

# **Grandmaster Salo Flohr**

*From chess fighter to chess writer*

Jimmy Adams



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## **Salo Flohr: 1908-1983**

At the height of his chess career, Salo Flohr could be ranked second to Alekhine, against whom, had it not been for the approach of the Second World War, he would most certainly have played a match for the World Championship.

With his games containing deep strategical conceptions and crystal-clear logic, Flohr was often regarded as being just 'a little Capablanca'. But that was on the surface only. He was much more than a disciple of Capablanca – in fact he was practically a school in himself and his contributions to the development of chess knowledge were very considerable.

After the excitement and wild excesses of the 1920's Hypermodern revolution, fired by the creative genius of Breyer, Réti and Nimzowitsch, came a cooling off period in the thirties, in which these new ideas were given a thorough and objective examination.

This was an equally important period in chess history when the fresh ideas were further developed, whilst the dubious ones were discarded or modified. It was here that Flohr's tremendous natural talent for the game and his capacity for independent thought played such a leading role in the refinement of chess technique. As a consequence,

Flohr's games, though played towards a century ago, have even today a most modern appearance.

Flohr gave chess technique a new vitality, not shackled by the hard and fast rules of the old classical school, and his games abound in beautiful combinations serving to further strategical aims. Salo Flohr was truly the complete chess player: Grandmaster of tactics, Grandmaster of technique.

Here then is Salo Flohr's best games collection, which, being both artistic and instructive, will not only give readers a great deal of pleasure, but may well serve as an inspiration and model for their own games...

Salo (Salomon) Mikhailovitch Flohr was born on 21 November 1908, of Jewish parents, in the small Russian-Polish village of Horodenka. During the turmoil of the First World War, Salo and his elder brother were the only survivors of a village pogrom, which wiped out the rest of the Flohr family. The two brothers escaped death, thanks to a friendly farmer, who, at great risk to his own life, hid the boys in the loft of his house. Shortly afterwards, they made their way, as orphan refugees, to Bohemia, where they later became naturalised Czech citizens.

Salo spent his childhood in the neighbourhood of Beneschau, and later settled in Prague. Though he was never to learn any trade or profession, he soon acquired a big reputation as a chess player in the Prague cafés where he eventually profited from playing skittles for money stakes. Perhaps, more than any great player, Flohr developed his chess powers by coffee house play, while his talent for journalism was inspired by reading the newspapers which he delivered daily to such establishments and which provided him with gainful employment.

His introduction to international chess came about when a journalist took him along as an assistant, to report on the major tournament at Bad Kissingen 1928. The young Salo was quiet and modest and kept very much in the background, although he did occasionally make interesting suggestions when the masters analysed.

A few weeks afterwards, Flohr again had the opportunity to visit an international event as an assistant reporter. This was the October tournament in Berlin, held in the Cafe König, where skittles chess, by the local chess fraternity, was carried on daily, often until the early hours of the morning. Clearly, Flohr was in his element in such an atmosphere, and rapidly became well known for his skill at lightning chess, at which he even defeated certain of the grandmaster players, relieving them of their prize money in the process!

Flohr's achievements in local tournaments were also being noticed. After several high placings in events in Prague during 1928, he celebrated the New Year by winning the Kautsky Memorial, an annual event, played at a leisurely rate over the winter months.

As a result of his growing stature in Czechoslovakian chess, he was then invited to take part in the grandmaster tournament at Rogaška Slatina, in September 1929. Though a newcomer to the international circuit, Flohr had further enhanced his private reputation at the great Carlsbad tournament, held shortly before, at which he again demonstrated his impressive talent for lightning chess. His international tournament debut turned out to be equally impressive, defeating several of the big names and finishing second only to Rubinstein. Flohr's brilliant wins were published in chess magazines throughout the world, and Tartakower already wrote of him as "the man of tomorrow".

This remarkable success led to an invitation for him to play in the 'Reserve' tournament at the traditional Hastings Congress, which would give him the chance to qualify for the prestigious Premier of the following year. But it was not to be: Flohr finished a disappointing third, and this time it was his defeat against the tournament winner which gained publicity in the chess press.

