

Jerzy Konikowski
Uwe Bekemann

Openings

The English

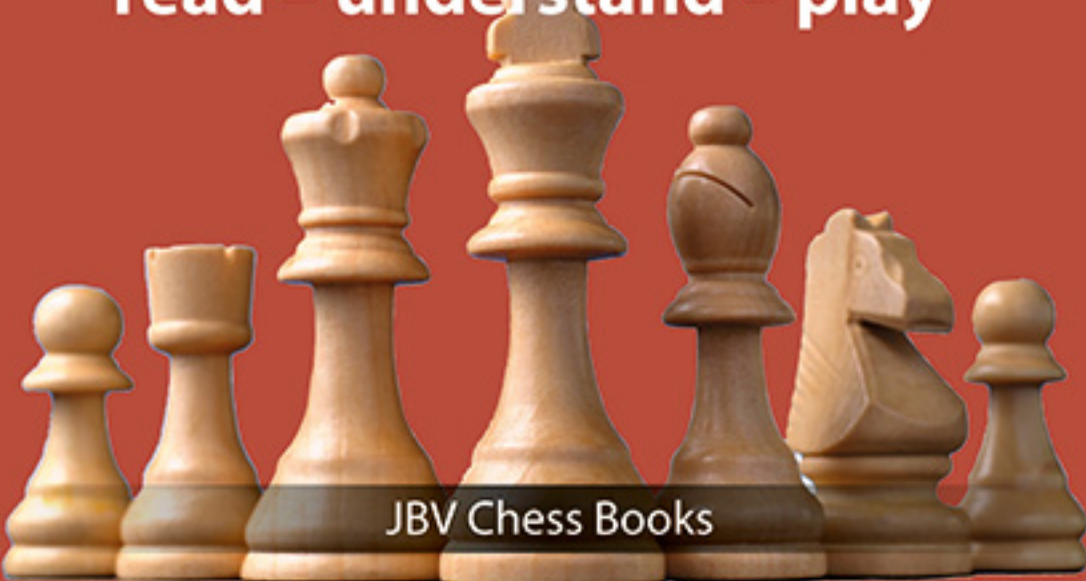
Opening

Volume 2

The continuations

1.c4 e5 and 1.c4 ♞f6

read – understand – play



JBV Chess Books

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Preface

The *English Opening* can arise if White plays c2-c4 in one of the first moves, which often only happens in a different move order, for example after 1.♘f3. This possibility already indicates the flexibility that White gains by choosing this opening.

In this context, it's also important to point out the many possibilities of transposing to other openings, such as the *Queen's Gambit* or the *King's Indian Defense* and even certain lines of the *Sicilian Defense*.

Black's main answers are 1...c5, 1...e5 and 1...♞f6. We first intended to cover the entire opening in a single book and began with the continuation 1...c5, the so-called *English Symmetrical Variation*. However, we soon realized that given the depth of explanation, we would not be able to accommodate the three main continuations in one book.

We have therefore decided to divide the material into two volumes. This second volume covers the systems after 1.c4 e5 and 1.c4 ♞f6, while the first volume was focused on the Symmetrical Variation 1.c4 c5.

Since most books on opening theory are aimed at advanced players, learners can quickly become overwhelmed. With this work we continue our series based on the motto 'read – understand – play', which is aimed at the less experienced player.

For this reason, we have once again attached great importance to presenting the ideas and plans associated with an opening. Basically, in the main lines every move relevant to understanding the opening paths is explained. We want our readers to know why they are playing a move and why exactly this move is appropriate right now. This approach serves to enable them to play their openings in their own games with sense and reason.

As usual in this series, we have based our work on the specific needs of the following groups of players:

- Beginners who already know all the rules and can handle them correctly, who know the basics of strategy and tactics and now need the basic equipment for the world of openings.
- Players who already have some experience but feel a deficit, especially in the opening, and who want to fill this gap quickly and with limited effort.
- Recreational players who simply want to play a solid opening and reach a position that allows them to play interesting and entertaining chess.

In the future, you will be able to use the systems presented well in your own games, based on the understanding you have built or further developed through studying the material provided.

Wherever possible, we looked for promising options that have not yet been played very often in tournament practice. However, we want to provide our readers not only with ideas that will force their opponents to solve problems over the board, but also with standard ideas that they can regularly apply in specific positions.

And of course we have looked at the overall material from *both* perspectives so that the reader can apply it with both the white and black pieces.

We hope you enjoy our book and wish you entertaining and successful games! If we can help a little to achieve your goals, then our work has paid off.

Part 1

1.c4 e5

Introduction

This introduction shows the structure of the first part and covers some side lines.

1.c4 e5

With his first move, White takes control of the central square on d5 and conquers some space on the queen-side, while Black takes control of the square on d4.

2.♖c3

In addition to the main line, Black also has to reckon with the alternatives 2.g3, 2.♗f3 and 2.b3.

The rare continuations 2.d3 and 2.e3 have little independent significance, as a different move order often leads back to the main line. And even if the game continues in an individual way, Black has little trouble equalizing with “natural opening moves”.

I. 2.g3 is discussed in detail in **Line 1**.

II. 2.♗f3 plays only a minor role. Black can either accept the invitation to push his e-pawn or protect it with 2...♗c6, which transposes to lines that will be discussed later.

2...e4 3.♗d4

A) With 3...♗c6 Black shows that he is not afraid of a doubled pawn.

A1) After 4.♗xc6, Black should reply 4...dxc6, even if this ignores the learn-

er's rule that taking towards the center is usually better. One of the positive effects is the activation of the queen on the d-line. Another advantage is that 2 pawn islands are less vulnerable than 3 after 4...bxc6 etc.

