

A Disreputable Opening Repertoire

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About the Author

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Also by the Author

Nimzo-Larsen Attack (with Byron Jacobs)

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Introduction

WGM Jennifer Shahade (on Twitter): *“Have you ever wasted time on an opening that wasn’t worth your time?”*

Me: *“That’s virtually my whole chess life summed up in one question.”*

I should therefore begin with a warning. If you want to play the very best openings, this book is not for you because few of those herein are “best” for Black. What they represent is my own disreputable repertoire in the Open Games after 1 e4 e5.

Hitherto many of these lines have been relegated to a single game, or a single paragraph, denoting why they should be avoided, supposing they’re mentioned at all. The Calabrese Counter-Gambit (2...f5; Chapter Two), for instance, was refuted by Carl Jaenisch in the 19th century; the Steinitz Scotch (4...♔h4; Chapter Seven) is known to be extremely dodgy; the Wagenbach King’s Gambit (3...h5; Chapter Five) is clearly ridiculous.

So why venture into this sort of territory? Just because! As IM Craig Hanley wrote in *Chess #9/2017* (when asked for a tip for the club player): “Play openings that you enjoy! A hobby is supposed to be leisure time where you relax and have fun.” And what I most like in the opening is to throw opponents off balance and onto their own resources. To force them to fight on unfamiliar turf – preferably *my* turf. To dictate the terms of the contest – at once, and in a provocative, in-your-face, suck-on-that kind of way.

Take the Bishop’s Opening (2 ♖c4). This tends nowadays to be used as a route to strategic Spanish-type positions, White setting up with d2-d3, ♘f3, 0-0, c2-c3 and so forth. The insolent response 2...f5!? immediately disrupts that. Rather than being able to continue routinely, heading for a systemic middlegame, White is faced with quite different problems, and at move three.

There are two pertinent points about playing such lines. Firstly, I think it’s important to *want* to play them, to want defend their honour, to feel protective of them. This provides added motivation at the board, leading to heightened concentration, which in itself should lead to better chess. Secondly, the time limit and strength of opposition may be relevant. Disruptive chess is excellent for blitz and rapid play, whereas you might have concerns about coming out worse against a strong opponent with more time to think.

Nevertheless, my own experience – up to about 2350 Elo (equivalent to my highest OTB rating) – is that you can pretty much play any old rubbish as long as you know what you’re doing. Stronger players, too, can struggle against unexpected aggression and may choose

to avoid critical paths, hoping instead to outplay you later. Okay, they can try. And please note: this particular rubbish is not *complete* rubbish. Some lines may teeter on the edge of soundness as the engines get ever stronger, such that *Stockfish 17* may refute the whole lot in five minutes, but they have stood up to computer-assisted analysis pretty well thus far. The Wagenbach even featured in the 9th Computer Championship Final (2019), scoring 1½/2 for Black.

All this is based to a large extent on my own investigations and practice. A lot of the referenced games are mine, in particular from online thematic tournaments at Tryfon Gavriel's ChessWorld.net website. Consequently, they will include players you've never heard of – players I've never heard of either, knowing them only by their online sobriquets (or handles), apart from *tsmenace*, which is me. (Other instances of “*tsmenace*” online are *not* me, though the source is likely to be the same, and I still have the t-shirt.)

I have referred extensively to the literature too, so much so that I am not providing a bibliography. A list of over 150 publications – twenty two books are piled up on my desk as I write this – doesn't seem like the best use of space. To compress things further I'll be referring to some paired authors by initials: B&B = Baker & Burgess; B&H = Botterill & Harding; I&K = Ivanov & Kulagin; K&S = Khalifman & Soloviev; L&O = Lysyj & Ovetchkin; S&S = Shamkovich & Schiller; T&H = Taylor & Hayward.

Please accept my apologies for the monstrous thicket of variations. It is the nature of such systems that their efficacy (or otherwise) can only be demonstrated concretely. So while I accept Emperor Joseph's criticism: “There are simply too many moves, that's all. Just cut a few and it'll be perfect.” – I'd also ask: “Which few did you have in mind, Majesty?”

In any case, I don't really expect people to adopt this repertoire en masse. Perhaps they'll be interested in only two or three variations. Whatever and whichever, the very detailed information required to play each one can be found in the appropriate chapter. If that detail seems overwhelming, just playing through the main lines (in bold) may well prove enough to start off with. I shall probably be doing that myself periodically, to try and remember what I've written.






Finally, I would be pleased to see anyone else's games with, or analysis of, any of these openings. I can be reached by email at <jon.statto@gmail.com> or via my blog <200opengames.blogspot.com>.

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Dedications

To my mother (1936-), sister (1961-2013), father (1924-2006), and gran (1907-2004).

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-  IM Byron Jacobs and Everyman Chess for allowing me to author another book after I failed to deliver on the previous two; this time I wrote most of it *before* signing the contract.
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-  John Anderson, Donald Andrew, Michael Barnes, Stefan Bücker, Andrew Butterworth, Paul Cumbers, John Elburg, John Emms, Bernard Hanison, Tim Harding, Otto Hardy, Volker Hergert, Thomas Johansson, Richard Palliser, Gerard Welling – for various degrees of assistance over the years, some so long ago they may have forgotten or even died. Apologies to whomever I've neglected to mention.
-  Everyone involved with the *Stockfish* open source chess engine. I've used other engines too (*Fritz*, *Houdini*, and *Rybka* in various incarnations), but *Stockfish* has been my primary companion.
-  My opponents (over-the-board, correspondence, and online) for their inadvertent, yet crucial collaboration.

Chapter Nine

Ulvestad Variation

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♗c6 3 ♙c4 ♘f6 4 ♗g5

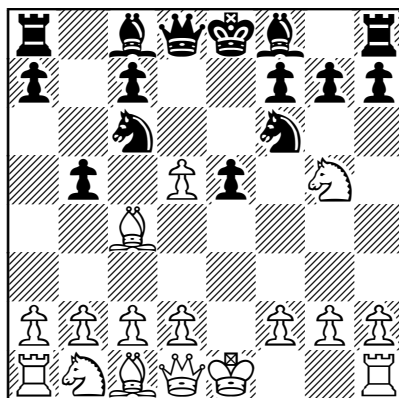
Having examined other fourth moves in the previous chapter, all that remains is this *richtiger Stümperzug*. I was intending initially to write about the Traxler, my main weapon for over thirty years. Unfortunately, issues have arisen with 4...♙c5, not least 5 d4! for which IM Panayotis Frenzas has been proselytizing online. It seems the best Black can do is to try to defend a dreary endgame a pawn down after 5...d5 6 ♙xd5 ♗xd5 7 dxc5 ♗db4 8 a3 ♙xd1+ 9 ♙xd1 ♗a6 10 b4. Although I have managed that each time as Black, the prospect of having to do so repetitively is profoundly unappealing.

So I've switched to my second string: the Ulvestad Variation. An online thematic tournament prompted me to go through published theory with *Stockfish* which turned up quite a lot of interesting ideas. Ultimately, Black may still be obliged to defend pawn-down endgames, but I think there are excellent prospects for success.

4...d5 5 exd5 b5!?

This move was discovered by the US

master Olaf Ulvestad and analysed in his openings booklet *Chess Charts*. Ulvestad took the view that 5...♗a5 was suspect (!) because it sidelines the knight and thus sought to find an improvement. He came up with 5...b5, which he justified as follows:



“It meets the Pawn attack on the Knight by a Pawn attack on White’s most effectively placed piece. White’s original attack is completely broken up and Black definitely obtains a powerful initiative. Instead of committing the same mistake as White,

by moving the same piece twice in the opening, Black attacks with a move which furthers his general development. 5...P-Kt4 provides useful freedom to his QB and QR.”

This led to a discussion with another American master, Albert Pinkus, in the 1941 issues of *Chess Review* (incidentally, the Traxler line above comes from Pinkus’ articles), where Ulvestad doubled down on behalf of 5...b5: “It stands out head and shoulders above all the other moves as the strongest, sharpest and best. The last word on the play may not be given for a long time but I have complete confidence in the move itself. Analysis will support it—now or later.”

Last words are hard to come by in chess, so the following should only be regarded as the *latest* word. Until it no longer is.

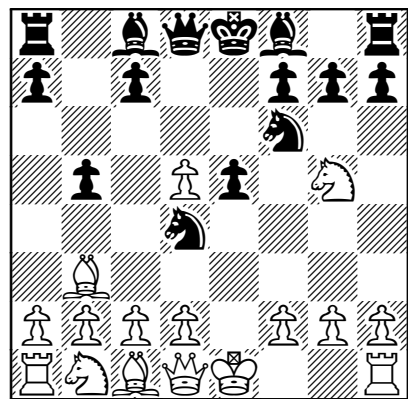
- A: 6 ♗xb5** 244
- B: 6 dxc6** 249
- C: 6 ♕f1** 255

The most natural response for White is to take the b-pawn, so we’ll look at 6 ♗xb5 first, followed next by 6 dxc6. Neither of these direct captures should trouble Black. The critical move is 6 ♕f1!, as recommended by Pinkus. Note that the more obvious retreats, 6 ♗e2 and 6 ♗b3 are inferior, as 6...♘d4 then hits the bishop, neutralizing 7 c3 as a threat:

a) 6 ♗e2 ♘d4 7 ♗f3 (the best try; 7 c3?! ♗xe2 8 ♗xe2 ♗xd5 is already good for Black, e.g. 9 d4 ♗xg2 10 ♗xe5+ ♗e7 11 ♗xb5+ ♗d7 12 ♗f1 ♗d5 13 h4 h6 14 ♗h3 ♗b5 15 ♗g1 ♗d6 16 ♗e3 ♗c6 and Black won, V.Malvinski-Mir.Lazic, Bela Crkva 1989; as is 7 0-0 ♗d6 8 c3?! ♗xe2+ 9 ♗xe2 0-0, since 10 ♗xb5? loses to 10...h6 11 ♗f3

e4 12 ♘d4 ♗xh2+! etc, B.Kiviaho-J.Van Leusden, Toronto 1978) 7...♗xd5 (Ulvestad went for 7...♗xf3+ 8 ♗xf3 e4 9 ♗e2 a6) 8 ♘xd4 (or 8 ♗c3 ♗c5 9 ♘xd4 exd4 10 ♗xb5 ♗b7 with compensation; e.g. 11 c3 d3! 12 ♗xd3 0-0-0 13 ♗e2 ♗g5 14 ♗g1 ♗h4 15 ♗b3 ♗e8 16 ♘xa7+ ♗b8 17 ♗c6+ ♗c8 18 ♘a7+ ♗b8 is a draw) 8...exd4 9 0-0 ♗b8 10 ♗f3 ♗c5 11 ♗e2+ ♗e6 and Black is fine, S.Petz-S.Titgemeyer, Dortmund 2006.

b) 6 ♗b3 ♘d4 and now:



b1) 7 c4? ♘xd5 8 ♗xf7? fails spectacularly to 8...♗h4! 9 0-0 ♗g4 10 ♗e1 (or 10 f3 ♗f4 11 ♗h1 ♗f5 12 ♗e1 ♗h3!) 10...♗e2+ 11 ♗h1 ♗df4 12 ♗xe5 (or 12 f3 ♗xf3! 13 gxf3 ♗h3) 12...♗d6 13 f3 ♗h3! 14 gxh3 ♗xh3 15 ♗f2 ♗g3+ 16 ♗g1 ♗g2+! 17 ♗xg2 ♗h3 mate (L.Radchenko).

b2) 7 c3?! ♗xb3 8 ♗xb3 ♗xd5 is good for Black; e.g. 9 0-0 ♗b7 10 ♗xd5 ♘xd5 11 ♗e1 f6 12 ♗e6 ♗f7 13 ♗xf8 ♗xf8 14 d4 exd4 15 cxd4 ♗fe8, T.Warakomski-M.Kanarek, Warsaw (rapid) 2006.

