

The Modernized Ruy Lopez

Volume 1

**A Complete
Repertoire for
White**

First edition 2021 by Thinkers Publishing
Copyright © 2021 Dariusz Świercz

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission from the publisher.

All sales or enquiries should be directed to Thinkers Publishing, 9850 Landegem, Belgium.

Email: info@thinkerspublishing.com
Website: www.thinkerspublishing.com

Managing Editor: Romain Edouard

Assistant Editor: Daniël Vanheirzeele

Typesetting: Mark Haast

Proofreading: Daniel Fernandez

Software: Hub van de Laar

Cover Design: Iwan Kerkhof

Graphic Artist: Philippe Tonnard

Production: BESTinGraphics

ISBN: 9789464201031

D/2020/13730/32

The Modernized Ruy Lopez

Volume 1

**A Complete Repertoire
for White**

Dariusz Świercz

Thinkers Publishing 2021





I dedicate this book to

*my lovely wife Keyla, with whom I share my life and who loves
me and supports me every day,*

*my parents, Mamuś Ela and Tati Jurek, without whom I would
have never achieved anything,*

*my sister Ola, BIL Wit, Otylia and Marek, who root for me in
every game I play,*

my grandma Irena (R.I.P), who always believed in me,

my grandpa Rysiek (R.I.P), who taught me the game of chess.

I wanted to say thank you and I love you!

Key to Symbols

!	a good move	±	White stands slightly better
?	a weak move	∓	Black stands slightly better
!!	an excellent move	±	White has a serious advantage
??	a blunder	∓	Black has a serious advantage
!?	an interesting move	+−	White has a decisive advantage
?!	a dubious move	−+	Black has a decisive advantage
□	only move	→	with an attack
N	novelty	↑	with initiative
⊙	lead in development	↔	with counterplay
⊙	zugzwang	Δ	with the idea of
=	equality	△	better is
∞	unclear position	≤	worse is
∞	with compensation for the sacrificed material	+	check
		#	mate

Table of Contents

Key to Symbols	6
Foreword by Le Quang Liem	9
Introduction	10

PART I – Alternatives to the modern major lines

Chapter 1 – Questionable setups for Black	15
Chapter 2 – Bird’s Defense	19
Chapter 3 – Schliemann Defense	31
Chapter 4 – Cozio Defense	53
Chapter 5 – Smyslov Defense	73
Chapter 6 – Classical Defense	91
Chapter 7 – Steinitz Defense	111
Chapter 8 – Norwegian Variation	145
Chapter 9 – Averbakh Variation	151

PART II – Berlin Defense

Chapter 10 – 4.0-0: Sidelines on move 4	173
Chapter 11 – 4.0-0: Sidelines on move 5 and 6	179
Chapter 12 – 4.0-0: Black plays 7... ♘f5	201
Chapter 13 – 4.0-0: Black plays 7... ♘xe5	239
Chapter 14 – 4.d3: Sidelines on move 4	303
Chapter 15 – 4.d3: Black plays 4... d6	315
Chapter 16 – 4.d3: Black plays 4... ♕c5	337

PART III – Ruy Lopez Open Defense

Chapter 17 – Sidelines on move 6 and 7	391
Chapter 18 – White plays 8. ♘xe5	405
Chapter 19 – White plays 8.dxe5 (9... ♕c5 and 9... ♘c5)	425
Chapter 20 – White plays 8.dxe5 (9... ♕e7)	469



Foreword

“If you want to become a better chess player, learn the Ruy Lopez opening.” Those words of wisdom were given to me by one of my first coaches when I was a seven-year-old kid in Vietnam. As I made my way into the world’s top forty, I have realized that my coach’s statement could not be more accurate. Throughout my professional career of more than 20 years competing in strong tournaments all over the world, the Ruy Lopez has appeared countless times in my practice with both colors. The main challenge in studying this fascinating opening, in my humble opinion, is to dissect the vast amount of options and absorb the most relevant information for your game. In the absence of an experienced coach who can guide you through those steps, a chess player may spend weeks studying the Ruy Lopez, yet he or she may not fully understand the strategic ideas behind long variations.

That challenge is now solved by Grand Master Dariusz Swiercz with the book you have just opened. I have known Dariusz for several years since we both immigrated to the United States. As colleagues and friends, I have become acquainted with his high-quality chess preparation. His opening ideas, always backed up by thorough analysis with trusted engines, are original and sound. Dariusz has used that principled approach to cover all variations of the Ruy Lopez. His dedication to providing you a quality guidance has been very impressive in this book. He does not shy away from complications or from sharing his own novelties. In critical positions, he explains very well the ideas and plans for both sides, which should help you gain a deeper understanding of the system beyond memorization of the moves.

