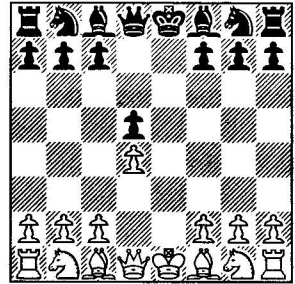


Chapter Five

Exchange Variation



1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 exd5

The Exchange Variation was probably the most popular variation of the French Defence in the late 19th century. It is not a particularly imaginative line.

3...exd5

The exchange of pawns has actually deterred some players from using the French Defence. With only one open file, they reason, both sides will mindlessly exchange their heavy pieces and a drawish position will ensue. But there is a huge hole in this reasoning: in most cases, neither side's rooks belong on the e-file. Why? Because there will be no points of penetration available for them along the file, e.g., squares like e2, e3 and e4 for White and e7, e6, and e5 for Black will customarily be covered 2 or 3 times by that side's pawns, knights, and bishops. Moreover, only one such defender is really necessary. So if, for example, White doubles or triples along the e-file while Black is blithely mounting a kingside pawn storm (backed by his rooks and queen), the second player has every chance of winning. Furthermore, Black can al-

ways make the struggle imbalanced should he so choose. This has been pointed out and demonstrated by great players for at least 70 years.

Thus my comments from the first two editions and they still hold true. Although the Exchange Variation appeals to players who are trying to draw against stronger players, allowing equality on the third move as White may not be the way to go about that. Be aware that it's a strategy that has failed miserably throughout the years.

White's main moves are:

5.1 4 c4

5.2 4 ♘f3

5.3 4 ♙d3

He has other choices, but Black can always achieve an imbalance if he wants to:

(a) 4 ♘c3 ♙b4 is dealt with in Chapter 8, under the order 3 ♘c3 ♙b4 4 exd5;

(b) 4 c3 is slow: 4...♙d6 (or 4...♘c6; then 5 ♙b5 might look appealing, but c3 doesn't go well with this move, i.e. ♘c3 is preferable; compare the re-

versed positions in Chapter 8). Now if 5 ♙d3 , 5... ♜c6 transposes to 4 ♙d3 ♜c6 below. On 5 ♜f3 , 5... ♙g4 will often transpose to 4 ♜f3 , and 5... ♜c6 6 ♜f3 ♙g4 is also possible;

(c) 4 ♙e3 is passive. Then 4... ♜e7 intending ... ♜f5 and 4... ♙d6 5 ♜c3 ♜e7 are dynamic continuations; in practice, 4... ♜f6 has also scored well;

(d) 4 ♜f3 has been played a bit more recently, but nearly every game develops independently and Black seems to get equality with 4... ♜f6 , 4... ♙d6 , 4... c6 , or even 4... ♜c6 . A nice example of the latter was 4... ♜c6 5 ♙b5 ♜f6 6 ♜e2 ♙g4 7 ♜c3 ♙d6 ! 8 ♙xc6+ bxc6 9 ♜xc6+ ♙d7 , and Black has more than enough compensation: 10 ♜a6 $\text{♜g4!$? (10...0-0?) 11 h3 ? ♜f6 ! 12 ♜bc3 (to stop ... ♙b4+) 12... ♜xf2+ 13 ♙d1 ♜xg2+ Bykhovsky-Ulibin, Aaland-Stockholm 1997.

I like the straightforward 4... ♙d6 5 c3 (5 ♙d3 ♜c6) 5... ♜e7 . A sequence which has come up more than once follows 4... ♜f6 5 h3 (versus ... ♙g4 , which is often followed by ... ♙h5-g6). Black has won several games from this position, for example, 5... c5 (or 5... ♙d6 6 ♙d3 0-0 7 ♜e2 c5 8 dxc5 ♙xc5 9 0-0 ♜c6 10 ♙f4 ♞e8 11 ♜bc3 ♜e5 12 ♙xe5 ♞xe5 13 ♞ad1 ♙d7 14 ♜g3 ♜b6 ? Kos-Mohr, Ptuj 2000) 6 $\text{♙b5+!$? ♜c6 7 ♜e2 ♜b6 ! 8 $\text{♜d3!$? c4 9 ♜e3+ ♙e6 10 ♙a4 ♙d6 ? with a big lead in development, Hermann-Vaganian, Bundesliga 1992;

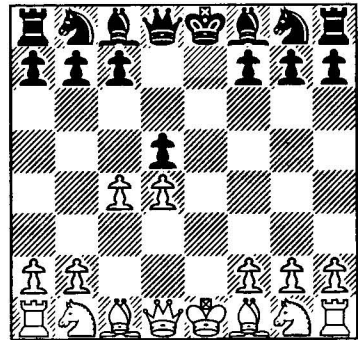
(e) After 4 ♙f4 , Black has equalised with 4... ♙f5 , 4... c5 , and:

(e1) 4... ♜f6 5 ♙d3 c5 6 dxc5 (6 ♜e2+ $\text{♙e7!$ 7 dxc5 0-0) 6... ♙xc5 7 ♜f3 0-0 8 0-0 ♜c6 9 c3 ♞e8 10 ♜bd2 ♜e4= Meyers-Gleserov, Tzrkva 1990; or 10... $\text{♙g4!$;

