

CHESS STRATEGY - REVEALED

Your Tool Kit of Key Concepts and Pawn Structures

Boroľjub Zlatanović



**INFORMANT
PUBLISHING**

Author

IM Boroljub Zlatanović

Editors

Goran Arsović, Igor Žveglič

Design

Miloš Majstorović

Editing and Typesetting

Jelena Arsović

CEO

Mirjana Ilić

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ISBN 978-86-82852-03-2

Publisher

Informant Publishing

11001 Beograd, Višnjička 91d, Srbija

Phone: +381 60 0650 669

E-mail: info@informantpublishing.com, Internet: <https://www.informantpublishing.com>

CONTENTS

SIGNS	4
FOREWORD	5
A WORD FROM THE AUTHOR	6
PART I KEY CONCEPTS OF CHESS STRATEGY	7
CHAPTER I CENTER	9
CHAPTER II THE BISHOP PAIR	30
CHAPTER III THE OPEN FILE	51
CHAPTER IV SQUARES	70
CHAPTER V SPACE	85
PART II PAWN STRUCTURES	99
CHAPTER I PASSED PAWN	101
CHAPTER II PAWN MAJORITY	115
CHAPTER III BACKWARD PAWN	130
CHAPTER IV HANGING PAWNS	144
CHAPTER V DOUBLED PAWNS	157
CHAPTER VI PAWN ISLANDS AND WEAKNESSES	173
CHAPTER VII ISOLATED PAWN	189
CHAPTER VIII PAWN CHAINS	205
PART III PRINCIPLES OF CHESS STRATEGY	223
CHAPTER I HARMONY, ACTIVITY AND INITIATIVE	225
CHAPTER II RESTRICTION AND PROPHYLACTIC PLAY	236

Foreword

In the age of computers, advanced technology and ample information it is difficult to stimulate interest in a book, which should provide an educational approach to different levels of chess players, without being just a "dry" opening theory.

However, now you are having in your hands a book which, thanks to the careful and diligent selection of material, will provide you that unique satisfaction of learning and improving.

Long time ago Philidor concluded that the pawns are the "soul of chess". The author leads us through the most common pawn structures, classified in certain themes, through the labyrinth of chess art, giving instructive examples for each topical structure. In the abundance of materials, with a powerful chess database at our disposal, it is extremely difficult to find exemplary games which will adequately depict certain topics.

It may seem easy to control the center, or to take advantage of the weakness of double or isolated pawns. However, in practice we often cannot exploit the weaknesses or convert the advantages, so you can often hear the players complaining about missed opportunities.

In some games, especially in the chapter on isolated pawns, the reader can enjoy in wonderful combinations, exemplary attacks, but also in the transition to the winning endings, which should have been envisioned long before they occurred on the board. Also, you can find highly instructive examples in chapters which deal with open lines and bishop pair where Zlatanovic really shines teaching you how to exploit the plus you gained by utilizing a subtle technique of conversion. There is just so much to learn from this exceptional book!

I know that this book has been prepared for a long time, and being familiar with the author's methodology and the huge number of games from which he selected the most instructive jewels, I truly believe that this work will be an exemplary book worthy of every praise and highly useful to players of different categories. Players who excel at sharp positions as well as positional players can find their interest in the presented games.

I find this chess book really impressive!

Skopje, April 2024

GM Dragoljub Jaćimović

A Word from the Author

Unfortunately, chess strategy is today often neglected, especially in education of young players. Every serious trainer must insist on strategy work, because strategy will be a powerful and probably decisive weapon against players who neglected it in their own chess study. That was my motivation to write this book, to present crucial elements and principles of strategy and to reveal its secrets to you, dear reader. After careful study of the book you will be fully equipped with strategic concepts, patterns and definitely you will catch “how it works” in chess game.

The material is divided in three parts. The first part tackles the “elements” of chess strategy, the way I see it. It contains five chapters and I suggest you to read them in presented order. The second part deals with pawn structures with eight chapters in it and here I suggest to follow the suggested order of themes as well. Finally, at the end I present important strategic principles and concepts of activity, harmony and initiative, finishing the book with the themes of prophylaxis and restriction. These are presented to teach you two global plans: to lead the play and to prevent your opponent to lead the play.

For those who always like to rely on numbers (I would advise you to forget about them, because numbers usually deny logics which is essential in using strategy), the material in this book is written for players of 1500–2300 elo range (I have on mind readers’ level of knowledge, not FIDE elo).

Once again, I suggest you to follow the presented order themes, because the simpler examples are presented first in each chapter, and the topics of our study are often based on previously presented material. Follow all examples from their initial position till the end, paying attention to every move. I did not want to bother you with deep exploration of the final parts of the model games. Whenever I believed that commentary is not necessary I decided to avoid pointless overload of lines. Of course, that does not mean that you should skip going through the final stages of the games! On the contrary, you need to follow endgames, analyze them alone and check possible continuations in order to find win in case of some alternative ways of defense.

