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This issue. We have a series of related studies from Paul Michelet, the special number looks at the studies of Jindřich Fritz, and do try the little trifle alongside before looking inside.

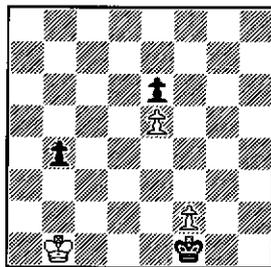
Index 1996-2010. Next time's final issue will be accompanied by a composite index of studies by author covering the whole of *BESN*. I have prepared a draft up to and including the present issue which I like to think is correct, but if some kind reader with a complete run of the magazine and time to spare is willing to check it for me I shall be most grateful.

Special number 63. It appears that the modern *Malá encyklopedie šachu* is wrong, and that "Jan" Vančura was in truth **Josef Vančura**. *Časopis českých šachistů* 1917, page 95, "Jos. Vančura" (from Emil Vlasák and Jaroslav Polášek, forwarding information from Zdeněk Závodný); chess column in *České slovo*, 22.i.1922, "Jos." (sent to me by Bedrich Formánek); obituary in *Časopis československých šachistů* 1922, page 21, "Josef" (cited by Gaige, drawn to my attention by Timothy Whitworth, and sent to me by the library in Den Haag). The incorrect name "Jan" appears to derive from an article by František Dedrle in *Československý šach* 1947, page 4, also sent to me by Bedrich Formánek. As for how the studies came to light, Duras wrote in 1922 that Vančura's father, also Josef, had placed them at his disposal.

My thanks to all.

Spotlight (see also back page). I was concentrating so hard on the reciprocal zugzwang aspect of Vitaly Halberstadt's 4 on page 462 that I contrived to overlook the composer's main line. Alain Villeneuve reminds me: **1 Kf3! f6 2 Kf4!** (2 gxf6+? Kxf6 3 Kf4 g5+) **fxg5+** (2...Kf7 3 gxf6! Kxf6 4 g5+) **3 Kxg5 h6+** (3...Kf7 4 Kh6! Kg8 5 g5! Kh8 stalemate) **4 Kf4 Kf6 5 g5+! hxg5+ 6 Kg4** and a draw.

Jaroslav Polášek suggests that the reason Vančura set the White king on h2 in 1 in special number 63 was to give White a choice. With the king on h2, advancing it by 1 Kg3 is a plausible try, failing only by a single tempo: 1...Kc7 (or 1...Re8 first) 2 Kf4 Re8 3 Kf5 (or 3 Kg5 Kd7 4 Kh6 Ke6 5 Kxh7 Kf7) Kd7 4 Kf6 h5 5 Kf7 h4 6 g8Q Rxcg8 7 Kxcg8 Ke8 8 Kg7 h3 9 Bd6 h2 10 Bxh2 Kxe7. With the king back on h1, the move 1 e8Q is less surprising because White has no other option.



by Richard Becker

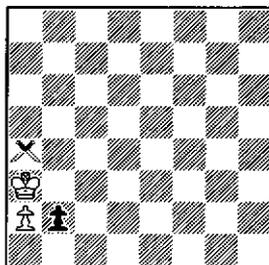
White to play and win

Variations on a theme

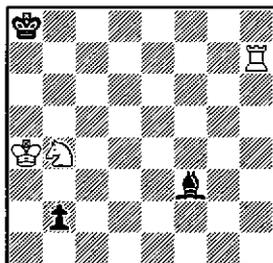
During the past year, Paul Michelet has been producing a varied series of studies based on moving the White king to a3 so that a promotion on b1 will give stalemate. We have seen a couple of them in our last two issues, but there are more, and I have suggested to him that they will have a greater impact if we present them as a group rather than piecemeal.

The basic idea is shown in 1, where the square a4 is assumed to be barred to the White king by one means or another. In the study we quoted in March, Paul got a Black bishop to d1 to guard a4, a configuration pioneered by Troitzky in 1895 and used many times since: 1...b1Q/R give stalemate, 1...b1B leaves White with just two light bishops, and 1...b1N loses a piece after 2 Kb2 Nd2 3 Kc1.

