

CHESS BARBS

by Jude Acers (US senior master)

DIAGRAM: Long before Adolf Anderssen made his mark as the greatest combinational genius of his day (until the advent of the young Paul Morphy!), he was famous in European chess circles as superb problemist. Try to figure out his ingenious mate-in-four miniature and you will see why the highly original theme still bears his name today. Solution at end of CHESS BARBS.

ALEKHINE: THE MISSING YEARS by D. Richards' an authoritative reconstruction of a gap in the life of Alekhine by a university lecturer in Russian history, condensed and edited from CHESS (Feb. 1964). This nearly forgotten article fills in some fascinating details in the career of one of the most magnificent heroes in chess. Reprinted for your pleasure and enlightenment, but take care how much you believe (see postscript next week!)

"When the First World War broke out in August 1914, Alekhine was playing in the Mannheim tournament. As is well known, he was interned by the German authorities, together with the other Russian competitors, as a civilian prisoner of war. After about a month in prison they were sent to Baden-Baden, where they were allowed to live in a hotel. Here Alekhine began work on a book of

the 1913-14 All-Russian Masters' Tournament, in which he had finished equal first with Nimzovitch. Since he suffered from heart disease, however, and was presumably considered unfit for military service, Alekhine was soon released, and by the end of the year was back in Russia.

During the war years Alekhine served in the Soyuz gorodov (Union of Cities), an organization set up in 1914 to finance and carry out medical work among the Russian troops. Some of the time he was based in Moscow, his home town, where he managed to win the city championship in both 1915 and 1916.

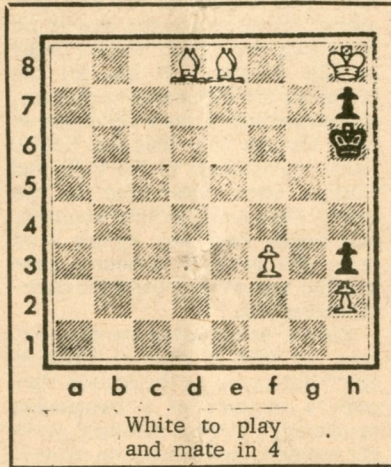
In May 1916 Alekhine was in Kiev, playing some exhibition games during his stay. Shortly after this he appears to have served on the Galician front, where a general Russian advance took place in June, July and August. Alekhine was wounded and spent a month in a military hospital in Tarnopol -- just below the front lines. In this military hospital he played his famous blindfold game against Feldt.

White: Alekhine (in blindfold exhibition). Black: Feldt. Tarnopol, 1916. French Defense 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 ed Nd5 5 Ne4 f5 6 Ng5 Be7 7 N5f3 c6 8 Ne5 0-0 9 Ngf3 b6 10 Bd3 Bb7 11 0-0 Re8 12 c4 Nf6 13 Bf4 Nbd7

14 Qe2 c5 15 Nf7! Kf7 16 Qe6ch!! Kg6 17 g4!!! Resigns.

On his release from the hospital Alekhine was demobilized and returned to Moscow.

Most of 1917 Alekhine seems to have spent in Moscow and Petro-



grad, which means he must have witnessed the revolutionary upheavals of February and October. Whether he played much chess during this year is not known. Certainly chess activities in Russia, which had been severely disrupted by the war, came almost to a standstill in the early days of the revolution, when the first reaction of the new authorities to chess was to condemn it as a worthless

bourgeois pastime. When he describes the fate of the Petrograd chess club after the October revolution, Alekhine gives the impression of having witnessed the scene himself:

In Petrograd a platoon of Red Guards was for a time billeted in the elegant rooms of the Finance and Commerce Club, where the Petrograd Chess Club had met for many years. The Red Guardsmen filled in their plentiful leisure hours, not exactly with chess playing, but rather with playing with chess, i.e., with the pieces. As a result of these "games", when the soldiers eventually departed, all the sets were completely mixed, and the pieces were found lying on the floor, while several knights had disappeared without trace. They had obviously been taken as proud mementos or simply for the Red Guard children to play with...

The October revolution of 1917, bringing the Bolsheviks under Lenin to power in Russia, and the subsequent Civil War, fought from early 1918 to late 1920, had a far greater effect on Alekhine's life than had any experiences of the years 1914-16. In the first place, much of his family's property was confiscated and his aristocratic background was obviously suspect

in the eyes of the new authorities. Alekhine seems to have adopted the policy of cooperating until the worst storms subsided.

In January 1918, Alekhine, who had had legal training before the war, began work as an examining magistrate in the Moscow Criminal Investigation Department. In April and May he won a three-man tournament in Moscow, against Nenarokov and Rabinovich with a score of 4 1/2 out of 6. July saw Alekhine in Petrograd, probably on official business; here he managed to give at least one simultaneous exhibition.

Later in the summer of 1918, Alekhine travelled south; early in October, he was in Kiev, and by the end of that month he was in Odessa, where he also spent November, December and probably the early weeks of 1919. While there he played a number of games against the local master, Verlinsky, of which at least six have been published. He also gave at least one simultaneous exhibition and is said to have played a great deal in Odessa cafes.

(Continued next week)

SOLUTION TO DIAGRAM: You have to see Anderssen's theme played out to really believe it. 1 Bh5!! Kh5 2 Kg7! h6 3 Kf6!! Kh4 4 Kg6mate! Faaanntastic!!