Variant Chess

THE MAGAZINE TO BROADEN YOUR CHESS HORIZONS

HOSTAGE CHESS

Progressive Chess

Losing Chess

Modern Courier Chess

Double-Move Chess

Circular Chess

Triplets

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## Alice Chess

Three-leapers

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HOSTAGE CHESS

Hostage Chess (rules in issue 00 sent out with *VC* 45) is most simply imagined in terms of Chessgi, but whereas in Chessgi a captured man changes sides and may be dropped immediately, in Hostage Chess you can merely exchange it for a captured man of your own of equal or lower value (Q > R > B = N > P) and then drop the recovered man. Your opponent receives his own man back as part of the exchange, and he can subsequently drop this at any time. In the diagrams, captured men are shown to a player's right, and men that he has ransomed and has available for dropping are shown to his left.

A Hostage game often proceeds quite normally until one side spots an opportunity to pounce. Jed Stone generously sent me a ladder game which he lost against Paul Yearout. **1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Nc3 Bc5 4 d3 d6 5 g3 Nf6 6 Bg2 Be6 7 0-0 0-0 8 Qe2 Qd7 9 Be3 Bxe3 10 Qxe3 Rad8 11 a3 Ng4 12 Qd2 h6 13 Ne2 d5 14 exd5 Bxd5 15 Nc3 Bxf3 16 Bxf3 Nd4 17 Bxg4 Qxg4 18 Qe3** :
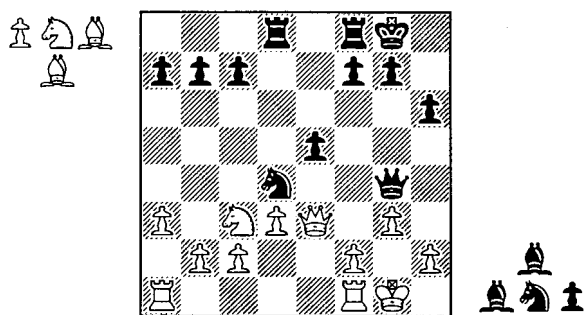

Now Black dropped for victory; answer on page 31.

One of John Leslie's recent tournament games featured a remarkable reversal of fortunes. **1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 d4 exd4 5 Nxd4 Bb4 6 Nxc6 bxc6 7 (P~P)P*d3** (I feel that something has gone seriously wrong if a player has to make a passive drop like this so early in the game) **P*e5** (again, this seems to be dropping a man to little purpose, and I would keep the pawn in hand and let him play e5 if he wanted to) **8 Bd2 0-0 9 a3 Bxc3 10 Bxc3 d6 11 Be2 Be6 12 0-0 Qd7** :
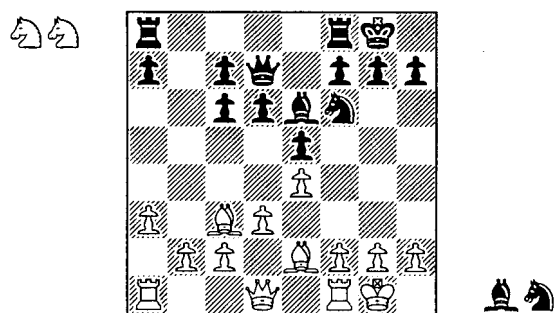

Another very ordinary position, but White now played **13 f4**, overlooking the fact that the hole at e3 can be exploited at Hostage in a way that is impossible at normal

chess. **13...exf4 14 Rxf4 (N~B)B*e3+ 15 Rf2** (nothing better) **Bxf2+ 16 Kxf2 Ng4+?** (as Peter Coast points out, correct was 16...(N~N)N*g4+, when 17 Bxg4 can be met by 17...Nxg4+ keeping up the checks) **17 Bxg4 Bxg4 18 (P~P)P*f3** (a typical defensive drop to gain a tempo) **Be6** and White came back out of nowhere (answer again on page 31) :
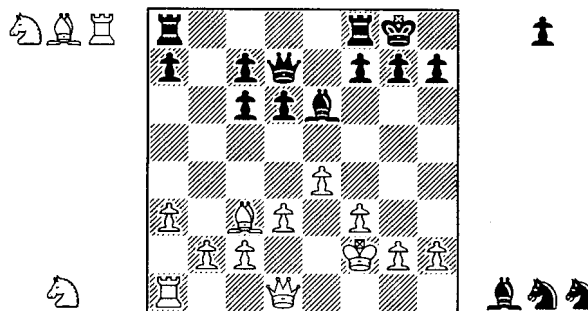

White was surely lost at move 16, and the game shows how the slightest slip can allow the opponent to turn the tables.

Peter Coast was Black in a very interesting friendly against John Leslie which John has kindly allowed me to quote. **1 d4 e6 2 c4 Nf6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Bd2 c5 5 e3 0-0 6 a3 cxd4** :
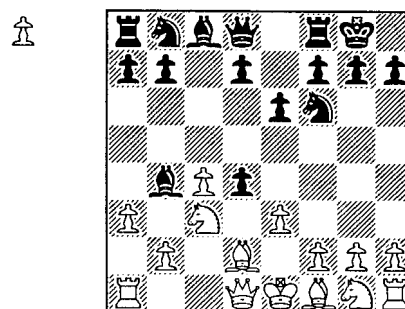

7 exd4 (at normal chess, I would play 7 axb4 dxc3 8 Bxc3, reckoning that my two bishops and my potential pressure on the a- and d-files would outweigh the doubled pawn, but at Hostage the advantage of the "two bishops" is evanescent because the opponent can make a knight-for-bishop exchange of prisoners) **Bxc3 8 Bxc3 d5 9 Bd3 dxc4 10 Bxc4 (N~B)B*d5 11 Bxd5 exd5 12 Ne2 (P~P)P*h3** :
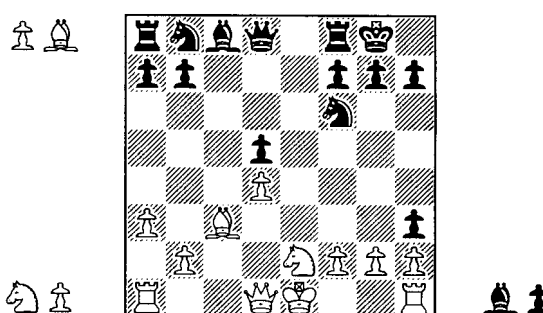

Players normally drop only for reasons of immediate tactical gain or necessity, but here Black exchanges and drops a pawn simply in order to disrupt White's position.

13 Nf4 hxg2 14 Nxg2 (P~P)P*f3 15 Nh4 (15 Qxf3 is met 15...(B~B)B*e4 winning material) (P~P)P*e2 16 Qd3 (B~B)B*e4 17 Qd2 Nh5 :
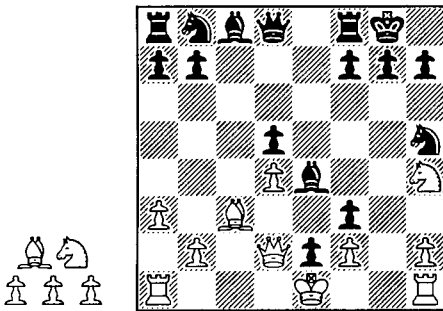
Had White defended his knight by 18 P*g3, Peter intended 18...Nxg3, with 19 hxg3 Qxh4! 20 gxh4/Rxh4 (N~N)N*g2 mate or 19 fxg3 Qxh4 20 gxh4 (N~N)N*d3+ 21 Qxd3 Bxd3. White preferred 18 N*g5 masking it, but with so many men available for dropping I imagine he looked first at P*h6 and even N*h6+, conceding material to try and disrupt Black's king's position. Presumably they don't work, because play continued 18...Bg4 19 h3 h6 20 hxg4 hxg5 (if now 21 gxh5 then 21...(N~N)N*d3+) 21 Nf5 (threat 22 (B~N)N*e7+) Bxf5 22 gxf5 Nf4 23 Rg1 :
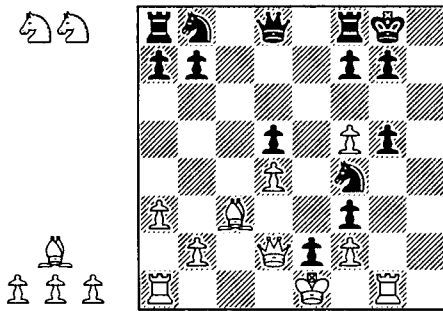
23...(N~B)B*e4 (23...Ng2+ 24 Rxg2 fxg2 wins rook for knight but takes the edge off Black's attack) 24 P*c2 Nc6 25 N*e3 Qf6 26 (B~N)N*g4 Qe7 27 B*c5 :
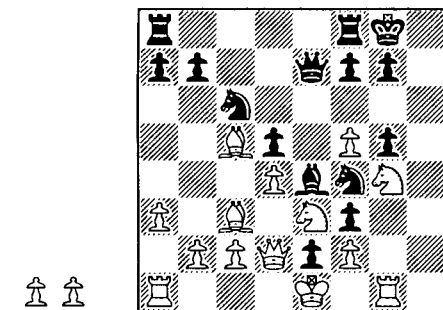
27...Qc7 (Peter notes that 27...Ng2+ 28 Nxg2 fxg2 29 Bxe7 (N~N)N*f3+ 30 Kxe2 Nxd2 allows 31 N*f6+ winning easily) 28 P*g3 (Black's intention after 28 Bxf8 was 28...B*h2 29 Nxh2 Nd3+ 30 cxd3 Qxh2, when the vulnerability of the rook at g1 and the bank rank will cause problems, for example 31 (N~N)N*h3 Qxg1+ 32 Nxg1 N*g2+ 33 Nxg2 (R~R)R*f1 mate) Ng2+ 29 Nxg2 fxg2

