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The Immediate Counter-Attack with ...c5

After 6...c5, the point of Black's plan initiated with 3...d5 becomes clear. He intends to lay siege to White's d4-pawn, and can still bring a knight and bishop to help do this. Therefore, White plans to deploy his forces so as to give this pawn two more units of protection. These must come from the c1-bishop and the g1-knight. Obviously the c1-bishop should go to e3, from where it affects the centre while retaining control over its original diagonal. However, with the g1-knight it is not that easy; at f3 it has fine scope but is subject to pin and capture by ...♗g4, while at e2 it has less scope but is safe from the pin because of the reply f3.

We first examine the 7 ♘f3 *(D)* variation.

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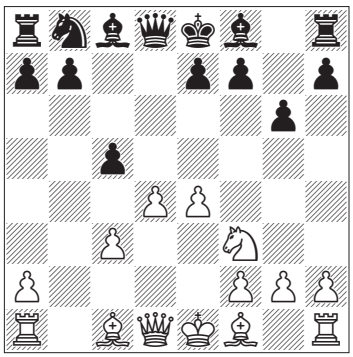
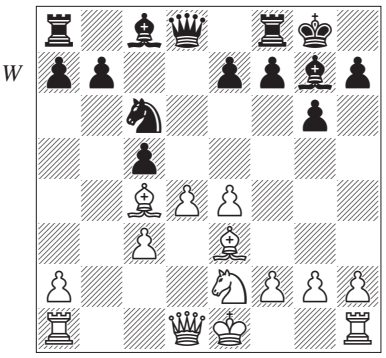


This could possibly be a **System** move if it were not for the previously noted fact that this knight is needed to defend the centre pawn on d4. If the knight goes to f3, it will later be pinned by ...♗g4, and then the white centre would be under severe pressure. Therefore, it is unlikely that this move is correct, but let us check it out. White plays 7 ♘f3, and then comes 7...♗g7 8 ♗e3 ♘c6. The order of White's moves is not important (which is a good reason for suspecting they are not **System** moves), but we are now at a critical point for White. White must face up to the threat of ...♗g4, which would destroy his centre. The best way to do this is by 9 ♗c4 which prevents 9...♗g4 due to 10 ♗xf7+. However, Black simply continues 9...♕a5 10 ♕d2 cxd4 11 cxd4 ♕xd2+ 12 ♔xd2 0-0, and now the threat of ...♗g4 and ...♖d8 assures Black of a good game.

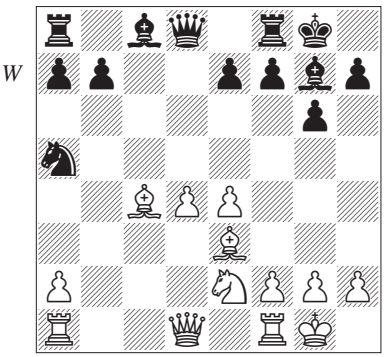
These variations make it clear that White's position would be much more cohesive if the knight were at e2 and not exposed to the pin, because ...♗g4 would be met by f3. However, if the knight is going to e2, the f1-bishop must get out first. Clearly, there is only one good square for it, so the main line proceeds 7 ♗c4 ♗g7 8 ♘e2 (the knight definitely belongs here, while we cannot be sure about the c1-bishop yet) 8...♘c6 9 ♗e3 0-0 *(D)*.

This turns out to be an extremely important theoretical position, and one from which much can be learned.



White to Play: Critical Position in the Grünfeld Defence

White is firmly in control of the centre, and must now decide what to do next. The opening books are unanimous in recommending 10 0-0. However, strangely enough, Black can just about force a draw after that move by simply playing 10...cxd4 11 cxd4 ♘a5 *(D)*.



After 12 ♗d3 ♘c6! White has nothing better than 13 ♗c4. This is best because any move such as 13 ♗c2 would allow Black control over c4, and remove the bishop from its important a2-g8 diagonal, on which it performs many functions. Another alternative in this line is for White to play 12 ♖c1, whereupon 12...♘xc4 13 ♖xc4 ♗d7 yields Black a fine game. White is without his bishop-pair, and his slight space advantage is not worth much without good minor pieces. Bronstein's sacrificial line, 13 d5!?, is taken up below. However, it has been analysed to a draw. Thus, the whole 10 0-0 line of play is hardly to be recommended for White.

However, the books continue in their error of recommending 10 0-0. Classical theory teaches us that when one side dominates the centre and controls more space, then he must attack. The question is where White is to attack. On the queenside, there are no targets. To advance the centre pawns only gives Black's pieces more scope. However, there is a target on the kingside, the black g-pawn, which can be attacked thematically by h4-h5. However, if this attack is correct then 10 0-0 is certainly not correct as it removes the h1-rook from a vital post.

