

The Consultation Game That Never Was

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Why would a world champion claim to have lost a 24-move brilliancy if such were not the case? That was a central question in our investigation into a famous game widely described as won by D. Janowsky and B. Soldatenkov against E. Lasker and J. Taubenhaus in Paris in 1909:

1 e4 e5 2 d4 exd4 3 c3 dxc3 4 Bc4 cxb2 5 Bxb2 Nf6 6 e5 Bb4+ 7 Nc3 Qe7 8 Nge2 Ne4 9 O-O Nxc3 10 Bxc3 Bxc3 11 Nxc3 O-O 12 Nd5 Qxe5 13 Re1 Qd6 14 Qh5 c6 15 Nc7 g6 16 Qh6 Qxc7 17 Bxf7+ Kxf7 18 Qxh7+ Kf6 19 Qh4+ Kg7 20 Re7+ Rf7 21 Qd4+ Kf8 22 Qh8+ Kxe7 23 Re1+ Kd6 24 Qe5 mate.



To mention just one standard source, the above players and occasion were given on page 171 of *The Golden Treasury of Chess* Wellmuth (Philadelphia, 1943). However, the game had already appeared in the nineteenth century, won by Soldatenkov against S. Durnovo (or Durnowo). Below, for instance, is what was published on page 18 of *Der Schachfreund* , April 1898:

by Francis J.

No. 11. Nach: 1. e4, e5 2. d4, e×d4
 3. c3, d×c3 4. Lc4, e×b2 5. L×b2, Sf6
 6. e5, Lb1+ 7. Sc3, De7 8. Se2, Se4 9.
 0-0, S×c3, 10. L×c3, L×c3 11. S×c3,
 0-0 12. Sd5, D×e5 13. Te1, Dd6 14.
 Dh5, c6 entstand folgende Stellung:

Schw. S. Durnowo.

Weiss W. Ssoldatenkow.

W. gewann auf folgende elegante
 Weise: 15. Sc7!, g6! (es drohte D×f7+)
 16. Dh6, D×e7 17. L×f7+, K×f7 18.
 D×h7+, Kf6 19. Dh4+, Kg7 20. Te7+.
 Tf7 21. Dd4+, Kf8! 22. Dh8+!, K×e7
 23. Te1+, Kd6 24. De5#

As noted in C.N. 1486, the game was also given as a win for Soldatenkov against Durnovo on page 504 of the November 1900 BCM, from České Listy, Šachové. The latter source (April 1898 issue, page 55) is reproduced below courtesy of Karel Mokry (Prostějov, Czech Republic):

136. Severní gambit.
Hrán 19. ledna 1898. (Šachmatný Žurnál)

Bílý: Soldatenkov.	Černý: Durnovo.
1. e2—e4	e7—e5
2. d2—d4	e5×d4
3. c2—c3	d4×c3
4. Sf1—e4	c3×b2
5. Sc1×b2	Jg8—f6
6. e4—e5	Sf8—b4+
7. Jb1—c3	Dd8—e7
8. Jg1—e2	Jf6—e4
9. 0—0	Je4×c3
10. Sb2×c3	Sb4×c3
11. Je2×c3	0—0

Lépe 10. . . . c6 12. Je4 0—0
13. Jd6 D×e5 14. Ve1 Df6.

12. Jc3—d5 De7×e5

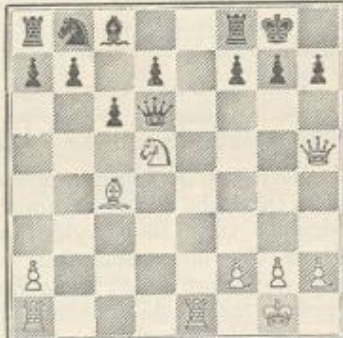
O něco lepší obranu poskytl ústup na d8 neb na c5 dámou, ať i pak jest obrana velmi nesešnou. Bílý může v útoku pokračovati tahy Dh5 resp. Vc1.

