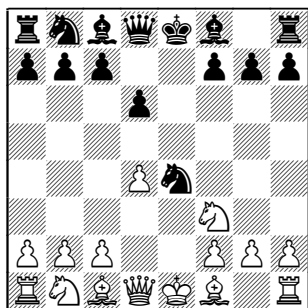


Chapter 19

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♗xe5 d6 4.♗f3
♗xe4 5.d4



5...d5

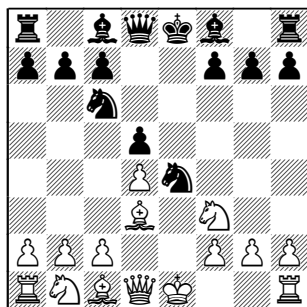
If Black voluntarily retreats his knight from e4, he ends up in a passive and cramped position, for example: 5...♗e7 6.♗d3 ♗f6 7.0-0 0-0 8.h3± with a slight edge for White.

6.♗d3 ♗c6

Black's other possibility is to abstain from exerting pressure against the centre with his pieces and to fortify his d5-pawn instead. For this purpose Black usually plays 6...♗d6 7.0-0 0-0 8.c4 c6. There is a lot of theory on this variation and I believe White has much more chance of fighting for an opening advantage here than in the variation we analyze in this chapter.

There is another possibility

too – 6...♗e7 with the idea of answering 7.0-0 with 7...♗c6 and then transposing to the main line. In that case Black must also reckon with the move 7.c4, so it is much better for him to develop his knight first.



7.0-0

The other two possibilities for White require precise play from Black:

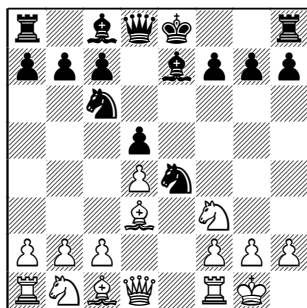
7.♖e2 ♗f5 8.♗bd2 ♖e7 9.0-0 ♗d6 10.♗d1 0-0-0! (It is weaker for Black to opt for 10...♗xd3?! 11.cxd3 ♗d7 12.♗e5 ♗xe5 13.dxe5 ♗f5 14.♗f3±, with a slight edge for White, Grischuk – Sakaev, Moscow 2007.) 11.♞e1 ♗f6 12.♗b3 ♗g4 (12...♗e4 13.c4 dxc4 14.♗xe4 ♗xe4 15.♞xe4 cxb3 16.♞xb3 ♗g6

1.e4 e5 2.♁f3 ♁f6 3.♁xe5 d6 4.♁f3 ♁xe4 5.d4 d5

17.♞e2 ♜f5=) 13.♙g5 (13.c3 ♙e7 14.♙e2 ♁e4=) 13...♜xg5 14.♁xg5 ♙xd1 15.♞axd1 ♁b4 16.c3 ♁xd3 17.♞xd3 c6 18.♞f3 f6 19.♁e6 ♞e8 20.♞fe3 b6 21.♞3e2 g6=;

7.♁c3 ♁xc3 (After 7...♙b4 8. 0–0 ♙xc3 9.bxc3 0–0 10.c4 ♙f5 11.cxd5 ♜xd5 12.c4± White maintains a slight advantage.) 8.bxc3 ♙d6! Black's bishop is more actively placed here than on e7. In addition, he can transfer his knight to the kingside via the e7-square (He should refrain from 8...♙g4 9.♞b1 ♞b8 10.h3 ♙h5 11. ♙b5 ♙e7 12.g4 ♙g6 13.♁e5 0–0 14.♙xc6 bxc6 15.♁xc6 ♞xb1 16. ♁xd8 ♙a3 17.♙xa3 ♞xd1+ 18.♁xd1 ♞xd8 19.♁d2 ♞b8 20.♞e1± and White is closer to victory than Black is to the draw, Leko – Gelfand, Miskolc 2010.). 9.0–0 0–0 10.♁g5 g6 11.♜f3 ♁e7 12.♞e1 c6 13.♙f4 ♁f5=

7...♙e7



8.♞e1

White has two popular alternatives here – 8.♁c3 and 8.c4 and we shall analyze these in the following chapters.

8.♁bd2 ♁xd2 9.♙xd2 ♙g4 10. c3 0–0= Vallejo Pons – Gelfand, Linares 2010.