By choosing 5.d4, White can use his options most directly.

(However, 5.♗c3 or 5.e3 are also playable. After 5.♗c3 and the possible continuation 5...♗f6 6.d4 exd3 7.exd3 ♗c5 8.♗e2 0-0 9.0-0 ♖e8 10.♗f4 ♗f5 11.♗d2 ♗d7 12.♗ad1 ♗ad8, Black has an excellent position.)

With 5...exd3 Black effectively limits the opponent's options in the center.

6.exd3 ♗e7

The knight is on his way to White's weak square on d4.

(Unlike after 5.♗c3, when the ♗e4 still had to be covered, 6...♗f6 makes less sense here. With 7.♗c3, White could transpose to the according line.)

Now both sides can activate their troops with natural moves such as 7.♗d2 ♗f5 8.♗e2 ♗d4 9.0-0 ♗e7 10.♗c3 0-0 11.♖e1 ♖e8=.

A2) 4.e3

Unlike after 3...♗f6, this move is appropriate here to cover the ♗d4.

4...♗xd4 5.exd4

Already after only 5 moves a rather strange and not very harmonious position has arisen. Although White's pawn position is no longer intact, it's currently more influential.

A2a) 5...♗f6

This development combines the rapid development with the fight for the d5 square.

6.♘c3 c6 7.d5

Before Black can use his influence over d5, White occupies this square.

7...cxd5 8.cxd5 ♖c5 9.d4

(9.♞c2 0-0 10.♙e2 ♜e8 11.0-0 d6 12.d3 ♙f5 13.♙g5 ♜c8=)

9...exd3 10.♙xd3 0-0 11.0-0 h6

Even if White currently has a slight advantage, the practical chances are equal. After 12.a3, for example, Black should prevent the planned advance b2–b4 with 12...a5, and after the following moves 13.h3 d6 14.♙d2 ♜e8 15.♞f3 ♙d7 16.♞ab1 ♜c8 the game is equal.

A2b) 5...♞f6!? leads to interesting complications, as after 6.d5, Black can occupy the diagonal a7–g1 with 6...♙c5.

With 7.♞e2 White combines the protection of his ♙f2 with an attack on the ♙e4, and after 7...♞g6 8.♘c3 ♘f6 9.d3 it can no longer be defended.

After 9...0-0 10.dxe4 ♘g4, Black has gained the initiative as compensation for the sacrificed pawn. The upcoming complications are also shaped by the fact that White's king is still in the center.

After 11.♘d1 (11.f3 ♘f2+) 11...d6 there is no way around 12.h3 or 12.f3. In both cases, White is exposed to a strong attack: e.g. 12.f3 ♜e8 13.fxg4 ♙xg4 14.♞d3 ♜xe4+ 15.♙e3 ♜ae8+ etc.

B) The doubled pawns in question usually also occur after the less frequently used alternative 3...♘f6, because Black can hardly accept the strong ♘d4 for a long time.

B1) 4.♘c3

B1a) The usual continuation 4...♘c6 is followed by 5.♘xc6 dxc6 with a transition to the line after 3...♘c6 4.♘xc6 dxc6 5.♘c3 ♘f6.

B1b) 4...c5 looks plausible, but is weaker. This continuation brings a touch of the Symmetrical Variation into play, which we covered in our book *Openings - English Opening, Volume 1, Symmetrical Variation, read – understand – play*, Joachim Beyer Verlag 2024.

5.♘c2 d5

(After 5...♘c6 6.d3 exd3 7.♞xd3± White is already better. After 8...♙e7 or 8...d6 he moves his e-pawn to the center, and 7...♘e5 allows the continuation 8.♞g3 d6 9.e4 etc.)

And after 6.cxd5 ♘xd5 7.♘xe4± followed by g2–g3, ♙f1–g2 and 0-0, Black does not have enough compensation for the pawn.

B2) 4.e3 has little practical significance. After 4...c5 5.♘b3 d5!? (5...b5!?) 6.cxd5 ♘xd5, Black is close to equalization. The game could plausibly continue with 7.♙b5+ ♙d7 8.♙xd7+ ♞xd7 9.d4 exd3 10.♞xd3 ♘c6= and Black is fine.

III. Since 2.b3 occurs only in around 0.4% of all games, it is sufficient for Black to prepare a standard treatment.

2...♘c6 is the easiest. Black simply protects his e5-pawn.

After 3.♙b2 ♘f6, the move 4.e3 has two advantages: The pawn controls the d4 square and the ♙f1 can be developed.

4...d5

(Another plan is 4...♖e7 followed by 0-0, d7–d6, ♜f8–e8 etc.)

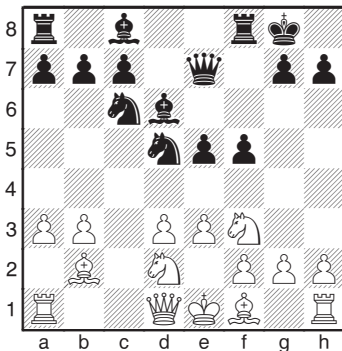
After 5.cxd5 ♘xd5, White most often continues with 6.a3 so that the push b3-b4 becomes an option.

6...♙d6 7.d3

White denies Black access to e4 and clears the d2 square for the transfer of the ♘b1 to the c4 square.

7...0-0 8.♗f3

Black can continue actively by putting the queen on e7 and advance the f-pawn to f5: e.g. 8...♕e7 9.♘bd2 f5.



