

Christian Rohrer

# **World Chess Champion and Favourite of Hans Frank?**

Assessing Alexander Alekhine's Closeness  
to the National Socialist Regime

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## Table of contents

Foreword to the English edition .....	4
Foreword .....	5
Introduction.....	6
I. Alekhine and the "Third Reich" up until the invasion of France (August 1939–May 1940).....	16
II. Searching for a way out (June 1940–September 1941).....	24
A world championship match against Capablanca as a way out .....	24
Alternative avenue – approaching the National Socialist regime .....	27
Two-pronged strategy .....	31
III. Return to the Reich and to the board (September–November 1941).....	41
Europa-Schachturnier in Munich.....	41
Weeks of decisions in the Generalgouvernement.....	43
IV. Sand in the gearbox (December 1941–May 1942) .....	52
Conflict with the GSB .....	52
Simultaneous "Soldatenbetreuung" for GSB and KdF.....	56
V. Alekhine's employment in the Generalgouvernement (May–June 1942) .....	61
In the crosshairs of the Reichssicherheitshauptamt .....	61
Research advisor at the IDO.....	65
Material matters .....	68
VI. In the service of the National Socialist regime (June 1942–October 1943) .....	72
Europaschachbund .....	72
In the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia .....	77
Tireless final spurt: Protectorate – Generalgouvernement – Reich .....	80
Chess seminar in Krakow? .....	81
VII. Final years of life in Spain and Portugal (October 1943–March 1946).....	84
Conclusion .....	91
Bibliography .....	100
Primary sources.....	100
Archival sources .....	100
Newspapers and periodicals.....	101
Contemporary publications.....	102
Document collections and editions.....	108
Secondary literature .....	108
Digital resources .....	119
Information.....	121
List of abbreviations .....	122

## Foreword to the English edition

The German version of my Alekhine study, published in February this year, has already met with a very friendly reception and triggered many reactions. And because the chess world is global and interconnected, it has already aroused interest beyond the borders of the German-speaking world. I have therefore decided to have my Alekhine study translated into English.

For this I thank first and foremost Emily Pickerill. She managed not only to turn my dry original text into readable English, but also to keep me from performing numerous inadequate translations of my own.

The translation follows as closely as possible the original German text, which should be consulted in case of ambiguity. German quotations in the main text are translated, the original quotations are given in the footnotes. Dates are always given in the order day, month, year.

Berlin, June 2021

Christian Rohrer

## Foreword

This publication came into being in 2010 when I came across Alexander Alekhine in the Federal Archives of Berlin-Lichterfelde while researching a project that had nothing to do with chess. Why would the personal file of the fourth world chess champion be found in the records of the Institut für Deutsche Ostarbeit? The duration of this archival fonds (R 52-IV) dates from 1940 to 1945, and the institute was based in Krakow in the Generalgouvernement.

Although obviously in need of an explanation, this discovery remained unexplored for years, with other projects taking priority until autumn 2019. Once I began to examine the topic, however, it quickly became apparent that the subject required more than a short essay. In view of the poor state of research, I decided not to shorten the text at the expense of much detailed information, but to publish it in full as an independent online publication, thus ensuring that all information is preserved and available to all interested parties immediately and regardless of location.

The subject of the present study, which intends to mark merely the beginning of further analyses on chess history, was the beginning of my cooperation with Prof. Dr. Wolfram Pyta. I would like to thank him most sincerely for his support, assistance and many suggestions.

Since this study follows Alekhine through Europe, many archives and libraries were relevant, especially in Germany, Poland, France, Spain and the Czech Republic. It was gratifying to see the great commitment and interest with which the staff of these archives and libraries examined their records with regard to my research topic. I would like to express my gratitude to all of them.

In addition, this work includes numerous helpful hints from people whom I had contacted with the request for information and assistance. I would therefore like to sincerely thank the following people for their support: Vlada Arnold; Ramona Bräu; Michael Coblitz; the DHI Paris, namely Kaja Antonowicz, Dr. Jürgen Finger and Dr. Stefan Martens; Ralf Dose; Reinhard Frost; Jan Kalendovský; Ingeborg Linder; Dr. Volker Mohn; Stefanie Odenthal; Veronique Perrin; Prof. Dr. Helmut Reinalter; Dr. Małgorzata Popiolek-Roßkamp; Dr. Daniel Rittenauer; Miguel A. Sánchez; Dieter Schenk; Dr. Miroslav Šepták; Marzena Szugiero.

The coronavirus pandemic continues to limit historians today because archives and libraries are hardly or not at all accessible. This also affected the present study, although its core statements remain unaffected. The plan is to incorporate the results of the research that has been interrupted or made impossible up to now as part of a second edition and expansion of this study in the near future.

Berlin, end of 2020

Christian Rohrer

## Introduction

Anyone who reads a description of the “defeat of the Anglo-Jewish idea of defence against the German-European idea of aggressive struggle”<sup>1</sup> would immediately identify this as a propaganda slogan of National Socialist war reporting. However, nothing could be farther from the truth. These words from March 1941 are taken from the infamous series of articles *Arisches und jüdisches Schach* (“Aryan and Jewish Chess”) by Alexander Alekhine, the world chess champion at the time. In fact, these words were only the publicly visible prelude to the collaboration of the world chess champion with the National Socialist regime, a collaboration that still interests many chess history enthusiasts today. It has already been raised as a topic of discussion, albeit not to the extent demanded by scientific historical analysis. Edward Winter’s internet publication *Was Alekhine a Nazi?* already poses in its title the very question that the chess community has been asking.<sup>2</sup>

After the horrors of the Second World War ended in 1945, Alekhine had become persona non grata in large parts of the chess world because of his involvement with the National Socialist regime. Some accusations were exaggerated: In October 1945, Ossip Bernstein accused Alekhine in the chess magazine CHESS of not having worked for the release of the Polish chess master Dawid Przepiórka despite his close ties to the Generalgouverneur Hans Frank. Przepiórka had been arrested with other chess players in a Warsaw café and murdered shortly afterwards. Alekhine’s contradiction in the same magazine at the beginning of 1946 was at least correct to the extent that Przepiórka had already become a victim of the National Socialist extermination campaign against the Polish intelligentsia during the infamous massacres at Palmiry, probably in January, but at the latest in April 1940. At that time, Alekhine had just returned to France from an extended trip to South America via Portugal and had joined the ranks of the French army. The world chess champion had, of course, cultivated friendly relations with Hans Frank before, but it seems doubtful whether these could have been used to save Przepiórka under the circumstances.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Alekhine, Alexander: *Arisches und jüdisches Schach*, in: *Pariser Zeitung* 1 (1941), no. 63, 18.03.1941, p. 3. Original quotation: “Niederlage des englisch-jüdischen Verteidigungsgedankens gegenüber der deutsch-europäischen Idee des Angriffskampfes.”

<sup>2</sup> Winter, Edward: *Was Alekhine a Nazi?*, in: [www.chesshistory.com](http://www.chesshistory.com), 02.08.2020 (last update, first 1989), <<http://www.chesshistory.com/winter/extra/alekhine.html>> [13.12.2020].

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Morán, Pablo: *A. Alekhine. Agony of a Chess Genius. Edited and Translated by Frank X. Mur*, Jefferson, NC/London 1989, pp. 279–280, there fn. 6 (cit. Morán: *Agony*). Both the dates provided by Alekhine (1939) and Morán (1942) for Przepiórka’s death were false. On Alekhine’s situation in 1940 see Skinner, Leonard M./Verhoeven, Robert G. P.: *Alexander Alekhine’s Chess Games, 1902–1946. 2543 Games of the Former World Champion, Many Annotated by Alekhine, with 1868 Diagrams, Fully Indexed*, Jefferson, NC/London 1998, pp. 650–651 (cit. Skinner/Verhoeven: *Alekhine*). On the murder of Przepiórka, which Tomasz Lissowski in particular has done much to illuminate, and on the massacres at Palmiry, cf. Negele, Michael/Lissowski, Tomasz: *Eine fruchtbare Beziehung zwischen Wachtel und Spatz*, in: *KARL* 31 (2014), no. 1, pp. 46–51, here above all p. 51; the passage is based significantly on Lissowski, Tomasz/Konikowski, Jerzy/Moraś, Jerzy: *Mistrz Przepiórka. Historia życia i śmierci człowieka, dla którego szachy były najważniejsze na świecie* [Master Przepiórka. The Life and Death Story of a Man for Whom Chess was the Most Important Thing in the World], Warsaw 2013. Cf. also Pietrowski, Tadeusz: *Poland’s Holocaust. Ethnic Strife, Collaboration with Occupying Forces and Genocide in the Second Republic, 1918–1947*, Jefferson, NC/London 1998, pp. 23–25, as well as Krzemiński, Adam: *Der Kniefall*, in: François,

At the time of his objection, Alekhine was already clearly aware of his de facto exclusion from the world chess community. In November 1945, the organiser of a high-profile tournament in London, Walter Hatton-Ward, withdrew Alekhine's invitation after significant protest voiced in particular in American chess circles.<sup>4</sup> Alekhine's letter to Hatton-Ward shows the essential points with which the world champion explained and defended his behaviour during the war: he had never done anything that was not directly connected with chess. He claimed to have been politically appropriated, first as a Russian on the side of the "White Movement", then as a collaborator for the National Socialists. He had not been able to stand up for chess players like Przepiórka who were persecuted by the National Socialists. Rather, his influence had been overestimated, for example, by Alekhine's successor as world chess champion, Machgielis (Max) Euwe, who had also protested against Alekhine's behaviour during the Second World War. On the contrary, he asserted that he had been constantly monitored by the Secret State Police (Gestapo) and threatened with detention in a concentration camp. Moreover, in his words, he had nothing to do with the leadership of Vichy France. During his enforced stay in the German Reich and the occupied territories, he worked as a chess player: this was the price for his wife's freedom and the only way he could earn an income. In retrospect, he said that given the chance to turn back the clock, he would act just as he had in 1941. And finally, Alekhine claimed that the series of anti-Semitic articles mentioned had not been written by him. As a prisoner of the National Socialists, he had to keep quiet until the liberation of Paris, after which he immediately tried to correct the articles.<sup>5</sup> This self-defence can be seen as the starting point for all further discussion of the critical points of his behaviour in the Second World War and, at the same time, as an attempt by Alekhine to point the way in the desired direction of the discourse.

Obviously, Alekhine's account needs to be put to the test. However, what is known about his life at the time of the Second World War? There is no way around Alekhine's own publications. He was not only a chess player, but also a very diligent author who published chess books in various formats as well as many articles in books, daily newspapers and chess periodicals.<sup>6</sup> During the Second World War and immediately after the end of the war, several works by Alekhine were published in Spanish, some posthumously, from which relevant information can be drawn.<sup>7</sup> In addition, there is an incalculable amount of information about Alekhine in contemporary daily newspapers, chess periodicals as well as other publications and in many languages moreover, since chess was already

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Étienne/Schulze, Hagen (eds.): *Deutsche Erinnerungsorte. Vol. 1*, special paperback edition, Munich 2003, pp. 638–653, especially p. 641.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. the letter from Paul G. Giers of 08.10.1945 to Walter Hatton-Ward, handed down in: Morán: *Agony*, p. 45.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Alexander Alekhine's letter dated 06.12.1945 to Walter Hatton-Ward, contained in: N. N.: "L'Affaire Alekhine", in: *BCM* 66 (1946), no. 1, January 1946, pp. 1–4, letter pp. 2–4. It is also in: Morán: *Agony*, pp. 46–47.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Linder, Isaak/Linder, Vladimir: *Alexander Alekhine. Fourth World Chess Champion. Foreword by Andy Soltis. Game Annotations by Karsten Müller*, Milford, CT 2016, pp. 262–266 (cit. Linder/Linder: *Alekhine* (2016)).

<sup>7</sup> Alekhine, Alexander (ed.): *Gran Torneo Internacional de Ajedrez. Madrid, October 1943. Edición publicada con la colaboración de la Federación Española de Ajedrez*, Madrid 1944 (cit. Alekhine (ed.): *Gran Torneo*); Aguilera, Ricardo/Pérez, Francisco José/Alekhine, Alexander: *Ajedrez hipermoderno. Estudio de las escuelas ajedrecistas a través de una selección de partidas de grandes maestros de todas las épocas. Bajo la dirección del Dr. A. Alekhine*, 2 vols, Madrid 1945; Alekhine, Alexander: *¡Legado! El campeonato mundial, match Reshevsky–Kashdan, el campeonato de E.E.U.U. 1943, curso de ajedrez a Arturo Pomar*, Madrid 1946 (cit. Alekhine: *Legado*); Aguilera, Ricardo (ed.): *Dr. Alejandro Alekhine: Gran Ajedrez. Mis mejores análisis. Partidas del autor y de otros maestros, detenida y ampliamente comentadas de acuerdo con la moderna concepción estratégica del tablero y con las más recientes conclusiones teóricas*, Madrid 1947 (cit. Aguilera (ed.): *Alekhine/Gran Ajedrez*).

attracting global attention at that time. Of course, these publications almost always refer to Alekhine's chess game in matches, tournaments and simultaneous displays.<sup>8</sup>

Among the publications that have become publicly accessible since Alekhine's death, we can first lay aside collections of games in which there are no or only brief superficial biographical remarks on Alekhine.<sup>9</sup> In addition, there are some publications that follow the stages of Alekhine's life and in which biographical passages alternate with the presentation of Alekhine's games. Leaving aside publications that are written at a historiographically unreasonable level,<sup>10</sup> the following offer further information for the present study: the accounts by Isaak Linder and Vladimir Linder,<sup>11</sup> Yuri Shaburov<sup>12</sup> and the very extensive and informative work by Leonard M. Skinner and Robert G. P. Verhoeven.<sup>13</sup> Unfortunately, all these publications lack a scholarly apparatus with footnotes or endnotes. An exception in this respect is a multi-volume work by Jan Kalendovský and Vlastimil Fiala.<sup>14</sup> However, the volume for the period from 1939 onwards was not (yet) published. In addition, the evidence in Kalendovský/Fiala's work is not infrequently based on publications that offered no scholarly apparatus themselves, and the present study cannot avoid this problem either.<sup>15</sup>

A prominent example of the fact that a very strong chess player does not automatically write very well about chess history is Garry Kasparov.<sup>16</sup> The volume of his series on his predecessors as world chess champions that is relevant here received a lot of attention and much applause for the game analyses, but for the historical sections, it was criticised to the core and can be directly disqualified from a historiographical point of view.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> As pars pro toto: Pereira, Alfredo Araújo: *Alekhine campeão mundial de xadrez em Portugal*, Lisbon 1940.

<sup>9</sup> Examples: Alexander, Conel Hugh O'Donel: *Alekhine's Best Games of Chess 1938–1945*, London 1949; Donaldson, John/Minev, Nikolai/Seirawan, Yasser: *Alekhine in Europe and Asia. 619 Games from Alekhine's Simultaneous Exhibitions, Clock Simuls, Blindfold Displays and more, from Europe and Asia 1905–1945*, Seattle, WA 1993; Varnusz, Egon/Földeák, Árpád: *Aljechin, der Grösste! 1111 Partien eines Lebenswerkes*, Düsseldorf 1994; Alekhine, Alexander: *Alexander Alekhine's Best Games. Additional Material by C. H. O'D. Alexander and John Nunn. Foreword by Garry Kasparov. Games Selected by Raymond Keene*, London 1996; Charushin, Victor Afanasievich: *U Rokovoj Tscherty. Alexandr Alechin w 1939–1946* [At a fateful border. Alexander Alekhine 1936–1946], Nizhni Novgorod 1996; Soloviev, Sergei (ed.): *Alexander Alekhine. Games. Vol. 1: 1902–1922. Vol. 2: 1923–1934. Vol. 3: 1935–1946*, Sofia 2002.

<sup>10</sup> An example of such a publication, which is without evidence and full of historical ignorance: Daniel, Wolfgang: *Alexander Aljechin. Biographie des 4. Schachweltmeisters*, Eltmann 2012.

<sup>11</sup> Linder/Linder: *Alekhine* (2016); less informative, however, is this: eid.: *Das Schachgenie Aljechin*, Berlin 1992.

<sup>12</sup> Shaburov, Yuri: *Alexander Alekhine – Undefeated Champion*, Moscow 1992 (in Russian: *Alexander Alekhine. Nepobezhdymnyy Chempion*, Moscow 1992); id.: *Alechin*, Moscow 2001. Also important in the present context: id.: Secret of the Astrea Lodge, in: *The Chess Herald. International Magazine [= Shakhmatny vestnik]* 1994, no. 4, pp. 81–85 (cit. Shaburov: *Lodge*).

<sup>13</sup> Skinner/Verhoeven: *Alekhine*.

<sup>14</sup> Kalendovský, Jan/Fiala, Vlastimil: *Complete Games of Alekhine. Vol. 1: 1892–1921. Vol. 2: 1921–1924. Vol. 3: 1925–1927*, Olomouc 1992–1998 (cit. Kalendovský/Fiala: *Alekhine*).

<sup>15</sup> “Grey literature” is represented by two booklets by Jan Kalendovský distributed to only a few people: *Aljechin and Bogoljubov v Československu* [Alekhine and Bogoljubov in Czechoslovakia], Brno 1988; *Alechin v Československu* [Alekhine in Czechoslovakia], Brno 1992. These booklets contain games from simultaneous exhibitions and games by Alekhine discovered by the author and are of no further relevance to the context here. Thanks to Jan Kalendovský for his information in this regard provided on 04.11.2020.

<sup>16</sup> Kasparov, Garry: *Meine großen Vorkämpfer. Die bedeutendsten Partien der Schachweltmeister, analysiert von Garri Kasparov. Vol. 2: José Raoul Capablanca, Alexander Aljechin, Max Euwe inkl. CD-ROM mit allen Partien. Deutsche Bearbeitung von Astrid Hager und Raymond Stolz*, Hombrechtikon/Zurich 2004 (cit. Kasparov: *Vorkämpfer, vol. 2*); in English: *On My Great Predecessors. Part 1*, London 2003.

<sup>17</sup> This criticism was summed up by Robert Hübner. Although not a specialist historian, Hübner was not only the strongest German chess player for decades, but he also earned academic merits as a papyrologist. Cf. Hübner, Robert:



On the other hand, further biographical information can often be found in accounts that lay out Alekhine's games as a textbook of chess or certain aspects of it. This is especially true of much useful information in a publication by Alexander Kotov, himself a world-class player in the mid-20th century.<sup>18</sup> Some early publications in particular were written by authors who knew Alekhine personally and preserved important information about him for posterity in their biographical accounts. First and foremost is a publication by Hans Müller and Adolf Pawelczak from 1953.<sup>19</sup>

A few works focus on Alekhine's final years. This is especially true of Pablo Morán,<sup>20</sup> whose publication, for all its weaknesses and apologetic passages, contains very important detailed information for the present study.<sup>21</sup>

There are editions of the aforementioned series of anti-Semitic articles, but none of them meet the scholarly standards of source editions, especially due to the lack of precise expert commentary on the source. Among these, the newly published edition by Ken Whyld is by far the best; in addition to a translation into English, it provides helpful notes on the tradition and the differences between the various versions.<sup>22</sup> Whyld was one of the pioneers of non-academic chess history research; his legacy

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Kasparovs neuester Beitrag zur Schachgeschichte, in: *Schach* 57 (2003), no. 11, pp. 24–35, as well as id.: Kasparovs neuester Beitrag zur Schachgeschichte (Teil 2), in: *Schach* 57 (2003), no. 12, pp. 34–48. Hübner's conclusion at the end of the second part (p. 48): "Apart from the game comments, the book does not offer the historian any material to be taken seriously. The author lacks an understanding of history. There are no references to sources; however, obviously source texts of very different value are used. The author does not consider it all that important that his statements are correct, if only they have an effect; with a straight face, legends are mixed with the presentation of the facts." Original quotation: "Dem Geschichtsforscher bietet das Buch – von den Partiekomentaren abgesehen – kein ernstzunehmendes Material. Es fehlt dem Verfasser an Geschichtsverständnis. Es gibt keinerlei Quellenangaben; es werden aber offenbar Quellentexte von sehr unterschiedlichem Wert verwandt. Der Autor hält es für nicht so wichtig, daß seine Angaben zutreffen, wenn sie nur wirken; mit erstem Gesicht wird Legendenhaftes unter die Darstellung der Fakten gemischt." Hübner himself has published a deep analysis of Alekhine's games in digital format, which also contains biographical details, cf. Hübner, Robert: *Weltmeister Aljechin*, 2nd edition, Hamburg 2002.

<sup>18</sup> Kotov, Alexander: *Das Schacherbe Aljechins. Bd. 1: Die Eröffnung, die Kombination, der Königsangriff. Bd. 2: Die Gesetze des Positionsspiels, das Endspiel*, Berlin 1957–1961; previously published in Russian: *Šachmatnoe nasledie A. A. Alekhina* [A. A. Alekhine's Chess Legacy], 2 vols, Moscow 1953–1958. No additional biographical information is offered in: Raetsky, Alexander/Chetverik, Maxim: *Alexander Alekhine. Master of Attack*, London 2004; superficial and useless in this respect: Haas, Walter K. F.: *Alexander Aljechin. Genius der Kombination. Kleines Kompendium der Schachtaktik mit 120 kurzen Gewinnpartien*, Maintal 1993.

<sup>19</sup> Müller, Hans/Pawelczak, A[dolf]: *Schachgenie Aljechin. Mensch und Werk. Zugleich ein Lehrbuch des Mittelspiels*, Berlin-Frohnau 1953, there also p. 7 (cit. Müller/Pawelczak: *Schachgenie Aljechin*).

<sup>20</sup> Originally published in Spanish: Morán, Pablo: *Agonía de un genio (Alekhine)*, Madrid 1972. In English and expanded by Frank X. Mur (see there p. VII): Morán: *Agony*. Morán's argumentation and assessments of Alekhine's behaviour during the Nazi era are partly evidence of grotesque historical ignorance (cf. *ibid.*, pp. 50–51).

<sup>21</sup> In essence, a review or evaluation of Morán's book (1972 edition): Kelbratowski, Konrad: Das langsame Sterben des Alexander Aljechin – Die letzten Lebensjahre des legendären Weltmeisters (1. Teil), in: *Schach-Report* 7 (1982), no. 5, 22.01.1982, pp. 7–11, as well as by the same: Das langsame Sterben des Alexander Aljechin – Die letzten Lebensjahre des legendären Weltmeisters (2. Teil/Schluss), in: *Schach-Report* 7 (1982), no. 6, 19.02.1982, pp. 23–27. As with Morán, there are also unconvincing apologetic assessments in Kelbratowski, e.g. (part 1, pp. 8–9): "You can see that Alekhine was not a Nazi sympathizer. As a chess artist who only lived for his game, he probably had no knowledge of Nazi ideology at all." Original quotation: "Man sieht, daß Aljechin also kein Sympathisant der Nazis war. Wahrscheinlich hatte er als Schachkünstler, der nur seinem Spiel lebte [sic!], die NS-Ideologie überhaupt nicht gekannt." The title published in Hungarian by Chalupetzky, Ferenc/Tóth, László: *Az ismeretlen Aljechin* [The Unknown Alekhine], Kecskemét 1948, there especially pp. 10–15, does not seem to go beyond what is already known, according to the few references.

<sup>22</sup> Kübel, Wolfgang (ed.): *Dr. A. A. Aljechin: Jüdisches und arisches Schach. Dokument der Schachgeschichte aus der Zeit der "Charakterdämmerung"*, Cologne 1973; already incorrect in the title: Griebshammer, Herbert: *Aljechin. Jüdisches und arisches*

lives on in the Chess History & Literature Society, founded as Ken Whyld Association (CHLS), a global network of people interested in chess history, whose members continuously publish numerous, qualitatively solid contributions to chess history.<sup>23</sup>

Since the turn of the millennium, internet publications have been added. The aforementioned Edward Winter, who has also published a number of successful works on paper, has earned particular merit here.<sup>24</sup> Although he is not a trained historian, he examines issues meticulously in his online publications and usually substantiates his statements precisely; however, the issues are often very narrowly defined and historically irrelevant beyond the sheer facts. For the question at hand, however, some of his contributions offer important information.<sup>25</sup>

Finally, Alekhine's life has already been dealt with in a whole series of fictional publications, admittedly of differing levels of literary quality.<sup>26</sup>

The list of numerous publications by and on Alekhine cannot, however, hide the fact that the amount of information about him is meagre. What is lacking is a biography of Alekhine that is as extensive as the one that has been available for some years on the second world chess champion in history, Emanuel Lasker (1868–1941).<sup>27</sup> Although Alekhine's life is not as extraordinarily varied and relevant outside of the actual game of chess as Lasker's, the political and social background of his life stages as well as Alekhine's personal circumstances and peculiarities demand an in-depth study.

At a crucial point for the question at hand, namely the question of Alekhine's employment and salary in the Generalgouvernement, it can be shown how little is known to date about Alekhine's relationship with the National Socialist regime. Significantly, immediately after the end of the war, knowledge on this matter was closest to the truth: in February 1946, the enterprising Swiss master player and chess publicist Erwin Voellmy<sup>28</sup> reported in his chess column in the *Basler Nachrichten* on Alekhine's simultaneous displays in the de facto annexed Alsace. He knew that the Greater German Chess Federation (Großdeutscher Schachbund, GSB) was behind this engagement and stated: "(...) at

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*Schach. Propagandaartikel 1942*, Nuremberg 1983; Whyld, Kenneth (ed.): *Alekhine. Nazi Articles*, Olomouc 2002 [first edition Caistor 1986] (cit. Whyld: *Nazi Articles*).

<sup>23</sup> On Ken Whyld see CHLS: This Page is Dedicated to the Memory of Ken Whyld, in: [www.kwabc.org](http://www.kwabc.org), not dated, <<https://www.kwabc.org/en/ken-whyld.html>> [01.08.2020], also id.: About Us, in: [www.kwabc.org](http://www.kwabc.org), not dated, <<https://www.kwabc.org/en/about-us.html>> [01.08.2020].

<sup>24</sup> E.g. Winter, Edward: *Capablanca. A Compendium of Games, Notes, Articles, Correspondence, Illustrations and Other Rare Archival Materials on the Cuban Chess Genius José Raúl Capablanca, 1888–1942*, Jefferson, NC/London 1989 (cit. Winter: *Capablanca*).

<sup>25</sup> For the "Chess Notes" and "feature articles" cf. Winter, Edward: Chess Notes, in: [www.chesshistory.com](http://www.chesshistory.com), March 2020 (last update), <<https://www.chesshistory.com/winter/index.html>> [25.07.2020]. Particularly relevant for the present publication: id.: Was Alekhine a Nazi?, in: [www.chesshistory.com](http://www.chesshistory.com), 02.08.2020 (last update, first 1989), <<http://www.chesshistory.com/winter/extra/alekhine.html>> [13.12.2020]; id.: Two Alekhine Interviews (1941), in: [www.chesshistory.com](http://www.chesshistory.com), not dated, <<http://www.chesshistory.com/winter/extra/alekhine5.html>> [14.08.2019].

<sup>26</sup> Kotov, Alexander: *Belye i tschernye. Roman* [White and Black. Novel], Moscow 1965; Yaffe, Charles D.: *Alekhine's Anguish. A Novel of the Chess World*, Jefferson, NC/London 1999; Stassi, Fabio: *La rivincita di Capablanca*, Rome 2008; Josten, Gerhard: *Aljechins Gambit. Roman*, Rodenbach 2011; Ogawa, Yōko: *Neko o daite zō to oyogu* [Holding a Cat Swimming with Elephants], Tokyo 2009; Geilmann, Ulrich: *Aljechin – Leben und Sterben eines Großmeisters. Roman*, Eltmann 2017.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Forster, Richard/Hansen, Stefan/Negele, Michael (eds.): *Emanuel Lasker. Denker, Weltenbürger, Schachweltmeister*, Berlin 2009. The first two volumes of the three-volume English-language version have been published: Forster, Richard/Negele, Michael/Tischbirek, Raj (eds.): *Emanuel Lasker. Vol. 1: Struggle and Victories. World Chess Champion for 27 Years. Vol. 2: Choices and Chances. Chess and other Games of the Mind*, Berlin 2018–2020.

<sup>28</sup> On his life and work see Müller-Breil, Paul: *Erwin Voellmy. 9. September 1886 – 15. Januar 1951. Eine Dokumentation über das Leben des vielseitigsten Schachmeisters der Schweiz*, herausgegeben und bearbeitet von Richard Forster, Zurich 2005.

that time Dr. Alekhine received a monthly salary of 800 RM from Dr. Frank under the name ‘Advisor for Eastern Affairs’ and had to undertake chess travels to this end; however, neither the game nor the performance were worthy of the title of a world champion.”<sup>29</sup>

The English chess magazine *CHESS* brought Voellmy’s information to its readership in April 1946,<sup>30</sup> and the following month a statement on it by Alekhine’s widow Grace. In a letter dated 10 April 1946, she informed the editor of the magazine that her husband had neither accepted a salary nor the position of “Officer of Eastern Affairs”. Rather, he had turned down a very advantageous position offered to him as a “NS official”, he had no influence over National Socialist leaders and had never interfered politically. Alekhine had been paid for tournaments and simultaneous displays in the customary way.<sup>31</sup>

Grace Alekhine, of course, knowingly or unknowingly misled the public, as will be shown. In 1953 Müller/Pawelczak also followed her line of argument, according to which Alekhine had only wanted to be a chess player and had been completely indifferent politically. They considered it absurd to view Alekhine as a “beneficiary of national socialism”. In their view, he could not be accused of having received “occasionally a kind of salary” for his work as a professional chess player like his German colleagues.<sup>32</sup> Shortly before the turn of the millennium, Gerald Schendel returned to this question in an essentially apologetic, scientifically untenable article, especially with regard to the role of Hans Frank. Based on contemporary newspapers from June 1942, he stated that Alekhine had worked as a civil servant in the Generalgouvernement and had held a civilian position there.<sup>33</sup> Eleven years later, Peter Anderberg took over Schendel’s information and added that Alekhine, like Efim Bogoljubov, had been listed as a civilian official of the Generalgouvernement.<sup>34</sup>

All these authors were apparently unaware of what Pawel Dudziński made public in 2013: that Alekhine had stayed in Krakow for a longer period of time, that he assumed leadership of the “Russia Research Section” (“Sektion Russlandforschung”) in the Institut für Deutsche Ostarbeit (Institute for German Eastern Work, IDO), that a chess school was to be founded under the direction of Alekhine and Bogoljubov, and that Bogoljubov was active in the care of soldiers and the

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<sup>29</sup> E. V.-W. [Erwin Voellmy]: Schachspalte der Basler Nachrichten vom 23. Februar 1946, in: *Basler Nachrichten* 102 (1946), no. 83, 23./24.02.1946, 2nd supplement, unpag. Original quotation: “(...) damals bezog Dr. Aljechin unter der Bezeichnung ‘Sachberater für Ostfragen’ von Dr. Frank einen Monatssold von 800 RM und hatte dafür Schachreisen zu unternehmen; doch waren weder Spiel noch Auftreten weltmeisterlich.”

<sup>30</sup> Cf. N. N.: Switzerland, in: *CHESS* 11 (1946), no. 127, April 1946, p. 147.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Olsen, Thomas: Alekhine ... The Man and the Master, in: *CHESS* 11 (1946), no. 128, May 1946, pp. 169–172, there p. 172. Edward Winter made this early information public again from 1989 onwards, cf. Winter, Edward: Was Alekhine a Nazi?, in: *www.chesshistory.com*, 02.08.2020 (last update, first 1989), <<http://www.chesshistory.com/winter/extra/alekhine.html>> [13.12.2020].

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Müller/Pawelczak: *Schachgenie Aljechin*, p. 42, quotations *ibid.* Original quotations: “Nutznießer des Nationalsozialismus”; “gelegentlich eine Art Gehalt”. The phrase “Nutznießer des Nationalsozialismus” is already in inverted commas in Müller/Pawelczak.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Schendel, Gerald: Die Soldaten. Alexander Aljechin und Klaus Junge – ein australisches Schachpoem, in: *Rochade Europa* (1999), no. 10, October 1999, pp. 66–70, there p. 70, furthermore Hager, Franz: Eine Replik auf G. Schendel’s “Soldaten”. Ein Beitrag zu Aljechins Kriegsjahren, in: *Rochade Europa* (1999), no. 12, December 1999, p. 87.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Anderberg, Peter: Warschau 1943, in: *Kaisiber* (2010), no. 36, January–March 2010, pp. 48–60, there p. 51 (cit. Anderberg: *Warschau 1943*).

wounded of the Wehrmacht.<sup>35</sup> Dudziński relies primarily on a publication by Teresa Bałuk-Ulewiczowa, who published an important study on the IDO in 2004.<sup>36</sup> However, Alekhine's name as an IDO employee had already appeared two years earlier in the work of Anetta Rybicka, who had also worked on the IDO.<sup>37</sup> However, Dudziński did not follow up on this news beyond the mere information, which was imprecise on an important point. In general, the present work will show that none of the authors mentioned allows us to even begin to grasp how the provided information, some of which is at best half-true, is to be understood in the overall context of Alekhine's behaviour during the Second World War.

Beyond the concrete case, typical, fundamental problems of contributions to chess history come to light here. Just as there are trained historians and those without training since anyone may call themselves a historian in the absence of a legally protected professional title, the same applies to chess historians and historians concerned with chess history. Typically those interested in chess history, who are usually also more or less skilled chess players, become chess historians without corresponding training by publishing on chess history. This does not necessarily mean that their contributions are useless from a historiographical point of view.<sup>38</sup> On the contrary, these specialists often do a great deal to illuminate aspects of chess history, and they do so with a chess player's meticulousness, which can compete with the meticulousness of a historian. However, contributions by chess historians often fall short of the requirements of historical scholarship on three central points: despite all the thoroughness, there is a lack of evidence, or only insufficient proof cited for the claims made, such that statements cannot be verified. Similarly, there is often a lack of knowledge of the relevant archival landscape, which is why published sources are given too much weight over archival records. It must be conceded that there is indeed a structural problem in that chess produces far less archival material than, for example, government agencies. Finally, there is often a lack of appropriate embedding of individual pieces of information in the relevant historical contexts, so that individual pieces of information may be named but not understood.

All these deficiencies are particularly important in the present case because in probably no other area of historical research is the knowledge base as extensive and thus the demand as high as for the National Socialist period. The already enormous amount of research on this subject is growing day by day.<sup>39</sup> Unfortunately, as with the person of Alekhine, the state of historical research on chess in the National Socialist era is not very helpful. While the number of studies that deal with chess history

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<sup>35</sup> Cf. Dudziński, Paweł: *Szachy wojenne 1939–1945. War chess. Konsultacja naukowa: Tomasz Lisowski, Tadeusz Wolsza* [academic consultation], Ostrów Wielkopolski 2013, p. 187, there also fn. 17 and fn. 18, as well as p. 191 (cit. Dudziński: *Szachy wojenne*).

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Bałuk-Ulewiczowa, Teresa: *Wyzwolić się z błędnego koła. Instytut für deutsche Ostarbeit w świetle dokumentów Armii Krajowej i materiałów zachowanych w Polsce* [Breaking Free from the Vicious Circle. The Institut für Deutsche Ostarbeit in the Light of the Documents of the Armia Kraiova and Materials Preserved in Poland], Krakow 2004, p. 34.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Rybicka, Anetta: *Instytut Niemieckiej Pracy Wschodniej. Instytut für Deutsche Ostarbeit. Krakow 1940–1945*, Warsaw 2002, p. 165 (cit. Rybicka: *Instytut Niemieckiej Pracy Wschodniej*).

<sup>38</sup> There is no lack of historiographically useless publications on chess history, for example: Wieteck, Helmut: *Schach im 20. Jahrhundert. 5. Dekade: 1941–1950*, Homburg 2011.

<sup>39</sup> Even research overviews are hardly manageable in smaller format than the size of a book, cf. Hildebrand, Klaus: *Das Dritte Reich*, 7th, reviewed edition, Munich 2009, and Kershaw, Ian: *Der NS-Staat. Geschichtsinterpretationen und Kontroversen im Überblick*, 5th edition, Reinbek bei Hamburg 2015.

at all is relatively small,<sup>40</sup> the research gap on chess in National Socialist Germany is particularly large.<sup>41</sup>

Ralf Woelk's dissertation on political influences on chess during the National Socialist era suffers in particular from a lack of source work. The same applies to Hauke Knop's master's thesis on anti-Semitism in chess during the "Third Reich".<sup>42</sup> The significance and fate of Jews in connection with chess during the National Socialist period are only touched on superficially in chess history publications.<sup>43</sup>

There is a painfully gaping research hole when it comes to the history of the German Chess Federation (Deutscher Schachbund, DSB), which was taken over by the GSB in 1933. The DSB itself has so far not been able to initiate a well-founded presentation of its own history.<sup>44</sup> An account on the occasion of the 125th anniversary, written by the doctor Harald E. Balló, comes to the untenable assessment that the DSB "should not be ashamed of its history in its 125th anniversary year."<sup>45</sup> At least when it comes to the time of the GSB, which is obviously included in this history, exactly the opposite is true. It speaks volumes that in the course of the work on this study, another president of the GSB "emerged": Paul Wolfrum was not only a Munich Councillor (Ratsherr), director of the local tourist office and a central figure for tourism in Munich and the surrounding area. He was also a well-known National Socialist functionary who joined the NSDAP in 1932 and the SS in 1933 and served in the ranks of the Waffen-SS during the Second World War.<sup>46</sup> The DSB is apparently still unaware today of one of its own presidents.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> The cultural historian Ernst Strouhal has been a pioneer in this field, partly together with Michael Ehn: Strouhal, Ernst: *acht x acht. Zur Kunst des Schachspiels*, Vienna 1996; Ehn, Michael/Strouhal, Ernst: *Luftmenschen. Die Schachspieler von Wien. Materialien und Topographien zu einer städtischen Randfigur 1700–1938*, Vienna 1998. From the ancient historian Christian Mann, at the same time a very strong chess player of the rank of International Master: *Schach. Die Welt auf 64 Feldern*, Munich 2019, on history pp. 16–51.

<sup>41</sup> Woelk, Ralf: *Schach unterm Hakenkreuz. Politische Einflüsse auf das Schachspiel im Dritten Reich*, Pfullingen 1996 (cit. Woelk: *Hakenkreuz*).

<sup>42</sup> Knop, Hauke: *Antisemitismus im Schach in Deutschland von 1933 bis 1945*, master's thesis Hamburg 2008.

<sup>43</sup> Strouhal, Ernst: Rubinsteins Verteidigung. Zum Leben des Schachmeisters Akiba Rubinstein, in: *Menora* 7 (1996), pp. 221–249 (cit. Strouhal: Rubinstein), Meissenburg, Egbert: Juden im Schachleben Deutschlands 1830–1930, in: *Menora* 7 (1996), pp. 167–193 (cit. Meissenburg: *Juden*). Essentially useless is Steinkohl, Ludwig: *Schach und Schalom*, Düsseldorf 1995.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Diel, Alfred: *Schach in Deutschland. Festbuch aus Anlaß des hundertjährigen Bestehens des Deutschen Schachbundes e. V. 1877–1977*. Hg. in *Zusammenarbeit mit dem Deutschen Schachbund e. V.*, Düsseldorf 1977, and Deutscher Schachbund e. V./Schachverband Sachsen e. V. (eds.): *125 Jahre Deutscher Schachbund e. V. Festschrift zum 125-jährigen Jubiläum*, Leipzig 2002.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Balló, Harald E.: Zur Geschichte des Deutschen Schachbundes. Part 3: 1919–1945 [second part], in: *Schach* 56 (2002), no. 10, pp. 50–56, quote p. 56 (cit. Balló: *Geschichte Schachbund, 1919–1945, no. 10*). Original quotation: "sich in seinem 125-jährigen Jubiläumjahr seiner Geschichte nicht schämen". Cf. also Balló, Harald E.: *Geschichte des Deutschen Schachbundes 1861–1945*, Offenbach a. M. 2004.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Paul Wolfrum's letter dated 05.10.1942 to the Lord Mayor of Munich, Department of Human Resources and Propaganda, StadtA München, DE-1992-BUR-1613, unpag., and Hoser, Paul: *Die politischen, wirtschaftlichen und sozialen Hintergründe der Münchner Tagespresse zwischen 1914 und 1934. Methoden der Pressebeeinflussung. Part 2*, Frankfurt a. M./Bern/New York et al. 1990, pp. 1102–1103 (cit. Hoser: *Münchner Tagespresse, part 2*). The information given by Hoser on Wolfrum's activity as a functionary of the GSB is, however, not correct.

<sup>47</sup> In the online presence of the DSB Franz Moraller is listed as president (Bundesleiter) of the GSB for the years 1938 to 1945, cf. Deutscher Schachbund: Liste der Präsidenten, in: [www.schachbund.de](http://www.schachbund.de), not dated, <<https://www.schachbund.de/liste-der-praesidenten.html>> [21.11.2020].

Some publications on chess during the National Socialist period are quite helpful: A very short but concise essay by Michael Dreyer from 2002 provides a good introduction to the subject.<sup>48</sup> The best publication in this field so far is certainly a longer section in the cultural-historically inspired dissertation by Edmund Bruns;<sup>49</sup> there are contributions by the same author on chess in concentration camps.<sup>50</sup> In particular, the chess magazines *KARL* and *Kaissiber* have repeatedly published chess history articles, also on the National Socialist period.<sup>51</sup> There are also sections on chess during the National Socialist period in many chronicles of clubs and federations. From a scholarly point of view, the older publications often suffer from the aforementioned shortcomings, but some useful works have been published in this field in recent times.<sup>52</sup> More recently, there have also been publications on chess players and tournaments, in the context of which the National Socialist period has also been examined at a passable level, for example, in the biography of Paul Felix Schmidt written by Michael Negele.<sup>53</sup> For the invaded territories in Poland, then incorporated or occupied by National Socialist Germany, the already mentioned work by Paweł Dudziński is helpful, as is a self-published work by Fred van der Vliet.<sup>54</sup>

Finally, a general ray of hope with regard to the research outlook is that the study of sports history, to which chess history belongs, has experienced a noticeable upswing in general historical scholarship in the last two decades. One of the core questions of this study is the relationship of sport to National Socialist ideology. Were sports organisations, their officials and sportsmen and sportswomen easily placed in the service of the National Socialist regime because they already had ideological common ground, or was the adaptation to the rulers due more to financial, opportunistic or private reasons? And to what extent was this service at all possible, where did it interfere with the autonomy of a sport? Valuable contributions were added in particular by the New Cultural History (Neue Kulturgeschichte), which opened up further perspectives, for example, through the history of the body or also through the question of the significance of symbolic communication.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Dreyer, Michael: “Juden können wir zu unserer Arbeit nicht brauchen”. Schach in Deutschland 1933–1945, in: *KARL* 19 (2002), no. 1, pp. 23–29 (cit. Dreyer: *Schach in Deutschland*).

<sup>49</sup> Bruns, Edmund: *Das Schachspiel als Phänomen der Kulturgeschichte des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts*, Münster/Hamburg 2003 (cit. Bruns: *Schachspiel*).

<sup>50</sup> Bruns, Edmund: Der Entwürdigung widerstehen – Schach in den KZ's des Emslands, in: Meyer, Claus Dieter/Schelz-Brandenburg, Till (eds.): *Die Jahrhundert-Meisterschaft im Schach. Die Deutsche Einzelmeisterschaft 1998 in Bremen und zur Schachgeschichte der Hansestadt*, Bremen 2001, pp. 307–325, as well as Bruns, Edmund: Spielen und Überleben. Das Schachspiel in den Lagern und Ghettos der Nazis, in: *DIZ-Nachrichten* (1998), no. 20, pp. 49–57.

<sup>51</sup> Anderberg: *Warschau 1943*, pp. 48–60; Negele, Michael: Propaganda auf 64 Feldern. Das Schach-Olympia München 1936, in: *KARL* 25 (2008), no. 3, pp. 20–26.

<sup>52</sup> For example, Efinger, Manfred: *Mainzer Schachverein Schachabteilung Schott. 100 Jahre. 1909–2009*, Mainz 2009.

<sup>53</sup> Magacs, Eva Regina (translation)/Negele, Michael (author): *Paul Felix Schmidt. A Winning Formula*, Berlin 2017 (cit. Magacs/Negele: *Schmidt*); with some weaknesses: Tal, Mario: *Bruderküsse und Freudentränen. Eine Kulturgeschichte der Schach-Olympiaden*, Cologne 2008 (cit. Tal: *Bruderküsse*).

<sup>54</sup> Vliet, Fred van der: *Chess in Former German, Now Polish Territories (plus Some Words on Neighbouring Areas)*, The Hague 2006.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Becker, Frank/Schäfer, Ralf: Einleitung, in: eid. (eds.): *Sport und Nationalsozialismus*, Göttingen 2016, pp. 9–23, Pyta, Wolfram: Sportgeschichte aus Sicht des Allgemeinhistorikers – Methodische Zugriffe und Erkenntnispotentiale, in: Bruns, Andrea/Buss, Wolfgang: *Sportgeschichte erforschen und vermitteln. Jahrestagung der dvs-Sektion Sportgeschichte vom 19–21. Juni 2008 in Göttingen*, Hamburg 2009, pp. 9–21, id.: Geschichtswissenschaft und Sport – Fragestellungen und Perspektiven, in: *GWU* 61 (2010), no. 7/8, pp. 388–401, as well as Havemann, Nils: Fußball um jeden politischen Preis: Ideologie oder Ökonomie? – Über die Vereinbarkeit scheinbar gegensätzlicher Erklärungsansätze

Publications on chess history must meet the standards of general historical scholarship in every respect if they are to be compatible with its results and progress. Only in this way can they become part of the historiographical discourse and make contributions to this discourse in dialectical interaction and receive usable impulses from it. This paper seeks to contribute to this goal. The aim is to assess Alexander Alekhine's closeness to the National Socialist regime, generally understood as the system of government and order of the German Reich between 1933 and 1945. What did this relationship consist of? Was it ideological, personal, organisational or economic? And how far did it go? What was the connection between this relationship and chess?

