

Akiba Rubinstein

YURI RAZUVAEV & VALERY MURAKHVERI



Yuri Razuvaev, Valery Murakhveri

Akiba Rubinshtein – Moscow: Fizkultura i sport, 1980 –
(Outstanding Chess Players of the World)

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Translated from the Russian by Andrey Deviatkin

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Sales or enquiries may be directed to jan@verendel.com
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All feedback will be considered for inclusion in any future edition.

Cover photograph: Rubinstein in his prime, circa 1914

This book covers the life and creative legacy of Akiba Rubinstein, the outstanding Polish chess master who was one of the leading candidates for the world chess championship in the years preceding World War I. Rubinstein contributed a great deal to the theory of chess. The biographer of Rubinstein is Valery Murakhveri, a well-known chess journalist. The annotations to *Selected Games* and the chapters *A Mosaic of Highlights* and *Rubinstein and Chess Theory* were written by Grandmaster Yuri Razuvaev. Furthermore, the book also includes those few games that Akiba Rubinstein annotated himself.

For skilled chess players.

The new *Footnotes* section was written for the English edition by Grandmaster Andrey Deviatkin.

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Publisher's preface

by Jan Verendel

Dear reader!

YOU HOLD IN YOUR hands the second offering from Verendel Publishing. The first was the Estonian to English translation of *World Chess Championship 1948* by Paul Keres, released in 2016 and which became an immediate success. I then had no idea what project to undertake next. This changed upon my receiving an email from Carlos Ruiz, a chess fan from Costa Rica, who recommended a book to translate about Akiba Rubinstein that was *really* good.

The only game collection available in English for several decades was *Rubinstein's Chess Masterpieces: 100 Selected Games* by Hans Kmoch. The book Carlos proposed was unknown to me, as were its authors Yuri Razuvaev and Valery Murakhveri. Remarkably, he had taught himself the Italian language to be able to read it! Until now, the Russian book has only been translated into Italian. Anyone who has tried to learn a language as an adult knows it to be a time consuming and laborious endeavour. This was a sign of exceptional work.

I came to realize that this book was a forgotten treasure from the rich heritage of Russian chess literature. *Акиба Рубинштейн* (Akiba Rubinstein) was published in Moscow by the USSR state publishing house Fizkultura i sport in 1980. It belongs to the "Black" series of Outstanding Players of the World volumes released from 1969 to 1987, so-called because of their black-coloured covers. The book had an initial print run of 75,000 copies and has become one of the most cherished of the entire series.

Valery Murakhveri wrote a warmhearted biographical chapter on Rubinstein, and Yuri Razuvaev carried out the lion's

share of the analytical work in the book. Razuvaev was a strong grandmaster who forsook his own chess ambitions to become a world-renowned teacher and coach. During his long career, he also worked with all the world champions from Smyslov to Carlsen. Razuvaev had the gift of explaining complicated concepts and strategies clearly and systematically coupled with characteristic patience and gentle humour. Razuvaev's unique pedagogical ability applied to the selection of Rubinstein's finest games is what combines to make this book so extraordinary.

The current English language edition contains all the elements from the original 1980 edition and has been expanded with additional content. Grandmaster Andrey Deviatkin reviewed every game with the assistance of modern chess engines. His fresh analytical discoveries and keen assessments are presented in the new Footnotes chapter together with certain facts about Rubinstein's life that have been uncovered since the Russian edition was first published. The newly added photographs offer a visual account of selected events from Rubinstein's life.

Why should players of today read this book and study the games of Akiba Rubinstein? He is considered to be one of the strongest and most talented players in chess history, never to have become a world champion. Current elite players may be generally stronger than those of a hundred years ago, but are their games more illuminating to study for an aspiring player? A big reason for their comparative superiority is that they are standing on the shoulders of chess giants from previous generations. Moreover, the methods of play that seem natural nowadays are often based on the innovations developed by great masters from the past. Many systems and strategies that Rubinstein creatively worked out in the 1910s and 1920s continue to shape how openings, middlegames, and endgames are played in present times.

I believe that players keen to improve are better off not to delve into the games of modern top grandmasters before they have thoroughly studied the model games from the past to learn

how and why chess has evolved into what it is today. Plans and typical ideas are often carried out in a much clearer and more straightforward manner in the games of players like Rubinstein. The study of such games is therefore highly instructive and enriching to one's complete understanding of chess.

Acknowledgements

Publishing a book is largely a result of good teamwork. Russian GM Andrey Deviatkin translated the text into English and wrote the Footnotes chapter. Proofreading was undertaken by Jimmy Adams, Thomas Engqvist, Dan Scoones(†), Simon Evans, and Philip Jurgens. Beatrice Bohman typeset the book and designed the cover with input from me. Majkel Kokocinski managed the layout. I edited the book in collaboration with Philip Jurgens who also compiled the photographs and their captions.

I am grateful to Boris Gelfand for his foreword. Thanks are also extended to Tomasz Lissowski (Poland), John Donaldson (USA), Avital Pilpel (Israel), László Jakobetz (Hungary), Raymond Rozman (Cleveland Public Library), Eddy Sibbing (Max Euwe Centre), Jonathan Schick (Belgium), Karel Mokry (Czech Republic), Michael Ehn (Austria), Evgenij Agrest, Peter Holmgren (Sweden) and Jacob Stråberg (Sweden) for their various acts of assistance.

