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Foreword

I must start with a confession: for many years I did not take the Torre Attack very seriously. While it was a part of my repertoire, I regarded it as for occasional use against specific opponents, or in unimportant games. For key games I would of course use a ‘proper’ opening. It took me years to realize that I was scoring better with the Torre than with ‘proper’ openings.

Eventually it dawned on me that I ought to take the Torre more seriously, and even make it my main opening. I reflected on why the Torre had proved so successful. Firstly, it is not a bad opening at all. Black needs to play very accurately to avoid landing in trouble, and in the main lines White can hope for a real advantage. Secondly, it is a much-underestimated opening. Many players seem to lump it in with innocuous ‘system’ openings such as the Colle and London, and meet it rather carelessly. Thirdly, White can expect to be much more familiar with it than Black; White is playing ‘his’ opening, rather than facing his opponent’s favourite defence. The fact that White can enjoy the game largely without worrying about being hit by some secret preparation is a great practical bonus. Eventually I grew to like the Torre, and began to play it at

every opportunity, and it has continued to reward me with good results.

My primary purpose in this book is to convey to the reader my enthusiasm for the Torre Attack while presenting the key ideas and the main theoretical details. I hope that this will help the reader graduate from Torre dabbler to Torre enthusiast rather more quickly than I did!

Readers have every right to expect the author has used all the available methods to produce the best book possible. I can assure you that this has been the case here; while I cannot guarantee there are no errors in this book, there should be very few missed transpositions, no notation errors, and no gross analytical errors.

The Torre Attack is named after the Mexican master Carlos Torre Repetto (1905-78), who shot to stardom thanks to his superb performance at the Moscow 1925 tournament.

Finally, I would like to thank Steve Rix for helping locate several of my own game annotations that I had mislaid.

*Graham Burgess
Bristol, July 1999*

Introduction to the 2015 Electronic Edition

It is a pleasure to reissue one of my favourite books in Kindle and Chess Studio formats. This makes the book available again to those who for whatever reason didn't buy a copy before it went out of print. It also means that we can make the book more user-friendly in various ways thanks to the electronic format. For instance, there are many more diagrams in this edition than in the original print edition; while there is a slight overhead in terms of a larger file-size, this is minor compared to the costs involved in printing a physical book with many more pages. The hundreds of cross-references are now hyperlinks, saving the reader a lot of time, especially given the free-form nature of much of the Torre with respect to move-orders. And in the Chess Studio edition, the reader can see the board position at any point in the text.

Naturally, I have also corrected any errors that I was aware of. I have also taken the opportunity to revise some of the analysis. The original edition was scrupulously checked with the best software and tools that were available at the time, to the extent that I felt able to guarantee "very few missed transpositions, no notation errors, and no gross analytical errors". I should clarify that by the last of those, I had in mind really serious errors, like pieces left *en prise* for nothing, or 'analysing the wrong position' situations – things that were common at the time in chess books – and not that the analysis was in some sense 100% perfect, whatever that could mean in an opening book. In the time since the book was written, computers have become several hundred times faster and analysis engines have advanced in leaps and bounds. Not only was I curious to see what improvements the current engines could find in Torre theory, but I also had a specific reason to set them to work on this book. In 2013 I wrote a book called *A Cunning Chess Opening Repertoire for White*, the plan being to have part of repertoire based on the Torre. So before choosing the specific

lines to recommend, I had the engines chug through all the analysis (Gambit's editing/proofing process generates a PGN file of the book's entire content, so this was already to hand). The end result was that one of my copies of the book acquired a variety of markings in red ink throughout its pages, where something of interest had been uncovered. The original book actually stood up pretty well all things considered, though that didn't stop my wife flicking through the marked copy and saying "There's a lot of red ink; did you write a bad book or something?" Like with blood itself, even a small amount of red ink looks like a bloodbath, I guess...

Incidentally, you may wish to use this book and *A Cunning Chess Opening Repertoire for White* ('CCORW') together. CCORW provides my proposed solutions to questions raised in the 'How the Torre Fits Inside a Repertoire' section of the Introduction, and also offers alternative handlings of the Torre not covered in this book (in particular a $c4 + \text{♟}c3$ approach to the lines in Chapter 7). Meanwhile, this book provides broader in-depth coverage of the Torre, which will be useful if you wish to investigate alternatives to the lines recommended in CCORW.

So, what has changed in this new edition? Firstly, I should clarify that it isn't a full-blown 'new updated edition'; it does not feature new game references. In a sense, it is a 'digitally remastered' version of the original book, such as I might have written if modern hardware and software had fallen back through a timewarp to my 1999 self. As you would expect, most of the revisions to the analysis are in the more concrete tactical lines, but there were some surprising little refinements and modified assessments throughout many of the outwardly quieter lines too. In a few cases where an analytical point formed the basis of a chunk of new analysis in CCORW, I have pasted this new analysis into the present book; I hope readers will view this as a pleasant bonus, rather than

cynical recycling of material! From a conceptual viewpoint, one of the most interesting new insights is that Black's problems in one of the traditional 'positions to avoid' may have been overestimated – see Game 3 in the Introduction; early castling in the ...d5 lines greatly reduces Black's margin for error, but may not be an error in itself.

Graham Burgess

Woodbury, Minnesota, May 2015

2022 Print Edition

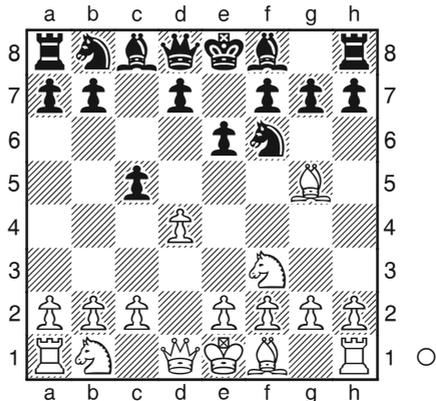
This reissue in print format features basically the same content as the 2015 electronic editions, with minor revisions, corrections and updates,

especially in lines I have re-examined in subsequent years. Hyperlinks have become cross-references to specific pages, and there are some extra diagrams. Where there was a need for extra text to fill a gap at the bottom of a page, I generally used it for extra explanation.

