

Harald Keilhack

**Knight on the Left: 1.  c3**

Studies of an Unorthodox Chess Opening



Schachverlag Kania

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## Preface

This book covers the *opening* 1.♘c3. Opening? - Oh, yes! Many consider 1.♘c3 to be just a move, which might be playable, but “hardly has any independent value”, rather transposing to 1.e4 systems.

In this context, Khalifman’s five volume opus 1.♘f3 - *Opening for White according to Kramnik* springs to mind. In an odyssey of more than 1300 pages, the former FIDE world champion proves that the “knight on the right” 1.♘f3 is a good move, but not an opening in itself! He doesn’t at all cover the Reti (with which 1.♘f3 is usually connected), but a multitude of openings including the King’s Indian, the Queen’s Gambit (Slav, Orthodox, Accepted etc), the Dutch Defence, the English Opening and even some lines of the Sicilian (namely the Maroczy setup against the Accelerated Dragon); besides, some peculiarities like the Grünfeld without d2-d4. Quintessentially, 1.♘f3 is presented as a very subtle transposition tool, by which - to simplify a bit - undesirable lines of the aforementioned openings can be excluded.

So, how are matters after 1.♘c3? There’s a bunch of established independent concepts, e.g. after 1.♘c3 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 or 1.♘c3 d5 2.e4 d4 3.♘ce2. It’s mostly possible, but not always advisable to stay clear of all transpositions. Typical questions that a 1.♘c3 practitioner will face are:

- After 1.♘c3 d5 2.e4 e6, should he go for a French by 3.d4 or try some independent setup?
- After 1.♘c3 c5, should he play 2.e4 immediately, possibly going for a Closed Sicilian (3.g3) or for the Grand Prix Attack (3.f4)? Or transpose to a standard Sicilian by 2.♘f3 ♘c6 (2...d6, 2...e6) 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 and 5.e4?

Or strive for the very tricky independent lines, keeping the option of e2-e4, transposing to some standard lines, as an “emergency exit” in reserve?

- After 1.♘c3 g6, should he return to 2.e4, should he go for the fierce 2.h4 or should he stay flexible by 2.♘f3 and 2.g3, not yet revealing his intentions?

In fact, every leading 1.♘c3 player has his own answers to those questions. Transpositions at a later stage are full of subtleties, which will be revealed in this work. If one wants to switch from 1.e4 to 1.♘c3, this is even an advantage: you may start by playing 1.e4 e6/c6/♘f6 2.♘c3 (reaching some lines from Chapter IV), later on you play 1.♘c3, firstly transposing quite often to 1.e4 systems, then less and less.

This book covers every possibility after 1.♘c3 which at least has some independent value. Additionally, some “secret” lines which belong to 1.e4 openings but in practice occur more often via 1.♘c3, or which have some features of this opening. For example, such Anti-Caro-Kann lines as 1.e4 c6 2.♘c3 d5 3.f4 or 3.♗f3!?. Typically such lines are neglected in opening manuals.

A special focus is on late transpositions (e.g., on move 6) to 1.e4 positions under favourable circumstances!

I have excluded only 1.♘c3 d5 2.d4, which leads to the Veresov Opening after 2...♘f6 3.♗g5, to the French after 2...e6 3.e4 or the Caro-Kann after 2...c6 3.e4.

Besides transpositions from 1.♘c3 to 1.e4 openings, there are also some in the other direction, e.g. 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 d5 3.♘c3!?, 1.e4 d5 2.♘c3!?, 1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘c3 c5 3.♘f3 (a basic position from *Chapter V*); one can argue that 1.e4 c5 2.f4 d5 3.♘c3 is also truly a 1.♘c3 position.

### *An unrecognised opening*

Unlike unorthodox openings such as 1.b4 or 1.g4, 1.♟c3 by no means compromises White's position, and at the same time it doesn't limit the first player to some extravagant strategy or other. On the contrary, this move is in perfect harmony with classical principles of opening play like development and gaining influence on the centre (keeping an eye on e4 and d5). Therefore, it sounds strange that 1.♟c3 is not yet recognised as an opening in its own right. Admittedly, the c-pawn is blocked, but in every opening, every move kills off some option or other.

Actually, 1.♟c3 offers exceptionally good possibilities of winning a miniature, thanks to knight tactics and supported by the accelerated development of the minor pieces. The older 1.♟c3 literature almost reads like a collection of traps and miniatures. However, the general level of chess is increasing, and one cannot expect that the average player of our day will repeat the errors that some semi-celebrities of the past committed - not to mention modern computer-aided correspondence chess.

So, this book isn't at all about cheap traps but will establish a deep theoretical and strategic basis for the further exploration of the *Knight on the Left*.

### *Between Worlds*

I was attracted by the unique hybrid status of a so-called "unorthodox" opening which has nevertheless so many lines which connect to traditional openings. 1.♟c3 is still labelled as an "unorthodox" opening and accordingly, it's treated poorly in main-stream publications like *Encyclopedia* or *Chess Informant*. On the other hand, many positions which arise can only be reliably assessed

when one compares them carefully to related, but well-explored positions from standard openings. Often enough, enthusiastic amateur authors of books about unorthodox or gambit openings are lacking in general knowledge of standard positions, which results in blatant misjudgements. In this book, I do my best to transfer knowledge between these two, so different, worlds. This also includes, by the way, comparisons to positions with colours reversed, which often allow striking insights.

Some methodological issues:

I agree very much with the maxim that if a given position can occur in various places (via transposition), all relevant games and analysis have to be presented together. This necessarily leads to a huge number of cross references. Whenever various move orders can lead to the same position, I have tried to figure out which one is most precise for both parties - sometimes this wasn't easy at all (e.g. in *Section 17*). Unfortunately, for instance, Dunnington's book is rather sloppy in this respect.

"Between Worlds" was also a maxim when choosing games from correspondence as well from over-the-board chess, from grandmaster as well as from amateur practice. This was the case too in my methodological choice to keep the sample game approach (with deep strategic explanations), but at the same time to supply dense theoretical coverage. The fact that this book has expanded to nearly 400 pages should not distract from the fact that even with today's knowledge some fundamental issues around move 5 are still unresolved. With regard to possible future discoveries I haven't cut off lines that have to be regarded as unfavourable from today's point of view.

## History and Naming

1.♖c3 was first mentioned in the 1st edition (1843) of "Bilguer - Handbuch des Schachspiels" by Tassilo von Heydebrand und der Lasa. According to Adrian Harvey/Stefan Bücke (*Kaissiber 15*), the first recorded 1.♖c3 game was Kieseritzky-Desloges, France 1847 (p.21). The game Napoleon-Madame de Remusat, Malmaison Castle 1804 (p.10), is probably a hoax.

Later on, 1.♖c3 was occasionally tried by world class players, e.g. Blackburne-Noa, London 1883, or Bogoljubow-Zubarev, St.Petersburg 1925. But these were solitary cases, comparable to Morozevich-Kasparov, Frankfurt 2000 (see *Game 83*) in our own days. It is not the professionals, but rather enthusiastic amateurs and grandmasters of correspondence chess who have advanced the development of this opening.

