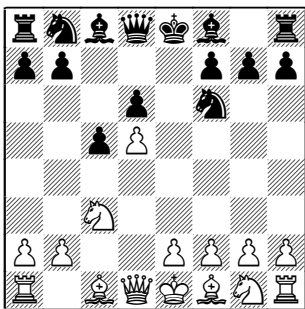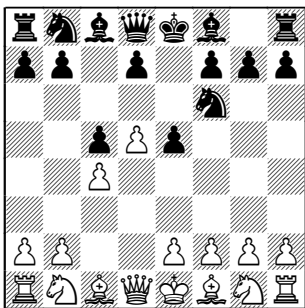# PREFACE

This book is devoted to a topical subject in contemporary chess – White's fight against the Modern Benoni Defence. The Benoni Defence can in fact be divided into two main structures, which are very different in concept: the Modern Benoni, **1.d4 ♞f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4.♞c3 exd5 5.cxd5 d6**

and the Czech (or Old) Benoni **1.d4 ♞f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e5**;

we shall treat the latter only cursorily in this book; it is very passive, so we shall not analyse it as extensively.

During the first half of the 20th century the Queen's Gambit was predominant among the closed openings (1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♞c3 ♞f6). For example, if you look at the famous match for the World Champion-
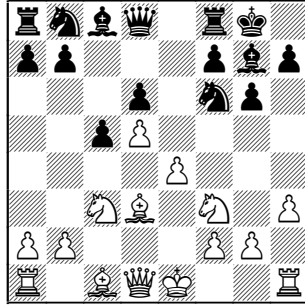
ships in Buenos Aires in 1927 between Capablanca and Alekhine, these adversaries mostly played the Queen's Gambit, as both White and Black. Black usually reaches solid and safe positions in this way, but he has only minimal chances of seizing the initiative.

However, some players wanted to be able to play for a win with Black in the closed openings and so around the middle of the 20th century some openings were actively developed in which the symmetry, so typical of the structures of the Queen's Gambit, is disrupted at an early stage. This period saw a boom in the development of the King's Indian Defence (1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♝g7 4.e4 d6), the Gruenfeld (1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5), the Nimzo-Indian (1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♝b4) and the Modern Benoni. The latter can lead to very complicated and dynamic positions and Black has great chances of seizing the initiative. Its popularity began to grow, peaking in the second half of the 20th century, when such great players as Tal, Fischer, Kasparov and many other famous grandmasters included it in their opening repertoire as Black, while Gligoric was among the greatest advocates of White's chances in this structure.

We should mention that in those days White's space advantage, which is of an enduring nature, was somewhat underestimated. We are all living now in the computer era, and this has affected chess as well; chess programs have progressed so much in their ability to analyse positions and variations that many well-known theoretical schemes have had to be considerably re-evaluated over the last ten to fifteen years. This certainly applies to the positions arising from the Modern Benoni.

Black can reach the main line of the Modern Benoni in either of two main move orders: 2...c5 3.d5 e6, or 2...e6 3.♘f3 c5 4.d5 exd5. I should like to emphasise right away that the correct move order is very important for White. Sometimes he should develop his bishop on d3 first and sometimes he should preface this with h3. This considerably reduces Black's possibilities and, as we shall see, it deprives him of any chance to organize meaningful counterplay.

The idea of the order of moves I am recommending is to force Black to follow a narrow path and to prevent him from creating active counterplay. For example after 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4.♘c3 exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.e4 g6 7.♝d3! ♝g7 8.h3 0–0 9.♘f3,

if Black plays 9...a6 then White continues with 10.a4! Instead, if Black tries the active move 9...b5, then after some long forcing lines he is reduced to fighting at best for a draw, with no prospects of achieving clear equality or of seizing the initiative.

It should be sufficient to mention that the players who defend Black's side at the top level are very careful in choosing when to play the Modern Benoni, since White's space advantage is of a long-term character. For example, the former World Champion Garry Kasparov, who used to play the Benoni in tournaments, did not risk trying it even once in all his matches for the World Championship against Anatoly Karpov. On the other hand, relatively recently Kasparov, in a "simul" game against Vazquez Cruz (Mexico 2010) reached the main position which we analyse in this book, albeit from a slightly different move order: 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 d6 4.♘c3 g6 5.e4 ♗g7 6.♘f3 0−0 7.h3 e6 8.♗d3 exd5 9.cxd5, thus confirming how important and fashionable this position is.

The Czech Benoni has always been much less popular compared to the Modern Benoni, mostly owing to the fact that it is less dynamic. The game is closed and is mostly positional. White enjoys a long-term space advantage and his position is much more pleasant, since Black has great problems creating active counterplay.

In this book I have analysed all Black's possible responses that deserve attention and in a great many variations I have suggested promising possibilities for White which are new to theory.

Alexey Dreev

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Modern Benoni

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 c5 4.d5 e6
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6

Some move order nuances for the White player against the Modern Benoni in order to reach the main tabia

The main tabia of the Modern Benoni

2...e6 3.♘f3 c5 4.d5 exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.♘c3 g6 7.h3 ♗g7 8.e4 0-0 9.♗d3
2...c5 3.d5 e6 4.♘c3 exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.e4 g6 7.♗d3 ♗g7 8.h3 0-0 9.♘f3

Czech Benoni
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e5 4.♘c3 d6

Hromadka System
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