



C O L U M N I S T S

The Instructor

Mark Dvoretsky

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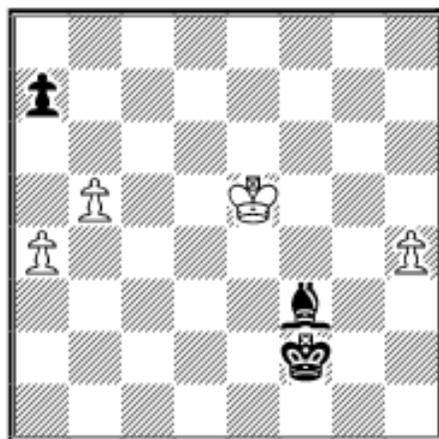
Some Réti Studies

One of the first grandmasters to successfully combine practical play with endgame composition was Richard Réti. Many of his outstanding compositions are in my notebook.

The great majority of Réti's studies have successfully withstood the test of time. Years ago, I found a second solution to one of them, and presented it in my first book. Later, in a Spanish magazine, analysis appeared showing that I was wrong and the study was correct.

Quite recently, however (while working on an endgame manual), I still had to exclude from my notebook of exercises two of Réti's studies. In each case, the refutations were sufficiently subtle and interesting that I should like to present them here.

First, let's examine two quite similar positions.

R. Réti, 1922

Black's bishop is fighting passed pawns on two separate diagonals. In such situations (to which M. Botvinnik gave the picturesque name of "*pants*"), the bishop is helpless without the aid of its king. The question becomes whether or not the Black king can reach the square of one of the passed pawns.

The task is easily solved if White plays the



straightforward 1 a5? Kg3=. Nor does he accomplish anything by marching his king after the a-pawn: 1 Kd6? Kg3 2 Kc7 Kxh4 3 Kb8 Bd1 4 a5 Be2=. And finally, on 1 Kf4? Be2! White finds himself in zugzwang. The pawns are immobilized; and if White's king goes to support them on one wing, Black's king is in time to get to the other wing: 2 Kg5 Ke3=, or 2 Ke4 Kg3 3 Ke3 Bg4! 4 a5 Kxh4 5 b6 ab 6 ab Bc8=.

Seeing that the zugzwang we spoke of is actually mutual brings us to the solution of this study. White has to "lose" a tempo.

1 Ke5-f5!! Bf3-e2

1...Kg3 2 Kg5 Be2 3 h5 Bd3 4 h6 Kf3 5 a5 is very bad. On 1...Ke3 2 a5 Kd4 3 b6 ab 4 ab Kc5 5 Kf4! Bd5 6 Ke5! Bf3 7 h5 is decisive. In these variations, we see put into action the *first method of exploiting the bishop "torn" between two diagonals: distraction*. One pawn moves forward, but it cannot be taken, or else the other pawn will queen.

2 Kf5-f4!

And here White uses the *second method: zugzwang*. From e2, the bishop freezes the advance of all the pawns; but any move it makes will allow one of them to advance. King moves will worsen Black's position also.

(I shall note parenthetically here the *third method of exploiting the "torn" bishop: the king can "bump" it from the point where the two diagonals intersect.*)

2...Kf2-g2

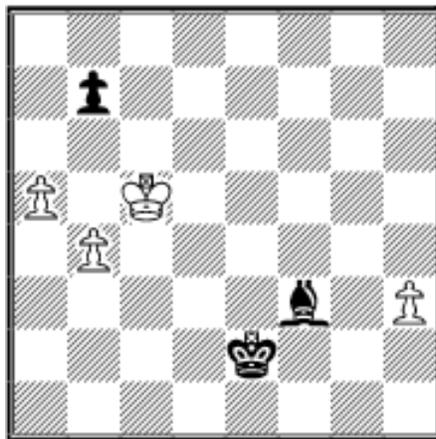
2...Ke1 3 Kg5 is no better.

3 Kf4-g5 Kg2-f3 4 h4-h5 Be2-d3 5 h5-h6Q

Black's king must go to e4 in order to neutralize 6 a5; but then it blocks the bishop, allowing the h-pawn to advance.

In this study, all was in order - the same, unfortunately, could not be said of the following study.

R. Réti, 1922

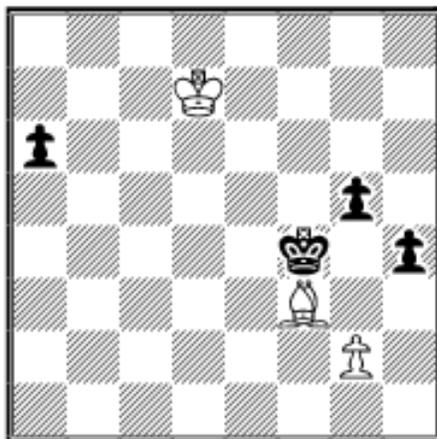


1 b5? or 1 h4? are met by 1...Ke3=. The author's solution was: **1 Kd4! Kf2 2 h4 Kg3 3 Ke3! Bg4 4 b5 Kxh4 5 b6!** (threatening 6 a6) **5...Bc8 6 Kf4(d4)**, when the king goes to c7.