Others have helped out in one way or another, but it's not possible to mention everyone. Thanks go to all of you for ushering this book into the light of day and giving me practical advice and valuable encouragement when the project seemed to be endless.

I hope that the present book will gain its place as the best biography of Akiba Rubinstein combined with the most well-commented games of his illustrious career.

Jan Verendel
Stockholm, September 2022

Foreword

By Boris Gelfand

Dear readers!

I AM VERY HAPPY that one of my favourite books, this biography of Akiba Rubinstein, written by Yuri Razuvaev and Valery Murakhveri, has finally appeared in English.

It is one of the books that has made the most impact on me for several reasons. It is a unique collection of great games by Akiba Rubinstein, which has fascinated players until the present day. These games have greatly influenced the way we nowadays play openings, middlegames, and endgames.

The joint author, Yuri Razuvaev, was one of the best coaches in chess history and very important for my own development as a chess player. Razuvaev had a unique gift of explaining complicated things in just a few words. And, in this book, too, he explains the games of Akiba Rubinstein in a very clear and specific way.

I first read this book when I was about ten years old. When I came home from school in the afternoons, I used to go through the games every day. I did this over and over again until I knew them by heart. And when I had finished the book, I started to read it all over again.

I was so fascinated with all aspects of Rubinstein's games, everything from how he played openings to how he handled rook endings. In fact, to the present day, such openings as the Nimzo-Indian with 4.e3 and setups with a fianchetto bishop on g2, upon which Akiba had a major influence, are still a part of my repertoire.

I encourage readers to study the games of Akiba Rubinstein and enjoy the comments, as I am sure this will lead to a big step forward in any chess player's development. I would also like to say thank you to Jan Verendel for publishing this book. It is a great gift to the English-speaking chess world.

Boris Gelfand, grandmaster
Rishon-le-Zion, Israel 2021

1. In the footsteps of Steinitz

by Valery Murakhveri

I

SOMETIMES WE KNOW more about prominent people of the distant past than we do about our contemporaries. Isn't that surprising? Sadly, however, we know very little about the life of Akiba Kivelevich Rubinstein, who contributed so much to the art and science of chess in the 20th century. Furthermore, colleagues who encountered him across the chessboard didn't know much about him either – otherwise, the life story of one of the most remarkable chess masters would have surely been told by now. Instead, we have to make do with just a few basic biographical facts. Meanwhile, despite mostly lacking his own annotations, his games appear amazingly harmonious and exquisitely beautiful even today. They are the only legacy bequeathed by the grandmaster to his descendants and all chess enthusiasts.

On December 1, 1880, a boy was born into a teacher's family in the ghetto of Stawiski, a town near Lomza, Poland.¹ The youngest of twelve siblings, he was named Akiba. However, his father never got the chance to see him because he died shortly before Akiba's birth. Moreover, his mother could not raise him, so the boy was adopted by his father's parents.

Back then, that region of Poland was part of the Russian Empire, so what kind of education could poor Jewish families hope for their many children? Becoming a rabbi would be the career

IV

In 1908, Rubinstein gained a couple of fourth-place prizes in big international events (Vienna: 1–3. Duras, Maróczy, Schlechter; Prague: 1–2. Duras, Schlechter, 3. Vidmar), and he defeated Marshall (Warsaw; +4, –3, =1) as well as Teichmann (Vienna; +3, –2, =1) in matches. He also won a match tournament of three (Marshall, Salwe) in Łódź. The following little-known game from the latter is very characteristic of both opponents: Marshall was setting traps and trying to obtain an opportunity to attack, while Rubinstein was improving his position calmly and gradually until his initiative proved decisive.

Dutch Defence
Rubinstein – Marshall
Łódź 1908

1.d2–d4 d7–d5 2.♘g1–f3 c7–c6 3.c2–c4 e7–e6 4.e2–e3 ♕f8–d6 5.♘b1–c3 f7–f5 6.♘f3–e5 ♕d6xe5?! 7.d4xe5 ♘b8–d7 8.f2–f4 ♚d8–e7 9.♕f1–e2 d5xc4 10.a2–a4! (10.♕xc4 ♘xe5!) 10...b7–b6 11.o–o ♕c8–b7 12.♕e2xc4 ♖a8–d8 13.♚d1–e2 ♘g8–h6 14.b2–b3 ♘h6–f7 15.e2–e4 g7–g6 16.♕c1–e3 c6–c5 17.♖a1–d1 ♖h8–g8 18.♖f1–f2 ♘d7–b8 19.♖d1xd8+ ♘f7xd8 20.e4xf5 g6xf5 21.♚e2–h5+ ♘d8–f7 22.♘c3–b5 ♕e8–f8 23.♚h5xh7 ♖g8–h8 24.♚h7–g6 ♖h8–h6 25.♚g6–g3 a7–a6 26.♘b5–d6! ♘f7xd6 27.e5xd6 ♚e7xd6 28.♚g3–g5 ♖h6–h7 29.♖f2–d2 ♕b7–d5 30.♚g5–f6+ ♖h7–f7 31.♖d2xd5 ♚d6xd5 32.♚f6–h8+ **Black resigned.**

