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# JOURNEY TO THE CHESS KINGDOM



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# Introduction

There are hundreds of chess books published every year and even for the most stubborn collector it is hard to catch up on all of them. Among these books we can find very decent works as well as the not so good: only a very few of them we could call "evergreens"; such books, which are written by top specialists, will always be of interest to chess lovers.

One such book is "Journey to the Chess Kingdom" written by Yuri Averbakh and Mikhail Beilin. Yuri Averbakh is the oldest living GM, a legendary former Soviet Champion and candidate for the World Championship. He also wrote the most important endgame manual in the history of chess. Mikhail Beilin was a famous lawyer, trainer of the Soviet National team and a prolific chess writer.

"Journey to the Chess Kingdom" has been reprinted many times and translated into a number of languages. Though quite surprising, the fact is it has never before been translated into English... until now! It's hard to say which chess book is the absolute bestseller but clearly there are two favorites – Robert Fischer's "Bobby Fischer Teaches Chess" and Averbakh/Beilin's "Journey to the Chess Kingdom".

According to my estimate, more than a million Soviet children have read it, for most of whom was the first and best guide to the marvellous world of chess. Even the romantic title shows the gateway to the exciting planet of "Chess". I hope that this English version of "Journey to the Chess Kingdom" will introduce chess to millions of kids and adults. In the modern computer age we should not forget that there still exists a good old way to enjoy the beauty of this ancient game.

Adrian Mikhalchishin

Grandmaster, FIDE Trainers Commission Chairman

## An ancient and unusual kingdom

*Chess is the most noble of all the games. It is harder to master than any other game, so we speak of it first.*

"Book of Games Alfonso", written in Seville in 1283.

This kingdom cannot be found on the World map. As you have already guessed, it is situated on the chessboard. Thirty-two simple pieces on the board, divided into sixty-four squares. This is the entire state.

History narrates about great and little kingdoms, tells how they were born, describes their blossoming and might, how they started wars, speaks of victories and defeats and, sooner or later, narrates about how they fade into oblivion.

But the little chess kingdom has adamantly stood for thousands years, and it will never perish. Its warriors fight fearlessly and the kingdom flourishes and becomes richer.

Strict laws and ancient traditions govern the kingdom's inhabitants. To become a real commander you have to learn these laws and traditions perfectly, respect them and protect them.

We invite you to take a journey into a pleasant chess land. Yes, exactly a journey, with adventures and challenges: a true journey is full of adventures, awaiting travelers in the chess kingdom. Travelers always have to deal with difficulties, but without them the pathway would be less interesting.

The Ancients said, that journeys expanded our cognition and provided us with a bit of imagination. If our trip turns out successful, you will seize the secrets of the most interesting game in the world, and wooden pieces will show you a marvelous world full of creativity, struggle and the happiness of unexpected discoveries. You will make friends with the chess kingdom's inhabitants for your whole life.

Chess has a lot of friends in all countries. Different people of all ages, professions, languages or skin colors spend their free time at the chessboard. And that means that in our difficult and inconsistent world, chess is favored in making friendships.

This book is a peculiar guide. It will introduce you to the laws and rules of the chess kingdom and the chess pieces' language. Seizing this simple language you will be able to recreate any chess battle which took place on the other end of the Earth, or restore old struggles. A chess book for a chess player means the same as music for a musician.

Unfortunately many people start their journey without experienced guides and guidebooks. But the pathway is very difficult and complicated. It often happens that a traveller wanders and strays off the road, becomes disappointed, and turns back without perceiving the mysteries of the ancient game.

This book's authors learned to play chess like many of their fellows at school (or even pre-school) age. We have taken the knowledge and experience of each other at school, at home, on the playground. Our experience was random and our knowledge unsystematic, because neither our partners nor we had any great skills! Only later in chess club did we meet dedicated chess players, and then we actually began to play.

Since then many years have passed. One of us became a Grandmaster, the other – a Master of Sports of USSR.

We have dreamed for a very long time of writing a book that would help people interested in the world of chess. We wanted to help them avoid childish mistakes and misconceptions, to comprehend the laws of chess and, most importantly, to feel the richness and beauty of the game.

This book, dear Reader, is for you.





