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Over the
Horizons

Stefan Bücker



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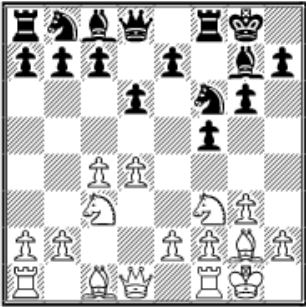
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Leningrad Fashions

If you are waiting for a new opening book that “provides a repertoire to last a lifetime” (as some publishers claim), it is a bit disappointing to discover that a particular author needs more time for completing his work because “the theory keeps evolving.” It seems we have to live with openings that are in a continuous state of flux.

The rapid evolution of the Leningrad Dutch, for example, where Black fianchettoes his Bf8, makes it almost impossible to write an opening book that is still useful after a decade. After **1 d4 f5 2 g3 Nf6 3 Bg2 g6 4 Nf3 Bg7 5 c4 0-0 6 0-0 d6 7 Nc3**, the last century has already seen several “best moves” come and go.

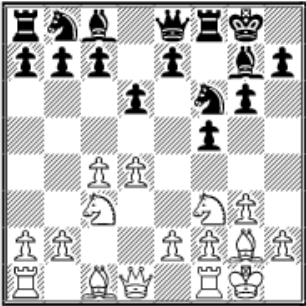


In the first edition of *ECO A* (1979), the Ilyin-Genevsky Variation appears at the end of the book, formally representing the main line of the Dutch Defense. Even then it was a bit strange to see the more popular Leningrad System only in second place. But apparently the Chess Informant’s code system was also destined “to last a lifetime.” The main line of the Leningrad in these days was still **7...Nc6 8 d5**, and then nobody really knew whether **8...Na5** or **8...Ne5** was the correct continuation. Later theoreticians found the answer: neither of the two moves was really correct. The tactical 8...Ne5 was tactically dubious, while the more positional 8...Na5 was positionally risky.

Okay, I admit that I am simplifying. *Kaissiber 12* (1999) contained an article of mine about the Leningrad *Bird* version with Nc3-a4. At least in this situation, when the Dutch player has a free extra move, the Nc3 system is quite interesting and fully playable. And in 2007 the riskier Nc6-e5 version was still used by Hikaru Nakamura.

In the 1970s **7...c6 8 d5 e5** had become the undisputed main line. There have been experiments with other eighth moves as well, sometimes remembering the piece formations of a King’s Indian Defense, only with a pawn on f5 instead of f7. But the status of the main line seemed reserved for all times for 8...e5. The resulting positions were solid and have since remained a respectable, if not very inspiring weapon.

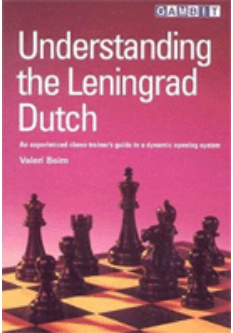
However, in the early 1980s **7...Qe8** had its breakthrough, this treatment is still fashionable today. There are overlaps with the theory of 7...c6, as combining the moves c6, Bd7, Na6 and Qe8 was a logical idea. But an early c6 has some disadvantages; e.g., White can attack the weak pawn b7 with Qb3, and 7...Qe8 is simply more precise.



The move was introduced in 1959 by Jorge Pelikan. His second game from the diagrammed position went **8 Nd5 Nxd5 9 cxd5 h6** (later drawn) Pugach – Pelikan, Buenos Aires 1959. One of the novelties in the 1980s that made the rare continuation so popular was **9...Qb5!** (0-1, 67) in Uhlmann – Espig, Leipzig 1983. Another inspiring maneuver was **8 Re1 Qf7! 9 Ng5 Qxc4** in Huzman – Malaniuk, Kiev 1986.

