Chapter 19  1.e4 e5 2.\textit{d}f3 \textit{d}f6 3.\textit{d}xe5 d6 4.\textit{d}f3 \textit{d}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...\textit{d}e7 6.\textit{d}d3 \textit{d}f6 7.0-0 0-0 8.h3 with a slight edge for White.

6.\textit{d}d3 \textit{c}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...\textit{d}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...\textit{d}e7 with the idea of answering 7.0-0 with 7...\textit{d}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.\textit{e}e2 \textit{f}f5 8.\textit{bd}2 \textit{e}e7 9.0-0 \textit{d}d6 10.\textit{d}d1 0–0–0! (It is weaker for Black to opt for 10...\textit{xd}3?! 11.cxd3 \textit{d}d7 12.e5 \textit{xe}5 13.dxe5 \textit{f}5 14.\textit{f}3±, with a slight edge for White, Grischuk – Sakaev, Moscow 2007.) 11.\textit{e}e1 \textit{f}6 12.\textit{b}3 \textit{g}4 (12...\textit{e}4 13.c4 dxc4 14.\textit{xe}4 \textit{xe}4 15.\textit{xe}4 cxb3 16.\textit{xb}3 \textit{g}6
$1.e4\ e5\ 2.Nf3\ \underline{\text{Nf6}}\ 3.Nxe5\ \underline{\text{d6}}\ 4.Nf3\ \underline{\text{Nxe4}}\ 5.d4\ \underline{\text{d5}}$

$17.e2\ \underline{\text{Qf5}}=)\ 13.g5\ (13.c3\ \underline{\text{e7}}\ 14.e2\ \underline{\text{e4}}=)\ 13...\underline{\text{xg5}}\ 14.xg5\ \underline{\text{xd1}}\ 15.exd1\ \underline{\text{db4}}\ 16.c3\ \underline{\text{xd3}}\ 17.exd3\ c6\ 18.\underline{\text{f3}}\ f6\ 19.\underline{\text{e6}}\ \underline{\text{e8}}\ 20.\underline{\text{fe3}}\ b6\ 21.\underline{\text{e2}}\ g6=)$

$7.Nc3\ \underline{\text{xc3}}\ (\text{After}\ 7...\underline{\text{b4}}\ 8.0-0\ \underline{\text{xc3}}\ 9.bxc3\ 0-0\ 10.c4\ \underline{\text{f5}}\ 11.cxd5\ \underline{\text{xd5}}\ 12.c4\ \underline{\text{e4}}\text{ White maintains a slight advantage.})\ 8.bxc3\ \underline{\text{d6}}!\text{ Black's bishop is more actively placed here than on e7. In addition, he can transfer his knight to the kingside via the e7-square (He should refrain from 8...g4 9.b1 \underline{\text{b8}}\ 10.h3 \underline{\text{h5}}\ 11.\underline{\text{b5}}\ \underline{\text{e7}}\ 12.g4\ \underline{\text{g6}}\ 13.\underline{\text{e5}}\ 0-0\ 14.\underline{\text{xc6}}\ \text{bxc6}\ 15.\underline{\text{xc6}}\ \underline{\text{xb1}}\ 16.\underline{\text{xd8}}\ \underline{\text{a3}}\ 17.\underline{\text{xa3}}\ \underline{\text{xd1+}}\ 18.\underline{\text{xd1}}\ \underline{\text{xd8}}\ 19.\underline{\text{d2}}\ \underline{\text{b8}}\ 20.\underline{\text{e1}}\pm\text{ and White is closer to victory than Black is to the draw, Leko – Gelfand, Miskolc 2010.})\ 9.0-0\ 0-0\ 10.g5\ g6\ 11.f3\ \underline{\text{e7}}\ 12.\underline{\text{e1}}\ c6\ 13.\underline{\text{f4}}\ \underline{\text{f5}}=$

$7...\underline{\text{e7}}$

$8.\underline{\text{e1}}$

White has two popular alternatives here – 8.\underline{\text{c3}} and 8.c4 and we shall analyze these in the following chapters.

