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4 Play on Two Wings

It is not always possible for White to maintain his initial advantage in development after the opening. More often than not in games between experienced players, both sides complete their development around the same moment. However, it can be expected that White will obtain a minimal advantage of some other nature, allowing him to start active operations. Perhaps White then makes an attacking move on one side of the board, Black defends, and so on. Can this kind of play result in anything concrete? From a logical point of view it shouldn't.

White needs an additional element if he is to get ahead of his opponent in carrying out his plans. One of the most reliable methods is to open a new front after creating tension in the initial theatre of action. The main idea relies on the fact that his pieces, enjoying greater mobility than their defending counterparts, need less time to be transferred to the other wing. Thus, the necessary temporal superiority of one or two tempi can be achieved, increasing the chances of success.

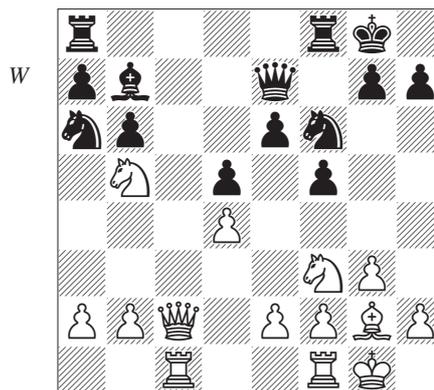
All this sounds a bit too abstract, but in the notes to the following example I shall try to highlight the most important aspects of this scenario.

Belavsky – Bareev

USSR Ch, Minsk 1987

1 d4 f5 2 c4 ♘f6 3 g3 e6 4 ♙g2 d5 5 ♘f3 c6 6 0-0 ♙d6 7 ♙f4 0-0 8 ♙xd6 ♗xd6 9 ♗c2 b6 10 ♘a3!? ♘a6 11 ♖ac1 ♙b7 12 cxd5 cxd5 13 ♘b5 ♗e7 (D)

White has emerged from the opening with an obvious advantage. He has an excellent outpost on e5 for his knight and also exerts strong pressure against the black queenside. Because of the weakness of the a7-pawn, which ties down the a8-rook to its defence, White has good chances of taking over control of the c-file.



From this perspective, White's next two moves are quite natural, since they prepare to double rooks.

14 ♖a4 ♘e8

Black tries to release the tension by means of exchanges. First of all, he aims to eliminate the irritating b5-knight.

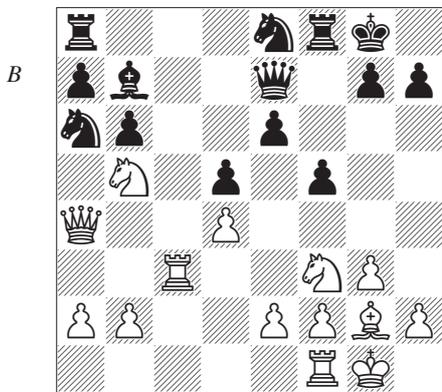
The more natural 14...♖fc8 fails to oppose White on the c-file since after 15 ♘e5 ♘e8 16 ♖xc8 recapturing with 16...♖xc8 is impossible because of 17 ♘xa7.

Compared to other lines of the Stonewall Dutch, the standard attacking plan based on 14...♗e8 (threatening ...♙c6) 15 ♗b3 ♘e4 (intending ...f4) is not too effective, precisely because the c-file is open, not allowing Black too much freedom of action. White would play 16 e3 followed by ♖c2, ♖fc1 and ♘e5, leaving Black simply worse.

15 ♖c3 (D)

Belavsky rightly refrains from the tempting knight jump to e5. After 15 ♘e5 Black wins time for regrouping precisely by threatening to exchange that knight with 15...♘b8; for instance, 16 ♗b3 (the careless 16 ♖c3? even allows Black to get an advantage with 16...a6 17 ♘a3 b5 followed by ...b4) 16...♘d7 (but now 16...a6? 17 ♘c3 b5 is mistaken because of the

tactical blow 18 ♞xd5! winning material for White) and a large part of White's advantage has evaporated. Playing for the initiative with 17 ♞c6 ♙xc6 18 ♞xc6 helps Black get rid of his passive bishop, allowing him to build up a solid position with 18... ♞df6 19 ♞fc1 ♞e4 possibly followed by ... ♞d8 and ... ♞8d6 . Using Vuković's terminology, we could say that 15 ♞c3 is the move involving the lesser degree of commitment. On f3, the knight is less vulnerable and maintains the option of both ♞g5 and ♞e5 .



