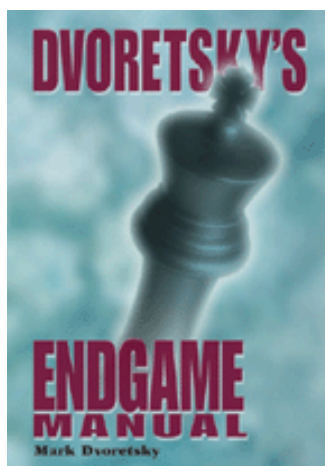




SKITTLES
ROOM



Adolf Albin and the Genesis of the Albin Counter Gambit Part I

by Olimpiu G. Urcan

Adolf Albin (1848-1920) was the subject of some articles published on the internet that invited further research. It has been our attempt to collect some of Albin's games, and those of the other famous Romanian chess master, Georg Marco (1863-1923), in our book *Chess Fathering a Nation* published by Moravian Chess, Olomouc, 2004. Far from being a faultless book, mostly due to some editing and proof-reading shortcomings, I hope it at least offers an accurate image of the chess skills and the chess service performed by these two men, which was instrumental in Central European and Romanian chess history. Through their work both men established the foundation for chess in their native country. Marco, a chess scholar with great playing skills; and Albin, a chess master with real writing skills; both anchored in the heart of the European chess tradition, worked to make chess more popular in the land between the Carpathian Mountains and the Black Sea. While they were chess masters for Europe and America they were chess parents for a nation.



Adolf Albin

The present article intends to offer new information in the debate over the origins of the Albin Counter-Gambit (1.d4 d5 2.c4 e5). The source is a very rare chess manual Albin wrote in Romanian and published in 1872. Therefore, it was unknown or inaccessible to many chess historians and researchers. [1] Today's opinion of the Albin Counter-Gambit is that the line was made popular by Albin, when he employed it against Emanuel Lasker in 1893 at the New York Tournament, but he was not its creator. It is said that the gambit was introduced by Cavalotti Mattia against Salvioli in Milan in 1881. A series of historical and biographical works from Italy concluded that Serafino Dubois (1817-1899) first alluded to this line of play long before Cavallotti played it and a theoretical polemic erupted. In 1872 the second volume of Dubois's work, *Le Principali Aperture del Giuoco degli Schacchi*, was published. The Italian chess historian

Adriano Chicco claimed that Dubois was the first who mentioned the counter-gambit on page 200 of his 1872 work, quoting: *E'una mia scappata, e la dò per quel che vale*, [ii] next to his indication of 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e5 3.e3 Bb4+. Chicco concluded that the testing of this idea continued and over the years was associated with Cavalotti's and Albin's name, but Dubois's claim to its invention is undisputable. [iii] Certainly, this voids any real claim from Cavalotti, since Dubois's work from 1872 originated the idea. But was Dubois the only one who thought about or made allusions to this counter-gambit? Albin's contemporary chess editors were not aware of Dubois's claim; Cavalotti's being the one that monopolized the disputes. Albin wrote a few articles to defend his ideas, for instance in *Neue Hamburger Zeitung's* chess column in 1904 and his fearless, and sometimes literary ruthless, attitude made him a difficult master to deal with. In Part Two of this article we will publish a sample of Albin's disputes with *Deutsches Wochenschach*. [iv]

Albin's Romanian manual also appeared in 1872, which might challenge Dubois's claim if further direct evidence is found to confirm our hypothesis. We believe that the Viennese chess columns from the 1870s and early 1880s likely contain some very early games of A. Albin that might confirm it; however, an earlier game of Albin's still needs to be recovered.

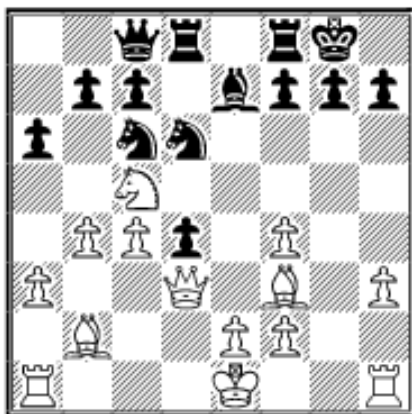
Lasker Em. – Albin A.