On his way back home Flohr re-established his reputation with a

first place at Antwerp, with an added bonus of a brilliancy prize for his dashing attack against Landau.

Three first places in local events followed, including the year's Kautsky Memorial, and twice he was runner up in small German tournaments. But his best performance of 1930 was his 14½/17 score on Board One for Czechoslovakia in the Hamburg Olympiad.

At the end of the year, Flohr was back in Hastings, where this time he made no mistake in winning the Premier Reserves, two points ahead of second placed Rellstab, whom he defeated in a marvellous game.

After this triumph, Flohr played in Gothenburg, where he tied for first in a small but strong event, which contained the best Swedish players, Stoltz, Lundin and Ståhlberg. Immediately afterwards he lost a close match against Stoltz but was to take ample revenge for this defeat in a return match later in the year at Prague.

After securing victory, for the third consecutive time, in the Kautsky Memorial, Flohr played against Alekhine and Stoltz in an unusual tournament, consisting of a series of games in which the 12 grandmasters played, in turn, in consultation with the French representatives, Reilly and Monosson. In his games against Alekhine, Flohr scored a miserable two draws and two losses. Throughout his career, he was never to beat Alekhine, and indeed lost to him

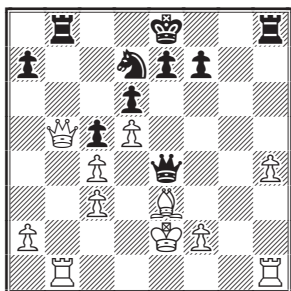
again later in the year at the Prague Olympiad.

In August-September 1931, was held the great tournament at Bled, the scene of Alekhine's fantastic victory, 5½ points ahead of second placed Bogoljubow. Flohr shared fourth place, below Nimzowitsch, but level with Kashdan and Stoltz. Though, at this stage of his career, he did not necessarily outshine his youthful colleagues, it was the opinion of many, including Alekhine, that Flohr was the most profound player of the new generation.

This opinion was vindicated over the next two or three years when Flohr competed in nearly all the great tournaments. His victory in the Hastings Premier 1931/32, with the fine score of 8/9, ahead of Kashdan and Euwe, was followed by a second place to Alekhine at London 1932, a win in the strong tournament at Bad Sliac, an equal second with Euwe, behind Alekhine, at Berne, and then first again at Hastings in the New Year.

Against players not quite of the first rank, Flohr was particularly effective, winning many small matches against Dutch and Swiss masters, in this period. At the higher level, he defeated the resilient Sultan Khan and drew matches with the solid Euwe as well as the more complex Botvinnik. He came ahead of world title contender, Bogoljubow, in Scheveningen 1933, and then pushed the World Champion into second place at Hastings 1933/34!

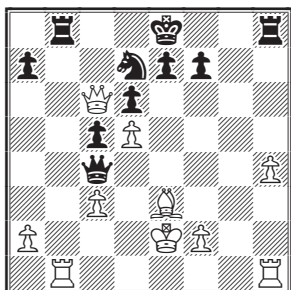
24...♖b8!



25 ♖c6!

25 ♖xb8+ ♗xb8 26 ♖xb8+ ♔d7 27 ♖xh8 ♖xc4+! (not an immediate 27...♖xh1 because of 28 h5 and Black would probably not be able to win) (1) 28 ♔f3/♔d1 ♖xd5+ or (2) 28 ♔e1 ♖xc3+ and (3) 28 ♔d2 ♖xa2+ 29 ♔d3/♔d1 ♖xd5+ or 29 ♔e1/♔c1 ♖a1+, in all cases winning some pawns before picking up a rook and leaving an easily won endgame.

25...♖xc4+



26 ♔f3?

