

Alexey Kuzmin

The Zaitsev System

Fresh Ideas and New Weapons for Black in the Ruy Lopez

New In Chess 2016

Contents

Foreword by Fabiano Caruana	7
Foreword by Peter Svidler	8
Introduction by Igor Zaitsev	9
Introduction by the author	15
A little bit of history	16
Part I The Kasparov Variation – 12.a4	23
Chapter 1 Third Match Heritage	29
Chapter 2 Possible Divergences from the Main Line for White	47
Chapter 3 The Beliavsky/Morozevich Variation	55
Chapter 4 The Boston Manoeuvre	74
Part II The Sochi Variation – 12.a3	82
Chapter 5 The Main Stream	87
Chapter 6 A Side Line	103
Chapter 7 The Updated Modern Variation	109
Chapter 8 The Alternative Way	119
Part III The Modern Variation – 12.d5	127
Chapter 9 The Main Stream	129
Chapter 10 Vitaly Tseshkovsky’s Attack	142
Chapter 11 The Doha Line	146
Chapter 12 Svetozar Gligoric’s Plan	157
Part IV The Geller/Karpov Variation – 12.♟c2	163
Chapter 13 The Geller/Karpov Variation	165
Part V Rare Variations	177
Chapter 14 The Refutation of the Refutation – 11.♘g5	178
Chapter 15 Albert Kapengut’s Idea – 11.♟g5	182
Chapter 16 The Arkhangelsk Manoeuvre – 11.a4	188
Chapter 17 The Szolnok Move Order – 11.a3	198
Chapter 18 Oleg Romanishin’s Idea – 11.♘bd2 ♟f8 12.♘g5	203
Part VI The Saratov Variation, or a Way to Avoid the Repetition	
10...♘d7 11.♘bd2 exd4 12.cxd4 ♟f6 13.♘f1 ♘a5 14.♟c2 ♖e8	211
Chapter 19 The Saratov Variation – The Main Body	213
Chapter 20 Two Move Orders	236
Index of Variations	249
Index of Names	251
Bibliography	255

Foreword by Fabiano Caruana

What makes a good opening book for me? It would have to contain a systematization of the material under scrutiny and, more importantly, a presentation of new and original ideas. You can find such systematizations in any opening book, but in the majority of cases new ideas are kept secret, intended to be used against an opponent who has not made a deep analysis of certain concrete positions and has limited his preparation to looking at previously played games.

The book *The Zaitsev System* by Alexey Kuzmin impressed me especially for this reason: it offers a huge range of new ideas from the author, updating to a significant degree the evaluation of various popular variations. Thanks to this, the book reflects the state of Zaitsev theory not only of today, but of tomorrow!

Much to my pleasure I have noted that the majority of the author's novelties are not exact renderings of the 'computer's first lines' but rather a result of deep analysis. I was highly interested in the author's new treatment of the most popular systems of today: 12.a3 and 12.d5, while important improvements in the fashionable variation 11...exd4 12.cxd4 ♘d7 are also given.

One more important merit of this book is that Kuzmin focuses on a 'human approach' in his evaluations, that is to say he successfully adapts the results of computer analyses to the needs of a practical chess player preparing.

In short, I can say that during my preparation work for last year's Candidates tournament, when Alexey Kuzmin showed me the material he had been working on for this book, it saved me and my seconds considerable time when we were looking at two topical opening systems: Zaitsev's system and the new treatment 11...exd4 12.cxd4 ♘d7.

In my opinion, the clear recommendations and the detailed explanations of the strategic plans give this book educational value. They make it very useful for chess players of all levels who wish to employ the Zaitsev System as well as to get a better understanding of the basic strategic ideas of the Ruy Lopez as a whole.

Fabiano Caruana,
September 2016

Foreword by Peter Svidler

I've been playing the Zaitsev Ruy Lopez with both colours for my entire chess career. Naturally, Alexey Kuzmin's book on that opening interested me a great deal – first and foremost from a purely professional viewpoint, but also on a more personal level. Full disclosure – I've known (and liked) the author for more than 20 years.

What makes this book stand out in today's plethora of opening monographs is its scope, and the universal approach of the author. On one hand, the book covers strategic plans of the side from very early stages, making it a very useful educational tool for people starting out with the Zaitsev System. On the other hand, GM Kuzmin provides in-depth analysis of the topical lines, where you would often find the critical positions appear after 20+ moves.

The chapters dedicated to the most popular lines, such as the 12.a3 variation, or the very fashionable plan with 11...exd4 12.cxd4 ♘d7, largely resemble an opening file, prepared for a top player by his experienced second. This is hardly surprising, considering the fact that for many years Alexey Kuzmin had been helping Alexander Morozevich, a great player – and a very serious exponent of the Zaitsev himself. The book defines very clearly the directions the author believes to be the most challenging, and contains a wealth of original ideas, which makes it a very useful source for preparation, even for tournaments of the highest calibre.

It is also a very lively-written book, insofar as that is possible in a serious opening treatise. The author's interludes, detailing how certain ideas (or even whole variations) came into existence, add a very welcome human touch. The book is not overloaded with long computer-produced variations, and has plenty of diagrams, making it very possible for an experienced player to study many of its chapters even without the board.

I believe the Classical Ruy Lopez is a very important opening for the development of any chess player, and many of its subsystems are firmly connected by common strategic ideas. The Smyslov, Breyer, Zaitsev, and even Chigorin systems often merge into each other, creating a large unified strategic block. In view of that, the book you're holding right now is uniquely useful not only as a source of material on a single system, but also as a textbook which will help you acquire a much deeper understanding of the underlying strategic ideas of the Ruy Lopez.

