The 9th FIDE World Cup in Composing

Section H – Retro

Preliminary award by

Joaquim Crusats

MMXXI

Participants

H01	Mikitovics J. (HUN)	H08	Tar G. (HUN)
H02	Crisan V. (ROM)	H09	Vokál S. (SVK)
H03	Grudziński H. (POL)	H10	Muljadi P. (USA)
H04	Frolkin A. (UKR)	H11	Baibikov D. (ISR)
H05	García C. E. (VEN)	H12	Semenenko V. (UKR)
H06	Gatti D. (ITA)	H13	Bašić B. (SRB)
H07	Packa L. (SVK)	H14	Coakley J. (CAN)

F irst of all I would like to express my gratitude to Andrey Selivanov and all the organizers of this 9th edition of the FIDE World Cup in Composing for entrusting me with the responsibility of judging the Retros section of this prestigious competition. I also want to thank the tourney director, Yuri Bazlov, for his efficient work, and all the composers for submitting their entries. I was delighted to have the opportunity to carefully study each one of their compositions. Thank you very much.

I received 14 problems from the tourney director in anonymous diagrams. The number of compositions in this section has traditionaly been low. On this occasion, in addition, the rules of the tourney specified that only classical retros without fairy elements were allowed, also leaving out proof games. I concur with this atypical format insofar as it may be a constructive initiative to palliate the current lack of "orthodox" retros in front of the ultra-popular SPGs and the expanding domain of fairy retros. As a result, entries **H01**, **H03**, and **H07** (orthodox and fairy proof games) were ineligible to participate. Similarly, entry **H12** was a helpstalemate in which I fail to see any retro content.

Nonetheless, this still leaves a total of 10 problems in the competition, certainly a low number, but not too different from previous editions of the tourney.

The entries are of disparate quality: from top class level to beginner level. This is not necessarily bad, as novice composers should indeed feel welcome to participate. Accordingly, I was willing to include as many sound originals as possible in the commendation section, even if the mechanisms were not original enough and regardless of the final percentage of selected problems appearing in the award.

However, three problems are cooked:

- **H02** is a very nice Pacific Proca Retractor showing an excellent construction and logical play. In spite that the pacific condition imposes heavy restrictions to the retroplay, since this point was not explicitly ruled out in the announcement I decided to give the author the benefit of the doubt and accept this entry for the competition. But the retraction –18…e2-e1♗+ is not forced because the b♙ that has retracted to b4 can acquire en passant capture rights, and in this case Black can indeed repeat the position for a third time forcing White to retract the double pawn step;

- **H09** is a can't castler based on a well-known mechanism, but White still retains his castling rights because the b♙b7 may still be on the board on c6;

- **H10** is a very simple last mover in which Black's last move is not determined because the w♗e5 could have given check by capturing a black unit.

And, not without mixed-feelings, I decided to leave the following two problems out of the award:
- **H05** is a constructional task, quite original and showing good composition skills, but with very little retro content, only the assessment of the legality of the resulting positions; I would encourage the author to submit this entertaining puzzle for publication somewhere else;
- **H06** is more of a scheme than a finished problem; perhaps the author eventually will find the way to add some more content and develop the idea into a deeper problem.

In summary, my classification has resulted in three Prizes, one Honorable Mention and one Commendation. I am well aware that this outcome is rather unusual, but probably this irregularity is simply the reflection of the current composing trends that overshadow the genre of classical orthodox retros. In this regard, I hope that the following problems will contribute to shed some more light on our beloved field.

1ˢᵗ Prize
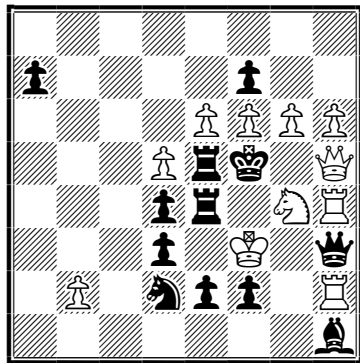
Add units and release the position   11+12

The last move was −1...♘~-d2+, so at least 3 units have to be added on squares g2, g3, and g5 to prevent illegal checks. If only black pieces are added, both balances are closed. However, after −1...♘~-d2+ White is retrostalemated. Thus, a white piece must be added on square g3 so that it can be then unpinned: −1...♘f1-d2+ −2.X~-g3 ♘g3-f1+. This white piece can only be a bishop. After the addition of the w♗g3 and two black pieces (for example, b♗g5 and b♘g2) both balances are closed too; however, after −1...♘f1-d2+ −2.♗f4-g3 ♘g3-f1+ −3.♗d2-f4 ♗f4-g5 −4.g5-g6+ it turns out that the retro-free dark-squared w♗d2 cannot reach the c8 square for unpromotion. So a white piece needs to be added on g2, which after unpinning, can reach the c8 square, while a black piece is needed on g5, which will be able to unpin the white piece on

g2. Taking into account all these facts, the required additions are: w♕g2, w♗g3, and b♕g5. The balances are as follows:

- White: 11 (on diagram) + 2 (added) + 3 (captured by black Pawns c:d, g:f, h:g) = 16;
- Black: 12 (on diagram) + 1 (added) + 3 (captured by white Pawns a:b, d:e, e:d) = 16.

