

British Endgame Study News

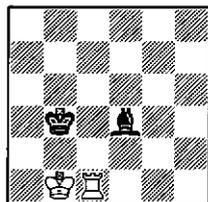
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Edited and published by John Beasley, 7 St James Road, Harpenden, Herts AL5 4NX
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by Marc Bourzutschky
42 moves to capture

This issue. The special number continues our look at foreign studies which first appeared in *EG*, there is my usual March book list, and we have a puzzle which recently occurred to Noam Elkies: find a reciprocal zugzwang with $K + R \vee K + R$ on a 5x6 board (answer on page 423).

Spotlight (see also back page). Rather a lot this time, and first place must go to Marc Bourzutschky's analysis of $R \vee B$ on a 6x6 board. Marc had sent me this in 2004, but it had failed to register, and I had forgotten about it until Noam Elkies reminded me just before the December *BESN* was due to go to press. I didn't have time to put more than a brief note into December's middle pages, but I can put the record straight now. Marc performed a normal backward analysis, and found that the longest win (see above) took 42 moves to capture: 1 Ka1 Bc4 2 Re1 Bd3 3 Re5 Kc3 4 Ka2 Kd4 5 Re1 Kc3 6 Ka3 Bf5 7 Re5 Bd3 8 Rc5+ Kd4 9 Kb4 Be4 10 Rc1 Kd3 11 Rd1+ Kc2 12 Rd4 Bd3 13 Rd6 Bf1 14 Re6 Bd3 15 Re5 Bf1 16 Ra5 Kd3 17 Kb3 Kd4 18 Ra4+ Kd3 19 Ra6 Kd4 20 Rd6+ Kc5 21 Rf6 Be2 22 Rf4 Kd5 23 Kc3 Ke5 24 Rb4 Kd5 25 Ra4 Bf1 26 Rd4+ Ke5 27 Rd1 Bb5 28 Kb4 Bc6 29 Kc4 Be4 30 Re1 Kf5 31 Kd4 Bc2 32 Rf1+ Ke6 33 Rc1 Bb3 34 Rb1 Bc2 35 Rb5 Kf6 36 Kd5 Bd1 37 Rb2 Bf3+ 38 Kd4 Ke6 39 Rb1 Kd6 40 Rb6+ Bc6 41 Ra6 Ke6 42 Rxc6+.

On a 6x8 board (a1-h6), the win from the same position takes 110 moves!

Alain Villeneuve reports that Oñate's 2 in special number 57 is cooked by 2 Ka3! (instead of 2 Be6), with 2...Kc3 3 Kxa4 Kd4 4 Be6 c5 5 Bc8 c4 6 Bxb7 c3 7 Ka3 and 2...Bc2 3 h7 Bxh7 4 Bxh7 Kc3 5 Kxa4 Kd4 6 Kxa5 c5 7 Bg8 Ke5 8 Bc4! Kd6 9 Ba6! (luring Black to c6 - if 9 Bf1 at once then 9...c4 draws) Kc6 10 Bf1 and 11 Bh3.

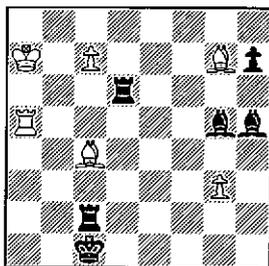
Alain also points out that in Gurgenzidze's 3 on page 411, 1 fxxg6+? must be met by 1...Kh6 (1...Kh8 allows 2 Rh5+ as in the solution), and he spots a good secondary line in Gurgenzidze's 14 in the special number: 3...Rf2+ 4 Kc3 Rfb2! threatening perpetual check, and even mate after 5 Re8+? Kd1. White must now play 5 Rc8!, so that Rc3 can protect the king against perpetual check and Rc4 against mate: 5...Kd1 6 Rc4!

Large print copies. Readers are reminded that I can supply *BESN* in large print, and any reader who would prefer to receive it in this form is asked to tell me.

