



The 11th FIDE World Cup in Composing

Section B – Threemovers

Final award by

Jean-Marc Loustau

MMXXIII

Participants

B01 Labai Z. (SVK)	B17 Feoktistov A.
B02 Shifrin S. (ISR)	B18 Garzón J. A. (ESP)
B03 Gasparyan A. (ARM)	B19 Svítek M. (CZE)
B04 Volchek V.	B20 Pankratiev A.
B05 Delobel B. (FRA)	B21 Gvozdják P. (SVK)
B06 Shavyrin V.	B22 Gorbatenko Y.
B07 Gatti D. (ITA)	B23 Shead A. (AUS)
B08 Syzonenko V. (UKR)	B24 Samilo V. (UKR)
B09 Slesarenko A.	B25 Murashov V.
B10 Yarosh L.	B26 Zamanov V. (AZE)
B11 Kuzovkov A.	B27 Galyaviev S.
B12 Vokál S. (SVK)	B28 Sygurov A.
B13 Dimitrov O. (BUL)	B29 Radović S. (SRB)
B14 Ataynts G.	B30 Havran J. (SVK)
B15 Velikhanov K. (AZE)	B31 Gavrilovski Z. (MKD)
B16 Abdullayev E. (AZE)	B32 Stojnic M. (SRB)

I thank the tournament organizer for trusting me to judge this 3# section of the 11th World Cup in Composing.

I received from the tournament director in anonymous form 32 problems to judge, of quite various level and quality.

I had great pleasure in studying all these problems in detail. I feel the need to remember that any judgment contains a large part of subjectivity even if there are objective elements which make it possible to rule out several problems. Subjectivity relates not only to the ranking, but also to the assessment of originality (or the possible level of anticipation).

This point, however, deserves a little digression. If subjectivity is inevitable, in my conception of the role of judge it has its limits and should not be used as an excuse to produce an arbitrary and therefore unfair ranking: the judge must try to be as objective and impartial as possible, try to assess the value of the works by setting aside his own tastes, and only when objectivity is no longer possible, which inevitably happens, make choices based on his own personality; except in case of jubilees (in which by nature the taste of the judge is the first and main criterion), a judge who would put his own tastes (or, why not – it happened, his personal interests) above the value of what he must judge would inevitably do a bad work and would not deserve the role entrusted to him, at least that

is my view. Thus, in my judgment there are a few works, really very few, that I do not like very much, and that I would have downgraded or ruled out if I had followed my personal inclinations: I felt that it was my duty as a judge to rank them where they are now, because I believe that's the place they deserve even if I don't like them.

So I did not retain:

- The problems that contained significant flaws (e.g. unacceptable refutation, bad key, etc.) without significant compensation;

- The problems with insufficient content (for example without a main idea, or with an idea without significant interest to my eyes)

- The low level problems relative to the current state of the composition (e.g. lack of originality or presenting an idea shown many times in a better way)

- Finally, I confess, the problems that didn't appeal to me at all, that didn't give me the minimal pleasure that I expect from a chess problem and for which I have not found a sufficient objective evaluation criterion to keep them in this award.

Obviously this last point underlines the subjective side of the judgment; I am not saying that these problems which did not really appeal to me are not good: several of them will possibly find a place later in a competition, perhaps with a better audience than me (and perhaps the author will find that preferable to a low place in this

award); two or three had received a commendation in a first version of my judgment, but I finally decided to grant this award only to problems that I really "recommend", that is to say that I like without objective and subjective restriction.

I will not detail here the reasons problem by problem, with 2 exceptions:

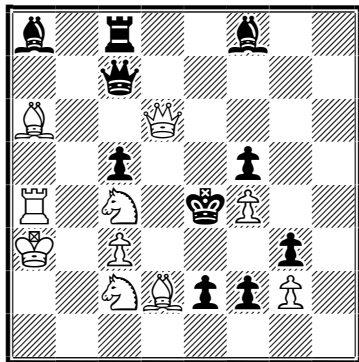
- the **B2** (♔d1-♔e3, 10+6) to which I had first granted a commendation is completely anticipated by an identical position by L. Makaronez, Australian Chess, 2009;

- also about the **B4** (♔f7-♔e5, 13+9) which had first received a 3rd or 2nd hm: this good problem shows a Zagoruiko in Visserman manner (as there are many since the 11th WCCT), but exactly the same matrix has been used for an excellent (better in my opinion) 2# by D. Stojnic, 2nd Israel Open Chess Problem Composition Tourney 2015, 2nd Prize: although the number of moves is different, and although the achievement in 3# needs some technical skills, I believe it is justified here to speak of anticipation.

A similar issue happened with the B31 after the publication of the preliminary results; I have nevertheless decided in this case to keep the problem in the award for the reasons explained in my comments, but at a different place.

Thus, here is my award, the ranking also reflecting to some extent, as explained above, my tastes and convictions:

B29 – 1st Prize, Gold medal
SREĆKO RADOVIĆ
Serbia



#3

10+10

1. ♔2e3! – 2. ♖d5+ ♔xf4 3. ♗xf5#,
2... ♕xd5 3. ♔d6# (2. ♖d8? ♗xf4! or
2. ♖b8?? impossible!)

1... ♗h7 2. ♖b8!! – 3. ♔d6#,
2... ♔d3 3. ♖b1# (2. ♖d8? ♔xf4!)