There is nothing wrong with 7...Qe8. However, in the last three decades

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*Understanding the
Leningrad Dutch*
by Valeri Beim

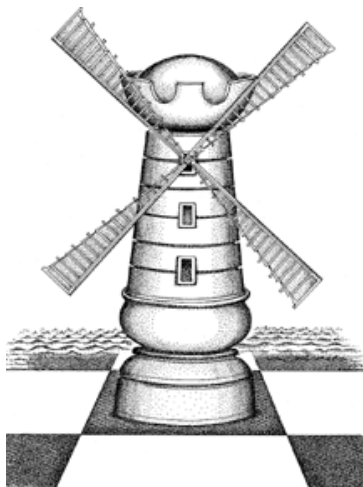


Leningrad System
by Stefan Kindermann



ABC of the Leningrad Dutch
by Andrew Martin

so much has been written on 7...Qe8, by Pedersen, McDonald, [Kindermann](#) and many others, that it has become difficult to be up-to-date. Maybe it is time to look for new adventures. The database contains only about fifty games with 7...c6 8 d5 cxd5!?. Black's results are not overwhelming, but in my opinion the following overview demonstrates that the variation is close to respectability. The move fell out of favor after Botvinnik recommended a good reply in *ECO*, but between 1998 and 2000 Kevin Spraggett tried the idea in four of his games.



The Dutch Defense
by Zygmunt Nasiolkowski, Lüdenscheid

1 d4 f5 2 g3 Nf6 3 Bg2 g6 4 Nf3 Bg7 5 c4 0-0 6 0-0 d6 7 Nc3 c6 8 d5 cxd5



“Plausible,” Harding [\[2\]](#). “Black begins queenside play at once, opening the c-file, and playing to exploit the artificially isolated d5 pawn by quick development. This approach has had good results, and is seriously underestimated,” Roy De Vault [\[5\]](#).

I have often experimented with 8...Qa5?! (Liebert Variation) and 8...Qb6. These systems were meant to avoid the strong maneuver Be3-d4. In the case of 8...Qb6, for example, Black still has c6-c5 as a reaction to Be3. But the propagated “loss of time” (White has to move the Be3 again) may well be disputed, since b6 isn’t a perfect square for Black’s queen either.

9 cxd5

9 Nxd5 was the reason why I never played 8...cxd5. The database knows only a single game:

(a) 9...Nc6 10 Nxf6+ Bxf6 11 Bh6 Bxb2 (Szekely – K. Pytel, Kallithea 1977), with a fast draw after 12 Bxf8 Bxa1. The stronger 12 Ng5! gives White an edge; e.g., 12...Re8 13 c5!. The alternative 11...Re8 isn’t very attractive either: 12 Qd5+ e6 13 Qd2 d5, and Black will suffer from an isolated pawn.

(b) 9...Na6 and 9...Nxd5 come into consideration.

(c) 9... e5! is a simple and reliable solution: 10 Nxf6+ (10 Bg5 Nc6 11 e4 Be6; 10 Ng5 h6) 10...Qxf6 11 Qd5+ Kh8 12 Rd1 (12 e4 f4 or 12 Bg5 Qe6; in both cases Black has active play and nothing to fear, even if he loses the pawn d6) 12...Nc6!



13 Bg5 (13 Qxd6 Be6 14 Bg5 Qf7 15 Bd2 Rad8 16 Qc5 Bxc4 17 Ng5

Qg8 18 Bc3 Nd4 => 13...Qe6 14 Be3 (14 e4 f4) 14...e4 (better than 14...f4) 15 Ng5 Qf6 16 h4 (16 Qxd6 Qxd6 17 Rxd6 Bxb2 => 16...h6 17 Nh3 Qxb2 18 Nf4 Qf6 19 Rab1 Rd8 20 f3 exf3 21 Bxf3 Kh7 22 Rb3 Qe7 with equal chances.