The study does not claim to follow all of Alekhine's movements and to depict his close relationship to the National Socialist regime in every detail, but rather to put them to the test qualitatively through the analysis of decisive developments. In view of the insufficient knowledge base and without losing sight of other approaches, the classical approach of "event history" (Ereignisgeschichte) is necessary first and foremost. It sometimes has the reputation of being old-fashioned, but it is not least the state of research that determines the most sensible methodological approach. In the present case, it is necessary to identify Alekhine's steps through National Socialist Europe in the Second World War, to follow them and to understand their course. The presentation is therefore structured in broad outlines along the chronology. On the one hand, the text draws on source material that is already known and for the most part already published, and on the other hand, it is based on previously unused archival sources, especially from holdings related to the Generalgouvernement.<sup>56</sup> Embedded in the relevant contexts by means of the presented state of research, the research makes it possible to follow Alekhine's steps in the Europe of the Second World War at crucial points and to understand them. It also alleviates the problem that at important points, in all probability no sources have actually survived. On the basis of the improved source material and in the knowledge of later developments, gaps in the information can now be bridged by plausible or likely true assumptions and conclusions.

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am Beispiel des "bürgerlichen" Fußballsports im 20. Jahrhundert, in: Court, Jürgen/Müller, Arno (eds.): *Jahrbuch 2013 der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Geschichte der Sportwissenschaft e. V.*, Berlin 2015, pp. 83–99. Cf. also: Polley, Martin: *Sports History. A Practical Guide*, Basingstoke 2007; Malz, Arié/Rohdewald, Stefan/Wiederkehr, Stefan (eds.): *Sport zwischen Ost und West. Beiträge zur Sportgeschichte Osteuropas im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, Osnabrück 2007; Bernett, Hajo: *Nationalsozialistische Leibeserziehung. Eine Dokumentation ihrer Theorie und Organisation*, 2nd, revised edition, Schorndorf 2008; Pfeiffer, Lorenz: *Sport im Nationalsozialismus. Zum aktuellen Stand der sporthistorischen Forschung. Eine kommentierte Bibliografie*, 3rd, supplemented and revised edition, Göttingen 2015.

<sup>56</sup> These are essentially the following holdings: AUJ, IDO; BArch, N 1110; BArch, R 52–IV; IfZ-Archiv, MA 120. More details on these holdings in the list of sources and references.

## I. Alekhine and the “Third Reich” up until the invasion of France (August 1939–May 1940)

“Reviewing in my mind the situation in which I found myself four years ago, I can only state that today I should have acted in the same way.”<sup>57</sup> While justifying his behaviour in the Second World War in his letter of 6 December 1945 to the tournament director Hatton-Ward, Alekhine himself focused attention on the year 1941. In that year, a fundamental change in his attitude towards the National Socialist regime became apparent: after his recent service in the ranks of the French army in the field against the Wehrmacht in May 1940, his series of articles on *Arisches und Jüdisches Schach* appeared in March 1941, and seven months later he sat down with Generalgouverneur Hans Frank, showing him a brilliant game. This took place not just anywhere, but in Krakow in the “Burg”, the National Socialists name for the venerable Wawel Castle,<sup>58</sup> and thus at the heart of the National Socialist extermination policy, only fifty-three kilometres from Auschwitz. As part of megalomaniac National Socialist resettlement plans since the end of 1939, in October 1941 IG Farben built the Monowitz labour camp at Auschwitz for forced labourers, prisoners were tortured and shot in the main camp and the construction of the Birkenau extermination camp for the gassing of hundreds of thousands of Jews had just begun.<sup>59</sup> Auschwitz is representative of National Socialist crimes against humanity, which Alekhine had nothing to do with. However, Hans Frank certainly did, and Alekhine’s closeness to the National Socialist regime should be illuminated against this background.<sup>60</sup>

When the German Reich launched the Second World War by invading Poland on 1 September 1939, Alekhine was in Buenos Aires, Argentina, like many of the world’s best chess players. The Chess Olympiad took place there from 24 August to 19 September.<sup>61</sup> At that time, Alekhine showed no sympathy for National Socialist Germany. On the contrary, immediately after the event, Albert Becker, the team leader of the German selection, complained to Max Blümich about the behaviour of the world champion: “Dr. Alekhine worked against us in every respect, forbade his people to have any contact with us, was our opponent in the press and on the radio.” According to Becker, the world champion had deliberately damaged the German team by awarding points to the competitors

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<sup>57</sup> Alexander Alekhine’s letter dated 06.12.1945 to Walter Hatton-Ward, included in N. N.: “L’Affaire Alekhine”, in: *BCM* 66 (1946), no. 1, January 1946, pp. 1–4, quote p. 3.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. Skinner/Verhoeven: *Alekhine*, p. 651 and pp. 655–656, and N. N.: Das zweite Schachmeisterturnier im Generalgouvernement, in: *DSBl.* 30 (1941), no. 21/22, 01.11.1941, p. 165 (title page) to p.167, there p. 166. Alekhine’s game presentation for Frank is captured there in the picture. Cf. also Schenk, Dieter: *Krakauer Burg. Die Machtzentrale des Generalgouverneurs Hans Frank. 1939–1945*, Berlin 2010, pp. 60–64 (cit. Schenk: *Krakauer Burg*).

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Steinbacher, Sybille: “Musterstadt” Auschwitz. *Germanisierungspolitik und Judenmord in Ostoberschlesien*, Munich 2000, pp. 159–252.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Friedrich, Klaus-Peter (ed.): *Polen: Generalgouvernement. August 1941–1945 (VEJ, vol. 9)*, Munich 2014, pp. 13–49, also Doc. 13 (pp. 92–93) and Doc. 26 (pp. 151–161) (cit. Friedrich: *Generalgouvernement*).

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Tal: *Brüderküsse*, pp. 121–131. Recently published on the 1939 Buenos Aires event: Corfield, Justin: *Pawns in a Greater Game. The Buenos Aires Chess Olympiad August–September 1939*, Lara, Victoria 2015; Morgado, Juan Sebastián: *El impresionante Torneo de Ajedrez de las Naciones 1939*, 3 vols, Buenos Aires 2019–2020. For a literary treatment, cf. Magnus, Ariel: *Die Schachspieler von Buenos Aires 1939*, Cologne 2018. The term “Chess Olympiad” is common in the chess world. Strictly speaking, an Olympiad refers to the four-year period between two Olympic Games.



Poland and Argentina as he didn't play against them.<sup>62</sup> "That Alekhine behaved disgracefully against us Germans I have already told you; it has also been strongly condemned by others."<sup>63</sup>

Becker and Blümich are representative of the loyalty to the regime among the high-ranking chess functionaries in the German Reich of those days. NSDAP member Becker, a secondary school teacher in Vienna by profession, distinguished himself for decades as a chess functionary under *völkisch* ("ethno-nationalist") auspices, as a very strong player, an excellent theoretician and a prolific writer. In March 1938 he had euphorically welcomed the annexation of Austria to the "Third Reich" and the "dearly beloved leader Adolf Hitler"<sup>64</sup> in the GSB chess magazine *Deutsche Schachblätter*.<sup>65</sup> The postal clerk Max Blümich, a Leipzig master player and chess functionary, achieved dubious fame by erasing all contributions of Jewish players to chess, except for a few defeats, from the 15th edition (1941) of the *Kleiner Dufresne*, a widely used chess textbook dating back to Jean Dufresne and continued by Jacques Mieses from 1907 onwards.<sup>66</sup>

Like many of his colleagues, for example, players from Becker's team, who remained there until 1945 and sometimes beyond, Alekhine could have waited in South America with his wife for the end of the war or gone north to the USA.<sup>67</sup> However, he returned to Europe in February 1940. Alekhine first stopped off in Portugal, where he gave simultaneous displays, still accompanied by his wife Grace.<sup>68</sup> When he returned to Paris, his plans continued to revolve around chess: at the end of March or beginning of April 1940, he suggested to an English chess event organiser, Rufus Henry Streatfeild Stevenson, that he hold a simultaneous exhibition in London with a very large number of participants; he wanted to play on 60 boards against opponents in teams of five players each.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Cf. the letter from Abert Becker of 05.10.1939 to Max Blümich, published in: *DSZ* 95 (1940), no. 1, January 1940, pp. 1–4, quote p. 2. Original quotation: "Dr. Aljechin arbeitete überhaupt in jeder Beziehung gegen uns, verbot seinen Leuten jeden Verkehr mit uns, war in Presse und Rundfunk unser Gegner".

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3. Original quotation: "Daß Aljechin sich gegen uns Deutsche schändlich benommen hat, habe ich Ihnen schon mitgeteilt; es ist auch von anderen Leuten scharf verurteilt worden."

<sup>64</sup> Quote from the letter from Albert Becker and Hans Geiger of 18.03.1938 to the GSB, handed down in: Post, Ehrhardt: Der Österreichische Schachverband mit dem Großdeutschen Schachbund vereinigt, in: *DSBl* 27 (1938), no. 7, 01.04.1938, pp. 98–99, there p. 99. Original quotation: "heißgeliebten Führer Adolf Hitler".

<sup>65</sup> On Albert Becker cf. Ehn, Michael/Strouhal, Ernst: Aufstieg und Elend des Wiener Schachlebens. Zu einer verborgenen Geschichte des Alltags und des Antisemitismus, in: *Menora* 7 (1996), pp. 194–220, here pp. 210–211 (cit. Ehn/Strouhal: *Wiener Schachleben*), as well as Albert Becker's own introduction (article "Albert Becker"), in: *DSBl* 27 (1938), no. 8, 15.04.1938, pp. 117–118.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. Krämer, Hans-Winfrid: Die sächsische Schachlandschaft in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus (1933 bis 1945), in: Popp, Ulrich (editing): *Sächsische Schachgeschichte. Ein Überblick*, Chemnitz/Dresden/Leipzig 2002, Chapter 7 (unpag.), and Laux, Carmen: Von Leipzig nach Stuttgart: Reclam und das Schachlehrbuch, in: Blume, Patricia F./Keiderling, Thomas/Saur, Klaus Gerhard et al. (eds.): *Buch macht Geschichte. Beiträge zur Verlags- und Medienforschung. Festschrift für Siegfried Lokatis zum 60. Geburtstag*, Berlin/Boston 2016, pp. 177–184, there pp. 177–178 (cit. Laux: *Schachlehrbuch*). The first edition of the "Kleiner Dufresne": Dufresne, Jean: *Kleines Lehrbuch des Schachspiels*, Leipzig 1881.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Morán: *Agony*, pp. 54–55, and Tal: *Bruderküsse*, p. 128.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. Lupi, Franciso: The Broken King, in: Morán: *Agony*, pp. 3–7, there p. 3 (cit. Lupi: *Broken King*); this is a reprint of a text by Lupi from 1946. Cf. also Skinner/Verhoeven: *Alekhine*, p. 783.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. Teyssou, Denis: A "Monster Exhibition" Offered to London, in: *alekhine-nb.blogspot.com*, 30.11.2013, <<http://alekhine-nb.blogspot.com/2013/11/a-monster-exhibition-offered-to-london.html>> [06.12.2020]. Together with Christophe Bouton, Teyssou acquired six notebooks by Alekhine, covering the years from 1939 to 1944. Teyssou has published parts of these notebooks in the online blog just mentioned, supporting what he claims with illustrations or references. Teyssou's information must be considered solid. Cf. Teyssou, Denis: Addendum, at: Bertola, Georges: Alekhine et la guerre, in: *www.europe-echecs.com*, 10.06.2015, <<https://www.europe-echecs.com/art/alekhine-et-la-guerre-6028.html>> [01.02.2020].

Alekhine's return to France became known in German chess circles a little later. Moreover, the May issue of the *Deutsche Schachzeitung* published that Alekhine had joined the ranks of the French army as an officer.<sup>70</sup> However, Alekhine was apparently not an officer, but a simple soldier serving as a budding reserve interpreter for Russian. Alekhine is said to have been transferred to a detachment in transport in Paris on 29 February 1940 and demobilised in Clermont-Ferrand on 12 July 1940.<sup>71</sup> During this time period lies the entire Western campaign, in which the Wehrmacht crushed France, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg in a blitzkrieg from 10 May to 25 June 1940. This war also marked the beginning of a stretch of eleven months during which no reports of chess games by Alekhine have survived.<sup>72</sup>

Alekhine's activity as an interpreter and his war service on the French side in general can only be viewed from the appropriate perspective when we consider Alekhine's origins and his previous life. Born in Moscow on 31 October 1892 according to the Gregorian calendar, Alexander Alekhine came from a wealthy family. His father was an officer, owned considerable property, became a Duma deputy and was raised to the aristocracy. His mother came from a well-known, equally wealthy industrialist family. Alekhine received an excellent education at a young age, he attended the prestigious Polivanov Gymnasium and soon became fluent in German and French. He studied law for one and a half semesters at the Lomonosov University in Moscow, then from autumn 1911 to 1914 at the renowned Imperial Law School in St. Petersburg; organised as a boarding school, it prepared the younger generations of the Russian elite for government service. In 1914, Alekhine, who had already ventured onto the international chess stage in Düsseldorf in 1908, also advanced to the absolute pinnacle of the chess world at the brilliantly contested tournament in St. Petersburg. At the outbreak of the First World War, Alekhine played a tournament in Mannheim and, together with other participating world-class players such as Bogoljubov, was detained in Triberg in the Black Forest. After Alekhine was apparently allowed to return to Russia for health reasons, he became active for the Red Cross, and was deployed at the front in Galicia. He is said to have been wounded twice and awarded medals for his service.<sup>73</sup>

In the course of the October Revolution of 1917, which Alekhine experienced in Moscow, and its aftermath, Alekhine apparently forfeited his comfortable material position. He went to Ukraine in search of income as a chess player, but in Odessa he was targeted by the Cheka, the Russian secret service, which accused him of spying for the Mensheviks, the "Whites". The common narrative may well be true that his rank as Russia's strongest and, given his successes, inevitably well-known chess player saved him from being shot by Cheka commandos; Alekhine would not have been the only top Russian chess player to fall victim to the turmoil of the revolution and its consequences. The story

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<sup>70</sup> Cf. N. N.: Aus der Schachwelt, in: *DSZ* 95 (1940), no. 5, May 1940, pp. 67–68, there p. 68.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Teyssou, Denis: Addendum, at: Bertola, Georges: Alekhine et la guerre, in: *www.europe-echecs.com*, 10.06.2015, <<https://www.europe-echecs.com/art/alekhine-et-la-guerre-6028.html>> [01.02.2020]. Teyssou gives the military unit to which Alekhine was assigned in February 1940 as "3e compagnie du dépôt du Train n° 19 de Paris".

<sup>72</sup> Cf. Skinner/Verhoeven: *Alekhine*, pp. 656–657 and p. 783.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. Kalendovský/Fiala: *Alekhine*, vol. 1, pp. 6–13, Müller/Pawelczak: *Schachgenie Aljechin*, pp. 7–14, as well as Linder/Linder: *Alekhine (2016)*, pp. 12–14, pp. 17–19 and p. 25. On the Imperial Law School, cf. Avenarius, Martin: *Fremde Traditionen des römischen Rechts. Einfluß, Wahrnehmung und Argument des "rimskoe pravo" im russischen Zarenreich des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Göttingen 2014, pp. 278–279, and Baberowski, Jörg: *Autokratie und Justiz. Zum Verhältnis von Rechtsstaatlichkeit und Rückständigkeit im ausgehenden Zarenreich 1864–1914*, Frankfurt a. M. 1996, pp. 34–37.

which has often circulated regarding a possible rescue by Leon Trotsky himself is, of course, one of the many rumours and myths surrounding Alekhine's life that should be treated with extreme caution.<sup>74</sup>

These myths apparently also include the doctorate that Alekhine supposedly earned in 1926 at the Sorbonne in Paris, where he was living at that time, for a thesis on the penal system in China. Apparently Alekhine did indeed study at the Sorbonne, but a dissertation by him has not been found to date, and there is no evidence of the award of the academic degree. Alekhine, however, henceforth used the doctoral title to subtly impress, deliberately adding it to his signature.<sup>75</sup> The title is part of Alekhine's elitist habitus. This does not at all mean a grandiloquent arrogance; Alekhine had rather solitary, introverted traits, even in society, in which he could apparently also be charming. Elitist habitus refers to the way that Alekhine, shaped by his environment, his upbringing, his ambitions and his achievements, generally aimed for the highest level in appearance, approach and goals, and as a matter of course he saw and placed himself at the top. Such a habitus is stable in the medium term, even if the concrete reality contradicts it at times.<sup>76</sup>

This corresponds to the fact that Alekhine worked with extreme concentration, strength and discipline, as if obsessed, on his ascent to the summit of world chess. In the end, between 1914 and 1921, neither his absence from Western European chess, a brief excursion into the film business nor an equally brief stint as a criminal investigator for a Moscow authority prevented him from perfecting his chess game. Instead, in the first half of the 1920s, Alekhine became the first challenger to José Raúl Capablanca of Cuba, who had dethroned world chess champion Lasker in 1921. In the world championship match in Buenos Aires in 1927, Alekhine defeated Capablanca and thus became the fourth world chess champion in history.<sup>77</sup> In the following years, especially until 1935, Alekhine

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<sup>74</sup> Cf. Tkachenko, Sergei: *Alekhine's Odessa Secrets. Chess, War and Revolution*, [Odessa] 2018, pp. 103–145 (cit. Tkachenko: *Odessa*), Linder/Linder: *Alekhine (2016)*, pp. 27–28, Kalendovský/Fiala: *Alekhine*, vol. 1, pp. 13–16, Müller/Pawelczak: *Schachgenie Aljechin*, pp. 14–15 and p. 45, and Soltis, Andrew: *Soviet Chess 1917–1991*, Jefferson, NC/London 2000, pp. 5–8 (cit. Soltis: *Soviet Chess*).

<sup>75</sup> Cf. Braunberger, Gerald: Anmerkungen zu A. Aljechin, in: Nickel, Arno (ed.): *Schachkalender 1992, Taschenkalender für Schachspieler*, 9th vol., Berlin 1991, pp. 90–96, here p. 93. According to Braunberger, at the beginning of the arrogation of the academic degree is the fact that Alekhine did not correct an obvious false report (“he got his doctorate in Paris just before Christmas”, original quotation: “er holte sich kurz vor Weihnachten in Paris den Doktorhut”), N. N.: Nachrichten, in: *Wiener Schachzeitung* 4 (1926), no. 2, January 1926, p. 29. Cf. also Linder/Linder: *Alekhine (2016)*, p. 29, and Alekhine, Alexander: *Meine besten Partien. 1908–1923*, Berlin/Leipzig 1929, before title page (cit. Alekhine: *Meine besten Partien*).

<sup>76</sup> Cf. Linder/Linder: *Alekhine (2016)*, pp. 22–25 and pp. 28–29; Linder/Linder, however, assume the existence of Alekhine's dissertation. Cf. also Müller/Pawelczak: *Schachgenie Aljechin*, p. 51, Winter: *Capablanca*, p. 156, Cafferty, Bernard: Alexander Alekhine, in: Winter, Edward Gerard (ed.): *World Chess Champions*, Oxford/New York/Toronto et al. 1981, pp. 65–76, there p. 69, and Pachman, Luděk: *Jetzt kann ich sprechen. Ein aufsebenregender Tatsachenbericht: Der Prager Journalist und Schachgroßmeister beschreibt sein Leben – von Beneš über die Dubček-Ära bis heute*, Düsseldorf 1973, pp. 27–28. See also Lenger, Alexander/Schneickert, Christian/Schumacher, Florian: Pierre Bourdieus Konzeption des Habitus (pp. 13–41, there especially p. 14), and Reichardt, Sven: Bourdieus Konzeption des Habitus in den Geschichtswissenschaften (pp. 307–323), both in: Lenger, Alexander/Schneickert, Christian/Schumacher, Florian (eds.): *Pierre Bourdieus Konzeption des Habitus. Grundlagen, Zugänge, Forschungsperspektiven*, Wiesbaden 2013.

<sup>77</sup> Alekhine himself described or staged this development above all in two publications: *Meine besten Partien*; *Auf dem Wege zur Weltmeisterschaft 1923–1927*, Berlin/Leipzig 1932. See also Linder/Linder: *Alekhine (2016)*, pp. 27–28, Kalendovský/Fiala: *Alekhine*, vol. 1, passim, vol. 2, passim, and vol. 3, passim, as well as Müller/Pawelczak: *Schachgenie Aljechin*, pp. 16–28 and pp. 52–53.

reinforced his dominant position with numerous victories in very strongly contested tournaments, quite apart from successfully defending his world title against Efim Bogoljubov in 1929 and 1934.<sup>78</sup>

In the year of his second title defence, Alekhine married the aforementioned Grace Wishaar (1876–1956), his last wife. Four serious relationships are known for the period before that: Even before the First World War, Alekhine was involved with a painter, Baroness Anna von Severgin, with whom he had a daughter in 1913. From 1920 to 1921 he was married to Alexandra Batayev. In the very year of their divorce, he married the Swiss writer and communist Anneliese Rüegg (1879–1934) and their son was born. Alekhine had been able to use his excellent language skills in a job as a translator for the Communist International in Russia since 1920 and met Rüegg there on her lecture tour. Alekhine left Russia with her in 1922 and they initially settled in Berlin. But while Alekhine moved to Paris the same year and became a French citizen in 1927, his wife went back to Switzerland. In the first half of the 1920s Alekhine met the widow general Nadezhda Vasilyeva (estimated 1873–1937). Their marriage, which presumably was concluded in 1928, ended in 1933.<sup>79</sup>

Grace Wishaar was a US-born artist who had herself already been married several times and had also become a British citizen. She had settled in Paris, was a good chess player, and also had a considerable fortune from her marriage to Archibald C. Freeman, who died in 1931. Grace lived in a kind of studio in Paris and starting in 1929, in Saint-Aubin-le-Cauf in Normandy as well. There, hardly more than ten kilometres from Dieppe and the English Channel, Grace had bought the chateau La Chatellenie.<sup>80</sup> Contrary to what is occasionally reported,<sup>81</sup> Grace was in all probability not of Jewish origin.<sup>82</sup> Like Anneliese Rüegg and Nadezhda Vasilyeva, Grace Wishaar was clearly older than Alekhine, the age difference being 16 years.

Though Alekhine's private affairs entered calm waters in the mid-1930s, he now gradually lost his dominant position in the chess world. In 1935 he surprisingly lost the world championship match against the Dutchman Max Euwe, presumably due in part to Alekhine's increasing alcoholism. Two years later, renouncing all vices, he regained the world championship title; he was to retain it for the rest of his life. However, old and new challengers were clearly gaining on him, and although he still won numerous tournaments among the chess elite, his victories in the second half of the 1930s were no longer as numerous as in the first half.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Cf. Skinner/Verhoeven: *Alekhine*, pp. 364–371, pp. 489–503 and pp. 751–755.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. Linder/Linder: *Alekhine* (2016), pp. 19–21, Dermond, Mariann: Annelise Rüegg, in: Zürcher Seminar für Literaturkritik/Weber, Werner (ed.): *Helvetische Steckbriefe. 47 Schriftsteller aus der deutschen Schweiz seit 1800*, Zurich/Munich 1981, pp. 191–195, Wild, Andrea: Das aussergewöhnliche Leben der Annelise Rüegg, in: Verein Frauenstadtrundgang Zürich (ed.): *Fräulein, zahlen bitte! Von legendären Zürcher Wirtsfrauen, stadtbekanntem Lokalen und hart verdientem Geld*, Zurich 2011, pp. 68–82, as well as Tkachenko: *Odessa*, pp. 170–188. The biographical data on Anna von Severgin and Alexandra Batayev are not available.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. Linder/Linder: *Alekhine* (2016), pp. 21–22, the entries for Grace Norton Wishaar, for the years 1929 to 1951, Arch. dép. Seine-Maritime, 4 Q 1/3/240, case no. 124, and the entry for Grace Norton Wishaar, not dated, Arch. dép. Seine-Maritime, 4 Q 1/2/130, fol. 38 verso.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. Kasparov: *Vorkämpfer*, vol. 2, p. 271, and Schulz, André: Über Aljechins “jüdisches und arisches Schach”, in: *de.chessbase.com*, 25.08.2020, <<https://de.chessbase.com/post/ueber-aljechins-juedisches-und-arisches-schach>> [01.09.2020].

<sup>82</sup> A sister of Grace born in 1880 was given a Christian baptism in New York, see FamilySearch: New York Births and Christenings, 1640–1962, Emile B. Wishaar, entry for Jennie McGraw Wishaar, in: *familysearch.org*, not dated, <<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:HQ17-79W2>> [21.01.2020]. Ralf Dose is thanked for this reference.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. Skinner/Verhoeven: *Alekhine*, pp. 534–553, pp. 593–617 and pp. 756–761.

In view of this rough sketch of his life, the gravity of the situation Alekhine found himself in in May 1940 becomes clear. Once again, after the First World War, the turmoil of revolution and the loss of his fortune, Alekhine, a man from the best of backgrounds with consistently the highest of ambitions, found his very existence at stake in the ranks of the French army. Moreover, for the 47-year-old, his position as the best chess player in the world was in question. Hardly more than two decades had passed since the “Great War” and it was completely uncertain whether he would be able to prove himself as world chess champion and remain recognised as such during another war whose extent and duration no one could know. After all, following a long war, Alekhine’s time at the top of world chess might have expired for reasons of age.

Alekhine’s own thoughts inevitably ran along such lines. The world championship title meant a great deal to him, and he is said to have often surprised those around him during the Second World War by asking whether he was really the world’s strongest chess player. Alekhine thus basically raised the fundamental question regarding what significance the title of world chess champion actually had, beyond winning a world championship match. This assessment was not decided by fixed rules, but rather by an expectation embedded in chess culture: the world chess champion was supposed to prove himself at the board as the best chess player in the world. The more he did so, the more he was recognised – by his fellow players, by the chess world as a whole – as the world chess champion and the higher the value of the title. Other world chess champions may have felt the resulting pressure for legitimacy less strongly and therefore cared less about it, but for Alekhine it was unquestionably high.

All this, however, was particularly problematic in Alekhine’s day because the World Chess Federation (FIDE), founded in 1924 and led at that time by the Dutchman Alexander Rueb, had not yet managed to take over the organisation of world chess championships. Accordingly, there was no clearly regulated world championship cycle in the course of which a challenger was chosen who would ultimately compete with the world champion for the highest title in chess. Rather, the world champions chose when they would defend their titles and their opponents. And so the period until the next world championship duel could be long and the opponents were not necessarily the most threatening.

Alekhine’s predecessor Capablanca had drawn up the so-called London Rules in 1922, which were intended to replace the arbitrary nature of the title holder with a transparent procedure for determining the world chess champion. Alekhine, among others, joined in at that time and formally adhered to these rules as world chess champion. These rules did, however, offer enough leeway to continue to avoid the strongest challenger, not least because of the requirement of the challenger to organise a hefty competition deposit of 10,000 dollars. But despite all the ulterior motives and pitfalls of such attempts at regulation, they essentially concerned the value of the world championship title: the world chess champion was supposed to defend his title against recognised strong challengers within a reasonable period of time. If he did not, his recognition as world chess champion declined and the title lost value. This could also happen if the world chess champion did not prove himself in between world championship matches by winning important, top-class tournaments. In short, the value of the world championship title had to be constantly updated through acknowledged best

performances at the board. That said, any loss of value is not a quantifiable quantity; it can be detected when substantial criticism of the world chess champion's results arises.<sup>84</sup>

In light of this background, Alekhine's last game at that time, which he played in Paris on 5 May 1940, just five days before Germany's attack on France seems portentous. In a consultation game, the team Alekhine/Budovsky lost to Bernstein/Tabludovsky<sup>85</sup> – against the aforementioned Ossip Bernstein that is, who in 1945 was to criticise Alekhine harshly for his behaviour during the Second World War. Bernstein (1882–1962), like Alekhine, was a well-known personality at the head of world chess. Born in Zhitomir, Bernstein was one of a number of very strong Russian-Jewish chess masters who, like millions of other Jews, had left the Russian Empire, at the time marked by anti-Jewish discrimination, and sought salvation in emigration to European metropolises such as Vienna, Berlin or Paris where chess life flourished, not least due to this emigration. For the first two decades of the 20th century, Bernstein can be placed among the world's top chess players. From 1920 onwards he lived in Paris, where he essentially pursued his profession as a lawyer (Bernstein had received his doctorate in law from the University of Heidelberg in 1906). However, he returned to the chess arena time and again and was able to call up a still remarkable playing strength almost from a standing start at important events such as the Chess Olympiads. In October 1933 he played a short, four-game training match against Alekhine in Paris, which ended in a draw.<sup>86</sup>

Thus, before the outbreak of the war in France, Alekhine and Bernstein, who had known each other for decades, had a lot in common. Beyond the aforementioned similarities, they shared something special: both had joined the "Astraea" lodge in Paris on 28 May 1928. Founded in 1922, it was the first lodge of Russian emigrants in Paris. It never had more than sixty members, most of them intellectuals. Twenty-four meetings were held annually, and the Freemasons met at the site of the Grand Orient de France on rue Puteaux in the Batignolles district, within walking distance of Place de Clichy. However, Alekhine, who is said to have cited "spiritual interest" as the reason for joining the lodge, was often away from Paris as a playing and therefore travelling world chess champion, and rarely attended these meetings at all. On 12 June 1937 Alekhine was expelled from the lodge;<sup>87</sup> nothing is known about Bernstein's further membership in the lodge.

For the present study, Alekhine's membership in a lodge is important information because Freemasons, along with Jews, Communists and Jesuits, were among the central enemy groups of the National Socialists. Any group with transnational and supranational structures which cultivated fundamental attitudes opposed to a *völkisch* and racial-biological view of the world came into the crosshairs of the National Socialists. From 1937 onwards, the Gestapo and the Security Service

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<sup>84</sup> Cf. Tartakower, Savielly: Im Zeichen des ewigen Schachs, in: Wiener Schachzeitung 31 (1934), no. 1, January 1934, pp. 7–9, there p. 8 (section "Problem der Weltmeisterschaft"), Müller/Pawelczak: *Schachgenie Aljechin*, pp. 28–32, Stolze, Raymund: *Umkämpfte Krone. Die Duelle der Schachweltmeister von Steinitz bis Kasparow. Kooperation: Eduard Gufeld, Klaus Metscher, Joachim Petzold, Hans Platz, Albin Pötsch*, 3rd edition, Berlin 1992, pp. 12–14, Winter: *Capablanca*, pp. 188–190, and Negele, Michael: A Biographical Compass: Part I, in: Forster, Richard/Negele, Michael/Tischbierek, Raj (eds.): *Emanuel Lasker. Vol. 1: Struggle and Victories. World Chess Champion for 27 Years*, Berlin 2018, pp. 1–49, there p. 45.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. Skinner/Verhoeven: *Alekhine*, p. 656 and p. 783.

<sup>86</sup> Cf. Tartakower, Savielly: *Moderne Schachstrategie, ausgewählt und erläutert von Dr. S. G. Tartakower*, Breslau 1930, pp. 3–9. Cf. also Skinner/Verhoeven: *Alekhine*, pp. 471–472, Ehn, Michael/Strouhal, Ernst: Article "Schach", in: Diner, Dan (ed.): *Enzyklopädie jüdischer Geschichte und Kultur. Vol. 5: Pr-Sy*, Stuttgart 2014, pp. 331–335, there especially p. 332, as well as Ehn/Strouhal: *Wiener Schachleben*, pp. 197–198.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. Shaburov: *Lodge*, pp. 81–85, and Linder/Linder: *Alekhine (2016)*, p. 54.

(Sicherheitsdienst, SD) established the programmatic idea that Freemasons and lodges were accomplices of the Jews. They were observed, monitored, put under pressure, persecuted and eliminated. This also happened in other authoritarian or fascist countries in Europe at that time. This was also the case in France, where the Grand Orient was politically left-wing and pacifist.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Cf. Reinalter, Helmut: *Freimaurerei, Politik und Gesellschaft. Die Wirkungsgeschichte des diskreten Bundes*, Vienna/Cologne/Weimar 2018, pp. 163–174, as well as id.: Einleitung. Freimaurerei und europäischer Faschismus (pp. 11–17), and Melzer, Ralf: Zwischen allen Stühlen. Deutsche Freimaurerei in der Weimarer Republik und im “Dritten Reich” (pp. 18–31, here pp. 27–28) (cit. Melzer: *Zwischen allen Stühlen*), both in: Reinalter, Helmut (ed.): *Freimaurerei und europäischer Faschismus*, Innsbruck/Vienna/Bolzano 2009.

## II. Searching for a way out (June 1940–September 1941)

### A world championship match against Capablanca as a way out

Although he himself had survived the war, Alekhine found himself in occupied, defeated France in the summer of 1940. He and his wife were therefore in a difficult situation, with their future life and the future of his chess career uncertain. Which avenues did Alekhine pursue to escape his disagreeable situation?

Only very little is known about Alekhine's movements between 25 June 1940 and the publication of his anti-Semitic articles in March 1941. He is said to have been in Arcachon near Bordeaux at the time of the armistice at the end of June 1940 and to have entered the unoccupied zone from there. A few days after his aforementioned demobilisation in Clermont-Ferrand on 12 July 1940,<sup>89</sup> Alekhine was apparently in Marseille where he probably contacted the Cuban consul Estrada there just before 23 July with the intention of initiating negotiations on a rematch with Capablanca.<sup>90</sup> The worldwide chess community had been hoping for this rematch since 1927, especially since Alekhine's 1929 and 1934 titles against Efim Bogoljubov were marred by the fact that Bogoljubov was certainly not considered the strongest rival, even at that time and especially in 1934.<sup>91</sup>

In the 1930s, other chess players of the elite class were repeatedly discussed as challengers to Alekhine for the world championship title. One of them was Mikhail Botvinnik, who actually went on to become world champion in 1948. A fight for the title between him and Alekhine was only conceivable beginning in 1936; after he had left the Soviet Union, the world champion was regarded as a traitor and despised in high (chess) political circles there. Alekhine is said to have flirted with the idea of a return to the Soviet Union in the years before, where the "Soviet school of chess" and with it an entire group of strong chess masters was on the rise. In a letter in 1936, he initiated a reconciliation with the Communist rulers. Alekhine offered a contribution to chess development there and acknowledged misjudging the Soviet Union.<sup>92</sup> According to Botvinnik's own memoirs, the negotiations between Alekhine and himself, which had been conducted in secret in 1938–39 and had actually become concrete, ended with the beginning of the Second World War. They were only resumed after the end of the war.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Cf. Teyssou, Denis: Addendum, by: Bertola, Georges: Alekhine et la guerre, in: *www.europe-echecs.com*, 10.06.2015, <<https://www.europe-echecs.com/art/alekhine-et-la-guerre-6028.html>> [01.02.2020].

<sup>90</sup> Cf. Sánchez, Miguel A.: *José Raúl Capablanca. A Chess Biography*, Jefferson, NC 2015, p. 462 (cit. Sánchez: *Capablanca*).

<sup>91</sup> Cf. Buland, Rainer: Die Schachweltmeisterschaft 1934 und das Gästebuch: Vorgeschichte, Organisation, Verlauf und Beurteilung, in: id./Edtmaier, Bernadette/Schweiger, Georg: *Das Gästebuch der Schachweltmeisterschaft 1934 in Deutschland. Faksimile, Forschungsergebnisse, Geschichte und Umfeld. Cooperation: Mario Ziegler, Stefan Haas, Michael Ebn, Nurjeham Gottschild, Günter G. Bauer*, Vienna/Berlin 2014, pp. 13–34.

<sup>92</sup> Cf. Linder/Linder: *Alekhine (2016)*, pp. 43–46, and Soltis: *Soviet Chess*, pp. 102–156 and p. 161.

<sup>93</sup> Cf. Botvinnik, Michail: *Schach-Erinnerungen*, Düsseldorf 1981, pp. 94–103. See as well Bernstein, Seth: Valedictorians of the Soviet School. Professionalization and the Impact of War in Soviet Chess, in: *Kritika. Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 13 (2012), no. 2, pp. 395–418, there pp. 407–409.



Botvinnik was not the only elite player who had prospects of a world championship match against Alekhine. Basically, this group of players was defined by the participants in the 1938 AVRO tournament in the Netherlands, which was named after its sponsor, a Dutch radio company. Alekhine and Botvinnik were joined by the former world chess champions Capablanca and Euwe as well as Reuben Fine (USA), Salo Flohr (Czechoslovakia), Paul Keres (Estonia) and Samuel Reshevsky (USA) – few tournaments in chess history brought the strongest players of their time to the board like AVRO 1938. Originally, this event was based on the idea of a Candidates tournament: As world champion, Euwe had agreed to let the World Chess Federation take the lead in the world championship matches, including determining the challenger. But in August 1937 the World Chess Federation had decided that Flohr should play the winner of the Euwe-Alekhine world championship rematch in 1940. In the meantime, Alekhine had regained the title. He did not recognise the agreements made by the World Chess Federation with Euwe. Rather, Alekhine reserved the right to play for the world championship with another opponent if he considered him suitable and if the player could raise the required sum of money. The negotiations with Flohr, who finished last at AVRO 1938, failed because of these financial demands.<sup>94</sup>

It was obvious, however, that Alekhine had consistently avoided a rematch against Capablanca since winning the world championship in 1927. After losing the title, the Cuban had demonstrated his yet remarkable playing strength in numerous tournaments. Even if unusual weaknesses crept into his game earlier in the 1930s and he had increasing health problems, presumably connected with this, Capablanca was still one of the contenders for the world chess championship in those years. However, it was not until the end of the 1930s that serious attempts were made to arrange a rematch for the world championship title between Alekhine and Capablanca.

In September 1939, it became known that the Club Argentino de Ajedrez, based in Buenos Aires, had initiated negotiations. Alekhine soon cited his mobilisation order for the French army as a potential obstacle, but by early November the contract appeared to be ready for signature. The match was to begin in Buenos Aires on 14 April 1940. Based on Capablanca's aforementioned London Rules of 1922, the match deposit was 10,000 dollars in gold; of this, 2,000 dollars for Alekhine up front, while the remaining 8,000 dollars was to be split 60:40 between winner and loser. However, at the beginning of December 1939, Alekhine announced in Rio de Janeiro that the match agreement would not materialise because the sponsors had not provided proof that they had guaranteed the agreed prize fund by depositing a sum. In an interview the following month, Capablanca avoided blaming Alekhine for the breakdown of negotiations; he himself had never received the funds that the Cuban Congress had approved for the preparation of a world chess championship match.<sup>95</sup>

These financial aspects point to a neuralgic point in the history of modern chess. In the 19th century, the royal game developed from a pleasurable bourgeois pastime into a sport, forming a

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<sup>94</sup> Cf. Anderberg, Peter: Das AVRO-Turnier 1938, in: *KARL* 27 (2010), no. 4, pp. 18–23, here especially pp. 18–19. Cf. also Reshevsky, Samuel: *Meine Schachkarriere. Mit 80 ausgewählten Partien*, Berlin 1957, pp. 125–126.

<sup>95</sup> Cf. Sánchez: *Capablanca*, pp. 270–272, p. 356, pp. 378–380, p. 401, pp. 432–436, p. 441 as well as pp. 459–462, and Teyssou, Denis: Back to Europa after a Failed Attempt to Play vs. Capablanca, in: *alekhine-nb.blogspot.com*, 05.11.2013, <<http://alekhine-nb.blogspot.com/2013/11/back-to-europe-after-failed-attempt-to.html>> [21.03.2020]. Teyssou documents the course of these negotiations here with links to contemporary newspaper articles, mostly from Brazil.

cosmos of its own. Clubs, regional and national federations with chess officials came into being, as did a veritable chess journalism. Journalists reported on games, players and competitions, and accordingly semi-professional or fully professional players entered the stage alongside pure amateurs. At the very least, they tried to elicit the underlying principles of chess with almost scientific meticulousness and to develop methods to defeat their opponents. This development of chess into an organised sport and the emergence of professional experts brought with it the need for funding.

At the same time, however, the game of chess had hardly any – literally – sensual and thus immediate and easily grasped appeal, in contrast to physical sports or musical performances, for example, which can also impress their audiences through their performative presentation. As a result, chess never became a spectator sport, and therefore no direct financing was established from the connection between professional chess players and spectators. Financing that existed was often precarious, carried out, as it were, indirectly and usually dependent on sponsors and patrons. Those who wanted to make a living from chess on a semi- or fully professional basis had to establish a regular financing model from various elements such as patronage, victory bonuses, press contributions and simultaneous displays if they did not want to pay dearly by living out their meagre existence as bohemians, even as world-class players.<sup>96</sup>

This general context and the concrete history of the match negotiations in 1939 formed the background for Alekhine establishing contact with the Cuban consul Estrada in Marseille in July 1940. Admittedly, the framework conditions were now completely different: Whereas Alekhine had evaded Capablanca's insistence on a rematch for years, now Alekhine, stuck in invaded France, took the initiative. In a telegramme sent by Estrada on 23 July 1940, Alekhine requested permission from Jaime Mariné, Minister of Sport and confidant of the dictatorial President Fulgencio Batista, to enter Cuba in order to reach an agreement with Capablanca on the rematch. Capablanca was open to this, but also surprised, as he was about to leave for New York. It was clear that the match deposit could not be raised in Cuba. Alekhine's push was thus aimed at obtaining a visa to Cuba through Mariné, and apparently this push was successful. Such an overseas visa was in fact a prerequisite for leaving Europe via Portugal: To get from France to Portugal, an exit visa from Vichy France was necessary, but this required presenting a transit visa from Spain whereas that required possessing an entry visa from an overseas country; attempts to leave often failed because one of the three necessary visas had expired. At the beginning of September 1940, Capablanca expressed scepticism to the *New York Times* regarding Alekhine's true intentions: Alekhine should have applied for a visa to Argentina for a

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<sup>96</sup> Cf. Petzold, Joachim: *Schach. Eine Kulturgeschichte*, Leipzig 1986, pp. 209–228, Bruns: *Schachspiel*, pp. 27–44 and p. 109, Dinçkal, Noyan: *Sportlandschaften. Sport, Raum und (Massen-)Kultur in Deutschland 1880–1930*, Göttingen 2013, pp. 122–174, id.: Von Zuschauern und Gästen. Sportkonsum und Sportraum in der Weimarer Republik, in: Becker, Frank/Schäfer, Ralf (eds.): *Die Spiele geben weiter. Profile und Perspektiven der Sportgeschichte*, Frankfurt a. M./New York 2014, pp. 333–353, Gebauer, Gunter/Alkemeyer, Thomas: Das Performative in Sport und neue Spielen, in: *Paragrana* 10 (2001), no. 1, pp. 117–136, Ehn, Michael: “Im Bilguer nichts Neues ...” Der Konflikt zwischen Hans Kmoch und Ernst Grünfeld um den Nachtrag zur “Bibel des Schachspielers”, in: *Kaïssiber* (2007), no. 27, April–June 2007, pp. 46–69, there pp. 46–47, and H. R. [Heinrich Ranneforth]: Sonderhonore, in: *DSZ* 93 (1938), no. 1, January 1938, pp. 2–4. On the financially precarious situation of chess professionals cf. Strouhal: *Rubinstein*, pp. 221–249, on the context also Eisenberg, Christiane: “*English sports*” und deutsche Bürger. *Eine Gesellschaftsgeschichte. 1800–1939*, Paderborn/Munich/Vienna et al. 1999, pp. 216–233.

rematch; after all, the country's most important chess club in Buenos Aires, together with the Argentine Chess Federation, had been trying to organise such a match for some time.<sup>97</sup>

Whether Capablanca's scepticism that Alekhine really wanted to get involved in a rematch was justified or not, at the very least it is quite likely that Alekhine was trying to achieve a departure under favourable circumstances in this way. Certainly it would be conceivable that Alekhine only used a world championship match as a pretext for leaving the country, but leaving with a match agreement makes more sense. In this way, he would have been sure of a financially well-poised new start, with the prospect of being able to lead a life in high society on the American continent in accordance with his elitist habitus; his wife was wealthy, but it is questionable whether this wealth could be accessed and transferred under occupation conditions. The sum of 10,000 dollars in gold that Alekhine had demanded as prize money at the end of 1939, for example, when negotiating a match against Capablanca, would have been worth about 280,000 dollars in 2015.<sup>98</sup> Last but not least, the world championship match would have given Alekhine the chance to lend brand new legitimacy to his existence as the acknowledged best chess player in the world and thus perpetuate it.

This avenue of escape from his current situation, however, apparently remained closed to Alekhine in the summer/autumn of 1940. After some time in Marseille, Alekhine returned to the militarily occupied zone north of the demarcation line dividing France and to his wife in Saint-Aubin-le-Cauf.<sup>99</sup> It is also known that he was expected in Paris on 15 October 1940.<sup>100</sup>

## Alternative avenue – approaching the National Socialist regime

Around the turn of 1940–41, however, Alekhine's attitude towards National Socialist Germany changed. Heinrich Ranneforth, one of the editors of the *Deutsche Schachzeitung*, wrote in February 1941 about the decisive developments:

The world champion, who now lives in Paris, is still hoping for a match with Capablanca. He wanted to travel to Argentina and Brazil via Lisbon at the beginning of January, but was sent back at the Spanish border near Irun because his Portuguese visa had expired in the meantime. As the newly founded German-language 'Pariser Zeitung' reports, friends from the Reich, who had organised the competition with Bogoljubov at the time, have now taken him on and promised him their support. As a thank you, Alekhine has dedicated his picture to the Paris newspaper with his signature and sincere best chess greetings. After all, one must assume that Alekhine who behaved in a very hostile manner towards the German team in his time in Buenos Aires during the competitions for the world team chess championship of the World Chess

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<sup>97</sup> Cf. Sánchez: *Capablanca*, pp. 462–463, on the visa problem, see as well Zur Mühlen, Patrik von: *Fluchtweg Spanien–Portugal. Die deutsche Immigration und der Exodus aus Europa 1933–1945*, in: Saint Sauveur-Henn, Anne (ed.): *Zweimal verjagt. Die deutschsprachige Emigration und der Fluchtweg Frankreich–Lateinamerika 1933–1945*, Berlin 1998, pp. 50–60, there p. 52 (cit. Zur Mühlen: *Exodus*).

