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A Practical White Repertoire with 1.d4 and 2.c4

Volume 1: The Complete Queen's Gambit

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PREFACE

Sooner or later every chess player faces the problem of building his or her opening repertoire. This is particularly difficult when you play with White, since you need to be well prepared against all of ♝lack's possible responses. However, most players, including the author, have no inclination to devote all their time to studying opening variations. Therefore, we have decided not to cover the favourite opening move of Ostap Bender * – 1.e2-e4.

As our main opening weapon for White we have chosen the closed openings arising after 1.d2-d4, in which an understanding of chess and a knowledge of the typical resources in the middle game and the endgame are often much more important than a detailed knowledge of a large number of variations. We have analysed the most straight-forward possibilities for White, generally based on the development of the knight to c3 and the fastest possible occupation of the centre with pawns.

Unfortunately it is impossible to cover all the possible theory after 1.d2-d4 for White within a single book, so the author plans to publish two further volumes.

The first book is devoted to the move 1...d7-d5 for Black. I believe that the most challenging defences for White to face are the Queen's Gambit Accepted (Part 2), the Queen's Gambit Declined (Part 4) and the Slav Defence (Part 5). A few less popular options for Black are covered in Parts 1 and 3.

Ostap Bender is the picaresque hero of the hugely popular Russian comic novel "The Twelve Chairs" (1928) by Ilf and Petrov. It is still not widely known in the West, despite the efforts of, for instance, Mel Brooks, who made a film adaptation of it in 1970.

In the second book we shall deal with the openings in which ♝lack fianchettoes his dark-squared bishop. These are first and foremost the Gruenfeld and the King's Indian Defence.

In book three we shall analyse in detail the Nimzo-Indian Defence and a few other defences not covered in our first two books.

This series has been written for players of all levels. The author hopes that it will be useful for grandmasters as well as for amateur players.
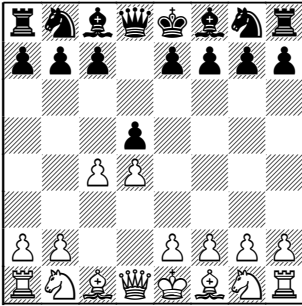
The author wishes to express his deepest gratitude to Margarita Schepetkova and Ekaterina Smirnova for their invaluable help in the creation of this book.

Alexei Kornev

Part 1
Black avoids the main lines

1.d4 d5 2.c4

The first part of our book will help readers avoid this situation with White. The point is that despite the fact that all these openings are only semi-correct, they have accumulated plenty of theory, with which White must be familiar in order to fight for an opening advantage.

Among all the openings analysed in the first part of the book, the most interesting are the Chigorin Defence (2...♘c6), in which Black exerts piece pressure against White's centre, and the Albin Counter-gambit (2...e5), which was resurrected at the beginning of the 21st century, thanks to the efforts of Alexander Morozevich. He has played the Albin at the highest level and has introduced many new and non-standard ideas. Black's compensation for the sacrificed pawn is objectively insufficient, but White must have a deep knowledge of theoretical variations, otherwise he can easily get lost in the maze of complications.
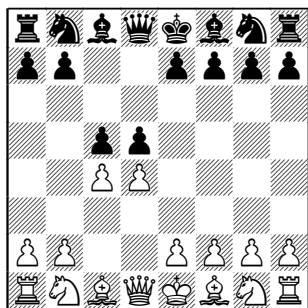
In the first part of our book we shall deal with some lines which are encountered only rarely in contemporary tournament practice. They are: 2...c5 (Chapter 1), 2...♗f5 (Chapter 2), the Chigorin Defence 2...♘c6 (Chapter 3) and the Albin Counter-gambit 2...e5 (Chapter 4).

Black cannot rely on equalising with these defences and furthermore a single inaccuracy can land him on the verge of disaster. However, there are players who employ them in tournament practice hoping that their opponents are theoretically unprepared.

