

New York 1927

by Alexander Alekhine



Foreword by Andy Soltis

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Alexander Alekhine

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Andy Soltis



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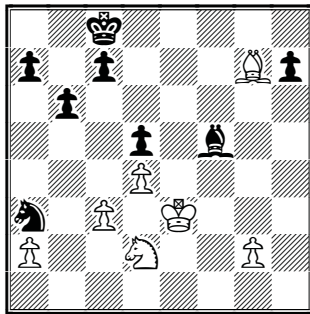
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Otherwise 35...♖b5, together with ...♗d3, etc.

35...♗h5 36.♗e5 g4 37.h×g4

Kingside pawn exchanges are beneficial only to Black, who, on the other side, possesses completely sufficient material to win. Therefore, 37.h4 was certainly more advisable from a practical point of view.

37...♗×g4 38.♖e3 ♗f5 39.♗g7



39...♗e6!

Threatens to win a pawn with 40...♖b5, etc., which at this moment, on account of the response c3-c4, would still be premature. White, apparently under time pressure (the 40th move!) misses the threat, whereupon the endgame causes no more difficulties at all. It was also won, however, after 40.♖d3!, for example: 40...♖d7 41.♗f8 ♗f5+ 42.♖e3 ♖c2+ 43.♖f4 ♗g6 44.♖e5 ♖e3±.

40.♗f8? ♖b5 41.♖b1 a5

Also fine was 41...♗f5, since after 42.a4 ♗×b1 43.a×b5, Black plays the simplest, 43...♖d7, together with (in the case of ♖e3-f4-e5) ...c6 and, after the

pawn exchange, forces his way to c4 with the king.

42.♖d2 ♗f5 43.♖a3 ♖×a3 44.♗×a3 ♗b1 45.♗f8 ♗×a2

Marshall could easily have spared himself the next fifteen moves.

46.♗g7 ♗c4 47.♖e3 ♖b7 48.♗h6 ♖a6 49.♖d2 ♗f1 50.g3 ♖b5 51.♖c1 ♖c4 52.♖b2 c5 53.♗e3 c×d4 54.♗×d4 b5 55.♗b6 a4 56.♗a5 d4! 57.c×d4 b4 58.♗b6 a3+ 59.♖a2 ♖b5 60.♗c5 ♖a4 0-1

Round 2

- 0 Nimzovich – Capablanca 1
- 0 Spielmann – Alekhine 1
- ½ Marshall – Vidmar ½

Standings after Round 2:

- Alekhine 1½
- Capablanca 1½
- Nimzovich 1
- Vidmar 1
- Marshall ½
- Spielmann ½

(4) Nimzovich – Capablanca
Queen's Gambit Declined [D30]

1.c4 ♖f6 2.♖f3 e6 3.d4 d5 4.e3

As is well known, 4.♗g5 and 4.♖c3 are more vigorous here, and at the same time quite credible developmental moves. But that is the way it is – in New York one played against Capablanca usually in such a way, as if there were a *mot d'ordre* to play only the second- or third-best moves against him.

Cycle I: Round 2

4...♙e7 5.♘bd2

Why this artifice? Other moves (5.c3, 5.♙d3) were more sound, that is, more in keeping with the demands of the problem of the center.

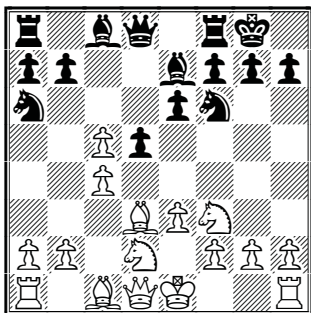
5...0-0 6.♙d3

More in harmony with the previous move was the flank development of the queen bishop (6.b3) or first, 6.♙e2.

6...c5 7.dxc5

Once again, 7.b3, together with 8.♙b2, would have lead to a full game with chances on both sides. The text move should result in a rapid simplification of the position.

7...♗a6



A good move, but one that should lead only to equality.

8.0-0?

That is the actual mistake, which relinquishes control of the whole board to Black. Virtually taken for granted here was 8.♗b3 dxc4 (if 8...♗xc5 9.♗xc5 ♖a5+ 10.♙d2 ♗xc5, then 11.♞c1, rather to White's advantage) 9.♙xc4

♗xd1+ 10.♞xd1 ♗xc5 11.♗xc5 ♙xc5 12.♞e2=.

8...♗xc5 9.♙e2 b6 10.cxd5?

This systematic and uninterrupted development of the opponent in the midst of sacrificing time and space is tantamount to a positional hara-kiri. White should still play 10.b3. He refrains too long from this possibility, until he incurs a lost position just on account of the encapsulated queen bishop.

