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Chess

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Part 2

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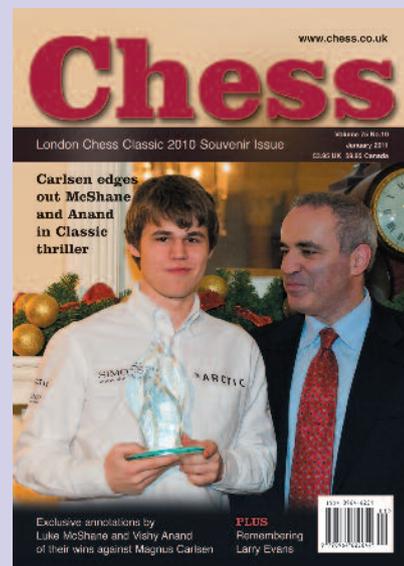
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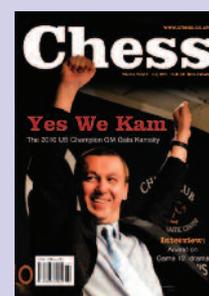
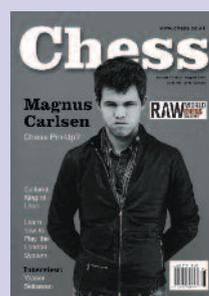
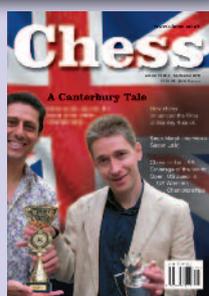
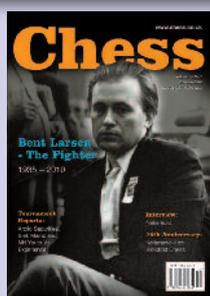
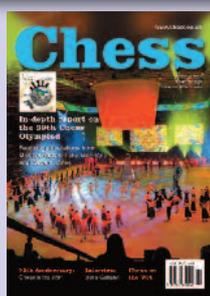
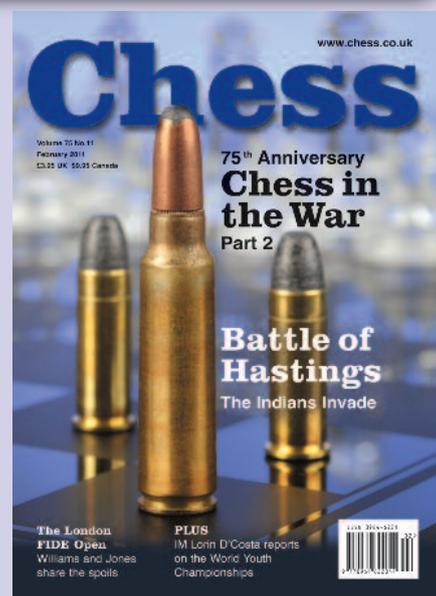
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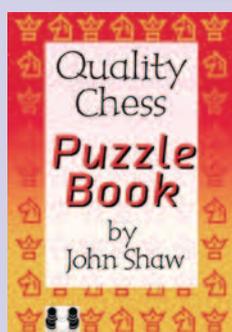
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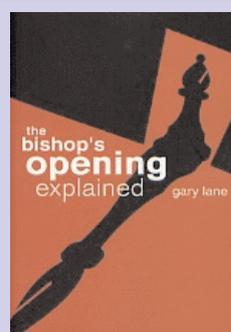
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Chess Magazine At War

As part of our 75th anniversary, John Saunders looks back to the outbreak of World War 2 and how it affected CHESSE Magazine

THOUGH CHESSE is a war game, few things are more inimical to competitive chess than the advent of real war. Still worse is the threat posed to chess publications, as the populace lacks the time and money to spend on leisure activities, while vital resources have to be diverted elsewhere.

CHESSE magazine had only reached just completed its fourth year of existence when the Second World War broke out on 1 September 1939. The October 1939 issue struck a defiant tone but the founding editor, Baruch H Wood, must have known that there were dark days ahead. The headline was: *CHESSE AND THE WAR: WE CARRY ON - WITH YOUR HELP.*

The first paragraph summarised the difficulties: "One month ago we forecast a brilliant year for British and International chess. [The] Bournemouth [BCF Congress] was in progress, [the] Buenos Aires [Olympiad] was about to begin, [the] Bath [Congress] was in the offing and, further ahead lay the opening of the National Chess Centre, the British Championship and many other events. Today we can count on none of these. The British team are on their way back from South America, sailing on a British ship which we trust will avoid the submarine menace; the congress at Bath has been cancelled; the opening of the Centre is still under consideration but, whatever the decision, it cannot find the same happy auspices as once seemed to assure its success. Chess, up and down the country, is temporarily disorganised."

But what of CHESSE magazine? The editorial went on: "One thing, however, is certain. Chess will be played whatever the conditions of war and we, on our part, are determined that CHESSE shall be published as long as it is in our power to put pen to paper and paper to printer."

One immediate problem was the absence of the editor at the start of the war. Baruch Wood had not been selected in the original British Chess Federation squad for the 1939 Buenos Aires Olympiad but had been brought in as a replacement when Edward G Sergeant had been forced to withdraw due to pressure of work. So the outbreak of war

found him on the other side of the world.

The five-man team (Hugh Alexander, Sir George Thomas, Stuart Milner-Barry, Harry Golombek and BH Wood) had taken part in the Olympiad preliminaries, held from 21-31 August, and finished third in its group behind Czechoslovakia (competing under the official name 'Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia') and Poland. They had thus qualified for the top final group, to be held from 1-19 September, but, uniquely of the 27 teams, they took the decision to withdraw and return to Europe at that point. Somewhat bizarrely, the Olympiad went on without them despite the fact that a state of war existed between some of the competing nations. Six individual matches were not played (and scored 2-2) and eventually Germany finished first ahead of Poland and Estonia.

The first wartime CHESSE editorial also reveals how the editor had coped despite his lengthy absence from his desk. He had left his wife in charge: "Already we have had very many letters from readers, the majority of them answering a circular letter by Mrs. Marjory Wood. They congratulate her on her determination to keep CHESSE flourishing until, and after, Mr. B. H. Wood returns with the British team. We do not doubt our ability to do this. The present issue, limited to 24 pages, shows the first effect of the war. Just as war affects food prices, so it rules paper prices. Therefore 24 pages becomes a necessary economy.

