

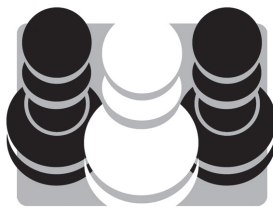
Kotronias on the King's Indian 4

Classical Systems

By

Vassilios Kotronias

For my children, Adoria, Athanasia and Dimitrios



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Introduction

Dear readers,

It is with great pleasure that I am able to welcome you to this fourth, penultimate volume on the King's Indian Defence. This volume is dedicated to the rest of the systems that have a Classical flavour, namely the Gligoric, the Makogonov, the Petrosian, the Averbakh, the Karpov, and several types of Exchange Variations. These are obviously systems that required a lot of elaboration on my part, endless hours of analytical work, difficult decisions and a lot of explanation. I hope that the result will vindicate not only me, but also the faithful devotees of the King's Indian all around the world – those who have put their faith and creativity into this wonderful opening, and supported me with their comments and reviews along the way.

At this point, I feel the inner desire to stress something: undertaking the responsibility to write such a repertoire was a task entailing a lot of risk, as the King's Indian has some of the richest tactical and positional content in the whole range of chess openings. In a way I consider myself rather brave for trying to classify and put some order in the chaos, while in another way I feel like a pawn of fate that was destined to do just that. After all, if there is no complete repertoire series on the King's Indian, then chess literature is lacking a vital spark. I would go as far as to say that it is like a family which is missing one of its most charismatic children, flamboyant and adventurous, fighting and full of creativity.

That said, I want to thank all my predecessors who tried to fill this gap. Although I don't know him personally, David Vigorito stands out as a composed writer and analyst, whose articles and surveys have helped me with their accuracy and evaluations. Other prominent examples who guided me with their previous works are GMs John Nunn and Victor Bologan. I hope I will be forgiven by those whose names I have failed to mention in this preface, but they can be sure they have my respect and gratitude for creating the first solid ground I stepped upon in order to explore an exotic and dangerous land.

Vassilios Kotronias
Athens, February 2016

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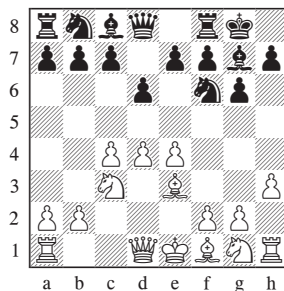
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Chapter 19

6.♘e3 Systems



Karpov

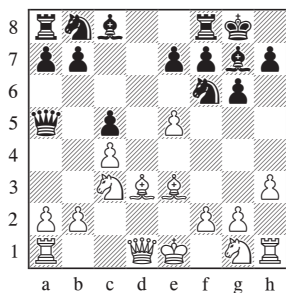
Variation Index

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♘g7 4.e4 d6 5.h3 0-0 6.♘e3

6...c5!

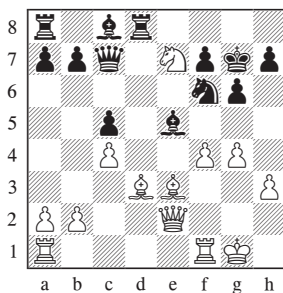
A) 7.dxc5	374
B) 7.♘f3	378
C) 7.d5 e6!	379
C1) 8.♘d3	380
C2) 8.♘f3 exd5	382
C21) 9.cxd5 ♖e8	382
C211) 10.♘d2	382
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C22) 9.exd5	385

A) after 9.e5!?



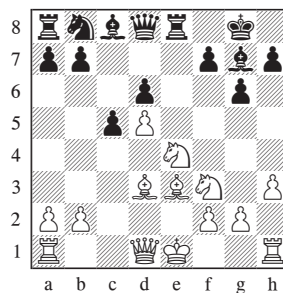
9...♘h5!

A) after 17.f4!?



17...♘xb2!N

C212) after 11.♘xe4



11...c4!N

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♗c3 ♕g7 4.e4 d6 5.h3 0-0 6.♙e3

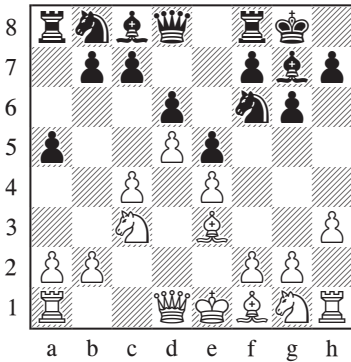
This move has been used extensively by Anatoly Karpov, particularly in rapid chess. Its main virtue is keeping open the option of developing the knight to e2 later on. This may prove extremely helpful in a Makogonov structure similar to the ones we've encountered in the previous three chapters, as the set-up of pawns on h3 and g4, and knight on g3, will stifle Black's kingside play and offer White long-term attacking chances.

6.♙g5 and 6.♗ge2 will be covered in Volume 5 of this series.

6...c5!

The logical and best reaction. Ladies and Gentlemen, it's time for a Benoni!

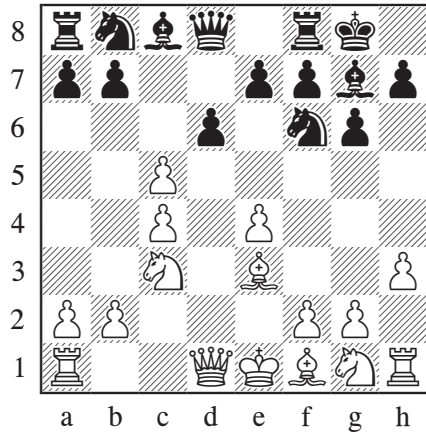
6...e5 7.d5 a5 (7...♗a6 8.♗f3 takes play into a Makogonov proper, but without the pawn on a5, tricking us into a line I have chosen not to recommend in the present volume.)



8.g4! ♗a6 9.♗ge2 h5 10.f3 ♗c5 11.♖d2 ♗h7 12.0-0-0 h4 13.♖g1 The more I looked at this, the less I liked Black's position, as he is unable to exchange dark-squared bishops and is reduced to passivity. Therefore 6...c5! is almost forced in the strategic sense, even though this may sound like an exaggeration on move six.

White options are A) 7.dxc5, B) 7.♗f3 and C) 7.d5.

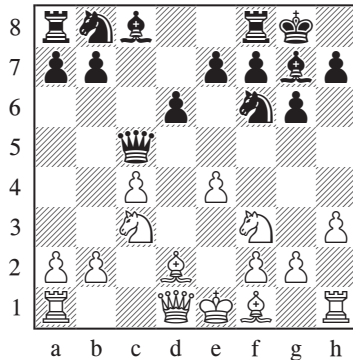
A) 7.dxc5



A strange move, after which Black should have no difficulties.

