

Themes & Tasks

THE SOUL OF CHESS

OLEG PERVAKOV

“Pawns are the soul of chess!” – until now nobody has denied this well-known motto of Philidor, and it is not very likely that anyone will. The nominally weakest force at the start of game can play an important or even a main role during a game.

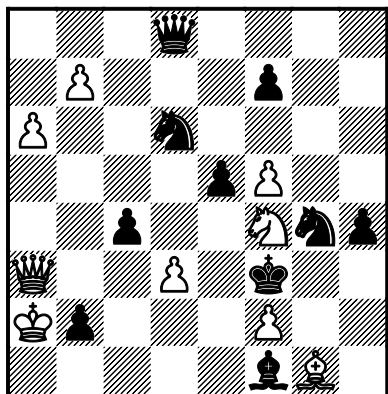
In composition, various themes are connected with pawns. For example: quadruple play of a pawn from the initial position to four different squares (“albino” and “pickaninny”), promotions – including into all four pieces, “excelsior”, the Valladao and Babson tasks... Naturally, it is easier to realize such complex plans in problems. But study composers also can be proud of something!

Let us postpone a detailed discussion of perhaps the most fascinating move of a pawn – promotion – and in this article first have a look at other interesting roles of the pawn.

1. – Albino (or pickaninny, if the black pawn plays)

P.1 O. Pervakov

1st Prize Sochniev 40 JT, 2002



a2f3 4047.55 9/10 Win

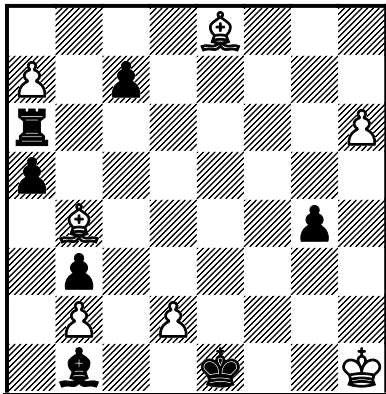
After **1.a7!** (1.dxc4+? Kxf4 2.a7 Sxc4! 3.b8Q Sxa3; 1.Qxb2? Sxb7 2.axb7 Qb8 or here 2.Qxb7+ Kxf4 3.Qe4+ Kg5) the black queen has to move into the line of the battery formed by Bg1 and pawn f2. **1...Qb6!** (Sb5 2.a8Q b1Q+ 3.Kxb1 Sxa3+ 4.Ka2) **2.dxc4+ Kxf4**. Now the time to sacrifice the white queen has come: **3.Qg3+! Kxf5** (hxc3 4.fxc3+ – the f-pawn has played to g3 – Kxc3 5.Bxb6 Bxc4+ 6.Kxb2 Sxb7 7.a8Q Bd5 8.Qa4, or here Sxc4 6.Bd4 exd4 7.b8Q+) **4.Qxg4+! Kf6!** (Kxc4 5.f3+, and the f-pawn has moved one square forward) **5.Qg5+! Ke6!** (Kxc4 6.f4+, and the f-pawn has jumped to f4) **6.Qxe5+! Kd7!** (Kxe5; f4+) **7.b8S+!** (7.Qxd6+? Qxd6 8.b8Q Bxc4+ 9.Kxb2 Qd2+ 10.Ka3 Qa5+) **7...Kd8!** (Kc8 8.Qh8+ Kb7 9.a8Q+! Kxa8 10.Sd7+, or here Kc7 9.a8S+ another knight promotion) Now White has to prepare the main plan. Not 8.Qg5+? Ke8 9.Qg8+ Ke7 10.Qf8+!? because of Kxf8! 11.Sd7+ Kg7! 12.Sxb6 Sxc4! 13.a8Q Bd3 14.Qg2+ Kh7!, and the h4-pawn rescues Black. Correct is **8.Qf6+!** (8.Qh8+? Se8!; 8.Sc6+? Qxc6 9.Qa5+ Ke7 10.a8Q Qxc4+ 11.Kxb2 Qe2+ 12.Kc1 Qc4+) **Ke8 9.Qh8+ Ke7 10.Qxh4+! Ke8!**, and now that the h4-pawn h4 has been removed, the main plan follows: **11.Qh8+ Ke7 12.Qf8+! Ke6!** (Kxf8 13.Sd7+ Kg7 14.Sxb6 Sxc4 15.a8Q Bd3 16.Qg2+ Kh7 17.Qh3+) **13.Qh6+ Ke7** (f6 14.Qxf6+! Kxf6 15.Sd7+, but not 14.Qe3+? Qxe3 15.fxe3 Bxc4+ 16.Kxb2 Bd5 17.Sa6 Sb5 18.Bh2 Ba8 19.Bb8 Kd5) **14.Qe3+! Qxe3 15.Sc6+! Kd7 16.fxe3** – the pawn has played to the fourth square – e3, and White wins.

