

Grigory Bogdanovich

THE ZUKERTORT SYSTEM:

A Guide for White and Black



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Introduction

Once, back when I was playing in the Soviet Junior Championship, a game that was being played on a board next to me caught my eye. White had developed his bishops to b2 and d3 and his knights to f3 and d2, had created an attack and was confidently winning. My neighbor's game made a strong impression on me, but my opening repertoire at the time began with the move e2-e4...

Many years later, in the European Team Championship in Plovdiv in 1983, I wanted to experiment as White and I remembered that episode. The "novelty" turned out to be successful and I won two colorful games with the "new" system. I was faced with an unexpected problem: what to call this new opening, of which I'd only just become an admirer. The official name, "Queen's Pawn Opening," didn't suit me, of course. In honor of the famous German grandmaster Zukertort, who played a number of brilliant games and from time to time used the system 1. d4, 2. ♘f3, and 3. e3, I started calling the new system the Zukertort Opening. Some time later (but "drops of water will eventually wear away a stone") the new name for the interesting opening system caught on.

I have now been using the Zukertort in practical play for over 25 years, and with its help I have achieved some rather good results. Of course, this isn't the most active system, but it is based on the good positional concept of fighting for the center and it has every right to exist. Even many strong opponents of mine have found themselves unprepared for its novel problems, falling into bad positions right off the bat. Certainly, if White manages to implement the main strategic idea – placing the knight on e5 and reinforcing it there, and maintaining control over the e4 square – then Black will have nothing to celebrate!

Of course, the Zukertort isn't some kind of universal weapon. So against the Slav or the King's Indian Defense it's better to look for more active variations. But if your opponent prefers to play the Queen's Gambit or the Nimzo-Indian, then the Zukertort is a good alternative to the standard openings. I'm very pleased that many chessplayers have followed my example and included the Zukertort in their opening repertoire.

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Unfortunately, I still have not managed to start writing a book about this opening, although I gladly show specific variations to my students. So Grigory Bogdanovich decided to compensate for this gap in the literature and has written a very interesting work on this fascinating opening. Readers will get the opportunity not only to familiarize themselves with the different variations and setups, but also to study many typical middlegame ideas that have universal value.

Artur Yusupov
July 2010

Foreword

Dear Reader:

If you play the Zukertort System in the Queen's Pawn Opening, I advise you to read the book that you hold in your hands. With few exceptions, and despite its popularity, theorists haven't favored this opening with their attentions. In fairness I should note that in 2008, when I had already prepared my book for discussion with the publisher, two books came out, by Richard Palliser (*Starting Out: d-Pawn Attacks*) and David Rudel (*Zuke 'Em: The Colle-Zukertort Revolutionized*). But then there is a great deal of material in these two titles that is not relevant to our subject. While its cousin, the Colle System, has been spoiled by the attention of theoreticians, and more than one book has been devoted to it, the Zukertort System, like Cinderella, is waiting for its day.

I was also waiting for one of the grandmasters who play the opening, like Artur Yusupov, to write a book about it. But, alas... And then I decided to follow the advice of the famous English novelist and politician Benjamin Disraeli: "When I want to read a book, I write one." I had long been planning to eliminate this inequity: you won't find such detailed coverage of the Zukertort System anywhere else. I've been playing this system for a long time, and I love it, and that's why I always keep track of eve-

rything that has to do with it, wherever that may be. Since I have an inclination towards analytical work, I've always tried to understand it from every angle. And you will see that in the Zukertort System there is no use for the recommendations of theoreticians who write according to the standards of a well-known phrase from that masterpiece of Soviet cinema, *Gentlemen of Fortune*: "Don't go there, go *there!*"; or of "doctor theoreticians" with their advice: "play a2-a3 to avoid a headache." This doesn't only apply to the Zukertort System, of course, but also to other openings.

The history of an opening, just like the history of anything, has its inconsistencies. Consider the name, for example: the "Colle-Zukertort System." Those who have some familiarity with it will wonder immediately: what's Colle doing here? According to the computer databases he only played it a couple of times, and then not the main lines of the system. And I would also ask: what was Zukertort's contribution to the system that is named after him? Again according to the databases and also the thick books about Zukertort, we can see that the subject of our discussion occupies a meager place in the story of its creation. But it was worth it for him to shine in this opening field, and the magic of his name worked: it will be associated with this opening setup forever. Neither Colle nor Zukertort re-

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searched or invented this system. And to judge by the number of games played, another person is no less significant, and perhaps even more so: Akiba Rubinstein exceeds them both put together. That's why in the West the Zukertort System is sometimes known as the Rubinstein Attack. And if you look at our day, then the contribution to the development of the Zukertort System by Grandmaster Yusupov (in no way the least of the modern chess elite) is much greater than the "service" to it given by the aforementioned gentlemen. So the Zukertort System has also acquired a third name among "the masses": the "Yusupovka." However, we have not set out to reinvestigate the name of the system; we'll just accept everything as it's been settled on.

