Alekhine’s Test — Record and Translation of His Thoughts

Adriaan de Groot’s Psychological Experiment

Subject: Alexander Alexandrovich Alekhine

Date: 28 November 1938
Test position: A (de Groot vs. Scholtens, 1936)



Thinking time: 9 minutes
Protocol designation: G2; A

Record of the Subject’s Thoughts

At first sight, I have a faint recollection of a tournament game, Botvinnik vs. Vidmar (Nottingham). There is a certain resemblance: the same queen position on d3. Opening type: Queen’s Gambit Accepted.

Given half an hour, I should be able to reconstruct logically the course of the game up to this position. Is the pawn on b2 really attacked? Or is that unimportant? Let us see what counterplay White has.

Which moves are worth considering?

1.Bxd5 — calculate: 1...Bxd5 is no good; 1...Nxd5 is no good either. So 1...exd5 remains. Then the knight on f6 becomes somewhat weak.

2.Ng4 or 2.Rfe1² might follow, perhaps also 2.Nxc6 and 3.Rfe1², or maybe 2.Qf3.

In any case, 1.Bxd5 is the tempting move.

But let us examine other possibilities as well.

1.Ng4 comes into consideration, but it does not look very good.

Perhaps **1.Nxd5**; 1...Nxd5 2.Bxd5, with many possible captures, but at first sight it does not look convincing.

1.Nxc6 — at first sight 1...bxc6 would follow, and then the d5 square becomes stronger. That is a pity.

In any case, White is much better. I would be very happy to have such a position in a tournament game.

Are there any other moves besides 1.Bxd5 that lead to a decisive advantage?

1.Bxd5 is a very strong move, that much is certain.

Calculate 1.Nxc6; 1...bxc6. Pressure on c6, the bishop pair: that is also very pleasant, but the position promises still more.

Check the other possibilities once again.

Well, under time pressure I would play **1.Bxd5**[1].

Note 1: Possible interpretations of Alekhine's concluding remark:

1) *"If I had to decide immediately, I would play 1.Bxd5."*
2) *"Well, if I had no more time to think, I would play 1.Bxd5."*

Note 2: Alekhine's recorded thoughts do not indicate explicitly whether he meant 2.Rfe1 and 3.Rfe1, or 2.Rce1 and 3.Rce1. From the logic of the position, however, it is perfectly clear that he meant the king's rook.

Note 3: The selected passages in bold were emphasized by the editor of the Czech version.