British Endgame Study News

Some more foreign studies
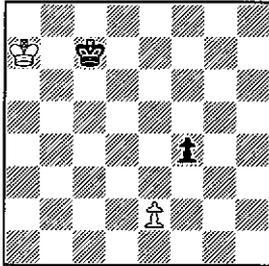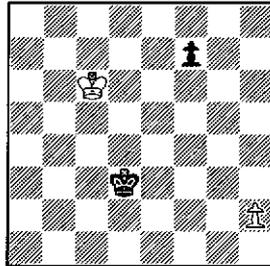
published in Britain (2)
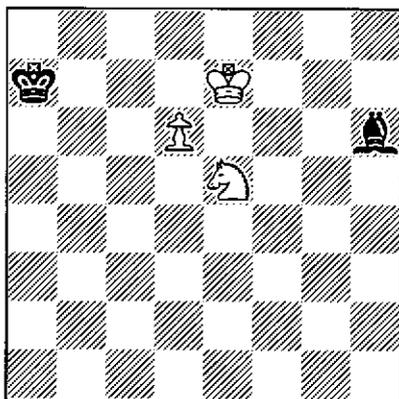
Could you force the win from here?
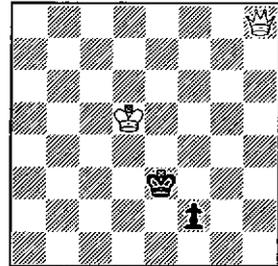
Some more foreign studies in Britain (2)

We concluded last time with some studies sent to the *Chess Amateur* by the American composer and analyst Orrin Frink. Here are some more.


1 - draw　　　　**2 - win**　　　　**2a - after 6...f2**

1, from March 1927, complements Sackmann's **17** in special number 59: **1 Ka8!** In Sackmann's study, the White king started above the Black, and wanted to get to the right of him; here, White starts to the left of Black, and wants to get above him.
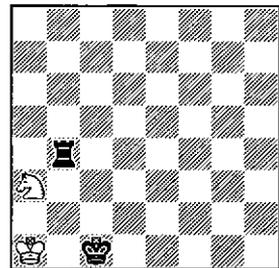
2, from September 1927, comes down to a theoretical nuance which appears not to have been noted before. I'll skip the early sidelines, which are relatively routine, and go straight to the main point. **1 Kd5 f6 2 h4 Ke3 3 h5 f5 4 h6 f4 5 h7 f3 6 h8Q f2** gives **2a**, and is this not a book draw? Not quite. **7 Qe5+! Kd3** (7...Kf3 8 Qe4+ Kg3 9 Qh1, 7...Kd2 8 Qh2 Ke1 9 Kd4 f1Q 10 Ke3) **8 Qb2!! f1Q** (8...Ke3 9 Qb5) **9 Qb5+!**
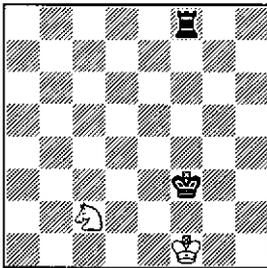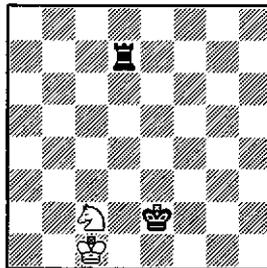