8.c3 ♙g4 9.♁bd2 (for 9.♞e1 f5 – see 8.♞e1 ♙g4 9.c3 f5) 9...♁xd2 10.♙xd2 0–0 11.♞e1 ♙d6 12.h3 ♙h5= Morozevich – Bu Xiangzhi, Yerevan 2008.

8...♙g4 9.c3

9.♙xe4 dxe4 10.♞xe4 ♙xf3 11. ♜xf3 (It is bad for White to play 11.gxf3 f5 12.♞e1 ♜xd4± and his pawn-structure has been weakened, so Black has the advantage.) 11...♁xd4 12.♜d3 ♁e6= and the position is equal.

We shall deal with the move 9...c4 in the next chapter.

9...f5 10.♁bd2

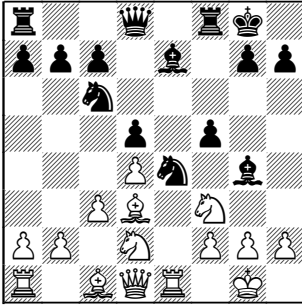
Black also answers 10.♞b3 with 10...0–0, when White has nothing better than 11.♁bd2, transposing to the main line, since it is wrong for White to play 11.♜xb7 owing to 11...♜f6! and Black's rook is ready to join in the attack via the sixth rank. 12.♙f4 (It is even worse for White to play 12.♜b3 ♙xf3! 13.gxf3 ♞b8!, for example: 14.♜c2 ♞g6+ 15.♁f1 ♜d6±; 14.♜d1 ♞g6+ 15.♁f1 ♜d6±; or 14.♜a4 ♞g6+ 15.♁f1 ♙g5±) 12... ♙xf3! 13.♙xc7 ♞g6 14.♞xe4 fxe4 15.♙xd8 ♞b8 16.♜xc6 ♞xc6±

10...0–0

(diagram)

11.♜b3

It is useless for White to play 11.♜c2, because in comparison with the main line: 11.♜b3 ♁a5 12.♜c2 ♁c6 he simply presents his opponent with an extra tempo.

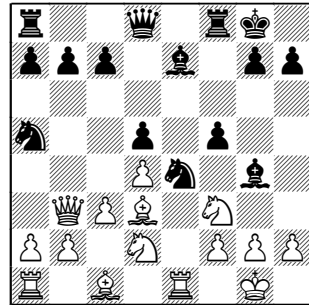


The move 11.♠f1 even increases the effect of the pin on the f3-knight, so it cannot be dangerous to Black. Black now has numerous attractive possibilities, of which I shall show you just the ones which seem to me the most purposeful: 11...♠h4 (Black can also refrain from forcing the issue, by playing 11...♠d6, increasing his kingside pressure. There might follow: 12.♖b3 ♘h8 13. ♖xb7 ♖f6↑ and Black has a very dangerous initiative as compensation for his minimal material deficit.) 12.♗g3 (After 12.♞e2, Black has many attacking ideas, but I like best the prophylactic move 12...♞b8!, defending against the possibility of ♖d1-b3. It is then hard to see how White can complete his development.) 12...♗xf2 (Black can maintain the tension here with the move 12...♖d6!?) 13.♗xf2 f4 14.♖c2 ♗xf3 15.gxf3 ♖f6 16.♠xh7+ ♘h8 17. ♠xf4 ♖xf4 18.♖d3 ♖h6 19.♠f5 ♠xg3+ 20.hxg3 (It would be too risky for White to opt for 20.♗xg3 ♗e7! 21.♠g4 ♗g6↑ and Black's knight penetrates to the f4-out-

post with great effect.) 20...♖h2 21.♗f1=. If Black so wishes, he can now draw by perpetual check: 21...♖h1 22.♗f2 ♖h2, but he can also play for a win without too much risk.

11...♗a5

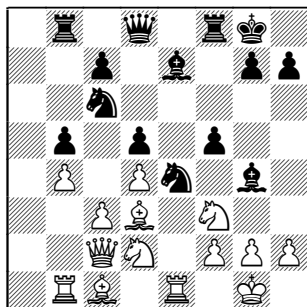
11...♗h8?! – This pawn-sacrifice is incorrect under these circumstances. 12.♖xb7 ♗f6 13.♖b3 ♗g6 14.♠b5 ♗xd2 (14...♠d6 15. ♠xc6 ♗xd2 16.♠xd2 ♠xf3 17.g3+-) 15.♗xd2 ♠d6 16.g3 ♗e7 17.♠d3! (It is less impressive for White to choose 17.♠f1 f4 18.♠g2 ♞b8 19. ♖c2= and thanks to his pawn-wedge on f4, Black can be optimistic about the future, Smeets – Bayram, Antalya 2004.) 17...♖f6 18.c4 c6 19.c5 ♠c7 20.f4±; White has a solid extra pawn and Black's compensation is obviously insufficient.