The largest chunk of new analysis appears at the end of Chapter 9, as this is rather a critical line where current engines can provide a lot of remarkable ideas and analysis. There are also a number of other points dotted throughout the book where there are new ideas, such as on page 60 where I note 4 d5!? (rather than “4 d5?!” as in previous editions) as being actually quite a good surprise weapon, and, for instance, a reassessment of Black's options on move 6 on page 66, in the 6 ♔c1 line on page 101, and various other small corrections and details.

4: 2...e6 3 ♖g5 c5: Alternatives to 4 e3

1 d4 ♘f6
 2 ♗f3 e6
 3 ♙g5 c5 (D)



Here White's most common move by far is 4 e3. In this chapter we discuss alternatives.

Quick Summary

Line A, 4 e4, is sharp but ineffective. On the other hand, Line B, 4 c3, enjoyed considerable popularity during the late 1990s, with Mark Hebden being a leading exponent. Unless anyone can demonstrate a particular deficiency of this move-order, it looks set to become a major and flexible pathway into the main lines of the Torre Attack. The only clear drawback is a practical one – White often has to be content with a symmetrical pawn-structure and positions akin to the Exchange Slav if Black exchanges on d4 while White can only recapture with the c-pawn.

The Theory of 2...e6 3 ♖g5 c5: Alternatives to 4 e3

1 d4 ♘f6 2 ♗f3 e6 3 ♙g5 c5

Now:

A: 4 e4?! 60

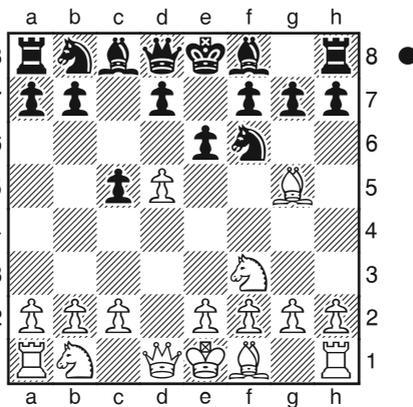
B: 4 c3 61

4 dxc5?! loses time. After 4...♙xc5 White has no chance of gaining any advantage.

4 ♗bd2 allows Black to remove White's central presence. 4...cxd4 5 ♗xd4 ♗c6 is equal.

4 ♙xf6? just loses a tempo by comparison with lines where Black plays ...h6, and leaves White struggling for equality. After 4...♙xf6 5 e3 (5 e4 cxd4 ♖) 5...♗c6 6 c3 ♙e7 7 ♙d3 d5 8 ♗bd2 0-0 White will have problems equalizing, Wahl-tuch-Rubinstein, London 1922.

4 d5!?! (D) looks reckless but is playable:

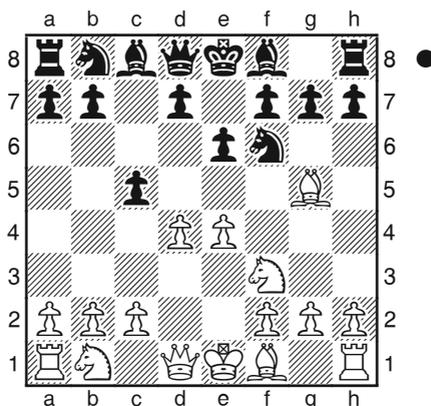


a) 4...exd5 5 e3! ♙e7 6 ♗c3 ♙a5 7 ♙e2?! (7 ♙d2!; 7 ♗d2!?) 7...h6 ♖ Tarashevich-Ronchenko, USSR 1964.

b) 4...♙a5+ 5 ♙d2 ♙b6 6 c4! (after 6 dxe6 dxe6 7 ♗c3 ♙e7 8 e4 ♗c6, White should play 9 ♙d3 =, avoiding 9 ♙b5?? ♗xe4!) 6...exd5 (6...♙xb2? 7 ♗c3! ♙b6 8 ♗b1! ♙d8 9 ♙a4! gives White strong compensation) 7 exd5 ♗xd5 8 e4 ♗c7! allows White fair play for the pawn.

A)

4 e4?! (D)



This has always been regarded as not quite adequate, but it might have some surprise value.

4 ... cxd4!

Or:

a) **4...h6?** 5 ♗xf6 ♜xf6 transposes to 3...h6 4 ♗xf6 ♜xf6 5 e4 c5?!, which gives White good chances of advantage.

b) **4...♖a5+?! 5 ♖d2!** (5 ♜bd2 cxd4 ♞) 5...♜xd2+ (5...♜b6 6 ♜c3!?) 6 ♜bx2 gives White a pleasant queenless middlegame.

c) **4...♜b6?! 5 ♜bd2?! (the sharp 5 ♗xf6!** favours White in the gambit play after 5...gxf6 6 d5! or 5...♜xb2 6 ♜bd2 gxf6 7 ♜b1 ♜xa2 8 d5!; the calmer 5 ♜c3 is also good since 5...♜xb2?? 6 ♜b5 is a disaster for Black, and 5...cxd4 6 ♜xd4 better for White than it looks) **5...cxd4** (5...♜xb2?? 6 ♜c4 ♜b4+ 7 c3 ♜xc3+ 8 ♗d2 traps the queen) and then:

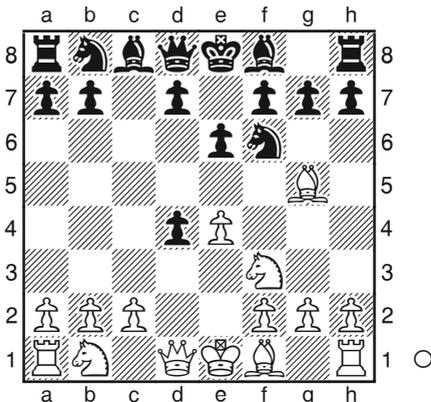
c1) **6 ♜c4 ♜b4+** (6...♜c5 7 ♗xf6 gxf6 8 ♜xd4 with unclear play, Piket-Kudrin, Amsterdam 1985; 6...♗b4+!?) 7 ♗d2 ♜c5 8 b4 ♜c7 9 e5 ♜e4 10 ♜xd4 a6 11 a4 b6 12 ♗d3 ♜xd2 13 ♜xd2 ♗b7 is also unclear, Marshall-Vajda, Budapest 1928.

