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The Réti Opening – Properly Played

JBV Chess Books

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Preface

Before we started working on this book, we discussed the needs of our intended target group. We came to the conclusion that it's primarily intended for amateurs looking for an opening that offers the following advantages:

1. It should be easy to learn – based on the fact that the readers can orient themselves on key ideas and general set-up plans – without the need to memorize vast amounts of 'theory'.
2. However, they should still be able to focus on certain continuations and to increase their specific knowledge.
3. The opening should enable them to master the passage from the opening to the middle game with mainly solid positional play – i.e. without the risk of running into sharp tactical surprises.
4. It should offer much room for research and experimentation.

The 'Réti Opening' is quiet and solid and usually leads to the middle game with fairly equal chances for both sides. The arising positions are interesting and require more positional understanding than tactical skills.

In addition to our theoretical explanations, we give many games from tournament practice to show the 'Réti Opening' in action. By studying these games, the reader can not only enrich his knowledge with many typical and subtle motifs and ideas – but also become familiar with what one might call the 'natural development' in the different lines and set-ups. However, we have made sure that the selected games, apart from the required work, are also enjoyable and entertaining.

One final comment on a specific organizational difficulty we had to fight with. Since the various systems and lines covered in this book are sometimes very closely related, many possible transpositions of moves can occur. We have done our best to point out all the different move orders, though we may have missed one or the other.

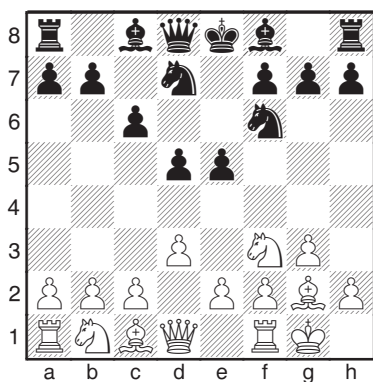
And now, enjoy our book! And may the ideas and plans shown help you to score many great successes!

Jerzy Konikowski – Uwe Bekemann

How to play the 'Réti Opening'

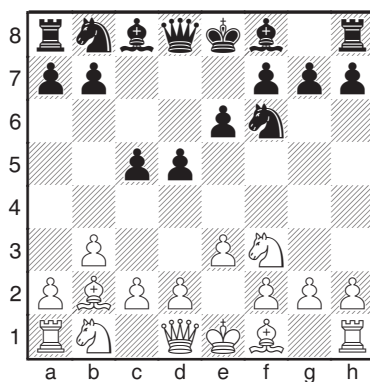
To give you some general guidelines on how to play the 'Réti Opening', let's look at some important typical positions. However, they can only show some of the regularly occurring essential possibilities, as it always depends on the specific circumstances, which approach is the best or the most appropriate.

1st example position

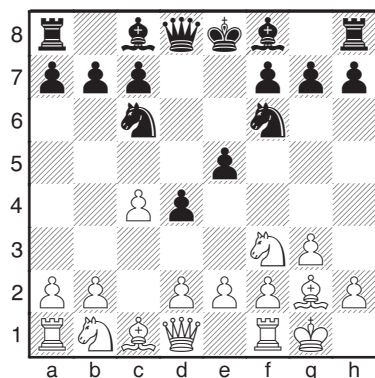


Black has built a strong pawn center and White has to keep it under control before he can attack it sooner or later. In the given position, he will do so by applying the lever e2-e4.

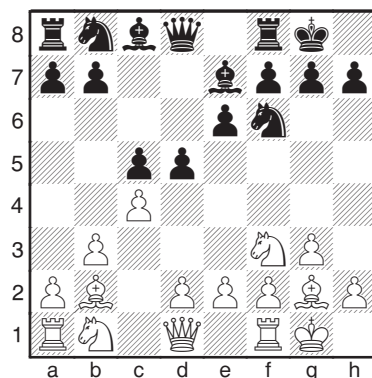
2nd example position



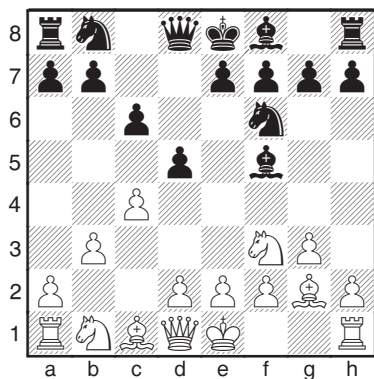
Here, Black's strong pawn center looks different, since the c-pawn has advanced *two* squares while the e-pawn has been held back. Furthermore, White has chosen a different fianchetto. The attack on the opposing center will be carried out with c2-c4.

