

MATTHIEU CORNETTE
AND
FABIEN LIBISZEWSKI

THE COMPLETE KALASHNIKOV



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Key to symbols	5
Preface	7
Introduction	9
Chapter 1. 6.1c3 7...e7 — Introduction / 8.e3 [B32]	11
Chapter 2. 6.1c3 7...e7 — 8.d5 [B32]	23
Chapter 3. 6.1c3 7...e7 — 8.c4 [B32]	29
Chapter 4. 6.1c3 7...b5 — Introduction / 8...xxx [B32]	61
Chapter 5. 6.1c3 7...b5 — 8...ge7 Introduction / 9.xxx [B32]	71
Chapter 6. 6.1c3 7...b5 — 8...ge7 10.cxd5 [B32]	83
Chapter 7. 6.1c3 7...b5 8...ge7 10.exd5 11...e7 [B32]	107
Chapter 8. 6.1c3 7...b5 8...ge7 10.exd5 11...d7! [B32]	131
Chapter 9. 6.1c3 7...e6 Introduction / 8.xxx [B32]	145
Chapter 10. 6.1c3 7...e6 8.c4 [B32]	157
Chapter 11. 6.c4 Introduction / 7.xxx [B32]	173
Chapter 12. 6.c4 Introduction / 8...f5 [B32]	183
Chapter 13. 6.c4 8...e6 [B32]	201
Chapter 14. 5.xxx [B33]	223
Chapter 15. 6.xxx [B33]	237

KEY TO SYMBOLS

=	Equality or equal chances
±	White has a slight advantage
∓	Black has a slight advantage
±	White is better
∓	Black is better
+ -	White has a decisive advantage
- +	Black has a decisive advantage
∞	unclear
∞̄	with compensation
↔	with counterplay
↑	with initiative
→	with an attack
Δ	with the idea
□	only move
N	novelty
!	a good move
!!	an excellent move
?	a weak move
??	a blunder
!?	an interesting move
?!	a dubious move
+	check
#	mate

PREFACE

It's in 1834 that the French champion Labourdonnais played 4...e5 for the first time. But the Kalashnikov, that promises Black dynamic compensation in exchange for the apparent weakness of the d5 square and the backwards d6 pawn, is a decidedly modern opening. That's why the opening only started gaining in popularity in the late 1980's, in particular thanks to the famous Russian grandmaster Evgeny Sveshnikov. Ever since, many top level players have added it to their repertoire: Pavel Tregubov, Alexei Fedorov, Etiennen Bacrot, Alexander Moiseenko and let's not forget the most famous one amongst them, Teimour Radjabov. In France, there was a fashion effect after the fantastic victory by Igor Nataf over John Nunn in 1999. Ever since then, we have ourselves, Matthieu and Fabien, been regularly playing it over the years and we had very correct results.

We always thought that the Kalashnikov was not well-known enough and that its potential was underestimated. There are very few books about it and they are not recent. That's why we got the idea of writing a new book about this opening, in order to share our passion and our ideas. When Arkadij Naiditsch gave us the opportunity to do it, we didn't hesitate. We were initially planning to only build a Black repertoire, but we quickly realized it would be a shame to not reveal all — or let's say most of the lines and ideas that are concealed within the Kalashnikov. On an unbiased basis, we present objective and exhaustive analyses of every line, with numerous novelties. Our goal is for our reader to build a complete Black repertoire and for him not to be afraid of facing the Kalashnikov with White any longer. We know what we are talking about: as we are both 1.e4 players, we could often have been confronted to this opening, but as many others, we have often chosen to avoid it by playing 3.Nc3 or 3.Bb5. Since the beginning of this project, namely in 2011, we decided to test our analyses in practice, with both colours. Cornette, M — Roy Chowdhury, S, Vandoeuvre 2011 1-0, Cornette, M — Pap, M, Metz 2012 1-0 with White, but also, Barbosa, E — Libiszewski, F, Cannes 2011 0-1, Korneev, O — Cornette, M, Metz 2012 0-1 and more recently Korneev, O — Libiszewski, F, Bagnara Calabra 2013 0.5-0.5 with Black are a part of the results of these tests. These games are all featured in this book.

