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Over the Horizons

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CHESSTHEATRE

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Main Lines Never Lead to a Significant Advantage

By definition, a main line of a well-known opening cannot end with a +/- . If it were bad, nobody would play it, and the opening would be laid to rest in the next edition of that famous work, *Unplayable Openings*. But there is a demand for more promising titles, from *White to Play and Win* (Weaver Adams; Philadelphia 1939) to the new *Squeezing the Gambits* (Kiril Georgiev, Sofia 2010). The fact that everybody uses a computer hasn't made it easier for a modern author. For the study of sharp lines PCs are great, but according to Kiril Georgiev this practice also creates a problem:

"A lot of more or less forced variations and even whole sharp systems will simply vanish from practice since they will be deeply analysed to finite evaluations."

The tactician Weaver Adams might have enjoyed to work with a PC (at least until his readers also got one), like most authors still do today. But Georgiev sees the signs on the wall and goes one step further. He aims at a positional advantage, to avoid computer-aided home preparation and to reach positions where it is possible for a good player to outplay his weaker opponent. An interesting philosophy, and one of the best recent opening works. It offers sound repertoires against four gambits: the Benkö, Budapest, Albin, and Blumenfeld.

The May column had studied minor lines from Boris Avrukh's repertoire book *1.d4 Volume Two* (Glasgow 2010) in which I was personally interested, here we'll continue with some more respected openings. Avrukh does not paint an overly rosy picture of White's chances; for example, in the King's Indian he is happy to reach a "typically favourable middlegame thanks to [White's] great control over the center." The "Grandmaster Repertoire" series comes with the curious claim to provide "a repertoire to last a lifetime," but Avrukh does a pretty reasonable job to achieve the impossible.

Quoted from his introduction: "I want the readers to have a repertoire that will last, so if there is a choice between two strong lines I choose the one where the theory is less likely to change on a daily basis." That sounds more realistic, and goes into the same direction as Georgiev's sound approach.

But openings where sharp variations matter less are not a new invention. Though I believe that the new books by Avrukh and Georgiev offer good value for the money, nobody is forced to buy the latest books with over 600 pages. To give a concrete example: In my opinion a player who prepares with *Alt-Benoni-Verteidigung* (Stoljar/Kondratjew, Heidelberg 1985), a 104-page book on the Czech Benoni, would not be seriously handicapped against a player who attacks him with the brand-new knowledge found in Avrukh's book.

Czech Benoni

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e5 4 Nc3 d6 5 e4 Be7

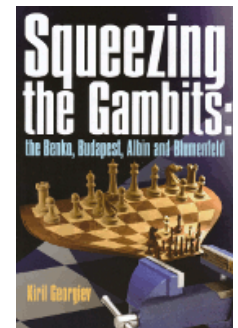
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Grandmaster Repertoire 2:

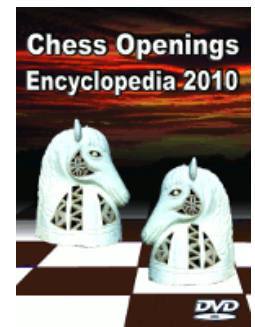
1.d4, Vol. 2

by Boris Avrukh



Squeezing the Gambits

by Kiril Georgiev



Chess Openings

Encyclopedia 2010

by Chess Assistant



[FEN "rnbqk2r/pp2bPPP/3p1n2/2pPp3/2P1P3/2N5/PP3PPP/R1BQKBNR w KQkq - 0 6"]

A closed position with a minimum of pawn breaks – a good way to limit the dangers of computer preparation. In this situation the main line used to be 6 Be2 followed by Nf3, 0-0 and an eventual Ne1-d3, to watch the key squares b4 and f4 and assist any action with b2-b4 and f2-f4. In Avrukh's repertoire the bishop belongs to g2, so he has to recommend the fianchetto:

6 g3

"This is considered to be the best set-up for White against the Czech Benoni," Avrukh. Well, maybe I have slept over twenty-five years of Czech Benoni theory. I admit that such laziness would be a bit extreme, even with the Czech Benoni in your defensive repertoire it must be wiser to update your knowledge every decade or so. But I am unsure whether I am really wrong. Maybe Avrukh just prefers to see it this way, some optimism is allowed.

6...0-0 7 Bg2 Nbd7 8 Nge2 a6 9 a4 b6 10 0-0 Ne8



[FEN "r1bqnrk1/3nbPPP/pp1p4/2pPp3/P1P1P3/2N3P1/1P2NPBP/R1BQ1RK1 w - - 0 11"]

An important position, reached in Avrukh's book on p. 142. It already appeared twenty-five years ago in the Stoljar/Kondratjew book (p. 48), based on three games. Its main line was 11 Qc2 Rb8 12 b3 Nc7 13 Nd1 b5 14 Bd2!," Furman – Kotov, semi finals of the USSR Championship 1950, a game that's missing in the database and led to some advantage for White. But the database contains fifty-four later games. I am not sure which information is more useful, a large number of games can also be confusing. Instead of 13... b5, the characteristic move 13...Bg5, offering to exchange Black's bad bishop, comes into consideration.