13. Vf1—e1 De5—d6
14. Dd1—h5 c7—c6

Jest-li 14. . . . Jc6 tedy vyhraje bílý takto: 15. J×c7! Vb8 16. Ve8! Dg6 17. Va1—e1 Je7 18. S×f7+ D×f7 19. D×f7+ K×f7 20. Vee7×+ Kf6 21. Jd5+ atd.

15. Jd5—c7! . . . (viz diagr.)
Elegantní a rázné zakročení.
15. . . . g7—g6

Po 14. tahu černého.



Na 15. . . . D×e7 dá bílý mat ve 2 tazích. Kombinace, jež následují, jsou velmi poučny.

16. Dh5—h6 Dd6×c7
17. Sc4×f7+! Kg8×f7
18. Dh6×h7+ Kf7—f6
19. Dh7—h4+ Kf6—g7
Jest-li 19. . . . g5 tedy 20. Dh6+ Kf7 21. Ve7+! neb Dh7+atd.
20. Ve1—e7+ Vf8—f7
21. Dh4—d4+ Kg7—f8
Jest-li 21. . . . Kg8 tedy 22. Ve8+ Vf8 23. V×f8+ K×f8 24. Dh8+ atd.
22. Dd4—h8+ Kf8×e7
23. Va1—e1+ Ke7—d6
24. Dh8—d4 mat.
(Poznámky Šifferse.)

So did a consultation game in Paris simply repeat the moves of Soldatenkov v Durnovo? At first, that seemed possible, given that, as reported in C.N. 22, the following was presented on page 330 of the Illustrated London News, 27 February 1909:

CHESS IN PARIS.

The following game is taken from Dr. Lasker's own Chess Column. As we read his letter, it was between Messrs. SOLDATEN and JANOWSKY on the one side, and Messrs. LASKER and TAUBENHAUS on the other.

(*Danish Gambit.*)

WHITE Messrs. S. & J.)	BLACK (Messrs. L. & T.)	WHITE Messrs. S. & J.)	BLACK (Messrs. L. & T.)
1. P to K 4th	P to K 4th	Very pretty. Mate follows in two, if the Knight be taken by 16. Q takes P4ch), etc.	
2. P to Q 4th	P takes P	15.	P to K Kt 3rd
3. P to Q B 3rd	P takes P	16. Q to R 6th	Q takes Kt
4. B to Q B 4th	P takes P	It is surprising to find that even now this move is fatal; but White's spirited reply was scarcely anticipated.	
5. B takes P	B to Kt 5th (ch)	17. B takes P (ch)	K takes B
6. Kt to B 3rd	Kt to K B 3rd	Black's moves are now all forced, and the game won by a charming combination.	
7. P to K 5th	Q to K 2nd	18. Q takes R P (ch)	K to B 3rd
8. Kt to K 2nd	Kt to K 5th	19. Q to R 4th (ch)	K to Kt 2nd
9. Castles	Kt takes Kt	20. R to K 7th (ch)	R to B 2nd
10. B takes Kt	B takes B	21. Q to Q 4th (ch)	K to B sq
11. Kt takes B	Castles	22. Q to R 8th (ch)	K takes R
12. Kt to Q 5th		23. R to K sq (ch)	K to Q 3rd
White's position, stripped of its Pawns, looks curious, but there are good opportunities for a five attack.		24. Q to K 5th, mate	
12.	Q takes P	The game may be skittles, but is most enjoyable chess.	
13. R to K sq	Q to Q 3rd		
14. Q to R 5th	P to Q B 3rd		
15. Kt to B 7th			

We asked whether Lasker really gave the game in his own column, and C.N. 774 quoted from page 162 of volume A of Walter Penn Shipley's scrapbooks, which had a cutting, from an unidentified newspaper, undoubtedly written by Lasker:

12 PxB	PxB	30 QxQRP	R-Q7ck
13 Q-B5	Kt-K4	31 K-B3	R-K7
14 KR-K	KtxB	32 P-Kt4	B-B3ck
15 Kt-Q5	Kt-K4	33 K-Q3	R-Kt7
16 RxKt	PxR	34 K-B4	R-B7ck
17 QxKP	P-B3	35 K-Kt5	Resigns
18 KtxQBPeK-B			

A game by consultation was also arranged. M. Soldatencow, a Russian nobleman, attached to the embassy at Rome, wished to consult with Janowsky against myself and Taubenhaus. M. Soldatencow is a player of no mean skill. Here is one of the games, in which he won by a pretty combination.

