

ISAAC LIPNITSKY: Chess Master

The first in a two-part series about a legend of Ukrainian chess — and Bobby Fischer's favorite author

BY **MYKOLA FUZIK**
TRANSLATION BY **DOUGLAS GRIFFIN**

Editor's Note: This article has been a long time coming.

We commissioned a translation of this article in the spring of 2022, during the first months of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and as part of our “Voices from Ukraine” series on *Chess Life Online*. Our purpose was two-fold: first, to let some of Ukraine's top players and writers tell their stories, and second, to get some money into their hands when they could use it.

Mykola Fuzik sent us this article on Isaac Lipnitsky. It is a tight synopsis of his 2018 book on Lipnitsky's life and works (co-authored with Alexei Radchenko), but it is also very long — much longer than our usual *Chess Life* fare.

We have been trying, and failing, to find page space to publish Fuzik's work for the last few months, largely because it has presented some unusual challenges. Do we edit it down radically to make it fit? Do we simply put it online? Ultimately we have decided to split the article into two parts, leaving the vast majority of Fuzik's text intact.

Our thanks to Douglas Griffin for his pro-bono translation, and to Mykola for his patience.

THE TALENTED KYIV CHESS-player Isaac Lipnitsky (1923-1959) remained undeservedly half-forgotten for many years, and in the West, almost completely unknown. Although interest in Lipnitsky has noticeably increased in recent years, certain details of his life — in particular, the period from June 22, 1941 to May 9, 1945, when the USSR suddenly transformed from an ally of Nazi Germany to its enemy — remain a blank spot for the wide circle of chess fans.

Isaac Oskarovich Lipnitsky was born in Kyiv on June 25, 1923. Unfortunately, little is known about Lipnitsky's early years, since he was extremely reluctant to talk about his childhood, which until 1927 was not very joyful, as his family lived from hand to mouth in cramped living conditions.

In 1934, the Pioneers Palace, an architectural attempt to develop a space adapted to the needs of children, opened in Kyiv, and the following year, a chess and checkers circle started operating from it. Lipnitsky, who had learned to play chess at eight years old, was one of the first to enroll in the circle. A year later, in April 1936, the circle was transformed into the first children's chess and checkers club in the USSR. It soon became one of the best in the country, which does great merit to the tutors — Alexander Konstantinopolsky (chess) and Semyon Natov (checkers).

In his first years of study at the Pioneers Palace, Lipnitsky seemed to be in the shadow of a number of his peers, the names of whom were repeatedly mentioned in the press: Nikolai Zanozdra, Anatoly Bannik, Mark Usachyi, Fyodor Derkach, Lev Morgulis and others. Chronologically, the first publications in which I was able to find his surname were notes in the Kyiv newspaper *Bilshovik* in late 1938/early 1939 regarding an interesting tournament for adults and the strongest schoolchildren of the city. Fourteen-year-old David Bronstein won the tournament with 8½ points out of 10, one point ahead of second prize-winner Boris Goldenov (future master and participant in three USSR championships). Although Lipnitsky occupied a place in the bottom half of the table, he managed to be among the three participants who drew against the winner of the tournament, and he won this nice game:

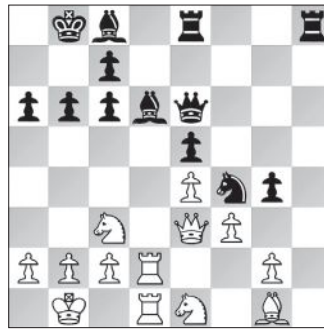
EARLY PROMISE

Isaac Lipnitsky

Kanevsky

Kyiv, 1938

Annotations by Lipnitsky



WHITE TO MOVE

**24. Rxd6 cxd6 25. Qxb6+ Bb7 26. Na4 Rh7
27. Qa7+ Kc8**

If 27. ... Kc7, then 28. Bb6+ Kc8 29. Ba5 and then Na4-b6+. The idea of the combination thought up by White consists in the maneuver Bg1-b6-a5 and then Na4-b6+.

28. Bb6 Qc4 29. b3 Qe2 30. Kc1 Rc7

Black tries to appease his opponent with sacrifices. But White continues his maneuver.

31. Ba5 Kd7 32. Nc5+

Now this sacrifice is decisive.

32. ... Ke7 33. Bxc7 dxc5 34. Qxb7, Black resigned.

Lipnitsky's first fully-fledged appearance in the media also occurred in 1939, when he took part in his first adult championship of Kyiv a few months later. This was followed by a new debut — the Ukraine championship, also the same year (both times Lipnitsky occupied places in the mid-table). And in the spring of 1940, with two victorious games, Lipnitsky made a significant contribution to his team's overall triumph (by score of 13-7) in an important friendly match against the team from the Leningrad Pioneers Palace — the strongest in the Soviet Union — which was also reflected in the press.