Then −1...♘f1-d2+ −2.♗f4-g3 ♘g3-f1+ −3.♗c1-g5! ♕d2-g5 −4.g5-g6+ and further −4...♕e1-d2 −5.♗d2-c1 ♕f1-e1 −6.♗b4-d2 ♕g1-f1 −7.♗d6-b4 ♕f1-g1 −8.♗b8-d6 ♕g1-f1 −9.b7-b8♗ ♕f1-g1 −10.b6-b7 ♕g1-f1 −11.b5-b6 ♕f1-g1 −12.b4-b5 ♕g1-f1 −13.b3-b4 ♕f1-g1 −14.a2: ♘ b3 ♕g1-f1 and now tempoplay starts: −15.♕f1-g2 g2-g1♕+ −16.♕c1-f1 b4-b3 −17.♕c8-c1 b5-b4 −18.c7-c8♕ b6-b5 −19.c6-c7 b7-b6 −20.c5-c6 e3-e2 −21.c4-c5 c5:♗(♘)d4 etc.

For the first time, the addition of three promoted pieces is realized without stipulation pressure.

This problem is one of these impressive constructions that fill a hole in the retroanalysis realm. The problem speaks for itself, but the freshness of the biarticulated cage, resistant to various combinations of colored units in the vacant squares, and the excellent try refuted by the color of the promotion square, are worthy to remark. The clear winner of this competition. Hats off.

2ⁿᵈ Prize
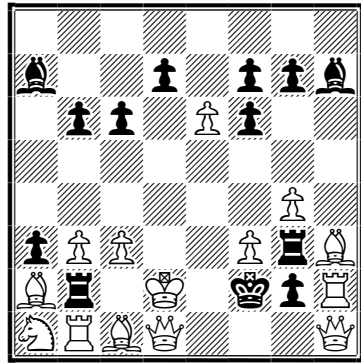
Last 16 single moves?   14+13

White balance: 14 (pieces on the board) + 2 (e7:f6, h:g) = 16.

Black balance: 13 + 2 (a6:b7-b8, d:c→c8=♗) = 15.

The h-pawn could have promoted on h8. One black piece is unaccounted for. This means, in particular, that the possibility of h7:g8=♗ and d6:c7-c8 or d:e (with a white promotion on e8) cannot be discarded immediately. The last move is −1...♗c2-h7+, and the resulting position features a retrocage in the bottom half of the board. An attempt to release the cage through e2:f3 necessitates four captures by white while three black pieces are missing. The cage can only be released by retracting the black king to f1 after the installation of two shields – on e1 and g1.

Then −2.e5-e6 (d5:e6?) ♗b8-a7 −3.e4-e5 ♗d6-b8 −4.e3-e4 ♗f8-d6 −5.e2-e3 e7:♘f6! −6.♘d5-f6 a4-a3 −

7.♘e3-d5 a5-a4 –8.♘f1-e3 a6-a5! –
9.♘e3:♕f1 – the sequence of 16
unique single moves is over; now –
9...♕g1-f1 (a7-a6) –10.♘d5-e3
a7-a6 (♕g1-f1) –11.♘b4-d5 ♕f1-g1
–12.♘a6-b4 ♕g1-f1 –13.♘b8-a6
♕f1-g1 –14.b7-b8=♘ ♕g1-f1 –
15.a6:♘b7 ♘c5-b7 –16.a5-a6
♘d3-c5 –17.a4-a5 ♘e1-d3 –
18.a3-a4 ♔f1-f2 –19.f2-f3 ♖~-g3
and the cage is released.

–8...a7-a5? leads to retro-
opposition between the black king
and the uncaptured queen on f1 –
the queen arrives there at the
wrong moment and Black later has
to waste a tempo; this eventually
results in retrostalemate for white.
The uncaptured white knight
serves a dual purpose: to
uncapture, in its turn, the black
shielding queen and then, after
unpromoting, to uncapture the
second shielding black piece, a
knight.

