

Encephalitis lethargica

or

**The medical case
of Lodz chess master
Achilles Frydman**

Laudation for Edward Winter

William Hartston has called Edward Winter „probably the most meticulous and diligent researcher and chess writer around.”

(...) He has edited and translated books by Capablanca and Alekhine, while among his own works are *Capablanca* (Mc Farland, 1989), *Chess Explorations* (Cadogan, 1996) and *Kings, Commoners and Knaves* (Russell Enterprises, 1999).

(...) and in March 2002 ChessCafe.com welcomed on-line his celebrated „Chess Notes”, which had previously been a periodical and a magazine column.

Taylor Kingston, *Heroic Tales: The Best of ChessCafe.com 1996-2001*, p.219.

C.N. 2917:

From page 79 of the 2002 edition of *Chess Lists* by A. Soltis:

‘The most tragic case belongs to Paulino Frydman, a little-known Polish master who was invited to the Bad Poděbrady, Czechoslovakia international of July 1936. Surrounded by several world-class players – including Alexander Alekhine, Salo Flohr, Erich Eliskases and Gideon Stahlberg – he astounded them by allowing only a draw in his first seven games. But two rounds later, with a score of 8-1, he lost to Alekhine and suffered a nervous breakdown. Frydman scored only one and a half points in his last eight games and finished as an also-ran. He was never again a significant figure in chess.’

„Sourceless Soltis”

Next, a typical Internet item by Bill Wall:

‘Frydman, Paulino (1905-1982)

A leading Polish player during the 1930s who represented his country in seven Olympiads. He used to run around nude in hotels yelling, “fire”.’

Wall writes similarly at another website:

‘Paulino Frydman was a leading Polish player during the 1930s who represented his country in seven olympiads. He used to run around nude in hotels yelling “fire”.’

Or again:

“The Polish master Frydman also ran around nude, but usually in hotels while yelling, “fire”.’

At yet another Internet site, Wall disseminates a slightly dressed-up version of his story:

‘The Polish master Paulino Frydman represented his country in seven chess olympiads. He liked to clear out hotels by running down the halls in his underwear yelling, “Fire!”’

At no stage, of course, has Wall given any further particulars, but a similar tale may be recalled from *The Psychology of the Chess Player* by Reuben Fine. On page 65 he wrote:

‘During a chess tournament in Poland a Polish master by the name of A. Frydman was reported to have gone berserk and to have run through the hotel without any clothes on shouting “Fire!”’

This may seem strange. We have been repeatedly assured by Wall that the master in question was Paulino Frydman, so why did Fine write ‘A. Frydman’? Moreover, Fine suggests that the incident in question occurred once only, whereas Wall is ostensibly privy to information that it was Frydman’s frequent conduct (i.e. what he ‘used to’ do, ‘liked to’ do and ‘usually’ did). Finally, given that Poděbrady was in Czechoslovakia and not Poland, where Fine places the tournament in question, how might any of this tie in with Soltis’ reportage?

Bill Wall;
a negative hero?

Contribution
of
Reuben Fine

Stimulated by C.N. 2917, on 3 July 2002 I wrote an e-mail to David Hayes, who published the Frydman item a la Bill Wall on his page:
<http://www.logicalchess.com>.

Dear Sir,

I would like to ask you about your source of information regarding Paulino Frydman who, according you, „used to run around nude in hotels yelling ‘fire’.”

On Thursday, July 04, 2002 6:43 AM my correspondent wrote to me and to Bill Wall:

All historical information is from Mr. Bill Wall.

On July 05, 2002 01:33 Bill Wall wrote to me and to David Hayes:

Tomasz and David,

I am trying to track where I found this information on the Polish master Paulino Frydman. So far, it is not obvious from any of my chess books, so I need to look at some old chess magazines such as British Chess Magazine, Chess, Chess Life etc.

This was supposed to be just what Carlos Torre did when he had a mental breakdown. Other documented mental breakdowns occurred with Steinitz, Rubinstein, Miles, Morphy, perhaps Fischer now.

Bill Wall

No further information from Bill Wall followed.

In C.N. 2917 Edward Winter also wrote:

„Perhaps a Polish correspondent can locate further details.”

His appeal could not be unanswered...

