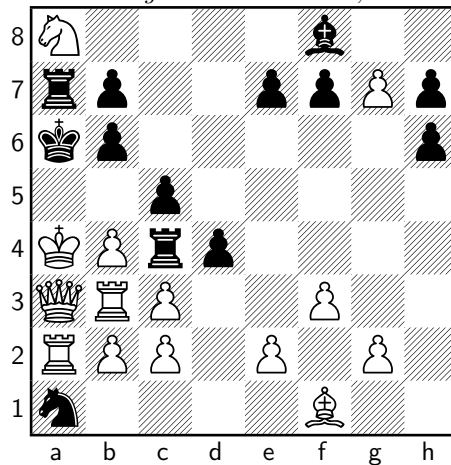# Black-and-White Allegro
(The RA Corner, Volume IV)

Alexander Kislyak

Tempo! Upon proclaiming its own existence at the dawn of the century it swiftly expanded its sounding range – from shy fragmentary bars to melodic rhythmic tunes – and became the true master of RA.

N20. T. R. Dawson
Neuburger Wochenschach, 1911
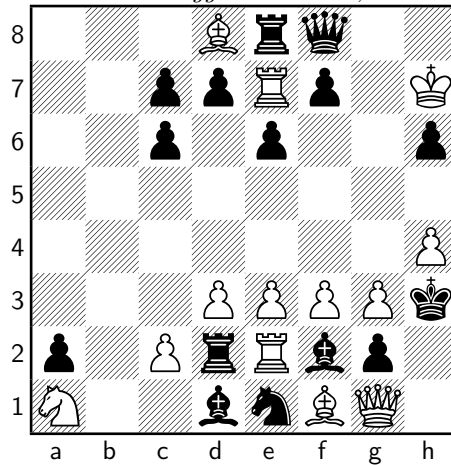

14 + 13. Release the position

Position **N20** is released by the retromove d2:c3, but a Bishop needs to return to c1 before that. White's dark-squared Bishop can only be uncaptured by means of g7:Bh6, provided that the black Rook is already inside the h8-g8 "box." The implementation of this plan, however, is limited in time by the number of White's possible pawn retromoves (attention – retro-notation!): 1.

... c7-c5 2. g6-g7 Rc6-c4 3. g5-g6 Rg6-c6 4. g4-g5 Rg8-g6 5. g3-g4 and 5. ... g7:Bh6! Notice that the moves f2-f3 and h2:g3 must have been made at some earlier stage before the queenside cage was locked – "ventilation panes" were needed for the white King's, Queen's and h1-Rook's exit. The sequence of retromoves g7–g6–g5–g4–g3 is called **tempo-play**. Each one of its tempo-moves is subject to the same common purpose: avoiding a retrostalemate, i.e. a situation in which one of the sides lacks a legal retromove.

Tempoplay motivations are best revealed against the background of the so-called **transformation phases**. Their essence is, on one hand, the alternating tempoplay by white and black pawns, and, on the other hand, the successive movement by black and white pieces.
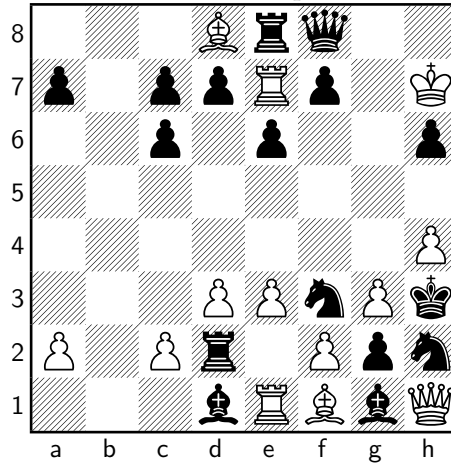
N21. L. Ceriani
32 Personaggi e 1 Autore, 1955

13 + 15. Release the position

After a brief introduction, the tempoplay in **N21** moves on to two clear-cut consecutive phases with sweeping amplitudes (see **N21a**).

