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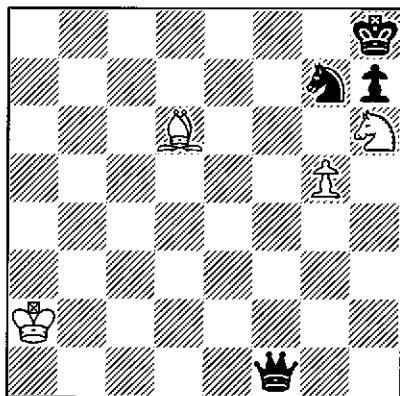
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Some studies by

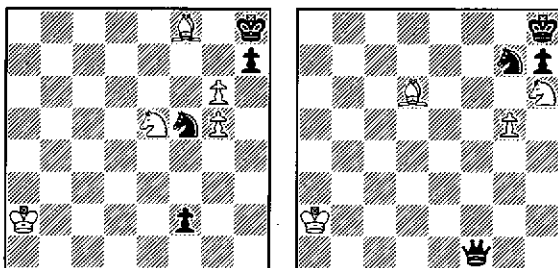
Gleb Zakhodyakin



The impotent queen

Some studies by Gleb Zakhodyakin

The Russian composer Gleb Zakhodyakin (1912-1982) has always been among my favourites; his ability to conjure startling play from apparently innocent starting positions has rarely been equalled. He first came to prominence in 1930-31 with a series of compositions which found their way straight into the anthologies. Like many composers, he never greatly surpassed the best of his initial productions, but his work was always entertaining: "popular" in the best sense of the word. The 1990 Russian encyclopedia *Shakhmaty* gives his output as around 120 compositions; Harold van der Heijden's "Endgame study database 2000" contains no fewer than 203 including versions and alternative settings, but 73 are lightweights which appeared in *Shakhmaty v SSSR* from 1980 onwards (some posthumously) and it may be that *Shakhmaty* did not include these in its total.

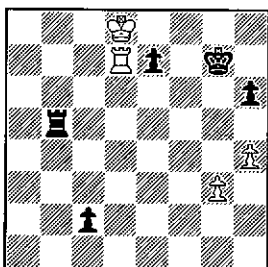


1 - draw

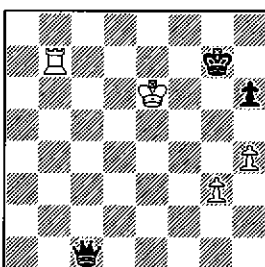
1a - after 5 Bd6

One of Zakhodyakin's favourite themes is the "powerless queen": Black is a queen ahead, usually as the result of a promotion, but his position is such that it can do nothing useful. **1** (1 Pr *Shakhmatny Listok* 1930) is in *Endgame magic*, but it is so much an archetype that I think we must start with it. The Black f-pawn is bound to promote and **1 g7+** appears merely to be throwing a man away to no purpose, but after **1...Nxb7 2 Nf7+ Kg8 3 Be5 f1Q 4 Nh6+ Kh8 5 Bd6** we have **1a** and what can Black do? If his knight moves, Be5+ drags it straight back again, and Bd6 restores the position; if his queen checks and captures on d6 or g5, the White knight has a fork; and if his queen checks on e2, thinking to move the knight now that e5 is guarded, White plays Be5+ anyway because the capture allows another fork.

