



Российская Шахматная Федерация

119019 Москва, Гоголевский бульвар, 14;  
тел./факс: +7(495) 691-9755; тел.: +7(495) 691-8578  
e-mail: russiachess@gmail.com

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**Press release**

## **LOUVRE AND RUSSIAN STATE MUSEUM TO HOST INTERNATIONAL COMMEMORATIVE CHESS TOURNAMENT TO ALEKHINE**

The leading national museums of France and Russia, the Louvre and the Russian State Museum, have teamed up to host a historic international chess tournament dedicated to the memory of the fourth World Chess Champion, and Russia's first such champion, Alexander Alexandrovich Alekhine (1892–1946). Some of the world's leading chess players will take part in the tournament organised by the Russian Chess Federation on the initiative and with the support of businessmen Gennady Timchenko and Andrei Filatov, who are active members of the Franco-Russian Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

This major international sports and cultural event will take place in Paris and St Petersburg – two cities with close ties to the maestro - between 21 April and 1 May 2013. Participants include World Chess Champion Viswanathan Anand and other top grandmasters from France, China, Russia the UK and other nations across the world.

The chess tournament will be held in two stages. The first five days of the tournament will take place at the Louvre Museum in Paris, the city where Alekhine lived and worked at the peak of his fame. The second four-day stage of the Memorial will begin on 28 April at the Mikhailovsky Palace of the State Russian Museum in St Petersburg, the city where his brilliant chess career was launched at the famous St Petersburg chess tournament in 1914. The winner will be announced in St Petersburg on 1 May 2013.

The Alekhine Memorial tournament continues the successful practice of holding major international chess tournaments in museums, combining two areas of important cultural interest. In May 2012, the State Tretyakov Gallery hosted the FIDE World Chess Championship Match organised by the Russian Chess Federation, again with support from both Timchenko and Filatov. The duel for the world chess crown was not only an important sports event but also an important cultural one. The match drew the attention of millions of live broadcast spectators to the collection of one of Russia's leading museums and showed that chess could be an effective tool for raising awareness of Russian culture.

Admission to the watch the tournament in Paris and St Petersburg will be free of charge. There will also be a live webcast of the tournament, with commentary in Russian, English, and French.

The leading international grandmasters who have confirmed they will participate in the tournament include the current World Chess Champion Viswanathan Anand, world number-two ranking Vladimir Kramnik, world number-three Levon Aronian, winner of the Chess World Cup Peter Svidler, winner of the 2012 Candidates' Tournament Boris Gelfand, champion of France Maxime Vachier-Lagrave, Britain's strongest chess player Michael Adams, International Grandmaster Laurent Fressinet, member of the gold-medal-winning Russian team at the World Team Chess Championship Nikita Vitiugov, and China's reigning Chess Champion Ding Liren. Boris Postovsky will be the head arbitrator of the tournament.

**Ilya Levitov, Chairman of the Executive Board of the Russian Chess Federation, said:** “Alekhine was one of the brightest personalities in world chess history. It is a wonderful thing that a tournament commemorating Alekhine will be held in the two global cultural capitals that were an integral part of his life. The interesting roster of participants promises an intense competition, while the spectacular museums hosting the tournament will attract the spectators’ interest to the Alekhine Memorial as both a chess and a cultural event.”

**Gennady Timchenko, a sponsor of the Alekhine Memorial, added:** “The Alexander Alekhine Memorial continues the successful tradition of holding top-level chess tournaments at famous museums, which was started by the Tretyakov Gallery in May 2012. We are thankful to the Louvre and the Russian Museum for supporting our proposal and believe that the upcoming tournament will serve not only the development of chess but also popularisation of Russian art. Alekhine was the first Russian World Chess Champion and one of the most interesting chess virtuosos of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. His creative legacy remains of value to new generations of chess players, while the story of his life continues to excite historians and chess enthusiasts alike. The coming tournament is a tribute to the memory of a great chess player and a worthy citizen of the two countries to which his life was closely tied: Russia and France.”

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### *Media contacts*

**CCIFR Paris**

mathieu.calleux@calyptus.net  
Tél. +33 1 53 65 37 91

**CCIFR Moscou**

natalia.petrova@ccifr.ru  
Tél. +7 (495) 721 38 28

## Information for the media

### Alexander Alekhine (1892–1946)

Born in Moscow on 19 October 1892, the first Russian World Chess Champion Alexander Alekhine was the son of a State Duma deputy, marshal of the Voronezh nobility, and the owner of huge black-earth estates in Central Russia. Alekhine graduated from the St Petersburg School of Law in 1914. That same year, he became one of the world's strongest chess players, placing third at the prestigious St Petersburg chess tournament, after the then-reigning World Champion Emanuel Lasker and before the future Champion José Raúl Capablanca.