c2) **6 e5 ♜d5** and here:

c21) **7 ♗d3?! h6!** (7...♜c6 8 0-0 ♜c7 9 ♜e1 d6 10 ♜c4 dxe5 11 ♜fxe5 gives White good compensation, Basman-Conroy, England 1965) 8 ♗h4 (8 ♜c4!?) 8...♜c6 (8...♜f4 looks reasonable for Black) 9 0-0 ♜c7? (9...♜xb2!) 10 ♜e1 ♜db4 11 ♗e4 gave White excellent play in Basman-Anoshin, Sinaia 1965.

c22) **7 ♜c4 ♜b4+** (7...♜c7? 8 ♜xd4 a6 9 ♜f5! ±) 8 ♗d2 ♜c5 is messy; now 9 ♗d3 is the solid move, while 9 ♜g5 is worth a look too.

We now return to 4...cxd4! (D):



5 e5

5 ♜xd4?! ♜a5+ ♞ and **5 ♜bd2?! ♜c6 6 e5 h6 7 ♗h4 g5 ♞** both give White a poor version of the Sicilian, while **5 ♜xd4 ♜c6 6 ♜e3** is at best equal for White.

5 ... h6

6 ♗h4?! (6 ♗c1 may be superior.)

6 ... g5

7 ♗g3

7 ♜xg5?? hxg5 8 ♗xg5 ♜a5+ wins for Black, while **7 exf6 gxh4 8 ♜xd4 h3** (instead 8...d5 is only unclear) followed by ...♜c6 should be quite good for Black.

7 ... ♜h5

7...♜e4 8 ♜xd4 ♜xg3 - 7...♜h5 8 ♜xd4 ♜xg3.

8 ♜xd4

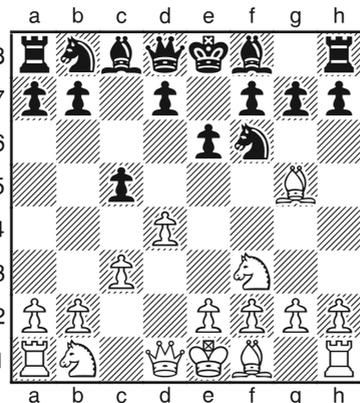
Now:

a) **8...♜xg3 9 hxg3 ♜c6 10 ♜e4 ♜b6** is a little awkward for White, though after 11 ♜bd2 ♜xb2 12 ♜b1 ♜c3 13 ♜b3, the careless **13...♜a5?** (Apsenieks-Kashdan, Hamburg Olympiad 1930) 14 ♗b5! proves good for White. **13...f5!?** is one way to keep a plus.

b) **8...♜c6! 9 ♜e4 ♗g7 (9...♜b6!) 10 ♗b5?! (odd; 10 ♜c3 is more natural) 10...♜c7 ♞ (10...d5!?)** Marshall-Nimzowitsch, Berlin 1928.

B)

4 c3 (D)



This is White's main alternative to 4 e3. Quite often it transposes back to normal lines after a later e3 by White, though White must be a little wary of arriving in a line where c3 is premature. The 4 c3 line has two main positive

features for White. Firstly, he threatens to play e4, and this limits Black's choice of replies. The second reason is a practical one: this position can be reached via various move-orders (e.g. 1 d4 e6 2 ♖f3 c5 3 c3 ♗f6 4 ♕g5), thus extending the possibilities for White to steer the game into a Torre.

Now:

B1: 4...h6	63
B2: 4...cxd4	64
B3: 4...♗b6	64

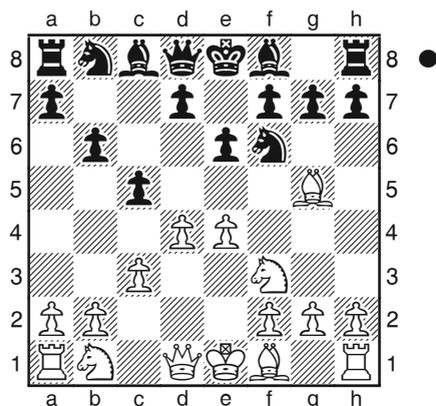
Line B2 is the traditional theoretically-approved equalizing line. The fact that it has hit some problems is a major factor in the recent popularity of 4 c3.

A few other moves:

a) **4...d5** 5 ♗bd2 (5 e3 – 4 e3 d5 5 c3) 5...cxd4 (5...♗b6 6 ♖b1 cxd4 7 cxd4 ♗e4 8 ♕f4 ♗xd2 9 ♕xd2 ♗c6 10 e3 ♕d7 gives Black a solid game, Hebden-Papaioannou, Cappelle la Grande 1998) 6 cxd4 ♗c6 (6...♕e7 – 4...♕e7 5 ♗bd2 cxd4 6 cxd4 d5) 7 e3 h6 8 ♕h4 ♗b6 9 ♖b1 ♕d6 10 a3 ♕d7 11 ♕d3 ♗e7 12 ♗e2 a6 13 0-0 ♕b5 14 ♕xf6 gxf6 15 e4 ♕xd3 16 ♗xd3 dxe4 17 ♗xe4 ♗d5 led to a complex struggle in Hebden-Hauchard, French League 1999.

b) **4...♗c6** 5 ♗bd2 (5 e3 invites a transposition to the main lines of the Torre, but Black can reply 5...h6, when 6 ♕h4 g5 7 ♕g3 ♗e4 attempts to exploit White's omission of ♗bd2, but in turn gives White the idea 8 d5!?, as in Bronstein-Van den Berg, Beverwijk 1963; 5 e4!?) 5...cxd4 6 cxd4 h6 7 ♕xf6 ♗xf6 – 4...h6 5 ♕xf6 ♗xf6 6 ♗bd2 cxd4 7 cxd4 ♗c6.

c) **4...b6** 5 e4!?. (D).