Thus, about 1910 the Czech Johann Kotrc started to play 1.♖c3 regularly, as did some years later Ted Dunst from New York. After 1945, the Baden master Leonhard Hanke attracted attention by playing 1.♖c3 in southern Germany.

Further progress is closely connected with the contemporary heroes mentioned below.

The opening 1.♖c3 has had many names; it is possible to say that everybody who wrote about it has used his own name. So, there had been, among others, the Romanian, Kotrc, Dunst, Slepner and the van Geet Openings (to mention just the most widespread ones). Finally, I opted for the neutral *Linksspringer* or *Knight on the Left*, which was preferred by my mentor in chess publishing, the *Randspringer* editor Rainer Schlenker.

## Contemporary heroes

From about 1965 up to nowadays, two outstanding correspondence GMs have been setting the trend: Ove Ekebjærg, Denmark, and Dick van Geet from the Netherlands. The extrovert Dutchman has published articles, booklets and a CD about the "Van Geet Opening". In his work, tactical finesses prevail. Of the reclusive Dane, however, hardly anything is known beyond the game scores themselves. But his games are of unique strategic depth.

In the 14th correspondence world championship 1994-2000, Ekebjærg<sup>1</sup> came close to his greatest triumph: he scored 10½ out of 14, including 6 out of 7 in his games with White, opened exclusively with 1.♖c3, and almost looked like the sure winner. However, in the end Tinu Yim from Estonia, who finished his games years later due to longer postal delivery times, overtook him by half a point.

Besides van Geet and Ekebjærg, other correspondence GMs including Sarink, van Perlo and Hector regularly start their games with 1.♖c3 (and there are only about 200 corr. GMs); and besides them, numerous corr. players around 2400 too - one could almost talk about a "correspondence chess opening"!

In over-the-board chess, one will repeatedly meet names like, IM Mestrovic, IM Sydor and (again!) IM van Geet, see for instance his draw against the then world champion Spassky (*Game 14*). Nowadays, 1.♖c3 is occasionally used by modern grandmasters like Bellon, Buhmann (soon to be a GM), Ermenkov, Hector

<sup>1</sup> In the years since publishing the German edition, Ekebjærg's fortunes have turned. I have in mind his failures in the 16th World Championship and the 50th Jubilee Grandmaster Tournament (a true all-star correspondence event). However, those results have been influenced by health problems.

(again! - he has both titles), Cs.Horvath, Narciso, Rashkovsky, Rogers, Schmaltz (limited to 1.e4 d5 2.♗c3), Wi.Watson; all of these have a well-earned reputation as unprejudiced players.

Other names include Dutch followers of van Geet, namely Jongasma, Leeners, van Bellen; the 1.♗c3 scene from Tübingen (Frick, Schlenker, Moser and others) or the Estonian master Aarne Hermlin.

And finally Anker Aasum from Norway. His book, while being somewhat dated with regard to pure theoretical issues, contains a lot more historical information, including numerous short biographies of enthusiastic 1.♗c3 players (or rather 1.♗c3 riders, as Aasum uses to say).

### *Acknowledgements*

I would like to thank:

Jochen Bastian, Christian Beyer, Jonathan Tait and Martin Weise for sending me their private game collections.

Gerson Berlinger, Petrus Burghouwt, Gabriel Elefteriadis (who painstakingly pointed out some inconsistencies in the German edition), Wolfgang Finke, Tihomir Glowatzky, Bernd Gräfrath, David Höffer, Marc Lacrosse, Tobias Lagemann, Ralph Mallée, Davide Rozzoni, Rainer Stockmann, Dick van Geet, Martin Weise, Frank Zeller, who submitted games, analysis or general comments which have been useful for this revised edition.

Henk van Bellen for the kind invitation to his nicely organised thematic tournament in Mariac 2001 (also including van Geet, Aasum, Hanke).

Stefan Bücker for historical references.

And finally John (Ian) Adams for the proofreading, ensuring that this experiment with an "author's translation" didn't turn out too badly, or so I hope.

Harald Keilhack  
Schwieberdingen, March 2003/August 2005

### *About this revised English language edition*

Soon after the German edition of this book was published in Spring 2003, I received several requests for an English edition. Well, this project took some time, so that simultaneously the question of an update arose.

In brief, this edition is totally revised in the respect that I have included all important games played until August 2005 (e.g. Morozevich-Köhler). On the other hand, I have kept the whole structure of the book, including the 99 sample games, untouched. Partly for practical reasons, having the countless cross-references in mind. But besides this, I felt that those 99 stem games perfectly illustrated the original concept of the specific systems and variations - for modern refinements, see the more recent games and analysis in the notes.

Also, some errors and misjudgements have been corrected. There are many more new games than it may look like at first sight, as on correspondence games mostly only the starting date is published, so "corr. 2001" reads: started in 2001, finished in 2004 (or so) and published only in 2005, when the tournament concluded. However, I haven't included material from the recent Chessbase CD on 1.♗c3 - Carsten Hansen's Chesscafe review should give you an idea why.

([www.chesscafe.com/text/hansen73.pdf](http://www.chesscafe.com/text/hansen73.pdf))

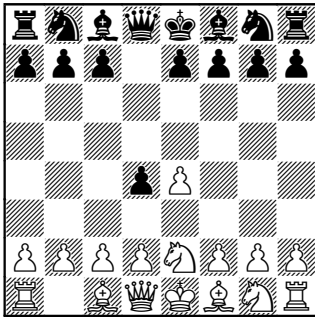
Finally, although much recent stuff has been added, this edition is actually 16 pages smaller than the original one. Apart from the fact that the German language takes up more space, I took van Geet's advice in his review (New in Chess Yearbook 68) to leave out some non-essential things.

Harald Keilhack  
Schwieberdingen, August 2005

# Chapter II – The Van Geet Attack

## 1. ♖c3 d5 2. e4 d4 3. ♗ce2

The Van Geet Attack 1. ♖c3 d5 2. e4 d4 3. ♗ce2 followed by ♗e2-g3 is the core of the 1. ♖c3 opening. While elsewhere there are constantly possible transitions to the patterns of standard openings, the Van Geet Attack is a fully independent entity which strives for early knight activity on the kingside.



White usually plays ♗g3, ♗f3, ♗c4 or ♗b5, d3, 0-0; while Black can vary the formation of his pawns and minor pieces in many ways, occasionally he even castles queenside. Due to the closed structure of the position, move-orders can vary. One should know the concrete lines after

3...e5 4. ♗g3 ♗e6, and besides, one should be aware of the problem of finding the right timing for f2-f4 in the 3...c5 line. For all other cases, it's much more important to develop a good understanding of the strategic issues. E.g., *Section 10* is *per se* non-theoretical, as both parties may vary their moves in nearly any way (but it's nearly always good for White!).

