



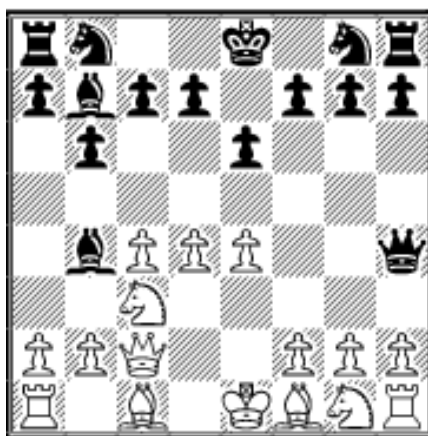
## COLUMNISTS

*From the Sidelines*

Hannes Langrock

*The Modern  
Morra Gambit*by  
Hannes LangrockThe Enterprising English Defense  
Part Three

This month we will discuss lines in which White protects e4 by an early Qc2; namely, 4. Nc3 Bb4 5.Qc2 and 4.Qc2. In case of 4.Nc3 Bb4 5.Qc2, the move 5...Qh4! has proven to be a strong answer:



Black exerts maximum pressure on the opponent's center. The game [M.Gagunashvili-D. Bunzmann](#) investigates 6.Bd3 f5, while 6.d5 f5 is the subject of [S.Shulakova – T.Grabuzova](#).

There are still interesting lines such as 6.Bd3 f5 7. Nf3!?, but generally Black has nothing to fear after 5...Qh4. In many lines he manages to grab the initiative quickly. A much tougher variation is 4.Qc2!?, whose main adherent is GM Victor Mikhalevski. Here, too, the main line is 4...Qh4, and now 5.Nd2! Bb4 6.Bd3



Black has tried different moves at this point. 6... Qg4 is a logical idea, as it more or less forces 7. Kf1. However, after 7...f5 8.h3!, White seems to be on top, despite having lost the right to castle. After the more common 6...f5 7.Nf3, Black can move his queen (7...Qg4 or 7...Qh5) with a playable position, but in both cases White can fight for a small edge by 8.0-0. Therefore, 7... Bxd2+ appears most ambitious. After 8.Bxd2! Qg4 9.Ne5 Qxg2 10.0-0-0 fxe4 11.Be2, White is two pawns down, but has a huge lead in development. Play can become extremely sharp, and whoever plays this line should be well prepared. For 4...Qh4, see the game [A.Webster-](#)

[M.Adams](#). A promising alternative to the main line is the double fianchetto 4...g6!?, see the game [T.Coleman-J.Watson](#). White's queen is not placed perfectly for a double fianchetto, as the d4-pawn is not covered and sometimes Black has the useful ...Nb4 with tempo.

*M.Gagunashvili (2321) – D.Bunzmann (2484)*

Wch U20 Yerevan, 2000

1.d4 e6 2.c4 b6 3.e4 Bb7 4.Nc3 Bb4 5.Qc2 Qh4 6.Bd3 f5 7.g3



Weakening the long diagonal is rather ugly; therefore, it is a bit strange that 7.Nf3!? is played much less often.



White tries to take over the initiative, but Black is able to get a good position: 7...Bxc3+! It is important to include this, as in case of 7...Qg4?! 8.0-0 Bxc3, White has 9.h3 Qh5 10.bxc3 Nf6 11. Nd2 fxe4 12.Nxe4 with the more pleasant position, A.Gorbatow-V.Litus, Moscow 1992. After 7...Bxc3+:

A) 8.Qxc3 Qg4 9.0-0 fxe4 10.Ne5 Qh4 (Worse is

10...Qh5?! 11.Bc2 Nf6 12.Bd1 Qh4 13.Be3 and

the poor position of his queen caused Black some problems in Garcia Gonzalez-Forintos, FRA 1985. For example 13...d6? is met by 14.Qc1) 11.Be2 (The piece sacrifice 11.Bc2? d6 12.Ba4+ c6 13.d5 is insufficient. King gives: 13...dxe5 14.Qxe5 Qe7 15.dxe6 Nf6 16. Bg5 0-0 17.Rad1 Na6-+) 11...d6! (11...Nf6 is wrong, as Black's exposed queen can easily get into trouble; for example, 12.Be3 0-0? 13.Qc1+- M.Sagafos-K.Gawehns, Bergen 2000) 12.Ng4 Nf6 13.Nxf6+ Qxf6 "and Black is a pawn to the good" (King). A correct assessment, but it is worth going a bit deeper, as Black can easily falter after 14.f3. Then 14...exf3 15.Bxf3 looks risky; while in case of 14...c5 15.Be3, the continuation 15...Nc6 16.fxe4 cxd4 17.Rxf6! dxc3 18.Rxe6+ Kd7 19.Bg4 is good for White; for instance, 19... cxb2 20.Rd1! Kc7 21.Bf4 Bc8 22.Rxd6 Bxg4 23.Rd7+ Kc8 24.Rc7+ Kb8 25.Rxg7+ Kc8 26.Rc7+ Kb8 27.Rxh7+--. Instead, 14...Nc6! leaves White without sufficient compensation for the pawn 15.Be3 e5 16.d5 (16.fxe4 exd4) 16...Nd4;

B) 8.bxc3 Qg4 is good for Black.