11 Kh1

"A generally useful move," Avrukh. The old book regards 11 f4 exf4?! 12 gxf4 g6 as a dangerous alternative, when White may try 13 e5 (with the idea 13...dxe5? 14 e6 attacking the rook a8) with a slight advantage. The modern author prefers the prophylactic 12...Ra7 from Taras – Georgescu, Romania 2008 (instead of 12...g6), and then: 13 Be3 Bf6 14 Qd2 g6 15 Nc1 Bg7 16 Nd3 f5! 17 exf5 gxf5 and "Black has decent play" according to Avrukh.

11...Ra7

Avrukh: "Actually this move has never been played in tournament praxis, but

it was recommended by Mihail Marin, a great specialist in the Czech Benoni with Black, in his comments to the Kasimdzhanov – Nisipeanu game."

In my opinion 11...Rb8 is more accurate. It is true that it is a more traditional approach, similar to Furman – Kotov (in the notes below the last diagram), hoping for a later b6-b5. But I cannot see why it should be bad. "White can react in the same way as in our main line with 12 Qd3," is Avrukh's laconic comment. Maybe, but in this situation 12...Nc7 would be a logical alternative, again in the spirit of that old Kotov game. White may be better, but only very slightly and not "in the same way" (12...g6 13 Bh6). A plausible continuation: 13 b3 Bf6 (Bg5!?) followed by Re8, g6 and so on. Black has a reliable position.

12 Qd3 g6 13 Bh6 Ng7 14 f4



[FEN "2bq1rk1/r2nbpnp/pp1p2pB/2pPp3/P1P1PP2/2NQ2P1/1P2N1BP/R4R1K b - f3 0 14"]

14...f5 15 Bh3!

"A very strong idea, which secures White's edge," Avrukh.

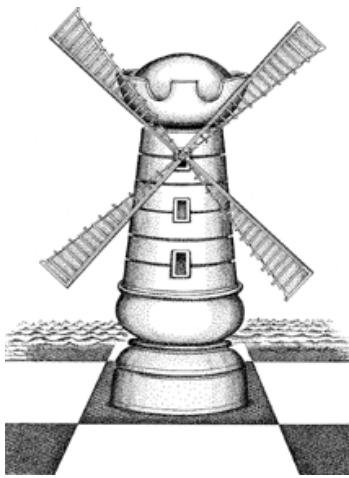
15...fxe4 16 Nxe4 exf4 17 Bxd7 Bxd7 18 Nxf4 Bf5 19 Bxg7 Kxg7 20 Ne6+ Bxe6 21 dxe6 "+/-," analysis by Avrukh.

Does Avrukh really believe that the main line of the Czech Benoni should lead to a clear advantage for White? Will many of his readers share his optimism? After all, the Czech Benoni has a reputation to be a bit passive, but not easy to overcome. The decisive error in the line above is probably 14...f5. According to Avrukh, "White uses the same idea if Black chooses to exchange on f4 first": 14...exf4 15 gxf4 f5 16 Bh3!. However, instead of the suicidal 15...f5? Black has several better continuations, e.g. 15...Re8 (or 15...Nf6 16 Bh3 Ng4) 16 Bh3 Bh4 17 Qf3 Nf6 followed by Rae7 or Nh5.

If this were not sufficient to achieve full equality (I think it is), there remains 11...Rb8! and other alternatives along this line. Don't misunderstand me: even here, where he clearly overshoots the mark, I find Avrukh's analysis inspiring. But nobody should expect a large opening advantage against the Czech Benoni.

Dutch Defense: Leningrad Variation

The Leningrad Dutch is one of my main weapons against 1 d4, so here I'll concentrate on this set-up. Avrukh recommends a solid approach, he fianchettoes the Bc1. Certainly the variation 6 b3 isn't bad, but I don't think that White achieves an advantage.



The Dutch Defense
by Zygmunt Nasiolkowski, Lüdenscheid

1 d4 f5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 g3 g6 4 Bg2 Bg7 5 0-0 0-0 6 b3 d6 7 Bb2 a5

The first of eight alternatives for Black, discussed by Avrukh on thirty-two pages. Perhaps the text move isn't Black's strongest reply, but it seems good enough to demonstrate that the fianchetto Bb2 is harmless.

8 c4 Na6 9 Nbd2 Bd7!