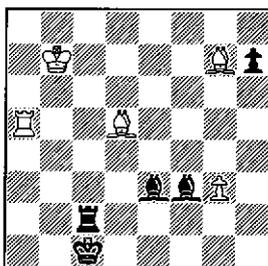
Reflections on a travesty

Readers of other magazines will be aware of the controversy that surrounded the most recent World Chess Composition Tournament. To say that some of the reports do not make good reading is to put the matter very mildly indeed, but I thought it appropriate to wait I had seen the formal minutes of the relevant meeting before making any comment. These having now appeared, the time has come to examine the matter and the way in which it was conducted.

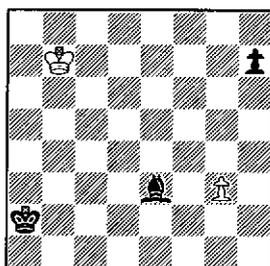
The dispute centred around the following study by Ladislav Salai jr and Ľuboš Kekely of Slovakia:



1 - draw



1a - after 5 Bd5



1b - after 11...Kxa2

Play starts **1 c8Q Be3+ 2 Kb8 Rb6+ 3 Qb7 Rxb7+ 4 Kxb7 Bf3+ 5 Bd5**, and we have the first realisation of the set theme (see **1a**): Black does nothing to save his attacked bishop on f3, but puts a second piece *en prise* by **5...Ra2**. White in turn does nothing to save his rook on a5 but puts his dark bishop *en prise* by **6 Bh6**, thus realising the theme a second time. Play continues **6...Bxd5+ 7 Rxd5 Bxb6 8 Rh5 Be3 9 Rh1+ Kc2 10 Rh2+ Kb3 11 Rxa2** and the draw is established, though the solution actually continued **11...Kxa2** (see **1b**) **12 Kc6 Kb3 13 Kd5 Kc3 14 Ke4 Kd2 15 Kf3**.

This study, along with some others, was given zero points by one of the judges, apparently on the grounds that positions such as **1b** could have been extracted from computer-generated databases. As far as the present study is concerned, such a judgement would seem to have been utterly preposterous. Whatever view individuals may take of the competitive credit to which a composer is entitled for positions which he could have extracted from such databases, I think we are all agreed that he is entitled to full credit for anything which he may have put in front of them, and here the whole of the thematic play, and anything else that might be considered of value, has occurred before the database position is reached. The composers could properly have stopped after White's move 11 (Black is now down to a side pawn and a bishop of the wrong colour, White's king can get back to the corner in front of the pawn, elementary book draw), and had they done so the judge would presumably have seen nothing amiss and would have marked the study normally. What sort of judging is it that reduces someone's mark to zero for having written out a few moves more than were strictly necessary?

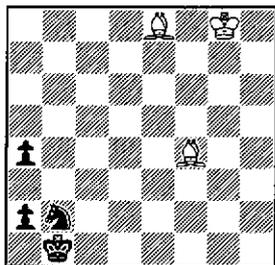
The Slovaks understandably protested, a protest made sharper by the realisation that had the judge given this study even the lowest of the marks awarded by his fellow judges they would have achieved a team triumph which they would have greatly valued, and they asked that the provisional results be not confirmed. Of course, the view would normally be taken that a judge's verdict, however perverse, must be respected, but here there were allegations of procedural irregularity which from this distance would appear to have been wholly justified. In particular, the rules apparently stipulated that zero points should have been given only to compositions which were unsound, which failed to embody the set theme, which were anticipated in all essentials, or which were not of publishable standard. None of these was alleged here, and this irregularity alone should surely have caused the judgement to be referred back for justification or revision. There was apparently also a rule that judges should in any case have been asked to reconsider any mark which turned out to be two or more points out of alignment with the marks of the other judges (compositions were marked on a scale of 0 to 4, and in this case the other judges gave marks of 1.5, 2.5, 3, and 3, average 2.5), and it appeared that for some reason this had not been done.