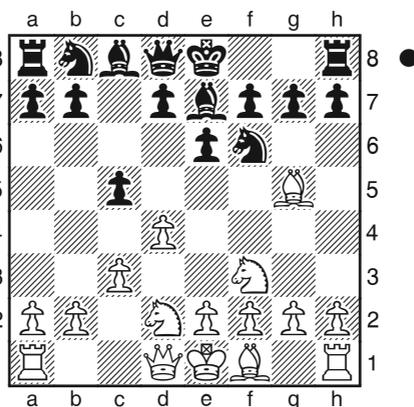


This shows a key point behind 4 c3, but it isn't clear whether this actually gives White an advantage. **5...h6** (5...♕e7 6 ♗bd2 – 4...♕e7 5 ♗bd2 b6 6 e4) **6 ♕xf6 ♗xf6 7 ♕d3** and now:

c1) **7...♗d8** 8 0-0 ♕a6 (8...♕e7 is more solid) 9 ♕xa6 ♗xa6 10 d5 ♗b8 11 ♗e5!? ♕d6 12 ♗xf7!? ♗xf7 13 dxe6+ ♗e7 (13...dxe6? 14 e5!) 14 e5 ♕xe5 15 ♗f3 gave White a powerful initiative in Lutikov-Velimirović, Sukhumi 1966, but Black's play here clearly wasn't optimal.

c2) **7...♕b7** 8 ♗bd2 cxd4 (8...♗d8 9 0-0 ♕e7 is solid) 9 cxd4 ♗c6 10 e5 ♗d8 11 0-0 is reminiscent of some lines of the c3 Sicilian, and shouldn't be too bad for Black as long as he defends alertly.

d) **4...♕e7** 5 ♗bd2 (D) and now:



d1) **5...b6** 6 e4 d5 (6...♕b7 7 ♕d3 should certainly be at least a little better for White) 7 e5 ♗fd7 8 h4 ♕a6 is reasonable for Black, Hebden-Zarnicki, Matanzas Capablanca Memorial 1993.

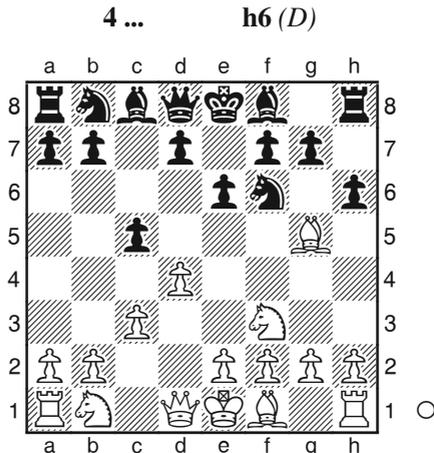
d2) **5...cxd4** 6 cxd4 and now:

d21) **6...h6** 7 ♕h4 d5 8 e3 0-0 9 ♕d3 ♗c6 10 a3 a5 11 0-0 a4 12 ♗e2 ♕d7 13 ♗e5 ♕e8 14 ♖ac1 ♗xe5 15 dxe5 ♗d7 16 ♕xe7 ♗xe7 17 f4 ♗c5 18 ♗f3 b6 19 ♕b1 ♕d7 20 ♗d4 with a pleasant advantage for White, Hebden-Sindik, Isle of Man 1997.

d22) **6...d5** 7 e3 (we now have a normal-looking Torre position, but where White has recaptured on d4 with the c-pawn rather than the e-pawn; this rather lessens White's chances of achieving an initiative – his queen's knight really needs to be on c3) 7...♗c6 8 ♕d3 (8 a3 0-0 9 ♕d3 ♕d7 10 ♗e5 h6 11 ♕f4 ♖c8 12 0-0 ♗xe5 13 dxe5 ♗h7 14 ♗f3 ♗g5 15 ♗d4 f5

keeps the game unclear, Hebden-Kiriakov, Hastings Challengers 1998/9) 8...0-0 9 0-0 ♖b6 10 ♗b3 h6 11 ♖h4 ♗d7 12 ♗e5 ♗fd8 13 f4 ♖e8 14 ♖c1 ♗dc8 15 ♖b1 ♖d8 16 ♖f3 ± Hebden-K.Arkell, Le Touquet 1992.

B1)



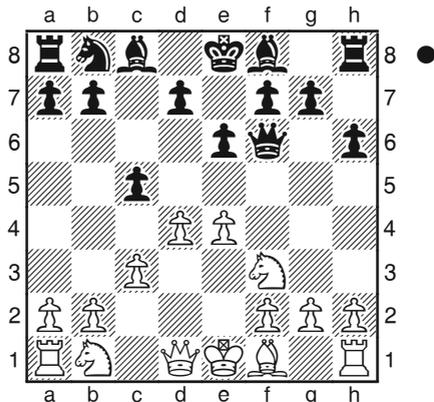
5 ♖xf6

5 ♖h4 – 3...h6 4 ♖h4 c5 5 c3.

5 ... ♖xf6

6 e4 (D)

6 ♗bd2 cxd4 7 cxd4 ♗c6 (7...g5 is unclear – Varnusz) 8 e3 g5 (8...d5 gives White more to bite on, e.g. 9 ♖b5 ♗d6 10 0-0 0-0 11 ♖c1 ♗d7 12 e4 dxe4 13 ♗xe4 ♖e7 with chances for both sides, Hebden-Motwani, Hastings 1996/7; 8...♖g6 is an interesting way to interfere with White's smooth development) 9 h3 (9 a3 g4 10 ♗g1 h5 11 g3 d5 12 ♖g2 ♗d7 13 ♗e2 h4! 14 ♗f4 ♖g7 15 ♗b3 ♗d6 16 ♖c1 b6 ♗ Lechtynsky-Velimirowić, Banja Luka 1985; 9 ♗d3!?) 9...h5 10 g3 with unclear play – Velimirowić.