New York-Impromptu Tournament, 1893

Round 12

Notes by Urcan Olimpiu

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e5 Introducing this counter-gambit at a high international level.
3.dxe5 d4 4.Nf3 (O.C. Muller – H.V. Crane, London, 1906 saw 4.a3 c5 5.f4 Nc6 6.Nf3 Bf5 7.g3 Be7 8.Bg2 h5 9.0-0 h4 10.Qe1 hxg3 11.Qxg3 Rh6 12.Kh1 Rg6 13.Qe1 Qd7 14.Rg1 0-0-0 15.Nbd2 Nh6 16.Nf1 Rh8 17.Bd2 Ng4 18.e4 Bxe4 19.Ng5 Rgh6 20.Qg3 Rxh2 21.Nxh2 Rxh2 22.Qxh2 Nf2 mate; Or 4.e4 Nc6 5.Nf3 Bg4 6.Bf4 f6 7.exf6 Nxf6 8.Bd3 Bb4+ 9.Bd2 0-0 10.0-0 Bxd2 11.Nbxd2 Ne5 12.c5 Kh8 13.Qc2 Bxf3 14.Nxf3 Nxf3+ 15.gxf3 Nh5 16.Kh1 Rxf3 17.Qe2 Qf6 18.e5 Qf4 19.Qe4 Qxe4 20.Bxe4 Rf4 21.Bxb7 Rb8 22.Bc6 Rxb2 23.e6 Nf6 24.e7 Rb8 25.Rab1 Rc8 26.Rb7 Rf5 27.Re1 d3 28.Rxc7 Rb8 29.e8Q+ Nxe8 30.Rxe8+ Rxe8 31.Bxe8 d2 32.Ba4 g6 33.Kg2 Re5 34.c6 Ra5 35.Bb3 Rxa2 36.Rc8+ Kg7 37.Rg8+ Kf6 38.c7 1-0, Salvioli C. – Cavallotti M., Milano, 1881.)
4...Nc6 5.a3 Capablanca gave 5.Nbd2 Bg4 6.h3 Bxf3 (8...Be6 is better.) 7.Nxf3 f6 8.exf6 (8.e6!?) Nxf6 9.g3?! (9.a3!) in his annotations to Capablanca – Aurbach, Paris, 1914. He remarked in his annotations from *Capablanca-Magazine* (April-May, 1914): *Although this counter-gambit is rarely played nowadays, it does not seem entirely bad.* **5...Bg4 6. h3 Bxf3 7.gxf3 Nxe5 8.f4 Nc6 9.Bg2 Qd7 10.b4 a6 11.Bb2 Rd8 12.Nd2 Nge7 13.Nb3 Nf5** Reinfeld and Fine gave 13...Ng6 14.b5 (14.Qd2 Bd6 (14...Qf5 15.Bxc6+ bxc6 16.Nxd4±) 15.Nxd4 Bxf4 16.e3±) 14...Nxf4! (14...axb5 15.cxb5 Na7 (15...Nxf4 16.Bf3 Ne5! 17.Nxd4 Nxf3+ 18.exf3 Bc5) 16.Qxd4! Qxb5 17.Qxa7 Qxb3 18.Qxb7 Qxb7 19.Bxb7 Nxf4 20.Bc6+ Ke7 21.Bb5 Ne6 22.e3 and White should win.) 15.bxc6 Nxe2+ 16.Kf1 Qxc6 17.Nxd4? Ne3+ and wins. **14.Qd3 Be7 15.Be4! Nd6 16.Nc5 Qc8 17.Bf3!** If 17.Nxa6 then 17...Nxe4 18.Qxe4 0-0 19.b5 Rfe8!
17...0-0



18.Rg1 Ne8 19.Nb3 Qd7 20. 0-0-0 Qd6
21.Kb1 Qxf4 22.Rg4 Qh6 23.Bxc6 bxc6
24.Rxd4 Rd6 25.c5 Re6 26.Qxa6 Qxh3
27.R4d3 Qg2 28.Nd4 Rf6? 29.Re3 Bd8
30.Nc2 Rxf2 31.Rxd8 1-0

Source: *Lasker's Greatest Chess Games 1889-1914*, Dover Publications, New York, 1965.

N.N. – Albin A.
Vienna, 1900

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e5 3.dxe5 d4 4.e3 Bb4+ 5.Bd2 dxe3 6.Bxb4 exf2+ 7.Ke2 fxe3 8.Ke1 Qh4+ 9.Kd2 Nc6 10.Bc3 Bg4 and White resigned in a losing position.
Source: *Wiener Schachzeitung*, No. 1, 1902, p.14

Chigorin M. – Albin A.
Nuremberg, 1896

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e5 3.dxe5 d4 4.Nf3 Nc6 5.g3 Bf5 6.Bg2 d3 7.e3 Nh6 8.0-0 Be7
9.Nc3 0-0 10.b3 Qd7 11.Bb2 Rae8 12.Nd5 Bd8 13.Ba3 Be7 14.Nxe7+ Nxe7
15.Nd4 c6 16.Bd6 Bg6 17.c5 Kh8 18.f4 Rg8 19.e4 f5 20.e6 Qd8 21.e5 Nc8
22.Qxd3 Qa5 23.a3 a6 24.b4 Qd8 25.Rfe1 Ne7 26.Rad1 Qc8 27.Rd2 Rgf8
28.a4 Rg8



Any modern master playing black would resign here. Albin's will to defend this hopeless position is remarkable. 29.b5 axb5 30.axb5 Qa8 31.Bxe7 Rxe7 32.bxc6 bxc6 33.Nxc6 Qc8 34.Nxe7 Qxc5+ 35.Kh1 Qxe7 36.Qd6 Qa7 37.Rb1 Ng4 38.Qb6 Qa3 39.h3 Qxg3 40.hxg4 fxe4 41.Rbd1 Qh4+ 42.Kg1 g3 43.Rd8 Be8 44.Qd4 h5 45.Rd3 Rf8 46.e7 Rg8 47.Rxe8 Rxe8 48.Qd7 Qxe7 49.Qxe7 Rxe7 50.Rxg3 Rf7 51.e6 Ra7 52.Re3 Re7 53.f5 Kh7 54.Rg3 Ra7 55.Rg6 Rc7 56.Be4 h4 57.Kh2 Kh8 58.Kh3 Ra7 59.Kxh4 Kh7

