Qxb7 Wxb7 15.Wf3 Qac8 16.Qc1. The pin on the h1-a8 diagonal is very unpleasant for Black and life is far from easy for him, and the following decision definitely does not make it easier: 16...Qd5?! 17.Qxd5 Qxg5 18.Qxc6 exd5 19.Wxd5 White is a sound pawn up, and soon it will be more. 19...Qxc1? 20.Qe7+ Wxe7 21.Qxe7 Qxb2 22.g3 and White soon won in M. Gurevich-L.B. Hansen, Tastrup 1992;

C) 11...Qbd7 mostly transposes to the 11...Qxc3 line:
C1) 12...\(\texttt{\&xd7}\) does not promise White more than equality: 12...\(\texttt{\&xd7}\) 13.\(\texttt{\&xf6}\) \(\texttt{gxf6}\) As already seen in some other lines, White does not have a clever way to exploit the weakness of Black’s kingside structure. 14.d5 this pawn break is White’s best option here. 14...\(\texttt{\&xc3}\) 15.\(\texttt{bxc3}\) \(\texttt{\&xd5}\) 15...exd5? is not a good idea due to the simple 16.\(\texttt{\&d3}\) followed by \(\texttt{\&h5}\). 16.\(\texttt{\&g4+}\) \(\texttt{\&h8}\) 17.\(\texttt{\&d4}\) and now:

C11) 17...\(\texttt{\&ac8}\) 18.\(\texttt{\&xf6+}\) \(\texttt{\&g8}\) 19.\(\texttt{\&d3}\) 19.\(\texttt{\&a6}\) may be an improvement, and therefore 17...\(\texttt{\&g7}\) looks safer for Black. 19...\(\texttt{\&d8}\) 20.\(\texttt{\&h6}\) f5 with a balanced game which was later drawn in Jussupow-Ivanchuk, Brussels 1991;

C12) The simple 17...\(\texttt{\&g7}\) is probably easier for Black, since White does not have any advantage here:

C121) 18.\(\texttt{\&fe1}\)?! can only bring White in trouble after 18...\(\texttt{\&fd8}\) followed by ...\(\texttt{\&a4}\) (18...\(\texttt{\&c6}\)?! would allow White to execute his idea of 19.\(\texttt{\&e3}\);

C122) 18.\(\texttt{\&ad1}\) \(\texttt{\&c6}\) and now the game is very likely to end peacefully. One of the lines goes: 19.\(\texttt{\&g4+}\) 19.\(\texttt{\&d3}\)? is wrong, since Black is better after 19...\(\texttt{\&e4}\)! followed by ...\(\texttt{\&g6}\). 19...\(\texttt{\&h8}\) 20.\(\texttt{\&h4}\) \(\texttt{\&xc4}\) 21.\(\texttt{\&xf6+}\) \(\texttt{\&g8}\) 22.\(\texttt{\&d4}\) White’s only winning attempt here. 22...\(\texttt{\&fc8}\) 23.\(\texttt{\&g4+}\) \(\texttt{\&f8}\) 24.\(\texttt{\&g7}\)

C2) White has better chances to get an opening advantage with 12.\(\texttt{\&e2}\) \(\texttt{\&xc3}\) 13.\(\texttt{\&xc3}\) \(\texttt{\&c7}\) or 13...\(\texttt{\&c8}\) 14.\(\texttt{\&xd7}\) \(\texttt{\&xd7}\) 15.\(\texttt{\&ac1}\). This transposes to 11...\(\texttt{\&xc3}\) – see Gelfand-Polgar from Wijk aan Zee 1998, for example.

D) Black has an interesting exchange sacrifice here, which has not been tried often in practice and has to be investigated more closely: 11...\(\texttt{\&c6}\)?! 12.\(\texttt{\&xf6}\)

12...\(\texttt{\&xf6}\)! This exchange sac is the point behind 11...\(\texttt{\&c6}\)?! In the event of 12...\(\texttt{\&xf6}\)? White gets an easy advantage with 13.\(\texttt{\&xc6}\) \(\texttt{\&xc6}\) 14.d5! \(\texttt{\&xc3}\) 15.\(\texttt{\&g4+}\) \(\texttt{\&h8}\) 16.\(\texttt{\&xc6}\) \(\texttt{\&xb2}\) 17.\(\texttt{\&ad1}\) \(\texttt{\&c7}\) 18.\(\texttt{\&xe6}\)! \(\texttt{\&g8}\) 19.\(\texttt{\&h3}\). White has a large advantage and won easily in Lanchava-Janssen, Wijk aan Zee C 2004. 13.\(\texttt{\&d7}\) \(\texttt{\&h4}\)! Black wants to collect White’s d4 pawn while keeping the queens on the board. The queen swap works in White’s favour in this exchange sac line and he is better after 13...\(\texttt{\&xd4}\) 14.\(\texttt{\&xd4}\) \(\texttt{\&xd4}\) 15.\(\texttt{\&xf8}\) \(\texttt{\&xf8}\) 16.\(\texttt{\&fd1}\) 14.\(\texttt{\&xf8}\):

D1) 14...\(\texttt{\&xd4}\)? does not seem to work for Black after 15.\(\texttt{\&xe6}\)!
Chapter 4.2: Karpov Variation - 8...cxd4 9.exd4 b6

would run into 15...f3!. 15...fxe6 16...d3 d6 Or 16...f8 17.e2 followed by g3. 17.exf6+ h8 18.g3 
f6 19.d5 and White wins;

D2) 14...xf8

White does not have an easy task here. His d4 pawn is going to fall, so his material advantage will be minimal, and Black is going to have harmonious pieces and active play. Actually the position is rather unclear, probably there is a dynamic balance, and it does not take much for White to go wrong:

D21) Trying to hang on to his d4 pawn as long as possible is not a good idea for White here: 15.e2 d8 16.a4 Sometimes terrible things happen very fast: 16.g3? f6 17.d3?? xd4 and White resigned in Babikov-Ulko, Moscow 2009. 16...d6 17.f4 This is an important moment.

D211) One practical example continued with 17...xd4 (which is far from bad by the way) 18.exd4 c5 Interesting is 18...xf4?! 19.xf4 xf4 20.d1 h5. 19.ad1 we4 Black should have continued with f6. 20.h1 xd4 21.d2 h5 22.xa7 e4 with some compensation. Here White missed 20.e2!, threatening e2. 20.g3? h5 with a better game for Black was seen in Aloma Vidal-Cheparinov, Linares 2005. 20...c6

This looks effective and seems to be doing the job for Black, but... 21.f3!! a hammer blow! 21...xa4 22.exd8+ f8 23.e5 f5 24.b3 Black loses his light-squared bishop, leaving White with a large material advantage and an easily won position;

D212) Black's play can be improved with 17...a6! The threat of b7-b5 is extremely unpleasant and White does not have a clever way to continue. 18.wc2 White is worse here and it is not easy to give him good advice. 18.xa6 is met by the simple 18...a8; or 18.d3 xd4! 19.xd4 xf4. 18...xd4 19.exd4 xf4 19...c5 is also possible. 20.xf4 xf4 21.xe6! The only way for White to stay in the game. 21.b3 loses to the simple 21.c8. 21...xe6 22.xe6+ h8 and if White is lucky he may save the game.

D22) 15.a3 and now:

D221) 15...d6 This active move is probably not the best, since White can play b5 with tempo. 16.g3 we3 16...xd4?! is clumsy with the bishop on d6 due to 17.b5. 17.xe1 xd4 18.xf1 xf3+ 19.xf3 xf1+ 20.xf1 In this position White's minimal material advantage is likely not enough for more than a draw, but still White is clearly the one playing for a win here;

D222) 15...e7! Black is going to collect White's d4 pawn. White will have a
mineral material advantage, Black has a beautiful bishop pair — it looks like a dynamic balance. White should be careful. 16...d3! If 16.d5 Black responds with the simple 16...\textit{xc}4 17.dxc6 \textit{xc}6 with strong compensation for his minimal material sacrifice — only Black can be better here; while 16...d8 looks like a good version for Black of the Cheparinov game shown in the comment to 15...d2 above. 16...d4
17...d4! Forcing a queen swap. 17...dxe4 18...d4 d6 19...d4 dxe4 White has a minimal material advantage, but Black has good compensation due to his excellent bishop pair. A plan for him is, for example, ...d6f6, ...d5e5, then push his kingside pawns ...f6, ...g5, ...h5, ...g4, etc. It looks like a dynamic balance — white players beware: despite being an exchange down, Black can play for a win here as well! This exchange sacrifice should be more deeply investigated, however it looks like an active way for Black to combat 11...d5, and is likely to discourage white players to choose this line;

\textbullet\ Definitely an interesting move order for white players to study is 11...d2.

11...dxc3 this is by far the most played move here. 11...dbd7 12...d5 (12...d2 has also been played here) 12...dxc3 13.bxc3 \textit{c}7 transposes to Gelfand-Polgar above. 12.bxc3 dbd7

Here White has a principled decision to make — he can jump d5e5 and play this position without a pair of knights, or he can start with d3 and keep his f3 knight on the board. Both decisions have their logic. Trading with 13...d5 looks more promising for White to me, since after Black takes ...d6f6xd7, he will no longer have his regular counterplay with ...\textit{c}7, ...d5g4 (or sometimes ...d6h5). 13...d3 Please note that 13...d5 would transpose to the line 11...d5 dxc3 12.bxc3 d6 13...d2, see the analysis of this line above.

13...d7 Black prepares his counterplay with d5g4.

A) In the case of 14.c4 Black proceeds with 14...h6 Or 14...d5g4 15...dxe4 dxe4 16...dxe4 d6f6 17...d2 dxc8 18...d2 dfe8 19...d1 h6 20...d2 and White's advantage (if any) is symbolic here: 20...d6 21...d3

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21...a6! (since the light-squared bishops have been exchanged, this is a good standard strategic plan for Black here — take note!) 22.h3 b5 (White is just in time to keep the balance) 23.cxb5 \textit{xb}5 24...dxb5 axb5 25...d1 d2 26...d5 dA8 27...d1 dxa2 28...dxa2 dxa2 29...d7 ½-½ Karlov-Van Wely, Wijk aan Zee 1998. 15...d2 If 15...d2 Black has 15...d6h5. 15...d5g4 16...dxe4 dxe4 17...dxe4 d6f6 18...d2 d6c6

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19...a4! Nakamura does not allow Giri to execute ...a7-a6 and ...b7-b5 — Van Wely’s plan we just showed. 19...\textbf{Bc8}
20.\textbf{Bxc1} \textbf{Be4} 21.\textbf{Be3} White’s position is a bit more pleasant, though it is difficult to obtain something tangible. The game was later drawn in Nakamura-Giri, Dortmund 2011;
B) 14.\textbf{Bd2}! This old idea of Smyslov perhaps deserves more attention. White retreats his bishop and vacates the g5-square, hence ...\textbf{Bg}4 is not possible due to \textbf{Bxh7}:
   B1) In the event of 14...\textbf{Whd6} play may continue 15.\textbf{Bf1} \textbf{Bc8}

16.a4! h6 17.a5 This is a standard strategic plan for White here. After axb6 axb6, he will get rid of his weak a-pawn, while Black’s b6 pawn becomes a potential target. White has the advantage here and it is difficult for Black to create counterplay. 17...\textbf{Bd5} 17...\textbf{Bg}4? is bad due to 18.h3 \textbf{Bxf3}? 19.\textbf{Bxf3} \textbf{Bh}2+? 20.\textbf{Bf1} \textbf{Bgf}6 21.\textbf{Bxf4}, winning. 18.axb6 axb6 19.\textbf{Bc2} \textbf{Bf4} It is important for White to keep his \textbf{Bd2} for the time being, since this bishop defends the c3 pawn. 20.\textbf{Bwe3} \textbf{Bd5} 21.\textbf{Bd3} \textbf{Bf6} Black’s position is solid, however White is a bit better (21...\textbf{Bf6}? allows 22.\textbf{Be5});

B2) 14...\textbf{Bc8} 15.c4 In the event of 15.\textbf{Bf1} Black executes the strategic idea 15...\textbf{Bd5}! followed by \textbf{Bc4}. 15...\textbf{Bf6} 16.\textbf{Bf1} \textbf{Bh}4 17.\textbf{Be3} \textbf{Bf4} The tactic 17...\textbf{Bd5}? fails to 18.cxd5! \textbf{Bxc3} 19.\textbf{Bxh7}+! \textbf{Bxh7} 20.\textbf{Bg}5+. 18.\textbf{Bd2}! \textbf{Bxd2}! A strategic mistake. Without queens the position will be difficult for Black. 19.\textbf{Bxd2} \textbf{Bf8} 20.\textbf{Bf1} \textbf{Bc8} 21.a4! As already shown, this standard strategic plan mostly works well for White in these positions. 21...\textbf{Bb8} 22.a5 b5 23.\textbf{Beb1}! \textbf{Bd6} 24.a6! \textbf{Bxa6} 25.\textbf{Bd5} \textbf{Bd7} 26.\textbf{Bxb5} \textbf{Bb7} 27.\textbf{Bb3} followed by \textbf{Bc5}. White was clearly better and went on to win in Smyslov-Matanovic, Hamburg Ech-ht 1965. This idea of Smyslov probably needs a fresh test. However, I think that White is just a bit better if he opts for the knight jump to e5 and transposes to the position from Gelfand-Polgar.

* Finally, White also has 11.\textbf{Bd3}.

In my opinion this is the least dangerous for Black here and it does not promise White any opening advantage. White’s idea is to achieve the set-up \textbf{Bad1}, \textbf{Bf1}, a3, \textbf{Bc2}, and now \textbf{Bb1}, or a central break with d4-d5 — Queen’s Gambit Accepted-type play in any case. This kind of plan works reasonably well if Black retreats his bishop to e7. However, in case Black opts to take ...\textbf{Bxc3} and creates a structure with connected hanging pawns for White, White’s plan
does not work that well and Black gets easy equality.

A) In the event of 11...\(\text{\textit{c}}\text{e}7\) the plan would work reasonably well: 12.\(\text{\textit{d}}\text{ad}1\) \(\text{\textit{c}}\text{6}\) 13.\(\text{\textit{a}}\text{3}:

A1) After 13...\(\text{\textit{w}}\text{d}6?\), which looks slow and clumsy, we see how play may develop in one older game: 14.\(\text{\textit{f}}\text{e}1\) 14.\(\text{\textit{d}}\text{5}!\) looks good for White. 14...\(\text{\textit{a}}\text{d}8\) 15.\(\text{\textit{a}}\text{2}\) \(\text{\textit{f}}\text{e}8\?\) 16.\(\text{\textit{h}}\text{3}\) It's difficult to explain why White again refrained from 16.\(\text{\textit{d}}\text{5}!\), since then 16...\(\text{\textit{w}}\text{b}8\) loses to the simple 17.\(\text{\textit{d}}\text{xe}6\). 16...\(\text{\textit{w}}\text{b}8\) 17.\(\text{\textit{d}}\text{5}\) Finally. 17...\(\text{\textit{e}}\text{xd}5\) 18.\(\text{\textit{a}}\text{xd}5\) \(\text{\textit{e}}\text{xd}5\) 19.\(\text{\textit{a}}\text{xd}5\) \(\text{\textit{h}}\text{6}\) 19...\(\text{\textit{c}}\text{a}5\)? fails to 20.\(\text{\textit{a}}\text{xf}7+\) \(\text{\textit{xf}}\text{7}\) 21.\(\text{\textit{f}}\text{f}5+\) \(\text{\textit{g}}\text{8}\) 22.\(\text{\textit{w}}\text{e}6+\) \(\text{\textit{h}}\text{8}\) 23.\(\text{\textit{e}}\text{5}\). Now White enters a combination that brings him an extra pawn: 20.\(\text{\textit{a}}\text{xf}7+\!\) \(\text{\textit{xf}}\text{7}\) 21.\(\text{\textit{w}}\text{c}4+\) \(\text{\textit{f}}\text{8}\) 22.\(\text{\textit{h}}\text{4}!\) \(\text{\textit{e}}\text{5}\) The only move for Black. 23.\(\text{\textit{a}}\text{xe}7+\) \(\text{\textit{xe}}\text{7}\) Or 23...\(\text{\textit{a}}\text{xe}7\) 24.\(\text{\textit{a}}\text{xd}8+\) \(\text{\textit{xd}}\text{8}\) 25.\(\text{\textit{a}}\text{xe}5\) \(\text{\textit{w}}\text{d}1+\) 26.\(\text{\textit{f}}\text{1}\) \(\text{\textit{xf}}\text{1}+\) 27.\(\text{\textit{a}}\text{xf}1\). 24.\(\text{\textit{w}}\text{b}4+\) \(\text{\textit{g}}\text{7}\) 25.\(\text{\textit{w}}\text{f}4+\) \(\text{\textit{g}}\text{8}\) 26.\(\text{\textit{a}}\text{xd}8\) \(\text{\textit{w}}\text{d}8\) 27.\(\text{\textit{a}}\text{xe}5\) \(\text{\textit{a}}\text{xe}5\) 28.\(\text{\textit{a}}\text{xe}5\) \(\text{\textit{w}}\text{xh}4\) 29.\(\text{\textit{w}}\text{b}8+\) \(\text{\textit{h}}\text{7}\) 30.\(\text{\textit{w}}\text{xb}7\) White was a sound pawn up, though eventually he did not manage to win in Hort-Panno, Buenos Aires 1980;

A2) After 13...\(\text{\textit{h}}\text{6}\) White goes for a forced sequence: 14.\(\text{\textit{x}}\text{f}6\) 14.\(\text{\textit{h}}\text{4}\) is another possibility. 14...\(\text{\textit{x}}\text{f}6\) 15.\(\text{\textit{d}}\text{5}\) \(\text{\textit{a}}\text{5}\) Black opts for a pawn sacrifice. White would have a small, risk-free advantage after 15...\(\text{\textit{e}}\text{xd}5\) 16.\(\text{\textit{x}}\text{xd}5\) 16.\(\text{\textit{d}}\text{xe}6\) \(\text{\textit{c}}\text{xc}4\) 17.\(\text{\textit{w}}\text{xc}4\) \(\text{\textit{w}}\text{c}8\) 18.\(\text{\textit{e}}\text{f}7+\) \(\text{\textit{f}}\text{7}\) 19.\(\text{\textit{w}}\text{xc}8+\) \(\text{\textit{f}}\text{8}\) 20.\(\text{\textit{d}}\text{4}\) \(\text{\textit{g}}\text{6}\) 21.\(\text{\textit{f}}\text{e}1\) Black's bishop pair provides reasonable compensation for the pawn here. Black should make a draw, but it remains unpleasant for him. Normally only two results are possible here: either Black makes a draw or he loses. White eventually won this endgame in Kamsky-Karpov, Monaco rapid 1994. In general 11...\(\text{\textit{c}}\text{e}7\) is a passive move, I do not like it.