C) 8.Kf1 The only way to avoid losing a pawn, for the price of losing the right to castle. 8...Qh5 9.bxc3 This is a similar position as in the 7...Qg4 line, but with the important difference that White can't castle anymore. 9...fxe4 (9...Nf6 may not be the most clever continuation, as after 10.exf5! Bxf3 11.gxf3 Qxf3 12.Rg1, White's king position suddenly makes sense. Also Black has to fight against the bishop-pair, which turned out to be difficult in the only practical example: 12...0-0 13.Rg2 Nc6 14.fxe6 dxe6 15.Bg5 e5 16. Bxf6 Qxf6 17.Bxh7+ Kh8 18.Be4+- N.Gaprindashvili-G.Meier, GER 2001; Bauer gives 9...Ne7 as an alternative.) 10.Bxe4 Bxe4 11.Qxe4 Nc6 Now 12.Bf4 Nf6 was comfortable for Black in M.Raljić-D.Brumen, Velika Gorica 2006. The critical move is 12.Bg5!, hindering Black's development and threatening d4-d5. 12...Nf6 13.Bxf6 gxf6 14.d5 Here Bauer gives 14...f5 15.Qe3 Nd8 16.Qe5 as good for White. But Black can play 14...Ne5 15. dxe6 (15.Nxe5 Qxe5 16.Qxe5 fxe5 17.dxe6 d6) 15...0-0 with compensation for the pawn, as White still lacks coordination because of having lost the right to castle.

Bad is 7.d5? fxe4 8.Bxe4 Nf6 9.Bf3 Qxc4 10.dxe6 Qxe6+ and Black was a pawn up in P. Varga-A.Czebe, HUN 1996.

7...Qh5



Black is not yet better, but in praxis this position proved to be difficult for White, who has multiple problems. His centre pawns are under pressure, Black is strong on the h1-a8 diagonal, and often White has development problems as well. In most lines Black gets the initiative and generally scores very well.

8.f3



8.Be2, with the understandable idea to bring the bishop to the long diagonal, can't solve White's problems. 8...Qf7 9.Bf3 Nc6! The most ambitious

continuation. (Instead, the solid 9...fxe4 10.Bxe4 Bxc3+ 11.bxc3 Bxe4 12.Qxe4 Nc6 is equal or slightly better for Black, because of his better pawn structure.) 10.Be3 (10.Nge2 fxe4 11.Bxe4 Nf6 with the initiative for Black in Y.Zimmerman-G.Jamrich, Budapest 1997, of course 12.Bg2? fails to 12...Nxd4+!) 10...e5 11.d5 Nd4 12.Qd3 Nf6 13.Bg2 (13.Bxd4 exd4 14.Qxd4 fxe4 15.Bxe4 0-0 with the initiative) 13...fxe4 14.Bxe4 Nxe4 15.Qxe4 0-0-/+ with a dominating position for Black in Y.Ramsingh-A.Ali, Bled 2002. Black has a development advantage, the bishop-pair and he threatens to open the position with ...c7-c6. After 16.0-0-0, he could have transposed into an endgame by 16...Bxc3! 17.bxc3 Qf5, when there is no way for White to avoid losing a pawn. 8.Nge2? fails to 8...Qf3 9.0-0 Bxc3! (9...Nf6 10.d5 fxe4 11.Nxe4 is less clear.) 10.Nxc3 Nc6 11.Qd1 Nxd4-/+ A. Chibukhchian-I.Lempert, Yerevan 1996.

### 8...Nc6

I don't know if 8...fxe4 9.fxe4 (9.Bxe4 Nc6 10.Be3 Nf6 transposes to 8...Nc6 9.Be3 fxe4 10.Bxe4.) 9...Nf6 10.Nge2 Nc6 is so good: 11.a3! (11.0-0 Bd6!? M.Wienkeller-M.Berg, Sollentuna 1995.) 11...Bxc3+ 12.Qxc3 0-0 13.Nf4 Qe8 and after 14.0-0 e5, Black had a nice position in A.Surjadnji-N.Sulava, Cairo 2001. But critical is 14.e5!, which looks at least OK for White; for example, 14...Nxe5 (14...Nh5 15.Be4!?, 14...Nxd4 15.0-0) 15.dxe5 Bxh1 16.exf6 Rxf6 17.Qc2!? This tries to provoke a weakness in Black's king position. White will castle and try to organize a kingside attack.