All right, mistakes had apparently been made. They happen, and you acknowledge them, apologise, and do your best to put matters right. Sadly, none of this seems to have occurred. On the contrary, the argument was apparently put forward that once the preliminary results had been made public the situation had become irreversible, since a change would violate the fundamental principle of judgement with anonymity (which amounted to saying that an injustice could not be corrected once the victim's identity had become known, an argument I have not seen used in any other context), and a provisional result so totally unsatisfactory was eventually confirmed by a full meeting of delegates by a majority of seventeen to ten (one abstention).

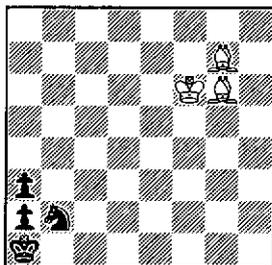
The only people to come out of this affair with credit are the ten delegates who stood up for common sense and eventually formed the minority. Of those who formed the majority, and the establishment figures who seem to have encouraged them to do so, all that can be said is that they cannot have appreciated the enormity of what they were doing. It has been reported (I am translating) that the tournament director subsequently admitted that he had been at fault, and that he accepted full responsibility for the consequences. In fact I have a good deal of sympathy for him. Yes, he appears not to have done things that he should have done and there would seem to have been no very good reason for the omissions, but the work is massive, it is unpaid, and it has to be fitted into the time left by family and professional commitments; what is surprising is not that the job is done imperfectly but that it is attempted at all. What was truly reprehensible, once it had become apparent to anybody with knowledge of the subject that a major injustice had been done, was that the opportunity was not taken to correct it.

This is not the first time that the "Permanent Commission of the FIDE for Chess Composition" has provided students of politics with an illustration of the nonsense that can result when matters are entrusted to amateur committees. If its deeply discredited existence is to continue, it should confine its future attentions strictly to problems, and leave endgame studies to people who understand them.

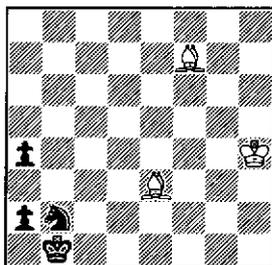
Recently published British originals



1 - win

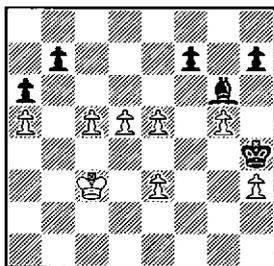


1a - after 5 Kf6

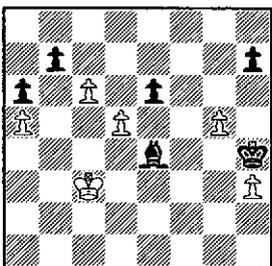


1b - win (M. Platov, 1924)

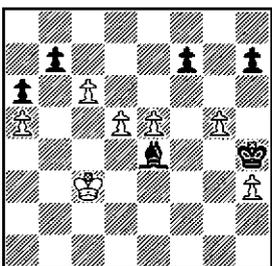
Paul Michelet's 1, a version of a 1924 study by Mikhail Platov, appeared in the *BCM* in January. **1 Bg6+ Ka1 2 Bh6! a3** (for 2...N- see below) **3 Kf7! N- 4 Bg7+ Nb2 5 Kf6!** (see 1a) and now it's easy: **5...N- 6 Ke6+ Nb2 7 Ke5 N- 8 Kd5+ Nb2 9 Kd4 N- 10 Kc4+ Nb2 11 Kc3 Na4+/Nd1+ 12 Kb3+ Nb2 13 Bf8 Nd3/Nd1 14 Bxa3** and mate in a few. If 2...N- then 3 Bg7+ Nb2 4 Kf7 and the same; if 2 Kf7? then 2...Nc4 draws (3 Bh6 Ne5+). A computer might also play 8 Kd4 Kb2 9 Kc4+ Kc1 10 Kb3 and claim an eventual win with 2B v N, but 8 Kd5+ is the only humanly practicable line. Platov's setting (see 1b) had a less subtly motivated introduction, the need for Bh6 to precede Kg5 being obvious, and although the improvement is modest I thought it worth having.