B) 11...\(\text{\textit{e}}\text{bd}7\) 12.\(\text{\textit{a}}\text{3}\) Or 12.\(\text{\textit{a}}\text{d}1\) \(\text{\textit{e}}\text{xc}3\) 13.\(\text{\textit{b}}\text{xc}3\) \(\text{\textit{w}}\text{c}7\) and now Black has a double threat with ...\(\text{\textit{a}}\text{c}8\) or ...\(\text{\textit{g}}\text{4}\). 12...\(\text{\textit{a}}\text{c}3\)! A correct reaction. 13.\(\text{\textit{b}}\text{xc}3\) \(\text{\textit{w}}\text{c}7\)

Black now has the double threat of ...\(\text{\textit{a}}\text{c}8\) or ...\(\text{\textit{g}}\text{4}\). 14.\(\text{\textit{d}}\text{2}\) \(\text{\textit{a}}\text{c}8\) We have the same pawn structure as in Gelfand-Polgar or Nakamura-Giri shown above, however White does not nearly have the same piece coordination! Actually White should be careful not to become worse here. 15.\(\text{\textit{f}}\text{3}\) 16.\(\text{\textit{a}}\text{d}5\) 16.\(\text{\textit{e}}\text{xd}5\) 17.\(\text{\textit{f}}\text{e}1\) \(\text{\textit{h}}\text{6}\) 18.\(\text{\textit{e}}\text{3}\) \(\text{\textit{f}}\text{e}8\) 19.\(\text{\textit{c}}\text{4}\) \(\text{\textit{w}}\text{c}6\) 20.\(\text{\textit{c}}\text{5}\) \(\text{\textit{b}}\text{xc}5\) 21.\(\text{\textit{d}}\text{xc}5\) \(\text{\textit{a}}\text{e}5\) Black was fine, the game was later drawn in Hübiner-Van der Sterren, Munich 1988.

11.\(\text{\textit{d}}\text{3}\) is definitely not something which should worry Black.
This is one of the three often played continuations for Black here – the other two being 11...\(\text{xc3}\) or 11...\(\text{c6}\).

As in other lines I showed, Black may here also opt to force a transformation of White's pawn structure with 11...\(\text{xc3}\) 12.bxc3. We have the same pawn structure and similar plans like in Gelfand-Polgar, Nakamura-Giri, Smyslov-Matanovic, etc. It is not easy to work out forced lines for opening preparation here. It is rather important to understand the position, the general plans and principles, and try to apply them. I will give some games to show how play may develop. 12...\(\text{bd7}\)

A) Placing the bishop on b3 is definitely a possibility to consider: 13.\(\text{b3!}\) \(\text{c7}\) and now:

A1) The immediate 14.c4 is premature, because Black targets d4 and easily equalizes with 14...\(\text{d6!}\) 15.\(\text{h4}\). 15.\(\text{e5}\) leads to an endgame where a draw is the likely result after 15...\(\text{xe5}\) 16.dxe5 \(\text{xd1}\) 17.\(\text{axd1}\) \(\text{e4}\) 18.\(\text{e7}\) \(\text{f6}\) 19.\(\text{d4}\) \(\text{c7}\). 15...\(\text{xf3}\)! Due to the weakness of his d4 pawn White has to recapture with his pawn: 16.\(\text{gf3}\) White's dark-squared bishop will be transferred to g3 and Black will ultimately have to capture it with ...\(\text{xb3}\), improving White's pawn structure. So, the structural damage is of a temporary nature, and this is the case in around 80% of \(\text{xf3}\) \(\text{xf3}\) transactions in these lines, so take note! However, White does not have any opening advantage. 16...\(\text{h5}\) 17.\(\text{d2}\) \(\text{e8}\) 18.\(\text{g5}\) \(\text{df6}\) 19.\(\text{ad1}\) h6 20.\(\text{e3}\) \(\text{ed8}\) 21.\(\text{h1}\) \(\text{f8}\) 22.\(\text{g1}\) \(\text{f4}\) 23.\(\text{g3}\) Finally White has to come up with this move. 23...\(\text{xb3}\) 24.\(\text{hxg3}\) \(\text{c7}\) The position was about equal and the game was later drawn in Nepomniachtchi-Arutinian, Dresden Ech 2007;

A2) 14.\(\text{c1}\):

A21) 14...\(\text{b5}\)! This generally sound positional move here gives White the tempo he needs to quickly develop a kingside attack. 15.\(\text{d3}\) a6 16.\(\text{e5}\) and the situation soon becomes rather unpleasant for Black:

A211) 16...\(\text{xe5}\) does not solve the problems after 17.\(\text{dxe5}\) \(\text{d7}\) 17...\(\text{c6}\)
Part IV: 4 ... 0-0 5. \(\text{d}3 \text{ d}5 \) 6. \(\text{f}3 \text{ c}5 \) 7. 0-0 – The Immediate 7...dxc4 8. \(\text{xc}4 \)

18. \(\text{wh}3 \) does not improve Black's situation, since White keeps his kingside attack after 18. \(\text{wg}3 \), with an advantage (the immediate 18.\(c4 \) is also good);

A21) 16...\(\text{d}5 \) 17. \(\text{c}2! \text{ g}6 \) The dark squares around Black's king have been weakened and with Black's dark-squared bishop absent, White will get an unpleasant kingside attack. 18. \(\text{wh}3 \) \(\text{fc}8 \) 19. \(\text{wh}4 \) \(\text{xe}5 \) 20. \(\text{dxe}5 \) \(\text{d}7 \) 21. \(\text{e}3 \) and Black's king position soon collapsed in Rozentalis-Benko, New York 1994. I like Rozentalis' plan, though Black was assisting with 14...\(b5 \)!

A22) Better is the standard 14...\(\text{ac}8 \) and now probably White's best is to fight for an advantage following the standard plan (already shown many times above) with 15. \(\text{h}4 \). I think White has reasonable chances to get an opening advantage here – at least I would prefer to play this position with white. Another possibility is 15. \(\text{e}5 \) \(\text{xe}5 \) 16. \(\text{xe}5 \) to try to follow plans similar to Gelfand-Polgar above. 15. \(\text{wd}3 \) does not look good for White, since Black has 15...\(\text{fd}8 \) with the tactical motif ...\(\text{c}5 \).

B) 13. \(\text{d}3 \) and now:

B1) 13...\(\text{wc}7 \) Probably the most flexible move here. Here White has a choice between the relatively forcing 14.\(c4 \) or the slightly slower build-up with \(\text{c}1:\)

B11) 14. \(\text{c}4 \) \(\text{d}6 \) Black threatens ...\(\text{xf}3 \), forcing White to recapture with his g-pawn due to the weakness of his d4 pawn, so now the game gets a forced character. 15. \(\text{e}5 \) 15. \(\text{h}4 \) \(\text{xf}3 \) 16. \(\text{gxf}3 \) \(\text{h}5 \) would lead to approximate equality, as we have already seen in a couple of examples. White will play \(\text{g}3 \) and Black will take ...\(\text{d}g3 \), so White's pawn structure will improve but his dark-squared bishop will be exchanged and the game will be equal – a standard scenario. 15...\(\text{xe}5 \) 16. \(\text{dxe}5 \)! White correctly judges that his kingside attack will be dangerous for Black. 16. \(\text{xe}5 \) \(\text{fd}8 \) 17. \(\text{e}3 \) \(\text{ac}8 \) 18. \(\text{h}3 \) \(\text{c}5 \) led to a remarkable position – two rooks on the 5th rank on a board full of pieces! 19. \(\text{f}4 \) \(\text{cc}8 \). In this strange position White's pieces are not coordinating well, and White may experience that a big centre is sometimes a big problem! Yu Yangyi-Ni Hua, Danzhou 2011. 16...\(\text{c}6 \) 17. \(\text{f}1 \)! Keeping the route of his queen to \(\text{g}4 \) free. 17.\(f3 \)?! would also allow tactics of the type 17...\(\text{g}4 \). 18. \(\text{e}7 \) \(\text{fd}8 \). 17...\(\text{e}4 \) 18. \(\text{e}7 \) \(\text{fe}8 \) 19. \(\text{h}4 \) \(\text{h}6 \) 20. \(\text{g}4 \)

An interesting position. White's kingside threats are unpleasant, so Black takes a bold decision! 20...\(\text{g}5 \)! 21. \(\text{ad}1 \) and now 21...\(\text{f}5 \) is a logical follow up on the previous move. 21...\(\text{ad}8 \)? is bad due to 22. \(\text{xg}5 \) \(\text{xg}5 \) (or
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22...hxg5 23...xd8! 24.xe4 Wxe4 25.Wxg5+ 23...xd8 24.h4. 22.Wh5 The only move.

B11 l) 22...gxh4 Black takes a piece, hoping that White does not have more than a perpetual check. 23.Wg6+ fxg8 24.Wxh6+ Kg8 25.Wg6+ Kg8 26.Wxe4 The only winning attempt for White here. 26...fxe4 27.Wh7!

B111) 27...Be7? Black stumbles. It is very likely, given the complicated nature of the game so far, that there was serious time pressure at this stage. 28.Wh8+ Kh7 29.Wf6+ Kg8 30.Wxe2! 1-0 Gligoric-Unzicker, Milan 1975. An impressive game!

B1112) Black should have played 27...ed8! when a beautiful, study-like variation would have led to a draw: 28.Wh8+ Ke7 29.Wxh4+ Ke8 30.Wh8+ Ke7 31.Wg7+ Ke8 32.Wd6! Wxd6 33.ed6 Wd8 33...Wxd6 34.Wxb7 is likely better for White. 34.c5!

White tries to bring his last soldier into the battle: the Bf1. 34.We7+ is just a perpetual: 34...c8 35.Wf8+ d7 36.We7+. 34...e3! The only move! On 34...bxc5? 35.We7+ c8 36.Wb5! wins. 35.fxe3 bx5 36.We7+ c8 37.e4! Renewing the threat of b5. 37...e4! (37...d7? 38...b5) and here White is well advised to accept that a draw is also a result! 38.Wf8+ 38.exf4? fails to 38...c5+ 39.Wh1 b8 40.b3 a6 followed by ...a7 and Black's material advantage will soon prove decisive. 38...d7 39.We7+ with a perpetual check.

Whether my analysis is correct is important for the assessment of the whole line. As you can see, I think it is a draw, but if anybody finds something different - please mail to my publisher!

B112) An alternative was 22...Be7 23.Bxe4! fxe4 23...Wxe4? 24.Wg6+ 24.Bg3. White has good compensation after 24...Wf7 (after 24...Wd3 25.f3 White has a dangerous initiative, definitely worth the exchange) 25.Bd6 (25.h4 is less good due to 25...Wf8) 25...Wf8 26.Wd1. Black has no active play. White will follow up with Bf2, Bh5 (or Bg4), h4, etc.;

B12) In the case of 14.Bc1, which is in my opinion good enough for an opening advantage, there is a classic game by Karpov where the 12th World Champion demonstrated the extra possibilities of 13...Wc7 compared to the 13...Bc8 move order. However, it is still not enough for Black to equalize. The game in question continued 14...Wd6 15.Bh4 and follows White’s standard plan, and Karpov demonstrates an interesting idea for Black: 15...Bc8?! 16.Bg3 Wa3 17.c4
17...\(\text{d}f8\)? Taking a pawn with 17...\(\text{w}xa2\)? is, to say the least, rather dubious. 18.\(\text{d}6\) 18.\(\text{e}e5\) \(\text{g}6\) 19.\(\text{e}3\) \(\text{w}f8\) Black is keeping his position flexible, his pawn structure healthy, and his options open. However, reader, please note that White has considerably more space and that it is far from easy for Black to manoeuvre on the last two ranks here (or in similar positions). It takes a special talent (like for example Karpov's) to do this successfully! 20.\(\text{f}4\) Gelfand's play is logical and straightforward. 20...\(\text{w}d8\) 21.\(\text{b}1\) \(\text{e}7\) 22.\(\text{h}4\) \(\text{g}6\) 23.\(\text{g}5\) \(\text{b}5\) 24.\(\text{x}g6?!\) It is not obvious to me why Gelfand refrained from 24.\(\text{b}3\), which seems to be winning a pawn after 24...\(\text{a}6\) (24...\(\text{a}6?!\) is not good due to 25.\(\text{c}5\) 25.\(\text{a}4\). 24...\(\text{h}xg6\) 25.\(\text{h}3\) The threat is 26.\(\text{h}8!\). 25...\(\text{c}7!\) with a sharp game, where Black ultimately emerged victorious, Gelfand-Karpov, Linares 1994.

B2) The other continuation is 13.\(\text{c}8\) 14.\(\text{c}1\). I do not quite understand why white players do not seem to have tried 14.\(\text{c}4\) here (at least there are no games in my database): 14...\(\text{w}c7\) 15.\(\text{h}4!\) This standard plan works here as well, since Black's counterplay with 15...\(\text{w}f4?!\) fails after 16.\(\text{g}3\) \(\text{g}4\) 17.\(\text{e}3\); hence Black will probably have to allow \(\text{g}3\) and have to place his queen on c6, like for example in Portisch-Browne (see below). With the rook still on a1, White may consider the idea of a4-a5. 14...\(\text{w}c7\)

B21) White may first play 15.\(\text{c}4\) \(\text{f}e8\) and now 16.\(\text{w}e2\) has been played by a number of very strong players. I personally prefer 16.\(\text{h}4\), the most logical. After 16...\(\text{c}6\) 17.\(\text{g}3\) \(\text{cd}8\) 18.\(\text{b}3\) White had an advantage in Lukacs-Navarovsky, Budapest 1980. 16...\(\text{h}6\) 16...\(\text{d}6\) has the drawback that it allows 17.\(\text{cd}1\) \(\text{h}6\) 18.\(\text{c}1\), which worked well for White in Korobov-Ibraev, Pardubice 2008. 17.\(\text{d}2\) 17.\(\text{h}4\) is with the white queen on e2 no longer promising for White due to 17...\(\text{h}5\);

B211) An old classic continued 17...\(\text{x}f3\) 18.\(\text{x}f3\) \(\text{e}5\). As I pointed out before, this is a standard counterplan for Black here. 19.\(\text{g}3?!\) White wrongly sacrifices a pawn - his subsequent pressure on the h4-d8 and h3-c8 diagonals will prove to be of a temporary nature. Correct was 19.\(\text{d}5\) \(\text{c}5\) 20.\(\text{b}1\) with chances for an advantage. 19...\(\text{exe}4\) 20.\(\text{exe}8+\) \(\text{exe}8\) 21.\(\text{f}4\) \(\text{w}c6\) 22.\(\text{f}5\) \(\text{d}8\) 23.\(\text{h}3\) \(\text{c}5\) Black is a sound pawn up, the white bishops are hitting nothing. Black went on to win in Portisch-Karpov, Bugojno 1978;

B212) 17...\(\text{d}6\) 18.\(\text{c}3\) \(\text{g}4\) This standard plan equalizes here. 19.\(\text{h}3\)
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\[ \text{B22) } 15.\text{g}4! \text{. This standard plan simply leads to a white advantage. The white bishop on g3 deprives Black from counterplay along the h2-b8 diagonal and also disturbs Black's queen, and hence the harmony of Black's pieces.} 15...\text{f}e8 \text{. After } 15...\text{f}d8 \text{ White got an easy advantage after } 16.\text{d}2! \text{ (this knight transfer – with the white pawn still on c3! – is in combination with the } \text{h}4-\text{g}3 \text{ transfer a standard plan here – Black's d6-square is weak! – so, take note!) } 16...\text{e}7 17.\text{g}3 \text{. After } 16...\text{e}8 \text{, White has an advantage here.} 17.\text{d}5! \text{. After } 17...\text{e}5 18.\text{f}d4 \text{. White got an advantage after } 18.\text{d}4 \text{.}\]

16...\text{f}e8 was better, though White has an advantage here. 17.d5! \text{c}5 17...\text{exd}5?? is a blunder due to the prosaic 18.\text{d}4 \text{h}6 19.\text{f}5, winning. 18.\text{g}5 \text{h}6 19.\text{d}xe6 \text{fxe}6 20.\text{d}xe6 \text{and White was a clear pawn up, with also a better position, Portisch-Browne, Tilburg 1978. It is important to note that Portisch, a great expert on the white side in this line, played both games with Karpov and Browne in 1978. However, Bugojno was played in May, while Tilburg was in October, so after losing to Karpov, Portisch very likely analysed the position deeply, came to the conclusion that 15.\text{h}4! was the way to go and subsequently employed it against Browne. To me it also looks like the most logical move. Anyhow, 13...\text{c}7 looks more flexible for Black than 13...\text{c}8.

- The other major alternative to 11...\text{bd}7 is 11...\text{c}6. Play here often resembles that in Queen's Gambit Accepted isolated pawn positions. 12.a3 A useful move in these positions, and a logical one here. It is also by far the most played. 12...\text{e}7

12...\text{xc}3 13.bxc3 is now, with the knight already developed to c6, less attractive for Black and, with good reason, rarely played. With his knight al-
ready on c6, Black has problems to achieve harmonious development:

A) 13.\(\text{d}3\) is considered White's main move here. However, it should not lead to an advantage, so white players may turn to 13.\(\text{a}2\) - see line B.

A1) 13...\(\text{b}5\)?! is not good due to 14.\(\text{d}2\). This is exactly why Black must include \(\text{h}6/\text{h}4\) before making this jump. 14...\(\text{f}6\) 15.\(\text{ad}1\) \(\text{a}5\) 16.\(\text{a}2\) \(\text{d}5\) 17.\(\text{b}4!\) \(\text{xc}3\)? This will lead to a quick collapse. 17...\(\text{c}6\) 18.\(\text{xd}5\) \(\text{exd}5\) 19.\(\text{c}1\) is clearly better for White, but Black would still have been in the game. 18.\(\text{xc}3\) \(\text{c}6\) 19.\(\text{d}5!\) A standard central break. 19...\(\text{exd}5\) 20.\(\text{xd}5\) White's pieces are harmonious and they cooperate excellently. Black is under a terrible attack and his position cannot be saved. 20...\(\text{c}7\) Or 20...\(\text{f}6\) 21.\(\text{c}2\) with the double threat of \(\text{xf}7\) and \(\text{xc}6\). 21.\(\text{b}5\) \(\text{a}5\) 22.\(\text{e}5\) \(\text{c}5\) 23.\(\text{xb}7\) \(\text{xb}7\) 24.\(\text{d}7\) \(\text{a}5\) 25.\(\text{d}4\) 1-0 Portisch-Sosonko, Biel Interzonal 1976;

A2) 13...\(\text{c}8\) also leads to a white advantage after 14.\(\text{ad}1\) \(\text{d}5\) 15.\(\text{xd}5\) \(\text{exd}5\) 16.\(\text{f}5\) \(\text{g}6\) 17.\(\text{g}4\) Black achieved the draw after the tactical sequence 17.\(\text{xd}5\) \(\text{xd}5\) 18.\(\text{xd}5\) \(\text{g}5\) 19.\(\text{xe}5\) \(\text{f}8\) 20.\(\text{e}7+\) \(\text{exe}7\) 21.\(\text{xe}7\) \(\text{xd}4\) 22.\(\text{de}1\) \(\text{g}2\) 23.\(\text{xf}7\) \(\text{d}5\) in Pinter-H. Olafsson, Copenhagen 1985;

A3) 13...\(\text{d}5\) leads to a standard central pawn symmetry where White has the upper hand after 14.\(\text{xd}5\) \(\text{exd}5\) 15.\(\text{e}7\) \(\text{e}7\) 16.\(\text{f}6\) 17.\(\text{a}1\) as in Degraeve-Hauchard, Marseille 2001;

A4) Collecting White's d4 pawn with 13...\(\text{a}5\)?! 14.\(\text{a}2\) \(\text{xf}3?\) 15.\(\text{xf}3\) \(\text{xd}4?\) would lose a piece to the simple 16.\(\text{b}4\) \(\text{ac}8\) 17.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{e}5\) 18.\(\text{f}4\) followed by 19.\(\text{bxa}5\);

AS) 13...\(\text{b}6!\)

This might just solve Black's opening problems here.