3 - draw　　　　**3a - after 7 Nc2**　　　　**3b - after 15 Ka1**

3 and **4** appeared as a twin in May 1927. **3** had already been shown in passing by Amelung in 1900 (source not known to Harold van der Heijden), but he appears merely to have given it as a drawn position at the end of a variation. In fact the only drawing move is **1 Ke1**, and Frink gave the continuation **1...Rd8 2 Nb4 Ke3 3 Nc2+ Kd3 4 Kd1 Rd7 5 Ne1+ Ke3+ 6 Kc1 Ke2 7 Nc2** (see **3a**) **Rb7 8 Nd4+ Kd3 9 Nf3 Rb4 10 Ne1+ Ke2 11 Nc2 Rc4 12 Kb2 "Kd3"** (d2 was clearly intended) **13 Na3 Rb4+ 14 Ka2 Kc1 15 Ka1** "drawn" (see **3b**). If instead 1 Ne1+ then 1...Ke3+ 2 Kg1 Ke2 3 Ng2 Re8 4 Kh2 (4 Nh4 Re4 wins) Kf3 5 Nh4+ Kg4 6 Ng2 Re2 and wins.
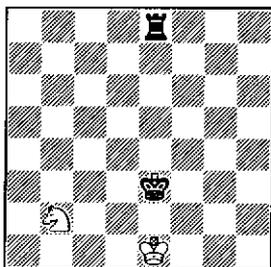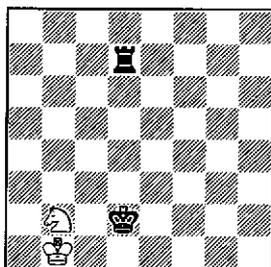
4 - draw   **4a** - 1 Kd1, after 7...Rd7

In **4**, everything is the other way round. The drawing move is now with the knight, **1 Nd1+**, the given sequel being **1...Kd3+ 2 Kf1 Kd2 3 Nf2** (now we have effectively a reflection of **3a**) **Rg8 4 Ne4+ Ke3 5 Nc3 Rg4 6 Nd1+ Kd2 7 Nf2 Rf4 8 Kg2 Ke3 9 Nh3** "drawn", and if 1 Kd1 instead then 1...Rc8 2 Na4 Kd3 3 Nb2+ Kc3 4 Kc1 Rc7 5 Nd1+ Kd3+ 6 Kb1 Kd2 7 Nb2 Rd7 (see **4a**) 8 Ka2 (8 Nh4 Rd4 and 9...Rb4 winning) Kc3 9 Na4+ Kb4 10 Nb2 Rd2 and wins.
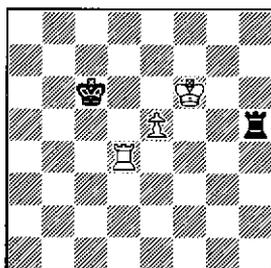
Dawson described these as "Very interesting and far from obvious twins. The way either position converts into the draw or loss of the other according to the choice of opening move is fascinating."
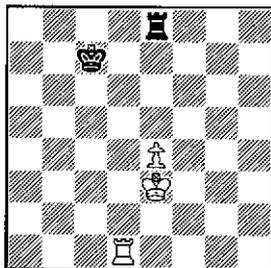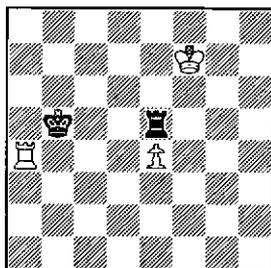