(e2) 4... ♙d6 led to a nice example in Prie-Vaisman, Nimes 1990: 5 ♙xd6

♜xd6 6 ♜c3 (6 c3 ♜f6 7 ♙d3 0-0 8 ♜e2 b6 9 0-0 c5 10 ♜d2 $\text{♙g4!$? 11 f3 ♙d7 12 ♜e1 ♞e8 13 ♜f2 ♜c6 ? Stefanova-Kindermann, Vienna 1996) 6... ♙f5 7 ♙d3 ♙xd3 8 ♜xd3 $\text{♜d7!$? (8... ♜c6=) 9 ♜f3 0-0-0 10 0-0-0 ♜gf6 11 h3 (White would lose material after 11 ♞he1 ♞he8 12 ♙b1 $\text{♜e4!$ 13 $\text{♜xe4!$? dxe4 14 $\text{♞xe4?$ $\text{♜c5!$ 15 dxc5 ♜xd3 16 cxd3 ♞xe4) 11... ♞he8 12 ♞de1 $\text{♜e4!$ 13 $\text{♜xe4?$ dxe4 14 ♞xe4 ♜c5 15 dxc5 ♜h6+ 16 ♙b1 (16 ♜e3 ♞xe4) 16... ♞xd3 17 ♞xe8+ ♞d8 18 ♞xd8+ ♙xd8 19 ♜e5 ♜f4+ Piroth-Apicella, Sautron 2003.

5.1 4 c4



This move has become one of White's main options. It can transpose to 4 ♜f3 and 5 c4 , but also has independent significance. I will give two solutions.

4... ♙b4+

A move this book helped to bring to attention. I think that it casts into doubt the value of 4 c4 as a practical weapon; in fact, Black has scored 53% with a clearly superior performance rating after many games. Also good is 4... ♜f6 , which is played about 10 times as often! Then White has:

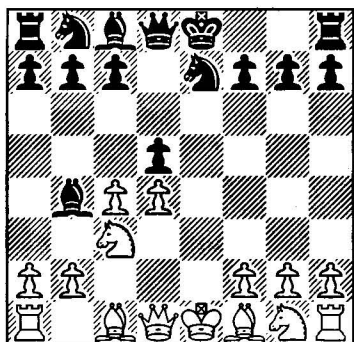
(a) 5 ♜f3 ♙b4+ (or 5... ♙g4) 6 ♜c3 (6 ♙d2 ♙xd2+ 7 ♜bxd2 tends to be

bad in such positions because in the isolated pawn position following ... dxc4 and ... dxc4 , the exchange of bishops favours Black, e.g., 7...0-0 8 e2 dxc4 9 cxc4 bd7 10 0-0 b6 11 e3 e6 12 e5 d6 f Ellenbroek-Stellwagen, Wijk aan Zee 2001) 6...0-0 7 e2 dxc4 8 0-0 (8 cxc4 g4) 8... cxc3 ? 9 bxc3 e6 10 b1 bd7 ! 11 g5 b6 f Herrera-Campora, Argentina 1987;

(b) 5 c3 b4 6 cxd5 (6 a3 cxc3 + 7 bxc3 0-0 8 d3 c6 9 e2 dxc4 10 cxc4 a5 =) 6... dxd5 7 d2 0-0 8 d3 c5 ! 9 dxc5 cxc3 10 cxc3 cxc3 + 11 bxc3 d7 12 c6 c5 ! 13 c2 e8 + 14 e2 e7 f Kuijf-Korchnoi, Tilburg 1992.

5 c3 e7

5... f6 has been played often with success and an appealing idea is 5... e7 +! 6 e3 (6 e2 ?! c6 7 f3 g4) 6... f6 , e.g., 7 d3 e6 8 c5 0-0 9 h3 b6 f Perrin-Knott, USA 1857(!).

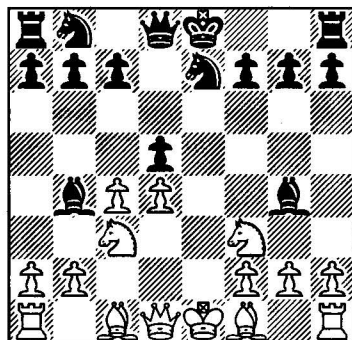


6 f3

6 a3 cxc3 + 7 bxc3 0-0 8 f3 bc6 = intending as always ... a5 and/or ... g4 . Then 9 d3 !? dxc4 10 cxc4 d5 11 xd5 e8 + 12 e3 xd5 13 h3 (13 0-0 g4) 13... c4 14 c2 b6 f was the game Speck-Luther, Liechtenstein 1993.

6...0-0

6... g4 ! will usually transpose and pretty much amounts to the same thing. But I actually prefer this less common order because it puts immediate pressure on the centre. These useful early pins are characteristic of the Exchange French.



7 a3 (7 a4 + bc6 8 e5 e6 =; 7 e2 bc6 8 a3 cxc3 + 9 bxc3 would transpose to this note, and here 7... dxc4 8 cxc4 0-0 9 0-0 bc6 is the main line) 7... cxc3 + 8 bxc3 bc6 (8...0-0 is again the main line) 9 g5 (9 a4 a5 f ; 9 cxd5 dxd5 10 d2 e7 + 11 e2 xf3 12 xe7 + dxe7 13 gxf3 g6 f) 9...0-0! 10 e2 (10 cxd5 xd5 threatens capture on f3, hitting the g5 bishop) 10... f6 (10... d7 may be more accurate: 11 0-0 dxc4 12 cxc4 d5 with the idea ... a5 , ... b5 etc.) 11 d2 a5 =.

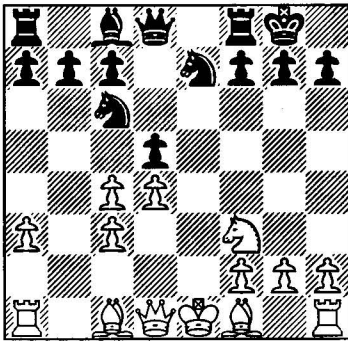
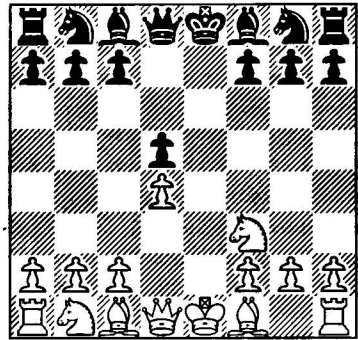
Black's control of the light squares compensates for the bishop pair: if 12 c5 , 12... b6 !; and 12 cxd5 xd5 13 b1 (13 0-0 c4 14 e1 fe8 15 b1 b5 16 a4 a6) 13... c4 ! plans ... b5 .

