

The Modernized Alekhine Defense

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Website: www.thinkerspublishing.com

Managing Editor: Romain Edouard

Assistant Editor: Daniël Vanheirzeele

Proofreading: Bernard Carpinter

Software: Hub van de Laar

Cover Design: Iwan Kerkhof

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Christian Bauer

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Key to Symbols

!	a good move
?	a weak move
!!	an excellent move
??	a blunder
!?	an interesting move
?!	a dubious move
□	only move
N	novelty
☉	lead in development
⊙	zugzwang
=	equality
∞	unclear position
≈	with compensation for the sacrificed material
±	White stands slightly better
∓	Black stands slightly better
±	White has a serious advantage
∓	Black has a serious advantage
+−	White has a decisive advantage
−+	Black has a decisive advantage
→	with an attack
↑	with initiative
↔	with counterplay
Δ	with the idea of
⌒	better is
≤	worse is
+	check
#	mate

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Preface

When Thinkers Publishing suggested I could try to produce a book on the Alekhine Defense, since for some reason I seem to have the reputation of using maverick openings, this idea looked reasonable. In that Covid period I had nothing better to do after all! After a few months I however realized that Thinkers Publishing had passed me a hot potato (many thanks!), i.e. the arduous task of checking the serious recent works of Kornev and Negi, plus the mammoth book of Chetverik and Kalinichenko, not to mention some “already ancient” suggestions from John Shaw dated 2016!

You will therefore find some references to those inspiring sources throughout this book (Chetverik & Kalinichenko being abbreviated to C&K).

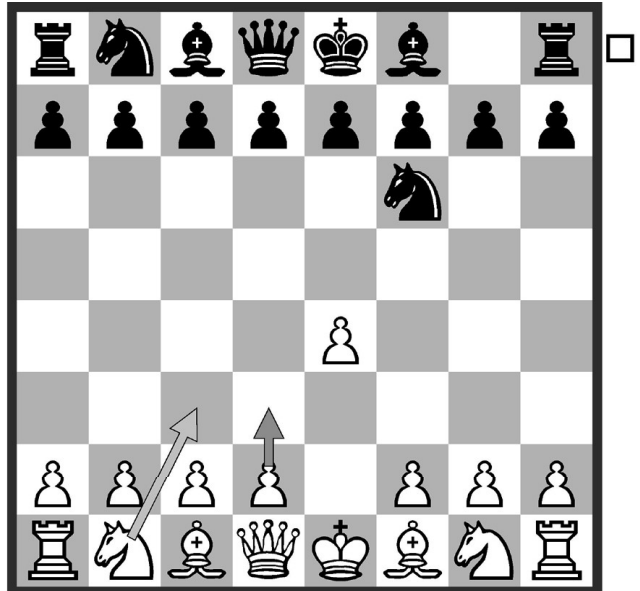
I wasn't sure at first whether I wanted to talk about “all existing” lines of this intriguing opening, and discovered in the process there were quite a few, or whether I would sort them out to offer a Black repertoire. I finally decided on the first approach, to give you, dear reader, a broader choice. Among all the lines included in that book, the Four Pawns Attack Classical, covered in the Bonus Lines chapter, is probably the only one where a Black player would need more knowledge in order to be “safe” from a theoretical standpoint.

Hope you'll enjoy reading this book!



Alternatives on move 2

1.e4  f6



Chapter Guide

Chapter 1 – Alternatives on move 2

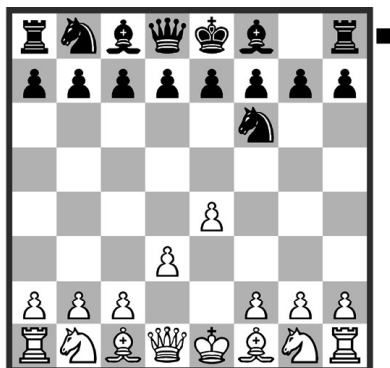
In this chapter we will examine secondary options by White on move 2 as well as 1.e4 ♘f6 2.e5 ♘g8.

