

Victor Bologan

The Rossolimo for Club Players

New Ideas and Strategic Plans in a Powerful Anti-Sicilian

New In Chess 2022

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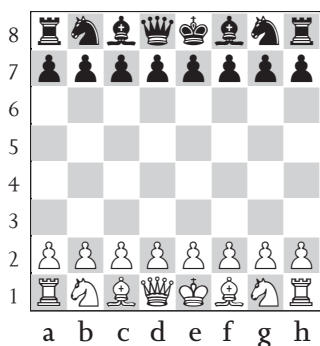
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Explanation of symbols

The chessboard with its coordinates:



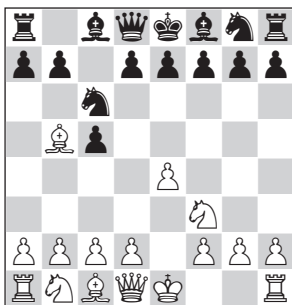
- White to move
- Black to move
- ♔ King
- ♚ Queen
- ♖ Rook
- ♗ Bishop
- ♘ Knight

- ± White stands slightly better
- ∓ Black stands slightly better
- ± White stands better
- ∓ Black stands better
- +− White has a decisive advantage
- −+ Black has a decisive advantage
- = balanced position
- ∞ unclear position
- ! good move
- !! excellent move
- ? bad move
- ?? blunder
- !?! interesting move
- ?! dubious move

Introduction

Get away from theory! Find that uncharted path that leads to an advantage, whether on the clock, a psychological advantage or, best of all, a real chess advantage! A lot of water has passed under the bridge, chess analysts have all seen their moments of joy and disappointment in the quest for something new. It is thanks to these people that chess develops not only in depth (like, for example, in the main variations of the Sicilian), but also in breadth – it seems that all the possible moves have already been looked at.

In this book, we will examine the system 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 – one of a number of so-called ‘secondary’ continuations against the Sicilian Defence, which thanks to its deep positional basis has not only proved its right to exist, but has replaced the move 3.d4 in the repertoires of many elite grandmasters.



The system 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 followed by the exchange on c6 was taught to me and my comrades by the ‘all-Moldavian trainer’ Vyacheslav Andreevich Chebanenko. The idea of this original plan is to immediately spoil the opponent’s pawn structure, try to create additional weaknesses and, ideally, to ‘freeze’ them. In this type of position, the white knights will be stronger than the black bishops.

In general, Chebanenko had very deeply worked-out Anti-Sicilian systems (Grandmaster Sergey Rublevsky has become a splendid successor to him in this regard). Some forty years have passed and Chebanenko’s handling of the variations starting with 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.♙b5+ and 2...♘c6 3.♙b5 is still current. It is surprising, but not one of the main

theoretical lines has changed to this day! Take, for example, the unforced exchange 4. ♖xc6 after 2... ♗c6 3. ♙b5 g6 – this is entirely to his credit. I remember how in 1986, my comrade from Moldava (later Israel) Grandmaster Misha Oratovsky returned from the Botvinnik-Kasparov school and said that the 13th World Champion had roundly criticised him for the move 4. ♖xc6: why on earth surrender the bishop?! But less than ten years later, Kasparov himself was happily playing the same variation, and a further ten years later, we studied it in detail at a joint training session.

In his book *The Opening Revolution of the 1970s*, Garry Kasparov confirmed my story above: ‘When at a session of the school I saw the move 4. ♖xc6, I criticised it severely: “Can one really play chess like this?”. Ever since my childhood I had had a fondness for bishops and here White also loses a whole tempo! For a long time I continued to have a negative view of this exchange, sharing Sveshnikov’s opinion – “After 3...g6 only a madman could play 4. ♖xc6”. However, at the start of the 1990s, during some work with Makarychev, I revised my opinion of 4. ♖xc6, began to analyse the system seriously and even use it myself’.

In Soviet chess literature, the variation 1.e4 c5 2. ♗f3 ♗c6 3. ♙b5 remained nameless and lived, if not in the backyard of theory, somewhere nearby. Not engaging in sharp duels in the main lines of the Sicilian with 3.d4 was somehow considered a sign of weak opening play. But even so, it was occasionally played, not only by amateurs, but also by masters and grandmasters, including some top players – Tal, Spassky, the young Karpov, even Botvinnik and Fischer. I myself did not even suspect at that stage that in the West the system was named after Rossolimo, as in our country this player was long forgotten. And that is a shame, as his biography deserves a section to itself.

Nicolas Rossolimo was born on February 28, 1910 in Kyiv, the capital of Ukraine, which was then part of the Russian Empire. His father, the artist Spiridon Rossolimo, was Greek by nationality, and his mother Ksenia Nikolaevna (née Skogarevskaya) was Ukrainian. Nicholas’ uncle, Grigory Rossolimo, was a well-known neurologist and psychiatrist, who founded and funded the first clinic for childhood nervous diseases in Russia. After the revolution he donated it to Moscow University. One of the streets in the Khamovniki district of Moscow, where many hospitals and hospitals are located, is named after him.

In 1920, Spiridon Rossolimo left for America, and little Nicolas and his mother moved to Moscow. Here he spent his youth: he became the champion of the capital among schoolchildren, and also began to sketch.

Apparently, his chess development was quite slow (at least in comparison with Botvinnik, who was a year younger, but already a prominent force at the age of 16 to 18 years old), and in the Soviet period Rossolimo did not achieve many successes. In 1929, thanks to his father's nationality, Nicolas left the Soviet Union, settled in Paris and soon became one of the strongest French masters. In the mid-30s, he was the undisputed Champion of Paris, and in total he won the Parisian championship ten times. In 1938, at a tournament in the French capital, Rossolimo took second place, only behind Capablanca. Apparently, Nicolas reached the peak of his practical strength in the years immediately following World War II: in 1948 he became the champion of France and tied two matches with Savielly Tartakower; 6:6 in 1948 (+1 -1 =10) and 5:5 in 1949 (no draws!). Europe, exhausted by the war, was clearly not up to organising much chess, but, nevertheless, Rossolimo embarked on the difficult path of a professional chess player. He never managed to enter the world elite, successes were interspersed with mediocre results, but still he won prizes in international tournaments more than once and won many brilliancy prizes. He valued those awards especially highly. In 1950, FIDE awarded Rossolimo the title of International Master, and in 1953, Grandmaster.