N21a. Critical position

13 + 16. White to move

1. Re2 Ne1 2. f3 Bf2 3. Qg1 – unpinning the Knight h2, and 3. ... Ng4 – the first phase has started! 4. a3 Ne5 – the white pawn and the black Knight are playing – 5. a4 Nc4 6. a5 Nd6 7. a6 Nb7 and 8. ab – a transformation! 8. ... a6! Further on: 9. b8N a5 – a black pawn and a white Knight are playing – 10. Na6 a4 11. Nc5 a3 12. Nb3 a2 and the second phase comes to an end: 13. Na1, creating the position presented on diagram **N21**.

Obviously, the number of phases exceeds the number of transformations by one. In **N22**, transformation occurs twice and the number of phases is three.

N22. A. Kislyak
Shakhmaty v SSSR, 1976, 2nd Prize
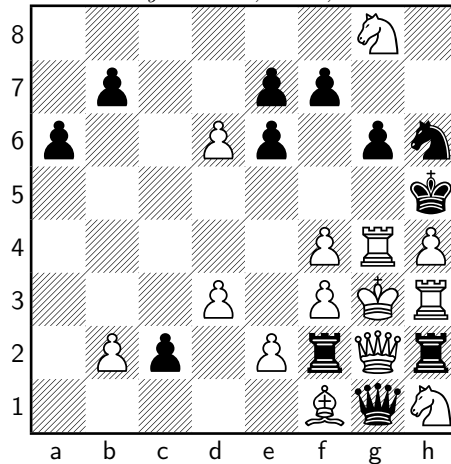
14 + 12. #1

Let us follow the retroplay: 1. ... c3-c2! and 2. c2:Bd3! Here starts the first phase: 2. ... Bb5-d3 3. d5-d6 Bd7-b5 4. d4-d5 Bc8-d7 5. d3-d4 and 5.

19

... d7:Ne6! The second phase: 6. Nc7-e6 c4-c3 7. Na8-c7 c5-c4 8. a7-a8N c6-c5 and 9. b6:Ra7! The third phase: 9. ... Ra8-a7 10. a5:Bb6! Bd4-b6 11. a4-a5 Bg7-d4 12. a3-a4 Bf8-g7 13. a2-a3 g7-g6 14. Rg6-g4 and the position is released. Now, getting back to the initial game array is by no means difficult.

Notice that in **N20** one of the phases is lucid and the other is indistinct. Indeed, following the retromove g7:Bh6 the thematic piece – the black Rook – is not excluded from play, but only restricted in mobility. Just a few strokes, and a second phase would have sounded... But the author was seemingly hypnotized by the spectacular ending: c7-c5.

The tempoplay's apogee – the transformation phases – is a sort of allegro in the hypothetical proof game, it is its climax.
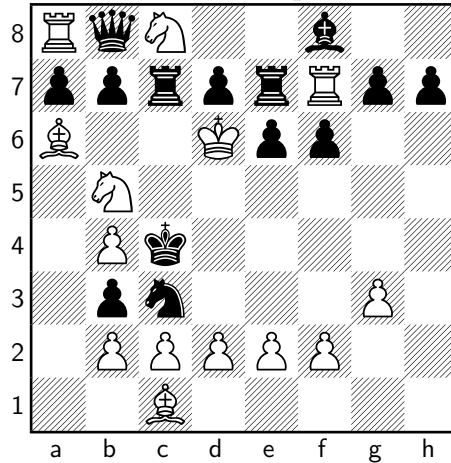
N23. A. Kislyak
Shakhmaty v SSSR, 1985, 1st Prize
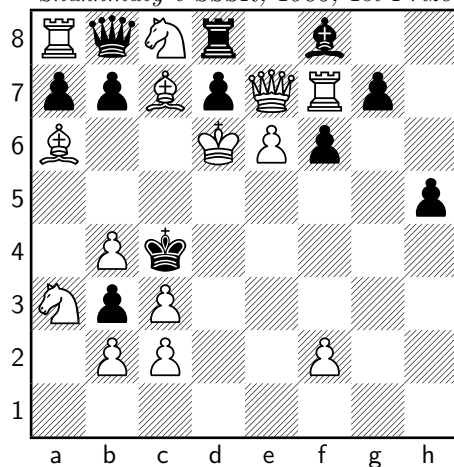
14 + 11. Mate?