A5 1) 14.\(\text{f}4\) \(\text{d}6\) 15.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{e}7\) 16.\(\text{ad}1\)

16...\(\text{xf}3?\)! Black goes for a tactical sequence which will ultimately work for White. Black would have had a good game after 16...\(\text{c}8\)! 17.\(\text{a}2\) \(\text{b}8\) (this looks like a good plan here) 18.\(\text{b}1\) \(\text{f}5\). 17.\(\text{xf}3\) \(\text{xb}2+\) 18.\(\text{fl}\) most likely Black had only calculated 18.\(\text{h}2\) \(\text{c}7+\) 19.\(\text{g}1\) \(\text{xc}4\) 20.\(\text{h}6\) \(\text{f}5\) 18...\(\text{xd}4\) 19.\(\text{b}3\) It turns out that Black cannot retreat his bishop: 19...\(\text{c}7\)? 20.\(\text{b}5\). 19...\(\text{f}5\) 20.\(\text{g}3\) \(\text{f}3\) After 20...\(\text{g}4\) 21.\(\text{f}4\) \(\text{d}4\) 22.\(\text{e}4\) the black bishop remains trapped. 21.\(\text{f}3\) \(\text{g}4\) 22.\(\text{f}4\) \(\text{d}8\) 23.\(\text{g}2\) \(\text{g}5\) 24.\(\text{xd}4\) \(\text{xd}4\) 25.\(\text{c}1\) White's bishop ultimately turned out stronger than Black's three pawns in
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Yakovenko-V. Gaprindashvili, Warsaw Ech 2005;

A52) Critical may be 14.\(\texttt{Qh}4.\) However, this now leads to a pawn sacrifice: 14...\(\texttt{dxa}5\) White should have slight pressure in the case of 14...\(\texttt{dxh}5\) 15.\(\texttt{Qg}3\) 16.\(\texttt{xg}3\) 17.\(\texttt{xf}6\) 18.\(\texttt{ad}1\).

White soon won in Swiercz-Bocharov, St Petersburg 2010;

B12) 16...\(\texttt{a}6\) does not solve the problems due to 17.d5! (17.\(\texttt{xc}6?\) b5 would be fine for Black) 17...\(\texttt{ex}d5\) (17...b5? is a blunder due to the prosaic 18.\(\texttt{xh}7+\) 19.\(\texttt{e}4+\) 20.dxc6) 18.\(\texttt{xd}5\) followed by 19.\(\texttt{ad}1.\)

B12) 16...\(\texttt{h}6.\) Better is 14...\(\texttt{dxh}7\) 15.\(\texttt{g}3\) \(\texttt{ac}8\) It seems as if White’s compensation is perhaps worth a pawn (and it is a very big if), however definitely not more.

B2) Black can investigate 13...d6, though this does not seem to equalize:

14.\(\texttt{h}4\) \(\texttt{h}5;\) or 14.\(\texttt{e}3\) \(\texttt{c}8\) 15.\(\texttt{d}2\) (15.\(\texttt{e}2\) is also a possibility to explore) 15...\(\texttt{a}5\) 16.\(\texttt{e}5\) 17.\(\texttt{d}7\) 18.\(\texttt{e}2\) – this can be critical since White has good attacking prospects on the kingside;

Based on the examples shown, both 11...\(\texttt{xc}3\) and 11...\(\texttt{c}6\) are definitely playable, but still do not entirely equalize.

12.\(\texttt{c}1\) \(\texttt{c}8\)

This is by a wide margin the most popular and main move for Black here. Black has two considerably less played alternatives, which probably do not equalize. 12...\(\texttt{h}6\) 13.\(\texttt{h}4.\)

A) 13...\(\texttt{c}8\) 14.\(\texttt{d}3\) \(\texttt{e}8\) A decision like 14...\(\texttt{xc}3\) 15.bxc3 would transpose to already analysed ...\(\texttt{xc}3\) lines, and likely in a good version for White as Black has played ...h7-h6 too early.

15.\(\texttt{b}1\)
Here the black player tried an unusual idea to solve the h4-d8 diagonal pin:
15...g5? 16.Qg3 Qh5 17.Wd3 f5 18.a3 Qxc3 19.bxc3 White’s play can be improved with 19.Qxc3! Qdf6 20.Qe5 Qxc3 21.bxc3 and now if 21...Qe4 White has 22.Qe2, keeping his pawn structure intact. 19...Qdf6 20.Qe5 Qe4!
The point behind Black’s idea. The white queen will be chased away, then Black takes ...Qxf3 and White will be forced to recapture with his g-pawn, when he has also damaged his own kingside pawn structure. 21.Wb5 21.Qe2 Qxb1 22.Qxb1 Qxc3 21...Qxf3 22.gxf3 Wd5
White’s advantage is very small, this ending was later drawn in Sargissian-Volokitin, Ohrid tt 2009. An interesting idea by Volokitin, but not enough for equality;
B) 13.a6 14.a4
A standard QGA type decision.
B1) 14...Qa7 is an interesting idea by Kiril Georgiev.
B11) 15.Qe5 Qxe5 16.dxe5 Wxd1 17.Qexd1 Qxc3 18.bxc3 18.Qxc3 Qd5 leads to equality. 18...Qd5! 19.Qe2 Qd7 20.f4 White’s advantage is very small, this ending was later drawn in Vitiugov-Bologan, Poikovsky 2010;
B12) White can try to improve with 15.Wb3. After 15...Qe7 16.Qg3 Black seems to have problems. Black is OK in the case of 16.Qe5 Qxe5 17.dxe5 Qd7.

B121) 16...Qh5 also does not completely equalize: 17.d5 Or 17.Qcd1 followed by d4-d5; while white players looking for an adventure should analyse 17.Qe5!? Qxg3 18.Qxf7. 17...Qxg3 18.hxg3 Qc5 19.Wa2 exd5 20.Qcd1 Qf6 21.Qxd5 Qxd5 22.Qxd5;
B122) 16...Wa8

and here White has an interesting and unusual way to develop an initiative with 17.Qh4! 17.Qe3 is also better for White, however text is more to the point. White now threatens all sorts of different tactics related to taking on e6, or Qg6, or Qf5, for example: 17...Qe4 18.Qxe4 Qxe4 19.Qxe6 Qxh4 20.Qxh4 Qxg2 21.Qf5 (White has two strong bishops and a passed d-pawn, while Black cannot take advantage of White’s open king) 21...Qh1? 22.Wh3; or 17...Qh5 18.Qg6! Qg5 (18...fxg6 19.Qxe6) 19.Qxf8 Qxf8 20.Qcd1 Qxg2 21.d5; or 17...Qd8 18.Qxe6!

B2) The stem game for Qa7 continued: 14...Qe8 15.Wd3 White can here consider 15.Qe2!? Qa7 16.Qe5 or 15.Wb3 Qe7 16.Qg3. 15...Qa7! 16.Qa2 Qa8 17.Qb1 Qxf3 18.gxf3 Qxc8 19.Qg3 Qf8 20.Qed1 Qd7 with approximate equality in Delchev-Kir. Georgiev, Istanbul Ech 2003.

● Black may also try a new idea of Adla here: 12...a6 13.a4 Wc7!!?
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So far this has been tried in only one grandmaster encounter. However, it looks a bit strange and I do not think it equalizes after my suggested improvement at the next move. 14.\textit{\textit{f}b3} White may consider 14.\textit{\textit{d}3} here, and after 14...\textit{\textit{d}6} 15.\textit{\textit{e}5}! \textit{\textit{f}d8} 16.\textit{\textit{e}3}! it looks to me that White is going to develop a dangerous kingside attack.

14...\textit{\textit{x}f3} 15.\textit{\textit{xb}4} \textit{\textit{g}4} Due to the fact that White's bishop is still on g5, Black has this tactic. 16.\textit{\textit{g}3} \textit{\textit{b}7} Black looks OK here. 17.\textit{\textit{d}6} \textit{\textit{g}f6} 17...\textit{\textit{h}6} 18.\textit{\textit{f}4} \textit{\textit{g}f6} should be about equal.

18.\textit{\textit{d}5}! \textit{\textit{x}d5} 18...\textit{\textit{c}8}!? looks OK: 19.\textit{\textit{d}xe6} \textit{\textit{x}c4} 20.\textit{\textit{exd}7} \textit{\textit{x}d7} 21.\textit{\textit{e}7} \textit{\textit{h}1}! 22.\textit{\textit{d}d5} \textit{\textit{x}c1+} 23.\textit{\textit{x}c1} \textit{\textit{w}d5} 24.\textit{\textit{w}xd5} \textit{\textit{x}d5} 25.\textit{\textit{w}d7} \textit{\textit{c}6} 26.\textit{\textit{d}6} \textit{\textit{a}4} 27.\textit{\textit{b}6} with a draw. 19.\textit{\textit{d}xd5} \textit{\textit{d}x\textit{d}5} 20.\textit{\textit{d}xd5} \textit{\textit{w}x\textit{d}5} 21.\textit{\textit{w}x\textit{d}5} \textit{\textit{exd}5} 22.\textit{\textit{e}d}1 White gets his pawn back and has an advantage in this endgame, which White ultimately managed to win in Nisipeanu-Adla, France tt 2011.

White has here two main moves: 13.\textit{\textit{d}3} and 13.\textit{\textit{w}b3}, both of which have served White reasonably well. There is a big difference however, since in my opinion 13.\textit{\textit{d}3} brings White an opening advantage, whereas with correct play 13.\textit{\textit{w}b3} does not bring White any advantage at all – actually, in the tactical complications arising in the 13.\textit{\textit{w}b3} line White may easily get into trouble.

13.\textit{\textit{d}3}

This continuation mostly leads to structures with connected hanging pawns since the ...\textit{\textit{x}c3} bxc3 transaction occurs later, and these positions are very similar or may transpose to positions analysed above; for example the line 11.\textit{\textit{e}2} \textit{\textit{xe}2} 12.\textit{\textit{w}b3} \textit{\textit{d}7} 13.\textit{\textit{d}3}.

13.\textit{\textit{w}b3}

This move has an independent character and usually leads to more direct play. This line was always considered to be one of the main lines for White in this system, but has recently still gained in popularity. Perhaps Kasparov's sensational loss in a miniature to Kramnik in their World Championship match has also played a role. Anyhow, Black already has an important choice to make here: 13...\textit{\textit{e}7}, the move chosen by Kasparov in the mentioned game, leads to very direct tactical play, while in the
case of 13...âxc3 White recaptures with his rook: 14.âxc3, so we get a type of play that differs strategically from other lines analysed here, where White recaptured bxc3:

A) It would be a mistake to defend the âb4 with the 'natural' 13...âe7? because this runs into the tactic 14.âd5!. Now, as early as move 14, Black has to be careful not to lose immediately. The first game where this tactical trick occurred continued:

A1) 14...âa6 The best move here. 15.âa4 âxc3 16.bxc3 âb8 17.âb3 Black's bishop on a6 is terribly placed, it ties up the knight that defends it, while it can itself not retreat to b7 because the a7 pawn hangs. 17...b5 18.âa5 âb7 18...âc7 was more resilient. 19.âxf6 âxf6 20.d5! Now it is over quickly. 20...exd5 21.âb4! The white queen goes after Black's exposed king. 21...âd7 22.âh4 âg7 23.âd4 Black does not have a defence against âc2 followed by âf5, 1-0, Browne-Ljubojevic, Tilburg 1978. This well-known disaster for Ljubojevic has made sure that 13...âe7? has found no followers;

A2) White is obviously better after 14...âxc3 15.âxb7 âxe1 (in case of 15...âb8?! White gets a big advantage after 16.âxc3 âxb7 17.d5) 16.âxc8 Black's pieces lack all harmony here.

B) 13...âxc3 14.âxc3

Now we have arrived at an important moment:

B1) A move by Svidler which looks like over-the-board inspiration was 14...âc7?! 15.âe5!.

A multifunctional move: White threatens âxf7, while the third rank is now free for a transfer of the white rook to the kingside. Black is already in an unpleasant situation. In the event of 15.âf4 Black would have played 15...âc6, and this rook may look strange, but it is not easy for White to find anything concrete, for instance 16.âe5?! does not bring anything after 16...âxe5 17.dxe5 âd4!.

B11) 15...âh8 16.âh3 Black is already in terrible trouble. 16...âa8 17.âxd7 âxd7 18.âxf6 âxf6 19.âxh7+!! White will give checks with âh3 and âg4, and then the rook lift âe3 will decide, 1-0 Timofeev-Svidler, Moscow ch-RUS 2008 – a terrible game for Svidler;

B12) In the case of 15...h6 White indeed plays 16.âxf7! In reply to 16.âh4 Black may go for the forced line 16...âxe5 17.dxe5 âd4 18.âxf6 âxf6 19.âxe6 âxc3 20.bxc3 âd2 21.âd1 âg5 22.âd5 âxd5 23.âxd5 fxe5, and though White is a little better due to Black's exposed king, a draw should be the most likely outcome;
16...\textit{cxd4} 9...dxe5 10.xd5 c4 11.h3 exd5 12...xd5 e4 13.xf6 gxf6 14...xc4 e5 15...d3 d5 16.g4 17...g5+ f8 18.w3 f6 19.g4 f5 20.xh6
\textit{e6} 21.xf7+ g8 22.wc6+ f8 23.wc8

B1) 15...\textit{e7} 16...\textit{g3} and White has an unpleasant initiative (16...\textit{xf7}?! does not work well for White here due to 16...\textit{xc4} 17...\textit{xc4} \textit{xf7}).

B2) 14...\textit{e8}?! led to another opening disaster for Black after 15...d2! Opening the third rank for a swift rook transfer. 15...h6?

This runs into an instructive tactic. 16...\textit{xh6}! White correctly strikes at once. Due to his ability to quickly transfer his rook along the third rank, his attack on the black king becomes crushing. It is important to note that two very strong players like Svidler and Vescovi both terribly underestimated White's attacking potential here. 16...\textit{g6} 17...\textit{h3} \textit{exc4} Black tries to eliminate part of White's attacking potential, but to no avail. Black's problem is, just like in the Svidler game, that his king has no defenders. 18...\textit{xc4} \textit{g7} 19...\textit{g3}+ \textit{h7} 20...\textit{d3}+ \textit{g7} 21...\textit{d6} \textit{wb8} 22...\textit{xe6}+ fxe6 23...\textit{g3}+ \textit{g4} 24...\textit{xg4}+ \textit{f6} 25...\textit{h7} 1-0 Onischuk-Vescovi, Poikovsky 2002;

B3) As we have seen from the opening catastrophes of Svidler and Vescovi, it is clever for Black to throw in 14...h6! here. 15...\textit{h4}

Black is not likely to succumb to an immediate storm, however White has the advantage. Black can choose from a number of different ways to be slightly worse:

B31) An option is 15...\textit{d5}, when:

B311) In the case of 16...\textit{xd5} \textit{xc3} 17...\textit{xc3} \textit{exd5} 18...\textit{a3} Black can equalize by using White's back-rank weakness as a motif: 18...\textit{e8}! 19...\textit{e8}+ 19...\textit{xa7} \textit{xe1}+ 20...\textit{xe1} \textit{xc8}. 19...\textit{xe8} 20...\textit{xa7} \textit{c8} 21...\textit{xf6} \textit{xc3} 22...\textit{h3} \textit{c1}+ 23...\textit{h2} \textit{f4}+;

B312) 16...\textit{d2} It is important for the reader to note that White often places his knight on d2 in this particular line. It is well placed there – it opens the third rank for rook transfers to the kingside (which, as we have seen in
Svidler's and Vescovi's disasters, may result in a swift attack on the black monarch, it defends the c4 bishop, and controls the e4-square. 16...\textit{c6} 

White can obtain a long-term, risk-free plus with 17.\textit{xd}5!. One practical example from grandmaster practice continued 17.\textit{wa}4 \textit{wc}8 18.\textit{xa}6 and here Black found a good tactical solution which leads to a draw more or less by force: 18...\textit{b}5! 19.\textit{xc}6 \textit{xc}6 20.\textit{xb}5 \textit{xb}5 21.\textit{xb}5 \textit{wc}2 22.\textit{f}1 \textit{b}8 23.\textit{e}2 \textit{d}1 24.\textit{c}4 \textit{b}6 25.\textit{c}2 \textit{xd}4 26.\textit{x}f6 \textit{xf}6 and the game was soon drawn in A. David-De la Villa Garcia, Presolana 2011. 17...\textit{xc}3 18.\textit{bxc}3 \textit{ex}5 19.\textit{f}1 \textit{e}8 20.\textit{e}3 \textit{wc}7 21.f3 White's advantage may look small, but it is long-term, based mainly on the weakness of Black's d5 pawn (White's c3 pawn weakness is less of a worry), his ability to jump \textit{f}5 at the right moment, creating tactical threats, the possibility to start a kingside pawn advance - White is indeed likely to proceed with g2-g4, \textit{g}3, and h2-h4 here, disturbing Black's f6 knight and reminding him once more of his weak d5 pawn. So it would be wrong for Black to assume that he gets an easy draw here.

B32) The queen move 15...\textit{We}8 has a logical purpose: to free the f6 knight from a pin on the h4-d8 diagonal, and here (given the fact that 14...h6 15.\textit{h}4 have been included) White cannot develop a quick and deadly attack like in Onischuk-Vescovi. However, in this isolated pawn position Black often misses his dark-squared bishop, and also he is passive and it takes him time to coordinate his pieces and create counterplay. 16.\textit{dd}2 Again, the knight is well placed on d2 here, often heading for the c4-square. Another possibility for White is to try and take advantage of the absence of Black's dark-squared bishop and take control of the a3-f8 diagonal - especially the vital d6- and e7-squares: 16.\textit{wa}3 a6 17.\textit{f}1 \textit{dd}5 18.\textit{xc}8 \textit{xc}8 19.\textit{dd}2!. White's knight heads for c4, where it will be ready to jump to d6 - yes, Black's dark-squared bishop has been exchanged and so the d6-square is a weakness in his camp. 19...\textit{c}6 20.\textit{d}4 and White has the advantage here. 16...\textit{dd}5 

White faces an important decision: 

B321) 17.\textit{e}4?! may look like a tactical hammer blow, but actually it does not work after 17...\textit{xc}3! 18.\textit{dd}6 \textit{xc}4 19.\textit{xe}8 \textit{e}2+! 20.\textit{h}1 \textit{xd}4 21.\textit{f}6+ \textit{xf}6 22.\textit{xe}2 \textit{c}8 and Black is at least equal; 

B322) A logical alternative is the standard aggressive option and logical follow up on \textit{dd}2, 17.\textit{g}3. Black seems
to have enough resources here: 17...f5! By far the best reply (17...b7f6 18.wxf3). Black stops White's dagger threat and also takes space on the kingside. Now the white rook on g3 suddenly becomes clumsy whereas the weakness of Black's e6 pawn weakness is not really felt at the moment.

