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Openings

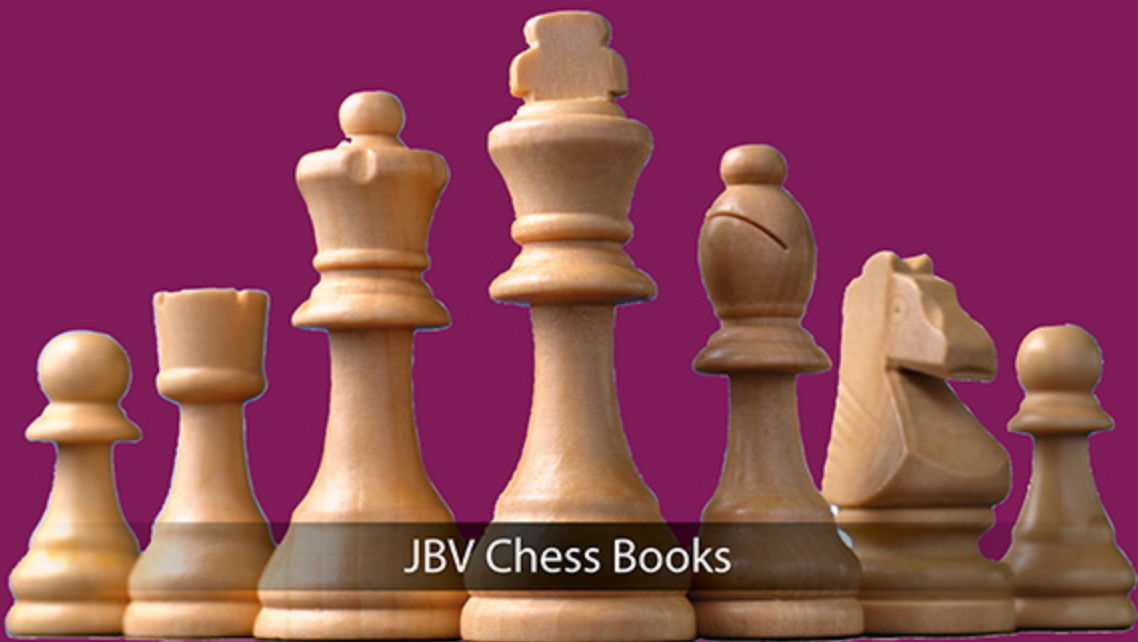
The English

Opening

Volume 1

Symmetrical Variation

read – understand – play



JBV Chess Books

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Explanation of Symbols

!	a good move
!!	an excellent move
?	a weak move
??	a blunder
!?	an interesting move
?!	a dubious move
+−	White has a decisive advantage
−+	Black has a decisive advantage
±	White is better
∓	Black is better
±	White is slightly better
∓	Black is slightly better
=	equal
∞	unclear
≡	with compensation for the material deficit
↑	with initiative
→	with attack
↔	with counter play
Δ	with the idea
⊂	better is
x	takes
+	check
#	mate

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 system 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. The first volume on the *Symmetrical Variation* with 1...c5 will be followed as soon as possible by the second volume which will cover the continuations 1...e5 and 1...♘f6.

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.

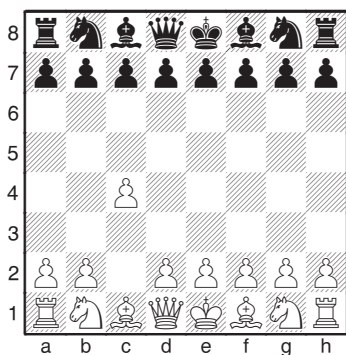
We hope you enjoy our book and wish you entertaining and successful games! If we can help a little to achieve your goals, then our work has paid off.

Introduction to the English Opening

1.c4

This move initiates the *English Opening*, the name of which goes back to a match that took place in 1843 between the Frenchman Pierre Charles Fourrier de Saint-Amant (1800–1872) and the Englishman Howard Staunton (1810–1874). In this match, Staunton used the then rare move 1.c4 no less than six times. However, its popularization only progressed from the 1920s.

One advantage of the opening 1.c4 is its flexibility. White does not occupy one of the central squares with a pawn, but rather influences the center with his c-pawn. As a result, the game can develop along the lines of the *English Opening* or transition to other systems, such as the *Queen's Gambit*, Indian systems and even certain areas of the *Sicilian Defense*.



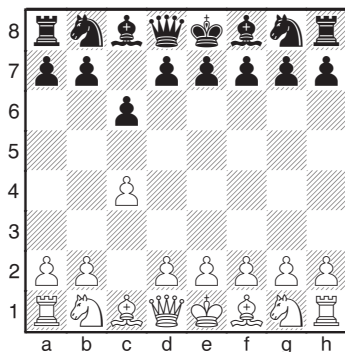
The three main continuations are covered in two volumes as follows:

Volume 1: 1...c5

Volume 2: 1...e5 and 1...d6

If the game does not (or not *directly*) follow the tracks of the main lines (which can also be reached later via different move orders), the following exemplary developments are possible.

1...c6 is an option for the player who wants to throw his opponent off the main lines. At the same time this move keeps open the possibility of a transition to other systems – in a range from the *Queen's Gambit* to the *Caro-Kann Defense*.



2.e4

(– The alternative 2.d4 d5 leads to the *Slav Defense*, which we have presented in detail in our book *Openings – The Queen's Gambit, read – understand – play*, Joachim Beyer Verlag 2020.

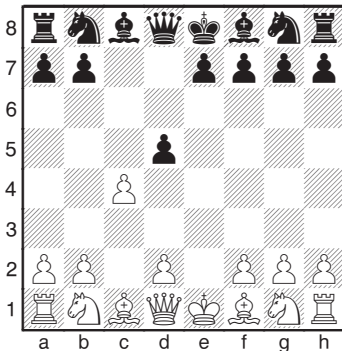
– 2.g3 can not only transition to different lines which will be discussed in this book, but also to systems covered in the book about the *Queen's Gambit*.

It is planned to present some further opening plans in the following volume.

– 2.♘f3 is the most frequently chosen option, after which the game regularly returns (by different move orders) to the lines and systems discussed.

2...d5 is the best and by far the most often chosen move, which leads to an immediate clarification of the situation in the center.

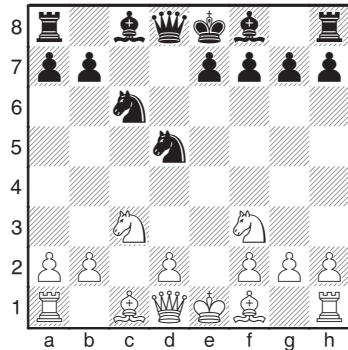
3.exd5 cxd5



After 4.cxd5 it becomes clear that White is ready, willing and able to play with an isolated queen's pawn.

(4.d4 transposes to the *Caro-Kann Defense*, more precisely to the *Panov Attack* after the further moves 4...♘f6 5.♘c3.)

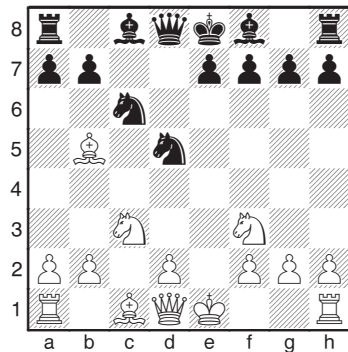
4...♘f6 5.♘c3 ♘xd5 6.♘f3 ♘c6



We are still in an area with positions that can also arise via other opening paths. However, this should not stop us from discussing them under the heading of "English Opening".

A) 7.♙b5 is played most often.

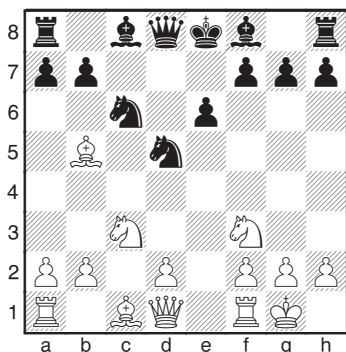
(For the alternatives 7.♙c4 and 7.d4 see lines **B** and **C**.)



7...e6 primarily serves to activate the ♙f8. However, this move can also clear the square on e7 for the ♘g8 if Black wants to fianchetto the ♙f8 and not block the diagonal with a knight on f6.

