



Studies for Practical Players

Few tournament chessplayers are familiar with the name of the Austrian study-composer Alois Wotawa. I don't know much about him myself. His creative period occurred during the second third of the twentieth century, and he avoided participating in competitions.

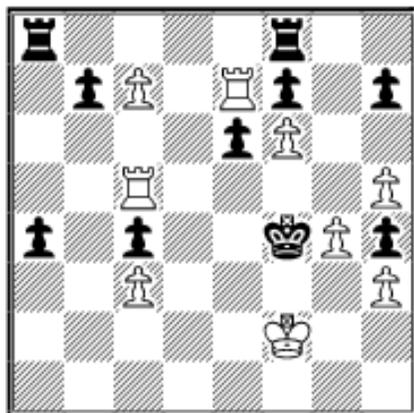
But I do recall that the first works of Wotawa with which I became acquainted made a strong impression. Many years later, when I acquired the computerized database of studies put together by Harold van der Heijden, I went over all of Wotawa's studies and selected several dozen of the best (according to my own taste, of course). I offered this selection to my students for solving, either with the aim of developing their combinative acuity, or to help them reach peak form before important tournaments.

The distinguishing feature of the Austrian composer's studies is that they are brimming with brilliant combinations, generally paired, as a rule, with fantastic quiet moves as well as with effective sacrifices. Most of his studies resemble a practical game, in form as well as in spirit. In them, White most often initiates a direct attack on the black king; but the mating constructions are far from obvious, and uncovering them requires the solver to display a great deal of inventiveness.

I shall begin by demonstrating some studies in which, unfortunately, a defect was found – either a refutation or a second solution. I hope even these will please you. And then I will present my collection of Wotawa's unimpeachable studies – from which, I am sure you will derive even greater pleasure.

A. Wotawa

1962



1.?

Something must be done – the passed a-pawn is about to queen.

1 c8Q Raxc8 2 Rxc8 Rxc8 3 Rxf7 leads to a sharp ending, difficult to assess.

The straightforward 1 Rd7 (threatening 2 Rd4#) meets 1...e5, when the black king escapes the danger zone via the g5-square. The position after 2 Re7 Kg5 3 Rxe5+ Kxf6 4 Re2 a3 5 Ra2 is about even.

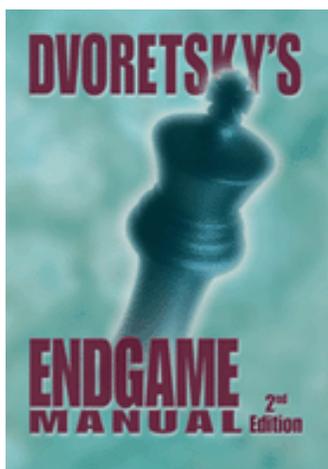
And so it appears that White can escape defeat. The question is: Should he try for a win? The composer came up with a wonderful way to prepare the move Rd7.

1 h5-h6!!(?)

COLUMNISTS

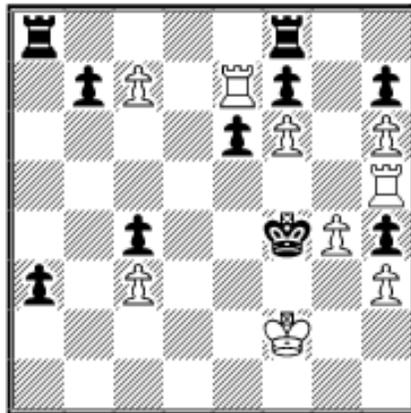
The Instructor

Mark Dvoretsky



The exclamation marks are for the cleverness of the idea. The question mark reflects its actual value.

1...a4-a3 2 Rc5-h5!



1...?

2...a3-a2?

2...Ra6? 3 Rd7 e5 4 Rd8+- wouldn't save Black either.

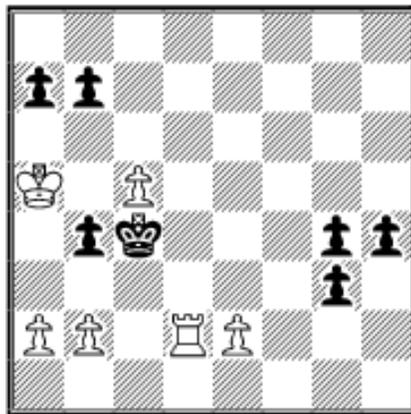
3 Re7-d7 e6-e5 4 Rd7-d5 Rf8-e8 5 Rh5-f5+ Kf4-e4 6 Rf5xe5+! Re8xe5 7 Rd5-d4 mate

A beautiful attack! Unfortunately, White's idea falls apart, if in the last diagrammed position, Black takes preventive measures against the

transfer of the e7-rook to the fifth rank; namely, **2...Ke4! 3 Rd7 e5+-**.