The theoreticians of the past probably noticed a certain similarity in the arrangement of White's pieces: pawns on d4 and e3, a bishop on d3, knights on d2 and f3. And the difference doesn't appear to be very great: it's all in the positioning of the b- and c-pawns, and in the available spots for developing White's dark-squared bishop. So they decided to call White's setup with d4, e3, ♖f3, ♘d3 the Colle System. The setup with a pawn on c3 is the Colle-Koltanowski System; the setup with the pawn on b3 is the Colle-Zukertort System, and sometimes also the Yusupov-Zukertort System. In her domestic opening nomenclature Russia always goes her own way, establishing the following names respectively – the Colle System and the Zukertort System. These are the ones we will follow. Again according to the databases, this setup was first used for White by W.N. Potter

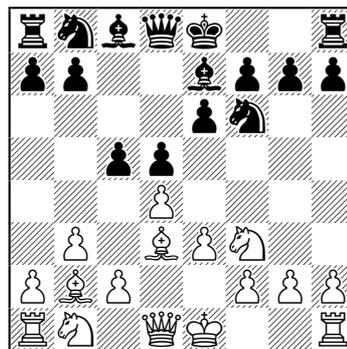
and Joseph Blackburne. Moreover, they both made one of the main moves in the Zukertort System – ♗f3-e5! Here are those games:

Blackburne J. – Minckwitz J. Berlin 1881

1. d4 d5 2. ♗f3 ♗f6 3. e3 e6 4. b3

The game Potter W.N. – Blackburne J., London 1876, continued: 4. ♘d3 ♘d6 5. c4 0-0 6. 0-0 b6 7. b3 ♘b7 8. ♘b2 ♗bd7 9. ♗bd2 ♖e8 10. ♗e5 ♗f8 11. f4. The deployment of the white pieces corresponds to the Pillsbury formation in the Zukertort System, and Black has refrained from playing ...c7-c5. Blackburne remembered this game and repeated the plan five years later!

4...♘e7 5. ♘b2 c5. And after 6. ♘d3!? there is a *tabiya* from the Zukertort System on the board.



6...♗c6 7. 0-0 0-0 8. ♖e1 b6 9. ♗bd2 ♘b7 10. ♗e5 ♖c8 11. ♗df3 ♗d7 12. ♗xd7 ♗xd7 13. dxc5 bxc5 14. c4 ♗c7 15. ♖c1 dxc4 16. ♖xc4 f5 17. ♗a1 ♘d6 18. ♖h4 ♗e7 19. ♖h5 ♗b4 20.

♖xg7 ♗xg7 21. ♖g5 ♗xg5 22. ♘xg5
 ♘xd3 23. ♖d1 ♙e5 24. ♗b1 ♘b4 25.
 ♖d7 ♖c7 26. ♗d1 ♘d5 27. ♖xc7 ♙xc7
 28. ♘xe6 ♖f7 29. ♗h5 ♙b6 30. e4 ♘f6
 31. ♗g5+ ♙h8 32. exf5 ♘d7 33. ♗h5
 ♖e7 34. ♗h4 ♖f7 35. ♗g3 ♙c6 36.
 ♗d6 ♙b5 37. g4 ♙g8 38. a4 ♙a6 39. a5
 ♙xa5 40. ♗xa6 ♙b6 41. ♗c8+ ♘f8 42.
 ♙g2, and here Black gave up the fight.

Digging around the databases I found the following game Mahescanda – Cochrane J., played even earlier than the above games, way back in 1851: 1. d4 d5 2. ♘f3 e6 3. e3 c5 4. ♙d3 ♘f6 5. 0-0 ♙e7 6. c4 0-0 7. b3 cxd4 8. exd4 ♘c6 9. ♙b2 b6 10. a3 h6, and here White brought his knight out to a less characteristic square for the Zukertort System, c3, instead of d2. We'll see later on that even in the Zukertort System the knight can also be developed to c3, so this position can certainly be associated with the Zukertort System. And do you know where this game was played? In Calcutta! So India isn't only the birthplace of elephants and chess, but also of the Zukertort System! It's quite possible that some meticulous chess historian will discover an even earlier game played with the Zukertort.

The contribution of the players I've named consists of the fact that it was they who were the first to place the bishop in an active position on d3. And subsequently it was this deployment of the bishop to d3 that became the axis around which the theory of this system turns. By the way, the course of play with the bishop on e2 cannot be associated with the Zukertort System. So a question arises for the authors of the two-

volume *Queen's Pawn Opening*, Anatoly Karpov and Nikolai Kalinichenko, who believe: "...that the most beautiful game with an early e2-e3, b2-b3 and ♙c1-b2 was played, without a doubt, by the First Candidate [Zukertort - GB]," and they reference the game Zukertort – Blackburne, London 1883.

