

TIBOR KAROLYI

**ALEKHINE'S REMARKABLE
GAMES**

VOLUME I: (1902-1921)

Alekhine's Remarkable Games – Volume I: 1902-1921

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Author's Preface

Sergey Voronkov has written a truly outstanding series on the fourth world champion, *Alexander Alekhine – The Russian Sphinx*, offering a comprehensive and meticulously documented account of both his life and his chess career. As of the time of writing, the first volume has already been published and the other volumes are on their way.

Through extensive archival research, Voronkov has succeeded in uncovering numerous previously unknown details concerning the great Russian champion — insights that, in some cases, Alekhine himself might no longer have retained in his memory. We now know a great deal more about Alekhine the man than we ever did, and much of what we thought we knew has been turned on its head.

The first volume of Voronkov's work made a deep impression on me, even though its analytical scope in terms of annotated games was intentionally selective, comprising just 52 encounters. It was in this context that the publishers Elk and Ruby invited me to prepare a complementary volume, conceived in the spirit of a games collection that would harmonize chronologically with Voronkov's biographical study.

Originally, I wanted to avoid substantial overlap with the games already examined in Voronkov's study, but their relatively small number led me to change my mind, and I instead aimed for a comprehensive coverage of Alekhine's career in this book.

In my own series, rather than consistently presenting complete games, I frequently concentrate on critical fragments and decisive phases. The rationale for this approach is primarily pedagogical and historical: many opening systems from the first half of the twentieth century have limited relevance for contemporary theory. Although Alekhine's genius is beyond dispute, the overall standard of chess prior to the Second World War was necessarily lower than in later decades. Consequently, even his games contain a greater number of technical inaccuracies when compared with those of the champions of the 1950s. For this reason, the present work concentrates on those moments in which Alekhine's creative power, strategic imagination, or tactical brilliance manifests most clearly.

When I submitted a large part of Volume One, my publisher liked it and suggested expanding the series to three volumes. I happily agreed: Alekhine's games are so rich and captivating that even many volumes can be filled with interesting material.

Altogether, Elk and Ruby has undertaken a huge project, devoting seven books to the fourth world champion. His life was full of extreme events — he may have been murdered, he faced a death sentence, and he produced many masterpieces at the chessboard. I think that such a life and career justify so many volumes. Perhaps no chess career has ever been investigated in such depth.

I also take special personal joy in this project: with these three volumes, the number of my books devoted to great Russian and Soviet players will reach twenty-four in total. That is a landmark that I could hardly have imagined before, and it means a great deal to me.

World champions may be classified according to numerous criteria, one of the most significant being their instructional value. All great players have enriched chess in fundamental ways; however, certain styles lend themselves more readily to systematic study and practical emulation than others. For example, it is considerably easier to adopt the methodical approach of Mikhail Botvinnik than to reproduce the intuitive dynamism of Mikhail Tal. Alekhine occupies a special place in this spectrum: his games are renowned for their breathtaking attacking power and original tactical vision.

It is undeniable that Russia has been the most successful country in chess history; the record number of world champions and their overwhelming lead in Olympic team gold medals strongly support this claim. Furthermore, if one had to name the most historically important chess city in the world, it would undoubtedly be Moscow. Alexander Alekhine was the pioneer, becoming the first world champion from Russia and the first from the Russian capital.

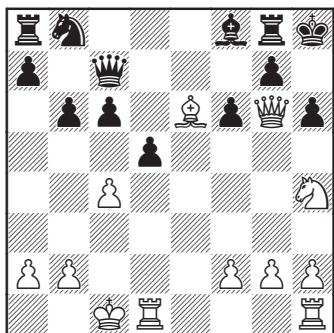
His achievements likely influenced the Soviet authorities to invest heavily in the game. Sadly, these days the nation is more preoccupied with the battlefield than the chessboard, and while the level of Russian chess has deteriorated, its players' historical contribution to the game's development remains unparalleled. This legacy did not start with Alekhine — masters like Petrov and Chigorin were brilliant — yet Alekhine's impact was arguably stronger than that of his predecessors.

