

Winning Pawn Structures

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ALEXANDER BABURIN

A modern classic about pawn structure

Philidor, the great eighteenth-century chess thinker, once stated that 'pawns are the soul of chess'. This has never been more true than in the modern game, yet very few recent books have been devoted to this aspect of chess.

In this contemporary guide to pawn structure the author explains the importance of pawn structure in forming and executing plans. Superior understanding of this aspect of chess can constitute a decisive practical advantage in an over-the-board struggle.

Alexander Baburin is an experienced Russian grandmaster who has won many international tournaments. He is based in Ireland, where he is a chess trainer.

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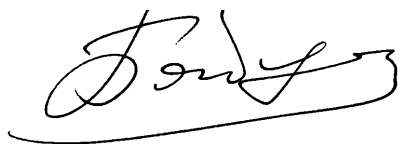
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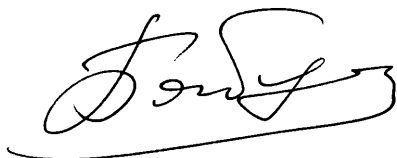
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Baburin', written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish underneath.

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Alexander Baburin

B. T. Batsford Ltd, *London*

With best wishes
from the author



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A BATSFORD CHESS BOOK

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Symbols

+	Check
++	Double Check
#	Mate
!	Good move
!!	Excellent move
±	Slight advantage to White
∓	Slight advantage to Black
±	Clear advantage to White
∓	Clear advantage to Black
+-	Winning advantage to White
-+	Winning advantage to Black
∞	Unclear position
?	Bad move
??	Blunder
!?	Interesting move
?!	Dubious move
1-0	White wins
0-1	Black wins
½-½	Draw
Ch	Championship
OL	Olympiad
Z	Zonal
IZ	Interzonal
Ct	Candidates event
Wch	World championship
Cht	Team championship
Echt	European team championship
Wcht	World team championship
Mem.	Memorial tournament
s/f	Semifinal
jr	Junior event
wom	Women's event
rpd	Rapid game
corr.	Correspondence game
sim	Simultaneous display game
(<i>n</i>)	<i>n</i> th match game
(<i>D</i>)	Diagram follows

Preface

Introducing this book, which is my first major work in chess literature, I would like to say a few words about its aims. Although I hope that this book will be of interest to my fellow professional players, I believe that my main audience will be that large group of club players who are eager to learn more about positional play, but have problems approaching the subject.

Studying positional play is not an easy matter and there are a few different ways to tackle this problem. This work deals with one of them — studying chess by examining various *typical pawn formations*. This is the approach taken by professional chess players while working on particular openings, middlegame positions, or even endgames — they study particular patterns and typical techniques. Indeed, it's more efficient to study *standard* or *typical* situations as they are more likely to arise in tournament practice. And when we look for the most standard, most common positions, we should look for the most typical pawn structures. Why is this so? The answer lies in the nature of pawns. When we play chess, we deal with two different kinds of chessmen — the pieces, which are rather flex-

ible and move around quite a lot and pawns, which are much more static and usually form the skeleton of a position. Probably Philidor had this particular quality of pawns in mind, when he called them 'the soul of chess'. So, our task is to define standard pawn skeletons and learn where the pieces belong within them, what plans are available for both sides, etc. This is the main aim of this work.

When a player knows well the characteristic features of various typical pawn formations, he is better prepared for the game. Then it will be easier to choose an appropriate plan and to implement it. But before that we should learn quite a lot about typical pawn formations themselves, so we can develop so-called 'pattern recognition' — when looking at a particular position you compare it with the ones you have seen before and that helps you to come up with a suitable plan. Hopefully this book will help you to develop such pattern recognition.

Of course, there many different typical pawn structures in chess and if I should try to cover all of them in this book, it would probably run to several hundreds of pages. Rather

than merely making only an introduction to the topic, I therefore chose a few popular pawn skeletons and dealt with them intensively. Perhaps, one day I shall continue this work...

As you will see, this book deals with all three phases of the game — opening, middlegame and endgame. The approach of looking at the making of a plan through the lenses of typical pawn structures is probably most applicable and productive in the delicate area of transition from the opening to the middlegame. Therefore I covered opening problems when it was relevant to the theme. Otherwise I did not pay much attention to the opening phase, as this is not our subject matter.

The problems of the middlegame form a major part of this work, but at the same time I examined many endings, as long as they were important to the subject. There is quite a lot of analysis contained here, as this is something I really enjoy in chess. While dealing with any particular theme, I usually tried to avoid categorical conclusions and ‘ultimate’ verdicts.

In chess, one side wins not because they just happen to get a ‘winning’ pawn formation by some lucky chance. No, it’s done through better planning, superior strategy and more precise play. For example, there are many positions where some great players prefer to play on one side,

while some other top players are happy to take the opposite side. This is largely a matter of taste, so I tried not to seek for ‘ultimate truth’, which may not exist, but to describe typical situations and to give some guide lines on how to deal with them.

Finally I would like mention the selection of the games analysed. There are many very instructive classical games and it is very tempting to stick to them when covering certain themes. Although many classical examples are indeed examined, wherever possible I tried to use lesser-known games, preferably from recent practice. Alas, some of my own games sneaked in here too... Although in terms of quality they may not match the other examples, they nevertheless have that important advantage that I know exactly what I considered while making certain decisions.

That is probably enough for the introduction — let the book speak for itself. It took me a long time to finish it, but I enjoyed working on it and this analytical work has certainly paid off, as my tournament results went up. I hope that this book will help you to improve your chess too. I will welcome and highly appreciate your comments.

**Alexander Baburin,
Grandmaster.
Dublin, September 1998.**

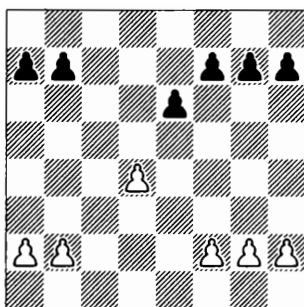
General Considerations

In the diagram we see a typical example of the isolated d-pawn, which can occur in many openings, e.g. the Queen's Gambit Accepted, Queen's Gambit Declined, Nimzo-Indian Defence, Sicilian Defence, Caro-Kann Defence. This pawn structure is probably the most common type of imbalanced (non-symmetrical) pawn formation. Usually such situations lead to interesting strategic play.

The question as to whether the isolated d-pawn is a weakness or a strength, has no answer as such — it all depends on some other features of the position.

As a coach, I find that usually club players are afraid to get an isolated d-pawn, as they believe that it will ultimately turn out to be a weakness. Yet, when they have the opportunity to play against such a pawn, they are unsure how to exploit this 'advantage' either.

Here we will examine those 'other



features of the position' which should help us to assess each particular case correctly and find a sound plan. It is worth mentioning that the position above isn't the only case of the isolated d-pawn: this pawn could be on d5, while the black pawn would be on e7; Black might have the c6-pawn instead of the e6-pawn, etc. We will examine all these cases, starting with this pawn set-up as the most typical one. Obviously White and Black have different advantages and disadvantages here and should base their plans on them accordingly. Let us list the

main features of the position, which are related to the pawn structure:

White:

a) has the open c-file and semi-open e-file, where his rooks can be developed and employed; often the 3rd rank can be used as a track to bring them to the kingside (this is referred to as a 'rook-lift');

b) has an easy development, due to the existence of open diagonals for his bishops and some space advantage;

c) the isolated pawn can support White's pieces (particularly knights) placed on e5 and c5;

d) the d4-pawn may become vulnerable, being attacked by the opponent's pieces, as it lacks pawn protection;

e) the square in front of the isolani (the d5-square in this case) may become a strong post for the opponent's pieces.

Black:

a) has a good square on d5 for his pieces, in particular for a knight;

b) may hope to use the weakness of the isolated pawn, tying the white pieces down to its defence, or just winning it; usually any simplification of the posi-

tion will be in Black's favour;

c) has less space for manoeuvring; usually he has problems with the development of the queen's bishop and quick deployment of his rooks.

From now on we assume for reasons of simplicity that it is White who has the isolated d-pawn, although some positions with Black possessing such a pawn will be examined as well.

So, here are the main plans employed by White in positions with the isolated d-pawn:

1) Pawn break in the centre: with d4-d5.

2) Attack on the king involving sacrifices on e6 or f7; the latter often involves the pawn advance f2-f4-f5 in order to remove the e6-pawn.

3) Attack on the kingside: White often brings one of his rooks to that flank, using a rook lift via the 3rd rank; if necessary the h-pawn advances towards the black king.

4) Play on the queenside, using the c-file and e5- and c5- squares for knights.

Let us start with plan Number 1 — the pawn advance in the centre by d4-d5.

1 White advances d4-d5

I believe that this plan should be analysed before all others, because usually it is White's major *strategic threat*, which ties down Black's pieces to the d5-square and forces him to consider the possible d4-d5 advance very seriously. As we will see from our examples, he neglects this central thrust at his peril. Thus, often Black moves his knight from f6 to d5 in order to stop d4-d5, which in its turn leads to a weakening of Black's kingside in some way and may allow White to attack on that wing.

Once d4-d5 is played, the isolated pawn is usually exchanged and we get a new pawn formation: a pawn-free centre. In such a case the mobility and activity of the pieces becomes a major factor. In other words, the side which has its pieces mobilised and actively placed in the centre when the centre is cleared, is going to benefit most from the d4-d5 break.

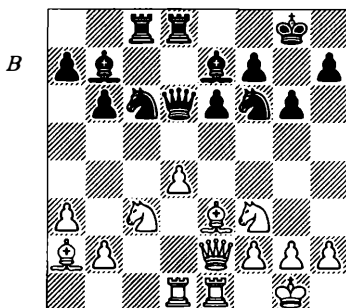
So we conclude that the chief requirement of this plan is a lead in development. Because White can bring out his pieces more easily, he often has such better development in the opening or just after the opening phase, so not surprisingly this is oft-

en the time when the d4-d5 break is most profitable for White. Now let us see all this in action.

De la Villa - Sion

Leon 1995

1 e4 c5 2 c3 d5 3 exd5 ♖xd5 4 d4
 ♜f6 5 ♙e3 e6 6 ♜f3 cxd4 7 cxd4
 ♜c6 8 ♜c3 ♗d6 9 a3 ♙e7 10
 ♙d3 0-0 11 0-0 ♜d8
 12 ♜e1 b6
 13 ♗e2 ♙b7
 14 ♜ad1 g6
 15 ♙b1 ♜ac8
 16 ♙a2 (D)



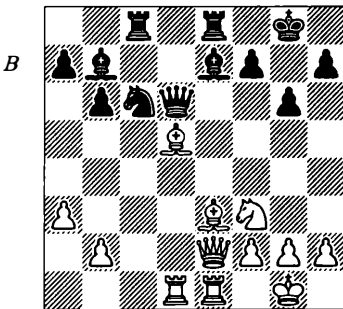
The position in the diagram is clearly in White's favour: all his pieces are well placed and ready for action. White needs to open up the centre with a d4-d5 break and his last

move prepares this thrust. Pay attention to the fact that both white rooks and the a2-bishop are just awaiting this move: the X-rays of the d1-rook will affect the black queen, while the a2-bishop will be pointing to the f7-pawn after the removal of the e6-pawn. Black has to be very careful in defence.

16 ... ♖e8?

After this unnecessary retreat Black gets into serious trouble. Probably Black, when he played this move, thought that the presence of his rook on the same file as White's queen would discourage White from opening up the centre, but this is far from true. Instead of the text, Black should have played 16... ♗f8, although even then White would keep a serious initiative by playing 17 d5! exd5 18 ♖xd5 ♖xd5 19 ♗xd5.

17 d5! exd5
18 ♖xd5 ♖xd5
19 ♗xd5 (D)



A critical position. The centre has been cleared and now Black has to decide where to move his queen from the d-file. In the game he failed to

come up with the toughest defence.

19 ... ♖b8?

Let us consider some other options available here.

19... ♖c7 looks more natural, but it still allows the sacrifice on f7, as White is able to use the position of the black queen to great effect: 20 ♗xf7+! ♖xf7 and now after 21 ♖c4+ ♗g7 22 ♗f4 b5! 23 ♖c3+ ♗f6 24 ♗xc7 ♗xc3 25 ♖xe8 ♖xe8 26 bxc3 White is a pawn up and may expect to win. However, he should be able to do even better than that: after 20 ♗xf7+! ♖xf7 he has 21 ♗h6! ♖d8 22 ♖d7! ♖c5 23 ♖xb7+-. Thus, 19... ♖c7 would have been no better than the text.

However, another queen move — 19... ♖f6! — would have been a better defensive try: Black keeps the queen near the vulnerable kingside. As after 20 ♖g5 ♖f8 White has nothing decisive, he should choose between 20 ♗h6 and 20 ♗g5.

The first option is very attractive as White's bishops work well together. Perhaps this is the most practical choice, as after 20 ♗h6 White maintains a strong initiative.

However, I will pay more attention to the more forceful move, 20 ♗g5. Yet, after a further 20... ♖f5, White has to play very precisely in order to maintain his advantage. For example, 21 ♗xc6?! (an attempt to win on the spot) fails because of 21... ♖xc6 22 ♗xe7 ♖e6! and Black is even slightly better now, while other tries on move 22, such as 22

♖xe7? ♜xe7 23 ♜xe7 ♖c8! and 22 ♜d8? ♜xd8 23 ♖xe7 ♜b8 24 ♘d4 ♖g4 25 ♘xc6 ♙xc6 are even worse for White.

Here I would like to pause briefly to share my experience of working with chess computer programs.

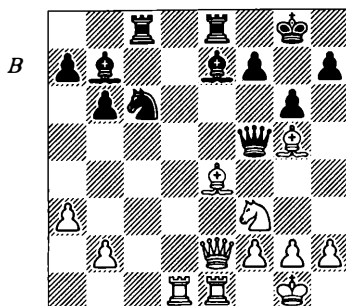
Nowadays it is very common among chess professionals to use computers not just for gathering information, but also for analytical purposes. Of course, certain techniques are required, as chess programs have their own weaknesses. The two most obvious problems are that computers have an horizon in their chess vision and that they tend to overrate material values. However, such work teaches strict discipline as computers do not excuse tactical mistakes and don't buy into bluff attacks. Remember, however, that the computer needs you to guide it in the right direction!

Let us come back to the position after 19...♖f6! 20 ♙g5 ♖f5. In such positions computers can be of great help, since it's almost pure calculation — the centre is cleared of pawns and piece activity decides everything.

Analysing such positions with a good chess program (I use mainly the Fritz 5 and Hiarcs 6.0 analysis modules) running on a fast computer can be great fun. Here I should like to share the fruits of such analysis from a more 'normal', human perspective.

In the position we are analysing, White should continue with 21 ♙e4!, first of all 'putting a question' to the

black queen. I believe that this position merits a diagram and a detailed discussion. (D)



Black can choose between three different routes for his queen. After 21...♖g4 22 h3 ♖h5 23 ♙xc6 ♜xc6 White has a nice choice between two winning lines: he can either make an elegant move — 24 ♖f1! (threatening both 25 ♜xe7 and 25 g4), or play more forcefully — 24 ♖xe7! ♜xe7 25 ♜xe7 h6 26 ♙e3. When my computer suggested 24 ♖f1!, I could not believe my eyes and at first thought that computer's chip was faulty, so unusual is this move for a human player — we are taught to centralise our pieces!

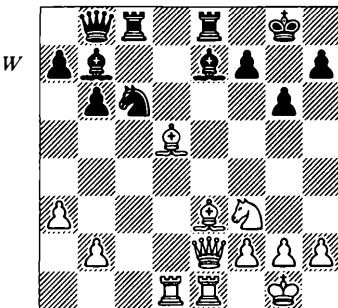
Another defence is 21...♖a5. Then White has a choice between two interesting ideas. The first one is 22 ♙d5! — this manoeuvre of the bishop is quite fascinating: it went to e4 and then back to d5, but pushed the black queen away from the kingside in the meantime! Now Black has his standard problems with the vulnerable f7 square, for example:

22...♙a6 23 ♖xf7+ ♜xf7 24 ♚e6+ ♜g7 25 ♜d7 ♚f5 26 ♚d6!? and White wins a piece back, emerging from complications a pawn up after 26...♜cd8 27 ♜exe7+ ♜xe7 28 ♚d4+ ♜g8 29 ♜xd8 ♚b1+ 30 ♚d1 ♚xd1+ 31 ♜xd1+.

Another possible line is 22 ♙xc6 ♜xc6 23 ♜d8!. This fantastic blow, which exploits the back rank weakness, is an easy spot for computers, but such a move is hard to find for human beings! White wins in the endgame arising after 23...♜xd8 24 ♚xe7 ♜cd6 (or 24...♜b8 25 ♙h6+-) 25 ♚xb7 ♜d1 26 ♚e7 ♜xe1+ 27 ♚xe1 ♚xe1+ 28 ♜xe1.

Perhaps after 21 ♙e4! Black should try 21...♚e6 with some chances to survive in the endgame arising after 22 ♙xc6 ♙xc6 23 ♚d3 ♚xe1+ 24 ♜xe1 ♙xg5.

Now we return to the game after 19...♚b8? (D)



20 ♙h6!

Creating the threat of ♙xf7+!, which, however, White could have played straight away. As after the text

Black is helpless anyway, the choice between these two moves is a matter of taste. The lines after 20 ♙xf7+! are as follows: 20...♜xf7 21 ♙h6 ♜g8 (21...♜d8 22 ♜xd8+-) 22 ♚c4+ ♜h8 23 ♚f7! ♙f8 24 ♜g5 (or 24 ♜d7+-) 24...♜xe1+ 25 ♜xe1 ♜c7 26 ♙g7+! ♙xg7 27 ♜e8+ ♚xe8 28 ♚xe8+ ♙f8 29 ♚xf8#.

20 ... ♜d4?

Black loses after 20...♜d8 as well: 21 ♚xe7! ♜xe7 22 ♜xe7 ♙c6 23 ♜e5+- (23...♜c7 24 ♜xc6).

21 ♜xd4 ♙f8

22 ♙e3 1-0

Helgi Olafsson - Th. Thorhallsson
Reykjavik Z 1995

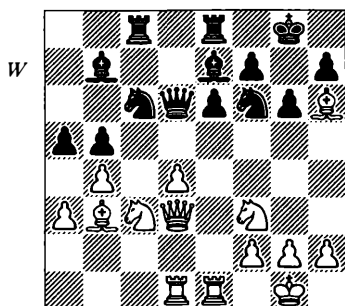
1 ♜f3 d5 2 d4 ♜f6 3 c4 dxc4 4 e3 e6 5 ♙xc4 c5 6 0-0 a6 7 ♙d3 ♜c6 8 ♜c3 ♙e7 9 a3 cxd4 10 exd4 0-0 11 ♜e1 b5

12 ♙c2 ♙b7
13 ♚d3 g6
14 ♙h6 ♜e8
15 ♜ad1 ♚d6
16 b4!?

This is an interesting idea: White establishes more control over the c5-square and at the same time stops a possible ...♜c6-a5-c4 or ...b5-b4.

16 ... ♜ac8
17 ♙b3 a5?? (D)

Black did not foresee what was about to happen in the centre and started a tactical demonstration on the queenside — an action which he simply cannot afford here; 17...♙f8 would have been more prudent.

**18 d5!**

Here, as in the previous example, White is much better prepared for opening up the centre, therefore this pawn break leads to White's benefit. Black probably expected only 18 $\text{Qxb5?!$ Wb8 or 18 $\text{Wxb5?!$ Qxb4! , with initiative for him in both cases.

18 ... exd5
 19 Qxd5 Qxd5
 20 Qxd5

Now Black is lost, as he cannot prevent Qxf7+ . As in the previous game, the d5-bishop is the real hero of the battle.

20 ... Qd8?

After 20... axb4? 21 Qxf7+! Qxf7 22 Wb3+ White wins, as he also does after the slightly better 20... Wf6 21 Qg5 .

21 Wd4+ - Qf8
 22 Qxe8 Qe6
 23 Qxf8+ Qxf8 1-0

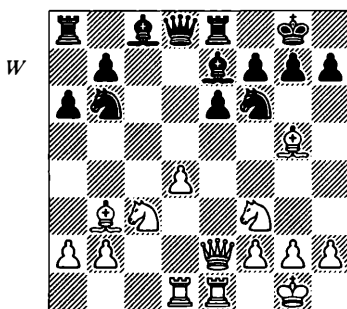
Here is another example. Black did not take good care of prompt development, thus allowing White to build up a strong attacking position in the centre, which White then opened up by the timely d4-d5 break.

P. Popović - Barlov
Yugoslavia Ch, Novi Sad 1995

1 e4 e5 2 Qf3 a6 3 c3 Qf6 4 e5
 Qd5 5 d4 cxd4 6 Qc4 Qb6 7 Qb3
 d5 8 exd6 e6 9 cxd4 Qxd6 10 Qc3
 Q8d7 11 0-0 Qf6 12 Qe1 0-0
 13 Qg5 Qe7
 14 Wd3 Qbd7?

This move simply cannot be right: Black ignores his development, at the same time lessening his control over the d5-square. After the text it will be some time before the c8-bishop is developed; therefore either 14... Qbd5 or 14... Qd7 should have been preferred.

15 Qad1 Qe8
 16 Wf2 Qb6 (D)



White has developed all his pieces, while Black still has a long way to go in this respect. It can be said that White is playing the middlegame, while Black is still in the opening. Thus White takes advantage of this by the thematic break:

17 d5!

It is worth mentioning that the presence of the major pieces on the e-file is not in Black's favour, as White simply has more forces on that file.

17 ... ♖c7

Other options were no better: 17...♟fxd5?? 18 ♙xe7 ♚xe7 19 ♙xd5+-, while 17...exd5 would also lose after 18 ♙xf6 gxf6 19 ♟xd5 ♟xd5 20 ♙xd5 ♚c7 21 ♟d4.

18 dxe6 ♙xe6

19 ♙xe6 ♙d8

20 ♟d4 fxe6

21 ♟xe6

White is winning, having a healthy extra pawn in a superior position. The rest is quite clear: 21...♚f7 22 g3 ♟bd7 23 ♟xd8 ♚axd8 24 ♚d3 ♚xe1+ 25 ♚xe1 ♚e8 26 ♚xe8+ ♚xe8 27 ♚f3 b5 28 ♟d5 ♟xd5 29 ♚xd5+ ♟h8 30 ♚c6 h6 31 ♙f4 ♚f7 32 ♚xa6 ♚d5 33 ♚c8+ ♟h7 34 ♚c2+ ♟h8 35 b3 ♟c5 36 g4 ♟d3 37 ♙g3 ♟h7 38 a4 ♚e4 39 h3 bxa4 40 bxa4 ♚e1+ 41 ♟h2 ♚f1 42 a5 ♟h8 43 ♚c8+ ♟h7 44 ♚c4 ♚d1 45 ♚e4+ 1-0.

Now let us examine how White's threat to play d4-d5 impinges on Black's strategy from an early stage of the game. In this case we would like to refer to a classical game, where White exploited the advantages of having the isolani in very nice style.

Boleslavsky - Kotov

Zurich Ct 1953

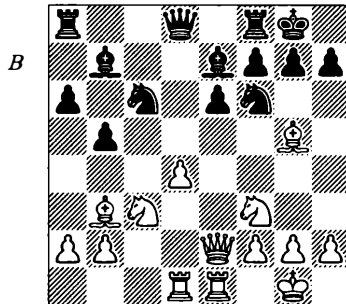
1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 ♟f3 ♟f6 4 e3 e6 5 ♙xc4 c5 6 0-0 a6 7 ♚e2 cxd4

8 exd4 ♙e7 9 ♟c3 b5 10 ♙b3 ♙b7

11 ♙g5 0-0

12 ♚fe1 ♟c6

13 ♚ad1 (D)



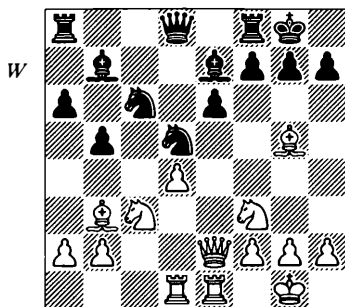
Black has not done very well in the opening, for example after 7 ♚e2 he should have played 7...b5, while taking on d4 was an inferior choice.

Theory regards the diagram position as pretty difficult for Black, who now has to find a way to prevent the d4-d5 break. He should consider the moves which seem to deal with the problem, namely 13...♟b4, 13...♟d5 and 13...♚e8. Let us begin with the first one:

13...♟b4??. This is a losing move, although it looks extremely natural. It was refuted by Rauzer, as Bronstein pointed out in his comments, even prior to the present game. However, in 1995 none other than Karpov fell into this trap against Andersson in a rapid chess event (25 minutes per game). Black's problem is that his last move does not really prevent the thrust in the centre and after 14 d5!

Black is just lost, because of White's pressure along the e-file. In his game Karpov resigned after 14... Qfxd5 15 Qxd5 Qxg5 16 Qxb4 $\text{W}e7$ 17 Qd5 Qxd5 18 Qxd5 .

Another option here is **13... Qd5** (D), blockading the dangerous pawn.



White has a choice between two different ways of capturing on d5:

a) **14 Qxd5 Qxg5** 15 Qb6 ? was recommended by Bronstein in his book on the candidates tournament of 1953. The point is to clear the d5-square for the subsequent d4-d5; however this is an oversight, as the following continuation shows — 15... Qxd4 ! 16 Qxd4 $\text{W}xb6$ 17 $\text{W}g4$ Qf6 18 Qxe6 Qc8 ! and White resigned in the game Shamkovich-Dlugy, New York 1986. Thus, 14 Qxd5 gives White nothing.

b) **14 Qxd5 ! Qxg5** 15 Qe4 Qh6 and now **16 a4!** weakens Black's position on the queenside before advancing the central pawn (instead of the immediate 16 d5 exd5 17 Qxd5 g6 18 h4 Qe8 19 Qh2 ?! Qg7 when White did not get much in the game

Izeta-Magem, Spain 1995). Now, however, if 16...b4 then 17 d5! exd5 18 Qxd5 would be already unpleasant for Black, while after 16...bxa4 17 Qxa4 Qa7 18 Qc5 Qa8 19 Qxe6 ! fxe6 20 Qxc6 Qxc6 21 Wxe6+ Qaf7 22 Wxc6 White achieved a winning position in the game Wells-Magem, Linares Z 1995.

Finally, we must consider **13... Qe8** , a move which aims to discourage White from playing d4-d5, because of the X-ray of the black rook against the white queen. However, this move has not been tried in tournament practice, probably because White has a choice of two promising continuations here:

a) **14 d5!** (Anyway!) 14...exd5 15 Qxd5 Qxd5 and now White obtains a big advantage by playing 16 Qxd5 ! Wc8 (16... Wc7 ? loses on the spot to 17 Qf5 !) 17 Wd1 !?, whereas 16 Qxd5 Qxg5 17 Wxe8+ Wxe8 18 Qxe8+ Qxe8 19 Qxg5 Qd8 leads to almost complete equality.

b) **14 Qe5 !**? is another logical move as White immediately threatens Qxf7 !, since the rook has moved to e8. 14... Qxe5 15 dxe5 Qd7 16 Qf4 Wc7 17 Qc2 offers good attacking chances for White, as recommended by GM Suetin in his book on Boleslavsky.

This analysis shows how difficult it can be to prevent the d4-d5 thrust without giving White some other advantages.

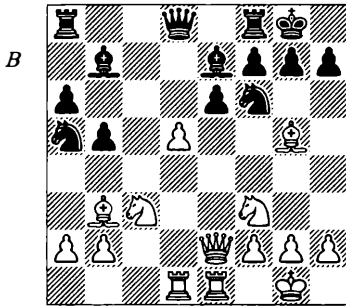
In this particular case Black's position is just difficult, as he is seri-

ously behind in development, therefore there is no completely satisfactory remedy for him here, and his next move does not help either:

13 ... ♖a5?!

This attempt to remove the b3-bishop from its active position fails, but it took energetic play by White to prove it:

14 d5! (D)



14 ... ♖xb3

15 dxe6 ♗b6

The point of White's play is that after 15...♗xf3? he wins both pieces back by 16 exf7+ ♖h8 17 ♖xd8 ♗xe2 18 ♖xa8 ♖xa8 19 ♖xe2, remaining two pawns up.

16 axb3 fxe6

17 ♖d4 ♗d6

18 ♗xe6+ ♖h8

19 ♖f3 ♖ad8

20 ♗f4! ♗xf3

21 ♖xd6 ♖xd6

22 ♗xd6 ♗xd6

23 ♗xd6 ♖e8

24 ♖xe8+ ♖xe8

25 ♗e5

This endgame is easily winning for White.

25 ... ♗c6

26 b4!

Fixing the black pawns on the light squares. As the black knight cannot leave e8 without being taken by the bishop, the presence of the opposite coloured bishops here does not give Black drawing chances.

The conclusion was: 26...h5 27 f3 ♖h7 28 ♖e2 g5 29 ♖f2 h4 30 g3 hxg3+ 31 hxg3 ♖g6 32 g4 ♗b7 33 ♖e3 ♗c6 34 ♖c3 ♗b7 35 ♖e4 ♗d5 36 ♖c5 ♖f7 37 ♖xa6 ♖e6 38 ♗c3 ♗a8 39 ♖c5+ ♖f7 40 ♖e4 ♖g6 41 ♗e5 ♗d5 42 ♖d2 ♖f7 1-0.

Here is another example of an early d4-d5 thrust. In this game it was related to some interesting tactics.

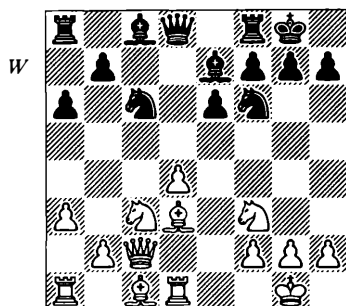
Topalov - Gausel
Moscow OL 1994

1 e4 c6
2 d4 d5
3 exd5 cxd5
4 c4 ♖f6
5 ♖c3 e6
6 ♖f3 ♗b4
7 cxd5 ♖xd5
8 ♗c2 ♖c6
9 a3

Another option here is 9 ♗d3, which may lead to a very complicated position after 9...♖xc3 10 bxc3 ♖xd4 11 ♖xd4 ♗xd4.

9 ... ♗e7
10 ♗d3 ♖f6
11 0-0 0-0

12 ♖d1 a6? (D)



This move makes little sense. As it cannot be a preparation for ...b5 (which would drop a pawn after ♖xb5 and ♗xc6), the main point of the text is to cover the b5-square, preparing for ...♗d6 and ...♞d8. However, Black has no time for this slow plan, as White now proves convincingly.

Black did better after 12...♙d7 in the game Topalov-Yudasin, Gron-ingen 1993, which ended in a draw after 13 ♘e5 a6 14 ♙e3 ♗c7 15 ♘d7 ♗xd7 16 d5 exd5 17 ♙f5 ♗d6 18 ♘e4 ♗e5 19 ♘xf6+ ♙xf6 20 ♙xh7+ ♖h8 21 ♙d3 ♗xb2 22 ♞ab1 ♗xc2 23 ♙xc2 d4 24 ♙f4 b5.

The fact that Topalov repeated this line raises the question — how did he intend to improve on his play in that game?

We believe that had Black selected 12...♙d7 in the present game, Topalov would have played the more aggressive move: 13 d5! exd5 14 ♘d5 and after 14...h6 15 ♘xe7+

White obtains a significant advantage, having the bishop pair in an open position.

13 d5!

Here this well-timed pawn advance wins White a pawn by force. The main feature of this position is the pressure of White's battery on the b1-h7 diagonal and the influence of the d1-rook on the d-file.

13	...	exd5
14	♘d5	♘d5
15	♙xh7+	♖h8
16	♙e4	♙e6
17	♙xd5	♙xd5
18	♗f5	g6
19	♗xd5	♗xd5
20	♞xd5+	♞fd8
21	♞d2!	

The rest of the game is the technical work of capitalising on an extra pawn: 21 ...♙f6 22 ♞b1 ♘a5 23 b3 ♖g8 24 ♖f1 ♞ac8 25 ♞xd8+ ♞xd8 26 ♙d2 ♞d5 27 a4 ♘c6 28 ♖e2 ♖f8 29 ♙e3 ♖e7 30 ♞d1 ♞h5 31 h4 ♖e6 32 g3 ♙e7 33 ♘g5+ ♙xg5 34 ♙xg5 ♞h8 35 ♞d3 f6 36 ♙d2 ♘e7 37 ♞e3+ ♖f7 38 ♞c3 ♘d5 39 ♞c5 ♖e6 40 ♞c1 ♖e5 41 ♖d3 ♖d6 42 f3 f5 43 ♙g5 ♘b4+ 44 ♖c4 ♘d5 45 ♖d4 b6 46 ♞e1 ♞c8 47 ♞e5 ♘c7 48 ♙e7+ ♖d7 49 ♙a3 ♘e6+ 50 ♖d3 ♞e8 51 ♞d5+ ♖c7 52 ♞d6 a5 53 ♖c4 ♖b7 54 ♞d7+ ♖c6 55 ♞f7 ♞c8 56 ♞e7 b5+ 57 axb5+ ♖b6+ 58 ♖d5 ♘c7+ 59 ♖e5 ♘xb5 60 ♞e6+ ♖b7 61 ♙e7 ♞c3 62 ♞xg6 ♞xb3 63 ♖h5 ♞e3+ 64 ♖f6 ♘c7 65 ♖f7 1-0.

Often the side possessing the isolani simply has to go for d4-d5 (or ...d5-d4) when the time is right, as otherwise this chance will be gone and the pawn will be blocked. Hesitation in strategically double-edged positions, such as those with the isolated d-pawn, often leads to inferior situations. Let us illustrate with an example from my own play.

Baburin - Ryan
Kilkenny open 1996

1 d4 d5
2 c4 dxc4
3 ♟f3 c5

Here White's most aggressive move is 4 d5, but I was surprised by my opponent's choice of opening and therefore decided to surprise him in return by selecting this less popular reply.

4 e3 cxd4
5 ♟xc4 ♟c7

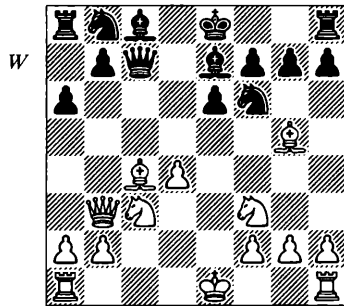
This is the point of 4...cxd4 — Black forces White to put his queen on b3, where it is rather awkwardly placed. Should Black play any move other than 5...♟c7, White would have replied 6 exd4 and obtained a very comfortable game.

6 ♟b3 e6
7 exd4 ♟f6

Instead of the text, 7...♟c6 would have been more precise — as was played in the game Vyzhmanavin-Kaidanov, Norilsk 1987, which continued: 8 ♟c3 a6 9 ♟d1 (the white queen had to retreat in view of

...♟a5) 9...♟f6 10 0-0 ♟e7 11 ♟g5 0-0 12 ♟e2. This is necessary in order to vacate the d1-square for a rook, but it is already the third queen move in the opening — that is the problem with 6 ♟b3. After 12...♟g4!? 13 ♟e3 b5 14 ♟b3 Black should have continued 14...♟a5! 15 h3 ♟xb3 16 axb3 ♟f6! 17 ♟xb5 ♟b8 with slightly better chances for him, as GM Kaidanov recommended in *Informator 44*. In the game he played instead 14...♟b7? 15 ♟fc1! ♟xe3 16 fxe3 ♟b6 17 ♟e4! ♟a5?, which led to a significant advantage for White after 18 ♟c5 ♟fc8 19 ♟e5! ♟xb3 20 axb3 ♟xc5 21 ♟d7 ♟d6 22 ♟xc5 ♟d5 23 b4.

8 ♟c3 a6
9 ♟g5 ♟e7? (D)



This natural looking move is a serious mistake — Black had to try to catch up in development by playing 9...♟c6!. The point is that in that case Black stands better after 10 ♟xf6?! ♟a5 11 ♟a4+ e♟d7 12 ♟e5 ♟b6 13 ♟c2 ♟xc4. After 9...♟c6 I would

probably consider 10 ♕d3 or 10 ♖d1 ♕e7 11 ♖e2 0-0 12 ♗d1.

Now White should consider the future scenario of this game — if he just plays all the natural moves like 0-0, ♗ac1, ♗fd1, etc., then Black will certainly play ...♟c6 and force White to lose time on either moving his queen or the c4-bishop away. Therefore White should think of the immediate thrust in the centre, while his lead in development is great. Otherwise the strategic situation will change and not in his favour.

10 d5! exd5
11 ♕xd5!

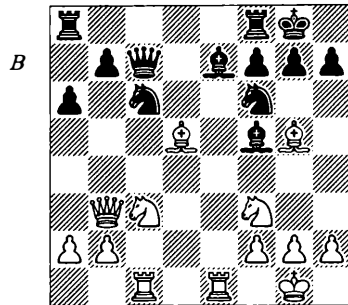
After the game I checked my database and discovered that the text was actually a novelty, as White had played the more obvious but less promising 11 ♟xd5 in the game Wojtkiewicz-Yermolinsky, Rakvere 1993. Even then after 11...♟xd5 12 ♕xd5 0-0 13 0-0 ♟c6 14 ♕xc6 bxc6 15 ♕xe7 ♖xe7 16 ♖c3 White had an advantage.

The point of recapturing with the bishop is that White keeps more pieces on the board, which is in his favour, as Black cannot take on d5 in view of ♟xd5 hitting the queen.

11 ... 0-0
12 0-0 ♟c6
13 ♗fe1 ♕f5
14 ♗ac1 (D)

In this position, White has a significant advantage, as he is able to bring his rooks to the centre with comfort while Black cannot do the same. White's minor pieces are more

active too. He threatens to capture on c6 at some point, spoiling Black's pawn formation. Although Black's next move is understandable — he wants to release the pressure from the a2-g8 diagonal — his idea is faulty.



14 ... ♟a5?

In situations like this (with a pawn-free centre) it is better to keep the pieces centralised. After the text, Black is just lost.

In reply to Black's best defence, 14...♗ad8, White has a wide choice of promising continuations, e.g. 15 ♖c4, but perhaps I would play the useful move 15 h3!?, maintaining all the advantages of my position.

15 ♖a4 ♟c6
16 ♕xc6! bxc6
17 ♟d4 ♟g4

Desperation, but other moves would not be any better.

18 ♟xf5 ♖xh2+
19 ♔f1 ♕xg5
20 ♖xg4 ♖h1+
21 ♔e2 ♗ae8+
22 ♔f3

The king can certainly look after

himself in this situation and Wilhelm Steinitz, who strongly believed in the king's active role in chess, would be pleased to see this position!

- 22 ... ♖xe1
 23 ♖xg5 g6
 24 ♖h6! 1-0

The simplest way to win here, although 24 ♖e4 wins too. After the text, as Black would be a piece down after 24... gxf5 25 ♖xh1 ♖xh1 26 ♖xh1, he resigned.

Of course, White often manages to play d4-d5 not only in the opening or just after the opening phase, but also in the middlegame. This thematic break appears on the menu quite often, particularly if Black does not succeed in simplifying the position.

Our next three games will illustrate this case.

Kamsky - Short
Linares Ct (5) 1994

- 1 d4 ♖f6
 2 c4 e6
 3 ♖c3 ♖b4
 4 e3 c5
 5 ♖d3 ♖c6
 6 ♖ge2 cxd4
 7 exd4 d5
 8 cxd5 ♖xd5
 9 0-0

It seems that White is better off with his knight placed on f3, rather than on e2 in positions with the isolated d-pawn. This is because it can be more usefully employed on the kingside (after ♖g5 or ♖e5).

However, in this game Kamsky employs this knight in an interesting manner too.

- 9 ... ♖d6
 10 ♖e4 ♖e7
 11 a3 0-0
 12 ♖c2 ♖e8
 13 ♖d3 g6
 14 ♖h6 b6
 15 ♖ad1 ♖b7
 16 ♖fe1 ♖c8
 17 ♖b3

It is time to put some pressure on the blockading knight.

- 17 ... a6?!

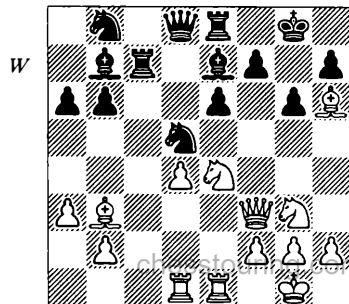
Black has a very solid position, but needs to find a plan of future play. Perhaps, 17... ♖c7 should have been preferred, intending to move the rook to d7, putting some pressure on the isolani.

- 18 ♖2g3 ♖b8?!

An interesting idea was suggested here by GM Suba: 18... ♖h4, vacating the e7-square for the c6-knight. After the text, which decentralises the knight, White seizes the initiative.

- 19 ♖f3! ♖c7? (D)

The natural move 19... ♖d7 would have led to the situation similar to



the one in the game after 20 ♖h5!. Then White threatens to play 21 h4! with a further 22 ♖g5, while Black cannot push White's cavalry back, as 20...f5 leads to a disaster after 21 ♖c3 ♙f8 22 ♖xd5! ♙xh6 23 ♖df6+ ♖xf6 24 ♖xf6+ ♙xf6 25 ♙xb7+, where Black's pawns on the queen-side are going to fall. Another line — 22 ♙xe6 ♙xe6 23 ♙xd5 ♙xd5 24 ♙xd5 — is less convincing because of 24...♖c5! 25 ♖f4 ♙xd5 26 ♖cxd5 ♙d6 27 dxc5 ♙xc5 28 ♙xf8 ♖xf8 29 h4 ♙c2.

The text leads to serious trouble, but perhaps Black underestimated White's next move. Thus, 19...♙h4 was already absolutely necessary.

20 ♖h5!

From this square, the knight threatens to jump either to f6 or g7. As Black must now deal with the deadly threat of ♙xd5 followed by ♖gf6+, his next move is forced.

20 ... ♖d7

20...f5 would have led to a collapse after 21 ♖c3, as 21...♖xc3? is impossible because of 22 ♙xe6+ ♖h8 23 ♙g7#.

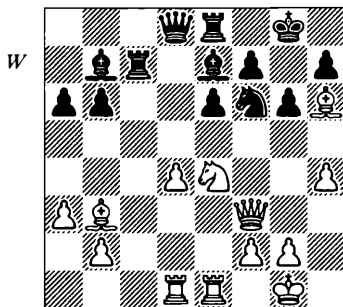
21 h4!+-

White creates the threat of 22 ♖g5, leaving Black helpless. It is very instructive that with all the pieces on the board Black has no room for manoeuvring, while White enjoys a great space advantage. This is one of the reasons behind Black's desire to simplify the position, when faced with such a pawn formation.

21 ... ♖7f6

Black has nothing better than the text, but now he loses control over the d5-square. After 21...♙xh4 22 ♖d6 ♙e7 White can choose between 23 g3 gxh5 24 gxh4 ♖f8 25 ♖xb7 ♙xb7 26 ♙e5 with a strong attack or the even more energetic move 23 ♙e4!, when Black's dark-squared bishop causes him a lot of problems.

22 ♖hxf6+ ♖xf6 (D)



23 d5!

This thrust wins the game; the difference in activity between White's and Black's pieces is too great and therefore Black cannot bear the tension thus created in the centre.

23 ... ♖xe4

After 23...♖xd5 Black would have lost because of the weakness of the f6-square in the following line: 24 ♙xd5 ♙xd5 25 ♙xd5 exd5 26 ♖f6+ ♖h8 27 ♖xe8 ♙xe8 28 ♙f6+ ♙xf6 29 ♙xe8#. However, the text does not save him either.

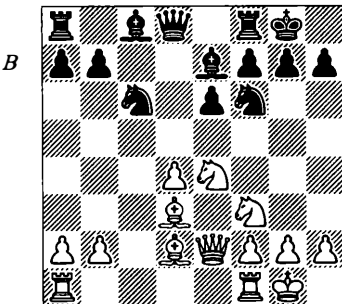
- 24 dx6 f5
- 25 ♙xd8 sstou ♙xd8:om
- 26 ♙d1 1-0

Kamsky - Karpov
Elista FIDE Wch (2) 1996

- | | | |
|----|------|------|
| 1 | e4 | c6 |
| 2 | d4 | d5 |
| 3 | exd5 | cxd5 |
| 4 | c4 | ♟f6 |
| 5 | ♞c3 | e6 |
| 6 | ♞f3 | ♙b4 |
| 7 | cxd5 | ♞xd5 |
| 8 | ♙d2 | ♞c6 |
| 9 | ♙d3 | ♙e7 |
| 10 | 0-0 | 0-0 |
| 11 | ♞e2 | ♞f6 |

The knight moves to the kingside, which needs protection, potentially vacating the blockading d5-square for the other knight. At the same time Black brings some pressure to bear on the isolani.

12 ♞e4!?! (D)



White's last move introduces an important strategic problem — it is known that the side possessing the isolated d-pawn usually should avoid exchanges, while the opposite side tries to induce them. However, this principle is often not very well un-

derstood by club players. In reality, it is just impossible to avoid simplification altogether and there are definitely cases when certain exchanges should be **initiated** by the possessor of the isolani. Here for example, White does not mind exchanging a pair of knights, as the black knight on f6 is an important defensive piece. We will discuss this strategic problem in more detail later.

In the meantime, White discourages Black from developing the c8-bishop to the long diagonal, as now 12...b6?? loses to 13 ♞xf6+ ♙xf6 14 ♞e4. The text also solves by tactical means the problem of protecting the d4-pawn, as 12...♞xd4?! leads to White's advantage after 13 ♞xd4 ♞xd4 14 ♙c3 ♞d8 15 ♞xf6+ ♙xf6 16 ♞ad1 ♙d7 (or 16...♞e7 17 ♞e4 g6 18 ♙b4±) 17 ♙xf6 (17 ♞e4 g6 18 ♙xf6 ♞xf6 19 ♞xb7 is in White's favour too.) 17...♞xf6 18 ♙xh7+ ♞xh7 19 ♞xd7.

12 ... ♙d7

Two games later in the match Karpov came up with an improvement over this game — 12...♞b6!?! 13 a3 ♙d7 14 ♞ad1 ♞ad8 15 ♞xf6+?! ♙xf6 16 ♞e4 g6 17 ♙e3 ♞e7! — and Black got an advantage and eventually won.

13 ♞ad1 ♞c8?!

Perhaps Black should have preferred 13...♞b6!?! with mutual chances, while 13...♞xe4 would have given White an attack after 14 ♞xe4 g6 15 h4. chesstouring.com

14 ♞fe1 ♞d5?!

Better was 14...♞xe4 15 ♖xe4 g6 and then if 16 a3, preventing the consolidating manoeuvre ...♞c6-b4-d5, Black plays 16...♙f6 with a solid position.

15 ♞c3!

An excellent decision — the black bishop did not come to b7 and the d4-pawn was protected. So the white knight has done its work on e4 and therefore Kamsky redeploys it, fighting for control over the vital d5-square.

15 ... ♞f6

Black could try some other moves instead of the text, but all of them would have left White with a significant advantage, e.g. 15...♞e8 16 ♞xd5 exd5 17 ♞e5! and then Black cannot play 17...♞xd4?, which loses to 18 ♙xh7+ ♖xh7 19 ♖h5+ ♖g8 20 ♖xf7+ ♖h7 21 ♞xd7. If Black takes the c3-knight (15...♞xc3), White recaptures with a pawn (16 bxc3) and the arising pawn formation — the *isolated pawn couple* — is in his favour as he can still count on his attack on the kingside and pressure in the centre. The attempt to utilise the b4-square by 15...♞cb4 16 ♙b1 ♙c6 would also leave White with the initiative after 17 a3 (17 ♞e5!? is interesting as well) 17...♞xc3 18 bxc3 ♞d5 19 c4 ♞f6 20 ♙g5.

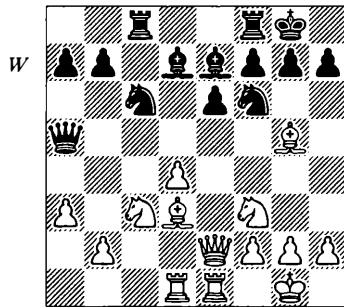
16 a3 ♖c7

Eventually the presence of the black queen and white rook on the same file might cause Black problems, so he moves the queen away

from the X-rays of the rook. However, finding a safe, yet active position for the queen is always a difficult task for Black in such positions. White does not have this problem at all, as he controls more space.

17 ♙g5! ♖a5? (D)

This loses. However, it is already difficult to give Black any advice here, e.g. after 17...♞fe8 18 ♙b1! White is about to launch a crushing attack with ♖d3 and d4-d5.



18 d5!

This time the key factor in the success of this typical blow is the lack of protection of the d7-bishop.

18 ... exd5
19 ♙xf6 ♙xf6
20 ♙xh7+

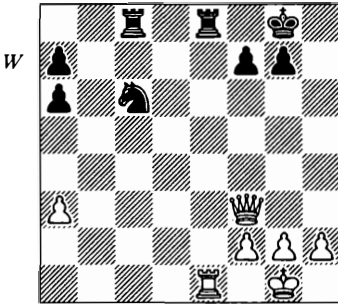
Here White had another winning continuation at his disposal: 20 ♞xd5 ♙d8 (or 20...♙e6 21 ♖e4+-) 21 b4 ♖xa3 22 ♞a1 ♖b3 23 ♙c4 and the black queen is trapped.

20 ... ♖xh7
21 ♞xd5+ ♙xc3
22 ♞xa5 ♙xa5

23 b4 ♔g8
 24 bxa5 ♙g4

Black could not take the pawn by 24...♘xa5? because of the fork — 25 ♖d2.

25 a6! bxa6
 26 ♖e4 ♙xf3
 27 ♖xf3 ♚fe8 (D)



28 ♖a1!

This move lessens Black's chances of building a fortress, which might be possible should the rooks be exchanged. White is winning:

28...♙e6 29 h3 ♙d8 30 ♖c3
 ♙dd6 31 ♖b1 ♙d7 32 ♖c4 a5 33
 ♖b5 ♙d1+ 34 ♔h2 ♙d2 35 ♖f5
 ♙d4 36 ♖c3 ♙dd6 37 ♖c5 ♖f6 38
 ♖c4 ♖fe6 39 ♖c5 ♖f6 40 ♖e3
 ♖fe6 41 ♖g3 ♖g6 42 ♖b3 ♖gf6
 43 ♖b7 ♖fe6 44 ♖c7 ♖f6 45 f4 g6
 46 f5 gxf5 47 ♖xf5 ♙de6 48 ♖h5
 ♖h6 49 ♖g3+ ♔f8 50 ♙d5 ♖hg6
 51 ♖f2 ♖gf6 52 ♖b2 ♔e7 53 ♖h5
 ♖h6 54 ♖b5 ♖hf6 55 ♖c3 ♔f8 56
 ♖h5 ♖h6 57 ♖f5 ♖hg6 58 ♖f3
 ♖g7 59 ♖f4 ♔g8 60 ♖c7 ♔f8 61
 ♖c8+ ♔e7 62 ♙d5 ♔f6 63 ♖h8
 ♖e4 64 ♖h5 ♔e7 65 ♖h7 1-0.

Here is yet another convincing example of the successful d4-d5 thrust:

Yusupov - Lobron
Germany Ch, Nüßloch 1996

1 d4 ♘f6
 2 c4 e6
 3 ♘c3 ♙b4
 4 e3 0-0
 5 ♙d3 c5
 6 ♘f3 d5
 7 0-0 cxd4
 8 exd4 dxc4
 9 ♙xc4 b6
 10 ♚e1 ♙b7
 11 ♙d3

White aims the bishop at the kingside, as he believes there is no future for it in eyeing the e6-pawn, while a d4-d5 break isn't possible yet. The question of the best placement of this bishop is an evergreen problem in such formations, which White successfully solves in this game.

11 ... ♘c6
 11...♘bd7 is a good alternative.
 12 a3 ♙e7

Naturally Black does not want to exchange the bishop on c3, as he won't be able to take advantage of the c3-d4 pawn couple, while his kingside would be vulnerable without the bishop.

13 ♙c2 ♖e8
 14 ♖d3

White has got a standard battery, which forces Black to weaken his kingside in some way.

14 ... g6

15 h4!?

The march of the h-pawn is a typical weapon from White's arsenal in this pawn formation, as we have already seen in Kamsky-Short.

15 ... ♖d6?

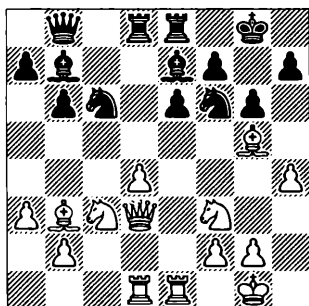
Black is trying to find a safe place for the queen and also to put some pressure on the d4-pawn after the eventual ... ♖ad8 and ... ♗b8. However, it does not really solve the problem. 15... ♖c8 might be a better choice, meeting 16 ♕g5 with the standard reply 16... ♗d5.

16 ♕g5 ♖ad8

17 ♖ad1 ♗b8

18 ♕b3! (D)

B



Excellent judgment — the bishop no longer has anything to do on the b1–h7 diagonal, so White re-deploys it to a better location. The bishop has gone via a long route: f1-d3-c4-d3-c2-b3 and finds itself on the a2-g8 diagonal again, where it supports the d4-d5 thrust. This game is a fine example of handling the isolani: White has brought all his pieces to the cen-

tre, avoided any simplification and placed his forces in such a manner that the forthcoming blow in the centre seems to be almost inevitable.

18 ... a6?

After this mistake Black cannot survive. He obviously misjudged the outcome of White's next move, otherwise he would have probably tried 18... ♖g7.

Our analysis shows that another possible defence — 18... ♗a5 — which at first glance looks playable for Black, does not help: White gets an irresistible attack after 19 ♕a2!. The point is that White does not need to get involved in the complications arising after 19 ♕xe6 fxe6 20 ♖xe6, even though they might favour him — the text is strong enough. White renews the threat of d4-d5 after the eventual b2-b4.

The following analysis illustrates Black's difficulties here — after 19 ♕a2! ♗d5 20 b4 Black is facing problems in all lines:

a) 20... ♕xg5 21 ♗xg5 ♗xc3 22 ♗xc3 ♗c6 when White has two different ways of capitalising on his advantage. Each of them is sufficient:

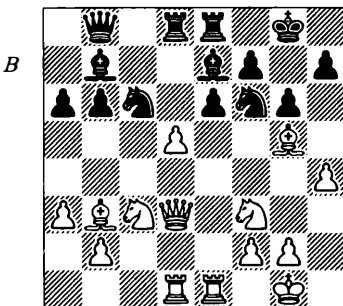
a1) 23 ♗xe6! fxe6 24 ♖xe6 ♖xe6 25 ♕xe6+ ♖g7 (25... ♖f8 loses on the spot to 26 ♗f3+ ♖g7 27 ♗f7+ ♖h6 28 g4+-) 26 d5+ ♗e5 27 ♖d3!+- (but not 27 ♖c1? ♕a8, where 28 dxc6?? loses because of 28... ♖d1+ 29 ♖xd1 ♗xc3) and White is a healthy pawn up in the endgame arising after 27... ♗xc3 28 ♖xc3 ♖d6 29 dxc6 ♕xc6.

a2) 23 d5! is also good and leads to a winning position after 23...exd5 24 ♖xe8+ ♖xe8 25 ♜xf7 ♜e5 26 ♜h6+ ♜g7 27 ♜g4.

b) 20...♜xc3 21 ♖xc3 ♜c6 leads to a similar scenario — White clears out the centre by 22 d5! exd5 23 ♜xd5 and after 23...♜xg5 hits the weak spot on f7: 24 ♜xf7+! ♜xf7 25 ♜xg5+ ♜g8 26 ♖c4+ ♜h8 27 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 28 ♖f7, winning.

In the variations shown above White's attack goes very smoothly, while it is very hard for Black to come up with a plan of defence. Perhaps the move which was mentioned earlier — 18...♜g7 — would have been the best try; at least Black would have fewer worries on the a2-g8 diagonal. In that case White would maintain the initiative, whereas after 18...a6 he starts a crushing attack.

19 d5! (D)



Once again we see how White capitalises on his advantage after the well-prepared and well-timed d4-d5 breakthrough.

19 ... ♜a5?! (D)

Let us check whether Black had any better options here. As 19...exd5?? loses on the spot to 20 ♖xe7 and 21 ♜xf6, Black can take on d5 only with the knight — 19...♜xd5. Then White has a pleasant choice between the two ways of recapturing:

a) 20 ♜xd5 and then:

a1) 20...♜xg5?! 21 ♜xg5 exd5 22 ♜xf7! ♖xe1+ 23 ♖xe1 ♜xf7 24 ♜xd5+ ♖xd5 25 ♖xd5+ is a win for White.

a2) 20...exd5 21 ♜xd5 ♜xg5. Here it is much more difficult for White to prove his advantage, e.g. 22 ♜xg5 fails to do so in view of 22...♜e5 23 ♖b3 ♜xd5 24 ♖xd5 ♜g4! and Black is fine. White has nothing decisive after the tempting sacrifice 22 ♖xe8+ ♖xe8 23 ♜xf7+ either, as after 23...♜xf7 24 ♜xg5+ ♜g8 25 ♖b3+ ♜h8 26 ♖c3+ ♜g8 27 ♖d7 ♖e7 28 ♖b3+ ♜f8 29 ♖xe7 ♜xe7 30 ♖e6+ ♜d8 31 ♜f7+ ♜c7 a draw seems to be inevitable.

After 21...♜xg5 White's best bid is 22 ♜xf7+!, which leads to some advantage after 22...♜g7! (22...♜xf7? loses in view of 23 ♜xg5+ ♜g8 24 ♖b3+ ♜h8 25 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 26 ♖f7) 23 ♖xe8 ♖xd3 24 ♖xd3 ♜d8 (24...♖f4 is worse because of 25 ♜xg5 ♖c1+ 26 ♜h2 ♖f4+ 27 ♖g3 ♖xh4+ 28 ♜g1 and White is winning) 25 ♜d5 ♖f4 26 ♜xc6 ♜xc6 27 ♖exd8.

It seems that this endgame — which is clearly better for White but may not be easy to win — is the most that White can achieve by taking on

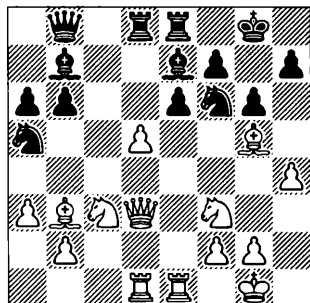
d5 on move 20 with the knight. However, after 19... ♖xd5 White has a better option available to him, which is analysed next.

b) As we have already seen in numerous previous examples, White usually captures on d5 with a knight in such situations, but here in view of the weakness of the f6-square (and the b6-pawn) it might be more beneficial for White to preserve the knight and play 20 ♖xd5!

The power of White's knights becomes apparent in the following forced line: 20... ♖xg5 (20... exd5 21 ♖xd5 ♖xg5 22 ♖xe8+ ♖xe8 23 ♖xg5 transposes to the same position as arises after 20... ♖xg5) 21 ♖xg5 (but not 21 hxg5? because of 21... ♖e7!.) 21... exd5 22 ♖xe8+ ♖xe8 23 ♖xd5 ♖e5 24 ♖f3! f5 25 ♖b3, where White is winning.

Therefore we may conclude that even after the better practical defence (19... ♖xd5), White obtains decisive advantage if he plays correctly — 20 ♖xd5! ♖xg5 21 ♖xg5.

Now let us come back to the position after 19... ♖a5?! (D).



20 dx6!

This sacrifice decides, as now Black cannot play 20... ♖xd3 because of 21 exf7+ ♖g7 22 fxe8 ♖+ ♖xe8 23 ♖xd3 ♖xb3 24 ♖de3 when White wins material and the game.

- | | | |
|----|-------|-------|
| 20 | ... | ♖xb3 |
| 21 | exf7+ | ♖xf7 |
| 22 | ♖c4+ | ♖g7 |
| 23 | ♖e5! | ♖g8?! |

The text is too passive. Black missed a chance to put up tougher resistance by playing 23... ♖d5!?. However, White succeeds in the following line: 24 ♖h6+! ♖xh6 25 ♖f7+ ♖g7 26 ♖xd8 ♖a5 27 ♖d4+ ♖f6 28 ♖xb6 ♖xd8 29 ♖xe8 ♖xb6 30 ♖xb8 ♖c7 31 ♖xb7 ♖xb7, where the resulting endgame is technically winning for him.

- | | | |
|----|----------|------|
| 24 | ♖f7+ | ♖h8 |
| 25 | ♖xd8 | ♖xd8 |
| 26 | ♖xb3 | ♖d4 |
| 27 | ♖e3 | ♖f8 |
| 28 | ♖xe7 1-0 | |

Brilliant play by GM Artur Yusupov — first, neat strategic manoeuvring and then an energetic storm of the opponent's position, involving material sacrifices.

It is harder to find examples where Black, having the isolated d5-pawn, manages to play the ...d5-d4 break with an advantage. Apparently there is an explanation for this: the breakthrough requires a lead in development and this is quite difficult for Black to achieve, unless White plays riskily or carelessly. However, sometimes it hap-

pens and then the ...d5-d4 blow in the centre works just as well for Black, as the d4-d5 break can do for White. Here is an example.

Korchnoi - Beliavsky

Leon 1994

- | | | |
|---|-------|------|
| 1 | c4 | c6 |
| 2 | d4 | d5 |
| 3 | e3 | ♟f6 |
| 4 | ♞c3 | e6 |
| 5 | ♞f3 | ♞bd7 |
| 6 | ♚c2 | ♙d6 |
| 7 | b3 | 0-0 |
| 8 | ♙b2?! | |

8 ♙e2 is the main line here. The text leads to a delay in the development of the kingside which Black can exploit with energetic play.

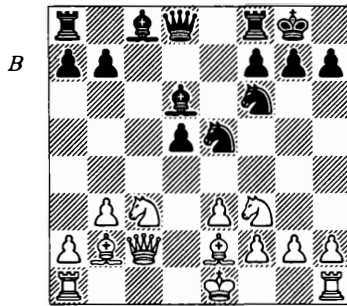
8 ... e5!

8...♞e8 gave White an advantage in the game Korchnoi-Tukmakov, Rotterdam 1988, after 9 ♙e2 dxc4 10 ♙xc4 e5 11 ♞d1 (Tukmakov recommended 11 ♞g5! ♞e7 12 0-0-0 as an even better option) 11...exd4 12 ♞xd4.

- | | | |
|----|---------|------|
| 9 | cxd5 | cxd5 |
| 10 | dxе5 | ♞xe5 |
| 11 | ♙e2 (D) | |

As a result of White's risky play in the opening, Black has a promising position. The main feature is the position of the white monarch in the centre. Thus the centre must be opened!

- | | | |
|----|-------|--------|
| 11 | ... | ♞xf3+! |
| 12 | ♙xf3 | d4! |
| 13 | exd4? | |



Annotating the game in *Informator No. 69*, Beliavsky recommended the prudent 13 ♞e4 ♞xe4 14 ♙xe4 dxe3 15 0-0!, where White could get some compensation for the pawn after 15...exf2+ 16 ♚xf2. Now the white king gets stuck in the centre.

- | | | |
|----|-----|------|
| 13 | ... | ♞e8+ |
| 14 | ♞f1 | |

If White tried to preserve the right to castle, Black would get full compensation for the sacrificed pawn as well, e.g. after 14 ♞e2?! ♙b4+ 15 ♙c3 ♙f5! 16 ♚d2 ♙xc3 17 ♚xc3 ♞c8 18 ♚b4 ♙d3 and Black has a great advantage, as White still cannot castle and therefore cannot connect his rooks.

Another try — 14 ♙e2 — is more acceptable, as then the tempting move 14...♞g4 leads Black nowhere after the simple 15 h3. However, Black gets a promising attacking position after 14...♙g4 15 f3 (White cannot play 15 0-0? because of 15...♚c7!) 15...♙h5 16 0-0 ♚c7 17 h3 ♙g6 18 ♙d3 ♞h5.

- | | | |
|----|-------------|---------|
| 14 | ...chesstou | ♙a5.com |
| 15 | ♚d1 | ♙b4 |

16 ♖c1 ♔d7

16...♗e6!? was another promising option.

17 a3

White can't afford to grab the b7-pawn, as after 17 ♗xb7?? Black wins material by 17...♗xc3 18 ♗xc3 ♖b5+ and 19...♗xb7.

17 ... ♗xc3

18 ♖xc3

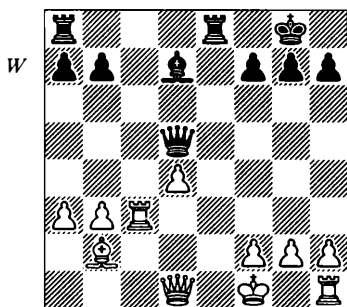
After 18 ♗xc3 Black gets an attacking position after 18...♗xa3 19 ♗xb7 ♖ab8 20 ♖a1 ♗e7 21 ♗f3 ♔e4 22 ♗xe4 ♗xe4.

18 ... ♔d5

19 ♗xd5

White cannot play 19 ♖c5?, as it loses on the spot to 19...♗b5+ 20 ♗e2 ♗xe2+ 21 ♗xe2 ♖xe2 22 ♖xa5 ♖xb2 due to the weakness of White's back rank.

19 ... ♖xd5 (D)



Here Black has a clear advantage, as the white king is unsafe and the h1-rook cannot be employed in the near future. As usual, the presence of opposite coloured bishops makes

the defence even more difficult.

20 a4 ♖ac8!

The exchange of the only active white rook is the best way to prove that the other one is out of play.

21 f3 ♖xc3

22 ♗xc3 ♗e3

23 ♗a1

White could not play 23 ♗d2? in view of 23...♖xf3+ 24 gxf3 ♗xf3+ 25 ♖g1 ♗c6.

23 ... ♖xb3

24 ♖f2 ♗xa4

25 ♖e1 f6

The premature 25...♖b2+?? would have been a disaster due to the back rank weakness — 26 ♗xb2 ♗xd1 27 ♖e8#.

26 ♖c1 ♗c6

27 ♖f4 h5

28 h4 ♖a3

29 ♖g3 ♖a2

30 ♗c3 ♖f7

Black is winning here and White's next move just speeds up his defeat.

31 ♖f5? ♖c7+

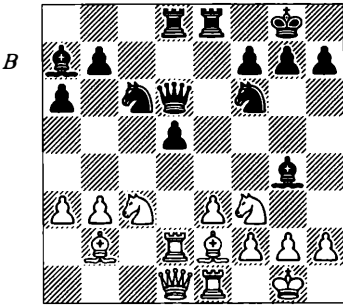
0-1

Here is our last example of this theme, a game where Black builds up an attacking position and exploits his advantage in energetic style.

Wirthensohn - Tal
Lucerne OL 1982

1 e4 ♔f6 2 ♔c3 c5 3 ♔f3 e6 4 e3 d5 5 cxd5 exd5 6 d4 ♔c6 7 ♗e2 ♗e7 8 dxc5 ♗xc5 9 0-0 0-0 10 b3 a6 11 ♗b2 ♖d6 12 ♖c1 ♗a7

13 ♖e1 ♗e8 14 a3 ♙g4 15 ♖c2
 ♜ad8 16 ♜d2 (D)



Black has achieved a fine attacking position. The pattern is similar to those we have seen in some of the previous examples, e.g. in the game Yusupov-Lobron (with colours reversed). It is worth mentioning once again that in such positions the presence of all pieces on the board is usually an indication that the possessor of the isolated d-pawn is doing well, while his opponent has made some mistakes. Here the influence of the d2-rook does not really discourage Black from advancing in the centre — he is ready for it!

16 ... d4!
 17 ♜xd4

17 exd4 leads to a position from the game after 17...♜xd4 (but not 17...♙xf3?!, which allows White to solve most of his problems after 18 ♙xf3 ♖xe1+ 19 ♗xe1 ♜xd4 20 ♜h1!) 18 ♜xd4 ♙xd4. On the other hand, capturing on d4 is compulsory, as 17 ♜b1? loses to 17...♙xf3 18

♙xf3 dxex3 19 fxe3 ♖xe3.
 17 ... ♜xd4
 18 exd4

White would not have survived after 18 ♙xg4 ♜xg4 19 ♗xg4 either, because of 19...♜f3+ 20 ♗xf3 ♗xd2.

18 ... ♙xd4
 19 ♙xg4 ♖xe1+

This is not the only way to defeat White in this position — 19...♜xg4 20 g3 ♗h6 would be just as good, as the following analysis proves:

a) 21 h4? ♖xe1+ (21...♙xf2+ wins as well) 22 ♗xe1 ♗xd2 23 ♗xd2 ♙xf2+ 24 ♗xf2 ♜xf2 25 ♜xf2 ♜d2+, winning;

b) 21 ♖xe8+ ♖xe8 22 h4 ♜xf2 23 ♖xf2 ♗e3 24 ♜e4 ♖xe4!? (or 24...♙xb2 25 ♗d7 ♖f8 to Black's advantage) 25 ♙xd4 ♖xd4 26 ♗f3 ♗xf3 27 ♖xf3 g6 and the resulting rook endgame is technically winning. Yet Tal's move is more forceful.

20 ♗xe1 ♜xg4
 21 ♜e4

The invasion of the black queen was inevitable, as 21 g3 loses to 21...♗h6 22 ♗e7 ♖f8 23 ♜e4 ♙xb2 24 ♜d8 g6.

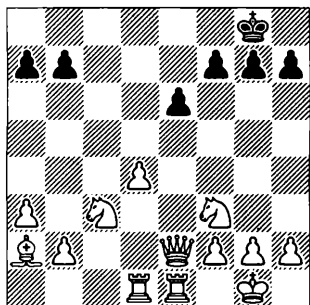
21 ... ♗xh2+
 22 ♜f1 ♗h1+
 23 ♜e2 ♗xg2
 24 ♜d1 ♗f3+
 25 ♗e2 ♗h1+
 26 ♗e1 ♗f3+
 27 ♗e2 ♗xb3+
 28 ♜e1 ♜e5
 29 ♜g5 ♙c3

Summary

The d4-d5 (...d5-d4) thrust is a serious positional threat. When successfully managed, this break leads to the opening of the centre and creates a pawn-free centre — a situation for which the (former) possessor of the isolani is usually better prepared due to his space advantage. This pawn breakthrough often occurs early in the opening phase and it is particularly dangerous if the side playing against the isolani has not yet managed to simplify the position.

It is important from a practical point of view to develop pattern recognition. I would like to point out that while working on this theme, I often encountered one particular piece set-up which works really well for the d4-d5 plan. This pattern is:

White's rooks on d1 and e1, White's queen on e2 or d3 and White's light-squared bishop on the a2-g8 diagonal.



Then, when the d4-d5 thrust is achieved, White usually gets a lot of pressure on the newly opened d- and

e- files, as well as on the cleared a2-g8 diagonal. Quite often Black experiences difficulties with protecting the vulnerable f7-square, as, for example, in the game de la Villa-Sion. The same piece pattern (but with colours reversed) worked well for Black in the game Wirthensohn-Tal.

Although the central break is extremely dangerous for the side playing against the isolated pawn, there are ways of dealing with it. Here are some ideas:

1. Try to exchange at least some pieces in order to simplify the position and thus to reduce the attacking potential of your opponent's pieces. This is the most common plan while playing against the isolani in general.
2. Take especially good care of the square in front of the isolated d-pawn — firmly control it with your pieces, placing a minor piece of your own there if necessary.

3. Try to bring your rooks into the centre as soon as possible — they should be there if the centre opens up. It would help if you can exchange the rooks along an open file (for example, on the c-file) — that would reduce the impact of a possible break in the centre.

4. Pay particular attention to your king's safety. Great care should be taken over the critical f7- (f2-) square.

Now I should like to move on, in our next chapter, to another theme which is very common for the examined pawn structure — the vulnerability of the f7- (f2-) square.

2 Attack on the f7- (f2-) square

After the removal of the e6-pawn, the diagonal a2-g8 — including the critical f7-square — often becomes weak and causes a lot of trouble for Black. We saw this already in quite a few of the previous examples, for example in the game de la Villa-Sion.

Sometimes in order to eliminate the e6-pawn and so make his light-squared bishop more active, White advances not his d-pawn, but the f-pawn. After f4-f5 and ...exf5 the diagonal is cleared and the f7-square becomes more vulnerable, while the d-pawn becomes passed. This idea worked fine for White, for example, in two rather famous games of Botvinnik — against Vidmar, Nottingham 1936, and against Tolush, Moscow 1965. As these games can be found elsewhere, we won't quote them here, showing a few more recent examples of this plan instead.

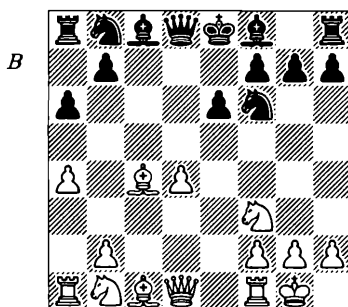
Lerner - Kharitonov
USSR Ch, Lvov 1984

1	d4	d5
2	c4	dxc4
3	Qf3	a6

4	e3	Qf6
5	Qxc4	e6
6	a4	c5
7	0-0	cxd4

7...Qc6 is a much more common choice here, when after 8 ♖e2 Black can choose between 8...cxd4 9 ♜d1 Qe7 10 exd4 0-0, playing against the isolated pawn, or 8...♗c7, keeping the tension in the centre.

8 exd4 (D)



8	...	Qc6
9	Qc3	Qe7
10	Qe3	0-0
11	♗e2	b6

Black could also play 11...Qb4, followed by Qd7 and ♜c8, or blockade the d4-pawn by 11...Qd5.

12 ♖ad1 ♖b4
 13 ♗e5 ♙b7
 14 f4!?

This plan is particularly suitable for White when his rook is still on f1, as here, since it can then be employed on the f-file.

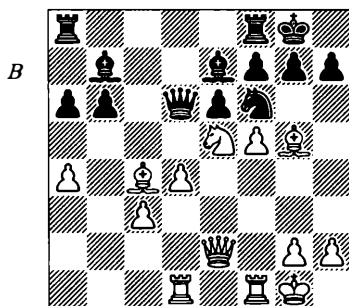
14 ... ♗bd5
 15 f5 ♜d6?!

Black misses a chance to swap the white bishop, which could play an important role in White's initiative on the kingside.

He should have preferred 15... exf5!? 16 ♖xf5 ♖xe3 17 ♜xe3 ♖c8 with mutual chances (but not 17... ♗d5?!, because of 18 ♗xd5 ♙xd5 19 ♙xd5 ♜xd5 20 ♗g6!+-).

16 ♙g5! ♗xc3
 17 bxc3 (D)

Strictly speaking, we have here another pawn formation — the c3 and d4 pawn couple, which very often arises from positions with the isolated d-pawn.



As I understand it, in chess literature in English these pawns are — like the c4-d4 pawn-pair — called

'hanging pawns', whereas Russian chess literature distinguishes between these two cases. Indeed, when there is a pawn on c3, the d4-pawn is not really 'hanging'.

Anyway, these are methodological differences and it is far more important to understand how to play such positions, than how to name them! Now White has a strong initiative on the kingside, while his position in the centre is solid.

17 ... ♗e4
 18 ♙xe7 ♜xe7
 19 ♜g4 ♗f6
 20 ♜h3 exf5
 21 ♜xf5 ♙e4?!

Black urgently calls the bishop to fortify the kingside, but it does not help much. 21... ♖ac8 would also leave Black with difficult problems after 22 ♗de1 ♜d6 23 ♖e3!.

22 ♜g5 ♙g6
 23 ♖f3

The rook lift to the kingside along the third rank is another standard technique in this pawn formation. We will discuss it in more detail in Chapter 3.

23 ... ♜c7
 24 ♖h3 ♖fe8
 25 ♙b3+-

Now the bishop, which was moved to the right wing to protect the king, begins to cause problems itself, as White threatens to destroy Black's position after 26 ♗xg6 hxg6 27 ♜xg6. That forces Black to eliminate the e5-knight, giving up the exchange.

The final moves were: 25... ♖xe5
 26 ♜xe5 ♜d7 27 ♜c3 ♜e8 28 ♜f4
 ♜c8 29 ♜de1 b5 30 axb5 axb5 31
 h3 ♜c6 32 ♜f3 ♜b6 33 ♜e5 b4 34
 ♜e3 h6 35 c4 ♜h7 36 c5 1-0.

Neverov - Maksimenko
 Ukraine Ch, Kherson 1989

1	d4	♘f6
2	c4	e6
3	♘c3	♙b4
4	e3	c5
5	♙d3	cx d4
6	ex d4	d5
7	♘f3	dx c4
8	♙xc4	♘bd7
9	0-0	♘b6?!

9...0-0 would be more prudent. After 10 ♜e2 b6 Black gets a normal position known from the Nimzo-Indian Defence, where Black can choose between playing against the isolani or taking on c3.

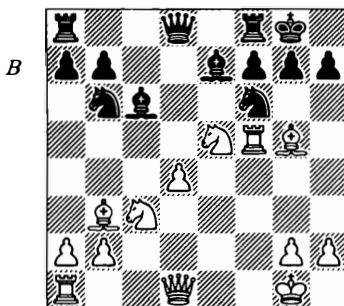
10	♙b3	♙d7
11	♙g5	♙e7
12	♘e5	♙c6?!

Once again the immediate 12...0-0 would be a better idea, as the bishop could stay on d7 in case White chose the plan with f2-f4-f5, and could be transferred to c6 if White does not go for it. After 12...0-0 White should continue with 13 ♜e2, followed by ♜ad1 (intending to play ♜fe1 and d4-d5!) and should switch to the plan involving f2-f4-f5 only after ...♙c6. The tempting 13 ♜f3 can be met by 13...♙c6, when 14 ♘c6 bxc6 15 ♜xc6 ♜xd4 is O.K. for Black.

13 f4!

Now this plan is particularly good, as Black has lost control over the f5-square.

13	...	0-0
14	f5	ex f5
15	♜xf5 (D)	



White has achieved his strategic goal — the e6-pawn has been removed and now Black has problems with the a2-g8 diagonal in general and with the f7-square in particular. We should also pay attention to the fact that Black's influence over the vital d5-square is at least questionable now.

15 ... ♘fd5?

This desire to relieve the pressure by exchanging some pieces is very understandable, as otherwise White would simply bring more forces into the game, for example by playing moves like ♜d1-d3 and ♜a1-f1, increasing the tension. However, this tactic of simplification can no longer solve all Black's problems here. Instead of the text, Black should have preferred 15...♘bd5 or even 15...♘c8 with the idea of ...♘d6.

After 15...♖b5 White does not achieve anything special by playing 16 ♖xd5, as Black has a nice choice between 16...♖xd5 17 ♗xe7 ♜xe7 18 ♜xc6 bxc6 19 ♗xd5 cxd5 20 ♜xd5 ♜e3+ 21 ♖h1 ♜f2 with compensation for the pawn and 16... ♗xd5!? 17 ♗xd5 (17 ♗xf6?! ♗xf6 18 ♜g4? is bad because of 18... ♗xb3!-+) 17...♜xd5 18 ♜g4 ♗xg5 19 ♜xg5 g6 with mutual chances.

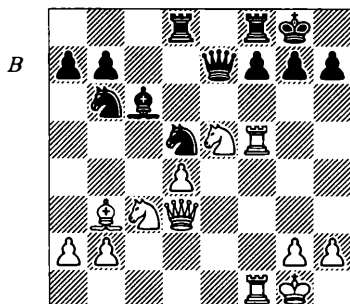
In the last variation White can force a draw if he wants to, by playing 20 ♜xg6 hxg6 21 ♜xg6+ fxg6 22 ♜xg6+.

However, White would probably choose instead 16 ♗xf6 ♜xf6 (16...♗xf6? gives White a clear advantage after 17 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 18 ♜g4 ♗e6 19 ♜xf6+ gxf6 20 ♜f2) 17 ♜d3 ♜d6, with complicated play, or 16 ♜f3!?

16 ♗xe7 ♜xe7
17 ♜d3

Also possible was 17 ♜f3, but the text is more precise as now the queen can be used on the b1-h7 diagonal.

17 ... ♜ad8
18 ♜af1 (D)



The position in the diagram is a triumph for White's plan: he has pressure both on the f-file and on the a2-g8 diagonal, thus the f7-pawn is under strong fire. This position is already close to winning for White, as our analysis shows.

18 ... f6

This is the only way to protect the f7-square, as 18...♜f6? loses on the spot to 19 ♗c2 when ♜xf6 is inevitable.

19 ♜h5! g5?!

The text looks like desperation and it shows that strategically the battle is lost. Black probably should have preferred the less committal move 19...g6, although even then White retains a very strong attack by playing 20 ♜xg6! hxg6 21 ♜xg6+ ♜g7 22 ♜e4. Then the continuation might be as follows: 22...♜fe8 (22...♜f7? fails at once because of 23 ♜ff5 ♜fe8 24 ♜h4+-) 23 ♜f3 ♜f7 24 ♜e4! and White's attack decides after 24...♜xe4 25 ♜g5+ ♖h8 26 ♜xe4 ♜h7 27 ♜xh7+ ♖xh7 28 ♜g3! ♖h6 29 ♗c2 ♗d7 30 ♜g6+ ♖h5 31 ♜g7.

20 ♜g4 ♜d7
21 h4

White had even a more energetic way of capitalising on his advantage here: 21 ♜f5! ♖h8 22 ♜e5 winning.

21 ... gxh4?!
22 ♜e3 ♜f8
23 ♜ff5 1-0

The side playing against the isolated d-pawn, naturally, may have more problems with the f7 (or f2) square in the lines where he has a c-

pawn instead of an e-pawn. Such versions of the isolani occur, for example, after 1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 e3 e5 4 $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{xc4}$ exd4 5 exd4 $\text{\textcircled{d}}\text{f6}$ 6 $\text{\textcircled{d}}\text{f3}$ 0-0 7 0-0, where it is Black, who may have problems with the a2-g8 diagonal, or 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 $\text{\textcircled{d}}\text{d2}$ a6 4 $\text{\textcircled{d}}\text{gf3}$ c5 5 exd5 exd5, where White often gets to play against the isolated pawn. In that case, the difficulties he may experience with the potentially vulnerable f2-square are well illustrated by the following game:

Rogić - V.Kovačević
Croatia Ch 1995

- 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 $\text{\textcircled{d}}\text{d2}$ a6 4 $\text{\textcircled{d}}\text{gf3}$ c5
5 exd5 exd5
6 $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{e2}$ $\text{\textcircled{d}}\text{f6}$
7 0-0 $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{e7}$
8 dxc5 $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{xc5}$
9 $\text{\textcircled{d}}\text{b3}$ $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{a7}$

Black keeps the bishop on the important a7-g1 diagonal; after 9... $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{e7}$ 10 $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{e3}$ 0-0 11 $\text{\textcircled{d}}\text{fd4}$ $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{e8}$ 12 $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{e1}$ $\text{\textcircled{d}}\text{bd7}$ 13 $\text{\textcircled{d}}\text{f5}$ White got better chances in the game Chandler-Razuvaev, Keszthely 1981.