In a formal sense this assertion may be correct, but how is the Zukertort System relevant here? The bishop on e2 is a completely different line of play (true, in some subvariations the bishop may find itself on e2 temporarily when it's chased from the d3 square), and the authors themselves in their chapter dedicated to the Zukertort System examine it only in the variation where Black's light-squared bishop comes out to g4. But that variation can be viewed as a way for Black to avoid playing on Zukertort territory. Some writers on our theme include the development of the bishop to e2 – if they even mention it at all – only as a completely "foreign body."

Many of the great chessplayers of the past played this system. How valuable is an endorsement from names like Alekhine, Bogolyubov, Gunsberg, Capablanca, Levenfish, Maróczy, Marshall, Pillsbury, Rubinstein, Tarrasch, Tartakover, Teichmann, Flohr, Schlechter, Euwe, and Janowski? Tigran Petrosian and Vasily Smyslov used it in their time. Among the modern chess elite it is constantly used by Artur Yusupov and Michal Krasenkow. Mark Taimanov, Rafael Vaganian, Maia Chiburdanidze, Susan Polgar, Teimour Radjabov, and many other well-known grandmasters

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have used it brilliantly. So there is something to use as an example.

What attracts us to the Zukertort System? In the conclusion to my book on the Nimzowitsch-Rubinstein System in the Sicilian Defense, I wrote that Nimzowitsch's invention interested me because you didn't have to memorize long forced variations. In passing I'll add the comment by Mark Dvoretsky, that "your opening repertoire should be built on the capabilities of your own memory." So in the Zukertort there's no need to put your memory to the test. The Zukertort System looks, figuratively speaking, like a sailboat (the pawn structure that is characteristic of the system and the typical piece setup) with many sails (the plans, methods, and maneuvers that are inherent in and work specifically in the Zukertort System). A player of the Yusupovka must be a good "sailor" in order to steer these kinds of boats. Moreover, the "wind" often changes direction – that is to say, Black's reactions to White's play are extremely varied and demand specific knowledge and skills of the latter. Sometimes a small "gust of wind," in other words some insignificant little technique on Black's part, can overturn the "sailboat" and lead to defeat. That's why it's very important to know not only the strategy of the system, but also its tactics.

This is the objective that the author sought when writing the book – to reflect the slightest nuances in the practical material, and not just general discussions. Therefore, in addition to the general contents, the author brings in

a list of "Tactical Methods and Strategic Themes." The need for this list was provoked by the circumstance that no matter what plan we undertake in the Zukertort System, any of the elements of this list may be encountered in it. Of course, we can argue about the correctness of their classification, but the main purpose of the list is to draw the reader's attention to one possibility or another for both sides in the Zukertort System. Up until now, emphasis has mainly been placed on a traditional presentation of the theoretical material, with the move order taking priority. Move order is very important, of course, and in the Zukertort System in particular. But the generalized conclusion of some theoreticians that you should make the move a2-a3 as soon as possible, and not ♖b1-d2, is extremely dubious. The Zukertort System is multifaceted, and trying to channel it into a narrow rut is a very bad idea. In this book you will encounter themes such as the Pillsbury formation, the long diagonal (a1-h8), the strategic diagonal (b1-h7), and others.

When writing this book, I started from the assumption that the reader has a sufficient grasp of general chess theory. Practical play shows that this system requires familiarity with some areas of general chess theory, such as how to play with or against hanging pawns and isolated pawns, among others. It would also be useful to be aware of certain opening variations, for example, the Queen's Indian (*ECO* code E14), into which the Zukertort System sometimes transposes. I've already said that the Zukertort System is distinguished by its strong

interweaving of plans and the multifaceted improvised methods, that is to say, techniques and elements of play. And more time is required from the reader to master them than when you're studying other opening variations and openings. Remember: "Knowledge is achieved at a slow walk, not a fast gallop."

This book will also be very useful to those who just want to improve their positional play. The reality is that in the Zukertort System you use "the kind of method of play where most of your attention goes not on calculating individual moves, but on drawing from general principles." Richard Réti called this method "position play." The goal of position play is to create the preconditions for carrying out a combination, for a decisive game, or simply to obtain (or increase) some kind of advantage. Remember the words of Emanuel Lasker: "Position play is preparation for combinational play." For coaches it will make the creation of your students' opening repertoire considerably easier, if they are already familiar with the elements of position play.