Peter Svidler
St Petersburg
April 2016

Chapter 3

The Belavsky/Morozevich Variation

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♙e7 6.♖e1 b5 7.♙b3 d6 8.c3
0-0 9.h3 ♙b7 10.d4 ♖e8 11.♘bd2 ♙f8 12.a4 ♘a5



Variation I – 13.♙a2

Variation II – 13.♙c2

BRAND-NEW VIBES

Variation I – 13.♙a2 c5 14.b4 exd4

Variation II – 13.♙c2 b4



15.bxa5!?!N



14.♖b1!?

Variation II – 13.♘c2 exd4 14.cxd4 b4
15.b3 g6 16.♘b2 ♘g7 17.♘d3



17...♘h5!?N and 17...c5!?N

Variation II – 13.♘c2 exd4 14.cxd4 b4
15.b3 g6 16.♘d3 ♘g7 17.♞b1



17...♞c8!?

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♘b5 a6 4.♘a4
♘f6 5.0-0 ♘e7 6.♞e1 b5 7.♘b3
d6 8.c3 0-0 9.h3 ♘b7 10.d4 ♞e8
11.♘bd2 ♘f8 12.a4 ♘a5



White faces a choice. It is tempting to keep the bishop on its active diagonal – 13.♘a2. But in this case, firstly, it risks ending up out of play if Black succeeds with c7-c5-c4. And, secondly, it is more difficult to activate the bishop, if White himself should play d4-d5. The traditionally ‘Spanish’ 13.♘c2 is not so ambitious, but it is more logical.

Variation I

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♘b5 a6 4.♘a4
♘f6 5.0-0 ♘e7 6.♞e1 b5 7.♘b3

d6 8.c3 0-0 9.h3 ♘b7 10.d4 ♞e8
11.♘bd2 ♘f8 12.a4 ♘a5 13.♘a2

Black cannot grab a pawn with 13... exd4 14.cxd4 ♘xe4 in view of 15.♘xe4 ♘xe4 16.♞xe4! ♞xe4 17.♘d5 ♞e7 18.♘xa8 ♞xa8 19.axb5 and wins.

The position after 13.♘a2 has been handled in different ways by the authors of the variation: Beliavsky played in the classical style of Chigorin’s ideas – 13...c5, while Morozevich opened the centre – 13...exd4 14.cxd4 c5.

We will begin our examination with the classical plan.

Variation A – Beliavsky’s Plan
13...c5



White again has two options. He can close the centre with **14.d5**, after which there follows 14...c4, or he can first try to restrict Black's options on the queenside by **14.b4**.

A1) **14.d5**



14...c4!

The natural move and obviously the best.

15.b4

15.♙b1 ♘d7 16.♙c2 is too slow. Compared with the main line of the Breyer Variation White has had to waste two tempi on transferring his bishop from a2 to c2. After 16...♗c5 17.♖a2 ♙c8 18.♗f1 ♙d7 Black has a comfortable game.

15...cxb3 16.♗xb3



This position is worth dwelling on in more detail. At first sight it appears that Black has no problems – the arrangement of his pawns on the queenside even looks somewhat preferable. But in fact

the position contains nuances that are by no means without danger for Black. The exchange **16...♗xb3?! 17.♙xb3** is bad for Black. This position was reached in the first game where the 12...♗a5 plan was employed, Leko-Beliavsky, Istanbul Olympiad 2000. True, there Leko played 13.♙c2, but after the exchange on b3 this becomes irrelevant. There followed 17...♗d7 18.c4! and Alexander Genrikhovich had to endure considerable suffering to save half a point for his team.

A few years later (Amsterdam 2006), Beliavsky in a game with Karjakin played **16...♙c8**. He repeated this bishop manoeuvre a year later against Stellwagen (Amsterdam 2007). But this plan again allows White to exchange a pair of knights, which is advantageous for him, since it is more difficult for him to find good squares for his knights.

The most accurate way was demonstrated by Michael Adams:

16...♗c4!

Black should keep all four knights on the board.



17.♗fd2

The following bishop manoeuvre requires time and cannot be dangerous: 17.♙b1 ♖c7 18.♙d3 ♗d7 19.♗fd2 f5⇌.

17...♗b6!

The two white knights are senselessly huddled together in their own camp,

blocking the diagonals of their own bishops, and so Black again avoids the exchange. Weaker is 17...♖c8?!, as Kasimdzhanov played against Volokitin in the Russian Club Championship in Sochi 2006.

18.a5

The invasion on c6 has only temporary success: 18.♘a5 ♗c8! 19.♘c6 ♔c7=.

18...♘a4 19.c4 b4 20.♗b1 ♘c3

Both sides have chances, Stellwagen-Adams, Wijk aan Zee 2009.

A2) **14.b4**

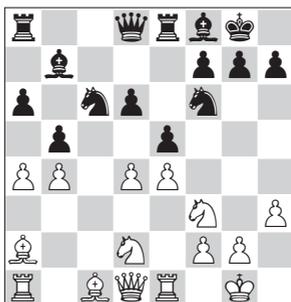


A typical idea, but in the given version it is not very successful – the row of white pawns on the fourth rank does not have sufficient piece support.

A21) **14...cxb4**

The capture 14...exd4 will be examined below.

15.cxb4 ♘c6



Beliavsky twice played in this classical Ruy Lopez style.

16.♗b3

This looks the most natural, since if White succeeds in playing d4-d5, there will be an obvious advantage on his side. This is how both his opponents, Ivanchuk and Stellwagen, continued.

The immediate **16.d5** is in accordance with the plan, but it allows the exchange of all the queenside pawns. White cannot create any serious problems for the opponent: **16...♘xb4 17.♗b1** There can follow **17...a5 18.axb5 ♗b6 19.♗a4 ♜eb8 20.♘c4 ♗c5 21.♘xa5 ♗c8** with equal chances, but **17...♗c7!?** **18.♗b3 ♗c5 19.a5 ♘bxd5 20.exd5 ♗xd5** is also interesting, with very unclear play.



Stellwagen-Beliavsky, Amsterdam 2006, went:

16...d5!

Necessary, but strong!