1... ♗f7 2. ♖d8!! – 3. ♔d6#,
2... ♔xf4 3. ♖h4#, 2... ♗xc4
3. ♗xc4# (2. ♖b8? ♗xc4!)

By-play: 1... ♗d7 2. ♖xd7 –
3. ♔d6#/♗xf5#, 2... ♔xf4 3. ♗xf5#

No doubt many will be surprised that in this era of multiphase problems and changes of functions/recurrence of moves I grant the 1st place to a single-phase problem which presents only 2 thematic variations, without any recurrence of moves (B29)!

Certainly; but what variations! In a magnificent Diagonal/Orthogonal echo we have 2 spectacular (paradoxical) flight-giving withdrawals of the white queen which moves away from its

privileged position next to the black king, and which provides a completely unexpected distant mate on the flight variations! This result alone would be enough to arouse strong interest; but to this is added that these 2 variations are separated with dual-avoidance (*) by 2 black defences of an admirable precision by the Black Queen, who is nevertheless very free, and without any parasitic variation (**): we thus obtain a "mini-duel" between the Queens, and the integration of the formidable white play and this astonishingly precise black play makes this problem, by my subjective standards, a true masterpiece.

The construction is excellent, with an airy, very dynamic position, precise positioning of the pieces and their multiple use; for examples the ♖c8 is used to prevent 2. ♜4~+ c4 3. ♜xc4# after 1... ♗h7, but also to avoid 1... ♗c8! which would refute the solution; ♜g2 controls f3 but also blocks ♜g3 (1...g2 would refute); the positioning of the white king is essential because after 1. ♜4~+?? c4 the white queen is pinned (2. ♗d4??). Everything here evokes both a high-level technique that hides itself to leave room entirely for the artistic impression, and a great maturity in the approach to composition.

One could perhaps criticize the fact that the capture of the white Queen in the diagram is an unprovided strong move; it's a fact, but this kind of defect seems to me

quite secondary in 3# field; on the other hand, I appreciate that the key, interfering with the ♕d2, attaches the white queen to the guard of f4, guard that she hastens to abandon in the good sacrifice threat 2. ♗d5+!

A great success, in the tradition of the best classic 3 movers.

(*) The common harmful effect of the 2 variations by the black Queen is twofold: 1° giving up access to f4 (2... ♗xf4??) and 2° opening the d6-b8 line; these effects are compensated by the Black Queen's gain of access to h4 and c4 respectively. On a theoretical level, we get therefore a reciprocal 2nd degree.

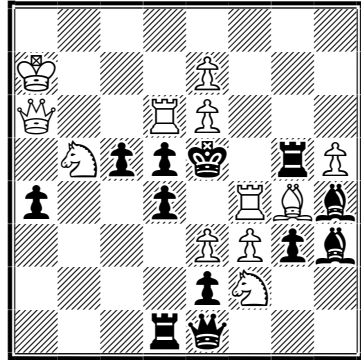
(**) The secondary variation 1... ♗d7 2. ♗xd7 completes the Queens duel but does not add anything significant to the content.

During the phase of preliminary results a predecessor has been reported: V. Kirillov and S. Khachaturov, SuperProblem 2014, 2nd Prize (yacpdb/429162, B93 in the relevant Fide Album); this very good problem shows a spectacular thematic white play identical to that of the B29, with however a different positioning of the direct/indirect R/B-S batteries. The black play is on the other hand very different: the Kirillov and Khachaturov's problem shows 2 thematic variations played on the same square (without dual-avoidance), and the B29 2

variations by the same piece with dual-avoidance. The claim for at least partial anticipation can be understood, and I admit that I have been hesitating for some time before settling on my final decision which is to keep the B29 at the 1st place for the following reasons.

The B29 presents a different treatment of the same white idea; the combination with a Queens duel of great precision and its own subtleties seems to me a feature which suffices to give an independent existence to the B29 (which is to be considered as a whole) and which is a significant part of its identity; the B29 also has a much clearer, more "airy" position, in which the function(s) of each piece is understandable very quickly (while in the other problem construction difficulties have certainly caused a noticeable heaviness). Subjectively I find that while the predecessor is an excellent and very interesting problem, the B29 is more directly striking, in a way matching well with the themes it presents. It is certainly less original than I thought, but enough to deserve its place. I could have given a special reward to the B29 as I did for the B31 (see below), but that would have been inconsistent with the fact that on the one hand I consider the B29 fully entitled to existence and that on the other hand it is for me the best problem of the competition.

B14 – 2nd Prize, Silver medal
GRIGORY ATAYANTS



#3

12+12

The next problem (B14, 2nd prize) presents an idea that I really like and that is generally called the "Keller paradox" (White plays to a square that has just been attacked by Black). This problem presupposes a certain effort on the part of the spectator, not only because the compact position is unattractive, but also to be felt as a coherent whole (I say "felt", because the appreciation of coherence is relatively subjective); but this coherence is indeed there and I will endeavour to make it stand out by writing the solution in the body of this comment.

First we have a first try:

1. ♖d7/d8? (2. ♔d6# (M)) 1... ♔a5!

So the natural correction which is a thematic try:

1. ♖xd5+? (A) Kxd5! 2. ♔d6+ (M) ♔c4!