10 $\text{\textcircled{w}}\text{d3}$

White plans to exchange the dark-squared bishops, which should strengthen his control over the d4-square. Another option here is 10 $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{g5}!$?, trying to prove that the a7-bishop may be missing on the kingside.

That gave White better chances in the game Chiburdanidze-Levitina, Wch wom (12), Volgograd 1984, af-

ter 10... $\text{\textcircled{d}}\text{bd7}!$? (10...0-0 would have been better, leaving the option of ... $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{g4}$ open) 11 $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{d3}$ 0-0 12 $\text{\textcircled{w}}\text{d2}$ $\text{\textcircled{d}}\text{c5}$ 13 $\text{\textcircled{d}}\text{xc5}$ $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{xc5}$ 14 $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{ae1}$ $\text{\textcircled{w}}\text{d6}$ 15 c3. White went on to win that game after 15...h6? 16 $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{f4}$ $\text{\textcircled{w}}\text{b6}$ 17 b4 $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{d6}$ 18 $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{hx6}!$, as Black could not afford to recapture on h6 in view of the crushing attack after 18...gxh6 19 $\text{\textcircled{w}}\text{hx6}$.

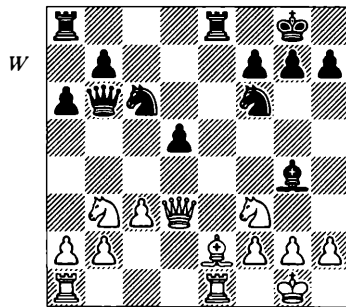
- | | | |
|----|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 10 | ... | 0-0 |
| 11 | $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{e3}$ | $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{xe3}$ |
| 12 | $\text{\textcircled{w}}\text{xe3}$ | $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{e8}$ |
| 13 | $\text{\textcircled{w}}\text{d3}$ | $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{g4}$ |
| 14 | $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{fe1}$ | $\text{\textcircled{d}}\text{c6}$ |

As a result of the time-consuming plan with 10 $\text{\textcircled{w}}\text{d3}$ and 11 $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{e3}$, Black has comfortable development for all his pieces.

15 c3

Probably 15 $\text{\textcircled{d}}\text{bd4}!$? would be better instead, e.g. 15... $\text{\textcircled{d}}\text{e4}$ 16 $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{ad1}$ or 15... $\text{\textcircled{w}}\text{b6}$ 16 $\text{\textcircled{w}}\text{b3}$, with a small advantage for White in both cases.

15 ... $\text{\textcircled{w}}\text{b6}!$ (D)



Black is targeting the b2- and f2-pawns. chesstouring.com

16 $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{f1}?$

38 Attack on the f7- (f2-) square

As the bishop will be quite inactive on f1, there was no point in retaining it. Instead of his last move, White should have played **16 ♖fd4** with equal chances. He has obviously underestimated the potential danger in his position.

16 ... ♜xf3!

Black reduces White's control over the d4-square and seizes the initiative. This move also illustrates an old rule, which states that the possessor of the isolani should exchange his bishops and keep the knights. This statement cannot be regarded as an absolute, but it gives an important and useful hint to a player. This advice means that as they are more flexible pieces, knights are generally more useful in such pawn formations — at one moment a knight can be protecting the isolated pawn and the next it can be quickly re-deployed and take part in the attack, enjoying the support such a pawn gives him.

17 ♖xf3 a5!

Attack on the b2-pawn is a typical idea in such positions, which often arise from the 3 ♖d2 c5 line of the French Defence. Black's last move is particularly unpleasant for White here, since the d4-square is no longer available for his knight.

18 ♜xe8+ ♜xe8

19 ♖f4?

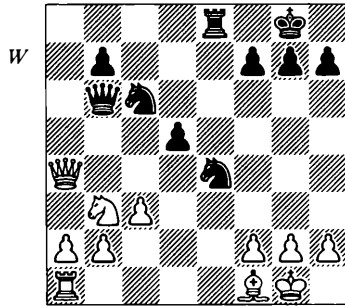
White tries to stop ...a5-a4 but overlooks another, even more dangerous threat. **19 ♜b1** should have been played instead. Then 19...♖e4 can and has to be met with **20 ♖e3!** and

White holds the position, while the more 'natural' move **20 ♖f4?** fails completely in view of **20...a4 21 ♖d2 g5!** and White loses material. Black would have maintained the initiative after **19...a4** (instead of **19...♖e4**) **20 ♖d2 d4**, but White cannot be too unhappy here.

19 ... a4!

Anyway!

20 ♖xa4 ♖e4+ (D)



White collapses due to the vulnerable f2-square. The rest is a matter of technique: **21 ♖d4 ♖xb2 22 ♖c2 ♖b6! 23 ♜d3 ♖xf2+ 24 ♖h1 ♖c5 25 ♖b5 ♖xd3 26 ♖xd3 ♜e2 27 ♖xe2 ♖xe2 28 ♜e1 ♖e6 29 ♜xe6 fxe6 30 ♖g1 ♖f7 31 ♖f2 e5 32 ♖e3 ♖e6 33 ♖d3 h5 34 a4 ♖a5 35 ♖e3 b6 36 ♖d1 ♖b3 37 ♖b2 ♖c5+ 38 ♖e3 g5 39 g3 ♖f5 40 ♖f3 g4+ 41 ♖e3 ♖e6 42 ♖d2 ♖d6 43 ♖e3 ♖c6 44 ♖d2 ♖b7 45 ♖c2 ♖a6 46 ♖d2 ♖a5 47 ♖c2 ♖a6 48 ♖d2 ♖b7 49 ♖c2 ♖c6 50 ♖d2 ♖d6 51 ♖e3 ♖e6 52 ♖d2 ♖f6 53 ♖e2 e4 54 ♖d2 ♖e5 55 ♖e2 ♖e6 56 c4 d4 57 c5 bxc5 58 a5 ♖d5 0-1.**

We have analysed some games where the f7-square was vulnerable because of the absence of a pawn on e6. However, even the presence of the pawn there does not guarantee Black a carefree existence, as White often targets the f7-square anyway, particularly if the e6-pawn lacks protection. This motif was used by then young Botvinnik in the following game:

Botvinnik - Batuyev
Leningrad Ch 1931

- | | | |
|---|-----|------|
| 1 | d4 | d5 |
| 2 | c4 | e6 |
| 3 | ♘c3 | ♘f6 |
| 4 | ♙g5 | ♙e7 |
| 5 | e3 | 0-0 |
| 6 | ♘f3 | ♘bd7 |
| 7 | ♙d3 | |

Theory recommends here 7 ♖c1 as the best option, but the text was a pet line of Botvinnik at the time — he often aimed for positions with the isolated pawn.

- | | | |
|---|------|-------|
| 7 | ... | dx c4 |
| 8 | ♙xc4 | c5 |
| 9 | 0-0 | cx d4 |

9...a6 would have been preferable and only after 10 a4 — 10...cx d4, as the b4-square might become weak then.

- | | | |
|----|-------|--------|
| 10 | ex d4 | ♘b6 |
| 11 | ♙b3 | ♘bd5?! |

There was no need to occupy the blockading square yet; Black should have played 11...♙d7 instead.

- | | | |
|----|-----|--|
| 12 | ♘e5 | |
|----|-----|--|

Perhaps 12 ♖e2, followed by ♖ad1 and ♖fe1, is even more promising here.

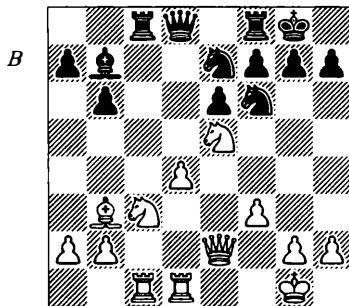
- | | | |
|----|------|-------|
| 12 | ... | ♘d7!? |
| 13 | ♙xe7 | ♘xe7 |
| 14 | ♖e2 | |

White could have played 14 ♘e4!?, trying to exploit some weakness of the dark squares, since after the exchange of the dark-squared bishops these may be open to occupation.

- | | | |
|----|------|-----|
| 14 | ... | ♘f6 |
| 15 | ♖fd1 | |

Botvinnik decided that the other rook could be usefully employed on the open c-file; another possible plan here is 15 ♖ad1 and then ♖fe1. Where to put the rooks is always a difficult question in such positions.

- | | | |
|----|------|-----|
| 15 | ... | b6 |
| 16 | ♖ac1 | ♙b7 |
| 17 | f3!? | (D) |



White makes the move ♘c3-e4 possible, limiting the black bishop at the same time.

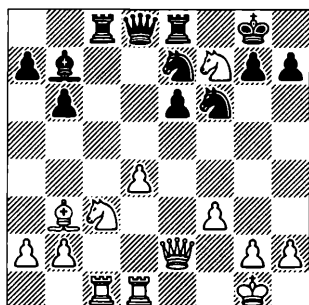
- | | | |
|----|-----|------|
| 17 | ... | ♖c8? |
|----|-----|------|

Careless! This is a typical example of a 'natural' move, which is often made automatically, without too

much thinking. Indeed, why not place the rook on an open file? Here the problem is that the text makes possible for White a combination, which did not work before simply because the rook was not on c8! So, Black set himself up. Instead he could have played 17... ♖ed5 18 ♗e4 ♜c8 with roughly equal chances.

18 ♖xf7! (D)

Now White gets at the very least a rook and two pawns for a knight and bishop, which is a material advantage for him.



18 ... ♜xf7?!

This move loses. Instead, Black should have tried to complicate the issue by taking on f7 with the king: 18... ♗xf7 19 ♗xe6+ (19 ♜xe6+ ♗g6 20 ♗c2+ ♗h6 21 ♜h3+ ♗h5 22 g4 g6 is not so clear.) 19... ♗g6 20 ♜d3+ ♗h6 21 ♗xc8 ♗xc8. Here White's advantage is undoubted, but the fight continues.

19 ♜xe6 ♜f8

Or 19... ♖ed5? 20 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 21 ♜xc8 ♗xc8 22 ♜xd5 and White wins.

20 ♗e4! ♜xc1
21 ♜xc1 ♗fd5
22 ♗d6 ♗a8
23 ♜e1!

The simplest way to win here, although 23 ♖xf7 ♜xf7 24 ♜c8+ ♗xc8 25 ♜xc8+ ♜f8 26 ♜d7 would also win.

23 ... g6
24 ♗xf7 ♜xf7
25 ♜xe7 1-0

Here is an example of this positional motif from the author's own practice.

Baburin - Brady
Kilkenny open 1995

1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 ♗f3 ♗f6 4 e3
e6 5 ♗xc4 c5 6 ♜e2 cxd4 7 exd4
♗c6

8 ♗e3

Here 8 0-0 is more promising as White obtains fine compensation for a pawn after 8... ♗xd4 9 ♗xd4 ♜xd4 10 ♗c3. If Black plays 8... ♗e7 instead, then White continues 9 ♗d1 0-0 10 ♗c3 with a very promising position. In that case the c1-bishop can be placed more actively on g5, instead of e3.

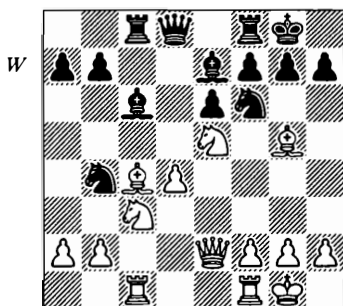
Nevertheless, the text is quite playable too.

8 ... ♗e7
9 0-0 0-0
10 ♗c3 ♗b4
11 ♗e5 ♗d7
12 ♜ac1 ♜c8

Perhaps Black could do better without this move, playing simply

12... ♖c6 — he should not be afraid of 13 ♜xc6 bxc6!, as the shift of the pawn to c6 usually suits Black. In such a case the d4-pawn loses its mobility, while the c6-pawn itself isn't weak. We will examine such examples later in the book.

13 ♗g5!? ♖c6? (D)



After the text, which is either provocative or just careless, the position looks very similar to the one which occurred in our previous example. As I knew the game Botvinnik-Batuyev rather well, I immediately began to examine the capture on f7 — this is how pattern recognition works! Here the blow on f7 does not work quite as well as in that game, but still creates difficult problems for Black.

14 ♜xf7! ♝xf7

15 ♗xe6 ♗d7

This is probably Black's best attempt — he forces the capture on f7.

16 ♗xf7+ ♖xf7

17 ♝fe1!?

While I decided to bring the rook into the action, White has another promising continuation here: 17 a3!?

♜c6 (but not 17... ♜bd5? because of 18 ♜xd5 ♜xd5 19 ♗xe7 ♜xe7 20 ♝f3+ ♖g8 21 ♝xb7, winning) 18 d5 ♜xd5 19 ♗xe7 ♜dxe7 20 ♜e4 with a very dangerous attack. For example: 20... ♗f5 21 ♝fd1 ♜d4 22 ♝h5+ ♖f8 (the best defence, as both 22... ♗g6 23 ♝xc8 ♜xc8 24 ♝g4 and 22... ♜g6 23 ♝xc8 ♗xc8 24 ♖h1 are hopeless for Black.) 23 ♜g5 ♜g6 24 ♝xc8 ♗xc8 25 ♖h1, moving the king away from the possible checks of the d4-knight. White's advantage is then close to decisive.

17 ... ♗f5

17... ♗g4 would have also left White with the advantage after 18 ♝d2 or 18 ♝e3.

18 ♗xf6!? (D)

The text sets up a little trap and strangely enough Black falls into it, playing his next move without too much thought.

18 ... ♗xf6?

Before making this move Black should have asked himself: if 18... ♗xf6 is good for Black, why would White take on f6, parting with a good bishop?! Having answered this question Black would have played 18... gxf6, although here White maintains big advantage as well after 19 ♝b5 ♗d3 (19... ♝d7?? loses in view of 20 ♝xe7+ ♖xe7 21 ♝xb4+) 20 ♝xb7 ♝c7 21 ♝f3 ♝xd4 22 a3.

19 ♝b5!

This is the reason why Black should have not recaptured on f6 with the bishop — now he loses a piece and the game.

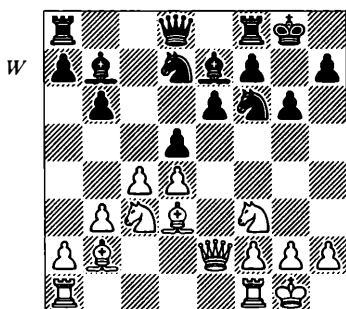
19 ... ♖d3
 20 ♜xf5 ♖xc1
 21 ♜xc1 ♖g8
 22 ♜d1 ♜c7
 23 ♖d5 ♜c4
 24 ♜e6+ 1-0

Our next game proves that with many pieces on the board the blow on f7 can be a *major strategic threat*, which may be rather difficult to prevent due to Black's space limitations. Remember, one of the advantages conferred on the possessor of the isolani is the command of more space.

Taimanov - P.Ostojić

Reykjavik 1968

1 d4 ♖f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♖f3 b6 4 ♖c3
 ♜b7 5 e3 ♜e7 6 ♜d3 d5 7 0-0 0-0
 8 b3 c5 9 ♜b2 ♖bd7
 10 ♜e2 cxd4
 11 exd4 g6 (D)



Black employs a plan, standard for such positions — he limits the d3-bishop and prepares for ...♜e8 and ...♜e7-f8-g7. Then the residence of his monarch will be very safe.

12 ♜ad1 ♖h5

The thematic 12...♜e8 would have been more appropriate.

13 ♜e3 ♜c8
 14 ♖e2 ♜e8
 15 ♖e5 dxc4
 16 ♜xc4!?

After 16 bxc4 ♖xe5 17 ♜xe5 ♜f6 Black would have got unpleasant pressure against the hanging pawns. The text is more interesting and inventive.

16 ... ♖h6?

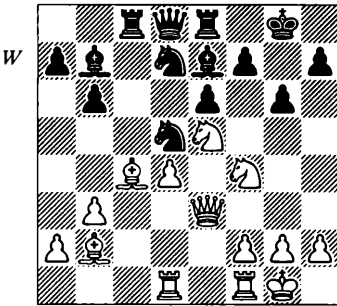
Black should have left the knight on h5 for a little while longer. From there it covers the f4-square, not allowing the e2-knight to advance there. Instead of the text Black could have played 16...♜f8 with good play. White's position has one very serious defect: the inactive placement of the dark-squared bishop, which usually does not belong on b2 in such a pawn formation.

17 ♖f4 ♜f8??

White has aimed his knights and bishop at the e6 and f7 squares and Black should have taken careful note of that. Instead he carries on with his plan of fianchettoing the bishop, which allows White to finish the game in fine style.

Rather than the text move, Black ought to play 17...♖d5 (D), after which it wouldn't be easy for White to prove his advantage.

The diagram position at the top of the facing page is worth more detailed analysis. White does not achieve anything positive by playing 18 ♖xd5



♕xd5, as then after 19 ♕b5 ♖xe5
 20 ♕xe8 (probably 20 dxe5 is a better try.) 20... ♖f3+ 21 gxf3 ♗xe8
 Black has good positional compensation for the exchange, while 19 ♕xd5 leads to a roughly equal position after 19...exd5 20 ♗f3 ♖f6 21 ♖c1 ♗d6 22 h3 ♗e6.

However, White has a terrific queen sacrifice at his disposal — 18 ♖xf7!! ♖xe3 19 fxe3. Although now White has only a knight and a pawn for a queen and it's Black to play while the f7-knight is *en prise*, it is nevertheless White who is better here! Black has to give a queen back immediately by playing 19...♖xc4, as 19...♗c7? loses because of 20 ♖xe6 ♗b8 21 ♖h6+ ♖h8 22 d5+ ♖e5 23 ♕xe5+ ♗xe5 24 ♖f7+ ♖g8 25 ♖xe5. After 19...♖xc4 20 ♖xd8 ♖c2 21 ♖xb7 ♖xb2 22 ♖xe6 Black should try 22...♖f8 with some drawing chances, while 22...♖b8? fails to

23 ♖c1!, winning.

Now we return to the game continuation following 17...♕f8.

18 ♖xf7!

This blow is devastating!

18 ... ♖xf7

19 ♖xe6 ♖xe6

20 ♗xe6+ ♖g7

21 ♗f7+ ♖h8

22 ♖fe1

White has both a material and a positional advantage. As soon as the b2-bishop joins the attack, the curtain falls.

22 ... b5

23 ♕e6 ♖c7

24 d5 ♖e5

25 ♗xf6+ 1-0

Summary

Playing with the isolated d-pawn, always keep an eye on the f7- (f2-) square, since its weakness can often be exploited — typically by a ♖xf7 strike. Then usually the e6-pawn goes as well, Black's position becomes unsafe and White gets an attack on the opponent's king.

When you play against the isolated d-pawn, pay attention to the critical f7- (f2-) square — protect it, particularly when there is existing pressure on the a2-g8 (a7-g1) diagonal. Challenge or chase away the opponent's pieces which target that square.

3 Kingside attack: the Rook lift

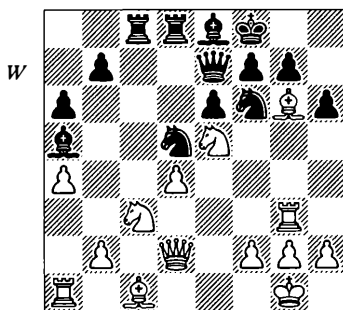
Along with the pawn break d4-d5 (or ...d5-d4 for Black) and the strike on f7/f2, the possessor of the isolated d4-pawn often has another very dangerous plan — a kingside attack. The arsenal of such an attack consists of such techniques as:

- the Rook lift along the third rank,
- the transfer of the Queen to the king's wing,
- the Bishop sacrifice on h6, and
- the march of the h-pawn.

Often all these techniques are used together, giving, when successfully managed, the possessor of the isolani a significant superiority in force on the kingside. This often enables him to crack the residence of the opponent's monarch by means of a sacrificial combination.

Here we shall closely examine these methods, beginning with the rook lift to the kingside. See the diagram position, which we shall analyse later in this chapter on page 48.

The rook lift often comes up as a natural result of White's advantage in space and his rooks' flexibility when they get in position on the semi-open c- and e- files, or on the d-file



behind the isolani. Brought to the king's flank, a rook adds a lot of firepower to the attack and often makes it unstoppable. Therefore, the side playing against the isolani should always bear in mind this positional motif and try to prevent it.

Let us study the games in which the rook lift worked just fine for White. For the purpose of clarity in our examples, we assume that White is the possessor of the isolated d-pawn.

Benko - Filip

Wijk aan Zee 1970

1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 e3
e6 5 ♙xc4 c5 6 0-0 a6 7 a4 ♘c6 8
♙e2 ♙e7 9 ♖d1 cxd4 10 exd4 0-0

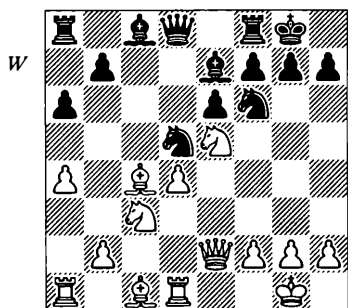
11 ♖c3 ♜b4

Nowadays 11...♜d5 is more popular here, preventing 12 ♙g5 and rendering 12 ♜e5 rather harmless in view of 12...♜xc3 13 bxc3 ♜xe5 when Black has comfortable game.

12 ♜e5

Bareev played 12 ♙g5 against Ivanchuk in Linares in 1994 and got an advantage after 12...♜d7 13 ♜e5 ♜c8 14 ♜e1!? ♙e8 15 ♜ad1 ♜fd5 16 ♜xd5 ♜xd5 17 ♙xd5 ♙xg5 18 ♙xb7.

12 ... ♜bd5?! (D)



Such a move is rather standard in positions with the isolani but here it is wrong: the knight had the important duty of covering the d3-square, which it no longer attacks after the text. In addition, being placed on d5, the knight works as a shelter for the d4-pawn. Black has some other options here and I would like to quote a few games that illustrate some techniques employed in positions with the isolated d-pawn.

After 12...♜fd5 13 ♜e4 b6 14 ♜a3 f5 White sacrificed a piece by playing 15 ♜h3 fxe4 16 ♙xe4, but Black suc-

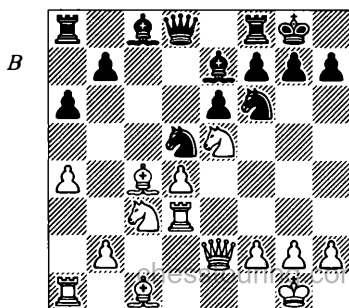
cessfully defended and eventually won in the game Browne-Christiansen, USA 1977, after 16...h5 17 ♙e2 h4 18 ♜g6 ♜a7 19 ♜xf8 ♙xf8 20 ♙g4 ♙f7 21 ♜f3 ♜f6 22 ♙e1.

Another option for Black here is 12...b6 and then White has two choices:

a) 13 ♙f3 ♜fd5 (but not 13...♜bd5? because of 14 ♜c6!±, while after 13...♜a7 White can consider 14 d5!?) 14 ♜xd5!? exd5 15 ♙b3 ♙e6 16 ♙d2 f6 17 ♜g4 ♜c6 18 ♙c3 ♙d7. Then after 19 h3! ♜ad8 20 ♙e2 a5 21 ♜e1 ♙f7 22 ♙f3 ♜h8 23 ♜e3 ♜fe8 24 ♙c2 ♙f8 25 ♙d3 ♙d6 26 h4! ♜b4 27 ♜f5 ♙c7 28 ♙b5 White seized the initiative and won in the game Pinter-Korchnoi, Beer-Sheva 1988;

b) 13 ♜e4 ♙b7 14 ♜xf6+ ♙xf6 15 ♜a3 ♜c8 16 ♜h3 (Yet another example of the rook lift!) 16...♜c7 17 b3 b5 18 axb5 axb5 19 ♙h5 ♙e4 20 ♙xb5 ♜d5 21 ♙c4 h6 22 ♜g3 and White realised his material and positional advantage in the game Bischoff-Hort, Dortmund 1985.

13 ♜d3! (D)



13 ... ♔d7?!

Perhaps, instead of the text Black should have tried the paradoxical 13...♖b4!?, as then after 14 ♖g3 he can grab the d-pawn — 14...♙xd4. Of course, that would give White the initiative after 15 ♕h6 ♖e8 16 ♖d1, but at least Black would have some material to count on. Now White has his attack 'free of charge'.

14 ♖g3 ♖h8

Black tried a different defensive idea, 14...♖e8, in the game Marin-Ghitescu, Romania Ch 1987, but 15 ♕h6 g6 16 h4! gave White a strong attack.

15 ♖h3! ♕e8

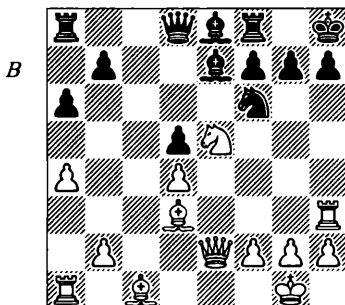
15...♕c6 would hardly serve Black better — White plays 16 ♕d3, threatening 17 ♕g5, when 16...♖b4 loses at once to 17 ♕xh7! ♖xh7 18 ♙h5. The text overprotects the f7-square, preparing for a future ...g6.

16 ♖xd5 exd5

Black won't do any better with 16...♖xd5, as then after 17 ♙h5 (but not 17 ♕xd5?, which allows Black to use his queen in defence after 17...♙xd5 18 ♙h5 ♙e4 ≠) 17...♖f6 18 ♙h4 he is forced to weaken his position further by playing 18...h5, since 18...♖c8 allows White to break through after 19 ♕g5 h6 20 ♕xh6!. After 18...h5 White maintains a strong attack by 19 ♕g5 g6 20 g4.

17 ♕d3 (D)

Since the black pawn arrived at d5, the position has changed radically — we have another type of pawn structure. The d4-pawn is still isolated, but



now it is sheltered by the black one. In such symmetrical pawn formations, the difference in piece placement and activity becomes the major factor, and here White is way ahead of Black in this respect.

He has a glorious knight in the centre, two bishops pointed towards the kingside with the queen eyeing the same flank, and all these forces are supported by the h3-rook. No wonder that White's attack here is irresistible. Right now he threatens 18 ♕xh7! ♖xh7 19 ♙h5, winning.

17 ... g6

17...h6? loses on the spot to 18 ♕xh6! gxh6 19 ♖xh6+ ♖g7 20 ♙e3!.

18 ♕h6 ♖g8

19 ♖e1

The last White piece joins the attack, which can no longer be stopped.

19 ... ♕f8

The alternative 19...♖b4 can be simply disregarded by 20 ♙f3, and if then Black continues consistently with 20...♕xe1?!, then after 21 ♕g5 ♖g7 22 ♕xf6 ♙a5 23 ♖g4! White gets a crushing attack. For example: but

23... ♖d2 24 ♙xg7+ ♜xg7 25 ♜f6+ ♜g8 26 ♞h6+ ♜f8 27 ♜e3+- or 23... ♙d2 24 ♙xg7+ ♜xg7 25 ♜f6+ ♜g8 26 ♜e7!+-.

- | | | |
|----|-------|-----|
| 20 | ♙g5+- | ♜d6 |
| 21 | ♜f3 | ♙g7 |
| 22 | ♜f4 | ♜b6 |
| 23 | ♞ee3 | |

Threatening 24 ♙xf6 ♙xf6 25 ♞xh7+ ♜xh7 26 ♞h3+ ♜g7 27 ♜h6#.

- | | | |
|----|------|------|
| 23 | ... | h5 |
| 24 | a5! | ♜d8 |
| 25 | g4 | ♞c8 |
| 26 | gxh5 | ♞c1+ |
| 27 | ♜g2 | gxh5 |
| 28 | ♞eg3 | 1-0 |

Tukmakov - Korchnoi
USSR Ch, Riga 1970

- | | | |
|----|------|------|
| 1 | d4 | ♞f6 |
| 2 | c4 | e6 |
| 3 | ♞c3 | ♙b4 |
| 4 | e3 | 0-0 |
| 5 | ♙d3 | c5 |
| 6 | ♞f3 | d5 |
| 7 | 0-0 | dxc4 |
| 8 | ♙xc4 | ♞bd7 |
| 9 | ♜b3 | a6 |
| 10 | a4 | ♜e7 |
| 11 | ♞d1 | ♙a5 |

Here we make a small digression into opening theory. Instead of the text Taimanov, in his monograph *Zaschita Nimzovicha* ('Nimzo-indian Defence', Moscow, 1985) recommended 11...e5 12 d5 ♜d6 13 ♞d2 ♙xc3!? 14 bxc3 e4 with mutual chances, as in Uusi-Pitksaar, USSR

1958, while Beliavsky tried 11...♞d8 12 ♙d2 h6!? 13 ♞e2 ♙xd2 14 ♞xd2 in his game against Vaisser in Novosibirsk in 1993. According to Vaisser, Black could obtain good play by 14...b6. Note that in the both cases Black avoided ...cxd4, a dubious plan which Korchnoi adopted in the game under review and in a later game against Portisch in Belgrade in 1970, in which he also experienced great difficulties.

- | | | |
|----|-------|--------|
| 12 | ♜c2 | cx d4? |
| 13 | ex d4 | |

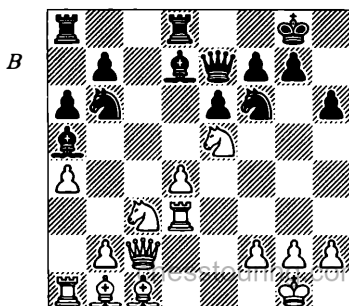
The problem for Black is that he has opened the diagonal for the c1-bishop, while his own dark squared bishop is misplaced for such a pawn formation, not being able to protect the kingside.

- | | | |
|----|------|-----|
| 13 | ... | ♞b6 |
| 14 | ♙a2± | h6 |

The text prevents an unpleasant pin, but weakens the kingside.

- | | | |
|----|----------|-----|
| 15 | ♞e5 | ♙d7 |
| 16 | ♙b1 | ♞f8 |
| 17 | ♞d3! (D) | |

Here this standard rook lift to the kingside is particularly effective,



since already there is an obvious target to attack there — the h6-pawn. The black pieces lack co-ordination and cannot prevent the massive invasion on the right wing. The rook manoeuvre also takes advantage of the artificial and unsound position of the bishop on a5, which is absent from the kingside.

17 ... ♖ac8
18 ♖g3 ♖f8
19 ♗d2!

Threatening to play 20 ♖xg7! and preparing another, hidden blow...

19 ... ♖bd5

Black could not snatch a pawn by 19... ♗xa4, as that would have lost to 20 ♖xg7 ♖xg7 21 ♗xh6+ ♖g8 22 ♗g5, with a smashing attack.

20 ♗g6! ♗e8

Now we have the position seen at the start of this chapter, on page 44.

White has a huge advantage in force on the kingside and the position of the black monarch is very cramped. It is no surprise that a tactical solution is in the air...

21 ♗xh6! ♗b4

The queen could not be taken as 21... gxf6 22 ♗xh6+ ♖g8 23 ♗e4+ ♖h8 24 ♗g7+ ♖g8 25 ♗xf6+ ♖f8 26 ♖xd5 is hopeless for Black.

22 ♗h8+ ♖e7
23 ♗xg7 ♗xd4
24 ♖d3

Instead of the text White could finish the game much more quickly by playing 24 ♖xf7!, for example 24... ♖xc3 25 ♖d3! and Black loses a lot of material.

After the text, the game ended:
24... ♗xc3 25 bxc3 ♖xc3 26 ♗a3+ ♖d7 27 ♖e1 ♖c7 28 ♗e7 ♖cd5 29 ♗xd8+ ♖xd8 30 ♗e4 ♗xa4 31 ♗xd5 ♖xd5 32 ♗g5+ ♖c7 33 h4 ♗b5 34 ♖c1+ ♗c6 35 h5 ♗d4 36 ♖e5 f6 37 ♖xc6 bxc6 38 ♗g7+ ♖d6 39 h6 ♖f4 40 ♗g4 ♗d2 41 ♖d1 1-0.

Keene - Miles
Hastings 1975/76

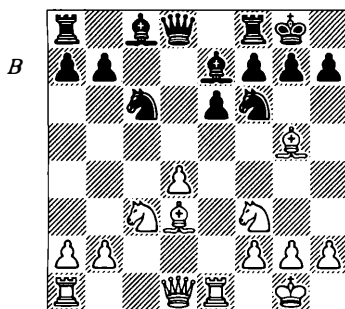
1 ♖f3 ♖f6 2 c4 c5 3 ♖c3 ♖c6 4 e3 e6 5 d4 d5 6 cxd5 ♖xd5 7 ♗d3 cxd4 8 exd4 ♗e7

9 0-0 0-0

10 ♖e1 ♖f6

The text is quite playable, although both 10... ♗f6 11 ♗e4 ♖ce7, strengthening the d5-square and 10... ♖xc3 11 bxc3 b6, with play against the c3/d4 pawn couple, are more common options here.

11 ♗g5 (D)



11 ... ♖b4

In the game Karpov-Beliavsky, Linares 1995, Black chose 11... h6 instead and after 12 ♗e3 ♖b4 13

♙b1 b6?! 14 ♖d2 White got a strong initiative. Black defended with 14...♞e8, as 14...♙b7? would have already lost to 15 ♙xh6! ♙xf3 16 ♙xg7 ♙xg7 17 ♖g5+ ♙h8 18 ♖h6+ ♙g8 19 ♞e5, as Karpov pointed out in *Informator No. 63*.

The game continued: 15 a3! and Beliavsky wisely avoided the natural 15...♖bd5?, which would have lost in all lines, as Karpov showed: 16 ♖xd5 exd5 (16...♖xd5 fails after 17 ♙xh6 gxh6 18 ♖xh6 f5 19 ♖g6+ ♙h8 20 ♙xf5 exf5 21 ♖g5+-, while 16...♖xd5 loses on the spot to 17 ♙xh6 gxh6 18 ♞e5!) 17 ♙xh6! gxh6 18 ♖xh6 and White's attack is unstoppable.

In the game Black played 15...♖c6 16 ♖d3 ♙b7 17 ♖e4 ♙f8 18 ♙d2 a5 19 ♙f4!? ♖d5 20 ♙g3 ♙a6 21 ♖d2 ♞c8 22 ♙a2 ♙g8 23 ♞ac1 ♖f6 24 ♖c3 ♙f8 and here according to Karpov the correct 25 ♙h4!? g5 26 ♙g3 g4 27 ♖e5 ♖xd4 28 ♖c2 would have left White with an advantage.

12 ♙b1 b6

In the game Polugaevsky-Sahović, Belgrade 1969, Black tried 12...♖fd5 13 ♙c1 ♖f6, but White obtained the advantage after 14 a3 ♖bd5 15 ♖e5 ♙d7 16 ♖d3 ♙c6 17 ♖h3 ♞e8 18 ♙g5 g6 19 ♙a2.

13 ♖e5

Another interesting possibility here is 13 a3, forcing Black to occupy the blockading d5-square but getting the d3-square for the queen. This move was employed in a very interesting game Karaklajić-Puč,

1978 which continued: 13...♖bd5 14 ♖d3 g6 15 ♖e5 ♙b7 16 ♙h6 ♞e8. Then White came up with very instructive manoeuvres.

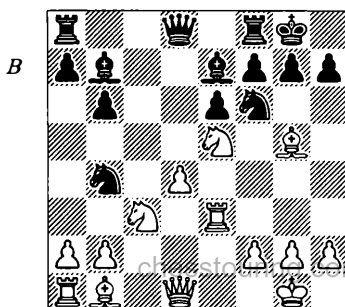
He played 17 ♙a2! — the usual technique, as the bishop has little to do on b1, it is being re-deployed on another diagonal, putting some pressure on the blockading knight. After 17...♞c8 White continued his attack with 18 ♖h3!, threatening 19 ♖xf7! — yet another familiar motif. Black did not find a suitable defence and lost after 18...♙f8 19 ♙g5 ♖c7 20 ♞ac1 ♖b8 21 ♙xd5! ♖xd5 22 ♖xd5. Here Black resigned as after any recapture on d5 White would have played 23 ♖d7 with a further ♖f6+, winning on the spot.

Let us return to the game Keene-Miles, which saw a different attacking plan used by the commander of the white pieces.

13 ... ♙b7

14 ♞e3! (D)

Again White's rook is heading towards the kingside. White is already threatening to employ the 'Greek gift' sacrifice and win after 15 ♙xf6 ♙xf6 16 ♙xh7+ ♙xh7 17 ♖h5+ ♙g8 18



♖h3. Therefore Black must block the dangerous b1–bishop.

14 ... ♗g6
15 ♖g3

Also interesting was 15 ♔h6!?
♗e8 16 ♖g3 ♔f8 17 ♔g5.

15 ... ♚c8??

This is another typical example of a 'natural' move (please compare it to the game Botvinnik-Batuyev), which turns out to be a decisive mistake. As the text brings the rook on to the open file and carries on development, one may ask what's wrong with it?

The answer is that this move does not meet the concrete requirements of the position.

Here the position is so tense that Black has no time to waste on such indifferent moves. Instead of the text he should have put some pressure both on the e5-knight and on the d4-pawn by playing 15...♘c6!. That would offer Black good chances in defence after 16 ♔h6 ♗xd4! 17 ♗xd4 ♘xd4 18 ♔xf8 ♗xf8.

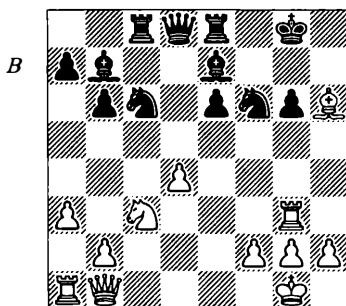
16 ♔h6 ♖e8
17 a3! ♘c6

17...♘bd5 would lead to a similar result: 18 ♘g6 hxg6 19 ♔xg6 ♔f8 (or 19...fxg6 20 ♗d3+-) 20 ♔d3+ ♗h8 21 ♔xf8 ♖xf8 22 ♗d2 ♘g8 23 ♘d5 ♔xd5 24 ♗f4+-.

18 ♘g6!! hxg6
19 ♔xg6 fxg6
20 ♗b1! (D)

20 ♗c2 ♘e5! 21 dxe5 ♘e4 would allow Black to defend.

This is a triumph for the plan of



the rook's transference to the kingside! Two consecutive blows on g6 have completely destroyed the residence of the black monarch.

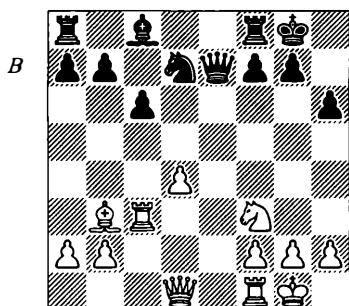
20 ... ♘e5
21 dxe5 ♘e4
22 ♘xe4 ♗h7
23 ♘f6+ ♔xf6
24 ♗xg6+ ♗h8
25 ♔g7+ ♔xg7
26 ♗xg7# 1-0

Karpov - Yusupov
Ct (8), London 1989

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 d5 4 ♘c3 ♔e7 5 ♔g5 0-0 6 e3 h6 7 ♔h4 ♘e4 8 ♔xe7 ♗xe7 9 ♖c1 c6 10 ♔d3 ♘xc3 11 ♖xc3 dxc4 12 ♔xc4 ♘d7 13 0-0 e5 14 ♔b3 exd4 15 exd4! (D)

So far both players have followed one of the main lines of Lasker's Defence to the Queen's Gambit Declined.

Here I should like to take a break and talk about situations when it is *objectively necessary* to create the isolated d-pawn in your own camp. I know many club players who would



not even consider 15 exd4 here, on the simple grounds that it leads to the isolation of a pawn and therefore it 'spoils' the pawn formation. Such a 'static' approach would be quite wrong here, as the dynamic advantages which the text gives White *right now* are worth a lot more than some *potential* weakness of the pawn.

Indeed, the text is much better than the solid but rather drawish 15 ♖xd4: White opens the e-file, gains control over the c5 and e5 squares and clears the third rank for the c3-rook. The latter as we will see, is going to play an important part in the game.

15 ... ♘f6
 16 ♖e1 ♖d6
 17 ♘e5 ♘d5

Black blocks the a2-g8 diagonal, but moves an important defender away from the kingside. The alternative 17... ♗e6 would not have completely solved Black's problems either: after 18 ♗xe6 fxe6 19 ♖g3!? White maintains the initiative.

18 ♖g3± ♗f5?!

18... ♗e6 would have been a better try in this difficult position.

19 ♖h5! ♗h7
 20 ♖g4 g5

Black tries to block the g-file, keeping his bishop active in the meantime. The alternative 20...g6 simply looks too ugly.

21 h4

White must demolish the g5-pawn in order to use his major pieces on the g-file, while Black will try to fortify that pawn by all available means.

21 ... f6

This is the only move as 21..f5 loses after 22 ♖h5 g4 23 ♘xg4!, while 21... ♗f6 is bad because of 22 ♖f3+.

22 hxg5! hxg5

This is better than 22...fxg5 23 f4±.

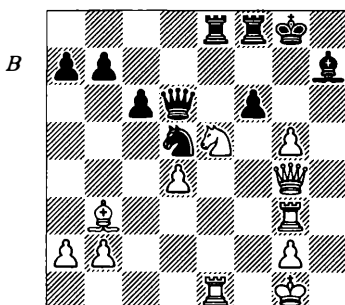
23 f4!?

Here White had a choice between a few promising continuations — apart from the text he could have played 23 ♖h5 ♖ae8 24 ♖ee3 or 23 ♘f3 ♗h8 24 ♖e6, with a promising attack in each case.

23 ... ♖ae8?!

The desire to develop the rook is understandable but Black could put up more resistance by playing 23... ♗h8!?. After 24 fxg5 fxe5 25 g6 ♖xg6 26 ♖xg6 ♗xg6 27 ♖xg6 exd4 28 ♖e4 ♖f7 29 ♗xd5! cxd5 30 ♖h4+ ♖h7 31 ♖xd4 White is clearly better in the resulting end-game but Black has some drawing chances. The text allows White to launch a deadly attack.

24 fxg5! (D)



The g5-pawn has fallen and as a result Black's position collapses. This is hardly surprising, since all White pieces are well placed and are taking part in the attack.

24 ... fx5

The logical attempt to keep the g-file blocked by playing 24... ♙f5 fails as well, as White has a nice sacrificial combination at his disposal: 25 gxf6+!! ♙xg4 26 ♖xg4+ ♗h8 27 ♗f7+ ♖xf7 28 ♖xe8+ ♖f8 29 f7 ♗f6 30 ♖xf8+ ♗xf8 31 ♖g8+ ♗xg8 32 fxf8♗+ ♗xg8 33 ♙xg8+-.

25 g6 ♙xg6
 26 dxe5 ♗e6
 27 ♙xd5 cxd5
 28 ♗xg6+ ♗xg6
 29 ♖xg6+ ♗h7
 30 ♖d6+-

The rest is a matter of technique and Karpov's technical skills are hard to match!

30... ♖c8 31 ♖e3 ♖c2 32 ♖d7+ ♗g6 33 ♖xb7 ♖e8 34 a3 d4 35 ♖d3 ♖xe5 36 ♖xd4 ♖g5 37 ♖d6+ ♗h5 38 ♖h7+ ♗g4 39 ♖d4+ ♗f5 40 ♖d5+ ♗g6 41 ♖g7+ ♗xg7 42 ♖xg5+ ♗f6 43 ♖b5 a6 44 ♖b6+

♗e7 45 ♗h2 ♗d7 46 ♗h3 ♗c7 47 ♖b3 ♗d6 48 g4 ♗e5 49 ♗h4 ♗f6 50 ♖b6+ ♗g7 51 ♗h5 a5 52 ♖b7+ ♗g8 53 a4 1-0.

Now I should like to show a little-known game, played between two then young Soviet chess masters. I played in the same tournament and remember being impressed at the way White conducted his attack. Nowadays both these players are well-established Grandmasters.

Varavin - Komarov

*Ch of the Soviet Army,
Novosibirsk 1989*

1 e4 c6
 2 d4 d5
 3 ♗c3 dxe4
 4 ♗xe4 ♗d7
 5 ♗f3

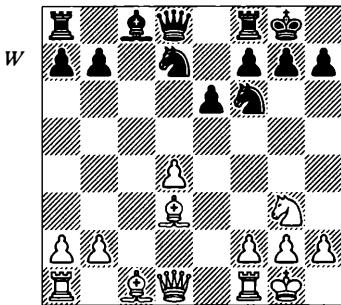
Today this natural move has been largely replaced by 5 ♙c4, 5 ♙d3 and 5 ♗g5.

5 ... ♗gf6
 6 ♗g3 e6
 7 ♙d3 c5
 8 0-0 cxd4
 9 ♗xd4 ♙c5
 10 c3

10 ♗b3 is more common here, however the text had been tried in a few games as well.

10 ... ♙xd4
 11 cxd4 0-0 (D)

This line shows that the Panov-Botvinnik variation is not the only way to get positions with the isolated



d4-pawn from the Caro-Kann Defence. This position is rather specific — Black has exchanged the dark-squared bishop for one of the white knights and has good control over the important d5-square. On the other hand, the absence of the bishop may make the defence of the kingside more difficult.

As for White, he has his knight placed rather unusually on g3, which increases his chances for a kingside attack, as the knight is ready to jump to h5. The d4-pawn will not need protection for a good while, which allows White time to bring his pieces towards the kingside.

Overall we would prefer to be White here: his play is much easier, while Black lacks piece harmony and active counterplay. Let us discuss the latter statement in some more detail.

Black will (after the eventual ... b6) have two knights controlling the d5-square but there is no need for such strong control, since a d4-d5 advance is not on the menu here. It would be much better for Black to

have his knight on c6, putting pressure on the isolani.

12 f4

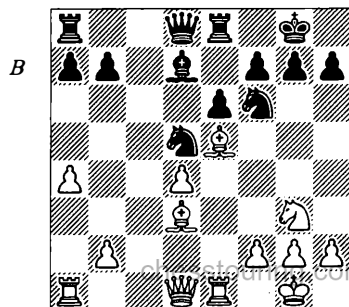
In positions with the isolated d-pawn some players like to develop the dark squared bishop not on g5, but on f4 — for example it was a ‘trademark’ of Russian master Nikolai Riumin. Often the bishop then moves to e5, from where it influences both flanks. Here this idea seems to be very natural.

The more common approach 12 g5 led to a similar position after 12...h6 13 f4 b6 14 c2 bd5 15 e5 b6 in the game Tal-Flesch, Lvov 1981. After 16 d3 b4 17 d2 xc2 18 xf6 xa1 19 h5 e5 the position got very messy.

12 ... $\text{d5!?$

After 12... b6 13 e1 d7 in the game Plachetka-Meduna, Hradec Králové 1981, White seized the initiative by 14 h5 c6 15 e5 bd7 16 xf6+ xf6 17 e3 .

- 13 d6 e8
 14 e1 f7f6
 15 e5 d7
 16 a4!? (D)



At first glance White's last move makes a very strange impression — one may ask, why does White waste time and weaken the b4-square? When a2-a4 is played in order to stop ...b7-b5, it's understandable, but why should White play it here? Well, while the standard 16 ♖h5 would give White a promising attack, the text introduces a more interesting approach.

White wants to employ his a1-rook — the only piece which is not active at the moment. However, he believes that just bringing the rook to c1 won't make much sense as it would only lead to some exchanges after an eventual ...♙c8. Instead, White wants to transfer the rook to the kingside via the a3-square, and this is the reason behind the 'strange' move 16 a4.

In the game, this plan worked just fine; perhaps Black just did not sense the danger.

16 ... ♙c6
17 ♖a3 h6?!

Black takes measures against the possible ♖g3-h5, however the text weakens the kingside, since the h6-pawn might become a target. The alternative — 17...g6 — does not look great either; while limiting the white knight and the d3-bishop, that would make the other white bishop too dangerous, but perhaps it should have been tried anyway.

18 ♙b1!

White prepares the route for the rook's journey to the kingside.

18 ... ♖b4??

Completely wrong! Black has a lot of problems in this position, mainly because he lacks counterplay, but the text just loses. In no instance should Black move this piece away from his vulnerable kingside, where he has few forces. Black should have preferred 18...♙c8, sitting tight.

19 ♙xf6!

The text gets rid of the only defender of the kingside, making White's attack unstoppable.

19 ... ♖xf6

20 ♖h5 ♖e7

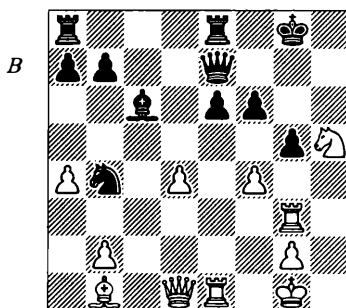
21 ♙g3 g5

21...g6 loses on the spot to 22 ♙xg6! fxg6 23 ♙xg6+ ♖h7 24 ♖b1.

22 h4 f6

23 hxg5 hxg5

24 f4+- (D)



The same scenario as in the previous game — White demolishes the g5-pawn, cracking the residence of the black monarch.

24 ... ♙ad8

25 fxg5 esstoufxg5.com

26 ♙e5 ♙d5

27	♖d2	♜xe5
28	dxe5	♜d8
29	♜xg5+	♔h8
30	♖f4 1-0	

Summary

The theme which we have just examined — the rook lift to the kingside along the third rank — is very common for the positions with the isolated d-pawn and the possessor of the isolani should always keep an eye on this idea. When managed successfully, the rook lift usually gives the possessor of the isolani a great advantage in force on the kingside and therefore often leads to a crushing attack. Typically such a

lift can be organised using the c-, d-, and e- files, although sometimes the semi-open a- and f- files can be employed for this purpose as well.

If you play against the isolated pawn, be aware of this theme — try to tie down the opponent's rooks to the d-pawn and to control the important squares on the third rank. Naturally, exchanging pieces, particularly the rooks themselves, would be of great help in preventing this attacking idea.

We shall see the motif of the rook lift in many other games examined in this book, but now I should like to move on and to consider another technique often employed by the player with the isolated d-pawn.

4 The Bishop sacrifice on h6 and the Queen shift

When the possessor of the isolani attacks on the kingside, such an attack often involves sacrifices on the h-file. For example, it can be a bishop sacrifice on h7, which will be covered in our 'Exercises' section.

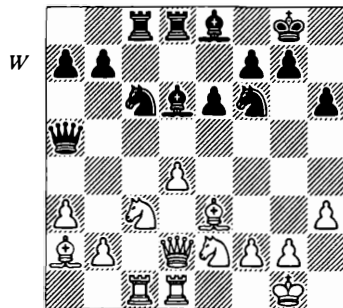
Here I am going to concentrate on another type of bishop sacrifice — on h6 (h3). This sacrifice usually occurs when the side playing against the isolated d-pawn weakens his kingside by playing ...h7-h6 (or h2-h3). The sacrifice usually results in a great exposure of the opponent's monarch and often leads to the defeat of the defender, whose pieces cannot take care of the exposed king. This motif is very typical for positions with the isolated d-pawn, so knowledge of this attacking pattern is very important for a better understanding of the analysed pawn formation.

Here is an instructive example of such a sacrifice, played at a very high level:

Kamsky - Beliavsky

Linares 1994

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♙b4 4 e3
0-0 5 ♙d3 c5 6 ♘ge2 cxd4 7 exd4
d5 8 0-0 dxc4 9 ♙xc4 ♘c6 10 ♙g5
♙e7 11 ♖c1 ♚a5 12 ♚d2 ♖d8 13
a3 ♙d7 14 ♖fd1 ♙e8 15 ♙a2 h6
16 ♙e3 ♙d6 17 h3 ♖ac8? (D)



As we see, earlier in this game Black played 15...h6, chasing away White's bishop from g5. That move created a potential target for White's

attack. Yet Black could do well, if he managed to take care of the h6-pawn by playing 16...♙f8 or 17...♙f8, as GM Alexander Beliavsky pointed out annotating this game in *Informator 60*. However, his careless move 17...♖ac8? allowed White to start a very dangerous attack:

18 ♙xh6!

This sacrifice breaks open the position of the black king and gives White a long-term attack. Usually it's very hard to defend in situations like this, while the attack often develops easily and naturally.

18 ... gxh6
19 ♖xh6 ♘h7

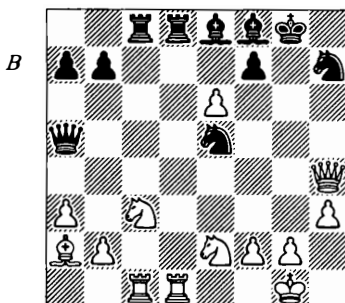
White's attack succeeds quickly after 19...♙e7? 20 ♖d3 ♘h5 21 d5 ♘e5 22 ♖e3.

20 ♙b1

White had to make a very important choice on move 20. It would clearly be unsatisfactory to play 20 ♖d3? because of 20...♙g5!, but I think that although 20 ♙b1 is by no means a mistake, Kamsky missed a more energetic way to proceed with his attack with the thematic break 20 d5!.

This move brings the 'sleeper' on a2 into life, at the same time clearing the d-file for White's rook. After the further 20...♙f8 21 ♖h4 ♘e5 22 dxe6 (D) we reach the position seen at the top of the next column.

Here Black's defensive task is very difficult, for example: 22...♙g7 23 b4! ♖xd1+ 24 ♖xd1 ♖c7 (or 24...♙xa3 25 ♖d8 ♖xd8 26 ♖xd8



♘f6 27 f4+-) 25 ♘d5 ♖c2 26 ♘e7+ ♘h8 27 ♖c1 ♖xc1+ 28 ♘xc1 ♖xc1+ 29 ♘h2 fxe6 30 ♙xe6 and a queen plus three pawns are stronger here than a rook and two minor pieces.

Compared to the game continuation, 20 d5! would have created even more difficulties for Black.

20 ... ♙f5?

Here Black missed a chance to put up more resistance by playing 20...♘f8!. Then the continuation could be 21 ♘e4!? ♙e7 22 ♘f4 (threatening 23 ♘h5), where Black defends successfully after 22...♘xd4! (worse is 22...f5 because of 23 ♙a2! with a winning attack).

For example, 23 ♘h5 ♘e2+ 24 ♘h2 ♖e5+ 25 f4 ♖xh5 26 ♖xh5 ♘xc1 with an unclear position or 23 ♖xc8 ♘f5 24 ♖cxh8 ♘h6 25 ♖xe8 ♖a4! and White has to give up the exchange: 26 ♖dd8 ♙xd8 27 ♖xd8, when his chances are no better than Black's.

21 b4!

This is more energetic than 21 ♖xe6+ ♙f7 22 ♖xf5 ♖xf5 23

♙xf5, which would also be good for White.

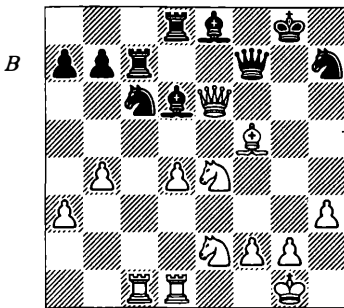
21 ... ♖c7

Much worse is 21...♙xa3 in view of 22 ♖xe6+ ♙f7 (or 22...♗h8 23 ♖xf5 ♙d7 24 ♗b5 ♖xb4 25 d5 ♖xb5 26 dxc6 ♖xf5 27 ♙xf5+-) 23 ♖xf5 ♗f8 24 ♗e4 and White wins.

22 ♖xe6+ ♖f7

23 ♙xf5 ♙c7

24 ♗e4 (D)



White is very close to victory, having four pawns for a minor piece. Yet, as we will see, the fight is still not over.

24 ... ♖xe6?

After 24...♗f8 Beliavsky gave the following interesting line in *Informator*: 25 ♗xd6 ♗xe6 26 ♗xf7 ♙xf7 27 d5, evaluating the resulting position as winning for White.

However, there Black can play 27...♗cd4! and everything is far from clear, for example: 28 dxe6 ♙xc1 29 ♗xc1 ♗f3+ 30 ♗f1 ♙xd1+ 31 ♗e2 ♙xc1 32 exf7+ ♗xf7 33 ♗xf3 ♙c3+.

Perhaps, instead of 25 ♗xd6,

White should play 25 ♖xd6!? ♙xd6 26 ♗xd6 ♖e7 27 ♗b5, where he would eventually obtain some material advantage (two rooks and four pawns for a queen and a minor piece). But at any rate we can state that 24...♗f8 would be a better try for Black.

25 ♙xe6+ ♙f7

26 d5

Now it's all over.

26 ... ♗e5

27 ♗d4 ♙xc1

28 ♙xc1 ♙b8

29 ♗f5 ♗f8

30 ♗c5 ♗g5

31 ♗xb7 1-0

In the game which we have just seen, Black's move ...h6 was not absolutely necessary, but now we are going to deal with cases when Black is more or less forced to play it.

How can White achieve this? Usually by creating threats against the h7-pawn. For that, White often uses a 'queen shift' — moves his queen along the third rank to h3, usually via d3. Then, if White has his light-squared bishop on the b1-h7 diagonal and the dark-squared bishop on g5, where it attacks the f6-knight, Black may be forced to advance his h-pawn, thus giving White an even better object for attack.

After discussing this plan in general, let us now see how it works in practice. Our next example is a pretty clear illustration of this attacking plan.

Shamkovich - Dmitrievsky
Moscow Spartakiada 1967

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 exd5 cxd5 4 c4
 ♖f6 5 ♜c3 e6 6 ♜f3 ♙e7 7 cxd5
 ♜xd5

8 ♙c4 ♜f6?!

This is too passive and gives White *carte blanche* to develop his initiative. With White's bishop on c4 there is no need for the text, as this knight does not have to defend the kingside yet.

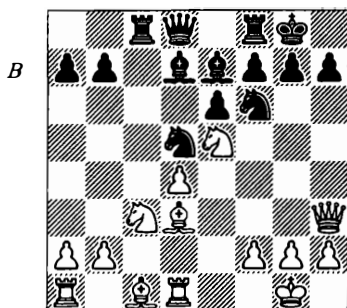
9 0-0 0-0
 10 ♙e2 ♜bd7
 11 ♜d1 ♜b6
 12 ♙d3

Also possible is 12 ♙b3 with a further ♜e5, ♙g5 and ♜ac1. Then at some stage White might move his rook to the kingside by ♜d1-d3-g3.

12 ... ♜bd5
 13 ♜e5 ♙d7
 14 ♙f3!?

The beginning of an interesting manoeuvre.

14 ... ♜c8
 15 ♙h3! (D)



White targets the h7-pawn. After a further ♙c1-g5 Black will have to weaken his kingside. From h3 the queen also keeps an eye on the e6-pawn, which might be important in some lines, as we shall see.

15 ... ♜xc3?!

Perhaps Black should have played 15... ♙c6 16 ♙g5 g6 (16... h6? allows a typical sacrifice — 17 ♙xh6 gxh6 18 ♙xh6, where Black cannot save his king). After the further 17 ♜ac1 White's chances are somewhat better but Black maintains a solid position.

16 bxc3

Strictly speaking, it's a different pawn formation now. However, these two pawn structures — the isolated d4-pawn and the pawn couple c3/d4 — are so closely related that it's almost impossible to talk about the isolani without dealing with this type of position. White's goal remains the same — an attack against Black's king. He has chances to utilise the semi-open b-file or to advance his pawns in the centre by playing c3-c4 and d4-d5.

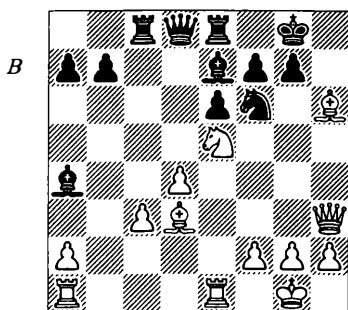
16 ... ♙a4?!

Black just helps his opponent to move the d1-rook to a better position.

17 ♜e1 ♜e8
 18 ♙g5 h6

After the more stubborn 18...g6, White can concentrate his forces against the e6- and f7-pawns with 19 ♙c4!. Then after 19... ♙d7 White can take advantage of the semi-open b-file by playing 20 ♜ab1 after which Black experiences serious difficulties.

19 ♖xh6! (D)



This move destroys Black's kingside.

19 ... ♜xc3

After 19...gxh6 20 ♖e3 Black is helpless, for example: 20...h5 21 ♖g3+ ♖f8 22 ♖f3 ♖d6 23 ♗xh5! ♖xe5 24 ♗h6+ ♖e7 25 dxe5 and White wins.

20 ♖xg7!

The bishop cannot be stopped from performing its destructive task! This 'gift' must be accepted.

20 ... ♖xg7

21 ♜e3 ♜xd3

22 ♜xd3 ♖c2

23 ♜g3+ ♖g6

24 ♜xg6+! fxg6

25 ♗g3+-

Finally White's queen gets a tête-à-tête with the black monarch!

25 ... ♜f8

26 ♗xg6+ ♖h8

27 ♜d1 ♗e8

White also wins after 27...♖d6 28 ♗h6+ ♖h7 29 ♖g6+ ♖g8 30 ♖xf8 ♖xf8 31 d5!? exd5 32 ♗h5 ♗a5 33 ♗xd5+ ♗xd5 34 ♜xd5.

28 ♜b1! b6

29 ♜b3 ♗xg6

30 ♖xg6+ ♖g7

31 ♖xe7 ♖f7

32 ♖c6 1-0

Now let us examine yet another example of the same plan — it's useful to see how different games can be very similar to each other in terms of the positional ideas employed in them. In our next example White used the same attacking pattern that Shamkovich employed in his game against Dmitrievsky.

Kavalek - Pritchett

Haifa OL 1976

1 ♖f3 c5 2 c4 ♖f6 3 ♖c3 e6 4 e3 ♖c6 5 d4 d5 6 cxd5 ♖xd5 7 ♖d3 cxd4 8 exd4 ♖e7 9 0-0 0-0

10 ♜e1 ♖cb4

11 ♖b1 ♖f6

12 a3

We came across this position earlier: for example you may remember that in the game Keene-Miles (page 48), White played 12 ♖g5 b6 13 ♖e5 ♖b7 14 ♜e3!? and achieved a promising attacking position.

12 ... ♖bd5

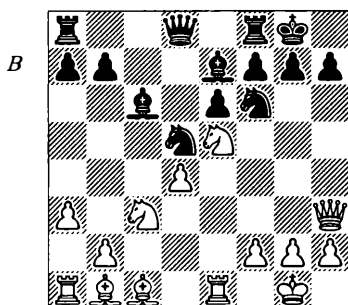
13 ♖e5

Also interesting here is 13 ♗d3!? and after 13...b6 White obtained a clear advantage in Yagupov-Bombin, Ubeda open 1996, by playing 14 ♖xd5!? ♗xd5 15 ♖g5 g6 16 ♖a2 ♗d6 17 d5!.

13 ... ♖d7

14 ♗d3esstou ♖c6.com

15 ♗h3! (D)



Comparing this game and our previous example, we can clearly see that this is the same pattern — White is preparing to attack the h7-pawn, at the same time creating threats against the e6- and f7- pawns.

This is how pattern recognition works — it helps us to find a good plan in fairly standard situations. The more plans you are aware of, the better your chances of outplaying your opponent!

15 ... ♖d6

Prior to this game Black tried 15 ... ♜e8 in the game Polugaevsky-Sahović, Belgrade 1969, but White stood better after 16 ♙g5 g6 17 ♙a2 ♜h5 18 ♙h6. The text is hardly an improvement for Black.

16 ♙g5 g6

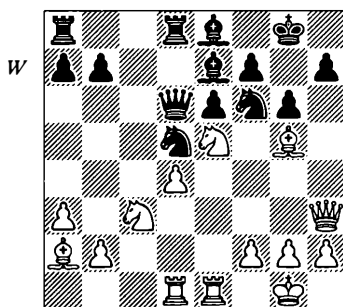
This is forced, as 16...h6? loses on the spot to 17 ♙xh6 gxh6 18 ♗xh6, when Black's king is too vulnerable.

17 ♙a2!?

This is an interesting moment. We have already seen many times in this book such shifts of White's light-squared bishop between the two diagonals (a2-g8 and b1-h7). We can

speak of a pattern here — often when this bishop is limited on the b1-h7 diagonal by Black's move ...g6, the bishop moves on to the other diagonal. Typically White does it in order to put pressure on d5 or e6; here this shift pursues yet another goal, as White makes way for his a1-rook to come to the centre.

17 ... ♜fd8
18 ♜ad1 ♙e8 (D)



19 ♜d3

A familiar idea — White uses a rook lift to create threats on the h-file by playing ♗h4 and ♜h3. The text isn't bad, but White had an even a better option. He could have played 19 ♙xd5!

After 19...♜xd5? 20 ♜e4 ♗c7 21 ♜c1 ♙c6 22 ♜xf7! (yet another familiar technique!) Black is lost, he has to recapture on d5 with a pawn — 19...exd5. After that White does not achieve much with the forceful move — 20 ♜g4, as Black holds after 20...♙d7 21 ♙xf6 ♙xf6 22 ♜xf6+ ♗xf6 23 ♜xd5 ♗xf2+! 24 ♜xf2 ♙xh3. For example: 25 ♜e7+

♙f8 26 g×h3 ♖d7 27 ♖c1 ♖xe7 28 ♖xe7 ♙e7 29 ♖c7+ ♙e6 30 ♖xb7 ♖c8 and it should be a draw. However, White has at his disposal another and deadly move — 20 ♖h4! — after which Black has no defence. Thus, we can state that taking on d5 would have decided the game by force.

- | | | |
|----|------|------|
| 19 | ... | ♗xc3 |
| 20 | bxc3 | ♗d5 |
| 21 | ♙xd5 | ♙xg5 |
| 22 | ♙xb7 | ♖ab8 |
| 23 | ♖f3 | ♖c7 |
| 24 | ♙c6 | |

Black has no compensation for the pawn. The game ended: 24...f6?! 25 ♙xe8 fxe5 26 ♖g4! ♖c4 27 ♙xg6 hxg6 28 ♖g3 ♙f4 29 ♖xg6+ 1-0.

Finally, I would like to illustrate this theme — the queen shift to h3 — with yet another example, where White also achieved a great attacking position but failed to capitalise on his advantage. Knowing this game is useful for a better understanding of how White's attack should be conducted in positions like this.

Stein - Padevsky
Moscow 1977

- | | | |
|---|------|------|
| 1 | ♗f3 | c5 |
| 2 | c4 | ♗f6 |
| 3 | ♗c3 | e6 |
| 4 | e3 | d5 |
| 5 | d4 | ♗c6 |
| 6 | cxd5 | ♗xd5 |
| 7 | ♙d3 | ♙e7 |

- | | | |
|----|------|------|
| 8 | 0-0 | cxd4 |
| 9 | exd4 | 0-0 |
| 10 | ♖e1 | ♗cb4 |
| 11 | ♙b1 | b6?! |

In our previous game Pritchett played 11...♗f6, vacating the d5-square for the b4-knight. The move 11...b6 means that Black is prepared to take on c3 after the possible a2-a3. Yet, I think that the resulting position is not good for him.

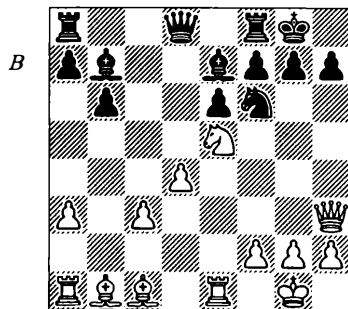
- | | | |
|----|-----|------|
| 12 | ♗e5 | ♙b7 |
| 13 | a3 | ♗xc3 |

Black had to take on c3, as 13...♗c6? would put his queen in trouble after 14 ♗xd5 ♖xd5 15 ♙e4 ♖d6 16 ♙f4.

- | | | |
|----|------|------|
| 14 | bxc3 | ♗d5 |
| 15 | ♖d3 | ♗f6? |

Here 15...g6 is better, although White's chances are still preferable after 16 c4 ♗f6 17 ♙h6 ♖e8 18 ♙a2.

- 16 ♖h3! (D)



The same idea as in our two last examples; here it also gives White a good attacking position.

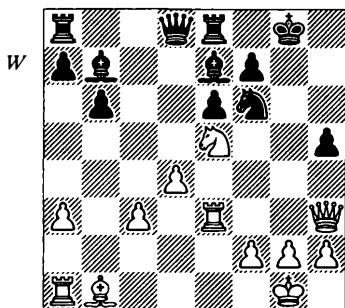
- | | | |
|----|-------------|-----|
| 16 | ...chesstou | ♖e8 |
| 17 | ♙g5 | h6 |

Black could not play 17...g6 in view of 18 ♖xf6 ♖xf6 19 ♜xf7!. This thematic sacrifice, which we have already seen so many times in this book, wins after 19...♝xf7 20 ♜xh7+ ♖g7 21 ♖xg6+ ♝f8 22 ♖xe8 ♜d5 23 ♜g6 ♜xe8 24 ♜e3.

18 ♖xh6!

This blow should have brought White the full point.

18 ... g6
19 ♜e3 h5 (D)



The only move. However, the sad necessity to make moves like this clearly indicates that Black's defensive resources are nearly exhausted. All White needs is to find a final stroke. Alas, this is something he failed to do in the game...

20 ♜h4?

White does not harvest the fruits of his previous play. Black's resistance could be destroyed with the following crushing move — 20 ♖g6!. Now Black is helpless, for example: 20...fxg6 21 ♜xe6+ ♝h8 22 ♜xg6+ (this is even better than 22 ♜f7+ ♝g7 23 ♜xd8 ♖xd8 24 ♜h3, which also wins) 22...♝g7 23 ♜xe7 and White's

attack decides. Also after 20...♜f8 21 ♖xh5 ♜e4 22 ♜xf7 ♜xf7 23 ♜xe6 ♜e8 24 ♜xe4 ♖xe4 25 ♜xe4 White's advantage is overwhelming.

20 ... ♖d6
21 ♜g5+ ♝f8
22 ♜g6+

This leads to a forced draw.

22 ... fxg6
23 ♜h6+ ♝g8
24 ♜xg6+ ♝f8
25 ♜h6+ ♝g8
26 ♜g6+ ½-½

The queen shift to the kingside is a very typical idea in isolated d-pawn positions and therefore both sides should be aware of this motif. You should look for such shifts in your own games, when an appropriate moment arises.

The h3-square is not the only place where White's queen can appear after its shift to the kingside, as our next game shows:

Velimirović - Rukavina
Yugoslavia Ch 1975

1 e4 c6
2 d4 d5
3 exd5 cxd5
4 c4 ♜f6
5 ♜c3 e6
6 ♜f3 ♖e7
7 cxd5 ♜xd5
8 ♖d3 ♜c6
9 0-0 0-0
10 ♜e1 ♜d6?!

A rare move and not a particularly convincing idea.

11 ♖c2

Gheorghiu simply played 11 ♖xd5!? exd5 12 ♘e5 in his game vs. Bouaziz at the Novi Sad chess olympiad in 1990. After the further 12...♘xe5 13 dxe5 ♗b6 14 ♗c2 h6 15 ♙e3 d4 16 ♙f4 ♙d7 17 ♗e2 White obtained a promising position.

11 ... g6

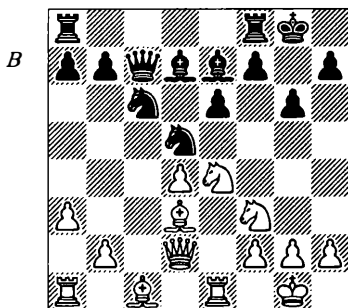
Also possible is 11...♖f6 12 ♘e4 ♘xe4 13 ♙xe4 h6.

12 ♘e4 ♗c7

13 a3 ♙d7

Perhaps, here Black should have put pressure on the d4-pawn by playing 13...♗b6 — this idea was used in similar positions by Karpov in some of his games against Kamsky at Elista in 1996.

14 ♗d2!? (D)



A very interesting idea — White has spotted a weakness in Black's kingside and shifts his queen there, trying to exploit that weakness.

14 ... ♖fe8

15 ♗h6 ♙f8

16 ♗h4 ♘ce7?!

By playing this move Black gives up control over the central squares.

Much better would be 16... ♙g7!. Then White will probably have to sacrifice a pawn by playing 17 ♙g5 (the tempting move 17 ♙c4? just drops a pawn after 17...♘xd4! 18 ♘xd4 ♗xc4+) 17...♘xd4 18 ♘xd4 ♙xd4 19 ♖ac1. The further play — 19...♗b6 20 ♙c4 — leads to a very unclear position, where White has compensation for the pawn.

17 ♘eg5! h6

18 ♘h3

Here White missed a chance to start a dangerous attack by 18 ♘xf7!? ♘xf7 19 ♘e5+ ♘g8 20 ♙xh6. After the further 20...♙c6 21 ♙xf8 ♖xf8 22 ♙xg6 White has three pawns for a knight and good attacking chances.

18 ... ♗h7

Maybe 18...h5 would be the lesser evil in this situation.

19 ♘e5 ♖f5?

Black had to play 19...f6 when the situation would remain very unclear.

20 ♙xf5 exf5

21 ♘g5+ ♘g8

22 ♘gxf7

Now White is winning: 22 ... h5 23 ♗g3 ♖e6 24 ♙h6 ♙e8 25 ♖ac1 ♗b6 26 ♙xf8 ♙xf7 27 ♙h6 ♖ae8 28 ♖c5 ♖f6 29 ♗c3! ♘e4 30 ♖xe4 fxe4 31 ♘c4 ♗d8 32 d5 ♖f6 33 ♙g5 ♗e7 34 d6 ♗xd6 35 ♘xd6 1-0.

Although this game is by no means perfect, I still quite like it, since it's rather rich in ideas. Analysing such games we can clearly see how much

inventiveness is required from both sides in positions with the isolated d-pawn.

Let's just recall what happened here — White came up with an interesting plan (14 ♖d2 and 15 ♖h6) which created certain problems for Black. Then Black made one error (16...♗ce7) and White seized the initiative firmly. Perhaps he could have played more energetically on move 18 and then another Black mistake (19...♗f5?) put him into a lost position.

Summary

The value of each move is very high in positions with the isolani, as every inaccurate, meaningless or passive move can lose the initiative or

lead to a difficult position. Both players must handle such positions with energy and yet they should be alert and perceptive regarding the opponent's plans.

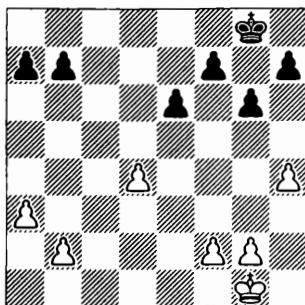
Often when the possessor of the isolani attacks on the kingside, a queen's shift to that area adds a lot of power to his attack. A typical route for this manoeuvre is ♖d1-d3-h3 with further threats against the h7-(h6-) pawn and the e6-pawn.

If you play against the isolated pawn, try to prevent such a shift by putting pressure on the d4-pawn or by exchanging pieces. If that fails, consider bringing more of your pieces to the kingside. Be very careful with moves like ...g7-g6 and ...h7-h6 — often they are necessary, but sometimes they just weaken your position.

5 The h-pawn battering-ram

Now let us examine yet another attacking motif, typical for this pawn formation — the advance of the h-pawn. In fact we've already seen this theme in action, for example in the game Yusupov-Lobron. All these ideas, such as the rook lift, the queen's shift, the strikes on e6, f7 or h6 and the advance of the h-pawn are closely related and often make one whole unit, namely a successful attack. However, it's worth studying some more practical examples where the advance of the h-pawn was one of the main themes.

So, when should the possessor of the isolani push his h-pawn forward? Usually he advances the h-pawn in order to weaken opponent's pawn position on the kingside — typically when there is a pawn on g6 (g3). Sometimes the reasoning behind such an advance is to establish control over the g5 (g4) square to give additional support to the piece based there. Our next few examples will illustrate these ideas.



Banaš - Navarovszky
Trencianske Teplice 1974

1	e4	c6
2	d4	d5
3	exd5	cxd5
4	c4	♞f6
5	♞c3	e6
6	♞f3	♙b4
7	cxd5	♞xd5
8	♙d2	0-0
9	♙d3	♞c6
10	0-0	♞f6

In this position Karpov prefers 10...♙e7, leaving the knight on d5 for a while. Later the knight can be

moved to f6, as in Karpov's games vs. Kamsky at Elista in 1996, or exchanged on c3, as in the game Wahls-Karpov, Baden-Baden 1992.

11 ♖g5 ♔e7

12 ♜e1 b6

12... ♖b4 13 ♖b1 b6 14 ♗e5 would lead to the position from the game Keene-Miles, which we examined earlier on page 48.

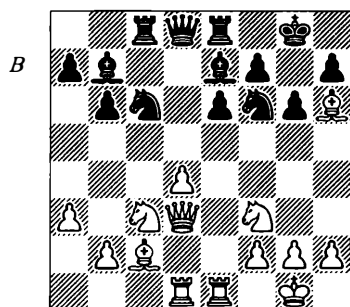
13 a3 ♔b7

14 ♖c2 ♜c8

15 ♖d3 g6

16 ♖h6 ♜e8

17 ♜ad1 (D)



White has mobilised all his pieces and managed to avoid any exchanges, which would generally favour his opponent. We have already seen a similar pattern (♖c2, ♖d3, ♖h6) in a few games, e.g. in Yusupov-Lobron, on page 25 (where White's bishop was on g5). The next thing White is likely to do is to redeploy the bishop on b3, threatening to break in the centre at an appropriate moment by d4-d5. I think that White has some advantage here, but both sides

must be very precise with their play.

17 ... ♗d5

The text prevents the d4-d5 break radically. Also very interesting here is 17... ♖c7 with the idea of a subsequent ... ♜cd8 and then at the appropriate moment ... ♗g4, targeting White's king.

18 h4!

With the black knight gone from the kingside, it's logical to take advantage of it and increase the tension there. At the moment the battery "♖d3 + ♖c2" is pointed to the g6-bulwark; therefore the h-pawn is needed in order to weaken it.

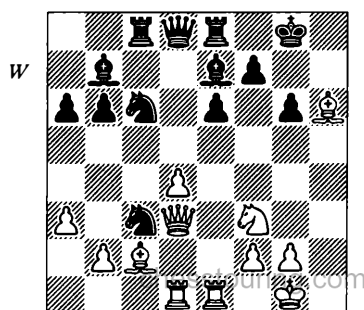
18 ... a6?

This indifferent move puts Black into a difficult situation. He should have played 18... ♗xc3 instead. Then after 19 bxc3 Black can choose between 19... ♖d5 or 19... ♖f6 (19... ♖xh4? would be bad in a view of 20 d5!); in each case White would have the initiative, but Black would have his own chances.

19 h5 ♗xc3?

Now it's too late.

20 hxg6! hxg6 (D)



21 ♖xe6!!

A crushing move, which Black obviously missed, expecting only 21 bxc3. Please pay attention to how much the residence of Black's king has been weakened by the march of the h-pawn. Now White's attack is decisive.

21 ... ♖e5

The only move, as otherwise Black cannot stop 22 ♖xg6+.

22 ♖xe5 ♖e4

23 ♖xg6+!

Another devastating blow, which White had to foresee when playing 21 ♖xe6!!.

23 ... fxg6

Black must accept this sacrifice, as 23... ♖h7 loses even more quickly after 24 ♖h3 fxg6 25 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 26 ♖g5+ ♖g8 27 ♖e6+ ♖h8 28 ♖f7+ ♖g7 29 ♖xd8+.

24 ♖b3+ ♖h7

25 ♖h3 ♖h4

More stubborn would be 25... ♖e2+ 26 ♖f1 ♖h4, but even then White's attack succeeds after 27 ♖f7! ♖f5 28 g4 ♖xg4 29 ♖xg4 ♖f6 30 ♖g5+ ♖xg5 31 ♖xg5+.

26 bxc3 ♖c7

27 ♖f7 ♖xf7

28 ♖xf7 ♖f5

29 ♖h2 ♖e2 30 ♖e3 ♖g7 31 ♖c4 ♖c2 32 ♖f4 1-0.

Our next game is a more recent example of the same theme. This game also shows that if the possessor of the isolated d-pawn manages to keep most of the pieces on the

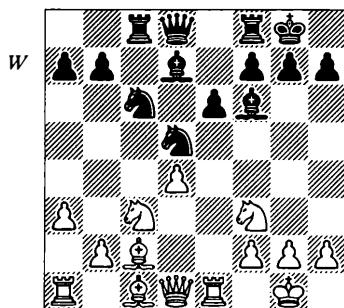
board, his attack may be more dangerous. This example also illustrates the close connection which exists between the two flanks in chess — as you will see, the firm control over the c5-square which White enjoyed in the game helped him greatly with his kingside attack.

Please pay close attention to this game:

Gulko - Kaidanov

USA Ch 1994

1 c4 c6 2 e4 d5 3 exd5 ♖f6 4 d4 cxd5
5 ♖c3 e6 6 ♖f3 ♖e7 7 cxd5 ♖xd5
8 ♖d3 ♖c6 9 0-0 0-0 10 ♖e1 ♖f6
11 a3 ♖d7 12 ♖c2 ♖c8? (D)



Annotating this game in *Informator 62*, GM Gulko regarded this move as dubious, suggesting 12... ♖xc3 13 bxc3 ♖c8 instead. I think that in fact the text is a serious positional mistake, yielding White a significant advantage.

13 ♖e4!

Now White gets to keep more

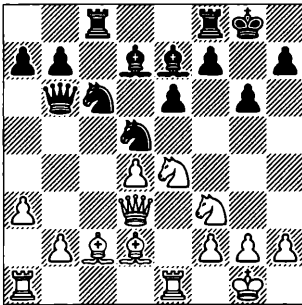
pieces on the board, which generally favours the side possessing the isolani.

- 13 ... ♘e7
 14 ♖d3 g6
 15 ♙d2

Instead, 15 ♙h6? — quite standard for such positions — would be wrong here in view of 15... ♟cb4 16 axb4 ♟xb4 17 ♙xf8 ♙xf8! and Black stands better.

- 15 ... ♖b6? (D)

It is tempting to play 15...f5 here, but it still leaves White with the better chances after 16 ♟eg5 ♟xd4 17 ♖xd4 ♜xc2 18 ♜xe6 ♙c6 19 ♖h4 ♙xg5 20 ♙xg5 ♖d7 21 ♜ae1.



Instead of the text, Gulko recommended 15...a5!, preventing White's expansion on the queenside. However, it's very hard to come up with a move like this, as prophylactic thinking is a very difficult area in chess strategy — we generally tend to be quite pushy in our plans and don't always look closely enough at what our opponent is up to.

- 16 b4!

A fine move — White takes care of the weakness of the b-pawn and establishes good control over the c5-square. Here we see how grabbing space on the queenside helps White's action in the centre and on the opposite wing.

- 16 ... ♜fd8
 17 ♙b3 ♙e8
 18 ♜ac1

In his annotations, Boris Gulko also mentioned that 18 ♜ad1!? is worth considering here. I like this idea too — that move would fortify the d-pawn and would avoid any possible simplifications on the c-file.

- 18 ... a6?!

Black prepares to utilise the b5-square somehow, but this attempt is very slow. Still it's hard to suggest a better strategy for Black.