<sup>98</sup> On the prize money cf. Sánchez: *Capablanca*, p. 460.

<sup>99</sup> Cf. Skinner/Verhoeven: *Alekhine*, p. 656.

<sup>100</sup> Cf. N. N.: *Federation Française des Echecs*, in: *Le Matin* 57 (1940), no. 20653, 12.10.1940, unpag. The news in Müller/Pawelczak: *Schachgenie Aljechin*, p. 33, that Alekhine travelled from Marseille to Portugal is incorrect. Here events from 1940 and 1941 are apparently incorrectly mixed up with each other.

Federation and forbade his people to have any contact with the German team, has learned a new lesson; he probably realises that in the long run, it is no longer possible to do business with Germanophobia.<sup>101</sup>

The basic accuracy of these statements is corroborated by the fact that Alekhine himself had already made public in September 1941 the fact that he had given simultaneous exhibitions in Paris in the winter of 1940–41 against players from the Wehrmacht and the Winter Relief of the German People (Winterhilfswerk, WHW).<sup>102</sup> Presumably this was in December 1940,<sup>103</sup> and probably it was the WHW that organised these chess events during which Alekhine played simultaneously against members of the Wehrmacht. In fact the WHW, a foundation under public law that was designed to strengthen the *Volksgemeinschaft* (“people’s community”),<sup>104</sup> especially by collecting donations as a social policy measure, did indeed organise Wehrmacht events in Paris at that time, and even “city championships of Greater Paris” in football and handball.<sup>105</sup> Indeed, Alekhine had already moved in chess circles in occupied Paris, but at that time on the occupied side. On 15 October 1940, the daily newspaper *Le Matin* announced Alekhine’s presence at a simultaneous exhibition by a Paris chess master under the direction of the French Chess Federation.<sup>106</sup>

A supportive network thus played a central role in Alekhine’s “re-education”, which Ranneforth explicitly named in the above quotation: this network involved people from the German Reich who had organised the world championship match between Alekhine and Bogoljubov.<sup>107</sup> This could only refer to the second match of 1934 between Alekhine and Bogoljubov because the National Socialists had also replaced many of the previously influential chess functionaries, above all the highly deserving President of the DSB, Walter Robinow, who had already been forced out of office in April

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<sup>101</sup> H. R. [Heinrich Ranneforth]: Aljechin in Ausreisenöten, in: *DSZ* 96 (1941), no. 2, February 1941, pp. 19–20. Original quotation: “Der Weltmeister, der jetzt in Paris wohnt, hofft immer noch auf ein Zustandekommen des Wettkampfes mit Capablanca. Er wollte Anfang Januar über Lissabon nach Argentinien und Brasilien fahren, wurde aber an der spanischen Grenze bei Irun zurückgeschickt, weil sein portugiesisches Visum inzwischen abgelaufen war. Wie die neugegründete, in deutscher Sprache geschriebene ‘Pariser Zeitung’ mitteilt, haben sich jetzt Freunde aus dem Reich, die seiner Zeit den Wettkampf mit Bogoljubow organisiert hatten, seiner angenommen und ihm ihre Unterstützung zugesagt. Als Dank hat Aljechin der Pariser Zeitung sein Bild mit Unterschrift und besten Schachgrüßen in Aufrichtigkeit gewidmet. Nach alledem muss man annehmen, daß Aljechin, der sich in seiner Zeit in Buenos Aires bei den Kämpfen um die Mannschaftsweltmeisterschaft des Weltschachbundes sehr feindselig gegen die deutsche Mannschaft benahm und seinen Leuten jeden Verkehr mit der deutschen Mannschaft untersagte, umgelernt hat; er sieht wohl ein, daß mit Deutschenhaß auf die Dauer keine Geschäfte mehr zu machen sind.” A similar report, with reference to the Paris newspaper, but without naming the supporters now looking out for Alekhine: N. N.: Weltmeister in Sorge, in: *Schach-Echo* 10 (1941), no. 2, 07.02.1941, p. 31.

<sup>102</sup> Gonzales, Valentín: Una charla para Informaciones con el campeón de mundo de ajedrez, in: *Informaciones* 16 (1941), no. 5226, 03.09.1941, p. 5. This was probably the simultaneous display against members of the Wehrmacht that was announced in the *Pariser Zeitung* of 23.02.1941, cf. [Linder, Alfred]: Schach-Ecke der “Pariser Zeitung”, in: *Pariser Zeitung* 1 (1941), no. 40, 23.02.1941, p. 6.

<sup>103</sup> In N. N.: Schach-Ecke der Pariser Zeitung, in: *Pariser Zeitung* 1 (1941), no. 326, 07.12.1941, p. 6, it is pointed out that Alekhine would compete “as in the previous year” on 21.12.1941 in a simultaneous exhibition against members of the Wehrmacht.

<sup>104</sup> Cf. Hammerschmidt, Peter: *Die Wohlfahrtsverbände im NS-Staat. Die NSV und die konfessionellen Verbände Caritas und Innere Mission im Gefüge der Wohlfahrtspflege des Nationalsozialismus*, Opladen 1999, pp. 397–401, and Tennstedt, Florian: Wohltat und Interesse. Das Winterhilfswerk des Deutschen Volkes. Die Weimarer Vorgeschichte und ihre Instrumentalisierung durch das NS-Regime, in: *GnG* 13 (1987), pp. 157–180.

<sup>105</sup> Cf. Wegner, Bernd: *Das deutsche Paris. Der Blick der Besatzer 1940–1944*, Paderborn 2019, p. 58.

<sup>106</sup> Cf. N. N.: Federation Française des Echecs, in: *Le Matin* 57 (1940), no. 20653, 12.10.1940, unpag.

<sup>107</sup> Cf. H. R. [Heinrich Ranneforth]: Aljechin in Ausreisenöten, in: *DSZ* 96 (1941), no. 2, February 1941, pp. 19–20, there p. 19.

1933 because of his Jewish origins. And this was not simply about individuals. Rather, the GSB excluded practically the entire German-Jewish world of chess, without whom the state and development of chess in Germany and worldwide would have been unimaginable: excellent players, energetic organisers and officials, generous sponsors and patrons.<sup>108</sup>

The 1934 world chess championship match, apart from the conclusion in Berlin, was held in cities in Bavaria and above all in Baden. This was due to the fact that the Baden Chess Association, under the direction of Senior Legal Secretary (Ministerialrat) Herbert Kraft organised the competition. But Ranneforth's allusion referred to a very specific group of people: Bogoljubov had already pointed out in 1935 that there had been great difficulties in organising and carrying out that competition. In addition to Herbert Kraft, Hans Schemm, the Bavarian Minister of Culture and regional party leader (Gauleiter des NSDAP-Gaues Bayerische Ostmark), as well as Hans Frank, the Reich Judicial Commissioner (Reichsjustizkommissar) at the time, were the primary individuals responsible for overcoming these difficulties.<sup>109</sup> Alekhine and Bogoljubov were in close contact with the two politicians, who attended individual games and simultaneous displays. Together with their wives and others, such as the Jewish chess champions Aaron Nimzowitsch and Hans Kmoch, Alekhine and Bogoljubov visited Frank at his invitation on 9 May 1934, at his country residence in Fischhausen on Schliersee and, again with other chess friends, in Berlin towards the end of the competition.<sup>110</sup> Schemm died in a plane crash in 1935,<sup>111</sup> but Alekhine remained in contact with Frank.<sup>112</sup>

Hans Frank, an early and close companion of Hitler's from his days in Munich during the Weimar period, had gained importance in the "Third Reich" since 1933. Born in Karlsruhe in 1900 and holding a doctorate in law, he succeeded in rising, so to speak, along the path of National Socialist law: In 1928 he founded the National Socialist Association of German Legal Professionals (Bund Nationalsozialistischer Deutscher Juristen, in 1936 onwards NS-Rechtswahrerbund). Beginning in 1930 he assumed head of the legal department of the Reich Leadership of the Party (Reichsleitung der NSDAP), from 1935 onwards Reich Law Office (Reichsrechtsamt) of the NSDAP. In 1933 he became provisional Minister of Justice in Bavaria, he was founder and President of the Academy for German Law (Akademie für Deutsches Recht), in 1934 he became Reich Commissioner for the Gleichschaltung of the Justice on State Level and Renewal of the Legal System (Reichskommissar für

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<sup>108</sup> Cf. Kiok, Fritz/Römmig, Hermann/Krüger, Otto: Deutscher Schachbund, in: *DSBl.* 22 (1933), no. 8, 15.04.1933, p. 113 (title page), Dreyer: *Schach in Deutschland*, pp. 23–25, and Meissenburg: *Juden*, pp. 167–193. Cf. also Negele, Michael: "Mein Feld ist die Welt". Die Schacholympiade von Hamburg 1930 (Zugleich eine Erinnerung an Walter Robinow, ein unermüdlichen Förderer des Schachspiels), in: *KARL* 22 (2005), no. 1, pp. 22–27, and Ehn, Michael: "... und deckte das heuer entstandene Defizit liebenswürdigerweise ab ...". Zur Bedeutung jüdischer Mäzene für das Wiener Schachleben, in: *KARL* 26 (2009), no. 2, pp. 34–38.

<sup>109</sup> Cf. Bogoljubov, Efim: *Schachkampf um die Weltmeisterschaft zwischen Dr. A. Aljechin (Paris) und E. Bogoljubow (Triberg) in Deutschland 1934*, Karlsruhe 1935, pp. 4–5, p. 10, p. 29, p. 39, p. 54, p. 62, pp. 72–73, p. 86, p. 90, pp. 94–95, pp. 101–102, p. 108 and p. 117 (cit. Bogoljubov: *Weltmeisterschaft*).

<sup>110</sup> Cf. Buland, Rainer: Autopsiebericht und Bildmaterial in Beziehung gesetzt zum Verlauf der Schachweltmeisterschaft, in: id./Edtmaier, Bernadette/Schweiger, Georg: *Das Gästebuch der Schachweltmeisterschaft 1934 in Deutschland. Faksimile, Forschungsergebnisse, Geschichte und Umfeld. Cooperation: Mario Ziegler, Stefan Haas, Michael Ehn, Nurjeham Gottschild, Günter G. Bauer*, Vienna/Berlin 2014, pp. 77–121, here pp. 110–111, and Bogoljubov: *Weltmeisterschaft*, p. 117.

<sup>111</sup> Cf. Kühnel, Franz: *Hans Schemm. Gauleiter und Kultusminister (1891–1935)*, Nuremberg 1985, pp. 377–383.

<sup>112</sup> Cf. Richter, Kurt (ed.): *Schach-Olympia München 1936. Zwei Teile in einem Band. Unter Mitwirkung von Willi Schlage, Heinz von Henning und Ludwig Rellstab*, reprint of the Berlin/Leipzig 1936 and 1937 editions, Zurich 1997, part I, p. 10 (cit. Richter (ed.): *Schach-Olympia 1936*).

die Gleichschaltung der Justiz in den Ländern und für die Erneuerung der Rechtsordnung) and Reich Minister without Portfolio (Reichsminister ohne Geschäftsbereich). In October 1939, he became Generalgouverneur, reporting directly to Hitler. Frank was thus responsible for the civil administration in the Generalgouvernement, which consisted of the Polish territory invaded by the Wehrmacht and not integrated into the German Reich. By the end of the war, Hans Frank was responsible for the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people there. The murder of Jews and Poles, the use of forced labourers and their mass deaths, the disenfranchisement of the entire non-German population in the area and much more – Hans Frank was involved in the National Socialists' grave crimes against humanity. He was arrested by American troops in 1945, sentenced to death at the Nuremberg Trials and executed there in 1946.<sup>113</sup>

One of Hans Frank's contradictions was that he liked to act as a keen culturally-minded person and surround himself with high-ranking personalities from the arts and culture scene. And the intellectual was unmistakably fascinated by the world of chess. He had attained a decent level of skill in the royal game and also had a wealth of chess literature at his disposal.<sup>114</sup> Bogoljubov's praised support of Frank was not a one-off action, but only an early expression of Frank's striving to achieve importance in the chess world through organisational assistance, the endowment of prize money and the making available of his network of influential persons. All in all, his obviously close contact with and influence on the GSB leadership around President (Bundesleiter) Otto Zander and Managing Director Ehrhardt Post became apparent already in the mid-1930s: for example in the run-up to and during "Chess Olympia 1936",<sup>115</sup> during a visit of world chess champion Euwe in Berlin in 1937<sup>116</sup> as well as in the same year on a cover picture of the GSB magazine *Deutsche Schachblätter*. Framed by the superscription "Leading men of the new Germany in the Großdeutsche Schachbund" ("Führende Männer des neuen Deutschland im Großdeutschen Schachbunde") and his own signature, it showed Frank in typical National Socialist aesthetics as an unwavering, determined man of will.<sup>117</sup> To sum up, chess seems to have represented both a real passion and a means of gaining political ground and promoting propaganda for Hans Frank.

As was already clear at the 1936 Chess Olympiad, Frank was not the only political figure in the German Reich to cavort in the world of chess. This was less true of the Reich Minister of Propaganda Goebbels, who had already assumed the honorary chairmanship of the GSB in April

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<sup>113</sup> For an overview, see Kleßmann, Christoph: Hans Frank – Parteijurist und Generalgouverneur in Polen, in: Smelser, Ronald/Zitelmann, Rainer (eds.): *Die braune Elite 1. 22 biographische Skizzen*, 4th, updated edition, Darmstadt 1999, pp. 41–51, and id.: Der Generalgouverneur Hans Frank, in: *VfZG* 19 (1971), no. 3, pp. 245–260.

<sup>114</sup> Cf. Schenk, Dieter: *Hans Frank. Hitlers Kronjurist und Generalgouverneur*, Frankfurt a. M. 2006, p. 166, pp. 170–172 and p. 177 (cit. Schenk: *Kronjurist*).

<sup>115</sup> Cf. Richter (ed.): *Schach-Olympia 1936*, part I, p. 10, and part II, p. 55. Cf. also Tal: *Bruderküsse*, pp. 91–117. The 1936 Chess Olympiad was not an official Chess Olympiad of the World Chess Federation, but an event held in Munich, directly after the Berlin Olympics.

<sup>116</sup> Cf. H. R. [Heinrich Ranneforth]: Der Weltmeister in Deutschland, in: *DSZ* 92 (1937), no. 9, September 1937, pp. 259–260.

<sup>117</sup> Cf. N. N.: Title page "Führende Männer des neuen Deutschland im Großdeutschen Schachbunde", in: *DSBl.* 26 (1937), no. 23, 01.12.1937, p. 353. On Nazi image aesthetics cf. Ronge, Tobias: *Das Bild des Herrschers in Malerei und Grafik des Nationalsozialismus. Eine Untersuchung zur Ikonographie von Führer- und Funktionärsbildern im Dritten Reich*, Berlin 2010, p. 194 and p. 473 (Fig. 214 there), and generally Paul, Gerhard: *Bilder einer Diktatur. Zur Visual History des "Dritten Reiches"*, Göttingen 2020, pp. 163–174.

1933, but from whom no further interest in chess beyond propagandistic exploitability is known.<sup>118</sup> However, there was a kind of Munich circle around Hans Frank: high-ranking politicians networked with each other through various functions and also involved in chess circles beyond the pure enjoyment of the game. These included in particular the Bavarian Minister President Ludwig Siebert, Lord Mayor Karl Fiehler and Councillor Paul Wolfrum.<sup>119</sup>

Apart from Ranneforth's hint, nothing more is known, but it is very likely that Alekhine and people in this circle – Hans Frank himself, people in his political orbit or people from the federal leadership of the GSB associated with Frank – came into contact in December 1940 or January 1941 in order to agree with Alekhine to work for the German cause; it is unclear exactly who took the first step. However, Alekhine did not go from being a “hostile” opponent to an unconditional proponent of the National Socialist regime overnight. Rather, as included in Ranneforth's explanations as well, he worked from that point until well into the following year on two viable ways out of his predicament: either to leave the country under the favourable circumstances of an arranged world chess championship match in North or South America or to cooperate with the National Socialist regime. This is the only way to understand the developments leading up to June 1942.

## Two-pronged strategy

In March 1941, this two-pronged strategy was particularly evident. With the series of anti-Semitic articles *Arishes und jüdisches Schach* or *Jüdisches und arishes Schach*<sup>120</sup> mentioned previously, Alekhine made himself into a propagandist for National Socialist racial ideology.<sup>121</sup> The basic message is that with the dichotomy of “Aryan” versus “Jew”, a structural element of the National Socialist worldview was transferred to chess, which can be found at the core of all forms of this ideology.<sup>122</sup> Alekhine assigned an aggressive, risk-taking style of play to “Aryan” chess masters, while Jewish

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<sup>118</sup> Cf. Bruns: *Schachspiel*, pp. 175–178.

<sup>119</sup> Cf. Richter (ed.): *Schach-Olympia 1936*, part II, pp. 88–89 and pp. 177–179, Heusler, Andreas: Karl Fiehler, Oberbürgermeister der “Hauptstadt der Bewegung” 1933–1945, in: Hettler, Friedrich H./Sing, Achim (eds.): *Die Münchner Oberbürgermeister. 200 Jahre gelebte Stadtgeschichte*, Munich 2008, pp. 117–134, Bruns: *Schachspiel*, p. 181, as well as the transcript of Ludwig Siebert's opening speech on 14.09.1942 at the Munich European chess championship, BayHStA, StK 5538, unpag. Siebert and Fiehler were also connected to Hans Frank through the Academy for German Law, Wolfrum in turn was a close associate of Fiehler.

<sup>120</sup> The series of articles appeared in various places and with changing titles: in the *Pariser Zeitung* 1 (1941) under the title *Arishes und jüdisches Schach* in no. 63, 18.03.1941, p. 3, no. 64, 19.03.1941, p. 3, no. 65, 20.03.1941, p. 3, no. 66, 21.03.1941, p. 3, no. 67, 22.03.1941, p. 3, and no. 68, 23.03.1941, p. 9; in *Deutsche Zeitung in den Niederlanden* 2 (1941) under the title *Jüdisches und arishes Schach* in no. 289, 23.03.1941, in no. 294, 28.03.1941, and in no. 299, 02.04.1941, all unpag.; in *Deutsche Schachzeitung* 96 (1941) under the title *Jüdisches und arishes Schach* in no. 4, April 1941, pp. 49–53, no. 5, May 1941, pp. 65–67, and in no. 6, June 1941, pp. 82–84; the publication of the series of articles in the *Deutsche Schachzeitung* ended at that point, despite the announcement “to be continued” (p. 84).

<sup>121</sup> The following summary of Alekhine's series of articles is based on Dreyer, Michael: Article “Jüdisches und arishes Schach (Alexander Aljechin, 1941)”, in: Benz, Wolfgang (ed.): *Handbuch des Antisemitismus. Judenfeindschaft in Geschichte und Gegenwart. Vol. 6: Publikationen*, Berlin 2013, pp. 381–383 (cit. Dreyer: Article “Jüdisches und arishes Schach”).

<sup>122</sup> Cf. Kroll, Frank-Lothar: *Utopie als Ideologie. Geschichtsdenken und politisches Handeln im Dritten Reich*, 2nd edition, Paderborn/Munich/Vienna et al. 1999, passim, also Becker, Manuel/Bongartz, Stephanie: Einleitung, in: eid. (eds.): *Die weltanschaulichen Grundlagen des NS-Regimes. Ursprünge, Gegenwürfe, Nachwirkungen. Tagungsband der XXIII. Königswinterer Tagung vom Februar 2010*, Berlin 2011, pp. 3–18.

players were characterised by a defensive, cowardly, opportunistic style of play fixated on material gain. In times of many draws and the alleged threat of “draw death” – the concern, common then as now, that the path to a draw was growing ever wider due to increasing theoretical knowledge<sup>123</sup> – chess had to be rescued from such a decline brought about purportedly by Jewish players. Here, Alekhine also asserted a dichotomy in the approach of the players: for the “Aryan” player, the aesthetic pleasure that he gives his fellow men through his art of chess is in the centre and in the first place, and only derived from this is his endeavour to make a living with it. In contrast, for the “Eastern Jewish type of professional chess player”<sup>124</sup>, earning a living is the first priority, and the art of chess only takes second priority, if any at all. In view of the undisputed extraordinary contributions and successes of Jewish chess players, this interpretation of chess history based on racial ideology must be regarded as sheer nonsense. Alekhine himself had praised the long-time German-Jewish world chess champion Emanuel Lasker as late as 1934.<sup>125</sup>

Of course, Alekhine’s remarks and their anti-Semitic aim were by no means entirely new. Towards the end of the 19th century, chess had already become more rational and methodical, even scientific, thanks to excellent Jewish players such as world champions Wilhelm Steinitz and Emanuel Lasker or top players like Siegbert Tarrasch. Some authors wielded their whole arsenal of anti-Semitic forms of expression against this development; Franz Gutmayer is representative for this stance in the first three decades of the 20th century.<sup>126</sup>

In any case, Alekhine must have come into contact with the staff of the *Pariser Zeitung* many weeks before the anti-Semitic articles appeared; here, Ranneforth’s reference above is completely plausible. For as early as 16 February 1941, the headline “Chess Column in the ‘Pariser Zeitung’. Headed by World Champion Dr. Alekhine”<sup>127</sup> appeared in the German occupation newspaper. The chess column appeared on Sundays, at first every week, from May until the end of the year, usually on three Sundays of each month. To the outside world, Alekhine was the leader and driving force behind the column, but there was also an operational director. He framed game commentaries, which often, especially in the beginning, actually came from Alekhine himself, later several times from the Russian-French chess master Eugène Snosko-Borowsky and occasionally from others, with his own text. Only in this way, in combination with a chess diagram, did the typical journalistic format of a chess column emerge.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Cf. Ehn, Michael: ‘Tod durch Remis? Tod dem Remis! Zur Frühgeschichte der Diskussion um den “Remistod”’, in: *KARL* 31 (2014), no. 3, pp. 14–19.

<sup>124</sup> Alekhine, Alexander: ‘Jüdisches und arisches Schach’, in: *DSZ* 96 (1941), no. 4, April 1941, pp. 49–53, there p. 50. Original quotation: “‘ostjüdischen’ Typus des Berufsschachspielers”.

<sup>125</sup> Cf. F. G. [Fritz Gygli]: ‘Das 37. Schweizerische Schachturnier in Zürich’, in: *SSZ* 34 (1934), no. 8, August 1934, pp. 113–121, there p. 121, H. R. [Heinrich Ranneforth]: ‘Zürcher Nachklänge’, in: *DSZ* 89 (1934), no. 9, September 1934, pp. 257–259, there p. 258, as well as Dreyer: ‘Article “Jüdisches und arisches Schach”’, pp. 381–383, there pp. 382–383.

<sup>126</sup> Cf. Bruns: *Schachspiel*, pp. 77–83.

<sup>127</sup> Cf. A. L. [Alfred Linder]: ‘Schach-Ecke der “Pariser Zeitung”’, in: *Pariser Zeitung* 1 (1941), no. 33, 16.02.1941, p. 7. Original quotation: “Schach-Ecke in der ‘Pariser Zeitung’. Geleitet von Weltmeister Dr. Aljechin”. With the addition “Geleitet von Dr. Aljechin” this chess column appeared for the last time at the end of November 1941, cf. N. N.: ‘Schach-Ecke der Pariser Zeitung’, in: *Pariser Zeitung* 1 (1941), no. 319, 30.11.1941, p. 8. The chess column itself appeared only sporadically in 1942 and was discontinued. Cf. also Winter, Edward: ‘Was Alekhine a Nazi?’, in: *www.chesshistory.com*, 02.08.2020 (last update, first 1989), <<http://www.chesshistory.com/winter/extra/alekhine.html>> [13.12.2020].

<sup>128</sup> This was the result of a review of the 1941 and 1942 volumes of the *Pariser Zeitung*.



This operational leader was often not mentioned at all,<sup>129</sup> at the beginning repeatedly with the abbreviation “A. L.” and only on 23 March 1941, on the same page as a follow-up article on *Arisches und jüdisches Schach*,<sup>130</sup> with “A. Linder”; one never learned the full name of this person.<sup>131</sup> The individual in question was Alfred Linder, born in Bruchsal in 1904, who worked for various newspapers as a Schriftleiter (the title of editors or journalists in National Socialist jargon). He joined the NSDAP in October 1934 and wrote for the NSDAP party newspaper *Westdeutscher Beobachter*, among others, as well as for the *Kölnische Zeitung* between 1933 and 1937, where he mainly wrote articles on the arts. After the invasion of France, he moved to Paris, where he became a correspondent for the *Völkischer Beobachter*, the central publication of the NSDAP, and for the *Pariser Zeitung*.<sup>132</sup>

This contribution to a National Socialist occupation newspaper is revealing. For Linder was not simply a journalist, but belonged “as a staff member of the ‘Pariser Zeitung’ to the Wehrmacht team of the propaganda department in France.”<sup>133</sup> Such propaganda departments were a military innovation of the National Socialists and the result of an agreement between the Reich Ministry of Propaganda and the Wehrmacht High Command (Oberkommando der Wehrmacht, OKW) in 1938–39. The journalists worked as soldiers and directly in the military units. They were subordinate to the Reich Ministry of Propaganda in terms of their task, but to the military command in terms of their deployment; organisationally, the propaganda departments were integrated into the army units and subordinated to the army high commands (Armeeoberkommandos). They were created in order to have “war correspondents” in the immediate vicinity of the front and personnel for propagandistic troop support in the occupied areas. The aim was to influence the enemy troops and the population. The propaganda department in Paris was one of the first of its kind, and its work was primarily directed at the population there. Moreover, those who, like Linder, had been accepted into a propaganda department had previously been carefully vetted by the Reich Ministry of Propaganda in terms of political loyalty and journalistic ability.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> On 13.07.1941, for the first and apparently only time, a certain “M. E.” was responsible for this issue of the chess column, cf. *Pariser Zeitung* 1 (1941), no. 179, 13.07.1941, p. 7.

<sup>130</sup> On signing with “A. Linder” cf. Linder, A[lfred]: Schach-Ecke der “Pariser Zeitung”, in: *Pariser Zeitung* 1 (1941), no. 68, 23.03.1941, p. 9. See also the chess column signed with “A. L.” in: *Pariser Zeitung* 1 (1941), no. 33, 16.02.1941, p. 7.

<sup>131</sup> This is the result of a review of the 1941 and 1942 volumes of the *Pariser Zeitung*. Presumably Ken Whyld was the first to correctly identify “A. L.” as Alfred Linder, cf. Whyld: *Nazi Articles*, p. 1.

<sup>132</sup> Cf. the index card of Alfred Linder (born 10.04.1904), provided in: BArch, NSDAP-Mitgliederkartei, Zentralkartei; during his stay in Paris from 1940 onwards, Linder was first registered with the NSDAP-Gau Ausland, OG France, then, after his move to Brussels in 1943, with the OG Belgium. He then returned to Paris and to the previous NSDAP OG France. Cf. also entry no. 128 of 12.04.1904 in the birth register, Stadt Bruchsal, Registry Office (Einwohnermeldeamt). According to this, Linder was of Protestant denomination, his father Heinrich was a hunting inspector by profession. Alfred Linder died on 12.05.1958 in Baden-Baden. See also Laska, Andreas: *Presse et propagande allemandes en France occupée. Des Moniteurs officiels (1870–1871) à la Gazette des Ardennes (1914–1918) et à la Pariser Zeitung (1940–1944)*, Munich 2003, p. 261, and Oelze, Klaus-Dieter: *Das Feuilleton der Kölnischen Zeitung im Dritten Reich*, Frankfurt a. M./Bern/New York et al. 1990, p. 229 and p. 494.

<sup>133</sup> Written confirmation of the Militärbefehlshaber in Frankreich, Propaganda Department, signed [Menning?], dated 07.07.1941, LAB, C Rep. 375-01-08, no. 5859/A. 21, unpag. Original quotation: “als Mitarbeiter der ‘Pariser Zeitung’ zum Wehrmachtsegefolge der Propaganda-Abteilung Frankreich.”

<sup>134</sup> Cf. Zöller, Alexander: Die Propagandakompanien der Wehrmacht, in: Stiftung Topographie des Terrors (ed.): *Hans Bayer. Kriegsberichter im Zweiten Weltkrieg*, Berlin 2014, pp. 137–149, here especially pp. 137–140, and Uziel, Daniel: Propaganda, Kriegsberichterstattung und die Wehrmacht. Stellenwert und Funktion der Propagandatruppen im NS-Staat,

Alfred Linder can therefore easily be described as a specialist in National Socialist propaganda. In view of the fact that the question of whether or to what extent Alekhine was actually the author of the anti-Semitic series of articles has not yet been conclusively clarified, one could conclude that it was Linder who edited the text. After all, he must have worked closely with Alekhine on matters concerning the chess column. This is possible, but it would be pure speculation for which there is no evidence. At the same time, there is no question that Alekhine himself had anti-Semitic tendencies; corresponding indications can be traced back to at least the beginning of the 1930s. Such a basic attitude was not denied either by a contemporary chess master and free spirit like Savielly Tartakower, who himself was of Jewish origin, or by authors who were extraordinarily sympathetic to Alekhine, such as Morán.<sup>135</sup> Alekhine's anti-Semitism, however, obviously did not necessarily extend into his personal relationships, demonstrated by his close friendship with Ossip Bernstein, for example.

All these considerations and the question of the "true" authorship of the anti-Semitic articles are only of secondary interest here. For there is no reason whatsoever to release Alekhine from responsibility for the series of articles *Arisches und jüdisches Schach* or *Jüdisches und arisches Schach*. Contrary to later assertions in which Alekhine relativised his authorship or denied it altogether, he boasted in two interviews in Spanish newspapers at the beginning of September 1941 that he had written these articles and had been the first to deal with chess from a "racial point of view".<sup>136</sup> At least one other article in the *Krakauer Zeitung* dated 10 October 1941, which has so far apparently escaped the attention of the relevant research, contains a passage in which Alekhine is quoted with an allegedly personal experience that contains anti-Semitic stereotypes in an almost silly manner. It is clear that in the course of 1941, Alekhine was keen to publicise anti-Semitic statements based on National Socialist racial ideology.<sup>137</sup> Alekhine, not least in cooperation with Alfred Linder who specialised in this, carried out propaganda for the National Socialist regime.

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in: Rother, Rainer/Prokasky, Judith (eds.): *Die Kamera als Waffe. Propagandabilder des Zweiten Weltkrieges*, Munich 2010, pp. 13–36, here especially pp. 16–17 and pp. 25–27.

<sup>135</sup> Cf. Haas, Stefan: *Der XIX. Kongress des Deutschen Schachbundes zu Mannheim 1914*, Ludwigshafen 2013, pp. 54–55 (cit. Haas: Mannheim), and Morán: *Agony*, pp. 31–33.

<sup>136</sup> Lastanao, [Enrique]: Llega a Madrid el campeón del mundo, in: *El Alcázar* 6 (1941), no. 1616, 04.09.1941, p. 3. Original quotation: "(...) ha tratado de ajedrez desde el punto de vista racial." Cf. also Gonzales, Valentín: Una charla para Informaciones con el campeón del mundo de ajedrez, in: *Informaciones* 16 (1941), no. 5226, 03.09.1941, p. 5. English translations offered by Winter, Edward: Two Alekhine Interviews (1941), in: *www.chesshistory.com*, not dated, <<http://www.chesshistory.com/winter/extra/alekhine5.html>> [14.08.2019]. Cf. also Whyld: Nazi Articles, pp. 3–4, and Bruns: *Schachspiel*, p. 208.

<sup>137</sup> "ski" [author's abbreviation]: Schachweltmeister und Königlicher Falkner. Eine Stunde mit Dr. Aljechin – Vom Zarenoffizier zum französischen Leutnant – Der "moralische" Sieg des Juden, in: *Krakauer Zeitung* 3 (1941), no. 238, 10.10.1941, p. 4: "Dr. Alekhine knows the following significant episode about a Jewish chess partner: 'In Bolivia's capital La Paz I played a simultaneous game, i.e. a simultaneous game against a whole series of opponents, among whom was also a Jewish emigrant. The rule in this type of game is that each opponent only returns my move when I come to his board. The Jew, however, fiddled with the chess pieces behind my back, and when I returned to him, I found that the position of the game had changed each time, so that I finally refused to continue playing with him. This Jew travelled after me to various other cities and repeatedly joined the participants during the simultaneous game. When he once again moved behind my back in an unfair manner and I again refused, he suddenly stood up and solemnly declared, despite even being in a losing position: 'If the world champion refuses to play with me, I am the moral victor!'" Original quotation: "Von einem jüdischen Schachpartner weiß Dr. Aljechin folgende bezeichnende Episode zu erzählen: 'In Boliviens Hauptstadt La Paz erledigte ich ein Simultanspiel, also ein gleichzeitiges Spiel gegen eine ganze Reihe von Gegnern, unter denen sich auch ein jüdischer Emigrant befand. Es ist bei dieser Spielart Vorschrift, daß jeder der Gegner

Even before the last instalment of Alekhine's anti-Semitic series of articles had been printed in the *Pariser Zeitung*, the world chess champion was already pushing ahead again with his two-pronged approach, trying to find an alternative way out of his situation. He travelled to Portugal again; the practical circumstances are not known. However, this speaks for the fact that Alekhine possessed a valid overseas visa at that time, otherwise it is difficult to explain how he reached Portugal.<sup>138</sup>

It is not by chance that Alekhine ended up in Portugal several times during the war. Lisbon was a central hub for departures to North and South America. The Iberian Peninsula was basically the last loophole through which one could leave the German sphere of power in Europe. Portugal under António de Oliveira Salazar was itself a dictatorship that drew in particular on a powerful police apparatus with far-reaching powers of internal repression and external defence. Ideologically, there was a certain closeness to National Socialist Germany, for example, in the idea of the *Volksgemeinschaft* and anti-communism, but not in racial policy. Both the Axis powers and their opponents accepted the strict neutrality that Portugal maintained as part of its diplomatic seesaw policy. Both sides placed a large number of intelligence and other agencies in Lisbon. For the National Socialist regime, diplomatic personnel, the Reich Ministry of Propaganda, the military intelligence service of the Wehrmacht (Abwehr), the SD, but also the NSDAP and the German Labour Front (Deutsche Arbeitsfront, DAF) were deployed there and formed a network of surveillance with actors from the economy and culture as well as with agents. In all this, Portugal remained essentially a transit country for those heading overseas and was not itself a desirable destination for flight and emigration; Salazar's largely asylum-unfriendly positions also ensured this.<sup>139</sup>

Presumably Lisbon was important to Alekhine for another reason: from here he could resume attempts to negotiate a new world championship match against Capablanca from an unoccupied territory. He immediately set about doing this: on the morning of 22 March, when he arrived in Lisbon, Alekhine told journalists that it had taken him nine months to obtain exit papers, which he had now managed to do thanks to Portugal's Foreign Ministry. He had a visa for Brazil, but wanted to stay in Portugal for some time. He was ready to resume negotiations for a world championship match with Capablanca and wanted to prepare for this match, which could take place anywhere and at any time. His wife was in France taking care of what was left of their property – meaning the castle

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erst dann meinen Schachzug erwidert, wenn ich zu seinem Spielbrett komme. Der Jude hantierte jedoch hinter meinem Rücken mit den Schachfiguren herum, und bei meiner Rückkehr zu ihm fand ich jedesmal eine veränderte Spielstellung vor, so daß ich schließlich ein Weiterspiel mit ihm ablehnte. Dieser Jude reiste mir in verschiedene andere Städte nach, und mischte sich immer wieder unter die Teilnehmer im Simultanspiel. Als er wieder einmal hinter meinem Rücken in unfairer Weise zog und ich erneut ablehnte, stand er plötzlich auf und erklärte feierlich, trotzdem er sogar in Verluststellung stand: 'Wenn der Weltmeister sich mit mir zu spielen weigert, bin ich moralischer Sieger!'" In the overall concept of the article, which links Alekhine's life story with statements from an interview and is full of errors, this passage seems like an incongruous interjection. In terms of content, it seems implausible, because an elite chess player would remember and easily recognise a simultaneous opponent who cheated him at the game and would not give him the opportunity for further simultaneous games.

<sup>138</sup> This contradicts Alekhine's claim at the end of 1944 that he had to write two articles – probably meaning the anti-Semitic series of articles – in return for an exit visa, at least if this was meant in this chronological order, cf. N. N.: An Interview with Dr. Alekhine, in: *BCM* 64 (1944), no. 12, December 1944, pp. 274–275, there p. 274; also published in Morán: *Agony*, pp. 295–296.

<sup>139</sup> Cf. Zur Mühlen, Patrik von: *Fluchtweg Spain–Portugal. Die deutsche Emigration und der Exodus aus Europa 1933–1945*, Bonn 1992, pp. 116–150 (cit. Zur Mühlen: *Fluchtweg*), id.: *Exodus*, pp. 50–60, and Prutsch, Ursula: *Iberische Diktaturen. Portugal unter Salazar, Spanien unter Franco*, Innsbruck/Vienna/Bolzano 2012, pp. 21–84.

in Saint-Aubin-le-Cauf – after the German occupiers had taken up residence there. Four days later, Alekhine was already meeting with Cuba’s diplomatic representative in Lisbon. The ambassador agreed to immediately send a request from Alekhine to Capablanca in Havana to organise a rematch for the world championship title. Alekhine gave the ambassador this request in written form, but only on 8 April. He asked for a quick reply, as he also arguably had two challenges from young grandmasters; Alekhine may indeed have been toying with the idea of a match against Samuel Reshevsky in the United States.<sup>140</sup> Francisco Lupi, Alekhine’s confidant in the last years of his life, claimed as early as 1946 that Alekhine in fact wanted his wife to join him and then leave for New York or Rio de Janeiro after arranging a world championship match on the American continent.<sup>141</sup>

Nothing is known about the further course of these preliminary negotiations. In the aforementioned interview with Spanish newspapers at the beginning of September 1941, Alekhine was very sceptical, though. In general, he said, it was difficult to imagine that a world championship match could be held before the end of the war. He rejected reports in the Portuguese press about preparations for such a match against Capablanca. The Cuban Federation had written to him, but no agreement had been reached. According to Alekhine, travelling to the USA or Great Britain – as possible venues for the world championship match – was out of the question because of his articles in the German press and his simultaneous displays against members of the Wehrmacht in Paris the previous winter. Alekhine also commented on his potential opponent Capablanca: The Cuban was no longer the player of earlier years, he was showing signs of exhaustion. Nevertheless, Alekhine emphasised, along the lines of his anti-Semitic articles, that he had to recognise the glorious Capablanca among all the players for having knocked Lasker, a Jew, off the world championship throne.<sup>142</sup>

In view of such statements by Alekhine and the apparent lack of progress in talks about the world championship match, it is not surprising that at the end of September 1941, Capablanca told Mario Figueredo, who was a journalist and a kind of confidant of his, about Alekhine’s actual intentions: What Alekhine said and did had to be viewed with caution. The latter wanted to leave Europe under any circumstances, for which he would gladly play against him, Capablanca. However, Capablanca expected Alekhine to try to double the price money for the match, since the world champion actually wanted to play Reshevsky. He had private reports that Alekhine was unlikely to get a visa to the USA, with explicit reference to the anti-Semitic articles that Alekhine had written, in Capablanca’s view, to ingratiate himself with the German occupiers. Capablanca, however, remained interested in the match and considered the situation to be favourable for negotiations. He gave Figueredo, whom he had already wanted to entrust with the match negotiations the previous year instead of a Cuban chess federation official, the clear indication to become active in the direction of a world championship match against Alekhine to be held in Cuba.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Cf. Sánchez: *Capablanca*, pp. 468–470 and p. 533, fn. 27, and Skinner/Verhoeven: *Alekhine*, p. 656.

<sup>141</sup> Cf. Lupi: *Broken King*, p. 4.

<sup>142</sup> Cf. Lastanao, [Enrique]: Llega a Madrid el campeón del mundo, in: *El Alcázar* 6 (1941), no. 1616, 04.09.1941, p. 3, as well as Gonzales, Valentín: Una charla para Informaciones con el campeón de mundo de ajedrez, in: *Informaciones* 16 (1941), no. 5226, 03.09.1941, p. 5.

<sup>143</sup> According to Capablanca in a letter dated 27.09.1941 to Mario Figueredo, quoted from: Sánchez: *Capablanca*, p. 470. On the relationship of trust between Capablanca and Figueredo, cf. *ibid.*, p. 441, p. 443, p. 450 and p. 460.

Alekhine's aspirations for a world championship match against Capablanca became known to the chess public in the German Reich and, for example via the *Pariser Zeitung*, also in occupied territories. Nevertheless, beyond what has been described, little is known about Alekhine's entire Lisbon period, which lasted from 22 March to 3 September. Perhaps he was actually working on a book that was to deal with the history of chess between 1840 and 1940.<sup>144</sup> Presumably, however, Alekhine was primarily preoccupied with advancing the world championship match against Capablanca and preparing for a possible departure, especially with regard to the necessary valid visas.<sup>145</sup>

With a view to future developments, the world political situation must be taken into account: after the Wehrmacht's victorious campaign in the West, the "Third Reich" was at the zenith of its power for a little more than a year. In March 1941, Yugoslavia was forced into the Tripartite Pact (Dreimächtepakt), which had been agreed between Germany, Italy and Japan. In April the Wehrmacht rushed to the aid of the bogged-down Italian army in Greece before the entire Balkan campaign was concluded victoriously on 23 April. This meant a six-week delay for the "Operation Barbarossa", with which Hitler sought to destroy the two main enemies according to the National Socialist worldview: the war against the so-called "Jewish-Bolshevik" Soviet Union. Particularly in the first months after 22 June 1941, the Wehrmacht conquered almost infinite areas of land and seemed unstoppable. And while it was consistently taking Soviet prisoners of war in seven-digit numbers, 2.7 million of whom had died by the end of the war due to illegal treatment by the Wehrmacht, and while people were displaced across Europe in resettlements and forced labourers toiled for the Reich, the "killing squads" (Einsatzgruppen) in the Soviet Union immediately continued the mass murder of European Jews and other persecuted groups of people, leading to millions of victims by the end of the war.<sup>146</sup>

Alekhine's stay in Lisbon, which ended in early September 1941, should be seen in this historical context: Nothing in those days indicated that anything other than German dominance was to be expected on the European mainland in the foreseeable future. Alekhine therefore by no means abandoned his two-pronged strategy, but now moved increasingly closer to the German side. Alekhine is said to have decided, after failing to obtain an exit visa in Portugal, to return to France to his wife; according to Morán, it was a question of an exit visa for North America, which is plausible insofar as Alekhine had a visa for Brazil as described, if it had not already expired. In any case, Alekhine did not return directly to Paris from Lisbon, but stopped off at the "Europa-Schachturnier" in Munich.<sup>147</sup>

Alekhine's return to the German sphere of power is, as it were, logical in the light of the two-pronged strategy described above, but it also permits a clear conclusion: if Alekhine's sole concern

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<sup>144</sup> Cf. Sánchez: *Capablanca*, p. 468, as well as Gonzales, Valentín: Una charla para Informaciones con el campeón de mundo de ajedrez, in: *Informaciones* 16 (1941), no. 5226, 03.09.1941, p. 5. Cf. also N. N.: Aljehin auf Reisen, in: *DSZ* 96 (1941), no. 8, August 1941, p. 117, and Linder, A[lfred]: Schach-Ecke der "Pariser Zeitung", in: *Pariser Zeitung* 1 (1941), no. 68, 23.03.1941, p. 9 (section "Der Bewerber um den Weltmeistertitel").

<sup>145</sup> Cf. also Morán: *Agony*, p. 115.

<sup>146</sup> For an overview, see Herbert, Ulrich: *Geschichte Deutschlands im 20. Jahrhundert*, Munich 2014, pp. 420–482 (cit. Herbert: *Germany*).

<sup>147</sup> Cf. also Morán: *Agony*, p. 115. Apparently, Alekhine's visa problems were not that he did not obtain appropriate visas. Rather, they may have consisted of keeping his visas valid for a certain date and at the same time obtaining suitable exit visas for his wife.

had been his sheer survival or his escape from the National Socialists – i.e. his concern did not revolve around his wife or his position as world chess champion – he would not have left the relatively safe haven of Portugal for the German Reich. The *British Chess Magazine* showed no understanding whatsoever for Alekhine’s decision to travel from Lisbon to participate in the tournament in a country that had overrun his own. It accepted no excuse for this, not even coercion – according to the paper, it showed Alekhine’s weakness if he allowed himself to be forced.<sup>148</sup>

On the way from Lisbon to Munich, Alekhine made a stopover of several days in Madrid, where he held two simultaneous exhibitions. There, too, on 3 September, Alekhine gave the interviews already mentioned several times, which were published in two Spanish newspapers. According to his statements, Alekhine planned to go to Paris after the Munich tournament to pick up his wife Grace and their cats – Alekhine was a great lover of cats, which he presented to the chess community as the likeable quirk of a genius, right down to his lucky charm in the playing hall. He planned to potentially move to Madrid for a while, but to do this, some difficulties would have to be overcome before his wife could leave the occupied zone as an American. What would happen after the hoped-for move to Madrid was an open question.<sup>149</sup>

In fact, Alekhine must have been in contact some time earlier, during his stay in Portugal, with people from the supporting group defined in more detail above.<sup>150</sup> In its issue of 1 September 1941, the *Deutsche Schachblätter*, as a publication of the GSB obviously equipped with arcane knowledge, already reported meaningfully to its readers that Alekhine had “enthusiastically placed himself at the disposal of the new tasks and goals of the Großdeutsche Schachbund”. He would now take part in the Munich tournament, which was held from 8 to 21 September 1941.<sup>151</sup>

These “new tasks and goals” of the GSB were not specified. Undoubtedly chess had been politicised by the National Socialist regime from the very beginning. It was to be used as a national game and as a means to achieve its goals: the education of German, “Aryan” people and the unification of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. Just as physical sport was supposed to be empowering for the body, chess was supposed to do the same in the intellectual sphere. Some of the peculiarities inherent in chess were easy to fit into the National Socialist worldview, for example, the idea of defence and the idea of struggle. “Combat chess” (“Kampfschach”) was the catchword, though never developed in a conceptually consistent manner, which was supposed to sum up the approach to chess expected of the “Aryan” competitor. The GSB, originally founded in 1931 as a National Socialist-oriented particular association, formed the organisational framework for chess in the

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<sup>148</sup> Cf. N. N.: Foreign and Dominion News, in: *BCM* 61 (1941), no. 11, November 1941, p. 285. Quote: “He is a French officer and as such he went from Lisbon to Munich to take part in a tournament in a country which has overrun his own; (...) There will be people who will excuse this on the grounds of coercion. The case would be not better and he would not be much of a man who could be coerced in like circumstances.”