With the translation of our book “The Complete Kalashnikov” into English, we have performed some updates to it. Following some feedback we received about the first edition, we carried out some small changes, added news games and of course found some improvements.

We hope that our analyses will offer you as much pleasure and success as they did to us.

Hope you enjoy it,
GM Fabien Libiszewski and GM Matthieu Cornette,
Bordeaux the 21th February 2013.

Bibliography:

Mega Database 2013.
Corr Database 2013.
The Week In Chess.

INTRODUCTION

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 e5



Unlike other opening books, this one doesn't only address one of the colours: throughout the writing we have tried to be objective in the evaluation of the different positions arising from the Kalashnikov.

In the labyrinth of this opening that was popularized by Evgeni Sveshnikov, we nevertheless had to choose a path: after pacing it to and fro, we decided to recommend the line starting with 5.♗b5 d6 6.♗1c3 to White. We start our journey by analysing this variation and we are devoting the ten first chapters of the book to it, i.e. its major part. After 6...a6 7.♗a3, Black has different options, two of which we consider to be particularly interesting:

— 7...♙e7, the most fashionable move, is our recommendation for Black. It's a pretty solid continuation which we will analyse in the chapters 1 to 3, 8.♗c4 being the critical line. White has the choice between 10.g3, which is the most played move, and 10.♙d3, which has the benefit of leading to less forced lines. For this reason, we are advising 10.♙d3 to White.

— 7...b5 has always been the most played move. After 8.♗d5, Black needs to continue by 8...♗ge7. The other 8th moves are analysed in chapter 4, but they give better play to White. After 8...♗ge7 9.c4 ♗xd5, 10.exd5 is the critical move, leading to very rich positions. The solid 10.cxd5 is analysed in chapter 6, but it doesn't promise any advantage to White. If they play 10.exd5 however, Black needs to react well: after the popular 11...♙e7, we think that white can obtain an advantage after 12.♙d3 (see chapter 7). The line 11...♙d7!? (chapter 8) is very rarely played, but it leads to new positions and ideas. According to us, it's the only way to make the variation "live", even if everything is not always easy for Black.

A last possibility after 7.♗a3 is to play 7...♙e6: we are looking at variations resulting from this move in chap-

ters 9 and 10.9. ♖c4 is clearly the best move for White and it guarantees them a certain advantage.

This concludes the analysis of 6. ♖1c3 and thus of the repertoire we advise to those playing with the white pieces. We then thoroughly analyse 6.c4 (chapters 11 to 13), the other move that is often played by White; chapter 11 is dedicated to the white side lines starting from move seven. We have then decided to divide the rest of this line into two distinct chapters: the 12th chapter is devoted to the variations arising after 8...f5, a rather dynamic continuation, while the 13th chapter looks at the more solid 8... ♕e6.

Both moves seem to be theoretically correct to us, but 8... ♕e6 is definitely more secure. To end with, we dedicate the last two chapters to rapid deviations of White; chapter 14 is devoted to secondary 5th white moves, while chapter 15 analyses White's 6th moves others than 6. ♖1c3 and 6.c4.

CHAPTER 1

6. ♘1c3 7... ♕e7 Introduction / 8. ♕e3 (B32)

1.e4 c5 2. ♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4. ♘xd4
e5 5. ♘b5 d6 6. ♘1c3 a6 7. ♘a3 ♕e7

Here is the most fashionable move, that we recommend to Black. Moiseenko played it in 2011, as well as of course Sveshnikov. Other grandmasters such as Radjabov, Ikonnikov or Federov, who are also specialists of this opening, have also played it recently. The idea is playing ♘f6 without White having the move ♕g5. White has the choice between three moves here: 8. ♘d5, as it is often tempting to occupy this square (chapter 2), 8. ♘c4, the most played move, the idea of which is to make use of the fact that Black hasn't played b5 yet (chapter 3) and finally 8. ♕e3, with the idea of playing on the b6 square after ♘d5 or ♘c4 to follow.



8. ♕e3

This is the rarest one out of the three moves, but it has recently been played several times by very good players.

8... ♘f6!?

The move we recommend.