He had to play 26 ♔d2 ♖xa2+ 27 ♔d3 when Black had to choose between (1) 27... ♔d8 (to stop White's threat of 28 ♖xb8 mate) 28 ♖xb8+ (White was menaced with

both 28...♖xb1 and 28...♗e5+) 28...♗xb8 29 ♖b7 ♗d7 30 ♖a8+ ♔c7 31 ♖c6+ (not 31 ♖xh8 ♗e5+ 32 ♔e4 ♖c4+ mating in a few moves) 31...♖b8 32 ♖b5+ (32 ♖d7 ♖xd5+ and 33...♖xh1) 32...♗b6 with a very difficult ending to win, or better (2) 27...0-0! 28 ♖xd7 (28 ♖bg1+ leaves White open to an enemy rook invasion on the b-file) 28...♖xd5+ when (a) 29 ♖c2 ♖e4+! and if 30 ♔d2 ♖xb1; (b) 29 ♔e2 ♖xb1 30 ♖xb1 ♖a2+ 31 ♔f3 ♖xb1 leaves White the exchange down and with no perpetual check after 32 ♖g4+ because of 32...♖g6!; (c) 29 ♔d4 is best, but after 29...cxd4 30 ♖g4+ ♔h7, Black has an obvious advantage.

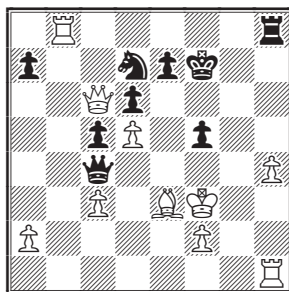
26...f5!!

Preventing the threatened 27 ♖xb8 mate, by creating an exit for Black's king, whilst at the same time threatening 27...♖g4 mate.

27 ♖xb8+

If 27 ♖bg1 ♖e4+ with a decisive attack.

27...♔f7

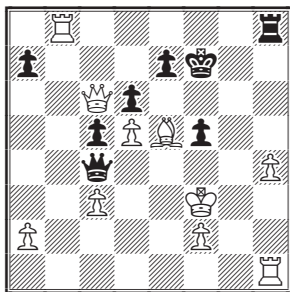


28 ♔d4

To parry both White's threats of 28...♙g4 mate and 28...♘e5+ winning the queen. 28 ♖g2 was hopeless after 28...♙g4+ 29 ♖f1 ♜xb8 etc., while 28 ♜b4 loses to 28...♘e5+ 29 ♖g2 ♙xc3! 30 ♜b3 ♙c4 (1) 31 ♙b5 ♙xd5+ 32 ♖g1 ♘f3+ 33 ♖f1 (33 ♖g2 ♘h4+) 33...♙d1+ 34 ♖g2 ♘h4+ 35 ♜xh4 (35 ♖h2 ♘f3+) 35...♜xh4 with the threat of checkmate by 36...♙h1+ 37 ♖g3 ♙h3 or 36...♙g4+ 37 ♖f1 ♜h1 mate; (2) 31 ♙b7 ♙e4+ 32 ♖g1 (32 ♖h2 ♜xh4+) 32...♘f3+ 33 ♖f1 (33 ♖g2 ♘h4+) 33...♙c4+ 34 ♖g2 ♜g8+ 35 ♖g5 (35 ♖xf3 ♙g4 mate) 35...♘h4+ etc.

28...♘e5+ 29 ♖xe5

29 ♖g2 ♘xc6 30 ♜xh8 ♙xd5+ wins.



29...♙e4+! 0-1

White is mated after 30 ♖g3 ♙g4+ 31 ♖h2 ♜xh4.

### 9 Flohr – Ludwig Rellstab

Hastings, 1930/31

*English Opening*

1 c4 c5 2 ♘c3 ♘f6 3 g3 d5 4 cxd5 ♘xd5 5 ♖g2 ♘c7

Safer is 5...♘xc3 followed by 6...g6.

6 b3 e5

Black constructs a pawn centre, with the special emphasis on controlling the important d4 square. If Black is left undisturbed in his big central build up, White could find himself in a permanently passive position.

7 ♖b2 ♖e7 8 ♜c1

Flohr immediately gets to work to tackle the c5 and e5 pawns.

8...0-0 9 ♘a4 ♘d7

The only move to protect the two attacked pawns.