The Ruy Lopez is such a classic opening that never gets old. Regardless of what you already knew about this opening, there are always new ideas to be found and tested over the board. That is why this book is beneficial to chess players and enthusiasts at all levels, including top Grand Masters like myself. Reading the first volume of this book has been inspiring, as I feel that I have broadened my chess knowledge in certain variations. I am eagerly waiting to try Dariusz’s solid recommendations in my future games, and I look forward to the second volume of his series. Overall, I highly recommend this book to anyone interested in the Ruy Lopez.

Le Quang Liem
Grand Master, former World Blitz Champion
Saint Louis, August 2020

Introduction

Dear Reader,

I appreciate that you are reading my book and I wanted to thank you for doing so. It is the first book that I have ever written, and it really means a lot to me.

When I decided to write a book on the Ruy Lopez, covering an entire repertoire for White, I initially did not realize the volume of work that lay ahead of me. I have played the Ruy Lopez for many years with both colors and believed that I have good knowledge about this opening. I thought that armed with my knowledge I could easily write a book about it. Nothing could be further from the truth! While writing this book, I discovered that the number of resources and lines that Black has here is astonishing. To provide very good material that would satisfy not only the Reader, but also myself, I decided to cover the entire opening in two volumes.

The first volume includes three parts. The first part is about Black's alternatives to the modern major lines. Even though they are not as frequent as lines that I cover in subsequent chapters or volumes, I believe that it is good to know what to do in less popular variations too. After all, why would we study only (say) the Berlin Defense, leaving our opponents able to surprise us with the sharp Schliemann Variation? From a practical point of view, such a line would be very hard to face over the board from both chess and psychological perspectives. Basic knowledge of sidelines is therefore important.

The second part I devote to the extremely solid Berlin Defense. The amount of theory in this opening has grown exponentially in recent years, as basically all the top players go for it with at least one color. I will try to shed some light on this complex line and try to show different ways in which White can try to get an advantage out of the opening.

Finally, in the third part I discuss the Open Ruy Lopez. Similarly to the Berlin, the theory has developed immensely here in recent years. I will try to show some interesting lines and ideas that challenge this opening.

I would like to note one thing. Chess is a game where, with perfect play, Black should be always able to equalize. However, equal positions do not mean that the game should end in a draw. In many lines (especially in the Berlin), the positions are

simply equal if Black does everything correctly. There is no way to prevent that. However, I aim to show lines that can possibly create practical problems for your opponents. Very often the objective evaluation does not really matter if a player knows what he or she is doing while his or her opponent does not. Having a clear idea about the plans and where to put one's pieces, as well as a general "feeling" for the position, is way better than knowing that 0.23 is shown by an engine and not having any idea what to do next. And this is the primary goal of this book – to provide to the Reader various ideas in the Ruy Lopez that could be used to the Reader's advantage in practical games. This would increase the chances of opponents making mistakes (by driving them out of their comfort zone) and therefore also your winning chances.

I hope that this book will be a great journey for the Reader in exploring the intricacies of the Ruy Lopez, and that reading it will bring success in terms of won games.