After 18...♟f6 White avoids unnecessary exchanges by playing 19 ♟c5 — a move which also shelters the d4-pawn. Then, if Black tries to weaken the position of the c5-knight by 19...a5?, he loses on the account of 20 ♟xe6! fxex6 21 ♙xe6+ ♙f7 22 ♙xc8 ♜xc8 23 b5+-.

White also stands better after 18...a5 19 b5 ♟a7 20 a4, as Black's position is cramped. Maybe that was Black's best chance in the position after 18 ♜ac1. At least in this line Black gets some relief by playing 20...♜xc1 21 ♙xc1 ♟c8.

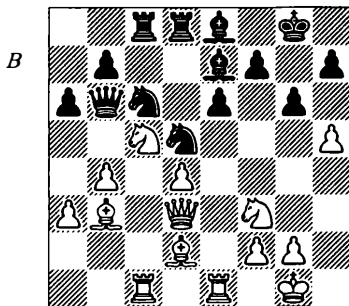
- 19 h4!

Now it's time for the march of the h-pawn, whose job is to soften up Black's pawn chain on the kingside.

19 ... ♖a7
20 ♘c5 ♘c6

Black cannot find a suitable defensive plan, while White's attack develops naturally, for example: 20...♙b5 21 ♖b1 ♙c6 22 h5 and Black's kingside comes under fire.

21 h5 (D)



Here I would like to digress from our theme and talk again about computers in chess. I have mentioned previously that I use chess programs quite a lot in order to prepare for tournaments or to check my analysis.

The difference between a silicon mind and a human brain can be clearly seen in this case — suggest this position to a computer (I mean some chess analysing module) and give it some time. You will probably see that the program assesses this position as roughly equal.

Yet, in *Informator*, GM Gulko assessed this position as winning for White and I agree with him. Indeed, Black cannot stop the opponent's attack here without serious positional concessions. The fact that the fruits

of this attack will become apparent only a few moves later, should not delude us — we should be capable of this kind of strategic insight.

21 ... ♖a7

Another logical move — 21...♙f6 — would also lead to a collapse after 22 hxg6 hxg6 23 ♘xe6! fxex6 24 ♖xe6 ♔g7 25 ♖e4. For example: 25...♙f7 26 ♙xd5 ♙xe6 27 ♙xe6 ♖c7 (also bad is 27...♙xd4 28 ♙xc8 ♙xf2+ 29 ♔f1 ♖xc8 30 ♙c3+ and White wins.) 28 d5 or 25...♘c7 26 ♖xf6 ♔xf6 27 d5 and White's attack is devastating.

22 hxg6 hxg6

23 ♘xe6!

Yet another addition to our already extensive collection of sacrificial blows on e6!

23 ... fxex6

24 ♖xe6 ♙f7

After 24...♔g7 25 ♖e4 ♙f7 26 ♙xd5 ♖xd5 27 ♖xd5 ♖d8 28 ♖e4 ♙xe6 29 ♖xe6 White has a decisive material advantage. Also hopeless for Black is 24...♔h8 25 ♖xg6 ♙xg6 26 ♖xg6.

25 ♖xg6+ ♔f8

26 ♖h6 ♔e8

27 ♖e1 1-0

This is a model game from the possessor of the isolated d-pawn, although Black failed to come up with any counterplay after his mistakes on moves 12 and 15.

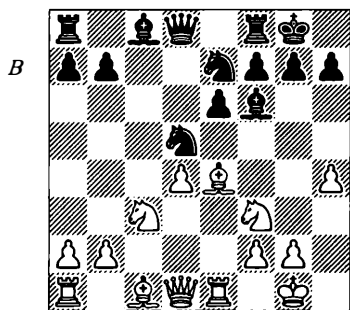
In our two previous games the h-pawn was pushed forward in order to attack the g6-pawn and thus weaken Black's kingside.

Now let us see an example where the possessor of the isolani advances his h-pawn to h4 (h5) in order to establish control over the g5- (g4)-square. I think that the following game is quite instructive:

Dzhandzhgava - Kalegin

Batumi 1991

- 1 c4 c6 2 e4 d5 3 exd5 cxd5 4 d4
 5 f6 6 c3 e6 7 f3 e7 8 cxd5
 9 0-0 0-0
 10 e1 f6
 11 e4 ce7
 12 h4!? (D)



An interesting idea — this move establishes firm control over the g5-square, enabling White's pieces to occupy it.

- 12 ... e7
 13 d3 h6

Also possible is 13...g6 but after the further 14 e6 e8 (14...e7!?) 15 h5 e6 16 hxg6 hxg6 17 ead1 e8 18 e5 xc3 19 xc6 bxc6 20 bxc3 White stood better in the

game Kosić-Cela, 1989.

- 14 g5!? g6

This move has the disadvantage that it weakens Black's kingside.

Obviously Black could not take the knight, as 14...hxg5?! leads to problems, for example: 15 hxg5 e6 16 e7+ e8 17 e3+.

Neither could Black disregard the annoying knight — the careless 14...e6?? loses on the spot to 15 e7+ e8 16 e8 g6 17 xf7+.

Probably Black's defence here is 14...b4!, with a further 15...f5, which leads to positions with mutual chances. For example: 15 e1 f5 16 a3 e6 17 xf5 exf5 18 f3 e6.

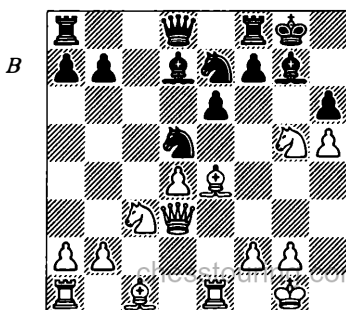
- 15 f3 e7
 16 h5

Now this pawn changes its role and is used as a battering-ram.

- 16 ... g5

I think that from a practical point of view the text is better than 16...gxh5 17 e5, where White gets a long-term initiative, as Black's kingside is seriously compromised.

- 17 e5!? (D)



A very interesting sacrifice! This is an example of a so-called 'real sacrifice', as it does not lead to immediate success. Yet, White gets quite enough for his knight — two pawns and a long-lasting attack.

17 ... hxc5
18 ♖xg5 f6

Here Black could try 18... ♖b6 19 ♖ad1 f6, but after 20 h6 fxg5 21 ♖h7+ ♖h8 22 hxg7+ ♖xg7 23 ♖xd5 ♖xd5 24 ♖g6+ ♖h8 25 ♖h6 ♖f6 26 ♖g6+ ♖g8 27 ♖xg5 White's attack is still going.

19 ♖h7+ ♖h8
20 h6 fxg5

Also interesting is 20... ♖xc3!? 21 ♖d2!? ♖cd5 22 hxg7+ ♖xg7, where White has a draw after 23 ♖h3 ♖h8 24 ♖h6+ ♖f7 25 ♖h5+, but it's not clear whether he has more than that.

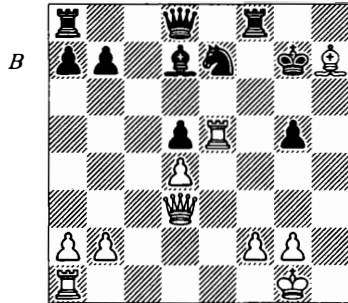
21 hxg7+ ♖xg7
22 ♖xd5 exd5?!

It might be better to recapture on d5 with the knight — 22... ♖xd5, where after the further 23 ♖g6+ ♖h8 24 ♖h6 ♖f6 Black can defend successfully, for example 25 ♖g6+ ♖g8 26 ♖e5 ♖f4. Then 27 ♖h7+ ♖f8 28 ♖h5 does not win in view of 28... ♖xh5 29 ♖xg5 ♖f7!, when the end-game arising after 30 ♖g8+ ♖e7 31 ♖xd8 ♖xh7 32 ♖xa8 ♖f4 is O.K. for Black.

23 ♖e5 (D)

23 ... ♖f6?

As often happens in practical play, the defender — being under pressure — makes a mistake: 23... g4! would be much better. After the further 24



♖g5+ ♖h8 25 ♖h5! ♖g7 26 ♖e3 we reach a critical position. Now 26... ♖f6 is not satisfactory for Black in view of 27 ♖g5+ ♖g6 (or 27... ♖f7 28 ♖e4 ♖f8 29 ♖xd5+ ♖e8 30 ♖e1, winning for White) 28 ♖e1 where White's advantage is overwhelming. But after 26... ♖g8! Black can defend. For example: 27 ♖xg8 ♖xg8 (but not 27... ♖xg8? 28 ♖h6 ♖f7 29 ♖h7+ ♖e6 30 ♖g7 ♖f6 31 ♖e1+ ♖d6 32 ♖e7 which is winning for White.) 28 ♖xd5 and the resulting position is very unclear.

24 ♖ae1+

White's attack is unstoppable now.

24 ... ♖c6

Also bad is 24... ♖g6 25 ♖xg6 ♖xg6 26 ♖e7+ ♖h6 27 ♖g3! when White wins by force, for example: 27... ♖b8 28 ♖le5 ♖c8 29 ♖h2+ ♖h3 30 ♖5e6 ♖cl+ 31 ♖e1 ♖c8 32 ♖7e3+-.

25 ♖xg5+ ♖h8

26 ♖h5! ♖g7

27 ♖g3+ ♖f7

28 ♖g6+! ♖xg6

29 ♖h7+ ♖f6

30 ♖h4+

Here the computer shows checkmate in 6 after 30 ♖d6+ ♕g5 31 f4+ ♘f5 32 ♗xd5+ ♕g4 33 ♗h5+ ♘xf4 34 ♗f3+ ♕g5 35 ♖h5#. The text (30 ♗h4+) is typical for us human beings — it may not win that quickly, but it wins for sure and there is little calculation to do here.

30 ... ♖g5

Also bad is 30... ♘f5 31 ♖f7+ ♖f6 32 ♗h5+ ♘f4 33 g3#.

31 f4 1-0

Quite an interesting game. Even if the whole operation with 17 ♜xg5!? does not give White an advantage, Black's defensive task in the arising complications is not easy. In practical play such sacrifices usually give excellent winning chances to the attacker. Besides, they make chess much more spectacular!

The plan with the march of the h-pawn was the last attacking motif we have covered in this chapter, as now we will move on to another subject and examine the cases where the owner of the isolated d-pawn plays on the queenside. But before that I would like to sum up with a few observations:

Summary

The possessor of the isolated d-pawn often employs the h-pawn in his attack. Usually it happens when there is an enemy pawn on g6 (g3), which in this case attracts the h-pawn like a magnet.

When White (assuming he is the possessor of the isolani) succeeds with his plan of h2-h4-h5xg6, Black's position on the kingside often becomes considerably weakened.

As a result of that, various sacrifices (usually on f7 or e6) become possible. Sometimes the h-pawn is advanced in order to establish control over the g5-square, supporting a white piece placed there.

If you play against the isolated pawn, take measures against this plan — counterattack in the centre, try to simplify the position, thus reducing your opponent's attacking potential, or fortify your kingside by keeping more pieces there.

Be careful with the move ...g6 — make sure it does not give a clear target to your opponent.

6 Queenside activity and play on the c-file

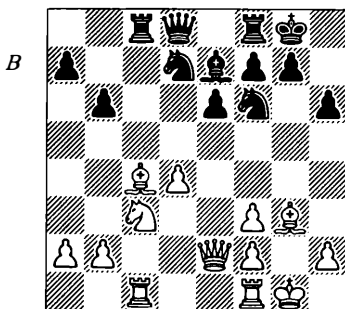
Not only can the side possessing the isolated pawn undertake play in the centre or on the kingside, quite often the pawn can help to develop an initiative on the queenside. Usually in order for the possessor of the isolated pawn to do well on that wing, he needs to meet one of the following conditions:

- a) Firm control of the open c-file;
 - b) Occupation of the important squares on the c-file with his pieces.
- Typically this applies to the c5-square, particularly when Black's b-pawn has moved to b5. In this case we again assume White to be the possessor of the isolated d-pawn.

Talking about firm control over the open c-file, we should pay particular attention to those cases where Black's a6-square falls into the possession of White's bishop, which then controls the vital c8-square, preventing Black from competing for control of the c-file. The following game illustrates this idea very clearly:

Karpov - Geller
Moscow 1981

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♙e7 4 ♗f3 ♗f6 5 ♙g5 h6 6 ♙h4 0-0 7 e3 b6 8 ♜c1 ♙b7 9 ♙d3 ♗bd7 10 0-0 c5 11 ♖e2 ♜c8 12 ♙g3 cxd4 13 exd4 dxc4 14 ♙xc4 ♙xf3 15 gxf3 (D)



On move 14 Black spoiled White's pawn formation on the kingside by exchanging his b7-bishop. However, that was a rather dubious idea, since White's kingside is well guarded by

his dark-squared bishop on g3, while Black's queenside is now seriously weakened.

- 15 ... ♖h5
 16 ♙a6! ♖xg3
 17 hxg3 ♜c7?!

Later Black tried here 17...♜c6 18 ♜fd1 ♖f6 19 ♖b5 ♗d7 20 a3 ♖d5 21 ♜c4 ♙g5 22 ♖c3 and a draw was agreed in the game Torre-M.Gurevich, Leningrad 1987. However, White could play better — 19 ♖g2!, with some advantage.

- 18 ♜fd1!

White does not hurry to start fighting for the c-file, preparing the d4-d5 break first and thus forcing Black's knight to move away from the queenside. It would be much too premature to try to invade on the c-file by playing 18 ♖b5? ♜xc1 19 ♜xc1, as after 19...♖b8! Black is better, for example: 20 ♙b7 a6 21 ♜c8 ♗d7 22 ♜c7 ♗e8 23 ♖c3 ♗d8 24 ♜c8 ♗xd4.

- 18 ... ♖f6
 19 ♖b5!

Now it's time to take control of the open c-file.

- 19 ... ♜xc1
 20 ♜xc1 ♖d5

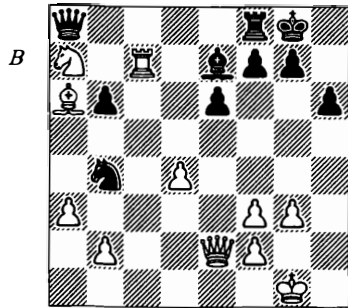
After 20...♗b8 21 ♜c7 ♖d5 22 ♜xa7 Black has no compensation for the pawn, while after 20...♗d5 21 a3 his position is also rather difficult, for example: 21...♙d6 22 ♖xa7 ♗xd4 23 ♖b5 ♗e5 24 ♗xe5 ♙xe5 25 f4 ♙b8 26 ♜c6 and White has a pleasant edge in the endgame.

- 21 ♖xa7 ♖b4

- 22 a3! ♗a8

The best try, as after 22...♖xa6 23 ♖c6! ♗d7 24 ♗xa6 Black has no compensation for the pawn.

- 23 ♜c7! (D)



- 23 ... ♖d5

Perhaps Black should have preferred 23...♙d8 24 ♜b7 ♖xa6 25 ♗xa6 ♙f6. Then White has a choice. After 26 ♗xb6 ♙xd4 27 ♗c7 ♙xa7 28 ♜xa7 ♗xf3 Black has some counter-chances, as White's king lacks pawn protection.

Therefore White should probably prefer 26 b4!? ♙xd4 27 b5 ♙c5 28 ♖c6, where he has the advantage, thanks to the dominant position of his knight and his pawn majority on the queenside.

- 24 ♜b7!

This is better than 24 ♜d7 ♜d8 25 ♗b5! ♜xd7 26 ♗xd7 ♙f6 27 ♙c4 — White should not exchange his rook, which is quite active.

- 24 ... ♙f6
 25 ♖c6 ♜c8

- 26 ♖e5 esstouring.com

White's play on the queenside,

which started with 16 ♖a6, has brought him a healthy extra pawn, so he can count on winning this position.

26 ... ♗xe5
 27 dxe5 ♖c1+
 28 ♔g2 ♜d8
 29 ♗d3 ♖a1?

Black could put up more resistance by playing 29... ♖c7 30 ♖xc7 ♜xc7, although the resulting ending is also winning for White.

30 ♜e4 g6
 31 ♖xf7! ♔xf7
 32 ♜xg6+ ♔f8
 33 ♜xh6+ 1-0

Black resigned, as the line 33... ♗e8 34 ♗b5+ ♔f7 35 ♜h7+ ♔f8 36 ♜h8+ ♔f7 37 ♜xd8 is self-evident.

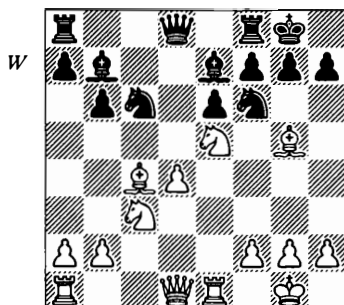
In the game which we have just examined White's bishop occupied the a6-square because its counterpart had been exchanged, but sometimes White's bishop can go there even if the black bishop is on b7, as in our next example:

**Mikhail Gurevich -
 Lars Bo Hansen
 Taastrup 1992**

1 d4 e6 2 c4 ♗b4+ 3 ♘c3 c5 4 e3
 cxd4 5 exd4 ♘f6 6 ♗d3 d5 7 ♘f3
 0-0 8 0-0 dxc4 9 ♗xc4 b6 10 ♗g5
 ♗b7 11 ♘e5 ♗e7

12 ♖e1 ♘c6?! (D)

Black completes his development and puts pressure on both the d4-pawn and e5-knight. Yet, as GM Gurevich convincingly proved in the game, the text is a mistake and in-



stead of that Black should have settled for the less ambitious 12... ♘bd7.

13 ♗a6!

White exploits the shaky position of the knight on c6.

13 ... ♜c8

Black could not take the bishop, as 13... ♗xa6? 14 ♘xc6 ♜d6 15 ♘xe7+ ♜xe7 16 ♘d5 is hopeless for him.

14 ♗xb7 ♜xb7

15 ♜f3 ♖ac8

16 ♖ac1

Although Black has avoided the immediate danger, the weakness of the c6-square and the pin along the h1-a8 diagonal is very unpleasant for him. Now Black has to find a suitable defence.

16 ... ♘d5?

Annotating this game in *Informator 54*, Mikhail Gurevich recommended 16... ♖fd8 as Black's best defence. Then after 17 ♘b5 ♖d5 18 ♘xc6 ♖xc6 19 ♖xc6 ♜xc6 20 ♘c3 ♖d6 Black is equal, as given by Gurevich. White can slightly improve on this line by playing 20 ♗xf6! ♗xf6 (worse is 20... gxf6?) 21 ♘c3 ♖d6 22 d5 with White's initiative.)

21 ♖c3 ♗d6 22 ♖e4 ♗d5 23 ♖xf6+ gxf6 24 ♜xf6, but after 24...♜c2 Black still has sufficient counter-play. Thus, 17 ♖b5 is harmless for Black.

Gurevich also mentioned the move 17 ♗xf6 as worth considering, but after the further 17...♗xf6 18 ♖e4 ♗xe5 19 dxe5 Black can play 19...♜c7! with better chances.

Yet, the simple and most logical move 17 ♖e4 gives White a decisive advantage after the further 17...♖xe4 18 ♜xf7+ ♖h8 19 ♖xc6!. For example: 19...♖xg5 20 ♜xe7 ♜xe7 (if 20...♗d7, then White does not have to take on g5 yet, but instead can play a crushing *zwischenzug* — 21 ♖xa7!, winning on the spot.) 21 ♖xe7 ♗xc1 22 ♗xc1 and the endgame is winning for White. Slightly more acceptable for Black is 19...♗xc6 20 ♜xe7 ♜xe7 21 ♗xe7 ♗dc8 22 ♗xc6 ♗xc6, although White should still be able to win this rook endgame arising after 23 g3 ♖f6 24 ♗xf6 gxf6 25 ♖g2.

Therefore, I think that 16...♗f8? would be a mistake too and Black should have preferred another move, also mentioned by Gurevich — 16...♖a5!, immediately taking care of the pin. After the further 17 ♜xb7 ♖xb7 18 ♖b5 White stands better in the line 18...a6 19 ♖a7! ♗xc1 20 ♗xc1, but perhaps Black can put up tougher resistance if he plays 18...♗b4 19 ♗ed1 ♗xc1 20 ♗xc1 ♖d5.

Even though in that position White can fight for the initiative with 21 a3 or 21 ♖c6, this ending is the best

Black can get after his mistake on move 12. This analysis shows how difficult Black's defensive task is after 13 ♗a6 and how easily Black can go wrong here.

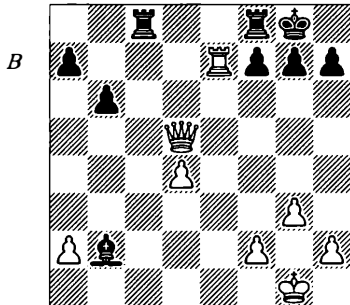
17 ♖xd5 ♗xg5
18 ♖xc6! exd5

The only move, as 18...♗xc1? loses on the account of 19 ♖de7+ ♖h8 20 ♖xc8 ♗d2 21 ♖d6 ♜d7 22 ♗d1.

19 ♜xd5 ♗xc1

Black had a tricky move at his disposal — 19...♗d2 — but it would eventually lead to the same position as in the game after 20 ♗e2! ♗xc1 21 ♖e7+ ♜xe7 22 ♗xe7 ♗xb2.

20 ♖e7+ ♜xe7
21 ♗xe7 ♗xb2
22 g3 (D)



Ever since 16...♖d5?, the play has been forced and this position is the logical result of that move. White is winning here, although he has to play precisely not to allow Black to build up a fortress.

22 ...chesstoua5g.com

Black also loses after 22...♗c2 23

♖xa7 ♜d2 24 ♖a4 b5 25 ♖a8 g6 26
 ♖xf8+ ♔xf8 27 ♗xb5+.

23 ♜d7!

White overprotects the d-pawn and prepares for the further advance of this passed pawn.

23	...	♜b8
24	♗b3	♙c1
25	♜d6	b5
26	♗c3	♙g5
27	♗xa5	♙f6
28	d5	b4
29	♗a4	h6
30	♜d7	♜fe8
31	d6	♜e6
32	♗a7	♜b5
33	♗a8+	♔h7
34	♗f3?	

Much easier would be 34 ♜xf7!, as Black cannot take the d6-pawn — 34...♜xd6?, because of 35 ♗e4+ ♔g8 36 ♗e8+ ♔h7 37 ♗xb5.

After the text, the game continued 34...♜b6 35 ♗d3+ ♔g8 36 ♖a7 ♜b8 37 d7 ♜d8 38 ♜c7 ♔f8 39 ♗b5 ♔e7 40 ♗xb4+ ♜d6 41 ♗e4+ ♜e6 42 ♗b4+ ♜d6 43 a4 ♙d4?

As Gurevich mentioned in *Inf-ormator*, after the correct 43...♜8xd7 44 ♜xd7+ ♔xd7 45 a5 ♙d4 46 a6 ♔e6! 47 ♔g2 ♜d7 White would still have to work to win the game.

Now it ended abruptly:

44 ♜c4 1-0

Sometimes the occupation of the a6-square by White's bishop is of a temporary nature, whose purpose is that of disrupting the harmony of the

opponent's pieces. In the following game yet another Danish grandmaster fell a victim to such a plan.

Karpov - Cu. Hansen

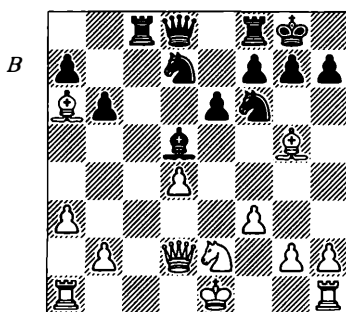
Wijk aan Zee 1988

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♙b4 4 ♗c2
 0-0 5 a3 ♙xc3+ 6 ♗xc3 b6 7 ♙g5
 ♙b7 8 e3 d6 9 f3 ♘bd7

10	♙d3	c5
11	♘e2	♜c8
12	♗d2	cxd4
13	exd4	d5?!

Shortly after this game Black discovered a better move here — 13...♙a6, for example: 14 ♜c1 ♘d5 15 cxd5 ♙xd3 16 dxe6 ♙xe2 17 ♜xc8 ♗xc8 18 exd7 ♗xd7 19 ♔xe2 ♘d5 with complicated play, as in the game Nikolić-Agdestein, Wijk aan Zee 1988.

14	cxd5	♙xd5
15	♙a6!	(D)



White is trying to fight for the open file. Although this bishop can be eventually chased away, it will cost Black some time.

15 ... ♖c6

15...♖c7? loses the exchange for a pawn after 16 ♙f4 ♖c6 17 ♙b7 ♖c4 18 b3 ♖xd4 19 ♜xd4.

16 ♙b5 ♖c7

After 16...♖c8?! 17 ♙xd7 ♜xd7 18 ♙xf6 gxf6 19 ♜g3!? White has good chances to attack Black's weakened kingside.

17 ♙f4 ♖c8

18 ♙a6 ♖a8

19 ♖c1

This is the point of White's previous play — he now controls the only open file. If Black wants to bring his rook on to it again, he needs to demobilise some of his pieces.

19 ... ♜b8

20 ♙d3 ♙b7

21 ♙g5 ♜bd7

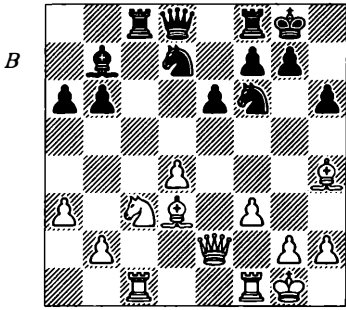
22 0-0 h6

23 ♙h4 ♖c8

24 ♜c3 a6

25 ♜e2! (D)

A great idea. It's well known that such 'short' queen moves are often most difficult, as we associate this piece with long-range movements.



The idea of the text is to force the move ...b5, weakening the c5-square, which then can become an outpost for White's pieces. As 25...♜b8 looks quite ugly, Black has to play into his opponent's hands.

25 ... b5

26 ♜e4

Now the c5-square is weak and Karpov immediately begins to move his knight to the desired destination. Control over the outpost on c5 promises him a stable advantage.

26 ... ♖b6

27 ♜c5! ♖fe8

If he captured the knight — 27...♜xc5 — Black would get into a very unpleasant position after 28 dxc5 ♜d8 (28...♖xc5?? loses on the spot to 29 ♙f2 ♜d7 30 ♖xc5 ♜xc5 31 b4) 29 b4.

28 b4 ♙c6

29 ♖d2 ♜d5

30 ♙e4 ♜7f6

31 ♖fe1

Perhaps, having established his knight on the c5-outpost, White should concentrate his forces on the c-file. Thus 31 ♖c2!?, with a further ♖fc1, was well worth considering.

31 ... ♜h7

32 ♙f2 ♜f8

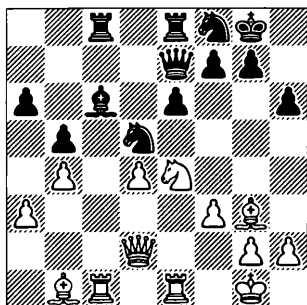
33 ♙b1 ♜a7

34 ♜e4 ♜e7

35 ♙g3 (D)

White's advantage is of a long-term nature, so he can try various ideas in this position, while his opponent is confined to passive defence.

B



35 ... ♖ed8
 36 ♘c5 ♘b6
 37 ♙d3 ♖a7
 38 ♙h4 ♗e8
 39 ♖f2 a5?!

Black has grown tired of his passive role and wants to create some play of his own. Yet, this move is a mistake, as it weakens the b5-pawn. Black should have stuck with the 'wait & see' policy by playing 39...♘d5.

40 ♖a1 ♘d5
 41 ♖b2 ♖b6
 42 bxa5! ♖xa5
 43 ♗eb1 ♘f4
 44 ♙f1 ♘8g6
 45 ♙g3 ♗ed8

Black could not try to weaken the position of White's knight, as 45...e5 46 dxe5 ♖a7 47 ♖c1 is bad for him, for example: 47...♙xf3 48 gxf3 ♗xc5 49 ♙f2.

46 ♖c1 ♗d5
 47 ♘e4 ♖d8
 48 ♙f2 ♘e7
 49 ♖c2 ♖a5

Black is experiencing difficulties,

for example 49...♖c7 also leaves White with the initiative after 50 ♖ac1 ♖b8 51 ♘c3 ♗h5 52 ♙g3.

50 ♖c1!? ♘fg6
 51 ♖b1 ♗dd8
 52 ♘c5 ♗h8 53 h4 ♖a8 54 h5 ♘f8
 55 ♙xb5 ♙xb5 56 ♗xb5 ♘f5 57 ♖b4 ♘h7 58 ♖a4 1-0

Black lost on time. He is a pawn down and has no compensation for it.

In this game we saw the importance of the c5-outpost in such positions. We may say that the weakness of this square is quite a common feature of many positions with the isolated d4-pawn, as Black often plays ...b5 in order to develop his bishop to b7.

Let us examine yet another game where White's control of the c5-square played an important role.

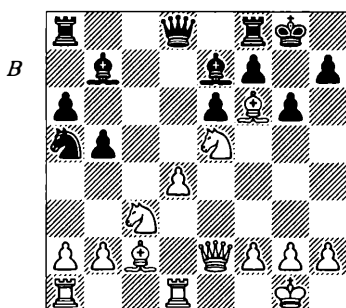
Kaidanov - Brunner *Wcht Lucerne 1993*

1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 e3 ♘f6 4 ♙xc4
 e6 5 ♘f3 c5 6 0-0 a6 7 ♙b3 cxd4 8
 exd4 ♙e7
 9 ♘c3 0-0
 10 ♖e2 ♘c6
 11 ♗d1 ♘a5
 12 ♙c2 b5
 13 ♙g5

Later White tried here 13 a4 b4 14 ♘e4 ♙b7 15 ♘c5, and after 15...♙d5? 16 ♘e5 ♖a7 17 ♙g5 White seized the initiative in the game Zvyagintsev-Magem, Pamplona 1996. However, Black

could play better — 15...♙xf3 16 ♖xf3 ♗d5 — putting pressure on both White's knight and queen. Then after 17 ♜e4 ♜d7! Black is fine. Therefore we can say that 13 a4 is no better than the text.

13 ... ♙b7
 14 ♜e5 g6
 15 ♙xf6!? (D)



An interesting decision! White cannot manage the d5-break and it's difficult to attack Black's king here, but GM Kaidanov has spotted the weakness of Black's queenside in general and the weakness of the c5-square in particular.

This is yet another example showing that the possessor of the isolated d-pawn should keep both flanks in mind when considering a plan.

15 ... ♙xf6
 16 ♙e4

A natural follow-up. White needs to exchange the light squared bishops in order to highlight the weakness of Black's queenside.

16 ... ♙xe4
 17 ♜xe4 ♙g7
 18 ♜ac1

Perhaps White should have played 18 b4!? ♜b7 19 ♜ac1. The text is less energetic and allows Black time to consolidate his position.

18 ... ♜c8
 19 ♜c5 ♗d6?

A serious mistake. Here Black missed the chance to bring his knight into play by 19...♜c6!.

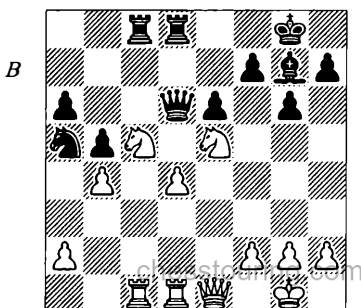
Alas, now 20 ♜xe6? does not work in view of 20...♜xd4! 21 ♜xd4 ♜xc1 22 ♜xc1 ♗xd4 and Black is better. White should play 20 ♗e3, but then after 20...♜e7 Black's knight is heading to f5, from where it will attack the d4-pawn. Black has good play.

20 ♗e1! ♜fd8?

This error loses. It was too late to move the knight to c6 as 20...♜c6?? loses on the spot to 21 ♜e4 ♗d5 22 ♜c5. Therefore, Black had to play 20...♜c4, even though it would not yield him sufficient compensation for the pawn after the further 21 ♜xc4 bxc4 22 ♜xc4 ♗d5 23 b3.

21 b4! (D)

This move wins the exchange. 21 ♜xf7! ♜xf7 22 ♗xa5 would also be



good, as Black cannot restore material equality by 22...♙xd4 on account of 23 ♖b7 ♙xf2+ 24 ♜f1! when White wins.

The game finished as follows:
 21...♖c4 22 ♖b7 ♗d5 23 ♖xd8
 ♜xd8 24 ♗e2 ♙h6 25 ♖g4 ♙g7
 26 ♖e3 ♗e4 27 ♗c2 ♗f4 28 ♖xc4
 bxc4 29 g3 ♗g4 30 ♗xc4 ♙xd4 31
 ♜g2 ♗e4+ 32 f3 ♗e3 33 ♜c2 e5
 34 ♜e2 ♗g5 35 ♗xa6 h5 36 ♗c6
 ♜b8 37 a3 ♜g7 38 h4 ♗f5 39 ♗e4
 ♗e6 40 ♜xd4 exd4 41 ♗xd4+ ♗f6
 42 ♗xf6+ ♜xf6 43 f4 ♜c8 44 ♜f3
 ♜c1 45 ♜e3 ♜f5 46 ♜e2 f6 47 ♜d2
 ♜g1 48 ♜c2 1-0.

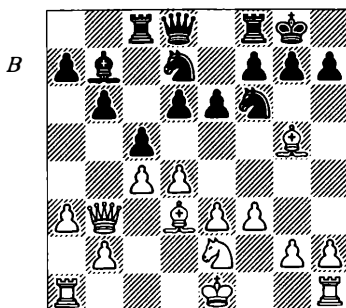
Now let us see how White's control over the c-file can help his attack on the opposite wing. Both flanks are closely related in chess and therefore we should always keep in mind that our superior position or piece activity on one wing may lead to attack on the opposite side.

In our next game we again encounter a familiar line from the Nimzo-Indian Defence — which we saw for example, in the game Karpov-Hansen — and a very familiar player, who now plays against the isolani.

Adianto - Karpov
Jakarta (3) 1997

1 d4 ♖f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♖c3 ♙b4 4 ♗c2
 0-0 5 a3 ♙xc3+ 6 ♗xc3 b6 7 ♙g5
 ♙b7 8 e3 d6 9 f3 ♖bd7

10 ♙d3 c5
 11 ♖e2 ♜c8
 12 ♗b3 (D)



12 ... d5

Much more common here is 12...cxd4 13 exd4 d5, where the following complicated game shows how many opportunities are available to both sides in this position:

14 0-0 dxc4 15 ♙xc4 h6 16 ♙h4
 ♖b8 17 ♗d3 ♗e7 18 ♜fe1 ♜fd8 19
 ♖g3!? (Sokolov also recommended
 19 ♜ad1) 19...g5! 20 ♙xe6 fxe6 21
 ♖f5 ♗f8 22 ♜xe6 ♜e8? 23 ♜xe8
 ♜xe8 24 ♙g3 ♜d8? 25 ♜e1 ♖c6 26
 ♜e6 ♜h8 27 ♖d6 and White obtained a decisive advantage in the game I.Sokolov-Almasi, Groningen 1995. Of course, Black could have defended better.

Black also often plays 12...h6 13
 ♙h4 cxd4 14 exd4 d5 and now 15
 0-0 dxc4 16 ♙xc4 leads to the position from Sokolov-Almasi, while after 15 e5 ♙a8 16 ♙a6 ♜c7 17
 ♙g3 bxc5! 18 ♙xc7 ♗xc7 19 ♗c3
 e5 20 ♙d3 exd4 21 ♖xd4 ♜e8+
 22 ♜f1 ♗b6 Black had an upper hand in the game Lautier-Karpov, Linares 1995.

13 cxd5 ♙xd5
 14 ♗a4 cxd4

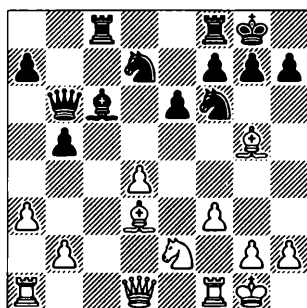
Also possible was 14...♙c6 15 ♖d1 h6 16 ♙h4 b5.

15 exd4 ♙c6

16 ♖d1 b5

Black needs to play this in order to bring his queen out.

17 0-0 ♖b6 (D)



Here Black is doing better compared to the game Karpov-Hansen, which we examined earlier, as he has pressure on the d4-pawn and some prospects of play on the queenside.

18 ♖c1 ♘d5

Perhaps Black should have played 18...h6!?, putting the question to the bishop. If White then plays 19 ♙h4, then after 19...♘d5 he has to take care of the weakness of the e3-square.

If the white bishop retreats on the c1-h6 diagonal — 19 ♙d2!? — then Black has an interesting simplifying move — 19...♘e5, and White is only slightly better after 20 ♙b4 ♘xd3 21 ♖xd3 ♖fe8 22 ♙c5.

19 ♙h1 a5?!

This is too slow. As White is about to start a kingside attack, Black should have hurried with action on

the opposite wing by 19...b4!?

20 ♖e1! b4

21 ♖h4 f5

Black had to play this move, as 21...h6?? would have led to a disaster after 22 ♙xh6! gxh6 23 ♖xh6 ♘5f6 24 ♘f4 ♖xd4 25 ♖c4 where White's attack is victorious.

22 ♖g3 ♙f7?!

Black cannot exchange the light-squared bishops by 22...♙b5? because of 23 ♙h6+., but he should have preferred 22...♙b7 to the text.

23 ♘f4!

White needs to exchange the powerful d5-knight, at the same time his own knight was quite inactive.

23 ... ♘xf4

24 ♙xf4 ♙d5

It would be much too risky to take the d4-pawn, as after 24...♖xd4? 25 ♙a6 e5 26 ♙c4+! ♙d5 27 ♖fd1 exf4 28 ♖xd4 fxg3 29 ♖xd5 White's advantage is decisive.

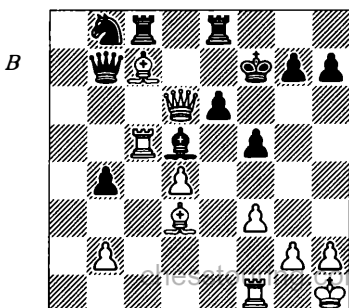
25 ♙d6 ♖fe8

26 axb4 axb4

27 ♙c7! ♖b7

28 ♖d6 ♘b8

29 ♖c5! (D)



White invades on the open c-file and his advantage is already decisive.

29 ... ♖e7?

Black could not solve his problems by tactical means, playing 29...♘c6?, as this fails to 30 ♖xd5! ♜xc7 (or 30...exd5 31 ♜xd5+ ♖e6 32 ♙c4, winning) 31 ♖xf5+ and White wins. Black can't solve his problems even with the relatively best 29...♗g8 as then after 30 ♙b5 ♖f8 31 ♖fc1 White's pieces dominates the whole board. Yet he should have played that, as the text loses by force.

30 ♙xb8! ♖xb8

Also hopeless is 30...♜xb8 31 ♖xd5 exd5 32 ♜xd5+ ♗f8 33 ♜xf5+ ♖f7 34 ♜xh7.

31 ♖fc1!

White restrains himself from winning material, preferring to attack along the open c-file. Should White choose the more obvious 31 ♖b5, Black would have some chances to build up a fortress by playing 31...♜xb5 32 ♙xb5 ♖xb5.

31 ... ♜b6

32 ♜e5 ♖d8

33 ♙xf5!

After this blow, Black's position collapses.

33 ... exf5

34 ♜xf5+ ♜f6

35 ♖xd5 ♜xf5

36 ♖xf5+ ♗g6

37 ♖b5 ♖xd4

38 ♖b6+ ♗f7

39 h3 ♖e2

40 ♖b7+ ♖e7

41 ♖b5 ♖e2

42 b3 ♖e3

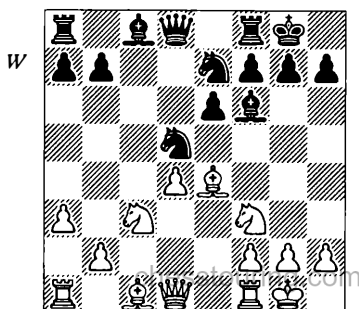
43 ♗h2 h5

Black is also lost after 43...♖xb3 44 ♖c7+ ♗f6 45 ♖b6+ ♗e5 46 ♖xg7.

Now the end was: 44 ♖b7+ ♖e7 45 ♖b6 ♖e3 46 ♖c7+ ♖e7 47 ♖c4! ♖xc4 48 bxc4 ♖e2 49 ♖xb4 ♖c2 50 h4 g6 51 ♗g3 ♗f6 52 ♖b6+ ♗f7 53 ♖c6 ♗g7 54 ♖c8 ♗f6 55 c5 ♗g7 56 c6 ♗f6 57 ♗f4 ♗g7 58 ♗e5 ♖e2+ 59 ♗d6 ♖d2+ 60 ♗c7 ♖xg2 61 ♖d8 1-0.

In the game analysed above White first occupied the c-file and then decided the game by launching a devastating blow (33 ♙xf5!) on the opposite wing. This is not an uncommon scenario—the dominance of the open file on one of side of the board can often help the attack taking place on the opposite wing.

Here I would like to illustrate the above statement by showing a few games beginning with the opening line: 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 ♘c3 c5 5 cxd5 ♘xd5 6 e3 ♘c6 7 ♙d3 ♙e7 8 0-0 0-0 9 a3 cxd4 10 exd4 ♙f6 11 ♙e4 ♘ce7 (D).



This position is quite important to opening theory, as it may arise not only from the Semi-Tarrasch, but also from the Panov Attack in the Caro-Kann Defence. It is not my intention to analyse this opening line in great depth, as my goal is different — to show some positional ideas available for White here in their historical development and logical interaction.

I believe that the best way to study positions like this (for either side) is by studying games of masters and grandmasters which feature them. Here I would like to use this approach and show a few games which I think are important for the position in question.

In particular, I shall closely examine one particular idea — White's invasion of the seventh rank via the c-file with his rook and the further use of this rook in the attack on Black's king. Here is our first model game from this line.

Filip-Platonov

Wijk aan Zee 1970

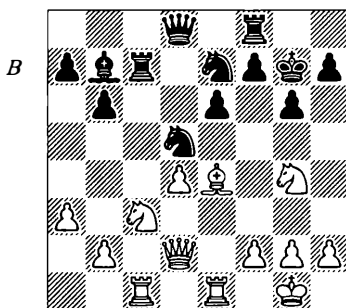
(1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 ♘c3 c5 5 cxd5 ♘xd5 6 e3 ♘c6 7 ♙d3 ♙e7 8 0-0 0-0 9 a3 cxd4 10 exd4 ♙f6 11 ♙e4 ♘ce7)

12 ♖d3 g6

Black had to decide which pawn to advance on the kingside. He could play 12...h6, but that would have drawbacks as well, as this move weakens the b1-h7 diagonal and White might exploit this by shifting

his pieces on this diagonal by playing ♖e2, ♙c2 and ♖d3.

- | | | |
|----|-------|------|
| 13 | ♙h6 | ♙g7 |
| 14 | ♙xg7 | ♖xg7 |
| 15 | ♘e5 | b6 |
| 16 | ♖d2!? | ♙b7 |
| 17 | ♗fe1 | ♗c8 |
| 18 | ♗ac1 | ♗c7 |
| 19 | ♘g4!? | (D) |



White is probing the weakness of the dark squares around the black king.

19 ... ♖h8

White is also slightly better after 19...♘g8 20 ♘xd5 ♗xc1 21 ♗xc1 ♙xd5 22 ♙xd5.

20 ♘xd5 ♗xc1
21 ♗xc1 ♘xd5?!

Now, although Black's knight occupies a nice position, it can be always eliminated. Besides which, the knight is pinned. Black should have preferred 21...♙xd5, when White would still have some advantage after 22 ♙d3!.

22 ♖h6! ♗g8
23 ♘e5 ♖e7?

Black had to play 23...♗g7, even

though White would still keep the initiative then by playing 24 h4!? ♖d6 25 h5.

24 ♙xd5!

Now it's the time to eliminate Black's knight — White is gaining access to the c7-square, as we will soon see.

24 ... ♙xd5?

Black had to recapture on d5 with the pawn — 24...exd5, trying to fight on in the resulting, quite difficult for him, pawn formation. The text loses.

25 ♖f4!

White's advantage is decisive.

25 ... ♙g7 -

Also after 25...f5 26 ♖c7! ♖xc7 27 ♖xg6+ ♖xg6 28 ♖xc7 White is winning.

26 ♖xf7 ♖f6

27 ♖h6+ 1-0

In the game which we have just examined, White only threatened to bring his rook on to the seventh rank (we saw it in the line 25...f5 26 ♖c7!), while in our next example White made this invasion a major part of his opening strategy:

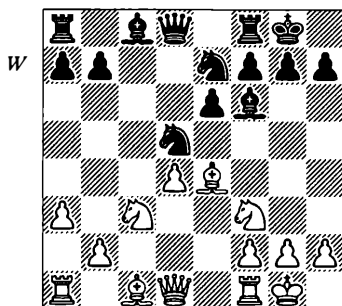
Smyslov - Ribli

Ct (7), London 1983

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♖f3 ♖f6 4 ♖c3
c5 5 exd5 ♖xd5 6 e3 ♖c6 7 ♙d3
♙e7 8 0-0 0-0 9 a3 cxd4 10 exd4
♙f6 11 ♙e4 ♖ce7 (D)

12 ♖e5

Also quite popular here is 12 ♖c2, for example: 12...g6 13 ♖e5 b6 14 ♙h6 ♙g7 15 ♖xd5 exd5 16 ♙xg7



♖xg7 17 ♙f3 ♙f5 18 ♖d2 ♖d6 and Black stood quite satisfactorily in the game Portisch-Ribli, Hungary Ch 1981.

12 ... g6

Black would certainly prefer to play this move only in reply to ♖d3, but he has some problems finding a useful move in the meantime. For example, after 12...b6 Black might not like 13 ♖g4!?. Instead of the text Black also tried 12...♖xc3 13 bxc3 ♖g6, but after the further 14 ♖xg6 hxg6 15 ♖f3 White was better in the game Servat-Sorin, Argentina Ch 1986.

13 ♙h6 ♙g7

14 ♙xg7 ♖xg7

15 ♖c1!? b6

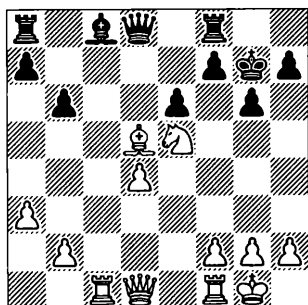
16 ♖xd5 ♖xd5?!

Although the position arising after 16...exd5 is quite unpleasant for Black, he had to settle for it, as the text leads to bigger problems.

17 ♙xd5! (D)

This reminds us of the question already discussed on page 23 — that of exchanges. I should like to re-emphasise what I wrote there: it is too

B



much of a generalisation to say that the possessor of the isolated d-pawn should avoid simplification.

The possessor of the isolani should really avoid *unnecessary* simplification. At the same time there are many cases where he must exchange some pieces! We have already seen some situations like this in this book and here is yet another illustration of this theme.

Although two pairs of minor pieces have already come off, another exchange is required. By swapping his bishop for Black's knight, White eliminates Black's only developed piece, which covered many important squares. Now White's remaining pieces are much more active than Black's.

17 ... ♖xd5?!

As Smyslov pointed out in his book *Letopis Shakhmatnogo Tvorchestva* (something like 'Annals of creative work in chess'), Black should not allow White's rook on the seventh rank, settling for the thankless position arising after 17...exd5 instead.

18 ♖c7 ♙b7

Black could not get rid of the rook, as 18...♗d6? would drop a pawn after 19 ♖xf7+ ♖xf7 20 ♘xf7.

19 ♗g4 ♖ad8

Again Black had no time to attack the c7-rook, as 19...♖ac8? would lose a pawn for no compensation after 20 ♖d7 ♗e4 21 ♗xe4 ♙xe4 22 f3 ♙d5 23 ♖xa7 ♖c2 24 b4.

20 ♖d1 a5

21 h4!

As usual this march of the h-pawn is designed to weaken Black's kingside.

21 ... ♖c8

22 ♖d7 ♗e4

23 ♗g5 ♙c6

What is good for one side is not always good for the other — Black could not bring his rook to the seventh rank here, as 23...♖c2? would give White a tempo in the attack and after 24 h5 ♙g8 25 h6 ♙d5 26 ♖d8 ♖c8 27 ♘d7 White is winning.

24 f3 ♗f5

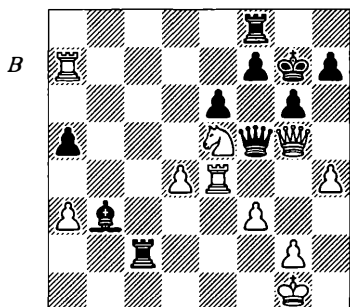
This was necessary, as after 24...♗e2? 25 ♘g4 ♗xd1+ 26 ♙h2 White's attack succeeds, while after 24...♗c2 25 ♖c1! ♗xc1+ 26 ♗xc1 ♙xd7 27 ♗f4 White also has a decisive advantage, as his pieces are much better coordinated.

25 ♖a7 ♙a4

After 25...♗xg5?! 26 hxg5 the resulting endgame is very unpleasant for Black, since the knight is superior to the bishop here, besides which, the white rook on the seventh rank is very active.

26 ♖e1 ♜c2
 27 b4 ♙b3
 28 bxa5 bxa5
 29 ♖e4! (D)

Yet another familiar technique — the rook lift to the king side adds fuel to the attack on f7.



29 ... h6
 30 ♖e3 ♜b2
 31 ♖g4!

After this move White's attack is victorious; much worse would be 31 ♖f4 ♖c2 and White would have to play 32 ♖g4, as 32 ♖ffxf7+ even loses after 32... ♖xf7 33 ♖xf7+ ♔g8.

31 ... g5
 32 hxg5 h5
 33 ♖g3 h4
 34 ♖g4 h3
 35 g6 h2+

Black is trying hard to complicate the issue, but to no avail.

After 35... ♖xg2+ 36 ♖xg2 ♖b1+ 37 ♔h2 hxg2 38 ♔xg2 White would have won more easily, for example: 38... ♖h8 39 ♖xf7+ ♔g8 and now the following forced line is possible — 40 ♖f8+ ♔xf8 41 g7+ ♔xg7 42

♖g5+ ♔h7 43 ♖h5+ ♔g7 44 ♖f7+ ♔h6 45 ♔g4+ ♔g5 46 ♖f6+ ♔h5 47 ♖xh8+ ♔g6 48 ♖f6+ ♔h7 49 ♖f7+ ♔h8 50 ♔f6, where Black cannot prevent a checkmate.

36 ♔xh2 ♖h8+
 37 ♔g3 ♖xg2+
 38 ♔xg2 ♖c2+
 39 ♖f2 ♖h2+
 40 ♔xh2 ♖xf2+
 41 ♔h3 ♖f1+
 42 ♖g2 ♖h1+ 1-0

The move 42... ♖h1+ was sealed, but Black resigned without resuming play, as after 43 ♔g3 ♖e1+ 44 ♔g4 ♖h1 45 ♖g3 ♙c2 46 ♖xf7+ ♔g8 47 ♔g5! White is winning.

This is a very interesting game, played by White in that crystal-clear style which is so characteristic of Smyslov's best games.

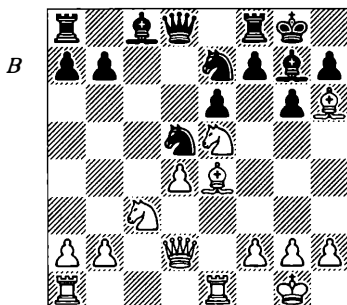
As Smyslov mentioned in that book, the plan which he used to such great effect in the previous game (14 ♙xg7, 15 ♖c1 and 16 ♔xd5) was new at the time the game was played. Hitherto, he said, White played 14 ♖d2.

I got quite interested in this remark of Smyslov and decided to check my databases, looking for examples of the plan associated with 14 ♖d2. As a result I learned that it was Smyslov himself who won a very nice game playing ♖d1-d2 on move 14 in a very similar position! Obviously Ribli would be well prepared for this scenario if repeated, and therefore Smyslov tried a new idea, adding considerably to the theory of this line.

Now I would like to show that earlier game by Smyslov.

Smyslov - Padevsky
Moscow 1963

- 1 c4 ♘f6 2 ♖c3 e6 3 ♗f3 d5 4 d4
c5 5 cxd5 ♗xd5 6 e3 ♖c6 7 ♘d3
♙e7 8 0-0 cxd4 9 exd4 0-0 10 ♞e1
♙f6 11 ♙e4 ♗ce7 12 ♗e5 g6 13
♙h6 ♙g7
14 ♖d2 (D)



White is planning to take advantage of the weakness of the dark squares on the kingside after the dark-squared bishops come off.

- 14 ... ♗f6
15 ♞ad1 ♗xe4
16 ♞xe4 ♗f5?

This move allows the standard pawn break in the centre. Better here is 16...b6 17 ♙xg7 ♗xg7 18 ♖h4 ♗f5 19 ♖h3 ♙b7 20 d5 with some advantage for White, as recommended by Euwe.

- 17 ♙xg7 ♗xg7
18 d5! exd5
19 ♗xd5 ♙e6

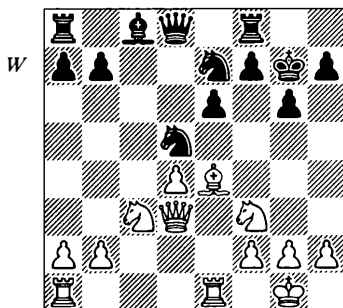
20 ♖c3!

White has a very significant advantage here, thanks to his dominance in the centre. The game continued: 20...♙xd5 21 ♗d7+ ♗g8?! 22 ♞xd5 ♞c8 23 ♖d2 ♗g7 24 h3 ♞g8 25 g4 ♗h4 26 ♞f4 ♞c4 27 ♞xf7+! ♗xf7 28 ♗e5+ ♗e7 29 ♖g5+ 1-0.

Smyslov's plan of playing on the c-file together with an attack against Black's king looked so convincing that I was curious to learn whether anyone else had employed a similar idea. After some research in the book *Isolated Pawn* by Mikhalchishin *et al.*, I found a very similar position (see diagram below).

Antoshin - Nezhmetdinov
Ryazan 1967

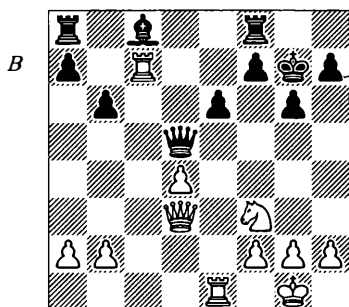
- 1 d4 ♗f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♗f3 d5 4 ♖c3
c5 5 cxd5 ♗xd5 6 e3 ♖c6 7 ♘d3
♙e7 8 0-0 cxd4 9 exd4 0-0 10 ♞e1
♙f6 11 ♙e4 ♗ce7 12 ♖d3 g6 13
♙h6 ♙g7 14 ♙xg7 ♗xg7 (D)



This position can also arise by various other move orders.

As we can see, the only difference between this position and the one which arose after 14...♔xg7 in the game Smyslov-Ribli is that here White has played ♖e1 and ♗d3 instead of a3 and ♘e5, which occurred in Smyslov's game. The subsequent play by White is very similar in both games, as you will soon see.

- 15 ♖ac1 b6?
 16 ♔xd5! ♘xd5
 17 ♘xd5 ♗xd5?
 18 ♖c7! (D)



Here, compared to Smyslov-Ribli, the invasion of White's rook is even more destructive, as Black cannot develop his bishop yet — 18...♔b7 immediately loses to 19 ♖e5. Perhaps here Black no longer has a completely satisfactory defence against the very straightforward plan involving ♗e3, ♘f4 and ♗f4. His best try here is 18...♔d7 19 ♘e5 ♔e8 20 ♗e3, as suggested by Lev Polugaevsky, although even then Black's position is very difficult.

- 18 ... ♗xa2?
 19 ♘e5 ♗d5

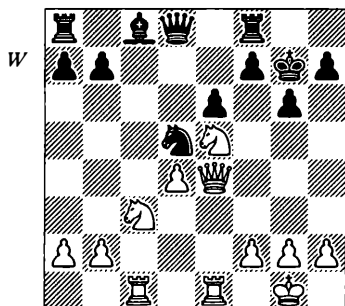
20 ♗e3 1-0

Here Black resigned. At first glance his decision may look premature, but Black's position is indeed lost. He cannot defend his vulnerable kingside in general and the f7-pawn in particular, e.g. 20...♔b7 21 f3 ♖ad8 22 ♗f4 ♔c8 23 ♖xf7+ ♔g8 24 ♗f6 ♗xd4+ 25 ♔h1 ♖xf7 26 ♗xf7+ ♔h8 27 ♗e7 ♔g8 28 ♘g4. It's worth mentioning that also winning for White is 20 ♗g3, when Black cannot play 20...♔b7 in view of 21 ♖d7, while White threatens to play his standard move 21 ♗f4.

This is a very nice example of White's strategy in this line and indeed a very important game. The Mikhalchishin book, which I mentioned earlier, contains many very interesting examples, regarding the pawn formation with the isolated d-pawn, but I wanted to see the full text of that game. Finally, thanks to the help of IM Kapengut from Belarus, it was found in the magazine *Shakhmatisty Rossii* ('Chess Players of Russia') No. 7/1967 with annotations by Polugaevsky.

I do not want to create the impression that the possessor of the isolani always has an upper hand in such positions. Although the plan with 15 ♖ac1 with the further 16 ♔xd5, 17 ♘xd5 and 18 ♖c7 is very dangerous for Black, there are ways of dealing with it. For example, after 17 ♘xd5 Nezhmetdinov ought to have recaptured on d5 with the pawn 17... exd5.

Also on move 15 Black can play better — 15...♖f6 16 ♘e5 ♘xe4 17 ♙xe4 ♘d5 (D), as in the game Tseitlin-Zhuravliov, Rostov 1976.



The Tseitlin game continued 18 ♘g4 (also interesting is 18 ♘xd5!? exd5 19 ♙f4) 18...♙d7 19 ♙e5+ f6 20 ♙g3 ♘xc3 21 bxc3 ♖c8 with unclear play. Perhaps White should have preferred 19 ♘xd5!? exd5 20 ♙e5+ f6 21 ♙c7 with a small, but stable advantage.

Summary

While playing with the isolated d-pawn, we should look not only for a kingside attack or a pawn break in the centre, but also for possible play on the queenside. This plan may be particularly attractive for the side possessing the isolani, when he has firm control over the open c-file — often this happens when we can con-

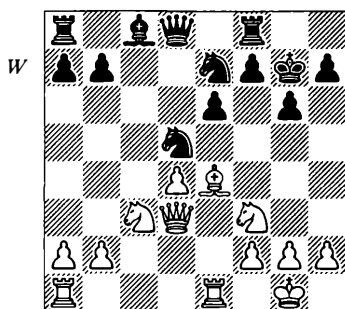
trol the c8-square, for example by our bishop from a6. Yet another objective for queenside play can be the possession of the c5 square (c4 for Black), particularly if the side playing against the isolated d-pawn has weakened that square by playing ...b7-b5 (b2-b4).

There is a strong link between queenside play and attack on the other flank and in the centre — once we have established serious control over the c-file, we may consider attacking the kingside using the seventh rank with our rook.

For the side playing against the isolani the advice is fairly standard — try to simplify the position and keep pressure on the opponent's isolated pawn. Here are some more concrete recommendations, assuming that you are playing Black vs. the isolated d4-pawn:

- make sure that the a6-square does not fall into possession of White's bishop;
- be careful and think twice when you play ...b5, as often this move leads to a future weakness of the c5-square. Try to keep control over that square;
- develop the c8-bishop sooner rather than later — that would help you to fight back for the control over the open c-file by bringing your rooks to c8.

7 Play on the e-file



Now let us return to the above position arising after 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 d5 4 ♘c3 c5 5 cxd5 ♘xd5 6 e3 ♘c6 7 ♙d3 ♙e7 8 0-0 cxd4 9 exd4 0-0 10 ♖e1 ♙f6 11 ♙e4 ♘ce7 12 ♚d3 g6 13 ♙h6 ♙g7 14 ♙xg7 ♘xg7 (D) and examine yet another plan available to White.

Darga - O'Kelly
Madrid 1957

15 ♙xd5?! ♘xd5
 16 ♘xd5

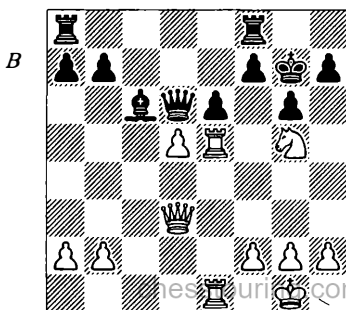
White has been eliminating the pieces which exercised control over the d5-square, hoping that after

...exd5 the resulting pawn formation would be favourable for him, as Black's light-squared bishop will be limited by the d5-pawn. Black tries to avoid this pawn structure, but runs into more trouble:

16 ... ♙xd5?!
 17 ♖e5 ♙d6
 18 ♖ae1

Your first impression may be that White's rooks are facing a wall (the e6-pawn), but in fact that obstruction can be removed by playing d4-d5 at the appropriate moment.

18 ... ♙d7
 19 ♘g5! ♙c6
 20 d5! (D)



White vacates the d4-square, opening the e-file for the rooks at the same time.

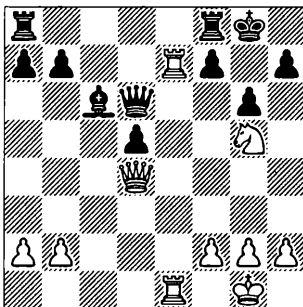
20 ... exd5

At first glance it seems that 20... ♟xd5 21 ♖d4 ♟g8 would be more stubborn. Indeed, in the game Novak-Meduna, Czechoslovakia 1981, White did not find anything better than to force a draw by playing 22 ♖h4 h5 23 ♜h7 ♟xh7 24 ♜xh5+ gxh5 25 ♖xh5+ ♟g7 26 ♖g5+ ♟h7 27 ♖h5+. However, on move 22 White has a much better option. He can play 22 ♜e4! ♖d8 23 ♜xd5 exd5 24 ♜f6+ ♟h8. And then White should continue not with 25 ♜d7+ f6 26 ♜xf8 ♖xf8 27 ♖xd5, where he is only slightly better, but with 25 ♜e3! ♜c8 26 g4!!, which is winning for him after 26... ♜c4 27 ♜h3 h5 28 ♖e5.

Perhaps, this analysis has some importance for the line starting with 15 ♟xd5.

21 ♖d4 ♟g8
22 ♜e7 (D)

Although it's always tempting to invade the seventh rank with a rook,



B

perhaps 22 ♜e3! should have been preferred instead. Then Black would be defenceless against the two threats — 23 ♜e4 and 23 ♜xh7.

22 ... f6?

Now White is winning. Should Black play 22... ♜ad8?, then 23 ♜1e6! would be devastating, but Black had to try 22... ♟d7. Then White would have the pleasant choice between 23 ♜e4 ♖xe7 24 ♜f6+ ♖xf6 25 ♖xf6 ♜fe8 and 23 ♜xf7 ♜xf7 24 ♖h8+ ♟xh8 25 ♜xf7+ ♟g7 26 ♜xd6, but in both of these variations Black is still fighting.

23 ♜1e6 ♖d8
24 ♜xh7 ♜e8
25 ♖h4 1-0

While our examples in Chapter 6 illustrated the benefits of possessing the open c-file, this game shows the importance of the open e-file. As I mentioned earlier, the presence of the semi-open and open files and the opportunity to utilise them is one of the major advantages for the side possessing the isolated d-pawn.

Now let us take a closer look at the cases where the possessor of the isolani takes advantage of the open e-file.

Positions in which the side playing against the isolani does not have a pawn on the e-file are very common. One obvious example is the following popular line from the French Defence: 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♜d2 c5 4 exd5 exd5. Should then White take on c5 or Black take on d4, we will get the pawn structure

which we are discussing. Positions like this happened in many games between Karpov and Korchnoi and generally the isolani fared well in them.

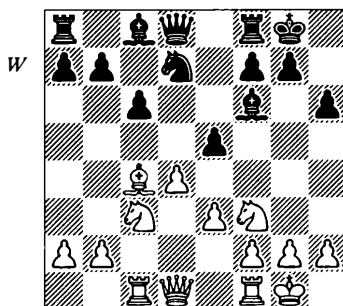
For those who would like to study this line and the associated pawn formation in more detail, I would like to recommend the following approach: gather the games played in the position after 3 ♞d2 c5 4 exd5 exd5 . Select those games where Vaganian and Bareev were Black and study them closely. That would give you a good insight into this system, as both the above-mentioned grandmasters are experts on this line. Should you like to look at this variation from White's point of view, take a close look at the games played in this opening by Karpov. I believe that this a useful method of studying typical pawn structures in relation to particular opening lines.

As I have said, some positions arising from the French are good illustrations of our theme, but here I would like to concentrate on the cases where White possesses the isolani and takes advantage of the open file. Two openings where such positions arise quite often are the Queen's Gambit Accepted and the Queen's Gambit Declined. Let us start with the latter:

Andersson - Tal
Malmö (6) 1983

1 ♞f3 d5 2 d4 ♞f6 3 c4 e6 4 ♞g5
 ♞e7 5 ♞c3 h6 6 ♞xf6 ♞xf6 7 e3

0-0 8 ♞c1 c6 9 ♞d3 ♞d7
10 0-0 dxc4
11 ♞xc4 e5 (D)



12 ♞b3

Later, after the game Kasparov-Karpov (game 23 of their match in Moscow in 1985), the line 12 h3 exd4 13 exd4 became very popular. White's hopes for advantage here are related to the pressure on the a2-g8 diagonal and the control over the e-file, where White's knights can occupy the e4- and e5- squares. At some point White might also break in the centre with d4-d5. Then after 13... ♞b6 14 ♞b3 ♞f5 15 ♞e1 the following game is very instructive: 15... $\text{♞g5}?$! 16 ♞a1 ♞d7 17 d5! $\text{♞c8}?$ 18 ♞d4 ♞g6 19 ♞e6 ! fxe6 20 dxe6 ♞h7 21 ♞xd7 ! ♞b6 22 e7 ♞fe8 23 ♞g4 ♞c5 24 ♞e4 ♞xe7 25 ♞c2 ! ♞f8 26 g3 ♞d8 27 ♞ad1 ♞a5 28 h4 ♞e7 29 ♞c3 ♞xc2 30 ♞xe7 ♞g8 31 ♞dd7 ♞f5 32 ♞xg7 + ♞h8 33 ♞d4 and Black resigned in the game Kasparov-Short, Brussels 1986.

Later GM Abramović suggested

an interesting idea in this line — 13...♖e8!?, planning the further ...♟f8 and ...♙e6 and aiming to solve the problem with the a2-g8 diagonal. After 14 ♖b3 ♗f8 15 ♖c2 ♗e8 16 ♗fe1 (worse is 16 ♖g6?! ♗e7 17 ♗fe1 ♟f8 18 ♖h5 ♗xe1+ 19 ♗xe1 ♙e6 20 ♙xe6 ♟xe6 and Black obtained a slight advantage in the game Dlugy-Abramović, New York open 1988) 16...♟f8 (much worse is 16...♗xe1+? 17 ♗xe1 ♟f8 because of 18 ♖b3!). After the further 18... ♖c7 19 ♟e4 ♙d8 20 ♟e5 ♙e6 21 ♙xe6 ♟xe6 22 ♟xf7! ♖xf7 23 ♟d6 ♖d7 24 ♗xe6 ♟h8 25 ♗e8+ ♟h7 26 ♖d3+ g6 27 ♖b3 Black resigned in the game Hellsten-Olesen, Copenhagen open 1995) 17 ♗xe8 ♖xe8 18 ♗e1 ♙e6 White's advantage is minimal. Perhaps, White can improve on this line by playing 17 ♖b3! or 18 d5!?, with some initiative in both cases.

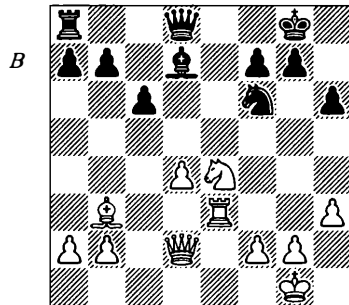
12	...	exd4
13	exd4	♗e8
14	♖d2	♟b6

14...♟f8 is also possible here. After the further 15 d5! ♙xc3 16 ♗xc3 cxd5 17 ♙xd5 ♖f6 18 ♗d1 ♗b8 19 ♖d4 ♖xd4 20 ♟xd4 White had only a minimal advantage in the game Andersson-Wedberg, Haninge 1989.

15	♗fe1	♗xe1+
16	♗xe1	♙g4
17	♟e5	♙xe5
18	♗xe5	♟d7
19	♗e3	♟f6
20	h3	♙d7

The alternative 20...♙f5 also leaves White with some initiative after the subsequent 21 ♗e5 ♖d7 22 ♖f4 ♙g6 23 d5!.

21 ♟e4! (D)



A very interesting and logical idea. All White's pieces are more active than their counterparts with the exception of the knights, so White wants to exchange them. Black's main problem is that he cannot bring his rook out yet. Once again we see that sometimes certain exchanges can favour the side possessing the isolated d-pawn.

A similar situation could arise after 21 ♗e5 ♖f8 22 ♖e3 ♗e8 23 ♟e4 ♟xe4 24 ♖xe4, but the text-move is stronger.

21	...	♟xe4
22	♗xe4	♖f8
23	♖f4	♗e8
24	♗xe8	♖xe8
25	♟h2	

In this ending the d4-pawn is not a weakness as Black's pieces cannot attack it. White's advantage is deter-

mined by his pressure along the a2-g8 diagonal and the more active queen, which may attack Black's rather vulnerable queenside.

25 ... a5?

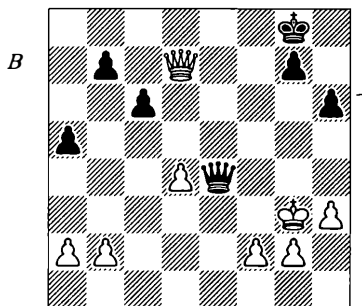
Better was 25...e6, although White keeps the advantage after 26 ♖e5 ♗d7 27 ♖c7 ♖c8 28 ♖d6.

26 ♖c7 ♖e4

27 ♗xf7! ♖xf7

28 ♖xd7+ ♖g8

29 ♖g3 (D)



White's excellent strategy has given him an extra pawn, which GM Ulf Andersson, famous for his end-game technique, realises very convincingly:

29... ♖d3+ 30 f3 ♖d2 31 b3 b5
32 ♖e6+ ♖h8 33 ♖e8+ ♖h7 34
♖e4+ ♖h8 35 ♖e8+ ♖h7 36
♖e4+ ♖h8 37 a4 ♖c3 38 ♖e8+
♖h7 39 ♖e4+ ♖h8 40 axb5 cxb5
41 ♖e8+ ♖h7 42 ♖xb5 ♖xd4 43
♖xa5 ♖d6+ 44 ♖f2 ♖d4+ 45 ♖e2
♖b2+ 46 ♖d2 ♖xb3 47 ♖d3+
♖xd3+ 48 ♖xd3 ♖g6 49 ♖e4 ♖f6
50 f4 h5 51 f5 1-0.

Changes in the assessment of certain pawn formations, and the middlegame positions related to them, normally lead to the changes in the assessment and popularity of the opening lines, from which such middlegame positions arise. As an example, I can mention that the King's Indian Defence was regarded as a dubious opening until Black found new ideas in many of the pawn structures arising from that opening.

This is also very noticeable when we look at some lines of the Queen's Gambit Accepted. Our next two games will illustrate this thought:

Vaganian - Hübner
Tilburg 1983

1	d4	d5
2	c4	dx c4
3	♗c3	e5

Some years ago it was believed that once Black manages to play ...e5 at an early stage in the QGA, his opening problems are over, as the pawn formation which arises was regarded as quite favourable for Black. That applied to the variations 1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 e3 e5 and 3 ♗c3 e5.

However, modern chess theory does not share such an optimistic view, as the pawn formation with isolated d4-pawn vs. Black's pawn on c7 (or c6) and with the open e-file are now considered to be more promising for the possessor of the isolani.

It's interesting that in his blitz match vs. Fritz3 in Munich in 1994

Kasparov chose this particular pawn formation in all of his three 'White' games, achieving superior positions in all of them. Here is the only game the champion lost in that match, but the opening had nothing to do with this result:

Kasparov v. Fritz3, Munich 1994: 1 e3 (Obviously in a blitz game vs. a computer such a move makes sense.) 1...d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 ♖xc4 e5 4 d4 exd4 5 exd4 ♖b4+ 6 ♜c3 ♜f6 7 ♜f3 0-0 8 0-0 ♖g4 9 h3 ♖h5 10 g4! ♖g6 11 ♜e5 ♜c6 12 ♖e3 ♜xe5 13 dxe5 ♜d7 (White is also better after 13... ♖xc3 14 bxc3 ♜e4 15 ♖xd8 ♜axd8 16 f4 h6 17 f5 ♖h7 18 e6) 14 f4 ♜b6. Now, instead of 15 ♖b3?, White could win the game on the spot by playing 15 ♖xb6! axb6 16 ♖xd8 ♜axd8 17 f5 ♜d2 18 fxg6 hxg6 19 e6.

Now let us come back to the game Vaganian-Hübner:

4	e3	exd4
5	exd4	♜f6
6	♖xc4	♖e7
7	♜f3	0-0
8	0-0	

Also possible is 8 h3. However, Vaganian obviously did not think that Black could solve all the opening problems by exchanging his light-squared bishop.

8	...	♜bd7
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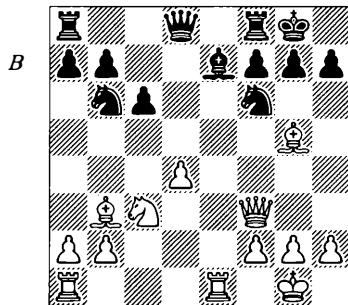
After the alternative 8...♖g4, White also keeps the advantage by playing 9 h3 ♖xf3 10 ♖xf3 ♜c6 11

♖e3. Then after 11...♜xd4 12 ♖xb7 ♜f5 13 ♜ad1 the two bishops in the open position and the better pawn formation gave White a long-lasting advantage in the game Mochalov-E.Ruban, Byelorussia Ch, Minsk 1996.

9	♖e1	♜b6
10	♖b3	c6
11	♖g5	♖g4
12	♖d3!?	

As White now threatens both 13 ♜e5 and 13 ♖c2, Black is forced to part with his light-squared bishop.

12	...	♖xf3
13	♖xf3 (D)	



White can be pleased with the results of the opening as his pieces are very active, particularly the b3-bishop which has no counterpart. White's rooks can be brought to the centre easily which promises him good prospects both in the centre and on the kingside.

13	...	♜f5
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Also 13...♖e8 would not solve Black's problems either after the simple 14 ♜ad1!, threatening to play 15

♙xf6 ♙xf6 16 ♘e4. If Black then tries to block the a2-g8 diagonal by 14...♘fd5?!, he would face a thankless task, defending the position a pawn down arising after the further 15 ♙xe7 ♖xe7 16 ♖xe7 ♗xe7 17 ♙xd5 ♘xd5 18 ♘xd5 cxd5 19 ♗xd5.

14 ♙xe7 ♘xe7
15 ♖e5!

White prepares to double on the open file, simultaneously taking control over the blockading d5-square. Black has to kick the annoying rook, but that leads his knight astray.

15 ... ♘g6
16 ♖e4 ♘d7
17 ♖d1 ♗a5

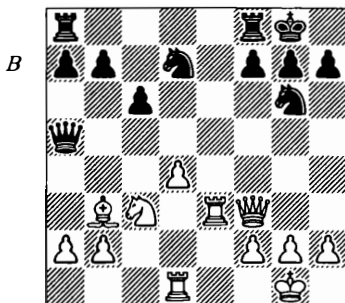
Black could try to re-establish control over the d5-square by playing 17...♘f6 18 ♖e3 ♘e7, but then White plays 19 ♖de1! and now 19...♘ed5 leads to a very unpleasant ending for Black — 20 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 21 ♙xd5 (also good is 21 ♖e5) 21...♗xd5 22 ♗xd5 cxd5 23 ♖e7. Black's main problem in the position after 17 ♖d1 is his inability to develop his rook.

18 ♖e3! (D)

A great move! Moving the rook away from the possible ...♘f6, White also vacates the e4-square for the knight, which will be heading to d6 in order to put more pressure on Black's position in general and on the f7-pawn in particular.

18 ... ♖ad8

It is hard to recommend 18...♘f6



instead of the text — should Black play it and not hold the difficult position arising after 19 d5 cxd5 20 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 21 ♙xd5, the commentators of the game would probably say something like this: “instead of 18...♘f6 Black had to play the more stubborn move 18...♖ad8”.

Positions like this are very difficult to hold at grandmaster level, so let's just say that despite Black's logical defence, White is able to increase his advantage here.

19 ♘e4 ♗c7
20 h4!

Yet another example of the march of the h-pawn, which is designed to disturb Black's kingside.

20 ... h6

Of course, 20...♘xh4?? would be simply suicidal in view of 21 ♗h5 ♘g6 22 ♖h3 ♖fe8 23 ♗xh7+ ♔f8 24 ♖f3 and White is winning. Black had to put a stopper on the further advance of White's h-pawn, as after 20...♘b6 21 h5 ♘f4 22 h6 ♘bd5 23 hxg7 ♔xg7 24 ♖ee1 the residence of his king would be badly damaged.

21 ♗g4 ♔h8

Forced, as the black king must leave the dangerous a2-g8 diagonal in view of the threat of 22 ♖xg6. After the alternative 21... ♖f4 White would have decided the game by a direct attack — 22 ♜f3! ♘d5 23 ♜g3 g6 24 h5 ♘g7 25 ♙xd5 cxd5 26 hxg6! f5 27 ♗h4 and White wins.

22 h5!

White does not fall for 22 ♙xf7, as then after 22... ♘de5 23 dxe5 ♘xe5 24 ♜xd8 ♗xd8 25 ♗h5 ♘xf7 Black would have escaped the main danger.

22 ... ♖f4
 23 ♜g3 g5
 24 hxg6 fxg6
 25 ♜e1!

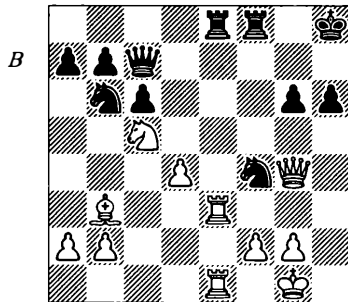
Vaganian's play in this position is crystal-clear — his rook had little to do on d1, so he relocates it to the open file.

25 ... ♜de8

The difficulties which Black is experiencing here due to the exposed position of his king, are quite apparent in the following line: 25... ♖b6 26 ♘c5!? ♜xd4 27 ♘e6 ♘xe6 28 ♗xg6 ♗f4 29 ♜f3 ♗g5 30 ♗xe6 and White's positional advantage is decisive, as 30... ♜xf3 leads to a forced checkmate after 31 ♗e8+.

26 ♜ge3 ♖b6
 27 ♘c5 (D)
 27 ... ♜c8?

This is a blunder, but Black's position was lost anyway. After 27... ♜xe3 White would have the pleasant choice between 28 fxex3 ♗e7 29 ♗g3 ♘fd5 30 ♗xg6, with a ma-



terial advantage, and the more thematic (play on the open e-file!) move 28 ♜xe3, threatening 29 ♗h4 and 30 ♜e7. After the further 28... g5 29 ♘e6 ♗d7 30 ♗g3! ♜f6 31 ♘xf4 ♜xf4 32 ♜e6 ♘g7 33 ♗h3 White is winning.

28 ♗xf4 1-0

The same pawn formation, but with Black's light-squared bishop on the board, arose in the following game which illustrates some other ideas available for the possessor of the isolated d-pawn in this structure.

I. Sokolov - Hübner
Wijk aan Zee 1996

1	d4	d5
2	c4	dx c4
3	e3	e5
4	♙xc4	exd4
5	exd4	x ♘f6
6	♘f3	♙e7
7	0-0	0-0
8	h3	

White prevents ♙g4, although as we have seen in our previous

game, pinning the knight in positions like this does not guarantee Black equality.

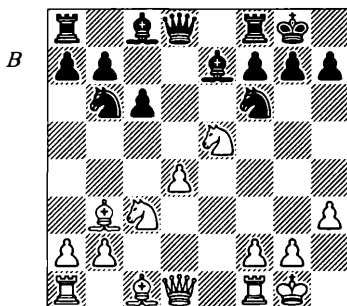
8 ... ♖bd7

Perhaps Black should have tried to use the fact that White spent some time on the prophylactic move 8 h3 by playing 8...c5.

9 ♖c3 ♖b6

10 ♗b3 c6

11 ♖e5 (D)



Karpov, playing vs. Timman in the Euwe Memorial in 1991, preferred 11 ♖e1 and achieved a solid advantage after the further 11...♗fd5 12 ♖e4 ♗f5 13 ♖e5 ♖d7 14 ♖f3 ♖xe5 15 dxe5 ♗g6 16 ♗f4!. That game continued: 16...♖a5? 17 ♖d6! ♗xd6 18 exd6 ♖fe8? 19 ♖xe8+ ♖xe8 20 ♗xd5! cxd5 21 d7 ♖e7 22 ♖c1 and White's advantage became decisive.

Karpov won after the further 22...♖xd7 23 ♖c8+ ♖d8 24 b4! ♖b6 25 ♗c7 ♖xc8 26 ♗xb6 axb6 27 ♖xd5 h6 28 ♖xb7 ♖c1+ 29 ♖h2 ♖c2 30 ♖xb6 ♖xa2 31 ♖d4.

11 ... ♖bd5!?

This is an improvement compared to the game I.Sokolov-Piket, Corfu 1991, where Black played 11...♗fd5 and after 12 ♖e4 ♗e6 13 a3 ♖c7 14 ♖e1 ♖ad8 15 ♖f3 ♖c8 16 ♗c2 f6?! (Black should have played this move earlier) 17 ♖h5! Sokolov obtained an advantage.

That interesting game went: 17...fxe5 18 ♖d6 ♖f6 19 ♖xc8 ♖xh5 20 ♖xe7+ ♖f7 21 ♖xe5 g6 22 ♗g5 ♖xd4 23 ♖ael ♖d6 24 f4 ♖c4 25 ♖c5 ♖f6 26 f5 ♖xe7 27 ♖xc4 gxf5 28 ♗xf5 ♖d7 29 ♖f4 and White eventually won.

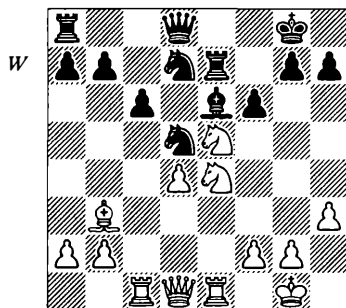
12 ♖e1 ♗e6

13 ♗g5 ♖e8

14 ♖c1 ♖d7

15 ♗xe7 ♖xe7

16 ♖e4 f6?? (D)



White is also better after 16...♗f4 17 ♖d6 or 16...♖xe5 17 dxe5, but the text is just a blunder, which should lead to a disaster.