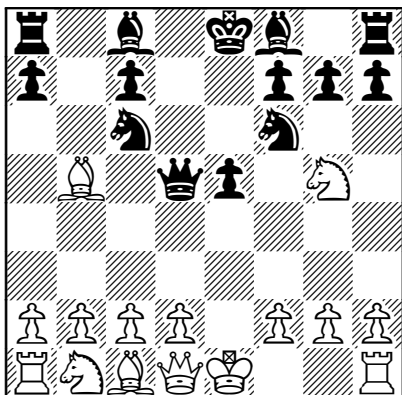
b3) 7 d6 ♗xb3 8 dxc7 is met by 8...♗d5! 9 axb3 ♗xg2 10 ♗f3 ♗xf3 11 ♗xf3 ♗b7 12 ♗e2 a6, which leaves White in a mess.

b4) 7 d3 ♗c5 (or 7...♗xb3 8 axb3 ♗xd5 – Ulvestad) 8 0-0 ♗g4 9 ♗e1 0-0 10 ♗e4

♖xe4 11 dxe4 ♖h4!? (11...f5! is stronger) 12 ♖h1?? (12 ♖d2 was forced) 12...♖f3! 0-1 A.Touret-V.Petkov, Metz 2007.

b5) 7 ♖c3 h6 8 ♖ge4 ♖xe4 (8...a5! looks even better) 9 ♖xe4 ♖h4!? 10 ♖g3 ♖g4 11 f3 ♖d7 12 c3 ♖xb3 13 axb3 ♖c5 14 ♖e2 0-0 15 ♖e4 ♖d8! with excellent play for the pawn, F.Raab-A.Karpachev, Selestat 2008.

A: 6 ♖xb5 ♖xd5



This was Ulvestad's main idea. Deflecting the bishop has allowed Black to recapture the d5-pawn with the queen, which now attacks both b5 and g2, thus forcing White to make a concession – either in wasting time or relinquishing the pawn or bishop pair.

7 ♖xc6+

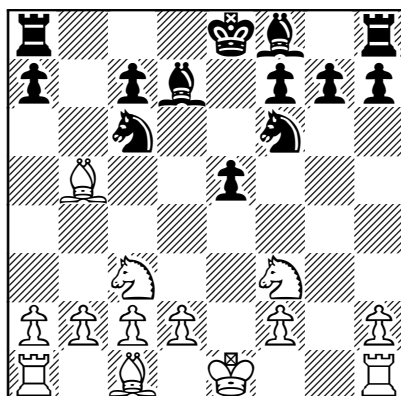
Relatively best, in that White has nothing better:

a) 7 ♖e2? ♖xg2 8 ♖xe5+? (too greedy; despite the wasted tempo on ♖e2 White has to concede 8 ♖f3 ♖xf3 9 ♖xf3 ♖d7 with a slight edge for Black) 8...♖e7 9 ♖f1 0-0 10 ♖xc6? (or 10 ♖xc7? ♖d4) 10...♖xc6 11 ♖c3 ♖b5 wins for Black (Ulvestad), and even after 10 ♖g3 ♖xg3 11 hxg3 ♖d4 12 ♖d3 (or 12 ♖a4 ♖d7) 12...♖e8 White is

unlikely to survive.

b) 7 ♖f1? (too passive) 7...♖c5! 8 d3 (or similarly 8 ♖c3 ♖xf2+! 9 ♖xf2 ♖d4+ 10 ♖e1 ♖h4+ 11 g3 ♖xg5, I.Barchuk-M.Bezkorovaina, Lvov 2017) 8...h6 9 ♖c3 ♖xf2+! 10 ♖xf2 ♖d4+ 11 ♖e1 hxg5 12 ♖xg5 ♖b8 13 ♖xf6 gxf6 14 ♖f3 ♖h4+ 15 g3 ♖d4 16 ♖f2 ♖h6 and Black has more than enough for the pawn, J.Tanti-K.H.Hansen, corr. 2008.

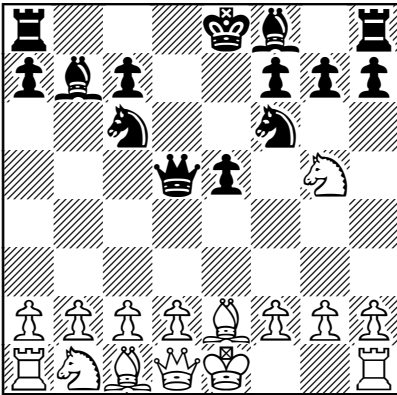
c) 7 ♖c3?! (too simplistic) 7...♖xg2 8 ♖f3 ♖xf3 9 ♖xf3 ♖d7 sees Black regain the pawn straight away.



Ulvestad stopped here, assessing the position as equal. Practice has shown Black to be on the right side of that. For example: 10 0-0 (or 10 d3 ♖d4 11 ♖xd7+ ♖xd7 12 ♖xd4 exd4 13 ♖e2 ♖e8 14 ♖f1 c5 15 ♖d2 ♖d6 16 ♖g3 ♖d5, M.Nezar-L.Fressinet, French League 2010; or 10 ♖g1 ♖d4 11 ♖xd7+ ♖xd7 12 ♖xd4 exd4 13 ♖e2 d3!? 14 cxd3 ♖d5, J.Bourges-A.Karpachev, Guingamp 1999) 10...♖d6 11 ♖xc6 ♖xc6 12 ♖xe5 ♖xe5 13 ♖e1 0-0-0 14 ♖xe5 ♖he8 15 d4 (or 15 ♖e2 ♖xe2 16 ♖xe2 ♖e8 17 ♖f1 ♖g4 18 ♖d4 ♖xh2+ 19 ♖g1 ♖f3+ 20 ♖xf3 ♖xf3, D.Norris-Tsang Hon Ki, Genting 1995) 15...♖xd4 16 ♖xe8+ ♖xe8 17 ♖e3 ♖g4+ 18

♔f1 ♖h4 (or 18...♗g2!?) 19 ♕e2 a6 20 ♖d1 ♗xh2 21 ♘d5 ♕xd5 22 ♖xd5 ♖h4, L.M.Kovacs-A.Hennings, Sarajevo 1969. White was worse in all these games.

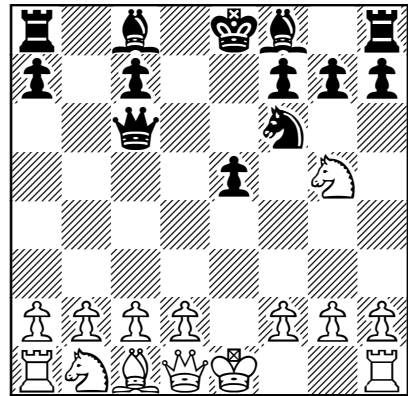
d) 7 ♕e2 at least has the idea 7...♗xc2?? 8 ♕f3, so Black must rely on activity: 7...♕b7 (more accurate than 7...♘d4, if only because 8 ♘f3 ♕b7 9 ♘c3 ♗c6?? then loses to 10 ♘xd4 exd4 11 ♕b5)



d1) 8 0-0 ♘d4 9 ♘f3 (both 9 f3? h6 10 ♘h3 g5 and 9 ♕f3?! e4! 10 ♘xe4 ♘xf3+ 11 gxf3 0-0-0 are bad for White, despite the extra material) 9...♕d6 (or 9...0-0-0 10 ♘c3 ♗c6 – Ulvestad) 10 d3 0-0 11 c4 ♗c6 12 ♘c3 ♖fe8 13 ♕e3 ♖ad8 14 ♖b1 a5 and Black's control is worth more than White's pawn, J.Splichal-Wo.Bauer, corr. 2010.

d2) 8 d3 ♘d4 9 ♘f3 (if 9 ♕f3 then 9...♘xf3+ 10 ♗xf3 ♗a5+ 11 ♕d2 ♗b6 – Estrin; or 9 f3?! ♕c5 10 ♘c3 ♗c6 11 ♘ge4 ♕b6 12 ♕g5 0-0-0 13 ♗d2 h6 14 ♕h4 g5 15 ♕f2 ♘h5 and White's position is horrible, H.Wademark-M.Keller, corr. 1986) 9...0-0-0 10 ♘c3 ♗c6 11 0-0, F.Renault-L.Lejarre, French League 2008, and now Black could play 11...g5! at once, since 12 ♕xg5? ♖g8 13 ♕xf6 ♗xf6 14 ♕h1 ♗g7 15 ♖g1 f5 is a crushing attack.

7...♗xc6



Having neutralized one threat (at b5) White can now look to the other (g2) and has two ways of doing so:

A1: 8 ♗f3 245

A2: 8 0-0 247

Not 8 ♘f3? ♕a6! 9 d3 e4 and White is already in serious difficulties.

A1: 8 ♗f3

A counter-attacking try analysed by Pinkus.

8...e4

The usual reply. Black seems never to have grabbed the c2-pawn with 8...♗xc2!?, perhaps because 9 ♗xa8 ♗xc1+ 10 ♕e2 ♗xh1?? 11 ♗xc8+ ♕e7 12 ♗xc7+ ♘d7 13 ♘c3 gives White a decisive attack (Pinkus). Nonetheless, 10...♗c4+! 11 d3 (or 11 ♕d1 ♗a6) 11...♗g4+ 12 ♘f3 ♕d6 looks okay, as does 9 0-0 ♖b8.

9 ♗b3

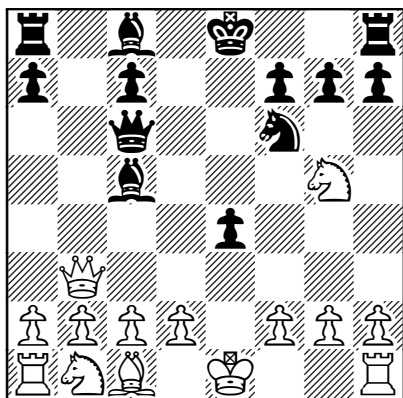
Targeting the weak f7-square which Black cannot defend without making unfavourable concessions.