## Chapter four

### The commander's alphabet

*The king almost next to the rook  
Which itself the corner had took.  
The knight on the fifth 'fore the king,  
And the pawn to the sixth it did bring.  
Next, on its right, another did stand,  
Defended by a bishop from its very own land.*

J. Kochanowski "Chess"

"The pawns are the soul of chess". A very famous French chess player of the XVIII century, Andre Philidor, defined the role of pawns so poetically. Indeed, the duties of privates in the chess army are large and diverse. At the beginning and in the middle of the game pawns protect the king and the other pieces. In offense pawns usually jostle the enemy pieces and capture territory, while storming and ramming into the opponent's set.

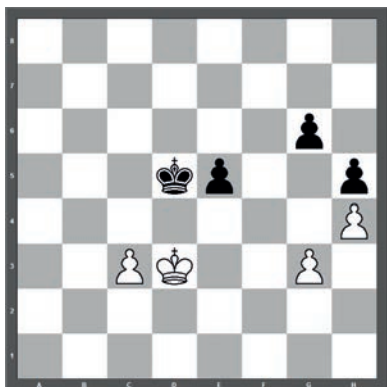
#### The soul of chess

The pawn's role gets especially more valuable at the end of the game (*endgame*). If in the middle (middlegame) and at the beginning of the game (*opening*) one strives for a material advantage or mating attack, then in the endgame the main

goal is promotion. It is very hard to announce mate in the endgame; it happens actually very rarely. A natural way to victory is gaining a material advantage, turning a very weak piece into the strongest one. Promotion is the leitmotif of the endgame. It is clear that inconspicuous features of pawn's positions can have a huge impact on the outcome of the game. In fact pawns do not remain still during the game: some are moving forward, some are left behind and some die on the battlefield... There are different varieties of pawns' configuration.

*Although all pawns look the same,  
their value is different.*

Let's analyze a particular set up of pawns in examples of pawn endings (the end of the game where only the kings and pawns remain on the board).



The pawns on the right flank are arranged symmetrically. Both sides have a *passed pawn*. A passed pawn is a pawn which cannot be blocked or captured by the enemy pawns in its advance to promotion. Having a passed pawn is very beneficial, especially at the end of the game. However passed pawns are not all equal in value.

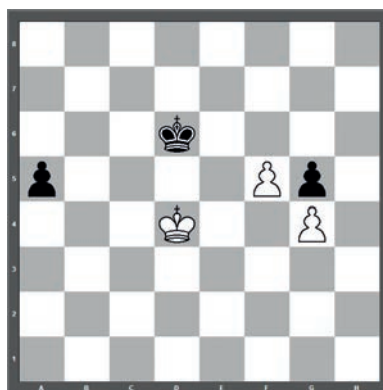
In the diagram the pawn c3 is an outside passed pawn. An outside pawn usually refers to a pawn which is separated by a number of files from the rest of the pawns. The pawn c3 is much more dangerous than the pawn e5. Why is that so? Black's king capturing the c3 pawn would be separated by a number of files from the other pawns, but the white king taking the e5 pawn on the contrary would get closer to the bulk of pawns. So the plan is clear: to force the black king to move towards the c3 pawn and send our king to the pawn on e5.

**1.c4+ ♖e5 2.♗e4 ♜xc4**

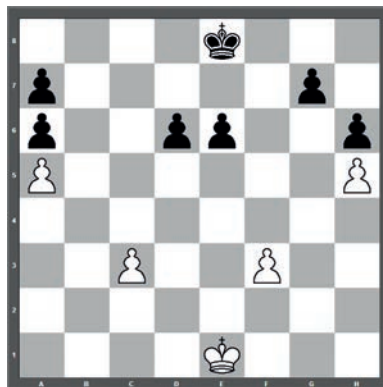
Black cannot avoid the exchange of pawns. If

2...♔d6 3.c5+ ♖e6 4.c6 the king is forced to return to the white pawn.

**3.♗xe5 ♜d3 4.♗f6 ♖e3 5.♗xg6 ♜f3 6.♗xh5 ♜xg3 7.♗g5.**



The passed pawn on f5 is protected by the pawn g4. Such a pawn is called a *protected passed pawn*. A protected passed pawn is very powerful. White's king does not have to worry about its protection. So it can easily move to the pawn a5 and wipe it out. As for the black king, it cannot support its passed pawn because the king has to prevent the f5 pawn from promotion.



Let us introduce you to some features of pawns. The pawns a7 and a6 are doubled. Doubled pawns refer to pawns of the same color placed on the same file. These doubled pawns are constrained by the white pawn on a5.