We are in front of a masterly
composed classical retro problem
based on a Release the Position
approach. The presence of a cage
that allows an open balance adds a
lot of thrill to the solving process.
The uncapture of an officer by
another officer — not in relation to
any check — together with the
initial double-step of the b♙a7
being ruled out on the basis of a
subtle retro-opposition mechanism,
are very nice touchs that enrich
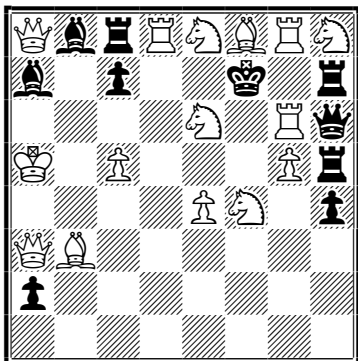this enjoyable problem.
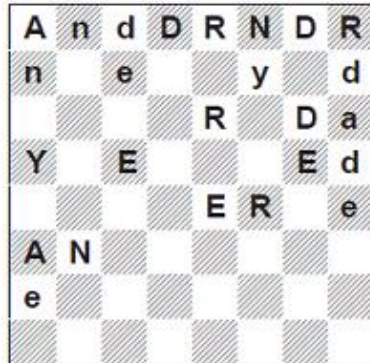
Rebus: determine the   6+13
position and last 8 moves

In order to determine the
position, the following facts must
be taken into account:
- Y is king (letter with only one
uppercase, one lowercase);
- E is pawn (remaining letter
not on 8th rank);
- D is not queen or bishop
(impossible double check);
- R is not queen or bishop
(impossible double check);
- N is not queen (both kings in
check);
- A is queen;
- N is bishop;
- if D is knight and R is rook
there an impossible double check,
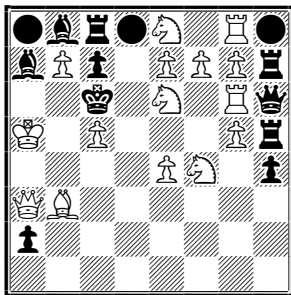so D is rook and R is knight.

There is a check on square h8,
so last move was-1.g7:h8=♘+
meaning that caps are White (see
solution diagram below):

Solution diagram   15+10

White has seven pawns and a promoted knight. The only missing white piece is a dark-square bishop. Black has at least two promoted pieces (rook and dark bishop). Black is missing three pieces. The pawn formation and promoted pieces could only occur by the following play:

White: a: ♗b, b8=♘, d: ♗e, h: ♗g;

Black: ...d1=♖, ...f:♗g, ...g1=♗ (or...f:♗e, ...e1=♗). Three black pawns (b, e, g) were captured by White. Therefore the three black pieces awaiting capture on the 8th rank are a light bishop and two knights. The bishop is on light square a8 and the knights are on d8 and h8. Previous move is: –4...♔d7-c6.

Allumwandlung on White's last four moves in which three of the promotions are captures. The only other *last mover* to achieve this task with exactly determined moves is Kornilov-Frolkin 1981 (P0000545), but their problem has no captures.

The *rebus* part of this problem is straightforward as for retroanalysis, but the problem is excellently constructed as a *last mover*, with the positive feature that the nature of the first uncaptures cannot be decided until further back in the retroplay. The four retractions of the black king confer a nice sense of thematic unity to the problem. Many pieces on the board are required to make the last sequence of moves unique, and this poses a severe limitation to the flexibility of the position, yet the composer still shows great skill to present the concept in a *rebus* form. It is a little bit disenchanting,

The last moves were: –1.g7:♘h8=♘+ ♔e7-f7 –2.f7-f8=♗+ ♔d7-e7 –3.e7:♘d8=♖+ ♔c6-d7 –4.b7:♗a8=♕+ ♔d7-c6. Black's moves were not captures because white pawns were on f7 and e7. –3...♔c6-d7 –4.b7:a8=♕+. Black's move was not a capture. The only missing white piece is a dark bishop. No other black retractions are possible, regardless of which pieces were captured on h8 and d8. the diagram below shows the position before –4.b7:a8=♕+.

Earlier position with black officers on a8, d8, and h8

though, that none of the deeper retro subtleties of the *last mover* facet of this problem can be entangled to the resolution part of the *rebus*, and somehow this deprives this outstanding construction of a full sense of wholeness.