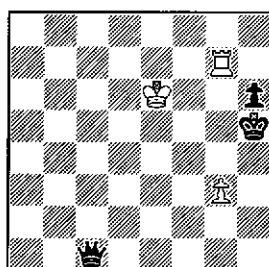
2 (3 Pr Chigorin Memorial Ty, *Shakhmaty v SSSR* 1949) is less well known. Let's try the natural **1 Rxe7+** followed after say **1...Kf6** by **2 Rc7**: no, **2...Rb8+ 3 Kd7 Rb7** pins wR, and after **4 Rxb7 c1Q** Black has Q+P v R+2P with an easy win. So how is an immediate **1 Rc7** better? Black still plays **1...Rb8+** (**1...Rb2 2 Kxe7 Rb7** leads to the same thing), but after **2 Kxe7 Rb7 3 Rxb7 c1Q** White has **4 Ke6+** (see **2a**). A move to the eighth rank leads nowhere (**4...Kf8 5 Rb8+ Kg7 6 Rb7+**), hence **4...Kg6**, and **5 h5+** pursues the king further. **5...Kxh5** is now met by **6 Rg7** boxing in the king (see **2b**), and if instead **5...Kg5** then **6 Rg7+** forces **6...Kxh5** anyway. Once again Black's forces have been decoupled, and his queen can do nothing on its own;



2 - draw

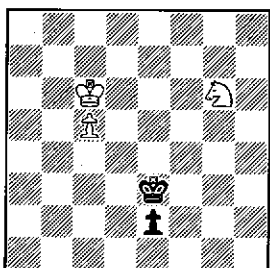


2a - after 4 Ke6+

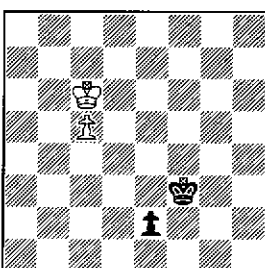


2b - after 6 Rg7

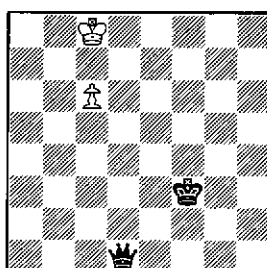
it can chivvy the blockaders (the given line continues 6...Qf1 7 Ke7 Qf5 8 Rg8 Qh7 9 Kf8 Qd7 10 Rg7 Qe6 11 Rg8 Qd6+ 12 Kf7) but it cannot break the stranglehold.



3 - draw

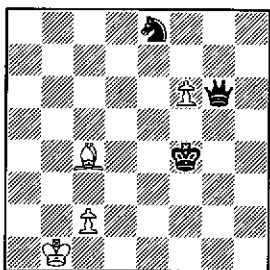


3a - after 2...Kxf3

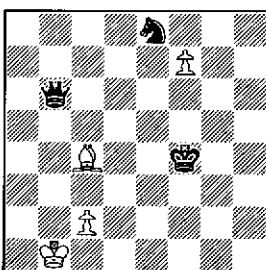


3b - after 4...Qd1+ 5 Kc8

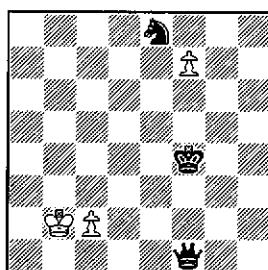
The finale Pc6 v Q has attracted many composers, but the beautifully light 3 (*Shakhmaty v SSSR* 1980) seems to contain one or two original touches. 1 Nh4 (for 1...e1Q 2 Ng2+) Kf2 (forcing promotion, but...) 2 Nf3! Kxf3 (see 3a) 3 Kd7! (the only square to draw) e1Q 4 c6 Qd1+/Qd2+ 5 Kc8! (see 3b) and c7 will follow.



4 - draw

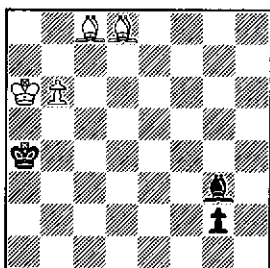


4a - after 1...Qb6+

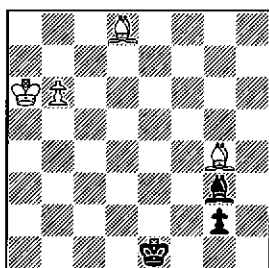


4b - 2...Qxb5+, after 4 Kb2

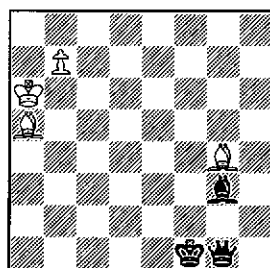
4 (*Thèmes-64* 1980) features another advanced wP. 1 f7 Qb6+ gives 4a, and Black will win if bQ can get back to e7 or h8. The only way to stop her is 2 Bb5! Qg1+ (2...Qxb5+ 3 Kc1 Qf1+ 4 Kb2 and Black is getting nowhere, see 4b) 3 Bf1! Qb6+ 4 Bb5 and so on. And of course if Black plays 1...Qg1+, 2 Bf1 leads to the same.