Instead of 2...Kg3? Black could play 2...Be2! In Réti's opinion, this move changes nothing, in light of 3 Ke4 Kg3 4 Ke3 Bg4 5 b5, and so on - just as in the main variation.

The error of this assessment was apparently first discovered by the author of the following deep and difficult production, which combines ideas from both of Réti's studies.

A. Chéron, 1955



1 Bf3-c6!

1 Kc6? h3! 2 Bd5 h2 would lose.

1... Kf4-e5!

1...a5? 2 Kd6=; 1...g4? 2 Kd6=.

2 Kd7-c7 a6-a5 3 Bc6-d7! Ke5-d5!

Nothing comes of 3...Kf4 4 Kd6! (a typical “pursuit of two rabbits”: the king wants to get inside the square of the a-pawn, while simultaneously getting closer to the kingside pawns) 4...Kg3 5 Bc6 a4 (5...g4 6 Kc5) 6 Bxa4 Kxg2 7 Bd7 h3 8 Ke5=.

4 Kc7-b7!!

Only this subtle move saves White!

The variation 4 Kb6? Kd6! 5 Bb5 g4 6 Kxa5 g3! 7 Bf1 Kc5(e5) 8 Ka4 Kd4 -+ is already familiar to us.

And after 4 Bc6+? Black wins, by employing the “tempo loss” we saw in the first study: 4...Kc4!! (but not 4...Kc5? 5 Bd7, and Black is in zugzwang) 5 Bd7 Kc5! (but now it’s White in zugzwang) 6 Kb7 Kb4 7 Kc6 a4 8 Be6 a3 -+.

Less obvious is the refutation of 4 Kd8? If Black’s king heads for one wing or the other, then the White king arrives just in time on the opposite wing. It’s important to determine first the direction White’s king is heading, and then to employ the “*shoulder block*”. And so: 4...Kd4!! 5 Ke7 (5 Kc7 Kc5! with the familiar zugzwang) 5..Ke5! (and again, White is in zugzwang, whereas the overhasty 5...Ke3? would allow him to save

himself after 6 Kd6! Kf2 7 Bc6 a4 8 Bxa4 Kxg2 9 Bd7=) 6 Kf7 Kf4 7 Ke6 (7 Kg6 g4 8 Kh5 h3 9 gh g3 -+. Thanks to the fact that the king had to go to f7, he is now in the path of his bishop.

4...Kd5-d6 5 Kb7-c8! Kd6-c5

5...Ke7 6 Kc7=; 5...Kd5 6 Kb7!!=.

6 Kc8-c7

And still, White has managed to obtain the key position of mutual zugzwang, with his opponent on the move. He offers Black the choice of which way to move his king, in order then to send his own king on an **end-run** to the opposite wing. For example: 6...Kb4 7 Kd6! =; or 6...Kd4 7 Kb6 =. But his opponent has one more try left.

6...Kc5-c4!? [The author's solution was two moves shorter; he considered 4...Kc4 at once.] **7 Kc7-c6!!**

The only way! The variation 7 Kb6? Kb4 8 Kc6 a4 9 Be6 a3 with a winning advantage is already quite well known to us. Another mistaken line would be 7 Kd6? Kd4! (zugzwang) 8 Ke7 (8 Kc6 a4R; 8 Ke6 g4 -+) 8...Ke5!, and once again, White is in zugzwang (cf. the variation 4 Kd8? Kd4!).

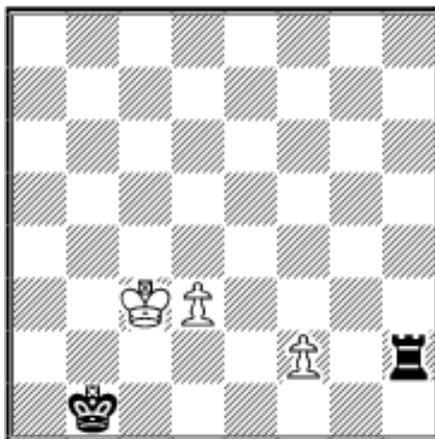
7...a5-a4 8 Kc6-d6 a4-a3 9 Kd6-e5! Kc4-d3

9...a2 10 Be6+

10 Bd7-e6 Kd3-e3 11 Ke5-f5=

The following study has an interesting history.

R. Réti, 1929



The king is unable to advance alongside the d-pawn: 1 d4?! Rxf2 2 Kc4 (2 d5 Rf4! with a winning advantage - a typical case of *cutting the king off from the pawn*) 2...Kc2 3 d5 Rd2! 4 Kc5 Kd3! (Black's king starts an *end-run*) 5 d6 Ke4 6 Kc6 Ke5 7 d7 Ke6 -+.