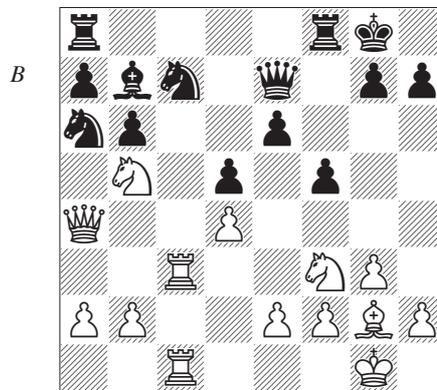
15... ♞ec7

Consistently following his plan. The queen-side diversion initiated with 15... ♞b4 16 ♞xb4 ♞xb4 17 a3 ♞a2 (17... ♞c6 is simply bad because of 18 ♞e5) fails to 18 ♞e3 ♙a6 19 a4 ♙xb5 20 axb5 ♞c7 21 ♞g5 and suddenly Black is unable to defend his pawn-chain. After, say, 21... ♞fe8 White can play 22 ♞xe6! ♞xe6 23 ♞xe6 ♞xe6 24 ♙xd5 winning back one of the knights with a decisive material advantage. In this line we can see for the first time the multi-functionality of the c3-rook. It not only fights for the open file, but is also ready to take part in operations on other parts of the board.

16 ♞xc7

This might look like a slight concession, since it allows Black to improve the position of his a6-knight. However, Beliavsky had in mind a very deep plan. For the sake of truth, it should be mentioned that the more natural 16 ♞fc1 (D) is also entirely playable.

a) The move recommended by Beliavsky and Mikhalchishin in *Informator*, 16... ♞fc8? ,



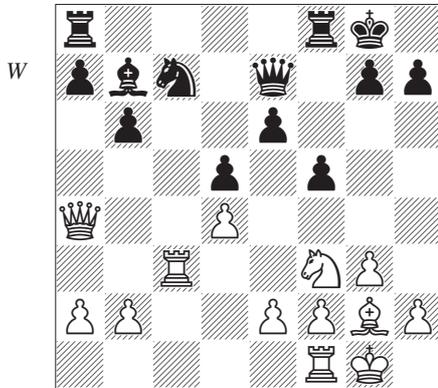
actually loses material to 17 ♞xa7! ! (Beliavsky and Mikhalchishin only consider 17 ♞e5? ! ♞xb5 18 ♞xb5 ♞xc3 19 ♞xc3 ♞c7 20 ♞a4 a6 21 ♞b3 ♞d6 , when Black holds the position, although their evaluation of 'equal' looks a bit exaggerated) 17... ♞xa7 18 ♞xc7! ♞xc7 19 ♞xc7 , when the a6-knight is pinned while 19... ♞xc7 is impossible in view of 20 ♞e8\# .

b) Black can generate interesting complications with 16... ♞e8! ?, pinning the white knight. Play may continue 17 ♞xc7 ♞xc7 18 ♞xc7 ♙c6 19 ♞xc6 (after the more ambitious 19 ♞a6 ♙xb5 20 ♞b7 ♞g6 White obtains a dangerous-looking initiative with 21 ♞e5 ♞f6 22 ♙xd5 but after the cold-blooded 22... ♞fb8! he has nothing better than to take a draw by perpetual with 23 ♙xe6+ ♞xe6 24 ♞xg7+ ♙f8 25 ♞f7+ ♙g8 26 ♞g7+) 19... ♞xc6 20 ♞e5 ♞c1+ 21 ♙f1 a6 22 ♞c3 b5 (the greedy 22... ♞xb2 allows a decisive infiltration by the white queen with 23 ♞c6 ♞ae8 24 ♞d7 ♞f7 25 ♞f6+! gxf6 26 ♞xe8+ ♙g7 and now the safest way to keep things under control is 27 ♞c6) 23 ♞b4 ♞fe8 and White seems to preserve the better chances in a position with a rather unusual material balance.

c) The endgame resulting after the simplistic 16... ♞xb5 17 ♞xb5 ♞ac8 18 ♞e5 ♞xc3 19 ♞xc3 ♞c8 might be defensible for Black, in spite of White's impressive optical advantage.