8.0-0

(8.d4 is just a different move order to reach the main line after 8...♙e7 9.0-0 etc.)



After the further normal opening moves 8...♗e7 9.d4 0-0 10.♖e1 ♗d7 the further path is not predetermined. However, Black has almost equalized and can basically wait and see how White intends to continue. After the frequently played continuation 11.♗d3 ♖c8 12.♗xd5 exd5 13.♗e5 ♗f6= Black can be happy with his solid position. The results from practice confirm that the chances are absolutely equal.

B) After 7.♗c4 ♗b6 8.♗b3 the bishop has reached an active diagonal with gain of tempo, but the black knight has also retained a lot of his energy. With 8...♗f5 Black can continue his development efficiently and secure roughly equal influence over the center.

9.d4 e6

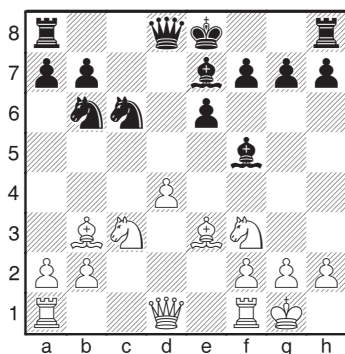
With this move Black stops the ♗d4 and clears the way for the ♗f8.

10.0-0 ♗e7 11.♗e3

White sticks to his intention of playing with the isolani and continues activating his troops while strengthening the vulnerable pawn.

(If White gets rid of the isolated pawn with 11.d5 exd5 12.♗xd5, he cannot hope for an advantage as the position

loses a lot of its potential. With the isolani off the board, the further development with 12...♗xd5 13.♗xd5 ♗xd5 14.♗xd5 0-0 already leads towards the endgame. With 15.♗xc6 bxc6, White can weaken his opponent's pawn structure, but after 16.♗e3 ♗fd8 the position is equal.)

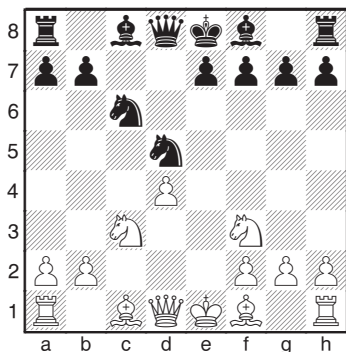


After 11...0-0 both sides are close to completing their development with fairly equal chances and the game mostly continues with 12.♗e5.

(After 12.d5 Black can take on d5 with both the pawn and the knight.)

12...♗a5 13.♗c2 ♗xc2 14.♗xc2 ♖c8 and Black has obtained active play without any particular problems.

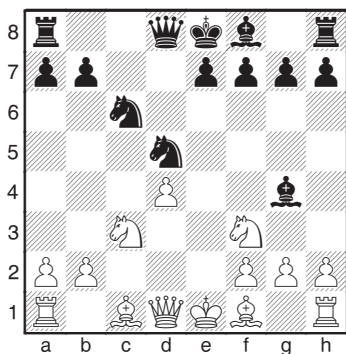
C) 7.d4



This typical Caro-Kann position usually arises after the moves 1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.c4 ♘f6 5.cxd5 ♜xd5 6.♟f3 ♝c6 7.♞c3.

7...♞g4

(After 7...e6 followed by the moves 8.♞d3 ♞e7 9.0-0 0-0 10.♞e1 ♟f6 11.♞e4 ♜ce7, another opening metamorphosis has taken place. We have reached a position from the *Improved Tarasch Defense*, which is also covered in our book *The Queen's Gambit* mentioned above.)



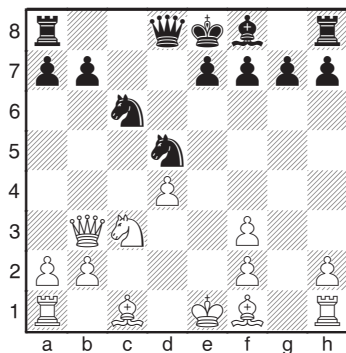
The continuation 8.♞b3 is by far the most frequently played. White accepts

doubled pawns on the f-file and thus a weakening of his pawn structure, but in return he obtains dynamic compensation.

(The more passive reaction 8.♞e2 unpins the knight and prevents doubled pawns, but allows Black to equalize easily; e.g. with the plausible continuation 8...e6 9.0-0 ♞e7 10.h3 ♞h5 11.♞b3 ♞b6.)

8...♞xf3 9.gxf3

(9.♞xb7 ♞db4!-+)

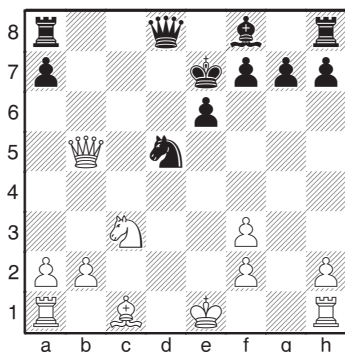


C1) After 9...e6 there is no alternative to vigorously snatching a pawn with 10.♞xb7.

(Securing the position with 10.♞e3 plays into Black's hands and after 10...♞b4 11.♞b5 0-0 he has achieved a winning advantage early on.)

Black also has no choice but to allow an open exchange of blows.

10...♜xd4 11.♞b5+ ♜xb5 12.♞c6+ ♜e7 13.♞xb5

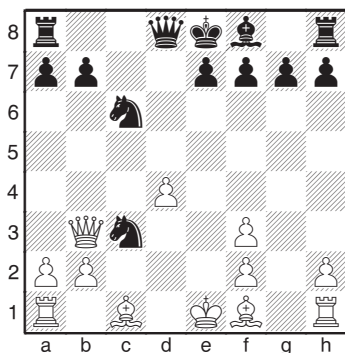


13...♙d7

Up to this point, this extremely sharp line contains only forced or strongly recommended moves. However, we would like to encourage the readers to take a look at alternatives for the moves 12.♙c6+ and 13...♙d7. Because only then can they understand why the line is played exactly this way.

After the continuation 14.♘xd5+ ♙xd5 15.♙xd5 exd5 16.♙e3 ♔e6 17.0-0-0 ♙b4 18.♙b1 ♞hc8, the opponents can now compete in a balanced endgame without having fought a substantial middle game.

C2) 9...♘xc3



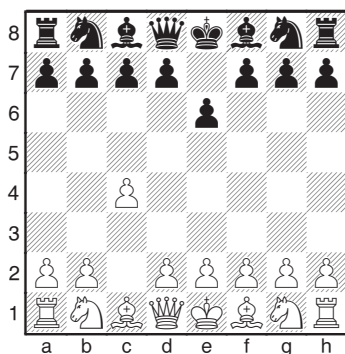
This decision is not recommended.

10.♙xb7

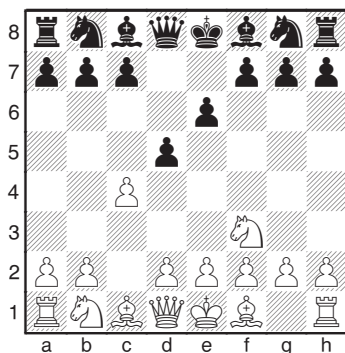
(However, 10.bxc3!? is also strong.)

To confirm our assessment, we add the line 10...♘xd4 11.bxc3 ♘c2+ 12.♙e2 ♙b8 13.♙c6+ ♙d7 14.♙xd7+ ♙xd7 15.♙f4 ♙b2 16.♙d1+ ♙c6 17.♙c1 ♙xa2 18.♙d2 e6 19.♙d1 with material gain.

II The continuation 1...e6 has little independent significance and usually only amounts to a different move order.



A) 2.♘f3 d5



(If White plays ♘g1-f3 early, he usually intends the fianchetto of his light-

squared bishop. Anticipating this, Black can also aim for different positional patterns, for example with 2...♘f6 and the possible continuation 3.g3 b6 4.♙g2 ♙b7 5.0-0 and now 5...c5 6.♘c3 with a transition to **Chapter 4** – after 6.0-0 in the main variation.)

Now 3.g3 is one of the two main moves.