7...♗a5 8.♙d3

8.♙d2 ♖xc5 (8...dxc5!? 9.e5 ♗fd7 10.f4 ♗c6 11.♗f3 ♖d8♞, intending ...f6, should also be fine for Black) 9.♗f3



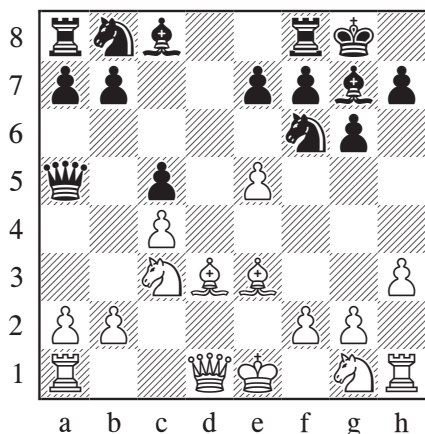
9...♗bd7 (or 9...♙e6!?) 10.♙e2 b6 11.0-0 ♖c7 12.♙e3 ♙b7 13.♗d2 e6 14.♖c1 a6 15.b4 ♖ac8 16.♖b3 ♖b8= A balanced Hedgehog had arisen in Ravikumar – Fuller, Fyn 1980.

8...dxc5 9.e5!?

Trying to block the radius of the g7-bishop

by following up with f2-f4 next, but it seems that this plan cannot successfully materialize.

9.♠f3 ♘c6 10.0-0 ♘d7 is a typical position where Black's control over the dark squares in the centre gives him a slight edge.



9...♘h5!

Gold's move is the best. The knight cannot be captured without consequences, in view of the mounting pressure along the d-file.

10.g4

This move, throwing caution to the wind, does not yield White any advantage, but is obviously the only critical choice.

10.♠f3 ♘c6 11.g4 ♝d8 is just a transposition to our main line.

10.f4? ♘g3 11.♞h2 ♝d8 12.♞c2? (12.♙f2 ♠f5 13.♞e2 ♠c6♯ looks awful, but had to be tried) 12...♠c6 13.♞d1 ♠b4 14.♞b1 ♞xd3 15.♞xd3 ♠f5+ This was a complete disaster for White in Arcuti – Gallagher, Graechen 2013.

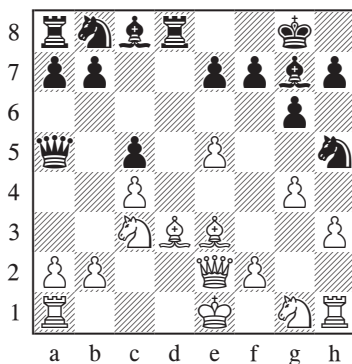
10...♝d8!

Fully justifying Black's unorthodox knight move.

11.♠f3

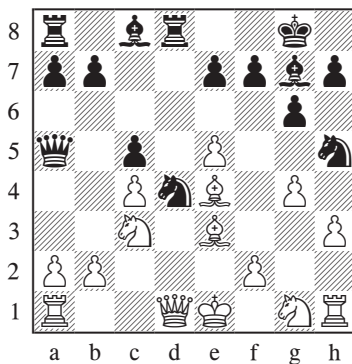
11.gxh5? ♠f5♯ is, of course, out of the question.

11.♞e2 is strongly answered by:

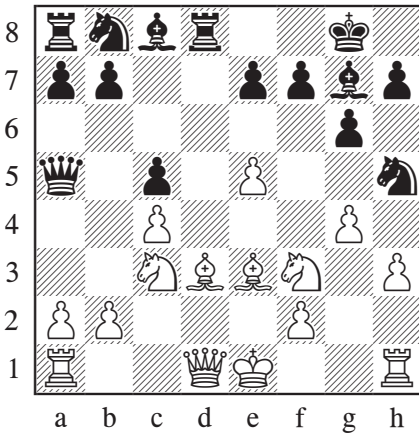


11...♠xe5! 12.♠d2 ♠f4 13.♠d5 ♠xe2 14.♠xa5 ♞xd5 15.cxd5 ♠xb2 16.♞b1 ♠c3† 17.♙xe2 ♠xa5♯ Black has a slight advantage in this ending.

11.♞c2 is considered by Mikhalevski, who gives the following line in his ChessBase commentary: 11...♠c6 12.♠e4 ♠d4! 13.♞d1



13...f5! (In my view, 13...♠xe5!? 14.gxh5 ♠e6 15.♠d2 ♠xc4 16.♠f3 ♞c7 17.♠xe5 ♞xe5 18.f4 ♞e6 19.♙f2 ♝d7∞ deserves attention.) 14.♠d5† e6 15.♠g2 ♠c6 16.♞b3 (16.♞a4?! ♞xa4 17.♠xa4 ♠b4 18.♙f1 [18.♙e2 ♠c2 19.♠f3! ♠xe3 20.♙xe3 ♠h6† 21.g5 ♠f8♯] 18...♠c2 19.♠g5 ♠xa1 20.♠xd8 ♠f4♯ is better for Black) 16...♠d4 17.♞d1= With a repetition.



11...♖c6!

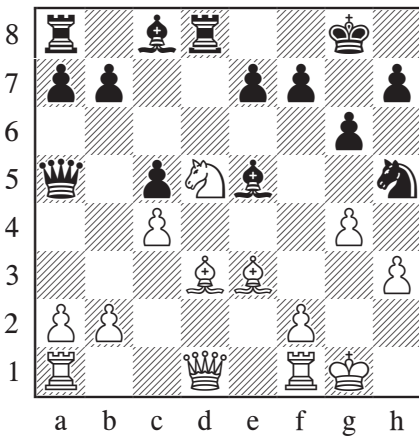
A strong retort, with the idea of ...♗b4 winning back the piece with an advantage, in case of 12.gxh5?.

12.0-0! ♗xe5!

12...♗b4?? 13.♗d5+- would now be a horrible blunder.

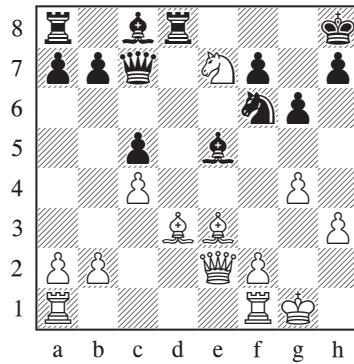
13.♗xe5 ♘xe5 14.♗d5

Mikhalevski points out in ChessBase that 14.gxh5? is bad due to: 14...♗xc3 15.bxc3 ♘f5! 16.hxg6 hxg6 17.♗f3 ♘xd3+ Black has regained his piece with a considerable advantage.