Chapter 1   1.d4 d5 2.c4 c5

This move is considered to be not quite correct, and rightly so. The main reason is that, as a rule, symmetrical positions are in White's favour, since after all he moves first... In addition to the extra tempo inherent in playing White, he gains further time by attacking Black's queen on d5 with his knight on c3 and the two extra tempi provide White with a stable advantage in this open position, despite the fact that Black has no pawn weaknesses in his camp.

3.cxd5

We shall now analyse **A) 3...♕xd5** and **B) 3...♘f6**.

It is rather dubious for Black to play 3...cxd4?! since after 4.

♕xd4 White simply ends up with an extra pawn. A possible continuation is 4...e6 5.e4 exd5 6.exd5 ♘f6 7.♘c3± and Black has no compensation for the sacrificed pawn.

Black's position is also very bad after 5...♘c6 6.♕d1 exd5 7. exd5 ♘b4 8.a3! ♘xd5 9.♗b5+ ♔e7 10.♕e2+ ♗e6 11.♘f3±. There are so many pieces left on the board that Black's king, having lost the right to castle, has only very slim chances of survival.

A) 3...♕xd5
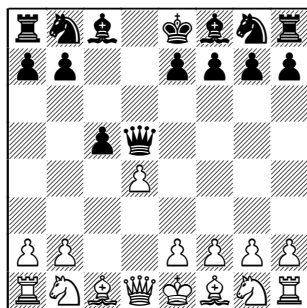
This move leads to the situation we mentioned above – White

will gain another tempo by attacking the enemy queen with his knight.

4.♘f3 cxd4 5.♘c3 ♛d8

5...♛a5 – This retreat of the queen fails to solve all Black's problems. 6.♘xd4 ♘f6 7.g3! (we shall see a similar idea after 5...♛d8) 7...e5 8.♘b3 ♛c7 9.♗g2 ♗b4 10.♛d3 0–0 11.♗g5 ♖d8 12.♛f3 ♗xc3+ 13.♛xc3 ♘c6?! (here it was better for Black to play 13...♛xc3+!? 14.bxc3±, although even then, despite his weakness on c3, White maintains a slight edge in the endgame) 14.0–0 ♗e6 15. ♖ac1±. White exerts strong pressure on the queenside and soon converted it into a full point in the game Fressinet – Degraeve, Belfort 2010.

6.♛xd4
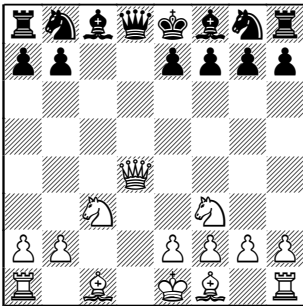
6...♗d7
Black avoids the exchange of queens and wishes, just like White, to gain a tempo by attacking the enemy queen with his knight on c6.

The endgame is worse for Black after 6...♛xd4. It is easy to see that White has two extra tempi in a symmetrical position – his knights are on c3 and d4, while Black's are still on their initial squares. 7.♘xd4 ♘f6 (7...a6? 8. ♘d5+−) 8.♘db5 ♘a6 9.g3!±. This is one of the main ideas of the variation. White develops his bishop on the long diagonal, where it exerts maximum pressure against Black's queenside, impeding the development of its black counterpart – the bishop on c8. It thus seems less convincing for White to play 9.e4±, although even then he maintains a slight edge in the endgame, Shantharam – Dave, India 1994.

7.♘e5
This move is quite obvious. White prevents ♘c6 and wishes to exchange on d7, gaining the advantage of the two bishops, which would be a considerable achievement in this open position.

7...♘f6
The endgame is prospectless for Black after 7...♘c6?! 8.♛xd7+ ♛xd7 9.♘xd7 ♔xd7 10.♗e3 ♖d8 11.0–0–0+ ♔c8 12.♖xd8+ ♔xd8 13.g3 e6 14.♗g2± K.Hulak – Manievich, Pula 1994. White has a great advantage in the position arising. He leads in development and his bishops are pointed menacingly at Black's queenside. White is already threatening to win the enemy a7-pawn after ♗xc6.