"The rest of the editorial consists of an appeal to readers to send in game scores and items of news.



BH Wood's description of the cruise down to Rio, written before the outbreak of war, is a poignant glimpse of a carefree world prior to the conflagration. Here are the edited highlights of his entertaining narrative:

The weather has been excellent all the way. Miss Menchik has looked a little queer once or twice, as also did Golombek but the rest of the English team - including Milner-Barry, who considers himself a bad sailor - have not suffered a single qualm of sea-sickness. Milner-Barry spends most of his time working quietly on his forthcoming book about the Stock Exchange. He has not played a single game of chess; he has a theory that "skittles" are bad for one's play. It can hardly be said that the other members of the British team subscribe to this theory, for they have played hundreds of games with each other, usually at stakes of a Belgian franc (about three-halfpence) a time. There seems little between us in this department. When Alexander, our young British Champion, is not "skittling" or playing in one of the innumerable



rubbers of bridge organised by Miss Menchik, he is swimming, playing table tennis or deck quoits or deck tennis or analysing openings with demoniacal energy. By the expenditure of intense enthusiasm and the shedding of pints of perspiration, he has succeeded in establishing his position as table tennis champion of the ship, his chief rivals being two boisterous Lithuanians named Vaitonis and Tautvaisas.

The Icelanders are a fine set of men with the fair skins and pale blue eyes of the Vikings who founded their race. The Lithuanians are a bouncing, happy crowd who don't seem to allow Memel to get on their minds. The Poles, on the other hand, are a little preoccupied over the Danzig business. The Bulgarians are rather a disappointment to one's ideas of sturdy, war-like Balkan warriors, being rather a knock-kneed lot. At the ceremony of "crossing the line" when several dozen chess masters were daubed with paint and baptised with a hose-pipe wielded by Father Neptune's minions, the Bulgarians were nowhere to be found.

Sir George Thomas, our captain, who had travelled on ahead of us, greeted us in Buenos Aires... he had been down to the quay a few days before to enquire the time of arrival of our ship but through ignorance of Spanish wandered into the Immigration office. Here they took his passport from him and told him to return two days later. On returning, he was presented with a huge document to fill up. To his extreme annoyance, he found himself listed as a Turk! (He was born in Constantinople, during a cruise by his parents.)

On our arrival in Buenos Aires, I might mention, we were all assaulted by an

official who twisted back our eyelids in a search for evidence of negro blood. I regret to say that the reactions of the various members of our team to this ordeal, which came without a moment's warning, are entirely unprintable.

Here we are accommodated for the duration of the tournament in a beautiful summer residence most generously loaned by Mr. Millington-Drake [the British minister to Uruguay from 1934-41, whom film buffs might remember being depicted as a leading character in the 1956 movie *The Battle of the River Plate* and played by the actor Anthony Bushell - ed]. The House stands some twelve miles out of the city, in beautiful grounds and a Diplomatic Service car is placed at the team's disposal. The food is plentiful and perfect. If we fail to do justice to ourselves under such ideal conditions, we never shall. Moreover, the manager of the Buenos Aires branch of Harrods has taken us under his wing and is doing everything in his power to make us comfortable - it is hardly possible to talk of such hospitality without "gushing." Miss Menchik is expected to have another walk-over in the Women's World championship. She defeated her closest rival, Miss Sonia Graf, three years ago by nine games to two and there is little reason to suppose that their relative strengths have altered so fundamentally as to bridge the gap.

One possibility must be borne in mind, however; the rest of the field is so very weak that a loss in her individual game with Fraulein Graf might decide the whole tournament. Probably the only other people with an outside chance of the title are Miss May Karff, of New York, and Miss Lauberte, of Latvia, who swotted steadily throughout the whole of the voyage and had much gratuitous tuition from her male colleagues. Taken as a whole, however, the entrants certainly fulfil woman's primeval task, to look beautiful. They are an astonishingly good looking collection of people to be competing in a world's chess championship. Ruth Bloch-Nakkerud, of Norway, with her Grecian profile; Ingeborg Anderson, of Sweden, tall and slim with golden hair; Ingrid Larsen, of Denmark, plump and comely; Mme. Rausch, of Palestine, with strikingly pale blue-green eyes; Milda Lauberte, earnest, petite; Mme. Janecek, from Czecho-Slovakia, ultra modern in the sheer effectiveness of her make-up.

It is inevitable that, 70 years later, some items in the foregoing should cause us to

raise our eyebrows, for example Wood's 'non-PC' references to the 'knock-kneed' Bulgarians and the physical attributes of the women competitors - the adjective 'plump' used in such a context today would surely elicit a lawsuit - but perhaps his description of the Polish players being "a little preoccupied over the Danzig business" demonstrates the widespread lack of acceptance that the cataclysm was coming.

In December 1939, the editorial takes a more optimistic tone as the initial shock of war had given way to the 'phoney war'. Bombs had not rained down upon the UK - yet. The National Chess Centre had opened and the Hastings Congress of 1939/40 was still scheduled to go ahead. As 1940 began, the editor repeated a slogan he had first used the previous year: "chess is beating the war".

In February 1940, the editorial was headlined '*British Championship Must Be Held*'. The only reason that the British title had not been competed for in 1939 was because most leading contenders had been in Buenos Aires but a BCF Congress with a strong international competition had been held then. Wood's arguments for holding it in 1940 were reasonable enough ("cinemas are now open and football matches are played") and backed up by readers' letters. But Sir George Thomas was one of a number of major chess figures to sound a cautionary note: "it is rather early to decide... conditions may be very different in a few months' time." He was right. The so-called 'phoney war' soon gave way to the 'real thing' and major chess events were off the agenda.

1940 was a grim year in British history and the editor keeps quiet on the details for the most part, but his ebullient tone soon returns during 1941/42 as the tide of the war gradually turned. His life must have been very difficult as he juggled his wartime work as a chemist with his magazine responsibilities. He found a good solution to paper rationing by changing the print face to a smaller font, and one which would be familiar to readers much later in the magazine's history. Lack of top-level competition in Europe (though there was some) was made up for by inclusion of material from North and South America, where major chess tournaments were still being played.