In the first game, Beliavsky against Ivanchuk (Lviv 2000) continued **16...♗c7?!**, but after **17.d5 ♘e7 18.♗b1! bxa4 19.♗xa4 ♜eb8 20.♗a5** White's spatial superiority combined with the possibility of attacking the black pawns on the queenside ensured him an obvious advantage.

The fact that Black should hurry to open the centre is obvious, but the move 16...d5 deserves an exclamation

mark for the reason that it is difficult to assess correctly the consequences of this operation. The point is that White's typical reaction to ...d6-d5, when the e4, d4/e5, d5-pawn quartet comes into direct conflict, is to exchange on e5, then with gain of tempo drive back the black piece which ends up on this square, and finally, advance e4-e5. Usually this series of actions secures White some advantage, but every position has its special features.

17.dxe5 ♘xe5 18.♘xe5 ♗xe5



19.♗b2

Stellwagen should first have opened the a-file – 19.axb5 axb5 20.♗b2, but even in this case Belivsky's manoeuvre 20...♗e6! 21.e5 ♘h5! would have given Black excellent counterplay.

19...♗e6! 20.e5 bxa4 21.♗xa4 ♘h5!

This manoeuvre is the whole point! The knight is transferred to f4, and the rook is already prepared to join the attack along the sixth rank.

22.♘f3 ♘f4

Black has a dangerous initiative.

As we have seen, in reply to 14.b4 the plan 14...cxb4 15.cxb4 ♘c6 gives Black good play. But the attempt to transpose into Volokitin-Morozevich, Biel 2006, is very interesting (the game itself will be examined below).

A22) **14...exd4!**



15.bxa5!?N

Only the capture of the piece leads to an original position. After 15.cxd4 cxb4 ♗ a position is reached from the Volokitin-Morozevich game, where a different move order occurred: 13...exd4 14.cxd4 c5 15.b4 cxb4.

15...dxc3 16.♘f1

A counter-sacrifice does not help: 16.♘b1 b4 17.♘xc3 bxc3 18.♗xf7+ ♘xf7 19.♗b3+ ♗d5! ♗.



Now Black has two logical possibilities. He can defend his c3-pawn by playing **16...b4**, or he can block an important diagonal by advancing his other pawn: **16...c4**.

A22) **16...b4 17.♘g3** Weaker is 17.♗g5, after which Black should continue 17...♗xe4! (17...♗xe4?! 18.♘g3! ♗) with the better chances. **17...h6 18.♗d3 d5!?**

The capture 18...♔xa5 leads after 19.♕xh6! gxh6 20.e5 c4! 21.♕xc4 d5 22.♕b3 ♖e4 23.♗xe4 dxe4 24.♖xe4 ♕xe4 25.♗xe4 ♗c7 26.♞e1 to a position in which the activity of the white pieces compensates for the sacrificed exchange. **19.e5 c4 20.♗d4 ♗d7 21.♗f5 c2 22.♗g4 ♞e6!** In this complicated game both sides have chances;

A222) The other logical course is **16...c4**. After **17.♕g5 ♕xe4** the exchange sacrifice **18.♖xe4! ♗xe4 19.♕b1 ♞e8 20.axb5 axb5 21.♗d4** leads to a position in which it still has to be demonstrated that White has full compensation.

Variation B – Morozevich’s Plan

13...exd4 14.cxd4 c5

This plan first occurred in the game Volokitin-Morozevich, Biel 2006.



Morozevich’s game with Volokitin was played in the eighth round. This was the last critical moment on Alexander’s path to his third success in Biel. The previous day, after blundering badly, he had lost to the young Magnus Carlsen and clouds of uncertainty had appeared on the serene horizon of his leadership. With five wins and two losses Morozevich was still heading the tournament table, but only half a point separated him from his pursuers: Radjabov and Carlsen.

It should be said that early in 2006, before the tournament in Biel, Morozevich played 12...♗a5 in Monte Carlo in the Amber rapid event. Grischuk chose 13.♕c2 against him, but, on encountering the new continuation 13...b4!?, he failed to fully understand the rather unusual strategic picture of the opening battle. This variation had also occurred with Volokitin – in the Russian Club Championship in Sochi a couple of months before the tournament in Biel. There, as also in the present game, he retreated his bishop to a2 and his opponent Rustam Kasimdzhanov replied 13...c5.

Morozevich’s dynamic plan came as a surprise to Volokitin.

15.b4?!

On encountering an abrupt change of scene, the Ukrainian grandmaster goes wrong: the cavalry charge ♗f3-g5 is not so fearsome as to precede it with a pawn sacrifice. If White desired, he could also have played **15.♗g5** immediately, although after 15...c4 16.♕b1 b4! 17.e5 dxe5 18.dxe5 h6 or 16...g6 17.e5 dxe5 18.dxe5 ♗b3!? the chances are on Black’s side.

Also, nothing is promised by immediate action in the centre: **15.dxc5** dxc5 16.e5 ♗d5 with good play.

The critical continuation is **15.d5** – it will be examined below.

15...cxb4 16.♗g5

After the exchange **16.axb5** axb5 the doubled black pawns control important squares, and it is not possible to organise an effective attack on them: 17.♕b1 ♗c7 18.d5 ♗d7. The advantage is with Black.

16...♗c4

There were also other ways promising an advantage: **16...b3** 17.♗xb3 ♗c4

18.♘d2 h6 19.♘gf3 ♘xe4 20.♙xc4 bxc4 21.♘xc4 ♖c8♞, or **16...d5** 17.e5 h6! and if 18.exf6, then 18...♖xe1+ 19.♙xe1 ♙xf6! 20.♘gf3 bxa4♞. But in connection with the following exchange sacrifice, the game continuation looks, at the least, more tempting!

17.axb5 axb5 18.♘xc4



18...♖xa2!