<sup>149</sup> Cf. Lastanao, [Enrique]: Llegó a Madrid el campeón del mundo, in: *El Alcázar* 6 (1941), no. 1616, 04.09.1941, p. 3, as well as Gonzales, Valentín: Una charla para Informaciones con el campeón de mundo de ajedrez, in: *Informaciones* 16 (1941), no. 5226, 03.09.1941, p. 5. On Alekhine fancying cats, see Linder/Linder: *Alekhine* (2016), p. 30, as well as N. N.: Der Katz, in: *DSZ* 91 (1936), no. 1, Januar 1936, pp. 8–9.

<sup>150</sup> Correct in this respect: Morán: *Agony*, p. 115.

<sup>151</sup> Cf. N. N.: Europaturnier in München vom 7. bis 21. September, in: *DSBl* 30 (1941), no. 17/18, 01.09.1941, p. 129 (title page) to p. 130, quotation p. 130. Original quotation: “sich begeistert den neuen Aufgaben und Zielen des Großdeutschen Schachbundes zur Verfügung gestellt”.

National Socialist state after the takeover of the DSB in April 1933.<sup>152</sup> “Chess forces concentration, clear thinking and resolute action and can therefore also strengthen our people’s spiritual defence”, was how the *Deutsche Schachzeitung* reported the remarks of Franz Moraller, then head of the federation, at the general meeting of the GSB on 20 May 1939. The GSB aimed at a broad effect and the formation of elites, as the organisation was supposed to “contribute to the spread of the game, but also to educate the great experts from the masses, who have to represent the honour and the glory of the German nation in this field.”<sup>153</sup> The essential tasks and goals that the GSB set for itself appear here in a nutshell. What the “new tasks and goals” of the GSB were, would only become clear in the course of the war.

The driving force behind both the old and the new goals was not Moraller, who as head of the Reich Chamber of Culture worked closely with Reich Minister of Propaganda Goebbels and had replaced Otto Zander, who had died in an accident, as GSB President in 1938. Rather, the driving force was Ehrhardt Post. A public prosecutor at a local court by profession, he was not only a strong chess player who won the German championship in 1920 and 1921, he was also a hard-working and ambitious chess functionary who also served as President of the Berlin Chess Society starting in 1907. Post was already promoting *völkisch* positions in the leadership of the DSB at the beginning of the Weimar period. Though he was not able to climb his way to the top at that time, Post’s moment had come with Hitler’s assumption of power and through the GSB. In the formal organisation, he was always behind the head of the federation, but as Deputy or Managing Director, he decisively determined the fate of the federation, which was structured according to the Führer principle. From the regional federations to the intermediate bodies and the clubs, up to 50,000 members are said to have been organised there in 1934, after only about 10,000 members a few years earlier, which is plausible insofar as the GSB absorbed particular federations such as the Workers’ Chess Federation and the Catholic Chess Federation. It soon became clear that Post was leading the GSB along National Socialist lines even without NSDAP membership; as late as 1934 he dismissed the native Russians Alekhine and Bogoljubov as “critics foreign to the species”.<sup>154</sup>

A few years later, there was no longer any talk of “foreign to the species”. And it would be far too short-sighted, for example, to declare Alekhine’s anti-Semitic propaganda to be implausible for the reading public; for example, because as a native Russian he was not himself an “Aryan”. Rather, and even the “anti-German” behaviour at the 1939 Chess Olympiad, which he was resented for, did nothing to change this, certain characteristics were attributed to Alekhine, which were to a large extent compatible, at least for the National Socialist chess community. This is shown to be

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<sup>152</sup> Cf. Bruns: *Schachspiel*, pp. 160–189, and Woelk: *Hakenkreuz*, pp. 24–25 and pp. 56–65.

<sup>153</sup> H. R. [Heinrich Ranneforth]: Die Stuttgarter Großveranstaltungen des Großdeutschen Schachbundes, in: *DSZ* 94 (1939), no. 6, June 1939, pp. 161–164, quotes p. 163. Original quotations: “Das Schachspiel zwingt zur Konzentration, zum klaren Denken und zum entschlossenen Handeln und könne daher auch die geistige Wehrkraft unseres Volkes stärken”; “zur Verbreitung des Spiels beitragen, aber auch aus der Masse die großen Könnner erziehen, die auf diesem Gebiete die Ehre und den Ruhm der deutschen Nation zu vertreten haben.”

<sup>154</sup> Post, Ehrhardt: Artfremde Kritiker, in: *DSBl.* 23 (1934), no. 12, 15.06.1934, p. 183. Original quotation: “artfremde Kritiker”. On the GSB and Ehrhardt Post cf. Dreyer: *Schach in Deutschland*, pp. 23–25, Tal: *Bruderküsse*, pp. 34–38, as well as Woelk: *Hakenkreuz*, pp. 56–62.

More detailed but less convincing on Post is Balló, Harald E.: Zur Geschichte des Deutschen Schachbundes. Part 3: 1919–1945 [first part], in: *Schach* 56 (2002), no. 9, pp. 44–53, there pp. 48–52, as well as id.: *Geschichte Schachbund, 1919–1945*, no. 10, pp. 55–56.

particularly valid in the remarks of Alfred Brinckmann, who in 1940 directly linked his chess-related remarks in the book *Schachmeister im Kampfe* (“Chess Masters in Combat”) in the preface to the situation of the belligerent and expansive National Socialist Germany. According to Brinckmann, Alekhine “left his mark on our time, he is its true representative.” He attributed to him “audacity” and a passionate “thirst for action”, contrasted with correct chess, which “pathetic diminishers and sober-minded people” considered to be true chess.<sup>155</sup> Alekhine ventured into the unknown and was sceptical of “conventional wisdom”. He wanted “to fight, not to be bound by supposedly unchangeable rules, and to be able to use his toughness, his restlessly active imagination, his impetuous endeavour to leave his own mark on the course of the battle”. Ordinary victories were not enough for him, Alekhine wanted to overtake others and leave them far behind him: “Thus only a demonic man of will, such as he is, could succeed in the great and unique feat of winning a lost world championship for a second time”.<sup>156</sup>

Brinckmann’s remarks are pathetically exaggerated under National Socialist auspices, but by no means completely taken out of thin air: other appointed chess masters and not least Alekhine’s predecessors and successors as world chess champions themselves regularly attested to his extraordinary fighting strength, willpower, courage and downright earth-shattering creativity.<sup>157</sup> In this respect, Alekhine was without question a fitting and credible representative of the vague idea of “combat chess” propagated by the GSB. Even if he was not the ideal figurehead for the National Socialist regime in terms of “racial biology”, Alekhine embodied virtues in gesture and substance that were also highly valued outside the chess community in those days in National Socialist Germany, whose Wehrmacht was overrunning one country after another.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> Cf. Brinckmann, Alfred: *Schachmeister im Kampfe. Betrachtungen zum Schach und zur schachgeschichtlichen Gegenwart*. Aljechin, Eume, Keres, Eliskases, Leipzig 1940, preface and p. 15, all quotations p. 15. Original quotations: “unsere Zeit den Stempel aufgedrückt, er ist ihr wahrer Repräsentant”; “Kühnheit”; “Tatendrang”; “armselige Verkleinerer und Nüchterlinge”.

<sup>156</sup> All quotations *ibid.*, p. 16. Original quotations: “konventionellen Weisheiten”; “kämpfen, sich nicht an vermeintlich unabänderliche Regeln binden und seine Härte, seine rastlos tätige Phantasie, sein stürmisches Bestreben, dem Kampfverlauf eine eigene Note zu geben, einsetzen”; “So konnte auch nur einem dämonischen Willensmenschen, wie er einer ist, der große und einmalige Wurf gelingen, eine verlorene Weltmeisterschaft zum zweiten Male an sich zu bringen.”

<sup>157</sup> Cf. Tartakower, Savielly: Aljechins Schaffen, in: Alekhine: *Meine besten Partien*, pp. 1–8, and Linder/Linder: *Alekhine (2016)*, pp. 270–272.

<sup>158</sup> Cf. Förster, Jürgen: Geistige Kriegführung in Deutschland 1919 bis 1945, in: Echterkamp, Jörg (ed.): *Das Deutsche Reich und der Zweite Weltkrieg. Vol. 9/1: Die deutsche Kriegsgesellschaft 1939 bis 1945. Politisierung, Vernichtung, Überleben*, Munich 2004, pp. 469–640, there pp. 506–518.



### III. Return to the Reich and to the board (September–November 1941)

#### Europa-Schachturnier in Munich

After nearly two years had elapsed since his last tournament game at the 1939 Chess Olympiad, Alekhine again took part in a high-level chess tournament. Though the Munich Europa-Schachturnier was not the highest level event, it nevertheless had a strong line-up which, in addition to Alekhine and Bogoljubov, included top players from all over Europe.<sup>159</sup> The event was attended by a circle of chess enthusiasts associated with Generalgouverneur Frank, such as Ludwig Siebert and Paul Wolfrum, and served as a stage for political celebrities such as Adolf Wagner, Minister of State and regional party leader (Gauleiter des NSDAP-Gaues München-Oberbayern).<sup>160</sup>

At this tournament, it became clear that rapprochement with the National Socialist regime – the alternative way out of his situation that Alekhine had opened up for himself since the beginning of 1941 – certainly appeared to offer promising opportunities. Alekhine himself already hinted at this in the interviews he gave in Madrid in early September: Asked about lectures for the time after his possible return to Madrid, he suggested that he would consider giving them, and referred to good study material. He then stated more generally that he would talk in Germany with Post, the Managing Director of the GSB, whom he described as a great chess promoter, about plans concerning the organisation of European chess. However, he mentioned that he could not say anything more about this yet, as everything depended on the course of the talks to be held.<sup>161</sup>

Obviously, Alekhine knew in advance about the strategic background of the Europa-Schachturnier, which became public on 9 September 1941. At that time, the 16 top chess players present adopted a resolution to the following effect:

The chess masters gathered in Munich at the Europaturnier wish to unite the chess countries in a European federation, which should organise European championships on a regular basis. They undertake to promote this plan in their countries. They note with gratitude that the Großdeutsche Schachbund has again invited the countries to a European tournament in Munich in September 1942. They ask the Managing Director of the Großdeutsche Schachbund, Mr. Ehrhardt Post, to establish the necessary connections for the execution of the plan and to take the preparatory steps for the establishment of a Europaschachbund.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Cf. Skinner/Verhoeven: *Alekhine*, pp. 659–666.

<sup>160</sup> Cf. H. R. [Heinrich Ranneforth]: Das Europa-Schachturnier des Großdeutschen Schachbundes, in: *DSZ* 96 (1941), no. 10, October 1941, pp. 145–148.

<sup>161</sup> Cf. Gonzales, Valentín: Una charla para Informaciones con el campeón de mundo de ajedrez, in: *Informaciones* 16 (1941), no. 5226, 03.09.1941, p. 5. The original states: “Por cierto que en Alemania pienso hablar con el señor Post, gran animador del ajedrez en el país germano, sobre algunos proyectos de organización del ajedrez europeo. De momento no puedo concretarle nada, pues todo depende de las conversaciones que he de celebrar.”

<sup>162</sup> Richter, Kurt (ed.): *Europa-Schachturnier München 1941. Im Auftrage des Großdeutschen Schachbundes herausgegeben von Kurt Richter unter Mitwirkung von Weltmeister Dr. Aljechin, Alfred Brinckmann, Fritz Sämisch und anderen Meistern*, Berlin 1942, p. 4. Original quotation: “Die in München beim Europaturnier versammelten Schachmeister wünschen einen Zusammenschluss der Schachländer zu einem Europabund, der in ständiger Wiederholung Europameisterschaften

Post, the head of the GSB, was behind this resolution: “I had the masters give me the order to conduct the negotiations on the formation of the organisation.” He already knew at that time that important Reich agencies, especially the Reich Ministry of Propaganda, were interested in the foundation of the Europaschachbund (European Chess Federation).<sup>163</sup> In addition, Post had already obtained in advance the promise of the Lord Mayor of Munich, Karl Fiehler, to take over the leadership in a Europaschachbund. Moreover, after the resolution of 9 September, Post immediately obtained verbal permission for the aforementioned preparatory steps – from Hans Frank.<sup>164</sup> The Generalgouverneur commissioned Heinz Eisenlohr, his personal advisor in the Reich Law Office of the NSDAP, to represent him, if necessary, in a committee preparing the Europaschachbund.<sup>165</sup> And by mid-November, probably on the sidelines of the second chess championships of the Generalgouvernement, which took place in Warsaw and Krakow from 5 to 21 November 1941, Frank gave his written consent to Post’s plans.<sup>166</sup>

The GSB had clearly travelled a long and winding path with regard to the international stage of chess. Having left the World Chess Federation FIDE in 1933, it re-joined it in 1939 in order to be able to influence international developments in chess.<sup>167</sup> Now it was involved in the foundation of a European chess federation. For the Reich Ministry of Propaganda, the planned Europaschachbund was another possibility to influence propaganda and communication in Europe. As early as on 11 September 1941, while the Munich Europa-Schachturnier was already in progress, the Ministry declared it to be “important to the Reich”. The event should “serve at the same time the purpose of a reorganisation of European chess relations”.<sup>168</sup> Within the Ministry, Alfred-Ingemar Berndt was in charge of the matter – not a subordinate lightweight, but the newly promoted head of the propaganda department. The proven comrade-in-arms of Joseph Goebbels had just returned from his

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durchführen soll. Sie verpflichten sich, für diesen Plan in ihrem Land einzutreten. Sie nehmen mit Dank davon Kenntnis, dass der Grossdeutsche Schachbund die Länder erneut zu einem Europaturnier in München für September 1942 eingeladen hat. Sie bitten den Geschäftsführer des Grossdeutschen Schachbundes, Herrn Ehrhardt Post, die zur Ausführung des Planes erforderlichen Verbindungen aufzunehmen und die vorbereitenden Schritte zur Errichtung eines Europaschachbundes zu tun.”

<sup>163</sup> Cf. Ehrhardt Post’s letter dated 15.11.1941 to Heinz Eisenlohr, BArch, N 1110/67a, fol. 266–267, quote fol. 266.

Original quotation: “Ich habe mir von den Meistern den Auftrag geben lassen, die Verhandlungen über die Bildung der Organisation zu führen.”

<sup>164</sup> Cf. Ehrhardt Post’s letter dated 29.09.1941 to Hans Frank, BArch, N 1110/67a, fol. 238.

<sup>165</sup> Cf. Heinz Eisenlohr’s letter dated 13.11.1941 to Ehrhardt Post, BArch, N 1110/67a, fol. 259. On Heinz Eisenlohr: Born 16.05.1888, lawyer and NSDAP functionary, headed the Office for Legal Services for the German People (Amt für Rechtsbetreuung des deutschen Volkes) at the Reich Law Office of the NSDAP from 1935 until its dissolution in 1942 and assumed other high-ranking functions there during the war; he established the connection between the Reich Law Office and the Party Chancellery (Partei-Kanzlei) and was personal advisor to the head of the Reich Law Office, Hans Frank, cf. Heinz Eisenlohr’s not dated curriculum vitae [ca. September 1942], BArch, R 3001/55085, unpag., as well as Reichsorganisationsleiter der NSDAP (ed.): *Nationalsozialistisches Jahrbuch*, 16th vol., 2nd edition, Munich 1942, p. 187. For context, cf. Rücker, Simone: *Rechtsberatung. Das Rechtsberatungswesen von 1919–1945 und die Entstehung des Rechtsberatungsmissbrauchsgesetzes von 1935*, Tübingen 2007. Heinz Eisenlohr is not to be confused with Dr. Georg Eisenlohr, who was a County Leader (Kreishauptmann) in the Generalgouvernement as well as Head of Office and later Vice-Governor of the district of Krakow (Distrikt Krakau), cf. Präg, Werner/Jacobmeyer, Wolfgang (eds.): *Das Dienstagebuch des deutschen Generalgouverneurs in Polen. 1939–1945*, Stuttgart 1975, p. 947 (cit. Präg/Jacobmeyer: *Dienstagebuch*). This confusion also appears in this work, cf. p. 485, p. 557, pp. 567–568, pp. 939–941, p. 943 and p. 963.

<sup>166</sup> Cf. Ehrhardt Post’s letter dated 15.11.1941 to Heinz Eisenlohr, BArch, N 1110/67a, fol. 266.

<sup>167</sup> Cf. Bruns: *Schachspiel*, p. 179 and p. 183.

<sup>168</sup> Cf. Ehrhardt Post’s letter dated 29.09.1941 to Hans Frank, BArch, N 1110/67a, fol. 238, quotes *ibid.* Original quotations: “reichswichtig”; “zugleich dem Zweck einer Neuordnung der europäischen Schachverhältnisse dienen.”

assignment as an orderly officer with the German Africa Corps. During those years, Berndt, who had close ties to the top echelons of the leadership and who repeatedly reported to Hitler at the Führer headquarters near Rastenburg in East Prussia, was instrumental in establishing the propaganda myth of the “desert fox” Erwin Rommel.<sup>169</sup>

Berndt explained the background and significance of Post’s plan to Goebbels: According to their view, the transfer of the leadership of the World Chess Federation from Holland to Argentina due to the war situation did not meet with approval, especially in European countries. They considered the federation to thus effectively become incapable of acting. The GSB had cultivated the ties with 21 European countries that had existed since the 1936 Chess Olympiad and was now striving to found a German-led European chess federation. For the Reich Ministry of Propaganda, this approach seemed favourable, not least to forestall a possible corresponding advance by Italy. And: “Our office would have the opportunity to exert influence on the newly founded Europaschachbund in the same way as it already does today towards the Großdeutsche Schachbund.” Berndt therefore recommended that the intended foundation of the Europaschachbund be approved, “since this would be the first step towards Germany taking over the leadership in world chess and the existence of a Europaschachbund would offer favourable propaganda opportunities.” At that time, the Reich Ministry of Propaganda had already consulted the Foreign Office, which did not raise any objections to the plans for founding the federation.<sup>170</sup>

In other words, the hidden goal behind the above-mentioned “new tasks and goals” of the GSB was the perspective of bringing world chess under German leadership, with the GSB as the organisational spearhead. Given his closer relationship to the GSB, this could also open up opportunities for Alekhine.

## Weeks of decisions in the Generalgouvernement

In the wake of the Munich tournament, developments with far-reaching consequences for Alekhine were now underway. Even during the tournament, Generalgouverneur Frank arranged for Alekhine, Bogoljubov and other participating chess masters to be invited to Krakow.<sup>171</sup> The second chess championships of the Generalgouvernement took place there and in Warsaw from 5 to 19 October 1941. In addition to the world champion and Bogoljubov, the “greater German” (“großdeutsche”)

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<sup>169</sup> Cf. Longerich, Peter: *Joseph Goebbels. Biographie*, Munich 2010, pp. 461–466 and p. 479 (cit. Longerich: *Goebbels*), Reuth, Ralf Georg: *Rommel. Das Ende einer Legende*, Munich 2012, pp. 75–76, p. 78, pp. 154–155, p. 167 and pp. 195–196, and Klee, Ernst: *Personenlexikon zum Dritten Reich. Wer war was vor und nach 1945*, 2nd edition, Hamburg 2016, p. 42 (cit. Klee: *Personenlexikon*).

<sup>170</sup> Cf. Alfred-Ingemar Berndt’s letter dated 17.11.1941 to the Minister (Joseph Goebbels), BArch, NS 18/945, fol. 1–2, both quotations fol. 2. Original quotations: “Für das Haus würde die Möglichkeit bestehen, auf den neu zu gründenden Europa-Schachbund in gleicher Form Einfluß zu nehmen, wie das heute bereits gegenüber dem Großdeutschen Schachbund praktisch erfolgt”; “da damit der erste Schritt für die Übernahme der Führung im Weltschach durch Deutschland getan ist und das Vorhandensein eines Europa-Schachbundes günstige propagandistische Möglichkeiten bietet.”

<sup>171</sup> Cf. Heinz Eisenlohr’s letter dated 18.09.1941 to Ehrhardt Post, BArch, N 1110/67a, fol. 229. However, Alekhine had already confirmed his participation in the tournament the day before; Heinz Eisenlohr had already informed GSB Managing Director Ehrhardt Post of this verbally, so they were probably in telephone contact.

chess elite took part, not least the great talent Klaus Junge and Paul Felix Schmidt, who was equal on points with Alekhine in the end; Alekhine won the tournament and received a prize for the most beautiful game.<sup>172</sup> Once again, there were plenty of political celebrities present, not only Hans Frank himself, but also leading personnel from all three territorial levels of the Generalgouvernement administration; from the leadership of the Generalgouvernement itself, from the district of Krakow and from the city of Krakow. The chess masters were invited to receptions and tours; the tournament was obviously also to be used as a promotional event for the “unceasing and responsible work of the administration” and “its great successes”.<sup>173</sup>

Such depictions were a typical topos of propaganda in the Generalgouvernement. In every respect, including cultural, they were intended to contrast the “great work of reconstruction” of National Socialist Germany with the alleged all-encompassing Polish inferiority. The propaganda thus provided the legitimisation for the brutal *Herrenmenschen* (master race) policy under Hans Frank, in which Poles were granted subhuman status at best and there was no longer any place for Polish culture.<sup>174</sup> The Generalgouverneur was at the zenith of his power in the second half of 1941. Following the invasion of the Soviet Union, the district of Galicia, established on 1 August 1941, expanded the Generalgouvernement to almost one and a half times. It now covered some 142,000 square kilometres and almost 18 million people. Frank did his best to play off the Polish and Ukrainian populations of his area against each other.<sup>175</sup> Above all, however, Frank was involved in central crimes of the German Reich in those days, especially in the economic exploitation of the territory entrusted to him, including the use of forced labourers, and the organised mass murder of the Jews.<sup>176</sup>

After celebrating the sixtieth birthday of GSB Managing Director Ehrhardt Post with Generalgouverneur Frank and other guests in Berlin at the end of September, Alekhine was already present in Krakow a few days before the tournament began.<sup>177</sup> He gave simultaneous displays, including in military hospitals, and is said to have raised money for the Soldiers’ Aid Fund (*Soldatenhilfe*), as reported by the *Deutsche Schachblätter*. Their readers were also treated to a remark heavy with meaning: Apparently asked about his form before the start of the tournament, Alekhine

<sup>172</sup> Cf. Magacs/Negele: *Schmidt*, pp. 210–213, and Skinner/Verhoeven: *Alekhine*, p. 667.

<sup>173</sup> M. B. [Max Blümich]: Das 2. Turnier im Generalgouvernement, in: *DSZ* 96 (1941), no. 11, November 1941, pp. 161–163, quotations p. 163. Original quotations: “rastlose und verantwortungsvolle Arbeit der Verwaltung”; “deren große Erfolge”. Cf. also Präg/Jacobmeyer: *Dienstagebuch*, pp. 10–11.

<sup>174</sup> Cf. Jockheck, Lars: *Propaganda im Generalgouvernement. Die NS-Besatzungspresse für Deutsche und Polen 1939–1945*, Osnabrück 2006, e.g. pp. 168–169 (cit. Jockheck: *Propaganda*), and Höpel, Thomas: *Kulturpolitik in Europa im 20. Jahrhundert. Metropolen als Akteure und Orte der Innovation*, Göttingen 2017, pp. 140–160.

<sup>175</sup> Cf. Schenk: *Kronjurist*, pp. 200–202.

<sup>176</sup> Cf. Heim, Susanne (ed.): *Deutsches Reich und Protektorat Böhmen und Mähren. Oktober 1941–März 1943. Cooperation: Maria Wilke (VEJ, vol. 6)*, Berlin/Boston 2019, pp. 18–20, Friedrich: *Generalgouvernement*, pp. 19–22, Herbert: *Deutschland*, p. 476, Linne, Karsten: “Sklavenjagden” im Arbeiterreservoir – das Beispiel Generalgouvernement, in: Dierl, Florian/Janjetović, Zoran/Linne, Karsten: *Pflicht, Zwang und Gewalt. Arbeitsverwaltungen und Arbeitskräftepolitik im deutsch besetzten Polen und Serbien 1939–1944*, Essen 2013, pp. 171–316, there pp. 205–294, and Schenk: *Kronjurist*, pp. 203–235.

<sup>177</sup> Cf. Skinner/Verhoeven: *Alekhine*, p. 666.

said that “matters beyond the realm of chess would have a considerable influence on his performance” but that this would not prevent him from fighting for the tournament championship.<sup>178</sup>

This comment may indeed have also applied to the situation of his wife Grace, who was stuck in occupied France. In principle, it must be assumed that concerns regarding his wife’s well-being weighed heavily on Alekhine’s mind as he searched for a way out of his predicament. This is indicated, for example, by the fact that Alekhine’s first, admittedly not very sharp, public criticism of the National Socialist regime dates from the end of 1944 – still during the war, but only after the liberation of Paris.<sup>179</sup> Yet little is known about her situation in concrete terms, especially with regard to the two important aspects of her possessions and freedom of movement.

When Alekhine was in Portugal in the spring and summer of 1941, Grace is said to have stayed behind to sell her country estate near Dieppe under the protection of the American embassy.<sup>180</sup> Apparently she also lived temporarily in Saint-Aubin-le-Cauf, in a farmhouse next to her chateau;<sup>181</sup> La Chatellenie itself had been confiscated by the German occupation forces in the summer of 1940.<sup>182</sup> In the spring of 1942, the Wehrmacht set up a military hospital in Saint-Aubin-le-Cauf, and the chateau must have been part of this hospital. Soldiers are said to have been nursed back to health in the chateau, including through chess courses and chess competitions.<sup>183</sup> There was a definite need for the hospital, as Saint-Aubin-le-Cauf was located in an area that saw heavy combat at times. In August 1942, the 302nd Division of the Wehrmacht defeated an attempted landing by Allied forces on the Channel coast near Dieppe called “Operation Jubilee”, with considerable losses on both sides; the wounded were brought, among other places, to Saint-Aubin-le-Cauf.<sup>184</sup>

Grace Alekhine’s whereabouts are also somewhat unclear for about two years after autumn 1941. Apparently she had not left occupied France until then. She did not join Alekhine’s simultaneous

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<sup>178</sup> Cf. Nowarra, Heinz: Der Wettlauf zwischen Aljechin und Schmidt, in: *DSBl* 30 (1941), no. 21/22, 01.11.1941, pp. 167–168, quote p. 167. Original quotation: “außerschachliche Dinge sein Leistungsvermögen wesentlich beeinflussen würden”.

<sup>179</sup> Cf. N. N.: An Interview with Dr. Alekhine, in: *BCM* 64 (1944), no. 12, December 1944, pp. 274–275, there p. 274.

<sup>180</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>181</sup> Information from Veronique Perrin via e-mail dated 05.07.2020 to the author. Ms Perrin, the current owner of La Chatellenie, describes her father’s memories; Ms Perrin’s grandfather had bought the property from Grace Alekhine. See also Teyssou, Denis: Addendum, at: Bertola, Georges: Alekhine et la guerre, in: *www.europe-echecs.com*, 10.06.2015, <<https://www.europe-echecs.com/art/alekhine-et-la-guerre-6028.html>> [01.02.2020].

<sup>182</sup> Cf. Procès-verbal de constat des dégâts causés par les troupes Allemandes d’occupation, Propriété de Madame Grace Alekhine, Château de Saint-Aubin-le-Cauf (Seine-Inférieure), dated 25.09.1945, Arch. dép. Seine-Maritime, 238 W 5344/120562, [2nd page ], and Demande d’indemnité de reconstruction, Grace Alekhine, dated 27.06.1951, Arch. dép. Seine-Maritime, 238 W 5344/120562, [2nd page].

<sup>183</sup> Cf. the activity report for April 1942, dated 03.05.1942, signed Prof. Richter, divisional doctor of the 302nd Infantry Division, BArch, RH 26-302/53, unpag., Prof. Richter’s activity report for May 1942 dated 03.06.1942, BArch, RH 26-302/53, unpag., the supplement for the medical officer to supply order no. 17, 302nd Infantry Division, dated 30.04.1942, BArch, RH 26-302/52, unpag., the supplement for the medical officer to supply order no. 18, 302nd Infantry Division, dated 12.05.1942, BArch, RH 26-302/52, unpag., as well as v. M. [presumably: Hans-Werner von Massow]: Soldaten-Schach in Aljechins Landhaus, in: *Schach-Echo* 12 (1943), no. 2, 09.02.1943, p. 13 (title page) and p. 14. Hans-Werner von Massow also featured prominently in other publications of the KdF chess community (KdF-Schachgemeinschaft), e.g.: Amt Feierabend der NS-Gemeinschaft “Kraft durch Freude” (ed.): *Schach ist schön, Schach bringt Freude! 58 ausgewählte Kampfbilder aus dem Schachspiel. Zusammenstellung und Bearbeitung: Schriftleiter Hans-Werner von Massow*, Berlin 1940.

<sup>184</sup> For a military-historical study of this, see Zuehlke, Mark: *Tragedy at Dieppe. Operation Jubilee, August 19, 1942*, Vancouver 2012.

tour in spring 1942 until after it had begun. During his later stops in the Generalgouvernement and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, she was at her husband's side, but not for the entire time; apparently she also stayed alone in occupied France at times.<sup>185</sup> In other words, Grace was able to move within the German sphere of power, but she was apparently prevented from leaving; in this respect, Alexander Alekhine's assertions mentioned above may be regarded as correct. This is borne out by the fact, proven at least for October 1943, that Grace had to report to the police station responsible for her district in Paris every week; however, this regulation was suspended for the period of her temporary absence.<sup>186</sup>

The "matters beyond the realm of chess" that Alekhine spoke of in October 1941 probably also referred to quite different developments than the situation of his wife: On 3 October 1941, the characteristic curved signature of Alekhine can be found in the guest book of Dr. Wilhelm Coblitz, the director of the Institut für Deutsche Ostarbeit in Krakow.<sup>187</sup> On 2 and 3 November, in the magnificent Belvedere Palace on the edge of Łazienki Park in Warsaw, the world chess champion played consultation games with Generalgouverneur Frank against Efim Bogoljubov, who formed teams with various players.<sup>188</sup> Then on 6 November 1941, Coblitz received a letter from Dr. Franz Keith, the head of the Generalgouverneur's Chancellery (Kanzlei des Generalgouverneurs), following a telephone conversation they had had that same day: "The Generalgouverneur instructs you to negotiate with Dr. Alekhine about taking him into the service of the IDO, with the aim of employing him as a consultant for Russian questions: on linguistics, history, law and literature."<sup>189</sup> Two days later, Coblitz confirmed in writing to the world chess champion residing in the Grand Hotel in Krakow that Alekhine was "employed by order of the President of the IDO, Generalgouverneur Dr. Frank, with effect from 1 January 1942, as a senior consultant for Russian questions at the IDO."<sup>190</sup> These events that took place within five weeks of each other take us to the crucial question of Alekhine's closeness to the National Socialist regime and must therefore be examined more closely.

It is no coincidence that at this time, Alekhine's former adversary Bogoljubov once again entered the scene. As mentioned, Alekhine and Bogoljubov had known each other for decades. Bogoljubov,

<sup>185</sup> Cf. Ehrhardt Post's letter dated 12.05.1942 to Hans Frank, BArch, N 1110/67a, fol. 389, N. N.: An Interview with Dr. Alekhine, in: *BCM* 64 (1944), no. 12, December 1944, pp. 274–275, there p. 274, and Müller/Pawelczak: *Schachgenie Aljechin*, p. 48.

<sup>186</sup> Cf. announcement made by Direction des Renseignements Generaux et des Jeux, 4. Sektion, Bureau des Britanniques, dated 13.12.1943 (no. 1506), Archives de la Préfecture de Police de Paris, 77 W 684-239150, unpag.

<sup>187</sup> Guest book Dr. Wilhelm Coblitz, entry "Dr. Alexander Alekhine" dated 03.10.1941, Privatarchiv Michael Coblitz. The author has consulted this guest book himself. Michael Coblitz is thanked for his support.

<sup>188</sup> Cf. Dudziński: *Szachy wojenne*, p. 188, and N. N.: Schachwettkämpfe im Palais Brühl. Beratungspartien Dr. Aljechin–Bogoljubow, in: *Krakauer Zeitung* 3 (1941), no. 259, 02.11.1941, p. 7; these games were originally to take place in the Palais Brühl. One of Efim Bogoljubov's playing partners was Frank's adjutant, SS-Hauptsturmführer Helmut Pfaffenroth, cf. Schenk: *Kronjurist*, p. 179. Cf. also N. N.: "Wie soll ich die Schachpartie eröffnen?", in: *DSBl* 30 (1941), no. 23/24, 01.12.1941, pp. 184–186.

<sup>189</sup> Cf. Franz Keith's letter dated 06.11.1941 to Wilhelm Coblitz, BArch, R 52-IV/61, fol. 88, quote *ibid.* Original quotation: "Der Herr Generalgouverneur beauftragt Sie, mit Herrn Dr. Aljechin wegen der Übernahme in die Dienste des Instituts für Deutsche Ostarbeit zu verhandeln und zwar mit dem Ziele, ihn als Referent für russische Fragen – Sprachwissenschaft, Geschichte, Recht und Literatur – anzustellen."

<sup>190</sup> Cf. the letter from Wilhelm Coblitz of 08.11.1941 to Alexander Alekhine, BArch, R 52-IV/61, fol. 87, quote *ibid.* Original quotation: "im Auftrage des Herrn Präsidenten des Instituts für Deutsche Ostarbeit, Generalgouverneur Dr. Frank mit Wirkung vom 1. Januar 1942 als leitender Referent für Russlandfragen am Institut für Deutsche Ostarbeit angestellt". The name "Frank" is blocked out in the original, as was customary in such letters of those days.

born in 1889 in Stanislavchik near Kiev in the Russian Empire, met his future wife in Triberg and settled in the small community in the Black Forest. His further ascent to the pinnacle of world chess, up to vice world champion, took place from there; as a German citizen beginning in November 1929.<sup>191</sup> In February 1940, however, the *Deutsche Schachzeitung* reported that Bogoljubov had moved from Triberg to Krakow and had taken up work as an interpreter for the Generalgouvernement. He also headed a newly founded chess club there.<sup>192</sup> He did not officially move to Krakow until 15 March 1940,<sup>193</sup> and his employment as an interpreter with the Government of the Generalgouvernement began only four days later.<sup>194</sup>

Here it is important to note that at the head of this governmental authority was Generalgouverneur Frank's completely loyal deputy, the State Secretary Dr. Josef Bühler. Without him, access to Frank was difficult, even for the heads of the Main Departments subordinate to him who ran departments such as finance, economics and propaganda, roughly corresponding in layout to the Reich ministries.<sup>195</sup> Bogoljubov, of course, received special attention: he was received by Hans Frank in Wawel Castle on his first day of work. The Generalgouverneur asked him to “become active in Ukrainian circles against irredentist efforts”, to translate state decrees into Ukrainian and to deal with the Ukrainian press.<sup>196</sup> It is not known what activities Bogoljubov actually carried out in the everyday professional life of his employment with the Government of the Generalgouvernement. But one thing is clear: Bogoljubov was not primarily engaged as a chess master, but had been entrusted with a clearly politically relevant task. And while Bogoljubov was active as a chess master in the German

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<sup>191</sup> Cf. Haas: *Mannheim*, p. 35 and p. 275, and Brinckmann, Alfred: *Grossmeister Bogoljubow*, Berlin 1953, pp. 1–2. On citizenship, cf. the certificate of the mayor of Triberg dated 26.08.1943, LABW, Staatsarchiv Freiburg, D180/2, no. 210434, unpag.; the year of naturalisation is often incorrectly stated, e.g. 1928 in Eisinger, Max: Article “Bogoljubow, Efim D.”, in: Otnad, Bernd (ed.): *Badische Biographien. Neue Folge, vol. 1*, Stuttgart 1982, pp. 71–73, there p. 72.

<sup>192</sup> Cf. N. N.: Aus der Schachwelt, in: *DSZ* 95 (1940), no. 5, May 1940, pp. 67–68, there p. 68.

<sup>193</sup> Information from the Stadtverwaltung Triberg, Registry Office (Einwohnermeldeamt), dated 13.02.2020.

<sup>194</sup> Cf. the denazification file (Entnazifizierungsakte) of Efim Bogoljubov, registration sheet (Meldebogen) of 27.08.1948, LABW, Staatsarchiv Freiburg, D180/2, no. 210434, unpag.

<sup>195</sup> Cf. Präg/Jacobmeyer: *Diensttagebuch*, pp. 12–13.

<sup>196</sup> Entry in Hans Frank's *Diensttagebuch* (service diary) dated 19.03.1940, IfZ-Archiv, MA 120/1, fol. 225–226: “Herr Generalgouverneur then receives the chess master Bogoljubov, who has taken up his activity as Ukrainian and Russian interpreter. Herr Generalgouverneur asks Bogoljubov to see to it that irredentist efforts do not arise in the circles of the Ukrainians. [fol. 226] Bogoljubov remarks that it is actually unreasonable to play Ukrainians and Russians off against each other. Every educated Ukrainian used to be Russian at the same time. The Ukrainians had felt very comfortable in the great fatherland of Russia, and there had not really been any hatred against Great Russia. Herr Generalgouverneur gives Bogoljubov the task of translating the basic provisions of decrees and orders into Ukrainian, especially some basic decrees on the structure of the courts and traffic. Bogoljubov is also to deal with the Ukrainian press.” Original quotation: “Der Herr Generalgouverneur empfängt dann den Schachmeister Bogoljubow, der seine Tätigkeit als ukrainischer und russischer Dolmetscher aufgenommen hat. Der Herr Generalgouverneur ersucht Bogoljubow, dafür zu sorgen, daß in den Kreisen der Ukrainer nicht irredentistische Bestrebungen entständen. [fol. 226] Bogoljubow bemerkt, daß es eigentlich unvernünftig sei, Ukrainer und Russen gegeneinander auszuspielen. Jeder gebildete Ukrainer sei früher gleichzeitig auch Russe gewesen. Die Ukrainer hätten sich in dem großen Vaterland Rußland sehr wohl gefühlt, und ein Haß habe gegen Großrußland eigentlich gar nicht bestanden. Der Herr Generalgouverneur gibt Bogoljubow die Aufgabe, die grundlegenden Bestimmungen von Verordnungen und Erlassen ins Ukrainische zu übersetzen, vor allem einige grundlegende Verordnungen über den Aufbau der Gerichte und des Verkehrs. Bogoljubow soll sich auch mit der ukrainischen Presse beschäftigen.” Blocked sentences, underlining and errors in the original have not been included. Cf. also Präg/Jacobmeyer: *Diensttagebuch*, p. 154.

Reich from mid-June to the beginning of July,<sup>197</sup> for example, he was once again in a meeting with Frank in Wawel Castle on 10 July 1940. Bogoljubov is said to have applied “to be used within the Russian department in the office of the Generalgouverneur, since as a native Ukrainian he had a very good command of the Russian language and was also very familiar with the mentality of the population.”<sup>198</sup>

In November 1940, Bogoljubov was active again as a chess master. He won the first chess championships in the Generalgouvernement, held in Krakow, Krynica-Zdrój and Warsaw.<sup>199</sup> Bogoljubov, who participated as a “representative of the Generalgouvernement” and came into contact with some high-ranking National Socialist officials, was also part of a propaganda production there. Arthur Greiser, a regional governor (Reichsstatthalter) and regional party leader (Gauleiter des Reichsgaues Wartheland), gave a reception, and Hans Frank in particular posed as a great cultural promoter. He said that “the tournament was intended as a link in the chain of measures to fertilise the intellectual life in the Generalgouvernement.”<sup>200</sup> The social programme for the players included a city tour through Warsaw, which had been massively bombed by the Wehrmacht, and “concluded with a tour through the ghetto.”<sup>201</sup>

Bogoljubov’s activity at the Generalgouvernement was neither a disguised employment for other purposes nor a sinecure. It consisted primarily of a politically relevant task as an interpreter, which at the same time allowed him to continue working as a chess master. It is therefore no surprise that Bogoljubov became a member of the NSDAP on 1 April 1941. Less convincing is Bogoljubov’s idealistically dressed-up attempt to exonerate himself in his denazification proceedings of 1948; as an exiled Russian, he claimed he had not been able to “put up with the provocations of the war against Russia, which were particularly noticeable in Krakow”, he “joined the party in order to be able to fight against them.”<sup>202</sup> Alexander Alekhine, on the other hand, is not known to have joined the NSDAP. Admittedly, this was hardly possible, at least from a formal point of view, because he would have had to have been a Reich German, i.e. a German citizen, or be considered a *Volksdeutscher*

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<sup>197</sup> Thus Bogoljubov played a chess tournament in Berlin in June 1940, and at the beginning of July he gave a clock simultaneous display in Stuttgart, cf. N. N.: Aus der Schachwelt, in: *DSZ* 95 (1940), no. 7, July 1940, pp. 100–101, there p. 100, as well as N. N.: Aus der Schachwelt, in: *DSZ* 95 (1940), no. 8, August 1940, pp. 118–119, there p. 118.

<sup>198</sup> Entry in Hans Frank’s Dienstagebuch of 10.07.1940 on the meeting with District Court Judge (Landgerichtsrat) Max Dorn and interpreter Bogoljubov, IfZ-Archiv, MA 120/2, fol. 646. Original quotation: “im Rahmen des Russenreferats im Amt des Generalgouverneurs verwendet zu werden, da er als geborener Ukrainer die russische Sprache sehr gut beherrsche und auch mit der Mentalität der Bevölkerung sehr genau Bescheid wisse.” Frank then promised Bogoljubov that he would give the matter to State Secretary Josef Bühler. Cf. also Präg/Jacobmeyer: *Dienstagebuch*, p. 247.

<sup>199</sup> Cf. the article by M. B. [Max Blümich], written in the National Socialist *Herrenmenschen* tone: Das Turnier des GSB. im Generalgouvernement, in: *DSZ* 95 (1940), no. 12, December 1940, pp. 185–187.

<sup>200</sup> Both quotations in N. N.: Das Meisterturnier des Generalgouvernements, in: *DSZ* 95 (1940), no. 11, November 1940, pp. 169–170, there p. 169. Original quotations: “Vertreter des Generalgouvernements”; “das Turnier als ein Glied in der Kette der Maßnahmen gedacht, das geistige Leben im Generalgouvernement zu befruchten”. Cf. also Präg/Jacobmeyer: *Dienstagebuch*, p. 302.

<sup>201</sup> Cf. N. N.: Krakau – Krynica – Warschau, in: *DSBl.* 29 (1940), no. 23/24, 01.12.1940, p. 185 (title page) to p. 192, quotation p. 191. Original quotation: “einer Fahrt durch das Ghetto ihren Abschluss erreichte.”

<sup>202</sup> Denazification file of Efim Bogoljubov, registration sheet dated 27.08.1948, LABW, Staatsarchiv Freiburg, D180/2, no. 210434, unpag. Original quotations: “Provokationen des Krieges gegen Russland, die in Krakau besonders auffielen, nicht ganz tatenlos ertragen”; “ging in die Partei, um dagegen ankämpfen zu können.” Bogoljubov bore the NSDAP membership number 8.380.482 and, according to his self-declaration, was not a member of a party branch or an affiliated association.



(ethnic German); the NSDAP statutes were vague on this question. *Volksdeutsche* did not have German citizenship, but they were certified as belonging to the German *Volk* through culture and language, for example.<sup>203</sup>

On 15 April 1941, for unknown reasons, Bogoljubov's activity as an interpreter employed in the Generalgouvernement ended.<sup>204</sup> Over the following months, he appeared again as a chess player: for example, in July and August in a match against the former world chess champion Euwe in Karlsbad, who roundly defeated him,<sup>205</sup> and in September and October, as mentioned, in the tournaments in Munich and Krakow/Warsaw. After the latter tournament and only days before the consultation games with Alekhine and Frank in the Belvedere Palace, however, something remarkable happened with regard to Alekhine's developments: Bogoljubov was again employed by the Government of the Generalgouvernement in Krakow on 1 November 1941, now entrusted with the task of "chess in military hospital care" ("Lazarettbetreuung Schach").<sup>206</sup> He was thus probably placed in the Main Propaganda Department (Hauptabteilung Propaganda) of the Government of the Generalgouvernement, which had a sub-department "Propaganda" with various units, including a special unit for troop support.<sup>207</sup>

These developments in 1941, as well as Bogoljubov's overall closeness to the Government of the Generalgouvernement and to Hans Frank in particular, could lead to the assumption that Bogoljubov was significantly involved in the fact that Alekhine was also offered a job there; indeed, that Bogoljubov had perhaps belonged to the circle of supportive persons who had tried to draw Alekhine to the German side at the beginning of 1941. But that would be pure speculation: there are no known sources that support these conjectures.<sup>208</sup>

In terms of employment, there was a difference between Bogoljubov and Alekhine: Bogoljubov was employed by the Government of the Generalgouvernement, whereas Alekhine was assigned to the IDO. The Institut für Deutsche Ostarbeit, which had its headquarters in the venerable Collegium Maius of the Jagiellonian University in the Annagasse, had been founded by Generalgouverneur

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<sup>203</sup> Cf. Falter, Jürgen W.: *Hitlers Parteigenossen. Die Mitglieder der NSDAP 1919–1945*, Frankfurt a. M./New York 2020, p. 24 and p. 46.