Honorable Mention
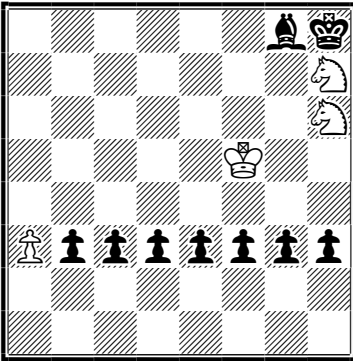
Proca Retractor -9 & #1   4+9

−1.♔f6-f5! a4:b3 e.p. −2.b2-b4 b4:c3 e.p. −3.c2-c4 c4:d3 e.p. −4.d2-d4 d4:e3 e.p. −5.e2-e4 e4:f3 e.p. −6.f2-f4 f4:g3 e.p. −7.g2-g4 g4:h3 e.p. −8.h2-h4 (with the dual-free threat − 9.♘f8:♖h7 & 1.♘f8-g6#) −8...♗f7-g8 −9.♘g5:♗h7 & 1.♘g5:f7#; not − 9.Sg5:♗h7?? that leads to an illegal position owing to the promoted bB and the structure of the wPs.

Side-variations:

(A) −7...♗f7:♖g8 -8.♖g7(:)g8+ & 1.♘h6:f7#;

(B) −7...♗~:♖g8 −8.♖g7-g8+ ~ − 9.♘f8(:)h7 & 1.♘f8-g6# (−8...♗f7-~ −9.~ & 1.♘h6:f7#).

The same holds if Black uncaptures w♖g8 on any earlier

move, but note that Black cannot retract −8...♗f7:♖g8 because then White would have eight pawns whose structure would imply that none of the original w♖s could get to g8! (C) −8...♗~:♕g8 −9.♕~-g8+ & 1.♕~-g7#.

Let us comment on the try − 1.♔f6:♗f5 (all the other possible uncaptures on f5 are easily eliminated). The reason why this try fails is not because White cannot play −9.♘g5:♗h7 in the main line because that variation is unreachable anyway since Black's retraction − 7...g4:h3 e.p. would be illegal with b♗f5 (Black would need at least two pawn captures, while the only white piece that could had been captured by black pawns would be the queen). Instead, Black refutes this try by playing immediately −7...♗f7-g8!, after which −8.♘g5:♗h7?? is illegal (as well as −8.♘g5:♗h7??), and in spite of having two more moves at his disposal, White is unable to achieve the aim.

A well-constructed problem with seven e.p. captures by Black in a Proca retractor, task!

After a very harsh flight-taking key, justified by the task character of the problem, there is a short threat and all what Black can do is buy himself some time. A valid mechanism to show this theme at its maximum. The most amazing aspect of this problem is that, surprisingly, it seems to be that it is sound. "Easily", as indicated by the composer, is a subjective term, and for me it was not that easy to

eliminate some tries. I tried hard to cook the problem, and I failed. Then I tried harder, and I failed again. White has some tricks at his disposal, forcing some initial moves for Black that lead him to dangerous positions or, for example, White can threaten mates based on unpromotions on f8. I found at least three serious tries that failed owing to subtle reasons such as unavoidable forward defenses by Black, the illegality of the resulting positions, or a unique carefully chosen retraction by Black that cannot be defeated. The presence of a witty cook cannot be lightly disregarded. Some dual mates or retractions in the secondary full-length side-variations are not meaningful defects. Altogether, a problem to remember.
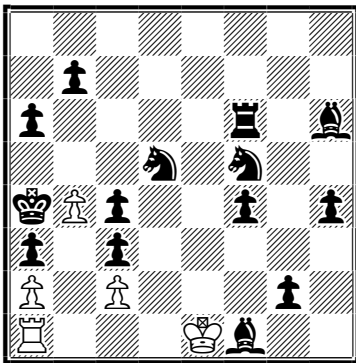
1.c4:b3 ep.! 0-0-0 2.g2-g1=♖ ♖d1:f1 3.♖g1-g5 ♖f1:f4+ 4.♘d5-b4 ♖f4:f5 5.b3:c2 ♖f5:f6 6.♖g5-a5+ ♖f6:h6 7.b7-b5 ♖h6:h4=.

An *a posteriori* retro allowing the *en passant* capture key by subsequent castling. The problem shows the Valladao theme (*en passant capture, castling, and promotion*) along with an anticipated Phoenix by the black rook. There and dozens of *a posteriori* problems showing the Valladao theme, but here the helpstalemate stipulation allows the composer to use minimal white force that, in addition to the pleasant help play, aesthetically compensates for the trivial retro part.

The fact that castling is inevitable and that there is a double motivation for Black's underpromotion — preventing the pinning of the wR on f4 and ruling out a move of the promoted unit out of the final cage — do not seriously detract from the problem.

Joaquim Crusats,
August 17, 2021

Commendation

h=7   AP   5+14