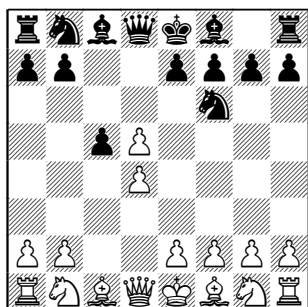**8.♘xd7 ♘fxd7!? 9.g3 ♘c6 10.♕d2**
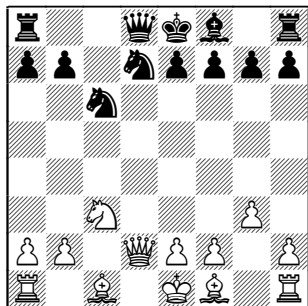
Black has completed the development of his queenside pieces and White no longer has a development lead, but Black is far from equality yet, since he is unable to counter the pressure of White's strong bishop on g2.

10...g6 11.♗g2 ♗g7 12.0–0 0–0 13.♖d1 ♘de5 14.♕f4 ♕c7 15.♘d5± with a big advantage for White, Opocensky – Puc, Zagreb 1947.

B) 3...♘f6

This is Black's main reply.

4.e4!?

This is an energetic move. White wishes to retain his d5-pawn, which cramps Black's forces, even at the cost of losing his e4-pawn.

There is an interesting alternative here in 4.♘f3, which generally leads to a slight but stable advantage in the endgame, for example: 4...cxd4 5.♕xd4 ♕xd5 6. ♘c3 ♕xd4 7.♘xd4 a6 8.♗g5 ♘bd7 9.g3 h6 10.♗d2 e5 11.♘c2±. White had a minimal advantage which after Black's inaccurate play 11... b5 12.♗g2 ♖b8 13.♘e3 ♘b6 14. 0–0 ♗b7 15.♗xb7 ♖xb7 16.♖fc1 g6 17.a4 b4 18.♘a2 a5 19.♘c4 ♘xc4 20.♖xc4± became overwhelming, owing to the chronic weakness of Black's a5-pawn, Sakaev – Salmensuu, Ubeda 2001.

**4...♘xe4 5.dxc5**
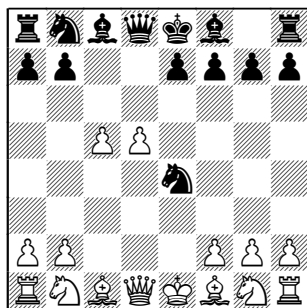
5...♘xc5

It seems rather dubious for Black to play 5...♕a5+. Such early queen sorties in the opening are

hardly ever justified. 6.♗d2 ♘xd2 (of course 6...♕xc5?? is answered with 7.♕a4+−, winning a piece) 7.♕xd2 ♕xc5 8.♘a3. Of course White's knight would be much better placed on c3, but he has a concrete idea, which is to develop the rook on c1 with tempo, attacking Black's queen and exploiting the fact that Black's bishop on c8 is unguarded at the moment. 8...♗d7 9.♖c1 ♕b6 10.♘c4
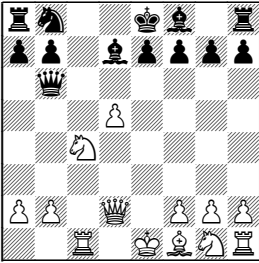
Now Black must chose a square for the retreat of his queen.

After 10...♕h6 the simplest for White would be to exchange the queens, weakening Black's pawn structure and obtaining a stable advantage in the endgame. 11.♕xh6! (the move 11.f4± also leads to a slight edge for White, but since he can bring about such a favourable endgame by force he does not need to enter complications in the middlegame, H.Olafsson − Westerinen, Reykjavik 1997) 11...gxh6 12.♘e5±. White deprives his opponent of his only compensation for the disrupted pawn structure − his bishop pair − and sets up a trap in the process: now if 12...♗g7? 13.♗b5!+−