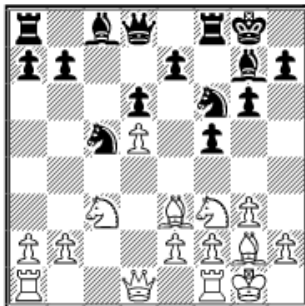
9...Na6 10 Be3!

The critical continuation (missing in Harding's pioneer work [2], in other respects still a highly useful book), the bishop is heading for its ideal square d4. Nothing else poses Black major problems: 10 Nd4 Nc5 11 b4 Nce4 12 Nxe4 fxe4! (12...Nxe4 13 Be3 Nf6 14 h3 a5 15 b5 Nh5 16 Qd2 Be5 17 Bh6 Bg7 18 Be3? Be5 19 Bh6 draw, Comas Fabrego – Spraggett, Spain 1999; 18 Bxg7 +/-) 13 Bb2 Qb6 14 Qb3 a5 = Tolstrup – Bjorntoft, Tastrup 2000. Black has fully equalized and later won the game.

10...Bd7!

Black retains the option to move the knight to c7 and later perhaps to b5.

However, 10...Nc5 occurred in several games and was even the main line in *ChessBase Magazine No. 65*.



(a) 11 b4 (Tyomkin) 11...Nce4 12 Nxe4 Nxe4 is analysis by Meulders in CBM 65, but Black has the stronger 12...fxe4 13 Ng5 Ng4, when 14 Bd4? fails to 14...Bxd4 15 Qxd4 e5 -/+, and 14 Rc1 Nxe3 15 fxe3 Bh6 is equal.

(b) 11 Bd4 is critical: 11...a5 (11...Bd7? Bachmann – Ditt, Bundesliga 1980, is refuted by 12 b4 Nce4 13 Nxe4 Nxe4 14 Bxg7 +/-; 11...Qa5 12 a3 Qa6 13 b4 Nce4 14 Nxe4 fxe4 15 Ng5 Bf5 16 f3 exf3 17 exf3 +=)

(b1) 12 Ne1 b6 13 Nc2!? Comas Fabrego – Gomez Benitez, Barcelona 2000, with a slight advantage for White, who prepared b2-b4 and won with ease. Black should have preferred 12...Bd7! 13 Nd3 (13 Nc2 Rc8) 13...b6 =.

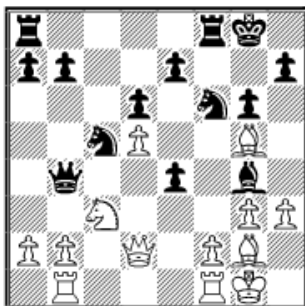
(b2) 12 Rc1! += is probably best: 12...Bh6 13 e3 b6, or the immediate 12...b6 13 Ng5 Bh6.

11 Bd4 Qa5!

Egon Ditt's improvement upon 11...h6? from Langeweg – Pytel, Dortmund 1975, which was the only move considered by Botvinnik in ECO, by Ehlvest [6] and by Gurevich [7] in his relatively recent work (1994).

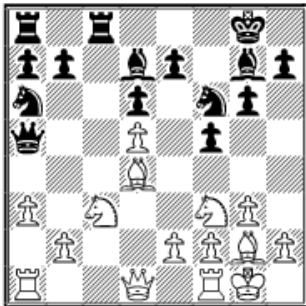
12 a3!

12 e4 fxe4 13 Ng5 Bg4 (13...Nc5! is a good alternative) 14 Qd2 Bh6 (De Vault recommends 14...Nc5 15 Nxe4 Qxd2 [5] with equal chances; 15 Rab1 Qb4 or 15 h3 Bf5 doesn't make a great difference) 15 Be3 Bxg5 16 Bxg5 Nc5 17 Rab1 Qb4 18 h3 Hovde – Ditt, European Corr. Ch. 1989.



