



Book Reviews



Translate this page



Rating Chart

- Awful –  Utter rubbish
- Poor –  Inferior
- Uneven –  Mix of good and bad
- Good –  Worth buying
- Great –  Above average
- Excellent –  Everyone should own



The Truth is Out There

by Brian Almeida

Mannheim 1914 and the Interned Russians, by Anthony Gillam, The Chess Player 2014, Hardcover, Figurine Algebraic Notation, 525pp. \$69.95 (ChessCafe.com Price \$61.47)

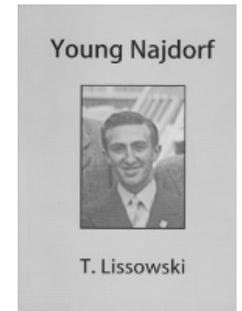
The release of *Mannheim 1914 and the Interned Russians* was timed to coincide with the centenary anniversary of the Mannheim 1914 tournament. It tells as much of the story as can be presently unearthed about the 19th Congress of the *Deutscher Schachbundes* (the German Chess Federation). The event, comprising five tournaments, began on July 20, 1914 and was stopped on August 1, 1914 after the eleventh round when Germany declared war on Russia.

The draw for the Master tournament was as follows:

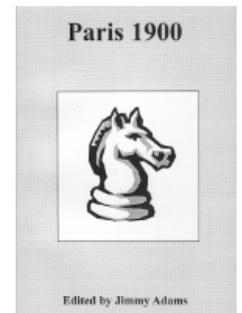
- Milan Vidmar
- Richard Réti
- Savielly Tartakower
- Walther John
- Rudolf Spielmann
- Frank Marshall
- Oldřich Duras
- Paul Krüger
- Ehrhardt Post
- Gyula Breyer
- Carl Carls
- Alexander Alekhine
- Efim Bogoljubow
- Alexander Flamberg
- Siegbert Tarrasch
- Jacques Mieses
- Hans Fahrni
- Dawid Janowski

The playing hours of the Master tournament were 0900-1300 and 1600-2000, with a time limit of 36 moves in 2 hours and then 15 moves per hour. The venue was the *Ballhaus am Schloss*, a building located in the Mannheim Palace garden area. Alexander Alekhine was leading the event with 9.5 points (nine wins, one draw, and one loss) when the tournament was suspended. Vidmar was at 8.5; Spielmann at 8; and Breyer, Marshall, and Réti at 7 points. Gillam takes some time in the introduction to voice some criticism of the crosstables given by De Felice in *Chess Results 1901-1920*, noting that "it leaves a lot to be desired" and indicating his reasons for disagreement.

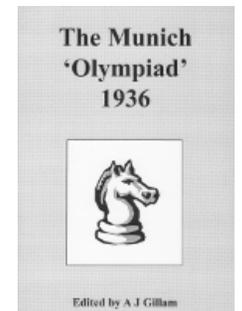
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by T. Lissowski



[Paris 1900](#)
by Jimmy Adams



[The Munich Olympiad 1936](#)
by A.J. Gillam



Standing at the back, left to right: Ahues, Hirsch, Krüger, John, Przepiorka?, Flamberg, Maljutin. Standing, second row: Janowski, Fahrni, Duras (behind), Dr. Vidmar, Carls, Bogoljubow (behind), Marshall, Hild, Robinow, Post, Dr. Tartakower, Schellenberg, Alekhine, Breyer, Réti, Sosnitsky (behind).
Sitting: Römmig, Gudehus, Prof. Dr. Gebhardt, Tarrasch, Spielman.

After the declaration of war, citizens of the Russian empire (players, spectators, and reporters) were interned at various locations in Germany. This group included Alekhine, Bogoljubov, Bohatyrchuk, Flamberg, Koppelman, Maljutin, Rabinovich, Romanovsky, Saburov, Selezniev, and Weinstein. Gillam, through diligent research, has attempted to tell the stories of all forty Russians who were interned. The material for which accounts for more than 250 pages of the book!

Much of the information comes from magazine and newspaper articles from a very wide variety of source publications, including those published in Australia, Britain, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Russia, Sweden, Switzerland, and the U.S.A, all meticulously accredited. In addition, there is a biography on all the competitors in the Master tournament, as well as for many of the less well-known players.

The book offers about 373 games, many with extensive notes from contemporary sources, and 130 illustrations (including photographs, maps, and documents). There are ninety-four games from the Master tournament (five are lost); all known games from the lower sections (ninety in all), many of which have never been published before; 103 games from the tournaments played by the interned players in Baden Baden and Triberg (pronounced Treeberg); along with other games played in consultation, in matches, and by correspondence.

