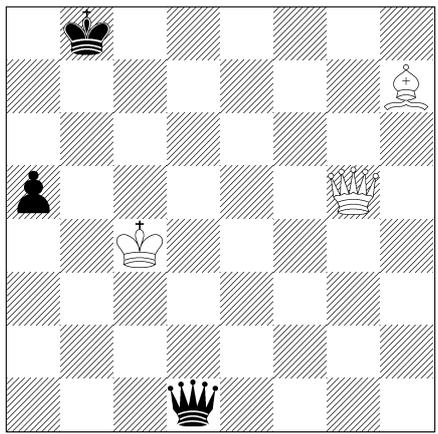


Endgame Explorations 10: Troitzky

Noam Elkies

We now turn to the work of Alexey Alexeyevich Troitzky (1866–1942), who together with H. Rinck founded the modern art of endgame composition. In *The Oxford Companion to Chess* we read that Troitzky, educated in Leningrad, was in 1928 named an Honored Art Worker by the Russian government — “the first time that chess composition was officially regarded as an art form” — and that, besides his hundreds of studies and extensive endgame analyses, Troitzky also composed problems, often involving retrograde analysis. Troitzky’s best known contribution to the game is the analysis of the endgame of two knights against pawn, an endgame which many years later became the first exception to the fifty-move rule recognized by FIDE (since some positions take as long as seventy moves to win, without a capture or pawn move) and recently confirmed by exhaustive computer analysis. Many of Troitzky’s studies depend on this analysis, or on his analyses of other endgames where he discovered many new ideas. A common theme in his endgames is a surprising quiet move in a wide-open queen endgame, where one usually assumes that the initiative can only be maintained by continuous checks; a typical case is the following endgame (*Bohemia*, 1911, reprinted as #24 in his *360 Brilliant and Instructive End Games*):

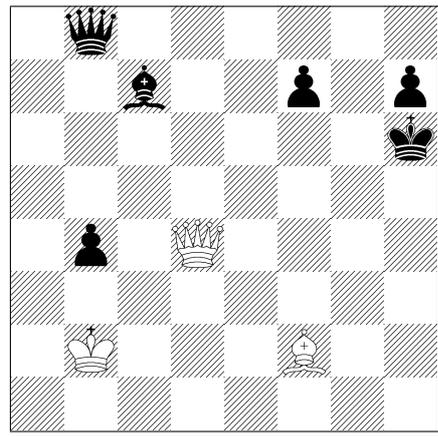


White to play and win

Black barely escapes the direct attack starting
1. Qe5+ Kb7 not **Ka7** 2. **Qc7+ Ka6** 3. **Bd3!**
2. Be4+ Kc8 3. **Bf5+ Kd8!** Kb7 loses pro-
 saically: 4. **Qb5+ Kc7** (Kb6 5. **Qc5+!** trans-

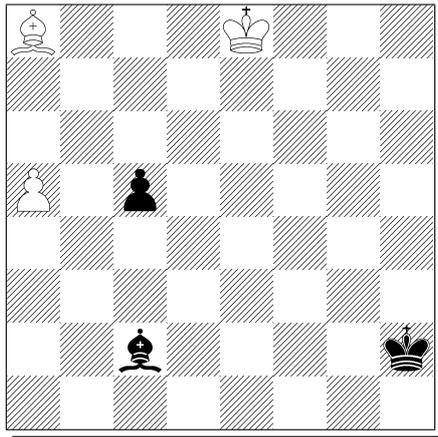
poses) 5. **Qc5+ Kd8** 6. **Qf8+ Kc7** 7. **Qc8+ Kb6** 8. **Qc5+ Kb7** 9. **Be4+ Kb8** 10. **Qb6+ Kc8** 11. **Bf5+**. After 3. ... **Kd8!**, further checks get White nowhere, but his pieces dominate the board, paralyzing both **Kd8** and **Qd1** (which must guard against 4. **Qd6+** and **Bg6**), whence an unusual king march: **4. Kc5! Qd2** or **Qc1(g1)+** 5. **Kb6(c6)** etc.; as in the endgame of two knights against pawn, Black’s pawn only hurts him here by preventing such stalemate defenses as 5. ... **Qc6(b6)+**. **5. Kc6! Qh6+** or **Qg2+** 6. **Be4** and Black is already helpless against 7. **Qc7(d6)+**. **6. Kb7** Now Black must also worry about **Qc7+ Ke8 Bg6+**. **Qh1+** or **a4** 7. **Bd3!** \triangle **Bb5**. **7. Be4 Qh6** **8. Bc6 Qh7+** **9. Kb8 Qb1+** **10. Bb5** and White’s win can no longer be delayed.