Opposing queens again with 9 ♗c3

doesn't bring White anything: 9...♙b7 (or 9...♚d5 10 d3 ♙b7, if Black prefers to keep the queens on) 10 ♚xc6+ ♙xc6 11 0-0! h6 12 ♖h3 0-0-0 13 ♖c3?! g5 and White's casual play landed him in trouble, L.Fassio-A.Gallucci, Turin 2010.

9...♙c5!

Fortunately, Black has no need to worry about f7. Even 9...h6!? 10 ♖xf7 (not 10 ♚xf7+? ♙d8 11 ♖h3 e3! 12 f3 ♚xc2) 10...♙e6 11 ♖e5 ♙xb3 12 ♖xc6 ♙xc2, first seen in P.Tumurbator-K.Harandi, Tehran 1972, should be okay for Black, who has control of the light squares.



10 ♚xf7+

If White throws in 10 d4 ("!" – Pinkus) first, then 10...exd3 11 ♚xf7+ ♙d8 12 0-0 ♚f8 13 ♚b3 dxc2 14 ♚xc2 (or 14 ♖a3 ♖g4 15 ♖f7+ ♙d7 16 ♖xc2 ♙b7) 14...♙b7 15 ♖f3 ♖g4 gives Black excellent play for the pawn.

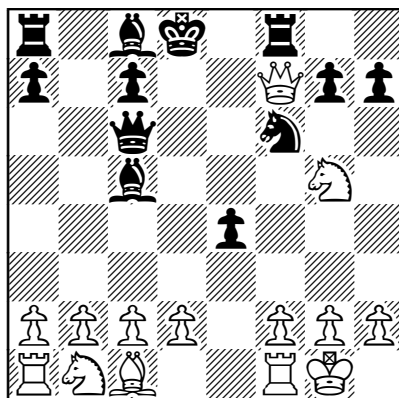
10...♙d8 11 0-0

Not yet 11 ♚xg7?? ♚g8 12 ♚h6 ♙xf2+ and wins; or similarly 11 ♖c3? h6 12 ♚xg7? ♚g8 13 ♚xh6 ♙xf2+; while 11 ♚b3?! allows 11...♚e8! 12 0-0 ♙a6.

11...♚f8

Instead, 11...h6!? 12 ♚xg7 ♚g8 13 ♚xh6

♙b7 14 ♖h1 e3 15 f3 e2 16 ♚e1 ♖e4, G.Bardi-O.Kenez, corr. 1976, leads to a draw after 17 ♚xc6 ♖f2+ 18 ♖g1 ♖h3+ 19 ♖h1 etc. But White might try 12 d4!? exd3 13 ♖f3 dxc2 14 ♖c3 with a favourable version of Pinkus' idea above.



12 ♚xf7

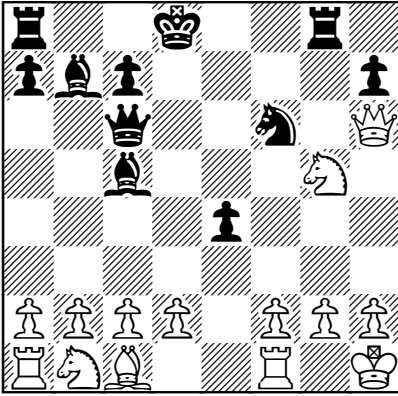
Retreating the queen is objectively safer: 12 ♚b3 ♖g4! 13 d4! (not 13 ♖h3?, Y.Berghaell-G.Lagland, corr. 1964, because of 13...♚b8! 14 ♚c3 ♙a6 15 ♚g3 ♚d7 or 14 ♚g3 ♙d6 15 ♚h4+ ♙e7 16 ♚g3 h5 with a huge attack) 13...♙xd4 14 ♖c3 (White can play 14 h3 as well; but not 14 ♚d1? ♚d6 15 ♖xe4 ♚xh2+ 16 ♖f1 ♙a6+ 17 c4 c5 and Black is winning, K.Essegern-C.Brauer, corr. 1984) 14...♖xf2 (14...♙xf2+?! 15 ♚xf2 ♖xf2 16 ♙e3 ♖g4 17 ♚d1+ ♖e8 18 ♖d5 is only dangerous for Black) 15 ♙f4! (the key resource) 15...♚xf4 16 ♖e2 ♖h3+ 17 ♖h1 ♚xf1+ 18 ♚xf1 ♖f2+ 19 ♚xf2 ♙xf2 20 ♚g8+ with a draw.

12...♚g8 13 ♚h6 ♙b7

For the three-pawn investment Black has a big lead in development, nearly all of which is lined up against the enemy king. White needs to be very precise to survive.

14 ♖h1!

The only move, as shown by 14 ♖d1? ♙xf2+ 15 ♚f1 ♚e7 16 ♜xh7 ♙d4 17 b3 ♜xc2 0-1 S.Sandin-W.Weiss, corr. 1962; or 14 ♜f7+? ♚e7 15 ♜e5 ♜d5 (*Stockfish* bangs out 15...♜xg2+! at once) 16 ♚h1 e3 17 f3 e2 18 ♜e1 ♜xg2! and Black won, N.Kirchner-Joh.Holzer, Postbauer 2007.



And now:

a) 14...♜g6 15 ♜h4 ♜d5? is given in all my books, intending 16 ♜h3? e3 17 ♜f4 ♜xg2+! “with a quick win” (Estrin); but White can disrupt this with 16 d4! exd3 (or 16...♙xd4 17 ♜d1) 17 f3 dxc2 18 ♜c3 and seems to be consolidating. In this line 15...♚e7! 16 ♜c3 ♜ag8 is a better try, when White will again look to defend after 17 d4!. *Stockfish* says “0.00”.

b) 14...e3 forces a draw: 15 f3 e2 16 ♜e1 ♜g4 (or 16...♜e4) 17 ♜xc6 ♜f2+ 1/2-1/2 J.Grau Ribas-W.Weissleder, corr. 1997, in view of the continuation 18 ♚g1 ♜h3+ 19 ♚h1 ♜f2+ etc.

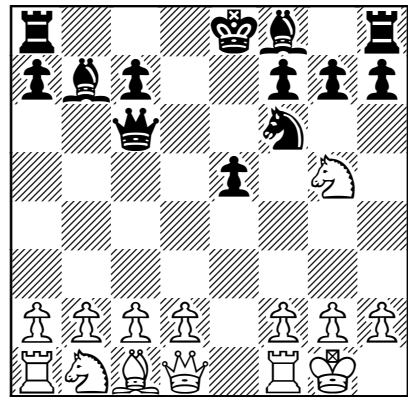
c) 14...♙f8!? is one way to keep the game going. After 15 ♜h4 h6 16 d3 (forced) 16...hxg5 17 ♙xg5 ♙g7 (or 17...♙e7) 18 ♜c3 ♚c8, say, White has four extra pawns, Black an extra bishop. I’m not sure which side I’d prefer to play. Perhaps either side.

A2: 8 0-0

Castling provides only a very temporary lull. Once Black builds the battery on the long diagonal, White will be forced to fight once again.

8...♙b7

The most logical, if not the only move. Another option is 8...h6!? 9 ♜f3 (or 9 ♜f3 ♜b7!? 10 ♜xb7 ♙xb7 11 ♜f3 e4) 9...e4 10 ♜e5 (or 10 ♜e1 ♙e7) 10...♜e6 11 d4 ♙d6, when Black has the usual activity for the pawn, V.Hanjs-Z.Csapo, Budapest 1998.



9 ♜f3

White is virtually forced to enter the complications.

a) 9 f3? h6! (even stronger than 9...♙c5+ 10 ♚h1 h6, which is also terrible for White) 10 ♜h3 g5 and ...g5-g4 already looks crushing; e.g. 11 d3 g4 12 ♜f2 gxf3 13 ♜e1 ♜g8 14 ♜xe5+ ♚d7 15 g3 ♙d6 and so on.

b) 9 ♜f3?! is no good either as “Black’s attack develops unhindered” (Estrin); e.g. 9...0-0-0 (Black has plenty of choice here: 9...♙c5, 9...♙d6, and 9...g5!?) are all options too) 10 ♜c3 (or if 10 d3 e4 11 ♜e5 ♜d5 12 d4 e3 13 ♜f3 exf2+ 14 ♜xf2 ♜g4 15 ♜e2?, *Myosotis1984-Qaurial*, playchess.de 2001, then 15...♜h5 16 h3 ♙xf3 17 gxf3 ♜xd4!

wins) 10 ♖c3 ♗c5 11 d3 e4 12 ♗e1 exd3 13 cxd3 ♜he8 14 ♗f3, J.Del Arco Gimeno-F.Destruels Moreno, Pref 1992, and now 14...♗g4! again is very strong.

9...e4

Ulvestad's 9...♗a6!? has hardly been tested, perhaps due to 10 ♗f5 ♗d6 11 d3.

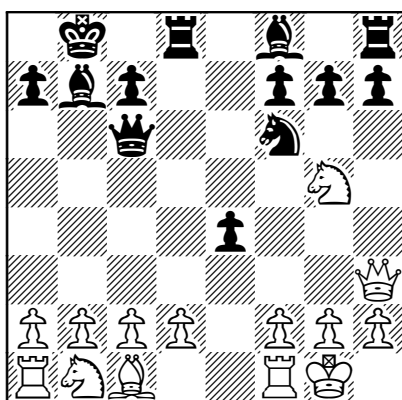
10 ♗b3

Swinging across to attack f7 again, and the inclusion of 0-0 and ...♗b7 on line A1 means that 10...♗c5?? now loses to 11 ♗xf7+ ♗d8 12 ♗e6. No worries; Black can just castle. Note that 10 ♗e1 ♗e7 is also more than acceptable for Black.

10...0-0! 11 ♗h3+

A necessary intermediary move to defend the kingside. The immediate 11 ♗xf7? runs into 11...e3! 12 f3 e2 13 ♗e1 ♗c5+ 14 ♗h1 ♗de8 and Black is winning; e.g. 15 d4 ♗xd4 16 ♗d3 ♗f2 17 ♗xe2 ♗a6 18 ♗f5+ ♗b8 19 ♗e5 ♗d6, A.Salazar-J.Davila Liceaga, Villa Giardino 2002.

