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COLUMNISTS

## *The Instructor*
## Mark Dvoretsky

# Pay Attention to Details

In my February 2001 column, we examined an instructional position, composed by Yuri Averbakh and published in 1983 in the Russian edition of his five-volume *Chess Endings*. The commentary to this position in the book contains numerous errors. Afterwards, my article containing analysis of this example was published in the Russian magazine *Chess Weekly*.

The grandmaster wrote the magazine's editors a wrathful letter, the main point of which was that the errors were all due to a misprint: the White pawn should have been printed on h2, and not on h4. This is where, according to Averbakh, the pawn was placed in the earlier German edition, published in 1973.

So, it's a misprint, is it?

In 1973, the German edition had it right, while the later Russian edition had it wrong. And not just there: in the English edition too, which saw the light of day in 1987. That was the edition quoted by the American Chuck Adelman, when he sent a critical letter to the editor on the same subject in the August 2000 issue of the magazine *Chess Life*. Generally speaking, errors and misprints are usually corrected between older editions and the newer ones; here, for some reason, the reverse occurred. Well, it happens...
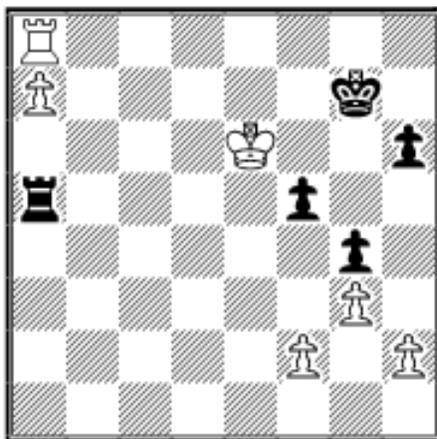
So - let's have a look at the position "as intended" - with
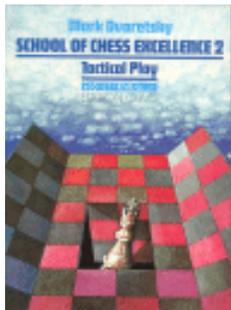
the White pawn at h2.

This is a draw after **1...Ra2 2. Kxf5 Rxf2+ 3. Kxg4 Ra2.** White can only create a second passed pawn on the knight or rook file, which is not enough to win.

So why does the position of White's pawn make a difference? Because, with the pawn at h4, the pawn endgame after 2. Re8! Rxa7 3. Re7+ is won; with the pawn at h2, it's drawn.

Averbakh's explanation would pass without question, were it not for his commentary in the book to Black's 1...Ra2:

> *The only move! Mistaken is 1...h5 2. Kd6! (2. Re8 Ra6+! 3. Kxf5 Rxa7 4. Kg5 Ra5+ 5. Kf4 Ra2 only leads to a draw) 2...Kh7 3. Ke7 Kg7 4. Ke6 Ra2 5. Kxf5 Rxf2+ (5...Ra5+ 6. Kf4 Kh7 7. Rf8! Rxa7 8. Kg5 Ra5+ 9. Rf5 wins) 6. Kg5 Ra2 7. Kxh5 Ra4 8. Re8 Rxa7 9. Kxg4, and White wins.*

With the pawn at h4, as my article demonstrated, this piece of analysis contains seven (!) wrong moves. But with the pawn at h2, all is still not right.

The first question is why, in the variation 1...h5 2. Re8, the move 2...Ra6+ receives an exclamation mark? As we already know, after 2...Rxa7, the exchange of rooks by 3. Re7+ Rxe7 4. Kxe7 leads only to a draw. With the pawn at h4, the exclam would be eaisier to understand (Black avoids the lost pawn endgame), although still not really justified, since it's not enough to save the game: 2...Ra6+

3. Kxf5 Rxa7 4. Re5! Kh6 5. Re6+ Kg7 6. Rg6+ Kh7 7. Rf6 Ra5+ 8. Kf4, with the unstoppable threat 9. Rf5.

And now, let's run through Averbakh's variation, almost to the end:

**1...h5 2. Kd6 Kh7** (as will soon become clear, 2...Ra2 3. Ke5 Re2+ is not a bit worse) **3. Ke7 Kg7 4. Ke6 Ra2 5. Kxf5 Rxf2+ 6. Kg5 Ra2 7. Kxh5** (7. Rb8 Rxa7 8. Kxh5 Ra2=)
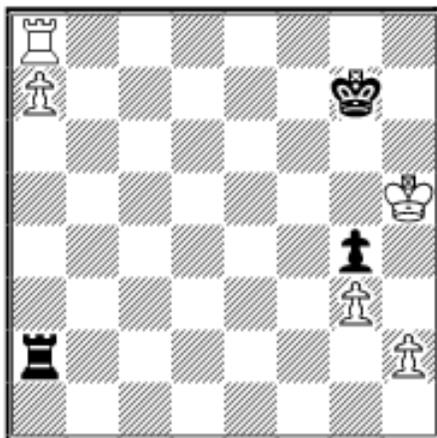


And now, how do we explain the "cooperative" 7...Ra4?? given by Averbakh - since **7...Rxh2+ 8. Kxg4 Ra2** leads to an obvious draw? Which in turn means that 1...Ra2, contrary to his opinion, is hardly forced.

Of course, with that pawn on h2, the grandmaster's analysis contains, not 8 errors, but only 1 (that is, if we ignore things like the sprinkling of exclams). But on the other hand - what an error it is! In the first place, it's a horrible blunder; and in the second place, it's thematic. After all, the whole idea of Averbakh's instructive example was precisely to show that, with the pawn at a7, even a second passed pawn on the g- (or h-) file is not enough to win.

We note that, with the pawn at h4, the position in the last diagram would of course be a win, and the 7...Ra4 move in the book would be quite understandable. So it's a possible hypothesis (whether it was right or not, is another question) that Averbakh originally intended to put the pawn on h2; but then, spotting the hole in his analysis, decided to fix it by moving the pawn up to h4, without noticing that this might affect the evaluation of

other variations (which a quick glance at the position, without reopening the analysis, would not reveal).

This is one possible answer to Averbakh's quite reasonable objection: how could he be suspected of being able to commit so many errors? Such cases occasionally happen to all of us. In fact, Pal Benko, when publishing the above-cited letter of Chuck Adelman in his monthly column, added his own comment, as follows: *He [Averbakh] told me that about 10% of the endings in his books are erroneous, even though he worked with a team. No one is perfect."*

But Averbakh doesn't agree even with this - he avers that Benko misunderstood him; that he was not talking about the percentage of errors in his own books, but in endgame books in general. Here too, though, as in the episode with the misprint, I am not about to rely without discussion on his memory and his words. It's very rare that someone can remember exactly after many years what he said to someone else. Whereas Benko quite likely would have remembered a statement that surprised and impressed him.

Now let's examine a few more endgames of the same type - beginning with a position similar to the first diagram, but with White's pawn at f4.

**M. Dvoretsky, 2003**
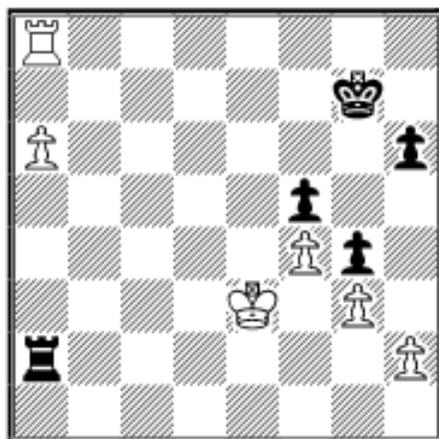
## 1. a7!

The plan is clear: White's king aims for the f5-pawn; after its almost unavoidable capture, the f4-pawn can advance.

After 1. Kd4? Rxh2 2. Ke5, Black saves himself by playing for stalemate: 2...Kg6! 3. a7 Ra2 4. Rg8+ Kh5 5. a8Q Ra5(or e2)+ - the rook is now a "desperado"; or 3. Rg8+ Kh5 4. Rf8 Re2+! 5. Kxf5 (5. Kd6 Ra2=) 5...Re8!=.

## 1...Ra4 2. Kd3 Kh7 3. Kc3 Kg7

The clever try 3...Kg6!?, suggested by A. Gansauer, a reader of the German edition of my work *Die Endspiel Universität*, is refuted by 4. h3!! gh 5. Rg8+ Kh5 6. a8Q Rxa8 7. Rxa8 Kg4 8. Kd4 h2 9. Ra1 Kxg3 10. Ke5, and wins.