1.e4 ♘f6

a) 2.d3	11
b) 2.♘c3 d5 3.e5 --	16
c) 2.♘c3 d5 3.e5 ♘fd7	22
d) 2.e5 ♘g8.....	27

a) 2.d3

1. e4 f6 2. d3



Position after: 2. d3

With 2.d3 White chickens out from entering the Alekhine proper, indicating that he is obviously not trying hard to get an opening edge. Black has several ways to follow up, depending on his tastes. I'd suggest 2...d5, since Alekhine players shouldn't be afraid of 3.e5, should they? Here you see a mixture of some quite fresh and older examples:

2... d5

A) 2... e5 shouldn't really have any independent value, since play will almost certainly transpose into some minor line of 1.e4 e5. Or to my recommendation, if after 2...d5 White decides on 3.d2 Black can happily play 3...e5, getting a good 1.e4 e5 position. After 2...e5 3.f4?! White is already playing with fire, since with 3...exf4 4.xf4 c6 followed by 5...d5 Black can nourish the

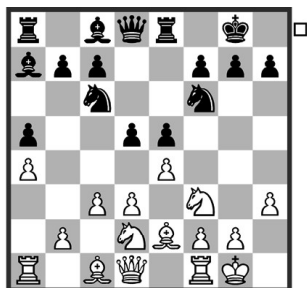
hope of seizing the initiative. 3. f3 [3. c3 c5 4. g3 a6 5. g2 d6 6. ge2 c6= Azmaiparashvili, Z (2673) – Minasian, A (2595) Montecatini Terme 2000 transposed into the Vienna opening 1.e4 e5 2.c3 f6 3.g3 and so on] 3... c6 4. e2 d5 [4... g6 5. c4 g7 6. c3 0-0 7. h3 d6 8. e3 e8 9. d2 d7 Ponkratov, P (2630) – Gupta, A (2608) chess.com (rapid) 2020] 5. bd2



Position after: 5. bd2

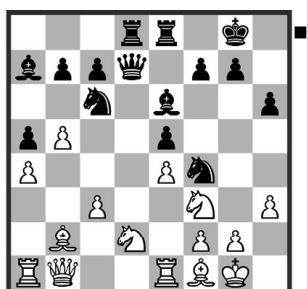
Playing a reversed Philidor (thus one tempo up compared to that opening as Black), White should be equal here, but he runs the risk of landing in an overly passive position.

A1) In Haub, T (2427) – Bauer, C (2622) Vandoeuvre 2004, I chose 5... c5. 6. 0-0 0-0 7. c3 a5 8. a4 [8. b3!? Intending a2-a3, then either b1 or b2 followed by b3-b4. If 8... d4 then 9. cxd4 xd4 10. b2 is known to be around equal with reversed colors.] 8... e8 9. h3 a7



Position after: 9... ♖a7

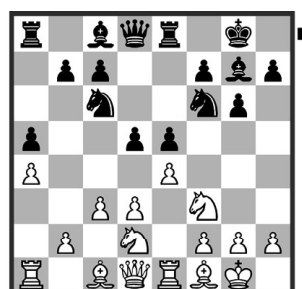
10. ♜e1 [Here or on the next move 10. exd5 followed by ♘c4 would have been more active; see the note after 5. ♘bd2.] 10... h6 11. ♙f1?! ♙e6 12. b3 ♛d7 13. ♙b2 ♜ad8 14. ♛b1 ♘h5 15. b4 dxe4 16. dxe4 ♘f4 17. b5



Position after: 17. b5

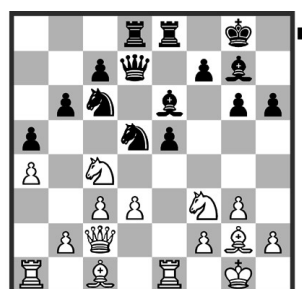
17... ♙xh3!! The black army is fully mobilized, with its mighty dark-squared bishop eyeing f2 and the rooks ready to join the assault along the sixth rank. 18. gxh3 ♘xh3+ 19. ♙h2 ♘f4 20. bxc6 ♛g4→ Bringing the heavy artillery nearer the white king, whose situation is already hopeless. 21. ♜e3 ♜e6 22. ♘d4 ♛h4+ 23. ♙g1 exd4 24. cxd4 ♜g6+ 25. ♜g3 ♜xg3+ 26. fxg3 ♛xg3+ 27. ♙h1 ♛h4+ 28. ♙g1 ♜xd4 White resigned.

A2) 5... g6 6. 0-0 ♙g7 7. c3 a5 8. a4 [As in Haub – Bauer seen under 5... ♙c5, White should seriously have considered 8. b3 0-0 9. a3 if only for the sake of having a clear and constructive plan to follow.] 8... 0-0 9. ♜e1 ♜e8 10. ♙f1



Position after: 10. ♙f1

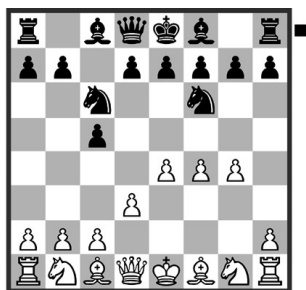
This position was reached in Todorcevic, M (2535) – Tal, M (2610) Marseille 1989. Being an adept of King's Indian systems, the French-Yugoslavian GM probably didn't mind playing the white side here. When an opportunity presented itself a few moves later, however, the Magician of Riga didn't miss it! 10... b6 11. exd5 ♘xd5 12. ♛b3 ♘f4 13. ♘e4 ♙e6 14. ♛c2 ♘d5 15. g3 h6 16. ♙g2 ♛d7 17. ♘ed2 ♜ad8 18. ♘c4