5 - draw



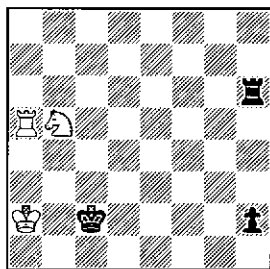
5a - after 4...Ke1



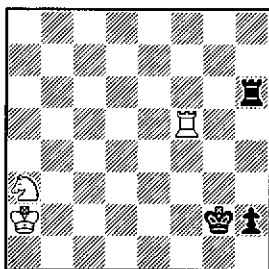
5b - after 6...Kf1

Another way of dealing with a threatened promotion is by perpetual check, and 5 (4 Pr *Lelo* 1951) is an excellent realisation of a double-bishop manoeuvre which has attracted several composers. Play starts **1 Bd7+**, and if **1...Kb4** then the dark-square bishop gets into play: **2 Be7+ Kc4 3 Be6+ Kd4 4 Kb5 with Bc5** to follow. Hence **1...Kb3**, and analysis similar in principle if slightly more complex in detail leads to **2 Be6+ Kc2 3 Bf5+ Kd1 4 Bg4+ Ke1**. Now we have **5a**, and no dark-square check is possible.

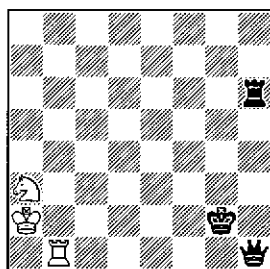
Black's promotion can no longer be delayed, but **5 b7** opens a second line of attack on the king, and after **5...g1Q 6 Ba5+ Kf1** we have **5b**. Now comes **7 Bh3+ Ke2 8 Bg4+ Kd3 9 Bf5+ Kc6 10 Be6+**, and perpetual check is unavoidable. The two bishops, assisted by the White king at one end of the line and exploiting the vulnerable Black queen at the other, are able to control every square.



6 - draw



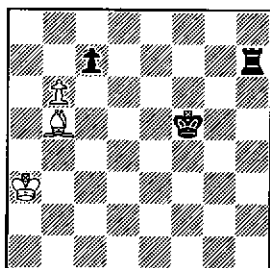
6a - after 4...Kg2



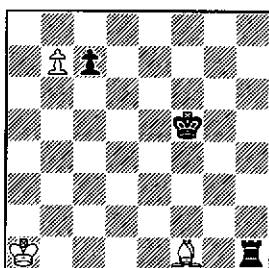
6b - after 6 Rb1

The White rook can afford to sacrifice itself for the pawn in 6 (3 Pr *La Tribune de Genève* 1978), but first he must catch it... **1 Na3+ Kd2/Kd3** (1...Kc1 2 Rb5 h1Q 3 Rb1+, 1...Kc3 2 Rc5+ Kd2 3 Rc2+) **2 Rd5+ Ke2** (now the Black king must keep to the second rank) **3 Re5+ Kf2 4 Rf5+ Kg2** and we have **6a**.

