



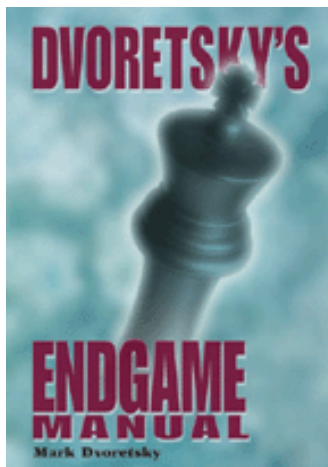
## The Test of Objectivity

“Genius and evildoing are two things incompatible” – so wrote Alexander Sergeevich Pushkin (*Mozart and Salieri*). Alas, it’s only a pretty phrase. There are more than enough examples of such “compatibility” in the world’s history; and we can also find plenty of them in a much narrower range of history – that of chess.

### COLUMNISTS

## *The Instructor* Mark Dvoretsky

Hardly any chessplayer, at least in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, can have contributed more to the development of our game than that genius, Robert Fischer. But can the beastly anti-Semitism he puts forth be called anything but evildoing? Only a rank evildoer, or else an absolutely incorrigible person, could find it possible to rejoice at the merciless murders of thousands of peaceable Americans on September 11<sup>th</sup>, let alone break into a radio station to be the first to share his joy with the listeners. I am completely in agreement with the moral judgment of the situation Fischer currently finds himself in, which was recently given public expression by Viktor Korchnoi.



From a humanistic standpoint, another unattractive figure was cut by a different chess genius: Alexander Alekhine. One need only recall how he played along with the evil regimes of both Stalin (that was in the latter half of the 30s at the peak of his massive repressions) and Hitler (during the Second World War), or the series of racist articles he wrote during the same period. In the West, the documentary evidence of Alekhine’s life is quite well reflected; in Russia, unfortunately, the facts are much less well known. Conversely, the habit of factual manipulation is much better developed – this way, you can reconstruct the facts to fit the desired version of events. I am, however, not a historian, but a trainer; and I want to touch upon this narrow, special aspect of our theme: to show how some negative characteristics of the personality can influence one’s professional behavior, particularly in the analysis and commentary of games.

Alekhine has a well-deserved reputation as an outstanding commentator. In his notes, what is most instructive is the logical linking of his assessment of the position with his analysis of the variations. Accurate, concrete evaluation narrows the field of possibilities to be examined, which allows the accurate – and, where necessary, lengthy – analysis of the few remaining continuations.

In my study of Alekhine’s books, I have long noted that his most valuable commentaries are those involving games of “unimportant” players; and that a great deal less faith should be placed in his notes when he comments on his own games, or on the games of his historical opponents.



In many of the notes to his own games, one can clearly see that he is attempting to demonstrate his own genius. To this end, Alekhine is capable even of direct falsification: several such occasions are known – such as the famous five-queen position, which supposedly occurred in his game against Nikolai Grigoriev. And if the game didn't turn out well, then Alekhine strove either to ignore or to make excuses for his errors.

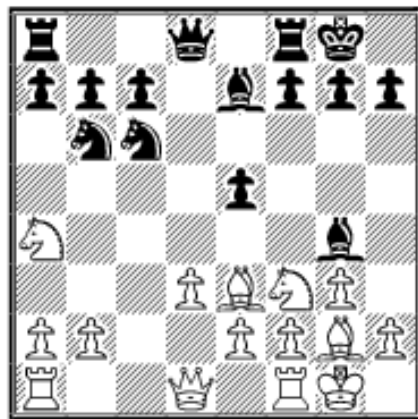
In his notes to games of his opponents we find constantly emerging attempts, either conscious or unconscious, to show their efforts in an unfavorable light, a concentration upon the errors they either committed – or didn't commit.

I have been aware of all this from my youth, when I made a close study of Alekhine's books. Quite recently, I came across a convincing illustration of this while reexamining games commented by Alekhine from his book of the tournament of Nottingham 1936 for inclusion in my book of exercises. Let's examine the game, comparing Alekhine's notes (in italics) with what was really going on.

