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## 3 Fighting Blow by Blow

There's been a lot of talk about the connection of chess with noble arts such as music, but sometimes there is also a relation with other arts, not always so refined, such as boxing.

There are situations where without a clear mistake having necessarily been made, and without its justification being clear either, one of the players finds himself under attack, and in order to defend is forced to enter complications, whether accepting a sacrifice or making concessions such as moving an important piece away or weakening the position.

Sometimes it is not a pleasant decision, taken willingly, nor is it a 'normal' continuation. Its consequences are not clear, but failing to take the critical path is even worse, so one is forced to counterattack, fighting fire with fire.

The next game is a good example of this.

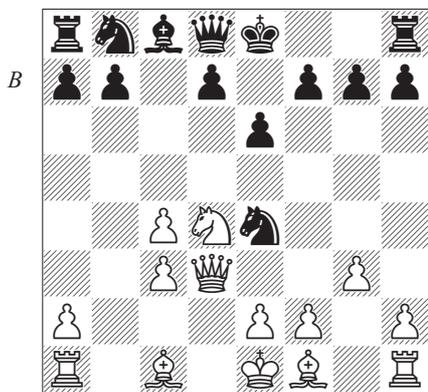
### Game 9

## Peter Heine Nielsen – Vasily Ivanchuk

*Capablanca Memorial, Havana 2007*

Nimzo-Indian Defence, Fianchetto Variation

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♗f3 c5 4 ♗c3 cxd4 5 ♗xd4 ♙b4 6 g3 ♗e4 7 ♚d3 ♙xc3+ 8 bxc3 (D)



Black has seriously weakened White's structure at the cost of conceding several tempi, opening up lines to White's advantage and giving up the bishop-pair. Black will in the future put pressure on the doubled pawns and White will try to exploit his greater mobility – the bishop-pair can make a difference. It is a

typical fight between a permanent advantage and a dynamic one.

It was possible to achieve the same thing and keep the dark-squared bishop with 7...♗xc3, but a knight on c5 is more useful than a passive bishop on e7.

8...♗c5 9 ♚f3

Hindering the development of the c8-bishop with 9...b6, which could have followed after any other queen move such as 9 ♚e3.

9...d6

Following classical precepts, Black places his central pawns on dark squares. Curiously enough, before this game Ivanchuk and Nielsen had already played this very same position, but with colours reversed.

10 ♙a3

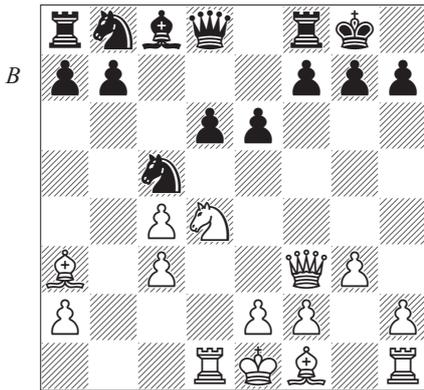
This is the start of a very ambitious plan, trying to put pressure on the black centre quickly. It is more usual to continue with the development of the kingside by 10 ♙g2 ♗bd7 11 0-0, which has been played many times in master games.

In Supplementary Game 9.1, Topalov-Aronian, Morelia/Linares 2008, we shall briefly see

an example of how dangerous White's initiative on the kingside can be.

**10...0-0 11 ♖d1 (D)**

A novelty by Nielsen. 11 ♗g2 had been played, while Ivanchuk suggested a very different set-up with 11 ♖b3!?



White is delaying the development of the kingside to increase the pressure of the a3-bishop and the d1-rook against the weak d6-pawn in particular. The d4-knight can also join in the attack; e.g., 11...♖bd7? 12 ♖b5. In any case the jump ♖b5 is one of White's ideas. The direct threat is 12 ♗xc5 and 13 ♖xe6 – how should Black meet this idea?

It is possible to play 11...♖ba6, and then ...♗d7 and ...♗c6, but it is clear that the knight is not ideally placed on a6 – it isn't a very ambitious move.

**11...♗a5!**

Black counterattacks on the queenside, trying to prove the a1-rook has moved away from there prematurely. It is not an obvious move because it leaves the d6-pawn to its fate – for the enjoyment of the white knight – and must have required deep analysis.

**12 ♖b5**

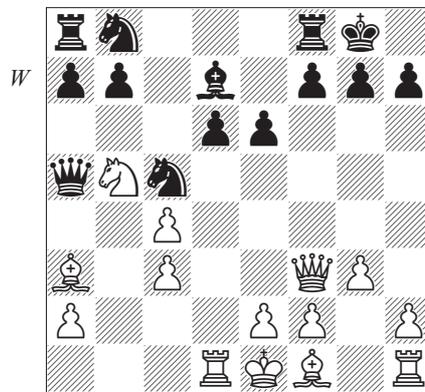
White accepts the challenge. Giving up the dark-squared bishop with 12 ♗xc5 would be a mini-defeat: besides 12...♗xc5, again attacking White's doubled pawns, Black could win a pawn for insufficient compensation with a line given by Ivanchuk: 12...dxc5 13 ♖b3 (if 13 ♖b5, Black can play 13...♗d7 14 e4 ♗c6, followed by ...♖d7, when White's pieces lack

coordination and his pawn weaknesses start to tell) 13...♗xa2 14 ♖xc5 ♗xc4 15 ♗e3 ♖c6.

