

## Early Retirement

### *Gady Costeff*

Fifty years ago, in 1965, appeared in Shachmat magazine Yehuda Hoch's first study. This lifted the curtain on a 30 year composing career during which Hoch and his contemporary Yochanan Afek, made Israel a study composition powerhouse. Then, in 1995, just short of his 50<sup>th</sup> birthday, Hoch retired from composing.

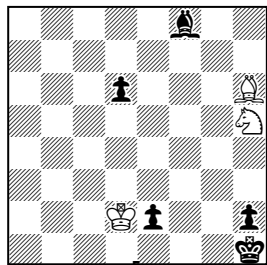
To write this article I met with Yehuda at his home in Petach-Tikva, as I have many times over the years. The thick head of hair is still jet black but the chess set is only used now to play with the grandchildren. Over a few hours Hoch recounted his composing career and chose a few studies to highlight it.

Hoch's parents moved to Romania in 1936 from neighboring Hungary. This ended up saving the immediate family from the oncoming calamity. Yehuda was born in 1946 and four years later the family immigrated to Israel.

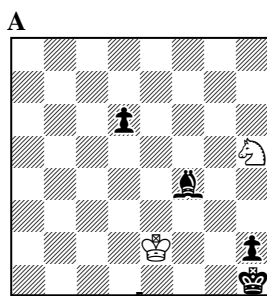
As Yehuda recalls it he was not a serious chess player, taking part in but a single tournament. This contrasts with the group of composers connected to the Tel-Aviv youth center that included Yochanan Afek, Amatzia Avni, Ofer Comay and later this author.

In 1965 Hoch made his composing debut in Shachmat. By the early 1970's, Hoch, together with Yochanan Afek, established Israel as a rising force in endgame composition.

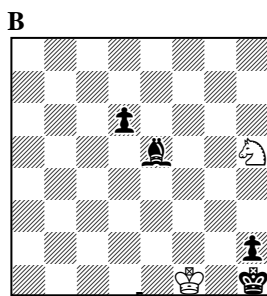
#### *4<sup>th</sup> Prize, The Problemist* 1975



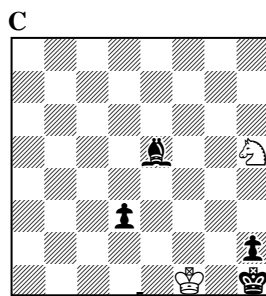
Draw 3+5  
1. ♖f4! ♜h6!! 2. ♜xe2!  
♜xf4



3. ♜f2! ♜e5 4. ♜f1



4..d5 5. ♜f2 d4 6. ♜f1 d3



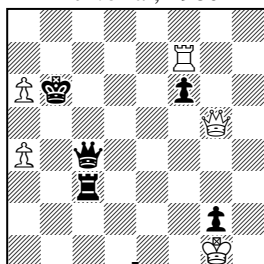
7. ♗g3+ ♜xg3 stalemate.

The above study is a good example of Hoch's creative approach. His goal, he says, was to make the study as attractive as possible for the solver, which to him meant rigorously avoiding analytical complexity. This feature is present throughout his output which approaches 200 studies. Together with Yehuda's thorough nature, it also helps explain why his studies rarely suffered analytical holes, despite never have been checked with computer.

The next study was the first to receive the maximum 12 points in a Fide Album and has been quoted in many books and numerous articles. I recall underestimating how great it

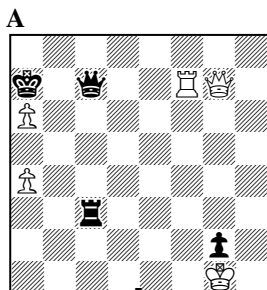
was when Yehuda showed it to me for the first time. Apparently the judge had the same blackout, originally placing it third(!), but the two studies ahead of it were eliminated for various reasons. This study is a miracle, a complete 7 piece chameleon echo with a brilliant logical-geographical point.