Many of the 1939 Buenos Aires Olympiad competitors had stayed on in Argentina for various reasons, and for many of them, particularly the Polish and/or Jewish players, it was to prove a life or death decision. However, a story in the October 1941 issue showed that life in South America was not without its perils...



engagement and be welcomed as tutor in many a rich home, Raud would be unwanted. There is not even a bare subsistence in Argentine café chess. Soon after, came Raud's last tournament, an event staged by the *Círculo Argentino*. His principal competitors were Frydman, who finished first, and Grau and Luckis who tied for second place. Raud led the tournament for several rounds, but then began to slip back. He refused to participate in the supper offered by the officials of the organising body. In the final score-table he

finished fourth.

RAUD, THE YOUNG ESTHONIAN MASTER, STARVES TO DEATH.

At third board of the Estonian team [in the 1939 Buenos Aires Olympiad] was Ilmar Raud. Estonian champion in 1934, [his] performances for his native country had been little inferior to those of his distinguished friends Keres and Schmidt. English chess followers had met him in Margate, the Easter before, where he took fourth place in an exceptionally strong Reserves tournament.

During the Buenos Aires tournament, the war broke out... Raud remained behind with many others... Of these masters, Najdorf, Eliskases and Stahlberg are experts of the topmost calibre, who could be relied on to make their way in any community with a pretension to civilisation. Najdorf's success has been scintillating; as one of the greatest lightning players of all time, he has been able, through whirlwind simultaneous displays, to make money - and spend it - like water.

But what of those not quite top-notchers? The history of chess is studded with miserable stories of near-success, and now Ilmar Raud, in dying, has given us another. His play had always shown flashes of brilliance but that solidity essential for a consistent record was not there. It is said that his mother begged him to return home and that one of his brothers was killed when the Soviets annexed Estonia.

The long-awaited tournament at Mar del Plata gave the many European masters their chance. Stahlberg's triumph was Raud's failure: he could only finish fourteenth out of eighteen players, with four of the five Argentine players above him. That meant that whilst Stahlberg would be offered many and many an

Conditions in South America's chess world are extraordinary. Grau has achieved a position of extraordinary power and influence and is virtually dictator of Argentine chess; it is authentically stated that his chess organising activities have netted him at least £5,000 in two years. Yet tournament after tournament goes through in the most haphazard and unsatisfactory fashion. Dates and venues are altered at random; even at Mar del Plata, the masters' accommodation was very unsatisfactory and the bonus per point, originally announced as ten pesos (roughly 10/- or \$2.50), turned out finally to be eight only. Sometimes no prize-money is paid until weeks after the tournament is over.

Though the *Círculo Argentino's* tournament (which Grau organised) finished in April, the prize distribution did not take place until June 29th (a personal telephone call by Luckis to Palau, Grau's right-hand man achieved this!).

Raud's prize was only a few shillings. At 10 a.m. on that very June 29th, he left his poor lodging-house never to return. He was found wandering in the streets and was arrested by the police. It is said there was a fight, and visitors subsequently observed obvious evidence of blows. He spent a bitterly cold night in the police yard, and the next day was sent to a lunatic asylum, where he died at 2am, on July 13th, at the early age of 27. The doctor's certificate gave, as cause of death, general debility and typhoid fever, but the general verdict is - starvation! His body was cremated, and the ashes have been conveyed by the Esthonian consulate to Europe.

Buenos Aires 1940

M.Luckis - I.Raud

Queen's Gambit Declined

1 d4 ♠f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♠c3 d5 4 ♠f3 ♠e7 5 ♠g5 ♠bd7 6 e3 0-0 7 ♠c1 c6 8 ♠d3 a6 9 cxd5 exd5 10 ♠c2 ♠e8 11 0-0 ♠f8 12 ♠e5 ♠g4 13 ♠xe7 ♠xe7 14 ♠xg4 ♠xg4 15 ♠e2 15 ♠a4 had been played in Horowitz-Kashdan, US Championship 1938. These days White usually plays a rook to e1. 15...♠ad8 16 ♠g3 ♠d6 17 ♠fe1 ♠h4 18 b4 ♠h6 19 ♠f1? Too passive. 19 h3 seems safe enough for White, since 19...♠xh3?! 20 gxh3 ♠xh3 21 ♠f5 ♠h2+ 22 ♠f1 doesn't lead anywhere. 19...♠e6 20 a4 Instructional manuals sometimes advise us not to weaken our pawns in front of our castled kings but Black now demonstrates that the pawns can be disrupted via a direct attack here.



20...♠f3! 21 ♠e2 21 gxf3 ♠g5 22 ♠f5 is White's best chance: 22...♠xf3+ 23 ♠g2 ♠xh2 24 f4!? g6 seems to win for Black. 21...♠e4 22 ♠d2 ♠g5 23 f3 23 ♠d1 ♠xg2! 24 ♠xg2 ♠ee6! gives Black an unstoppable attack. 23...♠h3+! 24 gxh3 ♠g6+ 25 ♠g3 ♠xg3+! 26 hxg3 ♠xg3+ 27 ♠f1 ♠xh3+ 28 ♠g1 ♠g3+ 28...♠e6 29 ♠f1 ♠g6+ 30 ♠g2 ♠xf3 is another win. 29 ♠f1 ♠h2 30 fxe4 ♠e6 31 ♠d1 dxe4 32 ♠c2 ♠h3+ 32...♠g3 is simpler. 33 ♠g1 ♠g6+ 34 ♠g4 ♠xg4+ 35 ♠xg4 ♠xg4+ 36 ♠g2 ♠f5 37 ♠b2 h6 38 b5 c5 39 ♠f2 ♠g5+ 40 ♠g2 ♠d5 0-1

By late 1943, and the Axis powers on the run, the editor could redirect his artillery against a home target - the British Chess Federation. Under the heading "A Disgraceful Report", he fulminated against their inactivity as regards the fostering of chess in the forces in February 1943: "The BCF has done not one iota of work in this field... BCF's shamefully shirked work... this disgraceful report reveals once again... how far behind the times the federation is falling."

The Home Front, indeed!