Meanwhile, time was not standing still — one by one, the first pupils of the club graduated and went off to adulthood. Lipnitsky was no exception, having entered the history program at Kyiv State University in 1939. But then came June 22, 1941. ...

CADET AND CHAMPION OF TOMSK

The World War II years are the least known period in the biography of our hero. For several decades the most detailed description of this part of his biography came the lines from the obituary in the magazine *Chess in*

the USSR: “During the Great Patriotic War Lipnitsky took part in the Battle of Stalingrad and fought from Stalingrad to Berlin. For his military exploits I. O. Lipnitsky was awarded seven orders and medals.” Today there is an opportunity to fill this gap, largely thanks to documents from the Central Archive of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation, which Stella Berestetskaya, Lipnitsky's niece living in Los Angeles, managed to obtain and provided to this author.

As early as July 1941 Lipnitsky, a third-year student at Kyiv University, was called up to serve in the Kuibyshev military registration and enlistment office in Stalino (Translator's note: today's Donetsk). Immediately after being called up, fate took Lipnitsky to Tomsk, where he was trained at the Second Tomsk Artillery School under an accelerated training program.

While in training, Lipnitsky had the chance to take part in the Tomsk chess championship in January 1942 — a tournament that was comparatively unknown until recently, thanks to the efforts of local chess history fans. Perhaps the reason that the Tomsk championship did not fade into oblivion was the presence of Moscow master Nikolai Riumin — a participant in the 1935 and 1936 Moscow international tournaments. By 1942, Riumin was incurably ill with tuberculosis. Since he could no longer play in tournaments, he had switched completely to organizational work. Riumin organized the Tomsk championship, performed the role of arbiter, and for some time, covered the event in local newspapers.

Unfortunately, neither the results of the tournament nor any games have survived, but T. Magazhnikova wrote this note on the website of the Tomsk Chess Federation: “The name of the winner of the tournament is not known, but we can have no doubt that it was Isaac Lipnitsky, as he was the only candidate master, and this was a very serious level in those years. In addition, the author of the newspaper articles Nikolai Riumin noted his excellent play in the tournament.”

THE WAR YEARS

Lipnitsky graduated from artillery school on May 25, 1942, with the rank of lieutenant. He was put at the disposal of the chief of artillery of the Volga military district, and in all likelihood, underwent additional training for the intelligence service after graduating from the artillery school. On October 12, Lipnitsky was appointed head of intelligence as part of the newly-formed

266th rifle division. He was presented with the Order of the Red Star on May 15, 1943 “for participation in the winter offensive and pursuit of the enemy from the Don to the Donets and the high performance achieved.” After the defeat of the Germans on the Volga, the 32nd Rifle Corps was formed and Lipnitsky was appointed senior assistant to the head of the intelligence department of the corps headquarters. He ended the war holding this position.

The Iași-Chisinau Offensive (August 20-29, 1944), in which the 32nd Rifle Corps took an active part as part of the 5th Shock Army, is considered one of the most successful Soviet operations of the war. For his role in the offensive, Lipnitsky received a second order — Patriotic War, 2nd degree — in September 1944 “for excellence in the performing of official duties, contributing to the defeat of the opposing enemy in the Chisinau direction.”

Below: Players from the Kyiv Pioneers Palace, July 1939. Lipnitsky is standing, second from the left. Bronstein is sitting, far right.

On October 30, 1944, the entire 5th Shock Army was transferred to the 1st Belorussian Front and was intended for an offensive from the Magnuszew bridgehead (an operational bridgehead on the western bank of the Vistula River, near the town of Magnuszew) as part of a shock group of front troops. “For excellent study of the enemy and the identification of his intentions, which contributed to the defeat of the German units on the Magnuszew bridgehead, Captain Lipnitsky is worthy of a government award with the Order of the Patriotic War, 1st Class,” testifies the third award sheet, signed on January 18, 1945.