30 (N~N)N*h2 N*h3 :
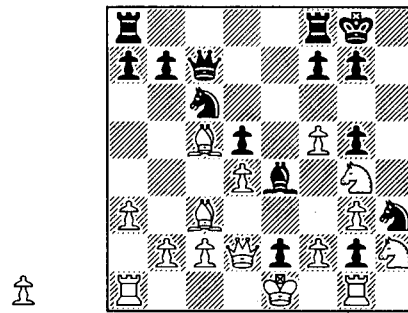
31 0-0-0!!! Pardon? Surely this is illegal? But a pawn can promote at Hostage Chess only if there is a piece in the opponent's prison for which it can be exchanged, and here there is no such man (the bishop, having already been exchanged, is not available). Hence e2xd1 is not possible, so d1 is not commanded and White can castle across it. 31...Nxg1 32 Rxg1 B*d1 33 P*d3 f6 34 dxe4 dxe4 35 Ne3 (Peter describes 35 Bxf8 Kxf8 as "difficult") b6 36 Bxf8 Na5 37 Bfb4 (White sees what is threatened but thinks he will get plenty of compensation) (R~N)N*b3+ 38 cxb3 Nxb3+ 39 Kb1 Nxd2+ 40 Bxd2 :
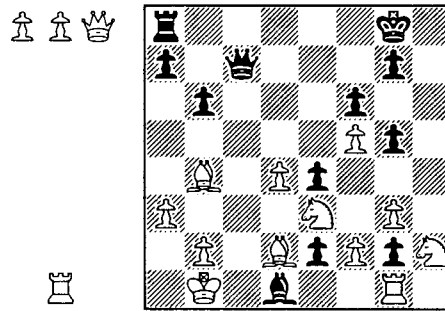
40...e2-e1(P~R) (the pawn goes into the opponent's prison in exchange for the rook) 41 Nxd1 Rxd1+ 42 Rxd1 (P~P)P*c2+ 43 Ka2 and Black's next move caused White to resign (answer and Peter's analysis on page 31) :
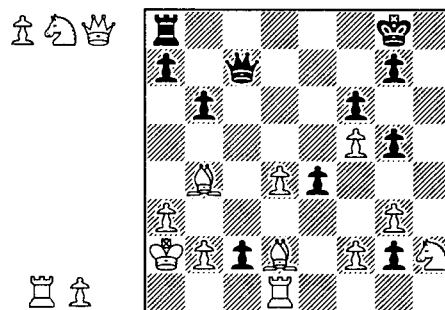
PC: "A really good game. I was making a deliberate attempt at positional play - not to any great effect, however. I simply failed to see that his 31st move was possible, and thought the position lost. He doesn't press home his advantage, and I have just enough for a final mating combination. Note the *sole* purpose of promoting at move 40 is to release a pawn to check on c2 at move 42."

PROGRESSIVE CHESS

Peter Coast has been giving me some valuable analytical backup, and in particular he has sent notes on some more of the games from the final stage of the 1996 "First World Internet Progressive Chess Championship" (see *VC* 45). I found his analysis of Fred Galvin's one loss particularly interesting. This occurred against Hugh Brodie. Play went **1 d4 2 e5 d5 3 Bg5 Bxd8 Bxc7 4 exd4 d3 dxc2 cxd1Q+ 5 Kxd1 Bxb8 Bd6 Bxf8 Bxg7 6 a5 a4 a3 axb2 bxa1Q Qxg7 7 h4 h5 h6 hxg7 gxh8Q Rxh7 Kc2**, and now Black found a mate :

For the answer, see page 31.

Peter looked at what would have happened had White deprived Black of a move by giving a check at turn 7, replacing Rxh7 and Kc2 by Kc2 and Qxg8+ :

"Black now operates under heavy constraints. Given that (I believe) he does not have a mate, he has to get to a position where White has no mate, and reduce White's material substantially in the process. Also he cannot use his b and d pawns effectively, and queening the f or h pawns takes too long to be effective.

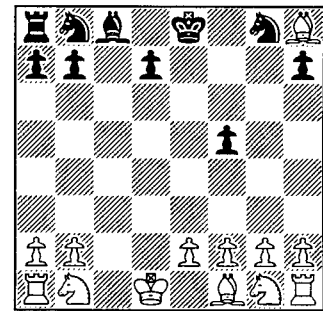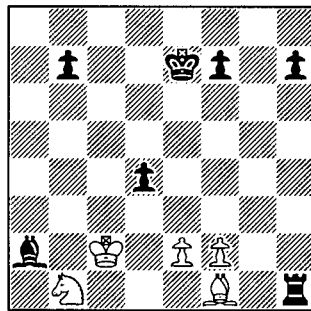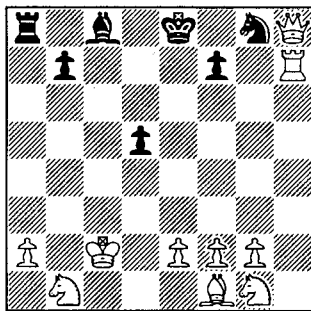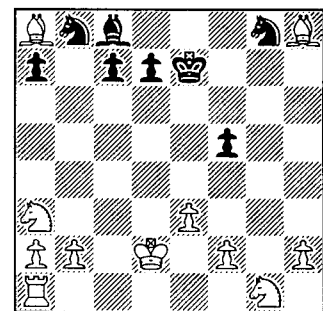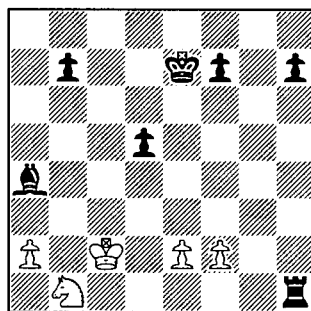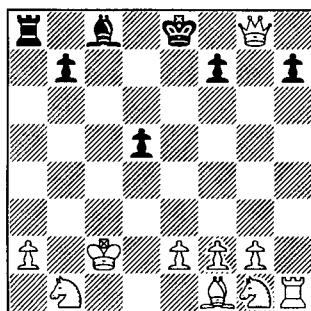"So, try 8 Ke7 Bg5 Bxe2 Bxf1 Bxg2 Bxh1 Rxg8 Rxg1 :

"White cannot mate, but 9 a4 a5 a6 axb7 b8Q Qh2 Qxg1 Qxh1 Qxh7 is a clear win.

"Capturing the a pawn seems to take too long for Black. e.g. 8 Ke7 Be6 d4 Bxa2 Rxg8 Rxg2 Rxg1 Rxh1 :

"White can now clear off all Black's pieces and pawns (except d4) and then play Kd3 winning."

Fred himself had a different idea, namely 8 Ke7 Bd7 Rxg8 Rxg2 Rxg1 Rxf1 Rxh1 Ba4+ :

This allows White neither a mate nor a useful promotion, for "if 9 Kc3 e4 e5 e6 exf7 f8R Rf6 Rh6 Rxh1 then Black mops up with 10 Bb3 Bxa2 Bxb1 Be4 Bxh1 Bg2 h5 h4 h3 Ke6". However, it seems to me that White does have a win, and when I asked Fred what he would do after such-and-such (see page 31) he said "Resign".

On balance, therefore, it seems that White had a win at move 7.

Play in our own tournaments tends to be at a less advanced level, but Paul Byway is genuinely expert, and Allan Brown did well to hold out against him until move 9. Most of us can find a mate for ourselves if one is there, particularly if an editor draws the possibility to our attention, but we aren't so good at working out mates for our opponent and playing so as not to leave any, nor at making progress when no mate is available. Paul's game against Allan gave an excellent illustration of how to do this.

Play started **1 d4 2 e5 exd4 3 Bg5 Bxd8 Bg5 4 f5 d3 dxc2 cxd1Q+**, and White continued **5 Kxd1 Be7 Bxf8 Bxg7 Bxh8** :

Having no mate, White takes material, making sure that he is not leaving a mate (Nb3/Rc1 takes seven moves). Black replied **6 Ke7 h5 h4 h3 hxg2 gxh1Q**, and White played **7 Bg2 Bxh1 Bxb7 Bxa8 Na3 e3 Kd2** :

White has been unable to mate, but this is just as decisive. Black's heavy pieces are gone, and he cannot obtain another quickly enough to do anything useful; his only available promotions are by Nxf2, N--, f2, and f1/fxg1, and these use all eight moves. He actually played **8 Na6 Nb4 Nc2 Nxa1 Nh6 Ng4 Nxh2 Nf1+** allowing **9 Kd3 b4 b5 b6 b7 bxc8Q Bg7 Bc6 Qxd7 mate**, but nothing else was better.

LOSING CHESS : WHAT IF ...

Here are two more games from the 2001 "First Unofficial World Championship", with analysis by Stan Goldovski's program *Giveaway Wizard*. Answers are on page 31.

The top-board game in round 3 was between Fabrice Liardet and Andrzej Nagorko. **1 e3 b6 2 Qf3 Bb7 3 Qxb7 g6 4 Qxb8 Rxb8 5 c3 e6** (5...a6 doesn't quite win, 6 Bxa6 Rb7 7 Bxb7 Qa8 8 Bxa8 d5 9 Bxd5 and the bishop will be able to give itself away) **6 Be2 Bb4 7 cxb4 Qh4** and what if anything is Black threatening?
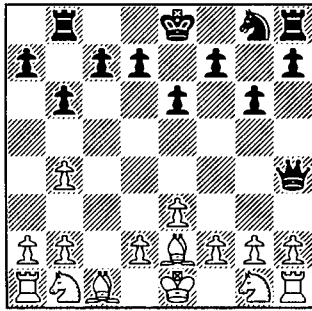
Whatever it might be, White avoids it by **8 Bd1**, with sequel **8...Qxb4 9 b3 Qxb3 10 Bxb3** (10 bxa3 allows Black to give White a rampant rook) **Ke7 11 Bxe6 Kxe6 12 Ne2 g5 13 f4 gxf4 14 exf4** (14 Nxf4 leaves White with a rampant knight) **Ne7 15 f5 Kxf5 16 Ng1** (Black threatened ...Kf4 etc) and is 17 g4 a threat for White?
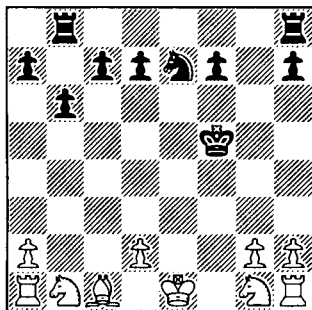
Black removed the possibility by playing **16...Kg6**, and play continued **17 Kf2 Ra8** (the position is tense, and neither side dare venture very far forward) **18 Kf3 a5 19 g4 Kg7** (20 g4 was a threat) **20 d3**. Now Black slipped up, playing **20...Rhe8?** and

overlooking that White could play **21 Bh6** with a variation of the threat after his 16th move: **21...Kxh6 22 g5 Kxg5 23 Kg4 Kxg4 24 Nh3 Kxh3 25 Rg1 Kxh2 26 d4** and Black resigned. Had Black played say 20...Nf5 21 gxf5 f6, White would not have been able to do this, and the ultimate result would have been very far from obvious.