Position after: 18. ♘c4

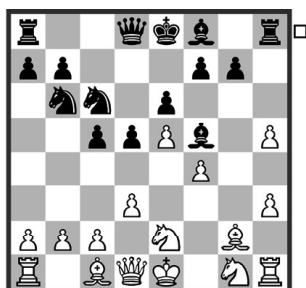
18... ♖db4! 19. cxb4 ♖xb4 20. ♔c3?! [20. ♔e2 would have limited the damage and the same goes for 21. ♕f1 on the next move.] 20... ♔xd3 21. ♖a3?! [21. ♕f1 ♔xc3 22. bxc3 ♖c2+] 21... e4 Black was winning and duly converted his edge.

B) 2... c5 3. f4 ♖c6 4. g4



Position after: 4. g4

This occurred in Ponkratov, P (2630) – Markus, R (2599) chess.com (rapid) 2020, where White's creative handling of the opening was probably motivated by the time control. At any rate it's fun to watch! 4... h6 5. h3 d5 6. e5 ♖d7 7. ♕g2 ♖b6 [7... g5!? in order to blow apart the white center.] 8. ♖c3 h5 9. gxh5 ♕f5 10. ♖ce2 e6∞

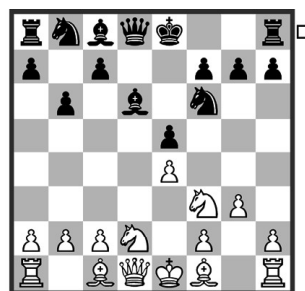


Position after: 10... e6∞

Black could claim a very sound position strategically, even though the outcome was still very much open.

3. e5

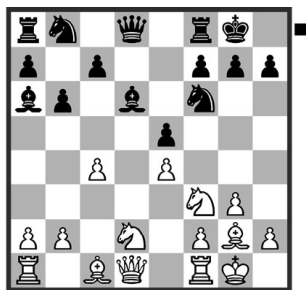
3. ♖d2 dxe4 [Black is again spoilt for choice and 3... c5 is by no means worse, e.g. 4. g3 dxe4 5. dxe4 ♖c6 6. ♕g2 g6 7. ♖gf3 ♕g7 8. 0-0 0-0 9. ♔e2 e5 10. c3 ♔c7∞ Artemiev, V (2691) – Bortnyk, O (2610) World Blitz Ch Riyadh 2017.] 4. dxe4 e5 5. ♖gf3 ♕d6 6. g3 b6!



Position after: 6... b6!

This position is usually reached via 1.e4 e6 2.d3 d5 3. ♖d2 ♖f6 4.g3 dxe4 5.dxe4 e5 and so on. Black is supposed to be doing fine there, despite having lost a tempo on ...e7-e6 and then ...e6-e5. With his last move Black intends to disturb his opponent's standard development. 7. ♕g2 ♕a6 8. c4 This weakens the d4-square forever, but otherwise White couldn't castle. 8... 0-0 9. 0-0

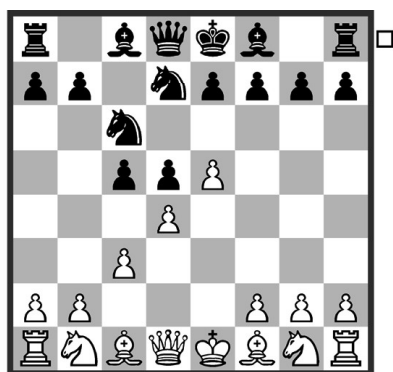
(see analysis diagram next page)



Position after: 9. 0-0

9... ♞bd7 [9... c5!? and then 10... ♞c6 came into consideration, especially if one knows how things developed later on in the game.] 10. a3 ♞b7 11. ♔c2 a5 12. b3 ♞c5 13. ♖e1 ♞e6 14. ♙b2 ♞d7 15. ♞f1 c5 16. ♞e3 ♞d4 17. ♔d3 a4∞ Nakamura, H – Degraeve, JM chess.com (rapid) 2018.

3... ♞fd7 4. d4 c5 5. c3 ♞c6



Position after: 5... ♞c6

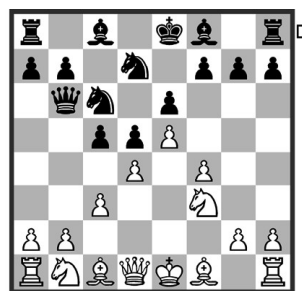
At this juncture White has to make up his mind between 6. ♞f3 and 6.f4. In both cases Black will then decide whether he wants his light-squared bishop out of the pawn chain or if he

satisfies himself with a good version of a French Defense. A matter of taste again, but I'd advocate the more ambitious “bishop out of the pawn chain” approach.

