

Maxim CHETVERIK
Nikolay KALINICHENKO

Alekhine Defense

A Complete Guide



**Chess
University**



WWW.CHESSM.RU

Russian Chess House
chessm.ru@ya.ru or andy-el@mail.ru
www.chessm.com

Alekhine Defense: A Complete Guide
by Maxim Chetverik and Nikolay Kalinichenko

Copyright 2018 © Russian Chess House
Text Copyright © Maxim Chetverik, Nikolay Kalinichenko

The moral right of the author has been asserted

All rights reserved. No parts of the publication may be reproduced, stored in retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

Edited by Sergey Sudakov and Kiril Kuznetsov
Translated from the Russian original by Ilan Rubin
Design by Alexey Belov

ISBN 978-5-94693-689-7

This book can be ordered directly from the publisher at the website:
www.chessm.com
Or try your local bookshops

Introduction

‘Just like King Midas, who was endowed with the power to turn everything he touched to gold, Alekhine, the Russian maestro, has the same magical touch in the opening—his audacious and incredible knight move pursues a particular aim—breaking down White’s pawn chain, which pays off in the endgame.

The Alekhine Defense is a peculiar mix of open and semi-open systems. Initially, Black obliges by letting his knight get kicked around by e5, d4, c4, and f4, responding with ♖g8-f6-d5-b6. White gets comfortable in the center, but then Black starts chipping away at White’s pawn chain (with d7-d6, ♗c6, etc.) and eventually, the tables are turned. **Now White has to fight tool and nail to maintain his initiative.**’

Savielly Tartakower began his magnificent work entitled *The Hypermodern Chess Game* with those two eloquently written paragraphs, thereby signifying that the author attached a particular importance to the Alekhine Defense. We recommend you take a look at Tartakower’s analysis of 1.e4 Nf6, viewing our historical background section and his comments as two entries on early chess theory and history. Now we have to move onto some more dry material.

Like the authors’ previous book, *An Encyclopedia on the Dutch Defense*, this volume includes a theoretical section with illustrative games (exactly 100 of them). The book’s 87 chapters have been broken down into 16 separate parts. Not every chapter contains commented games; however, those chapters covering the hottest lines may have two or three, each of them providing extensive analysis and numerous lines from other games. The move order has been modified in certain cases to present the material in a more coherent manner; luckily, one can dissect the Alekhine Defense’s constituent parts without sacrificing continuity, as it is such a flexible and ingenuous opening system.

Historical Background

The Alekhine Defense is a strange progeny of 20th century. According to the Megabase, Black only attacked White's king pawn with his knight (1... Nf6) two times during the 19th century. The first encounter of its kind is rather comical — Madame de Remusat — Napoleon Bonaparte, Paris 1802. Madame shied away from the principled 2.e5 in favor of 2.d3. The French emperor lured the white king into the center of the board by sacrificing two pieces and he mated the poor monarch on move 13. The title of Chase's detective novel, *Believe This — You'll Believe Anything*, probably most aptly describes Napoleon's triumph.

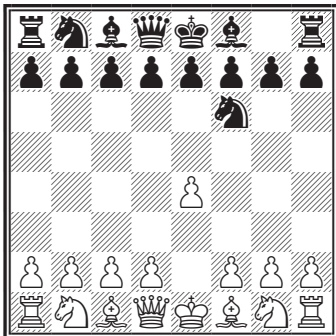
Johann Allgaier mentions 1...Nf6 in his 1811 textbook on chess. No practical games were referenced, though. It is known that in 1860 the Edinburgh Chess Club employed this odd opening against the Berwick Chess Club in a correspondence game. Only was it in 1893 that two American masters, Hanham and Delmar, played something vaguely resembling a modern opening system: 2.Nc3 d5 3.e5 d4 4.ef dc 5.fe cd+ 6.♙xd2 ♖xe7+ 7.♗e2 ♘e6, etc. Aron Nimzowitsch won a funny little game against Adolf Albin twelve years later. Let us take this opportunity to consider this sideline in the Alekhine Defense (and never return to it again for serious analysis). De-facto, this line is not a part of the real Alekhine Defense.

Game 1

A.Nimzowitsch – A.Albin

Vienna 1905

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6



'A theoretically innocent attempt, not the Klyatskin variation' (Nimzowitsch). One should note that in 1905 Mikhail Klyatskin, a chess player from Moscow, was only eight years old, and he introduced 1...♘f6 into his repertoire slightly earlier than Alekhine himself. Luckily enough, Klyatskin's legacy did not fade into oblivion, but 'the Alekhine Defense' is a fairer name than 'the Klyatskin Defense'.

2. e4-e5 ♘f6-g8?!

It is hard to believe that the potentially vulnerable far-advanced

e-pawn adequately compensates for this tempo loss. Retreating to the back rank never gained popularity, remaining an opening experiment. Centralizing the knight by playing 2...♞e4?! is risky relative to 2.♞c3 d5 3.e5 ♞e4. For instance, after 3.d4 f6 4.♙d3 d5 5.f3 ♞g5 6.♞e2 it is unclear how Black will develop his pieces, while White can meet 3...e6 with the promising 4.♞h3!.

3.d3, as well as 3.d4, gives White an advantage. It is hard not to shed a tear looking at Black's position after 3...♞c5 4.d4 ♞ca6 5.♞f3 d6 6.♙c4 e6 7.0-0 de 8.♞xe5 ♙d6 9.♞g4 ♙xe5?! 10.de ♙f8 11.♙g5 ♞e8 12.♞c3 Bakhmatov – Heinrichs, Nettetel 2010. After 4...♞e6 5.d5 ♞c5 6.b4 ♞ca6 the overworked horse also finds itself on the brim, but the position is not so clear because Black can undermine White's center with 7.a3 d6 8.♙e3 c6. 5.f4!? g6 6.d5 ♞c5 7.♙e3 d6 8.♙d4 f6 (Moroz – Vavra, Pardubice 1998) 9.e6 c6 10.c4 is worth considering.

John Watson and Eric Schiller have dubbed the 2...♞e4 continuation the Mokele Mbembe variation. One can only wonder how these two American chess theorists drew a parallel between Nessi's relative in Africa and an opening variation.

3. d2-d4 d7-d5

The 3...d5 and 3...d6 sidelines run together if an exchange on d6 occurs. After 4.ed ♞xd6 5.♞c3 we

arrive at a transposed Scandinavian Defense (1.e4 d5 2.ed ♞xd5 3.♞c3 ♞d6 4.d4). 5.♞f3, looking to redirect the queen's knight to c4, is more flexible.

Perhaps, 3...d6 is best for Black, all things considered. If 4.♞f3 de 5.♞xe5 ♞d7 (if 2...♞d5 3.d4 d6 4.♞f3 de 5.♞xe5 ♞d7 White would sacrifice on f7...) 6.♙d3 (or 6.♞f3 ♞xe5 7.de c6 8.♞c3 ♞a5 9.♙f4 g5!? 10.♙xg5 ♞xe5+ 11.♞e3 ♙g7 with a manageable position for Black) 6...♞gf6 7.♞d2 c5 8.♞df3 cd 9.♞e2 ♞xe5 10.♞xe5 a6 11.♙g5 h6 12.♙h4 ♞a5+ 13.c3 e6 14.0-0, and the sacrificed material is roughly worth the initiative, Grandelius – Fries Nielsen, Lund 2011. 10.♞xe5, followed by winning back the pawn, guarantees White a small yet stable advantage.

Magnus Carlsen, seemingly recalling his younger days, returned his knight to the back rank, instead of centralizing it, in his blitz game against Fressinet (Dubai 2014). After 4.♞f3 c6 5.h3 ♙f5 6.♙d3 ♙xd3 7.♞xd3 de 8.♞xe5 ♞d7 9.♙f4 ♞gf6 10.♞c3 ♞xe5 11.♙xe5 e6 12.0-0-0 ♙e7 13.♙b1 0-0 14.♞g3 ♞h5 15.♞f3 ♞f6 the French GM shied away from repeating moves. Instead, he charged on (16.h4!?!), and eventually lost. Overall, Black does not have any weaknesses or chances at usurping the initiative.

4. ♙f1-d3 ...

4.c4!? is more decisive. By opting against undermining the d4+e5

pawn duo Black may find himself in a critical position. For instance, 4... c6 5.♘c3 ♕e6 6.♗ge2 dc4 7.♗f4 ♖c8 8.♕e3 ♕f5?! (Black should have redirected his knight to this square via h6) 9.♕xc4 e6 10.g4 ♕g6 11.h4 ♕b4 12.f3 b5 13.♕b3 Ponizil – Krajina, Ostrava 2010.

4. ... e7-e6

It is unwise of Albin to neglect putting some pressure on d4. An interesting continuation could follow: 4...c5 5.c3 ♗c6 6.♗e2 ♕g4 7.f3 (7.♕e3!?) 7...♕d7 8.♕e3 ♖b6 9.dc ♖xb2 10.e6!?! fe 11.♗d2 ♖a3 12.♖b1 ♖b8 13.0-0.

5. ♗g1-e2 ...

Nimzowitsch aims to activate his queen as he does in his variation of the French Defense (1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.♖g4). This would be an improvement on his usual developing maneuver. 5.♖g4 b6 6.♗f3 ♕a6 7.♕xa6 ♗xa6 8.0-0, noted by Nimzowitsch, actually does favor White; however, if 5... c5!? 6.♗f3 cd 7.♖xd4 ♗c6 8.♖f4 ♗ge7 he still must fight for an advantage.

5. ... ♗b8-c6

Black cannot stir up any substantial counterplay without c7-c5. Nevertheless, his fortress is still rather durable.

6. c2-c3 ♗g8-e7

7. ♕c1-g5 ♖d8-d7

8. ♗b1-d2 ♗e7-g6

9. 0-0 ...

It is easier to attack by playing 9.♖c2 ♕e7 10.h4 (Nimzowitsch).

Marching the f-pawn is slightly less effective.

9. ... ♕f8-e7

10. f2-f4 ♖d7-d8

11. ♗d2-f3 h7-h6?!

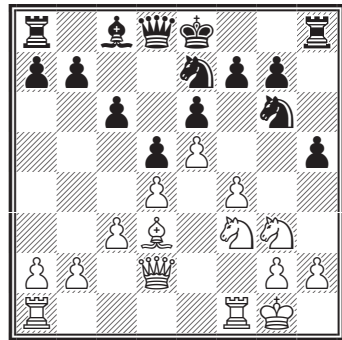
12. ♕g5xe7 ...

12.♕xg6 hg 13.♖d3! ♖f8 (13... fxg6 14.♖xg6+ ♖d7 15.f5) 14.♕h5 ♖h8 (aimed against 15.♖h7) 15.♕xf7+!? (15.♕g4!?) 15...♖xf7 16.fg ♖g8 17.♗f4 ♕d7 18.h4 is more interesting, and Black will struggle to defend his cramped position.

12. ... ♗c6xe7

13. ♖d1-d2 c7-c6

14. ♗e2-g3 h6-h5



15. f4-f5!? ...

Nimzowitsch opts for an immediate sacrifice instead of breaking down Black's blockade on the white squares with 15.♗g5 ♗h4 16.♖e2 g6. He chose not to comment upon Albin's reply, but wrongfully. The endgame resulting after 15...♗xf5 16.♖ae1 (threatening 17.♗xf5 ef 18.e6) 16... ♗ge7 17.♖g5 ♗xg3 18.hg ♗f5

19.♙xf5 ♖xg5 20.Nxg5 ef 21.e6
♙xe6 22.♖xf5 0-0 looks like drawn.

15. ... e6xf5?

16. ♘f3-g5 ...

Yet another sacrifice aimed at wrenching open some lines is on the agenda. Nevertheless, 16.♖g5 (16... ♖d7 17.Nxf5! Nxf5 18.e6!) looks simpler and stronger.

16. ... f5-f4

17. ♖f1xf4! ♘g6xf4

18. ♖d2xf4 ♙c8-e6

19. ♖a1-f1 ♖d8-b6?!

19...♖d7! is more precise than 19...♖c7?! and the text move, because in the 20.♘xf7 0-0 21.Nh6+ gh 22.♖xh6 line the bishop is protected, and White's attack is not a sure thing. If 20.♖f3, then 20...0-0-0 21.♘xf7 ♙xf7 22.♖xf7 g6, and Black may be able to fend off the attack.

20. ♘g3-f5?! ...

Nimzowitsch's self-proclaimed 'remarkable positional intuition' failed him here. Black could have held on in this seemingly dangerous position by playing 20...♙xf5 21.♙xf5 c5! 22.♙d3 0-0, while the prophylactic 20.b4! would have backed Black up against a wall!

20. ... ♘e7xf5?

21. ♙d3xf5 ♖b6-c7

22. ♙f5xe6 f7xe6

23. ♘g5xe6 ♖c7-e7

24. ♖f4-f5 ♙e8-d7

25. ♘e6-f8++ ♙d7-c7

26. ♘f8-g6 ♖e7-e8

27. ♘g6xh8 ♖e8xh8

28. ♖f5-e6 ...