Nicolas Rossolimo

In 1952, Nicolas Rossolimo moved to the United States with his wife and son. Tournaments in America were held much less frequently than in Europe, and Rossolimo had to adopt many professions to feed his family: he worked as a car washer, a hotel messenger, a taxi driver (for 15 years!), and also played the accordion and sang. In 1955, in the US Open Championship, Rossolimo shared first and second places with Reshevsky and was declared the winner on tie-break. He represented the French team at the Olympiad twice and the US team three times.

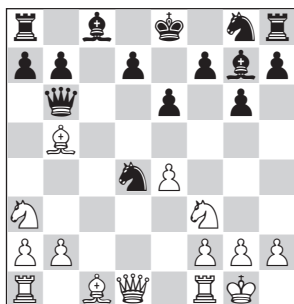
Rossolimo founded the 'Chess Studio' in Manhattan – a kind of café where you could not only drink and eat, but also buy chess literature and play chess, even – for a small fee – with the owner of the establishment. Despite the fact that he had to play mainly with amateurs, Rossolimo

retained great practical strength until the last days of his life. In 1975, shortly before his death, he took third place in a major open tournament in New York. Nicolas Rossolimo was a multi-talented person: he spoke five languages fluently, had a brown belt in judo, released a record of songs performed by himself (its cover was designed by the great artist and chess master Marcel Duchamp), and wrote two books. He also developed several opening variations, including the system with 3...♟b5 in the Sicilian Defence, which is the subject of this book.

Nicolas Rossolimo
Alberic O'Kelly de Galway

Oldenburg 1949

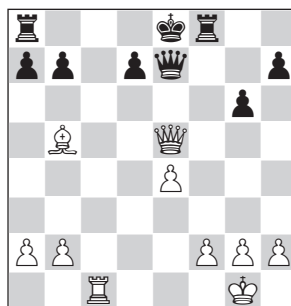
- 1.e4 c5 2.♟f3 ♘c6 3.♟b5 g6 4.0-0
 ♟g7 5.c3 e6?!
 5...♟f6.
 6.d4 cxd4 7.cxd4 ♚b6 8.♞a3 ♘xd4?



- 9.♞c4! ♘xf3+ 10.♚xf3 ♚c7
 11.♟f4 e5 12.♞xe5! ♟xe5 13.♞ac1

In general, if you look into a large database, you can see that the move 3...♟b5 was used at tournaments in Amsterdam and London back in the 'prehistoric' year of 1851. But it is impossible to find a theoretical background in those games: people played it as they saw fit, with no clear consistent ideas. Simon Winawer tried to interpret this scheme in a modern way for the first time in his game against Mikhail Chigorin (London 1883) – in response to 3...e6, he immediately took on c6 and tried to get a blocked position, but soon blundered the central pawn and lost ingloriously.

- ♚b8 14.♞xc8+! ♚xc8 15.♟xe5 f6
 16.♟xf6 ♞xf6 17.♚xf6 ♞f8 18.♚e5+
 ♟d8 19.♚g5+ ♟e8 20.♞c1 ♚d8
 21.♚e5+ ♚e7



- 22.♟xd7+! ♟f7 23.♟e6+ ♟e8
 24.♞c7
 Black resigned.

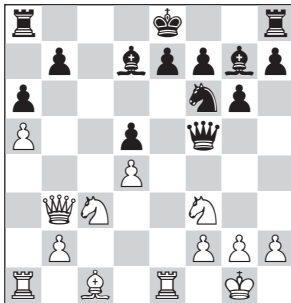
In subsequent years, the 3.♘b5 system occasionally occurred in the games of such well-known players and theorists as Alapin, Schiffers, Nimzowitsch, Sämisch and Tartakower. As we have already noted, Rossolimo played two matches against the latter, and they also met several times in Parisian tournaments. It seems likely that the creative communication between the two grandmasters helped the development of the system, to which both of them were partial.

In Soviet tournaments, the move 3.♘b5 also found its adherents – it was played by David Bronstein, Bukhuti Gurgenedze, Rashid Nezhmetdinov, Evgeny Vasiukov and Anatoly Lutikov.

David Bronstein Efim Geller

Gothenburg 1955

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♘b5 g6 4.c3
♙g7 5.d4 ♖b6 6.a4 cxd4 7.0-0 a6
8.♙xc6 ♖xc6 9.cxd4 ♖xe4 10.♘c3
♖f5 11.♞e1 d5 12.a5 ♙d7 13.♖b3
♘f6

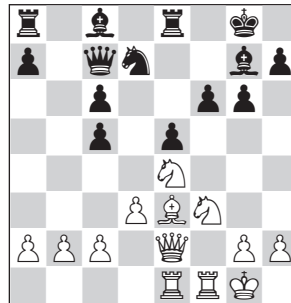


14.♞e5! ♖d3
14...♖g4 15.h3+–.
15.♞xe7+! ♙xe7
15...♙f8 16.♞xf7+! with a decisive
advantage for White.
16.♘xd5+ ♘xd5 17.♖xd3 f6 18.♙d2
♙f7 19.♖b3 ♙c6 20.♘e1 ♞he8
21.♘d3 ♞e6 22.♞c1 ♙f8? 23.♞xc6
Black resigned.

Evgeny Vasiukov Dragoljub Velimirovic

Tbilisi 1973

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♘b5 e6 4.♙xc6
bxc6 5.0-0 ♖c7 6.d3 d6 7.♘c3 ♘f6
8.♖e2 e5 9.♘h4 g6 10.f4 exf4 11.e5
dxe5 12.♙xf4 ♘d7 13.♞ae1 ♙g7
14.♘f3 f6 15.♘e4 0-0 16.♙e3 ♞e8



17.g4!? f5 18.gxf5 gxf5 19.♘fg5
♘f6 20.♘xf6+ ♙xf6 21.♖h5 ♞e7
22.♘xh7! ♞g7+
22...♞xh7 23.♖e8+ ♙g7 24.♞e2.
23.♙h1 ♖f7 24.♘xf6+ ♖xf6 25.♞g1
Black resigned.

Anatoly Lutikov
Oleg Romanishin

USSR 1968

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 ♚c7 4.0-0
 a6 5.♙xc6 ♚xc6 6.d4 cxd4 7.♘xd4
 ♚c7 8.♘c3 e6 9.e5 ♘e7?
 9...d6.