It is my hope that the present volume will enable readers to engage more deeply with this remarkable legacy. The book is recommended not only to admirers of creative chess, but especially to those who have already studied Voronkov's seminal work.

International Master Tibor Karolyi,
Soltvadkert, 6 March 2026

Black is completely lost.

18...♚c7 19.♙e6+ ♚h7 20.♘h4
♙g8 21.♙g6+ ♚h8



22.♙f5 1–0

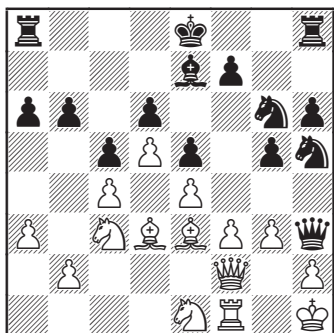
One rarely loses with such a miserable position in the end.

In the next two games, Alekhine scored 1.5 points. He was very fortunate; he could have easily scored zero.

GAME 29

Tereshchenko, N – Alekhine, A

All-Russian Amateur Championship
St Petersburg, 1909



20...♘gf4!!

This brilliant knight move opens the g-file or enables the f5 advance. Alekhine correctly feels the need to act immediately — if White were

allowed time, the rook could swing to g1, and with all pawns intact, his extra exchange would count for little. Remarkably, Alekhine already has four developed pieces, though two remain awkwardly on the board's edge.

21.gxf4

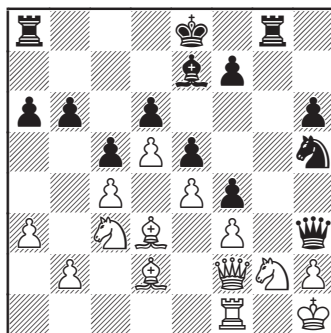
After 21.♙c2 ♘g3+ would win. If 21.♙g1 ♘xd3 22.♘xd3 f5 would win. If 21.♙e2 ♘xe2 22.♘xe2 f5 23.exf5 ♘f6 (which is more precise than the 23...e4 24.fxe4 ♘f6 move order) 24.g4 e4 25.♘g1 ♙h4 Black's advantage is sufficient to win.

21...gxf4 22.♙d2 ♙g8

22...♘g3+ would be more decisive. 23.♙g1 ♙g8 24.♙g2 ♙h5 and Black would win after 25.♙f2 ♘xe4+ or 25.hxg3 ♙xg3 or 25.♙f2 ♙h4.

23.♘g2?

This mistake makes the position clearly lost. After 23.♙g1 ♘g3+ 24.♙xg3 ♙xg3 25.♙f1 (25.♙f1 ♙h5) 25...♙h5 26.♙g2 White is clearly worse, though Black may not yet be fully winning.



23...♙h4

Alekhine wins White's queen.

24.♘d1

After 24.♘h4 ♘g3+ wins.

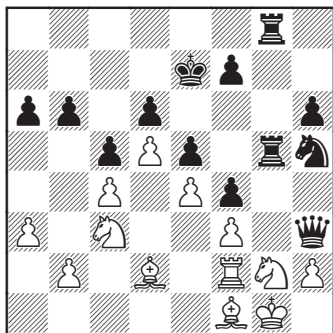
24...♙xf2 25.♖xf2 ♖g5!

Alekhine prepares to exert pressure along the g-file.

26.♙g1 ♙e7 27.♙f1

After 27.♙f1 ♖ag8 would win.

27...♖ag8 28.♘c3



28...♘g3

This elegant move not only targets the elimination of the f1-bishop, but also sets up a potential checkmate with a queen sacrifice on h2.