White has an extra passed pawn and an overwhelming position, so all roads lead to Rome: 28.e6, 28.♖g6, followed by invading the 7th rank (♖f1-f7), and the text move are winning.

28. ... ♙c7-b6

29. ♖e6-e7 ♖h8-h6

30. ♖e7-c5+ ♙b6-a6

31. b2-b4 b7-b5

In the 31...b6 32.b5+! cb 33.♖a3+ ♙b7 34.♖f7+ ♙c6 35.h3 h4 36.♙h1 variation Nimzowitsch takes prophylactic measures, but there is no need to because he has 35.c4!

32. h2-h3 ...

Another pointless move. After 32.a4 White wins by wrenching open the a-file.

32. ... h5-h4

33. ♙g1-h1 ♖h6-e6

34. ♖f1-f7 ♖e6-h6

35. a2-a4 ♖h6-e6

36. a4-a5 ♖e6-e8

37. ♖f7xa7+ ♖a8xa7

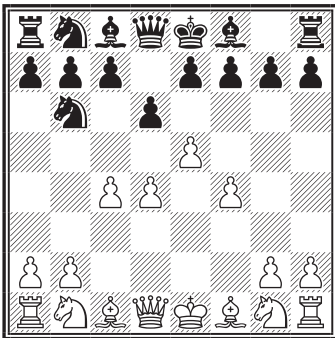
38. ♖c5-b6#

Alexander Alekhine first employed the defense bearing his name in a game versus Donegan, Muellner, and Zimmerman (August 1921). He implemented 1...Nf6 during a serious tournament game two months later. His games against Friedrich Saemisch and Endre Steiner during the Budapest tournament were not particularly impressive though, but it would be a disservice to Alekhine's

legacy to forego commentating his fascinating draw against Eugene Znosko-Borovsky in 1925.

Game 2
E.Znosko-Borovsky –
A.Alekhine
 Paris 1925

- | | | | |
|----|-------|-----|-------|
| 1. | e2-e4 | | g8-f6 |
| 2. | e4-e5 | | f6-d5 |
| 3. | d2-d4 | | d7-d6 |
| 4. | c2-c4 | | d5-b6 |
| 5. | f2-f4 | ... | |



By the time this game was being played the dangerous Four Pawns Attack was by no means a novelty. Max Euwe and Georg Marco employed this system against Bora Kostic during the 1921 Hague tournament. Alekhine had not faced this tough pawn quartet yet.

- | | | | |
|----|-------|-----|-------|
| 5. | ... | | d6xe5 |
| 6. | f4xe5 | | b8-c6 |
| 7. | c1-e3 | | c8-f5 |
| 8. | g1-f3 | ... | |

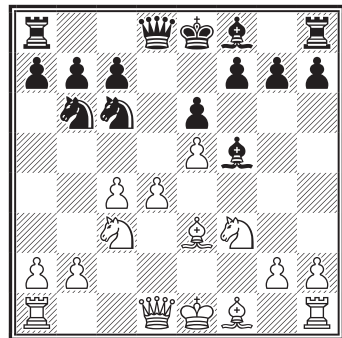
A slight imprecision. White neglects the threat on c2. Generally,

players develop their queen's knight first.

- | | | | |
|----|-----|--|-------|
| 8. | ... | | e7-e6 |
|----|-----|--|-------|

Black should have forced the b1-knight onto the brim by playing 8... ♖b4, going for 9. ♘a3 e6 10. ♙e2 ♙e7 11. 0-0 0-0 12. ♚d2 c5 13. ♜h1 ♙g6 14. ♘b5 (unlike 14. ♖fd1, this helps bring the b6-knight back to life) 14... ♘c2 15. ♖ac1 cd 16. ♙xd4 ♘xd4 17. ♘bd4 ♘a4 18. b3 ♘c5 19. b4?! ♘e4 20. ♚e1 a5 21. a3 ab 22. ab ♖a2, and now Black is the one with an advantage, Ye Ling Feng – Benjamin, New York 2007. This pawn push returns the players to an opening tabiya.

- | | | | |
|----|--------|--|-----|
| 9. | ♘b1-c3 | | ... |
|----|--------|--|-----|



- | | | | |
|----|-----|--|-------|
| 9. | ... | | c6-b4 |
|----|-----|--|-------|

This is one major contribution to opening theory made by the fourth world chess champion. The knight clears the way for the c-pawn with tempo, which allows Black to undermine his opponent's center.

- | | | | |
|-----|--------|--|-------|
| 10. | ♖a1-c1 | | c7-c5 |
|-----|--------|--|-------|

- | | | | |
|-----|-------|--|-----|
| 11. | a2-a3 | | ... |
|-----|-------|--|-----|

Znosko-Borovsky forces his

rival to commit to a plan in the center immediately. If White intends on pushing d4-d5 then it is best to do so after playing 11.♔g5 ♕e7 12.♕xe7 ♜xe7, not immediately. However, after 13.d5 ed 14.♗xd5 ♜d7 15.♗xb4 cb 16.c5 ♜xd1+ 17.♖xd1 ♗d7 both players have equal chances.

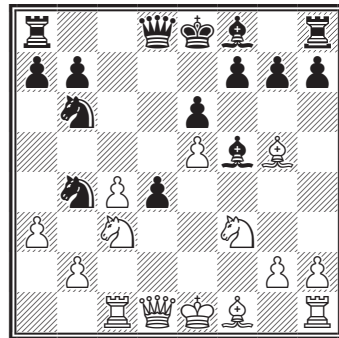
The players can enter into a non-aggression pact lasting two moves in order to finish mobilizing their respective kingsides – 11.♔e2 ♔e7 12.0-0 0-0. In the complex variation of 13.dc ♗d7 14.♗d5!? ♗xa2! 15.♗xe7+ ♜xe7 16.♖a1 ♗b4 it is crucial that an immediate ♜d1-d6 fails to a queen exchange followed by a knight fork. If 13.a3, then 13... cxd4 14.♗xd4 ♗c6 15.♗xf5 ef 16.♖xf5 g6 17.♖f2 ♗xe5 18.♜b3 ♗bd7 19.♖d1 ♜c8 is logical, because White needs to defend the c4-pawn, which depreciates his two bishops significantly.

11. ... c5xd4

12. ♔e3-g5? ...

Objectively speaking, this is a weak move, which Alekhine was unable to fully exploit. 12.ab, which objectively is not a bad capture, never seemed to catch on. After 12... de 13.c5 ♗d7 14.♔b5 a6 15.♔a4 a5 16.♖a1 ♖a6! White's pawn chain crumbles and his advantage evaporates. In the event of the typical 12.♗xd4 ♗c6 White is not inspired by any of the captures — a long fight awaits him and he does not have a clear advantage. Here

are some exemplary continuations: 13.♗xc6 bc 14.♜f3 ♜c7 15.♔e2 ♖d8 16.0-0 ♔e7, or 13.♗xf5 ef 14.♜f3 g6 15.♗b5 ♗d7 16.♖d1 a6 17.♔g5 ♜b8 18.♗d6+ ♔xd6 19.ed 0-0 20.♔e2 ♖e8, and after ♖e8-e6, White's far-advanced pawn looks pretty frail.



12. ... d4xc3!

If Black does not want to merely fight for equality without queens (12...♜d7 13.♗xd4 ♗c6 14.♗db5 ♜xd1+ 15.♖xd1 ♖c8 16.♔e3) then he should just sacrifice his one!

13. ♔g5xd8 ♖a8xd8?!

Alekhine regretted that he missed an easy win here: 13...cxb2 14.♔xb6 bc♜ 15.♜xc1 ♗c2+ 16.♔f2 ab or 14.♔g5 bc♜ 15.♔xc1 ♗c2+ 16.♔f2 ♖d8 17.♜e2 ♔c5+ 18.♔g3 0-0. Black wins back material while continuing to fuel his raging initiative. But does he have a more complicated win?!

14. ♜d1-b3 c3xb2

15. ♜b3xb2 ♗b6-a4

16. ♜b2-a1 ♗b4-c2+

In any case, exchanging 16...

♖d3+ 17. ♖xd3 ♖xd3 does not win. White wins back his queen and makes a transition to a tough, yet tenable endgame: 18. ♖d4! ♖xa3 19. ♖xf5 ♖xa1 20. ♖xa1 ♖b4+ 21. ♖d1 ef 22. ♖xa4 a5 23. ♖c2.

17. ♖c1xc2 ♖f5xc2

18. ♖f3-d4 ♖c2-g6

19. c4-c5!? ...

White should have opted for 19. ♖b5 ♖c5 20. ♖d6+ ♖xd6 21. ed 0-0 22. ♖d4 instead of sacrificing a pawn and letting his bishop free. It is hard for Black to concentrate his troops and contend for a win while White's passed pawn lives.

19. ... ♖a4xc5

20. ♖f1-b5+ ♖c5-d7

21. ♖a1-c3 a7-a6?

Black has ruined any chance at winning by delaying to mobilize his forces. 21... ♖e7 22. ♖c7 a6 23. ♖a4 b5 24. ♖c6 ba 25. 0-0 ♖c5+ 26. ♖h1 ♖a8 27. ♖c1 0-0 28. ♖xd7 ♖xa3 was necessary, or 23... ♖e4, recommended by Alekhine, if he was wary about White's knight invading to c6.

22. ♖b5xd7+ ♖d8xd7

23. ♖c3-c8+ ♖d7-d8

24. ♖c8xb7 ♖d8xd4

25. ♖b7-c6+ ♖d4-d7

26. 0-0 ♖g6-d3

27. ♖f1xf7 ...

These two valiant fighters are in no hurry to smoke the pipe of peace. Black passed up 26... ♖e7 27. ♖c5+ ♖d8 28. ♖b6+ ♖e8 29. ♖c6, whereas White refrained from 27. ♖c8+ ♖d8 28. ♖c6+.

27. ... ♖f8-c5+

28. ♖g1-h1 ♖d3-b5

Alekhine rightly decided against 28... ♖e7 29. ♖xe6 ♖g6(?) due to 30. ♖f1!. White would subsequently shift the rook to c1 and then start moving all over the board. But the position has already slipped into drawn quicksand — 29... ♖f5! 30. ♖xe7+ ♖xe7 31. ♖xf5 ♖f8 32. ♖c8+ ♖f7 33. ♖c4+ ♖e6 34. h3, and there is nothing interesting left.

29. ♖c6xe6+ ♖d7-e7

Black is forced to settle for a draw by repetition. If 29... ♖d8? then 30. ♖xd7+ ♖xd7 31. ♖d5 ♖f8 32. g4, and Black drops a bishop.

30. ♖f7xe7+ ♖c5xe7

31. ♖e6-c8+ ♖e7-d8

32. ♖c8-e6+ ♖d8-e7

33. ♖e6-c8+ ♖e7-d8

34. ♖c8-e6+

1/2 - 1/2

Alekhine's encounter with the venerable Jacques Mieses was of a completely different nature. Black gradually equalized, acquiring little tiny advantages, and winning without getting into any dicey positions. This game laid the groundwork for theory on the Alekhine Defense.

Game 3

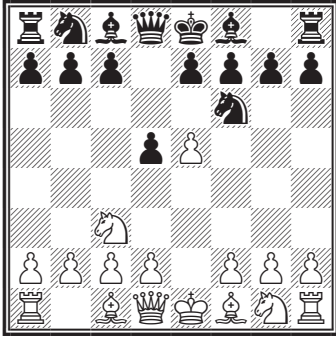
J. Mieses – A. Alekhine

Baden-Baden 1925

1. e2-e4 ♖g8-f6

2. ♖b1-c3 d7-d5

3. e4-e5 ...



3. ... ♖f6-d7

Alekhine outright rejected 3... ♖e4 because of 4. ♖ce2!. The exclamation mark is justified, although Alekhine's evaluation of the position is misguided.

4. ♖c3xd5 ...

We wonder if Mieses came up with this himself or, more likely, copied Nimzowitsch, who played so seven rounds earlier in his game against Reti. This unusual exchange is hardly seen in other variations of the Alekhine Defense, so we shall take a brief look at this and then move on.

4. ... ♖d7xe5

5. ♖d5-e3 ...

If 5. ♖c3 then White would be closing off the long diagonal intended for his dark-squared bishop.

5. ... ♖b8-c6

Now 5...c5, seeking to establish tighter control over d4, became more of a priority. 6.b3 ♖bc6 7. ♖b2 ♖d4 8.c3 (8. ♖h5 ♖d6 9. ♖xd4 cd

10. ♖c4 ♖xc4 11. ♖xc4 e6 is no better) 8... ♖f5 9. ♖c2 g6 10. ♖e4 ♖g7 11. ♖b5+ ♖f8 12. ♖e2 ♖xe3 13. ♖xe3 ♖c7 14.h3 ♖f5 could follow, Lu Shanglei – Dimitrov, Golden Sands 2012. The black king has lost castling rights, but his cavalry is dominating.