8...b5 has been tried by Moiseenko and Fedorov in 2011. This move is probably playable, but we don't really like the type of position with a closed center that arises from it. 9. ♘d5 ♖b8 10.c4 b4 11. ♘c2 ♘f6

(11...a5 is too slow. 12. ♖d3 ♘f6 13. ♕e2 is the most precise.

(13. ♖d1 0-0 (13...b3 14. ♘xf6+ ♕xf6 15.axb3 0-0 16. ♕e2± A. Zhigalko–A. Fedorov / Minsk 2011.) 14. ♕e2 a4∞ With an unclear position.)

13...0-0 14.0-0± Followed by ♖d1.)

12. ♖d3

a) 12. ♕d3 A rather strange move, as we think it is logical to play on the d-file. 12... ♘d7 13.0-0 ♘c5 14.a3 a5 15.axb4 axb4= D. Guerra Bastida–S. Maze / Linares 2005;

b) 12.f3 b3!? Black is trying to get counterplay right away.



13. axb3 ♖xb3 14. ♘cb4

(14. ♖b1 o-o

b1) 14...a5 15. ♖a2 ♖b8 16. ♙e2 o-o 17. ♖a3 ♘xd5 18. cxd5 ♘b4 19. ♘xb4 axb4 20. ♖a5!±;

b2) 14...♘xd5 15. cxd5 ♘b4 16. ♙d2 ♘xc2+ (16...♘d3+ 17. ♙xd3 ♖xd3 18. ♙a5 ♖d7 19. o-o o-o 20. ♘b4 ♖e3 21. ♘c6±) 17. ♖xc2 ♖b8 18. ♙xa6±;

15. ♖a2 ♖b8 16. ♙e2 ♘h5∞ Followed by ♙g5. The position is uncertain.)

14...♘xd5 15. ♘xd5 (15. ♘xc6? ♖xe3+±) 15...♖xb2 16. ♖a4 ♙d7 17. ♖a3 ♖b8!±N (17...♖b8 B. Vuckovic-M. Pap / Belgrade 2007.) 18. ♘c7+ ♙f8 19. ♘b5! ♙h4+ 20. ♙d1 ♖b4∞ With a complicated position where Black doesn't have any trouble with finding counterplay;



12...o-o 13. ♙e2 ♘d7!±N A good improvement. Black wants to play ♙g5 and the knight will possibly go to c5.

(13...♘g4?! We don't like this move very much. In the game Black found an interesting idea, but unfortunately it doesn't work: 14. ♙d2 ♙g5 15. ♖d1 ♘xf2? A too bold sacrifice. (15...♙xd2+ is the most natural continuation, but it leaves White with a small advantage. 16. ♖xd2 ♖h4 17. ♖g3 ♖xg3 18. hxg3 b3 19. axb3 ♖xb3 20. f3 ♘h6 21. ♘ce3±) 16. ♙xf2 f5 17. ♙g1 fxe4 18. ♖xe4 b3 (18...♙xd2 19. ♖xd2 ♖a5 20. ♙d3!±) 19. axb3 ♖xb3 20. ♙g4 ♙xd2 21. ♙xc8 ♙h6 22. ♙e6+ ♙h8 23. h4± V. Iordachescu-A. Moiseenko / Aix-les-Bains FRA 2011.)



14. ♖d1

(14. ♖xe7+ ♔xe7 15. ♖d1 ♜f6!
16. ♙g5

a) 16. 0-0 ♖d8∞;

b) 16. ♔xd6 ♔b7! An important move as Black will be able to develop rapidly while putting pressure on the e4 pawn, while White's pieces are not very well coordinated. The ♙e3 is for example taking away the knight's square.



17. ♔d3 ♙e6 18. ♙g5 (18. 0-0 ♖fd8
19. ♔b3 ♜xe4=) 18... ♖fd8 19. ♔f3
♖xd1+ 20. ♙xd1 b3 21. axb3
♔xb3∞;

16... ♖d8 17. ♔f3 h6 18. ♙xf6 ♔xf6
19. ♔xf6 gxf6 20. b3 f5∞ Black
doesn't have any problems here, as
the bad white bishop compensates
for their inferior structure.)

