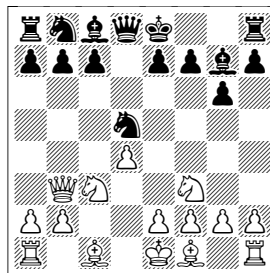


## Gruenfeld Defense, Romanishin Variation

A Preperatoire for White

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 d5 4.Nf3 Bg7 5.cxd5 Nxd5 6.Qb3** This combination of the Exchange Variation and Russian Variation was developed by Oleg Romanishin, among others. It has proven successful at the board, scoring about 55%, though theoreticians consider the chances about even. Perhaps its practical success is due to Black rarely being prepared for it. The Romanishin Variation is often overlooked in books on the Gruenfeld. Karpov doesn't mention it, neither do Shamkovich & Cartier. The basic idea is to put pressure at d5, and to eventually conquer the center with e4. At b3, the queen can capture should Black choose to exchange knights at c3. In this introductory analysis, I present the opinions of various authorities and give practical suggestions for the player of the White pieces.

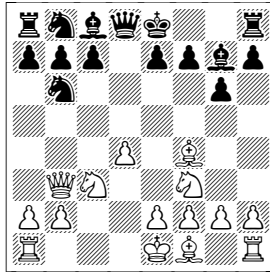


**6...Nxc3** This is the move most Gruenfeld players will consider first, since it fits the pattern of the well-known lines of the Exchange Variation.

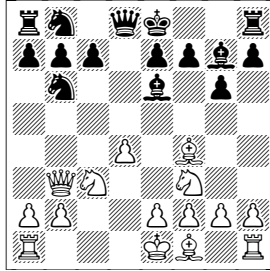
**6...Nf6 7.Bg5 Be6** seems a rather dubious gambit. **8.Qxb7!** (**8.Qc2** see Small-Keene.) **8...Nbd7 9.Nb5 O-O 10.Nxc7 Rb8 11.Qxa7 Rxb2 12.Nxe6 fxe6 13.Qa3** gives White a pair of free pawns, and all White has to do is find some way to castle.;

**6...c6 7.e4 Nb6 8.Bf4** is similar to the main line. **8...O-O 9.Rd1 Bg4 10.a4 a5 11.d5 cxd5 12.Nxd5 Nxd5 13.exd5 (13.Qxb7!? Qb6 14.Qxd5 Na6) 13...Na6 14.Bxa6? (14.Bb5 Bd7 15.O-O Nc5 16.Qa3 Bxb5 17.axb5** looks a little better for White.) **14...Rxa6 15.Be3 Qd7 16.O-O Bxf3 17.gxf3 Rf6** Black is clearly better, Speelman - Ivanchuk, New York 1995.;

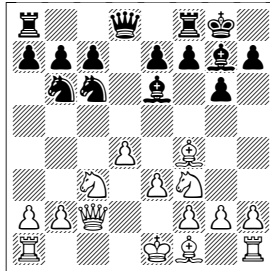
**6...Nb6 7.Bf4!?** White takes complete control of e5, and puts some pressure at c7. Instead, **7.e4** will likely lead to one of the Russian Variation positions.