17 ♖d3?

Quite amazingly, such a great attacking player as GM Ivan Sokolov here missed a chance to land a dev-

astating blow — 17 Bxc6!! .

It takes only seconds for a program like Fritz 5 to come up with this move, but for human beings it's a lot harder to see the sudden tactical chance in this seemingly quiet position. Now Black is lost, for example: 17...bxc6 18 Qxc6 Wf8 (or 18... Wb6 19 Qxe7+ Qxe7 20 Qxf6+ Qxf6 21 Bxe6 , winning.) 19 Qxe7+ Wxe7 20 Qg5 . White also wins after 17...fxe5 18 Bxe6 Bxe6 19 Qxd5 Qf8 20 Wb3 Wb6 21 Qg5 .

17 ... Qf8
 18 Wf3

Also worth considering here is 18 Qc3 , with some advantage for White.

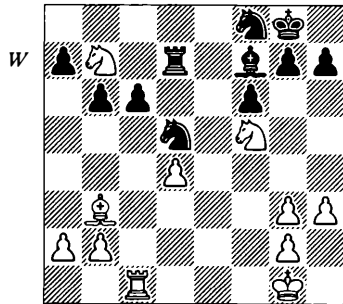
18 ... Wc7
 19 Qg3 Bd8
 20 Qc5 $\text{Qf7?!$

Sokolov, in the book *Sokolov's Best Games*, recommended 20... Qc8 . It appears that then Black would stand well. The text-move leaves White with some initiative.

21 Bxe7 Wxe7
 22 Qf5 Wc7
 23 Wg3! Wxg3
 24 fxg3 b6
 25 Qb7 Bd7 (D)
 26 $\text{Qfd6?!$

Much better is 26 Qbd6 Qe6 27 Bxc6 as here, compared to the game continuation, White does not have problems with the knight on b7. After the possible 27...g6 28 Qh6+ Qg7 29 Qg4 White keeps the advantage.

26 ... Qe6
 27 Bxc6 Qe7



28 Bc3 h5??

A horrible blunder. After the logical 28... Qxb3 29 Bxb3 Qe6 Black would have good compensation for the pawn, as the white knight on b7 is awkwardly placed.

29 Qa4 1-0

Summary

With this game I conclude the coverage of the advantages of possessing the isolated d-pawn.

When the possessor of the isolated d-pawn controls the e-file, he should try to convert this advantage into attack against the enemy king, which may involve the advance of the h-pawn and other attacking techniques. Usually the pressure along the e-file is particularly unpleasant for Black when it is combined with pressure along the a2-g8 diagonal.

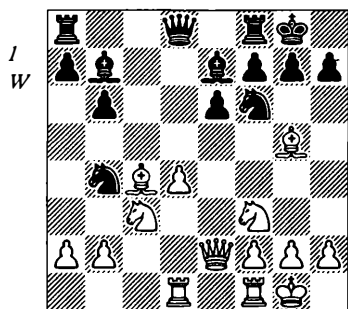
You can find more material on this theme in our 'Exercises' Section. Now let us move on and examine the disadvantages associated with the isolani.

Exercises For Part 1

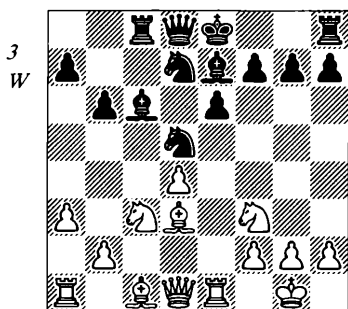
The Exercise sections in this book serve a few purposes: they provide additional material on the subject and give help for those who want to play some of these positions against friends, etc.

Please notice that these examples do not imply only one 'correct' solution, as usually there are a few attractive ways you could select from. Perhaps your suggestion may be even better than the actual game continuation.

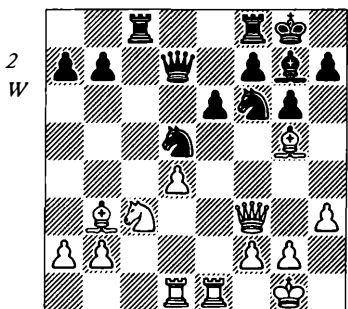
For the solutions to these Part 1 Exercises, see pages 229-240.



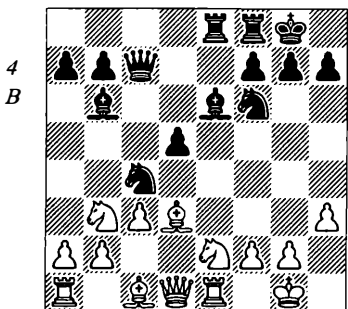
How should White play here? What are the plans available to him?



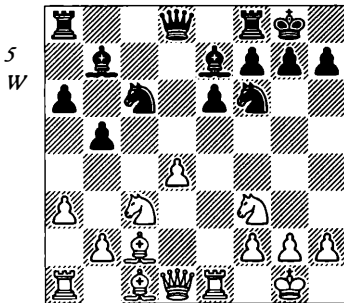
Suggest a plan for White.



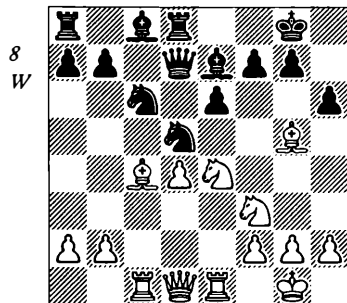
Suggest a plan for White and supply some likely variations.



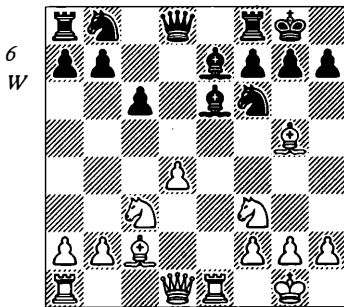
How should Black continue?



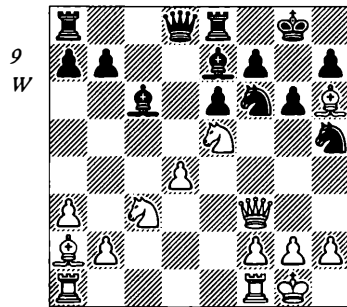
Find a plan for White and illustrate it with a few possible variations.



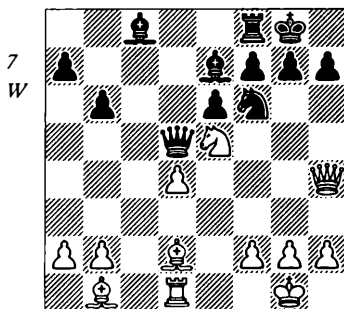
How would you continue with the white pieces?



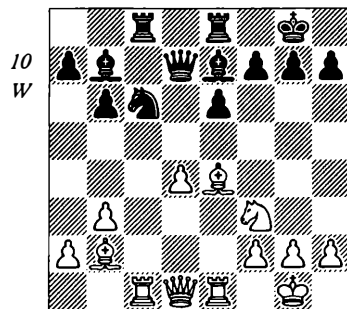
How should White develop his initiative?



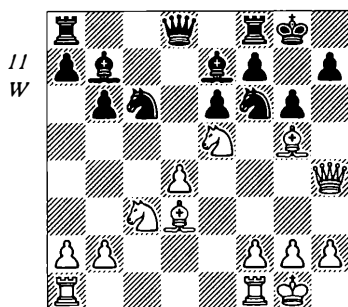
Suggest a plan for White, showing some relevant variations.



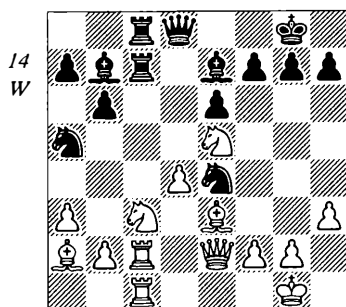
Find White's best continuation.



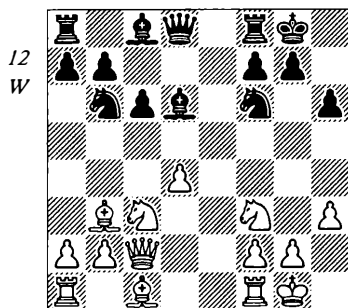
How would you develop White's initiative?



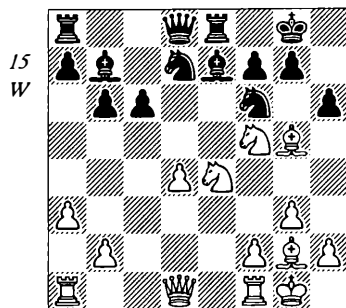
Find White's best continuation.



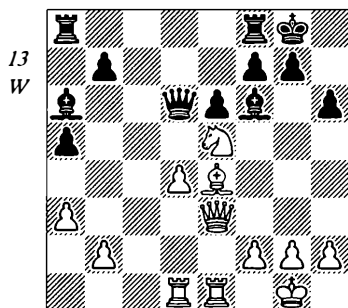
How should White play here?



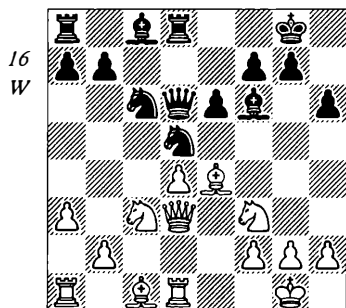
How should White play?



How should White continue?



Suggest a plan for White.



Suggest an appropriate plan for White.

8 The weak isolani in the endgame

Let us examine how to exploit the weaknesses of the isolated d-pawn. It is common knowledge that the isolani is, or may become, weak in the endgame, therefore it is quite logical to study such endings. That should give us ideas about the reasons why possessing the isolani in the endgame is not a great thing, what type of endings are particularly unpleasant for the side having the isolated d-pawn, and the techniques which are used in order to exploit its weakness.

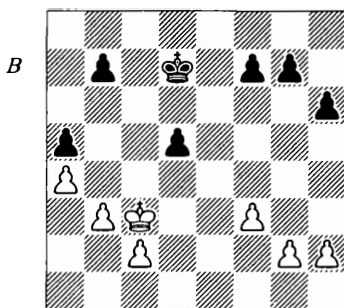
So, we are going to make an excursion into the endgame. This book is not about just the opening and middle-game — it is about pawn structures and surely they are present in many endings as well.

King and Pawn Endings

Naturally, our first stop during this endgame excursion is a pure pawn ending, as in this endgame the weaknesses of the isolated d-pawn are present in the purest form.

Let us state them:

1. The isolani may require protection from its king, thus making the king passive;



Kholmov - Kremenietzky
USSR Trade Unions Ch 1981

2. The square in front of it may fall into the permanent possession of the opponent;

3. Even when it is a passed pawn, advancing it may be very difficult.

All of these points I would like to illustrate in our first example. I came across this position when I was a student of the chess school of GM A.N. Panchenko, who covered a great deal of endgames during his classes. One thing which he recommended was to look for endgames in periodicals and take a note of interesting examples, write them down in a copybook and then analyse them. In my opinion this method of studying chess through

analysing important practical endgames proved to be very successful.

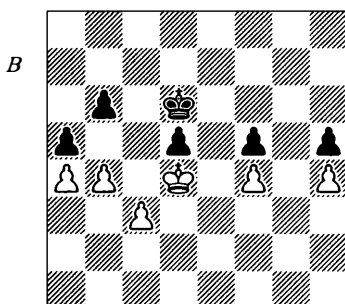
White has a clear advantage in the diagram above due to the potentially more active position of his king, which will occupy the blockading d4-square. From there the king will attack the isolani, thus leaving his black colleague with a passive role. Even if the d5-pawn is exchanged, White's king will be more centralised and therefore more active than Black's.

However, it is not quite clear yet, whether White's advantage is sufficient for a win. The first stage of his plan is to occupy the d4-square and advance pawns on the kingside, gaining space and hoping to provoke some weaknesses in Black's ranks.

1	...	h5
2	♔d4	♔d6
3	h4	g6
4	c3	f6
5	g4	♔c6?

Such a natural move and yet a serious mistake which leaves Black with no hope of survival. Let us see how the game might have continued after the best defence — **5...b6!**. The king must stay on d6 and soon we shall see why. The continuation could be **6 gxh5 gxh5 7 f4! f5! (7...♔e6? is bad because of 8 b4 ♔d6 9 bxa5 bxa5 10 f5 ♔c6 11 c4 dxc4 12 ♔xc4, where White gains the opposition and wins after 12...♔d6 13 ♔b5 ♔e5 14 ♔xa5 ♔xf5 15 ♔b6) 8 c4!**

This is White's best try. On the other hand, **8 b4?? (D)** would be a horrible mistake.



Black can punish this slip by playing an unexpected move — **8...b5!!** — which turns the tables completely, as Black is winning now: **9 axb5 a4 10 ♔d3 ♔c7 11 ♔c2 ♔b6 12 ♔b2 ♔xb5 13 ♔a3 ♔c4 14 ♔xa4 ♔xc3 15 b5 d4 16 b6 d3 17 b7 d2 18 b8 ♖d1 ♗+ 19 ♔a5 ♗a1+ 20 ♔b6 ♗b2+ 21 ♔c7 ♗xb8+ 22 ♔xb8 ♔d4 23 ♔c7 ♔e4+.** In situations like this, it is easy to get first overconfident and then careless. Be aware of the hidden danger — keep your concentration high!

In order to be able to counter **b3-b4** with **...b6-b5**, Black needs to keep his king away from the c6-square, as otherwise White would play **axb5** with a check. This is the actual problem with the move **5...♔c6?**, which was played in the game. Now let us come back to the position after **8 c4!**. Play goes **8...dxc4 9 bxc4! ♔c6 10 ♔e5 ♔c5 11 ♔xf5 ♔xc4 12 ♔g5 b5 13 axb5 ♔xb5 14 f5 a4 15 f6 a3 16 f7 a2 17 f8 ♗ a1 ♗** and then after **18 ♔xh5** or **18 ♗f5+ ♔c6 19 ♔xh5** we reach queen endgames, which are theoretically drawn according to Ken

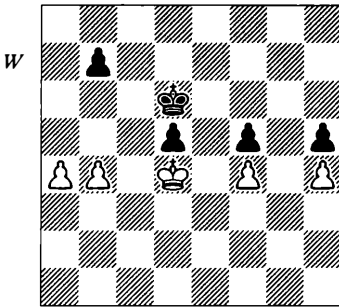
Thompson's endgame database.

This is probably enough for the analysis of 5...b6!, which clearly is a much better defence. Now let us come back to the game continuation.

6 gxf5 gxf5
7 b4 axb4

The attempt to keep the *status quo* on the queenside by playing 7...b6 won't help either, as after 8 f4 ♖d6 9 bxa5 bxa5 10 f5 ♕c6 11 c4 dxc4 12 ♕xc4 White penetrates across the fifth rank with his king and wins.

8 cxb4 ♔d6
9 f4 f5 (D)



The position in the diagram merits a separate discussion. The situation on the queenside has changed radically — White has got a pawn majority there, while the d5-pawn is harmless, if not useless. White needs to advance his pawns, but he should do so with care, as right now both 10 a5? ♕c6 and 10 b5? b6 are no good for White.

Here the so-called theory of corresponding squares helps us to understand the position. Black can still hold the position provided that it is his op-

ponent's move when the kings are located on the following pairs of squares: d4-d6; c3-c6; d3-c7; b3-b6; c2-c7.

Let's say, for example, that here after 10 ♕c3 Black plays 10...♕c7? (10...♕c6 would be correct). Then after the further 11 b5, followed by 12 ♕b4 and 13 a5, White wins. For a similar reason, the move 10 ♕d3 cannot be answered with 10...♕c6? as it would lose to 11 ♕c3. Also after 10 ♕d3 ♕d7? 11 b5! ♕d6 (or 11...b6 12 ♕c3 ♕d6 13 ♕b4, winning) 12 a5 ♕c5 13 a6 White wins. This proves that the square corresponding to d3 is indeed c7.

As we can see, for the two corresponding (or 'critical') squares — d3 and c2 — available to White, Black has only one corresponding square for his king — namely c7. This suggests a winning plan: by using these two critical squares, White breaks the existing delicate balance and destroys Black's defence. Now let us see how GM Kholmov did it in the game.

10 ♕e3 ♕c6
11 ♕d3 ♕c7

As we know, the alternative move 11...♕d7 loses after 12 b5!.

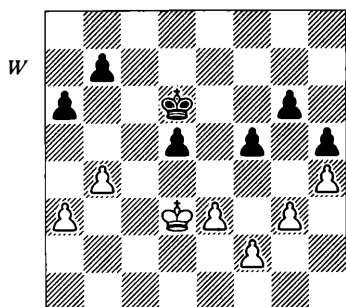
12 ♕c2 ♕d7

After the text Black can no longer meet 13 ♕b3 by occupying the (corresponding) b6-square, but he had no defence anyway, as 12...♕c6 fails to 13 ♕c3! Black would be O.K. then, should it would be White to play, but as this is not the case, Black loses after 13...♕d6 14 ♕d4 b6 15 a5.

13 ♖b3

White's goal has been achieved and his pawns are ready to advance: 13...♖d6 14 a5 ♖c6 15 ♖a4 d4 16 b5+ ♖c5 17 a6 bxa6 18 bxa6 ♖c4 19 a7 d3 20 a8♖ 1-0.

For the better understanding of these tricky pawn endgames with the isolani, let us study another one.



Ehlvest - Rausis
Riga Z 1995

Here Black has serious problems because in addition to the isolani, he has potential weaknesses on the kingside. Nevertheless, correct play could have saved this position.

31 ♖d4 b6
32 a4 ♖e6
33 f3

White could have tried the immediate 33 a5 bxa5 34 bxa5 ♖d6 35 f3 — a plan employed later in the game.

33 ... ♖d6
34 ♖c3

White tries manoeuvring with the king, but this attempt is rather harmless. The immediate 34 a5 was also possible. At some point White will

need to advance his a-pawn, trying to gain access to the c5-square.

34 ... ♖e5
35 ♖d3 ♖e6
36 ♖c3 ♖e5
37 ♖d3 ♖e6
38 ♖d4 ♖d6
39 a5 bxa5
40 bxa5 ♖c6
41 ♖e5 ♖b5??

This is the losing mistake. Black could draw with 41...♖c5. Then after 42 ♖f6 GM Chekhov, analysing this game for *ChessBase*, considered only 42... ♖b5, correctly stating that White wins after 43 ♖xg6 ♖xa5 44 ♖xh5 ♖b5 45 ♖g6 a5 46 h5.

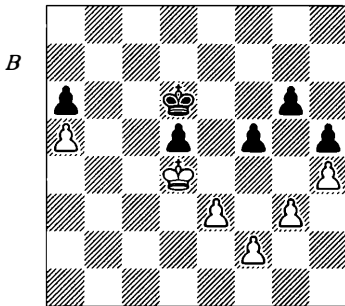
However, Black has a better defence — 42...♖c4!. It's much more important to eliminate the e3-pawn than the one on a5. After 43 ♖xg6 ♖d3 44 ♖xh5 ♖xe3 Black survives in the queen endgame: 45 ♖g6 (or 45 ♖g5 d4 46 h5 f4 47 gxf4 d3 48 h6 d2 49 h7 d1 ♖ 50 h8♖ ♖g1+ 51 ♖f5 ♖b1+ 52 ♖e6 ♖b3+ with a draw.) 45...f4! 46 gxf4 d4 47 h5 d3 48 h6 d2 49 h7 d1 ♖ 50 h8♖ ♖d6+ 51 ♖f6 ♖xf6+ 52 ♖xf6 ♖xf4 53 ♖e6 ♖xf3 54 ♖d6 ♖e4 55 ♖c6 ♖e5. The black king will arrive just in time to lock up his white colleague, when the a6-pawn falls.

42 ♖xd5 ♖xa5
43 ♖c5 1-0

Black resigned, as the line 43... ♖a4 44 e4 fxe4 45 fxe4 a5 46 e5 ♖b3 47 e6 is hopeless for him.

Now let us consider what would happen if, in the position of our pre-

vicious diagram, the white a-pawn had been on a2 (instead of a3). As we will see such a small difference in the placement of just one pawn leads to a very big change in the outcome, thanks to White's reserve tempo. After 31 ♔d4 b6 32 a3 ♔e6 33 a4 ♔d6 34 a5 bxa5 35 bxa5 (D) we would reach the position in our next diagram:

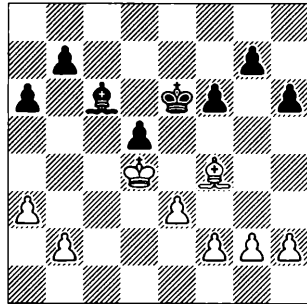


Black has to play 35...♔c6 36 ♔e5 ♔b5 (here 36...♔c5 makes no sense, as the e3-pawn is rock solid!) 37 ♔xd5 ♔xa5 and after 38 ♔c5! ♔a4 39 f3 ♔b3 (39...a5? is even worse for Black: after 40 ♔c4! ♔a3 41 e4 fxe4 42 fxe4 ♔b2 43 e5 a4 44 e6 a3 45 e7 a2 48 e8♚ a1♚ 49 ♚e5+ White forces a winning pawn ending) 40 e4 fxe4 41 fxe4 a5 42 e5 a4 43 e6 a3 44 e7 a2.

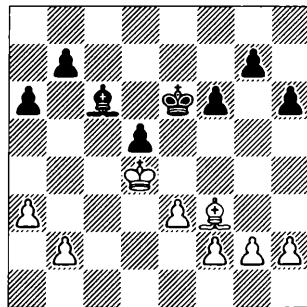
Then both sides promote their pawns at the same time — 45 e8♚ a1♚, but White can exchange the queens by force by playing 46 ♚e6+ ♔c2 47 ♚e2+! ♔b3 48 ♚c4+, obtaining a pawn endgame once again, but this time one that is completely winning for him.

Bishop Endings

Having learned that pure pawn endgames with the isolani can be quite dangerous for its possessor, let us move to endings with more pieces on the board. Our next diagram features a position with the opposite coloured bishops:



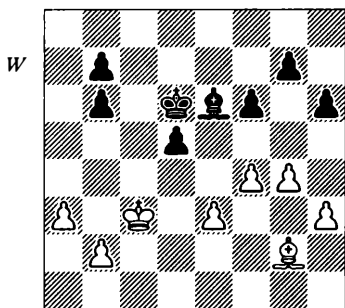
Quite clearly, White cannot take advantage of the isolani here and therefore, with correct play, a draw is inevitable. Moving the white bishop from f4 to f3, we get the following position:



Here, compared to the previous position, Black has a lot more problems, since the isolani is under real pressure. Yet, provided that it's his

move, Black can hold the position by playing 1...♙d6, followed by ...b6 and ...a5. In that case Black will have only one weakness (the d5-pawn) to worry about and should be able to defend successfully.

However, if in such a situation the possessor of the isolated pawn has another weakness to defend, his task may prove impossible — the opposite side may be able to use the so-called principle of ‘two weaknesses’. Let us see how this principle works in practice. For that we will examine the following bishop endgame:



Wojtkiewicz - Khalifman
Rakvere 1993

Here White has better chances for a win than in our previous diagram, as Black's pawn formation on the queenside is compromised. This results in limited mobility of the black pawns on the b-file and one of them (the b7-pawn) may become a second weakness. However, it took precise play from White to handle this case and his next move was right to the point!

30 a4!

A great move — the potentially weak pawn on b7 is now fixed. The fact that White places a pawn on the square of the same colour as his bishop is irrelevant here, since Black cannot really attack that pawn. The cliché move — 30 ♖d4? — would have allowed Black to solve his problems by playing 30...b5! followed by ...b6, when Black can successfully defend.

30 ... g5
31 ♖d4 ♙f7
32 ♙f3

White prevents ...h5, which would have eased Black's defence — it is in White's interest to keep more pawns on the board.

32 ... ♙e6
33 f5!

Again White puts a pawn on the square of the same colour as his bishop, and again this is the right decision: the text limits Black's bishop a lot and lessens Black's room for manoeuvring.

33 ... ♙f7
34 b4 ♙e8
35 b5

Continuing the same strategy of limiting Black's pieces; as a result Black is close to zugzwang.

35 ... ♙f7
36 ♙d1

Relocating the bishop to the a2-g8 diagonal with a subsequent e3-e4 finally wins the weak d5-pawn. However, Black's defensive resources are not yet exhausted.

- | | | |
|----|------|------|
| 36 | ... | ♙g8 |
| 37 | ♙b3 | ♙f7 |
| 38 | e4 | ♙g8 |
| 39 | ♙a2 | ♙f7 |
| 40 | ♙xd5 | ♙xd5 |
| 41 | exd5 | ♔c7 |

Now White cannot get through in the centre, but fortunately for him there is a queenside and the possibility to clear a path for the white king over there by managing a4-a5.

- | | | |
|----|------|-----|
| 42 | ♔c3! | ♔d6 |
| 43 | ♔c4 | ♔e5 |

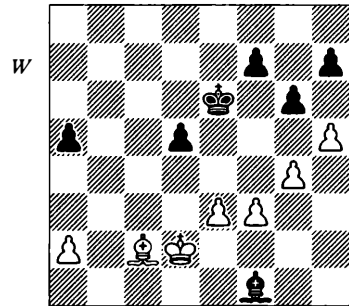
Passive defence — 43...♔d7 — would also have failed after 44 ♔b4 ♔d6 45 a5 bxa5+ (or 45...♔xd5 46 a6 bxa6 47 bxa6 ♔c6 48 ♔a4! and White wins) 46 ♔xa5 ♔xd5 47 ♔b6 ♔c4 48 ♔xb7 ♔xb5 49 ♔c7 ♔c5 50 ♔d7 ♔d5 51 ♔e7 ♔e5 52 ♔f7, winning.

- | | | |
|----|----------|------|
| 44 | a5! | bxa5 |
| 45 | ♔c5 | a4 |
| 46 | d6 | b6+ |
| 47 | ♔c6 | a3 |
| 48 | d7 | a2 |
| 49 | d8♚ | a1♚ |
| 50 | ♚d6+ | ♔e4 |
| 51 | ♔xb6 (D) | |

Yet another metamorphosis — from the bishop ending the players went into a pawn endgame and now we witness a queen ending!

White's material advantage is decisive, as GM Wojtkiewicz convincingly proved in the game: 51...♔f3 52 ♔b7 ♔g2 53 ♚d3 ♚c1 54 b6 ♚c5 55 ♚b3 ♔h2 56 ♚f3 ♚d4 57 ♚c6! ♔xh3 58 ♔c8 ♚b4 59 b7 ♚f8+ 60 ♔d7 ♔xg4 61 ♚c8 1-0

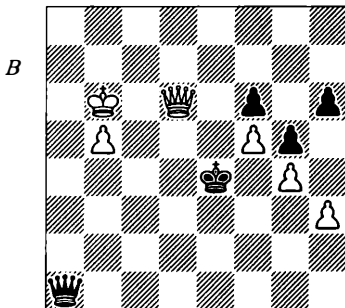
The endgame was conducted in masterly fashion by White.



Miles - Mariotti
Las Palmas 1978

Our next example, the diagram above, also involves exploiting the weakness of the isolani in a bishop ending. Once again the attacker succeeds because he has two targets.

Here, as in our previous example, one target is clear — that is the isolated d5-pawn. What could White's second target be? Looking at the kingside, where Black's pawns are located on light squares and therefore vulnerable, suggests that it could be the h7-pawn. In the game GM Miles



exploited this weakness with great precision.

40 h6!

First of all the target must be fixed! The text serves this purpose fine — in future taking on g6 with the bishop may become a real threat. Notice that Black was about to play 40...gxh5 41 gxh5 h6, thus solving most of his problems. In view of that, a routine advance of the king — **40 ♔c3** — would have been a serious mistake.

40 ... ♖b5

41 f4

Not **41 ♔c3? ♗e2**.

41 ... ♗d7

42 ♔c3 ♔d6

43 g5 ♔c5

44 a3 ♖c8

The bishop must keep an eye on the f5-square, as **44...♖b5** loses after **45 f5 ♗e8 46 ♗d3 ♔d6** (or **46...♗d7 47 fxg6 fxg6 48 ♗xg6!**) **47 ♔d4**.

45 ♗a4 ♖f5

46 ♗e8 d4+

Or **46...♗e6 47 a4 ♔d6 48 ♔d4 ♗e7 49 ♗c6 ♔d6 50 ♗b7+.**

47 exd4+ ♔d5

48 ♗xf7+ ♔e4

49 d5 ♔xf4

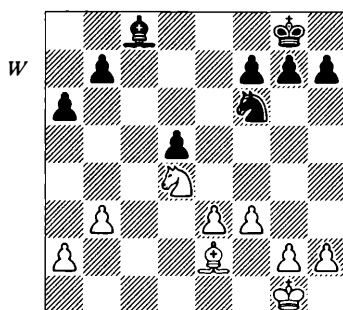
50 ♗xg6! 1-0

Finally overloading Black's bishop. The line **50...♗xg6 51 d6 ♗f5 52 g6** is clear enough.

Endings with Bishops & Knights

Now let us examine a rather common material correlation — bishop and knight vs. bishop and knight.

Adding knights to the position generally makes defence more difficult, as with knights on the board the attacker has more chances of creating a second weakness (target). If that happens, then a pure bishop ending may be winning for him. Our next two games are good illustrations of this possible scenario.



Averbakh - Matanović
USSR-Yugoslavia, Belgrade 1961

Here White has a definite advantage, as apart from the isolated d5-pawn, Black's pawn set-up on the queenside is potentially bad. Strictly speaking, Black should be able to hold this endgame but in practice such passive positions are very difficult to save.

25 ♔f2 ♔f8

26 ♔e1 ♔e7

27 ♔d2 ♔d6

After the attempt to relocate the black pawns on the queenside by playing **27...a5?!** White would be able to advance his king along the b-file after **28 ♔c3 ♔d6 29 b4! axb4+** (**29...b6?** makes the a-pawn very vulnerable after **30 bxa5 bxa5 31 ♗b3**

a4 32 ♖c1) 30 ♜xb4, where White has increased his advantage.

28 b4

This fixes the pawn pair a6-b7. In the book devoted to the USSR-Yugoslavia chess matches, *Druziya i soperniki* ('Friends and Rivals'), Averbakh made the following remark here: "In order to neutralise the pressure, Black needs to find an appropriate piece set-up. It looks to me, that first of all he should play ...♗d7 in order to make the advance of the a2-pawn more difficult, and then relocate the knight to e7, in order to protect the pawns on the kingside."

Please note that the great endgame expert, GM Averbakh, did not give any concrete *variations* — he is talking about a *plan*. Black's next move indicates that he failed to find this defensive set-up.

28 ... ♗e8?!
29 ♗d3 g6

The desire to cover the f5-square and thus to limit the d4-knight is quite understandable, but placing pawns on squares of the same colour as the bishop is wrong in principle. Instead of the text, 29...h6 would have been more prudent.

30 ♖c3 ♗c7
31 a4 b6?!

So far on the queenside Black had a *potential* weakness on b7, but the text turns the a6-pawn into a *real* target.

32 a5 bxa5
33 bxa5 ♖c5
34 ♗b3+ ♖d6
35 ♖b4 ♗e6

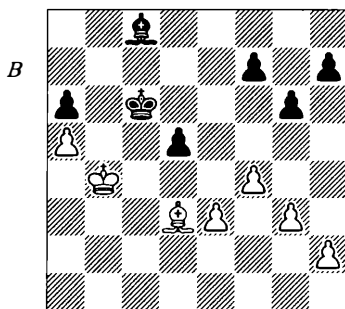
36 g3

Instead of this move, White could have played 36 f4 or 36 h4. However he follows a well-known endgame maxim — 'Do not hurry!'. Using this principle, a player may squeeze some extra points from positions where his opponents lack active play, as they get tired defending and therefore are likely to commit some mistakes.

36 ... ♗d8

Black is opting for a pure bishop endgame — a decision which may be quite risky for him. Perhaps 36...h6 preparing a further ...g5, would be more prudent. However, the text is possible too.

37 ♗d4 ♗c6+
38 ♗xc6 ♖xc6
39 f4 (D)



Let us assess the position. Quite clearly, White has achieved a lot since our first diagram as here, in addition to the d5-pawn, Black now has a weak pawn on a6 and potential weaknesses on the kingside. However, this position is still drawn, as becomes clear from the analysis [chessring.com](http://www.chessring.com)

This surprising assessment may

require some explanation. The point is that White has only one *real* target to attack — the a6-pawn. The d5-pawn cannot be attacked effectively; while the pawns on the kingside remain only as potential targets, as long as they are not *fixed*. So, White lacks real objects for an attack — as we know, usually two targets are required for successful manoeuvring.

Suddenly, White received help from his opponent, who played:

39 ... f5?

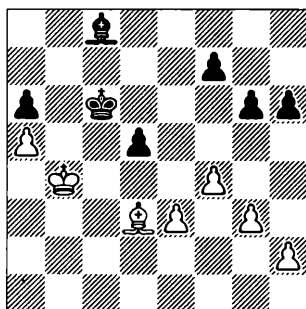
Only this mistake is decisive! The text is extremely bad — having all his pawns fixed on light squares, Black does not have a chance of survival. The game ended rapidly:

40 h4 ♖d6
41 h5! gxf5

Black no longer has a defence, as 41...♖c6 loses after 42 h6! (fixing the h7-pawn) 42...♗d6 43 ♖c3 ♖c5 44 ♙e2 ♙b7 45 g4 fxf4 46 ♙xg4 ♗b5 47 f5.

42 ♗c3 1-0

Instead of 39...f5?, Black should have tried to relocate at least some of his pawns to dark squares by playing 39...h6! (*D*).



After that, White would have to keep his bishop on the b1–h7 diagonal, keeping an eye on the g6-pawn, as otherwise Black would play ...f6 and ...g5. White's plan here is to fix the pawns on g6 and f7 by placing his own pawn on g5. However, that leads to further simplification of the position, which helps Black to defend.

Averbakh, in his fundamental work on endgames, analyses two lines where White can try for a win, but in both of these variations Black survives:

a) 40 h4 ♖d6 41 g4 ♙xg4 42 ♙xa6 f6 43 ♙b7 (or 43 ♙b5 g5 44 hxg5 hxg5 45 a6 ♙c8 46 a7 ♙b7=) 43...g5 (Black can also draw by playing 43...♙e2, for example after 44 a6 ♖c7 45 ♖c5 g5 46 hxg5 hxg5 47 fxg5 fxg5 48 ♖xd5 g4 49 ♗e4 g3 26 ♖f4 ♙xa6=) 44 a6 ♖c7 45 ♙xd5 ♗b6 46 hxg5 hxg5 47 ♙c4 ♙c8 and Black draws after a further advance of the g-pawn.

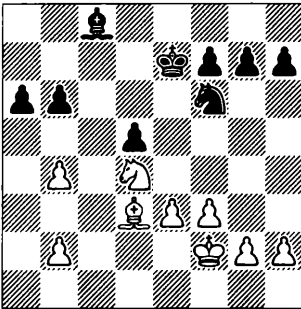
b) Another try is 40 e4, where White exchanges the isolani in order to activate his king. Black holds the position by playing 40...dxe4 41 ♙xe4+ ♗d6 42 ♖c4 ♙g4! 43 ♖d4 ♙e2. Here Black keeps the balance after 44 h4 ♙g4 45 ♙d3 ♙c8 46 g4 ♙xg4!. Black's last move is absolutely necessary, as he must not allow the fixing of his pawns by g4–g5. After 47 ♙xa6 f6, with a further ...g5, Black reaches a draw.

On move 44 White has a more tricky attempt at his disposal: 44 ♙c2. However, it does not win ei-

ther. The key point is that Black must not occupy the g4-square, as 44... ♙g4?? leads to zugzwang and defeat after 45 ♙d3 ♙c8 46 h4. In that position, as it is Black to play, he must either place one of his pawns on a light square, which is fatal, or play 46... ♙b7, thus allowing White to advance his g-pawn first to g4 and then to g5. After 46... ♙b7 47 g4 ♙c8 48 g5 hxg5 49 hxg5 ♙b7 50 ♙c4 Black's position is hopeless.

Instead of 44... ♙g4, Black has to play 44... ♙f1 45 h4 ♙e2 46 ♙b1 ♙c6 47 ♙a2 f6, when he holds the position.

Since isolated d-pawn positions where each player has a knight and bishop are fairly common, it is worth studying yet another ending of this kind. The simplicity of such positions is very deceptive. The defender must be aware of serious problems he may need to solve before he can equalise.



Szabo - Korensky
Sochi 1973

Here Black may expect to draw, but again, as in the game Averbakh-

Matanović, Black failed to defend his passive position.

27 ♖e2 ♜d6
28 ♜d2 g6?!

Again, this set-up is potentially dangerous for Black, as his pawns, placed on light squares, may eventually become targets for White's bishop. More prudent would have been 28... h6 with a further ... ♜f6-g8-e7, as GM Averbakh recommended in a similar position.

29 ♜c3 ♜d7
30 f4 ♜f8
31 ♙e2 ♜c7
32 g4 h6
33 h3 ♜d6
34 ♙d3 ♙b7?

Instead of the text Black should have kept an eye on the g4-pawn, thus making h3-h4 more difficult for White to manage.

35 h4! ♙c8

It was already too late to prevent g4-g5, as 35... f6? fails after 36 h5 gxh5 37 ♜f5+, winning.

36 g5 hxg5
37 hxg5 ♜e6?

This is the decisive mistake. The f8-knight was not a great piece, but going into a pure bishop endgame is a bad decision, as Black already has some weaknesses which are *fixed*. Pay attention to the fact, that by exchanging the knights, Black allows the white king to occupy the d4-square.

38 ♜xe6 ♜xe6
39 ♜d4 ♜d6

40 ♙e2 esstoua5ig.com

The text leads to a weakening of

the c5-square, but sooner or later White would have forced this advance anyway, for example after 40...♙b7 41 ♖d1 ♙c8 42 ♙b3 ♙e6 (or 42...♙b7 43 e4 and White wins) 43 ♙a2 a5 44 bxa5 bxa5, as 43...♙c6 fails as well after 44 ♙e5 ♙b5 45 ♙xd5 ♙xd5 46 ♙xd5 ♙xb4 47 e4 ♙b3 48 f5.

41 bxa5 bxa5
42 ♙b5 ♙e6?

IM Shereshevsky in his book *Endgame Strategy* (Pergamon Press, 1985) quoted GM Szabo who had written in *Shakhmatniy Bulletin* (1974, No. 2) that after the better try 42...♙f5 (or 42...♙g4) 43 ♙e8 ♙e6 44 b3 ♙e7 45 ♙c6 ♙d6 46 ♙b7 f6 47 gxf6 ♙f7 White cannot win, because the b3-square is occupied by his pawn and therefore White cannot put a bishop there.

Thus, Shereshevsky believed that only 42...♙e6 caused Black's defeat, while the position would still be drawn after 42...♙f5, despite Black's mistake on move 37. However, I find it very hard to trust that in the position arising after 47 ...♙f7 (D) White cannot win being a pawn up and hav-

ing two targets to attack. Let us have a closer look at that position:

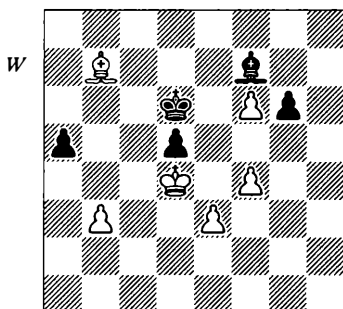
First of all White needs to relocate his bishop, which he achieves after 48 ♙c8 ♙e8 49 ♙g4 ♙f7 50 ♙d1 ♙e8 51 ♙c2 ♙f7. Then, since the b-pawn takes away the square from his bishop, White should get rid of the pawn by playing 52 b4!. After 52...axb4 53 ♙b3 White is winning, for example: 53...♙e6 54 ♙xd5+ ♙xf6 55 ♙xf7 ♙xf7 56 ♙c4 ♙e6 57 ♙xb4 ♙d5 58 ♙c3 ♙e4 59 ♙d2. This analysis proves that 37...♙e6 was indeed a decisive mistake.

After I made this analysis, I came across a very interesting and instructive book — *Winning Endgame Technique* by GMs Alexander Beliavsky and Adrian Mikhalchishin (Batsford, 1995). There on pages 107 and 108 the authors analysed the diagram position and came to a similar conclusion that White is winning. In their chapter on 'Bishop Endings', the authors gave many examples of positions with the isolani.

43 ♙e8 ♙e7
44 ♙c6 ♙d6
45 ♙b7

Zugzwang.

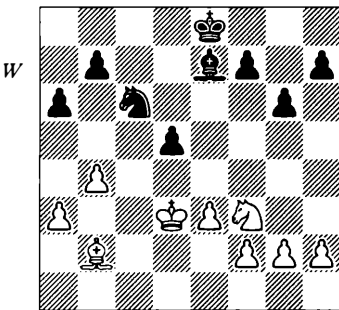
45 ... ♙f6
46 gxf6 ♙f7
47 ♙c8 ♙g8
48 ♙g4 ♙f7
49 ♙c8 ♙g8
50 ♙h3 ♙f7
51 ♙g4 ♙e8
52 ♙f3 ♙f7
53 ♙d1



White is going to put the bishop on b3 and play e3-e4.

The rest does not require any comment: 53...♖e6 54 ♘b3 ♜xf6 55 ♙xd5 ♙e8 56 e4 g5 57 e5+ ♜f5 58 fxg5 ♜xg5 59 ♜c5 ♜f5 60 ♙c6 ♙f7 61 ♜d6 ♙b3 62 ♙d7+ ♜e4 63 e6 ♜d3 64 e7 ♙f7 65 ♙a4 ♜c4 66 ♜d7 ♜b4 67 b3 1-0.

So far we have been looking at positions where the isolated d5-pawn somehow restricted Black's light-squared bishop, which was rather passive in the examples analysed. Thinking logically, we may guess that should Black have a dark-squared bishop in such endings instead, he will do better. This must be so, yet there are certain exceptions to the rule, as our next example will illustrate.



Botvinnik - Kholmov
Moscow Cht 1969

In the diagram position, Black controls the d4-square and his bishop is fine. Exchanging the knights by playing ♞f3-d4xc6 would lead White nowhere, so he must come up with a

different approach to this position.

28 e4!

This is it! Botvinnik does not attack or blockade the isolani, which won't work in this position anyway. Instead, he simply exchanges it. By removing this pawn he activates his king further.

28 ... dxe4+

29 ♜xe4 ♜d7

30 ♜d5

Here White has some advantage due to his more centralised and therefore more active king. In the game, Botvinnik managed to increase his advantage further and finally turned it into a full point. Here is the rest of the game with some comments:

30 ... h5?!

Botvinnik regarded this move as a serious mistake, suggesting 30... ♙d8 instead — with the idea of kicking the white king from d5 by playing ...♞e7+. Perhaps, Kholmov was afraid of the possible move 31 g4!?, which would have fixed his h-pawn.

31 ♙g7! ♙d8

32 ♙f8 ♙b6

Botvinnik wrote that Black should have played 32...♞e7+ 33 ♙xe7 ♜xe7. His insight into this ending is very interesting — he commented that in general White should be happy to exchange the bishops here, while Black should be trying to trade off the knights. Thus, it looks as if Kholmov misunderstood this position, playing into White's hands.

33 ♙c5 ♞e7+?! m

34 ♜c4 ♙xc5?!

- 35 ♖xc5 ♖c7
 36 ♜g5! f6
 37 ♜h7 f5
 38 h4 f4

Or 38...b6+ 39 ♜d4 ♜d6 40 ♜f8 ♜c6+ 41 ♜e3 ♜e5 42 ♜f4 and the g6-pawn will eventually fall.

- 39 ♜f8 b6+

According to Botvinnik, Black's best chance lay in 39...f3! 40 g3 ♜f5 41 ♜xg6 ♜xg3 42 ♜d4, although there White would also have better chances.

- 40 ♜d4 ♜f5+
 41 ♜e4 ♜xh4
 42 ♜e6+ ♜c6
 43 ♜xf4 ♜b5

Of course, not 43...g5? 44 g3 gxf4 45 gxh4 and White wins.

- 44 g3 ♜f5
 45 ♜xg6 ♜h6
 46 ♜e5! ♜a4
 47 ♜c4 ♜b3

Black also loses after 47...b5 48 ♜e5 ♜xa3 49 ♜c6.

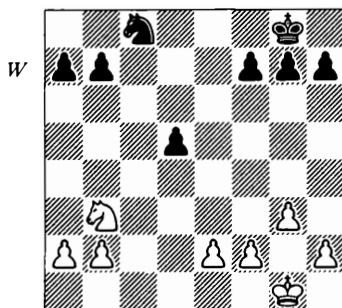
- 48 ♜xb6 ♜xa3
 49 ♜d5 ♜b3
 50 f4 ♜c4
 51 ♜c7 ♜xb4
 52 ♜xa6+ 1-0

As we see from these examples, the material balance 'bishop and knight vs. bishop and knight' is quite unpleasant for the side possessing the isolated pawn.

For those who would like to see more examples of this kind, I can recommend the book *Opening Preparation* (Batsford 1994) where Mark Dvoretsky analysed Polugaevsky-

Mecking, Mar del Plata 1971. There, the same type of ending occurred, so Dvoretsky's in-depth analysis can help you to understand such positions.

Now let us imagine that the bishops are of f and therefore we will examine a pure knight endgame to see how the isolani fares there. Here is a suitable example:



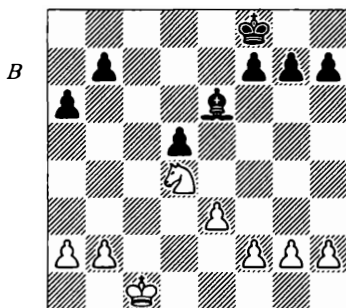
Korchnoi - Kasparov
London Ct (8) 1983

In this position Black's problems are not too serious, since a knight is a very flexible piece and can both defend the isolated d-pawn and keep White's king away from the blocking d4-square. The game continued: 26 ♜c5 ♜d6 27 ♜g2 ♜f8 28 ♜f3 ♜e7 29 ♜f4 f6 30 h4 g6 31 g4 b6 32 ♜a6 ♜e4 33 f3 ♜c5 34 ♜c7 d4 35 ♜d5+ ♜e6 36 ♜b4 a5 37 ♜d3 ♜d5 38 g5 f5 39 ♜g3 ♜xd3 ½-½.

So, pure knight endgames with the isolani are not too dangerous for its possessor. However, endgames where the owner of the isolated pawn has a bishop vs. the opponent's

knight, are somewhat different. I think that such endings are amongst the worst endings which the side possessing the isolani can possibly have.

Let us take a look at the following position:



Flohr - Capablanca
Moscow 1935

This classical ending is simply a *must* for anyone who wants to have good endgame technique. The third world champion gave an instructive example of defence in this unpleasant position.

23	...	♔e7
24	♔d2	♔d6
25	♔c3	b6!

Black places his pawns on the queenside on b6 and a5, so that they will cover the dark squares.

26	f4	♙d7
27	♘f3	

In such endings the d4-square is not for the knight, but for the king. Here the knight has to attack the isolani and not blockade it!

27	...	f6
28	♔d4	a5

29	♘d2	♙c8
30	♘b1	♙e6
31	♘c3	♔c6
32	a3	h6
33	g3	h5 (D)

Why does Black put the pawn on a square of the same colour as his bishop? Could he stay idle instead? Averbakh wrote that in that case White can try the following plan suggested by I. Rabinovich:

1. Move his knight to h4;
2. Put his pawns on f5 and g4;
3. Relocate the knight to f4, tying down Black's bishop to the f7-square, as the bishop would have to watch both ♘f4-e6 and ♘f4-h5;
4. When Black plays ...♔c6, White's knight will occupy the e6-square (♘f4-e6), attacking the g7-pawn and therefore forcing ...♙xe6;
5. Then after fxe6 ♔d6, e7 ♔xe7, ♔xd5 White will win the resulting pawn endgame.

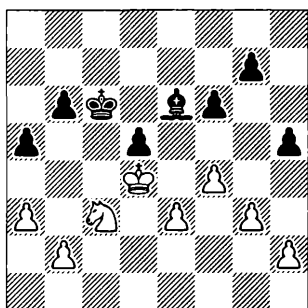
On account of this plan, Averbakh gave 33...h5 an exclamation mark in his book. However, I am quite sceptical about the Rabinovich plan and therefore about the value of 33...h5, as I simply don't see how White can get his knight to h4! Before that he would have to move his pawns on the kingside, as otherwise the bishop can control the f3- and g2- squares.

A sample line can be as follows: 33...♔d6!? 34 ♘d1 (I do not think that Black should fear 34 f5 ♙xf5 35 ♘xd5 b5 36 b4 axb4 37 axb4) 34...♙g4 35 ♘f2 ♙d7 36 g4 g5 and Black seems to be fine here. Black

only needs to avoid cooperative lines like 35...♙f5? 36 g4 ♙e6 37 f5 ♙d7 38 ♖d3 h5 39 h3 hxg4 40 hxg4 ♙e8 41 ♖f4 ♙f7 42 b3 ♖c6, where White indeed wins the pawn endgame arising after 43 ♖e6 ♙xe6 44 fx6 ♖d6 45 e7 ♖xe7 46 ♖xd5. For example: 46...♖d7 47 b4 axb4 48 axb4 ♖c7 49 ♖e6 ♖c6 50 ♖f7 ♖b5 51 ♖xg7 ♖xb4 52 ♖xf6 b5 53 g5, winning.

Thus, it appears that 33...h5 was not so necessary, although it holds the position as well.

Now let's come back to the game.



- | | | |
|----|------|------|
| 34 | b4 | axb4 |
| 35 | axb4 | ♖d6 |
| 36 | b5 | g6 |
| 37 | ♖a4 | ♖c7 |
| 38 | ♖c3 | ♖d6 |
| 39 | f5! | gxf5 |

Forced, as taking on f5 with the bishop loses a pawn after 39...♙xf5 40 ♖xd5 ♙d3 41 ♖xf6 ♙xb5 42 ♖d5, when 42...♖c6 is impossible because of 43 ♖e7+ and 44 ♖xg6.

- | | | |
|----|-----|-----|
| 40 | ♖e2 | ♙d7 |
|----|-----|-----|

Averbakh gives 40...♙g8! as a more accurate move, since after the further 41 ♖f4 ♙f7 42 h3 ♙e8 43

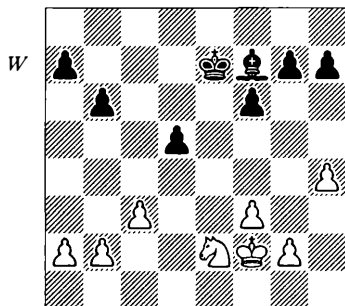
♖xd5 ♙xb5 44 ♖xb6 ♙c6 White has wasted one reserve tempo (h2-h3), compared to the game continuation.

- | | | |
|----|------|------|
| 41 | ♖f4 | ♙e8 |
| 42 | ♖xd5 | ♙xb5 |
| 43 | ♖xb6 | ♙c6 |
| 44 | ♖c4+ | ♖e6 |
| 45 | ♖b2 | ♙b5 |
| 46 | ♖d1 | ♙e2 |
| 47 | ♖f2 | ♙f1! |

Black does not allow White's knight to get to f4.

The game ended: 48 ♖d3 ♙xd3 49 ♖xd3 ♖e5 50 ♖e2 ♖e4 51 h3 ♖d5 52 ♖f3 ♖e5 ½-½.

After this very well-known endgame, let us examine a similar ending from more recent practice.



Kudrin - Gulko
USA Ch 1988

Although this position *looks* quite similar to our previous example, I think that here White's pawn formation is somewhat better than in Flohr-Capablanca. The difference is that here White has a pawn on the c-file rather than on the e-file, which makes it risky for Black to play ...a5. In that

event, White could eventually play b2-b4 and after ...axb4 he would recapture with cxb4, obtaining a pawn majority on the queenside. Because of this, White is able to advance his b-pawn here, thereby fixing Black's a-pawn.

31 a3 ♖e6
 32 ♖e3 ♖d6
 33 ♖d4 h6
 34 ♖f4 ♖f7
 35 ♖d3

White is in no hurry to determine his pawn formation on the kingside. One possible plan for him is to move his f-pawn to f5, limiting the bishop, and place the knight on f4.

35 ... g5

Black is trying to prevent this plan from evolving, but the text creates some weaknesses on the kingside. At any rate, this is Black's best set-up and the fact that he lost this endgame, may simply mean that the ending is lost anyway.

36 g3 ♖h5
 37 ♖e3

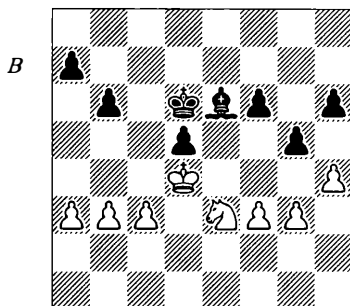
I would prefer the more direct approach — 37 f4 gxh4 38 gxh4, where White will get his knight to e3 (via b4 and c2, if necessary), attacking the d5-pawn and f5- and g4- squares. However, the text does not spoil anything.

37 ... ♖g6
 38 ♖f2 ♖f5?

A very serious error. On f5 the bishop is quite inactive, just observing the empty b1-h7 diagonal. Black had to play 38...♖h5, targeting the

f3-pawn, thus making White's task more difficult.

39 ♖d4 ♖e6
 40 ♖d1 ♖d7
 41 ♖e3 ♖e6
 42 b3! (D)



Now, when Black's bishop cannot move, as it has to look after both the d-pawn and the weak f5-square, White has all time in the world to improve his position on the queenside.

42 ... ♖c6
 43 b4 ♖d6
 44 b5 h5

A sad necessity, but Black was in zugzwang.

45 f4 gxf4
 46 gxf4 ♖g8
 47 ♖f5+

Now White wants to attack the h5-pawn, put his own pawn on f5 and then relocate the knight to f4. Black can do nothing but merely watch this happening.

47 ... ♖d7
 48 ♖g3 ♖f7
 49 f5 ♖e7

Also bad for Black is 49...♖d6 50

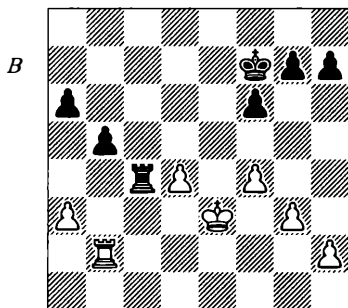
♖e2 ♙e8 51 ♜f4 ♙xb5 52 ♜xh5
and White wins.

The game ended 50 ♖e2 ♙e8 51
♜f4 ♙d7 52 ♜xh5 ♙xf5 53 ♜xd5
♙d7 54 c4 ♙e6+ 55 ♜d4 ♙f5 56
♜f4 ♜d6 57 h5 ♙b1 58 h6 ♜e7 59
c5 bxc5+ 60 ♜xc5 ♙c2 61 a4 ♜f7
62 a5 ♙e4 63 ♜d6 ♜g8 64 ♜d5
♙d3 65 b6 axb6 66 axb6 ♙a6 67
♜c7 1-0.

A nice demonstration of the power of the knight. Comparing our two last examples, one can only say that it is amazing how much difference such little deviations (white pawn on c3 instead of e3) can make to the outcome of the game!

Rook Endings

Now let us see how the isolated pawn fares in the presence of major pieces. For that purpose we shall first examine two rook endings. Again, one example is an old ending, while the other is taken from fairly recent practice.



Marshall - Chigorin
Barmen 1905

In this position apart from the weakness on d4, White has another weak pawn on the a-file. To make things worse, Black has a queenside pawn majority and his rook is very active. Still, some caution is required by Black while exploiting his advantages — rook endings are tricky!

1 ... ♜e6!

Black prefers to improve the position rather than to win some material. In rook endings activity is often more important than everything else! The hasty 1...♜c3+? 2 ♜e4 would have allowed White serious counterplay. For example: 2...♜xa3 3 ♜d5 and White's king has become very active or 2...♜e6 3 f5+ ♜d6 4 a4 bxa4 5 ♜b4! (this is better than 5 ♜b6+?! ♜c6 6 ♜b4 a5! 7 ♜xa4 ♜a6, when Black has his rook ideally placed behind his passed pawn) 5...♜c6 6 ♜xa4 ♜b5 7 ♜a1 and nothing is clear.

2 ♜b3

The alternative 2 ♜e4 f5+ 3 ♜d3 ♜d5 4 ♜b4 also loses, as after the further 4...♜xb4 5 axb4 h6 6 h3 h5 7 h4 g6 White is in zugzwang.

2 ... ♜d5

3 ♜d3 f5

4 h3 h5

5 ♜e2

Or 5 h4 g6 and White has to give up the d-pawn.

5 ... ♜xd4

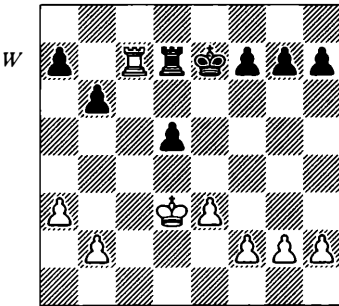
6 ♜c3 ♜e4+

7 ♜d2 h4!

Black convincingly converts his extra pawn into a win.

8 ♖c7 hxg3 9 ♖xg7 ♖xf4 10 ♖xg3 ♔e5 11 ♔e2 ♖c4 12 ♖g6 ♖a4 13 ♖g3 f4 14 ♖b3 ♖c4! (Of course, not 14...♔e4?? because of 15 ♖b4+! ♖xb4 16 axb4=) 15 ♔d1 ♔e4 16 h4 f3 17 ♔e1 ♔f4 18 h5 ♖c1+ 19 ♔f2 ♖c2+ 20 ♔e1 ♔g3 21 h6 ♖e2+ 22 ♔d1 ♖h2 23 a4 b4 24 ♖xb4 ♖h1+ 25 ♔d2 f2 26 ♖b8 f1 ♔0-1.

Next comes an example from modern tournament practice. Unlike our previous position, in this ending the possessor of the isolani has only one weakness — the isolated pawn itself. This makes the attacker's technical task much more difficult:



Bareev - I. Farago
Rome 1990

25 ♖c8!

Obviously, GM Bareev was not convinced that the pure king and pawn ending arising after 25 ♖xd7+ ♔xd7 26 ♔d4 ♔d6 would be winning for him. Knowing the endgame Ehlvest-Rausis (page 108), we may say that White's intuition did not let him down!

25 ... h5?

Annotating this game in *Informator 49*, Bareev regarded this move as the losing mistake, suggesting 25...a5 instead. Perhaps then, White should seriously consider 26 g4!?, fixing Black's h-pawn.

26 b4!

Now the a7-pawn will be a source of permanent headache for Black.

26 ... ♔e6

27 ♔d4 f6

Perhaps Black should have played 27...g6 instead, keeping his pawn formation more compact. Now Black's g-pawn might become weak (after an eventual ...g6).

28 h4 ♔f5

29 f3 ♔g6

30 a4 ♔f7

31 a5! ♔e6

Exchanging on a5 — 31...bxa5 32 bxa5 — would have weakened the important c5-square. White can take advantage of it in the following line: 32...♔e6 33 ♖c6+ ♔e7 34 ♔c5, winning.

32 a6!

White fixes the a7-pawn, thus keeping Black's rook passive.

32 ... ♔d6

33 b5 ♔e6

34 g3 g6

35 ♖e8+!

Bareev also mentioned the move 35 g4. Evidently he believed that it would give Black some unnecessary counterplay after 35...hxg4 36 fxg4 ♖h7. However, after the further 37 ♖c6+ ♔d7 38 ♖xf6 ♖xh4 39 ♖xg6 White is clearly winning.

35 ... ♔d6
 36 ♖f8 ♕e6
 37 ♖c8
 Zugzwang.
 37 ... ♔d6
 38 ♖c6+ ♕e7
 39 g4!

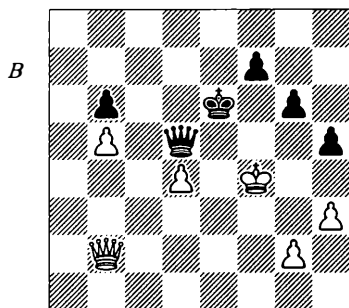
After this thrust White will either create a weakness on h5 (if Black lets him play g4xh5) or obtain a passed pawn after hxg4, fxc4 and the eventual h4-h5.

39 ... ♔f7
 40 gxh5 gxh5
 41 ♖c8

Now Black has too many weaknesses — on d5, h5 and a7, and therefore cannot survive here: 41...♕e6 42 ♖e8+ ♔d6 43 ♖h8 ♖c7 44 ♖d8+ ♕e6 45 ♖xd5 f5 46 e4 fxe4 47 fxe4 ♖h7 48 ♖d8 ♖c7 49 ♖e8+ ♕f6 50 e5+ ♔f7 51 ♖h8 ♖c5 52 ♖xh5 ♕e6 53 ♖h6+ ♕e7 54 ♕e4! ♖xb5 55 ♕f5 1-0.

White showed impressive technique in this ending, never giving Black any chance to escape.

Queen Endings



Lisitsyn - Capablanca Moscow 1935

At first glance it seems that White is O.K. in this position. However, although the isolated pawn on d4 is passed, this pawn is weak and Black's pieces, the queen in particular, are more active. Notice that the weaknesses on d4, b5 and g2 make White's queen rather passive. Of course, that may change, so Black needs a lot of technique to convert his positional advantages into something real. Fortunately for him, Capablanca rarely lacked endgame technique!

1 ... ♕e6
 2 h4 f6

Black is going to try to create a passed pawn on the kingside. He won't mind exchanging queens here, since the pawn endgame would be favourable for him due to his kingside pawn majority.

3 ♕e3 ♖c4
 4 g3?!

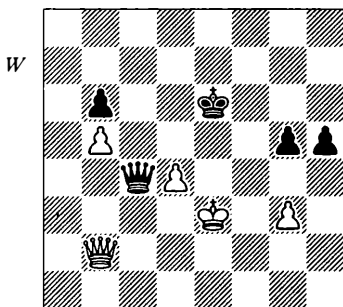
GM Bondarevsky suggested 4 ♖b1! here. Then the continuation might be: 4...♖c3+ 5 ♖d3 (or 5 ♕e2 ♖xd4 6 ♖xg6 ♖e5+ 7 ♕f3 ♖xb5 with advantage to Black) 5...♖xd3+ 6 ♕xd3 when Black has managed to reach a pawn ending, but the fact the isolated pawn is also passed gives White some hope of survival.

Detailed analysis is beyond the scope of this book. Black has to continue with 6...♕f5! 7 ♕e3 g3 8 g3 g4! 9 ♕d3 ♕e6 10 ♕e4 ♕d6 11 ♕f5 ♕d5 and now Averbakh, in the Yu-

goslav *Encyclopaedia of Chess Endings*, continued 12 ♔g6? f5? (the question marks are mine) but Black has a better move in 12...♔xd4!, e.g. 13 ♔xh5 f5 14 ♔g5 ♔e4 15 h5 f4 16 h6 fxg3 17 h7 g2 18 h8 ♖ g1 ♗ and Black should be able to win this position.

White in turn can do much better with 12 ♔xf6! ♔xd4 13 ♔g5 ♔e4 14 ♔xh5 ♔f3 15 ♔g6 ♔xg3 16 h5 ♔f4 17 h6 g3 18 h7 g2 19 h8 ♗ g1 ♗+ 20 ♔f7 ♗c5. As often happens, a complicated queen endgame has transformed via a king and pawn ending into another queen endgame, also quite complicated!

4 ... g5
5 hxg5 fxg5 (D)



6 ♗h2?

This loses immediately. Squares like h2 are very seldom suitable for the queen. In such endgames we should always try to keep her more or less centralised and therefore active. However, Black also should win after 6 ♔e4 g4 7 ♔f4 ♔f6! 8 ♔e3 ♗e6+ 9 ♔d3 ♗d5 10 ♗f2+ ♔g6. In the other line — 6 ♗b1 ♗c3+ 7

♔e2 ♗xd4 8 ♗g6+ ♗f6 9 ♗xh5 ♗e5+ — Black's advantage is also decisive.

6 ... ♗b3+
7 ♔e4 g4!
8 ♗e2

8 ♗f2 would not be much better than the text after 8...♗xb5 9 ♗a2+ ♔f6 10 ♗f2+ ♔e7-+.

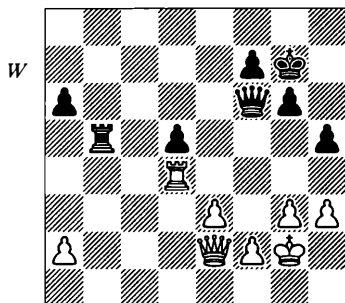
The game now concluded: 8... ♗xg3 9 ♗c4+ ♔e7 10 ♗c8 ♗f3+ 11 ♔e5 ♗f6+ 12 ♔d5 ♗d6+ 0-1. As after 13 ♔e4 ♗e6+ Black swaps off the queens, White resigned.

Queens and Rooks

Having learned how the isolani fares in pure rook and in pure queen endings, let us move on to the positions where there are both queens and rooks.

Usually the isolani is not a good thing to possess when only major pieces are left on the board. The problem for its possessor is that his pieces often get tied down to the defence of that pawn, thus becoming passive. This gives his opponent what Nimzowitsch called an 'ideal advantage' — advantage in piece activity and mobility.

Such advantage is usually utilised by creating a second weakness or opening a 'second front' — then at some point the defender, whose pieces are passive and less mobile, may not be able to cope with his defensive task. Let us look at the following position.



Andersson - Comas
Benasque 1995

Here White has the advantage since his rook is more active than his opponent's. White cannot win by just putting pressure on the d5-pawn, however. He needs other targets to attack, so that he can use his 'ideal advantage'. Such targets can be either Black's king or the a6-pawn.

- 33 ♖c2 ♜b6
34 ♖c3 ♜a5

Or 34...♙h7 35 ♜f4!, which leads to similar positions to the game.

- 35 ♖a1 ♙g8
36 ♜f4! ♜b6
37 ♖e5 ♜b7
38 ♜d4!

GM Ulf Andersson, famous for his excellent technique, masterfully combines attack against Black's king with play vs. the isolated d5-pawn. Now White threatens to play 39 e4, winning a pawn, as 39...dxe4 isn't possible because of 40 ♜d8+ and 41 ♜h8#.

- 38 ... ♜b6?

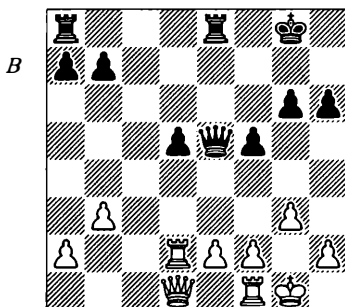
Now Black is lost. Only 38...♜c6 could offer some resistance.

- 39 e4 ♜e6

- 40 ♜xd5 ♜b2
41 ♜d2 ♜e5
42 ♜d4 ♙g7
43 ♜xe5+ ♜xe5
44 ♜a4

The endgame is winning for White due to the presence of additional pawns on the a-file. Without them Black would have great drawing chances, but his a-pawn is weak and this makes Black's rook passive: 44...a5 45 ♙f3 f5 46 ♙f4 ♙f6 47 f3 fxe4 48 fxe4 ♜c5 49 h4 ♙e6 50 ♜a3 ♙f6 51 ♜b3 ♜c2 52 e5+ ♙f7 53 ♜b7+ ♙e6 54 ♜b6+ ♙f7 55 ♜f6+ ♙e7 56 ♜xg6 ♜xa2 57 ♜a6 ♜a3 58 ♜h6 ♜a4+ 59 ♙f5 ♜g4 60 ♜h7+ ♙e8 61 ♙f6 1-0.

Spiridonov - T.Stanciu
Bucharest 1973



This is a typical example of the isolated d-pawn with major pieces on the board. Piece activity and king safety is what matters in such positions and in this respect the d5-pawn causes Black a lot of trouble, making his pieces defensive.

- 22 ... ♜ad8

In the variation 22...d4 23 ♖xd4 ♗xe2 24 ♜d7, Black's seventh rank is too weak.

23 e3 ♜e6

Perhaps the pawn sacrifice — 23...d4!? — is worth trying here.

24 ♜d4 ♜c6

25 ♗d2 b6

26 ♜d1 ♜cd6

Now White has to find ways to increase his advantage — he needs a second target. The most promising plan for him is to penetrate with his pieces via the open c-file.

27 h4 ♖g7

28 ♗c3 ♜8d7

29 ♜c1 ♗f6

30 ♗c8 ♗d8

31 ♗a6 ♜c7

32 ♜cd1 ♜cd7

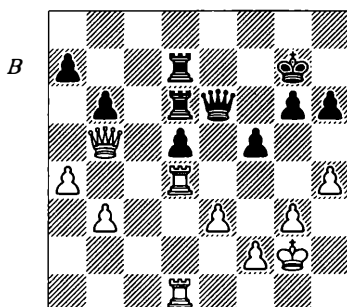
33 ♗b5 ♗f6

34 ♖g2

Often moves like this are most unpleasant for the defender, who has to stay passive and sit tight, which is usually very difficult. The text has a purpose too — now White threatens to capture on d5.

34 ... ♗e6

35 a4!? (D)



White's plan to invade on the c-file did not succeed, so he tries to gain an advantage by advancing his pawns on the queenside.

35 ... ♔f7

36 ♗d3 ♔f6

37 ♜c1

Back to the c-file — in this position White can try various plans, so there is no point in rushing. Besides, such tactics wear the opponent down and lower his resistance.

37 ... ♖g7

38 b4 ♖f6

39 b5 ♖f7

40 ♜c8 ♜d8

41 ♜c3 ♜8d7

42 ♗c2 h5

43 ♗c1 ♗e7

44 ♔h2 ♗e6

45 ♖g1 ♗f6

46 ♜c8 ♜d8

47 ♜xd8 ♜xd8

48 ♜d2 ♜d7

49 ♜c2 ♗e5

Black could not get rid of the weak d-pawn, as 49...d4 loses after 50 ♜c7.

50 ♜c6

I think that 50 ♜c8 would be more energetic.

50 ... ♖g7

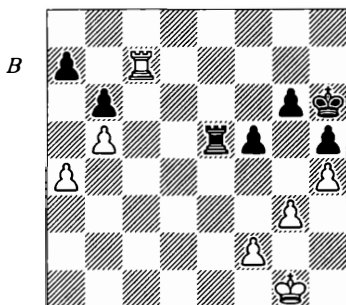
51 ♗c3!?

An interesting approach — White believes that he would win the rook ending arising after 51...♗xc3 52 ♜xc3. He is probably right, since in the resulting endgame Black has three fixed weaknesses — on a7, d5 and g6.

51 ...chesstoug.com ♔d4

52 exd4 ♜xd4

- 53 ♔a1 ♖h6
 54 ♜c4 ♜d5
 55 ♚xe5 ♞xe5
 56 ♞c7 (D)



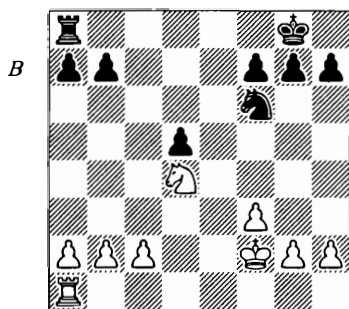
The horrible position of Black's king makes survival in this rook ending impossible. The game ended: 56...a6 57 bxa6 ♞a5 58 a7 ♞xa4 59 ♚f1 g5 60 ♜c6+ ♚g7 61 hxg5 ♞xa7 62 ♞xb6 ♞a4 63 ♞f6 h4 64 gxh4 ♞xh4 65 ♞xf5 ♚g6 66 ♞a5 ♞g4 67 ♚e2 ♞xg5 68 ♞xg5+ ♚xg5 69 ♚e3 ♚f5 70 ♚f3 1-0.

Rook and Minor Piece Endings

Having analysed positions with only major pieces on the board, let us now study how the isolated d-pawn behaves in the presence of both major and minor pieces. Obviously, a lot depends what pieces they are. We will start with the material correlation 'rook and minor piece vs. rook and minor piece'.

First of all, since a pure knight endgame is the least dangerous one for the possessor of the isolani, we may think that adding rooks won't

change that assessment greatly. However, practice shows that the side playing with the isolated d-pawn has some difficulties defending in such an endgame. Here is an example.



Parma - Puč
Ljubljana 1969

- 22 ... ♞e8
 23 ♞d1

Pay attention to the fact that White is not willing to exchange rooks by playing 23 ♞e1, as after a further 23...♞xe1 24 ♚xe1 ♚f8 Black will have fewer problems.

- 23 ... a6
 24 ♞d3 ♞c8
 25 c3

The immediate 25 g4!? was worth considering.

- 25 ... ♚f8

Perhaps Black should have made his kingside pawns safer by playing 25...h5!? with a subsequent ...g6.

- 26 g4!

Grabbing space, White unbalances the position and creates tension in the position.

- 26 ... ♚d7

27 ♖f5 ♘b6
 28 b3 g6
 29 ♖e3 ♜c5

Black has to defend the d5-pawn, as 29...♗e7 can lead to an unpleasant rook endgame after 30 a4! a5 31 ♖xd5+ ♖xd5 32 ♜xd5 ♜xc3 33 ♜b5.

30 ♗e2 h6

Perhaps Black was concerned about White playing g4-g5 at some stage, which would fix his h7-pawn. However, that plan does not seem to be so dangerous and therefore Black should have centralised his king by 30...♗e7.

31 ♖d2 ♗g7
 32 ♜d4 a5

After 32...♗f6 the variation 33 ♜b4 ♜b5 34 ♜xb5 axb5 35 ♖c2 ♗g5 36 ♗e3 is quite unpleasant for Black.

33 a4 ♗f6
 34 b4!

As a result of the very unconvincing manoeuvre ...♗f8-g7-f6 (instead of ...♗f8-e7-e6), Black has problems with the d-pawn and in fact he can no longer hold it.

34 ... axb4

34...♖c4+ also drops a pawn after 35 ♗d3 ♖e5+ 36 ♗e2, but perhaps it was a better try.

35 cxb4 ♜c6
 36 a5 ♖c8

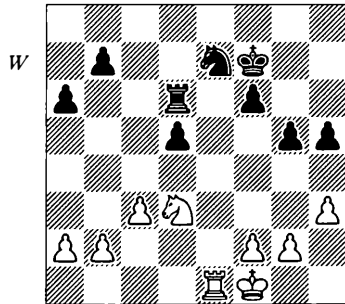
36...♖c4+? 37 ♖xc4 dxc4 38 ♗c3 is clearly hopeless for Black.

37 ♜xd5 ♗e6
 38 f4 ♖d6
 39 ♜e5+ ♗d7
 40 ♜d5 ♗e6

41 f5+ gxf5
 42 gxf5+ ♗e7
 43 b5 ♜c8
 44 a6 bxa6
 45 bxa6 ♗d7
 46 ♜a5 ♗c6
 47 ♗d3 ♗b6
 48 ♜a4 ♖b5

White's material advantage here is sufficient for the win, which he secured in nice style: 49 a7! ♜d8+ (Or 49...♖xa7 50 ♖c4+ and White wins) 50 ♖d5+! ♗b7 51 a8♖+ ♜xa8 52 ♜b4 ♜a5 53 ♖c3 ♗c6 54 ♜xb5 ♜xb5 55 ♖xb5 ♗xb5 56 ♗d4 ♗c6 57 ♗e5 ♗d7 58 ♗f6 ♗e8 59 ♗g7 ♗e7 60 f6+ ♗e6 61 h3 1-0.

A very similar position occurred in our next example, but here Black was more active on the kingside and therefore had fewer problems defending his position.



Buturin - Shulman
 Ubeda 1997

34 ♖c5 ♜c6
 35 ♖b3 ♜c7

Please note that here Black's knight is much better placed than in

Parma-Puč, where it was attacked and driven away from b6. On the e7-square, the knight is much safer. Also here Black has a much better pawn set-up on the kingside than in our previous example.

36 ♖d1 ♔e6
37 ♘d4+ ♕f7
38 ♘e2

Also logical is 38 ♖e1, not disclosing any intentions.

38 ... ♔e6
39 f4 ♘c6
40 ♕f2 ♖d7
41 ♕f3 ♕f7
42 ♕e3

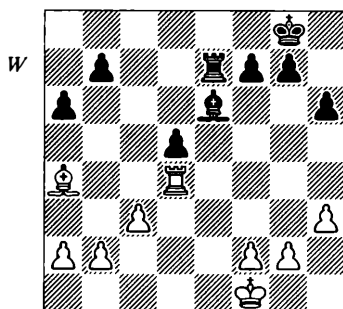
Perhaps White should have preferred the more direct approach — 42 ♘d4!?, as after 42... ♘xd4+ 43 ♖xd4 ♕e6 44 ♖d2!?, he would have some advantage in the rook endgame.

42 ... ♖e7+
43 ♕f2 ♖d7
44 ♘g3 h4
45 ♘e2 ♕g6
46 ♕e3 ♖d8
47 ♖f1 ♖e8+
48 ♕d2 ♘a5
49 b3 ♘c6
50 ♖f3 ♖d8
51 ♖d3 ♕f5
52 fxg5 fxg5
53 ♘d4+ ♘xd4
54 ♖xd4

So, White has exchanged the knights, but this has happened in less favourable conditions than it would have been earlier (after 42 ♘d4 ♘xd4+ 43 ♖xd4) — Black's king is more active here.

The game ended: 54... ♔e5 55 ♖g4 ♕f5 56 ♖b4 ♖d7 57 a4 ♖g7 58 ♖g4 b6 59 ♕d3 ♕e5 60 g3 hxg3 61 ♖xg3 ♕d6 62 ♕d4 ♖h7 63 ♖xg5 ♖xh3 64 ♖g6+ (64 ♖xd5+ ♕c6 does not offer White much either) 64... ♕c7 65 a5 ♖h4+ 66 ♕d3 ♖h3+ 67 ♕c2 ♖h2+ 68 ♕b1 ♖h1+ 69 ♕b2 ♖h2+ 70 ♕a3 bxa5 71 ♖xa6 ♖c2 72 ♖xa5 ½–½.

Knowing that pure bishop endings are much more dangerous for the possessor of the isolani than pure knight endgames, we can assume that the same is correct if we add rooks. Indeed, such positions contain many problems for the side playing with the isolated d-pawn, as our next example proves.



Matanović - Uhlmann
Skopje 1976

White's pieces are much more active and, as usual, all he needs is a second weakness.

28 ♘b3 ♖d7

Note that the presence of the bishops on the board in some respects suits Black, as he does not have to

worry about a c3-c4 option (his rook is protected). On the other hand, Black's bishop is very passive.

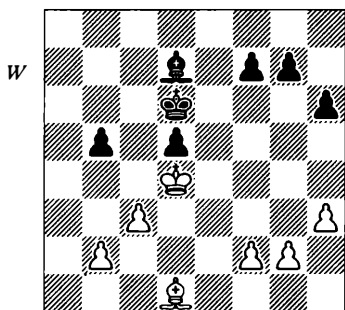
- 29 ♔e2 ♔f8
 30 ♔e3 ♔e7
 31 ♖b4 ♔d6
 32 ♔d4 b5?!

A serious commitment. The text weakens the c5-square and creates a potential target for White's attack. More careful would be 32...♔c6, although even then White can eventually force ...b5 by playing 33 ♕d1! with a subsequent ♕f3, when Black would have to play ...b5 in order to stop the threatened c3-c4.

- 33 a4 ♖b7
 34 ♕d1 ♕d7
 35 axb5 ♖xb5

After 35...axb5 36 ♕e2 White might be able to utilise the open a-file after a further ♖b4-b3-a3.

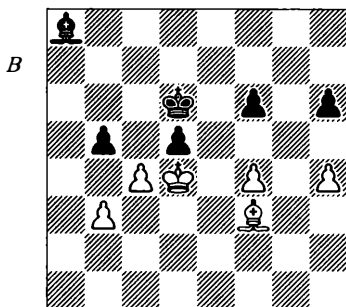
- 36 ♖xb5 axb5 (D)



So, the rooks have come off and we have a pure bishop ending now. The b5-pawn is weak, but as our analysis will show, here White's advantage is not enough for a win.

- 38 ♕f3 ♕e6 39 h4 f6 40 g3 g5 41

- ♕e2 ♕d7 42 ♕h5 ♕h3 43 b3 ♕d7
 44 ♕f7 ♕c6 45 f4 gxh4 46 gxh4
 ♕b7 47 ♕h5 ♕c6 48 ♕f3 ♕a8 49
 c4 (D)



The last dozen moves needed no comment. White has squeezed the maximum out of his position and now he wins a pawn, but can he win the game?

- 49 ... dxc4??

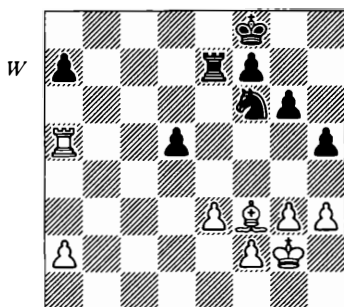
This move is hard to explain, as it loses without any resistance. After the logical continuation 49...bxc4 50 bxc4 ♕b7 51 ♕xd5 ♕c8 52 c5+ ♔c7 we reach a position where Black is able to hold out for a draw. The only line which Black needs to avoid is 50...♕c6 51 ♕xd5 ♕d7? (51...♕e8!), as then White is able to use the position of Black's bishop on d7 by playing 52 c5+ ♔c7 53 c6! ♕g4 54 ♔c5. Then White wins, eventually entering the e6- or f5- squares with his king.

Once again, as I discovered afterwards, this analysis is in agreement with the conclusions of Beliavsky and Mikhalchishin in their book.

- 50 ♕xa8 cxb3

- 51 ♖e4 b2
 52 h5 b4
 53 ♜c4 1-0

Now let us see how the isolani fares in the endings where one side has a rook and bishop, while the other has a rook and knight. Here is an example of how the isolani can be attacked by a bishop:



Uhlmann - Rogulj
Bucharest 1979

Here White has two targets to attack — the first is the isolated d5-pawn itself and the other one is the a7-pawn. Defending that pawn, Black's rook remains passive and he cannot create any counterplay. Now White needs to find a plan that improves his position even further. The only area where White can strengthen his position is the kingside and GM Uhlmann begins to play there:

- 32 ♗d1!

First of all, the bishop is moved to a better position. When Black brings his king to e6, White's bishop will pin the d-pawn from b3. Secondly, if the isolated d5-pawn later goes, the

bishop will have another target to attack — the f7-pawn. Meanwhile the f3-square is being vacated for White's king. It's really hard to expect more from one move!

- 32 ... ♖d7
 33 ♗b3 ♜e7
 34 f4! ♜c7
 35 ♜f3 ♜e6
 36 g4!

Now it is time to advance White's pawns on the kingside, chasing away Black's knight — the main defender of the d5-pawn. Black is absolutely helpless against this plan.