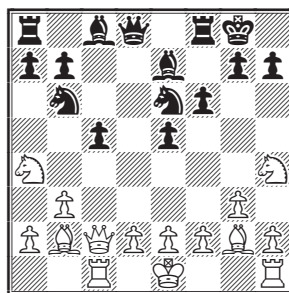
10 ♘f3 f6 11 ♙c2 ♘e6

Preference should have been given to 11...♜b8 and defence of c5 by ...b6.

12 ♘h4

Presenting a curious symmetry of White's knights and bishops.

12...♘b6



13 ♘f5!

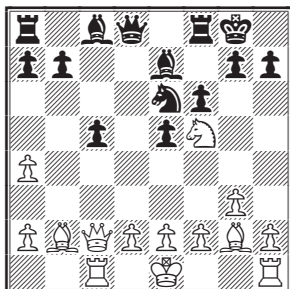
Black would have been pleased with his position after 13 ♘xb6

axb6, when he has secured his c5 pawn, whilst threatening ... $\text{xa4}$ .

**13... $\text{xa4}$**

White was intending 14  $\text{xe7+}$  followed by 15  $\text{xc5}$ , so this exchange was more or less forced.

**14 bxa4**



Flohr's conduct of the opening has been truly amazing. He has broken all the rules in the book; moving the same piece repeatedly in the opening, neglecting to get his king out of the centre by castling, and having no regard to his pawn structure, which is both splintered on the a-file and shows no signs of contributing to control of the central squares. And yet it is Black who is in serious trouble!

**14... $\text{b8}$**

To play ...b6 in order both to defend c5 and to develop his queen's bishop.

**15 f4!**

In the finest hypermodern tradition, the enemy centre comes under fire from the flanks. The text move contains some sharp tactical turns. If now 15... $\text{exf4}$  16  $\text{gxf4}$   $\text{exf4}$

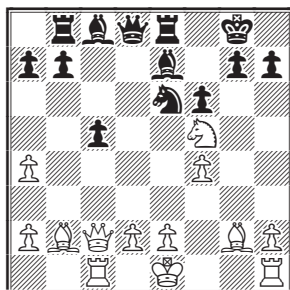
17  $\text{c4+}$   $\text{e6}$  18  $\text{d5}$   $\text{f7}$ , then, in addition to the recovery of the sacrificed pawn with either 19  $\text{xg7}$  or  $\text{xe7}$ , White has an even stronger continuation by pursuing an attack by 19  $\text{g1}$   $\text{g6}$  20  $\text{h4!}$ .

**15... $\text{exf4}$**

Black's proud 'strong point' on e5 must be dismantled, since 15... $\text{d6}$  16  $\text{xd6}$   $\text{xd6}$  17  $\text{xe5}$   $\text{xe5}$  18  $\text{e4}$   $\text{d4}$  19  $\text{d5+}$  wins either the c- or e-pawn.

**16  $\text{gxf4}$   $\text{e8}$**

Black will not get involved in ... $\text{xf4}$ , analysed above.



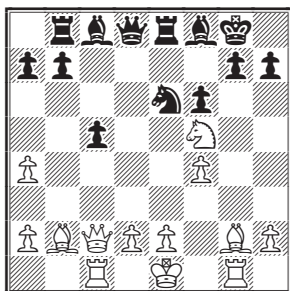
**17  $\text{g1!}$**

Played in the same unconventional manner with which he has conducted the entire game. Now all of White's men are actively placed, he has an especially dangerous avenue of attack on the g-file, Black's pawn centre has been smashed, and White's king is far more secure than Black's!

**17... $\text{f8}$**

17... $\text{xf4}$  now loses outright to 18  $\text{c4+}$   $\text{e6}$  19  $\text{d5}$   $\text{f7}$  20  $\text{g7+}$ , or 19... $\text{f8}$  20  $\text{h6+}$

♔h8 21 ♖f7+ winning the queen. The text move also loses. The only chance was 17...♔h8 to move the king away from the dangers on the g-file and the a2-g8 diagonal.



