

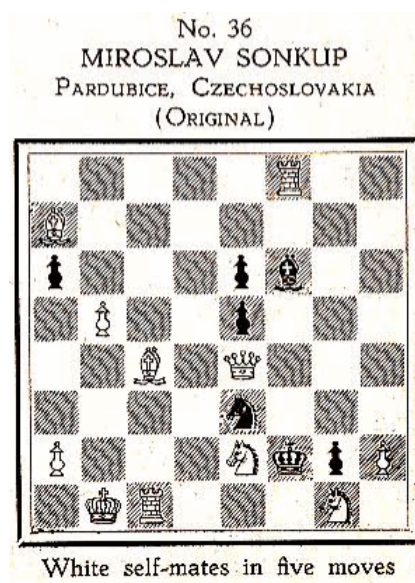
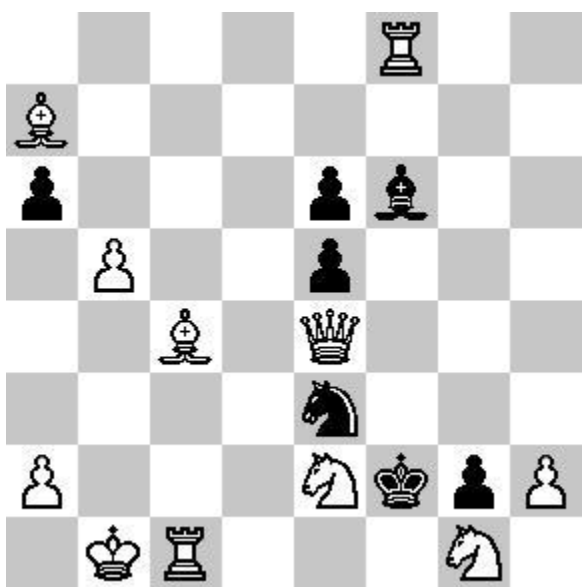
A Missing Soukup Problem?

By Steven B. Dowd, 25.6.2009

One of my favorite activities as a student of chess problems is downloading the public access documents from [Vaclav's](#) site. As an American, the magazines Chess Review and Chess Life interest me the most. In general, I look for ways to correct problems by American authors for entry into Brian Stephenson's [Meson](#) database. With computers, even an amateur like me can work through a problem to find corrections that still meet the thematic requirements of the original authors.

However, in the March 1933 issue of [Chess Review](#) (only the third issue of the magazine; if it was [Soukup](#), he may have been an early submitter because of his editorial connections, knowing the magazine was starting up soon), a selfmate by "Miroslav Sonkup of Pardubice, Czechoslovakia" (Problem number 36) caught my eye:

"Miroslav Sonkup"
S#5



I have every reason to believe that "Sonkup" is just a mangled version of "Soukup" and would appreciate any confirmation of this. It would be in fact one of the first selfmates ever published in Chess Review (a selfmate in two by Prytz appeared in the same issue), one not found in the WinChloe database, as Vaclav noted to me.

In the April issue, it is noted that the problem was missing a requested dedication, "To Alain C. White," making it look like the problem was destined to suffer from the so-called "dedication disease" (that is, something always goes wrong with a dedication problem!).

In the solver's section, it is later noted that the problem is cooked. The editor at the time was the great Wurzburg, who took over on the second issue, the first issue being just reprints. He noted the 1. Td1 solution is the one intended by the author, and was "much praised." This was in the days when magazines had many solvers who worked very hard to solve and cook problems, and the early Chess Review was no exception.

Whether Wurzburg made the mistake with Soukup's name is not known, perhaps not, as he only joined the magazine with the second issue. I also do not know enough Czech to know if this use of an "n" instead of a "u" was some sort of transcription mistake through misreading Soukup's handwriting, or any other plausible explanation. Given Wurzburg's background, both personally and as a chess composer, it seems like a strange mistake for him to make.