## 4. Kb3 Ra6 5. Kc4!

Mistaken is 5. Kb4? Kg6!, when 6. h3 no longer works - White's king is too far away from the f5-pawn. There are curious variations after 6. Kc5 Kh5! (6...Ra1 7. h3! wins) 7. Kd5 Ra2 8. Ke5
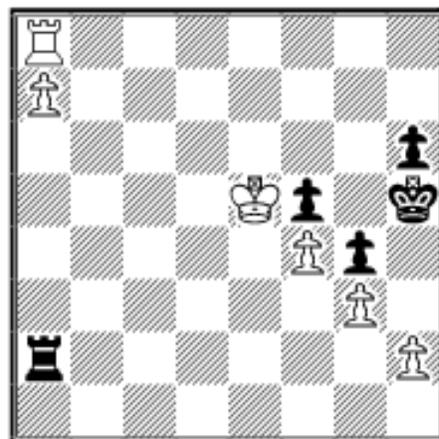
Now 8...Ra5+? is bad: 9. Ke6 Ra6+ (9...Kg6 10. h3! Ra6+ 11. Ke7 gh 12. Rg8+) 10. Kxf5 Rxa7 11. h3! Rf7+ (the only move to meet the mate threat) 12. Ke6 Rb7 13. hg+ (13. Ra5+ Kg6 14. hg Rb3 is less convincing) 13...Kxg4 14. Rg8+ Kh5 15. g4+ Kh4

16. f5.

8...Re2+! is much harder to crack: 9. Kxf5 Re7! (but not 9...Re8? 10. h3!, winning; the text leads to a mutual zugzwang) 10. Rd8 (10. Kf6? Re8!=) 10...Rxa7, putting White's win in doubt. For example:11.Ke6 Kg6 12. f5+? Kg5 13. Rg8+ Kh5=; or 11. Rd5 Ra6.

**5...Ra5 6. Kb4 Ra1 7. Kc5 Ra6 8. Kd5 Ra1 9. Ke5 Ra5+ 10. Ke6** (the decisive zugzwang!) **10...Kh7** (10...Kg6!? 11. h3! wins) **11. Kf6**, and the f5-pawn falls.

It should be noted that the inaccurate 9. Ke6? Ra5 puts White in zugzwang; however, he can easily give up the move to his opponent: 10. Kd6 Kh7 11. Ke7 Kg7 (11...Ra6 12. Kf7) 12. Ke6, or 11. Kc6 (threatening 12. Kb6) 11...Ra1 12. Kd5 Ra5+ 13. Kd6! Kg7 14. Ke6. Another possible line is 10. Rd8 Rxa7 11. Kxf5 Ra2 12. Rd7+ Kf8 13. Kg6!? Rxh2 14. f5, and wins. However, going into the pawn endgame after 11.Rd7+? Rxd7 12. Kxd7 is a mistake: Black has a saving stalemate by 12...Kg6 13. Ke6 Kh5!

Following is an interesting endgame, which Averbakh tells us served as his starting point for the composition of the instructive study in the first diagram.

*Rovner – Schipunov* **Kiev 1938**
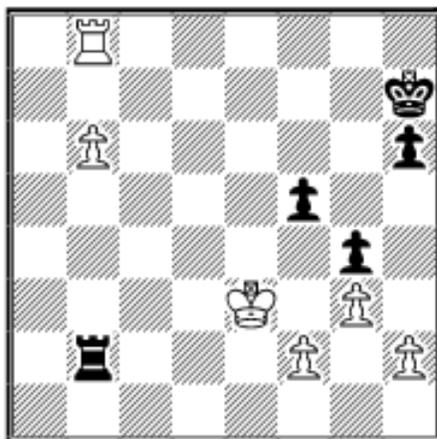
White was not able to handle the problem set before him. **1. b7?** allowed the forcible win of the f5-pawn; but, as we now know, this is not enough to win. After **1...Kg7 2. Kd4 Rb5 3. Kc4 Rb2 4. Kd5 Rd2+ 5. Ke5 Re2+ 6. Kxf5 Rxf2+ 7. Kxg4 Rb2**, the game ended in a draw.

As Kopayev pointed out, sharper play was needed: 1. Kd4! Rxf2 2. Rc8 is sufficient for the win in this case.

Here what matters is the difficulty Black has in creating a kingside passed pawn, as well as the fact that White's passed pawn is on the b-file - closer to his king (there might possibly be no win, if it were on the a-file).