In most cases, doubled pawns are considered a weakness in the position. On the right flank a white pawn also constrains two enemy pawns, which is possible because the pawn g7 is a *backward pawn* (the term does not need a definition). Black pawns e6 and d6 are *connected*. They can help each other. Each of the four white pawns is *isolated*.

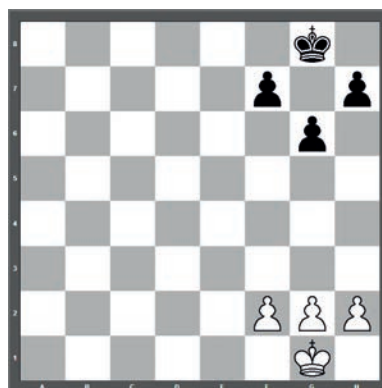
These pawns are called isolated because there are no friendly pawns on the adjacent files.

*When waging infantrymen in attack, remember the pros and cons of pawns structure. Strive to get a passed pawn, but do not let the enemy capture it. Avoid weakening your pawn chain or allowing isolated or backward pawns.*

Of course, it all depends on the situation. In the heat of the battle you have sometimes to deal with weaknesses of the pawn structure.

A pawn often becomes weak because it does not prevent the invasion of the enemy pieces into the camp.

## Charmed squares

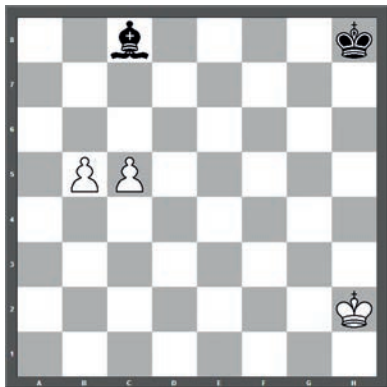


There are castled set-ups in the diagram. White's pawns are in close order and they keep the field on the third rank from e3 to h3 under fire. Here there is no place for enemy pieces to settle.

Now take a look at the black pawns. The difference is not that big, it may seem, but the squares f6 and h6 are not protected by the pawns anymore. The knight can break through here or a pawn can also enter, besides the diagonal a1 – h8 being open. If White manages to settle a bishop on the diagonal with the queen in front of the bishop, then a threat of mate will appear. Of course, it all depends on specific conditions, however, there is no doubt that any pawn move may be weakening and entail huge troubles.

In the previous chapter, analyzing the mating endings, we have actually seen that weaknesses in the pawn structure were the reason for the successful invasion of the enemy forces into the king's range. The first world chess champion Wilhelm

Steinitz called squares between pawns, on which the opponent's pieces can invade, "holes". The formation of holes is inevitable when you move pawns. However, a hole does not always mean a weakness.



White has two connected passed pawns, which are struggling with the bishop. How do you move pawns? Who should move first – infantryman "c" or "b"? If 1.c6 then a hole will appear on b6, and if 1.b6 then the hole will be on c6. Is there any difference? There is a huge difference!

**1.b6 ♖b7**

White's pawns are stranded – they are unable to move further without the king. There might follow

**2.♔g3 ♖g7 3.♔f4 ♖f6**

Black also has a king and it hastens to rescue the bishop.

**4.♔e3 ♔e5**

Black eliminates the enemy pawn's. The weak pawn's move just formed a hole, which became a weakness.

Now let's take a look at another variation.

**1.c6**

A hole has occurred for the moment on b6, but Black is unable to use it.

**1...♗e6 2.b6 ♗d5**

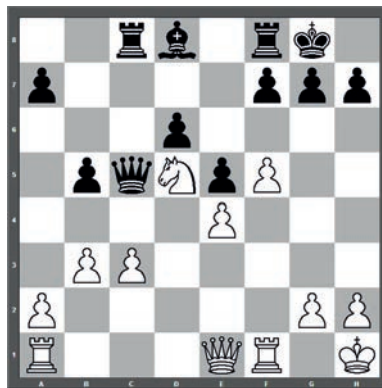
It's a trap!

**3.b7!**

The move 3.c7 misses victory because the bishop would have immediately taken the square b7, and the pawn would have been stranded again. That's why Black loses.

*A weak square is a great disadvantage; invading this square and getting stronger, the enemy piece constrains your actions, disorganizes your defense and disturbs maneuvers.*

Here is a distinctive example.



This position took place in a game **Smyslov – Rudakovsky**, which was played in Moscow in 1945. Black has a very weak point d5, where the opponent's knight has strengthened its position. White deploys an attack around the black king with the knight's support.