One of the competitors – not a particularly successful one – in the B-group of the Prague tournament was Georg Rotlewi of Łódź, whom Rubinstein had defeated with a beautiful combination sometime before. Just like his already glorious fellow

townsman, Rotlewi was talented but poor. His tragic fate had all the hallmarks of Rubinstein's life but in fast motion: an All-Russian Masters' Tournament (1907, 6th place) as an initial success; the master title earned at a German congress (Hamburg 1910); a great performance at his first-ever grandmaster competition (Karlsbad 1911); fame (though not developed into glory), illness, obscurity, and death. Rotlewi was seven years younger than Rubinstein. His chess career was as momentary as a tiny shooting star, whereas Rubinstein was like a giant meteor whose bright trail would remain in history forever.

In 1909, Rotlewi challenged Rubinstein to a match in which the former put up stubborn resistance. The final score was +8, –5, =3 to Rubinstein. Earlier that year, both the Łódź players travelled to St. Petersburg to take part in the epic Chigorin Memorial. However, their roles were different: Rotlewi competed in the Amateur Tournament, where he took 2nd place, behind Alekhine. As Russia's top master, Rubinstein participated in the elite round-robin, along with none other than the great Lasker, who was playing his first tournament since Cambridge Springs (1904). One could not say that the world champion was “rusty” since he had played two world championship matches during the previous five years, of which the most recent – against Tarrasch – was still fresh in everyone's mind. However, here in St. Petersburg, Lasker was up against an array of young players: Rubinstein, Duras, Spielmann, Bernstein, Vidmar, Tartakower, among others. As Dr. Hannak, a chess historian, observed, it was not uncommon for Lasker's games to display the so-called “first game effect”. Several of Lasker's opponents would beat him in their very first encounter, whereas in the future, they would not be able to repeat this success for years, if at all. This pattern was the case with, among others, Tarrasch and Marshall. The same thing also happened to Rubinstein at the St. Petersburg 1909 tournament.

Boldly and somewhat carelessly, Lasker castled queenside as though not realising what kind of opponent he was facing. A deep counter-combination followed, leaving White with two extra pawns. The rest all came down to Rubinstein's flawless technique.

Lasker was hard enough to defeat in a single game, but to finish ahead of him in a tournament was even more challenging. After five rounds, Rubinstein was on $4\frac{1}{2}$ points, while Lasker had only 3. Then something unprecedented happened: in the next ten rounds, the world champion allowed his opponents a total of only half a point! By now, it was Lasker who was one and a half points ahead of Rubinstein, but the latter had one extra game to play.

By a twist of fate, the rivalry between the two leaders was twice heavily influenced by the same participant. In Round 9, Duz-Khotimirsky beat Rubinstein, thereby helping Lasker catch up with the early hero and then overtake him. But in Round 16, the very same Duz-Khotimirsky defeated Lasker. Moreover, Lasker subsequently had a day off because the finish saw an odd number of participants due to V. Nenarokov's illness. Meanwhile, Rubinstein won yet another game and regained the lead by a half-point margin.

The pairings of the last round were Tartakower–Rubinstein and Lasker–Teichmann. Usually, Teichmann would welcome a draw, but to defeat him was a different story. This time, however, he lost as submissively as if hypnotised. As a result, two top-notch players emerged as winners of the Chigorin Memorial. Those tied for 3rd – Duras and Spielmann – finished no less than $3\frac{1}{2}$ points behind Rubinstein and Lasker.

The triumphant duo had also proved to be head and shoulders above the rest in terms of creativity. Both had played many outstanding games: although neither Lasker nor Rubinstein won any of the brilliancy prizes, their combined contribution

to the chess treasure trove in the Chigorin Memorial 1909 was enormous. They each have victories from the tournament to include as highlights in their collections of best games.

In the same year, Rubinstein played a match against Mieses, which took place in various German cities. A surprising thing about the match is that Mieses won three early games despite having difficult positions, whereas he harvested only two draws in the remaining seven encounters. The games of the match leave one with a strange feeling. Rubinstein played the first three games in line with the features of the position – that is, believing in objective chess laws and trying to find the best move. This approach did indeed bring him advantageous positions – which, however, at the same time were too lively and tactical for his taste. Mieses enjoyed this kind of play, finding the best moves by intuition, and his resourceful tactical style triumphed. But from the fourth game on, a completely different opponent faced Mieses – one who was ready to eliminate any tactical tension, to create positions that allowed a to-and-fro manoeuvring kind of play. And the effect was deadly! That said, it is no pleasure to see some historians apply their beloved clichés to people who have died long ago. Many times, the authors of this book have read that Rubinstein did not know the slightest thing about psychology and played purely according to the position. In our opinion, for practical reasons, every great master has to be pretty versatile. We think this applies perfectly to Rubinstein as well. He was able to direct his chess games towards success in many ways.