6. ♞f3

6. f4

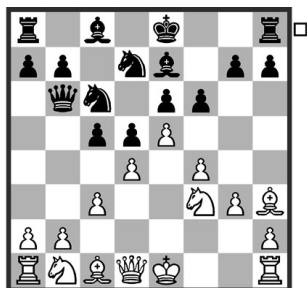
A) 6... e6 7. ♞f3 ♔b6



Position after: 7... ♔b6

A1) 8. a3 was used in Maljutin, E – Fedorov, A, Moscow 1992, the only clash between two players rated over 2400 where the position after 6...e6 was discussed. Black replied with the sensible 8... a5∞, stopping b2-b4 first before focusing on his own active play linked with the undermining ...f7-f6.

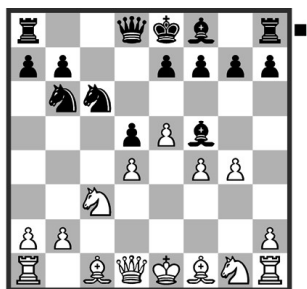
A2) 8. g3 ♞e7 [Starting with 8... f6 gives White the extra option of 9. ♞d3, the d4-pawn then being taboo in view of the check on g6.] 9. ♞h3 f6!



Position after: 9... f6!

I'd rather be Black here because 10. Qxe6 cxd4 11. cxd4 [11. Qxd7+ Qxd7 gives Black tremendous compensation on the light squares for the pawn] 11... Ndx5! and 10. 0-0 cxd4 11. cxd4 fxe5 12. fxe5 Ndx5 13. Nxe5 Nxe5 14. Nc3 Nf7 both seem to turn in his favor.

B) 6... cxd4 7. cxd4 Nb6 8. Nc3 Qf5 9. g4



Position after: 9. g4

Now 9... Qe4 10. Nxe4 dxe4 11. Qg2 is messy, but the retreat 9... Qd7 is quite interesting. White will likely not manage to find a safe shelter for his king and he may well regret his last impetuous pawn thrust.

6... e6

After this move the position is transformed into the Advance variation of the French Defense. The only difference is the position of the black knight on d7 instead of g8. This fact seems to favor Black, who easily solves his opening problems.

6... cxd4 7. cxd4 Nb6 8. Qd3 Qg4 9. Qe3 e6



Position after: 9... e6

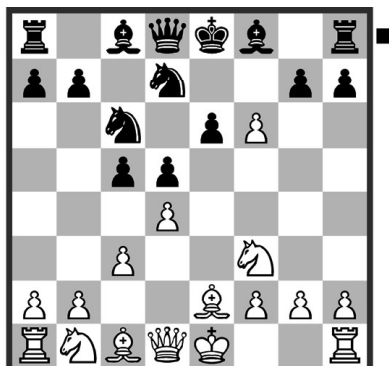
This looks like a good French or Advance Caro-Kann from the black perspective.

After ... Qe7 followed by ...0-0 moves like ... Nb4 , ... Nc4 and the maneuver ... Qh5-g6 are in the air.

7. Qe2 f6

7... Qe7! ? Possibly intending to recapture on f6 with the bishop following ... f7-f6 exf6 .

8. exf6



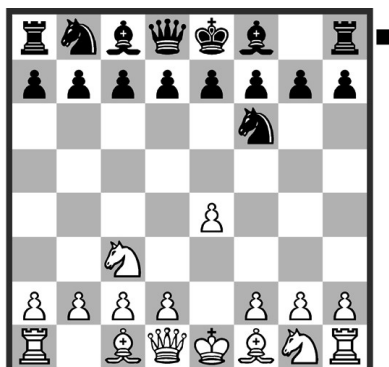
Position after: 8. exf6

Now 8... ♔xf6 was played in Rozentalis, E – Zapolskis, A Vilnius 2002 and proved slightly better for White after 9. 0-0 ♙d6 10. ♙g5! ♔f7 11. ♙h4.

Finkel offers the improvement 8... ♞xf6 9. 0-0 ♙d6 in his annotations of that game for ChessBase, and I agree with him that Black could indeed have claimed equality there.

b) 2. ♞c3 d5 3. e5 --

1. e4 ♞f6 2. ♞c3



Position after: 2. ♞c3

2... d5

2... e5 is of course another story, where the move order has served Black to exclude the Ruy Lopez, the Italian and the Scotch. He thus has saved a considerable amount of work compared to what a usual 1.e4 e5 player must learn.

