

Viktor Moskalenko

# **The Perfect Pirc-Modern**

**Strategic Ideas & Powerful Weapons**

**New In Chess 2013**

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## Foreword by Vassily Ivanchuk

Dear Readers!

You are interested in chess, and accordingly, you cannot pass by such an important aspect of the game as the theory of the openings. Admittedly, Jose Raoul Capablanca advised players to begin by studying the endgame, but it is hard to imagine how we can survive into an ending, without at least some elementary idea of opening principles. This is especially true in our day, when practically every player can absorb different opening variations with the greatest speed, by an adroit use of textbooks and the computer.

The present book is devoted to the Pirc and Modern Defences, although in many books (especially Soviet ones!), the Pirc is given the name of the master from Kustan, Anatoly Ufimtsev. The author gives detailed coverage of various lines of this opening. Although in the main, the book is aimed at highly-qualified players, I think it will also be useful to the average amateur... As well as the main strategic plans, the author also draws attention to traps and non-standard tactical tricks.

And now to the opening itself. When playing the Pirc Defence, the black player does not aim to equalize the position. He tries to obtain complicated play, and even invites the danger of a direct attack on his king. But playing such positions, and making full use of one's (often far from obvious) resources, requires great skill, developing which is very valuable for players of all levels.

Viktor Moskalenko has already written a number of books, on various openings. One can think of the Nimzo-Indian with 4.f3 in his book *Revolutionize Your Chess*, the French Defence and the Budapest Gambit. By way of illustration, the author uses many of his own games, with very interesting annotations – not just regarding chess, but also from the psychological point of view. Consequently, this is not just an opening book, but it is also useful for further study of certain middlegame and even endgame positions. In addition, you can also become familiar with the particular methodology of analysing employed by Viktor Moskalenko, which will undoubtedly help you to master not just the Pirc and Modern Defences, but also to systematize and perfect your understanding of the key points of other openings.

I wish you success!



Vassily Ivanchuk

# Introduction



## Surprise your opponent with the Perfect Pirc-Modern!

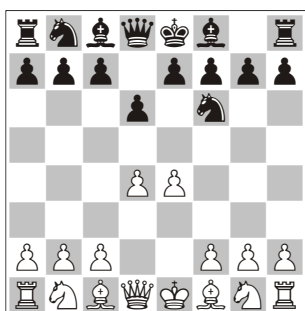
In the beginning of the 20th century, hyper-modernism made its appearance in chess.

Since then, many chess players have finally discovered its 'dark side' (the dynamic style); the chess game proved to be richer than it had been thought to be before, and it began to change, from classical chess to a more active and unpredictable game.

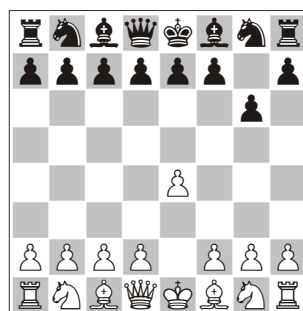
As a consequence of this development, new openings were tested. In some of them, the influence on the centre was exerted from a distance.

This book is about two such systems: the **Pirc** and the **Modern Defence**.

**Pirc** 1.e4 d6 2.d4 ♘f6



**Modern** 1.e4 g6



Both systems have long since established themselves as a universal opening weapon for the creative player.

The failure of many attempts to refute Black's defence outright with a quick occupation of the centre and a straight assault (such as the Austrian Attack with f2-f4) prove that it is still very much alive and kicking.

All main lines for White and Black are covered in this book, as well as some rare options.

### **The main opening resources and pawn structures**

#### **White:**

- \* maintain his centre and develop
- \* attack in the centre (e4-e5)
- \* attack on the kingside (h2-h4)
- \* a typical attacking set-up with pieces is f3/♘e3/♔d2/♙h6 etc.

#### **Black:**

- \* usually prepares ...e7-e5
- \* the universal set-up with ...c6-b5
- \* the modern set-up with ...a6-b5
- \* sometimes the Sicilian Dragon structure appears after ...c7-c5
- \* Benoni structure: ...c7-c5 and White replies d4-d5
- \* King's Indian: ...e7-e5, and White's d4-d5
- \* Ruy Lopez: ...e7-e5
- \* Philidor: ...e7-e5 and ...exd4

This list of options shows the great flexibility of the combative Pirc-Modern Defence. Many times we can see motifs from the Sicilian, the Benoni and certain other openings, and also transpositions, in a single game.