3rd example position

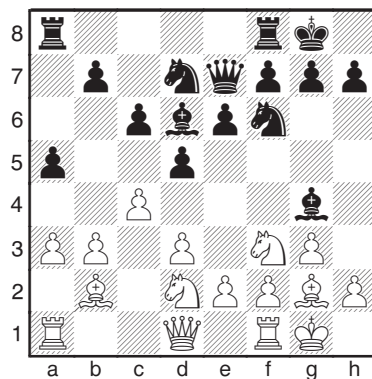
In this position, Black has released the central tension by pushing the d-pawn to d4. After the stabilizing move d2-d3, White will attack the opposing center with the lever e2-e3.

4th example position

Here, White has chosen a double fianchetto in order to maximize the central influence of *both* bishops. Furthermore, the attack move c2-c4 has already been executed. Depending on whether Black sooner or later pushes his d-pawn, White chooses the appropriate countermeasures. If Black keeps the d-pawn in place, he will continue his development with d2-d3, ♖b1-d2, e2-e3 etc. – and if it advances to d4, he will either attack it with e2-e3 or become active on the queen side with a2-a3 and b3-b4.

5th example position

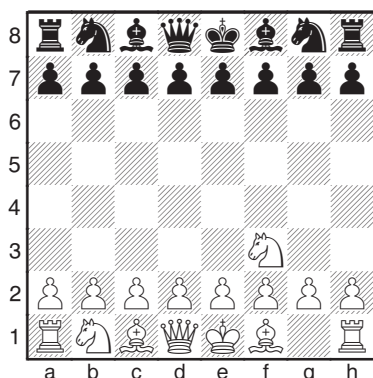
This position is characterized by the fact that Black's queen bishop operates *outside* the pawn chain (alternatively it could also stand on g4). Black will put his e-pawn on e6 for the time being and only later try to push it to e5.

6th example position

This position shows an example of which shape the previous one might take. Both sides still have to develop their heavy pieces. Meanwhile, further significant pawn moves are not to be expected in the near future.

Introduction

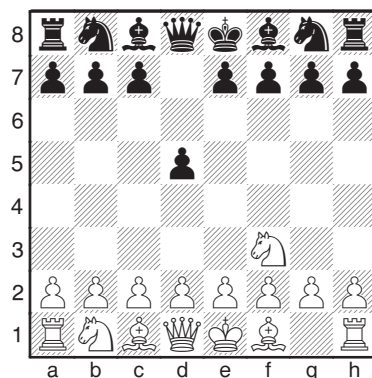
1. ♘f3



This opening was introduced in tournament practice almost one century ago by the extraordinary Hungarian Grandmaster Richard Réti, who was one of the pioneers of the so-called 'Hypermodern School'. One of its revolutionary ideas was a completely different approach to the treatment of the center. Instead of occupying it with pawns (i.e. in the *classic* manner), the bishops were developed to the flanks (by means of a so-called 'fianchetto') in order to build up piece pressure on the center. If White chooses the 'Réti Opening', he allows his opponent to occupy the center with pawns – and then attacks these pawns with the appropriate levers. In many cases the close relationship of the 'Réti Opening' with other openings becomes apparent – for example with the 'King's Indian Defense', the 'English Opening' and many others.

1...d5

This is the most popular reply, although Black has many alternatives given White's restrained approach – like e.g. 1... ♘f6, 1...c5 etc. However, they will mostly lead to the main line or to one of the sidelines by transposition of moves.



2.c4

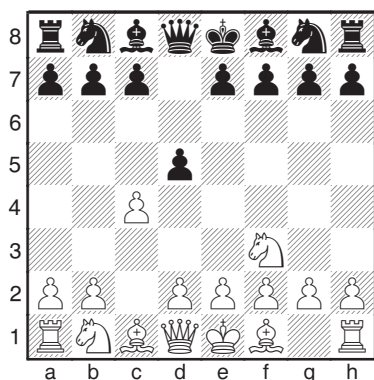
This is the original form of the Réti Opening. White immediately attacks the opposing center pawn. The other options that prepare a fianchetto with either 2.g3 or 2.b3 are examined in separate chapters.

I. 2.g3 (**Chapter 1**)

II. 2.b3 (**Chapter 2**)

However, these two moves can also lead to other lines by transposition of moves. At this early stage of the game it can happen very often, that different move orders lead to the same positions. Of course, if White plays

d2-d4 here or in one of the next moves, this would lead to the Queen's Gambit, which is not a subject of this book.



2...c6

This is one of the best defense options, since it reinforces the pawn on d5 without blocking the diagonal c8-h3. However, Black has other moves at his disposal.

I. 2...d4 (Chapter 3)

II. 2...e6 (Chapter 4)

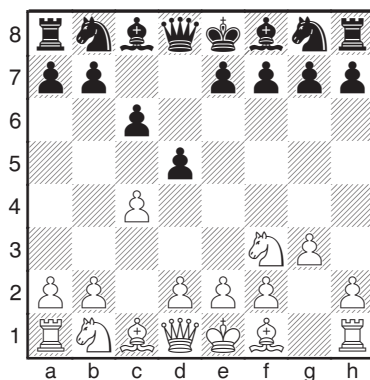
III. 2...dxc4 (Chapter 5)

3.g3

White quickly develops his king side without taking care of his pawn on c4. Alternatively, he could do so with the following lines.