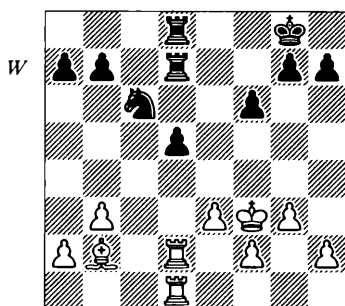
The conclusion of the game was:
 36...hgx4+ 37 hxg4 ♜e7 38 g5 ♗e4
 39 ♗xd5 ♗d6 40 ♖a6 ♗f5 41 e4
 ♗d6 42 ♜g4 ♗c8 43 f5 ♗b6
 (White also wins after 43...gxf5+ 44
 exf5 ♗b6 45 ♗b3 ♜d6 46 ♜f4) 44
 f6+ ♜d6 45 ♜f4 ♜c5 46 ♗b3
 (White prefers to finish the game by
 tactical means) 46...♜b5 47 ♖xb6+
 axb6 48 e5 ♜c6 49 ♗xf7 ♖xf7 50
 e6 (The white pawn armada is victor-
 ious) 50...♖h7 51 f7 1-0.

That endgame is a model of how to exploit the weakness of the isolated pawn in this type of ending.

When the bishop itself cannot attack the isolated pawn, as in the diagram at the top of the next page, the side playing against it may still take advantage of its presence by creating a second weakness.

- 27 g4!

White grabs space on the kingside and prepares to expand there, hoping to activate his bishop. As Black's



Ribli - Pinter
Baile Herculane 1982

rooks are tied down to the isolated d-pawn, it's not easy for him to deal with this plan.

27	...	♖f7
28	♗e2	♗e6
29	f4	f5?!

This move increases the scope of White's bishop. Black had to adopt a more modest approach — 29...g6, although even then White has better chances after 30 ♗f3.

30	gxf5+	♗xf5
31	♗f3	♗e6
32	h4!	♖f8
33	♗g4	g6?

Black neglects White's threat and gets punished for doing this.

34	e4!	h5+?
----	-----	------

Black has panicked. He had to play 34...♖fd8, even though after 35 exd5+! (much worse is 35 f5+ gxf5+ 36 exf5+ ♗f7 and the d5-pawn is not only safe, but is ready to move forward) 35...♖xd5 36 ♖xd5 ♖xd5 37 ♖xd5 ♗xd5 38 f5 gxf5+ 39 ♗xf5 the resulting endgame is very difficult for Black. For example: 39...

♗e7+ 40 ♗f6 ♗g6 41 h5 ♗f4 42 ♗g5!.

Here White could go wrong, as after 42 h6? ♗d3 43 ♗g7 ♗e6 44 ♗xh7 ♗f7 it's a draw, since White's king cannot get out from h7.

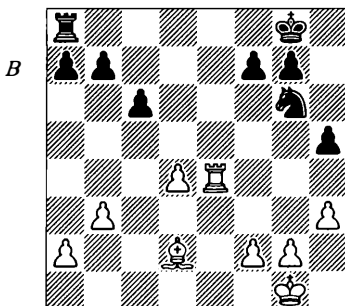
Therefore White must keep the h6-square vacant, so the king can escape after capturing the h7-pawn and let his own h-pawn go forward. I doubt that Black can save the position after 42 ♗g5!. Still, Black had to take that chance.

35 ♗g5

Now the fight is over: 35...d4 36 ♗xd4 ♗d8 37 ♗g7 ♗f7+ 38 ♗xg6 ♗h8+ 39 ♗h6 ♗f7+ 40 ♗xh5 1-0.

In the two examples analysed above, we saw situations where the possessor of the isolani had a knight vs. a bishop. We may guess that those positions where the isolani is protected by a bishop, while his opponent has a knight, are even more difficult for the possessor of such a pawn.

Let us start with a fairly well known endgame.



Averbakh - Keres
18th USSR Ch, Moscow 1950

This is a classic example of such endings. Black's winning chances are great in practical play. Chess analysis is one thing, but defending a difficult position where your opponent can try various plans is another!

27 ... f6

Black prepares to centralise his king.

28 ♔f1 ♔f7

29 ♙a5 b6

30 ♙c3 ♖d8

31 ♙b2 ♖d6

32 g4!

This is logical, as reducing the number of pawns generally suits the defending side.

32 ... hxg4

33 hxg4 ♖e6?

Various annotators, including Keres himself, criticised this move. I would like to quote from the book *Paul Keres: The Quest for Perfection* (Batsford, 1997):

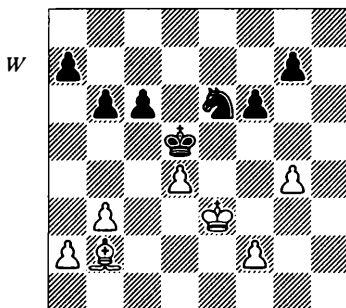
"This attempt to free a way for his king to d5 by a rook exchange is not the happiest of plans. In the first place he cannot clear a path for his king to reach the desirable post on d5 and in the second place any further exchange merely relieves the pressure on White's position. Despite the fact that the ending, for example after 34 ♖xe6 ♗xe6 35 ♖e2 ♔d5 36 ♔d3, is very favourable for Black, White, in view of the reduction in material, still has very good chances of putting up resistance. Hence, and more particularly when one takes into account that the game was shortly due to be adjourned, it would have been better to

have continued 33... ♗f8, followed by 34... ♗e6 and 35... ♖d5, thereby reaching a position attained at a later stage in the game."

Please excuse this lengthy quotation, but we can learn a lot from such a great master as Keres. I particularly appreciate his comment about the fact that he should not change the character of the position when the adjournment was due shortly. Indeed, Black could analyse the outcomes of a rook exchange at home and, on resumption of play, offer this exchange, if necessary. This is a practical example of how one of the main principles of endgame play — 'Do not rush!', should be implemented in practice.

34 f3?!

Let us examine the endgame which could have arisen after 34 ♖xe6 ♗xe6 35 ♖e2 ♔d5 36 ♔d3 ♗f4+ 37 ♖e3 ♗e6 (D)

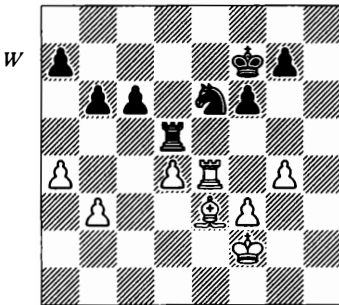


I spent a few hours analysing this position and did not find any convincing way for Black to increase his advantage. White holds this position by putting his bishop on c3 and moving his king between e3 and d3.

34 ... ♖e7
 35 ♙c1 ♘d5
 36 ♙d2 ♜d6
 37 ♚e2 ♜d8
 38 ♚f2 ♘c7
 39 a4

This weakening move is forced, as White has to prevent 39...♘b5.

39 ... ♖e6
 40 ♙e3 ♜d5 (D)



41 ♚g3

After 41 ♚e2 Keres was going to play 41...♚e7 with a further ...♚d7, ...b6, ...a6 and, at the appropriate moment, ...b5. He wrote: "It seems unlikely that White could have successfully defended himself against this plan, even if he had played entirely passively."

Yet another valuable comment from a great master. We should note that Keres wants to start actions on the queenside only after a good preparation. The immediate 41...b5?! 42 a5 b4?! would allow White counterplay after 43 a6. For example: 43...♘c7 44 ♚d3 ♘xa6 45 ♚c4 or 43...♞a5 44 d5 cxd5 45 ♞xb4.

41 ... ♚e7

Keres wrote that he did not like the immediate 41...b5 because of the following pawn sacrifice: 42 ♚f2 bxa4 43 bxa4 ♞a5 44 d5 cxd5 45 ♞b4 and White's pieces get active. Therefore, Black wants to move his king to d7 prior to starting any action on the queenside.

42 g5?

Black's patience has paid off, as White, disliking passive defence, commits an error.

42 ... f5!

This is much better than 42...fxg5 43 ♚g4 where White gets some activity in compensation for the sacrificed pawn.

43 ♞e5 ♚d6

44 ♞xd5+ ♚xd5

45 g6!

Obviously such a strong player as GM Averbakh had some reason for playing 42 g5? and the text is such a reason — White fixes the g7-pawn which can become a target for his bishop. The text also sets a trap.

45 ... a5!

White's clever plan becomes apparent if Black takes the d-pawn — 45...♘xd4 46 ♙xd4 ♚xd4 47 ♚f4. Suddenly, the position arising after 47...b5! 48 axb5 cxb5 49 b4! ♚c4 50 ♚xf5 ♚xb4 51 f4! offers Black few winning chances, for example: 51...♚c3 52 ♚g5! b4 53 f5 b3 54 f6 gxf6+ 55 ♚xf6 b2 56 g7 b1♚ 57 g8♚ and White has great drawing chances in this ending. If 51...♚c5 52 ♚e6! b4 53 f5 b3 54 f6 gxf6 55 g7 b2 56 g8♚ b1♚ 57 ♚c8+ draw-

ing, while even worse is 51...a5 52 ♖e4! a4? 53 ♖d3!.

Keres mentioned that he had not seen all these lines, but simply made a move which improved his position further. Yet another valuable endgame lesson!

46 ♖h4 ♜xd4

Much easier would be 46...b5!, improving Black's position and not giving White any counterplay.

47 ♙h6! ♜e6

48 ♙e3 c5

49 ♖h5 ♖e5?!

Easier would be 49...c4 50 bxc4+ ♖xc4 51 ♙xb6 ♖b4, winning.

50 ♙c1 ♜d4

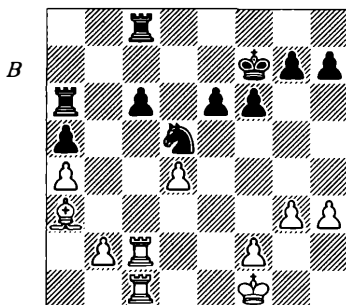
Better was 50...♖d5! 51 ♙b2 c4 52 bxc4+ ♖xc4 53 ♙xg7 ♜xg7+ 54 ♖g5 ♜e8! 55 ♖xf5 ♖d5-+.

Now the game ended 51 ♙h6 ♖f6?! 52 ♙g5+ ♖e6 53 ♙h6? (53 ♙d8! was better, although after 53...♖d7! Black is still winning) 53...g7 54 ♖xh6 ♜c6! 55 g7 ♜e7 56 ♖h7 ♖f7 57 ♖h6 ♖g8 58 f4 ♖f7 0-1.

In this example we had a pure case of the weakness of the isolani, since it was White's only weakness, while Black's pawn formation was perfect.

Situations where both players have pawn weaknesses apart from the isolani occur more often in practice. In such cases, the side playing against the isolani may need to find other objects to attack, rather than the isolated d-pawn itself.

I hope that the following game will illustrate this idea.



Pupols - Baburin

Los Angeles open, 1997

Here we have a more complex situation than our previous example — both sides have weak pawns. The isolated d-pawn is not particularly weak here, but White's pawns on the queenside are *potentially* vulnerable. On the other hand, Black's pawn formation is not perfect either, as his pawns on c6 and a5 need attention and tie Black's rooks down.

During the game I planned to move my king to d7, freeing at least one rook. But when you think of this plan or rather its goal, then a very important question arises — where should that rook be used? Once this problem is considered, the following move is not too difficult to find:

28 ... g5!

Black fixes the h3-pawn, planning eventually to play ...h5, ...♖h8 and ...h4, attacking White's kingside pawns. If then White allows ...hxg3, he might (after fxg3) have problems with the weak e3-square. If instead, he meets ...h4 by g3-g4, then the f4-

square falls into the black knight's possession. In the latter case, Black might be able to transfer his rook to b3, attacking the h3-pawn. In practical play White's defensive task here is quite difficult.

- | | | |
|----|------|------|
| 29 | ♙c5 | h5 |
| 30 | ♖e1 | ♖aa8 |
| 31 | ♙d6 | ♖a7 |
| 32 | ♖ce2 | ♖b7 |
| 33 | ♙a3 | |

White is better off keeping the b-pawn, as the position arising after 33 ♖xe6?! ♖xb2 34 ♖6e2 ♖xe2 35 ♖xe2 ♖d8 36 ♙c5 ♖b8 would be very difficult for him.

- | | | |
|----|-----|-----|
| 33 | ... | ♖e8 |
| 34 | ♖c1 | ♖b6 |

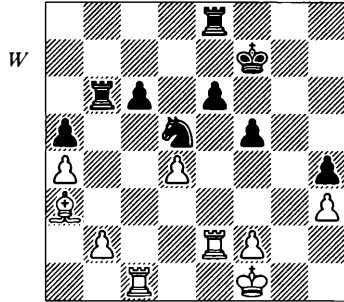
Black still has to defend his weaknesses, but the moment when he will start kingside play is approaching.

- | | | |
|----|-------|--|
| 35 | ♖e4?! | |
|----|-------|--|

This move plays into Black's hands. Yet, Black again stands better after 35 ♖c5 ♖a6 36 ♖ec2 ♖c8, where Black is ready to move his king to d7, followed by ... ♖h8 and ...h4. Also, 'wait-and-see tactics' — 35 ♖ec2 ♖c8 36 ♖e2 — would allow Black to go ahead with his plan by playing 36...h4.

- | | | |
|----|------|------|
| 35 | ... | h4! |
| 36 | gxf4 | f5 |
| 37 | ♖e2 | gxf4 |

Compared to the previous diagram, Black has made significant progress — White's h3-pawn is really weak now, while the scope of Black's knight has been greatly extended.



- | | | |
|----|------|------|
| 38 | ♖ec2 | ♖b3 |
| 39 | ♖xc6 | ♖xh3 |
| 40 | ♙d6 | ♖g8 |

Black's h-pawn may become quite dangerous, while White's pawn majority on the queenside is not valid. Besides, White's king might come under attack.

- | | | |
|----|-----|-----|
| 41 | ♙e5 | ♖b3 |
|----|-----|-----|

The immediate 41...f4 was also worth considering.

- | | | |
|----|------|-----|
| 42 | ♖a6 | f4! |
| 43 | ♖cc6 | |

The danger which White faces becomes apparent in the following line: 43 ♖a7+ ♔g6 44 ♖c6?! ♖xb2 45 ♖xe6+ ♔f5 46 ♖c6 ♔e4+.

The game ended: 43... ♖xb2 44 ♖xe6 f3-+ 45 ♖f6+ ♔xf6 46 ♖xf6+ ♔e7 47 ♖xf3 ♔e6 48 ♙c7 ♖g5 49 ♖e3+ ♔d7 50 ♙e5 ♖a2 51 ♖h3 ♖xa4 52 f4 ♖a1+ 53 ♔f2 ♖a2+ 54 ♔f1 ♖gg2 55 ♖xh4 ♖gc2 56 ♖h7+ ♔e8 0-1.

With this example I would like to finish the theme 'The isolated d-pawn in the endgame'. I tried to make this chapter a sort of encyclopaedia of endings with the isolani.

Of course, the isolated d-pawn is not *always* a handicap in the ending — for example we may recall the game Andersson-Tal (page 94), where the possessor of the isolani had the upper hand in the endgame. Yet in general, the isolated d-pawn in the endgame is liable to cause trouble to its possessor. How much trouble it may bring greatly depends on the nature of the pieces present on the board, as the endings which we examined showed.

Summary

- Pure pawn endings with the isolated d-pawn are usually defensible, provided that its possessor does not have a second weakness to defend;
- The same principle applies to endings with same-colour bishops;
- Knight endings are probably least dangerous for the side with the isolani;

● Adding rooks generally makes the defence more difficult for the possessor of the isolani, as, with a rook, his opponent has more chances to generate a second target. Thus, playing against the isolated d-pawn in the endgame, we should think twice before offering to trade off rooks or accepting such a trade;

● The possessor of the isolani usually suffers a lot when he has a bishop, limited by the isolani itself, vs. a knight. In such cases the defender must make sure the bishop does not become completely passive, being blocked by his own pawns.

As a general rule, we may say that the side playing against the isolated d-pawn can rarely win using just the weakness of that pawn — it typically requires a second target to attack as well. Whether that second target can be created or not usually decides the outcome of the battle.

9 The weak isolani in the middlegame

As we mentioned earlier, the presence of the isolated d-pawn may have the following major disadvantages:

1. Such a pawn can be weak itself — in this case *the opponent may try to win it*. The pieces, tied down to the defence of the isolani, may not be mobile enough to deal with other opponent's threats, so when his opponent opens up a second front or creates a second weakness/target, the possessor of the isolani may have problems defending.

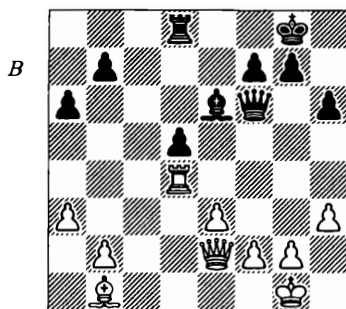
2. The square in front of the isolani may fall into the permanent possession of the opponent — in this case *the opponent might obtain a nice blockading position*.

Normally, the play against the isolated d-pawn is usually based on these two factors — we can either try to win the isolated pawn or to blockade it. The third possible way of playing against the isolated d-pawn is in transforming the pawn formation altogether — this method will be covered in Chapter 11. Which strategy is available and which is best depends on the concrete conditions in each particular position.

As usual, we shall examine a few

positions with the isolani as a weakness in the middlegame, so we can outline some principles for playing in such situations.

Positions With Bishops



T. Petrosian - Yudovich
USSR Cht 1966

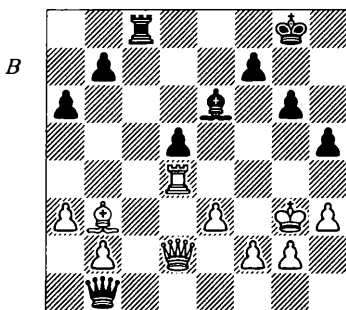
In this position the isolated d-pawn is rather weak and this makes Black's pieces, particularly the bishop, quite passive. White is going to point his bishop at the pawn and bring his queen to d2, after which the threat of e3-e4, exploiting the pin along the d-file, will be difficult to deal with. Black has to prepare for this scenario.

Black moves his rook away, simultaneously taking control over the open c-file — this is certainly Black's best chance here. White has to combine the pressure on this pawn with neutralising Black's play on the file.

25	♖d2	g6
26	♙a2	♗f5
27	♙b3	h5
28	♖h2	♖b1

A very committal decision. I think that Black should have stuck to passive defence, playing 28...♖c5. After that White would probably try 29 ♖b4!?, weakening Black's kingside. After 29...b5 (29...♖c7? allows White to break in the centre with 30 e4! ♗e5+ 31 f4 ♗d6 32 ♖d4 and White is winning a pawn) White's rook comes back — 30 ♖d4!. Then White threatens to play 31 f4 with the further 32 e4. In this case the fact that Black's rook on c5 can no longer be protected by the b-pawn may play an important role.

29 ♖g3!? (D)



This solution is quite typical of Petrosian — he avoids the potentially even more advantageous move 29

e4!?, which would have led to even sharper positions, for example: 29...♖c1 30 ♖g3 ♖h1 31 ♙xd5 ♙xh3 32 ♗g5 h4+ 33 ♖f3 ♖g7.

In this line White may also try 30 ♙d1!?, where after the further 30...h4 31 exd5 ♙d7 32 d6 he can expect to capitalise on his extra pawn. The text move is designed to deprive Black of any counterplay and is a good example of Petrosian's famous prophylactic technique.

29 ... ♖c5

If Black had insisted on play on the back rank by 29...♖c1, then, apart from the move 30 e4, White would have the additional option — 30 ♙a2!? — which leads after 30...♗c2 31 ♙xd5 ♗c7+ 32 f4 ♖c2 33 ♗d3 to a position where White's advantage should be sufficient for a win.

Perhaps instead of the text move Black should have retreated his queen by 29...♗f5, although then White would continue 30 f4, denying his opponent counter-chances.

30 a4

The immediate attack in the centre — 30 e4! — was also worth considering. In that case White should not fear 30...♖b5, as he can then play 31 ♗c3, winning the d-pawn.

30 ... a5?

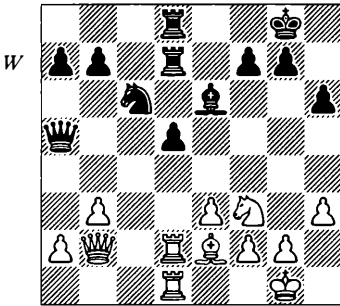
Black had to relocate his queen by playing 30...♗f5. By refusing to do this, Black loses more quickly.

31 e4!

This wins the isolated d-pawn and the game: 31...♗g1 32 h4!? ♖h7 33

♙xd5 ♙xd5 34 ♜xd5 ♜c6 35 ♜d7
♜f6 36 ♚d4 1-0.

Having seen how Petrosian exploited the weaknesses of the isolani, let us now examine how his predecessor on the chess throne dealt with a similar strategic situation.



Botvinnik - Zagoriansky
Sverdlovsk 1943

19 ♖e5!

When the knights come off, White will be able to utilise the d4-square with his major piece. The text also vacates the f3-post for the bishop.

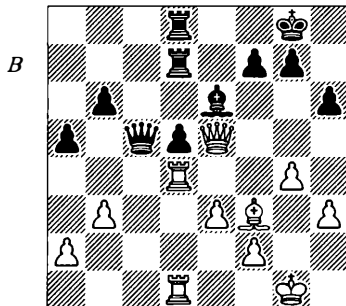
19	...	♖e5
20	♚xe5	♚c5
21	♙f3	b6
22	♚b2	♜c8
23	♚e5	♜cd8
24	♜d4	a5

This is the same material balance as in the game Petrosian-Yudovich. Compared to that game, here there is an extra pair of rooks on the board. From one point of view, this fact makes Black's task of defending the isolani easier, as the threat of e3-e4 is not that dangerous here, but on the

other hand the same feature reduces Black's chances of play on the open c-file, as White's rooks can control the entry points on it. Now White has to find a way to increase his advantage. As the attack against the isolani and its defence are in balance, White needs to find or create a second weakness in order to benefit from his more active pieces. Botvinnik came up with a great move:

25 g4!! (D)

This is truly excellent. White plans to open the g-file by playing g4-g5, after which Black's monarch itself will be White's second target. Black's pieces, tied down to the weak d5-pawn, are less mobile compared to their white counterparts and therefore may not be able to save their king. The position of the black pawn on h6 helps White to create an attack.



The fact that the text weakens White's king as well, does not matter here as Black's pieces are passive and cannot use this factor. Computers probably will not be able to come up with such a move for years to come, at least I hope not!

25 ... ♖c6
 26 ♔g5 hxg5?!

Better was 26... ♕c2, bringing the queen to the kingside after 27 gxh6 ♕g6+ 28 ♔h2 ♕xh6. In this line Black would have more chances for a successful defence.

27 ♕xg5 f6

Here Black could again try to re-deploy his queen to the kingside. White would have a pleasant edge in the endgame arising after 27... ♕c2!? 28 ♕h5 ♕h7 29 ♕xh7+ ♔xh7 30 ♔g2, but that would be better for Black than the continuation in the game. Please note that if instead of 28... ♕h7 Black grabs a pawn by 28... ♕xa2?, he would come under a devastating attack — 29 ♖h4 f5 30 ♕h7+ ♔f7 31 ♖h6 ♕b2 32 ♖d4!. This variation demonstrates how dangerous White's attack can be here.

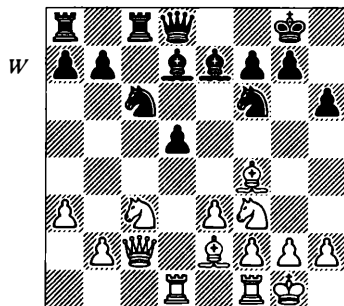
28 ♕g6 ♔f7
 29 ♕g3 f5?

In his book *Analiticheskiye i kriticheskiye raboty* ('Analytical and critical works') Botvinnik criticised this move, yet stating that in any case after the eventual relocation of the white rook from d1 to g1, Black's problems would be insoluble.

He now won as follows: 30 ♕g5 ♕e6 31 ♔h1 ♕e5 32 ♖g1 ♖f8 33 ♕h6 ♖b8 34 ♖h4 ♔f8 35 ♕h8+ ♔g8 36 ♖f4!+- (White's strategy is bearing fruit — the f5-pawn is hopelessly weak and will fall shortly.) 36... ♖bb7 37 ♖g5 ♖f7 38 ♕h5 ♕a1+ 39 ♔g2 g6 40 ♕xg6 ♔h7 41 ♕d6+ ♖fe7 42 ♕d8+ 1-0.

This game is a very clear demonstration of the principle of two weaknesses, masterfully implemented by the sixth World Champion in a situation where the second weakness was not very apparent! In the two examples which we have just seen there were not too many pieces on the board, so the positions had been fairly simplified.

Of course, it takes a lot of effort and precision to reach such positions against an opponent who opposes our plans — now let us see how the side playing against the isolated pawn should implement the strategy of simplification. Here is yet another example from the highest level — this time both players have held the world title.



Karpov - Spassky
Montreal 1979

Here we may claim that White is better, since the d5-pawn lacks protection and Black's pieces are not placed harmoniously. In order to increase his advantage, Karpov starts a simplifying operation.

16 ♔e5!

This looks very similar to our previous example, does it not? Again we encounter pattern recognition — when an idea or a technical method, shown by one player, is implemented in a similar position by another. Here, as in the Botvinnik game, the knight move both intends simplification and frees the f3-square for White's bishop.

16 ... ♗e6

Annotating this game in his book *My 300 Best Games*, Karpov suggests here the move 16...♖e8, with the further 17 ♖xc6 ♗xc6 18 ♖b3 ♗d8 19 ♗f3 ♖e4. However, this recommendation is an oversight, as after 16...♖e8? 17 ♖xd7! ♖xd7 18 ♖xd5! ♖xd5 19 ♖b3 ♗d8 20 ♗f3 White is winning.

17 ♖xc6 ♗xc6

Capturing with the pawn would lose the exchange — 17...bxc6? 18 ♗a6.

18 ♗f3 ♖b6

19 ♗e5!

White systematically increases the pressure on the d5-pawn.

19 ... ♖e4

Also after 19...♗ac8 20 ♗d4 ♖c7 21 ♖e2 Black would have serious problems, as the d5-pawn is in trouble in view of the threat of ♗xf6 and ♗xd5. Besides, White can improve his position further by playing ♗d2 and ♗fd1.

20 ♖e2!?

Also interesting was 20 ♗d4 ♗c5, with the following rather forced line: 21 ♗xe4 dxe4 22 ♗xc5 ♗xc5 23 ♖xe4 ♖xb2 24 ♖a4 ♗e5 25 ♖f4

♖b5 26 ♗b1 ♖a5 27 ♗xb7 ♗d8, where Black has some compensation for a pawn.

20 ... ♖xc3

21 ♗xc3 ♗d8

Obviously, not 21...♗xa3?!, as after 22 ♗xg7 ♖xg7 23 bxa3 Black would have many problems concerning the safety of his king.

22 ♗d3! ♗cd6

23 ♗fd1 ♗6d7

24 ♗1d2 ♖b5

25 ♖d1

Pay attention to White's set-up on the d-file — the most valuable piece is the last in the line. This order is very typical for such positions.

25 ... b6

26 g3

A useful move, particularly unpleasant for the opponent who does not have any counter-play. White has a very clever plan in mind.

26 ... ♗f8

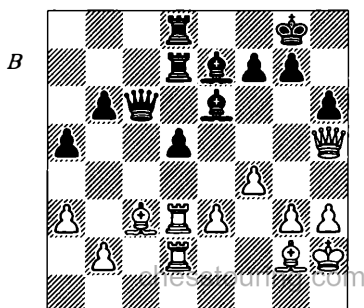
27 ♗g2 ♗e7

28 ♖h5 a6

29 h3 ♖c6

30 ♖h2 a5

31 f4 (D)



Slowly, but surely White improves his position, squeezing Black, who now has to weaken his kingside.

31 ... f6

This is forced, as 31... ♖b5? (with the idea to meet 32 f5 with 32...d4) won't do in view of 32 a4 ♖xa4 33 f5 and White wins a piece.

32 ♖d1 ♖b5

33 g4

White's pawn storm on the kingside is very similar to Botvinnik's plan in his game vs. Zagoriansky.

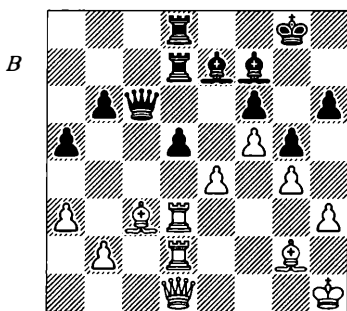
33 ... g5?!

Black finally got tired of the 'sit and wait' tactics but, as often happens, such a pseudo-active move makes things even worse for him.

34 ♖h1 ♖c6

35 f5 ♙f7

36 e4 (D)



This is the culmination of the siege of the d5-pawn — the pawn can no longer survive. When it goes, Black's position falls apart as well. A great example of play against the isolani!

The end was 36... ♙g7 37 exd5 ♖c7 38 ♖e2 b5 39 ♖xe7 ♖xe7 40 d6 ♖c4 41 b3 1-0.

So far we have been looking at positions where Black's isolated d5-pawn was protected by his light-squared bishop. Usually in such cases, this pawn is reasonably secure, although it makes the bishop rather passive.

Now I would like to show a game where Black had the isolated d5-pawn and the dark-squared bishop left on the board. This game is also quite instructive in the sense that Black (who had a rating of 2320 at the time) did not oppose White's intentions to trade off the pieces and obtain a simplified position. As a result Black lost the strategic battle to his more experienced and higher rated (then — 2500) opponent.

Handoko - Z. Rahman

Dacca 1995

1	e4	e6
2	d4	d5
3	exd5	exd5
4	♘f3	♘f6

The Exchange Variation of the French Defence had the reputation of a drawish line until White came up with the idea of meeting the possible 4... ♙d6 with 5 c4!? dxc4 6 ♙xc4, thus unbalancing the position and obtaining quite promising play.

5 ♙d3 ♙g4

Black seizes the opportunity to introduce the pin first. In the game Kavalek-Korchnoi, Kettler Cup rpd 1997, Black went for the isolated d-pawn himself by playing 5...c5. Yet,

after the further 6 dxc5 ♖xc5 7 0-0 0-0 8 ♖g5 h6 9 ♖h4 ♜c6 10 ♜c3 ♖e6 11 ♖e1 White stood better in that game. Black can also try to maintain the symmetry for a while, for example: 5...♖d6 6 0-0 0-0, although after the further 7 ♖g5 h6 8 ♖h4 ♖e8 9 ♖e1 ♜bd7 10 ♜bd2 c6 11 c3 ♖xe1+ 12 ♖xe1 ♜f8 13 ♜e5 g5 14 ♖g3 ♜h5 15 ♖e2 ♜g7 16 ♜f1 h5 17 h3 ♖e6 18 ♖e1 White had the initiative in the game Bareev-Speelman, Moscow PCA-Intel qualifier 1995.

- | | | |
|---|------|------|
| 6 | 0-0 | ♖e7 |
| 7 | ♜bd2 | 0-0 |
| 8 | c3 | ♜bd7 |
| 9 | ♖c2 | c5? |

This decision to change the pawn formation is incorrect, as the isolated d5-pawn, which appears almost inevitably after the text move, will cause Black some problems and won't give him enough dynamic advantages. Instead of his last move, Black should have played 9...♖d6, establishing control over the important e5-square.

10 ♖f5

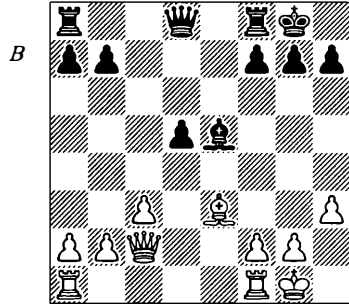
Instead of this, I would have preferred 10 ♜e5 ♖e6 11 ♜xd7 ♖xd7 12 dxc5 ♖xc5 13 ♜b3, where White has a clear edge.

- | | | |
|----|------|-------|
| 10 | ... | cx d4 |
| 11 | ♜xd4 | ♖d6 |
| 12 | ♜2f3 | ♜e5? |

Black does not appreciate the fact that with fewer pieces on the board, the static weaknesses of the isolani may become more apparent and thus

he plays into White's hands.

- | | | |
|----|---------|-------|
| 13 | ♖xg4 | ♜fxg4 |
| 14 | h3 | ♜xf3+ |
| 15 | ♜xf3 | ♜e5 |
| 16 | ♜xe5 | ♖xe5 |
| 17 | ♖e3 (D) | |



Black's strange desire to exchange pieces while possessing the isolani has led to a situation, which is very unpleasant for him — the isolated d5-pawn will soon require protection, while here it does not offer Black any dynamic compensation.

- | | | |
|----|------|------|
| 17 | ... | ♖a5 |
| 18 | ♖fd1 | ♖fd8 |
| 19 | ♖d4! | |

On the other hand, White has no reason to avoid exchanges — he will either get the d4-square for his bishop or will trade the bishops off. The latter case is hardly acceptable for Black, as then White might triple his pieces on the d-file and play c3-c4 at the appropriate moment. So Black's bishop must retreat.

- | | | |
|----|------|-----|
| 19 | ... | ♖d6 |
| 20 | ♖f5 | ♖c7 |
| 21 | ♖d3 | ♖d7 |
| 22 | ♖g5! | |

A very good decision. In general, exchanging queens would be in White's favour, but he wants to use his most powerful piece to weaken Black's position further. Trading off the queens immediately — 22 ♖xd7 ♜xd7 — would ease Black's defence, as after 23 ♜ad1 b5 24 ♙e3 ♜ad8 Black can defend the isolani with both his rooks — something he was not able to do in the game.

22 ... f5

Sooner or later this weakening move would be forced.

23 ♜ad1 h6
 24 ♖h5 ♖e6
 25 ♙e3 ♖e5

Also after 25...♙c7 26 ♖f3 Black can no longer save the d-pawn. Then he has to play 26...♖e4 27 ♜xd5 ♜xd5 28 ♜xd5 ♖b1+ 29 ♜d1 ♖xb2, but after the further 30 ♙xh6! Black's position collapses, e.g. 30...gxf6 31 ♖d5+ ♔h8 32 ♖d4+ ♔g8 33 ♖c4+ and White is winning.

26 g3

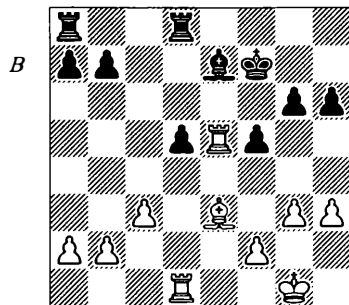
There was no objective need for such caution, as White wins after 26 ♜xd5 ♖h2+ 27 ♔f1 f4 28 ♜xd6 ♜xd6 29 ♜xd6 fxe3 30 ♖d5+ ♔h8 31 ♜d8+ ♜xd8 32 ♖xd8+ ♔h7 33 ♖d3+ ♔h8 34 fxe3. But the text move does not spoil anything either.

26 ... ♙e7
 27 ♙d4 ♖e6
 28 ♜e3 ♖f7
 29 ♖xf7+ ♔xf7
 30 ♜e5

The text is even better than 30 ♙xg7 ♙g5 31 f4 ♔xg7 32 fxg5 hxg5

33 ♜e5, which should be also winning for White.

30 ... g6
 31 ♙e3 (D)



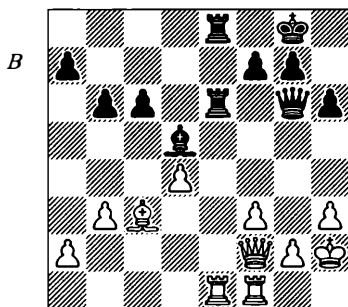
Finally the isolated pawn falls and White achieves a decisive advantage.

The rest of the game is not of great interest to our theme: 31...♙f6 32 ♜exd5 ♜xd5 33 ♜xd5 ♔e6 34 ♜b5 b6 35 ♙xh6 ♜h8 36 ♙e3 ♜xh3 37 a4 ♙d8 38 c4 ♜h7 39 c5 a6 40 ♜b3 bxc5 41 ♙xc5 g5 42 ♜b8 ♜d7 43 b4 f4 44 gxf4 gxf4 45 ♔g2 ♔f5 46 ♔f3 ♜d3+ 47 ♔e2 ♜d5 48 ♜c8 ♔g4 49 ♜c6 ♙g5 50 f3+ ♔g3 51 ♜xa6 ♜e5+ 52 ♔d3 ♔xf3 53 ♜g6 ♔g4 54 ♙d4 ♜f5 55 b5 f3 56 b6 ♜d5 57 b7 ♜xd4+ 58 ♔xd4 f2 59 b8 ♖ f1 ♖ 60 ♜xg5+ ♔xg5 61 ♖b5+ 1-0.

Opposite Coloured Bishops

Now I would like to examine the situation with opposite-coloured bishops on the board. Of course, there are not many positions which would suit our topic (the isolated d-pawn as a weakness in the middlegame), but the

following game seems to be a perfect match.



Here the isolated d4-pawn itself is not weak, since it is well guarded by White's bishop. But the difference in the activity of the bishops and Black's superiority on the only open file makes Black's advantage quite significant.

Granda - E. Torre
Thessaloniki OL 1988

24 ... ♖d3
25 ♖d2 ♖a6!

This is better than 25...♖xd2 26 ♙xd2 ♜e2, as in that line after the further 27 ♙g3 a5 28 ♜xe2 ♜xe2 29 ♜f2 ♜e7 30 ♙f4 Black's advantage is very hard to convert into a full point. The text move prepares an invasion into the second rank, forcing White's reply.

26 ♜xe6 ♜xe6
27 ♜f2 ♖b5!

Black is planning to advance his a-pawn to a4, which would weaken White's pawns on the queenside.

28 ♙g1 a5

29 ♖d1 ♜e3

This little demonstration on the open file is quite harmless, but of course it does not spoil anything — Black is still looking for a way to improve his position.

30 ♖d2 ♜e8

31 ♖c2 ♖a6!?

Now Black has found such a way! He wants to play ...b5 and than possibly ...a4, either creating a weakness on b3 or getting access to the c4-square.

32 ♖d1 ♜e6

33 ♖f1 b5

34 ♜e2

Also after 34 ♖d1 b4 35 ♙b2 f6 Black is better, as he has limited White's bishop further and can later go for ...a4. White's decision to trade off the rooks certainly looks logical.

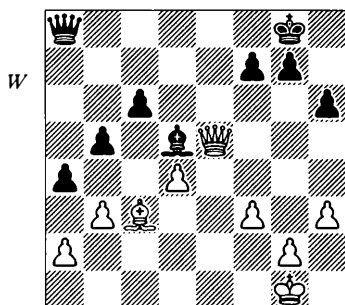
34 ... a4
35 ♜xe6 ♙xe6
36 ♖e1 ♖a8!

A good prophylactic move, where-as the hasty 36...axb3?! 37 axb3 ♙xb3?! would lead only to a draw after 38 ♖e8+ ♙h7 39 ♖e4+. Then Black's try to avoid the perpetual check by playing 39...g6? would only be risky for him in view of 40 d5!.

37 ♖e5

Here sacrificing the d-pawn won't solve all White's problems, as after 37 d5 ♙xd5 38 bxa4 (after 38 ♖g3?! ♖f8 Black threatens both 39...♖c5+ and 39...axb3.) 38...♖xa4 39 ♖g3 ♖a7+ 40 ♙h2 f6 41 ♙xf6 ♙xa2 Black should eventually win.

37 ... ♙d5 (D)



Restoring the blockade on d5, Black deprives his opponent of a chance to activate his bishop by sacrificing the ill-fated d-pawn.

38 ♖h2?!

Perhaps White should have preferred 38 b4, although even then after 38...f6 39 ♔e2 a3 Black would have very good chances of success.

38 ... axb3

39 axb3 ♔a3

40 ♙d2 ♔xb3

Of course, here an extra pawn does not automatically guarantee Black a win, because of the presence of the opposite coloured bishops. Yet, with correct play Black should be able to succeed, since his bishop is much more active than his opponent's.

The end was: 41 ♖g3 ♔c2 42 ♙b4 ♖h7 43 ♙f8 f6 44 ♔c7 ♖g6+ 45 ♖f2 ♖g5 46 ♔a7 h5 47 ♙d6 ♔d2+ 48 ♖g1 b4 49 ♙f8 ♖g5 50 ♙xb4 ♙xf3 51 ♔a2 ♔c1+ 52 ♖h2 (Black should also win after 52 ♖f2 ♙d5 53 ♔d2 ♔h1! 54 ♔d3+ g6 55 ♖g3 g5) 52... ♙f4+ 53 ♖h1 ♔xd4 (Black wins easily in this queen endgame) 54 gx f3 ♔xb4 55 ♔c2+ ♖h6 56 ♔xc6 ♔e1+ 57 ♖g2 h4 0-1.

This game is a nice demonstration of how the blockade of the isolated d4-pawn can paralyse White's dark-squared bishop, thus giving the blockading side a significant advantage in piece activity.

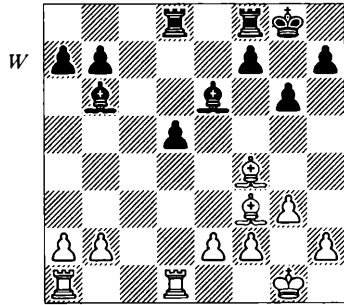
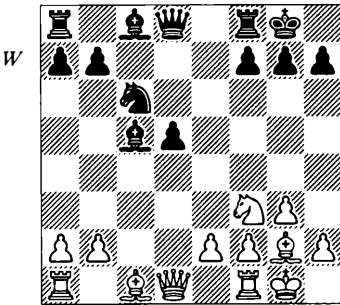
Positions With Knights

In the games examined above, we saw how the isolated d-pawn fares in middlegame positions with bishops on the board. Now let's see how it fares in positions with knights.

After studying several games on this theme, I can say that in such cases the isolani itself is not usually weak, but the fact that the square in front of it can become a useful base for the opponent's knight causes the possessor of the isolated d-pawn a lot of problems. In a way, this is similar to the situation in the game Granda-Torre: the isolated pawn is not weak, but the pieces which occupy the blockading square in front of it are *very* annoying!

In order to illustrate this point, I would like to examine one particular opening variation, from which such middlegame positions occur quite often. That position, seen in the diagram at the top left of the facing page, arises after the following moves: 1 ♘f3 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 ♘c3 ♘c6 4 g3 e6 5 ♙g2 d5 6 cxd5 ♘xd5 7 0-0 ♙e7 8 d4 0-0 9 ♘xd5 exd5 10 dxc5 ♙xc5 .

This position became quite popular in the late 1970s and has been a



frequent guest in tournaments of all standards ever since. Compared to similar positions arising from the Tarrasch Defence, here one pair of knights has been exchanged, which generally should be in White's favour. However the comparison also has some advantages for Black, as in that opening his f6-knight usually gets pinned after ♙g5 . White has two different strategies available here — one involves a blockade of the d5-pawn with a subsequent attack on it, while a second plan is connected with forcing Black to advance his d-pawn to d4. Then White tries to utilise the d3-square with his knight. Black's chances are related to the pressure on the e-file, particularly if his pawn goes to d4.

White has tried many moves in the above position. One attempt to seize the initiative goes **11 ♖c2 ♗b6 12 ♘g5 g6 13 ♖d2**. The following is quite instructive: **13... ♘d4 14 ♘f3 ♘xf3+ 15 ♗xf3 ♗e6 16 ♖d1 ♖f6 17 ♖f4 ♖xf4 18 ♗xf4 ♖ad8 (D)**

In this interesting endgame White has the better prospects, due to the

permanent weakness of the isolated d-pawn. For example, **19 a4!? f6 20 a5 ♗c5 21 ♖ac1 b6 22 axb6 axb6 23 b4!? ♗xb4 24 ♖c6 ♖fe8 25 ♖xb6 ♗c3 26 h4! h5 27 ♖b7 ♗e5 28 ♗h6 ♗f7 29 ♗g2 d4 30 ♗c6 ♖e6 31 ♗b5 ♖ed6 32 ♖xf7 ♗xf7 33 f4 d3 34 fxe5 dxe2 35 ♖e1 fxe5 36 ♗c4+ ♗e8 37 ♖xe2 ♖b8 38 ♖xe5+ ♗d7 39 ♗b5+** and Black resigned in the game Panchenko-I.Farago, Sochi 1980.

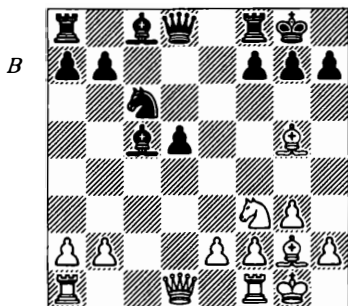
As I am looking at this line just for the sake of our general theme, and not pretending to cover the opening theory, I should like to mention only that for some reason the idea with **11 ♖c2** and **12 ♘g5** has lost its popularity. That move, as well as some other White's tries on move 11, has been largely replaced by **11 ♗g5** which we will examine here.

This move has been known for a long time, but its current popularity is largely due to the excellent results achieved with it by grandmaster Bent Larsen. Yet, our first example is from the practice of Vladimir Kramnik, in whose opening repertoire this move also takes a considerable place.

Kramnik - Kengis
Tal Memorial, Riga 1995

(1 ♖f3 ♗f6 2 c4 c5 3 ♗c3 ♗c6 4 g3 e6 5 ♗g2 d5 6 cxd5 ♗xd5 7 0-0 ♗e7 8 d4 0-0 9 ♗xd5 exd5 10 dxc5 ♗xc5)

11 ♗g5 (D)



11 ... f6

It seems that the more cautious move 11...♗d7 might be preferable here.

12 ♗d2

Also interesting is 12 ♖c1 ♗b6 13 ♗d2 ♗g4 14 ♗b3 ♗h8 15 e3. Then in the game Portisch-Keres, San Antonio 1972, Black got rid of the isolated d-pawn by playing 15...d4 16 exd4 ♗xf3 17 ♗xf3 ♗xd4. However, that did not solve all of his problems and after the further 18 ♗h5 ♗d7 19 ♖ce1 ♖fe8?! 20 ♗xb7 ♖xe1? 21 ♗xa8 ♗e2+ 22 ♗g2 ♗xg3 23 hxg3 ♗xd2 24 ♗f7 h6 25 ♗d5 White achieved a decisive advantage and went to win the game.

12 ... ♗f5

Also after 12...♗e6 13 e3 ♗b6 14 ♖c1 d4 15 exd4 ♗xd4 16 b4

♗xf3+ 17 ♗xf3 ♗d6 18 a3 ♖f7 19 ♗d3 ♗f8 20 ♗e3 ♗d6 21 ♗b5 White stood better in the game Chernin-Dlugy, Tunis IZ 1985, as his bishops were much more active than their black counterparts. Another try for Black here is 12...d4, but White obtained an advantage in the game Makarov-Dvoiryys, Russia Ch 1989, by 13 b4! ♗b6 14 a4 a5 15 b5. After the further 15...♗e5 16 ♗b3+ ♗h8 17 e3 ♗h3 18 exd4 ♗xg2 19 ♗xg2 ♗xf3 20 ♗xf3 ♗xd4 21 ♖ac1 ♖f7 22 ♖fd1 ♖d7 23 ♗g4 ♖d5 24 ♗xa5! b6 25 ♗b4 f5 26 ♗f4 h6 27 ♗e7! his advantage became decisive.

13 ♗b3 ♗b6

14 ♗e3!? ♗a5

After 14...♗xe3 15 ♗xe3 d4 16 ♗f4 White would attack the d4-pawn by ♖fd1, ♖d2 and ♖ad1, when Black's knight can be eventually disturbed by playing b2-b4 at some point. The variation 15...♖e8 16 ♗d2 d4 seems to be more acceptable for Black, but White can play better — 16 ♗b3! ♗a5 17 ♗b5 a6 18 ♗b4 ♗e4 19 ♖ac1 ♗c4 20 ♖fd1, with advantage, as in Groszpetter-I.Farago, Budapest 1986. Perhaps in that game Black should have tried 16...♗xe2 17 ♗xb7 ♖c8, so that his d-pawn would become passed.

15 ♗c3 ♗xe3

Also after 15...♖c8 16 ♗xb6 ♗xb6 17 ♗d4 White's chances are better.

16 ♗xe3 ♖e8

17 ♗c5

Also good would be 17 ♗f4, but

White wants to provoke some weakening moves from Black — a plan crowned with full success in this game.

17 ... b6?!

Perhaps Black should have preferred 17...♖c8 18 ♖a3.

18 ♖b5 a6

19 ♖a4 b5

20 ♖f4

The raid of White's queen has been quite successful, as Black's queenside is now weaker than it used to be.

20 ... ♕e4

21 ♖ac1 ♖c4

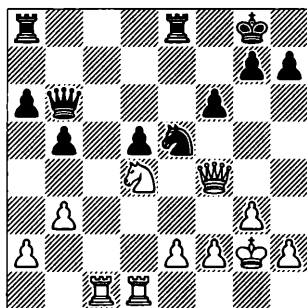
22 b3 ♖e5

23 ♖d4 ♕xg2

24 ♖xg2 ♖b6

25 ♖fd1 (D)

B



The position is definitely in White's favour: although the isolated pawn is not particularly weak here, it is firmly blockaded, giving White's knight an excellent square. White is controlling the c-file and he has good chances of penetrating into Black's camp along this road. Pay attention to the difference in the activities of the knights — while Black's knight

is practically idle, White's is very dangerous.

25 ... ♖ad8?

Black is making a serious mistake in not fighting for control over the c-file. The d5-pawn did not require protection yet, so that rook should have been employed on the open file. Thus, Black should have played 25...♖ac8.

26 ♖f5!? g6

27 ♖c2

White has control of the c-file and can hope to get on to the 7th rank.

27 ... ♖d7

After 27...♖c8? 28 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 29 ♖xc8+ ♖f7 30 e3 White's rooks would be a lot more useful than the opponent's queen.

28 h3 ♖g7

29 ♖c5!

Counting on the fact that the ending arising after 29...♖xc5 30 ♖xc5 would be very unpleasant for Black, White increases his advantage further.

29 ... ♖b7

30 ♖c3 b4?!

This is yet another weakening move, which Black should have avoided.

31 ♖c2 ♖ee7

32 ♖dc1 h5

33 ♖c8 ♖b6

34 e3 ♖d8?

This is a blunder, but Black's position was already very difficult. For example, after 34...♖d6 White might play 35 ♖c7!? ♖xc7 36 ♖xc7 ♖xc7 37 ♖xc7+ ♖xc7 38 ♖e6+ ♖f7 39 ♖xc7, where the isolated d5-pawn is destined to fall.

35 ♖e6+!

This blow gives White a decisive material advantage. The game ended: 35 ... ♖xe6 36 ♖xd8 ♜f7 37 ♖c8 ♖e4+ 38 ♖g1 ♜g5 39 ♖c7 ♜f3+ 40 ♖f1 ♜h2+ 41 ♖e2 1-0.

I have mentioned that it was Larsen who popularised the line with 11 ♖g5 and now I would like to show some of his games played with this system:

Larsen - Agdestein

Gausdal Z 1985

(1 ♜f3 ♜f6 2 c4 c5 3 ♜c3 ♜c6 4 g3 e6 5 ♖g2 d5 6 cxd5 ♜xd5 7 0-0 ♖e7 8 d4 0-0 9 ♜xd5 exd5 10 dxc5 ♖xc5)

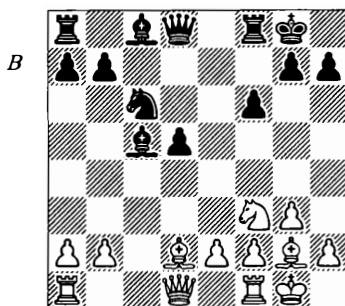
11 ♖g5 f6

Larsen faced other moves here as well. For example, in the game Larsen-Wells, London 1991, Black played 11... ♖d7, which is probably the safest move in this position. After the further 12 ♖d3 h6 13 ♖d2 ♖d8 14 ♖fc1 ♖e7 15 a3 ♖g4 16 h3 ♖h5 17 ♖b5 ♖b6 18 a4 ♖xf3 19 ♖xf3 ♜d4 20 ♖d3 ♜xf3+ 21 ♖xf3 Black could have been satisfied with his position, had he then continued 21... ♖e6 22 a5 ♖d4 23 ♖c7 ♖d7 with rough equality. Instead of this, Black erred with 21... ♖ac8?, which allowed Larsen to obtain an advantage after 22 ♖xh6! ♖e6 23 ♖g5 ♖xc1+ 24 ♖xc1 ♖e8 25 a5! ♖xa5 26 ♖e3 and White eventually won that game.

One of Larsen's later opponents

employed 11... ♖b6 and after the further 12 ♖c1 d4 13 ♜d2 ♖e8 14 a3 ♖f8 15 ♜c4 ♖b5 16 ♖f4 ♖g4 17 ♖e1 ♖ad8 Black solved all opening problems in the game Larsen-L. Hansen, Denmark Ch 1994. However, White can improve on this line by choosing 13 ♖c2, which was recommended by Korchnoi, who assessed the position arising after the further 13... ♖d6 14 ♜d2 ♖e6 15 ♜c4 as better for White.

12 ♖d2 (D)



White plans to play e3, ♖c3 with a blockade of the d5-pawn. Black may allow this or he may opt for ...d4, but in both cases the weakness of the e6-square might play an important role in the future fight.

12 ... ♖e8

Two more examples from Larsen's practice in this variation are:

a) 12... ♖e6 13 e3 d4 14 exd4 ♜xd4 15 ♖e3 ♜xf3+ 16 ♖xf3 ♖b6 17 ♖fe1 ♖xe3 18 ♖xe3 ♖xe3 19 ♖xe3 ♖f7 20 b3 ♖ae8?! 21 ♖ae1 ♖d7 (after 21...b6? 22 ♖xe6 ♖xe6 23 ♖d5 ♖fe8) 24 f4 g6 25 g4 f5 26 g5 Black would be completely para-

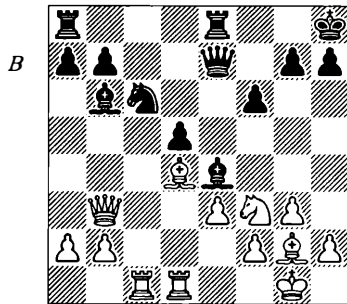
lysed and therefore lost) 22 ♔d5+ ♖g6 23 ♙xb7 ♜xe3 24 ♜xe3 and White eventually capitalised on his extra pawn in the game Larsen-Yusupov, Reykjavik 1985.

b) 12...♙f5. This move is already familiar to us from Kramnik-Kengis. After 13 ♖b3 ♙b6 Larsen played 14 ♜ad1!? (whereas Kramnik's game saw 14 ♙e3!?). After the further 14...♙e4 15 ♙c3 ♖e7 16 e3 ♜ad8 17 ♙d4 ♝xd4 18 ♝xd4 ♙xg2 19 ♖xg2 ♖e4+ 20 ♖g1 White obtained a very favourable position in the game Larsen-Bareev, Næstved open 1988. While taking on d4 would lead to long-term torture for Black, leaving White's knight alive puts the d5-pawn in danger, as Black's bishop cannot protect it.

We will see a very similar position in our next game, where we will analyse the idea more closely. In his game Larsen obtained a decisive advantage after the further 20...h5?! 21 ♝e2! ♖c4 22 ♝f4 ♖xb3 23 axb3 d4 24 ♝e6 dxе3 25 ♜xd8 exf2+ 26 ♜xf2 ♙xd8 27 ♝xf8 ♖xf8 28 ♖g2 and eventually scored a full point.

- | | | |
|----|---------|-----|
| 13 | ♜c1 | ♙b6 |
| 14 | e3 | ♙f5 |
| 15 | ♙c3 | ♙e4 |
| 16 | ♖b3 | ♖h8 |
| 17 | ♜fd1 | ♖e7 |
| 18 | ♙d4 (D) | |

Obviously this is the same pattern which was also successfully employed in the later game Larsen-Bareev mentioned above. White's dark-squared bishop is restricted by



the f6-pawn and cannot attack the d5-pawn; therefore exchanging it suits White just fine.

- | | | |
|----|------|------|
| 18 | ... | ♝a5 |
| 19 | ♖c3 | ♝c4 |
| 20 | ♙xb6 | ♝xb6 |
| 21 | b3 | |

Also good for White would be 21 ♖c7 ♜ac8 22 ♖xe7 ♜xe7 23 ♜xc8+ ♝xc8 24 ♜c1 ♝d6 25 ♝d4 ♖g8 26 ♙h3!, with a significant advantage in the endgame.

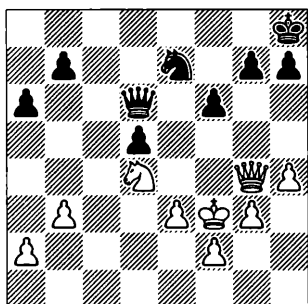
- | | | |
|----|------|------|
| 21 | ... | ♖a3 |
| 22 | ♝d4 | ♜ac8 |
| 23 | ♖d2 | ♙xg2 |
| 24 | ♖xg2 | a6 |
| 25 | h4!? | |

Larsen is known for his habit of pushing his h-pawn in various situations. The text is quite useful, as White gains space on the kingside.

- | | | |
|----|----------|------|
| 25 | ... | ♖d6 |
| 26 | ♖e2 | ♜xc1 |
| 27 | ♜xc1 | ♜c8 |
| 28 | ♜xc8+ | ♝xc8 |
| 29 | ♖g4 | ♝e7 |
| 30 | ♖f3! (D) | |

In the ending a king must be active and the text move illustrates this

B



rule perfectly. Here we can see that if Black's pawn were still on f7, his problems would be less serious.

30 ... ♖g8
 31 ♜e6+! ♜xe6
 32 ♜xe6

When we discussed pure knight endings with the isolated d-pawn, we stated that in general they do not contain much danger for the possessor of such a pawn. However, we meant positions with all other conditions being equal, which is clearly not the case here.

32 ... b6
 33 ♜c7 a5
 34 ♜e2 h5

The only chance — Black is trying to organise some counterplay with ...g5, which should either create a weakness on h4 or give him a chance to create a passed pawn on the h-file.

Unfortunately for Black, his counterplay comes too late...

35 ♜d3 ♜f7

Also 35...g5 36 hxg5 fxg5 37 ♜e6 would be hopeless for Black.

The conclusion was: 36 ♜d4 g5

37 ♜xd5 ♜f5+ 38 ♜e4 ♜d6+ 39 ♜d3 b5 40 e4+ ♜e6 41 f3 b4 42 ♜e3 gxh4 43 gxh4 ♜e5 44 ♜d5 ♜b5 45 f4+ ♜e6 46 ♜e3 1-0.

Knight Versus Bishop Middlegames

Now let us examine yet another material balance — where the side playing vs. the isolani has a knight vs. the opponent's bishop.

Knowing that in the endgame such a situation is very difficult for the possessor of the isolated pawn, we may guess that in the middlegame, too, this same balance is unfavourable for the possessor of the isolated d-pawn. This is in fact so, as our next game will illustrate:

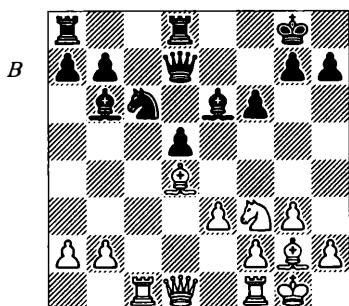
Khalifman - Lukin

St. Petersburg open 1994

(1 ♜f3 ♜f6 2 c4 c5 3 ♜c3 ♜c6 4 g3 e6 5 ♜g2 d5 6 cxd5 ♜xd5 7 0-0 ♜e7 8 d4 0-0 9 ♜xd5 exd5 10 dxc5 ♜xc5)

11 ♜g5 f6
 12 ♜d2 ♜e6
 13 e3 ♜d7
 14 ♜c1 ♜b6
 15 ♜c3 ♜fd8
 16 ♜d4! (D)

A familiar plan in action! White implements it with even more efficiency than in the games Larsen-Agdestein and Larsen-Bareev, as here he plays it without preparatory moves like ♜b3 and ♜fd1.



- 16 ... ♖xd4
 17 ♗xd4 ♙h3
 18 ♙xh3 ♖xh3
 19 ♗e2

Again we can recognise the pattern from the game Larsen-Bareev, but perhaps White ought to prepare this move by playing 19 ♖d3! first. Then White can play ♗fd1, reserving the move ♗d4-e2 for a later stage, if necessary. As in the endings where the possessor of the isolani has a bishop vs. the opponent's knight, in the middlegame this material correlation is difficult for him.

Take for example this position — if Black had a light-squared bishop here (say, on c6), his d-pawn would be relatively safe, but the bishop would be passive. With the dark-squared bishop on the board, the pawn itself is weak — as the bishop cannot defend it — while the knight can be relocated to attack the pawn.

- 19 ... ♖f5
 20 ♖b3 ♗h8

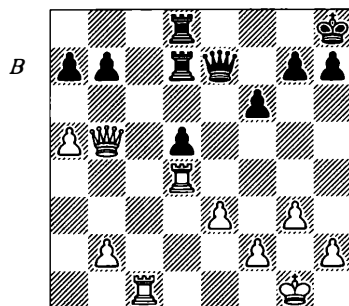
It was better to play 20... ♖f3! 21 ♗c3 ♗h8 22 ♗a4 d4, trying to get rid of the isolated pawn. Having

missed this chance, Black gets into serious trouble.

- 21 ♗fd1 ♖f3
 22 ♖d3 ♗d7
 23 ♗d4 ♖g4
 24 ♖e2!?

White could have forced a very favourable ending by playing 24 ♖f5!? ♗xf5 25 ♗xf5.

- 24 ... ♖e4
 25 ♖b5 ♗ad8
 26 a4! ♖e7
 27 a5 ♙xd4
 28 ♗xd4 (D)



White's strategy is succeeding, as the position is much better for him. As we know from examining such material correlations earlier in this work, in positions with only major pieces on the board, the isolated d-pawn is in great danger. For example, here White might double his rooks on the d-file and then play e3-e4.

- 28 ... f5

In view of that threat, this move was forced, but it inevitably weakens Black's king.

- 29 b4 ♖e6
 30 ♖d3 a6

31 ♖c5 g6

Perhaps Black should have restrained from this move, which weakens the 7th rank even more.

32 b5!? axb5

33 ♖xb5 ♖c6

34 ♗b3 ♗c1+

35 ♔g2 ♖c6

36 h4!

White is planning to attack the g6-pawn with a further h4-h5. This is a standard plan for such positions, perfectly illustrating the principle of two weaknesses — the second target for White's attack here is Black's king.

36 ... ♔g7

37 ♖b6 ♖c5

38 ♖b5 ♖c6

39 ♔h2 ♔h6

After 39... ♔g8 40 h5 Black's life won't be any easier either.

40 ♖b6 ♖c5

41 h5 ♖xa5

42 hxg6 hxg6

43 ♗b2

White's attack is now decisive.

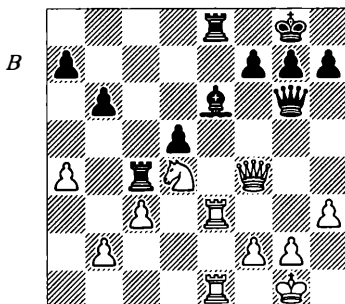
43 ... f4

44 ♖xf4 d4

45 ♖h4+ ♔g7

46 ♖xb7 1-0

Finally, I would like to show one game where the possessor of the isolani has the bishop which protects that pawn, while his opponent has a blockading knight. Obviously, this is a very unpleasant situation for the side which has the isolani. Maybe it's even more unpleasant for him in the middlegame than it is in the ending, as our example will prove:



V. Fedorov - Panfilionok USSR Clubs Cht, Podolsk 1990

Here the isolani is quite safe, but the difference in the activity of the minor pieces present on the board is striking. White's knight is much more useful than Black's bishop, whose role is narrowed to minding the isolani. This determines White's decisive advantage.

23 ... ♖f6

Facing the threat of ♖g3, Black had to play the text move.

24 ♖d6!?

Also quite good would be 24 ♖xf6 gxf6 25 b3 ♖c7 26 f4, with a further advance of White's king to d2 and future play on the queenside. However, White's decision to keep the queens on the board is correct — his queen is much more active than its counterpart. Now White threatens to play 25 ♗xd5.

24 ... ♖d8

25 ♖a3 ♖e8

26 a5!

White weakens Black's pawns on the queenside. Creating more targets

for attack while having better piece activity is one of the major strategic rules in chess.

26 ... ♖e7
 27 ♖xe7 ♜xe7
 28 axb6 axb6
 29 ♜a1

White has chosen to attack the b6-pawn. Also quite sufficient for a win would be 29 ♘xe6 fxe6 30 ♜xe6 ♜xe6 31 ♜xe6 b5 32 ♜b6.

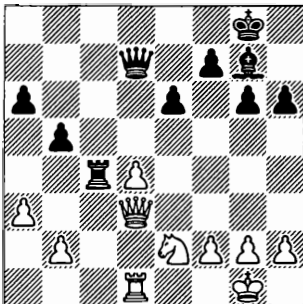
29 ... h6

After 29...♜c8 30 ♜a6 Black is also lost.

The game now ended: 30 ♜a8+ ♖h7 31 ♜b8 ♜a7 32 ♜xb6 ♜a1+ 33 ♖h2 ♜b1 34 ♘xe6 fxe6 35 ♜exe6 d4 36 ♜e4 ♜xc3 37 bxc3 ♜xb6 38 cxd4 ♜b2 39 ♖g3 ♖g6 40 ♖f3 ♖f6 41 ♜e2 ♜b8 42 ♖e4 ♖e6 43 ♜a2 ♜b5 44 f4 1-0.

As I have been trying to show various material correlations, I would also like to present one example from recent practice involving the opposite situation to our previous example.

The side playing against the isolani has a bishop, attacking that pawn, while the pawn is defended by a knight.



Salov - Anand
 Wijk aan Zee 1998

White's defence is difficult, as even after the possible exchange of the isolated d4-pawn the resulting position would be much better for Black, whose minor piece would be superior in this case.

27 f4?!

I think that White should have tried to avoid this move, which weakens his kingside. For example, 27 g3 looks better than the text.

27 ... h5!

28 ♖f2

Perhaps White should have played 28 h4, aiming for a more stable situation on the kingside.

28 ... ♙f6

29 g3 h4

Black has created tension on the kingside, where a second target is now likely to appear.

30 ♜d2 ♖d5

31 ♜d1 ♖g7!

Such quiet moves are often the most unpleasant for a defender.

The text move has created an additional possibility of ...♜c4-c8-h8 for Black, while White is nearly in zugzwang.

32 b3 hxg3+

33 hxg3 ♜c8

34 ♖f3 ♖d6

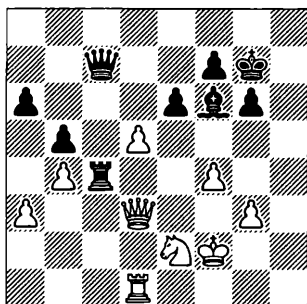
35 b4 ♜c4

36 ♖d3 ♖c7

37 d5 (D)

Exchanging the d4-pawn does not bring White any relief, as Black's

B



bishop becomes very active.

37	...	exd5
38	♖xd5	♙b2!
39	♜d3	♜c2
40	♚f3?!	♜c8
41	♜e3	♜h3
42	♜d1	♜h5+
43	♚f2	♜h2+
44	♚f3	♜c8
45	♜b1	♙c1
46	♞xc1?	

The knight played an important role in defending White's king, so should have been retained.

Instead of the text move, White had to play 46 ♜b3, as now he cannot survive the attack against his king.

46	...	♜h1+
47	♚f2	♜xc1
48	♜d3	♜g1 0-1

Summary

In this chapter we have seen quite a lot of examples of how the weakness of the isolated d-pawn can be exploited in fairly simplified middlegame positions.

Playing against the isolani in such cases, we should look for two main goals:

- further simplification, aiming for a favourable endgame, and
- creating a second target for our pieces to attack.

Naturally, the aims of the side having the isolated d-pawn are quite the opposite.

One particular thing is worth mentioning — having rooks is often a big handicap for the possessor of the isolated d-pawn, as then his rooks often get tied down to the pawn and become passive. Besides this, in such cases the d-pawn usually becomes pinned and therefore more vulnerable to the challenge of an opponent's pawn.

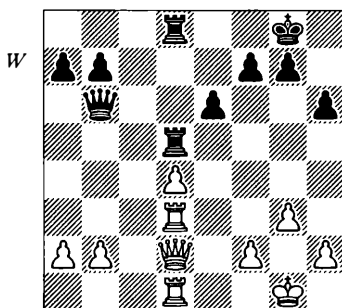
Thus, playing vs. the isolated pawn, try to exchange minor pieces — particularly knights — and retain at least one pair of rooks.

10 Combatting the isolani by simplification

Potentially this chapter could be huge, as there are very many examples where the side playing against the isolated d-pawn tries to exploit the weaknesses of such a pawn by exchanging pieces. Yet, this chapter features just a few examples, as we have already come across this technique many times earlier in this work. We saw how it worked in the games Botvinnik-Zagoriansky (19 ♖e5!, see page 141) and Karpov-Spassky (16 ♖e5!, page 142), to name but two.

The diagram on the right shows a good situation for the defender where all minor pieces have been exchanged; this position arose in a Korchnoi-Karpov game and is discussed on page 164.

When pieces are exchanged, the drawbacks of the isolated d-pawn become more apparent. There are a few reasons why this happens. First of all, with fewer pieces on the board (particularly with fewer minor pieces) the potential break in the centre (d4-d5 or ...d5-d4) loses its effect to a great degree and becomes more difficult to implement. Secondly, the fact that the isolated d-pawn provides its possessor with control over certain squares (like c5 and e5, if we talk



about White's isolated d4-pawn) becomes less important when the side playing with the isolani has no pieces to put on to those squares. Finally, with fewer pieces on the board, a successful blockade of the isolani followed by its siege is more likely to happen.

Here I would like to illustrate this theme and the above-mentioned points with some more examples. Our first three games feature Karpov playing against the isolani.

Karpov - Spassky USSR Cht, Riga 1975

- | | | |
|---|-----|-----|
| 1 | d4 | ♖f6 |
| 2 | c4 | e6 |
| 3 | ♗f3 | b6 |
| 4 | g3 | ♙b7 |

5 ♖g2 ♗e7
6 ♘c3 0-0?!

Deviating from the line with 6...♘e4, which is the most common move here, Black takes a greater strategic risk. The problem with the natural-looking text move is that later, in order to control the e4-square, he will have to put his pawn on d5. That would lead to pawn structures favourable for White.

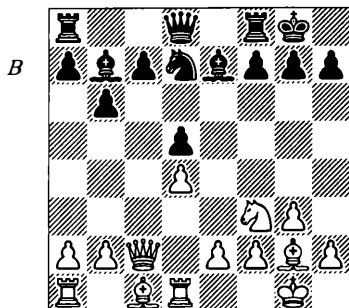
7 ♔c2 d5
8 cxd5 ♘xd5?!

Perhaps it would be better to keep more pieces on the board, playing 8...exd5. Yet, after 9 0-0 ♘a6-10 ♚d1 h6 11 ♖f4 ♗e8 12 a3 c5 13 ♗e5 ♘c7 14 ♘h4! White seized the initiative in the game Yusupov-G. Kuzmin, 49th USSR Ch, Frunze 1981.

9 0-0 ♘d7
10 ♘xd5 exd5

A different pawn structure arises after 10...♗xd5. Then 11 e4 ♗b7 12 ♚d1 ♘f6 13 ♘e5 ♔e8 14 ♗e3 gave White the better chances in the game Ribli-Unzicker, German Bundesliga 1988.

11 ♚d1 (D)



A very useful move — White anticipates that at some stage Black will need to play ...c5. Meanwhile White can improve his position further, playing ♗f4 and ♚ac1.

11 ... ♘f6
12 ♘e5 c5
13 dxc5 ♗xc5

A position with hanging pawns would have arisen after 13...bxc5?!. Then after 14 ♗g5! these pawns would come under immediate pressure, for example 14...♔d6 15 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 16 ♘c4! and Black has lots of trouble with his pawns. Therefore, we can safely say that Black was more or less forced to recapture on c5 with the bishop, isolating his d-pawn.

14 ♘d3 ♗d6

In his book *My 300 Best Games*, Karpov claims that also after 14...♚c8 15 ♘xc5 ♗xc5 16 ♔a4 White has a pleasant edge.

15 ♗f4!

This is a very important move — White wants to simplify the position, as then the drawbacks of the isolated d-pawn would become more apparent.

15 ... ♗e8
16 e3 ♘e4

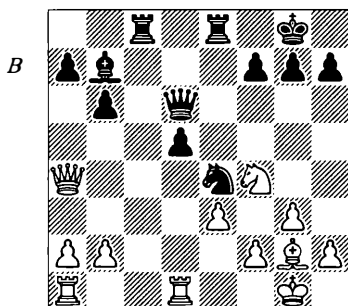
Black wouldn't do any better avoiding the exchange of the dark-squared bishops, as both 16...♗e7 17 ♗e5 and 16...♗f8 17 ♗g5 are advantageous to White.

17 ♗xd6 ♔xd6
18 ♘f4 ♚ac8?!

This move looks attractive, but in fact it makes the Black position

worse, creating tactical problems. Black should have preferred something like 18...♖e5, which would still leave White with a considerable advantage.

19 ♖a4 (D)



Now Black faces great difficulties, as he cannot parry the threat of 20 ♗xe4 ♜xe4 21 ♖xe4 and protect the a7-pawn at the same time. We can say that White has won the strategic battle of the pros and cons of the isolani.

19 ... ♖e7

Also after 19...♖f6 20 ♖xa7 ♗a8 21 ♗d4 Black does not have compensation for the pawn. The text creates some threats against the f2- and e3- squares, but here White already has various ways of realising his advantage.

20 ♖xa7!

White would be also better after 20 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 21 ♜xd5 ♗xf2 22 ♜f1 or 20 ♗xe4 ♖xe4 21 ♗d4, but the text is more energetic, as it forces Black to show his hand.

20 ... ♗xf2

21 ♗xd5 ♗xd5
22 ♖xe7 ♗xd1?!

White would have a definite advantage in the endgame arising after 22...♗xe7 23 ♗xd5 (also very interesting is 23 ♜ac1!?) 23...♗g4 24 ♗h3 ♗xe3 25 ♗xc8 ♗xd5 26 ♗d1, but this is what Black should have tried anyway, as the text move just loses.

23 ♜c1!? ♜b8
24 ♖b4 ♗xg2
25 ♗xg2 ♗xe3+
26 ♗g1

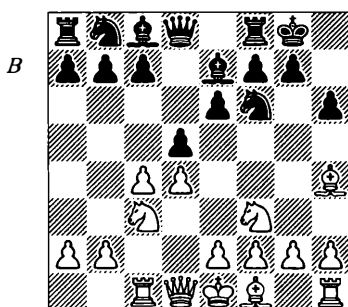
White is winning, as he can create a queenside passed pawn. The end was: 26...♗e6 27 ♖f4 ♗d8 28 ♖d4 ♗de8 29 ♖d7 ♗g4 30 ♜c8 ♗f6 31 ♗xe8+ ♗xe8 32 ♖b7 ♗e6 33 ♖b8+ ♗e8 34 a4 g6 35 b4 ♗g7 36 ♖b7 h5 37 h3 ♗f6 38 ♗g2 ♗d6 39 a5 bxa5 40 bxa5 ♗e6 41 a6 ♗c7 42 a7 ♗e7 43 ♖c6+ ♗e5 44 ♗f3 1-0.

Our following game is a *must* for everyone interested in the theme 'isolated d-pawn', as in this example the drawbacks of such a pawn were exploited by Karpov masterfully.

Korchnoi - Karpov
Merano Wch (9), 1981

1 c4 e6
2 ♗c3 d5
3 d4 ♗e7
4 ♗f3 ♗f6
5 ♗g5 h6
6 ♗h4 0-0
7 ♜c1 (D) touring.com

This line was one of the main sub-



jects of a theoretical discussion in that match, being featured in games No. 5, 7, 9 and 17. It's interesting that later Karpov began to play this line with White as well. The main aim of this move is to prepare to play against the hanging pawns which often occur after the possible 7...b6. For example, the 7th game of that match continued: 8 cxd5 ♞xd5 9 ♞xd5 exd5 10 ♙xe7 ♚xe7 11 g3 ♙a6 12 e3 c5 13 dxc5 ♙b7 14 ♙g2 bxc5 15 0-0 ♞d7 16 ♚b3 ♞fb8 17 ♚a3 and White stood better.

7 ... dxc4

Black tries a very rare move, avoiding 7...b6. Later this move became very popular.

8 e3 c5

9 ♙xc4 cxd4

10 exd4

Modern theory favours the less committal 10 ♞xd4. Here is a recent example: 10...♙d7 11 ♙g3 ♞c6 12 ♞db5 e5 13 a4 a6 14 ♞a3 ♙xa3 15 bxa3 ♚e7 16 ♙h4 g5 17 ♙g3 ♙e6 and Black stood well in the game Korchnoi-Short, FIDE-Wch Groningen 1997.

10 ... ♞c6

In the game where the move 7...dxc4 was introduced for the first time — Portisch-Forintos, Hungary Ch 1962 — Black played 10...b6 and after 11 ♚d3 ♙b7 12 a3 ♞h5 13 ♙g3 ♙g5 14 ♞d1 ♙d5?! 15 ♙xd5 exd5 16 ♞e5 White was better. Another interesting try here is 10...♙d7, which was employed in Yusupov-Beliavsky, Linares 1991. In that game White had slightly better chances after the further 11 0-0 ♙c6 12 ♞e5 ♞fd7 13 ♙xe7 ♚xe7 14 ♞xc6 ♞xc6 15 d5.

11 0-0 ♞h5!?

A key move — Black simplifies the position, reducing the opponent's chances for dynamic play in the middlegame with the isolated d-pawn.

12 ♙xe7 ♞xe7

13 ♙b3

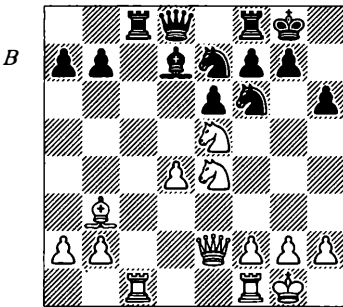
This move is rather inactive. White has several other options here. For example, after 13 d5 exd5 14 ♞xd5 ♞xd5 15 ♚xd5 ♚xd5 16 ♙xd5 a draw was agreed in Knezević-Tal, Porz 1981. Opportunities to get rid of the isolated d-pawn by exchanging it should not be overlooked in such positions — often it's the best chance to avoid an unfavourable position in the future.

However, here there is nothing wrong with White's position and he can still expect to have some initiative. Therefore, 13 ♞e1!? ♞f6 14 ♞e5 ♙d7 15 ♚b3 is better. Then in Christiansen-Karpov, London 1982,

Black had equal chances after 15... ♖b8 16 ♜cd1 b5 17 ♘xd7 ♘xd7 18 ♙d3 ♘f6. However, White might be able to improve on that game by playing 16 ♘xd7!?. After the further 16... ♘xd7 (16... ♖xd7? puts Black in trouble in view of 17 ♙xe6!) 17 d5 exd5 18 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 19 ♙xd5 White's chances are better, as his bishop is superior to the knight in this open position.

Perhaps fearing this last variation, Black instead played 15... ♙c8?! in the game Dreev-A.Petrosian, Palma de Mallorca GMA 1989. Yet, the cure turned out to be worse than the illness, as after 16 ♜cd1 White obtained a considerable advantage, thanks to the pressure along the a2-g8 diagonal.

- | | | |
|----|----------|-----|
| 13 | ... | ♘f6 |
| 14 | ♘e5 | ♙d7 |
| 15 | ♖e2 | ♜c8 |
| 16 | ♘e4? (D) | |



This strange decision leads to a position with better chances for Black; playing 16 ♜fd1, White would have kept the balance. This is a case where the rule of thumb — that exchanges generally favour the

side playing against the isolani — does apply.

- | | | |
|----|------|------|
| 16 | ... | ♘xe4 |
| 17 | ♖xe4 | ♙c6! |

Obviously, Black does not mind exchanging some more pieces.

- | | | |
|----|-------|------|
| 18 | ♘xc6 | ♜xc6 |
| 19 | ♜c3?! | |

Perhaps, the lesser evil would be to exchange rooks by 19 ♜xc6. Then Black would recapture on c6 with a pawn — 19... bxc6! — thus establishing firm control over the d5-square. Then he would play ... ♖b6 and ... ♜d8 with advantage. We will examine such a pawn formation (with Black's pawns on c6 and e6 vs. White's isolated d4-pawn) more closely later on in this book.

- | | | |
|----|------|-----|
| 19 | ... | ♖d6 |
| 20 | g3?! | |

The text move reduces the scope of White's rook on the 3rd rank.

- | | | |
|----|-----|------|
| 20 | ... | ♜d8 |
| 21 | ♜d1 | ♖b6! |

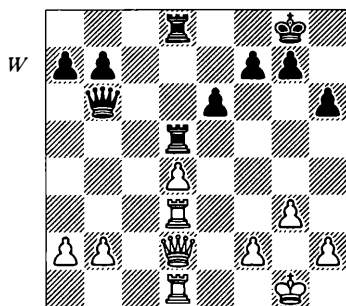
Black relocates his pieces in order to increase the pressure on the d4-pawn.

- | | | |
|----|-------|-----|
| 22 | ♖e1 | ♖d7 |
| 23 | ♜cd3 | ♜d6 |
| 24 | ♖e4 | ♖c6 |
| 25 | ♖f4 | ♘d5 |
| 26 | ♖d2 | ♖b6 |
| 27 | ♙xd5? | |

White should have refrained from this exchange, playing 27 a3 instead.

- | | | |
|----|-----|----------|
| 27 | ... | ♜xd5 (D) |
|----|-----|----------|

Black has achieved a lot — the isolated d-pawn is a pure weakness here and White is going to have a hard



time defending it. Earlier in this work we have examined several positions with a similar material correlation (only major pieces on the board), for example Spiridonov-T.Stanciu (page 126) and Khalifman-Lukin (page 154), and in all of them the isolani proved to be a hard weakness to defend. This game is yet another illustration of this theme.

Black's main threat is to triple on the d-file and then to play ...e5. In order to stop this, White must play f2-f4 which in turn badly exposes his king, allowing Black to attack it later. Of course, this sounds simple, whereas in the game it took precise play from Black to capitalise on his advantage.

28 ♖b3?!

This move weakens the d4-pawn, White should have tried to stay passive.

28	...	♙c6
29	♙c3	♙d7
30	f4	b6!
31	♖b4	b5!
32	a4	

Forced, but now the queenside opens up and Black's pieces obtain

routes towards the enemy king. It's really interesting to see how the advance of Black's b-pawn on moves 30 and 31 lead to a future attack on the opposite wing.

32	...	bxa4
33	♙a3	a5
34	♖xa4	♙b5
35	♖d2	e5!

This is a decisive break — more files are being opened and White's monarch will soon be in trouble.

36	fxe5	♖xe5
37	♙a1	♙e8!