More on 'Chess Magazine at War' in our next issue.

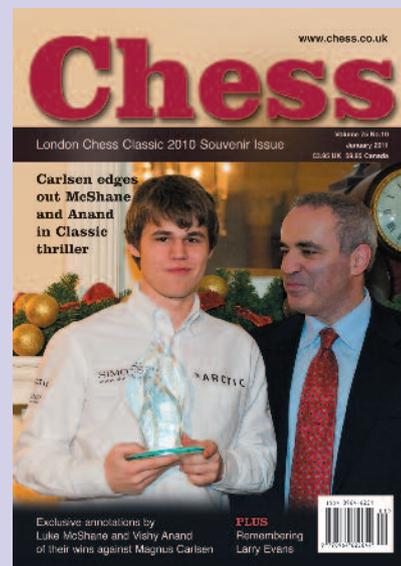
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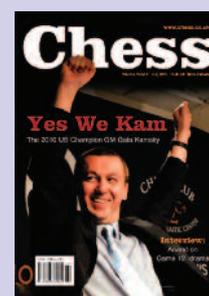
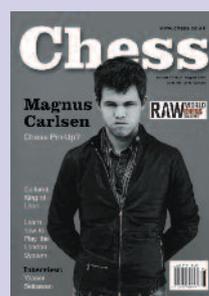
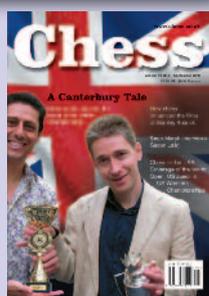
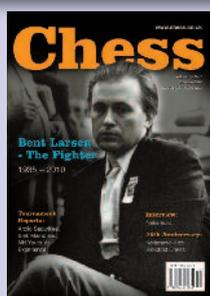
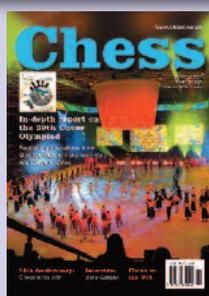
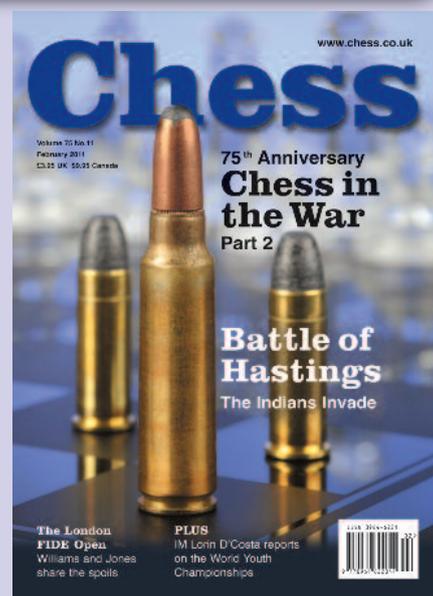
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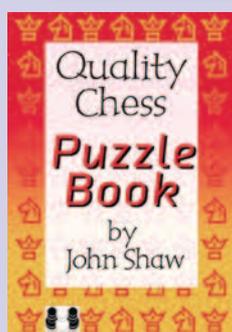
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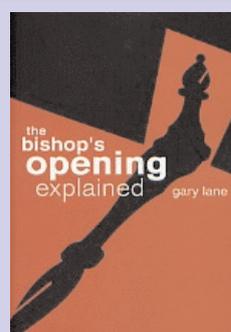
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Chess Magazine At War

Another look into the magazine during the war years, by John Saunders



"I don't agree. I think the isolated queen's pawn is more a strength than a weakness."

Here's a question which no chess magazine editor would ever want to face, let alone answer - what do you put in your magazine in the event of a world war? In the November 2010 issue, we looked back at how BH Wood coped with the onset of World War Two, and how difficult the practical side of running a magazine became as the war escalated and the 'phoney war' gave way to the Blitz.

Please forgive the statement of the blindingly obvious, but the main content of a chess magazine has to be chess games. By early 1940 the dwindling supply of newly-played games was Wood's most pressing problem. Following the 1939/40 Hastings Congress, held as usual but much reduced in size and scope, the nations of western Europe turned their attention to real war and top-level competitive chess took a back seat. This meant that the editor had to cast his net wider than before, turning to tournament chess in the Americas and Spain. For the early part of the war, chess in the USSR was largely unaffected, with bulletins and even radio programmes broadcasting news of Soviet chess. Later in the war BH Wood refers to Vasily Smyslov speaking in English on the radio and mentioning the deaths of some Soviet players. Somehow, despite the unprecedented scale of fighting on the eastern front, and the appalling civilian suffering in parts of the country, high-level chess continued to be played in the USSR almost for the entirety of the war.

War or no war, British amateur chess carried on in various shapes and forms. There was still club news, with the editor

appealing for people to send in games and news. Foreign allied forces based in UK brought with them a number of chess players from France, Poland, Czechoslovakia and elsewhere. One of the most famous of these was 2nd Lieutenant

Georges Cartier - the wartime rank and pseudonym of Saviely Tartakower, attached to the Free French forces in London. The pseudonym was evidently nothing to do with military secrecy as Tartakower's real name was often referred to in the chess press. BHW said he used it because Tartakower "was too much of a mouthful" for his Free French colleagues. Tartakower played some club chess whilst in the country, including matches between British and Allied forces, in one of which he got the better of Bombardier Harry Golombek, as the future British IM was now known. It was the fashion for published games and match results to give the military rank of the player. Here is a game played on board six of the first British Forces versus Allied Forces match in November 1941, with Pilot Officer FG Tims Collins beating Private Wladislaw Prytys of the Polish forces (whilst the aforementioned 'Cartier' was beating Bombardier Golombek).