60.Bc6 Rc7 61.Bd7 Rc4+ 62.Rg4 1-0

Schwarz A. - Albin. A.
Vienna, 1899-1900

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e5 3. dxe5 d4 4.g3 Nc6 5.f4 Bf5 6.a3 h5 7.Bg2 h4 8.Nf3 h3 9.Bf1 a5 10.b3 Bc5 11.Bb2 Nh6 12.e3 Ng4 13.exd4 Ne3 14.Qc1 Nc2+ 15.Kd1 N6xd4! 16.Nxd4 Bxd4 17.Nd2 Bf2! Black is threatening 18...Ne3+ 19.Ke2 Qd3+ 20.Kxf2 (If 20.Kf3 then 20...Nxf1+ 21.Kxf2 Qe3+ 22.Kxf1 Bd3 mate.) 20...Ng4+ 21.Ke1 Qe3+ 22.Be2 Qd2+ 23.Kd1 Ne3 mate! 18.Qxc2 Bxc2+ 19.Kxc2 Bd4 20.Nf3 Bxb2 21.Kxb2 a4 22.b4 Qd7 23.Be2 Qc6 24.Rac1 Qe4 25.Rhe1 Qe3?! (25...0-0-0!) 26.Rc3 Qf2 27.Rc2 0-0-0 28.Bd1 Qxe1 29.Nxe1

Rxd1 30.Nf3 Rd3 31.Ng5 f6 32.exf6 gxf6 33.Ne4 Rhd8 34.Nc5 Why not 34.Nxf6? If 34...Rd2 then 35.Nd5. **34...Rd2 35.Nxa4 Rxc2+ 36.Kxc2 Rg8 37.Nc5 Rxc3 38.Ne4 Rg2+ 39.Kd3 Rxh2 40.Nxf6 Rg2 0-1**

Source: Bachman, *Schachjahrbuch*, 1899, vol.2, p. 36

Teichmann R. – Albin A.

Monte Carlo, 1902

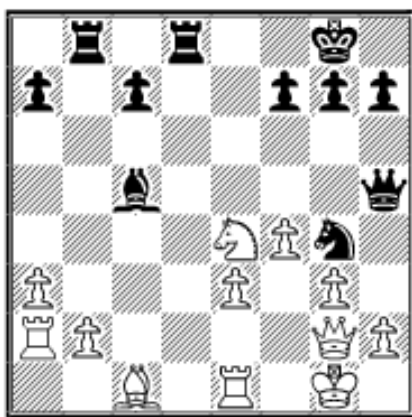
1.d4 d5 2.c4 e5 3.e3 Bb4+? 4.Nc3 e4? 5.cxd5 Qxd5 6.Bd2 Bxc3 7.bxc3 a5 8.f3?! Nf6 9.Qb3 Qd6 10.Bc1 (10.a4!) 10...a4 11.Qc2 Qe7 12.fxe4 Nxe4 13.Nf3 O-O 14.Bd3 f5 15.O-O Nd7 16.Rb1 c6 17.c4 h6 18.g3 g5 19.Bd2 c5 20.Bxe4 fxe4 21.Ne5 Rxf1+ 22.Rxf1 Nxe5 23.dxe5 Bh3 24.Rf6 Rf8 25.Bc3 Rxf6 26.exf6 Qd7 27.Kf2 Qf5+ 28.Ke1 Qf1+ 29.Kd2 Qxc4 30.Kc1 Kf7 31.Be5 Qd5 32.Bc3 b5 33.a3 Bg4 34.Qd2 Qc4 35.Kb1 Be6 36.h4 Qb3+ 37.Qb2 Qd1+ 38.Qc1 Ba2+? 38...Qd3+ and 39...Qc4 offered winning chances. 39.Kb2 Qd5 40.hxg5 hxg5 41.Ka1 Bb3 42.Qh1 Qd1+ 43.Qxd1 Bxd1 44.Be5 Ke6 45.f7 Kxf7 46.Bd6 c4 47.Kb2 Ke6 48.Bb4 and drawn at move 69.

Source: *Monte Carlo 1902*, A.J. Gillam (ed.), The Chess Player, 1997, p. 64-65

Meitner – Albin A.

Vienna, 1904

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e5 3.cxd5 Qxd5 4.dxe5 Qxe5 5.Nf3 Bb4+ 6.Nbd2 Qa5 7.e3 Bg4 8.Bc4 Better is 8.Be2. **8...Nf6 9.0-0 Nc6 10.Qb3 0-0 11.a3 Bd6 12.Qxb7 Ne5 13.Nxe5 Qxe5 14.g3 Rab8 15.Qg2 Qh5 16.Rfe1 Be5 17.Ra2 Rfd8 18.f4 Bd6 19.Be2 Bc5! 20.Bxg4 Nxc4 21.Ne4** If 21.Nf1 then 21...Rb3 with great pressure.



21...Rd1! 22.Rxd1 Nxe3 23.Bxe3 Bxe3+ 24.Nf2 Qxd1+ 25.Qf1 Bxf2+ 26.Kxf2 Qd4+ and a2-rook is lost. **0-1**

Source: Bachmann, *Schachjahrbuch*, 1904, p. 162

As with his *Schach-Aphorismen und Reminiscenzen* (containing drawings and 14 games published in 1899), Albin's *Amiculu' Jocului de Schach. Theoreticu si Practicu* (Bucuresti, 1872) is a prized collector's item.

A rare chess manual for amateurs, it is the first chess book printed in Romanian. It was published with the help of Manole Costache Epureanu, a preeminent political and cultural character in the old Bucharest. One of the surviving originals can be found at *Lucian Blaga Central Library*, Babes Bloyai University (Cluj Napoca, Romania), in the heart of Transylvania. It has 42 pages and is in very good condition. The library staff even used to lend it out for home study, but now it is considered a historical manuscript and handled with extreme care.



Albin's chess manual written in the old Romanian language and published in 1872

The passage that follows is from the *Amiculu' Jocului de Schach. Theoreticu si Practicu* (Bucuresti, 1872):

Gambits are very interesting. The one who is offering the gambit – the one who is intentionally giving up the pawn – through this sacrifice is preparing a better ground for his pieces to create vivacious attacks. His opponent is forced to sacrifice some of the pieces as he is dealing with an attack. The struggle is hopeless since the one who offered the gambit is fiercely attacking, while the other is weaker and confronted with the mission of a difficult defence and expectant attacking chances.