### 9.Be3

This is played most frequently, but it promises nothing but trouble. The creative 9.Nge2!? looks more interesting. In D.Thomson-P.Wallis, Whitby 1962, Black took on f3: 9...Qxf3 (9...fxe4 10.fxe4 Nf6 transposes to 8...fxe4 9.fxe4 Nf6 10.Ne2 Nc6.) 10.Rf1 Qg2 and now 11.exf5 would have led to an unclear position.; After 9.d5, Black can go for a dangerous rook sacrifice: 9...Nd4 10.Qf2 fxe4 11.Qxd4 exd3 12.Qxg7 0-0-0 13.Qxh8 exd5 At the moment Black has only two pawns for the rook, but his compensation is obvious. White has no development, a weak king and it's hard to believe that he will be able to survive without giving up a good amount of material. Maybe a computer could defend this position, but for a human it's very difficult. 14.Be3 Re8 15.0-0-0 Nh6 16.Qxe8+ Qxe8 17.Bxh6 dxc4 18.Bd2 d5 19.Nh3 d4 20.Ne4 c3 21.Nf4 Bxe4 22.fxe4 Qa4 23.Nxd3 Qxa2 24.Kc2 Qa4+ 25.Kc1 cxd2+ 26.Kb1 Ba5 27.Rhfl Qb3-+ K.Kryzius-G.Piesina, Radviliskis 1995.

### 9...fxe4

Or 9...e5 10.d5 Nd4 11.Bxd4 exd4 12.a3 fxe4 13.fxe4 Bxc3+ 14.bxc3 dxc3 15.Qxc3 Nf6 and White's position is very loose. 16.Be2 Qh6 17.Bf3 Now instead of 17...d6 18.e5 (A. Kharlov-H.Gretarsson, Leeuwarden 1995) 17...0-0, followed by pressuring the e4-pawn, would have been difficult for White; for example, 18.e5 Rae8 19.Ne2 Nh5 20.0-0 Qg5.

### 10.Bxe4 Nf6 11.0-0-0

11.Bd3 e5!? with the initiative. 11...Bd6, with the ideas ...Bxg3+ and ...Nb4, looks clever, but maybe it isn't. 12.Qg2 Nb4 13.Bb1 Ng4 14.Bd2 Be7 15.a3 and Black got driven back in S.Mohammad-S.Kabir, Istanbul 2000.

### 11...Bxc3 12.Qxc3 Nxe4 13.fxe4



**13...Nb4!**

A nice tactical shot.

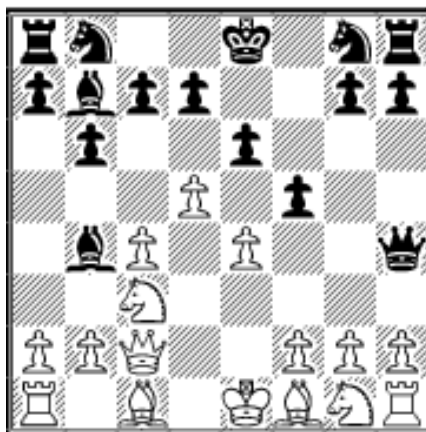
**14.Qxb4 Bxe4 15.Nh3 Bxh1 16.Nf4 Qxh2-- 17. Nxe6 dxe6 18.Bg5 Kd7 19.Qe7+ Kc6 20.d5+ exd5 21.cxd5+ Bxd5 22.Rxd5 Qg1+ 23.Kc2 Qf2 + 24.Kc3 Rae8 25.Qd7+ Kb7 26.Bf4 Qf3+ 27. Kc2 Re2+ 28.Kc1 Qh1+ 29.Rd1 Qc6+ 0-1**

**S.Shulakova (2198) – T.Grabuzova (2332)**  
RUS, 2005

**1.d4 e6 2.c4 b6 3.e4 Bb7 4.Nc3 Bb4 5.Qc2 Qh4 6.d5**

White is still dreaming of a strong center, but Black's answer shows how vulnerable it really is.

**6...f5**



Of course! White is already fighting for equality and there is no clear way to achieve it.

**7.exf5**

White gives up the center, but keeps the material balance. For 7.Bd3?, see 6.Bd3 f5 7.d5?. Instead, in case of 7.Bd2 fxe4



It is difficult for White to win back the pawn. Also the e4-pawn restricts White's forces. Black has the better prospects:

**A) 8.Nxe4 exd5 9.cxd5 Bxd5 10.Bxb4 Qxe4+ 11. Qxe4+ Bxe4 12.0-0-0** For the pawn, White puts his hopes on the bishop-pair and a certain initiative, but Black's center pawns give his position long-term security; Black should be clearly better if he plays the next moves accurately. **12...Nf6 13.Re1 Kd8 14.Nf3 c5 15. Bc3 Bd5-/+** A.Rotstein-E.Bricard, Cannes 1992.