V

Meanwhile, for Rubinstein, achieving practical success in mundane life was far more complex. The joint victory of Rubinstein and Lasker at St. Petersburg in 1909 gave the Łódź grandmaster the moral right to a world championship match. However, to turn the moral right into a legal right required overcoming considerable financial and organizational challenges. Lasker was on friendly terms with Rubinstein, but the rules were the same for everyone, and the champion wasn't going to ease up for his young rival. Besides, by then, Rubinstein's record was not as impressive as that of Janowski and Schlechter, who were therefore first in line for a match against Lasker.

Shortly after the St. Petersburg tournament, Janowski played a world championship match (having obtained significant sponsorship from his good old friend Nardus, a wealthy artist) and got crushed by Lasker 2–8.⁵ Then came Schlechter's turn to play Lasker. The negotiations proceeded successfully. The two sides reached a deal to play a 30-game match over the 1909–1910 period in five capitals: Vienna, Stockholm, Berlin, London, and New York. Schlechter was a modest and quiet person (resembling Rubinstein in this respect) who could not raise sufficient funds on his own, so Lasker offered him the chance to sign a joint “Appeal to the Chess World”. However, this effort was almost to no avail. The intended full-scale chess fest fizzled out to a short encounter of only ten games and ended in a tie. Curiously enough, Lasker proposed to continue the match and even lowered his financial demands, but Schlechter refused, saying he was “tired”.

In the same year, Lasker met Janowski in another match, having been tempted by a big prize provided by Nardus for the winner (the first player to win eight games). In the public's eyes, this wasn't a good “move” by the champion since everyone was looking forward to seeing his match against Rubinstein.

Lasker allowed Janowski just three draws and scored his eighth win as quickly as the eleventh game. Thus 1910 saw two world title matches.

Chess tournaments, however, weren't at all abundant in 1910. The only notable event was the traditional German Chess Union Congress in Hamburg. It was planned as a new “Champions tournament”, but many invited players, including Lasker and Rubinstein, decided to skip it for different reasons. In Rubinstein's chess career, only one modest line relates to 1910: a Rubinstein–Flamberg match, +4, –0, =1.⁶

The beginning of 1911 saw the first edition of a tournament in San Sebastian, Spain. The organizers only sent invitations to the most prominent masters, of whom everyone except Em. Lasker agreed to take part. However, there was one exception: an invitation went out to a player who had yet to achieve any notable successes. This person was none other than José Raúl Capablanca – and it was he who emerged as the winner! Rubinstein was the only player to avoid defeat in the tournament, although he did draw many games. He finally tied for 2nd place with Vidmar, a half-point behind Capablanca.

In the tournament book, Jacques Mieses assessed his result as follows:

Rubinstein is the only competitor who finished the tournament without losing a single game. What a mighty player! Although not favoured by luck and having played clearly below his strength, he still finishes with the brilliant result of being only half a point behind the winner. Let us just add that he gave away at least two and a half points in his games against Teichmann, Vidmar, Bernstein, Marshall, and Spielmann, where he had winning positions but spoiled them by inattentive play [Author: Something that had never been seen in his play before!] and only

drew the games. Let us also note that he was not the beneficiary of the smallest gift and that no half-point came his way as compensation. In such circumstances, we cannot help but declare Rubinstein the moral winner of San Sebastian.

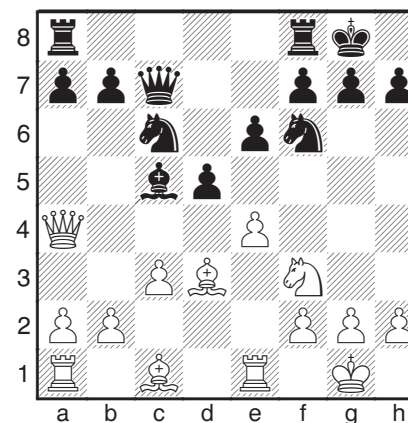
It is worth noting that the first four slips out of the five occurred in Rounds 1-4. His game against Vidmar was quite an unusual story, though.

Queen's Pawn Game
Vidmar – Rubinstein
 San Sebastian 1911

1. d2-d4	d7-d5
2. ♘g1-f3	c7-c5
3. e2-e3	♘g8-f6
4. ♙f1-d3	♘b8-c6
5. 0-0	♙c8-g4
6. c2-c3	e7-e6
7. ♘b1-d2	♙f8-d6
8. ♚d1-a4?	...

8. ♚c2 is better

8...	0-0
9. ♚f1-e1	♚d8-c7
10. d4xc5	♙d6xc5
11. e3-e4?	♙g4xf3
12. ♘d2xf3	...



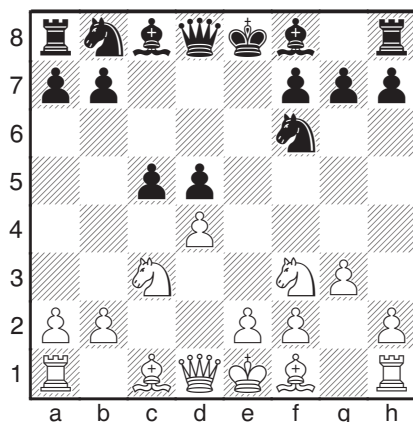
As pointed out in the tournament book, here, Rubinstein could have played 12... ♘g4, after which it's hard to find a satisfactory defence for White. Instead, he chose **12... dxe4 13. ♙xe4 ♘xe4 14. ♚xe4** followed by a few more exchanges, and a **draw was agreed** on move 22.