I should like to emphasize one significant fact: *no matter how thoroughly we understand all the most important ideas, we have no right to employ them automatically, since any change - no matter how insignificant - in the position usually brings with it new elements, sometimes even important enough to alter our assessment.* This is the case here: it is far from unimportant, for example, which file the passed pawn stands on, a- or b-. And with the pawn on h4, the variations are completely unlike those with the pawn at h2, etc.

It's not enough to memorize the basic theoretical conclusions, in order to become a wise "endgamer". It's also important to train oneself in their practical use in new situations. With the aid of specially selected exercises, you will learn to determine whether this or that well-known technique or evaluation works or not, and what sort of new ideas are contained in the position. I have conducted such training sessions more than once; and have repeatedly found them to be difficult (perhaps due to unfamiliarity), even for grandmasters.

I offer two such exercises for you to solve: think about the following positions, and determine in each whether White to move can win.

*Ljubojevic – Gligoric* **Belgrade 1979, 9th Match Game**
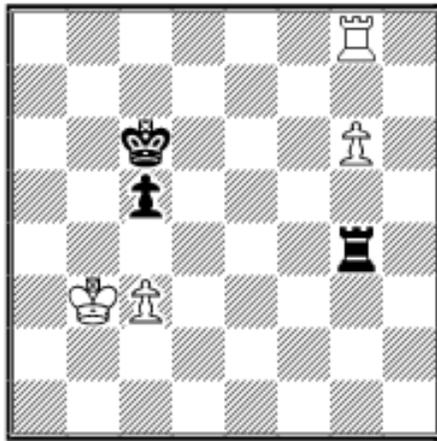
The game continuation was: **1. g7 Kb7?? 2. c4! Rg2 3. Kc3**, and Black resigned. The king moves through the center to attack the c5-pawn, which will be lost due to zugzwang.

So far, nothing new. But look at the situation after 1...c4+! 2. Kb4 Kb7 3. Kb5 Ka7. Here, zugzwang can no longer occur. White cannot run both the enemy rook and king out of moves simultaneously: after 4. Kc6, the rook is freed from the defense of the c4-pawn, so the draw becomes inevitable.

In the opinion of Milic and Bozic, who commented on this endgame in the 27th volume of *Chess Informant*, White should have played 1 c4 Rg3+ 2. Kc2, winning. This would be correct, if the kingside pieces stood along the h-file. But in this instance, Black finds another defensive resource: the king marches over to the g-pawn. After 2...Kd6 3. g7 Ke6 (or e7), it's a drawn pawn endgame. And if 2. Ka4, then 2...Kb6 3. g7 Kb7 4. Kb5 Rg5 5. Ka4 Rg3! White can neither create a zugzwang, nor break into the queenside with his king.

### *Benko – Gereben* **Budapest 1951**
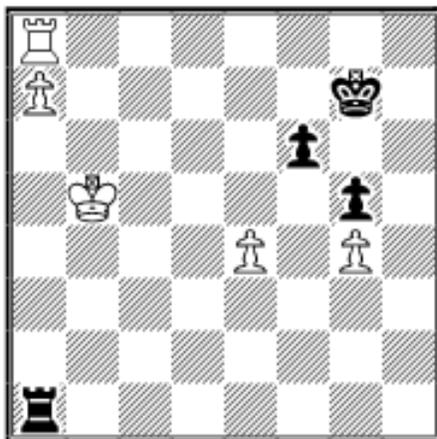
With proper defense, the position is drawn.

**1. Kb6 Rb1+ 2. Kc6 Rc1+ 3. Kd6 Rd1+!**

In the actual game, Black erred with 3...Ra1?, and after 4. Rc8! (but not 4. Re8? Ra6+!=) 4...Ra6+ 5. Rc6 Rxa7 6. Rc7+ Rxc7 7. Kxc7, White had the distant opposition, which is easily transformed into close opposition. After 7...Kh7 8. Kd7! Kg6 9. Ke6 Kg7 10. Ke7 Kg6 11. Kf8, Black resigned.

**4. Ke6 Ra1 5. Rd8** (5. Re8 Ra6+! 6. Kf5 Rxa7=) **5...Rxa7 6. Rd7+ Rxd7 7. Kxd7 Kh7!=** Black is saved **only** by taking the distant opposition, **not** the close: 7...Kf7? 8. Kd6, and White takes the opposition away.