I want to thank my family that always supports me. Also, I want to thank the eminent publisher that gave me the opportunity for nice collaboration and for spreading love to our beloved game of chess.

April 2024

To my son, Vasilije
Boroljub Zlatanovic



Anatoly Karpov 2690 - Anthony Miles 2555

Las Palmas 1977

1.c4 b6 2.d4 ♖b7 3.d5!? Traditionally advance of the d-pawn restricts the black light-squared bishop.

3...e6 4.a3 A well known resource. After ...♗b4 is prevented Black will face problem with harmony.

4...♞f6 5.♞c3 ♗d6? is an extravagant move that would be soon declared as mistake.

5...d6 is more common;

5...g6 is more logical too.

6.♞f3 exd5 7.cxd5 0-0 8.♗g5 Causing new problems for the black army.

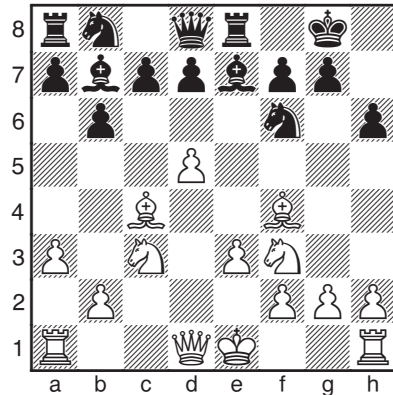
8...♞e8 9.e3 ♗e7?! After this move everything is clear. Black does not have any ideas about the middle-game. The bishop makes another move and blocks the rook. But, any other way to finish development is not obvious.

10.♗c4 Over-protecting pawn that restricts Black. In case of possible ...c6 bishop will get perfect diagonal.

10...h6 11.♗f4



Anatoly Karpov



11...♞h5!? Another anti-centralization measure that is practically forced.

12.♗e5 ♗f6 13.♗d4 Not supporting Black's development.

13...♗a6? Another move that neglects the centralization.

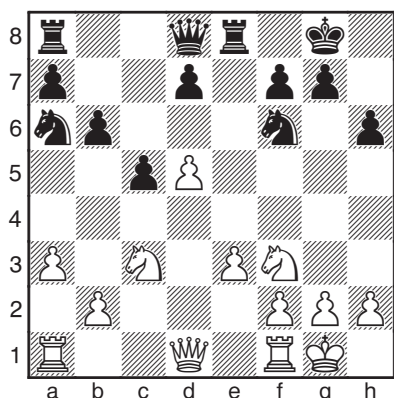
13...c5 is better choice, however

14. ♖xf6 ♜xf6 15. 0-0 d6 16. ♞d2
with preparing advance of central
pawn avalanche is evidently better
for White.

14. ♖xa6! ♜xa6 The knight is now
very bad here. The other is also poorly
placed on the other side of the board.

15. 0-0 c5 Logical, but too late.

16. ♖xf6 ♜xf6

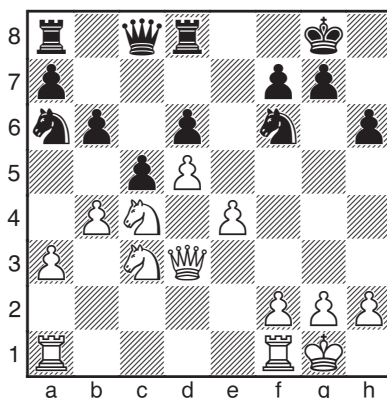


The situation is clear! Black has prob-
lems with the harmony of his pieces,
while White's pieces are well central-
ized and active. There is a clear plan of
using the majority in the center and
prepare for the e5–push. That must
end of the game! But, White first
must complete his own development
and set pieces on the best spots.

17. ♖d3 ♖c8 18. ♞d2! d6 19. ♞c4
The optimal square for the knight is in
front of the opponent's central pawn.

19... ♖d8 20. e4 ♞c7 21. b4 Noth-
ing is wrong with a direct preparing
of the e4–e5 advance.

21... ♞a6



22. b5! Completely blocking the po-
sition on the queenside White has
freedom to organize activities on the
other side of the board.

22... ♞c7 23. a4 ♖d7 24. f4 ♖e8
25. ♖ad1 ♖ad8 26. h3 ♖e7 27. e5
Finally. Black is lost.

27... dxe5 28. d6 ♖f8 29. fxe5
♞h7 30. ♖f3 Avoiding the pin, re-
newing the threat and invading!

30... ♞e6 31. ♖b7 ♖a8 32. ♞d5
g6 33. ♞e7+ ♙g7 34. ♞c6 Black
resigned.