Another interesting Round 3 game was that between Vincent van der Bilt and Marten Wortel. **1 e3 c5 2 Bb5 c4 3 Bxd7 Nxd7 4 c3** :
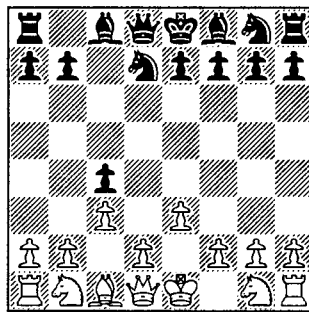
An old-fashioned player like myself would regard this position as good for White, who will be able to give men to the Black pawn almost whenever he feels like it; a modern expert works out that no real harm will ensue even if he does, and he is more impressed by the pawn's cramping effect on White's queen's side. **4...e6 5 a3 Bxa3 6 bxa3 Nc5 7 a4 Nxa4 8 Rxa4 Qxd2 9 Kxd2 h5 10 Qxh5 Rxh5 11 Rxc4** (far from giving men to the advanced pawn, White has chosen to capture it) **Rxh2** :
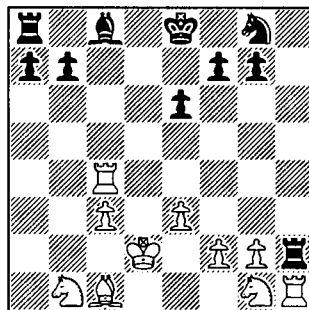
Now 12 Rxc8 leads to horrendous complications, since after 12...Rxg2 13 Rxe8/Rxa8 Rxg1 White will have a choice of two if not three captures for several moves to come. The computer takes such things in its stride, and declares a forced win for Black after

a few seconds of calculation; White, I suspect, merely tried a few lines, found them unpromising, and settled for **12 Rxh2**. Play continued **12...Kd8** (to avoid having to meet 13 Rxc8 by 13...Rxc8, when Black gets a rampant rook) **13 Rxc8 Kxc8 14 Ne2 Kc7 15 Rh1** (a curious little move but *Wizard* likes it, perhaps because it gives the rook more scope) **Nh6** (so Black promptly kills it) **16 Rxh6 gxh6 17 Kc2 e5 18 f4 exf4 19 exf4** (19 Nxf4 leaves White with a rampant knight) **Kd6 20 Nd2 Rf8** :
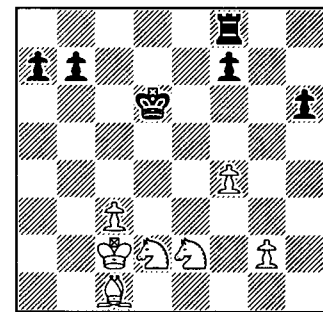
Black gives up fighting for more space and goes passive, and now it is a question of whether White can strip him of moves and force his rook into the open. **21 c4** (threatening a massive giveaway to Black's king) **Kc7 22 Nf3 Kd7 23 Kd3 Ke6** (threatening 24...Ke5 letting White's knight or bishop loose) **24 Nd2 Kd7** (but now Black must retreat again to avoid 25 f5) **25 Kd4 Kc7 26 Ke5 b5 27 cxb5 a6 28 bxa6 Kb7?** (Black decides to come down to one pawn and hope for the best, but as so often this is a losing strategy) **29 axb7 Ra8 30 bxa8R** (if you cannot see right to the end, promote to a rook if you want to win, to a king if you want to hold out for a draw) **f5 31 Kxf5 h5** :
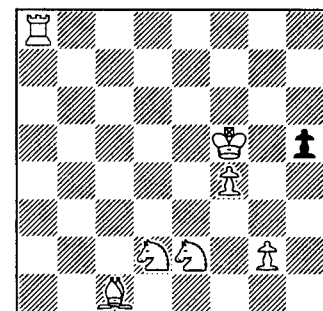
A little care now suffices to clinch the win; see page 31 for the actual finish.

IN PRAISE OF MODERN COURIER CHESS

Every editor has his enthusiasms, and it is quite usual for the likes and dislikes of one editor to be very different from those of his successor. Paul Byway is an enthusiastic advocate of Modern Courier Chess, and the issues of *VC* produced under his editorship very properly reflected this. However, any readers who may hope that MCC will now vanish from our pages will be sadly disappointed. Far from wanting to drop it, I think it a very good game.

MCC is played on a 12 x 8 board with four extra pieces: two "ferses" which move one square diagonally, and two "couriers" which jump to the second square in any direction (from e3, to c5/e5/g5/g3/g1/e1/c1/c3). A fers can make a double move at its first turn, though not to capture (this speeds and simplifies development), and a king can do the same but not out of or through check. The game is conveniently played by taking two normal sets and using the bishops and knights from the second set as ferses and couriers, differentiating them in some way (I use B+P for the fers and N+P for the courier, putting the two men diagonally on the same square), and in the hope of helping readers who are doing something similar I shall use inverted bishop and knight symbols on diagrams. Boards must be made *ad hoc*. Paul used to supply very attractive vinyl boards, but he tells me he has now sold out.

VC has featured eighteen complete games, plus a lot of endgame studies, and there is another in *ECV*. As always happens when players are getting used to unfamiliar pieces, some of the games are disfigured by blunders and tactical oversights, but others are not and that between Peter Wood and Paul in *VC* 33 strikes me as particularly instructive. We take it up after Black's 30th move :
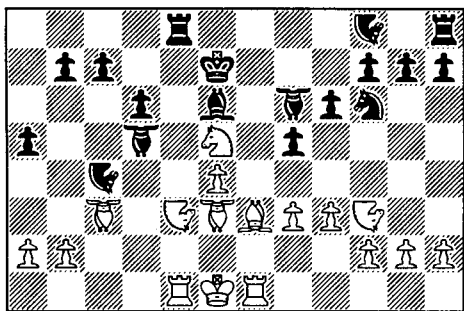

Paul (Black) had gone pawn-snatching, and White had replied in what Paul called "exemplary fashion" by concentrating on development. But he now played **31 k2-k4**, presumably envisaging something like 31...Nxk4 32 Bxk7 Rk8 33 Bxj8 Rkxj8/Rexj8 34 Nxh6+ Kf8 35 Rg6 with Ce3-g5 and Rg7 to follow, and I feel this was a mistake. "[White] hopes to open up the kingside," wrote Paul in *VC* 33, but with respect White doesn't *want* to open up the king's side; if he feels the need of a second front, he should open it on the queen's side, where he can mass his forces much more quickly than Black can. In the event,

Black declined the gambit, and play continued **31...Nj6-i8 32 Cj3-l5 j7-j6 33 Cl5-j7 Fd5-e4 34 Ff3xe4 Cc4xe4 35 Cj7-h7+ Kf7-f8 36 Ce3-e5 Bf6-d8** (36...dxe5 37 fxe5 Bxe5 allows 38 Rxe4 Bxg3 39 Rxe8+ Kxe8 40 Rxg3 Kf8 41 Rg6 and White's rook will get in, so Black gives back the pawn) **37 Re1xe4 Ni8-g7 38 Bg3-f2 d6xe5 39 Re4xe5 Re8xe5 40 f4xe5 Ng7xf5 41 Ch7xf5 Bd8-e7 42 Fc3-d4** :
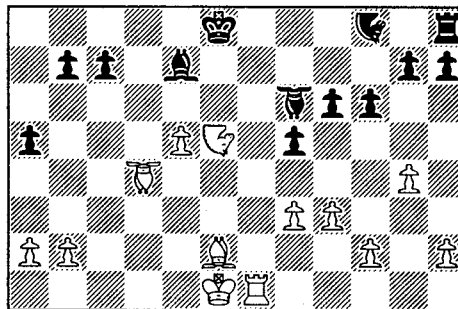
White no longer had enough material for an effective attack on the king (in particular, only his rook can bear on e8 and g8), and while Black's rook was still undeveloped he could remedy this by **42...l7-l5** (development "in situ" in Paul's neat phrase). Play continued **43 k4-k5 j6xk5 44 Bf2xk7 Rl8-k8 45 Bk7-e1 b7-b6 46 Kf1-e2 Cj8-h8 47 Ke2-d3 Rl8-j8 48 Rg1-g2** (an unwelcome necessity) **k5-k4 49 Kd3-e4 Rj8-j3** :
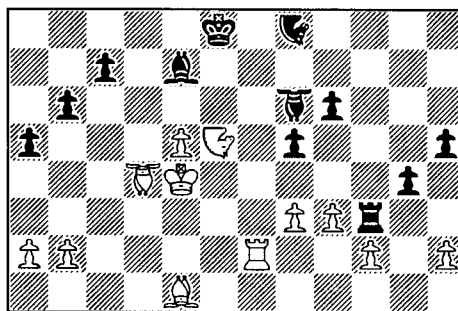
White now made a poor move which precipitated defeat, but he is lost anyway. Black's courier will walk up to j6 and l4 and attack White's j and l pawns, and how can White defend them?

Readers wanting to try the game will find some openings in *VC* 38 (pp 92-93) and *VC* 40 (pp 128-130). As regards middle-game strategy, the greater number of short-range pieces means that control of the centre is even more important than at ordinary chess, while pawn play carries over and the pawns remain very much the soul of the game. White loses the game above because his move 31 k2-k4 gives Black a target and lets him force open a line for his rook; put this pawn back to k2 in the position at move 42, and the advantage lies with White.

Paul has taken a dim view of my discontinuing the attractive font he used for MCC in *VC* 39-44, but I hope he will consider this endorsement an adequate compensation. The game is a genuinely good one, and I hope this article will gain it more adherents.

IN THE LIBRARY

by Peter Fayers

Doppelzugschach by Hans Klüver.

This 36-page booklet is an ideal introduction to the variant "Double-Move Chess", which was very popular in Germany in the 1960s.

The game is similar to Balanced Marseillais Chess in mechanics, but totally different in the objective. With both variants white starts with a single move as normal, then each player makes two moves in succession on his own turn. The difference is that in Marseillais, the game is won by getting to an orthodox checkmate position, whereas in Double-Move chess the game is won by capturing the opponent's King - there is no such thing as check or mate. Thus, the opening 1 e3 d6/Nf6 is quite playable for black in Marseillais, but is suicidal here: white wins outright by 2 Bb5/Bxe8!
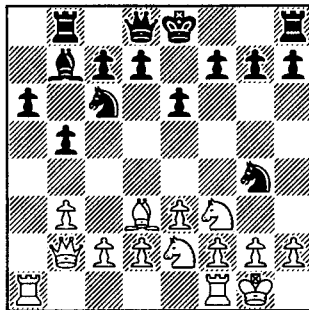
The booklet gives a long section on opening theory (with one or two unfortunate misprints), and then gives several annotated games, so you can follow the theory being put into practice.