British Forces v Allied Forces, 1941
F.Tims Collins - W.Prytys
Bishop's Opening

1 e4 e5 2 ♖c4 ♗f6 No doubt readers will turn up their noses at such an early queen excursion. Fair enough, though it has been played by a young Jonny Hector (unsuccessfully) and occasional CHESS contributor Andrew Smith (successfully). But please try not to be too critical about opening nuances. There is a war on, you know... **3 ♗c3 c6 4 ♗f3 h6 5 0-0 ♖c5 6 d3** Fritz wants to go for the jugular with 6 d4!? **♗xd4 7 ♗xd4**

exd4 8 e5 ♗g6 9 ♗xd4 ♗e7 10 ♗e4 when Black's queenside is not going to get developed anytime soon. **6...d6 7 h3 ♖e6 8 ♖b3 ♗xb3 9 axb3 ♗e7 10 ♖e3 ♗d7 11 d4 exd4 12 ♗xd4 ♗xd4 13 ♗xd4**



13...♗e4? Asking for trouble. 13...0-0 is not too terrible for Black, though White is better. **14 f4 ♗5g6 15 ♗f5! ♗xf5** Leads to a fatal opening of the e-file, but **15...d5 16 ♗e3!** is also very strong for White. **16 exf5 ♗e7 17 ♗e4! ♗xb2 18 f6** Fritz (the analysis engine, not the WW2 slang term for the enemy) finds **18 ♗xd6+ ♗f8** and now the very pretty **19 ♗xa7!** with the idea of **19...♗xa7 20 ♗c4!** threatening the queen and mate on d8. The text is also very good. **18...gxf6 19 ♗xd6 ♗d5 20 ♗xf6+!** 1-0 A rook check on e1 will be devastating.



"WHAT BOMB?" *Daily Mail*

THE GUTTING OF JOHN LEWIS'S



"X" roughly marks the spot where the National Chess Centre once stood.

In 1944, BH Wood imparted some bad news about the winner of the above game. "According to Mr [Julius] du Mont, FG Tims Collins is reported missing from a bombing raid. How we hope that this genial and universally popular chess congress-ite managed to bale out!" Sadly, not so - Francis George Tims Collins, who played in three Varsity chess matches for Oxford in the 1930s and who won the Civil Service Championship in 1938 and 1939, was killed on the night of 27 November 1943 in a Lancaster bomber over Heuchelheim, Germany, aged 28. His name appears on a memorial in Balliol College chapel.

The first issue of the sixth volume of CHESS, published on 25 September 1940, was entitled 'The Greatest Tragedy in Chess History'. BH Wood was referring to the complete and utter destruction, just two days before, of the National Chess Centre, housed on an upper floor at the John Lewis Partnership premises in London's Oxford Street. In the conflagration were lost the best part of the British Chess Federation library, all the effects of the City of London Chess Club and the Southern Counties' Chess Union and various other trophies and chess association property. The contemporary reader (who may argue that British chess has fared reasonably well without such an institution in place) might feel that the editor's hyperbole was slightly misplaced but there is no doubt that it set chess in these islands back many years. It had opened only a year before, in September 1939, as war had started, amalgamating

with the City of London Chess Club to form a well-equipped, modern centre for the playing of match and tournament chess for the entire metropolis. Managed by women's world champion Vera Menchik, it had already attracted a membership of 700 and seemed certain to go from strength to strength before it became one of the many corporate victims of the London Blitz.

This wasn't quite the end of the story. The National Chess Centre was reopened in 1952 on a site opposite the one destroyed in 1940. But, in truth, it didn't last much longer the second time around.

No bombs were involved this time: the reason for closure appears to have been the retirement in 1955 of the eponymous founder of the department store, John Spedan Lewis (1885-1963), who had been the driving force behind the NCC and without whose continuing generous patronage and influence it proved impossible to continue.

CHESS AS A MORALE-BOOSTER

BH Wood was quick to recognise one important function of a chess magazine in wartime - as a morale booster. To that end, the magazine was filled with short, upbeat examples of chessplayers' adherence to the 'spirit of the blitz'. More than once he used the sub-title 'Business As Usual' - the defiant claim of every bombed-out shop and institution the length and breadth of the beleaguered nation - before going on to describe how a chess club carried on regardless, despite bombardment or privation. There was also more than a hint of that other wartime slogan, 'Make Do and Mend', with soldiers or schoolboys shown fashioning chess sets out of all manner of improbable artefacts (one chess set allegedly featured light-coloured British bullet casings for the white pieces, and sinister dark-coloured German bullet casings for the black ones - prompting the 21st century notion that the British ones could somehow have been recycled and used against the enemy?!).

When it came to waging the propaganda war, BHW's own favourite weapon was the cartoon. Flicking through the pages, it

becomes clear that he scoured the country for chess-themed cartoons, reusing (with permission) those published in well-known magazines and newspapers (even from the previous world war) as well as commissioning them from artistically-inclined chessplayers. One such was WH Cozens, later to become known and loved for his splendid book *The King Hunt* as well as other books and articles for *BCM* after the war. Many of the cartoons used (we provide a selection here) have a similar underlying theme - that chess has the comforting power to distract the human mind and anaesthetise the brain against all manner of pain and suffering that might be happening all around. So much for the propaganda, but few wartime issues of CHESS went by without reports of untimely deaths caused by war. One notable casualty was Arthur Reynolds, a strong Midlands player who gave his name to a variation of the Slav, became a prisoner of war in the East and was thought to have been killed in the aftermath of a naval incident in 1943.



Vera Menchik, with her husband RHS Stevenson

Perhaps the most tragic loss, from a purely British perspective, was that of women's world champion Vera Menchik, who died along with her sister Olga and mother as a result of a V1 'flying bomb' destroying their home in Clapham in 1944. Vera had been widowed the year before when her husband, the greatly respected chess administrator, RHS Stevenson, had died, and she had been the game editor of CHESS magazine for much of the war.

WOOD GOES TO WAR

As editor, BH Wood well understood the power of controversy and its value to his publication. Even a world war could not distract British chessplayers from displaying their verbal pugnacity when debating the minutiae of chess and chessplaying.

One such spat was ignited by Lord Brabazon of Tara (1884-1964), an English aviation pioneer and wartime cabinet minister. This distinguished peer was the UK's answer to the Wright Brothers - he



LORD BRABAZON

had been the first Englishman to pilot a heavier-than-air machine under power in England - but his well-meaning attempt to spice up the game of chess saw him crash to earth in a crumpled heap. His proposal? Like Bobby Fischer in his post-champion phase, Lord Brabazon thought opening theory was killing chess (with its reliance on "dead men's brains") and he thought that a small rearrangement of the pieces on the back rank was in order to refresh the game. He suggested that the first change should be the "quite trivial" one of reversing the starting positions of the white king and queen. Thinking further ahead, when that arrangement had been analysed to destruction, he suggested a further back rank rearrangement could be made.