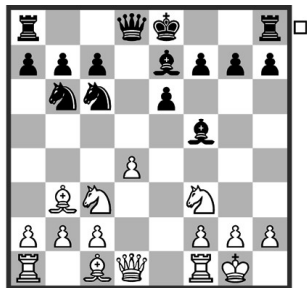
3. e5

3. exd5 ♞xd5 is the other option to be investigated.



Position after: 3... ♞xd5

A) 4. ♙c4 ♞b6 [If 4... ♞xc3 White can profitably throw in 5. ♔f3 before recapturing the knight.] 5. ♙b3 ♞c6 6. ♞f3 ♙f5 7. 0-0 e6 [From this point on, going for the bishop by means of 7... ♞a5 deserved serious attention.] 8. d4 ♙e7

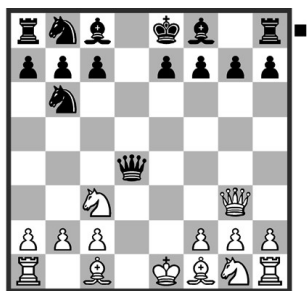


Position after: 8... ♖e7

9. d5 This leads to simplifications, but White had nothing better and was probably concerned about ...♘a5. 9... exd5 10. ♖xd5 ♘xd5 11. ♙xd5 0-0= Taimanov, M – Tseshkovsky, V USSR Ch Moscow 1976.

B) 4. ♙f3!?

B1) 4... ♘b6 Basagic, Z (2370) – Baburin, A (2470) Hartberg 1991 is worthy of attention, when our cybernetic friend offers 5. d4!? ♙xd4 and now the surprising 6. ♙g3.



Position after: 6. ♙g3

The c7-pawn is attacked while the black queen is denied the e5-square and 7. ♘f3 can now follow. White has serious compensation.

B2) 4... c6 5. ♙c4 e6 was rock-solid for Black in Papp, G (2471) – Heinzel, O (2402) Balatonlelle 2004.

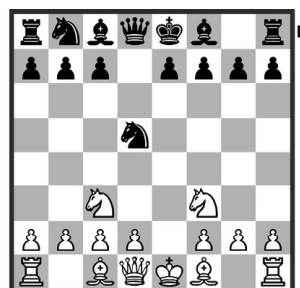
B3) 4... e6 5. ♙c4 ♘b4 6. ♙b3 ♘8c6 [6... c5!?] 7. ♘ge2



Position after: 7. ♘ge2

7... ♙e7?! [7... ♘a5 was right: 8. ♙a4+ ♙d7 9. a3 ♘d5=] 8. a3 ♘e5 9. ♙g3 ♘bc6 10. d4 This remained slightly better for White in Bellon Lopez, J (2350) – Alburt, L (2510) Bucharest 1978, but why not grab the pawn? [10. ♙xg7!±]

C) 4. ♘f3 The white formation being rather innocuous, Black can react in various ways. Some fresh examples, all at a rapid time control, follow.



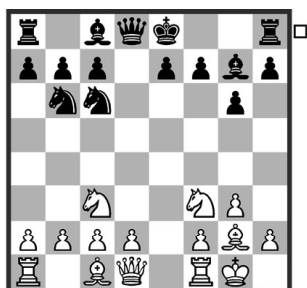
Position after: 4. ♘f3

C1) 4... ♘c6 5. ♖b5 ♖g4 6. h3 ♖h5 7. g4?! ♖g6 8. ♘e5 ♙d6 9. ♘c4? [9. d4∞] 9... ♙e6+ was already much better for Black in Baklan, V (2587) – Ponomariov, R (2631) chess.com 2020.

C2) 4... ♘xc3 5. bxc3 g6 6. g3 ♖g7 7. ♖g2 0-0 8. 0-0 c5 with rough equality, Livaic, L (2507) – Bortnyk, O (2598) chess.com 2020.

C3) 4... ♖g4 5. h3 ♖h5 6. d4 e6 7. g4 ♖g6 8. ♖g2 ♘b4?! [the robust 8... c6 was much sounder] 9. 0-0 [9. ♘e5! intending 9... ♘xc2+ 10. ♙f1 ♘xa1 11. ♖xb7±] 9... ♖xc2 10. ♙d2 Liang, A (2589) – Ashwin, J (2500) chess.com 2019. White's lead in development provides him ample compensation for the pawn.