Besides the “albino” theme, the study featured a double knight promotion and a 6-fold queen sacrifice at six different squares.

2. – Excelsior

P.2 O. Pervakov

1st Prize Philidor MT 1994



h1e1 0350.44 7/7 Win

At first sight, White's chances seem to be connected with the passed "a" and "d"-pawns... **1.d3+** (Bad is 1.Bc5? in view of Rxh6+ 2.Kg1 Be4) **1...Kf1** (axb4; h7) **2.Kh2** (the black g-pawn is not less dangerous: 2.Bf8? g3) **2...Rxh6+**. An interesting, but unsuccessful attempt to activate the bishop is: Bxd3 3.h7 Rh6+ (Bxh7; Bb5+) 4.Kg3 Be4 5.Bb5+ Kg1 6.Bc5+ Kh1 7.Bd3 Bg2 8.Be3 Rh3+ 9.Kxg4 Kh2 10.Bf1! and White wins. **3.Kg3 Ra6**. It seems that White is given a set-down. In fact, after the natural 4.Bc5? Bxd3 5.Bc6 Ke1 6.a8Q Rxa8 7.Bxa8 the white bishops cannot cope with the strong shelter of their rival after 7...Kd2. For example: 8.Bc6 (8.Kxg4 Kc2 9.Bd4 a4 or 9.Ba3 c5) Kc1 9.Bd4 Be2 10.Ba4 Bd1. And immediately advancing the d-pawn leads to a prompt counter by the black a-pawn: 4.d4? Bd3 5.Bc5 a4 6.Bc6 a3! And still, as in a national Russian song: "Soldiers are brave boys, but where are your wives?.." **4.Bb5!** "...Our wives – the guns are charged!" **Rxa7 5.d4+ Kg1 6.Bc5** (again building the pawn-bishop battery; but not at once 6.d5? axb4) **Ra8 7.d5+ Kh1 8.Bc6** (It is still not possible to leave it up to the old guy: 8.d6? Be4 9.dxc7 Bb7, or 9.d7 c6) **8...Ra6**. And now follows the final acceleration of the duel's hero – the initially modest pawn d2: **9.d6+** (Bb7? Rd6!;) **Rxc6 10.d7 Rxc5 11.d8Q** and mate.

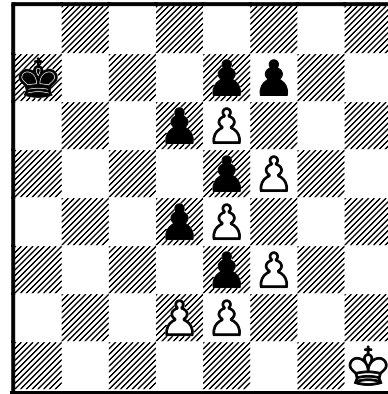
If we closely look at an initial position, we conclude that the bishop b4 is a promoted

piece, so another white pawn has performed an excelsior.

This theme is humorously presented in following two studies.