The other Rook provides an analogous system:

1. ♖f7(f8)? (2.f4# (N)) 1... ♗xf2!
(x) and at this step if 2. ♖d7(d8)?
♗xf3! 3. ♗d6+ (M) ♘e4!

So again, the natural correction which is a 2nd thematic try:

1. ♖f5+? (B) ♖xf5! 2.f4+? (N) ♖xf4!

Then we have a try of another nature:

1.Sc7? (2. ♖xd5# (A)) 1...dxe3! (a)
and of course if 2. ♖xd5+?? ♖xd5!
(2... ♗xf4? 3. ♗xh3#) 3. ♗d6+ (M)
♖xd6!

It should be emphasized here that the motivation of this move 1...dxe3 is indeed to give control of d5 to the ♖d1, reinforcing the paradoxical aspect that we will see in the solution:

1.e8♗! – 2. ♖e4+! (C) dxe4 3.f4#
(N)

This “strong” promotion key seems acceptable to me: it allows a check to the white King, providing a variation which is of formal interest: the reappearance of the move ♖f5+ (B) as mate on the 3rd move:

1... ♖g7+ 2. ♗xg7 – 3. ♖f5# (B),
2... ♗xg4 3. ♗xg4#

Here are now the 2 main variations showing the Keller paradox:

1...dxe3 (a) 2. ♖xd5+!! (A) ♗xd5
3. ♗d6# (M) (the ♖f4 controls c4),
2... ♖xd5 3. ♖e4# (C) (d5 is blocked -
and White controls f6), 2... ♗xf4
3. ♗xh3#

1... ♗xg4 2. ♖f5+!! (B) ♖xf5
3. ♗xg4# (g4 is unblocked),
2... ♗xf5 3.f4# (N) (f5 is blocked),
2... ♗xf5 3. ♖xd5# (A)

The combination in the variation 1...dxe3 (a) of the Keller paradox and of the Dombrovskis paradox is excellent. It should also be noted that the 3 Rook moves (A), (B), (C) appear on the 2nd move and as mate on the 3rd move. There is also here a little perfume of logic school (logic tries 1. ♖xd5+?/ ♖f5+?). Finally in by-play a last variation with also a logic perfume and recurrence of the defence x (logic try 1. ♖d7?):

1... ♗xf2 (x) 2. ♖d7! – 3. ♗d6# (M)
(2... ♗a5??)

Therefore, beside the Keller theme, there is a correspondence in the play of the white Rooks (tries, sacrifices, unblockings, etc.), and several interesting recurrences of white and black moves; but the Keller variations don't work in the same way (ex: opening of white and black lines for dxe3, unblocking and direct control for ♗xg4): this can be seen as a lack of homogeneity that some may judge as an imbalance and feel as a frustration. For my part, I see first a wealth/variety of effects in a set that, with some hindsight, I consider to be organized in a satisfactory way, conferring on the problem some modernity.

This impression was confirmed by pushing further my analysis of the problem which offers

additional content (that the author has not reported); this thematic feature will be of more interest to analysts because it is very formal:

We can see in the 2 main variations a cycle of functions between the 3 sub-variations on the 2nd move and the mates, according to the following array (*):

B2 (function)	1...dxe3	1...♙xg4
Refutation of thematic try (2...♗xd5/♖xf5)	Unblocked mate on W2, M (X)	Mate by ♙f2 (Y)
Additional "Keller capture": (2...♖xd5/♙xf5)	Mate by Rook sacrificed on W2 in other variation (1...♙xg4) (Z)	Unblocked mate on W2, N (X)
Extra-flight variation (2...♗xf4/♗xf5)	Mate by ♙f2 (Y)	Mate by Rook sacrificed on W2 in other variation (1...dxe3) (Z)

Those who are interested in this kind of somewhat formal properties (like I am) will find a significant element of consistency/coherence here; I'm not sure that the author intended to show this unusual and intellectual cycle; anyway the problem can be appreciated even without highlighting it.

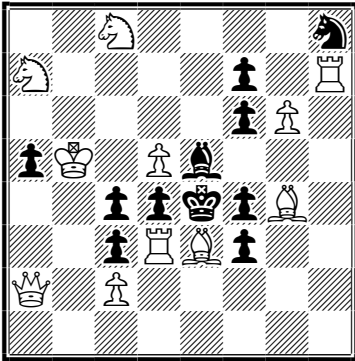
There are many homogeneous achievements of the Keller paradox and I find interesting and probably promising to explore paths mixing various mechanisms – on the essential condition that there are

enough binding elements to ensure an aesthetic coherence to the whole, which is the case here.

Finally, I have to point out the parasitic variation 1...♖xg4 2.♖f5+ ♗xf5 3.♖xd5# which I consider here as a flaw, but which has no impact on my ranking order. One could also regret that the move 2.♖f7 is not a continuation in the solution, completing the by-play, but this seems impossible as it is (maybe that's why the author doesn't point out the try 1.♖f7? However, my opinion is that this try must be mentioned because it highlights the echo-play of the two white Rooks).

(*) There is also a reciprocal change of functions at the 2nd/3rd move between the planned capture (♗xd5/♖xf5) and the newly introduced capture (♖xd5/♙xf5) with respect to the mate unblocked by the Rook on the 2nd white move (M, N) and the "new" mate exploiting the blocking of the flight given on the 2nd move (3.♖e4/3.♙xg4).