6 ... cxd4

Or:

a) 6...b6 – 4...b6 5 e4 h6 6 ♖xf6 ♖xf6.

b) 6...♖d8?! 7 d5 ♖c7?! 8 ♗a3! ± and now Alekhine-E.Steiner, Kemer 1937 concluded 8...a6 9 ♗c4 b5 10 ♗e3 e5?! 11 a4! bxa4 12 ♖xa4 ♖e7 13 ♗d1 0-0?? 14 d6! 1-0.

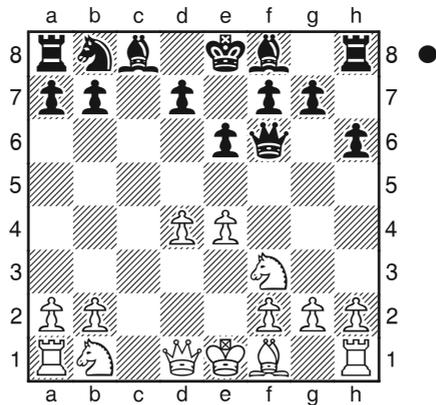
c) 6...d6 7 ♗d3 (7 e5!?) 7...e5 8 ♗a3 ♖e7 9 dxe5 dxe5 10 ♖b5+ ± Vidmar-Kostić, Yugoslavia 1922.

d) 6...♗c6 and here:

d1) 7 a3 (7 e5!?!; 7 d5!?) 7...cxd4 (7...d6 8 d5 exd5 9 exd5 ♗e5 10 ♖b5+ ♗d8 11 ♗bd2 g5 12 0-0 ♗xf3+ 13 ♗xf3 ♖g4 14 ♖e1 ♖xf3 15 gx3 ♖g7 16 ♖a4 ± ♖xf3? 17 ♖e8! ♖f5 18 ♖e6! 1-0 Augustin-Lanc, Czechoslovak Ch (Brno) 1975) 8 cxd4 – 6...cxd4 7 cxd4 ♗c6 8 a3.

d2) 7 ♖e2 and now 7...♖g6?! 8 d5 ♗e7 9 0-0 ♖xe4 (Varnusz) is best met by 10 dxe6! (rather than 10 c4 ♖f4! with survival chances) 10...fxe6 11 ♗bd2 with excellent compensation, but 7...cxd4 8 cxd4 ♖b4+ or 7...d5 looks more reasonable.

7 cxd4 (D)



7 ... ♖b4+

7...♗c6 8 a3 (8 ♖e2!?) 8...d6 9 ♗c3 a6 10 ♖e2 ♖e7 11 ♖d2 0-0 = Michel-Vajda, Semmering 1926.

8 ♗c3

Now:

a) 8...0-0 and now 9 a3 ♖xc3+ 10 bxc3 d6 11 ♗d3 e5 12 h3 ♗c6 13 ♖c2 ♗e7 14 g3 ♗c6 15 ♖f1 b6 16 ♖b3 ♗a5 17 ♗d5 ♖a6+ 18 ♖g2 ♗ac8 ♗ was G.Orlov-Psakhis, Philadelphia 1992. Instead White should try 9 ♖c1 (± NCO).

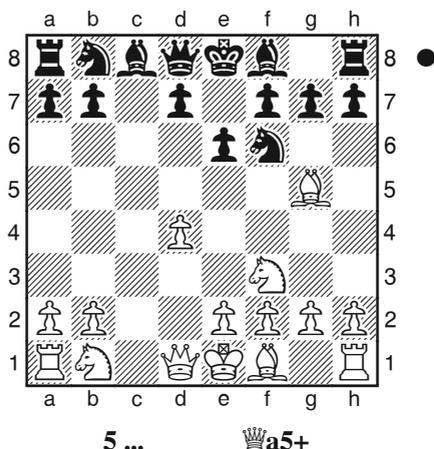
b) 8...♙xc3+ 9 bxc3 d6 10 ♖a4+ ♘c6 11 ♙b5 ♙d7 12 0-0 ♖e7 (12...♗f4!?) 13 d5 ± Hebden-Ward, Isle of Man 1997.

B2)

4 ... cxd4

5 cxd4 (D)

5 ♘xd4 is illogical. 5...d5 gives Black immediate equality, e.g. 6 ♘d2 ♘bd7 7 e4 dxe4 8 ♗xe4 ♙e7 = Trifunović-Pirc, Amsterdam 1950.



This 'disruptive' check is the main idea behind the exchange of pawns, but it turns out not to be very disruptive – to White at least. Instead:

a) 5...d5 leads to fairly sterile positions – in fact 6 ♘c3 transposes to a line of the Exchange Slav (1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 cxd5 cxd5 5 ♘c3 e6 6 ♙g5). In *NCO I* gave 6...♘c6 7 e3 ♙e7 8 ♙d3 ±, but the advantage isn't very large.

b) 5...♗b6 might be the best move:

b1) 6 ♗c2 – 4...♗b6 5 ♗c2 cxd4 6 cxd4.

b2) 6 ♗b3 – 4...♗b6 5 ♗b3 cxd4 6 cxd4.

b3) 6 ♗c1 has the advantage over the analogous line 4...♗b6 5 ♗c1 that the c8-bishop is attacked, but 6...♘c6 7 e3 (7 ♙xf6!?) 7...♘e4 (or 7...♙e7) is very satisfactory for Black.

b4) 6 ♘bd2 ♘c6 (6...♗xb2 is critical, of course) 7 e3 d5 8 ♙d3! (8 ♗b1 =) 8...♗xb2 9 0-0 ♙e7 10 ♖e2 0-0 11 a3 ♗b6 12 ♘e5 ♗d8 13 f4 ♘d7 (Duz-Khotimirsky – Bogoljubow, USSR Ch 1924) 14 ♗h5 f5 15 ♘df3 gives White reasonable play for the pawn.