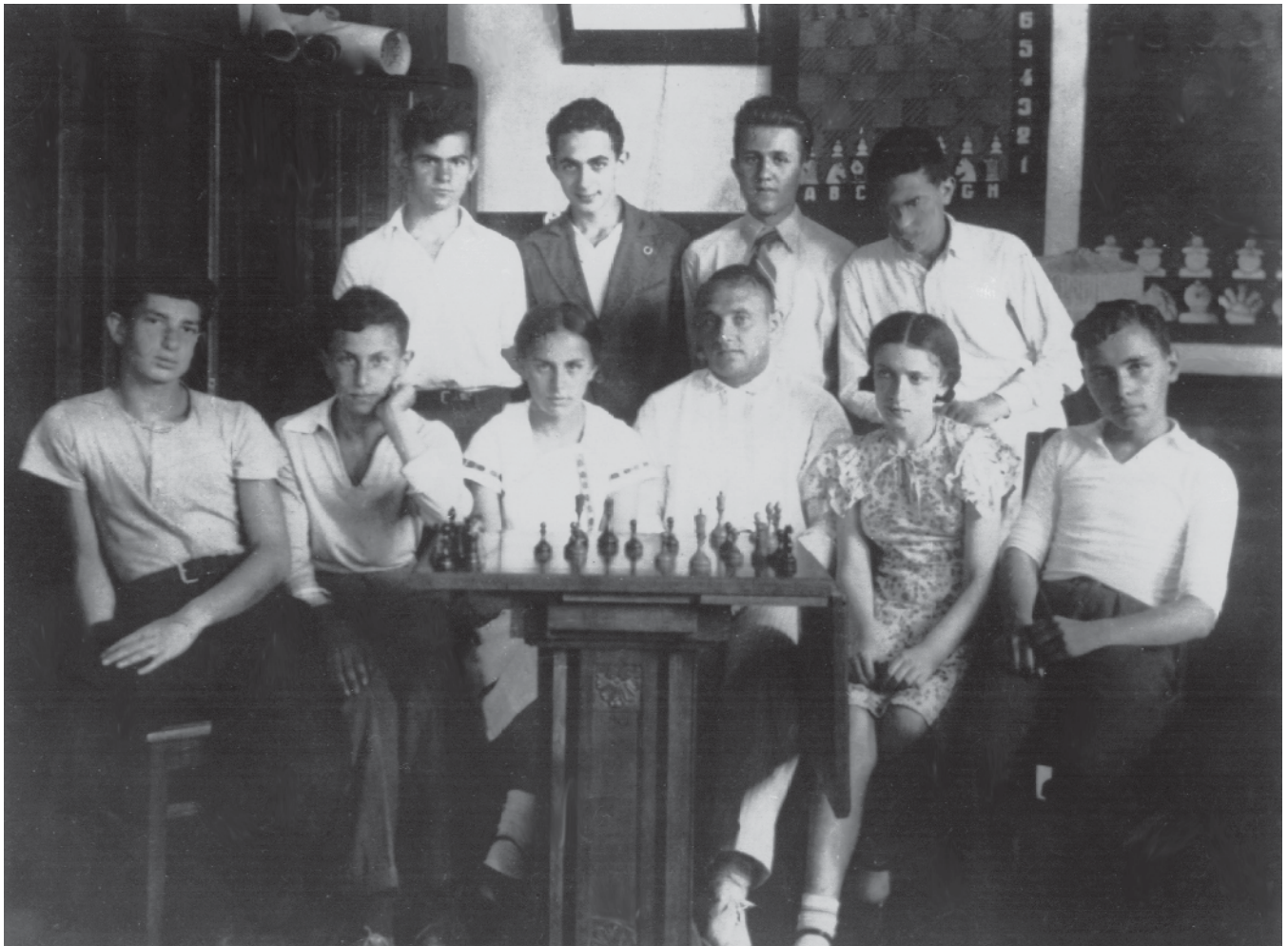
By now, the Red Army had entered German territory. Berlin was no more than 50 miles away. According to the plan from the headquarters, the main role in the Berlin operation (April 16-May 8, 1945) was assigned to the 1st Belorussian Front, which included the 5th Shock Army. For his participation in the Berlin operation, Lipnitsky received his final, fourth order, signed on May 8.

Lipnitsky also was awarded three med-

als, as verified by the account card that S. Berestetskaya obtained in the archive. This document, in addition to four orders, indicates that he received medals “For the victory over Germany” (by decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on May 9, 1945), “For the liberation of Warsaw,” and “For the capture of Berlin” (both — on the basis of a similar decree on June 9, 1945).

TWO PEACEFUL YEARS IN UNIFORM

With the war over, Lipnitsky became head of the 5th department (fire inspection) of the quarters and maintenance department of the administrative and economic department of the Soviet Military Administration in Germany (SVAG) in October 1945. This position turned out to be high enough that, more than 60 years later, a short biography of Lipnitsky was published in a guide to the leadership of the SVAG.



PHOTOS: COURTESY FUZIK / YAKIR (THIS PAGE) FUZIK / CHEPZHINNY (PREVIOUS PAGE)

Now that the fighting was over, the time had come to think once again about chess. At the Central Club of the SVAG Lipnitsky organized a chess circle that held tournaments and classes on chess theory. Local chess players also came to the club, among them the champions of Berlin of different years, masters Berthold Koch and Kurt Richter. With the latter (who played in the 30s as part of the German national team), Lipnitsky played a training match, which he confidently won.