29.hxg3

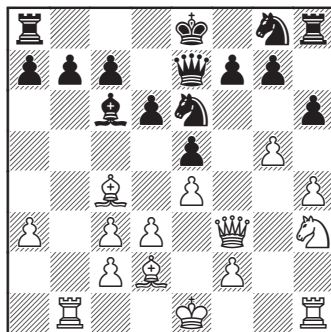
If 29.♙d3 ♖xh2+ checkmates.

29...♖h5 30.♖e2

If 30.♘h4 ♖xh4 wins.

30...fxg3 0-1

White resigns, caught on the kingside. After 30...♖xg3 31.♙f2 ♖xf3+ 32.♙e1 ♖xf1+, mate is inevitable.



14...♙d7?

Black ventures a risky approach by leaving his king in the centre. The position would remain balanced after 14...hxg5 15.♘xg5 or 14...0-0-0 15.♙d5 (15.♖g4 ♙b8) 15...♙xd5 16.exd5 ♘c5

15.♖g4!

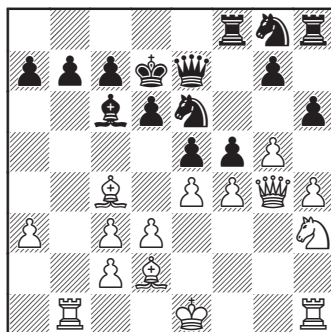
Alekhine pins the knight and prepares to advance the f-pawn.

15...♖f8?!

After 15...♖e8 16.f4 ♙c8 17.f5 ♘d8 18.f6+ ♖d7 19.fxg7 ♖h7 20.♖g1 hxg5 21.♖xa7 ♖g4 22.♙xg5 White would be slightly better.

16.f4 f5??

This aggressive move loses. Black can stay in the game with 16...♙c8 17.f5 h5 18.♖g2 ♘c5, though White still has a clear advantage.



GAME 30

Alekhine, A – Gregory, B

All-Russian Amateur Championship

St Petersburg, 1909

Vienna Game

1.e4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.♙c4 ♘c6
4.d3 ♙b4 5.♙g5 ♘d4 6.a3 ♙xc3+
7.bxc3 ♘e6 8.h4! h6 9.♙d2 d6 10.♖f3
♙d7 11.g4 ♖e7 12.g5 ♘g8 13.♖b1
♙c6 14.♘h3

17.exf5!

This exchange sacrifice wins, as White's queen will invade and the pawn on e6 will become a powerhouse.

17...♙xh1 18.fxe6+ ♔c8

Black also loses after 18...♔e8 19.fxe5 dxe5 20.♚g1 or 18...♔d8 19.fxe5 ♙f3 20.♚d4.

19.♚g1!

This double attack is devastating.

19...c6 20.♚xa7

The queen moves dangerously close to the black king.

20...c5

Black prevents the taking of the b7–pawn, but only temporarily. After 20...b5 21.♚a8+ ♔c7 22.♚a5+ ♔c8 23.a4 his position collapses.

21.d4

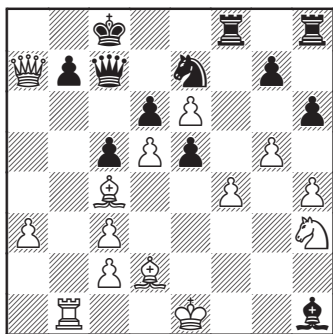
Alekhine seeks to restrict the h1–bishop.

21...♚c7

If 21...cxd4 22.cxd4 b5 (22...exd4 23.♚a8+) 23.♚a6+ ♚b7 24.♚xd6 White wins.

22.d5 ♘e7

On 22...♚b8 23.♚xb7 or 23.♚a4 would win.



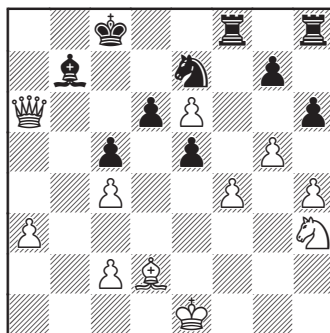
23.♚xb7!