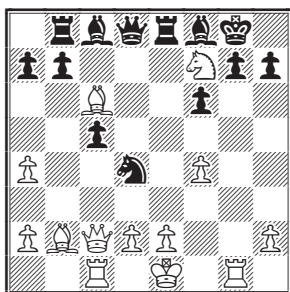
18 ♙c6!!

So if 18...bxc6 19 ♖h6+ ♔h8 20 ♖f7 wins the queen.

18...♞d4

A desperate counterattack on the white queen.

19 ♖h6+ ♔h8 20 ♖f7+ ♔g8



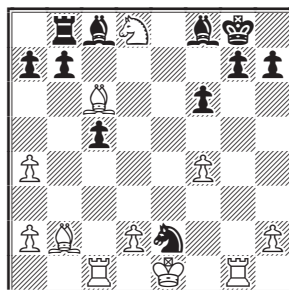
21 ♖h6+

A repetition of moves to gain time on the clock.

21...♔h8 22 ♖f7+ ♔g8 23 ♚c4!

Threatening a mate in two by 24 ♖h6+ ♔h8 25 ♚g8, but the move still needed precise calculation.

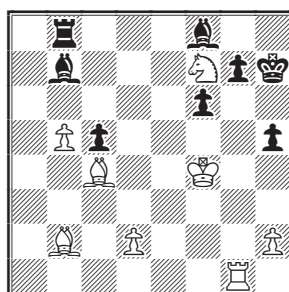
23...♚xe2+ 24 ♚xe2! ♖xe2 25 ♖xd8



25...♞xg1?

This loses a piece. But after the alternative 25...bxc6 26 ♔xe2 ♚xb2 27 ♚b1 ♚xa2 (after an exchange of rooks, White wins easily) 28 ♚b8 ♙a6+ 29 ♙e3 ♚a3+ 30 ♙f2 ♙c4 (otherwise 31 ♖e6 wins) 31 f5! ♚xa4 32 ♖e6 ♙xe6 33 fxe6 ♚e4 34 ♚e1 still wins for White.

26 ♙d5+ ♔h8 27 ♖f7+ ♔g8 28 ♙f2 ♖h3+ 29 ♙g3 b5 30 axb5 ♙b7 31 ♙c4 a6 32 a4 axb5 33 axb5 ♖xf4 34 ♙xf4 h5 35 ♚g1 ♔h7



36 ♙xf6! 1-0

Since 36...gxf6 37 ♙d3+ mates. Euwe's comment on Flohr's brilliant and highly original management of this game was, "The essence of Flohr's style is revealed here: the

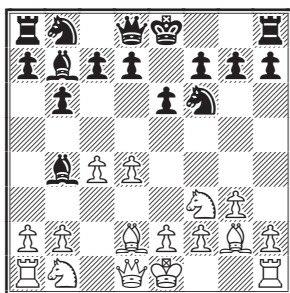
carrying out of his preparations in an almost mysterious way, like an artist roughing in, to begin with, odd strokes and points which seem to signify nothing; finally he links up these random strokes – and you gaze amazed at a perfect portrait.”

### 10 Flohr – Gösta Stoltz

Game 4, match, Gothenburg, 1931

*Queen's Indian Defence*

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 b6 4 g3  
♙b7 5 ♙g2 ♙b4+ 6 ♙d2



6...♙e7

6...♙xd2+ is best met by 7 ♗xd2! 0-0 8 ♘c3 ♘e4 9 ♗c2 f5 with a balanced game, Euwe – Flohr, Match 1932.

On the other hand, 7 ♘bxd2 leaves the knight rather badly placed; Sultan Khan – Flohr, 1st Match Game 1932, continued 7 ♘bxd2 0-0 8 0-0 d6 9 ♘h4 ♙xg2 10 ♙xg2 c5 11 d5 exd5 12 cxd5 ♘xd5 13 ♘e4 ♘f6 14 ♘xd6 ♘c6 15 ♘b5 ♗e7 16 ♘c3 ♗ad8 17 ♗c1 ♘d4 18 e3 ♘e6 19 ♗c2 g6 20 ♗ad1 ♗b7+ 21 f3 b5 22 ♗xd8 ♗xd8 23 ♗d1 ♗xd1 24 ♗xd1 b4 25 ♘a4

c4 26 ♙f2 ♗b5 27 ♘g2 ♗h5 28 ♗c2 ♗xh2 29 ♗xc4 ♘g5 30 ♗f1 ♘h5 31 f4 ♘e4+ 32 ♙e1 ♘hxg3 0-1.