### *Alexander – Euwe*

Nottingham 1936

**1. c2-c4 e7-e5 2. Nb1-c3 Ng8-f6 3. g2-g3 d7-d5 4. c4xd5 Nf6xd5 5. Bf1-g2 Nd5-b6 6. Ng1-f3 Nb8-c6 7. 0-0 Bf8-e7 8. d2-d3 0-0 9. Bc1-e3 Bc8-g4 10. Nc3-a4**



**10...Qd8-d7**

*Black has a completely equal position; but this and the following moves lead only to exchanges, which do nothing to ease the pressure exerted by his opponent on the c-file. 10...Nd5 looks more promising; and if 11. Bc5, then 11...Re8, intending to play his bishop to f6, if White does not trade it off immediately.*

In reviewing old games, there's usually no sense in dealing with the problems of the opening – that is why I have edited out Alekhine's earlier annotations and neglected to indicate the alternatives which could have been tried later. On the whole, both players have acted reasonably so far. Alekhine's suggested plan isn't bad, as is the plan recommended by ECO: 10...Nd4; the text move, however, can hardly be weaker.

Since Max Euwe had just recently wrested the World Championship title away from Alekhine the criticism directed at his play certainly doesn't come by accident. Alekhine is trying to show that both sides played weakly, and that the outcome of this game, which was included in Euwe's book of his collected games, was determined chiefly by the errors both sides committed.

**11. Ra1-c1**

Euwe rates the position after 11. Nc5 Bxc5 12. Bxc5 as favorable to Black.

### 11...f7-f6

*White need have no fear of 11...Nxa4 12. Qxa4 Nd4 (?? – Dvoretsky) 13. Qxd7 Nxe2+ 14. Kh1 Bxd7 15. Rxc7.*

But what he really needed to be afraid of was the series of exchanges after 11...e4! 12. Nxb6 ab 13. de Qxd1 14. Rfxd1 Rxa2 =/+. Unfortunately, both Alekhine and Euwe overlooked this possibility in their notes.

### 12. Be3-c5 Nc6-d8

*That Black must now have recourse to this defensive move shows clearly that he must have committed an inaccuracy earlier.*

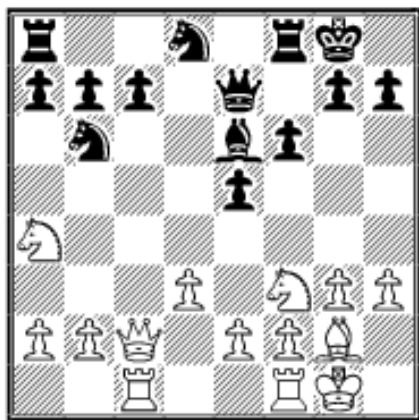
It can't be correct to say that the move Black played was necessary (he could, for instance, have played 12...Nxa4 13. Qxa4 Be6, with a slightly inferior position); but it does flow logically from his previous actions: this is how he prepared to neutralize the pressure on the c-file. This is a completely normal plan, undeserving of criticism.

### 13. Bc5xe7 Qd7xe7 14. h2-h3

*Weakening his pawn structure without any reason. 14. Nc5 was natural and good, with a favorable position.*

To which Euwe probably intended to reply 14...c6, followed by Ne6. White tries to induce Black's bishop to go to e6, so that the knight can't get there instead.

### 14...Bg4-e6 15. Qd1-c2



*If this move forced the following exchange, it certainly would deserve praise; however, Black could have continued 15...Rf7 here (16. Nc5 Bd5 or 16. Qc5 Qd7, etc.), so the simple 15. a3 was preferable. And Alekhine gives Black's reply, 15...Nxa4, a question mark.*

One may agree that 15. a3 deserved consideration; the rest is utter nonsense. After 15...Rf7? 16. Nc5 (of course not 16. Qc5?? Nxa4) 16...Bd5, White has the pleasant choice between 17. Nh4 Bxg2 18. Nf5 Qf8

19. Kxg2 and 17. e4!? Be6 18. Rfd1 followed by d3-d4 – in both cases, the position clearly favors him. Euwe dismissed 15...c6 because of 16. Nc5 (intending e2-e4 and d3-d4) – this is precisely the problem with the bishop's position – the one that White induced to go to e6. All that remains is the exchange on a4, which means that by no means does it deserve a question mark.

**15...Nb6xa4 16. Qc2xa4 Be6-d5**

*This is a [too] clever defensive idea, to put it mildly. Why not 16...c6 and then Nf7?*

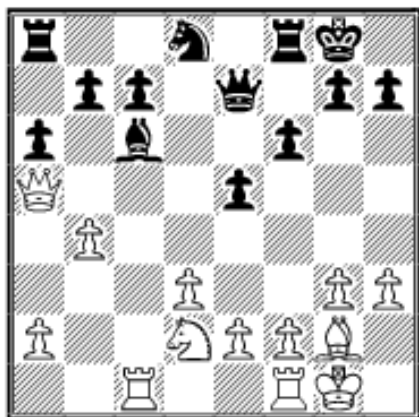
Most likely because putting his bishop on the long diagonal allows Black to neutralize his opponent's bishop, free the e6-square for his knight, and obtain an excellent position. In addition, after 16...c6, he would have to consider the reply 17. d4.

