OBITUARIES

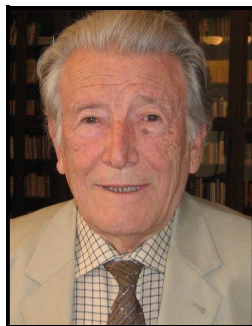## ALEKSANDAR POPOVSKI (28.4.1932 – 28.12.2023)

Sad farewell to the doyen of Macedonian problem chess

The news of the demise of **Aleksandar Popovski** (AlPo) at the end of 2023 made us sad, for he was the doyen of problem chess in Macedonia and a good friend to us and other chess composers.

Aleksandar was born in the village of Novo (Kosovo (Yugoslavia) in 1932. He spent his youth years in Kavadarci (Macedonia) and then lived in the State's capital Skopje. After his studies of literature and world literature at the Philological faculties in Skopje and Ljubljana (Slovenia), respectively, he was a journalist in Radio Skopje and the *Trudbenik* [*Labourer*] and *Vecher* [*Evening*] newspapers, the Editor in Chief of the children's magazine *Razvigor* [*Spring Wind*] in the eminent publishing company "Detska radost" ["Children Joy"], and the Editor in Chief of the family publishing company "Aleksandar & Aleksandar". He wrote more than 20 books of poetry and prose (some of which received prominent awards), as well as three anthologies. The general public, however, did not know much about Aleksandar's deeds in the realm of chess poetry.

Although the period between the World Wars I and II saw the publication of the first chess problems by other residents of Macedonia (which in this period was a part of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia without any sovereignity of its own, or recognition as an independent nation), it was Aleksandar Popovski who is credited for establishing the basis of the problem chess organisation in the post-war Socialistic Republic of Macedonia (part of Yugoslavia from 1945 to 1991). After running a problem column on the airwaves of Radio Skopje in the 1950s and organising the first thematic composing tourney, Aleksandar organised solving and composing tourneys in printed outlets, including the youth magazine *Mlad Borec* [*Young Fighter*] in the 1960s. Aleksandar's problem chess columns introduced the craft of solving chess problems and the art of creation of chess compositions to many newcomers, of whom some (notably Živko Janevski, Nikola Stolev, Zlatko Mihajloski and Boško Milošeski) put the name of Macedonia on the problem world map. His subsequent problem chess publishing and editorial work includes 40 issues of *Novi temi* [*New Themes*] from 1971 to 1983 and 14 issues of *Falanga* [*Phalanx*] from 1994 to 1998.

Aleksandar Popovski started as a solver and won first places in several tournaments, but his main preoccupation was chess composing. His composing portfolio includes more than 1,000 chess problems in almost all genres, and his composing successes were often team successes, too (see **№s 1** and **2**). Being curious by nature and persistently searching for novelties, Aleksandar "broke new ground" by defining a theme which bears his name (see **№ 3**). Although he rarely composed jointly, he was no stranger to co-authoring with his friends in the country and abroad (see **№s 4** and **5**), particularly in genres that were not often explored by himself (**№ 5**). Aleksandar's vivid spirit lead him to the vaste expanses of non-orthodox chess, where he made entertaining problems in pleasantly light setttings (**№s 6-9**). He was one of the few Macedonian problemists who composed fairy problems, including notably miniatures (**№s 8** and **9**). In 2001, *The Macedonian Problemist* published "8 x 8 by AlPo: 64 selected problems by Aleksandar Popovski".

Aleksandar's activities are registered in golden letters in the Macedonian problem chess annals. Being grateful for his contribution to our probem chess development, we are committed to cherishing his legacy and keeping memories of our long-lasting collegial and friendship relations. This homage of Aleksandar's work and deeds hopefully contributes to these aims, as well as to the aim of bringing closer his work and deeds to the wider problem chess communiy.
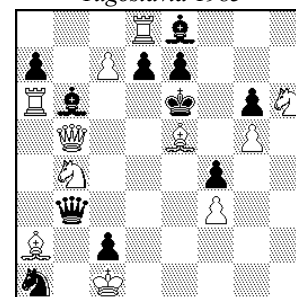
Zoran Gavrilovski, GM and the Editor of *The Macedonian Problemist*, and Nikola Stolev, FIDE Master and the former President of the Macedonian Problem Chess Commission

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1. Aleksandar Popovski
1st Pl. *Macedonia – Bosnia and Hercegovina* 1956-1957
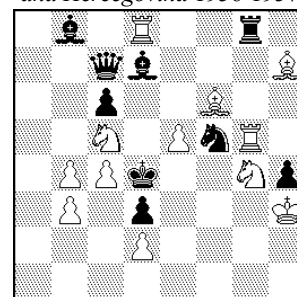
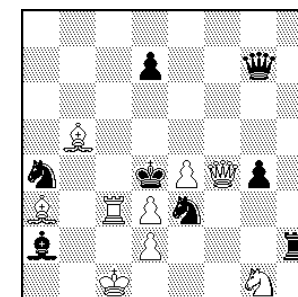

