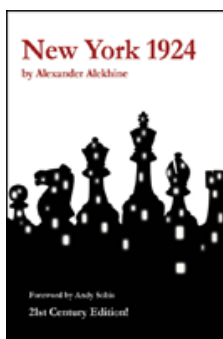




SKITTLES ROOM



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One of the most remarkable and famous chess tournaments took place in New York City in March and April 1924. It had a narrative that is still striking today: three world champions – undisputed world champions, mind you – fulfilling their destiny. The stunning performance of the 55-year-old former world champion Emanuel Lasker. The seemingly invincible reigning world champion José Raúl Capablanca suffering his first loss in eight years. And all 110 tournament games deeply annotated by future world champion Alexander Alekhine.

The tournament book that Alekhine produced became the stuff of legend. He provides real analysis, and with words, not just moves. He imbues the book with personality, on the one hand ruthlessly objective, even with his own mistakes, on the other, candidly subjective.

ChessCafe.com is pleased to present this excerpt of the recently released “21st Century Edition” of Alekhine’s classic.

Excerpt: New York 1924

Alexander Alekhine

Sixteenth Round

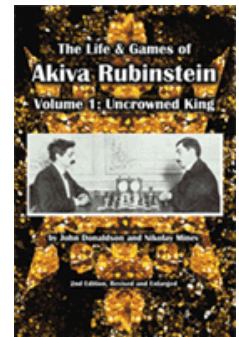
In Réti, Dr. Lasker was called upon to face not alone the sole conqueror of Capablanca, but likewise one of the rivals for high honors who at the time was pressing him most closely. Réti at that stage of the play had five points in his debit column, in which respect Dr. Lasker had one and a half games the better of it. It was small wonder then that the gallery expected much of their encounter, and in this they were not disappointed.

Naturally, it was a Réti opening, since the godfather of the debut was on the white side. Dr. Lasker seemed to be very much at home, even if the singular maneuvering of the adversary behind the lines gave him occasion to arch his eyebrows. As he realized that Dr. Lasker had the position well in hand and was gradually tightening the pressure upon the center, Réti decided upon giving up the exchange in return for a pawn. Right after that, however, he missed a chance to win a second pawn, the capture of which would have made the outcome indeed problematical. Thereafter Dr. Lasker was at his best, made every move tell and turned the advantage of the exchange splendidly to account.

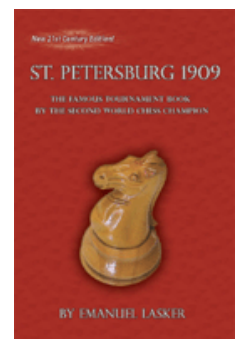
While Dr. Lasker was thus forging ahead, Marshall held Capablanca in check by drawing a Queen’s Gambit Declined, in which the champion did not quite make the most of the opening. Marshall’s subsequent good play saw him safely through the middle game. In an even queen and rook ending the United States champion went so far as to seek for a win, but Capablanca was not to be caught napping.

Alekhine vs. Ed. Lasker was a most interesting Indian Defense, in which Alekhine forced matters on the queen’s wing, the while Lasker was busy on the kingside. This time Alekhine did not find the best method of keeping up the pressure and then went astray trying to gain a definite advantage. Lasker’s failure to profit thereby brought about an ending replete with possibilities. Although both disregarded risks in playing for a win, this was eventually drawn.

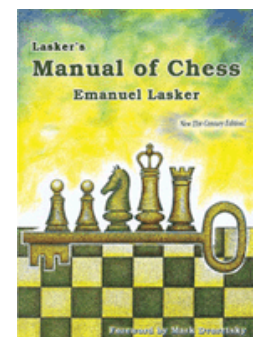
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After bringing about an exchange of queens which he desired in a Queen's Gambit Declined, wherein he had the white side, Bogoljubow reached an ending with Yates which held forth every promise of success. As a penalty for a lack of precision the tables were turned and the Briton energetically took hold of the situation. The latter appeared actually to have a winning position at his disposal when he committed himself to an inviting advance of his passed pawn. The white king, however, came over to the rescue just in the nick of time. After that it was a losing fight for Yates.