2 - win



2a - 1 e4, 2 e6, 3 c6

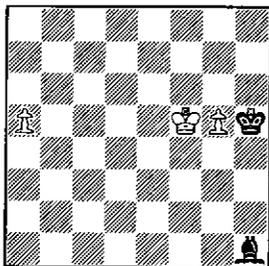


2b - 1 e4, 2 c6

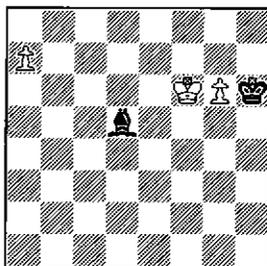
This leaves space for Lionel Penrose's 2, which appeared in the *New Statesman* in 1953 and was recently drawn to my attention by Paul Valois. 1 d6 is met by 1...Bf5. Try 1 e6: no, 1...fxe6, and the bishop gets back to e8. Try 1 e4 Bxe4 (with f5 guarded, d6 becomes a threat, so the bishop must capture) 2 e6 fxe6 3 c6 (see 2a), with the idea of 3...bxc6 4 d6 clearly winning: yes, but Black has 3...exd5, and 4 cxb7 is met by 4...d4+. **1 e4 Bxe4** is correct, but the c-pawn must move first, **2 c6** (see 2b). Now **2...bxc6** leads to **3 e6 fxe6 4 d6**, the check after 3...cxd5 4 exf7 d4+ not being useful, and if instead **2...Bxd5** then **3 e6 fxe6** (3...Bxe6 4 cxb7) **4 c7** and the bishop is again blocked out. Sadly, the a, g, and h pawns are necessary for soundness.

Studies for the *Braille Chess Magazine*

My most recent *Braille Chess Magazine* selection featured further studies in which a king accompanied only by pawns had to overcome or outwit a bishop.

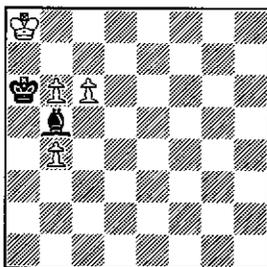


1 - win

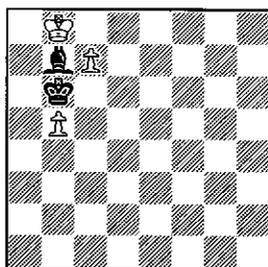


1a - 1 g6, after 4...Bd5

1 was published by Josef Moravec in 1950. Try 1 g6: no, 1...Kh6 2 Kf6 Bd5 3 a6 Bc4 (forcing the a-pawn to advance further) 4 a7 Bd5, and we have 1a. Now White can make no further progress: 5 Ke5 Bg2 6 Kf6 Bd5, or 5 g7 Kh7 and then the same. But if White plays 1 a6, we have 1...Bd5 (nothing else is better) 2 g6 Kh6 3 Ke5! Bg2 (again nothing else is better) 4 Kf6 Bd5 (else 5 g7 Kh7 6 Kf7 and as below) 5 a7, and we have again reached 1a but with Black to play. Now it's easy: 5...Kh5 6 g7 and the bishop is overloaded (White will sacrifice one pawn and promote the other), or 5...Bg2 (say) 6 g7 7 Kf7 8 Kf7 Bd5+ 8 Kf8 and again the bishop is overloaded.