Emanuel Lasker attended the event and reported on it for various publications. In *The Evening Post*, New York, he wrote that Capablanca did not attend because the organizers could not meet his conditions. Gillam notes that when America entered the war this column was given to an American editor, and that "soon after hostilities commenced, Lasker started a series of articles in the *Vossische Zeitung*, praising the German war effort and comparing the army's strategy to that of a successful chess game." Gillam suggests that one of Lasker's reasons for writing the articles could "have been a desire to build bridges with those Germans who still had doubts about his allegiance" after having lived in Britain. However, a translation of the articles are not included here.

Gillam comments that "It is said that in war the first casualty is truth," and there does appear to be competing narratives concerning the treatment of the detainees. In an excerpt from *Mannheim 1914 and the Interned Russians* [here at ChessCafe.com](#) there is an interview with Alexander Alekhine in which he details harsh mistreatment:

"They lead us into a private room and searched us. Of course, they found nothing illegal. We were left with the impression that we would soon be released from arrest. Alas, our expectations were not realized. You can imagine how surprised we were when the soldiers were ordered to load their guns, and we were sent out in pairs on to the platform. Here nearly every one of us was put with two soldiers. We were ordered to raise our hands, despite the fact that each of us had our traveling bags and things in our hands. And so we set out. To proceed in this manner was downright impossible, and the crowd positively howled when they led us out on to the street. Both the officers and the soldiers shouted at us. Some of us could not keep our hands

up and lowered them. Then the whole "cortège" came to a halt and they began to beat, with rifle butts and kicks, those who had lowered their hands. I personally received a blow like this on the back of the leg, which despite its blunt impact created a torn wound. It bled all night and even now I have a big scar on my leg. They sent us to a military prison where we were held for more than twenty-four hours. Here the soldiers cursed us terribly. They said that we were dangerous Russian spies, and that at any moment an order was expected that we were to be shot. Later, however, we were told that we were free from suspicion of espionage and they sent us to a civilian prison. We sat there for about two weeks. All our things were taken away from us. The treatment was horrible. They fed us worse than what is fed to dogs. We were forced to walk about the tiny courtyard, and we walked in line as in the arena of a circus. We were given over to the power of an insolent jailer, a retired soldier, who downright mocked us. Thus, there was the case that it seemed to him that I had smiled while out for a walk and for that I was taken away and placed in solitary confinement, where they kept me for three days."

However, in *British Chess Magazine's* "Quotes & Queries" #4951, [also reprinted at ChessCafe.com](#), it is written that "in Mueller and Pawelczak's *Schachgenie Aljechin* p. 13, Alekhine is quoted as saying that he had fond memories of their idyllic detention there (*in Rastatt, ed.*), with meals and gossip brought three times a day by the overseer and his daughter. There he played blindfold games with Bogolyubov, who, with Rabinovich and Veinstein, shared his room. In the second half of August they were all moved to a hotel in Baden Baden."

I could not find mention of this *BCM* piece in the book, though it might well be somewhere in those 525 pages. There are indices of illustrations, openings, and games, but no general index or index of sources. It would seem the former is a more accurate account.

Efim Bogoljubow, for his part, was interned in Triberg for five years as an enemy civilian, but then married a Triberg native in 1920 and was granted German citizenship in 1929. Today, the Triberg tourism office still commemorates the house in which Bogoljubow lived until his death in 1952, and has an assembly hall where information on the chess grandmaster is exhibited.

Here is a game that Marshall included in his book, *My Fifty Years of Chess*.

(81) Marshall, Frank - John, Walter [D13]

Shortly after this game, my opponent bade me farewell and went off to the front – Marshall. [In fact, John played in the remaining two rounds. See a longer, and less misleading, version of this sentence later in this book where we deal with Marshall's "adventures" after August 1st – editor.]

1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.c4 c6 4.cxd5

This makes Black's job easier – D.Sb.

4...cxd5 5.Nc3 Nc6 6.Bf4 Nh5

Eliminating an annoying bishop, but also opening the h-file for his opponent. 6...Bf5 or 6...Bg4 came into consideration – D.Sb. A radical method of at once getting rid of a piece which generally gives Black a lot of trouble.

7.Be5 f6!?

The underlying idea is to gain possession of the center with his pawns after getting rid of the bishop.