10...♕f6. This retreat of the queen is safer. At least, this way Black does not voluntarily weaken his kingside pawn structure. Nevertheless, after 11.♘f3± White's advantage, based on his lead in development, is not in doubt and after the somewhat dubious 11...g5?, Goossens − M.Zaitsev, M Belgium 2006, he could have virtually terminated the game with the move 12.♕b4!+−
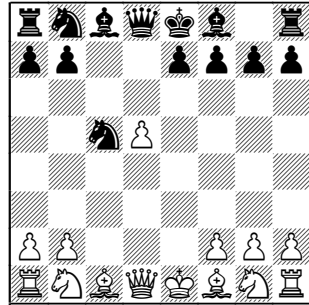
6.♘f3!?

This White's best move. He leads in development and should prevent any attempt by Black to close the position, which would is possible if White plays 6.♘c3; then Black could continue with 6...e5!±, making his defence a bit easier.

6...e6 7.♘c3 exd5

After 7...♗e7 White should play 8.♗e3, more or less forcing his opponent to exchange on d5. If 8...0−0? White wins the exchange (after 8...exd5 9.♕xd5± the position is similar to the one

arising after 7...exd5) with 9.d6! ♗xd6 (Black's position becomes even worse after 9...♕xd6 10. ♕xd6 ♗xd6 11.♘b5 ♘e4 12.0–0–0 ♖d8 13.♘d2! ♘f6 14.♘c4 ♗e7 15. ♘c7+–) 10.♘b5 ♘e4 11.♘xd6 ♘xd6 12.♗c5 ♘e4 13.♗xf8 ♕xf8 14.a3±; Black has only one pawn for the exchange and White only needs to demonstrate good technique to convert it into a full point.

8.♕xd5
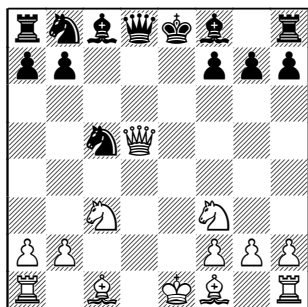
8...♗e7

Black has many options here, but none of them equalise.

His position remains difficult after 8...♘c6 9.♕xd8+ ♘xd8 10. ♘d5 ♘de6 11.♗e3 ♗d7 12.♘e5± and White's advantage is not in doubt, since his knights have occupied the centre of the board, Donner – O'Kelly de Galway, Havana 1965.

The move 8...♕e7+ was tried in the game Portisch – Bronstein, Monte Carlo 1969. This looks rather dubious, because Black is behind in development, so he should not avoid the exchange of queens, which ought to be in his favour. Furthermore his queen on e7 will impede the development of his kingside. The game did not last long... 9.♗e3 ♘c6 10.♗b5 ♗d7 11.0–0 ♘e6 12.♗e5 ♕xe5 13.♕xe5 ♗xb5 14.♘xb5 a6 15.♖ad1 ♖d8 16. ♗b6 ♖xd1 17.♖xd1 f6 18.♕f5 g6 19.♘c7+ ♔f7 20.♕d5. Black cannot avoid heavy loss of material, so resigned.

After 8...♕xd5 White's pieces are noticeably more active. 9. ♘xd5 ♘e6 (the development of Black's knight to the edge with 9... ♘ba6 only increases White's advantage after 10.♗b5+ ♗d7 11. ♗xd7+ ♘xd7 12.0–0 f6 13.♗e3 ♔f7 14.♖fd1 ♗c5 15.♘c7 ♖ad8 16. ♘xa6 ♗xe3 17.fxe3 bxa6 18.♖ac1± Gleizerov – Westerinen, Stockholm 2000) 10.♗e3 ♘c6 11.♗c4 ♗d7 12.0–0 ♗d6 13.♖fd1 0–0–0 14.♖ac1±. White's pieces are ideally placed and his knight on d5 is exceptionally strong. Black will do well to survive in this endgame. Still, he has no pawn weaknesses, so White's task may be not so easy after all...