<sup>204</sup> Cf. the denazification file of Efim Bogoljubov, registration sheet of 27.08.1948, LABW, Staatsarchiv Freiburg, D180/2, no. 210434, unpag.

<sup>205</sup> On this match, which was held from 20.07. to 03.08.1941, cf. N. N.: In Karlsbad: Euwe-Bogoljubow 6 ½: 3 ½, in: *DSZ* 96 (1941), no. 8, August 1941, pp. 114–115, as well as Münnighoff, Alexander: *Max Euwe. The Biography. Including 50 Games with the Original Analysis by the Dutch World Champion*, Alkmaar 2001, pp. 241–242 (cit. Münnighoff: *Euwe*). Directly before this match, Bogoljubov had won a tournament in Krefeld, cf. N. N.: Krefelder Wertungsturnier, in: *DSZ* 96 (1941), no. 8, August 1941, pp. 116–117.

<sup>206</sup> Cf. the denazification file of Efim Bogoljubov, registration sheet dated 27.08.1948, LABW, Staatsarchiv Freiburg, D180/2, no. 210434, unpag.

<sup>207</sup> Cf. Jockheck: *Propaganda*, p. 348, and Hirt, Alexander: "Die Heimat reicht der Front die Hand". *Kulturelle Truppenbetreuung im Zweiten Weltkrieg 1939–1945. Ein deutsch-englischer Vergleich*, Dissertation Göttingen 2009, pp. 20–29. The Special Department for Troop Support (Sonderreferat Truppenbetreuung) was based on an agreement between the Reich Ministry of Propaganda, the KdF and the OKW of 10.10.1939. See also Chapter IV, subchapter "Simultaneous 'Soldatenbetreuung' for GSB and KdF".

<sup>208</sup> In any case, a remark by Alekhine from one of his interviews in Madrid on 03.09.1941 speaks against this influence of Efim Bogoljubov. When asked about the participants in the Munich tournament, Alekhine said that he thought it was probable that Euwe and Bogoljubov were also playing there, which means he did not know exactly, which speaks against closer contact with Bogoljubov, cf. Lastanao, [Enrique]: Llegó a Madrid el campeón del mundo, in: *El Akázar* 6 (1941), no. 1616, 04.09.1941, p. 3.

Frank in April 1940. Funded by the Generalgouvernement, its aim was to research the *Ostraum* (Eastern regions) and thus derive the claim to this space from the achievements of *Deutschtum* (German identity) there in the past; a claim, therefore, that is to be seen within the framework of the central *Lebensraum* ideology of the National Socialists. In addition, the IDO also conducted – horrible dictu – “up-to-date” research, among other things in the section “Race and Ethnic Research” (“Rasse- und Volkstumforschung”). Here the IDO became, as it were, a supplier for the resettlement policy of the National Socialist state under the leadership of the Reich Commissioner for the Consolidation of German Volkstum (Reichskommissar für die Festigung deutschen Volkstums), Reichsführer SS Heinrich Himmler. As already mentioned, Frank served as president of the IDO, and Wilhelm Coblitz, who had a doctorate in law, as its director.<sup>209</sup>

In the IDO’s first yearbook, one of the IDO’s publications, Coblitz outlined the institute’s goals, programme and organisation in a principle article. In addition to the internal administration, there were eleven sections for scientific work, most of which were in the humanities, but some in the natural sciences. Not yet counted among the sections, but already announced, was “Russian research”, which was to be “expanded as a separate section under the direction of Dr. Alexander Alekhine in the coming months.”<sup>210</sup> Alekhine was thus obviously not to be employed primarily as a chess master, but in a scientific, yet politically relevant function, given the nature of the IDO; otherwise he could have been given the same task as Bogoljubov days before.

IDO Director Coblitz asked Alekhine to arrive early enough so that he could prepare for his new activity. The civil and military authorities, in turn, were asked to assist Alekhine in entering the Generalgouvernement.<sup>211</sup> As early as 20 November 1941, a net monthly salary of 2,050.88 zloty was calculated for Alekhine in the IDO in accordance with the Tariff Regulations for Employees (Tarifordnung für Angestellte). This consisted of a gross taxable portion of 1,458.88 zloty, from which 17 per cent tax was deducted, and a tax-free allowance of 840 zloty.<sup>212</sup> Converted, this was a total of about 1,000 Reichsmark, the amount that IDO leader Coblitz had promised Alekhine. After Generalgouverneur Frank had approved this salary for Alekhine, Coblitz was asked by Franz Keith to “negotiate with the Finance Department in the Government of the Generalgouvernement along these lines.”<sup>213</sup> With the head of the Generalgouverneur’s office, Frank had handed over the causa Alekhine to a very close confidant. Under Keith, Frank’s original private office had developed into a regular state chancellery, which also took on government business. Although formally subordinated to the State Secretariat under Bühler like a Main Department of the government, Keith, thanks to his

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<sup>209</sup> Cf. Lehr, Stefan: Article “Institut für Deutsche Ostarbeit, Krakau”, in: *Online-Lexikon zur Kultur und Geschichte der Deutschen im östlichen Europa*, 2012, <<https://ome-lexikon.uni-oldenburg.de/begriffe/institut-fuer-deutsche-ostarbeit-krakau>> [01.04.2020]. There is no treatise on the IDO at the current state of research; relevant is: Rybicka: *Instytut Niemieckiej Pracy Wschodniej*. Cf. also Schenk: *Krakauer Burg*, pp. 120–122.

<sup>210</sup> Cf. Coblitz, Wilhelm: *Das Institut für Deutsche Ostarbeit*, in: *Jahrbuch/Institut für Deutsche Ostarbeit Krakau* 1 (1941), pp. 7–57, there pp. 13–25, quote p. 15.

<sup>211</sup> Cf. the letter from Wilhelm Coblitz of 8.11.1941 to Alekhine (Grand Hotel, Krakow), BAArch, R 52-IV/61, fol. 87.

<sup>212</sup> Cf. the unspecified document, BAArch, R 52-IV/61, fol. 86.

<sup>213</sup> Cf. Franz Keith’s letter dated 21.11.1941 to Wilhelm Coblitz, BAArch, R 52-IV/61, fol. 86, quote *ibid.* Original quotation: “mit der Hauptabteilung Finanzen in der Regierung des Generalgouvernements in diesem Sinne zu verhandeln.”

direct access to Frank, was sometimes able to provide this access even to heads of the Main Departments, bypassing Bühler.<sup>214</sup>

Alekhine's salary of 1,000 Reichsmark net, which would have been roughly 13,750 Reichsmark gross per year, was not an absolute top salary. However, it was a very high salary that not many earned in the German Reich of those days; at the same time, it was the financial expression of Alekhine's elitist habitus, so to speak, which also enabled him to live in line with this habitus. With this income alone, Alekhine would have been among the top two percent of taxpayers in the German Reich in 1940 in terms of income and wage taxes.<sup>215</sup> In the Generalgouvernement, the purchasing power of two zloty was slightly lower than that of one Reichsmark spent in the Reich, depending on the specific goods, of course; groceries were roughly the same price.<sup>216</sup>

That said, it should be borne in mind that Alekhine was undoubtedly able to generate additional income through fees of various kinds, including from elite tournaments. The publications on the elite tournaments organised by the GSB during the Second World War are conspicuously silent on such fees. However, comparable tournaments a few years earlier indicate that the first prize at such a tournament could fetch 1,000 Reichsmark or more. It was not uncommon for special fees to be paid, especially to players of the absolute top of their field, and first and foremost to the world champion. These were entry fees of approximately the same amount; free board and lodging may be assumed.<sup>217</sup> In addition, special prizes were often offered at elite tournaments, for example, for the most beautiful game; such a prize of 200 Reichsmark was donated by Generalgouverneur Frank for the Munich tournament in September 1941, a prize Alekhine won.<sup>218</sup> The fee an elite chess player like Alekhine received for a simultaneous display can be estimated in the low three-digit range.<sup>219</sup> Finally, one can assume further income for publicity contributions, for example, in the form of a chess column or tournament reports.

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<sup>214</sup> Cf. Präg/Jacobmeyer: *Dienstagebuch*, pp. 17–18.

<sup>215</sup> Cf. Banken, Ralf: *Hitlers Steuerstaat. Die Steuerpolitik im Dritten Reich*, Berlin/Boston 2018, p. 366 and appendix A9.

<sup>216</sup> Cf. Baedeker, Karl (ed.): *Das Generalgouvernement. Reisehandbuch*, Leipzig 1943, p. X. On this otherwise infamous "Baedeker" because it was racist, anti-Semitic and written in the *Herrenmenschen* style, see Müller, Susanne: *Die Welt des Baedeker. Eine Medienkulturgeschichte des Reiseführers 1830–1945*, Frankfurt a. M. 2012, pp. 252–253.

<sup>217</sup> Cf. H. R. [Heinrich Ranneforth]: Sonderhonorare, in: *DSZ* 93 (1938), no. 1, January 1938, pp. 2–4, and id.: Das kleine, große Meisterturnier, in: *DSZ* 92 (1937), no. 8, August 1937, p. 226.

<sup>218</sup> Cf. Hans Frank's letter dated 16.08.1941 to Heinz Eisenlohr, BArch, N 1110/67a, fol. 198, and Skinner/Verhoeven: *Alekhine*, p. 660.

<sup>219</sup> Cf. club chronicle and tournament book, Schachclub Pforzheim 1906 e. V., vol. I, StadtA PF, V41–1, fol. 102; for more details see below in Chapter IV, subchapter "Simultaneous 'Soldatenbetreuung' for GSB and KdF".

## IV. Sand in the gearbox (December 1941–May 1942)

### Conflict with the GSB

While Alekhine's salary was being calculated in Krakow, he had already hit the road again as world chess champion; in Berlin he performed at simultaneous exhibitions on 19 and 27 November. A few days later, the German chess public was informed of these events, and more. A small report ended with the succinct final sentence that Alekhine wanted to move to Krakow at the end of the year.<sup>220</sup> At the beginning of December 1941, every detail seemed to be neatly arranged. It appeared that Alekhine, the world chess champion, had abandoned his two-pronged strategy: on the one hand, leaving the country by means of a world championship match with Capablanca, on the other hand, approaching the National Socialist regime, and had opted for a very well-remunerated position in the Generalgouvernement. December 1941, however, called all of this into question.

Alekhine once again traveled to Spain, apparently at short notice, at the end of November. There, chess friends in Madrid had organized a five-round tournament from 1 to 5 December; it was apparently organised in a hurry, which is why the strongest Spanish players could not take part in the "Torneo Alekhine". Alekhine won every game and thus the tournament.<sup>221</sup> After that, he played only simultaneous exhibitions for several months, starting on 14 December in Málaga and in the following days in Cordoba, Seville, Madrid, San Sebastián and Vitoria. On 21 December, Alekhine returned to Paris in order to play simultaneously against members of the Wehrmacht that same evening, an event which was documented in a propaganda film. In the final days of 1941, Alekhine also played against their comrades during three simultaneous displays in the north of France, in Dieppe, Rouen and Le Havre. Alekhine's next publicly known activity was not until the following year, at another simultaneous exhibition on 3 February 1942 in Pforzheim.<sup>222</sup>

This series of events raises a weighty issue: Wasn't Alekhine supposed to take up his post in Krakow on 1 January 1942? On Christmas Eve 1941, Heinz Eisenlohr made a remarkable note in his files after a telephone call with Karl Mieke, the GSB Treasurer:

2. Dr. Alekhine has behaved reservedly against the chess federation and does not want to play chess any more or he claims high fees. He invokes the fact that he has taken a position in the Generalgouvernement as of 1.1.42 and can no longer devote time to playing chess, as he is very busy.

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<sup>220</sup> Cf. N. N.: Aus der Schachwelt, in: *DSZ* 96 (1941), no. 12, December 1941, p. 179.

<sup>221</sup> Cf. Morán: *Agony*, pp. 121–122, and Skinner/Verhoeven: *Alekhine*, p. 672.

<sup>222</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 675–678 and pp. 783–784; in the case of the simultaneous exhibition in Cordoba it is unclear whether it took place before or after 14.12.1941. Cf. also Winter, Edward: Chess Note "7629. Alekhine in Paris, 1941", in: *www.chesshistory.com*, not dated, <<https://www.chesshistory.com/winter/winter93.html>> [02.02.2020]. The Paris simultaneous exhibition is recorded on film: Agentur Karl Höffkes: Material Nr 68, film "Paris and the Wehrmacht" (Paris 1941), in: *www.archiv-akh.de*, undated, <<http://www.archiv-akh.de/filme/68#1>> [19.12.2020]. The relevant passages are from 10:50:44 to 10:51:59.

3. On 8.2.42 a chess tournament is taking place in Salzburg. The best masters are invited and among them Alekhine. Alekhine invokes his new position and does not want to take part. However, one has the impression that he only wants to shirk the invitation and makes his participation dependent on a high fee or a guarantee of the first prize. If Herr Generalgouverneur desires it and gives him leave, he would take part.<sup>223</sup>

Eisenlohr apparently brought this matter to the attention of Hans Frank at the end of 1941, including the information from the GSB Treasurer Miehe that “Dr. Alekhine had occasionally shown strange behaviour when he was asked to participate in the chess tournament in Salzburg on 8.2.1942”, and immediately informed GSB Managing Director Post. The Generalgouverneur had expressly disapproved of Alekhine’s behaviour and thought “that it might be expedient and appropriate for the Großdeutsche Schachbund to point out any improprieties in Dr. Alekhine’s behaviour and to reject them accordingly.”<sup>224</sup> In his reply at the beginning of January, Post let it be known that he had been left in the dark by Alekhine – obviously contrary to previous practice, since he knew Alekhine’s itinerary for November and December 1941. The world chess champion had agreed to come to Berlin on Christmas Eve with his wife and cats, and had asked that chess events be prepared. However, the Alekhine couple did not occupy the room in the Zentralhotel that the GSB had reserved for this purpose.<sup>225</sup>

How are these developments to be interpreted? It seems impossible that Alekhine really wanted to give up his existence as an elite chess player. In this respect, Eisenlohr and the GSB were certainly right to doubt his argumentation. It is also not plausible to see this as a simple poker game for a higher fee. Rather, several considerations seem to have determined Alekhine’s behaviour: He wanted employment at the IDO, but not at any price. The employment was connected with material security and not least with the prospect of a reputation that in retrospect was highly dubious, but which at that time carried weight in German-dominated Europe: the world chess champion as an academic and section leader of an up-and-coming institution. At the same time, Alekhine obviously saw himself as personally obliged to Generalgouverneur Frank and thus sought favor under his protective wings. A greater degree of existential security was hard to come by on occupied soil under wartime conditions.

This position also promised flexibility for his employment at the IDO. Alekhine was presumably aiming for a role in the IDO that would still leave him enough time and capacity to continue as a

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<sup>223</sup> Cf. Heinz Eisenlohr’s memo dated 24.11.1941, BArch, N 1110/67a, fol. 312. Original quotation: “2. Dr. Aljechin hat sich reserviert gegen den Schachbund verhalten und will nicht mehr Schach spielen oder er macht hohe Honorarforderungen geltend. Er beruft sich darauf, daß er ab 1.1.42 eine Stellung im Generalgouvernement habe und sich um Schachspielen nicht mehr kümmern könne, da er sehr beschäftigt sei. 3. Am 8.2.42 findet ein Schachturnier in Salzburg statt. Es sind die besten Meister eingeladen und darunter Aljechin. Aljechin beruft sich auf die neue Stellung und will nicht teilnehmen. Man hat aber den Eindruck, daß er sich nur drücken will und macht seine Teilnahme von hohem Honorar beziehungsweise Garantierung des 1. Preises abhängig. Falls Herr Generalgouverneur den Wunsch hat und ihn beurlaubt, würde er daran teilnehmen.”

<sup>224</sup> Both quotations in Heinz Eisenlohr’s letter dated 31.12.1941 to Ehrhardt Post, BArch, N 1110/67a, fol. 322. Original quotations: “Dr. Aljechin gelegentlich der an ihn ergangenen Aufforderung zur Teilnahme am Schachturnier in Salzburg am 8.2.1942 ein merkwürdiges Verhalten an den Tag gelegt”; “dass es vielleicht zweckmäßig und angebracht ist, wenn der Großdeutsche Schachbund Herrn Dr. Aljechin auf Ungehörigkeiten in dessen Verhalten entsprechend hinweist und sie entsprechend zurückweist.”

<sup>225</sup> Cf. Ehrhardt Post’s letter dated 05.01.1942 to Heinz Eisenlohr, BArch, N 1110/67a, fol. 331–332.

leading chess master, comparable to Bogoljubov's first employment at the Government of the Generalgouvernement. The GSB's forceful approach to Alekhine indicates that, at least informally, the contract with the IDO must have included an agreement that Alekhine would also be available as a chess master. This was basically in Alekhine's interest since it would have left the way open even for a match for the world championship title against Capablanca and thus, if necessary, for his departure under favourable conditions. However, based on this reason – aside from the fact that it ran completely counter to his elitist habitus – Alekhine refused to let the GSB send him to chess events like a simple employee: He wanted to determine his own further steps with respect to his chess activities, and the personal affiliation with Generalgouverneur Frank promised far more flexibility. Understood in this way, Alekhine's arbitrary behaviour served his security and his prospects of remaining a recognised world chess champion.

By the end of 1941, therefore, there had obviously been a serious disagreement between Alekhine on the one hand, and the GSB and Generalgouverneur Frank on the other. The chess association was already treating Alekhine, whose position apparently included politically relevant and chess-related tasks, like an employee. Alekhine, in turn, ignored the agreed start of the contract and returned to France instead. Presumably he was with his wife for a longer period starting in 21 December, in Paris and probably also near her estate near Dieppe. It was certainly no coincidence that the three simultaneous displays in northern France at the end of 1941 took Alekhine exactly near La Chatellenie chateau.

The above interpretation of why Alekhine did not take up the IDO post in Krakow acquires further plausibility if one considers the concrete circumstances in December 1941 and, in particular, Alekhine's trip to Spain. Previous accounts of the background to this trip overlooked an important piece of information. It is already contained in a contemporary publication to which Alekhine himself contributed<sup>226</sup> and is confirmed in the sources: Alekhine was not only in Spain in December 1941, but also in Portugal, more precisely in Lisbon.<sup>227</sup> Did Alekhine make a last attempt during his trip to Lisbon to set up an agreement on a world championship match with Capablanca<sup>228</sup>, who was in New York, and thus to seek another chance to leave the country under favourable conditions before he completely agreed to cooperate with the National Socialist regime? Was that why he did not want to commit himself to the Salzburg tournament?

The global political events that unfolded in December 1941 lend some plausibility to this speculation. After its naval base at Pearl Harbor had been reduced to rubble by Japanese kamikaze planes on 7 December 1941, the USA officially entered World War II on 11 December. When considering this event as well as the fact that the Wehrmacht had been slowed and weakened in the mire of the Soviet expanses since October, and had experienced a failed attack on Moscow a few days earlier,<sup>229</sup> Alekhine must have seen the writing on the wall: a world championship match in North America was henceforth in all likelihood impossible. Likewise, the window of opportunity for a

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<sup>226</sup> Cf. Alekhine: *Legado*, p. 195, but Morán: *Agony*, p. 121, and Skinner/Verhoeven: *Alekhine*, p. 672.

<sup>227</sup> Cf. Ehrhardt Post's letter dated 05.01.1942 to Heinz Eisenlohr, BArch N 1110/67a, fol. 331–332, there fol. 331.

<sup>228</sup> Cf. Sánchez: *Capablanca*, pp. 471–472.

<sup>229</sup> Cf. the still pertinent article worth reading by Hillgruber, Andreas: Die weltpolitischen Entscheidungen vom 22. Juni 1941 bis 11. Dezember 1941, in: Bracher, Karl Dietrich/Funke, Manfred/Jacobsen, Hans-Adolf (eds.): *Nationalsozialistische Diktatur 1933–1945. Eine Bilanz*, Bonn 1983, pp. 440–464.

match agreement at a venue in South America could now close at any time; Pearl Harbor meant an attack on an ally of Brazil, which was a close partner of the USA, while Argentina remained neutral. At the same time, it had become obvious that the German Reich's continental European dominance was by no means assured.<sup>230</sup> In any case, the fact that the negotiations with Capablanca regarding a world championship match did not end with Pearl Harbor, as claimed, does not speak against this speculation.<sup>231</sup> It is simply unknown when exactly or if ever these negotiations were officially broken off.<sup>232</sup>

In the end, the Salzburg tournament, which Alekhine wanted to turn down, was not held until June 1942. It had already been announced in the press at the beginning of December 1941 as a “European chess tournament”, which was to bring Alekhine and Bogoljubov together with Max Euwe, Paul Keres, Paul Felix Schmidt and Gösta Stoltz in a double-round tournament from 11 to 25 January 1942.<sup>233</sup> The date was postponed several times, sometimes with less than credible reasons.<sup>234</sup> These difficulties may have had to do not only with Alekhine, but also with former world chess champion Euwe, who declined the invitation of GSB Managing Director Post. Euwe did not want to play in the same tournament with Alekhine, whom he apparently resented for his anti-Semitic and personally disparaging articles.<sup>235</sup>

Although described as “European”, the tournament was apparently not explicitly associated with the intended Europaschachbund at this planning stage. At the turn of the year 1941–42, the foundation of the Europaschachbund was not yet ripe for discussion, although preparations were underway. The Party Chancellery (Partei-Kanzlei), the former Staff of the Deputy Führer (Stab des Stellvertreters des Führers), which had just been renamed, showed little official interest in these preparations. However, the fact that Walter Tießler, the liaison man between the Reich Ministry of Propaganda and the Party Chancellery, took charge of the planned Europaschachbund reveals a great deal about its importance.<sup>236</sup> He was also involved when the decision was made at the beginning of March to make Karl Fiehler, the Lord Mayor of Munich and Reich Leader of the Party (NSDAP-

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<sup>230</sup> Cf. also Barrios, Harald: *Die Außenpolitik junger Demokratien in Südamerika. Argentinien, Brasilien, Chile und Uruguay*, Wiesbaden 1999, pp. 50–51 and pp. 86–89, and Skinner/Verhoeven: *Alekhine*, p. 656.

<sup>231</sup> Cf. Skinner/Verhoeven: *Alekhine*, p. 656.

<sup>232</sup> This is the message of the Capablanca biographer Miguel A. Sánchez, e-mail dated 28.03.2020 to the author. According to Sánchez's assessment, Capablanca gave up hope of a world championship match against Alekhine after Pearl Harbor because it was now hardly conceivable to raise the money for the match deposit and make an ocean voyage.

<sup>233</sup> Cf. N. N.: Europäisches Schachturnier in Salzburg, in: *Kleine Volkszeitung* 87 (1941), no. 339, 07.12.1941, p. 8.

<sup>234</sup> According to N. N.: Ein europäisches Schachturnier, in: *Salzburger Volksblatt* 71 (1941), no. 291, 10.12.1941, p. 4, the tournament was now scheduled for the end of January to the beginning of February. In N. N.: Sechsheisterkampf in Salzburg, in: *DSBl* 31 (1942), no. 7/8, 01.04.1942, p. 51, it was claimed that the rooms in Mirabell Palace had not yet been completed and that the tournament would now start on 08.06.1942. According to N. N.: Aus der Schachwelt, in: *DSZ* 97 (1942), no. 1, January 1942, p. 5: “The January date could not be kept because the punctual arrival of some foreigners was in question.” Original quotation: “Der Januartermin konnte nicht innegehalten werden, weil das pünktliche Eintreffen einiger Ausländer fraglich war.” Accordingly, the tournament was to be held from 08.02. to 22.02.1942.

<sup>235</sup> Cf. Münninghoff: Euwe, pp. 242–243.

<sup>236</sup> Cf. Walter Tießler's letter dated 6.12.1941 [presumably to Hermann Witt], BArch, NS 18/945, fol. 6, and Hermann Witt's letter dated 17.01.1942 to Walter Tießler, BArch, NS 18/945, fol. 10. Cf. also Longerich: *Goebbels*, pp. 590–591.

Reichsleiter), the head of the Europaschachbund. The foundation of the association had admittedly still not taken place, allegedly because of a pending “response from Italy”.<sup>237</sup>

### Simultaneous “Soldatenbetreuung” for GSB and KdF

It was an affront to the GSB and above all to its Managing Director Post that Alekhine did not take up his position in Krakow on 1 January 1942. They had visibly built up a relationship of trust in the previous year, but now it was again in doubt whether the GSB could use a second, even more important figurehead in addition to Bogoljubov for its goals. In view of this, Alekhine’s simultaneous display on 3 February 1942 is revealing for it shows that the GSB and the world chess champion quickly found their way back to cooperation. Moreover, in the process, the GSB becomes recognisable as an association that did not act from a position of its own strength, but was under massive pressure to assert itself.

As early as the mid-1930s, the GSB was caught up in a typical problem of the National Socialist state: a competing organisation developed. The underlying cause of this, referred to in research as “NS-Polykratie” (National Socialist polycracy), was essentially the rival competences and claims of the state, the party and the special powers, as well as Hitler, who had total freedom of decision, at least in individual cases.<sup>238</sup> Admittedly, the resulting jealousies and power struggles often were over-represented in the sources and tended to obscure the view of the National Socialist state, which despite everything functioned with “catastrophic efficiency”.<sup>239</sup>

The GSB’s adversary was a subdivision within the Department for Leisure after Work (Amt Feierabend) which had been founded at the end of 1935 as part of the National Socialist community Strength through Joy (Kraft durch Freude, KdF). KdF was a sub-organisation of the DAF, which was itself an affiliated association of the NSDAP. The DAF absorbed trade unions and employers’ associations and aimed at becoming the unifying organisation of the “company community” (“Betriebsgemeinschaft”). Millions of members gave it enormous financial strength, from which KdF also profited. Its various offices offered their members leisure time: state-organised recreation in the group, so to speak, in order to be available to the *Volksgemeinschaft* with every fibre of their being during their working hours. The Department for Leisure after Work was the ideological heart of the KdF offices: here, culture enriched with National Socialist programmes was cultivated, from the preservation of customs to folk theatre and amateur chess. In 1939, for example, more than 60

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<sup>237</sup> Cf. Fiehler’s note dated 11.02.1942 to Walter Tießler, BAArch, NS 18/945, fol. 12, as well as the letter from the Reich Ministry of Propaganda dated 03.03.1942 to Walter Tießler, BAArch, NS 18/945, fol. 17, quote *ibid.* Original quotation: “Antwort Italiens”.

<sup>238</sup> The programmatic article on this question: Hüttenberger, Peter: Nationalsozialistische Polykratie, in: *GG 2* (1976), pp. 417–442. For a current assessment of the concept, cf. Hachtmann, Rüdiger: Polykratie – Ein Schlüssel zur Analyse der NS-Herrschaftsstruktur?, Version: 1.0, in: *Docupedia-Zeitgeschichte*, 01.06.2018, <<http://dx.doi.org/10.14765/zzf.dok.2.1177.v1>> [02.09.2020].

<sup>239</sup> The quotation is taken from an essay title by Rüdiger Hachtmann: Elastisch, dynamisch und von katastrophaler Effizienz – Anmerkungen zur Neuen Staatlichkeit des Nationalsozialismus, in: Seibel, Wolfgang/Reichardt, Sven (eds.): *Der prekäre Staat. Herrschen und Verwalten im Nationalsozialismus*, Frankfurt a. M./New York 2011, pp. 29–73.



million participants attended 224,000 events; it is unknown how many people were organised in the KdF chess community (KdF-Schachgemeinschaft).<sup>240</sup>

The KdF chess community was a serious competitor for the GSB. It aroused the GSB's envy with regard to new members and financial resources. But on the other hand, why shouldn't the KdF chess community simply play to its strength and absorb the GSB? From the end of 1935 onwards, attempts at mutual demarcation alternated with each side continually overstepping its own domain of authority. On the KdF side, the Deutsche Schachgemeinschaft (German Chess Community, DSG) existed in 1937–38 with a vertical organisational structure, to which entire state associations of the GSB switched over to at times. Reich Minister of Propaganda Goebbels, the Führer's Chancellery (Kanzlei des Führers), and the Deputy Führer (Stellvertreter des Führers) were all involved in calming the conflict. For example, a 9-point plan of October 1937 assigned the DSG responsibility for chess to the "Aryan" German population as it were, including not least chess organised in companies (Betriebsschach). The GSB, on the other hand, was responsible for representing German chess to foreign chess federations, club chess and all forms of chess competitions, including individual and team competitions as well as tournament chess. However, the competition between the GSB and the KdF chess community continued into the Second World War.<sup>241</sup>

Against this backdrop, the close connection between the top of the GSB and Generalgouverneur Frank took on additional significance. In December 1941, GSB Managing Director Post explained to Frank his view of the renewed tensions between the GSB and the KdF chess community: Goebbels and the Party Chancellery had already been called in at the beginning of 1941 to delineate the tasks. It had become clear that the GSB would not be dissolved. However, the KdF chess community demanded almost all of the GSB's responsibilities, not least to organise tournament chess ("Turnierrecht"). The GSB had therefore proposed a division that had already been agreed in parallel between Robert Ley, DAF leader and Reich Party Organisation Leader (NSDAP-Reichsorganisationsleiter), and Reich Sports Leader (Reichssportführer) Hans von Tschammer und Osten: the KdF should "retain the advertising and education for chess in the companies and the use of company employees in competitions, while tournament participation should be possible through the affiliation of competition groups of the companies with the Grossdeutscher Schachbund". In addition, the Party Chancellery had apparently suggested that the GSB leader Moraller should head the KdF chess community; this was insofar problematic as Moraller was a Wehrmacht soldier on the

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<sup>240</sup> Cf. Weiß, Hermann: Ideologie der Freizeit im Dritten Reich. Die NS-Gemeinschaft "Kraft durch Freude", in: *AfS* 33 (1993), pp. 289–303, Dahm, Volker: Kulturpolitischer Zentralismus und landschaftlich-lokale Kulturpflege im Dritten Reich, in: Möller, Horst/Wirsching, Andreas/Ziegler, Walter (eds.): *Nationalsozialismus in der Region. Beiträge zur regionalen und lokalen Forschung und zum internationalen Vergleich*, Munich 1996, pp. 123–138, and Hachtmann, Rüdiger:

"Volksgemeinschaftliche Dienstleister"? Anmerkungen zu Selbstverständnis und Funktion der Deutschen Arbeitsfront und der NS-Gemeinschaft "Kraft durch Freude", in: Schmiechen-Ackermann, Detlef (ed.): *"Volksgemeinschaft". Mythos, wirkungsmächtige soziale Verbeißung oder soziale Realität im "Dritten Reich"? Zwischenbilanz einer kontroversen Debatte*, Paderborn/Munich/Vienna et al. 2012, pp. 111–131. The explanations in Woelk: *Hakenkreuz*, p. 90, are imprecise.

<sup>241</sup> Cf. Bruns: *Schachspiel*, pp. 186–189, and Woelk: *Hakenkreuz*, pp. 90–98. On the 9-point programme of October 1937, cf. N. N.: Neuordnung des Schachwesens, in: *DSBl.* 26 (1937), no. 22, 15.11.1937, p. 337 (title page) to p. 338.

Hachtmann's assertion, based on Sopade reports, that the GSB disintegrated due to the pressure of the KdF chess community is inaccurate, cf. Hachtmann, Rüdiger: "Bäuche wegmassieren" and "überflüssiges Fett in unserem Volke beseitigen". Der kommunale Breitensport der NS-Gemeinschaft "Kraft durch Freude", in: Becker, Frank/Schäfer, Ralf (eds.): *Sport und Nationalsozialismus*, Göttingen 2016, pp. 27–65, here pp. 49–50.

Eastern Front at the time. Post referred to the support of the Reich Ministry of Propaganda and the Party Chancellery in this matter and concluded by expressing to the Generalgouverneur Frank the “heartfelt request to help the Grossdeutscher Schachbund by making a corresponding suggestion to the Party Chancellery”.<sup>242</sup>

Post’s lines not only show that the smouldering polycratic tensions were to be eased with a tried and tested means of settling disputes, namely by way of holding offices simultaneously, as was envisaged for Moraller.<sup>243</sup> Admittedly, they had missed a favourable moment for this, for in January 1941 Friedrich Majer had replaced the long-serving Reich Chess Administrator (Reichsschachwart) Friedrich Bethge at the head of the KdF chess community.<sup>244</sup> GSB Managing Director Post blatantly tried to use his good connection to Generalgouverneur Frank to position him against the KdF chess community. In this endeavor, he was not able to push his cause through completely, yet his efforts were not without some success. In January 1942, Heinz Eisenlohr, who in this regard acted as Frank’s right-hand man, apparently brought to light a change of course by the Party Chancellery, according to which it was no longer acceptable for the GSB to remain outside the NSDAP and its affiliated organisations: rather, it might be required to be integrated into them as a whole organisation.<sup>245</sup> But only a few weeks later, Martin Bormann, head of the Party Chancellery, emphasised to GSB Honorary President Ludwig Siebert Ley’s position dating from May 1941, according to which it was not necessary “to integrate the entire organised chess players into the National Socialist community ‘Kraft durch Freude’.” Rather, Bormann asked Siebert to “refrain from pursuing further motions to bind the Grossdeutsche Schachbund more strongly to the party because during the war organisational measures should only be taken in urgently necessary cases.”<sup>246</sup> The tense situation between the GSB and the KdF chess community was thus still not to be finally resolved, and indeed it was not until the end of the war.<sup>247</sup>

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<sup>242</sup> Cf. Ehrhardt Post’s letter dated 01.12.1941 to Hans Frank, BArch, N 1110/67a, fol. 297–298, quotations *ibid.* Original quotations: “die Werbung und Erziehung zum Schach in den Betrieben und der Einsatz der Betriebsangehörigen im Leistungskampf verbleiben, während eine Turnierbeteiligung durch Anschluss von Wettkampfgruppen der Betriebe beim Grossdeutschen Schachbund möglich sein soll”; “herzliche Bitte aus, dem Grossdeutschen Schachbund durch eine entsprechende Anregung bei der Partei-Kanzlei zu helfen.”

<sup>243</sup> Accordingly GSB Treasurer Mieke in conversation with Heinz Eisenlohr: the Reich Ministry of Propaganda and the Party Chancellery had suggested something similar, but the Party Chancellery could not get through to Ley – hence the Reich Ministry of Propaganda expressed its request to Hans Frank that Moraller should also be the head of the KdF chess community, cf. Heinz Eisenlohr’s memo dated 24.11.1941 after a telephone conversation with Karl Mieke, BArch, N 1110/67a, fol. 312. Cf. also Gotto, Bernhard: Polykratische Selbststabilisierung. Mittel- und Unterinstanzen in der NS-Diktatur, in: Hachtmann, Rüdiger/Süß, Winfried (eds.): *Hitlers Kommissare. Sondergewalten in der nationalsozialistischen Diktatur*, Göttingen 2006, pp. 28–50, here pp. 47–50.

<sup>244</sup> Cf. Massow, Hans-Werner von: Friedrich Bethge und das KdF-Schach, in: *Schach-Echo* 10 (1941), vol. 3, 05.03.1941, title page to p. 35, title page there.

<sup>245</sup> Cf. Heinz Eisenlohr’s letter dated 30.01.1942 to Ehrhardt Post, BArch, N 1110/67a, fol. 343.

<sup>246</sup> Cf. Walter Tießler’s note dated 31.03.1942 for Dietrich (Reich Ministry of Propaganda), BArch, NS 18/945, unpag., quotations *ibid.* Original quotations: “die gesamten organisierten Schachspieler in die NS-Gemeinschaft ‘Kraft durch Freude’ einzugliedern”; “von der Verfolgung weiterer Anträge, den Grossdeutschen Schachbund stärker an die Partei zu binden, abzusehen, weil während des Krieges organisatorische Massnahmen nur in dringend notwendigen Fällen vorgenommen werden sollen.”

<sup>247</sup> Cf. Bruns: *Schachspiel*, p. 189.

When Alekhine gave the aforementioned simultaneous exhibition in Pforzheim on 3 February 1942, he was working in an area where the GSB and KdF for once cooperated smoothly, in the so-called “soldier support” (“Soldatenbetreuung”).<sup>248</sup> KdF was one of the most important departments in this domain, along with the Reich Ministry of Propaganda, the Reich Chamber of Culture and the Wehrmacht itself. Chess was just one of the many KdF events in this area.<sup>249</sup>

In August 1940, the GSB and the KdF chess community announced the “Chess Aid for Soldiers” (“Schachhilfe für Soldaten”), which they jointly organised and carried out for all soldiers, whether they were at the front or in military hospitals, whether at home or in occupied territories. The previously mentioned events at the beginning of November 1941, including both Alekhine’s simultaneous display for the benefit of the Soldiers’ Aid Fund and Bogoljubov’s new appointment in the Generalgouvernement, were rooted in the “Chess Aid for Soldiers”. In practice, it was to consist of simultaneous exhibitions, courses, lectures, but also tournaments and competitions. For this, fees and organisational expenses were incurred, and this is where the financial power of the KdF came into play; the KdF paid these amounts from a fund.<sup>250</sup> Of course, this basically only institutionalised an already basic practice since there had been comparable chess events for soldiers before, for example, in February 1940.<sup>251</sup>

Alekhine’s simultaneous display in Pforzheim on 3 February 1942 was one of these events organised by the GSB and the KdF chess community. However, to understand it as an expression of a changed task for Alekhine and thus to use it as an explanation for the fact that the world champion did not take up the agreed position at the IDO in Krakow on 1 January is mistaken – the GSB and IDO were firmly expecting Alekhine to take up his post there at the beginning of the new year. An initiative by GSB Managing Director Post to Hans Frank also had a different objective: Post did point out that “the chess support of the Wehrmacht in the occupied territories was to be used on a large scale”, for which 13 chess masters had been requested, each of whom was to be deployed for three months. Post put forward the argument of the importance of war because the support was “in the interest of the fighting soldiers, who in the winter time feel an ever-increasing longing for occupation with chess”; because the chess sets (boards and pieces) were missing, he asked Generalgouverneur Frank for support.<sup>252</sup>

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<sup>248</sup> Cf. Ehrhardt Post’s letter dated 21.12.1941 to Hans Frank, BAArch, N 1110/67a, fol. 309.

<sup>249</sup> Cf. Vossler, Frank: *Propaganda in die eigene Truppe. Die Truppenbetreuung in der Wehrmacht 1939–1945*, Paderborn/Munich/Vienna et al. 2005, pp. 56–57 and pp. 72–130.

<sup>250</sup> Cf. N. N.: Schachhilfe für Soldaten, in: *DSZ* 95 (1940), no. 8, August 1940, pp. 117–118, the joint statement by Ehrhardt Post (GSB) and Carl-Maria Holzappel (KdF, deputy head of the Department for Leisure after Work) in the article “Schachliche Betreuung der Wehrmacht”, in: *Schach-Echo* 9 (1940), no. 8, 10.08.1940, p. 125, as well as Post, Ehrhardt: Schachhilfe für Soldaten, in: *DSBl.* 29 (1940), no. 15/16, 01.08.1940, pp. 113–114.

<sup>251</sup> Cf. Rogmann, Gustav: Soldaten spielen Schach, in: *Schach-Echo* 9 (1940), no. 4, 06.04.1940, p. 47, as well as Majer, Fritz: Das KdF-Schach im Dienste der Wehrmacht, in: *Schach-Echo* 9 (1940), no. 3, 06.03.1940, pp. 41–42.

<sup>252</sup> Cf. Ehrhardt Post’s letter dated 21.12.1941 to Hans Frank, BAArch, N 1110/67a, fol. 309, quotations *ibid.* Original quotations: “die schachliche Betreuung der Wehrmacht in den besetzten Gebieten in grossem Umfange eingesetzt werden”; “im Interesse der kämpfenden Soldaten, die in der Winterzeit eine immer stärker werdende Sehnsucht nach der Beschäftigung mit Schach empfinden”. Post soon received Hans Frank’s message via Heinz Eisenlohr that “there is probably the possibility of producing chess sets in the Generalgouvernement for the purposes of the Wehrmacht”, Heinz Eisenlohr’s letter dated 31.12.1941 to Ehrhardt Post, BAArch, N 1110/67a, fol. 316. Original quotation: “wohl die Möglichkeit besteht, im Generalgouvernement Schachspiele für Zwecke der Wehrmacht herzustellen”. In this context, there is also the news that Efim Bogoljubow and Hans Frank discussed chess pieces at the Wawel Castle in Krakow on

Alekhine, however, did not circulate in the “occupied territories” meant by Post, namely those in the East. The world chess champion was not only in Pforzheim, but he went on a regular tour of simultaneous exhibitions, which took him through southern Germany and the de facto annexed Alsace between February and May 1942.<sup>253</sup> Such tours were nothing special in themselves, Alekhine had regularly carried them out in many countries since 1921, not least in the German Reich and other European countries.<sup>254</sup> In May 1942 the German chess press reported on Alekhine’s month-long simultaneous tour. He had held a large number of events organised by the GSB and KdF in south-west Germany, which obviously also meant Alsace. Often these were events in hospitals or military hospitals as well as institutions of the Wehrmacht, which Alekhine then held free of charge.<sup>255</sup> The records of the opening event in Pforzheim reinforce the conclusion that there were two types of simultaneous exhibitions on this tour: On 3 February in the evening, Alekhine held an ordinary simultaneous display, as it were, for which he apparently collected a fee of 150 Reichsmark. The following afternoon, Alekhine actually played against soldiers of the Wehrmacht and inmates of the local military hospital. There is no mention of a fee for this event, apparently here he was engaged in “soldier support”.<sup>256</sup>

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13.04.1942. The chess master demonstrated chess pieces he had designed, cf. the entry in Hans Frank’s *Diensttagebuch* of 13.04.1942, IfZ-Archiv, MA 120/7, fol. 293, as well as Präg/Jacobmeyer: *Diensttagebuch*, p. 485.

<sup>253</sup> Cf. N. N.: Eine Entdeckungsfahrt des Weltmeisters, in: *DSZ* 97 (1942), no. 5, May 1942, p. 66, and on the various territories associated with the German Reich Röhr, Werner: System oder organisiertes Chaos? Fragen einer Typologie der deutschen Okkupationsregime im Zweiten Weltkrieg, in: Bohn, Robert (ed.): *Die deutsche Herrschaft in den “germanischen” Ländern 1940–1945*, Stuttgart 1997, pp. 11–45, there pp. 31–45.

<sup>254</sup> Cf. Skinner/Verhoeven: *Alekhine*, pp. 768–784.

<sup>255</sup> Cf. N. N.: Eine Entdeckungsfahrt des Weltmeisters, in: *DSZ* 97 (1942), no. 5, May 1942, p. 66.

<sup>256</sup> Cf. club chronicle and tournament book, Schachclub Pforzheim 1906 e. V., vol. I, StadtA PF, V41–1, fol. 102–103.

## V. Alekhine's employment in the Generalgouvernement (May–June 1942)

### In the crosshairs of the Reichssicherheitshauptamt

There is much to suggest that holding a simultaneous tour in the spring of 1942 was a means for Alekhine to gain time and thus delay the decision whether to commit himself contractually on the side of the National Socialist regime. However, during this simultaneous tour, Alekhine's room for manoeuvre was massively curtailed. First, on 8 March 1942, José Raúl Capablanca died in a New York hospital. Although he had been involved in chess nearly up until his last moments, the Cuban player had been ailing for some time and his health had deteriorated severely. A series of radio broadcasts on chess over the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) ended abruptly on 19 February 1942.<sup>257</sup> In the later published manuscripts of these broadcasts, there is only a somewhat condescending remark about Alekhine's endgame skills, but apart from that, there are no other indications as to whether anything had transpired in 1942 concerning a possible world championship match between Capablanca and Alekhine.<sup>258</sup> This much is clear: by 8 March 1942 at the latest, there was no longer the option for Alekhine of pursuing an alternative way out of his situation by leaving Europe under the favourable circumstances of a match agreement with Capablanca.

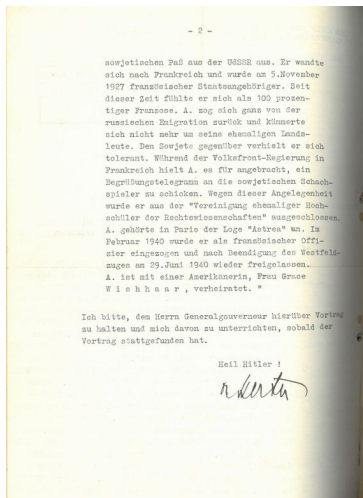
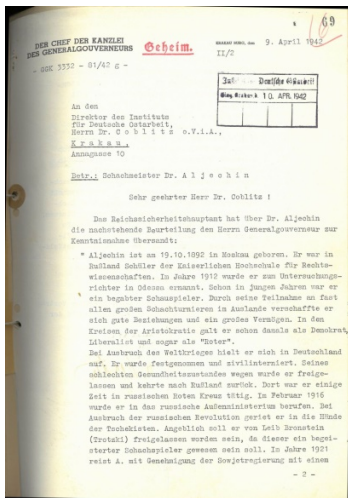
The fact that this competition, which the chess world had been waiting for since 1927 and which would therefore probably have produced a globally recognised world chess champion, would no longer take place clearly reveals a matter that had been glossed over, as it were: due to the war, one unified chess world no longer existed – it had broken up into separate parts. And if Alekhine wanted to preserve the value of his world championship title and his position as the world's best player to the extent that was still possible, he had no other option for the time being than to remain in the continental European area dominated by the National Socialists. In view of this, it is not surprising that Alekhine should agree to a position in the Generalgouvernement less than three months after Capablanca's death. However, in one key respect, which will be discussed later, it was no longer the position that Alekhine was originally planned to assume in Krakow on 1 January 1942.