(7.Bg5?! Be6 (7...h6 8.Bh4 Be6! (8...g5 9.Bg3 g4 10.Nd2 Qxd4 11.O-O-O gives White more than enough compensation for the pawn. Lalic notes that the Black king will find it hard to remain safe.)) 8.Qc2 Nc6 9.Rd1 h6 (9...Nb4 10.Qb1 O-O 11.e4! Bg4 12.d5 and now Lalic suggests 12...Qd6) 10.Bh4 Nb4 11.Qb1 c6 12.e4 O-O 13.a3 Na6 14.Be2 Nc7 15.Bg3 Bb3 Black already has the advantage, Keene - Small, Melbourne 1983.) 7...Be6 Since the b-pawn is covered, Black can use the bishop to chase the queen back. (7...O-O 8.Rd1! No need to settle for the wimpy move 8.e3, the only line given by Lalic. 8...c6!? Not mentioned in MCOE, but maybe best. (8...a5 9.e4 a4 10.Qc2 c6 11.Be5 Bg4 12.Bxg7 Kxg7 13.Be2± Roesler-Otto, 1992. += MCOE.; 8...Be6 9.d5 Bg4 10.Ne5 Bc8 11.e4± +/- MCOE. 11...N8d7 12.Nf3 c6 13.dxc6 bxc6 14.Ne5 Qe8 15.Nxd7 Bxd7 16.Ba6 Bc8 17.Be2 e5 18.Be3 Be6 19.Qb4 Qb8 20.Ba6 Nc4 21.Qxb8 Rfxb8 22.Bxc4 Bxc4 23.b3± Murdzia-Jasnikowski, Polish Teams 1993.; 8...Nc6 9.d5 Na5 10.Qb4 Nac4 11.e4 Nxb2 12.Rd2 Bxc3 13.Qxc3 N2a4 14.Qa3 Bd7 15.Be2 a6 16.O-O +/- MCOE 16...Bb5 17.Rc1 Rc8 18.Bd1 Qd7 19.Nd4 Rfd8 20.Ne6 Re8 21.Qh3 c6 22.Qh6 Black resigned, Poluljahov-Yandemirov, Volgograd 1994.) 9.e3 Be6 10.Qc2 Nd5 11.Be5 (11.Bg3 Nb4 12.Qb1 Qa5 13.a3 Nd5 14.Nd2 c5 15.Nxd5 Bxd5 16.b4 cxb4 17.axb4 Qa3 18.Qa1 Qxa1 19.Rxa1 Rc8 20.f3∞ The position is unclear, but White has good prospects in the center, Obermayr-Devide, Werfen Open 1992.) 11...Qa5 12.Bxg7 Kxg7 13.a3 Nd7 14.Qd2 Nxc3 15.Rc1!? Nf6 16.Qxc3 Qxc3+ 17.Rxc3 Ne4 18.Rc1 Rfc8 19.Bd3 Bd5 20.Ke2 Nd6 21.Rhg1 Re8 was drawn in Alatortsev-Navarovszky, Tbilisi 1965.; 7...Bg4 8.Ng5 O-O 9.h3 Bc8 10.e3 c5 (10...Nc6; 10...Nc6) 11.dxc5 e5 12.Nxf7± Rxf7 13.Bg3 N6d7 14.Bc4 Qe7 15.Ne4 Na6 16.Rc1± Speelman-I.Gurevich, 1992/93. Lalic comments: "the position looks more fun for White."; 7...a5?! 8.Nb5 sets a trap. 8...Nd5?? (8...Na6 9.Nxc7+ Nxc7 10.Qxb6 costs Black a pawn, Blasco - Beggi, Imperia 1990.) 9.Qxd5 Black resigned. Murdzia-Murawski, Biala-Podlaska 1994.)

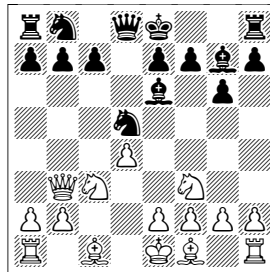


8.Qc2 Nc6 (8...Bc4 9.Rd1 Nc6 10.Qc1 Nd5 11.Be5 Nf6 12.b3 Ba6 13.Na4 O-O 14.Nc5± See Benjamin-Gutman, 1984. MCOE: +/-) 9.e3 O-O (9...Nb4 10.Qd1 O-O 11.a3 N4d5 12.Nxd5 Bxd5 (12...Nxd5 13.Be5 Bxe5 14.Nxe5 Qd6 15.Rc1 Rfc8 16.Nd3± MCOE: +=.) 13.Rc1 c6 14.Be2 a5= Kholmov-Hort, 1975. MCOE: =.)