10...♗xd5 11.♗b3 ♙b7 12.♗xc5 ♙xc5 13.♞a4

And now he seeks to trade the already developed bishop, and leaves the other one quietly sleeping. Indeed, in this game, Nimzovich is not to be recognized. Preferable was 13.♙d2 ♖f6 14.♞b3 (e5) 15.♙c3, etc.

13...♞f6!

Justifiably, Black doesn't bother in the least about further losses in tempo planned by the opponent (the exchange on a6 was otherwise surely easy to prevent with ...a6) and plays only to take advantage of the c1-bishop's lack of development. A sounder, more appropriate plan, but one, which, for a change, Capablanca doesn't implement with the necessary precision.

14.♙a6 ♙xa6 15.♞xa6 ♗b4 (?)

This knight maneuver in particular appears to be somewhat superficially calculated and merely leads to a facilitated exchange for the opponent. Simple and strong here was 15...♞fd8, together with possibly ...e5-e4, against which

White would hardly have found a sufficient defense in the long run.

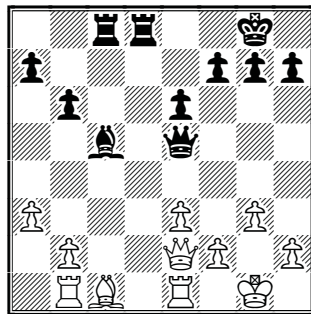
16. ♖e2 ♜fd8 17. a3

Better than 17. ♘e1, whereupon the simple doubling of rooks (17... ♜d7) would be very strong.

17... ♘d3 18. ♘e1 ♘×e1 19. ♜×e1 ♜ac8 20. ♜b1 ♖e5

This so-much admired queen move should have just as little success as everything else: Black just threw away the substance of his advantage with his unfortunate knight maneuver. Certainly White may not now successfully play 21. b4, on account of 21... ♘d6 22. g2-g3 ♖e5-e4, with the subsequent penetration of the rooks. But he had simpler ways out in the following play.

21. g3



This new, highly precarious debilitation of the light squares was hard to avoid, since with the plausible move 21. ♘d2, Black would get the advantage in the following way: 21... ♘d6 22. g3 ♜c2 23. ♖d3 ♜×b2! 24. ♘c3 ♜×b1 25. ♘×e5 ♜×e1+ 26. ♖g2 ♘e7, etc.

21... ♖d5!

The right move, because with it, a further weakness is forced. On the other hand, Capablanca's assertion (in his written commentary to this game for the English tournament book) that 21... ♖e4 would have won a pawn is based on an error: that is to say, after 22. ♘d2, Black couldn't have played 22... ♘a3?, because then the missing *Luft* would have become disastrous for him; for example, 23. b×a3 ♜c2 24. ♜bc1! ♜b2 25. ♜ed1 ♖d5 26. e4! ♖d7 27. ♘b4!, and wins.

22. b4 ♘f8 23. ♘b2 ♖a2!

With the unpleasant threat 24... a5.

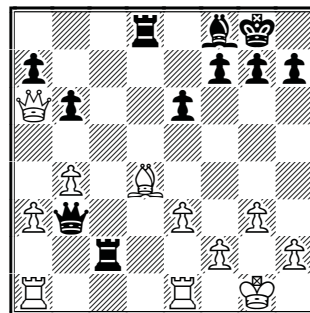
24. ♜a1?

A weak palliative. To save the game, he should play 24. ♜bd1! – for example, (1) 24... ♜×d1 25. ♜×d1 a5 26. b×a5 b×a5 (or 26... ♘a3 27. ♖a6!) 27. ♖a6 ♜c2 28. ♜d8 ♖×b2 (or 28... ♜×b2 29. ♜×f8+, etc., with perpetual check) 29. ♖d6; or (2) 24... a5 25. ♜×d8 ♜×d8 26. ♘d4!, etc., with sufficient counter threats.

24... ♖b3 25. ♘d4?

Even now 25. ♜ac1 could still occur, with variations similar to those mentioned above. The d4-square is not secure for the bishop, since ...e5 hovers continuously in the air.

25... ♜c2 26. ♖a6?



Cycle I: Round 2

With this, the game is finally lost. (It's strange, by the way, how many weak moves White had to make in order to get to this result!) To be sure, it looked bad anyway – but after 26. ♖f1 or 26. ♖d1 (intending ♗e2), there were still some hopes of rescue.

26...e5!

The beginning of a forceful endgame, which in a way compensated for the mutual omissions of the previous phase.