B3221) The attempt to exploit the recently created weakness of the e6 pawn by sacrificing the exchange with 18.xge3 does not work: 18...fxe3! 18...xex3 White's idea would likely work in the case of 19.xex6+ wh8 20.xxe3. 19.xc4 19.xxe6? wxe6 20.xex6 21.xd4. 19...xex3 20.wxe3 f4 and only Black can be better here; B3222) 18.wa3 and now:

B32221) 18...g5 is risky, to say the least: 19.xg5 Another possibility is 19.f4 g4 (19...xf4?? loses to 20.xg5 hgx5 21.xg5+ wh8 22.xe6 xxe6 23.wxh3+) 20.h3 h5 21.wxa7 xc6 22.wa3. 19...hxg5 20.xg5+ wh7 21.b5 c8 22.c4 xc4 23.xg8 wxg8 24.xc4 of4 25.wg3 25.g3 is not clear after 25...wc8 26.axf1 wc6 27.f3 of6. 25...wg3 26.xg3 cd5 27.f3 White is better, but is it enough for a win? – that's not easy to say;

B32222) 18...a6 19ЛЕ7 df7 20.d6 c7f6 and due to the fact that White's rook is actually clumsy on g3 here, Black has enough counterplay: 21.xe5 e4 or 21.xd3 h5! (21...wd7 22.xe5 is better for White) 22.xf3 wd8! (the black queen heads for g5, Black is developing an initiative here) and now 23.c4?! does not work due to 23...df4 24.xf4 exf4 25.xf4 xd4 26.e5 wd5 27.f3 xc4. B323) 17.cc1 27f6 17...f5?! is a wrong decision here. Please just compare the position to our previous 17.xg3 f5 lines: here White's rook is well placed on c1 and there are no tactics related to White's clumsy rook on g3 here: 18.f3. This position (pawn structure, Black's dark-squared bishop exchanged, White's bishop pair) resembles one of the main Nimzo lines with 4..c2 0-0. White has an advantage there as well. 18...a6 19.a4 wg6 20.xg3 wd6 21.d3 f4 22.f2 wd7 23.e2 ec7 24.d4 and White had a clear advantage in Timofeev-Grigoriants, Moscow 2007. 18.xf3 wd7 19.xe5 wd6 This kind of position is likely to occur in this line and both sides have to decide before they choose their respective lines whether they like playing it. I would personally prefer White (bishop pair, dominant knight on e5), though Black has his trumps (weak d4 pawn) and the position is definitely playable for him. The practical example we have just followed was drawn later – Pozo Vera-Orms Pallisse, Torredembarra 2011. We still have relatively little practical tests here.

C) 13...LE7! The best for Black. Now in order to justify 13.wb3 White has to aim for a tactical solution: 14.xf6 Black has two ways to recapture on f6 and both should be OK:

C1) 14...xf6 allows tactical complications, which should not be unfavourable for Black: 15.xe6!
The point behind $\text{Wb3}$.  
C11) Interestingly, in his World Championship game with Kramnik, Kasparov played the clearly inferior $15...\text{fxe6?}$, which was all the more surprising since Kramnik's idea was not a novelty and had already been seen in a game by Hazai (given below). $16.\text{Wxe6+ Wh8}$ $17.\text{Wxe7 Qxf3}$ $18.\text{gx}f3 \text{Wxd4}$ $19.\text{Qb5 Wxb2}$ Kasparov correctly takes the pawn. The stem game continued $19...\text{Wf4}$ $20.\text{Exc8 Exc8}$ $21.\text{Qd6 Wxf3}$ $22.\text{Qxc8 Wg4+}$ $23.\text{Qf1 Wh3+}$ $24.\text{Qe2 Wxc8}$ $25.\text{Qd2}$ and White won in Hazai-Danielsen, Välby 1994. $20.\text{Exc8 Exc8}$ $21.\text{Qd6 Qb8}$ $22.\text{Qf7+ Qg8}$ $23.\text{We6}$ Black's situation is far from good, however after his next blunder Black loses instantly. I guess that batteries like $\text{We6/ Qf7}$ here, threatening a discovered check, simply make any kind of player (World Champion or club amateur!) extremely nervous. $23...\text{Af8??}$ $23...\text{h5}$ was the only move. $24.\text{Qd8+ Wh8}$ $25.\text{We7}$ 1-0 Kramnik-Kasparov, London World Championship m/10 2000;

C12) $15.\text{Cc7!}$ $16.\text{Qg5}$ The most natural follow-up. In the case of $16.\text{Cc4 Qxf3}$ $17.gxf3 \text{Qd6}$ Black has, due to White's compromised kingside pawn structure, good compensation for the sacrificed pawn.

C121) $16...\text{Wxd4!}$ This recently discovered move is strong, and White has to be careful not to get wiped out quickly. $17.\text{Qxd4}$ This natural move (also the first choice of most of the engines) probably brings White in trouble since it sends the black queen to a very active position. Probably the most advisable for White here is to realize the danger he is in and opt for the peaceful $17.\text{Qxf7! Qc5}$ $18.\text{Qd6+ Wh8}$ $19.\text{Qxb7 Wxf2+}$ $20.\text{Qh1 Qxb7}$ leading to a likely draw. In the case of $17.\text{Qxf7+? Wh8}$ Black has many unpleasant threats - like $...\text{Wg4}$, $...\text{Qg4}$, $...\text{Qc5}$. $17...\text{Wh4}$ $18.\text{Qxf7 Qc5}$

As it turns out, White's king is left without defenders and is under a terrible attack. White's $\text{Qf7}$ cannot deliver any meaningful discovered check here:

C121) In the only practical example until now, White was quickly massacred after $19.\text{Qd2?! Qxf7!}$ $20.\text{Qxf7+ Wh8!}$ Now White is under a terrible attack and her position quickly collapses. Severiukhina was perhaps hoping for $20...\text{Qxf7??}$ $21.\text{Qd8+ Qf8}$ $22.\text{Qe7 Qd5}$ $23.\text{Qxd5 Qxd5}$ $24.\text{Qxf7 Wxd8}$ $25.\text{Mf5}$ and White wins. $21.\text{Qee2 Qg4}$ $22.\text{Qh3}$ $\text{Wg3}$ $23.\text{Qe4 Qxf2}$ 0-1 Severiukhina-Schepetkova, Voronezh 2009;

C1212) $19.\text{Qe5+ Wh8}$ $20.\text{Qe2}$ It is obvious that Black's attack is strong and
White should consider himself lucky if he escapes with a draw. 20...\(\text{e}7\) 20...\(\text{vh}5\) followed by ...\(\text{xf}4\) also looks strong for Black. 21.\(\text{wc}4\) \(\text{wg}5\) 22.\(\text{g}3\) \(\text{wh}5\) Another possibility is 22...\(\text{xf}2\)+ 23.\(\text{xf}2\) \(\text{xe}5\). 23.\(\text{b}4\) Probably the only move. 23...\(\text{xf}2\)+ 24.\(\text{xf}2\) \(\text{xe}5\) White has an unpleasant situation with his open king here.

C122) Another, more often played continuation, 16...\(\text{f}6\), leads by force to a position where White has a safe, risk-free advantage: 17.\(\text{b}5\) \(\text{e}7\) 18.\(\text{xd}6\) \(\text{wd}6\) 19.\(\text{c}4\) \(\text{vf}4\) and now:

C1221) 20.\(\text{g}3\) leads to sharp positions where White may easily get worse: 20...\(\text{d}2\) 21.\(\text{ed}1\) \(\text{xb}2\) 22.\(\text{d}3\) Or 22.\(\text{b}3\) \(\text{d}5\) 23.\(\text{xd}5\) \(\text{xd}5\) 24.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{g}6\) 25.\(\text{c}4\) \(\text{d}8\) with Black's advantage in Emm-Döttling, Germany Bundesliga 2002/03. 22...\(\text{b}4\) 23.\(\text{d}5\) \(\text{d}6\) and Black was at least OK in Braun-Latzke, Hockendorf ch-GER 2004 – later Black lost due to a horrible blunder; 20.\(\text{f}1\) \(\text{xf}3\) 21.\(\text{xf}3\) \(\text{xe}1\)+ 22.\(\text{xe}1\) \(\text{xd}4\) 23.\(\text{b}3\) \(\text{c}5\) In this type of position the bishop is superior to the knight, hence White had a risk-free advantage in Markosian-Afromeev, Tula 2000.

C2) The other option is 14...\(\text{xf}6!\) – not the most played move but quite OK – likely leading to a draw by perpetual check. 15.\(\text{b}5\) Black threatened to capture on f3, so this knight jump was forced. 15...\(\text{xf}3\) 16.\(\text{xf}3\)

C21) It is wrong for Black to be 'clever' and 'win a tempo' with 16...\(\text{g}5\)? because as we will see Black's bishop is better placed on f6: 17.\(\text{c}2\) \(\text{a}6\) 18.\(\text{d}6\) \(\text{c}7\) 19.\(\text{xf}7\) \(\text{w}7\) After 19...\(\text{xf}7\) 20.\(\text{xe}6\) it becomes obvious that Black's bishop should have stayed on f6! 20.\(\text{xf}5\) Tactics now simply work for White. 20...\(\text{xf}3\) 21.\(\text{xe}6\) \(\text{c}4\) 22.\(\text{xe}7\) \(\text{xc}2\) 23.\(\text{gf}3\) \(\text{f}8\) 24.\(\text{d}5\)! The threat is \(\text{e}8\) followed by \(\text{e}6\). The immediate 24.\(\text{e}8\)? does not work due to 24...\(\text{w}6\)! 25.\(\text{e}6\) \(\text{g}7\) and White's \(\text{e}6\) is not protected. 24...\(\text{d}2\) 25.\(\text{e}6\) \(\text{d}5\) 26.\(\text{xe}7\) \(\text{h}8\) 27.\(\text{e}7\) \(\text{e}5\) 28.\(\text{e}8\) \(\text{xe}6\) 29.\(\text{xf}8\) \(\text{g}7\) 30.\(\text{b}8\) and White easily won this endgame with two pawns up in Alexandrov-Perunovic, Vrnjacka Banja 2005;

C22) 16...\(\text{a}6\)! 17.\(\text{c}7\) Or 17.\(\text{d}6\) \(\text{c}7\). White's d4 pawn, which is more valuable than Black's a6 pawn here, is hanging, and White will likely have to go for the following transaction: 18.\(\text{xf}7\) \(\text{xf}7\) 19.\(\text{xe}6\) \(\text{f}8\) – this position is not clear because compared to some other similar \(\text{h}+2\) pawns vs \(\text{h}+2\) lines we have seen, here Black has good piece coordination. 17...\(\text{c}7\)
Part IV: 4...0-0 5. \( \text{\underline{\text{d}}}_3 \) d5 6. \( \text{\underline{\text{f}}}_3 \) c5 7.0-0 – The Immediate 7...dxc4 8. \( \text{\underline{\text{x}}}_c4 \)

18. \( \text{\underline{\text{c}}}_6 \) \( \text{\underline{\text{c}}}_8 \) 19. \( \text{\underline{\text{d}}}_3 \) 19.d5?! brings White nowhere after 19...exd5 20. \( \text{\underline{\text{x}}}_d5 \) \( \text{\underline{\text{e}}}_5 \). 19...\( \text{\underline{\text{b}}}_8 \)! White’s strong knight will be either exchanged or kicked out. 20.d5 The known tactical motif 20.\( \text{\underline{\text{c}}}_5 \)? \( \text{\underline{\text{x}}}_c6 \) 21.\( \text{\underline{x}}_h7+ \) \( \text{\underline{\text{x}}}_h7 \) 22.\( \text{\underline{\text{h}}}_5+ \) \( \text{\underline{\text{g}}}_8 \) 23.\( \text{\underline{\text{h}}}_3 \) does not seem to work here after the simple 23...\( \text{\underline{\text{h}}}_4 \) 24.\( \text{\underline{\text{x}}}_h4 \) f6. 20...\( \text{\underline{\text{d}}}_8 \) Another, ‘calmer’ option for Black is 20...exd5 21.\( \text{\underline{\text{f}}}_5 \) \( \text{\underline{\text{b}}}_7 \) 22.\( \text{\underline{\text{b}}}_4 \) \( \text{\underline{\text{x}}}_c1 \) 23.\( \text{\underline{\text{x}}}_c1 \) \( \text{\underline{\text{d}}}_8 \) 24.\( \text{\underline{\text{d}}}_1 \) \( \text{\underline{\text{c}}}_6 \). Now White has to go for 21.\( \text{\underline{\text{x}}}_h7+ \) \( \text{\underline{\text{x}}}_h7 \) 22.\( \text{\underline{\text{x}}}_d8 \) \( \text{\underline{\text{x}}}_c1 \) 22...\( \text{\underline{\text{x}}}_d8 \)?? would prove to be a terrible blunder after 23.dxe6 fxe6 24.\( \text{\underline{\text{h}}}_3+ \) \( \text{\underline{\text{g}}}_8 \) 25.\( \text{\underline{\text{x}}}_e6+ \) \( \text{\underline{\text{h}}}_7 \) 26.\( \text{\underline{\text{h}}}_3+ \) \( \text{\underline{\text{g}}}_8 \) 27.\( \text{\underline{\text{x}}}_c7 \) \( \text{\underline{\text{x}}}_c7 \) 28.\( \text{\underline{\text{e}}}_8+ \) \( \text{\underline{\text{h}}}_7 \) 29.\( \text{\underline{\text{h}}}_5+ \) \( \text{\underline{\text{g}}}_6 \) 30.\( \text{\underline{\text{h}}}_7+ \) \( \text{\underline{\text{g}}}_7 \) 31.\( \text{\underline{\text{g}}}_8+ \) \( \text{\underline{\text{f}}}_6 \) 32.\( \text{\underline{\text{e}}}_6+ \) \( \text{\underline{\text{g}}}_5 \) 33.\( \text{\underline{\text{e}}}_3+ \) \( \text{\underline{\text{f}}}_6 \) 34.\( \text{\underline{\text{h}}}_4 \) and White delivers mate by either \( \text{\underline{\text{e}}}_6 \) or \( \text{\underline{\text{f}}}_3 \). 23.\( \text{\underline{\text{h}}}_5+ \) \( \text{\underline{\text{g}}}_8 \) 24.\( \text{\underline{\text{x}}}_f7 \) with a draw by perpetual check.

I think we can conclude that 13.\( \text{\underline{\text{b}}}_3 \) is not dangerous for Black. Black should be ready to enter tactical exchanges with 13...\( \text{\underline{\text{e}}}_7 \)!, when he is definitely not inferior – actually the tables may turn rather quickly.

13...\( \text{\underline{\text{e}}}_8 \) 14.\( \text{\underline{\text{e}}}_2 \) \( \text{\underline{\text{x}}}_c3 \) 15.bxc3

Now we have a ‘regular’ pawn structure that we have seen in a number of lines.

15...\( \text{\underline{\text{c}}}_7 \) 16.\( \text{\underline{\text{h}}}_4 \)

As already seen in some other examples by Gelfand, Portisch, etc., this is White’s standard plan here.

16...\( \text{\underline{\text{h}}}_5 \)

Since \( \text{\underline{\text{x}}}_h7 \) does not appear to work, this is probably the most natural plan for Black in this position.

17.\( \text{\underline{\text{g}}}_5 \)!

Definitely the critical continuation here. 17.\( \text{\underline{\text{e}}}_3 \) \( \text{\underline{\text{d}}}_f6 \) was played in a couple of games, with a good position for Black; 17.\( \text{\underline{\text{x}}}_h7+ \)?? does not work here due to 17...\( \text{\underline{\text{x}}}_h7 \) 18.\( \text{\underline{\text{g}}}_5+ \) \( \text{\underline{\text{g}}}_6 \) 19.\( \text{\underline{\text{g}}}_4 \) \( \text{\underline{\text{f}}}_4 \)!. 19...\( \text{\underline{\text{f}}}_4 \)?? blunders into a forced mate after 20.\( \text{\underline{\text{c}}}_2+ \) \( \text{\underline{\text{f}}}_5 \) 21.\( \text{\underline{\text{e}}}_6+ \) \( \text{\underline{\text{e}}}_6 \) 22.\( \text{\underline{\text{x}}}_f5 \) +.

17...\( \text{\underline{\text{g}}}_6 \)

Black has an interesting possibility in 17...\( \text{\underline{\text{f}}}_4 \)!

18.\( \text{\underline{\text{x}}}_h7+ \) \( \text{\underline{\text{h}}}_8 \) 18...\( \text{\underline{\text{f}}}_8 \) fails to 19.\( \text{\underline{\text{b}}}_5 \) when \( \text{\underline{\text{b}}}_4 \) is a serious threat. 19.\( \text{\underline{\text{c}}}_2 \) \( \text{\underline{\text{f}}}_5 \) 20.\( \text{\underline{\text{g}}}_3 \) \( \text{\underline{\text{f}}}_8 \) This is a strange position which black players who are looking for new ways to combat this line should investigate.

18.\( \text{\underline{\text{h}}}_3 \)
Chapter 4.2: Karpov Variation – 8...cxd4 9.exd4 b6

17.\textit{Q}g5 is an idea of Psakhis. His (little-noticed) stem game continued:

\textbf{18.\textit{W}d2 \textit{Q}d5} White is better after
\textbf{18...f6 19.\textit{Q}h3} (19.\textit{Q}xe6?? loses a
Knight after the simple 19...\textit{W}d6
19...\textit{Q}g7 20.\textit{W}f3 \textit{Q}f5 21.\textit{Q}f2). 19.\textit{f}3
\textit{Q}c4

Here Psakhis' game continued 20.\textit{b}1
\textit{W}f4 21.\textit{W}f2 \textit{f}5 22.\textit{Q}h3 \textit{W}d6 with a
later draw, Psakhis-Hillarp Persson,
Torshavn 2000. White's play can be
improved with 20.\textit{a}xc4! \textit{W}xc4 21.\textit{a}e4
\textit{W}c6 22.\textit{g}4! \textit{Q}g7 23.\textit{W}h6 \textit{W}c8
23...\textit{f}5?? is a blunder due to 24.\textit{Q}f6.
24.\textit{Q}e7 \textit{Q}e8 25.\textit{h}4 White threatens to
start a mating attack: h4-h5, h5xg6,
\textit{W}c2-\textit{h}2 and it looks like White is go-
ing to succeed.

\textbf{18...e5}

As we have already seen, the ...e6-e5
pawn break is a standard idea to start
counterplay in these positions. How-
ever, here things are somewhat differ-
ent: the weakened dark squares around
Black's king and the strange position of
both knights on the h-file all play a role.

\textbf{19.\textit{f}3 \textit{W}d6 20.\textit{Q}f2}

White has an advantage here. Topalov
went for a radical solution:

\textbf{20...exd4}

An option was 20...\textit{Q}g7.