After 10.♗c4, the e-pawn is sufficiently protected, so that Black can play 10...b5 to force the exchange 11.♗xd6 cxd6 with largely equal chances, even if Black has a little more space. After 12.g3 ♖b7, Black can consider the interesting idea of transferring his ♗c6 to f7 via d8 in order to support the push g7-g5 and create active play on the kingside.

2...♗f6

This is clearly the main line, although we will also deal with the alternatives 2...♗c6, 2...d6, 2...f5 and 2...♖b4 in separate lines. In this introduction, we

will also look at the continuations 2...♗c5 and 2...c6. The material is therefore structured as follows:

I. 2...♗c6 3.g3 (Line 2)

It should be noted that 2...♗c6 often leads to other main lines by transposition of moves.

II. 2...d6 (Line 3)

III. 2...f5 (Line 4)

IV. 2...♖b4 (Line 5)

But first we will continue with **Line V** – 2...♗c5 and **Line VI** – 6...c6.

V. The continuation 2...♗c5 is not really in Black's favor.

A) 3.♗f3

The simplest. White immediately puts the e-pawn under pressure and intends to use the vulnerably placed bishop on c5 for attacking motifs.

With 3...d6, Black avoids a complicated line that could arise after 3...♗c6 4.♗xe5!?

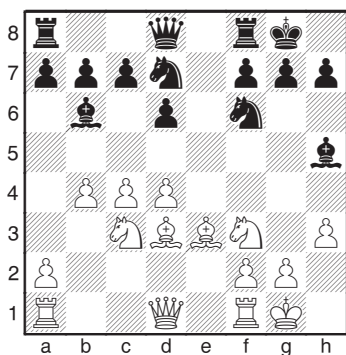
After 4.e3, Black can no longer prevent the advance d2–d4 or at least make it more difficult. With 4...♗f6 he simply continues his development.

5.d4 exd4 6.exd4 ♖b6 7.♙d3

(7.♕e2+ to prevent Black from castling may be tempting. However, after 7...♕e7 8.♕xe7+ ♔xe7, this approach can hardly pose any problems; e.g. 9.♙d3 ♙g4 10.♙e3 ♗c6± followed by ♜h8–e8 and Black can complete the mobilization of his forces.)

With 7...♗g4 Black pins the ♘f3 and disrupts the free development of White's forces. The bishop cannot easily be pushed back, as White is planning to castle kingside.

After 8.0-0 0-0 both sides are close to completing their development. Supported by his space advantage, White has gained a slight advantage. A possible continuation is 9.♗e3 ♘bd7 10.h3 ♗h5 11.b4.



After 11...c6±, White's space advantage is obvious, but Black has a solid position.

B) Black must also reckon with the equally logical response 3.g3 followed by the fianchetto of the king's bishop.

B1) 3...♘f6

Simple and good. The knight is activated and clears the way for castling.

4.♗g2 0-0 5.e3

White follows a plan with the king's knight on e2, short castling and the option of playing d2–d4 at an appropriate moment. Black can react with standard opening moves.

(Another typical and frequently played line is 5.♘f3 ♗c6 6.0-0 d6 7.d3 h6 8.a3

a5 with an equal position. In practice, White has had very good experiences with the strategy of slowly expanding his position with the subsequent moves e2–e3, b2–b3 and h2–h3 while keeping it rock solid. Black can try to continue his development with ♗f8–e8 and ♗c8–f5 or ♗c8–g4.)

5...♘c6 6.♗ge2 ♗e8 7.0-0 d6

Now the ♗c8 can be used flexibly on the c8–h3 diagonal – e.g. with ♗g4 followed by the elimination of the ♘e2.

After 8.d4 (8.a3!? ♗b2–b4) 8...♗b6, Black has a solid structure.

B2) 3...♘e7 with the idea of not blocking the f-pawn has rarely been played. White can react with the same setup as after 3...♘f6. For example, the following development can occur (our comments on the line after 3...♘f6 can be consulted):

4.♗g2 d6 5.e3 ♘bc6 6.♗ge2 a6 7.0-0 0-0 8.a3 (8.d4!?) 8...♗a7

Black expects the push b2–b4.

9.b4 ♗e6 10.♘d5 ♗d7 and as after 3...♘f6, Black has also reached a solid position here.

VI. 2...c6 is playable, but not recommended. This is especially true for the inexperienced player, as Black does not have an easy time in the fight for equality and often cannot achieve it. With the colors reversed, the position is known from the Alapin Variation of the Sicilian Defense. If White allows it, Black can soon follow up with the push d7–d5.

White most often reacts with 3.♘f3, after which the game can continue with 3...d6 4.d4 ♘d7

(4...exd4?! 5.♘xd4 gives White a clear development advantage.)

A) 5.e4

This is clearly the most popular move. It increases the influence on the center, prepares the activation of the ♗f1 and prevents Black's d-pawn from advancing. Black will develop the king's bishop to the center and castle king-side. The main line usually begins with 5...♘g6.

(The rarely played 5...g6!? also deserves attention, although Black has two problems in particular to solve. How can the knight and the bishop be developed? In the case of a cemented center, the bishop from g7 will hit a brick wall for the time being. And the knight on f6 would just be disturbing the harmony. The solution can be the maneuver ♘g8–h6–f7, followed by positioning the bishop on the diagonal c1–h6; e.g. 6.♗e2 ♗g7 7.0-0 ♘h6 8.d5 c5 9.♗d2 f6.

Up to this point, White has advanced his development with natural moves. His further action can be based on a plan for the queenside. It begins with 10.a3 to prepare the advance b2–b4. Black cannot easily prevent it with a7–a5, as this would lead to a serious weakening of the light squares – in particular the b5 square.