"Really, Lord Brabazon!!" was the editor's first reaction to this naivety, and he then invited readers to express their views. Which they did, quite forcibly in some cases. Truly, hell hath no fury like a chessplayer scorned, though, to be fair, a handful of subscribers seemed to like the idea. But reader G Soar of Enfield perhaps spoke for the silent majority when he responded: "Lord Brabazon says he is a keen lover of the game. If he is, then why does he want to wreck it?"

BH Wood was in more serious vein when he blasted an annual report put out by the British Chess Federation in 1942/43 proposing a temporary curtailment of administrative activity, at a time when he thought the federation should have been doing the opposite, e.g. fostering forces' chess and taking other active steps to

invigorate the game. "*The BCF is beginning to revolve round two or three rich and influential men, whose love of, and enthusiasm for chess, nobody could doubt. But if these few energetic minds are distracted for a moment, the barrenness of the back-benches becomes blatantly apparent. This disgraceful report reveals once again, in a blinding light, how far behind the times the Federation is falling: nine-tenths of it needs replacing by new blood.*"

This stirred up much discussion, the majority of it chiming in with the editor's own sentiments, but amongst the dissenters was the magazine's very own Games Editress (as BHW sometimes styled her) - Vera (née Menchik) Stevenson. It is an intriguing letter, providing *en passant* an interesting insight into the women's world champion's early days in Moscow and her impression of the British attitude to chess as contrasted with that of Russia.

Dear Mr. Wood,

As one ponders over your recent attack on the B.C.F. one cannot help wondering what useful purpose has this outburst served? Surely the answer is in the negative. Such an attitude could not result in goodwill and co-operation and it most probably has resulted in prejudicing a number of your readers who, not having had personal acquaintance of chess organisers, may have taken you at your word and decided that the B.C.F. Committee is as lethargic as you say. Anyway this impression must have been still further strengthened when you took the trouble of publishing, and publishing uncommented, such remarks as: "That the backwardness and the standard of play are due to people seeking and retaining office who really do nothing beyond carrying on normal activities in a routine manner. But they feel important, and that is about all that matters in most cases."

However, what I chiefly want to say is how it amazes me that a man of your international chess experience should attempt to draw comparison between chess-life in U.S.S.R. and in Britain?

If the Soviet Union can boast the strongest team of players in the world and the largest rank and file, it is not merely because of their superior chess organisation, but because of social conditions under which the whole nation lives and works. Millions of spectators do not go (in Russia) to football matches in the winter months; nor do they go to dog-racing or indulge in any shape of gambling; nor, I think, have they access to



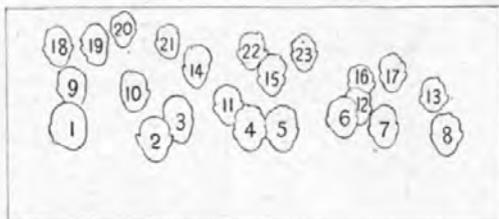
Just goes to show that adjudications and adjournments have never been very popular

the world's literature in the same way we have to the excellent series of the Penguin Books, etc.; and if the theatres and cinemas of Moscow are crowded every night, they are not nearly as numerous as the places of amusement in big cities in England, and few people have either the time or the means to frequent them as regularly as so many do here.

If, to-day, people in Russia continue to play chess in very strenuous and difficult conditions, it is because they are used to hard life and value comfort far less than we do. In the few years before the war the Soviet nation was fortunate to enjoy considerable prosperity, but the many years immediately succeeding the 1917 revolution had been very hard and trying, and few people could have forgotten them. For example, during the winter of 1919-20, the school I attended was for some time without water, heating or electric light, yet the classes went on and the students, clad in their fur-lined coats and hats, read by the light of a few flickering candles or an oil lamp, and then perhaps had an hour's walk home through snow, for all traffic stopped after working hours. People also played chess in the same conditions, and they most likely still do, though we here prefer to forego our games of chess because of the inconvenience of the black-out. How understandable it all is, but can you really blame the B.C.F. that such vast differences should exist? There are many other important points which make



1. T. H. Tylor
2. C. H. Alexander
3. H. Golombek
4. A. D. H. Bivar
5. I. Berenblum
6. H. G. Schenck
7. J. W. Cornforth
8. Lt. A. Levinson
9. S. Ardeshir
10. J. M. Aitken
11. Sir Robert Robinson
12. (Dr.) Good



13. Sgt. Jacobs
14. D. Rees
15. R. C. O. Matthews
16. P. J. Hilton
17. N. A. Perkins
18. M. A. Chamberlain
19. W. R. Cox
20. E. C. Crossfield
21. Sgt. Gilbert
22. V. Grieve
23. J. O. L. Roberts

Players in the 1944 match between Oxford University and Bletchley Chess Club, including some of the British and American code-breakers of Operation 'Ultra' whom Churchill credited with winning the war.

comparison impossible, such as the average age of players here and in Russia - a difference perhaps of 20 years! Then again the actual attitude to chess: in Russia - serious and studious; here - often very light-hearted. Have you not met players who pride themselves on never having read a chess book in their lives; who regard all theory as the invention of the Evil One specially devised to spoil the enjoyment of their leisure hours? Have you never heard them say that they play chess just for pleasure? In Russia they would be officially and severely reprimanded, but do you think the B.C.F. can alter their outlook?

To finish up I should like to relate an experience I had regarding Army chess. A year ago I was working at a soldiers' canteen run by the W.V.S. I volunteered to organize a chess section and to give lectures and displays. This suggestion was received quite enthusiastically and I was even asked to contribute a chess article for the weekly Gazette. I wrote an article of a very elementary kind, explaining how to read and record a game, accompanied by a short brilliancy to serve as an example. It had two diagrams and was easy enough for a child of nine to understand. Yet in the end it was turned down on the ground of being too difficult. and in fact the whole idea of chess fell through. Can you blame the B.C.F. for such lack of enterprise. and can you imagine this happening in U.S.S.R.?