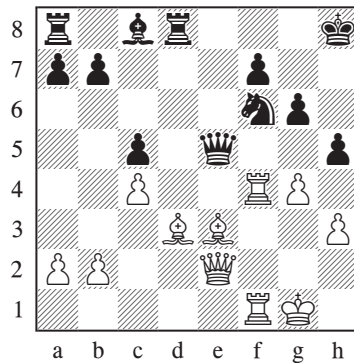


14...♗f6 15.♗xe7+ ♔g7

15...♗h8!? is also fine, with a sample line being: 16.♗e2 ♗c7



17.f4 (17.♗xc8 ♗axc8 18.♗ad1 ♘f4=) 17...♗xe7 18.fxg5 ♗xe5 19.♗f4 (19.♘f4 ♗d4+ 20.♗f2 ♘e6 21.♘e5 ♗xd3 22.♘xf6+ ♔g8 23.♘xd8 ♗xd8=) 19...h5 20.♗af1



20...♗g4! 21.hxg4 ♘xg4 22.♗d2 ♔g8 23.♗4f2 ♘f5 24.♗xf5 ♗g3+ 25.♗h1 ♗xd3 26.♗5f3 ♗xd2 27.♗xg3 ♗xb2 28.♗gf3 ♗e8 29.♘xc5 ♗ee2 30.♘g1 ♗e4=

16.♗e2

This move is logical, since the e5-bishop is a bit unstable. However, it is not incisive enough.

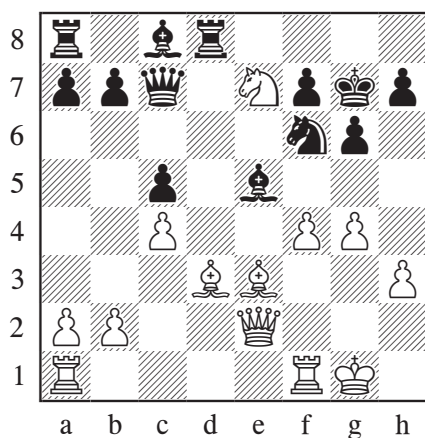
16.g5!N ♗h5 17.♗d5 ♘e6! (17...♗xh3? 18.♘d2 ♗a6 19.♗e1+ with the idea 19...♘d4 20.♗f3 ♘e6 21.♗c7) 18.♘e4 ♗d7 19.♗e1 ♗e8= Black has coordinated all his pieces and

looks equal to me, although this was the best possibility for White.

16...♖c7 17.f4!?

Fressinet's risky move, which should objectively lead to a slightly worse position for White.

17.♘xc8 ♜axc8 18.♞ad1 has been given as equal by Mikhalevski, but after 18...♙f4 19.♞fe1 h6 Black has a modest edge.



17...♙b2!N

This bold move should give Black the advantage.

17...♙d4? 18.g5! ♘h5 19.♘d5± was slightly better for White in Fressinet – Golod, Biel 2006.

18.♞xb2 ♞xe7 19.♞e2 b6! 20.♞ae1

20.♞ad1 ♙b7 is also excellent for Black.

Mikhalevski remarks that 20.♞fe1 ♘g8 21.♞ad1 ♙b7 22.g5 ♘h5± gives Black dangerous pressure on the a8-h1 diagonal.

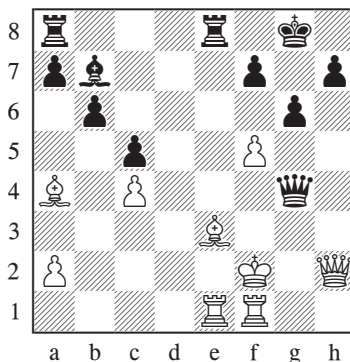
20...♔g8 21.f5 ♙b7 22.♙c2 ♘e4!?

My idea, and a natural move at that.

Mikhalevski gives 22...♞e5 (to which he

attaches an exclamation mark), but after 23.♙f4 ♞xe2 24.♞xe2 ♙a6 25.♙b3 the position is only unclear.

22...♞e8!?! is another move I looked at, yet there seems to be nothing more than a draw after the following complicated sequence: 23.♙a4! ♞e4 24.♞h2 ♘xg4 25.hxg4 ♞xg4† 26.♔f2

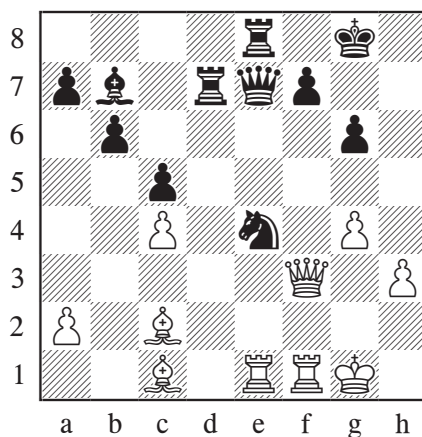


26...♞e5! 27.♙d7! ♞e4 28.♔g1! ♞g4† (28...♞d8 29.♞f4) 29.♔f2 ♞e4=

23.♞f3!

23.♙c1 ♞d4! 24.♙b2 ♞d6 25.♙xd4 ♞g3† 26.♞g2 ♞xg2† 27.♔xg2 ♘d2† 28.♔f2 cxd4† gives Black the slightly better ending.

23...♞d7 24.fxg6 hxg6 25.♙c1 ♞e8



26.♞f4! ♞d6 27.♙a4 ♙c6 28.♙xc6 ♞xc6

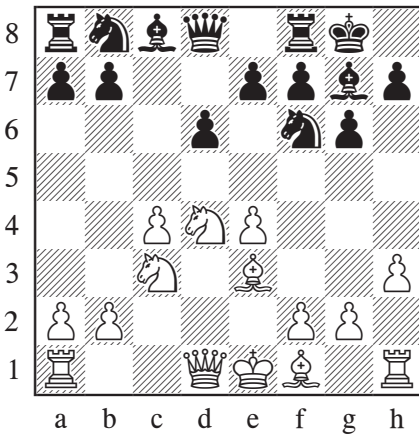
29. ♖b2 g5

Black has a tiny edge, although White should be able to nullify it and achieve a draw.

B) 7. ♘f3

Karpov's favourite move. White is trying to keep the position fluid and avoid a Benoni structure, at least for the time being.

7...cxd4 8. ♘xd4



8...b6!?

Black will opt for a Hedgehog set-up, trying to take advantage of the fact that White has played the rather useless h2-h3. That said, the position is quite delicate and Black has to treat it with care.