SICILIAN DEFENSE, DRAGON VARIATION (B70)

Kurt Richter

Isaac Lipnitsky

Training Game, Berlin, 1946

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 g6 6. Be2 Bg7 7. g4 Bxg4 8. Bxg4 Nxg4 9. Ne6 fxe6 10. Qxg4 Nc6 11. Ne2 e5 12. c3 Qd7 13. Qg3 0-0-0 14. Be3 Qe6 15. 0-0 Rdf8 16. b4 Kb8 17. f3 Qc4 18. Qe1 h5 19. a4 Rf7 20. b5 Nd8 21. Qf2 Rhf8 22. Bxa7+ Ka8 23. Qb6 Qxe2 24. Rf2 Qd3 25. Qa5 Nc6 26. bxc6 Qa6 27. Qxa6 bxa6 28. Rb1 Kxa7 29. Rb7+ Ka8 30. Rfb2 Bh6 31. Rd7 e6 32. Rbb7 Rxd7 33. Rxd7 Be3+ 34. Kg2 Bc5 and Black won.

Lipnitsky also took the initiative to hold a friendly match with the American Military Administration team, since the Soviet team had several very decent chess players, including future masters Boris Naglis and Rashid Nezhmetdinov. After this idea was approved “from above,” the Soviet team visited the Americans and inflicted on them a crushing defeat — 10-0. One should not be misled by the match score, however, as it was achieved after fierce fights on almost all boards. Last to finish was the game between the leaders of the teams, in which Major Lipnitsky managed to break the resistance of one “Lieutenant Neckerman.”

SICILIAN DEFENSE (B60)

Isaac Lipnitsky

“Neckerman”

Berlin, 1946

Annotations by Lipnitsky

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 d6 6. Bg5 Qa5

Leading to the loss of several tempi. Better is 6. ... e6.

7. Bb5 Bd7 8. Nb3 Qb6 9. 0-0 a6 10. Be3

Qc7 11. Be2 e6 12. a4 Na5 13. Nxa5

After the routine 13. Nd4 Nc4 14. Bc1 Be7 15. b3 Ne3 16. Bxe3 Qxc3 Black could have been satisfied with his position.

13. ... Qxa5 14. Qd4 Rc8 15. b4 Qc7 16.

Ra3 Be7 17. f4 0-0 18. e5!



Seizing the initiative and preparing an unexpected combination.

18. ... dxe5 19. fxe5 Nd5 20. Nxd5 exd5

21. Bh6 Be6

On 21. ... gxh6 22. Rg3+ Bg5 23. h4 Rce8 24. hxg5 Qxe5 25. Qh4 White gains an irresistible attack.

22. Rg3 g6 23. Bxf8 Bxf8 24. Bg4 Bg7 25.

Bxe6 fxe6 26. Rg5 Qe7

Or 26. ... Qxc2 27. Qg4 etc.

27. Rg3 Rc4 28. Qa7 Bxe5 29. Qa8+ Kg7

30. Rgf3 Qxb4

There is no salvation. On 30. ... Rxb4 there follows 31. Qc8.

(Author’s note: For the sake of objectivity, and with the full moral support of the “metal friend,” I will disagree with the respected commentary — the position that has arisen is perfectly defensible for Black, but the capture on b4 with the queen indeed gives White an irresistible attack [incidentally, the quiet 30. ... Rc7 was also possible]. Black only had to renounce the magic of the word “queen,” and then display the necessary accuracy: 31. ... a5!. Then, for instance, possible is 32. Rf7+ Qxf7 33. Rxf7+ Kxf7 34. Qd7+ Kf6 35. Qd8+ [35. Qxh7 Bd6] 35. ... Kf7 36. Qxa5 Rc4 37. Qb5 Rc7 38. Qb6 Ke7.)

31. Rf7+ Kh6 32. Qg8 Rc7 33. Qxh7+ Kg5

34. Rxc7 Qb6+ 35. Kh1 Qxc7 36. h4+ Kg4

37. Qxg6+ Kxh4 38. Rf7, Black resigned.

Who was Neckerman? His name is unknown — in *Chess in the USSR*, and later in the newspaper 64, in which V. Chepizhny interviewed B. Naglis, there is mention only of his initial: “D. Neckerman.” But how accurate is it?

It has been possible to clarify that at the 1939 New York Open (the 40th Congress of the American Chess Federation) there was one Michael Neckermann who took fifth place in the preliminary group with seven participants, and in the “consolation” tournament — third place out of the eight participants, drawing with the winner of the tournament, 15-year-old Daniel Abraham Yanofsky, a future grandmaster. (In the main final, the winner was Fine, with Reshevsky coming in second).

In addition, the *Brooklyn New York Daily Eagle* also mentions Michael Nekkerman, a participant in tournaments at the Marshall Chess Club in New York. Is this chess player related to Lipnitsky’s opponent? (For more on this, see our extended discussion of “Who is Nekkerman?” on *Chess Life Online*. ~ed.)