However, later, Tarrasch found that 12... ♘g4 could be met by the strong reply 13. exd5 with complications that would eventually favour White. Tarrasch assumed that Rubinstein had noticed this opportunity already after 11... ♙xf3, otherwise why would he give up his bishop out of the blue? According to Tarrasch, 11... ♘e5 instead of 11... ♙xf3 might bring Black an advantage which would perhaps already be decisive.

Overall, oversights would crop up with increasing frequency in Rubinstein's games of his later years. Time and again, he would miss incidental tactics – both for himself and his opponents. There is a theory that such blindness is common primarily in those who learned to play chess relatively late. It seems to us that this point of view needs thorough statistical verification. As for Rubinstein, one can explain it in a simpler and more specific way by considering the characteristics of his

Nº 10. Queen's Gambit Declined
Rubinstein – Salwe
 Łódź 1908

- | | |
|-----------|--------|
| 1. d2–d4 | d7–d5 |
| 2. ♘g1–f3 | c7–c5 |
| 3. c2–c4 | e7–e6 |
| 4. c4xd5 | e6xd5 |
| 5. ♘b1–c3 | ♘g8–f6 |
| 6. g2–g3 | ... |



“Rubinstein’s famous weapon forged by him based on a game between Schlechter and Duz-Khotimirsky, Prague 1908”, wrote Tartakower. The Tarrasch Defence has had a complicated and interesting history. Having emerged at the dawn of the 20th century, it did not remain popular for long.³² One of its “killers” was Rubinstein, so effective as White against the Tarrasch Defence that the great chess preacher’s opening passed into obscurity. Nevertheless, the Tarrasch Defence saw a revival in the 1960s when Boris Spassky successfully adopted it as Black in his second World Championship match against Tigran Petrosian.

- | | |
|-----------|--------|
| 6. ... | ♘b8–c6 |
| 7. ♖f1–g2 | c5xd4 |

Now, this move is rarely seen. Modern theory recommends 7...♖e7 or 7...♖e6.

- | | |
|------------|--------|
| 8. ♘f3xd4 | ♙d8–b6 |
| 9. ♘d4xc6! | ... |

Why is Rubinstein ridding Black of the isolated d5-pawn? Because the isolated pawn couple c6- and d5 will now be subject to a blockade while White gains time.

- | | |
|---------|--------|
| 9. ... | b7xc6 |
| 10. 0–0 | ♖f8–e7 |

10...♖e6 (suggested by Kmoch) is inferior since after 11.e4! Black’s centre is collapsing, and his king is stuck on e8. After the text move, 11.e4 is also fine, as in Boleslavsky–Stoltz, Bucharest 1953.

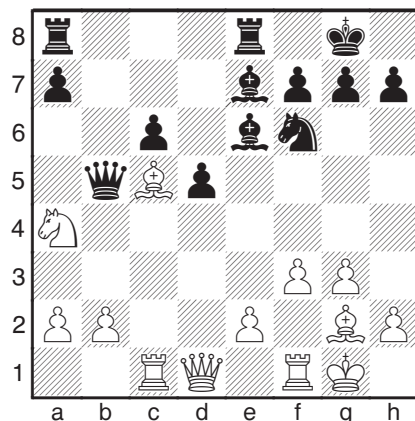
- | | |
|------------|--------|
| 11. ♘c3–a4 | ♙b6–b5 |
| 12. ♖c1–e3 | 0–0 |
| 13. ♖a1–c1 | ... |

White has the initiative and is ready to occupy the c5-square. It is difficult for Black to find counterplay against White’s clear strategy. Here 13...♖a6 deserved attention, whereas the text move only aggravates Black’s difficulties.

- | | |
|------------|--------|
| 13. ... | ♖c8–g4 |
| 14. f2–f3! | ... |

This defensive move is, at the same time, the first step of a profound strategic plan.

14. ... ♖g4-e6
15. ♕e3-c5 ♖f8-e8



16. ♖f1-f2! ...

The point of this subtle move will only be clear four moves later. Since 14.f3 has weakened the second rank, covering it with a rook is important.

16. ... ♞f6-d7
17. ♕c5xe7 ♖e8xe7
18. ♚d1-d4 ♖e7-e8
19. ♕g2-f1! ...

Curiously, three unattractive moves (f2-f3, ♖f1-f2, ♕g2-f1) have allowed White to regroup and form a spring of pieces ready to uncoil.

19. ... ♖e8-c8
20. e2-e3! ...

It is only now that the depth of White's 14th move becomes apparent. The white pieces have become active and wonderfully

coordinated, whereas Black has failed to generate any counterplay.

20. ... ♚b5-b7
21. ♞a4-c5 ♞d7xc5
22. ♖c1xc5 ♖c8-c7

Such passive defence is the pathway to a slow but sure death. Black should have tried his luck with 22...a5!? to complicate matters.