Therefore, I have included a lengthy introduction to recurring strategic issues. This seemed necessary solely in the current chapter, as otherwise the mutual strategy is mostly obvious, but this one has a bold distinguished character, including various far from obvious manoeuvres. Possibly, this is caused by the fact that the Van Geet Attack has all characteristics of a closed opening, while all other lines could belong to the semi-open games.

2...d4 is chosen either by somewhat naive players who are attracted by the fact that Black wins time and space (usually going for the clumsy c5/e5/♗d6/♗f6 setup afterwards), or by strong players who are aware of the strategic risks but are striving for a complex battle.

Overview:

*Section 8:* Strategic elements of the Van Geet Attack

*Section 9:* Early deviations

*Section 10:* 1. ♖c3 d5 2. e4 d4 3. ♗ce2 e5 4. ♗g3 various

*Section 11:* 1. ♖c3 d5 2. e4 d4 3. ♗ce2 e5 4. ♗g3 ♗e6

*Section 12:* The 3...c5 system - 1. ♖c3 d5 2. e4 d4 3. ♗ce2 c5

*Section 13:* The Lizard Attack - 1. ♖c3 d5 2. e4 d4 3. ♗ce2 followed by g2-g3

Section 11 with 4...♗e6 is the theoretical mainline, while Section 13 shows a totally different approach, far from the intentions of the Van Geet Attack.

## Section 8

# Strategic elements of the Van Geet Attack

We'll look at the following elements:

- ① Basic (knight) tactics
- ② Sudden attack on the king
- ③ The thematic lever f2-f4
- ④ Exchanging bishops - some thoughts about 'good' and 'bad' bishops
- ⑤ The march of the h-pawn: ...h5(-h4-h3)
- ⑥ The black pawn wall on the kingside
- ⑦ The doubled c-pawns
- ⑧ The phantom pawn on d3
- ⑨ The pawn push b2-b4
- ⑩ 'Defensive energy' and sliding into a messy position

The discussion is not finished with this section. Some of those elements are the focus of attention in some critical lines.

Besides the above, the motif **c2-c3** should be mentioned. White usually resorts to this measure when Black has prepared himself well against other plans like f2-f4. Compare the King's Indian, where (after d4-d5) ...f7-f5 is Black's standard thrust, but occasionally he plays ...c6 as well. The logic behind this is hard to grasp, as in the King's Indian, it's usually White's task to take action on the queenside.

It's hard to illustrate c2-c3 clearly, as it's often only an adjunct to other plans, and its influence on the game is more subtle. Concretely, c2-c3 indirectly helps to stabilize the position of the c4-bishop (in the King's Indian, Black often plays ...a5 and ...c6 when he has a knight on c5), in some cases, it makes b2-b4 (item ⑨) work; and it's particularly beneficial to play c2-c3 when Black has blocked his c-pawn by playing ...♞c6. In this case, White has a good chance to gain superiority in the centre.

## ① Basic (knight) tactics

The following may look rather suited for a beginner's book. However, after the unaccustomed 1.♟c3! such disasters are not at all rare:

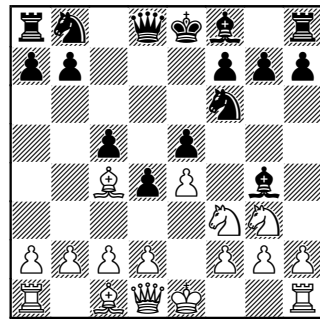
**1.♟c3 d5 2.e4 d4 3.♞ce2 e5 4.♞g3 c5**  
 4...♞c6 5.♞f3 ♟d6 6.♟c4 ♞ge7??

This position was reached, via a 'small' transposition (1.e4 e5 2.♞f3 d5 3.♟c3!? d4 etc), in the top-flight *Internet Chess Club* encounter Vlassov-Radjabov, 8th February 2003 (the latter was just warming up for Linares where he was going to beat Kasparov). Unsuspecting, White continued with 7.0-0, missing the chance to crush the youngster with 7.♞g5! 0-0 (7...♞f8 8.♞xh7) 8.♞h5 +-.  
**5.♟c4**

Or 5.♞f3 ♟g4 6.♟c4 f6? 7.♞xe5! ♟xd1?  
 8.♟f7+ ♞e7 9.♞f5#, Moody-S.Bender, corr. 1985.

**5...♞f6**  
 5...♟e7? 6.♞h5 g6 7.♞xe5 ±, Leeners-Douwes, match 1972.

**6.♞f3 ♟g4??**



**7.♟xf7+**

This motif finds its victims again and again.

**7...♞e7 8.♞xe5!**

And now even Legal's mate: 8...♟xd1 9.♞f5#. The move 7.♞xe5 was already possible in the diagram position (7...♟e6).

**8...♞c7 9.♞xg4** and 1-0/41, van Bellen-Glende, Wildbad (Wch veterans) 1993.

The following game shows knight tactics in a less trivial manner. The victim, the late Hungarian IM Cserna, was a well-known open specialist at the time:

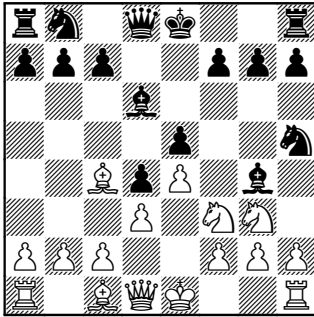
Game 11  
Frick – Cserna  
Vienna 1984

1. ♖c3 d5 2. e4 d4 3. ♗ce2  
e5 4. ♗f3

As we will see in *Game 17*, this is not the best move. Also the next moves of both parties are far from perfect. But in the year 1984, even the few specialists could not know everything.

4... ♗d6 5. ♗g3 ♗e6

5... ♗f6 6. ♗c4 ♗g4 7. d3 ♗h5?



8. ♗xf7+! ♗xf7 9. ♗xh5 ♗xh5 10. ♗xe5+  
♗xe5 11. ♖xh5+ ♗e6 12. ♖f5+ ♗d6 13.  
f4+- (1-0/19), Schleef-Menke, 1988/89.

6. ♗b5+

Preferable is 6.c3 first.

6... ♗d7

More logical is 6...c6 7. ♗a4 ♗a6 or 7...  
♗d7 (7...♖a5 8.c3!). But the situation  
after this is less favourable for Black  
than in *Game 22* - here, the d6-bishop  
obstructs the d-file, which is a disadvan-  
tage in view of the typical motif ...d4-d3!

7. ♗a4

7.c3! c5 8.b4 would transpose to *Game 24*.

7...c5

?! according to Moser, but I think the  
move isn't that bad.

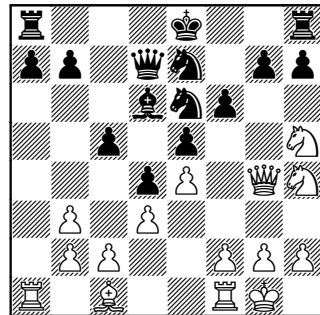
8.0-0 f6 9.d3 ♗e7 10. ♗b3  
♗f8?