The openings tend to be dominated by tactical threats to capture the enemy King. Consider this game as an example of these possibilities: White **Hans Hofmann**, Black **Helmut Hardt**, Murkisch - Einladungs - Fernturnier 1962-63. **1 Nc3 c6/Na6 2 e4/Qf3 Nc5/Nf6?** Better is Nb4/Nf6 and if 3 a3/axb4 then Qa5/Qxa1. **3 b4/bxc5 d6/dxc5 4 Nd5/Bb5!** :
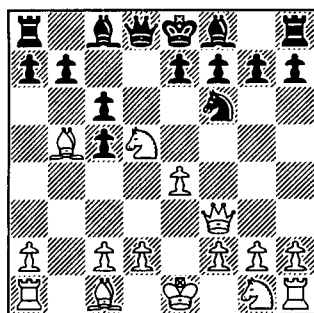

Put two pieces en prise to the same pawn! However, black cannot save his King, so resigned.

White **Hans Klüver**, Black **Otto Eckmann**, Doppelzugfernturnier der "Europe d'Echecs", 1960/61. **1 Nc3 e6/Nc6 2 e3/Nf3 Nf6/Bd6 3 a3/Bd3 a6/b6 4 b3/Bb2 Bxa3/Bxb2 5 Qc1/Qxb2 b5/Rb8 6 Ne2/0-0 Ng4/Bb7** :

7 Qf6/Qxd8 Attacking the black King with 7 Bg6/Bh5 loses to 7...Nf6/Nxh5 and if 8 Nf4/Nxh5 Qh4/Qxh5! 9 g4/gxh5 Nd4/Nxf3 wins (10 Kg2/Kg3 Nxd2/f5!) **7...Rxd8/h5 8 Ne5/Nxc6 Bxc6/Nxh2 9 Kxh2/Nd4 Bxg2/Bxf1 10 Nc6/Nxd8** :
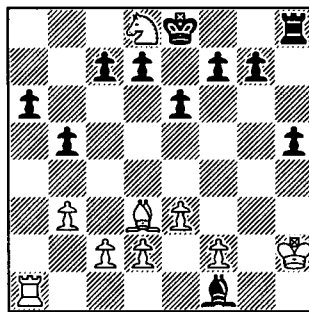

10...Rh6/Rf6 10...Kxd8/ Bxd3? loses to 11 cxd3/Rxa6. **11 Bxf1/Bg2 e5/Kxd8 12 d4/dxe5 Rb6/Ke7 13 c4/c5** :
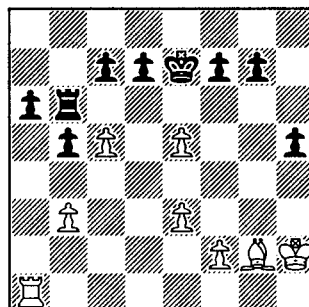
Pc5 is immune: if 13...d6/dxc5 then 14 Bc6/Rd1! **13...Rh6/h4** Black must not allow his Rook to be shut off on b6, but ... **14 e6/Rd1! Resigns**.

Here is another game from the same tournament, this time with the book's author on the receiving end:

White **Godehard Murkisch**, Black **Hans Klüver**. **1 Nc3 e6/Nc6 2 e3/Nf3 a6/Nf6 3 g3/Bg2 Nb4/Ng4?** This attack is premature; it gains the Queen, but cedes the initiative. **4 a3/axb4 Nxe3/Nxd1 5 Rxa6/Ne4!** :
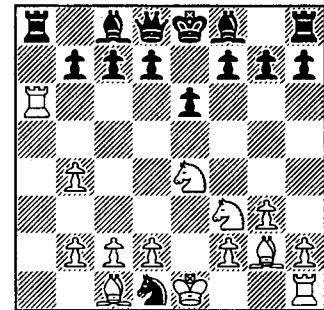
5...Bxb4/Kf8 Worse is bxa6/Ke7, exposing the King to Nd4/d3. **6 Rxa8/Kxd1 d5/dxe4 7 Rxc8/Rxd8 Ke7/Rxd8 8 d3/Nd4** Resigns. Enough is enough !

The booklet has a section for the problemist, as well, with several "Mate in two moves" type problems - a unique pair of white moves from the diagram guarantees capture of the black King next time. Here is an example. Note the sequence of the first move-pair is forced - the two moves cannot be transposed.

G. Murkisch, Die Welt 1960
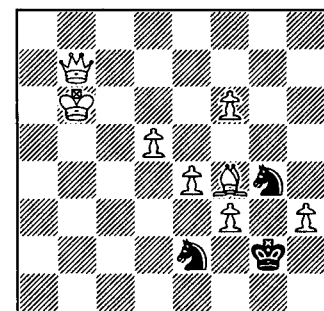
White wins in two double-moves

All-in-all, a complete introduction to a variant that seems to abound in tactical possibilities; positional play and strategic planning are not going to get you very far. The one drawback is that it is in German, but I didn't find that a problem. Even without the language, I could follow the game scores and the alternatives given.

Highly recommended.

CIRCULAR CHESS

This year's Circular Chess World Championship took place in Lincoln on May 16, and resulted in yet another victory for Francis Bowers. Francis, relieved this year of the sole burden of recording the results and arranging the pairings, won in the most unanswerable of styles, scoring 5 out of 5 and beating the second and third seeds along the way. Mike Clark recovered from an early loss to come second, and 1996 champion Rob Stevens was third.
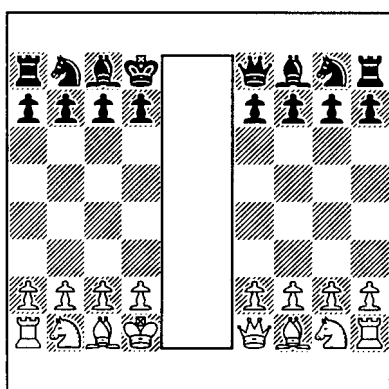

A brief reminder of the rules. The board and men are shown diagrammatically above (imagine the a/h files joined to form a 16-square ring, the b/g files joined similarly, and so on); promotion is on the eighth rank as usual; there is no castling, and no *en passant*. Note that a1 is *light* and that the kings are on d1/d8. To help readers who are trying to follow the play with an ordinary board and men, "round the end" moves are starred.

One of the organizers sat beside a game in each round and noted it down for display on a web site, but the choice of games to be recorded proved unfortunate; the only two that were on the site when I was preparing this report were colourless and straightforward affairs in which the result owed everything to the final time scramble and nothing to the earlier play. I think readers will find more to enjoy in my own game against David Carew, where I was on the wrong end of an interesting attack. I take up the game after White's 20th move :
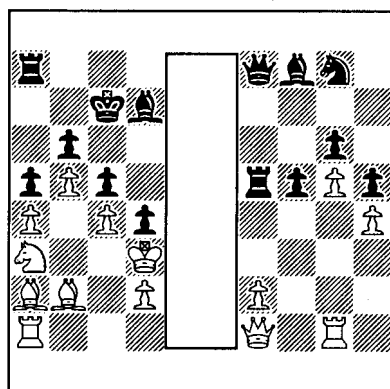

I had misplayed the opening and had been forced to block the position on the left, and by tucking my king away on d3 I hoped to leave my other pieces free to deal with any attack on the right. **20...Ra8-d8 21 Qe1-d1*** (to free e1 for the rook, but d1 is a poor square for the queen and Qf2 might have been better) **Re5-e4** (now White's rooks are tied to the defence of h4 as well as e2) **22 Rg1-e1 Re4-g4** (this looks dangerous, but in fact the attack is superficial and once I have removed my bishop from the b/g ring I shall be able to chase the intruder away) **23 Na3-b1 Bf8-a7* 24 Bb2-c1** :
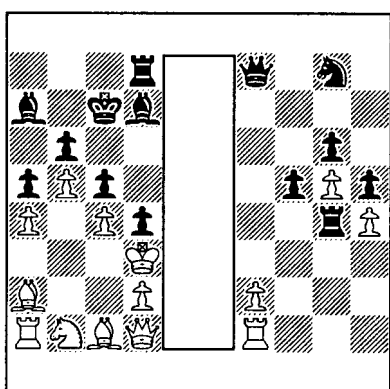
24...Rg4-e4 (this effectively admits that Rg4 was a pointless excursion, but White was threatening Nf2* simultaneously attacking the rook and cutting off its line of retreat, and Black was surely right not to try his luck on f4, g3, or g2) **25 Nb1-f2* Re4-e6 26 Bc1-g1* Kc7-b7 27 Nf2-h3 Ng8-c7*** (I was puzzled by this - all right, Black's knight cannot reach e4, but surely d8*-f7*-e5-g4 would offer more promise than the blank wall on the other side?) **28 e2-e3 Bd7-h7* 29 Ra1-c1 Rd8-c8 30 Ba2-b1 Nc7-d5** :
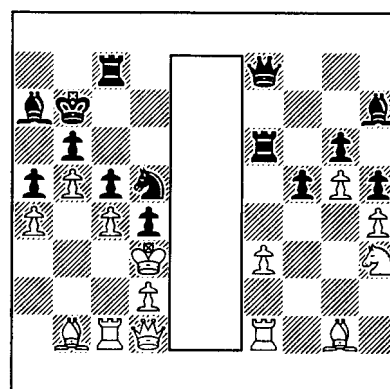
My king isn't as cosily tucked in as I had thought! But surely I can take the knight while it is on offer, and then blockade c4? In any case, gentlemen always accept sacrifices, so I made my next move almost without reflection. **31 c4xd5 Qe8xd5* 32 Rc1-c4 Kb7-b8 33 Re1-e2** (better would have been Ba2, preparing to change the blockader on c4) **Bh7-g8** (Black gives up another pawn for the attack, but if accepting the knight was the proper and correct act of a gentleman, taking the pawn as well will be that of a greedy pig) **34 Nh3-f4 Re6-e8 35 Nf4xg6** (oink) **Bg8-a8* 36 Ng6-f4 Qd5-d6 37 g5-g6?** :
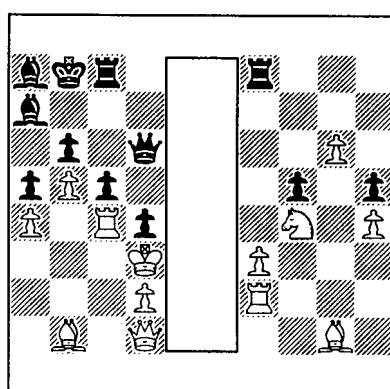
This is the sort of move that gets a player into the anthologies - as the loser. I quite seriously thought that Black's attack would get nowhere, and that I had an easy win. Something like 37 Ba2 was necessary, though 37...Bd5 38 Rc2 Bxa2 39 Rxa2 c4+ isn't too pleasant. **37...Ba8-d5 38 Rc4-f3*** (38 Ba2 might still have saved the day, though the exchange is worth more at circular chess than at ordinary) **c5-c4+ 39 Kd3-c2 Qd6-b4** (now Black starts pouring through) **40 Rf3-h3 c4-c3 41 d2xc3 Rc8xc3+ 42 Kc2-d2 Rc3-f1*+** and I gave up.