11...♗b8



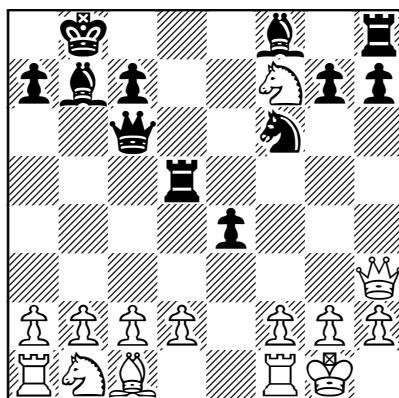
12 ♗xf7

It's too late to back out now.

a) 12 d3? exd3 13 ♗xf7 fails to the rook lift 13...♗d4! 14 ♗e3 (or 14 ♗xh8 ♗h4 15 ♗f3 ♗xc2 16 ♗g3 ♗g4) 14...♗g4 15 f3 ♗c5

16 ♗xc5 (equivalently, 16 fxg4 ♗e8! 17 ♗xc5 ♗xc5+ etc; or if 16 ♗e5 ♗xe3+ 17 ♗h1 ♗c5 18 ♗xg4 then 18...dxc2 19 ♗c3 ♗c8) 16...♗xc5+ 17 ♗h1 ♗e8 18 cxd3 (or 18 fxg4 ♗e3) 18...♗g6 19 ♗c3 ♗e7 and Black wins.

b) 12 ♗c3?! can be answered by the computer move 12...♗g8! (rather than 12...♗d7, I.Kan-A.Konstantinopolsky, USSR Ch., Moscow 1945, when 13 d3 exd3 14 ♗f3 is more or less equal); the point is simply to nullify the threat to f7 by removing the h8-rook from danger. For instance, after 13 d4 (or 13 ♗xf7? ♗e8) 13...exd3 14 cxd3 ♗xd3 15 ♗e3 ♗c5 Black has regained the pawn with a definite initiative.



12...♗d5!

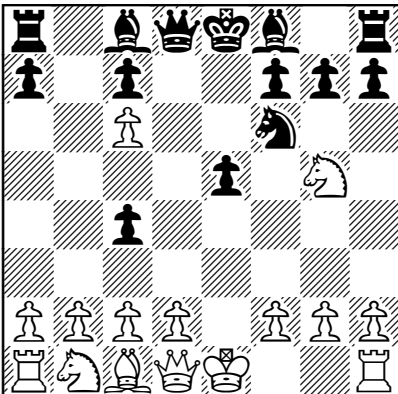
This time the rook is heading for h5. Black has won every game from this position:

a) 13 ♗xh8? ♗h5 "with a very strong attack" (Estrin), which *Stockfish* upgrades to "winning"; e.g. 14 ♗c3 ♗c5 15 ♗h1 e3 16 f3 ♗g4 (or 16...e2 17 ♗e1 ♗d6 18 h3 ♗g3 19 d4 ♗g4 - Cramer) 17 dxe3 ♗xh2 (17...♗xh2+ 18 ♗g1 ♗h1+ etc was quicker) 18 ♗g1 ♗xf1 19 ♗xf1 ♗h1+ 20 ♗f2 ♗xc1 21 b3 ♗xc2+ 0-1 A.Kotlar-A.Veksler, Essen 1999.

b) 13 ♞c3? ♚h5 14 ♞g3 (or 14 ♞e3 ♙c5 15 ♞g3 ♚f8 16 ♜e5 ♞e6 and the knight goes, B.Ramanamurthy-J.Van der Kooij, corr. 1995) 14... ♞e8! (trapping the knight again) 15 ♜xh8 ♙d6 16 ♞xg7 ♙xh2+ 17 ♙h1 ♙g3+ 18 ♙g1 ♚h1+ 0-1 V.Marincas-L.Csilcser, Felix Spa 2007.

c) 13 d4! exd3 14 ♜xh8 is the only way to bail out, when 14... ♚h5 (or if 14... ♙d6 15 ♜f7 ♚h5 then 16 ♜d8! and White survives) 15 ♞f3 ♙d6 (or 15... ♞xc2 16 ♞g3 ♜e4 17 ♞g4 ♜f6 18 ♞g3) 16 ♞xc6 ♙xh2+ 17 ♙h1 ♙g3+ 18 ♙g1 ♙h2+ is a draw.

B: 6 dxc6 bxc4



Taking on c6 is a rather impractical variation for White. For a meagre investment Black has gained the two bishops (including an unopposed light-squared bishop), easy development, and a cramping pawn on c4, and can hope to pick up the c6-pawn anyway. Nevertheless, the engines say “equal”, so it may not be objectively so bad.

The two main continuations are:

B1: 7 ♞e2 249

B2: 7 ♜c3 253

Note that 6 ♞e2 bxc4 7 dxc6 and 6 ♜c3 bxc4 7 dxc6 transpose to each of these lines. Instead:

a) 7 0-0? allows Black to attack almost automatically; e.g. 7...h6 8 ♜f3 (or 8 ♜h3 ♞d5 9 ♚e1 ♙d6 10 d4 cxd3 11 ♞xd3 ♞xc6 with a clear advantage, H.Bänsch-H.Krongraf, corr. 1993) 8...e4 9 ♜e5 (if 9 ♚e1 then 9... ♙e6 , or 9 ♞e2 ♙d6) 9... ♙d6! (9... ♞d4 10 ♜d7 is less clear) 10 ♜xc4? , Ch.Roberts-C.McCarty Snead, London 2012, and now the classic sacrifice 10... ♙xh2+! 11 ♙xh2 ♜g4+ 12 ♙g3 (or 12 ♙g1 ♞h4) 12...h5 would have won.

b) 7 d3 (or 7 d4) 7...cxd3 removes the cramping c4-pawn at the cost of making d3 a target: 8 cxd3 (or 8 ♞xd3 ♞xd3 9 cxd3 ♙a6) 8... ♙a6 9 0-0 (or 9 ♞b3 ♞d5 10 ♜c3 ♞xb3 11 axb3 ♙xd3 with an edge, S.Lode-A.Rainfray, Romans 1999) 9... ♞xd3 (9... ♙c5 10 ♚e1 0-0 is also fine) 10 ♞xd3 ♙xd3 11 ♚e1 ♙d6 12 ♙f4 , S.Reklaitis-V.Kazakovskiy, Palanga 2011, and now 12... ♜g4 13 h3 0-0 is equal, since 14 ♙g3 ♜h6 15 ♙xe5?? loses to 15... ♙xe5 16 ♚xe5 ♙xb1 17 ♚xb1 f6.

B1: 7 ♞e2

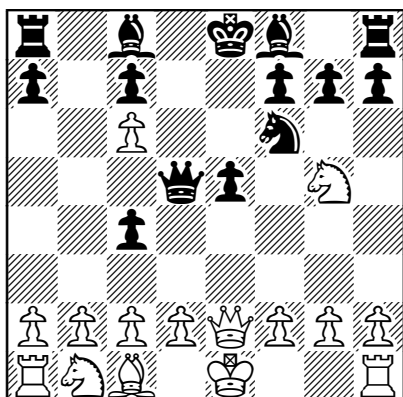
Attempting to justify White’s play by immediately attacking c4 and e5. Black has two main replies:

B11: 7...♞d5 250

B12: 7...h6!? 251

Even 7... ♙d6 8 ♞xc4 0-0 is possible, though the onus is then on Black to prove sufficient compensation; e.g. after 9 ♜c3 ♚b8 10 a3 (or 10 0-0 ♚b4 11 ♞e2) 10...h6 11 ♜ge4 ♙e6 12 ♞e2 ♜xe4 13 ♜xe4 f5, M.Bocangel Chavez-J.Perez Rodriguez, Lima 2016, and simply 14 ♜xd6 cxd6 15 0-0.

B11: 7...♙d5



The simplest solution. The centralized queen defends both pawns while attacking c6 and g2 in return.

8 0-0

Other moves are worse:

a) 8 ♘c3?? ♜xc6 9 ♜xe5+ ♕e6, K.McEwan-B.Keogh, Scottish League 1996, and White is lost in view of 10 ♜f1 ♕d6 11 ♜e3 0-0 and ...♜fe8.

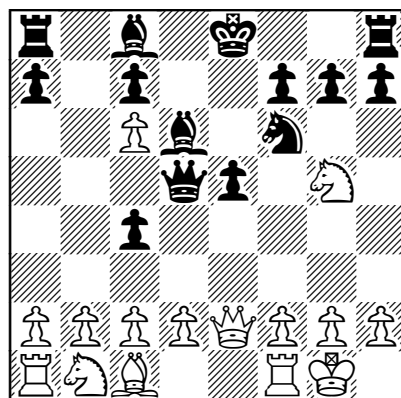
b) 8 ♘f3 ♕d6 9 ♘c3 ♜xc6 sees Black regain the pawn with advantage. L.Knutsson-J.Gunnarsson, Reykjavik 2002, continued 10 h3 0-0 11 0-0 ♜e8 12 ♜e1 ♕a6 13 ♜e3? ♕c5 14 ♘xe5? ♜xe5 15 ♜xe5 ♜e8 16 ♜xe8+ ♘xe8 and White resigned.

c) 8 f3 ♕e7 (obviously 8...♕d6 9 ♘c3 ♜xc6 is fine too) 9 ♘c3 ♜xc6 10 ♜xe5 0-0 11 0-0 (or if 11 ♜b5, P.Bartron-D.Arganian, Redmond 2016, then 11...♜xb5 12 ♘xb5 h6 13 ♘e4 ♘xe4 14 fxe4 ♕b7 15 ♘xc7 ♕xe4 is good for Black; e.g. 16 ♘xa8? ♕xg2 17 ♜g1? ♕h4+ 18 ♖e2 ♜e8+ 19 ♖d1 ♕f3 mate) 11...♕c5+ 12 ♖h1 ♜e8 13 ♜f4 ♕d6 14 ♜h4 ♕f5 15 ♘ce4 ♕xe4 16 fxe4 h6 and Black is winning, M.Caravan-P.Melmuk, Brno 1987.

d) 8 f4 ♕d6 (not 8...h6?, as in J.Mieses-H.Steiner, Hastings 1945/46, because of 9

♘f3 e4 10 ♘e5 ♕e6 11 b3 and White is better, V.Sivuk-N.Getz, Fermo 2009) 9 0-0 (both 9 fxe5 ♕g4 10 ♘f3 ♕xf3 11 gxf3 0-0-0 and 9 ♘c3 ♜xc6 10 fxe5 ♕g4 11 ♘f3 0-0-0 12 0-0 ♜he8 are also good for Black) 9...0-0 10 fxe5? ♕xe5 11 ♜f3? ♕d4+ 12 ♖h1 ♜xg5 and Black won, P.Jazdyk-Mo.Herman, Polanica Zdroj 2009.

