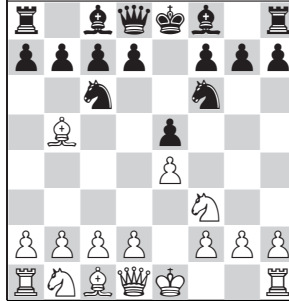


# Contents

Explanation of symbols. . . . .	6
Preface by the author. . . . .	7
<b>Chapter 1</b>	Fourth move alternatives. . . . . 11
<b>Chapter 2</b>	4.d3 d6 . . . . . 16
<b>Chapter 3</b>	4.d3 ♘c5: Introduction, and the development of the b1-knight. . . . . 20
<b>Chapter 4</b>	4.d3 ♘c5 5.♙xc6 dxc6 . . . . . 25
<b>Chapter 5</b>	4.d3 ♘c5 5.0-0 . . . . . 36
<b>Chapter 6</b>	4.d3 ♘c5 5.c3: Sidelines . . . . . 42
<b>Chapter 7</b>	4.d3 ♘c5 5.c3 0-0 6.0-0 d6 . . . . . 53
<b>Chapter 8</b>	4.0-0 ♖xe4: Alternatives to 5.d4 . . . . . 67
<b>Chapter 9</b>	4.0-0 ♖xe4 5.d4: The Berlin jungle . . . . . 78
<b>Chapter 10</b>	The Old Berlin: 4.0-0 ♖xe4 5.d4 ♙e7. . . . . 86
<b>Chapter 11</b>	4.0-0 ♖xe4 5.d4 ♖d6: Alternatives to the endgame . . 96
<b>Chapter 12</b>	The Westerinen-Eslon Variation: 4.0-0 ♖xe4 5.d4 ♖d6 6.♙xc6 dxc6 7.dxe5 ♖e4 . . . . . 110
<b>Chapter 13</b>	The Berlin endgame: from Lasker to Kramnik. . . . . 119
<b>Chapter 14</b>	9...h6. . . . . 129
<b>Chapter 15</b>	Eljanov's Repertoire . . . . . 135
<b>Chapter 16</b>	The Blockade Variation . . . . . 143
<b>Chapter 17</b>	9...♙e8, lines without ...h7-h5 . . . . . 155
<b>Chapter 18</b>	The Check Variation . . . . . 163
<b>Chapter 19</b>	The Almasi-Kramnik Variation . . . . . 168
<b>Chapter 20</b>	Game collection. . . . . 180
<b>Chapter 21</b>	Instructive Berlin positions . . . . . 235
<b>Chapter 22</b>	Solutions . . . . . 242
Index of names . . . . .	261
Index of games . . . . .	266
Index of variations. . . . .	268
Bibliography . . . . .	272

## Preface by the author

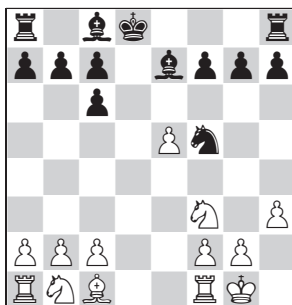


My teammate looked at my analysis of one of the critical variations of the Berlin endgame with a sense of pity and disbelief. Meanwhile, our daughters were playing, unbothered by an episode of the children's series Peppa Pig. For a moment, our looks were diverted to the television to see how Mummy Pig fell through a bramble from atop a ladder she had climbed to find the best berries. A dense shrub, full of thorns ready to dig into the flesh of anybody approaching it without proper caution, is certainly an appropriate metaphor to describe the study of chess openings in the age of computers.

The embryonic stage of the book consisted of fifty pages of analysis of Berlin games played by Magnus Carlsen, updated until December 2015. In late March 2016, I got a phone call from my editor, Alfonso Romero Holmes, encouraging me to expand the investigation beyond the games of the World Champion, and covering the practice of other elite GMs, as well as sidelines often found in the games of amateurs.

We must first of all climb to the top of Mummy Pig's bush to the consider the Berlin endgame. The games from the match Carlsen-Anand in 2014 had made it possible to draft a first version of Chapters 14, 16, 17 and 19, but the analysis of the game Adams-Eljanov, Wijk aan Zee 2016, resulted in a totally new approach:

**1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 ♘f6 4.0-0 ♗xe4 5.d4 ♗d6 6.♙xc6 dxc6 7.dxe5 ♘f5  
8.♚xd8+ ♚xd8 9.h3 ♙e7**

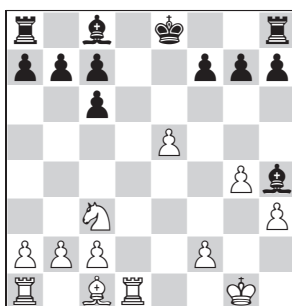


This line did not seem too important, and my first impulse was to mention it only as a sideline, perhaps dedicating an illustrative game to it. However, Pavel Eljanov also played this way against Maxime Vachier-Lagrave at Norway Chess (Game 16), as well as in several other games last year, which forced me to give it more serious consideration.

**10. ♖d1+ ♔e8 11.g4**

The bishop cuts off the retreat of the knight, which is forced into an exchange that is at first sight unfavourable.

**11... ♗h4 12. ♗xh4 ♘xh4 13. ♗c3**



Here Eljanov shows us his idea. Instead of comfortably awaiting events with a solid position he decides to break up the opponent's structure.

**13...h5! 14.f3 f5! 15.exf6 gxf6 16. ♗e2 ♔f7**

It might seem as if Black has started this mess to open up the game for his bishop pair. The main idea, however, is to create a safe position for his king on f7, where it will not disturb the coordination of his pieces. Black's play in this game is so interesting that I decided to dedicate an entire chapter (no. 15) to 9...♙e7, which I have called 'Eljanov's Repertoire'.

Here is an experiment for you: enter the position of the above diagram in your favourite analysis engine, editing it so that Black is allowed to castle. After a few minutes, you will see on your computer screen two alternatives to Eljanov's plan: one is 13...0-0, to continue with ...♖e8 or ...f7-f6, and the other 13...h5 14.f3 ♙d7 and 15...0-0-0. I know I shouldn't fully

trust the evaluation of Stockfish or Komodo, but a basic principle in the Berlin endgame can be inferred:

### **BLACK'S ONLY SERIOUS PROBLEM IS THE POSITION OF HIS KING.**

From this point of view, understanding the final chapters of the book is much easier. In the lines of the Almasi-Kramnik Variation (Chapter 19), the black king comes to b7, and his position is comfortable if the opponent does not exchange the light-squared bishop or at least create serious threats with the advance of his pawn majority. In the other variations, the king remains on e8, either voluntarily or forced by a check on d1, and then you have to either find safety on f7 or accept piece exchanges as in the Blockade Variation (Chapter 16), hoping that the black king is well placed to stop the 'candidate' on e5. In this last line, the most solid one according to theory, I recommend you carefully analyse the ideas of Game 20 (Vachier-Lagrave-Carlsen, Stavanger 2016).

