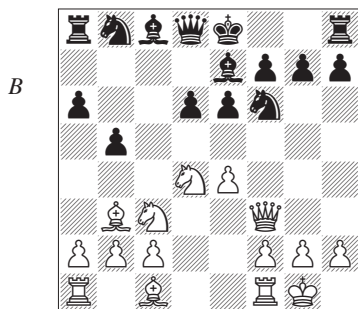


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6 5...a6 6 6 ♖c4 e6 7 ♖b3 b5  
8 0-0 ♗e7 9 ♔f3!

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4  
♗f6 5 ♗c3 a6 6 ♗c4 e6 7 ♗b3 b5 8  
0-0 ♗e7 9 ♔f3! (D)



This is a strong move associated with a plan which involves pieces only. By preventing 9...0-0? (in view of 10 e5!) and 9...♗b7?! (which allows 10 ♗xe6!), White gains time for ♔g3 with the idea of answering ...0-0 with ♗h6! and obtaining an advantage in development after the forced ...♗e8. The threats of various strikes in the centre (♗d5, ♗f5) and the possibility of deploying the rooks (♖ad1, ♖fe1) make Black proceed very cautiously.

Within White's concept, the future of the f2-pawn is an indefinite factor: in the variations with ...♗c6 and an exchange on c6, it is often necessary to play f3, while in other variations White may prepare f4.

### Main Lines

Currently, 9...♗c7 and 9...♗b6 are of about equal importance. 9...♗c7 with the main variations 10 ♔g3 0-0 and 10 ♔g3 ♗c6 is considered more reliable and 9...♗b6 braver, as it leaves Black the chance to continue with ...♗bd7 (with the queen on c7 this is precluded by the threat of ♗xe6!). After 9...♗b6, the main continuation is 10 ♗e3 ♗b7 11 ♔g3, when Black has a choice of several lines, the main one being 11...b4 12 ♗a4 ♗bd7. Lately, 10 ♗g5!? has become popular instead of 10 ♗e3.

### Transpositions

9 ♔f3 is a genuine subsystem that is almost unconnected by transposition to other lines of the Sozin. However, it is inherently somewhat entangled as the sides have many standard moves. The greatest number of transpositions occur in the positions with ...♗c6, ♗xc6 ♗xc6, that arise, as a rule, in various lines after 9...♗c7 but may sometimes be obtained even after 9...♗b6 10 ♗e3 ♗b7 (if Black rejects ...♗bd7 in favour of ...♗c6).

### General Assessment

Black's delay in development precludes him from organizing quick counterplay and his real strategic aim is to neutralize his adversary's activity

gradually. If Black defends accurately, he may get an acceptable game. The chances of the sides in the position after 9 ♖f3 may be assessed as in the initial position: somewhere between ‘=’ and ‘±’.

As usual in the Sozin, in the variations with ...♗b6 and ...♗bd7, White bears relatively greater strategic risk than in the variations with ...♗c7 and ...♗c6, and, at the same time, the ever-increasing lag in Black’s mobilization makes his own risk no less.

We shall discuss:

**A:** 9...♗b6 61  
**B:** 9...♗c7 73

Sometimes, two other moves by Black occur:

a) 9...♗a7 10 a4!? (the alternative is 10 ♖g3 0-0 11 ♗h6 ♗e8 12 ♗e3 ♗c7 13 a4 b4 14 ♗a2, Mukhutdinov-Agrest, Budapest 1991) 10...b4 11 ♗a2 ♗b7 (in White’s favour is 11...d5 12 exd5 ♗xd5 13 ♗f5 Gallagher, or 11...a5 12 c3!) 12 ♗d2 e5 13 ♗f5 ± Sion Castro-Vera, Mondariz 1995.

b) 9...♗d7 and now:

b1) 10 ♖g3 does not reveal the drawbacks of Black’s idea since after 10...♗c6!?, 11 ♗xc6 ♖xc6 transposes to Line B22, while 11 ♗e3 is hardly stronger.

b2) 10 ♗g5!? ♗b7 11 ♗ad1 ♗c6 12 ♖g3 enables White to hope for a small advantage, Lerch-Ftačnik, Czechoslovak Cht 1988.