Black is winning. The end was: 38 dxe5 ♖xd2 39 ♖xa5 ♙c6 40 ♖a8+ ♔h7 41 ♙b1+ g6 42 ♙f1 ♙c5+ 43 ♔h1 ♙d5+ 0-1.

A classic example of exploiting the drawbacks of the isolated d-pawn!

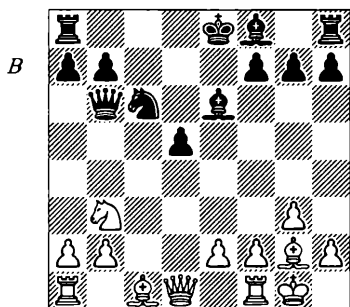
When playing with an isolated d-pawn, White and Black have quite different prospects, because White can naturally afford more risk in the opening. For example, in the game which we have just examined, it took a few inaccuracies and mistakes (13 ♙b3, 16 ♔e4?, 19 ♖c3?! and 20 g3?!) before White faced really difficult problems. On the other hand, in many cases all it takes for Black is one mistake or dubious move — and he finds himself suffering positionally. That's why such openings as the Tarrasch Defence require both very energetic and precise play from Black.

We can often see that Black, having the isolated d-pawn, runs into problems without making any apparent mistakes — as was the case with the

first game analysed in this chapter. Here is yet another example of how careful Black should be when he gets the isolated d-pawn in the opening.

Karpov - Korchnoi
Brussels 1988

1 f3 f6 2 c4 c5 3 c3 c6 4 d4
 cxd4 5 dxd4 e6 6 g3 b6 7 b3
 d5 8 cxd5 dxd5 9 dxd5 exd5
 10 g2 e6
 11 0-0 (D)



11 ... d8

For some reason Black deviates from the game Krogus-Korchnoi, 32nd USSR Ch, Kiev 1964/5, where he did well after 11... d4 12 d2 d8 13 c1 b4 14 a5 xa5 15 a3 b5 16 axb4 xb4 .

12 g5!

It is useful to provoke ... f6 , weakening the e6 -square.

12 ... f6

13 d2

After 13 e3?! d4 the attempt to win a pawn by playing 14 xc6+?! bxc6 15 dxd4? loses in view of 15... c5 16 a4+ d7 .

13 ... e7?!

Perhaps, only this move can be really criticised, as it does not help Black to fight for the d4 -square at all. After 13... a5 Karpov in his book *My 300 Best Games* recommends 14 $\text{e3!?$, supporting this move with the following lengthy variation: 14... d4 15 xc6+ bxc6 16 dxd4 c5 (here 16... c5 does not work, as after 17 a4+ d7 18 b3 the black queen is not protected) 17 xe6 xd1 18 axd1 xe3 19 d8+ e7 20 hxh8 , assessing White's chances as slightly better. Although this line is interesting, I think that after 13... a5 White can simply play 14 $\text{c3!?$, carrying out a plan similar to the one he used in this game. Probably Black should have played 13... d4 , which leads to a position similar to the one from Krogus-Korchnoi.

14 c3

White takes control over the critical d4 -square, as now Black cannot play 14... d4? because of 15 xc6+ bxc6 16 a5 xb3 17 axb3 and White wins. This is the first sign of the forthcoming blockade.

14 ... 0-0

15 d4 dxd4

16 bxd4

Also possible was 16 dxd4 c5 17 xc5 xc5 18 d2 , but the text move allows White to keep better control over the d4 -square.

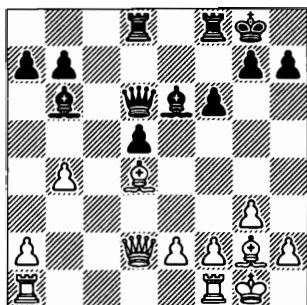
16 ... c5

17 d2 d6

18 b4 chesstou.com b6

19 d4! (D)

B



White has obtained a significant advantage — he controls the d4-square and has good chances of laying siege to the d5-pawn.

19 ... ♖f5
 20 ♖ac1 ♗e4
 21 ♗h3?!

Not every exchange should be welcomed — the bishop on e4 is centralised but rather useless, while its white counterpart is very active now.

21 ... ♖fe8
 22 ♖fd1 ♗e7
 23 a3 ♖f8
 24 ♗b2 ♗c7
 25 ♖xc7 ♗xc7
 26 ♖d2 ♖d6
 27 ♗g2 ♗e6

Also after 27... ♖c6 28 ♗xe4 dxe4 29 ♗xb6 ♗xb6 30 ♖d4 White is better.

28 e3 ♖e7
 29 h4 a6?!

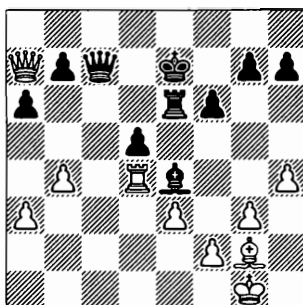
Black could try to fight for control over the d4-square by playing 29... ♗xg2 30 ♖xg2 ♖e4, but then he would have to take into consideration — amongst other White replies — the move 31 ♗b3!?

In that line Black has immediate

problems with the d-pawn and White's chances are much better, for example: 31... ♗xd4 32 ♗xd5 ♗c6 33 ♗xc6 bxc6 34 ♖xd4 ♖xd4 35 exd4 ♖e6 36 ♖f3 ♖d5 37 ♖e3 ♖c4 38 h5 or 31... ♗c4 32 ♗xc4 dxc4 33 ♖c2. Yet that would probably be a better try for Black, as now he gets squeezed.

30 ♗xb6 ♗xb6
 31 ♖d1 ♗c7
 32 ♗d4 ♗c4
 33 ♗a7! ♗c7
 34 ♖d4 (D)

B



34 ... ♖f7?

This is a blunder, but also after 34... ♗xg2 35 ♖xg2 ♖d6 36 a4!? Black's defence wouldn't be easy.

35 ♖xd5! ♗xg2
 36 ♖xg2 ♗c6
 37 ♗c5 ♗xc5
 38 ♖xc5

This ending is winning for White. The game concluded: 38... ♖e7 39 ♖f3 ♖e6 40 ♖e4 ♖d6+ 41 ♖d4 ♖d7 42 g4 ♖e8 43 e4 b6 44 ♖d5+ ♖e7 45 e5 ♖f8 46 ♖d6 b5 47 ♖xa6 fxe5+ 48 ♖xe5 ♖xf2 49 ♖a7+ ♖f8 50 h5 ♖f3 51 ♖d4 ♖f4+ 52 ♖c5

$\text{E} \times \text{g}4$ 53 $\text{C} \times \text{b}5$ $\text{E} \text{g}5+$ 54 $\text{C} \times \text{c}6$
 $\text{E} \times \text{h}5$ 55 $\text{b}5$ $\text{E} \text{h}6+$ 56 $\text{C} \times \text{c}7$ $\text{E} \text{h}3$ 57
 $\text{b}6$ $\text{C} \times \text{e}7$ 58 $\text{b}7$ $\text{E} \text{c}3+$ 59 $\text{C} \times \text{b}6$ $\text{E} \text{b}3+$
 60 $\text{C} \times \text{c}6$ 1-0.

I would like to finish this chapter by showing one of my own games, where play against the isolani and the methods of simplification were the key factors in Black's strategy.

G. Rey - Baburin

2nd Mechanics Institute

Invitational, San Francisco 1997

1 $\text{d}4$ $\text{d}5$
 2 $\text{c}4$ $\text{dxc}4$
 3 $\text{C} \times \text{a}4+$

A very rare move. This check is more common after 3 $\text{C} \times \text{f}3$ $\text{C} \times \text{f}6$.

3 ... $\text{C} \times \text{c}6$

3...c6 would lead to standard play after the further 4 $\text{C} \times \text{c}4$ $\text{C} \times \text{f}6$ 5 $\text{C} \times \text{f}3$ $\text{C} \times \text{f}5$.

4 $\text{C} \times \text{f}3$ $\text{E} \text{g}4!$?

This is the point — Black delays the development of the g8-knight, using this time to put pressure on the d-pawn, thus creating a more unbalanced position.

5 $\text{C} \times \text{c}3!$?

The text offers a pawn, but it would be too risky for Black to accept the offer. I was going to meet 5 $\text{C} \times \text{bd}2$ with 5... $\text{C} \times \text{f}3$ 6 $\text{C} \times \text{f}3$ $\text{C} \times \text{d}5$ and White may have problems getting the pawn back. Also after 5 e3 $\text{C} \times \text{f}3$ 6 $\text{gxf}3$ e5! (6... $\text{C} \times \text{d}5$ is also possible.) 7 $\text{dxe}5$ $\text{C} \times \text{d}7$ 8 $\text{C} \times \text{c}4$ $\text{C} \times \text{e}5$ 9 $\text{C} \times \text{d}7+$ $\text{C} \times \text{d}7$ Black is doing quite well.

5 ... $\text{C} \times \text{f}3$

6 $\text{exf}3$ e6

If Black had captured the isolated d-pawn — 6... $\text{C} \times \text{d}4$?! — White's lead in development would become frightening after 7 $\text{C} \times \text{e}3$ $\text{C} \times \text{e}5$ 8 $\text{C} \times \text{c}4$. For example, 8...e6? already loses because of 9 $\text{C} \times \text{a}6$!. Therefore, I decided not to take on d4, but instead to lay siege to the pawn, waiting for a better moment to snatch it.

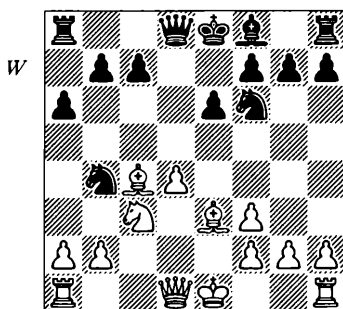
7 $\text{C} \times \text{e}3$

White could also try 7 $\text{C} \times \text{c}4$. Then 7...a6?! is not satisfactory because of 8 d5 and White is clearly better. Instead of that Black, can either accept the sacrificed pawn by playing 7... $\text{C} \times \text{d}4$ 8 $\text{C} \times \text{e}3$ $\text{C} \times \text{d}7$ 9 $\text{C} \times \text{d}1$ $\text{C} \times \text{d}6$ 10 $\text{C} \times \text{e}4$ $\text{C} \times \text{ge}7$ 11 $\text{C} \times \text{c}5$ $\text{C} \times \text{c}8$, with interesting play, or choose 7... $\text{C} \times \text{ge}7$ followed by ...a6.

7 ... $\text{C} \times \text{f}6$

8 $\text{C} \times \text{c}4$ a6

9 $\text{C} \times \text{d}1$ $\text{C} \times \text{b}4!$ (D)



Black needs to utilise the b4-square and relocate this knight. After 9... $\text{C} \times \text{e}7$?! 10 a3! it would have been much more difficult for him to find a good plan. The d4-pawn is

well-protected, so here it's better not to attack it, but to blockade it.

- | | | |
|----|------|------|
| 10 | 0-0 | ♙e7 |
| 11 | ♖c1 | 0-0 |
| 12 | ♗e2 | c6 |
| 13 | ♝fd1 | ♞bd5 |
| 14 | a3? | |

The text helps Black to exchange pieces and therefore cannot be recommended. Since Black has two knights and only one good square available to them, I was very happy to exchange one of the knights.

- | | | |
|----|------|-------|
| 14 | ... | ♞xc3! |
| 15 | ♖xc3 | |

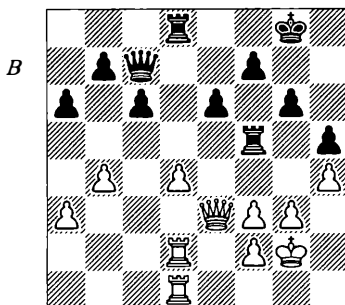
White could not play 15 bxc3?, as then the a3-pawn would be lost.

- | | | |
|----|------|-----|
| 15 | ... | ♞d5 |
| 16 | ♖cd3 | ♙f6 |

Black has a definite advantage here, as the d4-pawn can cause its owner a lot of trouble in the near future. At this stage I made a plan, which fully fits in with Nimzowitsch's slogan — 'Restrain, blockade, destroy!'. Black is going to bring rooks to the d-file and then play ...♞d5-e7-f5, targeting the isolani. In the meantime White will try to attack on the kingside, so Black should take some measures against this.

- | | | |
|----|------|------|
| 17 | g3!? | ♗d7 |
| 18 | ♙a2 | ♖ad8 |
| 19 | ♗c2 | ♗c7 |
| 20 | ♝g2 | ♖d7 |
| 21 | h4 | h5 |
| 22 | ♙b1 | g6 |
| 23 | ♗d2 | ♝fd8 |
| 24 | ♙g5 | ♙xg5 |
| 25 | ♗xg5 | ♞e7 |

- | | | |
|----|--------|------|
| 26 | ♖3d2 | ♖d5 |
| 27 | ♗e3 | ♞f5 |
| 28 | ♙xf5 | ♖xf5 |
| 29 | b4 (D) | |



Black's strategy is succeeding, as he has managed to force some exchanges, which generally favour him. White's last move was necessary, as otherwise Black would triple on the d-file and win the d-pawn by playing ...c5 (or ...e5).

- | | | |
|----|-----|------|
| 29 | ... | ♖fd5 |
| 30 | ♗c3 | ♖8d6 |
| 31 | f4 | |

Here placing a pawn on f4 does not weaken White's king as there is another white pawn on the f-file. However, on the queenside White is going to face serious problems.

- | | | |
|----|-------|----|
| 31 | ... | a5 |
| 32 | ♖b1?! | |

Better was 32 bxa5!, trying to organise counterplay against the b7-pawn. However, being short of time, my opponent quite naturally avoided loosening his position any further.

- | | | |
|----|-------------|--------|
| 32 | ...chesstou | ♗b6!om |
| 33 | ♖bd1 | |

After 33 ♖db2?! a4 White would lose a pawn.

33 ... axb4

34 axb4?!

In time trouble IM Rey makes a final mistake. I felt that White had to play 34 ♖xb4 when at least he can hope to attack the b7-pawn. If he does not seek counterplay, White is sure to lose.

After 34 ♖xb4 Black would probably go into the rook endgame arising after 34...♖xb4 35 axb4. Then, after seizing the a-file by 35...♖b5 36 ♖b2 ♖d8 37 ♔f3 ♖a8, Black would advance his king into the centre and start attacking White's weaknesses. He should be able to capitalise on his advantage.

34 ... ♖d8!

The key move — the rook should go to the a-file, since there is nothing to do on the d-file any more.

35 ♖a3? ♖b5

Black wins the pawn and the opponent's defence soon collapses.

36 ♖b1 ♖xd4

The pawn which could be taken on move 6 with a great risk for Black now falls as a ripe fruit. The text crowns Black's strategy in this game.

37 ♖a8+ ♔g7

38 ♖bd1 ♖bxb4

39 ♖b8 c5 40 ♖xd4 ♖xd4 41 ♖a1 ♖d8 42 ♖e5+ ♔g8 43 ♖f6 c4 44 f5 ♖d4 0-1

With this game I would like to fin-

ish Part Two and move on to other very interesting themes — various transformations of the pawn structure between the isolated d-pawn and associated pawn formations. Before I do so, I'd like to outline some ideas discussed in this chapter.

Summary

When playing against the isolated d-pawn always consider exchanging pieces — in order to reduce the dynamic chances of your opponent and so help to exploit the weaknesses of such a pawn. Of course, not all exchanges are beneficial, so you have to judge in each case whether you should or should not trade off any particular piece.

As a guideline, you can use the fact that positions with only major pieces and/or bishops are the most difficult to defend for the possessor of the isolani. Thus, you should seriously consider exchanging knights, rather than keeping them. At the same time it's often good to keep at least some major pieces on the board.

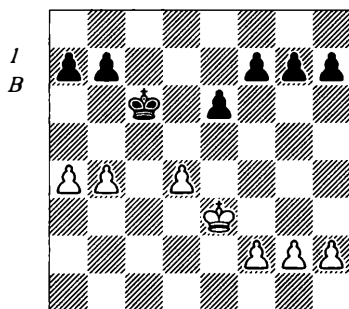
When you have the isolated d-pawn, you should be very cautious about exchanging pieces. If you see that the board is getting emptier, consider trading off the isolani (usually by advancing it) in order to avoid future blockade and positional suffering.

Exercises For Part 2

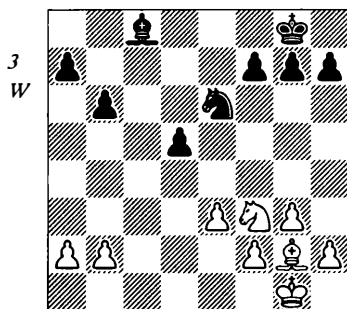
The Exercise sections in this book serve a few purposes: they provide additional material on the subject and give help for those who want to play some of these positions against friends, etc.

As with the Exercises for Part 1, these examples do not imply only one 'correct' solution. Perhaps your suggestion may be even better than the actual game continuation.

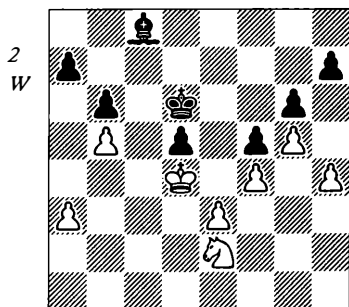
For the solutions to these Exercises, see pages 240-249.



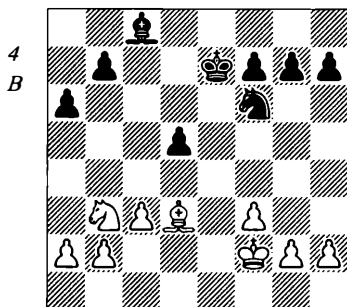
*How would you play this ending?
What should be the result?*



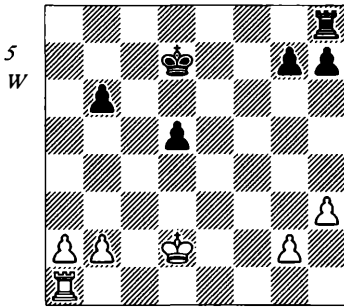
*Assess this position and suggest a
plan for White.*



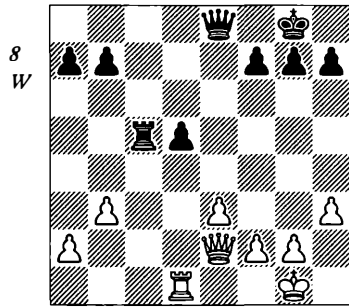
*Suggest a plan for White and
support it with a few variations.*



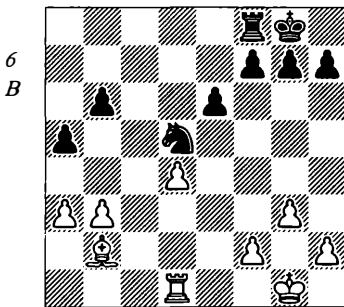
*Play this position from either side
vs. an opponent of similar strength.*



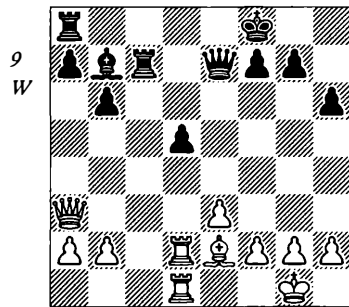
Play this position from either side vs. an opponent of similar strength.



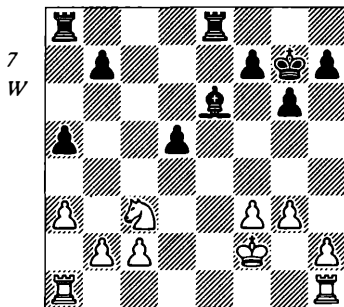
Suggest a plan for White and provide some variations.



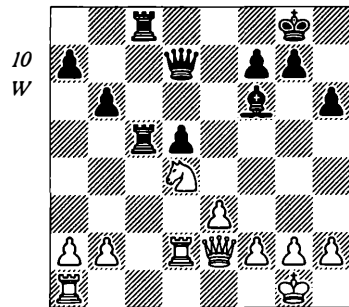
Suggest a plan for Black.



How should White continue?



Suggest a plan for White.



Play this position from either side vs. an opponent of similar strength.

11 Transformations of the pawn skeleton

One of the main reasons why positions with an isolated d-pawn are so difficult to play for either side is that numerous transformations are possible in this pawn structure. Therefore, both players often have to deal with the difficult task of evaluating the possible outcome of various changes in the pawn skeleton.

In this chapter we will examine a few of the most common changes that can happen with this formation. Let's first list these possibilities, assuming that it's White who possesses the isolated d-pawn. The following transformations may occur:

1) White's d-pawn moves to d5, when there are no black pawns either on c6 or on e6.

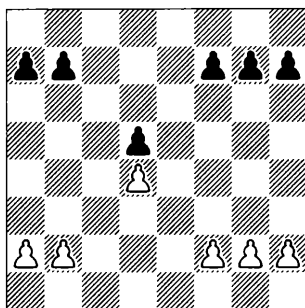
2) Black's pawn shifts to d5 (from c6 or e6), leading to pawn symmetry in the centre.

3) White's d4-pawn shifts to e5.

4) Black plays ...f5, blocking the b1-h7 diagonal, but making his e6-pawn backward.

5) Black's b-pawn shifts to c6, where it becomes isolated.

6) White's f-pawn shifts to e3, forming the e3-d4 pawn couple.



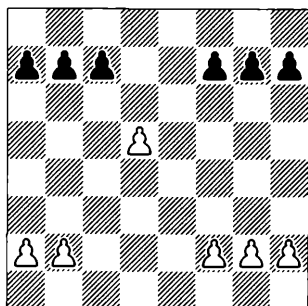
7) White's b-pawn shifts to c3, forming the c3-d4 pawn couple.

The last of these cases will be examined in our next chapter, while here we will study cases 1-6.

1. White's pawn moves to d5, fixing the enemy pawn on the 7th rank

This group of positions is fairly large — they can arise from various openings, e.g. from the Petroff Defence and the Grünfeld Defence. We can distinguish two different cases, depending whether Black has a pawn on c7 or on e7. Please note that we do not examine those cases where the d5-pawn is passed, as it's hard to

outline general principles applicable for such positions.



We can point out a few particular features of the diagram position — the open e-file, which can be used by both sides; White's spatial advantage; potential weakness of the d5-pawn; a nice blocking square for Black's pieces on d6 and the backwardness of the c7-pawn. To see how some of these features influence the strategy of both players, let's have a look at the following game:

Smyslov - Lilienthal
Moscow Ch 1942

1 d4 ♖f6 2 c4 g6 3 g3 d5 4 cxd5
 ♜xd5 5 ♙g2 ♙g7 6 ♖f3 0-0 7 0-0
 ♜b6 8 ♜c3 ♜c6
 9 d5 ♜b8?!

This is too passive. Nowadays 9...♞a5 is most common here.

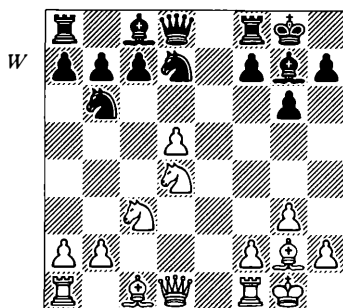
10 ♜d4?!

Better was 10 e4 c6 11 ♙g5. The text has tactical drawbacks — while it prevents 10...c6 (which will be met with 11 dxc6!), it allows another attack against the d5-pawn.

10 ... e6!
 11 e4 exd5?!

This isolates the d-pawn, but in the sequel this pawn is by no means a weakness. Instead Black should have played 11...c6!, destroying White's pawn centre.

12 exd5 ♜8d7(D)



Here the strategic fight revolves around the d5-pawn — if Black can prove that the pawn is weak or if he can utilise the d6-square, then his strategy will be justified. If Black fails to do so, the d5-pawn will enable White to develop his pieces with great comfort and to organise an attack against the c7-pawn.

13 ♙f4 ♜e5

This move indicates that Black goes for the blockade of the d5-pawn. It's interesting to try to attack the pawn instead by playing 13...a6 14 ♜e1 ♖f6. While White can then defend the d5-pawn by playing 15 ♜b3, it's much more critical to play 15 ♙b3! instead. After a further 15... ♜fxd5 16 ♜xd5 ♜xd5 17 ♙xd5 ♙xd4 18 ♜ad1 White has a strong initiative. For example: 18...c5

(18...♟f6? loses on the spot to 19 ♖xd4! ♟xd4 20 ♙xf7+ ♜xf7 21 ♜e8+ ♚g7 22 ♙e5+) 19 ♙h6 ♟f6 20 ♜xd4 cxd4 21 ♙xf8 ♚xf8 22 ♟b4+ ♚g7 23 ♜e8, with a winning position.

- | | | |
|----|-----|------|
| 14 | h3 | ♞bc4 |
| 15 | b3 | ♞d6 |
| 16 | ♜e1 | ♜e8 |
| 17 | ♜c1 | |

Black must now prevent White's threat of ♞c3-b5. Smyslov wrote that 17...♙d7 could be met with 18 ♜c2 with a further ♜c2-e2, but perhaps it would be better for Black than the game continuation.

- | | | |
|----|------|----|
| 17 | ... | a6 |
| 18 | ♞a4! | |

White immediately changes the route for the knight, which will be well placed on c5.

- | | | |
|----|-----|------|
| 18 | ... | ♞b5? |
|----|-----|------|

This allows a tactical blow that radically changes the character of the position.

- | | | |
|----|----------|--|
| 19 | ♞e6! (D) | |
|----|----------|--|

This move, which is possible thanks to the d5-pawn and White's pressure on the e-file, gives White a

considerable advantage — the d5-pawn disappears and White's pieces launch an attack on the enemy queenside.

- | | | |
|----|------|------|
| 19 | ... | ♙xe6 |
| 20 | dxe6 | ♜xe6 |
| 21 | ♞c5! | ♟xd1 |

Black could not play 21...♜d6 22 ♟c2 ♞d4 23 ♟e4 f5, as after 24 ♟e3 he loses material.

- | | | |
|----|-------|-------|
| 22 | ♜exd1 | ♜d6 |
| 23 | ♞xb7 | ♜xd1+ |
| 24 | ♜xd1 | |

The rest of the game is a technical task of capitalising on the bishop pair and better pawn structure. Smyslov never gave his opponent a chance to recover the damage done by 18... ♞b5? and exploited his advantage masterfully.

- | | | | |
|--------|-----|-----------|------------|
| 24... | ♜b8 | 25 a4 ♞c3 | 26 ♜d2 ♜e8 |
| 27 ♞c5 | a5 | 28 ♜c2!+- | ♞d1 |
| 29 ♙d2 | ♙f8 | 30 ♞e4 | |

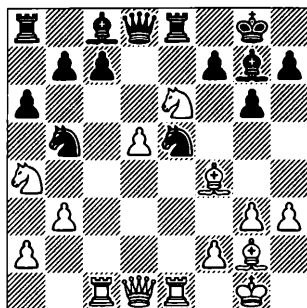
The variation 30 ♙xa5 ♞xf2 31 ♞b7 is also winning for White.

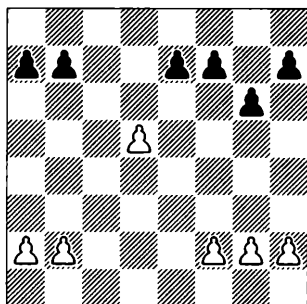
- | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------|------|---------|------|---------|-----|----------|------|---------|-----|--------|------|
| 30... | ♜b8 | 31 ♙xa5 | ♜xb3 | 32 ♙xc7 | ♞d3 | 33 ♙f1!? | ♞1b2 | 34 a5 | f5 | 35 ♞d2 | ♜a3 |
| 36 ♞c4 | ♞xc4 | 37 ♜xc4 | ♜a1 | 38 ♙b6 | ♞e5 | 39 ♜c3 | ♙b4 | 40 ♜c8+ | ♚f7 | 41 ♚g2 | 1-0. |

This game should give you some idea of the plans available for both sides in the structure with White's isolated pawn on d5.

Now let us study the other case — where Black has a pawn on e7 vs. White's pawn on d5. This is featured on our diagram at the top of the facing page.

B





This skeleton can often be seen, for example in the Tarrasch Defence to the Queen's Gambit (with colours reversed). Usually the isolated pawn is safer on d5 than on d4, as White's extra space offers more possibilities to support the pawn. It fixes the e7-pawn, which can now be regarded as backward and which may become a weakness.

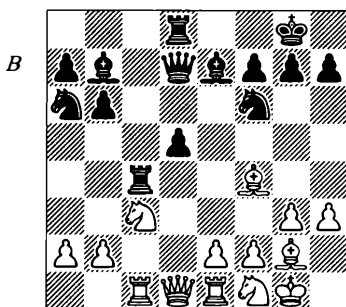
However, there are also drawbacks to the position of the pawn on d5 — Black's dark-squared bishop can become more active, compared with White's light-squared bishop which might be blocked by this pawn. Also, Black's knight often enjoys a nice blockading position on d6. As usual, it's better to study all these motifs in action, so let's start with a game where the isolated pawn fared well:

Ljubojević - Karpov
Europe Cht, Moscow 1977

1 c4 ♘f6 2 ♘f3 b6 3 g3 ♙b7 4 ♙g2
 e6 5 0-0 ♙e7 6 ♘c3 0-0 7 ♜e1 d5
 8 cxd5 exd5 9 d4 c5 10 ♙f4 ♘a6
 11 ♘d2

This is too passive. It is better to play 11 ♜c1 or 11 dxc5, which after 11... ♘xc5 12 ♜c1 a6 13 a3 ♜e8 14 ♘d4 ♙d6 15 ♙xd6 ♜xd6 16 ♜d2 ♜ad8 17 ♜ed1 g6 18 ♜f4! ♜xf4 19 gxf4 led to White's advantage in the game Gelfand-Karpov, Vienna 1996.

11 ... ♜d7
 12 ♘f1 ♜fd8
 13 h3 ♜ac8
 14 ♜c1 cxd4
 15 ♜xd4 ♜c4
 16 ♜d1 (D)



Black's pieces are more active than their white counterparts, and he needs to take advantage of this situation. The best way to do so is to expand in the centre.

16 ... d4!

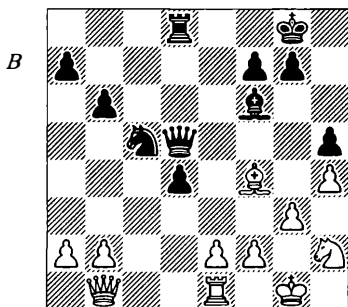
Black's pawn crosses the demarcation line, giving its possessor a spatial advantage.

Here Karpov, in his book *My 300 Best Games*, gives the following alternative line — 16... ♘h5 17 ♙e5 d4 18 ♙xb7 ♜xb7 19 ♘b5 ♜c5 20 ♜xc5 bxc5 21 ♜a4 f6, claiming that "Black is clearly better".

However, this line is full of mis-

takes. In particular, 19 ♖b5?? simply loses to 19...♗xc1 20 ♖xc1 ♗d5+. Instead of this White has to play 19 ♖d3, with a good position. Then, after 22...f6 instead of 22 ♗f4?, White should play 22 ♗d6!, which gives him an advantage, as 22...♗xd6 23 ♖xd6 ♗xd6 is impossible because of 24 ♖e8#. Therefore, 16...♖h5 would have been a mistake.

- | | | |
|----|--------|------|
| 17 | ♗xb7 | ♖xb7 |
| 18 | ♖e4 | ♗xc1 |
| 19 | ♖xf6+ | ♗xf6 |
| 20 | ♖xc1 | ♖d5! |
| 21 | ♖b1 | ♖c5 |
| 22 | ♖h2 | h5! |
| 23 | h4 (D) | |



23 ... d3

Here the move 23...a5!? is also worth considering — Black fortifies the position of his knight and keeps the tension. The variation 24 ♗c7 ♗d7 25 ♗xb6 ♖a4 is clearly bad for White, while after 24 ♖f3 the advance of the d-pawn — 24...d3 — gains in strength. So, perhaps after 23...a5!? White would face even more difficult problems than in the game. Note that the d4-pawn is very safe in

this position and White has none of the advantages which it might give him — no blockading knight on d3, no active bishop on g2.

- | | | |
|----|------|------|
| 24 | exd3 | ♖xd3 |
| 25 | ♗d1 | ♖b5 |
| 26 | ♗g5 | ♗xg5 |
| 27 | hxg5 | ♖f5 |
| 28 | ♗d2 | ♗d4 |
| 29 | ♖c2 | h4! |
| 30 | gxh4 | |

30 ♖c3 is worth considering.

- | | | |
|----|-----|------|
| 30 | ... | ♖h3 |
| 31 | ♖c6 | ♗xh4 |
| 32 | ♖g2 | ♖f5 |

Probably better is 32...♖f4 33 ♖g3 ♖h7 and it's hard to suggest a move for White.

- | | | |
|----|-------|------|
| 33 | ♖g3 | ♗d4 |
| 34 | g6!? | fxg6 |
| 35 | ♖e3 | ♗d5 |
| 36 | ♖f1 | ♖f4 |
| 37 | ♖xf4? | |

This is a losing mistake, whereas after 37 ♖g3 Black would still have to work in order to capitalise on his advantage. The finish was: 37...♖xf4 38 ♗xd5 ♖g4+ 39 ♖g3 ♖c4 40 ♗d8+ ♖h7 41 b3 ♖c2 42 ♖g2 g5 43 ♗d6 ♖xa2 44 ♖e4 ♖a5 45 ♖f3 ♖f5+ 46 ♖e3 ♖b5 47 ♖d4 g4 48 ♖e3 ♖xb3+ 49 ♖f4 ♖f3+ 50 ♖e5 ♖f8 51 ♖g5+ ♖g8 52 ♖e4 b5 53 ♗e6 b4 0-1.

The pawn on d4 does not always bring Black such dividends as in this game. We have already listed the problems which it may cause to its possessor. The following game illustrates those problems quite clearly.

Legky - Salaun

France Cht, Montpellier 1998

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 c5 4 cxd5
exd5 5 ♘f3 ♘f6 6 g3 ♘c6 7 ♙g2
♙e7 8 0-0 0-0 9 dxc5 ♙xc5 10 ♙g5
d4 11 ♙xf6 ♗xf6 12 ♘d5 ♗d8 13
♘d2 ♙h3?!

This move leads to a rather unpromising position. Usually Black plays 13...♙e8 here, trying to put some pressure on the e2-pawn.

14 ♙xh3 ♗xd5
15 ♙g2

Here a less popular move — 15 ♗b3!? — deserves serious attention. As the line 15...♗h5 16 ♗xb7 does not offer Black enough compensation for the pawn, he has to settle for the endgame arising after 15...♗xb3 16 ♘xb3. This ending is very pleasant for White, as after a further 16...♙b6 17 ♙fd1 he can increase the pressure by playing ♙ac1 and ♙g2.

15 ... ♗e6
16 ♘b3 ♙b6
17 a3 ♙ad8
18 ♘c1!

The knight heads for a good square on d3. Here the d4-pawn is over-protected, so White should not attack it. Instead he blockades it, hoping that his minor pieces will be more active than their black counterparts.

18 ... ♙fe8
19 b4

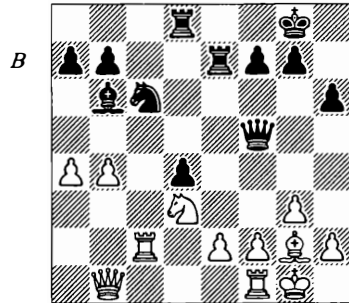
A multi-purpose move: while grabbing space on the queen-side, White also prepares to protect the e2-pawn.

19 ... h6?!

I don't like this move. In positions like this Black should seek active play on the kingside, so if the h-pawn had to move, it should be advanced to h5. I would prefer 19...♙d7, followed by ...♘e5. That should give Black sufficient counterplay.

20 ♙a2 ♙e7
21 ♙c2 ♙c7?!

21...♘e5 is better.
22 ♘d3 ♗f5
23 ♗b1!? ♙e7
24 a4 (D)



Having placed his pieces well, White goes for queenside expansion. Now it is quite apparent that Black has lacked a plan.

24 ... ♘e5
25 a5 ♙c7
26 ♙d1 ♘d3
27 ♙xd3 ♙d6
28 ♙f3 ♙e5
29 ♗g2

Though Black has got rid of the blockading knight, he still has many problems here, due to his inferior bishop and White's control over the open c-file. Black needs to decide

how to arrange his pawns on the queenside. One option is to play ...a6 at some point, but then White will play b4-b5 anyway and the b7-pawn may be much more vulnerable than the a5-pawn. Black's defensive task is not easy, whether he plays ...a6 or avoids this advance.

29	...	g6
30	♔b3	♔f6
31	♖c5	♗g7
32	b5	♖dd7?!
33	♖c8	♖c7
34	♖a8!	b6
35	a6	♙d6?!
36	♔d5	

White wins the d4-pawn and having yet another target on a7, he stands to win: 36...♖c5 37 ♔xd4 ♔xd4 38 ♖xd4 ♙e5 39 ♖d5 ♖c2 40 ♖xa7 ♖xa7 41 ♖xe5 ♗f6 42 ♖e8 ♖c5 43 ♙c6 ♖e5 44 ♖b8 ♖xe2 45 ♖xb6 ♖e6 46 ♖b7 1-0.

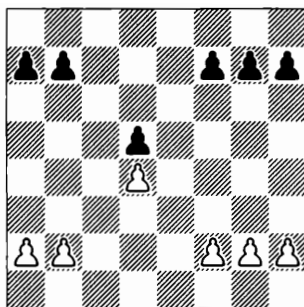
Before I move onto our next pawn formation, I'd like to give a short summary. With the structure in question, both sides should take into consideration the following motifs:

a) whether the isolated pawn will be weak on d5 (d4) or whether it can be well supported;

b) whether the possessor of the isolani will be able to put pressure on the enemy pawn on the semi-open c- or e-files;

c) whether the side playing against the isolani will be able to utilise the blockading square in front of the pawn and to take advantage of his potentially active king's bishop.

2. Black's pawn shifts to d5 leading to pawn symmetry in the centre.



The pawn formation featured here is very common. In this absolutely symmetrical structure, the only advantage either side can have is due to superior placement of its pieces. Let us assume that it was White who enforced this pawn structure by exchanging some pieces on d5 and list the following advantages which White may have in practice:

1. Better control over the open e-file in general and over the e5-square in particular;

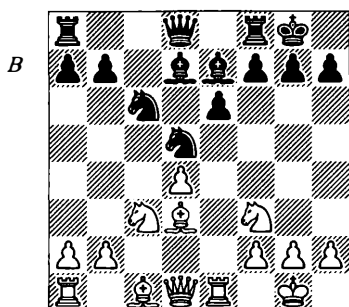
2. Better control over the c-file;

3. Superior minor pieces, e.g. a knight vs. Black's light-squared bishop.

If one of those advantages will be available for White after exchanging on d5, then such exchange must be considered. Our first example of this pawn skeleton illustrates the first advantage that we listed — White's better control over the e-file and the e5-square.

Vaganian - Serper
Groningen PCA 1993

1 c4 c6 2 e4 d5 3 exd5 cxd5 4 cxd5
 5 f6 6 c3 7 d5 8 f3 9 c6 7
 10 b5 e6 8 0-0 9 e7 9 d4 0-0 10 e1
 11 d7 11 d3! (D)



Black here has an extra move, ...d7, compared to the usual position typical for this system.

However, this bonus move may be somewhat unnecessary and therefore Black needs to be careful. First of all, 11...c3 12 bxc3 is not attractive for Black, as the bishop on d7 is misplaced. Also after 11...f6 12 a3 Black suffers because of the bishop on d7. However, both 11...cb4 12 b1 f6 followed by ...c6, and 11...f6 are superior to the move played.

11 ... c8?!

The text allows White to change the pawn formation to his advantage. Vaganian seizes the opportunity.

12 xd5!? exd5
 13 e5 xe5?

White would stand slightly better after either 13...xd4 14 exh7+

xh7 15 xd4 or 13...f6 14 f4, but the text is worse.

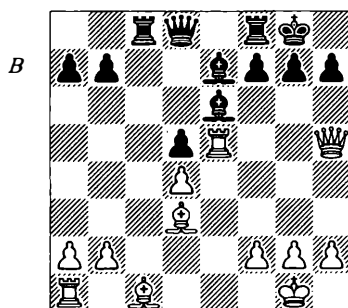
14 xe5

This recapture indicates very clearly that White is after an attack in this game. Vaganian hopes to take advantage of his control over the e-file and of the active position of his light-squared bishop, which is aimed at Black's kingside. 14 dx5 would also be quite good for White.

14 ... e6

In *ChessBase Magazine No. 39*, GM Blatny recommended here 14...f6 15 xd5 c7, with compensation for a pawn, but then after either 16 e3 or 16 h5 White's advantage is unquestionable.

15 h5 (D)



White launches an attack before his rook can be chased away by ...d6.

15 ... g6

The only defence, as 15...h6? loses on the spot to 16 exh6! gxh6 17 xh6.

16 h6 g4?

Like it or not, Black had to play 16...f6 17 h5 e8. Then after the

hasty 18 ♖xh7+ ♔f8 19 ♕xg6? Black gets good counter-chances by playing 19...♜xc1+ 20 ♜xc1 fxg6 21 ♖xg6 ♕f7 22 ♖h6+ ♕g7 23 ♖f4 ♜e4.

In this line White should prefer 19 ♜e5, but it's even better not to take on h7 so soon and to prefer 18 ♕d2. Then after 18...♖b6 19 ♖xh7+ ♔f8 20 ♕xg6 ♕xd4 21 ♕h6+ ♔e7 22 ♕g5+ White is winning.

17 h3!- f6?!

Here Black missed a chance to set a little trap. He should have played 17...♕d1, hoping for 18 ♕f4? ♕f6 19 ♜xd1 ♕g7!, where Black is O.K.

Of course, White does not have to fall for this — after the correct 18 ♕d2! ♕f6 (18...♕c2 19 ♜h5 is curtains for Black) 19 ♜xd1 ♕xe5 20 dxe5 White wins.

18 ♕xg6! hxg6
19 ♖xg6+ ♔h8
20 ♜e3! 1-0

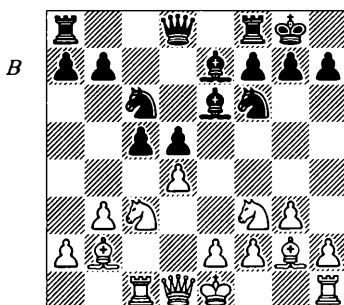
Since checkmate is inevitable after 20...♕d7 21 ♜g3, Black resigned.

In the pawn formation under consideration, there are two open files and White might be able to take advantage of either of them. We have just seen how Vaganian utilised his control over the e-file; now let's have a look at how the open c-file can be used.

Larsen - Penrose

Palma de Mallorca 1969

1 b3 c5 2 ♕b2 ♘c6 3 c4 e6 4 ♘f3
♘f6 5 g3 ♕e7 6 ♕g2 0-0 7 ♘c3 d5
8 cxd5 exd5 9 ♜c1 ♕e6 10 d4 (D)



By transposition, Larsen has obtained his favourite set-up against the Tarrasch Defence — the double fianchetto.

This system is not without poison, as White's dark-squared bishop sometimes can be very dangerous on the long diagonal.

10 ... ♜c8
11 0-0 ♜e8
12 dxc5 ♕xc5
13 ♘a4 ♕e7
14 ♘c5 ♘d7?!

This is too passive. Perhaps Black should have preferred 14... ♕xc5 15 ♜xc5 ♘e4, followed by ...♖e7.

15 ♘xd7

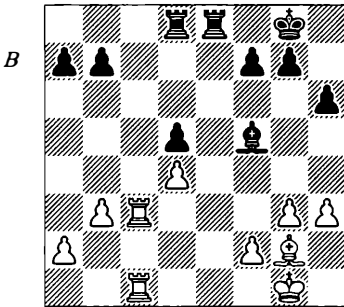
White could also change the pawn formation by playing 15 ♘xe6 fxe6 16 e4 dxe4 17 ♘d2, but he prefers to play against the isolated pawn.

15 ... ♖xd7
16 ♖d2 ♖d8
17 ♜fd1 ♕f6
18 e3 ♖e7
19 h3 h6
20 ♕xf6 ♖xf6
21 ♜c3 ♕f5
22 ♜dc1 ♜d8

23 ♖d4!

This is the only way for White to play for any advantage. Other moves enable Black to solve all his problems with an eventual ...♙e4.

23 ... ♖xd4
 24 ♗xd4 ♗xd4
 25 exd4 (D)



We have arrived at the pawn formation which interests us. White's advantage here is based on two factors. His bishop is superior and, of the two open files, the one that White's rooks control is the easier for penetration on to the seventh rank. These advantages are quite significant and Black must be careful.

25 ... ♗e7?

Faulty idea — in situations like this it's better to seek counterplay *before* your opponent strengthens his position. Thus, Black should have tried 25...♗e2!, with chances for survival. For example, after 26 ♖c7 ♗xa2 27 ♗xb7 a5 the future does not look too dark for Black. Remember: your opponent just loves to have an opportunity to improve his position

at his leisure, so don't give him this chance — defend *actively!*

26 g4! ♙e6

After 26...♙e4 27 f3 ♙g6 28 ♖f2 it becomes apparent that it's a lot easier for White to control the points of entry on the e-file than for his opponent to control the c7-square.

27 f4! f6

After 27...f5? 28 ♖e1 g6 29 gxf5 gxf5 Black's bishop would be just awful.

28 ♖f2 ♙f7
 29 ♙f3 ♖f8
 30 a4!

White consistently improves his position: he is already more active on the kingside and now he wants to grab space on the opposite wing.

30 ... ♗de8

Perhaps Black should have tried 30...g5, provoking White to show his hand on the kingside.

31 a5 ♗d7
 32 b4 ♗ed8

Black plays consistently, sticking to passive defence, but this allows his opponent to find ways to improve his position without any interruptions. As the d5-pawn is well protected, White moves his bishop to the diagonal where it will have better prospects.

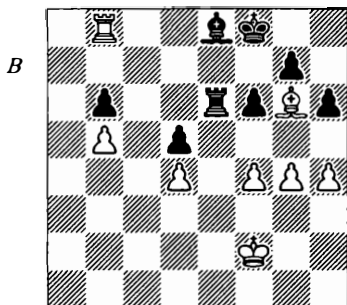
33 ♙e2!? ♙e8

Also after 33...♙g6 34 ♖c7 ♗e7 35 ♙b5! Black's position is lost, for example: 35...♗xc7 36 ♗xc7 ♗b8 37 f5 ♙f7 38 ♙d7 and White's pieces dominate the board.

34 ♙d3 ♗e7
 35 ♖c8

This spells disaster for Black.

35	...	♖xc8
36	♗xc8	♔f7
37	b5	b6
38	axb6	axb6
39	♖b8	♗e6
40	♕g6+!	♔f8
41	h4 (D)	



This picturesque position crowns White's strategy. The whole game is a good illustration of the superiority of White's light squared bishop over its counterpart in this pawn formation.

The finish was: 41...♗e7 42 h5 ♗e6 43 ♔f3 ♗e7 44 g5 1-0. Black resigned since on the further 44...fxg5 45 fxe5 hxg5 46 ♔g4 ♗e6 47 ♔xg5 White would eventually exchange the bishops and the rooks on e8 and penetrate to e5 with his king, thus winning the pawn endgame.

The open c-file, which served White so well in this game, can cause Black even more troubles if the c6-square in his camp has been weakened by ...b6. The following classical game is a must for everyone who plays with or against the isolani.

Botvinnik - Alekhine

AVRO 1938

1 ♖f3 d5 2 d4 ♖f6 3 c4 e6 4 ♗c3
c5 5 cxd5 ♗xd5 6 e3 ♗c6 7 ♕c4
cxd4 8 exd4 ♕e7 9 0-0 0-0 10 ♗e1
b6?

This is a typical mistake. If Black wants to fianchetto his light-squared bishop here, he should play 10... ♗xc3 11 bxc3 b6, with mutual chances.

11 ♗xd5!

The text closes the diagonal a8-h1, after which ...b6 loses any sense, leaving Black only with the weak c6-square.

11 ... exd5

12 ♕b5 ♕d7

After 12...♕b7 13 a3 ♗c8 14 ♕d2 ♕d6 15 ♗c1 White enjoyed a pleasant advantage in the game Ehlvest-Oll, Podolsk 1993, but perhaps he could have achieved an even bigger edge by playing 13 ♖a4 ♗c8 14 ♕f4.

13 ♖a4 ♗b8

This is a sad necessity, but 13... ♗c8 14 ♕f4 leads to an even worse situation, as Black would have serious problems protecting the a7-pawn.

14 ♕f4 ♕xb5

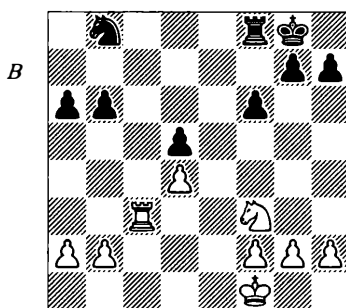
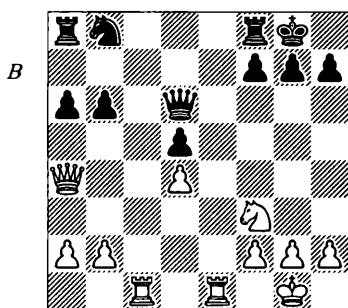
15 ♖xb5 a6

16 ♖a4 ♕d6

17 ♕xd6 ♖xd6

18 ♗a1 (D)

Annotating this game, Botvinnik wrote: "White controls both open files with a good chance of firmly holding one". Now we can see how much damage the move 10...b6 has done to



Black's position — if he were able to put his knight on c6, it would ease his problems. In practice, defence of such passive positions against a strong opponent is a thankless and usually a hopeless task, so it's much better to avoid them!

18 ... ♖a7
19 ♜c2!

Here is yet another valuable comment from Botvinnik — “The c-file is more important than the e-file, since the e7-square can be protected by the black king, while the c7-square will remain vulnerable.” Thus, White allows rooks to be exchanged on the e-file, but not on the c-file. We saw a similar positional motif in the game Larsen-Penrose.

19 ... ♖e7
20 ♖xe7 ♜xe7
21 ♜c7 ♜xc7
22 ♖xc7 f6!
23 ♜f1! ♖f7
24 ♖c8+ ♖f8
25 ♖c3 (D)

Black is almost in a zugzwang, as the moves like 25... ♖e8, 25... ♖d7 or 25... ♜f7 can (and will!) be met the

return of White's rook to the seventh rank (♖c3-c7). Meanwhile White wants to centralise his king and to relocate his knight to a more active position — perhaps to e3, from where it will attack the d5-pawn.

25...g5 26 ♖e1! h5 27 h4!? ♖d7

Also after the alternative — 27... ♜f7 28 ♖f3 g4 29 ♖e1 ♜e6 30 ♖d3 ♜f5 31 g3 — Black's problems are far from being over.

28 ♖c7 ♖f7 29 ♖f3 g4 30 ♖e1 f5 31 ♖d3 f4

Black had to advance his pawn to f4 in order to prevent ♖d3-f4, but now this pawn itself becomes a target.

32 f3! gxf3 33 gxf3 a5 34 a4 ♜f8 35 ♖c6 ♜e7 36 ♜f2 ♖f5 37 b3 ♜d8 38 ♜e2 ♖b8 39 ♖g6 ♜c7 40 ♖e5

White's position is absolutely winning and Botvinnik could already choose between different ways of capitalising on his advantage.

40... ♖a6 41 ♖g7+ ♜c8 42 ♖c6 ♖f6 43 ♖e7+ ♜b8 44 ♖xd5 ♖d6 45 ♖g5 ♖b4 46 ♖xb4 axb4 47 ♖xh5 ♖c6 48 ♖b5 ♜c7 49 ♖xb4 ♖h6 50 ♖b5 ♖xh4 51 ♜d3 1-0

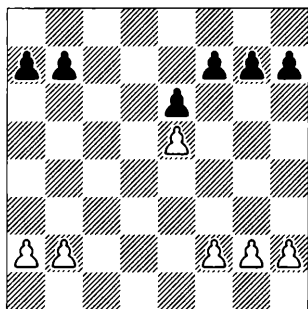
Again, before I move on to our next pawn formation, I'd like to give a short summary. Heading for the symmetrical pawn structure with pawns on d4 and d5 by exchanging on d5 can be beneficial for White if in the resulting pawn structure he will have at least some of the following advantages:

a) better control over the open e-file and possibilities to utilise the e5-square;

b) better control over the open c-file, particularly if Black has played ...b6;

c) superior minor piece — this usually happens when Black has his light-squared bishop (which is limited by the d5-pawn) on the board.

3. White's d-pawn shifts to e5.



The pawn structure featured above is a frequent guest in tournament practice. Of course, it arises not only from positions with the isolated d-pawn when the d4-pawn shifts to e5, but we will primarily examine this transformation.

The main feature of this pawn for-

mation is White's spatial advantage, due to the advanced position of his e-pawn.

Spatial advantage is a tricky thing. My students often point out to this factor while assessing various positions, but they frequently overestimate its importance — territorial advantage does not matter that much in positions which are greatly simplified.

I often illustrate this with the following comparison: imagine eight people in a room with the dimensions of 3m x 3m. Do they lack space? Certainly. Now imagine the same room, but with only two or three people in it. Obviously they do not have much problem with space.

Something similar can be said about chess positions. The chessboard is that room, while the pieces are its occupants. For example, in the diagram position Black might have serious problems if there are many pieces on the board, but if most pieces have been exchanged, Black is O.K.

Examining this position, we should also mention that the d6-square may become a valuable outpost for White, while the d5-square can be utilised by Black. Now let's see a game where all these factors played a very important role.

Kasparov - Piket

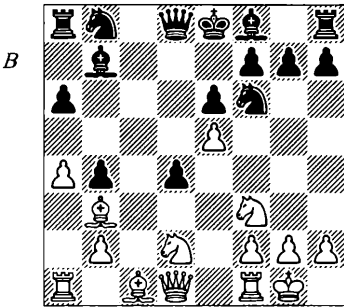
Fontys, Tilburg 1997

1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 e3 ♟f6 4 ♟xc4
e6 5 ♟f3 c5 6 0-0 a6

- 7 ♖b3 b5
 8 a4 b4
 9 ♖bd2

In the game Baburin-Ashley, Bermuda 1998, White obtained some advantage after 9 e4 ♖b7 10 e5 ♖e4! 11 ♖bd2 ♖xd2 12 ♖xd2 cxd4 13 ♖g5 ♖e7 14 ♖xe7 ♖xe7 15 ♖xd4 0-0 16 ♖c1.

- 9 ... ♖b7
 10 e4 cxd4
 11 e5 (D)



We have reached the pawn skeleton under examination. The e5-pawn gives White territorial advantage and may help him to organise an attack on the kingside or to occupy the d6-outpost. Though White is a pawn down, he can easily restore the balance later as the d4-pawn is weak.

- 11 ... ♖d5

It's always difficult to decide where to retreat with the knight in positions like this — to d5, occupying a nice square in the centre or to d7, putting pressure on the e5-pawn.

Black chose the latter route in the game Slipak-Spangenberg, Buenos Aires 1996 and won after 11...♖fd7

- 12 ♖c4 ♖c5 13 ♖g5 f6 14 exf6 gxf6
 15 ♖fe5 h5 16 ♖g6 ♖d5 17 ♖d6+
 ♖xd6 18 ♖xh8 ♖xb3 19 ♖xh5+
 ♖d7 20 ♖xf6 ♖xa1 21 ♖f7+ ♖e7
 22 ♖g6 ♖c6 23 ♖xa1 e5.

- 12 ♖c4 ♖c6
 13 ♖g5

Here Kasparov's second, GM Dokhoian, recommends 13 ♖xd4 ♖e7 14 ♖xc6 ♖xc6 15 ♖g4, where White is also better as his opponent has problems with his king.

- 13 ... ♖d7

Black could not get rid of the e5-pawn by playing 13...f6?, as then after 14 exf6 gxf6 15 ♖e1! White's attack is devastating, for example: 15...fxg5 16 ♖xe6+ ♖d7 17 ♖xc6 ♖xc6 18 ♖ce5+ ♖c7 19 ♖xc6 ♖xc6 20 ♖xd4+ ♖b6 21 a5+ ♖b7 22 ♖e6, winning.

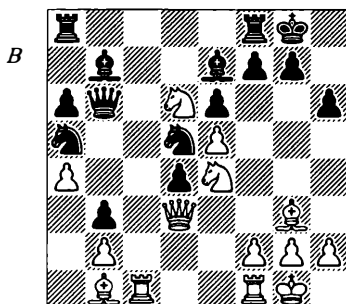
- 14 ♖c1 h6
 15 ♖h4 ♖c5
 16 ♖fd2! 0-0
 17 ♖e4 ♖e7
 18 ♖g3!

Having a spatial advantage, White does not want to trade off pieces. The text move gives extra support to the e5-pawn.

- 18 ... ♖d8
 19 ♖cd6 ♖a5

Effectively this is the only move, as the alternative try — 19...♖b6 — loses after 20 ♖xd5! exd5 21 ♖f6+! gxf6 22 ♖f5 fxe5 23 ♖g4+ ♖g5 24 ♖xh6+ ♖h7 25 ♖xg5.

- 20 ♖c2! b3
 21 ♖b1esstou ♖b6.com
 22 ♖d3 (D)



White's spatial advantage has helped him to get a very dangerous attack against the enemy king. Black's next few moves are forced.

22	...	g6	-
23	♖c5	♙c8	
24	h4!	♖c6	
25	a5!		

This pawn sacrifice completely disorganises Black's forces — it's interesting to see how this action on the queenside intensifies White's attack on the opposite wing.

25	...	♙xa5
26	♖xf7!	♗xf7
27	♙xg6+	♘f8
28	♖xe6+	♙xe6
29	♗xc6!+-	♙d7

White is also winning after 29... ♖c7 30 ♙xh6+ ♗e8 31 ♗xe6 ♖xe6 32 ♙xe6.

30 ♙xh6+ 1-0

Black resigned in view of 30... ♗e8 31 e6 ♙xc6 32 exf7+ ♗d7 33 ♙f5+.

This game is a fine example of how the pawn formation that we are examining favours White if there are many pieces still left on the board. Black should bear this in mind when

he considers transforming the pawn formation with the isolated d4-pawn by exchanging pieces on e5. Here is an illustration of this idea:

Balashov - Yandemirov
Russian Cup, Moscow 1998

1 e4 c6 2 c4 d5 3 exd5 cxd5 4 cxd5 ♖f6 5 ♖c3 ♖xd5 6 ♖f3 ♖c6 7 ♙b5 e6 8 0-0 ♙e7 9 d4 0-0 10 ♗e1 ♙d7

Also possible is 10... ♖f6. Then after 11 ♙f4!? ♖b4 12 ♖e5 a6 13 ♙e2 ♖bd5 14 ♙g3 ♖xc3 15 bxc3 ♖e4 16 ♙d3 ♖xg3 17 hxg3 ♙c7 18 a4 White seized the initiative in the game Korchnoi-Serper, Wcht Lucerne 1993.

11 ♙d3 ♙f6
12 ♙e4 ♗e8?!

Annotating this game in *Shakhmaty v Rossii* ('Chess in Russia') No. 3/1998, GM Balashov criticised the text move and recommended 12... ♖ce7 with a further ... ♙c6 instead. This would be a logical attempt to use the extra tempo which Black has here compared to the usual position arising from the Panov Attack of the Caro-Kann Defence and the Semi-Tarrasch Defence.

Black has this extra move (... ♙d7) because on its way to e4 White's bishop made a short visit to b5. Balashov also made a valuable point that in this pawn structure Black's rook is better off on f8, where it over-protects the f7-pawn.

13 ♙d3!

After 13 ♖xd5 exd5 14 ♙xd5
♜xe1+ 15 ♜xe1 ♙g4!? Black is fine.

13 ... h6?

Black should have played 13...g6
instead, not weakening the b1-h7 di-
agonal.

14 ♖e5! ♖db4?!

It was better to play 14...♜c8.
Then White would probably play 15
♙d2!?, mobilising all his forces and
keeping good prospects for attack.

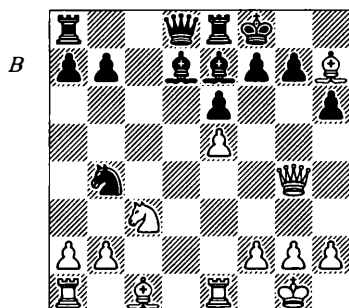
15 ♙h7+ ♖f8

16 ♜e4 ♖xe5?

Here the exchange on e5 only
helps White's attack as there are
many pieces on the board. Therefore
the pawn formation that now arises
favours White. Black had to play
16...♜c8, though even then his posi-
tion would be difficult.

17 dxе5 ♙e7

18 ♜g4 (D)



The e5-pawn divides the board
into two parts, making White's attack
on the kingside irresistible. As White
threatens to play 19 ♙xh6, Black's
next move is forced:

18 ... g5

19 h4! ♙c6

20 hxg5 hxg5

21 ♜d1!+-

This is even better than winning a
pawn after 21 ♙xg5 ♙xg5 22
♜xb4+ ♖g7 23 ♙e4.

The end was: 21...♜a5 22 ♙xg5
♙xg5 23 ♜xg5 ♜ed8 24 a3 ♖d5
25 ♖e4 ♜a4 26 b3 ♜xb3 27 ♖d6
♙e8 28 ♜ab1 ♜a4 29 ♜xd5 1-0.

In this game Black's decision to
change the pawn structure by ex-
changing on e5 was wrong, as in the
resulting pawn formation his oppo-
nent quickly obtained an attack on the
kingside. Now let's see a game where
altering the pawn skeleton was a corr-
ect idea.

Djurhuus - Baburin

Skei Masters, Gausdal 1993

1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 e3 ♖f6 4 ♙xc4
e6 5 ♖f3 c5 6 ♜e2 cxd4 7 exd4 ♙e7
8 ♖c3 a6 9 ♙g5 0-0 10 0-0 b5 11
♙b3 ♙b7

12 ♜fe1

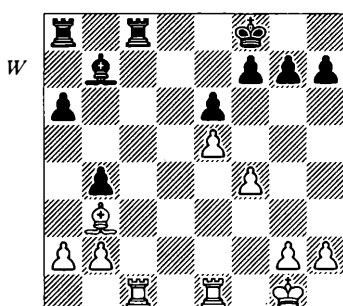
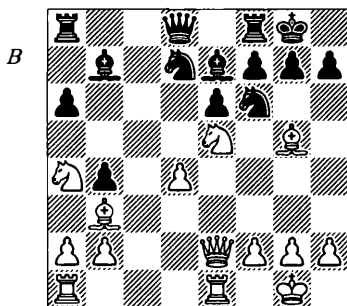
We saw this variation while ex-
amining the game Boleslavsky-
Kotov, which went 12...♖c6 13
♜ad1 ♖a5? 14 d5! and White ob-
tained a decisive advantage. Black's
next move is designed to discourage
the d4-d5 break.

12 ... b4

13 ♖a4 ♖bd7

After 13...♙d5? 14 ♙xf6! ♙xf6
15 ♙xd5 exd5 16 ♜c2! Black ran
into serious problems in Levenfish-
Rauzer, 10th USSR Ch, Tbilisi 1937.

14 ♖e5 (D)



As White now threatens to strike on f7, Black is practically forced to take on e5. Fortunately, the arising pawn formation is quite acceptable to him, as he can exchange a few pieces later on. It also helps Black that the a4-knight is away from both the d6-square and the kingside.

- 14 ... ♖xe5
15 dxe5 ♗d7

It's important to limit the a4-knight — after 15... ♗d5?! 16 ♗c5 White would be better.

- 16 ♗xe7

More interesting here is 16 ♗f4!?, keeping more pieces on the board.

- 16 ... ♖xe7
17 ♖e3 ♗c6
18 ♖ac1 ♖f8
19 ♗b6

More ambitious would be 19 ♖ed1 ♗xa4 20 ♗xa4 ♗c5 21 ♗c2, although after the further 21... ♖a7, followed by ... ♖ac7, Black should be O.K.

- 19 ... ♗xb6
20 ♖xb6 ♖b7
21 ♖xb7 ♗xb7
22 f4 ♖f8 (D)

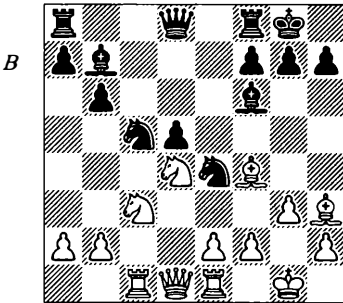
Referring to my example with that 'imaginary room', we can say that here Black no longer has problems, since so many occupants have left the room! A draw resulted after 23 ♖f2 ♖e7 24 g3 a5 25 ♖ed1 a4 26 ♖xc8 ♗xc8 27 ♗c4 f6 28 ♖d6 fxe5 29 fxe5 ♖a5 30 ♖b6 ♖xe5 31 ♖xb4 ♗d7 32 ♗d3 h6 33 h4 g5 34 hxg5 hxg5 35 ♗c2 ♖c5 36 ♗d1 ♗c6 37 ♖e3 ♖e5+ 38 ♖f2 ♖f5+ 39 ♖e1 ♖e5+ 40 ♖f2 ♖f5+ ½-½.

Now let us see how a shift to this particular pawn formation can be used as a method of exploiting the drawbacks of the isolated d-pawn.

Anand - Adams
Wijk aan Zee 1996

1 d4 ♗f6 2 ♗f3 e6 3 c4 b6 4 g3 ♗b7
5 ♗g2 ♗e7 6 0-0 0-0 7 ♖e1 d5 8
cxd5 exd5 9 ♗c3 ♗a6 10 ♗f4 c5
11 ♖c1 ♗e4 12 dxc5 ♗axc5 13
♗d4 ♗f6 14 ♗h3! (D)

White would also have better chances in the position arising after 14 b4 ♗xc3 15 ♖xc3 ♗e6 16 ♗xe6 fxe6 17 ♖c7 ♖f7 18 ♖xf7 ♖xf7 19



e4!. However, the text move is even stronger — White simply takes control over the important squares on the h3-c8 diagonal, gradually improving his position.

14 ... ♖g5?!

In *ChessBase Magazine*, I criticised this move, recommending 14...♖e8 instead, but did not provide any variations. Analysing the same game, GM Dautov paid more attention to the move 14...♖e8, but gave it a question mark on account of the following variation: 15 ♜cb5 ♜g5 16 ♙g2 ♙xd4 17 ♜xd4 ♜ge6 18 ♙e3 and White is better.

In this line he also mentioned the move 15...♖e7, stating that then after 16 b4 ♜e6 17 ♜xe6 fxe6 18 ♜c7 White is winning. However, this is incorrect, since after the further 18...e5! it is Black who is better.

Without disagreeing that White still has the better chances even after 14...♖e8, I still think that it is a better move than the text.

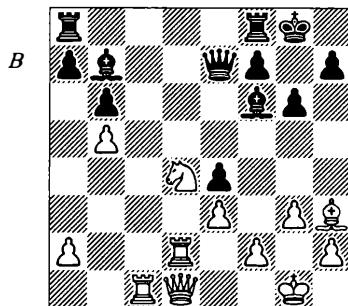
15 ♙xg5 ♙xg5
 16 e3 ♙f6
 17 ♖e2! g6

18 b4! ♜e4
 19 ♜xe4!?

A very interesting approach — White alters the pawn structure, hoping that the resulting pawn formation will be favourable for him, thanks to the greater activity of his pieces.

Also interesting is 19 ♖ec2!? with a further ♜cb5, as recommended by Dautov.

19 ... dxe4
 20 ♖d2 ♖e7
 21 b5! (D)



This is the point of White's previous play — he turns the c6-square into an outpost, threatening to plant his knight there and thus forcing Black's reply.

21 ... ♙xd4
 22 ♖xd4 ♙c8

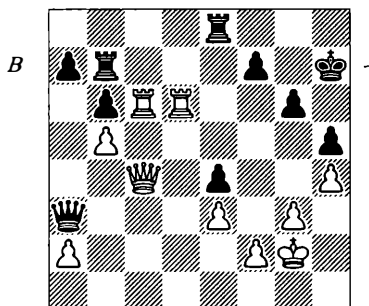
Also after 22...♖fd8 23 ♙d7! White stands better.

23 ♙d7! ♙d7
 24 ♖xd7 ♖a3
 25 ♖c2 ♖a4
 26 ♖d5 ♖ae8

The rook endgame arising after

26...♖ac8 27 ♖xc8 ♗xd1+ 28 ♖xd1
 ♖xc8 29 ♖d7 ♖a8 30 a4 is difficult
 for Black. Perhaps he should have
 played 26...a6!?, trying to reduce the
 material.

27	h4	h5
28	♖g2	♖e6
29	♗e2	♗a3
30	♖c7	♖e7
31	♖c6	♖fe8
32	♗c4	♖h7
33	♖d2	♖b7
34	♖dd6 (D)	



White has a significant advantage thanks to the dominant positions of his pieces. Here the e4-pawn causes its possessor only troubles.

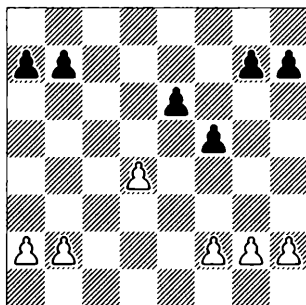
Anand masterfully combined the pressure on this pawn with threats against the a7-pawn and the enemy king: 34...♗b2 35 a4 ♖e5 36 ♖d5 ♖xd5 37 ♗xd5 ♖e7 38 ♗d6! ♖e6 39 ♗d8! ♗e5 40 ♖c7 ♖g7 41 ♖xa7 ♖d6 42 ♗e7 ♗d5 43 ♖a8 ♖d7 44 ♗f8+ ♖f6 45 ♖e8 1-0.

With this game I'd like to finish our study of this pawn formation. If

you consider transforming to this pawn formation from positions with the isolani, you may find the following hint useful:

If there are plenty of pieces on the board, the side having the more advanced e-pawn usually has better chances. If the board is more or less deserted, then the advanced e-pawn does not offer much of an advantage and may become a weakness itself.

4) Black plays ...f5, blocking the b1-h7 diagonal, but making his e6-pawn backward.



The pawn skeleton featured here is fairly common and merits a detailed discussion.

About 15 years ago, a young and inexperienced candidate master had an isolani playing against a stronger opponent who advanced his pawn to f5. 'Great!' — thought White — 'Black has erred badly, weakening the e5-square and making his e6-pawn backward, so I shall now win.'

Alas, he failed to understand the fact that, by playing ...f5, Black limited the scope of White's light-squared bishop, which was then on b1. Needless to say, having wrong ideas about the game, White soon lost.

That young candidate master was yours truly; my opponent was Yuri Yakovich, now also a GM. I don't remember the rest of that game and unfortunately I cannot find its score-sheet, but I certainly learned quite a lot from that experience and never again was I so dogmatic about moves like ...f5.

Here comes some proof.

I. Sokolov - Baburin
New York open 1997

1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 e3 e6 4 $\text{\textcircled{e}}$ xc4 c5
5 $\text{\textcircled{f}}$ 3 a6 6 $\text{\textcircled{e}}$ 2 b5

The text allows Black to avoid the Furman Variation of the Queen's Gambit Accepted, which could arise after 6... $\text{\textcircled{f}}$ 6 7 dxc5 $\text{\textcircled{e}}$ xc5.

7 $\text{\textcircled{e}}$ d3

The alternative — 7 $\text{\textcircled{e}}$ b3 — leads to one of the main positions of the QGA after 7... $\text{\textcircled{e}}$ b7 8 0-0 $\text{\textcircled{f}}$ 6 9 $\text{\textcircled{c}}$ 3 $\text{\textcircled{b}}$ d7. With the text White still hopes to transpose into the Furman Variation, but Black deprives him a chance to play dxc5:

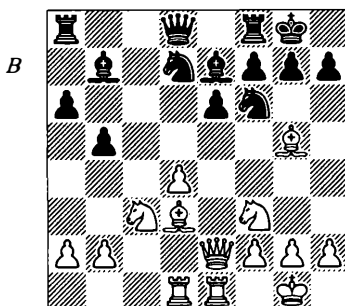
7 ... cxd4

8 exd4

In the game Krasenkov-Baburin, 'Politiken' Cup, Copenhagen 1996, Black obtained an advantage after 8

$\text{\textcircled{d}}$ xd4 $\text{\textcircled{f}}$ 6 9 0-0?! e5! 10 $\text{\textcircled{b}}$ 3 e4
11 $\text{\textcircled{c}}$ 2 $\text{\textcircled{d}}$ 6 12 f4 exf3 13 gxf3 0-0
14 $\text{\textcircled{g}}$ 2 $\text{\textcircled{c}}$ 6. If White hopes to get any edge, he must recapture on d4 with a pawn.

8	...	$\text{\textcircled{f}}$ 6
9	0-0	$\text{\textcircled{e}}$ 7
10	$\text{\textcircled{e}}$ g5	$\text{\textcircled{b}}$ 7
11	$\text{\textcircled{c}}$ 3	0-0
12	$\text{\textcircled{a}}$ d1	$\text{\textcircled{b}}$ d7
13	$\text{\textcircled{f}}$ e1 (D)	



13 ... $\text{\textcircled{b}}$ 6

Black had to prevent the d4-d5 break. The careless move 13... $\text{\textcircled{c}}$ 8? caused Black a lot of trouble in the game N.Ristić-Baburin, Groningen open 1995, after 14 d5! $\text{\textcircled{e}}$ xd5 15 $\text{\textcircled{d}}$ xd5 $\text{\textcircled{d}}$ xd5 16 $\text{\textcircled{e}}$ xh7+ $\text{\textcircled{c}}$ xh7 17 $\text{\textcircled{d}}$ xd5! $\text{\textcircled{c}}$ g8 18 $\text{\textcircled{d}}$ 3 exd5 19 $\text{\textcircled{e}}$ xe7 $\text{\textcircled{c}}$ 5 20 $\text{\textcircled{d}}$ 1. Then I found a good chance to complicate the issue by playing 20... $\text{\textcircled{b}}$ 6!? 21 $\text{\textcircled{e}}$ xf8 $\text{\textcircled{d}}$ e4. White avoided the most critical line — 22 $\text{\textcircled{e}}$ a3 $\text{\textcircled{d}}$ xf2+ 23 $\text{\textcircled{c}}$ h1 $\text{\textcircled{c}}$ c2 24 $\text{\textcircled{g}}$ 1 a5 — and after 22 $\text{\textcircled{f}}$ 1 $\text{\textcircled{c}}$ xf8 23 $\text{\textcircled{d}}$ e5 $\text{\textcircled{f}}$ 6 24 h3 g6 25 $\text{\textcircled{c}}$ h2 $\text{\textcircled{c}}$ g7 Black solved his problems.

Apart from the text Black can also play 13...b4!?. After the game, Sokolov mentioned that he had nonetheless considered meeting this with 14 d5. Alas, nothing is new and this had already occurred in the game Franco-Kharlov, Canete 1994, where Black obtained an advantage after the further 14...bxc3 15 dxe6 ♖xf3 16 gxf3 ♖a5 17 ♙xf6 ♙xf6 18 exd7 cxb2 19 ♖e4 g6.

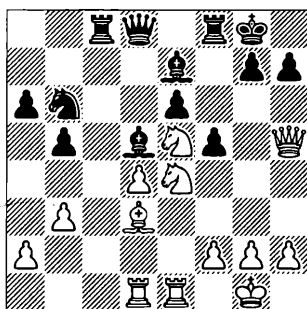
14 ♖e5 ♖c8
 15 ♙xf6 ♙xf6
 16 ♖e4

White tries to utilise the c5-square, but Black has enough resources to deal with this plan.

16 ... ♙d5!

Black moves the bishop away from the possible ♖e4-c5 and targets the a2-pawn.

17 b3 ♙e7
 18 ♖h5 f5!? (D)



This move is more ambitious than 18...g6 19 ♖h6 ♙xe4 20 ♙xe4 ♙g5 21 ♖h3 ♖d5, which is also good for Black. Though the text turns the e6-pawn into a backward one and gives

White an outpost on e5, it is quite sound as it limits the scope of White's bishop. Meanwhile the e6-pawn is not really weak and the e5-knight can be chased away or exchanged.

19 ♖g3 ♖d7
 20 ♖e2 ♖xe5

Probably it was better to play 20...♙b4!? 21 ♖f1 ♙d6, with some advantage for Black.

21 dxe5 ♙b4
 22 ♖f1 ♖c7
 23 ♖h4

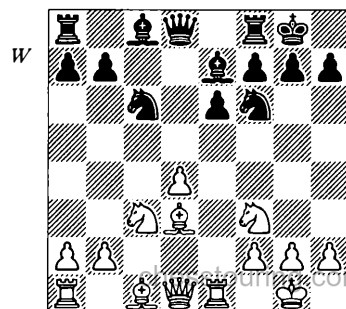
Of course, it would be wrong to weaken all the diagonals by playing 23 f4?. The text maintains the balance.

23 ... ♙c5
 24 ♖g3 ♖f8 ½-½

The following game illustrates how White should react to ...f5.

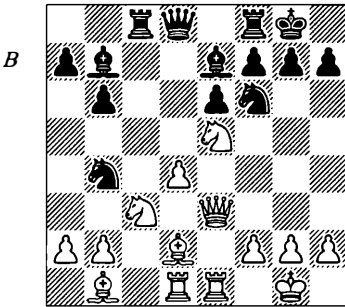
T.Petrosian - Najdorf
 Moscow 1967

1 c4 ♖f6 2 ♖c3 e6 3 ♖f3 d5 4 d4 c5 5 cxd5 ♖xd5 6 e3 ♖c6 7 ♙d3 ♙e7 8 0-0 cxd4 9 exd4 0-0 10 ♖e1 ♖f6 (D)



We came across this position on page 48, while examining the game Keene-Miles, Hastings 1975/76. Both Keene and Petrosian chose 11 ♖g5, but it's worth mentioning that 11 a3 b6 12 ♙c2 is more common, building a battery on the b1–h7 diagonal.

- | | | |
|----|------|-----|
| 11 | ♙g5 | b6 |
| 12 | ♞e2 | ♙b7 |
| 13 | ♞ad1 | ♞b4 |
| 14 | ♙b1 | ♞c8 |
| 15 | ♞e5 | ♞f6 |
- 15... ♞bd5 was worth considering.
- | | | |
|----|----------|-----|
| 16 | ♙d2 | ♞f6 |
| 17 | ♞e3! (D) | |



This motif — the queen shift to the kingside — should be familiar to us by now.

- | | | |
|----|-----|--------|
| 17 | ... | ♞fd5?! |
| 18 | ♞h3 | f5 |

This move was forced. Black could no longer defend with 18... ♞f6?, since after 19 ♙g5 h6 20 ♙xh6! gxh6 21 ♞xh6 White's attack is devastating.

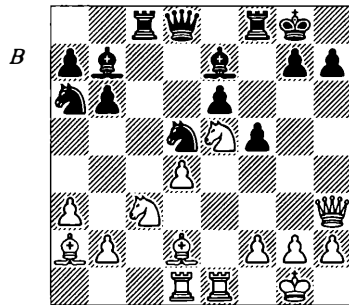
After 18...f5 White has to change his plan — he needs to take advan-

tage of the drawbacks of the advance of Black's f-pawn. First of all White needs to activate his bishop, relocating it to another diagonal.

- | | | |
|----|-----|-----|
| 19 | a3! | ♞a6 |
|----|-----|-----|

This is better than 19... ♞c6 20 ♞xc6 ♞xc6 21 ♙a2, where White's advantage is unquestionable.

- | | |
|----|----------|
| 20 | ♙a2! (D) |
|----|----------|



This is how White should play in such positions — once the b1–h7 diagonal has been closed for your bishop, relocate it on to the neighbouring diagonal!

- | | | |
|----|-----|------|
| 20 | ... | ♞ac7 |
| 21 | ♞e2 | ♙g5 |

Black should not pursue the exchange of the dark-squared bishops — instead 21... ♙f6 was worth considering. As then 22 ♞f4 ♞xf4 23 ♙xf4 ♞d5 is fine for Black, White should prefer 22 ♞c1!?

- | | | |
|----|------|--------|
| 22 | ♞d3 | ♙xd2?! |
| 23 | ♞xd2 | ♞e8 |
| 24 | ♞d3! | |

A fine idea — the knight *looked* nice on e5, but it did not do much there and yet it acted as a screen for

the e6-pawn. After the text this pawn will come under pressure soon.

24 ... g5

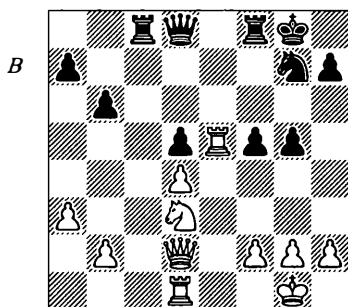
This move prevents ♖d3-f4, but it seriously weakens Black's position.

25 ♖c3! ♖g7

26 ♖xd5 ♙xd5

27 ♙xd5 exd5

28 ♖e5 (D)

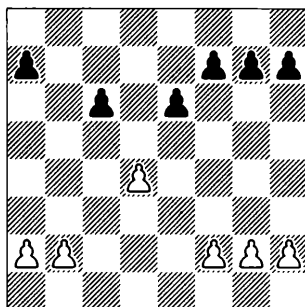


White's strategy has succeeded — his advantage can be evaluated as almost decisive: 28...a5 29 ♖de1 f4 30 h4! h6 31 hxg5 hxg5 32 ♙e2! f3 33 ♙e3 fxg2 34 ♖xg5 ♖e8 35 ♖e5 1-0.

Summing up what we can learn from these games, we can state the following:

The move ...f5 can be a very effective way to release the pressure on Black's kingside, particularly along the b1-h7 diagonal. When this move has been played, the possessor of the isolani should consider relocating his light-squared bishop onto the a2-g8 diagonal, where it can attack the newly weakened e6-pawn.

5. Black's b-pawn shifts to c6, where it becomes isolated.



The pawn formation featured on this diagram is quite important, as it often occurs in positions with the isolated d-pawn. For example, it could happen in the game Korchnoi-Karpov, Merano Wch (9) 1981, which we examined. In that game it was very important that the pawn formation arising after the possible 19 ♖xc6 bxc6! would actually favour Black. We also saw such a pawn skeleton in the game Pupols-Baburin (page 136).

Let's outline the results of the shift of Black's b7-pawn to c6:

a) Black has greater control over the d5-square and the d-pawn is practically immobilised;

b) Black might be able to use the semi-open b-file;

c) The c6-pawn is isolated and can be weak, being placed on the semi-open c-file;

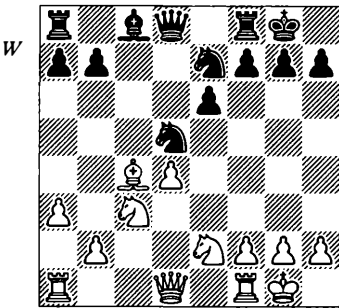
d) The c5-square might become an outpost for White's pieces.