This capture doesn't deliver checkmate; it simply leads to a completely winning position.

23...♚xb7 24.♙a6 ♙xd5 25.c4

White can win at will.

25...♚xa6 26.♚xa6+ ♙b7



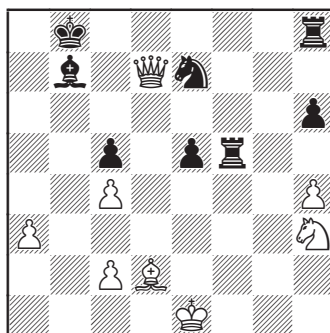
27.♚xd6

Black's central pawn chain is on the verge of falling.

27...♘c6 28.gxh6 gxh6 29.f5

White is ready to win material, with options like 29.♚xc5 or 29.♙e3 all decisive.

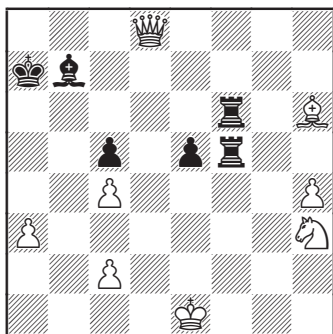
29...♚xf5 30.♚d7+ ♔b8 31.e7 ♘xe7



32.♚xe7

Ahead in material, White also threatens to exploit the soon-to-be vulnerable black king.

32...♚hf8 33.♚d6+ ♔a8 34.♙xh6 ♚f6 35.♚d8+ ♔a7



36. ♖e3

The black king is about to be caught by White

36... ♜f3 37. ♕xc5+ ♔a6 38. ♖b8 1-0

The next game is remarkable as it appears to be the first time Alekhine thoroughly prepared his opening. How deeply previous masters prepared is hard to judge, but it was likely not as extensive.

GAME 31

Verlinsky, B – Alekhine, A

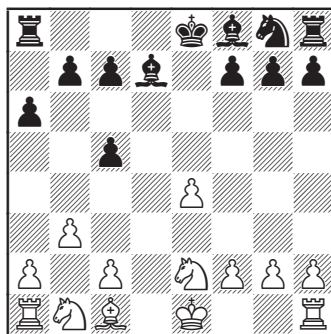
All-Russian Amateur Championship

St Petersburg, 1909

Spanish Opening

1.e4 e5 2. ♘f3 ♘c6 3. ♖b5 a6 4. ♕xc6 dxc6 5. d4 exd4 6. ♖xd4 ♖xd4 7. ♘xd4 c5 8. ♘e2 ♕d7 9. b3

According to the database, Verlinsky played this move in his first-round game of the same event, and it also appeared in the Lasker – Tarrasch World Championship match of 1908.



9...c4!

Alekhine most likely prepared this imaginative pawn sacrifice to eliminate his doubled pawns. Practice had seen 9... ♕c6 earlier. The pawn sacrifice disrupts White's pawn structure.

10. bxc4

This capture offers no advantage, but allowing the exchange of the doubled pawns would indicate that the opening variation is not dangerous.

10... ♕a4?!

Tactics do not justify Black's ambitions. After 10...f5 or 10... ♕e6 11. ♘d2 0-0-0 12. ♕b2 ♘f6 13. f3 ♕c5 Black has sufficient play for the pawn.

