



SKITTLES
ROOM

From the Archives

Hosted by
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From the Archives...

Since it came online many years ago, ChessCafe.com has presented literally thousands of articles, reviews, columns and the like for the enjoyment of its worldwide readership. The good news is that almost all of this high quality material remains available in the [Archives](#). The bad news is that this great collection of chess literature is now so large and extensive – and growing each week – that it is becoming increasingly difficult to navigate it effectively. We decided that the occasional selection from the archives posted publicly online might be a welcomed addition to the regular fare.

Watch for an item to be posted online periodically throughout each month. We will update the [ChessCafe](#) home page whenever there has been a “new” item posted here. We hope you enjoy *From the Archives*...

Efim Bogolyubov Letter

With two notable exceptions, the great New York tournament, held in 1927, had all the great players of the day. Former World Champion Emanuel Lasker and Efim Bogolyubov did not play. They both had been invited, though. As far as Lasker was concerned, he and the tournament organizer Norbert Lederer had had an ongoing dispute since the New York 1924 tournament. But what about Bogolyubov? He also declined. He had the arrogance to suggest that the tournament simply was not of a high enough caliber for him. After receiving the invitation, he responded with the following letter, which was originally written in German.

Date: December 9, 1926

Dear Mr. Capablanca: I have just received your kind letter of November 30th, and I thank you for your information. I notice you and the tournament committee have entirely wrong ideas about the matter. The prizes in the New York Tournament of 1927 appear to me not very large. Even the sum of \$2,000 as a first prize is insufficient to induce me to put forth my best efforts. The reason is that from this money I could live at the most three quarters of a year with my family, although I have my own house.

It will not pay me to go to New York in inclement weather and to run the certain risk of not winning the first prize, but to have to content myself perhaps

with second or third prize. As much as these prizes amount to, I can earn in Europe during the same time without any effort or risk. In looking over the list of masters invited, I arrived at the conviction that this list is very disadvantageous for me. Apart from the fact that, for instance, Niemzowitsch is very hostile to me and lately has not missed any opportunity to harm me. I cannot expect fair treatment at the hand of Alekhine, Spielmann or Vidmar. Besides, I must say, as this matter has been mentioned by Mr. Lederer, that if Alekhine and Niemzowitsch play without retainer, I consider this self-confident. Alekhine, although he is an exceptionally successful master, has never had results even approaching my result in Moscow in 1925. If he later succeeds in arranging a championship match with you and succeeds in winning the same, which I consider highly unlikely, he can then demand even bigger amounts. For the time being, let us rather calculate with realities.

As far as Niemzowitsch is concerned, you know as well as I do that he, notwithstanding his fairly good results, is hardly a real grandmaster, so that I am really surprised that people make such a ridiculous fuss over him of late.

You will understand me. I shall be one of the participants who risks most in this tournament (you as champion have no risk at all) and I shall play for nothing and give the others a cheap opportunity to come ahead of me. No, I am not as altruistic as all that.

Now, to talk about the matter itself: I have already given in the first letter my MINIMUM conditions and am surprised that people are taking such unnecessary trouble to turn the discussion from the main point.

I have asked for only \$1,500, because in 1924, they invited me on my request; otherwise, I would have asked for \$100 per game.

When I made you the proposition regarding Moscow, I immediately told you the highest amount the committee was able to pay, as I do not like drawn out negotiations. The real reason why the committee of New York does not want to give me the sum demanded, it seems to me, is because the committee does not have any great interest in getting a real, first-class tournament together. For this reason, I will repeat the conditions already mentioned as follows:

I am awaiting the decision of the committee accepting or refusing my conditions until December 31, 1926. If I do not receive at that time their acceptance, together with the retainer in advance, I will assume that my conditions have been declined. Propositions after that date, even if more advantageous than my demands, cannot be accepted any longer.

Kindly excuse me, but I am unable to give you a better answer, and I wish you and the tournament committee to be assured that they are personally esteemed.

Yours very truly /s/ E.D. Bogolyubov



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