Such a shift has both advantages

and drawbacks. A general rule is that in fairly simplified positions the c6-pawn causes Black fewer troubles than the d4-pawn causes to White. Let's examine such a case.

Stanec - Beliavsky
Graz open 1996

1 c4 e6 2 d4 ♘f6 3 ♖c3 ♗b4 4 e3
 c5 5 ♗d3 ♘c6 6 ♘ge2 cxd4 7
 exd4 d5 8 0-0 dxc4 9 ♗xc4 0-0
 10 ♗g5 ♗e7 11 a3 ♘d5 12 ♗xe7
 ♘cxe7 (D)



This line does not yield White any advantage and the position can be evaluated as equal. Annotating this game in the magazine *64-Shakhmatnoye Obozreniye* ('64-Chess Review') No. 7 of 1996, GM Beliavsky wrote that around that time White offered a draw. Although Beliavsky evaluated the position as equal, he decided to play on, fighting for the first place in the tournament. It's interesting to see how a super-GM outplays his opponent in this deceptively simple position.

13 ♘xd5

This move shows that White is anxious to break the blockade of the d5-square. The game Rubinetti-Zarnicki, Buenos Aires 1992, went to full equality after 13 ♖d3 b6 14 ♗ad1 ♗b7 15 ♗a2 ♘g6 16 ♖g3 ♖c7 17 ♘xd5 ♖xg3 18 hxg3 ♗xd5 19 ♗xd5 exd5 20 ♘c3 ♗fd8, but Black could do better in that game — for example 15... ♗c8 was worth considering. I think that the position after 12... ♘cxe7 is already slightly better for Black. His plan is simple (...b6 followed by ...♗b7), while White has yet to come up with a suitable plan.

I think that instead of 12 ♗xe7 White should have played 12 ♗xd5!? ♗xg5 13 ♗xc6 bxc6 14 ♖c2, where his two knights are not inferior to Black's bishop pair.

13 ... ♘xd5
 14 ♖b3

White wants to change the existing pawn formation by taking on d5 or by managing the d4-d5 break; the play revolves around these ideas:

14 ... ♘b6!
 15 ♗fd1 ♗d7
 16 ♘c3 ♗c8
 17 ♗b5 ♗c7!

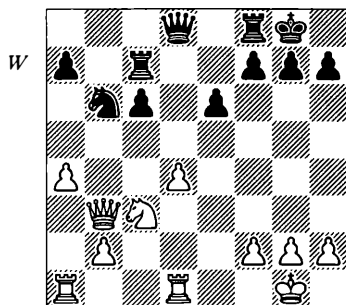
This is a very useful move — if White trades the bishops, Black will recapture with the rook, putting pressure on the d4-pawn and preventing d4-d5.

18 a4

White could get rid of the isolani by playing 18 d5?!, but the position

arising after 18...exd5 19 ♖xd5 ♙e6
20 ♖xc7 ♙xb3 21 ♜xd8 ♜xd8
would be very dangerous for White,
whose knight is stuck on c7.

18 ... ♙c6
19 ♙xc6 bxc6! (D)



The text prevents the simplifying thrust d4-d5 and gives Black better chances, as the d4-pawn might be more vulnerable than the c6-pawn.

20 ♖e4?!

Beliavsky criticised this move, suggesting 20 ♜ac1 instead, with the idea to meet 20...♜d7 with 21 ♖e2, putting pressure on the c6-pawn.

I agree that the text is not quite sound, as it leaves the d4-pawn under-protected. But I believe that even after 20 ♜ac1 Black's chances would be better, if instead of 20...♜d7 he plays 20...♖c8!?, relocating his knight to e7 with further play against the d4-pawn and on the semi-open b-file.

20 ... ♜d7
21 a5?

This is yet another mistake — Black's knight had little to do on b6

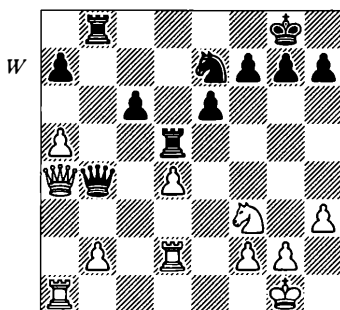
and therefore there was no need to chase it away. Not only is the text pointless; it actually worsens White's position, as his pawn structure on the queenside becomes more static. Instead of the a-pawn advance, White should have tried to play b2-b4-b5.

21 ... ♖c8
22 ♙a4

In his notes, Beliavsky recommended 22 ♙c4 with a further b2-b4, which would improve White's pawn configuration.

Yet I doubt that after 22...♖e7 White's problems would be easier than in the game — although b2-b4 is possible, to manage b4-b5 will be difficult. At the same time White's b-pawn will be just as vulnerable on b4 as on b2.

22 ... ♖e7
23 ♖g5 ♜d5
24 ♖f3 ♙d6
25 h3 ♜b8
26 ♜d2 ♙b4! (D)



Black's position is strategically winning. The text forces the exchange of the queens, after which White's

pawn weaknesses become even more apparent.

27 ♖xb4 ♜xb4
 28 ♜c2 f6
 29 a6 ♔f7
 30 ♜e1 h5!?

Black gains space on the kingside and creates possibilities of future play with ...g7-g5-g4, with an indirect attack against the d4-pawn.

31 h4 ♜d6
 32 g3 ♜f5
 33 ♔g2 ♔e7

The difference in the activity of the kings is crucial here. When Black's king comes to protect the c6-pawn, his rooks will be free to attack his opponent's weak pawns on d4, b2 and a5.

34 ♜ec1 ♔d7
 35 ♜a1 ♜xd4+

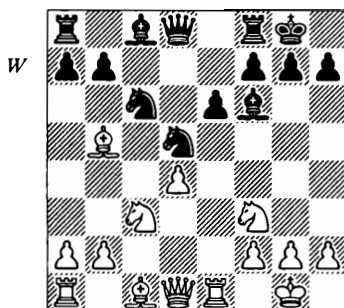
The game concluded: 36 ♜xd4 ♜xd4 37 ♜a5 ♜d5 38 ♜a3 e5 39 ♜f3 ♜b6 40 ♜a3 ♔c7 41 ♔f3 ♜db5 42 ♜a2 ♜b3+ 43 ♔e2 ♜6b4 0-1.

In this game we saw the benefits which the c6-pawn can bring to its possessor. However, there are downsides too. They become particularly apparent when, with such a pawn structure, Black is left with an inactive light-squared bishop. Here is an example of this scenario.

Helgi Olafsson - Th. Ernst
Reykjavik Z 1995

1 c4 c5 2 ♜f3 ♜c6 3 e3 ♜f6 4 ♜c3 e6 5 d4 d5 6 cxd5 ♜xd5 7

♜b5 cxd4 8 exd4 ♜e7 9 0-0 0-0
 10 ♜e1 ♜f6 (D)



We already came across this line while analysing the games Vaganian-Serper (p. 179) and Balashov-Yandemirov (p. 186). In both of these games 10...♜d7 was played, avoiding the pawn structure which Black allowed in this game.

11 ♜xc6!

This is very interesting — White does not think about break in the centre or about kingside attack. Instead he transforms the pawn skeleton, hoping that the resulting pawn structure will favour him.

11 ... bxc6

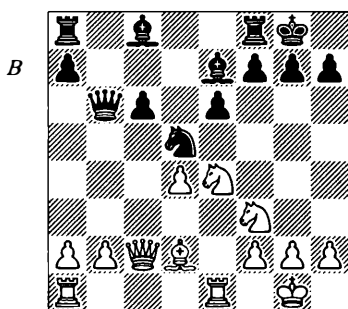
Also after 11...♜xc3 12 bxc3 bxc6 13 ♖a4 White's chances are better — Black's light-squared bishop is inactive, which causes him troubles.

12 ♜e4

Now White's plan, which he began with 11 ♜xc6, becomes clear. He wants to occupy the c5- and e5-squares with his knights, thus dominating the centre. If this plan succeeds, Black's light-squared

bishop will become a miserable creature.

12 ... ♖e7
13 ♖d2 ♜b6
14 ♜c2 (D)



White's plan shapes up nicely. One of the most attractive features of the plan begun with 11 ♖c6! is that it is a lot easier to play for White here. Indeed, White's play develops itself — moves like ♖a1, ♖c5 and ♖e5 can be played in one order or another without much thinking. Yet, for Black it's much more difficult to find an adequate counter-plan. Not surprisingly such thankless positions often result in defender's defeat.

14 ... ♖d7
15 ♖e5 ♜f8
16 ♖c4

Perhaps 16 ♖c5, with total domination in the centre, would be even better.

16 ... ♜b8

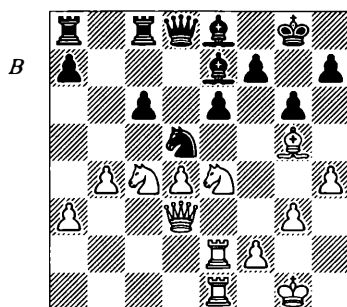
Perhaps Black should have tried 16... ♜xd4 17 ♖a5 a6 18 ♖ad1 ♜a7 19 ♖xd8 ♜xd8, changing the character of the position.

17 ♖ad1 ♜c8

18 ♖c5 ♖e8
19 a3

White continues to build up his position and there is little Black can do about it. If Black gets rid of one of the annoying knights by playing 19... ♖xc5, after 20 dxc5 the other one would soon establish itself on the newly-created outpost at d6.

19... ♜b5 20 b4 ♜b8 21 ♖e4!
♜c7 22 ♖de1 ♜d8 23 ♜d3 g6 24 g3 ♖f6 25 ♖4e2 ♖d5 26 h4!? ♖f6 27 ♖e4 ♖e7 28 ♖g5! (D)



GM Olafsson masterfully exploits his advantage. White has established firm control in the centre and on the queenside, but to make further progress on those fronts is difficult. So, he begins to create some play on the kingside (24 g3, 26 h4!?) in attempt to soften up Black's position there.

If Black exchanges the bishops, the dark squares in his camp will be very weak. Yet Black also weakens his position when he avoids this exchange.

28 ...chesstouf6g.com
29 ♖h6 ♖f7

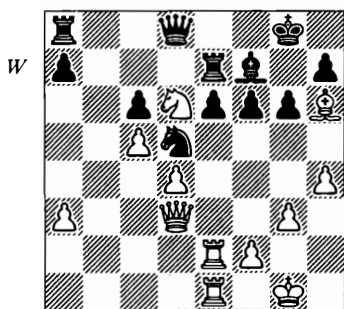
30 ♖c5 ♙xc5
31 bxc5!

This is better than 31 dxc5 e5, which might bring Black some relief.

31 ... ♖c7
32 ♖d6

White's excellent strategy brings its fruits — he has acquired an outpost on d6 and has clear play against the e6-pawn.

32 ... ♖e7 (D)



33 ♙d2

Here White could try 33 ♖a6!? ♖d7 (33... ♖c3 34 ♖c2 ♖b5 won't solve Black's problems either after a further 35 ♖xb5 cxb5 36 c6) 34 ♖b2 or 33 ♖f3!?, with the idea to keep an eye on the f6-pawn and to occupy the b-file later. In the latter line, Black cannot contest that file, as 33... ♖b8?! 34 ♙f4! ♖xf4 35 ♖xf4 leads to a very difficult position for him.

33 ... ♖b8
34 ♖b1 ♖xb1+
35 ♖xb1 ♖c7
36 a4 ♖d7
37 ♙e1!

White wants to take advantage of the open file by playing ♖e2-b2-b7.

37 ... ♖xd6

This is practically forced, as otherwise the invasion along the b-file will decide.

38 cxd6 ♖xd6
39 ♖b7

Black's position is lost, as the exchange sacrifice has not solved one of his major problems — the inefficiency of his bishop.

The end was: 39... ♖a3 40 ♖b8+ ♖g7 41 ♖b2 ♖xa4 42 ♖b7 ♖d1 43 ♖xa7 ♖xe1+ 44 ♖g2 ♖e3+ 45 ♖f3 ♖f5 46 ♖xf7+ ♖g8 47 ♖xf6 ♖h1+ 48 ♖e2 ♖e4+ 49 ♖d2 ♖xd4+ 50 ♖xd4 ♖xd4 51 ♖f4 e5 52 ♖e4 ♖f7 53 ♖d3 ♖f6 54 f4 ♖f5 55 g4 ♖xh4 56 ♖xe5 1-0.

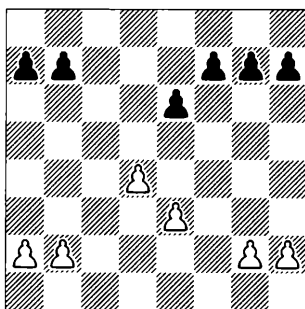
I think that these two games illustrate this particular pawn formation quite well. The following observation, which I made analysing similar positions, might be of some practical value:

1. When Black shifts his b-pawn to c6 after exchanging his *bishop* on c6, the resulting pawn formation is usually quite acceptable for him and may in fact be preferable for Black.

2. If such a shift occurs after exchanging Black's *knight* on c6, and afterwards Black is left with his light-squared bishop locked inside his pawn chain, White's prospects are usually superior. The same ideas apply when we reverse the colours.

This is just an general observation, so please do not rely on it in every case — take it only as a guideline.

6. White's f-pawn shifts to e3, forming the e3-d4 pawn couple.



This schematic diagram introduces yet another quite common and very important pawn structure.

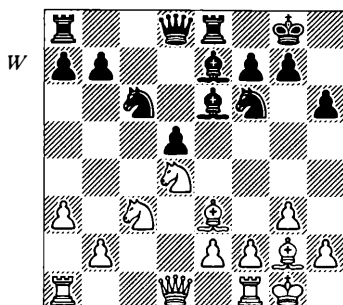
Usually it occurs when Black captures the e3-bishop with his knight. This gives the d4-pawn good protection, which may help White to play along the c-file or on the kingside and along the f-file.

Black's chances are usually related to a further attack on White's pawn centre with ...e5.

This pawn formation occurs particularly often (with colours reversed) in the Tarrasch Defence to the Queen's Gambit and I would like to illustrate it with just one, very instructive, game played with that opening:

Smyslov - Kasparov *Vilnius Ct (12) 1984*

1 d4 d5 2 ♘f3 c5 3 c4 e6 4 cxd5 exd5
5 g3 ♘f6 6 ♙g2 ♙e7 7 0-0 0-0 8
♘c3 ♘c6 9 ♙g5 cxd4 10 ♘xd4 h6
11 ♙e3 ♞e8 12 a3 ♙e6 (D)



13 ♖xe6!?

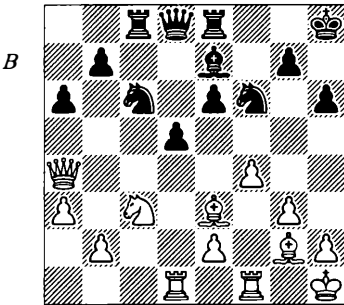
In the game Korchnoi-Kasparov, London Ct (2) 1983, White played 13 ♖b3 ♗d7 14 ♖xe6 fxe6 15 ♞ad1, but after the further 15...♙d6! 16 ♙c1 ♖h8 chances were equal. Perhaps, that game gave Smyslov the idea to have a closer look at the positions arising after ♖xe6.

As a result, in the game Smyslov-Kasparov, Vilnius Ct (2) 1984, White introduced a very interesting plan — 13 ♖h1!? ♗d7 14 ♖xe6 fxe6 15 f4!?. Black experienced a lot of problems after 15...♞ed8!? 16 ♙g1 ♞ac8 17 ♗a4 ♖h8 18 ♞ad1 ♗e8 19 e4 d4 20 ♖e2 ♙c5 21 ♗b5 ♙b6 22 h3 e5 23 fxe5 ♖xe5 24 ♗xe8+ ♞xe8 25 ♖xd4 ♖c4. Although Kasparov eventually drew that game, he obviously did not want to repeat the experience. Instead of 21 ♗b5, for example, White could have considered 21 e5!?.

So Kasparov abandoned the Tarrasch Defence for a while, until he came up with an improvement in the eighth game of the match — 13... ♙g4!?. After the further 14 f3 ♙h5

15 ♖g1 ♔d7 16 ♔a4 ♙c5! 17 ♗ad1
 ♙b6 18 ♗fe1 ♙g6 Black solved the
 opening problems. In the present
 game Smyslov exchanges the e6-
 bishop immediately, heading for his
 desired pawn structure straight away.
 It's worth mentioning that another
 great strategist — Rubinstein — also
 liked this exchange in this opening.

- | | | |
|----|--------|------|
| 13 | ... | fxe6 |
| 14 | ♔a4 | ♗c8 |
| 15 | ♗ad1 | ♙h8 |
| 16 | ♙h1 | a6 |
| 17 | f4 (D) | |



This is the same pattern as in the
 second game of the match — White
 wants to put pressure on Black's
 pawn centre after ♙g1 and e2-e4 or
 f4-f5.

Black should try utilise the c-file
 and to exchange the dark-squared
 bishops, liquidating White's bishop
 pair.

- | | | |
|----|------|------|
| 17 | ... | ♙a5! |
| 18 | f5!? | |

In his book about Kasparov, IM
 Nikitin (Kasparov's former coach)
 gives the following line: 18 ♙g1

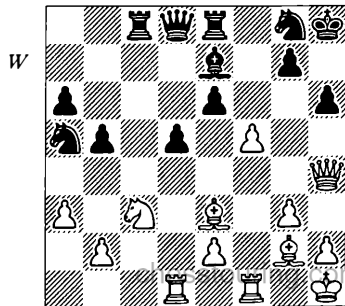
♗c4 19 ♔b3 ♙c5 20 e4 ♙xg1 21
 ♗xg1 ♗e3 — stating that Black is
 better. However, this variation is not
 convincing, as after a further 22 ♗d2
 White is fine. Black can do better by
 playing 21...♗g4!, when he indeed
 has a dangerous initiative, but White
 can improve on this line after 20
 ♙xc5! ♗xc5 21 e4, when he is bet-
 ter, as 21...♗e3 can be met with 22
 ♗a4.

Perhaps in this line Black should
 avoid 19...♙c5 and play 19...♔c7
 instead, with a threat of 20...♗xb2.
 Anyway, I think that 18 ♙g1 is worth
 considering.

- | | | |
|----|-----|------|
| 18 | ... | b5!? |
|----|-----|------|

Of course, 18...♗c4? 19 ♙c1 is
 risky for Black, but 18...♗c4!? would
 be a very logical follow-up of Black's
 previous play. Nikitin says that
 Kasparov rejected it because in the
 variation 19 ♔c2 e5 20 ♔d2 d4 21
 ♙xh6, he missed a nice reply —
 21...♗g4! (21...dxc3? 22 ♔g5!), af-
 ter which Black is better. The text
 move allows White to develop dan-
 gerous attack on the kingside.

- | | | |
|----|-----|----------|
| 19 | ♔h4 | ♗g8! (D) |
|----|-----|----------|



This retreat was necessary, as after 19...♖c4? 20 ♙xh6! ♜h7 21 ♜h5 gxh6 22 fxe6 White's attack is devastating.

20 ♜h3

The text isn't active enough so the alternative 20 ♜g4!? deserved serious consideration. After the further 20...♜c4 21 ♙c1 ♙g5! 22 fxe6 ♙xc1 23 ♜xd5 a very sharp position arises, when Black has to make a difficult choice.

After 23...♜b6 GM Kupreichik analysed the move 24 ♜d7?, correctly stating that after 24...♙g5 25 ♜xg7 ♜e5! 26 ♜f5 ♜xg7 27 ♜xe5+ ♙f6. Black wins.

Nikitin gives a better move — 24 ♜f7!, but wrongly claims that after a further 24...♙g5 25 ♜xg5 ♜f6 White should force a draw by playing 25 ♜xg7. In fact White wins after 25 ♜f4.

Instead of 23...♜b6 Nikitin recommends 23...♜e3, claiming that then Black seizes the initiative after 24 ♜xd8 ♜cxd8 25 ♜f4 ♙d2. However, I believe that White is still better after 26 ♙h3 ♜xf1 27 ♜xf1. Thus, we may state that 20 ♜g4!? would be a better try.

20 ... ♜c4
 21 ♙c1 ♙g5!
 22 fxe6 ♙xc1
 23 ♜xc1

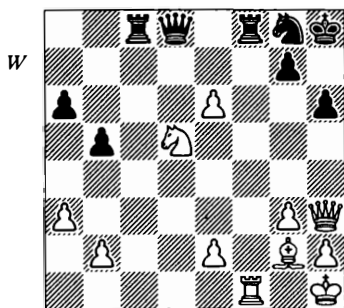
23 ♜xd5? ♜a5! 24 ♜xc1 ♜xb2 is hopeless for White.

23 ... ♜e3
 24 ♜xd5! ♜xf1

Black had to accept the sacrifice,

as 24...♜xc1? 25 ♜xc1 ♜xd5 26 ♜d1 is bad for him.

25 ♜xf1 ♜f8 (D)



26 ♜f4?!

Better was 26 ♙e4, with roughly equal chances.

26 ... ♜e7
 27 ♜g4?

Yet another mistake, after which White's position goes downhill: 27...g5! 28 ♜h3 ♜f6! 29 ♜d3 ♜xf1+ 30 ♙xf1 ♜g7 31 ♜g4 ♜d5+ 32 e4 ♜d4 33 h4 ♜f8 34 ♙e2 ♜e3 35 ♜g2 ♜g6 36 h5?! ♜e7 37 b4 ♜h7!-+ 38 ♜h2 ♜d8 39 e5 ♜xd3 40 ♙xd3+ ♜xd3 0-1.

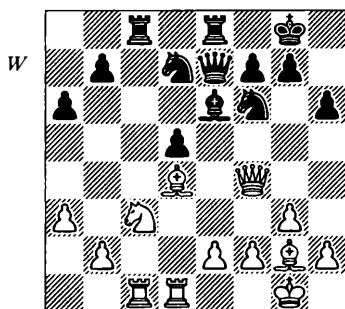
I hope that the game which we have just examined gives a very clear idea about the pawn structure with the pawn couple d5-e6 — the side playing against these pawns should try to attack them with his e- or f-pawn, while its possessor should develop play on the c-file.

Now I would like to show one unconventional way of playing against the isolated d-pawn. Sometimes the side playing against this pawn does not try to win or to

blockade it, but instead it simply exchanges the isolani, clearing the centre. Usually a player chooses this method of play against the isolated d-pawn when he possesses a bishop pair and hopes that it will bring him advantage in the resulting pawn-free centre. Our next game illustrates this point.

Kasparov - Hjartarson
World Cup, Belfort 1988

1 c4 e5 2 g3 ♘f6 3 ♙g2 c6 4 d4 exd4
 5 ♖xd4 d5 6 ♘f3 ♙e7 7 cxd5 cxd5
 8 0-0 ♘c6 9 ♖a4 0-0 10 ♙e3 ♙e6
 11 ♘c3 ♖d7 12 ♗fd1 h6 13 ♗ac1
 a6 14 ♙b6 ♗ac8 15 ♘e1!? ♗fe8
 16 ♘d3 ♙d6 17 ♘f4 ♙xf4 18
 ♖xf4 ♖e7 19 a3 ♘b8 20 ♙d4
 ♘bd7 (D)



The diagram is of a particular interest to us. White has acquired some advantage, as his pieces are more active than their black counterparts.

Yet, it's not obvious how he can develop his initiative — the d5-pawn is well protected, while Black does not have any other weaknesses. Kas-

parov's next move introduces a very interesting approach to the problem of the isolated d-pawn:

21 e4!?

We are quite familiar with the scenario when the isolani steps forward and a pawn-free centre arises, but here it's the side playing against the isolated d-pawn who enforces this major change in the pawn structure. White believes that his bishop pair in the resulting open position will promise him more than the play against the isolani. Beware of such a way of treating the isolated d-pawn!

21 ... dxe4
 22 ♘xe4 ♘xe4

After 22... ♘d5? 23 ♖d6 the d5-knight only *looks* nice, while White's knight will actually *work*, when it will enter the d6-square. So, the knights had to be exchanged, but now White gets a lot of pressure along the h1-a8 diagonal.

23 ♖xe4 ♗xc1
 24 ♗xc1 ♖d6
 25 ♖e3! b6

After 25... ♖b8 26 ♖c3 f6 27 ♖c7 White's advantage is also unquestionable.

26 ♗c6 ♖b8
 27 ♖c3 f6
 28 b4 ♙f5
 29 h3 ♘h7
 30 ♙e3

Here White missed a nice possibility to increase his advantage by tactical means — 30 ♙xb6! ♘xb6 31 ♖c5.

30 ... ♖d8
 31 ♖d4 ♘e5?!
 32 ♖xb6!

At first sight the variation with 32 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 33 ♖xb6 looks very convincing, but a closer look shows that after 33...♗d1+ 34 ♖h2 ♘c4 Black has serious counterplay. For example: 35 ♖xa6 ♘xe3 36 fxe3 ♗d2 37 ♖g1 ♗d1+ 38 ♖f2 ♗d2+ 39 ♖f3 ♗d3 40 ♖e6 f5.

32 ... ♖c8
 33 ♖h2

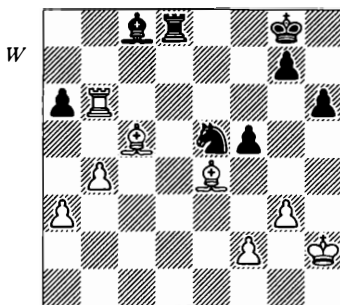
Also good is 33 g4.

33 ... ♗d8
 34 ♖c5?!

It's hard to say why Kasparov rejected 34 ♗d6. After that move his task of capitalising on the advantage would be easier — for example after 34...♖xd6 35 ♖xd6 ♘c4 36 ♖e7 ♘xa3 White can regain extra pawn by playing 37 ♗xh6! ♖xh6 38 ♖e3+ ♖h7 39 ♖xa3.

34 ... ♗xh3
 35 ♗e4+ ♖g8
 36 ♖xc8 ♗xc8
 37 ♗c5 f5 (D)
 38 ♗b1?

Yet another slip, which spoils a well-played game. Better was 38 ♗a8!. Then White can advance his



pawns on the queenside, while 38...♘c4? loses to 39 ♖b8, followed by 40 ♗b7.

38 ... ♗d1
 39 ♗a2+

Perhaps White had planned to play 39 ♖b8 ♖xb1 40 ♖xc8+ ♖f7 41 ♖a8 and only later he noticed that after a further 41...g5! his king might get into trouble.

The final moves were: 39...♖h7 40 ♗d6 ♘g4+ 41 ♖g2 ♗b7+ 42 f3 ♗c1 43 ♗e6 ♖c2+ 44 ♖g1 ½-½.

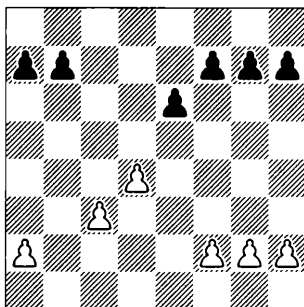
With this game I'd like to finish the discussion of the associated pawn formations. We still have one important transformation left — the appearance of the Isolated Pawn Couple (c3-d4 or c6-d5), but we will examine it in our next chapter along with Hanging Pawns.

12 Hanging Pawns and the Isolated Pawn Couple

The diagram features one particular case of the c3/d4 Isolated Pawn Couple (let's call it IPC for short) — the pawn structure which is a close relative of the formation with the isolated d4-pawn.

Indeed, all it takes to get this pawn skeleton from the position with the isolani is to exchange pieces on c3 (usually Black's d5-knight for White's c3-knight), recapturing with the b2-pawn. This leads to a major transformation, because the d4-pawn becomes protected whereas its neighbour is liable to be weak. The c-file is closed for White, while Black may be able to attack the c3-pawn down that file. We should also note that the c4- and d5-squares may fall into Black's possession.

Let us now discuss the plans available for both sides in this pawn structure. The possessor of the IPC has two main plans. One is to advance the c-pawn, bringing about yet another very important pawn formation



— Hanging Pawns. The other plan is related to play on the kingside. Black also has two different strategies available — blockade of the c4- and d5-squares and pawn attack against the c3/d4 pawn couple, which involves moves like ...b5-b4 and ...e6-e5.

Playing with the c3/d4 (c6/d5) Isolated Pawn Couple.

Positions with hanging pawns will be examined later in this chapter, while now I should like to discuss the plan where the possessor of the IPC

plays on the kingside. With this pawn structure, his initiative on that wing is often even more dangerous than in the positions with the isolani, as in this case his pieces do not have to protect the d-pawn. At the same time, the techniques and methods used for kingside attack are very similar in both pawn formations — rook lift, advance of the h-pawn, etc. In fact, we already saw this pawn skeleton earlier in this book, e.g. in the games Lerner-Kharitonov (p. 33) and Stean-Padevsky (p. 62).

Here is an example of the execution of the kingside attack plan, taken from the author's own practice.

Baburin - B. Lengyel

Budapest 1990

1 d4 d5 2 e4 e6 3 ♖c3 ♜f6 4 cxd5 ♜xd5 5 ♜f3 c5 6 e3 ♜c6 7 ♙d3 cxd4 8 exd4 ♙e7 9 0-0 0-0 10 ♜e1 ♙d7 11 a3

Also promising is 11 ♜xd5 exd5 12 ♜e5 and Black is a tempo down (his rook is not on c8) compared to the game Vaganian-Serper, which we analysed on page 179.

11 ... ♜c8

In the game Baburin-Solozhenkin, Cappelle la Grande 1993, Black chose 11...♜xc3 12 bxc3 ♜c8 and after 13 ♖c2 h6 14 ♜b1 ♖c7 15 ♖e2 a6 16 c4 ♜fe8 17 c5 ♜cd8 18 ♖e4 f5 19 ♖e3 ♙f6 20 ♙c4 ♙h8 21 ♙d2? e5! he seized the initiative. However, there were a few places in that game where White could im-

prove, e.g. 13 ♜b1, 17 ♖e4 and 21 ♙b2 were worth considering.

12 ♙c2 ♜e8

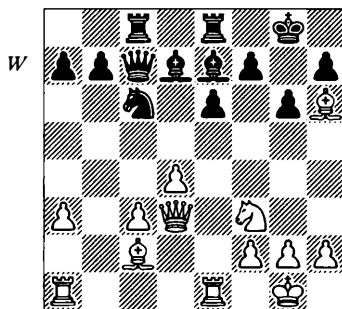
13 ♖d3 g6

14 ♙h6

Also possible was 14 ♙b3.

14 ... ♜xc3

15 bxc3 ♖c7 (D)



The pawn formation in question has arisen. While Black will try to attack the c3-pawn and utilise the c4-square, White should carry on with his play on the kingside. His next moves serve exactly this purpose.

16 ♜g5!? ♜d8

17 ♜e3!

The rook heads to the kingside, while also taking care of the threatened c3-pawn.

17 ... ♖a5

18 ♜g3

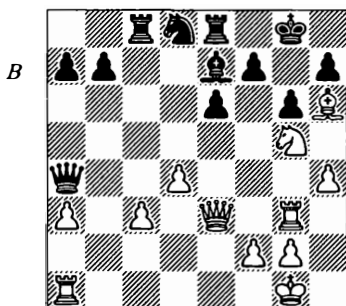
Now sacrifices on h7 and then on g6 are really in the air, so Black needs to do something about White's battery on the b1-h7 diagonal.

18 ... ♙b5

After 18...♙d6 it would be too early to start a sacrificial attack by

19 ♖xh7? ♔xh7 20 ♜xg6, as after
20...f5 21 ♖e3 ♜xc3 22 ♜g7+ ♔h8
23 ♜xc3 ♜xc3 24 ♖xd7 ♜xc2 25
♜xd6 ♖f7 White is in trouble. But
White can choose between 19 ♖e4
♙e7 20 ♙g5 and 19 ♜f3, keeping
the initiative in both cases.

19 ♖e3 ♙a4
20 ♙xa4 ♜xa4
21 h4! (D)



As usual, advancing the h-pawn
adds fuel to White's attack as after
the forthcoming h4-h5 various sacri-
fices will appear on the agenda again.

21 ... ♜b3?

Black's defence was already diffi-
cult, but this suicidal move makes it
impossible. Winning a mere pawn,
Black completely neglects his king.
Perhaps he should try to gain some
space by playing 21...e5, although
after 22 dxe5 ♜xh4 23 ♖xh7!
White's attack will still go on. A very
neat finish may occur after 22...♜c4?!
23 h5 ♙d6 24 ♖xh7 ♙xe5?! (24...
♔xh7 25 hxg6+ fxg6 26 ♜g5+-) 25
♜xe5! ♜xe5 26 ♖f6+ ♔h8 27 hxg6
and checkmate is inevitable.

22 h5 ♜b2

23 ♜e1 ♜xa3
24 ♖xh7

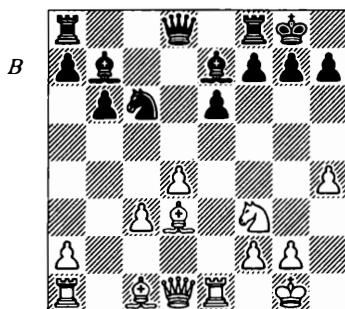
Here 24 ♖xf7 and 24 hxg6 would
also be sufficient.

24 ... ♔xh7
25 hxg6+ fxg6
26 ♖e5 ♙f8
27 ♖f6 1-0

The move h2-h4 is a very impor-
tant part of this plan. White often
advances his h-pawn — either in or-
der to attack Black's g6-pawn or to
establish control over the g5-square,
where his knight might then go. Our
next two examples illustrate this at-
tacking pattern.

Razuvaev - I. Farago
Dubna 1979

1 d4 e6 2 ♖f3 ♖f6 3 c4 d5 4 ♖c3
c5 5 cxd5 ♖xd5 6 e3 ♖c6 7 ♙c4
cxd4 8 exd4 ♙e7 9 0-0 0-0 10
♜e1 ♖xc3 11 bxc3 b6 12 ♙d3!
♙b7 13 h4! (D)



To the best of my knowledge, this
direct attempt to attack on the

kingside was GM Razuvaev's invention and he tried it in tournament practice for the first time in this game. Prior to this, the move 13 ♖c2 was popular.

13 ... ♘a5?!

Black had a wide, but difficult choice. 13...♖c8?! is unsatisfactory, as after 14 ♘g5 h6 (14...g6? loses on the spot to 15 ♘xh7! ♘xh7 16 ♖h5+ ♔g8 17 ♙xg6 fxg6 18 ♖xg6+ ♔h8 19 ♗e4) 15 ♖h5 ♖d7 16 ♗e3 White's attack plays itself.

Black can accept the sacrifice — 13...♙xh4, but after 14 ♘xh4 ♖xh4 15 ♗e3 White's pieces become very active. For example, 15...h6? loses after 16 ♗h3 ♖e7 17 ♖h5 f5 18 ♙xh6 gxh6 19 ♖g6+ ♖g7 20 ♖xe6+ ♔h7 21 ♙xf5+ ♗xf5 22 ♖xf5+, while 15...g6 led to White's advantage in the game Anand-Morrison, British Ch 1988, following 16 ♗g3 ♖f6 17 ♖g4 ♖g7 18 ♖h4 f5 19 ♙h6 ♖f6 20 ♙g5 ♖f7 21 ♗e1 ♘a5 22 c4 ♙e4 23 ♙xe4 fxh4 24 ♗c3. Black probably should play 15...f5, but after a further 16 ♗xe6 ♘xd4 17 ♗e3! (but not 17 cxd4? ♖xd4 18 ♗e7 ♖xa1 19 ♖b3+ ♙d5! 20 ♖xd5+ ♔h8 21 ♗c7 ♗ac8) White is better anyway.

Black's other options will be discussed in our next game.

14 ♘g5 h6?

This leads to insuperable difficulties. The annoying knight had to be eliminated at once — 14...♙xg5. Then White would have a choice between 15 ♙xg5 ♖d5 16 ♖g4 f5 17

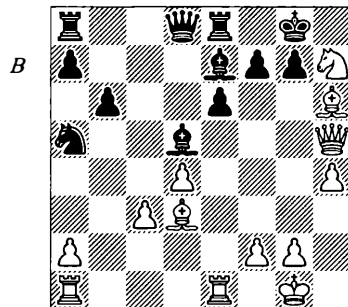
♖g3 ♗ac8 18 ♗e5 ♖d7 19 ♙b5!?, and 15 hxg5!?, with an advantage in both cases. In the latter line White has a clear plan of attack down the h-file.

15 ♖h5! ♙d5

Black had to fortify the e6-pawn, as after 15...♖c7 16 ♙h7+ ♔h8 17 ♘xf7+ ♔xh7 18 ♗xe6 his king would be busted. Alas, the text does not save Black either as now yet another pawn comes under fire.

16 ♘h7! ♗e8

17 ♙xh6! (D)



After this blow Black's position collapses, since White's advantage in forces on the kingside is overwhelming.

17 ... gxf6

18 ♖xh6 f5

Also bad is 18...♙xh4 in view of 19 g3 f5 20 gxh4 ♗e7 21 ♘f6+ ♔f7 22 ♙e2+.

19 ♗e3!

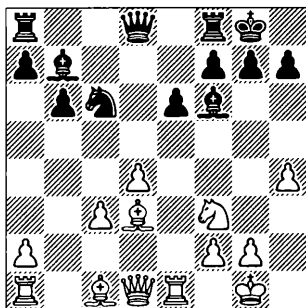
This is simpler than 19 ♗xe6 ♙xe6 20 ♖xe6+ ♔g7 21 ♖xf5 ♖d6 22 ♘g5 ♙xg5 23 ♖xg5+, although that line is also winning for White.

The conclusion was: 19... ♖xh4 20 ♖g3+ ♗xg3 21 ♖g6+ ♔h8 22 ♜f6 ♗h2+ 23 ♔h1 ♖xf6 24 ♖xf6+ ♔g8 25 ♔xh2 ♖ac8 26 ♖h1 ♖c7 27 ♖g6+ ♔f8 28 ♔g1 ♖f7 29 ♖g5 ♖g7 30 ♖h8+ ♔f7 31 ♖h5+ 1-0.

After this game, the plan with an early h2-h4 became very popular in such positions. Here is a more recent example of White's attack in this pawn structure.

Cifuentes - Van der Sterren
Netherlands Cht 1996

1 d4 ♜f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♜f3 d5 4 ♜c3 c5 5 cxd5 ♜xd5 6 e3 ♜c6 7 ♖c4 cxd4 8 exd4 ♖e7 9 0-0-0 10 ♖e1 ♜xc3 11 bxc3 b6 12 ♖d3! ♖b7 13 h4! ♖f6 (D)



In our previous game we already saw 13... ♜a5 and analysed 13... ♖xh4. Black has also tried 13... ♖d5, but after 14 ♖b1! ♖ac8 15 ♖b5 White seized the initiative in the game Anand-Timman, Moscow 1992.

In the game Agdestein-Orr, Thessaloniki OL 1984, Black chose 13... ♖g6,

but it also gave White a promising attacking position after 14 ♖h6 ♖e8 15 ♜g5 ♖f8 16 ♖xf8 ♖xf8 17 ♖g4 ♖f6 18 h5.

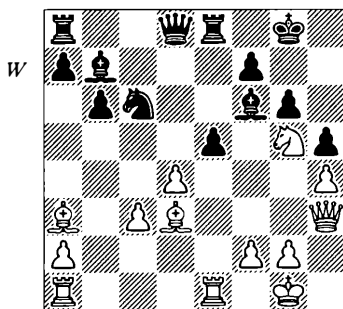
14 ♜g5 g6
15 ♖g4 h5
16 ♖h3!?

In the game Onischuk-Magem, New York Open 1998, White won quickly after 16 ♖g3 ♖d7?! (16... ♜e7 is better) 17 ♜e4! ♖g7 18 ♖g5 ♜e7?? 19 ♖d6! ♖xd6 20 ♜xd6 f6 21 ♖xe6 ♖d5 22 ♖xe7 fxg5 23 hxg5 ♖ad8 24 ♜b5.

The text move is also promising. By retreating his queen to h3, White keeps an eye on the e6-pawn.

16 ... e5
17 ♖a3 ♖e8? (D)

The variation 17... ♖xg5 18 hxg5 ♖e8 looks risky for Black, but this is what he should have played.



Now the game has approached its critical moment.

Both players have pursued their plans consistently and the next few moves should tell whose play has been the more adequate.

18 ♖e4?!

In *ChessBase Magazine No. 56*, GM Cifuentes showed that here White could have got a devastating attack by playing 18 ♖xf7!! ♗xf7 19 ♖g3.

After 19...♖g8 20 dxe5 ♖xe5 21 ♖xe5 ♗xe5 22 ♖xe5 ♗d5 23 ♗b5! a6 24 ♖d1 axb5 25 ♖xd5 ♖xa3 26 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 27 ♖c7+ ♗e8 28 ♖xb6 White is winning.

More stubborn is 22...♖c8, but after 23 ♖d1 ♖e8 24 ♖f4+ ♗g7 25 ♗c4 ♖xc4 26 ♖xc4 ♖c6 27 ♖d4+ ♗h7 28 f3 White should also win.

This line shows how dangerous White's attack can be in such positions and proves that 17...♖e8 was indeed a mistake.

18 ... exd4
19 ♖d7!? ♖e5??

This blunder loses, whereas 19...♖xe4! 20 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 21 ♗xe4 dxc3 22 ♖ad1! ♗xh4 23 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 24 ♗xb7 ♖xb7 would keep Black in the game.

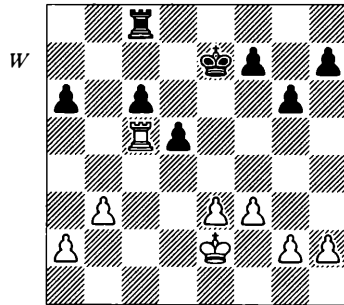
20 ♖xe8+! 1-0

Note that in both the previous games White played 12 ♗d3!, relocating his bishop. In this pawn formation, White's light-squared bishop belongs on the b1-h7 diagonal, since from there it attacks Black's kingside.

With this game I should like to finish discussing the plan where the possessor of the Isolated Pawn Couple attacks on the kingside and move on to discuss the drawbacks of the IPC.

Playing against the c3/d4 (c6/d5) Pawn Couple.

Methods of play against the Isolated Pawn Couple are very similar to those employed while playing against the isolani. They usually involve simplification and the blockade of these pawns. Let's start with the following classical example.



Flohr - Vidmar
Nottingham 1936

This endgame is a fine illustration of the drawbacks of the IPC in fairly simplified positions. Here both the c6- and a6- pawns are weak, which makes Black's pieces passive.

33 ♗d3 ♗d6 34 ♖a5 ♖a8 35 ♗d4 f5 36 b4 ♖b8 37 a3 ♖a8 38 e4!

This is a typical way of playing against the c6/d5 pawn couple: first White blockades these pawns, controlling the c5- and d4-squares, and then he attacks the d5-pawn with e2-e4. The ending is winning for White.

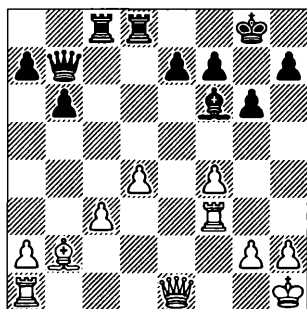
38...fxe4 39 fxe4 dxe4 40 ♗xe4 ♖a7 41 ♗f4 h6 42 h4 ♗e6 43 ♗g4

♖a8 44 h5! g5 45 g3 ♖a7 46 ♔f3
 ♖a8 47 ♕e4 ♖a7 48 ♔d4 ♔d6 49
 ♕e4 ♕e6 50 ♖e5+!

The key move — now either White's rook gets to e8 or his king penetrates via the f5-square.

The finish was: 50... ♔d6 51 ♖e8
 c5 52 ♖d8+ ♕c6 53 ♖c8+ ♕b6 54
 ♖xc5 ♖h7 55 ♖e5 ♕c6 56 ♖e6+
 ♕b5 57 ♕f5 ♖f7+ 58 ♖f6 1-0.

Basically, methods of playing against the IPC remain the same when there are more pieces on the board — the side playing against these pawns should try to blockade them and/or to challenge the opponent's d-pawn with his e-pawn. Here is yet another classical example.



Sir George Thomas - Alekhine
 Baden-Baden 1925

In this position White has no compensation for the weakness of the c4- and d5-squares. His bishop is very passive, though without it the c3-pawn would be very vulnerable. Black's plan is to get total control over the queenside and enforce further simplifications. In this game

Alekhine demonstrated how such positions should be played.

22... ♖d5 23 ♖e3 ♖b5! 24 ♖d2
 ♖d5 25 h3 e6 26 ♖e1 ♖a4 27 ♖a1
 b5 28 ♖d1 ♖c4 29 ♖b3 ♖d6!

Black starts to relocate his rooks, trying to force an exchange of queens.

30 ♕h2 ♖a6 31 ♖ff1 ♕e7 32
 ♕h1 ♖cc6 33 ♖fe1 ♕h4! 34 ♖f1

White's rook had to leave the e-file, as 34 ♖e2? loses after 34...
 ♖xb3! 35 axb3 ♖xa1 + 36 ♕xa1 ♖a6
 37 ♕b2 ♖a2 38 b4 ♕g3.

34 ... ♖c4!

35 ♖xc4

Sooner or later Black would force this exchange by playing ... ♖a4 and ... ♖ca6.

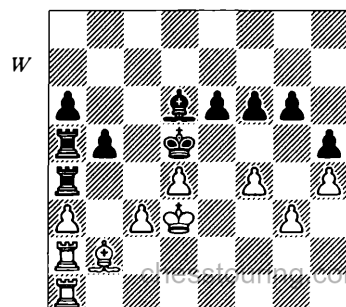
35 ... ♖xc4

36 a3 ♕e7

37 ♖fb1 ♕d6!

Alekhine forces White to put yet another pawn on to a dark square, where it may become a target for Black's bishop later.

38 g3 ♕f8 39 ♕g2 ♕e7 40 ♕f2
 ♕d7 41 ♕e2 ♕c6 42 ♖a2 ♖ca4 43
 ♖ba1 ♕d5 44 ♕d3 ♖6a5 45 ♕c1
 a6 46 ♕b2 h5! 47 h4 f6! (D)



Black's pieces are ideally placed and they need more objects to attack. Therefore, Black prepares the ...e5 break, which will allow him to get access to the weak g3-pawn.

48 ♖c1 e5 49 fxe5 fxe5 50 ♖b2

Also after 50 dxe5 ♖xe5 51 ♖f4 ♖xf4 52 gxf4 ♖xf4 53 ♖g2 ♖g4 54 ♖xg4 hxg4 55 ♖g1 ♖a4 White's position is hopeless.

The finish was: 50...exd4 51 cxd4 b4 52 axb4 ♖xa2 53 bxa5 ♖xb2 0-1.

Now let us see how the side playing against the IPC tries to get such an ideal blockading position as Alekhine had in the game against Thomas. Our next example is a model game of how to play against the IPC.

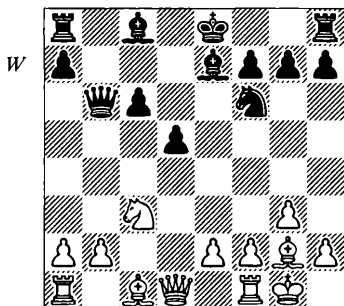
Rubinstein - Salwe *Lodz 1908*

1 d4 d5 2 ♘f3 c5 3 c4 e6 4 cxd5 exd5
5 ♘c3 ♘c6 6 g3 ♘f6 7 ♖g2 cxd4 8
♘xd4 ♖b6?!

This idea to force the exchange on c6 is dubious as Black falls seriously behind in development, while the pawn formation that comes about suits White anyway.

9 ♘xc6 bxc6
10 0-0 ♖e7 (D)

Later Salwe tried to improve on this game by playing 10...♖a6, but after 11 ♖a4 ♖c4 12 b3 ♖b5 13 ♖f4 ♖e7 14 ♖e3 ♖b7 15 ♘xb5 ♖xb5 16 ♖c7! ♖a3 17 ♖e5+ ♔f8 18 b4! White seized the initiative in the game Rubinstein-Salwe, Vilno 1909.



11 ♘a4!

Also 11 e4! is very good here, trying to destroy the c6-d5 pawn couple rather than to blockade it. This move introduces a more modern approach to dealing with the IPC. After the further 11...dxe4 12 ♖e3! ♖xb2 13 ♘xe4 0-0 14 ♖d4 White obtained a dangerous initiative in the game Boleslavsky-Stoltz, Bucharest 1953.

Both methods of playing against the IPC — the blockade and the challenge with the e-pawn — are good. Which is the better one to implement depends on the particular position. Often it is also a matter of taste.

11 ... ♖b5
12 ♖e3 0-0
13 ♖c1 ♖g4
14 f3 ♖e6

In the game Edwards-Wade, York 1959, Black tried 14...♖f5. Obviously White was not familiar with this classical game by Rubinstein, as he replied poorly with 15 b3?! ♖fe8 16 ♖c5? and got into trouble after 16...♖xc5+ 17 ♖xc5 ♖xe2.

15 ♖c5! [esstouring.com](http://www.esstouring.com)

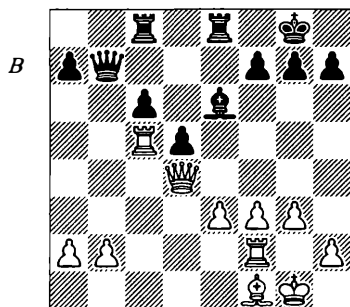
This move is a very important part

of White's plan, as by exchanging the dark-squared bishops he gets firm control over the c5-square and the whole complex of dark squares.

- 15 ... ♖fe8
16 ♖f2!

Yet another fine move — White start to regroup his pieces.

- 16 ... ♘d7
17 ♙xe7 ♖xe7
18 ♗d4 ♖ee8
19 ♙f1! ♖ac8
20 e3 ♗b7
21 ♘c5 ♘c5
22 ♖xc5 (D)



White has achieved all his goals: he controls the dark squares and can put a lot of pressure on the c6-pawn. This position is very similar to the situation in Thomas-Alekhine. There the defender protected his c-pawn with the bishop and that is what Black should do here. Because he fails to do this, he loses more rapidly.

- 22 ... ♖c7
23 ♖fc2 ♗b6
24 b4! a6?

Better was to play 24... ♖b7 25 a3 ♙d7. Then after a further 26 ♙d3

White will be able to choose between the plan with ♙f2 and ♖a5 and the one with e3-e4.

- 25 ♖a5!

White is also winning after 25 ♖xd5 cxd5 26 ♗xb6 ♖xc2 27 ♗xa6, but the line chosen by Rubinstein is easier as it does not give Black any counterplay.

- 25 ... ♖b8
26 a3 ♖a7
27 ♖xc6! ♗xc6
28 ♗xa7 ♖a8
29 ♗c5 ♗b7
30 ♙f2 h5
31 ♙e2 g6

The end was: 32 ♗d6 ♗c8 33 ♖c5 ♗b7 34 h4 a5 35 ♖c7 ♗b8 36 b5 a4 37 b6 ♖a5 38 b7 1-0.

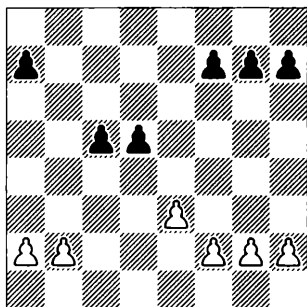
Summary

The side playing with the Isolated Pawn Couple should try to advance his c-pawn, obtaining a position with hanging pawns, or should try for an attack on the kingside. The latter plan often involves an advance of the h-pawn, transfer of his king's bishop to the b1-h7 (b8-h2) diagonal and a rook lift via the e-file to the kingside.

The side playing against the IPC should try to simplify the position as much as possible, hoping to utilise the squares in front of the IPC.

It's often beneficial to challenge the opponent's d-pawn with the e-pawn. That plan is particularly effective if the side playing against the IPC has the more active pieces.

Hanging Pawns



In this diagram, we can see one particular case of Hanging Pawns. This pawn formation is very important, as it occurs in many openings, for example in the Queen's Indian Defence. The strategic struggle in this pawn structure is very rich in ideas and this attracts many strong players to it.

Let us outline the specific characteristics of this pawn skeleton.

The hanging pawns control the important central squares and have good dynamic potential, as they can advance at an appropriate moment. Their possessor has semi-open b- and e-files for his major pieces.

However, hanging pawns have a certain vulnerability and this is the drawback with them. Also, if one of them is forced to advance, the square in front of its companion may become a good post for the enemy pieces.

Now let us examine the good and bad points of hanging pawns more closely. We will start with the advantages they bring to their possessor.

Playing with Hanging Pawns

The main advantage of having hanging pawns is the control of the central squares which they provide. Of course, the side with the pawns often has to take care of them. However, when his pieces are fully mobilised, one of the hanging pawns can advance, pushing the enemy pieces backwards. Usually this role belongs to the d-pawn. This pawn break — d4-d5 or ...d5-d4 — is quite similar to the one occurring in positions with the isolani. The goal is to clear files and diagonals for the pieces located near the advancing pawn.

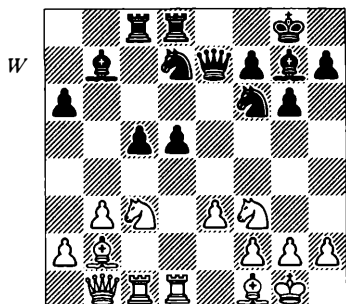
There is also one difference, since in positions with hanging pawns the d5- (...d4-) thrust usually leads to the appearance of a dangerous passed pawn on the d-file, as in our next example.

Sokolsky - Botvinnik

11th USSR Ch s/f, Leningrad 1938

1 c4 ♘f6 2 ♘c3 d5 3 d4 g6 4 ♘f3
 ♙g7 5 e3 0-0 6 ♙e2 e6 7 0-0 b6 8
 cxd5 exd5 9 b3 ♙b7 10 ♙b2 ♘bd7
 11 ♖c2 a6 12 ♗ac1 ♗c8 13 ♗fd1
 ♗e7 14 ♗b1 ♗fd8 15 ♙f1 c5 16
 dxc5?! bxc5 (D)

White played the opening rather passively and should have refrained from 16 dxc5?!. Botvinnik wrote that hanging pawns cannot be attacked effectively in positions with many pieces on the board, particularly if the



side playing against them has most of his pieces on the first rank! We can learn a lot from this valuable remark.

17 ♖e2!?

As White's kingside might soon come under attack, it makes sense to shift more pieces there.

17 ... ♔h6!

Black vacates the a1–h8 diagonal, preparing to play ...♟g4. At the same time he pins the e3-pawn, threatening also to play 18...d4.

18 ♗a3 ♟g4

Black prepares to strike on e3. Also quite interesting is the immediate 18...♗xe3! 19 fxe3 ♖xe3+ 20 ♖h1 ♗e4, where after a further 21 h3 ♟f2+ 22 ♖h2 ♟xd1 23 ♖xd1 d4 Black's chances are better.

19 ♖d3 ♟de5

20 ♟xe5 ♖xe5

21 ♟g3 ♖f6!

22 ♟h1

The white knight had to adopt this awkward position, as 22 ♖c2? would just lose after 22...♖h4 23 h3 ♟xe3 24 fxe3 ♖xg3.

22 ... d4!

Black develops his attack, open-

ing a diagonal for the b7-bishop and creating threats against the e3-pawn. This break is one of major motifs in positions with Hanging Pawns.

23 ♖e2 ♗e5

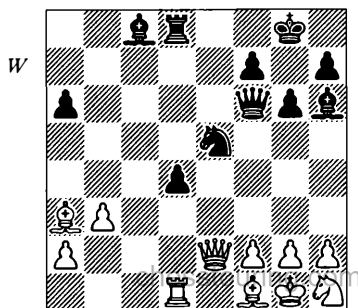
This is a critical moment in the game. Black threatens to play 24...♖e8 and White needs to make good use of the opportunity which he now has.

Botvinnik wrote that after 24 ♖xc5 ♖xc5 25 ♗xc5 Black plays 25...♟f3+? (the mark is mine) 26 gxf3 ♗xf3 27 ♖c2 ♗xd1 28 ♖xd1 ♖g5+ and 29...♖xc5, winning. However, this is an oversight, as in this line it's White who wins after 27 ♗e7!. Instead Black should play 25...♗f3! 26 gxf3 d3 27 ♖xd3 ♖xd3, with better chances.

Perhaps White's best option is 24 f4! ♟d7 25 g3. As then 25...♖e8 26 ♟f2 ♖xe3? 27 ♟g4 is bad for Black, he has to play 25...♖b6, keeping some initiative after a further 26 exd4 cxd4. In the game White chose the least sound move:

24 exd4? cxd4

25 ♖xc8 ♗xc8! (D)



Now the d4-pawn is very powerful and can act like a battering-ram, pushing the enemy pieces backwards. Here White had to play 26 ♖e4, but he erred again and lost quickly: 26 ♖e1? d3! 27 ♖d1 ♙g4 28 ♖a1 d2 29 ♜xe5 d1♙ 30 ♜e8+ ♜xe8 31 ♖xf6 ♙e2 32 ♜g3 ♙g7 33 ♖c6 ♙b5 34 ♖c1 ♖xc1 35 ♙xc1 ♜e1 36 ♙e3 ♜a1 37 a4 ♙d3 38 f4 ♜b1 39 ♜f2 ♙xf1 40 ♜xf1 ♜xb3 0-1

Let's have a look at yet another classical example of this theme:

Keres - Taimanov

19th USSR Ch, Moscow 1951

1 c4 ♜f6 2 ♜f3 e6 3 ♜c3 d5 4 e3 ♙e7 5 b3 0-0 6 ♙b2 b6 7 d4 ♙b7 8 ♙d3 dxc4 9 bxc4 c5 10 0-0 cxd4 11 exd4 ♜c6 12 ♖e2?!

It was better to play 12 ♜c1, preparing to meet ...♜b4 by ♙b1, as recommended by Keres.

12 ... ♜e8?!

Of course, 12...♜xd4? loses in view of 13 ♜xd4 ♖xd4 14 ♜d5 ♖c5 15 ♙xf6 gxf6 16 ♖g4+ ♙h8 17 ♖h4+, but Black should have played 12...♜b4!.

Keres wrote that he intended 13 ♙b1 ♙xf3 14 ♖xf3 ♖xd4 15 a3 ♜a6 16 ♖b7, winning a piece, but his later analysis showed that after 16...♙d6! 17 ♖xa6 ♙xh2+ 18 ♙xh2 ♖h4+ 19 ♙g1 ♜g4 it is Black who wins. So, then he recommended 14 gx f3 ♖xd4 15 ♜e4, "with excellent attacking prospects" and 13 ♜fd1 ♜xd3 14 ♜xd3 when White "is ahead

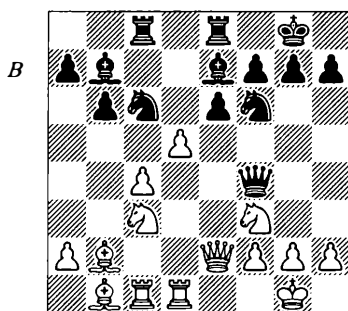
in development and is threatening such attacking moves as d5 or ♜e5".

However, in the book *The Quest for Perfection*, GM Nunn regarded this assessment as over-optimistic, stating that after a further 14...♙a6 15 ♜e5 ♜c8 Black is better. This proves that 12 ♖e2?! was indeed a mistake, which Black should have exploited with 12...♜b4!.

13 ♜fd1 ♜c8
14 ♜ac1 ♖d6?!

Better was 14...♜b4!, as the line 15 ♙b1 ♙xf3 16 ♖xf3 ♜xc4 17 d5 exd5 18 a3 ♜c6 19 ♙a2, given by Keres, is not convincing as GM Nunn proved. After a further 19...♜e5 20 ♖h3 ♜c7 21 ♜xd5 ♜xd5 22 ♙xd5 ♜xc1 23 ♙xc1 ♖c7 White's compensation for a pawn may not be sufficient even for equality.

15 ♙b1 ♖f4
16 d5! (D)



Black failed to put early pressure on the hanging pawns and now one of them has moved forward with great effect. The play now is very sharp and requires a lot of calculation from both players. To explain this position,

I used Keres' and Nunn's analysis from the above-mentioned book.

16 ... exd5
17 cxd5

Even stronger was 17 Qxd5! . Keres wrote that he did not see anything decisive after 17... Qxd5 (if 17... Wh6 18 Re1 with the initiative) 18 cxd5 Qf6 19 Wc2 Qxb2 20 dxc6 Qxc1 21 Wxh7+ Qf8 22 cxb7 Qcd8 . However, as Nunn showed, White wins here after 23 Wh8+ Qe7 24 Re1+ Qd7 25 Qf5+ Wxf5 26 Re8 Re8 27 Wxe8+ Qxe8 28 b8W+ , followed by 29 Wa7+ and 30 Wxb6 .

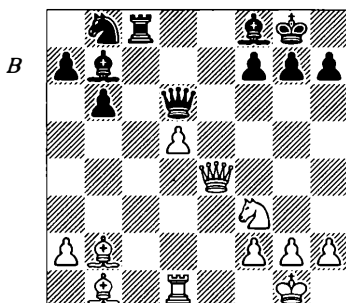
In this line, 19 dxc6 also deserves serious consideration. The continuation might be: 19... Re2 20 cxb7 Rf8 21 Qxf6 Wxf6 22 Rc8 Ree8 23 b8W Rxc8 24 Wxa7 and White has good winning chances. Yet, 19 Wc2! is a simpler way to secure a victory and therefore should be preferred.

17 ... Qb8
18 Re4 Wd6
19 Rcd1

Now the d-pawn is a considerable force.

19 ... Qf8?
Necessary was 19... Qbd7 .
20 Qe4! Qxe4
21 Re4 Re4
22 Wxe4 (D)
22 ... Wh6?

22...g6 would have offered better resistance. The game now ended: 23 Qg5+ Qd6 24 h4! Qd7 25 Wf5 Qf6 26 Qxf6 gxf6 27 Qxf7! Wc1 28 Wxh7+ Qf8 29 Qxd6 Wxd1+



30 Qh2 Wxd5 31 Qxb7 We5+ 32 g3 Rc7 33 Wh8+ Qf7 34 h5 Rxb7 35 Wh7+ Qe6 36 Wxb7 Wh5+ 37 Qg2 1-0 .

This is a very interesting game, which illustrates how both sides should play in positions with hanging pawns. Now I would to show a game from recent tournament practice, where the motif of d4-d5 played a key role in the strategic battle.

Shabalov - Bezold

Europe vs. Americas, Bermuda 1998

1 d4 Qf6 2 e4 e6 3 Qc3 Qb4 4 e3 c5 5 Qd3 d5 6 Qf3 0-0 7 0-0 Qbd7 8 Qd2 cxd4 9 exd4 Qxc3 10 Qxc3 b6?!

I think that Black should have preferred 10...dxc4 11 Qxc4 Qb6 12 Qd3 Qbd5 when he has a comfortable position, as White's dark-squared bishop is misplaced.

11 b3! Qb7
12 Rc1 dxc4
13 bxc4

A position with hanging pawns has arisen. Black will try to put pressure

on them and may be able to challenge them with ...e5, while White can play on the queenside by a2-a4-a5 or try to manage the d4-d5 break.

- 13 ... ♖e8
- 14 ♖e1 ♖c7
- 15 h3 ♖ac8
- 16 a4 a5

Perhaps better was 16...♙xf3!? 17 ♖xf3 e5, challenging the hanging pawns.

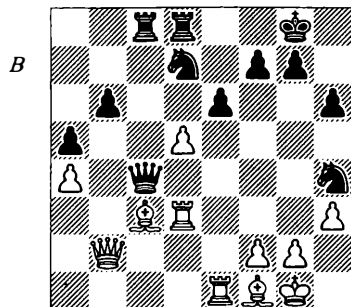
- 17 ♖e3 h6
- 18 ♖e2 ♘h5
- 19 ♖d2 ♘f4
- 20 ♙f1 ♖ed8
- 21 ♖ce1 ♘g6
- 22 ♖b2

After some interesting manoeuvres, White has prepared everything for the d4-d5 break.

- 22 ... ♙xf3
- 23 ♖xf3 ♘h4
- 24 ♖d3!

White sacrifices a pawn, since after 24 ♖fe3 ♘f5 25 ♖f3 Black would have a choice between 25...♘d4, repeating the position and 25...♘d6, attacking the c4-pawn.

- 24 ... ♖xc4
- 25 d5 (D)



Finally White has managed to make this thrust, which offers him good attacking prospects.

- 25 ... e5
- 26 ♖g3! ♖xd5
- 27 ♙xe5 ♘f5
- 28 ♖d3 ♖e6?

It's hard to defend in situations like this. Black had to play 28...♖c6!, when after 29 ♖c3 ♖e6! White has full compensation for a pawn, but probably no more than that. Note that in this line 29...♘c5? is bad because of 30 ♙xg7!., when White gets a strong attack after 30...♖g6 (not 30...♘xg7? 31 ♖g3 f6 32 ♖e7+-) 31 ♙f6 ♘xa4 32 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 33 ♖e5.

- 29 ♖d2!

The text serves two purposes — White protects the e1-rook and pins the d7-knight.

- 29 ... ♖c6
- 30 ♖d5!+-

Suddenly the sleeper on f1 is going to come back into play with devastating effect! Black is helpless against the threat of 31 ♙b5.

- 30 ... ♘e7
- 31 ♖d6 ♖xa4
- 32 ♙xg7 ♘f5
- 33 ♙a1

More energetic would be 33 ♙xh6!, exposing the enemy king.

- 33 ... ♖c2?

Obviously 33...♘d6 34 ♖xh6 f6 35 ♖e7 is hopeless for Black, but he could play 33...♖c2!. Yet, after a further 34 ♖xc2 ♖xc2 35 ♖d3 ♖c7 36 ♖ed1 ♘f8 37 ♙f6 White should also win.

The game ended 34 ♖d3 ♗f4 35 ♗xc2 ♜xd6 36 ♗c7 1-0.

Now let us examine the situation where the side with hanging pawns advances his c-pawn. This is usually done in order to fix the enemy b-pawn on b2 (b7) and attack it later down the b-file. If then the b-pawn goes, the c-pawn may become very dangerous. The advance of the c-pawn does not lead to such sharp situations as that of its neighbour. Yet, this advance can be dangerous too, as can be illustrated quite sufficiently with a single example — the following classical game.

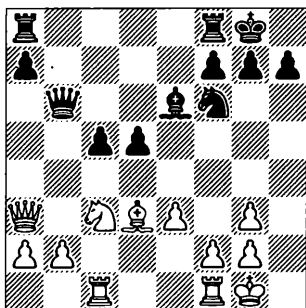
Rubinstein - Nimzowitsch

Karlsbad 1907

1 d4 d5 2 ♜f3 e6 3 c4 c5? 4 cxd5 exd5 5 ♜c3 ♜c6 6 ♙f4 cxd4 7 ♜xd4 ♙b4 8 e3 ♜f6 9 ♜xc6 bxc6 10 ♙d3 0-0 11 0-0 ♙d6!

Preparing to play ...c5, Black moves the bishop from b4 where it might be misplaced.

12 ♙g3 ♙xg3 13 hxg3 c5 14 ♜c1 ♙e6 15 ♗a4 ♗b6 16 ♗a3 (D)



B

White forces the c-pawn to step forward, but here this advance is actually good for Black. After ...c4 the b2-pawn will be fixed and the pressure against it will compensate Black for the weakness of the d5-pawn.

16...c4! 17 ♙e2 a5! 18 ♜fd1 ♗b4 19 ♜d4 ♜fd8 20 ♜cd1 ♜d7 21 ♙f3 ♜ad8

This position is a good example of dynamic equality: nobody can get the upper hand here. Nimzowitsch wrote that 22 ♙f1 ♙f8 23 ♙g1 ♙g8 would be an appropriate finale. However, White tried to disrupt the balance and was punished for this.

22 ♜b1 ♜b8 23 ♜1d2 ♗xa3!

After 23...♜db7 White should not play 24 ♗c3? ♗xc3 25 ♜xc3 ♜xb2 26 ♜xb2 ♜xb2 27 ♜xd5, as recommended by Nimzowitsch, since White simply loses after a further 27...♜xd5 28 ♙xd5 c3. Instead, he should prefer 24 ♜c3!, and the chances become equal again.

24 ♜xa3 ♙f8

Black prepares to double rooks, since the immediate 24...♜db7? would be met by 25 ♜xc4!.

25 e4 dxe4 26 ♜xd7 ♜xd7 27 ♙xe4 ♜c5 28 ♜d4?

White had to play 28 ♙c6!? ♜b4! and then not 29 ♙d5 ♜a4! as mentioned by Nimzowitsch, but 29 ♙b5 when, after a subsequent ♜c2, White should draw the ending.

Now Black won after 28...♜xe4 29 ♜xe4 ♜xb2 30 ♜xc4 ♜b4 31 ♜d6 ♜xe4 32 ♜xe4 ♙xa2+ 33 ♜c3 ♙c4 34 f4 ♙e7 35 ♙f2 ♜d6 36 ♙e3 ♙c5

37 g4 ♖b4 38 ♗d4 ♙b3 39 g5 a4 40
 ♜b1 ♙e6 41 g3 ♖b3 42 ♜c3 a3 43
 ♗d3 g6 44 ♗d4 ♖c2 0-1.

Summary

The possessor of hanging pawns should try to develop his pieces harmoniously behind them and look for a chance to advance one of the pawns. Generally it is the d-pawn, which then often becomes passed and disorganises the enemy pieces. Sometimes the c-pawn advances instead, usually in order to fix the enemy b-pawn and later attack it.

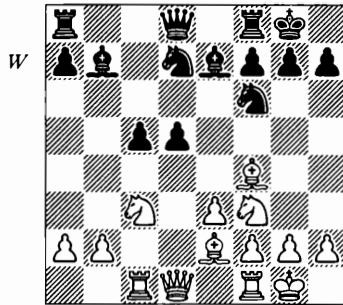
Playing against Hanging Pawns

The side playing against hanging pawns should try to put pressure on them as soon as they appear in the position. This pressure may include a challenge with the e-pawn, which is a very common motif, or with the b-pawn, which happens sometimes. However, usually the hanging pawns must be attacked with pieces first.

There are different methods of attack; here we will discuss some of them in detail. The basic idea is simple — immediately point your pieces at the hanging pawns and try to put your opponent on the defensive. Then seek a way to win or to exchange one of the hanging pawns or look for a chance to challenge the opponent's d-pawn with your e-pawn. Often some simplifications are desirable too.

Yusupov - Ljubojević
 Tilburg 1987

1 d4 ♜f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♜f3 d5 4 ♜c3
 ♙e7 5 ♙f4 0-0 6 e3 b6 7 ♜c1 c5 8
 dxc5 bxc5 9 ♙e2 ♙b7 10 0-0 ♜bd7
 11 cxd5 exd5 (D)



The opening phase is over and both players have showed their preferences — Black will try to use the dynamic power of the hanging pawns, while White will try to prove their weakness.

With his next move GM Yusupov gets down to business:

12 ♙e5!

It's always better to attack the pawns *before* their possessor completes his development.

White vacates f3 for the bishop, while the exchange of the knights suits him fine: after 12... ♜xe5 13 ♙xe5 ♙d6 14 ♙xd6 ♜xd6 15 ♜c2 or 13... ♜d7 14 ♙f4 ♜f6 15 ♙f3 White's chances are better.

12 ... ♜b6

13 a4 chesstouring.com

Also possible was 13 ♙f3. Now

White wants to disturb the b6-knight. Perhaps, Black could counter this by 13...d4 14 exd4 ♖xd4 (not 14...cxd4? 15 ♖b5), with roughly equal play.

- | | | |
|----|------|-----|
| 13 | ... | a5? |
| 14 | ♙f3 | ♖e8 |
| 15 | ♖b5! | ♖a6 |

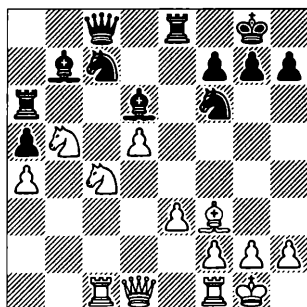
This position for the rook is awkward, but after 15...♖c8 16 ♖a7! ♖a8 (but not 16...♖c7? 17 ♖d3!) 17 ♖ac6 ♙xc6 18 ♖xc6 ♖d7 19 ♖xe7+ ♖xe7 20 ♖b3 Black's pawns come under severe pressure.

16 ♖d3?!

A hasty move, which lets White's advantage slip. In the book *Opening Preparation* (Batsford 1994) Yusupov showed the way to keep his edge — 16 b3!. After that move Black would be completely strained, as the c5-pawn would have lost its mobility.

- | | | |
|----|---------|------|
| 16 | ... | c4 |
| 17 | ♙c7 | ♖d7 |
| 18 | ♖e5 | ♖c8 |
| 19 | b3!? | ♖a8 |
| 20 | bxc4 | ♖xc7 |
| 21 | cxd5 | ♙d6 |
| 22 | ♖c4 (D) | |

B



22 ... ♙c5

In the above-mentioned book, Yusupov pointed out that 22...♙b4 would be the best defence. Then White can choose between 23 ♖b2 ♙d6 24 ♖c4= and the more adventurous move — 23 e4!?.

Yet, the move 22...♙c5 is not a mistake, as our analysis will show.

23 ♖xa5

Instead of the text, 23 e4!? deserves serious consideration here — two dangerous pawns and active pieces yield White sufficient compensation for a piece.

- | | | |
|----|------|-------|
| 23 | ... | ♖xa5 |
| 24 | ♖xc5 | ♖d8 |
| 25 | ♖d6 | ♖xd6 |
| 26 | ♖xa5 | ♙xd5? |

Only this mistake causes Black's defeat, whereas after 26...♙a6! 27 ♖e1 ♖b4 28 ♖xa6 ♖xa6 he would be O.K.

- | | | |
|----|-------|-------|
| 27 | ♖d4+- | ♖e6 |
| 28 | ♙xd5 | ♖cxd5 |
| 29 | ♖d1 | ♖c8 |
| 30 | ♖c5 | ♖xc5 |
| 31 | ♖xc5 | |

Black's cavalry lacks secure posts and therefore he is helpless against the rook and the a-pawn.

The finish was: 31...h5 32 a5 ♖e4 33 h3 g6 34 ♖c6 ♖b4 35 a6 ♖a5 36 ♖b7 ♖a4 37 ♖b1 1-0.

The idea of disturbing the b6-knight with the a-pawn worked well for Yusupov in this game, but in our next example he fell victim to the same idea.

Kramnik - Yusupov
Dortmund 1998

1 ♖f3 d5 2 d4 ♗f6 3 c4 e6 4 ♗c3
 ♙e7 5 ♙g5 h6 6 ♙h4 0-0 7 e3 b6 8
 ♙d3 ♙b7 9 0-0 ♗bd7 10 ♚e2 c5
 11 ♙g3 ♗e4 12 cxd5 exd5 13 ♜ad1
 ♗xg3 14 hxg3 a6?!

Annotating this game in *New in Chess* magazine, GM Kramnik was rather sceptical about the text and suggested 14...c4 instead. Now White opts for the pawn formation with hanging pawns.

15 dxc5! bxc5

15...♗xc5? just drops a pawn after 16 ♙c4, while 15...♙xc5 also leads to trouble after 16 ♙c2 ♗f6 17 ♙b3.

16 ♙b1!

A thematic move — the d5-pawn comes under pressure. The text also creates possibilities of play on the b1–h7 diagonal, where White might be able to build a battery.

16 ... ♗b6

After 16...♗f6?! Kramnik gives 17 e4 d4 18 e5 'with the initiative'. I think that Black should not be too unhappy after 18...♗d5 19 ♗xd5 ♚xd5, but in fact White has a better move at his disposal — 17 ♗xd5! ♗xd5 18 e4 with the advantage.

17 a4!

White employs the same idea as in the game Yusupov-Ljubojević. Note that taking on d5 does not work here, since after 17 ♗xd5?? ♙xd5 18 e4 ♙c4 Black wins.

17 ... ♙f6?!

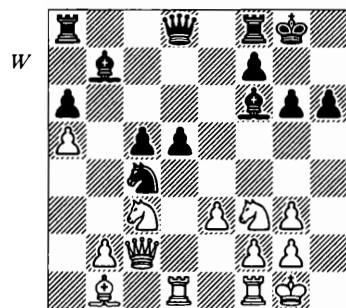
Maybe Black should have stopped the a-pawn. Though the position arising after 17...a5 18 ♚c2 g6 19 ♙a2 is in White's favour, that would probably be the lesser evil for Black.

18 ♚c2 g6

19 a5!?

As Kramnik pointed out, 19 ♙a2!? would also lead to considerable advantage for White after 19...♙xc3 20 ♚xc3 ♗xa4 21 ♚c2 ♗b6 22 ♚xc5.

19 ... ♗c4 (D)



Kramnik gives the line 19...♙xc3 20 ♚xc3 ♗c4 21 e4 ♚xa5 22 ♚c1! ♙g7 (but not 22...dxe4? 23 ♚xh6 exf3 24 ♙xg6 fxg6 25 ♚xg6+ ♙h8 26 ♜d7+-) 23 exd5, claiming that White has a dangerous initiative. This is probably correct, though after 23...♚b4!? nothing is yet clear.

20 ♗xd5

Probably, White should have transposed into the above-mentioned line by playing 20 e4 ♙xc3 21 ♚xc3.

20 ... ♗xb2

21 ♗xf6+ ♚xf6

22 ♜d2 ♙xf3

23 gx3 ♙ab8

24 f4!

After 24 ♖xc5 ♜b5 25 ♖d4 ♖xd4 26 ♜xd4 ♜xa5 White has only a minimal advantage.

- | | | |
|----|-------|------|
| 24 | ... | c4 |
| 25 | e4 | ♜fd8 |
| 26 | e5 | ♜xd2 |
| 27 | ♖xd2 | ♖d8 |
| 28 | ♖e2 | ♖d4! |
| 29 | e6! | ♜d3 |
| 30 | ♙c2! | fxe6 |
| 31 | ♖xe6+ | ♝g7 |
| 32 | ♙a4 | c3? |

White has maintained the tension with a series of fine moves and Black finally errs. The text weakens the position of his knight and this is crucial. Kramnik wrote that the best move here is 32...♜f8, saying that even then White can fight for the full point, e.g. after 33 ♙e8 ♖f6 34 ♖xc4 ♜xf2 35 ♙d7 ♖d6 36 ♜xf2 ♖xd7 37 ♖xa6.

Now it is all over: 33 ♙c2! ♜b2 34 ♖e7+ ♝g8 35 ♖e2 ♜xf4 36 gxf4 ♝f7 37 ♜d1 1-0.

Playing against hanging pawns, it is usually best to have your king's bishop on the long diagonal. If you are White, this will be the g2 square.

In this case White often needs to move his f3-knight away, so the bishop can attack the d5-pawn. That knight has various attractive routes, for example ♜f3-h4-f5 or ♜f3-e1-d3 or ♜f3-e5-c4.

Let's examine these typical routes in order, beginning with the manoeuvre ♜f3-h4-f5. The following game is a fine example of this motif.

Kramnik - Ribli
Groningen PCA 1993

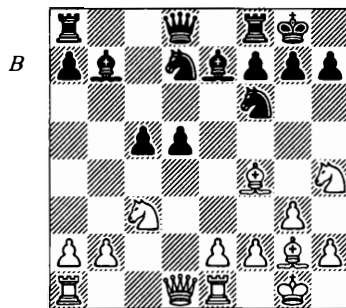
- 1 e4 ♜f6 2 ♜c3 e6 3 ♜f3 c5 4 g3 b6 5 ♙g2 ♙b7 6 0-0 ♙e7 7 ♜e1 d5 8 cxd5 exd5 9 d4 0-0 10 ♙f4 ♜bd7

After 10...♜a6 11 ♜c1 ♜e4 12 dxc5 ♜axc5 13 ♜d4 ♙f6 14 ♙h3! White was better in Anand-Adams, analysed in this book on page 188.

11 dxc5 bxc5?!

It would be safer to take on c5 with the knight, accepting an isolated d5-pawn. If Black wanted to recapture on c5 with a pawn, he might be better off to develop his knight to a6, as now the d5-pawn is somewhat vulnerable. White's next move underlines this fact:

12 ♜h4! (D)



This is a very important manoeuvre of which you should be aware. White puts pressure on the d5-pawn, while relocating his knight to a more active position on f5.

12 ... ♜b6

In the later game Gulko-Shabalov, USA Ch 1994, Black tried to improve

with 12...♖h5, but after 13 ♖f5! ♖xf4 14 gxf4 ♖b6 15 ♖xd5! ♙xd5 16 ♙xd5 ♖xd5 17 ♗xd5 ♙f6 18 ♗ad1 ♗a5! 19 ♖d6 ♗ad8 20 e4 ♙xb2 21 e5 White obtained an advantage and went to win.

13 ♖f5 ♖e8

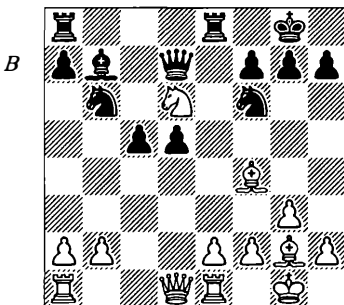
Also after 13...♗d7 14 e4! d4 15 ♖b5 ♗xb5 16 ♖xe7+ ♖h8 17 ♖f5 or 17 b3 White is better, but perhaps that would be the lesser evil.

14 ♖b5 ♗d7

14...♖h5?! gets Black into trouble after 15 ♙d6 ♙f8 16 e4.

15 ♖bd6 ♙xd6

16 ♖xd6 (D)



16 ... ♖e6?

Trying to exploit the somewhat shaky position of the d6-knight is a faulty idea. Black had to settle for the difficult position arising from 16...♗ed8 17 ♗c1 c4 18 ♖xb7 ♗xb7 19 ♙g5.

17 ♙h3 ♙c6

18 ♗c1 c4

19 ♙e5!+ ♗f8

Also hopeless is 19...♗e7 20 ♙xe6 ♗xe6 21 ♗f4 ♖bd7 22 ♙d4 ♖h5 23 ♗f5.

The game ended: 20 ♗f4 ♖h5 21 ♙xe6 ♗xe6 22 ♗d4 ♖f6 23 b3 ♙a8 24 f3 ♗c6 25 ♗ac1 ♖fd7 26 bxc4 dxc4 27 ♙xg7 ♗xf3 28 exf3 ♗xf3 29 ♖e4 ♖d5 1-0.

Yet another important route for White's king's knight is ♖f3-e1-d3. This manoeuvre is often used when there is a need to vacate the f3-square for the bishop, giving it access to the long diagonal, as in our next example.

