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Preface

I was delighted when Everyman asked me to write a book on the greatest ever endgames, because this phase of the game has always been my favourite aspect of chess. Although we all enjoy seeing spectacular sacrificial attacks, it is in the endgame that the true depth and subtlety of chess is revealed. The complexities and fine points that can be hidden in positions with only a small number of pieces on the board never cease to astonish. The older masters, such as Capablanca, were absolutely right to recommend that beginners start their study of chess with the endgame, because it is by studying simplified positions, with only a few pieces on the board, that one can develop an understanding of the capabilities of the pieces, and what they do and do not “like”.

In this context, I recently came across an interesting story, which shows that chess is not the only game where such a study of the basics pays off. Walter Lindrum, the Australian star, who in the 1930s and 40s developed the game of billiards to such a level that he practically killed it as a competitive event, was tutored in his youth by his martinet father, himself an excellent player. Young Walter was forced to spend up to twelve hours each day, practicing. It seems that for the first three months, his father only allowed him one ball, the cue ball! As one can imagine, by the time he had spent that long, with just a cue ball, Walter could do just about anything imaginable with it, short of making it sing and dance, and this expertise was the foundation of his later immortality at the game. In chess, Vasily Smyslov is an excellent example of a player who learnt his chess expertise by starting with the endgame.

Obviously, there are many textbooks on the endgame which deal with the basic theoretical positions. The present book is somewhat different. As with other books in this series, *The Greatest Ever Chess Endgames* aims to entertain, and also to instruct the reader, by presenting some of the finest practical examples of endgame play in master chess. Through the medium of 50 annotated examples, we will look at the different types of endgame, and see how they have been played by the world’s greatest masters.

I should say a word about the selection. Clearly, with a book such as this, a lot of the examples presented will be familiar to many readers, and will be games which have been published in other endgame books in the past. However, I have tried, as far as possible, to pick at least a few slightly less well-known examples, and there are bound to be some games missing from the book which readers might expect to see here. To take just two examples, Rubinstein's famous rook endings against Lasker (St Petersburg 1909) and Alekhine (Karlsbad 1911) have both been omitted, because I felt them to be so well-known that it would be impossible to say anything original about them. Where I have chosen other famous examples, I have tried, as far as possible, to add something new, or at least to pull together recent analytical discoveries published in more obscure sources. One example is Capablanca-Tartakower, New York 1924 (Game 28), where I have included a summary of some fascinating analysis published in the Russian journal *64* a few years ago. Where appropriate, I have also made use of the seven-man endgame tablebases, which have only recently become available. These have enabled me bring a degree of certainty to some positions that was previously unachievable.

One other thing I should comment on, as far as the selection is concerned, is the age of the games presented here. The reader will note that, with a few exceptions, most of the games were played no later than the 1980s, and many long before that. To some extent, this reflects my own interest in chess history, and reverence for the great masters of the past. However, I think there is also another, more objective reason, which is the change to tournament regimes and time-limits over recent years. A great many of the games in this book were played in the days of slow time-limits (40 moves in two and a half hours being the norm), and with adjournments. Whilst I would accept that adjournments, and the use of third parties to assist with analysis of adjourned games, does contradict the basic philosophy of chess, as being a battle between two individuals over the board, I think it is clear that abolishing adjournments has had a hugely negative impact on endgame play. One only has to look at the epic analytical achievement of Jan Timman and his second Ulf Andersson in Game 39, to see what we have lost by getting rid of adjournments. In recent years, this process has been taken even further, with the adoption of Fischer-style increment time limits, which almost all authorities agree have further damaged the standard of endgame play. The paucity of games from the past 20 years to be found in this book reflects this sad fact.

At the beginning of each chapter, I have added some introductory remarks, which summarize the main principles and characteristics of the different types of endgame. For now, there are three general endgame principles, applicable to all endings, which are worth mentioning here:

1. The principle of two weaknesses

In almost all of the endgames you will see in this book, the key to winning the position is for the stronger side to create a second front, so as to stretch the defender's resources beyond their limits. This may involve creating another passed pawn, opening a file, or simply weakening a single square, so as to allow penetration (or, quite often, merely the threat thereof) by a piece. Whatever the precise means, a second front is nearly always required. A single weakness is rarely enough to lose by itself.