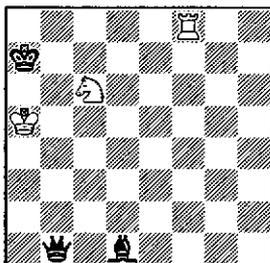
In the study we quoted in June, Paul moved the bishop to b3, a2 now being empty and the Black king being used to guard b4. Promotions to queen or rook again give stalemate, and a promotion to bishop or knight allows White to capture on b3.



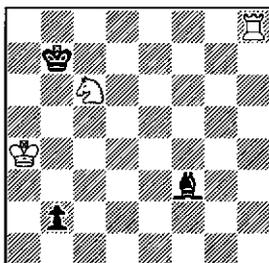
1 - Black to play



2 - draw



2a - 1...Ka7, after 4 Nc6+

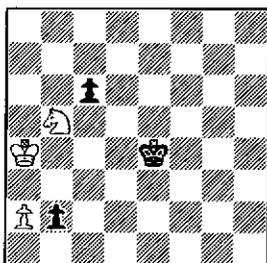


2b - main line, after 2 Nc6

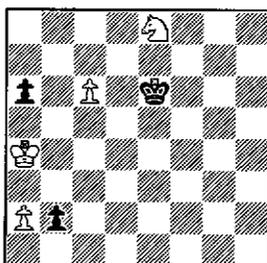
In 2, which appeared in the May *BCM*, Paul will manoeuvre the Black bishop to c6. This seems to spoil the finale, since with no pawn on a2 a rook promotion won't give stalemate, while a promoted knight will be able to escape to d2. But let us see.

Try 1 Rf7, intending 1...Be2/Bg2 2 Rf2? No, 1...Bd1+ 2 K- b1Q wins. White must play 1 Rh8+ first, and after 1...Ka7 2 Rf8 he can meet 2...Bd1+ with 3 Ka5 (3 Ka3 also works) b1Q 4 Nc6+ with a skewer on the b-file to follow (see 2a).

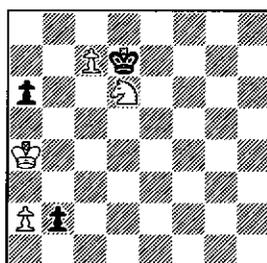
But Black also has 1...Kb7, and now White's knight move to c6 will not give check and he will be a tempo behind. Can he keep checking? No, 2 Rh7+ Kc8 3 Rh8+ Kd7 (Black keeps to light squares) 4 Rh7+ Ke6 5 Rh6+ Kf5 and the checks have run out. The startling answer is to play 2 Nc6 at once (see 2b). This threatens another skewer from b8, hence 2...Bxc6+, and 3 Ka3 again clinches the draw. 3...b1Q will be met by 4...Rb8+, with yet another skewer and with stalemate if Black takes the rook, and 3...b1R won't help because R + B v R is not a win.



3 - Black to play



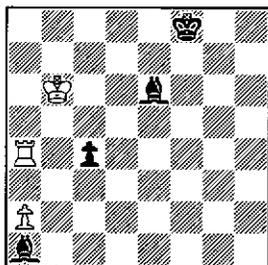
4 - draw



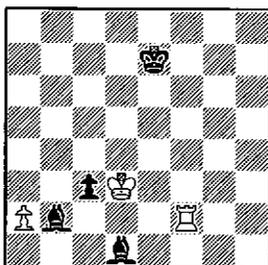
4a - after 2 Nd6

In 3, a4 will be guarded by a Black pawn lured to b5 by a knight sacrifice. 1...b1Q will allow a fork on c3, hence 1...cxb5+, but after 2 Ka3 promotions to queen and rook will yet again give stalemate, while other promotions will allow White quickly to capture or exchange off Black's remaining pawn.