1<sup>st</sup> Prize, Mandil Memorial, 1980

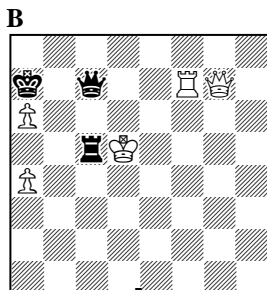


Win 5+5

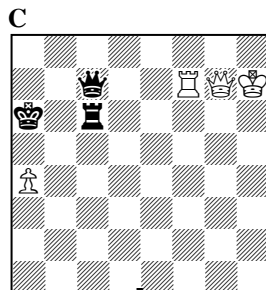
**Try:** 1. ♖xf6+ ♕a7  
2. ♗g7+ ♜c7 3. ♖f7



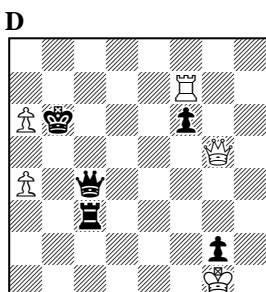
3. ♜c1+ 4. ♗xg2 ♜c2+  
5. ♗f3 ♜c3+ 6. ♗e4  
♜c4+ 7. ♗d5 ♜c5+



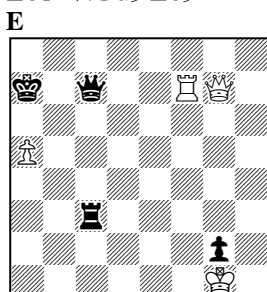
8. ♗e6 ♜c6+ 9. ♗f5  
♜c5+ 10. ♗g6 ♜c6+  
11. ♗h7 ♗x6!!



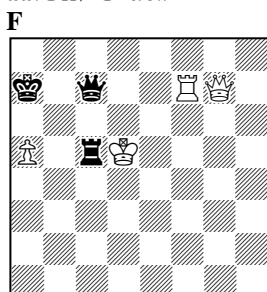
With 12. ♜xc7 ♜xc7  
13. ♗xc7 stalemate



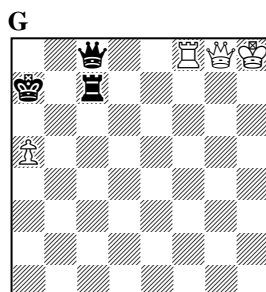
**Solution:** 1. a5+!! ♗xa6  
2. ♖xf6+ ♕a7 3. ♗g7+  
♜c7 4. ♖f7



4. ♜c1+ 5. ♗xg2 ♜c2+  
6. ♗f3 ♜c3+ 7. ♗e4  
♜c4+ 8. ♗d5 ♜c5+



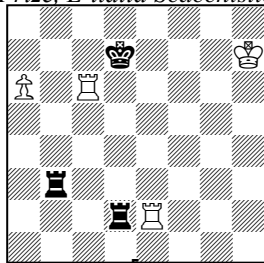
9. ♗e6 ♜c6+ 10. ♗f5  
♜c5+ 11. ♗g6 ♜c6+  
12. ♗h7 ♗a8! 13. ♗g8+  
♜c8 14. ♖f8 ♜c7+  
15. ♗h8 ♗a7!



A Chameleon echo of thematic try diagram C. The stalemate repeats after 16. ♜xc8 ♜xc8 17. ♗xc8 but the extra row allows: 16. ♗g1+! winning.

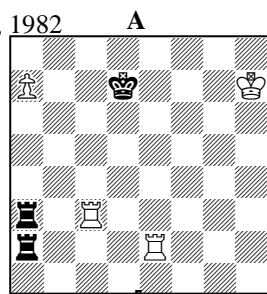
As the above study illustrates, Yehuda had a soft spot for rooks and their systematic movement potential. Accordingly, some of his most successful studies use rooks and the next study is a good illustration of this.

Prize, L'Italia Scacchistica, 1982

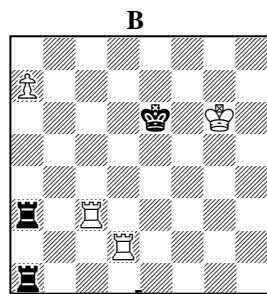


Win 4+3

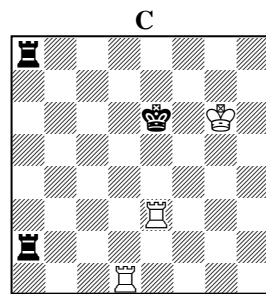
1. a7 ♖a3 2. ♜c3 ♜da2



3. ♜d2+ ♗e6 4. ♗g6!  
♖a1



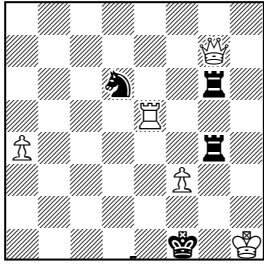
5. ♜d1! ♖1a2 6. a8♗  
♖xa8 7. ♜e3



Mate.