C4) 4... g6 5. g3 A rare bird. 5. ♖c4 is by far White's most frequent choice here and could transpose into 4. ♖c4. 5... ♖g7 6. ♖g2 ♘b6 [6... ♘xc3 7. bxc3 would transpose into 4... ♘xc3 5. bxc3 g6.] 7. 0-0 ♘c6



Position after: 7... ♘c6

A more familiar position to us, with the white pawn on e2 rather than c2, would occur after 1. ♘f3 ♘f6 2. c4 g6 3. ♘c3 d5 4. cxd5 ♘xd5 5. g3 ♖g7 6. ♖g2 ♘b6 7. 0-0 ♘c6. The theory of this branch of the Grunfeld is quite developed, whereas the actual position arose only in the two following duels: 8. a4 a5

C4.1) 9. d4 0-0 [sidestepping the sinful 9... ♘xd4? 10. ♘xd4 ♖xd4 11. ♘b5±] 10. ♖e3?! [10. ♘b5! see 9. ♘b5] 10... ♖f5 was roughly equal in Radjabov, T (2734) – Ivanchuk, V (2704) Beijing (blitz) 2014.

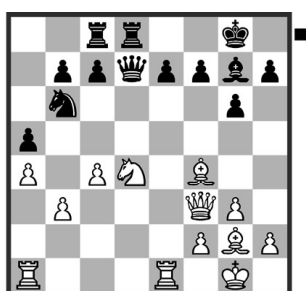
C4.2) 9. ♘b5 0-0 10. d4



Position after: 10. d4

This was seen in Harikrishna, P (2727) – Ivanchuk, V (2704) Beijing (blitz) 2014, where the Ukrainian failed to equalize. 10... ♖e6 11. ♙e1 ♖d5 12. ♖f4 ♙c8 13. c3 Here 13. b3! followed by 14. c4 was more determined and would have set Black considerable

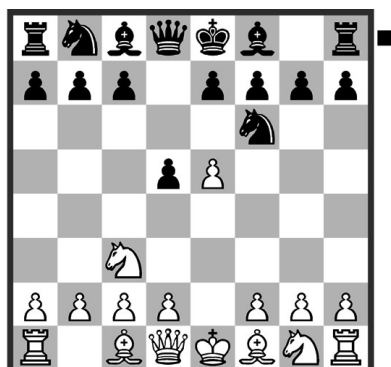
problems. The same idea was available one move later, but it is unclear whether that was more promising than White's slow approach. 13... ♔d7 14. b3 ♖fd8 15. c4!? Or 15. ♔c2 and White has a pleasant edge. 15... ♕xf3 16. ♔xf3 ♖xd4 17. ♖xd4



Position after: 17. ♖xd4

And here 17... ♕xd4 18. ♖ad1 with strong pressure or 17... ♔xd4!? 18. ♕xc7 and now Black can try to sacrifice his queen by means of 18... ♖xc7 19. ♖ad1 ♖cd7 20. ♖xd4 ♕xd4.

Let's return to 3.e5.



Position after: 3. e5

3... d4

This and 3... ♖e4 represent Black's alternatives to our choice of 3... ♖fd7 (covered in the next subchapter). Here are some brief lines and notes to illustrate them.

3... ♖e4 4. ♖ce2 White is now threatening 5.d2-d3 and if ... ♖c5 then 6.d3-d4, gaining precious time to develop. I don't dig much into the next moves since, as I mentioned, we'd go for 3... ♖fd7. [White could also try 4. ♖xe4 dxe4 5. d4 and now 5... exd3 6. ♕xd3 ♖c6= looks sensible.] 4... f6 5. ♖f3 [5. d3 ♖g5∞] 5... fxe5 6. d3 [6. ♖xe5!?] 6... ♖d6 [6... ♖f6!?] 7. ♖xe5 ♖d7



Position after: 7... ♖d7

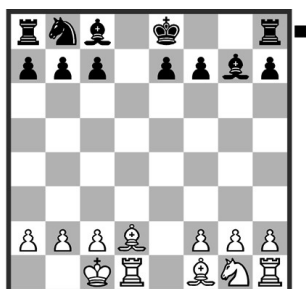
Smyslov, V (2595) – Albur, L (2505) Leningrad 1977. The position is about equal.

4. ♖ce2

This can become entertaining, in contrast with the dull 4.exf6.