7 0-0 0-0

Better is 7...♙xd2 8 ♘bxd2 0-0, entering a variation similar to that in the previous note.

8 ♘c3

The most logical. He intends to leave the bishop hanging in the air on b4. Alternatively, 8 ♙f4 would be countered, not by 8...d5 9 c5! bxc5 10 a3 ♙a5 11 dxc5 etc, but with 8...♙d6! and White can hardly avoid the exchange since if 9 ♙d2 ♙b4 10 ♙e3 ♘g4.

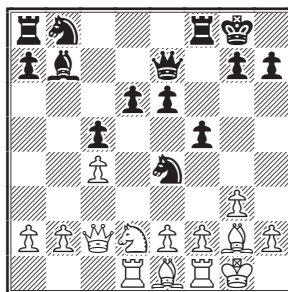
8...d6 9 ♗c2 c5 10 dxc5 bxc5 11 ♗ad1 ♙xc3

This exchange had to be made sooner or later.

12 ♙xc3 ♘e4 13 ♙e1

To preserve the ‘minor exchange’. The possession of the two bishops is an advantage here, due to the open diagonals.

13...f5 14 ♘d2



# Grandmaster Flohr and his Book

*by Yuri Nagibin*

Literary people who value words, believing in their precise and meaningful essence that relates to the overall subject material, do not consider all 'bound sheets of paper' (V. Dahl) as a book. Although their perception of a book does not fully correspond to the definition in a dictionary. 'It seems I'm giving birth to a book,' said Pasternak with a mysteriously significant look. This didn't mean that he had written enough new poems to compile a slim or even hefty collection. A novel is always a book, even if it's a bad one. Authors of shorter texts, on the other hand, are often positioned differently – usually, their works are released in collections, but occasionally books also emerge, although not always due to premeditated intentions, although that is often the case. Books come to poets, storytellers, novelists, essayists when the smaller works comprising them – despite their varied themes – are connected by a common root, originating from a strong individual emotion, a certain enchantment, and serve as an expression of a single soulful idea that has taken hold of an entire period of life. In a different scenario, collections are created, which, from an artistic standpoint, may

be superior to a book but do not constitute a singular, extensive, powerful, and enduring experience.

One might think that articles and reportage by Salo Flohr, titled 'Through the Prism of Half a Century,' cannot be called a 'book.' Well, if only for the simple reason that he did not write such a book: scattered articles, sketches, reports on famous tournaments and matches published in various newspapers and specialised magazines were collected by the Grandmaster's widow after his death.

The late author would sign his articles when they were sent to periodicals, but he would not sign off the last page until he had given it all a final look. Of course, the present collection is devoted to chess and chess players, it has a single theme, but unity cannot be achieved through this alone. A collection of writings from different years, related to various periods of the chess world, has been gathered in this book. It includes diverse narratives, alongside sketches, psychological studies with newspaper reports on long-gone chess battles, and reminiscences with musings on the mysteries of the capricious goddess

Caïssa. Despite the lack of genre cohesion, complete stories coexist with snippets. However, the variety has a strong connection to the charming and remarkably whole personality of the journalist/author, vividly emerging from the effortlessly written pages. Whether this is the result of a conscious and imperceptible selection process or simply happened that way, I won't judge. But the miracle has occurred, and the conversation is about the book of Grandmaster Salo Flohr, not about a posthumous collection.