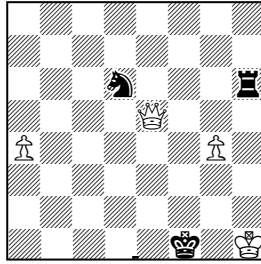
Just before retiring Hoch created another masterpiece. A deep logical study where white forces black to obstruct f2, which is then exploited by the corner move Kh1. This became only the second study to receive a perfect score from the Fide Album judges.

1<sup>st</sup> Prize, Dobrescu 60,  
1994



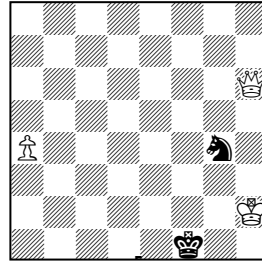
Win 5+4  
1.♙e1+ ♖×e1 2.♚e5+  
♔f1! 3.f×g4 ♗h6+

A



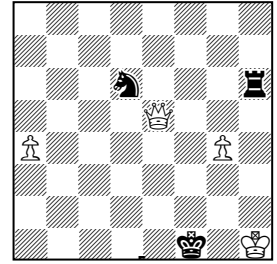
Try: 4.♖h2 ♚e4!!  
5.♗×h6 ♔f2+ 6.♔h2  
♔×g4+

B



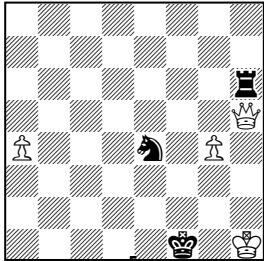
7.♔h1! (7.♔h3 ♔×h6  
8.a5 ♔f7 9.a6 ♔g5+!  
draws) 7..♔f2+!! draws

C



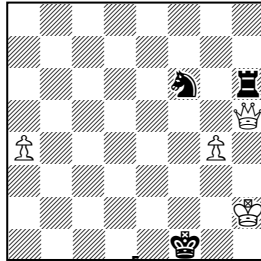
Solution: 4.♖h5! ♚e4!

D



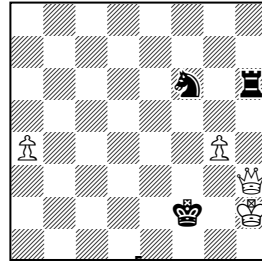
5.♔h2! ♔f6!

E



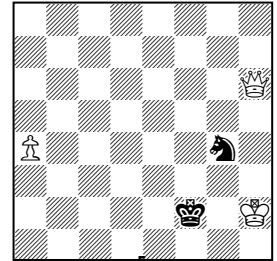
6.♖h3+!! (6.♖×h6 ♔×g4  
is diagram B in the  
thematic try) ♔f2

F



7.♗×h6 ♔×g4+

G



compare diagram B  
8.♔h1!! now that f2 is  
obstructed! ♔×h6 9.a5!  
wins

Following this achievement Hoch composed only 4 more studies, the last one dated 1995 and thus we now mark twenty years to his unofficial retirement. Yehuda still enjoys meeting composers and going over studies, but the desire to compose is apparently gone. Instead he focuses on his family. Curiously, Hoch has three children, all daughters, and eight grandchildren, all boys. Perhaps this indicates a future comeback in fairy chess.

## Israel Ring Tourney Award: Selfmates 2011-12

**Judge: Evgeny Bourd, Israel (March 2015)**

There were 29 selfmates published in the period. The overall quality was good, having most problems showing some interesting content. I decided to split the award into two sections according to length—S#2-3 and S#>3.

Few words on some problems not present in the award:

2121 ( Givi Mosashvili ) – Although the content is nice, the problem is transform from #2 without real added selfmate value.

2174 ( Andrey Dikusarov ) – Cooked