10.Be2 (10.a3!? Rc8 (10...Bf5 11.Qd1 Nd5 12.Nxd5 Qxd5 13.Rc1 Qa5+ 14.Qd2 Qxd2+ 15.Nxd2 e5 16.dxe5 Rac8 17.Nf3 Bg4 18.Be2 Bxf3 19.Bxf3 Nxe5 20.Bxe5 Bxe5 21.Rc2 c6 22.Ke2 Agreed drawn, Mengel-Duppel, Pinneberg Juniors 1996.; 10...Na5 11.b4 Nac4 12.Be2 c6 13.O-O a5 14.Rfd1± Alatorsev-Sajtar, 1946. MCOE: +=.) 11.Rd1 (11.Be2 Bf5 12.Qd1 Nd5 13.Nxd5 Qxd5 14.Rc1 Rfd8 15.O-O h6 16.Bc4 Qd7 17.b4 Be4 18.Qb3 e6 19.Nd2 Bd5 20.Bxd5 Qxd5 21.Rc5± White has the initiative, Salokangas-Helenius, Finnish Teams 1992.) 11...Nd5 12.Nxd5 Qxd5 13.Bd3 Bg4 14.Be4 Qa5+ 15.Rd2 Nd8 16.Ne5 Bxe5 17.Bxe5 c5 18.d5 c4 19.h3 Bd7 20.O-O Ba4 21.Qc1± White's centralized bishops can be useful, Krisko-Apro, Hungarian Teams 1994.) 10...Nb4 11.Qc1 (11.Qb1!? is also worth considering. 11...c5 12.dxc5 N6d5 13.Be5 Bxe5 14.Nxe5 Qc7! 15.Nxd5 (15.Nd3 Nxc3 16.bxc3 Nxd3+ 17.Bxd3 Qxc5 18.O-O=) 15...Bxd5 16.Nf3 Qxc5 17.O-O= Rfc8 (17...Nc2 18.Rc1 Rac8 19.Ne1 Be4 20.Bd3 Bxd3 21.Nxd3 Qf5 22.Rxc2 Qxd3 23.Rc1 Rxc1+ 24.Qxc1 Qe2 25.h3 Drawn, Baikov-Notkin, Moscow 1995.) 18.e4 Be6 19.Rc1 Qxc1+ 20.Qxc1 Rxc1+ 21.Rxc1 Nxa2 22.Rc7 Rc8 23.Rxb7 Rc1+ 24.Bf1 Rd1 25.Rc7 Nc1 26.Nd4 Nb3 27.Nxb3 Bxb3 28.g3 a5 29.Kg2 Rd2 30.Ra7 a4 31.Bb5 Rxb2 Drawn, Walther-Lagunow, Dudweiler 1996.) 11...Bc4 12.O-O= Bxe2 (12...c6 13.Rd1 N4d5 14.Bxc4 Nxc4 15.Nxd5 cxd5 16.b3 Nd6 17.Qa3 Ne4 18.Rac1 e6 19.Qb4 Rc8 20.Kf1 Drawn, Pribyl-Kirov, Lodz 1979. (20.Qxb7 Nc3! 21.Rd2 Ne2+! 22.Rxe2 Rxc1+

23.Re1 Rxe1+ 24.Nxe1 Qa5); 12...Nd3 13.Bxd3 Bxd3 14.Rd1 Ba6 15.e4 c6 16.b3 Qd7 17.Qe3 Rfd8 18.Rac1 Rac8 19.a4 Qe8 20.a5 Nd7 21.e5 Nf8 22.Ne4 b6 23.Bh6 Qd7 24.Bxg7 Kxg7 25.Nf6 Qb7! 26.Ng4 f6 27.Qh6+ Kf7 28.exf6 exf6 29.Qf4 Qe7 30.Re1 Qd6 31.Ng5+- (31.Nfe5+? Kg7 32.Qh6+∞ Denker-Kraidman, Israel 1974.)) 13.Nxe2 Rc8 14.Rd1 Qe8 15.Be5 Bxe5 16.Nxe5 c5 17.Nc3 cxd4 18.exd4 N4d5 19.Rd3 White is a little better, despite the isolated d-pawn and temporary pin on the c-file. Trapl-Jansa, 1987. ; 6...e6?! weakens the kingside dark squares. 7.e4 Nxc3 8.bxc3 O-O 9.Ba3 Re8 10.Rd1 Nd7 11.Bd3 c5 12.O-O cxd4 13.cxd4 a6 14.e5 Bf8 (14...b5!/? would have allowed Black to maneuver a piece to d5.) 15.Nd2 Bxa3 16.Qxa3 Qe7 17.Qb3 b5 18.Ne4 Bb7 19.Nd6 The invading knight is very strong, Essing - Knispel, Germany 1989.; 6...Be6?!