B11 – 3rd Prize, Bronze medal
ALEKSANDR KUZOVKOV



#3

11+11

1. ♕f2! –(a4) 2. ♖h5 (P) – 3. ♕xf3# (A), 2... ♗xd5 (x) 3. ♖xd4# (B), 2...cxd3 (y) 3. ♕f5# (M)

1...fxg6 2. ♖e7 – 3. ♖xd4# (B), 2... ♗xd5 (x) 3. ♕xf3# (A), 2...cxd3 (y) 3. ♔d6# (N) (2. ♕xf3+? (A) ♗f5 3. ♖h5+ g5/gxh5!)

1... ♗xd5 (x) 2. ♗xc4+ ♗e4 3. ♗c6#

1...cxd3 (y) 2.cxd3+ ♗xd3 3. ♕f5# (M)

1... ♔xg6 2. ♕xf3+ (A) ♗f5 3. ♖h5# (P)

1... ♕~ 2. ♖xd4+ (B) ♗e5 3. ♔c6#

This 3rd place B11 is also a great problem, very much in the taste of the times, and I'm sure many judges would have given it a 1st or a 2nd place. Here we have a juxtaposition of several very fashionable thematic elements, and the whole is certainly a feat: Le Grand, Visserman, Adabashev, Babouchka. I have not found an achievement with the exact combination of all these elements, but I would not be particularly

surprised if there are, and if so, they are probably very few; in any case it would not have changed my ranking (except of course in the case of a clear anticipation). While the menu is enticing and deserves praise, a few remarks are in order.

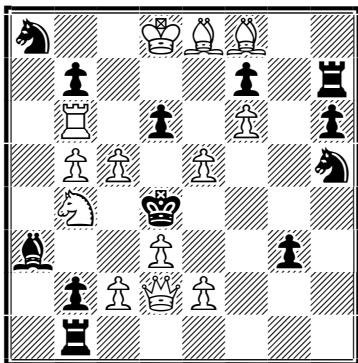
The Le Grand mechanism with change of pinning axis has been well known for a long time; the ♕a7 has no other use than to provide a mate on the variation 1... ♕~, which somewhat detracts from the overall impression (I imagine that the author would have liked a mate like 3. ♖e7#, with reappearance of this move as mate – which obviously is not possible as it is); the technically clever key that removes the strong move 1...fxe3 without being bad is not very good (but as I said previously, it is of secondary importance in 3#). On the positive side, I will note a certain richness or variety in the play, for a position that is not very heavy: note the reappearance (transfer) of mate ♕f5# and that of the move ♖h5 on the 2nd and 3rd moves; finally the variation 1... ♔xg6 exploits the distant blocking of g6, and therefore the variation on this same square 1...fxg6 constitutes a correction: 2. ♕xf3+? ♗f5 3. ♖h5+?? g5 or gxh5!

A picturesque detail, the usefulness of the ♔a5: the only function of this pawn is to provide a neutral variation; indeed 1...a4 is the only black move on which the threat appears (which is an integral part of the thematic

content); if it is removed, the problem remains correct, but without this essential sequence.

In my opinion, the value of the problem lies mainly in the virtuoso synthesis of all the thematic elements into a coherent whole. If by chance this combination does not already exist, the problem will also have value as a first achievement.

B21 – 4th Prize
 PETER GVOZDJÁK
 Slovakia



#3

13+12

*1...d5 2.♙d6 – 3.c3#/e3#,
 2...♜e1(c1) 3.c3(e3)#

*1...♝xc5 2.♞xd6 – 3.♚c3#,
 2...♞b6 3.♞d5#, 2...♙xb4 3.♚e3#

1.♙d7! – 2.♞xd6+ ♝xc5 (x)
 3.♚c3#, 2...♝xe5 (y) 3.♚e3#

1...♞xf6 2.c3+ ♝xc5 (x) 3.♚e3#,
 2...♝xe5 (y) 3.♙xd6#

1...♞xb6 2.e3+ ♝xc5 (x)
 3.♙xd6#, 2...♝xe5 (y) 3.♚c3#

1...♝xc5 (x) 2.♞xd6 – 3.♚c3#,
 2...♞b6 3.♞d5#, 2...♙xb4 3.♚e3#

1...♝xe5 (y) 2.♚e3+ ♝xf6 3.♞xd6#

1...d5 2.c3+ ♝xe5 3.♚e3#

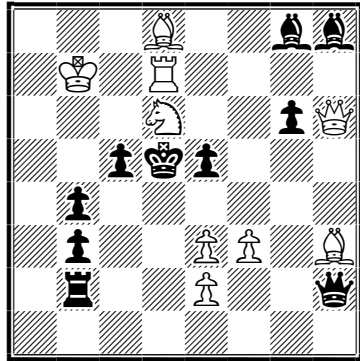
When we read the solution of the B21 (4th Prize), we immediately notice a cyclical Zagoruiko (aka Rice theme in the Cyclone terminology) on the 2nd move, in the Visserman style; there is nothing extraordinary about this result today, especially on flights and in a symmetrical position; indeed, the author does not even mention it in his thematic description: his intention is different: presenting a full cycle of the squares occupied by White between the 2nd move and the 3rd move: when White play on square A at 2nd move, mates take place at the 3rd move on squares B and C; when they play on B, mates are on C and A; and when they play on C mates take place on A and B: this would be the first achievement according to the author. The mechanism is based on controlling or blocking remote flights b6, f6, b4, f4 and access for Black Knights to c4 or e4. The thematic squares of the cycle are d6, c3, e3.