In **N23**, four times black and white characters appear on the stage. In **N23a**, the black Bishop c8 and the white **h**-pawn are out of the game. White captured a:Nb4, releasing the Rook a1, black captured c:Qb3, and the balances for both sides are closed. 1. dc – the retrocage has been locked. The black pawn h7 and the white Bishop c1 make the debut here: 1. ... h6 2. Be3 h5 3. Bb6 Rc5+! 4. Bc7! The relay-race is continued by the black Rook - white pawn duet: 4. ... Rg5 5. g4 Rg6 6. g5 Rh6 7. g6 Rh7 8. gh! A black pawn appears under the spotlight – 8. ... e5! and then a white Queen: 9. h8Q! e4 10. Qh6 e3 11. Q:e3! The tension is rising: 11. ... Re8+! and 12.Qe7! Similar to a metronome, the black Rook ticks away the final bars of the epilogue: 12. ... Rd8 13. e3! Re8 14. e4 Rd8 15. e5 Re8 16. e6 Rd8 and 17. Na3 - mate!
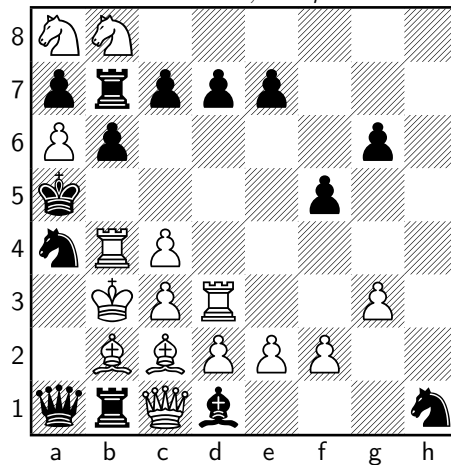
N23a. Critical position

14 + 14. Before Nb5-a3+ and Kc4-d4

In the development of transformation phases, the last word has not been said yet. The dreamt-of ideal is a position with three or four closely fitting excelsior phases... **N24** is but a prelude[7].

N24. A. Kislyak
Schach, 1984

15 + 14. White to move and mate in one

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[7]The content of Mr. Kislyak's **N24** is not limited to the double excelsior – the problem also shows a doubled Phoenix theme: two pieces unpromote not long before their precise duplicates are uncaptured so that they can re-appear on the board – reborn from ashes in a reversed direction of time.

**The RA Corner: An Afterword**

Dear reader,

In 1985, the Soviet chess magazine 64 – Shakhmatnoe Obozrenie *(64 – Chess Review) published the first volume of a new column –* The RA Corner. *In the following two years, four articles by renowned retroanalysts were published – in the 6/1985, 14/1985, 3/1986 and 19/1986 issues. As far as I know, no volumes were published in 1987 and it seems that about that time the column ceased to exist.*

The first two of these volumes bear some emotional significance to me, as they were among the first articles on retroanalysis I ever read. I learned about the existence of volumes III and IV many years later; they are also present here. Volume IV was translated into English several years ago by Andrey Frolkin as a part of A. Kislyak's 1998 book Po Sledam Shakhmatnikh Figur *(On the Tracks of Chess Pieces). His text is reproduced here with his kind permission; only some minor changes were made so as to help this part of the translation fit in better with the others.*

It seems that the most economical analytical e.p. capture is due to Friedrich Amelung:
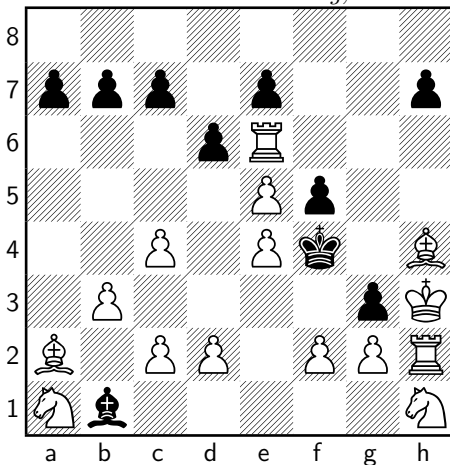
N25. F. Amelung
Duna Zeitung, 1897
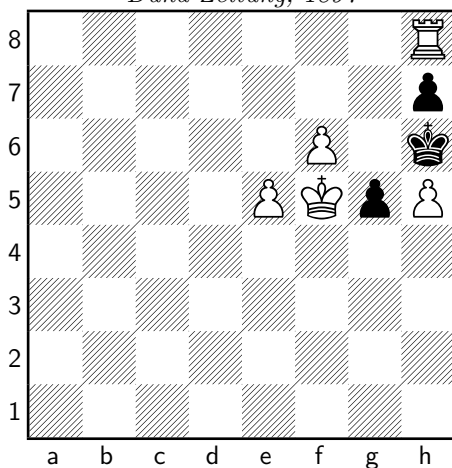
5 + 3. #2