9. ♖d3

This has been Karpov's preferred move in all his games from this position.

Another possibility is: 9.g3!? ♖b7 10. ♖g2 ♘bd7 11. 0-0 ♖b8 12. ♖c2 a6 13. ♖ad1 ♖a8 14. a4 e6 15. b3 ♖e7 16. ♖b1 ♖fc8 17. ♖d2 ♘e5 18. ♖fd1 ♘e8= With approximate equality in Tihonov – A. Zhigalko, Minsk 2010.

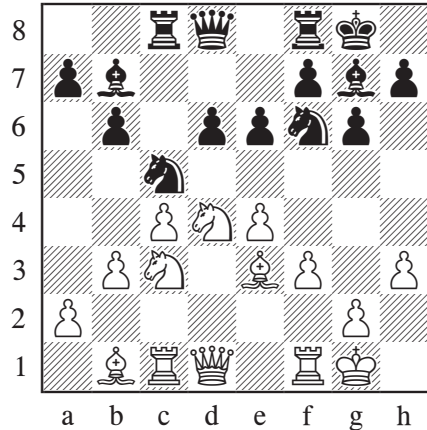
9...♖b7 10.0-0 ♘bd7 11. ♖c1 ♖c8

All the moves so far have been logical and solid for both sides. White would now like to overprotect the pawns at c4 and e4, in order

to free the d3-bishop from the burden of defending them.

12. b3 ♘c5 13. f3 e6 14. ♖b1

So far we have been following Karpov – Bacrot, Cap d'Agde 2013, when I think Black should have chosen:



14...d5!?:N

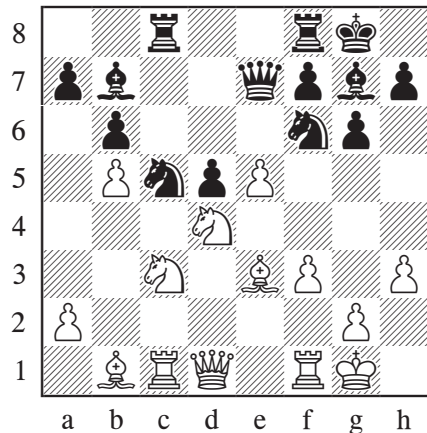
Despite the fact that this entails some risk and looks rather drastic, I am satisfied with Black's chances.

15. b4! ♘a6 16. b5

16.cxd5 exd5 17. e5 ♖e7! 18. f4 ♘xb4 19. ♘db5 ♘e4 is equal.

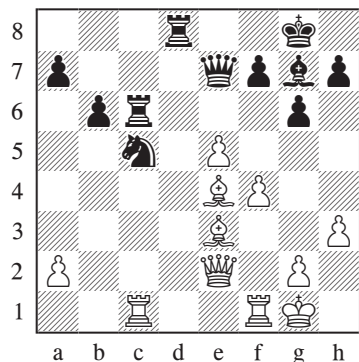
16...♘c5 17.cxd5 exd5 18. e5 ♖e7

18...♖e8!?: is also possible.



19. ♖e1!?

I don't see any problems for Black after:
 19.f4 ♖fe4 20.♗xe4 dxe4 21.♞e2 (21.♗c6
 ♙xc6 22.bxc6 ♜fd8 23.♙xc5 bxc5 24.♞a4
 e3 25.♞e4 e2 26.♞xe2 ♜xc6 27.♙d3 ♖h8=
 should be a draw because of the opposite-
 coloured bishops) 21...♜fd8 22.♗c6 ♙xc6
 23.bxc6 ♜xc6 24.♙xe4



24...♗xe4! 25.♜xc6 ♗g3 26.♞c4 ♗xf1
 27.♖xf1 ♙f8 28.♖g1 ♞e8 (28...♜d7!?) 29.♜c7
 b5 30.♞b3 a5=

19... ♞xe5!? 20. ♗f5! ♞c7 21. ♗xg7 ♖xg7

Despite Black's weakness on the dark squares, there is nothing concrete.

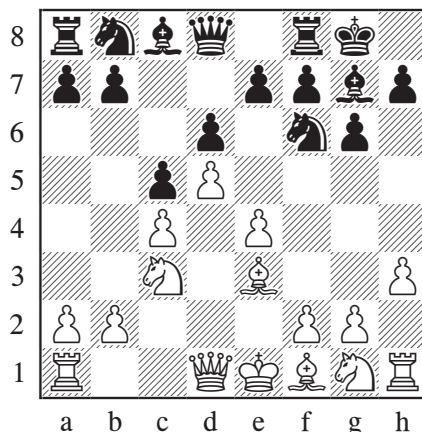
22. ♙d4

22.♞d2 ♜fe8∞; 22.♞d4 ♞d8 23.♗e2 ♜e8
 24.♗f4 ♖g8 25.♙d2 ♞d6 26.♙c3 ♜xe1†
 27.♜xe1 ♗cd7 28.♙b4 ♞b8 29.♙d3 ♜e8∞

22...♞d6 23.♙e5 ♞d8 24.♗e2 ♗cd7
 25.♙d4 ♜e8 26.♗f4 ♖g8∞

C) 7.d5

I was surprised to see that the 12th World Champion has never actually chosen to play this supposedly critical move, and this led me to consider the possibility that it is not as critical as I first thought, which is indeed the case.



7...e6!

Black has an excellent game and the better practical chances.

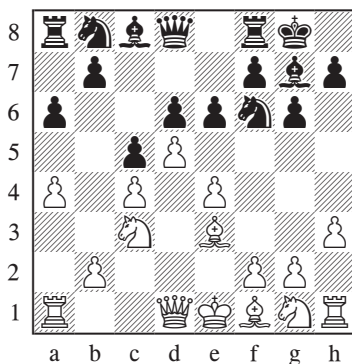
7...a6

At first I was attracted to this move, but then I realized that White can maintain an edge with accurate play:

8.a4!

8.♗f3 b5♣ is excellent for Black.

8...e6



9.♗f3!

The position is more appealing for White, who will complete his development in a harmonious way and then try to suffocate Black.

The reason I initially wanted to recommend 7...a6 was that the alternative 9.♙d3 exd5 10.exd5 allows Black to equalize with

10...♙e8!, preparing to play ...♙h6 under the best possible circumstances:

a) 11.♘f3 ♙h6 12.0-0 ♙xe3 13.fxe3 ♙xe3† 14.♙f2 ♘bd7 15.♙f1 ♙e8 leads to a position where I couldn't see anything really scary for Black.

b) 11.♙e2 ♘bd7 12.♘f3 ♘e5 13.♘xe5 ♙xe5 14.0-0 ♙f5 15.♙ae1 ♙fe8 16.♙c2 ♙xd3 17.♙xd3 ♙e7= looks quite balanced.