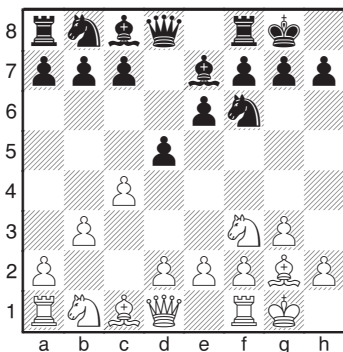
(– The line 3.d4 ♘f6 4.♘c3 ♙e7 leads to the *Queen's Gambit*.

– And 3.cxd5 exd5 4.♘c3 ♘f6 etc. would be unambitious from White's point of view.)

Both sides can now develop their king-side in a typical way with natural moves and after 3...♘f6 4.♙g2 ♙e7 5.0-0 0-0 their further tasks are mapped out. Among other things it's important to activate the queen side and strive for enough central influence.

6.b3

White protects his c-pawn (after dxc4 the reply ♙d1-a4 would be without check) and at the same time prepares the fianchetto of the ♙c1.



6...c5

The pawn participates in the fight for the center before the knight is placed on c6. White can now fulfill his essential opening tasks with 7.cxd5 and the possible continuation 7...♘xd5 8.♙b2 ♘c6 9.♘c3 ♙f6.

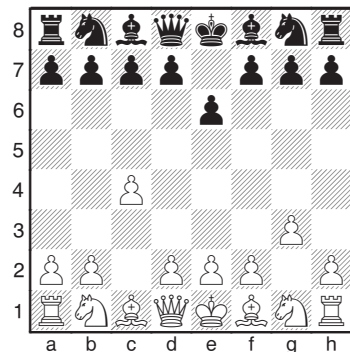
With this usual move Black keeps his influence at eye level and strives for exchanges and the subsequent improvement of his piece position.

With 10.♙c1 the queen protects the bishop and knight and avoids an attack with ♘b4.

10...♘xc3 11.♙xc3 e5

Now the core idea of the preceding maneuver is clear: Black has not only erected a good central position, but also neutralized the influence of the ♙c3 and freed his own ♙c8. A possible continuation is 12.d3 ♙g4 13.h3 ♙e6 14.♙b2 ♖e8= etc.

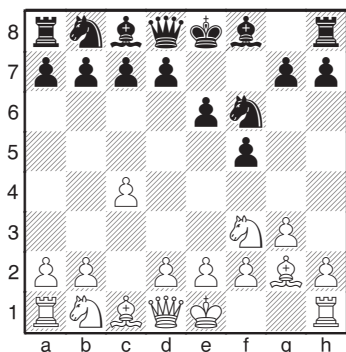
B) 2.g3



If Black doesn't want to play one of the main moves 2...d7-d5 or 2...♘f6, he can also resort to 2...f5. However, this line is rarely chosen and the success statistics generally speak clearly for White. However, there are oppor-

tunities for Black to achieve more than is statistically possible.

3.♘g2 ♘f6 4.♗f3



White continues to pursue his goal of quickly activating his kingside.

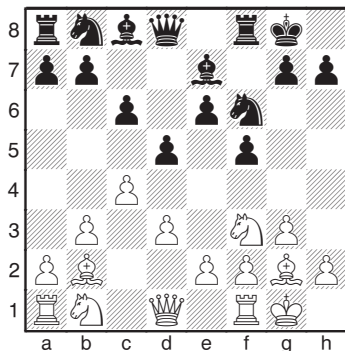
4...d6 is a solid choice that keeps the game on paths away from the main lines.

(4...c6 Δd7-d5 is an alternative worth considering, although not without problems.

5.0-0 d5 6.d3 ♘e7 7.b3

The fianchetto of the queen's bishop contributes to the harmonious further development, as on the long diagonal a1-h8 he can expand White's dominance over the dark central squares.

7...0-0 8.♘b2

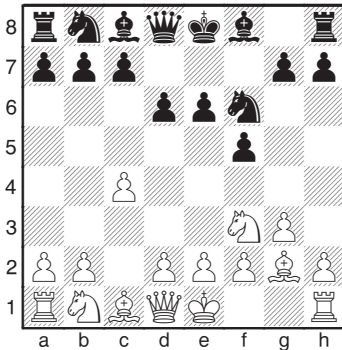


With 8...a5, Black can secure the potential for further active action and cause White to take precautions against a5-a4, which could shake up his solid pawn structure on the queen-side.

9.a3

Black's problems to unfold his queen-side are obvious. The ♘c8 is locked up by Black's own pawns and a good square for the knight is not in sight. The solution can be to transfer the bishop to the diagonal e8-h5 and the knight to c5; e.g. 9...♗a6 10.♗bd2 ♘d7 11.♗c2 ♘e8± followed by ♗a6-c5 and ♘h5 at an appropriate moment.

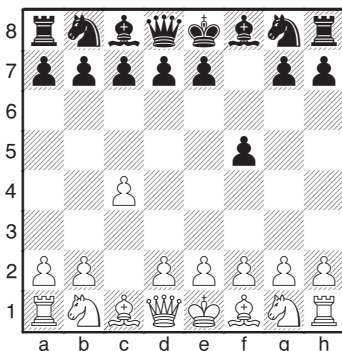
White has used the time his opponent needed for his maneuver to continue his development with natural moves. Practice confirms that Black can play a decent game with not too bad prospects, even if White's position is more harmonious.)



Now both sides can simply continue their development, especially with the moves 5.d3 ♘e7 6.♘c3 0-0 7.0-0 ♘c6. One idea for White is to prepare the push b2-b4 with 8.♖b1 and after the defensive move 8...a5 stick to the plan with 9.a3.

Black can strive for counterplay on the kingside with 9...♔e8 Δ♗h5 and after 10.b4 axb4 11.axb4 ♔h5 the contours of the further battle are recognizable. After the possible continuation 12.b5 ♘d8 13.♘d2 ♗f7± etc. White's position is easier to play, but Black is not without counter-chances.

III 1...f5



Since this line has some parallels to the line 1...e6 2.g3 f5 etc. discussed above, it's worth looking back at our comments there. With 1...f5 Black takes control of the central square on e4 and prepares to place the knight on f6. The following development is typical: 2.♘c3 ♗f6 3.g3.

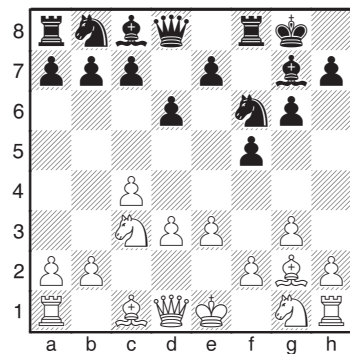
(The continuation 3.d4 leads to the *Dutch Defense*, which we will cover in a separate book.)

After 3...g6 4.♘g2 ♘g7 White has a variety of continuations – with 5.d3 being the most played move.

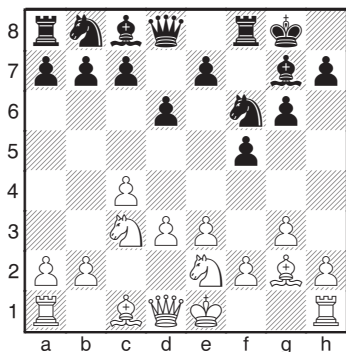
(With 5.d4 White could still choose a transition to the *Dutch Defense*.)

5...0-0 6.e3 d6

Of course White wants to castle short and can prepare this move by developing the knight to e2 or f3.



A) 7. ♖ge2



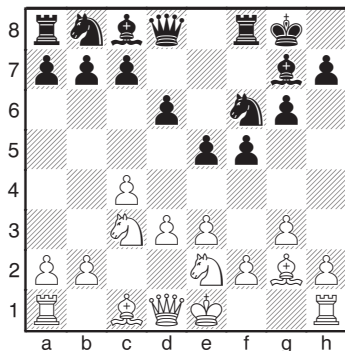
Since after this usual continuation the ♖g2 exerts pressure on Black's queenside, he has less freedom in his decisions. He usually chooses a set-up with pawns on e5 and c6 and the corresponding moves 7...e5 and 7...c6 can occur in different orders. Sometimes they are carried out immediately and in direct succession, sometimes one of them follows with a certain delay.

When examining 7...e5, we will look at the consequences if the two pawn moves are executed in direct succession.