Dr. Tartakower also resorted to a Réti Opening, which he treated in a somewhat novel manner, so much so that Janowsky, adversely affected apparently, lost his bearings. After establishing a very strong position, Dr. Tartakower sacrificed the exchange, as a result of which he completely overran the hostile terrain, under-developed as it was.

At the close of the round, Dr. Lasker, with 10½-3½, was in comfortable circumstances, his nearest neighbors being Capablanca, 10-5; Alekhine, 9-6; Réti, 8-6; Bogoljubow, 8-7; and Marshall, 7½-6½.

The white pieces gained another point, with the totals at 45½-34½.

(76) Réti, R – Lasker, Dr.

Réti Opening [A12]

1 Nf3 d5 2 c4 c6

If, as we surmise, this should be the best reply to Réti's second move of c4, then at all events that move by White has the merit of maneuvering Black into a variation of the Queen's Gambit hitherto not considered as fully satisfactory. (1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3).

3 b3

Réti, however, makes no use of this possibility, doubtless in the hope that his whole system may achieve glorious success even against the best defense. This praiseworthy aim lends the game important theoretical interest.

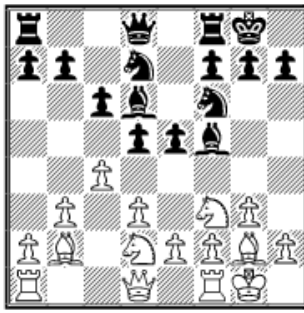
3...Bf5

With this move Dr. Lasker as second player applies the London System of development, which, with colors transposed, has several times stood the test against the double fianchetto. There is indeed no reason for Black to cut off the queen's bishop with ...e6, as, for instance, Yates and Bogoljubow have done in the tournament.

4 g3 Nf6 5 Bg2 Nbd7

More cautious would have been first 5...e6, as White might assure himself of a positional advantage, even if microscopic, by means of 6 cxd5! cxd5 7 Bb2, followed by Nc3 (compare Game 86, Dr. Lasker vs. Alekhine, wherein, with colors transposed, this method was adopted successfully).

6 Bb2 e6 7 0-0 Bd6 8 d3 0-0 9 Nbd2 e5



Now a pawn formation similar to that in the game between Réti and Yates (Game 30) is reached, which is the more favorable for Black since his queen's bishop has already been developed.

10 cxd5 cxd5 11 Rc1 Qe7 12 Rc2

Réti follows out his tried plan of development but, after a few moves, is forced to play for a liberating sacrifice which at the best will yield drawing chances.

Rather a dubious outcome for the "opening of the future!"

12...a5

To be sure this cedes to the opponent the b5-square, which is otherwise difficult of access, but, on the other hand, weakens in return not only the corresponding square of b4, but also chiefly White's b-pawn. All in all a very good transaction.

13 a4 h6

Preparing for the retreat of the bishop later on and strengthening thereby the eventual threat of ...e4, inasmuch as White would not then attack the bishop with Nd4.

14 Qa1 Rfe8 15 Rfc1 Bh7 16 Nf1

A defensive move against the now really serious threat of ...e4-e3.

16...Nc5

By means of 16...e4 17 dxe4 dxe4 18 Nd4 e3 19 Nxe3 Bxc2 20 Rxc2, the exchange could have been won, but thereupon the two united white bishops would have acquired altogether too much power. Black, therefore, prefers rightly to put on additional pressure.

17 Rxc5

With correct position judgment White seeks his salvation in this sacrifice by which he can dispose of one of Black's center pawns. 17 Qa2, for instance, would have been apparently less profitable on account of 17...Na6.

17...Bxc5 18 Nxe5 Rac8 19 Ne3 Qe6 20 h3

White gets no adequate compensation for the exchange and for the present must be content to wait. The harmless text move nevertheless has a distinct object which, strangely enough, is overlooked by Dr. Lasker.

20...Bd6

A mistake which might have had unpleasant consequences and in place of which might best have been played 20...b6 in order to safeguard the queen's wing as well as the position of the bishop. After 21 d4, he would

still have had sufficient counterplay by occupying the e4-square, and in the event of other moves a plan leading eventually to simplification could have been undertaken with 21...d4 22 N3c4 Nd7, after which his material superiority would finally have been decisive. Now, however, something quite different should happen.