TRIPLETS

A nice little game, this; I was always glad when somebody chose it for one of the rounds of our multi-variant tournaments at Godalming. Peter Wood printed a few games in *VC* 20, but there seems to have been nothing since. Perhaps it is time for another look.

The rule is that at turn 1, a player moves a pawn; at turn 2, a pawn and a piece; at each subsequent turn, a pawn, a piece, and the king (in any order). Inability to make any of these moves forfeits the game. More than one move in a turn may give check, and a player need not get out of check until the end of his turn. David Pritchard recorded in *VC* 20 that it was invented for a Christmas meet of the Haslemere Chess Club by Adam Sobey (a gentleman of fiendish ingenuity, who composes orthodox chess endgame studies and used to compile crosswords for *The Listener*).

In practice, the vast majority of games are lost when one player runs out of pawn moves, and most of the tactical manoeuvring is directed towards this end. In particular, "piece for pawn" is surprisingly likely to be a good swap. For example, after **1 e4 e5 2 Bc4/d3 Bc5/d6**, which seems to be a fairly common opening, I would at least consider **3 Bxf7+**, accompanied by **f3** to prevent his doing the same to me and **Kf1** as my compulsory king move. A bishop sacrifice so blatantly early may not be sound (I have not seen the move in a published game), but it gives White lots of surplus pawn tempi on the king's side, and these may come in very handy later on.

A similar sacrifice does occur in the game below, which was recently sent to me by David. It was played in 1991, and appeared in *Eteroscacco* 56. Black was Alessandro Castelli.

1 d3 e5 2 e3/Bd2 Nf6/e4 3 d4/Bc4/ Ke2 d5/Be7/0-0 (diagram at top of next column). This appears to be a very bad opening by White, conceding space to no purpose, but Black has difficulty defending d5 later on, so perhaps White is simply playing in hypermodern style and persuading Black to overstretch himself.
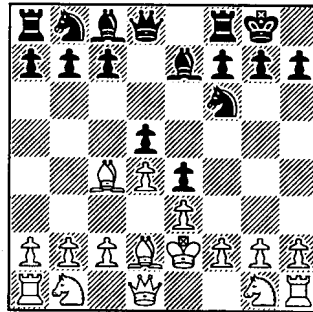

4 Bb3/c3/Ke1 Ng4/c6/Kh8 (going for f2) **5 h3/Kf1/Ne2** (had White known that Black would play Nxf2 anyway, he might have played c4 instead of h3 and gained a tempo) **Nxf2/a6/Kg8** :
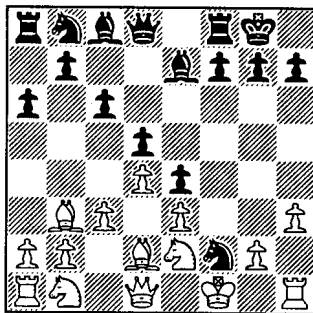

Black will now have many more potential pawn moves than White, but this has been achieved at a cost not just of a knight but of development. **6 Kxf2/Nf4/c4** (going for d5) **Bh4+/ a5/Kh8** (Black perhaps regrets having played a6, since Na6 followed by Nc7 would help to bolster d5) **7 Rf1/Kg1/ cxd5** (White can wait until the second move of his turn to get out of check) **cxd5/Be6/Kg8 8 Qh5/Kh2/a3 Qg5/ h6/Kh8 9 Qxg5/g3/Kg2** :
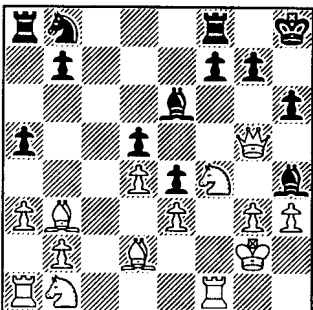
Does Black play Bxg5 to preserve his bishop, or Rd8 to hold d5? He opts for the latter: **9...hxg5/Rd8/Kg8 10 Nxd5/gxh4/Kg3** (but White takes anyway, and also starts using his king) **gxh4+/Bxd5/Kh7 11 Kxh4/Bxd5/b3 Rxd5/f6/Kh6 12 Nc3/a4/Kg3** :
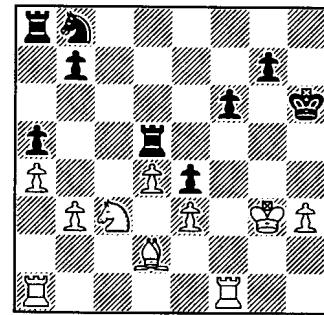
White finally clears Black from d5, which almost levels the pawn tempi. **12...Rg5+/f5/Kh5** (tying up the rook rather oddly - did Black guess what was coming?) **13 Kf4/Nb5/d5??** (far too ambitious - after say Rf4/Kf2/d5 I think White has the better of it) **Kh4/ Nd7/b6** and White has no king move :
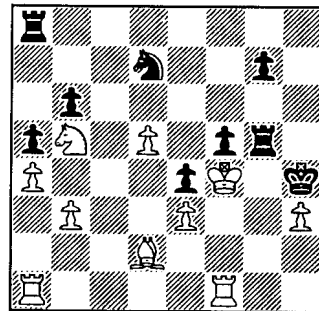
A most unusual finish.

My only reservation concerns the rule that you needn't get out of check until the second or third move of your turn. Another game sent to me by David ended with this position :
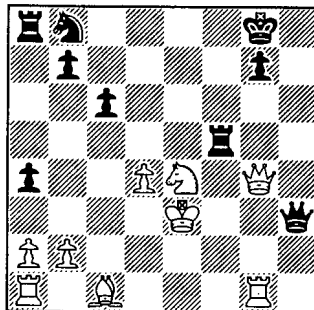
Here White, soon to run out of pawn moves, resigned; **Ke2/b3/Qxg7** "mate" fails because Black has **Kxg7/ a3/Rg5**. I think I would prefer to see the Progressive Chess rule, where you must get out of check with the first move of your turn and mate is mate. But this is detail. It's a game with much tactical and strategic subtlety, and very good to play; recommended.

PROOF GAMES

by Peter Fayers

I thought for a change this time I'd look at Proof Games from the viewpoint of the composer, and try to take you through the thought processes when creating problems.

Firstly, we need a theme. I decided to go through the commonly-played variants alphabetically to see where inspiration struck. Alice? - No, there have already been some excellent Alice proof games. Avalanche (with each move, you pull an enemy pawn forward one square)? - Possibly, I've never seen an Avalanche proof game. Let's give it a go.

What are the features of the variant, and how can we use them? Pawn-pulls by the opponent ... this means both sides can move the same pawn, so we should be able to promote in three moves. Play **1 b4/a6 g5/b5 2 bxa6/g4 g3/a7** :
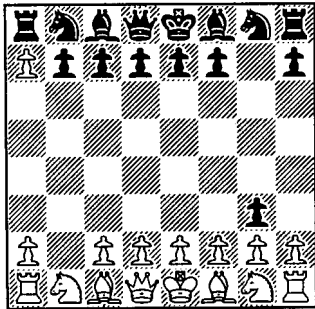
Looks good, we are about to promote on the third move. But we find we can't; there is no pull of a black pawn we can make that would keep the game score unique. (This is a necessary feature of proof games - no possible transposition of moves is allowed). If we try **3 axb8Q/h6** for example, the same position could have resulted from **2 ... h6/a7 3 axb8Q/g3**.

So we need a mechanism to force the sequence of pawn-pulls. We forget about the idea of promoting a black pawn as well, and instead set up a set of valves. Look at the black fgh pawns in **10**. Bf8 has got out, either via g7 or h6, and Pg6 must have been there before this happened. Once we determine which route the Bishop took, we know the precise sequence of

these three pawns moves. A different mechanism is used to determine in which order the pawns d3 & e3 were pulled - the avoidance of check at the wrong time.

Hopefully we've got the pawn-pull sequence fixed, now we decide what to do with the promoted pawn (we need to disguise it in some way, otherwise the problem would be less challenging). By far the easiest way to hide a promoted piece is to capture it and get it off the board completely. (This is known as the Frolkin theme, after the great Ukranian problem composer Andrei Frolkin). A feature of this theme is that the precise identity of the promoted piece must be deducible from the position. We cannot, for example, just capture the piece immediately it is promoted (...Pxb8X 4 RxX) as X could have been any of NBRQ.

We arrange this by having the promotion take place at d8, without check, so we know it is not to R or Q. The subsequent move then uniquely determines which piece it must be.

The last step is in tidying up, making cosmetic changes to make it look good. In **10**, for example, the last black move could have been with the Ra8, but I prefer to aim for minimum disturbance from the game array.

10 - PF (Original)
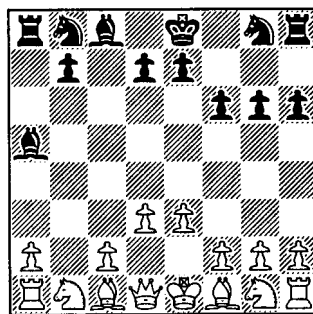
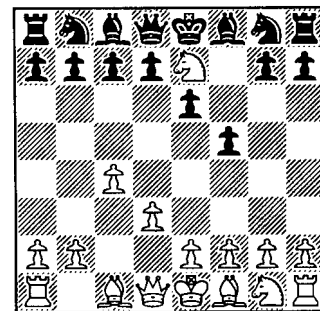After Black's fourth. Game score?
Avalanche Chess

Finally, we change hats and do a quick check from the solver's viewpoint. Looking at the diagram, the first thing I notice is that white is in check. How was it administered? I like it: we have an Avalanche effect and a trap for the unwary solver, right from the start.

But you won't fall into that trap when you solve it, will you?