But back to the main theme.

The match with the Americans was “warm and friendly,” helped in part by a few amusing episodes, including this one recounted by B. Naglis.

During the game the chess players were served whiskey and cognac. Nezhmetdinov and I (he was the second to finish play) drank a glass each, but decided to go easy on it, as a banquet was forthcoming. And then the last game was over. Lipnitsky made the overall score 10-0!

At the banquet the manager of the American team had to admit the complete superiority of our chess players. “We knew that the Russians were good at war, and now we know that they’re just as good at chess!” Well, the banquet went all wrong. There were plenty of snacks, but nothing to drink.

– “Will there ever be order in this system?” I asked Nezhmetdinov.

And suddenly an American colonel sitting beside me said with a smile in the purest Russian:

– “Mr. Major, there will never be order in our system. We have a capitalist system!”

We laughed. We joked. The Americans got over their defeat, they wanted to meet again the next year. But the meeting did not take place.

A FAIRY-TALE RISE AND FALL

In August 1947 Lipnitsky returned to Kyiv with his wife and daughter and resumed his

studies at the university — first at the Faculty of History, then he transferred to the Faculty of Philosophy. A year later, however, Lipnitsky made his final choice — chess. His competition reports, annotated games, theoretical articles, and reviews were often



published in the All-Union and Ukrainian republic press in the following years.

Lipnitsky was active in public life — he cooperated with the sports societies Burevestnik and Spartak, headed the chess section of the Kyiv district Officers' House, and he was director of the chess club of the October House of Culture. He regularly trained with the leading female chess players of Ukraine. According to the recollections of his students, Lipnitsky was a natural teacher. His pupils were future masters Lyubov Yakir (Kogan), Esther Goldberg, Berta Weisberg, Alla Rubinchik, Tatiana Kryukova, as well as Efim Lazarev, Yakir Kurass, Vladislav Shiyanovsky, and future grandmaster Eduard Gufeld.

After two years of hard work and occasional doubts about the correctness of his chosen path, Lipnitsky's chess career took off dramatically. In 1949 he won the Ukrainian Championships in brilliant style in Odessa. His final-round win (his 10th in a row!) over his only remaining rival, Efim Geller, sealed Lipnitsky's overall victory in the tournament with 15½ out of 19. Second-placed Geller was two points behind.

The new champion's creativity was on par with his sporting results.

QUEEN'S INDIAN DEFENSE (E16)

Isaac Lipnitsky

A. Sokolsky

Ukrainian Championship, Odessa, 1949

Annotations by Kopaev & Lipnitsky

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. Nf3 b6 4. g3 Bb7

5. Bg2 Bb4+ 6. Bd2 Qe7

The game Lipnitsky – Sokolsky forces a reconsideration of the above variation. Khvalchev, against Serebriinsky, continued 6. ... Be7 7. 0-0 0-0 8. Nc3 Ne4 and equalized.

7. 0-0 Bxd2 8. Qxd2 0-0 9. Nc3 Ne4 10.

Nxe4 Bxe4 11. Qf4!



Known to theory, but it had been considered that it does not give White anything.

11. ... d5

Unattractive is 11. ... Bxf3 12. Bxf3 c6 13. d5!.

12. Rac1 Na6

The pressure on the c-file is very tangible. Bad, for instance, is 12. ... c5 13. cxd5 exd5 14. dxc5 bxc5 15. Qe5! Qxe5 16. Nxe5 Bxg2 17. Kxg2. Or 12. ... Rc8 13. Bh3! with the threat of Nf3-d2 and c4xd5.

13. cxd5 Bxd5

Or 13. ... exd5 14. Rc6.

14. Ne5

The exchange of light-squared bishops reveals the weakness of Black's queenside.

14. ... Bxg2 15. Kxg2 c5 16. dxc5 Nxc5 17. b4!



Left: Major Lipnitsky, Berlin, 1947. Below: Lipnitsky gives a simul for Soviet soldiers stationed in Berlin.

White has the advantage.

17. ... Qb7+ 18. f3 Nd7 19. Nc6 Nb8?

Incautious.

20. Nd8 Qe7 21. Qe4

White is winning.

**21. ... Nd7 22. Qxa8 Rxd8 23. Qxa7 Qg5
24. Rfd1 Nf8 25. h4 Qf6 26. Qxb6 Ra8 27.
a4 Qb2 28. Kf2 g6 29. Qd4 Qb3 30. Rc7 e5
31. Qc4 Qxc4 32. Rxc4 Rxa4 33. Rc8 Kg7
34. Rb1, Black resigned.**

After this brilliant success, Lipnitsky did not sit at the board for almost a year, as if to get used to the new height that he had reached. But the next year was the most successful in his short chess career. Admittedly, in the next Ukrainian championship he had to be satisfied with “only” second place, but then he dominated the table at the next two events — the All-Union championship of Spartak and the semi-final of the 18th USSR Championship — success which gave him a ticket to the main chess forum of the country.