$8.\underline{\text{bd2}}\ \underline{\text{xd2}}\ 9.\underline{\text{xd2}}\ \underline{\text{g4}}\ 10.\underline{\text{c3}}\ 0-0=\text{ Vallejo Pons – Gelfand, Linares 2010.}$

$8.c3\ \underline{\text{g4}}\ 9.\underline{\text{bd2}}\ (\text{for}\ 9.\underline{\text{e1}}\ f5 – \text{see}\ 8.\underline{\text{e1}}\ \underline{\text{g4}}\ 9.\underline{\text{c3}}\ f5)\ 9...\underline{\text{xd2}}\ 10.\underline{\text{xd2}}\ 0-0\ 11.\underline{\text{e1}}\ \underline{\text{d6}}\ 12.h3\ \underline{\text{h5}}=\text{ Morozevich – Bu Xiangzhi, Yerevan 2008.}$

$8...\underline{\text{g4}}\ 9.\underline{\text{c3}}$

$9.\underline{\text{xe4}}\ \text{dxe4}\ 10.\underline{\text{xe4}}\ \underline{\text{xf3}}\ 11.\underline{\text{xf3}}\ (\text{It is bad for White to play 11.gxf3 f5 12.\underline{\text{e1}}\ \underline{\text{xd4}}\pm\text{ and his pawn-structure has been weakened, so Black has the advantage.})\ 11...\underline{\text{xd4}}\ 12.\underline{\text{d3}}\ \underline{\text{e6}}=\text{ and the position is equal.}$

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

$9...f5\ 10.\underline{\text{bd2}}$

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

$11.\underline{\text{b3}}$

It is useless for White to play 11.\underline{\text{c2}}, because in comparison with the main line: 11.\underline{\text{b3}}\ \underline{\text{a5}}\ 12.\underline{\text{c2}}\ \underline{\text{c6}}\ \text{he simply presents his opponent with an extra tempo.}$

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The move 11.Nf1 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...Bh4 (Black can also refrain from forcing the issue, by playing 11...Bd6, increasing his kingside pressure. There might follow: 12.Qb3 Kh8 13.Qxb7 Rf6 14.Bb5 Nxd2 (14...Bd6 15.Bxc6 Qxd2 16.Bxd2 Qxf3 17.g3++) 15.Qxd2 Bd6 16.g3 Ne7 17.f3! (It is less impressive for White to choose 17.f3 f4 18.g2 Bb8 19.Qc2= 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.

11...Na5
11...Kh8?! – This pawn-sacrifice is incorrect under these circumstances. 12.Qxb7 Qf6 13.b3 g6 14.Bb5 Qxd2 (14...d6 15.Qxc6 Qxd2 16.Qxd2 Qxf3 17.g3++) 15.Qxd2 Bd6 16.g3 Ne7 17.f3! (It is less impressive for White to choose 17.f3 f4 18.g2 Bb8 19.Qc2= and thanks to his pawn-wedge on f4, Black can be optimistic about the future, Smeets – Bayram, Antalya 2004.) 17...Qf6 18.c4 c6 19.c5 c7 20.f4±; White has a solid extra pawn and Black’s compensation is obviously insufficient.

12.Qc2
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-

14.g3 (but not 14.Nxh4 Qxh4 15.Nf1 f6→ and White will come under direct attack) 14...f6 15.\textit{\textbf{Q}}xc6 bxc6 16.Qxc6

16...\textit{\textbf{b}}8!. This is a very powerful attacking move (it is much weaker for Black to play 16...\textit{\textbf{e}}8 since after 17.\textit{\textbf{e}}5± he will need to worry about maintaining the balance, Anand – Kramnik, Wijk aan Zee 1999). 17.c4 (After 17.\textit{\textbf{w}}e6+ \textit{\textbf{f}}7 18.\textit{\textbf{Q}}xe4 dxe4 19.\textit{\textbf{e}}5 \textit{\textbf{Q}}xe5 20.\textit{\textbf{w}}xe5 \textit{\textbf{f}}3± Black’s queen will be continually trying to get to the h3-square and White’s position is very dangerous.) 17...f4 18.\textit{\textbf{Q}}xe4 dxe4

and now:
19.\textit{\textbf{w}}xe4 \textit{\textbf{xf}}3 20.\textit{\textbf{w}}xf3 fxg3 21.hxg3 \textit{\textbf{w}}xd4 22.\textit{\textbf{f}}4 \textit{\textbf{x}}b2 23.\textit{\textbf{f}}1 \textit{\textbf{xf}}2 (here it might be stronger for Black to continue with 23...\textit{\textbf{w}}d7!?, increasing the pressure) 24.\textit{\textbf{w}}xf2 \textit{\textbf{x}}a1. Black has an extra pawn, but realising it will not be at all easy, Cheparinov – Gelfand, Sochi 2008;