During my study for this book I have discovered a huge number of powerful ideas for both sides; surprising new plans, and even some unexplored but attractive systems.

### **The Perfect Player**

From the beginning, White can choose to go for forced and aggressive lines, and he can also choose among many positional plans, trying a different playing style every time. However, most of the time the character of the positions and the play in the Pirc-Modern is ultra-dynamic.

This factor enabled me to collect many great and memorable games for the book, for both White and Black.

As usual in my books, I have tried not to be too heavily influenced by computer lines and to offer material mainly based on healthy concepts instead. One of the strong points of the best players is that they allow us to learn how to play with a solid basis. After that we can learn how to use computers to our benefit.

“One of the secrets of success nowadays is to use computers in your favour and not let computers rule your thinking ability”, said Grandmaster Boris Gelfand in his video interview *Nobody's invincible, nobody's immune to mistakes*, before playing his World Championship match against Vishy Anand.

Nowadays, the Pirc-Modern remains in the repertoire of many players as a nice dynamic option in must-win situations with black. On the other hand, it is also played by super grandmasters such as Ivanchuk, Grischuk, Kramnik and Nakamura: they also know perfectly well how to use the ‘active side’ of their chess talent. This perspective allows them as it were to take the chess game into a new dimension.

The perfect Pirc-Modern player doesn't need to have a phenomenal memory combined with some wishful thinking. He should first of all get the feel of this fascinating opening, and then use his fighting spirit!

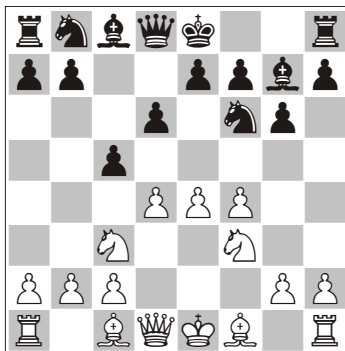
Viktor Moskalenko,  
Barcelona, December 2012



Vasja Pirc (1907-1980).

## Chapter 2

### The Austrian Attack: 5...c5



Opinion (2001-2009): ‘In the Austrian Attack, we can be confident in relying on the move 5...c5!. Black has sharp lines after 6.♔b5+ that lead to good positions. And we have plans and ideas of how to play the position after 6.dxc5. This preparation is sufficient for playing at any level’ – according to grandmasters Lev Alburt and Alexander Chernin, in their enthusiastic (American) story *Pirc Alert!*



Statistics (2012): However, the total of games in the databases with 5...c5 is 5,082, compared to 5...0-0 = 11,382! The score is virtually the same.

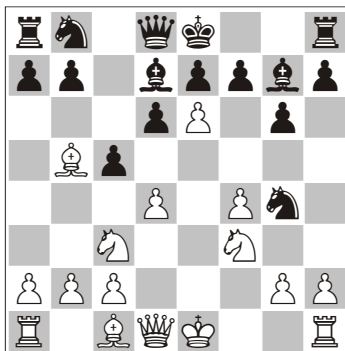
Objectively, this ultra-dynamic Sicilian/Benoni thrust is not a typical early opening move in the Pirc, but it is mainly aimed against the possible attack e4-e5. Black prefers to put immediate pressure on the d4-pawn, after which White has at least four original arguments:

A) Force the play: 6.♔b5+ or 6.e5.

B) Just play normal positional moves: 6.d5 or 6.dxc5.

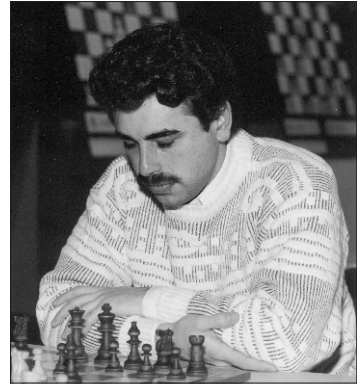
#### Game 2 – The Main Line: 6.♔b5+

Up to this day, White mostly uses this dynamic check. Now: 6...♔d7 7.e5 ♘g4 8.e6

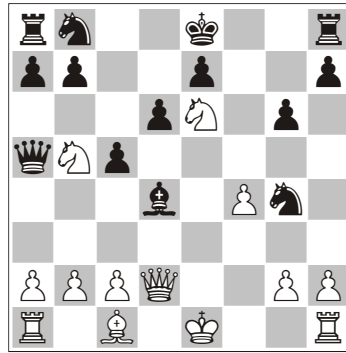


When Yasser Seirawan introduced the fantastic move 8...fxe6 in the 1980s (even if 8...♙xb5!? 9.exf7+ ♖f8! is also interesting for Black), which earned him a quick draw with Gyula Sax and a prize for the best novelty of that year, the variation beginning with 5...c5 became fashionable. Throughout history (and I am writing in 2012), besides a few forced lines with a maximum level of complexity, White has also developed some intermediate plans on moves 7 and 8 to simplify the line: 7/8.♙xd7, 7.h3, or 8.♘g5.