11. c3

Hanging onto the pawn results in a passive position.

a) 11. ♘d4! 0-0-0 12. ♕b2 ♕b4+ (12... ♜e8 13. ♘c3 ♕b4 14. 0-0-0 ♕xc3? 15. ♕xc3 ♜xe4? 16. ♘e6 and White is winning.) 13. ♖e2 and the position would be balanced after 13... ♘h6 14. a3 ♕d6 or 13... ♘f6 14. f3 ♜he8.

b) 11. ♘bc3! ♕b4 (If 11... ♕xc2?? 12. ♖d2 would win, or if 11... ♕d7 12. ♕g5 White would have an edge.) 12. 0-0! (or 12. ♕d2 0-0-0 (12... ♕xc2? 13. ♜c1) 13. 0-0-0 and White would have some advantage.)

b1) 12...♙xc2 13.♘d5 ♙d6 (13...♙a5 14.♙d2) 14.♙b2 f6 15.e5 fxe5 16.c5 and White is winning.

b2) 12...♙xc3 13.♘xc3 ♙xc2 14.♙f4 and Black's position is extremely difficult.

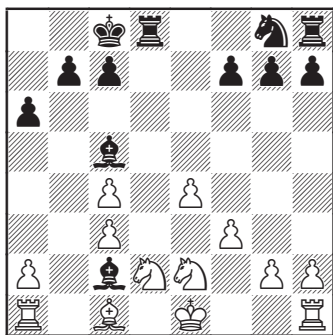
11...0-0 12.♘d2

After 12.♘d4 c5 13.♘b3 ♖e8 14.f3 f5 15.♘1d2 ♗f6 Black wins back the pawn, likely gaining a winning advantage.

12...♙c2?!

This move allows White to gain a tempo on the bishop on c2. White's position would become very unpleasant after 12...♗f6 13.f3 ♘d7.

13.f3 ♙c5



14.a4

14.♘d4 ♖xd4 15.cxd4 ♙xd4 16.♖b1 leads to equality. 14.♙b2 followed by ♘d4 would also maintain the balance.

14...♗f6 15.♙a3

Verlinsky aims to exchange the c5-bishop. After 15.♘d4 ♙d3 16.♙a3 ♙xd4 17.cxd4 ♖xd4 the game is likely to end in a draw.

15...♙e3 16.♗f1

If 16.♘d4 ♙d3 17.c5 ♖he8 18.♗b3 White seems to escape with a passive position.

16...♙a7 17.a5?!

This move is somewhat optimistic, as it ignores development.

a) 17.c5 ♖he8 (17...♙xa4 18.♘d4 and White gets organised.) 18.♘d2 ♙xa4 19.♙b4 and White would remain in the game.

b) 17.♘d4! ♖xd4 (17...♙xe4 18.fxe4 ♗xe4 19.♘g3 ♗xc3 20.♘de2 ♗xa4 and Black has three pawns for the piece, with the endgame looking balanced.) 18.cxd4 ♙xd4 19.♖c1 ♙xa4 20.♘g3 and Black has sufficient play for the exchange.

17...♖d3 18.c5?

Verlinsky aims to restrict one of Black's pieces, but chooses the wrong target. 18.♙e7! ♘d7 (18...♖e8 19.♙xf6 gxf6 20.♖c1 ♙b3 21.♗f4 ♖d6 22.♘d2 and White gets away with a draw.) 19.♖c1 ♙a4 20.♗f4 ♗e5 21.♘xd3 ♗xd3+ 22.♗d2 ♗xc1 23.♗xc1 ♖e8 24.♙g5 ♖e5 25.♙e3 and White can hold the position.

18...♖hd8 19.♗f2?

White's position is already unpleasant. Verlinsky correctly identifies the problem — he needs to remove the bishop from c2 — but his solution is too slow.

a) 19.♙b4? Ignoring development may be punished. 19...♖d1+! 20.♖xd1 ♖xd1+ 21.♗f2 ♘d7! After 22.♘d4 ♙a4 or 22.♘fg3 ♗xc5 23.♖xd1 ♗d3+ 24.♗f1 ♙xd1 White faces a difficult endgame.

b) 19.♖c1. Perhaps chasing the bishop away immediately is best. 19...♙a4 20.♘fg3 ♘d7 (White would be passive after 20...g6.) 21.♘f4 ♖e3+ 22.♗ge2 (22.♗f2?? ♗xc5) 22...♙b5 23.♗f2 ♗xc5 24.♘d4 ♖xc3 25.♖xc3 ♗a4 and Black is pressing hard.