14... ♙g5 15. ♙xg5 ♔xg5 16. ♜d3
♜f6∞ With a complicated position.
Black managed to exchange their
black squared bishop and he will
simply play ♖d8 on the next move.



If White plays 17. ♔xd6 then Black
will find good counterplay after 17...
♙b7 18. ♔d3 defending the e4 pawn
and after 18... ♖fd8 19. ♜d5 ♔xg2∞
Black has won the pawn back;

8... ♖b8 has already been played by
grandmasters Fedorov and Mazé.
9. ♜d5 b5 transposes to 8... b5 9. ♜d5
♖b8.



9. ♜c4

9. ♜d5 doesn't give much to White.
9... ♜xd5 10. exd5 ♜d4! A thematic
pawn sacrifice. (10... ♜b8 11. ♜c4
♜d7 12. a4∞ D. Le Goff-H. Tirard /
Fouesnant 2007.)



11. ♖d3 (11.c3 ♜f5 12. ♖d2 ♖g5 Black doesn't have any problem at all. M. Bezgodova–P. Nakhapetiane / Izhevsk RUS 2011.; 11. ♖xd4 is too risky. This is a recurrent theme in the Kalashnikov: if White takes the pawn for the price of his black squared bishop, then the opening of the files favors Black. 11...exd4 12. ♖xd4 0–0 Black got an overwhelming initiative in A. Kovchan–P. Eljanov / Dnipropetrovsk 2000. ♖f6 and ♖e8 will follow.) 11...♜f5

(11...0–0 12.0–0 (12.♜c4?! b5 13.♜d2 ♜f5 14. ♖xf5 ♖xf5 15.0–0 ♖c7 J. Polgar–T. Radjabov / Rishon Le Ziyon 2006.) 12...♜f5 See 11...♜f5.)

12. ♖d2 0–0 13.♜c4 Threatening ♖a5. 13...a5 (13...♖b8!? 14.0–0 ♖c7 15.b3 ♖c5 is also a possibility, with an interesting position.) 14.a4 b6 15.0–0 ♖a6 16.♖g4 ♜h4 17.♖e2 ♖xc4 18.♖xc4 ♖g5 19.♖e1 f5∞ B. Socko–T. Radjabov / Novi Sad 2009.

9...b5!?

This is the best way to go on in our opinion.

9...♖e6 This move seems to be playable, but Black will have to play very precisely.



10.♜d5 (10.♜b6 ♖b8 11. ♖e2 0–0 12.0–0 ♜xe4!?) leads to simplifications. 13.♜xe4 d5 14.♜c5 d4 15.♜xe6 fxe6 16.♜c4 dxe3 17.♜xe3 ♖c5= Despite his bad structure, Black equalized in C. Balogh–K. Kerek / Hungary 2001. The ♖c5 is on the right diagonal, where he puts pressure on the f2 pawn, while White has some difficulties to coordinate his pieces.) 10...0–0! We think that this is the right continuation:

a) 10...b5?! 11.♜xf6+! gxf6 A sad necessity. 12.♜b6 ♖b8 13.♜d5 f5 14.exf5 ♖xf5 15. ♖d3± It is clear that White is better here: A. Vovk–V. Ikonnikov / Vlissingen 2009.;

b) 10...♖xd5 11.exd5 ♜a7 (11...♜d4 12. ♖xd4 exd4 13.♖xd4 b5 14.♜e3 And Black didn't have enough compensation in the following game: D. Kryakvin–V. Laznicka / Pardubice 2007.; 11...b5N We think that this move which is suggested by the computer is dubious: 12.♜b6 ♖b8 13.dxc6 ♖xb6 14. ♖xb6 ♖xb6 15.a4±) 12.a4! The most precise.

(12. ♖b6 ♜b8 13.c4 (13.a4 0-0 14. ♙e2 ♜c8 15.a5 ♜xb6 16. ♙xb6 ♜e8 17.0-0 ♜d7 18. ♙e3 f5∞ With an unclear position in the game J. Echavarría-A. Zapata / Cali 2003.) 13...0-0 14. ♙d3 ♜c8!= D. Naroditsky-R. Hess / Berkeley USA 2011.)