A little about the materials dedicated to the Zukertort System. It's very important to know who they come from. Some theorists latch on to any problem just so that they can write something. For them the most important thing is to jot anything down as quickly as possible and rush it to press. They find out what they need and don't need at the touch of a button on the computer keyboard, add stock phrases, and hand the latest "pie" they've half-baked to the publisher. And

my doubts only increase when I see that they have never played the opening they're writing about.

Of course, there are exceptions. For example, coaches whose students play this or that variation. They "live through" them together with their charges, but I have observed that they don't really like to share their knowledge, for completely understandable reasons. I always read the works on opening theory by GM Evgeny Sveshnikov with great interest. In the first place, his belief in what he plays makes a convincing impression on the reader. Secondly, it feels like he himself has lived through everything that he writes about. He doesn't write about anything and everything, although his knowledge and playing strength give him the right to do that.

Of the works dedicated to the Zukertort System I would single out a book by the American author David Rudel, *Zuke 'Em: The Colle-Zukertort Revolutionized* (Thinkers' Press, 2008). Its main virtue, as the author tells us at the beginning of the book, is that it is the first to be completely dedicated to the Colle-Zukertort System. Never mind the fact that it contains a great deal of material that is irrelevant to our topic. We'll come back to that. A second, no less important virtue of the book is that the author is very enthusiastic about this subject and no shoddy work is evident. And this endears me to Rudel's book.

On the other hand, not everything impresses. Here, too, it's appropriate to recall another saying: "Don't shoot

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the piano player; he's doing the best he can." I'm very well aware that on that score my book, too, contains shortcomings, but the most important thing is this absence of shoddy work. In the American author's book the main emphasis is on what we may call the philosophy of the Zukertort System, which is also crucial for understanding it. Moreover, I think that it can be a wonderful supplement to my book, or (so as not to offend anyone) vice versa. But, as nothing can be ideal, I'm not in complete agreement with the author here, either. Above all, as I've pointed out, a great deal of space in the book is taken up by material that is irrelevant to the Zukertort System. So, for example, what do variations in the Slav Defense (pp. 130-146) have to do with the Zukertort? I also noticed the author's fondness for statistics. Of course, "statistics know everything!" But statistics are statistics, and there are very few games, and their analysis isn't exactly packed with detail.

Right after Rudel's work, Richard Palliser's book *Starting Out: d-Pawn Attacks* (Everyman Chess, 2008) came out. Here we have a book by a professional chessplayer, and he takes a different approach to presenting the material. It is also distinguished by a conscientious treatment of the subject and a stress on key points in the development of the theory of the Zukertort System. Palliser's book is dedicated not only to the

classical Zukertort System, but also to other openings in which the Zukertort setup can be used.

There was also a book by Ken Smith and John Hall, *Winning with the Colle System*, published by Chess Digest. It too has a chapter on the Zukertort System. True, the authors of this work call it the Colle-Zukertort System. We won't repeat ourselves, as we've already discussed the matter of the opening's name. Much has happened since it came out, and also only a small number of pages are dedicated to the Zukertort System.

At the end of this book you'll find a bibliography. It contains a list of all the books and magazines that the author worked through. Yes, really "worked through," and not on the principle that, "We read a book so we can say that we've read it." And all the points that are worthy of attention have been reflected in this book. I didn't want to make a compilation – I either gave the information as a supplementary note with an indication of authorship, so as not to be a plagiarist, or else I included it in the course of the discussion.

I hope that I've persuaded you, dear reader, to start studying the Zukertort System. It will help you to improve both your play and your results. Enjoy your excursions into this opening which, no doubt, will improve your chess health!

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1. d4 d5 2. ♘f3 ♗f6 3. e3

“The idea of this variation is to take possession of the e5 square and, after occupying it with a knight, to start an attack against the enemy king. Black, meanwhile, tries to take the initiative on the other flank and, when he gets the chance, make sound use of his queen’s bishop.” That, in the most general terms, is how Alexander Alekhine characterized the Zukertort System.

3...e6

In our book we’ll only be examining the Zukertort System in its classical form, i.e. with the move ...e7-e6, which to a large extent determines the strategy of play for the opposing sides. The main weakness of this move, as in the French Defense, is that Black has the “light-squared bishop problem.” The Zukertort System can be used, in principle, against any opening setup by Black, as it’s universal. But it can’t always be effective, otherwise opening theory wouldn’t exist and there would only be the Zukertort System. That’s why, as a rule, theorists relate only those variations where it works and that are typical for it. So, for instance, after 3...c5 4. b3 ♘c6 5. ♗b2, Black can play 5...♗g4!?, and the main ideas for White in the Zukertort System simply don’t work. John Watson and Eric Schiller, the authors of the book *How to Succeed in the Queen Pawn Openings* (Trafford, 2006), are of the same opinion.