**5** - win   **5a** - 3 Rd4, after 6...Re5   **5b** - main line, after 8 e5

Let us end with another rook and pawn study. **5**, which has been quoted with an attribution to the *Encyclopaedia of Chess Endings* of 1985, appeared in the *Chess Amateur* in February 1926, and was described as "an exceptional case, in this ending region, where White wins although the Black King is only one file from the Pawn instead of the generally necessary two". The solution went **1 Kf4 Rf8+ 2 Kg5 Re8 3 Kf5!** (3 Rd4? Kc6 4 Kf6 Kc5 5 Ra4 Kb5 6 Kf7 Re5 "drawn", see **5a**) **Rf8+ 4 Kg6 Re8 5 Rd4! Kc6 6 Kf7! Re5 7 Kf6 Rh5 8 e5** "wins" (see **5b**), and there is a note that if the Black king were on c6 or c5 he would draw. There are blind-alley duals at various points and 2 Kg4 is as good as Kg5, but essentially this is the only way to win.
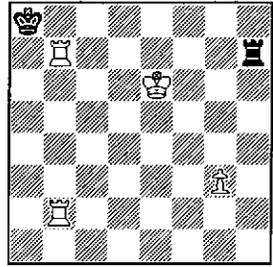
Frink deserves to be better remembered. He was a sufficiently good analyst to gain the respect of André Chéron, who published a deeply ambitious study dedicated to him in the *Chess Amateur* in February 1928; but as so often happens with dedication pieces, it proved to be unsound.
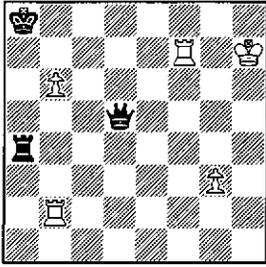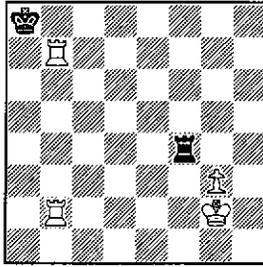
**6 - win**   **6a - White's objective**   **6b - after 5 Ke6**

The Swiss composer Moriz Henneberger specialised in "desperado rook" studies, and his **6** appeared in the *British Chess Magazine* in April 1930. It was set as a task, but no reader attempted a solution.

1 b7+ Qxb7 is obvious, but with which rook should White recapture? Either will stalemate the Black king, allowing Black to start a series of sacrificial checks, and it turns out that the only square on which the White king can hide is g2 (see **6a**), and this only if he has kept his rook on b2. The correct capture is therefore **2 Rfxf7**.

However, know where to go is only half the story. The composer's full solution occupied over a page of the June 1930 issue, but the main line as given goes **2...Rh4+ 3 Kg8! Rh8+! 4 Kf7 Rh7+! 5 Ke6** (see **6b**) with two branches: **5...Re7+ 6 Kf5 Re5+ 7 Kf4 Re4+ 8 Kf3 Re3+ 9 Kf2 Rf3+ 10 Ke1 Rf1+ 11 Kd2 Rf2+ 12 Kc3 Rf3+ 13 Kc4 Rf4+** (see **6c**) **14 Kb5! Rf5+** (14...Kxb7 15 gxf4) **15 Ka4 Ra5+ 16 Kb4 Ra4+** (see **6d**) **17 Kc3 Rc4+ 18 Kd2 Rd4+ 19 Ke2 Re4+ 20 Kf2 Rf4+ 21 Kg2** and White has achieved his objective, or **5...Rh6+ 6 Kd5 Rd6+ 7 Kc4 Rc6+ 8 Kd3 Rc3+ 9 Kd2 Rd3+ 10 Kc1 Rd1+ 11 Kc2 Rc1+ 12 Kd2 Rd1+ 13 Kc3 Rd3+ 14 Kb4 Rd4+ 15 Ka3 Ra4+ 16 Kb3 Ra3+ 17 Kb4 Ra4+** and we have again reached **6d**.
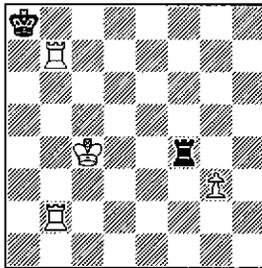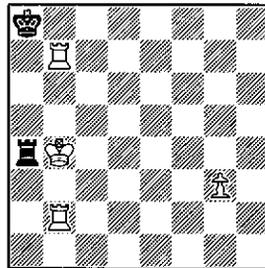