12.♖c2

12.♖a4 ♗c6 13.♠b5. Bearing in mind what follows in this variation, it would be more prudent for White to retreat his queen to b3 now. 13...♠h4! (Black provokes, with tempo, an important weak-

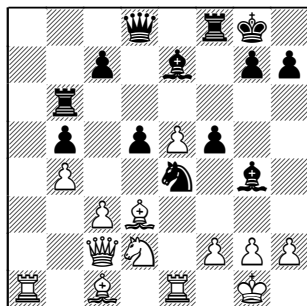
15.a4 ♖b8 16.axb5 axb5



17.♞a1

17.♞e5 ♞xe5 18.dxe5 c5! (The ex-World Champion played too riskily here: 18...♞xf2 19.♞xf2 ♞h4+. Here, instead of 20.♞f1 ♞xe1 21.♞xe1 ♞h4+ 22.g3 ♞xh2 23.♞f1 ♞xc2 24.♞xc2∞ Howell – Kramnik, London 2009, which led to a very complicated endgame, it would be much stronger for White to play 20.g3 f4 21.♞g2 fxg3 22.hxg3 ♞h3+ 23.♞xh3 ♞xg3 24.♞f3 ♞xf3 25.♞g2 ♞f2+ 26.♞xg3 ♞xc2 27.♞xc2± and Black should be happy if he manages to save the game with a perpetual check against White's exposed king.) 19.f3 ♞b6 20.♞xe4 fxe4 21.fxg4 cxb4+ 22.♞h1 ♞f2 23.♞g1 (the game Amontov – Kunin, Moscow 2009, continued with 23. ♞d1? bxc3–+ and Black won) 23...♞c5 24.♞b2 e3 25.cxb4 ♞xb4 26.♞b3 ♞xd2 27. ♞xd5+ ♞f7 28.e6 ♞e7 29.♞a1 b4 30.♞d4 ♞bd8 31.♞e5 ♞xd4 32. ♞xd4 ♞xe6±. White will be hard pressed to save the game.

17...♞b6 18.♞e5 ♞xe5 19. dxe5



19...c5!?!N

Now some very interesting complications arise. Black has also tried 19...♞xf2 20.♞xf2 ♞h4+ 21. ♞f1 (21.g3 f4 22.♞g2 fxg3 23. hxg3 ♞xg3 24.♞xh7+ ♞h8 25.♞h1 ♞xe5= and, strangely enough, White has nothing better than perpetual check) 21...♞xe1 22. ♞xe1 ♞h4+ 23.g3 ♞xh2 24.♞f1∞, and the position is very unclear, Stellwagen – Fridman, Netherlands 2007.

20.f3 cxb4 21.♞b3!

After 21.cxb4, Black should continue with the far-from-obvious move 21...♞g6!→, with a crushing attack.

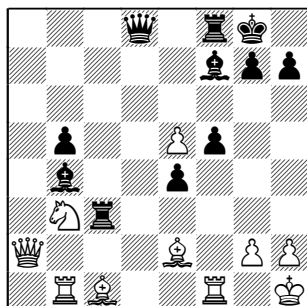
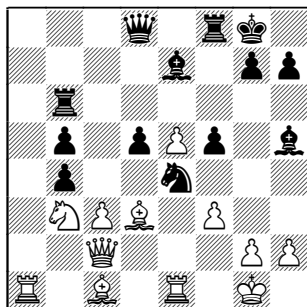
In the variation 21.fxe4 fxe4 22.♞xe4 (White cannot keep his extra piece: 22.♞e2 ♞c5+ 23.♞h1 ♞h4–+, or 22.♞f1 ♞c5+ 23.♞h1 ♞h4–+) dxe4 23.♞xe4 bxc3 24. ♞c3 b4± White's e5-pawn is safely blockaded by Black's bishop, while Black's outside passed b4-pawn is tremendously dangerous, so he has the advantage.

