Contents

9 The Exchange Variation

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6

This move allows White to play the most challenging form of Exchange Variation, with ♗g5 and retaining possibilities of ♘ge2.

4 cxd5 exd5 5 ♗g5 *(D)*
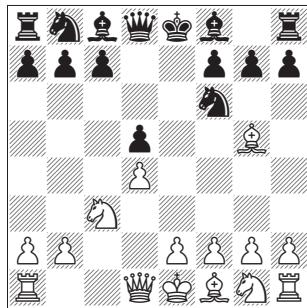
White has several possible middle-game plans in this line, of which the main ideas are: 1) A queenside minority attack with b4-b5; 2) Attack in the centre with (e3-)e4.

Black's possible plans are: a counterattack using his kingside pawns; a kingside attack based on piece-play; positional methods of defence, involving the creation of a defensive barrier by ...b5 or piece control of c4 and b5.

It is important to bear these plans in mind as they subtly affect the opening play for both sides.

Getting back to specifics, Black has two main continuations here:

A: 5...♗e7 134
B: 5...c6 137

Other continuations have also been tried in practice, but without success:

a) 5...♗e6?! 6 e3 c5 7 ♗b5+ ♘c6 8 ♗xf6 gxf6 9 ♘ge2 a6 10 ♗xc6+ bxc6 11 0-0 ♖g8 12 ♔h1 f5 13 dxc5 ♗xc5 14 ♘f4 ♗d6 15 ♘ce2 ± Furman-Spassky, USSR 1958.

b) 5...c5?! 6 ♗xf6 gxf6 7 e3 ♗e6 8 ♘ge2 ♘c6 9 g3 ± Pillsbury-Steinitz, Hastings 1895.

A)

5...♗e7 6 e3

In this position Black can, if he wishes, transpose to Line B24 by playing 6...c6. Other continuations have also been tried in practice:

A1: 6...h6 134
A2: 6...♘bd7 135
A3: 6...0-0 136

A1)

6...h6 7 ♗h4 0-0 8 ♗d3 *(D)*
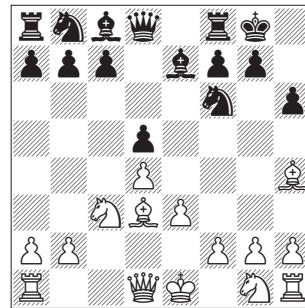
8...b6

Black can try 8...♖e8, hoping for 9 ♕c2?! c5! 10 ♘ge2 ♘c6 11 dxc5 d4 12 ♖d1 g5 13 ♗g3 dxc3 14 ♗c4! ♕a5 15 ♕g6+ ♔h8, when 16 ♕xh6 ♘h7 is unconvincing for White, and 16 ♗xf7? loses to the attractive sequence 16...cxb2+ 17 ♔f1 (Azmaiparashvili-Sr.Cvetković, Stary Smokovec 1983) 17...♖d8! 18 ♗d6 ♗f5! 19 ♕xf5 ♖xd6! 20 ♖xd6 ♕xc5! −+. However, simpler and stronger is 9 ♘ge2 ♘bd7 10 0-0 c6 (or 10...♘f8 11 ♕c2 c6 12 f3 ♗e6 13 ♖ad1 ♖c8 14 ♔h1 ± Malaniuk-Kasperek, Katowice 1991) 11 f3 c5 12 ♕c2 b6 13 ♗b5 ♗b7 14 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 15 dxc5 bxc5 16 ♖ad1 d4! 17 exd4 cxd4 18 ♘xd4 ♕b6 19 ♕f2 ♖ed8 20 ♘b3 ± Botvinnik-Porath, Amsterdam OL 1954.