It seems to me that Salo Flohr wrote with a lively enthusiasm, without the torment that is scarier than any other. Words flocked to him like trained birds. He wrote about what he loved most in the world, what he constantly thought about, what he lived for, and what he knew inside out. He was talented, intelligent, resourceful, and joyous at heart. Everything came easily to his abundantly gifted nature. He wasn't an analyst like Alekhine or Botvinnik (they were geniuses, but they worked tirelessly from dawn to dusk). Flohr himself admitted that he didn't possess a vast opening repertoire and wasn't as strong in theory as other top players, although they were weaker than him in overall strength. In that sense, he resembled Capablanca, although he didn't have such a flawlessly fine-tuned chess apparatus. Perhaps because of this, one of the strongest Grandmasters of the century stepped away from

practical play early on. It became difficult to play the new, demanding games that required incredible erudition, perseverance, and dedication to chess.

Certainly, the distressing experiences of war and disappointment from his unrealised world title match with Alekhine played a significant role. However, it is credible that Flohr's bright and agile soul would have overcome all of that, but the chess train had left the station.

Flohr was organically incapable of writing a purely business-like, dry newspaper report about any chess event. His warmth, his genuine interest in people, his unwavering empathy for them would inevitably break through somewhere. And the operational material would acquire a touch of humanity, rising above the pettiness of the immediate task. Flohr truly loved people, knew how to find something attractive in them, and couldn't genuinely be angry even at the bad things. He was disappointed, hurt, bewildered by the existence of the negative, but effortlessly and naturally remained good. As one philosopher said, a person must become what he is, not what he was intended to be or should be. I don't know if Flohr realised it, but his personality undoubtedly fulfilled the philosopher's wish.

It seems that Flohr had some unresolved issues with Capablanca, but it is challenging to deduce what these were. In one of his articles

included in our book 'Through the Prism of Half a Century,' he confesses that he once 'took offence at Capa.' When Capablanca offered him a draw and, upon Flohr's refusal, bluntly advised him to consult a chess textbook. Flohr, though upset by his opponent's rudeness, did not hesitate to speak kind words about the self-centred and sometimes prickly Cuban. Despite the unique nature of Capablanca's chess genius, his good looks, and rare charm, he was not as transparent a character as Flohr.

Alekhine, on occasion, made fun of Flohr, but sometimes excessive kindness triggers an aggressive feeling. However, Flohr forgave him every time and never wavered in his devotion to his idol. Alekhine was tall and imposing, while Flohr was noticeably short and, in his youth, slender. I remember during the historic Botvinnik – Flohr match, we all expected a tall and, for some reason, melancholic blond, so we were very surprised when we met a miniature, agile dark-haired fellow. Alekhine's bulky, imposing manner was always evident in his interactions with younger colleagues. Flohr could not compete with Alekhine in that respect; he did something different – he made himself respected as an opponent.

Before the war, when Alekhine regained the World Champion title 'owed' to him by Euwe for two years, and Capablanca, who had long sought a rematch, presented

unattainable financial demands, Alekhine named Flohr as the worthiest opponent in the battle for the chess crown. Negotiations took place, for which Alekhine came to Prague. It was a tumultuous time – Hitler had already annexed Austria and was baring his fangs at Czechoslovakia. According to Flohr, the Grandmasters were less concerned about the conditions of the match and more about discussing Europe's troubled future.

And now, a tragic theme arises: Flohr, the bright, light-hearted Flohr, – a tragic figure. Is his personal fate tragic? What could be more painful for a person than losing their homeland? Flohr had to leave Czechoslovakia, which had become another prey of Nazism. He wandered through European cities until the Soviet Union embraced him, becoming his second homeland.

Flohr lived a long and happy life in our country. He was part of the national team, participated in international tournaments, later became a prominent arbiter in major chess competitions, achieved tremendous success as a journalist, lived in comfort, surrounded by universal love. He often spent vacations in Czechoslovakia, where he indulged himself, using the old-fashioned term, with the healing waters of Karlovy Vary. Everything seemed fine, but ... the images of Charles Bridge over the tranquil Vltava River, the imposing Prague Castle, or the café where, as a boy,

## Memories of Richard Réti



*Richard Réti*

Richard Réti was born on May 18, 1889, in Pezinok, near Bratislava. This part of Austria-Hungary became the territory of Czechoslovakia after World War One, and Réti became a Czechoslovak citizen, although he did not speak Czech or Slovak. He spent his childhood and youth in Vienna, where he received his chess education.