In our main game, super grandmaster Alexander Grischuk improved the main line by exchanging the queens:



A Pirc hero: legendary American grandmaster Yasser Seirawan.



12...♙xd2!, and after that he just played the endgame as a positional masterpiece. See several amazing posts on the Internet by the winner.



**KEEP IN MIND:** In this variation, exchanging the queens is a basic necessity for Black!

□ **Sergey Karjakin**  
 ■ **Alexander Grischuk**

Moscow ch-RUS 2011 (4)

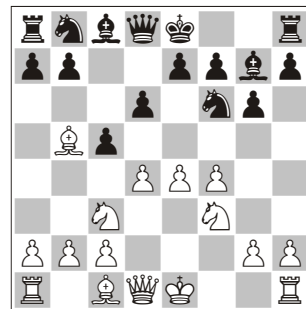
1.e4 d6 2.d4 ♘f6 3.♘c3 g6 4.f4  
 ♙g7 5.♘f3 c5!?

Recently, in two games against Karjakin, Ivanchuk castled on both occasions (see Part 2, Austrian Attack 5...0-0), while the text is the second main move.

6.♙b5+

This move reminds me of Taimanov's check in the Four Pawns Benoni! Also,

because the right defence is almost identical:



### 6...♙d7!

6...♙fd7?! is too passive: 7.dxc5! dxc5 8.e5± – Black gets a bad pawn structure.



**TRICK:** 6...♙bd7? allows White to exploit the big hole on e6: 7.e5 ♖g4 8.e6! fxe6 9.♙g5↑ 0-0□ 10.♙xe6 ♔a5 11.♙xg7 ♙df6 12.h3 ♙h6 13.dxc5!±;



**WEAPON:** However, 6...♙c6!?, an idea introduced in 1980 by the young Englishman Peter Wells (now a grandmaster), is a provocative defence, especially suited to players who enjoy an extremely sharp struggle:



analysis diagram

A) 7.dxc5 is not strong enough: 7...♔a5 (7...0-0!? 8.0-0 ♙e6☞) 8.♙d2 0-0☞, as occurred in Motwani-McNab, London 1989, and, more recently, in Alsina Leal-Peralta, Catalunya tt 2012;

B) 7.d5!? a6 8.♙a4 (8.♙e2!? is the solid Benoni alternative) 8...b5 9.dxc6 and now 9...♔c7!? (9...♔b6!? is similar; 9...bxa4!? is also unclear: 10.e5 ♙g4 11.0-0 0-0 12.h3 ♙h6 13.♙d5 ♙e6 14.c7 ♔d7☞) 10.e5! (10.♙b3 c4☞) 10...dxe5 11.fxe5 ♙g4 12.♔d5 bxa4 13.♔xc5 ♙xe5 14.♙d5 ♙xf3+ 15.gxf3 ♔e5+ 16.♙f2 ♔b8! threatening 17...♔b5. The position remains quite dy-

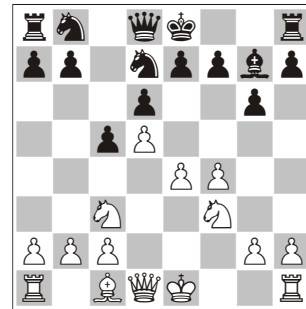
namic, but forced play follows: 17.♙f4 ♔d4+ 18.♔xd4 ♙xd4+ 19.♙g3 e5 20.♔he1 ♙e6! 21.♔xe5 ♙xe5 22.♙xe5 ♙xd5 23.♙xb8 ♙xc6 24.♔d1 ♙e7=.

### 7.e5!

The planned attack begins.