Two more classic Troitzky endgames featuring the White queen and bishop: First a double cross-pin (*L’Echiquier*, 1930; #36 in the *360*):



White to play and win

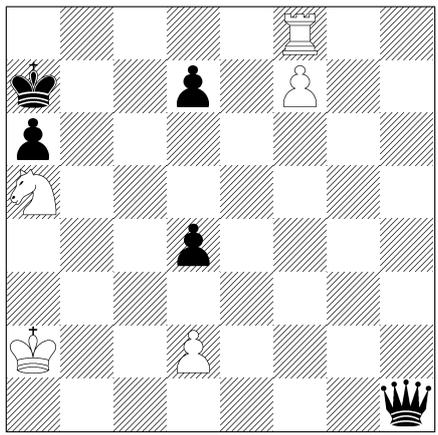
Again an introductory checking attack,
1. Qf6+ Kh5 **2. Qf5+ Kh5** **3. Be3+ Kg7** **4. Qg5+ Kf8** **5. Bc5+ Bd6**, and now **6. Qe5!** the first cross-pin; Black dare not take the **Bc5**, exposing his queen, nor may he play **Bxe5+** since his own king falls first. **Kg8** or **Qd8** 7. **Bxd6+ Qd8** averting immediate disaster with 8. **Qg5+** and **Be5+**, but now comes an “echo” of the first cross-pin: **8. Qg3+ Kh8** **9. Be5+ f6** **10. Qg5!** and wins. Second, another miniature, this time with subtle introductory play prior to the appearance of the queens (#17 in the *360*, first published in *28 Rijen*):



White to play and win

1. **a6 c4** 2. **a7 c3** 3. **Bh1!!** a “Bristol clearance”: the bishop moves past the “critical square” g2, anticipating Qg2 mate after the mutual promotions. **Ba4+!** 4. **Kf7!** White must foresee that the king’s control of g6 will be crucial in the coming Q+B vs. Q endgame. **Bc6!** anti-Bristol, dragging Bh1 back past g2. 5. **Bxc6 c2** 6. **a8Q c1Q** but White still has a decisive attack: 7. **Qa2+ Kg3** or Kh3 8. **Qg2+ Kh4** 9. **Qf2+! Kh5(g4)** 10. **Bf3(d7)+** etc. 8. **Qg2+ Kf4** 9. **Qf3+ Kg5** or Ke5 10. **Qf6**, mate in broad daylight! 10. **Qd3+ Kf5** 11. **Qg6+** at last explaining White’s fourth move. Now Black loses the queen after Kf4 12. **Qh6+** or gets mated with Ke5 12. **Qf6**.

And finally an early composition (*Shahmatni Zhurnal* 1901, #171 of the 360) where White wins despite a material deficit:



White to play and win

In his commentary Troitzky engages in some practical retrograde analysis here: “The diagram position could have happened after the actual following play: **Re8+**, **Ka7**; **RxRf8**,

h1Q.” The final combination is also of practical value, though its idea occurs more commonly in the middlegame than the endgame. 1. **Rb8!** White cannot force the promotion of the f-pawn, but can use the threat of promotion to lure the Black queen to f7. **Qd5+** 2. **Kb2!** to avoid embarrassing checks later. Now **Kxb8** 3. **f8Q+** and 4. **Nb3** is a technical win, so the rest is forced: **Qxf7** 3. **Rb7+ Ka8** 4. **Nc6!!** puts both pieces *en prise!* Due to the mate threat one of these must be captured, and then the other takes the Black queen (**dxc6** 5. **Rxf7** or **Kxb7** 6. **Nd8+**), winning.

Note added in 2005: Several readers have pointed out that Black can draw by playing (instead of 2...Qxf7) 2...Qxa5! 3 f8/Q Qxd2+ with perpetual check. This “cook” has been known for some time: it already appears, attributed to Klaman, in the Errata for the 1968 edition of Lommer and Sutherland’s *1234 Modern End-Game Studies* (Troitzky’s study is # 1123 of the 1234 studies). Lommer and Sutherland also give a simple correction: add a White pawn on a4 to the diagram. The intended solution then works because after 2...Qxa5 3 f8/Q Qxd2+ there is no perpetual (e.g. 4 **Ka3** and Black cannot play **Qa5+**), and White still has no other way to force a win.