27. ♗×e5 ♗dd2 28. ♖b7

Nice is the “main variation,” 28. ♗f1 ♖×e3! (as in so many problems and studies, there's also a sideline cook here, by the way: 28...♖d5, together with ...♖f3) 29. ♗f4 ♗×f2!, with early mate. And 28. ♖f1 would not have saved the game – for example, 28...♖d5 29. ♗d4, ♖h5! (indicated by Capablanca, and much better than 29...♖f3, which could be answered with 30. ♗ac1) 30. h4 (otherwise, 30...♗×f2, etc., with a sufficient pawn preponderance) 30...♖f3, with annihilation.

28...♗×f2 29. g4 ♖e6 30. ♗g3 ♗×h2!

A second nice twist: if 31. ♗×h2, then 31...♖×g4+ 32. ♖h1 ♖h3!, together with mate. Weaker in contrast would be 30...♖×g4 on account of 31. ♗f1, etc.

31. ♖f3 ♗hg2+ 32. ♖×g2 ♗×g2+ 33. ♖×g2 ♖×g4

The rest is already quite easy.

34. ♗ad1 h5 35. ♗d4 ♖g5 36. ♖h2 a5 37. ♗e2 a×b4 38. a×b4 ♗e7

39. ♗e4 ♗f6 40. ♗f2 ♖d5 41. ♗e8+ ♖h7 0-1

(5) Spielmann – Alekhine
 Sicilian Defense [B40]

1. e4 c5 2. ♗f3 e6 3. d4 c×d4 4. ♗×d4 ♗f6 5. ♗d3

With this move, in my opinion, Black gets easy equality. More promising – but also more double-edged, on account of Black's possible pressure on the c-file – is 5. ♗c3.

5...♗c6 6. ♗×c6

To 6. ♗e3, 6... d5 7. ♗d2 e5!, etc., suffices for equality.

6...d×c6

After 6...b×c6, the mobilization plan of 7. ♖e2, together with 8. 0-0 and 9. c4!, etc., would have been unpleasant for Black.

7. ♗d2

The knight, for whom no fine future beckons from c3, is steered to more promising squares. It's plain, though, that this procedure can cause Black no great difficulties.

7...e5 8. ♗c4 ♗c5! 9. ♗e3

Not 9. ♗×e5? ♖d4, etc.

9...♗×e3 10. ♗×e3 ♗e6 11. 0-0 0-0

Black stands a tad better, mainly on account of the blockage on e4, which somewhat limits the freedom of movement of the white pieces. Still, an early

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draw is anticipated following the hard-to-avoid rook exchange on the only open line.

12. ♖e2 ♜b6 13. c3 ♖ad8 14. ♖fd1 ♜c5

Unfortunately, Black can't so easily get around to doubling the rooks on the d-file, since after 14... ♖d7, there follows 15. ♖c4!, rather to White's advantage.

15. ♖ac1 a5

Otherwise 16. b2-b4.

16. ♖b1 g6

If immediately 16... a4, then 17. ♖x d8 ♖x d8 18. ♖d1 ♖x d1+ 19. ♜x d1, and if 19... ♜b6?, then 20. ♜x a4, threatening ♜a8+, etc. Therefore *luft* was necessary.

17. ♖d2 a4 18. ♖cd1 ♜b6 19. g3

Although at the moment White influences the open file somewhat more than his opponent, White can't strengthen Black's position so easily – after 19. h3, for example, 19... ♖h5 could well enough follow. The text move, however, which also should serve as preparation for a possible f4, allows the following simplifying maneuver.

19... ♖x d2 20. ♜x d2

If 20. ♖x d2, then of course, 20... ♖d8, etc.

20... ♖g4!

With this, Black apparently gets the advantage – but only just apparently. Certainly 21. ♖f1 ♜g7, with the threat ... ♖f8-d8, etc., as well as 21. ♖x g4

♖x g4, together with ♖d8, etc., looks rather uncomfortable for White, but he has a face-saver in ...

21. ♖f5!

– which at least eliminates the unpleasant enemy bishop.

21... ♖x f5

There was no choice, since the variation 21... gxf5 22. exf5 ♜xf2+ 23. ♜xf2 ♖xf2 24. ♜xf2 ♖d5 25. f6! ♖e8 26. ♖f5!, etc., would obviously be very favorable for White.

22. exf5 ♖f6

Or first of all 22... ♜g7.

23. ♜d6

If 23. ♜g5, then 23... ♖d8!, etc.