**17. Qa4-a5! Bd5-c6**

*If 17...c6 now, then 18. e4 Bf7 19. d4, and the position opens in White's favor.*

**18. b2-b4**

*A subtle move, preparing White's following maneuver.*

**18...a7-a6 19. Nf3-d2!**

Of course not 19. b5? b6! and 20...ab (Euwe). The exclamation points were attached to White's next move by Alekhine.

*It now becomes clear that 19...Bxg2 would be met by 20. Rxc7 Qd6 21. Kxg2 Nc6 22. Qb6. There is no need to add that this variation only became possible owing to 18...a6, making the b6-square available to White's queen.*

Nonsense again! 21...b6! (instead of 21...Nc6?) wins a rook.

21. Nc4 would set greater problems for Black – here he could transpose by force into a very favorable endgame in the line 21...Qd5 22. Qxd5+ Bxd5 23. Nb6 Ne6 24. Re7 Nd4 (24...Bxa2 is weaker: 25. Ra1 Bb3 26. Nxa8 Rxa8 27. Rxb7=/+ ) 25. Nxd5 Nxe2+ 26. Kg2 Rad8-/+.

Which means the capture at c7 doesn't work – White must play 20. Kxg2, but after 20...Ne6, Black's position is preferable.

Euwe also failed to notice that 20. Rxc7? was impossible, and suggested preparing the exchange on g2 by inserting the move 19...b6. The position after 20. Qa3 Bxg2 21. Kxg2 Ne6 would be about equal (Euwe's 21...a5 is weaker because of 22. Qb3+ and b4-b5).

**19...Kg8-h8**

*Intending to avoid possible exchanges along the a2-g8 diagonal. It turns out that Black is playing to win.*

One senses some irony in the last sentence, although it's not clear to whom it's directed. Of course, a World Champion, having a roughly equal position against a player who is considerably inferior to him, would strive to win.

## 20. Qa5-c5 Qe7-f7

*The same tendency.*

## 21. Bg2xc6 Nd8xc6 22. Nd2-b3 Qf7-h5

A double attack on the pawns at h3 and e2; Alekhine grants it a question mark, and again without reason.

*This tempting move turns out to be a tactical error. 22...Rad8 (preventing 23. b5 because of 23...Rd5) was correct, with an even game.*

## 23. d3-d4!



*After this continuation, which was probably overlooked by his opponent, White obtains a distinct advantage in position. The threat of 24. d5 followed by Qxc7 is most unpleasant.*

## 23...Ra8-d8

Alekhine doesn't even bother to comment on the e-pawn capture, while Euwe gives the variation 23...Qxe2 24. d5 Nd4 25. Nxd4 ed 26. Qxc7 which requires some adjusting. It's hard to see who is favored in the final

position, after 26...Rad8; on the other hand, White would keep somewhat better chances by playing simply 26. Qxd4. In turn, Black's play can also be strengthened considerably by 24...Na7! 25. Qxc7 Qxa2. The resulting situation is no longer any better for White at all – more likely the reverse (if the knight retreats, Black plays 26...Qxd5). And if that's true, then there was no reason to question the black queen sortie to h5, especially since, as the game went, Black did not stand worse.

## 24. d4-d5

Alekhine considered this a mistake.

*The logical consequence of the preceding move would have been 24. e3!, preventing the transfer of the black knight to d4 and strengthening the threat of d4-d5. After the text, Black is clear of all dangers.*

Black would have answered 24. e3 with 24...Qxh3, and after 25. d5, he would have had the choice of either a double-edged position after 25...Nb8 26. Qxc7 Rxd5 (the weakness of White's king serves as a sufficient counterweight to his queenside accomplishments), or the forced draw he can achieve after 26...f5!? 27. dc f4 27. ef ef 28. Rc3 f3 29. Rxf3 Rxf3 30. cb Rxg3+.