A. Wotawa

1960



1.?

The black pawns cannot be stopped, and promoting White's e-pawn clearly comes too late. So – do we play for mate? At first sight, it seems absurd; on the other hand, White really has nothing else.

1 c5-c6! b7xc6

After 1...g2?, White wins with either 2 Rc2+ Kd5 3 e4+ Kxe4 4 Rxe4, or with 2 c7 g1Q 3 c8Q+ (3 Rc2+ Kd5 4 c8Q) 3...Qc5+ 4 Qxc5+ Kxc5 5 e4

g3 6 e5 h3 7 e6 h2 8 e7 h1Q 9 e8Q.

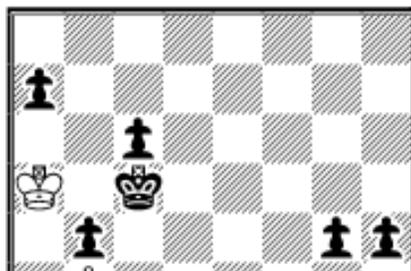
2 Rd2-d3!

2 e3? is bad because of 2...c5! (White cannot create any more mating threats) 3 e4 h3.

2...g3-g2

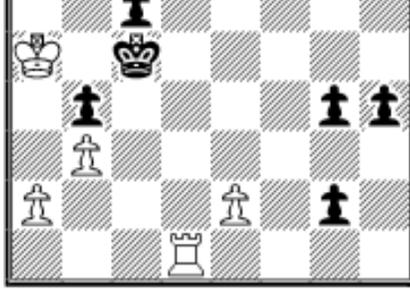
2...c5? results in a "cooperative mate" with 3 b3#, as does 2...b3?? 3 ab+ Kc5 4 b4+ Kc4 5 b3#.

3 b2-b3+ Kc4-c5 4 Rd3-d1!



1...?

The outlines of the mating construct are becoming clear: White will continue e2-e3, securing the d4-square for his rook, and then a2-a3.



4...h3? 5 e3!! h2 (5...g1Q 6 Rxd1 h2 7 Rd1! g3 8 a3! changes nothing) 6 a3! ba 7 Rd4 g1Q 8 b4 mate.

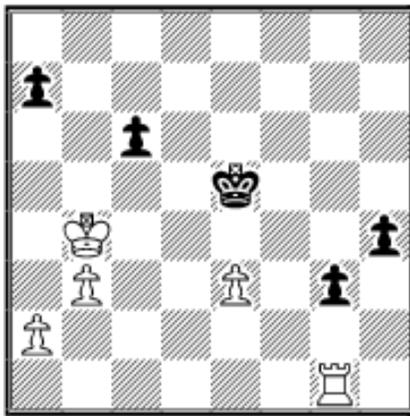
While solving the exercise, grandmaster Motylev discovered a defense that the composer hadn't seen.

4...g4-g3!! 5 e2-e3 g2-g1Q! 6 Rd1xg1 Kc5-d5!

Here's the point! After 4...h3?, the king would not have time to get out of the mating net, since the g4-pawn would be *en prise*. But now, White must find a defense against Black's threat to bring his king over to the aid of the kingside pawns and promote them.

7 Ka5xb4 Kd5-e5!

Black must transit via the fifth rank and the f5-square. The careless 7...Ke4? would lose to 8 Rh1.



1.?

Try to find a saving line for White. Not simple, is it? Let me show you the solution proposed by Motylev.

8 Kb4-c3! Ke5-f5 9 e3-e4+!

9 Rf1+ Kg4 10 Rf4+ Kg5! (10...Kh3 11 Rf7 only draws; for example, 11...Kg2 12 e4 h3 13 e5 h2 14 Rh7 h1Q 15 Rxh1 Kxh1 16 e6 g2 17 e7 g1Q 18 e8Q) 11 Rf7 h3 12 Rg7+ Kh4 13 Rxa7 h2 14 Rh7 + Kg4 would be weaker. This is a much more

dangerous version of the queen-vs.-rook endgame seen in Motylev's variation.