In his article A bila li Nisha-to? *(Shakhmatnaya Kompozitsiya, 9/1995) N. Plaksin goes into a somewhat deeper detail on the early history of retroanalysis. He points out that the "...advent [of e.p. capture problems with the white King placed on the 5th rank next to the black pawn that is to be captured] continues to the present day...", quoting a problem from 1993. He writes: "Loyd's revelation [the Souvenir problem] ... flowered unexpectedly: from 1907 to 1915, Troitsky,*

*Dawson and Hundsdorfer published 58 original problems (N26 was the touchstone)... But why did Loyd's innovation lay in vain for 12 years? And, it turns out, in the period 1894-1907 the vacuum in the "non-standard e.p." niche was not complete – **N27**. But wasn't this just an exception?!"*
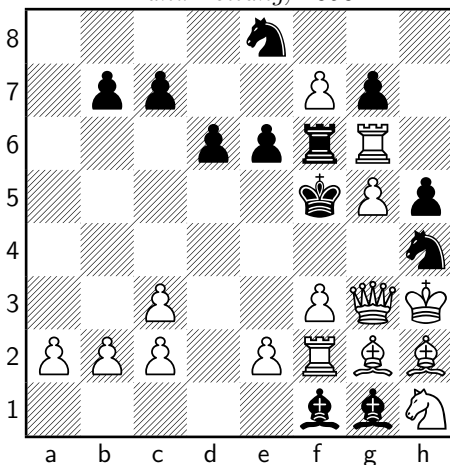
N26. A. Troitsky
Deutsche Schachzeitung, 1907

15 + 10. #3

N27. K. Sternberg
Duna Zeitung, 1898

15 + 12. #3

"On August 6 and August 20, 1897, Duna Zeitung *published an article by the chess column editor F. Amelung* New Chess Ideas (En Passant Capture as a Problem Theme)*." It listed several compositions of the standard type. And two months later in the* St. Petersburger Zeitung *newspaper... H. Seyboth*[8]*,*

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[8]In tracking down the original spelling of the name of Hans Seyboth (1864 – 1938), I

referring to F. Amelung's article, published **N28**... *Was Troitsky acquainted with Loyd's problem?...* *"But Troitsky must have seen Seyboth's column in* St. Petersburger Zeitung, *too" – E. I. Umnov conjectured in one of his letters..."*

N28. H. Seyboth
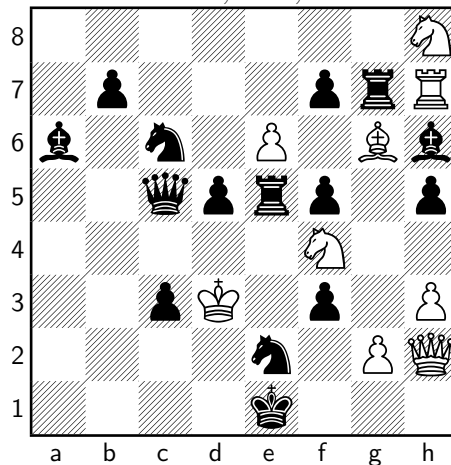
St. Petersburger Zeitung, 1897

Version from Baltische Schachblatter, 1898
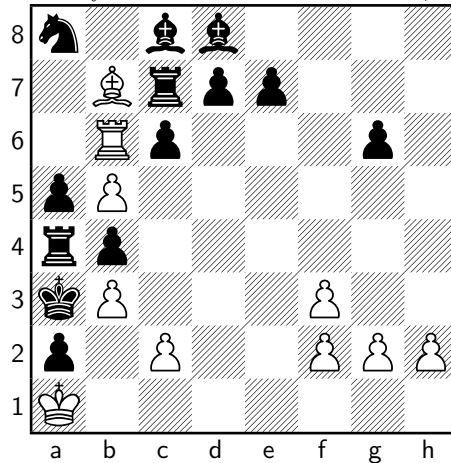
10 + 13. White to move. What was Black's last move?