John Cox, in his book *Dealing with d4 Deviations* (Everyman Chess, 2005), also considers the line where the light-squared bishop comes out to f5 or g4 independent of both the Colle System and the Zukertort System. Richard Palliser additionally thinks that bringing out the bishop to f5 or g4 gives Black an “easy game” if White sticks to the Zukertort System. He, too, declines to examine this continuation. And you are amazed when you read the following in the book by Anatoly Karpov and Nikolai Kalinichenko: “However, the ideas in apparently (to judge by their name) different systems are, in essence, extraordinarily similar. The only difference is that in the Zukertort System the bishop temporarily stays on c8, and in the Nimzo-Indian, as we see, it can be developed to g4. The rest is identical...”

What on earth is the meaning of the phrase, “...in the Zukertort System the bishop temporarily stays on c8”? Despite my long acquaintance with one of the authors of this bit of wisdom, I have to call things as I see them. The whole point is that after ...e7-e6 this poor devil of a bishop often can’t find a worthy use behind the fence of black pawns, and often finds itself in secondary roles for a long time, and sometimes remains a mere extra all the way through to the end of the game. At the same time, once it comes out to g4 it immediately jumps into the middle of the battle, neutralizing White’s threats on the b1-h7 diagonal. And then naturally, the game scenario changes fundamen-

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tally, and similar issues arise only in a few situations. After 5...♙g4!? it is difficult for White to count on getting an advantage by sticking to the Zukertort System. In general, as I said above, it's very doubtful that the variations with Black's light-squared bishop coming out to a useful spot (the g4 or f5 squares) have a connection with the Zukertort System. That's why with this move order for Black, 3...c5, White has to be very careful and react in some other way to Black's plotting.

By way of illustration, Watson and Schiller bring in the game Perissinotto C. – Zurla M., Bologna 1991: 3...♙g4 4. b3 e6 5. ♙d3 c5 (5...♞e4!?) 6. ♙b2 cxd4 7. exd4 ♞c6 8. 0-0 ♖c8 (On this theme there are two other games that once again confirm that once Black brings out his light-squared bishop to g4 it's better if White doesn't try for the Zukertort System: 8...♙d6 9. ♞bd2 [9. ♖e1 0-0 10. a3 ♖c8 11. ♞bd2 ♙h5 12. h3 ♙f4 13. g4 ♙g6 {with the maneuver ...♙c8-g4-h5-g6, which Savielly Tartakover vividly described as "a departure to distant lands," Black neutralizes White's play on the important b1-h7 diagonal, and furthermore the white pawn remains weak, as it has lost its main defender – the d3-bishop} 14. ♞f1 ♞e4 15. ♞e5? ♞xe5 16. dxe5 ♞h4 and White is defenseless, Mendoza A. – Bachmann A., Aguascalientes 2007] 9...0-0 10. a3 ♖c8 11. ♞e1 ♙f4 12. ♞e5 ♞xe5 13. dxe5 ♞d7 14. f3 [14. g3] 14...♙h5 [14...♙f5!? 15. ♙xf5 exf5 16. g3 ♞b6+ 17. ♖h1 ♖xc2] 15. ♖f2 ♞b6 16. ♞f1 ♙g6 17. ♙xg6 hxg6 18. ♖h1 ♙xe5, and Black won a pawn in Rogmans J. – Karpachev A., Charleroi 2005, and with it the game) 9. ♞bd2 (according to Watson and Schil-

ler, Black is already better) 9...♙d6 10. ♖c1 ♙f4! (exclamation mark by Watson and Schiller. As we can see from these games, the move is characteristic of this variation: now the bishop can't be cut out of the action on the kingside by the move ♞f3-e5 [of course, after the knight frees itself from the pin], and it's also pleasant for it to work along the c1-h6 diagonal) 11. ♙e2 ♞e4!, and Black has the advantage.

4. ♙d3 c5

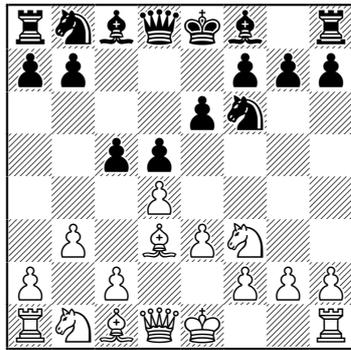
In principle, the theory of the Zukertort System starts out from the assumption that there is a black pawn on c5. In 90 percent of the cases that's true, but there are games in which Black refrains from ...c7-c5 for a while, or never plays it at all. The fact is that, knowing what difficulties await him, Black might go for different schemes: either by saving a tempo on ...c7-c5 or by playing a "Black Zukertort" (see Part II, Chapter 3).