#2   8+12

2. Aleksandar Popovski
2nd Pl. *Netherlands – Yugoslavia* 1985

#2 ᵛ ᵛ   11+11
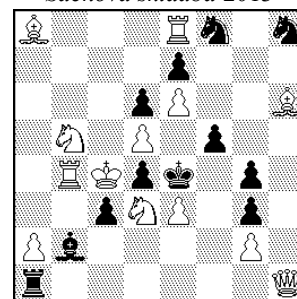
3. Aleksandar Popovski
2nd Pr. *Novi temi* 1974-1975

#2 *   9+8

№ 1: **1.♘h2!** (2.♘f3#), 1...♞~+ 2.♘e6#, 1...♞d6+ 2.e6#, 1...♞g7+ 2.♖g4#. Cross-checks.

№ 2: *1.♗d4?* **A** (2.♕e5#), 1...d6 **y** 2.♕e2# **C**, 1...d5! **x**; *1.♗c3?* **B** (2.♕e5#), 1...d5 **x** 2.♕e2# **C**, 1...d6! **y**; **1.♕e2!** **C** (2.♗:f4#), 1...d5 **x** 2.♗c3# **B**, 1...d6 **y** 2.♗d4# **A**. *Banny* theme and *Reversal I* with shut off mates after unpinng of black pieces at the B1 moves.

№ 3: * 1...♕e5 2.♕:e3# **A**; 1...d5 2.e5# **B**, 1...♞:c3 2.d:e3# **C**; **1.♖c5!** (2.♕:e3# **A**, 2.e5# **B**, 2.d:e3# **C**), 1...♗c4 2.♕:e3# **A**, 1...♞c2(♞d1, ♞f1), ♖:d2 2.e5# **B**, 1...♕g5 2.d:e3# **C**. *Popovski* theme: Reappearance of the set mates in another phase as a multiple or double threat [* 1...**x**/**y**/**z** 2.**A**#/**B**#/**C**#, 1.M! (or 1.M?) ~ 2.**A**#/**B**#/**C**#; or *: 1...**x**/**y** 2.**A**#/**B**#, 1.M! (or 1.M?) ~ 2.**A**#/**B**# (see № 2830 in this issue)]; or as single threats [*: 1...**x**/**y**/**z** 2.**A**#/**B**#**C**#; 1.M? ~ 2.A#; 1.N? ~ 2.B#; 1.P! ~ 2.C#; or *: 1...**x**/**y** 2.**A**#/**B**#; 1.M? ~ 2.A#; 1.N! ~ 2.B#].

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4. Evgeny Fomichev & Aleksandar Popovski
Šachová skladba 2013

#3   13+12

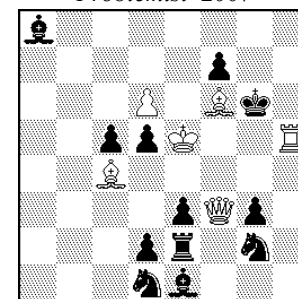**5. Aleksandar Popovski & Boško Milošeski**
Vratnica-64 2003
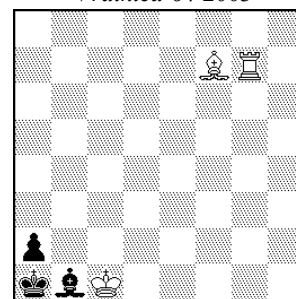
#7   3+3

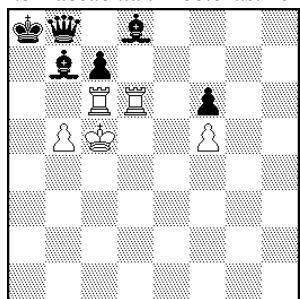**6. Aleksandar Popovski**
2nd Pr. *The Macedonian Problemist* 2007

S#2 ᵛ   6+12

№ 4: **1.♗f4!** (2.♘c5+ d:c5 3.d6#), 1...♖:a2 2.♘f2+ g:f2 3.g3#, 1...d:e3 2.♘:c3+ ♗:c3 3.♔:c3#, 1...♞d7 2.♖:d6+ e:d6 3.e:d7#. Fourfold sacrifice and white battery opening.