8...♕d6



9 b3

Challenging the cramping c4-pawn straight away is probably best.

a) 9 ♜f3 is well met by 9...e4! 10 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 11 ♜e1 0-0 12 ♜xe4 (or 12 ♜xe4 ♕f5) 12...♜h5 13 g3 ♕f5 14 ♜h4, J.Garwell-N.Hoiberg, Haifa Olympiad 1976, and now 14...♜xh4! 15 gxh4 ♜fe8 with a clear advantage, since swapping rooks is terrible for White; e.g. 16 ♜xe8+ ♜xe8 17 ♖g2 ♜e4 18 d3 cxd3 19 cxd3 ♜g4+ 20 ♖f3 ♜xh4 and so on.

b) 9 ♜e1 ♕g4 10 f3 ♕f5 11 ♘c3?! (but if 11 ♘e4 ♘xe4 12 fxe4 then 12...♜c5+ 13 ♖h1 ♕e6 with ...♜xc6 to follow) 11...♜c5+ 12 ♖h1 ♕xc2 and Black was clearly better, P.Grott-P.Leisebein, corr. 1998.

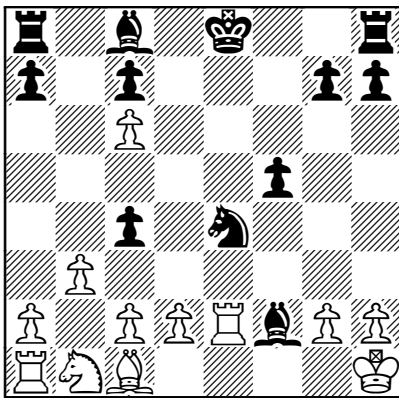
c) 9 ♘c3 ♜xc6 is also good for Black, who again isn't even a pawn down; e.g. 10

b3 (or 10 d4 cxd3 11 cxd3 ♖b7 12 ♗ge4 ♗xe4 13 ♜xe4 f5 14 ♜xc6+ ♙xc6 with an edge, A.Borstnik-M.Skrinjar, Slovenian League 2009) 10...♙b7 11 f3 ♙a6 12 b4? (but if 12 bxc4 then 12...♙c5+ 13 ♖h1 ♙d4 14 ♙b2 h6 15 ♗ge4 ♗xe4 16 ♜xe4 ♜xe4 17 fxe4 ♙xc4) 12...0-0 (or 12...h6) 13 ♖b1 ♙xb4! is another terrible position for White, G.Mahia-A.Conde, Buenos Aires 2013, where the Argentine IM had to rely on a swindle.

9...e4!?

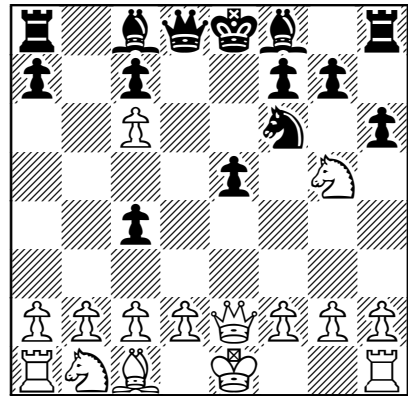
An enterprising, if unnecessary response. Any of 9...♜xc6, 9...♙a6, or simply 9...cxb3 is fine for Black; e.g. 9...cxb3 10 ♖c3 ♜xc6 11 axb3 0-0 12 ♜b5 ♙b7 13 ♜xc6 ♙xc6 14 ♙a3 ♖fd8, A.Sousa-A.Antoniou, Moscow Olympiad 1994.

10 ♗xe4 ♜xe4 11 ♜xe4+ ♗xe4 12 ♖e1 f5 13 f3 ♙c5+ 14 ♖h1 ♙f2 15 ♖e2



This was M.Manik-T.Olsarova, Brno 2011, where Black needed to find 15...♙a6! 16 fxe4 ♙d4 17 exf5+ (or 17 c3 cxb3) 17...♖f7 18 c3 ♖ae8, exploiting the weak back rank. Then after 19 ♖e6 (forced) 19...♙c8 20 cxd4 ♙xe6, the game would have been roughly equal, since 21 fxe6+?? ♖xe6 is fatal for White.

B12: 7...h6!?



More ambitious than 7...♜d5, in that Black offers up the e5-pawn as well.

8 ♜xe5+

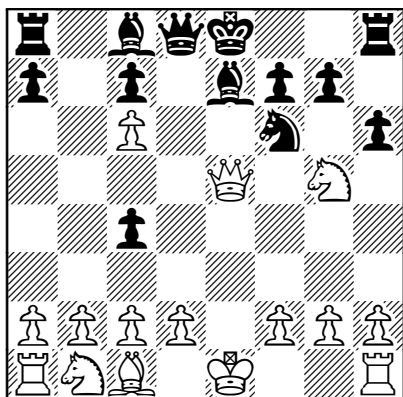
White should probably decline in favour of note 'b'.

a) 8 ♗e4 ♜d5 9 ♗xf6+ (or if 9 ♗bc3 ♜xc6 10 0-0 ♗xe4 11 ♜xe4 ♜xe4 12 ♗xe4 f5 13 ♗c3, H.Sleeman-R.Walmisley, corr. 1998, then 13...♙a6 14 ♖e1 e4 and ...0-0-0) 9...gxf6 10 ♜f3 ♜xf3 11 gxf3 ♙f5 12 d3 cxd3 13 cxd3 ♙xd3 and Black is clearly better as the c6-pawn is a liability, G.Coy-W.Korn, corr. 1942.

b) 8 ♗f3 e4 (or immediately 8...♙d6!? 9 ♗xe5 0-0 10 ♗xc4 ♖e8 11 ♗e3 ♗g4 with a useful initiative for the pawns) 9 ♗c3 (here 9 ♗e5 ♜d4 10 ♗xc4 ♙a6 11 d3 0-0-0 12 ♙e3 exd3 leads to equality) 9...♙d6 (better than 9...♜e7 10 ♗d4 ♖b8 11 ♗db5 ♜e5, as in G.Beresovsky-A.Scuderi, corr. 1992, when 12 f4 ♜c5 13 b4! ♜xc6 14 ♗xa7 ♜a6 15 ♗xc8 ♙xb4 16 ♖b1 ♜xc8 17 ♜xc4 ♙xc3 18 ♖xb8 ♜xb8 19 ♜c6+ ♖e7 20 ♜xc3 is somewhat in White's favour) 10 ♗xe4 (or 10 d4 cxd3 11 cxd3 ♙a6 12 ♗xe4 0-0 13 ♗xd6 ♜xd6 14 0-0 ♙xd3) 10...0-0 11 ♗xd6 (or 11 0-0 ♙a6) 11...♜xd6 12 0-0 (or 12 d4 ♜xc6

13 O-O ♗g4) 12...♙a6, when Black's activity and light square clamp should be enough for the pawn(s), as it's difficult to see how White will develop successfully.

8...♙e7



9 ♖f3

Here 9 ♖e4 O-O 10 O-O is well met by 10...♗g4! 11 ♜b5 (similarly 11 ♜a5 f5 12 ♗ec3 ♙d6 and so on; or if 11 ♜c3 ♜d5 12 ♜f3 f5 13 ♗g3, M.Böhnisch-J.Reich, Ruhla 1957, then 13...♜xf3 14 gxf3 ♖e5 is very good for Black) 11...f5! (stronger than Ulvestad's 11...♜d4 12 ♗bc3 ♙e6, when 13 d3 gives White the edge; or 11...♙e6, P.Oldrati-R.Kurylo, corr. 2002, where 12 h3 would be unclear) 12 h3 (not 12 ♗ec3 ♙e6 or 12 ♜xc4+ ♗h8 13 ♗ec3 ♙d6 14 h3 ♜h4 with a very strong attack) 12...fxe4 13 hxg4 ♜d4 14 ♗c3 ♙h4 15 ♜d5+ ♜xd5 16 ♗xd5 ♙xg4 and Black's development is worth more than White's pawn.

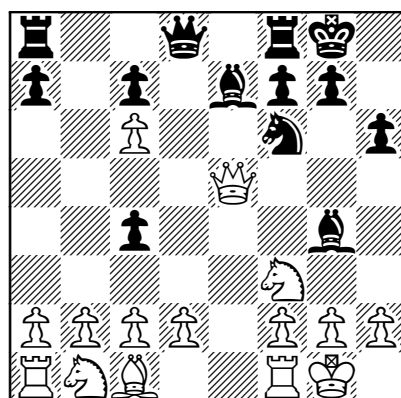
9...O-O 10 O-O

An exchange of queens with 10 ♜d4 ♜xd4 11 ♗xd4 ♙c5 doesn't help White at all.

10...♙g4

No one has yet tried 10...♙d6!, which forces the white queen to scurry home: 11

♜e2 (or 11 ♜e1 – anywhere else and 11...♙g4 is very strong, as we'll see by transposition in the next note) 11...♜e8 12 ♜d1, when Black has definite compensation; e.g. 12...♙f5 (discouraging a d-pawn break) 13 b3 (not 13 ♜e1? ♜xe1+ 14 ♜xe1 ♙xc2; while 13 ♗a3 ♙xa3 14 bxa3 ♜d6 and 13 ♗c3 ♗g4 14 h3 ♖e5 15 ♗xe5 ♙xe5 both give Black good play) 13...♗g4 (13...♗h5!? looks promising too) 14 ♙b2 ♙e4 15 g3 ♙c5 16 bxc4 ♜b8 17 ♙c3 ♗xf2 18 ♜xf2 ♙xf3 19 ♜xf3 ♜e1+ 20 ♗g2 ♙xf2 21 ♗xf2 ♜e7 and Black is certainly no worse.



11 ♜f4?

Going for the c4-pawn as well is far too greedy. Enabling development with d2-d4 is an urgent requirement.

a) 11 ♜d4? ♙d6 12 ♗e5 (for 12 ♜xc4 see the main line) 12...♙xe5 13 ♜xe5 ♜e8 14 ♜a5 ♙e2 15 ♜e1 ♙d3!? 16 ♜e3 ♗g4 is good for Black.

b) 11 ♜c3? ♙d6 12 d4 (or 12 ♜xc4 again) 12...♗d5! 13 ♜xc4 ♙xf3 was H.Röder-G.Dietz, corr. 1971; in view of 14 gxf3 ♜h4, Black is already winning.

c) 11 d4 cxd3 12 cxd3 was Holzschuh-G.Cramer, Bad Neumheim 1984, where 12...♙xf3 13 gxf3 ♙d6 14 ♜f5 ♜e8 (threat-

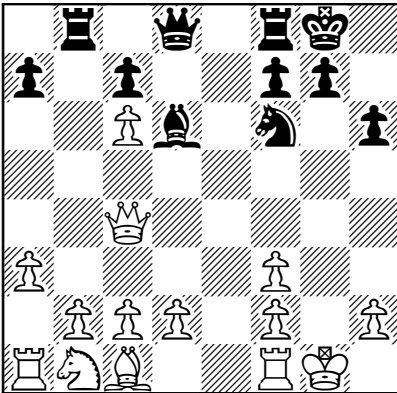
ening ...♖e5) 15 d4 (or 15 f4 ♖e6) 15...♘d5 appears to give Black full compensation, if no more than that.

d) 11 ♖e2 ♖e8 12 ♖xc4? (12 d4 is critical, when 12...cxd3 13 ♖xd3 ♖xd3 14 cxd3 ♙xf3 15 gxf3 ♖ed8 is probably okay for Black; all the same, 10...♙d6 seems preferable) 12...♙d6 13 ♘c3 ♙xf3 14 gxf3 ♖e5 15 d4? (the immediate 15 f4 was necessary) 15...♗h5 16 f4 ♘g4 17 ♖d3 ♘h2 and Black is winning, J.Holwell-H.Tiemann, corr. 1989; e.g. 18 ♖e1 f5 19 ♙g2 ♘g4 or 19 ♖g3 ♖g5!.