C.N. 2932:

From Tomasz Lissowski (Warsaw):

‘It is true that Achilles Frydman of Łódź (and not the more famous Paulin(o) Frydman of Warsaw, and later of Buenos Aires) had serious health problems in the late 1930s. Two quotations follow, the first being from the column in Polska Zbrojna by Colonel M. Steifer at the time of the Jurata, 1937 tournament:

“Najdorf could have easily won first prize, had it not been for an irritating incident with A. Frydman, who caused many difficulties for the tournament management and for the players. This cost Najdorf two points: the games he lost against Gerstenfeld and Schächter in winning positions.”

Further information is given by Tadeusz Wolsza on page 32 of the third volume of his dictionary of Polish chess players, Arcymistrzowie, mistrzowie, amatorzy:

“Near the end of the tournament Achilles Frydman fell ill. After one of his numerous lost games he was the victim of a strong attack of fury, and doctors placed him in a mental asylum in Kocborowo. This unfortunate case ended his chess career. He never returned to competitive chess, and his occasional off-hand games were only against friends.”

„What really happened?”
Who (and if) run around naked?

After visiting the State Archive in Gdansk
and Psychiatric Hospital in Starogard Gdanski
in May 2005

the true story of poor Achilles Frydman
could be presented.

LODZ 1935

Semifinal of Polish Championship



Achilles Frydman - second from the right.

8 Masters' Tournament Lodz 1936/37



Sitting, left to right: M. Najdorf, P. Frydman,

A. Weinreich (president of the Lodz Chess Club), T. Regedzinski.

Standing, left to right: I. Appel, J. Kolski, A. Frydman, NN, A. Szpiro, E. Gerstenfeld