The world elite, led by their brilliant young champion, have stopped trying for an advantage in the typical Berlin endgame, looking for new positions in the labyrinth of the anti-Berlin with 4.d3, a system in itself. This is shown by a constant flow of ideas, such as Caruana and Wei Yi's plan with opposite-side castling after 4.d3 ♖c5 5.♗xc6 bxc6 (Chapter 4 and Game 2), the confirmation that 4.d3 ♖c5 5.0-0 ♘d4! (Chapter 5) is a good method to avoid Carlsen's plans with ♗xc6 after ...d7-d6. New efforts by Anand, Vachier-Lagrave, Giri and Kramnik forced me to rewrite an entire Chapter (no. 7) after 4.d3 ♖c5 5.c3 0-0 6.0-0 d6. Another plan is seen in the atomic variation 4.d3 ♖c5 5.c3 d5!?, which, in the absence of more practical tests, seems to give Black excellent prospects for equality.

The lines of Chapters 8 to 12, although inferior to the Berlin endgame and the Anti-Berlin, are tricky as well. Bareev, Kramnik's second in the famous match of 2000, argues in the excellent book *From London to Elista* (New In Chess, 2007) that Berlin sidelines are inferior, leading to games devoid of content, and that they can be refuted by simple analysis. Relying on Bareev's opinion, and trusting in my own good fortune, I started tackling the lines in Chapters 9-12 with optimism, thinking that analysing them would not take me very long. To my surprise, however, no matter how hard I attacked the dubious positions that follow after 5.d4 a6?! (Chapter 9) and 5.d4 ♘d6 6.♗xc6 bxc6 7.dxe5 ♗e4 (Chapter 12), they somehow kept holding up. On the other hand, the theoretically soft lines of Chapter 11 proved very difficult to deal with from a practical point of view. A

good example of this is Game 13, in which Kramnik himself is unable to equalise after a seemingly harmless novelty by his opponent. From these chapters, an important lesson can be learned, i.e. although objectively Bareev may be right, sometimes grandmasters analyse one of these variations for a single game, hoping to catch an unprepared opponent off guard. This could be called the Muhammad Ali Strategy: float like a butterfly, sting like a bee.

This is not the case in the super-solid and somewhat boring variation 4.0-0 ♖xe4 5.♙e1, in which White plays for a symmetrical position with minimal advantage, or in the venerable variation 5.d4 ♗e7, which we shall baptise Old Berlin in Chapter 10, which is perhaps theoretically not as solid as 5...♗d6 but perfectly playable. For the study of the latter we will use a very useful opening training ploy: we will follow the strong Grandmasters Vladimir Malakhov and Viktor Erdős and build a consistent repertoire based on their games.

I have lived for several months in the heart of the prickly Berlin bush, thorns nailed down to my very soul, but I have managed to unravel the mysteries of this diverse opening, sometimes even at the risk of losing my wits. Dear reader, I am confident you will make this book your own. And once you have removed the most dangerous spines, you may even be able to help me develop it further.

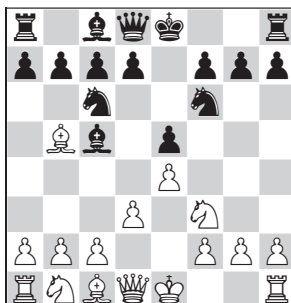
Now it is time to let the analyses speak on my behalf... In addition to the Muses (spiritual, or corporeal as the lyricist of Boleros) and to you, dear reader and future co-author, I would like to thank FIDE Master Marcos Rodriguez Fontecha for his contribution, reviewing the evidence of the book on Carlsen and helping me analyse a couple of critical positions; IM Juan Carlos Fernandez ('the English teacher') for his willingness to always translate some documents; correspondence GM Carlos Rodriguez Amezcqueta for guiding me as I delved into the complex little world of his speciality; my father for helping me with a last-minute review; and, above all, my daughter, little Mar: the human brain needs to rest after several days working in a world as abstract as chess, and I know of no better method for this purpose than answering to the concrete and urgent calls of a four-year-old girl.

Luis Bernal,  
Santander, March 2017

CHAPTER 3

## 4.d3 ♖c5: Introduction, and the development of the b1-knight

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♗c6 3.♙b5 ♘f6 4.d3 ♙c5



The most popular system of development. After 4.0-0, it is not so good to play 4...♙c5, as 5.c3 or 5.♘xe5 give White good prospects for an advantage, but once the white d-pawn has advanced a square, top GMs usually seize the opportunity to develop the bishop actively.

The rapid theoretical development of the variation implicates a division of the material into different chapters; in this chapter we will discuss the moves of the ♗b1, in Chapter 4 the immediate exchange of the knight on c6, 5.0-0 in Chapter 5, and 5.c3, the main variation, in Chapters 6 and 7.

1.e4 e5 2.♗f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 ♗f6 4.d3  
♙c5

A) 5.♗c3

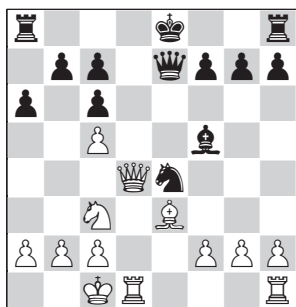
An unpretentious move that leads to a kind of Four Knights Game with the black bishop on c5 instead of b4.

5...d6

The theory of these lines is not entirely established and the decision to promote one or the other move to our main line is rather arbitrary. In this case, we will pay due respect to the following big names, as we are following the game **Carlsen-Anand, London 2012**.

Black has two alternatives that are less solid, but definitely more fun:

a) 5...a6 loses a tempo in return for forcing White to make decisions. Karjakin-A.Onischuk, Baku 2015, continued 6.♙xc6 dxc6 7.♗xe5!? (the future tournament winner completely changes the structure. 7.♙e3 or 7.h3 were possible, aiming for schemes in the style of Chapter 4 (with the immediate 5.♙xc6), claiming that Black has lost a tempo with his 5th move) 7...♖d4 8.♙e3 ♗xe5 9.d4 ♗e7 10.dxc5 ♗xe4 11.♖d4 ♙f5 12.0-0-0.



analysis diagram

Karjakin, who had lost the first game of the mini-match to the experienced American GM, originally also from the Crimean Peninsula, decides to try his luck in an endgame with a minimal edge because of the c5-pawn which fixes weaknesses on b7 and c7. This decision shows just how difficult it is for White to get even the slightest of initiatives against the Berlin. After 12...0-0 13.♗xe4 ♗xe4 14.♗xe4 ♙xe4 15.f3 ♙f5 16.♙f4 ♖ac8 17.♖he1 ♙e6 18.♖e3 ♖fe8 19.♖d4 b6 20.♖b4 a5 21.♖a4 ♖e7 22.c4 ♖d7 23.cxb6 cxb6 24.c5 bxc5 25.♖xa5, White's advantage began to take shape and Karjakin displayed impressive technique, praised on Twitter by none other than Carlsen;

