

Yuri Averbakh

Mihails Beļins

JOURNEY TO THE CHESS KINGDOM



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Introduction

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

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

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

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

Adrian Mikhalchishin

Grandmaster, FIDE Trainers Commission Chairman

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

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

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

Since then many years have passed. One of us became a grandmaster, another international master. We have dreamed for a very long time of writing a book that would help those with an interest in learning the world of chess to avoid childrens mistakes and errors to comprehend the chess laws and, the most important, to understand and feel its wealth and beauty.

This book, reader, is for you! Whether we failed or not – you are the judge.



Chapter Three

The Guard defends the King

Initially the king, like the rest of the pieces, is covered by the rank of pawns. At the beginning of the game central pawns are usually moved forward in order to open the way for the other pieces, which means you automatically open up the king. However, we should notice that the desire not to open the king at any price is an ostrich tactic, which hides its head under its wing in danger; because the pawn cover is not reinforced concrete and the enemy can easily destroy it.

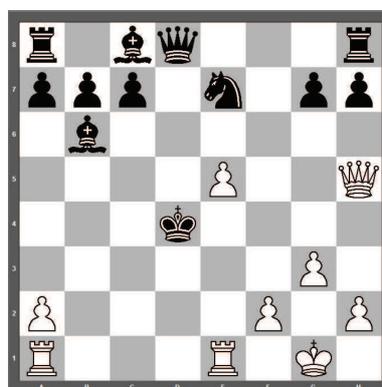
When there are a lot of pieces on the chessboard and danger is everywhere, it makes no sense for the king to move ahead of his infantrymen.

Without bodyguards

Checkmating the opponent's king covered with pawns and the rest of the pieces is not as difficult as it may seem. It is more difficult to reach a situation when the enemy king must show courage and stand in front of its army. That's why it's sometimes necessary to sacrifice pawns and other pieces, because a sane king would never want to lose the cover and support of its faithful guard.

Now let's discuss a typical

example taken from a real game.



The black king alone, without its retinue, has moved straight to the center. Here, it transpires, brave against its will – White has sacrificed three pieces in order "to bring the King out into the open", and now he deals with it quickly.

1. ♖a1

The unfortunate king has only a narrow strip of the board at its disposal, which becomes its grave. The move 2. ♖d1 is threatened, with checkmate. If the king tries to run

1... ♔d5

then you should play

2. e6+ ♘f5

In answer to 2... ♔d6 you checkmate with 3. ♖e5#

3. ♖xf5+ ♔d6 4. ♖ed1+ ♔e7 5. ♖f7#

So, the enemy king will be hiding behind the rank of its pawns. Let's assume that seducing the king to go for a walk into "the open field" is impossible. Then we should try to break through the pawn's ranks close to the enemy king. If the mountain will not come to Mohammed, Mohammed must go to the mountain.

Let's take a look at the initial position when the kings are covered by a barrier of pawns. Is there any guarantee of the king's safety?? Let's discuss the defense line of the king.

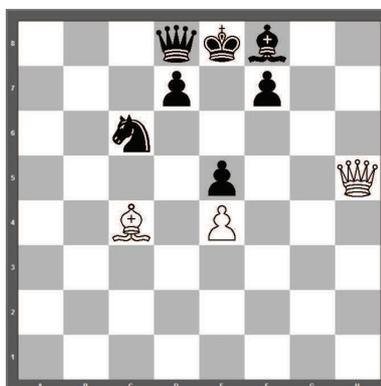
There are three infantrymen – d7, e7, f7 in front of the black king. The first one is protected by four pieces – the knight b8, the bishop c8, the queen and the king! It is difficult to approach. The knight g8, the bishop f8, the queen and the king protect the second infantryman. We have four guardians again. As for the pawn f7 only the king protects it.

It's obvious that this is the most vulnerable point in Black's defence. White is in the same situation – the weakest point is the pawn f2.

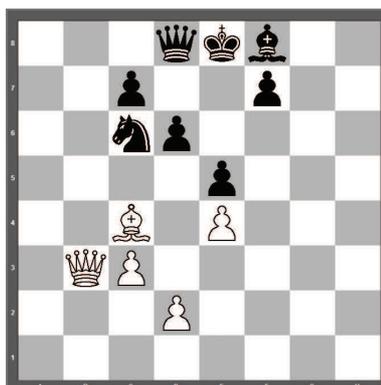
After we have found the target for attack, it is necessary to weigh up our forces. So White is planning to attack, what about the closest pieces situated near to the square e7? The bishop f1 comes out to the line of attack in one move – square c4. The knight g1 can be thrown through f3 to the square e5 or g5, which means it will need two moves to reach the point of attack f7. Finally, the queen can aim at f7 from squares h5, f3, and b3. So the queen, the knight and

the bishop are the main forces for a quick attack over the point f7. It is not a coincidence that there are no rooks in the list. It is not easy for the Rook to join the attack on f7. You will see in future that in order to use the rook as a cannon you have to work very hard.

Here are a few examples of successful attacks on the square f7.

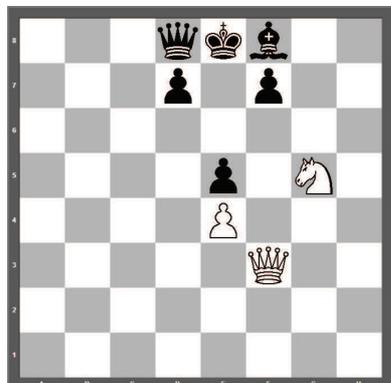


1. ♔xf7#

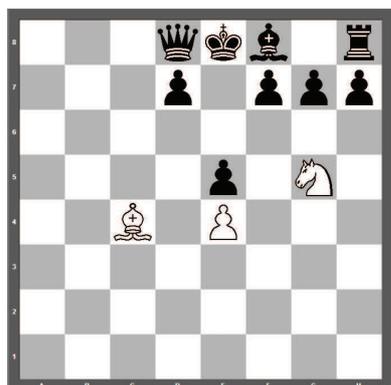


1. ♘xf7+ ♔d7 2. ♔e6#

Here the pawn's demise on f7 gives a very good opportunity for White to invade Black's camp.



1. ♖xf7#



1. ♘xf7

Previously the king was under attack from square f7. Here the knight attacks the queen and the rook at the same time, making a fork.

As you can see, a successful capture of the point f7 can be made with only two pieces. That's why the weakness of the square f7 threatens the king, which is situated in the very middle.

Let's discuss the situation when White, using the opponent's mistakes, manages to launch a successful attack on the square f7.

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 ♘d7 4.♙c4 ♙e7?

In the fear of move Ng5 Black decides to develop the bishop. But this is also a fatal mistake.

5.dxe5! dxe5??

5...♘xe5 6.♘xe5 dxe5 7.♖h5 and in order to protect the point f7 Black has to give the pawn up: 7...g6 8.♖xe5 6.♖d5



The second and decisive attack on the vulnerable point. There is no proper protection; after

6...♘h6 7.♙xh6

and White wins the piece.

While most of the pieces are still on the board, it is often common to hide the king behind a reliable pawn's barrier, somewhere away from the place where the main actions happen. In that case castling is generally used. Remember:

Castling facilitates protection, but does not guarantee the king's safety. The king, even under pawns' and other pieces' defense, can be attacked.