7.Ng5?! (7.Qxb7 Nb6 8.Bf4!) 7...Nxc3 8.Nxe6 fxe6 9.bxc3 Qd5 10.e3 O-O 11.Qxd5 (11.f3 Qxb3 12.axb3 should be a bit better for White, thanks to the superior pawn structure.) 11...exd5 12.Ba3 Re8 13.Rb1 b6 14.c4 e6 15.Rc1 c6 16.h4!/? Nd7 17.cxd5 exd5 18.Ba6 (18.Be2!/? ) 18...Bxd4 19.Bb7 Rad8 20.O-O Bc5 21.Bxc5 Nxc5 22.Bxc6 Re6 23.Bb5 Re4 was eventually drawn in Tisdall-Einarsson, Reykjavik 1990.

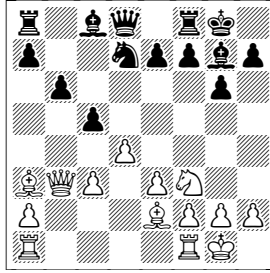
### 7.bxc3 c5 Typical Gruenfeld play.

7...b6!/? 8.Bg5 O-O 9.e3 c5 10.Be2 (10.Bb5!/? ) 10...Ba6 This is the point of the ...b6 plan. 11.Bxa6 Nxa6 12.O-O Qd7 13.Qa3! Nc7 14.dxc5 Nd5!/? (14...Nb5! 15.Qa4!; 14...Ne6 15.c6 Qxc6 16.Bxe7 is clearly better for White, according to Gulko.) 15.Rfd1! Qc6 Gulko acknowledges that White has compensation for the pawn. (15...Qf5 16.Rac1 bxc5 17.Qxc5±) 16.c4 (16.Rac1 bxc5 17.c4 Nf6 18.Ne5 is very strong for White, according to Lalic.) 16...Nf6 (16...Nc3 17.Bxe7 Nxd1 18.Rxd1∞) 17.Ne5±;

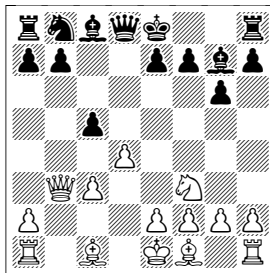
7...Nd7!/? supports the idea of ...c5 and is a good defense for Black. 8.Ba3 O-O (8...c5 9.e3 Qa5 10.Bc4 O-O 11.O-O e6 12.Bb5 b6 13.Nd2 a6 14.Bc6 cxd4 15.Bxa8 dxe3 16.Nc4 Qxc3 17.Qxc3 Bxc3 Black resigned, Tahirov-Bluvshstein, Tallinn 1997.) 9.e4 c5 10.Be2 Qc7 11.O-O b6 12.e5!/? (12.Bc4) 12...e6 13.Ng5 Bb7 14.Bf3! (14.Bc4 Nxe5!/? 15.Bxe6 Qc6?! (15...h6!± 16.dxe5 hxg5!) 16.f3 fxe6 17.dxe5 Rae8± MacMahon-Gravagna, Massy 1993.) 14...Bxf3 15.Nxf3 with equal

chances.;

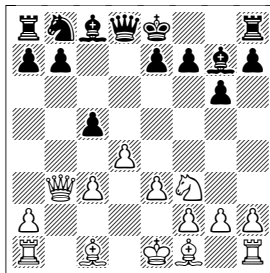
7...O-O 8.Ba3 Nd7 9.e3 c5 10.Be2 b6 11.O-O



This is a typical position in this opening. White has good posts for his pieces and some pressure at c5. See Tisdall-Conquest, Tisdall-Olafsson and Piket-van Mil.