2. Do not hurry!

Time and time again, in this book, you will see players delaying decisive action, in favour of taking minor prophylactic measures, playing small strengthening moves, marginally improving the position of a piece, etc. Such play is absolutely typical of the endgame. The majority of the time (rook endings are a frequent exception), the pace of the endgame is slower than the middlegame, and there is not the same pressure to take immediate action, or to avoid any suggestion of a wasted tempo. Instead, patient manoeuvring and gradual strengthening of the position tend to be the order of the day.

3. Endgames always become concrete!

This rule, which to some extent may seem to contradict point 2 above, was taught to me years ago by GM Jonathan Levitt. Despite the slower pace of endgames, and the need for patient manoeuvring, nearly all endgames eventually reach a phase where they become concrete, and exact calculation of specific variations is required. Many players tend to assume that tactics and calculation belong in the middlegame, and have little place in the ending, but this is a major fallacy. If you look through the endings in this book, especially the minor piece endings, you will see that a long bout of patient manoeuvring usually culminates in a specific, concrete tactical finish, which needs to be accurately calculated. This may be as simple as counting a passed pawn race in a king and pawn ending, or it may involve much more complex calculations, such as in Henneberger-Nimzowitsch (Game 17), but if you cannot or will not calculate variations, you will not be a successful endgame player.

This has been an immensely enjoyable book to write. Spending my days going through some of the finest practical endings ever played has been a great way to pass the last few months, and I hope the reader will gain a similar enjoyment from reading the book. If it serves to stimulate an interest in the endgame amongst

players who hitherto thought it dull, I will be even more delighted.

Last, but by no means least, acknowledgments are due to the following: John and Byron of Everyman, for their advice, technical support and general encouragement; Calle Erlandsen, Per Skjoldager and Jørn Erik Nielsen, who between them dug out and supplied details of Larsen's Danish commentary on Game 10; Gerard Welling, for supplying photocopies of Dutch-language material pertaining to Game 16; Bernard Cafferty, who clarified the probable repetition rules applying in Game 35; Matthew Sadler, for some interesting analytical suggestions in Game 25; Jakov Konovol, who provided results from his seven-man endgame tablebases (and also John Nunn and Harold van der Heijden, who put me in touch with Jakov in the first place); and finally, Laithwaites Wine, the eventide imbibing of whose products provided such splendid refreshment from my daily labours on this book!

Steve Giddins,
Rochester, UK,
January 2012

Chapter Three

Bishop Endings

Bishop and pawn endings come in two distinct categories, depending on whether the bishops operate on the same colour squares, or squares of opposite colours. In both cases, the key characteristic of bishops is their colour-blindness – a bishop can only cover squares of one colour, which means that its influence is always limited to only half the squares on the board.

Same colour bishop endings are the more straightforward. The usual end-game assets are important here too – passed pawns, pawn weaknesses, king activity, etc. A particular issue in bishop endings is the placement of the pawns. In same colour bishop endings, one should almost always strive to place one's pawns on squares of the opposite colour from those on which one's bishop travels. This serves two purposes:

1. The colour-blindness of the bishop means that it can only control half the squares on the board. By placing the pawns on the squares of the

other colour, the player can establish a degree of control over those squares too.

2. If the pawns become fixed on the same colour squares as the bishop, its activity is restricted and it risks becoming a “bad bishop”.

Game 8 shows a typical case, where the defender suffers from the bad bishop. The consequent weakness of Black's dark squares, combined with White's more active king, allows Yanofsky to win a position with equal material and symmetrical pawns.

Game 9 sees White able to win by virtue principally of the much more active king, although here, too, Black is handicapped by his queenside pawns, fixed on the same colour squares as his bishop. This game also shows a typical device in such ending, viz. the sacrifice of the bishop for several pawns. Finally, Game 10 is a virtuoso display by Larsen, who exploits the smallest of positional advantages, against a world-class opponent. The ending illustrates espe-

cially well the battle between mutual passed pawns.

Opposite-colour bishop endings are notorious for their drawing tendency, although this should not be exaggerated. The fundamental concept in such endings is that of the fortress. Since bishops only control squares of one colour, it follows that opposite-coloured bishop endings allow the defender the possibility of setting up a fortress based on the colour squares which his bishop controls. By definition, he will have an extra piece over his opponent when it comes to the fight on those squares, and this frequently allows the defender to draw positions two, or even more pawns down.