***VC* 45 solution. 9** (Paul Raican, dedicated to Manfred Rittirsch, Dynamo Chess, wK on d1, wQ on b1, wNb1 off, wPd2 on f4, bQ on d3, bPd7 off, add bNb3, after Black's 4th): 1 Bc1-e3 (push Pd2-f4) Qd8-d3 (push Pd7-d2+) 2 Nb1-"z0" (off the board WSW, pull Pd2-b1N) Nb1-d2 3 Qd1-b1 (pull Ke1-d1) Nd2-b3 (pull Bf1-d2) 4 Bd2-c1 (pull Be3-d2) Nb3 stays put (push Bd2-f1). White's 4th move can also be written "Be3-d2 (push Bd2-c1)", but this ambiguity is inevitable with like men and it is not regarded as a blemish.

***VC* 44**: Congratulations to John Leslie, who successfully solved my Hostage Chess proof game in *VC* 44, which was no mean feat. Also to Roger Smook, who sent his solution on a postcard from his holiday in Russia!

[A possibly improper addition by JDB. The receipt of Peter's article encouraged me to try my own hand, and perhaps I can use a couple of the results to fill out the page. They are by no means masterpieces, but perhaps they will amuse. Answers on page 31.]

After Black's third. Game score?
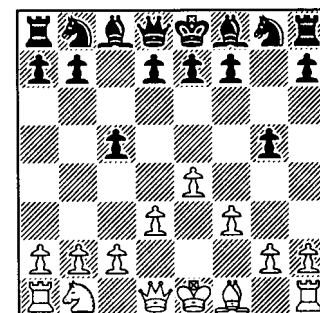
After Black's fourth. Game score?

New Sets...

reviewed by John Beasley

Handmade Chess Sets by Vincent Siracusano (prices on application)

Among the material handed over by Paul Byway was a photograph showing some chess sets created by Vincent Siracusano. Siracusano has worked for twelve years as a Disney animator, but he is producing these under his own name. The photograph shows sets for chess, checkers (draughts), and Grand Chess (10 x 10 board, 20 men per side including marshall and cardinal), and his web site <www.jigsawknight.com> shows further items. I haven't seen the originals, and am reviewing on the strength of the photograph and some subsequent correspondence.

The chess set offers a medium, at once abstract and figurative, which has attracted many artists of the last hundred years: Man Ray, Yves Tanguy, and a host of others less celebrated but not necessarily less talented. The present sets appear to be first-rate additions to the tradition, featuring elegant, flowing shapes more representational than a Staunton set but simplified rather than wholly naturalistic. The men are made from cast resin, polished, lacquered, and felted, and the boards are of wood overlaid with plexiglass (4-inch squares). The men are weighted, and the height-to-base ratio is never greater than 2 : 1; I judge them to be sufficiently stable for practical play.

The sets are individually made and are available only to order (via the web site, or direct to 2313 Blackjack Oak Street, Ocoee, FL 34761-5608, USA). The cardinal and marshall of Grand Chess are already offered, and I imagine that requests to create further new men would be sympathetically received. A set takes from eight to ten weeks to produce, and the price reflects this; they are luxury items. They have character, and something which has character will not be to everybody's taste; on the evidence of the photograph, however, they are very definitely to mine.

...And A New Game

reviewed by David Pritchard

Honeycomb Chess by Douglas Reid (A4 format - 64pp) £12.50

Honeycomb Chess, an invention of the author, is a variant played on a regular 91-hex board (i.e., equivalent to Glinski's) with 22 men a side. The pieces are: 1 x king; 2 x queen, rook; 6 x hopper; 11 x pawn. The hopper, represented in diagrams by a bishop, moves directly to the nearest hex of the same colour complex (a hex board has three colour complexes, regularly arranged so that no two hexes of the same colour are adjacent to each other). This gives the hopper's move a choice of six cells if away from the board edge, three if in a corner and four if on a side. The initial array is shown. Notice that there are three hoppers on each side of the board. Like-hex hoppers can of course protect each other.

The rooks move on files or laterally through cells of the same colour complex. This means that a rook has access only to alternate files. Since both rooks start on the same coloured hexes, they can support each other but

together cover only half the board. This can be resolved by castling, which is regular (king moves three hexes in either direction, etc.) when the castled rook has access to the other half of the board. It follows that after castling the rooks can never attack the same square or protect each other.

Pawns have a two-cell initial move option, promote on an end hex and can be captured *en passant*. The moves of the king and queen are orthodox (any direction; in the case of the queen, along adjacent hexes only). A weakness of the game is that the wing pawns are only three squares from promotion whereas the central pawns, the worst placed, are eight moves away. Despite the presence of the pair of queens, the game plays slowly, the average game running to 60-odd moves. The book covers the rules, the opening, middle-game and end-game and four annotated games.

This is surely a must-buy for chess book collectors as the first edition is limited to just one hundred numbered copies. Write:

Douglas Reid, Flat 106, 120-124 Sackville Court, Harold Wood, Romford, Essex RM3 0ED
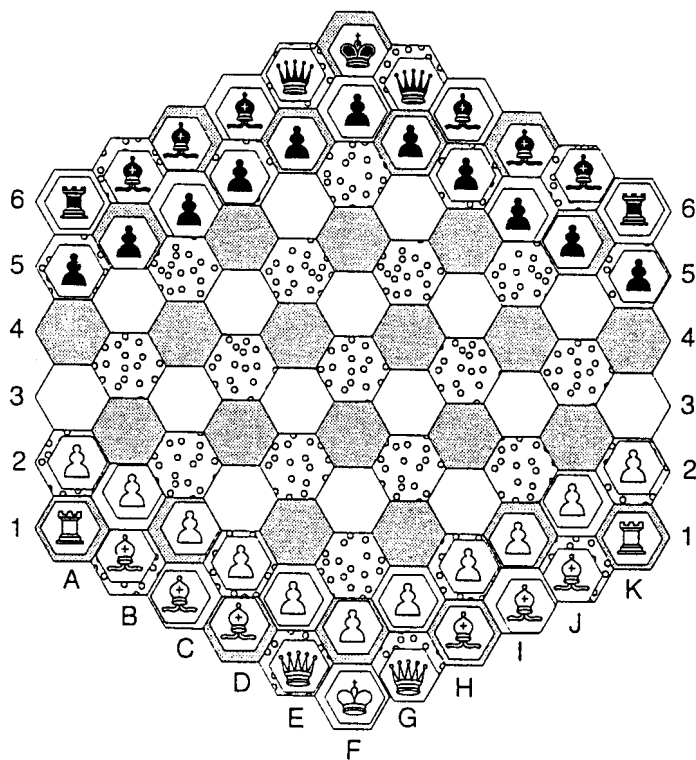
Castles In The Air

by Jed Stone

To a postal chess player 'slow' is a way of life. It's the way postal chess has been played since the fifties (1950's). Unfortunately it is also rapidly becoming extinct. For the new generation of 'postal chess' players 'e-mail' beats licking stamps and 'The Net' itself opens up the possibility for 'face to face' play with opponents on the other side of the world. It's faster. It's better and you can do it from home! Modern technology is drawing a vale over the envelope and stamp world that once was the alternative way to play chess.

With the demise of most of the great postal chess clubs there are few places the traditional postal player can still enjoy chess 'as it used to be played'. Castles in the Air is one of them. Since the last issue of *VC* I have been thanked by a postal friend for keeping the tradition alive and for supplying him with opponents. We're few in number, a little slow in moving but we are still here.

Because of the short time gap between issues little has changed. A few games have finished, but the final line has yet to be drawn under any of the ongoing competitions and no new ones have started though a couple of names have been submitted for a new Alice Tourney. Plans are being laid for a new Challenge League that will some how support less popular variants, and a new way of structuring tournaments is being examined. The aim of both innovations is to try to stimulate some interesting games that could be worthy of inclusion in future issues of *VC*. As with all things postal, however, they move slowly towards maturity. At the moment I can only say, 'Watch this space. Something interesting may start to develop in a while.' Till that happens you can obtain updates on the leagues or current tournament starts from me by e-mail or post.

Till next time

Cheers

J. S.

...continued by JDB...

The short time gap between *VC* 45 and *VC* 46 can be blamed on myself (I wanted to slot *VC* into my quarterly cycle ahead of *British Endgame Study News*, and three-month gaps should be standard in future), but Jed had already sent me a file of games played under our auspices and these included an instructive game which he won at **Extinction Chess**. The rule here is that you win by capturing all your opponent's men of a particular type: king, queen, both rooks, both bishops, both knights, or all eight pawns (though I have never heard of this in practice). **1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 f6** :
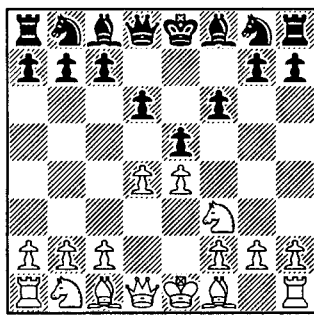

This is bad at ordinary chess because it weakens the diagonal h5-e8, takes a square away from the knight, and does nothing for Black's development. The first defect is less serious at Extinction, but the others remain. **4 Nc3 exd4 5 Nxd4 b6 6 b4 Bd7 7 Bd3 Nc6 8 Nxc6 Bxc6 9 0-0** :
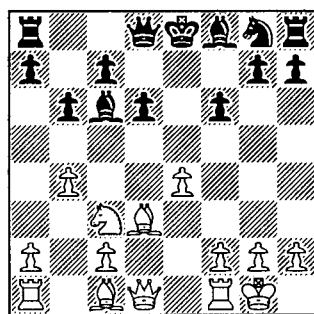
Black's knight is now in deep trouble. White threatens 10 Bc4, and if 10...Ne7 then 11 e5 with Re1 and exf6 to follow (11...fxe5 loses to 12 Bg5). His actual **9...Be7** made things worse, but it led to a quick and elegant finish: **10 Bc4 d5 11 exd5 Bxb4** (re-opening e7, but to no avail) **12 Ne2 Bb7 13 d6!!** and Black resigned :
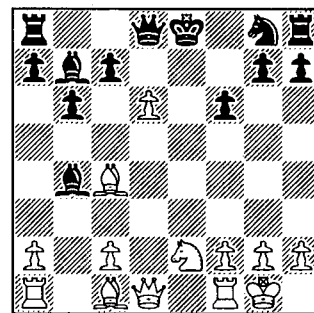

The file also contained some of our Progressive Chess games. Jed tells me he is always happy for me to quote his losses (see page 18), but he has some wins as well, and it seems to me that his finish from this position would not be out of place in The End Is Nigh :
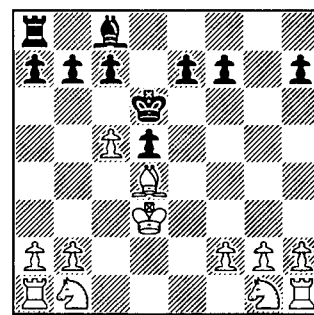
Black is to play series 8; answer on page 31.