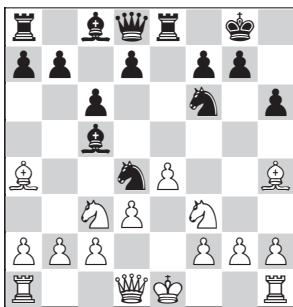
b) More interesting play occurs after 5...0-0 6.♙g5. With the king already castled, the pin seems annoying, but Black has an attractive resource at his disposal. Let's briefly examine other options:

b1) 6.0-0 is answered as in the main line: 6...♗d4! 7.♗xe5 (risky, but otherwise White would not be able to claim any opening advantage) 7...d6 8.♗f3 ♙g4 9.♙e3 ♙xf3 10.gxf3 c6 11.♙a4 b5 12.♙b3 ♗h5 (Black has excellent compensation for the pawn) 13.♗h1 ♗h4 14.♖g1 ♗h3 15.♗f1 ♗xf3+ 16.♗g2 a5 ♞ Svidler-PH Nielsen, Copenhagen rapid 2010;

b2) The somewhat stronger 6.♙xc6 dxc6 7.♙g5, which was played in Motylev-Kramnik, Nizhny Novgorod 2013, forces

Black to look for alternative ways to untangle in this structure with ...♙d6 and ...♘d7. The former World Champion solved the problem with 7...♚d6!? (more passive, but perfectly playable, is 7...♙g4 8.h3 ♙xf3 9.♚xf3 ♙e7=, followed by ...♘d7, as in Bartel-Balogh, Budapest 2014) 8.♚d2 a5 9.h3 ♚e8 10.♘h4 a4 11.a3 b5 12.0-0 ♘h5 13.♘e2 ♙b6 14.g4 h6 15.♙e3 ♘f4 16.♘xf4 exf4 17.♙xf4 ♚f6 18.♘f5 ♚xb2∞.

**6...h6! 7.♙h4 ♘d4!** An improved version of the Rubinstein Gambit in the Four Knights Game. **8.♘xe5** Neither 8.♘xd4 ♙xd4 nor 8.♙a4 c6!? (8...d6=) holds any promise to White. **8...♚e8 9.♘f3** The d3-pawn takes away the best retreat square for the knight. If 9.♙xf6 ♚xf6 10.♘xd7 ♚g5 11.♘xc5 ♚xg2→. **9...c6 10.♙a4** The black initiative is very dangerous after 10.♙xf6?! ♚xf6 11.♙a4 d5 (also strong is 11...a5!?) 12.♘xd4 ♙xd4 13.0-0 b5 14.♙b3 a5 15.a3 ♚g6, and even worse is 10.♘xd4? ♙xd4 11.♙a4 ♘xe4!-+.



analysis diagram

**10...♘xe4!** This neat trick regains the pawn. Also possible is 10...d5∞. **11.♘xe4 ♘xf3+ 12.♚xf3 ♚xh4 13.0-0 ♙f8** And in Navara-Landa,

Minsk rapid 2015, Black had at least equalised thanks to his bishop pair.

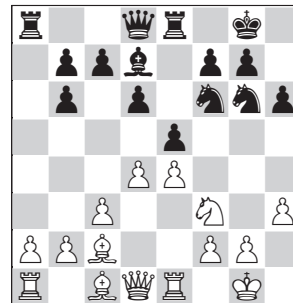
**6.♘a4!**

This ensures the advantage of the bishop pair, a significant achievement that compensates for the slight loss of time and the doubled pawns.

**6...♙b6 7.♘xb6 axb6 8.c3! ♙d7 9.♙a4 ♘e7 10.♙c2**

White has managed to save the bishop. However, 10.♙b3, as in Bartel-Maletin, Moscow 2014, is a possible improvement. After 10...♘g6 11.h3 0-0 12.0-0, White can prepare the d3-d4 advance with his more active bishop, and if 12...♙e6 13.♙c2 he has prevented Anand's ...♙c6 in the main line. The game continued 13...c5!? 14.a3 h6 15.d4 ♚c7 16.♙e3 ♚fe8 17.♚e1 ♚ad8 18.d5 ♙d7 19.a4 ♚f8 20.♘d2±.

**10...♘g6 11.h3 0-0 12.0-0 h6 13.♚e1 ♚e8 14.d4**



**14...♙c6!**

Forces White to take a decision in the centre.

**15.dxe5**

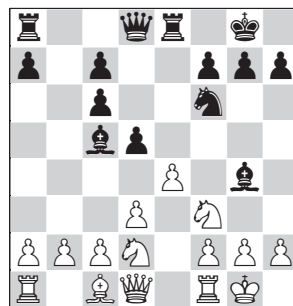
15.d5 ♙d7 16.c4 leads to more complicated play. As pointed out by Postny, Black gets counterplay with 16...♘h5 and a later ...f7-f5, but preparing c4-c5 might give White



chances of an advantage in the medium term.

**15...dxe5 16. ♖xd8 ♜exd8 17.g3 ♟d7 18. ♙e3 ♟c5 19. ♟d2=**

In the endgame, Black's activity compensates for the bishop pair, and the Norwegian genius even managed to create certain difficulties for the then World Champion.



analysis diagram

### B) 5. ♟bd2!?

This subtle development became quite popular during the early months of 2016. White is trying to transpose to normal lines after eliminating or complicating some of his opponent's possible answers.

#### 5... ♟d4

Allows White to carry out his main idea, but the consequences are not very serious. Of course, two natural developing moves are also possible:

- 5...d6 cannot be bad, but White enters Chapter 5 (5.0-0), without having to look for an antidote against 5...♟d4, which, as we will see in Chapter 5, seems very comfortable for Black;

- After 5...0-0, Caruana (among others) has played 6. ♙xc6, and if Black captures with the d-pawn, we reach Chapter 4 (5. ♙xc6 dxc6 6. ♟bd2) with Black already having castled, ruling out the options 6... ♙e6 and 6... ♙g4 and allowing White to follow the fashionable plan with queenside castling. To avoid this transposition, some of the toughest proponents of the Berlin have experimented with an interesting gambit: 6...bxc6!? 7. ♟xe5 ♜e8 8. ♟ef3 d5 9.0-0 ♙g4

The bishop pair and the advantage in development seems to guarantee reasonable compensation.

Grandelius-Aronian, Stavanger 2016, continued: 10.h3 ♙h5 11. ♖e2 h6!?

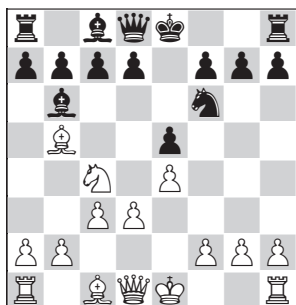
An attempt to improve on Anand-Caruana, Stavanger 2015: 11...dxe4 12. ♟xe4 (12.dxe4 ♟xe4 13. ♟xe4 ♖d5=) 12...h6 13. ♙e3 (a more or less forced simplification to an endgame with a tiny advantage. With 13. ♖e1, it might be possible to hope for a little more) 13... ♟xe4 14.dxe4 ♜xe4 15. ♖d3 ♙xf3 16. ♖xd8 17. ♙xc5 ♙e2! 18. ♜fc1 a5 19.b3 a4, and Black defended with relative ease.