(After 7...c6 8.0-0, Black expects a double benefit from 8...a5. On the one hand, the pawn takes control of the b4 square, so that White cannot play b2-b4 quickly. On the other hand, the queen's knight can be developed to c7 via a6 without blocking the a-pawn and thus preventing its participation in the fight against the push b2-b4. And with his next two moves, White strives exactly for this push.

9. ♖b1 ♖a6 10. a3

After Black has made it extremely difficult for his opponent to implement his plan on the queenside, he can now execute the intended central push 10...e5. And after the possible continuation 11. b4 axb4 12. axb4 ♖c7 13. b5 ♗d7∞ he has good counter play.)



8.0-0 c6 9. ♖b1 a5 10. a3 ♗e6

(Now 10...♖a6 11. b4 would lead to the line with the delayed move e7-e5, which underlines the close relationship between the two alternatives.)

After 11. b4 axb4 12. axb4 the push 12...d5! guarantees Black good play.

B) After 7. ♖f3, Black builds a strong pawn center with 7...e5.

(7...e6 is also possible, but there are not many reasons to prefer this modest development to the d7-d5 advance. Of course, one might argue that Black keeps the d5 square better under control and thus also protects the king from flank attacks.

After 8.0-0, White has secured his king and can now proceed on the queenside according to the tried and tested pattern ♖a1-b1 and b2-b4, if necessary supported by the move a2-a3.

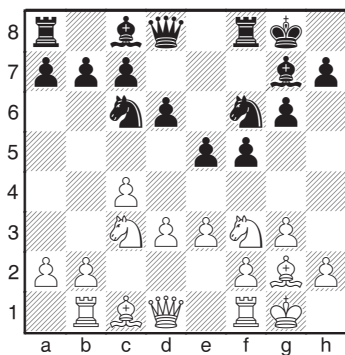
Black has to make an effort to activate his queenside.

8...♖e7 9.♖b1 a5 10.a3 ♘c6 11.b4 axb4 12.axb4 ♙d7

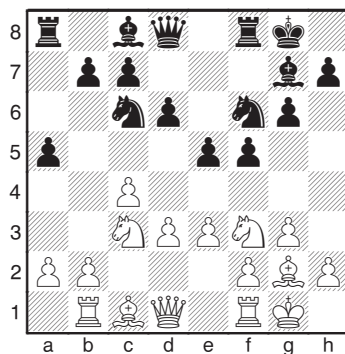
Both sides have achieved their interim goals. After the possible continuation 13.b5 ♘d8 Black can use the maneuver ♘d8-f7 and g6-g5 to initiate his counterplay on the kingside.)

8.0-0 ♘c6

Particularly apart from the position of the black c-pawn, the current position shows a clear similarity to positions that we will discuss in **Chapter 3**. There the advance b2-b4 is a common option, which can also be considered here after the preparatory move 9.♖b1.

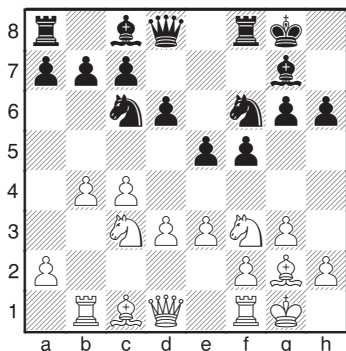


B1) With no black pawn on c5, the white pawn could advance on the next move, but with 9...a5 Black can prevent this at least for the time being.



If White sticks to his plan, he will have to invest additional time. After 10.a3 the b-pawn can no longer be held back and Black can implement his plan with h7-h6 and g6-g5; e.g. 10...h6 11.b4 axb4 12.axb4 g5 and after 13.b5 ♘e7 ♘d7-e7-g6 he has active play on the kingside.

B2) The question arises as to whether Black would be well advised to let White have his way on the queenside and pursue his own ambitions on the kingside with 9...h6 Δg6-g5. After 10.b4 the question arises whether he should pay attention to the opponent's action on the other side or continue his own attack.



The following lines show that he can definitely consider both options.

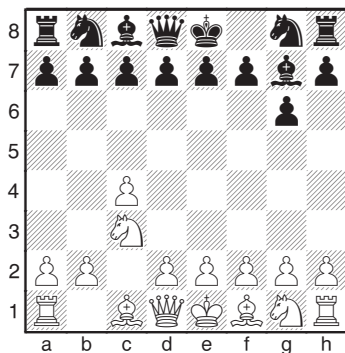
10...♗e6

(After 10...g5 (10...a6 11.a4!?) White makes no concessions on the other side. Similar to the line with 10...♗e6, he can push his pawns with 11.b5 ♖e7 12.a4. And after 12...♗e6 13.♘d2 ♖b8 with a return to the line with 10...♗e6 it becomes clear that 10...g5 has little more significance than a different move order.)

Now 11.b5 ♖e7 possibly followed by 12.♘d2 ♖b8 13.a4 g5∞ results in a complex and complicated position.

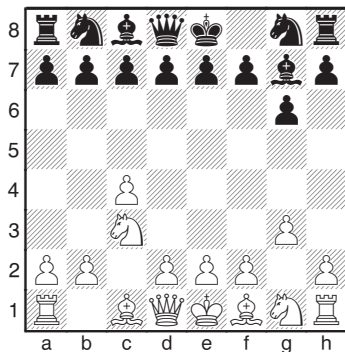
IV With 1...g6 Black initiates the fianchetto of his king's bishop. Since this is an element of a multitude of lines, it's impossible to determine where the journey will go. However, in general it can be said that this move gives White a lot of creative leeway.

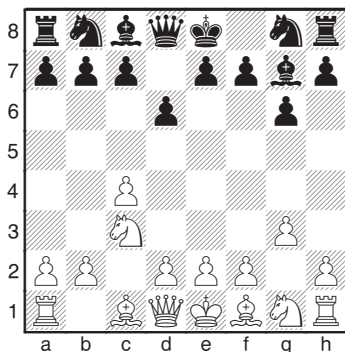
2.♘c3 ♗g7



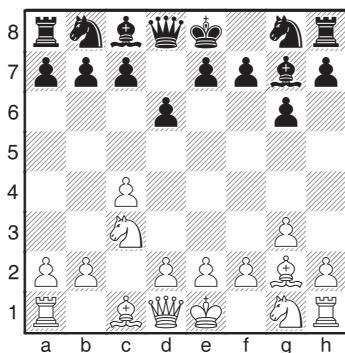
The main continuations are 3.g3 and 3.d4.

A) By choosing 3.g3 White shows that he wants to keep the game in the realm of the *English Opening*, at least for the time being.



A1) 3...d6

This setup is vaguely reminiscent not only of the *King's Indian*, but also of the *Modern Defense* and the *Pirc Defense*, which, however, arise after 1.e4.

A1a) 4.♘g2

Before any concrete conflict, both sides first strive for good development. After the calm and exemplary continuation 4...♘c6 5.e4 e5 6.♗ge2 ♗ge7 7.0-0 0-0 8.d3 Black creates the first pawn tension with 8...f5. The typical further moves 9.♗d5 ♗e6 10.♗e3 ♔d7 keep the position in balance so that the opponents can expect a fight on equal terms in the middlegame.

A1b) Any hope of gaining an advantage with 4.d4 can simply be destroyed with 4...e5.

5.dxe5 (5.d5 f5!?) 5...♗xe5 6.♗f3 ♗g7 7.♗g2

Now Black should first complete the development of his kingside and evacuate his king from the middle. After 7...♗e7 8.0-0 0-0 he is close to equalizing; e.g. 9.♗g5 h6 10.♗d2 ♗bc6 11.♔c1 ♗h7= and everything is under control.

A2) After 3...c6 Black wants to continue with d7-d5 if White allows it.

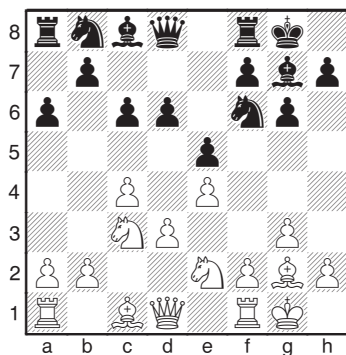
4.♗g2

(4.d4 d5 5.cxd5 cxd5 ♗g2 leads to the *Grünfeld–Fianchetto–Line*.)