Vladimir Sergeev (White), a well-known expert on the Alekhine Defense, gradually outplayed Sikora-Lerch (Liberec 2005) after 5... ♖ec6!? 6.f4 e5!? 7.fe ♖c5! 8. ♖e2 0-0 9. ♖f3 ♖d4 10. ♖xd4 ♖xd4 11.c3 ♖xe5 12.d4 ♖h4+?! 13. ♖f2 ♖xf2+ 14. ♖xf2 ♖d6 15. ♖c4 ♖e7 16. ♖f4 ♖d8 17. ♖e2 ♖d7 18. ♖he1, but that can be attributed rather to a faulty queen exchange than anything else. Black is doing excellently after 12... ♖d6 13.g3 c5 14.d5 ♖e8 15. ♖g2 ♖d7 16.0-0 ♖e5.

6. ♖g1-f3 ...

The exchange of pawns made by Nimzowitsch and Reti, 6.b3 e6 7. ♖b2 ♖e7 8.f4 ♖g6 9. ♖xg7 ♖g8 10. ♖b2 ♖xf4, plays into White's hands. Now 11. ♖f3 ♖f6!? 12. 0-0-0 ♖xb2+ 13. ♖xb2 ♖d5 14. ♖xd5 ♖xd5 15. ♖xd5 ed 16. ♖e1+ ♖e6 17. ♖e2 and 18. ♖f4 is of particular interest – Black finishes his queenside development by giving up some ground positionally. 7... ♖g6, planning e6-e5, is better. If 8.d4 then Black can delay mobilizing his kingside and focus on the queenside – 8... ♖ce7 9.c4 ♖d7, and then ♖d7-c6.

6. ... ♖e5xf3+
7. ♔d1xf3 ♔d8-d6

Black's setup failed to impress Mieses, so he repeated the same opening against Reti a few days later. That time he faced stiff resistance: 7...g6 8.♗b5 ♗d7 9.d4 ♗g7 10.d5?! (10.c3 keeps the position balanced) 10...♘d4 11.♗xd7+ ♔xd7 12.♔d1 0-0-0 13.0-0 ♖b8 14.c4 e6 15.♖b1 ♗he8, and Black has an excellent setup.

8. ♗f1-b5 ♗c8-d7
9. 0-0 e7-e6

The 2.♘c3 d5 3.ed ♗xd5 line has proved over and over again that **Black should not have a care in the world if he controls d4**. This is true here, too – 9...f6 10.d3 e5 promises Black little to no trouble.

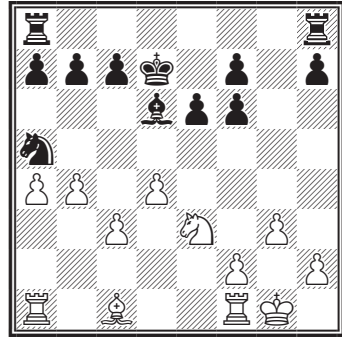
10. c2-c3 ♗d6-e5
11. a2-a4 ...

Alekhine advocates for 11.♔e2 ♗d6 12.f4, practically forcing Black to make rather dangerous long castling.

11. ... ♗f8-d6
12. g2-g3 ♔e5-f6!
13. ♗f3xf6 g7xf6
14. d2-d4 ♗c6-a5
15. ♗b5xd7+ ♗e8xd7
16. b2-b4 ...

What allows Black to believe he will soon have a better endgame? His activity on the kingside, play against White's advanced queenside pawns, and most importantly, optimism and superior technique. If 16...♘b3 17.♖b1 ♘xc1 18.♖xc1 then White's pawn armada will

move forward, so Black does not have much of a choice.



16. ... ♗a5-c6
17. ♖f1-d1 ...

17.b5 ♗a5 18.♖b1 ♖hg8 19.c4 b6 20.♗d2 ♘b7 21.♖fc1 is more precise, and by expanding on the queenside White limits his opponent's viable options.

17. ... a7-a6
18. ♖a1-b1 b7-b5
19. a4-a5?! ...

White should have dropped the rook back, opening up the long diagonal, just at an unwelcome moment for Black. Mieses is putting up very weak resistance.

19. ... ♗c6-e7
20. ♗g1-f1 ♗d7-c6
21. ♖b1-b2 ♗e7-d5
22. ♗f1-e1 h7-h5

Alekhine's sloppy comment — 22...♘xc3 23.♖c2 ♗xb4 24.♗d2 (causing Black some serious trouble) — needs to be tweaked. After 23... ♘b7 24.♖xc3 ♗xb4 25.♗d2 ♗xc3 26.♗xc3 f5 White is the one in hot water.

- 23. ♖e3-g2 ♜a8-e8
- 24. ♙c1-e3 f6-f5
- 25. ♚e1-d2? ...

If ♜d1-d3 and ♚e1-f1 then White should still be able to hold the position. Now everything falls to pieces.

- 25. ... h5-h4!
- 26. ♚d2-d3 h4xg3
- 27. h2xg3 ♜h8-h2
- 28. ♖g2-h4 ...

If 28. ♜g1, then 28... ♜g8 29. ♜bb1 ♙xg3! 30. fg ♜xg3 (Alekhine). Now the bland 28... ♗xe3 29. ♚xe3 f4+ is the shortest path to victory.

- 28. ... ♙d6xg3
 - 29. ♗h4-f3 ♜h2-g2
 - 30. ♗f3-e1 ♜g2-g1!
 - 31. ♜b2-e2 ♙g3-d6
 - 32. ♜d1-c1 ♜e8-h8
 - 33. ♗e1-f3? ♜g1xc1
 - 39. ♙e3xc1 ♜h8-h3
- 0-1

A year later, the knight retreat (3... ♗fd7) let Alekhine down. Aron Nimzowitsch made a novelty move and emerged victorious. Subsequently, the 4.f4 line became known as the Nimzowitsch variation.

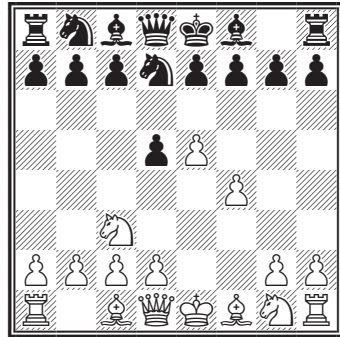
Game 4

A.Nimzowitsch – A.Alekhine

Semmering 1926

- 1. e2-e4 ♗g8-f6
- 2. ♗b1-c3 d7-d5
- 3. e4-e5 ♗f6-d7

- 4. f2-f4 ...



White protects his foot soldier on the front line, tucks his king away on the queenside, and advances the d-pawn one square, not two (which would switch to the French Defense).

- 4. ... e7-e6

If Black plays 4...c5 at first then there are many other offshoots that are harmless for Black. 4... ♗b6!?, freeing the bishop from captivity, is terribly interesting. Konopka outplayed Walter (Augsburg 1999) in record time: 5. ♗f3 ♙g4 6. d3 e6 7. ♙d2 ♗c6 8. h3?? ♙xf3. Vladimir Bagirov met 5.d4 with 5... h5, eventually posting his queen's knight on f5.

- 5. ♗g1-f3 ...

In the tournament book Nimzowitsch suggests 5. ♚g4 (his signature pounce) 5... ♗c6 6. ♗f3 ♗b4 7. ♚d1 – losing castling rights should not matter because the position is closed. Kopylov, as Black against Denker (Bargteheide 2008), continued energetically with 5...f5

6. ♖g3 d4 7. ♘d1 ♘c5 8. d3 ♘c6
 9. ♙d2 b6 10. ♙e2 ♙b7 11. ♘f3 ♖d7
 12. 0-0 0-0-0 13. b3 ♙e7 14. ♘b2 h6
 15. b4 ♘e4! 16. de fe, winning back
 the piece and obtaining a favorable
 position.

5. ... c7-c5

6. g2-g3 ...

After 6. ♙e2, the assumed d2-d3
 would limit the scope of White's
 bishop, so Yates exchanged it off
 in his game against Rubinstein,
 Semmering 1926: 6. ♙b5 a6
 7. ♙xd7+ ♙xd7 8. 0-0 ♘c6 9. d3
 g6 10. ♖e1 ♖c7 11. ♘d1 0-0-0
 12. c3 ♙e7 13. ♙e3 ♖b8 14. ♖f2 d4!
 15. cd ♘b4 16. ♖d2 (16. ♘c3 ♘xd3
 17. ♖e2 ♙c6!) 16... ♙c6 17. a3 ♙xf3
 18. ab cd 19. ♖xf3 de 20. ♘xe3 ♖b6.
 White is up a pawn, but he does not
 even have the slightest advantage in
 this ludicrous position.

6. ... ♘b8-c6

7. ♙f1-g2 ♙f8-e7

8. 0-0 0-0

9. d2-d3 ♘d7-b6

If the standard f7-f6, undermining
 White's pawn chain, is played, then
 the knight may come in handy on
 the kingside. For instance, 9...f6
 10. ef ♘xf6 11. ♖e1 ♙d6 12. ♘g5
 ♘d4 13. ♙e3 h6 14. ♘h3 ♙d7
 15. ♖h1 ♖c7 Prados – Colovic,
 Dos Hermanas 2006. Black has
 finished his development, taken
 control of the center, and is not
 too concerned about his backward
 pawn.

10. ♘c3-e2 d5-d4

Raymond Keene, who

commented this game, claims Black
 missed the last good moment to play
 f7-f6. But it would be incorrect to
 say that Black has no weaknesses
 after 10...f6 11. ef ♙xf6 12. c3 e5.
 In the 13. fe ♘xe5 14. ♘xe5 ♙xe5
 15. ♖xf8+ ♖xf8 16. a4 a5 17. ♖b3
 ♖d6 18. ♙f4 variation White has
 enough targets to attack.

11. g3-g4 f7-f6

This is an unnecessary move,
 although it is not a mistake. If
 11... ♙d7 12. a3 (aimed against
 ♘c6-b4-d5) 12... ♖c7 13. ♙d2
 ♖ad8 14. ♘g3 ♘d5 then Black has
 nothing to complain about.

12. e5xf6 g7xf6?

12... ♙xf6 13. ♘g3 ♘d5 14. ♖e2
 ♖c7 would have been the right
 continuation. Alekhine has
 destroyed his king's abode, so all of
 his subsequent titanic attempts at
 mending his position are for naught.

13. ♘e2-g3 ♘b6-d5

14. ♖d1-e2 ♙e7-d6

15. ♘f3-h4 ♘c6-e7

16. ♙c1-d2 ...

16. ♘h5 (16... ♘g6? 17. ♙xd5
 ed 18. ♘f5), recommended by
 Nimzowitsch, is no worse, to say
 the least.

16. ... ♖d8-c7

17. ♖e2-f2 c5-c4!?

18. d3xc4 ♘d5-e3!?

19. ♙d2xe3 d4xe3

20. ♖f2-f3 ♖c7xc4

21. ♘g3-e4 ♙d6-c7

22. b2-b3 ♖c4-d4

23. c2-c3 ♖d4-b6

24. ♖g1-h1 ♘e7-d5

Black is simply unable to finish his development and protect his king and e3-pawn all at the same time. If 24...f5 25.♘g3 e5! 26.fe f4 he has almost solved all of these problems, but 25.♘g5 is a noticeable improvement.

25. f4-f5? ...

Nimzowitsch pushed the wrong pawn, thereby giving up the initiative. After 25.g5! f5 26.♖h5! fe? 27.♗xe4 ♖f7 28.g6, White wins.

25. ... ♗d5-f4

26. ♖f1-d1 ♖g8-h8

26...e2!? 27.♖d2 ef 28.gf ♖f7 is interesting, not allowing the white bishop to shift to a different, more favorable diagonal.

27. ♗g2-f1 e6xf5

28. g4xf5 ♗c7-e5

29. ♖d1-e1 ♗c8-d7

30. ♖e1xe3 ♗d7-c6

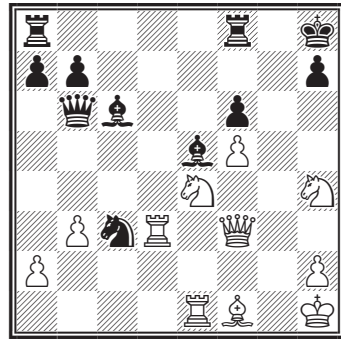
31. ♖a1-e1?! ...

White should have completed his bishop maneuver by shifting it to c4 to deprive Black's rook of the key g8-square. Meeting 31...♖c7 with 32.a4 would protect the bishop against b7-b5.

31. ... ♗f4-d5

32. ♖e3-d3 ♗d5xc3?

Alekhine had calculated a winning variation: 33.♖xc3 ♗xc3 34.♖xc3 ♖f2, although he failed to consider White's stunning refutation of his combination. 32...♖g8, followed by doubling his rooks, would have done the job.



33. ♗h4-g6+! h7xg6

34. ♖f3-g4! ♖f8-f7?

This drastic change of events rattled Black. First, he let a win slip between his fingers and now he missed a drawing continuation. After 34...♖g8 35.fg ♗g7 36.♖d7+ ♗xd7 37.♖xd7+ ♗xg6 38.♗d3 ♗h6 39.♖h3+ ♗g7 40.♗xc3 ♖h8 41.♖d7+ ♗f8 42.♖xe5! fe 43.♖f5+, the game would have ended in perpetual check.