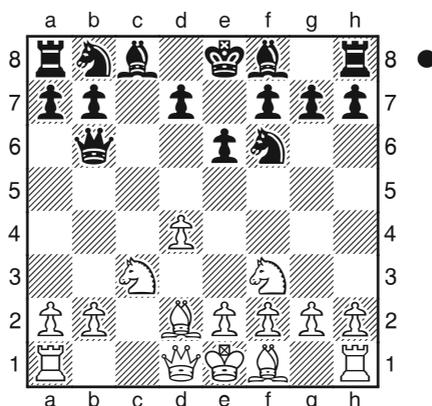
b5) 6 ♙xf6 gxf6 (6...♗xb2!?) 7 ♗d2 d5 8 ♘c3 ♘c6 9 ♗c1 ♙d7 10 e3 ♙e7 11 ♙d3 ♗c8 12 0-0 ± Mi.Tseitlin-Emms, Cappelle la Grande 1994.

6 ♙d2

Best. 6 ♘bd2!? ♘c6 (6...♘e4? 7 ♗c2! forces the silly 7...♘d6) 7 ♙xf6 gxf6 8 e3 ♙e7 9 a3 b6 10 ♙d3 ♙b7 looks quite reasonable for Black, M.Olbrich-H.Hunt, Pula Women's European Team Ch 1997, while 6 ♘c3 ♘e4 7 ♙d2 ♘xd2 8 ♗xd2 d5 is also satisfactory for Black.

6 ... ♗b6

7 ♘c3 (D)

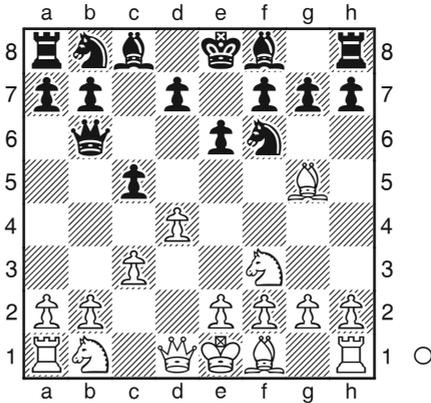


This is the problem for Black; White has no need to defend his b2-pawn for the time being, and can pursue the initiative relatively unhindered.

7...♘c6 (7...♗xb2?? 8 ♗b1 ♗a3 9 ♘b5) 8 e3 d5 (8...♗xb2?? 9 ♗b1 ♗a3 10 ♘b5) 9 ♗c1 (9 a3 ♙d6 10 ♙e2 0-0 11 0-0 a6 = Lechtynsky-Yudasin, Trnava 1983) 9...♙d6 (9...♗xb2?? loses to 10 ♘b5) 10 ♙d3 (10 ♙e2 0-0 11 0-0 ♗d8 12 ♗c2 ♙d7 13 ♗b1 ♗c8 14 e4 dxe4 15 ♘xe4 ♙e7 16 ♗fd1 ♘d5 17 ♘c3 might preserve an edge for White, Kharitonov-Vaiser, Sverdlovsk 1984) 10...0-0 (10...♗xb2?? 11 ♘b5 ♙e7 and now 12 0-0! forces Black to give up his queen; 12 ♗c2 ♘b4 is messier) 11 0-0 ♙d7 12 ♘a4 ♗c7 13 b4 a6 14 ♘c5 ♗fb8 15 ♗b3 ♙e8 16 a4 ♗e7 17 ♙c3 ♘d7 18 ♗b1 h6 19 ♗fe1 and White is well in control, Kamsky-Am.Rodriguez, Palma de Mallorca 1989.

B3)

4 ... ♗b6 (D)



5 ♗bd2!?

This is less speculative than the analogous line 4 e3 ♗b6 5 ♗bd2. It is odd then that in practice White normally does not offer the pawn:

a) 5 ♗c1 ♗e4 should equalize without difficulty; there are possible transpositions to 4 e3 d5 5 c3 ♗b6 6 ♗c1 ♗e4.

b) 5 ♗c2 (White cannot hope for any advantage with this insipid move):

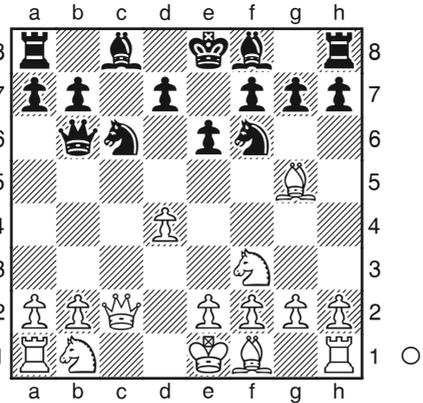
b1) 5...♗c6 6 ♗xf6 gxf6 7 dxc5 ♗xc5 8 e4 ♗g8 gives White no advantage, Garcia Gonzales-Gipslis, Jurmala 1983.

b2) 5...♗e4! seeks to nullify the main benefit of putting the queen on c2: White's 'control' of e4. Then White should choose between 6 ♗h4, 6 ♗f4 and 6 ♗e3, since after 6 ♗xe4? ♗xb2 7 g3 d5 (7...♗xa1? 8 ♗c2 ♗c6 with unclear play; Black has lost a tempo in the battle to free his queen by allowing the white queen to occupy c2 directly) 8 ♗d3 Black can play simply 8...c4! followed by 9...♗xa1, when White will have great difficulty trapping the queen. Note that instead 8...♗d7?! 9 ♗g2 ♗b5? actually fails: 10 ♗d2! ♗xa1 11 0-0! ♗c4 12 ♗a3! ♗xa2 13 ♗xc4 ±; the point is that 13...♗xc4? 14 ♗e5 ♗b3 15 ♗f4 f5 16 c4! gives White a decisive attack.

b3) 5...cxd4 and now:

b31) 6 ♗xd4 ♗c6 leaves White struggling for equality. Marshall-Capablanca, New York 1927 continued 7 e3 d5 8 ♗d2 ♗d7 9 ♗2f3?! (9 ♗c1 ♗c8 10 ♗b1 = Alekhine) 9...♗e4 10 ♗f4? f6 11 ♗d3? e5 and White was in serious trouble.