On the other hand the problem shows a set-play, which the author presents as a bonus and to which he seems attached: it allows to show a changed sequence on the by-play variation 1...d5, a reappearance between the solution (after 1...♝xe5) and this set-play (after 1...d5) of the 3 thematic 2nd moves (♞xd6+, c3+, e3+) as mating moves at the 3rd move, and incidentally the flight 1...♝xc5 is provided. It should however be

noted that if we overcome the set-play, it is possible to save at least 3 pieces; I understand the author's choice, although I'm not sure that as a composer I would have done the same, but I appreciate that this set-play adds a bit of fantasy and variety to a solution that is extremely "mechanical".

I reward here the technical achievement, but also the originality of the idea (cycle of squares) which seems to offer good prospects by opening a broader way for the cycles (moves cycles can be seen as a particular case of squares cycles); by now this idea may seem very formal, as move cycles did long ago, but if it finds a certain answer among composers it might fit into the basic culture of the chess problem. However, personally, the present problem is not my cup of tea: subjectively I don't like symmetric matrices (except when they work in a clearly asymmetrical way, or for incredible tasks, which is not the case here); moreover, the mechanical and cold play only excites me moderately; but I recognize the value of the work, which justifies its rank in this award.

B6 – 1st Honorable mention
VALERY SHAVYRIN



#3

9+10

1. ♔f5! – 2. ♖b5+ ♚c4 3. ♔d3#
 1... ♗d2 2.e4+ ♚d4 3. ♗xd2#
 1... ♗xe2 2. ♔e4+ ♚e6 3. ♗h3#
 1...e4 2.fxe4+ ♚e5 3. ♗xh2#
 1...gxf5 2. ♖e4+ ♚c4 3. ♗a6#

Cook tries:

1. ♗h4? ♗f4!; 1. ♗xg6(f8)? ♗xh3!

In the B6 (1st HM), after a beautiful sacrifice key, 4 accurate black defences are followed by 4 white moves on the same square (e4), then 4 moves by the black king on different squares, and finally 4 different mates by the white Queen whose amplitude of the play will be appreciated... We could qualify the 3 diagonal mates by the Queen as "echo mates", even if this echo is very partial, but the impression is there (the mates ♗xh2/♗h3 recall this charming little predator, the chameleon). We thus have a beautiful unity from

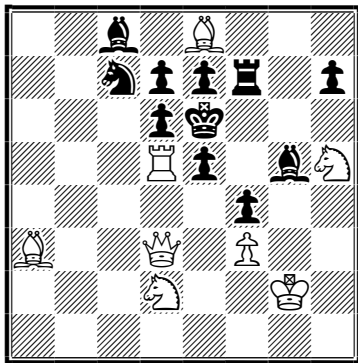
the 2nd move, and this set is extremely pleasant.

We can probably regret that this unity does not deploy from the first black move with a more developed black strategy... The mates by capture of the Black Queen or the Black Rook are a bit “violent”, but in a certain way they respond to each other...

A small detail: the ♔d8 is only useful to control f6 in 2 variations; for my taste I would have preferred it on e7 (the problem remaining correct), because here 1...c4 is a defence against the threat followed by a short mate (2. ♖e4#), whereas with the Bishop on e7 this is no longer a defence; moreover with ♔e7 I find it pleasant that in the mate 3. ♖h3# f7 is controlled only by the ♖d6 and e7 by the ♗d7; the Bishop is also more discreet there in that his only function of controlling f6 is less immediately visible... But this is only a matter of tastes and in any case does not affect the ranking.

A claim has been reported, with 2 problems showing 3 similar white 2nd moves by Bishop and 2 Pawns; I even know myself other examples, but to my opinion this claim is not relevant: the B6 has a significant different content.

B28 – 2nd Honorable mention
ALEKSANDR SYGUROV



#3

8+11

1. ♖b3! – 2. ♗xe5+ dxe5 3. ♖c5#
(A), 2... ♗xe5 3. ♖e4# (B) (2. ♖e4?
(B) – 3. ♖d4#, 2... ♖b5!)

1... ♔b7 2. ♖c5+ (A) dxc5 3. ♔xd7#

1... ♖a6 2. ♖e4 (B) – 3. ♖d4# (C)

1... ♖xd5! 2. ♖d4+ (C) exd4
3. ♖e4# (B) (2. ♖e4? (B) – 3. ♖d4#,
2... ♖e3+!)

1... ♔f6 2. ♖xf4+ exf4 3. ♖f5# (2. ♖e4?
(B) – 3. ♖d4#/ ♖xf4#, 2... ♗g7+!)

1... ♗f5 2. ♗xd6+ exd6 3. ♖xd6#

The problem B28 (2nd HM) is presented by its author as a form of Adabashev synthesis with 2 triplets of variations; the 1st triplet includes the threat and 2 variations in which we find at the 2nd move the 2 mates A/B which intervene in the threat (recurrence / change of function of moves) – as we see quite often today.