**12...♗d7! (D)**

A strong blow seeking to exploit White's lack of kingside development – the threat of 13...♗c6 is serious. This move allows White to win the exchange, but Black hopes that the tempi White must expend to capture the rook will compensate for this, and in particular leave the white king as a target in the centre.

Again this is more ambitious than 12...♖ba6.



**13 ♗b4?!**

White chooses to win material, although of course the delay in bringing the king to safety is significant.

Instead of this capture of material, Ivanchuk noted that it was better to finish development at any cost; e.g., 13 ♗xc5 dxc5 14 e4 ♗c6 15 ♖d6 ♖d7 16 ♗e3 ♖b6 17 ♗e2! ♖a4 18 ♖d3 ♗ad8 19 0-0 ♖xc3 20 ♗h5! ♖a4 21 e5, when the strong d6-knight together with the greater freedom of movement compensate for the pawn.

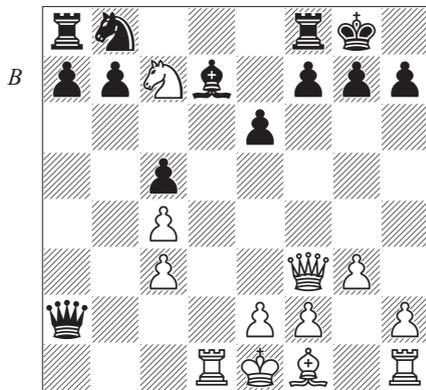
**13...♗xa2 14 ♗xc5**

This is consistent although somewhat reckless. In *Informator 100* Ivanchuk considered other possibilities but none is entirely satisfactory. For instance, after 14 ♗xd6?! ♗c6 15 ♗f4 ♖ba6 16 ♗xc5 ♖xc5 17 f3 ♗a5 18 ♗g2 ♖a4 Black wins a pawn at the very least.

White manages to end up level on material with 14 ♖xd6 ♗c6 15 e4 ♖bd7 16 ♗g2, but after 16...♖b3 (threatening to win with 17...a5) 17 ♗e2 ♗xe2+ 18 ♖xe2 a5 the passed pawn, virtually an extra pawn, gives Black the advantage.

**14...dxc5 15 e4 (D)**

There is no turning back. Closing the long diagonal with 15 e4 yields Black the initiative. He can complete his development with 15...c6! since 16 xd7? is impossible due to 16...e5 17 d1 xd7 18 xd7? ad8, winning. White's development is not satisfactorily completed with 16 g2 because of 16...e5 17 e2 xe2+ (retreating the queen is also good, but without queens the doubled pawns cannot be supported) 18 xe2 fd8 19 d6 a4! 20 d2 xc4! 21 xc4 b5.



Now Black would have compensation after 15...c6 16 e4 d7 – he is a pawn up, a passed pawn at that, and the white structure has weaknesses, but “if you see a good move, look for an even better one”.

**15...a4!**

The white rook is forced to stay on the first rank so it will be left hanging, worsening White's position and becoming a tactical weakness.

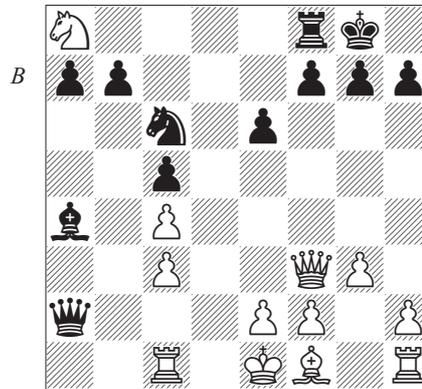
**16 f1**

16 xa8 xd1 doesn't work – White needs too many tempi to bring both his king and knight to safety, and ...c6-e5 is imminent.

**16...c6**

Also tempting was 16...c6 17 e4 a3 18 e3 (if 18 d1, the switchback 18...a4! is now winning; e.g., 19 xa8 {if 19 b1, then 19...c2 wins} 19...xd1 20 xd1 xc3+ 21 d2 f3 22 g1 c6, with a winning attack; Black threatens the a8-knight, as well as 23...d8 and the entry of the c6-knight; 23

e2? loses to 23...d4!) 18...xe4 19 g1 c6 20 xa8 xa8 21 e2 a5.

**17 xa8 (D)**

What is the strongest continuation for Black now?