2 - win



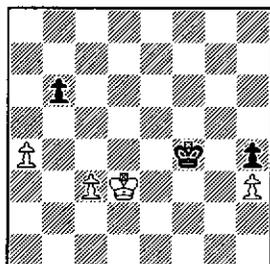
2a - 2 Kb8, after 3...Kxb6

2 was published by Moravec in 1925. 1 c7 Bc6+, and if 2 Kb8 then 2...Bb7 3 b5+ Kxb6 (see 2a) and both White pawns will go. But White can play 2 b7, sacrificing the pawn on b7 instead of letting it be taken on b6, and after 2...Bxb7+ 3 Kb8 Kb6 4 b5 we again have 2a but with Black to play. Now Black must relinquish control of c8 or give up his bishop, and either way White will have an easy win

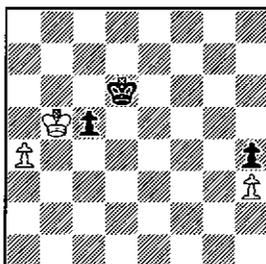
My third example, the one "for fun", was a study in which White, a bishop down, could draw by putting all his pawns on squares of the other colour and shutting out the Black king. It can be found on page 34 of our issue for March 1997.

From the world at large

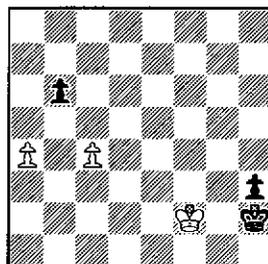
I have discussed the political aspects of the most recent World Chess Composition Tournament elsewhere. It would be pleasant to say that in spite of these, some fine studies were produced, but as often happens when composers are required to work to a set theme the results were disappointing. A manoeuvre from a classic study is set for reproduction, and there is an understandable expectation that further masterpieces will result; but in practice the results, while technically accomplished, are too often complicated and characterless, with none of the sparkle and charm of the original.



1 - win



1a - 1 c4, after 4 Kb5



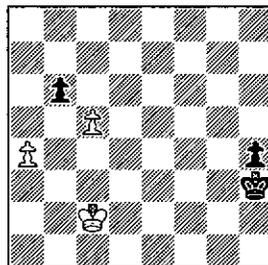
1b - 1 Kd4, after 5 c4

Very much more to the point was Mark Dvoretzky's 60th Jubilee tourney, reported in *EG* 174. The theme was "Studies for the practical player", and even though there was quite a lot which I would have thought rather artificial for this purpose there were several studies which combined elegance and instructiveness.

I was particularly taken by Yochanan Afek's 1. A direct attack on b6 is soon seen to fail (1 Kc4 Kg3 2 Kb5 Kxh3 3 Kxb6 Kg3 4-6 a7 h1Q and a8 is covered). Try 1 c4, when 1...Kg3 is clearly hopeless and 1...Ke5 2 c5 bxc5 3 Kc4 Kd6 4 Kb5 gives 1a and White seems to have won (4...Kc7 5 Kxc5 Kb7 6-8 Kf4 Kxa4 9-10 Kxh4 Kc6 11-13 Kg7): yes, but Black has 4...Kd5 luring the a-pawn forward (if instead 5 Kb6 then 5...c4 etc), and after 5 a5 Kd6 6 a6 Kc7 7 Kxc5 Kb8 8-9 Ke5 Kxa6 10-12 Kxh4 Kd6 Ke7 Black will reach f8. If instead White tries 2 Kc3, 2...Kd6 keeps him at bay.

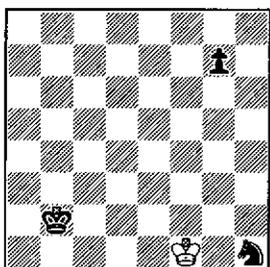
All right, try 1 Kd4, and if 1...Kg3 then 2 Ke3 (2 c4 Kxh3 3 c5 loses) Kxh3 3 Kf3 (3 Kf2 Kg4 4 c4 h3 5 c5 bxc5 is drawn) Kh2 4 Kf2 h3 5 c4 giving 1b: no, 5...b5!