12. ♖e1 a5 13. ♖f1 13.e5 ♟d7 14.g4 ♙g6 15. ♟f1∞ gives Black similar compensation as in our main game. 13...a4 13... ♙xf3 14. ♟xf3 dxe4= 14.e5 ♟d7 15.d4 ♙b6 16.c4 ♟f8 Black is very active and does not at all feel he is a pawn down. The whole line is in full theoretical development, and it won't surprise me if there will be some improvements for both sides.

#### 6. ♟xd4 ♙xd4 7.c3

Taking into account the large number of lines in the 4.d3 ♖c5 complex where Black surrenders

the e-pawn, it is easy to fall for the trick 7.♘f3 ♘b6 8.♗xe5?? (8.0-0) 8...♖e7, and White loses a piece as well as all hope.  
**7...♘b6 8.♗c4**



Taking advantage of the early development of the knight to gain the pair of bishops.

**Vachier-Lagrave-Giri, Wijk aan Zee 2015, continued:**

**8...0-0 9.0-0 d5 10.exd5**

After 10.♗xb6 axb6 11.exd5, also playable is 10...♘g4!?, provoking the advance of the f-pawn. Black's idea can be clearly seen in the variation 11.f3 (11.♖d2 ♖xd5 12.♘c4 ♗d6 13.♞e1 ♞fe8= did not create any difficulties for Black in Korneev-Lötscher, Lienz 2015) 11...♖xd5 12.♘c4 ♖c5+! 13.♙h1 ♘f5∞.

**10... ♖xd5 11.♗xb6**

11.a4 ♘g4 12.♖e1 c6 13.♗xb6 axb6 14.♘c4 ♗d6 15.♘e3 ♗d5=, Vachier-Lagrave-Jakovenko, Tbilisi 2015.

## CONCLUSION

5.♗c3 is not without danger, but the difficulties can be solved with 5...0-0 or with the more passive 5...d6. Instead, the subtle 5.♗bd2! is a serious try for an advantage in the Anti-Berlin complex, especially if White manages to refute the pawn sacrifice from Grandelius-Aronian, and comes up with something aimed against 5...♗d4.

**11...axb6 12.♘c4 ♗d6 13.♘g5 ♘g4!?**

In Informant 123, Branko Tadic mentions 13...♘e6?! 14.♘xf6 ♘xc4 15.♘xe5 ♖xe5 16.dxc4±. It is possible that the extra pawn cannot be exploited, but as the American master Olav Ulvestad, who lived in Spain for many years, used to say in such cases: 'Better a doubled pawn, than no pawn at all.'

Tadic also suggests the possibility 13...♗d5!∞.

**14.♖d2**

Again, it is useful to have a check on c5: 14.f3 ♘e6 15.♘xf6 ♘xc4 16.♘xe5 ♖xe5 17.dxc4 ♞ad8, and Black regains the pawn with full equality.

**14...♗d7 15.d4 exd4?!**

Better is 15...♘e6 16.d5 ♘f5∞, which was suggested by Tadic. It will not be easy for White to advance his majority on the queenside.

**16.cxd4 ♗f6?! 17.♘f4 ♖d7**

17...♖d8±

**18.♘e5 ♘e6 19.♘xf6 gxf6 20.d5 c6**

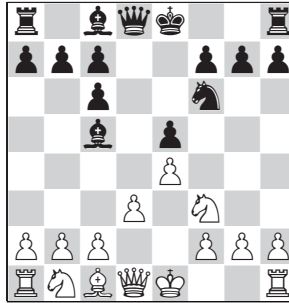
**21.♖h6! cxd5 22.♞ad1**

The brilliant young French GM obtained a considerable advantage, treating his younger but equally brilliant opponent to one of his rare defeats.

CHAPTER 4

**4.d3** ♖c5 **5.** ♗xc6 dxc6

1.e4 e5 2.♗f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 ♗f6 4.d3 ♗c5 5.♗xc6 dxc6



In this variation, the structure from the Exchange Variation is reached, with the ♗c5 and the ♗f6 not very well placed. The bishop will retreat to d6 to make way for the c-pawn, while the knight will look for greener pastures via d7. Meanwhile, White looks to exploit the fact that these manoeuvres use up quite a few tempi. The whole scheme was beginning to look innocuous, but efforts by Caruana and Wei Yi show that there are attacking chances with opposite-side castling after the critical 6.♗bd2 0-0.

**1.e4 e5 2.♟f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 ♘f6 4.d3  
♙c5 5.♙xc6 dxc6**

**A) 6.h3**

The fashion in 2014, aimed at preventing the development of the bishop to g4. We are following the game **Carlsen-Caruana, Zurich 2014**.

**6...♘d7**

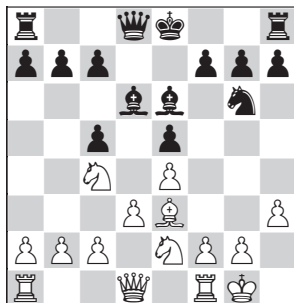
White is playing in slow motion, and this allows the manoeuvre ...♘f8-g6 (or e6) before castling, thus sparing a future ...♙e8. 6...♙e6 is another interesting idea, reserving the option of queenside castling.

**7.♙e3 ♙d6 8.♘c3**

This novelty by Carlsen does not alter the evaluation: this line leads to equality. After 8.♘bd2, 8...0-0 (8...c5 is also possible) 9.0-0 ♙e8 led to a quick draw in Anand-Carlsen, Zurich 2014: 10.♘c4 ♘f8 11.d4 (11.♘fd2 ♘g6, and there is no f2-f4) 11...exd4 12.♙xd4 c5 13.♙d3 b6 14.♘xd6 ♙xd6 15.♙xd6 cxd6 16.♙fd1 ♙b7 17.♙xd6 ♙xe4 18.♘e1 ♙ad8 19.♙ad1 ♘e6 20.♙xd8 ♙xd8 21.♙xd8+ ♘xd8=, and there is hardly any material left on the board.

**8...c5 9.0-0 ♘f8! 10.♘d2 ♘g6**

**11.♘c4 ♙e6 12.♘e2**



Carlsen has prepared the advance of the f-pawn. Now, Caruana continued to delay castling with 12...♙d7?! 13.♘xd6+ cxd6 14.f4 exf4 15.♘xf4 ♘xf4 16.♙xf4 b6? (16...0-0 would still keep the game within drawing margins, as after 17.♙h5 f6 (17...f5?! 18.♙h4 g6 19.♙h6 is slightly annoying) 18.♙h4? (18.♙af1 ♘h8=) 18...g5!, the rook has nowhere to go) 17.♙h5 d5 18.d4!, and found himself in a very dangerous position.