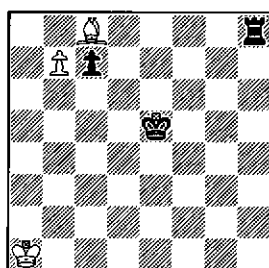
The thoughtless continuation **5 Rg5+** will now be met by **5...Kh3**, but White can play **5 Rb5!** There follows **5...h1Q** (the threat of **6 Rb1** means that this must be played now or never) **6 Rb1!** (see **6b**) and we see why White chased the Black king right across to g2: the new queen cannot escape on the diagonal, and it has no move better than **6...Qh5**. But this bars the fifth rank to the Black king, and so the rook can deliver a perpetual check on the b-file: **7 Rb2+ Kf3 8 Rb3+ Ke4 9 Rb4+** etc.



7 - win



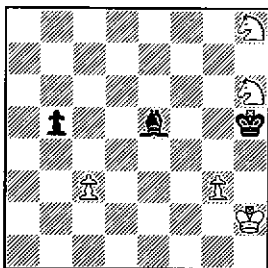
7a - after 4 Bf1



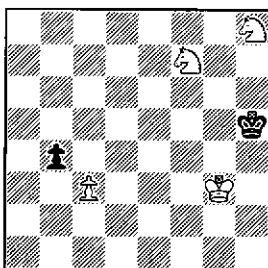
7b - after 6 Bc8

It's time for some wins. Play in 7 (64 1934) starts **1 b7**, and if **1...Rh8** then **2 Bd7+** **K-- 3 Bc8** and the pawn will promote. Hence **1...Rh3+**, and White must be careful. **2 Kb4** is obviously bad because of **2...c5+**, but the rest of the b-file is poisoned also (**2 Kb2 Rh8 3 Bd7+ K-- 4 Bc8 Rh6 5 b8Q Rb6+**) and so is the a-file north of a3 (**2 Ka4 Rh8 3 Bd7+ K-- 4 Bc8 Rh1 5 b8Q Ra1+** and **6...Rb1+**). This leaves only **2 Ka2**, and **2...Rh2+** must be met by **3 Ka1**.

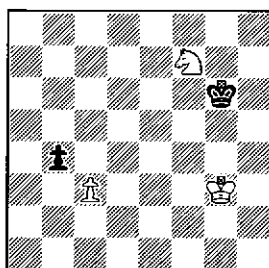
Black continues **3...Rh1+** and he appears to have a perpetual check, but White can play **4 Bf1!** (see 7a). The capture **4...Rxf1+** will bring the rook on to a blocked file, and White will win by **5 Kb2!** (now he needs to march up the c-file, and this is the simplest and cleanest way to get there) **Rf2+ 6 Kc3 Rf3+ 7 Kc4 Rf4+ 8 Kc5**. So Black must try **4...Rh8**, but the bishop can still get to c8: **5 Bh3+ Ke5** (say) **6 Bc8** (see 7b). The b-file remains poisoned and so Black can still try for a perpetual check, **6...Rh1+ 7 Ka2 Rh2+ 8 Ka3**, but the bishop's guard of h3 prevents further progress.