The waiting move 1 Kd2, hoping for 1...Kg3 2 c4, also fails (given is 1...Ke4 2 Kc2 Kd5 3 Kb3 Kc5 4 Ka3 Kc4 5 Kb2 Kd5 6 Kb3 Kc5), and the answer is **1 Kc2!** White does indeed go for b6, but he goes the long way round so as not to obstruct his c-pawn. If now 1...Ke5 then 2 Kb3 Kd5 3 Kb4 Kc6 4 Kc4 wins, and if 1...Kg3 then 2 c4 Kxh3 3 c5 (see 1c) with 3...Kg4 4-6 c8Q+, or 3...Kg3 4 cxb6 and 5-6 b8Q+, or 3...bxc5 4 a5 and the c-pawn prevents the normal Ph2 v Q stalemate draw.

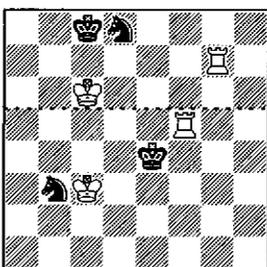


1c - main line, after 3 c5

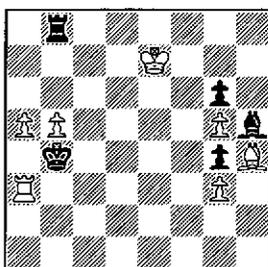
EG 174 also reproduced some four-man studies by Vladimir Kuzmichev. He had published a book of lightweight compositions, both studies and problems, in 1995, and although many subsequently proved to have been anticipated 2 below is one that has stood up. **1 Kg2** is obvious, but after **1...Kc3** the move is not the natural **2 Kxh1** (when 2-4...Kf5 gives Black a standard win) but **2 Kf3!** Play continues **2...Kd4 3 Kf4** (keeping Black from the e-file, **3 Kg4 Ke5 4 Kg5 Ng3 5 Kg6 Nf5**) **Ng3** (3...Kd5 **4 Kf5** and **5 Kg6**, winning the pawn) **4 Kxg3** (now the capture is forced, but it has also become safe) **Ke5 5 Kg4 Kf6 6 Kf4** with the opposition.



2 - draw



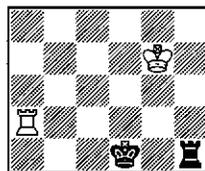
3a (draw), 3b (win), but...



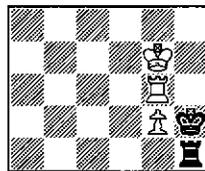
4 - win

Back in 1933, Artur Mandler drew attention to the fact that the standard R v N draw shown in 3a (top) became a win for the rook if the h-file was removed, and Marc Bourzutschky recently pointed out that 3b (bottom) is the opposite: it is won only by **1 Rh5 Nc1 2 Rh4/Rh2 Kf3 3 Rh3+ Kg2 4 Re3**, and becomes a draw if the h-file is removed. Noam Elkies remarks that the first of these affects some R v P theory: the familiar systematic motion ending with White Kc4, Ra3 against Black Kc2, Pd2, drawn after **1 Ra2+ Kc1 2 Kc3 d1N+**, becomes a win for White on a seven-file board.