**6c - 5...Re7+, after 13...Rf4+**   **6d - after 16...Ra4+**

The definitive results now available from Eiko Bleicher's web site refine this slightly (there are time-wasting alternatives for White at many points, equi-optimal alternatives at a few, and there are one or two places where White could have saved a move or Black could have prolonged play by a move), but complete accuracy is rarely possible in a study of this kind and I think the key points, that White must hide on g2 and that he must get there via the a-file and d2-e2-f2, have not been compromised.
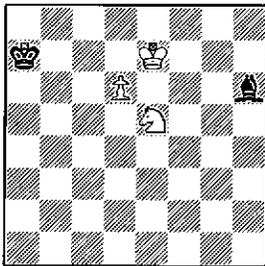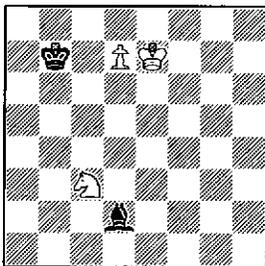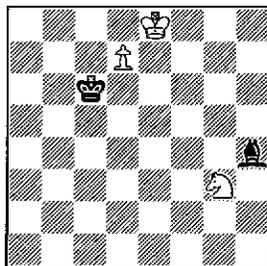
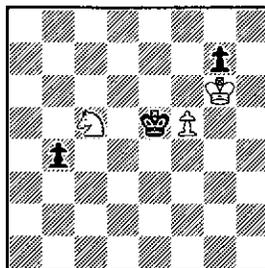**7** - win   **7a** - after 5 Nc3   **7b** - after 8 Ng3

Vitaly Halberstadt's eminently practical **7** appeared in *Chess* in 1939. **1 d7** is obvious and correct, and best for Black is **1...Be3** aiming for b6 (if instead 1...Bg5+ then 2 Ke8 followed by Ng6 and Ne7). There follows **2 Nc4 Bf4 3 Nd6 Bd2 4 Nb5+ Kb7 5 Nc3!** blocking the bishop's path to the diagonal a5-d8, and we have **7a**. If 5...Be3 or 5...Bf4 trying to find another way through, 6 Nd5 covers b6/c7/f6 and ushers the pawn home, and if...Bg5+ then 6 Ke8 Kc6 transposes into the main line. Hence **5...Kc6**, to which White replies **6 Ke8** leaving his knight obstructing the bishop. This leaves Black nothing better than **6...Bg5**, and after **7 Ne4 Bh4** the further sacrificial block **8 Ng3!!** leaves him helpless (see **7b**). Black's bishop cannot get round to the Q-side, and Nf5, attacking the bishop and threatening the shut-off Ne7, will be decisive. White can backtrack at moves 3 and 4 without forfeiting the win (3 Nc5, 4 Nc4), but with these irrelevant exceptions every move has been forced.
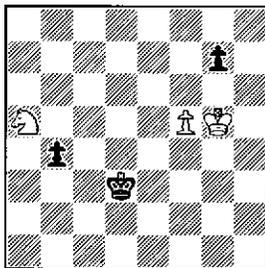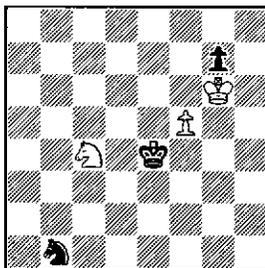

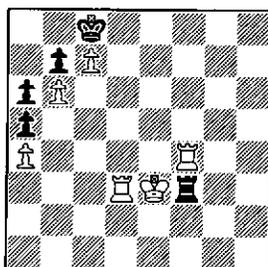**8** - win   **8a** - 1 Kg6, 2 Nc6, 4...b1N   **8b** - main line, after 6 Nc5