23. ♖f2-c2 ♚b7-b6?

This allows a total blockade of Black's queenside. 23...a5 was the last chance for counterplay.

24. b2-b4! a7-a6

Forced since White threatened to play 25.b5, whereas 24...a5 would have already been refuted by 25.♖xa5. Now, after the text move, White could have played 25.♖xd5, but perhaps Rubinstein wanted to wipe out the opponent's entire queenside.

25. ♖c5-a5 ♖a8-b8

No better is 25...♚xd4 26.exd4 ♕c8 27.♖xd5 cxd5 28.♖xc7 etc.

26. a2-a3 ♖c7-a7

Or 26...♕c8 27.♚xb6 ♖xb6 28.♖xd5 and White should win.

27. ♖c2xc6! ...

In addition to his positional advantage, White wins a pawn. The game is quietly heading towards its natural conclusion.

27. . . . ♖b6xc6
 28. ♖d4xa7 ♜b8-a8
 29. ♖a7-c5 ♖c6-b7
 30. ♔g1-f2 . . .

Such unhurriedness was characteristic of Rubinstein: He calmly improves his position without worrying about making half a dozen extra moves.

30. . . . h7-h5
 31. ♙f1-e2 g7-g6

If 31... ♜c8, then 32. ♙xa6! decides.

32. ♖c5-d6 ♖b7-c8
 33. ♜a5-c5 . . .

Preventing an invasion by the enemy queen.

33. . . . ♖c8-b7
 34. h2-h4 a6-a5
 35. ♜c5-c7 . . .

The easiest. The final moves are a mere formality.

35. . . . ♖b7-b8
 36. b4-b5 a5-a4
 37. b5-b6 ♜a8-a5
 38. b6-b7 **Black resigned.**

This game is a classic example of how to combat an isolated pawn and an isolated pawn couple. The manoeuvre of 14.f3, 16. ♜f2, 19. ♙f1, 20.e3 is the mark of a great strategist.

Nº 11. Ruy Lopez
Duras – Rubinstein
 St. Petersburg 1909

1. e2-e4 e7-e5
 2. ♞g1-f3 ♞b8-c6
 3. ♙f1-b5 a7-a6
 4. ♙b5-a4 ♞g8-f6
 5. d2-d3 . . .

This quiet advance is also sometimes made today. It was originally played by Steinitz and Anderssen. The move's main purpose is to avoid the Open Ruy Lopez (5.0-0 ♞xe4).

5. . . . d7-d6

5...b5 6. ♙b3 ♙e7 7.a4 leads to a position that was fashionable in the 1960s.

6. c2-c4 . . .

This looks somewhat artificial but can easily be explained. The line of 1.e4 e5 2. ♞f3 ♞c6 3. ♙b5 a6 4. ♙a4 d6 5.c4 is named after Duras himself, so his desire to carry out his favourite plan is obvious. However, after c2-c4, White cannot avoid playing d3-d4 anyway, after which the position will open up, and the loss of time will be felt. Curiously, Duras repeatedly adopted the 5.d3 d6 6.c4 move order. For Black's part, one can highlight the Duras-Levenfish game (Karlsbad 1911), which went 6... ♙e7 7.h3 0-0 8. ♙e3 ♞h5! 9. ♞c3 f5 10. ♞d5 ♞f4 11. ♙xf4 exf4 12. exf5 ♙xf5 13.0-0 ♙f6! and Black seized the initiative.

Modern theory prefers 6.c3. "On 6...g6, 7. ♞bd2 (or Bronstein's 7. ♙g5) 7... ♙g7 8. ♞f1 0-0 9.h4 opens fresh vistas." (R. Fischer). This assessment is based on Steinitz's games, but in the

early 20th century, almost every renowned master preferred to go his own way. If the reader is interested in 5.d3, we recommend carefully analysing Fischer–Smyslov, Havana 1965, and going through a dozen games by Steinitz, the first World Chess Champion.

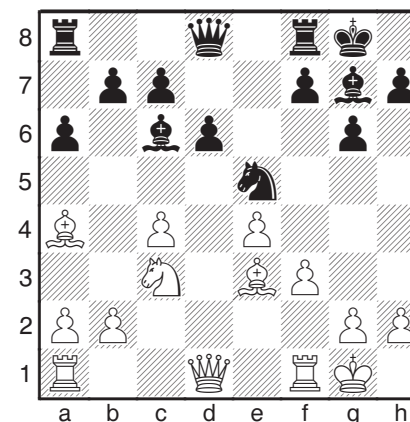
6. . . .	g7–g6
7. d3–d4	e5xd4
8. ♖f3xd4	♙c8–d7
9. ♘d4xc6	. . .

This is better than 9.♙xc6, which would give Black the bishop pair and good prospects of exploiting it (...c6–c5, ...♙d7–c6, ...♞a8–b8). Now, answering the text move with 9...bxc6 would be inferior since it would require the d7-bishop to guard the c6-pawn against its a4-counterpart.

9. . . .	♙d7xc6
10. 0–0	♙f8–g7
11. ♖b1–c3	0–0
12. f2–f3	. . .