Alice Chess

Peter Coast and Paul Yearout have been probing the first game in *VC* 45. After 1 c4>B c6>B 2 d4>B Qc7>B threatening 3...Qa5>A mate, suppose White tries 3 a3>B, allowing the rook through to guard the mating square :
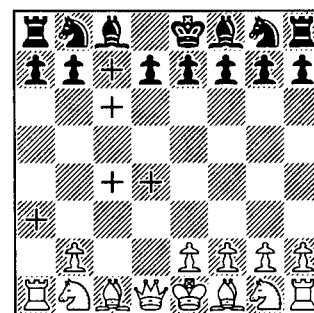
On B: bQc7, bPc6, wPa3/c4/d4

Questions: (PC) how can Black now win, and (PY) is 3 a4>B any better? Answers next time.

Three-Leapers In Unguard

based on material from George Jelliss

The following puzzle of George's was left for solution last time. A "three-leaper" jumps three squares in any horizontal or vertical direction, irrespective of the occupancy of the intervening squares (for example, from d4 to d7, a4, g4, or d1). The task is to place the largest possible number of three-leapers of the same colour on a chessboard so that none guards any other. How many geometrically distinct patterns are possible?

George suggested examining the 4x4 board first, but I found the counting unexpectedly tricky even on this small scale and I am therefore spelling out the solutions. We can occupy the four central squares b2/b3/c2/c3, and six of the twelve outside squares: a1/d4 or a4/d1, a2 or d2, a3 or d3, b1 or b4, and c1 or c4. This gives a total of 10 occupied squares. There are $2^5 = 32$ different ways in which the six outside squares can be occupied, but only seven of them turn out to be geometrically distinct; each of the others can be transformed into one of these seven by a rotation and/or a reflection.

Each of these can be made the basis of an 8x8 solution. We place the 4x4 solution in the sixteen central squares, and extend it over the rest of the board in an obvious way (in the first diagram opposite, d6 is occupied so we must leave a6/g6 empty, but d3 is empty so we can fill a3/g3). In every case, exactly half the additional squares can be occupied, giving a total of 34 occupied squares. The resulting patterns are shown in the facing column, oriented so that c6 and f3 are occupied in all cases and arranged with the most symmetrical first. The first two have symmetry about both diagonals and hence diametral symmetry as well, the third has diametral symmetry only, the fourth and fifth have symmetry about one diagonal, and the last two have no symmetry at all. "It seems strange to me how such a really weird selection of patterns can appear from such a simply stated question" (GPJ).

What happens on other boards can be described more briefly. On the 5x5 and 7x7 boards, we can occupy the central square and half the rest, giving respectively 13 and 25 pieces. There are $2^8 = 256$ different ways in which the outside squares can be occupied, but only 51 are geometrically distinct.

On the 6x6 board, we can only occupy half the squares. The 18 occupied squares can be arranged in $2^9 = 512$ different ways, of which 84 are geometrically distinct.

On the 9x9 board, we can occupy the central nine squares and half the rest, total 45, and the solution is unique.

The cases 10x10 to 15x15 repeat the numbers of solutions for cases 4x4 to 9x9, and so on.

George tells me that this is part of a study of chess-piece arrangement problems that will appear in his on-line *Games and Puzzles Journal*. "Other unguard problems of
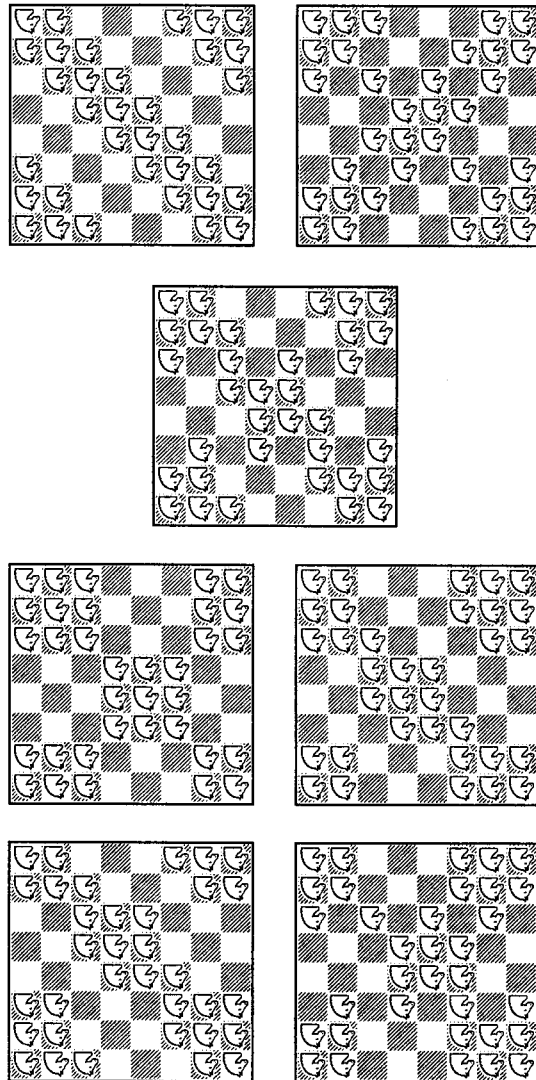
this type are well known (for instance the famous 8 queens). For the knight a solution is obvious: you place 32 knights all on the same colour. The same solution works for {0,1}, {2,3}, and {1,4} leapers (wazir, zebra, giraffe), whose moves, like the knight, have one odd and one even co-ordinate, and one is therefore tempted to jump to the conclusion that, on a sufficiently large board, the same is true for any pieces whose moves take them always from a cell of one colour to a cell of the other colour. However, as the three-leaper shows, this is not always the case."

George suggests another task that produces attractive patterns: to arrange the largest possible number of **{3,4} leapers (antelopes)** on a **7x7 board** so than none guards any other. Again, how many geometrically distinct patterns are possible? Answer on page 31. "The solutions that work for the antelope include those that work for the {1,4} leaper and the {3,4}+{0,5} leaper." George also suggests looking at the **8x8 board**, where Tom Marlow has managed to put no fewer than 36 antelopes in unguard.

The Games and Puzzles Journal, strongly recommended to those who share my taste for puzzle mathematics, can be found at <http://www.gpj.connectfree.co.uk>.

THE END IS NIGH !

by Paul Byway

From The Opening
To The Ending

For the postal tournament in **Progressive Chess** I decided to experiment with the defence **1 d4 2 d5 Nc6**. Opening statistics given in *VC* 30 suggested that it was best. I found a report on the WIPCC98 by Doug Hyatt giving a survey of opening theory. Very interesting it was too, in particular he gives the line **3 Bf4 Bxc7 Bxd8 4 Kxd8 e5 Nh6 Bb4+** and the TN (theoretical novelty) **5 Qd2 Qxb4 Qxb7 Qxc6 Na3** with the comment "Black's position is already resignable". I thought it would be a nice idea to refute this, as I had a promising line for the attempt:- **6 Bd7 Bxc6 Rb8 Rxb2 Rxa2 Rxa1+** :
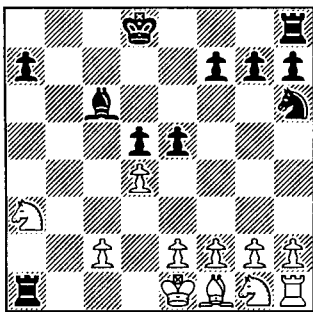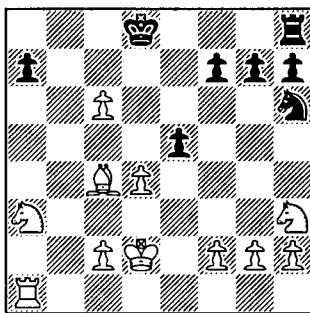

Black has a slight material edge and has finished with a forcing check; White's development meanwhile is abysmal; the case must surely be arguable. One plausible line **7 Kd2 e3 Bb5 Bxc6 Ne2 Rxa1 dxe5** could be answered by **8 d4 d3 dxe2 e1R Rxa1 Rxa3 Ra6 Rxc6** and Black seems to be OK :
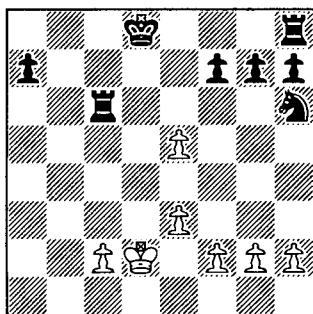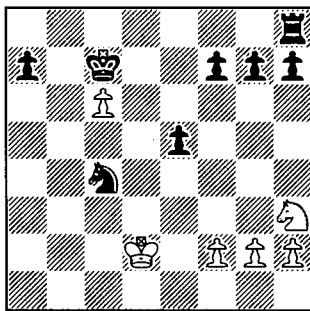

I had much more difficulty with

7 Kd2 e4 exd5 dxc6 Bc4 Nh3 Rxa1 :

I tried taking the d-pawn, running the g-pawn and roaming with the rook. White found a variety of interesting mates in reply, including one by 3 pawns. I recommend you investigate this fascinating position. Eventually I found that I must abandon the back rank and play **8 Kc7 Nf5 Nxd4 Nxc2 Nxa1 Nc2 Nxa3 Nxc4+** :

This position is also worth examining. I think it's a draw but White can lose.

Solutions to competition 21

#128 9 Kc2 Nf4 Nd5 Rg1 Rg5 Rxe5 Re8 e5 Bb5 mate
#129 8 Ne7 Nec6 Bh6 Rg8 Rg1 Na6 Nxc5 Nd4 mate
#130 9 Nxc6 Na7 Bb8 f4 f5 f6 fxe7 e8Q Qb5 mate

In the case of #130 I have modified the position by adding a Pc6 and moving the Be5 to f4.