Halberstadt's **8** appeared in the *British Chess Magazine* in May 1940. Try the obvious 1 Kg6: no, 1...Ke4 2 Nb3 Kf4 3 Nc5 Kg4 and draws, or 2 Nc6 b3 3 Na5 b2 4 Nc4 b1N! "with a draw obtainable by careful play" (see **8a**, and the database confirms). But the Black king is unusually well placed on d3 (d4 would allow Nc4+, e3 would allow 1 Nc6 b3 2 Na5 b2 3 Nc4+, and anywhere else apart from e4 would be out of range of f5 and White could play Kg6 and Kxg7). So White triangulates, **1 Kf4 Kc3 2 Kg4 Kd3 3 Kg5**, and now we see that **3...Ke4** doesn't help either: **4 Kg6 Kf4 5 Nb3 Ke5 6 Nc5** (see **8b**) **Kd5 7 Kxg7 Kxc5 8 f6** and White will queen with check. If 1...Kc2/Ke2 then 2 Nc6 b3 3 Nd4+; if 1...Kd2 then 2 Nc6 b3 3 Na5 b2 4 Nc4+. This was "a revision of an earlier work", but I have failed to trace the latter.
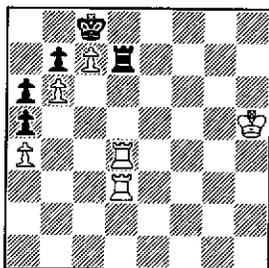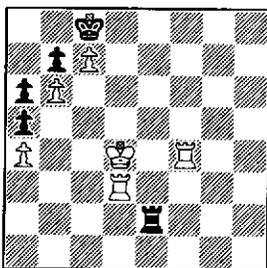
9 - win **9a - White's objective** **9b - after 7...Rf3+**

The original version of **9**, by José Mugnos, appeared in *Chess* in March 1944, and shared first and second prizes in its endgame tourney (the other prizewinner was also by Mugnos). It was later proved to be unsound, but Harold van der Heijden's "Endgame study database III" has a corrected version which I am using.

Like **6**, it is a desperado rook study, but this time White has six plausible options at the start (either rook can go to the e, f, or g file) rather than just two. The correct one is **1 Rf4** setting the scene for the White king to hide on d4 (see **9a**), and if 1 Rg4 instead then 1 Rh7+ 2 Kg5 Rg7+ 3 Kf5 Rg5+ 4 Ke6 Rg6+ 5 Kc5 Rg5+ 6 Kd6 Rxg4 7 Re3 Re4 (or Rg6+). After 1 Rf4, the given line continues **1...Rh7+** (1...Rd5+ 2 Kg4 Rg5+ 3 Kf3 Rg3+ 4 Ke4 Re3+ 5 Rxe3, 1...Rxd3 2 Rf8+) **2 Kg4 Rh4+ 3 Kg3** (3 Kf3 Rxf4+ and 4...Rf8) **Rg4+** (3...Rh3+ 4 Kf2 Rh2+ 5 Ke3 Rh3+/Re2+ 6 Kd4) **4 Kh3 Rh4+ 5 Kg2 Rh2+ 6 Kf3 Rf2+ 7 Ke3 Rf3+** (see **9b**) **8 Kd2 Rf2+ 9 Kc3 Rc2+ 10 Kb3** (White must play to reach d4 from e3, not c3) **Rb2+ 11 Kc4 Rb4+ 12 Kc3 "Rc4+"** (a mistake, because 13 Kb3 wins at once, but 12...Rb3+ 13 Kd2 Rb2+ 14 Ke3 Re2+ gives the intended finish) **13 Kd2 Rc2+ 14 Ke3 Re2+ 15 Kd4** and mission accomplished. 3 Kh2 also works but takes a move longer, and there are inevitable blind-alley duals at various points.
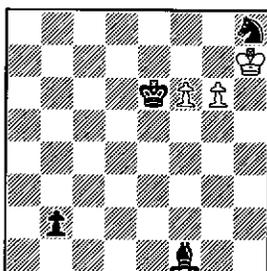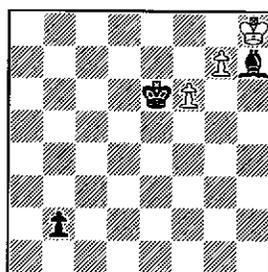