But this seems too artificial. In the game  
Salimäki-Franssila, Finland 1999, there  
followed 10... ♗xb3 11.axb3 g6 12. ♗h1?  
(better 12. ♗d2 or 12. ♗e1, with ideas like  
♖g4 and/or f2-f4) 12... ♖c7 13. ♗g1?! h5  
14. ♗3e2 g5, and now Black had the  
upper hand.

11. ♗h4 ♖d7 12. ♗h5 ♗xb3?!

12... ♗g8 was suggested as a possible  
improvement, but I think it's already too  
late: 13. ♗h6! ♗f7 14. ♖f3 gxh6 15.  
♖xf6+ ♗e8 16. ♖xh6 ♗d8 17. ♗f6+-;  
12... ♗f7 13.f4±.

13.axb3 ♗e6 14. ♖g4!+-



The knight tactics decide the game:  
14... ♗g8 15. ♗f5 ♗xf5 (15... ♗g6 16. ♗h6  
or 16. ♗fxg7+) 16. ♗xf6+, 14... ♗f7  
15. ♗xg7, 14...0-0 15. ♗h6 or:

14... ♗c6 15. ♖xe6+ ♖xe6 16.  
♗xg7+ ♗f7 17. ♗xe6 ♖xe6

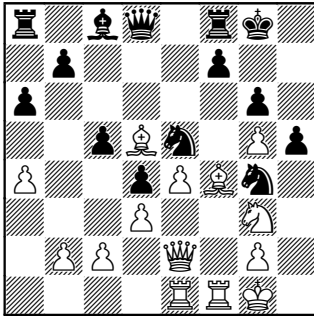
Frick needed only seven minutes to reach  
this endgame with a clear pawn up - whereas  
the black clock showed 90 minutes. White  
converted his advantage convincingly.

... 1-0/41.

## ② Sudden attack on the king

After castling, Black's king is far from being safe. The c4-bishop plays an important role in White's attack, e.g. when pinning f7:

### Schäfer-Frey – Arndt Germany 1991



Black has just driven the c4-bishop to d5 by 16...♗ce5. Now he should deactivate this time bomb by 17...♗e6!, as 18.♗xb7 ♖b8 19.♗xa6 ♖xb2♖ can hardly be in White's intentions, e.g. 20.♗b5 c4. Instead there followed the leisurely:

**17...♖a7? 18.♗xh5!**

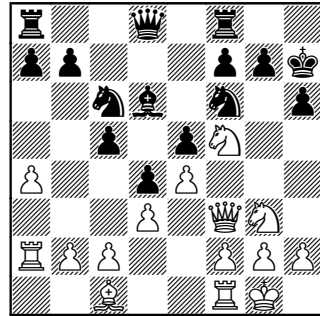
An early ...h7-h5 is often tempting, while the disadvantages of ...h5 only show up later! More about this below in this chapter.

**18...gxh5 19.♗xe5+- ♖xg5**  
**19...♗xe5 20.♖xh5 ♗e6 21.g6+-.**  
**20.♗d6 ♗e3 21.♗xf8 ♗xd5 22.exd5**  
**b6 23.♖e8 1-0**

But even after exchanging the king's bishop Black should not wrongly believe that he is safe.

In the following game, the bishop swap recently took place on a2.

### P. Bischoff – Fux Bern 1999



**15.♗xg7! ♗xg7**

**15...♗b4 16.♗7h5.**

**16.♗f5+**

**16.♗xh6+!? ♗xh6 (16...♗h8 17.♗h5±)**

**17.♗f5+ ♗g6 (17...♗h7? 18.♖h3+ ♗g8**

**19.♖g3+) 18.♖g3+ ♗g4 19.♖xg4+ ♗f6**

**20.♖g7+ ♗e6 21.♖h6+ f6 22.♖h3 had**

to be considered. But not least because of the offside position of the a2-rook Black retains chances for counter-play, e.g. after 22...♗d7 23.♗xd4 f5.

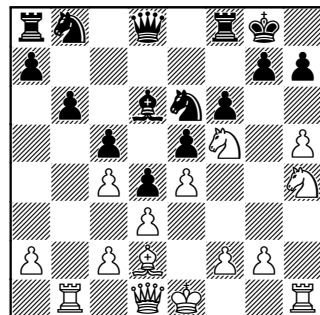
**16...♗h8 17.♗xh6**

Probably 17.♖h3!? was stronger.

**17...♗g8 18.♖h3 ♗h7 19.f4 exf4**

**20.♗xf4, and 20...♗e5! should keep**  
 Black in the game.

### M. Larsson – Lavoisier corr. (1st North Sea team cup) 1998



16. ♖g4! ♜d7

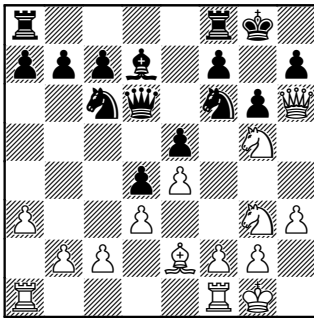
Or 16... ♖h8 17. ♗g6+.

16... ♗g5 17. ♗xd6 (17.g3!? Δf4) 17... ♜xd6 18. ♗xg5 fxg5 19. ♜xg5 costs a pawn, 16... ♖f7± was a less than ideal solution. 17. ♗h6+ and 1-0 due to 18. ♗g6+ hxg6 19. hxg6 gxh6 20. ♜xh6+ ♖g8 21. ♜h3.

The final example leads to the f2-f4 theme. However, here this is not played as a pawn lever but to make space for the rooks!

**Jo. Bastian – Luz Bastos**

corr. 1999



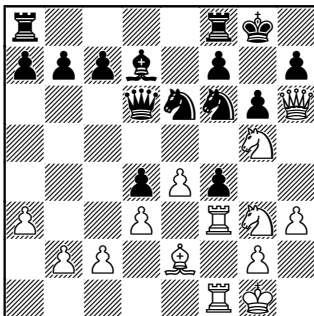
16.f4 exf4 17.f3!

After 17.e5 ♜xe5 18. ♗3e4 ♜fe8 19. ♗xf6+ ♜xf6 20. ♜xh7+ ♖f8 Black escapes.

17... ♗d8

Δ... ♗e6. 17... fxg3? 18. ♜xf6+- and 17... ♗e5? 18. ♜xf4+- are out of the question; 17... ♜fe8!? 18. ♜af1 ♜f8 19. ♗xf7!±.

18. ♜af1 ♗e6



19. ♗h5! gxh5 20. ♜g3!

It is as if the black pawns did not exist.

20... fxg3 21. ♜xf6 ♗xg5 22. ♜xg5+ ♖h8 23. ♜xd6 cxd6 24. ♜f6+ ♖g8 25. ♜xd6 ♜fd8 26. ♜xg3+ ♖f8 27. ♗xh5 with a winning position, 1-0/35.

See, besides other examples in the current chapter, particularly *Game 58* for a piece attack with this very pawn structure!