I. 3.b3 (Chapter 6)

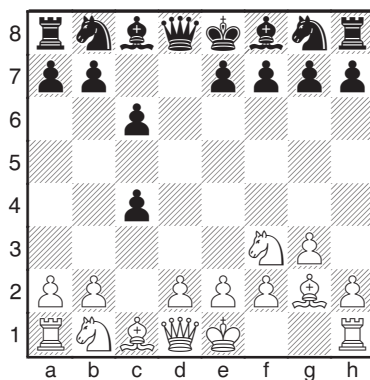
II. 3.e3 (Chapter 7)



3...f6 (continued on page 17)

If Black took the pawn on c4 now, White would have to continue in gambit-style. Since this is of considerable practical relevance, we will take a closer look at it.

3...dxc4 4.g2



4...f6 leads to the main line (see page 17).

The alternatives are 4...f5, 4...d7 and 4...b5.

A) 4...d7 5.0-0

5.a3!? is a noteworthy alternative, which can also be found in similar lines (e.g. Chapter 5 – Line 3).

However, the basic ideas are explained in the following paragraphs.

A1) If Black chooses a set-up with the fianchetto of the king bishop, the game can take the following course.

5...g6 6.♗a3 ♗b6 7.♖c2 ♕g7

(Black can try to defend his extra pawn with 7...♗d5!?, but after the example line 8.b3 cxb3 9.axb3 ♕g7 10.e4 ♗h5 11.d4 ♕h3 12.♗c4, White has obtained a very active position.)

8.♗xc4 ♗xc4 9.♗xc4 ♗f6 10.d3

(After 10.b4 a5 11.b5 ♗d5, Black has no problems.)

10...0-0 11.♕d2

(In the game Wen – Shulman, Ningbo 2013, White played 11.♗h4, and Black tried to exploit the opposing queen's absence from the queen side.

11...♗b6 12.♖b1 ♕e6 13.b3 ♗a5 14.a4 ♕g4

Black wants to clarify the situation on the king side.

15.♕d2 ♗h5 16.♗xh5 ♕xh5 17.h3 ♕xf3 18.♕xf3 ♖fd8 19.b4 a6 20.♖fc1 ♗d5 21.h4 h5 22.♕f1 ♖ac8 23.b5

White has an advantage and went on to win. Although there should be the one or other improvement for Black after 11.♗h4, the basic idea deserves more practical tests.)

11...♗d5 12.♖ab1 a5 13.♕c3

To give up the bishop pair is probably not advisable in the given position.

(13.a3!? followed by e2-e4 and only then ♕d2-c3 etc. came into consideration.)

13...♗xc3 14.bxc3 a4 15.♗b4 a3 16.♖fc1 ♖a6 17.♗d2 ♗c7 18.♖b3 ♗d6

19.♖c2 ♖d8 20.♗xd6 exd6

In the game Dominguez Perez – Vallejo Pons, Melilla 2011, White should now have played 21.♗b1!? to conquer the pawn on a3, e.g. 21...b5 22.♖xa3. Instead he got under pressure after 21.♗c4 b5 22. ♗xa3 ♕e6 and had to fight for a draw.

A2) 5...♗gf6 6.♗a3

(The alternative 6.♗c2!? can lead to lines discussed further below.)

6...♗b6 7.♗e5 ♗d4

(Although the approach 7...♕e6!? seems a bit artificial, it gives Black good chances to reach an equal position; e.g. 8.♗c2 g6 9.♗axc4 ♗xc4 10.♗xc4 ♕g7 11.d3 0-0=, Maletin – Linchevski, Saint Petersburg 2015.)

8.♗exc4!? ♕e6

Here we even choose this seemingly artificial move as the main line, because we find its effectivity convincing.

(After the alternative 8...♗xc4, the game Vachier–Lagrave – Giri, Beijing 2013, took the following course.

9.♗a4 ♕d7 10.♗xc4 ♗xc4 11.♗xc4 g6 12.b4 ♕g7 13.♕b2 0-0 14.♗a5 ♕c8 15.a4 ♖d8 16.♖fd1 ♗d5 17.♕xg7 ♕xg7 18.b5 cxb5 19.axb5 a6

Now, White could have obtained at least a small advantage with 20.bxa6.)

9.♗a5 ♕d5 10.♗b3

(The greedy 10.♗xb7?? would be a blunder, because after 10...♕xg2 11.♕xg2 ♗d7 12.♗a5 ♗d5+, the knight would be lost.)

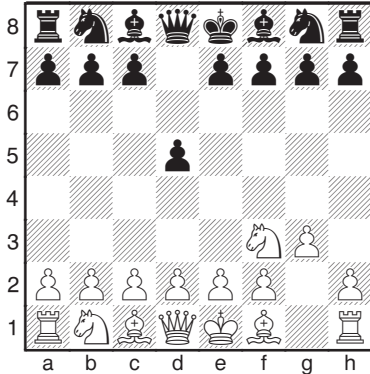
10...♗g4 11.f3 ♗b4 12.♗c2

This is a solid choice.