P.3 J. van Reek

Comm. *Shakhmaty v SSSR*, 1969

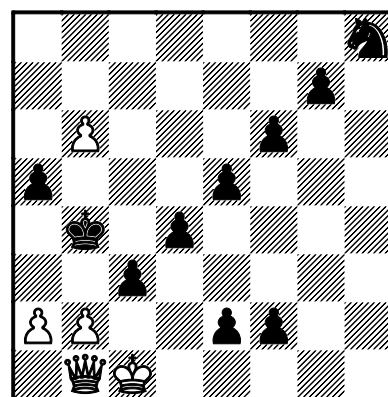


h1a7 0000.66 7/7 Win

1.dxe3 fxe6 2.exd4! (2.fxe6? dxe3 3.Kg2 Kb6 4.f4 exf4 5.Kf3 Kc5 6.Kxf4 Kd4 7.Kf5 Kc3) **exf5 3.dxe5 fxe4**. dxe5 4.exf5 Kb6 5.Kg2 Kc5 6.e4 Kd4 7.Kh3 Ke3 8.Kg3 Kd3 9.Kh4 Ke3 10.Kg4 does not save Black. **4.exd6 exf3** (or exd6 5.fxe4 Kb6 6.Kg2 Kc6 7.Kf3 Kd7 8.Ke3 Ke7 9.Kd4 Ke6 10.e3) **5.dxe7 fxe2 6.e8Q**. An original steeple-chase!

P.4 V. Korolkov

Problem, 1958



c1b4 1003.38 5/10 Win

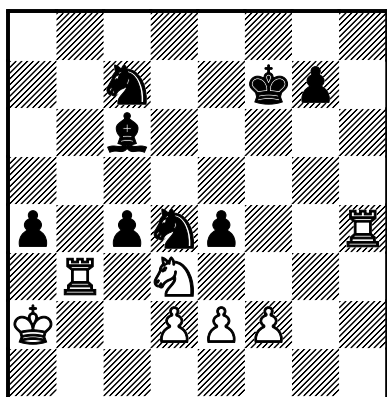
1.bxc3+ (1.b7? e1Q+ 2.Kc2 Qd2 mate; 1.Kc2? e1Q 2.bxc3+ Kc5 3.cxd4+ exd4) **1...Kc5!** (Kxc3 2.Qb3 mate; Kc4 2.Qb3+ Kd3 3.Qc2+ Ke3 4.Qd2+ Kf3 5.Qd3+ Kg2 6.Qxe2) **2.cxd4+** (2.Kb2? e1Q 3.cxd4+ Kxd4 4.Qc2 f1Q) **2...Kd6** (Kxd4 3.Qb2+ Ke3 4.Qd2+; exd4 3.Qf5+; Kc6 3.Qc2+; Kd5

3.Qb3+ Ke4 4.Qc2+ Ke3 5.Qc3+) **3.dxe5+** (3.Kc2? e1Q 4.Qb5 f1Q 5.Qc5+ Ke6) **3...Ke7!** (Kxe5 4.Qb2+; fxe5 4.Qd3+; Kc6 4.Qe4+; Ke6 4.Qb3+) **4.exf6+ Kf8** (Kxf6 5.Qb2+; gxf6 5.Qe4+; Kf7 5.Qb3+ Kg6 6.Qg3+; Ke6 5.Qe4+) **5.fxg7+** (Qh7? f1Q+;) **5...Kg8** (Kxg7 6.Qb2+; Kf7 6.Qb3+; Ke7 6.Qe4+) **6.gxh8Q+!** The triumphal end of the ascent! Bad is 6.Qb3+? Sf7 7.b7 e1Q+ 8.Kb2 Qe5+ 9.Ka3 f1Q 10.b8Q+ Qxb8 11.Qxb8+ Kxg7. **6...Kxh8 7.Qb2+ Kg8 8.Qxe2.**

The famous composer Vladimir Korolkov would have been 100 years old on November 7, 2007. In his creativity he was fond of records, including pawn tasks. In this article some characteristic examples are included.