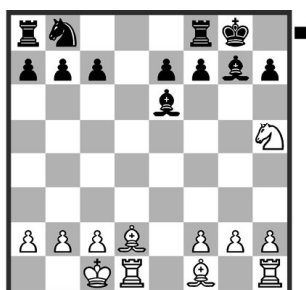
The capture 4. exf6 may lead directly to an equal endgame after 4... dxc3 5. fxg7 [alternatively 5. bxc3 exf6 is also about level] 5... cxd2+ 6. ♔xd2 [6. ♕xd2

♙xg7 is of course a quite decent option for White too. Practice has however shown he can't easily profit from his healthier pawn structure, and thus the position remains balanced.] 6... ♖xd2+ 7. ♙xd2 ♙xg7 8. 0-0-0



Position after: 8. 0-0-0

White scored three wins and 33 draws without defeat from this position when both belligerents were rated over 2400. So if you are ready to run the risk of getting bored in order to “play it safe” as White... Here you have a rather recent GM clash: 8... ♙f5 [8... ♘c6 is more frequent, since Black may prefer hiding his king on the other wing. We will soon see why.] 9. ♘e2 0-0?! [9... ♘c6!] 10. ♘g3 ♙e6 11. ♘h5±

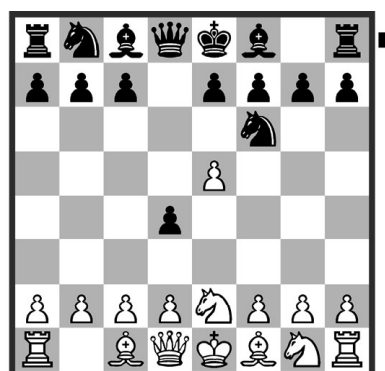


Position after: 11. ♘h5±

11... ♙xb2+ Otherwise 12. ♘f4 fol-

lowed by ♘d5 or ♙h6 could have been annoying, but the remedy is worse than the evil. 12. ♙xb2 ♙g4 13. ♖e1 ♙xh5 14. g4 ♙g6 15. h4 f6 16. h5 ♙f7 17. g5 ♖d8 18. ♙d3 fxg5 19. ♙xg5+— Because of Black's exposed king his opponent needed only 10 more moves to clinch victory in Plaskett, H (2445) – Vaganian, R (2577), World Team Ch 50+, Radebeul 2016.

After 4. ♘ce2 Black has three options.

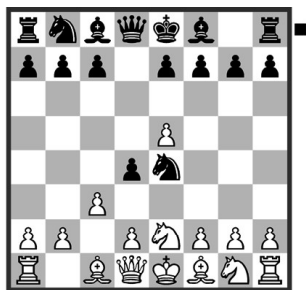


Position after: 4. ♘ce2

4... ♘g4!

A) 4... ♘fd7?! led to some typical nonsense in the ultrablitz game Mamedyarov, S (2767) – So, W (2767) chess.com 2019: 5. e6! ♘f6 6. exf7+ ♙xf7 7. ♘f3 ♘c6 White naturally stood much better at this point but, probably because of the fast time control, he lost the thread a few moves later.

B) Another sensible jump, namely 4... ♘e4, is borderline if White correctly replies 5. c3!.

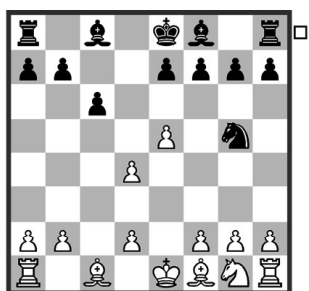


Position after: 5. c3!

5... ♘c6 [5... dxc3? is bad on account of the simple 6. bxc3 but it hides a trap: 6. ♔a4+ ♘d7 and now 7. ♕xe4? is erroneous due to ♘c5, but after 7. ♘xc3! White stands clearly on top and the biter is being bitten.]

B1) 6. cxd4 ♘g5∞

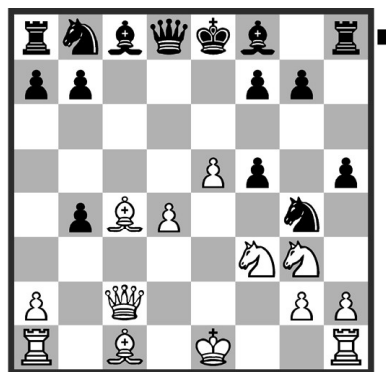
B2) 6. ♘xd4 ♘xd4 7. ♔a4+ c6 8. cxd4 ♘g5 or 8. ♕xd4 ♕xd4 9. cxd4 ♘g5



Position after: 9... ♘g5

Intending ...♘e6. In all those lines Black can claim a certain amount of compensation even if he doesn't recover his pawn in the near future, but is it really enough?

5. f4 c5 6. ♘f3 h5 7. b4 d3 8. ♘g3 dxc2 9. ♕xc2 cxb4 10. ♖c4 e6 11. f5 exf5 12. d4↑



Position after: 12. d4↑

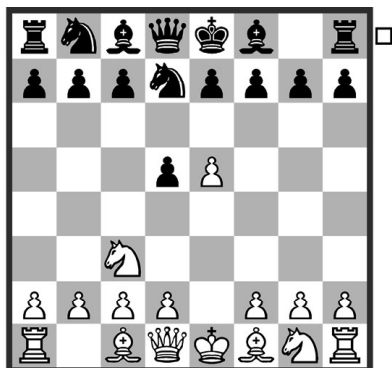
Ponkratov, P (2624) – Khismatullin, D (2679) Khanty-Mansiysk 2014.