White: M. Soldatencow.

Black: *E. Janowsky*

1. P-K4	P-K4
2. P-Q4	PxP
3. P-QB3	PxP
4. B-QB4	PxP
5. PxB	B-Kt5ch
6. Kt-B3	Kt-KB3
7. P-K5	Q-K2
8. Kt-K2	Kt-K5
9. Castles	KtxKt
10. BxKt	BxB
11. KtxB	Castles
12. Kt-Q5	QxP
13. R-K	Q-Q3
14. Q-R5	P-QB3
15. Kt-B7	...

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Of course, if QxKt, QxBPch, RxQ, R-K8 mate.

15. . . .	P-KKt3
16. Q-R6	QxKt
17. BxPch	KxB
18. QxRPch	K-B3
19. Q-R4ch	K-Kt2
20. R-K7ch	R-B2
21. Q-Q4ch	K-B
22. Q-R8ch	KxR
23. R-Kch	K-Q3
24. Q-K5 mates	

There is one variation of the Danish gambit which Stasch Mlotkowski thinks sufficiently strong for black to make the attack almost unplayable. Concerning the short analysis below the State champion writes:

"After winning a game from Daly in the St. Louis Minor Tournament of 1904, in which I adopted the Danish, Max Judd showed me the following defense, as a result of which I did not subsequently adopt the opening.

DANISH GAMBIT.

White.	Black.
1-P-K4	P-K4
2-P-Q4	PxP
3-P-QB3	PxP
4-B-QB4	P-Q4
5-BxP	PxP
6-QBxP	B-Kt5 ch
7-Kt-B3	BxKt ch
8-BxB	Kt-KB3

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In that same item we commented on various points still requiring clarification:

a) The date. "1909" has always been given, but, if we are correctly reading a handwritten note in the scrapbook, the article in question by Lasker appeared on 2 December 1908.

b) The venue. Lasker does not specify Paris or anywhere else, at least not in the "clipped" clip preserved by Shipley.

c) The conditions. The Lasker quote above implies that "Soldatencow", more than Janowsky, conducted the white pieces, and this is reinforced by the game heading, which does not mention Janowsky at all (or Lasker or Taubenhau – only "Soldatencow").

d) The source. Are we correct in guessing that the column is from the *New York Evening Post* of 2 December 1908?

In C.N. 1369 there was further evidence to consider: the text below from page 878 of *The Field*

, 22 May 1909:

LASKER v. JANOWSKY.

JANOWSKY informs us of the historical point of the match. When Dr Lasker was in Paris in January a consultation game was arranged between him and Janowsky, a good game resulting in a draw. In consequence of this game M. Nardus asked Dr Lasker under what conditions he would play a championship match with Janowsky. Lasker replied that his terms have been published, viz., a prize of 5000fr. or a stake of 10,000fr. M. Nardus accepting these terms, Dr Lasker quickly added that the match could only be played two years hence. *Deux ans c'est beaucoup dans la vie d'un homme*, exclaims Janowsky. N. Nardus therefore arranged this short match of four games in the meantime.

After quoting this passage, which was also reproduced on page 260 of the June 1909 *BCM*, we commented:

'In [C.N. 774] we wrote, "it would seem therefore that the 'spurious' game was indeed played", but the above *BCM-Field* quote dents our confidence. If Janowsky and Soldatenkov had scored a win and a draw why would Janowsky have mentioned to *The Field* only the draw?'

In C.N. 1486 an additional complication was offered: the game appeared on page 77 of the March-April 1933 issue of *Les Cahiers de l'Echiquier Français*

as Soldatenkov v Sabourow, St Petersburg, 1909. The magazine stated that the game's attribution to Janowsky/Soldatenkov v Lasker/Taubenhaus was a frequent but inexplicable error. It has not been possible to ascertain on what basis the name Sabourow and the venue St Petersburg were introduced by the French magazine.