**③ The thematic lever f2-f4**

Game 12

**Schlundwein – S. Förster**

Germany (Youth-ch U17) 1991

1. ♗c3 d5 2.e4 d4 3. ♗ce2 e5

4. ♗g3 ♗d6 5. ♗c4 ♗e7!?

Concerning other possibilities see *Game 18*.

6.d3 0-0 7. ♗1e2!?

7. ♗f3.

7... ♗g6 8.0-0 ♖h8?!

The c4-bishop makes Black nervous. Exchanging it with ... ♜e8 and ... ♗e6 is by far not sufficient for equality - White can point to the potential outpost f5, the bad d6-bishop as well as the lever c2-c3.

Concerning the question, how bad (or not!) the doubled pawns are after 8... ♗e6!? 9. ♗xe6 fx6 are, see *Game 18*. In the current situation, the g6-knight would be perfectly placed, while the 'bad' bishop protects everything, e.g. 10.c3 (10. ♗d2 ♗f4! looks too slow) 10...c5 11. ♜b3 (11.b4!?) 11... ♜d7 - White has only a tiny edge.

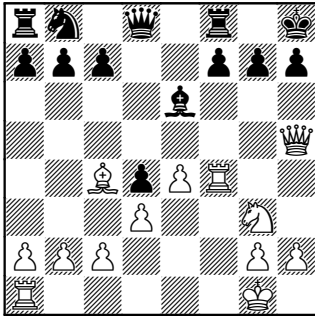
9.f4 exf4

9...f6 10.f5 would be a dream-like King's Indian constellation - the king's bishop takes part in the attack, instead of idling on g2 (or g7 respectively).

However, 9... ♗g4!? 10.f5 ♗f4 11. ♗xf4 exf4 12. ♗h1! was worth considering.

10.♗xf4 ♗xf4 11.♗xf4 ♗xf4  
12.♖xf4 ♗e6 13.♖h5

Dunnington mentions 13.♗xe6 fxe6 14.♖xf8+ ♖xf8 15.♖g4. White has ♗e2-f4 in reserve, but attacking with ♖h5 is much more natural.



13...♗xc4?!

Thus Black increases his problems (×f7). A natural defensive move was 13...♗d7, and now 14.♖af1 ♗f6 (14...♗xc4 15. dxc4 f6 16.♖h4 h6 17.♗f5+-). If now 15.♖h4 with kingside pressure or 15.♖b5 with some ideas against b7 seem too vague, then the exchange sacrifice 15.♖xf6 gxf6 16.♖h6 (Δ♗h5) could be interesting: 16...♗xc4 17.♖f5 ♖g8 18.♖h5 ♖g7 19.♗f5 ♖g8 20.♖xf6 ♗e6 21.♗e7 ♖f8 22.♖xh7+! ♗xh7 23.♖h4# or 19...♖f8 20.♖xf6 ♗e6 21.♗e7! with the decisive threat ♖xh7+!. 16...♖g8 looks forced, but after 17.♖xf6 White has at least compensation.

14.dxc4 ♖e8

14...♖g8 15.♖h4 h6 16.♗f5 or 14...f6 15.♖h4 h6 16.♗f5 with decisive threats.

15.♖h4 h6 16.♗f5 ♖e6

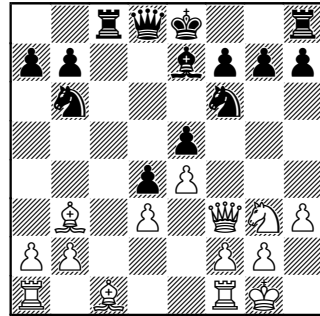
16...f6 17.♗xd4 was the lesser evil.

17.♖g5! ♖g6 18.♗xh6!

1-0

due to 18...♖xg5 19.♗xf7+ ♖g8 20. ♗xg5 with two extra pawns. Some minor omissions caused this drastic defeat.

Glowszky – ‘Irlknight’  
corr. 2003/04



The f2-f4 push seems to be out of reach for the time being, but it easily decides the game within a few moves:

14.♗f5 0-0 15.♖g3 g6

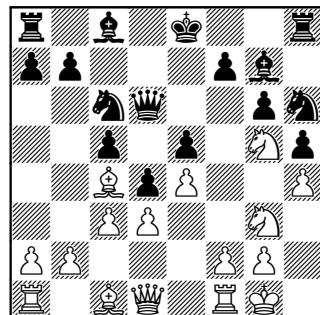
15...♗h5 16.♖xe5+-.

16.♗g5 ♗bd7 17.♗xe7+ ♖xe7 18.f4 ♖g7 18...♗h5 19.♖h4 with overwhelming pressure on the kingside.

19.fxe5 ♗h5 20.♗xe7 ♗xg3 21.♖f2, and Black may resign.

If Black has not yet castled, the advance f2-f4 may cause tactical fireworks on the critical f7-square, similar to the King’s Gambit. Black frequently goes to the dogs; I’ve chosen a comparatively complicated - but nice! - example:

H. Steiner – Liedl  
Vienna 1991



12.f4 ♖g4!? 13.♗xf7!? ♚e7

After 13...♗xf7 14.♖xf7+ ♚xf7 15.fxe5+ ♚g8 16.exd6 ♖xd1 17.♖xd1 dxc3 18.bxc3 ♖xc3 19.♖b1 ♖d4+ (19...b6 20.♗e2) 20.♚h1 b6 21..♖f4 ♚f7 Black should have obtained equality.

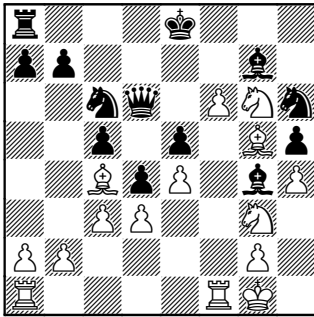
14.♗xh8 ♖xd1 15.♖xg6 ♚f6?

15...♚d6 16.f5 ∞.

16.f5

The f-pawn now becomes a real force.

16...♖g4 17.♖g5 ♚d6 18.f6



18...♖f8

Better was 18...0-0-0 19.fxg7 ♚xg6, after which 20.♖f6! is strongest: 20...♚xg7 21.♖xh6 ♖h8 (21...♖f8 22.♗xh5±) 22.♗f5 ♖xf5 23.♖xh8+ ♚xh8 24.exf5. With the material balance being roughly even, the new-born passed f-pawn as well as the bishop pair are factors in White's favour.

19.f7+ ♗xf7

19...♚d7 20.♖f6 ♚c7 21.♗xf8+ +-.

20.♖xf7+

In the final stage, the king is attacked by the white pieces.

20...♚d7 21.♖f6 ♚c7 22.♗xh5?!

Even stronger was 22.♖d5!.

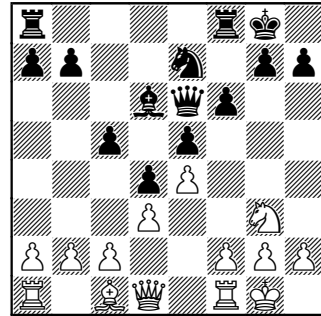
22...♖xh5?