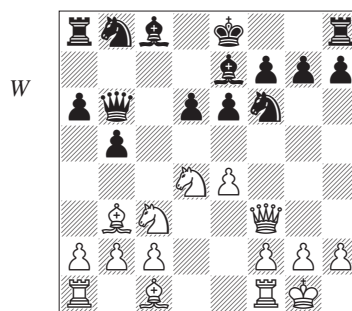
b3) A similar assessment applies to 10 ♗d1!? ♖b7 (10...♗b7 11 ♖h3!?) 11 ♖g3, Zapata-Infante, San Salvador Z 1998.

b4) Possibly the main continuation here is 10 a4 b4 11 a5 0-0 12 ♗a4 ♗d8

(12...♗c6 13 ♗b6! ♗xd4 14 ♖d1 Bangiev), and now 13 ♗d1!?

**A)**

9...♗b6 (D)



Now:

**A1:** 10 ♗g5!? 61

**A2:** 10 ♗e3 74

**A1)**

10 ♗g5!?

This interesting move attracted attention only after the game Ivanchuk-Kamsky, Monaco Amber rpd 1996, but it was first played by Brooks in 1982 (by the way, the position after 10 ♗g5 may also arise via 8 ♗g5 ♗e7 9 ♖f3 ♖b6 10 0-0).

Let us consider:

**A11:** 10...♗bd7 62

**A12:** 10...0-0 63

Other moves:

a) 10...♖xd4? 11 e5 ±.

b) 10...b4?! 11 e5 ♗b7 12 ♗a4! ♖c7 (12...♖a7 13 ♖d1 dxe5 14 ♗xe6! +-) 13 exd6 ♗xd6 14 ♖h3 with an initiative, Alvim-Valiente, corr. 1989.

c) 10...♗b7 11 ♗e3! ♖a5 (but not 11...♖c7?! 12 ♗xe6!) 12 a3 ♗c6 13

♖g3 0-0 14 f4 ± Ganguly-Farkas, Szeged 1998.

d) 10...h6. Now White can play 11 ♙e3 ♗b7 12 ♖g3 or 11 ♙xf6!? ♙xf6 12 e5 ♙b7 13 ♜d5 exd5 14 exf6 ♗xd4 15 ♜fe1+ (Alvim) 15...♙d8 16 fxg7 ♗xg7 17 ♙xd5 ♙xd5 18 ♗xd5 followed by a4, with compensation.

e) 10...♗b7!? is playable:

e1) 11 a3 0-0 (11...♜bd7) 12 ♖g3 ♜bd7 13 ♜fe1 ♜e5 (13...♙h8!?) 14 ♜ad1 ♙d7 15 f4 ± Ciemniak-Kempinski, Polish jr Ch (Czestochowa) 1992.

e2) 11 ♜fe1 and now:

e21) 11...♜bd7 and then: 12 ♖g3 0-0 13 ♙h6 ♜h5 14 ♗h3 ♜hf6 15 ♙g5 ♜c5 = Alvim-Vujanović, corr. 1999; 12 ♜ad1!? transposes to Line A11.

e22) 11...0-0 12 ♖g3 (12 ♜ad1!? b4 13 ♜a4 – 10...0-0 11 ♜ad1 b4 12 ♜a4 ♗b7 13 ♜fe1) 12...b4 13 e5 (13 ♜a4? ♜xe4) 13...dxe5 14 ♙xf6 ♙xf6 15 ♜e4 ♙e7 (15...exd4!? 16 ♜xf6+ ♙h8 Van der Weide) 16 ♗xe5 ♜c6 17 ♜xc6 ♗xc6 = Mirumian-A.Petrosian, Armenian Ch (Erevan) 1996.