11...♙d6 12 ♖xc4 ♙xf3 13 gxf3 ♖b8

Threatening ...♗b4, which White must prevent.

14 a3



Now:

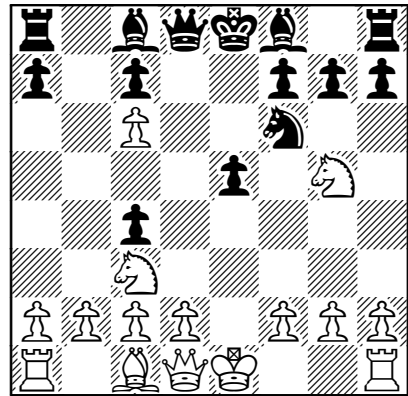
a) 14...♘h5 (Ulvestad) doesn't offer an advantage, as after 15 d3 the dark squares f4, g5 and h4 are all covered. Black must resort to the deflection sacrifice 15...♗xb2!, when 16 ♙xb2 ♙f4 17 ♙g2 ♖g5+ 18 ♙h3 ♖f5+ is only a draw.

b) 14...♗b5!? was very imaginative in K.Burger-Zweiburg, corr. 1963: 15 ♖xb5 ♘d5 16 ♖c4? (after 16 d4! ♖h4 17 ♖e1 ♖xh2+ 18 ♙f1 ♙g3 19 fxg3 ♖h1+ 20 ♙f2 Black can only draw again) 16...♘f4 17 ♙h1

♖h4! (more accurate than the game's 17...♖e8? 18 ♖g1? ♖h4, in which Pinski's 18 d3 ♖g5 19 ♙xf4 ♙xf4 20 ♖g1 ♖h4 21 ♖g3 might have spoiled Black's attack) 18 ♖g1 (18 ♖e4 f5! 19 ♖c4+ ♙h7 doesn't help) 18...♖h4 19 ♖f1 (or 19 ♖d4 g6 20 d3 ♖h3 – Pinski) 19...♘d3 20 f4 ♘xf2+ 21 ♙g2 ♙c5 and White resigned.

c) 14...♖c8! (Estrin) is the strongest continuation: 15 ♙g2 (if 15 f4 ♖g4+ 16 ♙h1 ♖f3+ 17 ♙g1 ♙xf4, Black is winning – Cramer; e.g. 18 ♖d3 ♖g4+ 19 ♙h1 ♖h5 20 h3 ♖fd8 21 ♖c3 ♘e4) 15...♖f5 (Cramer) 16 d3? (missing the threat; the only defence was 16 ♖g1, though after 16...♖g6+ 17 ♙f1 ♖h5 Black has all the chances) 16...♖g6+ 17 ♙h1 ♖h5 18 f4 ♘g4 0-1 D.Shershakov-Rom.Zakharov, Dombay 2014.

B2: 7 ♘c3



A more sober approach than 7 ♖e2.

7...h6

Seeking clarification before committing to any specific piece placement. Other moves allow White the benefit of information; in particular, ♖e2 may prove more effective. For example:

a) 7...♙c5 8 ♖e2 0-0 9 0-0 ♖d6 (or

9...♙a6 10 ♖xe5 ♗d6 11 ♖a5) 10 ♖xc4 ♖xc6 11 d3 ♗b7 12 ♗ce4 ♗xf2+ (or 12...♗xe4 13 ♖xe4) 13 ♜xf2 ♖xc4 14 ♗xf6+ gxf6 15 dxc4 fxf6 16 ♜f6 ♗e4 17 ♗xg5 ♜ab8 18 b3 ♗xc2 19 ♜e1 and White has a definite advantage despite the opposite-coloured bishops, A.Streltsov-O.Kinberg, Netanya 2019.

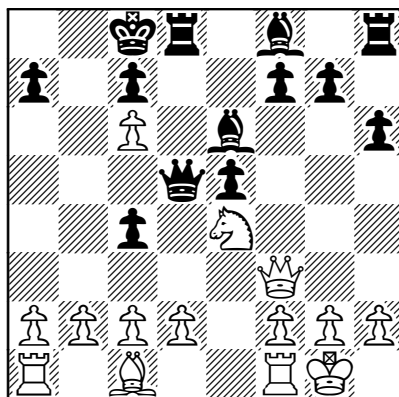
b) 7...♗f5 8 ♖e2 (not 8 0-0 h6 9 ♗f3 e4 10 ♗e5 ♗d6 11 ♗xc4? ♗xh2+! 12 ♖xh2 ♗g4+ 13 ♖g3 h5 and Black is probably winning) 8...♗xc2 9 ♖xc4 (rather than 9 ♖xe5+? ♗e7 10 0-0 0-0 11 ♜e1 ♗d6, C.Groenendal-J.Wijker, corr. 1986; or 9 ♗b5? ♗e7 10 ♖xc4 ♗g6 11 ♗f3? a6 12 ♗c3 ♗d3, when White has huge problems, D.Scheglmann-W.Weiz, corr. 1989) 9...♗g6 10 0-0 and White keeps the extra pawn, though the d3-square will be a permanent weakness.

c) 7...♗g4!? 8 f3 ♗f5 9 ♖e2 ♗xc2 10 ♖xc4 ♗g6 improves on note 'b', as 11 0-0 is now well met by 11...♜d3, intending 12 ♖xd3 ♗xd3 13 ♜e1 ♗c5+ 14 ♖h1 ♗d4; while 11 ♗ge4 ♗xe4 12 ♗xe4 ♖h4+ 13 g3 ♖h3 14 ♖e2?! (14 b3, ♗b2 and 0-0-0 was a better plan) 14...♗e7 15 d3 0-0 16 ♗d2 ♜ad8 17 0-0-0 ♖e6 18 ♖b1 ♖xc6 gave Black a very promising position in J.Havumaki-E.Orak, Iasi 2013.

8 ♗f3

The half retreat with 8 ♗ge4 leaves White struggling to equalize: 8...♗xe4 9 ♗xe4 ♖d5 10 ♖f3 (defending with a threat; other moves are worse, e.g. 10 d3 cxd3 11 cxd3 ♗b4+ or 10 ♖e2 f5 11 ♗g3 ♖xg2 12 ♖xe5+ ♖d8) 10...♗e6 (not 10...♖xc6?? 11 ♗f6+ etc) 11 0-0 (here 11 b3 0-0-0 12 ♗c3, M.Belica-R.Müller, German League 2008, 12...♖xf3 13 gxf3 ♗b4; and 11 ♗c3 ♖xf3 12 gxf3 ♜b8 13 b3 ♜b6 14 bxc4 ♗xc4, H.Niese-

J.Carlstedt, Bad Wiessee 2011; and 11 d3 cxd3 12 cxd3, S.Dyrhaug-C.McCarty Snead, London 2012, 12...0-0-0 13 0-0 f5 14 ♗c3 ♖xf3 15 gxf3 ♜xd3 all give Black the advantage) 11...0-0-0! and now:

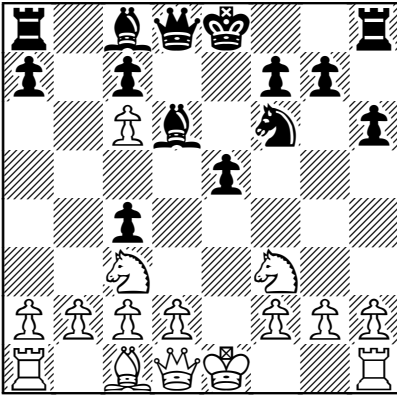


a) 12 ♖e3?! ♖xc6 13 ♗c3 ♗c5 14 ♖xe5 ♜d4 15 h3 ♜e8 16 ♖h5? (avoiding the discovery lands White in greater trouble) 18...g5! 17 ♖xh6 g4 18 hxg4? (or 18 h4 g3) 18...♜xg4 19 ♖h3 ♜eg8 0-1 K.Hanusek-M.Chmiel, Murzasichle 2011.

b) 12 ♜e1?! ♖xc6 13 b3 f5 14 ♗c3?! (but 14 ♗g5 e4 15 ♖h3 ♗d7! 16 ♗f7 ♖f6 17 ♗xd8 ♖xa1 18 ♗f7 ♜g8 is still good for Black) 14...e4 15 ♖h5 ♗c5 16 bxc4?! (16 ♗a4 is preferable) 16...g6 17 ♖e2?! (and here 17 ♖h4 – Pinski) 17...♗xc4 18 d3 exd3 19 cxd3 ♜xd3 20 ♖c2 ♗a6 (20...♗d4! 21 ♗b2 ♗a6 is even stronger) 21 ♗d1? ♗b7 22 ♗e3 ♜xe3 0-1 N.Bahram-J.Hector, Stockholm 1998, in view of 23 fxe3 ♗xe3+ etc.

c) 12 b3 is suggested by Pinski as best; e.g. 12...♖xc6 13 bxc4 f5 14 ♗g5 e4 (or if 14...♖xf3 15 ♗xf3 ♗xc4 16 d3 e4 then 17 ♗e5) 15 ♖h3 ♗xc4 16 ♖xf5+ ♖d7 (or 16...♜xd7 17 ♖xe4) 17 ♖xd7+ ♜xd7 18 ♗xe4 ♗xf1 19 ♖xf1 and White should probably survive with two pawns for the exchange.