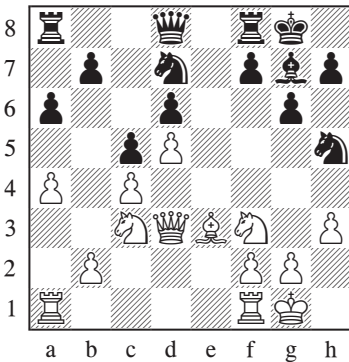
c) If White plays 11.♘ge2, then Black has available the fine idea 11...♘bd7 12.0-0 ♘e5 13.♘g3 ♘xd3 14.♙xd3 ♘d7 15.♘ge4 ♘e5 16.♙e2 ♙e7 17.f4 ♘xc4! 18.♙xc4 ♙f5 19.♙f2 b5! 20.axb5 axb5= which should eventually equalize.

However, after 9.♘f3! my efforts to find complete equality came to nought, with the main line being:

9...exd5 10.exd5 ♙f5

Black, as we already know, should play for the liberating ...♘e4 in such structures.

11.♙d3! ♙xd3 12.♙xd3 ♘bd7 13.0-0 ♘h5



14.♙ae1!

14.g4 ♙f6! 15.♙d1 ♘f4 16.♘e4 ♘xh3† 17.♘h2 ♙e7 18.♘g3 f5! 19.gxf5 gxf5 20.♘h5 f4 21.♙d2 ♘g5 22.♘xg7 ♘xf3† 23.♙xf3 ♙h4† 24.♙h3 ♙xh3† 25.♘xh3 ♘xg7 26.♙g1† ♘f6 27.♙xf4 ♘e5= is just equal.

14...♘e5 15.♘xe5 ♙xe5 16.♘e4±

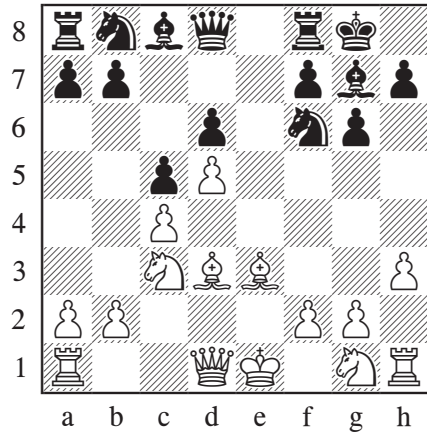
After 7...e6! White's options are **C1) 8.♙d3** and **C2) 8.♘f3**.

C1) 8.♙d3

White keeps the option of ♘ge2, which seems logical.

8...exd5 9.exd5

In case of 9.cxd5, the typical strike 9...b5! 10.♙xb5 ♘xe4! leads to a better position for Black.

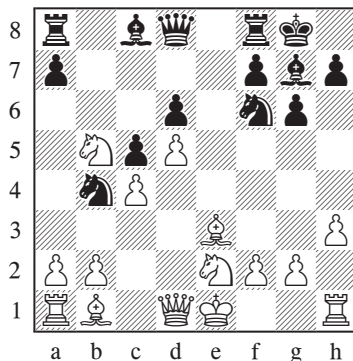


9...♘a6!

A star move, which was first played by Tigran Petrosian. I believe that Black has good chances, for example:

10.♘f3

10.♘ge2 ♘b4 11.♙b1 b5! 12.♘xb5

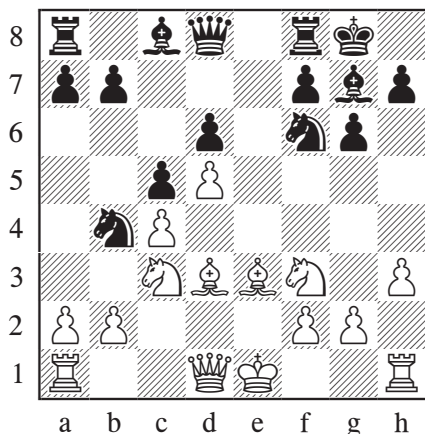


12...♙a6! 13.♘ec3 (13.a4 ♙a5! 14.♙d2 ♙xb5 15.cxb5 a6†) 13...♘fd5 14.♘xd5

(14.cxd5 ♖a5) 14...♘xd5 15.♗xd5 ♙xb2
 16.♙xg6 ♙xb5 17.♙xh7† (17.cxb5 hxg6)†
 17...♙xh7 18.♞b1 ♙c3† 19.♙f1 ♙a6
 20.♗d3† f5 21.♗xc3 ♗f6☞ An important line,
 at the end of which Black seems to have good
 compensation for his pawn.

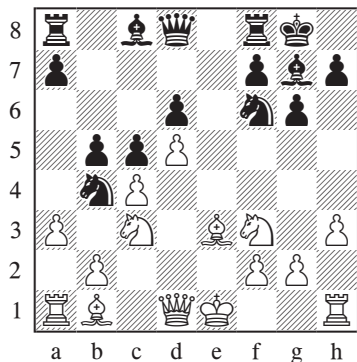
10...♘b4!

10...♘c7 was Petrosian's original treatment,
 but it may not be so good after 11.a4±.



11.♙e2!N

11.♙b1?! b5!! 12.a3



12...♗a5! 13.0-0

13.♘d2 bxc4 14.♘c4 ♗a6 15.axb4 ♗xa1
 16.b5 ♘d7 17.0-0 ♘b6 18.♘d6 ♗xb2
 19.♘ce4 c4 20.♙c5 ♙d7 21.♞e1 ♙xb5
 22.♘xb5 ♗xb5 23.♙xf8 ♞xf8 24.d6 ♞d8
 25.♙a2 h6 26.♗c2 ♗b2† was better for

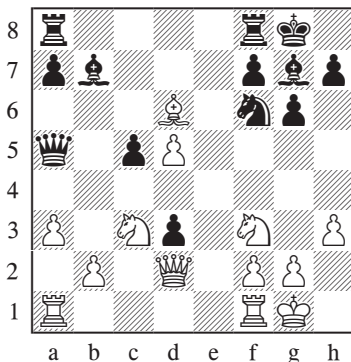
Black in Ju Wenjun – Huang Qian, Khanty-
 Mansiysk 2012.

13...bxc4 14.♙f4

After 14.♗d2 ♘d3† Black clearly had the
 upper hand in Aleksandrov – Kokarev,
 Moscow 2013.