10.♘db5! axb5 11.♘xb5 ♚a5
 12.♘d6+ ♘d8 13.♘xf7+ ♘e8
 14.♘d6+ ♘d8 15.♙d2 ♚c7 16.♘f7+
 ♘e8 17.♘xh8 ♚xe5 18.♙c3 ♚f5
 19.♚e1 ♘d5 20.♙d4 ♘f6 21.♚e5
 ♚f4 22.g3 ♚h6 23.h4 g6 24.♚f3
 ♙e7 25.♚e4 ♚f8 26.♚f4 ♚a4
 27.♚c3!
 Black resigned.

I think it was thanks to grandmaster Anatoly Lutikov that this system became well known in Moldova, and the ‘coach of all Moldovans’ (and mine too) Vyacheslav Chebanenko took up its further development. Vyacheslav Andreevich, in response to 3...g7-g6, 3...d7-d6 and 3...e7-e6, recommended immediately taking on c6, creating doubled pawns for the opponent. He considered this circumstance to be a significant disadvantage of Black’s position, mainly because the doubled pawns are inactive. Yes, they also have their advantages – for example, the doubled pawns reliably cover the central squares d5 and d4, but it is difficult for them to move, so they can easily become an object of attack. If Black captures on c6 with the b-pawn, then White tries to remove the enemy’s d-pawn (for example, in response to ...d7-d6, play e4-e5, insistently offering an exchange on e5). And in the case of ...d7xc6, Black is already deprived of the pawn advantage in the centre.

At the end of the 20th century and beginning of the 21st century, great contributions to the development of the system were made by Michael Adams and Sergey Rublevsky. Nor can one overlook the triumphant return of the 11th World Champion Bobby Fischer in 1992, when he not only defeated Boris Spassky in their match, but also showed a new positional approach to the system with 3.♙b5.

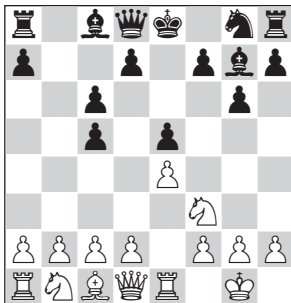
Bobby Fischer 2785

Boris Spassky 2560

Sveti Stefan/Belgrade 1992 (m/11)

**1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 g6 4.♙xc6
bxc6 5.0-0 ♙g7 6.♞e1 e5**

Nowadays Black prefers the move
6...♘h6.



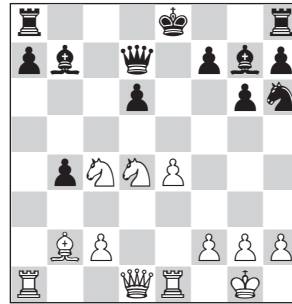
7.b4!?

Here is Fischer's idea! The usual continuation is 7.c3 ♘e7 8.d4 cxd4 9.cxd4 exd4 10.♘xd4 0-0 11.♘c3 with a small initiative for White.

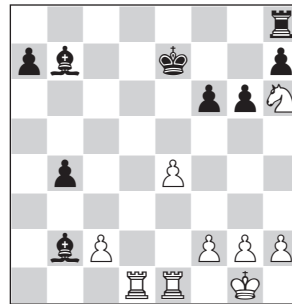
7...cxb4 8.a3 c5?!

Accepting the pawn sacrifice is dangerous because of the weakness of the a3-f8 diagonal, but more solid was 8...b3 or 8...♘e7.

**9.axb4 cxb4 10.d4 exd4 11.♙b2 d6
12.♘xd4 ♖d7 13.♘d2 ♙b7 14.♘c4
♘h6**



**15.♘f5! ♙xb2 16.♘cxd6+ ♔f8
17.♘xh6 f6 18.♘df7 ♚xd1 19.♞axd1
♙e7 20.♘xh8 ♞xh8**



**21.♘f5+! gxf5 22.exf5+ ♙e5 23.f4
♞c8 24.fxe5 ♞xc2 25.e6 ♙c6 26.♞c1
♞xc1 27.♞c1 ♙d6 28.♞d1+ ♙e5
29.e7 a5 30.♞c1 ♙d7 31.♞c5+ ♙d4
32.♞xa5 b3 33.♞a7 ♙e8 34.♞b7
♙c3 35.♙f2 b2 36.♙e3 ♙f7 37.g4
♙c2 38.♙d4 b1 ♚ 39.♞xb1 ♙xb1
40.♙c5 ♙c2 41.♙d6**

Black resigned.

Over the past ten to twelve years, the Rossolimo System has been actively developed and today it is firmly included in the repertoire of all elite chess players who play 1.e4 with White, and not only the elite, of course. I hope the first edition of this book, which was published in 2011, played a role in this growth in popularity. In 2012, the system was tested in the World Championship Match between Vishy Anand and Boris Gelfand; both of these outstanding chess players gave a great impetus to the development of the system. So, thanks to the efforts of Gelfand, and later his younger

comrade Daniil Dubov, several variations have appeared where the game goes 'move by move'. By the way, Boris himself had problems more than once facing the Rossolimo, primarily in games against Vishy.

I should note that White is not at all obliged to go for long forced variations, where everything is decided by memory and the quality of home preparation – he has worthy alternatives. So, despite the large number of games and the proliferation of theory, the system remains absolutely relevant. I always feel very confident in the Rossolimo System, because you can 'play by hand' there. There are not a lot of 'fast-&-furious' lines, you can build the game according to general schemes. Summing up, the picture remains the same as many years ago.

The Rossolimo System suits competent positional chess players very well. And not only professionals, but also amateurs, the so-called club players. It does not require a lot of memory. If you play some kind of weekend tournament,

you can quickly review this variation, or even not review it: if you remember the ideas, then this, in principle, is enough to play the system even at the grandmaster level.

In this case, we return to the principles of building an opening repertoire from Vyacheslav

Andreevich Chebanenko:

so that all variations can

be remembered and never

forgotten. Wake me up in the middle of the night and I will calmly play all of Chebanenko's openings!

These days it's hard to promise a big advantage for White in almost any opening. But still there is such a thing as pressure, human psychology. For example, a computer can easily hold this or that position, but it will not be easy for a human. In this book, we show fighting methods, typical tricks, 'life hacks'. Our task is to help the player playing White to put the maximum number of problems in front of his opponent.

The theory is now rapidly developing in all directions. People are always looking for where to stray away from theory in order to try, if not to surprise the opponent, then at least to avoid a forced draw in the opening. This is the tendency of world chess: to try to transfer the weight of the



The author with Vyacheslav Andreevich Chebanenko in 1992.

struggle to the middlegame, to get some kind of strategic position, and to fight for the centre and for the initiative at a 'slower' pace. Therefore, strategically solid schemes are becoming more in demand.