What a change of picture compared to 3...d4 4.exf6 dxc3!.

Obviously the position after 6...h5 is quite rich and deviations for both sides are possible after every single move.

c) 2. ♘c3 d5 3. e5 ♘fd7

1. e4 ♘f6 2. ♘c3 d5 3. e5 ♘fd7

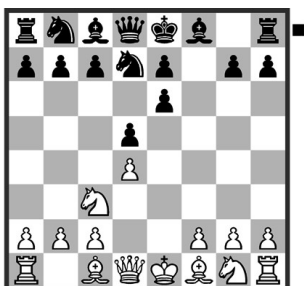


Position after: 3... ♘fd7

I suggest establishing this retreat as our main move.

4. d4

A) 4. e6 This gambit appeared for the first time in Mieses, J – Colle, E, Frankfurt 1930 according to my database. It is dangerous in practice because it leads to sharp positions, but from a theoretical standpoint Black is at least fine. 4... fxe6 5. d4



Position after: 5. d4

A1) 5... c5 I personally prefer to attack the white center at once.



Position after: 5... c5

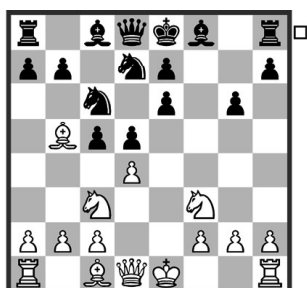
A1.1) 6. dxc5 is another attempt that was, however, skilfully neutralized by Black in the following encounter. 6... ♘c6 7. ♘f3 g6 8. ♘d4



Position after: 8. ♘d4

8... ♘db8! [Of course not 8... ♘xc5?? 9. ♘xc6 bxc6 10. ♔d4+-.] 9. ♘xc6 ♘xc6 10. ♙b5 ♙g7 11. ♙f3 In order to prevent ...0-0, but that doesn't really bother Black. 11... ♙d7 12. 0-0 ♘d4 ♠ Garbisu de Goni, U (2483) – Del Rio de Angelis, S (2499) San Juan 2008.

A1.2) 6. ♘f3 ♘c6 7. ♙b5 g6



Position after: 7... g6

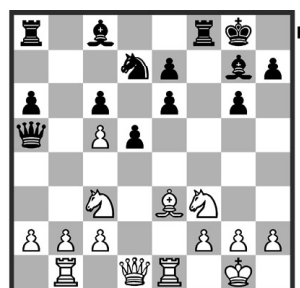
Black is about to continue ...♙g7 followed by ...0-0, with the better game. Although White has scored decently from this position, computer-assisted analysis shows that he is struggling to maintain the balance. Here are some variations to illustrate that assertion. 8. ♙e3 [8. 0-0 ♙g7 9. ♙xc6 bxc6 10. ♘g5 ♘f8 11. dxc5 h6 12. ♘f3 e5 This looked quite promising for Black in Borda, A – Varga, Z, Lodi 2006; 8. h4 ♙g7 9. ♙xc6 bxc6 10. ♘g5 ♘f6 11. h5 gxh5 12. ♙f4 0-0 Petenyi, T (2443) – Ivanchuk, V (2733) European Cup Novi Sad 2016. White's attack on the kingside is illusory and he has been overwhelmed in the center.] 8... ♙g7 9. dxc5 ♙a5!? [Instead, Black can also opt for ...a6, or 9... 0-0 10. 0-0 ♙c7, while 10... ♙a5 transposes into Hector – Sergeev, see 9... ♙a5, 11. ♖e1 ♘de5 12. ♘d4

(see analysis diagram next column)



Position after: 12. ♘d4

12... ♘g4!! – rather than 12... ♙d7 Hector, J – Madsen, D, Copenhagen 1996 – 13. ♙xg4 ♘xd4 14. ♙xd4 ♖f4 10. 0-0 0-0 11. ♖b1 a6 12. ♙xc6 bxc6 13. ♖e1.



Position after: 13. ♖e1

In Hector, J – Sergeev, V, Berlin 1995, Black now opted for 13... ♙c7, but he could also have tried 13... ♖b8 in order to deny his opponent the answer ♘xd5 when ...e6-e5 comes. 14. ♙d4 ♖xf3 15. ♙xg7 ♖f5 With ...e6-e5 or ... ♙c7 to follow, depending on what White does.

A2) 5... ♘f6 looks playable too. 6. ♘f3 g6 7. h4 From the white perspective this should come as a reflex, or at