Emanuel Lasker condemns this move in his notes of the tournament book, suggesting 12.♙xc6 bxc6 13.♙g5 h6 14.♙e3 instead. However, after 14...♞e8 Black is doing very well; e.g., 15.f3 d5!; if 15.♞c2 or 15.♞d3, then 15...♘g4! and Black has the initiative. So, in our opinion, 12.f3 is not bad at all.

12. . . .	♘f6–d7
13. ♙c1–e3	♘d7–e5



13...♞e8 was possible, but the text move of 13...♘e5 poses concrete problems for White. “14.c5 would be refuted by 14...♘c4 15.♞e2 ♘xe3 16.♞xe3 ♙xa4 17.♘xa4 dxc5 and ...♙d4. Also unsatisfactory is 14.♞e2 because of 14...♙xa4 15.♘xa4 ♘xc4 16.♞xc4 b5.” (Em. Lasker)

Not much better was 14.♙d4, which would pass the initiative to Black: 14...♙xa4 15.♘xa4 b5 (worse is 15...♘xc4 16.♙xg7 ♙xg7 17.♞d4+ ♞f6 18.♞xc4 b5 19.♞xc7 bxa4, with a draw) 16.cxb5 axb5 17.♘c3 b4 18.♘d5 c6 19.♘e3 c5 20.♙xe5 ♙xe5, or 19.♘xb4 c5 20.♙xe5 ♙xe5 21.♘d3 ♙d4+ 22.♙h1 c4 23.♘b4 ♙xb2 – Black is better in both variations. However, 14.♙xc6 bxc6 15.♞e2 was perfectly playable.³³ As can easily be seen, Duras was stubbornly unwilling to reach that position.

14. ♙a4–b3 b7–b6

The white light-squared bishop must be kept imprisoned, so it was necessary to stop 15.c5. White’s next move looks extremely risky; it weakens the e4-pawn when White should keep it protected by the f3-pawn. 15.♙d4 ♞e8 16.♘d5 was better, with a roughly equal position.

- 15. f3–f4?! ♞e5–d7
- 16. ♙e3–d4 ♞d7–c5
- 17. ♙d4xg7 ...

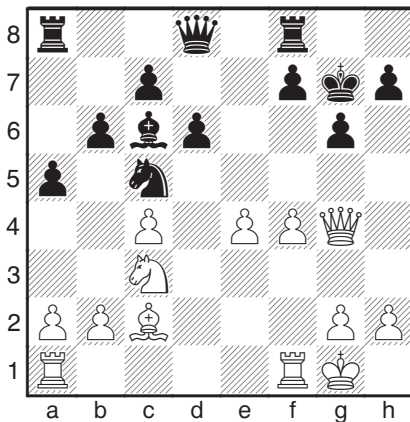
This move results in White losing control over the a1-h8 diagonal. 17. ♙c2 was worth considering, although after 17...a5 18. ♖d2 ♗h4 Black would still have a slight edge.³⁴

- 17. ... ♔g8xg7
- 18. ♙b3–c2 a6–a5

Rubinstein’s pawn moves like this are especially noteworthy: Black secures the c5-square for his knight. Rubinstein usually avoided early clashes, preferring to make all necessary preparatory moves before forcing events. The game would have been more tactical in the case of 18... ♖e8.

After the text move, White should have come up with a concrete plan. Em. Lasker recommended 19. ♖d4+ ♗f6 20. ♖xf6+ ♔xf6 21. ♖ae1, with only a slight advantage for Black. Duras finds a way to exchange the bishops, which nevertheless doesn’t bring him full equality.

- 19. ♖d1–g4 ...



- 19. ... ♞c5xe4!
- 20. ♞c3xe4 f7–f5
- 21. ♗g4–f3 f5xe4
- 22. ♙c2xe4 ♙c6xe4
- 23. ♗f3xe4 ♗d8–f6!

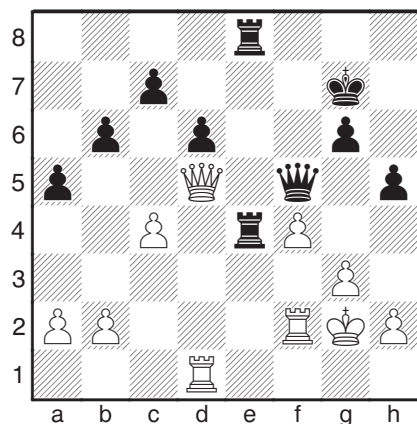
Intending to occupy the e-file; in our opinion, White should have forestalled that. A. Yusupov recommended 24. ♖c6, with the possible follow-up 24... ♖d4+ 25. ♔h1 ♗c5 26. ♖xc5 bxc5 27. ♖ae1 ♖ae8 28. g3 g5!? 29. fxg5 ♖xf1+ 30. ♖xf1 ♖e2.

- 24. ♖f1–f2?! ♖a8–e8
- 25. ♗e4–d5 ♗f6–f5!
- 26. ♖a1–d1 ♖e8–e4
- 27. g2–g3 ♖f8–e8

Even a cursory glance at this position is enough to realise how it has changed over the last four moves. Black has seized the e-file and enjoys the initiative, yet White’s position is solid, and finding a way to make further progress is not easy.