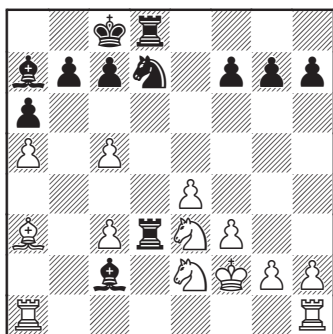
c) 19. ♖fg3 ♘d7 20. ♖f5 (20. ♖f4 ♜xc3 21. ♖d5 ♜b3 with a big advantage for Black) 20... ♘xc5 21. ♙xc5 ♜d1+ (or 21... ♙xc5) 22. ♚f2 ♙xc5+ 23. ♖fd4 and White would still struggle greatly.

d) 19. ♜a2 ♜d1+ 20. ♚f2 ♙b3 21. ♜b2 ♙c4 and White should lose.

19... ♘d7!

Alekhine goes for the c5–pawn in time.

20. ♖e3



20... ♘xc5!

Verlinsky probably missed in his calculations that the bishop on c2 doesn't have to move.

21. ♖d4

21. ♖xc2 gets White mated after 21... ♖xe4+ 22. ♚e1 ♜d1+ 23. ♜xd1 ♙f2+ 24. ♚f1 ♜xd1+ 25. ♖e1 ♜xe1.

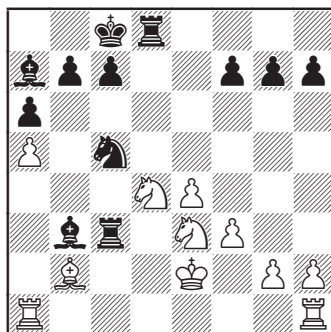
21... ♙b3

21... ♜xc3 is more convincing, since if 22. ♖exc2 ♘b3 Black wins.

22. ♚e2?

This causes White's position to collapse quickly. 22. ♙xc5 would allow White to play on for longer. After 22... ♙xc5 23. ♜hc1 ♜8xd4 24. cxd4 ♙xd4 25. ♜e1 ♙xa1 26. ♜xa1 Black's extra pawn should be decisive.

22... ♜xc3 23. ♙b2



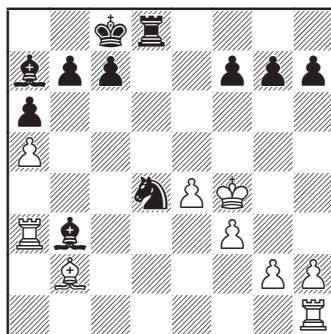
23... ♜xc3+

Alekhine wins material.

24. ♚xc3 ♘e6 25. ♜a3

If 25. ♜hd1 ♙xd1 26. ♜xd1 c5 would win.

25... ♘xd4 26. ♚f4



26... ♙c5

Alekhine wants to end the game quickly.

27. ♜ha1

27. ♜aa1 ♖e2+ 28. ♚g5 ♙e7+ 29. ♖h5 ♖f4+ 30. ♚g4 g5 would also be hopeless.

27... ♖e2+

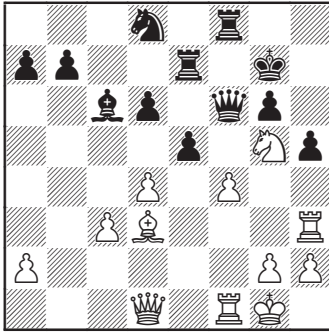
Alekhine could win by increasing his material advantage, but keeps attacking the white king.