7 a3?!

7 e2 dxc4 8 cxc4 g4 9 0-0 bc6 is a typical position in which Black has pressure on the d-pawn and light squares. Several games have gone 10 e3 f5 !? (10... b8 !? 11 a3 cxc3 12 bxc3 d5 13 d2 a5 14 a2 b5 and

the light squares balance White's bishops) 11 ♖d3 ♜d6: 12 ♙d5 (12 ♙g5!? ♜c8 13 ♙d5 ♙f5!? 14 ♖d1 ♜e8=) 12...♙f5 13 ♖d1 (13 ♖e2 ♜a5 14 ♙g5 ♜c8 15 ♜fc1 ♜e8 16 ♖f1 c6 17 a3 ♙xc3 18 ♜xc3 ♙e6 19 ♙xe6 ♖xe6 20 b4 ♜ac4♞ Ashley-Remlinger, New York 1994) 13...♜e7 14 ♙b3 c6 15 ♜e5 ♙h8 16 ♜c1 f6 17 ♜d3 ♙xc3 18 bxc3 ♜d5 19 ♜f4 ♜xe3 20 fxe3 ♖e8♞ Waitzkin-Shaked, Mermaid Beach Club 1997.

7...♙xc3+ 8 bxc3 ♜bc6



9 ♙e2

9 c5 b6!♞, since 10 cxb6 axb6 gives Black the a-file and all the light squares, perhaps even with ...♙a6 next.

9...dxc4 10 ♙xc4 ♜d5 11 ♙d2 ♜e8+ 12 ♙e2 ♖e7♞ 13 c4 ♜b6

Or 13...♙f5!? with the idea 14 cxd5? ♙c2.

14 ♙e3 ♙g4 15 0-0 ♜ad8 16 d5 ♙xf3 17 gxf3 ♜e5 18 ♖b3 ♜bxc4! 19 ♙xc4 ♜xf3+ 20 ♙g2 ♖e4! with an overwhelming attack, Santo Roman-Shaked, Cannes 1997.

5.2.4 ♜f3

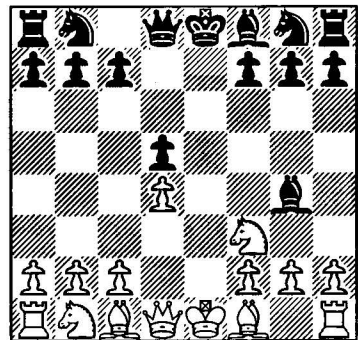
White's most common move; it is very natural but allows double-edged play because of the possibility of a ...♙g4 pin at some point. Black has:

5.21 4...♙g4

5.22 4...♙d6

Of course, 4...♜f6 is fully playable (and a current favourite among grandmasters). I should point out that 5 c4 (a key white plan) then allows 5...♙b4+ 6 ♜c3 ♜c6, which is of particular interest because the light square theme after ...♙g4 can be effective.

5.21 4...♙g4



5 h3

(a) 5 ♙f4 ♙d6 6 ♙xd6?! ♖xd6 7 c3 ♖e7+ 8 ♜d2 ♜f6♞ Karolyi-Vaisser, Clichy 1991;

(b) 5 ♙e2 ♙d6 (5...♜c6 6 ♙f4 ♙d6 7 ♖d2 ♜f6 8 ♖e3+?! ♜e4! 9 ♜bd2 0-0

Play the French

10 ♖xe4 dxe4 11 ♕e5 ♖b4 12 ♜d2 ♗xe2 13 ♜xe2 f6 14 ♜c4+ ♖h8 (Omtvedt-Myreng, Norway 1982) 6 ♗g5 (6 0-0 ♖c6 7 c3 ♖ge7 8 ♜b3 a6 9 ♜e1 0-0 10 ♗g5 ♜d7= Malisauskas-Lputian, Moscow 1989) 6...♕e7 7 ♗h4 0-0 8 0-0 c6 9 c3 ♜e8 10 ♗g3 ♖f5 11 ♗xd6 ♖xd6 (Haering-Hug, Wohlen 1993).

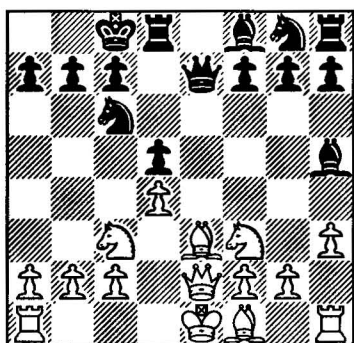
5...♗h5 6 ♜e2+!

This move took off after Kasparov used it in 1991. Harmless is 6 ♗e2 ♗d6 7 ♕e5 ♗xe2 8 ♜xe2 ♕e7 9 0-0 (9 ♜b5+ ♖bc6! 10 ♖xc6 bxc6 11 ♜d3 0-0=) 9...0-0 10 ♗f4 ♜e8 11 ♜g4 ♗xe5 12 ♗xe5 ♖g6 13 ♗g3 ♖d7 M.Gurevich-Short, Manila 1990; Short assesses this as slightly better for Black.

6...♜e7

White wins a pawn after 6...♗e7? 7 ♜b5+ (7 g4 ♗g6 8 ♜b5+?! ♖c6 9 ♜xb7 ♖b4 10 ♗b5+ ♖f8 11 ♕e5 ♖f6) 7...♖c6 8 ♕e5 a6 9 ♖xc6!? (or 9 ♜a4±) 9...axb5 10 ♖xd8 ♗xd8 11 ♗xb5+.