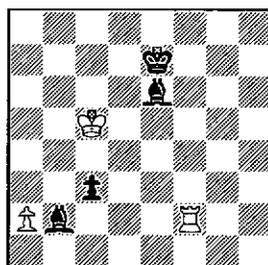
3 first appeared in a 1907 study by H. von Duben, who simply moved the knight from d4. Paul's 4, not previously published, is a little more subtle. 1 c7 Kd7 2 c8Q+ Kxc8 3 Nd6+ K~ 4 Nb5, perhaps? No, there is no longer a fork on c3, so Black can play 4...b1Q. 1 c7 Kd7 is correct, but White must now play 2 Nd6 (see 4a). This threatens c8Q+, forcing 2...Kxc7, after which 3 Nb5 is check and Black must take it or lose. This time, the operation will be successfully concluded.



5 - draw



5a - 3 Rf2, after 5...Bb2

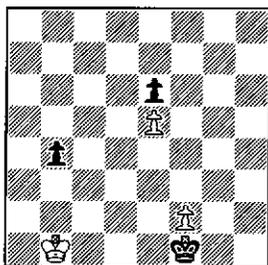


5b - main line, after 4 Rf2

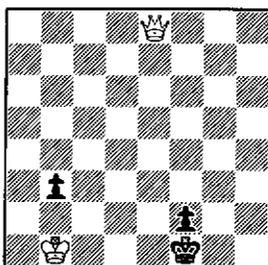
5, which appeared in *diagrammes* last year, is the star of the show. It hardly seems possible that White can manoeuvre to reach 1 with Black's light bishop again on d1, but this is what will happen and there will be a vicious try along the way.

1 Kc5 c3 2 Rf4+ Ke7, and now 3 Rf2 to cover c2, perhaps? No. 3...Bg4 4 Kc4 Bd1 5 Kd3 Bb2 (see 5a), after which White's king and rook are tied to the defence of c2 and Black will eventually be able to bring his king down the board; a typical line is 6 Rh2 Ke6 7 Rh6+ Kd5 (else 8 Rc6 drawing) 8 Rh2 Ke5 9 Rf2 Ba4 10 Rh2 Kf6 (playable because the bishop now guards c6) 11 Rg2 Bd1 12 Rh2 Kg5 13 a3 Ba4 14 Rf2 Kg4 15 Rh2 Kg3 etc. White must interpolate 3 Rf1, and only after 3...Bb2 play 4 Rf2 (see 5b). If now 4...Bxa2 then 5 Kb4 threatens 6 Rc2 and 7 Rxc3, and after 5...Bb1 6 Rxb2 cxb2 7 K~3 the pawn goes; alternatively, 4...Bg4 5 Kb4 again threatening 6 Rc2 etc, and 5...Bd1 6 Rxb2 cxb2 7 Ka3 gives the required finale.

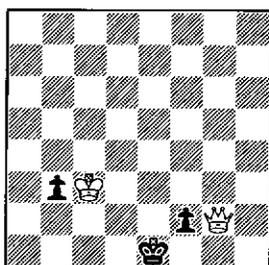
From the world at large



1 - win



1a - 1 f4, after 5...f2



1b - main line, after 14 Kc3

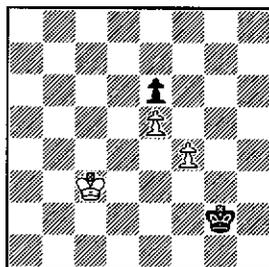
Richard Becker's **1** appeared in *diagrammes* earlier this year. I haven't seen the official solution yet, and am relying on the computer and on my own interpretation.

1 f4, obviously, and after 1...b3 2 f5 exf5 3-5 e8Q f2 we have **1a** and presumably the presence of the b-pawn will spoil the normal stalemate defence? But try as we may, there is in fact no win from **1a**, nor can we improve things by moving the king at some stage instead of blindly rushing the pawn forward. So 1 f4 is wrong, yet an initial king move is clearly hopeless; surely it cannot be a "festina lente"?