The Rossolimo System fully complies with these requirements. There is no particularly hard 'junction' in the opening. The game quickly turns into a middlegame, and there the struggle of plans already begins.

The author expresses the hope that this book will benefit, first of all, club-level players, but even stronger players will find something interesting. They will be able to take it as a basis and use the computer to look for more or less original ideas that can work in at least one game. This is how everyone works now: they try to set a task for the opponent in the opening, the so-called 'test'. Faced with a novelty, a human chess player at least will spend a lot of time, and maybe will still not find the strongest continuation. However, even without our help, strong chess players know perfectly well how to work on the opening!

This book is addressed primarily to those who want to use the Rossolimo System for White. However, Black will also benefit from it: all the most dangerous plans for White are considered here, and side variations can be easily and quickly studied on your own. Lastly, this edition adds a c2-c3 plan against all of Black's plans.

In conclusion, I would like to thank my friend International Master and well-known journalist Vladimir Barsky for his help in working on this book.

Viorel Bologan,
Doha, March 2022

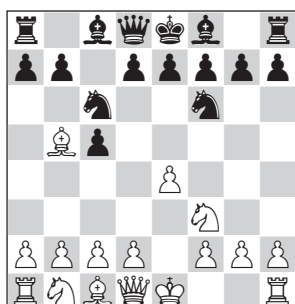
Index of variations (numbers refer to pages)

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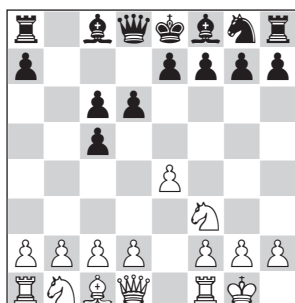
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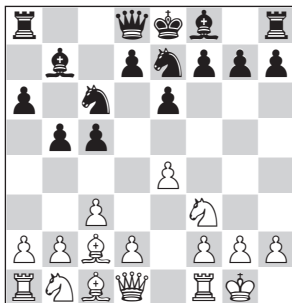
4...♙g4	79
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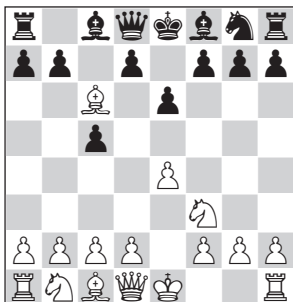
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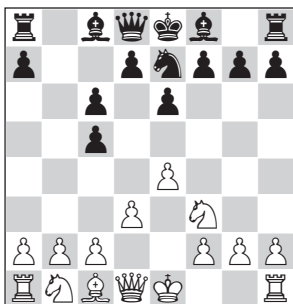
8.♖e1	101
8.♙e2 c4	103
8...♘g6.....	103
8...d5 9.e5 ♙b6	105
9...d4 10.♙e4 ♙b6	107
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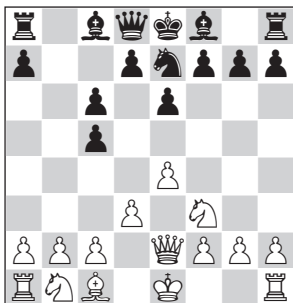
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6.♘g5 ♘g6	124
6...f6 7.♘h3 d5	124
7...g6	125
6.♙d2 f6	128
6...♙c7	129
6...♘g6	129
6...d5	132
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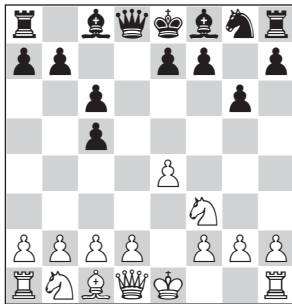
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6...♘g6	138
6...f6	142
6...d5 7.0-0	146
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6...d6	149
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Chapter 10 – 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 g6



4.0-0 ♙g7 5.♖e1 e5 6.b4 ♘xb4 7.♙b2 a6 153
 7...♗c7 154
 6...cxb4 7.a3 bxa3 155
 7...♘ge7 156
 5...♘f6 6.e5 ♘d5 7.♘c3 ♘c7 8.♙xc6 dxc6
 9.♘e4 ♘e6 157
 9...b6 158
 Conclusion..... 161

Chapter 11 – 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 g6 4.♙xc6 dxc6



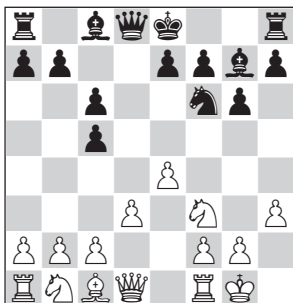
5.h3 ♙g7 6.d3 e5 163
 6...h6 165
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 7.0-0 ♘h6..... 167
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Chapter 12 – 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 g6 4.♙xc6 dxc6 5.h3 ♙g7 6.d3 ♘f6



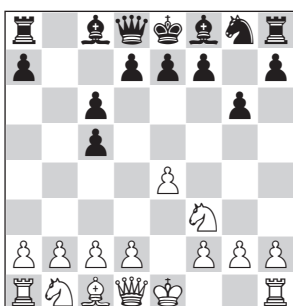
7.♘c3 0-0 8.♙e3 ♘d7..... 172
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 8...c4 174
 8...b6 9.♗d2 ♘e8..... 175
 9...e5 10.♙h6 ♗d6 11.0-0-0..... 176
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Chapter 13 – 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 g6 4.♙xc6 dxc6 5.h3 ♙g7 6.d3 ♘f6 7.0-0



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Chapter 14 – 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 g6 4.♙xc6 bxc6



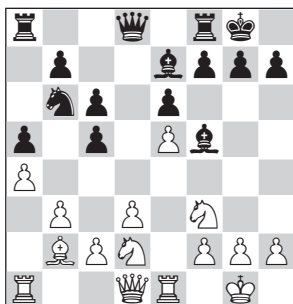
5.0-0 ♙g7 6.♙e1 ♙c7	195
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6...♘f6 7.e5 ♘d5 8.c4 ♘c7 9.d4.	200
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7.c3.	205
6...♘h6 7.c3 0-0 8.d4 ♙b6	207
8...cxd4 9.cxd4 d6	207
9...d5	208
7.e5.	211
Conclusion	212

plan: 6.e5! ♘d5 7.c4 ♘b6 8.♘bd2 ♙g4 9.h3 ♙h5 10.e6! 0-0-0 11.♖e2 ♗d6 12.exf7 e5 13.0-0 Naiditsch-Kuzubov, Spain tt 2020.