7 ♗e3 ♖c6 8 ♖c3 0-0-0



A position that has been played often and is crucial for assessing 4...♗g4. The lines are very concrete.

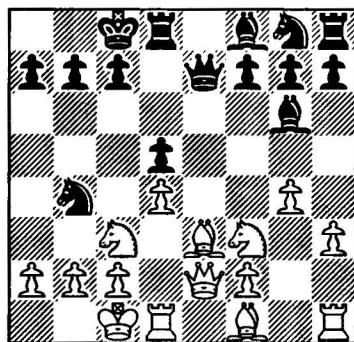
9 g4

White does well to chase this bishop immediately and eliminate

some options for Black after 9 0-0-0 such as 9...f6, 9...h6, 9...f5, and 9...♜b4!?, e.g., 10 g4 ♗g6 11 ♖h4 (11 ♕e5?! ♖xe5 12 dxe5 d4 13 ♜d2 ♗e7!?) 11...♜a5 12 ♖xg6 hxg6 13 ♜b5! ♗b4 (13...♖f6) 14 ♜xa5 ♖xa5 15 ♖b1 ♖f6 16 c3 ♗d6= Rutter-S.Williams, London 1993.

9...♗g6 10 0-0-0 ♖b4!?

A direct tactical solution that has barely been tried. It may be no better than the options, but leads to wonderful complications. Black has also played 10...♜e8 here, but I prefer 10...f6, covering e5 and allowing ...♗f7 after ♖h4. Black's main idea is ...♖a5: 11 ♗g2!? (11 ♖h4 ♗f7 12 a3 ♜d7!? clears the bishop on f8: 13 ♗g2 ♖a5!? 14 f4 ♖c4 15 ♜he1 ♖h6=, e.g., 16 ♜d3 ♗d6! 17 ♖xd5? ♜b5 18 b3 ♗xa3+ 19 ♖b1 ♗xd5! 20 ♜xc4 ♜xc4 21 bxc4 ♜a5; 11 a3 ♜e8!? 12 ♖d2 f5 13 ♗g2 ♖f6 14 ♜he1 ♜e6 15 g5!? ♕e4 16 ♖dxe4 fxe4=) 11...♜d7 12 a3 and 12...♖a5 looks natural, but Mitkov-Shirov, Batumi 1999 went 12...♖ge7 13 ♗f4 ♖b8 14 ♖a4!? ♖c8 (Shirov suggests 14...b6=) 15 ♖h4, when 15...♜e8 16 ♜d2 (16 ♜b5? ♗xc2) 16...♗f7 17 ♖f5 h5 looks equal.



11 a3

This is supposed to be the refutation.

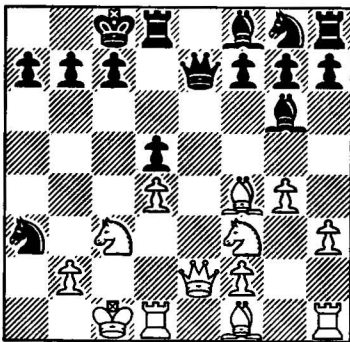
(a) The natural 11 ♖d2 allows 11...f6!? (to cover e5; also, ...♗f7 in some lines strengthens c4 while protecting d5) 12 ♗g2! ♗f7 (another idea would be 12...♖d7 13 a3 ♖c6 14 ♖h4 ♗f7, e.g., 15 ♖e1 ♖a5 16 ♖f3 ♖c4 17 ♖de2 ♖e7!? 18 g5 ♖c6 19 gxf6 gxf6 20 ♖xf6 ♖g8 with dynamic compensation) 13 ♖e1 c6!? (13...♖d7=) 14 ♖d1 ♖c7 15 a3 ♖a6 16 ♖de2 ♗d6 17 ♖d2 ♖e7= (aiming for f4) 18 ♖d1 ♖g6 19 ♖ee1 ♖b8!? (19...♖f4?) 20 ♗f1 ♖d7 21 ♖a4 ♖de8 ½-½ Mimon-Sanchez Jimenez, Spain 1993. Black still stands a little better;

(b) 11 ♖e1 ♖f6 12 a3 ♖c6 13 ♗g2 (13 ♖f3 ♖e4) 13...♖e4 14 ♖xe4 ♗xe4 15 f3 ♗g6 16 f4 ♗e4=, or here 16...♖e8 17 f5 ♖xe3+ 18 ♖xe3 ♖xe3 19 fxg6 hxg6 20 ♗xd5 ♖d8=. 11...♖xc2 12 ♗f4

This is Ulibin-Vilela, Santa Clara 1991. Instead of the tempting 12...♖a1?! 13 b4!, Black might have tried:

12...♖xa3!

which results in fascinating complications.



13 bxa3

13 ♖xe7 ♗xe7 14 bxa3 ♗xa3+ 15 ♖d2 ♖f6 transposes.

13...♖xa3+ 14 ♖b2 ♗b4 15 ♖xa3

Too slow is the alternative 15

♗d2?! h5! (15...♖a5!?) 16 ♗g2 ♖f6 17 g5 ♖xb2+ 18 ♖xb2 ♗xc3+ 19 ♗xc3 ♖e4 20 ♗e1 ♖he8.

15...♗xa3+ 16 ♖d2 ♖f6

Black has three pawns and enough play for the piece, for example:

17 ♖e5! ♗b4! 18 f3 c5 19 ♖xg6 hxg6 20 ♖c2 c4 21 ♗g2 b6

Planning ...♖b7-c6 followed by advancing the 3 connected passed pawns.

22 ♖b1!

22 ♗e5 ♖b7 23 f4 ♗xc3 24 ♖xc3 ♖e8! 25 f5 gxf5 26 gxf5 ♖c6.