Chapter 1

The continuation 2.g3

1.♘f3 d5 2.g3



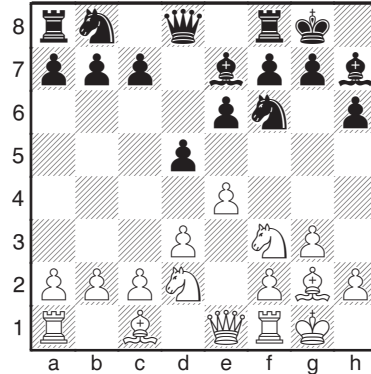
2...c6 (continued on page 30)

- 2...c5 leads to **Chapter 4** by transposition of moves.
- 2...g6 can lead to completely different openings (e.g. the King's Indian Defense) or to lines treated in **Chapter 11**.
- After 2...b6 and the possible continuation 3.♗g2 ♕b7 4.0-0 ♘f6 5.b3 g6 6.♗b2 ♗g7 7.c4 0-0 8.♘c3 d4 9.♘b1 c5 10.d3 ♘c6, Black can let the moves ♖d8-c7 and e7-e5 follow.
- 2...♘f6 can lead to various lines, which will be examined further below. But of course, Black can also choose different set-ups without the move c7-c6, whereupon the game gets a completely different face.

3.♗g2 ♗f5 4.0-0 e6 5.d3 h6 6.♘bd2 ♗e7 7.♖e1

(7.b3 0-0 8.♗b2 followed by c2-c4 leads to **Chapter 8**.)

7...0-0 8.e4 ♗h7



White has more than half a dozen options, although we will focus on 9.e5 and 9.♖e2.

A) 9.e5 ♘fd7 10.♖e2 c5 11.♖e1

(White intends to continue with the active maneuver h2-h4 and ♘d2-f1-h2-g4.)

11...♘c6 12.♘f1 ♔h8!?

(Since the alternative 12...b5 13.h4 a5∞ leads to sharp play, it could be the adequate approach for the resourceful attacking player.)

13.h4 f6

(Another option is 13...♖c8!? 14.h5 f6 15.exf6 ♗xf6 16.♖xe6 ♘b4 17.♖e2 c4 with counter play, Stepak – Chandler, London 1985.)

14.exf6 ♗xf6 15.c3

(15.♖xe6 ♘b4 16.♖e2 c4⇝)

15...e5 16.♘e3 ♘b6

With double edged play, Nalbandian – Böhm, Dortmund 2014.

B) 9.♖e2 c5

(9...a5 also deserves consideration, whereupon the game Appel – Meier, Germany 2010, took the following course.)

10.♞e1 ♘c6 11.e5 ♘d7 12.♘f1 b5 13.h4 b4 14.♙f4 a4

Black has good counter play and his approach can serve as a good general example of how the position after the push a7-a5 should be properly treated.)

10.e5

(10.♘e5

This is White's most common choice.

10...♘bd7

According to statistics, this is Black's most promising answer.

11.♘xd7 ♖xd7 12.b3

This little researched move should give White good chances.

12...♞ad8 13.♙b2 dxe4 14.♘xe4 ♘xe4 15.♙xe4 ♙xe4 16.♖xe4 ♖d5 17.♖a4 a6=

Akopian – Gelfand, Cap d'Agde 1996.)

10...♘fd7 11.♞e1 ♘c6 12.♘f1 b5 13.h4 ♞c8 14.a3 ♖c7 15.♘1h2 a5 16.h5 b4 17.axb4 axb4 18.♘g4 ♘d4

Black has good play. While he tries to attack on the queen side, White seeks his luck on the king side, Smeets – Van Wely, playchess.com INT 2011.

– 2...♘c6 is a rare continuation.

3.♙g2

(In the game Kramnik – Fressinet, Paris/Saint Petersburg 2013, White

played 3.d4 and after 3...♙g4 4.♘bd2 ♖d7 5.h3 ♙f5 6.c3 e5!? 7.dxe5 0-0-0 8.e3 ♘ge7 9.g4 ♙g6 10.b4 h5, Black had active play.)

3...e5 4.d3

(4.0-0 allows 4...e4 and after 5.♘e1 ♘f6 6.d3 ♙f5 7.c3 ♖d7 followed by 0-0-0, Black has a good position.)

4...♘ge7

(4...f6!? is an interesting idea; e.g. 5.c3 ♙e6 6.♖b3 ♖c8 7.0-0 ♘ge7 8.♖a4 g5 followed by ♘e7-g6, ♙f8-e7 etc.)