35. ♖d3-h3+ ♗h8-g7

36. ♗f1-c4! ♗c6-d5

37. f5xg6 ...

Black's king position is so atrocious that White can take his pick of winning lines. 37.♖xg6+ ♗f8 38.♗xd5 ♗xd5 39.♖h8+ ♗e7 40.♖xa8 is rather bland. Nimzowitsch opts for a more flashy attack on the desperately weak light squares.

37. ... ♗c3xe4

38. g6xf7+ ♗g7-f8

39. ♖e1xe4 ♗d5xe4+

40. ♖g4xe4 ♗f8-e7

41. f7-f8♖+ ♖a8xf8

42. ♖e4-d5 ♜b6-d6
 43. ♖d5xb7+ ♔e7-d8
 44. ♖h3-d3 ♙e5-d4
 45. ♖b7-e4 ♖f8-e8
 46. ♙d3xd4
 1-0

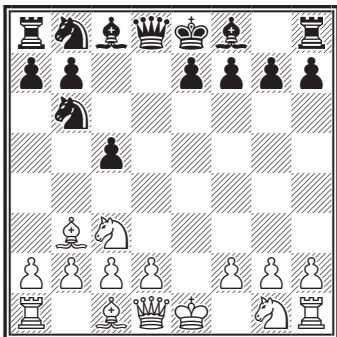
As one can see, the opening had nothing to do with Black's loss. Nevertheless, Alekhine lost interest in his brainchild after Semmering, playing 1...♘f6 only a few times thereafter. However, tons of amateurs, primarily players participating in simul, started employing the Alekhine Defense against the inventor himself. This game, played during Alekhine's record-breaking 28-board blindfold simul, tops the list.

Game 5

A. Alekhine – P. Potemkin

Paris 1925, simul

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
 2. ♘b1-c3 d7-d5
 3. e4xd5 ♘f6xd5
 4. ♙f1-c4 ♘d5-b6
 5. ♙c4-b3 c7-c5



Alekhine commented this game in his book *On the Road to the World Championship*. But he disregarded the principled continuation 6.♙h5!? c4 7.♙xc4 ♘xc4 8.♙b5+, which is considered in our theoretical section.

One can only assume that the world champion intentionally did not analyze a continuation he was planning on employing later. But it just so happened that Alekhine only played 2.♘c3 in simul, and he always pushed his e-pawn in games versus serious rivals such as Fine, Tartakower, Euwe and Reshevsky.

6. d2-d3 ♘b8-c6

6...♙f5, letting the bishop out of the pawn wall, is interesting. After 7.♙f3 ♖d7 8.♙g3 ♘c6 9.♘f3 e6 10.0-0 ♙d6!?, Houdini strongly advocates accepting the sacrifice, although not everyone would love to be White in the 11.♙xg7 0-0-0 12.♙h6 ♖hg8 13.♔h1 ♖g6 14.♙e3 variation. Black simply finishes his development and equalizes if White does not take the pawn: 11.♙f4 ♙xf4 12.♙xf4 0-0 13.♖fe1 ♖ad8 14.♘e4 ♙xe4 15.♙xe4 ♘d5 16.c3 ♘f6 17.♙e3 (Filipowicz – Chetverik, Switzerland 2012) 17... ♙xd3 18.♙xc5 ♘e4 19.♙h5 ♘f6.

7. ♘g1-f3 ...

Alekhine decided against blocking in the c8-bishop by attacking f7. After 7.♙h5 e6 8.♙g5 ♙e7 9.♘f3 0-0 10.0-0 a5 11.a3 h6 12.♙xe7 ♙xe7, or 7.♙f3 e6 8.♘ge2 ♙e7 9.♙g3 0-0 10.♙h6

♙f6 11. ♘e4 ♙e5 (11... ♘d5!?) 12. f4 ♙f6 13. 0-0-0 ♚h8 14. ♙g5 ♙e7 15. ♙xe7 ♚xe7 16. ♚f2 ♘d7 Babits – Z. Varga, Heviz 2011, Black has a solid position, but he still has some work to do on his queenside.

7. ... ♘c6-a5?!

Potemkin neglects development in order to get the bishop pair. It makes sense to exchange off the bishop after 7...e6 8. 0-0 ♙e7 9. ♙f4 0-0 10. ♚e1. If 7... ♙f5 8. ♙f4 e6 9. 0-0 ♙e7 10. ♚e2 0-0 then Black has already mobilized his forces and keeps the position balanced.

8. ♘f3-e5 ♘a5xb3

9. a2xb3 ♘b6-d7?!

Black is hoping to alleviate some of his problems by exchanging off a few pieces. 9... ♙e6 10. ♘e4 ♙d5 11. 0-0 ♙xe4 12. de ♚xd1 13. ♚xd1 f6 14. ♘c4 ♘xc4 15. bc leads to simplifications but there is no clear-cut draw on the horizon.

10. ♘e5-c4! ...

How can Black evacuate his king now? 10...e5 would be met by 11. f4!, while 10...e6 would be met by 11. ♙f4 a6 12. ♘e4. If 10...g6 11. ♙f4 ♙g7 12. ♘b5 0-0 13. ♙c7 ♚e8 14. ♙g3 ♚d8 15. ♘c7 ♚b8 16. ♚xa7 then a pendulum-like bishop maneuver would ward off e7-e5.

10. ... ♘d7-b6

11. ♙c1-f4 ...

11. ♚h5, followed by 11... ♘xc4 12. dc e6 13. 0-0 ♙e7 14. ♚d1 ♙d7 15. ♘e4 ♚c7 16. ♙g5, is more energetic. Black is on the verge of a disaster.

11. ... ♘b6-d5

12. ♘c3xd5 ♚d8xd5

13. 0-0 ...

Threatening ♘c4-b6. After exchanging queens, that threat costs Black a pawn: 13. ♚f3!? ♚xf3 14. gf.

13. ... b7-b5

14. ♘c4-e3 ♚d5-c6

14... ♚d7 (15. ♚h5 e6 16. ♙e5 ♘b7), backing out of the d-pawn's way, is more persistent.

15. d3-d4 e7-e6

16. d4-d5 e6xd5?!

17. ♘e3xd5 ♙f8-d6

18. ♚f1-e1+ ♙c8-e6

19. ♙f4xd6 ...

Alekhine rightly noted that 19. ♚f3! ♚c8 20. ♚xa7 is more precise, but how is the text any simpler, especially in a blindfold game?! Later on, Potemkin could keep resisting for a while instead of capitulating.

19. ... ♚c6xd6

20. ♚a1-a6! ♚d6-d8

21. ♚e1xe6+ f7xe6

22. ♚a6xe6+ ♙e8-f7

23. ♚e6-e7+ ♚d8xe7

24. ♘d5xe7 ♙f7xe7

25. ♚d1-e2+ ♙e7-f7

26. ♚e2-h5+ ♙f7-f6

27. ♚h5xc5 ♚h8-d8

28. g2-g4

1-0

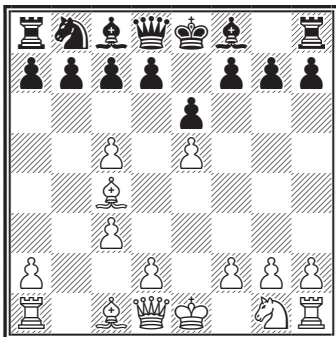
Naturally, theory on the main continuation, 2.e5, was growing exponentially relative to theory on 2. ♘c3. In 1922 Hans Fahrni, a Swiss master, published valuable analysis on the most current systems. In

1923 Gruber – Tartakower, which looked pretty run-of-the-mill, gave the chess world a new system, the Two Pawns Attack. This ambitious line, in which White aims to grab the initiative quickly due to his huge space advantage, wound up being a fierce weapon in the hands of tactical geniuses. This next game was also played in a simul, albeit not a blindfold one. One should not take Lasker's opponent lightly. Buchholz, a total unknown on the chess circuit, went blow for blow with the ex-world champion until he cracked.

Game 6

Em. Lasker – Buchholz Copenhagen 1927, simul

- | | |
|-----------|--------|
| 1. e2-e4 | ♘g8-f6 |
| 2. e4-e5 | ♞f6-d5 |
| 3. c2-c4 | ♞d5-b6 |
| 4. c4-c5 | ♞b6-d5 |
| 5. ♙f1-c4 | e7-e6 |
| 6. ♞b1-c3 | ♞d5xc3 |
| 7. b2xc3 | ... |



Played significantly less often than the traditional capture away from the center. Actually, if White is looking for a blistering attack he should clear the way for his queen's bishop.

7. ... ♙f8xc5

7...d5 (7...d6) 8.cd cd 9.ed ♙xd6 is more solid, and Black can activate his pieces easily. After 10.♞f3 0-0 11.0-0 ♞d7 12.d4 b6 13.♞e2 ♙b7 14.♙d3?! (White should offer an exchange of bishops) 14...♞c7 15.c4 the players have a position reached on move 14 in Rabiega – Rublevsky, Frankfurt 2000 (started as the Sicilian Defense). Rublevsky could have pocketed a pawn, and he probably would have gotten off scot-free (15...♙xf3 16.♞xf3 ♙xh2+ 17.♞h1 ♙d6).

8. ♞d1-g4 ...

For some reason 8...d5! is not considered the main reply to 8.d4?!. If 9.ed ♙xd6 10.♞f3 0-0 11.0-0 ♞d7 Black has a pleasant position, as noted in the previous comment, and an extra pawn on c7.

8. ... ♙g8-f8

If 8...0-0!? 9.d4 f5! 10.ef ♞xf6 11.♞f3 d5! 12.♙d3 ♙d6 Taylor rightly prefers Black. The other ways of defending g7 have their flaws, too, although if 8...♙f8 the computer does not give White any extra points for being ahead in development.

9. d2-d4 ♙c5-e7

10. h2-h4 h7-h5

11. ♞g4-f4 f7-f5

11...d5 12.ed ♖xd6, like before, puts up stiff resistance, and Black can fight for an advantage.

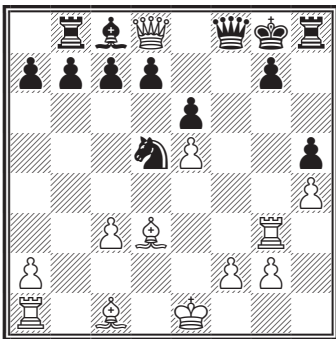
- 12. e5xf6 ♘e7xf6
- 13. ♘g1-f3 ♘b8-c6
- 14. ♘f3-e5 ♘c6-e7
- 15. ♙c4-d3 ♙d8-e8
- 16. ♚f4-f3 ♚f8-g8
- 17. ♚h1-h3?! ...

Lasker would not attack so bluntly in a serious tournament game. Perhaps, the players failed to notice that after 17...d6 18.♚e2 now 18...c5! is very strong.

- 17. ... ♘f6xe5?!
- 18. d4xe5 ♙a8-b8
- 19. ♚h3-g3 ♙e8-f7
- 20. ♚f3-f6 ♘e7-d5??

A heart-breaking and devastating blunder. Black probably could have simplified the position and drawn with 20...b6 21.♙h6 ♘f5 22.♙xf5 ♚xf6 23.ef ♚xh6 24.♚xg7+ ♚h8 25.♙d3 ♚xf6 26.♚h7+ ♚g8 27.♚xh5 ♙b7.

- 21. ♚f6-d8+ ♚f7-f8



- 22. ♚g3xg7+! ...
Forces mate.

- 22. ... ♚g8xg7
- 23. ♚d8-g5+ ♚g7-f7
- 24. ♚g5-g6+ ♚f7-e7
- 25. ♙c1-g5+ ♘d5-f6
- 26. ♙g5xf6+ ♙f8xf6
- 27. ♚g6xf6+ ♚e7-e8
- 28. ♙d3-g6#

Positional systems gradually started to take over in the Alekhine Defense, in theory and practice. Those who were content with little opted for the exchange variation. After 1.e4 ♘f6 2.e5 ♘d5 3.d4 d6 4.c4 ♘b6 5.ed most players would choose a symmetrical reply 5...exd6. The heyday for 5...cxd6 came much later. This next game directs us to positions arising after 5...cxd6; however, this classical masterpiece remains relevant to this day.

Game 7

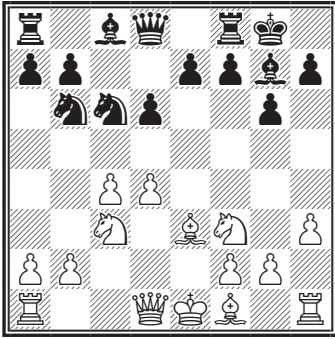
F.Bohatirchuk – I.Rabinovich

Moscow 1924

- 1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
- 2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
- 3. c2-c4 ♘d5-b6
- 4. d2-d4 d7-d6
- 5. e5xd6 c7xd6
- 6. ♙c1-e3 g7-g6
- 7. ♘b1-c3 ♙f8-g7
- 8. ♘g1-f3 0-0
- 9. h2-h3 ♘b8-c6

One of the most topical tabiyas of the exchange variation. Generally, players opt for 10.♚c1 or 10.♙e2,

but setting up a battery along the c1-h6 diagonal should come as no surprise.