№ 5: *1.♗g2?* (2.♖b2) ♗c2! **x**; **1.♗b3!** (2.♖a7) ♗c2 **x** 2.♗:a2 (3.♔c2 ♚:a2 4.♖a7#) ♗b3 3.♗b1 (4.♖a7+ ♗a2/♗a4 4.♖:a2#/♖:a4#) ♗f4 4.♖h7! (zz) ♗a2 5.♗:a2 (6.♔c2 ♚:a2 7.♖a7#) 5...♚:a2 6.♖h3 (zz) ♚a1 7.♖a3. Published in issue 12. A version with ♗f7→a4 & ♗b1→g6 by B.M. and AlPo was published in *Vratnica-64* 25/2007 on 11.03.2007 and it won a 2nd Prize.
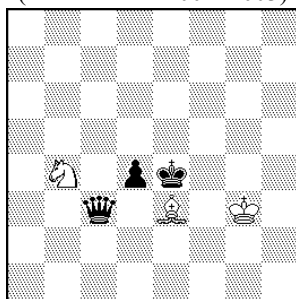
№ 6: *1.♖h1?* (2.♖:g3+ ♗:g3#), 1...♞h4!; **1.♖h8!** (2.♕:g3+ ♗:g3#), 1...♘f2 2.♕g4+ ♞:g4#, 1...♖f2 2.♕f5+ ♖:f5#, 1...♞f4 2.♗d3+ ♞:d3#. Interferences of a black line on the B1 move.

7. Aleksandar Popovski
2ⁿᵈ H.M. Lj. Anastasov – 70 JT
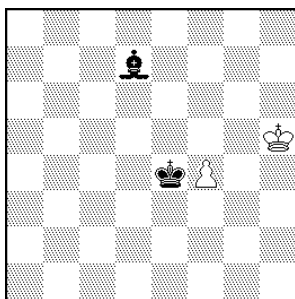*The Macedonian Problemist* 2011

8. Aleksandar Popovski
Probleemblad 2003
(FIDE Album 2001–2003)

9. Aleksandar Popovski
feenschach 2002

H#2 *   5+6

H#3   Parrain Circe   3+3
3 solutions

H#3½ Equipollent Circe 2+2
2 solutions

№ 7: * 1...♖:c7 2.♚a7 ♖a6#, 1.♛a7+ ♖b6 2.♚b8 ♖:d8#. Two model echo-like mates.

№ 8: 1.♚:e3 ♘c2[♗f1]+ 2.♛:c2 ♗e2[♘b3] 3.♛:e2 ♘c5[♗f4]#; 1.♛c2 ♘c6 2.♚:e3 ♘:d4[♗f1] 3.♛d2[♙e4] ♘f5#; 1.d3 ♚g4 2.♛:b4 ♗d4[♘a5] 3.♛:d4 ♘c4[♗f3]#. *Parrain Circe*: A captured units are reborn, but on completion of the move following the capture move. The length and direction of this following move is the same as the length and direction from the capture square to the rebirth square (e.g. capture on e4 followed by move ♘g8-h6: rebirth on f2). If that square is occupied or does not lie on the board, the captured unit does not return.

№ 9: 1...♚g5 2.♗h3 f5 3.♗:f5[♙d7] d8♛ 4.♚e5 ♛d5#; 1...f5 2.♚:f5[♙g6] ♚h4 3.♚:g6[♙h7] h8♛ 4.♗f5 ♛g7#. See the definition of *Equipollent Circe* at page 43.

Aleksandar's literature opus was praised by the poet and critic Miho Atanasovski who wrote: "From his manner of creating poems, his style, and his way of forming verses and the thoughts contained in them, I'm entitled to say that the poet Aleksandar Popovski has already traced his own original path, which certainly distinguishes him from his generation of poets. ... He continues to follow that path and to explore even more deeply in pursuit of the truths of life."

The Man

In roads I leave myself, even on those that I've never walked
on the pages of books, even those that I did not ever leaf through

To other people I leave myself
dear and disagreeable, known and unknown
to envy I leave myself, to anger I leave myself
to unfulfillment I leave myself, in uncertaintly I leave myself

And so little by little, I expend and diminish myself
I'm becoming thin as thread before it snaps

Once still I hoped tiny and inside my being to find a nice place
a place without thorns and burdocks
without the stabs of angry blackberries

So I leave myself later to be discovered by an unexpected quest
to deliver to other people what I did not manage to deliver.

The Tree of Life

There is no one to stop at the landmark
to seek freshness under its branches

Nobody reaches out with arm or mouth
to nibble its juicy fruits

As this remarkable tree does not exist
as its forms cannot be seen

Are there not leaves, clouds, blossoms
is there not a rich crop of heavy fruits?

Am I the last to gaze admiringly
To the trunk firmly upraised

Are there others to come later
through scattered twigs and splinters

Disregarded anchored remains after
the woodcutter's job is finished.

Translation/proofreading of Aleksandar Popovski's poems: Zoran Gavriloski/John Rice