1 : 0



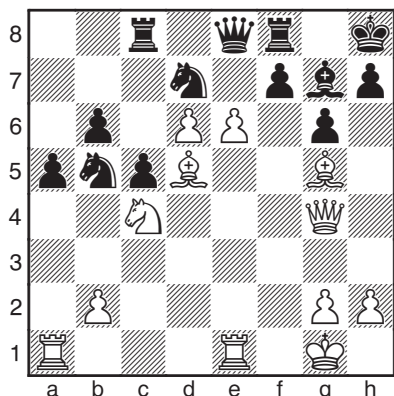
Johan Hellsten 2554 - Marcelo
Llorens Sepulveda 2418

Santiago de Chile 2005

1. d4 ♞f6 2. c4 c5 3. d5 b5 A pop-
ular flank attack connected with the
center. By deflecting the c–pawn

I would advise the readers to try to find some better defense for Black in the last few moves and to make sure that there is no escape after finding converting plans for White.

23...a5 24.♔g5 ♚e8 25.e6



The final position deserves a diagram, as it depicts a marvelous triumph of central strategy. Black resigned.

1 : 0



Nikita Vitiugov 2709 - Surya Shekhar Ganguly 2650

Olympiad Khanty-Mansiysk 2010

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘c3 g6 3.e4 d6 4.d4 ♔g7 5.f3 One of many possible moves in this variation of the King's Indian. White wants to make secure the bishop on e3 and create a battery on the c1–h6 diagonal, attacking the black king. Here, Black should opt for standard replies in this opening ...c5

or ...e5. The idea is to crush White's pawn center and to prove that White wasted time for nothing by creating the pawn center. Of course, that is easy to say, difficult to do, but still it is quite logical. To strike at the middle pawn when opponent has three connected pawns on same rank, in order to create holes and outposts for your own pieces. Alas, Black here strangely deviates and the punishment will be brutal.

5...0–0 6.♔e3 ♘c6 7.♘ge2 a6 is a fashionable and not a bad approach to prepare ...b5. But, that plan is definitely less logical.

8.♚d2 ♖b8 9.♖c1 e6?! Played in nowadays fashionable "hippopota-



Nikita Vitiugov

mus” style. It simply doesn’t fit with natural King’s Indian ideas.

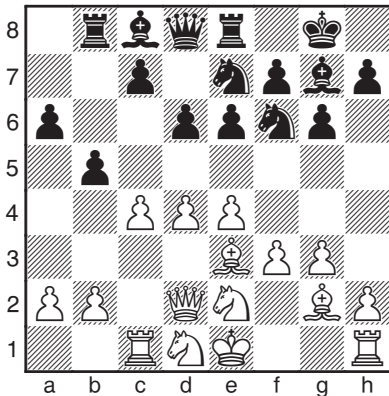
9...♔d7!/? would prepare ...b5.

10.♘d1 making the rook acting as submarine on the c-file and relocating the knight to the kingside where White has predicted play.

10...♖e8 11.g3?!

11.♘f2 is more flexible, because the knight definitely will go there. Later, White can choose plan to finish his development.

11...♘e7 12.♔g2 b5



13.c5!? Interesting approach. White’s strong pawn wall fully restricts Black’s minor pieces and White bases his further play on continuing with the squeeze. Black can never take because the rook recapture gives White a serious plus.

13...b4 Black himself is trying to restrict White’s pieces and to claim the a6–f1 diagonal for the bishop.

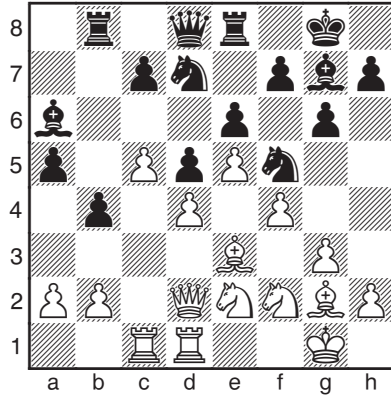
14.♘f2 a5 15.0–0 ♔a6 16.♖fd1

♘d7 17.f4 White naturally gains more space and new prospects for his pieces.

17...d5 is a natural strike at the middle pawn.

18.e5 Of course!

18...♘f5



19.♔h1! White solves the biggest problem – the knight will be relocated via the g1–square. That would be a prelude to planned kingside pawn attack.

19...♖a8 Black is trying to do same with his knight. Without space in the center Black is forced to go for flank activities. Obviously, it is a result of bad strategy.

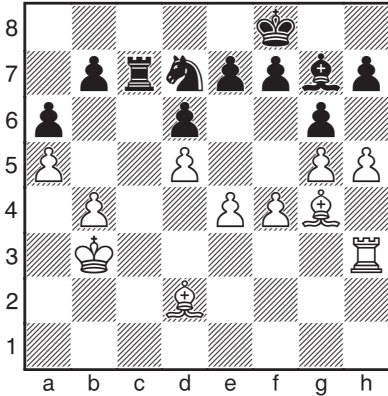
20.♘g1 ♘b8

20...h5 will not work. Black will surrender the g5–square and g3–g4 would be anyway played after preparation.

21.g4 ♘xe3 Having so little space Black must try to trade pieces.

No rush. Maybe the rook will go to h3. Deflecting the black king from the queenside may be useful.