19.\textit{\textbf{d}}5 \textit{\textbf{Q}}xe5 20.dxe5 fxg3 21.\textit{\textbf{w}}xg3 \textit{\textbf{b}}6 22.\textit{\textbf{w}}xe4 (It is even worse for White to choose 22.\textit{\textbf{w}}d5+ \textit{\textbf{w}}xd5 23.cxd5 \textit{\textbf{f}}3 24.g4. He has no other defence against his opponent’s manoeuvre \textit{\textbf{f}}5-h5. 24...\textit{\textbf{Q}}xg4 25.\textit{\textbf{Q}}xe4 \textit{\textbf{f}}3 26.\textit{\textbf{f}}4 \textit{\textbf{xf}}4 27.\textit{\textbf{xf}}4 g5 28.\textit{\textbf{g}}3 \textit{\textbf{xb}}2 and Black has excellent chances of winning this position.) 22...\textit{\textbf{f}}3 23.\textit{\textbf{w}}h4 \textit{\textbf{w}}xh4 24.gxh4 \textit{\textbf{g}}6+ 25.\textit{\textbf{h}}2 \textit{\textbf{g}}2+ 26.\textit{\textbf{h}}3 \textit{\textbf{xf}}2 27.\textit{\textbf{e}}3 \textit{\textbf{xb}}2 and only Black has winning prospects.

12...\textit{\textbf{c}}6 13.b4 \textit{\textbf{a}}6

White has two logical possibilities now: A) 14.\textit{\textbf{b}}1 and B) 14.a4.

A) 14.\textit{\textbf{b}}1 \textit{\textbf{b}}5!

Black exploits the circumstance that White’s rook has abandoned the a-file and blocks the advance of his b4-pawn indefinitely.
15.a4 \( \text{b8} \) 16.axb5 axb5

17.\( \text{ea} \)1
17.\( \text{e}5 \) \( \text{dxe}5 \) 18.dxe5 c5! (The ex-World Champion played too riskily here: 18...\( \text{xf}2 \) 19.\( \text{xf}2 \) \( \text{h}4+ \). Here, instead of 20.\( \text{f}1 \) \( \text{xe}1 \) 21.\( \text{xe}1 \) \( \text{h}4+ \) 22.g3 \( \text{h}2 \) 23.\( \text{f}1 \) \( \text{xc}2 \) 24.\( \text{xc}2 \)\( \text{∞} \) Howell – Kramnik, London 2009, which led to a very complicated endgame, it would be much stronger for White to play 20.g3 f4 21.\( \text{g}2 \) fxg3 22.hxg3 \( \text{h}3+ \) 23.\( \text{xh}3 \) \( \text{xg}3 \) 24.\( \text{f}3 \) \( \text{xf}3 \) 25.\( \text{g}2 \) \( \text{f}2+ \) 26.\( \text{gx}3 \) \( \text{xc}2 \) 27.\( \text{xc}2 \)\( \text{∞} \) and Black should be happy if he manages to save the game with a perpetual check against White’s exposed king.) 19.f3 \( \text{b6} \) 20.\( \text{xe}4 \) \( \text{fxe}4 \) 21.fxg4 cxb4+ 22.\( \text{h}1 \) \( \text{f}2 \) 23.\( \text{g}1 \) (the game Amonatov – Kunin, Moscow 2009, continued with 23.\( \text{d}1? \) bxc3++ and Black won) 23...\( \text{c5} \) 24.\( \text{b}2 \) e3 25.cx\( \text{b}4 \) \( \text{xb}4 \) 26.\( \text{b}3 \) \( \text{xd}2 \) 27.\( \text{xd}5+ \) \( \text{f}7 \) 28.e6 \( \text{e}7 \) 29.\( \text{d}1 \) b4 30.\( \text{d}4 \) \( \text{bd}8 \) 31.\( \text{e}5 \) \( \text{xd}4 \) 32.\( \text{xd}4 \) \( \text{xe}6 \)\( \text{f} \). White will be hard pressed to save the game.