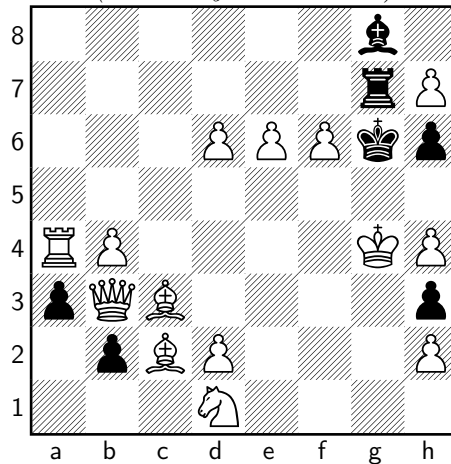**N29. A. Frolkin & Y. Lebedev**

Die Schwalbe, 1993, 3rd Prize

9 + 15. Last 11 single moves?

Three is the record number of en passant captures in a retro problem known today. After N. Hoeg, the theme was taken up by several composers. **N29** and **N30** are two of the most memorable examples.
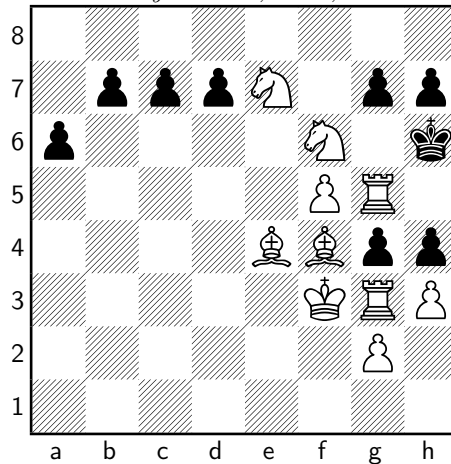
N30. L. Borodatov

Shakhmaty v SSSR, 1989
(version by L. Borodatov)

14 + 7. #1

N31. A. Kornilov

*Shakhmaty v SSSR, 1981, 1st Prize*

10 + 9. Release the position

The simple and elegant idea of Arpad Molnar was later used multiple times. It seems that Andrey Kornilov succeeded to take it to the limit. In **N31**, five white Knights were captured in the last five moves.

***

While editing this text, Andrey Frolkin provided to me quite extensive historical notes on the theme bearing his name.

As Gerd Wilts noticed in the mid-1990s, it seems that the first ever retro problem to demonstrate multiple *captures of promoted pieces was published by T. R. Dawson in 1912. It was a proof game, though, not a "classical" retro (or a "resolution retro", as it is sometimes called), and not a unique one – some small alterations in the move sequence are possible.*

N32. T. R. Dawson
Hampstead and Highgate Express, 1912
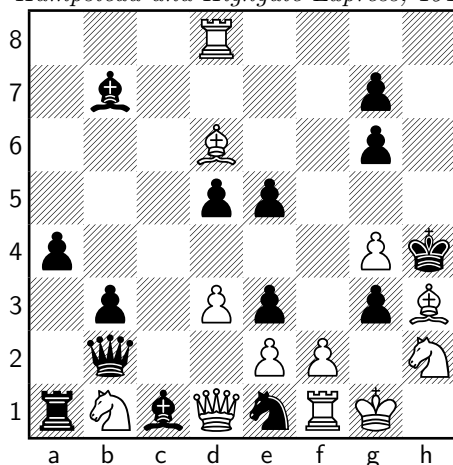
12 + 14. Proof game in 34.5 moves

Later on, Luigi Ceriani undertook a thorough study of the subject in the 1930s and 40s. He composed problems demonstrating all possible monochromatic "Ceriani duplexes" – that is, all possible pairs of two pieces of the same colour to be captured after they appear on the board. He also attempted to compose one problem showing a threefold implementation of the theme (Sahovski Vjesnik, 1950, 1st Prize) but it was cooked. His correction, which makes use of the same matrix – **N33** – is still quite a brilliant problem, even though it is "only" a duplex (it is also a bichromatic or a "mixed" duplex, with the two pieces being of different colours).