22...♗xc3 23 ♖xc3 ♖b7 24 ♖he1 ♖c6

Riskier is 24...♖de8!? 25 ♗e5! ♖c6 26 f4 a5 27 g5 ♖d7 28 ♗xg7 ♖xe1 29 ♖xe1 ♖g8 30 ♗e5 b5, although the pawns are dangerous enough to hold the balance.

25 ♖e2

Now 25 ♗e5 a5 26 g5 ♖e8 achieves nothing.

25...♖de8 26 ♖eb2 ♖e7=

There follows ...♖he8, and the idea of ...♖h7, ...f6, ...g5 can be surprisingly effective. This is of course just sample analysis, but it includes several exact moves for White that let him escape from being overrun by the passed pawns. I think that the verdict is an objective one.

5.22 4...♗d6 5 c4

(a) 5 ♖c3 is rare because 5...c6 restricts the White knight, and 5...♖e7 is also fine;

(b) 5 ♗d3 ♖e7 (5...♖c6 might transpose to 4 ♗d3 ♖c6) 6 0-0 ♗g4 (or, again, 6...♖bc6) 7 ♗g5 (7 h3 ♗h5 8 c4 dxc4 9 ♗xc4 0-0 10 g4 ♗g6 11 ♖e5 c5!? 12 ♖xg6 ♖xg6 13 dxc5 ♗xc5 14 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 15 ♗g5 ♖d7= Thesing-Knaak, Bundesliga 1992; and here 11...♖bc6 would have been more con-

frontational) 7...♟bc6 8 c3 ♜d7 9 ♟bd2 f6 10 ♟h4 h5 11 b4 ♟d8 (or 11...0-0-0) Mokcsay-L.Portisch, Zalkaros 1991; Black's coming kingside pawn storm in this type of position will be seen again under 4 ♟d3.

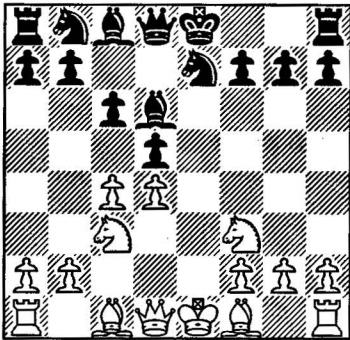
5...c6

This has the advantage of reserving a later ...♟e7, when Black's knight will be better placed than White's in the event of cxd5. 5...♟f6 6 c5 ♟e7 is also played.

6 ♟c3

6 cxd5 cxd5 7 ♟d3 (7 ♟c3 ♟e7 transposes, and here 7 ♟g5 f6! only helps Black) 7...♟e7 8 ♟g5 h6 9 ♟h4 ♜b6! = Holubicik-Vavrak, Tatranske Zruby 2000.

6...♟e7



7 ♟d3

(a) 7 ♟e2 might transpose after 7...dxc4, but Black might also simply develop by ...0-0 and ...♟f5, in view of the passivity of White's bishop;

(b) 7 cxd5 cxd5 yields a static central pawn structure where knights are at least the equal of bishops. Thus White is ill-motivated to waste two tempi to win the d6 bishop by 8 ♟b5?! 0-0 (8...♟bc6) 9 ♟xd6 ♜xd6 10 ♟e2 ♟g4! 11 0-0 ♟bc6 (with the idea ...♟f5) 12 h3 ♟h5 13 b3? (but 13 ♟e3 f5! or 13 g4 ♟g6 14 ♟h4 f5! – Ren-

man) 13...♞fe8 14 ♟b2 ♟g6! 15 g4 (15 g3 ♜e6!; 15 ♟c1 ♞xe2!) 15...♟f4 16 ♟e5 ♟g6 17 ♟f3 ♟xh3+ 18 ♟h1 ♟e4+– Johansson-Renman, Sweden 1982;

(c) 7 c5 tends to be harmless in these positions because it releases the pressure on the centre, e.g., 7...♟c7 8 ♟d3 (8 ♟g5 f6 9 ♟e3 0-0 10 ♟d3 ♟f5=) 8...0-0 (8...♟f5 is the more common move order, to force the kind of position that arises next) 9 0-0 h6 10 h3 (10 ♜c2 ♟g4! 11 ♟e5 ♟xe5 12 dxe5 ♟d7?) 10...♟f5 (10...♟e6 would be more enterprising) 11 ♞e1 ♟xd3 12 ♜xd3 ♟d7 13 ♟h4!? (versus ...♟g6) 13...♞e8 14 ♟d2 ♟f8 15 b4 ♟d7 16 a4 ♟fg6 17 ♟xg6 ♟xg6 = George-Hutchings, England 1986.

7...dxc4 8 ♟xc4 0-0 9 0-0

9 ♟e3?! ♟d7 10 ♜d2 ♟b6 11 ♟b3 ♟bd5 12 0-0-0 a5! 13 ♟xd5 ♟xd5? with the idea ...a4-a3, Jellison-J.Watson, Denver 1974.

9...♟d7 10 ♞e1

10 ♟g5 ♟b6 11 ♟b3 (11 ♟d3 f6!?) 11...♟h8 (11...♟g4!? has a similar idea, e.g., 12 h3 ♟h5 13 g4 ♟g6 14 ♟e5 ♟h8! intending ...f6) 12 ♜d2 (12 ♟xe7 ♜xe7 13 ♞e1 ♜c7 14 d5 ♟g4=) 12...f6 (this plan is worth noting, since it has not been played in several recent games with this variation) 13 ♟f4 ♟b4!? (13...♟xf4?) 14 a3 ♟a5 15 h3 (15 ♟a2 ♟bd5?) 15...♟ed5 16 ♟g3 ♟e6 17 ♟a2 ♟a4 18 ♜e2 ♟xc3 19 ♜xe6 ♞e8 20 ♜f5 ♟xb2+– Frederick-J.Watson, New York 1981.