10. ♖d1-d2 d6-d5

Black does not wait for White to develop the f1-bishop, trying to win a tempo, because he has to do something about d4-d5 first. For instance, 10...♙f5 11.d5 ♘b4 12.♖c1 ♗c8 13.a3 ♘xc4 14.♙xc4 ♘c2+ 15.♖xc2 ♙xc2 16.♙e2 ♙f5 17.♙d4, and clearly the two minor pieces are stronger than the rook and pawn.

Black could have considered 10...e5. After 11.d5 ♘e7 12.g4!? ♙d7 13.♘e4 ♘bc8 14.♖g1 b5 15.c5 f5 16.gf ♙xf5 17.♘fg5 h6?! (17...♙xe4 18.♘xe4 ♘f5) 18.♘e6 ♙xe6 19.de d5 20.0-0 ♗c7 21.♙b1! de? 22.♗d7 White's minimal advantage soon became overwhelming, Najer – Neverov, Dresden 2007. By sacrificing material (11...♘d4!?) Black gets the initiative for the pawn: 12.♘xd4 ed 13.♙xd4 ♖e8+ 14.♙e3 ♗h4 15.b3 ♖xe3+! 16.♗xe3 ♙d7 17.♗d2 ♖e8+ 18.♙e2 ♙d4.

11. c4-c5 ...

Let us check an exchange of dark-squared bishops in another setup: 11.cd ♘xd5 12.♙h6 ♘xc3 13.bc e6 14.h4 ♙xh6 15.♗xh6 f6 16.♙c4 ♙d7 17.♖b1 ♘a5 18.♙d3 ♖f7 19.0-0 ♖c8 Gaehwiler – Konopka, Rogaska Slatina 2009. Black has sufficient counter chances on the queenside. But if 17.♗e3 ♗e7 18.h5 g5 19.♘d2 then he still has not equalized yet.

11. ... ♘b6-c4

12. ♙f1xc4 d5xc4

13. 0-0 ...

13.d5 would be premature because the pawn could easily become a sitting duck. After 13...♘b4 14.0-0 ♙f5 15.♙d4 ♙d3 16.♙xg7 ♗xg7 17.♖fd1 ♘xd5 18.♘e1 ♘f6 19.♘xd3 cd 20.♗xd3 (Seirawan – Wirth, Zuerich 1988 simul) 20...♗xd3 21.♖xd3 ♖fc8 Black posts up a knight on d5 and has absolutely nothing to worry about.

13. ... ♙c8-f5

14. ♖f1-d1 ♘c6-b4

15. ♙e3-h6 b7-b6

16. ♙h6xg7 ♗g8xg7

17. a2-a3 ...

It makes sense to loosen the knight that will eventually land on d3: 17.♘b5!? ♘d3 18.b3 cb 19.ab3±.

17. ... ♘b4-d3

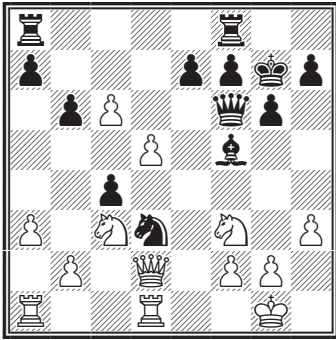
According to the winner's comments, this knight invasion was Black's decisive mistake, and 17...♘d5 was the strongest move. However, just the opposite is true –

17...♖d5 can be refuted by 18.♗e5, whereas the text move promises almost equality.

18. c5-c6 ♔d8-d6?!

Black should have waged war against White's pawn pair, instead of idly contemplating it: 18...♖c8 19.d5 e6!, and 20.g4 ♗xg4 21.hg ed wins a piece, although it does not guarantee White any real advantage.

19. d4-d5 ♔d6-f6



20. ♔d2-e3! ...

Bohatirchuk has a fine understanding of the position. He improves two of his pieces by shedding a pawn. Centralization of the rook is especially dangerous for Black, so he should have gone for 20...♖ad8 or 20...♖fe8.

20. ... ♗d3xb2?

21. ♖d1-d4 b6-b5

22. g2-g4 ♗f5-d3

23. ♗c3xb5 g6-g5

23...♗a4 would have parried the threat of ♖d4-f4 without dropping a pawn. However, White is playing in the center, wasting no time on flank attacks.

24. ♗f3-e5 ♖f8-d8

25. f2-f4 h7-h6

26. ♗e5-d7 ♖d8xd7

27. c6xd7 ♖a8-d8

28. f4xg5 h6xg5

29. d5-d6! ♖d8xd7

30. ♗b5-c7 ♔g7-f8

31. ♖a1-e1! ...

White is executing an elegant attack! If 31...♖xd6 then 32.♗d5, while if 31...exd6 then 32.♔e8+ ♖g7 33.♗e6+! decides.

31. ... e7-e6

32. h3-h4 g5xh4

33. ♖d4-f4 ♖f6-g6

34. ♖e3-e5 ♖g6-h6

35. g4-g5

1-0

This game won the second brilliancy prize.

An exchange on d6 serves as an entrance to two completely different main lines — c7xd6 and e7xd6, but the resulting pawn formation does not exactly give Black a ton of options. 1.e4 ♗f6 2.e5 ♗d5 3.d4 d6 4.♗f3, which provided chess theorists and players with endless possibilities and sidelines, is a whole another story..

Game 8

F.Yates – E.Colle

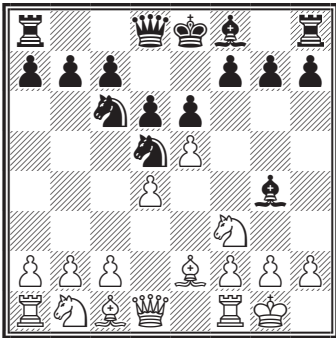
Scarborough 1930

1. e2-e4 ♗g8-f6

Edgar Colle, a Belgian chess champion in the early-mid 1900's,

achieved astounding results with the Alekhine Defense. His first two attempts (against Mieses and Rosselli del Turco) went awry, but then he got on a roll. According to the Megabase, he won two times more games than he lost, defeating chess giants like Yates (three times), Spielmann (two times), Mieses, and Stoltz.

- | | |
|-----------|--------|
| 2. e4-e5 | ♘f6-d5 |
| 3. d2-d4 | d7-d6 |
| 4. ♘g1-f3 | ♙c8-g4 |
| 5. ♙f1-e2 | e7-e6 |
| 6. 0-0 | ♘b8-c6 |



The vast majority of players opt for 6...♙e7, instead of developing the knight, because the latter provokes Black to play c2-c4, followed by the keynote d4-d5!

7. c2-c4 ...

An exchange on d6 would give the retreating knight two extra squares. If 7.ed ♙xd6 8.c4 then Black should go for 8...♘f6 9.♙e3 0-0 10.♘c3 ♙b4, exerting strong control over the center, instead of 8...♘f4 9.♙xf4 ♙xf4 10.d5.

7. ... ♘d5-b6

Reti, not Mikenas (as Bagirov claimed), was a pioneer in the 7...♘d7 line. After 8.ed ♙xd6 9.♘c3 ♙xf3 10.♙xf3 0-0-0 (10... ♙xd4 11.♘b5! ♙xd1 12.♙xd1 ♙c8 13.♙f4) 11.d5 ♘e5 12.de ♘xf3+ 13.♙xf3 ♙xe6 14.b3 ♙f5 15.♙xf5 ♘xf5 16.♙f4 ♙c5 17.♙ad1 f6 18.♙xd8+ ♙xd8 Sergeant – Reti, Hastings 1926, the endgame drifted towards a draw, but White should have shied away from lightening up the center of the board (12. ♙e1!? ♘xc4 13.de). It would have been even better to make a key breakthrough by playing 11.♘b5! ♙d7 12.d5.

8. e5xd6 c7xd6

9. d4-d5 ...

Sometimes they include 9.♘c3 ♙e7 before making this break in the center. 9...d5 has bad statistics, which is easy to explain: Black cannot limit White's expansion by exerting pressure on d4. After 10.c5 ♘d7 11.b4 ♙xf3 12.♙xf3 a6 13.♙b1 ♘f6 14.a4 b6 15.♙e3 a5 16.♙e2 ab 17.♙b5 ♙d7? 18.♘a2! Bogoljubow knocked out Schulz (Lueneburg 1947). 17...♙c8 is more persistent though, and eventually the knight on d7 will free up his partner on c6.

According to Tartakower, 9.b3 had been played at a top amateur tournament (Ostrava 1923) by Bauer and Razovsky. The consequences of choosing 9...♙e7 are analyzed in Chapter 83.

9. ... e6xd5

10. c4xd5 ♖g4xf3

11. ♗e2xf3 ...

11.gf?, looking to disturb Black's centralized knight with the doubled pawns, is interesting. Then White can use his light-squared bishop on its 'native' diagonal. After 11... ♞e5 12.♗b5+ ♞bd7 13.♞e1 ♗e7 14.f4 ♞g6 15.f5 ♞ge5 16.♞c3 a6 17.♗xd7+ ♞xd7 18.f4 ♞c4 19.♞d4 Black now has to capture on f5, part with his knight, and hope for some miniscule chances by his opponent's king. In Oll – Kaunas (Clichy 1991) 17...♞xd7 18.♗g5 f6 19.♞h5+ ♞f8 20.♗d2 ♞e8 21.♞h3 ♞f7 22.♞e3 ♞g8 23.♞e2 ♞e5 24.♞f4 g5 25.♞g3 h5 26.♗c3 h4 27.♞g2 ♞h7? 28.♞e6 ♞h5 29.f4 g4 30.fe! followed, and Black paid a hefty price for consolidating his position.

11. ... ♞c6-e5

12. ♗f3-e2 ...

Yates intends to redirect his queen's rook to the kingside as quickly as possible. 12.♗e4 ♗e7 13.♞c3 0-0 14.a4 ♞e8 15.a5 ♞bd7 16.♗e3, a more academic approach, does not have much bite.

12. ... ♗f8-e7

13. a2-a4 0-0

14. ♞a1-a3 ...

Here is a bit from one of the rising stars on the modern-day chess circuit: 14.a5 ♞bd7 15.♞c3 a6 16.♗e3 ♞c8 17.♞b3 ♞c7 18.♞fc1 ♞b8 19.f4 ♞g6 20.g3 Caruana – Galindo, Spain 2009. Expansion had not brought Caruana any real

dividends yet, but his subsequent play was much more effective than Yates'.

14. ...

15. f2-f4

16. ♞a3-h3

17. g2-g4

18. g4-g5

19. ♗e2-b5

20. ♗b5-d3

f7-f5

♞e5-g6

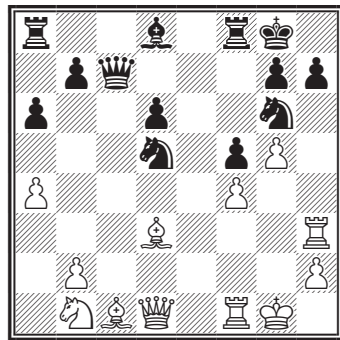
♗e7-f6

♞d8-c7

♗f6-d8

a7-a6

♞b6xd5



It was hard for Yates to decide whether or not White should induce a7-a6, but the Englishman guessed right about the bishop coming to d3. It was a guess and that is all. The white bishop should have continued on via c2 to b3, thereby gaining the initiative for the lost pawn.

21. ♞d1-h5? ♞c7-c5+

22. ♞g1-h1 ♞c5-c6

Colle is not backing down, and it is time for White to retreat (23. ♞f3). Colle refutes the ensuing bishop sacrifice easily.

23. ♗d3-e4? f5xe4

24. f4-f5 h7-h6!

25. ♞h5xg6 e4-e3

26. ♞g6-e6+ ♞f8-f7

27. ♔h1-g1 ♘d8xg5
 28. ♙c1xe3 ♞d5xe3
 29. ♖h3xe3 ♙c6-c5
 0-1

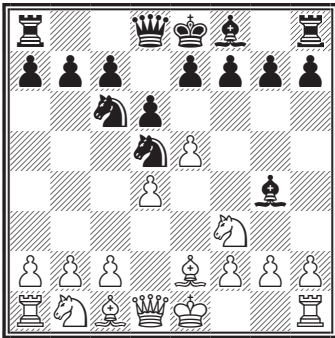
Game 9

A.Becker – S.Tartakower Zandvoort 1936

1. e2-e4 ♞g8-f6

Saviely Tartakower can take pride in his incredible record with the Alekhine Defense, too. He either won or drew all of his games, except for his disastrous encounter against Theodore Tylor (Nottingham 1936). But he was routed because he opted for 2...e5, instead of his signature 2...d5, in response to 2...c3.

2. e4-e5 ♞f6-d5
 3. d2-d4 d7-d6
 4. ♞g1-f3 ♙c8-g4
 5. ♙f1-e2 ♞b8-c6



Vladas Mikenas, a renowned theorist on the Alekhine Defense, made a fundamental contribution to this line, the so-called Lithuanian

variation. With that being said, this and the next move had been played before.

6. 0-0 d6xe5

Black commits to a particular pawn structure. Minekas had tried d6xe5 before, but he is most well-known for his 6...♞b6 continuation.