23... ♜g7 24. ♖d2 ♖e8 25. f×g6 h×g6 26. ♜b4

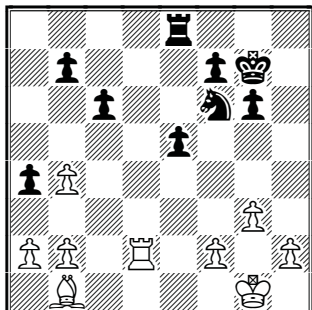
Because of the threatened thrust of the e-pawn, White has hardly anything better than this offer to exchange, which, however, should suffice.

26... ♜x b4

If Black wanted to play for a win, then he could have pulled the queen back to a7 without risk. After the queen exchange, it would have been the most reasonable for him to accept the opponent's correctly offered draw.

27. c×b4

Cycle I: Round 2



27...a3

To his regret, the author has to state that this, his brain child – although it looks quite aesthetic on the surface – in no way merits the exclamation mark awarded it by most all critics. To the contrary, this move should have led, with correct technique on the part of the first player, to a compromise of the black position, and after 27...d5 28.a3 (or b5) f5, etc., to an easy draw.

28.bxa3 B a8 29.B d3 e4 30.B e3

As desired, although not yet jeopardizing Black's game; on the other hand, 30.Bb3! would have put a rather difficult task in front of the opponent, because after 30...Bd8, then 31.a4! would follow – with the threat of speedily using the queenside pawn preponderance by means of a5, a4, together with b5, etc. Admittedly, different counterattacks – like ...Bd1+, together with ...Bd2 and ...g4; or ...e3, together with ...Bd2, etc. – were then at Black's disposal. Yet, even so, a draw would be Black's best result – and this only after a tough battle. If, however, 30. Bb3 b5, then 31. Qf1, and the Black rook couldn't penetrate. Now Black forces a quite pleasant rook endgame.

30...d5! 31.Bxe4 d c3 32.B e1 Bxa3 33.Qf1 Qf6 34.h4 dxb1

Black's position is not really strengthened, especially since White threatens to free up a corner pawn; if, for example, 34...Ba4 35.Bc1 d5 36.b5! cxb5 37.Bc5, etc.

35.Bxb1 Bxa2 36.B e1?

Hardly had the rook endgame begun, when White already commits the decisive error. As becomes immediately apparent, the idea to defend the b-pawn from the fourth rank is quite an unfortunate one, and the intended cordoning off of the black king from the queenside is not executable. Correct was 36.Bb3!, in connection with an immediate exploitation of the kingside chances; for example, 36...Qe5 37.Be3+ Qd5 38.Bf3 f5 39.h5! gxh5 40.Bxf5+ Qc4 41.Bxh5 Qxb4 42.g4, etc. Then a drawn ending could hardly fail to materialize.

36...Ba4 37.B e4 c5

As a result, Black obtains a winning position, since after Bf4+, the pawn obviously still can't be taken.

38.Bf4+ Qe6 39.B e4+ Qf6

Although not in great time pressure, Black favors figuring out the not-so-easy-to-calculate consequences of the king move to d5 only after the time control at move 40. At this moment, he is certainly still able to allow himself this luxury. But his next, indifferent, move seriously imperils the win.

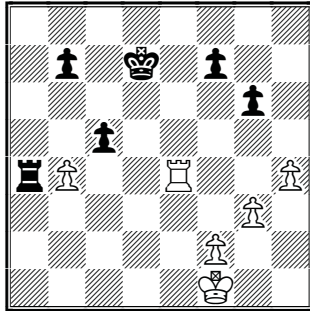
40.Bf4+ Qe7 (?)

The king had to move specifically to e6, in order to be able to go from there immediately to d5, because he mustn't

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go to f6 any more – since the position would repeat for the third time. After this omission, White again gets chances for a draw.

41. ♖e4+ ♗d7



If 41... ♗f8, then 42. ♖e5 cxb4 43. ♖b5 e7-f8, etc. – draw.

42. g4

His only chance; insufficient would be 42. ♖f4 ♗e6 43. ♖e4+ ♗d5! 44. ♖e7 cxb4! (not so clear by far are the consequences of 44... ♖xb4 45. ♖xf7, etc.) 45. ♖xb7 ♗c4!; for example, 46. ♖c7+ ♗d3 47. ♖d7+ ♗c2 48. ♖c7+ ♗b2 49. ♖xf7 b3 50. ♖f6 ♗a3!, etc. With his 40th move, Black gave up precisely this advantage out of convenience.