After 4...♗f6 White prevents the push d7d5 with 5.e4. The easiest way for Black is the setup with 5...e5 to stop the opposing e-pawn and control the squares on d4 and f4. Now both sides can continue their natural development with 6.♗ge2 0-0 7.0-0 d6 8.d3.

(After 8.d4 Black can decide whether to take the pawn or maintain the tension with 8...♗bd7. Both alternatives are good.)

8...a6



Black hopes for the wing attack b7-b5, but White thwarts it with 9.a4. After 9...a5 White continues with the prophylactic move 10.h3 to secure the g4 square.

With 10...♞a6 the knight strives for the strong square on c5, but White prevents this plan with 11.♙e3. Black needs the additional piece support with 11...♞d7 to occupy c5. Now the lever 12.f4 looks good, but in practice White has had mostly bad experiences with this approach.

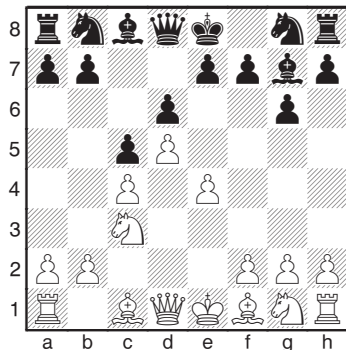
(An interesting alternative worth further investigation and testing might be 12.d4, with consequences that cannot be conclusively assessed; e.g. 12...♞b4 13.♙d2 exd4 14.♞xd4 ♞c5 15.♞ad1 ♞e8 with a complicated situation.)

After the advance of the f-pawn and the possible continuation 12...♞dc5 13.f5 ♞b4 Black has a good position. If White drives the knight away with 14.d4, he does not retreat, but advances into the opponent's camp with 14...♞cd3.

B) The moves 3.d4 d6 4.e4 lead to a structure that is strongly reminiscent of the *King's Indian Defense*. With 4...c5 to immediately clarify the situation in the center, Black remains faithful to the *English Opening*.

(With 4...♞f6 he can choose a transition to the *King's Indian Defense*, which is covered in our book *Openings – The King's Indian Defense, read – understand – play*, Joachim Beyer Verlag 2019.)

5.d5



This best solution is by far the most frequently played.

5...e6

(Giving up the fianchetto bishop with 5...♞xc3+!? initiates an interesting plan, in which Black hopes to lock up the white queen's bishop. After 6.bxc3 e5 the center is closed for the time being and White can hardly take any action on the queenside.)

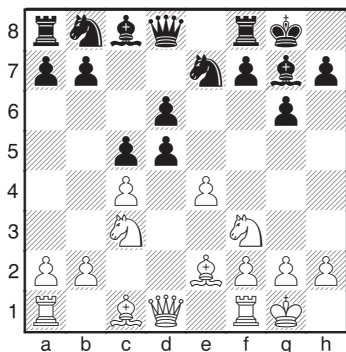
As Black develops his kingside, he can prepare for action on the other side; e.g. 7.♞d3 ♞d7 8.♞e2 ♞e7 9.0-0 ♞gf6.

10.f3

What to do with the ♞c1? White wants to put him on e3, and to protect him from being attacked by the opponent's knight, he blocks the square on g4 with his f-pawn. And where can the black king find safe shelter? Of course, on the queen side! The idea for the evacuation 10...♞d8 11.♞e3 ♞c7 comes from practice and can be followed by b7-b6, a7-a5 etc. with an unclear position.)

After the natural development moves 6.♞f3 ♞e7 7.♞e2 0-0 8.0-0 the capture 8...exd5 is the most direct way.

Sometimes Black plays a7-a6 first and only takes on d5 after the more or less forced reaction a2-a4. Basically, this is of no importance if Black has decided to play a7-a6 anyway.



9.cxd5

(After 9.exd5 Black can play 9...♗g4 with the intention to exchange the bishop, which is not easy to activate. With 10.♗f4, White targets Black's weak point on d6.

10...♞f5

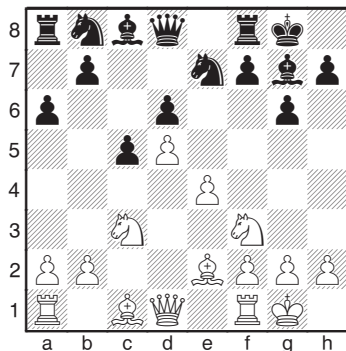
Since a retreat of the bishop on g4 is not Black's intention anyway, the knight can block the diagonal leading back into Black's camp. After h2-h3, Black gives up the bishop as intended and must then expect that his opponent will continue to attack the weakness on d6, especially with ♞c3-e4. Against this background, the knight's move to f5 not only serves to improve the position of the knight (which can possibly move on to d4), but also to parry White's threat by placing the king's rook on e8.

11.h3 ♗xf3 12.♗xf3 ♖e8 13.♞e4 ♗e5

Supported by the rook, the bishop can oppose his white counterpart without the risk that an exchange on e5 would result in a protected white passed pawn on the d-file.

After the further moves 14.♗xe5 ♖xe5 15.♞e1 ♞d4, Black has good play and can continue his development with f7-f5 and ♞b8-d7 or with ♗d8-e7!? and ♞b8-d7.)

B1) 9...a6

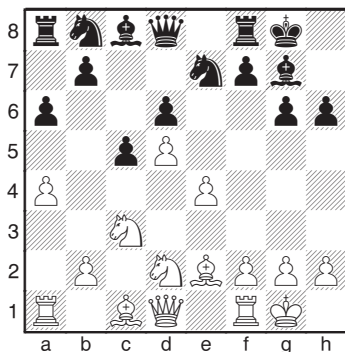


10.a4

In this book you will often encounter maneuvers concerning the push b2-b4 or b7-b5 respectively. White mostly uses the move a2-a3 for support, Black the move a7-a6. The other side often tries to prevent the advance or at least make it more difficult by playing a7-a5 or a2-a4 like in the given case.

With 10...h6 the pawn prevents the opposing pieces from moving to the g5 square. The situation is complicated and cannot be clearly assessed and the game can develop in different directions. To illustrate a plausible continuation, we follow a line that has been played several times in practice.

11. ♖d2



The knight avoids the annoying pin ♗c8-g4, which Black could use to exchange his problematic bishop. The knight aims for c4 and at the same time allows the advance f2-f4.

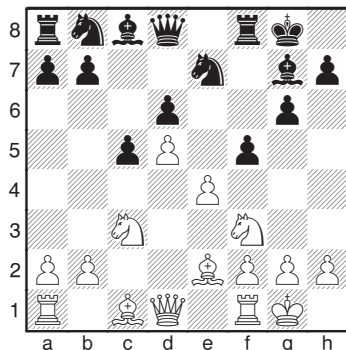
11... ♗d7 12. ♖c4

Of course, Black cannot tolerate the strong knight on c4. With 12... ♗b6 he not only restores the protection of ♖d6, but also forces White to decide what to do with his ♗c4.

13. ♗e3 f5

This long-planned strike ensures enough activity. There is hardly any possibility for either side to deviate from the continuation 14. a5 f4 15. axb6 fxe3 16. ♗xe3 ♖xb6 17. ♖d2 ♔h7. Compared to his opponent, Black faces a somewhat more difficult task, but proceeding according to the plan ♗c8-d7, ♖a8-e8 etc. gives him decent counter-chances.

B2) It's unclear whether Black can immediately undermine the opponent's central position with 9...f5.



In the few cases in which this position has been played, White has had less good experience with the continuations 10. ♗g5 and 10. e5, but 10. ♗e1 needs further investigation. Let's take a quick look at what can happen after the two alternatives mentioned:

B2a) 10. ♗g5 a6 11. a4

Otherwise Black can play b7-b5.

11...h6 12. ♗e6

If the knight were to retreat, the f7-f5 advance would have been a success.

12... ♗xe6 13. dxe6 ♗bc6

In this double-edged position, the ♗e6 can prove to be a weakness, but this is not guaranteed; e.g. 14. exf5 ♖xf5 15. ♗g4 ♖f8 etc.

B2b) After 10. e5 dxe5 11. d6 (11. ♗e3!?) 11... ♗ec6 12. ♖d5+ ♔h8 ♞ Black has more space.