**24...Nc6-d4 25. Nb3xd4 e5xd4 26. Qc5xc7**

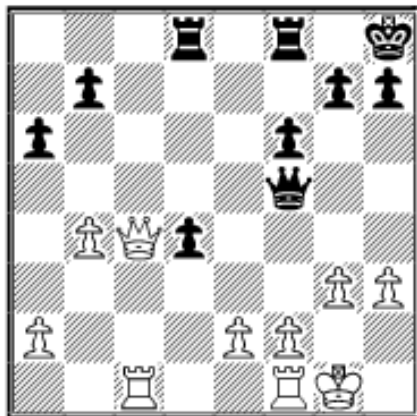
26. Qxd4 Rxd5 27. Qg4 was also good enough to draw.

I believe that after 27...Qxg4 28. hg c6=+, White would still have had to work for his draw, as he also would have after 27. Qc4 c6=+ (Euwe). 27. Qa7! looks better.

**26...Qh5xd5 27. Qc7-c4**

*This move, as well as the next few after this, were evidently the product of time-pressure.*

**27...Qd5-f5**



**28. Rf1-d1?**

*An oversight. The correct 28. Rcd1 would have secured an easy draw. But 28. Kg2 Rfe8=+ (Euwe) was weaker.*

**28...Qf5xh3 29. Qc4-c7**

*White can't play 29. Rxd4, in view of 29...Rc8.*

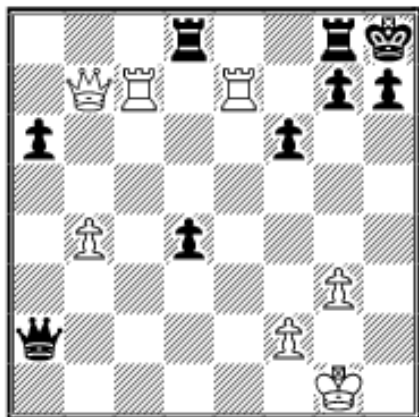
**29...Qh3-e6 30. Qc7xb7?**

*White could have resisted a lot longer after 30. Qc4.*

**30...Qe6xe2 31. Rf1-e1**

*Desperation.*

**31...Qe2xa2 32. Re1-e7 Rf8-g8 33. Rc1-c7**



This position kicks off my lecture, “The Technique of Formulating and Making Decisions” from the book, *The Development of Creative Thinking for the Chessplayer*, by M. Dvoretsky and A. Yusupov, Book 5 in our series, *School of Chess Excellence*.

Euwe found an outstanding solution for the task set before him.

**33...d4-d3!**

*An accurately calculated winning combination. However, 33...Qd2 (34. Rxf7 Rxf7, etc.) was simpler still.*

The desire (perhaps subconscious) to belittle – if only slightly – the achievement of one’s opponent in the battle for the Champion’s title, like any other prejudice, generally gives rise to errors in argumentation, sometimes elementary ones. Let’s extend the variation by just two moves: 33...Qd2? 34. Rxf7 Rxf7 35. Rxf7 Qh6 36. Rd7, with equality (and 36. Re7!? d3 37. Qc7 would have made White’s position even a little preferable).

But in fact, Black had no other means than the one he chose in the game to convert his indisputable advantage into the full point. Let’s examine the variations.

33...Qb1+? 34. Kg2 Qg6 35. Rcd7 d3 36. Qd5 (36. Qxa6!? deserved consideration) – White recovers the d-pawn, and soon obtains a drawn endgame, with three pawns vs. two on the kingside.

Roughly the same thing happens after 33...Qd5? 34. Qxd5 Rxd5 35. Red7.

The attempt to whip up an attack by 33...Rd5 (expecting 34. Rxf7 Rxf7 35. Rxf7 Qb1+ 36. Kg2 Rh5) is refuted by 34. Rc8!

Casting doubt on 33...Rb8!? is more complicated. White loses after 34. Qa7? Rxb4 35. Rxf7 Rb1+ 36. Kg2 Qd5+, or 34. Qe4? Rxb4 (Black is secured by the possibility of exchanging queens after Qb1+). White has to continue either 34. Qf3!? or 34. Qc6!?, for example: 34. Qc6 d3 (34...Rxb4 35. Rxf7!; 34...Qb1+ 35. Kg2 Qxb4 36. Qxf6!) 35. Kg2!? d2 36. Rcd7 Qb3 37. Rxd2 Qxb4 38. Rdd8=/+.

### **34. Re7xf7**

34. Rcd7 d2 is bad – it’s important that the pawn queens with check. Here’s why Black can’t reverse moves: 33...Qb1+? 34. Kg2 d3 35. Rcd7! d2, and now either 36. Rxd8 Rxd8 37. Qd7!, or better still, 36. Rxf7! Rxd7 37. Rxf8+ Kxf8 38. Qc8+ Kf7 39. Qxd7+ Kg6 40. Qxd2.