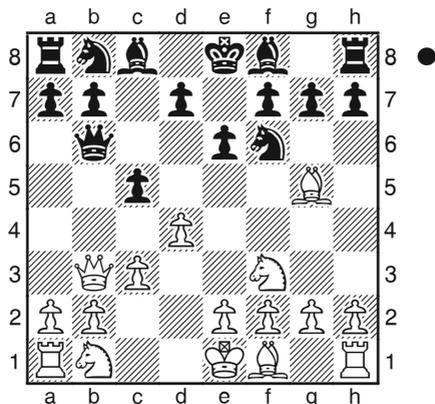
b32) 6 cxd4 ♗c6 (D) and here:



b321) 7 ♗xf6 gxf6 8 e3 d5 9 ♗e2 ♗d7 10 ♗c3 ♗c8 (10...♗e7 11 0-0 0-0 12 ♗a4 ♗c7 13 ♗c5 ♗fc8 14 ♗xd7 ♗xd7 gave White no meaningful advantage in Larsen-Portisch, Tilburg 1980) 11 0-0 ♗e7 with unclear play, Franke-Ribli, Bundesliga 1987/8.

b322) 7 e3 d5 8 ♗c3 ♗d7 9 ♗b5 (9 ♗e2 ♗e4! 10 ♗f4 ♗e7 11 0-0 g5?! {11...♗c8} 12 ♗e5?! {12 ♗xe4 ±} 12...f6 13 ♗g3 ♗xg3 14 hxg3 ♗c8 gave Black good counterplay in Siebrecht-Dinstuhl, Münster 1994) 9...♗e4 10 0-0 ♗xc3 11 ♗xc6 ♗xc6 12 ♗e5 ♗a4 13 ♗xc3 ♗c8 = Marshall-Tartakower, Berlin 1928.

c) 5 ♗b3 (D) brings about a b3-b6 queen stand-off. These situations generally require careful handling by both sides, but this one is quite satisfactory for Black, as his pieces are active and his structure flexible.



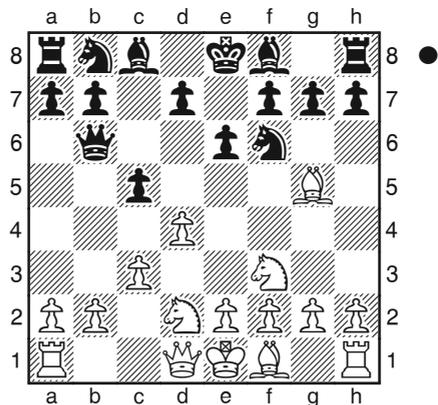
c1) 5...cxd4 6 cxd4 (6 ♗xb6 axb6 7 ♗xd4 is probably best; see Yermolinsky's *The Road to Chess Improvement* for some thoughts on the b3 vs b6 queen stand-off in structures of this type) 6...♗e4 7 ♗f4 ♗c6 8 e3 ♗b4+ is comfortable

for Black, since the natural 9 ♖bd2?? (9 ♖c3 is necessary) loses: 9...g5! 10 ♖xg5 ♖xd2+ 11 ♖xd2 ♗a5 0-1 Sangla-Karpov, Riga 1968.

c2) 5...♖e4 6 ♖f4 (6 ♖e3 d5 7 ♖bd2 ♖xd2 8 ♖xd2 ♖d7 9 g3 ♖d6 is perfectly satisfactory for Black, Todorović-Dragomaretsky, Bela Crkva 1989 – indeed White's set-up looks very artificial) 6...♖c6 (6...cxd4 7 cxd4 – 5...cxd4 6 cxd4 ♖e4 7 ♖f4) 7 e3 ♖e7 (7...d5 8 ♖bd2 gives White a little more to bite on) 8 ♖bd2 ♖xd2 9 ♖xd2 d5 10 ♗xb6 axb6 11 ♖c7 ♖d8 is equal, Klarić-Suba, Sochi 1977.

c3) 5...♖c6 6 e3 d5 (6...♖e4 7 ♖f4 – 5...♖e4 6 ♖f4 ♖c6 7 e3) 7 ♖bd2 ♖d7 (7...♖e7 8 ♖e2 0-0 9 0-0 ♖e8 10 ♖ad1 cxd4 11 exd4 ♖e4 12 ♖xe7 ♖xd2 13 ♖xd2 ♖xe7 14 ♖d3 ♗xb3?! 15 axb3 ♖d7 16 ♖a1 ± Trifunović-Averbakh, Yugoslavia-USSR 1961) 8 ♖e2 cxd4 (8...♖e7 9 0-0 ♖a5 has scored well for Black in practice; Black's king will be well placed for the ending) 9 exd4 (9 ♗xb6 axb6 10 ♖xd4 ♖xd4 11 exd4 =) 9...♖d6 10 0-0 h6 is fine for Black, Kostić-Capablanca, Havana (4) 1919.