An important detail about opposite-colour bishop endings is the pawn placement. Contrary to the usual rule in same-colour bishop endings, in positions with bishops of opposite colour, the defender should usually put his pawns on the same colour squares as

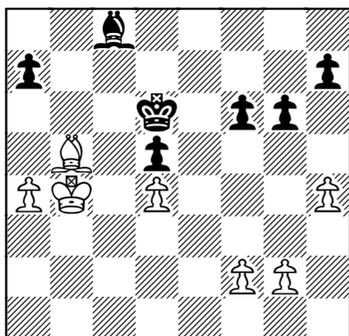
his bishop. This secures them from attack, since his own bishop can defend them, whilst the enemy bishop cannot attack them.

In order to win an opposite-colour bishop ending, the stronger side usually needs to create a second passed pawn, several files away from the first. This will usually force the defender to block one pawn with his king and the other with his bishop. The stronger side then needs to get his king over to support whichever pawn the enemy bishop is stopping.

In this chapter, we have two classic opposite-colour bishop endings, which illustrate this. Game 11 is a famous example of a combinational breakthrough, where Black is prepared to sacrifice several pawns, in order to create his second passed pawn. Game 12 shows Karpov, one of the finest-ever handlers of opposite-bishop endings, weave a magical win against a grandmaster, from a completely drawn position.

Game 8
D.Yanofsky-A.Pinkus
 Ventnor City 1942

1 d4 ♘f6 2 ♗f3 d5 3 c4 e6 4 ♘c3 ♙e7 5
 ♙g5 0-0 6 e3 ♗bd7 7 ♚c2 c6 8 a3 ♜e8 9
 ♜d1 ♗f8 10 ♙d3 dxc4 11 ♙xc4 ♗d5 12
 ♙xe7 ♚xe7 13 0-0 b6 14 ♜c1 ♙b7 15
 ♙d3 ♜ec8 16 ♗xd5 exd5 17 ♙f5 ♜c7 18
 b4 g6 19 ♙d3 ♗e6 20 ♚b2 ♜ac8 21
 ♙e2 c5 22 bxc5 bxc5 23 dxc5 ♗xc5 24
 ♚b4 ♗e6 25 ♚xe7 ♜xe7 26 ♜xc8+
 ♙xc8 27 ♜c1 ♜c7 28 ♜xc7 ♗xc7 29 ♗d4
 ♙d7 30 ♙f1 ♙f8 31 ♙e1 ♙e7 32 ♙d2
 ♙d6 33 ♙c3 f6 34 ♙b4 ♙e8 35 ♙b5
 ♙f7 36 a4 ♙e6 37 ♗b3 ♙c8 38 ♗d4
 ♙e6 39 ♙d3 ♙d7 40 h4 ♗e6 41 ♙b5
 ♗xd4 42 exd4 ♙c8

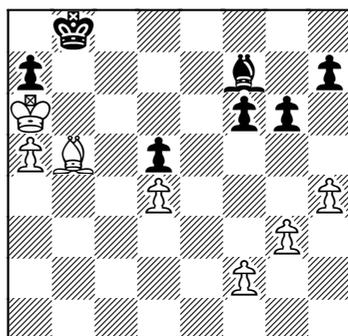


Yanofsky notes that the game was adjourned in this position, and the other competitors in the tournament all thought it was drawn. However, by very fine play, Yanofsky proves otherwise. White has the advantage of the more active king and the better bishop, principally because of the black pawn

on d5, which blocks in his own prelate. Black also has two of his kingside pawns on white squares, and Yanofsky hurries to capitalize on this. The first stage of his plan is to fix all three black kingside pawns on light squares.

43 ♙d3 f5

Coming rather quietly, but Yanofsky argues that the move is practically forced anyway. The threat is g2-g3, followed by h4-h5. Black can try to bring his bishop over, to defend the kingside pawns, but then he allows the white king into a6, when the a-pawn or d-pawn will fall. Yanofsky gives the variation 43...♙d7 44 g3 ♙e8 45 ♙b5 ♙f7 46 ♙a5 ♙c7 47 ♙a6 ♙b8 48 a5



and Black is close to zugzwang. 48...g5 (48...♙a8 49 ♙c6+ ♙b8 50 ♙b5, followed by ♙c5, wins the d-pawn) 49 f4 (in view of the next note, 49 ♙d3 h6 50 ♙b5 and ♙c5 is simpler) 49...h6 (the

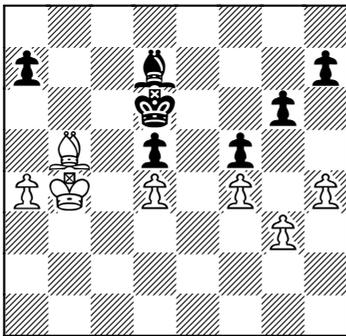
computer points out 49...gxh4! 50 gxh4 ♖g6! which probably draws, as White's king gets stuck on a6) and now 50 ♖a4! is the full "Volkswagen", as Nigel Short calls it: 50...♗e6 51 ♗e8! followed by ♖b5-c5.