10...♘f7 11.♔c2 0-0 12.b4 ♗h6∞

The computer sees a clear advantage for White and in fact his position is actually more free due to his space advantage. However, the tournament results confirm Black's good practical chances.)

6.♗e2 ♗e7 7.0-0 0-0

Now the essential structure has emerged. While Black's position is cramped and he has difficulty activating his forces, White can develop more freely. The results from practice confirm that Black is in a difficult position; e.g. 8.♖e1 ♖e8 9.♗f1 ♗f8 10.d5±.

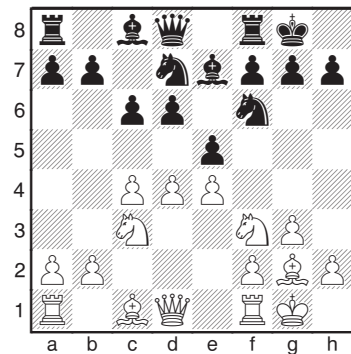
B) 5.g3 gives Black more room to breathe after 5...♘g6.

(Black should not give up the tension in the center with 5...exd4, because the disappearance of his e-pawn would only free White's play after e.g. 6.♘xd4 g6 7.♗g2 ♗g7 8.0-0±. White can develop his second bishop to f4 and push his e-pawn.)

6.♗g2

This confirms the value of the blockade after 5.e4 (instead of 5.g3 in this line). The push 6...e4 initiates a continuation from which White cannot easily deviate.

(Omitting e5–e4, e.g. 6...♗e7 7.0-0 0-0, improves White's chances, as he can continue with 8.e4.



Black has several options, but we will concentrate on the most frequently played move 8...a6. If White allows it,

Line 7

The continuation 4.e3

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.♗f3 ♗c6 4.e3

White wants to play d2-d4 at some point and build a strong center by taking back with the e-pawn in case of an exchange on d4.

4...♗b4

With this mostly played move, Black wants to increase the pressure on the central squares. At the same time, he intends to take c3 at a favorable moment. Alternatives worth considering are 4...♗e7, 4...d5 and 4...d6.

I. With 4...♗e7, Black strives for a quick and undisturbed development.

A) 5.d4 exd4

(5...d6 would lead to the line 4...d6 5.d4 ♗e7 by transposition of moves.)

6.♗xd4

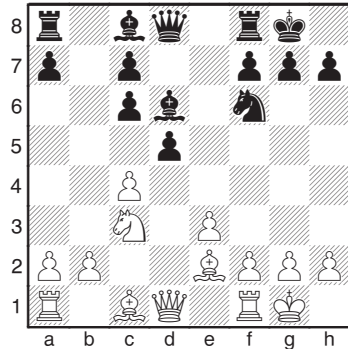
(White usually decides against 6.exd4, because 6...d5 7.cxd5 ♗xd5 is considered positive for Black.)

6...0-0 7.♗e2 d5

(The serious alternative 7...♗b4 leads to a position from the line with 5.d4 (as an alternative to the main move 5.♖c2) 6.♗xd4 0-0 7.♗e2 with Black to move. The explanations from there can be used as a guide. After the possible line 8.0-0 ♗xc3 9.bxc3 d6, Black would be perfectly fine.)

White mostly uses the opportunity to damage the opponent's pawn position with 8.♗xc6 and after 8...bxc6 9.0-0,

Black can improve the position of his bishop with 9...♗d6. However, this move also has a special effect, which will become apparent after the exchange on d5.



A1) 10.cxd5 cxd5 11.b3

(11.♗xd5?? would of course be a terrible mistake, because after 11...♗xd5 12.♖xd5 ♗xh2+ →, White could resign.)

A plausible continuation could be 11...c6 12.♗b2 ♖c7 13.g3 ♗h3 14.♖e1 ♖fe8= etc.

A2) If White chooses the fianchetto setup on the queenside, Black can go for a draw with 10.b3 ♖e7 11.♗b2 dxc4 12.♗xc4 ♗g4.

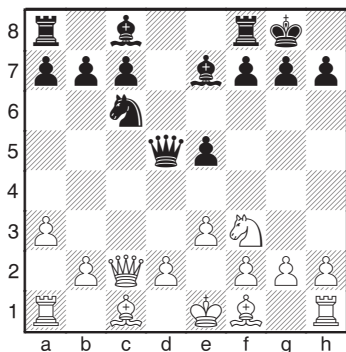
Now the only defense is 13.g3 (13.h3?? ♖e5→) and after 13...♗xh2 14.♗xh2 ♖h4+ 15.♗g1 ♗xg3 16.fxg3 ♖xg3+, Black has a perpetual check.

B) Another option is 5.a3 0-0.

B1) After 6.♖c2, Black secures the best chances with 6...d5.

(6...d6 and 6...♖e8 are more difficult to handle for inexperienced players, since Black accepts a more passive role for the time being.)

7.cxd5 ♖xd5 8.♖xd5 ♔xd5



With 9.♗d3 White can develop his bishop with a threat.

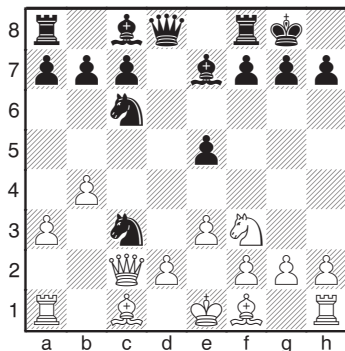
(9.♗c4 ♔d6 10.b4 ♗f6 11.♖b1 ♖d8 12.0-0 a6 13.h3 ♗e6 14.♗xe6 ♔xe6=)

The best answer is 9...♔h8, after which White cannot take on h7 because of the reply g7–g6. By moving the king out of the diagonal a2–g8, Black also prepares the push f7–f5.