The game continued **19.♖xa2 bxc4 20.♙a4?!** (the lesser evil would have been 20.d5 h6 21.♖a4!, when after 21...hxg5 22.♙xg5 ♙c8 23.♙xf6 gxf6 24.♖xb4 f5! 25.exf5 ♙xd5 Black has merely a slight advantage) **20...b3! 21.♖ae2 ♙c7** and White has nothing to counter the opponent's passed pawns – Black has an obvious advantage. Now let us return to White's 15th move.

Of course, the main continuation is

15.d5



Of course, if the white bishop were on c2, White's advantage would be undisputed. On the other hand, it would appear that its unprepossessing position on a2 should automatically ensure Black an easy game, but this is not altogether so.

15...♘d7 looks logical, aiming to obtain good counterplay in Benoni style, but this is spoiled by the position of the knight on a5. In the given instance, the assertion of Dr. Tarrasch that 'a knight on the edge of the board always stands badly' is to a certain extent confirmed either by **16.♖b1** with the idea of b2-b4, or by the seemingly unprepossessing move **16.b3!♞** and if 16...♙e7 or 16...g6, then 17.♙b2 followed by the manoeuvre of the light-squared bishop to d3.

In the World Cup, Khanty-Mansiysk 2007, Alexey Shirov played **15...c4** against Karjakin, avoiding such a development of events. But after the energetic **16.b4!** he also encountered problems.

The best attempt at counterplay for Black is

15...g6N

In practice this continuation has not yet occurred.



Now in the event of **16.b3 ♙g7 17.♙b2 b4** White cannot play 18.♙b1! on

account of 16...♗xe4!, while after 18.♖c2 the activation of his light-squared bishop takes too long.

In the given instance the Spanish knight manoeuvre is too late: 16.♖b1 ♖g7 17.♗f1 b4 18.♗g3 c4.

It is logical for White to link his plan with the strategic diversion b2-b4. But the immediate 16.b4 cxb4 17.♖b1 can be met by 17...♗d7! 18.axb5 ♗c5! with good counterplay. It is probably more accurate to first exchange with 16.axb5 axb5 17.b4 cxb4 18.♖b1, but in this case a regrouping of the minor pieces by 18...♖c8 19.♖b1 ♗b7 20.♖b2 ♗c5 gives Black normal counterplay.

And if b2-b4 is prepared with 16.♖b1, then in reply both 16...♖c8, similar to the above variation, and 16...b4 are possible. In contrast to the variation with 15...♗d7, White cannot play 17.♗c4 since his e4-pawn is inadequately defended.

Variation II

1.e4 e5 2.♗f3 ♗c6 3.♖b5 a6 4.♖a4 ♗f6 5.0-0 ♖e7 6.♖e1 b5 7.♖b3 d6 8.c3 0-0 9.h3 ♖b7 10.d4 ♖e8 11.♗bd2 ♖f8 12.a4 ♗a5 13.♖c2

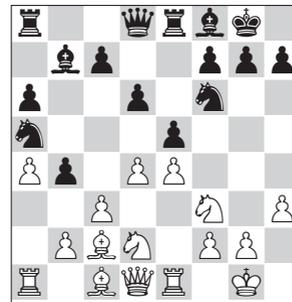


Also in the given version Beliavsky played 13...c5, Leko-Beliavsky, Istanbul Olympiad, Hungary-Slovenia, 2000. But with the bishop on c2 the position after

14.d5 is favourable for White. What essentially results is an inferior version for Black of the Chigorin system, since the 'superfluous' moves ...♖e8 and ...♖f8 have been made.

We will examine in detail the plan of Alexander Morozevich – 13...b4 and also 13...exd4 14.cxd4 b4, which as yet has not occurred in practice.

Variation A – Morozevich's plan 13...b4



It was thanks to this temporary pawn sacrifice, introduced by Alexander Morozevich, that the 12...♗a5 variation acquired the right to exist.

Alexander first played this in a rapid game against Grischuk in the Amber tournament in Monaco, 2006. Grischuk responded with the most practical move 14.d5. 14.♖d3 and the capture 14.cxb4 have frequently occurred.

Before beginning an examination of these three main possibilities, I should also mention the curious 'ambush' move 14.♖b1!?N, which has not yet occurred. In reply, apart from the analogous 14...♖b8, Black can continue 14...exd4 15.cxd4 and now either 15...b3 16.♖d3 c5 17.d5 ♖b6 with counterplay, or immediately 15...c5.

A1) 14.cxb4

In this version the pawn exchange imparts a certain flavour of originality to the position.

14...♘c6 15.♘b3



15...♘xb4!

An unusual structure arises after **15...exd4 16.♙d2 d5 17.e5 ♘e4 18.♘c5! ♙xc5 19.bxc5**, Karjakin-Adams, Wijk aan Zee 2009, but it is advantageous for White: **19...♘xe5 20.♘xe5 ♗xe5 21.♙a5!±** or **19...a5 20.♙f4±**. In the game there followed **19...♗b8?! 20.b4!** and after closing the pawn chain on the queenside White gained a big advantage.

16.♘a5 ♗b8!



Here White has quite a wide strategic choice.

A11) **17.♙d2**

Deferring the taking of a critical decision ‘until tomorrow’, even by making a useful move, in the given situation is not the best course. Now Black preserves his bishop from exchange.

17...♙a8 18.dxe5 dxe5

It looks quite good to sacrifice a pawn, the aim of which is precisely to exploit the strength of this bishop which has been preserved from exchange: **18...♘d7?! 19.exd6 cxd6 20.♘c4 ♘c5**.

19.♘c4 ♙c5 20.♗c1 ♘a2 21.♗a1

And in Emelin-Vitiugov, Czechia tt 2010/11, the players repeated moves.