In the Spartak championship, Lipnitsky played one of his best games against the future master Mikhail Beilin. The game became the one most often cited in the English-speaking part of the internet when his book *Questions of Modern Chess Theory* was published in English in 2008.

QUEEN'S GAMBIT, RAGOZIN DEFENSE (D38)

Mikhail Beilin

Isaac Lipnitsky

Spartak Championship, Dzintari, 1950

Annotations by Lipnitsky

1. d4 Nf6 2. Nf3 e6 3. c4 d5 4. Bg5 h6

“After this move White obtains a lasting initiative.” “This is rightly considered unsatisfactory, since Black’s two bishops do not fully compensate for White’s advantage in space.” In the light of the latest achievements of theory and practice, these pronouncements of Alekhine sound highly controversial today. With a transposition of moves one of the basic positions of the Ragozin Defense is obtained.

5. Bxf6 Qxf6 6. Nc3 Bb4 7. Qa4+ Nc6 8. Ne5 Bd7 9. Nxc6

White sees through the trap in time: on 9. Nxd7? there follows not 9. ... Kxd7, but 9. ... Qxd4!. For instance, 10. Qc2 Qxc4 with two extra pawns for Black.

**9. ... Bxc3+ 10. bxc3 Bxc6 11. Qb3 dxc4
12. Qxc4 0-0**



Whereas for Black the opening is already over, White still has significant difficulties with the development of his kingside.

13. f3

The only way to complete the development of his forces. After 13. e3 White could not have developed his light-squared bishop in view of the vulnerability of his g2-pawn.

13. ... e5

An obvious reply. Black aims to open lines as soon as possible, so as to gain the possibility of exploiting his advantage in development for a direct attack.

14. d5?!

The move 14. e4 created somewhat greater difficulties for Black, since in this case it would have been harder for him to open lines. But after 14. ... Qg5! (there are other ways too) White’s situation remains difficult. If 15. d5, then 15. ... Bd7 (followed by ... c7-c6!) 16. Qxc7 is impossible on account of 16. ... Qe3+.

14. ... Bd7 15. Qxc7

Since after 15. e4 c6! White all the same cannot prevent the opening of the c-file, then for the time being he compensates himself with a pawn. Attacking the bishop, White perhaps believed that on the next move he would all the same have time to play e2-e4. However, he falls “out of the frying pan into the fire.” In beginning a fight without having any reserves near at hand, White essentially predetermines its outcome, since all the courage of his queen is not enough to resist Black’s perfectly-mobilized army.

15. ... e4!

In positions of this sort, such moves tend to be available. Now White’s dream of uniting his pawns in a single chain by means of e2-e4 is already unrealizable.

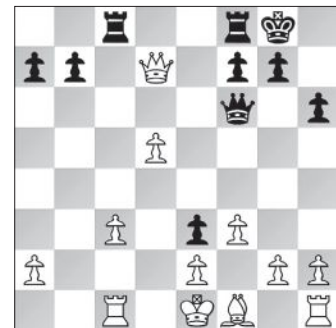
16. Rc1

Directed against the move ... R(a8)-c8, but this proves insufficient.

16. ... Rac8!

The beginning of a combination leading to a win nine moves later.

17. Qxd7 e3!!

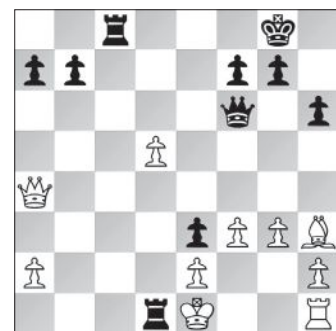


Black’s whole idea is based on this quiet move. The march of the black pawn from e6 to e3 permits the almost complete “walling in” of White’s entire kingside. Now the move ... Qf6-d4! is threatened.

18. Qa4

White eliminates this threat and includes the queen in the defense. An amusing mating finale could have taken place after 18. Qxb7 Rxc3 19. Qb2 Rfc8 20. Rxc3 Rxc3 21. g3 Rb3!!, and White can resign.

18. ... Rxc3 19. Rd1 Rfc8 20. g3 Rc1 21. Bh3 Rxd1+



In a difficult position White had set a cunning trap. On the tempting 21. ... Qc3+ 22. Kf1 Qd2 there follows 23. Bxc8!! Rxd1+ 24. Kg2 Qxe2+ 25. Kh3 (the king follows the route paved by its officer) 25. ... Rxh1 26. Qe8+ Kh7 27. Bf5+ with a rapid mate.