#### A11)

10...♜bd7 11 ♜ad1 ♗b7

Or:

a) 11...0-0 – 10...0-0 11 ♜ad1 ♜bd7.

b) 11...♜c5?! 12 ♙xf6! gxf6 13 ♜fe1 (Nunn recommended 13 e5 ♙b7 14 ♜d5! exd5 15 exf6) 13...♜a7 (Ivanchuk-Kamsky, Monaco Amber rpd 1996; 13...♗b7 14 ♜f5 ±) 14 ♖g4! Nunn.

c) 11...♜e5 12 ♖g3 b4 13 ♜a4 ♗b7 and now both 14 ♜fe1 (Nijboer-Timman, Amsterdam 2000) and 14 ♙xf6 are dangerous for Black.

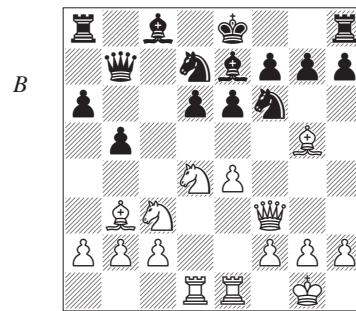
d) 11...♙b7!? is another relatively rare option; e.g., 12 ♜fe1 (both 12 ♙xe6 and 12 ♙e3 should be investigated) 12...♜c5 (12...0-0!? – 10...0-0 11 ♜ad1 ♙b7 12 ♜fe1 ♜bd7) 13 ♖g3 (13 ♗h3!?), and now:

d1) 13...0-0-0?! 14 ♙e3, Jaracz-Smirin, Groningen 1996.

d2) 13...0-0! – 10...0-0 11 ♜ad1 ♙b7 12 ♜fe1 ♜bd7 13 ♖g3 ♜c5!.

e) 11...b4 12 ♜a4 ♗b7 13 ♜fe1 – 11...♗b7 12 ♜fe1 b4 13 ♜a4.

12 ♜fe1 (D)



#### 12...b4

Or 12...0-0 13 ♖g3 ♙h8:

a) 14 a3 and now:

a1) 14...♜c5 15 ♙xf6 gxf6 16 ♜d5!? ± Lang-Kask, corr. 1994.

a2) 14...h6!? 15 ♗h4 ♜e5 16 f4 ♜g6 17 ♗h3 e5 18 ♜f5 ♜xf4 = Snarheim-Leskiewicz, Gausdal 2000.

b) 14 ♜e3 b4 15 ♜ce2 (15 ♜d5?! exd5 16 ♜f5 ♜h5 17 ♗h4 ♙xg5 18 ♗xg5 ♜df6) 15...♜xe4 16 ♜xe4 ♙xg5, and Black has at least equality; e.g., 17 ♜xe6 (Nunn-Ftačnik, British League (4NCL) 1999/00) 17...♜f6! or 17 ♜g4 ♙e7!? 18 ♜xg7 ♜f6! ± Van der Weide.

c) Interesting is 14 ♜d5!? exd5 15 ♜f5 ♜h5 16 ♗h4 ♙xg5 17 ♗xh5.

**13 ♖a4 0-0**

Two other ways to reach this position are 10...♜b7 11 ♜fe1 0-0 12 ♜ad1 b4 13 ♖a4 and 10...0-0 11 ♜ad1 b4 12 ♖a4 ♜b7 13 ♜fe1 ♖bd7.

**14 ♜g3**

Or:

a) 14 ♜h3 ♜e8 15 f4? ♖xe4 ≠ Peter-Amigues, Bescanon 1999.

b) 14 c3!? ♖e5 (14...bxc3 15 ♖xc3 ♖c5 16 e5!! ±; 14...a5!) 15 ♜e2 bxc3 16 ♖xc3 with an advantage, Srebrnić-Gruskovnjak, Ljubljana 2000.

**14...♜e8**

14...♖xe4? fails to 15 ♜xe4 ♗xg5 16 ♜xe6! ♖f6 17 ♜ee1 – Van der Weide.