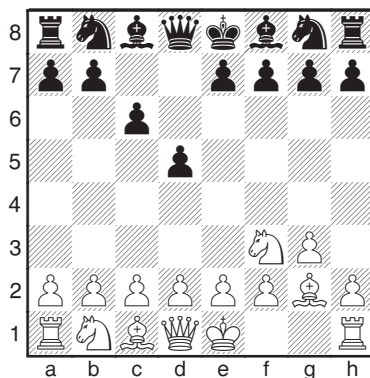
5.0-0 g6 6.c4 ♙g7

(6...dxc4 7.dxc4 ♖xd1 8.♞xd1 ♙e6=)

7.cxd5 ♘xd5 8.♘c3 ♘de7= 9.♞b1 a5 10.a3 0-0 11.b4 axb4 12.axb4 ♘d4 13.♘d2 c6 14.e3 ♘e6 15.♖c2 ♘d5

The situation is still unclear, Almasi – Bartel, Budapest 2014.

3.♙g2



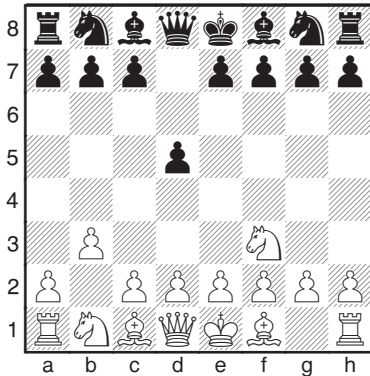
3...♘f6 (continued on page 32)

Instead of this main continuation, Black can immediately develop his queen bishop to either f5 or g4.

Chapter 2

The continuation 2.b3

1. ♘f3 d5 2.b3



In this chapter we examine the lines with the fianchetto of the queen bishop instead of the king bishop.

I. 2... ♘f6 (Line 1)

II. 2... c5 (Line 2)

III. 2... ♗g4 (Line 3)

Line 1

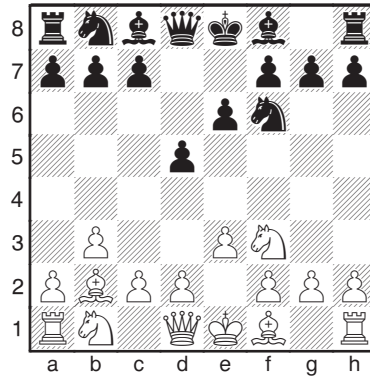
The continuation 2... ♘f6

1. ♘f3 d5 2.b3 ♘f6 3. ♗b2 e6

Of course, Black can first develop his queen bishop with either 3... ♗f5 (see **Chapter 8**) or 3... ♗g4 (see **Chapter 9**).

4.e3

The lines with 4.c4 are examined in **Chapter 4** (although with the different move order 2.c4 etc.).



4... ♗e7

After 4... ♗d6, White can play 5.c4 (see above), although he has two noteworthy alternatives.

A) 5. ♗e2

Considering that this development can be found in several other lines, it can be regarded as universal. White reserves the option to move to other areas of the 'Réti Opening'.

5... ♘bd7 6.0-0 ♗e7 7.d3

Now the game can lead to other lines, which are discussed in various other parts of the book. For example, after ♘b1-d2 White can strive for one of the pushes c2-c4 or e2-e4.

B) 5.d4

This 'big' step of the d-pawn is rather atypical for the 'Réti Opening'. This type of position is especially suitable for friends of complex structures. Sooner or later Black will let the lever c7-c5 follow, but first he will continue the development or occupy the square on e4.

5...0-0

(5... ♘e4 6. ♘bd2 f5)

If White doesn't want to eliminate the dominant opposing knight, he has to

drive it away with f2-f3, which of course leads to a certain weakening of the king side.

7.♔d3 0-0 8.0-0 ♕d7 9.♘e5 ♕e8 10.f3 ♘xd2 11.♖xd2 ♕xe5 12.dxe5 c5

White is slightly better developed and has the bishop pair. The game Chernyshov – Pacher, Pardubice 2011, took the course 13.♖ad1 ♘c6 14.c4 d4 15.exd4 ♘xd4 16.♙b1 ♖f7 17.♗f2 ♖d7=. Looking for an improvement one should focus on White's 16th move.)

6.♔d3 ♗e7

(The lever 6...c5 can be carried out immediately; e.g. 7.0-0 ♘c6 8.a3 ♗e7 9.♘e5 ♘d7 10.♘xd7 ♕xd7 11.♘d2 e5=, Anton Guijarro – Candela Perez, Madrid 2013.)

7.0-0 c5

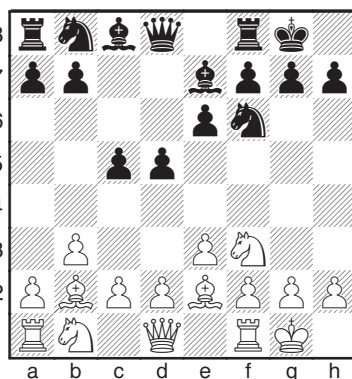
In the game Ushenina – Gunina, Beijing 2014, both sides had enough active potential after 8.a3 b6 9.♘bd2 ♕b7 10.♘e5 ♘bd7 11.f4 ♘e4 12.♘xe4 dxe4 13.♕c4 ♘f6=.