[FEN "r2q1rk1/1ppbp1bp/n2p1np1/p4p2/2PP4/1P3NP1/PB1NPPBP/R2Q1RK1 w - - 0 10"]

Boris Avrukh only considers 9...c6 and follows a game Tratar – Rogetzer, Vienna 2003, with some initiative for White (and a +/- after Black committed an error in move twelve), but in my opinion the text move is more flexible.

10 Ng5

The knight is looking for weak squares in Black's camp. 10 Re1 c5! is also critical:

(a) 11 e4 fxe4 12 Nxe4 Nxe4 13 Rxe4 Bf5, about =.

(b) 11 d5 a4 and Black isn't worse.

(c) 11 Ng5 h6 12 Nh3 cxd4 (or 12...g5) 13 Bxb7 Ra7 14 Bd5+ (14 Bxa6 Rxa6 15 Nf4 Qe8) 14...Nxd5 15 cxd5 Rc7 (15...g5); for example, 16 Nc4 Rc5 17 Nf4 g5 18 Nh5 Bh8 and Black can be satisfied with his position.

10...c6 11 Qc2

White intends e2-e4. If instead 11 Re1, the response 11...Nh5 seems adequate, and 11 d5 Qb6 must be good for Black.

11...f4!?



[FEN "r2q1rk1/1p1bp1bp/n1pp1np1/p5N1/2PP1p2/1P4P1/PBQNPPBP/R4RK1 w - - 0 12"]

One of the nice dynamic options of the Leningrad Dutch. After the text move Black has almost equalized:

(a) 12 gxf4 Bf5 13 Qd1 (or 13 e4 Bd7 14 f5 Nh5 with compensation for the sacrificed pawn) 13...Nh5 14 e3 e5 15 d5 exf4 16 Bxg7 Nxg7 17 exf4 Nh5! 18 dxc6 Nxf4 with dangerous attacking chances.

(b) 12 Qc3 fxg3 13 fxg3 Qb6. Black is fully developed and has a solid position: about =.

The new work studies the Dutch Defense on seventy-five pages, the remark above only scratches the surface. In the section on the Classical Dutch, Avrukh discusses the ideas of GM Simon Williams in great detail. Finally, there is the Stonewall Variation, but the Krause Variation is missing.

Budapest Defense

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e5 3 dxe5 Ng4 4 Nf3

In my opinion, Alekhine's 4 e4 is White's best attempt to get an advantage.

4...Bc5 5 e3 Nc6 6 Nc3 0-0 7 Be2 Ngxe5 8 Nxe5 Nxe5 9 0-0



[FEN "r1bq1rk1/pppp1ppp/8/2b1n3/2P5/2N1P3/PP2BPPP/R1BQ1RK1 b - - 0 9"]

Avrukh: "This is the initial position of our variation. In my opinion the whole line promises White slightly the better chances, due to his control of the centre."

9...Re8 10 b3 d6

10...a5, intending Ra6 to create attacking chances, is more popular at this stage, but I am not convinced that it is better.

11 Bb2

Kiril Georgiev's proposal 11 Na4 also deserves attention. 11...Bf5 12 Bb2 (so far mentioned by Georgiev), and here 12...a5 13 Qd5 c6 14 Qd2 Ba7!? 15

Rfd1 Qh4! looks promising.

11...Bd7 12 Qc2

According to Avrukh, the alternative 12 Nd5 c6 13 Nf4 is "also interesting," but after 13...Bf5, Black is fully developed and has nothing to fear. Possibly he can start an attack in the next moves, with Qg5 or Qh4.

12...Qg5!



[FEN "r3r1k1/pppb1ppp/3p4/2b1n1q1/2P5/1PN1P3/PBQ1BPPP/R4RK1 w - - 0 13"]

Instead, Avrukh follows a game that is hardly convincing: 12...Bc6 13 Rad1 Ng6?! 14 Nd5 Nh4 (Roeschlau – Fohler, Mengen 1990) 15 g3! Qg5 16 b4 Bb6 17 a4 "with a large advantage," Avrukh. The text move is a refutation; the main threat is Bh3.

13 Kh1 Rad8!

The immediate 13...Ng4 14 h3 Qh4 is also possible; for example, 15 Nd5 Bf5 16 Qc3 Be4 17 Qxg7#.

14 Rad1

14 f4 Qg6 15 e4 Nc6 16 Bf3 Nd4 17 Qd2 f5! isn't better.

14...Ng4



[FEN "3r1k1/pppb1ppp/3p4/2b3q1/2P3n1/1PN1P3/PBQ1BPPP/3R1R1K w - - 0 15"]

15 h3 Qh4 16 Bf3

If 16 Bd3, the calm 16... g6! keeps the position under control, but even 16... Rxe3 17 fxe3 Nxe3 18 Qd2 Bxh3 is possible.

16...Ne5 17 Qe4 Ng4 18 Qc2 Ne5 =

Drawn by a repetition of moves.

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