The 2nd triplet has, as its unifying element, blockings on the 1st black move; this link is quite

tenuous, but it is acceptable even if it is quite elementary; it should be noted however that the harmful effect of the variation 1...♙f6 is not only the blocking of f6 but also the loss of control of f4 both by the black Bishop and the ♖f7; and also that the blocking effect is exploited on the 3rd move in 1 variation (1...♗f5) and on the 2nd in the other 2: this attenuates the impression of unity of the whole triplet, which obviously is rather a defect in this thematic context.

Nevertheless, despite these last remarks, it emerges from the whole of the problem a very pleasant impression which justifies in my eyes its ranking; this feeling comes first from the good use of the white material. In trying to deepen the reasons, it seems simplistic to reduce the problem to this single juxtaposition of Adabashev triplets; there are also several elements that link the 2 triplets: First, all 2nd moves are sacrifices of white pieces (except for the only quiet move 2.♖e4); then the moves ♙d4 and ♖e4 appear either on the 2nd move, either on the 3rd (with an exchange of the 2nd and 3rd white moves); finally the move 2.♖e4? is to be considered as a try on the 2nd move after 1...♙xd5 and 1...♙f6 which highlights anti-dual effects (checks to the white King 2...♙e3+ and 2...♗g7+); we can also say that 1...♙xd5 corrects the variation 1...♙a6. The author further points out that in 4 variations the threat 2.♗xe5 is

refuted by 4 different captures on e5.

One can certainly see there a kind of patchwork, with a lack of thematic unity; each of the elements mentioned is hardly sufficient on its own, but taken together it emanates a certain richness to which I admit to being sensitive (and I am well aware, particularly in this case, of the subjective dimension of this judgment).

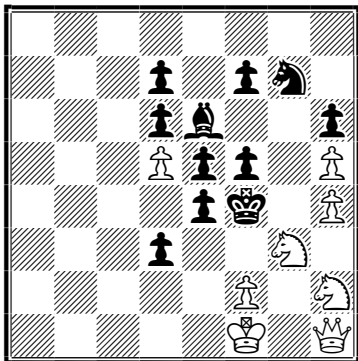
However a weakness of the problem in my opinion is the key played by the ♙d2 which is out of play. I think the author would benefit from reworking this point to present a better key at the possible cost of a little additional material (*). This is obviously only a personal and therefore subjective assessment without impact on the ranking in this case.

(*) Without having worked in depth, here are some possibilities:

- ♙d2→b3, ♗d5→d4, +black ♖c3;
key: 1. ♗d5! (1...exd4 is provided on diagram by 2.♖e4# (B), and the key sacrifices the Rook for the ♙c7)

- ♙d2→b3, ♙a3→c5, +black ♖c3,
+white ♖a3; key: 1.♙b4! with the tries 1.♙c~? ♗f5!

B31 – Special Honorable mention
 ZORAN GAVRILOVSKI
 North Macedonia



#3

8+11

- (1. ♖xe4? – 2. ♖f3#, 1...fxe4!)
 1. ♖g2! zz
 1... ♖e8 2. ♖h1 – 3. ♖g3# (A),
 2...e3 3. ♖f3# (B)
 1... ♗xd5 2. ♖xe4 – 3. ♖f3# (B)
 (3. ♖g3??), 2... ♗xe4 3. ♖g3# (A),
 2...fxe4 3. ♖g4# (C)
 1...f6 2. ♖xf5 – 3. ♖g4# (C)
 (3. ♖g3??), 2... ♗xf5 3. ♖g3# (A),
 2... ♗xf5 3. ♖g4#

In the B31 after the key 1. ♖g2! that sets up a zugzwang, we find the following tries:

2. ♖g~ (♖h1)? – 3. ♖g3# (A),
 2...e3 3. ♖f3# (B), 2... ♖xh5!
 2. ♖xe4!/? (3. ♖f3# (B), 3. ♖g3+? (A) ♗xe4!), 2...fxe4! (3. ♖g4+?? ♗xg4!)
 2. ♖xf5!/? (3. ♖g4# (C), 3. ♖g3+? (A) ♗xf5!), 2... ♗xf5 3. ♖g3# (A), 2... ♗xf5!

So 2. ♖xe4 and 2. ♖xf5 are threat-corrections of the first attempt (2. ♖h1).

The only 3 variations of the problem introduce these moves: by 1... ♖e8 the Knight loses access to h5, 1...f6 is a far pre-blocking, and 1... ♗xd5 quits its ambush behind f5 allowing mate after 2...fxe4; this last variation followed by 2. ♖xe4 is particularly interesting because it presents a Keller paradox (additional control of e4), and the new variation of capture on e4 by the black Bishop (2... ♗xe4) is followed by the primary mate 3. ♖g3# (A), which gives a "complete" aspect to this threat correction that did not exist in the try mentioned above. Then, there is a welcome cyclical pseudo-Le Grand (and also an additional pseudo-Le Grand between the 2 first variations).

The construction seems to me very satisfactory, and the position rather light given the fact that we are in a zugzwang context: the white King has the double function of blocking f1 and avoiding the dual 2. ♖e2+ due to the check after 2...dxe2+; the ♖h5 blocks both the ♗h6 and the white Knight; the ♗d5 restricts both the ♗d6 and the black Bishop... Only the Pawns d6 and d7 have the sole function of blocking 1 piece, which is not expensive and quite lucky. We could certainly have preferred a threat-problem (which would probably have allowed a more interesting key, 1. ♖g2 setting up a big part of the white play), but this zugzwang form allows a very sober

and clear thematic presentation which is also appreciable.