Alekhine was playing at a tournament in Germany when WWI broke out. He was arrested and thrown into a German prison; upon his return to Russia, he signed up as a volunteer with the Red Cross. Alekhine was twice contused on the Galician Front, carried the wounded from battlefields, was decorated several times and was nominated for the Order of Saint Stanislaus with Swords. He became the first Chess Champion of the USSR in 1920, before leaving Soviet Russia in 1921 for France, where he became a citizen in 1925.

In 1927, Alekhine defeated the “invincible” José Raúl Capablanca in a match for the World Champion title. He dominated the chess world for several years after that, winning major tournaments at a big advantage over his rivals. In 1935, he lost a match to Max Euwe, only to defeat the Dutch Grandmaster two years later in a return match and to remain undefeated until his death.

In 1939, during the chess Olympics in Buenos-Aires he called for the German team to be disqualified because of the German attack on Poland. After the Olympics he performed charity games, with funds going to the Polish Red Cross. In 1940, he joined the French army, which brought many complications to his life in occupied France.

Alekhine died in Portugal in 1946, on the eve of an announcement that his World Championship match against Mikhail Botvinnik would take place after all. Alexander Alekhine was the only World Chess Champion to die undefeated.

**The Russian Chess Federation** is a membership-based, voluntary, all-Russian public association made up of chess federations of the republics, territories, regions, federal cities, autonomous regions, and autonomous districts. It operates throughout the Russian Federation, its goal being to develop chess in Russia and to represent the interests of chess players who are members of the Federation both in Russia and abroad.

**The Louvre Museum** is one of the world's largest museums, covering an area of 160,000 m<sup>2</sup>. The exhibition halls themselves occupy 58,000 m<sup>2</sup>. Its collections have more than 300,000 items. The Louvre was the first museum to open its doors to the general public in 1793. Every year, more than 10 million people visit the Louvre. The museum's collection consists of departments for the Ancient East, Ancient Egypt, Ancient Greece and Rome, Artefacts, Sculptures, Fine Art, Graphic Art, and Islamic Arts. In February 2013, the Louvre museum signed an agreement with Russian businessmen Gennady Timchenko and Andrei Filatov to open an exhibition of Russian art in France's most prestigious museum.

**The State Russian Museum**, the country's first state museum of Russian fine arts, was founded in 1895 in St. Petersburg by decree of Emperor Nicholas II. It was officially opened to visitors on 19 March (7 March by the old calendar) 1898. The Russian museum's collection currently includes over 400,000 exhibits and covers all historical periods and development trends of Russian art, all main types and genres and areas of over more than 1,000 years (from the tenth to the twenty-first

century). The main exhibition is housed in the Mikhailovsky Palace and the Benoit Building, which forms part of the palace ensemble. In addition to the Mikhailovsky Palace, the Benoit Building and the Rossi Wing, the museum complex includes the Marble Palace and the Stroganov Palace, the Mikhailovsky (Engineering) Castle, as well as unique garden and park ensembles – the Summer Garden and Summer Palace of Peter I and the Mikhailovsky Garden.

**Gennady Timchenko** has been Chairman of the Economic Council of French and Russian Businesses of the Franco-Russian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCIFR) since December 2011. His family has been involved in charitable work both in Russia and abroad for more than 20 years. The Key Foundation, which works to help families with adopted children, was set up in 2007. The Neva Foundation was founded in 2008 in Geneva to support scientific and cultural cooperation projects between Russia and Western Europe. The Ladoga Charitable Foundation was created in 2010 to support the older generation, children's sport and the revival of Russian spirituality.

**Andrei Filatov** is an entrepreneur and a member of the Economic Council of the Franco-Russian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCIFR). He is actively involved in philanthropic work and is financing a number of humanitarian programmes. He set up an art fund to trace and collect works of Russian and Soviet artists from the period 1917–1991 which have been taken out of Russia. The fund aims to promote awareness of this artistic period through the publication of catalogues and the organization of exhibitions. Andrei Filatov supported an exhibition of works by the Russian émigré artist Nikolai Fechin at the State Tretyakov Gallery and is currently preparing an exhibition of Mikhail Nesterov to mark the 150th anniversary of this outstanding master of Russian painting.