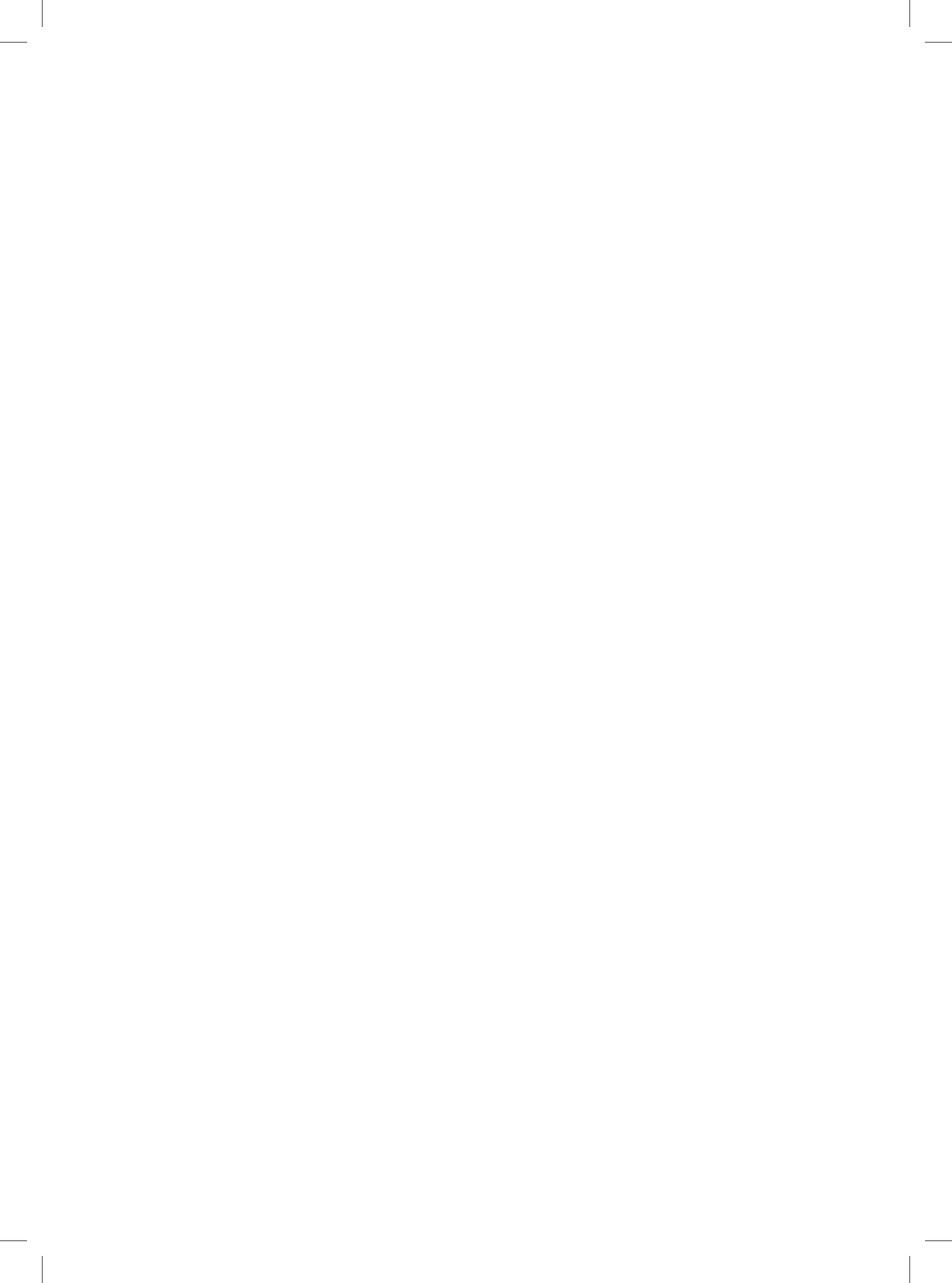
Thank you,

Dariusz Świercz



Part I

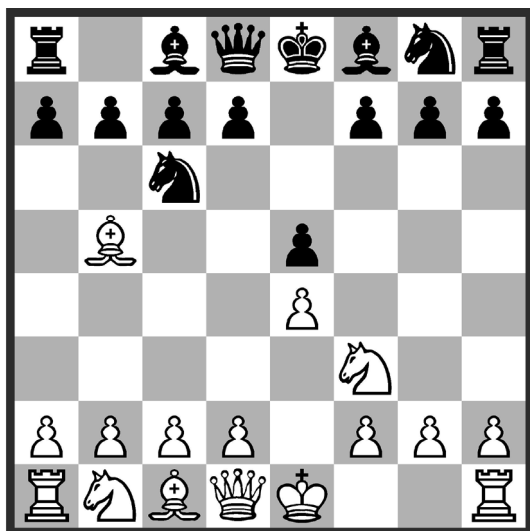
Alternatives to the modern major lines



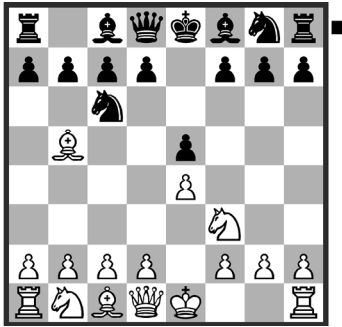


Questionable setups for Black

1.e4 e5 2. ♘f3 ♘c6 3. ♕b5



1. e4 e5 2. ♘f3 ♘c6 3. ♖b5

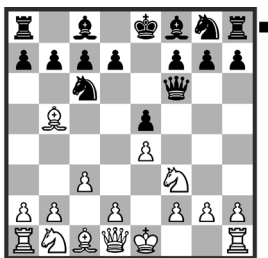


Position after: 3. ♖b5

3... ♖b4?!

A very rare move and, to be honest, it does not look good for Black. However, it has been employed by Magnus Carlsen (mostly rapid, blitz or online games), so I think it deserves attention!

A) 3... ♖f6? 4. c3! followed by d4 gives White a big advantage immediately:



Position after: 4. c3!

A1) 4... ♖c5 5. d4 exd4 6. e5 ♖g6 7. cxd4 White has a strong center. The ... ♖f6-... ♖g6 manoeuvre does not lead to anything special for Black. 7... ♖b4+ [7... ♘xd4? 8. ♘xd4 ♖b6 is possible but after 9. ♖e3 ♖xd4 10.