8.e3



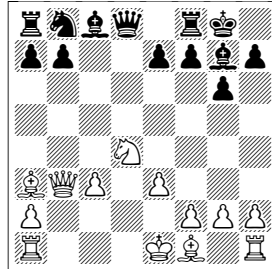
8...O-O

8...Nc6 9.Be2 O-O 10.O-O cxd4 (10...Qc7 11.Ba3 Na5 12.Qb5 b6 13.dxc5 Nb7 14.cxb6 axb6 15.Bb4 Nc5 16.Bxc5 bxc5 17.Qb2 Ra4 18.Rfc1 Qa5 19.a3 Be6 20.Ng5 Bd7 21.Qb7 Rxa3 22.Rab1 Qa7 23.Qxa7 Rxa7= Remlinger-Dlugy, American Open 1990.) 11.cxd4 e5 12.Ba3 Re8 13.dxe5 Nxe5 14.Rad1 Qb6 15.Nxe5 Bxe5 White is better positioned to take advantage of the open lines, Rajmaekers-Goedkoop, Correspondence 1985. 16.Qxb6 N axb6 17.Bb5!± Bg4 (17...Rxa3 18.Bxe8 Be6 19.Rb1±) 18.Bxe8 Bxd1 19.Rxd1 Rxe8 20.Bb4±;  
8...Nd7 9.Be2 O-O 10.O-O Qc7 11.e4 e5 12.d5 Nf6 13.Qc4 Ne8 14.Be3

b6 15.Nd2 Nd6 16.Qb3 f5 17.f3 f4 18.Bf2 Bd7 19.a4 g5 20.Bb5± White has a more promising position, Privman-Lapshun, Philadelphia 1998.

**9.Ba3 b6** The most solid defense.

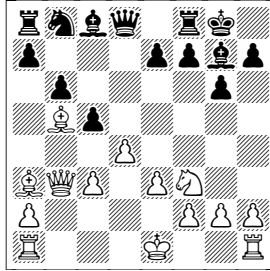
9...cxd4!? 10.Nxd4! It may seem more natural to capture with the pawn, but using the knight gives White more opportunities.



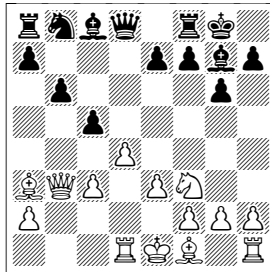
10...Nc6 (10...Qc7 11.Be2 a6 12.O-O Re8 13.f4 (13.Rfd1) 13...Nc6 14.Bc5 Nxd4 15.exd4 White's bishops have more effect, Wemyss-Barclay, Correspondence 1987.; 10...b6 11.Rd1 Qc7 12.Bc4 Ba6 13.Bd5 Bb7 14.Nb5 Qc8 15.Bxe7 Bxd5 16.Qxd5 Bxc3+ 17.Nxc3 Qxc3+ 18.Ke2 with a much better game for White. Black sacrificed the exchange in Schwarz-Bunk, Germany 2001, but White had a clear advantage.; 10...a6 11.Be2 b5 12.O-O Bb7 13.Rfd1 Qc7 14.c4 bxc4 15.Qxc4 Rc8 16.Qxc7 Rxc7 17.Rac1 Rxc1 18.Rxc1 e5 19.Bf3! e4 20.Bxe4! Bxe4 21.Rc8+ Bf8 22.Rxf8+ Kg7 23.Re8 gave White a decisive advantage in Fedorowicz- Greanias, Foxwoods 2002.) 11.Be2 Qc7 (11...Re8 12.O-O Na5 13.Qc2 Bd7 14.Rfd1 Qc7 15.c4 Rac8 see Romanishin-Grigorian, Vilnius 1975.; 11...Qa5 12.O-O Qg5 13.Bf3 Qf6 14.Rac1 Rd8 15.Rfd1 h5 16.Bd5 Bg4 17.f3 Bf5 18.Qxb7 Nxd4 19.cxd4 Rab8 20.Qxa7 e6 Black resigned, havng spotted the killer 21.Be7!, Halasz-Schwebel, Dortmund 1991.) 12.O-O Bd7 13.Rab1 Rab8 14.Rfd1 Rfc8 15.Nb5 Qd8 16.Bg4 e6 17.Rxd7 Qxd7 18.Rd1 Qe8 19.Nd6 Na5 20.Nxe8 Nxb3 21.Nxg7 h5 22.Nxe6 Rxc3 23.axb3 hxg4 24.Nd4± see Romanishin-Tukmakov, Soviet Union 1974.; 9...Nd7 10.Bb5 b6 11.O-O Qc7 12.Rfd1 Rb8 13.Rac1 a6 14.Be2 e5 15.Bc4 b5 16.Bd5 Bb7 17.Bxb7 Rxb7 18.dxc5 see Romanishin-Lukin, Soviet Teams, Riga 1975.