Then in C.N. 1574 a correspondent, Jack O'Keefe (Ann Arbor, MI, USA), shed considerable further light on the affair:

'Lasker's column in the semi-weekly edition of the New York Evening Post appeared on Thursday and Saturday; the Saturday column was repeated without change on the following Monday. Three columns have a bearing on the Soldatenkov consultation game versus Lasker.

The first, and most important, is the column of Saturday 30 January (and 1 February) 1909. Dated Paris, Jan. 5, it deals with simul by Lasker in Amsterdam, Utrecht, Groningen and Haarlem, and his subsequent trip to Paris. Lasker's observations were not confined to the chess board:

"The women that one sees in the streets and restaurants are far from being pretty, with rare exceptions. But they dress with style, their conversation is lively, and they show an evident desire to please. Woman is the topic at all Parisian shows, which becomes a little monotonous after awhile."

Lasker next describes a visit to the *Café de la Régence*, where a simul was arranged. Then comes the crucial paragraph:

"A game by consultation was also arranged. M. Soldatenkov, a Russian nobleman, attached to the embassy at Rome, wished to consult with Janowsky and myself and Taubenhau. M. Soldatenkov is a player of no mean skill. Here is one of the games, in which he won by a pretty combination.

White

M. Soldatenkov."

The moves of the Danish Gambit game follow. Note that the reader is not told who played Black, 2) the date and place of the game, and 3) any consultation partner of Soldatenkov.

The column for Thursday, 4 February contains the game Lasker/Taubenhaus versus Janowsky/Soldatenkov. It is a Ruy López, as given in Volume 3 of Whyld Lasker, but without the repetition of moves on 18 and 19, and ending with 27 (29) PxKt and " After a few more moves the game was abandoned for adjudication, each side having queen and four pawns, with no evident advantage for either party" Emanuel

Finally, in his column of 13 (and 15) February, Lasker says of the consultation team Janowsky/Soldatenkov: " One of their games was published in this column a few weeks ago." [Emphasis mine.]

I believe that the evidence of these columns, combined with Janowsky's failure to boast of a win over Lasker (as mentioned in C.N. 1369), proves that only one game – the Ruy López - was played between Lasker/Taubenhaus and Janowsky /Soldatenkov.

How did the misunderstanding arise? I suggest that it is a combination of 1) the poor typesetting at the head of the Danish Gambit game, which gave the reader no information except that Soldatenkov played White, 2) Lasker's somewhat awkward phrasing (" Here is one of the games ... instead of " Here is one of his games, in which he won by a pretty combination", and 3) the failure of magazines that reprinted the game to heed the caveat of the Illustrated London News: " As we read his letter it was between Messrs Soldatenkov and Janowsky on the one side and Messrs Lasker and Taubenhau on the other. " (C.N. 22). [Again, emphasis mine.]

We believe that Mr O'Keefe analysed the matter impeccably. His contribution indicates that the cutting from Shipley's scrapbook given above was indeed from Lasker's *New York Evening Post* column. On the other hand, the handwritten note in the scrapbook still looks to us like '2 Dec. 1908'. If so, however, it must be an error since the Lasker/Taubenhaus v Janowsky/Soldatenkov consultation game which genuinely took place in Paris (the only one – a drawn Ruy López) was not played until 24 January 1909. The chronology suggests that during their time together in Paris Soldatenkov showed Lasker his old game against Durovno, and Lasker published it in his *Post* column a week or so later. Although it was correctly reproduced on page 86 of the *Chess Weekly*, 6 February 1909, with the bare information that Soldatenkov was White, other writers were, as Mr O'Keefe remarked above, misled by Lasker's poor presentation into thinking that the game also involved Lasker himself, Janowsky and Taubenhau and had just been played in Paris.

Finally, in C.N. 2360 we pointed out that, as reported on page 110 of the 7 November 1909 *Deutsche Schachblätter*, Lasker subsequently denied involvement with the game, after Tarrasch had published the moves in *Gartenlaube*.

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