The opinions on this matter are diverse regarding who will win or how the draw occurs in such a game when two equally matched opponents are facing each other on the chessboard.

La Bourdonais [sic] says that 'the one who is receiving the gambit – that is the one who is taking the pawn – has to win'. Philidor noted that 'a Gambit in which the attacks and the defences are equal should end up as a draw'. Allgaier observed that 'So far I conclude that a good defence against a Gambit is not known yet to me'.

My last enduring study and experience has persuaded me that if these Gambit games are played with finesse, then the opponent can hardly even earn a draw, and can never win unless some better defence is discovered, on the tail of which I am finding myself right now and which I hope to share in the second edition of this brochure if this initial edition is encouraged by intelligent amateurs of the game". [emphasis added]

Considering the closing words of the book, it can be argued that there was a need for commerce and publicity so that the next edition would sell as well as the first one. This must have convinced Albin to tempt the reader in such a way. If so,

then it would be the only ‘marketing’ sentence in the whole booklet! Plus, if you wanted to tempt beginners in chess, then a promise about opening traps or how to win easily in the opening stage would do the trick.

What was this “better defence” he was working on and mysteriously concealed? A better defence against the gambits implies a new way of approaching them, and it was at this time that counter-gambits started to become fashionable. Albin undoubtedly had in mind a counter-gambit.

Was Albin referring to his counter-gambit that begins with 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e5? His words appear in the context of a discussion on the value of gambit games and what the chances for each side are. The most popular gambits of his time were the King’s Gambit and the Queen’s Gambit. After reviewing the authorities’ opinions, Albin advanced his own ideas and disclosed the fact that he was studying an improved system. Interesting enough Labourdonnais is quoted first and he was one of the first adepts of the Queen’s Gambit. Albin also wrote these lines when the Falkbeer Counter-gambit (1.e4 e5 2.f4 d5) was enjoying a moment of popularity, which stands as a mirror reflection of the Albin Counter-Gambit.

If Albin was writing about 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e5 then the date, place and source of its origin should be revisited. Cavalotti was wrong to claim a monopoly on the idea. And, claiming a similar monopoly for Dubois can be misleading as well. Such a thesis needs further evidence as “one cannot raise a mountain with a fist of sand” as the old saying goes. Nevertheless, this significant passage raises some useful questions for further inquiry. Albin had very few chances to meet 1.d4 with Black prior to the 1890s and in his first encounter with a heavy-weight player (Em. Lasker) he played his invention. Here are some secondary arguments supporting this theory.

I. Albin’s Chess Beginnings Revisited

Chess Monthly (1894) claimed that Albin learned the game in 1870.^[v] Albin, on the other hand, in 1872 in his Romanian manual mentions his “*last enduring study and experience.*” Two years of chess study would not be enough to write such words. It seems logical that Albin played chess in Vienna during the late 1850s and early 1860s while completing his business studies. Potential games might be recovered by someone with access to the Austrian archives.

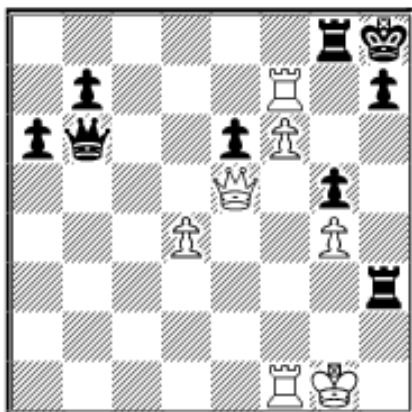
Quarterly for Chess History (8/2003 pp. 499-500) offered three early games of his from tournaments played in Vienna and Budapest, the earliest from 1883; while the Chessbase mega-database indicates 1890 as the year of Albin’s earliest games. Below we offer several games recovered from Albin’s so called “early period” – prior to 1890. An undeniable fact in his game from 1883 is that Albin’s playing strength is that of an already experienced player. Remarkably, even his earliest games show his enthusiasm for offering pawns in the opening and playing gambit-style lines.

Albin A. – Schindler F.

Vienna, 1883

1.Nf3 Nf6 2.d4 d5 3.Bg5 e6 4.e4 Nc6 5.Bb5 Be7 6.Nbd2 dxe4 7.Bxf6 Bxf6

8.Nxe4 Bd7 9.O-O O-O 10.Nxf6+ Qxf6 11.Ne5 Qe7 12.Nxd7 Qxd7 13.c3 Rad8 14.f4 a6 15.Bxc6 Qxc6 16.f5 Rd7 17.f6 g6 18.Qd2 Kh8 19.Qh6 Rg8 20.Rf3 Rd5 21.g4 Rh5 22.Qe3 Rh4 23.h3 g5 24.c4 Rh6 25.Rd1 Qxc4 26.Rc1 Qxa2 27.Rxc7 Qb1+ 28.Rf1 Qxb2 29.Rxf7 Qb6 30.Qe5 Rxh3



31.Rf8 1-0

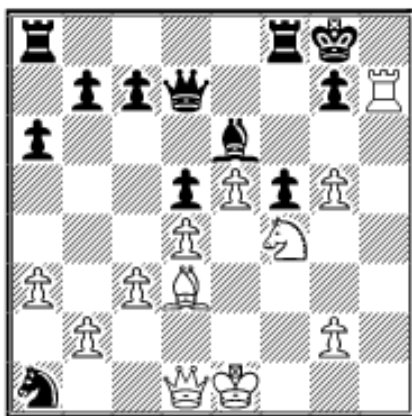
Source: *Wiener Schachzeitung*, No.2, 1887, p.32