We now return to 5 ♖bd2!? (D):



5 ... ♗xb2

This leads to very messy positions. If Black wishes to play safe, then 5...cxd4 is the move. After 6 ♖c4 we have:

a) 6...♗c7!? is the combative retreat, but could leave Black in hot water:

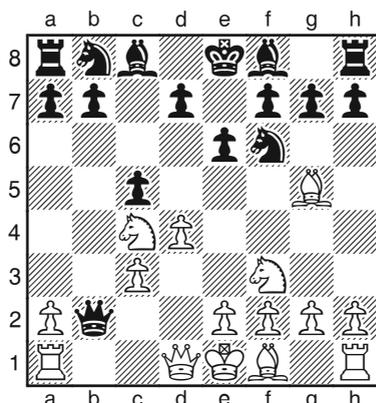
a1) 7 cxd4 ♖e4!? should give Black comfortable equality (instead 7...♗xc4 8 ♖c1 regains the piece while disrupting Black's position).

a2) 7 ♖xf6 dxc3 (7...gxf6 8 ♗xd4 ±; 7...♗xc4 8 ♖xd4 gives White a useful devel-

opment advantage) 8 ♖xc3 ♗xc4 9 ♖c1 gives Black some serious problems to solve.

b) 6...♗d8 7 cxd4 d5 (normally, inviting the knight into e5 would not be a good idea, but here White is too vulnerable on the a5-e1 diagonal, so steps backward) 8 ♖cd2 ♖e7 – 4...♖e7 5 ♖bd2 cxd4 6 cxd4 d5 (this odd transposition, which occurred in Hebden-Kiriakov, Hastings Challengers 1998/9, leads to a sound line for Black).

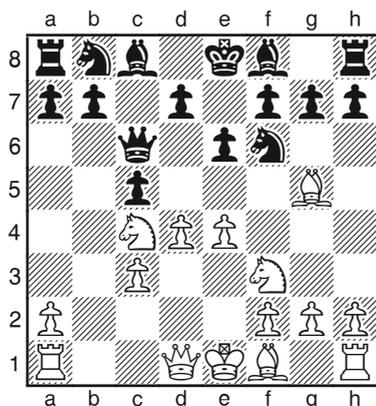
6 ♖c4 (D)



6 ... ♗b5?

6...♗xc3+! is the best try (or even simply necessary), though it used to be condemned on the basis of 7 ♖d2 ♗xc4 8 e4 '±'. Indeed, it looks as if Black has fallen into an opening trap, and 'should' therefore be losing. However, the position after 8...♗xf1+ 9 ♖xf1 ♖xe4 is very far from clear (and considered roughly equal by 2022's NNUE engines). White should probably start with 10 ♖f4, but it will be hard work to get much traction on the black position.

7 e4 ♗c6 (D)

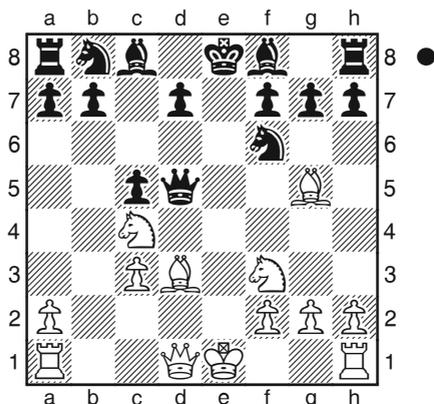


8 d5

8 ♘d3 gives White compensation – *NCO*. No doubt true, but in view of the next note, this may be redundant.

8 ... exd5
9 ♘ce5?

9 exd5! ♙xd5 **10 ♘d3 (D)** gives White very good compensation; indeed, computer analysis provides no defence at all for Black:



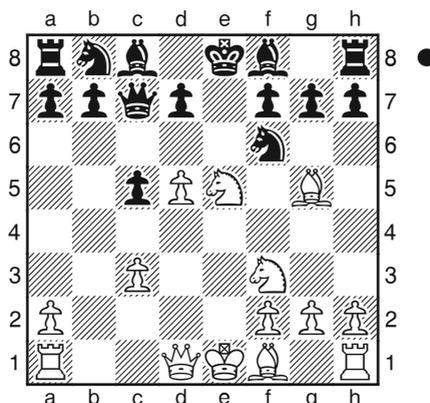
a) **10...♙d8?! 11 0-0 d6 12 ♘e3** with an attack that Black will not be able to fend off for long.

b) **10...♙e6+** and now **11 ♙d2?! d5! 12 ♘xf6** (12 ♚e1 ♘e4+ 13 ♙c2 is also very messy) 12...♙xf6 13 ♘e3 was unconvincing in S.Sokolov-Muratov, USSR 1973. However, **11 ♘e3!** is again the right approach, keeping the minor pieces flexible and ready to meet whatever attempt Black makes to organize his mess of a position. 12 0-0 and 13 ♚e1 are coming next unless Black invites an immediate tactical blow.

c) Black could also try **10...♘e7**, though after 11 0-0, he is still unable to evacuate his king due to the exposed queen on d5. Following 11...♙c6 12 ♚b1 (versus ...d5 plans) 12...0-0 13 ♚e1 Black is rapidly heading for

what Peter Wells memorably called ‘one of those Duke of Brunswick moments’.

9 ... ♙c7
10 exd5 (D)



10 ... d6

10...♘e4? loses to 11 ♘xf7!! ♙xf7 12 d6! ♙xd6 13 ♘c4+ ♙e8 14 ♙e2, etc.

11 ♙a4+

The game is far from clear:

a) **11...♘d7?! 12 ♘xd7 ♘bxd7 13 ♘xf6 gxf6 14 ♘h4** (or 14 ♘d3!?) gives White good compensation.

b) **11...♘bd7!?** could be tried. 12 ♘xf6 gxf6 13 ♘c4 offers White positional compensation, but nothing more specific.

c) **11...♙d8!?** 12 ♙f4?! (12 ♙h4!?) 12...♙e7 13 0-0-0 dxe5?! (the calm 13...♙c7 is more solid, while 13...h6 suggests the queen would have been better placed on h4) 14 ♘xe5 ♘bd7 (14...h6? 15 ♘xf6! gxf6 16 ♘c6+! with a decisive attack) 15 ♘c6+! bxc6 16 dxc6 c4?! (16...h6!? 17 ♘c4 hxg5 18 c7+ ♙e8 19 ♙f3 ♙e4 20 ♚he1 ♘b7 is still unclear) 17 ♘xc4 ♙a3+ 18 ♙b1 ♙xc3? (now it's forced mate; 18...♘e7 was essential) 19 c7+ ♙e8 20 ♚he1+ ♘e7 21 ♙d6 ♙xc4 22 ♙xe7# (1-0) S.Sokolov-Dobosz, Primorsko 1970.