8 - win

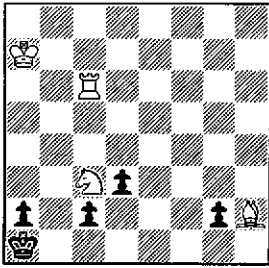


8a - after 2...b4

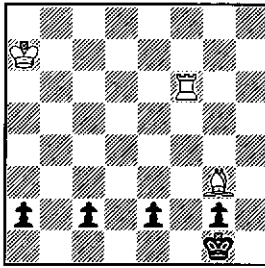


8b - after 3...Kxg6

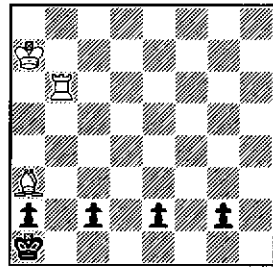
8 (*Zemědělské noviny* 1961) is an excellent example of cut and thrust. The natural start might seem to be **1 N8f7**, but this allows **1...Bxc3** drawing easily, and correct is **1 N6f7** keeping a guard on g6. **1...Bxc3** is now met by **2 Kh3** threatening mate, since if **2...Bxh8** then **3 Nxh8 b4 4 Nf7 b3 5 g4+ Kg6 6 Ne5+** and the pawn will be stopped. But guarding the king's field cuts both ways; **1...Bxg3+ 2 Kxg3 b4!** attacks White's last pawn (see 8a), and **3 cxb4** will be stalemate. All right, **3 Ng6!** threatening mate on f4, and after **3...Kxg6** (see 8b) there is no stalemate. But White still needs to save his pawn. **4 cxb4 Kxf7** is only a draw; so is **4 Ne5+ Kf5**; **4 Nh8+! Kf5** (**4...Kg7 5 cxb4 and wins**) **5 cxb4 Ke4 6 Ng6! Kd4 7 Nf4 Kc4** and **8 Nd3** will win.



9 - win



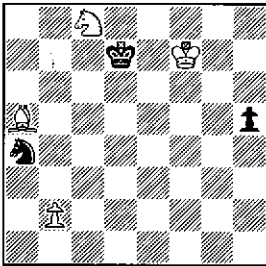
9a - after 7...Kg1



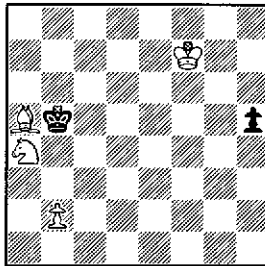
9b - after 13...Ka1

The most emphatic way to win is of course to give mate. 9 (3 Pr *Shakhmatny Listok* 1931, version) is hardly a typical Zakhodyakin study, but I quote it because it appears both to anticipate and to be better than a frequently quoted 1939 study by Birnov. The objection to 1 Be5 is 1...g1Q+, and the correct way to start is 1 Ne2. Black has only 1...dxe2, and the dance begins: 2 Be5+ Kb1 3 Rb6+ Kc1 4 Bf4+ Kd1 5 Rd6+ Ke1 6 Bg3+ Kf1 7 Rf6+ Kg1 (see 9a).

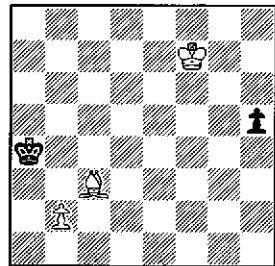
Now the tune changes: 8 Bf2+ Kf1 9 Bc5+! (the only correct square) Ke1 10 Bb4+ Kd1 11 Rd6+ Kc1 12 Ba3+ Kb1 13 Rb6+ Ka1 (see 9b) and again the tune must change. The natural move is 14 Bc5 to shield wK against a future check from g1, but this fails: 14...c1Q 15 Bd4+ Qb2 16 Rxb2 (16 Bxb2+ leads nowhere) g1Q and the attack on wBd4 prevents a useful discovered check by wRb2. Instead, 14 Be7! (again the only correct move) and now it's easy: 14...c1Q 15 Bf6+ Qb2 16 Rxb2! g1Q+ 17 Rb6+ (Black's check has proved to be harmless) Qd4 18 Bxd4 mate.