**B) 8.dxe6 Nf6** Black is ready to give back the pawn for fast development. (8...dxe6 is good as well; for example, 9.Qa4+ Nc6 10.g3 Qg4 11.Bh3 Qg6 12.Nge2 e5 13.0-0 Nf6 14. Be6 Ng4 15.Bd5 0-0-0 16.h3 E.Hasanova-T.Gara, ESP 2000, and now 16...e3! would have been very strong: 17.Bxe3 (17.fxe3 Bxc3 18.bxc3 (18.Nxc3 Nxe3) 18...Nf6 and White's position is hopeless as 19.Bxc6 fails to 19...Rxd2) 17...Nxe3 18.fxe3 Bxc3 19. bxc3 Qh6-/+ 9.Nh3 0-0 10.0-0-0 dxe6 11.Rg1 Qg4 12.Be2 Qg6 13.Ng5 Re8 14.Be3 Na6 15.f3? Bc5!-+ M.Reina Aguilar-A.Stefanova, Coria del Rio 2002.

C) 8.Nge2 Nf6 9.g3 Qg4 10.Nf4 Bxc3 11.Qxc3 Qf3 12.Qxf3 exf3 13.dxe6 0–0 14.0–0–0 g5 15.Nd5 Nxd5 16.cxd5 Bxd5 17.exd7 Be6 18.Bb5 Nxd7 19.Rhe1 c6 20.Bxc6 Rac8 21.Rxe6 Rf6 22.Bc3 1–0, Jobava-Rahman, Abu Dhabi 2003. White did very well in a game between two strong players. However, Rahman had a bad day there. Instead of 8...Nf6, 8...exd5 looks normal and better for Black; for example, 9.cxd5 Nf6 10.g3 Qh5.

D) 8.0–0–0 Nf6 9.Be2 This threatens g2-g3, winning the queen, so 9...Qxf2 10.Nh3 Qc5 11.Nxe4 Nxe4 12.Qxe4 Bxd5 13.Bh5+ Kd8 14.Bxb4 Qxb4 15.Qh4+ Kc8 16.Rd4 Bxg2 Black is now three pawns up and went on to win twelve moves later in K.Urban-M. Maciejewski, Lubniewice 1993.

### **7...exd5 8.cxd5**

The endgame after 8.Nf3 Qe4+ 9.Qxe4+ dxe4 10.Nd4 can't satisfy White, because of his inferior pawn-structure. According to King 10...Ne7, as well as 10...Nc6, are strong, and indeed Black has done well with both these moves in praxis.

### **8...Nf6**

The most attractive move, Black goes for activity and fast development. It appears less natural to waste time with 8...Bxd5 9.Bd2 Bb7 10.0-0-0, as in D.Hooper-P.Wallis, Hastings 1953.

### **9.Bd2**

9.Nf3 Qe4+ 10.Qxe4+ Nxe4 11.a3 Bxc3+ 12.bxc3 Bxd5–/+ V.Sharma-Z.Rahman, IND 2006.

### **9...Bxc3**

9...Nxd5 has been played successfully in H.Post-R.Lau, Dresden 1996.

### **10.Bxc3 0–0 11.Bxf6**

This gives up the bishop-pair, but keeps the important d5-pawn. After 11.0–0–0 Qf4+ 12.Bd2 Qxf2 13.Nh3 Qc5 14.Qxc5 bxc5 15.Be3 d6 16.Nf4 Nbd7, White has big problems with his pawns. Black threatens to win one of them with ...Nb6 or ...Ng4. 17.Be2 Rfe8 18.Ne6 Bxd5 and the central pawn was gone, M.Link-E.Kengis, Bern 1995.

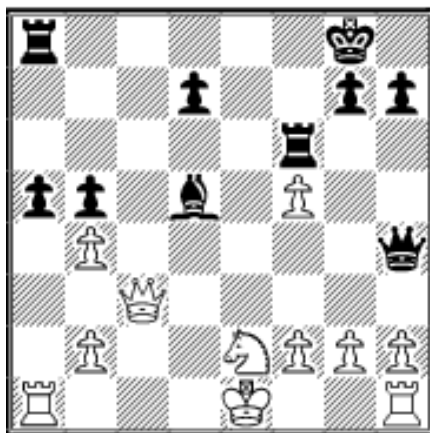
### **11...Rxf6**

It would be more natural to recapture with the queen, but the text move has concrete advantages.

### **12.Bc4**

12.0–0–0? Bxd5! 13.Rxd5?? Rc6 is one point of 11...Rxf6; 12.Qc4 Qxc4 13.Bxc4 b5 14.Bb3 Na6.

**12...Na6 13.Ne2 Nb4 14.Qb3 a5 (Or 14...b5) 15.a3 b5 16.Bxb5 Bxd5 17.Qc3 c6 18.axb4 cxb5**



**19.bxa5?**

Only 19.0–0 Qe4 20.Qf3 could reduce Black's advantage.

**19...Re8**

White can't avoid losing decisive material now.