**1.♖f3 ♔h8 2.f6**

White destroys the king's protection.

2...gxf6 3.♖h4

There is the threat of 4.♖h3

3...♖g8 4.♘xf6 ♖g7 5.♖g3

There is the threat of 6.♖xh7 ♖xh7

7.♖g8 mate

5...♖xf6 6.♖xf6 ♖cg8 7.♖d1

Losses for Black are inevitable.

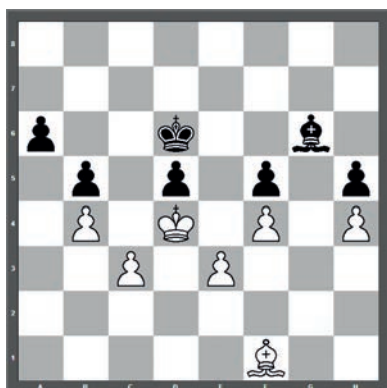
He desperately plays

7...d5

and after

8.♖xg7

he gives up.



What is the fate of an isolated pawn? Take a look at the diagram. Black's pawns d5, f5 and h5 are isolated. There are no friendly pawns on the adjacent files. It is necessary to protect isolated pawns with pieces, but this role is too modest for them.

However this is not the only drawback of isolated pawns. The square d4 in front of the isolated pawn d5 cannot be attacked by black pawns, so this square becomes a weakness for Black and an advantage for White. This square is an excellent base for White, in this

case for the king. Being safe the king itself attacks the opponent's pawn. The forces of both sides are equal in volume, but the pawns' weakness defines White's initiative. White attacks the isolated pawns, so Black is forced to protect them.

1.♖g2 ♖f7 2.♖f3

What a curious situation! White's bishop has attacked two pawns; so the black bishop has protected them. Black's turn. He is forced to let the opponent's king into the camp against its desire.

2...♖c6 3.♖e5 ♖g6 4.♖xd5+ ♖c7  
5.♖e6

The weak pawn on d5 has fallen, now it's the f5 pawn's turn. We could show you the development of the game till the very end, but it is unnecessary. The way to victory is by promotion of the pawns "e" or "f" into queens. Try to make the promotion yourself. If you move the pawns correctly, then one pawn will capture the bishop, another one will make the promotion. Well, you already know how to checkmate with the queen.

## The strong run from the weak

*The most important role of a pawn... is hustling away enemy pieces.*

Pawns can prevent pieces from maneuvers and even force them out of the game.



This position is taken from the game **Winter – Capablanca** (Hastings, 1919). Black blocks the white bishop out of the game.

**1...g5 2.♖xf6+ ♗xf6 3.♙g3 ♙g4!**

White was planning to rescue the bishop. In order to do so, it was necessary to move the "f" pawn so that the bishop could enter the game through the "back door". The move 3...♙g4 is accompanied with an exclamation mark, because it radically prevents this effort.

**4.h3 ♙xf3 5.♗xf3 ♗xf3 6.gxf3 f6**

Now it is apparent that White lacks the bishop. It is blocked by pawns and it's impossible to rescue the bishop without material losses. Black starts to play on the queenside, where he has an extra piece. Notice how Black has easily converted his material advantage, however, the forces are theoretically equal! Chess does not tolerate formalism...

**7.♙g2 a5 8.a4 ♖f7 9.♗h1 ♙e6 10.h4**

White responds on the king's flank.

**10...♗fb8 11.hxg5 hxg5 12.b3 c6 13.♗a2 b5 14.♗ha1 c4**

Using this move Black strives to open the files up.

**15.axb5 cxb3 16.cxb3 ♗xb5 17.♗a4 ♗xb3 18.d4 ♗b5 19.♗c4 ♗b4 20.♗xc6 ♗xd4**

White resigned.

Pawns can be very brave defenders. Forming long chains, pawns create "barricades" and prevent the enemy from invading.



Black's turn. Suddenly he places the queen under the fire.

**1...♗b6 2.♖xb6+ cxb6**

The pawn chain blocks the entire board. In order to win, the white queen has to invade the opponent's camp.

**3.h4**

White hopes to break loose through the square h3.

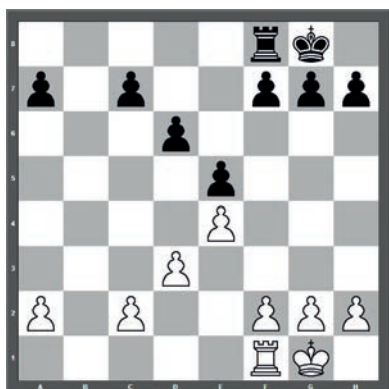
**3...gxh4 4.♗b1 h3! 5.gxh3 h4**

An impregnable wall of pawns is built. Draw!