42... cxb4

Even after 42... ♖xb4 43. ♖xb4 cxb4 44. ♗e2, Black would still have had some difficulties. Correct for him then would be the following: 44... ♗e6 45. ♗d3 ♗f6! 46. ♗c4 ♗g7 47. ♗xb4 ♗h6 48. ♗b5 f5! 49. f3 f×g4 50. f×g4 ♗g7 51. ♗b6 ♗f6 52. ♗xb7 ♗e5 53. ♗c6 ♗f4 54. h5 g×h5 55. g×h5 ♗g5 – draw.

43. h5 b5

Contrived; after the simpler 43... g×h5 44. g×h5 b5, White would have a difficult game – for example, 45. h6 b3 46. ♖e3 b2 47. ♖b3 ♗c6! 48. ♖×b2 ♖h4±, etc.

But after 46. ♖×a4 (instead of 46. ♖e3) 46... b×a4 47. h7 b2 48. h8♗ b1♗+ 49. ♗g2, the queen endgame would have been very difficult, if possible at all, for Black to win.

44. h6 b3 45. ♖e3

The rook exchange would clearly be less favorable now than in the variation above. On the other hand, now the fourth rank is blocked at the moment by the white g-pawn, so that White succeeds in capturing the enemy passed pawn, without having to surrender his own.

45... b2 46. ♖b3 ♗c6

Of course not 46... ♖a1+ 47. ♗g2 b1♗ 48. ♖×b1, together with h7.

47. ♖×b2(?)

This should also suffice; but 47. f3! ♖a3 (47... ♖a2 48. ♗g1!) 48. ♖×b2 ♖×f3+ 49. ♗g2 ♖e3 (-d3, -a3) 50. ♖f2, etc., was much easier.

47... ♖×g4 48. ♖c2+ ♗b6

Black has to let the enemy rook advance to the eighth rank – since 48... ♗b7 49. ♖c5 b4?, would be a worse trap to fall into because of 50. ♖h5!.

49. ♖c8 ♖h4 50. ♖h8 b4 51. ♗e2 ♗c7

Cycle I: Round 2

Obviously, the king may not move forward because of h7, and the last, weak chance of a win for Black now consists in his crossing over, where possible, to the kingside.

52. ♖d3 ♜h3+ 53. ♗c2 b3+

If 53... ♜f3, then 54. ♜f8! ♜xf2+ 55. ♖b3 ♜h2 56. ♜xf7+, together with ...h7 – draw.

54. ♗c1!

More exact than 54. ♖b2 ♗d6 55. ♜b8 ♖e5! 56. ♜xb3 ♜xh6=, etc.

54... ♜h1+ 55. ♖b2 ♗d6

The winning of the f2-pawn with 55... ♜h2 was still of no importance on account of a later ♜f8, etc.

56. ♖xb3

Here White appears to have seen a ghost, since otherwise he would have chosen the quite simple path to a draw: 56. h7 ♖e7 57. ♖xb3 ♖f6 58. ♗c3 ♖g7 59. ♜a8 ♖xh7 60. ♗d2, etc. Even so, White can allow himself some things in this position.

56... ♖e5! 57. ♗c4

After an inferior move – again quite a good one. His idea consists in answering the threatening advance of the black king in case of need with an analogous maneuver of his own – for example, 57... ♖e4 58. ♗c5! ♖f3 59. ♗d6 ♖xf2 60. ♖e7 f5 61. ♖f6, etc., draw. What's more, 58. ♗d3 looms, with a fully secure position.

57... ♜h3!

Black still tries everything possible, but should not have succeeded.

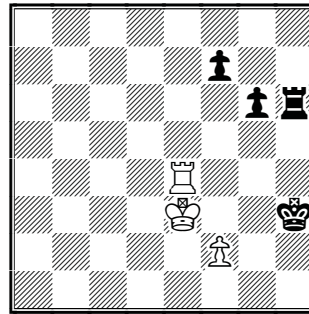
58. ♜e8+

In connection with the following, probably the simplest process.

58... ♖f5 59. ♗d4! ♜xh6 60. ♖e3 ♖g4 61. ♜e4+

With this, the next mistake is prepared. Safest was to reach a draw with 61. ♖e2! ♜h1 62. ♜e4+ ♖f5 63. ♜a4, etc.

61... ♖h3



62. ♜f4?

With this instructive mistake, White allows the decisive encircling of his remaining pawn. 62. ♖e2, etc., would still have sufficed for a draw.

62... f5 63. ♜f3+

Loses quickly, but after 63. ♜a4, as well as after 63. ♖e2, Black would have ultimately won with 63... ♖g2, etc.

63... ♖h2! 64. ♜f4 ♜h3+ 0-1