♖xd4 ♖xb5 11. ♘c3+- White's development advantage is overwhelming.] 8. ♘c3 ♘ge7 9. 0-0 d5 10. ♘e2!?± White's idea is ♘f4 and he is simply much better.

A2) 4... g5 5. d4 g4 6. ♘xe5 ♘xe5 7. dxe5 ♖xe5 8. ♖d3± is definitely an overly ambitious approach by Black.

B) 3... f6? 4. d4 exd4 5. ♘xd4± is just awful for Black.

C) 3... ♖e7? 4. 0-0± and d4 next.

D) 3... ♘a5? - honestly, nearly everything is great for White! 4. c3± [4. d4±

E) 3... g5? 4. d4+- is just crushing in the center.

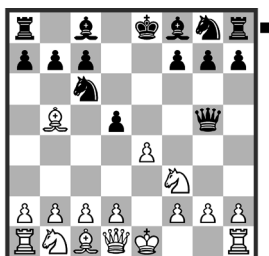
F) 3... ♖d6?! 4. 0-0 ♘ge7



Position after: 4... ♘ge7

This is a really awkward setup and White can just build a strong center with great prospects: 5. c3 0-0 6. d4 ♘g6 7. ♖e3±.

G) 3... d5? 4. ♘xe5 just loses immediately: 4... ♖g5 5. ♘f3!



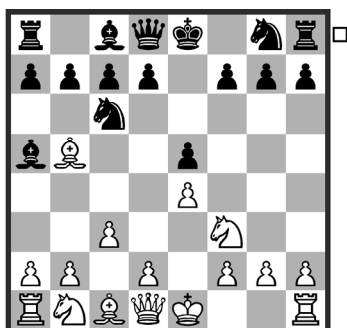
Position after: 5. Nf3!

5... ♖e7 [5... ♖xg2 6. ♖g1 ♖h3 7. exd5+-] 6. e5+-

H) 3... b6? A hard move to fathom.
4. 0-0 ♖b7 5. ♖xc6 dxc6 6. Nxe5+-

I) 3... a5? 4. 0-0± is also just much better for White.

4. c3 ♖a5



Position after: 4... ♖a5

Here, White can play ♖xc6 and Nxe5 with a clear edge, but I found something even stronger:

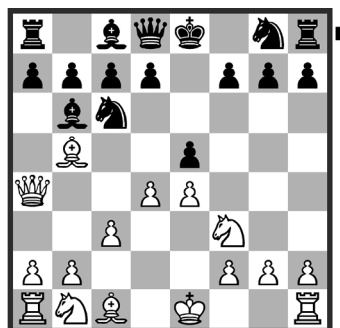
5. ♖a4!

I believe that this is an attempt to simply put the line out of business. The idea is to chase the bishop away from a5 and play d4 as soon as possible.

5... ♖b6

5... ♖ge7 allows 6. Nxe5 just grabbing the pawn. 6... Nxe5 7. ♖xa5±

6. d4



Position after: 6. d4

6... ♖f6

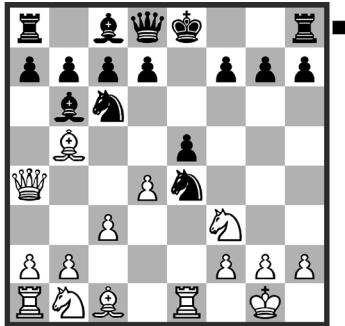
6... exd4 7. cxd4 and White will get to play d5 next: for instance, 7... ♖ge7 8. d5± simply looks terrible for Black.

7. 0-0!

I believe that this is the simplest.

7... Nxe4 8. ♖e1!

Forcing Black to play ...f5.



Position after: 8. ♖e1!

8... f5

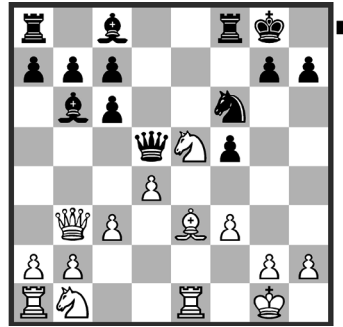
A) 8... d5 9. ♙xc6+ bxc6 10. ♚xc6+-

B) 8... ♞d6 9. ♙xc6 dxc6 10. ♖xe5+ ♙f8 11. c4+-

9. ♙xc6 dxc6

9... bxc6 leaves the queen on d8... trapped! 10. ♖xe4 fxe4 11. ♙g5+-

10. ♞xe5 0-0 11. ♚b3+ ♙d5 12. f3 ♞f6 13. ♙e3±



Position after: 13. ♙e3±

White has a huge advantage. The bishop on b6 is actually completely out of the game, meaning that White is in some sense “a piece up”!

Personally, such bishops always remind me of the classic game Winter– Capablanca, 1919.