**20.b3 Rxf5–+ 21.Qg3 Qxg3 22.hxg3 Rfe5 23.0–0 Bxg2 24.Nf4 Bxh1 25.Rxh1 b4 26.Rd1 Rxa5 27.Rxd7 Ra2 28.Nd3 Rc8+ 29.Kd1 Rc3 30.Nxb4 Rxf2 31.Nd3 Rg2 32.Rd8+ Kf7 33.b4 Rb3 34.Kc1 Rxg3 35.Rd7+ Ke8 36.Nc5 Rbc3+ 37.Kd2 Rxc5 0–1**

*A. Webster (2275) – M. Adams (2555)*

Prestwich, 1990

**1.d4 e6 2.c4 b6 3.e4 Bb7 4.Qc2 Qh4**

This is the Main Line and the best way to attack White's center. As in the 4.f3-line, 4...Bb4 + is not very effective because of 5.Bd2, when the exchange of bishops will take much of the dynamics out of the game.

**5.Nd2**

Critical. After 5.Bd3? Nc6, Black threatens 6...Nxd4 and 6...Nb4; 5.d5 f5 6.exf5 exd5 7.cxd5 Bxd5 8.Qxc7 Bb4+ 9.Nc3 Ne7 10.Qg3 was A.Koukolik-M.Tratar, Ceske Budejovice 1995, when 10...Qe4+ looks good for Black: 11.Nge2 Nxf5 12.Qf4 Bxc3+!? 13.bxc3 Qe6 or 11.Qe3 Qxf5; finally 5.Nc3 Bb4 transposes to 4.Nc3 Bb4 5.Qc2, which as we now know is fine for Black.

**5...Bb4**



Having the knight on d2 (instead of c3) is generally OK for White if Black decides to exchange the knight (...Bxd2). Then White can just recapture with the bishop, keeping e4 covered by the queen; while by recapturing on c3, White would have to weaken his pawn-structure (bxc3) or neglect the protection of the e4-point (Qxc3). Also, after having played Ng1-f3, White gets the option to recapture on d2 with the knight to maximize the protection of e4. The obvious disadvantage of the knight's placement on d2 is of course that it blocks the c1-bishop.

**6.Bd3 f5**

The move 6...Qg4 has the sensible idea of forcing the white king to go to f1 (7.g3 f5 is good for Black). But White seems to be on top despite losing the right to castle. 7.Kf1 f5 Now:

**A)** 8.Ng3 Bxd2 is OK for Black. The game M.Quinn-J.Speelman continued 9.Ne5 Qh4 10.Nf3 Qh5 11.Bxd2 and for this position see 6...f5 7.Nf3 Bxd2 8.Kf1 Qh5 9.Bxd2, where it is reached two moves earlier.

**B)** In case of 8.f3 Qh4 9.exf5 (J.Levitt-J.Ehlvest, New York 1994) 9...Nc6!? 10.fxe6 dxe6 gives Black nice play for the pawn; for example, 11.Ne2 (11.d5 Ne5 12.Qa4+ Bc6) 11...0-0 (or 11...Nxd4 ) 12.a3 Nxd4! 13.Nxd4 Bc5.

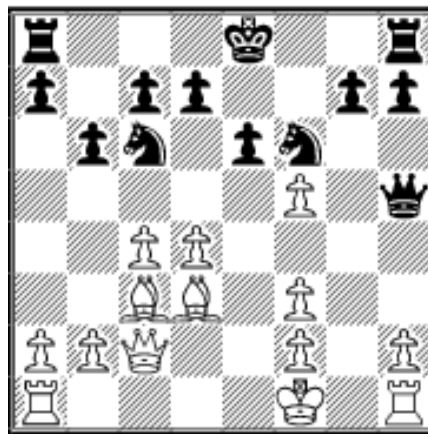
**C)** 8.h3! Qg6 (8...Qh5 9.exf5 and it is difficult for Black to prove compensation for the pawn.) 9.Ng3 Ne7 Covering f5. 10.exf5 exf5 This position occurred in M.Sher-R.Burnett, New York 1999, when White missed the strong 11.Nh4! Qf6 (11...Qf7 12.Ndf3; 11...Qh5 12.Nxf5 Nxf5 13.Bxf5 0-0 14.Bg4 Qf7 15.Nf3) Now, of course not 12.Nxf5?? Nxf5 13.Bxf5 Rf8, but after 12.Ndf3, with the main threat of 13.a3. I do not see a good solution for Black. Instead of 9...Ne7, Black played 9...Bxd2 in J.Parker-M.Sher, Copenhagen 1996 (Note, that Sher decided to play this variation as White three years later!) After 10.Ne5 Qf6 11.Bxd2 Ne7 12.Nf3 h6 13.Re1 0-0 14.d5, White had an advantage. Odessky gives 10...Qh5 as a possible improvement, continuing 11.Bxd2 Nf6 12.exf5 0-0 13.fxe6 dxe6 14.Be3 Nc6 15.Nxc6 Bxc6, but I am skeptical and at the moment it seems Black has to prove something in the line 6...Qg4 7.Kf1 f5 8.h3!.