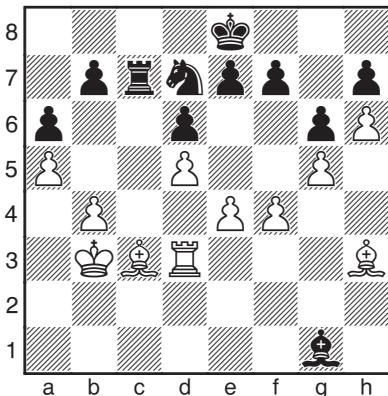
28...♙d4 29.h4 ♘g7 30.h5 ♙d4
31.♖h1 ♙g7 32.♖h3 ♔f8



33.h6! Generally, it is better to advance to the 6th rank than to take. Now Black has both the h7- and g6-pawn (because of the looming sacrificial motif) as targets.

33...♙d4 34.♖d3 All White should do is to devise a plan of invasion, as the e5- or f5-advance must work.

34...♙a7 35.♙h3 ♙g1 36.♙c3 ♔e8



37.e5!

37.f5 is less logical in view of 37...♞e5

37...♙h2 38.exd6

38.e6 is the other typical advance. 38...fxe6 39.dxe6 ♞f8 40.f5 is winning.

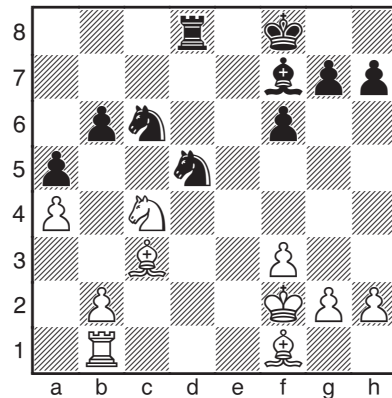
38...exd6 39.♖e3+ ♔d8 40.♖e4 ♙g1 41.♙xd7 White's rook invades and the h7-pawn falls. Black resigned.

1 : 0



Magnus Carlsen 2714 - Michael Adams 2729

World Cup Khanty-Mansiysk 2007



White is better thanks to his strong bishop pair in open position. But, the black knights are also good and dangerous, as they control many neuralgic spots. On top of that, the white

bishop pair is neutralized. Moreover, the dark-squared bishop is attacked and White must keep it.

34. ♕e1! ♖e7? An “academical” move, which is a mistake in this position.

34... ♞cb4 to continue threatening with jumps to c2 or d3 was needed.

35. ♖g1! A fantastic move that may easily be missed. I am pretty sure Adams missed it. The white king waits for better times to become active and helps the bishop for the time being.

35... ♞b8?

35... ♞e5!? surprisingly looks good. By allowing an isolated pawn Black will get new prospects for his knight.

36. ♕f2 Played automatically.

36. ♞xb6! is a shocking win and easy one to miss 36... ♞xb6 37. ♕xa5 ♖d6 (37... ♞8d7 38. ♕b4+! ♖e6 39. ♖e1+ ♖d5 40. ♕b5 and with all his pieces hanging Black is just hopeless.) 38. ♕b4 must be winning.

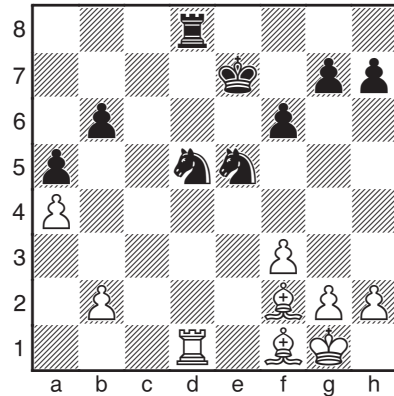
36... ♞d7 37. ♖e1+ ♖f8 38. ♖d1 No need to rush.

38... ♖e7 39. ♖e1+ ♖f8 40. ♞d6 White makes place for his bishop by attacking the black bishop.

40... ♞e5?

40... ♕g8 is better. Black must retain his bishop at any cost.

41. ♞xf7 ♖xf7 42. ♖d1 ♖e7



43.f4 White should somehow kick back the black knight to be able to activate his bishops. However, that operation looks risky.



Magnus Carlsen

43...♖g4 44.♔e1+ ♕f8 45.♙d4
♗d6

45...♗xf4? loses after 46.♙xb6

46.h3 ♗h6 47.♗d1 Indirectly de-
fending the pawn.

47...♗f5

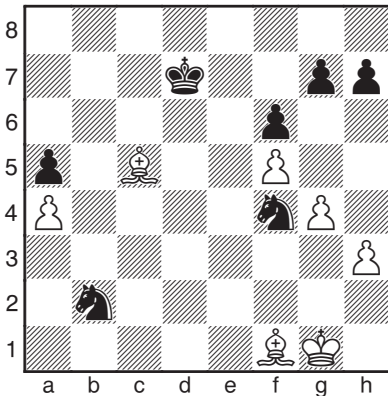
47...♗e7 looks safer. Anyway 48.
♗d3 ♗hf5 49.♙f2 will not change
a lot.