The simple

**12...0-0!**

would equalise without too many problems. After

**13.♘xd6 cxd6 14.f4**

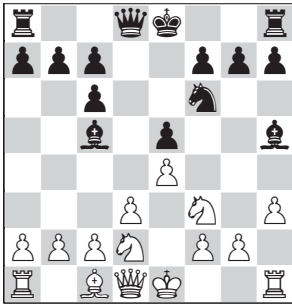
Black can break the tension with **14...exf4 15.♘xf4 ♘xf4 16.♙xf4 f5 17.exf5 ♙xf5 18.♙xf5 ♙xf5 19.♙f3 ♙d7 20.♙f1 ♙g6=**

**B) 6.♘bd2**

The most popular. The unforced character of the game leaves Black with several methods of development, three of which we will analyse in some depth: 6...♙g4 (B1), 6...♙e6 (B2) and 6...0-0 (B3) Also frequently played are 6...♘d7 and 6...♙d6, which almost always transpose to line B3 after the normal 7.♘c4 0-0. Less appropriate seems 6...♙e7. In Caruana-Nakamura, London 2015, White managed to prove that the black queen is not too well placed: 7.h3!? (prevents ...♙g4) 7...0-0 8.♘c4 ♘d7 9.♙e2 b5?! (ugly. Perhaps Nakamura was afraid of 9...f6 10.g4!?) 10.♘e3 ♘b6 11.♘f5 ♙xf5 12.exf5 ♘d7 13.♘d2±

**B1) 6... ♖g4**

A continuation that was briefly in vogue after Carlsen played it in his 2013 World Championship match against Anand. The ‘extra bishop’ is willing to sacrifice itself on f3.

**7.h3 ♖h5****8. ♖f1**

I have decided to keep this knight manoeuvre as the main variation because of the importance of the game in which it was played. However, White has two other ideas available that might give him better chances of getting some advantage:

a) 8. ♖c4 ♖d7 9.g4 ♖g6 10. ♖e2 ♖e7 11. ♖d2 0-0-0 12.0-0-0 f6 was played in Laznicka-Goganov, Gjakova 2016. The Czech GM is playing the scheme we will see in variation B3, but without a pawn attack on the king. After 13. ♖e3 ♖f8 14. ♖f5 ♖f7 15. ♖b1 ♖e6 16. ♖e3 ♖he8 White achieved next to nothing;

b) 8. ♖b3!? ♖d6 9.g4 ♖g6 10. ♖g5, as in Berg-Aronsson, Sweden tt 2014/15, leads to an interesting fight with regard to the bishop on g6, which could be left out of the game forever if the opponent manages

to double pawns on the f-file. The Swedish GM got an edge after 10... h6!? 11. ♖h4 h5 12. ♖g1 hxg4 13.hxg4 ♖e7 14. ♖g5 0-0-0 15. ♖e2 ♖e6 16. ♖h4±, but his opponent could have played better at some point, for example with 14...a5 or 14...♖h3∞.

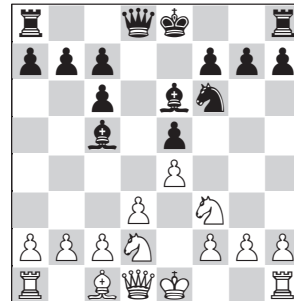
**8... ♖d7 9. ♖g3 ♖xf3! 10. ♖xf3 g6**

The knight is not very well placed on g3.

**11. ♖e3 ♖e7 12.0-0-0**

While it is true that White has very little chances of getting an edge, a better try to get active play was 12.0-0, with the idea of preparing f2-f4 after ♖e2 and ♖g3.

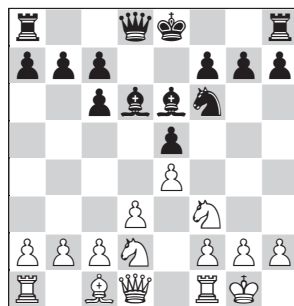
**12...0-0-0 13. ♖e2 ♖he8 14. ♖b1 b6 15.h4 ♖b7 16.h5 ♖xe3 17. ♖xe3 ♖c5**  
And White got nothing in Anand-Carlsen, Chennai 2013.

**B2) 6... ♖e6**

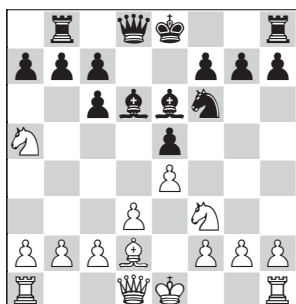
The safest move, avoiding the mess that variation B3 currently leads to. Black develops his bishop before the necessary manoeuvre ...♖f6-d7, delaying castling while White decides where to put his own king. The only drawback of the plan is that the ‘extra’ bishop runs the risk of being exchanged.

### 7.0-0

7.♖b3 only has independent value after 7...♗d6. I prefer 7...♗b6 8.0-0 ♘d7 9.♘g5, which leads to the main line. 8.♘a5!? The continuation in the game Hou Yifan-Zhu Chen, Sharjah 2014, is interesting: 8...♖b8 8...♗b4+ 9.♗d2 ♗xa5 10.♗xa5 ♘d7 11.d4± is uncomfortable for Black. 9.♗d2



analysis diagram



analysis diagram

9...c5 In Caruana-Topalov, Leuven rapid 2016, Black chose not to advance the pawn: 9...0-0 10.♖e2 ♗e8 11.h3!?, and now he didn't find anything better than 11...♘d7, which allowed the exchange of the bishop that had no counterpart: 12.♘g5 ♘f8 13.♘xe6 ♘xe6 14.♖g4 ♗c5 15.0-0 ♖e7 16.♘c4± 10.♖e2 ♖e7 11.a3!? h6 12.0-0 ♘d7 13.♖fb1 ♖f6 14.b4± The plan to eliminate the opponent's doubled pawn by the advance of the b-pawn occurs frequently in the Rossolimo Sicilian (1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5).

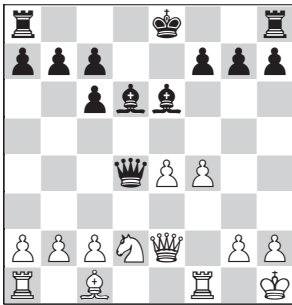
### 7...♘d7

7...♗d6 is riskier than the main variation. White has tried several methods to develop his initiative:

a) 8.♘b3 is the latest fad. The game Saric-Fressinet, Germany Bundesliga 2015/16, is interesting: 8...♖e7 8...0-0?! 9.♗g5 c5 10.♘a5 ♖b8 11.♖e1 h6 12.♗h4 ♗g4 13.♖e3± was uncomfortable for Black in Bartel-Goryachkina, Moscow 2016. 9.♖e1!? 9.♘a5 ♖b8 10.♗d2 can also be considered, with the idea of playing the plan from the previous note with a3-b4. 9...h6 10.♘a5 ♖b8 11.d4!? exd4 12.e5 ♗b4 13.♗d2 ♗xa5?! Better is 13...♘d5. 14.♗xa5 14.exf6!? ♗xd2 15.fxg7!, which may punish Black's dubious move order. 14...♘d5 15.♘xd4 0-0 16.♖e4 c5 17.c4 ♘f4!∞;

b) Lately, super GMs have tried 8.d4 ♘d7 9.dxe5 ♘xe5 10.♘xe5 ♗xe5 11.f4. The pawns advance menacingly, but the bishops seem to provide sufficient defensive resources. See e.g. Nakamura-Aronian, Zurich 2016: 11...♖d4+ An attempt to improve on Caruana-Grischuk, London 2015, which continued 11...♗d4+ 12.♖h1 f5 (12... f6 13.f5 ♗f7 14.♖g4 ♖e7! 15.c3 h5 16.♖e2 ♗e5 17.♘f3 0-0-0∞, Brkic-Hovhannisyan, Halkidiki 2011).

