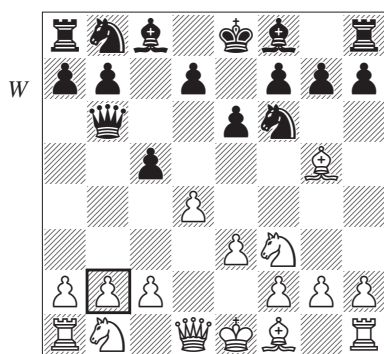


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2 The Torre Poisoned Pawn

1	d4	♘f6
2	♘f3	e6
3	♗g5	c5
4	e3	♙b6 (D)



It seems logical to begin our detailed investigation with this line, as it is the sharpest and most forcing in the entire opening. A study of this chapter is essential for anyone wishing to play the Torre; in other variations it is possible (though not advisable) to get by with very little theoretical knowledge, but not here.

Those looking for an ambitious weapon against the Torre as Black may wish to study this chapter carefully; if Black is armed to the teeth with specific analysis and likes grabbing pawns, it is a reasonable way to unbalance the game and so create winning chances.

Due to the extreme theoretical importance of this variation, the coverage in this chapter is more encyclopaedic in nature than elsewhere in the book.

We have already seen one thematic example of the Torre Poisoned Pawn (Game 1 in the Introduction), and, given the highly concrete nature of this line, it makes sense to get straight into the theory.

Quick Summary

Line A is the cautious approach. White's chances of a large advantage are slim here, but if he can demonstrate that the queen is in Black's way on b6, and that this is more relevant than his own traffic-jam on the queen-side, then a nagging edge may result. Line A is also important due to some transpositional possibilities from other lines.

Line B is the real test of Black's idea – and in many ways the critical test of the whole opening. Black is invited to capture the b2-pawn, whereafter White will use all the means at his disposal to smash open the position. He has two main targets – the black king and the black queen. In many lines White exchanges on f6, forcing a doubling of Black's pawns, and this may provide a number of lesser targets too. White should not go

berserk in an all-or-nothing attack though, as he can often obtain quite good compensation in the form of a positional bind, especially if the black king has no obvious home.

Black's main decision, once he has grabbed the pawn, is how to use his queen. Running back to safety, such as in Line B1, allows White a prolonged initiative, so he should aim to use the queen to disrupt White's plans. However, it seems on current evidence that Line B3 rather overdoes this, but Line B42 is the most critical. Both the gambiteers and the pawn-grabbers should be content with their chances here.

The Theory of the Torre Poisoned Pawn

1 d4 ♘f6 2 ♘f3 e6 3 ♙g5 c5 4 e3 ♖b6

Now:

A: 5 ♖c1 38
B: 5 ♗bd2 41

Line B, where White goes in for the gambit, is the most critical by far. Other moves, while not completely innocuous, pose Black far fewer problems.

a) 5 b3?! is inferior; it seriously weakens White's dark squares, for which the black queen's placement on b6 does not represent anything like adequate compensation. Writing in 1980, Larsen went as far as to give it a double question mark and to call it a "beginner's move". Had he been writing in recent years, he might have added "or a computer's move"; it was

used by Junior in a victory over GM Gofshtein, but this had nothing to do with the opening. Black is somewhat better after 5... ♗e4.

b) 5 ♗c3?! (in the analogous line of the London System, i.e. 1 d4 ♘f6 2 ♘f3 e6 3 ♙f4 c5 4 e3 ♖b6, 5 ♗c3 is strong, but here White does not have enough control over c7 for it to have much bite) 5... ♖xb2 6 ♗b5 ♖b4+ 7 c3 (7 ♖d2 ♖xd2+ 8 ♗xd2 ♗a6 9 ♙xf6 gxf6 10 dxc5 ♙xc5 11 ♗e4 ♙e7 12 ♖b1 gives White a little compensation) 7... ♖a5 8 ♗d2 a6!? (the simple 8...d5 is also good) 9 ♗c4 ♖xb5 10 ♗d6+ ♙xd6 11 ♙xb5 axb5 gives Black a little too much for the queen, Bisguier-Sherwin, New York 1954/5.

c) 5 ♙xf6 may well transpose to the 5 ♗bd2 main lines, but is overly committal. There is an independent line: 5... ♖xb2 (5...gxf6 6 ♖c1 ♗c6 transposes to 5 ♖c1 ♗c6 6 ♙xf6 gxf6 while avoiding 5 ♖c1 ♗e4) 6 ♙xg7!? (White could play 6 ♗bd2 gxf6 and hope to transpose to a reasonable line) 6... ♙xg7 7 ♗bd2 cxd4 8 exd4 and now:

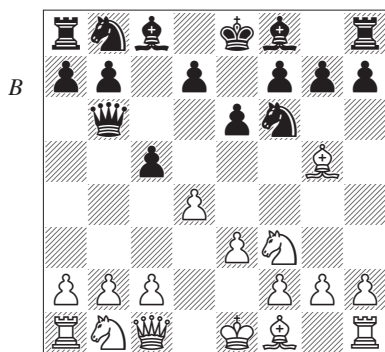
c1) 8... ♙xd4 9 ♖b1 ♖c3 10 ♖b3 ♖c5 is messy. Kamenets-Kuznetsov, USSR 1978 continued 11 ♙b5 ♙g7 12 ♗e4 ♖d5?! (12... ♖c7!?) 13 ♗d6+ ♙e7 14 ♖d3 (14 ♖xd5 exd5 15 ♗f5+ looks quite good) 14... ♖c5 15 0-0 with good play for White.

c2) 8... ♗c6 9 ♖b1 ♖xa2 10 ♙d3 ♗xd4 11 ♗xd4 ♙xd4 12 0-0 gives White good play for the pawns. Whether it is objectively sufficient is hard to say, but in the hands of a skilled attacker it looks dangerous enough,

e.g. 12...d5 13 ♖g4 ♙c3 14 ♗f4 ♗a5 15 ♘f3 ♗d8 16 ♚e5 0-0? 17 ♜b3 d4 18 ♗g4+ ♘h8 19 ♗h5 f5 20 ♘f7+ ♜xf7 21 ♗xf7 ♗g8 22 ♗f6+ ♗g7 23 ♗d8+ ♗g8 24 ♗d6 ± b6 25 f3 ♗g5 26 f4 ♗g7 27 ♜f2 ♙d7 28 ♜e2 ♜e8 29 ♜b1 h6 30 ♘h1 ♜g8 31 ♙c4 ♙c8 32 ♙xe6 ♗f6 33 ♜b5 ♜d8 34 ♗c7 ♜e8? 35 ♙xf5 1-0 Hodgson-Schulz, Benidorm 1988.

A)

5 ♗c1 (D)



This is a move that I have always regarded as much too insipid, but Varnusz is more upbeat about it, and having looked at the move more closely, I admit he has a point: “Cautious yet not as modest as it may seem: White’s queen can easily be activated whereas the c8-bishop gets stuck for a long while.” Indeed: Black’s queen stands in the way of ...b6 and ...♙b7.

One important point: if you wish to play the 5 ♗c1 line, then you must consider carefully what to play against 4...h6 and 4...cxd4 5 exd4 h6. This is

because, as we shall see later (p.104), 4...h6 5 ♙h4 ♗b6 6 ♗c1?! cxd4 7 exd4?! g5 8 ♙g3 g4 gives White problems.

5 ... ♚e4

5...cxd4 6 exd4 may well transpose to standard lines (5...♚c6 or 5...♚e4), but there is no need for Black to commit himself to this exchange right away.

5...♚c6 is the main alternative:

a) 6 ♙xf6 gxf6 7 c3 d5 8 ♚bd2 (8 ♙e2 is less natural, and gives Black more options after 8...e5) 8...♙d7 9 ♙e2 ♜c8 10 0-0 cxd4 11 exd4 ♙h6 (11...♙d6 is also playable) gives Black active play. Kogan-de Firmian, USA Ch (Berkeley) 1984 continued 12 ♗b1 0-0 (12...♚e7!?, 12...e5!?) 13 ♚b3 ♚e7 14 ♚c5 ♙c6 with unclear play.

b) 6 c3 d5 (6...♚e4 will, of course, transpose to 5...♚e4 lines) and then:

b1) 7 ♙d3 ♙d6 (7...♙d7 8 ♚bd2 – 7 ♚bd2 ♙d7 8 ♙d3; 7...♙e7 is likely to transpose to the line 7 ♚bd2 ♙d7 8 ♙d3; e.g. 8 ♚bd2 cxd4 9 exd4 ♙d7 10 0-0 ♜c8 11 ♗b1 h6 12 ♙h4 – 7 ♚bd2 ♙d7 8 ♙d3 ♜c8 9 ♗b1 h6 10 ♙h4 ♙e7 11 0-0 cxd4 12 exd4) 8 ♚bd2 (8 ♙xf6!?) 8...cxd4 9 exd4 ♚h5 10 ♘f1 h6 11 ♙d2 ♗c7 (Vidmar-Nimzowitsch, Karlsbad 1929) 12 g3! with unclear play (ECO).

b2) 7 ♚bd2 ♙d7 (Black delays moving the bishop from f8, since otherwise White might be able to gain a tempo by taking on c5; 7...♙e7 8 ♙e2 ♗c7 9 dxc5 ♙xc5 10 c4 {this plan is especially effective because White’s bishop is on e2, rather than the more exposed square d3} 10...♙e7 11 0-0