9.♕xd8+ ♗xd8 10.♗e3
Black's defence is difficult even after the exchange of queens.
10...♘ba6
He fails to solve all his problems with 10...♘e6, because after 11.0–0–0 0–0 12.♗c4 ♘c6 13.

♖he1± White's pieces are all actively deployed, while Black still has to develop his c8-bishop and connect his rooks.
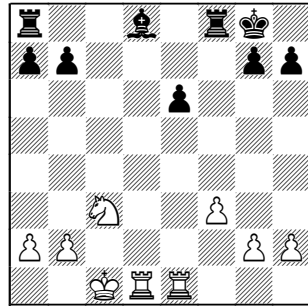
11.♗b5+ ♗d7 12.♗xd7+ ♘xd7 13.0−0−0

White's rooks will occupy the central files with tempo.

13...♘dc5 14.♖xc5 ♘xc5 15. ♖he1+ ♘e6 16.♘d4 0−0 17. ♘xe6 fxe6 18.f3±

(diagram)

White has a slight but stable advantage in this endgame, thanks to his better pawn structure. **18...♗g5+** This is Black's best survival chance (after 18...♗c7 19.h3 ♖ad8 20.♖xe6± White was a pawn up in the game Gleizerov – Berkell, Stockholm 2002).


19.♔c2 ♖ae8± and despite the fact that Black has avoided the immediate loss of his e6-pawn and has thus maintained he material balance, he will still have to fight long and hard for a draw. His e6-pawn is weak and White's knight has the excellent e4-outpost.

Conclusions

The move 2...c5 is not often encountered in the tournament practice. Hardly any really strong players play it, and quite deservedly so. As a rule, White easily obtains an opening advantage. The most prudent line for Black is to exchange the queens and to defend an inferior endgame; otherwise, he risks losing very quickly, as happened in the game Portisch – Bronstein, Monte Carlo 1969. White has a clear advantage in the endgame thanks to his lead in development. His rooks quickly seize the open files and threaten to invade the seventh rank at any moment.. Of course, it cannot be said that this advantage is decisive, but the number of players who are be willing to play this variation with Black, forced to choose between being crushed in the middlegame and conducting a long and difficult defence in an endgame, diminishes with every passing year...

Chapter 2   1.d4 d5 2.c4 ♗f5
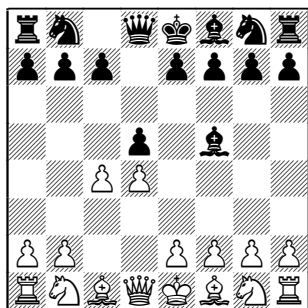
This move is considered to be more reliable than 2...c5, which was analysed in the previous chapter, but nevertheless it does not feature among Black's main weapons against 2.c4.

Edward Lasker was one of the first players to try this line, back in the year 1913, but it has never become particularly popular. It can be seen sometimes in the games of contemporary grandmasters such as Shirov, Malaniuk and Miladinovic.

The move 2...♗f5 is based on a sound positional idea. Black would like to solve immediately a problem which is typical for the majority of the closed openings – the development of his bishop on c8. But the disadvantage of this move is equally clear. Black loses the possibility after 3.cxd5 of recapturing on d5 with a pawn, as in the most popular openings (the Slav Defence and the Queen's Gambit Declined).

3.cxd5!?

Of course this is White's most natural and principled response to Black's second move, emphasizing its main drawback.

White's other possibility of fighting for an opening advantage is with the move 3.♘c3. The main ideas for both sides can be illustrated by the game Kramnik – Gelfand, Wijk aan Zee 1998: after 3...e6 4.♘f3 c6 5.♕b3 ♕b6 6.c5 ♕c7 7.♗f4 ♕c8 8.♘h4 ♗g6 9.♘xg6 hxg6 10.e4±, a position typical for the Chebanenko variation of the Slav Defence has arisen. White has the better development and more space, so he has the better chances, but Black's position is very solid. He has no pawn weaknesses and has solved the problem of his light-squared bishop.