17.\( \text{e}6 \) 18.\( \text{e}5 \) \( \text{xe}5 \) 19.\( \text{dxe}5 \)

19...\( \text{c}5! ? \text{N} \)
Now some very interesting complications arise. Black has also tried 19...\( \text{xf}2 \) 20.\( \text{xf}2 \) \( \text{h}4+ \) 21.\( \text{f}1 \) (21.g3 f4 22.\( \text{g}2 \) fxg3 23.\( \text{xh}3 \) \( \text{h}8 \) 24.\( \text{xh}7+ \) \( \text{h}8 \) 25.\( \text{h}1 \) \( \text{xe}5 \) and, strangely enough, White has nothing better than perpetual check) 21...\( \text{xe}1 \) 22.\( \text{xe}1 \) \( \text{h}4+ \) 23.g3 \( \text{hx}2 \) 24.\( \text{f}1 \)\( \text{∞} \), and the position is very unclear, Stellwagen – Fridman, Netherlands 2007.

20.\( \text{f}3 \) \( \text{xb}4 \) 21.\( \text{b}3 \)!
After 21.cxb4, Black should continue with the far-from-obvious move 21...\( \text{g}6! \rightarrow \), with a crushing attack.

In the variation 21.fxe4 \( \text{fxe}4 \) 22.\( \text{xe}4 \) (White cannot keep his extra piece: 22.\( \text{xe}2 \) \( \text{c}5+ \) 23.\( \text{h}1 \) \( \text{h}4–+ \), or 22.\( \text{f}1 \) \( \text{c}5+ \) 23.\( \text{h}1 \) \( \text{h}4–+ \)) dxe4 23.\( \text{xe}4 \) bxc3 24.\( \text{c}3 \) b4\( \text{∞} \) 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...\( \text{h}5 \)!
White is clearly better after 21...\( \text{h}4 \) 22.\( \text{fl} \) \( \text{c}6 \) 23.fxg4 \( \text{xc}3 \) 24.\( \text{b}1 \) fxg4 25.\( \text{xf}8+ \) \( \text{xf}8 \) 26.

\[\text{Be3} \text{Bf2+ 27.Bxf2} \text{Qxf2+ 28.Kh1}\]

22.cx\text{b}4

Black has a very good position after 22.fxe4 fxe4 23.\text{e}2 \text{xe}2 24.\text{exe}2 \text{c}6=, obtaining several passed pawns for the piece.

22...\text{xb}4 23.\text{xf}1 \text{xb}8

There is a transposition of moves after 23...\text{b}7 24.fxe4 dxe4 25.\text{xe}2 \text{xc}7 26.\text{a}2 \text{f}7 27.\text{b}1! (it is weaker for White to opt for 27.\text{d}1 \text{e}7 28.\text{xb}5 \text{c}3 29.\text{a}4 \text{xe}5 30.\text{b}2 \text{h}5 31.\text{d}4 \text{d}6 32.\text{f}4 \text{xf}4 33.\text{xd}6 \text{h}3! 34.\text{gxh}3 \text{xd}6= with a probable draw) 27...\text{e}3 28.\text{h}1.

24.fxe4 dxe4

It is not good for Black to continue with 24...\text{b}6+ 25.\text{f}2 \text{xf}2+ 26.\text{xf}2 fxe4 27.\text{e}2.

White also maintains a clear advantage after 24...fxe4 25.\text{xf}8+ \text{xf}8 26.\text{f}1 \text{c}8 27.\text{a}2\+

25.\text{xe}2 \text{c}8 26.\text{a}2 \text{f}7

26...\text{xe}2 27.\text{xe}2 \text{d}5 28.\text{b}1 \text{exe}5 29.\text{b}1\+

27.\text{b}1! \text{e}3 28.\text{h}1!

(diagram)

28...\text{b}6

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! \text{xe}6 30.\text{a}6 \text{c}4 31.\text{xc}4+ \text{xc}4 32.\text{d}4 \text{xd}4 33.\text{e}6+ \text{h}8 34.\text{xb}4= and the fact that Black's king has no escape square is decisive.