48.♙f2 ♕e7 49.g4 ♗h6 50.f5
♗f7 Black is naturally trying to install
the knight on the e5-square.

51.♙g2 ♗f4

51...♗b4 changes nothing.

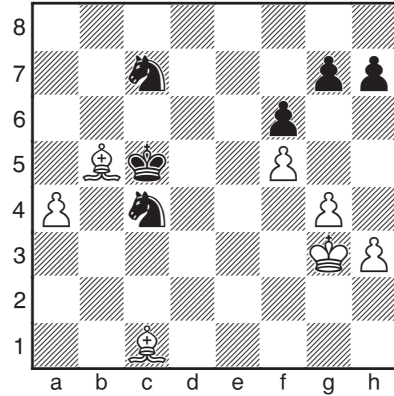
52.♗xd6 ♗xd6 53.♙xb6 ♗c4
54.♙c5+ ♕d7 55.♙f1 ♗xb2



Black managed to keep the balance.
But, White's bishops are active and
there is nothing to do to save the
game. The rest is relatively simple for
Carlsen.

56.♙b5+ ♕d8 57.♙b6+ ♕e7 58.
♕h2 ♗d5 59.♙xa5 ♕d6 60.♙d2

♕c5 61.♕g3 ♗c7 62.♙e3+ ♕b4
63.♙d2+ ♕c5 64.♙c1 ♗c4



65.♙xc4! A typical approach – sim-
plify to win!

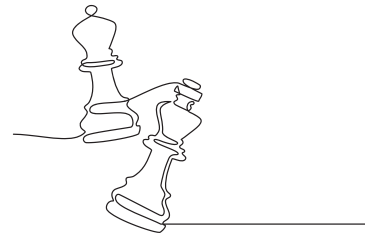
65...♕xc4 66.♙d2

66.♙a3 with ♙f8 next is the alter-
native plan.

66...♗a6 67.a5 ♕b5 68.♕f3 ♗c5
69.♙c3 h6 70.♕e3 ♕c4 71.♙d4
♗a6 72.♕e4 ♗b4 73.h4 prepar-
ing g4–g5.

73...♕b5 74.♙c3 ♗a6 75.♕d5
♗c5 76.♙d4 ♗d3 77.♕e6 Black
resigned.

1 : 0



CHAPTER III

THE OPEN FILE

It is clear that an open file should be occupied and the final goal should be invasion to the 7th, 8th, or even 6th rank. But, how to evaluate importance of an open file? What to do when having a control on the open file? How to compare the significance of two files? What to do against opponent's control over an open file? Answers to these questions can be found in this chapter.

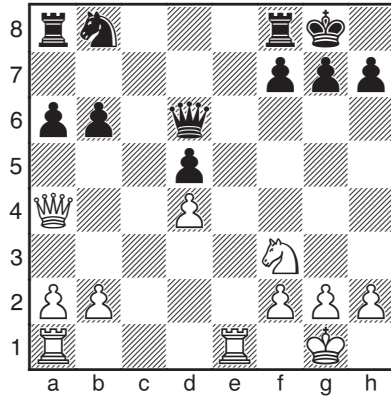
Of course, there are many other examples in other chapters in this book that may refer to the use of open files. That is why you should carefully analyze all presented examples.



Mikhail Botvinnik– Alexander Alekhine

Netherlands 1938

Let's start this chapter with a highly instructive classic example. White's domination is undisputed, and with his next move Botvinnik gains control over a new file.

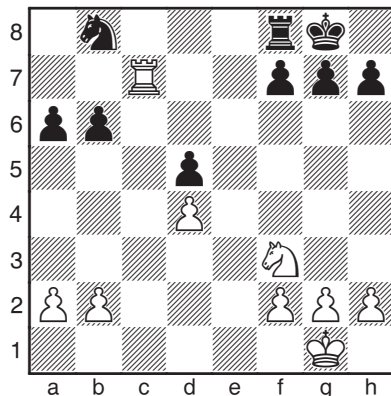


18. ♖ac1 ♜a7 Generally, it is advisable to use rooks on ranks if there are no accessible files.

19. ♕c2 White prevents ...♜c7 and plans a highly unpleasant ♕c8.

19... ♜e7 Black neutralizes the other rook.

20. ♖xe7 ♕xe7 21. ♕c7 ♕xc7 22. ♜xc7



22...f6! An excellent defensive move. Black neutralizes knight and plans ...f7.

23. g1

23. b7 is not good enough. Black has counterplay after 23...c8

23...f7 24. c8+ f8 25. c3!
The rook can work on the 3rd rank.

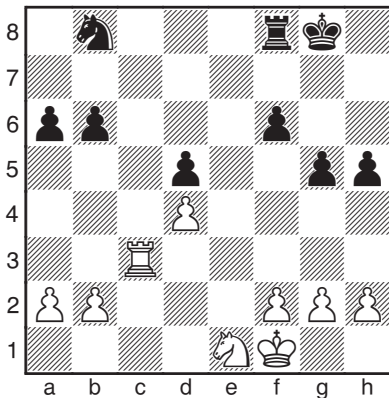
25...g5! Black reduces the importance of the 7th rank by removing pawns. His king may find a safe spot on g6.