Apparently, trouble for the world chess champion had been brewing behind the scenes during Alekhine's simultaneous tour in south-western Germany and Alsace. On 10 April 1942, the IDO in Annagasse received a letter that had been sent the day before only a few hundred metres away, namely from Wawel Castle. The fractured stamp imprinted in red on the letterhead with the word "Geheim" ("Top Secret"), which was typically used in such cases between National Socialist institutions, already signalled that this was no ordinary piece of mail. As head of the Generalgouverneur's Chancellery, Franz Keith under the subject "Schachmeister Dr. Aljechin" informed the IDO head Coblitz of information that had previously been gathered in the Reich Security Main Office (Reichssicherheitshauptamt, RSHA) (see next page).

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<sup>257</sup> Cf. Sánchez: *Capablanca*, pp. 472–474.

<sup>258</sup> Cf. Capablanca, José Raúl: *Capablanca's Last Chess Lectures. Foreword by Assiac* [Heinrich Fraenkel], London 1966, p. 58.



**Source document:** RSHA assessment of Alexander Alekhine, contained in: Franz Keith's letter dated 09.04.1942 to Wilhelm Coblitz, BArch, R 52-IV/13b, fol. 69 (recto and verso).

“Dear Dr Coblitz!

The Reichssicherheitshauptamt has sent the following assessment of Dr. Alekhine to the Generalgouverneur for his information:

Alekhine was born in Moscow on 19.10.1892. He was a student at the Imperial Law School in Russia. In 1912 he was appointed examining magistrate in Odessa. At a young age, he was already a talented chess player. Through his participation in almost all the major chess tournaments abroad, he acquired good connections and a large fortune. In the circles of the aristocracy, he was already considered a democrat, liberalist and even a ‘red’. He was in Germany at the outbreak of the World War. He was arrested and placed in civilian internment. Because of his poor health, he was released and returned to Russia. There he was active in the Russian Red Cross for some time. In February 1915, he was appointed to the Russian Foreign Ministry. When the Russian revolution broke out, he fell into the hands of the Chekists. It was said that he was released by Leib Bronstein (Trotsky) because he allegedly was an enthusiastic chess player. In 1921, with the permission of the Soviet government, A. travelled with a

[verso]

Soviet passport from the USSR. He went to France and became a French citizen on 5 November 1927. Since that time he felt 100 per cent French. A. withdrew completely from Russian emigration circles and no longer cared about his former compatriots. He behaved tolerantly towards the Soviets. During the Popular Front government in France, A. saw fit to send a welcoming telegram to the Soviet chess players. Because of this matter he was expelled from the ‘Association of Former Law Students’. A. belonged to the ‘Astrea’ lodge in Paris. In February 1940, he was drafted as a French officer and released on 29 June 1940 after the end of the Western campaign.

A. is married to an American, Ms Grace W i s h h a a r.’

I request that you present this to the Generalgouverneur and let me know as soon as he has been informed.

Heil Hitler!

[signed Dr Keith]”

It is not a question of investigating the individual allegations, which in the light of what has been said so far can already be evaluated as true in many cases, but inaccurate in others. What is decisive is the core message conveyed by the RSHA: Alekhine was portrayed as a politically unreliable actor and opportunist who was not to be trusted. With the exception of Jews, the RSHA's assessment called out the main enemies of nationalsocialism: democrats, liberals, communists, freemasons, and "traitors to the people".

There is no information about the circumstances of this assessment, such as the exact date, who commissioned it and who worked on it. From 1939 onwards, the RSHA, which was to become the most important institution in the organisation of the Holocaust, brought together the central repressive bodies from elements of the SD, which was a part of the SS (a subdivision of the NSDAP), as well as the security police consisting of the Gestapo and the Criminal Investigation Department (Kriminalpolizei). Last but not least, all intelligence from Germany and abroad came together in the RSHA. It must have been quite easy for the institution, which had highly qualified personnel, to gather information about Alekhine.<sup>259</sup> Some of the information mentioned in the assessment was already known to the public.<sup>260</sup> The RSHA had access to other information as a result of the German expansion policy. For example, it was able to obtain information about Alekhine's Masonic activities from the archive of the Grand Orient, which the German occupiers had confiscated in Paris.<sup>261</sup> The RSHA's assessment is, moreover, another strong indication that Grace Alekhine was not of Jewish origin. Since the autumn of 1940, the RSHA leadership staff seconded to France had been responsible for compiling a "register of Jews" ("Judenkartei"), the starting point for the immediate persecution of French Jews, including deportation and mass murder.<sup>262</sup> If Grace Alekhine had been listed there as a Jew, the RSHA would have known this and mentioned it in the assessment.

It is quite possible that it was Alekhine himself who sounded the alarm in the RSHA – in Office VI, "SD abroad" (Amt VI, "SD-Ausland"), where the foreign intelligence service was located<sup>263</sup> – with his trip to the Iberian Peninsula in December 1941. At the end of October 1941, the Government of the Generalgouvernement had already sent a letter to the subordinate departments and affiliated authorities expressly warning against disclosing useful information to the "enemy" in written or telephone communications with foreign offices or abroad. Especially in the case of Spain and Portugal, incautious behaviour would have drawn negative attention from the Abwehr. The

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<sup>259</sup> Cf. Wildt, Michael: *Generation des Unbedingten. Das Führungskorps des Reichssicherheitshauptamtes*, 3rd edition, Hamburg 2015, passim (cit. Wildt: *Generation des Unbedingten*).

<sup>260</sup> Alekhine's own publications contributed to this, cf. Alekhine, Alexander: *Das Schachleben in Sowjet-Rußland*, Berlin 1921, passim, as well as Tartakower, Savielly: Aljechins Schaffen, in: Alekhine: *Meine besten Partien*, pp. 1–8. There was already an entry on Alekhine in the Brockhaus in 1928, cf. N. N.: Article "Alechin, Aljechin, Alexander", in: *Der Grosse Brockhaus. Handbuch des Wissens in zwanzig Bänden, vol. 1: A-Ast*, 15th, fully new edition, Leipzig 1928, p. 259.

<sup>261</sup> Cf. Melzer, Ralf: *Konflikt und Anpassung. Freimaurerei in der Weimarer Republik und im "Dritten Reich"*, Vienna 1999, p. 212, and id.: *Zwischen allen Stühlen*, p. 28.

<sup>262</sup> Cf. Brunner, Bernhard: *Der Frankreich-Komplex. Die nationalsozialistischen Verbrechen in Frankreich und die Justiz der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, Göttingen 2004, pp. 44–76, there especially pp. 46–49.

<sup>263</sup> Cf. Wildt: *Generation des Unbedingten*, pp. 391–410, Paehler, Katrin: *The Third Reich's Intelligence Services. The Career of Walter Schellenberg*, Cambridge 2017, pp. 105–267, and ead.: Ideologie und Illusion. Das Amt VI des Reichssicherheitshauptamtes, in: Wildt, Michael (ed.): *Das Reichssicherheitshauptamt. NS-Terror-Zentrale im Zweiten Weltkrieg*, Leipzig 2019, pp. 97–117.

letter was specifically directed at the behaviour of people in business circles, but it is obvious that Portugal and Spain were firmly in the regime's sights with regard to espionage and sabotage.<sup>264</sup> In Madrid, where Alekhine stayed in December 1941, the RSHA was also represented by agents, in the German embassy, wrapped in the protective cloak of diplomatic immunity.<sup>265</sup> In any case, one can safely assume that the RSHA was aware of Alekhine's trips to the Iberian peninsula.

Regardless of what prompted the intervention from the RSHA, in the following weeks, while Alekhine was still on his simultaneous tour, there were hectic activities behind the scenes in connection with the employment of the world chess champion in the Generalgouvernement. These activities were accelerated by the above-mentioned tournament in Salzburg, which had been postponed several times since January, was organised by the GSB and was now to take place in June 1942. Managing Director Post was in correspondence with Hans Frank about this. He informed him about the foundation of the Europaschachbund which was planned during the tournament and the players already mentioned above, whereby Klaus Junge was to replace Max Euwe. However: "Alekhine, who has made trouble from the start, has recently once again determined special conditions for his participation. He only wishes to take part if you, Generalgouverneur, expressly wish him to do so. I therefore request that you give Alekhine such an instruction." Alekhine had also demanded that he be guaranteed a minimum price of 1,000 Reichsmark and that the GSB pay board and lodging for his wife, who had been accompanying him on his simultaneous tour for some time. In order not to risk any further delays, Post agreed to all of Alekhine's demands and booked a hotel room for the world champion and his wife from 20 May 1942 onwards – in Krakow, however, where Alekhine could soon travel after a stopover in Berlin.<sup>266</sup>

Individuals in the leadership of the Generalgouvernement then increased the pressure against Alekhine's appointment. With apparently good reasons, they feared "imminent danger" because the room reservation by the GSB for the world chess champion on 20 May served nothing less than Alekhine's "assumption of a local official position at the IDO." For this purpose, Alekhine had also applied for entry to the Generalgouvernement. However, as had already happened for other reasons in December 1941, this reservation also lapsed: Alekhine's entry "was not granted for the time being, since Dr. Coblitz, who is currently in Munich, would like to take advantage of the Generalgouverneur's stay there to present the matter again in view of the news that has meanwhile come to light regarding Alekhine." With these words, Franz Keith informed Heinz Eisenlohr, who was now to consult with Coblitz in order to present a unified position towards Alekhine. At the same time, however, according to Keith, Generalgouverneur Frank had spoken out in favour of Alekhine's participation in the Salzburg tournament.<sup>267</sup>

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<sup>264</sup> Cf. the letter dated 24.10.1941 from the Government of the Generalgouvernement, Main Department of Economy (Hauptabteilung Wirtschaft), to the subordinate departments and authorities, including the IDO, BArch, R 52-IV/13 b, fol. 77–78.

<sup>265</sup> Cf. Zur Mühlen: *Fluchtweg*, pp. 72–73.

<sup>266</sup> Cf. Ehrhardt Post's letter dated 12.05.1942 to Hans Frank, BArch, N 1110/67a, fol. 389–390, quote fol. 389. Original quotation: "Aljechin, der von Anfang an Schwierigkeiten machte, stellt auch neuerdings wieder für seine Teilnahme besondere Bedingungen. Er will nur teilnehmen, wenn Sie, Herr Generalgouverneur, das ausdrücklich wünschen sollten. Ich spreche daher die Bitte aus, Aljechin eine solche Anweisung zu geben."

<sup>267</sup> Cf. Franz Keith's letter dated 23.05.1942 to Heinz Eisenlohr, BArch, N 1110/67a, fol. 394, quotes *ibid.* Original quotations: "Antritt einer hiesigen Dienststellung beim Ostinstitut"; "zunächst nicht bewilligt worden, da Dr. Coblitz, der



## Research advisor at the IDO

Clearly, further evidence for an evaluation of Alekhine along the lines of the assessment described above had been gathered by the RSHA. Only in the knowledge of these events and the entire history can the further developments be understood: Hans Frank informed GSB Managing Director Post that Alekhine was now allowed to travel to the Generalgouvernement, “not at the behest of the Generalgouverneur, but rather the IDO in Krakow.”<sup>268</sup> A few days later, on 3 June 1942, Hans Frank and the head of the IDO, Coblitz, met in Wawel Castle and reached the following agreement:

The deployment of the world chess champion Alekhine is out of the question for a variety of highly important reasons. A deployment of Alekhine can only take place in his capacity as chess master. Director Dr. Coblitz is instructed to contact President Ohlenbusch about the establishment of a chess school under the direction of Alekhine-Bogoljubov.<sup>269</sup>

This statement confirms that until this decision, Alekhine had been intended for a position that did not, or not only, relate to chess; a position such what was offered in the contract on 1 January 1942. As early as on the following day, Coblitz informed the Main Department for Internal Affairs (Hauptabteilung Innere Verwaltung) within the Government of the Generalgouvernement that not only Hans Frank, in his capacity as Generalgouverneur, had given Alekhine the order to attend the Salzburg tournament, but also: “Dr. Alekhine will be working at the IDO as a research adviser from 1 June 1942 until further notice.”<sup>270</sup> Alekhine had thus, a few months after the canceled appointment, once again been offered a position in the Generalgouvernement. This time as well, it was located at the IDO, but differed from the previous position in one essential point: There was no longer any mention of Alekhine’s responsibility for “Russian questions” or even the leadership of a “Russia Research Section” at the IDO – the use of Alekhine in a politically relevant position that was sensitive in view of the war situation was thus finally shelved. The phrase “wissenschaftlicher Referent” (“research adviser”) was elastic enough to allow Alekhine to be used solely as a chess player, on the same level as Bogoljubov, who was employed directly by the Government of the Generalgouvernement, though. A few months later, when Alekhine spent time in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, he summed up the essential activities as an employed chess master in a newspaper: He mentioned the chess school, where seminar lectures as well as practical exercises were

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sich zur Zeit in München aufhält, den dortigen Aufenthalt des Generalgouverneurs benutzen möchte, um im Hinblick auf inzwischen über Aljechin weiter eingetroffene Nachrichten die Angelegenheit erneut vorzutragen.”

<sup>268</sup> Heinz Eisenlohr’s letter dated 30.05.1942 to Ehrhardt Post, BArch, N 1110/67a, fol. 397. Original quotation: “und zwar nicht auf Veranlassung des Herrn Generalgouverneurs, sondern auf Veranlassung des Instituts für deutsche Ostarbeit in Krakau.”

<sup>269</sup> Entry in Hans Frank’s Diensttagebuch of 03.06.1942 about a meeting with Wilhelm Coblitz, IfZ-Archiv, MA 120/8, fol. 461. Original quotation: “Eine Verwendung des Schachweltmeisters Aljechin kommt aus verschiedensten hochwichtigen Gründen nicht infrage. Eine Verwendung Aljechins kann lediglich in seiner Eigenschaft als Schachmeister stattfinden. Direktor Dr. Coblitz erhält den Auftrag, sich wegen Errichtung einer Schachschule unter Leitung von Aljechin-Bogoljubow mit Präsident Ohlenbusch in Verbindung zu setzen.” The records in Prag/Jacobmeyer: *Diensttagebuch*, p. 501, only report on the establishment of the chess school to be run by Alekhine and Bogoljubov.

<sup>270</sup> Cf. the letter of Wilhelm Coblitz dated 04.06.1942 to the Government of the Generalgouvernement, Main Department of Internal Affairs, Passport Office (Passstelle), BArch, R 52-IV/61, fol. 81, quote *ibid*. Original quotation: “Herr Dr. Aljechin ist ab 1. Juni 1942 bis auf weiteres am Institut für Deutsche Ostarbeit als wissenschaftlicher Referent tätig.”

to take place. In addition, his task was to get in touch with younger chess talents, which could be translated as “master training.” And finally, he mentioned that in those days, his activity would concentrate on those who otherwise could not participate in the usual chess life, namely soldiers.<sup>271</sup>

What were these strange developments all about? They can be understood as a compromise solution by Generalgouverneur Frank that was acceptable to all players involved. Alekhine was given a position that suited him, even if it did not promise him the prestige of a section leader at the IDO. The RSHA, in turn, was obviously able to live with this; in any case, there was no security risk that might have been perceived if someone who was characterised as a politically unreliable actor was placed at the head of a “Russia Research Section” at the IDO while a war was being waged against the Soviet Union. Above all, however, this solution served the Generalgouverneur himself. For Hans Frank, who at the end of 1941 and the beginning of 1942 still thought himself politically secure, found himself in an extraordinarily precarious situation in the summer of 1942. The underlying reason for this was the overall trend towards a shift in authority from the Generalgouvernement to the Reich authorities, which had already begun before 1942. This was especially true for the institutions that were under the control of Reichsführer SS Himmler. In the course of Reich policy – meaning the policies of security, expansion, settlement and extermination – and war developments, they increasingly took over the competences of regional authorities such as the Gauleiter of the NSDAP. In the dispute over such powers, Heinrich Himmler, Martin Bormann (Party Chancellery) and Hans Heinrich Lammers, head of the Reich Chancellery (Reichskanzlei), also put Generalgouverneur Frank under pressure and collected incriminating material for this purpose; it cannot be ruled out that the RSHA’s assessment of Alekhine must also be seen in light of these developments.

The Generalgouverneur was a straightforward target if incriminating material needed to be found: For example, Karl Lasch, a long-time friend of Hans Frank’s and lover of his wife Brigitte, whom the Generalgouverneur had made governor of the district of Galicia, was arrested in January 1942 and put on trial for offences in the areas of corruption and foreign currency. He died in prison on 1 June 1942, before the end of the trial; presumably he was forced to commit suicide or was shot on Himmler’s orders. What makes the issue even more intriguing is that Hans Frank and those closest to him were all corrupt in a similar way. In May, while Alekhine was agreeing on the new contract with the IDO, Frank’s power struggle escalated: Hitler’s decree of 7 May ruled that in the event of differences between Himmler and Frank, the Führer was to be called in to decide. In addition, Friedrich-Wilhelm Krüger was installed directly in Frank’s government as Higher SS and Police Leader (Höherer SS- und Polizeiführer, HSSPF) and Himmler’s extended arm. The Generalgouverneur further undermined his position in the following months through a love affair that also resumed in May, and through public criticism of “police-state despotism” that was implicitly directed at Hitler and Himmler. Hitler then urged him to resign all party positions, and by early August 1942, Hans Frank was “only” Generalgouverneur and Reich Minister without portfolio. Although also

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<sup>271</sup> Cf. “ad” [author’s abbreviation]: Boj Mistrů Královské Hry [Fighting Master of the Royal Game], in: *Svět* 1 [or 11] (1942), no. 50, 16.12.1942, p. 3 (paragraph “Co Nám Vypráví Dr. Aljechin” [What Dr. Alekhine Tells Us]). Jan Kalendovský is thanked for pointing out this title. In Müller/Pawelczak: *Schachgenie Aljechin*, p. 42, Alekhine is quoted as saying that the Germans had asked nothing of him except to entertain their soldiers by means of chess, but the German soldiers had not wanted to play chess at all.

badly damaged and under pressure in the months and years to come, he held on to these offices until the end of the war; in this case, as in many others, Hitler did not completely abandon an early companion and early member of the NSDAP.<sup>272</sup>

Nevertheless, the loss of his party positions was a heavy burden for Generalgouverneur Frank. In light of this background, it is of interest to consider a diary entry by Reich Minister of Propaganda Goebbels, who was well informed about Frank in general as well as about his chess-related activities: apparently with reference to the planned chess school of Alekhine and Bogoljubov, Goebbels noted on 21 August that letters had been submitted to him according to which Frank ordered “the establishment of a chess seminar under Polish leadership in Krakow. Of course this is very important now, when it is crucial to procure the necessary food for the Reich and to form the necessary organisation. One sometimes gets the impression that Frank is half-crazy.”<sup>273</sup> In fact, Frank’s activities in the field of chess were hardly compatible with the criterion of “critical for the war effort” (“Kriegswichtigkeit”). However, in his theatrical condescension, Goebbels forgot that, as mentioned, his own ministry had supported the GSB’s activities concerning the Europaschachbund and declared them “important to the Reich”.

As chance would have it, the Generalgouverneur also made a private chess-related note at almost the same time. In his personal calendar on 23 August 1942 he wrote: “Visit by Alekhine world chess champion”.<sup>274</sup> This referred to the magnificent country castle “Kressendorf”, where Alekhine was his guest one Sunday. At this private residence, which was surrounded by a twelve-hectare park, Frank occasionally stayed overnight during the week and spent the weekends there. It was situated 24 kilometres west of Krakow and some distance from the small town of Krzeszowice, whose Germanised name gave both the town and the country castle their names. Here Frank hosted receptions, invited special friends and selected guests there and also accommodated some of the guests.<sup>275</sup> It is unknown what the Generalgouverneur and the world chess champion discussed with each other in the country castle. But the very fact of the meeting there shows that there must have been a friendly and intimate relationship between the two. This underlines what had already become apparent in Alekhine’s “strange” behaviour both at the end of 1941 and in May 1942 around his participation in the Salzburg tournament: Alekhine’s closeness to the National Socialist regime

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<sup>272</sup> Cf. Schenk: *Kronjurist*, pp. 254–275, Pohl, Dieter: *Nationalsozialistische Judenverfolgung in Ostgalizien 1941–1944. Organisation und Durchführung eines staatlichen Massenverbrechens*, 2nd edition, Munich 1997, pp. 76–77, and Bajohr, Frank: *Parvenüs und Profiteure. Korruption in der NS-Zeit*, Frankfurt a. M. 2004, pp. 77–81, on HSSPF Krüger also Curilla, Wolfgang: *Der Judenmord in Polen und die deutsche Ordnungspolizei 1939–1945*, Paderborn/Munich/Vienna et al. 2011, p. 53.

<sup>273</sup> Joseph Goebbels’ diary entry of 21.08.1942, published in: Stüber, Angela (ed.): *Die Tagebücher von Joseph Goebbels. Im Auftrag des Instituts für Zeitgeschichte und mit Unterstützung des Staatlichen Archivdienstes Russlands. Hg. von Elke Fröhlich. Part II: Dictations 1941–1945. Vol. 5: July–September 1942*, Munich/New Providence/London et al. 1995, pp. 373–379, there p. 377. Original quotation: “die Errichtung eines Schachseminars unter polnischer Führung in Krakau anordnet. Das ist ja auch jetzt sehr wichtig, wo es darauf ankommt, für das Reich die nötigen Lebensmittel zu beschaffen und die dafür erforderliche Organisation zu bilden. Man hat manchmal den Eindruck, es bei Frank mit einem Halbverrückten zu tun zu haben.”

<sup>274</sup> Hans Frank’s calendar entry dated 23.08.1942, BAArch, N 1110/10, Kalender 1941–1943, vol. 3, fol. 103; underlining in the original. Original quotation: “Aliechin zu Besuch Weltschachmeister.” This entry, also in view of other passages in the private calendar, is very probably to be read retrospectively, i.e. that the visit had already taken place at the time of the entry; cf. Schenk: *Kronjurist*, pp. 271–272. However, even if the note on Alekhine had only been a preliminary note, this would not diminish its significance and meaningfulness.

<sup>275</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 174–175.

primarily consisted of his dependence with Generalgouverneur Frank. Alekhine owed his employment to him personally, Frank offered him protection, and Alekhine thanked him through personal devotion. But this also meant that Frank's precarious situation could have direct consequences for Alekhine.

## Material matters

The IDO had already arranged for payments to be made to Alekhine shortly before the official start of his employment. Apparently, Alekhine and the IDO had resolved to maintain the conditions agreed upon in November 1941. Accordingly, Alekhine was to receive about 1,000 Reichsmark per month, the equivalent of about 2,000 Zloty. These payments were made, though at the beginning they took the form of partial payments and were thus not easily recognisable as a salary. In June and July 1942, Alekhine received three payments, namely one for 400 Reichsmark (800 Zloty) as an "Reisekostenvorschuss" ("advance on travel expenses"), as well as two partial payments of 1,000 Zloty and 200 Zloty, each declared as an "Vorschuss" ("advance");<sup>276</sup> they thus added up to about 2,000 Zloty. In July, August and September, Alekhine received regular pay, also booked as an advance and amounting to 2,000 Zloty per month.<sup>277</sup> Alekhine had thus received payments amounting to four months' salary; sometimes in cash,<sup>278</sup> sometimes the salary was transferred to his account at the Munich branch of Deutsche Bank.<sup>279</sup> Alekhine had a priority blocked account ("Vorzugssperkkonto") at the bank from 1940 to 1948, i.e. beyond his death.<sup>280</sup> Such accounts were quite common during the foreign exchange regime for "foreign exchange foreigners" ("Devisenausländer"); foreigners were defined here as persons with residence outside the German Reich, regardless of their nationality. Within the framework of the strict provisions of foreign

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<sup>276</sup> Cf. the letter of Otto Albrecht (IDO) dated 30.05.1942 to the Bevollmächtigter des Generalgouverneurs (Berlin), BArch, R 52-IV/61, fol. 84, Albrecht's telex dated 30.05.1942 to the Bevollmächtigter des Generalgouverneurs (Berlin), BArch, R 52-IV/61, fol. 83, two entries each reading "Dr. Aljechin Vorschuss" ("Dr. Alekhine advance"), no. 522, 04.06.1942 (fol. 82), as well as no. 599, 08.06.1942 (fol. 85), both in: IDO ledger, June 1942, AUJ, IDO 20, and entry no. 1022, also reading "Dr. Aljechin Vorschuss" ("Dr. Alekhine advance"), 15.07.1942, IDO ledger, July 1942, AUJ, IDO 20, fol. 101.

<sup>277</sup> Cf. the payment order of "Dr. Da/Kä" [Siegmond Dannbeck] dated 31.08.1942 to the Cash Office (Kasse) in the IDO, BArch, R 52-IV/61, fol. 72, the confirmation of 02.09.1942 (N. N.) from the IDO, BArch, R 52-IV/61, fol. 71, the entry "Dr. Aljechin Gehaltvorschuss" ("Dr. Alekhine salary advance"), no. 1487, 31.08.1942, IDO ledger, August 1942, AUJ, IDO 20, fol. 120, the entry "Dr. Aljechin Vorschuss" ("Dr. Alekhine advance"), no. 1553, 10.09.1942, IDO ledger, September 1942, AUJ, IDO 20, fol. 123, and the payment order of "Dr. Ka/Kä" [Siegmond Dannbeck] dated 10.09.1942 to the Cash Office (Kasse) in the IDO, BArch, R 52-IV/61, fol. 70.

<sup>278</sup> Cf. the confirmation of 2.9.1942 (N. N.) from the IDO, BArch, R 52-IV/61, fol. 71.

<sup>279</sup> Cf. the payment order of "Dr. Ka/Kä" [Siegmond Dannbeck] dated 10.09.1942 to the Cash Office (Kasse) in the IDO, BArch, R 52-IV/61, fol. 70.

<sup>280</sup> Cf. account no. 37421, Deutsche Bank Filiale München, Altspargengesetz, Auswanderer- und Vorzugssperkkonten A-Z, HADB, F038/0220/I. Reinhard Frost (Historical Institute of Deutsche Bank AG) is thanked for pointing out this source.

exchange law, a foreign exchange foreigner could use such an account to receive and make payments within the Reich in Reichsmark.<sup>281</sup>

After September 1942, no further payments to Alekhine can be found in the IDO's accounting records. This is not due to gaps in the records since Alekhine was only to be given a position temporarily at the IDO.<sup>282</sup> Franz Keith and Wilhelm Coblitz had agreed that "until Dr. Alekhine was finally transferred to the Main Propaganda Department of the Government of the Generalgouvernement, the IDO would take over the payment of Dr. Alekhine for the months of July, August and September 1942."<sup>283</sup> According to this, Alekhine was to be employed by the Government of the Generalgouvernement as early as October 1942, in the same department in which Bogoljubov was probably also based. The Main Propaganda Department was not responsible for the most important part of propaganda in the Generalgouvernement, the press. Generalgouverneur Frank had decided to outsource this area as much as possible to a separate department, thus pushing back the access of the Reich Ministry of Propaganda in his favour. With further sub-departments, for example, for film, radio and culture, but also through support functions such as the aforementioned support for troops, the Main Propaganda Department was nevertheless an important player in the propaganda of the Generalgouvernement; in October 1942, 127 employees and four civil servants worked in its Krakow headquarters.<sup>284</sup>

Alekhine must have been informed about this planned transfer to the Main Propaganda Department of the Government of the Generalgouvernement, and this aspect was probably part of the contract negotiations. A few days after the agreement of the contract as of 1 June 1942, Alekhine apparently saw a need for further discussion and wanted to visit Wilhelm Ohlenbusch, the head of Hauptabteilung Propaganda, to discuss his future position. Coblitz then clarified with Ohlenbusch that this would not be possible at that time due to Ohlenbusch's time constraints, but rather after the Salzburg tournament. He told Alekhine that Ohlenbusch would then "discuss with you your use within the Main Department."<sup>285</sup>

There is no corresponding record,<sup>286</sup> but it is very likely that Alekhine continued to receive salary payments after September 1942, which were paid directly or indirectly from the coffers of the Government of the Generalgouvernement. What is certain, however, is that after September 1942,

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<sup>281</sup> Information from Reinhard Frost, e-mail dated 07.02.2020 to the author. See also Seeger, Arno: Die Inlandszahlungen des Devisenausländers unter den Beschränkungen des deutschen Devisenrechts, in: *Die Bank* 30 (1937), vol. 22, 02.06.1937, pp. 741–747, and Müller, Carl-Hermann: *Grundriß der Devisenbewirtschaftung*, Berlin/Wien 1938, pp. 164–184.

<sup>282</sup> One can only speculate about the reasons for Alekhine's temporary employment at the IDO. Was this related to the pressure on Generalgouverneur Frank? Did Frank want to let some time pass in this way so as not to provide the RSHA with new starting points for investigations? It is certainly also conceivable that administrative or accounting considerations led to this decision.

<sup>283</sup> Cf. the payment order of "Dr. Da/KH" [Siegfried Dannbeck] dated 31.08.1942 to the Cash Office (Kasse) in the IDO, BAArch, R 52-IV/61, fol. 72, quote *ibid.* Original quotation: "bis zur endgültigen Übernahme von Dr. Aljechin in die Hauptabteilung Propaganda der Regierung des Generalgouvernements das Institut für Deutsche Ostarbeit für die Monate Juli, August und September 1942 die Bezahlung von Dr. Aljechin."

<sup>284</sup> Cf. Jockheck: *Propaganda*, p. 72, pp. 80–82 and p. 348.

<sup>285</sup> Letter from Wilhelm Coblitz dated 05.06.1942 to Alexander Alekhine, BAArch, R 52-IV/61, fol. 80. Original quotation: "wegen Ihrer Verwendung innerhalb der Hauptabteilung mit Ihnen sprechen."

<sup>286</sup> Larger random checks of the archival fonds "Rząd Generalnego Gubernatorstwa" [Administration of the General Government], Archiwum Akt Nowych (ANN), 111, were unsuccessful. With thanks to Marzena Szugiero for the research.

large sums were paid to Alekhine from the budget of the Generalgouverneur's Chancellery, which were booked as invoices for Alekhine's accommodation in the Grand Hotel in Krakow. In several payments,<sup>287</sup> entered on 7 October<sup>288</sup> and 21 October, a total of about 1,175 Złoty accrued. In further payments on 27 November,<sup>289</sup> 30 November<sup>290</sup> and 7 December,<sup>291</sup> a total of around 4,925 Złoty were transferred. "Grand Hotel" was always noted as the recipient without further specification; only for 30 November was there an addition stating that it was an invoice "for Dr. Alekhine's flat".<sup>292</sup> In 1943, the only other payment record that survives is one made to the Grand Hotel and dated 30 March, with the note "visit Alekhine"<sup>293</sup>, which is probably related to a short match between Alekhine and Bogoljubov on 27 and 28 March 1943 in Warsaw;<sup>294</sup> at that time, Alekhine's activities were centred in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia.<sup>295</sup>

It is striking that the hotel bills paid from October to December add up almost exactly to 6,100 Złoty. This would correspond almost precisely to the amount of three more months of Alekhine's salary, so that the question arises whether these were fictitious bookings or payments. However, high hotel bills in Krakow are quite plausible for Alekhine in the second half of 1942, especially in the company of his wife.<sup>296</sup> For just as Alekhine was probably never officially registered as a resident of Krakow, he obviously never had his own flat in Krakow. Rather, Alekhine always resided in the Grand Hotel, where the IDO sent mail to him,<sup>297</sup> and this "residence" is occasionally mentioned in publications.<sup>298</sup> The flair of the Grand Hotel certainly suited Alekhine's elitist habitus. It had acquired an excellent reputation in the decades before. The rooms of the magnificent hotel, which also included a restaurant and a café, were frequented by the Polish elite and "intelligentsia". Rich

<sup>287</sup> Cf. Generalgouverneur's Chancellery, Haushaltsüberwachungsliste für das Rechnungsjahr 1942, Einzelplan 1, vol. 3: 1942, Kapitel 1, Kapitel B 32, BArch, R 52-II/157, fol. 18. The entries, each dated 07.10.1942, amounted to 37.90 Złoty and twice to 265.30 Złoty.

<sup>288</sup> Cf. Generalgouverneur's Chancellery, Haushaltsüberwachungsliste für das Rechnungsjahr 1942, Einzelplan 1, vol. 3: 1942, Kapitel 1, Kapitel B 32, BArch, R 52-II/157, fol. 18.

<sup>289</sup> Cf. Generalgouverneur's Chancellery, Haushaltsüberwachungsliste für das Rechnungsjahr 1942, Einzelplan 1, vol. 3: 1942, Kapitel 1, Kapitel B 32, BArch, R 52-II/157, fol. 19. The amount was 1309.39 Złoty.

<sup>290</sup> Cf. Generalgouverneur's Chancellery, Haushaltsüberwachungsliste für das Rechnungsjahr 1942, Einzelplan 1, vol. 3: 1942, Kapitel 1, Kapitel B 32, BArch, R 52-II/157, fol. 19. The amount was 1648.18 Złoty. This amount corresponds to individual amounts of 303.20 Złoty, 265.30 Złoty and 1079.68 Złoty, each dated 26.11.1942 and crossed out on the same sheet.

<sup>291</sup> Cf. Generalgouverneur's Chancellery, Haushaltsüberwachungsliste für das Rechnungsjahr 1942, Einzelplan 1, vol. 3: 1942, Kapitel 1, Kapitel B 32, BArch, R 52-II/157, fol. 19. The amount was 1967.08 Złoty.

<sup>292</sup> Generalgouverneur's Chancellery, Haushaltsüberwachungsliste für das Rechnungsjahr 1942, Einzelplan 1, vol. 3: 1942, Kapitel 1, Kapitel B 32, BArch, R 52-II/157, fol. 19. Original quotation: "über Wohnung Dr. Aljechin."

<sup>293</sup> Cf. Generalgouverneur's Chancellery, Haushaltsüberwachungsliste für das Rechnungsjahr 1942, Einzelplan 1, vol. 3: 1942, Kapitel 1, Kapitel B 32, BArch, R 52-II/157, fol. 20, quote *ibid.* Original quotation: "Besuch Aljechin"

<sup>294</sup> Cf. Anderberg: *Warschau 1943*, pp. 48–60, there especially pp. 55–60.

<sup>295</sup> See the following Chapter VI.

<sup>296</sup> More on Alekhine's stays in the second half of 1942 in the following chapter. Beyond the tournaments, little is known about the period between June and November 1942; moreover, Alekhine played hardly any simultaneous exhibitions during this time. However, it seems likely that he stayed in Krakow, for example, after the end of the third chess championships of the Generalgouvernement until his departure for Prague, see Skinner/Verhoeven: *Alekhine*, p. 762 and p. 784.

<sup>297</sup> Cf. the letter from Wilhelm Coblitz dated 05.06.1942 to Alekhine, BArch, R 52-IV/61, fol. 80.

<sup>298</sup> Cf. Europaschachbund E. V. (ed.): *Europa-Schach-Rundschau. Vol. 1: Europameisterschaft München 1942. Die besten Partien des Turniers nebst Gründungsbericht des Europaschachbundes. Bearbeitet von A. Brinckmann unter Mitwirkung von Schachweltmeister Dr. Aljechin*, Leipzig 1943, p. 10 (cit. Europaschachbund (ed.): *Europa-Schach-Rundschau*).

aristocrats and landowners met there, as did musicians, painters and other cultural figures. Under German occupation, however, the Grand Hotel remained accessible only to German guests<sup>299</sup> – Alekhine’s stay there thus reveals his position.

Whatever the hotel bills were about, it is clear that from June to at least December 1942, considerable sums were spent on Alekhine from IDO funds or the Government of the General-gouvernement.

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<sup>299</sup> Cf. Homola-Skapska, Irena: *Grand Hotel w Krakowie*, Krakow 2005, there especially pp. 51–52, pp. 144–145 and pp. 175–176.

## VI. In the service of the National Socialist regime (June 1942–October 1943)

### Europaschachbund

Alekhine's employment at the IDO starting on 1 June 1942 clarified his situation. Consequently, the following 14 months were marked by Alekhine's nearly tireless activity as a chess master in the service of the National Socialist regime. In Alekhine's chess calendar, this period includes no less than six tournaments with strong to very strong players, a small match against Bogoljubov and a very large number of simultaneous exhibitions.<sup>300</sup>

The tournament in Salzburg marked the beginning of this intense period. It was held from 9 to 18 June 1942 after the aforementioned postponements. Alekhine won it decisively ahead of Paul Keres,<sup>301</sup> who around the time of 1942–43 was the only one who could somewhat keep up with the world champion.<sup>302</sup> Since Botvinnik was in the Soviet Union, which was under attack from National Socialist Germany, and Capablanca had died, Keres was the only player who would have been considered for a world championship match with Alekhine at that time. Due to wartime expansion, the Estonian found himself first under Soviet occupation in 1940–41 and then under German occupation from June 1941. In fact, Alekhine is said to have offered him world championship matches during the years of German occupation. However, Keres apparently refused because he considered the title worthless in the event of a victory and his world championship ambitions buried forever in the event of a defeat.<sup>303</sup>

In the present context, however, the essential significance of this tournament is not of a sporting but rather a chess-political nature: After preliminary work had been underway since the autumn of the previous year, as described above, the foundation of the Europaschachbund took concrete shape beginning in May 1942. GSB Managing Director Post primarily pursued the foundation of the federation in consultation with Hans Frank, his personal advisor Heinz Eisenlohr, who was to represent the Generalgouverneur at the founding event, the Bavarian Minister President Ludwig Siebert and the Munich Councillor Paul Wolfrum.<sup>304</sup> The Reich Ministry of Propaganda, where Joseph Goebbels agreed to the project in consultation with the Foreign Office, insisted that the

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<sup>300</sup> Cf. Skinner/Verhoeven: *Alekhine*, pp. 679–710 and pp. 784–785.

<sup>301</sup> Cf. the tournament report by H. R. [Heinrich Ranneforth]: Das Salzburger Sechsmästerturnier (9. bis 18.6.), in: *DSZ* 97 (1942), no. 7, July 1942, p. 97 (title page) to p. 98.

<sup>302</sup> Cf. Skinner/Verhoeven: *Alekhine*, pp. 762–763.

<sup>303</sup> Cf. Heuer, Valter: Der Weg von Paul Keres: Eine biographische Skizze, in: *KARL* 21 (2004), vol. 2, pp. 12–17, there pp. 14–15. In retrospect, Keres also emphasised that the difficult circumstances of wartime had affected the quality of his play, cf. Keres, Paul: *Ausgewählte Partien 1931–1958. Zugleich ein Lehrbuch des praktischen Schachs*, Amsterdam 1964, pp. 174–175.

<sup>304</sup> Cf. Ehrhardt Post's letters dated 04.05.1942 to Ludwig Siebert and Paul Wolfrum, BayHStA, StK 5528, unpag., dated 05.05.1942 to Heinz Eisenlohr, BArch, N1110/67a, fol. 388, and dated 12.05.1942 to Hans Frank, BArch, N1110/67a, fol. 389, also Heinz Eisenlohr's letter dated 30.05.1942 to Ehrhardt Post, BArch, N1110/67a, fol. 397, and Paul Wolfrum's letter dated 07.05.1942 to Ludwig Siebert, BayHStA, StK 5528, unpag.



founding of the Europaschachbund should not take place on a large stage, but rather in a low-key working session<sup>305</sup> – presumably to avoid the impression that time and money were being invested in the middle of the war for a cause that was dispensable in light of the times.

On 14 June 1942, the Europaschachbund was launched during the Salzburg tournament, in the presence of various political celebrities such as Gustav Adolf Scheel, the regional governor (Reichsstatthalter) and regional party leader (Gauleiter des Reichsgaues Salzburg). Ehrhardt Post made it the aim of the federation “to lead chess in Europe to a hitherto unknown height through a real joint effort of all countries.”<sup>306</sup> To this end, European championships were envisioned to be held regularly as individual and team competitions, mutual assistance provided for major events and uniform criteria found on how top tournaments should be filled and held. In addition, the founding vision included winning over governments of the participating countries to support chess. Munich was chosen as the seat of the Europaschachbund.

The statutes laid down an organisational and personnel structure from which it was clear that the Europaschachbund basically meant nothing other than that the GSB was now reaching out to the chess of continental Europe: as planned, the chairmanship (Präsidium) was taken over by Karl Fiehler, the Lord Mayor of Munich, and the Italian representative Efremer Ferraris became Vice President. On the managing board (Vorstand), Ehrhardt Post acted as Managing Director, Paul Wolfrum as deputy Managing Director and GSB Treasurer Karl Miede as Federal Treasurer (Bundeskämmerer). The general assembly, which formally elected chairmanship and managing board, consisted of the chess federations that constituted the Europaschachbund. At the time of its foundation, these were the chess federations of Finland, Sweden, Norway, the Netherlands, France, Spain, Italy, Croatia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria and Slovakia, for Germany the GSB as well as an association responsible for the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia (Zentralvereinigung der tschechischen Schachspieler im Protektorat) and a chess federation responsible for the Generalgouvernement.<sup>307</sup>

The Landesverband Generalgouvernement was in fact founded later that year. Generalgouverneur Frank suggested its foundation on 24 October 1942 and promoted to its head his colleague Dr. Friedrich Siebert, the son of the Bavarian Minister President Ludwig Siebert.<sup>308</sup> Siebert, who had a doctorate in law, rose to very high positions in the NSDAP as well as in the SS. He held high-ranking posts in the Bavarian Ministry of Finance, but above all he was head of the Main Department of Internal Affairs in the Government of the Generalgouvernement in 1939–40 and again from 1942 onwards. Friedrich Siebert was personally involved at least in the deliberations on the extermination of Jews in the Generalgouvernement and was an agitator on this issue.<sup>309</sup>

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<sup>305</sup> Cf. Walter Tießler's submission dated 21.05.1942, BArch, NS18/945, fol. 36.

<sup>306</sup> Europaschachbund (ed.): *Europa-Schach-Rundschau*, p. 7. Original quotation: “durch eine wirkliche Gemeinschaftsarbeit aller Länder das Schach in Europa zu einer bisher nicht gekannten Höhe zu führen.”

<sup>307</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 7–10. The Europaschachbund was registered on 19.08.1942 in Munich in the register of associations of the district court (Vereinsregister des Amtsgerichts). Cf. also N. N.: Europaschachbund, in: DSBl. 31 (1942), no. 13/14, 01.07.1942, p. 97 (title page) to p. 99.

<sup>308</sup> Cf. the entry in Hans Frank's *Diensttagebuch* dated 24.10.1942 on a reception at the Wawel Castle, IfZ-Archiv, MA 120/8, fol. 1114–1119, there fol. 1114, as well as Präg/Jacobmeyer: *Diensttagebuch*, pp. 569–570. Cf. also Anderberg: *Warschau 1943*, pp. 52–53.

<sup>309</sup> Cf. Rittenauer, Daniel: *Das Amt des Bayerischen Ministerpräsidenten in der NS-Zeit*, Munich 2018, pp. 363–366.

The Europaschachbund, as already indicated above, did not simply aim at organising chess in Europe. Some time before the start of the tournament in Salzburg, Paul Wolfrum had already corresponded with Ludwig Siebert in order to prevent the discrepancy between the place of foundation and the seat of the federation. In doing so, Wolfrum bluntly reiterated the line of the Reich Ministry of Propaganda regarding the eventual goal of the Europaschachbund. In communication with Ludwig Siebert, Wolfrum spoke of the “future new World Chess Federation, whose leadership can only lie in your hands and whose seat will thus be Munich itself.”<sup>310</sup>

In view of this objective, it is quite significant that Alekhine became one of a total of thirteen staff members of the federal leadership (Bundesleitung) in the Europaschachbund; however, he was probably only added to this group of people after September 1942. The staff members were in charge of their own areas of expertise, and Alekhine became the Commissioner for Master Training (Beauftragter für Meisterschulung). As early as during the Salzburg tournament, Alekhine gave a lecture on “The Position of the Master in Chess”, together with Alfred Brinckmann. Brinckmann, who later served as secretary of the German Chess Federation from 1950 to 1967, was responsible for the Masters’ Committee (Meisterausschuss) in both the GSB and the Europaschachbund; he had gone from a German nationalist to a National Socialist-minded chess functionary without a party card, much like Ehrhardt Post.<sup>311</sup> GSB Managing Director Post was also the driving force behind the appointment of staff in the Europaschachbund. However, during the war even this selection of personnel was subject to political reservations: Ludwig Siebert made it clear to Post that the prospective staff members had to be politically impeccable and that the approval of the Foreign Office was necessary for the planned foreign staff members.<sup>312</sup>

At the beginning of the 21st century, the term “Europe” is firmly associated with democratic states and the process of peaceful European unification. That being said, the discourse on European unification already existed in the first half of the 20th century, in the German Reich and in other European countries. However, this unification was conceived in an undemocratic, *völkisch* and hegemonic way. Accordingly, there was also a National Socialist conception of Europe, which was publicly propagated most significantly after the victorious campaigns of 1940 in the West and North until the military failures of 1942 and 1943 – the Europaschachbund belongs in this discursive context. European unification, on a large scale as well as in the small world of chess, was to take

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<sup>310</sup> Cf. Paul Wolfrum’s letter dated 07.05.1942 to Ludwig Siebert, BayHStA, StK 5528, unpag. Original quotation: “künftigen neuen Welt-Schachbund, dessen Führung nur in Ihren Händen liegen kann und dessen Sitz damit von selbst München sein wird.”