29.\text{xf}5

29.\text{f}4 \text{f}c8 30.\text{b}2 \text{h}6= with excellent compensation for the pawn.

29.\text{g}5!? e3 (29...\text{h}6!? 30.\text{h}4 \text{h}7=?) 30.\text{h}4 \text{c}6 31.\text{b}2 \text{c}4!

32.\text{g}3 (32.\text{g}5 \text{d}5 33.\text{g}1 \text{a}8 34.\text{b}1 \text{c}3 35.\text{c}2 \text{b}4 36.\text{f}3 \text{xf}3 37.\text{xf}3 \text{e}4 38.\text{f}4 \text{d}3 39.\text{xb}4 e2 40.\text{c}1 \text{xb}1 41.\text{xb}1 \text{xb}4=) 32...\text{d}5 33.\text{xc}4 (33.\text{g}1 \text{f}4=) 33...\text{xc}4 34.\text{f}3 \text{c}3 35.\text{b}1 \text{e}4 36.\text{e}1 \text{xe}5= and despite the absence of a whole rook, Black is on top in this position.

29...\text{xb}3 30.\text{xf}8+ \text{xf}8

31.\text{b}2 \text{c}2 32.\text{xc}3 \text{xb}1 33.\text{b}3+ \text{h}8 34.\text{xb}1 \text{f}2 35.\text{g}5 \text{xe}2 36.e6 \text{b}4 37.e7 \text{xe}7 38.\text{xe}7 \text{b}3= White must give up his bishop in order to stop Black's passed pawns, so it all ends in a draw.
Chapter 19

B) 14.a4 \(\triangle d6\)

15.\(\triangle a3\)

15.\(\triangle b1\). 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... \(\triangle x d2\)! (worse is 15...\(\triangle h8\) 16.b5 axb5 17.axb5 \(\triangle a5\) 18.\(\triangle e5\) \(\triangle x e5\) 19.dxe5 \(\triangle h5\) and here, after 20. \(\triangle f1\) \(\triangle c4\) 21.f3, as well as following 20.c4, Black must play very precisely in order to hold the balance) 16.\(\triangle x d2\) \(\triangle h4\)! 17.\(\triangle f1\) \(\triangle d2\) f4 19.f3 \(\triangle d7\) = 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 \(\triangle h5\) 18.f3 (after 18.\(\triangle a2\), Black has the powerful argument 18... f4\(\uparrow\)) 18...\(\triangle h3\) (18...\(\triangle x f3\) 19.\(\triangle x f3\) \(\triangle x f3\) 20.\(\square f1\) \(\triangle h5\) 21.\(\triangle x f5\)\(\downarrow\) and White’s position is slightly preferable thanks to his bishop-pair) 19.b5 axb5 20.\(\triangle x b5\) \(\triangle f e 8\) 21.\(\triangle d1\) (21.\(\triangle x e 8\)\(\uparrow\) \(\triangle x e 8\) 22.\(\triangle d 1\) \(\triangle g 6\) 23. \(\triangle f 1\) \(\triangle x f 1\) 24.\(\triangle x f 1\) \(\triangle x g 3\) 25.\(\triangle x g 3\) \(\triangle x g 3\) 26.\(\triangle x f 5\) \(\triangle h 2\) = 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...\(\triangle f 7\)\(\downarrow\)?, for example: 23. \(\triangle x b 7\) f4 with initiative for the pawn) 21.\(\triangle e 7\) 22.f4 (22.\(\triangle e 2\) b6\(\uparrow\)) 22...\(\triangle g 4\) (He has no difficulties in the endgame either: 22...\(\triangle x d 1\) 23.\(\triangle x d 1\) b6 = and later, he may continue with the manoeuvre \(\triangle g 8\)-f8 and \(\triangle e 7\)-g8-f6 and this knight will be headed for the e4-square.) 23.\(\triangle b 3\) b6 =

15...\(\triangle h 8\)