## Roads to victory

*A file on which there are no pawns is called an open file. If there is a piece on a file it is called a half-open file.*

Open and half-open files are highways, with the help of which heavy pieces invade the opponent's camp.

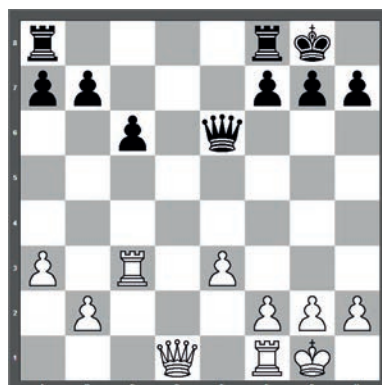


White to move

**1. ♖b1**

takes control of the open file so that he can assail b7 next. Invasion of the seventh rank and attacking the pawns from the flank is a great achievement. Black will lose at least a pawn.

Open files shouldn't be voluntarily ceded. Players often struggle for possession of the open files.



Here is, for example, the game between champions: **Capablanca – Alekhine** (fifth game of the match, Buenos Aires, 1927). White takes over

**1. ♜d3 ♔f6!**

Attacking the pawn b2, Black gains some time in order to play the rook to d8.

**2. ♕b3**

White defends, attacks and also prepares to double rooks at the same time.

**2... ♕e7 3. ♜fd1 ♜ad8**

This is the correct rook. The move **3... ♜fd8?** was losing because of **4. ♕xb7!**

**4. h3**

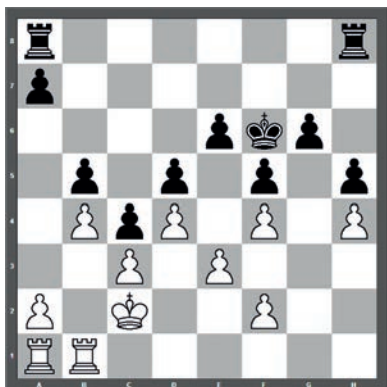
Now without any fear of mate on the first rank, White threatens to exchange rooks and capture the b7 pawn with the queen.

**4... ♜xd3 5. ♜xd3 g6 6. ♕d1!**

Despite Black's ingenious defense, the open file is in White's hands.

**6... ♕e5 7. ♕d2 a5 8. ♜d7!**

The rook invades the enemy camp along the open file and White has a positional advantage.



Here is another example of struggling for an open file. The rivals have an equal amount of pawns and two rooks.

There are no open files. It may seem that the position is balanced. It would have been so, if White had stuck to the same plan. White has a precise plan: preparing an open "a" file and then doubling rooks.

### 1.a4 a6 2.♖a3

Pay attention to this example: *doubled rooks come first and then the file opens*. Otherwise it is harder to take the open file.

### 2...♜he8 3.♖ba1 ♜ab8 4.axb5 axb5 5.♖a6

Taking the open line, White uses it as a highway in order to invade the enemy camp.

### 5...♜e7 6.♜c6 ♔f7 7.♖aa6 ♖bb7 8.♔b2!

Before the rooks leave the highway it is necessary to mine the way so that Black doesn't get it.

### 8...♜b8 9.♜d6!

White is no hurry and plays very

carefully. If he plays

9.♖ab6 then after 9...♜a8! 10.♜xb5 ♜ca7 the black rooks burst into White's camp on the a-file and threaten the king.

### 9...♖bb7 10.♖ab6! ♔f6 11.♜xe6+

It may seem that Black has just built a new line of defense, but this effective punch destroys the fortress.

### 11...♜xe6 12.♜xb7

White achieves a material advantage.

## What is good?

You will often hear from a chess player: "I had a very good position". How do you come to such a conclusion? How do you understand the situation if you don't see an immediate threat?

*A position's quality can be characterized by the following features: particular qualities of the pawn structure, weak and strong squares, active and passive pieces, safety of the king, open files and, of course, coordination of the pieces.*

From a large number of operating factors it is important to be able to identify the main ones. A chess player creates a plan relying on these strategic considerations.