7. ♞f3xe5 ...

Capturing with the pawn does not pose any problems for Black whatsoever. For instance, there is 7.de e6 8.c4 ♞b6 9.♞bd2 ♙e7 10.h3 ♙h5 11.b3 0-0 12.♙b2 ♞d7, and the knight is heading for c5, a prime square, Dragun – Givon, Prague 2012.

7. ... ♙c6xe5

The 7...♙xe2 8.♙xe2 ♞xd4 line, winning a pawn, has been partially rehabilitated in the 21st century. It is risky to meet 9.♙c4 with 9...c5?!, due to 10.♖d1!?, intending to sacrifice the exchange (10...e6?! 11.♖xd4! cd 12.♙b5+). Black should return his spoils: 9...f6! 10.♙xd4 fe 11.♙xe5 ♙d6 12.♙e2 0-0-0 13.c4 ♞b4 14.♞c3 ♙g6 15.♙e3 ♞c6 16.♖ad1 ♖xd1 17.♖xd1 e6 18.♞b5 a6 19.♞d4 ♞xd4 20.♙xd4 ♙e7, finishing development without bearing any material losses, Stevic – Narciso Dublan, Rijeka 2010, or 14...♙d3!? 15.♙g4+ ♙d7 16.♙g5 h6 17.♙g6 ♙c6. Black can always threaten his

8. d4xe5 ♙g4-f5

9. ♙e2-d3 ...

Alekseev – Kupreichik, Yekate-

rinburg 2002, was over very quickly:
 9.c4 ♖b6 10.♖b3 e6 11.♗d1 ♕e7?
 12.♗c3 g5 13.♙f3 c6 14.♗b5!
 ♙h6 15.♗d6+ ♖f8 16.♙e3 ♖c7
 17.♗xf5 ef 18.♙c5+ ♖g7 19.♙d6
 ♖c8 20.c5 ♗d7 21.♙h5 ♖e8
 22.♙xf7! ♖xf7 23.e6 ♖f6 24.ed.
 It is pretty obvious why Black was
 routed — his queen was blocking in
 his bishop, so his position collapsed
 like a line of dominoes. 11...♖c8
 followed by ♗b6-d7 would have
 given him chances at equalizing.

**One key warning for all Alekhine
 Defense players: do not keep your
 knight on the hideous b6-square for
 too long! Start shifting it once the
 opportunity arises!**

9. ... ♙f5-g6?!

Always keep your eye on e5-e6
 in the Alekhine Defense! After 9...
 ♙xd3 10.♖xd3 ♖d7 11.♗d1 e6
 12.c4 ♗b6 13.♖e2 ♖c6 14.b3 ♗d7
 (a tried and true maneuver) White's
 advantage is marginal.

10. ♙d3xg6 h7xg6

11. e5-e6 ♖d8-d6

The move order 10.e6! ♖d6
 11.♙xg6 hg is more precise, because
 in the game Tartakower could get a
 more closed and durable position
 playing 11...f5.

12. e6xf7+ ♖e8xf7

13. ♖d1-f3+ ♖f7-g8

14. h2-h3 c7-c6

15. c2-c4 ♗d5-f6

16. ♖f3-b3 e7-e6

17. ♙c1-e3?! ...

Black failed to take advantage of
 Becker's minor slip-up: 17...♗g4!

18.f4 ♗xe3 19.♖xe3 ♖c5 20.♖xc5
 ♙xc5+ 21.♖h2 ♙d6=. 17.♗d1
 ♖c7 18.♙e3 was the right move
 sequence.

17. ... ♖d6-c7?!

18. ♗b1-d2 c6-c5

19. ♗d2-f3 e6-e5

20. ♗a1-d1 ♗a8-e8

21. ♗f1-e1 e5-e4

22. ♗f3-g5 ♗h8-h5

23. ♖b3-c2 ♙f8-d6

24. ♖c2-d2 ...

The Austrian chess player gets
 off track. His knight and queen had
 been zeroing in on his opponent's
 pawn. Why did not he have the rook
 join in after 24.♙c1!? ?

24. ... ♙d6-e5

25. g2-g3 ♖c7-c8

26. ♖g1-g2 ♖c8-f5

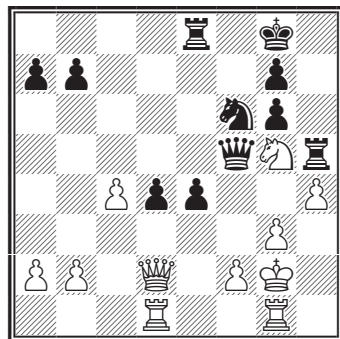
27. ♗e1-g1? ...

Now Tartakower creates a
 threatening pawn pair using hanging
 White's knight. 27.h4 ♖g4 28.♗h1
 was necessary — White still would
 have had a more promising position.

27. ... ♙e5-d4

28. ♙e3xd4 c5xd4

29. h3-h4 ...



29. ... e4-e3!

Black cuts the queen off from her knight. He was counting on two possible rook endgames when making this move. The route to the first one is well-concealed: 30.♚e2! d3! 31.♚f3! ♚xf3+ 32.♘xf3 ef 33.♚gf1 ♚e3 34.♘g5 ♚xg5 35.hg ♘e4 36.♚xf2 ♘xf2 37.♚xf2 ♚e2+ 38.♚f3 ♚xb2 39.♚xd3, and a draw is likely.

30. f2xe3 ♚h5xg5!**31. h4xg5 ♚f5-e4+****32. ♚g2-h2 ♘f6-g4+?!**

However, after 32...de 33.♚d4 ♘g4+ 34.♚h3 ♘f2+ 35.♚h2 ♘xd1 36.♚xe4 ♚xe4 37.♚xd1 ♚xc4 Black should have an advantage large enough for the win.

33. ♚h2-h3 ♚g8-f7**34. ♚g1-f1+? ...**

The wrong rook! 34.♚df1+! ♘f6 35.g4! (White throws a pawn to the lions to get his king off the fateful back rank) 35...♚h8+ 36.♚g3 ♚xg4+ 37.♚f2, drawing, is the best continuation. 37...dxe3+ 38.♚xe3 ♚h4+ 39.♚g3 ♚d4+ 40.♚g2 ♚h4 may follow.

34. ... ♘g4-f6**35. ♚f1-f4 ♚e8-h8+****36. ♚f4-h4 ♚h8xh4+****37. g3xh4 ♚e4-f3+****38. ♚h3-h2 d4xe3
0-1**

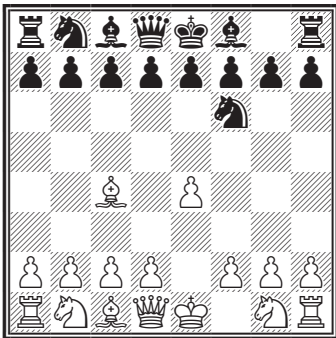
Richard Reti and Ernst Gruenfeld enjoyed playing the Alekhine Defense. Distinguished chess players such as Max Euwe and Salo Flohr would occasionally opt for this unusual opening. Later on, Smyslov, Korchnoi and Larsen would mix it up and play 1...♘f6; the latter elected this opening more often than the other two.

Nevertheless, no high-profile masters played the opening religiously, so it never quite caught on. Robert Fischer, one of the most prolific chess players of all time, went for the Alekhine Defense during his world championship match against Spassky. The American won game 13 and drew game 19. Magnus Carlsen, the rock star of the modern chess circuit, played 1...♘f6 at the 2007 World Blitz Championship (Moscow) and a few other tournaments. The Alekhine Defense has yet to become a fixture at elite tournaments, but it is still a part of many GMs' opening repertoire. All in all, it would not be fair to classify the Alekhine Defense as a second-rate opening.

Part 1. Various 2nd moves

Chapter 1. 2. ♖c4

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. ♙f1-c4 ...



This looks like a pawn sacrifice, but it really is not. Picking up the c4-pawn causes Black to drop his f7-pawn and lose castling rights.

2. ... ♘f6xe4

Generally, Black accepts the challenge, counting on his potent pawn center. Let us limit the number of possible replies by discarding 2...♘c6 (see openings with 1...♘c6), 2...e5 (leading to the Bishop's Opening), 2...d6 (which is some offshoot of the Pirc Defense), 2...d5 (venturing into Scandinavian Defense territory), and 2...e6 (this

will be considered later, via the 2.e5 ♘d5 3.♙c4 e6 move order). Black can go in for a flank attack, 2...b5!?, hoping to distract his opponent and lure the bishop off of the a2-g8 diagonal. Black should be content with the 3.♙b3 ♙b7 4.d3 e6 5.a4 b4 6.♘f3 ♙e7 variation, but the main line looks more promising.

3. ♙c4xf7+ ♚e8xf7
4. ♚d1-h5+ ♚f7-g8

One should make note of Zoltan Varga's treatment of the Alekhine Defense because he is considered one of the leading experts on the opening. Fragments of his games are littered throughout this book. He has played 4...g6 5.♚d5+ e6 6.♚xe4 d5 7.♚f4+ ♚g8 8.♘f3 ♙d6 9.♚h6 ♚f8 10.d4 ♘c6 11.c3 ♙d7 12.♚xf8+ ♚xf8 13.b4 h6 14.0-0 g5 15.♚e1 ♚f5 16.♘bd2 ♚h7 with a roughly equal position, Xheladini – Z.Varga, Basel 2007. However, if White were to keep queens on the board by playing 12.♚d2 he could fight for an advantage. 6...♙g7 7.♘f3 ♚f8 8.d4 ♚g8 9.♙g5 ♚e8 10.0-0 c5 is better, and Black has

castled by hand and drummed up some counterplay, although he has not developed his queenside yet.

5. ♖h5-d5+ e7-e6
6. ♖d5xe4 d7-d5
7. ♖e4-e2 ...

The queen steps back so as not to allow Black to play e6-e5, which would open up his queen's bishop. If 7. ♖f3 e5 8. d3 ♞c6 9. c3 ♙e6, followed by ♖d8-f6, then it is smooth sailing for Black.

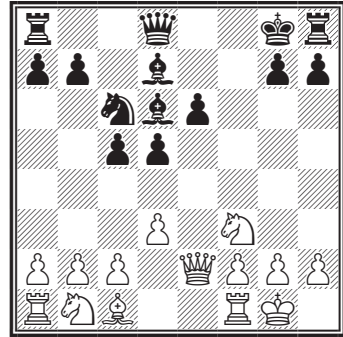
7. ... c7-c5

At the very least, this is no worse than 7... ♞c6, insisting on e6-e5. It turns out that 8. ♞f3 e5! 9. ♞xe5?? ♞d4 Vospernik – Sklyarov, Pattaya 2011, shooting for 10. ♖d3 ♖g5! 11. ♖xd4 ♖xg2 12. ♖f1 ♙h3 13. ♖d3 ♙d6, is disastrous. In the 9. d3 ♙g4 10. c3 ♖f6 11. ♞bd2 h6 12. h3 ♙xf3 13. ♞xf3 ♙h7 variation Black sets up his forces rather harmoniously.

8. ♞g1-f3 ♞b8-c6
9. 0-0 ♙f8-d6
10. d2-d3 ♙c8-d7

Diagram

Black does not encounter any serious difficulties, no matter what strategy White may pursue. After



11. ♙g5 ♖c7 12. c3 e5 13. ♞a3 a6
 14. ♞c2 ♖e8 15. ♞e3 ♙e6 16. h3
 h6 17. ♙h4 ♖f7 18. ♙g3 ♙h7
 White has bunkered down and does not have much going for him, except for his rock-solid fortress, S.Olah – Chetverik, Gyula 1997. Undermining the center with 11. c4 h6 12. ♞c3 runs into 12... ♖f8!, planning ♖f8-f5. 13. cd ed 18. ♞xd5?! ♙g4 would backfire on White.

2. ♙c4 may not deserve a ‘?!’; however, it essentially turns White into Black. Strong chess players have never opted for such passive opening systems and never will.

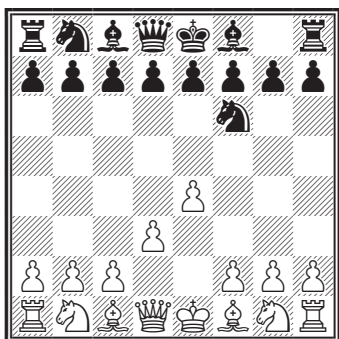
Chapter 2. 2.d3

1. e2-e4 ♞g8-f6
2. d2-d3 ...

Chess players who are not enamored with opening theory

and have no qualms about playing modest and standard opening systems choose moves like 2.d3. Now Black has numerous attractive

follow-ups because he kicked off the game with a universally useful move – $\text{c}6\text{g}8\text{-f}6$. However, we shall not analyze every possible continuation since that would lead us into other openings.



2. ... $\text{e}7\text{-e}5$

$2\dots\text{c}5$ and $2\dots\text{d}6$ overlap with the Sicilian and Pirc defenses, respectively. Game 10, with a modified move order, illustrates the main idea behind $2\dots\text{d}5$.

3. $\text{f}2\text{-f}4$...