A12) **17.d5**

White defers the exchange on b7, but determines the pawn structure in the centre. In the game Inarkiev-Eljanov, Khanty-Mansiysk 2009, there followed **17...♙c8 18.♙d2 ♙d7** and now, instead of **19.♙xb4 ♗xb4 20.b3 c5!** with good play for Black, **19.♗a3! c5 20.♘c4** deserved attention. With the e4/d5 pawn wedge in place it is psychologically difficult to retreat **17...♙a8!?**, but in anticipation of ...c7-c6 it was more accurate. The immediate **17...c6** was also possible, with an acceptable game.

A13) **17.♘xb7**

The most sensible continuation. It is interesting that it has not yet occurred in practice, whereas a dozen and a half such games have already been played by email. As would be expected in ‘computer’ encounters, all except one of these ended in a draw.

17...♗xb7



By exchanging on b7 White has made the first choice, and now he has to decide on the pawn structure in the centre.

A131) **18.d5 h6!?**

The immediate 18...c6 is weaker: 19.dxc6 ♖xc6 20.♔g5. The possibility of capturing the b2-pawn does not fundamentally change anything – already taking shape are the depressing contours of an unpleasant position for Black with opposite-coloured bishops.

19.a5

After 19.♔d3 ♖d7 or 19.♔d2 ♖b8 Black accurately carries out ...c7-c6 and gains equal chances.

19...c6

Now 20.♔a4 cxd5! 21.♔xe8 ♖xe8 22.exd5 ♖fxd5 leads to a position where Black has quite sufficient compensation for the exchange, while after 20.dxc6 ♖xc2 21.♖xc2 ♗c7 the two sides' chances are roughly equal.

A132) **18.dxe5 dxe5 19.♖e2**



At first sight it might appear that Black has no problems. But in fact things are not so simple – he must play very accurately to avoid coming under positional pressure.

19...♔c5 seems not fully adequate – 20.♔g5 h6 21.♗ad1 ♔d4 22.♔xf6

♖xf6 23.♗xd4 exd4 24.e5 ♖b6 25.♔b3 c5 26.e6! and the activated bishop has become a powerful force – White has the initiative.

It is more accurate to exchange it immediately – **19...♗xc2 20.♖xc2**. There can follow either 20...♖d7 21.♔e3 ♖e6 or 20...♗h5!? 21.♔e3 ♖f6, and with precise play Black should solve his opening problems.

A2) **14.♔d3**



This quiet move, improving the placing of the pieces, could have been a serious rejoinder to the plan chosen by Black, had it not been for a concrete solution available in the given position.

14...d5!

This move is unsuccessful after the preparatory exchange of pawns – **14...bxc3 15.bxc3 d5?! 16.♖c2!**, as in Sutovsky-Miton, Montreal 2007. Now 16...c5! 17.dxe5 c4± was relatively best. After 16...dxe4?! 17.♗xe4 ♗xe4 18.♗xe4! White gained a dangerous initiative.

Illogical would be **14...♖d7 15.d5**, when the black queen is obviously misplaced.

14...exd4 15.cxd4 g6 is quite possible, but this type of position will be examined in the move order 13...exd4 14.cxd4 b4.



In this version after **15.♞c2** Black gets good play with both **15...c5N** with the idea of **16.dxe5 c4!**, and **15...b3!**, after which **16.♟xb3?! dxe4 17.♟xa5 exd3 18.♟xb7** is bad on account of **18...♞d5!** with advantage to Black. And the correct **16.♞b1 exd4** leads to an equal position – **17.cxd4 (17.e5 dxc3!) 17...dxe4 18.♟xe4 ♟xe4 19.♞xe4 h6**. White is also not promised any benefits by **15.♟xe5 dxe4** (the preparatory exchange on c3 is also possible) **16.♟c2 c5** with equal chances, as in Berg-Nyback, Malmö 2009.

A third option – **15.exd5**, occurred in Kasimdzhanov-J.Polgar, Vitoria Gasteiz 2007. There followed **15...exd4 (15...♞xd5 16.c4 ♞d8 17.♟xe5 ♞xd4! 18.♟df3 ♞d6 19.♟f4 ♞ad8=** is also possible) **16.c4 c6 17.dxc6 ♞xe1+ 18.♞xe1 ♟xc6 19.♞d1 g6**, with at least equal chances for Black.

A3) 14.d5

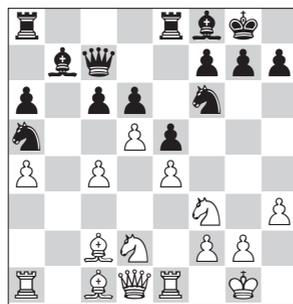


The continuation that has occurred most often. Now both black bishops are severely restricted and much time is required to activate them. As compensation, the knight on a5 has ceased to be a piece, constantly threatening to remain out of play, and also it is much simpler for Black to deploy his major pieces on the c- and b-files.

14...bxc3 15.bxc3 c6 16.c4 ♞c7

This is what Black played in nearly all the games. The queen move is quite flexible: it connects the rooks, but for the moment does not determine which of them to place on b8.

16...♟c8!? deserves attention, in the first instance transferring the bishop to a 'normal' square: **17.♟d3 ♞b8**, or **17.♟a3 ♟d7 18.♟h2 ♞b8 19.♟hf1 g6**, or **17.♞b1 ♞c7 18.♞e2 ♟d7 19.♟f1 ♞eb8**, with counterplay in all variations.



A31) 17.♞a3

A daring plan. White uses the third rank for the switching of his rook, hoping to create, if not an attack, then at least definite threats on the kingside. But Black's defences are sound.

17...♞eb8 18.♟h4 ♟c8

The untimely tactical operation **18...♟xc4?! 19.♟xc4 cxd5 20.♟e3 dxe4** would have played into White's hands. After **21.♟ef5 d5** both **22.♞g3**, increasing the pressure, and the gambit move **22.♟g5!?** look good.

19. ♖g3

Both sides consistently carry out their intentions: Black regroups his forces on the queenside, while White brings up reserves on the kingside.