*Choosing the right plan, along with a faithful and objective assessment of the position is a great art.*





This position occurred in the game **Steinitz – Mongredien** (London, 1863). Black has just castled and expects the same from the opponent. However, White has taken the particular situation into account and found a more beneficial plan. White's pieces are developed and the bishop gazes at f7, while the knight f3 can join the attack in one jump. The rest of the pieces are in reserve. Even the rook h1 has perspectives: the position of the black pawn on g6 helps to open the file "h" (after h2 – h4 – h5). The white king is in the center but safe. Attack the royal flank!

**10.h4** ♖d7

The move 10...h5 would not stop White's offensive. After 11.♘g5 Black is threatened by 3.g4.

**11.h5 c5 12.hxg6** ♖g6 **13.0-0-0 a6 14.♘g5** ♖f6 **15.♘xh7!** ♖xh7 **16.♖xh7** ♖xh7 **17.♗h5+** ♖g8 **18.♖h1** ♖e8

White wipes the black king's defenders off the board, and others come immediately to replace the pieces dying in attack.

**19.♗xg6** ♗f6 **20.♔xf7+!** ♗xf7

It would have been much better to play 20...♔f8 but after 21.♔xc8 ♖xe8 22.♖h8+ ♔xh8 23.♔h6+ ♖c7 24.♔g5 White wins both the queen and the game anyway.

**21.♖h8+** ♔xh8 **22.♗xf7**

Black resigns.

Steinitz noticed the weakness of the black king's flank, however it wasn't that obvious. The right plan quickly led to victory. The opponent hasn't understood what is important and unimportant. He dreamed of attack instead of defense.



This position occurred in the game **Kotov – Unzicker** (Saltsjobaden, 1952). White's turn. It's impossible to see how White should start attacking. However, he has mobile central pawns e3 and f3, and that suggests playing e3 – e4.

**1.♘g3** ♖c6 **2.♔b2** ♖c8 **3.♖ae1**

Now White could advance the pawn but there is no hurry; firstly he moves up the reserves.

**3...h6**

Black is still unable to prevent the

"e" pawn's move, so he is preparing for the impending attack in advance.

#### 4.e4 cxd4 5.cxd4 dxe4 6.fxe4

As a result White opens up a file on the king's flank and the white pawns threaten to move forward, hustling away the black pieces.

#### 6...♘e5

Trying to start a skirmish in the center

#### 7.♞d1 ♘c4 8.♙c1

After two active moves Black's initiative has petered out.

#### 8...♘h7 9.e5

Now the situation is ripe for attack. Kotov characterizes White's plan: "White's game is simple – he has more pieces on the kingside. Black can do nothing."

#### 9...♞e6

This is an effort to allow the rook to defend the king's flank.

#### 10.♞e4 ♘f8 11.♘f5 ♖h8 12.♞h5

Take a look – what a rapid change of events! The previous moves show how White has landed his troops into the enemy camp.

#### 12...♞c7 13.♞h4

White has created such a material advantage on the kingside that there is no defense. There is a threat of sacrifice on g7 and h6.

13...♘h7 14.♘xg7! ♖xg7  
15.♙xh6+ ♖g8 16.♞g4+ ♞g6 17.e6!

Black resigned.



In the diagram you can see a position from the game **Botvinnik – Zagoriansky** (Sverdlovsk, 1943). The white forces are grouped around the isolated black pawn – all white's pieces attack and all black's pieces are shackled in defense of their own pawn. Using the fact that Black is shackled, White changes the direction of the main attack.

#### 1.g4!

White's plan is clear – destruction of the enemy king's protection.

#### 1...♞c6 2.g5 hxg5 3.♞xg5 f6

It is necessary to prevent the heavy pieces from doubling on the "h"-file.

#### 4.♞g6 ♙f7

Continuing 4...♙xh3 could be too risky, because it would let White quickly redeploy the rook on the "h"-file.

#### 5.♞g3 f5 6.♞g5 ♞e6 7.♖h1

Though creating new weaknesses, Black has employed the queen in the defense and prevented White from doubling on the "h" file. But now White uses the adjacent file for this purpose.

7...♖e5 8.♞g1 ♜f8 9.♞h6 ♞b8  
10.♞h4

White has managed to do it.

10...♔f8 11.♞h8+ ♕g8

Step by step White invades Black's camp, hustling the rest of the pieces.

12.♞f4!

The rook has helped the queen to invade the enemy camp and now the queen has a new task – attacking the pawn f5.

12...♞bb7

Black protects the vulnerable square g7.