There appears to be only one solution for #128; in #129 the knights can swap roles; #130 was a real disaster with multiple solutions, more than one in 8 moves. IR showed several varieties of pawn promotion combined with Bd2, Qa5 mate or Bd6, Qc5 mate. PW and FG really went to town on this - with a slight edge for FG. I give several of their varied solutions:-

(a) 9 g4 g5 g6 gxh7 hxg8Q Qc4 Qa4 any Nd7
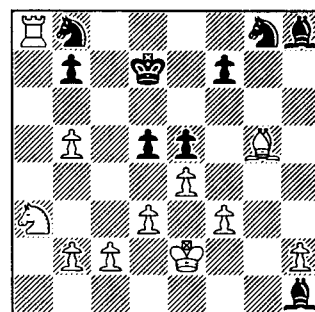(b) 9 c3 cxd4 d5 d6 Kd2 Kc3 Kb4 any Be3 (Italian)
(c) 9 c3 cxd4 d5 d6 Kd2 Kc3 Kb4 c8N
(d) 9 Na6 Bb8 Nc7 c4 Kd2 Kc2 Kb3 Kb4 c5

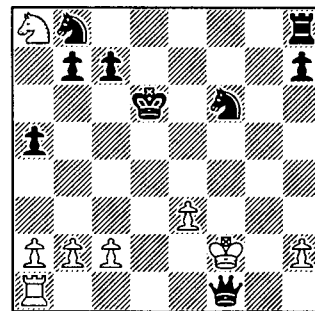The current scores:- FG 67, IR 62, DP 44, CL 24, RT 19, PW 19, JB 13, NE 2, SB 2.
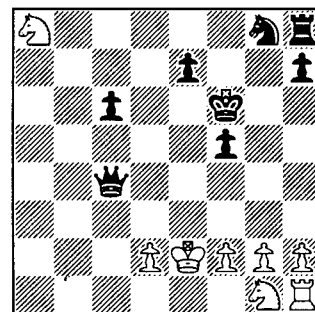
Competition 22

#131 Cassano - Crasto (1982)

Black wins (series 8)

#132 Ervetti - Stefanelli (1988)

White wins (series 9)

#133 Sarale - Figura (1990)

White wins (series 9)

SOLUTIONS

Hostage Chess (see pages 18-19). Stone - Yearout: Black won by 18...(N~N)N*h3+ 19 Kh1 (if Kg2 then (B~B)B*f3+ at once) (P~P)*g2+ 20 Kg2 (B~B)B*f3+ 21 Qxf3 Qxf3+ 22 Kxh3 (B~B)B*g4+ 23 Kh4 g5 mate.

Leslie table-turn: 19 Bxg7!! The threat is 20 N*f6+, and if 19...Kxg7 then 20 N*h5+ and mate in a few (the actual game went 20...Kg6 21 (B~N)N*f4+ and Black resigned).

Leslie - Coast: 43...(N~B)B*b3+. The sequel might have been 44 Kxb3 cxd1(P~B)+ 45 Ka2 (dropping on c2 doesn't help) (P~P)P*b3+ 46 Ka1 (Q~R)R*a2+ Kb1 47 Qc2 mate, or 44 Ka1 (Q~R)R*a2.

Progressive Chess (see page 20). Galvin - Brodie, after 7 Kc2: 8 f5 f4 f3 fxe2 exf1Q d4 Be6 Rxa2 mate.

Same game, "what if" line ending Ba4+: I suggested 9 Kd2 Nc3 Nxa4 Nc3 Ne4 Ng3 Nxh1 f3 Kc3. Black cannot now promote, and while he can capture two of White's pawns he cannot capture all three. White will promote at turn 11, and the rest will be easy.

Losing Chess (see page 21). Liardet - Nagorko, after 7...Qh4. Black threatens 8...Qxh2 9 Rxh2 a6, with possible sequel 10 Bxa6 Rc8 11 Bxc8 Kf8 12 Bxd7 f6 13 Bxe6 Ke8 14 Bxg8 Rxg8 15 Rxh7 and White has a rampant rook. If he plays Rxh7 at any earlier point, Black recaptures, and White's eventual Bxg8 leaves him with a rampant bishop.

Same game, after 16 Ng1. Yes, 17 g4 is indeed a threat; 17...Kxg4 18 Nh3 Kxh2 19 Rg1 Kxh2 20 d4 Kxg1 21 Kf2 Kxf2 22 Be3 Kxe3, and simplest is 23 d5 bringing the knight into play.

van der Bilt - Wortel, after 31...h5: 32 Nd4 (Nc3 and Ng1 also win) h4 33 g3 hxg3 and the game actually finished 34 Ra6 g2 35 Ra7 g1N 36 Ne2 Nxe2 37 Ke6 Nxc1 38 Nb3 Nxb3 39 Ra5 Nxa5 40 Ke5, but 35...g1K would have made White play out the win with R v K and 34 Ra3 would have been slightly more incisive (34...g2 35 Rh3 with six giveaways after any promotion). The one thing *not* to do is to give a man away on f1, when Black will promote to a bishop with a draw at least.

In the Library (page 23): 1 Bb8/Qc7. White takes one of his two pieces completely out of play.

Avalanche proof games (see page 26). The solution to Peter's **10** will appear next time as usual.

JDB diagrams. The pawn advances are fully accounted for by pulls, so the actual moves must have been made by pieces. Upper diagram: Black's last move must have been with a king or a knight and only if it was the final step of a king triangulation could he have made exactly three moves, so 1 Nc3/e6 Ke7/d3 2 Nd5/f6+ Kf7/c3 3 Ne7/f5 Ke8/c4.

Lower diagram: Black's last move was surely a capture, so we need to get one of White's missing men to the eighth rank, and the way that works is 1 Nf3/g6 Bh6/d3 2 Nd4/c6 Bxc1/f3 3 Ne6/c5 Bh6/e3 4 Nf8/g5 Bxf8/e4. The absence of cooks in this owed a great deal to composer's luck!

Antelope arrangements (see page 29). "For maximum antelopes in unguard on the 7x7 board there are 8 distinct patterns, the number of pieces used being 25. One of the solutions is the simple chequering pattern (on the cells of the same colour as the corner cells).
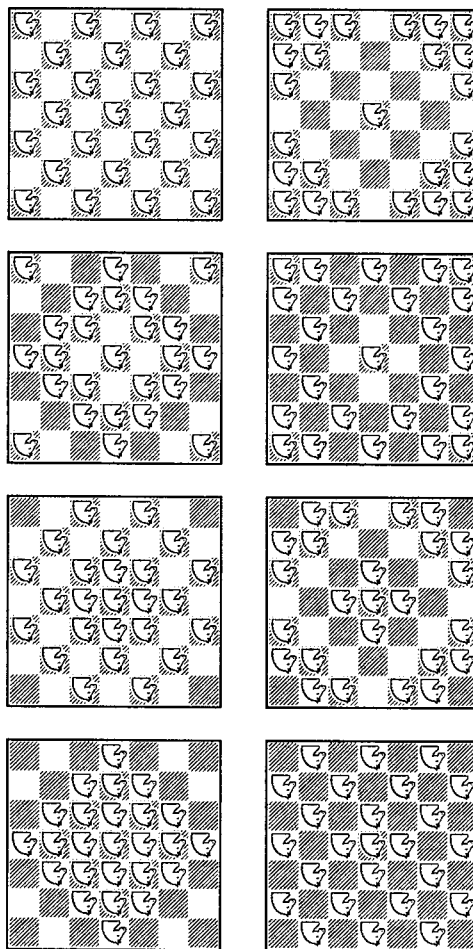
"These patterns are related to the fact that the antelope cannot move when on the central cell (so this is occupied in all patterns) and its moves on the other cells form three separate circuits with no connection between them. On each circuit the antelopes can be placed alternately, that is in 2 ways, giving $2^3 = 8$ ways in all.

"For the {1,4} leaper (giraffe), only the first and last of these patterns work.

"For the {3,4}+{0,5} leaper (five-leaper), the first, last and fifth work."
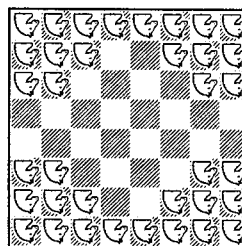
Tom Marlow's 36-antelope setting on the 8x8 board is shown above. George tells me that nothing better than chequering is possible on larger boards.

CONTENTS

Once again we can feature a dozen and more games, and I offer my grateful thanks to all who have contributed material or ideas. Editing a magazine in such circumstances becomes a very easy task.

Credit where credit is due? George Jelliss questions my attachment of his name to the "hypercube" problem (*VC* 45, page 13): "I first saw it when you were demonstrating it [...] just as I arrived for the meeting last year." Yes indeed as to this particular realisation, but I stand by the statement that George had already done the essentials and that my contribution was merely cosmetic. Readers who have the relevant journals can look at issues 13 and 14 of *Chessics* for George's original presentation, and at *The Problemist* for November 1989 for the elegant three-dimensional realisation which he contributed to the "Bournemouth Fairies" solving competition earlier that year, and judge the matter for themselves.

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Here's a little **puzzle**, no originality claimed. Black, White, and Piebald each have a knight, a bishop, and a rook. Place these nine men in nine straight lines on an 8x8 board so that :

- each line contains one knight, one bishop, and one rook;
- either the three men on a line are all of the same colour, or there is one man of each colour;
- *no two lines are parallel.*

I think there are two geometrically distinct solutions; answers next time.

CALENDAR

Circular Chess. I have received no details as yet, but in recent years there has been a "Chrimbo Challenge" at the Tap and Spile, Hungate, Lincoln, on a **Sunday afternoon in January**. I am expecting the same again and intend to turn up, and will gladly answer enquiries from others who may be interested.

The **8th International Colloquium on Board Games Studies** will be held in Oxford on **Wednesday-Saturday April 27-30 2005**. Details can be found on the organizers' web site <www.boardgamesstudies.org>.

Notices for *VC* **47** should be in my hands by **December 15**.

Postal chess as an instrument of economic warfare? Jed Stone's reference to postal play in the fifties (see page 28) reminded me irresistibly of a remark by the late C. H. O'D. Alexander. After commenting on the general timescale of play with the Eastern Europe of his day ("the Communist post is a leisurely affair"), he noted a "curious phenomenon" familiar to all postal players, that with some opponents the more difficult the position the longer it seemed to take letters to reach them. He continued, "in my experience this effect is particularly marked in Bulgaria - any serious threat on my part seemed to paralyse the Bulgarian postal service to such an extent that I began to feel nervous about dislocating the entire Bulgarian economy and bringing the country to a standstill" (*A Book of Chess*, Hutchinson, 1973, pp 98-99). Perhaps postal chess should be in the curricula of our spy training schools?