Obviously the knight can be captured but this would be an immense relief for White, who would complete his development after 17...xa8? 18 g2 d8, when he is in time to play 19 0-0.

It is possible to anticipate this with 17...d8, threatening 18...d2#. Then 18 e3 is forced and after 18...a5 the move 19 g2? loses to 19...xc4, but surprisingly White holds with 19 h3!, when against 19...xc4? the move 20 xe6! is effective. Black can get some advantage by playing 19...b3 instead, although after 20 0-0 xc1 21 xc1 xa8 22 xc5 xe2 23 g2, unlike other positions in which Black's passed pawn gave him a tangible advantage, here White is much more actively placed.

This would be the result of the first ‘sounding’ of the position but this last variation can provide us with a clue of what is the strongest continuation.

What would you play?

**17...a3!**

Again using the helpless rook to increase the advantage. The tempo ...d8 is not needed to force e3, and it is better for the queen to step off the a2-g8 diagonal, avoiding the move 20 xe6! of the previous note.

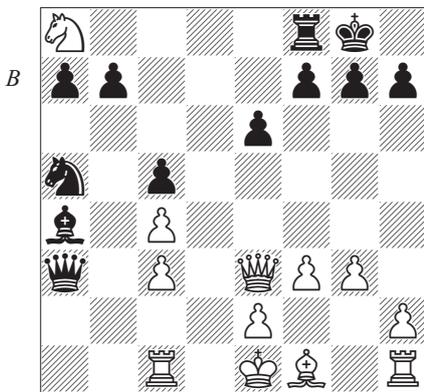
**18 e3**

18 ♖f4 e5 19 ♗e3 leads to a position similar to the one in the game, whereas 18 ♜b1 loses to 18...♙c2; e.g., 19 ♙g2 ♙xb1 20 0-0 ♙a2 21 ♘c7 ♙xc4.

**18...♘a5! 19 f3 (D)**

Vacating the f2-square for the king and thus preventing mate.

19 ♙g2 ♘xc4 is not possible: the queen cannot defend the c1-rook, whose capture leads to mate.



**19...♘xc4 20 ♗f4 b5!**

Threatening to win the rook by 21...e5.

**21 ♜b1 ♗xc3+**

This is the third pawn to fall – Black is a rook down, but not for long.

**22 ♔f2 ♘d2 23 ♜e1 ♜xa8**

The outcome is now beyond doubt – the three pawns for the exchange are passed ones.

**24 ♙g2 c4 25 ♗c7 ♗d4+ 26 e3 ♗d8 27 ♗e5 ♜c8 28 ♗c3 ♗d3 29 ♗a5 c3 30 ♜e2 ♘b3 31 ♗xa7 c2 0-1**

White's set-up with 10 ♙e3 and 11 ♜d1 was very ambitious, putting strong pressure on the d6 point, but with the counterattack begun by 11...♗a5! and 12...♙d7! Black highlighted the drawback of White's plan, getting counterplay on the queenside itself. He also had a lead in development. White could not get his king to a good shelter with the necessary speed.

For the idea to be successful, Black had to resort to tactics, with a beautiful variety of tactical finesse, such as the *zwischenzugs* 15...♙a4! and 17...♗a3!.

### Supplementary Game 9.1

## Veselin Topalov – Levon Aronian

*Morelia/Linares 2008*

Nimzo-Indian Defence, Fianchetto Variation

**1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♙b4 4 ♘f3 c5 5 g3 cxd4 6 ♘xd4 ♘e4 7 ♗d3 ♙xc3+ 8 bxc3 ♘c5 9 ♗f3 d6 10 ♙g2 e5 (D)**

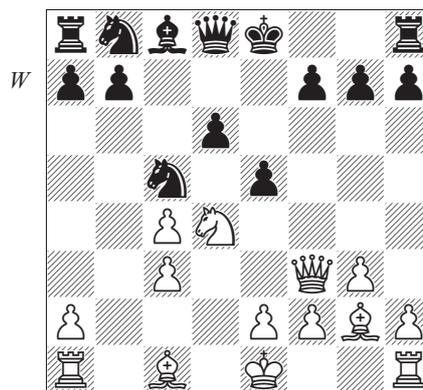
Here, instead of the previously used 11 ♘b3 or 11 ♘f5, White introduced a novelty.

**11 ♗e3**

“The threat is stronger than its execution” – this provides more strength to the future ♘b3 because of the pressure on c5.

**11...0-0**

If Black wants to imitate his opponent's play, anticipating ♘b3 with 11...♘ba6, there follows another of White's ideas, 12 f4!, which gave him the advantage in Gajewski-Macieja, Lublin 2008 after 12...♗e7 13 ♘c6! ♗d7 14 ♘b4 0-0 15 ♘xa6 ♘xa6 16 fxe5, when he managed



to open up the position: his g2-bishop is powerful and he will be able to exert annoying