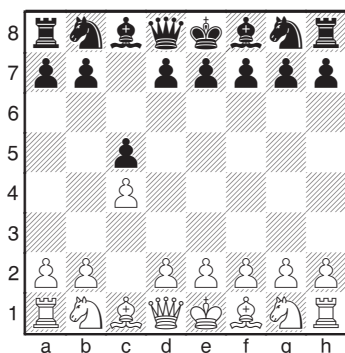
Summary: Since in this introduction we have presented side lines that are comparatively rare in practice, our analyzes are more exemplary than in-depth.



Introduction to Volume 1

1.c4 c5

This introduction to **Volume 1** provides an overview of the possibilities that arise if Black reacts symmetrically with his c-pawn.



The symmetrical response with the c-pawn aims to gain control of the d4 square and thus limit White's active options in the center. The two sides face the following tasks: White strives to control the squares on d5 and e4 and to expand his influence in the center with the push d2–d4 and possibly with f2–f4. Black, on the other hand, tries to achieve dominance over the d4 and e5 squares, prepare the counterattack d7–d5 and execute it at an opportune moment.

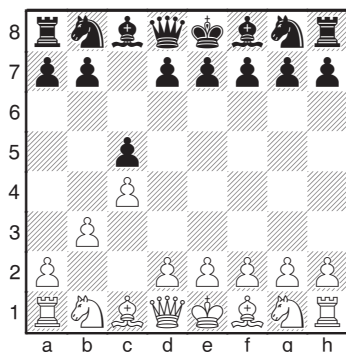
2.♘f3

This continuation to increase control over the d5 square is the most common. The four alternatives 2.♘f3, 2.g3, 2.b3 and 2.e3 also deserve attention:

I 2.♘f3 (Chapter 1)

II 2.g3 (Chapter 2)

III After 2.b3 the queen's bishop is placed early on the long diagonal a1/h8, where it has an effect on the important central squares on d4 and e5, making Black's task more difficult.



Maintaining symmetry with 2...b6 is a good decision.

(Important further options are 2...♘c6 and 2...♘f6, after which the game can transpose to different lines, so the further path cannot yet be determined exactly at this point.)

3.♙b2 ♙b7

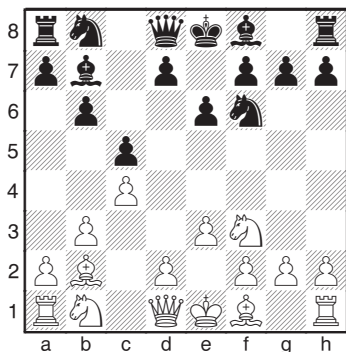
As if there were a mirror on the demarcation line in the middle – Black proceeds according to the principle "tits for tats" and lets his bishop, among other things, target the squares on d5 and e4.

4.♘f3 ♘f6 5.e3

(5.g3 is also often played. Black can

then choose a similar structure; e.g. 5...e6 6.♘g2 ♕e7 7.0-0 0-0 8.♘c3 and now 8...d5 or 8...d6.)

5...e6



6.♕e2

(6.d4 cxd4 7.exd4 d5=)

6...♕e7 7.0-0 0-0

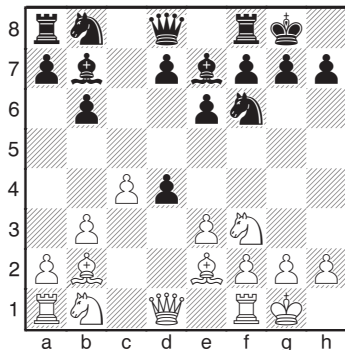
This position occurs again in **Chapter 1** (in the line after 3.b3 e6) where we will only look at the alternative 8.d3, while here we will deal with the consequences of the push 8.d4. For systematic reasons, we cover the two lines in different places, but each with a reference to the other.

8.d4

After careful preparation this advance can now be executed.

8...cxd4

Black has had good practical experience with abandoning symmetry. 8...d5 is also good, but is more difficult to play, not least for the less experienced player.

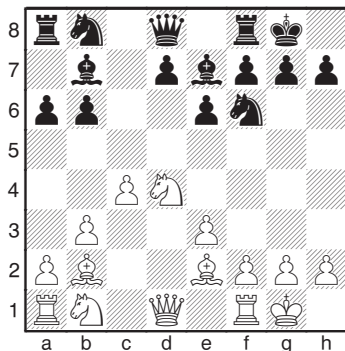


9.♘xd4

(After 9.exd4 and the good answer 9...d5 followed by 10.♘bd2 ♘c6 both sides activate their rooks with 11.♖c1 ♜c8=.)

9...a6

Black has a clear plan: After denying White access to b5, he wants to continue his development largely undisturbed by activating the pieces that are still on their initial squares.



With 10.♘c3 the knight participates in the fight for the d5 and e4 squares and at the same time clears the way for the queen's rook.

10...d6 11.♕f3

White wants to neutralize the control of ♖b7 over the light central squares and possibly exchange him.

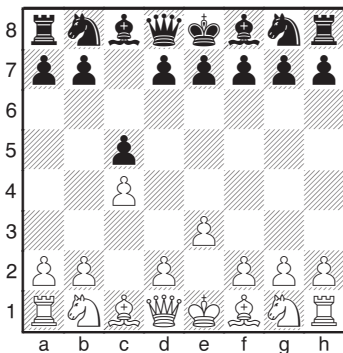
11...♖c7 12.♖c1 ♘bd7 13.♙xb7 ♜xb7
14.♞e2

White wants to execute the push e3-e4.

14...♞ac8 15.e4 ♘c5

Now Black has to take care of his ♖e4. After 16.♞fe1 he can complete his plan with 16...♞fd8. He has reached a flexible piece position and can now try to give his ♙e7 more influence. An appropriate idea is ♙e7-f8-g7 and the preparatory move g7-g6 can follow at a convenient moment.

IV After 2.e3, White intends to continue with d2-d4 and, in the case of c5xd4, wants to recapture with his e-pawn to maintain a strong central pawn duo.



The most common answer 2...♘f6 has good statistical values for Black.

(2...♘c6 is an equivalent alternative. In the fight for the d4 square, a constellation typical of the *Tarrasch Defense* in the *Queen's Gambit* can arise

via the moves 3.♘f3 e6 4.d4 and now 4...d5. We have covered this line in our book *Openings – The Queen's Gambit, read – understand – play*, Joachim Beyer Verlag 2020.)

3.d4 g6

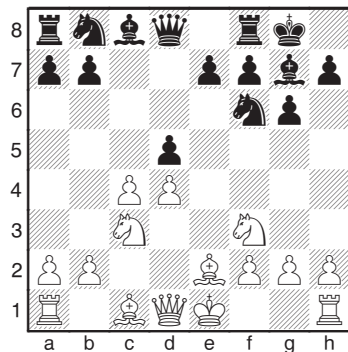
The fianchetto setup on the kingside offers Black good opportunities.

4.♘c3

(Black doesn't have to fear 4.dxc5 because the simple 4...♘a6 is a sufficient reply.)

4...♙g7 5.♘f3 0-0 6.♙e2

White prepares 0-0 and with 6...cxd4 Black initiates the development 7.exd4 d5, which gives him a lot of influence in the center.



8.0-0

(White should stay away from 8.cxd5. After 8...♘xd5 his isolated d-pawn is safely blocked and therefore tends to be weak. In fact, White achieved very poor results with this position.)

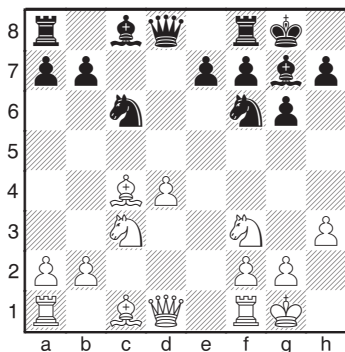
With 8...♘c6 the knight exerts pressure on the ♖d4.

9.h3

White prevents the black bishop from

attacking the ♘f3, the piece responsible for the safety of the ♖d4.

After 9...dxc4 Black almost automatically obtains good play. Now the isolani is also attacked by his queen and after 10.♖xc4 he has time to improve his position.