Caruana blitzed out his opening moves, so we can assume he had prepared something: 13. ♖h5+ g6 14. ♖e2 0-0 15. ♘f3 ♗f6 16. e5 ♗e7 17. ♖d1 ♖e8 18. ♘d4 ♖f7 19. ♘xe6 ♖xe6 20. ♗e3, and White is a little better, even though the blockade of the passed pawn makes a draw the most likely result. 12. ♖h1 ♗d6 13. ♖e2

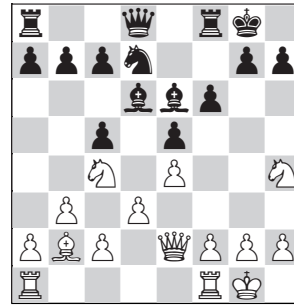


analysis diagram

And here, instead of 13...0-0-0?!, which was played in Nakamura-Aronian, Zurich 2016, it was safer to play 13...f6!∞;

c) 8.b3 seeks to eliminate the pair of bishops with ♘c4, although Black seems to hold his own in the resulting positions: 8...0-0 In Adams-Giri, Germany Bundesliga 2014/15, the always well-prepared Dutch star equalised with 8...♘d7 9. ♘c4 ♗xc4 (nor should Black be worried too much after 9...0-0 10. h3 ♖e7 11. ♘xd6 cxd6 12. d4 f5!? 13. dxe5 dxe5 14. ♘g5 f4= Svidler-Anand, St Louis 2016) 10. bxc4 0-0 11. ♗e3 ♖e7 12. c3 b5 (takes advantage of the opponent's pawn on c4. In some previous high-level games, Black had sought counterplay with ...f7-f5,

which seems less reliable) 13. cxb5 cxb5 14. a4 a6 15. ♖c2 c5 16. axb5 axb5=. 9. ♗b2 9. ♘c4 will probably transpose to the previous note. 9...♘d7 10. ♖e2 c5 11. ♘c4 f6 12. ♘h4



analysis diagram

12...♗b8! The knight is on one of its two common circuits to get back into the game (the other one is f8-e6), and already eyeballing the d4-square. In Yu Yangyi-Eljanov, Havana 2015, the Chinese GM decided to break in the centre before his opponent could complete the plan, but he did not get anything: 13. ♘xd6 ♖xd6 14. f4 exf4 15. e5 fxe5 16. ♗xe5 ♖d7 17. ♗xf4 ♘c6 18. ♗e3 ♘d4 19. ♖d2 ♗g4= The downside of 7...♘d7 is that Black more or less has to reconcile himself to the idea of exchanging his proud bishop.

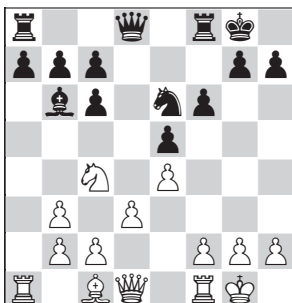
8. ♘b3! ♗b6

The best retreat. After 8...♗d6?! 9. ♘a5! ♖b8 10. ♘g5 ♖e7 11. ♘xe6 ♖xe6 12. a4 0-0 13. ♘c4±, as in Svetushkin-Dvirnyy, Skopje 2016, Black has a more passive version of the main line. 8...♗e7 prevents the exchange of the bishop, but White can get a better version of the plan from the note



to 7.0-0, with 9.♘a5 ♖b8 10.♙d2, as in Nisipeanu-Wagner, Baden-Baden 2014, or break quickly with 9.d4. In this case, a possible continuation is 9...♙f6 10.♘a5! ♖b8 11.dxe5 ♗xe5 12.♗xd8+ ♘xd8 13.♘d4±, with a pleasant endgame (Harikrishna-Melkumyan, Biel 2012). In the Berlin endgame, the e-pawn is on e5, which makes the defender's life easier.

**9.♘g5 ♙xb3 10.axb3 f6 11.♗f3 ♘c5**  
Simple chess. In Yu Yangyi-Kramnik, Doha 2014, the former World Champion preferred the slower 11...♗f8 12.♘d2 ♗e6, which the rising Chinese star capitalised on by creating a small weakness on the kingside with 13.♗h5+!? g6 14.♗d1. Now, exchanging the bishop on b6 followed by f2-f4 could create difficulties, so Kramnik complicated matters with 14...♙c5 15.♘c4 b5!? 16.♘a5 ♗d7 17.♙e3 ♙b6 18.b4 0-0, and in his publication *After Magnus* (New in Chess, 2015) Giri points out the idea 19.♘b3 here, which should give White some advantage.  
**12.♘d2 0-0 13.♘c4 ♗e6**



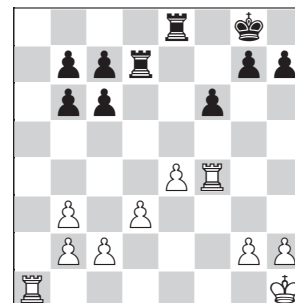
In this type of position, White has the slightly more comfortable game and can fight for the advantage

with the f2-f4 break, while Black is solid yet slightly passive. Nonetheless, it is by no means easy for White to make any progress. We are following the game **Eliseev-Khismatullin, Russia tt 2016:**

**14.♘h1**

In Bok-Khairullin, Bangkok 2016, White adopted a slightly different approach to the position: 14.g3 ♗d7 15.♘g2 ♙d4 16.♙e3 a6 17.♙xd4 ♘xd4 18.b4!? ♗e7 19.♘e3=± It is no big deal, but White can start preparing the f2-f4 advance with c2-c3 (to prevent the response ...f6-f5), and after that defend the d-pawn.

**14...♗d7 15.♗g4 ♖ad8 16.f4**  
16.♙e3 ♙d4 17.♙xd4 ♘xd4 18.♗xd7 ♖xd7 19.♖xa7 (19.♘e3 a6 20.f4 f5=) 19...♘xc2 20.♖xb7 ♖xd3= led to nothing in Nakamura-Kramnik, Zurich rapid 2016.  
**16...♘xf4 17.♗xd7 ♖xd7 18.♙xf4 exf4 19.♖xf4**  
20.♘xb6 immediately was more accurate, avoiding 20...♙d4.  
**19...♖e8 20.♘xb6 axb6**



In this endgame, the possibility of a minority attack gives White only a symbolic advantage, and with



accurate play Black should be able to hold. You can see how things ended in Game 1 in Chapter 20.

### B3) 6...0-0

The most common alternative, which leads to more interesting play. It is possible to reach this position from the move order 6. ♗bd2!? 0-0 7. ♗xc6 dxc6.