White has a stable advantage after the straightforward 8...c5 9 dxc5 ♘bd7 10 ♘ge2 ♘xc5 11 ♗c2 ♗e6 12 0-0 ♖c8 (or 12...♘ce4 13 ♕d3 ♖c8 14 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 15 ♖fd1 ♕b6 16 ♗b3 ♖fd8 17 ♘f4 ♗d6 18 ♘fxd5 ♘xd5 19 ♘xd5 ♗xd5 20 ♗xd5 ♕xb2 21 ♖ab1 ♕c3 22 ♕xc3 ♖xc3 23 ♖xb7 ± Gulko-Lputian, Tashkent 1984) 13 ♕d4 ♕b6 14 ♖ab1 ♖fd8 15 ♖fc1 ± Portisch-Pfleger, Skopje OL 1972.

9 ♘ge2 ♗b7 10 0-0

10 ♗xf6 is overly hasty: 10...♗xf6 11 b4 c5 12 bxc5 bxc5 13 ♖b1 cxd4 14 exd4 ♘c6 = Antoshin-Zinn, Germany 1966.

10...♘bd7 11 ♖c1

11 ♗g3 c5 12 ♘f4 c4 13 ♗b1 ♖e8 14 f3 ♗b4 15 ♗f2 ♘f8 16 ♘fe2 a6 is unclear, Polugaevsky-Ab.Khasin, USSR 1956. However, 11 f3!? deserves attention: 11...c5 12 ♕d2 ♖e8 13 ♗f2 ♗f8 14 g4 with the initiative, Lama-Gomez Velasco, Argentina 1992.

11...♖e8

If 11...c5 then 12 ♗b1 a6 13 dxc5 bxc5 14 ♕c2 g5 15 ♗g3 ♕b6 16 ♖fd1 with a slight advantage for White, Draško-Dervishi, Panormo Z 1998.

**12 ♗b1 c6 13 f3 c5 14 ♗f2 ♗d6 15 ♖e1 a6 16 ♘g3 ♕b8 17 ♖c2 ♘f8 18 a3 ♘e6 19 ♗a2 cxd4 20 exd4 b5 21 ♔h1!**

Intending ♘f5.

21...g6 22 ♘f1 ♗c6 23 ♗h4

± Bagirov-Abramović, Erevan 1982.

A2)

6...♘bd7 7 ♗d3 ♘f8 *(D)*
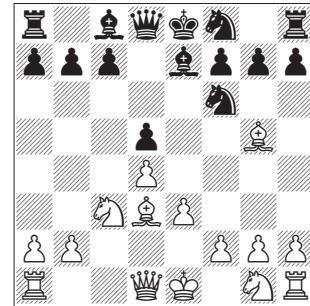
Black's idea is to play ...♘e6, meeting ♗h4 with ...g6, ...♘g7 and ...♗f5, with a favourable exchange of light-squared bishops.

8 ♘f3

8 ♘ge2!? deserves serious attention: 8...♘e6 9 ♗h4 g6 10 0-0 ♘g7 11 f3 ±/±.

Beliavsky's idea 8 f4!? is also interesting: 8...c6 9 f5 ♘e4 10 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 11 ♕f3 ♕b4 12 ♘ge2 ♕xb2 13 ♗xe4 ♕xa1+ 14 ♗b1 ♘d7 (Beliavsky-Ljubojević, Linares 1989) 15 ♕g3 0-0 16 f6 g6 (16...♘xf6 17 0-0 intending 18 ♖f6 or 18 ♗h7 ±) 17 0-0 ♕b2 18 h4!

♖e8 19 h5 ♕d2 20 ♖f3 ♘xf6 21 hxg6 hxg6 22 ♗xg6 ± Beliavsky.

8...♘e6 9 ♗h4 0-0 10 0-0 g6 11 b4!?

White gains nothing from 11 ♘e5 due to 11...c5 12 ♗e2 cxd4 13 exd4 ♘g7 14 f4 ♘f5 15 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 16 ♕d2 ♗e6 17 ♖ad1 ♖c8 18 ♔h1 ♗g7 = Uhlmann-Westerinen, Siegen OL 1970.