Half a century later, an encounter between two young women grandmasters led to the following endgame:

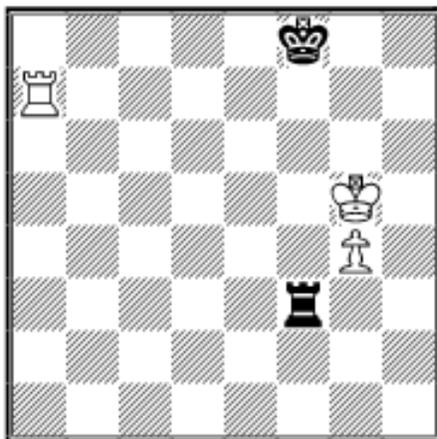*Pietzsch - Kosteniuk* **Mainz 2002, 5th match game**
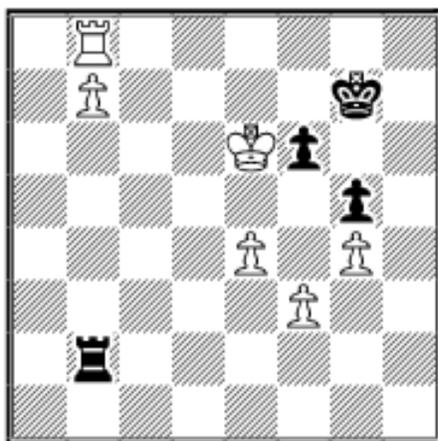
Compared with the previous example, White has an extra pawn at f3 - therefore, any pawn endgame is won. The elementary way to reach this was: 1. Rd8! Rb6+ 2. Rd6 Rxb7 3. Rd7+ Rxd7 4. Kxd7.

**1. Re8?? Rb6+! 2. Kf5 Rxb7**

The position is now drawn - but the adventure continues...

**3. e5 fe 4. Rxe5 Rf7+ 5. Kxg5 Rxf3 6. Re7+ Kf8 7. Ra7**

### 7...Rc3??

7...Kg8! 8. Kg6 Rf8= was necessary. With a knight's pawn, passive defense by the rook along the 8th rank is the way to guarantee a draw.
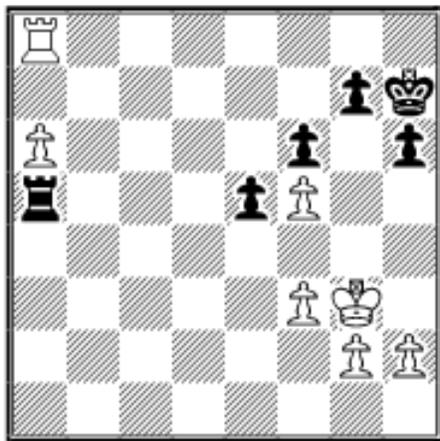
### 8. Kh5??

8. Kg6! leads by force to the winning "Lucena Position", for example: 8...Rc6+ 9. Kh7 Rc5 10. Rg7.

**8...Kg8 9. Rd7 Rc6**. And now we have reached "Philidor's position". The game was soon drawn.

Now, let's examine a much more complicated and instructive example of the same type.

### *Zurakhov – Vaisman* USSR 1966

First question: ***Should White push the pawn to a7? This makes sense in any of the following cases:***

***a) When it may be exchanged for enemy pawns, thereby obtaining a won endgame with all the pawns on one side***. (An example: our first position, with the pawn on h4, the variation 1...h5 2. Re8!);

***b) When you can win the enemy rook for it. This can be done, for example, by creating a passed f-pawn on the other wing, which will knock the enemy king from its safe square.*** (Example: the situation examined above, with the black f5-pawn and the white f4-pawn);

*c) And finally, when giving up the passed pawn forces a trade of rooks (by means of a 7th-rank check), and transposition into a won pawn endgame.* (In Averbakh's position, with the pawn at h4, the pawn endgame is won; with the pawn at h2, it's drawn. But if we place the White pawns at f4 and h2, then the rook exchange also leads to a draw, since Black's king has a stalemate haven at h5).

In the present instance, the first possibility is clearly out of the question; and it's very hard to say whether either of the other two possibilities can be executed. Here, we would probably have to make an intuitive decision.