3. – En-passant capture

P.5 A. Doluchanov & V. Korolkov
Modern Chess Endings, 1937



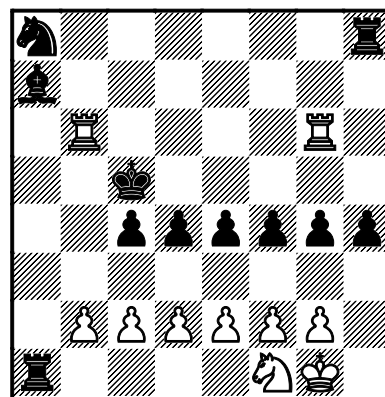
a2f7 0237.34 7/8 Win

1.Se5+ (After 1.Rb4? exd3 2.Rxd4 dxe2 3.Rb1 Se6 the strong pawn e2 compensates for Black's material loss) **1...Ke6** (poor is Kf6 2.Sg4+ Kg5 3.Rbh3 Sf5 4.Se5 Sxh4 5.Sxc6 wins) **2.Rb6 Kxe5 3.e3 Sf5!** (In contrast with Sf3 4.Rxc6 Sd5 5.Rh5+ here the knight would prevent a rook check) **4.Rxc6 Sd5!** (Sxh4 5.Rxc7 with a simple technical win) **5.f4+** (But not 5.d4+? exd3 6.f4+, and the king has a safe square e4 – Ke4 7.Rxc4+ Kf3 8.Rh2 (Rh3+ Kg4;) Sfxe3 with a draw) **5...exf3 6.d4+ cxd3 7.Re4+! Kxe4 8.Re6** mate. A beautiful mate with four active blocks after two en-passant captures!

Six en-passant captures figure in task P6.

P.6 V. Korolkov

Comm. *Shakhmaty v SSSR*, 1940



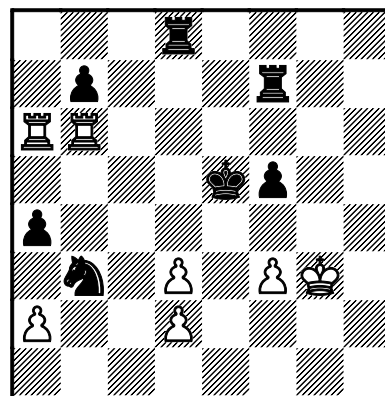
g1c5 0834.66 10/11 Draw

1.b4+! cxb3. Here and later the black king cannot return to the 5th rank because of immediate mate. **2.Rgc6+ Kd5 3.c4+! dxc3 4.Rd6+ Ke5 5.d4+! exd3 6.Re6+ Kf5 7.e4+! fxe3 8.Rf6+ Kg5 9.f4+! gxf3 10.Rg6+ Kh5 11.g4+! hxg3 12.Rg5+ Kxg5 13.Rg6+**, and a desperado white rook remains. Draw!

4. – Fork

A fork is one of the most piquant deeds of the modest pawn – as if to run two opponent's pieces through with one's sword. In the record study P7 Black succeeds in doing it no less than three times. However, White avoids defeat by equally inventive play.

P.7 V. Korolkov, L. Mitrofanov
1st prize FIDE Ty 1958



g3e5 0803.43 7/7 Draw

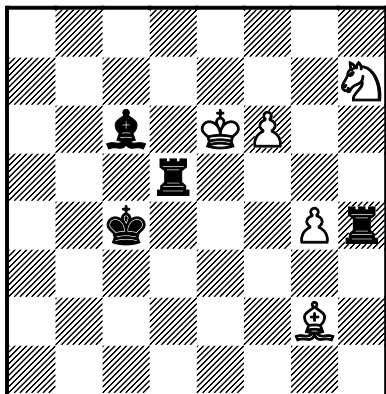
1.Rb5+! (Other continuations do not lead to the goal: 1.Rxa4? f4+ 2.Kf2 Sc5 3.Ra5 Rd5 4.d4+ Kxd4 5.Rb4+ Kd3 6.Ra3+ Kxd2 7.Rb2+ Kc1 8.Re2 Sd3+, or here 2.Rxf4 Rxf4 3.Rb5+ Sc5! 4.Rxc5+ Kd6; 1.Re6+? Kd5