It can be, and it is. **1 f3!! b3** (we'll look at alternative Black moves in a moment) **2 f4 Kg2 3 f5 exf5 4 e6 f4 5 e7 f3 6 e8Q f2** gives **1a** with the Black king on g2 instead of f1, and **7 Qg6+** leads into a known win (I. Grosz, *Pesti Hirlap* 1935, White Kg1, Qh1, Black Kc3, Pg3/c2, 1 Qh6 Kb2 2 Qb6+ etc). Even so, the play has its points, so let us follow it through: **7...Kf3/Kh~ 8 Qh5+ Kg2 9 Qg4+ Kh~ 10 Qf3(+)** **Kg1 11 Qg3+ Kf1 12 Kb2** (slightly quicker than Grosz's Kc1) **Ke2 13 Qg2 Ke1 14 Kc3!** (see **1b**) **b2 15 Qe4+ Kd1** (15...Kf1 16 Kd2 Kg1 17 Qg6+ Kh2 18 Ke2) **16 Qc2+ Ke1 17 Qxb2! Kf1 18 Kd3 Kg1 19 Qg7+ Kh2 20 Ke2.** 7 Qg8+ also works, if slightly less incisively, and there are many minor alternatives in the later play.

Why does all this work? Essentially, because f1 is the only good square for the Black king in **1a**. On g2 or g1, it allows the Grosz win, and on the e-file, White's e8Q will give check. If White plays 1 f4, Black can tempo with 1...b3, and reach **1a** with his king still on f1. If White plays 1 f3, he cannot.

Black has two other possibilities. He can start with two king moves, but now we will come down to the equivalent of **1a** with the b-pawn still on b4, and White will have a comfortable win wherever the Black king has put himself. He can also try 1...b3 and 2...b2, but 3 Kxb2 Kg2 4 Kc3 will give **1c** with a choice of evils: if he moves his king to the third rank now or later, the pawn advance f5 will win easily, and if he stays back, White's king will mop up.

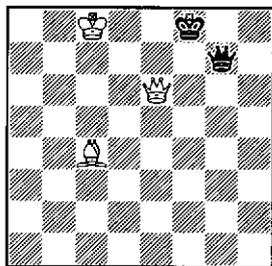


1c - 1-2...b2, after 4 Kc3

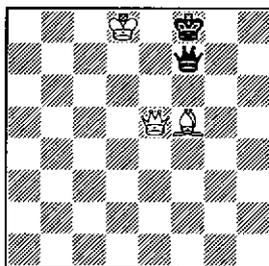
Maybe you took one look at this, and said that the answer must be 1 f3 else the position would not have been set. All I can say is that I didn't.

Nearly sixty per cent (40,056 out of 67,691) of the studies in Harold van der Heijden's "Endgame study database III" start with at most six men on the board or reduce to such a position in the main line, and *EG* 180 and 181 featured articles by Harold, Eiko Bleicher, and Guy Haworth in which they reported the checking of all these six-man positions against the definitive results in the Nalimov tablebases. Between seven and eight per cent of the studies (2,982 out of 40,056) proved to be "bust" in the sense that Black could win or avoid defeat, but over ten per cent of the faults (317 out of 2,982) were the result of transcription errors in the database (an incorrect stipulation or move). Even so, this left 2,665 studies out of 40,056 where the composer's main line did not give the required win or draw (though sometimes there was an alternative which did). 1,207 of these 2,665 studies had not been previously reported as faulty. The articles included examples of "busts" which the team thought particularly interesting, and I imagine that some will be surfacing as studies in their own right.

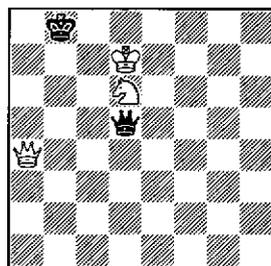
This is the non-controversial side of automatic testing. If White is supposed to win and the computer shows that Black can avoid defeat, the study is unsound, and that is an end of the matter. It is a different matter when the computer is asked to report if White's moves are unique, because it can be expected to report many minor alternatives which a human commentator would regard as of no importance.