After 22...♖d6 Black could play on for some time.

23.♖e6+ ♚d6 24.♖c8# 1-0

Basically, accomplishing f2-f4 does not guarantee an advantage in itself - it's just what one normally does:

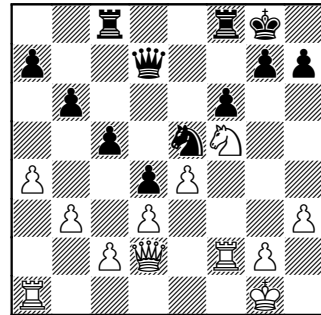
### Roques – Balaian corr. 1990



14.f4

After this Black can exchange his bad bishop. But that's no reason for White to refrain from f2-f4, as he has no other sensible plan. This should indicate how questionable the concept of good and bad bishops is here, See also ♁.

14...exf4 15.♖xf4 ♖xf4 16.♖xf4 ♗g6 17.♖f2 ♗e5 18.h3 ♚b6 19.b3 ♖ac8 20.♚d2 ♚c7 21.♗f5 ♚d7 22.a4 b6



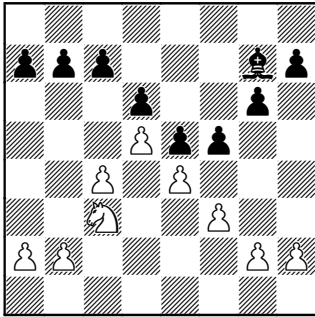
Both parties have obtained a nice square for their knight. The position is equal.

23.♖af1 a6 24.♚f4 b5 25.axb5 axb5 26.♚g3 ♖c7??

Counter-balancing the slight pressure on the kingside, Black prepares the lever ...c5-c4. 26...♚h8 would have kept the equilibrium, but after Black's blunder it's over.

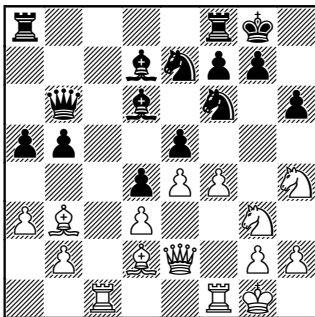
27.♗h6+ ♚h8 28.♚xe5 ♖d8 29.♖xf6 1-0

As we have seen, Black's equalizing measure is ...exf4, plus afterwards taking e5 under control. He should not allow the advance f4-f5. Regarding this, I would like to outline some differences to the King's Indian:



White doesn't take on f5 because after e4xf5 g6xf5! (White is missing the analogous move in the Van Geet Attack) he cannot keep the g7-bishop under control in the long run - ...e5-e4 is in the air. On the other hand, Black doesn't play ...f5xe4 (after ♗xe4 White has a nice square on e4) but ...f5-f4. The kingside attack with ...g5-g4 etc is strong but not superior to White's queenside attack with c4-c5 as the g7-bishop is only obstructing its own pieces on the g-file. With a bishop on c5 - this would correspond to the Van Geet Attack, with colours reversed - the attack would be much more vigorous:

**Mazzoleni – Briozzo**  
Villa Ballester 1993



**18...♖b8**

Gritting his teeth, he allows f4-f5.

After **18...exf4 19.♗xf4** (19.♗gf5!?) Black is not yet ready to fight for the vital control over e5, e.g. 19...♗g4 20.e5 ♗b8 21.♗gf5 ♗xf5 22.♖xg4±. The resource ...♗g6 (e.g. after taking on f4 twice) is not available due to the pin of the b3-bishop. **19...♗xf4 20.♖xf4 g5!**? looks faulty, but it isn't easy to refute: 21.♖xf6! ♖xf6 22.♗h5 ♖e5 (22...♖b6 23.e5 or 22...♖h8 23.♖c7, with very good compensation) 23.♗f3! ♗g4 (23...♖h8 24.e5) 24.♗xe5 ♗xe2 25.♗g3 (the point, the bishop is trapped) 25...♗xd3 26.♗xd3 ♖ac8 27.♖f1 with an advantageous endgame for White.

⇒ concerning the fork ...g7-g5 after f2-f4, compare *Game 21*, note g2 to Black's 6th move, including the insert which follows it.

**19.f5 ♖h8 20.♗h5 ♗xh5?**

More stubborn was 20...♗eg8, after which White continues his attack with 21.♗xf6 ♗xf6 22.g4. Black lacks counter-play but retains some chances for defence.

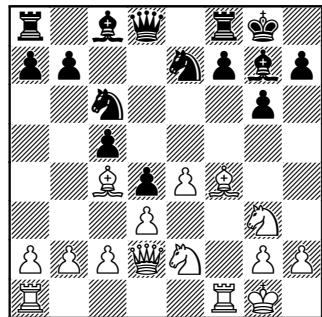
**21.♖xh5 +- ♗g8**

21...f6 22.♗xh6.

**22.f6! ♗g6 23.♗xg6+ fxg6 24.♖xg6 ♖xf6 25.♖xf6 ♖d8 26.♖f7 1-0**

A possible disadvantage of f2-f4 had already been mentioned: The weakening of the e3-square. In the following example this weakness turns out to be illusory:

**Casper – Möbius**  
East Germany (ch) Plauen 1980

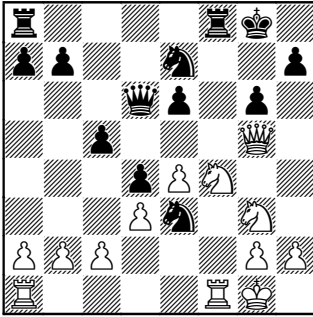


Black's position looks solid, and the second player continues with some plausible exchanges, hoping for further relief. It looks like the slight initiative resulting from f2-f4 should peter out. But exactly the opposite happens:

11...♙e6 12.♙xe6 fxe6 13.♙h6 ♔d6  
14.♙g5 ♙xh6

Also after 14...♗e5!? 15.♘f4 White retains the initiative.

15.♗xh6 ♘e5 16.♘f4 ♘g4 17.♗g5 ♘e3



18.e5! ♗c6 19.♘e4 ♖f7

So not e3 but f6 is the crucial weakness. 19...♗xf1 20.♗xe7 (20.♗xf1!?) 20...♗ae8 (20...♗f7? 21.♘f6+ ♗g7 22.♘xe6+) 21. ♗g5 ♘e3 22.♘f6+ (22.♘xg6 hxg6 23. ♗xg6+ ♗h8 24.♘f6 ♗xg2+ 25.♗xg2 ♘xg2 26.♘xe8 ♘e3=) 22...♗xf6 (22... ♗g7? 23.♘6h5+ ♗g8/♗h8 24.♘xg6+–) 23.exf6 with advantage for White, Black's king's position remains threatened (e.g. after h2-h4-h5). Still this was Black's best chance.

20.♗f3

On his e3 outpost, the black knight is only a spectator.

20...♗af8 21.♘f6+ ♗h8 22.♗h3 ♖g7?!