26. e1 White wants to activate the knight, since the rook alone cannot win the game.

26...h5



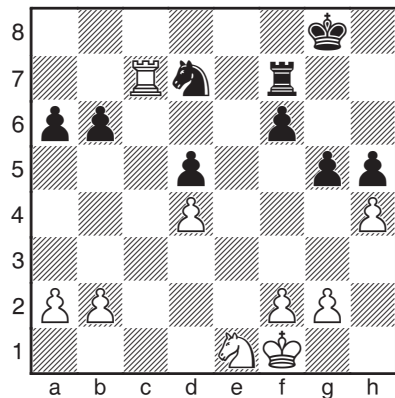
Alexander Alekhine



27.h4! With this move White definitely will find a good spot for the knight. Black can choose: the e5-square or the f4-square.

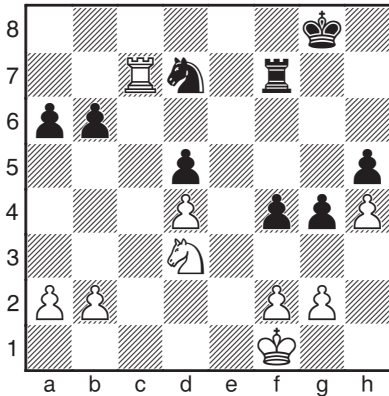
27...d7 28. c7 Now the rook can become active again.

28...f7



29. f3! Botvinnik, in his style, provokes a weakening pawn move, retreats and then takes advantage of it.

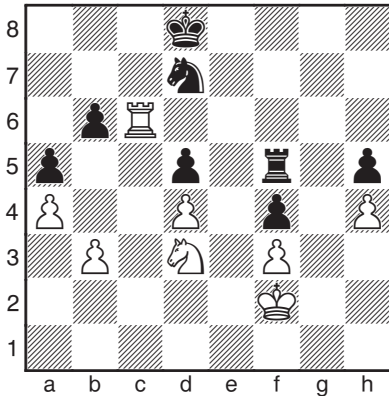
29...g4 30. e1 f5 31. d3 f4



32.f3 No need to rush. White first fixes the target.

32...gxf3 33.gxf3 a5 34.a4 Fixing the opponent's formation.

34...c8 35.c6 c7 36.c7
f5 37.b3 c8



38.c2 A decisive plan – the king goes to the queenside. White plans to push b4 and recapture with his king.

38...b8 39.g6

39.cxb6? c7 and Black gets dangerous counterplay with ...c6.

39...c7 40.e5 The knight finally invades and his black counterpart loses his prospects.

40...a6 41.g7+

41.g5 is another win. A matter of style.

41...c8 42.c6 f6 43.e7+ c8 44.xd5 What a powerful knight! Botvinnik prepared its activation for quite a while and now there comes the reward.

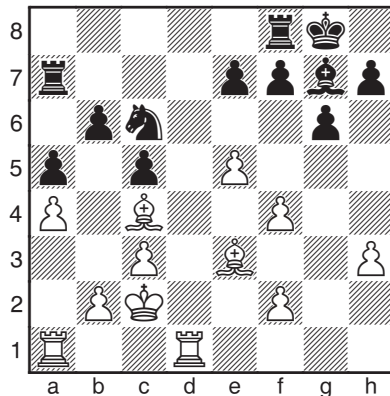
44...d6 45.g5 b4 46.xb4 axb4 47.xh5 c6 48.b5 c7 49.xb4 h6 50.b5 xh4 51.d3 Black resigned. **1 : 0**



Ulf Andersson 2560 – Marcelo Tempone 2235

Buenos Aires 1979

The next example illustrates problems that might be fatal when your opponent controls the only open file on the board. Here domination over the file is the key factor and together with weakness of the light squares on the kingside will bring White an easy win.



7...♔a5 8.♘b4? If the white knight must stay here White missed the point of doubling the pawns.

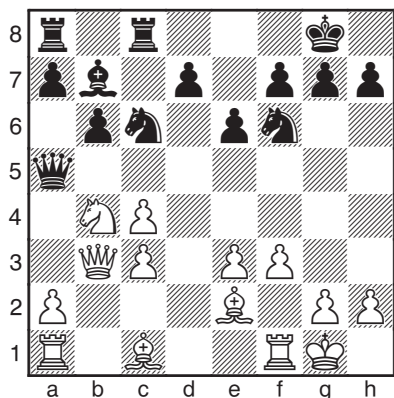
8.♖d3 and setting the bishop on the a3–f8 diagonal looks better.

8...0–0 9.e3? Another bad move. The white dark-squared bishop becomes even worse.

9.g3 is correct. White must try with a fianchetto to prevent normal development of Black's queenside troops.