12... ♜c8 13. ♙e2 0-0 14.0-0± The position is certainly complicated, but we think White is better. He can gain some space on the queenside by playing b4 and / or a5, but he can also play on the kingside by f4, while Black is lacking some perspective.;



11. ♜xe7+ This move obviously needs to be looked at! White will take the d6 pawn.

a) 11. ♙b6 ♜c8!?!N The advantage compared to 11... ♜d7 is that White cannot take back with the queen anymore. (11... ♜d7 was played in I. Smirin-U. Boensch / Fuegen 2006. 12. ♜xf6+N ♙xf6 13. ♜xd6 ♜c8 14.0-0-0±) 12. ♜xd6

a1) 12. ♜xf6+ ♙xf6 13. ♜xd6?! (13. ♜xd6 transposes to 12. ♜xd6.) 13... ♜d4 14. ♙xd4 ♜d8 15. ♜c5 exd4∓;

a2) 12. ♜xe7+? is bad since after 12... ♜xe7 White can't take on d6 and Black will thus continue by the thematic d5. 13. ♜xd6? ♜c6-+ Followed by ♜d8.;

12... ♜d7! 13. ♜xf6+ ♙xf6 14. ♜c4 ♜d4∞ With good compensation for the pawn.;

b) 11. ♜xf6+ ♙xf6! 12. ♜xd6 Black has two different ways of going on here, but both promise them good compensation: (12. ♜xd6?! ♜d4! Black has the initiative.) 12...b5

(12... ♜e8!? also seems possible in order to keep the queens on the board. The idea is to play ♙e7 or ♜d8 and of course b5. 13. ♜b6 (13. ♙b6 ♙d8! A very strong move! Black has the initiative.) 13... ♙e7 14. ♜d2 ♜d8 15. ♜d5 f5! 16. ♙d3 (16. ♜xe7+ ♜xe7 17. ♜c3 fxe4∞ With a complicated position.) 16...fxe4 17. ♙xe4 ♜b4 18. ♜xe7+ ♜xe7 19. ♜e2 ♜h4 20. ♙c5 ♜f4 21. ♙d3 ♜xd3+ 22.cxd3 ♜f5∞ The opposite colored bishops give Black good attacking chances.)

13. ♜xc6

(13. ♜xd8 ♜axd8 14. ♜a3 (14. ♜d2 ♜b4!= Black will win one pawn back.; 14. ♜b6 ♜b4=) 14... ♙e7 15.c3 ♙xa3 16.bxa3 ♜a8!? Preventing a4. 17. ♙e2 ♜fc8 Followed by ♜a5. The position is equal.)

13...bxc4 14. ♖e2 (14. ♔c5 ♖e7!? 15. ♔xe5 ♖f6 16. ♔g3 ♖xb2 17. ♖d1 ♖c3+ 18. ♖d2 ♖xd2+ 19. ♖xd2 ♔a5 Black has the initiative.; 14.b4 A real computer move. 14... ♔b8) 14... ♖g5!

(14... ♖b8 15.b3 (15.0-0 ♖xb2 16. ♖xc4 ♖xc4 17. ♔xc4 ♔c8!= Black will win the c2 pawn back.; 15. ♔xa6 ♖g5! With good compensation.) 15... ♔a5+ 16. ♖d2 ♔a3 With the idea of playing ♖fc8. 17. ♖xc4 ♔b2 18.0-0 ♖fc8 19. ♔xa6 ♖a8 20. ♔b5 ♖ab8 (20... ♖xc4 21.bxc4 ♔xc2 22. ♖e3 ♖ab8 23. ♖ac1 ♔xe4 24. ♖b6±) 21. ♔a4 ♖xc4 22.bxc4 ♔d4 23. ♖e3 ♔xe4 24. ♖fb1±)



15. ♔b6

b1) 15.0-0?! ♖xe3 16.fxe3 ♔d2;

b2) 15. ♖xg5?! ♔xg5 16.0-0 (16. ♖f3 ♖ab8) 16... ♔d2;

15... ♔xb6 16. ♖xb6 ♖ab8 17. ♖c7 ♖xb2 18. ♖xe5 Here both lines seem playable for Black.