Black was lost anyway, e.g. 22...♘3f5 23.g4 ♘e3 24.♗h6 or 22...♘3d5 23. ♗h6 (Δ ♗xh7+!) 23...♗xf6 24.exf6 ♘f5 25.♘xg6+.

23.♘xh7 ♗xh7 24.♗xe7! 1-0

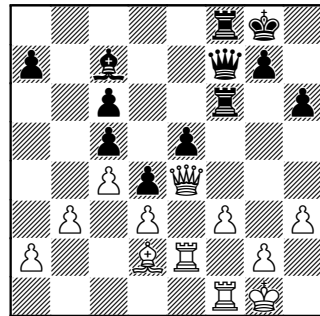
#### ④ Exchanging bishops - some thoughts about 'good' and 'bad' bishops

As already indicated, the issue of 'good' and 'bad' bishops may be irritating. Technically, White's light-squared bishop is 'bad' and his dark-squared bishop 'good', accordingly, Black's dark-squared bishop (e.g. placed on d6) is 'bad' and his light-squared (e.g. on e6) is 'good'.

Particularly with regard to the white bishops, this categorization is problematic. The f1-bishop is played to c4 or b5, in front of its own pawn chain c2/d3/e4, which overrules the labelling as a bad one. On the contrary, the c1-bishop is often restricted by Black's pawn chain, e.g. d4/e5/f6/g7 or even -g5 (see ⑥, the pawn wall). Often Black uses his 'good' c8-bishop only to neutralize White's king's bishop, while his 'big pawn' on d6 effectively works against White's f2-f4 lever and helps to stabilize Black's position. "Bad bishops protect good pawns" - Suba, cited after John Watson, *Secrets of Modern Chess Strategy*; p.159, I recommend the study of the relevant chapter.

#### D. Blau – Guzek (1)

corr. (preliminary World Cup) 1994



19...♗xe5 20.fxe5 (20.dxe5 ♗e8±) 20...  
 cxd4 21.♙xd4 ♗d7 22.♗g4 ♗xe5 23.  
 ♗xe5 ♙xe5 24.♙xe5 ♗xe5 25.♗xf7+ ±.

**20.♗xd7 ♗xd7 21.dxc5 bxc5**  
**22.♗xd7 ♗xd7 23.♗d1 ♗c7**  
**24.♗e4 ♙f8 25.♙d2 ♗d8 26.**  
**♙c3 ♗xd1 27.♗xd1 ♙e7 28.**  
**♗f3 f6 29.♙b2 ♗f7 30.g4 ♗d6!**

30...f5 31.gxf5 exf5 32.♗g5+ ♙xg5  
 33.fxg5 ♗e7 34.♗d5+ ♗f8 35.♗f1!!  
 ♗c7 (35...♗e3 36.♙a3 ♗h3+ 37.♗g1  
 ♗e3+ 38.♗g2 ♗e2+ 39.♗g3 ♗g4+  
 40.♗f2 +-) 36.♗c6 ♗e6 37.♙f6! ±.

**31.♙e5!?** fxe5! = **32.♗xd6+**  
 ♙xd6 **33.fxe5+ ♗e7 34.♗f6+**  
 ♗d7 **35.exd6 ♗xd6 36.♗g7+**  
 ♗c6!

36...♗e7 37.♗h6! ±.

**37.♗xa7**

37.♗xh7 ♗d2+ 38.♗f3 ♗xa2 39.♗xg6  
 ♗xb3+ followed by ...♗xc4(+) =.

**37...♗d2+**

1/2-1/2

## Section 23

**1.♗c3 d5 2.e4 c6 3.♗f3**

A largely underestimated sideline against the Caro-Kann, which in my opinion fits well into the 1.♗c3 master plan.

The reason for this disrespect is not the lack of success of this move but that it contradicts a beginner's rule:

*You must not bring your queen  
 into the game too early, etc*

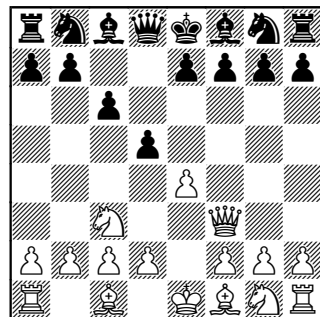
Nowadays one is less dogmatic. Modern master practice is full of concrete opening lines which seemingly contradict the classical principles. Concrete motifs of 3.♗f3 are:

- The interesting duel for the kingside dominance between White's queen and Black's minor pieces, beginning e.g. with ...♗f6, ...♙g4.
- The repeated sacrifice of the d4-pawn.

The latter motif is rather uncommon for the 1.♗c3 player who normally refrains from playing d2-d4. But here the sacrifice of this pawn - not protected by the queen or a knight on f3 - is very characteristic.

The idea occasionally appeared in the fifties and sixties, it was re-discovered by Graham Burgess in *101 Chess Opening Surprises* and elaborated on by Michael Negele in *Kaissiber 15*. Most cited games and analysis stem from this article. Negele calls this line the *Goldman Variation* after Warren H. Goldman.

Whoever would like to learn more about this and other interesting historical references, should study the said article, which particularly stands out with its extensive research in old sources. A pleasing exception in times, where the publications of the leading British houses are usually limited to *Chess Informant*, *TWIC* and *MegaBase* and perhaps the immediate predecessor.



We'll examine:

Game 51: **3...d4 4.♙c4!**

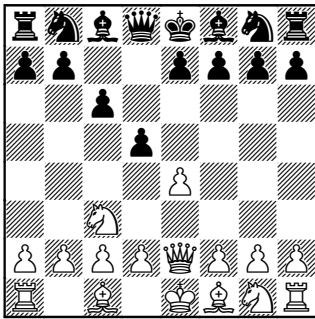
Game 52: **3...♗f6 (3...e6, 3...e5)**

Game 53: **3...dxe4**

Game 51  
**Negele – T. Bialas**  
 corr. 1996

1.♟c3 d5 2.e4 c6 3.♞f3

The 'other' queen move, 3.♞e2, is of a very different character. While 3.♞f3 is obviously aggressive, 3.♞e2 appeals rather introverted, clearing d1 for the knight and planning to manoeuvre in home territory for the time being.



- a) **3...g6?** 4.exd5 cxd5 5.♞b5+, clumsy but effective.
- b) **3...d4** 4.♞d1! e5 5.g3, playing the Lizard Attack after d2-d3 and finally f2-f4. This setup is impossible to refute, as White's pieces control every critical square. The wandering knight will enter action on f2 (compare 1.♟c3 d5 2.e4 c6 3.f4 dxe4 4.♞xe4 ♞f6 5.♞f2! and similar). After a stereotyped approach (...c5, ...♞c6, ...♞d6, ...♞f6/♞e7 etc) Black may miss a real prospect. Therefore, I'd like to suggest 5...h5!, undermining the f2-f4 lever by ...h5-h4 and possibly securing an outpost on g4 - compare the game van den Doel-Sosonko within *Game 31* (notes to 5.♞f3).
- c) **3...♞f6** 4.e5 ♞f7 5.f4 in the spirit of *Game 60*, Nimzowitsch-Alekhine.
- d) **3...dxe4** 4.♞xe4 ♞f5 (4...♞d7?? 5.♞d6#), and instead of the usual Caro-Kann like squabble, the game van Geet-

Diaconescu, corr. 1982/86, quickly went out of control: **5.b3!?** (5.g4!? ♞xe4 6.♞xe4 ♞f6 7.♞f3 e6 8.♞h3!? ♞e7 9.♞f4 ♞bd7 10.♞h5 ♞xh5 11.gxh5, Mitrovic-Mijajlovic, Zimski 2005) **5...♞d4!?** 6.♞c3 ♞xc2 7.♞f3 ♞f6 8.♞e5 ♞d7 9.♞xd7 ♞xd7 10.♞a3∞.