Albin A. – de Riviere

Paris, 1888

1.e4 e5 2.Nc3 Nf6 3.f4 d5 4.fxe5 Nxe4 5.Nf3 Black has a good game after 5.Qf3 f5 followed by 6...Nc6. 5...f5 6.d4 Bb4 7.Bd2 Nxd2 8.Qxd2 0-0 9.Bd3 Nc6 10.a3 Be7 11.h4 Be6 12.Ne2 a6 Better would have been

12...Qd7. 13.Nf4 Qd7 14.c3 Na5 15.Ng5 Bxg5 16.hxg5 Nb3 17.Qd1 Nxa1 18.Rxh7! (see next diagram)



18...Kxh7 19.Qh5+ Kg8 20.g6 Rfc8 21.Bxf5! Bxf5 22.Qh7+ Kf8 23.Qh8+ Ke7 24.Qxg7+ Kd8 25.Qf8+ Qe8 26.Qxf5 is winning for White. 18...Bf7 19.g4! Bg6 20.Nxg6 Kxh7 21.Nxf8+ Better was 21.gxf5! and if 21...Rxf5 then 22.Qh5+ Kg8 23.Bxf5. 21...Rxf8 22.gxf5 g6 23.f6 Qh3 24.Qa4! c6 25.Qb4 Qg3+ 26.Ke2 Rf7 27.Qd6 Qg4+ 28.Ke1 Qg1+ 29.Ke2 Qxg5 30.Qd8 Qg4+ 31.Ke1 Qd7? 32.Qxd7 Rxd7 33.e6 Rd6 34.e7 Re6+ 35.Kd1 1-0

Source: *Frankfurter Schachzeitung*, August

1, 1891, p. 1

Albin A. – Bauer J.H.

Vienna, 1891

1.Nf3 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.e3 b6 4.Be2 Bb7 5.b3 d5 6.Bb2 Nbd7 7.0-0 Bd6 8.d4 Ne4 9.Nbd2 Qf6 10.Nxe4 dxe4 11.Ne1 Qh6 12.g3 Qg5 13.Ng2 h5 14.h4 Qh6 15.f4 f5 16.Ne1 Qg6 17.Kh2 Nf6 18.b4! 18...Bxb4 is met with 19.Qa4+. 18...c6 19.Qb3 Be7 20.Ng2 Rh6 21.c5 Ng4+ 22.Kg1 Kf7 23.a4 Nf6 24.Kh2 Ng4+ 25.Kh3 Rhh8 26.Rac1 Nf6



27.Ne1! Activating this Knight via e1-c2-a3-c4-d6. 27...Nd5 28.Nc2 Rhb8 29.Na3 bxc5 30.Nc4! Bf6 31.dxc5 Ba6 32.Nd6+ Kg8 33.b5 Be7 34.Be5 Bxd6 35.Bxd6 Rb7 36.Be5! cxb5 37.c6 Rb6 38.a5 R6b8 39.Bxb8 Rxb8 40.c7 Advancing the pawns on the queenside wins the game. 40...Rc8 41.Rc6 Bb7 42.Qxd5 Qg4+ 43.Bxg4 hxg4+ 44.Kg2 exd5 45.Rc5 a6 46.Kf2 Kf7 47.Ke2 Ke6 48.Kd2 Kd6 49.Rfc1 g6 50.R5c2 Kd7 1-0

Source: *Frankfurter Schachzeitung*, March 8,

1891, p. 1

II. Genuine Originality in the Opening

Closely related to the need for a reassessment of Albin's chess beginnings comes the matter of his eccentricity in the openings. In his game against Csank in 1892, Albin introduced the so-called Alekhine-Chatard Attack in the French Defence (1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 Be7 5.e5 Nfd7 6.h4!?), which was later popularized by Alexander Alekhine. Albin also contributed heavily to the development of the Albin-Blackburne counter-gambit in the Philidor Defence (1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 Bg4 4.dxe5 Nd7!?) as Stefan Bucker correctly indicated in one of his theoretical articles. ^[vi] The game below, played during a simultaneous exhibition, stands as incontestable proof that in 1885 Albin was already studying this line:

Strasser L. – Albin A.

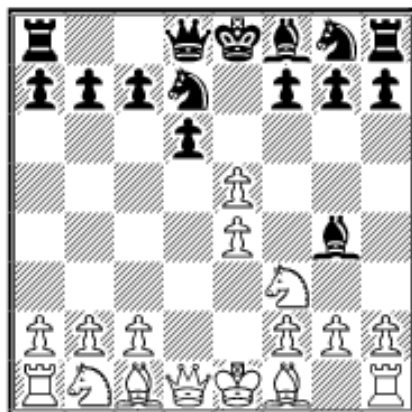
Vienna, 1885

Simultaneous Exhibition with clocks

Notes by *Brüderschaft*

This game was played by Albin in an exhibition against 17 players. (...) Fifteen Austrian schillings were bet against Adolf Albin by the audience regarding the chances of his pawn sacrifice from the Philidor Defence.