5.♕e2 0-0

Black can also play 5...♘bd7 and castle later.

6.0-0 c5

6...c6 is also a good choice; e.g. 7.d3 ♘bd7 8.♘bd2 ♖e8 9.♘e5 ♘xe5 10.♕xe5 ♕d6 11.♘f3 ♕xe5 12.♘xe5 ♘d7 13.♘xd7 ♕xd7=, Levenko – Kochura, Kiev 2003.



7.d3

After the alternative 7.d4, Black has two main continuations.

A) 7...♘c6 8.♘bd2

(8.dxc5 ♕xc5 9.c4 ♗e7 10.♘c3 ♖d8 11.cxd5 ♘xd5=, Cruz – Ramirez Garcia, Barcelona 2012.)

8...cxd4 9.♘xd4 ♕d7

The prospects are fairly equal. The game Mak – Kulaots, Beijing 2008, took the following course: 10.♖c1 ♖c8 11.a4 ♖e8 12.♘2f3 ♕d6 13.♘xc6 bxc6 14.c3 ♖b8 15.b4 ♗c7 16.♗c2 e5 with active play for Black.

B) 7...b6 8.♘bd2 ♕b7 9.♘e5

(9.c4 would lead to completely different positions, which may arise in the 'Queen's Gambit'.)

9...♘bd7 10.f4 ♖c8 11.♖c1 ♘xe5=

(11...cxd4 12.exd4 ♘e4 13.♘xe4 dxe4 14.♘xd7 (14.c4!?) 14...♗xd7 15.c4 f5=, Winz – Najdorf, Mar del Plata 1941.)

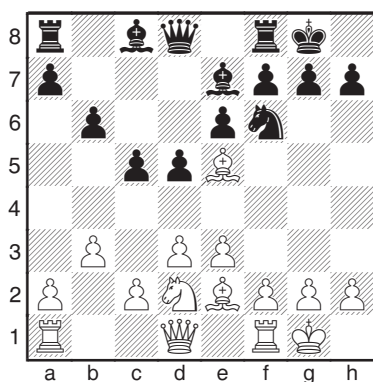
12.fxex5 ♘d7 13.♕d3 ♕g5 14.♗e2 ♕h6 15.♖ce1 f6 16.exf6 ♘xf6 17.♘f3 ♘g4 18.♕c1 ♗c7 19.h3 ♘f6 20.♘e5 ♘d7 21.♗h5 ♘xe5 22.dxe5 c4 23.♕e2 b5, Kozabekov – Bachuluun, Saint Petersburg 2014. Black's position is

preferable, as his active play on the queen side offers good chances. Looking for an improvement one should focus on White's 21st move.

7...♘c6 8.♘bd2 b6 9.♘e5

The alternative 9.c4 has pretty bad statistical results. The position can also arise from the 'Symmetrical Variation' of the 'English Opening'.

9...♘xe5 10.♘xe5



10...♘b7

In the game Eckard – Hagenbach, Germany 1991, Black immediately tackled the opposing bishop with 10...♘d6. After 11.f4 ♘xe5 12.fxe5 ♘d7 13.d4 f6 14.exf6 ♖xf6 15.♖xf6 ♗xf6 16.♗f1 ♗xf1+ 17.♖xf1 ♘f6 18.♖f4 ♘d7, White had an advantage, since Black had to nurse the weakness on e6 and his bishop was less active than its white counterpart.

11.♘b2 ♘d7 12.e4

After 12.c4 Black can also reply 12...♘f6.

12...♘f6 13.♘xf6 ♗xf6 14.♖e1 ♖ad8 15.♘f1 ♘e5 16.♗e2

16.g3? would be a mistake, as after 16...dxe4 White would be in trouble.

16...♗f4 17.♖ad1 dxe4 18.dxe4 ♗g5

Black can be very satisfied with his position; Bohorquez Trivino – Benitez Chiriboga, Quito 1997.

Summary: This line, in which White doesn't attack the opposing center with c2–c4, is not dangerous for Black. He can easily develop his troops and obtain equality or even more. Instead of playing 3...e6, Black can develop his bishop to f5 or g4, which leads to other parts of this book (especially to **Chapter 8** and **Chapter 9**). On the other hand, the fianchetto of the queen bishop is strong in combination with the push c2–c4. This will be dealt with in **Chapter 4**.

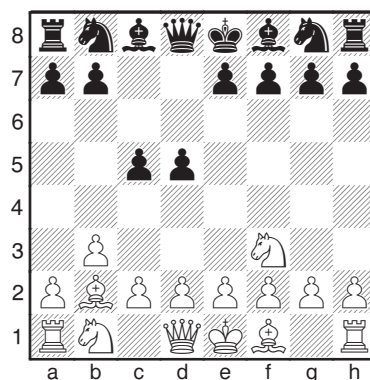
Line 2

The continuation 2...c5

1.♘f3 d5 2.b3 c5

Black wants to take as much space in the center as possible.