2.Rf6 Rxf6 3.Rxf6 Sd4; 1.f4+? Kd5 2.Rb5+ Sc5 3.Raa5 Rg8+ 4.Kf3 Rc7 5.d4 Kxd4 6.Rb4+ Kd3; 1.d4+? Kd5 2.Rb5+ Kc4 3.Rab6 Kxd4 4.Rb4+ Kd3 5.Rxb7 f4+ 6.Kf2 Rxb7 7.Rxb7 Kxd2) **1...Sc5!** (a sacrifice to distract the rook to the c-file) **2.Rxc5+** (2.Raa5? f4+ 3.Kf2 b6! 4.Rxb6 Rd5 5.d4+ Kxd4 6.Rb4+ Kd3 7.Rbb5 Kc4 8.Ke2 Re7+ 9.Kd1 Sd3 10.Rxd5 Re1+ 11.Kc2 Rc1 ends with a mate) **Kd4 3.Raa5!** (A necessary move to construct a stalemate. Quickly losing is 3.Rc4+? Kxd3 4.Raxa4 b5!) **3...Rg7+!** (Black withdraws the rook from a vulnerable position. After b6 4.Rxf5! Rg7+ 5.Rg5 Rxg5+ 6.Rxg5 Kxd3 it is a drawn endgame: 7.Rb5 Rb8 8.Rb2 b5 9.f4 b4 10.f5 Ke4 11.f6 Ke5 12.Kf3 Kxf6 13.Ke4 Ke6 14.Kd4 Kd6 15.Kc4) **4.Kf4! b6! 5.Rc4+ Kxd3 6.Raxa4 b5! 7.Rc3+ Kxd2 8.Raa3 b4!,** and a final stalemate combination: **9.Rc5! bxa3 10.Rd5+ Rxd5.**

In the following study we see two royal pawn forks.

P.8 P. Perkonaja

1st Prize *Tidskrift for Schack*, 1971



e6c4 0641.20 5/4 Draw

1.f7 (of course, not 1.Bxd5+? Bxd5+ 2.Ke5 Rxh7) **Rh6+ 2.Sf6** (Ke7? Rxh7;) **Bd7+ 3.Ke7 Re5+ 4.Kd6 Re6+!** (Of course avoiding Rxf6+ 5.Kxe5 Rxf7 6.Bd5+) **5.Kxd7 Rxf6 6.g5!!** (Play for a stalemate. 6.Ke7? is still premature: Re6+ 7.Kd7 Rd6+ 8.Ke7 Rhe6+ 9.Kf8 Re5 10.Kg7 Rg5+ 11.Kf8 Re6 12.Bd5+ Rxd5!, but not 12...Kxd5?) **6...Rxf7+ (Rd6+;**

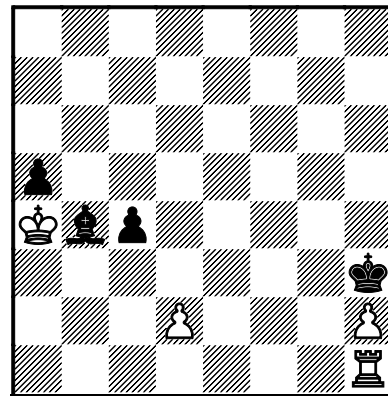
7.Kc7) 7.Ke8 Rhh7 (Rf2 8.gxh6 Rxg2 9.Kf7) **8.g6 Re7+ 9.Kf8 Rhg7**, and now the final accord: **10.Bd5+! Kc5** (10...Kxd5 stalemate) **11.Bf7! Draws!**

5. – Kamikaze Pawn

Another effective trick of a pawn which is clearly illustrated in P9.