\textbf{21.\textit{W}xe8+ \textit{Q}xe8 22.\textit{W}xe8+ \textit{Q}f8
23.cxd4}

White's two rooks proved stronger than
Black's queen and Black was lucky to es-
cape with a draw in Anand-Topalov, So-
fia World Championship (m-9), 2010.

\begin{center}
\textbf{Conclusion}
\end{center}

As we have seen in our analyses, this is a complex line with
abundant possibilities for both sides. Yes, there are many vari-
ations, some of them also rather forced, however for both sides a
good understanding of structures with an isolated pawn in the
centre and connected hanging pawns in the centre is essential to
be successful with this line.
Chapter 4.3

Parma Variation – 8...\(\text{\&bd7}\) 9.\(\text{\&e2}\)

The main idea behind 8...\(\text{\&bd7}\) is for Black to get a favourable version of the line 8...\(\text{cxd4}\) 9.exd4 from Chapter 4.2, since Black has not yet captured on d4 and so White's \(\text{c1}\) cannot develop to g5 yet. Some of the lines here, namely 9.\(\text{d3}\), 9.\(\text{\&d3}\) and 9.\(\text{\&e2}\), lead to positions similar to those analysed under 8...\(\text{cxd4}\) (Chapter 4.2) or transpose to them. Independent strategic play, not related to other lines, occurs after 9.\(\text{\&b3}\) or especially 9.a3, which leads to a pawn sacrifice by White. The three main moves we will focus on are 9.\(\text{\&e2}\), 9.\(\text{\&b3}\) and 9.a3. The reader finds the moves 9.\(\text{\&d3}\) and 9.\(\text{\&d3}\) in the comments to 9.\(\text{\&e2}\); while other moves, like for example 9.\(\text{\&e2}\), are not dangerous for Black at all. By the way, all three main moves offer White good prospects for an opening advantage.

9.\(\text{\&e2}\)

- 9.\(\text{\&d3}\) mostly transposes to lines seen under 8...\(\text{cxd4}\) (Chapter 4.2).
  A) By the way, transpositions coming after 9...\(\text{b6}\) are to regular lines where Black has acceptable play – please see under 8...\(\text{cxd4}\) in Chapter 4.2.
  A1) 10.\(\text{a3}\) \(\text{cxd4}\) 11.\(\text{\&xd4}\) \(\text{\&xc3}\) 12.\(\text{\&xc3}\) \(\text{\&b7}\) – see under 8...\(\text{cxd4}\);
  A2) 10.\(\text{\&e2}\) \(\text{\&b7}\) 11.\(\text{\&d1}\) \(\text{cxd4}\) 12.\(\text{\&d4}\) \(\text{\&c8}\) and Black has a good version of 8...\(\text{cxd4}\) lines;
  A3) 10.\(\text{\&e1}\) \(\text{\&b7}\) 11.\(\text{\&a3}\) \(\text{cxd4}\) 12.\(\text{\&xd4}\) \(\text{\&xc3}\) 13.\(\text{\&xc3}\) and again we have a transposition to 8...\(\text{cxd4}\) lines.
A black continuation that leads to independent positions is:
  B) 9...\(\text{a6}\) 10.\(\text{\&a3}\) 10.a4 is not critical and leads to equality: 10...\(\text{\&e7}\) 11.\(\text{\&e4}\) \(\text{h6}\) 12.\(\text{\&xf6}\) 13.\(\text{\&xf6}\) 14.\(\text{\&d1}\) \(\text{\&e7}\) 15.\(\text{\&c2}\) \(\text{b6}\) 16.\(\text{\&d2}\) \(\text{\&xd2}\) 17.\(\text{\&xd2}\) \(\text{\&b7}\) 18.\(\text{\&ad1}\) \(\text{\&ac8}\) and the game was soon drawn in Gligoric-Portisch, Buenos Aires ol 1978.
10...\(\text{\&a5}\)
Chapter 4.3: Parma Variation – 8...\(\text{bd7}\) 9. \(\text{we2}\)

B1) Wrong and illogical, voluntarily putting a knight on the edge of the board, is 11.\(\text{a4}\). Now 11...\(\text{xd4}\) 12.\(\text{exd4} \text{c7}\) is already better for Black;

B2) The knight pirouette 11.\(\text{e5}\)? \(\text{wc7}\) 12.\(\text{c4}\) brought White nothing good after 12...\(\text{xd4}\) 13.\(\text{exd4} \text{c3}\) 14.\(\text{bxc3}\) b5 15.\(\text{e3} \text{xc3}\), Gligoric-Puc, Sarajevo ch-YUG 1958;

B3) The Meran-like continuation 11.\(\text{e4}\) does not pose any problems for Black – if he reacts correctly: 11...\(\text{exe4}\);

B3 1) 12...\(\text{c7}\) 13.\(\text{dxc5}\) f5 The pawn sacrifice 13...\(\text{xc5}\) gives Black some compensation, but still does not equalize after 14.\(\text{e7}\)xh7+ \(\text{d7}\) 15.\(\text{c2}\)+ \(\text{g8}\) 16.\(\text{xc5}\) b6 17.\(\text{h5}\) \(\text{b7}\). It seems that Black has good Meran-like compensation, but Black's weak king is a problem: 18.\(\text{g5}\) \(\text{d3}\) 19.\(\text{d1}\) \(\text{f5}\) 20.\(\text{d4}\)! f6 21.e4 \(\text{exe4}\) 22.\(\text{exe4}\) (22.g4!? deserves attention) 22...\(\text{fxg5}\) 23.\(\text{we2}\) \(\text{d8}\) 24.f3. Due to his superior pawn structure White is obviously better here. 14.\(\text{c2}\) and White stood better in Minev-Kerchev, Varna 1965;

B3 2) 12...\(\text{e7}\) 13.\(\text{b4}\)! 13.dxc5 is also a bit better for White. 13...\(\text{xb4}\) 14.\(\text{d2}\) with White's advantage in B. Furman-Antoshin, Moscow tt 1972;

B3 3) 12...\(\text{f6}\)! Other moves do not equalize. 13.\(\text{c2}\) cxd4 14.\(\text{exd4}\)

In this position White can easily become worse. 14...\(\text{h6}\) Black can also try to do without this move: 14...\(\text{d7}\) 15.b4 (15.\(\text{g5}\) \(\text{b5}\) would force the exchange of White’s light-squared bishop, which is vital for White’s attack) 15...\(\text{b6}\) 16.\(\text{g5}\) h6 17.\(\text{h4}\) \(\text{b5}\) 18.\(\text{e1}\) \(\text{e7}\) and White's d4 pawn is very vulnerable: 19.a4 \(\text{c6}\) 20.\(\text{d3}\) (White's \(\text{d3}/\text{c2}\) battery does not yield anything here) 20...\(\text{d8}\) and Black is better. 15.\(\text{e5}\) \(\text{d7}\) 16.\(\text{xd7}\) \(\text{xd7}\) 17.\(\text{f4}\) \(\text{b6}\);

White's general problem is that his main idea to develop any initiative or threats is strongly connected to the \(\text{c2}/\text{d3}\) battery. But this battery does not promise much here. 18.\(\text{e5}\) \(\text{d8}\) 19.\(\text{e2}\) \(\text{ac8}\) 20.\(\text{ad1}\) \(\text{wb5}\) 21.\(\text{d3}\) 21.\(\text{d2}\)? \(\text{g4}\) 21...\(\text{a4}\) Black is at least OK. 22.\(\text{f3}\) Black is fine after 22.\(\text{b1}\) \(\text{d7}\) 22...\(\text{xd4}\)? 23.b3 23.\(\text{f4}\) \(\text{f6}\) (Black can also become ambitious with 23...\(\text{f8}\) 24.\(\text{e5}\)). 22...\(\text{xd4}\)! 23.b3 23.\(\text{f4}\) \(\text{xd1}\) (Black also has other moves here) 24.\(\text{xd1}\) \(\text{xe5}\) 25.\(\text{we5}\) \(\text{xd3}\) and only Black can be better here. 23...\(\text{xa3}\) 24.\(\text{xd4}\) \(\text{xd4}\) 25.\(\text{h7}\)+ \(\text{h8}\) 26.\(\text{xd4}\) \(\text{e7}\) with a draw as a likely result, though White should be more careful than Black, Donner-Unzicker, Hitzacker tt 1971;

B4) 11.\(\text{e2}\)! is probably the only move that gives White prospects for an advantage.
Part IV: 4...0-0 5.\( \text{\textit{d}} \)3 d5 6.\( \text{\textit{f}} \)3 c5 7.0-0 – The Immediate 7...dxc4 8.\( \text{\textit{e}} \)xc4

B41) 11...b5

12.b4! cxd4 In the case of 12...cxb4 13.axb4 \( \text{\textit{g}} \)xb4 14.\( \text{\textit{g}} \)xb5 \( \text{\textit{b}} \)7 15.\( \text{\textit{a}} \)a3 \( \text{\textit{a}} \)xa3 16.\( \text{\textit{g}} \)xa3 Black's a-pawn will prove to be more of a liability than an asset. 13.exd4 In the event of 13.\( \text{\textit{g}} \)xb5 axb5 14.bxa5 Black equalizes with 14...\( \text{\textit{c}} \)c5!. 13...\( \text{\textit{b}} \)6 14.\( \text{\textit{e}} \)e4 \( \text{\textit{b}} \)7 15.\( \text{\textit{c}} \)c5 It's unpleasant to leave White's knight on c5; on the other hand, should Black take it then White gets a powerful protected passed pawn;

B42) Black can also try playing a useful move, not making a decision in the centre: 11...\( \text{\textit{h}} \)6 12.\( \text{\textit{d}} \)d1 \( \text{\textit{w}} \)e7 13.\( \text{\textit{c}} \)c2 \( \text{\textit{d}} \)d8 14.\( \text{\textit{c}} \)c2 However, in order to complete development, Black must ultimately open the centre and then White's pieces will be better developed: 14...cxd4 15.exd4 Black's queen is not comfortable on e7, since due to the pin the threat of the central pawn break d4-d5 is hanging in the air. 15...\( \text{\textit{f}} \)8 16.\( \text{\textit{f}} \)4 In this isolated pawn position, Black's pieces are far from harmonious. White was better in Lautier-Barsov, Breda tt 2001;

B43) In the case of 11...\( \text{\textit{c}} \)c7, with the idea ...b7-b6, ...\( \text{\textit{b}} \)7, White is better developed after 12.\( \text{\textit{d}} \)xc5 \( \text{\textit{c}} \)xc5 13.\( \text{\textit{c}} \)c2 e5 14.e4 and Black would be very wrong to assume that White's slight initiative will quickly evaporate and the symmetrical pawn structure guarantees an easy draw.

I think that after 9.\( \text{\textit{d}} \)d3 Black is better advised to play 9...b6 and transpose to 8...cxd4 lines (Chapter 4.2).

- Another possibility for White, rarely played nowadays, which leads to structures analysed under 8...cxd4 and sometimes transposes exactly into them, is 9.\( \text{\textit{w}} \)d3.

I have to admit that the first time I seriously analysed this move was while writing this book. The general idea behind this move is that the queen can now recapture on c3, which is useful for White in some lines. However, the move also has its drawbacks. I came across Botvinnik's notes and I think he was right to suggest that the best way for Black – or the easiest, in any case – to combat this line was to aim for a structure with connected hanging pawns for White, in a good version for Black of the 8...cxd4 lines since White's queen is often not best placed on d3. Moves like 9...\( \text{\textit{a}} \)6 or 9...\( \text{\textit{b}} \)b6 are not convincing here.

A) Of the other moves, 9...b6 10.\( \text{\textit{d}} \)5 \( \text{\textit{c}} \)xc3 11.\( \text{\textit{d}} \)xc6 \( \text{\textit{a}} \)a5? has not been tried in practice, but looks OK for Black;

B) 9...cxd4 10.exd4 b6

B1) 11.\( \text{\textit{g}} \)5 leads to 8...cxd4 type positions. 11...\( \text{\textit{b}} \)7

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Chapter 4.3: Parma Variation – 8...d7 9.\textit{e}2

B14.1) One plan is 12.\textit{f}d1. However, Black is fine after 12...\textit{x}c3! In most of the 9.\textit{d}3 lines, Black's equalizing plan is simple – he creates a structure in which White has hanging pawns, where White's queen will not be perfect on d3 (Black often has tactics with ...\textit{d}d8, ...\textit{c}c5!) and hence Black will have a good version of 8...\textit{c}xd4 lines (see Chapter 4.2). 13.\textit{b}xc3 \textit{w}c7 14.\textit{b}b3 \textit{e}e4 15.\textit{c}c4 \textit{x}g5 16.\textit{a}g5 \textit{c}c8 with a fine game for Black in Milov-Sprenger, Port Erin 2004;

B14.2) 12.a3 \textit{a}a3 13.\textit{b}xc3 \textit{w}c7 14.\textit{d}d2 \textit{a}a8 is fine for Black, see 8...\textit{c}xd4;

B14.3) 12.\textit{a}d1 \textit{x}c3! 13.\textit{b}xc3 \textit{w}c7 is also a direct transposition to 8...\textit{c}xd4, which is fine for Black;

B14.4) 12.\textit{a}c1 is quite likely White's best here.

B14.11) 12...\textit{c}c8 and now:

B14.11.1) 13.\textit{b}b5 \textit{x}c3! If 13...\textit{e}e7 14.\textit{a}a6! with a white advantage – a correct assessment by Botvinnik. 14.\textit{b}xc3 is equal – again a correct assessment by Botvinnik, since after 14...\textit{w}c7 15.\textit{f}e1 \textit{d}d6 I do not see that White's queen on d3 is particularly useful in this position;

B14.12) 13.\textit{a}a6 \textit{a}a6 14.\textit{w}xa6 \textit{a}x\textit{c}3! 15.\textit{b}xc3 and now:

B14.12.1) 15...\textit{w}c7 is equal according to Botvinnik. He was right with this assessment, as after the almost forced 16.\textit{c}c4 (if 16.\textit{f}e1 Black plays 16...\textit{w}c4) Black has 16...\textit{e}e4 17.\textit{h}h4 \textit{e}5! 18.\textit{x}e5 (18.\textit{f}e1? is a blunder due to 18...\textit{ex}d4 followed by ...\textit{c}c5) 18...\textit{x}e5 19.\textit{e}e5 \textit{w}xe5 20.\textit{w}xa7 \textit{c}c3 21.\textit{g}g3 \textit{w}d4 22.\textit{h}h1 \textit{a}xc4;

B14.12.2) In a recent game Black played the inaccurate 15...\textit{c}c7?! here and got into trouble: 16.\textit{c}c4 Black's main problem is that with his rook on c7 (instead of his queen) he does not threaten to create counterplay with ...\textit{e}e6-\textit{e}5. 16...\textit{w}c8 17.\textit{a}a4 \textit{b}b7 18.\textit{f}f4 \textit{c}c6 19.\textit{c}c2 \textit{f}fc8 20.\textit{f}fc1 \textit{h}h5 21.\textit{c}c3 \textit{h}h6 22.\textit{b}h3 \textit{w}c7 White has a pleasant game, but how to improve? 23.\textit{e}e1! The white knight travels to b4. 23...\textit{w}b8 24.\textit{w}b3 \textit{e}5 This standard counterplay comes too late now. 25.\textit{d}d5 \textit{w}c7 26.\textit{d}d3 \textit{e}4 27.\textit{b}b4 \textit{w}b7 28.\textit{c}c6 and White was clearly better in Kogan-Macieja, Maalot-Tarshiha 2008.

B14.2) Black may also start with 12...\textit{x}c3!? Botvinnik postpones this capture for one move, but it might be easier to start with it. It gives White an extra possibility in 13.\textit{a}c3, but that should not bother Black at all, while 13.\textit{b}xc3 \textit{w}c7 is a good version for Black of the 8...\textit{c}xd4 line. 13...\textit{w}b8! Black moves his queen away from the pin and is now ready to jump with his \textit{f}6. 14.\textit{h}h4 \textit{c}c4 15.\textit{c}c1 a6 Now the
Part IV: 4...0-0 5...d3 d5 6...f3 c5 7.0-0 – The Immediate 7...dxc4 8...xc4

The immediate game peters out to a draw. If Black is ambitious, he should choose 15...wxd6 16...fe1 wac8! 16.d5 exd5 17...xd5 

If Black is ambitious, he should choose 15...wxd6 16...fe1 wac8! 16.d5 exd5 17...xd5 wfxd5 18...xd5 d6f6 19...xf6 wxf6 20...f5 wbf7 and the game was soon drawn in Psakhis-Podgaets, Tallinn 1983.

B2) Another possibility is 11...f4. In one top-class example from almost 40 years ago, White got into trouble without doing anything obviously wrong – actually Andersson played a model game with black – for a while: 11...b7 12...ac1 a6 13.a3 e7 14...fe1 ec8 15...a2 bc8 16...e5 

It looks as if White is getting a kingside initiative. 19...b5! Black threatens ...a6-a5 and ...b5-b4. Once this happens White's coordination will be terribly disturbed. 20...h3 ed8! The queen on d7 has to be protected. The immediate 20...a5? fails to 21...xf6 xf6 22.d5. 21...e3 21...xf6 xf6 22...xe6 does not work due to the simple 22...wxd4 and White's 'activity' will turn into agony. 21...a5! 22...c1 The ...b5-b4 plan has been executed, and Black stood better in Larsen-Andersson, Stockholm m-5 1975. Later, in mutual time trouble Larsen managed to swindle Andersson and eventually won.

Black's problem is that now 11.d5! opens up the position in White's favour. White gets a nice initiative, Black can easily go terribly wrong and has scored miserably in this line. So it is good advice for black players to stay away from this line:

A) 11...c5? is not a good move; Black soon gets into terrible trouble. 12...d1 we8 13...b5! The situation is not very good for Black. If he is lucky he will lose 'only' an exchange. Two strong players (one of them even a World Champion) suffered terrible defeats with black here. If I am well informed, those were rapid games, but still...

A1) 14...e4? Sometimes great players can make gross blunders, though the position was already lost – which certainly played a role. 15...d4! wg6 15...f5 16...b5 with a double threat on the h8 and the b4; 15...xe2 16...xe2 and Black loses either h8 or b4. 16...b4 1-0, Ivanchuk-Anand, Leon rapid 2008;

A2) 14...wxe2 15...xe2 b8 16...f4 is probably going to cost Black an ex-
change, since it is difficult to find something better than 16...\(\text{\texttt{Qe6}}\) 17.\(\text{\texttt{Qxe6 Qxe6}}\);

A3) 14...\(\text{\texttt{Wc6}}\) 15.\(\text{\texttt{Qxd5}}\) Black is already completely lost. 15...\(\text{\texttt{Qxd5}}\) 16.\(\text{\texttt{Qxd5 Qa6}}\) 17.\(\text{\texttt{Wc2 Wg6}}\) 18.\(\text{\texttt{Wxg6 hxg6}}\) 19.\(\text{\texttt{Qxa8 Qxa8}}\) 20.\(\text{\texttt{Qd2 Qxd2}}\) 21.\(\text{\texttt{Qxd2 Qb7}}\) 22.\(\text{\texttt{Qad1 Qf8}}\) 23.\(\text{\texttt{Qe5}}\) 1-0, Carlsen-Wang Yue, Leon rapid 2009.

B) The option 11...\(\text{\texttt{exd5}}\) 12.\(\text{\texttt{Qxd5 Qd6}}\) 13.\(\text{\texttt{Qg5 h6}}\) 14.\(\text{\texttt{Qh4 Qb7}}\) 15.\(\text{\texttt{Qad1}}\) looks rather unpleasant for Black, apart from the fact that one needs very good nerves to play such a position from the black side!