Black cannot obtain much with straightforward play: 15... \(\triangle f 6\) 16.b5 (After 16.h3 Black’s correct reaction would be, not 16... \(\triangle x d 2\) ? 17.\(\triangle x d 2\) \(\triangle x h 3\) 18.gxh3 \(\triangle g 6\) + 19.\(\triangle f 1\) \(\uparrow\) and White parried his opponent’s attack and won the game, Lastin – Slugin, Voronezh 2005, but 16...\(\triangle h 5\) 17. b5 axb5 18.\(\triangle x d 6\) cxd6 19.axb5 \(\triangle a 5\) =, with an acceptable position.) 16.axb5 (After 16...\(\triangle x d 2\), White has the rather elegant variation 17.\(\triangle x d 2\)! \(\triangle x f 3\) 18.bxc6 \(\triangle g 6\) 19.g3 bxc6 20.\(\triangle x d 6\) cxd6 21.\(\triangle x f 5\) \(\triangle f 6\) 22.\(\triangle x d 3\) g6 23.\(\triangle x f 3\)\(\downarrow\), with every chance of realising his advantage, Morozevich – Karpov, Prague 2002.) 17.\(\triangle x d 6\) cxd6 18. axb5 \(\triangle a 5\) 19.\(\triangle a 3\)! planning \(\triangle a 2\)!, with advantage.

16.\(\triangle b 2\)

It seems a bit awkward for White to play 16.\(\triangle e b 1\) \(\triangle e 7\) (After 16...\(\triangle x d 2\)! 17.\(\triangle x d 2\) \(\triangle h 4\) 18.\(\triangle f 1\) \(\triangle e 7\) 19.f3 \(\triangle h 5\) 20.b5\(\downarrow\) Black’s attacking potential was neutralized,
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.¤xb5 Ne6³ 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.¤d1 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.¤xe6 bxc6 19.¤e5 ¤g5 – 19...c5 20.¤f3= – 20.¤d3 ¤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 ¤h6³; 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...\(\text{we}7 \ 17.b5 \ \text{\&xa3} \ 18.\text{\&xa3} \ \text{axb5} \ 19.\text{\&xb5} \ \text{\&xf3} \ 20.\text{\&xf3} \ \text{\&d8} \ 21.\text{\&d3} \ \text{\&f7} \ 22.\text{c4} \ \text{dxc4} \ 23.\text{\&xc4} \ \text{\&fd6} \ 24.\text{\&a2\pm} \) Andreikin – Rakhmanov, Dagomys 2009;

16...\text{\&e8} \ 17.b5 \ \text{axb5} \ and here White would not achieve much with 18.\text{\&xb5} \ \text{\&f6} \ (here 18...\text{\&f4}?! \ is also very good, isolating the enemy bishop on a3) 19.\text{\&xd6} \ \text{cxd6} \ 20.a5 \ (after 20.h3, Black can play calmly 20...\text{\&h5\infty}, maintaining the tension) 20...\text{\&eb8\mp}; 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! \text{\&a5} 19.\text{\&xd6} \ \text{cxd6} \ 20.b6\pm, retaining a slight edge.

17.\text{\&e5} \ \text{\&g6}!

It is bad for Black to play 17...\text{\&xe5} \ 18.dxe5 \ \text{\&g6} \ 19.f3 \ \text{\&xe5} \ 20.\text{\&f1\mp} \ when his compensation for the piece is clearly insufficient, So – Giri, Wijk aan Zee 2010.

18.\text{\&xg4}

After 18.\text{\&xe4}, Black can advantageously sacrifice a piece: 18...\text{fxe4}! \ 19.\text{\&xg4} \ \text{\&h4} \ 20.\text{\&e5} \ (the move 20.h3 weakens White’s kingside and after Black’s simple reaction 20...\text{\&h5\mp} \ White is clearly worse) 20...\text{\&xf2\+} \ 21.\text{\&h1} \ \text{\&xe5} \ 22.dxe5 \ \text{\&xe5} \ 23.b5 \ \text{\&f5} \ 24.bxa6 \ \text{bxa6\mp}. White’s king is vulnerable and Black’s powerful centralized pieces provide him with an advantage.

18...\text{\&xd2} \ 19.\text{\&xd2} \ \text{fxg4} \ 20.\text{\&xg6}

White is unable to restrict the mobility of Black’s knight; after 20.g3, Black has the reply 20...\text{\&h4}!

20...\text{hxg6} \ 21.\text{\&e6} \ \text{\&f6}=\text{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.\text{\&e2} and 7.\text{\&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.\text{\&b3}. If he does not do so, however, Black obtains very active play and his prospects seem to be at least equal.