It is hard to arrive at this position from any other opening, although Walbrodt and Alapin (Berlin 1897) managed to do so: $1.\text{e}4 \text{e}5$ $2.\text{f}4 \text{c}6$ $3.\text{d}3$ (a rare reply to a rare move) $3\dots\text{d}5!$? $4.\text{fe} \text{c}6$ $5.\text{ed} \text{xd}5$ $6.\text{c}3$ $\text{c}6?$ (calm, simple development) $7.\text{d}4 \text{f}5$ $8.\text{d}3 \text{g}6$ $9.\text{d}4 \text{xf}5$ gf $10.\text{c}3 \text{a}5$ $11.\text{h}3 \text{h}6$ $12.\text{d}3 \text{g}5$ $\text{d}8$, and one can only marvel at the fact that the Russian maestro lasted until move 44. Galdunts' treatment of the position, in his game against Vorotnikov (Wuerzburg 1992), should serve as a model for other

players: $5\dots\text{xe}5$ $6.\text{c}3 \text{b}4$ $7.\text{f}3 \text{g}4$ $8.\text{e}2 \text{xd}5$ $9.\text{c}3 \text{xc}3$ $10.\text{bc} \text{xf}3$ $11.\text{d}3 \text{xf}3$ $\text{c}6 \text{xf}3+$ $12.\text{xf}3 \text{xf}3$ $13.\text{c}3 \text{f}3$ $0\text{-}0$ $14.\text{d}4 \text{d}7$ $15.\text{e}1 \text{fe}8$ $16.\text{e}8+ \text{xe}8$ $17.\text{c}7 \text{c}8$ $18.\text{d}6 \text{xc}3$, and the players agreed to a truce in a few moves.

3. ... $\text{b}8\text{-c}6$

Barrionuevo, as Black against Rodriguez Vila (Sao Paulo 2004), launched an attack on his opponent's king right out of the starting blocks: $3\dots\text{c}5(?)$ $4.\text{fe} \text{xe}4$ $5.\text{de} \text{h}4+$ $6.\text{c}2 \text{d}3$ $7.\text{g}1 \text{f}2+$ $8.\text{e}2 \text{d}4$ $9.\text{d}3 \text{f}2+$ $10.\text{c}3 \text{c}5+$ $11.\text{c}4 \text{b}5$ $12.\text{d}5 \text{xc}4+$ $13.\text{xc}4 \text{bc}$. $5.\text{g}4!$ refutes Black's premature attempt: after $5\dots\text{d}5$ $6.\text{g}7 \text{h}4+$ $7.\text{g}3 \text{f}2+$ $8.\text{d}1 \text{g}4$ $9.\text{g}4 \text{g}4+$ $10.\text{e}2 \text{d}3$ $11.\text{g}1 \text{xe}2+$ $12.\text{c}2$ Black is down a pawn and has a worse position.

4. $\text{g}1\text{-f}3$...

Nimzowitsch – Alekhine (New York 1927) is the most famous game in this line: $4.\text{fe} \text{c}6$ $5.\text{f}3 \text{c}3+$ $6.\text{xf}3 \text{d}5$ $7.\text{e}5 \text{e}7$ $8.\text{d}4 \text{e}4$ $9.\text{d}3 \text{h}4+$ (Alekhine suggested $9\dots\text{f}5$ $10.\text{e}6$, and then $0\text{-}0\text{-}0$) $10.\text{g}3 \text{g}4$ $11.\text{d}2 \text{xf}3$ $12.\text{c}3 \text{e}7$ $13.\text{e}3 \text{h}3$ $14.\text{d}4 \text{de}$ $15.\text{d}2$ $0\text{-}0\text{-}0$ $16.\text{e}6$ $17.\text{ef} \text{xf}6$ $18.\text{c}3 \text{he}8$ with a balanced position.

A.Rotstein – Chetverik (Bad Ems 2014) saw $4.\text{c}3 \text{b}4$ $5.\text{f}3!$ (it is best to insert $5.\text{fe} \text{xe}5$) $5\dots \text{xf}4$ $6.\text{d}4 \text{d}5!$ $7.\text{e}5 \text{d}4$ $8.\text{a}3 \text{dc}$

9.ab cb?! 10.♖b1 ♘d5 11.♙g5 f6 12.ef gf 13.♙d2 ♖e7+ 14.♖e2 (14. ♖f2?! a5!) 14...♗dxb4 15.♖xb2 a5 16.♖xe7+ ♖xe7 17.♙e2 b6 (17... ♖e8!?) 18.0-0 ♖d8) 18.0-0 ♙a6 19.♗h4 ♖hg8 20.h3 ♗d4 21.♙d1 against and White has compensation for the pawn due to his bishop pair. However, 9...♗d5! improves Black's position significantly, or 8...♙xc3+! 9.bc ♗d5 10.♙g5 f6 11.ef gf 12.♙d2 dc 13.♙c1 ♖d6 when White has nothing for the pawn in the closed position.

4. ... d7-d5!

Even if the pawn only progresses one rank it still can move forward at some point later on in the game. After 4...d6 5.♗c3 ♙e7 6.♙e2 0-0 7.0-0 ♖e8 8.d4 ed4 9.♗xd4 d5!? 10.e5 ♙c5 11.♙e3 ♗g4!? 12.♙xg4 ♙xg4 13.♖xg4 ♙xd4 14.♙xd4 ♗xd4 15.♖ad1 c5 16.♖d3 ♖e6 17.♖h3 ♖d7 18.♖g3 g6 19.f5 ♖xe5 20.fg ♖xg4 21.gf+ (Janowski – Halprin, Vienna 1898) 21...♖h8 22.♖xg4 ♖f8 the endgame is equal. Perhaps White should have tried to accelerate his attack: 15.f5 c5 16.f6 g6 17.♖g5 ♖h8 18.♖h6 ♖g8. Although g6-g5 and ♖g8-g6 parry White's direct mating threats, he still has a tangible initiative.

5. e4xd5 ...

In reply to 5.fe, Llanos – Reides (Buenos Aires 1999) is instructive: 5...dxe4 6.ef ef 7.♖xf3 ♗d4 8.♖e4+ ♙e6 9.fg ♙xg7 10.♖d1 (10.♗a3 0-0 11.♙d2 ♙xa2!, winning back the pawn with profit)

10...0-0 11.♗c3 ♖e8 12.♖f4 ♖e7 13.♙d2 ♖c5. White lagged behind in development, so he needed to exercise caution, which he failed to do: 14.♙e3? ♙g4+ 15.♖d2 ♖xe3! 16.♖xg4 (16.♖xe3 ♖b6!) 16... ♖ae8 17.h4 ♖b4 18.♖g5 ♖xb2 19.♖c1 ♗f3+! with mate to follow.

5. ... ♗f6xd5

6. f4xe5 ♙c8-g4

7. ♙f1-e2 ...

The cautious game played by two little known players, Haapasalo – Mertanen (Finland 1996), is worth mentioning: 7.c3 ♙xf3 8.♖xf3 ♗xe5 9.♖e4 ♖e7! 10.d4 ♗g4 11.♙d3 c6 12.0-0 ♖xe4 13.♙xe4 ♙d6 14.h3 ♗gf6 15.♙f3 0-0 16.♙g5 ♖fe8 17.♗d2 ♙g3. The players reached a calm, equal position. There is one interesting variation: 10.♖xd5 ♗xd3++ 11.♖d2 ♗b4+ 12.cb ♖d8 13.♖xd8+ ♖xd8+ 14.♖c3 ♖d7, when the white king winds up being much more energetic than his humble subjects, and Black probably has better chances.

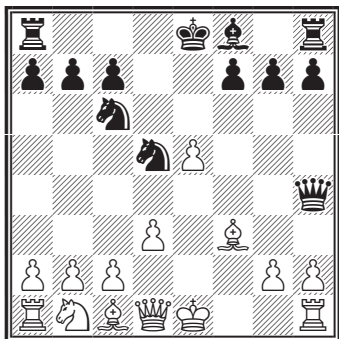
Let us check Alekhine's ancient analysis with an engine: 7.c3 ♗xe5(?) 8.♖e2(?) ♙d6 9.d4 ♙xf3 10.gf ♖h4+(?) 11.♖d1 0-0-0 12.de(?) ♖he8! 'with a crushing attack.' The attack is only enough for a draw: 13.♖g2 ♖b8 14.♖c2 ♙xe5 15.♗a3 ♗e3+ 16.♙xe3 ♖a4+ 17.b3 ♖xa3 18.♖f2 ♙xc3! 19.♖xc3 ♖a5+ 20.♖c2 ♖f5+ or 14.♙g5 ♙xe5 15.♙xh4 ♗e3+ 16.♖e2 ♙f6! 17.♖f2 (17.♙xf6?? ♗d1+!) 17...♙xh4+ 18.♖g1 ♖d1 19.♖e2

♖e6 20.h3 ♖xf1+ 21.♗xf1 ♖g6+ 22.♕h2 ♙g3+ 23.♕g1 ♙e1+. If 12.♗e4 (instead of 12.de?!) 12... ♗xe4 13.fe ♘g4 14.♙h3 ♘df6 15.♕c2 then Black will find it difficult to counteract his opponent's strong pawn center, so he should opt for 10...0-0! 11.de ♙xe5 12.♗f2 ♖e8 13.♙e2 ♙f4!, a promising continuation. These lines are not of practical purpose because the nifty 8.♗a4+! ♗d7 9.♗e4 stops ♙f8-d6, and Black would struggle being down a pawn after 9...f6 10.d4 ♙f5 11.♗e2 ♙d3 12.♘xe5 ♙xe2 13.♘xd7 ♙xf1 14.♘xf6+ ♘xf6 15.♖xf1.

7. ... ♙g4xf3

7...♙c5 keeps White from castling. Black faces no real difficulties (as Komora – V.Sergeev, Slovakia 1998 showed): 8.c3 ♙xf3 9.♙xf3 ♘xe5 10.d4 ♘xf3+ 11.♗xf3 ♙d6 12.0-0 0-0 13.♘d2 c6 14.♘e4 ♗c7 15.♘xd6 ♗xd6 16.♙f4 ♗d7 17.♗g3 f6 18.♖ae1 ♖ae8.

8. ♙e2xf3 ♗d8-h4+



In Maroczy – Alekhine (New York 1924) White voluntarily

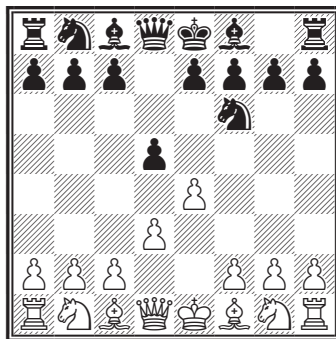
decided not to castle and after 9.♕f1? 0-0-0 10.♘c3 ♙c5 11.♘e4?! (11.♗e1, aiming to exchange queens, is stronger) 11... ♘e3+ 12.♙xe3 ♙xe3 13.♗e1 ♗h6 14.♘g3 ♘d4 15.♗b4 c6 16.♗a4? ♕b8 17.♖d1 ♖he8 he found himself in a bind. Raspor, possibly heeding to Alekhine's advice, equalized against Solak (Portoroz 2003): 9.g3 ♗d4 10.c3 ♗xe5+ 11.♗e2 ♗xe2+ 12.♕xe2 0-0-0 13.d4 ♙e7 14.♕f2 f5 15.♘d2 ♙f6 16.♘c4 ♖he8.

Game 10

G.Welling – I.Sokolov

Gibraltar 2009

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. d2-d3 ♘d7-d5



Black launches a new attack on White's central pawn. White has three options: exchange the pawn, push it forward or have the knight back it up. However, 3.♘d2 will lay the groundwork for an Old Indian setup (for White) and it does

not really jive with the Alekhine Defense. 3.ed ♖xd5 4.♗f3 takes us to the Scandinavian Defense with 1.e4 d5 2.ed ♗f6 3.♗f3 ♖xd5 4.d3, the last move being overly modest. It is as if the colors have been switched: 4...♗c6 5.♗e2 ♗f5 6.♗c3 e5 7.0-0 ♗e7 8.♗e4 ♖d7 9.♗d2 f6 10.a3 g5 11.♗g3 ♗e6 12.b4 g4 13.♗h4 ♗d4 14.c3 ♗xe2+ 15.♖xe2 0-0-0.

3. e4-e5 ♗f6-d7

4. f2-f4 ...

The knight defends the advanced e-pawn much more rarely. The position after 4.♗f3 c5 5.g3 e6 ♗g2 ♗c6 occurred in Appel – Swinkels (Germany 2010) through 1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 e6 3.g3 ♗c6 4.♗g2 ♗f6 5.d3 d5 6.e5 (instead of the usual 6.♗bd2, which keeps some tension in the center) 6...♗d7. Then 7.♗f4 ♗e7 8.h4 h6 9.♗c3 a6 10.a4 ♖b8 11.h5 b5 12.ab ab 13.0-0 b4 14.♗e2 ♗b7 15.♖d2 ♖a8 16.c3 ♗b6 17.g4 c4 followed, and Black has a raging attack, while White is going after a kingside with no king there.