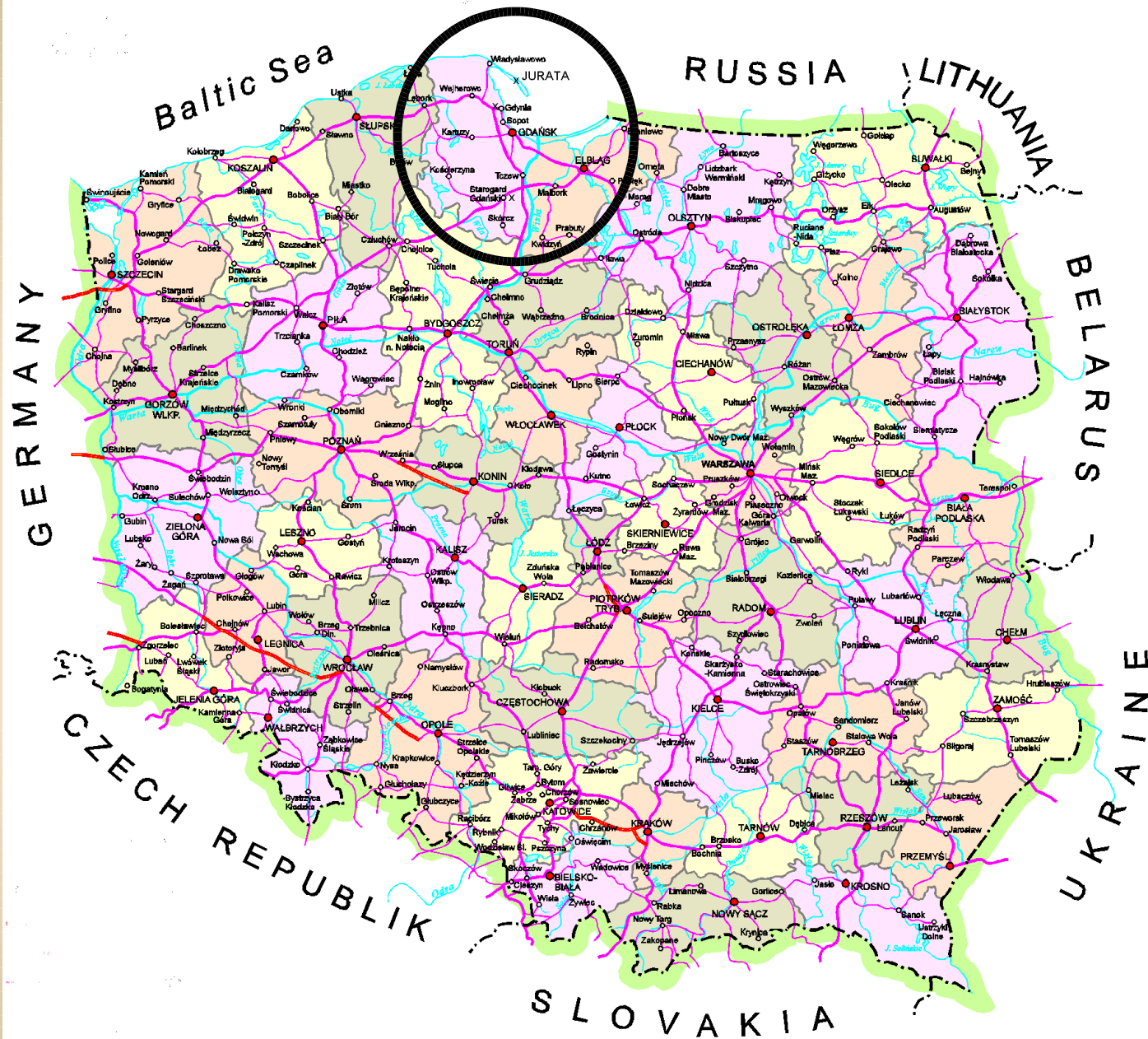
4th Championship of Poland

Jurata, 23 May - 6 June 1937

Tournament directors, master Dawid Przepiórka and colonel Marian Steifer, did their best: perfect accommodation (the prestigious „Lido” Hotel on the Hel peninsula), an appropriate prize fund (I - 200\$, II - 150\$, ..., XI - 15\$, Brilliancy Prize - 100\$) and ... nice weather at the turn of May and June. The field was strong (only P. Frydman and K. Makarczyk were absent) and enhanced by six foreign competitors: Stahlberg, Pirc, Foltys, L. Steiner, E. Anderssen and Apscheneek.

The tournament determined not only the Championship of Poland but also the names of the Olympic team members for Stockholm 1937.