7.♙xd7+ is a rather harmless option here, since Black gets excellent play after either of two equivalent answers:

A) 7...♙fxd7. This solid recapture is the most commonly played move, mostly in order to avoid complications with e4-e5. 8.d5 (if 8.♙e3 0-0 9.♔d2 ♙c6 10.0-0 ♔a5☞).



analysis diagram

As a general rule, after exchanging the bishops (f1xc8) and advancing his d-pawn, White will not get much out of this position.

8...b5!? is a typical Benoni gambit, but not the only option here.



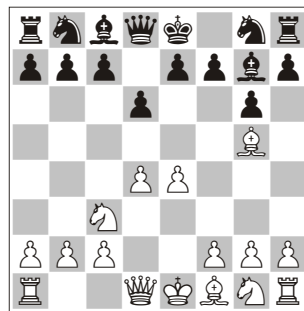
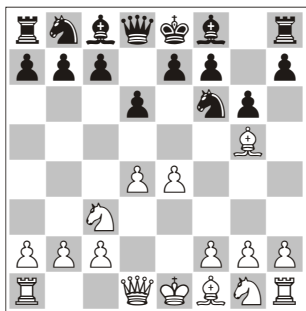
**WEAPON:** I would recommend the natural plan: 8...0-0 9.0-0 ♙a6 10.♔e2 ♔b6! (better than 10...♙c7 11.a4!) 11.♙h1 ♙c7☞ with the idea to exchange the queens after ...♔a6, Zambrana-Morovic Fernandez, Asuncion 2010.

9.♙xb5!? (9.♔e2 b4 10.♙d1 ♔b6 11.0-0 ♔a6! 12.♔e1 ♙b6 13.♙f2 (13.♙e3 ♙d8d7☞ Livshits-Grishchuk, Rishon Le Ziyon blitz 2006) 13...♙d8d7 14.a3, Shirov-

## Chapter 5

# The Dynamic Bishop Attack 4.♘g5

**Pirc:** 1.e4 d6 2.d4 ♘f6 3.♘c3 g6 4.♘g5    **Modern:** 1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♘g7 3.♘c3 d6 4.♘g5



The main characteristic of this set-up, which can be observed from the first moves, is that White initiates a sharp battle for the central initiative.

\* Thanks to the bishop on g5, the pawn advance e4-e5 will always be most effective.

\* One of the advantages of ♘g5 is the possibility of quick queenside castling.

### Directions

Game 22 provides an insight into the key positions of 4.♘g5: 4...♘g7 (4...h6 5.♘xf6!?) 5.♙d2 (also, 5.♙e2!? and the tricky 5.e5) 5...h6 6.♘h4 0-0 (6...g5) 6.f4.

This game also includes the Modern order as a weapon against 4.♘g5.

Games 23-26 continue the discussion on the sharpest variation: 5.f4!?



### Game 22 – Key Positions and Puzzle: 4.♘g5

Our main game was played by two experts on both sides. Black won this short theoretical duel easily. On move 18 he was already close to hauling in the deserved full point.

□ **Mikhail Kobalia**  
■ **Gennady Kuzmin**

Moscow 2002 (4)

1.e4 d6



**WEAPON:** Keep in mind that the Modern Defence move order is far more flexible against attacks with ♘g5, for example: 1...g6!? 2.d4 ♘g7 3.♘c3 d6 4.♘g5



analysis diagram

4...h6!? (4...a6!?; or 4...c6!?  
 5.♖d2 b5 6.a3 ♘d7 7.f4 ♘b6  
 8.b3 ♖c7 9.♘f3 a6 10.♙c1?!  
 c5!⇒ Ortega Hermida-Perez  
 Candelario, San Agustin 2012)  
 5.♙h4 (5.♙e3 makes little sense  
 in the light of what we have seen  
 in Chapter 4) 5...♘c6!? (5...a6  
 6.f4 g5!?N is an unexplored gam-  
 bit idea) 6.d5 ♘d4 (6...♘b8!?  
 7.♖d2 c6⇒) 7.♖d2 c5 8.♘d1!?  
 ♖d7!?N (White was very solid  
 after 8...♙d7 9.c3 ♘b5 10.f4± in  
 Vallejo Pons-Korobov, Aix-les-  
 Bains Ech 2011) and now:

TRICK: 9.c3? ♖g4!

9.♘e3 g5 10.♙g3 f5⇒, and the position  
 is already attractive for Black.

#### 2.d4 ♘f6 3.♘c3 g6 4.♙g5!?

This sharp bishop sortie is the first key  
 idea of this chapter.