### 7.Ng3 Bxd2+

Instead, 7...Qg4 and 7...Qh5 are playable, though I am not sure if they offer full equality. White castles and gets a solid position with a space advantage and good chances of a small edge. 7...Qh5 8.0-0 Ne7 (Kengis' suggestion 8...Nf6 9.exf5 Bxd2 10.Nxd2 Qg4 is strongly met by 11.d5 exd5 12.Re1+ Bauer) 9.a3 Bxd2 10.Bxd2; 7...Qg4 8.0-0 Bxd2 9.Nxd2 Nc6 10.f3 Qh4 11.Qc3 Qf6!? Provocative. 12.e5 (12.Nb3 Odessky) 12...Qh4 13.f4 Nh6 14.Nf3 Qh5 15.b4 Ne7 with counterplay (King), as in J.Wilson-A.Avni, Hastings 1995.

### 8.Bxd2!

Introducing a dangerous gambit. Unconvincing is 8.Kf1?! Qh5 9.Bxd2 Nf6 10.exf5?! Bxf3 11.gxf3 Nc6 12.Bc3



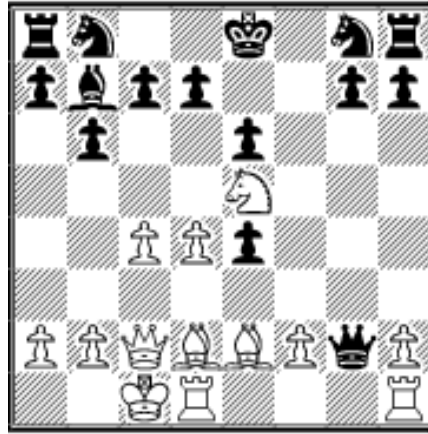
White has the bishop-pair, but that's the only good news. Many of his pawns are weak, as is his king. In both practical examples White didn't manage to hold his own: 12...0-0 (12...0-0-0 13.Re1 Rhe8 14.Re2 Qh3+ 15.Ke1 Qxf3 16.Rg1 Qf4 17.Rxg7 exf5 18.Qd2 Rxe2+ 19.Kxe2 Re8+ 20.Kf1 Qxh2 21.Bxf5 Ne7 22.Bd3 Ng6+— Quinn-Speelman, Dublin 1993.) 13.Re1 Qh3+ 14.Ke2 Rae8 15.Kd1 e5! 16.dxe5 Nxe5 17.Be2 Nxf3 18.Qd3 Rxe2 19.Rxe2 Qg2 20.Rhe1 Nxe1 21.Kxe1 Qxh2 22.Re7 Qg1+ 23.Ke2 Qg4+ 24.Ke1 h5 25.Qg3 Qxg3 26.fxg3 Rf7—/+ and Black went on to win the endgame in L.Polugaevsky-V.Korchnoi, Evian 1977; 8.Nxd2 is somewhat reasonable,

since it doesn't lose the right to castle (as does 8.Kf1), nor does it give up material (as does 8.Bxd2). However, Black has no problems after 8...Nf6 9.g3 Qh3 10.Bf1 Qh5 11.Bg2 0-0 12.0-0 Nc6 13.Qc3 (P.Kiriakov-M.Tratar, Pardubice 1995) and now 13...e5!? 14.dxe5 Nxe5 gives Black good chances on the kingside; for instance, 15.f4 Neg4 16.h3 fxe4! and obviously the knight can't be taken 17.hxg4? Nxg4 18.Re1 Qh2+ (or 18...Qc5+ ) 19.Kf1 e3+.

## 8...Qg4 9.Ne5 Qxg2 10.0-0-0 fxe4

Taking with the bishop has the sensible idea of exchanging pieces, but it is bad: 10...Bxe4? 11.Rhg1 Bxd3 12.Qxd3 Qe4 (12...Qxf2 13.Nf3) 13.Qg3 g6 14.Nxg6+- King, B.Vujacic-S. Le Blancq, London 1991.

### 11.Be2



An important position. For the two sacrificed pawns, White has a big lead in development, which gives him the initiative for the moment. The question remains as to how to evaluate this line if both sides play correctly.