3...♗xb1

This is a sad necessity for Black. He must part with this bishop, because after 3...♕xd5?! 4.♘c3± he would lose tempi not only moving his queen again, but also retreating his bishop after e2-e4.
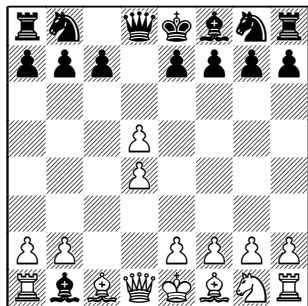

4.♕a4+!

This intermediate check is an important resource for White and it is vital to remember it. The routine recapture 4.♖xb1?! is inaccurate, because after 4...♕xd5, the a2-pawn will be hanging. White will have to lose time protecting it and this will enable Black to organize pressure in the centre against White's d4-pawn.

4...c6

The endgame arising from 4...♕d7 5.♕xd7+ ♘xd7 6.♖xb1 is inferior for Black. White has the bishop pair, the better pawn structure (he has exchanged his c-pawn for the enemy d-pawn) and moreover Black will have to lose time regaining his d5-pawn.

After 6...♘gf6 7.♗d2 ♘b6 8.f3 ♘fxd5 9.e4 ♘f6 10.d5! e6 11.dxe6 fxe6 12.♘h3±, White gained a clear advantage in the game Pinter – Matkovic, Pula 1997. In addition to all the other defects of Black's position, his e6-pawn was very weak.
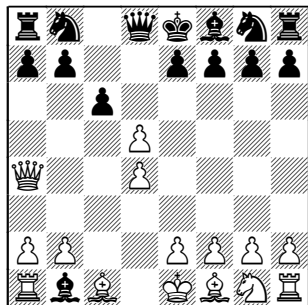

5.dxc6

5.♖xb1!? This option also enables White to keep an opening edge. He has the better chances in the ensuing middlegame, thanks to his bishop pair. He only needs to complete his development, carefully watching out for Black's possible pawn breaks e7-e5 and c6-c5, for example: 5...♕xd5 6. ♘f3 ♘d7 7.b4 e6 8.♕c2 ♘gf6 9.e3 a5 10.♗c4 ♕h5 11.bxa5 ♕xa5+ 12. ♗d2 ♕a4 13.♗b3 ♕a6 14.e4 ♗e7 15.e5 ♘d5 16.♗c4 ♕a7 17.0–0± Khenkin – Goreacinic, Frankfurt 2012. The centralised position of Black's knight on d5 is not sufficient to compensate for White's space advantage and bishop pair. Furthermore, White will be able to organise an attack if Black cas-

tles kingside, thanks to his strong pawn on e5, which deprives Black's knights of the important f6-square.

5...♘xc6 6.♖xb1
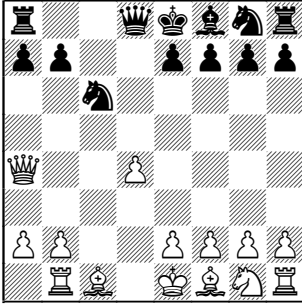
6...e5

If Black regains his pawn immediately with 6...♕xd4 the endgame arising is considerably worse for him. 7.♕xd4 ♘xd4 8.e3 ♘c6 9.b4! This is an important finesse and the only way for White to fight for an opening edge. (After the routine move 9.♗b5 he fails to obtain any advantage, since after 9...♖c8 he is unable to weaken Black's queenside pawn structure; after 10.♗d2 a6 11.♗a4 b5 12.♗d1 e6 13.♖c1 ♗d6 14.♗f3 ♔d7 15.♔e2 ♘f6= White is unable to exploit his advantage of the bishop pair owing to his lag in development, Kishnev – Svidler, Copenhagen 1991.) 9...e6 10.a3. This is the idea of White's previous move. He not only prepares to fianchetto his c1-bishop, but also restricts its opponent on f8, pre-

venting the check from the b4-square. 10...♗d6 11.♘f3 ♘f6 12. ♗b2 ♔e7 13.g3! White fianchettoes his other bishop too, exerting maximum pressure against his opponent's position. 13...♖ac8 14.♗g2 ♖hd8 15.♔e2± Ehlvest – Rausis, Riga 1995. The resulting position is a perfect illustration of the theme of the advantage the bishop-pair in the endgame. White's bishops on b2 and g2 dominate the entire board and even though the black position contains no pawn weaknesses, White can play for a win for a long time at absolutely no risk.