3.♘b2



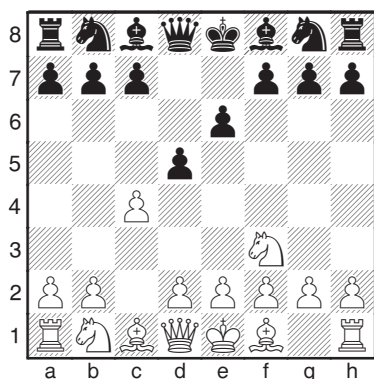
3...♘f6 (continued on page 40)

Chapter 4

The continuation

2...e6

1.♘f3 d5 2.c4 e6



Unlike the line with c7-c6, Black wants to deploy the c-pawn more aggressively with c7-c5. Again, countless transpositions of moves make a systematic presentation of the material very difficult.

3.g3

The alternative 3.e3 is not only less in the spirit of the Réti Opening, but also less promising; e.g. 3...♘f6 4.d3 ♕e7 5.b3 0-0 6.♕b2

A) After the example line 6...c5 7.♘bd2 ♘c6 8.♘e5 ♘xe5 9.♕xe5 b6 10.♕e2 ♕b7 11.0-0 ♘d7 12.♕b2 ♕f6 13.♖c2 dxc4 14.dxc4 ♘e5 15.♖ad1 ♘c6 16.a3 ♖e7, Black can obtain good play with the maneuver ♖a8-d8-d7 followed by ♖f8-d8.

B) However, Black can also postpone the advance of the c-pawn for a while. For example, the game Habibi – Telbis, Budapest 2003, took the following course.

6...b6 7.a3 ♕b7 8.♘bd2 ♘bd7 9.♖c2 (The alternative line 9.♕e2 c5 10.0-0 ♖c7 11.♖c1 ♕c6 12.♖c2 ♖b7 leads to an unclear position.)

9...c5

Postponed is not abandoned!

10.♕e2 ♖c8 11.0-0 ♖c7 12.♖ac1

After both sides have mobilized their troops, they fight for a positional advantage by various regroupings.

12...♖b8 13.♖b1 ♖fd8 14.♖fd1 a6 15.♖a1 ♕d6 16.♘f1 e5 17.cxd5 ♕xd5 18.♘3d2 b5

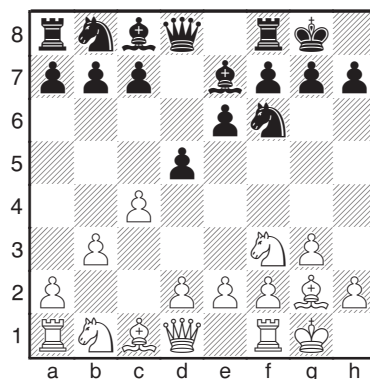
Since Black has more space, his pieces can maneuver more freely.

3...♘f6 4.♕g2 ♕e7

For 4...dxc4 – see **Line 1** (page 100) and for 4...d4 – see **Line 2** (page 105).

5.0-0 0-0 6.b3

6.d4 leads to the 'Catalan Opening', which is not the subject of this book.

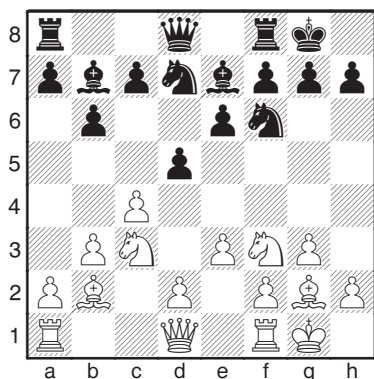


6...c5

This is the main line, which in general leads to more lively positions, whereas the alternatives with c7-c6 will be examined in **Chapter 6** (see page 134).

Furthermore, Black can develop according to a pattern already known from above.

6...b6 7.♘b2 ♘b7 8.e3 ♘bd7
(8...c5 leads to the main line.)
9.♘c3



A) After 9...c5, the game Caruana – Anand, Shamkir 2015, took the following course.

10.♞e2 ♞c7

(In the game Movsesian – Shimanov, Legnica 2013, Black immediately released the central tension: 10...dxc4 11.bxc4 ♘e4 12.♘xe4 ♘xe4 13.d3 ♘c6 14.a4 ♘f6 15.a5 ♘xb2 16.♞xb2 ♞c7 17.axb6 axb6 18.♞xa8 ♞xa8 19.♞a1 h6 with equal prospects for both sides.)

11.♘h4 dxc4 12.bxc4 ♘e8

Vacating the square on f6 for the bishop.