13.♞g5 ♜f7 14.♞h5

White implements his plan. He has shattered the fortifications on the king's flank, broken into the enemy encampment and forced the black pieces to take up uncomfortable positions. Now the superior forces have descended on one of the weaknesses. The pawn f5 is indefensible and Black's surrender is a matter of time.

14...♞a1+ 15.♔g2 g6 16.♞xg6  
♕h7 17.♞d6+ ♞be7 18.♞d8+

Black resigned.



In this position from the game **Teichmann – Bernstein** (Saint Petersburg, 1909) the main black forces are focused on the queenside and the pawns' protection of the king is weakened; only the bishop prevents White from invasion. Therefore the most important thing is to eliminate the defender of the kingside.

1.♕f2! ♕xf2

Black cannot avoid the exchange because after 1...♕e5 comes 2.f4

2.♞xf2 ♞a5 3.♞e2!

So, White moves the queen onto the critical diagonal.

3...f6 4.♞b2 ♞e6 5.g4

There is the threat of 6.♘xf6 ♞xf6  
7.g5

5...h6

After 5...♔f7 may come 6.g5 fxg5  
7.♞h8

6.h4 g5 7.f4! gxh4

The pawn g5 is eliminated and the black bastions crumble.

8.♘xf6!

White is winning.

Planning his actions, White has taken into account that the bishop d4 is a cornerstone in the building of Black's defense, and if it is taken, the entire building should collapse. The right plan led to victory amazingly quickly.



The diagram shows a position from the game **Kopayev – Averbakh** (Leningrad, 1946). White's queen is situated poorly. Black should hurry in order to exploit this position otherwise the advanced pawns will come under fire.

**14...d3! 15.cxd3 cxd3 16.♖2c3 ♗d4**

Black has implemented the first part of the plan – he has impeded the c1 bishop's development and weakened the squares c2 and b3.

**17.0-0 ♖b6 18.♕h1**

There was a threat of discovered check.

**18...♗b3 19.♖b1 ♕c6**

Black's pawn and knight completely paralyze the entire enemy queenside. Thus Black creates a superiority of forces on the other flank but it's important to act vigorously.

**20.♕f3 h5 21.♕g2**

An effort to banish the knight from b3 by 21...♕d1 is refuted 21...♗f2+, but now there is danger from another move.

**21...f5 22.exf6**

Do you remember the capture en passant?

**22...♗xf6 23.♖e1 ♗xe4 24.♕xe4**

White breaks with the hope of moving the bishop on d1. In case of 24.♗xe4 0-0-0 25.♕d1 Black still has an answer 25...♕d5

**24...0-0-0 25.a4 ♖d4**

Of course, it is good for Black to exchange the pieces which defend the king. After the exchange Black can deploy new forces to the attack, while the white pieces gathered on the queenside cannot take part in the game and help the king.

**26.a5**



**26...♖xe4!**

With the deadly threat of double check Black sacrifices the queen. Please analyze the possible variations yourself.

**27.♖xe4 ♖b4 28.♕h3 ♕xe4 29.♗xe4 ♖xe4**

Black's plan triumphs – all the white king's defenders have fallen in battle! In order to win, Black even lets the enemy queen out but it comes into the game too late.

**30. ♖xb3 h4!**

The final blow! The rook joins the attack

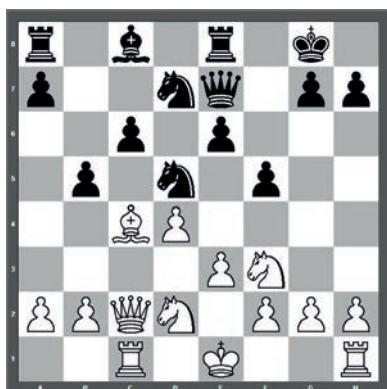
**31. ♖c3+ ♔d7 32. ♖e5**

The queen hastens to help the king, but...

**32...hxg3+ 33. ♕xg3 ♖h3+!!  
34. ♕xh3 ♖f3+ 35. ♕h4 ♙e7+ 36. ♖g5  
♖xf4+**

White resigned.

In cases where the kings are protected and the attack promises no prospects, fighting is reduced to maneuvering. Then the pawn structure, open files and weak squares become the most important factors.



Position from the game **Alekhine – Yates** (London, 1922). Black has just made a very committal pawn move b7 – b5. Why? Probably the plan was to pick an active fight after 1. ♙d3 ♙b7 and then ♖ac8. However, Black has weakened a very important square c5; this is a positional mistake.