22. Qxd1 Qc3+

The c-file is the broad thoroughfare along which Black’s heavy pieces penetrate into the opponent’s rear.

23. Kf1 Qd2!

The only path to victory. After the exchange of queens the black e-pawn would have fulfilled its mission to the end, transforming into a new queen after 24. Qxd2 exd2 25. Kf2 Rc1.

24. Kg2 Rc1!!, White resigned.

Completing Black's idea. White resigned, not wishing to be mated in two moves after 25. Qxc1 Qxe2+ and 26. ... Qf2 mate. The game was awarded a special prize as the best in the tournament.

A STARRY TIME: NEAR THE TOP

At the end of 1950, Lipnitsky made his debut in the 18th USSR championship, in which almost all the greatest players invariably played. Several top players did not participate that year — including Botvinnik and Bronstein, who were preparing for the World Championship match in four months' time, and Alexander Kotov, who withdrew — so some agreed with Grigory Levenfish's statement that "the 18th championship cannot be ranked among the strongest." However, Peter Romanovsky's words in the tournament book *18th USSR Chess Championship* (1952) seem much more balanced:

All the best chess forces of the Union took part in the tournament, led by Grandmasters Smyslov, Keres, Bondarevsky, Boleslavsky and Flohr. The young masters were represented by the gifted chess players Lipnitsky, Suetin, Borisenko and Petrosian. All of

them had achieved major successes in the semi-final competitions.

The participation in the tournament of such strong masters as Aronin, Geller, Tolush, Averbakh, Alatortsev and Konstantinopolsky promised substantive and tense play. As the course of the tournament proved, these expectations were justified. From the very first round the struggle of the eighteen representatives of Soviet chess mastery took on an intense character.

The first round of the 18th USSR championship was played on November 12, 1950, exactly one hundred years after the birth of outstanding Russian chess player Mikhail Chigorin. Lipnitsky got off to a slow start — after the first five rounds he had only two points. But once he hit his stride, Lipnitsky began to win one game after another — seven points in the next eight rounds lifted him to the top of the standings with nine points out of 13!

Each round was covered in detail in the newspaper *Sovietsky Sport*, where Master Lev Abramov and Viktor Vasiliev were regular contributors. On December 8, 1950, the Ukrainian newspaper *Radyanskiy Sport* (its name also means 'Soviet Sport' in translation) published an article about the Ukrainian participants in the tournament (Geller, Lipnitsky, and Sokolsky). A few paragraphs are devoted to Lipnitsky:

If Geller was well known to the Moscow public before the 18th championship, then the other representative of Ukraine — Lipnitsky, from Kyiv — was a mystery to spectators during the first

rounds... At the chess table sits a quiet, even somewhat slow, man. He moves the pieces unhurriedly not hurrying to look at the demonstration board until his opponent makes a move. Nothing seems to distract him from his equilibrium, and only the characteristic touch of his glasses betrays his inner turmoil.

Lipnitsky's calmness was not imaginary. As the audience subsequently realized, it was the serenity of a fighter ready for any eventuality. Lipnitsky's style was characterized by a maturity that only comes with experience. Remembering that Lipnitsky is not a very experienced chess player, one cannot help but be surprised and pleased by the speed with which the young master is moving towards the top of the art of chess. His draws with Keres, Bondarevsky and Tolush have already proved that the young Kyiv chess player is a worthy addition to the ranks of masters. His sporting individuality consists of perfectly-played openings, delicate calculation and deep understanding of the position. He demonstrated these qualities by achieving four wins in a row in the middle of the tournament and thus moving into the group of leaders.

Unfortunately, Lipnitsky did not manage to stay at the top of the table. Over the next three rounds, the Kyiv master lost to Alatortsev and Konstantinopolsky, spectacularly routing Smyslov in between those games. Going into the final round, Keres, Aronin, and Tolush shared the lead with 10½ points, Lipnitsky had 10, while Konstantinopolsky and Smyslov had 9½ each.

Of the top three, only Keres managed to gain victory in the final round, over Averbakh; Aronin and Tolush had to settle for draws. This allowed Lipnitsky, who had won a very tough game against Geller, to share second through fourth place with Aronin and Tolush. Silver medals went to all three.

SLAV DEFENSE, EXCHANGE VARIATION (D13)

Isaac Lipnitsky
Vassily Smyslov
18th USSR Championship, Moscow, 1950
Annotations by Lipnitsky

1. d4 d5 2. Nf3 Nf6 3. c4 c6 4. cxd5 cxd5 5. Nc3 Nc6 6. Bf4 e6 7. e3 Be7 8. Bd3
Possibly 8. Rc1 should be played first and



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only after this Bf1-d3, in order that on the move of the black knight to b4 the white bishop can retreat to b1, without blocking in its own rook.