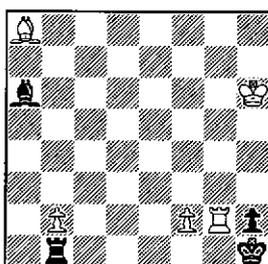**10 - draw** **10 - after 2...Bh7**

S. Isenegger's **10**, which appeared in *Chess* later in 1944, is much less demanding. **1 g7**, and if 1...b1Q+ then 2 Kxh8 and White will promote. If only the Black queen could get across to h1... All right, **1...Bd3+ 2 Kxh8 Bh7!** (see **10a**), and if 3 Kxh7 then 3...b1Q+ and Black will indeed get across to h1. But White has an answer: **3 f7 Kxf7 4 g8Q+!** and **4...Bxg8** will be stalemate. The passive knight on h8 is a pity.
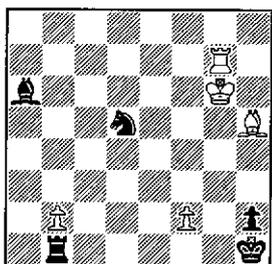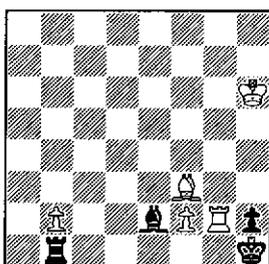
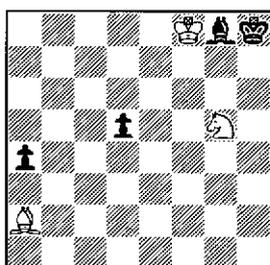**11** - win   **11a** - after 3...Be2   **11b** - after 8 Ba8

A. H. Branton's **11** appeared in the *British Chess Magazine* in August 1949. Any king move off the file will threaten a quick mate, and we shall see that the dark square is the one to choose: **1 Kh6**. There follows **1...Nf4 2 Bf3+ Ng2 3 Rxg2**, and we have the first surprise: **3...Be2!** (see **11a**). White must retreat, **4 Be4** (any other square on the long diagonal is open to attack from the Black rook), and we have the elegant dance **4...Bd3 5 Bd5 Bc4 6 Bc6 Bb5 7 Bb7 Ba6 8 Ba8!** (see **11b**). The Black bishop can do no more, and the end is swift: **8...Rxb2 9 Rg7+ Rb7 10 Rxb7** (10 Bxb7+ fails) **Rxb7 11 Bxb7+ Kg1 12 f4**. Had the White king chosen a light square, the Black bishop could have pinned the White at move 4 or 5.
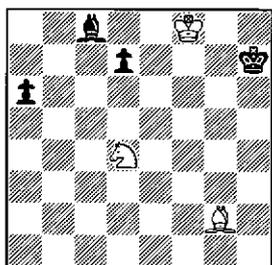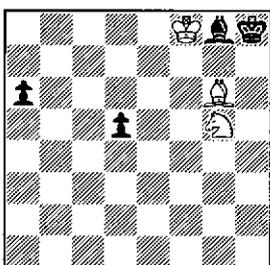

**12** - win   **12a** - after 4...Bg8   **12b** - after 9 Ba2

Branton's **12** appeared in the *BCM* in October 1949. **1 Be4+** doesn't seem particularly strong until we notice that 1...Kh6 allows 2 Nf5+ and 3 Nd6 winning the bishop. So Black must retreat into the corner, **1...Kh8+**, and this cannot be good. White continues **2 Nf3** aiming for g5 and f7, and only **2...d5** avoids a quick loss. If now say 3 Bd3 then 3...Bg4 and 4...Bh5 guarding f7, hence **3 Bg6**, and Black has nothing better than **3...Be6 4 Ng5 Bg8** (see **12a**).

All this has been routine if skilful manoeuvring, but now comes the first striking move: **5 Bh7!** 5...Bxh7 will allow immediate mate, hence **5...Be6**, and now comes the second striking move: **6 Bb1!** Black's bishop must retreat, **6...Bg8**, and **7 Ba2** applies pressure from another angle. There follows **7...a5 8 Bb3 a4 9 Ba2** (see **13b**), leading to **9...a3 10 Bb3 a2 11 Bxa2 d4 12 Bxg8** and **13 Nf7 mate**. If instead 6 Bc2 then 6...Bg8 7 Bb3 a5 8 Ba2 a4, and we have **12b** with White to play: no win.