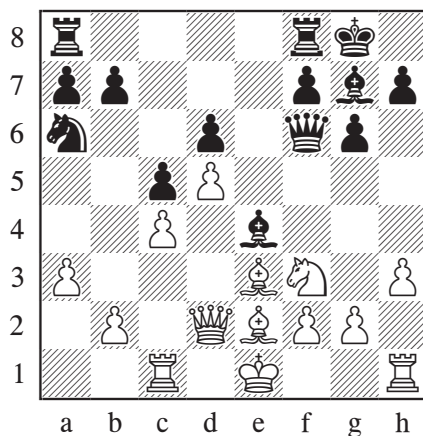
14...♙b7 15.♗d2 ♘d3 16.♙xd3 cxd3 17.♙xd6

As played in Barbero – Forster, Switzerland
 1998. I would like to recommend the strong
 exchange sacrifice:



17...c4!N 18.♙xf8 ♞xf8 19.♘e5 ♙xd5☞
 With a tremendous position for Black.

**11...♙f5 12.♞c1 ♘e4! 13.♘xe4 ♙xe4 14.a3
 ♘a6 15.♗d2 ♗f6**

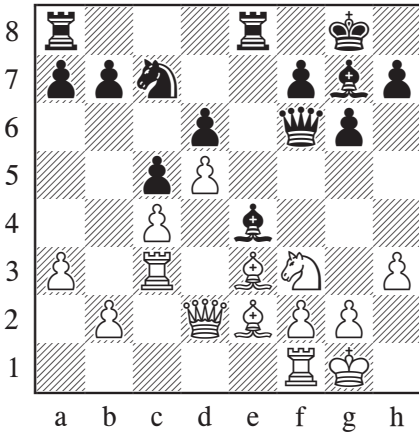


16.♞c3! ♞fe8 17.0-0

17.♙g5 is well met by 17...♗f5, when I
 prefer Black.

17...♖c7

17...b5!? 18.♗g5 ♕f5 19.cxb5 ♖c7 20.♞d1 h6 21.♗f3 ♜ac8 22.♗h2!? is double-edged, but White might be better.



18.♗g5 ♕f5 19.♗f3 ♕e4=

A draw by repetition should be the logical conclusion.

C2) 8.♗f3

This is what most people would play.

8...exd5

We will examine both recaptures:

C21) 9.cxd5 and C22) 9.exd5.

C21) 9.cxd5

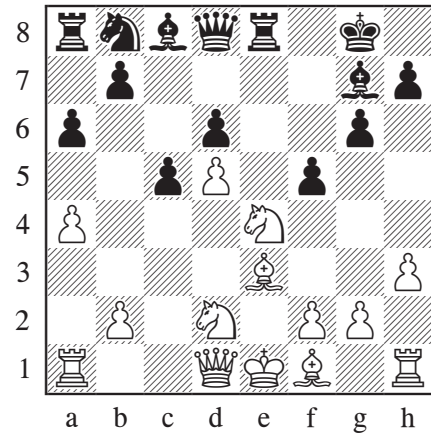
This proved a nuisance for me, as existing theory does not provide a convincing route to equality for Black. The following piece of analysis summarizes my efforts to show that such a route exists:

9...♞e8

The rarely played 9...b5!? may be possible, when the critical test is of course 10.e5!∞.

Equally interesting are C211) 10.♗d2 and C212) 10.♕d3.

C211) 10.♗d2 a6 11.a4 ♗xe4! 12.♗cxe4 f5



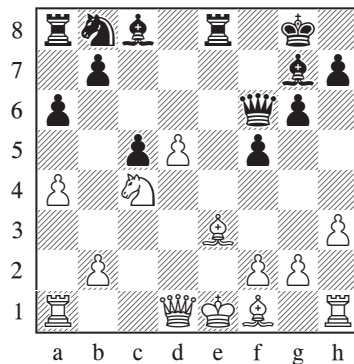
Black is poised to recover the piece, but extreme accuracy is still required to equalize the chances.

13.♕e2!?N

This untried move, playing for positional compensation, looks like the stiffest test of Black's enterprising play.

13.♗xc5? f4+ is much weaker.

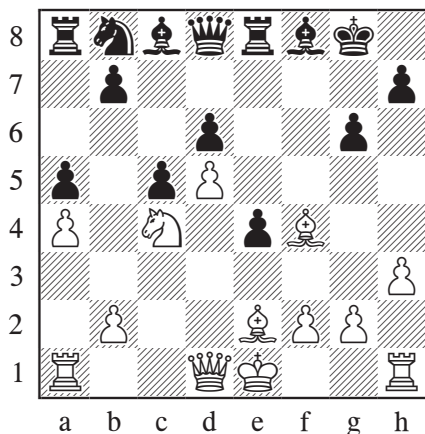
13.♗xd6 ♞xd6 14.♗c4 ♞f6



15.g3!N (15.♕e2? f4! 16.♕xc5 ♗d7 17.♕b4 f3 18.gxf3 ♞xf3 gave Black a winning position in Barria – Minzer, Torre Blanca 1998) 15...f4! 16.gxf4 ♞xf4 17.♞b3 (17.♞e2 ♞f6 18.♕g2 ♕f5 19.0-0 ♗d7±) 17...♞f3! 18.♗d6 c4

19. ♖xc4 ♜xe3† 20. fxe3 ♘d7 21. ♘xc8 ♜xe3†
 22. ♙e2 ♙xb2 23. d6† ♔g7 24. ♞d1 ♘e5
 25. ♜c7† ♔h6 26. ♜xb7 ♜g3† 27. ♔f1 ♜xc8
 28. ♜xc8 ♜f4† 29. ♔e1 ♜b4† 30. ♔f1 ♜f4†=
 With a draw by perpetual.

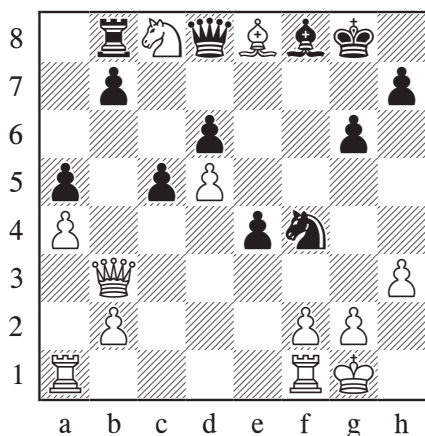
13... fxe4 14. ♘c4 a5! 15. ♙f4 ♙f8



16. ♜b3!?