In the rapid game J.Polgar-Topalov, Dos Hermanas 2008, there followed **19... ♖d8 20. ♗f5** and after the exchanges **20... ♕xf5?! 21.exf5 cxd5 22.cxd5 ♖b4**, instead of **23. ♗f3** White could have played **23. ♗e4 ♗xe4 24. ♖xe4 ♖xe4 25. ♕xe4 ♗b7 26. ♕g5 f6 27. ♕e3** with a promising position. Topalov was wrong to hurry with the exchange of his bishop – the cool-headed **20... ♖a7** was stronger.



In addition, in the diagram position **19... ♗g6!? 20. ♗f5 ♖h8** looks critical, when White still has to demonstrate that his stock on the kingside has not been devalued.

A32) 17. ♕a3 ♖eb8



After **18. ♕d3** a position from Grischuk-Morozevich, Monaco 2006, is reached. In that game White began with **17. ♕d3**. We will examine this plan below.

18. ♗h2

From here the knight can set off for active operations along its usual ‘Spanish’ route – to g4, or by a roundabout way it can be redirected to e3.

18... ♕c8

Kotronias against Naiditsch (French Team Championship 2007) preferred the more aggressive plan **19. ♖c1 g6 20. ♖f3 ♗d7 21. ♗g4 h5 22. ♗e3 ♕h6 23. ♖cd1**, but **23...c5** (instead of **23... ♗c5?! as played**, which could have been met by the energetic **24. ♕xc5 dxc5 25. ♗f5!**) would have retained for Black a sound, although rather passive position.

White acted differently in Zhao Zong Yuan-Kaufman, Budapest 2007 – **19. ♗hf1 g6 19... ♗d7 20. ♗e3 ♗c5** was possible, and if **21. ♕xc5 dxc5 22. ♗b3**, then **22... ♗xb3 23. ♕xb3 a5** with a solid position. **20. ♗e3** Now, instead of **20... cxd5? 21.cxd5 ♕d7 22. ♕d3**, which led to an advantage for White, since he obtained the excellent square c4 for his knight, Black should have closed the position – **20...c5** with quite normal play.

A33) 17. ♕d3

White prepares the ♗d2-f1 manoeuvre and for this he defends his c4-pawn, but in doing so he weakens the b3-square.

17... ♖eb8

The main move. But **17... ♕c8 18. ♗f1 ♖b8 19. ♖a3 ♗b7** also looks very logical, as in Wang Hao-Yakovenko, Taiyuan 2006. Black has good play. If **20. ♕e3 ♗c5 21. ♕xc5** there follows **21...cxd5!**, while after the game continuation

20.♙g5 ♘d7 21.♞e3 h6 22.♙h4 Black was able to drive back the bishop to a not very good position. This could have allowed him to fight for the initiative by 22...♞dc5! (in the game Yakovenko placed his other knight on c5) 23.♙c2 ♟a5.



18.♖a3

In the given situation this rook manoeuvre is aimed at controlling the b3-square.

On the very first occasion when Morozevich employed the 12...♟a5 13.♙c2 b4 plan, which was a rapid game in Monaco 2006, his opponent, Alexander Grischuk, continued 18.♙a3 ♙c8 19.♙f1 ♙d7 (19...♞d7!? also looks not at all bad) 20.♖e3 c5. The decision to block the position could have been delayed, but rapid chess has its own laws: Morozevich insured himself against the c4-c5 break, which is possible in certain variations. After 21.♞c2 g6 22.♙b2 ♙h6 23.♞ee1 ♖b7 Black had a cramped, but very safe position.

In the 'modern' game Jasny-Sodoma, Czech Extraliga 2015/16, White preferred 19.♞c2 (instead of 19.♙f1), but after 19...♙d7 20.♞eb1 ♟h5 21.♞xb8 ♞xb8 22.♞b1 ♟f4 Black achieved good play.

18...♙c8 19.♟f1



19...♙d7

This is how Morozevich continued. He preferred to keep one knight on the kingside. But 19...♙d7 20.♞e3 ♟c5 was also quite possible. This is how the game Cheparinov-Wang Hao, Taiyuan 2007, developed. There followed 21.♙c2 ♙d7 22.♙d2 ♞d8 23.♙c3 ♞b7 24.♞d2 g6 with good counterplay.

20.♙g5

This attempt to activate the bishop is not very successful, but also after 20.♞e3 White cannot hope for an advantage. The accumulation of minor pieces along the third rank fits in badly with the move ♖a3.

20...♙e7 21.♞e3 h6 22.♙h4



The game J.Polgar-Morozevich, Mainz 2008, now continued 22...cxd5 23.♙xf6 ♙xf6 24.♞xd5 ♞d8, after which the temporary pawn sacrifice 25.c5! led to unclear play. But the closed

type of position after **22...c5!** would have promised Black even somewhat the better chances.

Variation B – The new line
13...exd4!? 14.cxd4 b4



In practice this plan has not yet occurred, although it has been played in several games by email.

The first impression is that this is a typical computer recommendation, not really suitable for practical employment. Chess programs often give an acceptable evaluation to positions, based on their incomparable ability to ‘hold’ dubious, unpromising situations. But in the given instance this is not so.

The essence of the strategic battle in this position can be briefly summarised as follows. Black is aiming to achieve the exchange of the d-pawn for his c-pawn, which will give him good piece play. For this he needs to play ...c7-c5 at a moment when White cannot respond d4-d5, or it is unfavourable for him to do so. On the other hand, in most cases the Benoni pawn formation arising after ...c7-c5/d4-d5 is favourable for White, provided only that the opponent does not succeed in playing ...c5-c4. It is around this that the entire strategic battle revolves.

From what has been said it obviously follows that **15.d5 c6⇒** is unfavourable

for White, as is **15.♙d3 g6 16.♖b1** (16. b3 is better) **16...c5 17.d5 c4!**, which gives Black good counterplay.

As was mentioned above, the structure after the exchange of the d-pawns is not dangerous for Black, despite the creation of a ‘backward’ c-pawn.