10...♟b6 11 ♟b3 ♟bd5

11...♟ed5 12 ♟g5 f6 13 ♟h4 ♞e8 14 ♟g3 ♟xg3 15 hxg3 ♟e6 16 ♜d2 ½-½ was Neubauer-Borges Mateos, Santa Clara 2002.

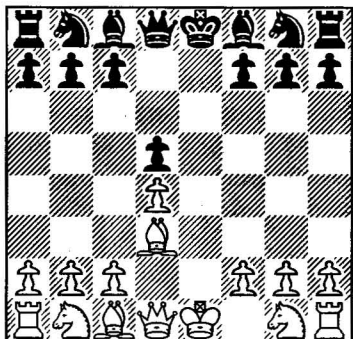
12 h3 ♟f5

12...♜b6!? 13 ♟c2 f6 keeps things complicated.

13 ♖e4 ♙xe4 14 ♜xe4 ½-½ Leko-Varga, Budapest 1993.

I prefer Black here after 14...♞c7 and ...♞ad8, but it's a matter of taste.

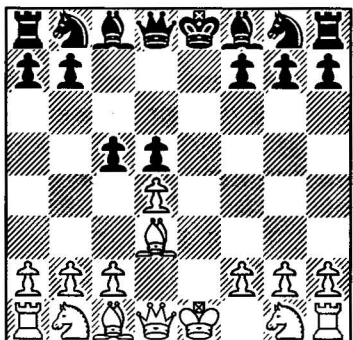
5.3.4 ♙d3



Formerly the main move and certainly an important one. Here an old semi-arranged draw used to continue 4...♙d6 5 ♖e2 ♖e7 6 0-0 0-0 7 ♙f4 ♙f5 or something similar. I recommend lines which immediately break the symmetry. This section is mostly unchanged from earlier editions, as I see no major changes in the theory.

4...♖c6

One of the main reasons that 4 ♖f3 has been replacing 4 ♙d3 is the move 4...c5, against which White hasn't succeeded in finding any edge.



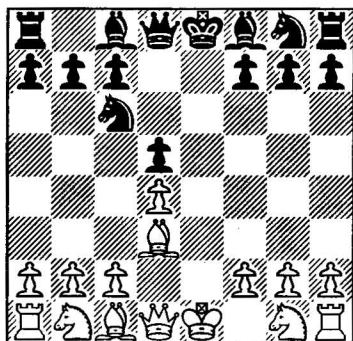
White's problem is that the bishop on d3 is not placed effectively for play against an isolated pawn. I will treat these lines briefly, since nothing much has occurred since the last edition:

(a) 5 ♞e2+ ♙e7 6 dxc5 ♖f6 7 ♖f3 0-0 8 0-0 ♙xc5 9 ♙g5 ♖c6 10 ♖bd2 h6 11 ♙h4 ♙g4 12 ♞fe1 g5! 13 ♙g3 ♖h5! Mantovani-King, Lugano 1989;

(b) 5 c3 ♖c6 6 ♖f3 (6 ♖e2 c4!? 7 ♙c2 ♙d6= with the idea ...♙ge7) 6...♙d6 7 ♙e3!? c4 and 8 ♙e2 ♙f5= or 8 ♙c2 ♙g4=;

(c) 5 ♖f3 ♖c6 6 ♞e2+ ♙e7 7 dxc5 ♖f6 8 h3?! 0-0 9 0-0 ♙xc5 10 c3 ♞e8 11 ♞c2 ♞d6! 12 ♖bd2? ♞g3! 13 ♙f5? (13 ♖g5!?) 13...♞e2+ Tatai-Korchnoi, Beersheva 1978;

(d) 5 dxc5 (the main move) 5...♙xc5 6 ♖f3 ♖f6 (or 6...♖e7) 7 0-0 0-0 8 ♖bd2 (8 ♙g5 ♖c6 9 ♖c3 ♙e6=) 8...♖c6 9 ♖b3 ♙b6 10 c3 ♙g4 11 ♙e2 ♞d6= Moldobayev-Orlov, Belgorod 1989.



5 c3

5 ♖f3 ♙g4 6 c3 ♙d6 transposes. 5 ♖e2 is natural and can't be bad, but Black can play aggressively by 5...♙g4 (or 5...♙d6) and:

(a) 6 c3 ♙d6!? 7 ♞b3 ♖ge7 8 ♖a3!? (8 ♞xb7 ♞b8 9 ♞a6 0-0 10 0-0 ♞b6 11 ♞a4 ♖g6 followed by ...♞h4) 8...a6 9

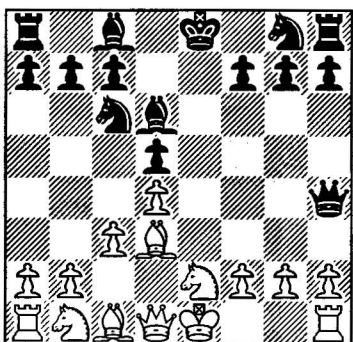
f3 ♖f5! 10 ♙xf5 ♜xf5 11 0-0 0-0 12 ♛c2 ♛f6♭ Lau-J.Watson, Philadelphia 1978;

(b) 6 f3 ♙h5 7 c3 (7 ♜f4 ♙g6; 7 ♜g3 ♛h4 8 0-0 ♙d6 9 ♛e1+ ♜d7! 10 f4 ♛e8 planning ...♜f6-g4) 7...♙d6 8 ♙f4 (8 0-0 ♛f6!?) or 8...♙g6 with the idea 9 f4 f5! and ...♜f6-e4) 8...♜ge7 9 0-0 ♙g6 10 ♙xd6 ♛xd6 11 f4?! (11 ♜a3 0-0-0 12 ♛d2 h5!?) 13 ♜f4 ♙f5 14 ♙xf5+ ♜xf5 15 ♜d3 a6 16 ♜c2 h4= Lenic-Karer, Kranj 2001) 11...♛e6! 12 ♛f3 ♜f5 (12...♙h5!) 13 ♜f2 ♜d6 14 ♛e3 ♙e4 15 ♜g3 f5♭ Sollid-J.Watson, Gausdal 1981.