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 Bg4 4.dxe5 Nd7



This pawn sacrifice – giving Black good play – is called the Albin Variation. 5.exd6 Bxd6 6.Bd3 Ne5 7.Nbd2 Nf6 8.h3 Bh5 9.g4 Nxf3+ 10.Nxf3 Bg6 11.e5 This move allows Black very interesting play. 11...Bb4+ 12.c3 Bxd3 13.exf6 Bc5 14.Ne5 Qd5 15.Qxd3 Qxh1+ 16.Ke2 0-0 17.Qf3 Qxf3+ 18.Kxf3 Rfe8 19.Bf4 Bd6 20.Nc4 Bxf4 21.Kxf4 Rad8 22.Ne3 Rd2 23.f3 Rd3 24.Nf5 Re2 25.b3 gxf6 26.c4 c5 27.Rg1 Re5 This move was very good because White had very little time left. 28.g5 Rxf5+ 29.Kxf5 Rxf3+

30.Kg4 Rf2 31.gxf6 Rxf6 32.Rg2? Rg6+ 33.Kf3 Rxc2 34.Kxc2 Kg7 35.Kf3 Kf6 36.Kg4 Ke5 37.Kg5 f5 0-1

Source: *Brüderschaft*, 28.12.1885, p. 150

Albin also patented a plan of advancing the queenside pawns in the Italian Game, after 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Nf6 4.d3 Bc5 5.c3 d6 6.b4 Bb6 7.a4 a6 8.a5 Ba7 9.Be3, this is another one of Albin's "pets" as Tarrasch called it. [vii]

The Romanian chess master often played openings or consciously chose lines considered inferior – at the Budapest Tournament in 1896 he played 1.e4 b6!? against Janowski, [viii] and in 1905 at Vienna he played 1.e4 Nf6 2.e5 Ng8 against Nimzovitch. In the match against Delmar at the Manhattan Chess Club in 1894 Albin played 1.d4 e6 2.e3 b6 in the 5th game. [ix] And Brody M. – Albin A., Vienna 1899 saw the exceedingly original 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 a6 3.Nxe5 Qe7. With White he played 1.e4, 1.d4, 1.Nf3, 1.f4, or even 1.d4 d5 2.Bf4 c5 3.Bxb8 against Schlechter at Vienna in 1905. In New York in 1895 he engaged in thematic consultation games defending Black in several apparently inferior variations of the Evans Gambit.

Below is one of Albin's theoretical novelties from his famous win over Tarrasch at Dresden in 1892. The reactions caused by this game are instrumental for deducing Albin's character and playing style.

Albin A. – Tarrasch S.

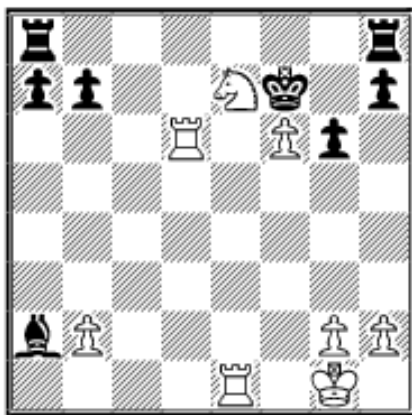
Dresden, 1892

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Bc5 4.c3 Nf6 5.d4 exd4 6.cxd4 If 6.e5 then 6...d5! 7.Bb5 Ne4 8.cxd4 Bb6 9.Nc3 0-0 10.Be3 Ne7 and Black has no problems.
6...Bb4+ If 6...Bb6? then 7.d5 Ne7 (7...Na5 8.Bd3!) 8.e5 Ng4 9.d6! **7.Bd2 Nxe4** 7...Bxd2+ or 7...d5 seems more normal, as Tarrasch himself wrote: *Usually 7...Bxd2+ is played. I adopted the text move many times in Nuremberg and not without success.* **8.Bxb4 Nxb4 9.Bxf7 Kxf7 10.Qb3+ d5 11.Ne5+ Kf6?** A move proposed by Vitzthum and recommended by Max Lange. Bilguer also called it a correct move, which along with the next two moves, creates the main idea of Black's defence. Kieseritsky in his match against Buckle in Paris, 1848 invariably played 11...Ke7. However, it seems that Dr. Schmidt's recommendation is better: 7...Ke6! 8.Qxb4 c5 9.Qa4 Qb6! **12.Qxb4 c5 13.Qa4 Qe8?!** Again 13...Qb6 seems more precise. **14.Qd1!**



A theoretical novelty; Tarrasch noted: *This move secures a positional advantage for White in all variations. So called "theoretical analyses" only considers here the exchange of Queens, when Black has a good game.* Tarrasch also wrote in his *Dreihundert Schachpartien*, Leipzig, 1895: *I carelessly played a little known line from Bilguer. My opponent, instead of making the weak reply according to theory, immediately found a much better one and reached an advantageous position. Thus I lost a game because of my good memory and the bad one of my opponent!*

And *Chess Monthly*, 1893-94 wrote: *He happened to have analysed this particular variation of the Giuco Piano with the late Herr Gelbfuhs, and so inflicted the only defeat the Doctor sustained in three consecutive International Tournaments.* **14...Ng5** If 14...cxd4 White will play 15.f4 and then capture the pawn from d4. Chigorin suggested 14...g6 as 14...cxd4 15.f4 g5 16.g3 followed by 17.Qxd4 is insufficient. **15.f4 Ne6 16.Nc3 g6 17.Nxd5+ Kg7 18. 0-0 cxd4 19.f5! Nf4 20.f6+ Kf8 21.Ne7 Qb5 22. Rxf4!** The best way; 22.Qe1 fails to 22...Ne2+ **22...Qxe5 23.Qxd4 Qxd4 24.Rxd4 Be6 25.Rd6! Kf7 26.Rae1 Bxa2**



27.Nd5! Rhd8 28.Re7+ Kf8 29.Rxd8+ Rxd8 30.Nc3 Bf7 31.Rxb7 a6 32.Ra7 Rd2 33.Ne4! Rxb2 34.Ra8+ Be8 35.Nd6 1-0 If 35...Re2 then simply 36.f7. The *British Chess Magazine* noted: *Herr Albin was warmly congratulated after his victory.* Source: *British Chess Magazine*, 1892, p. 361.