**10.Rd1** The presence of the rook at d1 insures that sooner or later Black's queen will abandon the d-file.

10.Bb5!? is an interesting option.



10...Be6 (10...Bd7 11.Be2 Nc6 12.O-O Na5 13.Qb2 Qc7 14.Rfd1 (14.Rad1 Ba4 15.Rd2 Rfd8 16.Re1 e6 17.Bb5 Bxb5 18.Qxb5 Nb7 19.Rdd1 (19.Rb1!? Nd6 20.Qd3!?) 19...Rac8 20.Qa6 Nd6 21.h3 Ne4 22.Nd2 Nxd2 23.Rxd2 Rd7 24.Rd3 Rcd8 25.Red1 Bf8 26.dxc5 Rxd3 27.Rxd3 Rxd3 28.Qxd3 Bxc5 29.Bb2 Qd6 30.Qxd6 Bxd6 31.c4 Drawn, Sygulski - Stohl, Polanica Zdroj 1985.) 14...Ba4 15.Rd2 Rac8 16.h3 (16.Rb1 Nb7 17.Ba6 Nd6! 18.Bxc8 Nc4 19.Qc1 Nxd2 20.Nxd2 Rxc8) 16...Rfd8 17.Rc1 cxd4 18.Nxd4 e6 19.Qb4 Nc4 20.Nxe6 fxe6 21.Rxd8+ Rxd8 22.Bxc4 Qc6 Drawn, Bukic-Sax, Ljubljana/Portoroz 1977. 23.Qe7 Re8 24.Qh4 looks pretty good for White, who can certainly play on.) 11.Qb2 Bd7 12.Be2 Nc6 13.O-O cxd4 14.cxd4 Re8 Romanishin-Tarjan, Novi Sad 1975. 15.Rac1 gives White a promising position.



10...Qc7 11.Be2 White has scored quite well from this position, though Black's position is solid.

11.Bc4?! See Schiller-Keatinge Clay.;

11.d5!? is more ambitious and should certainly be considered. 11...Nd7 12.Be2 Nf6 13.c4 See Fedorowicz-Sarkar, New York 2004.

11...Nd7

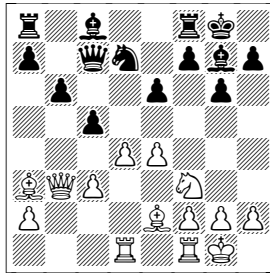
11...Nc6 12.O-O Na5 13.Qb1 Rb8! (13...Bb7 14.dxc5 bxc5 15.Qb5 gives White a good game, Barlov - Nestorovic, Nis 1995.) 14.e4!? (14.h3 Bd7= Jacimovic-Alterman, 1995.) 14...Bb7 15.Rfe1 Rfd8 16.Bf1 e6 17.Bc1 b5?! (17...Rbc8!?) 18.Bg5 f6 19.Bh4 a6 20.a4 White has a strong center and a powerful initiative, Popov - Sax, Varna 1972.

12.O-O e6

12...Bb7 13.c4 (13.d5!? Rad8 14.c4 Nf6 15.Bb2 Ne4 16.Bd3 Nd6 17.Bxg7 Kxg7= De Casteja-Gravagna, Massy 1993.; 13.Rd2!?)