### 11...Nf6

The other option is 11...Nc6 to question the white knight and give Black the option of castling queenside:

**A)** 12.Nxc6 Bxc6 13.d5 exd5! (13...Bb7? 14.Bh5 + g6, as in L.Remlinger-I.Rogers, Philadelphia 1986, could have been punished by 15.Qc3!) 14.cxd5 Bxd5 15.Rhg1 (15.Bh5+ g6 16.Qc3 gxh5 17.Qxh8 0-0-0 with better prospects for Black, Bauer.) 15...Qxh2! (15...Qxf2 is met by 16.Bh6!, with the threats of Bh5+ and Bxg7. Black can sacrifice the queen 16...Qxg1 17.Rxg1 Nxh6, when he has R+N +4 pawns for the queen. If he managed to consolidate, he could afford to give back two or even three pawns and still be OK. However, Black seems to be a bit unlucky in this position, as 18.Rxg7 Nf5 (18...0-0-0 19.Qd2) 19.Bh5+! Kd8 20.Rg5 looks strong: 20...Rf8 (20...Ne7 21.Qf2!) 21.Qd2 Be6 22.Bg4 Now White threatens to take on f5 and also Qf4. And if 22...Nd6 23.Bxe6 dxe6 24.Rg7 Black is suffering.) 16.Rxg7 (16.Bc3 Nf6 is unclear, according to King.) 16...Nf6 (Not 16...0-0-0 17.Bg5 Nf6 18.Bxf6 Qf4+ 19.Qd2 Qxf6 20.Qxd5) 17.Bg5 c6 18.Qc3 Rf8 19.Rxd5 (Odessky gives 19.Bh5+ Nxh5 20.Qb4 Qf4+ 21.Bxf4 Nxg7 22.Bh6 Rf7 23.Rg1 for White, but Black's last move was a mistake and has to be replaced by 22...Rg8.) 19...cxd5 20.Bh5+ Nxh5 21.Re7+ Kd8 22.Rxh7+ Ke8 23.Re7+ Kd8= and because of his material disadvantage, White has nothing better than perpetual check.

**B)** 12.Rhg1! looks like the real test. Now, in case of 12...Qh3, we see the disadvantage of 11...Nc6 compared to 11...Nf6: the e4-pawn is not protected. 13.Qxe4 Nf6 14.Qf4 Nxe5 15.Rxg7! and White is better. Instead, Black can continue with 12...Qxh2!? 13.Rh1 (13.Qxe4 Nf6 14.Qe3 Nxe5 15.dxe5 Ne4) 13...Qxf2 14.Bh5+ (14.Bh6, with the ideas of 15.Bh5+ and 15.Bxg7, is well met by 14...Qf5) 14...g6 and now:

**B1)** 15.Nxg6 Nf6 is unclear: 16.Rhf1 (16.Rdf1 Qxd4 17.Nxh8+ Nxh5 18.Rxh5 Qxh8 19.Qxe4 0-0-0 20.Rxh7 and Black's center pawns are worth more than the exchange.) 16...Qh2! 17.Nxh8+ Qxh5 18.Rxf6 Nxd4 19.Qa4 Bc6.

**B2)** The simple 15.Bxg6+!? hxg6 16.Rxh8 says goodbye to a direct win, but it may be enough for an edge: 16...0-0-0 (16...Nxe5 17.dxe5 0-0-0 18.Bg5) 17.Qxe4.

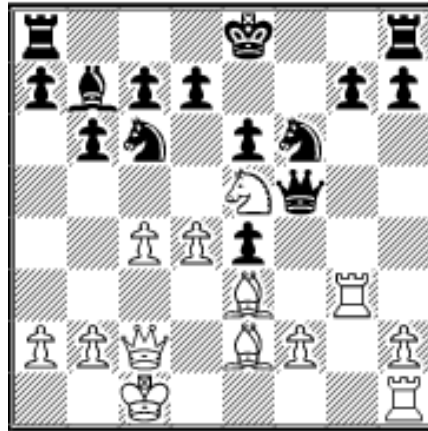
### 12.Be3

This is a bit too slow to question Black's set-up. Again, critical is 12.Rhg1! Now taking on h2 or f2 is known to be dangerous for Black. A detailed analysis of these lines can be



found in Odessky's book about the English Defence (Russian Chess House 2005). He concludes that Black is in trouble if White plays correctly. Assuming that this is correct, 12...Qh3 has to be played 13.Rxg7 Nc6 Now, according to Bauer, it seems that Black can hold and he gives the following lines: 14.Bg5 0-0-0 15.Rf7 (15.Bxf6? Qh6+) 15...Nxe5 16.dxe5 Ng4 17.Bxg4 (17.Bxd8 Nxe5 18.Bf6 Nxf7 19.Bxh8 Nxh8 unclear) 17...Qxg4 18.Bxd8 Rxd8 19.Qd2 Bc6.

**12...Qh3 13.Rdg1 Nc6 14.Rg3 Qf5**



**15.Rg5?**

Probably overlooking Black's reply. Better is 15. Nxc6 Bxc6 and then 16.Rg5 Qh3 17.Rg3 Qf5 18. Rg5 with a draw by repetition.

**15...Nxd4! 16.Qd1 Nxe2+ 17.Qxe2 Qh3**

Now White doesn't have enough compensation for the pawns and objectively Black should be clearly better. But it is still difficult, as the course of the game shows.