Lputian - Dorfman

USSR Ch s/f, Tashkent 1984

1 d4 ♖f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♖f3 d5 4 ♖c3 ♙e7 5 ♙g5 h6 6 ♙h4 0-0 7 e3 b6 8 ♗c1 ♙b7 9 cxd5 exd5 10 ♙e2 ♖bd7 11 0-0 c5 12 ♗a4 a6 13 dxc5 bxc5 14 ♗fd1 ♗b6 15 ♗b3 ♗xb3

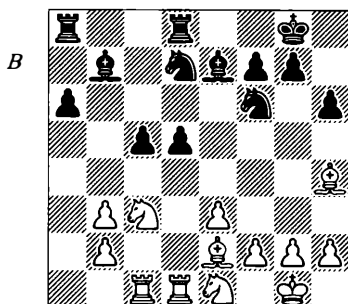
After 15...♗fd8 16 ♙g3 ♗ac8 17 ♖e5 ♗xb3 18 axb3 ♖b6 19 ♙f3 ♙a8 20 ♗a1 d4 21 exd4 cxd4 22 ♖e2 ♙xf3 23 gxf3! White obtained some advantage in the game Yusupov-Short, Linares 1992.

Perhaps, Black should avoid the exchange of the queens altogether — Kasparov played 15...♗a7 in the 31st game of his match vs. Karpov in 1984 and against Topalov in Sofia in 1998.

16 axb3 ♗fd8

The attempt to target the b3-pawn by playing 16...♙c6, with a subsequent ...♗fb8, might be met with 17 ♙xf6 ♖xf6 18 ♖e5 ♙b7 19 ♙f3 and White stands better.

17 ♖e1! (D)



In this pawn formation, White's light-squared bishop should be placed on the long diagonal, where it will put pressure on the d5-pawn. Meanwhile the knight will be relocated via e1 to d3. From there it will attack the c5-pawn and can also go to f4.

17 ... ♖b6
18 ♗f3 ♜d7?

Better was 18... ♜ac8.

19 ♘d3 g5

Black could not develop his queen's rook, as 19... ♜c8? loses on the spot after 20 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 21 ♗g4.

20 ♗g3 ♜c8
21 ♘e5 ♜dd8
22 ♘c4!

This is yet another very typical move for positions with hanging pawns, which often occurs when the bishops oppose each other on the h1–a8 diagonal. From c4 the knight often goes to a5 to disturb Black's bishop.

This idea decides the outcome of the game: 22... ♘bd7 23 ♘a5 ♗a8 24 ♘d5+- ♘xd5 25 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 26 ♜xd5 ♘f6 27 ♜xd8+ ♗xd8 28 ♘b7 ♗e7 29 ♜c4! ♘d5 30 ♗d6

♘b6 31 ♜c1 ♗xd6 32 ♘xd6 ♜d8 33 ♘f5 h5 34 g3 ♜d3 35 ♜xc5 ♜xb3 36 ♘d4 ♜xb2 37 ♜xg5+ ♔f8 38 ♜xh5 ♜a2 39 h4 a5 40 ♘f5 ♔e8 41 ♜h8+ ♔d7 42 h5 1–0.

I conclude this theme with yet another very typical route for White's knight — ♘f3–e5–c4.

Of course, in order to bring his knight to c4, White must have pinned the d5-pawn. This often happens in positions with bishops on g2 and b7. Our final game is a typical example.

Vaganian - Timman
Amsterdam OHRA 1986

1 ♘f3 ♘f6 2 c4 b6 3 d4 e6 4 g3 ♗a6 5 ♘bd2 ♗b7 6 ♗g2 ♗e7 7 0–0–0 8 ♚c2 d5 9 cxd5 exd5 10 ♘e5 c5 11 dxc5 bxc5 12 ♘dc4!? (D)

I believe that this was the first occasion that the text move was employed. Prior to this game, White used to play 12 b3, but usually did not obtain any advantage with it.

From c4 the knight eyes the a5-square, but it also might go to e3.

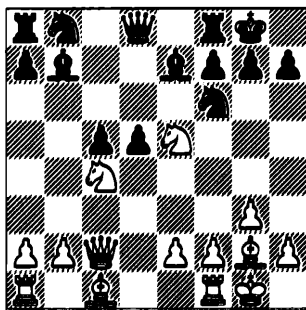
While White has many useful moves at his disposal (e.g. ♗g5, ♜d1, etc.), Black has a harder task choosing a suitable defence.

For example, 12... ♘c6 gave White a clear advantage in the game Groszpeter-Burger, New York 1988, after 13 ♘xc6 ♗xc6 14 ♗g5 ♘d7 (or 14...h6 15 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 16 ♘e3 with the initiative) 15 ♗xe7 ♚xe7 16 ♘a5.

12...♞e8 also does not work well for Black. After 13 ♖f4 ♜c8 14 ♘a5 ♙a6 15 ♞fd1 ♘bd7?! 16 ♙h3 he experienced problems in the game Yusupov-A.Sokolov, Tilburg 1987.

Perhaps, the most critical move here is 12...♜c7. Then the game Yusupov-Dolmatov, Hastings 1989, ended in a draw after some interesting complications: 13 ♖f4 g5 14 ♙xg5 dxc4 15 ♜f5 ♙xg2 16 ♙xf6 ♙xf6 17 ♜xf6 ♙xf1 18 ♜g5+ ♗h8 19 ♜f6+.

However, maybe in this line White can play for an advantage by 15 ♙xb7!? ♜xb7 16 ♙h6.



12 ... ♜c8?!
 13 ♘a5 ♙a6
 14 ♖f4 ♜e6
 15 ♞fd1 h6?!

Black could play 15...g5?, as the position arising after 16 ♙xg5 ♜xe5 17 ♙xf6 ♙xf6 18 ♙xd5 is bad for him. The text prepares ...g5, but White strikes first!

16 e4! d4
 17 ♜b3! ♜xb3
 18 axb3

Now the c5/d4 pawns are well blocked. However, the main problem for Black is his lack of development, as he cannot bring the b8-knight out and this proves to be fatal.

18 ... ♙d6
 19 ♘ac4+- ♙xe5

19...♙xc4 20 ♘xc4 ♙xf4 21 gxf4 is also bad for Black.

The end was: 20 ♙xe5 ♙xc4 21 bxc4 ♘fd7 22 ♙xd4! cxd4 23 e5 ♘c6 24 ♙xc6 ♞ad8 25 f4 ♘b6 26 b3 d3 27 ♗f2 ♞d4 28 ♗e3 ♞fd8 29 ♞xa7 d2 30 ♙e4 1-0.

Summary

The side playing against hanging pawns should put pressure on them as soon as they appear in the position. This often involves an attack by the king's bishop along the long diagonal and various manoeuvres of the king's knight.

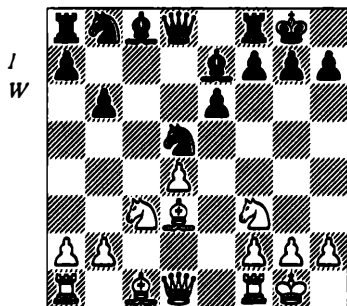
If White is the side playing against the c5/d5 pawns, his knight often takes one of the following routes: f3-h4-f5, f3-e1-d3 or f3-e5-c4. Then at some point the hanging pawns are forced to advance, creating holes in Black's position, or they can be challenged by White's e-pawn.

Implementing these plans is not easy and requires active and inventive play from both players. The resulting tension makes the pawn structure discussed in this section of the book one of the most interesting in the whole of chess.

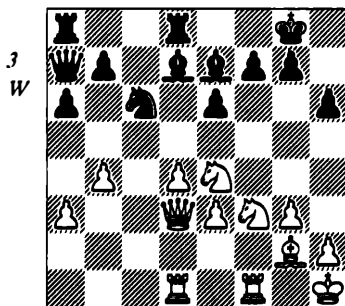
Exercises For Part 3

As with the Exercises for Parts 1 and 2, these examples do not imply only one 'correct' solution. Usually there are a few attractive plans from which you should select your move. Perhaps your suggestion may be even better than the actual game continuation.

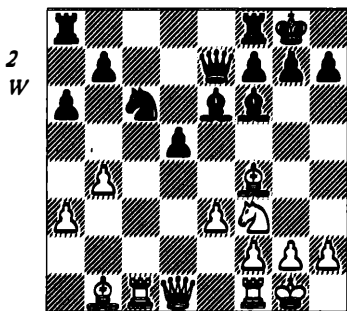
For the solutions to these Exercises, see pages 249-254.



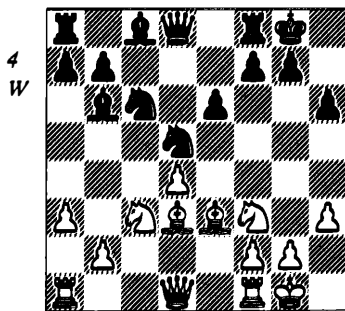
Suggest a plan for White.



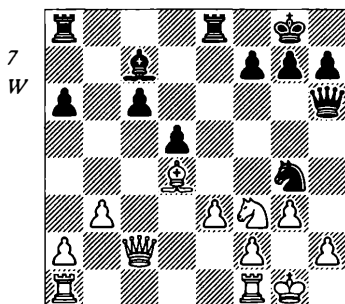
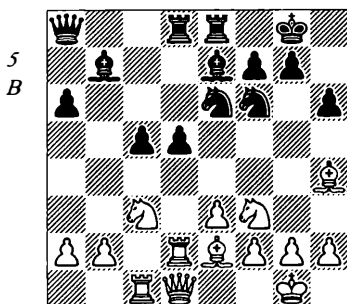
Suggest a plan for White.



How would you play with White?

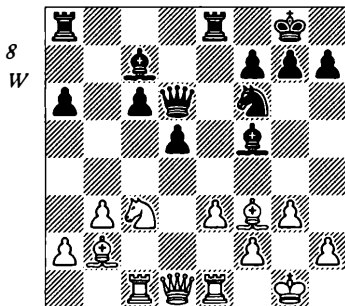
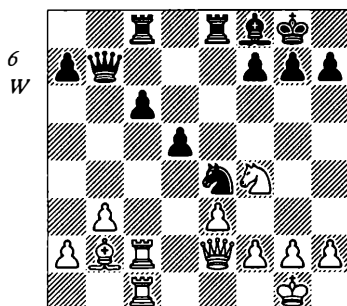


Suggest a plan for White.



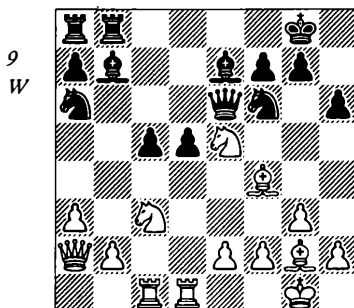
How would you play with Black?

How should White continue?



Suggest a plan for White.

Suggest a plan for White.

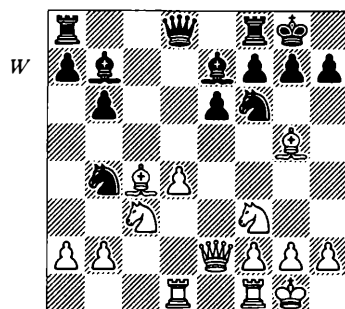


How would you play with White?

Solutions to Exercises

Part 1

No. 1



How should White play here? What are the plans available to him?

Savon - Tal
Moscow 1969

13 ♖e5

The f7- and e6-pawns come under fire, which more or less forces Black to move his knight from b4 to the blocking d5-square.

13 ... ♞bd5

14 ♜d3! ♞xc3

15 bxc3 ♜e4

16 ♙c1!? ♞d6

17 ♙b3 ♜c8

18 ♜h3 ♙e4

19 ♙a3 ♙g6

20 g4!

Black has redeployed his light squared bishop on the kingside, but now that very piece starts causing him trouble. Something like this also happ-

ened in the game Lerner-Kharitonov, which we analysed earlier.

20 ... ♜c7

21 f4 ♜c8

22 ♞xg6 hxg6

23 ♙xd6 ♙xd6

24 ♜e1!+- ♜e8

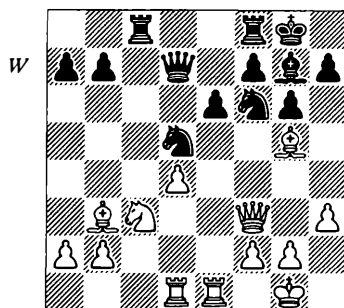
25 ♜h4 ♝f8 26 f5 gxf5 27 gxf5 f6

28 ♙xe6 ♜xe6 29 fxe6 ♜xe6 30

♜e1 ♜d7 31 ♜h8+ ♝f7 32 ♜h5+

♝f8 33 ♜g6 1-0.

No. 2



Suggest a plan for White and supply some likely variations.

Korchnoi - Gheorghiu
Romania 1968

18 ♙xf6!

This exchange opens the centre for White.

18 ... ♞xf6

19 d5! exd5

20 ♙xd5!

This is much better than 20 ♞xd5

♟xd5 21 ♙xd5 ♚c7, where White's advantage is not significant.

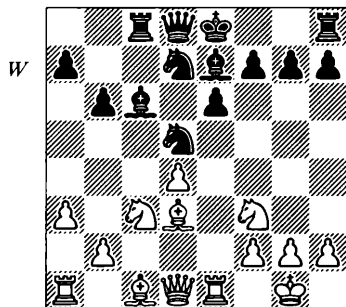
20 ... ♖b8
21 ♙b3 ♚c7

The endgame arising after 21... ♚c6 22 ♚xc6 bxc6 23 ♜e7 is very unpleasant for Black.

22 ♘b5 ♚b6
23 ♘d6

Now White's advantage in the centre is overwhelming and the pressure against the f7-pawn cannot be relieved. The end was: 23... ♖bd8 24 ♘xf7! ♖xf7 25 ♖xd8+ ♚xd8 26 ♚xb7 ♚d7 27 ♜e7 1-0.

No. 3



Suggest a plan for White.

Timman - van der Wiel
Wijk aan Zee 1980

13 ♟xd5!?

White has spotted that Black's rook has been brought out to c8 prematurely and this allows him to seize the initiative.

13 ... ♙xd5
14 ♙a6 ♖a8

Black had to move the rook back

to its original location, as 14... ♖c6? 15 ♙b5 ♙xf3 16 ♚xf3 ♜c8 17 d5 cannot be contemplated.

15 ♙f4 0-0

Black could try to free the bind at once by playing the immediate 15... ♘b8, but after the further 16 ♙xb8 ♖xb8 17 ♚a4+ ♗f8 18 ♘e5 ♜a8 19 ♖ac1 Black's position would be quite unpleasant.

16 ♖c1 ♘b8?

From a practical point of view this is a bad decision, as it leads to a position where Black can only fight for a draw. Instead he should have played 16... ♙f6. Then White's best try is 17 ♘d6!?. After the further 17... ♜e8 (or 17... ♙e7 18 ♙c7 ♚e8 19 ♚e2 ♘b8 20 ♙c4 ♙xc4 21 ♚xc4 and White firmly controls the open c-file and is ready to break in the centre with d4-d5) 18 ♘e5 ♘f8 (18... ♙xe5?! 19 dxe5 ♚g5 20 f3 is clearly better for White) 19 ♙c7 ♚e7 20 ♚h5!? g6 21 ♚h3 ♙g7 22 ♜c3 White has good prospects of play on both sides of the board.

17 ♖c8 ♚xc8

18 ♙xc8 ♖xc8

In this position Black has practical chances to survive, but his defensive task is thankless.

19 ♘e5 ♘c6

20 ♘g4!? ♖d8

21 ♚d3 ♙a2?!

22 ♖a1 ♖xd4

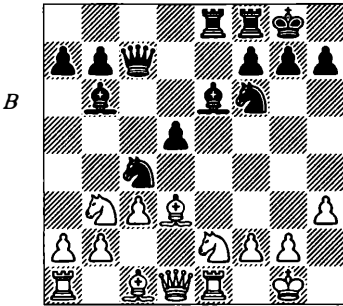
23 ♘h6+ ♗h8

23...gxf6 is also bad: 24 ♚g3+ ♙g5 25 h4. chesstouring.com

24 ♚c3 ♙c5

25 ♖d6+- ♔d5
 26 ♜xc5 bxc5 27 ♜xf7+ ♜g8 28 ♜d6 ♜g4 29 f3 ♜d4 30 ♜f2 ♜f8 31 ♜e1 ♜h4 32 ♜xc5 ♜b3 33 ♜xa7 ♜xh2 34 ♜e4 e5 35 ♜d7 ♜xe4 36 ♜xe4 ♜d4 37 ♜d5+ ♜h8 38 ♜xe5 ♜xf3 39 ♜f4 1-0.

No. 4



How should Black continue?

Panov - Bondarevsky
 10th USSR Ch, Tbilisi 1937

16 ... ♜xh3!

White's kingside lacks protection and this move exploits that fact.

17 ♜f4

After 17 gxf3? ♜xe2! Black's attack is unstoppable, for example 18 ♜xe2? leads to a forced checkmate after 18...♜g3+ 19 ♜h1 ♜xh3+ 20 ♜g1 ♜xf2+ 21 ♜xf2 ♜e4+ 22 ♜g1 ♜g3+ 23 ♜h1 ♜f2# while 18 ♜xe2 ♜g3+ 19 ♜h1 ♜xh3+ 20 ♜g1 ♜g3+ 21 ♜f1 ♜f3 22 ♜g1 ♜xf2+ 23 ♜xf2 ♜xd1+ is winning for Black.

17 ... ♜d7

18 gxf3?

It's difficult to find the best de-

fence over the board in positions like this. Instead of the text-move White had to play 18 ♜xc4!. Then Black would have a choice between two promising continuations:

a) 18...dxc4 19 gxf3 cxb3 20 ♜xd7 ♜xd7 21 axb3 (21 ♜d6 ♜e5 is even worse for White) 21...♜e5 22 ♜xe5 ♜xe5 and Black has a significant advantage in the ending.

b) 18...♜g4 19 ♜xd5 ♜xd5 20 ♜xd5 ♜xe2 21 ♜xe2 ♜xe2 22 ♜g3 ♜e6 23 ♜d2 ♜xd2 24 ♜xd2 and again Black has better chances in the endgame, thanks to his bishop pair.

18 ... ♜xh3

19 ♜xc4 ♜g4+

20 ♜f1

20 ♜g3? loses after 20...♜xe2 21 ♜xe2 ♜xg3+ 22 ♜f1 ♜h3+ 23 ♜e1 dxc4 24 ♜d4 ♜e4 25 ♜xe4 ♜h1+ 26 ♜d2 ♜xe4.

20 ... ♜xf2!

Perhaps the text-move makes a stronger aesthetic impression, but 20...♜f3! would also be very good for Black: 21 ♜bd4 ♜xd4 22 ♜xd4 ♜xe2 23 ♜h2 (or 23 ♜g3 ♜fe8 winning) 23...♜xe1+ 24 ♜xe1 ♜h1+ 25 ♜e2 ♜xh2 and White can resign.

21 ♜xf2 ♜e4+

22 ♜f1 ♜f3+

23 ♜g1 ♜f2+

24 ♜h1 ♜e6

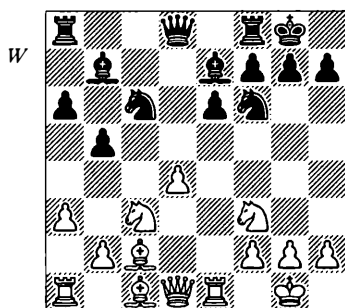
25 ♜xd5

25 ♜d3 dxc4 26 ♜e3 would be more stubborn, but there Black wins as well after the further 26...cxb3 27 ♜f1 ♜h4+! for example 28 ♜h2 ♜f6 29 ♜f4 ♜g4 30 ♜d4 ♜h6.

- | | | |
|----|-------|----------|
| 25 | ... | ♖f3+ |
| 26 | ♔h2 | ♜g6 |
| 27 | ♙xf7+ | ♞xf7 |
| 28 | ♞d8+ | ♞f8 |
| 29 | ♞d5+ | ♔h8 |
| 30 | ♘g3 | ♞f2+ 0-1 |

It's mate in 4, so White resigned.

No. 5



Find a plan for White and illustrate it with a few possible variations.

Lukacs - Flesch
Szolnok 1975

- 13 ♞d3!

White has set-up the '♙c2 and ♞d3' battery, which often works well for him, as we have seen.

- 13 ... ♞c8
14 d5!

A fine move which starts a dangerous attack. The text is even more energetic and forceful than 14 ♙g5.

- 14 ... exd5
15 ♙g5 ♘e4
15...g6? 16 ♞xe7 ♘e7 17 ♙xf6

is hopeless for Black.

- 16 ♘xe4 dx4

- 17 ♞xe4 g6
18 ♞ad1 ♞c7
19 ♞h4 ♞ce8

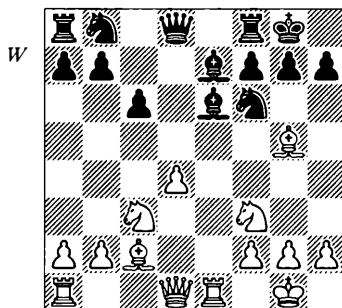
Moving the other rook to e8 — 19...♞fe8 — does not help either, as after 20 ♙b3! ♙f8 21 ♙f4 ♞xe1+ 22 ♞xe1 ♞a5 23 ♙xf7+! White's attack decides.

- 20 ♙b3! h5
21 ♙xe7 ♘e7

Black's position is lost. 21...♞xe7 22 ♞f6! is also hopeless for him.

- 22 ♘e5+- ♞d8
23 ♞xd8 ♞xd8
24 ♘xf7 ♞xf7
25 ♞xe7 1-0

No. 6



How should White develop his initiative?

Krasenkov - Rozentalis
Poland Cht, Krynica 1997

- 13 ♞d3! g6

This was forced, as 13...♘bd7 would have lost a pawn after 14 ♙xf6 ♘xf6 15 ♘g5.

- 14 ♙h6 ♞e8

15 ♖xe6!

White does not allow his opponent any time to organise a defence.

- 15 ... fxe6
16 ♘g5

The main target here is not the e6-pawn but the one on h7 — if that falls, Black's position will collapse.

- 16 ... ♖a5

His only chance is to move his queen to f5. Otherwise White will breakthrough along the b1-h7 diagonal, e.g. 16...♙f8 17 ♘h7 ♗xh7 18 ♖xg6+ ♗h8 19 ♙g5 ♘bd7 20 ♘e4+.

- 17 b4!

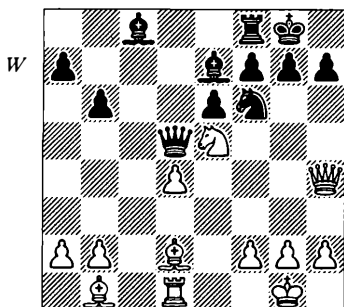
A terrific move which completely destroys Black's defence.

- 17 ... ♖f5

The point of White's previous move can be seen clearly in the following variation: 17...♙xb4 18 ♘h7 ♖f5 and now, as the f6-knight is no longer protected by Black's bishop, 19 ♖f5 wins: 19...exf5 20 ♘xf6+ ♗f7 21 ♘e8 ♙xc3 22 ♘c7.

- 18 ♖e3 1-0

No. 7



Find White's best continuation.

Knaak - Estevez
Cuba 1974

- 23 ♙g5! ♙b7
24 f3 h6

Sadly, this is forced. Black could not simply vacate the f8-square for the king by playing 24...♞d8, as after 25 ♘g4! White is winning.

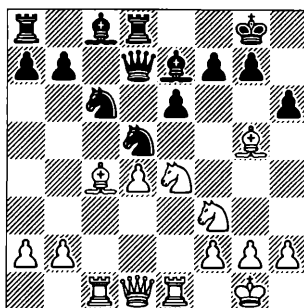
- 25 ♙xh6!

A winning move.

- 25 ... gxf6
26 ♖xh6

Black cannot prevent 27 ♘g4 and therefore he is lost: 26...♖d8 27 ♘g4 ♘e4 28 fxe4 ♙g5 29 ♖h5 ♗g7 30 ♘e5 ♙e3+ 31 ♗h1 1-0.

No. 8



How would you continue?

Stein - Tal
Pärnu 1971

- 14 ♙xd5!

This exchange yields White a very significant advantage.

- 14 ... ♖xd5

Also after 14...exd5 15 ♙xe7 White is better, as 15...dxe4? is bad

for Black in view of 16 ♙xd8 exf3 17 ♙c7!.

- 15 ♙xe7 ♜xe7
16 ♜e5 f6??

The desire to drive away the e5-knight is understandable, but the text badly weakens the seventh rank, causing much damage to Black's position.

Let us consider the solid-looking move 16... ♜c6. Then after 17 ♞h5! ♜xe5 (even worse is 17... ♜f8? 18 ♜f6+! gxf6 19 ♞xh6, where both White's rooks are ready to join the attack along via the third rank) 18 dx e5 White has a decisive advantage thanks to his better development, the outpost on d6 and the clear prospects of attack on the kingside. Thus, 16... ♜c6 just won't do.

I think that Black had to grab the pawn — 16... ♞xd4!. This move got a question mark in the book *Isolated Pawn* by Mikhalchishin on account of the following line: 17 ♞h5 ♜f8 18 ♜c4 ♞xb2 19 ♜f6+! gxf6 20 ♞xh6 fxe5 21 ♜h4 and White wins.

However, instead of 18... ♞b2? Black should defend with 18...g6!, and although after the further 19 ♜f6+ ♜g7 20 ♜xd4 gxh5 21 ♜xh5+ ♜h7 22 ♜c1 White's advantage in the ending is unquestionable, Black is still in the game.

- 17 ♜c7! ♙d7

After 17... ♞xd4? White should not settle for some plus in the end-game arising after 18 ♞xd4 ♜xd4 19 ♜xe7 fxe5 20 f3, but instead should exploit the advantages of his position tactically — by playing 18

♜xf6+! gxf6 19 ♞h5!, winning.

Also after 17...fxe5 18 ♜xe7 ♞a5 White's advantage is decisive, for example: 19 ♜e3!? ♞b4 20 ♜xg7+ ♜xg7 21 ♞g4+ ♜h8 22 ♞h4 ♞f8 23 ♜f3 and Black can resign.

- 18 ♞g4! ♜h7
19 ♜c3

It would be better to play 19 ♜xd7! ♜xd7 20 ♜xd7 ♞xd7 21 ♜c5 when after the further 21... ♞d5 22 ♜xe6 ♜g8 23 h3 White has both a material and a positional advantage.

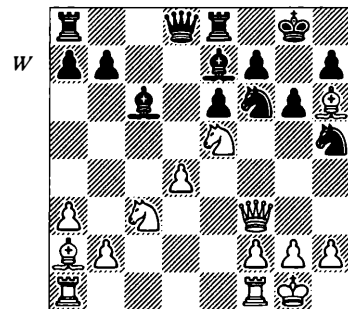
- 19 ... ♞d6
20 ♜xd7 ♜xd7
21 ♜xd7 ♞xd7

Here White went wrong again with 22 ♜xe6? and after 22...f5 23 ♞e2 ♜c6 24 ♞e3 ♞xd4 25 ♞xd4 ♜xd4 Black managed to save the day. With the superior:

- 22 ♞xe6 ♞xe6
23 ♜xe6

White should have been able to capitalise on his material advantage.

No. 9



Suggest a plan for White, showing some relevant variations.

Shamkovich - Kolarov*Varna 1970*

At first glance it looks that here White should play something like 19 ♟xc6 bxc6 20 ♙e3 , but in fact he came up with a different and a very interesting move:

19 **d5!**

This sudden break in the centre is justified by the rather awkward position of Black's knights.

19 ... ♞xd5

Black could take on d5 differently — 19... exd5 — but then 20 g4 ♞g7 21 g5 wins the f6-knight, as 21... ♞fh5 is bad for Black in view of 22 ♝xf7+ ♜h8 23 ♞xd5 .

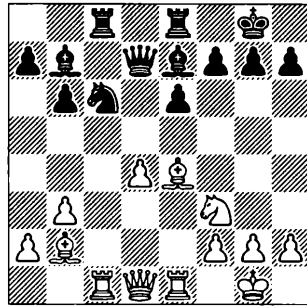
20 ♞xd5 **exd5**21 ♞ad1

Having temporarily sacrificed a pawn, White is about to break through in the centre — both the d5- and f7-pawns are weak.

21 ... ♙f8 22 ♞xf7! ♝b6

Black cannot play 22... ♞xf7? because of 23 ♞xd5+ .

However, instead of the text he should have played 22... ♝c7! . Then, after the further 23 ♙xf8 ♜xf8 (23... ♞xf8? 24 ♞g5 is bad for Black) 24 ♞g5 ♝f4! 25 ♞xh7+! ♞xh7 26 ♝xd5 ♞g7 27 ♝xb7+ , White is better, but Black's position is not without chances.

23 ♙xf8 ♞xf8 24 ♞g5 $\text{♝xb2?!$ 25 ♙xd5+ ♞xd5 26 ♝xd5+ ♜h8 27 ♞b1+ ♝c3 28 ♞xb7 ♞f6 29 ♝d6 **a5**30 ♝e7 ♞g8 31 ♝xh7+ 1-0**No. 10**

How would you develop White's initiative?

Portisch - de Firmian*Reggio Emilia 1989*16 ♞xc6!

This text refutes Black's previous move, 15... ♝d5-d7? . He should have retreated his queen to d6, a5 or h5.

16 ... ♙xc6 17 ♞e5 ♝b7

The only move, as 17... ♝d6? loses on the spot in view of 18 ♙xh7+ ♞f8 19 ♝h5 .

18 ♙xh7+! ♞f8

Black also loses if he accepts the sacrifice: 18... ♞xh7 19 ♝h5+ ♞g8 20 ♝xf7+ ♜h7 (or 20... ♜h8 21 ♞xc6! ♝c7 22 ♞xe6 ♙f8 23 ♝h5+ ♜g8 24 ♞xe8+). Annotating this game in *Informator* 49, GM Portisch then gave the following line as win-

ning — 21 ♖g6+ ♜g8 22 d5 ♙xd5
 23 ♜d7 e5 24 ♙xe5, but he missed
 that Black can defend better with
 22...♙f6 23 dxc6 ♜c7. Therefore,
 instead of 21 ♖g6+ White should
 play 21 ♜xc6!, as in reply to 21...♜f8
 22 ♖xe7 ♖xe7 23 ♜xe7 ♜c2 he has
 an important *zwischenzug* — 24
 ♜e3! — which wins after 24...g5 25
 ♙c3 ♜fxf2 26 ♜g3.

19 ♖h5 ♙b4

20 ♙d3 g6

The best move, as other attempts
 lose more quickly, for example
 20...♙xg2 21 ♙a6! ♜c7 22 ♙xc8
 ♜xc8 23 ♜c1+.

21 ♖h6+ ♜e7

Black's king could not come back
 to the kingside, as 21...♜g8 loses
 because of 22 ♜g4 f5 23 d5 e5 24
 ♖xg6+ ♖g7 25 ♜h6+ ♜h8 26
 ♜xe5!.

22 d5! ♙xe1

Now Black cannot play 22...
 ♙xd5? because of 23 ♖h4+, which
 picks up the b4-bishop.

23 ♙a3+ ♜d8

24 ♖h4+ ♜c7

25 dxc6 ♖a8

A sad necessity. Like a tornado,
 White's attack has dispersed Black's
 pieces and they find themselves in
 awkward positions, being unable to
 protect their king.

26 ♖f6+- b5

27 ♙c5 ♜cd8

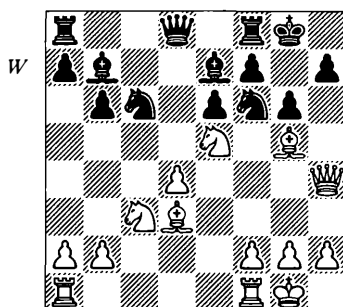
28 ♖xf7+ ♜c8

29 ♙xb5 a6

30 ♖d7+! 1-0

A neat finish!

No. 11



Find White's best continuation.

Plaskett - K. Arkell

London WFW 1991

14 ♙a6!

This move wins by force — White
 has spotted that both Black's knights
 are in shaky positions.

14 ... h6

15 ♙xh6 ♜d5

Also bad is 15...♜d7 16 ♖e4 ♜f6
 17 ♜xc6! ♜xe4 18 ♙xb7 ♜xc3 (or
 18...♖d7 19 ♜xe7+ ♖xe7 20 ♙xe4
 when both Black's rooks hang) 19
 ♜xd8 ♜e2+ 20 ♜h1 ♜axd8 21 ♜fd1
 ♜xd4 22 ♙xf8 ♜xf8 23 ♜ac1+.

16 ♖h3 ♜xc3

17 ♙xb7 ♜e2+

18 ♜h1 ♜cxd4

19 ♙xf8 ♙xf8

20 ♙xa8 ♖xa8

21 ♖e3

White is about to acquire even
 more material!

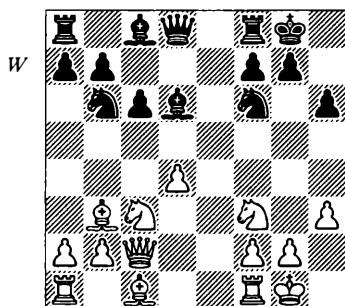
21 ... ♖d5

22 ♜ae1 ♙d6

23 f4chesstoug5ng.com

24 ♜xe2 1-0

No. 12



How should White play?

Smagin - Monin

Pinsk 1986

13 ♖xh6!

White punishes his opponent's careless 12...h6. Now Black comes under pressure for a long time.

13 ... ♗g6

14 ♖g6+ ♘h8

15 ♖xh6+ ♘h7

After 15...♘g8?! White obtains a material advantage by playing 16 ♗g5 ♖f5 17 ♘xf7! ♗xf7 18 ♖g5+ ♘f8 19 ♖xf7.

16 ♗e4 ♖e7

17 ♗f6! ♖f5

18 ♗h5 ♖f6

19 ♗g5 ♖xd4

20 ♗xh7 ♖xh7

21 ♗ad1 f5?

Until here everything was forced. Black finally got a moment to do something for his defence, but he used that time badly. The text exposed the seventh rank too much.

21...c5 would also be bad in view of 22 ♗xd4! ♖xd4 23 ♗d1 ♖e5 24

f4 ♖xb2 25 ♘f6+- but 21...♗g8 could offer good resistance. After 22 ♖c2 (after 22 ♖xf7? ♗f8 Black is fine) 22...♗g6 23 ♖xg6 fxg6 24 ♘f4 ♖f6 25 ♘xg6+ (25 ♗xd4 ♖xd4 26 ♘xg6+ ♘g8 gives White only a draw after 27 ♘e7+ ♘h8) 25...♖xg6 26 ♖xg6 ♖xf2+! 27 ♗xf2 ♖xg6 a very unbalanced endgame arises. Although White has the better prospects here after 28 ♗d6 ♘g7 29 g4 with a further advance of his kingside pawns, Black does have some chances.

22 ♗fe1!+- ♖f6

Desperation, but Black could not prevent 23 ♗xd4 ♖xd4 24 ♗e7.

23 ♘xf6 ♖xf6

24 ♗e6 ♖g7

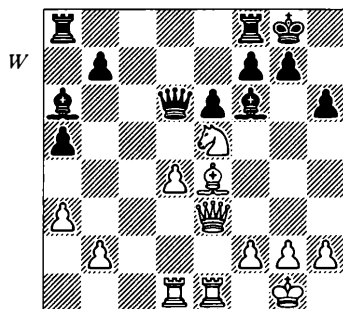
25 ♖h5 a5

26 ♗dd6 ♗ac8

27 ♗e7 a4

28 ♗h6 1-0

No. 13



Suggest a plan for White.

Karpov - Timman

Moscow 1981

chesstouring.com

23 ♖c2!?

The bishop makes way for the queen.

23 ... ♖fd8

After 23... ♖d5 24 ♘b3 ♗d6 White can transpose into the game continuation by 25 ♗e4! ♖fd8 26 ♘c2.

24 ♗e4 ♖ac8

25 ♗h7+ ♔f8

26 h3?!

Karpov's annotations suggest that White should have played 26 ♘b3! ♔e7 (26... ♗b6? is bad because of 27 ♘g6+! fxg6 28 ♘xe6 ♖c6 29 ♘d5 and White is winning) 27 ♘g4 ♖h8 28 ♗f5 with the advantage. Although 26 ♘b3 looks better than 26 h3, Karpov's next move in this variation — 27 ♘g4?! — is not very convincing, as then Black can play 27... ♗b6!? 28 ♘xf6 ♔xf6 29 ♖e3 ♗xd4!.

26 ... b6?

Black had to play 26... ♔e7 with a pretty good position.

27 ♘b3! ♘b7?

Again, 27... ♔e7 was required.

28 d5

White could also win by playing 28 ♘g6+ fxg6 29 ♖xe6.

28 ... ♗c7

29 dx6 ♖xd1

30 ♘g6+! 1-0

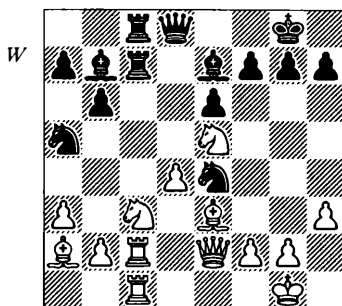
No. 14 (see top of next column)

Podgaets - V. Zhuravliov

USSR 1971

21 ♘xf7!

White spotted the weakness of the



How should White play here?

f7- and e6- pawns.

21 ... ♔xf7

White is also better after 21... ♘xc3 22 ♖xc3 ♖xc3 23 ♖xc3 ♔xf7 24 ♗h5+ ♔g8 25 ♘xe6+ ♔h8 26 ♘f5! ♗g8 (26...g6?! is worse, e.g. 27 ♘xg6 ♗g8 28 ♖xc8 ♘xc8 29 ♘xh7 ♗xh7 30 ♗e8+ ♗g8 31 ♗xe7+-) 27 ♘xc8 ♘xc8 28 ♖c7.

22 ♗g4!? ♗d7?

This move loses by force. Black overestimated his chances; he had to play 22... ♔g8, although even then White keeps a very dangerous initiative by playing 23 ♘f4!?

23 ♘xe4 ♖xc2

24 ♖xc2 ♖xc2

25 ♗f5+ ♔e8

26 ♘xe6

Despite his great material advantage (a whole rook up!), Black is lost.

26 ... ♗a4

27 ♘d6+

Also good would be 27 ♘g5 ♖xf2 28 ♘xf2 ♘f6 29 ♘xf6 gxf6 30 ♗xf6+-.

27 ...chesstou♘d8.com

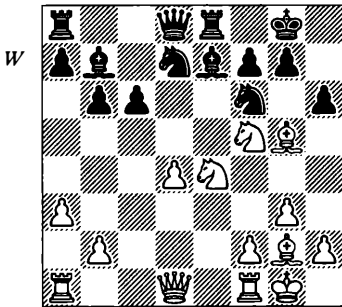
28 ♘f7+ ♔e8

29 ♖e5 ♜c6
30 d5

White could also win by playing 30 ♖xh7 ♜d8 31 b3 ♖xa3 32 ♖xc2 — there is more than one way to capitalise on White's advantage here.

The game ended 30...♜b5 31 ♖f7+ ♜d8 32 d6 ♜c1+ 33 ♜xc1 ♖d1+ 34 ♜h2 ♖xd6 35 ♜f4 ♜e8 36 ♖g8 ♜f8 37 ♜f7+ ♜xf7 38 ♖xf7 ♖e7 39 ♜g5 1-0.

No. 15



How should White continue?

Tatai - Sanna
Italy Ch 1981

15 ♜xh6!

This move isn't difficult to make, once White realises that his attack does not involve much of a sacrifice and will be long-lasting, since Black's king becomes completely exposed.

15 ... gxf6
16 ♜xh6+ ♜f8
17 ♜g5 ♜d6

White's advantage in this position is of a long-term nature. When the f7-pawn falls, he will have rough

material parity (three pawns for a bishop) and good chances to attack Black's exposed king. For example: 17...♖c8 18 ♜hxf7 ♜g7 19 ♜e1! ♜f8 20 ♜c1 and Black's position is lost.

18 ♖d2

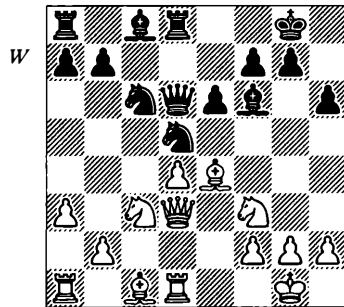
White also had another good option here — 18 ♖b3!? — when after 18...♜d5 19 ♜h7+ ♜g7 20 ♜f5+ ♜xh7 21 ♜xd6 White is winning.

18 ... ♖c7
19 ♜f5 ♜g8
20 ♜h6+ ♜f8
21 ♜hxf7 ♜e7
22 ♜h6 ♜ae8

23 ♜f5 ♜e2 24 ♜h7+ ♜f7 25 ♖h6 ♜g8 26 ♜g5+ 1-0

Black resigned, as after 26...♜xg5 27 ♖xg5 White would have both a material and a positional advantage.

No. 16



Suggest an appropriate plan for White.

Antoshin - Furman
USSR 1970

14 ♖e2!

A nice manoeuvre — White is trying to reverse his pieces on the b1–h7 diagonal, as the move ...h6 weakened Black’s kingside. This plan was briefly mentioned earlier (page 85) and now we can see how it works in practice.

- 14 ... b6
 15 ♖c2 ♗b7
 16 ♜d3 ♘f8
 17 ♜h7

From now on Black must be very careful with his king’s safety!

- 17 ... ♔e8

White is also better after 17... ♗ce7 18 ♗e4 ♜c6 19 ♗b3, for example 19... ♗g8 20 ♜h8!? ♗e7 21 ♗e5 ♜b5 22 ♗c4 ♜e8 23 ♗g4, with a very dangerous attack.

- 18 ♗e4!?

White wants to retain more pieces. 18 ♗b3 would also be interesting.

- 18 ... ♜f8
 19 ♗a4! a6
 20 ♗d2 b5
 21 ♗b3 ♗e7
 22 a4

22 ♜e1 was worth considering.

- 22 ... b4
 23 a5!?

White wants to resume the pin on the a4–e8 diagonal. The awkward position of Black’s king affects the play significantly.

- 23 ... f5
 24 ♗a4 ♜dc8

The position arising after 24... ♗xe4 25 ♗e5! (after 25 ♜g6+ ♜f7 26 ♗xc6+ ♗xc6 27 ♜xf7+ ♘xf7 28

♗e5+ ♘f6 29 ♗xc6 ♜dc8 Black avoids the immediate danger) 25... ♜d6 26 ♜ac1 ♜c8 looks quite scary for Black, but this is what he had to play.

- 25 ♗e5 ♔d8
 26 ♗xc6

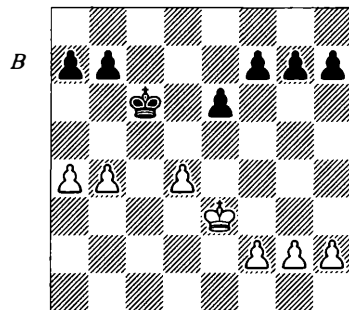
More energetic would be 26 ♗g6! ♜f7 27 ♗c5 ♗xc5 28 dxc5 with a decisive advantage.

- 26 ... ♗xc6
 27 ♗c5 ♗xc5
 28 dxc5 ♗e8
 29 ♗xb4 ♔c7
 30 ♜xd5 exd5

31 ♗c3 ♘b7 32 ♗g6 ♜xc5?! 33 ♗f4 ♜a7 34 ♜xf5 ♘b8 35 ♜e5+ ♜c7 36 ♗xd5 ♜xe5 37 ♗xe5+ ♘b7 38 ♗d4 ♜aa8 39 ♗b6 ♜d8 40 ♗xg7 ♗c6 41 ♗xa8 ♜g8 42 ♗b6 ♜xg7 43 g3 ♜e7 44 ♗c4 ♜e2 45 ♜c1 ♗f3 46 ♘f1 ♜e6 47 ♜c3 ♗c6 48 f4 1–0.

Part 2

No. 1



*How would you play this ending?
 What should be the result?*

Pinkus - Szypulski

Porz open 1992

26 ... b5

This seems to be the best move — the queenside pawns should be fixed.

27 a5 ♖d5

28 ♖d3 h5!

White is O.K. after 28...g5 29 g4 f5 30 h3 a6 31 f3 h6 32 ♖c3 e5 33 dxe5 ♗xe5 34 ♖d3.

29 f3!

The key factor in this endgame is control over the e4-square. As White's king has to look after the c4-square, the f-pawn must take control of the e4-entry point.

29 ... g5

Black has another interesting try here: 29...h4 30 ♖c3 h3!?. Alas, this attempt does not succeed either — in view of 31 gxh3. Of course not 31 g3? as it weakens the f3-pawn whereupon Black could gain access to the critical e4-square and win after 31...g5 32 ♖d3 a6 33 ♖c3 g4 34 fxg4 ♗e4.

Then the following lengthy variation is possible: 31...e5 32 dxe5 ♗xe5 33 ♖d3 ♖f4 34 ♗e2 ♗g5 35 ♗e3 (passive defence is hopeless — after 35 ♖f2? ♖h4 36 a6 ♖xh3 37 ♖g1 g5 38 ♖h1 f5 39 ♖g1 g4 40 fxg4 fxg4 41 ♖h1 g3 Black wins) 35... ♖h4 36 ♖d4 ♖xh3 37 ♖c5 g5 38 ♖xb5 f5 39 ♖c5 f4 40 b5 g4 41 fxg4 f3 42 b6 axb6+ 43 axb6 f2 44 b7 f1 ♚ 45 b8 ♚ with a draw.

30 ♖c3 f6

White would have to be more careful after 30...h4 31 ♖d3 a6. Then 32

♖c3? loses on account of 32...g4! 33 ♖d3 h3 34 gxh3 gxf3 35 h4 f2 36 ♗e2 ♖xd4 37 h5 ♗e5. White has to prevent this scenario by playing 32 h3!.

This move holds the position, for example: 32...e5 33 dxe5 ♗xe5 34 ♗e3 f6 35 ♖d3 ♖f4 36 ♗e2 ♖g3 37 ♖f1.

31 ♖d3 f5

32 ♖c3 g4

33 ♖d3 h4

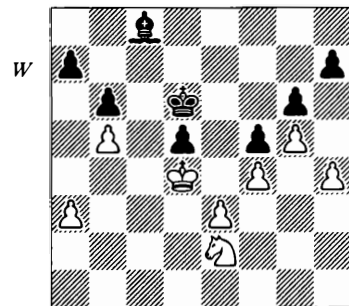
Black cannot use his reserve tempo on the queenside yet, as 33...a6 34 h4 is safe for White.

34 fxg4 fxg4

35 a6

Now it's White who has utilised that reserve move. The finish was: 35...e5 36 dxex5 ♗xe5 37 ♗e3 ♖f5 38 ♖d3 ♖f4 39 ♖d4 h3 40 g3+ ♖f3 41 ♖d3 ½-½.

No. 2



Suggest a plan for White and support it with a few variations.

Belavenets - Rauzer

Leningrad 1937

White's plan can be divided into two parts:

1. Gain more space on the kingside by advancing the pawn to h6. That will create various threats like ♖xf5.

2. Move the knight via b4 to the c6-square, forcing a winning pawn endgame.

1 ♖g3! ♜d7

If instead of the text, Black had played 1...a6, then after 2 bxa6 ♜xa6 3 h5 ♖e6 4 h6 he would not have been able to prevent 5 ♖h5!, which would either win the h7-pawn after 6 ♖f6 or give White's h-pawn a green light after 5...gxh5 6 g6 hxg6 7 h7.

2 a4 ♖e6

After 2...♜e8 3 h5 gxh5? Black loses in view of 4 ♖xf5+ ♖e6 5 ♖g7+ ♖e7 6 ♖xe8 ♖xe8 7 ♖xd5.

3 h5 ♜e8

4 h6! ♖d6

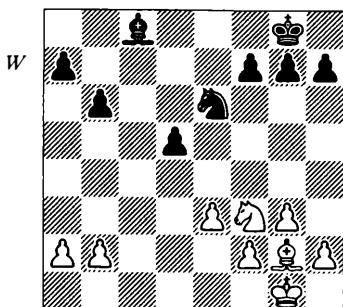
5 ♖e2! 1-0

At that stage the game was adjudicated and White was awarded a win.

A possible line could be: 5...♜d7 6 ♖c3 ♜e6 7 ♖a2 ♜f7 (or 7...♜c8 8 ♖b4 ♜b7? 9 ♖d3!+-) 8 ♖b4 ♜e6 9 ♖c6 a5 10 bxa6! ♖xc6 11 a7! (but not 11 ♖e5? ♜c8 12 a7 ♜b7 13 ♖f6 ♖d6 14 ♖g7 ♖e7) 11...♖b7 12 ♖e5. Then White wins after the further 12...♜d7 13 ♖f6 ♜xa4 14 ♖g7 b5 15 ♖xh7 b4 16 ♖xg6 b3 17 h7 ♜e8+ 18 ♖f6 b2 19 h8 ♖ b1 ♖ 20 a8 ♖+ ♖xa8 21 ♖xe8+.

No. 3 (see top of next column)

Tukmakov - Reshevsky
Vilnius 1978



Assess this position and suggest a plan for White.

22 ♜h3!

A clever move — White wants to exchange a pair of minor pieces, thus obtaining a more favourable ending.

22 ... ♖f8

23 ♜xe6 fxe6

Reshevsky avoided 23...♜xe6, after which the resulting position would be very similar to the one from the endgame Flohr-Capablanca. It's hard to say whether his move is better, though — White keeps good winning chances in either case.

24 ♖e5!

White fixes Black's central pawns, thus leaving Black's bishop passive.

24...♖e7 25 f4 ♖d6 26 ♖f2 ♖c5 27 ♖f3 b5 28 ♖e2 b4 29 ♖d3 ♜d7 30 ♖d4 ♖d6 31 ♖f3 ♖c5 32 ♖d4 ♖d6 33 a3! bxa3 34 bxa3 e5 35 fx5+ ♖xe5 36 ♖f3+ ♖d6 37 ♖d4 ♜f5 38 ♖e5 ♜e6 39 ♖d3 g5?

Although from the general point of view the text is correct — Black places his pawns on dark squares while having a light-squared bishop

— this move is wrong, since it creates a weakness. Black should have played something like 39...h6 instead.

40 ♖c5 ♙f5

The pawn ending arising after 40...h6 41 ♖xe6 ♗xe6 would be lost for Black, as White's king is more active. For example: 42 g4! ♖d6 43 e4 dxe4 44 ♗xe4 ♗e6 45 a4 a5 46 h3 ♖d6 47 ♖d4! ♗c6 (or 47...♗e6 48 ♗c5 ♗e5 49 ♗b5 ♗f4 50 ♗xa5 ♗g3 51 ♗b5 ♗xh3 52 a5, winning) 48 ♗c4 ♗b6 49 ♖d5 and White wins the a5-pawn and the game.

Yet, other retreats of the bishop do not help either: 40...♗c8 drops a pawn in view of 41 e4!, while 40...♗g4 41 e4 ♗f3 is also hopeless for Black because of 42 e5+ ♗e7 43 ♖a6! ♖d7 44 ♖b4 ♗e6 45 ♖c6.

41 ♖b7+ ♗c6 42 ♖d8+ ♖d7 43 ♗e5!

An important *zwischenzug*, which decides the game.

43...♗g6 44 ♖e6 ♗c6 45 ♖xg5 ♗b5 46 g4 ♖a4 47 h4 h5

Black should have tried 47...♗xa3!? 48 h5 ♗c2 instead. Then White would have a wide choice (49 ♗xd5, 49 e4, etc.) and therefore more chances to go wrong. Yet, in that line also, White wins by utilising the energy of his pawns on the kingside by playing 49 ♖xh7! ♗xh7 50 g5 ♗e4 51 g6 a5 52 ♗f6.

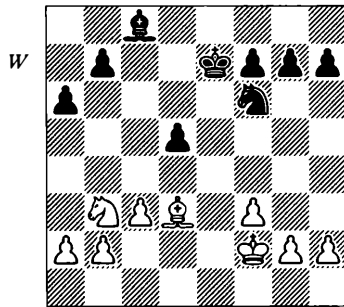
48 gxh5 ♗xh5 49 ♖h7 ♗xa3 50 ♖f6 ♗f7 51 h5 ♗b3 52 h6 ♗g6 53 ♖d4 ♗b4

White also wins after 53...a5 54 ♖xd5 a4 55 e4 a3 56 ♖c3, when his

e-pawn will march, eventually decoying Black's bishop from g6.

54 h7 1-0

No 4.



Play this position from either side vs. an opponent of similar strength.

G. Agzamov - Dolmatov
USSR Ch, Frunze 1981

30 ♗e3 ♖d6
31 ♖d4 b6

GM Sergei Dolmatov is known for his excellent endgame technique — pay attention to how he commands his pawns in this ending.

32 ♖d2 g6

This pawn goes to a light square only in order to cover the important f5-square.

33 ♗e3 ♖e8 34 ♗f4 h6 35 h4 ♖g7 36 ♖b3 ♖e6+ 37 ♗e3 ♗e5 38 g3 g5! 39 hxg5 hxg5 40 ♖d2 ♖d8 41 b4 ♖c6 42 ♖b3 ♖d6 43 ♗e2 f6 44 ♗f1 ♗e5 45 ♗d3 ♖d6 46 ♗e2 ♗e5 47 a4 ♖d6 48 ♗d3 a5

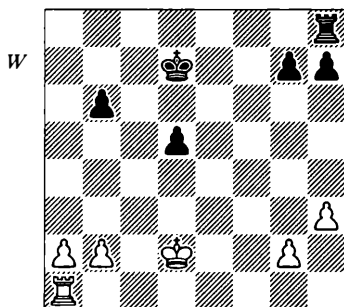
Now all Black's pawns are placed ideally — on dark squares, while his bishop takes care of the light squares.

49 ♖b5 ♖b7

Of course, not 49...axb4?? 50 ♗xc6 ♗xc6 51 cxb4, where White will be able to create an outside passed pawn.

50 ♖d4 ♖xd4 51 ♗xd4 ♗c8 52 ♗d3 ♗d7 53 ♗c2 ♗e6 54 ♖b3 ♗f7 55 ♗c2 ♗e8 56 ♖b3 ♗f7 57 f4 gxf4 58 gxf4 ♗e6 59 ♗d1 ♗f5 60 ♖b3 ♗e6 61 ♗c2 ½-½

No. 5



Play this position from either side vs. an opponent of similar strength.

Eingorn - Panczyk
Polanica Zdroj 1984

Obviously this position cannot be analysed 'to the end' but we can state that White has an advantage due to his queenside pawn majority and the opportunity to seize the open f-file.

32 ♗f1! ♗e6 33 ♗f3! ♗a8 34 a3 ♗d8 35 ♖b3 ♗d6 36 ♗e3+ ♗d7 37 ♗g3!

White masterfully weakens the opponent's pawns. Note how GM Eingorn forced Black's rook to take a passive position.

37...g6 38 ♗f3 ♗c6 39 ♗f7 h6 40 h4 h5 41 ♗d3

Now it's time to activate the king.

41...♗e6 42 ♗f4 ♗c5 43 a4 ♗d6 44 b4

White's queenside pawn majority starts to play an increasingly important role in the game.

44...♗e5 45 ♗f2 ♗d6 46 g3 ♗e4 47 ♗f4 ♗e6 48 ♗d4 ♗c6 49 a5 bxa5 50 bxa5 ♗b5 51 ♗xd5 ♗e3 52 g4 hxg4

52...♗xa5? would be much worse because White manages to keep more pawns on the board by playing 53 g5. Then after 53...♗b5 54 ♗f6 ♗h3 55 ♗xg6 ♗xh4 56 ♗h6 ♗h1 57 g6 h4 58 ♗e6 White is winning.

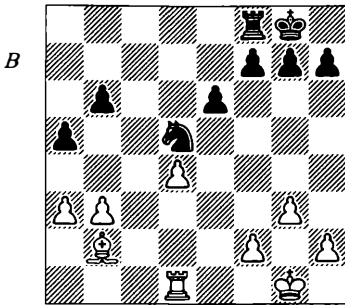
53 ♗xg4 ♗xa5 54 ♗xg6 ♗h3 55 ♗g4 ♗b6 56 ♗d6!

According to Ken Thompson's endgame database, White wins this position — with best play from both sides — in 27 moves. Being a human, I can only say that White is trying to move his king to the g-file, simultaneously cutting off the opponent's monarch from that flank.

56...♗h1 57 ♗b4+ ♗a5 58 ♗c5 ♗h2 59 ♗c4 ♗a6 60 ♗c6 ♗a7 61 ♗b4 ♗h1 62 ♗d6 ♗a6 63 ♗e6 ♗a5 64 ♗g4 ♗b6 65 ♗f6 ♗c6 66 ♗g6 ♗d1 67 h5 ♗d6+ 68 ♗g5 ♗d5+ 69 ♗h4 ♗d1 70 h6 ♗d7 71 ♗g5 1-0

No. 6 (see top of facing page)

Chloupek - Stohl
Czechoslovakia Ch, Prague 1992



Suggest a plan for Black.

This position is quite similar to the one which occurred in the game Averbakh-Keres. As we know from that game, in such situations exchanging rooks does not suit the side playing against the isolani, unless his opponent has other weaknesses. Understanding this, GM Stohl played a fine move:

30 ... ♖b8!

Should Black mechanically occupy the open file by playing 30... ♖c8 and then trade off the rooks after the further 31 ♖c1 ♖xc1+?! (still better is 31... ♖b8!) 32 ♙xc1 b5 33 a4, his advantage would be greatly reduced. The text move opens up a route for Black's king into the centre and generates possibilities of further play with ...b5 and ...a4. White's control over the c-file would give him virtually nothing.

31 ♖c1 ♔f8
32 ♔f1 ♔e8
33 ♔e2 ♔d7
34 ♔d3 g5!

Black gains space on the kingside. We have seen the same idea in the

game Pupols-Baburin (page 136). Perhaps White should have prevented this advance by playing h2-h4 earlier on, although placing a pawn on h4 would have its own drawbacks.

35 f3 h5
36 ♖c2 g4
37 ♖f2 f5
38 ♙c1 b5
39 fxg4 hxg4

Black's advance on the kingside has brought some positive results, as the h2-pawn is a fixed target now.

40 ♙f4 ♖c8
41 ♙d2

Perhaps White should have fought for the c-file by playing 41 ♖c2!?, as the rook ending arising after 41... ♗xf4+ 42 gxf4 ♖h8 43 d5! ♖h3+ 44 ♔d4 ♖xb3 45 dxe6+ ♔xe6 46 ♖c6+ ♔e7 47 ♖c5 would give him good drawing chances.

41 ... a4
42 bxa4 bxa4
43 ♙b4 ♖c1
44 ♖b2 ♔f6!

Black redeploys his forces — he wants to play ... e4, ... ♔c6 and ... ♔d5 and then manoeuvre the knight to f3, if necessary.

45 ♙c5 ♔e4
46 ♖b7+ ♔c6
47 ♖b6+ ♔c7
48 ♖xe6?

This loses immediately, but even the more stubborn move 48 ♔e3 would have led to defeat after the further 48...e5 49 ♖a6 ♖c3+ 50 ♔e2 ♗xc5 51 dxc5 ♖xa3.

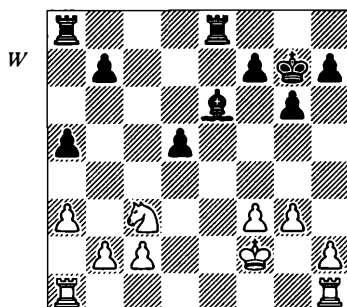
48 ... ♖xc5!

49 dxc5 ♖xc5+
 50 ♖d4 ♖xe6+
 51 ♖e5 ♖d7
 52 ♖xf5 ♖d4+
 53 ♖xg4 ♖b5
 54 ♖f4 ♖xa3
 55 ♖e4 ♖c4
 56 ♖d3 a3

0-1

This is a clear demonstration of how such endings should be played.

No. 7



Suggest a plan for White.

Westerinen - Hecht

Raach Z 1969

Without the rooks, this ending would be very difficult for Black, but with them it is just lost since White's rooks are going to be much more active than their counterparts.

23 ♖hd1 ♖ec8

Black is hoping to tie down the knight by putting pressure on the c2-pawn along the c-file, but this plan is easy to meet.

24 ♖d2 ♖c4
 25 ♖b5! ♖ac8

26 c3 ♖4c5
 27 ♖d4 ♖d7
 28 ♖e1 ♖f8
 29 ♖c2!?

Once the d5-pawn is fixed, White is going to attack it — a good example of utilising the blockading d4-square to switch between blockade and direct attack.

29 ... ♖e8
 30 ♖e3

An interesting and probably correct decision — White believes that his rook has better prospects than Black's.

30 ... ♖e6
 31 ♖ed1 ♖b5
 32 ♖e1 ♖c8
 33 ♖ee2 ♖cc5
 34 ♖e1!

White's king will take care of the b2-pawn, thus freeing his rooks.

34 ... ♖b3
 35 ♖d1 ♖g7
 36 ♖c1 ♖f6
 37 ♖d4 g5
 38 ♖ed2

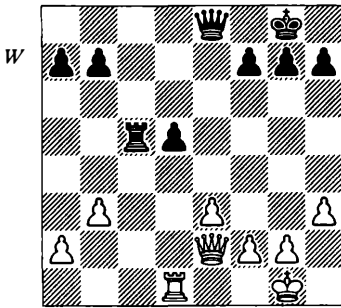
Also good would be 38 f4, weakening Black's kingside after 38... gxf4 39 ♖xf4+, as Black cannot play 38...h6? because of 39 f5, winning.

38 ... ♖cb5?

This loses on the spot, but also after 38... ♖bb5 39 h4 h6 40 hxg5+ hxg5 41 f4 Black would soon lose the d5-pawn and then the game.

39 a4 ♖c5
 40 ♖xd5+ ♖e5
 41 ♖c2 1-0

No. 8



Suggest a plan for White and provide some variations.

Smyslov - Suetin
Bad Wörishofen 1991

22 b4!?

White seizes the initiative, using the temporarily uncoordinated position of the black pieces and Black's back rank weakness.

22 ... ♖b5

This abandons the c-file, but Black did not have any better alternatives, as 22...♗c4? drops a pawn in view of 23 ♗xd5 ♗xb4? 24 ♖d3, winning. White also stands better after 22...♗b5 23 ♖d2! ♗c8 24 a3 ♗d8 25 ♖d4 ♗a4 26 ♗d3, when the threat of e3-e4 is hard to meet.

23 ♖g4! ♖e6

The only move, as 23...a5 is bad for Black because of 24 ♗c1 h5 25 ♖xh5 axb4 26 ♖g4. An attempt to create an escape square by playing 23...g6 is not satisfactory either in view of 24 a4 ♗b6 25 ♗xd5, when 25...♖xa4? results in a disaster after 26 ♗d8+ ♖g7 27 ♖d4+ ♖h6 28 ♗g8.

24 ♖f4 h6

25 a4 ♗b6

26 ♖d4 a6

27 ♖c5 ♖h7

Perhaps Black should have sought drawing chances in the rook endgame arising after 27...♖c6 28 ♗xd5 ♖xc5 29 bxc5 ♗b1+ 30 ♖h2 ♗a1.

28 b5 axb5

29 axb5 ♗d6

30 e4! b6

31 ♖d4 ♖d7

32 ♖d3!

White cleverly exploits the position of the black king on h7.

32 ... d4

33 e5+ ♗g6

34 f4 ♖d5

35 g4!

Smyslov attempts to exploit the black rook's awkward placement.

35 ... ♖g8

White is also much better after 35...h5 36 g5.

36 f5 ♗g5

37 ♖xd4 ♖f3

Black cannot restore the material *status quo*, as 37...♖xb5? loses in view of 38 h4.

38 ♖d8+ ♖h7

39 ♖d3 ♖f4

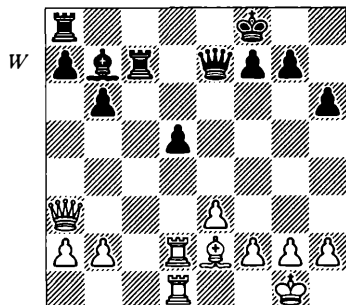
40 e6 ♖e5

40...fxe6 does not save Black either, as after 41 fxe6+ the e-pawn becomes too powerful, e.g. 41...♗g6 42 ♗e1 ♖b4 43 ♗e5 ♖e7 44 ♖e4 when Black is in zugzwang and therefore must give way to the e-pawn.

41 exf7 ♖f6

42 ♖d7 1-0

No. 9



How should White continue?

Hort - Beliavsky
Reggio Emilia 1986

21 ♖b3!

This move is contrary to conventional wisdom — “when playing against the isolated d-pawn, we should trade off pieces”. The reason behind White’s decision is that after 21 ♖xe7+ ♔xe7 Black’s king would be able to defend the d5-pawn, while his rooks would control the c-file.

21 ... ♖c5
22 ♘f3 ♖c4

After the alternative defence — 22... ♖d8 23 h3 — Black would have to give up control of the c-file, since he needs to protect the d5-pawn. Then after the further 23... ♖cd7 24 ♖d4 White has a very pleasant edge.

23 ♖a3+ ♔g8

Black could not play 23... ♖c5, as after 24 ♖d3! ♔g8 25 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 26 ♖xd5 ♖xd5 27 ♖xd5 ♖c2 28 ♖5d2 the resulting endgame would be winning for White.

24 h3 ♖d8

Better was 24... ♖d7, although after the further 25 ♖d4 Black’s position would remain very difficult, as all his pieces are tied down to the d5-pawn and therefore are passive.

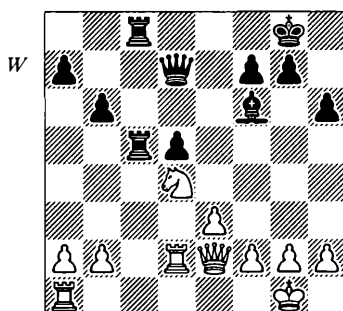
25 ♖xa7! ♖a8

The attempt to imprison the enemy queen by 25... ♖b4 would have lost on the spot after 26 ♖xd5!

26 ♖xb6 ♖a6
27 ♖d4 ♖xd4
28 ♖xd4 ♖xa2
29 ♖b4

White is winning: 29... ♖a5 30 ♖b6 ♔f8 31 b4 ♖a2 32 g4 ♖d7 33 ♔g2 ♔e7 34 ♖d4 ♖c2 35 ♖b5 ♔e6? 1–0. After this blunder, Black resigned in view of 36 ♖xb7!. However, after 35... ♖b2 36 h4 he would eventually lose anyway.

No. 10



Play this position from either side vs. an opponent of similar strength.

Gheorghiu - A. Petrosian
Bagneux 1982

White’s advantage is very significant. We saw a very similar situation

in the game Khalifman-Lukin (page 154).

21 ♖ad1 ♜a4

This leads Black's queen astray. Perhaps he should have preferred 21...g6, although over the board it's very difficult for Black to decide which defence is best.

22 b3 ♜a5 23 g3! ♜c1 24 ♖g2 ♖xd1 25 ♖xd1 ♜c5 26 h4!

White gains space on the kingside, which will be important in the future. Perhaps here Black should exchange the minor pieces, preparing for a difficult defence in a position with only major piece each on the board.

26...♜b4 27 h5 ♜c7 28 ♜f3 ♜c5 29 ♜f5! ♜a3 30 ♜d7 ♖f8

After the alternative 30...♜xa2 31 ♜e8+ ♖h7 32 ♜xf7 Black's kingside would be weak and would not survive White's attack.

However, the text move leads to a similar scenario.

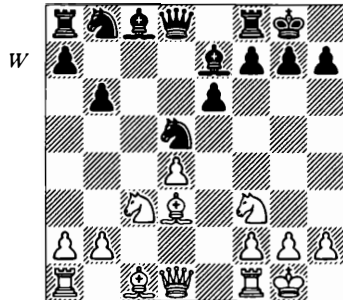
31 ♖b5 ♜b4 32 ♖d6 ♖g8 33 ♜xf7+ ♖h7 34 ♖xd5 ♜c2? 35 ♜g6+ ♖h8 36 ♜xc2 1-0

Part 3

No. 1 (see top of next column)

Larsen - Pomar
Spain 1978

This position arose after 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 exd5 cxd5 4 c4 ♖f6 5 ♖c3 e6 6 ♖f3 ♗e7 7 cxd5 ♖xd5 8 ♗d3 0-0 9 0-0 b6?!. White went to exploit the drawbacks of Black's dubious 9th move.



Suggest a plan for White.

10 ♖xd5!

This is the most practical decision. The tempting alternative — 10 ♜c2 — could lead to messy complications after 10...♖b4! 11 ♗xh7+ ♖h8 12 ♜e4 ♖8c6.

10 ... exd5

After 10...♜xd5 White scored a nice victory in the game Podgaets-Eolian, USSR 1979: 11 ♜c2 f5 12 ♗c4 ♜d6 13 ♗e1 ♖a6 14 ♗g5 ♗xg5 15 ♖xg5 ♖c7 16 ♜b3 ♜xd4 17 ♖ad1 ♜f6 18 ♗xe6+ ♖xe6 19 ♖xe6 ♗xe6 20 ♗xe6 ♜f7 21 ♗d7 1-0.

11 ♖e5

White immediately aims to take advantage of the weakened c6-square. Also very promising here is 11 ♜c2 g6 12 ♗e1.

11 ... ♗a6
12 ♗xa6 ♖xa6
13 ♜a4 ♜c8
14 ♗f4 ♜b7
15 ♜c6! ♖ab8

After 15...♜xc6 16 ♖xc6 ♗f6 17 ♗fe1 ♗fe8 18 ♖f1 Black is also in trouble, as his knight is completely paralysed.

- 16 ♖fc1 ♘b4
 17 ♜d7! ♘a6
 18 ♜c3 ♙f6
 19 ♜f5 ♜fe8
 20 ♜h3!

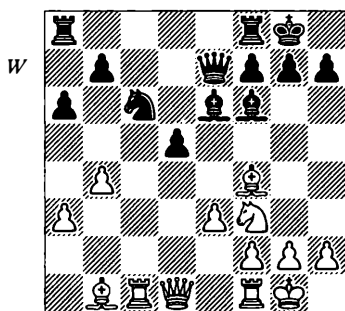
It's interesting to see how White's play on the queenside has resulted in a sudden attack on the opposite wing.

- 20 ... h6
 21 ♙xh6! ♜c8

Black is also helpless after 21... ♙xe5 22 dxe5 gxh6 23 ♜xh6 ♜e6 24 ♜h7+ ♘f8 25 ♜h8+ ♘e7 26 ♜xe6+ fxe6 27 ♜f6+ ♘d7 28 ♜f7+ ♘d8 29 ♜f8+ ♘d7 30 ♜d6+ ♘e8 31 ♜xe6+.

- 22 ♘d7 ♜e6
 23 ♙xg7 1-0

No. 2



How would you play with White?

Krasenkov - Van der Sterren
 FIDE-Wch Groningen 1997

- 16 e4!
 White hits the d5-pawn, using the

fact that 16...dxe4 isn't possible because of 17 ♙d6. Meanwhile he threatens to play 17 e5.

- 16 ... ♜d8
 17 ♜d3 dxe4
 18 ♜xe4 g6
 19 ♜fd1

White has a big advantage, due to his superior development.

- 19 ... ♜b6
 20 ♙e3 ♜c7
 21 ♘g5! ♜fe8

Of course, not 21... ♙f5? 22 ♜h4 ♙xg5 23 ♙xg5 ♙xb1 24 ♙f6+.

- 22 ♜h4 h5
 23 ♘xe6 ♜xe6
 24 ♜c4

White has converted the activity of his pieces into the possession of the bishop pair, which in this open position gives him a clear advantage.

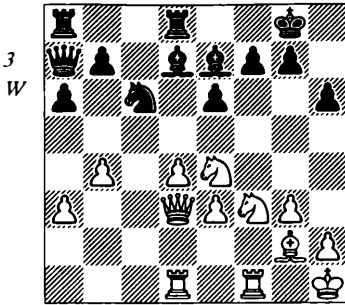
The rest needs no comment: 24... ♜e7 25 ♙a2 ♙g5 26 ♙xg5 ♜xg5 27 f4 ♜f6 28 ♜c5 ♜e7 29 ♜d6 ♜xf4 30 ♜f1 ♜e4 31 ♙d5 ♜d4+ 32 ♜xd4 ♘xd4 33 ♜xg6+ ♘h7 34 ♜b6+ f5 35 ♜xb7 ♜xb7 36 ♙xb7 ♜a7 37 ♙c8 f4 38 ♜d1 ♘e2+ 39 ♘f2 ♘c3 40 ♜d7+ ♜xd7 41 ♙xd7 ♘g6 42 ♙c8 ♘b5 43 ♙xa6 ♘xa3 44 ♙d3+ 1-0.

No. 3

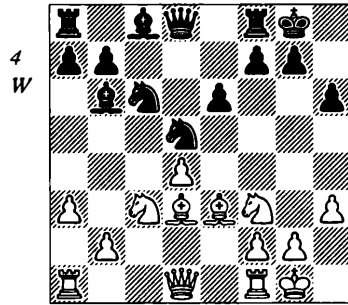
(see top of the facing page)

Mikhalthchishin - Lalić
 Sarajevo 1985

- 19 g4!
 chesstouring.com



Suggest a plan for White.



Suggest a plan for White.

White starts an attack on the kingside, as most Black's pieces are away from it.

19 ... e5

If 19... ♖e8, White takes the initiative: 20 g5 h5 21 g6! f5 22 ♖eg5 ♗d6 23 ♖f7 ♖xf7 24 gxf7+ ♖xf7 25 e4.

20 g5 exd4

21 exd4 ♖f5

22 gxf6 ♗d5

After 22...gxf6? 23 d5 Black's position would just collapse.

23 ♖e3 ♖g6

24 ♖c5 ♗ad8

25 hxg7 ♖b8?

More stubborn would be 25... ♖xg7, when after 26 ♖e5 ♖xe5 27 ♖xd5 ♗xd5 28 dxe5 ♖xc5 29 bxc5 ♖xc5 Black has chances to survive.

The end was: 26 ♖d3 ♖d6 27 ♖h4! ♗h5 28 ♖xg6 ♖xh2 29 ♖f3 ♖xg7 30 ♖xh5 fxg6 31 ♖xh2 ♗h8 32 ♖h3 ♖d8 33 ♖f4 1-0.

No. 4 (see top of the next column)

Reshevsky - Szabo
Buenos Aires 1970

14 ♖xd5!?

White gets rid of the blocking knight. Also possible was 14 ♖c2, but than Black could change the pawn formation himself by playing 14... ♖xe3! 15 fxex3 e5! 16 ♖d3 g6, solving his opening problems.

14 ... exd5

I prefer 14... ♖xd5, although after 15 ♖c2 White is also better.

15 ♖c2!

White goes to exploit the vulnerability of Black's kingside.

15 ... ♖d6

16 ♗e1! ♖c7?!

17 ♗c1 ♖e6

18 ♖d3 f5

19 ♖d2 ♗fe8

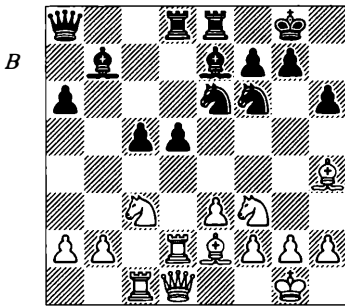
20 ♖a4! ♖f7

21 ♖xc6 bxc6

22 ♖e5+-

The triumph of White's strategy: he enjoys pressure along the c- and e-files and has superior minor pieces. The end was: 22... ♗xe5 23 ♗xe5 g6 24 ♖b4 ♖f6 25 ♖e7 ♖xe5 26 ♖xf6 ♖xf6 27 ♗xc6 ♖g7 28 ♗xf6 ♖xf6 29 ♖a6+ ♖e6 30 b4 1-0.

No. 5



How would you play with Black?

Topalov - Kasparov
Sofia rpd (1) 1998

Black's pieces are well placed for action, which Kasparov starts with the following typical break:

- 23 ... d4!
- 24 exd4 cxd4
- 25 ♖a4?

After 25 ♜xd4 ♜xd4 26 ♜xd4 ♜xg2 White's king is weak, but this is what he had to play.

- 25 ... ♜f4+
- 26 ♜c5

White is lost in all lines, e.g. 26 ♜xf6 ♜xf6 27 ♜c5 ♜xe2 28 ♜xe2 ♜xf3 29 gxf3 ♜d5 30 ♜e4 ♜xe2+ 31 ♜xe2 ♜g5+, or 26 ♜f1 ♜h3+ 27 gxh3 (27 ♜h1? ♜e4+) 27... ♜xf3 28 ♜e2 ♜xe2 29 ♜xe2 d3+ or 26 ♜b6 ♜a7 27 ♜c4 ♜e4+.

- 26 ... ♜xc5
- 27 ♜xf6 d3?

Much easier would be 27...♜b4! (suggested by Seirawan) or 27...gxf6! 28 ♜xc5 ♜xe2 29 ♜xe2 ♜xf3 30

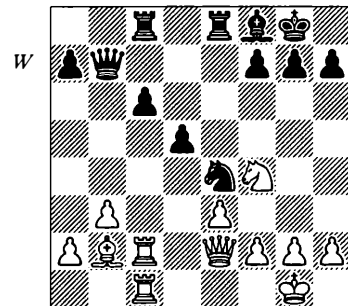
gxf3 ♜xf3 31 ♜e8+ ♜xe8 32 ♜xf3 ♜e1#, pointed out by Kasparov.

- 28 ♜xd3 ♜xf3
- 29 gxf3 ♜d5
- 30 ♜h4?

White had to play 30 ♜e4, although after 30...♜xd2 31 ♜xd2 ♜xe4 32 ♜xc5 gxf6! 33 fxg7 ♜xe4 34 ♜c8+ ♜g7 Black also wins.

The game now ended: 30...♜b4 31 ♜c3 ♜xc3 32 bxc3 ♜ed8 0-1.

No. 6



Suggest a plan for White..

T. Petrosian - Hort
Sarajevo 1972

- 21 ♜g4!

After this fine move, Black's position just falls apart. He cannot satisfactorily parry the threat of 22 ♜xd5! and take care of the g7-square at the same time.

- 21 ... g6

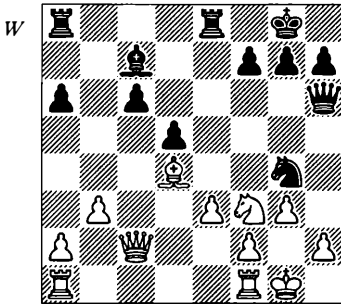
The alternative — 21...♜b5? — also loses after 22 f3 ♜d6 23 ♜xg7! f5 24 ♜g3 ♜xg7 25 ♜h5g.com

- 22 ♜d1!

Also good is to strike on d5 immediately — 22 ♖xd5! f5 23 ♗d1 ♜ed8 24 ♗d4+.

After the text, the finish was: 22...♙d6 23 ♖xd5!+ ♜cd8 24 ♜xc6 ♜b8 25 f4 ♜e6 26 ♖d4 1-0.

No. 7



How should White continue?

T. Petrosian - Beliavsky
41st USSR Ch, Moscow 1973

19 ♖f5!

This move forces further simplifications, which here suits White.

19 ... ♗e6

Alas, Black cannot keep the queens on since 19...♗h3? loses to 20 ♗xf7+ ♖xf7 21 ♖g5+.

20 ♗xe6 ♜xe6

21 ♜ac1 f6

22 ♜c2 ♖e5

23 ♙xe5! ♙xe5

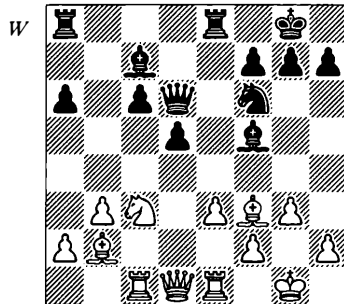
24 ♜fc1 ♜c8

25 ♜c5!

The endgame is technically winning for White, as the c6-pawn is too weak: 25...♜d6 26 ♜1c2 ♖f7 27

♖f1 ♖e6 28 ♖e1! d4 29 f4 d3 30 ♜d2+ ♙b2 31 ♜xd3 ♜a8 32 ♜xd6+ ♖xd6 33 ♖d3 a5 34 ♜c4 ♙a3 35 ♜a4 ♙c5 36 ♖xc5 ♖xc5 37 b4+ ♖c4 38 ♜xa5 ♜b8 39 a3 ♖d3 40 ♖f2 ♜b7 41 ♜c5 ♜a7 42 ♜xc6 ♜xa3 43 ♖f3 1-0.

No. 8



Suggest a plan for White

Gavrikov - Mochalov
Lithuania Open Ch, Vilnius 1983

17 ♖d4!

White prepares to take control over the c5-square by playing ♖a4, which then cannot be answered by ...♖e4. Black's reply seems to be natural, but in fact it leads him into even greater difficulties.

17 ... c5?

18 ♗f4! ♖d7

Also after 18...♗xf4 19 exf4 ♜xe1+ 20 ♜xe1 ♙e6 Black is in trouble. Then the most energetic way to exploit White's advantage is to play 21 f5 ♙xf5 22 ♜e7! ♙d6 23 ♖xd5! ♖xd5 24 ♜xf7!+.

19 ♖a4! ♜e6

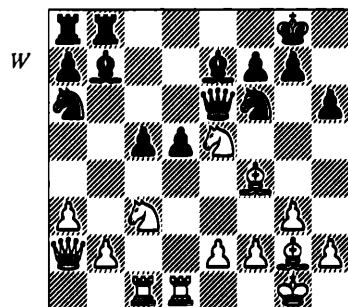
Black cannot get off the hook —
19...♗d6 loses after 20 ♜cd1 ♙e6
21 e4 ♙d7 22 ♗a3 d4 23 e5.

20 ♙xd5!+- ♙xd5

21 ♜xc5 ♜ed8

22 ♜c4 1-0

No. 9



How would you play with White?

Gluy - Kudrln
New York open 1986

18 e4!

White also stands better after 18
♙xd5 ♙xd5 19 ♙xd5 ♙xd5 20
♗xd5 ♗xd5 21 ♜xd5 ♜xb2, but the
text is even more promising.

18 ... d4

After 18...♙xe4 19 ♙xe4 dxe4 20
♗xe6 fxe6 21 ♙g6 Black is in trou-
ble, e.g. 21...♙g5 22 ♙xb8 ♙xc1 23
♙e5 with the initiative.

19 ♙d5! ♜d8

20 ♙h3! ♜xh3

After 20...♗d6? 21 ♙c4 the black
queen gets trapped, while 20...♙xd5
21 ♙xe6 ♙xa2 22 ♙xa2 also leaves
Black in a ruined position.

The final moves were: 21 ♙xf6+
♙xf6 22 ♗xf7+ ♜h7 23 ♗xb7+-
♗e6 24 ♙c6 ♜dc8 25 ♙xa7 ♜e8
26 e5 ♙g5 27 ♙xg5 hxg5 28 b4
cxb4 29 axb4 ♙xb4 30 ♜xd4 ♙a2
31 ♜c7 ♗xe5 32 ♜dd7 ♜g8 33
♗b1+ ♜h8 34 ♗xa2 ♜gf8 35 ♜c1
g4 36 ♗d2 ♜ab8 37 ♙c6 1-0.

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