How do you punish the opponent for weakening the square c5? White's pieces are ready to capture the file

"c" and the square c5 promises to become a very good support base. Conclusion: it is necessary to open the "c"-file up.

**14. ♙xd5! cxd5 15.0-0**

The king leaves the center before active operations.

**15...a5**

Black dreams of making the move 3...a4 in order to impede the invasion of the white knight on c5.

**16. ♘b3! a4 17. ♘c5 ♘xc5**

Black exchanges the last minor piece which could defend the weak black squares in his camp.

**18. ♖xc5! ♖xc5 19. ♖xc5 b4  
20. ♖f1 ♙a6 21. ♘e5 ♖eb8**

The rooks' exchange loses immediately 21...♖ec8 22. ♖xc8+ ♖xc8 23. ♖xc8+ ♙xc8 24. ♘c6 with two threats: ♘e7 and ♘xb4

**22. f3!**

Preparing to include the king in the game.

**22...b3 23.a3**

It would be silly to open the file for Black.

**23...h6 24. ♕f2 ♕h7 25. h4 ♖f8  
26. ♕g3 ♖fb8**

Black can do nothing and marks time.

**27. ♖c7**

White starts capturing the seventh rank.

**27...♙b5 28. ♖1c5 ♙a6 29. ♖5c6  
♖e8 30. ♕f4**

Pay attention to how White systematically invades along black squares into the enemy camp. And Black is powerless. He can only

dream: "Wouldn't it be great if the white bishop became a Black one!"

**30...♖g8 31.h5 ♕f1 32.g3 ♗a6  
33.♖f7!**

Everything is ready! White doubles the rooks on the seventh rank.

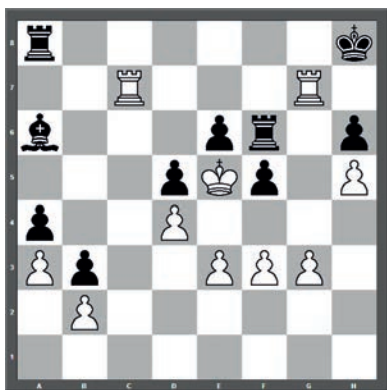
**33...♖h7 34.♖cc7 ♖g8 35.♘d7!**

Threatening ♗f6

**35...♖h8 36.♘f6! ♖gf8**

There is nothing Black can do. The game ends with an elegant combination.

**37.♖xg7 ♖xf6 38.♗e5!**



Black resigns. After 38...♖f8 there is a checkmate in two moves.

It is a great art to assess the situation properly and choose the right plan; it cannot be learned at once. Never give up if your plans fail at the beginning. In the history of our game there are a lot of examples when players, who became well known later, experienced all sorts of troubles at the start. A chess player gains experience over a very long time and only then, after years of work, does his practical strength

increase sharply. There are, of course, examples when a chess player starts his professional career at an early age.

For instance, the beginning of the chess biography of a very famous Soviet grandmaster, Alexander Kotov, is quite interesting. At the age of fifteen he took part in a tournament for the first time in his life; having revealed his abilities, however, he became a master only after ten more years. One year later he had a very good result – second place in the national championship (Botvinnik won). That brought him the title of grandmaster. Kotov used to say that he had to work a lot, but he worked very hard and also with passion.

Alexander Tolush got his master title only at the age of 28. Long before this, his striking attacking style became well known among all chess players and chess magazine readers. He was a strong-willed player, not discouraged by failures. He became a grandmaster at the age of 43.

Argentine grandmaster Miguel Najdorf also has a very interesting biography. He was twenty when he became a master and it took him ten years to become a grandmaster and after that he became one of the world's top players. He maintained a hefty skill of not paying any attention to his age.

We deliberately don't mention the world champions – we will talk about them later.

A more conventional way of well-known players' development is early

detection of their abilities. Chess has its own prodigies. However, not all of them become champions. Early success guarantees nothing. Rather, a relentless pursuit to discover and develop your own skills and abilities will help in achieving success. The chess battlefield provides enough space both for those who are capable of fast and far calculation, and for those who tend to concentrate on weighing up strategic options.

After each game try to understand what has happened on the board, regardless of whether you have won or lost.

*Self-critical analysis of the game you played is the best way for self-improvement. Strive to be a real sportsman: do not rejoice in winning and do not give way to despair when you are defeated. Remember that in the next game it can be the other way round.*