10 - win

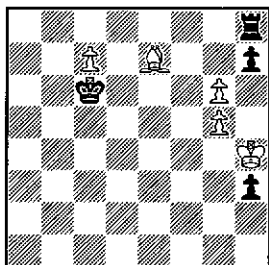


10a - after 2...Kb5

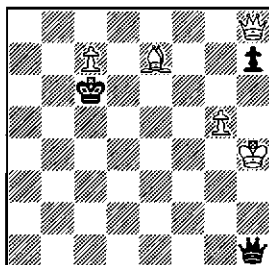


10b - after 3...Kxa4

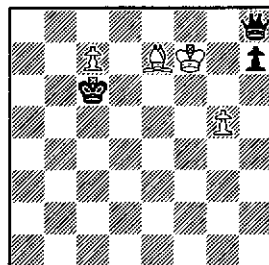
Play in 10 (64 1934) starts 1 Nb6+, and if 1...Nxb6 then 2 Bxb6 and White can just manage to stop Black's pawn and preserve his own: 2...h4 3 Kf6 h3 4 Bg1 Kc6 5 Kf5 Kb5 6 Kg4 Kb4 7 Kxh3 Kb3 8 Bd4. But Black has 1...Kc6 2 Nxa4 Kb5 (see 10a), winning back the piece lost and threatening to force off White's last pawn as well. There is only one way to proceed: 3 Bc3. The natural reply is 3...Kxa4 (3...h4 allows various options of which the simplest is probably 4 Bf6 h3 5 Nc3+ Kc4 6 Be5 Kb3 7 Nd1) and we have 10b. White now wins by a Réti manoeuvre: 4 Kc6! h4 5 Kd5 h3 6 Kc4! (the pawn is finally out of sight, but White has set up a mate instead) h2 7 Bb4 h1Q 8 b3 mate.



11 - win



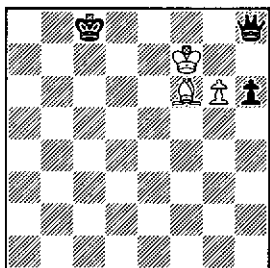
11a - after 2...h1Q+



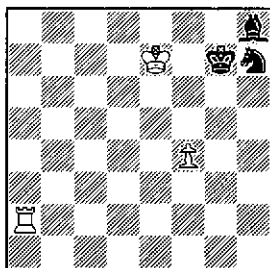
11b - after 9...Qxh8

The best known of Zakhodyakin's domination studies is probably his early classic with bishop and pawn against knight, but that is in *Endgame magic* and so let me quote a different one here.

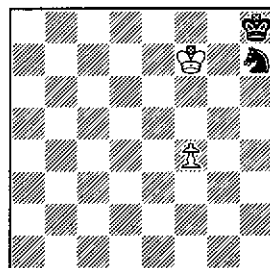
Play in **11** (1/2 Pr 64 1937) starts **1 g7**, and **1...Rg8** sets no problems: **2 Kxh3 Kxc7 3 Bf6** (simplest) and the White king will walk up and take the h-pawn. Hence **1...h2**, and **2 gxh8Q h1Q+** gives **11a**. Can White escape the perpetual check? Only by coming right up the board, and the moment he sets foot on f6 a skewer check will pick up the queen. But this is the way to win, and the main line goes **3 Kg3!** (3 Kg4 Qe4+ etc) **Qe1+** **4 Kf4 Qf2+** **5 Kg4 Qd2+** **6 Kf5 Qf3+** **7 Ke6 Qd5+** **8 Kf6 Qd4+** **9 Kf7 Qxh8**. Now we have **11b** and White's winning chances seem negligible, but let's trust the composer and play it out: **10 Bd8 Kb7/Kd7 11 c8Q+ Kxc8 12 Bf6** (light begins to dawn, because on c8 the Black king blocks its queen) **h6** (accepting that the queen is dead, but threatening to remove White's last pawn) **12 g6** (see **11c**) and Black must concede defeat.