Yours very sincerely,

Vera Stevenson

Thankfully, this public disagreement with the magazine editor had no repercussions: Mrs Stevenson continued with her game annotations for CHESS right up to her tragic death.

CHESSPLAYERS WIN THE WAR

BH Wood's (wholly complimentary) reference to "two or three rich or influential men" at the helm of British chess must have included Stuart Milner-Barry and Hugh Alexander. Needless to say, the wartime activities of these gentlemen were not referred to in any detail at the time, though much later it transpired that their minds, and those of a number of other notable chessplayers, were "distracted for a moment" on the hugely important task of decrypting enemy codes, in particular those generated by the famous 'Enigma' machine, at Bletchley Park. By late 1944 one imagines that their job was nearly done and they could relax and play a bit of chess. The February 1945 issue of the magazine carries a photo of the players from a match between Oxford University and Bletchley chess clubs. The names are given and seems probable that the Bletchley side consisted, possibly in its entirety, of British and American code-breakers who had worked on this operation, known by the codename 'Ultra'. Winston Churchill is alleged to have told King George VI after World War Two: "It was thanks to 'Ultra' that we won the war."

Youth was not quite so much to the fore in chess as it is today, with one notable exception. Elaine Saunders (later to become Mrs Elaine Pritchard and,

incidentally, no relation of the current writer, though coincidentally my wife is called Elaine Saunders) had already made something of a name for herself as a child chess prodigy by the time war broke out. She won what was styled the World Girls' Championship in 1936, aged only ten, and retained the title in 1937. Perhaps more impressively she had won the British Women's Championship in 1939, aged 13. Here is a game she won against Vera Menchik. It wasn't played as



Elaine Saunders won the 1939 British Women's Championship aged just 13.

part of a formal competition but she demonstrates considerable skill to steer her formidable adversary into a lost position, though its formal nature leads to some inaccuracies on both sides of the board.

Offhand game 1943
V.Menchik - E.Saunders
Stonewall Opening

1 d4 d5 2 e3 c6 3 ♘d2 e6 4 ♙d3 f5 5 ♘h3 ♙d6 6 0-0 ♞c7 7 f4 ♘f6 8 c4 ♘e4 9 ♙xe4 fxe4 10 ♞h5+ g6 11 ♞e2 ♙a6 12 c5 The world champion tries to cramp her opponent on the queenside, but Elaine finds a way to get play there in due course. 12...♙f8 13 a3 ♙g7 14 b4 b6 15 ♞b1 bxc5 16 bxc5 ♞e7 17 ♞d1 ♘c7 18 ♘b3 ♙a6 Black's second bishop is now in play and gives her an edge. 19 ♞e1 ♙d3 20 ♞b2 a5? 21 ♙d2? 21 a4 is correct, leading to a better game for White. Black's previous move was also an error, which might well have cost her a pawn. 21...a4 22 ♘c1 ♙b5 23 ♘a2 ♙c4 24 ♘f2 ♙b3 25 ♞c1 0-0 26 ♘b4 ♞d7 27 ♞b1 ♘b5 28 ♘g4 ♞f7 29 ♞f1 ♞af8 30 h4? After this weakening move, Black grabs the initiative. 30...h5 31 ♘f2 ♙c4 32 ♞e1 e5! 33 dxe5 ♙xe5 34 ♘xe4! White must try this as otherwise the two black bishops will rule the board. 34...dxe4

BEATING OUT THE YEAR'S FIXTURE LIST

Simultaneous chess comes as a welcome diversion to those clubs whose normal programme of matches against other clubs has been restricted by the war. J. Mieses celebrated his 75th birthday by taking on 22 opponents in the National Chess Centre (scoring + 15, = 5, - 2). Here is your Editor in play at Northampton, where his only loss among 14 occurred when he left his queen en prise against a schoolboy who had only been playing chess two months!

As if war work and editing a magazine wasn't enough! BH Wood travelled the country giving simulms and generally banging the drum for chess.

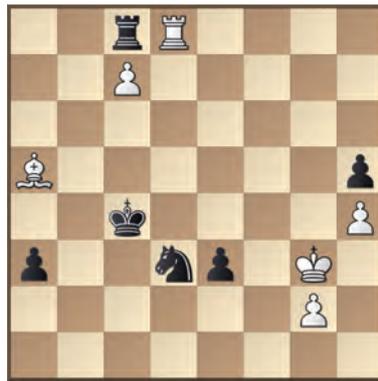


Acknowledgments to the "Northampton Chronicle."



35 fxe5 35 ♖xc4!? ♗xa3 36 ♜xe4 ♗xb1 37 ♖xb1 ♜xd2 38 fxe5 doesn't give White enough compensation for the exchange. 35...♗d3? Not easy to see but Black has 35...♗xa3!, e.g. 36 ♜xa3 ♖f2! lining up ♜g4 or the immediate ♖xg2+; 35...♗f1! is also surprisingly potent since the rook cannot take on f1 and Black again threatens ...♜g4, etc. 36 ♗xd3 ♜xd3 37 ♗a5? 37 e6! forces the undoubling of the black rooks, when White can continue with 38 ♖b4! and she is well in the game. 37...♗xa3 38 ♖a1 ♗c2 39 ♖d1 ♜xe3+ 39...♜e2 is even better. 40 ♜xe3 ♗xe3

41 ♖d6 ♖f1+ 42 ♗xf1 ♖xf1+ 43 ♖h2 ♗g4+ 44 ♖g3 ♗xe5 45 ♗c3 ♗d3 46 ♖xc6 e3 47 ♖xg6+ 47 ♖e6! slows Black's progress somewhat. 47...♗f7 48 ♖g7+ ♗e6 49 ♖g6+ ♗d5 50 ♖d6+ ♗c4 51 c6 ♖f8 52 ♗a5 ♖c8 53 c7 a3 54 ♖d8



54...a2 It is not clear who provides the annotation in the magazine (CHESS, September 1943, p193) – it could be BHW – but the comment here is: "Good enough, though it is interesting to point out here the following variation which is a favourite theme of so many endgame composers:

54...♖xc7 55 ♗xc7 a2 56 ♖a8 e2 wins." 55 ♖xc8 a1 ♜ 56 ♖d8 ♜e5+ 0-1 It is forced mate after 57 ♗f3 ♜f4+ 58 ♗e2 ♜f2+ 59 ♗d1 ♜f1+, etc. However, White could have turned the tables on the previous move. 54...a2 was not "good enough" after

all – it was an outright blunder. Vera Menchik could won after 56 ♖e8! and Black has no good moves.