18...c3! (18... ♖xc2 19.f4! f6 20. ♖d1! ♖xe2! A good exchange sacrifice. 21. ♖xe2 ♖h6 22.f5 ♖xf5 23.exf5 fxe5 24.g4 c3 Black has good compensation in this ending.) 19. ♖d3 (19.f4 ♖f6 20. ♖xf6 gxf6=) 19... ♖c8∞ With a complicated position where Black is not worse;

c) 11. ♖e2?! ♖xe4;

11... ♖xe7! The good way of taking back the knight.

(11... ♔xe7 12. ♔xd6 ♔xd6 (12... ♖xc4 13. ♔xe7 ♖xe7 14. ♖xc4 ♖xe4 15.0-0-0± The bishop pair promises White a certain advantage.) 13. ♖xd6 ♖b4 14.0-0-0! ♖xa2+ 15. ♖b1 ♖fd8 16. ♖e2!N A good improvement that confronts Black to some problems and refutes the 11... ♔xe7 line. (16. ♖c4 ♖xd6! 17. ♖xd6 ♖xc4 18. ♖hd1 ♖f8 19.f3 ♖e8= A. Smith–E. Sveshnikov / Marianske Lazne 2008.)



16... ♖d7 (16... ♗b4 17.c3 ♘c6
18. ♗xb7±) 17.c3±)



12. ♖xd6 White needs to accept the challenge. 12... ♗xc4!N A strong novelty.

(12... ♖c8 13. ♖xd8 ♗fxd8 14. ♗b6 ♖d7 (14... ♖f8 15. ♗xe5 ♗xe4 16. ♗d3 ♗c5 17. ♗xc5 ♖xc5 18. ♗f3±) 15. ♗xe5 ♖d6 16. ♗e3 ♗xe4 (16... ♖xc2?! 17. ♗d3± D. Kryakvin-M. Novik / Sochi 2008.) 17. ♗d3 ♗c5 18. ♗xc5 ♖xc5 19. ♗f3± It will be hard for White to win this position as the black pieces are very active, but obviously he is the only one who can play for the win here.)

13. ♖xd8 ♗fxd8 14. ♗xc4 ♗xe4 15. ♗d3 ♗f6 16.o-o-o This is the critical position of this variation... White must be a little bit better thanks to the bishop pair, but we think that Black can defend this position, for example:



16... ♗ed5 17. ♗d2 b5 18. ♖he1 ♗f4 19. ♗xf4 exf4 20. ♗e2 ♖f8 21. ♗f3 ♖xd1+ 22. ♖xd1 ♖e8 23. ♖d6 ♖e6 24. ♖d8+ ♖e7 25. ♖a8 ♗e4=;

9...o-o allows White to play ♗b6, when Black will have to play ♖d7. We would like to avoid having to place our queen in front of the ♗c8.



10. ♗b6 ♖d7 11. ♗e2 ♖b8 12.o-o!

(12. ♖d2 The idea of quickly putting pressure onto the d6 pawn doesn't lead to anything. 12... ♗d8 13. ♖d1 ♗xb6 14. ♗xb6 ♖d8 15. ♗xc8

(15. ♗bd5 ♗xd5 16. ♗xd5 ♖h4!? (16... ♗e6 was played in the game O. Renet-P. Potapov / Pardubice 2006.) 17. ♗d3 ♗g4 18. ♖c1 ♗e6 Black doesn't have any problem.)

15... ♖xc8 16. ♖xd6 ♖b6 The beginning of a nice tactical phase. (16... ♖a5 also gives Black decent compensation.) 17. ♖a3 ♗d4 18. ♗d3 ♗g4! 19.o-o ♖h6

(19... ♗xh2!! would have won in a very nice way.



20. ♖xh2 ♔h6+ 21. ♖g3 (21. ♖g1 ♜f3+! 22.gxf3 ♔g5+ 23.♖h2 ♜c6-+) 21... ♔f4+ 22.♖h3 ♜c6-+ White can't avoid getting mated.)