#### 4...♙g7

WEAPON: After 4...h6 White  
 can play the strategic exchange  
 5.♙xf6!? (5.♙h4 is the com-  
 mon continuation) 5...exf6.



analysis diagram

In this typical ‘Trompowsky’ position  
 (with doubled black f-pawns) White  
 maintains slight but quite annoying  
 pressure: 6.f4 (6.♙d3!?) 6...f5 (6...♙g7

7.f5! – this line is important in Game  
 23) 7.exf5 (7.e5!?) 7...♙xf5 8.♙d3±.

#### 5.♖d2

The most popular move (1995 games =  
 62,4%). White prevents 5...c5 (after  
 6.dxc5 ♖a5 doesn’t pin the ♘c3) and pre-  
 pares queenside castling. However, in view  
 of Black’s simple answer, this set-up is less  
 logical here than ♙e3/♖d2 in Chapter 4.



WEAPON: With 5.♖e2!?  
 White can follow an as yet un-  
 explored, strategically aggres-  
 sive plan (65 games = 69,2%).



analysis diagram

5...h6 6.♙xf6!? (the same idea is also  
 valid in Game 24) 6...♙xf6 7.e5! ♙g7  
 8.0-0-0 0-0 9.f4 with attacking possibili-  
 ties in the centre and on the kingside, Vega  
 Gutierrez-Reizniece, Aviles Ech-jr 2000.



PUZZLE: 5.e5 is a known tricky  
 line (1013 games = 61,6%).



analysis diagram

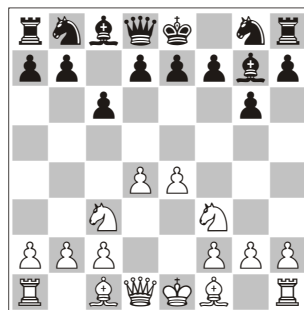
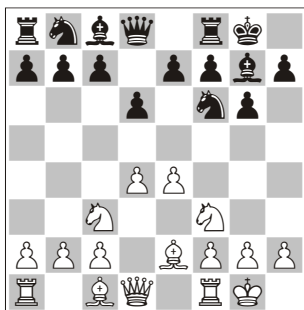
## Chapter 7

# The Classical 4.♘f3

‘Piece pressure against White’s centre has always been considered one of Black’s most reliable methods of play in the classical Pirc.’ – Marin.

**Pirc:** 1.e4 d6 2.d4 ♘f6 3.♘c3 g6 4.♘f3  
♙g7 5.♙e2 0-0 6.0-0

**Modern:** 1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♙g7 3.♘c3 c6!?  
4.♘f3 (Game 33)



The developing move ♘f3 is so natural and frequent that its motifs require no explanation. And we have already seen it in many lines of the 150 Attack (Chapter 4, Games 15 and 17).

In order to enrich the book (and your repertoire), this chapter will offer different ideas for Black to face ♘f3, mainly from my own practical and analytical experience.

This has at least one good feature: the offered lines led to memorable successes and opening discoveries by the author. So, dear reader, they might offer something for you as well!

### Directions

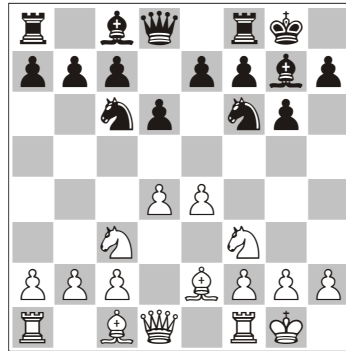
Game 31 – Chigorin’s provocative knight retreat 6...♘c6 7.d5 ♘b8.

Game 32 – The popular plan 6...♙g4, followed by ...♘c6 and ...e7-e5.

Game 33 – The ‘universal Pirc set-up’ with an early ...c7-c6; here with the Modern order.

Game 34 – The unusual line 6...c5 7.d5, which transposes to another popular opening, named the Schmid Benoni (A43).

### Game 31 – Chigorin’s Knight Retreat 6... ♘c6 7.d5 ♘b8



#### A Bit of History

We all know the famous Chigorin Defence: 1.d4 d5 2.c4 ♘c6!. However, another provoking idea with 6... ♘c6!? in the Pirc Defence was also first played by the same Russian grandmaster Mikhail Chigorin. In our days, nobody knows if this was a coincidence or causality.