21...♞h5!

White is clearly better after 21...♞h4 22.♞f1 ♞c6 23.fxg4 ♞xc3 24.♞b1 fxg4 25.♞xf8+ ♞xf8 26.

1.e4 e5 2.♁f3 ♁f6 3.♁xe5 d6 4.♁f3 ♁xe4 5.d4 d5

♙e3 ♙f2+ 27.♙xf2 ♚xf2+ 28.♙h1±



22.cxb4

Black has a very good position after 22.fx4 fx4 23.♙e2 ♙xe2 24.♚xe2 ♚c6=, obtaining several passed pawns for the piece.

22...♙xb4 23.♚f1 ♚b8

There is a transposition of moves after 23...♚b7 24.fx4 dxe4 25.♙e2 ♚c7 26.♚a2 ♙f7 27.♚b1! (it is weaker for White to opt for 27.♚d1 ♚e7 28.♙xb5 ♙c3 29.♙a4 ♚xe5 30.♚b2 ♙h5 31.♚d4 ♙d6 32.♙f4 ♚xf4 33.♚xd6 ♚h3! 34.gxh3 ♚xd6= with a probable draw) 27...♚c3 28.♙h1.

24.fx4 dxe4

It is not good for Black to continue with 24...♚b6+ 25.♚f2 ♚xf2+ 26.♚xf2 fx4 27.♙e2.

White also maintains a clear advantage after 24...fx4 25.♚xf8+ ♚xf8 26.♙f1 ♚c8 27.♚a2±

25.♙e2 ♚c8 26.♚a2 ♙f7

26...♙xe2 27.♚xe2 ♚d5 28.♚b1 ♚xe5 29.♙f4±

27.♚b1! ♚c3 28.♙h1!

(diagram)

28...♚b6

There are numerous tactical

nuances in this position and I would evaluate it as approximately equal from the dynamic point of view. White is better after 28... e3 29.e6! ♙xe6 30.♚a6 ♙c4 31.♙xc4+ bxc4 32.♁d4 ♚xd4 33.♚e6+ ♙h8 34.♚xb4± and the fact that Black's king has no escape square is decisive.

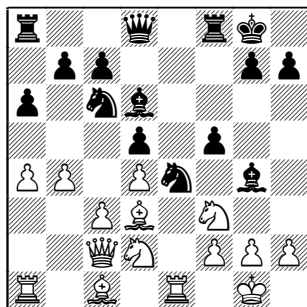
29.♚xf5

29.♙f4 ♚fc8 30.♚b2 h6!± with excellent compensation for the pawn.

29.♙g5!? e3 (29...h6!? 30.♙h4 ♙h7!?) 30.♙h4 ♚c6 31.♚b2 ♚c4! 32.♙g3 (32.♙g5 ♙d5 33.♙g1 ♚a8 34.♚b1 ♙c3 35.♚c2 ♚b4 36.♙f3 ♙xf3 37.♚xf3 ♚e4 38.♚f4 ♚d3 39.♚xb4 e2 40.♚c1 ♚xb1 41.♚xb1 ♙xb4±) 32...♙d5 33.♙xc4 (33.♙g1 f4±) 33...♙xc4 34.♚f3 ♙c3 35.♚b1 ♚e4 36.♙e1 ♙xe5± and despite the absence of a whole rook, Black is on top in this position.

29...♙xb3 30.♚xf8+ ♙xf8 31.♚b2 ♙c2 32.♚xc3 ♙xb1 33.♚b3+ ♙h8 34.♚xb1 ♚f2 35.♙g5 ♚xe2 36.e6 b4 37.e7 ♙xe7 38.♙xe7 b3=. White must give up his bishop in order to stop Black's passed pawns, so it all ends in a draw.