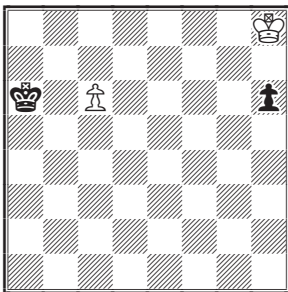
Réti became a chess professional and pursued tireless activities as a practitioner, analyst-innovator, writer,

and critic. He achieved tremendous success as a blindfold player. In this area, he and Alekhine, even more so, demonstrated absolutely fantastic results. When Alekhine and Réti played not blindfolded but at the chessboard, their games were incredibly interesting and intense. Tartakower wrote about one of their games, saying it was a meeting of two chess sorcerers. Alekhine competed with and befriended Réti and held a very high opinion of his colleague. He repeatedly said that Réti was the

only chess player who could astonish him with overwhelming moves and combinations.

Réti had brilliant accomplishments as an artist and chess composer. Often, during the analysis of an adjourned position, Réti would suddenly say, 'Wait, wait! If the pawn were still there and there, it could have resulted in a draw or a win.' He then developed the idea himself. Réti's studies often had significant practical value.

In 1921, one of Réti's early studies made a stunning impression on the chess world.



*Black to move,  
White draws the game.*

Everyone smiled and asked, 'What kind of April Fool's jokes are these? Which way are the pawns going?'

In Réti's studies, the struggle often revolves around the decisive tempo. A recent story told by Réti's Dutch friend Dr. Oscar illustrates Réti's perseverance. They analysed an endgame late into the night, and no matter how they twisted and turned,

the tempo was always with Oscar. The Dutchman went to bed, and Réti continued searching. In the morning, Oscar found a note from Réti on his door: 'You haven't got a draw! The tempo is mine.'

I first saw Richard Réti at the Czechoslovak Championship in Bratislava in 1925. It was when I was playing in one of the subsidiary tournaments. I was disappointed when I spoiled an interesting endgame. Réti showed me how I could have won it. In 1928, Réti played for the Czechoslovak team at the 1st Olympiad in The Hague. During those years, he started coming to Prague more often and usually stayed at a hotel. He didn't have a permanent residence anywhere. His mother and brother still lived in Vienna.

Réti took part in the first Moscow tournament in 1925. The colossal rise in chess in the USSR had made a strong impression on him and at that time he wrote that chess became a popular game here and that the future belonged to Soviet chess players. Moreover, in 1925, Réti married the 17-year-old daughter of the famous Russian poet Sergei Gorodetsky, named Ragneda.

Réti was an optimist by nature, a cheerful person. If we talk about his lifestyle, his only flaw was that he didn't engage in sports and was a bit overweight. I remember Bogoljubow saying, 'Réti is very talented, but he

will never be the World Champion because he's too fat.' But Bogoljubow didn't become the World Champion either, as he was even fatter than Réti. I mention this because, in the end, the excess weight proved fatal for Réti's life.

In 1929, Réti returned from a trip to Scandinavia to Prague and stayed at the 'Palace' Hotel. After two or three days, he fell ill with scarlet fever and had to be taken to an infectious diseases hospital. It's extremely rare for someone to die from scarlet fever at the age of 40. Of course, in our day, that wouldn't have happened. But at that time, Réti's illness ended tragically.

Réti died in the prime of his life, leaving behind a rich creative legacy. Later, I learned from Euwe

that not long before his death Réti sent all of his studies to the famous chess composer, Dr. Mandl, who published them together with his memoir of meetings with Réti.

Réti was friends with Euwe and trained him, together with other young Dutch players. On Euwe's initiative, to commemorate 40 years after Réti's death, a small 4-player tournament was held in Holland, with the participation of some of Réti's chess contemporaries.

It turned out that I was the youngest participant there. Max Euwe was the winner. Also invited to the tournament was Réti's widow Ragneda Gorodenskaya. Soon after Réti's death, she returned to Moscow.