

TRANSLATION OF DR. LASKER'S STATEMENT.

After declaring that he does not know what were the motives of the organizing committee in not inviting him to the forthcoming international tournament in New York, Dr. Lasker says:

"I can only say that it is practically the same committee, including the leading members, which arranged the tournament in 1924. I was invited to the tournament in 1924. It was not exactly a friendly invitation. It was very plain to me the way they invited me. In that letter they told me at the same time that, if I refused to accept the invitation, Dr. Tarrasch would replace me and, therefore, I had to answer within 24 hours—'yes' or 'no.'

"Since 1914 everybody has known that I require a small fee when a chess committee wants me to join a tournament. The invitation to which I had to reply, 'yes' or 'no,' cut off every possibility of discussing the fee, and it seems very clear to me that those who forwarded the invitation, through a go-between (Mr. Kagan), certainly figured that I would refuse the invitation.

"There were two reasons which forced me to accept the invitation. I have found, since 1922, that there was seemingly a sort of opposition against me. I found that even in London. I was invited to the tournament in London. I asked for an honorarium of \$500, but they refused to accept my proposition. Through the intermediary, Mr. Kagan, they offered me a smaller fee, which I refused to accept.

"Capablanca attacked me in the British Chess Magazine. I answered his attack and forwarded my reply to that magazine, but received it back, and the conclusion I came to was that the magazine did not wish to become mixed up in a war of words between Mr. Capablanca and myself. I was not the only one. There were Mr. Bogoljubow and Mr. Rubinstein, both treated in the same discourteous manner.

"In the London tournament of 1922 Germany was not represented. At Hastings and in other small tournaments Germany was represented by Dr. Tarrasch. At Maehrisch-Ostrau I proved that I could beat the younger generation of chess players better than Dr. Tarrasch. It was in the interest of the whole German chess world that I felt obliged to come to New York.

"During a meeting of the tournament committee the president stated that the tournament gained great importance because I attended it. Nobody seemed to pay any notice to the way in which I was invited. I soon perceived that there was in the committee a small circle of people who dominated the entire committee. In this smaller group, Mr. Lederer was the chief person. By other members of the committee, I was informed that the entire correspondence between me and the committee was left wholly in the hands of Mr. Lederer and that a certain honorarium was put on the budget in the same way as for Mr. Capablanca.

"I therefore asked Mr. Lederer if he was responsible for the manner in which I was invited. I told him that the contents of the invitation were written in such a way that it seemed as if they expected a refusal from me in order that I should not partake in the tournament. He intimated that Mr. Kagan was the cause of it, and as proof showed me the official correspondence, but not his correspondence with Mr. Kagan. He asserted that he did not have that correspondence at hand, but promised that he would endeavor to get it and show it to me. This promise, however, he never fulfilled, although I waited for it many months.

"After I returned, Mr. Kagan told me that he adhered strictly to the instructions given him by Mr. Lederer and that Mr. Lederer always had in his possession copies of the correspondence with the different chess masters, and that he, Mr. Kagan, was only the go-between. Although I have gone to much trouble to get light on this subject, I never could find my way out. It seems to me that it was the duty of the committee to ask Mr. Lederer to put before them the whole correspondence and to say: 'Yes, we wanted Dr. Lasker to be invited in the way it was done.' Or, in the other case, 'No, Mr. Lederer did not act in the spirit as we would have liked him to do and we are ready to offer you our good will.'

"In a letter to the president of the committee (Mr. Limburg) I insisted on an investigation and a solution in the way I have outlined, but he simply wrote me a non-committal letter. I wrote a second letter to him along the same lines. I never received an answer. So he has left it to me to think about the whole situation as I see fit. My idea is that, although Mr. Lederer acted originally against the will of the committee, using all sorts of tricks and bluff, the committee profited by the results of his actions.

"During the play I noticed that the clock which regulated my time for reflection was not correct. Mr. Lederer had the control of and responsibility for this clock. During an investigation I was shown that there was something wrong with the clock. I had lost about fifteen minutes of the time for reflection. This, of course, was an important handicap, which became still worse because I lost twenty minutes during the repairing of the clock. Some of the chess friends, who also noticed the inaccuracy of the clock, sent for Mr. Lederer, but he was nowhere about.

"Can it be possible that Mr. Lederer, who had charge of the clock, was not familiar

with the actions of the clock? It was his duty to control the clocks, especially those which are used for such important play. At any rate, it was his duty to remain in the vicinity in order to be able to regulate the clock whenever something happened to it. The result of this intermezzo was that I became greatly excited and that the loss of time for reflection caused me to make a terrible blunder in my play; therefore I lost the game, the only one I have ever lost in New York.

"This time it is the same Mr. Lederer who has been nominated as chairman for the tournament of 1927. This fact is sufficient for me to keep me from attending the tournament, but there are two other facts which show better than anything else that the organizers of the tournament wish at all costs to prevent my taking part.

"Mr. Maroczy, a second-class player, has been appointed as director of the tournament. I presume that they made this choice because he attacked me in the most ignoble way in 'Neueste Schachnachrichten,' Mr. Kagan's chess magazine. He stated in that article that I smoked to hinder my opponents. This man has also advised the organizers not to include those chess masters who want an honorarium to attend the tournament. This class of players should consider themselves favored to play with masters and pay for it. And this man is now a director of the tournament in 1927.

"The committee of the tournament of 1924 communicated in a letter to the chess masters that the surplus of the money received, estimated at from \$2,000 to \$3,000, should be divided between the players in proportion to the results they achieved. I won the first prize, so that I had a right to one-third of the surplus. But at the end it showed up that there was no surplus. In the congress book, in which the history of the tournament was written down, there was not a word mentioned about the said promise. From the balance nobody can see to which of the masters the surplus has been paid.

"I suppose that the committee took special care of some masters. Not that they paid them out of their own pockets, but with the money they promised to each of the masters. I consider that the Manhattan Chess Club bears a moral responsibility for the above-mentioned actions, as well as for the inheritance of the committee of 1924, because the president of that club was also chairman of the committee and, further, because the members of the said club started the tournament.

"I have informed the club to this effect and stated that, as soon as the committee of 1924 had been dissolved, it would be easy for them to clean up all the old controversies by submitting all the material to an arbitration committee. The club, however, has refused to do so.

"The committee of 1924 was partial toward Capablanca and I have shown in this letter the results of their actions. I see that the leader of that tournament is only a tool in the hands of Mr. Capablanca. Mr. Capablanca at present writes letters in the name of the committee revising old play rules for new ones which Capablanca uses for his own competitions. It is an old custom that before new rules can come into effect, they must first be confirmed by the chess masters.

"In one of the American newspapers it was stated that out of the tournament of 1927 the future opponent of Capablanca would come to the front, and Capablanca himself also expects this. In this way the question whether or not I should play with Capablanca (would not the whole chess world be delighted to see this match?) is circumnavigated. Nobody pays any attention at all to the request of Alekhine, who formally invited Capablanca to play a match with him in South America. No doubt a South American committee would be absolutely impartial.

"The committee of the forthcoming tournament does not represent the soul of the American people. It is a small minority backed by a couple of capitalists who started the tournament. All the chess friends of the United States are eager for impartiality. Soon there will come a time when they will eliminate the clumsy men who organized the tournament of 1924, and they will advise those who regulated the tournament of 1927: 'Go hence; keep the dollars in your pockets; our country (America) has no more need for your dollars than for yourselves.'"

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Richard Forster: "Lasker Speaks Out (1926)"

<https://www.chesshistory.com/winter/extra/laskerreveals.html>

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