Instead of the continuation 18...Bf5 19 Rbd1! a5 20 g4 Bd7 21 Rfe1 += (1-0, 43), Black should prefer 18...Bf3 19 Bxf3 exf3 20 Rfe1 (so far Hovde's analysis, who attributed 18...Bf3 with a ?) 20...Rf7 21 Qd1 (the point of Black's twentieth move is 21 Re3 Ncd7 22 Rxf3?? Ne4 -+; 22 Bxf6 exf6 23 Rxf3 Ne5 24 Rf4 Qa5 => 21...Raf8 22 Re3 a6 23 Bh6 Rc8 24 Rxf3 Ncd7, and White's advantage is small.

12...Rfc8!?

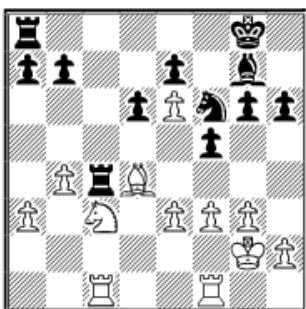


The plan Qa5, Rfc8 and the following Qd8 is a good defense found by Kevin Spraggett. The alternative 12...Nc7? is hardly convincing: 13 Qd2 Nb5 14 b4 Qa6 15 Nxb5 Qxb5 (15...Bxb5 16 a4! +/-) 16 Ng5 Bh6 (16...Rac8 17 Rac1 b6 18 h4! h6 19 Nh3 Ng4 20 Nf4 Bxd4 21 Qxd4 Ne5 22 Qe3 Kf7 23 h5! g5 24 Ng6 Nxc6 25 hxc6+ Kf6 26 g4 +/-) 17 Be3 Bxc5 (17...Ng4 18 a4! Qc4 19 Bf4, and again Black is in trouble) 18 Bxc5 Rfc8 19 Qb2 +/-.

13 b4

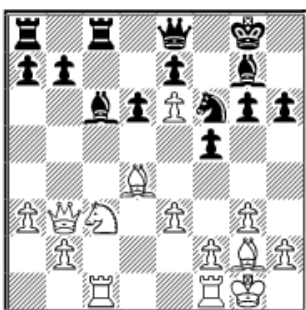
More dangerous than 13 e3, from a key game of the 7...cxd5 variation, Magai – Spraggett, Istanbul 2000 (ol): 13...Qd8 (13...Nc7?! 14 b4 Qa6 15 a4 b5 16 a5) 14 Rc1 (+= Tyomkin)

(a) 14...Qe8 15 Ng5 Nc5 (perhaps 15...Nc7) 16 b4 h6 17 Ne6 Nxe6 18 dxe6 Bc6 19 Qb3 Bxc2 20 Kxc2 Qc6+ 21 f3 Qc4 22 Qxc4 Rxc4



23 Bxf6 Bxf6 24 Nd5 Rac8 25 Nxf6+ exf6 26 Rxc4 Rxc4 27 Rd1 Kf8 28 Rxd6 Rc7 29 Rd8+ Ke7 30 Rh8 Kxe6 31 Rxh6 g5 32 g4 Rc2+ 33 Kg3 fxc4 34 fxg4 b5 35 Rh7 a6 36 Ra7 Rc6 37 h4 gxh4+ 38 Kxh4 Kd5 39 Rd7 + Ke6 40 Ra7 ½-½, Magai – Spraggett, Istanbul 2000 (ol). In ChessBase MegaBase 2008 the game is commented by D. Tyomkin.

(b) 14...Nc5!? 15 Ng5 (15 b4 Na4 16 Nxa4 Rxc1 17 Qxc1 Bxa4 18 Ng5 += is an analysis by Tyomkin, but 15...Nce4! 16 Nxe4 Nxe4 equalizes) 15...h6 16 Ne6 Nxe6 17 dxe6 Bc6 18 Qb3 Qe8



Black stands only slightly worse.

The text move (13 b4) isn't mentioned by Tyomkin.