10...♖a5

(10...b6 11.♖e3 ♖b7 12.♖c1 ♖c8 13.♗e2 ♘b4 14.♘e5 ♘bd5=)

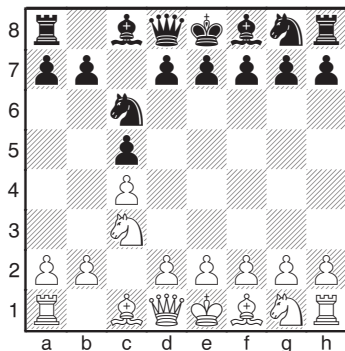
11.♖e2 ♖e6

Black blocks the ♖d4 and initiates the occupation of the c4 square. Although the chances are roughly equal, the position is easier to play for Black, which is also confirmed by the results from practice. After the possible continuation 12.♖e1 ♖c8 13.♖g5 h6 14.♖h4 ♘c4 15.♖xc4 ♖xc4= Black has positioned his troops effectively and harmoniously.

2...♘f6

With this reply, Black chooses an asymmetrical setup and aims for the push d7–d5 early on.

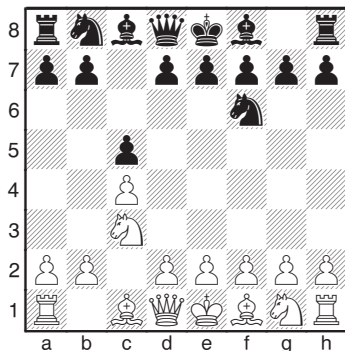
2...♘c6 maintains symmetry.



Now the two main continuations 3.g3 and 3.♘f3 will be covered in separate chapters:

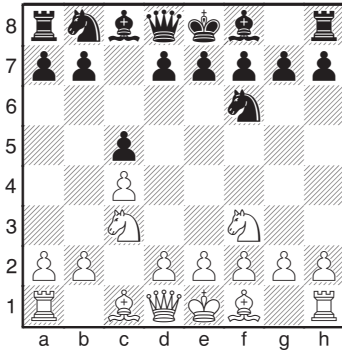
I 3.g3 (Chapter 3)

II 3.♘f3 (Chapter 4)



3.♘f3

After the main alternative 3.g3 we recommend 3...d5, the most played move that fits well with our other repertoire recommendations. Now the moves 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.♖g2 would lead to a transition to **Chapter 2** (see the alternative 3...♘f6 to the main move 3...♗xd5).



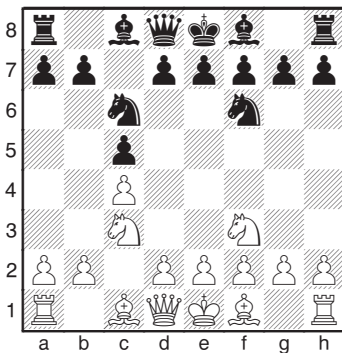
3...c6

This move leads to the so-called *Four Knights Variation*.

I 3...e6 leads to **Chapter 4**.

II 3...d5 leads to **Chapter 5**.

III 3...g6 leads to positions primarily covered in **Chapter 6**.

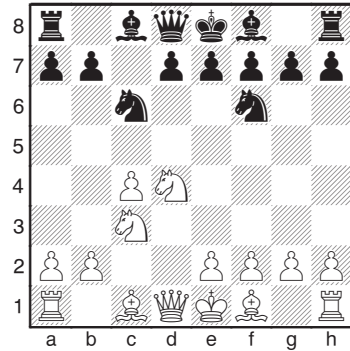


4.d4

After this most active option, a possible transition to the *Queen's Gambit* still needs to be considered.

At this point, White most often chooses the all-rounder 4.g3, which (by transposition of moves) leads to positions that are covered at various points in the book.

4...cxd4 5.♘xd4

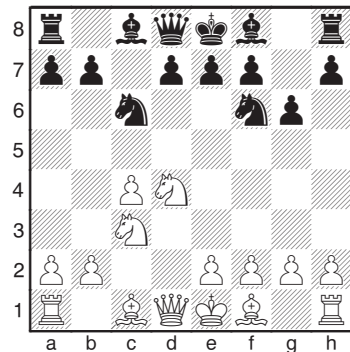


5...g6

This is a popular continuation.

The logical response 5...e6 (Δ♘b4 or ♘c5) leads to **Chapter 1** (side line 5...♘c6 to the main move 5...♘b4).

5...d5 also leads to **Chapter 1** (side line 4...♘c6 to the main move 4...e6 and then 5.♘c3 d5 etc.).

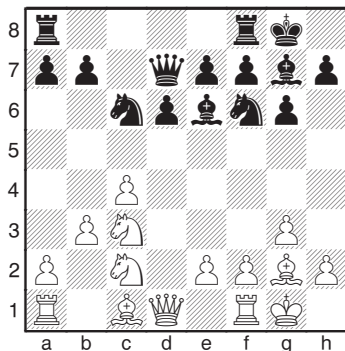
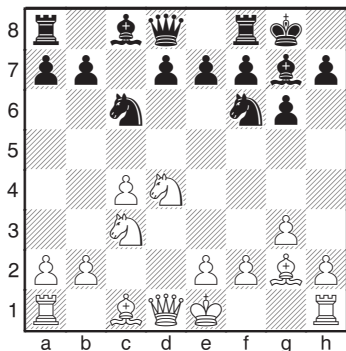


6.g3

The position after 6.e4 is usually reached via the *Sicilian Defense* and belongs to the so-called *Maroczy Bind*, which arises in the move order 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4

g6 5.c4 ♖f6 6.♘c3. For this system, see Chapter 12 of our book *Openings – The Sicilian Defense, read – understand – play*, 2nd edition, Joachim Beyrer Verlag 2021.

6...♙g7 7.♙g2 0-0



... is just one of the different paths the opponents can take to obtain an effective piece position.

8.♘c2

8.0-0 leads to the same position that arises in **Chapter 3** after the alternative 5...♖f6 to the main move 5...e6 followed by 6.0-0 0-0 7.d4 cxd4 8.♘xd4 etc.

8...d6

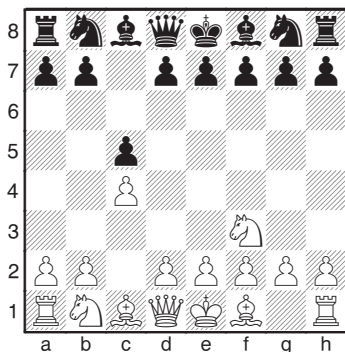
Since this overview is only intended to show how we have organized the material in our book, we conclude the examination of this line without assessment. The natural continuation ...

9.0-0 ♙e6 10.b3 ♔d7

Chapter 1

The continuation 2.♘f3

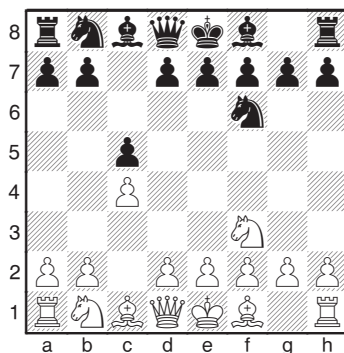
1.c4 c5 2.♘f3



2...♞f6

With this development move, Black maintains the symmetry for now. In addition, he can particularly choose one of the following alternatives:

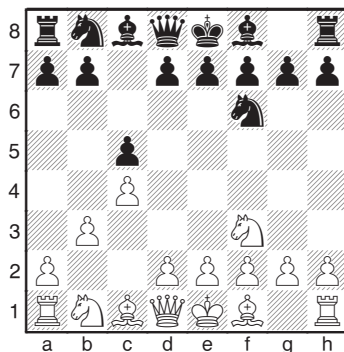
- 2...♞c6 and 2...g6 lead to positional patterns discussed at various other points in the book.
- With 2...b6, Black can strive for the so-called *Hedgehog Setup*, which we will focus on in **Chapter 4**.



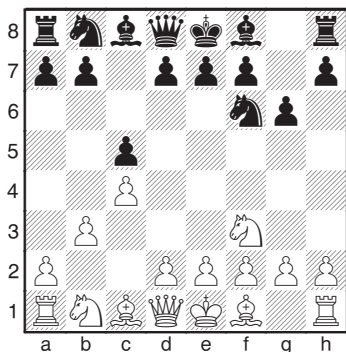
3.d4

With the universal move 3.g3 White can pursue a whole range of lines (discussed in various chapters) and leave his further options open.