7.♗d2
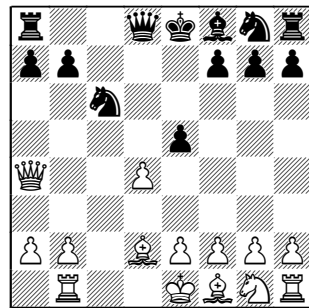
7...♕xd4

After 7...exd4 we reach a position resembling the Tarrasch Defence, but with a very important drawback for Black. After the development of White's bishop on g2, Black will have great problems with the protection of his light squares. This is the consequence of Black's exchange of bishop for

knight on move three! 8.g3! This is an important nuance; White does not yet commit his g1-knight and keeps open the possibility to transfer it to the d3-square via the route h3-f4-d3.
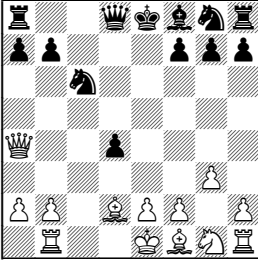

Now Black cannot solve his problems with the move 8...♕d5. He prevents indeed the above mentioned manoeuvre of his opponent's knight, but his queen on d5 is rather unstable and this becomes quite obvious after White's bishop is developed on g2. 9.♘f3 b5. This is the only way for Black to justify the placement of his queen on d5, but he loses the base under his knight on c6. 10.♕b3 ♕xb3 11.axb3 ♗d6 12.♗g2 ♖d8 13. 0–0 ♘ge7 14.♖fc1 0–0 15.♖a1. It would be very difficult for him to maintain the material balance, since he has too many pawn-weaknesses: a7, b5 and d4. 15... ♖c8 16.♖a6 ♖c7 17.♘g5 ♖fc8 18. ♘e4 ♗b4 19.♗f4 ♘b8 20.♖xc7 ♖xc7 21.♖a1 ♖c8 22.♖xa7+– After Black has lost his a7-pawn, his position has become completely hopeless, Shipov – Shemeakin, Yalta 1995.

8...♗c5 9.♗g2 ♘ge7 10.♘h3!

(White's knight is After the planned route to the d3-square.) 10...0–0 11.♘f4 ♗b6 12.0–0 ♖e8 13.♖bc1 ♕d7 14.♖fe1 ♖ad8 15.♕b5 ♕d6 16.a4± After White's pieces have occupied the ideal positions, his a-pawn is joining the attack on the queenside, Rapport – Lejlic, Sarajevo 2010. His initiative is very powerful and all Black's pieces are restricted by the d4-pawn. White doubtlessly has a great advantage.

8.♕xd4
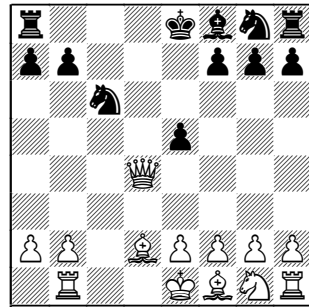
8...♘xd4

After 8...exd4, there arise positions similar to these which we have already analysed, except that the queens have disappeared off the board. This does not change the evaluation of the position, though... 9.g3 ♗c5 10.♘h3 ♘f6 11. ♗g2 ♗b6 12.♘f4 0–0 13.♖c1 ♖ac8 14.♘d3 (We are already familiar with this transfer of the knight.) 14...♖fe8 15.b4± and in this quite typical endgame for this variation Black is faced with a difficult de-

fence, Browne – Hergott, Linares 1993.