9...Kf5xe4

On 9...Kg4? 10 e5, only Black runs the risk of losing

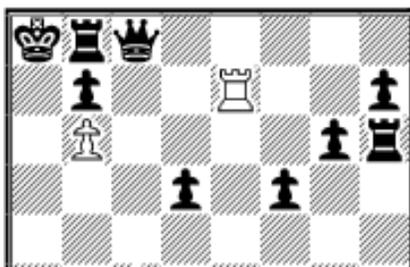
10 Rg1-h1 g3-g2 11 Rh1xh4+ Kf4-f5 12 Rh4-h5+ Kf5-g6 13 Rh5-c5 g2-g1Q 14 Rc5xc6 + Kg6-f5 15 Kc3-b2 Qg1-d4+ 16 Kb2-b1 Qd4-e4+ 17 Rc6-c2 =

Black appears unable to break through the fortress White has constructed.

So instead of a play-to-win study, we have a play-and-draw study – also interesting, and also useful for “two-handed play,” against a strong opponent.

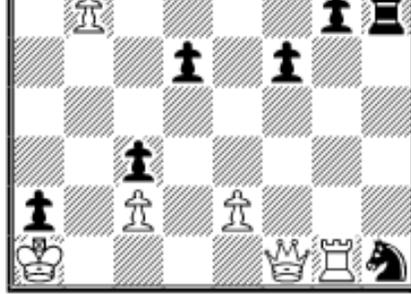
A. Wotawa

1963



1.?

How do we get at the black king? The primitive approach – 1 Rxh1? Rxh1 2 Qxh1 Qc5 – is completely hopeless. And 1 Qf4? Qc4! 2 Qd5 (2



Qxh6 Qb4 3 Qc1 Qxe7--+) also loses, in view of 2...Rh4!. And 1 e4?, although it creates the pretty threat of 2 Qa6+!, is refuted by the same 1...Qc4!.

1 Rg1-g4!! f5xg4

What's the idea behind the brilliant rook sacrifice?

If we recall the try 1 Qf4?, we could guess: it's to block the fourth rank.

2 Qf4! Qc4 3 Qd6! Rc8

There's no other defense against mate – 3...Qa4? loses at once to 4 Rd7, with the unstoppable threats of 5 Qxb8+ and 5 Rd8. Now White can get a draw in different ways (he has nothing better). One possible way is 4 Rc7 Rxc7 5 Qxc7 Qxc7 6 bc Ka7 7 c8Q =. Another way is to chase the black rook along the eighth rank.

4 Qa3+ Qa6 5 Qc5

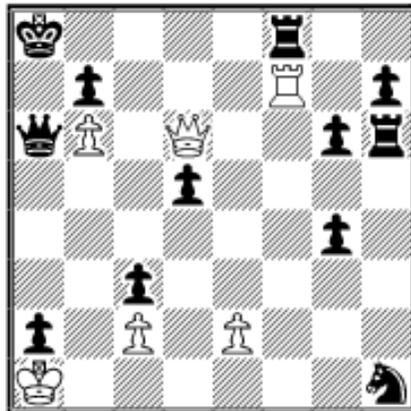
5 Rc7 Rg8 (5...Rb8?? 6 Qxa6+) 6 Qc5 = is no worse.

5...Rb8 6 Qd6! Rf8

As we already know, the threat of 7 Qxb8+ cannot be parried by 6...Qa4? because of 7 Rd7 +-.

7 Rf7!

7 Qf6!? Rc8 8 Qe6 Rd8 9 Qd6 or 9 Rc7 are also enough to draw.



1...?

White would be winning, if his opponent did not have the following excellent counterblow.

7...Qxb6!! 8 Rxf8+ (all other reasonable moves also lead to a draw) **8...Ka7 9 Qa3+ Qa6 10 Qc5 + Qb6 11 Ra8+ Kxa8 12 Qxb6 g3**, and sooner or later, White will have to give perpetual check.