The atmosphere of this game is described in *SAH*, No.25/1948, on page 793 as follows: *Indeed, it was not expected that one - so far -*

nearly unknown master succeeded in defeating Tarrasch. In a Ruy Lopez game, Albin playing with White came into a better position. At once the news spread in the playing hall: "Tarrasch is losing!" As in that time there was no demonstration wall boards, numerous spectators rushed toward the board on which Albin and Tarrasch struggled. Moreover, the participants of the tournament left their games to see the sensational event. Only Master Shotlender stayed seated in his place with his failing position, looking at the ceiling, as if he was expecting salvation from there. The nicely ornamented tournament room provided a warlike appearance when the struggle for the vicinity of the table with the chess game Albin - Tarrasch began. Improvised protection bands were crushed, and they quickly dragged tables onto which they piled chairs so that the audience could stand on them. In that way whole pyramids of tables and chairs were created and adorned by excited spectators. Among the mob of the several hundreds of spectators, Albin made his winning move. The opponent was left with no salvation. Tarrasch thought for a long time and made a few more moves. After that he crushed his pieces down, made a sign of capitulation, and went out through the door.

The applause reverberated in the tournament hall. Somebody was found who could beat Tarrasch. The biggest daily newspapers from different parts of the world asked to receive the game by telegraph. And Emanuel Lasker, Tarrasch's main rival, congratulated Albin by dispatch. After several days, Tarrasch, tired and a bit angry, found the occasion to give credit to the winner. The grand master wrote: "I had no bad foreboding when I played a weakly known line from Bilguer's textbook. But, my opponent didn't know the line at all. Owing to that fact, his moves were much stronger than the ones noted in that textbook and he came to advance. I lost the game only because of my good memory and opponent's ignorance.

Some annotators and well-known players, including Emanuel Lasker, suggested that this was an accident. Here is Albin's complete letter of reply sent to the *Wiener Schachzeitung* editors and published in the issue No.7-8/1908, p. 196-

199:

These words are coming from the warm heart of a man dominated by implication, who is not confusing a sad fate with inability or lack of gift, as is often done by some men of simple naivety when they don't receive the whole amount of won games to quench their appetite. This is their whole understanding! But things are different with respect to Lasker's creational power! He is satisfied with the productivity of isolated moves for evaluating one master. The fact that I did not manage to produce anything great is because of my unhappy family situation, for which I do not blame anyone, of course. I was not quite ready for the whole charge of complete analysis and semi-draws. Today, to create is not a task easily accomplished by all.

Now on the game from Dresden and about the fall of Mr. Tarrasch: At that time, the game produced a lot of clamour among the theoreticians and scholars, as it provoked the stupefaction of all the philistines from chess and a lot of angst in the camp of Tarrasch's supporters. I have to confess that such a deep loyalty moved me greatly and through it I became more aware of the importance of this victory. I did not accord too much significance to this game myself. For me it was just a good game, like many others.

My whole audacity - that to win against the invincible – consisted in the fact that I did not follow the same chess habits as many did against Tarrasch, but I chose to follow my own path into a variation which was regarded as wrong by theory. Here is the game which generated so much emotion and interest in the world of chess. I am asking now: where is the luck in this perfectly played game? It is possible that Mr Tarrasch – so much used to relying on complete analysis – became a bit jumpy because of my independence, but his game was lost after Qa4-Qd1. As to luck – that is out of question. Moreover, this game was disadvantageous for me since the organizer of the event – Mr Zwanzig (may he rest in peace) – seeing my advance in the first week, when I was the leader, and being a bit worried about Mr Tarrasch – his favourite, thought he could do something for Tarrasch and obliged me to play three adjourned games in the same day. This extra-effort meant a chance for Mr Tarrasch; otherwise I would have had a word to say in relation with the prizes, considering my good form at that point.

Nevertheless, I have never refused my admiration for the German grandmaster, Dr. Tarrasch, and I expressed my admiration for his skills in the games against Marshall with the most objectivity in Neue Hamburger Zeitung. But now it's gone too far, with some exaggerating that my victory was "accidental", as quoted in Lasker's letter. I deeply refute that with all the respect I have for the world master, Dr. Lasker, whom I knew as a noble man and a good friend.

Respectable editor, next to my gratitude for publishing these lines, please find my highest appreciation and the honour to sign as

*Yours Sincerely,
Ad. Albin*

Every now and then, to initiate an innovation, it is helpful not to know what the books say. Independence, originality in thinking, and a flexible approach to the

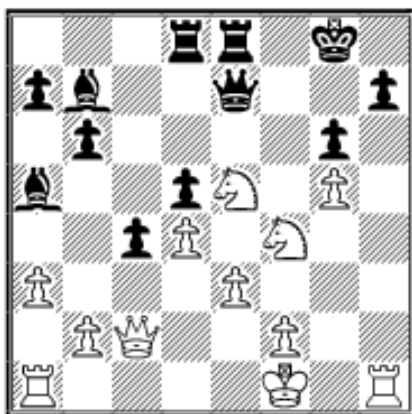
game were serious assets for Albin. Tarrasch was reduced to a student following the book and learning the hard way that the book recommendation was wide of the mark.