A particularly mischievous move is 5 ♙b5, which transposes into a Winawer with colours reversed (White has wasted a move)! As we show in the line 3 ♜c3 ♙b4 4 exd5 exd5, this is objectively equal, with chances for both sides (Black must be careful not to overextend).

5...♙d6 6 ♜f3

(a) 6 ♜e2 ♛h4! (6...♙g4 is often played; and Alekhine suggested 6...♛f6!?, for example, 7 0-0 ♜ge7 8 ♜d2 ♙f5 9 ♜f3 ♙xd3 10 ♛xd3 h6 planning ...0-0-0 and a kingside attack)



Here there are some fascinating ideas:

(a1) 7 ♜g3 ♜h6! (7...♙g4!) 8 ♙xh6

♛xh6 9 0-0 ♜e7♭ Westerinen-Kavalek, Solingen 1986;

(a2) 7 g3 with:

(a21) 7...♛h3 8 ♜f4 ♙xf4 9 ♙xf4 ♛g2?! (9...♜f6 10 ♛e2+ ♜d8 unclear) 10 ♛e2+! ♙e6 (10...♜d8 11 ♛f1) 11 ♛f1 ♛xf1+ 12 ♛xf1 0-0-0 13 ♜a3! ♙h3 14 ♛g1 ♛e8+ 15 ♜d2±;

(a22) 7...♛h5 8 ♙f4 (8 ♜f4 ♛xd1+ 9 ♜xd1 ♜f6 10 ♛e1+ ♜e7♭ Apseniēks-Alekhine, Buenos Aires 1939, or 9...♙g4+=) 8...♙g4 (8...♙xf4 9 ♜xf4 ♛xd1+ 10 ♜xd1 ♙g4+= – McDonald). I called 8...♙g4 clearly better for Black, but Justin Horton points out the line 9 ♙xd6 cxd6 10 ♛b3!. Then 10...0-0-0 11 ♜f4 ♛e8+ 12 ♜d2 ♛h6! (with the idea ...♜f6-h5) is interesting but hardly a clear advantage for Black: 13 ♜c2! (13 ♛xd5? ♜f6 14 ♛b5 a6 15 ♛c4 ♙f3♭; 13 ♜a3? ♜f6! and 14 h4? ♜h5 or 14 ♜c2 ♙f3 15 ♛hf1 g5 16 ♜b5 gxf4 17 ♜xd6+ ♜c7 18 ♜xe8+ ♛xe8+) 13...♜f6 14 ♜d2 ♜b8 15 h3 ♛c8! 16 ♛a4 ♙d7 unclear;

(a3) 7 ♜d2 ♙g4 (several readers and players have discussed this line, and some of the material is based upon that discussion; thanks to all) 8 ♛c2 (8 ♛b3 0-0-0 9 ♛xd5 ♜f6♭ – Alekhine) 8...♜f6 (8...0-0-0 9 ♜f1, and Black is better after either 9...♜f6 or 9...g6 10 ♙e3 ♜ge7 11 0-0-0 ♙f5 12 ♜eg3 ♙xd3 13 ♛xd3 h6♭ Alekhine-Winter, Nottingham 1936) 9 ♜f1 0-0 10 ♙e3 ♙h5 11 ♜eg3?! ♙xg3 12 ♜xg3 ♙g6 13 h3 ♛ae8 14 ♜f1 ♙xd3 15 ♛xd3 ♜e4♭ Ledwon-Bednarski, Poland 1975;

(b) 6 ♛f3 ♜f6! (6...♙e6 is a solid alternative, or 6...♜ce7 7 ♙f4 ♜f6 8 ♜e2 ♙g4 9 ♛g3 ♙xe2 10 ♙xe2 ♙xf4 11 ♛xf4 0-0 12 ♙d3 ♜g6 13 ♙xg6 ♛e8+ 14 ♜d1 hxg6♭ Lazic-Kosten, Varallo 1991) 7 ♙g5 (7 h3 0-0 8 ♜e2 ♛e8 9 ♙g5 ♙e7 10 ♙e3 ♜e4! 11 ♙xe4

dxe4 12 ♖xe4 ♖b4! ♠ Malanyuk-Psakhis, Moscow 1983) 7...♙g4 8 ♖xg4! (J.Horton's suggestion; 8 ♙xf6? ♙xf3 9 ♙xd8 ♙xg2-+; 8 ♖e3+?! ♖d7! 9 ♖e2 ♙e8♠) 8...♖xg4 9 ♙xd8 ♖xd8 (9...♙xd8 10 ♖f3 0-0 11 0-0=) 10 ♖f3 ♙e8+ 11 ♖f1 ♖f6 (11...g6 12 g3 ♖d7 13 ♖bd2 f5 14 ♖g2=) 12 g3 ♖e4 13 ♖bd2 f5 14 ♖g2 ♖d7 15 ♙ae1=.

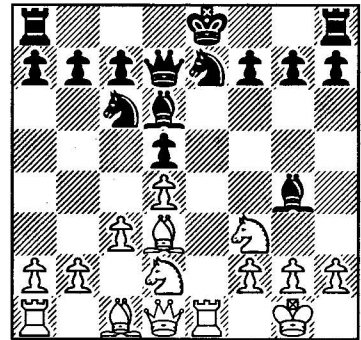
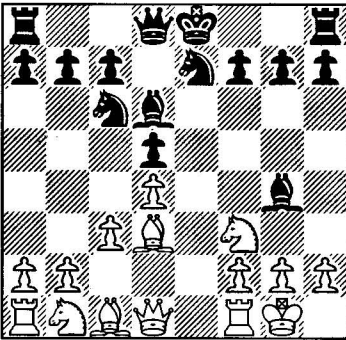
6...♙g4

6...♖ge7 usually transposes.