**3...d4** 4.♞c4!

The first point. Capturing the knight would be suicidal, although Black doesn't lose by force: **4...dxc3?** 5.♞xf7+ ♞d7 6.dxc3 ♞c7 7.♞f4+ ♞b6 8.♞d1± (Goldman) with more than just compensation.

**4...♞f6**

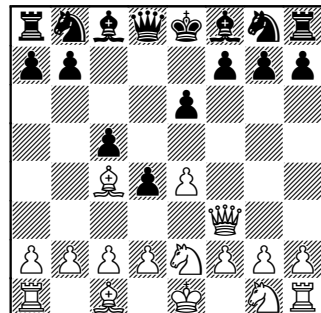
**4...e6** leads to a different kind of play:

**5.♞ce2**

5.♞b1 is inferior. The following game of the 1.♟c3 pioneer Leeners must be shown due to the nice pawn mate at the end: 5...♞d7 6.♞g3 ♞e7 7.♞e2 b5 8.♞b3 c5 9.d3 ♞b6 10.c3 ♞c6 11.cxd4 cxd4 12.0-0 ♞d6 13.f4 ♞b7 14.♞a3 a6 15.♞d2 g6 16.♞ac1 ♞g7 17.f5 ♞xg3 18.♞xg3 exf5 19.exf5 0-0 20.f6 ♞h8 21.♞e4 ♞ad8 22.♞h6 ♞fe8 23.♞xf7+! ♞xf7 24.♞g5+ ♞g8 25.f7#, Leeners-van Dijk, Amsterdam 1980.

**5...c5**

Black has tried various other moves; some idea: 5...g6 6.d3 ♞g7 7.h4, 5...b5 6.♞b3 ♞b7 7.d3 c5 8.c3 or 8.♞g3, 5...♞f6 6.c3 or 6.♞g3, 5...♞f6 6.e5 ♞fd7 7.♞e4/7.♞g3. Invariably, the kingside-capturing queen plays a leading part.



a) **6.♖g3** ♘c6 7.a3 ♘f6 8.d3 h5! 9. ♘g5 h4! 10.♙xh4 ♘xe4 11.dxe4 ♖xh4 12.♖d3?!, Brat-Zita, CSSR (ch) Prague 1953, 12...♘e5 13.♙b5+ ♘e7 followed by ...♖xe4. In my opinion, White has not enough compensation.

b) **6.d3** ♘c6 7.♖g3 ♘a5 (7...g6 8.h4, 7...♘f6 8.f4) 8.♙b5+ ♘d7 9.♙xd7+ ♖xd7 10.♘f3 ♘c6 11.0-0 f6 12.♖h3 ♙d6 13.c3 e5 14.♖xd7+ ♘xd7 15.cxd4 cxd4, Ardeleanu-Lupu, Romania (ch) 1996. A typical King's Indian endgame with colours reversed, however, White already exchanged his bad bishop, approx. =.

c) **6.b4!?** (6.e5!?) 6...cxb4 7.♙b2 ♘c6 8.♖d3 ♙c5 9.♘f3 e5?! (else 10.♘exd4) 10.♙xf7+! ♘xf7 11.♖c4+ Goldman (at the end Black's position is not as bad as it looks).

**5.e5!**

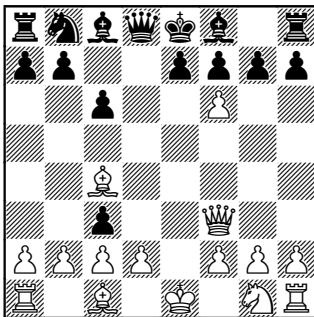
**5.♘ce2!?** e5 as in *Van Geet Attack* with the queen in play.

**5...dxc3**

**5...♙g4** 6.♖d3!± Goldman.

**5...♘bd7!?** is a weird idea that results in some compensation for a pawn after **6.exf6 ♘e5 7.♙xf7+ ♘xf7** 8.fxg7 ♙xg7 9.♘e4 d3 (Gypla-Solya, corr. 2003) or **7.♖e2 ♘xc4** 8.fxg7 ♙xg7 9.♖xc4 ♙e6 followed by dxc3.

**6.exf6**



Now the question for Black is whether to

accept a slightly inferior position (doubled pawns) or to grab a 'hot' pawn.

**6...cxd2+?!**

Besides:

a) **6...cxb2? 7.♙xf7+! ♘xf7?** (7...♘d7 8.♙xb2 exf6±, first happened in T.Schiller-G.Kuhn, Pinneberg 2001) **8.fxg7+ ♘xg7** 9.♙xb2+ ♘g8 10.♖g3+ ♘f7 11.♙xh8 1-0, Dieu-N. N., Tours 1993.

b) **6...gxf6 7.dxc3** ♘d7 8.♙f4 with some initiative for White, Shamkovich-N.Kopylov, Chigorin memorial 1951. White may insist on gambit play by **7.♖h5!?** cxd2+ (7...e6 8.dxc3 is a slight improvement on 7.dxc3) 8.♙xd2 e6 9. ♘f3 (9.0-0-0 ♖d4!?, Eraclides-Y.Kotov, corr. 2002).

c) **6...exf6**

The most solid move - White keeps the advantage of the first player but nothing more.

**7.♖xc3**

7.dxc3 and 7.bxc3 are equally good - a matter of taste.

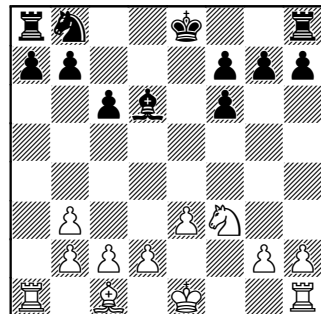
**7...♙d6 8.♖e3+**

Or 8.♘f3 ♖e7+ 9.♖e3.

**8...♖e7 9.♘f3**

9.d4 ♙e6 10.♙d3 0-0 11.♘e2 ♘d7 12. 0-0 ♖fe8, Lipnitzky-Goldberg, Baku 1951, ± according to Negele. Devotees of the Caro-Kann with 4...exf6 might protest and rather call this a standard position.

**9...♙e6** 10.♙b3 ♙xb3 11.axb3 ♖xe3+ 12.fxe3,





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