8.Bg3 Nxc3 9.hxc3 e5

This cannot be answered by 10.dxe5? because of 10...d4! with a powerful attack. To sum up the good and bad points or Black's strategy: he has gained the center, and a bishop for a knight – for which he has given White a dangerous open h-file and reconciled himself to certain tactical weaknesses on the king's side which temporarily impede his development.

10.e3 e4

This is necessary, for should he insist on maintaining the tension in the center, his d-pawn would become weak: 10...Be6 11 Qb3 Qd7 12 Rd1 Rd8 13 dxe5 fxe5 (not 13...d4 14 Bc4) 14 Bb5 – all of which indicates that e5-e4 is forced sooner or later.

11.Nd2 Be6 12.Bb5 a6 13.Ba4

White means to hold on to this bishop, which should be useful in the event that an ending is reached; for most of Black's pawns are on White squares and therefore vulnerable to the bishop's attack.

13...Bb4

To avoid 14 Ndx4 followed by d5. 13...f5 is probably to be preferred, threatening b5 followed by Nb4 – D.Sb.

14.Rc1 Re8 15.a3 Bxc3

Depriving himself of the more useful of his two bishops; 15...Ba5 seems preferable.

16.Rxc3 b5 17.Bb3 Ke7

White threatened 18 Nxe4, The white pieces have a little more activity – D.Sb. Protecting the bishop against the threatened Nxe4 and preparing to bring the KR into play. Furthermore, the king is probably safer here than after castling into an open h-file.

18.Rh4 f5

Else Nxe4 might again become feasible.

19.Qh5 g6 20.Qg5+ Kd7 21.Qxd8+ Nxd8

21...Rcxd8 is much safer. Black can then, by playing h5, prevent every advance on the king's side. The c-file would only be given up temporarily – D.Sb.

22.Rxc8 Kxc8

I deliberately played for the ending, knowing that I had somewhat the better of it because of the theoretical advantage mentioned in the note to my thirteenth move.

23.f3

With this, White gets the attack. The Nd8 cannot now be moved – D.Sb.

23...Kd7 24.g4 Nf7

24...exf3 should be examined – D.Sb. White strives to open up more lines for his pieces; but Black defends tenaciously.

**25.gxf5 gxf5 26.g4 Nd6 27.g5 Ke7 28.f4 Nf7 29.Bd1 h6 30.gxh6 Rxh6
31.Rxh6 Nxh6**

Despite this simplification White still has the initiative.

32.Nb3

Hardly has Black secured the king's side, than the danger transfers to the other wing – D.Sb.

32...Nf7 33.Nc5



[FEN "8/4kn2/p3b3/1pNp1p2/3PpP2/
P3P3/1P6/3BK3 b - - 0 33"]

33...Nd6?

The decisive error. White would also stand better after 33...Bc8 – D.Sb. Usually so steady, John gets an "inspiration" here which costs him the game. He should have played 33...Bc8 with good drawing chances.

34.Nxa6 Nc4

Regains the pawn but loses the game.

35.Ke2

Black overlooked this ingenious move. If 35...Nxb2 then Nc7 and White will win the b5-pawn – D.Sb.

32...Bf7

If 35...Nxb2 36 Nc7! maintains the advantage.

36.b3! Nxa3 37.Kd2 Kd6?

Bad! The Na3 can only be saved by giving up the b5-pawn with 37...b4 – D.Sb. The only move to hold on was b5-b4, losing a pawn but extricating the stranded knight and considerably prolonging his resistance. White's reply seals the black knight's fate.

38.Nb4!

This traps the Na3 – D.Sb.

38...Kc7 39.Kc1 Kb6 40.Kb2 Nc4+ 41.bxc4 dxc4 42.Kc3 Ka5 43.d5 Be8 44.d6 Kb6 45.Kd4 Bd7 46.Kd5 Bc8 47.Nc2

An unconventional game all the way. Notes by Marshall from *My Fifty Years of Chess*. Notes D,Sbl. from the *Deutsche Schachblätter 1916/7* p146.

1-0

Mannheim 1914 and the Interned Russians is a massive undertaking of historical research and compilation. Gillam writes that he wished to publish the entire collection of games along with as much of the story as he could unearth – he just did not realize how much there was to find! This is a book that you will pick up and browse, become absorbed by a certain story or game or item, and then return to again and again to plumb its many treasures.

My assessment of this product: 

Order [Mannheim 1914 and the Interned Russians](#)

by Anthony Gillam

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