B) 14.a4 ♖d6



15. ♖a3

15. ♖b1. It would be best for Black to deprive his opponent of the threat to deploy his knight on the e5-outpost, which is a permanent theme in this variation. 15... ♘xd2! (worse is 15... ♗h8 16.b5 axb5 17.axb5 ♘a5 18.♗e5 ♖xe5 19.dxe5 ♖h5 and here, after 20. ♗f1 ♗c4 21.f3, as well as following 20.c4, Black must play very precisely in order to hold the balance) 16. ♘xd2 ♖h4! 17. ♗f1 .♖d2 f4 19.f3 ♖d7= Black has no problems in the opening whatsoever, Shirov – Kramnik, France 2005. If he refrains from retreating with his knight to a rather unfavourable position, then his entire kingside will become vulnerable: 17.g3 ♖h5 18.f3 (after 18. ♖a2, Black has the powerful argument 18... f4↑) 18... ♖h3 (18... ♖xf3 19. ♗xf3 ♖xf3 20. ♖f1 ♖h5 21. ♖xf5± and White's position is slightly preferable thanks to his bishop-pair) 19.b5 axb5 20. ♖xb5 ♖fe8 21. ♖d1 (21. ♖xe8+ ♖xe8 22. ♖d1 ♖g6 23. ♗f1 ♖xf1 24. ♗xf1 ♖xg3 25.hxg3

♖xg3 26. ♖xf5 ♖h2= Black will end up the game with a perpetual check on the h1 and h2-squares; it also deserves attention for him to try 22... ♖f7!?, for example: 23. ♖xb7 f4 with initiative for the pawn) 21... ♗e7 22.f4 (22. ♖e2 b6±) 22... ♖g4 (He has no difficulties in the endgame either: 22... ♖xd1 23. ♖xd1 b6= and later, he may continue with the manoeuvre ♗g8-f8 and ♗e7-g8-f6 and this knight will be headed for the e4-square.) 23. ♖b3 b6=

15... ♗h8

Black cannot obtain much with straightforward play: 15... ♖f6 16.b5 (After 16.h3 Black's correct reaction would be, not 16... ♘xd2? 17. ♘xd2 ♖xh3 18.gxh3 ♖g6+ 19. ♗f1+- and White parried his opponent's attack and won the game, Lastin – Slugin, Voronezh 2005, but 16... ♖h5 17. b5 axb5 18. ♖xd6 cxd6 19.axb5 ♗a5=, with an acceptable position.) 16... axb5 (After 16... ♘xd2, White has the rather elegant variation 17. ♖xd2! ♖xf3 18.bxc6 ♖g6 19.g3 bxc6 20. ♖xd6 cxd6 21. ♖xf5 ♖f6 22. ♖d3 g6 23. ♖xf3±, with every chance of realising his advantage, Morozevich – Karpov, Prague 2002.) 17. ♖xd6 cxd6 18. axb5 ♗a5 19. ♖a3! planning ♖a2!, with advantage.

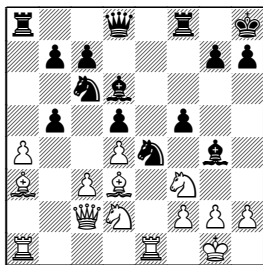
16. ♖b2

It seems a bit awkward for White to play 16. ♖b1 ♖e7 (After 16... ♘xd2?! 17. ♘xd2 ♖h4 18. ♗f1 ♗e7 19.f3 ♖h5 20.b5± Black's attacking potential was neutralized,

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♗e5 d6 4.♘f3 ♗e4 5.d4 d5

while his bad bishop and the weakness of the e5-square would later tell, Morozevich – Gelfand, Yerevan (rapid) 2008. However, a fairly reliable continuation for Black is 16...b6 17.b5 ♖xa3 18.♖xa3 axb5 19.♗xb5 ♗d6 20.♖aa1 ♗xd2 21.♗xd2 f4! =, with approximate equality.) 17.♗b2 ♗d8! (Black's knight is headed for the f4-square.) 18.b5 axb5 19.♗xd6 cxd6 20.♗xb5 ♗e6± and Black's position is at least equal.

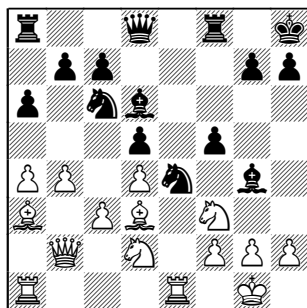
After 16.b5 axb5



we shall analyze two possibilities: 17.♗xd6 and 17.♗xb5.