POLAND TODAY

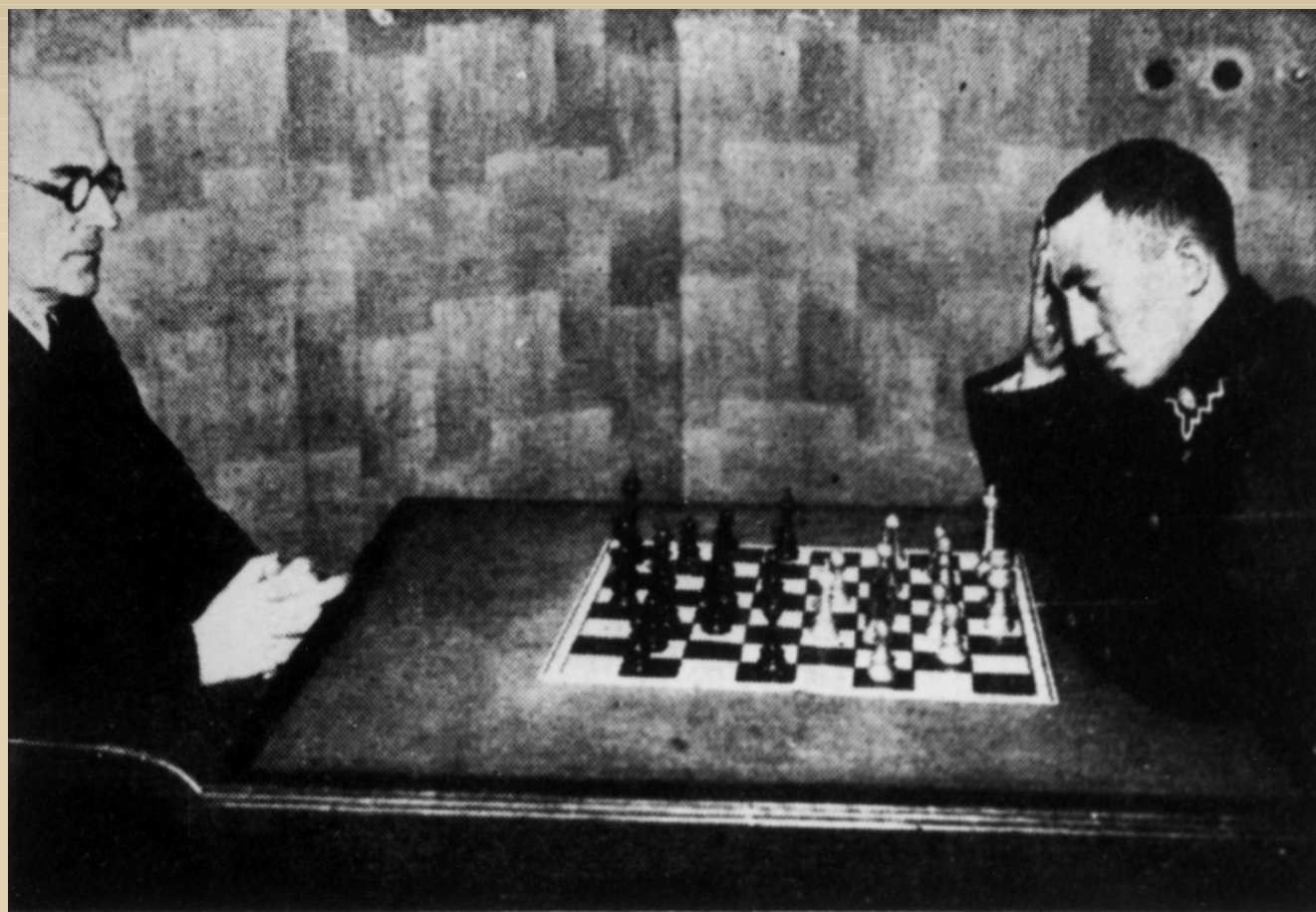




Jurata *Kur-Ort* on Hel peninsula was established in 1928.

„Lido” Hotel in Jurata on the post-card from 1930s.

Not a very big building, but please remember: peninsula is only 100-500 m wide!



*Prof. Zawadzki
(Śląsk)*

*M. Najdorf
(Warszawa)*

Moshe-Mendel-Mieczyslaw Najdorf (right) as a soldier of Polish Army wins a game versus Zawadzki during III Championship of Poland in Warsaw, May - June 1935. The Jurata game A. Frydman - Najdorf should be played on 3 June 1937 (round 15)

Gdynia, 4 June 1937

Gdynia dnia 4 czerwca 1937 r.

Świadcstwo nagłości

dla Krajowego Zakładu Psychiatrycznego

w K o c b o r o w i e

Dnia 3 czerwca 1937 r. o godz. 18 zawezwano Pogotowie Ratunkowe Ubezpieczalni Społecznej w Gdyni do pensjonatu "Hotel Lido" w Juracie na Helu celem zabrania stamtąd niejakiego FRYDMANA Achila lat 33, zamieszkałego stale w Łodzi przy ul. Śródmiejskiej Nr. 48, bawiącego chwilowo w Juracie na turnieju szachowym, który w dniu 3 czerwca b.r. zaczął zdradzać objawy choroby psychicznej, a ostatnio - dostał napadów szału, zagrażających bezpieczeństwu własnemu i otoczenia. Wysłano samochód Pogotowia, który o godz. 22 min. 30 przywiózł do Gdyni pacjenta skrupowanego kaftanem bezpieczeństwa, uspięnego dawką morfiny ze skopolaminą i z luminalem. Pacjentowi towarzyszył brat jego, Dr. Med. Leon Frydman, zamieszkały i praktykujący w Łodzi przy ul. Śródmiejskiej Nr. 48. Dr. Frydman podał, że w dniu 3 czerwca zawezwany został telefonicznie z Łodzi do Juraty. Po przyjeździe stwierdził u brata swego, Achila, znacznego stopnia podniecenie psychomotoryczne, urojenia wzrokowe i słuchowe o treści prześladowczej, chory był bardzo agresywny, rzucał się na otoczenie, chciał uciekać, chwilami występowały zamroczenia świadomości, chory tracił zorientowanie co do miejsca i osób. Dr. Frydman zastosował podanie dużych dawek luminalu, a następnie - morfiny ze skopolaminą, pod wpływem których chory uspokoił się nieco, a następnie ubrany został w kaftan bezpieczeństwa i przewieziony do Gdyni, skąd odesłany zostaje do Kocborowa, gdyż dalsze pozostawienie jego poza obrębem zakładu zamkniętego zagraża bezpieczeństwu własnemu chorego i bezpieczeństwu otoczenia. Leczenie w zakładzie zamkniętym jest konieczne.