In 1972, Nikita Plaksin published the first sound (after it survived a cook and a following correction) triplex – a monochromatic one, with three white Knights as the dramatis personae. Arpad Molnar's Bishop triplex followed in 1976.

About that time, N. Plaksin contacted A. Frolkin on the question of the missing Rook and Queen Ceriani triplexes. Mr. Frolkin's two subsequent problems were published in N. Plaksin's column in the Shakhmaty v SSSR *magazine, receiving a 1st Prize and a Special Prize, respectively*[9].

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[9]Both problems made use of the castling convention – that is, for the author's design to work properly, a castling must be legal in the diagram position. Such problems are sometimes considered to be "slightly" conditional (as they would not work with the "Release the position!" purest-of-all retro-stipulation), similarly to the "#1" problems where the stipulation is used to implicitly indicate the side to move – such as Mr. Lyubashevsky's **N15**.
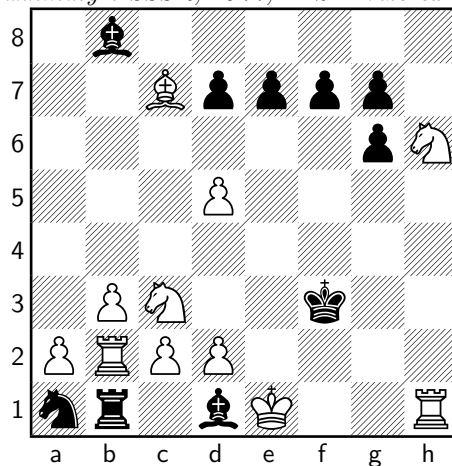
N33. L. Ceriani
Sahovski Vjesnik, 1950, 1st Prize
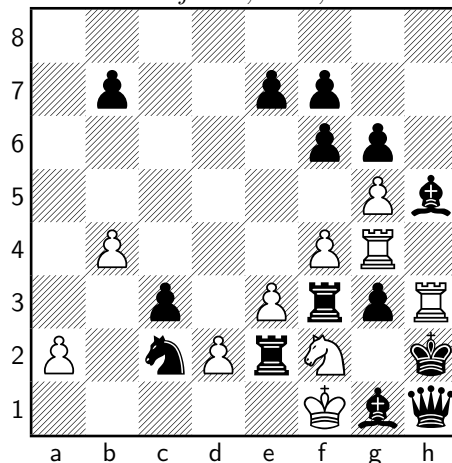
10 + 14. Where was the white queen Bishop captured?

N34. A. Frolkin
Shakhmaty v SSSR, 1977, 1.-2. Prize ex aequo

11 + 10. #1

Mr. Frolkin continued to work actively on the triplex theme. Accumulating a large amount of material, he proposed to Mr. Plaksin that the two of them co-author an article on the subject. After this proposal went unnoticed, he published an article of his own in the Die Scwalbe *magazine (1979). Most of the problems contained in it can be found on the Chess Problem Database specifying the search criterion* "a='frolkin' and year='1979' and month='10'".

The Die Schwalbe *retro-columnist Gunter Lauinger then coined the term* "Frolkin theme". *Back then, it was only used to describe triplexes of captured promotees – a pretty natural choice, given that at the time more than 10 triplex problems were composed by A. Frolkin and half as many by other composers*

(N. Plaksin, A. Molnar, A. Kislyak and F. Fatchullin). This was also when N. Plaksin started a large-scale campaign to replace the term "Frolkin theme" with "Ceriani theme". In Western chess composition literature, "Ceriani-Frolkin theme" seems to have settled stably for quite some time now.