(9...g6 is rarely chosen, but also playable. If Black does not want to advance his f-pawn, the king can also remain on the a2–g8 diagonal; e.g. 10.0-0 a5 (to prevent b2-b4) 11.♗c4 ♔d6 12.b3 ♗e6 13.♗b2 ♖ad8= and Black keeps the balance.)

After 10.b4, Black can immediately play his trump card 10...f5, and now the possible continuation 11.♗b2 e4 12.♗c4 ♔d6 13.♖d4 a5 14.♖xc6 ♔xc6= leads to a very interesting position that promises an exciting duel.

B2) The most energetic response to 6.b4 is the central push 6...d5, after which the game can take the course 7.cxd5 ♖xd5 8.♗c2 ♖xc3.



After the only move 9.dxc3 (9.♗xc3?? e4+ ♗e7–f6) the reason why the queen has left the d-line becomes clear – to avoid her exchange.

After 9...♗e6 10.♗d3 only the push 10...f5∞ is played in practice.

II. 4...d5

The early opening of the center leads to considerable complications.

5.cxd5 ♖xd5 6.♗b5

With this pin, White threatens the e5 pawn. Before Black can protect it with his king's bishop, he must first clear the situation of his ♖d5.

6...♖xc3 7.bxc3 ♗d6 8.d4

This position has been played many times, always with more success for White. This underlines that Black must play precisely in order to stay in the game.

The most important continuations are 8...e4, 8...♗d7 and 8...exd4.

A) 8...e4

A1) 9.♖d2

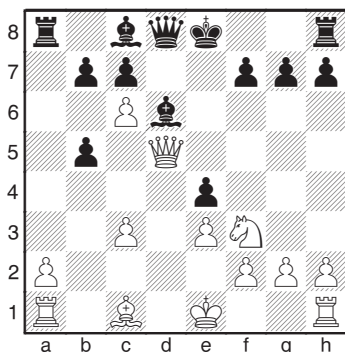
After 9...♗g5, White must pay attention to the fact that the queen is not only attacking g2, but also the ♗b5.

The most constructive solution is the retreat 10.♔f1 followed by a fianchetto setup.

After 10...♖g6 11.g3 0-0 12.♔g2∞, the unbalanced position cannot be clearly assessed. The key points of the further battle are in Black's hands, who can expand his active options with the advance 12...f5, after which the game can continue with 13.0-0 ♜e7 14.c4 c5 15.♙b2 ♜c6∞ etc.

A2) 9.d5 leads to a sharper fight, which Black does not need to fear. White's idea is that after 9...a6 10.dxc6 axb5 he does not move his knight, but continues with the counter attack 11.♖d5.

(If he abandons the idea associated with his 9th move and saves the knight, for example with 11.♜d2, the reply 11...♖g5+ leads to a clear advantage for Black.)



After 11...exf3 12.cxb7 ♙xb7 13.♖xb5+ c6 14.♖xb7 0-0-+, it becomes clear that White can no longer hold the game. We will prove this with the following line: 15.♖xc6 ♙e5 16.♙d2 fxg2 17.♖xg2 ♖d3 18.♖f1 ♖d5 19.f3 ♜fd8 20.♖e2 ♜ab8-+ etc.

B) 8...♙d7 leads to a much quieter game; e.g. 9.0-0

(9.e4 ♙e7 10.0-0 0-0= etc. also leads to an equal position.)

After 9...0-0, White has several options, but in practice, the most common continuation is 10.♙xc6 ♙xc6 11.dxe5 ♙xf3 12.♖xf3 ♙xe5 13.♙a3 ♜e8 14.♖xb7=. The easiest way for Black to keep the balance is now 14...♙xc3 15.♜ac1 ♙a5 16.♜fd1 ♖f6.

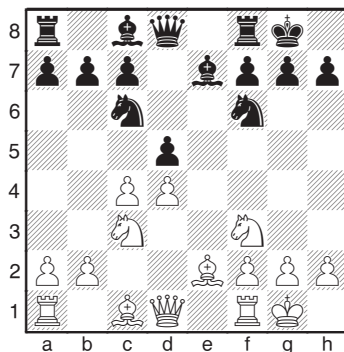
C) 8...exd4 9.cxd4 0-0 10.0-0± would be favorable for White, whose central pawns can become powerful weapons.

III. With the quiet continuation 4...d6, Black voluntarily accepts a somewhat passive role, imprisoning his king's bishop. However, after the natural move 5.d4, he can possibly steer the game in the direction of the King's Indian Defense.

A) 5...♙e7

A1) After 6.♙e2 0-0 7.0-0, Black can reduce the lack of space in his camp with 7...exd4.

A1a) 8.exd4 d5∞



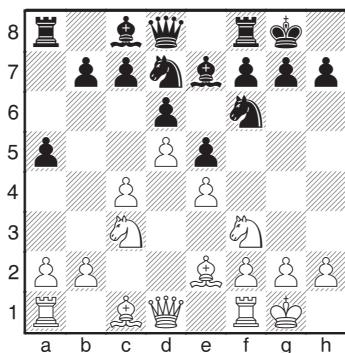
The position has developed a more open character. It is also known from the French Defense, but with Black to move. In modern tournament practice, Black achieves good results with ♖c8–g4. White mostly continues with 9.♗e5.