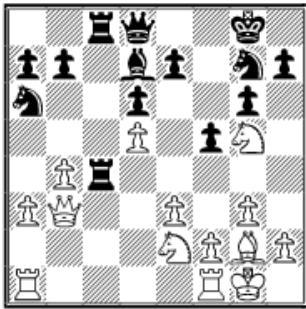
13...Qd8 14 Ng5 Rc4

14...Nc7?! avoids the tactical and positional mess in the lines below. Black might continue with Qf8, Ng4 and exchange the dark-squared bishops and maybe the queens. The resulting positions are somewhat better for White, but maybe acceptable for Black.

15 e3

15 Ne6 Bxe6 16 dxe6 Rxd4! leads to an ending which Black should hold: 17 Qxd4 Ne4 18 Qd3 Bxc3 19 Bxe4 Bxa1 20 Bxb7 Nxb4 21 axb4 Rb8 22 Rxa1 Rxb7 23 e4 Qf8.

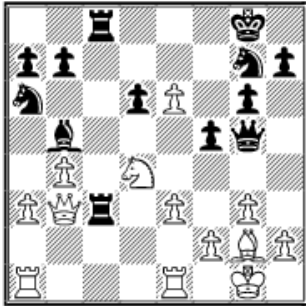
15...Rac8 16 Qb3 Nh5 17 Bxc7 Nxc7 18 Ne2!?



18...Bb5

Or 18...Qe8 19 Nd4 Ba4 20 Qd3 Nb8 21 e4 (21 Nc6 Rc2) 21...Nd7 22 exf5 Ne5 23 Qe3 Ng4 24 Qe4 gxf5 25 Qf4 Ne5 26 Rac1 Qg6 27 Qd2 Qf6 28 f4 Nd3 29 Rxc4 Rxc4 30 Ne2 Nb2, and Black might survive. The variation is a mess, and I am not sure how forced it really is, or whether it is worse than our main line. Ground to be explored.

19 Re1 e5 20 dxe6 Qxg5 21 Nd4 Rc3



For the sacrificed piece, White collects quite a few pawns:

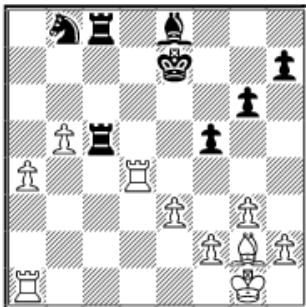
22 Qd5

22 Qb2 Bd3 comes into consideration.

22...Be8 23 Qxb7 Nb8 24 Qxa7 R3c7 25 Qb6

25 Qa5!? +=.

25...Qe7 26 b5 Nxe6 Qxe6 28 Red1 Qe5 29 a4 Kf7 30 Qxd6 Qxd6 31 Rxd6 Ke7 32 Rd4 Rc5



White's pawns on a4 and b5 look menacing, but I don't believe that White can win.

The variation 7...cxd5 can hardly be called "solid." What I like most are the connections between this unusual system and my old favorite lines in the Dutch and the Bird Leningrad – systems where a broad knowledge of motifs and ideas will gain many points.

Sources:

- [1] R. Schwarz: *Holländisch*, Hamburg 1964.
- [2] T. Harding: *The Leningrad Dutch*, London 1976.
- [3] *Encyclopedia of Chess Openings A*, 1st ed. Belgrade 1979 (A 86-89 ed. by Botvinnik)
- [4] B. Ivkov and M. Skoko: *Leningrad Dutch I*, Belgrade 1990
- [5] R. De Vault: *The Leningrad Dutch*, Dallas 1992
- [6] J. Ehlvest: *The Leningrad Dutch*, London 1993
- [7] M. Gurevich: *A 86-89*, Nicosia 1994
- [8] *Encyclopedia of Chess Openings A*, 2nd ed. Belgrade 1996
- [9] N. McDonald: *The Leningrad Dutch*, Brighton 1997

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