20.h3 ♜f3+! 21.♖h1 (21.gxf3?? ♔xh3 22.fxg4 ♔xg4+ 23.♖h1 ♜c6-+ With mate to follow.) 21... ♜g5! 22.f3! ♜xh3 23.fxg4 ♜f2+ 24.♖g1 ♜xg4 25.♜f5?? A huge defensive mistake.

(25.♜f2! was the only move! 25... ♔h2+ 26.♖f1 ♜xf2 (26... ♜e3+ 27.♖e2 ♜xg2 28.♜d5 ♔h5+ 29.♖d2 ♔g5+ 30.♖e2=) 27.♖xf2 ♔f4+ 28.♖g1 ♔e3±)

25... ♔h2+ 26.♖f1 ♔h1+ 27.♖e2 ♔xg2+ 28.♖e1 ♔g3+ 29.♖e2 g6-+ T. Kirovski-P. Eljanov / Ohrid 2001.)



12... ♔d8 Once again, this is a thematic move in this kind of situations. Black wants to chase the b6 bishop in order to liberate his position. 13. ♔e3 ♔c7 14. ♜b6 ♔d8 (14... ♔xb6 15. ♔xb6 ♜e7 16. ♔d3± The white position is more pleasant to play.) 15. ♜bd5± White has obtained a small advantage, but he wasn't able to convert it in the following game: I. Saric-P. Potapov / Aix-les-Bains FRA 2011.



10. ♜b6 ♜b8 11. ♜xc8

11. ♜bd5 This move doesn't give anything to White. 11... ♜g4!? (11...0-0 The easiest move also seems to be completely playable. 12. ♔e2 ♜xd5 13. ♜xd5 ♔g5 14.0-0 ♔xe3 15. ♜xe3 And a draw was agreed in A. Sokolov - A. Moroz / Cappelle la Grande 2007. We think the position is equal after 15... ♔e6 16. ♔d2 ♔c7 17.c3 ♜fd8=)



12. ♙d2?!

(12. ♖xe7 ♘xe7 (12... ♖xe3!?)
 13. ♖xc6 ♖xd1 14. ♖xd8 ♖xc3
 15. ♖xf7 ♙xf7 16. bxc3 ♙d7 17. ♙d2
 Despite White being a pawn up,
 this game should end in a draw.)
 13. ♙g5 h6 14. ♙xe7 ♚xe7 15. ♖d5
 ♚d8= Followed by ♙e6 and ♖f6.)

12...b4 13. ♖a4 ♖f6 14. ♖xe7 ♖xe7
 The position is unclear, but we are
 starting to like Black better as the a4
 knight is out of play and d6-d5 will
 follow. D. Kryakvin –D. Lintchevski
 / Krasnoyarsk 2007.

11... ♚xc8

The critical position. White has the
 choice of where to develop his ♙f1 to
 now.



12. ♙e2

This move has the drawback of leav-
 ing the e4 pawn vulnerable.

12. ♙d3 has the drawback of allow-
 ing the ♙e7 to move as the ♚d1 is
 not attacking the d6 pawn any long-
 er.



12...0-0

(12... ♖b4 13. 0-0 ♖xd3 14. ♚xd3 h6
 15. b4!?) A good way to gain some
 space on the queenside. (15. a3 0-0
 16. f3 ♚c4 17. ♖fd1 ♖fc8= A. Volok-
 itin–R. Kempinski / Warsaw POL
 2011.) 15...0-0 16. a4± White has the
 initiative.)

13. 0-0 ♙d8! An important move.
 Black will try to exchange their dark
 squared bishop by playing ♙b6.
 This is possible as the d6 pawn is not
 hanging anymore.



14.a4 (14. ♖g5?! doesn't make much sense as Black has 14... ♖d7! and he is obviously happy to exchange the bishops. 15. ♗e3 ♗b6 16. ♗g5 h6 17. ♗d2 ♖f6= Van S. Eijk–Ikonnikov / Barcelona 2009.) 14...b4 15. ♖d5

(15. ♖e2!?N seems to be an interesting try to improve White's play. The idea is to bring the knight to f5 via g3.