13.f4 ♘g2 14.♘xg2 ♘f6 15.f5 ♞c6
16.fxe6 fxe6 17.♘f4 ♘c7 18.d3 ♘xc3
19.♘xc3 e5 20.♘h3 ♘e6

Since neither side could achieve any opening advantage, the game soon ended in a draw.

B) After 9...♘e4, White has a variety of continuations.

B1) 10.cxd5 ♘xc3 11.♘xc3 exd5
12.♞c2 a5 13.♞fd1 ♞e8 14.♞ac1 c6
15.♞b2 ♘f8 16.d3 b5 17.♞b1 b4
18.♘b2 a4=, Kuzubov – Palac, Batumi 2018.

B2) 10.♞e2 ♘xc3 11.♘xc3 ♘f6 12.d3
c5 13.♘e5 ♘d7 14.♘xd7 ♞xd7
15.♞b2 f6 16.cxd5 ♘xd5 17.e4 ♘c6
18.d4 cxd4 19.♘xd4 ♞fd8 20.♘c3 e5=,
Delchev – Radulski, Panagyurishte 2012.

B3) 10.d4 ♘xc3 11.♘xc3 c5 12.cxd5
♘xd5 13.♞e2 cxd4 14.♘xd4 ♘c5
15.♞fd1 ♞e7 16.♞ac1 ♞a8 17.e4
♘b7 18.♘xc5 ♘xc5 19.e5 ♞fd8=;
Anwesh – Dedebas, Ukraine 2018.

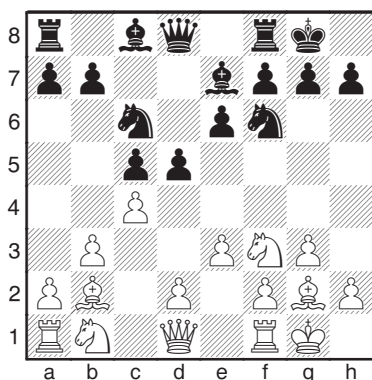
B4) After 10.♘e2, the game Howell – Svyetushkin, Jerusalem 2015, took the following course.

10...♘f6

(In the game Pantsulaia – Iovcov, Jerusalem 2015, the thematic advance 10...c5 led to an unclear position after the logical continuation 11.cxd5 ♘xd5 12.♘f4 ♘b7 13.d4 cxd4 14.♘xd4 ♘df6 etc.)

11.d4 dxc4 12.bxc4 c5= 13.♘f4 ♘d6
14.♞c1 ♞c8 15.♘h5 cxd4 16.♘a3 ♘xf3
17.♞xf3 ♘e7 18.♘xd6 ♘xd6 19.exd4
♞c7 20.♞e3 ♞e7 21.♞fd1 ♞fc8

7.♘b2 ♘c6 8.e3

**8...b6**

In view of the blocked diagonal c8–h3, the fianchetto of the queen bishop makes sense.

However, after the fianchetto of the *opposing* queen bishop, the advance d5–d4 appears in a different light.

8...d4 9.exd4 cxd4 10.♖e1

(Of course, White cannot simply allow 10.d3 e5! etc.)

10...♗e8

(10...♖b6!? looks promising and deserves a closer examination.)

11.♗e5

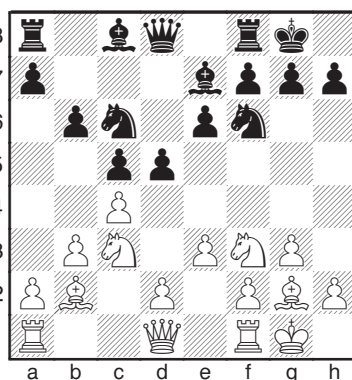
(The alternative 11.♗a3 f6 12.♗xe7 ♖xe7 13.a3 a5 14.d3 e5 leads to an equal position.)

11...♗xe5 12.♖xe5 f6 13.♖e1 e5 14.f4

(After 14.d3, Black has the good answer 14...♖b8 with the intention b7–b5.)

14...exf4 15.gxf4 ♗c7 16.♖f3 ♖b8 17.♖f2 ♗c5 18.♗a3 b6

Black has an equal position.

9.♗c3**9...dxc4** (continued on page 95)

Releasing the central tension is a far-sighted strategic decision. If White plays d2–d4 to avoid a weakness on the d–file, he will have to nurse the weakness on c4.

The following two alternatives are less good.

I. 9...♗b7 10.cxd5

This not only deprives the opponent of the possibility d5xc4 from the main line, but also plays with the idea of burdening him with an isolani on d5.

10...♗xd5

(After 10...exd5 11.d4, an isolani on d5 is already unavoidable.)

11.♗xd5 ♖xd5

(The consequences of the interesting approach 11...exd5 12.d4 a5!? etc. are difficult to assess.)

12.d4 ♖ad8

(– After 12...♗a5 3.dxc5 ♖xd1 14.♖fxd1 ♗xc5 15.♗c3, White has an advantage.

– But after 12...♗b4!? Black has good chances to equalize; e.g. 13.♗h4 ♖d7 14.dxc5

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