9...b6 10.♙e2 ♘b7 11.0–0 ♖c8 12.f3 ♘c6 Black smoothly finished his development and he is ready to start playing against doubled pawns.

13.♖b3



13...♖e5! 14.♘xc6 A necessity, due to threat of ...♘a5.

14...♖xc6 15.♙d2 ♖c7 16.♖a4 a5 Black prepares ...♙a6. White pawn falls and the game is over.

17.♖fb1 ♙a6 18.♖b2 ♙xc4 19.♙xc4 ♖xc4 20.♖b5 ♖c6 The remainder of the moves is not im-

portant for our topic, so here I present them without further comments.

21.e4 d6 22.♖g5 ♘d7 23.♖e7 ♘e5 24.♖xc7 ♖xc7 25.♖b5 ♘c4 26.♙c1 ♖ac8 27.♖ab1 ♖c5 28.♙f1 ♙f8 29.♙e2 ♙e7 30.♖5b3 ♙d7 31.a4 ♙c7 32.♙f4 ♙b7 33.♙e3 ♖5c6 34.♙d4 f6 35.♖d1 ♖d8 36.f4 d5 37.♙f2 ♖cd6 38.♙c5 ♖c6 39.♙f2 ♖dd6 40.exd5 ♖xd5 41.♖xd5 exd5 42.♖b5 ♖e6+ 43.♙d3 ♙c6 44.g3 ♖e7 45.♖b1 ♖b7 46.♖b5 ♘d6 47.♖b2 b5 48.axb5+ ♖xb5 49.♖e2 White resigned.

0 : 1



Yakov Estrin – Andor Lilienthal

Moscow 1951

To conclude this chapter I want to present you the game that cannot be found in database but is perfect for our topic.

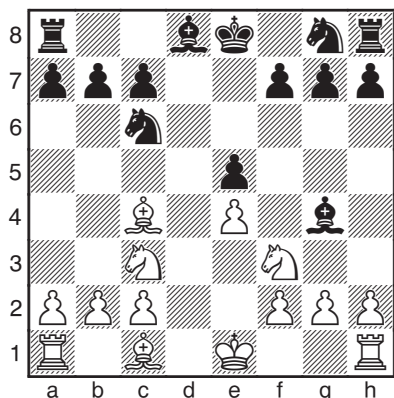
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙c4 ♙e7 4.d4 d6?

4...exd4 is correct.

5.dxe5! dxe5 6.♖xd8+ ♙xd8 7.♘c3

7.♙b5 gives nothing because after **7...♙d7 8.♙xc6 ♙xc6 9.♘xe5** Black has **9...♙xe4**

7...♘g4?



7...♘f6 should be preferred to get control over the d5-square.

8.♙b5! Black is already strategically outplayed and probably lost.

8...f6

8...♙xf3 9.♙xc6+! bxc6 10.gxf3 is dominant for White, although the machine is not as brutal in evaluation. White's doubled pawns are in group and not weak, while the black doubled pawns are horribly weak. The hole on f4 is controlled by the white bishop, while on the other side the c4-square is firmly in White's hands.

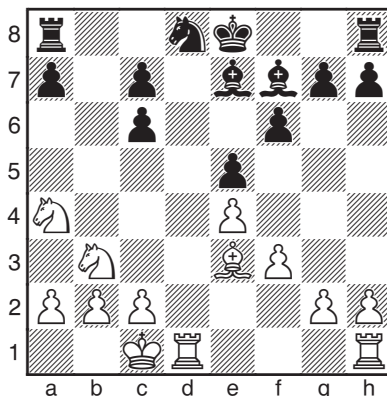
9.♙xc6+! bxc6 10.♘d2! White avoids harming his structure. At the same time, the queenside is battlefield and there are many duties for the white cavalry. There are so many weak squares White's knights can use.

10...♙e7 11.♘a4!

11.♘b3 allows 11...♙b4 with the opposite-colored bishops endgame.

11...♘h6 12.♘b3 ♘f7 13.♙e3 ♘d8 14.f3 ♙h5? Another terrible mistake. Just a pointless move.

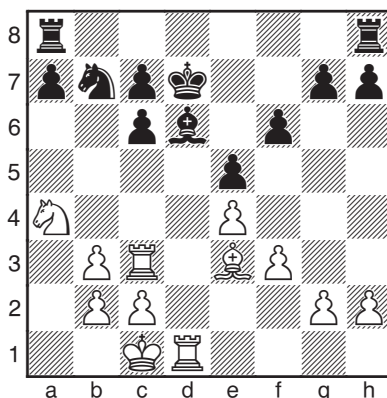
15.0-0-0 ♙f7



16.♖d3! White doubles the rooks and uses the d-file as a trampoline to jump to the c-file.