C) 11...\(\text{\texttt{Qxc3}}\) leads to positions that are better for White and though Black may be able to hold them, they are unpleasant to play: 12.\(\text{\texttt{Qxe6 Qb4}}\) 13.\(\text{\texttt{Qxd7}}\) White players looking to maximize the profits should analyse 13.\(\text{\texttt{Qg5?!}}\) or 13.\(\text{\texttt{Qd2}}\) here. 13...\(\text{\texttt{Wxd7}}\) and now:

C1) 14.\(\text{\texttt{a3}}\), which was played in a number of high-level games, is perhaps not the most accurate, as after 14...\(\text{\texttt{Qd6}}\) Black easily held in a couple of games;

C2) 14.\(\text{\texttt{Qe5}}\) does not bring much after 14...\(\text{\texttt{Wf5?!}}\) 15.\(\text{\texttt{Qd3 Qe6}}\) 16.\(\text{\texttt{Qf4 Qb7}}\);

C3) 14.\(\text{\texttt{Qd1 Qe7}}\) Or 14...\(\text{\texttt{Wc7}}\) 15.\(\text{\texttt{Qe3 Qb7}}\) 16.\(\text{\texttt{Qac1}}\) 15.\(\text{\texttt{a3 Qxe2}}\) 16.\(\text{\texttt{Qxe2 Qfe8}}\) 17.\(\text{\texttt{Qd6}}\);
C2) 14...\(\text{We}8\)? 15.\(\text{Ce}4\) cxd4 loses by force to 16.\(\text{Cd}6\) \(\text{Wb}8\) 17.\(\text{Cxb}7\) \(\text{Wxb}7\) 18.h3 \(\text{Ch}6\) 19.\(\text{Cxe}6\) gxh6 20.b4 b5 21.\(\text{Dd}3\) \(\text{Cc}7\) 22.\(\text{Ce}4\)++; 
C3) 14...f6 Black now goes for a pawn sacrifice – the whole idea looks strange. 15.\(\text{Exf}6\) \(\text{Dxf}6\)

C31) Now the actual game went 16.\(\text{Wxe}6\)+, which is OK, though not the most precise: 16...\(\text{We}6\) 17.\(\text{Cxe}6\) \(\text{Ch}8\) 18.\(\text{Cb}5\) Strangely enough, White went on to lose this position, and therefore there is a chance that Black’s play may find followers. However White is a solid pawn up here, and also Black’s bishop is terribly placed on a5, Roiz-Naiditsch, Valjevo tt 2011. 18.\(\text{Dad}1\) looks like a solid, sound pawn-up position;
C32) After 16.\(\text{Ce}5!\) it is difficult to find a way for Black not to land in a totally lost position immediately: 16...\(\text{Db}6\) This looks like Black’s only response; 16...cxd4?? loses to the simple 17.\(\text{Cxe}4\) dxc3 18.b4. Now, after 17.\(\text{Dd}7!\), if Black is lucky, he will be ‘only’ an exchange down.

10.\(\text{Dd}1\)

10.d5?! now works considerably less well, due to the fact that after 10...\(\text{Cxc}3\) 11.dxe6

Black has 11...\(\text{Ce}5!\) and after 12.\(\text{fxe}6+\) \(\text{Ch}8\) 13.\(\text{bxc}3\) \(\text{Dg}4\) White cannot properly develop. The pin along the h5-d1 diagonal is terrible and also it is very easy to go horribly wrong with white here and lose quickly – definitely a line for white players to avoid! 14.\(\text{e}4\) \(\text{We}7\) 15.\(\text{Ce}1\) b5 15...\(\text{Dad}8\) is also possible. 16.\(\text{Cxb}5\) \(\text{Db}5\) 17.\(\text{Cg}5\) 17.\(\text{Cc}4\) led to a disaster for White after 17...\(\text{Wf}6\) 18.\(\text{Dd}5\) h6 19.\(\text{We}3\) \(\text{Dxf}3+\) 20.\(\text{gxf}3\) \(\text{Dxf}3\) 21.\(\text{Df}1\) \(\text{Dad}8\) (Black now threatens to sacrifice an exchange on d5 and has a tremendous initiative) 22.e5?? \(\text{Wa}6+!\) (long checks are easy to miss) 23.\(\text{c}4\) \(\text{Dxd}5\) 24.e6 \(\text{Wxc}4+\) and Black soon won in Kortchnoi-Sax, Skelleftea 1989. 17...\(\text{We}6\) 18.\(\text{We}3\) \(\text{Dxf}3\) 19.\(\text{gxf}3\) \(\text{Dxf}7\) 20.\(\text{Dc}2\) h6 21.\(\text{f}4\) and a draw was agreed in Gligoric-Ribli, Moscow Ech-tt 1977.

10...cxd4 11.exd4

The most principled reply.

• 11.\(\text{Dxd}4\) does not bring White any tangible advantage after 11...\(\text{Db}7\):

  A) 12.e4 Gaining space in the centre (and White also has a threat: 13.\(\text{Cxe}6\) fxe6 14.\(\text{Cxe}8\) \(\text{Dh}8\) 15.e5), but this is not without risk for White, since his queenside structure will now be compromised.
Probably safest for Black is 12...\textit{w}c8!. With this move Black makes sure that his bishop comes to the a6-f1 diagonal. 12...\textit{x}xc3 13.bxc3 \textit{w}e7 14.f3 has also been played, but White has some chances for an advantage here. 13.f3 Now 13.\textit{d}xe6? does not work after the simple 13...fxe6 14.\textit{d}xe6+ \textit{h}8 15.e5? \textit{w}c6. 13...\textit{d}e5 14.\textit{b}b3 \textit{xc}3 15.bxc3 \textit{a}a6 and Black's bishop will be excellently placed on the a6-f1 diagonal:

A) 16.\textit{w}f2? runs into 16...\textit{d}d3;

B) 12.\textit{d}d2 a6 13.\textit{e}e1 White's advantage, if any, is microscopic. 13...\textit{w}e7 Or 13...b5 14.\textit{b}3 \textit{w}e7 15.a4 with some hope for an academic plus. 14.\textit{a}a1 \textit{b}5 15.\textit{b}3 \textit{f}c8

16.a4 bxa4 17.\textit{xa}4 \textit{xe}1 17...a5 18.f3 18.\textit{w}e1 h6 White's advantage, which is very small here, lies in the fact that Black's a-pawn is weaker than White's b-pawn. The game remained balanced and was only decided by a time pressure blunder by Black, I. Sokolov-Ibragimov, Nakhchivan 2011.

11.\textit{d}xc3

Black opts for a structure with connected hanging white pawns. White demonstrated exemplary play in this game.

Again, Black has the problem that after 11...\textit{b}7

12.\textit{d}5! (White gets an inferior version of the 8...\textit{cxd}4 lines from Chapter 4.2 in the case of 12.\textit{g}5 \textit{xc}3 13.bxc3 \textit{w}c7) is unpleasant for Black and leads to a white advantage. It is not easy for Black to choose here - both moves lead
Part IV: 4...0-0 5.\( \text{d}3 \) d5 6.\( \text{f}3 \) c5 7.0-0 – The Immediate 7...dxc4 8.\( \text{xc}4 \)
to an advantage for White; however in either case Black may manage to hold:

- After 12...\( \text{x}c3 \) 13.\( \text{dxe6} \) \( \text{xf3} \)
  14.\( \text{gx}f3 \) 14.\( \text{w}x\text{f3} \) seems to lead to a draw:
  A) 14...\( \text{e}5 \) 15.\( \text{exf7} + \text{h8} \)

16.\( \text{xd}8 \)! This exchange sac is fully justified since Black will have problems to collect White's f7 pawn. 16...\( \text{xf3} + \) 17.\( \text{gx}f3 \) \( \text{xd}8 \)! 18.\( \text{bxc3} \)

18...\( \text{d}5 \)! 18...\( \text{d}1 + ? \) would be bad for Black since after 19.\( \text{g}2 \) \( \text{d}7 \) 20.\( \text{f}4 \)
h6 21.\( \text{b}2 \) he cannot collect White's f7 pawn, while White can easily improve his position. 19.\( \text{g}5 \) \( \text{d}7 \) 20.\( \text{e}1 \) h6 Black is just in time to draw. 21.\( \text{e}5 \) Or 21.\( \text{xd}5 \) \( \text{xd}5 \) 22.\( \text{e}8 \) \( \text{x}g5 + \) 23.\( \text{f}1 \)
\( \text{f}5 \) 24.\( \text{xf}8 + \text{h7} \) with a draw later on, Tal-Gipslis, Riga ch-LAT 1965. 21...\( \text{xf}7 \)! Again Black's only move.

22.\( \text{d}2 \) It is always possible to do something stupid and lose, for example

with 22.\( \text{xd}5 ?? \text{f}5 \) 22...\( \text{f}6 \) 23.\( \text{xf}7 \)
\( \text{xf7} \) Due to his bad pawn structure White cannot convert his extra pawn into a win, though he is still better;

B) 14...\( \text{fxe6} \) Forced. 14...\( \text{b}4 \)?? blunders to 15.\( \text{exd}7 \) \( \text{xd}7 \) 16.\( \text{b}5 \).
15.bxc3

15...\( \text{w}c7 \) Or 15...\( \text{h}8 \) 16.\( \text{a}3 \) (it is important to note that White is not in a hurry to collect Black's e6 pawn, since it
blocks any e-file activity for Black’s rook and so prevents his counterplay) 16.\( \text{e}8 \) 17.\( \text{b}5 ! \) a6 18.\( \text{c}6 \) \( \text{c}8 \)
19.\( \text{d}6 \) and Black was under very unpleasant pins in Sasikiran-Alexandrov, Warsaw 2009. 16.\( \text{a}3 \) Again White is
not in a hurry to collect the e6 pawn. However, this was also possible here: 16.\( \text{xe}6 \) \( \text{h}8 \) 17.\( \text{e}3 \) (17.\( \text{f}4 \) went wrong for White after 17...\( \text{c}5 \) 18.\( \text{f}5 \)
\( \text{e}4 \) 19.\( \text{d}4 \) \( \text{xe}6 \) 20.\( \text{xe}4 \) \( \text{c}5 \) and White was left with a horrible pawn structure, badly missing his light-squared bishop, which would have been a great force here, and quickly lost in Donner-Portisch, Leipzig ol 1960) 17...\( \text{c}5 \). White can now improve on old theory by keeping his light-squared bishop with 18.\( \text{h}3 ! \) (18.\( \text{d}5 \) \( \text{xd}5 \)
19.\( \text{xd}5 \) \( \text{e}6 \) \( \text{c} \rightarrow \) Gligoric-Unzicker, Leipzig ol 1960) 18...\( \text{w}e5 \) (or 18...\( \text{c}6 \) 19.\( \text{g}2 \) 19.\( \text{c}4 \). White
does have a terrible pawn structure, but
he is a pawn up and has a powerful pair of bishops. Things are not easy for Black here. 16...c5 17.d4 h8 18.e1 ac8 19.e5 Aronian is centralizing his pieces and increasing the pressure, he is not in a hurry to collect any material. 19...f7

20.c1 This bishop has apparently done its job on the a3-f8 diagonal. 20...d5 Karjakin wants to trade his knight for White’s light-squared bishop, which is generally a good idea for Black here. 21.xd5 exd5 22.xd5 xf3 23.xf3 xf3 It is amazing that Black, with his own perfect pawn structure and so limited material left on the board, has problems here, but actually he does because all the remaining three white pieces are active and coordinating perfectly – White is going to get a mating attack soon! 24.e7 xc3 25.e3! Preparing a bishop transfer to d4 and cutting Black’s rook off on the wrong side of the board. 25...a3 26.g4 Black is getting mated! 26...h5 27.g5 h4 28.d4 h7 29.gxg7+ h6 30.b2 followed by 31.c1+, with mate in a few moves. 1-0, Aronian-Karjakin, Bilbao 2009.

12.exd5 13.xd5 e8 14.c2! White’s best move. In case of 14.e3 xd5 (14...d6 is also possible, since Black seems to hold after 15.xf6+ xf6 16.g5 e5) 15.xd5 xd5 16.c7 White’s initiative will be proved insufficient and Black should gradually level the game, Kuljasevic-Gareev, Brownsville 2010. 14...xd5 15.xd5 xd5 16.c7 e7 17.g5 In this symmetrical position White has an obvious initiative and Black is far from the draw. 17...f6 After 17...e6 White had a clear advantage and went on to win after 18.d1 f6 19.e5 in Donner-Matanovic, Leipzig 1960. 18.d1 f8 19.e3

19...f7 and here an amazing thing happened: the players agreed to a draw (!!!) in Cornette-Van Wely, France tt 2011. White has an obvious advantage and he can choose: 20.b3 20.a4 is also good for White. 20...c5 Black already had a very difficult choice to make. This loses a pawn, however 20...e7 21.d4 does not look pretty for Black either: 21...c5 22.f5 xe3? 23.d6. 21.xc5 bxc5 22.xc5 xb3 23.axb3 Who knows perhaps Black would indeed eventually manage to miraculously save this ending, however to agree to a draw just three moves earlier is a very mysterious decision. White has a stable advantage, Black has no counterplay at all, so, bar-
White wants to retreat his bishop to f1.
21...\textit{Q}a4 22.\textit{W}b4 \textit{Q}xc4 23.\textit{W}xa4

\textbf{14.c4 \textit{K}fe8 15.\textit{Q}b2 \textit{W}f4}

15...\textit{Q}g4 does not work here after
16.h3 \textit{Q}xf3 17.\textit{W}xf3 \textit{W}h2+ 18.\textit{R}f1 \textit{Q}g6

19.g4! h6 (19...e5? 20.g5) 20.\textit{K}e1 and White is better.

\textbf{16.\textit{W}e3 \textit{W}f5 17.\textit{Q}e1}

White prepares f2-f3 in order to take control of the e4- and g4-squares.

\textbf{17...b5}

A principled strategic decision – Black fights for the d5-square.

\textbf{18.c5!}

White surrenders the d5-square, but takes space and keeps his pawn chain intact. It should be noted that though

White's connected hanging pawns in the centre are now not mobile – Black's blockade is excellent at the moment – and White's \textit{Q}b2 is passive at this moment, his d4 and c5 pawns do control a number of vital squares and also secure him a space advantage. Due to this space advantage it will be easier for White to manoeuvre his pieces and improve his position, as we will soon see. I have explained these strategies in detail in my book \textit{Winning Chess Middlegames}. This game is an excellent learning example for players who want to try and understand the pros and cons of this complicated strategic struggle.

\textbf{18...\textit{Q}d5 19.\textit{W}g3 \textit{Q}f4 20.\textit{A}d2 \textit{Q}f6 21.f3}

Black is slowly but surely running out of activity and is soon going to be pushed back.

\textbf{21.\textit{Q}h5 22.\textit{W}f2 \textit{Q}d5 23.\textit{Q}c2!}

Naturally it is essential for White to keep his light-squared bishop.

\textbf{23.\textit{W}g5 24.\textit{Q}h1}

It was probably not easy for Black to believe that with his excellently placed and coordinated four pieces (\textit{W}, 2\textit{Q}s, \textit{Q}) he cannot create any threat on the kingside.
Chapter 4.4

Parma Variation – 8...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{b}}7} 9.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{b}}3}

9.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{b}}3} has been used by many strong players. It leads to a rather different set of positions than 9.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{c}}2}. I have to say that despite White's relative practical success in the 9.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{b}}3} line, I do not believe in a white advantage here, provided Black follows the plan I recommend. White gets some advantage in the event that Black decides to take \ldots\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{c}}xd4} and, after White recaptures exd4, forces an isolated pawn position. Black should keep the central tension here, so he should refrain from early \ldots\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{c}}xd4} lines and calmly play \ldots\textit{\textbf{b}7-\textbf{b}6}, develop his c8 bishop to b7 and continue development. Whether Black decides to start with 9...\textit{\textbf{b}6} or opts for 9...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{a}}6} 10.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{a}}4} \textit{\textbf{b}6} is a matter of taste — I think that Black is fine in both lines.

\textbf{9...\textbf{b}6}

This way Black quickly develops and White will have to open the position in the centre when, due to a lack of development, he is not ready for this. An early \ldots\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{c}}xd4} exd4 transaction is not accurate for Black here, because it helps White to efficiently develop his \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{c}}1}, while his isolated pawn on d4 will be difficult for Black to target.

\bullet One of Black's standard plans of development is, either now or with 9...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{a}}6}

\textbf{10.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{a}}4} included, 9...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{e}}7}, however in both cases this does not seem to equalize: 10.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{d}1}}
A) It is good to know that the immediate ...cxd4 (before playing ...b6) is inaccurate because it allows White an early unpleasant pin along the h4-d8 diagonal. 10...cxd4?! 11.exd4 a6 12.a4 \_b6 and now White does not retreat his c4 bishop, but plays 13.g5! and this pin is now rather unpleasant for Black: 13...Qxc4 14.Qd7?! 14.e5 Qac8?! led to an early collapse after 15.e4! Qxc4 16.Qxf6 Qxf6 17.Qxd7 and White won in Bronstein-Jezek, Moscow 1956. 14.Wxc4 Qd7 15.Qe5 Qac8 16.Wb3 The pin along the h4-d8 diagonal is taking its toll, so Black’s next move is forced: 16...Qxc3 17.bxc3 Qc6 18.c4 and White had an obvious advantage in Portisch-Beliavsky, Frankfurt rapid 1998;

B) 10...\_b6 11.e2:

B1) It is not clever for Black to hurry with taking on d4 here, because just like in other lines in this variation this provides White with an opportunity to quickly develop his Qc1 to g5: 11...cxd4 12.exd4 Qd7 13.e5 White threatens Qg5. 13...Qac8

B12) 14.g5 does not promise more than equality after 14...Qxc3! 15.Qxf6 (15.Qxd7?! Wxd7 16.Qf6 is wrong after 16...Qxb2! 17.Qg3?! g6 18.Qab1 Qd5) 15...Wxf6 16.Qxd7 Qxd7 17.Qxc3 Qc7;

B13) 14.Qxd7! A precise move, leading to a white advantage. 14...Qxd7 15.Qf3 Black has problems. 15...\_b8

B131) Now White went for material gain: 16.Qxb7 Wxb7 17.Wb4 Black had some compensation, though not worth a pawn – White was better in Larsen-Andersson, Stockholm m-3 1975.

B132) White could perhaps have gotten more out of the position with 16.d5! Qxc3 In the case of 16...exd5 White has a standard advantage of the bishop pair in an open position after 17.Qxd5 Qxd5 18.Qxd5 followed by Qe3. 17.bxc3 Wf6 18.a3 White can also play a better ending after 18.dxe6 fxe6 19.Qe1 Qxc3 20.Wxe6+ Wxe6 21.Qxe6. 18...Qxc3 19.Qb4 Qcc8 20.dxe6 fxe6 21.Qe1 Qf7 22.Qd6 – White is going to get his sacrificed pawn back and he will have a clear advantage.

B2) 11...Qd7 12.e5 Qe8?!