(Another possibility is 9.h3 followed by 9...dxc4 10.♗xc4 h6 11.♗f4 ♗d6 12.♗e5 ♗f5 13.♖e1 ♗d7∞. White has more space and is more active. Black, however, has a compact position and sufficient potential for his counterattack, which he can pursue, for example, with ♗d7–b6 and ♗f5–e6.)

9...dxc4 10.♗xc6 bxc6 11.♗xc4 ♗d5∞ etc.

A1b) 8.♗xd4 can be followed by 8...♗xd4 9.♖xd4 (9.exd4 d5=) 9...c6 etc.

A2) After 6.d5 ♗b8, White's standard setup is e2–e4, ♗f1–e2 and 0-0. Black also castles and then must focus on activating his forces on the queenside and organizing his counterplay; e.g. 7.e4 0-0 8.♗e2 ♗bd7 9.0-0 a5. Let's have a look at two possible continuations.



With 10.h3 White prepares ♗c1–e3 without being disturbed by ♗f6–g4.

(The immediate 10.♗e3 allows 10...♗g4, but after 11.♗d2 ♗c5 12.h3 ♗f6, Black has no profit worth mentioning. The position after 11.♖c2 differs from that after 10.h3 only in the placement of White's queen's bishop. Black can proceed according to the pattern ♗f6–e8 ♗f7–f5 or try a different approach with 13...c6∞.)

After 10...♗c5 the knight has found an effective position and forces White to protect the e4 pawn.

11.♖c2 b6

After the queen's wing has been secured, Black can initiate his counterplay on the other side. After 12.♗e3, he can prepare the push f7–f5 with 12...♗e8∞. The opponents are facing a double-edged battle.

B) 5...g6 can lead to positions that resemble the King's Indian; e.g. 6.♗e2.

(Since 6.b3 is rarely played, it has the potential to surprise. After 6...♗g7 7.dxe5, Black avoids an exchange of queens with 7...♗d7.

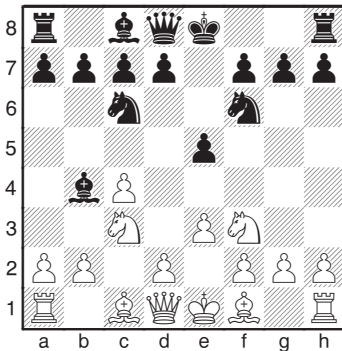
After 8.♗b2 ♗dxe5 9.♗e2 0-0 10.0-0 ♖e8 11.♖d2∞, Black's setup is somewhat cramped in terms of space and designed for a later counterattack. The position is unclear and offers opportunities for both opponents; e.g. 11...♗g4 12.♗xe5 ♗xe5 13.f3 ♗e6 14.e4 g5 15.♖ad1 ♗g6 etc.)

6...♗g7 7.0-0

(The line 7.dxe5 ♗xe5 8.♗xe5 dxe5 9.♖xd8+ ♗xd8 leads to considerable simplifications. Although Black's position looks uncomfortable, it's defen-

sible. After, for example, 10.b3 ♖e6 11.♗a3 ♖c8, Black has everything under control. With ♖c8–c7 he can prepare the activation of his ♖a8.)

After 7...0-0 8.d5 ♖e7 9.e4 ♗d7, the starting position of the Classical System of the King's Indian Defense is reached.



5.♖c2

This move at this very moment is logical in several respects. White prevents the advance e5–e4 and can take back with the queen in the event of ♗b4xc3. However, he has a range of alternatives, in particular 5.♗d5, 5.d4, 5.♗e2 und 5.♖b3.

I. The early operation in the center 5.♗d5 is very popular and Black must play precisely to equalize.

Black can either move the attacked bishop or attack the ♗f3.

A) 5...e4 is favored in practical games and also by engines.

White can either move his knight or first take the ♗b4.

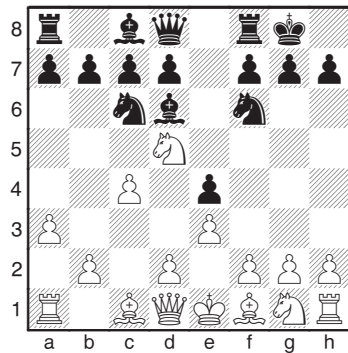
6.♗g1 is the right reaction, even if the knight's retreat to its original square

may hurt. However, the alternatives are even more painful.

(– 6.♗xb4 ♗xb4 to divert Black's knight from d4 is understandable, but not sufficient. After 7.♗d4, White has avoided the retreat to g1, but after 7...c5 the knight has to move again. After 8.♗b5 d5, Black has a clear advantage. White has to watch out for his square on d3.

– 6.♗d4? fails tactically in view of the continuation 6...♗xd5 7.cxd5 ♗xd4 8.exd4+ etc.)

6...0-0 7.a3 ♗d6



Here too, the bishop is temporarily well parked on d6. Our comments on the situation early in the line after 5.♗d5 ♗d6 can be consulted.

8.♖c2

(The good alternative 8.d3 can be followed by the plausible continuation 8...exd3 9.♗xd3 ♗e5 10.♗xf6+ ♖xf6 11.♗e4. By taking on f6, White has ensured that his bishop can advance to e4. Both sides can now concentrate on their further development.

After 11...♖e8 12.♖c2, the queen protects the ♗e4 and Black parries the

Part 2

Introduction

1.c4 ♖f6

This answer allows both sides to handle the opening in a flexible way. The next moves will determine whether the English Opening is reached, as it is also possible that the game will continue with the Queen's Gambit or one of the Indian systems instead.