6.e5! ♘b6 7.♘bd2 ♙f5 8.0-0

Or 8.♖e2 e6 9.h3 ♙e7 10.♘e4 h6 11.0-0 with the somewhat better chances, Amin-Rapport, Abu Dhabi 2018.

8...e6 9.b3 ♙e7 10.♙b2 0-0 11.♖e1 a5 12.a4



Of course, Black has a very solid position: he has two bishops and no obvious weaknesses with the exception of the doubled c-pawns. White's superiority consists of the small space advantage and also the fact that the pawn on e5, supported by the bishop on b2, significantly restricts Black's active possibilities. **12...♘d5 13.♘e4 ♗c7 14.♘fd2±** White wants to transfer the knight via c4 to d6, Bologan-Lautier, Poikovsky 2003.

B2b) 5...♙g4

A logical move: Black brings the bishop into play, which the opponent could have prevented with the move h2-h3, and pins the ♘f3, preventing White from

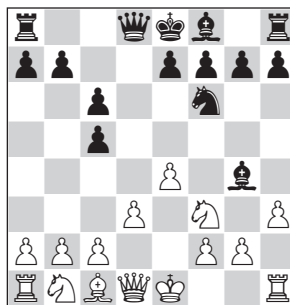
developing his pieces conveniently. Here White has two equally good plans: to take on f3 with either the knight or the queen.

B2b1) 6.h3

B2b2) 6.♘bd2

B2b1) 6.h3

White wants to clarify the intentions of the enemy bishop immediately and at the same time not to shut in his own bishop on c1.



B2b11) 6...♙h5

B2b12) 6...♙xf3

B2b11) 6...♙h5 7.♘bd2

An accurate move, preventing the move ...c5-c4, which sometimes involves a pawn sacrifice and sometimes does not. On 7.♙f4 the move 7...c4!? follows in its best form and after 8.♘c3 cxd3 9.cxd3 White has a weak pawn on d3. Probably he will soon have to play d3-d4, even if the other black pawn is by then on c5. This leads to new simplifications. For example: 9...e6 (the knight retreat 9...♘d7 is bad because of the simple 10.d4 e6 11.♖e2 ♙e7 12.0-0 0-0 13.♖ad1 –

♟e5 16.♞f5 ♔d3 17.♞d1 g6 18.♟c4 0-0-0 19.♞fxd6+ ♜xd6 20.♟xe5 ♟xe4 21.♞c1+- Sambuev-Chaichi, Kitchener 2015;

• 7...♟e7 8.d4 cxd4 9.cxd4 ♟g6 10.♟c3 ♟e7 11.♟xe5 ♟xe5 12.dxe5 ♞xe5 13.♟e3 0-0 14.♞d2 ♟b4 15.♟d4 ♞e7 16.a3 ♟a5 17.♞e3 d6 18.♞g3 f6 19.♞fe1± Nevednichy-Wonner, Nancy blitz 2017.

8. ♟g5

8.d4 exd4 9.cxd4 (9.♞e1 dxc3 10.♟xc3 ♟e7 11.e5 ♟d5 12.♟xd5 cxd5 13.♞xd5 ♟b7=) 9...♟xe4 10.♞e1 d5 11.♟c3 f5 12.♟e5±.

8... ♟e7 9.d4 cxd4 10.cxd4 d6

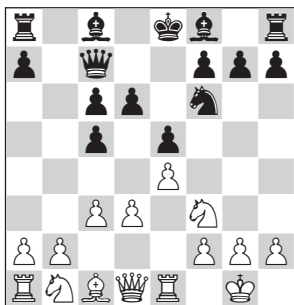
11.dxe5 dxe5 12. ♞c2

On account of the weakness of the pawn on c6, White has a small advantage.

B3b) 6...d6 7.c3 ♟f6

7...e5 8.d4 cxd4 9.cxd4 ♟f6 10.dxe5 dxe5 11.♞c2 ♟d6 12.♟e3 0-0 13.♟bd2 ♟g4 14.h3 ♟h4 15.♟h4 ♞fc8 16.♞ac1 ♟d7 17.g4 ♟g6 18.♞fd1 ♟e7 19.♟f5 ♟f8 20.♟b3 c5 21.♞d2± Macieja-Czarnota, Grodzisk Mazowiecki 2007.

8. ♞e1 e5



9.d4

Possibly it was even stronger to start with 9.♟g5 ♟e7 and only now 10.d4 cxd4 11.cxd4 0-0 12.dxe5 dxe5 13.♞c2 ♟e6 14.♟bd2 ♞ab8 15.b3±.

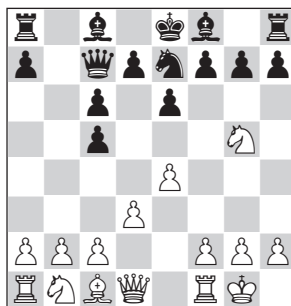
9...cxd4 10.cxd4 ♟g4 11.dxe5 dxe5 12.♟bd2 ♟b4 13. ♞a4 ♟xd2 14.♟xd2 0-0 15.♟b3

The knight wants to establish itself on the excellent square c5, blocking the weak c6-pawn.

15...♟d7 16.♟e3 ♟e6 17.♞ec1±

Bologan-Moiseenko, Tripoli 2004. Black has a very unpleasant position, but I did not succeed in converting my advantage, and in the end Moiseenko went through to the next round of the World Championship.

B3c) 6...♟e7 7.♟g5

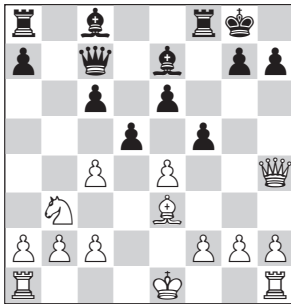


Freeing the path of the pawn on f2. This manoeuvre was invented by David Ionovich Bronstein, though admittedly in a slightly different position, after 5...♟e7, without the inclusion of the moves 5...♞c7 6.0-0. These additional moves favour White (castling is useful for him, whereas it is far from clear that the queen stands better on square c7 than on d8). As a result,

White manages to establish control over Black's pawn armada.