<sup>311</sup> Cf. Europaschachbund (ed.): *Europa-Schach-Rundschau*, p. 8 and p. 10. In N. N.: Eine neue Epoche beginnt mit der Europameisterschaft, in: *DSBl.* 31 (1942), no. 19/20, 01.10.1942, pp. 137–138, there p. 138, in comparison to the aforementioned publication, two more are missing among the staff members besides Alekhine. They were probably only after September 1942 appointed to the staff of the Europaschachbund, at least officially. On Brinckmann cf. also Post, Ehrhardt: Arbeitsausschuß der Meister, in: *DSBl.* 30 (1941), no. 3/4, 01.02.1941, p. 18. The Working Committee of Masters (Arbeitsausschuss der Meister) in the GSB, founded on 20.01.1941, was supposed to support the Federal Chess Warden (Bundesschachwart) and to contribute to making masters out of young chess players, it was supposed to promote the masters and connect them with each other in order to mobilise the best forces for the GSB. Among its members were some of the strongest players in the “Greater German Reich” (“Großdeutsches Reich”), including Carl Ahues, Max Blümich, Carl Carls, Karl Gilg, Georg Kieninger, Josef Lokvenc, Ludwig Rellstab, Kurt Richter and Paul Felix Schmidt. Cf. also Laux: *Schachlehrbuch*, pp. 178–179, Tal: *Bruderküsse*, p. 7 and p. 39, and Lüders, Horst: Brinckmann, Alfred Heinrich, in: Klose, Olaf (ed.): *Schleswig-Holsteinisches Biographisches Lexikon. Vol. 1*, Neumünster 1970, pp. 89–90.

<sup>312</sup> Cf. the letter of SA-Hauptsturmführer Haug [?] of [01.08.1942] to Ehrhardt Post, BayHStA, StK 5540, unpag.

place under German leadership and within the framework of National Socialist racial ideology. It was only on the basis of these premises that the countries and peoples of Europe were to grow together “voluntarily” and “on an equal footing”.

In contrast to the programmatic demand for the conquest of *Lebensraum*, National Socialist concepts of Europe never became state doctrine, but they were certainly elaborated, especially in the direction of a common European economic area. However, making the consequences of these ideas concrete for the individual European countries to be united was avoided, since then immanent contradictions to national ambitions in these countries would inevitably have come to light, not to mention the obvious contradiction to the expansionist, violent and exterminationist policies of National Socialist Germany in many European countries, which were experienced on a daily basis at the time.<sup>313</sup> The above-mentioned objectives and organisation of the Europaschachbund are in line with these concepts. The target was to achieve a hegemonic position for Germany in European chess and, as soon as possible, in world chess as well.

In light of this background, it is by no means a far-fetched consideration that the Europaschachbund could well have offered a perspective in the case of a continued existence of the German sphere of influence to Alekhine, after he had been given a role at the IDO that was limited to chess and did not include politically relevant tasks. Alekhine could have gone from being a chess player whose days as world champion were inevitably drawing to a close in view of the competition, his age at 51 and obvious health problems, to a chess functionary in an important position, and in the medium term perhaps also to the president of a new “World Chess Federation” under German auspices.

For the time being, however, Alekhine was primarily a world chess champion active at the board. From September 1942 onwards, things took off rapidly for him: First of all, Alekhine won the “first European championship in the history of chess” in Munich from 14 to 26 September 1942, again with a clear lead over Paul Keres. Twelve players took part in this tournament, including all the players from the Salzburg tournament except Paul Felix Schmidt. After the first tournament of the Europaschachbund following its foundation, the world champion could thus also adorn himself with the title of “European Champion”.<sup>314</sup> In fact, the new title was used for communication and propaganda purposes during and after the Munich tournament, both by the GSB and by Alekhine – albeit in different and revealing ways. A few weeks after the tournament, the GSB magazine *Deutsche Schachblätter* quoted, with slight abridgements, a statement by Alekhine from an otherwise purely chess-related article in the *Pariser Zeitung* dated at the beginning of October: According to his statement, the European championship title had the advantage over the world championship title of being “immune from any kind of intrigues, since it is always available to the Europaschachbund for its members”;<sup>315</sup> in the discursive environment of those days it was obvious to link the term

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<sup>313</sup> Cf. Grunert, Robert: *Der Europagedanke westeuropäischer faschistischer Bewegungen 1940–1945*, Paderborn/Munich/Vienna et al. 2012, pp. 9–11, and Kletzin, Birgit: *Europa aus Rasse und Raum. Die nationalsozialistische Idee der Neuen Ordnung*, 2nd edition, Münster 2002, pp. 210–217.

<sup>314</sup> Cf. Europaschachbund (ed.): *Europa-Schach-Rundschau*, p. 13, quote *ibid.* Original quotation: “erste Europameisterschaft der Schachgeschichte”. Cf. also Magacs/Negele: *Schmidt*, p. 216.

<sup>315</sup> N. N.: Nachklänge zur Europameisterschaft, in: *DSBl.* 31 (1942), no. 21/22, 01.11.1942, p. 154. Original quotation: “unangreifbar gegen jede Art von Intrigen zu sein, da er jederzeit dem Europaschachbund für seine Mitglieder zur

“intrigues” with anti-Semitic conspiracy myths, such as those which Alekhine himself had spread about the World Chess Federation the previous year.<sup>316</sup> In conclusion, the GSB-magazine contrasted the world and European championship titles and concluded: “Indeed: for us today, the proud dignity of a European champion carries more weight and stability.”<sup>317</sup>

However, this directly contradicted Alekhine’s attempt during the Munich tournament to sharply separate the two titles: “According to the intention of the managing board of the Europaschachbund, the title of European Chess Champion should in no way be confused with the title of world champion in chess, nor should it form a preliminary stage or a substitute for this title,” said Alekhine. The title should “rather be available to the Europaschachbund for its members alone, without connection to the title of world champion.”<sup>318</sup> Alekhine’s statement appeared in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, for which he acted as a reporter, as he did during other tournaments. During the event, he gave round reports by telegramme and shortly after the tournament, he wrote a review.<sup>319</sup> These articles by Alekhine in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* were without ideological-political rhetoric and related solely to chess. The newspaper was still living off its brilliant liberal reputation from earlier times, but had long since been brought into line with the National Socialist regime in those years during the war.<sup>320</sup>

While Alekhine’s statement in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* obviously served his goal of protecting the value of the world championship title and – in the event that he did not win in Munich – to preemptively cement his position of supremacy in the chess world, an article by Alekhine in the *Pariser Zeitung* published on the same day took a completely different turn. It contained the above quotation in a slightly altered form, but mirrored Alekhine’s anti-Semitic propaganda of the previous year: The Europaschachbund was intended to “advantageously replace” the “notorious” World Chess Federation. It symbolised two main objectives: “1. the leading role of the new Europe in the further development of chess and 2. the final end of the – to put it mildly – quite unnecessary interference of America in European chess affairs.” With regard to the first aspect, Alekhine stated that on the one hand, it was a matter of “training strong individual talents”, and on the other hand, chess should be

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Verfügung steht.” The slightly abridged primary quotation can be found in Alekhine, Alexander: Eindrücke von der Europa-Schachmeisterschaft, in: *Pariser Zeitung* 2 (1942), no. 272, 03.10.1942, p. 3.

<sup>316</sup> Cf. Alekhine, Alexander: Arisches und jüdisches Schach, in: *Pariser Zeitung* 1 (1941), no. 68, 23.03.1941, p. 9.

<sup>317</sup> Cf. N. N.: Nachklänge zur Europameisterschaft, in: *DSBz* 31 (1942), no. 21/22, 01.11.1942, p. 154. Original quotation: “In der Tat: mehr Gewicht und Bestand hat für uns heute die stolze Würde eines Europameisters.”

<sup>318</sup> Quotes from the article “Um die Europa-Schachmeisterschaft”, in: *Frankfurter Zeitung* 87 (1942), no. 474–475, 17.09.1942, p. 4. Original quotations: “Der Titel des europäischen Schachmeisters soll nach der Absicht des Vorstandes des Europäischen Schachverbandes in keiner Weise mit dem Titel des Weltmeisters im Schach verwechselt werden, er soll auch keine Vorstufe oder einen Ersatz dieses Titels bilden”; “vielmehr ohne Zusammenhang mit dem Titel des Weltmeisters dem Europäischen Schachverband allein für seine Mitglieder zur Verfügung stehen.” The author’s abbreviation “a” may certainly be resolved as “Alexander Alekhine”, especially in view of the mentioned, partly identical phrases in the *Pariser Zeitung*, cf. Alekhine, Alexander: Der Kampf um einen neuen Schachtitel. Betrachtungen zum Europameisterschafts-Turnier in München, in: *Pariser Zeitung* 2 (1942), no. 256, 17.09.1942, p. 3.

<sup>319</sup> Cf. Alekhine’s further coverage in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*: “Das Schachturnier in Salzburg”, in: *Frankfurter Zeitung* 86 (1942), no. 326, 29.06.1942, p. 2; “Münchener Schachbilanz”, in: *Frankfurter Zeitung* 87 (1942), no. 504–505, 03.10.1942, p. 4; “Das Prager Schachturnier”, in: *Frankfurter Zeitung* 87 (1943), no. 231, 08.05.1943, p. 4; “Das Salzburger Schachturnier”, in: *Frankfurter Zeitung* 87 (1943), no. 325, 29.06.1943, p. 2.

<sup>320</sup> Cf. Söseman, Bernd: Journalismus im Griff der Diktatur. Die “Frankfurter Zeitung” in der nationalsozialistischen Pressepolitik, in: Studt, Christoph (ed.): “Diener des Staates” oder “Widerstand zwischen den Zeilen”? Die Rolle der Presse im “Dritten Reich” (XVIII. Königswinterer Tagung Februar 2005), Berlin 2007, pp. 11–38, there pp. 29–34.

brought to “the broadest strata of the population”. It is easy to see that this reflects Alekhine’s responsibility for master training and his simultaneous exhibitions.

The second aspect, however, abruptly took an anti-Semitic direction: Not only had the Americans hardly organised any tournaments of their own, but instead they had sent only a few of their own champions to European tournaments, where they very often incurred high travel expenses. And accordingly, the USA had only ever sent “a single native American, the old marshal, and three to four Jews of Eastern European descent” to team matches. These Jews were “dollar heroes” who only played for their country for a high “special fee”. In the future, they could “confidently remain across the pond together with all their racial comrades”. The author almost triumphantly justifies this by saying that “our chess elite” has so far been “at least equal to them from a chess technical point of view, but certainly superior to them in terms of chess culture” and is also currently so. “Europe must and will remain a chess leader, which it always has been, one might add.”<sup>321</sup>

It is certainly possible to doubt Alekhine’s authorship of this text. But the partly word-for-word quotation indicates that he did indeed write these texts, at least in part. What remains without doubt, however, is that one and a half years after his notorious series of anti-Semitic articles, Alekhine continued to mix chess with the National Socialist ideology and, also in the way of publications, to serve as a propagandist for the National Socialist regime.

## **In the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia**

Two weeks after the Munich tournament, Alekhine was already back at the board, at the third chess championships of the Generalgouvernement. Starting in Warsaw on 11 October, the tournament made a stop in Lublin and ended in Krakow on 28 October 1942; in the midst of the culminating Holocaust, on these tournament days alone, tens of thousands of Jews – more than 20,000 in Treblinka – were gassed, shot or otherwise murdered in the five National Socialist extermination camps not far from the tournament venues. Alekhine also won this tournament, which had a weaker field than the tournaments in Salzburg and Munich, ahead of Klaus Junge, who had just come of age;

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<sup>321</sup> Cf. Alekhine, Alexander: Der Kampf um einen neuen Schachtitel. Betrachtungen zum Europameisterschafts-Turnier in München, in: *Pariser Zeitung* 2 (1942), 17.09.1942, no. 256, p. 3, all quotations *ibid*. Original quotations including some context: “Dieser Wettkampf ist die erste Tat des im Juni dieses Jahres gegründeten europäischen Schachbundes, der heute schon 16 nationale Einheiten als Mitglieder zählt und dazu berufen ist, die berüchtigte FIDE (Fédération Internationale des Échecs) auf unserem Kontinent vorteilhaft zu ersetzen. [...] 1. Die führende Rolle des neuen Europa in der Weiterentwicklung des Schachs und 2. das endgültige Ende der – milde gesagt – durchaus unnötigen Einmischung Amerikas in die europäischen Schachangelegenheiten. [...] Die Ausbildung starker individueller Talente [...] und, was nicht minder wichtig ist, das Herantragen unserer Kunst an die breitesten Volksschichten. [...] Nicht besser stand es mit Mannschaftskämpfen, die von den USA nie veranstaltet wurden und zu denen sie nach Europa regelmässig nur einen einzigen Stammamerikaner, den alten Marschall, und drei bis vier Juden osteuropäischer Abstammung schickten. Auch diese Dollarhelden, die ohne ein für schachliche Verhältnisse aussergewöhnliches Sonderhonorar sich nicht dazu bewegen liessen, die ‘Ehre’ ihres Landes zu verteidigen, können in Zukunft samt allen ihren Rassegenossen getrost jenseits des grossen Wassers bleiben: denn schachtechnisch war und ist ihnen unsere Schachelite zumindest ebenbürtig, schachkulturell aber bestimmt überlegen. Europa muss und wird schachführend bleiben, was es übrigens immer war.” The “old marshal” refers to Frank Marshall (1877–1944), one of the best chess players of his time.

Alekhine also won the prize for the most beautiful game.<sup>322</sup> At the international tournament in Prague from 5 to 16 December 1942, which once more did not involve the strong line-up from Salzburg and Munich, Alekhine won again – on equal points with Junge, whom he defeated in the final round in a brilliant, dramatic game. Alekhine also won another special prize. In addition to these tournaments, he also gave several simultaneous displays in the Reich and in Prague.<sup>323</sup>

The Prague tournament also marked the beginning of Alekhine’s time in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia.<sup>324</sup> The circumstances of Alekhine’s time in the Protectorate are unclear in many respects. This applies, for example, to the reason for the change of location: it was claimed that Alekhine was ordered to reside there in 1942 and 1943.<sup>325</sup> Alekhine himself is said to have justified leaving Krakow permanently due to fear of guerillas.<sup>326</sup> Without question, the reason attributed to Alekhine can appear plausible. German propaganda certainly exaggerated the Polish resistance, but it undoubtedly existed in the form of the Polish home army “Armia Krajowa” and guerilla activity, also in Krakow and the surrounding area.<sup>327</sup> In the Protectorate, resistance and guerilla activity were significantly weaker than in the Generalgouvernement, where German occupation was also significantly more brutal. However, the Protectorate was not a haven of peace and security, either. At the beginning of June 1942, Himmler’s confidant Reinhard Heydrich, the head of the RSHA and Deputy Reich Protector (stellvertretender Reichsprotector) in Bohemia and Moravia, died there as the result of an assassination attempt. A detachment of Czechoslovak resistance fighters had carried out the order from the Czech government-in-exile in London. The German security authorities reacted to Heydrich’s death with large-scale arrests and executions. The immediate murder of almost the entire male population of the central Bohemian village of Lidice as well as the subsequent levelling of the village represents this repression symbolically. In the second half of the year, the regime acted with

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<sup>322</sup> Cf. the tournament report by H. R. [Heinrich Ranneforth]: Das dritte Meisterturnier im Generalgouvernement, in: *DSZ* 97 (1942), no. 11, November 1942, p. 145 (title page) to p. 146, as well as Skinner/Verhoeven: *Alekhine*, p. 689. Cf. also Piper, Franciszek: *Die Zahl der Opfer von Auschwitz. Aufgrund der Quellen und der Erträge der Forschung 1945 bis 1990*, Oświęcim 1993, pp. 189–197 as well as Tabelle D, Czech, Danuta: *Kalendarium der Ereignisse im Konzentrationslager Auschwitz-Birkenau 1939–1945*, Reinbek bei Hamburg 1989, pp. 318–327, Jäckel, Eberhard/Longerich, Peter/Schoeps, Julius H. (eds.): *Enzyklopädie des Holocaust. Die Verfolgung und Ermordung der europäischen Juden. Vol. IV: Anhänge und Register. Main editor: Israel Gutman*, Munich/Zurich 1995, pp. 1698–1699, Arad, Yitzhak: Article “Treblinka”, in: Jäckel, Eberhard/Longerich, Peter/Schoeps, Julius H. (eds.): *Enzyklopädie des Holocaust. Die Verfolgung und Ermordung der europäischen Juden. Vol. III: Q–Z. Main editor: Israel Gutman*, Munich/Zurich 1995, pp. 1427–1432, there p. 1430, Distel, Barbara: Sobibór, in: Benz, Wolfgang/Distel, Barbara (eds.): *Der Ort des Terrors. Geschichte der nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslager. Editing: Angelika Königseder. Vol. 8: Riga-Kaiserwald, Warschau, Vainara, Kauen (Kaunas), Plaszów, Kulmbhof/Chelmno, Belzec, Sobibór, Treblinka*, Munich 2008, pp. 375–404, there pp. 380–383, and Friedrich: *Generalgouvernement*, pp. 27–38. Warsaw was not far from the Treblinka extermination camp, Lublin not far from Majdanek, Belzec and Sobibor, Krakow not far from Auschwitz-Birkenau; only the sixth extermination camp, Kulmhof (Chelmno), was further away.

<sup>323</sup> Cf. Skinner/Verhoeven: *Alekhine*, pp. 694–697 and p. 784, also N. N.: Kunde aus Prag, in: *DSBl.* 32 (1943), no. 1/2, 01.01.1943, p. 5.

<sup>324</sup> Cf. Skinner/Verhoeven: *Alekhine*, p. 697.

<sup>325</sup> Cf. Linder/Linder: *Alekhine* (2016), p. 267.

<sup>326</sup> Cf. Müller/Pawelczak: *Schachgenie Aljechin*, p. 41.

<sup>327</sup> Cf. Jockheck, Lars: “Banditen” – “Terroristen” – “Agenten” – “Opfer”. Der polnische Widerstand und die Heimatarmee in der Presse-Propaganda des “Generalgouvernements”, in: Chiari, Bernhard (ed.): *Die polnische Heimatarmee. Geschichte und Mythos der Armia Krajowa seit dem Zweiten Weltkrieg*, Munich 2003, pp. 431–471, there especially pp. 450–454; cf. in the same edited volume also Marszalec, Janusz: Leben unter dem Terror der Besatzer und das Randverhalten von Soldaten der Armia Krajowa (pp. 325–354). Cf. also Schenk: *Krakauer Burg*, pp. 135–139.

enormous severity against the remaining resistance groups, while at the same time resistance continued to exist and develop among the local population in the Protectorate.<sup>328</sup>

Nevertheless, the reason attributed to Alekhine for the change of location to Prague should rather be seen as an attempt to use this change retrospectively for the narrative of Alekhine's exoneration. Alekhine had arranged consultation games and simultaneous exhibitions for the immediate aftermath of the Prague tournament and, as mentioned above, held the first few.<sup>329</sup> But then he fell ill with scarlet fever and was taken to the Bulovka Hospital in Prague on 22 December 1942. All simultaneous exhibitions for the period between 22 and 29 December were immediately cancelled.<sup>330</sup> On New Year's Eve, a daily newspaper already announced that Alekhine was out of danger and that, provided there were no complications, his release from the hospital was expected by 20 January. What's more: Alekhine changed his schedule for the near future. Not only did he want to make up for the cancelled simultaneous displays in the period from 25 January to 20 February. He also wanted to stay longer in the Protectorate for recreation and could therefore give many more simultaneous displays than originally agreed.<sup>331</sup>

Like the change of location, an attempt was also made after the end of the war to incorporate Alekhine's recovery from scarlet fever into the narrative that portrayed him as a prisoner of the National Socialists. After the end of the war, Alekhine is reported to have claimed that he was forced to take up chess again immediately after his recovery; otherwise, the Gestapo had threatened to withdraw his cards for food rations.<sup>332</sup> In the light of Alekhine's behaviour and actions before and after, this lacks any plausibility. Especially in those days, Alekhine certainly did not need to be put under pressure, as his regime-friendly behaviour since June 1942 showed.

Alekhine's time in the Protectorate should not be understood as an independent phase of his life, but rather as a longer absence from the Generalgouvernement determined by the situation. This is not contradicted by the fact that he was ultimately only to return to the Generalgouvernement for a few days because as we have seen, no appointment or tournament date was safe from postponement or cancellation during the war. In any case, Alekhine most likely was never registered in Prague or the Protectorate at any time.<sup>333</sup> Consequently, Alekhine was correctly listed in a publication of the Europaschachbund, which could have only appeared in May 1943 at the earliest, with the addition

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<sup>328</sup> Cf. Deák, István: *Kollaboration, Widerstand und Vergeltung im Europa des Zweiten Weltkrieges. Aus dem Ungarischen übersetzt von Andreas Schmidt-Schweizer*, Vienna/Cologne/Weimar 2017, pp. 202–223, Küpper, René: *Karl Hermann Frank (1898–1946). Politische Biographie eines sudetendeutschen Nationalsozialisten*, Munich 2010, pp. 268–286, and Brandes, Detlef: *Die Tschechen unter deutschem Protektorat. Teil II: Besatzungspolitik, Kollaboration und Widerstand im Protektorat Böhmen und Mähren von Heydrichs Tod bis zum Prager Aufstand (1942–1945)*, Munich/Vienna 1975, pp. 61–94.

<sup>329</sup> Cf. Skinner/Verhoeven: *Alekhine*, p. 697, also N. N.: Konsultationsspiel Aljehins, in: *Der Neue Tag* 4 (1942), no. 349, 18.12.1942, p. 4.

<sup>330</sup> Cf. N. N.: Dr. Aljehin schwer erkrankt, in: *Der Neue Tag* 4 (1942), no. 354, 23.12.1942, p. 4.

<sup>331</sup> Cf. N. N.: Aljehin již mimo nebezpečí [Alekhine is out of danger], in: *Moravská Orlice* 80 (1942), no. 309, 31.12.1942, unpag. Jan Kalendovský is thanked for the reference to this title.

<sup>332</sup> Cf. Morán: *Agony*, p. 296.

<sup>333</sup> Alekhine left no pertinent traces in the relevant archives for his time in the Protectorate: no personal files, no references to entry, residence and departure, no medical records of the hospital Bulovka (Fakultní nemocnice na Bulovce), likewise no records in the archives of the Ministry of the Interior (Archiv bezpečnostních složek), according to the information of the National Archives (Národní archiv), Prague, of 11.06.2020 and 15.06.2020 as well as the information of the City Archives of Prague (Archiv hlavního města Prahy) dated 25.05.2020.

“Krakow in the Generalgouvernement, Grand Hotel”.<sup>334</sup> Alekhine’s closeness to the National Socialist regime was still primarily linked to the Generalgouvernement. In contrast, there was no chess promoter at the head of the Protectorate, and in general there is no known special significance of chess within the cultural policy pursued there by the occupiers.<sup>335</sup>

As in his earlier stages in the German sphere of power, Alekhine was also quoted promoting anti-Semitic propaganda in the local daily press in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia: In the newspaper *Svět*, which was published in the Moravian town of Zlín, he said that he had often pointed out the problem of the Jews in chess. He did not deny their success, but claimed they were not skillful and their game was impure. Then Alekhine referred to the thought pattern of Jewish cowardice: Their game is based on defence and on waiting for the enemy to make mistakes. This was followed by the thought pattern of materialism: Jews would first steal material before attacking decisively. According to Alekhine, this way of playing reflected the mentality of the Jews.<sup>336</sup>

### **Tireless final spurt: Protectorate – Generalgouvernement – Reich**

As a chess player, Alekhine achieved a remarkable feat in the weeks immediately after his recovery in January 1943. On a new simultaneous tour, he played almost the entire Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia in at least 29 stops within seven weeks, from 24 January to 13 March 1943.<sup>337</sup> At the end of March 1943, Alekhine returned for a few days to the Generalgouvernement and thus to the area of origin of his employment. There he played a short match over four games against Bogoljubov, which ended in a draw. This match was also played later than planned because of Alekhine’s scarlet fever; originally it was to be played in Lviv in January 1943.<sup>338</sup>

The excursion to the Generalgouvernement was followed by a last stay in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. At the tournament in Prague from 10 to 29 April 1943, which was organised by the Europaschachbund and was only strongly staffed at the top, Alekhine won by a huge margin, again ahead of Paul Keres;<sup>339</sup> at least for this tournament it is certain that Alekhine was accompanied by his wife Grace.<sup>340</sup> Immediately after the Prague tournament, Alekhine embarked on another series of simultaneous exhibitions with a tight schedule. After three events in the Moravian part, he left the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia behind him for good in the first week of May, whereupon twelve more simultaneous displays took him from Berlin straight across the Reich.<sup>341</sup> This tour was

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<sup>334</sup> Europaschachbund (ed.): *Europa-Schach-Rundschau*, p. 10. Original quotation: “Krakau im Generalgouvernement, Grand-Hotel”.

<sup>335</sup> Cf. Mohn, Volker: *NS-Kulturpolitik im Protektorat Böhmen und Mähren. Konzepte, Praktiken, Reaktionen*, Essen 2014.

<sup>336</sup> Cf. “ad” [author’s abbreviation]: Boj Mistrů Královské Hry [Fighting Master of the Royal Game], in: *Svět* 1 [resp. 11] (1942), no. 50, 16.12.1942, p. 3 (paragraph “Co Nám Vypráví Dr. Alekhine” [What Dr. Alekhine Tells Us]).

<sup>337</sup> Cf. Skinner/Verhoeven: *Alekhine*, pp. 784–785.

<sup>338</sup> Cf. Anderberg: *Warschau 1943*, pp. 48–60, there esp. pp. 55–60, and N. N.: Aljechin již mimo nebezpečí [Alekhine is out of danger], in: *Moravská Orlice* 80 (1942), no. 309, 31.12.1942, unpag.

<sup>339</sup> Cf. Skinner/Verhoeven: *Alekhine*, p. 763, and Magacs/Negele: *Schmidt*, p. 218.

<sup>340</sup> Cf. Linder/Linder: *Alekhine (2016)*, p. 24.

<sup>341</sup> Cf. Skinner/Verhoeven: *Alekhine*, p. 785. Skinner/Verhoeven do not give dates for the German stages. These were, in this order: Berlin, Dessau, Magdeburg, Braunschweig, Bremen, Velbert, Aachen, Alsdorf, Cologne, Lüdenscheid, Augsburg, Munich. A simultaneous exhibition in Magdeburg took place on 09.05.1943, cf. “K.” [author’s abbreviation]:



followed by the international tournament in Salzburg, which brought together six strong to very strong chess masters from 9 to 18 June 1943, as in the previous year. Alekhine won this too, equal on points with Paul Keres.<sup>342</sup> A break in July was followed by Alekhine's three further simultaneous exhibitions in Vienna in August 1943. No further activities of Alekhine as a chess master are known for the weeks following, until his trip to Madrid in October.<sup>343</sup>

In the elite tournaments between June 1942 and June 1943 Alekhine proved that he was the best chess player, at least in the German sphere of influence. This is also shown by the retrospectively calculated Chessmetrics ranking, which, despite all the criticism of long-term comparisons, correctly reflects the essential relative trends of those days. In this ranking, Alekhine climbed from fifth place at the beginning of 1941 and third place in July 1942 to first place in November 1942. He remained in first place from April 1943 to May 1944, and until the end of 1945, he occupied one of the first two positions without interruption; from August 1944, he consistently trailed Mikhail Botvinnik. This ranking also reflects the fragmented chess world caused by the Second World War since in almost every one of these months, there was at least one player among the top five players from the German sphere of power, from the Soviet Union and from the American continent.<sup>344</sup> Alekhine showed world-champion form in many games in the tournaments between June 1942 and June 1943, especially against his fiercest rivals. At the same time, however, he also showed lapses of concentration and carelessness, especially in games against weaker players, which may have been caused by his declining health and by his alcoholism, which was once again becoming increasingly noticeable.<sup>345</sup>

## Chess seminar in Krakow?

In connection with the contract agreement of 1 June 1942, Generalgouverneur Frank had set a concrete goal, namely the founding of a chess school in Krakow under the leadership of Alekhine and Bogoljubov. This indeed seemed to take concrete shape in the following months. On 24 October 1942, Frank invited the participants of the third chess championships of the Generalgouvernement not only to the Wawel Castle to distribute the prizes to the winners of the tournament, to praise the GSB for founding the Europaschachbund and to launch the Landesverband Generalgouvernement with President Friedrich Siebert at its head. He also gave the new

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Der Schachweltmeister beim Reihenspiel, in: *Magdeburgische Zeitung* (1943), no. 107, 10.05.1943, unpag. Alekhine probably left the Protectorate around 5/6 May.

<sup>342</sup> Cf. Skinner/Verhoeven: *Alekhine*, p. 763, and Magacs/Negele: *Schmidt*, p. 218. The Salzburg tournament suffered from financing difficulties because Gustav Adolf Scheel, regional governor and regional party leader, provided less money than in the previous year. The Reich Ministry of Propaganda, however, refused a subsidy, cf. the letter from Franz Krottsch (Reich Propaganda Office Salzburg) dated 16.06.1943 to the Reich Ministry of Propaganda (fol. 299) and the reply from Karl Ott dated 16.06.1943 to the Reich Propaganda Office Salzburg (fol. 298), both in: BArch, R 55/890.

<sup>343</sup> Cf. Skinner/Verhoeven: *Alekhine*, p. 710 and pp. 784–785.

<sup>344</sup> Cf. Sonas, Jeff: Monthly Lists: 1940–1950, in: *www.chessmetrics.com*, not dated, <<http://www.chessmetrics.com/cm/CM2/MonthlyLists.asp?Params=194010SSSS03S000000000000111000000000000>> [19.12.2020]. Cf. also Magacs/Negele: *Schmidt*, p. 207, pp. 213–214 and p. 217, and Moul, Charles C./Nye, John V. C.: Did the Soviets Collude? A Statistical Analysis of Championship Chess 1940–64, in: *www.ssrn.com*, 01.05.2006, <<http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.905612>> [23.12.2020], PDF pp. 11–12.

<sup>345</sup> Cf. Skinner/Verhoeven: *Alekhine*, pp. 693–694, p. 700 and p. 707.

GSB President Paul Wolfrum the opportunity to make a statement that is recorded in the Generalgouverneur's official diary as follows:

Thanks to the energetic support of the Generalgouverneur himself, the first chess seminar of the Großdeutscher Schachbund could be founded in Krakow. The first course will be convened in Krakow as early as January of next year. The plan is for outstanding masters of chess, such as the world champion Alekhine, to be part of this seminar. This seminar should one day become an academy that would lift chess out of the coffee house atmosphere and carry the intellectual power to develop the royal game further.<sup>346</sup>

Paul Wolfrum apparently replaced Franz Moraller as GSB President in September 1942; Ludwig Siebert as “honorary president and patron of the GSB” had “transferred the leadership of the GSB to him with the consent of the regional federation chairmen.”<sup>347</sup> However, it is unclear in view of the war situation to what extent he was still able to exercise this office at all. Wolfrum had been a member of the NSDAP since 1932, a member of the SS since 1933 and had risen to the rank of SS-Sturmbannführer. After a dispute in July 1942 with the equally powerful and brutal County Council President (Kreistagspräsident), Christian Weber, Wolfrum was drafted into the Waffen-SS at Weber's instigation in October 1942; he was deployed in Warsaw and Croatia over the course of the war.<sup>348</sup>

As GSB President and also as someone who had belonged to the circle of chess friends around Hans Frank for many years, Wolfrum was certainly well informed about all the internal affairs of the GSB. As Wolfrum's statement at the castle shows, there was no lack of lofty plans. Unlike Alekhine, however, he apparently did not mention Bogoljubov in his speech. Yet Bogoljubov would undoubtedly have been predestined to run a chess school “Alekhine-Bogoljubov”. At the end of 1937, he had already established a chess academy in Triberg and in the Generalgouvernement, he had apparently already founded the German Chess Community of Krakow (Deutsche Schachgemeinde Krakau) in May 1940, where he also worked as a chess instructor.<sup>349</sup>

At the beginning of December 1942, the German-speaking chess public learned about the planned chess seminar. According to the report, however, the first course had already been postponed to February; from the 7th to the 21st of that month, Alekhine and Brinckmann were to lead the course together with other chess masters. The participants were to be the best German

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<sup>346</sup> Entry in Hans Frank's *Diensttagebuch* dated 24.10.1942 on a reception at the Wawel Castle, IFZ-Archiv, MA 120/8, fol. 1114–1119, there fol. 1118. Original quotation: “Dank der tatkräftigen Förderung des Herrn Generalgouverneurs persönlich habe das erste Schachseminar des Großdeutschen Schachbundes in Krakau gegründet werden können. Man werde bereits im Januar nächsten Jahres den ersten Lehrgang nach Krakau einberufen. An diesem Seminar würden hervorragende Meister des Schachspiels wie z. B. der Weltmeister Aljechin wirken. Aus diesem Seminar müsse einmal eine Akademie werden, die das Schachspiel aus der Kaffeehausatmosphäre heraushebe und die geistige Kraft in sich trage, das königliche Spiel weiter zu entwickeln.” Cf. also Präg/Jacobmeyer: *Diensttagebuch*, pp. 569–570, and H. R. [Heinrich Ranneforth]: Das dritte Meisterturnier im Generalgouvernement, in: *DSZ* 97 (1942), no. 11, November 1942, p. 145 (title page) to p. 146, there p. 146.

<sup>347</sup> Paul Wolfrum's letter dated 05.10.1942 to the Lord Mayor of Munich, Department of Human Resources and Propaganda, StadtA München, DE-1992-BUR-1613, unpag. Original quotations: “Ehrenpräsident und Schirmherr des Grossdeutschen Schachbundes”; “mit Zustimmung der Landesverbandsvorsitzenden die Leitung des Grossdeutschen Schachbundes übertragen.” Cf. also the letter dated 26.09.1942 from Paul Giesler, regional party leader (Gaulerter des NSDAP-Gaues München-Oberbayern), to Paul Wolfrum, StadtA München, DE-1992-BUR-1613, unpag.

<sup>348</sup> Cf. Hoser: *Münchner Tagespresse*, part 2, p. 1103, and Martin, Thomas: Aspekte der politischen Biographie eines lokalen NS-Funktionärs. Der Fall Christian Weber, in: *ZBLG* 57 (1994), pp. 435–484, there pp. 463–464.

<sup>349</sup> Cf. Post, Ehrhardt: Schachakademie in Triberg, in: *DSBl.* 26 (1937), no. 23, 01.12.1937, p. 355, and Anderberg: *Warschau 1943*, p. 48.

junior players.<sup>350</sup> A few days before coming down with scarlet fever, Alekhine himself was quoted as saying that the chess school would start in February with an initial two-week seminar. Lectures and practical exercises would be given; the results of the seminar would then also be published in magazines.<sup>351</sup> After Alekhine's hospitalisation, however, it was made public in December that the announced chess seminar in February 1943 would probably not take place, at least not with Alekhine.<sup>352</sup> There are no surviving records of Alekhine's activities at a chess school together with Bogoljubov or in his capacity as "Commissioner for Master Training" in the Europaschachbund. In fact, Alekhine's activities in the German Reich and in occupied territories were limited to journalistic contributions, his chess playing in elite tournaments and simultaneous exhibitions; Alekhine gave lectures at such events, but these certainly did not constitute a "chess school".<sup>353</sup>

Alekhine's official employment as a "research advisor" from 1 June 1942 in the IDO and presumably from October 1942 in the Main Propaganda Department of the Government of the Generalgouvernement was thus, as much is clear, reflected in practice through activities as a chess master and chess publicist — unmistakably also in line with National Socialist propaganda. And while it is not clear until when exactly Alekhine was in a paid contractual relationship with National Socialist institutions in the Generalgouvernement, he undoubtedly worked with the GSB and the KdF chess community until well into 1943. Beyond the elite tournaments organised by the GSB or the Europaschachbund, Alekhine was at the disposal of the GSB and the KdF chess community at numerous simultaneous exhibitions, as well as through lectures; the two organisations in turn took care of the organisation of these events. These events were by no means aimed only generally at Wehrmacht soldiers, but included them and targeted them, which was subsequently highlighted by the media coverage.<sup>354</sup> This cooperation was evident, for example, at the end of June 1943, when Alekhine was invited to simultaneous exhibitions in East Prussia. Alekhine agreed by issuing the revealing remark that he wanted to "leave everything to Post, the deputy head of the GSB."<sup>355</sup>

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<sup>350</sup> Cf. N. N.: Schachseminar in Krakau, in: *DSBl* 31 (1942), no. 23/24, 01.12.1942, p. 170.

<sup>351</sup> Cf. "ad" [author's abbreviation]: Boj Mistrů Královské Hry [Fighting Master of the Royal Game], in: *Svět* 1 [resp. 11] (1942), no. 50, 16.12.1942, p. 3 (paragraph "Co Nám Vypráví Dr. Alekhine" [What Dr. Alekhine Tells Us]).

<sup>352</sup> Cf. N. N.: Aljechin již mimo nebezpečí [Alekhine is out of danger], in: *Moravská Orlice* 80 (1942), no. 309, 31.12.1942, unpag. Cf. also Skinner/Verhoeven: *Alekhine*, pp. 784–785. Presumably the seminar was cancelled, cf. Anderberg: *Warschau 1943*, p. 56.

<sup>353</sup> Cf. N. N.: Weltmeister Aljechin ist begeistert, in: *Neues Wiener Tagblatt* 77 (1943), no. 238, 29.08.1943, p. 5. Alekhine there: "I had the pleasure of giving lectures to the HJ., the seminar organised for the youth, and I was able to observe with great pleasure how strong the interest in chess is, especially among the youth, and how much this pleasure is promoted by the authoritative bodies." Original quotation: "Ich hatte das Vergnügen, Vorträge vor der HJ., dem Seminar, das für die Jugend veranstaltet wurde, zu halten, und ich habe mit großer Freude feststellen können, wie stark das Interesse am Schachspiel gerade bei der Jugend ist und wie sehr diese Freude von den maßgebenden Stellen gefördert wird."

<sup>354</sup> Cf. N. N.: Nachrichten des Großdeutschen Schachbundes E. V., in: *DSZ* 98 (1943), August 1943, p. 69 (title page) to p. 70, there p. 69; according to this, a lecture by Alekhine was transmitted to military hospitals as part of military care ("Wehrmachtsbetreuung"). Cf. also A. B. [Alfred Brinckmann]: Die deutschen Schachmeisterschaften, in: *DSZ* 98 (1943), October 1943, pp. 85–89, there p. 87, N. N.: Weltmeister Dr. Aljechin spielte, in: *Bremer Zeitung* 13 (1943), no. 135, 17.05.1943, unpag., as well as "ds" [author's abbreviation]: Dreißig Schachbretter und ein Weltmeister, in: *Die Neue Woche* 9 (1943), no. 21, 23.05.1943, unpag.

<sup>355</sup> Cf. "th" [author's abbreviation]: Weltmeister Aljechin kommt nach Königsberg, in: *Preußische Zeitung* 11 (1943), no. 178, 30.06.1943, unpag., quotation *ibid.* Original quotation: "alles dem stellvertretenden Bundesleiter Post vom Großdeutschen Schachbund überlassen". Cf. also N. N.: Weltmeister Aljechin kommt, in: *KAZ* 68 (1943), no. 178,

## VII. Final years of life in Spain and Portugal (October 1943–March 1946)

In October 1943, Alekhine permanently left the German Reich and its occupied territories. He settled on the Iberian Peninsula, which would be the last place he lived. In doing so, he went to a region of Europe where his sheer survival was far less in danger than in the German sphere of power. Right at the beginning of the year 1943, it had become clear that the momentum of the Second World War had switched directions on all fronts and that the defeat of the Axis powers was foreseeable in the medium term; this was demonstrated by the nearly complete destruction of the 6th Army of the Wehrmacht in the battle for Stalingrad at the end of January. Such political-military developments over the course of 1943 could not have escaped Alekhine's attention, and presumably they made it clear to him that it was time to leave the German sphere of power. This was not only – and despite all the propaganda – because of the reports in newspapers, but also because his activities as a chess master were more and more directly affected. For in January 1943 as well, the Western Allies had decided in Casablanca to intensify the already ongoing bombing campaign against the Axis powers and to increasingly target the civilian population in order to break their will to hold out. With the exception of the Protectorate, this increased the risk of staying mainly in larger and bigger cities – places Alekhine resided, for example, during his simultaneous exhibitions in May 1943.<sup>356</sup>

At the end of August 1943, it became known to the German-speaking chess public that the world champion was considering participating in a tournament in Madrid. At that time, he was apparently still expecting it to take place in September 1943; originally it was to take place even earlier.<sup>357</sup> The GSB was certainly very well informed about the planned tournament since Francisco Ojeda-Cobos, Vice President of the Spanish Chess Federation and, like Alekhine, an official in the Europaschachbund as the Advisor for the Tournament Events (Referent für das Turnierwesen), was in Berlin in September 1943 for discussions on the matter. At least at that time it was clear that Alekhine was to play in the tournament in Madrid.<sup>358</sup> But Alekhine, like Bogoljubov and other invited chess masters, did not take part in the tournament. Organised by the Spanish Chess Federation

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29.06.1943, unpag. The planned events were postponed and probably never took place, cf. N. N.: Dr. Aljechin kommt später, in: *KAZ* 68 (1943), no. 193, 14.07.1943, unpag.

<sup>356</sup> Cf. Overy, Richard J.: *Der Bombenkrieg. Europa 1939 bis 1945. Aus dem Engl. von Hainer Kober*, Berlin 2014, pp. 433–445, and Blank, Ralf: Kriegsallday und Luftkrieg an der "Heimatfront", in: Echternkamp, Jörg (ed.): *Das Deutsche Reich und der Zweite Weltkrieg. Vol. 9/1: Die deutsche Kriegsgesellschaft 1939 bis 1945. Politisierung, Vernichtung, Überleben*, Munich 2004, pp. 357–461, there pp. 362–370.

<sup>357</sup> Cf. N. N.: Weltmeister Aljechin ist begeistert, in: *Neues Wiener Tagblatt* 77 (1943), no. 238, 29.08.1943, p. 5. According to N. N.: Meisterturnier zu Madrid in Sicht?, in: *SSZ* 43 (1943), no. 8–9, August–September 1943, pp. 155–156, it was assumed that the tournament would start on 04.10.1943; in addition to Alekhine, Keres, Bogoljubov and Brinckmann, Mario Napolitano, Ludwig Rellstab, Jan Foltys and Fritz Sämisch were also to take part, possibly also Gösta Stoltz and the Portuguese player Mouros. According to N. N.: Nachrichten des Großdeutschen Schachbundes E. V., in: *DSZ* 98 (1943), June 1943, p. 53 (title page) to p. 54, there p. 53, the tournament was planned for the period from 17.07. to 03.08.1943.

<sup>358</sup> Cf. N. N.: Nachrichten des Großdeutschen Schachbundes E. V., in: *DSZ* 98 (1943), August 1943, p. 69 (title page) to p. 70, there p. 69, and N. N.: Großes Schachmeistertreffen, in: *Kleine Volkszeitung* 89 (1943) no. 256, 16.09.1943, p. 5.

within the framework of the Europaschachbund, it was finally held from 4 to 22 October 1943, and won by Paul Keres. Alekhine only arrived in Madrid on 15 October, i.e. after the tournament had already begun. GSB Managing Director Ehrhardt Post and Treasurer Karl Mieke were also present on behalf of the Europaschachbund.<sup>359</sup>

Alekhine's late arrival in Madrid is relevant in the present context and should be considered in more detail. According to Ojeda-Cobos' account, Alekhine had asked him for help in leaving the German Reich. After Alekhine had received permission to play in the Madrid tournament, he had again asked Ojeda-Cobos for help in the matter, namely to be able to extend his stay in Spain indefinitely. As in 1941, Alekhine had intended to obtain a passport for his wife and then leave for America.<sup>360</sup> It was speculated that Alekhine was late because Grace had been refused entry to Spain. Or, he may have arrived deliberately late in order to play a simultaneous tour afterwards rather than the tournament itself, which would have allowed him to stay in Spain at least temporarily.<sup>361</sup>

Whether this was actually the case cannot be determined on the basis of the available sources. Ojeda-Cobos' account does not necessarily require Alekhine's delay, and perhaps it had a very mundane reason: as sources from the police prefecture in Paris show, Grace Alekhine, who had just returned to Paris from the German Reich in September 1943, was admitted to the American Hospital of Paris in Neuilly-sur-Seine on 6 October 1943. The hospital, which was under the protection of the Red Cross and contained about 500 staff and patients, released her on 22 October 1943 whereupon she returned to her residence in what was then rue Schoelcher in the Montparnasse district of Paris.<sup>362</sup> It is therefore possible that Alekhine, if he had returned to France with her, initially stayed with his wife, who was already ill, accompanied her during her hospitalisation and only went to Madrid after her health had improved.

It is certain that Alexander Alekhine himself fell ill at the end of 1943, probably in December. He had been admitted to a hospital due to "signs of nervous disorders before he could travel to the competition in Madrid"<sup>363</sup>; in any case, the chronology of the *Salzburger Zeitung* is incorrect. The *Schweizerische Schachzeitung* reported less dramatically that Alekhine had "visited a clinic because of extreme fatigue", but had recovered quickly and had envisaged new plans, including a book on the Madrid chess tournament that had just taken place. As chance would have it, this news item was on the same page as the announcement that Ossip Bernstein had also been residing in Spain since the end of 1943 at the latest. According to the magazine, Bernstein had been in a concentration camp in

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<sup>359</sup> Cf. A. B. [Alfred Brinckmann]: Frisches Leben im Europaschachbund, in: *DSZ* 99 (1944), January 1944, pp. 2–5, there pp. 3–5, and Skinner/Verhoeven: *Alekhine*, p. 711. It is not known when exactly Post and Mieke were there and thus also whether they came into contact with Alekhine.