7 0-0 ♖ge7

14 ♖xd3 ♖f5=). What follows comes from a newsgroup discussion: 11...f6 12 ♖g3 ♙g6 13 ♖c2 (13 ♙f1 h5) 13...♙xd3 14 ♖xd3 h5!? (14...♙xg3! 15 fxg3 ♖f5 16 g4 ♖d6, analysis by C.Schulien) 15 ♖h4 g5! (15...♙xg3 16 fxg3 g5 17 ♖g6 Hagerty-Jeffrey, Parsippany 1996) 16 ♖hf5 (16 ♖g6 ♙h6 17 ♖xe7+ ♖xe7 18 h4 ♙g8 with good play) 16...♙xg3 17 ♖xe7+ ♖xe7 18 fxg3 g4 unclear – Mannien.

8...♖d7 9 ♖bd2



8 ♙e1

(a) 8 ♙g5 ♖d7 9 ♖bd2 f6 10 ♙e3 (10 ♙h4?! 0-0-0♠ intending ...♖f5 and, e.g., ...g5, ...h5-h4 is a position where Black's attack plays itself) 10...0-0-0 11 c4 (11 ♖a4 ♖b8 12 b4? ♙xf3 13 ♖xf3 ♖xd4♠ Trzaska-Koepf, Bundesliga 1988; 11 b4 ♙dg8 12 ♖b3 ♖d8! with the idea 13 ♖c5 ♖e8♠, when Black covers a4 and threatens the move ...♖h5) 11...♖b4!? (11...dxc4! 12 ♖xc4 ♖b8 13 ♖xd6 ♖xd6♠) 12 ♙e2 dxc4 13 ♖xc4 ♖bd5 14 ♖b3 ♙e6!? 15 ♙fc1 ♖b8 16 ♖fd2 ♖f4 17 ♙f3 ♙d5 18 ♖e4 ♖e2+!♠ Marcal-J.Watson, St Paul 1982;

(b) 8 h3!? ('inaccurate' – Psakhis) 8...♙h5 9 ♙e1 ♖d7 10 ♖bd2 0-0-0 (or 10...0-0!?, since 11 ♙xh7+? ♖xh7 12 ♖g5+ ♖g6 doesn't work) 11 ♖f1 (11 ♖c2!? ♙de8 12 b4 ♙g6 13 ♖b3 ♙xd3

This one of the recurring positions of the French Exchange Variation.

9...0-0-0

An all-out move. Also perfectly good is 9...0-0 10 h3 ♙f5 11 ♖f1 ♙ae8 as in Tal-Korchnoi, USSR 1955, when White tried 12 ♙xf5!? (12 ♙g5= – ECO; but I think Black is slightly better here also, for example, 12...h6 13 ♙h4 ♖g6 14 ♙g3 ♖f4) 12...♖xf5 (12...♖xf5!?) 13 ♖e3 ♖d7 14 ♙d2 ♖d8 15 ♖c2 c6♠.

10 b4 ♖g6

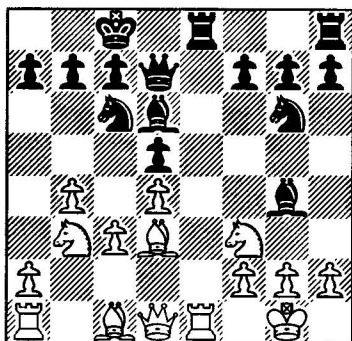
10...♙de8 11 b5 ♖d8 12 ♖a4 ♖b8 13 ♙a3 f6 also worked well for Black in Kholmov-Psakhis, Kiev 1984.

11 ♖b3

11 b5!? ♖ce7 and Black is well off; a typical line was 12 ♖a4 ♖b8 13 ♙a3 (13 ♖e5 ♙xe5 14 dxe5 f6!) 13...♖f4 (13...♙xa3 14 ♖xa3 f6, e.g.,

Play the French

15 ♖ab1?! ♜he8 16 ♜b4 ♘f4 17 ♜a4
 ♘c8?) 14 ♙f1 f6! 15 ♙c5 ♘c8? Z.Nik-
 olic-Barlov, Yugoslavia 1986.
 11...♜de8



A position from Spielmann-Mar-
 oczy, Sliac 1932. It is easy for White
 to go wrong here, although equality

seems the fair result. The obvious 12
 ♙d2? fails to 12...♘h4 13 ♙e2 ♜xe2!
 14 ♜xe2 ♙xf3 15 gxf3 ♜h3. A better
 line is 12 ♙e3! ♘h4!? 13 ♙e2 ♘f5 14
 ♙d2 ♜xe2!? 15 ♜xe2 ♘h4 Havski-
 Vladimirov, USSR 1956. This is given
 as unclear in ECO. The only defense
 to ...♙xf3 and ...♜h3 is 16 b5!, when
 16...♘b4!? (16...♙xf3? 17 bxc6 holds
 due to the counterattack) 17 ♘e5! (17
 cxb4 ♙xf3 18 gxf3 ♜h3-+) 17...♙xe2
 18 ♘xd7 ♘c2 19 ♜xe2 ♘xa1 20 ♘dc5
 ♘xb3 21 axb3 ♘f5 leaves no advant-
 age for either side.

Objectively, the Exchange Varia-
 tion is of course equal. But we have
 seen that there is ample leeway for
 the stronger player to outthink his
 opponent and win. This is all we can
 ask for from any opening.