**1. a7?!**

Contrary to the opinion of V. Zurakhov, who commented on this game for the magazine *Shakhmaty v SSSR*, the move made by him does not let slip the win. Nevertheless, leaving the pawn at a6 would have been simpler. After playing h2-h4-h5 and Ra7, White would then march his king over to the queenside, giving up the g2-pawn (or the f3-pawn, if he cannot do without g2-g4). The win would be achieved without much difficulty, since the enemy king remains forever locked in to h7.

With the text, White intended to continue h2-h4 and g2-g4-g5, and after the forced duble exchange on g5, to eliminate the g5- and e5-pawns with his king, in preparation for f5-f6.

**1...Ra2**

On 1...Ra3!? (threatening 2...e4!=), both 2. Kg4 and 2. Kf2 are good - the advance of the kingside pawns can only be delayed a little, but not prevented.

**2. h4 Ra3**

Black loses immediately after 2...h5? 3. Kh3, when there is no defense to g2-g4-g5-g6+.

### 3. Kh2

Right: it's simpler to keep the king behind the pawns. 3. Kg4 Ra4+ 4. Kh5 was possible too, but that would require more attentiveness and accuracy from White. Black would have responded 4...Ra5!?
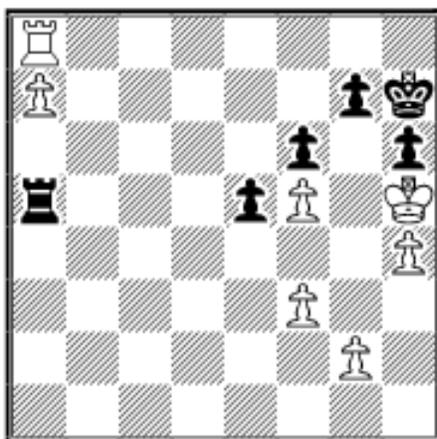
Now, after the indecisive 5. g3? Black saves himself by 5...e4! 6. fe g6+ 7. Kg4 gf+ (but not 7...h5+? 8. Kf4 gf 9. Rf8! Rxa7 10. Kxf5 Rg7 11. Rxf6 Rxg3 12. e5) 8. ef Kg7 9. Kf4 h5=.

But on 5. g4!, Black loses after both 5...g6+? 6. fg+ Kg7 7. g5 hg 8. hg fg (8...e4 9. Re8!) 9. Kg4! (zugzwang); and 5...e4? 6. g5 (6. fe?? g6#) 6...hg 7. hg g6+ 8. fg+ Kg7 9. Re8! (or 9. f4!? f5 10. Re8 Rxa7 11. Re5, and wins). Black would have to play 5...Ra1 6. g5 hg 7. hg fg, transposing back into the game.

**3...Ra2 4. Kh3 Ra3 5. g3 Ra2 6. g4 Ra3 7. Kg2 Ra2+ 8. Kg3 Ra4 9. g5 hg 10. hg fg 11. Kh3 Rh4+ 12. Kg2 Ra4 13. Kg3 Ra1 14. Kg4 Rg1+ 15. Kh5 Ra1 16. Kxg5 Ra6 17. Kg4 Ra3 18. Kh4 Ra4+ 19. Kh3 Ra2 20. Kg3 Ra5 21. Kf2 Ra3 22. Ke2 Ra5 23. Kd3 Ra4 24. Kc3 Ra1 25. Kb4 Ra2 26. Kc5 Ra1 27. Kd6 Ra5 28. Ke6 Ra1 29. Kxe5 Ra6 30. f4 Ra5+ 31. Ke6**
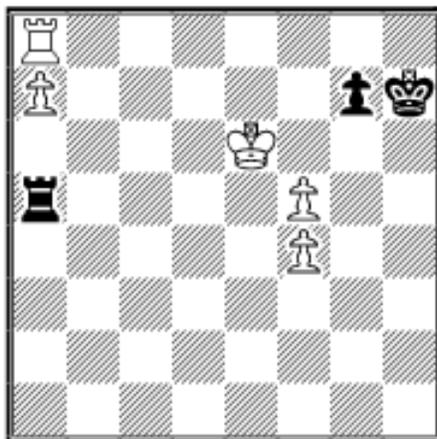
Now, try to find a system of defense for Black.

## 31...Ra1!

31...Ra6+? loses to 32. Ke7! (zugzwang) 32...Ra4 33. f6! gf 34. Kf7! Ra6 (34...f5 35. Ke6 Ra5 36. Kf6 and wins) 35. f5. The same zugzwang position, with Black to move, occurs after 31...Ra4? 32. Kf7! Ra6 33. Ke7.