44 f4

Immediately fixing the pawns on light squares.

44...♗e6 45 g3 ♗d7 46 ♗b5!

At present, the black bishop is ideally placed on d7, from where it is able to swing over to either wing. White's main plan is to play h4-h5, but if he prepares that with 46 ♗e2, then Black has 46...♗e8. Yanofsky therefore drives the enemy bishop off its ideal square, forcing it to choose an inferior post.



46...♗c8

Black chooses to maintain the guard of a6, but now the bishop loses the chance to come to e8, defending the other wing. If instead 46...♗e6, keeping the option of coming to f7, then White moves in on the queenside instead: 47 ♖a5 ♖c7 48 ♖a6 ♖b8 49 ♗e8 as in the note to move 43.

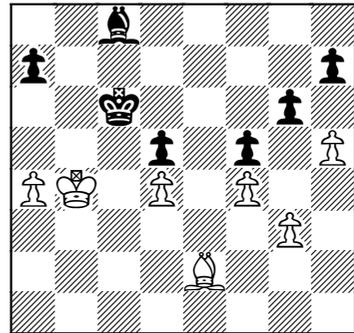
47 ♗e2!

With the enemy bishop no longer able to reach the e8-h5 diagonal, White can now prepare his h4-h5 break.

47...♖c6

47...h5 would obviously create a fatal weakness on g6, and after 48 ♗b5 there would already be no way to avoid loss of material, in view of the threat ♗e8. The king and pawn ending is of course lost after 48...♗d7 49 ♗xd7 ♖xd7 50 ♖c5 ♖e6 51 ♖c6.

48 h5



48...gxh5

If Black does not capture, White will have a pleasant choice between exchanging pawns, creating a fatal weakness on g6, or pushing on to h6. The latter creates various tactical threats involving the promotion of the h-pawn, for example 48...♗e6 49 h6 ♗c8? 50 ♗b5+ ♖d6 51 ♗e8 and there is no defence to the threat of ♗xg6.

49 ♗xh5

Now Black has a further weakness on f5.

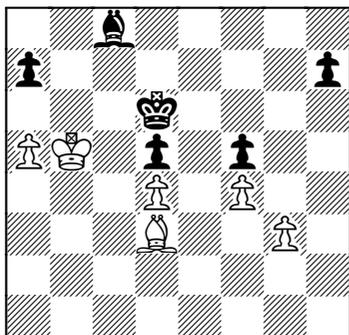
49...♖b6 50 a5+! ♖c6

Yanofsky points out that 50...♔a6 leads to a comic state of helplessness for Black after 51 ♖f7 ♗b7 52 ♖e6.

51 ♖e8+ ♔d6 52 ♗b5

White is gradually able to inch into the enemy camp.

52...♗e7 53 ♖h5 ♔d6 54 ♖e2 ♗b7 55 ♖d3 ♖c8



56 ♖c2!

Zugzwang again. The king cannot move without allowing the white king into c5, the bishop cannot go to b7 because the f5-pawn drops, and if the bishop moves to d7 or e6, it allows the white king into a6. There is only one other move.

56...h6 57 ♖d3!

But that only staves off the moment of truth by one move. Now Black must make a concession.

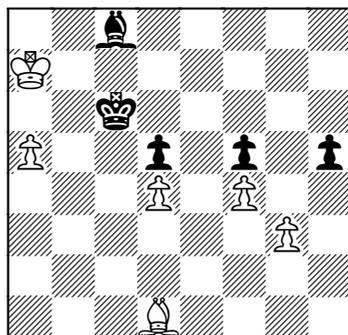
57...♖d7+ 58 ♔a6 ♔c7 59 ♔xa7 ♖c8

Black has been forced to surrender a pawn. He tries to make things difficult, by boxing in the white king, but once again zugzwang defeats him.

60 ♖c2! h5

This condemns another pawn to oblivion, but if 60...♖e6 61 ♔a6 ♔c6 then White frees his king by means of 62 ♖a4+.