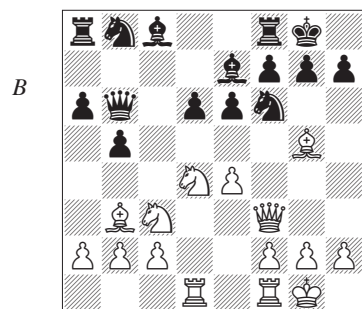
14...♗h8 15 c3 (15 ♖f3!? ♜c7 16 ♜d4 a5 17 ♗xf6 gxf6, Prokopchuk-Kempinski, Koszalin 1997, 18 c3!?) 15...a5 (15...♖xe4!?) 16 ♗c2 ♖e5 17 f4 ♖g6 (Nijboer-Van Wely, Dutch Ch (Rotterdam) 2000) 18 e5 (Van Wely) ±.

**15 f3 ♗h8 16 ♗h1**

± Reinderman-Danailov, Wijk aan Zee 2000.

**A12)****10...0-0 11 ♜ad1 (D)**

Not 11 e5? dxe5!.



Here Black faces a crucial choice:

a) 11...♖c6 12 ♖xc6 ♜xc6 13 ♖d5 (13 ♜fe1 ♗b7 14 a3 transposes to note 'c11' to White's 11th move in Line B1) 13...exd5 14 ♗xf6 dxe4 15 ♜e2 ♗xf6 16 ♗d5 ♗g4 17 ♜xg4 ♜c8 18 ♜xe4 ♜a7 (Ryvlin-Ar.Karpov, corr. 1991) 19 c3 with a minimal advantage for White.

b) 11...b4 12 ♖a4 ♜b7 and now:

b1) 13 ♜fe1 ♜e8 (13...♖bd7 transposes to Line A11) 14 c3 a5 15 ♗c2 ♖bd7 16 ♜g3 ♗f8 17 f4 e5 18 fxe5 dxe5 19 ♖f5 ± Reinderman-Bosboom, Hoogeveen 1999.

b2) 13 c3 a5 14 c4 ♖bd7 15 ♖b5 ♜b8 16 ♜e2 ♗b7 17 f3 ♗c6 18 ♖d4 ♜c8 19 ♜d2 h6 20 ♗h4 ♖e5 21 ♖xc6 ♜xc6 (21...♖xc6!?) 22 f4 ♖g6 23 ♗g3 ♜c7 24 f5 ± Emms-Van den Doel, Isle of Man 1997.

Two other moves can be linked to one and the same development pattern:

c) 11...♗b7 and then:

c1) 12 ♜h3!? ♗h8 13 ♜d3 (13 ♜fe1 looks more natural) 13...♖bd7 14 ♜fd1 b4 15 ♖a4 ♜a5 16 f4 ♖c5 17 ♖xc5 ♜xc5 18 ♜e3 ♗d8! with counterplay, del Rio-Gallagher, Lugano 1999.

c2) After 12 ♜g3!?, 12...♖bd7?! is dubious in view of 13 ♗e3!. Gallagher analysed 12...b4 13 ♖a4 ♜a5 (13...♜c7 14 ♗h6 ♖e8 15 ♗xe6!) 14 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 15 ♜xd6 ♜d8 16 ♜c5!, and recommended 12...♖c6.

c3) 12 ♜fe1 ♖bd7 (12...b4 13 ♖a4 ♜a5 14 ♗d2! ♖bd7 15 a3 ♜d8 16 ♗xb4 ♖e5 17 ♜e3 ♖xe4 18 f3 is better for White, Alvim-Ma.Adams, corr. 1999) 13 ♜g3 (13 ♜h3!? is possible) 13...♖c5! (after 13...b4 14 ♖a4 ♜c7, 15 ♗h6 ♖e8 16 ♗xe6 fxe6 17 ♖xe6 is suspicious due to 17...♜xc2! 18 ♖xg7 ♜f6 19 ♖f5+ ♗f7; however,