Here's another game by Elaine Saunders, against a 71-year-old chess author of blessed memory - and, indeed, with a long memory.

Correspondence, 1943
P.Sergeant – E.Saunders
Ruy Lopez

1 e4 e5 2 ♗f3 ♗c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♗f6 5 0-0 ♗xe4 6 d4 b5 7 ♗b3 d5 8 dxe5 ♗e6 9 c3 ♗c5 10 a4 Here Mr Sergeant says "I tried 10 a4 because I remembered that in 1906(?) I played the move with success against Professor L Loewy of Vienna, in the Ostend Amateur Tournament, he replying with the inferior 10...0-0 and getting a bad game." 10...b4 11 ♜e2 0-0 12 ♗c2 diagram 12...♗f5 Sound, if commonplace. In an exceedingly brilliant game against Shories (1905), Spielmann sacrificed a pawn by 12...f5 and the game continued 13 exf6 ♜xf6 14 ♗xe4 dxe4 15 ♜xe4 ♗b3! 13 ♗e3 ♗xe3 14 ♜xe3 ♗g3 15 ♗xf5 ♗xf5 16 ♜c5 ♜d7 17 cxb4 ♖fb8 18 ♗c3 ♗xb4 19 ♖ad1 c6 20 ♖d2 a5 21 ♗d4 ♗xd4 22 ♜xd4 ♜e7 23 ♖e1 ♖e8 24 ♜g4 ♜c5! 25 ♖e3 d4



26 ♖g3? A blunder. White can play 26 ♖xd4! ♗c2 27 ♖g3 ♜xe5 28 ♖e4 and survive – ed. 26...♜xe5 27 ♖e2 f5 28 ♜f3 ♜c5 29 ♜h5 ♖xe2 30 ♗xe2 ♜c2 31 h4 ♜xb2 32 ♜h6 d3 33 ♜e6+ ♗h8 34 ♖e3 ♖g8 35 ♗f4 d2 36 ♜xf5 d1 ♜+ 0-1

It is strange to think that Elaine Saunders, who is alive today, should have played with someone whose chess career went back to the 1890s. Whilst on the subject, the July 1945 issue celebrated the 100th birthday of one Henry Hudson of Canterbury. He was a well-known player in his day, we were told, and at the age of eight had drawn a game with Howard Staunton at the odds of a rook. Chessplayers never die, their ratings simply become inactive... we'll have more from our back pages very soon..



"K Kc to Kb3!",

By kind permission of Punch.

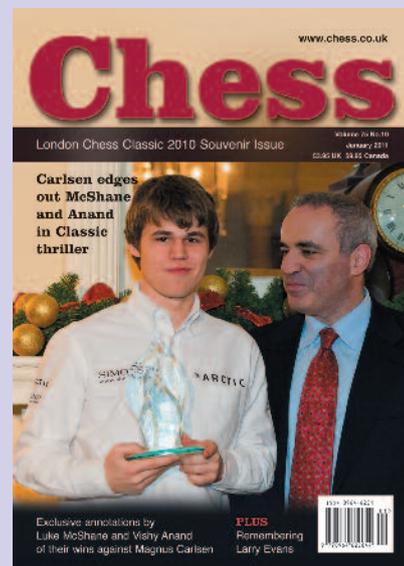
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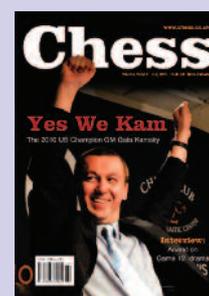
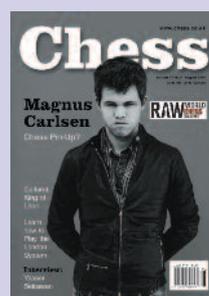
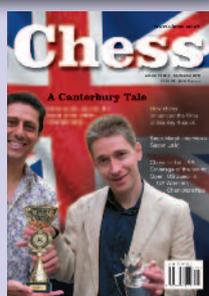
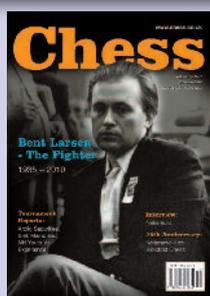
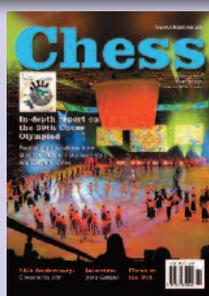
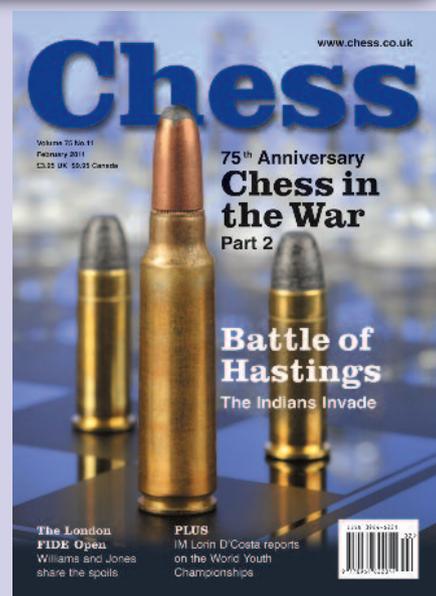
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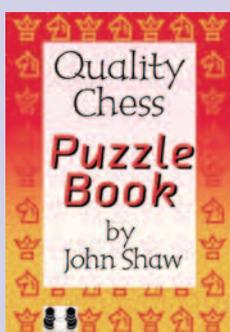
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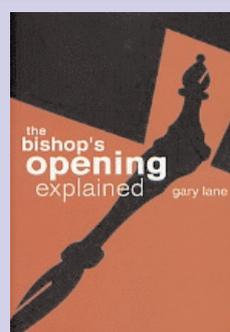
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