I once discussed this position with David Bronstein, who pioneered the wonderful attack (after 10 0-0 cxd4 11 cxd4 ♘a5 12 ♗d3 ♘c6 13 d5!? ♗xa1 14 ♕xa1) which though brilliant was found only to

lead to a draw with the best defence by Black. I said to David "Why would anyone want to castle in this position? What good is the rook going to do on the squares b1 through f1?". David looked at me in his wonderful way, and said nothing. That was quite a statement. Clearly, this idea had made an impression on a connoisseur of this opening.

I played 10 h4?! *(D)* in many games during the 1960s with unclear results.

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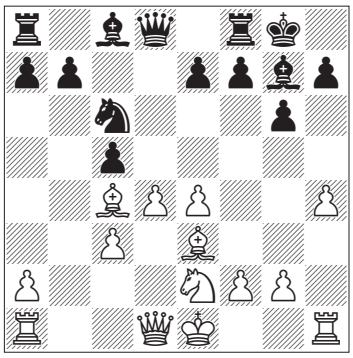

I played it three times in the 5th World Correspondence Championship (1965-8) that I won, and was lucky to get two points out of the three games. A game with the Soviet GM G. Borisenko continued 10...cxd4 11 cxd4 b5? 12 ♗d5 ♗d7 13 h5 e6 14 ♗b3 ♘a5 15 ♕d2 ♘b7 (Black would like to exchange queens; after 15...♘xb3 16 axb3, the attack commencing with ♗h6 and hxg6 is unstoppable) 16 ♖c1 ♖c8 17 ♖xc8 and now after 17...♗xc8 18 hxg6 fxg6 (or 18...hxg6 19 ♔f1!! ♕a5 20 ♕c1 and the attack starting with ♗h6 is overwhelming) 19 ♘f4 White could expect to win quickly. Black's 11th move was far from best and constituted a loss of valuable time. The opponents in the other two games played much better, and I was lucky to escape with draws. This convinced me that 10 h4 is incorrect. Now, we will reveal the correct **System** move.

The **System** and winning move is 10 ♖c1 *(D)*.

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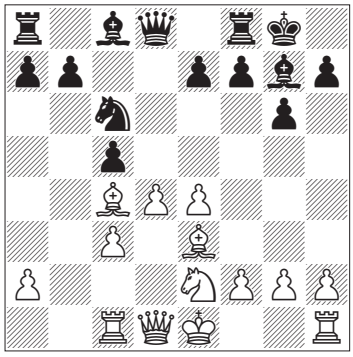

Why is this move correct? Firstly, it passes the important **System** test of not allowing the drawing line 10...♘a5, which is now met by 11 ♗d3 cxd4 (the immediate 11...♘c6 is met with 12 d5 winning a pawn) 12 cxd4 ♘c6 and now the wonderful innovation 13 ♖c5! *(D)*.

This defends White's d-pawn indirectly in a most unusual way. If

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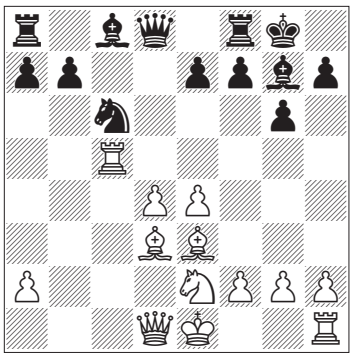

now 13...♘xd4, 14 ♖d5 wins, and 13...e6 (13...♗e6 14 d5! wins) 14 ♗b1, and now White has everything his way. The move 10 ♖c1, which makes possible 13 ♖c5!, is one of the major 'theoretical' contributions of this book.

10 ♖c1 is the **only** move that avoids the above drawing line. On the face of it, 10 ♖c1 appears to be a wasted move, but it solidifies the queenside against any coming attacks and thus allows White to concentrate all his forces on the coming attack against the black king.

I discovered the above about 1976, having retired from active competition, and being able to devote time to such research. However, this move has since been introduced into tournament play by Lev Polugaevsky in 1987. I make no claim here for being the originator of the move, since tournament practice must hold sway over unpublished analysis. However, what is important is whether 10 ♖c1 is the **System** move in this position. Below, we present strong evidence that it is, and that, despite being currently in disrepute among the top players, it is in actuality a winning continuation.

What can Black play against 10 ♖c1 ?

At the time I discovered 10 ♖c1, I based my judgement of its effectiveness primarily on the fact that it prevented the drawing manoeuvre, and thus made it possible to continue with the attack h4-h5, which I had played prematurely on move 10 in three games in the 5th World Correspondence Championship Final. I thought that White will play ♔f1 in response to ...♕a5(+) and thereafter pursue his attack with efficiency. It was not realistic to analyse much more than that. Now, however, that the move has been tested in many GM games, and, strangely, the world has a poor opinion of it, it was possible to apply **System** principles to the various attempts to refute 10 ♖c1 and see what can be found.

Let us look at how Black can continue. He must act on the queenside before the attack against the king with h4 gets too strong (strangely in several games by top players with this variation, White chickens out, and plays 0-0). It follows that Black must either pressure the centre with