11c - after 12 g6

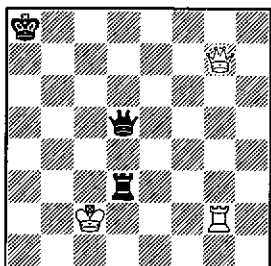


12 - win

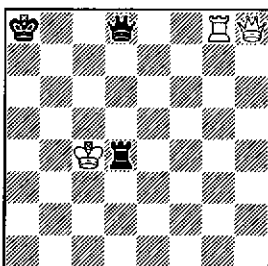


12a - after 4 Kf7

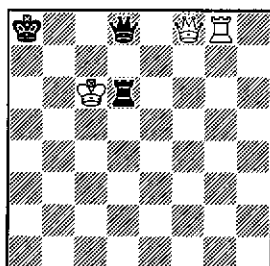
Black is badly cramped in **12** (Comm, 64 1930), but exploiting the fact is not easy; **1 Ra8** is met by **1...Nf6 2 Rxh8 Nd5+** and **3...Nxf4** drawing with **N v R**, and **1 Rg2+ Kh6 2 Kf7** by **2...Nf6** and if **3 Rg6+ Kh5 4 Rxf6** then **4...Kg4 5 f5 Kg5** drawing with **B v R**. Better is **1 Ra6**, when **1...Nf6** is unplayable and **1...Nf8** is met by **2 f5 Kg8** (**2...Nh7 3 Rg6** mate) **3 Ra8 Bg7 4 f6 Bh6 5 f7+**. This leaves only **1...Kg8**, and now **2 Ra8+** can be played with gain of tempo: **2...Kg7 3 Rxh8**. The saving move **...Nd5+** is now unavailable and threatening it by **3...Nf6** is simply met by **4 Rd8**, so Black has nothing better than **3...Kxh8**, and **4 Kf7** neatly dominates the knight (see **12a**).



13 - win

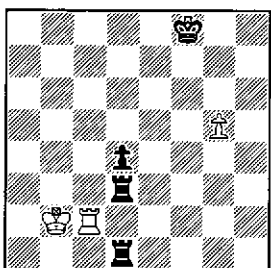


13a - 1 Qh8+, after 4...Rd4+

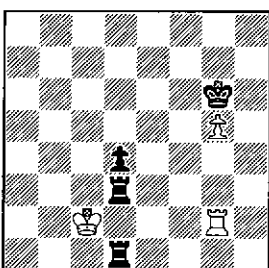


13b - main line, 6...Rd6+

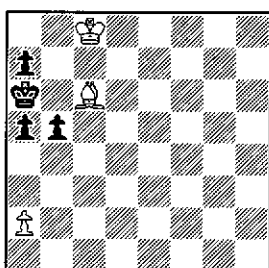
Let's finish with three more lightweights. 13 (*Shakhmaty v SSSR* 1980) is an amusing trifle with Q+R v Q+R. Let's try 1 Qh8+, so as to meet 1...Qd8 by 2 Rg8; no, 2...Rd2+ 3 Kc3 Rd3+ 4 Kc4 Rd4+ (see 13a), and if 5 Qxd4 to break the perpetual check then 5...Qxg8+. So how is 1 Qf8+ better? Play continues as before, 1...Qd8 2 Rg8 Rd2+ 3 Kc3 Rd3+ 4 Kc4 Rd4+ 5 Kc5 Rd5+ 6 Kc6 Rd6+ (see 13b), but now the check-breaking capture is 7 Qxd6 and White wins. Black's reply 7...Qxg8 no longer gives check, and White's king is close enough for 8 Qa3+ to force mate.



14 - draw



14a - reciprocal zugzwang



15 - win

14 (*Shakhmaty v SSSR* 1981) is based on 14a, where White to play soon loses (his rook must continue to guard the second rank, so he must abandon his pawn, and Black will then play his king round to c4 and disentangle his rooks). Hence 1 Rf2+ Kg8 2 Kc2 Kg7 3 Re2! (3 Rg2 Kg6, 3 Rh2 Ra3! 4 Kxd1 Ra1+ etc) Kg6 4 Rg2 Kf7 5 Rf2+ (simplest, and certainly not 5 g6+? Kg7! winning) Kg7 6 Re2 and so on.

Finally, another gem from Zakhodyakin's early period. Play in 15 (*Shakhmaty v SSSR* 1932) starts with 1 a4 apparently abandoning all hope of a win, but after 1...bxa4 2 Kc7 everything becomes clear: 2...a3 3 Ba4 a2 4 Kc6 a1Q 5 Bb5 mate.

This is the first special number of BESN that I have put together using Harold van der Heijden's "Endgame study database 2000" as my principal working source, and it really has been a godsend. Not only has it brought to my attention some fine studies of which I would otherwise have remained unaware, but it has presented everything in a compact and convenient form which has greatly simplified the task of assessment and selection. Harold, thank you very much indeed. - JDB