- 28. ♔g1–g2 h7–h5!!

“An amazing idea!” (Em. Lasker). Black commences an attack on the kingside. The plan is to create a pawn weakness in the opponent’s camp by ...h5–h4.



29. b2–b3 ♖e4–e3
30. ♖d1–d4 ...

Duras probably had confidence in the safety of his position before move 28. Then, when he encountered difficulties, he failed to readjust. More resistance could be offered by 30. ♖dd2; and if 30...h4 then 31. ♙xf5 gxf5 32. gxh4 ♔f6 33. ♖f3, with chances of holding on. Or 30...♖8e6 31. ♖f3, and Black has no obvious way of converting his advantage.

30. ... ♔g7–f6!

Black prepares to trade queens. From being a vague idea ...h5–h4 has now become a real threat.

31. h2–h3? ...

Confusion. However, the better 31. ♖dd2 would not have helped: 31...h4 32. ♙xf5+ gxf5 33. ♖f3 hxg3 34. hxg3 ♖e2+ 35. ♖f2

♖xd2 36. ♖xd2 ♖e3, followed by ...a5–a4 and ...♖e3–c3 or else ...a4–a3 and the rook goes to b2 – with a winning end-game in both cases (as pointed out by Em. Lasker). Even worse is 33. gxh4 ♖g8+ 34. ♔f1 ♖g4 etc.

31. ... h5–h4!
32. ♙d5xf5+ ...

If 32.g4, then Black could have occupied White's third rank: 32...♖g3+ 33. ♔h2 ♙xd5 34. cxd5 ♖ee3, winning.

32. ... g6xf5
33. g3xh4 ♖e8–g8+
34. ♔g2–f1 ♖e3xh3
35. ♔f1–e2 ♖g8–e8+
36. ♔e2–d2 ♖h3xh4

The white pawns are dropping like ripe apples.

37. ♖f2–g2 ♖e8–h8!

Trading a pair of rooks deprives White of any chances.

38. ♔d2–c3 ♖h4–h3+
39. ♖d4–d3 ♖h3xd3+
40. ♔c3xd3 ♖h8–h3+
41. ♔d3–d4 ♖h3–f3
42. ♔d4–d5 ♖f3xf4

Now Black is two pawns up. Further resistance by White cannot change anything. That said, one cannot help admiring Rubinstein's accuracy. He didn't give his resourceful opponent

(Duras was a superb composer of chess studies and problems) even the faintest hope.

43. ♔d5–c6	♖f4–g4
44. ♖g2–f2	♖g4–g7
45. ♔c6–d5	♖g7–e7
46. ♖f2–f1	♔f6–g5
47. ♖f1–g1+	♔g5–f4
48. a2–a3	♔f4–f3
49. ♖g1–f1+	♔f3–g4
50. ♖f1–g1+	♔g4–h3
51. ♖g1–f1	♖e7–e5+
52. ♔d5–c6	♔h3–g2
53. ♖f1–f4	♔g2–g3
54. ♖f4–f1	♖e5–c5+
55. ♔c6–b7	f5–f4
56. ♖f1–c1	d6–d5
57. ♖c1–g1+	♔g3–f2
58. ♖g1–b1	d5–d4
59. ♖b1–c1	d4–d3
60. b3–b4	a5xb4
61. a3xb4	d3–d2
62. ♖c1–c2	♔f2–e3
63. b4xc5	d2–d1 ♚
64. ♖c2–c3+	♔e3–d4
65. c5xb6	♔d4xc3

White resigned.

One of Rubinstein's best games. Great players are often described as artists in chess literature, with Rubinstein's style being reminiscent of a sculptor from ancient times. The steady, monumental molding of his moves is exquisite.

No 12. Queen's Gambit Declined

Rubinstein – Em. Lasker

St. Petersburg 1909

This game was played in Round 3 and had a strong influence on the overall course of the tournament.

1. d2–d4	d7–d5
2. ♞g1–f3	♞g8–f6
3. c2–c4	e7–e6
4. ♚c1–g5	...

Tarrasch makes a curious note here: "Rubinstein has made the Queen's Gambit an object of special study and is convinced that the Orthodox Defence is inferior. Now, in a very subtle way, he brings about a position analogous to that defence."

4. ...	c7–c5
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Lasker habitually went for complicated play, taking many risks. Modern theory recommends 4...♚e7, 4...♚b4+, 4...h6, 4...c6. The text move allows White to obtain an advantage.

5. c4xd5	e6xd5
6. ♞b1–c3	c5xd4
7. ♞f3xd4	♞b8–c6

"This leads Black to a difficult situation. 7...♚e7 was required; after 8.e3 0–0, Black has not much to complain about" (Em. Lasker). However, the latter assessment by the world champion is debatable. In our opinion, after 7...♚e7 Black is also clearly worse since it is difficult for him to generate active play.

Now, after the text move, 8.♚xf6 ♚xf6 is dangerous for White: 9.♞xd5? ♚xd4 10.♞c7+ ♔d8 11.♞xa8 ♚b4+, and