We can conclude that by playing for the c-file alone White cannot gain a significant lead in his speed of action, and thus has little chance of increasing his initial advantage. Intuitively sensing this, Beliavsky decided to open a new front of action on the opposite wing.

16...♖xc7 (D)



Black has more or less defended the c-file, but now his knight is rather misplaced, needing three further moves to take control of the crucial e5-square and thus restrict its white counterpart.

17 h3!!

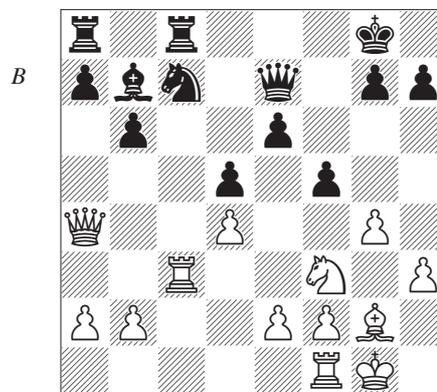
This might have come as a real shock for Bareev, whose attention was probably concentrated on the c-file. While maintaining the queenside pressure, Beliavsky aims to keep Black busy on the other wing as well.

17...♙fc8

Bareev decides first of all to neutralize the pressure along the c-file. Beliavsky and Mikh-alchishin recommend 17...a6, aiming to win time for the transfer of the knight to e4 via b5 and d6 while forcing the rook to abandon either the third rank or the c-file. In this case, White might have to give up the idea of opening the kingside for the moment. However, the move ...a6 has the obvious drawback of weakening the b6-square. Later, Black might be forced to create additional weaknesses with ...b5. Thus, switching back to queenside play is entirely possible; for instance, 18 e3 (important prophylaxis; after 18 ♙fc1 ♗b5 19 ♙3c2 f4 Black gets counterplay) 18...♗b5 19 ♙c2 ♗d6 (the straightforward 19...♙ac8 20 ♙fc1 ♙xc2 21 ♙xc2 ♙c8 has similar consequences since after 22 ♙xc8+ ♗xc8 23 ♗f1 ♗c7 24 ♙c6 Black must further weaken his position with 24...b5 anyway, when 25 ♗e5 gives White an overwhelming advantage) 20 ♙b4 b5 (Black can

avoid this move only by losing his coordination after 20...♙fc8 21 ♙xc8+ ♗xc8 22 ♙xe7 ♗xe7, when White continues 23 ♗g5; then in case of 23...♗c8 he simply occupies the c-file, while the counterplay attempt based on 23...♙c8 24 ♗xe6 ♙c2 fails to 25 ♙b1 followed by ♗f3-d1 and ♗f1-e1, driving the enemy rook back) 21 ♙fc1 ♙fc8 22 ♗e5 with a dream position for White due to the chronic weakness of Black's dark squares.

18 g4 (D)



18...g6

Bareev decides to keep his central structure intact. To a certain extent, this attitude is similar to that from the game Geller-Keres in Chapter 3. Not wishing to make any positional concessions, Black eventually lets things get out of control on dynamic territory. Black had three main alternatives:

a) The most simplistic reaction is 18...fxg4, keeping the d5-pawn solidly defended but helping White improve his structure with 19 hxg4, when play may continue 19...♗e8 (Black should offer the exchange of rooks as soon as possible; there is no time for 19...a6 because after 20 ♗e5 ♗b5 the rook can be switched to the kingside with 21 ♙h3, when the pressure along the h-file will soon become unpleasant) 20 ♙xc8 ♗xc8 21 ♗e5 ♗d6 (generally speaking, this is the best square for the knight, placing the e4- and f5-squares under control and thus anticipating the thematic moves g5 and f4; however, the knight will now be subjected to an irritating pin) 22 ♙a3 ♗d7 (Black prepares the transfer