P.9 M. Liburkin

4th prize Erevan Ty, 1940



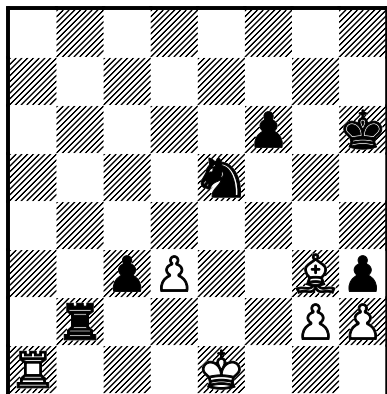
a4h3 0130.22 4/4 Win

1.Rd1! Kh4. In case of immediate capture of the pawn the black king reaches the fatal second rank: Kxh2 2.Kb5 c3 3.d4 Ba3 (Kg2 4.Kc4 Kf3 5.Kd3 Kf4 6.Re1 Kf5 7.Re2, or here a4 6.Rb1 Ba5 7.Ra1) 4.Ka4 c2 (Bb4 5.d5 Kg2 6.Kb3) and 5.Rd2+. **2.h3!** (2.Kb5? c3 3.d4 Ba3) **2...Kh5!** (Black waves from accepting “Danaë’s gift”: in case of 2...Kxh3 later a check by the rook on 3rd rank will finish the game) **3.h4! Kh6 4.h5! Kh7 5.h6! Kh8 6.h7! Kxh7.** There is no space for further retreat, so it is necessary to accept the sacrifice. **7.Kb5 c3 8.d4 Ba3 9.Ka4 Bb2** (c2 10.Rh1+! since the h-file is open) **10.Kb3 a4+ 11.Kc2 Kg7** (11...a3 12.d5 a2 13.d6 a1Q 14.Rxa1 Bxa1 15.d7) **12.d5 Kf7 13.Re1 Kf6 14.Re2** and wins.

The authors of P10 managed to double Liburkin’s idea, and in addition added a thematic try in which White gets into a position of mutual zugzwang.

P.10 E. Kolesnikov, N. Kralin
& An. Kuznetsov

2nd Hon. mention *Tidskrift for Schack*, 1995



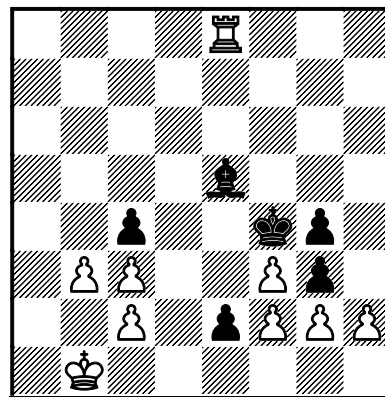
e1h6 0413.33 6/6 Win

1.Bf4+!! (The hasty 1.Bxe5? fxe5 2.gxh3 Rxh2 3.0-0-0! Ra2! 4.h4 Kh5! leads to a position of mutual zugzwang in Black's favour) **Kh5! 2.Bxe5 fxe5 3.gxh3 Rg2!** Black inventively finds chances. The natural Rxh2 4.0-0-0! Ra2 5.h4! leads to the above considered position of zugzwang, but now in favour of White. **4.0-0-0! Ra2! 5.h4!** The first kamikaze pawn starts its attack. **Kh6 6.h5! Kh7 7.h6! Kh8 8.h7! Kxh7 9.h4!** (9.h3? Kh6 10.h4 Kh5) **Kh6 10.h5!** And now the second kamikaze pawn goes to fight! **Kh7 11.h6! Kh8 12.h7! Kxh7 13.Rh1+**, and the white rook is able to leave the disastrous first line in time, drawing.

**6. – Decisive play of two,
three, four or more pawns
on a single file**

What can be weaker than such pawns? But sometimes in chess they are good, because they are full of paradoxes! Surely we all remember the well-known ending E. Ortueta – A. Sanz (Madrid 1934), in which doubled pawns are stronger than a rook and knight. With many studies on this theme I pinpoint the simple, but very intelligible P11 by the unforgettable V. Korolkov.

P.11 V. Korolkov
Shakhmaty v SSSR, 1921



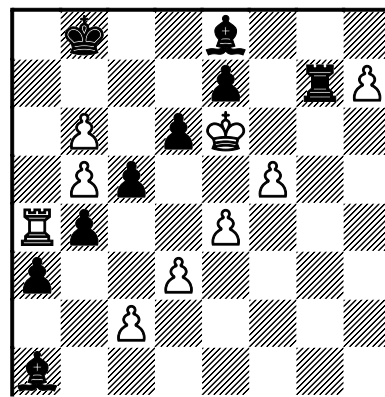
b1f4 0130.74 9/6 Win

1.hxg3+ Kf5 2.fxg4+ Kf6 3.g5+! Kf5 4.g4+! Kf4 5.g3+! all three pawns on the g-file have played. **Ke4 6.f3+ Kd5 7.bxc4+ Kd6.** And now the three pawns on the c-file contribute to the victory: **8.c5+! Kd5 9.c4+! Kd4 10.c3+!** wins.