B11) White cannot delay taking on d7 here, since in the case of 14.c3? Qxc3! 15.Qxd7 Wxd7 16.bxc3 Qd5, with another knight jumping to c4 Black has achieved a perfect blockade and stands better;

An interesting idea. Black delays his decision, though in general after ...cxd4 exd4, with White having an isolated pawn on d4, there is no reason for Black to be worried about a trade of his Qd7
Part IV: 4...0-0 5.\( \text{\textit{d3}} \) d5 6.\( \text{\textit{f3}} \) c5 7.0-0 — The Immediate 7...dxc4 8.\( \text{\textit{xc4}} \)

14.\( \text{\textit{we2}} \) h6 15.\( \text{\textit{de5}} \) looks better for White. 14...h6 It seems as if Black has lost a couple of tempi, but actually he has a reasonable game. 15.\( \text{\textit{d2}} \) 15.\( \text{\textit{e3}} \) b6 16.d5 is not clear after 16...\( \text{\textit{b7}} \)!. 15...\( \text{\textit{b4}} \) 15...b6 followed by ...\( \text{\textit{b7}} \) looks more natural. 16.\( \text{\textit{wb3}} \) \( \text{\textit{d6}} \)
17.\( \text{\textit{ac1}} \) \( \text{\textit{wd8}} \) Black has lost a lot of time, with the main purpose to confuse the opponent — typically Kortchnoi! White should definitely be better here, Portisch-Kortchnoi, Belgrade tt 1970;

B) 10...\( \text{\textit{wa5?!}} \) does not look natural:
11.\( \text{\textit{d2}} \) \( \text{\textit{b6}} \) 12.\( \text{\textit{e2}} \) \( \text{\textit{md8}} \) 13.\( \text{\textit{fd1}} \)
14.\( \text{\textit{xd4}} \) 14.\( \text{\textit{xd4}} \) White is developing naturally, while Black’s pieces are far from harmonious. 14...\( \text{\textit{bd7}} \) 15.\( \text{\textit{ac1}} \) \( \text{\textit{wb6}} \) Black’s last two moves are a clear sign that something has gone wrong. White had an advantage in V. Babula-Hammer, Dresden ol 2008;

C) Again Black can develop with 10...\( \text{\textit{we7}} \) and again it does not equalize:
11.\( \text{\textit{md1}} \) Black’s main problem is that due to the inclusion of 10...\( \text{\textit{we7}} \) 11.\( \text{\textit{md1}} \), 11...b6 is now strongly met with 11.d5! and after 11...\( \text{\textit{xc3}} \) White has the zwischenschlag 12.d6.

C1) 11...\( \text{\textit{a5}} \) was chosen by Kortchnoi in 1970, just like his 10...\( \text{\textit{a5}} \) against Portisch (see line B further on). This experiment did not go well for Kortchnoi: 12.\( \text{\textit{wc2}} \) cxd4 13.exd4 \( \text{\textit{b6}} \)
14.\( \text{\textit{a2}} \) h6 15.\( \text{\textit{e5}} \) \( \text{\textit{d7}} \) 16.\( \text{\textit{b1}} \) \( \text{\textit{fd8}} \)

17.\( \text{\textit{md3}} \)! White is launching a classic QGA with 7.a4 type of attack. All of a sudden Black is in serious trouble. Particularly the \( \text{\textit{a5}} \) is missed in the defense of his king — please note once more Black’s mistake of taking on d4 too early and allowing White QGA-type play. 17...\( \text{\textit{ac8}} \) 18.\( \text{\textit{ag3}} \) \( \text{\textit{wb8}} \) 19.\( \text{\textit{wd2}} \)
19...\( \text{\textit{xb5}} \) \( \text{\textit{g6}} \) 20.\( \text{\textit{e8}} \) \( \text{\textit{e8}} \) 20...\( \text{\textit{c7}} \)! was the only way to stay in the game. 21.\( \text{\textit{xd6}} \)!! A nice-looking move. White had a winning attack in Tukmakov-Kortchnoi, Riga ch-URS 1970;

C2) 11...\( \text{\textit{b8}} \) has the drawback that Black’s a6 pawn is now poorly defended, as was demonstrated excellently by Ivanchuk: 12.\( \text{\textit{wc2}} \);

C21) 12...\( \text{\textit{b6}} \) 13.\( \text{\textit{we2}} \)! a difficult choice for Black — it’s not easy to play a move like 13...\( \text{\textit{a5}} \) and surrender the b5-square, while it is also not easy to move the rook back to a8. 13...\( \text{\textit{a8}} \)
14.\( \text{\textit{a2}} \)

14...\( \text{\textit{b7}} \) In the case of 14...\( \text{\textit{a5}} \) I guess that Aronian did not like 15.e4!, and with good reason! After 15...\( \text{\textit{b7}} \) 16.\( \text{\textit{g5}} \) h6 17.\( \text{\textit{h4}} \) g5 18.\( \text{\textit{xc5}} \) hxg5
19.\( \text{\textit{xc5}} \) White gets a tremendous, probably winning attack. 15.\( \text{\textit{xb4}} \)
\( \text{\textit{cxb4}} \) 16.\( \text{\textit{d3}} \) Now White has the bishop pair and a pawn majority —
Black temporarily has the d5- and e4-squares under control, which is indeed temporary and not enough to keep equality. 16...\(\text{dxe4}\) 17.\(\text{dxd2}\) f5 18.\(\text{cxd4}\) Black's situation is serious. Aronian's idea to sac a pawn does not bring nearly enough compensation. 18...\(\text{bxc8}\) 19.f3 \(\text{dxe6}\) 20.\(\text{xd6}\) \(\text{wxd6}\) 21.\(\text{f6a6}\) \(\text{f6a6}\) 22.\(\text{wxa6}\) e5 23.\(\text{d2}\) \(\text{exd4}\) 24.\(\text{wb5}\)!

Likely missed by Black. White went on to win in Ivanchuk-Aronian, Germany Bundesliga 2006/07;

C22) 12...\(\text{b6}\) 13.\(\text{d3}\) cxd4 14.\(\text{exd4}\) h6 leads to White's advantage: 15.\(\text{b4}\) \(\text{d6}\) 16.\(\text{xd6}\) \(\text{wxd6}\) 17.\(\text{e4}\) White can also try 17.a5 \(\text{b5}\) 18.\(\text{xb5}\) \(\text{wxd5}\) 19.\(\text{c5}\) \(\text{d7}\) 20.\(\text{c5}\) with an advantage. 17...\(\text{xe4}\) 18.\(\text{xe4}\) \(\text{d7}\) 19.\(\text{e5}\) White can improve with 19.\(\text{wxc5}\) and he is better after 19...\(\text{f4}\) 20.\(\text{e1}\), since 20...\(\text{xa4}\)? fails to 21.\(\text{xb4}\) b5 22.\(\text{e5}\) \(\text{b5d8}\) 23.g3 \(\text{w6}\) 24.b3 \(\text{b6}\) 25.\(\text{xa6}\) with a huge, winning advantage. 19...\(\text{xc8}\) 20.\(\text{b3}\) a5 Black was doing fine and eventually won in Zhou Weiqi-Kamsky, Moscow 2010.

C3) In the case of 11...\(\text{b6}\) 12.\(\text{e2}\) cxd4 White gets a plus after 13.\(\text{exd4}\) (an original idea is 13.\(\text{b5}\)?! \(\text{c5}\) 14.\(\text{h4}\) e5 15.\(\text{wxc2}\) h6 16.a5 \(\text{b5}\) 17.\(\text{xd5}\) \(\text{xd5}\) 18.\(\text{wxe4}\) \(\text{e6}\) 19.\(\text{wxe5}\) \(\text{d8}\) 20.\(\text{d2}\) and Black has to prove that his compensation is worth a pawn) 13.\(\text{c5}\) 14.\(\text{e5}\) \(\text{d7}\) 15.\(\text{f3}\);

C4) 11...\(\text{a8}\) has also been tried. It can lead to a small white plus: 12.\(\text{b2}\) \(\text{b6}\) 13.\(\text{e2}\) cxd4 14.\(\text{exd4}\) h6 15.a5 \(\text{b5}\) 16.\(\text{e5}\) \(\text{d7}\) 17.\(\text{f3}\) Again we get positions similar to 11...\(\text{b6}\) (and in general ...\(\text{b6}\) with ...\(\text{xd4}\)) lines. 17...\(\text{d6}\) 18.\(\text{xd5}\) \(\text{d5}\) 19.\(\text{xd7}\) \(\text{wxd7}\) 20.\(\text{a1}\) and White had a standard position with a central pawn sym-

and it will soon transpire that the inclusion of 11...\(\text{h6}\) 12.\(\text{h3}\)! strongly favours White: 12...\(\text{b8}\) 13.\(\text{dxc5}\) \(\text{xc5}\) 14.e4

Due to the fact that Black no longer has the move \(\text{g4}\), it is obvious that the above inclusion favours White:

C61) In the case of 14...\(\text{b6}\) White gets a clear advantage:

C611) 15.\(\text{f4}\) e5 16.\(\text{g3}\) \(\text{b7}\) 17.\(\text{d5}\) \(\text{d5}\) 18.\(\text{xd5}\) — black players should know that these positions are often more unpleasant than they may initially look;

C612) Also good for White is 15.e5 \(\text{h5}\) 16.\(\text{e4}\) \(\text{b7}\) 17.\(\text{xc5}\) \(\text{bxc5}\)
18...e1 or the standard third-rank rook transfer 18.a3!?, since now 18...xf3? fails to 19.wx f3 xe5 20.wxh5 xc4 21.xg3.

C62) 14...d6 15.xe3 b6 16.d4:

C621) 16...b7 runs into a tactical trick:

C6211) One top-level encounter continued 17.f3?! xfc8 Ponomariov-Leko, Moscow Wch blitz 2007 (17...c5!). Now, strong was 18...xe6! c5 19.wa2;

C6212) 17.xe6! c5 Black's only move. Now:

C62121) 18.f5? is a blunder due to 18...h2+! 19.xh2 (or 19.xh1 wx e6 20.dx e6 fxe6) 19...c7+ 20.d6 xb3;


C622) If 16...xe5 White is better after 17.xe2 c5 18.a5 – less convincing for White is 18.f4 g6 19.e5 d7;

C623) Perhaps Black's best is 16...c5 though White has some advantage in the ending after 17.c6 xb3 18...xe7+ xe7 19.xb3.

D) 10...b6!

White's main move here.

D11) Petrosian's game continued 11...xc3 12.dxe6 a5 13.exd7 wx d7 14.xd1 wc7 15.xd2 x d2 16.xd2 e4 17.xd3 xd6 Better was 17...b8! followed by ...b5. 18.d5 White had an advantage and went on to win in T. Petrosian-Simagin, Moscow 1966;

D12) Black's play can be improved with 11...b5! 12.axb5 White has little choice but to take the exchange. 12...xb5 13.xa8 bxc4 14.wd1 xc4 15.wxc4 xb6 16...b6 15.a7 Returning the exchange with 15.xc8 xc8 16.dxe6 we6 is likely better for Black, since White has problems to develop his c1. 15...exd5 Black has excellent compensation, worth more than an exchange – White has problems here.

Other options do not promise White anything:

D2) It is important to mention that prior to his game against Simagin, Petrosian played 11.xd1 b7 12.d5 and discovered that Black has 12...b5!, getting an excellent game. Petrosian must have thought that with the black bishop still on c8, due to pin on the a-file the move...b7-b5 was impossible. 13.axb5 axb5 14.xa8 xa8 15.xxb5 exd5 16.d2 we7 Black took this op-
portunity to offer a draw, which was of course accepted in T. Petrosian-Ivkov, Zagreb 1965. Only Black can be better here;

D3) An attempt like 11.e4 does not really work for White after 11...exd5 12.bxc3 exd4 13.ex6 cxd4 14.exd4 dxc5! 15.dxc5 dxc5 16.exf7+ xf7 followed by ...eb7; Black is fine;

D4) The move 11.a2?! is here well met by 11...a5.

This looks to me like a good way for Black to get an excellent game against 9.e3. As we will see, the immediate 9...b6 is also fine.

* 9...exd5 is inaccurate since after 10.bxc3 White will likely be a tempo up compared to the line 9...b6 10.a3 exd5 11.bxc3. On the other hand, Black was fine after 10.exd5 b6 11.cd1 eb7 12.dxc5 ec8 13.b4 bxc5 14.b5 wxc7 15.db2 eb6 16.e5 d4 xd8 17.f1 ed5 18.e4 ec5 19.d4 in Berkes-J. Polgar, Hungary tt 2006/07.

10.a3

* In the case of 10.ad1 eb7 11.a3:

A) With 11.a5 we simply transpose to 10.a3 a5 11.ad1 eb7;

B) 11...exd5 is also possible, though White may get a small advantage after 12.bxc3 wxc7 13.ew2 ec8 (13...eg4? is a blank after 14.h3) 14.a4 and now:

B1) Should Black increase the central tension with 14...e5 then White does not have to react and gets an advantage with 15.a5;

B2) Black can also play for lightsquare control with 14.cxd4 15.cxd4 ed5 16.wa3 wb7, but White regroups and starts to push Black back with 17.db2 ac4 (or 17...ec2 18.ed3 ec7 19.ad1) 18.dxc4 ac4 19.ed2 ec7 20.f3 fc8 21.ac1 wa6 22.e4 we2 23.cf1 with a white advantage;

B3) 14...e4 15.c4! followed by 1b2, White should be slightly better. One example from grandmaster practice continued 15.ad1 e5, Alexandrov-A. Zhigalko, Minsk ch-BLR 2007. Black could have obtained an excellent game by playing for light-square control – since White has placed his rook on e1, it now takes him time to prepare ce1-f3, controlling the e4-square: 15.cxd4 16.cxd4 ed5 17.wa3 or 17.wd3 ac3 17...wc7 18.db2 ac4 and if somebody is better here, it is not White.

* The standard 10.d5 push has been tried in practice. It does not bring White anything due to the fact that his queenside (hd1, wc1) is undeveloped. Actually, White can easily become worse. 10...exd5 11.dxe6 ea8 12.exd7

12...ed7 12...wd7 is also good for Black. 13.e5 ec8 Black threatens
14...b5. 14.a4 wc7 Black's bishop on a5 is excellent. He could have obtained an advantage here with 14...wd6! 15.f4 ad8, and White has problems to develop. 15.f4 ad8 16.ad1 xd1+ 17.axd1 cc6 Now chances are equal. 18.cc6 cc6 19.cc1! An important resource - otherwise it would be difficult for White to develop and he would be worse. 19...we4 20.wd3 we7 21.we2 we4 22.wd3 with a draw in Vaisser-Adams, France tt 2005.

10...ca5 11.ad1

Again, the standard central push 11.d5 does not bring White the desired effect, again due to the undeveloped ca1 and cc1: 11...xc3 11...exd5? is a mistake since it allows White to quickly develop his cc1. After 12.xd5 cb7

13.e4! xe4 14.cf4 White has strong compensation for the pawn. Note that White's cf4 is now an excellent piece, while Black's ca5 is out of play! 12.dxe6 ca5 13.exd7 wd7 The position is open, Black has quick development (namely ...cb7), while White is behind in development (ca1, cc1) and simply does not have enough pieces in play to develop anything meaningful, for instance: 14.de5 wc7 15.f4 White has already taken a serious positional risk. 15...cf5
Chapter 4.4: Parma Variation – 8...<f:lbd7 9 ... b3

Now Black gets his pawn back and has a good game.

14...<f:wb3 15.<f:xc3 <f:xc3
16.<f:xb3 <f:xc5

13...<f:xc5? is not good due to 14.<f:xf7! and White is better:
14...<f:xf7 Or 14...<f:xf7?! 15.<f:xe6 <f:xe6 16.<f:xf7+ <f:xf7 17.<f:xf7+ <f:xf7 18.<f:e2. 15.<f:xe6+ <f:e8 16.<f:b5;

- The queen sac 13...<f:xe5!? 14.<f:xd8 <f:xf8 15.<f:e2 <f:xc5 certainly deserves attention – again White's main problem is his undeveloped queenside (<f:a1 and <f:c1);

- It is not easy to say whether Black's compensation is fully sufficient after 13...<f:e7 14.<f:xd7 <f:xd7 15.<f:xb6 <f:xb6 16.<f:f1;

- Easiest is 13...<f:xf7 14.<f:xg7 <f:xe2+ 15.<f:fxe2 <f:e6 16.<f:xg7 <f:f8 and Black is better. 14...<f:xf7 15.<f:xc3 <f:xc5 with an excellent game for Black – again White's main problem is his undeveloped queenside – <f:a1 and <f:c1.

13...<f:wb6

Black has full compensation here.

14.<f:d4

Conclusion

9.<f:wb3 is a popular move for White and many strong players have employed it. However, Black's idea of ...b7-b6 and ...<f:b7, either with or without 9...<f:a6 10.<f:a4, looks like a good antidote to me. White would have to open up the position, while his queenside (<f:a1, <f:c1) is still undeveloped. Hence Black, who has a lead in development, should have a good game. In these lines, White can easy become worse.
Chapter 4.5

Parma Variation – 8....bd7 9.a3

This is perhaps the most unpleasant continuation for Black in this line. He has a choice between taking a pawn, which is rather risky as White gets excellent compensation, or being slightly worse, or simply entering an inferior version of some of the lines with 7.0-0 dxc4 8.xc4 cxd4 9.exd4, analysed in Chapter 4.1.

9...cxd4

This is considered to be Black's main move here.

- 9...a5 has been tried by a number of strong players (notably Adams, young Carlsen and Almasi), however it seems to me that Black simply gets an inferior version of certain lines with 7.0-0 dxc4 8.xc4 cxd4 9.exd4 (Chapter 4.2):
  A) 10.xd3 leads to equality after 10...a6 11.dxc5 xc5 12.xd8 xd8 13.b4 ce4 14.xe4 xe4 15.b2 b5 16.d3 b7 as in Beliavsky-Kotronias, Gibraltar 2009;
  B) 10.d2 may promise White an advantage: 10...b6 11.bb1 d5 is equal after 11...exd5 12.xd5 xd2 13.xd2 b7 14.ad1 xd5 15.xd5 xd5 16.xd5 f6. 11...xe3 11...xd4 12.xd4 xc3 13.xc3 should be a bit better for White. 12.bxc3 is an option to improve. 12.xc3 b7 13.ad1 c7 with equality was seen in Beliavsky-Carlsen, Amsterdam 2006 – it's a bit strange that Beliavsky did not want to build a strong pawn centre. 12...b7 13.d3 followed by e3-e4 is better for White, who will have a central pawn majority and a bishop pair advantage;
  C) With correct play, 10.b5 does not offer White any advantage: 10...xd4 and now:
Chapter 4.5: Parma Variation – 8...b6 9.a3

C1) 11...bxd4  

C1.1) Black had problems after 12...e7 13.b4 a6 14...d4  
  15...d2 b6 16...b3 e5 17...c5  
  18...xf5. White's bishop pair ensures an advantage especially the  
  1b3 is strong. 18...e4 19...d4 e5 20...xe5  
  21...b2 22...c8 22...c1 23...c1  
  24...c8+ 25...f4. Also interesting is 25...c3 followed by  
  2e2, and Black's e4 pawn will be a target. 25...xf3 26...f3  
  27...f4 28...g2 29...a2 30...f3  
  31...e4 and White had a clear advantage in Giri-Quesada Perez, Khanty-Mansiysk 2010.  

C1.2) 12...a6 should be the most accurate: 13...d6  
  14.b3  
  15...c8 26...c8 16...b2  
  27...bd8 and Black is fine here. It is difficult for  
  White to prove anything substantial based on his bishop pair.

C2) Practice has also seen 11.b4 a6? Forcing the white knight to a good square. 11...b6 was necessary, with the idea 12...bxd4 e5 13...b5 e4  
  14...g5  
  (15...xd8 16...a2 h6 17...b2 is clearly better for White) 16...a2 h6.  
  12...bxd4  
  13...c7? Losing a pawn for nothing, however Black's situation was already not good – after 12...b6  
  13...b2 Black cannot develop. 13...e6  
  14...b3 and White went on to win in Alexandrov-Gershon, Istanbul Ech 2003.