61 ♖d1 ♔c6



62 ♖a4+

62 ♖xh5 ♔b5 63 a6 would also have won (63...♖xa6? 64 ♖e2+), but Yanofsky prefers not even to allow Black that forlorn hope of counterplay.

62...♔c7 63 ♖e8 ♖e6 64 a6 1-0

Megabase gives the final move as 64 ♔a6, but Yanofsky's own book gives the text. Either way, the position is obviously hopeless for Black. After 64 a6, Yanofsky gives the further line 64...♖c8 65 ♖xh5 ♖e6 66 ♖g6 ♖c8 67 ♖f7 ♔c6 68 ♖g8! with another zugzwang. The pawn promotes after 68...♔d6 69 ♔b6.

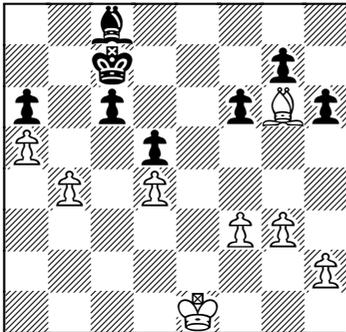
A splendid piece of precision play by the Canadian Champion, who was a noted endgame expert. His best game collection (alas, a bibliographical rarity these days) contains a number of finely played endgames, and can be highly recommended.

Game 9

Y.Averbakh-S.Furman

USSR Championship Semi-final, Odessa 1960

1 c4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♗c6 3 e3 e6 4 ♘c3 ♗f6 5 d4 d5 6 cxd5 exd5 7 ♙e2 ♙d6 8 dxc5 ♙xc5 9 0-0 0-0 10 b3 a6 11 ♗a4 ♙d6 12 ♙b2 ♗e4 13 ♖c1 ♖e8 14 ♗c3 ♗xc3 15 ♙xc3 ♙c7 16 ♗d3 ♙e6 17 ♖fd1 ♖c8 18 ♗b1 ♗e7 19 ♗a1 f6 20 ♗d4 ♗xd4 21 ♙xd4 ♙d6 22 ♙f3 ♖c6 23 ♙b2 ♖ec8 24 g3 ♙a3 25 ♖xc6 bxc6 26 ♙xa3 ♗xa3 27 ♖d4 ♗a5 28 ♖a4 ♗b6 29 ♗f1 ♖a8 30 ♗d3 ♙f7 31 b4 ♙e6 32 ♗d4 ♗xd4 33 exd4 ♙f8 34 ♙e2 ♙c8 35 f3 ♙e7 36 ♙f2 ♙d6 37 ♖a5 ♙b7 38 ♙e3 ♙c7 39 ♙d2 ♙b6 40 a3 ♖e8 41 ♖c5 ♙c8 42 a4 ♙d7 43 ♙d3 h6 44 a5+ ♙b7 45 ♖c1 ♙c8 46 ♙g6 ♖e7 47 ♖e1 ♖xe1 48 ♙xe1 ♙c7



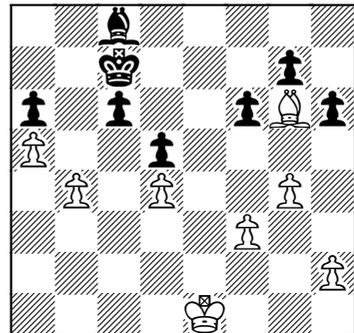
In almost any endgame, it is a significant advantage to have the more active king, and this is a perfect illustration of that rule applying in a bishop endgame. Black has two weak pawns on a6 and c6, to the defence of which his bishop will be tied down. Mean-

while, White will penetrate with his king on the weakened light squares on the kingside (two weaknesses!). It seems unlikely that he should be able to do so, but with the aid of zugzwang, his king makes it all the way to h8. Finally, we see another typical device in minor piece endings – the sacrifice of a piece, to net a winning collection of pawns.

Averbakh's handling of the endgame is technically flawless.

49 g4!

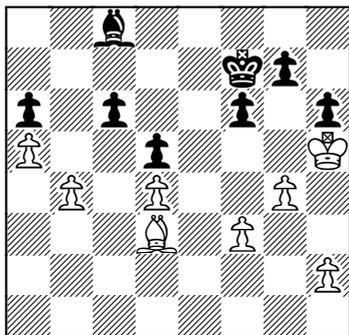
Fixing weaknesses – now the enemy kingside pawns are fixed in their place, and White can prepare to infiltrate them with his king.