He cannot equalise with 9...♗b4. Although Black deprives his opponent of his bishop pair, the weakness of his light squares and his d4-pawn precludes him from equalising. 10.♗g2 ♗xd2+ 11. ♔xd2 ♘f6 12.♘h3 ♖d8 13.♖hc1 ♖d6 14.b4 a6 15.b5 ♘d8 16.♘f4 0–0 17.bxa6 bxa6 18.♖c8 g5 19. ♘d3±. Now that White has carried out the standard transfer of his knight to the d3-square he has every chance of exploiting the weakness of Black's pawn structure, Kruppa – Eliet, Cappelle la Grande 2000.

9.e3 ♘c6 10.♗b5
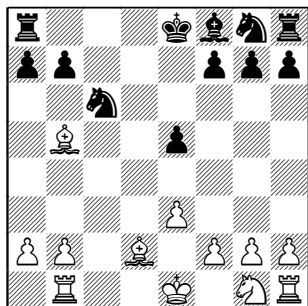
This is one of the main ideas of this variation. White wants to exchange on c6 and to transform his advantage of the bishops into chronic pawn weaknesses in Black's camp.

10...♖c8

In this way Black avoids weakening his pawn structure, but White maintains the advantage anyway.

After 10...♗d6 he can immediately disrupt Black's queenside pawn structure with 11.♗xc6+ bxc6.
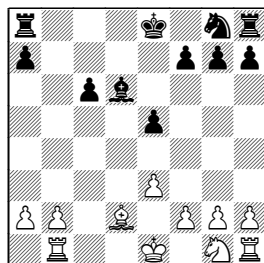
White has several ways of fighting for the advantage in the endgame arising.

After 12.♘e2 White wants to send his knight to the a4-square, from where it will control the c5-square. However, the serious drawback of this plan is that it is just too slow. 12...♘f6 13.♖c1 ♔d7 14.♘c3 ♖ab8 15.b3 ♖hc8 16.♔e2 c5! This is the only way for Black to fight for equality (after the unfortunate move 16...♔e6, White was able to carry out his plan: 17.♖hd1 ♗a3 18.♖c2 ♘d5 19.♘a4± Finegold – Haskel, Tulsa 2008). 17.♘a4 c4! Now you can see the idea of Black's previous move. He is unwilling to conduct a passive defence and seeks counterplay by sacrificing a pawn. 18. bxc4 ♘e4 19.♖hd1 ♖c6⇄. White will find it difficult to realise his material advantage, because Black's pieces are very active,
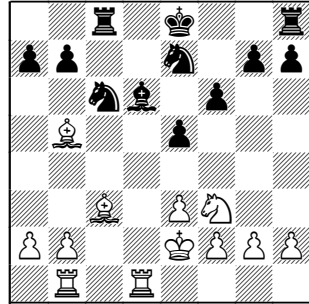
which cannot be said for White's knight on a4.

White can achieve more with the simple move 12.♘f3. He first wants to complete his development. 12...♘e7 13.♔e2 f6 14.♖hc1 ♔f7 15.e4±. This is an important pawn advance. White fixes the e5- and f6- pawns on the same colour as Black's bishop. Now, besides his weak pawns at a7 and c6, he will also have to worry about his "bad" bishop.

11.♘f3 ♗d6 12.♗c3 f6 13. ♔e2 ♘ge7 14.♖hd1± Shipov – Radmacher, Berlin 1992.

(diagram)

White has a clear edge in this endgame. He has the advantage of the two bishops and a lead in development. Black's pawns on e5 and f6 are not impeding White's active operations, since his knight can go at any moment to the d6-outpost via d2-c4.

Conclusion

As you have seen from the variations in this chapter, the move 2...♗f5 does not solve Black's opening problems. In general he has to choose between two inferior positions. He must either opt for an "inferior Tarrasch Defence" with a catastrophic weakness of his light squares, or a very difficult endgame in which he will have to defend weaknesses on a7 and c6 without any chances of creating counterplay. It is hardly surprising that the move 2...♗f5 has almost disappeared from contemporary tournament practice.