Less convincing is 7. ♖e2 e5 (7... ♗g6!?) 8. ♗g5 h6 9. ♗h3 d6 (9... g5 10. f3 d6 11. ♗f2 f5 12. exf5 ♖xf5 13. ♗d2 ♖g7 14. ♗de4 0-0 15. ♖e3 ♗d5) Marcelin-Lautier, France tt 2003) 10. f4 ♖xh3 11. gxh3 exf4 12. ♖xf4 ♗g6 13. ♖g3 ♖e7 14. ♗d2 0-0, unclear.

Recently in a blitz tournament in memory of seventh World Champion Vasily Vasilyevich Smyslov, Alexander Grischuk tried to 'modernise' Bronstein's idea by playing 7. ♗h4!?. After 7... ♗g6 8. ♖h5 ♗xh4 9. ♖xh4 ♖e7 10. ♖g5 f6 11. ♖e3 0-0 12. ♗d2 d5 13. ♗b3 c4 14. dxc4 f5

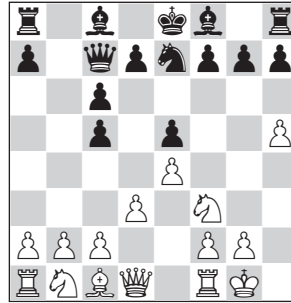


analysis diagram

15. ♗g5 ♖xg5 16. ♖xg5 fxe4, a double-edged position arose in Grischuk-Sjugirov, Moscow blitz 2021.

The furore created by AlphaZero has raised a general interest in advances of the rook's pawn at the first convenient moment. The position after 7. h4 e5 (White is better after 7... d6 8. h5 h6 9. ♗h2 g5 10. hxg6 ♗xg6 11. f4 ♖g8 12. ♖h5 ♖e7 13. ♗f3 ♖f6 14. ♖h2 d5 15. ♗c3±

Motylev-Ivic, Tornelo hybrid 2021) 8. h5 has been tested at the very highest level, though admittedly, as it often does nowadays, mostly in online blitz games.



analysis diagram

- 8... ♗g8 9. ♗h2 ♗f6 10. f4 ♖e7 11. ♗c3 d6 (Caruana-Carlsen, Clutch Chess Showdown rapid 2020) 12. ♖f3 h6 13. f5±;
- 8... d6 9. ♗h2 ♗g8 10. f4 ♗f6 11. fxe5 dxe5 12. h6 ♖e6 13. hxg7 ♖xg7 14. ♖g5 ♗d7 15. ♗d2 h5 16. ♖e1 f6 17. ♖h4 0-0-0) Caruana-Carlsen, Clutch Chess Showdown rapid 2020;
- 8... h6 9. ♗h2 d6 10. f4 exf4 11. ♖xf4 g5 12. ♖d2 ♖g7 13. ♖c3 0-0 14. ♖xg7 ♗xg7 15. ♖d2 ♖e6 16. ♖c3+ f6 (no better is 16... ♗h7 17. ♗d2 f5 18. ♖ae1 f4 19. e5 d5 (Aronian-Radjabov, Meltwater Tour rapid 2021) 20. ♗b3! ♗f5 21. ♗xc5±) 17. ♗d2 ♖f7 18. ♖f2 ♖af8 19. ♖af1 ♖b6 20. ♗c4 ♖b8 21. b3 d5 22. ♗b2 ♖b4 23. ♗a4 ♖xc3 24. ♗xc3 f5 25. ♗a4± Anand-Gelfand, Legends of Chess rapid 2020.

The plan with h4-h5 is quite promising and fully deserves additional study. However, the jump with 7. ♗g5 also deserves further scrutiny.

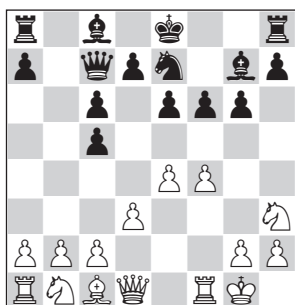


Fabiano Caruana

7...f6

7...h6 8.♘h3 (dubious is 8.♙h5 g6 9.♙h4 ♕g7 10.♘h3 g5 11.♙h5 e5 12.♙h1 d6 13.♘g1 (Vokhidov-Sjugirov, Titled Tuesday blitz 2021) 13...♕e6 14.c4 ♖d7 15.h3 0-0 16.♘c3 f5) 8...d6 9.f4 g6 10.♕d2 ♕g7 11.♕c3 ♕d4+ (Etmans-Peng Zhaoqin, Wijk aan Zee 2004) 12.♘f2. It is necessary to move the knight from the diagonal of the c8-bishop. Later White can either exchange on d4, or transfer the knight from b1 via d2 to f3. In my view, White can perfectly well count on a small advantage here.

8.♘h3 g6!? **9.f4 ♕g7**



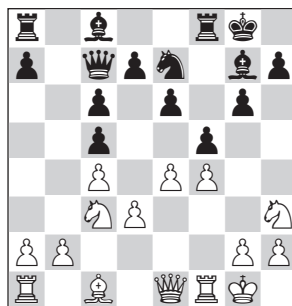
10.c4

Adopting the standard set-up – White prevents ...c5-c4 once and for all. Not so promising is 10.♘d2 d6!?, or 10.♘c3 0-0 11.♙h1 d6 12.♘g1 ♕a6 13.♘f3 c4 14.d4 (Caruana-Piscopo, Arvier 2007) 14...♖ab8 15.♙e2 f5 with good counterchances for Black.

10...0-0 11.♘c3± f5

We have already spoken of how White usually reacts to the breaks ...d7-d5 and ...e6-e5, but now we see this possibility for Black.

12.♙e1



White prepares the transfer of the queen to h4 in order to start an attack on the kingside. In addition, if the chance arises, he will play e4-e5, and the pawn on e5 will have additional defence.

It is also worth considering 12.e5 d6 13.exd6 (weaker is 13.♕e3 dxe5 14.♕xc5 exf4 15.♘xf4 e5 with mutual chances) 13...♕d4+ 14.♙h1 ♙xd6 15.♘g5 e5 16.♘e2 with the initiative for White.

12...d6 13.♘g5

This move gives the impression that the only thought on White's mind is to go and give checkmate as soon as

possible; in reality, the knight jump pursues a whole different idea.

13...e5 14.fxe5 ♖xe5 15. ♖f3

And this is White's idea: the knight returns to its rightful place on the board with tempo and takes control of the two important central squares e5 and d4.

15...♗g7 16. ♖h4

Now White also has taken control of some important dark squares on the kingside, g5 and h6. The exchange of dark-squared bishops will be quite unpleasant for Black.