28. ♚g4 ♙e6+ 0–1

A51

Alekhine,A – Hallegua,B

Quadrangular Tournament Paris
(2), 1914

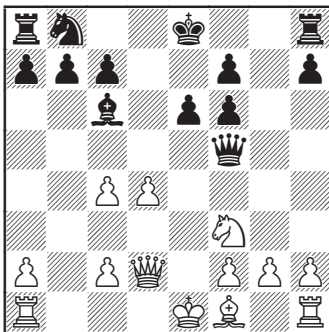


Move 22, White to move

A52

Alekhine,A – Krueger,P

DSB Kongress Meisterturnier
Mannheim (2), 1914

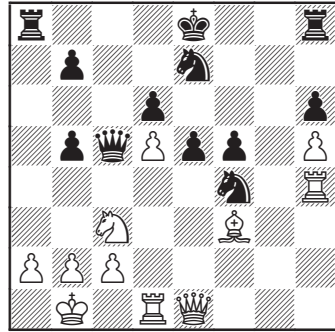


Move 11, White to move

A53

Alekhine,A – Breyer,G

DSB Kongress Meisterturnier
Mannheim (4), 1914

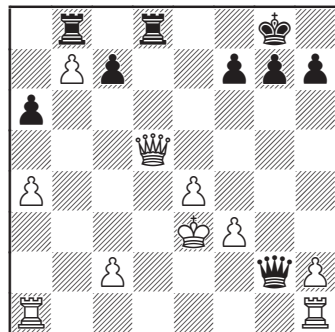


Move 30, White to move

A54

Alekhine,A-Isakov,K/Tselikov,N

Exhibition game Moscow, 1915



Move 23, White to move

42...dxc3 43.♖e2 ♖d4 0–1

Black is about to deliver checkmate.

A49

Alekhine, A – Bogoljubov, E

All-Russian Masters (Qualification)

St Petersburg (16), 1914

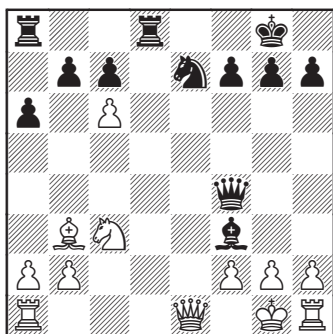
15.♖e1!

Alekhine's subtle move wins a piece.

15...♗g4

If 15...♖xd5 16.♗b3! wins, but 16.♖xd5? fails as 16...♖xa4 would be a strong reply.

16.♗b3 ♖f4 17.dxc6 ♗xf3



18.♖xe7

Alekhine has won a piece and obtained a completely winning position. 18.gxf3 would win as well. Later, Alekhine lost after falling for a clever trap.

18...♗xc6 19.h4 ♖d2 20.♖f1 ♖e8 21.♖g5 ♖xf2 22.♗xf7+ ♖h8 23.♖d1 ♖xf7 24.♖d2 h6 25.♖xf2 ♖e1+ 26.♖h2 ♖xf2 27.♖g4 ♗xg2 0–1

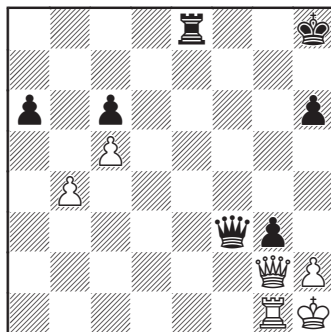
A50

Alapin, S – Alekhine, A

All-Russian Masters (Qualification)

St Petersburg (17), 1914

42...♖d2 43.♖e8+ ♖xe8 44.♖xd2 ♖xf3+ 45.♖g2??



45...♖e2! 0–1

Alekhine wins the queen or delivers checkmates.

A51

Alekhine, A – Hallegua, B

Quadrangular Tournament Paris (2),

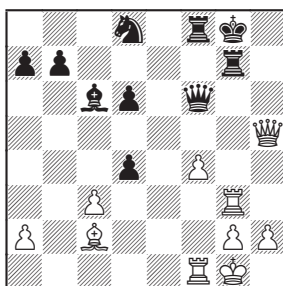
1914

22.♖h7!