Noam's 5x6 puzzle was inspired by two other Mandler studies, one of which is shown as 4 above (*Československý šach* 1954): **1 Ra2! Rb7+ 2 Kd6 Kxb5 3 a6 Rb6+ 4 Kd5 Rxa6 5 Rb2+ Ka4 6 Rb1!** and Black has no good move, and not **1 Ra1** etc, when White arrives at move 6 with his rook already on b1 and it is he who has no good move. The 5x6 reciprocal zugzwang with K + R v K + R is therefore as shown alongside, and Marc Bourzutschky confirms its uniqueness. Noam subsequently exploited it in the elegant little 5. White cannot usefully hold on to his pawn (**1 Kd3 Rd1+ 2 Kc2 Kxe3 3 Kxd1** is only drawn, just as it would be on the 8x8), but after say **1 Ra3** Black must take the pawn at once else **2 e3** will win. So try **1 Ra3**, going all the way: no, **1...Kxe2 2 Ra2+ Kd1**, and we have the reciprocal zugzwang with White to move. Try **1 Rb3**: yes, **1...Kxe2 2 Rb2+ Kd1** (**2...Ke1 3 Ke3**) **3 Ra2**, and this time it is Black to move. So why not **1 Rc3**, intending **1...Kxe2 2 Rc2+ Kd1 3 Ra2** and the same? Because now Black can play **2...Ke1**, since after **3 Ke3 Kd1** White has no check on the bottom rank.



reciprocal zugzwang



5 - win

News and notices

The £ and the euro. I am sorry, but I can no longer honour my previous prices in sterling for books from ARVES and for Harold van der Heijden's "Endgame study database III". I remain willing to act as an intermediary and to receive payments in sterling, but for the moment prices will have to be negotiated on a day-to-day basis.

Other magazines. Readers may subscribe to *EG* for 2009 by paying £20 in sterling to myself (cheques payable to "J D Beasley" please). The British Chess Problem Society's primary concern is with problems, but its magazine *The Problemist* includes endgame studies and its bookselling service normally has study books in its stock. The subscription for 2009 is £20 (under 21 £10): Sally Lewis, 16 Cranford Close, Woodmancote, Cheltenham, Glos GL52 9QA.

Outlets for original composition. I do not normally publish originals in *BESN*, but I am always glad to receive new discoveries, whether conventionally composed or computer-generated, for the *BCM*. Ian Watson (Parapet House, Maidstone Road, Lenham, Kent ME17 2QJ, ian@irwatson.demon.co.uk) accepts originals for *Correspondence Chess*, and Yochanan Afek (van Boetzelaerstraat 26/1, CW 1051 Amsterdam, NL - Nederland, afek26@zonnet.nl) for *The Problemist*. There are also outlets abroad, and my old column at *diagrammes* is now in the care of Guy Sobrecases, 83 Bd Port Royal, 75013 Paris, sobrecases@yahoo.fr (English spoken).

Meetings. John Roycroft tells me that the next *EG* readers' meeting will be at Pushkin House, 5A Bloomsbury Square, London, on **Friday April 3** at 6.00 pm (Holborn tube, Bloomsbury Way, south-west corner of the square). He will be glad to receive offers of talks (roycroft@btinternet.com).

Spotlight continued. Timothy Whitworth gently queries my presentation of study 2 by Bruno Breider (sorry, not "Brieder") in special number 57. He sees the composer as having set two main lines of equal importance, those ending in exactly echoed forks with the Black men on c1/g1 and c2/g2. The third fork I highlighted, after 2...Kb2 and 5...h4, is, he thinks, worth attention in a note, but only in a note. "The move 5...h4 may look natural at first sight, but then one notices that the pawn on g4 and the king on c2 are already in a forking relationship, so the h-pawn will never get within spitting distance of promotion. So 5...g3 is really the more promising move."

As to my spelling out of the "wrong" lines 4-5 Nf6 (bKc2) and 5-6 Ng7 (bKc1), he doesn't think they have the status of thematic tries (wrong moves whose refutations are a part of the theme), "but they certainly aid our understanding of the piece, and the composer could not possibly be displeased to see this analysis in print".

Anybody wishing to give notice in BESN of any event, product, or service should contact the Editor. There is no charge and no account is taken of whether the activity is being pursued for commercial profit, but notices are printed only if they seem likely to be of particular interest to study enthusiasts. Readers are asked to note that the Editor relies wholly on the representations of the notice giver (except where he makes a personal endorsement) and that no personal liability is accepted either by him or by any other person involved in the production and distribution of this magazine.