13...cxd4 14.exd4 Rfe8 (14...Rfd8 15.Rfe1 e5 suggested by Vakhidov & Gipslis 1987.) 15.Rfe1 (15.d5!? Nc5 16.Qe3 e6?! 17.d6± Qc6 18.Bxc5 Qxc5 19.Qxc5 bxc5 20.Nd2 (20.Ng5!?) 20...Red8 21.Nb3 but Black is better, Steinbrecht-Stillger, Porz 1989.) 15...e5! ECO3: =. 16.d5 Nc5 17.Qe3 Rac8 18.Bf1 Ba6 19.Nd2 Bf8 20.Qh3 Qd8 21.Re3 f5 22.Rde1 e4 23.Bb2 Rc7 24.f4 Bg7 25.Bxg7 Rxd7= Pribyl-Smejkal, 1983.

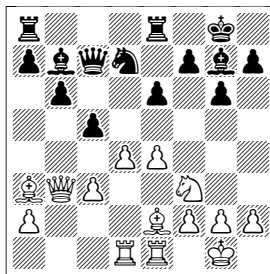
**13.e4** White decides to play in the center.



**13...Re8**

13...Bb7 14.d5!? exd5 15.exd5 Qd6 16.c4 Rfe8 17.Rfe1 Re7 (17...Qf6 18.Bf1 (18.Bd3!? Ne5 19.Nxe5 Rxe5 20.Bc1 Rae8 21.Rxe5 Qxe5 22.Qa4!?) 18...Qd6 19.Bb2 Rad8 20.Bxg7 Kxg7 21.a4 Kg8 22.a5 White has good queenside play, Black is passive, Timmerman - Boensch, Dieren 1988.) 18.Bf1 Rae8 19.Rxe7 Rxe7 20.Bc1 Bc8 21.g3 Ne5 22.Bf4 Bg4 23.Be2 h5 24.Nxe5 Bxe5 25.Bxe5 Rxe5 26.Bxg4 hxg4 27.Qa4 Re7 28.Kf1 Drawn, Parker - Van Wely, Mondariz 2000.

**14.Rfe1 Bb7**



**15.Bb5!?** This hasn't been played, so what follows is speculation.

15.e5!? Romanishin-Grigorjan, 1975;

15.d5 exd5 16.exd5 Ne5! 17.d6 Qd7 and it is hard to find a good move for White.

15...Red8 16.Bc1 a6 17.Bf1 Rac8 18.Bg5 Re8 19.Rc1 h6 20.Bd2 Nf6 21.Qb1 Red8 22.dxc5 bxc5

22...Qxc5 23.Be3

**23.Bf4 Qe7**

23...Qxf4 24.Qxb7 Rb8 25.Qxa6 Nxe4!? 26.Qc4

24.h3 Ne8 25.Ne5 Nd6 26.f3 White consolidates his formidable center. 26...c4 26...Rb8!?

**27.Qb4! Bf8**

27...Rb8 28.Nxc4 e5 29.Bg3 Bd5! 30.Nb6! Bxa2 31.c4 with a strong initiative for White.

**28.Be3 h5**

28...Qh4 29.Red1 Nxe4 (29...Nf5 30.Qxb7 Nxe3 31.Qxf7+) 30.Rxd8 Qxd8 31.Qxb7

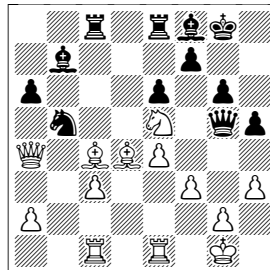
**29.Bb6 Re8 30.Qa4 Qg5 31.Bd4**

31.Qa5!? sets up the tactical trick Nxc4, since the queen at g5 is not defended. 31...f6 32.Nd7! Qxa5 33.Bxa5 Bg7 34.Red1 looks very awkward for Black.

**31...Nb5**

31...Red8 32.Nxc4 Nxc4 33.Bxc4 Bc5 34.Rcd1 would have given White an extra pawn, but keeping it might not be easy.

**32.Bxc4!±** White's strong grip on the center confers an advantage.



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