Anyway, although I didn't know much about that story, an interesting set-up came to my mind in 1990, before a game against a super-solid grandmaster.

□ **Valery Loginov**

■ **Viktor Moskalenko**

Balassagyarmat 1990 (6)

1. ♘f3

My opponent's main choice on the first move. But after

1... ♘g6!?

I was quite happy when the response

2.e4

appeared on the board.

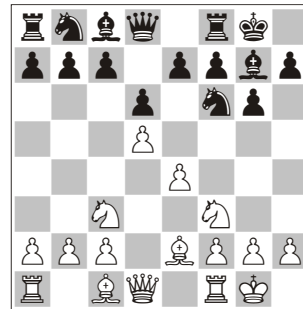
2... ♘g7 3.d4 d6 4. ♘e2 ♘f6 5. ♘c3  
0-0 6.0-0 ♘c6!?

A provocative move, played originally by the famous Russian grandmaster Mikhail Chigorin! – though he got it on the board via the move order 5... ♘c6 6.0-0 0-0.

7.d5

Otherwise Black will push ...e7-e5: 7.h3 e5; 7. ♘e3 e5.

7... ♘b8!



The first key position. I was going to continue in King's Indian style with ...e7-e5.

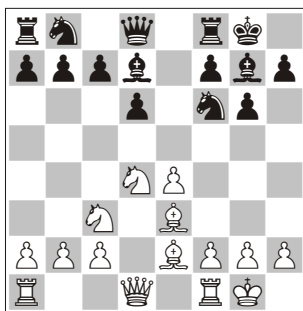
8. ♘g5

The stem game of this line shows Chigorin's plan: 8. ♘e1?! c6!? (the main alternative to ...e7-e5) 9.f4 ♘bd7 10. ♘d3 cxd5 11.exd5 ♘b6. This was played more than a hundred years ago, in Leonhardt-Chigorin, Karlsbad 1907.



Russian grandmaster Mikhail Chigorin (1850-1908). His ultra-provocative move ...♘c6!? re-returns in the Pirc Defence!

WEAPON: For instance, 8.♙e3 e5!? (for 8...♙g4 see Game 32; thanks to Chigorin, the main move here is 8...c6!? 9.♖d2 ♙g4!? 10.♗fe1 ♘bd7 11.♗ad1 cxd5 12.exd5 ♘b6 13.♙d4 ♗c8⇒, T. Hansen-Gelashvili, Khanty-Mansiysk ol 2010) 9.dxe6 ♙xe6 10.♘d4 ♙d7.



analysis diagram

This position is similar to the main game, where ...h7-h6 was included.

11.f3 ♘c6 12.♘xc6 bxc6!? 13.♖d2 ♗e8 14.♗fe1 ♖b8 15.b3 ♙e6 16.♗ad1

♖b4⇒ etc., Diogo-Vassallo Barroche, Matosinhos 2012.

### 8...h6

WEAPON: Again, 8...c6!? (instead of ...e7-e5) 9.♖d2 (9.h3 ♘bd7!? etc., playing like Chigorin) 9...cxd5 10.exd5 ♙g4∞ Petrushin-Khalifman, Podolsk 1992.

### 9.♙e3

WEAPON: A recent example saw 9.♙f4 e5!? 10.dxe6 ♙xe6 11.♖d2 ♘h7 (11...g5!? 12.♙e3 ♘g4 13.♙d4 ♘e5=) 12.♘d4 ♙d7 13.♗ad1 ♗e8 14.f3 ♘c6 15.♘xc6 bxc6 16.♙c4 ♙e6 17.♙xe6 ♗xe6= Sipila-Ehlvest, Riga 2012.

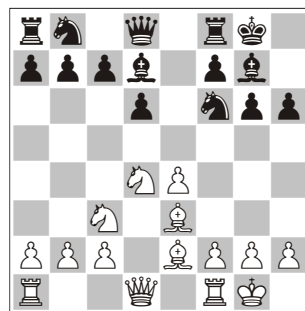
### 9...e5!?

Alternatively, 9...c6 is still possible: 10.♖d2 ♘h7 11.h3!? ♘bd7 etc. Stevic-Smirin, Sibenik 2005.

### 10.dxe6

Otherwise we will have a King's Indian without c2-c4.

### 10...♙xe6 11.♘d4 ♙d7



Finally I get my desired opening position: Black again has a Philidor structure, which we have already seen in the previous chapter against White's fianchetto (Games 28 and 29).