<sup>360</sup> Cf. Aguilera (ed.): *Alekhine/Gran Ajedrez*, section "Unas palabras del editor" [unpag., 2nd and 3rd page].

<sup>361</sup> Cf. Linder/Linder: *Alekhine* (2016), p. 37, Skinner/Verhoeven: *Alekhine*, p. 711, and Morán: *Agony*, p. 129 and p. 132.

<sup>362</sup> Cf. the notifications of the Direction des Renseignements Generaux et des Jeux, 4th Section, Bureau des Britanniques, of 12.10.1943 (no. 1527), of 22.10.1943 (no. 1538) and of 13.12.1943 (no. 1506), all handed down in: APPP, Série G, 77 W 684–239150, unpag. See also Lagard, Dorothée: *American Hospital of Paris, 1906–2006. L'aventure d'un siècle. A Century of Adventure*, Paris 2006, pp. 44–57, and Glass, Charles: *Americans in Paris. Life and Death under Nazi Occupation. 1940–1944*, London 2009, pp. 310–313.

<sup>363</sup> Cf. N. N.: Ist Aljechin geistesgestört? in: *Salzburger Zeitung* 2 (1943), no. 346, 16.12.1943, p. 5, quotation ibid. Original quotation: "bevor er zum Wettstreit nach Madrid fahren konnte, mit Anzeichen von Geistesgestörtheit in ein Nervenkrankenhaus eingeliefert worden". Something similar can be found in N. N.: Schachweltmeister Aljechin in eine Irrenanstalt eingeliefert, in: *Süddeutsche Tageszeitung, Ausgabe Banat* 70 (25) (1943), no. 285, 12.12.1943, p. 6, also in N. N.: Schachmeister Aljechin erkrankt, in: *Das kleine Volksblatt* [15] (1943), no. 346, 15.12.1943, p. 5.

France for some time, had escaped and been recaptured, but it was certain that he had given a lecture in Barcelona on 27 November 1943.<sup>364</sup>

While remaining pure speculation, it is conceivable that the hospitalisations of Grace Alekhine in Paris and Alexander Alekhine in Madrid were part of a plan to help the world chess champion arrive late in Spain and avoid a return trip. At the latest upon Alekhine's departure for Madrid, Grace and Alexander parted ways<sup>365</sup> — for good, as it turned out. And at the same time, it must be noted that Alekhine should still be understood as having a cooperative relationship with the GSB up to and including the Madrid tournament. After all, he was, albeit belatedly, at a tournament organised by a chess federation allied with the GSB in the Europaschachbund. Alekhine's cooperation with the GSB did not come to an official conclusion, but ended tacitly when Alekhine remained in Spain at the end of 1943.

What remains unclear is how the obviously good relations between Alekhine and Generalgouverneur Frank in 1942 subsequently developed. As described, Frank had been in a precarious position since the middle of 1942, which then deteriorated even further due to the course of the war and the actions of his rivals within the regime.<sup>366</sup> Unlike in previous years, Frank no longer played a role in the German chess newspapers after 1943,<sup>367</sup> and it is unknown whether Alekhine and Frank met again in 1943.<sup>368</sup>

Of course, Alekhine's stay on the Iberian Peninsula did not mean the end of chess-related activities for him or the Generalgouvernement. For Generalgouverneur Frank, chess was still on the agenda. In 1944, when the war situation in Krakow and in the Generalgouvernement deteriorated rapidly and massively to the disadvantage of the Reich, he ignited a veritable fireworks display of cultural events throughout the year and into December.<sup>369</sup> Frank's flight from reality is also shown by his last known involvement with chess in the Generalgouvernement: on 10 February 1944, he held a meeting with GSB Managing Director Ehrhardt Post, Heinz Nowarra, the Managing Director of the Landesverband Generalgouvernement, as well as Wilhelm Ohlenbusch and his subordinate Beetz from the Main Propaganda Department of the Government of the Generalgouvernement and others, which revolved around the "intensification of chess in the Generalgouvernement". Frank

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<sup>364</sup> Cf. N. N.: Meisterturnier in Madrid, in: *SSZ* 44 (1944), no. 2, February 1944, pp. 25–26, quote p. 26. Original quotation: "wegen Uebermüdung eine Klinik aufgesucht". Cf. there (p. 26) also: "B. N." ["*Basler Nachrichten*"]: Dr. O. S. Bernstein in Spain. Alekhine was quick to publish the Madrid tournament book, cf. Alekhine (ed.): *Gran Torneo*.

<sup>365</sup> Cf. N. N.: An Interview with Dr. Alekhine, in: *BCM* 64 (1944), no. 12, December 1944, pp. 274–275.

<sup>366</sup> Cf. Schenk: *Kronjurist*, pp. 275–280.

<sup>367</sup> This applies to the *Deutsche Schachzeitung*, the *Deutsche Schachblätter* and the *Schach-Echo*. Together with the *Schwalbe*, a magazine for chess composition (Problemschach), they were merged into the *Deutsche Schachzeitung* from April 1943 in order to "preserve further forces for the final victory" (original quotation: "weitere Kräfte für den Endsieg einzusparen"), according to Rellstab, Ludwig: An unsere Leser, in: *DSZ* 98 (1943), April 1943, p. 37 (title page).

<sup>368</sup> After August 1942, Alekhine is found neither in the *Diensttagebuch* nor in Frank's private diary in the period relevant here until the end of 1943. During the match between Alekhine and Bogoljubov in Warsaw at the end of March 1943, Frank was not in the Generalgouvernement, cf. Präg/Jacobmeyer: *Diensttagebuch*, fol. 547–766, as well as Frank's diary entries, in: *BArch*, N 1110/10, Kalender 1941–1943, vol. 3, fol. 2–[169].

<sup>369</sup> Cf. Schenk: *Kronjurist*, pp. 348–354.

complained that the Landesverband was practically invisible to the public. Moreover, he wanted to make “Krakow a chess metropolis” because “chess is of immense importance”.<sup>370</sup>

Post blamed the difficulties on Nowarra and the lack of a chess venue. He offered to run the Landesverband himself for a time and to first promote the establishment of chess clubs at the local level. Frank then decided that Dr. Ernst Boepple, his second State Secretary, who was heavily implicated in the Holocaust in the Generalgouvernement and had replaced Friedrich Siebert as president, should relinquish the presidency of the Landesverband due to time overload and that Post should lead it on a provisional basis. Nowarra was to remain managing director, an office was to be set up, public visibility was to be increased, a small newsletter of the association was to be published and the association was to be supplied with playing material. Ohlenbusch was to “particularly promote the efforts of the Landesverband as the state liaison officer.” The Landesverband Generalgouvernement, Frank concluded, could be supported financially by the state, but could not be pushed incessantly. Instead it had to develop on its own.<sup>371</sup>

This detailed account of Frank’s meeting helps us to understand how bizarre this meeting must have seemed in view of the actual war situation. At the time, Hans Frank was in a hopeless situation as Generalgouverneur. On 29 January 1944, Polish resistance fighters attempted to assassinate him, and in March, the Red Army crossed the borders of the Generalgouvernement for the first time. It was also in those days, beginning in 1 August 1944, that fighters of the Armia Krajowa rose up against the occupying forces in the Warsaw Uprising. The defeat of this insurgency by the beginning of October could not conceal the fact that from mid-1944 onwards, the final phase and decline of National Socialist Germany was in full swing, including in the Generalgouvernement.<sup>372</sup>

The de facto end of the Landesverband Generalgouvernement was less clearly indicated by Frank than by Efim Bogoljubov. Bogoljubov had won the Generalgouvernement championships in Radom in January 1943 and February 1944, and had come second in the tournament in Krynica, which was concluded at the beginning of December 1943. Together with Alfred Brinckmann, who was active in the GSB and the Europaschachbund, he gave lectures on various chess topics at the IDO at the end of April 1944. In May, Brinckmann and Bogoljubov still undertook a small chess tour through the Generalgouvernement, the first stop being a chess week organised by the Reich Propaganda Office (Reichspropagandaamt-Außenstelle) in Radom, where competitions, simultaneous exhibitions and

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<sup>370</sup> Cf. the entry in Hans Frank’s Diensttagebuch dated 10.02.1944 on a meeting with Post, Nowarra, Lühnenschloss, Dr. Painsip, Ohlenbusch (head of Main Propaganda Department) and Beetz (division head, Main Propaganda Department), IfZ-Archiv, MA 120/8, fol. 289–290, citation fol. 289. Original quotations: “Intensivierung des Schachspiels im Generalgouvernement”; “aus Krakau eine Schachmetropole”; “das Schachspiel von ungeheurer Wichtigkeit sei”. The evening before, Frank had already met with Post and Beetz for a discussion, cf. the entry in Hans Frank’s service diary dated 09.02.1944, IfZ-Archiv, MA 120/8, fol. 283.

<sup>371</sup> Cf. the entry in Hans Frank’s Diensttagebuch of 10.02.1944 on a meeting with Post, Nowarra, Lühnenschloss, Dr. Painsip, Ohlenbusch and Beetz, IfZ-Archiv, MA 120/8, fol. 289–290, there fol. 290, quotation *ibid.* Original quotation: “als staatlicher Verbindungsmann die Bestrebungen des Landesverbandes besonders fördern.” On Dr. Ernst Boepple, who was also deputy IDO President from January 1942, see Klee: *Personenlexikon*, p. 60.

<sup>372</sup> Cf. Schenk: *Kronjurist*, pp. 331–349, Borodziej, Włodzimierz: *Der Warschauer Aufstand*, in: Chiari, Bernhard (ed.): *Die polnische Heimatarmee. Geschichte und Mythos der Armia Krajowa seit dem Zweiten Weltkrieg*, Munich 2003, pp. 217–253, and Kershaw, Ian: *Das Ende. Kampf in den Untergang. NS-Deutschland 1944/45. Aus dem Englischen von Klaus Binder, Bernd Leineweber and Martin Pfeiffer*, 3rd edition, Munich 2011, p. 156 and summarising pp. 523–541.

lectures were held.<sup>373</sup> Apparently in July 1944, Bogoljubov's employment with the Government of the Generalgouvernement, where he had been employed since November 1941 with the task of "chess in military hospital care", came to an end.<sup>374</sup> On 1 August 1944, Bogoljubov took up residence again in Triberg in the Black Forest.<sup>375</sup> Around this time, the Landesverband Generalgouvernement may not be considered formally extinct, but at least de facto.

Alexander Alekhine was once again able to devote himself entirely to chess during his years in Spain from the end of 1943 to 1945. He had survived his stay in the German sphere of power and now had the prospect of being able to live in relative security in Spain, where, despite all the internal tensions and difficulties,<sup>376</sup> there were at least no immediate hostilities. There, he was apparently also in a good financial position at the beginning; in keeping with his elitist habitus, Alekhine is said to have stayed in the best hotels in Madrid thanks to the income he had earned in the Reich.<sup>377</sup>

At the beginning of January 1944, shortly after his release from the mental hospital, it became known that Alekhine was to hold simultaneous exhibitions throughout the country after receiving "permission" from the Spanish Chess Federation and that he was also to help improve the chess magazine *Ajedrez Español*.<sup>378</sup> These announcements were followed up with action: In the official publication of the Spanish Chess Federation, Alekhine's name was henceforth emblazoned as "asesor técnico" (Technical Advisor) on the title page of the monthly editions under the name of the aforementioned Vice President of the federation, Francisco Ojeda-Cobos, who was the "Director" of the publication.<sup>379</sup> Moreover, in 1944–45 Alekhine accepted the request of the Spanish Chess Federation to take the chess prodigy Arturo Pomar under his wing and teach him.<sup>380</sup>

During this entire time, Alekhine was still the world chess champion. Undoubtedly, the value and significance of this title was increasingly diminished since Spain offered him hardly any opportunity to prove himself as world chess champion; in view of the war situation, however, this would probably not have been possible anywhere in 1944–45. Alekhine played numerous simultaneous exhibitions in Spain, not to mention a few international tournaments, which were admittedly less well attended; Alekhine won most of these tournaments.<sup>381</sup>

The Europaschachbund, in whose territory Alekhine still resided, was unable to offer him prospects either as a chess player or as a chess functionary. Relevant activities of the staff of the

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<sup>373</sup> Cf. Dudziński: *Szachy wojenne*, pp. 200–204, N. N.: Bogoljubow gewann die Meisterschaft des Generalgouvernements (Landesverband des GSB), in: *DSZ* 98 (1943), no. 4, April 1943, p. 42, N. N.: Eine Woche des Schachspiels. Bogoljubow und Brinckmann in Radom, in: *Krakauer Zeitung* 6 (1944), no. 116, 09.05.1944, unpag., and N. N.: Bogoljubow in Neu-Sandez. Simultanpartien gegen 32 Spieler, in: *Krakauer Zeitung* 6 (1944), no. 160, 24.06.1944, unpag.

<sup>374</sup> Cf. the denazification file of Efim Bogoljubov, registration sheet of 27.08.1948, LABW, Staatsarchiv Freiburg, D180/2, no. 210434, unpag.

<sup>375</sup> Cf. the registration card (Meldekarte) "Ewfim Bogoljubow", Stadtverwaltung Triberg, Registry office (Einwohnermeldeamt).

<sup>376</sup> Cf. Bernecker, Walther L.: *Geschichte Spaniens im 20. Jahrhundert*, Munich 2010, pp. 199–219.

<sup>377</sup> Cf. Morán: *Agony*, p. 132.

<sup>378</sup> Cf. N. N.: Weltmeister Aljechin in Spanien, in: *Neues Wiener Tagblatt* 78 (1944), no. 5, 06.01.1944, p. 3.

<sup>379</sup> Cf. e.g. *Ajedrez Español* 3 (1945), no. 29, May 1944, title page.

<sup>380</sup> Cf. Linder/Linder: *Alekhine* (2016), pp. 252–254.

<sup>381</sup> Cf. Skinner/Verhoeven: *Alekhine*, pp. 711–732 and pp. 763–764.



federation are no longer known.<sup>382</sup> The announced second issue of the series *Europa-Schach-Rundschau*, which was to deal with the tournament of Salzburg 1943 — officially not declared as a tournament of the Europaschachbund — was never published.<sup>383</sup> The team championship of its member countries announced by the Europaschachbund for September 1943 and the second tournament of the European championship, which was apparently planned for the period from 10 to 24 September 1944 in Baden near Vienna, also did not take place.<sup>384</sup> A six-member tournament of the GSB announced for September 1944 in Krakow — analogous to the tournaments in Salzburg, which in 1942 had been registered as a tournament of the Europaschachbund — in which Alekhine and Bogoljubov were supposed to take part also failed to materialise.<sup>385</sup>

At the end of 1945, Alekhine moved to Estoril, Portugal, where he played a small match against Francisco Lupi at the beginning of January.<sup>386</sup> In the meantime, Alekhine was in severe financial difficulties and suffered from increasingly poor health. At the same time, as shown previously with his exclusion from the London tournament, he was ostracised by many in the international chess world because of his closeness to the National Socialist regime. When Mikhail Botvinnik officially approached Alekhine with a challenge for a world championship match, it seemed to awaken the world chess champion's spirits once more. But the match never took place. At the end of his rope financially and physically, Alekhine died a lonely death in his hotel room in Estoril on 24 March 1946 by choking on a piece of meat, according to the autopsy.<sup>387</sup> As was to be expected in view of the many myths and uncertainties surrounding Alekhine, his death was not without controversy. Instead of the mundane medical diagnosis, dark forces have been held responsible for his death in the manner of conspiracy theories.<sup>388</sup>

Alekhine was initially buried in Estoril on 16 April 1946. Ten years later, the World Chess Federation and the chess federations of the Soviet Union and France had Alekhine's remains moved to Paris. He was reburied in a grave in the Cimetière Montparnasse which he now shares with his recently deceased wife Grace; his wish to return to her in Paris, expressed at the end of 1944, was only fulfilled posthumously. The ceremony was not only attended by officials of the chess federations but also by some of the world's best chess players and colleagues of Alekhine. Among them were the future world chess champions Tigran Petrosian, Vasily Smyslov and Boris Spassky, as well

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<sup>382</sup> The Advisor on Chess Research (Referent für Schachforschung), Dr. Erich Fabian, planned a publication of the Europaschachbund on the subject of chess research for 1944 that was ultimately never published, cf. Meissenburg, Egbert: Vorwort, in: *Schachwissenschaftliche Forschungen. Beiträge zur Kultur- und Geistesgeschichte des Schachspiels 2* (1973), no. 2, March 1973, pp. 41–42, there p. 41; the special issue was apparently intended to become part of the publication series *Europa-Schach-Rundschau*. Cf. also Europaschachbund (ed.): *Europa-Schach-Rundschau*, p. 10.

<sup>383</sup> Cf. N. N.: Das Turnier in Salzburg, in: *DSZ* 98 (1943), no. 6, August 1943, p. 71.

<sup>384</sup> Cf. N. N.: Europaschachbund e. V., in: *DSBl* 31 (1942), no. 23/24, 01.12.1942, p. 170, and Dudziński: *Szachy wojenne*, p. 204.

<sup>385</sup> Cf. N. N.: Sechshester-Schachkampf in Krakow, in: *Znaimer Tagblatt* 47 (1944), no. 130, 05.06.1944, p. 4, as well as Dudziński: *Szachy wojenne*, p. 204.

<sup>386</sup> Cf. Skinner/Verhoeven: *Alekhine*, pp. 732–733.

<sup>387</sup> Cf. Morán: *Agony*, p. 278, and Winter, Edward: Alekhine's Death, in: *www.chesshistory.com*, 11.07.2020 (last update, first 2003), <<https://www.chesshistory.com/winter/extra/alekhine3.html>> [25.12.2020].

<sup>388</sup> Cf. Kasparov: *Vorkämpfer*, vol. 2, p. 276, Schulz, André: Zum 125sten Geburtstag von Aljechin, in: *de.chessbase.com*, 31.10.2017, <<https://de.chessbase.com/post/zum-125sten-geburtstag-von-aljechin>> [25.12.2020], and Fritsche, Olaf: Das Rätsel um Aljechins Tod — als Krimi Podcast, in: *de.chessbase.com*, 17.11.2020, <<https://de.chessbase.com/post/das-raetsel-um-aljechins-tod-als-krimi-podcast>> [25.12.2020].

as David Bronstein, Efim Geller, Paul Keres, and Ossip Bernstein. A close friend of Alekhine until 1940, a brother in the lodge, Bernstein fled from the National Socialists and in 1945, immediately after the end of the war, became a harsh critic of the world chess champion's closeness to the National Socialist regime.<sup>389</sup> Nevertheless, he chose to pay tribute to Alekhine who had in a sense fatefully accompanied his own life's journey.

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<sup>389</sup> Cf. Morán: *Agony*, p. 58 and pp. 278–279, and N. N.: An Interview with Dr. Alekhine, in: *BCM* 64 (1944), no. 12, December 1944, pp. 274–275.

## Conclusion

When it comes to some historical figures, it is easy to answer the question of whether they were a “Nazi”, a National Socialist. With others, however, the attempt to establish National Socialism, as it were, as the normative-ontological essence of a person is misleading since it would demand translating complex, even contradictory actions and behaviour that changed over time into a simple, binary decision. Alexander Alekhine is such a case. As shown, much more can be learned about him when guided by the question of Alekhine’s closeness to the National Socialist regime. Indeed, what was the nature of this closeness?

On the basis of the preceding text, the answer to this question could be summarized by saying that Alekhine had personal, organisational, ideological, propaganda-related and financial points of contact with the National Socialist regime. In detail, this already goes beyond the previous state of research. But leaving it at that, not much is gained: elements of knowledge about Alekhine in the Second World War often stand unmediated and unrelated to each other. In the present study, on the other hand, these elements of knowledge have been expanded by new source material at decisive points and brought into a sufficiently coherent, understandable sequence. As a result, not only the known and new elements of knowledge about Alekhine become visible, but also the contextual, causal, logical and chronological connections between them.

Those seeking to understand Alekhine’s closeness to the National Socialist regime will find the starting point not so much in the regime as in Alekhine himself, and in a state of contrast. When the German Reich unleashed the Second World War on 1 September 1939, Alekhine was enjoying a highly successful life: he came from a wealthy family, was obviously highly intelligent, excellently educated, he held a doctoral title he presumably had never actually earned, was respected, living in comfortable financial circumstances with a wealthy wife, and since 1937, he held the title once again of world chess champion. Alekhine’s reality corresponded to his elitist habitus, which he had developed since childhood on the basis of his environment, his great ambitions and his achievements, especially in chess. It was this life that was called into question during the Second World War and which Alekhine wanted to preserve to the greatest extent possible.

During the German invasion of France in May 1940, Alekhine was on the opposite side, in the ranks of the French army. He survived the war, but found himself and his wife under German occupation. As in the First World War and in the revolutionary turmoil in Russia, Alekhine faced uncertain times. This also applied to his status as world chess champion, to which Alekhine attached the greatest importance. But this put him under pressure to legitimize his position: if the title of world champion was to retain its value, a world chess champion had to prove himself at the board. In view of the state of the war, however, it was impossible to predict when this would be possible again, especially with the memory of the “Great War”, which had lasted more than four years, still fresh. Alekhine therefore looked for a way out of his predicament. The first avenue he pursued was to arrange a world championship match against José Raúl Capablanca in South America, which the

world chess community had been longing for. This would have enabled Alekhine and his wife to leave Europe via Portugal, and the prize money would have provided a reasonable financial cushion in the event of victory or defeat; such a cushion was probably necessary, since neither he nor his wife could be expected to easily access and transfer their existing assets. The conclusions of these negotiations were now a genuine concern for Alekhine, unlike in 1939, for example, but they did not lead to success. Both parties wanted the match, but not at any price: due to the repeated failure to conclude match negotiations since 1927, well-known predetermined breaking points appeared, especially financially. On the one hand, Capablanca had correctly assessed Alekhine's motives for leaving the country and was suspicious that Alekhine would cancel the match at short notice after successfully leaving the country. On the other hand, Alekhine was clearly not making any progress in obtaining exit papers for his wife, not to mention the difficulties of keeping his own visas valid.

Since his desired way out was not viable for the time being, Alekhine pursued an alternative path, namely rapprochement with the National Socialist regime. Alekhine's attitude towards the National Socialist regime during peacetime had not been consistent, and his genuine political opinion at the time is not known. However, the uncertain and insecure wartime environment created a completely new situation. Presumably at the end of 1940 or in January 1941, Alekhine became involved with Generalgouverneur Hans Frank and his chess friends, including the head of the GSB. They had all known each other since the mid-1930s. For Frank, chess was both a genuine passion and a means of gaining ground politically and in terms of propaganda; he acted as a promoter, networker and sponsor and used chess as a stage for self-promotion. The first visible expression of Alekhine's rapprochement with the National Socialist regime was the chess column in the occupation newspaper *Pariser Zeitung* in February 1941. The very next month, with his anti-Semitic series of articles on *Arisches und jüdisches Schach*, the world chess champion engaged in propaganda in the style of National Socialist racial ideology.

The previous state of research suggested that on the basis of these publications, Alekhine was now clearly on the German side. This, however, would be an expression of a narrow, binary perspective and would be wrong. For Alekhine did not commit himself to one of the two outlined paths. Rather, he pursued a two-pronged strategy and kept both ways out of his deadlocked situation open until March 1942. From March to September 1941, from Portugal, Europe's last loophole for those who wanted to leave for the New World, Alekhine tried to advance negotiations for a world championship match against Capablanca. If Alekhine had been concerned with his own mere survival, he could have stayed in Portugal. But that was obviously far too little for him. Alekhine returned to the German sphere of power and played an international tournament in Munich in September 1941 – for two years the reigning world chess champion had not played a game at elite level!

Immediately afterwards, it became clear that Alekhine's alternative approach of rapprochement with the National Socialist regime could offer real opportunities – only, however, if one was ready to overlook the already obvious criminal character of the National Socialist regime and its proponents such as Hans Frank. Through his personal relationships, first and foremost with Generalgouverneur Frank, but also with GSB Managing Director Ehrhardt Post, Alekhine was able to integrate himself into a symbiotically linked system, as it were. The GSB and the KdF chess community profited from

a regime that had destroyed the German-Jewish chess cosmos, but – also through the power of unified and centralised resources – allowed chess in the German Reich to emerge anew, as it were, in organisational, personnel and financial terms under National Socialist conditions. The answer to the question of whether ideological overlaps that existed before 1933 made National Socialism attractive for a sports federation can indeed be found in the ideological orientation and anti-Semitism of the GSB, which became decisive when the GSB took over the DSB in April 1933. However, because the German-Jewish chess cosmos was so important and influential, this led to overlaps that went far beyond mere ideological proximity. Certainly, for a *völkisch* nationalist like Ehrhardt Post, there were few reservations; he climbed the career ladder of chess officials and brought the GSB in line with the National Socialist regime, even without a party card.

On the other hand, chess was evaluated by the National Socialist regime for its usability and found to be advantageous: programmatically as a military and combat game that could be built up into a national game and the intellectual counterpart to physical sport which steeled the body and thus the *Volkskörper* (“people’s body”); at KdF chess events, simultaneous exhibitions and during wartime in the care of soldiers as a social practice of the *völkisch* ideal of the *Volksgemeinschaft*; later, in the Europaschachbund as a concrete implementation of National Socialist, hegemonic concepts of “Europe” that belonged to the overall context of the *Lebensraum* ideology. All this was reflected and thus used in media propaganda. The intrinsic logic of chess, its culture and the operation of the game was highly adaptable to the National Socialist regime. Only at one central point did this connectivity falter, namely concerning the strong Jewish, also German-Jewish roots of chess history. These roots were therefore denied with not very subtle, decades-old anti-Semitic arguments, not least with the help of Alekhine. Or was it even the case that precisely this weak point had been recognised and therefore, with Alekhine, a recognised authority had been chosen to “patch up” this spot, as it were?

For Alekhine, at any rate, in the autumn of 1941, when for the time being only German dominance was to be expected in continental Europe, the GSB was associated with something that no one else in the world could offer in those days with regard to his world championship title: framework conditions under which Alekhine could play chess at an elite level and prove himself as a world chess champion, to the extent that was still possible. After all, the chess world had been broken up into separate parts during the Second World War. This was due to the fact that, instigated by National Socialist Germany, particularly the strong chess masters from the Soviet Union with Botvinnik at the top were missing. Against this background, Alekhine’s intensified connections with both Generalgouverneur Hans Frank and the GSB that began in autumn 1941 make sense. Alekhine played in an international tournament organised by the GSB in the Generalgouvernement in October, and he held talks in Krakow that resulted in a job offer from the Institut für Deutsche Ostarbeit, founded by Hans Frank, who was at the zenith of his power at the time. Alekhine was to become head of a newly created “Russia Research Section” at the IDO. If Alekhine had taken up this post and filled it, he would have become part of the National Socialist *Ostforschung*, which served as a pseudo-scientific underpinning for the National Socialist regime’s policy of conquest, settlement and extermination. In any case, this part of the planned position had no connection to chess.

However, Alekhine still pursued the aforementioned two-pronged strategy. In this respect, it is only somewhat surprising that developments in December 1941 led to Alekhine not taking up the

agreed position in Krakow as planned on 1 January 1942. Apparently he resisted the GSB's going too far: cooperation with the GSB must have been an unwritten part of the contract offer for Alekhine because the GSB was already treating Alekhine like an employee. Alekhine, however, left the decision about his deployment to Generalgouverneur Frank personally. With the personal protection of the Generalgouverneur, Alekhine's security was ensured in the best possible way, and Frank could also have given Alekhine sufficient flexibility. In principle, Alekhine was prepared to accept the task in the IDO, especially since it promised renown in those days, at least in the German sphere of power, and a task as head of a "research section" suited Alekhine's elitist habitus perfectly. However, this habitus is also reflected in the fact that Alekhine wanted to remain active as a world chess champion and at the same time choose his own further steps. Alekhine was presumably aiming for a position that combined politically relevant and chess-related components, a position that Efim Bogoljubov had already held in the Generalgouvernement in 1940–41. Bogoljubov had just taken up a second post in the Generalgouvernement in November, the task of which consisted of caring for wounded soldiers in military hospitals through chess.

Alekhine's hesitation about the position offered in Krakow was probably also a result of the global political situation which had altered dramatically in the meantime: the entry of the USA into the Second World War after the attack on Pearl Harbor, which represented the strategic turning point in the war, and the setbacks suffered by a Wehrmacht mired in the vastness of the Soviet Union. Alekhine's first option – to leave for South America under the favourable conditions of a world championship match against Capablanca – was still open, but could quickly be blocked by the developments in world politics at the end of 1941. This was probably the reason for Alekhine's short-term trip to Spain and Portugal in December 1941. In any case, Alekhine did not take up the post in Krakow, but played simultaneous exhibitions in France at the end of 1941 and from February 1942 in the south of the German Reich and in occupied Alsace; not least for members of the Wehrmacht and organised by the GSB and the KdF chess community, which otherwise rivalled each other for the organisational leadership in chess in a manner typical of the National Socialists, but cooperated well in "soldier care".

These developments alone show that the common perception of Alekhine's behaviour in the Second World War was based on the misleading narrative that there was a fixed distribution of roles: on the one hand, the National Socialist regime, which wanted to use Alekhine for its own purposes, and Alekhine on the other hand, who was forced to comply. This idea should be shelved. In view of the dynamics of the time and the war as well as the protagonists involved, the roles were distributed in a far more complex way. And the small world of chess reflects the fact that – as the relevant research has already established decades ago – the National Socialist regime was not a monolithic, homogenous entity. All this became fully apparent in 1942. Until the spring, Alekhine appeared to be the one who held the reins of power in his hands and, with his two-pronged strategy, was able to find the best moment for an ideal solution. Soon, however, Alekhine primarily was forced to react to changing circumstances.

When Capablanca passed away in March 1942, Alekhine's originally considered way out died as well: he would no longer be able to leave Europe under favourable conditions with an agreed world championship match. At the same time, as the war situation increasingly turned against National

Socialist Germany, Alekhine was drawn into the crosshairs of the Reich Security Main Office (RSHA). Perhaps Alekhine's connections and travels to Spain and Portugal were decisive in this regard, or perhaps he simply got caught between the fronts when circles around Himmler, in particular, sought to further weaken Generalgouverneur Frank, who was under attack within the regime. The RSHA gathered information with which it could portray Alekhine as an unpredictable political actor and thus as an unnecessary security risk: The German Reich was in the midst of a war of extermination against the Soviet Union, prompting the question of whether an unreliable political actor and native Russian should become head of a "Russia Research Section" in the immediate circle of Generalgouverneur Frank. In any case, the RSHA found many pieces of evidence for its assessment in Alekhine's curriculum vitae, for example, his former lodge membership in Paris.

Four and a half years after the victory over Euwe, it was clear that Alekhine would not be able to defend his title as world chess champion in a world championship match for the foreseeable future. While the winner of a match between Alekhine and Capablanca, in view of their past history, would probably have been recognised worldwide as world chess champion in 1942, such a confirmation of the value of the title was now out of the question due to the war situation, the divided chess world and Alekhine's own unclear situation. In light of the circumstances, Alekhine accepted a position in the Generalgouvernement less than three months after Capablanca's death. The position, which was granted by Generalgouverneur Frank himself, offered him a very good salary. Through the GSB, which was in constant consultation with Frank, it also offered the prospect of being able to play in the world's best-staffed chess tournaments at the time – a certain substitute for the lack of prospects of a world championship match and a chance to prove himself as far as possible as a world chess champion under the circumstances. The prospect of participating in the organisation of European chess under German dominance by means of the Europaschachbund, also with a view to a later reorganisation of world chess, was also largely due to Frank and the GSB leadership.

Alekhine's employment in the Generalgouvernement differed from the position offered on 1 January 1942 in one crucial respect: Alekhine was formally employed in the Institut für Deutsche Ostarbeit as a "research advisor", but not as the head of a "Russia Research Section". In fact, Alekhine was employed solely as a chess player; an Alekhine-Bogoljubov chess school was to be established. Fourteen tireless months of chess followed, starting in June 1942. During this time, Alekhine served the GSB and thus the National Socialist regime as a propaganda figurehead: at GSB elite tournaments, as a member of the federal leadership of the newly founded Europaschachbund, and for the GSB and the KdF chess community in "soldier care". In this respect, it was only logical that Alekhine's employment should be transferred from the IDO to the Main Propaganda Department within the Government of the Generalgouvernement. Presumably this transfer did take place, but there is no official record of the end of Alekhine's contractual arrangement with the Government of the Generalgouvernement.

However, it is proven that Alekhine received a salary from the IDO for at least four months. In view of the high expenses taken over until the end of 1942 – whether actual hotel costs or further salaries for Alekhine by means of fictitious payments – it is thus certain that large sums were spent on Alekhine from the coffers of the Generalgouvernement from at least June to December 1942. Basically, there were two forms of income for which Alekhine ultimately could thank the triangle of

Generalgouverneur Frank and his authorities, the GSB and the KdF chess community: on the one hand, in fixed form, namely a contractually agreed salary; on the other hand, in loose form, namely income in the form of fees earned at international tournaments and simultaneous exhibitions and certainly also for journalistic contributions.

The situation in which Alekhine found himself in mid-1942 was by no means a full substitute for his nearly perfect life before September 1939, however. He was in relative security, lived in relative prosperity and was a world chess champion who had not defended his title for almost five years. And soon the highly changeable war situation became increasingly noticeable. It is against this background that Alekhine took advantage of a bout of scarlet fever end of 1942 to extend his stay in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia and to take a longer leave of absence from the Generalgouvernement; in the end he returned there only briefly. Alekhine's movements and stays now appear increasingly situational; in view of the war circumstances, postponements and cancellations of appointments were now constantly to be expected when the security situation became more acute. A first seminar of the Alekhine-Bogoljubov chess school planned in Krakow did not take place, the chess school in fact never existed. Nevertheless, even after Alekhine had left the Generalgouvernement, chess remained on the agenda of the Generalgouverneur there, despite an increasingly desperate war situation well into 1944. After the founding of the Landesverband Generalgouvernement in autumn 1942, Alekhine's long-time companion Bogoljubov, for example, remained active in the Generalgouvernement until mid-1944.

Over the course of 1943, National Socialist Germany came under more and more pressure on the fronts of the Second World War. Alekhine, increasingly in poor health and once again, as in the mid-1930s, suffering from his addiction to alcohol, took advantage of a chess tournament in Madrid to leave the German sphere of power for good. This was not a dramatic escape but probably a planned action with the help of the Madrid tournament organiser, who was Alekhine's colleague in the leadership of the Europaschachbund. Alekhine's stay in Spain tacitly ended his cooperation with the GSB. Alekhine remained in Spain until the end of 1945 and then moved to Portugal. In Spain, he was active once more as a chess player and chess publicist. At the end of 1944, when the National Socialist regime still existed but his wife Grace was safe in liberated Paris, he had already begun to carefully distance himself from the National Socialist regime. At the same time, Alekhine immediately began trying to downplay his closeness to the National Socialist regime as best he could, and in some ways to deny it altogether, thus establishing a narrative that exonerated him. In vain, of course; in the chess world he had become persona non grata. A possible agreement with Botvinnik on a world championship match was forestalled by Alekhine's death in Estoril in March 1946.

The present study has not yet succeeded in proving Alekhine's closeness to the National Socialist regime during the Second World War at all relevant points from the available sources and in this way to reconstruct this closeness. It was therefore necessary to occasionally fill in missing information with plausible or probable assumptions. Further research will reveal whether these assumptions hold up in light of new findings. But even if all possible sources are examined, gaps in the tradition and thus in knowledge will remain. As the present case shows, archival sources on chess will often not be found as "tradition", as something intentionally handed down, but as "leftovers" ("Überrest"), as



seemingly or actually handed down by accident. The likelihood of this is increased when taking on the often arduous task of delving into a multi-layered landscape of archival records.

The present study reveals significant research desiderata regarding the history of chess in Germany. From a methodological point of view, it is obvious that this research urgently needs to be raised to a professional level. Contributions by pure chess historians, who as a rule are not appropriately trained, are often helpful but rarely sufficient. This is a plea for more historians who deal with the history of chess professionally and according to the rules of the art, in the same way as with other historical subjects of investigation. This is also desirable insofar as the hermeneutic potential of this object of study reaches far beyond what is dealt with here. Since chess is also a globally understood, symbolic form of communication and interaction, it lends itself to the perspective of New Cultural History, for example.

In thematic terms, it is obvious that an in-depth biography of Alekhine is overdue; such an investigation will undoubtedly have to be carried out by an internationally composed group of historians, given Alekhine's activity worldwide. Efim Bogoljubov was active at the interface of elite chess, the GSB and the National Socialist regime for even longer, though less prominently than Alekhine; a careful study of his life, especially from 1933 onwards, is equally overdue.

This leads to the DSB, whose history has turned out to be one of the most significant research desiderata; and this by no means only because this study has brought back to light "Bundesleiter" Paul Wolfrum, a president of the GSB apparently unknown to his own federation so far. At the very least, it is negligent that the DSB still lacks knowledge of its own history, especially in highly sensitive areas. This applies not only, but especially to large parts of the history of the GSB. In particular, its activities in the occupied territories should be investigated in depth; in the Landesverband Generalgouvernement there were individuals who were heavily incriminated, up to and including convicted war criminals. The present study has also revealed a remarkably close cooperation between the GSB leadership and important Reich offices. This calls not only for an in-depth analysis of the history of the GSB as an institution, but also at the very least, of the GSB leadership. This applies first and foremost to Ehrhardt Post, but also, for example, to people like Alfred Brinckmann, who in their chess-political rise by means of the GSB and in their commitment to chess in Germany made themselves willing accomplices of the National Socialists.

Brinckmann acted as secretary of the GSB for many years after 1945. This demonstrates that the organisational, personal and ideological significance of the GSB for the period after 1945 must also be investigated, both for the Federal Republic and for the GDR.

Finally, the anti-Semitism spread by the GSB and its leading figures points to another research desideratum, namely the cosmos of the entire German-Jewish chess world, which was created well before 1933 and to whose downfall the GSB contributed decisively; excellent German-Jewish players and publicists, qualified organisers and independent patrons fell victim to the National Socialists. This cosmos, right up to its last days, must be preserved from oblivion.

Leaving all open questions aside, the results of the present study provide a changed picture of Alekhine's closeness to the National Socialist regime. Not least, the hermetic shield that first Alekhine himself and later his apologists had forged to exonerate him for his actions and behaviour

during the Second World War has been broken at a decisive point. In a sense, this shield was a fallback position when other arguments were not convincing, and consisted of the diversely varied narrative that Alekhine had acted under duress from the National Socialist regime. This, of course, can be used to justify basically anything. At the latest, with source material used for the first time in this study, this fallback position can be considered obsolete: Alekhine certainly had room for manoeuvre vis-à-vis the National Socialist regime, and he used it. From the end of 1941 to the spring of 1942, he did not behave like a prisoner of the National Socialist regime, but rather tactically and in the face of the GSB and Generalgouverneur Frank, he sought the best solution for himself.

In view of his room for manoeuvre, Alekhine's anti-Semitic outbursts also appear in a different light. Such passages by Alekhine are nowhere to be found as programmatically as in the articles dated March–April 1941, which were first printed in the *Pariser Zeitung*. But they were also not an isolated case. Rather, with the exception of Portugal, such statements appeared in newspapers everywhere Alekhine stayed for a longer period of time: in Spain in September 1941, in the Generalgouvernement in October 1941, in France again in September 1942 and in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia in December 1942. If Alekhine had room for manoeuvre, then he could at least have avoided publishing anti-Semitic passages from autumn 1941 onwards. This is also indicated by Alekhine's contributions, which differed greatly depending on the type of publication; his contributions in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* were essentially factual and chess-related. And even if Alekhine wanted to ingratiate himself with the National Socialist regime through ideological proximity, he could easily have found a way to do so without anti-Semitic propaganda: after all, National Socialist ideology was composed of inclusive and exclusive elements. Alekhine could have dispensed with anti-Jewish remarks and made propaganda for the *Volksgemeinschaft*. That would have been only a little better, but at least he would not have had to deny essential parts of chess history per se.

Without a doubt, Alekhine must be understood as a favourite of Hans Frank. Alekhine's personal closeness to the National Socialist regime consisted primarily in his connection to him; the Generalgouverneur took positions for Alekhine at decisive points. Frank was, as it were, the political protector of the GSB among the high-ranking National Socialist leaders. It was no coincidence that he was presented as one of the "Leading Men of the New Germany in the Greater German Chess Federation": this reflected reality, even though Frank never officially held an office in the GSB. There was no need to do so, especially in the Führer state, where informal, personal connections were often more important than formal organization. After all, Frank acted with the political, social and financial capital he had as a National Socialist leader, Generalgouverneur and Hitler loyalist; his position, however, was fragile, again because of the peculiarities of the Führer state, which had repercussions even for Alekhine.

The driving forces that brought Alekhine closer to the National Socialist regime were complex and, viewed from the perspective of the time, certainly had a rational core. Alekhine had not stood out as an advocate of National Socialist racial ideology before 1941, but his anti-Semitism could easily be integrated into cooperation with the National Socialist regime. On the other hand, the regime offered him prospects of living according to his elitist habitus: in terms of his living conditions, in terms of financial advantages, but also in terms of the fact that only the National

Socialist regime could provide the organisational framework within which Alekhine could prove himself at least to some extent as a world chess champion. Manfred Messerschmidt coined the classic phrase “partial identity of goals” (“Teilidentität der Ziele”),<sup>390</sup> referring to the connection between the Wehrmacht and the National Socialist state. Messerschmidt’s dictum could be further developed to imply that Alekhine’s closeness to the National Socialist regime was due to partial identities of goals and interests as well as of ideology and behavioural culture. The latter refers in particular the view of Alekhine as a “man of combat and will” (“Kampf- und Willensmensch”), which was also common in the National Socialist chess community. This overshadowed the fact, for example, that Alekhine was not an “Aryan”, causing this aspect to take a back seat almost completely; the “racial-biological” postulate quite obviously met its limits here in Alekhine’s specific practice of chess or in how he was perceived in the process. And with regard to Alekhine’s openness to the National Socialist regime, one could also ask whether his elitist habitus and the National Socialist *Herrenmenschen* attitude should be understood as closely linked.

With regard to his actions and behaviour towards the National Socialist regime, Alekhine is not aptly characterised as an “opportunist”, at least if one is to mean that an opportunist seizes opportunities that he considers favourable for himself, accepting negative consequences and disregarding general norms and values. Alekhine, however, by no means simply seized opportunities that presented themselves to him here and there. Rather, he himself contributed significantly to the fact that these opportunities arose in the first place. Alekhine’s actions and behaviour were those of a calculated tactician who — in the manner characteristic of a chess master — thinks in terms of variations. With his two-pronged strategy, Alekhine tried to achieve the maximum for himself and his wife, namely a semblance of their successful life in peacetime. But he failed in many ways, as a human being and as a chess player. In the end, he opened himself up to collaboration with the criminal National Socialist regime, but he was only able to escape from its sphere of power at a late stage, without his wife no less, his health and his reputation in the chess world were ruined, a match for the world chess championship was no longer possible and his world championship title held only questionable value.

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<sup>390</sup> Messerschmidt, Manfred: *Die Wehrmacht im NS-Staat. Zeit der Indoktrination*, Hamburg 1969, p. 1.

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## List of abbreviations

AfS	Archiv für Sozialgeschichte
ANN	Archiwum Akt Nowych
APPP	Archives de la Préfecture de Police de Paris
Arch. dép. Seine-Maritime	Archives départementales de Seine-Maritime
AVRO	Algemene Vereniging Radio Omroep
AUJ	Archiwum Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego
BArch	Bundesarchiv
BayHStA	Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv Munich
BCM	British Chess Magazine
CHLS	Chess History & Literature Society, founded as Ken Whyld Association
DAF	Deutsche Arbeitsfront
DDR	Deutsche Demokratische Republik
DHI Paris	Deutsches Historisches Institut Paris
DSBl.	Deutsche Schachblätter
DSG	Deutsche Schachgemeinschaft
DSZ	Deutsche Schachzeitung
ed.	Editor
eds.	Editors
FIDE	Fédération Internationale des Échecs
fn.	footnote
GDR	German Democratic Republic
Gestapo	Geheime Staatspolizei
GSB	Großdeutscher Schachbund
GuG	Geschichte und Gesellschaft
GWU	Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht
HADB	Historisches Archiv, Deutsche Bank AG
IDO	Institut für Deutsche Ostarbeit
IfZ	Institut für Zeitgeschichte
IG Farben	Interessengemeinschaft Farben
KAZ	Königsberger Allgemeine Zeitung
KdF	Kraft durch Freude
LAB	Landesarchiv Berlin
LABW	Landesarchiv Baden-Württemberg
N. N.	Nomen nescio (unknown author)
NBC	National Broadcasting Company

NS	Nationalsozialismus/nationalsozialistisch
NSDAP	Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei
OKW	Oberkommando der Wehrmacht
RM	Reichsmark
RSHA	Reichssicherheitshauptamt
SD	Sicherheitsdienst
Sopade	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (in der Emigration)
SS	Schutzstaffel
SSZ	Schweizerische Schachzeitung
StadtA München	Stadtarchiv München
StadtA PF	Stadtarchiv Pforzheim – Institut für Stadtgeschichte
unpag.	unpaginated
USA	United States of America
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
VEJ	Die Verfolgung und Ermordung der europäischen Juden durch das nationalsozialistische Deutschland 1933–1945
VfZG	Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte
ZBLG	Zeitschrift für Bayerische Landesgeschichte