5 - win



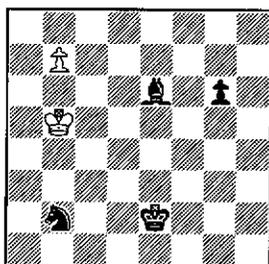
6 - win



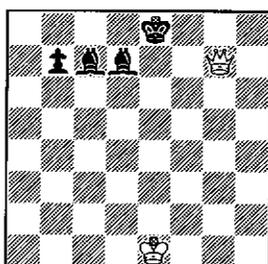
7 - win

Also in *EG* 181 was a perceptive article by Emil Vlasák in which he looked at the possible use of the PGN files of positions where the win takes at least three moves longer with White to move (downloadable via www.k4it.de/egtb/zugzwang.php). For a first trial, he looked at the positions with $Q + B \vee Q$. Two offered possibilities, the first being 5 with play 1 Qd6+ (1 Qf5+ also wins but wastes time) Qe7 2 Qh6+ Qg7 3 Qe6. But, of course, such a simple scheme had already been exploited. Slightly different was 6, with an attractive lose-a-move line 1 Qh8+ Qg8 2 Qf6+ Qf7 3 Qe5 but also a dual 1 Be4. Emil considered rotating the position and adding a Black pawn to remove the dual, but this also proved to have been done before.

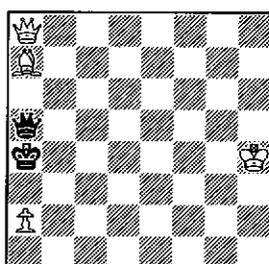
Inspired by this, I looked at the positions with $Q + N \vee Q$, and noticed 7: 1 Qb4+ Ka8 2 Qa3+ Kb8 3 Qa4 (3 Qe3 wastes time). This doesn't seem to have been used in a published study, though whether it is worth using is perhaps another matter. I still think these files will eventually prove useful, despite the large amount of "ballast" that they contain, but positions where White can only win by returning to the same position with Black to move seem to be much rarer than reciprocal zugzwangs.



8 - reciprocal zugzwang!



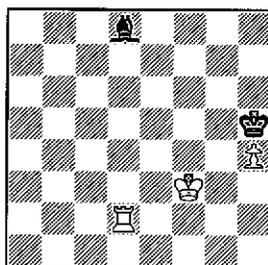
9 - reciprocal zugzwang!!



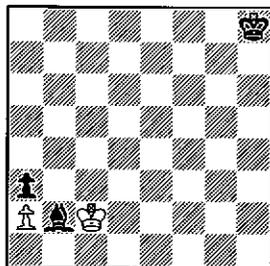
10 - reciprocal zugzwang

Of the usefulness and interest of the file of reciprocal zugzwangs, there is no question. Noam Elkies has been browsing, and he noticed the remarkable **8**, where Black to play is mated in 175 moves, and the even more remarkable **9**, where the mate takes only 121 moves but the White king appears to be in a wholly nondescript and unconstrained position a long way from any other man. The 50-move rule is assumed ignored, of course. **9** inspired me to dig out **10**, where the White king is seven whole files away from any other man, though this is perhaps less surprising since it is slightly constrained by the Black queen. In **9**, it seems unbelievable that it cannot have a simple waiting move.

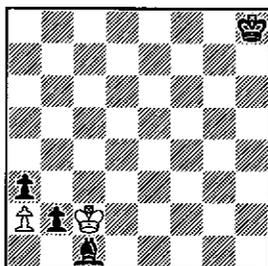
Noam also points out that **11**, which is the position after White's 15th move in Vančura's **10** in special number 63, also depends on a reciprocal zugzwang, albeit one that is well known: 15...Bxh4 16 Rh2 Kg5 17 Rh1. This would not work with the White rook already on the first rank, which is why he had to manoeuvre it to the second rank earlier in the play.