5. b3

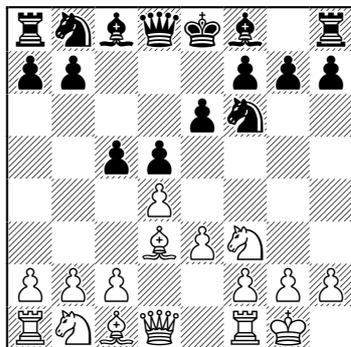
In contrast to the Colle System, where White plays c2-c3, securing a retreat square for the light-squared bishop in the event of...c5-c4, in the Zukertort System White not only anticipates Black's threat, but also immediately prepares a parking spot for the dark-squared bishop. Now we have the starting point of the Zukertort System. While White's aims in this position are fairly transparent – put the bishop on b2, open the a1-h8 diagonal, and throw all your pieces at your opponent's king, with the rocket battery of the two Horwitz bishops firing with terrible

The Subject of Our Serious Study

force — Black is at a crossroads. Where is his queen’s knight better placed — on c6, or d7? Where is the dark-squared bishop best developed, on d6, e7, or hidden away in a “cabin” on g7? Or perhaps he should express his love for an early check like an amateur? Or maybe start hacking away at d4 right away, swordsman-style. As we can see, Black has many roads to choose from. Incidentally, White’s subsequent play depends on this choice too. So it’s with these questions that we’ll begin our investigation.



But before going into the main material I should point out that, after 1. d4 ♘f6 2. ♘f3 e6 3. e3 c5 4. ♕d3 d5, White sometimes provokes Black into ...c5-c4 by immediately playing 5. 0-0:



A debatable decision. After 5...c4 Black not only chases White’s bishop away from its aggressive post, but also grabs some space. What does White seek in return? First, Black must react carefully to White’s action on the queenside. Below we’ll see what kind of nuance this is. Secondly, after Black plays ...c5-c4 the white pawn on d4 will solidly cover the center, providing an opportunity for its e-pawn brother to demonstrate some activity — e3-e4 — and untying White’s hands on the kingside. And what does Black need with all this? The fact is that seizing space with ...c5-c4 enables Black to create serious counterplay on the queenside. Therefore

6. ♕e2 b5

Here’s that very nuance: Slow play after this move isn’t desirable, as White will get the better pawn structure, for example 6...♘c6 7. b3 cxb3 (it is necessary to trade pawns, as 7...b5 is bad because of 8. a4) 8. axb3 (White already has a nice position thanks to his superior pawn structure) 8...♕d6 9. ♕a3 0-0 10. c4 ♖e8 11. ♕xd6 ♗xd6 12. ♘c3 (12. c5!? intending ♘b1-c3-b5-d6) 12...b6 13. ♗c1 a5?! (13...♕b7 ±) 14. ♘b5 (Rotstein E. — Hermann W., Cologne 2000) 14...♗d7 15. ♘e5 ♘xe5 16. dxe5 ♘e4 17. cxd5 ♕a6 18. dxe6 ♖xe6 19. ♖d1 ±; or 6...♘bd7 7. b3 b5?! (now it was necessary to agree to 7...cxb3 8. axb3) 8. a4 cxb3 9. axb4 bxc2 10. ♗xc2 ♕b7 11. ♘bd2 ♕d6 12. ♕a3 ♕xa3 13. ♖xa3 0-0 14. ♖fa1 ♗b6 15. ♗a2 ♖fc8 16. ♕f1 (weaker is 16. ♖xa7 ♖xa7 17. ♗xa7 ♖a8!) 16...♗c7 17. ♘b3 ♘e4, and here in Kurajica B. — Palac M.,

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Medulin 1997, White could already take the pawn with 18. ♖xa7 as 18...♖xa7 19. ♗xa7 ♖a8 doesn't work because of 20. ♖c1!; finally 6...♗d6 7. b3 b5? (here we go again: better is 7...cxb3 8. axb3) 8. a4 bxa4 9. bxc4 dxc4 10. ♗xc4 Baumgart S. – Eichner M., Germany 1997.

7. b3!?

White immediately tries to wreck his opponent's entrenched pawns. But there is also another frequently encountered strategy for White associated with the Pillsbury setup, which we'll talk about in more detail below. Here's how the game Najdorf M. – Hounie F., Mar del Plata 1946, went: 7. ♗e5 ♗bd7 8. f4 ♗b7 9. ♗d2 ♗d6 (play turned out less successfully for White in the following recent game: 9...♗e7 10. ♗df3?! [White voluntarily declines to fight for the e4 square, while it's precisely in this structure that the advance e3-e4 can be very effective. Now is not a good moment to undermine Black's queenside, i.e. 10. b3? c3 11. ♗df3 b4 12. a3 a5, and after Black occupies e4, White's dark-squared bishop can't get into play] 10...♗e4 11. a4?! [another unsuccessful move: in addition to the e4 square, Black also takes space on the queenside] 11...b4, and later on in Adly A. – Rublevsky S., Tripoli 2004, Black's space advantage on the queenside made itself felt) 10. c3 0-0 11. ♗c2 ♗c7 12. ♗f3 ♗b6 13. e4 ♖ac8 14. exd5 exd5 (14...♗bxd5!?) 15. g3, and in the

subsequent maneuvers Najdorf simply did a number on his opponent, not running into any powerful resources.