17.♗xd6 cxd6 18.axb5 (18.♗xb5 ♗a5 – see 17.♗b5 ♗a5 18.♗xd6 cxd6) 18...♗a5 19.h3 ♗h5 20.♗h2 ♖c8 21.♖a3 b6 22.♗df1 f4 23.f3 ♗h4 24.♖e2. Here it is very promising for Black to play 24...♖fe8!, increasing the pressure (in the game Ponomariov – Adams, Wijk aan Zee 2005, there followed 24...♗g3 25.♗xg3 fxg3 26.♗f1 ♗xf3! 27.gxf3 ♖xf3± and Black had sufficient compensation for the piece). After 25.♗c1 ♗g3 26.♖xe8+ ♖xe8 27.♗g4 ♗xf1 28.♗xf1 ♗g3 =, only White might have difficulties in the final position.

17.♗xb5 ♗a5 (It would be too risky for Black, from the point of view of strategy, to play 17...♗h5 18.♗xc6 bxc6 19.♗e5 ♗g5 – 19...c5 20.f3± – 20.♗df3 ♗xf3 21.♗xf3 ♗e7 22.♗xd6 cxd6 23.♗d2 ♗h4 24.♗f1± Amonatov – Iljin, Sochi 2007.) 18.♗b4 (18.♗xd6!? cxd6 19.♖ac1 ♖c8 20.♗b2 ♗h5 = Cheparinov – Korneev, Coria del Rio 2005). Now Black's most promising move seems to be 18...♖f6! (Naturally, he can also play a calm prophylactic move, such as 18...b6 or 18...♗h5.), with the standard idea of ♗d6-f4, and also preserving the possibility of transferring the rook to g6 or h6 to organize an attack against White's king. 19.♗e5 (after 19.h3 Black does not need to sacrifice material or exchange pieces; he can simply play 19...♗h5) 19...♗xe5 20.dxe5 ♖h6±; White's king is seriously endangered.



16...♗e7!

This move has a very bad reputation, but in fact it is very good. Black's knight is transferred to the kingside, adding to his already

excellent piece formation there. The alternatives are inferior:

16...♖e7 17.b5 ♕xa3 18.♞xa3 axb5 19.♕xb5 ♕xf3 20.♜xf3 ♜d8 21.♕d3 ♜f7 22.c4 dxc4 23.♕xc4 ♜fd6 24.♕a2± Andreikin – Rakhmanov, Dagomys 2009;

16...♞e8 17.b5 axb5 and here White would not achieve much with 18.♕xb5 ♖f6 (here 18...♕f4!? is also very good, isolating the enemy bishop on a3) 19.♕xd6 cxd6 20.a5 (after 20.h3, Black can play calmly 20...♕h5∞, maintaining the tension) 20...♞eb8±; White has lost his a5-pawn and must fight for equality, Svidler – Pe.H.Nielsen, Dortmund 2005. Instead, it would be correct for him to continue with 18.axb5! ♜a5 19.♕xd6 cxd6 20.b6±, retaining a slight edge.

17.♜e5 ♜g6!

It is bad for Black to play 17... ♕xe5 18.dxe5 ♜g6 19.f3 ♜xe5 20.♕f1± when his compensation for the piece is clearly insufficient, So – Giri, Wijk aan Zee 2010.

18.♜xg4

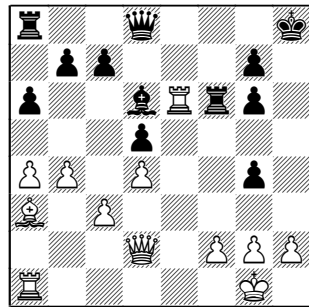
After 18.♕xe4, Black can advantageously sacrifice a piece: 18...fxe4! 19.♜xg4 ♖h4 20.♜e5

(the move 20.h3 weakens White's kingside and after Black's simple reaction 20...h5± White is clearly worse) 20...♖xf2+ 21.♜h1 ♜xe5 22.dxe5 ♕xe5 23.b5 ♞f5 24.bxa6 bxa6±. White's king is vulnerable and Black's powerful centralized pieces provide him with an advantage.

18...♜xd2 19.♖xd2 fxg4 20.♕xg6

White is unable to restrict the mobility of Black's knight; after 20.g3, Black has the reply 20... ♜h4!

20...hxg6 21.♞e6 ♞f6=



Black has no problems at all. His bishop is much more powerful than its white counterpart and his tripled (!) pawns are quite safe.

Conclusion

White usually castles on move 7, but the moves 7.♖e2 and 7.♜c3 require very precise play from Black in order to maintain equality. In the main line, White has the possibility of repeating the position on his thirteenth move by playing 13.♖b3. If he does not do so, however, Black obtains very active play and his prospects seem to be at least equal.