Lekarz dyżurny Pogotowia Ratunkowego
Ubezpieczalni Społecznej w G d y n i :


/Dr. Leon Frydman/


/Dr. Witold Szymborski/

POGOTOWIE RATUNKOWE
UBEZPIECZALNI SPOŁECZNEJ
w GDYNI

The report made by a doctor in Gdynia hospital for Kocborowo Psychaitric Hospital

(...) Achilles Frydman, age 33, temporary in Jurata on the chess tournament, on 3 June suddenly gave signs of a mental disease, and later - he suffered an attack of fury, being dangerous for himself and associates.

(...) His brother, Mr Leon Frydman, a medical in Lodz, was called by the telephone and came to Jurata. His diagnosis was: strong psycho-motor excitement, optical and aural delusions, persecution mania, aggressiveness; he attacked associates, wanted to escape, from time to time he was loosing consciousness, no orientation regarding persons and location.

(...) he is sent to Kocborowo, because his presence outside a close medical institution would be risky for both himself and environment. The treatment in a close institution is obligatory.

(Dr Witold Szymborski)

17. Kiedy zauważono pierwsze ślady obecnej choroby umysłowej? Jakiego rodzaju były te objawy? (Zmiana humoru, skłonności, nawyknienia, zachowania się, charakteru, mowy, charakteru pisma, chodu, snu itp.):

przed dwoma dniami podczas turnieju
w Juracie
Maledy, naciśnięcie, wstawanie w nocy,
i robienie nietrzymalych uwag, nie
przebudzenie, głośnie przebudzenie się,
bezsenność.

„Two days ago, during chess contest in Jurata, his colleagues - chessplayers observed: several times he woke up and took showers in the night, loud behaviour, enlarged excitability, sleeplessness.”

(From the paper: „The Malady Report”,
fulfilled on 4 June 1937 in Kocborowo.)

HISTORIA CHOROBY

dot. *umysł. chorego Frydmanu Achillea*
przyjęte *go* *4 IV* 193*7* r.
Numer głównej księgi wpisów: *13366*
Klasa wyżywienia: *I*

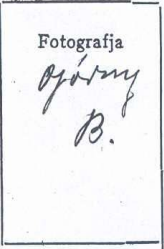
I. PERSONALJE:

data urodzenia: *19 III 1904* miejsce urodz *Lódź*
powiat *Łódź*
zatrudnienie, zawód: *funkcyj. bankowy*
wyznanie: *moż.* Stan rodzinny: *wolny, żonaty*
zamężna, w rozwodzie, owdowiały (a)
ostatnia siedziba: *Lódź, Śródmiejska 48*
zawód rodziców:
Czy przebywał pacjent kiedykolwiek w szpitalu dla psychicznie chorych?
po raz pierwszy od do gdzie?
zwolniony: a) po wyzdrowieniu? b) bez wyzdrowienia?
po raz drugi od do gdzie?
Zwolniony: a) po wyzdrowieniu? bez wyzdrowienia?
Prócz tego jeszcze razy w szpitalach?
Zwolniony *4/ VII* 193*7* r.
a) jako zdrowy na umyśle?
b) wyleczony?
c) z poprawą? *proszę dokąd?* *do domu*
(do innego zakładu?)
d) niewyleczony (oddany w opiekę (rodzinną?)
rodziny własnej?
rodziny obcej?
Zmarł: 193*7* r.
Przyczyna śmierci bez obdukcji?
" " po autopsji?

Rozpoznanie:
psych. rozpręśnienie?
Stadium manii acalis
typu paranoicznego
ostrego
z objawami szkodliwymi

Inne cielesne choroby:

Przypadek sądowy
oskarżony o



The Malady Report

Achilles Frydman, born 19 March 1904
in Lodz, clerck in the bank, single.

Jurata

Gdynia

Kocborowo

- today a part of
Starogard city,
but in 1937 -
independent
administrative
unit.



The political map of North Poland and *Freie Stadt Danzig* in years 1920 - 1939.

Hospital in Kocborowo



Building of Administration - May 2005

(photo: T. L.)