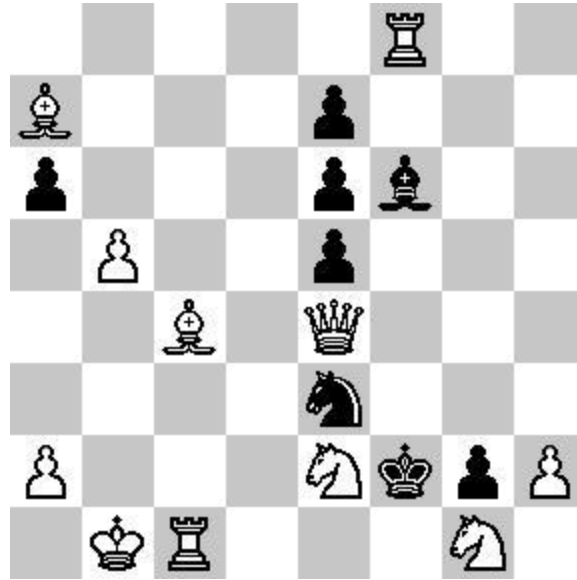
Interestingly, corrections to problems were rarely published in those days, in later issues of both Chess Review and America's other chess magazine, Chess Life, some editors would not accept corrections from authors or others, letting the problem sit as incorrect, the prevailing notion being that cooks should be eliminated pre-publication. This is a high goal, but perhaps unrealistic, especially for those days.

Solutions:

1.Tc1-d1 Ba6-a5 2.Kb1-a1 Ba5-a4 3.Td1-b1 Ba4-a3 4.De4-c2 Be5-e4 5.Se2-d4 Se3-c2#
1... Ba6-b5 2.Lc4-b3 Bb5-b4 3.De4-c2 Be5-e4 4.Lb3-e6 Bb4-b3 5.Se2-c1 Bb3-c2#
1.Lc4-e6 Ba6-a5 2.Kb1-a1 Ba5-a4 3.Tc1-b1 Ba4-a3 4.De4-c2 Be5-e4 5.Se2-d4 Se3-c2#
1... Ba6-b5 2.De4-b4 Be5-e4 3.Le6-c4 Bb5-c4 4.Tc1-d1 Bc4-c3 5.Se2-c1 Bc3-c2#

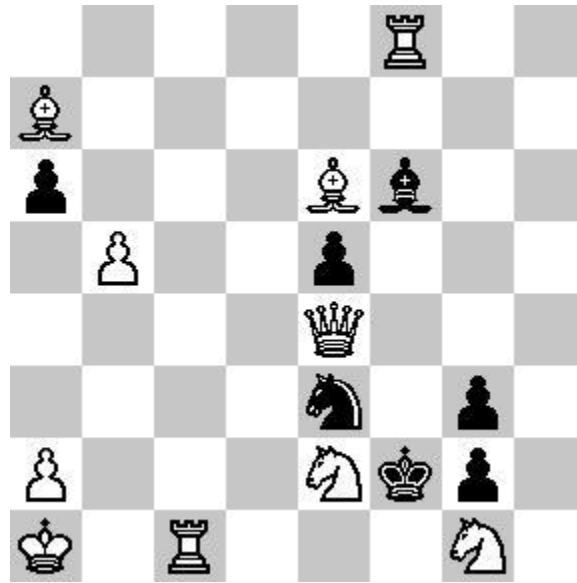
The problem is of course easily fixed by adding a black pawn on e7, making Bxe6 as anything other than a settling move impossible (coming back to c4 would now of course allow 3 e6! rather than the forced 3 ... bxc).

Miroslav Soukup v. Steven B. Dowd
S#5 (C+)



I am perhaps an odd sort in that sometimes the cooks to problems, especially in selfmates, where the computers show us ideas we may not have thought of, are interesting to me as possible main lines. One can make another s#5 from the cook. One reason I liked it is that I thought it might be extendable to a s#8, which I have been unsuccessful in doing (I made my composition partner, Mirko Degenkolbe suffer through this exercise). I liked the tempo move of the king, and the immediate switchback if black chooses to push the pawn instead of capture.

Steven B. Dowd (sketch) after Soukup
S#5 (C+)



1.Ka1-b1 Ba6-a5 2.Kb1-a1 Ba5-a4 3.Tc1-b1 Ba4-a3 4.De4-c2 Be5-e4 5.Se2-d4 Se3-c2#
1... Ba6-b5 2.De4-b4 Be5-e4 3.Le6-c4 Bb5-c4 4.Tc1-d1 Bc4-c3 5.Se2-c1 Bc3-c2#

Now Soukup, if he is the author, may take issue with my version – instead of two cross-check versions, now Sc1 is only a “settling” move to provide the block that makes Pc2 a mate. A longer version of either would be interesting, if possible (I think only a longer version of the cook is possible, but I have been proven wrong many times, and perhaps I am also mistaken and Soukup had this problem, 70 years ago, at its ideal length!), I end this article with this challenge to other composers, and for others with an interest in history to peruse Vaclav’s archives in the hopes of both learning the past of chess problems and perhaps correcting the problem of a great composer from the past, many of which deserve to be preserved.