2.♗c3

This is the main continuation. The alternatives 2.g3 followed by 2...c5 or 2...e5 and 2.♗f3 c5 can lead to lines that we have discussed in **Volume I** or in **Part 1** of this volume.

2...e6

Black can now follow two central ideas. On the one hand, he can play in the center with d7–d5 or c7–c5, and on the other hand, he can activate the king's bishop with ♗f8–b4.

Two important alternatives are 2...g6 and 2...d5.

I. 2...g6 with the typical development 3.g3 ♗g7 4.♗g2 0-0 5.e4 d6 6.d4 leads to the King's Indian Defense. We have covered this opening in our book *Openings, King's Indian Defense, read-understand-play*, Joachim Beyer Verlag 2019.

II. 2...d5 will be discussed in **Line 1**.

3.e4

This approach is known as the Flohr-Mikenas system.

The popular alternative 3.♗f3 will be examined in **Line 2**. Black then has the choice between two main directions: for 3...♗b4 see **Line 2A**, for 3...b6 see **Line 2B**.

Black has two good continuations:

I. 3...d5 (**Line 3**)

II. 3...c5 (**Line 4**)

Line 1

The continuation 2...d5

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘c3 d5

3.d4 would steer the game to a position from the Grünfeld-Indian Defense.

3.e3 e6 4.d4 would lead to the Queen's Gambit, which we analyzed in our book *Openings, Queen's Gambit, read-understand-play*, Joachim Beyer Verlag 2020.

3.cxd5 ♘xd5

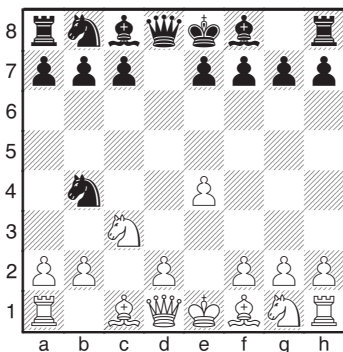
The two main continuations are discussed in separate lines:

I. 4.♘f3 (Line 1A)

II. 4.g3 (Line 1B)

The alternatives 4.e4, 4.♖b3 and 4.♘xd5 also deserve some attention.

I. With 4.e4, White increases his influence in the center and accepts the weakening of the squares on d3 and d4, which Black can exploit with 4...♘b4.



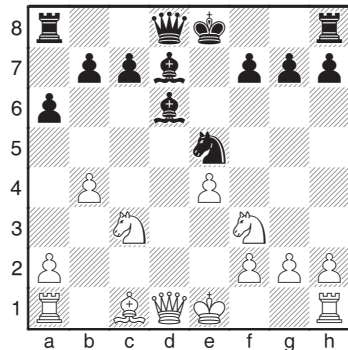
A) With 5.d3, White prevents ♘b4-d3+, but locks in the king's bishop.

After 5...c5 the ♘b4 can retreat to c6 without blocking the c-pawn.

(5...e5!? is also playable.)

After 6.a3 ♘4c6, the game can continue according to the pattern 7.♘f3 ♘g4 8.♙e2 e6 9.0-0 ♙e7 10.♙e3 0-0 11.♖c1 ♘d7=. After Black has managed to develop his forces flexibly, he has good prospects.

B) After the alternative 5.♖a4+ followed by the natural moves 5...♘8c6 6.♙b5 a6 7.♙xc6+ ♘xc6, Black has the bishop pair. Both sides should now concentrate on continuing their development quickly; e.g. 8.♘f3 ♙d7 9.d4 e5 10.dxe5 ♘xe5 11.♖d1 ♙d6= with an equal position.



White can continue with 12.♙f4.

The alternative line 12.♘xe5 ♙xe5 13.♙e3 0-0 14.0-0 ♙c6= is known from practice and still offers a lot of room for developing own ideas. The practical chances are more or less equal.

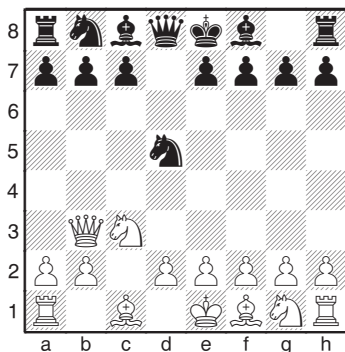
C) 5.♙c4 ♘d3+ 6.♙e2 has also been tried several times, although we would not recommend it to the inexperienced player.

After 6...♘e5 7.♙b5+ c6 8.d4 ♘g6, the position is easier to play for Black.

(Or 8...cxb5 9.dxe5 ♙xd1+, and White also faces a more difficult task.)

After the exemplary further moves 9.♙c4 e5 10.♙b3 ♙c7=, the practical chances should be more or less equal, even if the computer sees Black as having a slight advantage.

II. The approach 4.♙b3 is harmless.



Black simply retreats with 4...♘b6.

(Another good answer is 4...♘xc3 with the possible continuation 5.dxc3 e5 6.♘f3 ♘d7 7.e4 ♙c5 etc.)

After the quiet development according to the pattern 5.♘f3 g6 6.g3 ♙g7 7.♙g2 0-0 8.d3 ♘c6 9.♙e3 e5 10.0-0, it pays off that Black also thought about his b-pawn when he retreated his knight on move 4. With 10...♙e6 he also activates his second bishop and drives away the white queen. After 11.♙c2 ♘d4 12.♙xd4 exd4 13.♘e4 ♙d5, he has good play.

III. 4.♘d5 is harmless, since Black easily obtains at least equal chances; e.g. 4...♙xd5 5.♘f3 e5 6.d3 ♘c6 7.g3 ♙e7 8.♙g2 0-0 9.0-0 ♙d6=.