16.0–0 ♘a6 17. ♜b3 ♘b4 18. ♜g3 ♞a6
 19. ♘d2=

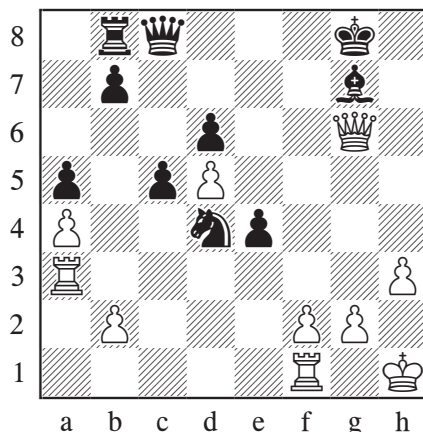
16... ♘a6 17. ♘b6 ♞b8 18.0–0 ♘b4 19. ♙b5
 ♘d3! 20. ♙xe8 ♘xf4 21. ♘xc8



21... ♘e2† 22. ♔h1 ♘d4↗

The game is approximately equal, with a possible further line being:

23. ♜g3 ♜xc8 24. ♙xg6!? hxg6 25. ♜xg6†
 ♙g7 26. ♞a3
 26. ♜xe4?! ♜f5↗



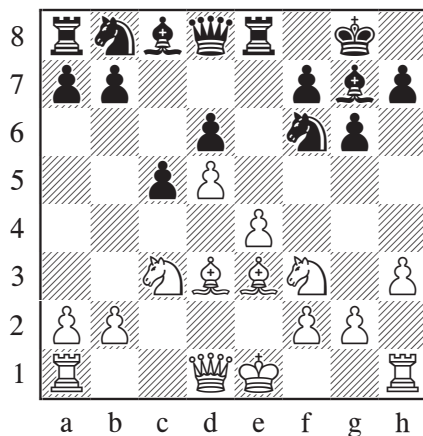
26... ♜f8 27. ♞e3 ♜f6 28. ♜xe4

28. ♜xf6 ♙xf6 29. ♞xe4 ♔f7↗ gives Black the better ending due to the idea of ...b5

28... ♞f8 29. ♞g3 ♜f5

The position is ultimately level, but the material imbalance gives rise to chances for both sides.

C212) 10. ♙d3

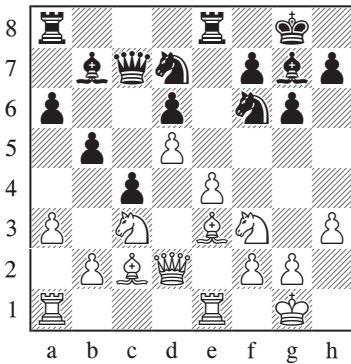


This looks like the most natural reply, as now White is ready to castle.

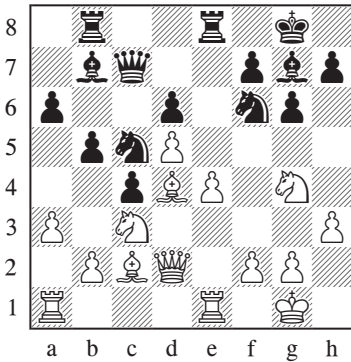
10... ♖xe4!

I have found this drastic idea to be best here, although other ways of playing are of course possible.

I feel obliged to point out one line of play that caused me some concern, despite it being popular in tournament chess. After the customary 10...c4 11. ♖c2 b5 12.a3 ♖bd7 13.0-0 a6 14. ♖d2 ♗c7 15. ♖fe1 ♖b7, Dreev conjured up a quite brilliant idea:



16. ♖h2!? (weaker is 16. ♖d4 ♖e5! 17. ♖h2 because it allows the regrouping 17... ♖fd7!?) In Dreev – Emms, Hastings 2000, Black had no active counterplay, and White’s mobile kingside pawns gave him good chances of an attack. Black went quickly downhill after: 16... ♖c5 17. ♖d4 ♖ab8 18. ♖g4



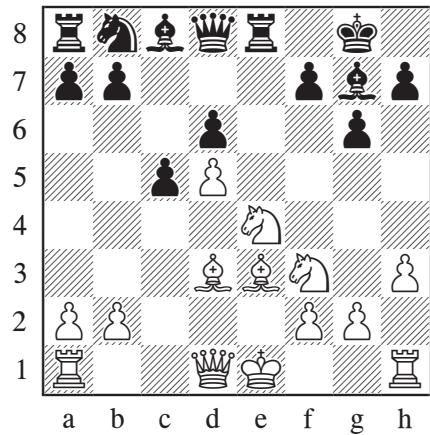
18... ♖cd7 (18... ♖xg4!N should be preferred) 19. ♖e2 ♖xe4? 20. ♖xe4 ♖xe4 21. ♖xg7 ♖xg7 22. ♖g3 ♖ee8 23. ♖e4 f6 24. ♗c3 ♖e5 25. f4 ♖f5

26. ♖g3 ♖xf4 27. ♖e7 ♖h8 28. ♗e3 g5 29. ♖h5 ♖xg4 30. hxg4 ♖f8 31. ♖xh7† 1-0. Although improvements may exist, White’s play looks easier and smoother to me, so I decided to suggest the more concrete text move.

11. ♖xe4

The critical response.

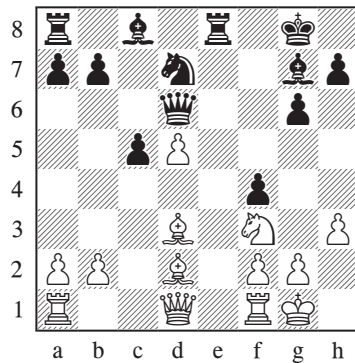
After 11. ♖xe4 ♖xc3† 12. bxc3 ♖xe4 13.0-0 ♖d7 White has some compensation, but it does not look fully sufficient.



11...c4!N

I think that this is an important ramification, ensuring good counterplay for Black.

Weaker is 11...f5?!, as played in Clery – Netzer, Bischwiller 2007, due to: 12. ♖xd6N ♗xd6 13.0-0 f4 (13... ♖d7 14. ♗c1!±) 14. ♖d2 ♖d7

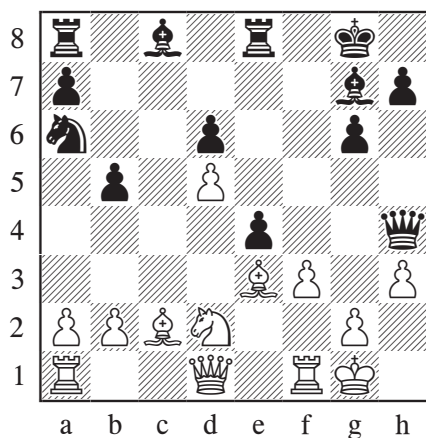


15. ♖a4! ♜f8 16. ♙c3 ♙xc3 17. bxc3 ♖b6
18. ♜b3±

12. ♙c2 f5 13. ♖fd2!