16...fxe4 17.dxe4

It is important to retain control of f5 and not allow the enemy knight or bishop to come there.

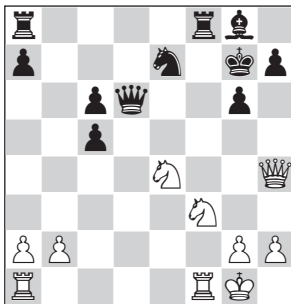
17...♙e6 18. ♙h6

White has a clear advantage, e.g.:

18...♙xc4 19. ♙xg7 ♖xg7 20.e5 ♙g8 20...♙xf1? 21. ♖g5+-.

21.exd6 ♖xd6 22. ♖e4

White has a strong initiative for the sacrificed pawn.



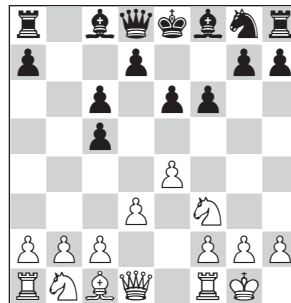
B4) 5...f6

This move was first played by Grandmaster Yuri Razuvaev. The idea is understandable: in reply to e4-e5, Black wants to exchange on

e5 and then follow it up with ...d7-d6 and ...e6-e5, creating a strong pawn formation in the centre.

However, White does not need to hurry with the thematic central advance on the e-file and can instead prepare it thoroughly and play it at a more suitable moment.

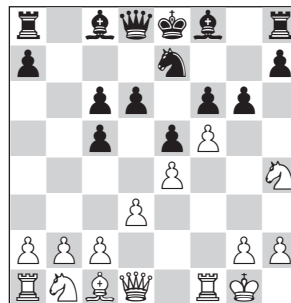
6.0-0



6...♖e7

In reply to 6...e5 White reacts the same way by freeing the f-pawn:

7. ♖h4 g6 8.f4 d6 9.fxe5 (the sharper 9.f5 ♖e7



analysis diagram

10.g4 (Bologan-Sevian, Speed Chess GP blitz 2021) is also possible, but here after 10...d5 a very sharp position arises) 9...dxe5 (now Black is left with doubled isolated c-pawns, but in the event of 9...

fxe5 10.♖f3 ♖e7 11.♔g5! ♗g7
 12.♗g3 ♘e6 13.♟a3 he has a very
 unpleasant position) 10.♟f3 ♘e6
 11.b3 ♟e7 12.♘e3 ♟c8 13.♗d2 ♟b6
 14.♗f2 ♟d7 15.♟c3± Stojanovic-
 Indjic, Serbia tt 2014.

7.♟h4

In the stem game, White did not
 find the correct plan: 7.♞e1 ♟g6
 8.♟bd2 ♘e7 9.♟f1 0-0 10.h4 d6
 11.h5 ♟h8 12.♟g3 ♟f7 13.♟h2
 d5 with chances for both sides,
 Himmel-Razuvaev, Dortmund 1993.

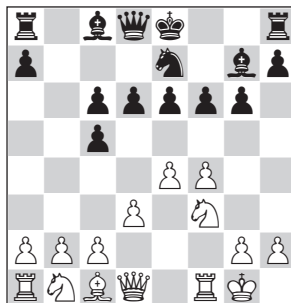
7...g6 8.f4 d6

Practice has also seen 8...♔g7 9.c4
 (the standard move, and here it
 can also be employed: Black stands
 rather passively. Therefore, White
 hardly need fear ...c5-c4. After
 9.♟f3 0-0 10.♟c3 a5 11.♘e3 White's
 chances are preferable) 9...0-0
 10.♟c3 d6 11.♗e2 ♗c7 12.♘e3±
 Carlsson-Moravec, Pardubice 2017.

Conclusion

The capture on c6 has a deep positional basis, and if White manages to
 complete the positional pawn clamp by means of c2-c4 and e4-e5, things
 become very bad for Black. In this sense, Black's slow responses discussed
 in this chapter leave enough time for White to establish a grip. An
 important point is the inclusion of the f-pawn in the battle after 4...bxc6
 5.d3 ♗e7 6.0-0 ♟e7 7.♟g5.

9.♟f3 ♔g7



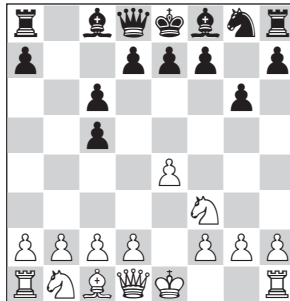
10.e5!?

Consequential, although it was also
 possible to wait with this move
 and continue to strengthen the
 position. After 10.♟c3 0-0 11.♗e1
 Black is still not threatening 11...
 e5, since the continuation 12.fxe5
 fxe5 13.♗h4, threatening 14.♘h6, is
 obviously unfavourable for him.
 10...0-0 11.♟c3 f5 12.♞e1 ♘a6
 13.♗e2± Nevednichy-Manik,
 Odorheiu 1995.

CHAPTER 14

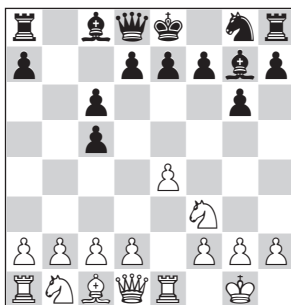
The fianchetto with 4...bxc6

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 g6 4.♙xc6 bxc6



An ambitious continuation: Black creates a large pawn mass in the centre, which he hopes to set in motion with the support of his bishops. However, this mass can turn out to be cumbersome and clumsy, and only interfering with his own bishops (especially the light-squared one). As for White, of course, he would very much like to eliminate the d7-pawn to isolate its neighbours and put his knight on c4, in order to exploit the doubled pawns on the c-file.