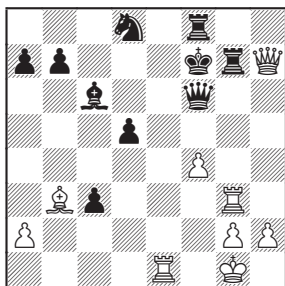
White has more than one winning continuation, such as 22.fxe5 or 22.f5, but Alekhine opts for the most elegant.

22...♖xh7 23.fxe5

White can also launch a direct attack on the black king: 23.♖xh5+ ♖g8 24.♗xg6 exd4 25.♖g3 ♖g7 26.♗h7+ ♖h8 27.♗c2+ ♖g8



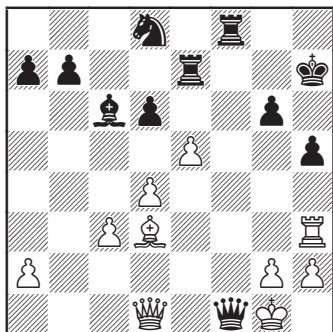
28.♖e1!! dxc3. Black can do nothing about White's threat. 29.♖h7+ ♖f7 30.♗b3+ d5



31. Rg7+ ♖xg7 32. Re7+ and White wins.

23... ♖xf1+

After 23... ♖g7 24. Rxf8 ♖xf8 25. ♖hx5+ White delivers checkmate.



24. ♖xf1 dxe5 25. d5 ♖d7 26. ♖h4 e4 27. ♖e2 ♖f5 28. ♖d4 ♖fe5 29. ♖f4 b6 30. ♖f8 ♖e8 31. ♖xe8 ♖xe8 32. ♖f6 ♖f5 33. d6 ♖e6 34. d7 ♖h8 35. ♖e7+ ♖h6 36. h3 ♖h7 37. d8=♖ ♖xd8 38. ♖xd8 ♖d7 39. ♖h8+ ♖g5 40. ♖f2 h4 41. g3 hxg3+ 42. ♖xg3 ♖e6 43. h4+ ♖f5 44. ♖g4 1-0

A52

Alekhine, A – Krueger, P

DSB Kongress Meisterturnier
Mannheim (2), 1914

11.d5!

Alekhine plays a brilliant move that secures a winning advantage.

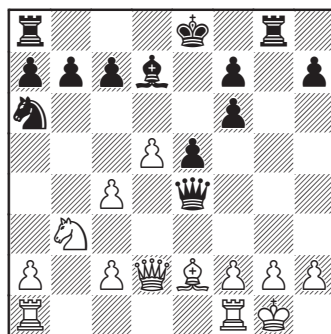
11... ♖e4+

If 11... exd5 then 12. 0-0-0 and White would win.

12. ♖e2 ♖d7 13. 0-0

13. 0-0-0 would win as well.

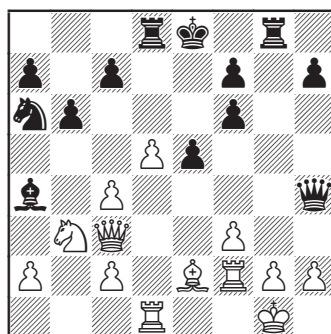
13... ♖a6 14. ♖d4 e5 15. ♖b3 ♖g8



16.f3

White's position is strategically winning.

16... ♖h4 17. ♖f2 b6 18. ♖d1 ♖d8 19. ♖c3 ♖a4



20.f4

Alekhine's position is winning, but later he blunders and the game ends in a draw.

20... ♖xb3 21. cxb3 ♖c5 22. ♖e3 ♖h6 23. b4 ♖d7 24. c5 bxc5 25. bxc5 ♖f8 26. ♖a3 ♖g7 27. c6 ♖b6 28. d6 cxd6 29. ♖xd6 ♖xd6 30. ♖xd6 e4