15... ♗b6 16. ♖g3 (16. ♗g5 ♖h5∞ Followed by ♗c5 and h6.) 16...a5 17. ♖f5 ♗e6 18. ♗b5

(18.b3 d5! A logical move in order to get rid of the d6 weakness. 19. exd5 ♖xd5 20. ♗c4 (20. ♗g4 g6 21. ♖h6+ ♗g7 22. ♗xe6 fxe6 23. ♗g5 ♗d4=) 20... ♗xf5 21. ♗xd5 ♖d4 22. ♗d3 ♗e6 23. ♗xe6 ♖xe6= The position is equal.)

18... ♖e7 19. ♗c4!? (19. ♗xd6 ♖xf5 20. ♗xe6 fxe6 21. exf5 exf5=) 19... ♗xc4 20. ♖xe7+ ♗h8 21. ♗xd6 ♖xe4 22. ♗xe5 ♗xe3 23. fxe3 ♗be8! A good move that allows Black to get sufficient compensation.



24. ♗ac1 (24. ♗d5 ♗c7 25. ♖f5 ♗e5 26. ♗d3 g6 27. ♖d4 f5∞) 24...f6 25. ♗d5 ♗c7 26. ♖c6 f5 27. ♖d4 g6 And Black has enough compensation for the pawn thanks to the strong e4 knight and the weakness of the e3 pawn.)

15... ♖xd5 16. exd5 ♖e7 17. a5 (17. ♗e2 a5 doesn't give anything to White either.) 17... ♖xd5 18. ♗xh7+ ♗xh7 19. ♗xd5 ♗c7 20. c4 (20. ♗fc1 ♗b7! =) 20...bxc3 21. bxc3= J. Smeets–V. Ikonnikov / Germany 2009;

12.a4 ♖b4!N is a novelty that leads to an unexpected simplification.

(12...b4 The most played move. 13. ♖d5 o–o 14. ♖xe7+ ♖xe7 15. ♗xd6 ♖g6?! V. Iordachescu–S. Roy Chowdhury / Dubai UAE 2012. (15... ♖c6!N 16. f3 ♗d8 17. ♗c5±) 16. o–o–o!±)



13. ♖e2

a) 13. ♖c1 o-o 14. axb5 axb5 Black's position is good, he will try to play d5;

b) 13. axb5?! ♗xe4! 14. ♗xe4 (14. ♖a3 d5!↑) 14... ♗xc2+ 15. ♔d2 ♗xa1 16. ♖xa1 axb5 ♞ White is clearly in danger here.;

13... ♗xc2+! 14. ♖xc2 b4 15. o-o bxc3 16. bxc3 o-o 17. ♕d3 ♖c6∞ The position is balanced. Black will play ♖fc8 followed by the thematic ♕d8.

12...o-o 13.o-o b4

13... ♖d8!? was a novelty when the first edition of this book came out, but it has been played since. The idea is to quickly play d5.



14. a3 In order to avoid b4. (14. ♕f3 ♗a5∞ Followed by ♗c4.) 14...d5!N (14...h6 15. ♖d3± B. Smith-V. Shishkin / Baia Sprie ROU 2012.) 15. ♗xd5 (15. exd5 b4! 16. axb4 ♗xb4= Black will get the pawn back.) 15... ♗xe4 16. ♕g4 f5 17. ♖f3! ♗d6 18. ♕h3 e4∞ With a very unclear position. The black queen will get back into the game via e6.

14. ♗d5 ♗xe4 15. a3!?

15. ♕f3 ♗f6 16. ♖d3 ♗xd5 17. ♕xd5 ♗h8 Followed by f5. There is no reason for Black to have any problems here.;

15. ♕c4 ♗f6 And now it is difficult for White to find an useful move.

15... ♕d8 16. ♖d3

16. b3 a5 17. axb4 axb4 18. ♕c4 ♗h8∞

16... ♗f6=



White has certain compensations for the pawn here, but not enough to claim an advantage. In the game: S. Sulskis-T. Radjabov / Tallinn 2004, Black managed to win.

Conclusion:

We don't think the recent 8. ♕e3 line is the most critical one. We recommend Black to play 9...b5!? rather than having a passive position after 9...o-o or 9... ♕e6.