In response to the occasional choice 3.b3, we propose the two alternative plans with 3...g6 or 3...e6. In both cases, White has difficulty keeping his opponent's position under control.



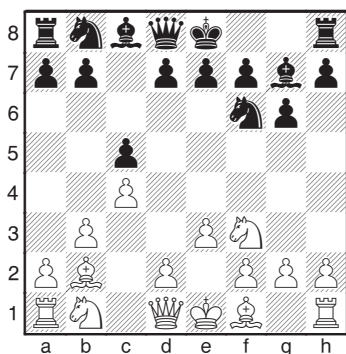
A) 3...g6



Black opts for the fianchetto of his king's bishop to neutralize the opponent's fianchetto bishop on b2 early on.

4.♘b2 ♘g7 5.e3

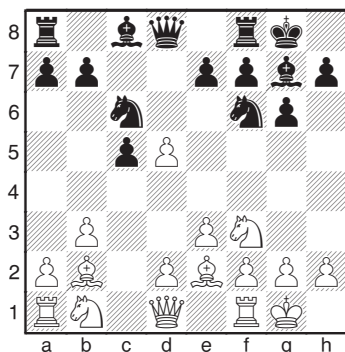
(We advise against the occasionally played alternative 5.e4 as it leads to a lasting weakening of the d4 square: e.g. 5...d6 6.d3 ♘c6 7.♘c3 0-0 8.♘e2 ♘d7 9.0-0 ♘g4 10.h3 ♘ge5 11.♘xe5 dxe5 and the d4 square is firmly in Black's hand.)



After the development moves 5...0-0 6.♘e2 ♘c6 7.0-0, a good time has come for the advance 7...d5.

(Another interesting approach is 7...b6, similar to the setups with b7-b6 and ♘b7 discussed in other chapters. After the plausible continuation 8.d4 cxd4 9.♘xd4 ♘xd4 10.♘xd4 ♘b7 11.♘f3, White has good results in practice, although the current position is fairly equal.)

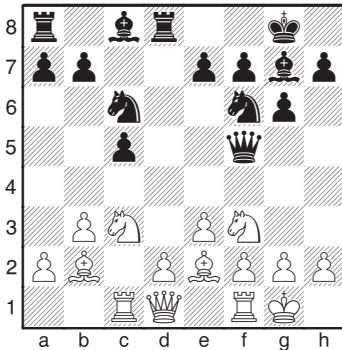
8.cxd5



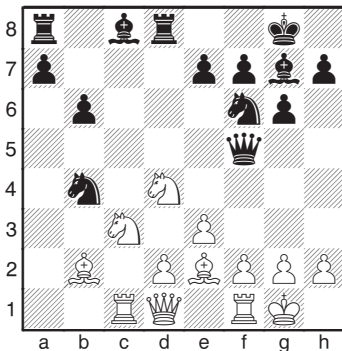
8...♙xd5

(The alternative 8...♘xd5!? is objectively equivalent, although it allows the exchange 9.♘xg7 ♙xg7. Playing with a fianchetto position that lacks the fianchetto bishop is not to everyone's taste, even if the position after, for example, 10.♙c1 ♙d6 is completely equal.)

9.♘c3 develops the knight with gain of tempo. However, the queen doesn't have to return home, but can stay near the center with 9...♙f5. Whether this position is an advantage or a disadvantage depends in particular on whether White can target her as an object of attack. For example, after 10.♙c1 ♙d8 Black can be satisfied.



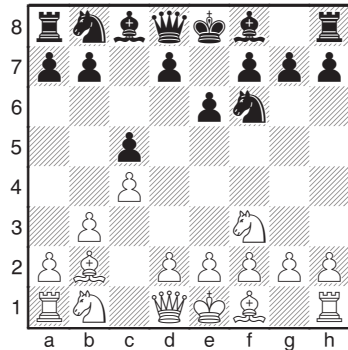
With b7-b6 and ♘c8-b7 he can continue his natural development. White can, among other things, work with maneuvers like ♘e2-c4/b5, ♘c3-e2-g3 etc. However, he should discard the idea of continuing with a2-a3 and b3-b4 to distract the ♘c5, as the example line 11.a3 b6 12.b4 cxb4 13.axb4 ♘xb4 14.♘d4 shows that this approach has a tactical hole.



After the positional exchange sacrifice 14...♙xd4! 15.exd4 ♘b7 Black obtains strong initiative.

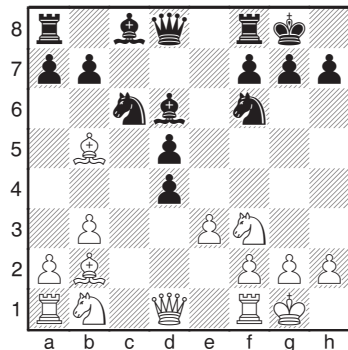
B) 3...e6 clears the way for ♘f8-e7 and can also serve to prepare d7-d5.

4.♘b2



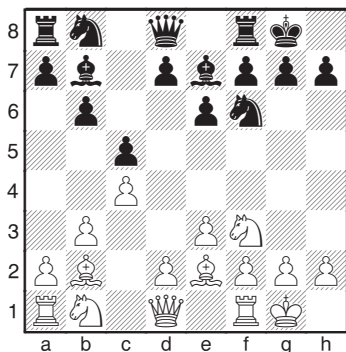
Black has enough time to safely develop his kingside with 4...♘e7.

(4...d5 is also played with success. However, this move is not quite in accordance to the general recommendation of first ensuring that one's own forces are well activated and only then making active attempts. With 5.e3 White stops the opponent's pawn, continues his development and can easily obtain a good position. After 5...♘c6 6.cxd5 exd5 7.♘b5 he has an active and expandable setup; e.g. 7...♘d6 8.0-0 0-0 9.d4 cxd4.



After 10.♘xd4 White can be satisfied as the isolani on d5 is safely blocked. The plausible continuation 10...♙d7 11.♙e2 ♖c8 12.♘c3 ♗e8∞ leads to a position for which engines calculate a hint of an advantage for White, although it's completely unclear based on human judgment.)

The natural development 5.e3 0-0 6.♙e2 b6 7.0-0 ♙b7 leads to a position that already occurred in the **Introduction** (in the line after 2.b3).



There we covered the continuation 8.d4.

(For systematic reasons, 8.d3 and 8.d4 are discussed at different points, but each with a reference to the other.)

So here we continue with 8.d3, after which the white setup is characterized by a massive array of pieces behind a robust central pawn formation.

8...d5

Here, this expansive push is better prepared than in the line with 4.d5 above.

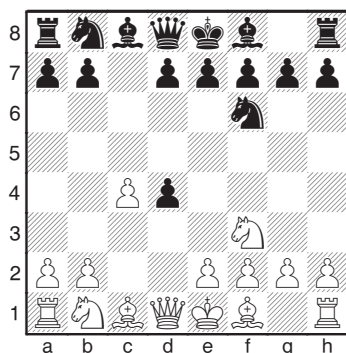
9.♘bd2 ♘c6

After both sides have developed their light pieces flexibly, the heavy artil-

lery has to be brought into play. This first leads to the question: what to do with the queens? Let's look at an illustrative example from practice.

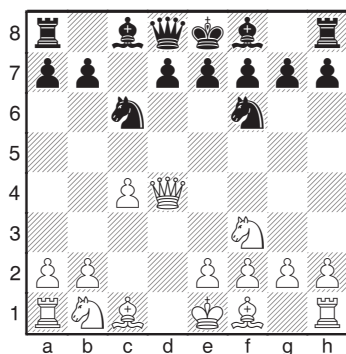
10.a3 ♖c7 11.♖c1 ♖ac8 12.♗c2 ♗b8 13.♗b1 ♗fd8 14.♗a1 ♗a8 with roughly equal chances. It deserves special mention that the position of the two queens *behind* the bishops is typical of some lines of the *English Opening*.

3...cxd4



4.♘d4

After 4.♗xd4 Black can win a tempo with 4...♘c6.



So White has to decide whether his queen should retreat to the initial