This problem enters an almost unexplored field of the orthodox 3# which, in my opinion, presents considerable possibilities: the white correction and the threat correction; the correction may be shown on the 2nd move as in the present problem, or on the 1st move as we usually see in 2#; all styles can find a field of expression there (logic, recurrence of moves, formal or strategic echoes, theoretical approaches, tasks, etc.), and I believe that composers of 3# (even others) in search of real novelties should explore this opportunity...

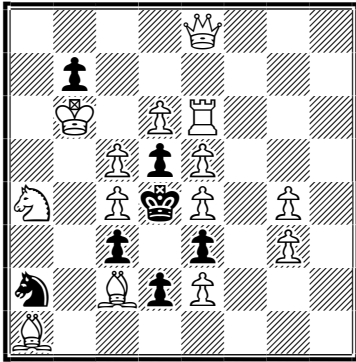
This problem originally received a 1st HM, but during the phase of preliminary results a predecessor has been reported (yacpdb/465748), an excellent 2# by M. Guida, FIDE Olympic Tourney 2018, Commendation; the Guida's problem is thematically richer (with a full 3x3 cyclical pseudo-Le Grand) and well built. In such circumstances my policy would be just to disqualify the B31.

However, I think that the duty of a judge is also to promote the works which, according to him, open up new and promising perspectives: the B31 offers an approach to correction themes that is perhaps new, or at least extremely unusual, and which

should be developed. To this I would add that the first introductory black moves are well done and give it some originality, and it must be recognized that the impression produced is very different from that of the Guida's problem: therefore, it seems to me that the two problems can coexist. In my opinion, the mention "after M. Guida" would be welcome, but that is not up to me to decide.

It was difficult for me to keep the problem at its original place (1st hm) given the predecessor, so I chose to reward it with a special honorable mention which has the advantage of recognizing its specific contribution without harming the other competitors.

B32 – Special Honorable mention
 MIHAILO STOJNIC
Serbia



#3

14+7

*1...dxe4 2.♖g6 (A) – 3.♗xe4#,
 2...♗xc4 3.♗xe4#

*1...dxc4 2.d7 (B) – 3.♙d6#/d8♗/♙#,
 2...♗b4 3.♗xc3#

*1...♗xc4 2.♗b5+ ♕d4 3.♗d3#

*1...♗~ 2.♗xc3+ ♗xc4 3.♗b5#

1.♗b3? zz

1...dxe4 2.d7 (B) – 3.♙d6#/d8♗/♙#,
 2...♗b4 3.♗xc3#

1...dxc4 2.♗b5 (C) – 3.♗xc4#,
 2...♗xe4 3.♗xc4#, 2...cxb3 3.♗d3#

1...♗xe4 2.♗g6+ ♕d4 3.♗d3#

1...♗~ 2.♗xc3+ ♗xe4 3.♗g6#

1...d1~!

1.♗d1! zz

1...dxe4 2.♗b5 (C) ♗~ 3.♗xc3# (P)

1...dxc4 2.♗g6 (A) ♗~ 3.♗xc3# (P)

1...♗xc4 2.♗b5+ ♕d4 3.♗d3#

1...♗xe4 2.♗g6+ ♕d4 3.♗d3#

1...♗~ 2.♗xc3+ (P) ♗xe4 3.♗g6#
 (A), 2...♗xc4 3.♗b5# (C)

1.♗d3? zz

1...dxe4 2.♗g6 (A) – 3.♗xe4#,
 2...exd3 3.♗xd3#

1...dxc4 2.♗b5 (C) – 3.♗xc4#,
 2...cxd3 3.♗xd3#

1...d1~!

The B32 posed some difficulties for me as a judge.

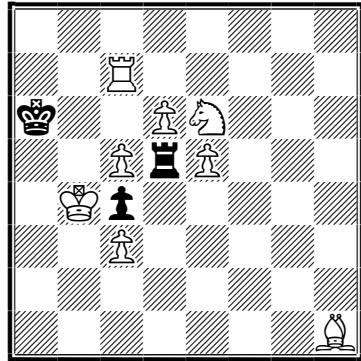
On the positive side it features a cyclical Zagoruiko (aka Rice theme in Cyclone terminology) in a matrix that seems original. This result in principle is significant: it is a difficult theme, for which there are relatively few achievements, and finding something new deserves praise; moreover, achievements with quiet 2nd moves are extremely rare. The author also points out the presence of Adabashev pairs, exchange of White's 2nd and 3rd moves, and the presence of an additional try (1.♗d3?) with reciprocal change: but in my eyes, here, these additional characteristics add very little to the problem, they are certainly present, but somewhat artificial or “mechanical”, and the primary interest of the problem is indeed the cyclical Zagoruiko which focuses attention.