21 Rxc8 Rxc8



22 Nf3

White is not aware that Dame Fortune smiles at him. By means of the obvious 22 N5g4 Nxg4 23 hxg4, he could have won a second pawn for the exchange and thereby have avoided anyway the danger of loss. After 23...Bf8 (23...Bxg3 24 Bxd5) 24 Bxd5 Qd7 25 Bf3, it would have been for Black, possibly through 25...b5, to strive for a difficult draw. After the not easily understood text move, Black holds fast until the end.

22...Be7 23 Nd4 Qd7 24 Kh2

The beginning of an artificial maneuver, the insufficiency of which is demonstrated by Dr. Lasker with marvelous clearness and precision. Better drawing chances were offered by 24 Nb5, which, on account of the threat of Bd4, followed by Nc3, etc., would have forced Black, after ... Bf5-e6, to permit the exchange of that bishop, strengthening thereby the power of the hostile pair of bishops.

24...h5

By this advance and the subsequent exchange the white king is deprived of one of his protecting pawns, a fact which will be of decisive importance in connection with the attack by the rook later on. It is now evident that the king was much safer on g1 and should have remained there.

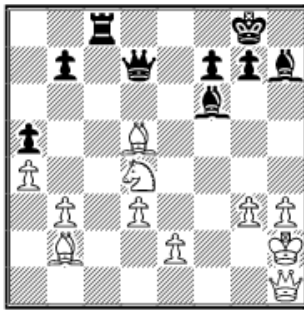
25 Qh1

Even for Réti himself this is almost too "original." In any event this move would have been ineffective if Black had been merely content to protect his pawn simply by means of 25...Rd8. His next move, however, is much more energetic and to the point.

25...h4 26 Nxd5

The only chance. After 26 Bxd5 Nxd5 27 Qxd5 (or 27 Nxd5 Bc5!) 27... Qxd5 28 Nxd5 Bc5 29 Nb5 Bf5, the ending could not have been held together long for White on account of the weakness of his queen's wing.

26...hxg3+ 27 fxg3 Nxd5 28 Bxd5 Bf6



Because of this unpleasant pin, White, notwithstanding his subsequent ingenious attempts, must perish eventually.

29 Bxb7 Rc5 30 Ba6

Threatening 31 Qa8+.

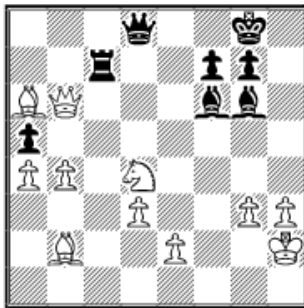
30...Bg6 31 Qb7 Qd8

For the success of the following maneuver the white queen must be deprived of the possibility of gaining a tempo by means of a check on the eighth row (as, for instance, would have been the case with 31...Qd6).

32 b4

32 e3 would not do on account of 32...Bxd4 33 Bxd4 Rc2+ 34 Kh1 Qd6.

32...Rc7 33 Qb6



33...Rd7

The point of the winding maneuver. White, for instance, after 34 Qxd8+ Rxd8, may not play 35 Nc6, as he would lose a bishop after 35...Rd6 36 Bxf6 Rxc6. For that reason he must allow his opponent a strong passed pawn which brings about a decision in a few moves.

34 Qxd8+ Rxd8 35 e3 axb4 36 Kg2

A trifle better would have been 36 Bc4, but even then Black would have won eventually after 36...Ra8 37 Bb5 Bf5, followed by the transfer of this bishop to b3.

36...Bxd4 37 exd4

Forced, as, after 37 Bxd4, Black would have won at once with 37...Rxd4 38 exd4 b3 39 Bc4 b2 40 Ba2 Bxd3.

37...Bf5 38 Bb7 Be6

In order to be able to meet 39 a5 with 39...Bd5+.

39 Kf3 Bb3 40 Bc6 Rd6 41 Bb5 Rf6+ 42 Ke3 Re6+ 43 Kf4

There is no satisfactory move left, for, if 43 Kf3, then 43...Bd1+; and if 43 Kd2, then 43...Rg6 44 g4 Rh6, winning a pawn.

43...Re2 44 Bc1 Rc2 45 Be3 Bd5 0-1

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