8...♙d6



9 0-0

Pinski's one-move, natural improvement. The only reasonable course of action is to accept that White has nothing, break with d2-d4, and get the pieces out. Instead:

a) 9 d4 cxd3 10 cxd3 0-0 11 0-0 transposes below.

b) 9 h3?! e4 (or just 9...0-0) 10 ♖e2 0-0 11 ♘d4, M.Kajan-S.Sigfusson, European Cup, Panormo 2001, and 11...♙e5! 12 ♘db5 ♗e8 gives Black a very strong initiative; e.g. 13 ♖xc4 (or 13 0-0 ♘h7, intending ...f7-f5) 13...a6 14 ♘a3 ♙e6 15 ♖e2 ♘d5 16 ♘xd5 ♖xd5 – and for just a single pawn (once the c6-pawn drops).

c) 9 ♖e2?! 0-0 (compare this with 8 ♘f3 e4 9 ♘c3 ♙d6 in line B12; clearly there's no need for 9...e4 here) 10 ♖xc4 (similarly 10 0-0 ♗e8 11 ♖xc4? e4 12 ♘e1 ♙xh2+! 13 ♙xh2 ♘g4+ 14 ♙g3, Malu-Kibitzer, playchess.com 2003, and now 14...h5! 15 ♖b4 h4+ 16 ♙h3 a5 17 ♖a3 ♘e3+ 18 ♙h2 ♘xf1+ wins – Pinski; or if 15 ♗h1 then 15...♖d6+ 16 f4 g5 17 d4 h4+ etc) 10...♗b8 11 0-0? (11 a3 was required) 11...♗b4 12 ♖e2 e4 13 ♘e1 ♙xh2+! 14 ♙h1 (or 14 ♙xh2 ♘g4+ 15 ♙g3 ♖d6+ 16 f4 exf3+ etc) 14...♙g4 15 f3

♙d6 16 fxg4 ♘h5 17 ♖e3 ♖h4+ 18 ♖h3 ♘g3+ 0-1 M.Brokko Olde-J.Hector, Jyvaskyla 1994, in view of 19 ♙g1 ♙c5+.

9...0-0 10 d4

10 ♗e1 ♗b8 11 d4 would be okay too, rather than the greedy 11 ♘e5?! ♙e5 12 ♗xe5 ♘g4 13 ♗e4?! (13 ♗h5 prevents the next move) 13...♖h4 14 h3 ♖xf2+ 15 ♙h1 ♙f5 16 hxg4? (16 ♗e2 ♗fe8 17 d4 was necessary) 16...♙e4 17 ♘xe4 ♖h4+ 18 ♙g1 f5 19 g3 ♖h3 20 gxf5 ♖xf5 21 d3 ♗bf8 with a decisive attack, J.Kramlová-L.Lisetskaya, corr. 2014.

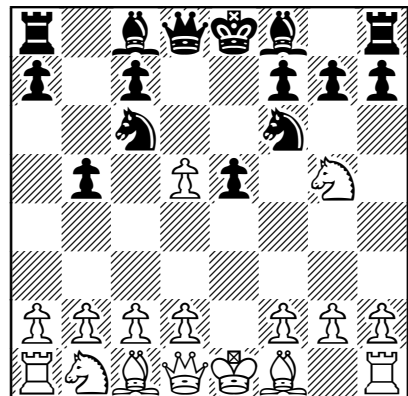
10...cxd3 11 ♖xd3?!

Thinking about structure is more unwarranted avarice. 11 cxd3 would allow White to mobilize with moves like ♗e1, ♖c2 and ♘e4. *Stockfish* says "0.00". All the same, humans would probably prefer Black.

11...a5 12 ♗e1 ♙a6 13 ♖d1 ♗e8 14 ♙e3 ♗e6 15 ♖d2 ♖e8 16 ♗ad1 ♖xc6

Black has: regained the pawn, more space, more active pieces, the two bishops, therefore a clear advantage, which was converted in L.Powell-J.Picchiottino, corr. 1998.

C: 6 ♙f1!



The *only* good move for White. There are

several possible replies. The question is which offers Black the most compensation for the pawn.

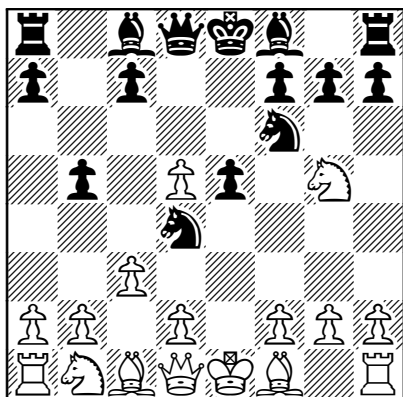
6...♖xd5!?

This was Ulvestad's second idea; it is supposed to be bad because of Pinkus' counter-analysis and a later suggestion by GM Reuben Fine (see 12 ♖g7?! below). Interestingly, the fourth edition of *ECO* Vol.C (2000) gives 6...♖xd5 once more as the main line, this time on the basis of a 1997 game by GM Alexander Obukhov.

I think other moves are worse:

a) 6...h6 (Ulvestad's first idea) is met by 7 ♖xf7! (stronger than 7 ♖f3 ♖xd5 8 ♖c3 ♖e6) 7...♗xf7 8 dxc6 ♖c5 9 ♖e2!, when Black has struggled to show compensation.

b) 6...♖d4 7 c3 transposes to the Fritz Variation (5...♖d4)

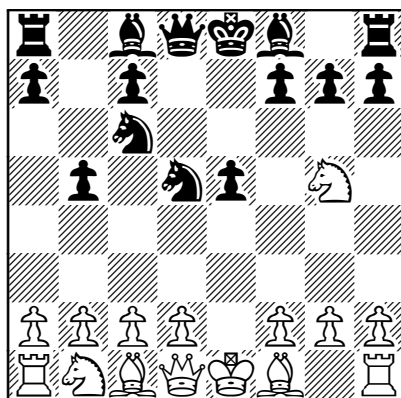


where 7...♖xd5 8 cxd4! ♖xg5 9 ♖xb5+ ♗d8 10 0-0 ♖b7 (or 10...exd4 11 ♖c6! ♖b8 12 d3; while 10...♖f4, as in Gi.Goldsztejn-Ma.Carlsen, Chess24.com blitz 2020, is also met by 11 ♖c6!, as the world champion bantered at the time) 11 ♖f3 ♖b8 12 dxe5! ♖e3 13 ♖h3 ♖xg2+ 14 ♖xg2 ♖xg2 15 d4! has been shown to be good for White. Sverre's Johnsen's untested 10...♖g6!? 11

dxe5 ♖b8 may be the best try, though 12 ♖c3 ♖f4 13 ♖f3 ♖b7 14 ♖g3 ♖xg2 15 d4 ♖h4 16 ♖e2 still seems in White's favour.

c) 6...♖g4? fails to 7 f3 (not 7 ♖e2? ♖xe2 8 ♖xe2 ♖xd5 9 0-0 ♖d4 10 ♖d1 h6 11 ♖h3 ♖d6 and Black had a very nice position, which he later lost in E.Paoli-O.Ulvestad, Reggio Emilia 1960/61 – the inventor's only game with his variation in the databases) 7...♖xd5 8 ♖xf7 ♗xf7 9 fxg4 ♖f4 10 ♖c3 ♖c5, K.Honfi-P.Pitters, corr. 1962, and now 11 ♖e4 (rather than 11 g3 e4!?) 11...♖d5 12 d3, followed by g2-g3, is probably winning for White.

d) 6...♖xd5! is worth considering. Then 7 ♖c3 ♖c5 8 ♖xb5 is worse for Black than 6 ♖xb5 ♖xd5, because the queen has first been deflected from its target on g2. All the same, with activity and rapid development Black has decent practical chances, and it's not such a simple matter for White to consolidate. Ulvestad thought that it was "probably a good answer" as well.



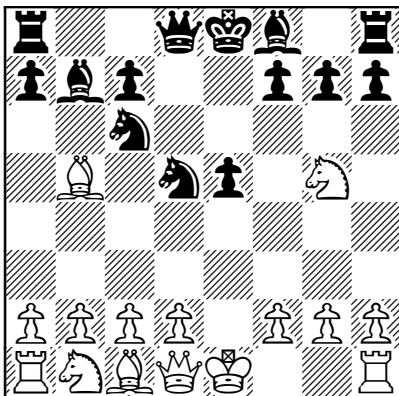
7 ♖xb5

Both 7 ♖f3 ♖d7 (not 7...f6? 8 ♖xb5 ♖b7 9 ♖e6) 8 ♖xb5 ♖b7 and 7 ♖h5 g6 8 ♖f3 ♖d7 9 ♖xb5 ♖b7 transpose to notes at move eight.

White punted 7 d4? and won after 7...h6? 8 ♟xb5 ♟b7 9 ♞f3 e4 10 ♞e5 ♜f6 11 ♜g4 in D.Ledesma Claros-A.Campos Parejo, Gran Canaria (online blitz) 2021; but 7...♞xd4 8 c3 a6! 9 cxd4 ♟b4+ is good for Black.

7...♟b7

The first recorded game with the Ulvestad saw 7...♟d7? 8 d3 ♟b4+ 9 c3 ♟e7 10 ♞f3 ♟d6 11 0-0 0-0 12 ♜e1 ♜e8 13 ♞bd2, when Black had nothing for the pawn and duly lost in A.Pinkus-S.Bernstein, Ventnor City 1941. Very satisfying for Pinkus no doubt, even if theoretically irrelevant. The Fried Liverish sacrifice 8 ♞xf7!? is tempting too: 8...♞xf7 9 ♜f3+ ♟e6 10 ♟c4 (better than 10 ♞c3?! ♞cb4 11 ♟c4 c6 – Pálkövi) 10...♞cb4 11 0-0, intending d2-d4.



In this fundamental position, White has two main continuations:

C1: 8 d3 259

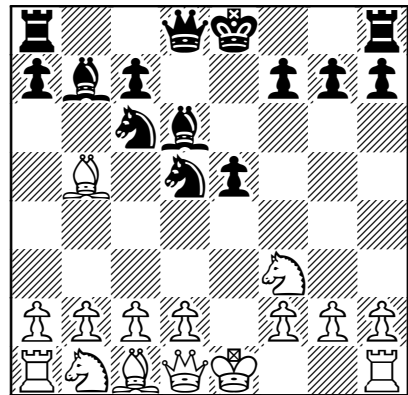
C2: 8 d4 262

Other moves have been tried or analysed:

a) 8 ♟c4 ♜xg5 9 ♟xd5 0-0-0 10 d3 ♜g6 11 ♟f3 f5 (Ulvestad) is good for Black, and throwing in 10...♟b4+ may be even better.

b) 8 ♟xc6+ ♟xc6 9 ♞f3? (an instructive mistake; 9 d3 is preferable, when 9...♜d7 10 0-0 0-0-0 gives Black quite enough play for the pawn, with plans of pushing on the kingside) 9...♞f4! (stronger than Ulvestad's 9...♟d6, which is fine for Black) 10 0-0 ♞xg2! 11 d4 (forced, since 11 ♞xg2? ♜g5+ 12 ♞h1 ♜g4 just wins) 11...♞h4 12 ♞xe5 ♟b7 leaves the white king wide open.

c) 8 ♞f3 ♟d6 and now:



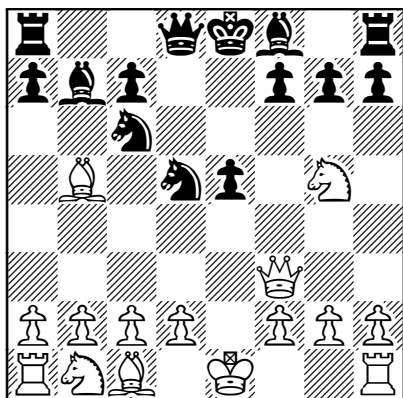
c1) 9 0-0 0-0 10 ♞c3 (or 10 ♟xc6 ♟xc6 11 d3 f5) 10...♞d4 11 ♞xd4 exd4 12 ♞xd5 (not 12 ♞e2?, A.Chiari-M.Numanoglu, World Junior Ch., Kemer 2007, because of 12...♜h4 13 g3 ♜h3 14 f3 ♞f6 with powerful threats) 12...♟xh2+ 13 ♞xh2 ♜xd5 14 ♜g4 f5 15 ♜g3 ♜xb5 is messily equal.

c2) 9 d4 exd4 (Ulvestad's line 9...e4 10 ♞e5 ♟xe5 11 dxex5 0-0 12 ♟xc6 ♟xc6 13 ♜d4 ♜e7 14 0-0 looks better for White) 10 ♞xd4 0-0 11 ♞xc6 ♜e8+ 12 ♜e2 ♟xc6 13 ♟xc6 ♜xc6 14 0-0 leaves White a pawn up for seemingly not very much, but *Stockfish* considers Black to be perfectly okay; e.g. 14...♜ad8 15 c3 (or 15 ♜f3 ♜xc2) 15...♜de8 (now ♞c3 has been ruled out) 16 ♜f3 ♜e6 17 g3 f5.

c3) 9 ♞c3 a6! (here Ulvestad's 9...♞xc3

seems too helpful, and 9...♖f4?, M.Cerrato Torrijos-J.Nunez Alonso, Padron 2008, can be met by 10 d4 exd4 11 ♙xf4 dxc3 12 ♙xd6 cxd6 13 ♖e2+ ♖e7 14 bxc3 with an edge) 10 ♙a4 (now if 10 ♙c4 then 10...♖f4, or 10 ♙xc6 ♙xc6 11 0-0 ♖xc3 and 12...0-0) 10...♖b6 (as we'll see, targeting the light-squared bishop is a standard plan in this whole line) 11 ♙xc6+ (or 11 ♙b3 ♖d4 12 ♖xd4 exd4 13 ♖e2+ ♖e7 14 ♖xe7+ ♙xe7 15 ♖e2 a5 16 a4 d3) 11...♙xc6 12 0-0 0-0 13 ♙e1 ♙e8 14 d3 f5 with full compensation due to the bishop pair and general activity.

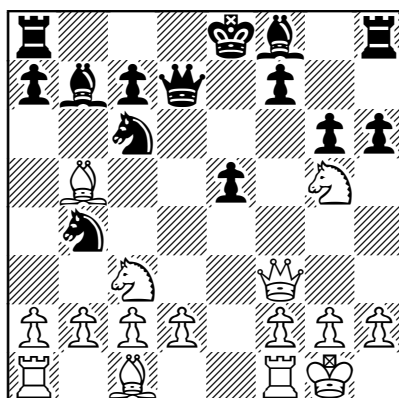
d) 8 ♖f3



8...♗d7 (not 8...f6?? 9 ♖e6 ♗d6 10 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 11 ♖xc7+ ♙d8 12 ♖xd5 ♖d4 13 ♙c4 and wins, P.Ofstad-B.Heggheim, Oslo 1978; nor 8...♗xg5?! 9 ♗xd5 ♗f6 10 ♖c3 ♙e7 11 0-0 0-0 12 ♙e1 ♙ad8 13 ♙xc6 ♙xc6 14 ♗xe5 ♙fe8 15 ♗xf6 ♙xf6 16 ♙f1, M.Novikov-U.Sevdimaliev, Bogoroditsk 2011, as I don't think Black has enough for two pawns) 9 ♖c3 (or 9 0-0 h6 10 ♖e4 0-0-0 11 d3 f5 12 ♖g3 g6 – Ulvestad) 9...♖db4! (not 9...♖xc3?! 10 bxc3 f6 11 ♖e4 0-0-0 12 ♙b1 f5 13 ♖g5 and White is clearly better, A.Rodriguez Vila-D.Izquierdo, Montevideo 2015; note that 13...♙c5 can be met by 14

♗xc6! ♗xc6 15 ♙xc6 ♙xc6 16 ♖f7, winning the exchange) 10 ♙a4 (or 10 ♗d1 h6; not 10 0-0! ♖xc2 11 ♙a4 ♖2d4!) 10...h6 (rather than 10...f6?! 11 a3 ♖xc2+ 12 ♙xc2 fxg5, which messes up Black's kingside, and 11...fxg5? 12 axb4 is just bad, S.Sorbes-Peray, Amiens 2001) 11 ♖ge4 (not now 11 a3?! ♖xc2+ 12 ♙xc2 hxg5) 11...0-0-0 12 a3 ♖xc2+ (or 12...♖d5!?) 13 ♙xc2 ♖d4 14 ♗d1 f5 with a lot of play; e.g. 15 ♙b1 (or 15 d3 fxe4 16 dxe4 ♖e6 17 0-0 ♙a6; and not 15 ♖g3? ♙xg2) 15...♙e7! 16 0-0 h5 17 d3 g5 and so on.

e) 8 ♗h5! g6 (I prefer this to 8...♗d7 9 d4 g6 10 ♖e2 ♙e7 11 dxe5, even if Black did go on to win in *rooksac-remyrey*, Chess-World.net 2019) 9 ♖f3 ♗d7 (all as in note 'd' above; the question is how the extra ...g7-g6 changes things) 10 ♖c3 ♖bd4! (not 10...♙d8? 11 ♖xd5 ♗xd5 12 ♗f6 ♙g8 13 c4 ♗d7 14 0-0 ♙g7 15 ♖f3 h6 16 ♖xf7 and White won, *rooksac-mizuzul*, Chess-World.net 2019) 11 0-0! (this is the difference: 11...♖xc2? 12 ♙a4 ♖2d4 now fails to 13 ♗f6; otherwise 11 ♙a4 h6 is much the same as before) 11...h6 leads to complications, but I think Black is okay.



Here are some supporting variations

from analysis:

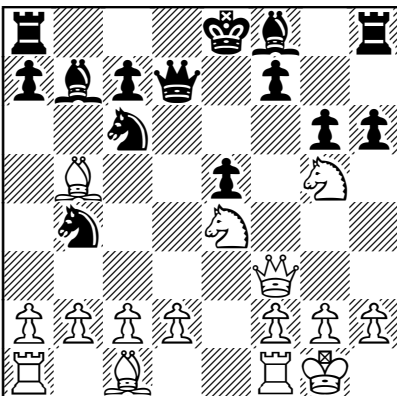
e1) 12 ♖ge4?! 0-0-0 13 ♜d1 f5 14 a3 ♘d5 15 ♗xd5 ♜xd5 16 ♗c3 ♜e6 with superb play for the pawn.

e2) 12 a3 hxg5 13 axb4 0-0-0 14 ♜xa7 f5! 15 ♖a6 ♖xa6 16 ♜xa6 e4 17 ♜e2 ♜h7 18 ♜a8+ (18 h3 ♗d4 19 ♜c4 ♗f3+! is much the same) 18...♗d7 19 ♜xd8+ ♗xd8 20 h3 ♗d4 21 ♜e3 ♗f3+ 22 gxf3 (not 22 ♗h1?? ♜xh3+! 23 gxh3 ♜xh3+ 24 ♗g2 ♜h2+ 25 ♗g3 ♖d6+ and mates) 22...f4! 23 ♜d4+ ♖c8, followed by ...♜xh3, so White must hurry to take the draw.

e3) 12 d4 hxg5 13 d5 ♗xd5 14 ♜d1 0-0-0 15 ♜xd5 (not 15 ♗xd5?! ♜e6) 15...e4 (or 15...g4!?) 16 ♜xe4 ♖d6 17 ♖xg5 ♜de8 18 ♜xd6 (not 18 ♜d3?! ♖xh2+ 19 ♗f1 ♖d6 20 ♗g1 ♜g4) 18...♜xd6 19 ♜f4 ♜xf4 20 ♖xf6 f6 is roughly equal.

e4) 12 ♜f6 ♜g8 (or even 12...hxg5!? 13 ♜xh8 0-0-0) 13 ♗ge4 ♖e7 14 ♖a4 ♜f8 (obviously the queen can't be taken yet) 15 a3 0-0-0 16 ♗c5!? (if 16 ♜f3 then 16...♗d5 17 d3 f5 or 17 ♜d3 ♜e6) 16...♜g4 17 h3 ♜h5 18 ♜g7 ♖xc5 19 axb4 ♗d4 20 bxc5 ♖xg2! 21 ♗xg2 ♜f3+ 22 ♗h2 ♜f4+ with a draw.

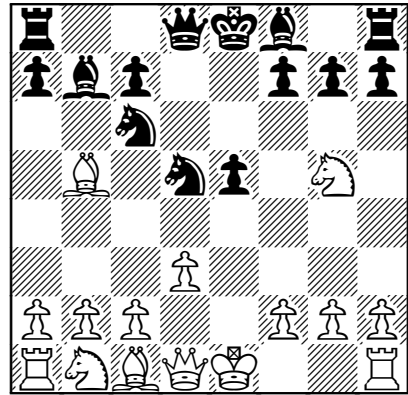
e5) 12 ♗ce4



12...♜f5! (the only move in fact) 13 a3

hxg5 14 axb4 ♜xf3 (14...0-0-0!? 15 c3 ♗xb4 is also possible) 15 gxf3 a6 16 ♖xc6 (or 16 ♖a4 ♖xb4 17 d4 exd4 18 ♖xg5 ♖e7) 16...♖xc6 17 d4 exd4 18 ♖xg5 (or 18 ♗f6+ ♗d8 19 ♖xg5 ♖c8) 18...f5 19 ♖f6 ♜h5 20 ♗g3 ♜h7 is unclear. *Stockfish* says equal, but "0.13" equal, so Black perhaps shouldn't be too complacent.

C1: 8 d3



Rather than force the pace by opening the position with d2-d4 at once, White plays in a more restrained fashion, hoping to consolidate the extra pawn.

8...♖e7

Developing the bishop while renewing the attack on the white knight. Black cannot afford to play casually:

a) 8...♖c5 9 0-0 0-0 10 ♗c3 ♗d4 11 ♖c4 ♗b6?? 12 ♜h5 and White won, E.Paoli-K.Ojanen, Trencianske Teplice 1949.

b) 8...♜d7 9 ♗c3 0-0-0 10 0-0 h6 11 ♗f3 ♜f5, P.Ptacnik-M.Muron, Czech League 2011, and now 12 ♗xd5 ♜xd5 13 ♖c4 leaves White a safe pawn up.

c) 8...h6 9 ♗f3 ♖d6 (Ulvestad) can be compared with 8 ♗f3 ♖d6 above. Here Black's ...h7-h6 looks like a wasted tempo.