13. ♖xd6 ♜xd6 14. 0–0 ♖a6± is much more comfortable for Black compared to the line given above, as the pawn on c4 cramps White.

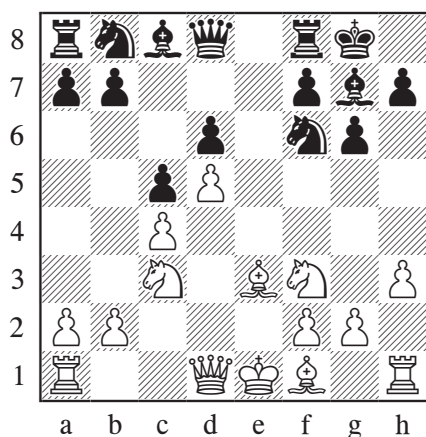
13...fxe4 14. 0–0 ♖a6 15. ♖xc4 b5 16. ♖d2
♜h4 17. f3



17... ♖c5! 18. ♙f2 ♜g5 19. h4 ♜f4 20. g3 ♜f7
21. ♖xe4 ♖xe4 22. ♙xe4 ♙h3 23. ♜e1 ♙xb2
24. ♜b1 ♙c3 25. ♜e3 b4=

With a double-edged game, offering chances to both sides.

C22) 9. exd5



Obviously trying to keep the position symmetrical is in White's interests, as he would prefer not to come under pressure on e4 with his kingside still undeveloped.

9...b5!?

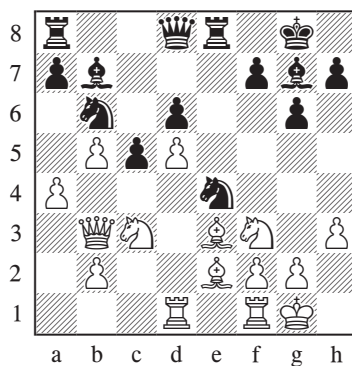
A bolt from the blue, which is approved by the engines. The idea is somewhat typical, but here it is seen in a very pure, almost primitive, form. Unsurprisingly, it is the great Dragoljub Velimirovic who played this move first.

10. cxb5 ♖bd7!

Black is preparing to pile up on the d5-pawn. This is an improvement over the Serbian Grandmaster's original treatment of 10...♜e8 11. ♙e2 ♖e4 12. ♖xe4 ♜xe4 13. 0–0 a6 14. a4 axb5 15. axb5 ♜xa1 16. ♜xa1±, which was a bit better for White in Koscic – Velimirovic, Budva 2003.

11. ♜b3

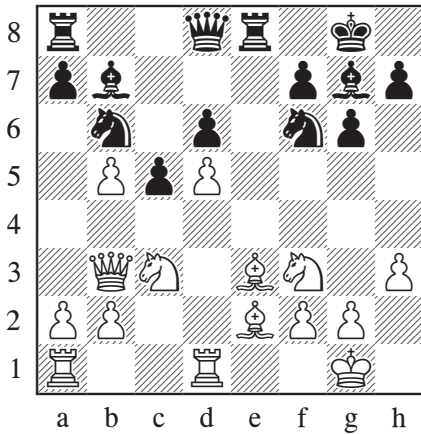
11. ♙e2 ♖b6 12. ♜b3 ♙b7 13. ♜d1 ♜e8 14. 0–0 ♖e4 15. a4 is at least equal for Black, for instance:



15...♜c8! 16. a5 ♖xc3 17. bxc3 c4 18. ♜a2 ♖xd5
19. ♙xc4 ♖xc3 20. ♙xf7+ ♖h8 21. ♜d2 ♙xf3
22. gxf3 ♜xe3 23. ♜xe3 ♖xd1 24. ♜xd1 ♜xa5=

11...♜e8 12. ♙e2 ♙b7 13. 0–0 ♖b6 14. ♜fd1

Keeping the rook on a1 looks a good idea for White, but Black's next is really shocking:



14... ♖xe3!!

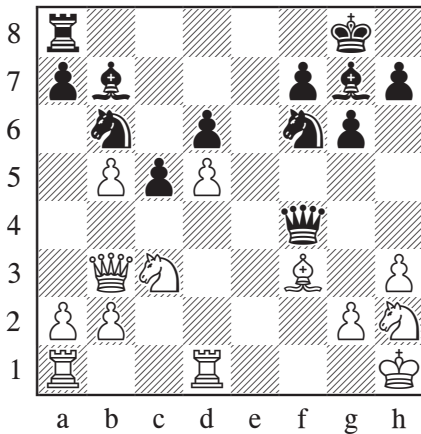
In addition to a pawn, Black further sacrifices an exchange – a tremendous conception.

15. ♜xe3 ♖e7 16. ♘h2 ♖xe3† 17. ♙h1 ♖f4

This is a really impressive position with wild complications. It seems to be approximately equal.

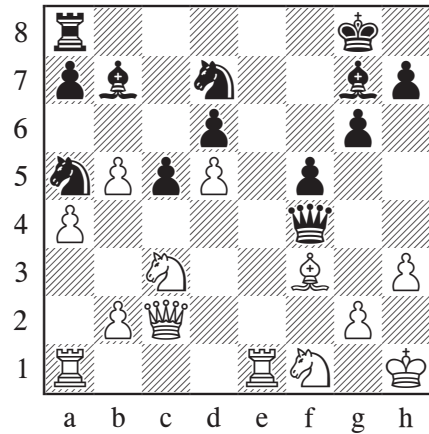
18. ♘f3

18. ♖f1 ♖g3 19. ♖f3 ♖h4↑



18... ♘fd7! 19. a4 ♘c4 20. ♘f1 ♘a5! 21. ♖c2 f5 22. ♖e1

22. ♘e2 ♖h4†



22... ♘e5 23. ♘e2 ♖h4 24. ♘d2 ♘h6 25. ♘f3 ♘xf3 26. ♘xf3 ♘f4 27. ♘e2 ♘e5 28. ♖ab1 c4 29. ♖bd1 ♘b3 30. ♙g1 ♖e8 31. ♘c3 ♙f7

Black's excellent compensation easily proved enough for a draw in Bailey – Mostowik, corr. 2012.

Conclusion

The Karpov Variation is a rather tricky line where Black needs to know a few things to avoid falling into a strategically inferior position. I chose a system based on ...c5, because I think Black has good chances in either a Benoni structure or a double fianchetto Hedgehog – which is what Karpov wants to reach by choosing to play this fluid position. To be honest, I believe this is practically terra incognita, and I expect a lot of developments in this line in the future.