5.0-0 ♙g7 6.♞e1



- A) 6...♙c7
- B) 6...♙b6
- C) 6...♞b8
- D) 6...f6
- E) 6...♘f6

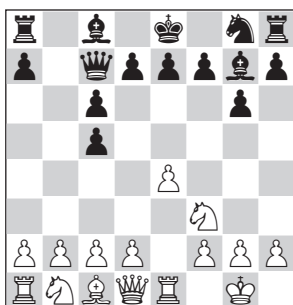
F) 6...e5

G) 6...♘h6

In reply to the modest move 6...d6, White prepares to seize the centre with 7.c3 ♙g4 (more principled is 7...♘f6, but here too, White has straightforward play: 8.d4 cxd4 9.cxd4 0-0 10.♘c3 ♘d7 11.♙e3 ♖b8 12.♙d2 c5 13.♞ad1 cxd4 14.♙xd4 ♙xd4 15.♘xd4± Eljanov-Le Quang Liem, Lichess.org blitz 2020; nor is full equality promised by 7...♘h6 8.d4 cxd4 9.cxd4 0-0 10.♘c3 ♙g4 11.♙e3 f6 12.h3 ♙xf3 13.♙xf3 ♞b8 14.b3± Onischuk-Dourerassou, Titled Tuesday blitz 2020) 8.h3 ♙xf3

9.♖xf3 e5 10.a3!? (quite ambitious, though White has other plans; for example, it is possible simply to develop the pieces in the centre, retaining slight pressure) 10...♗e7 11.b4 0-0 12.bxc5 d5 13.d3 ♖a5 14.a4 ♜ab8 15.♚e2± Carlsen-Polgar, Mexico City rapid 2012.

A) 6...♖c7



The idea of this relatively rare move is to take greater control of square e5 and not to allow the white pawn on e4 to advance there, and then to attack that pawn with the move ...f7-f5.

7.h3

It is worth considering the more direct plan with 7.c3, for example: 7...♗f6 8.e5 ♗d5 9.d4 cxd4 10.♖xd4 (10.c4!?) 10...♚b7 11.♗bd2 f5 12.exf6 ♚xf6 13.♖g4 0-0 14.♗e4 ♚g7 15.♖h4± Bologan-Tabatabaei, Titled Tuesday blitz 2021.

7...d6 8.c3 ♗f6

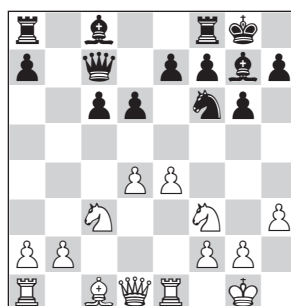
Insufficient for equality is 8...f5 9.exf5 ♚xf5 10.d4 cxd4 11.♗xd4 e5 12.f4! (White does not hurry with the exchange on f5 and for now invites his opponent to commit himself) 12...♗e7 13.fxe5 dxe5

14.♗xf5 ♗xf5 15.♗d2 (Black has a batch of weaknesses and does not even have the pair of bishops by way of compensation) 15...♗d6 16.♖f3 ♜f8 17.♖d3 ♜f7 18.♗c4 ♗xc4 19.♖xc4± Macieja-Kotanjan, Martuni 2007.

9.d4

In the event of 9.e5 dxe5 10.♗xe5 0-0 11.d3 ♗d5 12.♗f3 ♚f5 13.♖e2 ♜ad8 14.♗a3 e5, Black has fully-fledged counterplay, Petenyi-Ivic, Hungary 2021.

9...cxd4 10.cxd4 0-0 11.♗c3



11...c5

In reply to 11...♚b7 (Giri-Carlsen, Kolkata rapid 2019) I can recommend 12.♚f4 c5 13.d5 ♗d7 14.♜c1 and White has the easier game.

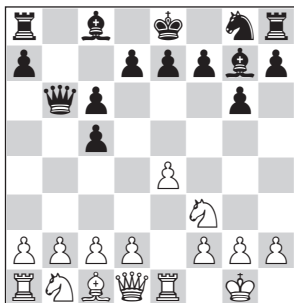
12.♚g5

Not dangerous for Black is 12.♚e3 cxd4 13.♚xd4 ♚b7 14.♜c1 ♖b8 15.♖d3 (Le Quang Liem-Adhiban, Moscow rapid 2019) 15...♜d8 with counterplay.

12...cxd4 13.♗xd4 ♚b7 14.♜c1 ♖b8 15.♖d2 ♜c8 16.b3 ♜c5 17.f3 ♖d8 18.♚e3 ♜cc8 19.♗a4±

Drygalov-Le Quang Liem, Titled Tuesday blitz 2020.

B) 6... ♖b6



Black attacks the pawn on b2, but this threat is easily dealt with. White simply plays natural developing moves, and as a bonus later even wins a tempo by exploiting the rather poor placement of the enemy queen on b6.

7. ♘a3 ♙a6

The pawn cannot be taken because of a pin along the b-file or the fork from c4, whichever tactical device you prefer.

8.d3 ♘f6 9. ♘c4 ♖c7 10.e5

White goes over to the offensive and with the aid of a small tactic deprives the opponent of castling rights.

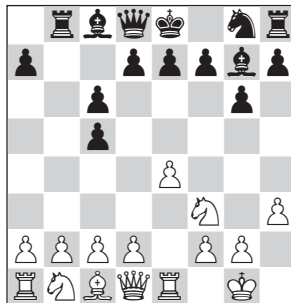
10... ♘d5 11. ♘d6+ ♔f8 12. ♘e4±
Bologan-Troyke, Dresden ol 1996.

C) 6... ♜b8

Black tries to tie his opponent down to the defence of the b2-pawn, but on closer inspection, it turns out that this threat is not very dangerous and White can just ignore it.

7.h3

Also good is 7.c3!?.



7... ♖c7

It is dangerous to accept the 'Greek Gift': 7... ♙xb2?! 8. ♙xb2 ♜xb2 9.d3 ♘f6 10. ♖c1 ♜b8 11. ♖h6 and White has a dangerous initiative.

In the event of 7... ♘f6 8.e5 ♘d5 9.c4 ♘c7 10.d4 White obtains superiority in the centre: 10... cxd4 11. ♖xd4 ♜b7 (or 11... 0-0 12. ♖xa7±) 12. ♘c3 ♘e6 13. ♖h4±.

8.c3 ♘f6 9.e5 ♘d5 10.c4 ♘b4

Nothing is achieved by 10... ♘f4?! 11.d4 ♘e6 12.d5±.

11.d4 cxd4 12.a3 ♘a6 13. ♖xd4 0-0 14.c5! d6

Or 14... ♖d8 15. ♘c3 ♘c7 16. ♖h4 with a dangerous initiative for White.

15.cxd6 exd6 16.exd6 ♖b6 17. ♖h4±
Giri-Grischuk, Stavanger 2015.

D) 6...f6

The plan with the immediate ...f7-f6 or ...h6 and then ...f7-f6 is quite passive, although Black does obtain a very solid position and retains hope that White will overestimate his chances and be deflected by active operations on the queenside, allowing a quick counterattack on the king (for example, after ...g6-g5-g4).