Exclusive lovers of letters games may be satisfied; but the aesthetic expectations that I can have of a chess problem are not really satisfied: the blocus form, with a very limited and strategically quite poor Black play, makes it a very “static” problem, very formal and very “mechanical”... The key of

course gives a flight, but it prevents the only unprovided move that refutes most attempts, including the thematic try (1. ♖a3?), and including the additional try (1. ♖d3?) which then, having the same refutation, clearly underlines this defect. This refutation is also imprecise (“a random move”): this would be acceptable, but it is an additional flaw even if it is minor. Finally the matrix and the play are very symmetrical, and this, in such a not very dynamic position, generates a certain boredom when reading the solution. Having quickly gone through the 3# cyclical Zagoruiko in the databases, I would say that this one (which is the only blocus in all its phases) is far from being among the best, at least for my taste, even if of course its mechanism and its matrix are interesting.

So I decided to give a “special” reward to this problem; torn between a prize to reward the thematic achievement in a certainly new matrix, and a commendation (or even the elimination) due to the aesthetic inadequacies for my liking, I have opted for the middle ground of a special mention.

B17 – 1st Commendation
ALEKSANDR FEOKTISTOV



#3

8+3

1. ♖xd5?? stalemate
 1. ♖d8? zz ♜xd6!
 1. ♖d4! zz
 1... ♜xe5 2. ♖b7+ ♜a7 3. ♖c6#
 1... ♜xd4 2. ♖c6 – 3. ♖b5#
 (2. ♖b7+? / 2. ♖b5?)
 1... ♜xd6 2. ♖b5 – 3. ♖b7#/ ♜a7#,
 2... ♜d7 3. ♖b7# (2. ♖b7+? / ♖c6?)
 1... ♜xc5 2. ♜xc5 ♜a5 3. ♜a7#
 (2. ♖b7+?)

The B17 is a find, a Meredith for which I did not find anticipation - but the risk remains. After a sacrifice key by the white Knight introducing a zugzwang (underlined by the try 1. ♖d8? ♜xd6!) the solution is composed by 4 variations which constitute a black Rook cross.

The first 3 variations are particularly interesting because they include:

- A cycle of occupied squares by White: b7, c6, b5 (to be compared

to the 4th prize with the same kind of theme)

- 3 model mates

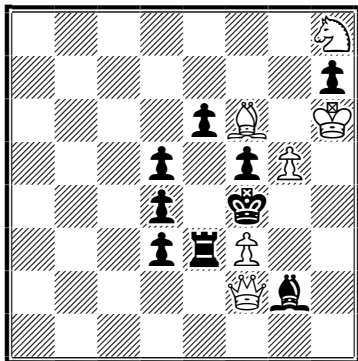
- A set of anti-dual effects (not reported by the author), consisting of a black correction with 3 correcting variations and a dual-avoidance couple:

- 1... ♖xe5 is a primary variation (which could be written 1... ♖~) with the primary harmful effect, opening h1-b7: 2. ♖b7+ ♔a7 3. ♖c6#

- The other 3 Rook moves correct this variation by preventing the mate 3. ♖c6 (by capture on the 2nd or 3rd move); 1... ♖xd4 and 1... ♖xd6 share a common secondary harmful effect, the loss of access to c5 on the 2nd move (2... ♖xc5??), allowing 2 continuations: 2. ♖c6 and 2. ♖b5; they are therefore linked by dual avoidance.

This thematic variety is very good for such a light position. To be reprinted in the anthologies...

B19 – 2nd Commendation
MIROSLAV SVÍTEK
Czech Republic



#3

6+9

1. ♖xh7? (2. ♖g6#) 1... ♖xf3
2. ♖g6+ ♔e4 3. ♖xd4#, 2... ♖g4
3. ♖h4#, 1... ♖xf3!

1.g6! – 2. ♖g5+ ♔e5 3. ♖f7#

1... ♖xf3 2. ♖xd4+ ♔g3 3. ♖h4#

1... ♖xf3 2. ♖h2+ ♔e4 3. ♖e5#,

2... ♖g4 3. ♖h4#

The B19 shows in the real play 2 beautiful variations in Diagonal/Orthogonal correspondence, with ample movements and nice mating moves by the white Queen. The thematic black moves, by the bishop and the rook, are both Queen line openings, blockings on f3, and, virtually, interferences of the black piece that remained in place: for lovers of labels, we have here a kind of Latvian Novotny (a white piece is already on the critical square before the key) in which the thematic continuations are not threats.

It's certainly a "little thing", but this play is visually pretty and it seems to me that it sticks in the memory. What surprised me the most here was to find no anticipation (it may have escaped me), and if indeed the position is new, in my opinion it deserves to be recognized.

The whole play is very pleasant and very clean, with a good threat and the black king mated on 4 different squares in the real play (I like also the good use of the White Bishop which protects the Queen in both mates on e5 and h4, and incidentally d4 in the try). The author wished to incorporate a try, surely to meet the understandable need to give a little more consistency to the whole, and also to give more play to the ♖h8 (without this try 1 piece can be saved); this try involves the same 1st black moves, one with a changed continuation, the other as a refutation. This try is a little "away" from the main idea, but it is natural, well done, and in my opinion very welcome.

So ends my judgment, and it is fun to relate the very first problem to the latter, which in a certain way have several elements in common (Diagonal/Orthogonal echo play by the white queen, with long mating moves after the Black King move...): the technical or even artistic level is not the same, but I have my pleasure with both! Things have finally come full circle...

Congratulations to the winners, and my sincere thanks to all the participants for the pleasure they gave me.

Jean-Marc Loustau,
August 26, 2023