1 f4?! is met by 1...Rf2, and if 2 d4, then 2...Rxf4 3 Kc4 Kc2 4 Kc5 Kd3 -+ (another end-run, just as in the previous variation). 2 Kd4 Rxf4+ 3 Ke5 Rf8 4 d4 Re8+! is no help either (*an intermediary check to win a tempo* - Black's rook goes to d8 without loss of time) 5 Kf6 Rd8! 6 Ke5 Kc2 7 d5 Kd3 8 d6 Kc4 9 Ke6 Kc5 10 d7 Kc6 -+.

1 f2-f3! Rh2-f2 2 d3-d4 Rf2xf3+ 3 Kc3-c4 Kb1-c2 4 d4-d5 Rf3-d3 5 Kc4-c5 Kc2-c3

Now the point of White's fine first move becomes clear: by enticing Black's rook to the d3 square, he has rendered the end-run (with 5...Kd3) impossible.

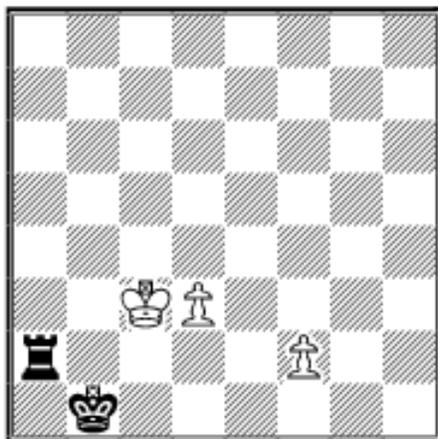
6 d5-d6 =

In 1950, the well-known endgame expert Igor Maizejlis discovered that the study has no solution. After **1 f3!** Black wins by sending his king on an immediate end-run down the a-file.

1...Ka2!! 2 d4 Ka3 3 Kc4 On 3 d5 Black can win with 3...Ka4 as well as with 3...Rh4 4 d6 Rh6 5 Kd4 Rxd6+ 6 Ke5 Rd1 7 f4 Kb4 8 f5 Kc5 9 Ke6 Kc6 10 f6 Re1+.

3...Ka4, and, as is easy to see, the Black king returns in time to fight successfully against the enemy pawns.

A clever correction of the study has been proposed: if the Black rook is moved to a2 in the starting position, then the Black king's end-run becomes impossible. It was exactly this version of the study that saw many years' employment in my notebook of exercises.



Alas, I have recently discovered that this position also contains a winning line for Black. Instead of the end-run along the a-file, he can successfully carry out a far more paradoxical one: along the first rank and the h-file! Unbelievable, but true.

1 f2-f3! Kb1-c1!! 2 Kc3-d4

2 d4 is met by 2...Ra3+ 3 Kb4 (3 Kc4 Kd2 4 d5 Ke3 5 d6 Rd3! 6 Kc5 Kf4R) 3...Rd3! 4 Kc5 Kd2 5 d5 (5 f4 Ke3 6 f5 Rxd4) 5...Ke3 (our familiar end-run) 6 d6 Kf4 7 Kc6 Ke5 8 f4+ Ke6 9 f5+ Kxf5 --+. It is worth pointing out that in Réti's original study (with the rook at h2), the move 1...Kc1 would not have worked, since after 2 d4, Black has no check along the third rank.

2... Kc1-d2 3 f3-f4

The most stubborn. On 3 Ke4, Black's king goes on a queenside end-run: 3...Kc3 4 f4 Kb4 5 Kd5 Rf2 6 Ke5 Kc5 --+.

4...Kd2-e2!

3...Ra4+? is a mistake: 4 Ke5 Kxd3 5 f5=.

4 Kd4-e4

White tries to prevent the enemy king's advance (the "*shoulder block*"). On 4 Ke5 Kf3 5 d4 Re2+! 6 Kf5 Rd2 is decisive (the rook moves behind the passed pawn with gain of tempo): 7 Ke5 Kg4 8 d5 Kh5! (here's the promised king march along the h-file) 9 f5 Kh6! 10 d6 Kg7.

4...Ke2-f2!! 5 d3-d4 Ra2-e2+!

White's king now stands at a crossroads. Wherever he goes, the enemy king will go the opposite way and arrive just in the nick of time. For example: 6 Kd5 Kf3 7 f5 Kf4 8 f6 Kg5 9 f7 Rf2 10 Ke6 Kg6 11 d5 Re2+.

6 Ke4-f5 Kf2-e3! 7 Kf5-e5

Or 7 d5 Kd4 8 d6 Kc5 9 d7 Rd2 etc. (the same as in the preceding variation, except in mirror-image).

7...Ke3-f3+

7...Kd3+ 8 Kd5 Rf2! comes to the same thing.

8 Ke5-f5 Re2-d2! 9 Kf5-e5 Kf3-g4 10 d4-d5 Kg4-h5! 11 f4-f5 Kh5-h6! 12 d5-d6 Kh6-g7

Réti's study (the one in the next-to-last diagram) might easily be corrected by another means, which was also suggested many years ago: simply shift the entire position one file to the left. In this case, the edge of the board itself prevents the king's end-run.

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Translated by Jim Marfia

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