In 1981, Andrey Frolkin composed the first Ceriani-Frolkin quartex. It was a bichromatic one (a black Knight, a white Bishop and two white Queens). All was silent in the field of quartexes for the next seven years, until in 1988 Nikita Plaksin and Boris Lurye published the first monochromatic quartex – **N36**. *Ten or fifteen more monochromatic qurtexes followed, almost all of them Mr. Plaksin's creations[10].*

N35. A. Frolkin
problem, 1981
*Pavlovic Memorial Tourney, 1st Honourable Mention*
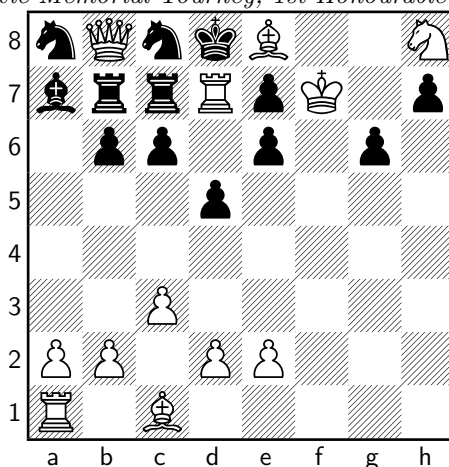
12 + 13. Release the position

No one has ever achieved a Ceriani quintex in a classical-style retro problem, though several examples in conditional retros and proof games are known. The records there are, respectively, 6 in an SPG (Michel Caillaud, Europe Echecs, *1994, Dedicated to A. Frolkin and G. Wilts – CPDB number P0004254) and 6 in a conditional problem (Andrey Frolkin,* feenschach, *1981 – CPDB number P0005941).*

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[10]With a few exceptions by Alexander Kislyak, Alexander Zolotarev and the classical problem of Harry Goldsteen – the latter being based on another idea of Mr. Frolkin!

N36. N. Plaksin & B. Lurye
Ranok, 1988, 1.-2. Prize
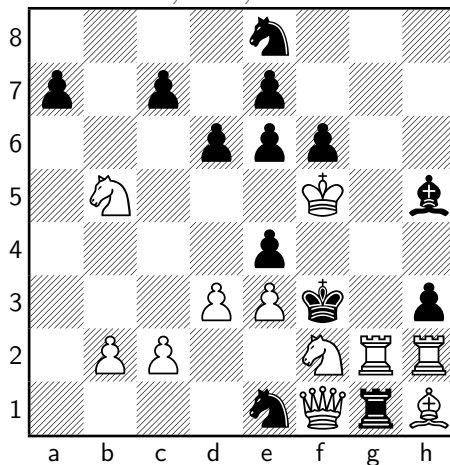
11 + 13. Release the position

***

Leonid Lyubashevsky is the author of many other excellent retros, a great number of them in co-authorship with A. Frolkin or S. Sidelnikov. **N33** is one of the most enjoyable examples (at least in my experience). Others can be found on the Chess Problem Database.
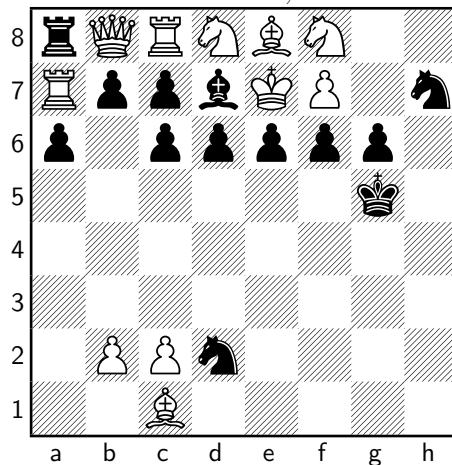
N37. A. Frolkin & L. Lyubashevsky
Die Schwalbe, 1987, 2nd Prize
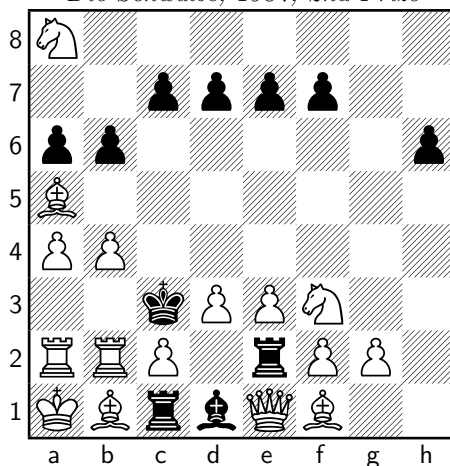
16 + 11. Release the position

An idea, similar to the one of **N17** – many unpromotions needed to help white pieces escape a very tight retrocage (but without multiple uncaptures of promoted pieces on the same square!) – was demonstrated by Michel Caillaud in his classical problem:

N38. M. Caillaud
Die Schwalbe, 1981

11 + 13. Release the position

Besides transformation phases, Luigi Ceriani – the Great Master of retro-analysis – considered three other notable types of retro-play: substitution phases, retro-opposition and checks phases. Ceriani's books are difficult to find today, but one brief introduction to the subject is available in N. Plaksin's excellent paper 16 Mgnovenii: Portret k Stoletiyu *(16 Moments: A Hundredth Anniversary Portrait,* Shakhmatnaya Kompozitsiya, *13-16/1996) which can be found here:*
    http://chessproblem.net/viewtopic.php?f=10&t=373

N39. A. Kislyak
feenschach, 1989, 2.-3. Honourable Mention
*Dedicated to Boris Klementyev*
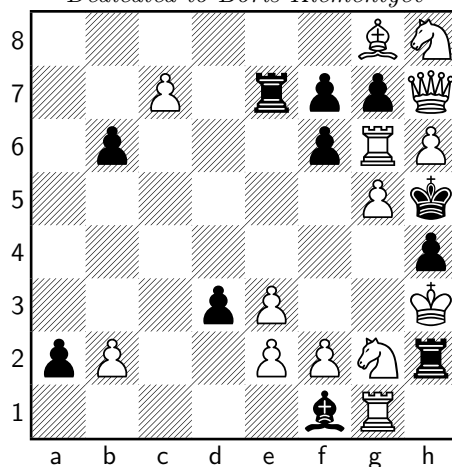
14 + 11. Release the position

Alexander Kislyak – another great master and the first official world champion in retroanalytical composition – continued to work on synthesizing transformation phases and determined retroplay with other notable retroanalytical themes. His **N39** *features six (!) transformation phases, and the later works* **N40** *and* **N41** *are two more of his finest creations.*
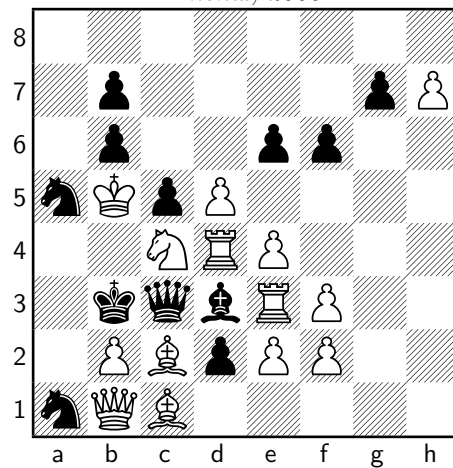
N40. A. Kislyak
The Ural's Problemist, 2000, 1st Prize
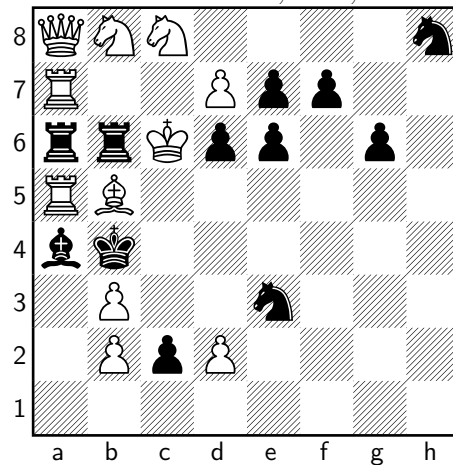
11 + 12. Release the position

N41. A. Kislyak
Phenix, 2000

14 + 12. Last 32 single moves?

Of special interest is his long series of beautiful problems showing duplex Ceriani-Frolkin theme with two pieces of the same type but different colour published in the 1990s and the 2000s.

Completing this translation would have been impossible without the help of the Chess Problem Database,

`http://www.softdecc.com/pdb/index.pdb`

the Retrograde Analysis Corner

`http://www.janko.at/Retros/index.htm`

and the Retro Mailing List, the archives of which are available here:

`http://www.pairlist.net/pipermail/retros/`

For the chess diagrams, I used the same typesetting system as the one employed by Alain Brobecker in the "Last Moves Records" booklet series. His LaTex source code is available for download at

`http://abrobecker.free.fr/chess/lengths.zip`

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Edited by Andrey Frolkin
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