We begin with a variational verification of this last assertion.

B1) 15.e5

White himself forces a structure with the exchange of the d-pawns. Black cannot get by without the capture on e5 – then he may be too late! **15...♘d7? 16.♘b3 ♘xb3 17.♘g5!** and wins.

15...dxe5 16.dxe5 ♘d7

One of the great players from the past – probably Tartakower – said: ‘a pawn on e5 is the signal for an attack!’. It is hard to disagree with this assertion, especially when the white bishop is eagerly eyeing up the h7-pawn. Black’s play has to be concrete. Moving to d5 would have been a mistake – this is precisely one of those exceptions when, standing in the centre, a knight has no particular prospects. Strangely enough, **16...♘h5** with the idea of ...g7-g6 is more justified, but nevertheless this would be too passive.



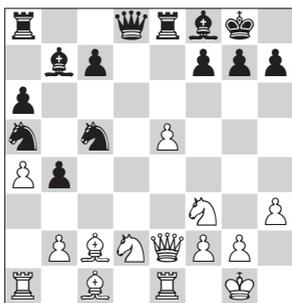
Black’s plan is simple – he wants to play **...♘c5**, threatening to invade

on d3 and once again attacking the b3-point. The same aim is pursued by the planned centralising move ...♙d5. It should be noted that the knight on a5 is performing very important functions: it is controlling the b3- and c4-squares. Two options should be considered: 17.♙e2 and 17.♘b3.

B11) 17.♙e2

If White wants to keep the queens on, he should make this move.

17...♘c5



Black has good counterplay:

18.♘e4 ♘xe4 19.♙xe4 ♘xe4 20.♙xe4 h6 21.♙e3 c5. Black's pawns are accurately restricting the opponent's knight – the chances are equal.

18.b3 ♙d5 19.♙b2. The pawn cannot be taken, but the centralisation of Black's pieces insures him against difficulties – 19...♙ad8∞. I don't like citing 'games by correspondence' from the last few years. Usually they do not have even a hint of the individual player – they only have purely 'computer' moves. But since attention was drawn to the 13...exd4 variation only by two such games, I will mention Akinal-Leimgruber, ICCF email 2010. There Black played 18...♙e7 (18...♙d5 is not so systematic, but also quite possible) 19.♙b2 g6 20.♙e3 ♙ad8 21.♙ad1 ♙g7 with a good game.

B12) 17.♘b3N

This move demands concrete action on Black's part.

17...♙xf3! 18.♙d3 g6



19.e6

19.♘xa5 ♘xe5 20.♙xd8 ♙axd8 21.♙f4 ♘c6 is to Black's advantage.

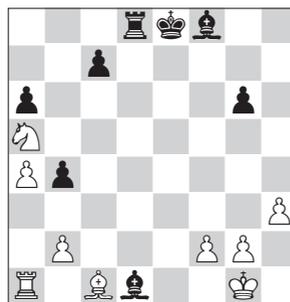
19...♘e5!

There now follows a series of forced exchanges.

20.♙xd8 ♙axd8 21.♙xe5

Everything also 'fits together' for Black in the variation 21.♘xa5 ♙xe6 22.♙f4 ♘c6! 23.♙xe6 fx6 24.♘b7 ♙d4 25.♙e3 ♙d5!♣, although after 26.b3 ♙h4 the exalted position of the rook provides White with some justification for the pawn deficit.

21...♙d1! 22.exf7+ ♙xf7 23.♙xe8 ♙xe8 24.♙xg6+ hxg6 25.♘xa5



A tsunami has swept the greater part of both sides' armies from the board.

White is a pawn up, but the two powerful bishops and favourable pawn structure force preference to be given to Black's position. Both **25...♙c2** and **25...♙e2** are possible, as well as the capture on a4.

B2) 15.b3

The most natural move.

The knight cannot move from d2, since it is tied to the defence of the e4-pawn, and we have already examined the consequences of e4-e5, but in any event White needs to complete the mobilisation of his forces.

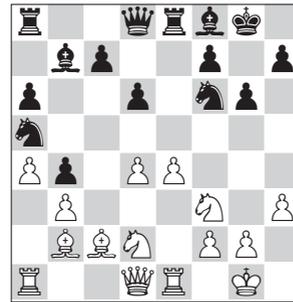
15...g6



To obtain benefits from the **16.e5** break, the inclusion of the moves b2-b3 and ...g7-g6 has not improved things for White, but it has changed the character of the position. In this version **16...♞d5** is now significantly more expedient – the knight is aiming for c3: 17.♞e4 dxe5 18.dxe5 ♞c3!∞. Also, 16...♞h5! is quite possible, since for the continuation of the knight manoeuvre the move ...g7-g6 has already been made.

In reality White has three logical moves: **16.♙b2**, **16.♙d3** and **16.♖b1**. But if he plays 16.♖b1, then after 16...♙g7 his next move will again be with one of his bishops, and therefore we will examine **16.♙b2** and **16.♙d3**.

B21) 16.♙b2



If Black plays **16...c5**, then after **17.d5** White obtains a favourable version of the Benoni pawn structure: the activity of Black's pawn mass on the queenside is blocked, whereas on the kingside White has prospects.

It is curious that all the main analytical programs – Komodo, Stockfish and Houdini – rate Black's position very optimistically in the structure arising after **16...d5 17.e5 ♞d7**, and not only in a concrete situation, but virtually everywhere. But...

'If on the elephant's cage you read the inscription "buffalo", don't believe your eyes', said Kozma Prutkov, the satirical hero of classical Russian literature. From the standpoint of the practical employment of the variation, this is precisely such a case. There is nothing surprising about the fact that this computer recommendation occurred, for example, in the game Semenov-Leimgruber, ICCF email 2011, just as it is also not surprising that with cool-headed play Black's defences held. Apart from 18.♞h2 ♙g7 19.♞df3 ♖c8 20.♖d2, as in the game, I would also suggest the possibility 18.♞f1 c5 19.♞1h2 c4 20.♙c1, when White has real chances of developing his initiative – the position is much simpler for him to play.