D) 10...d3 cxd4 11...c3  
  11...c7 12...g5. 12...c3  
  13.c4 b6. This position was reached in A. Zhigalko-Almasi, Khanty-Mansiysk ol 2010.

Please compare this to the variation 7.0-0 dxc4 8...c4 cxd4 9.exd4  
  10...d3 b6 11.a3  
  10.a3 analysed in Chapter 4.2. Here, in the Almasi game Black played first ...a5 and then  
...cxd4, while White spent exactly the same number of tempi! So after 12.  
  bxc3 White is a clear tempo up.

White is also better in the case of  
  9...c3 10...c3 b6. This line is not much played. White's main task here is  
  to move his central pawns (namely  
  e3-e4) and then he will be better due to  
  his space advantage and bishop pair. 11...d3  
  12...e4 Black is trying to prevent e3-e4. 13...b2  
  14.c4  
  15...c2:

A) If 15...f5 White is better after  
  16...d2, when black tactics do not seem to work: 16...cxd4 16...xf2? is wrong due to 17...xf2  
  18.d5  
  19...f3. 17...d4  
  18...f2  
  19...f3  
  20...f3 f4
21.\texttt{axb4} \texttt{wc3} 22.\texttt{e2 \texttt{g4}+ 22...\texttt{wxc2}+? 23.\texttt{d1} 23.\texttt{d2 \texttt{wxe6} 24.\texttt{xh7+ \texttt{f7} 25.\texttt{e1 \texttt{g4} 26.\texttt{we4} and White gets an attack;}}

\textbf{B) 15...\texttt{dxe5} 16.\texttt{d6} \texttt{f8} 17.\texttt{f3}}

Mission accomplished: White has the e4-square under control and was better in Kortchnoi-Ljubojevic, Lucerne ol 1982.

10.axb4

10.\texttt{exd4?! is not a good idea, since Black then gets a good version of the 7.0-0 dxc4 8.\texttt{xc4 cxd4 9.exd4 lines from Chapter 4.2, for example}}

10...\texttt{xc3 11.bxc3 wC7 12.\texttt{e2 b6} 13.\texttt{d3 b7 14.c4 \texttt{g4}}! (this standard counterthrust works perfectly here) 15.g3 \texttt{f6} and Black was already better in Averbakh-Botvinnik, training game, 1955.

10...\texttt{dxc3} 11.bxc3

Black has a problem here. As we are about to see, taking White's c3 pawn is rather risky, while if he doesn't, then White has a small but safe advantage, based on his pair of bishops and the possible creation of a passed c-pawn.

Here Black has a choice between taking a pawn, which is rather risky, or accepting a relatively one-sided game, fighting for a draw in a slightly inferior position:

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.8\textwidth]{image}
\end{center}

\textbf{11...\texttt{wc7}}

\textbf{A) 12.\texttt{e2} brings White a small advantage: 12...\texttt{b7} 13.\texttt{c4 \texttt{wc7} 14.\texttt{d4}}}

This move prevents the counter ...\texttt{g4} and also threatens \texttt{d5}. 14.\texttt{b2 a5 does not promise White much. 14...\texttt{e5} 14...\texttt{d8} 15.f3 is better for White - his pawn on f3 is good here. 15.\texttt{w3} and now:}

\textbf{A1) Looking for tactics with 15...\texttt{e4} may easily backfire after 16.\texttt{f4 e5 17.\texttt{f5 g6} (or 17...\texttt{d7} 18.\texttt{xe5 \texttt{xe5} 19.\texttt{b2}) 18.\texttt{g3 followed by h2-h3;}}

\textbf{A2) 15...\texttt{f8} 16.\texttt{b5 \texttt{c6} 17.f3}}

Again, note that White's pawn is excellent on f3 here:

\textbf{A21) 17...\texttt{c4? blunders an exchange after 18.\texttt{xa7 \texttt{c7? 19.\texttt{b5 \texttt{c6} 20.xa8 \texttt{xa8 21.a7).}}}}

\textbf{A22) 17...\texttt{a5 does not solve Black's problems: 18.bxa5 \texttt{bxa5} 18...\texttt{c4? is a blunder due to 19.\texttt{xc4 \texttt{xc4} 20.\texttt{xc4 \texttt{xc4} 21.d6 \texttt{c7} 22.axb6. 19.d1 Due to a back-rank tactic, the c4 pawn is taboo. White has a standard advantage here: a passed c-pawn, a well placed knight, and a strong dark-squared bishop (placed on a3 or b2);}}

\textbf{A23) 17...\texttt{a6 18.\texttt{a3} followed by \texttt{b2 leads to a white advantage. It is not}}

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big, but it is steady and also relatively risk-free. White's bishop on b2 will be strong, whereas Black's bishop is not well placed on b7.

B) Also possible, though a bit less convincing, is 12.\(\text{wd6}\), trying to take advantage of the fact that Black has not played \(\text{wc7}\). 12...\(\text{b7}\) 13.\(\text{d1}\) \(\text{wc8}\) 14.\(\text{b5}\) and now:

B1) 14...\(\text{wx}\text{xc3}\) is wrong due to 15.\(\text{a3}\) \(\text{wc2}\) 16.\(\text{e1}\)! 16.\(\text{xd7}\)? \(\text{ad8}\) 17.\(\text{a4}\)? 17.\(\text{e1}\) \(\text{we2}\)! 17...\(\text{wc8}\) 18.\(\text{we5}\) \(\text{xd1}\)!. 16...\(\text{f5}\) 17.\(\text{xd7}\) \(\text{ad8}\) 18.\(\text{e7}\)! Thus, White will remain ahead in material. 18.\(\text{wc7}\) is less clear after 18...\(\text{xd7}\) 19.\(\text{xa7}\) (19.\(\text{xd7}\)? is a blunder due to 19...\(\text{c8}\)) 19...\(\text{d5}\). 18...\(\text{d5}\) 19.\(\text{xd5}\) \(\text{xd5}\) 20.\(\text{d3}\) \(\text{wa2}\) 21.\(\text{h3}\) with a large white advantage;

B2) 14...\(\text{xf3}\)? 15.\(\text{xf3}\) \(\text{xc3}\) also does not work due to 16.\(\text{a3}\) \(\text{wc2}\) 17.\(\text{xd7}\) and now Black has a problem: 17...\(\text{ad8}\) loses to 18.\(\text{xa7}\) (not 18.\(\text{a4}\)? \(\text{xc8}\)!) while 17...\(\text{d8}\) fails to 18.\(\text{a4}\)! \(\text{g6}\)+ 19.\(\text{g3}\)+--;

B3) 14.\(\text{d8}\) 15.\(\text{b2}\) \(\text{a}\) 15...\(\text{xf3}\) 16.\(\text{gxf3}\) \(\text{a6}\) 17.\(\text{e2}\) is a bit better for White. 16.\(\text{e2}\) \(\text{b5}\) and now:

B31) 17.\(\text{ac1}\) \(\text{d5}\) 18.\(\text{c4}\) \(\text{xc4}\) 19.\(\text{d2}\) 19.\(\text{d3}\) \(\text{b8}\) was equal in Rogozenco-Sax, Hamburg 2002;

B32) 17.\(\text{e4}\) \(\text{xc4}\) 18.\(\text{d4}\) does not work due to 18...\(\text{d5}\)! and Black does not have any problems. 18...\(\text{c7}\) was less good after 19.\(\text{dc1}\) \(\text{b6}\) 20.\(\text{h4}\) \(\text{d5}\) 21.\(\text{e5}\) and White was better in Shabalov-Rohde, Virginia Beach 2002. 19...\(\text{wb7}\) 20.\(\text{xc4}\) \(\text{ab8}\) 20...\(\text{xa}\)?? blunders a piece after 21.\(\text{xf6}\) \(\text{gxf6}\) (or 21...\(\text{h}\) 22.\(\text{f3}\) \(\text{xf6}\) 23.\(\text{w}\) 22.\(\text{g3}\)+. 21.\(\text{a5}\) \(\text{xb4}\) 22.\(\text{xb4}\) \(\text{xb4}\) 23.\(\text{c3}\) \(\text{a4}\) 24.\(\text{f3}\) followed by e3-e4. White is actually a bit better here because Black's pieces lack harmony, though a draw is the likely result.

12.\(\text{e2}\) \(\text{xc3}\)

- In the case of 12...\(\text{d5}\)

A) 13.\(\text{d3}\) leads to a sharp position with probably balanced chances after 13...\(\text{xc3}\) 14.\(\text{a3}\) \(\text{f6}\) 15.\(\text{c2}\) \(\text{h6}\) 16.\(\text{b5}\) \(\text{b4}\) 17.\(\text{h7}\)+ \(\text{h8}\) 18.\(\text{w1}\) \(\text{a}\) as in Aronian-Topalov, Morelia/Linares 2006;

B) 13.\(\text{a3}\) should promise White a small advantage: 13...\(\text{b6}\) 14.\(\text{c1}\) \(\text{c4}\) 15.\(\text{xc4}\) \(\text{xc4}\) 16.\(\text{d2}\) \(\text{d3}\) 17.\(\text{b3}\) \(\text{xd1}\) White had an initiative after 17...\(\text{wc4}\) 18.\(\text{a5}\) \(\text{wc7}\) 19.\(\text{e4}\) \(\text{e7}\) 20.\(\text{f3}\) \(\text{b8}\) 21.\(\text{b5}\) in Sargissian-Gyimesi, Plovdiv tt 2010. 18.\(\text{fxd1}\) \(\text{b5}\) 19.\(\text{a5}\) \(\text{d7}\) 20.\(\text{e4}\) \(\text{b6}\) A draw is the most likely result here;

C) 13.\(\text{b2}\) \(\text{xc3}\) 14.\(\text{xc3}\) \(\text{xc3}\) 15.\(\text{d6}\) has also been tried. White has excellent compensation, but not much more, Graf-P.H. Nielsen, Sant Lluis 2005;
D) Probably White’s easiest road to an advantage is 13.c4 \( \text{\textit{Q}} \text{c3} \) 13...\( \text{\textit{d}} \text{xb4?} \) blunders an exchange after the simple 14.\( \text{\textit{a}} \text{a3}. \) 14.\( \text{\textit{w}} \text{c2} \) \( \text{\textit{d}} \text{xe2+} \) 15.\( \text{\textit{w}} \text{xe2 b6} \) 16.\( \text{\textit{b}} \text{b2} \) I like 13.c4 because it is simple. Here we have a position where White’s bishop will be stronger than its black colleague, White’s knight is better placed than Black’s, and the white \( c \)-pawn is far more dangerous than Black’s \( a \)-pawn. 16...\( \text{\textit{b}} \text{7} \) 17.\( \text{\textit{d}} \text{d4} \) \( \text{\textit{f}} \text{c8} \) 18.\( \text{\textit{f}} \text{c1} \) \( \text{\textit{f}} \text{6} \):

D1) 19.c5 \( \text{\textit{b}} \text{xc5} \) 20.\( \text{\textit{b}} \text{xc5} \) \( \text{\textit{d}} \text{7} \) 21.f3 a5 22.e4 The \( \text{\textit{b}} \text{7} \) is now dead, Black is facing a very unpleasant defence. White could have obtained a large advantage with 22.\( \text{\textit{w}} \text{c2} \) \( \text{\textit{a}} \text{a6} \) 23.e4 a4 24.\( \text{\textit{d}} \text{d1} \) \( \text{\textit{we}} \text{8} \) 25.\( \text{\textit{a}} \text{a3} \) and \( \text{\textit{f}} \text{b1} \). 22...a4 23.\( \text{\textit{w}} \text{e3 h6} \) 24.\( \text{\textit{a}} \text{a3} \) with a white advantage in Yakovenko-Grischuk, Khanty-Mansiysk 2009;

D2) Also good for White is 19.f3. This makes the life of the \( \text{\textit{b}} \text{7} \) miserable: 19...\( \text{\textit{we}} \text{7} \) 19...a6. 20.c5± 20.\( \text{\textit{a3}} \) e5 21.\( \text{\textit{f5}} \) \( \text{\textit{we}} \text{6} \) 22.e4
This kind of play is no fun for Black.

\( \text{\textit{b}} \text{6} \)

A) 13.\( \text{\textit{d}} \text{d4} \) \( \text{\textit{b}} \text{7} \) 14.\( \text{\textit{b}} \text{5} \) \( \text{\textit{w}} \text{c6} \) 15.\( \text{\textit{f3}} \)

This may look good for White.

A1) He is better in the event of 15...\( \text{\textit{w}} \text{c8} \) 16.\( \text{\textit{b}} \text{xb7} \) \( \text{\textit{xb7}} \) 17.c4 (17.\( \text{\textit{d}} \text{d6} \) \( \text{\textit{c6}} \) 18.c4 \text{\textit{fd8} was equal in

Hillarp Persson-Gausel, Karlstad tt 2005) 17...\( \text{\textit{c6}} \) 18.\( \text{\textit{d}} \text{d4} \) 19.\( \text{\textit{d3}} \)

A2) But actually this leads to equality after 15...\( \text{\textit{d}} \text{d5}! \) 16.\( \text{\textit{a}} \text{a7} \) \( \text{\textit{xc3}} \). Should White become ambitious with 16.c4!, this may backfire on him: 16...\( \text{\textit{e}} \text{5} \)!
Now White has to be careful not to become worse. He would have been doing fine in the case of 16...\( \text{\textit{w}} \text{xc4} \) 17.\( \text{\textit{d}} \text{d6} \) \( \text{\textit{c7}} \) 18.\( \text{\textit{d}} \text{xb7} \) \( \text{\textit{xb7}} \) 19.\( \text{\textit{b2}} \), though this compensation is enough for a draw – not more. 17.\( \text{\textit{d}} \text{d5} \) exd5 18.\( \text{\textit{d}} \text{d5} \) \( \text{\textit{xc4}} \) 19.\( \text{\textit{w}} \text{xc6} \) \( \text{\textit{xc6}} \) 20.\( \text{\textit{a}} \text{a7} \) White’s knight is pinned, and at this moment his \( \text{\textit{c1}} \) is a disaster. 20...\( \text{\textit{we}} \text{8} \) 20...f5?!
allows 21.\( \text{\textit{b2}} \) 21.f3. 21.e4 f5! followed by \( \text{\textit{f}} \text{7} \).

B) 13.c4 \( \text{\textit{b}} \text{7} \) 14.\( \text{\textit{d}} \text{d4} \) transposes to 11...b6. 14.\( \text{\textit{d}} \text{d4} \) e5 is OK for Black; also possible for White is 14.h3 a5 15.\( \text{\textit{a3}} \) axb4 16.\( \text{\textit{d}} \text{xb4} \) \( \text{\textit{xa1}} \) 17.\( \text{\textit{w}} \text{xa1} \) \( \text{\textit{a8}} \) 18.\( \text{\textit{b}} \text{b2} \) h6 19.\( \text{\textit{d}} \text{d1} \) and thanks to his bishop pair White had a small advantage, but the game was later drawn in Khalifman-Anand, New Delhi/Teheran 2000.

13.\( \text{\textit{b1}} \)

A relatively new discovery and perhaps White’s best here. Granted, White’s rook was excellently placed on the a-file and therefore the text may not look logical, but now White threatens the rather
unpleasant 14...b2, so Black has to lose even more time. The most unpleasant thing for Black here is that White actually has rather nice positional compensation for the pawn (the bishop pair, more space, Black still undeveloped), so that even in the event that matters do not develop perfectly, most of the time White will still be able to bail out with a draw. 13...a3 was the established move here, played amongst others in Kramnik-Kasparov, London 2000. While this move provides White with enough compensation, 13...b1 looks stronger to me.

13...c7

Otherwise White also plays 14...b2, with tempo, and most probably leading to the same position.

14...b2

In the case of 14...a5 White has an advantage after 15...c1...d8 16.b5...b6 17.a3...c5 18.e5. Apart from the fact that White can get his sacrificed pawn back any time he likes, his knight on c4 will be targeting the weak pawn on b6. White went on to win in Korobov-Miroshnichenko, Kharkov ch-UKR 2004. Stopping White’s pawn advance with 14...a6 does not help Black’s development: 15...c1...b6 16...d2...d5 16...xb4? would lose an exchange after 17...c4. 17...c4...d8 18...d4...f6 and now 19...f1 was the way for White to try to get more out of the position (19...f3...d7 20...xd5...xd5 21...b6...b5 22...fd1 eventually lead to a draw in Potkin-Alexandrov, Abu Dhabi 2005) 19...d7 20...b4 and White has a strong initiative, definitely worth more than a pawn.

15...b3 a5

In general it is a good idea for Black to trade his a-pawn for White’s b-pawn, as it opens up Black’s...a8, but the problem is that here it just doesn’t work. A move like 15...e4 is never easy to play here — White’s ...b2 remains open, White gets an excellent post for his knight on d4 and also Black’s e4 pawn will be a weakness.

16...c1

16...a1, keeping tension on the a-file, followed by...c1, also looks good for White.

16...b8

In the event of 16...b6 17.b5 Black simply cannot develop.

17.bxa5...xa5 18...a3
Part IV: 4...0-0 5. \( \text{d}d3 \) \( \text{d}5 \) 6. \( \text{f}f3 \) \( \text{c}5 \) 7.0-0 – The Immediate 7...dxc4 8. \( \text{xc}c4 \)

Black is now losing an exchange.

18...\( \text{xa}3 \)

Black does not really have a choice. 18...\( \text{d}d8 \)? loses instantaneously after 19.\( \text{g}g5 \) \( \text{d}d5 \) 20.\( \text{e}e7 \) \( \text{e}8 \) 21.\( \text{b}b4 \).

19.\( \text{xa}3 \) \( \text{b}6 \) 20.\( \text{fd}1 \) \( \text{c}5 \) 21.\( \text{b}2 \)

Black’s b6 pawn is going to fall. White converted his material advantage in Vitiugov-Karjakin, Poikovsky 2010.

**Conclusion**

Black has a problem in this line!
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The Strategic Nimzo-Indian
Volume I: A Complete Guide to the Rubinstein Variation

The Nimzo-Indian Defence continues to be one of the most important chess openings, both at club level and with top players. In recent years it has undergone a number of significant changes and it's high time for a thorough look at the current state of affairs. Top grandmaster Ivan Sokolov is the perfect authority to do so.

The Strategic Nimzo-Indian: A Complete Guide to the Rubinstein Variation is the first of a two-part series. In this ground-breaking and clearly structured first volume, Sokolov investigates all lines after the move 4.e3. Volume 2 will be about 4.a3, the Sämisch Variation.

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Although play can become very sharp, the Nimzo-Indian requires a profound positional understanding. Ivan Sokolov does not simply give variations, but provides clear explanations of the structures and plans in the various branches, and presents new ideas and resources for both Black and White. Each chapter ends with a summary containing key strategic and tactical advice.

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IM John Watson, The Week in Chess, on Winning Chess Middlegames

Ivan Sokolov is a top grandmaster who was born in Bosnia in 1968. He was Yugoslav champion in 1988 and Dutch champion in 1995 and 1998. He rose to the number 12 spot in the FIDE world rankings. In his rich career Sokolov has beaten world chess champions like Garry Kasparov, Vladimir Kramnik and Viswanathan Anand. His previous books The Ruy Lopez Revisited and Winning Chess Middlegames were widely acclaimed bestsellers.