49...♙d6 50 ♙f2 ♙e7 51 ♙g3 ♙f8 52 ♙h4 ♙e6 53 ♙h5 ♙c8 54 ♙d3!

Tying the black bishop down to the defence of a6.

54...♙f7



55 h3!

Zugzwang. Now Black's king must give way, since 55...♖b7 results in his bishop being completely immobilized after 56 ♖f5.

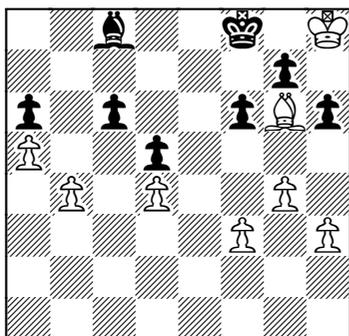
55...♖f8 56 ♖g6 ♖g8 57 ♖f1

Preparing a further zugzwang.

57...♖f8 58 ♖e2 ♖g8 59 ♖d3!

Once again, Black is in zugzwang and must give ground.

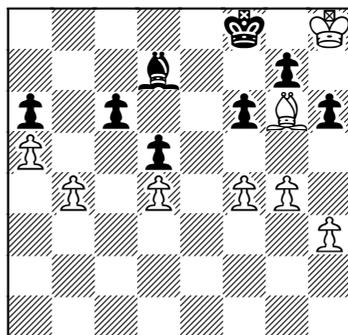
59...♖f8 60 ♖h7 ♖f7 61 ♖g6+ ♖f8 62 ♖h8



White's king has made it to the end of the earth. Now the next stage is to force Black to undefend the pawn on g7.

62...♖d7 63 f4

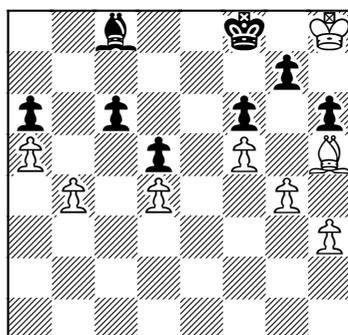
Gaining further ground. White sees that his bishop will no longer need the square f5, so he can advance his pawn there, to squeeze Black further.



63...♖c8 64 f5 ♖d7 65 ♖h5!

Setting up the final breakthrough.

65...♖c8



66 ♖e8!

A beautifully elegant final blow. The bishop sacrifices itself, on an empty square (always the most aesthetic form of sacrifice), in order to destroy the black kingside pawn structure.

66...♖xe8 67 ♖xg7 h5

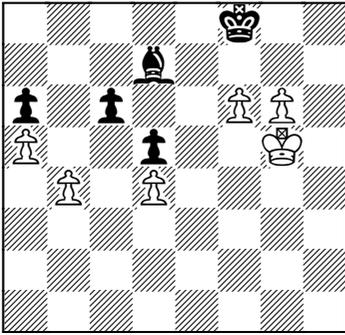
Desperation. If 67...♖e7 68 h4! (not

68 ♖xh6?? ♖f7 with a draw) 68...♗d7 and now simply 69 g5! and the f-pawn will promote.

68 ♖xf6 hxg4 69 hxg4

The two connected passed pawns will divert the black king and allow White's own king to penetrate to the queenside – two weaknesses again!

69...♖f8 70 g5 ♖g8 71 g6 ♖f8 72 ♖g5 ♗d7 73 f6

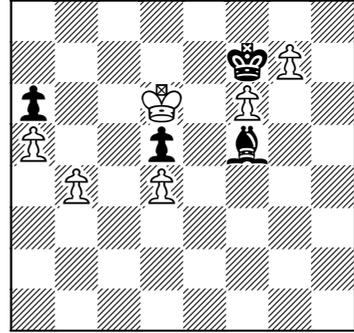


73...♗e8

73...♗c8 74 ♖f4 is no better.

74 ♖f5 ♖g8 75 g7 ♗f7 76 ♖e5 ♗g6 77 ♗d6 ♗d3 78 ♖xc6 ♖f7 79 ♗d6 ♗f5

If the bishop stays on the a6-f1 diagonal, to prevent White's next, then after 79...♗c4 White wins by 80 g8♖+! ♖xg8 81 ♖e7.



80 b5! 1-0

Now the a-pawn will decide. A beautifully elegant ending by the great Soviet endgame expert, and a highly instructive demonstration of some typical endgame ideas.