16...♙g7

The most natural and strongest move.



Black is planning to play 17...c5, since if 18.d5 he already has 18...♘xe4! prepared. The undefended bishop on b2 requires that White either changes his strategy, or defends the bishop. We will consider 17.♙d3 and 17.♞b1.

B211) **17.♙d3**

The idea of this move is that White does not aim to ensure the possibility of 18.d5 in reply to 17...c5, but is ready to play a position with the d-pawns exchanged.

**17...♘h5!?N**

An attempt to exploit a combination of factors: the fact that one white bishop is undefended, and the possibility of attacking the second bishop from f4. To me this seems to be strategically the most interesting solution.

However, 17...c5N, although White has prepared for it, is also quite possible. After 18.dxc5 – as has already been mentioned, 18.d5? is a mistake on account of 18...♘xe4! – 18...dxc5 19.♞c2 ♞c7 Black has a quite acceptable game.

18.♞c2 ♘f4 19.♙f1 d5

On this occasion the changes in the pawn structure resulting from this attack are expedient for Black.

20.exd5

After 20.e5 ♘e6 21.♞ad1 ♞c8 Black follows up with ...c7-c5 and obtains excellent counterplay, since from b2 it is difficult for the bishop to be included in operations on the kingside, while ♞c2 is simply a loss of time.

20...♞xe1 21.♞xe1 ♙xd5

The two sides' chances are roughly equal.

B212) **17.♞b1**

A strong prophylactic move.



Now **17...♟h5** does not achieve its aim on account of the simple **18.♞f1 c5 19.d5±**.

17...♟d7

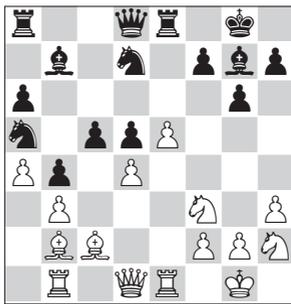
After the preparatory **17...♖c8** possible is **18.♞d3** (which will be examined in the move order **16.♞d3 ♟g7 17.♖b1 ♖c8 18.♞b2**) or even **18.♟h2**, since the break **18...c5 19.d5 c4** does not guarantee Black an equal game – **20.bxc4 ♟xc4 21.♟xc4 ♖xc4 22.♞d3 ♖c7 23.♞d4±**.

18.♞f1

After **18.♞d3**, for the variation **18...d5 19.e5?! c5↑** both white bishops are obviously misplaced.

18.h4!? ♖c8 **19.h5 c5⇒** leads to unclear consequences.

18...d5 19.e5 c5 20.♟1h2



20...c4 suggests itself, but after **21.♞c1 c3 22.♟g4** the far-advanced and even protected passed pawn is not yet a guarantee of prosperity – on the kingside White has a very serious initiative.

20...♟c6!

It is advantageous for Black if White himself captures on c5.

21.dxc5 ♟xc5 22.♟g4 d4!

This break solves Black's problems – in the complicated play the two sides' chances are roughly equal.

B22) **16.♞d3**



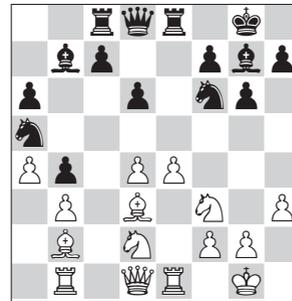
Quite an original plan: White, at least temporarily, refrains from **♞b2** – for the **d5/e5** structure the bishop is better placed on c1.

16...♟g7 17.♖b1 ♖c8!?

Black makes another useful move. After **17...d5 18.e5 ♟d7** White has the strong-looking reply **19.♟g5!?** ♟f8 **20.f4** with the initiative.

18.♞b2

It is not so easy to suggest a serious alternative – White's reserve of clearly useful moves has been exhausted.



18...d5

With the bishop on b2, and after White has spent time on **♖b1** and **♞d3**, this advance is more justified. But the waiting continuation **18...♟h5!?** **19.g3 (19.d5!?) 19...♟f6** is also possible.

19.e5 ♟d7 20.♞e2

After **20.♟f1?** c5 White does not have time to develop his initiative on

the kingside. Black has a dangerous initiative.

20...♖e6 21.h4 ♘h6
with unusual and double-edged play.

Conclusion

The Beliavsky/Morozevich Variation comprises a synthesis of the positional ideas of the Chigorin and Zaitsev Systems, and sometimes also the Breyer System. For those who like a strategic battle, it seems to me to be the most interesting reply to the plan with 12.a4. The positions that arise in the Beliavsky/Morozevich Variation are not so forcing in character as in the variation with **12...h6** (Chapter 1 – ‘Heritage of the Third Match’), and are less risky compared with the **12...exd4 13.cxd4 ♔d7** variation (Chapter 4 – ‘The Boston Manoeuvre’).

In the event of the bishop retreat to a2 – **12...♘a5 13.♙a2** – it looks safe to reply **13...c5** as approved by Alexander Beliavsky. After **14.d5 c4** the positions that arise resemble the main line in the Breyer System, and the position of the bishop on a2 gives Black additional tempi. **13...exd4 14.cxd4 c5**, which was introduced by Morozevich, is strategically more risky. But in this variation Black can count on livelier play.

White’s other retreat – **13.♙c2** – is more natural. It has occurred much more often. In this case the function of a safe strategic defence is fulfilled by Morozevich’s plan, beginning with the unexpected move **13...b4**. True, in this variation White also can continue playing with a minimal degree of risk. In reply to **13.♙c2** Black also has the strategically somewhat more risky, but very interesting ‘new line’ – **13...exd4 14.cxd4 b4**. It has not yet occurred in practice and can be regarded, among other things, as a way of surprising and perplexing the opponent.