However, Portisch's recommendation 11 ♕c2 ♘g7 12 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 13 b4 ± deserves attention.

11...c6

Black is worse after 11...a6 12 a4 c6 13 ♕b3 ♘g7 14 b5 axb5 15 axb5 ♗f5 16 ♘e5 ± Petrosian-Birbrager, USSR Cht (Moscow) 1966. Also not very good is 11...♘g7 12 b5 ♗f5 13 ♘e5 ♗xd3 14 ♘xd3 c6 15 bxc6 bxc6 16 ♖c1 ± Gligorić-Medina, Palma de Mallorca 1967.

12 ♕b3 a5!

The strongest move. If 12...a6 then 13 a4 ±, while 12...♘e4 is met by 13 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 14 ♗xe4 (also possible is 14 b5 ♘xc3 15 ♕xc3 cxb5 16 ♗xb5 ♘g5 17 ♘xg5 ♕xg5 18 ♖fc1 ± Zharkov-Ufimtsev, corr. 1991) 14...dxe4 15 ♘d2 ♘g5 16 h4 ♘e6 17 d5 ♘g7 18 ♘dxe4 ♕xh4 19 ♖ad1 ± Zelinsky-Ufimtsev, corr. 1991.

**13 b5 c5 14 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 15 ♘xd5 cxd4 16 ♘xf6+ ♕xf6 17 ♕b2 ♔g7 18 ♖ac1**

18 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 19 ♕xd4 ♕xd4 20 exd4 ♖d8 =.

18...dxe3 19 ♕xf6+ ♔xf6 20 fxe3 ♔e7 21 ♘e5 ♗d7

= Miladinović-Ljubojević, Belgrade 1995.

A3)

6...0-0 7 ♗d3 ♘bd7 *(D)*
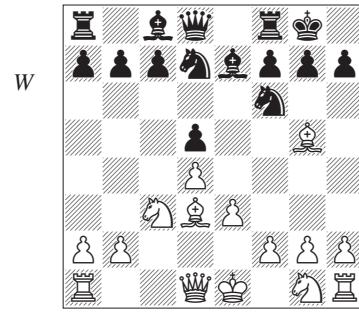
8 ♘ge2

The main continuation. We should also note Lerner's idea 8 ♕f3!? c6 9 ♘ge2 ♖e8 10 h4!? ♘f8 11 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 12 0-0-0 ♕d7 13 e4 dxe4 14 ♗xe4 ♕g4 15 ♕d3 ± Lerner-A.Petrosian, Jurmala 1983.

8...♖e8

Here 8...b6?! is dubious due to 9 ♘g3! (intending ♘f5) 9...g6 10 h4 c5 11 ♕c2 ♖e8 12 0-0-0 c4 13 ♗e2 a6 14 ♗f3 ♗b7 15 h5 ± Gulko-Chiburdanidze, Frunze 1985. White has an attack.

9 0-0

An important alternative is 9 ♕c2 ♘f8 10 0-0-0 ♗e6:

a) 11 ♘f4!? ♖c8 12 ♔b1 a6?! 13 ♘xe6 fxe6 14 f4 ± E.Vladimirov-Klovans, Frunze 1988.

b) 11 ♔b1!? ♘e4 (11...♘g4 12 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 13 ♘f4 ♘f6 14 f3 c5 15 g4 ± Kasparov-Campora, Thessaloniki OL 1988; 11...♖c8 12 ♘f4 h6 13 ♘xe6 fxe6 14 ♗f4 c5 15 dxc5 ±) 12 ♗xe7 ♘xc3+ 13 ♘xc3 ♕xe7 14 f4 gives White the initiative and a slight advantage – Kasparov.

c) 11 f3 ♖c8 12 ♔b1 a6 (12...c5 13 dxc5 ♖xc5 14 ♘d4 a6 15 h4 ♕b8 16 g4 ± Shirov-Ambartsumian, Frunze 1989) 13 g4! c5 14 dxc5 ♗xc5! 15