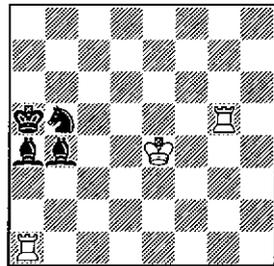Branton became one of America's finest composers. He did these in his teens.
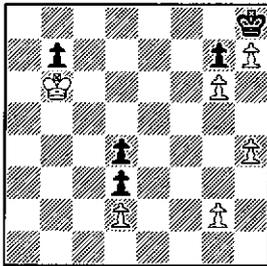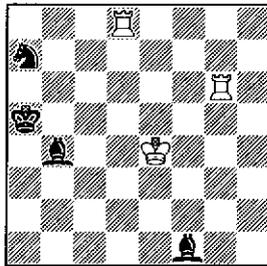
13 - win   **14 - win**   **14a - after 3...Nb5**

Three quickies to finish with. L. A. Garaza's **13** (*BCM*, November 1946) is a simple exercise in stalemate release, or at least it is simple if White is careful: **1 Kb5**. This holds Black's pawn to a one-step move, **1...b6**, and White has time to get his own pawn to h6: **2 Kc4 b5+ 3 Kxd3 b4 4 Kc2 b3+ 5 Kb1 b2 6 h5 d3 7 h6**. White can now relax for a moment, because after 7...gxh6 any legal move will win.

The combination of two rooks against three minor pieces is sometimes difficult to handle, but František Prokop's **14** (*BCM*, May 1967) makes it look easy. White starts **1 Rd1** threatening the light bishop directly and the knight by a skewer, hence **1...Bb5**, and after **2 Ra1+ Ba4 3 Rg5+ Nb5** Black is almost completely tied up (see **14a**). Now **4 Kd3** threatens 5 Kc4 and 6 Rxb5+, so Black's mobile bishop must counter-attack. 4...Be7 is met by 5 Rf5 (5...Kb4 6 Rf4+ etc), and if **4...Bc3** attacking the other rook then **5 Rxb5+ Kxb5 6 Kxc3** with a well-known zugzwang (6...Ka5 7 Kc4 etc). If instead 5...Ka6 then 6 Rbb1 Bxa1 7 Rxa1 Kb5 8 Kc3 and the same.
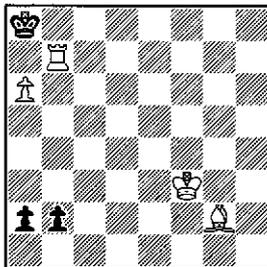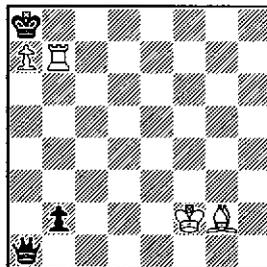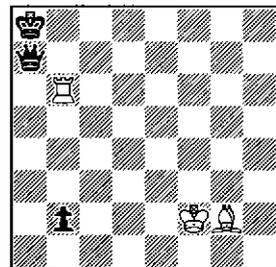
15 - win   **15a - after 2 a7**   **15b - after 3 Rb6+**

15, by Ladislav Prokeš, appeared in the *BCM* in February 1949. The king will surely have to get off the long diagonal, and **1 Kf2** is the move to choose. Black naturally plays **1...a1Q** and immediate checks get nowhere, but White has **2 a7** and we see why he chose f2 for his king: the new Black queen has no safe check (see **15a**).

But can Black not play **2...Qxa7+**, since White cannot afford to give up his rook even for a queen? He doesn't need to: **3 Rb6+!** (see **15b**).

As usual, my thanks to Harold van der Heijden's invaluable "Endgame study database III" and to the BCPS Library. - JDB