On the other hand, 32. f6 does not bring quick success, in view of 32...Ra6+ 33. Ke7 (33. Kf7 Rf6+) 33...gf 34. Kf7 (34. f5 Kg7) 34...Ra4! 35. f5 Ra6, when it is White who is in zugzwang.

## 32. Ke7 Ra6!

The only defense against the threatened f5-f6. 32...Ra4? is a mistake, because of 33. f6 gf 34. Kf7, when the zugzwang is decisive. We may properly call the corresponding squares f7-a4 and e7-a6 squares of mutual zugzwang. With accurate defense, Black will not fall into zugzwang.

## 33. Kf7 Ra4!

On 33...Rf6+? White gives his opponent the move by triangulating with his king: 34. Ke8! Ra6 35. Ke7, and wins.

**34. Kf8** (34. f6 gf 35. f5 Ra6) **34...Ra5** (34...Ra6? 35. Ke7 wins) **35. f6** (there's really nothing else) **35...gf 36. f5 Ra1** (36...Ra6? 37. Kf7 wins)
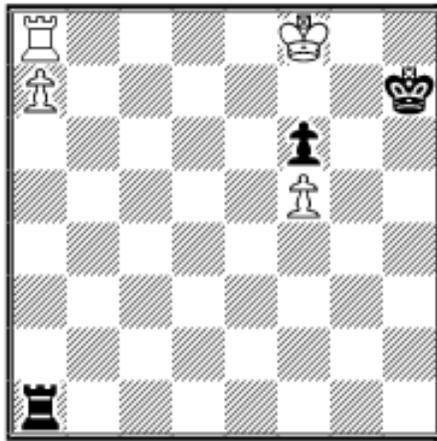
The culmination of this endgame: how does White continue?

## 37. Re8?

This natural move (White wants to get a winning pawn endgame) is in fact a mistake - Black has a stalemate defense! The correct line was pointed out by Sergey Dolmatov.

37. Kf7! (it's important to lure the rook to a6) 37...Ra6 38. Ke7! (by the way, the immediate 37. Ke7? Kg7 throws away the win) 38...Kg7 (of course, this position could also have come about earlier) 39. Kd8! (39. Ke8?! Kg8!) 39...Ra1 (both 39...Kg8 40. Kc7+ Kg7 41. Kb7, and 39...Kh6 40. Kc7 Kg5 41. Rg8+ Kxf5 42. a8Q Rxa8 43. Rxa8 are hopeless for Black) 40. Rc8! Rxa7 41. Rc7+ Rxc7 42. Kxc7 Kh6 43. Kd7 Kh5 44. Ke7! Kg5 45. Ke6, and wins.

## 37...Rxa7 38. Re7+ Kh8! 39. Kf7

Taking the rook is stalemate, so White must go after the f6-pawn.

## 39...Ra6 (39...Ra1 is good too) 40. Kg6 Ra8 41. Kxf6
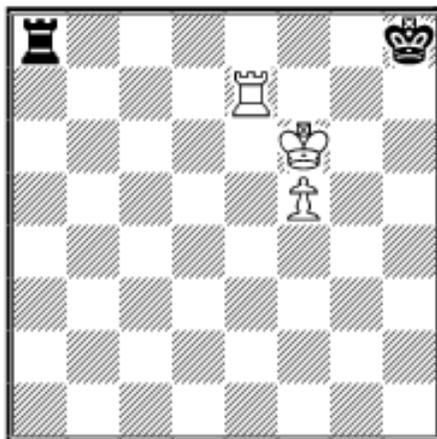
**41...Kg8??**

A horrible blunder, one step away from his goal. 41...Ra6+ secures the draw (as does 41...Ra1): 42. Re6 (42. Kf7 Kh7 43. f6 Ra8 or 43...Ra1, as long as Black doesn't fall for 43...Rb6?? 44. Kf8+ Kg6 45. f7 Kf6 46. Kg8!, winning) 42...Ra1! 43. Kg6 Rg1+ 44. Kf7 Kh7 (44...Rg7+) 45. f6 Rg7+! 46. Ke8 (46. fg is stalemate) 46...Rg8+, and the rook gets back to the "long side".

**42. Kg6**, and Black resigned.

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Translated by Jim Marfia

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