7...♗b7 8. a4

White's play is also organized by keeping pawns on the a-file, for example: 8. bxc4 bxc4 9. ♗c3 ♗bd7 10. ♖b1 ♗c6 11. e4!?! (White rushes to open up the center, as Black's king is stuck there) 11...dxe4 (It would be interesting to see what would have happened if Black had first taken the pawn with the knight. Does White really feel comfortable in the variation 11...♗xe4!?! 12. ♗xe4 dxe4 13. ♗d2 c3) 12. ♗d2 ♗a5 13. ♗b2 ♗b6 14. ♗xc4 ♗xc4 15. ♗xc4 ♗d6 16. d5!? exd5 17. ♗b5 ♗xb5 18. ♗xb5 ♗xb5 19. ♗xf6 ♗d7 20. ♗xg7 ♖g8 21. ♗d4 (also after 21. ♗d4 an impressive draw could be obtained: 21...♗h3 22. g3 ♗xg3 23. fxg3 ♖xg3+ 24. hxg3 ♗xg3+) 21...f6 22. ♗xf6 ♖xg2+ 23. ♗xg2 ♗g4+ ½-½, Dizdar G. – Chandler M., Jürjala 1983.

8...a6 9. c3

After the series of trades 9. axb5 axb5 10. ♖xa8 ♗xa8 11. bxc4 bxc4, neither side could achieve anything tangible in the game Maróczy G. – Nimzowitsch A., Göteborg 1920.

9...♗bd7 10. ♗bd2 ♗e7 11. ♗a3 0-0 12. ♗c2 ♗c6 13. ♗b2 with an approximately equal game in Kurajica B. – Bareev E., Sarajevo 2003.

Part I

Play for White

Chapter 1

A Piece Attack

A. The Black Monarch's Residence on the Kingside

White often attacks only with pieces on the kingside, dispensing with the pawns. In the first phase he transfers his pieces to the kingside. In the second phase he creates various threats in order to provoke weaknesses in Black's position. Then in the final phase, exploiting the weak points in his opponent's defenses, he launches the decisive attack. The usual scenario is that Black holds the position, but a protracted defense leads to mistakes that can't be corrected.

Yusupov A. — Scheeren P.

Plovdiv 1983

1. d4 ♘f6 2. ♗f3 e6 3. e3 c5 4. ♕d3
d5 5. b3 ♗bd7 6. ♕b2 b6 7. 0-0 ♕b7 8.
♞e5!?

The mark of respect after this move hasn't been placed there for no reason. You only have to recall the saying of the very experienced Tartakover: "A knight on e5 is a great master of space; mate follows on its heels."

8...a6

"Two for the price of one": First, Black is preparing to advance the pawns on the queenside — ...b6-b5 and ...c5-

c4; secondly, he prevents a check from White's bishop on b5. So, for example, now 8...♞e4 would be bad due to 9. ♕b5 ♗ef6 10. ♖f3, and as a result Black has only lost time. White, besides the gift in the form of additional tempi for development, has also created a terrible threat, for example on 10...a6? there follows 11. ♕xd7+ ♗xd7 12. ♖xf7# (the variation with the preliminary exchange 8...♞xe5? and after 9. dxe5 Black plays 9...♞e4 isn't even worth talking about due to 10. ♕b5+).

9. ♞d2 b5

Black adopts a very simple plan, which we'll talk about in Part II, Chapter 6. Its main drawback in this game

Part I. Play for White

is that development isn't finished. The counter-plan employed by Yusupov can be considered one of the most effective in this variation.

9...♗e4 is bad because of the variation pointed out by Susan Polgar: 10. ♖xd7 ♜xd7 (10...♗xd2 11. ♗xb6!? GB) 11. ♕xe4 dxe4 12. ♖c4 (threatening a fork on b6) 12...♜c6 13. dxc5 bxc5 (White has the advantage, as he has the better pawn structure: on the queenside he has three pawns against two black pawns, and without the help of the pieces they can create a passed pawn in the endgame; and on the kingside, thanks to the fact that Black has doubled pawns on the e-file, the white pawns easily hold off Black in a pawn ending. Of course, all this discussion of the long-term prospects inspires anguish in view of Nigel Short's saying: "In modern chess there's more concern about pawn structure. Forget it: mate decides everything." Giving checkmate is a more enjoyable pastime. But still, when defensive technique in modern chess has lulled you into the idea: I'll play how I play, I'll go wherever I'll be safe – that's rather a dangerous thing. White's superiority in the above variation is also determined by his better development, and moreover Black has to think about how to complete his development on the kingside. [Bad are both 13...♕xc5 because of 14. ♕xg7; and 13...♜xc5 because of 14. ♕d4.]).