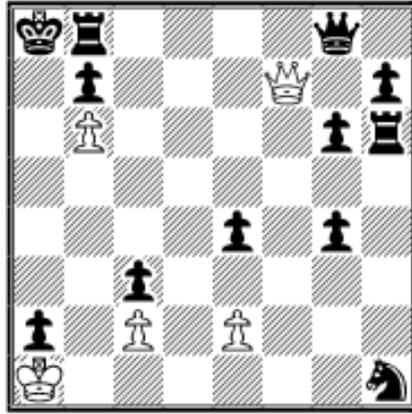
My readers will, of course, have understood (because of the abundance of equivalent alternatives) that what has been demonstrated so

far is a second solution. In the author's variant, the draw came about through a fundamentally different approach. The rook sacrifice on move one was not for the purpose of closing off the fourth rank, but to open the f-file for the queen. But before the queen invades, one more important highway must be opened: the a2-g8 diagonal – and for that, we need to sacrifice the other rook!

2 Re7-e4!! d5xe4

Black could try 2...Qc6!?, when there follows 3 Qc1! Qxb6 4 Ra4+ Qa6 5 Rxa6+ ba 6 Qxh6, with about equal chances.

3 Qf2-f7! Qc8-g8



1.?

The threat of mate from a2 is now parried. However, having conveniently gotten rid of all his pieces, White has, in return, obtained a new defensive resource.

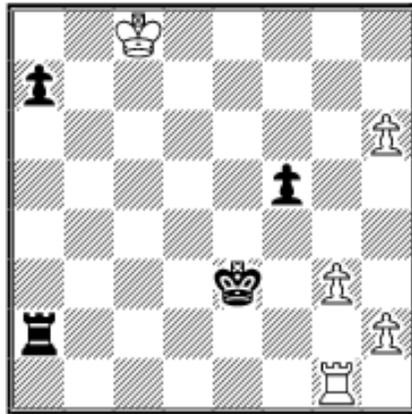
4 e2-e3! Qg8xf7

Stalemate! And if Black doesn't take the queen, White stalemates himself, by 5 Qxb7+!

To conclude this column, let's look at an endgame study – which, nevertheless, still manages to feature a beautiful combination.

A. Wotawa

1936



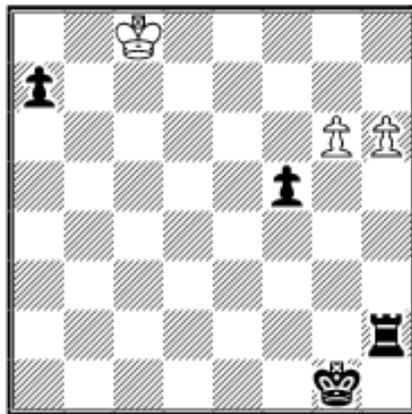
1.?

White's hopes, of course, are pinned on the advanced h6-pawn. But how can White support it? 1 Ra1? Rxh2 2 Ra6 Kf3 is useless; and on 1 h3? (or 1 h4?), there follows 1...Ra6 2 h7 Rh6 3 Re1+ Kf3.

1 g3-g4!! f5xg4

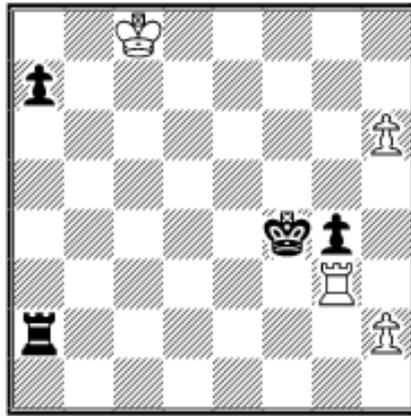
1...Rxh2!? 2 g5 Kf2! is worth serious consideration. White has no advantage in the variation 3 Ra1 Rh5 4 Ra5 f4, so he would have to

sacrifice the rook by 3 g6! Kxg1.



The computer confirms that the win is there, whether by 4 g7 Rg2 5 h7 Rxg7 6 h8Q Rg3!? 7 Qd4+, or after 4 h7 Kf2 5 g7 Rxh7 6 g8Q Rh3!? 7 Qa2+!, although it will be difficult: with proper play by both sides, mating will take over fifty moves!

2 Rg1-g3+ Ke3-f4



1.?

White's idea is to sacrifice the rook to close off the h-file. The rook may be given up in two ways. Not 3 Rh3? g4 h7 Rxh2 5 h8Q Rc2+ 6 Kd7 h2, when the position is drawn.