### **34...Rg8xf7 35. Rc7xf7 Qa2-b1+**

The next move will be 36...d2 (from b1, the queen defends the h7-square). The question Euwe had to answer before deciding to give up the g7-pawn was: will White be able to whip up counterplay? And here it makes sense to go to our standard technique, which has considerably improved the calculation of variations: first, we list all the move candidates (or, more accurately, the possibilities) our opponent has, to refute them one after another.

White has two methods of continuing his attack: 37. Rg4 (threatening mate on g7) and 37. Qf7 (with ideas of 38. Rg8+ or 38. Rxh7+). Plus, the king could be at either g2 or h2. So we have four branches, each of which had to be accurately calculated in advance.

Let's start with the queen to f7.

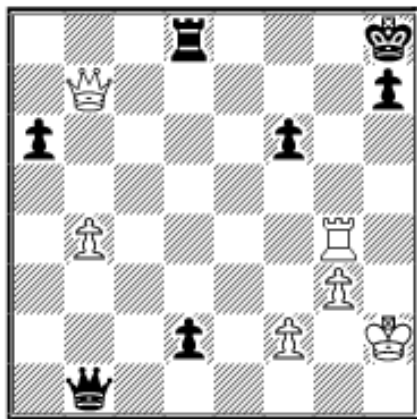
a) 36. Kh2 d2 37. Qf7 Qf5! White can't play 38. Rxh7+, since the rook will be recaptured with check; and on 38. Rg4 Black decides the game by 38...Qxf2+ 39. Kh3 Qf1+ 40. Kh2 Qh1+! (Euwe) or 40...Qe2+ 41. Kh3 Qxg4+!

b) 36. Kg2 d2 37. Qf7. Now 37...Qf5? is bad, because of 38. Rxh7+! Qxh7 39. Qxf6+ Qg7 40. Qxd8+ and 41. Qxd2, with two extra pawns; and 36...d1Q? leads to a perpetual check after 37. Rg8+! Rxg8 38. Qxf6+. Black wins by inserting 37...Qe4+! On 38. Kh2 Qf5, we transpose into the previous variation. On 38. f3, the simplest is 38...Qxf3+! 39. Kxf3 d1Q+, with mate soon to follow, although Black could also follow Euwe's suggestion 38...Qe2+ 39. Kh3 Qf1+ 40. Kh2 Qh1+! 41. Kxh1 d1Q+ 42. Kh2 Rd2+ (another path to the same end is 42...Qd2+ 43. Kg1 Qe3+ 44. Kg2 Rd2+ 45. Kh3 Qh6+ and 46...Qxg7+ [Dvoretsky]) 43. Kh3 Qh1+ 44. Kg4 h5+! 45. Kf4 Rd4+ 46. Ke3 Qg1+.

And now, let's look at retreating the rook to g4. Here, all the main variations were given by Alekhine.

c) 36. Kg2 d2 37. Rg4 Qh1+! 38. Kxh1 d1Q+ and 39...Qxg4.

d) 36. Kh2 d2 37. Rg4



The h1-square is controlled by the white queen; 37...Qg1+? is also insufficient: 38. Kh3! Qf1+ 39. Kh4. The only possibility is 37...Qg6! 38. Rxg6 hg. Let's see if White can get a perpetual check using nothing but his queen.

39. Qf7 d1Q 40. Qxf6+ Kh7 41. Qe7+ (after 41. Qf7+ Kh6 42. Qf4+ Kg7 43. Qe5+, both 43...Kh7 44. Qe7+ Kh6 [see below] and 43...Kf7 44. Qf4+ Kg8 45. Qc4+ Qd5 are strong) 41...Kh6 42. Qh4+ (42. Qe3+ Kh5!

43. Qe5+ g5, and the checks are over; or 43. Qe7 Qd4!) 42...Qh5, and White can't take the rook as the queen is pinned. Now we can understand why, on 36. Kg2 d2 37. Rg4, the reply 37...Qg6? was not enough to win – only 37...Qh1+!



works.

Let's return to the game. It only lasted one more pair of moves:

**36. Kg1-h2 d3-d2** White resigned.

*But I must admit that I, personally, would have liked to see if Black could have found the winning variation over the board.*

Our main conclusion is clear: One should not unquestioningly accept the annotations of even the great players, especially when we have reason to suspect their objectivity.



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