**7. – Systematic manoeuvres
with pawns participating**

A lot of studies have been based on this theme. I show two examples. In P12 a systematic manoeuvre is preceded by a beautiful sacrifice of the rook, freeing a necessary square for the king.

P.12 P12. D. Gurgenzidze
4th prize *Molodost Gruzii*, 1970



e6b8 0460.75 9/9 Win

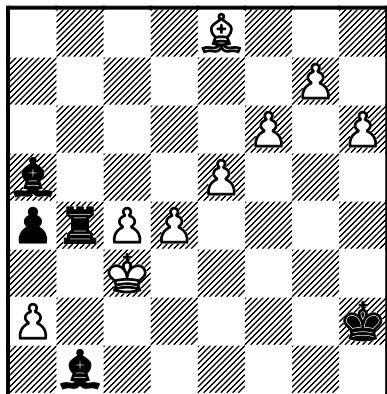
First a thematic try: **1.h8Q? Rg6+ 2.f6! (countering the battery) Rxf6+ 3.Kd5 Rf5+ 4.e5! Rxe5+ 5.Kc4 Re4+ 6.d4! Rxd4+ 7.Kb3 Rd3+ 8.c3! Rxc3+,** and it is necessary to play **9.Ka2.** But then White even loses after **b3+ 10.Kxa3 b2+ 11.Ka2 b1Q+ 12.Kxb1 Rc1+**

13.Kxc1 Bxh8 14.Rg4 Bf7. But what happens if we offer rook with tempo? Well, we shall try! **1.Ra8+! Kb7!** (putting a small trap) **2.Rb8+!** (but not 2.h8Q? Rg6+ 3.f6 Rxf6+ 4.Kd5 Bf7 mate) **Kxb8 3.h8Q Rg6+**, and now the king, rook and pawns join in a systematic manoeuvre: **4.f6! Rxf6+ 5.Kd5 Rf5+ 6.e5! Rxe5+ 7.Kc4 Re4+ 8.d4! Rxd4+ 9.Kb3 Rd3+ 10.c3! Rxc3+**. The square a4 is available now, so **11.Ka4!** is possible (11.Ka2? b3+ 12.Kxa3 (12.Kxa1 Rc1 mate) b2+ 13.Ka2 (13.Ka4 Ra3+! 14.Kxa3 b1S+) b1Q+ 14.Kxb1 Rc1+ 15.Kxc1 Bxh8) and mate follows.

In P13 the first systematic manoeuvre occurs against the background of the construction of four black rook and bishop batteries. Then the white king, pursued by the enemy bishop, returns to the camp on the same track.

P.13 O. Pervakov

4th/5th prize *Shakhmaty v SSSR*, 1990



c3h2 0370.71 9/5 Win

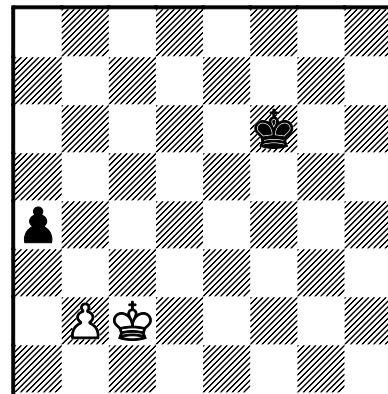
The threat of instant mate demands resolute action by White. **1.d5!** The king cannot escape after 1.c5? Rb8+ 2.Kc4 Bxa2+ 3.Kd3 Bb1+ 4.Ke2 Rb2+ 5.Kf3 Rb3+ 6.Kg4 Rg3+ or 1.Kd2? Rb2+ 2.Ke3 Rg2 3.d5 Bb6+ 4.Kf3 Rg3+ 5.Ke2 Rg2+ 6.Kd1 Bc2+ 7.Kc1 Be3+ 8.Kb2 Bd4+ 9.Ka3 Bc5+. **Rb5+! 2.Kd4 Bb6+ 3.c5! Rxc5! 4.e6!** (again not 4.d6? Rc1+ 5.Kd5 Bxa2+ 6.Ke4 Bb1+ 7.Kf3 Rc3+ 8.Ke2 Rc2+ 9.Kd1 Rg2) **4...Rc6+! 5.Ke5 Bc7+ 6.d6! Rxd6! 7.f7!** The pawns move in formation! Again bad is 7.e7? Rd2+ 8.Ke6 Bxa2+