3 Rg3xg4+! Kf4xg4

3...Kf5 4 Rh4 Re2 5 Kd7 Rd2+ 6 Ke7 Re2+ 7 Kf7 Rb2 8 Rh5+ Kg4 9 h7 is hopeless.

4 h2-h3+! Kg4-f5

4...Kxh3 5 h7 changes nothing. The king hides from checks on a8, just as in the main line of the solution.

5 h6-h7 Ra2-e2+ 6 Kc8-b7(b8)

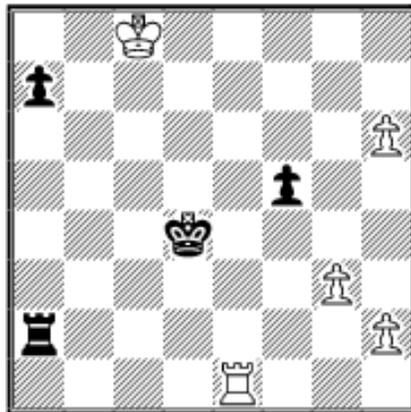
Not 6 Kd7 Rd2+ 7 Ke7 Re2+ 8 Kf7?? Rb2-+.

6...Rc2-b2+ 7 Kb7-a8!+-

And now, let's examine the attempt to win without sacrifices. We will send the rook to the aid of its pawn via the e1-square. The check must be played at once, while the black king is denied access to the f-file.

1 Rg1-e1+! Ke3-d4

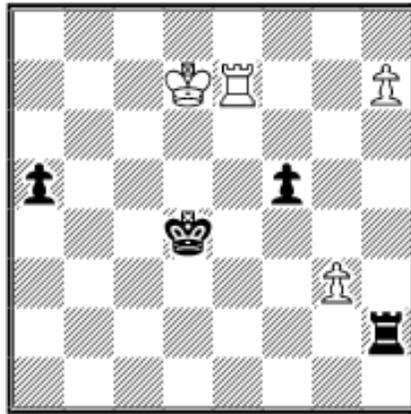
1...Kf2? 2 h7 or 1...Kf3? 2 Rf1+! Ke3 3 Rf4! lose quickly.



1.?

From several possible continuations, White must now choose the only correct one.

2 h7? Rxh2 3 Re7 a5 4 Kd7



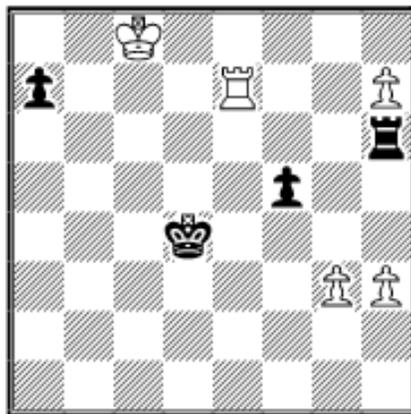
1...?

4...a4? loses to 5 Ke6. Black must first prevent the white king from getting to e6 by playing 4... Kd5! (or 4...Rh6!); and after 5 Ke8 a4 6 Kf8, prevent him from getting to g7, by attacking the g-pawn with 6...Rh3! =.

2 Re6? Rxh2 3 Kd7 Rh3 4 Rg6 a5 5 Ke6 Ke4 6 Kf7 a4 7 Kg7 a3 8 h7 a2 9 Ra6 Rxc3+, with equality.

2 h4? Ra6 3 h7 Rh6 4 Re7 a5 5 Kd8 a4 6 Ke8 a3 7 Ra7 a2 8 Rxa2 Rxh7 9 Kf8 Ke4 10 Kg8 Rb7 11 h5 f4 (11...Kf3! 12 Ra3+ Kg4 13 h6 Rb8+ would be simpler) 12 Ra4+ (12 g4 Kf3! 13 g5 Kg4 =) 12...Kf5! 13 Rxf4+ (13 gf Rb8+) 13...Kg5 =.

2 h2-h3!! Ra2-a6 3 h6-h7 Ra6-h6 4 Re1-e7



White's threat to obtain two connected passed pawns after 5 g4! leaves Black no time to push his a-pawn.

4...Rh6xh3 5 Re7xa7

Now Black has nothing to use against White's threat to advance his king in support of the h-pawn.

5...Kd4-e5 6 Kc8-d8 Ke5-f6 7 Kd8-e8 Kf6-g6 8 Ke8-f8

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