Summary: After 2...d5, the most common continuations are 4.♘f3 (**Line 1A**) and 4.g3 (**Line 1B**). The alternatives 4.e4, 4.♙b3 and 4.♘d5 are no particular challenge for Black in the fight for equality.



Line 1A

The continuation 4.♘f3

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘c3 d5 3.cxd5 ♘xd5
4.♘f3

With this simple opening move, White keeps all doors open for his further actions.

4...g6

Black's best plan is the fianchetto of the king's bishop to put pressure on the center.

White now can choose among several alternatives.

5.♖a4+

This most popular continuation is based on the idea of moving the queen to the kingside via the 4th rank. The most important alternatives are 5.e4, 5.♖b3 and 5.g3.

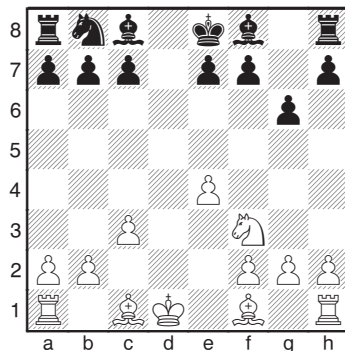
I. 5.e4

With this push, White asks the knight for a decision. This can either lead to the exchange of queens or to the transposition to a completely different opening.

5...♗xc3 6.dxc3

(After 6.bxc3, the game transposes to a position of the Grünfeld-Indian Defense, which is usually reached with the standard moves 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 etc. We will treat this opening in a subsequent volume.)

6...♖xd1+ 7.♙xd1



A) Black should continue with 7...f6 Δe7-e5, to keep the opponent's bishop away from the f4 square.

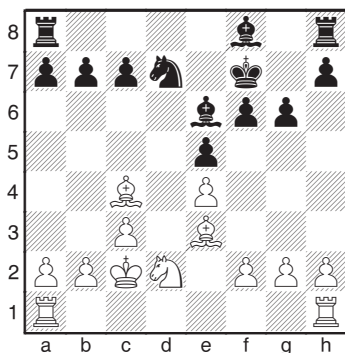
(After 7...♗g7 instead, White can effectively continue his development according to the pattern ♗c1–f4, ♙d1–c2 etc. and develop a certain initiative.)

8.♗e3

(The approach 8.h4 e5 9.h5 to weaken Black's position on the kingside is also interesting; e.g. 9...g5 10.♗e3 ♗d7 11.♘h2 and now the f-pawn can protect the e4 pawn. The knight on h2 is of course misplaced, but he can strive for a more active role via g4 or f1.)

After 11...♗c5 12.f3 ♗e6, Black can either castle long or put his king on f7.)

After 8...e5, Black has already almost achieved his goal of reaching the middle game with an equal position. While White continues to activate his troops, he should also reanimate his misplaced knight; e.g. 9.♗d2 ♗e6 10.♗c4 ♗f7 11.♙c2 ♗d7=.



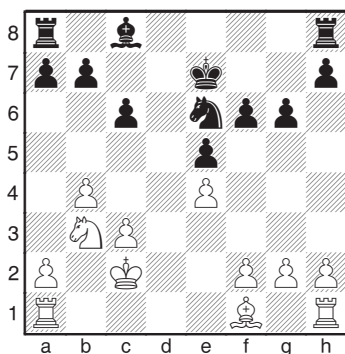
After the possible continuation 12.b4 ♗e7 13.♗xe6+ ♔xe6 14.♘c4 b5 15.♘a5 c5, the chances are still equal.

B) After 7...♘d7 White can play 8.♗f4, but this bishop can later be cut off with f7–f6 and e7–e5.

8...c6

(Another option is 8...♘c5!? with a counter attack on the e4 pawn; e.g. 9.♘d2 c6, ♖f7–f6, e7–e5.)

Now the game can continue with 9.♔c2 f6 10.♘d2 e5 11.♗e3 ♗c5 12.♗xc5 ♗xc5 13.b4 ♗e6 14.♘b3 ♔e7= with equal prospects.



Black leaves his king in the middle so that he can now participate in the battle.

II. 5.♙b3

White develops his queen and attacks the knight, although the position on b3 may later turn out to be vulnerable; e.g. 5...♘b6 6.d4.

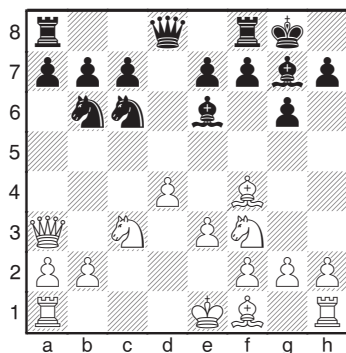
A) After 6...♗g7, the game can take the course 7.♗f4 0-0.

(7...♗e6 8.♙a3 0-0 is just another move order.)

8.e3 ♗e6 9.♙a3

(After 9.♙c2, the queen can later be attacked; e.g. 9...♘c6 10.♗e2 ♘b4 or also with ♗e6–f5.)

9...♘c6



(Another interesting development is 9...♘8d7 followed by the transfer of the queen to the queenside; e.g. 10.♗e2 c6 11.0-0 ♘c4 12.♙b4 ♙b6∞.)

A possible continuation is 10.♗e2 a5 11.0-0 ♘b4 12.♖fc1 c6 13.♗e5 ♗h6 with largely equal chances. However, playing with a locked up queen is not to everyone's liking.

B) 6...♗e6 may look tempting, but White obtains better play anyway.

B1) After 7.♙c2, the maneuver ♘b8–c6–b4 is nothing to be afraid of; e.g.