Albin favored dynamic lines and tried to include his personal touch in a variety of systems. Against the same Adolph Csank, Albin had another innovative idea with h2-h4, but this time in Queen's Gambit Declined. It was published in a Viennese chess journal eighteen years afterward.

Albin A. – Csank A.

Vienna, 1892

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 Be7 5.e3 0-0 6.Nf3 b6 7.Bd3 Bb7 8.Bxf6 Bxf6 9.cxd5 exd5 10.h4!? *Wiener Schachzeitung* gave credit to Albin for playing this original line for the first time in this very game. **10...Re8 11.g4 c5 12.Ne2 Nc6 13.g5 Be7 14.Qb1 g6 15.h5 Nb4 16.hxg6 Nxd3+ 17.Qxd3 fxg6 18.Ne5 c4 19.Qc2 Bb4+ 20.Kf1 Qe7 21.a3 Ba5 22.Nf4 Rad8**



23.Nfxg6! hxg6 24.Rh8+ Kxh8 25.Nxg6+ Kg7 26.Nxe7 Rxe7 27.Kg2 Bc8 28.Rh1 Re4 29.f3 Bf5! 30.Qf2 Re7 31.Qh4 Bg6 32.Qh6+ Kf7 33.Rh4 Rdg8 Draw at move 68. (The source does not reproduce the entire game). Source: *Wiener Schachzeitung*, No.11-12/1910, p. 193

Albin was an early champion of a very modern line that in the 1990s was re-evaluated by the Moldavian trainer, Chebanenko. Many top GMs, including

Kasparov, then adopted this line of play. [x]

Holzwarth – Albin A.

Vienna (Kolisch Memorial), 1890

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 h6 5.Bf4 a6 6.e3 Bg4 7.Qb3 b5



8.cxd5 Bxf3 9.gxf3 Nxd5 10.Bg3 e6 11.Bg2 Bb4 12.O-O Bxc3 13.bxc3 O-O 14.e4 Nb6 15.f4 Nc4 16.Rfd1 Nd7 17.Bf1 Ndb6 18.Bd3 f5 19.Qc2 fxe4 20.Bxe4 Nd5 21.f5 exf5 22.Bxf5 Qf6 23.Bd3 Rae8 24.Bxc4 bxc4 25.Qa4 h5 26.h4 Re2 27.Rf1 Qg6 28.Kh2 Rf3 0-1

Source: Vienna 1890 Kolisch Memorial, by W.Goldman, p. 77

[i] In the excellent work of Ed. Winter, *A Chess Omnibus* (Russell Enterprises, 2003) an error can be noted on page 392. It is stated that *Schach-Aphorismen und Reminiscenzen* (Hanover, 1899) was “Albin’s only book, and a self-publication”. Albin’s Romanian chess manual is mentioned by other sources. For instance: *From Vienna. H.Lehner’s magazine Oestereische Lesehalle communicates the following: Adolf Albin, moved in Vienna from Bucharest for several years ago, offered 20 simultaneous games in Café Puhmeyer on 25 June, managing to win 13 games and draw several others. Herr Albin is also the author of the only Romanian chess book, a short guiding manual. Deutsche Schachzeitung, no. 9/ 1885, p.283*

[ii] *I don’t know if this move of mine works well, it is just my two cents.*

[iii] A.Chicco, A. Rosino, *Storia degli scacchi in Italia* (Venice, 1990)

[iv] Many thanks to Mr. G. Berlinger for his help translating the German language.

[v] *Chess he learned in 1870. It cannot be said that he possesses considerable natural aptitude for the game; and if he had received a scientific training earlier than at that age of 22 years, when most of the great players, who have made their mark, are at their best, he would have been in the very first rank. (p. 66)*

[vi] Bucker replied to L. Pliester’s article from *New In Chess* No.48/1998, p.90-95 and his book on *Englund-Gambit*, 1988 contains some notes on the same matter.

[vii] Albin – Charousek, Nuremberg, 1895 (1-0); also Albin – Teichmann R., Nuremberg, 1896; in both, the notes of Tarrasch gave credit to Albin for inventing this plan in the Tournament Book.

[viii] See Janowski D. – Albin A., Budapest, 1896 (1-0) in *Budapest 1896 International Tournament*, by J.C. Owen, p.128; also see Albin’s innovative ideas from Petroff Defence in Tarrasch S.- Albin A., Monte Carlo, 1902 (1/2) and Albin’s innovative plan in Ruy Lopez from Janowski – Albin, Monte Carlo, 1902; both games can be found in *Monte Carlo 1902*, by A.J. Gillam (ed.), at page 36 and page 25; Also we quote from *The Oxford Companion to Chess* (2nd edition, Oxford University Press) 1992, p.6: **Albin Variation** – *An Alternative to the Dillworth Variation in the Spanish Opening introduced in the early 1890s in a match game Csank-Albin. Instead of 11...Nxf2 Albin played 11...Nxd2 12.Qxd2 Be7. Also in Philidor Defence, first played by Albin in a simultaneous display in 1885, when the spectators unsuccessfully wagered that Albin’s gambit would fail, and less happily in master play a month later, against Popiel, Vienna, 1886.*

[ix] In the 3rd game he played 1.d4 g6 2.e4 Bg7 with Black. The scores of the games are found in *The Sun*, New York, (February, 1894).

[x] *The Slav Defence* (ChessBase CD-ROM, 2002) by D. Rogozenko, a former

student of V. Chebanenko, deals extensively with this variation. Similarly see *The ...a6 Slav* by G. Flear (Everyman Chess, 2003).

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