9.Kf5 Bb1+ 10.Kg4 Rd4+ 11.Kf3 Rf4+ 12.Ke2 Re4+ 13.Kd1 a3 14.Bc6 a2 15.h7 Rd4+. **Rd7+ 8.Kf6 Bd8+ 9.e7! Rxe7! 10.g8Q.** So, in a relay race the white pawns have helped their girlfriend “g” to promote to queen. But Black’s arguments have not been settled yet... **Rxf7+! 11.Ke5!** (a sidestep is punished immediately: 11.Ke6? Bxa2+; 11.Kxf7? Bxa2+) **Bc7+ 12.Kd4! Bb6+ 13.Kc3! Ba5+ 14.Kb2! Rb7+**, and the doped bishop begins to work: **15.Bb5!** (Bad are 15.Ka3? Bb4+ 16.Kxa4 Bc2+ or 15.Kc1? Bd3!) **Rxb5+ 16.Ka3 Bb4+ 17.Kxa4**, winning.

And in conclusion two well-known studies.
“One against one”

P.14 F. Cassidy

The Chess Monthly, 1884

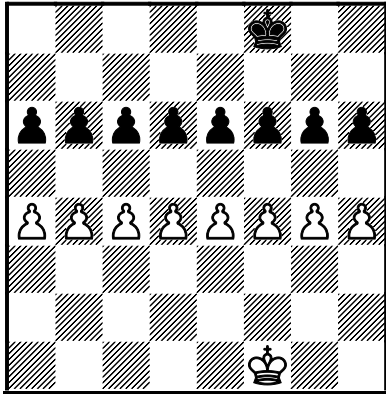


c2f6 0000.11 2/2 Win

1.Kb1!! A surprising move! The white king chooses the longest way to the a4-pawn. After the careless 1.Kc3? a3! Black is rescued. **1...a3!** The best chance. If Ke5 2.Ka2 Kd5 3.Ka3 Kc5 4.Kxa4 Kb6 5.Kb4. **2.b3!** An Odessa proverb goes: “ШИРОКО ШАГАЕШЬ – ШТАНЫ ПОРВЕШЬ!”, “When you walk straddle-legged, you will tear your trousers”: 2.b4? Ke5 3.Ka2 Kd5 4.Kxa3 Kc6 5.Ka4 Kb6! drawing. **Ke5 3.Ka2 Kd5 4.Kxa3 Kc6 5.Ka4! Kb6 6.Kb4**, winning the opposition and the game.

“Eight against eight”.

P.15 P. Cathignol
Comm. Thèmes-64, 1981



f1f8 0000.88 9/9 Win

Where to start the pawn breakthrough?
1.a5? bxa5; 1.b5? cxb5!; 1.c5? dxc5!; 1.e5?
fxe5!; 1.g5? fxg5! do not work. Only **1.d5** is
correct, and the main line of the study is:
1...exd5 2.exd5 cxd5 3.a5! bxa5 4.b5! axb5
5.cxb5 Ke7 6.b6! Kd7 7.b7! Kc7 8.g5! fxg5
9.h5! gxh5 10.f5 a4 11.f6 a3 12.f7 a2
13.b8Q+ Kxb8 14.f8Q+.

Try to analyse other opportunities for
White yourself, and you certain take pleasure!
See you soon!