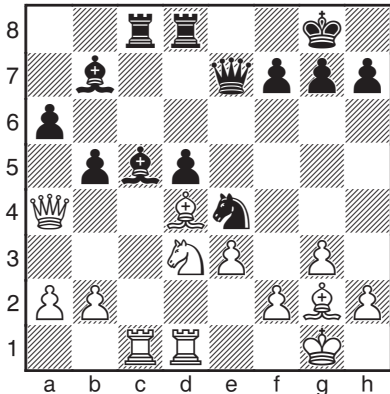
16...♘b7 17.♖c3 ♙xb3 18.axb3 All recaptures are good.

18...♙d7 19.♖d1+ ♙d6



Black consolidated, but White is still dominant and can easily continue attacking.

Samuel Shankland 2720 - Domingos Junior 2107
Olympiad Chennai 2022



The next example is very instructive. Black has just played a very bad move ...b5. That move weakens dark squares and after trading dark-squared bishops Black will be lost. Moreover, the black isolated pawn stays without support it could have got after possible ...bxc5.

22. ♖xc5! ♜xc5 23. ♚a3! Forcing the endgame - exchanging pieces is good for the side playing against an isolated pawn.

23... ♜c7 24. ♚xe7 ♜xe7 25. ♘b4! Direct attack and opening the file.

25...g6

25...a5 falls to 26. ♘xd5!

26. ♜d4 Blockading square is firmly in White's control and in a practical game Black is hopeless.

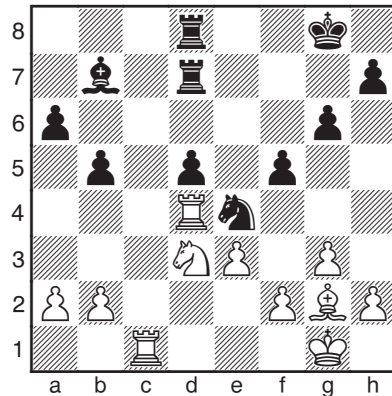
26. ♘c6 is a concrete way to convert

into a win. 26... ♙xc6 27. ♜xc6 a5 28. f3 ♘g5 29. ♜c5 wins material and the game. Still, White's decision is logical, don't give such a good knight for such a poor bishop.

26... ♜ed7 27. ♘d3

27. ♜cd1 gives White nothing tangible after 27...f5

27...f5



28. b4! It is important to accumulate advantages on the flanks as well. This fixing move is so important.

28... ♙g7 29. h4 Not needed right now, but might be useful.

29... ♙f6 30. ♘c5 It is debatable if White should trade the knights but after the last move he cannot easily play f3.

30... ♘xc5 31. ♜xc5 ♙e5 32. ♙f1 The king goes to the center. If possible he will come to d4-square.

32... ♜d6 33. ♙e2 ♙c6 34. ♜d2 The rook shifts to the c-file.

34... ♜8d7



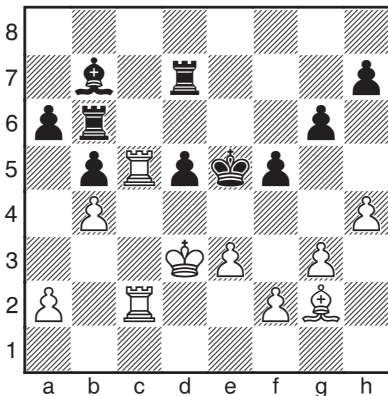
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34...♔e6 is better defense. Anyway
35.♕d3 is dominant for White.

35.♖dc2 ♘b7 36.♕d3

36.♖c7 is more logical. White should
not be afraid of ...d4.

36...♖b6?



Why there?

36...♖e6 37.♖c7 ♖ee7 is the right
way to continue.

37.♖c7 ♖bd6 38.♖2c5 Constricting
before action. Black is in Zugzwang.

**38...♘a8 39.♖c8 ♘b7 40.♖b8
♖e7 41.♘f3!?**

41.♖f8! and White will after f4 install
his king on the d4-square.

41...♖dd7 42.g4? Mistake - the
bishop should be removed instead.

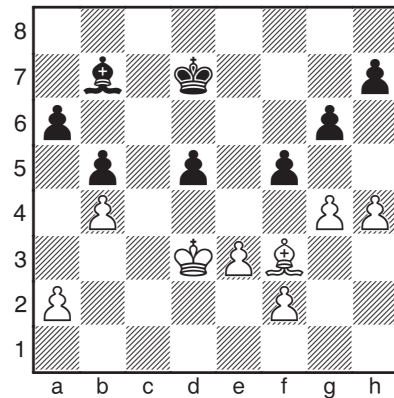
42...♖c7? A decisive mistake.

42...f4! would hold! Black will un-
freeze the kingside and get the f-file
for counterplay.

43.♖e8 ♔d6 44.♖d8+ ♖ed7

44...♖cd7 is more resistant.

45.♖xc7 ♔xc7 46.♖xd7+ ♔xd7



47.g5! A decisive freeze.

47...♔d6 48.♔d4 ♘a8 49.h5! ♘b7

**49...gxh5 50.♘xh5 ♔e6 51.f4
♔d6 52.♘f7+-**