If 4.d4 then White probably has just transposed back to the French Defense and lost a tempo. After 4...c5 5.c3 ♗c6 6.♗f3 e6 7.♗e2 f6 (7...♗e7 and 8...0-0 is not bad either) 8.ef ♗xf6 9.0-0 ♗d6 10.♗e3 cd 11.cd 0-0 12.♗c3 a6 13.♗g5 ♗d7 14.♗h4 ♗e8 15.♗g5 ♖d7 16.♗g3 ♗g6 17.♗d3 ♗xg3 18.hg ♗xd3 19.♖xd3 e5 20.de ♗xe5 21.♖d4 ♗c6 22.♖d3 ♗e5 Zvjaginsev and Khairullin (Belgorod 2010) ended

their encounter with a draw by repetition.

4. ... c7-c5

5. ♗f1-e2 ...

The bishop fianchetto is no better: 5.g3 ♗c6 6.♗g2 e6 7.♗f3 ♗e7 8.0-0 0-0 9.c3 b5 10.a4 ba (10...♖a5!?) 11.♖xa4 ♗b7 12.♗a3 ♗b6 13.♖d1 a5 14.♗c2 a4 15.♗e3 ♖d7 16.♗f2 ♖fb8 Todorcevic – Forcen, San Agustin 2012. White has nothing on the kingside to oppose Black's activity on the queenside.

5. ... ♗b8-c6

6. ♗g1-f3 e7-e6

In Van Dooren – Korneev (Tilburg 2006) Black liberated his problem bishop, and after 6...♗b6 7.c3 h6 8.♗a3 ♗f5 9.0-0 e6 10.♗c2 ♗e7 11.♗e3 ♗h7 12.d4 ♖c8 13.dc ♗xc5 14.b4 ♗e7 15.♗d4 0-0 16.a3 ♗xd4 17.♖xd4 ♗a4 18.♗d2 ♖b6 he achieved a much better setup. 8.d4 cd 9.♗xd4 ♗xd4 10.cd, fueling White's development, is much more consistent with 7.c3.

7. c2-c3 ...

Actually, the text game had different starting moves – 1.e4 c5 2.d3 ♗c6 3.f4 d5 4.♗e2 ♗f6 5.e5 ♗d7 6.c3 e6 7.♗f3, so Ivan Sokolov was concerned about much different variations. In particular, he did not have to worry about 7.c4!?. Further 7...d4 8.♗bd2 ♗e7 9.♗e4 a6 10.0-0 b5 11.b3 ♖b6 12.♗d2 ♗b7 13.♗fg5 h6 14.♗h3 a5 15.♗hf2 with a very complicated position is possible, Brunello – Papadopoulos, Greece 2012. It is not a bad idea to maintain

one's structure in the center with
7...♖b6 8.0-0 ♕e7 9.♗c3 0-0.

7. ... ♘f8-e7

Black plans to attack on the queenside. He can start playing this position like the French Defense: 7...f6 8.d4 ♖b6 9.0-0 cd 10.cd fe 11.fe ♗dxе5 12.♗xe5 ♗xe5 13.♗c3 ♕d7 14.♕g5 Kupreichik – Ehlvest, Moscow 1983. The slow d2-d3-d4 cost White a pawn; however, he keeps his opponent from castling on either side, and his activity compensates for the pawn.

8. 0-0 b7-b5

9. ♗b1-a3 ...

Or 9.♕e3 ♗b6 10.d4 ♗c4 11.♕xc4 bc 14.dc ♖a5 15.♗a3 ♕xc5 16.♗c2 ♖b8 17.♖c1 ♕xe3+ 18.♗xe3 0-0, zeroing in on the pawns, which is enough for equality, Glek – Berkvens, Kallithea 2008.

9. ... b5-b4

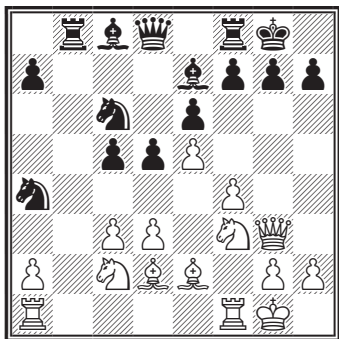
10. ♗a3-c2 b4xc3

11. b2xc3 ♗d7-b6

12. ♖d1-e1 ♗b6-a4

13. ♕c1-d2 ♖a8-b8

14. ♖e1-g3 0-0



White challenges Black on the only open file with 15.♖ab1 and gets a satisfactory position. Upon making some sloppy calculations, Welling launches a head-on attack, which came back to haunt him.

15. f4-f5?! e6xf5

16. ♕d2-h6 g7-g6

17. ♕h6xf8 ♗a4xc3

18. ♕f8xe7? ...

Apparently, the Dutch master was not planning on fighting for a draw after 18.♖e1 ♗xe2+ 19.♖xe2 ♕xf8. He would be up the exchange, but his pieces would be awkwardly placed. That would have been better, though.

18. ... ♗c3xe2+

19. ♖g1-f2 ♗e2xg3

20. ♕e7xd8 ♗g3xf1

21. ♕d8-f6 ...

Clearly, Welling was counting on winning the exchange here, too: 21...♖b2(!) 22.e6 ♖xc2+ 23.♗xf1 fe 24.♗e1 ♖f7 25.♕h8 ♕a6 26.♗xc2 (the knight might get away). Sokolov had calculated a bit further.

21. ... ♗f1xh2!

22. ♗f3xh2 ♖b8-b2

23. ♖a1-c1 ♗c6-b4

24. e5-e6 d5-d4

25. e6-e7 ♕c8-d7

26. ♖f2-g1 ♖b2xc2

27. ♖c1xc2 ♗b4xc2

28. ♗h2-f3 ♗c2-b4

29. ♗f3-e5 ♕d7-a4

30. g2-g4 ♗b4-d5

0-1

So, after 2.d3 e5 3.f4 Black can equalize comfortably by making a temporary pawn sacrifice (d7-d5). If Black cannot recall all the right lines at the board then he can opt for 2... d5. In that case Black does not have

to commit any complicated theory to memory, since he has a variety of choices. 2.d3 is like lobbing the ball over the net instead of serving it hard.

Contents

Introduction	3
Historical Background	4
Part 1. Various 2nd moves	27
Chapter 1. 2.♙c4.....	27
Chapter 2. 2.d3.....	28
Part 2. The Scandinavian System with 3.e5	35
Introduction	35
Chapter 3. 3.e5 d4.....	35
Chapter 4. 3.e5 ♖fd7.....	39
Chapter 5. Various continuations after 3.e5 ♗e4	43
Chapter 6. 3.e5 ♗e4 4.♗ce2 ♗c5.....	49
Chapter 7. 3.e5 ♗e4 4.♗ce2 f6.....	51
Chapter 8. 3.e5 ♗e4 4.♗ce2 d4.....	54
Part 3. The Scandinavian System with 3.ed ♖d5	61
Chapter 9. Various 4 th moves	61
Chapter 10. 4.♗f3	65
Chapter 11. 4.d4	70
Chapter 12. Various replies to 4.♙c4.....	72
Chapter 13. 4.♙c4 e6.....	75
Chapter 14. 4.♙c4 c6	79
Chapter 15. 4.♙c4 ♗b6 5.♙b3 c5.....	81
Chapter 16. 5.♙c4 ♗b6 6.♙b3 ♗c6.....	84
Part 4. Various 3rd moves	88
Chapter 17. 3.g3	88
Chapter 18. 3.♙c4.....	93
Chapter 19. Various replies to 3.♗c3.....	96
Chapter 20. 3.♗c3 ♗xc3 4.bc.....	101
Chapter 21. 3.♗c3 ♗xc3 4.dc.....	106

Part 5. The Two Pawns Attack.....	111
Introduction.....	111
Chapter 22. 5.d4.....	115
Chapter 23. 5.♘c3 ♘xc3.....	117
Chapter 24. 5.♘c3 c6.....	121
Chapter 25. 5.♘c3 e6.....	126
Chapter 26. 5.♙c4 without ♘b1-c3.....	132
Chapter 27. 5.♙c4 e6 6.♘c3.....	137
 Part 6. Various lines after 3.d4.....	142
Chapter 28. Rare replies to 3.d4.....	142
Chapter 29. 3.d4 d6 4.ed.....	148
Chapter 30. 3.d4 d6 4.f4.....	151
Chapter 31. 3.d4 d6 4.♙c4.....	156
 Part 7 The Four Pawns Attack. Approaching the tabiya.....	169
Introduction.....	169
Chapter 32. The Planinc Gambit.....	170
Chapter 33. 5...g6.....	174
Chapter 34. 5...♙f5.....	178
Chapter 35. 6...c5 7.d5 g6.....	185
Chapter 36. 5...de 6.fe c5 7.d5 e6.....	189
Chapter 37. Other deviations from the tabiya.....	195
 Part 8 The Four Pawns Attack. The tabiya.....	200
Chapter 38. 9...♙b4.....	200
Chapter 39. 9...♚d7.....	203
Chapter 40. 9...♙g4.....	206
Chapter 41. 9...♙e7 10.♙e2.....	210
Chapter 42. 9...♙e7 10.d5.....	213
 Part 9	
The Exchange System with 5...ed.....	222
Introduction.....	222
Chapter 43. Variations without ♘b1-c3.....	223
Chapter 44. Various replies to 6.♘c3.....	230
Chapter 45. 6.♘c3 ♙e7 7.♚f3.....	234
Chapter 46. 6.♘c3 ♙e7 7.♘f3.....	236
Chapter 47. 6.♘c3 ♙e7 7.h3.....	240
Chapter 48. 6.♘c3 ♙e7 7.♙d3.....	245

Part 10 The Exchange System with 5...cd. The classics	256
Chapter 49. Various 6 th moves.....	256
Chapter 50. 6.d5	263
Chapter 51. Various replies to 6.♘c3.....	267
Chapter 52. 6.♘c3 g6 7.♙d3	271
Chapter 53. 6.♘c3 g6 7.♘f3 ♙g7 8.♙e2.....	275
Chapter 54. 6.♘c3 g6 7.♘f3 ♙g7 8.h3.....	279
Part 11 The Exchange System with 5...cd. The Voronezh Variation	289
Introduction	289
Chapter 55. Various Black replies	290
Chapter 56. 9...♘c6.....	300
Chapter 57. 9...e5	304
Part 12 Various replies to 4.♘f3	313
Chapter 58. Rare replies to 4.♘f3	313
Chapter 59. 4...♘b6.....	319
Chapter 60. 4...♘c6.....	327
Part 13 4.♘f3 de	336
Introduction	336
Chapter 61. 5...♘d7	341
Chapter 62. 5...g6. Various White replies	353
Chapter 63. 6.♙c4 ♙e6	359
Chapter 64. 6. ♙c4 c6.....	369
Chapter 65. 5...c6. Various White alternatives.....	378
Chapter 66. 5... c6 6. ♙d3.....	389
Chapter 67. 5... c6 6. ♙c4.....	394
Chapter 68. 5...c6 6.♙e2 g6 and 6...♘d7.....	399
Chapter 69. 6. ♙e2 ♙f5.....	407
Part 14 4.♘f3 g6	414
Introduction	414
Chapter 70. 5. ♘g5.....	415
Chapter 71. 5. ♙c4 c6.....	417
Chapter 72. Rare continuations after 5. ♙c4 ♘b6	426
Chapter 73. 5.♙c4 ♘b6 6.♙b3 ♙g7 7.0-0	434
Chapter 74. 5. ♙c4 ♘b6 6. ♙b3 ♙g7 7. ♖e2.....	437
Chapter 75. 5. ♙c4 ♘b6 6. ♙b3 ♙g7 7. ♘g5.....	445
Chapter 76. 5. ♙c4 ♘b6 6. ♙b3 ♙g7 7. a4	454

Part 15 4. ♖f3 ♙g4	462
Introduction	462
Chapter 77. Various replies to 4... ♙g4	462
Chapter 78. Various replies to 5. ♙e2	468
Chapter 79. 5... c6. Various 6 th moves	472
Chapter 80. 5...c6 6. ♖g5.....	480
Chapter 81. 5...c6 6. 0-0.....	484
Part 16 4. ♖f3 ♙g4 5. ♙e2 e6	492
Introduction	492
Chapter 82. Various 6 th moves.....	492
Chapter 83. Diversions from the tabiya.....	496
Chapter 84. 6.0-0 ♙e7 7.c4 ♖b6 8.ed cd 9. ♖c3.....	503
Chapter 85. 6. 0-0 ♙e7 7. c4 ♖b6 8. ♖c3	509
Chapter 86. 6. 0-0 ♙e7 7. h3 ♙h5 8. c4 ♖b6 9. ed cd 10. ♖c3 ..	514
Chapter 87. 6. 0-0 ♙e7 7. h3 ♙h5 8. c4 ♖b6 9. ♖c3.....	520
Conclusion	528
Update	529
Part 2, Chapter 4.	529
Part 13, Chapter 67.....	530
Part 13, Chapter 69.....	531
Part 14, Chapter 71.....	533
Part 16, Chapter 86.....	534
Index of players	536
Literature	539