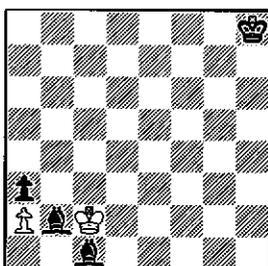
11 - Black to play his 15th



12 - only a draw



12a - still only a draw



12b - Black wins

Noam further reminds me that while **12** is a well known draw, and **12a**, which arises in Vančura's study **16** in the special number if Black exchanges queen for rook, is also drawn, **12b**, where we have replaced the extra pawn on b2 by a second dark bishop, is a win for Black (he withdraws his bishops to say h6 and g7, brings his king up to c4, waits for Kb1, plays ...Kc3 forcing Ka1, and mates by ...Kc2).

News and notices

Meetings. John Roycroft tells me that the next **Pushkin House** meeting will be on **Friday October 1** at 6.00 pm (offers of talks to roycroft@btinternet.com please). 5A Bloomsbury Square (Holborn tube, Bloomsbury Way, SW corner of the square).

Spotlight continued. Alain Villeneuve has been reading some Halberstadt manuscripts (given by his family to the French Chess Federation), and he tells me that Vančura's 9 in special number 63 was one of Halberstadt's favourites (and is also one of Alain's own). Halberstadt noted an important variation which I omitted, after **1 Kh5 Re8 2 Ng6: 2...Ra8 3 Kh6!!** (3 Nf8?! Ra1 4 Ng6 Ra8 5 Kh6) **Kb5** (3...Kd6 4 Nf8 Ra1 5 g8Q Rh1+ 6 Kg7, 3...Kd7 4 Nf8+, 3...Kd5 4 Nf8 Ra1 5 g8Q+, 3...Kc5 4 Nf8 Ra6+ 5 Kh5! Ra1 6 Ne6+ Kd6 7 g8Q Rh1+ 8 Kg6, 3...Kb7 4 Nf8 Ra6+ 5 Kh7!) **4 Nf8! Ra6+ 5 Kh5! Ra1 6 Ne6!! Ra8** (6...Rg1 7 Ng5) **7 Nc7+**. Halberstadt's comment, endorsed by Alain: who would have guessed, from the diagram, that the Black rook would be picked up on a8?

Noam Elkies points out that in study **11**, "will allow h8Q" won't be true if Black has played 1...Rxf8 and 2...Nxf8, and the note should read "will lead to easy draws".

In diagram **1b** on page 460, the pawn on e3 should of course be Black.

And while producing this time's special number, I noticed that one of my favourite Mike Bent studies, which I quoted as **1** in special number 6 and again as **3** in his obituary in March 2005, had been completely anticipated by Fritz, 4 HM *Szachy* 1974. Fritz even included the Elkies extension (June 2005, page 298).

51 flights of chess fancy. Although the whole of *51 flights* was played through with board and men before being given to the printer, a few typos escaped my notice, and this is perhaps a convenient place to report them. Page 4, column 2, line 2, for "Kxe6" read "fxe6"; page 10, column 1, paragraph 2, last line, for "Nc8+" read "Nc8"; page 17, column 1, paragraph 1, penultimate line, for "Nxd5+" read "Nd5+"; page 18, column 2, paragraph 3, line 3 from end, for "Bf4+" read "Bf5+"; page 21, column 2, line 6, for "win" read "draw"; page 30, column 1, paragraph 2, line 5, for "Rd6" read "Rd7"; same page, column 2, paragraph 2, line 2, for "Bxe6" read "2 Bxe6"; page 48, column 1, paragraphs 2 and 3, it should perhaps have been made clearer that "Cylinder Chess" applied only to position 6.6, not to 6.8; page 69, note to position 4.6, line 3, for "2005" read "2007". Additionally, "all 4121 of them" (page 8, paragraph 2, line 10) is correct only as regards the list in *EG* 122; the true total is 4128, and there was a corrective note in a later *EG*.

My thanks to all correspondents.

Anybody wishing to give notice in BESN of any event, product, or service should contact the Editor. There is no charge and no account is taken of whether the activity is being pursued for commercial profit, but notices are printed only if they seem likely to be of particular interest to study enthusiasts. Readers are asked to note that the Editor relies wholly on the representations of the notice giver (except where he makes a personal endorsement) and that no personal liability is accepted either by him or by any other person involved in the production and distribution of this magazine.