### 7. ♗c4

In the majority of recent outings, White has achieved not even a snippet of an advantage with the normal development 7.0-0 ♖e8 8. ♗c4 ♗d7. Anand-So, St Louis 2015, continued 9.b3 9. ♗e3 ♗d6 10. ♗fd2 (10.d4 exd4 11. ♗xd6 cxd6 12. ♖xd4 ♗e5= led to a quick draw in David-A.Mastrovasilis, Isthmia 2015) 10... ♗f8 11.a4 ♗g6 12. ♖h1 ♗e6 13. ♗b3 ♗f8 14.f3 b6 15. ♖e2 c5, and if anything, White was worse in Mamedov-Caruana, Baku 2015. 9...a5 10.a4 f6 11. ♗e3 ♗b4 12. ♖c1 b5!?

A more active plan than the usual ...c6-c5, which is possible thanks to the white b-pawn. 13.c3 ♗f8 14. ♗b2 ♗c5 15. ♖c2 ♗g4 and Black seized the initiative.

### 7... ♗d7 8. ♖e2!?

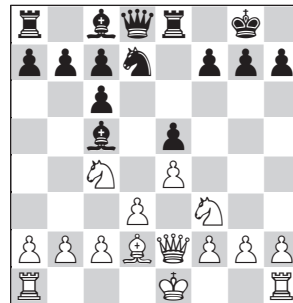
The modern trend that has increased interest in the trade on c6. White keeps the option of queenside castling, sharpening the game.

### 8... ♖e8

As was to be expected, the theory of this new plan is rapidly developing. Kokarev-Goganov, Russia tt 2016, saw the interesting plan 8...f6

9. ♗d2 ♗b6 10. ♗e3 (another plan is 10. ♗a5!?, with similar ideas to the variation 6... ♗e6) 10... ♗e6, which interferes radically with the opponent's plans: 11.0-0 11.0-0-0? is not possible on account of ♗xa2, but it might be preferable to adopt a waiting policy with 11.h3, not committing to anything while foreshadowing a possible g2-g4, or with 11.a3, preparing b2-b4 or even ♗b4. 11... ♗c8! Immediately improving the position of the knight. 12.c3?! 12.b4 creates more problems. 12...a5 13. ♖fd1 ♗d6 Now, Kokarev foregoes the planned 14.d4?, which would lead to a difficult position after 14... ♗b6! 15.dxe5 fxe5!, and there is no comfortable defence against the e-pawn, but after 14.c4 b6, Black is completely OK.

### 9. ♗d2



### 9... ♗d6

We are following the game **Caruana-Nakamura, Moscow 2016**. In the months following this game, other methods of counterplay have been developed.

a) In Bruzon Batista-E.l'Ami, Baku 2016, the solid Dutch GM launched

an immediate pawn storm on the queenside: 9...b5 10.♖e3 (10.♗a5 is a good alternative, but after 10...♙f6∞ (Areshchenko-Balogh, Germany Bundesliga 2015/16), there could follow ...♗f8-g6, or ...♗b6, followed by ...♗c5) 10...♗b6 11.0-0-0?! (brave, but I prefer 11.h3 or 11.h4!?) 11...a5 12.♗b1 b4 13.g4 ♗a4 14.♙c1 ♙d4 15.♞hg1 ♙e6 16.♗c4 ♞b8 and Black seems to be ahead in the mutual attacking race;

b) 9...♗b6!? was played in Howell-Adams, Llandudno 2016. 10.♗e3 (in Informant 129, Adams points out the possibilities 10.♗cxe5? f6♣, 10.♗fxe5 ♙d4 11.♙c3 ♙xc3+ 12.bxc3 f6∞, and 10.♗a5!?) 10...a5 (10...f6∞) 11.h4 ♙d4 12.0-0-0 ♙e6 13.♗b1 f6 and here, instead of 14.g4 ♙xe3 15.♙xe3 ♙xg4 16.♞dg1 ♙xf3 17.♙xf3 ♗h8∞, which is not entirely clear, Adams likes 14.♗f5, no doubt with some advantage to White.

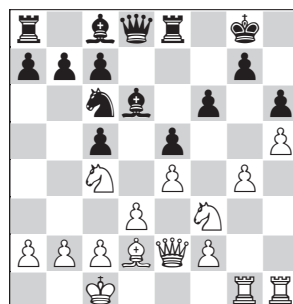
### 10.0-0-0!?

The Italo-American GM, who needed to win at all costs after starting the Candidates' with seven consecutive draws, comments in *New in Chess* 2016/3 that he had spent the whole night prior to the game looking at defensive resources against the black queenside attack, which confirms just how dangerous advancing the a- and b-pawns is. It is interesting to follow how the ideas in this position have evolved in recent times:

a) Anand-Giri, Bilbao 2015, continued 10.g4 ♗f8! (immediately exploiting the weakness created

on f4) 11.♗e3 ♗e6 12.♗f5 a5!? 13.h4 a4. Anand did not dare to castle queenside, intimidated by the advance of the pawn, but after 14.♗g5 a3 15.b3 ♙c5 16.♗xe6 ♙xe6 17.♙f3 ♙f8=, his attack ran out of steam;

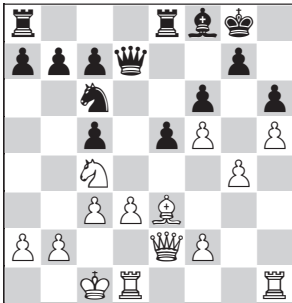
b) Three months later, in the ninth round of the traditional tournament in **Wijk aan Zee 2016**, a curious phenomenon took place: two world class GMs, surely working separately, had come to the same conclusions and tested at the same time the novelty **10.h4!?**, working with the light squares as this pawn threatens to move forward. An h-pawn attack usually has the advantage of not leaving many weaknesses in the pawn's wake. We are following the game **Caruana-Karjakin: 10...♗f8** In Wei Yi-Navara, the optimistic Czech GM preferred 10...c5 11.h5 h6?! 12.0-0-0 ♗b8? (too ambitious. Better is 12...♗f8 13.g4 f6±. and a later ...♗e6 allows Black to organise a better defence) 13.♞dg1 (13.g4! is more accurate) 13...♗c6?! (13...♙g4 14.♗e3 ♙d7 15.♗xg4 ♙xg4±) 14.g4 f6.



analysis diagram

And here, White, the Benjamin among super GMs, unleashed a brilliant attack with 15.g5!!, which is further covered in Game 2 (Chapter 20).

**11.h5 ♗e6** It is better not to touch the h7-pawn for the moment.  
 12.0-0-0 12.h6?! g6 is good for Black. **12...c5 13.♖f1 f6 14.♗h4 ♗d4 15.c3 ♗c6 16.♗f5 ♖xf5 17.exf5 h6 18.g4 ♖f8 19.♗e2 ♖d7 20.♖e3**



analysis diagram

At first sight, White seems a little better, but Caruana stated in *New In Chess* that he had obtained practically nothing.

It may be unsurprising to see Caruana and Wei Yi share the same opinion: top GMs work in very similar ways, thoroughly researching a limited set of openings and using the same analysis engines.