10. ♖xd7!?

Weaker is 10. dxc5 because of 10...♗xc5, attacking White's important bishop.

10...♜xd7

In the event of 10...♗xd7, White plays 11. c4, undermining Black's center. This is very dangerous for the second player, as he is behind in development.

11. dxc5!?

White opens up the major a1-h8 diagonal. One of the main weapons in the hands of followers of the Zukertort – opening up the a1-h8 diagonal – has been allocated its own chapter due to its importance. (See Chapter 2.) The idea is clear: to bring White's dark-squared bishop into the game.

11...♕xc5 12. ♜f3

In the game Adly A. – Taleb M., Dubai 2005, White used a plan involving an e3-e4 advance. See Part I, Chapter 9: 12. a4 b4 (12...bxa4?! 13. ♜xa4 is dubious, as White puts strong pressure on the a-pawn) 13. ♜f3 ♜e7 14. e4 (Worthy of attention in this position is Yusupov's plan, in which White can hope for success: 14. ♜g3!? 0-0 15. ♗f3. After 14. e4 mass exchanges follow, when the rightful result of the game is a "draw from exhaustion of the organism," as Tartakover put it.) 14...dxe4 15. ♗xe4 ♗xe4 16. ♕xe4 ♕xe4 17. ♜xe4 0-0 18. ♜ad1 with an equal game.

12...♕e7

Worthy of attention is 12...♜e7. True, after 13. ♜g3 0-0 (Smith and Hall point out an interesting opportunity after 13...♕d6: 14. ♜xg7 ♜g8 15. ♜xf6! ♜xg2+

Chapter 1. A Piece Attack

16. ♔xg2 d4+ 17. ♕e4 ♖xf6 18. ♕xb7, and it's even somewhat uncomfortable to talk about White's compensation for the queen) 14. a3, White's pieces are more active; I might also add that on 12...d4 there follows the straightforward 13. ♖e4. Susan Polgar came up with the following variation: 13...♗xe4 14. ♕xe4 ♕xe4 15. ♖xe4 ♖d8 16. ♖ad1 ±.

13. ♖g3 0-0 14. ♖f3

White not only brings the knight into the attack on the kingside, but also takes control of the e5 square, not giving Black the opportunity to play ...e6-e5. White's last three moves, transferring his pieces from the center to the flank, are completely in line with Tartakover's vivid expression: "Order to the center – take the king's fortress by storm."

14...♖ac8

Smith and Hall think that in this position Black should play 14...h6. After this move Richard Palliser suggests 15. ♖e5 ♖c7 16. f4, when White controls the situation on the queenside and in the center, while on the kingside he has good preconditions for an attack.

15. ♖g5 (threatening the h7-pawn)
15...g6

15...h6? is bad because of 16. ♖h7!.

16. ♖h4 (with the simple threat of 17. ♕f6 and 18. ♖h7#) **16...h5**

Moves suggested by our "silicon friends" such as 16...♖fe8 are difficult

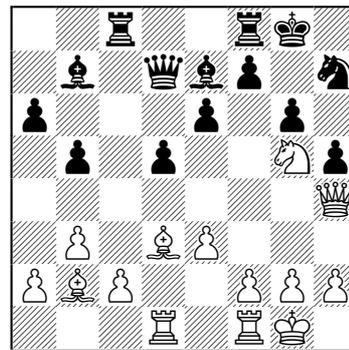
for a human to find, as they're very far from obvious.

17. ♖ad1

Directed against 17...♖e4. Worthy of attention is 17. ♖d4!?, tying Black down to the long diagonal.

17...♖h7?

17...♖c7 (Yusupov) 18. ♖d4 ♖c5
19. ♖f4 ♖g4.



18. ♖xh5!

One of the most beautiful sacrifices typical of the Zukertort System, but: "The most miraculous thing about chess is that there's absolutely nothing miraculous about it." We won't recall who said these words, but we'll bring in an explanation of them by Tartakover, who noted, "... how quickly here a creative moment turns into a purely technical one. So, for example, the player who used a 'smothered mate' for the first time, by means of a queen sacrifice... no doubt acted under the influence of great inspiration. However, since then this motif has participated