8. ... Nb4

Many considered this last move of Black to be artificial, but it has definite justification, the more so since in so doing a Black does not lose a tempo. The b4-knight restricts White, but if he chases it away with a2-a3, then with this he weakens his own queen-side, which in some cases can be exploited by Black.

9. Bb1 0-0

Quieter here is 9. ... Bd7.

10. a3 Nc6 11. Qd3 Bd7 12. h4

In many variations White must reckon with the defensive move ... g7-g6. In this case with the further advance of the h-pawn White will open a file for his king's rook.

12. ... Qb6

Smyslov immediately goes over to the counter-attack on the queen's side, since White's threats had become very dangerous.

13. Ne5!



Not only bringing the knight into the attack, but also giving the possibility of the move f2-f3, since in many variations the move ... Nf6-e4 was highly unpleasant for White. In passing White sets a cunning trap.

13. ... Rfd8

The capture of the b2-pawn appeared very tempting, since after 13. ... Qxb2!? 14. Nxd7 Ne4! 15. Nxe4 dxe4 16. Qxe4 Black has in reserve 16. ... g6!, and White is forced to part with one of his rooks.

But instead of 16. Qxe4 White intended 16. Ra2!!, and only after 16. ... Qxa2 17. Qxe4, threatening mate as well as the win of the queen. In this case after 17. ... f5 18. Bxa2 fxe4 19. Bxe6+ White is left with an extra pawn.

Nor is Black helped, in answer to 16. Ra2, by 16. ... Bb4+ 17. Kd1! (but not 17. axb4 Qxb4+ 18. Qd2 Qxb1+ etc.) 17. ... Qxa2 18. Bxa2 (now 18. Qxe4?? would lead to 18. ... Qd2 mate) 18. ... exd3 19. axb4 Rfd8 20. Nc5 Nxb4 21. Bb1, and again White should win.

14. Ra2

This "ugly," difficult to find move, is probably strongest, while the normal 14. b4 was only to Black's advantage.

14. ... Kf8

The black king hurries to distance itself from the danger zone, although it was still possible to play 14. ... Rac8!, since on 15. g4 Black had the possibility, by means of 15. ... Nxe5 16. dxe5 Ne4 17. f3 Bb5!! 18. Qc2 (18. Nxb5 Rc1+ 19. Ke2 Rxc1 20. fxe4 Rxb1) 18. ... Ba4!! 19. Qd3 Bb5!!, to force an interesting and unique method of repeating the position.

Clearly after 14. ... Rac8 White is not forced to play 15. g4 and could first cover the e4-square with the move 15. f3.

15. g4 Nxe5

This leads to a difficult position, but it is not easy to recommend anything different.

16. dxe5 Ne4 17. f3 Nxc3 18. Qxh7

An important *zwischenzug*.

18. ... Ke8 19. bxc3

It unexpectedly transpires that the rook stands excellently on a2.

19. ... Rdc8 20. Kf2

Defending the b1-bishop with the rook, White simultaneously removes the king to a safe place. Already the capture on g7 is threatened.

20. ... Bf8



It might appear that White's attack has been repulsed, while in his camp there are many weaknesses. But after ...

21. g5!

... it transpires that on e8 the black king has not found a secure haven. Now 22. g6 followed by Bf4-g5 is threatened.

21. ... Rc4 22. Kg3

Parrying the threat of 22. ... Rxf4; moreover, on g3 the white king is defended against all attacks.

22. ... Kd8 23. Qg8 Kc7 24. Qxf7 Bc5

25. Bd3

White seizes the c-file by force, continuing the pursuit of the black king.

25. ... Rxc3 26. Rb1 Rb3

Or 26. ... Qa5 27. Bb5 Rd8 28. Bxd7 Rxd7 29. Rxb7+ etc.

27. Rc1 Qa5

On the capture of the piece 27. ... Rxd3, 28. Rac2 is immediately decisive.

28. Rac2 b6 29. Qe7!



White realizes his advantage most simply by winning the queen for two rooks.

29. ... Rxd3 30. Rxc5+ bxc5 31. Rxc5+ Qxc5 32. Qxc5+ Bc6 33. Qd6+ Kb6 34. a4

After 34. Qxe6 Rxa3 the game could still have been prolonged.

34. ... Re8 35. g6

Bringing the bishop into play.

35. ... a5 36. Bg5

This is decisive. The threat is 37. Bd8+, winning material.

36. ... Rc8 37. Bd8+ Kb7 38. Qe7+ Kb8 39. Bxa5 Rb3 40. Bb4 d4 41. Bd6+ Ka8 42. Qxe6, Black resigned. ♠

Part II of this essay will appear in the June issue of *Chess Life*, when we celebrate the 100th anniversary of Lipnitsky's birth.