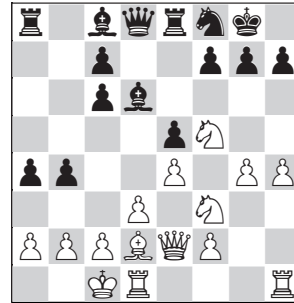
### 10...b5

Starting the pawn race. Quick castling had already been attempted in the game Perez Candelario-Sargissian, Villafranca 2010. The Armenian GM took the initiative after 10...c5 11.♗b1 ♗b8 12.c3 ♗c6 13.♗e3 b5, but it is better not to

touch the queenside and continue instead with 11.♗e3 ♗b8 12.♗f5 ♗c6 and now advance either the g- or h-pawn, or perhaps flick in 13.♖g5!?, as Caruana does in the main line.

### 11. ♗e3 a5 12. ♗f5 a4?!

After 12...♗f8 13.g4 b4 14.h4 a4∞



analysis diagram

a critical and as of yet unplayed position has been reached. It is understandable that Caruana stops the evaluation of the position here, and only points out that it is possible to move the pawns or to continue with the prophylactic 15.♗b1.

On the basis on the last move, you can investigate 15...♖e6 (less convincing is 15...♗e6 16.h5 b3 17.♖c3!?) 16.h5 ♖b8!? 17.♖e3! (the threat was 17...♖xa2+! followed by ...b3. 17.♖c1?! b3 18.cxb3?! axb3 19.a3 ♖b5! looks too dangerous, with the mean intention of giving mate after ...♖eb8 and ...♖xa3) 17...b3 18.h6! g6 19.♗g7∞.

### 13. ♖g5! f6 14. ♖e3

Caruana has created the possibility to break with g4-g5.

### 14... ♗c5 15.g4 ♖e6 16. ♗b1



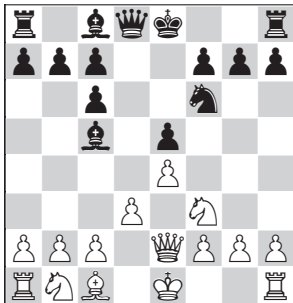
In the diagram position, Nakamura continued with 16...b4?! 17.g5 b3?! 18.♖hg1!± bxa2+?! 19.♙a1 ♕xf5 20.exf5 a3 21.b3 ♘a6 22.c3+–, and the black attack led nowhere. Caruana recommends a better line for Black:

**16...♖d7 17.♖hg1 ♖f7 18.g5!?**  
**♕xf5**

18...♕xa2+? 19.♙a1 does not contribute to the attack.

**19.exf5 a3 20.b3 e4 21.g6**  
 With a double-edged position.

**C) 6...♖e2!?**



A rare idea that Carlsen put on the agenda in his game against So, Bilbao 2016. White immediately threatens the e-pawn, which limits the opponent's options, as it prevents 6...♕e6.

**6...♖e7**

So's choice. Of course, Black has other methods of development at his disposal:

a) The immediate 6...♕g4 is solid, preparing to part with the bishop pair. In comparison with variation B1, the queen is worse on e2, since she loses a tempo when capturing on f3, a detail that Carlsen himself mentions in *New in Chess 2016/6*.

Dominguez Perez-Kasimdzhanov, Baku 2016, continued 7.♘bd2 (7.h3 ♕xf3 8.♖xf3 ♘d7=) 7...♘d7 8.h3 ♕h5 9.♘f1 ♕xf3 (keeping the bishop with 9...f6?! is not very consistent 10.♘g3 ♕f7. After 11.♘f5 0-0 12.g4, White's attack is well underway) 10.♖xf3 ♖e7 11.♘g3 g6 12.0-0 ♘f8! 13.♕e3 ♘e6 14.♘e2 0-0 15.♖g3 ♕xe3 16.♖xe3=. Black ended up losing, but not because of the opening; for example, 16...♖c5 leads to comfortable equality;

b) 6...♘d7 normally leads to the sharp variation B3 after 7.♘bd2. In Oparin-Fedoseev, Novosibirsk 2016, White tried a different approach: 7.♕e3!? ♕d6 8.d4 0-0 9.♘bd2 exd4 10.♘xd4 ♘b6 (I prefer 10...♖e8, hoping to find a better square for the knight) 11.0-0-0 a5 12.g4 a4 13.a3 ♖e8 14.f3 ♕d7 15.h4∞;

c) 6...♕d6 carries the seal of approval of Anand, an indication that it may be the best move. After 7.♘bd2 ♕e6, a version of variation B2 is reached (6.♘bd2 ♕e6), with the white queen not particularly well placed on e2. Gharamian-Anand, Bastia rapid 2016, continued

**8.b3.** Preparing 9. ♖c4. The alternatives are not too impressive:

c1) 8. ♖g5 ♗g4 doesn't make any sense;

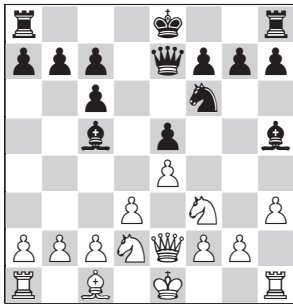
c2) 8. ♖c4 ♗xc4 (safer than 8... ♖d7 9. ♖a5) 9. dxc4 ♖d7 10. 0-0 ♖e7, and White had less than nothing in Antipov-Swiercz, Turkey tt 2016.

**8... ♖d7 9. ♗b2 c5 10. ♖c4 f6**

**11. ♖h4 g6!?** This leads to a more complicated game than 11... 0-0 12. ♖f5 ♖b8! =, a manoeuvre we saw in variation B2. **12. 0-0 ♖e7**

**13. ♖xd6+ cxd6 14. f4 0-0-0∞**

**7. ♖bd2 ♗g4 8. h3 ♗h5**



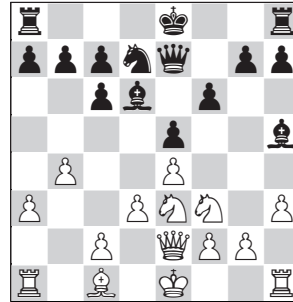
### 9.a3!?

Carlsen, not impressed by the alternatives 9. ♖c4, 9. g4 followed by ♖f1-g3, or 9. ♖f1 ♖d7 10. ♖g3 ♗xf3 11. ♖xf3 g6, prepares to annoy the other bishop as well.

### 9... ♖d7

9... a5!? Carlsen.

**10. b4 ♗d6 11. ♖c4 f6 12. ♖e3**



Now, So chose the risky 12... a5? 13. ♖f5 ♖f8?! (forcing White to capture on a5 but neglecting his king) 14. bxa5 ♖xa5 15. 0-0↑, and Carlsen brilliantly exploited his development advantage. It is better to immediately start rerouting the knight:

**12... ♖f8! 13. ♖f5 ♖f7=**

followed by ... ♖e6 and ... 0-0.

Carlsen feels that Black is OK and we, mere mortals, are not in any position to question his diagnosis. 6. ♖e2 leads to interesting new positions, but Black has sufficient resources to get good play.

## CONCLUSION

The exchange on c6 followed by 6. ♖bd2 is currently the stage for the most interesting battles in the Anti-Berlin complex, perhaps together with the lines from Chapter 7. Black can choose between a more quiet approach with 6... ♗e6 or 6... ♗g4, with small positional disadvantages that do not seem very serious, or investigate the riskier plans based on opposite-side castling after 6... 0-0, which are very much the latest fashion.