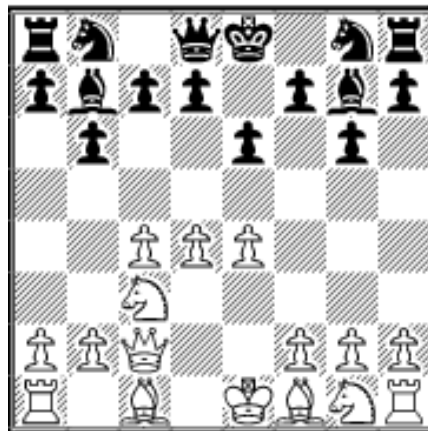
**18.Rhg1 d6 19.Rxg7 0-0-0 20.Nf7 Qxh2 21.Qd1 Qh3 22.Nxd8 Rxd8 23.Rf7 Nd7 24. Rgg7 h6 25.Rh7 Bc6 26.Rxh6 Qg2 27.Rxe6 Ne5 28.Rh7 Qg8 29.Ree7 Qxc4+ 30.Qc2 Qf1+ 31.Qd1 Qc4+ 32.Qc2 Qf1+ 1/2-1/2**

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USA, 2004

**1.d4 e6 2.c4 b6 3.e4 Bb7 4.Qc2 g6!?**

This is a promising alternative to the main line. The move Qc2 doesn't perfectly fit in against the double fianchetto, as the d4-pawn is not covered and also Black may be able to later play ...Nb4 with tempo.

**5.Nc3 Bg7**



**6.Be3**

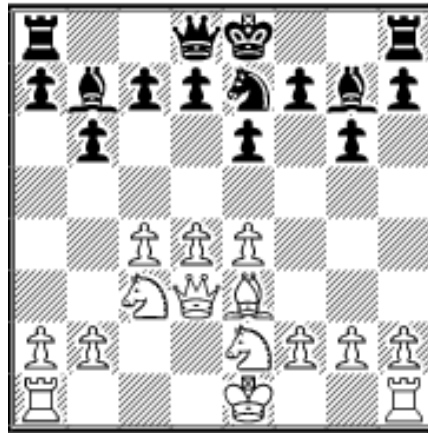
By calmly developing his pieces, White doesn't get far: 6.Nf3 Ne7 7.Be2 0-0 8.0-0 f5 9.Rd1 fxe4 10.Nxe4 Nbc6 11.d5 Now, in V.Mikhalevski-J. Ehlvest, Lake George 2005, Black played 11... Nb4 and after 12.Qb3 a5 13.a3 exd5 14.Neg5 Na6 15.cxd5 Nc5 16.Qc4 Ba6 17.Qc2 Bxe2 18. Qxe2 Nf5, his chances were not worse. The materialistic approach 11...exd5 12.cxd5 Nb4 13. Qb3 Nbx5 also deserves attention.

**6...Ne7 7.Bd3**

By giving up the bishop-pair, White can't fight for an advantage. 7.Nf3 0-0 "and Black is ready for ...f7-f5." King; in the stem game of 4...g6, White came up with the ambitious

7.0-0-0!? 0-0 8.f4 f5 9.e5 (9.Nf3 b5!? King) 9...d5 10.c5 bxc5 11.dxc5 Now 11...g5?! was played in J.Levitt-N.Short, Calcutta 1998, but after 12.g3 Nbc6 13.Nf3 g4 14.Nd4 Nxd4 15.Bxd4 Nc6 16.Bb5 Nxd4 17.Rxd4 c6 18.Bd3+/- Black had weak bishops and no counterplay. Instead, King recommends 11...Nbc6, while 11...Ba6!? also looks reasonable.

**7...Nbc6 8.Nge2 Nb4 9.Qd2 Nxd3+ 10.Qxd3**



Black's bishop-pair compensates for the disadvantage in space. In the middlegame his position looks better, but it finally ends in a draw.

10...0-0 11.0-0 d6 12.Rad1 Qd7 13.h4 Ba6 14.b3 d5 15.Ng3 f5 16.exf5 exf5 17.Bf4 Rad8 18.Nge2 dxc4 19.bxc4 Nc6 20.d5 Ne5 21.Bxe5 Bxe5 22.Nd4 Rfe8 23.Rfe1 Qg7 24.Ncb5 Bxb5 25.Nxb5 c6 26.Na3 cxd5 27.cxd5 Bd6 28.Nc4 Qf6 29.Nxd6 Rxe1+ 30.Rxe1 Qxd6 31.h5 Kf7 32.Rd1 Rd7 33.h6 Kf6 34.Qc3+ Kg5 35.Rd4 f4 36.Qd2 Kxh6 37.Rxf4 Kg7 38.Rd4 Re7 39.g3 Re5 40.Kg2 Kf7 41.Qd3 Re7 42.Re4 Rxe4 43.Qxe4 b5 44.Kg1 ½-½

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