Contents

Introduction

The King's Indian Defence is one of the richest openings in all of chess theory. Black does not play to equalize as he does in the classical defences. Rather he seeks to unbalance the game from the outset. The last decade has seen a revitalization of the King's Indian, as even top players are often trying to win with the black pieces. Compared to the classical openings, the price of each move is quite high and a mistake by either side can easily lead to disaster.

The King's Indian has always been considered a somewhat risky opening, but despite that common sentiment, the King's Indian has an impressive pedigree. While this dynamic system was pioneered in the 1950s by Russian and Yugoslav players such as David Bronstein, Efim Geller and Svetozar Gligoric, the two big names that are often attached to the King's Indian are those of its World Champion practitioners, Robert Fischer and Garry Kasparov. Whereas Fischer's retirement signalled the end of his King's Indian era, Kasparov gave up our favourite opening while he was still an active player, which 'indicated' its unsoundness. At least that was the general feeling after he lost a well-known game in 1997 to Kramnik in the then dreaded 'Bayonet' system.

In fact Kasparov stated something to the effect that the Sicilian and King's Indian were too much to keep up with at the level he was playing at, and so he stuck with the Sicilian while heading for more solid systems in the closed openings. Nowadays young players are not so worried about this; with advances in technology many modern talents play both the Sicilian and the King's Indian, as well as other sharp defences.

Opening fashions come and go. The beginning of the new millennium brought forward a great new champion of the King's Indian Defence in Teimour Radjabov. Like Kasparov, Radjabov hails from the city of Baku in Azerbaijan. Radjabov really took over where Kasparov left off, even scoring well in the aforementioned Bayonet (see Chapters 5 and 6). Radjabov's success influenced the younger generation as well as the old guard, and nowadays most of the top players have been found at one time or another on the black side of the King's Indian.

The King's Indian Defence has always been an opening I've felt greatly attached to. Despite the fact that I have written extensively on the Slav Defences, the King's Indian was my first real defence to 1 d4. While the King's Indian is considered to be a 'tactical' opening, I have always considered it to be very strategic in nature. It is an opening where a feeling for piece placement and pawn structure is very important. There are many thematic ideas and although the opening lends itself to frequent complications, the tactics have always seemed 'logical' to me. So, while it is true that when I 'grew up' I began to rely more on the solid Slav systems, it is always useful to have a sharp weapon available, especially when one really wants to try to win with Black.

Even though the King's Indian is a complicated opening, I do not think it is so difficult to learn. For one thing, it is relatively 'move order proof'. That is, the King's Indian set-up can be employed against 1 d4, 1 c4, or 1 ♘f3. Also, the King's Indian lends itself to just a handful of pawn structures, so the ideas are easier to assimilate.

In this book, as well as the second volume, I will generally focus on the main lines. The reason for this is that I think the best way to learn an opening is to study the main lines. It is easy to add other secondary systems later. The biggest example of this is in the Classical Variation, 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♗g7 4 e4 d6 5 ♘f3 0-0 6 ♗e2 e5 7 0-0. Here I have gone for what is no doubt the main line, 7...♘c6. This is the most uncompromising approach and it is also the most difficult. The main alternative is 7...♘a6. This line is safer, easier to learn and may well be just as good as 7...♘c6. In fact, I have played 7...♘a6 myself on several occasions. Nevertheless, I think it is best for the aspiring King's Indian player to learn the main lines. One great thing about the King's Indian is its flexibility – if you learn the main systems, it is easy to expand your repertoire by adding additional lines without having to learn a whole new opening.

In the Sämisch Variation, 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♗g7 4 e4 d6 5 f3 0-0 6 ♗e3, the main line nowadays is 6...c5. This was not always the case, and 6...♘c6 and 6...e5 used to be considered Black's two main systems. I have elected not to go with 6...c5 even though it may well be the best move. While White often steers the game into a Benoni structure, it is also possible for White to simply grab a pawn while exchanging queens as well. Modern practice has clearly shown that Black gets sufficient compensation for the pawn, but some White players are rather well prepared in these endings. If Black is well prepared too and has a good understanding of these positions, he should certainly be able to draw, but I believe that heading into a pawn-down endgame straight out of the opening is probably not to everyone's taste.

Moreover, 6...c5 against the Sämisch has been very well covered in modern King's Indian literature and I did not have a lot to add to what is already out there, especially as the lack of popularity of the Sämisch at high level has not produced much fresh material to examine. The classical 6...e5 must still be playable, but I always thought it was easier to play White in these lines and so decided to go for the Panno Variation with 6...♘c6. This is an uncompromising system that still has a lot of fresh territory to explore.

Note that the second volume will cover the Fianchetto Variation, the Four Pawns Attack, the Averbakh and all of White's other tries.

I would like to thank a few people for their help with this book: John Emms, for suggesting the topic, allowing me to split the book into two parts and for his patience; Richard Palliser, for listening to me rant and rave about various lines that may or may not have found their way into this book; Joe Fang, for the use of his impressive library; and Vasik Rajlich, for keeping me well supplied with *Rybka* 3 and 4. Thanks to you all!

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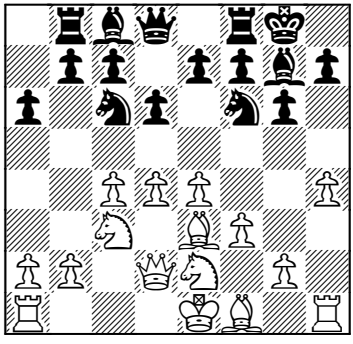
October 2010

Chapter 14
Panno Variation

9 h4 without 9...h5

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♗g7 4 e4 d6 5 f3 0-0 6 ♗e3 ♘c6 7 ♘ge2 a6 8 ♕d2 ♖b8 9 h4



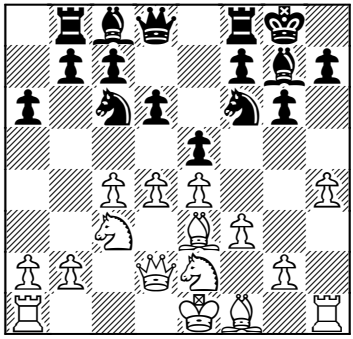
This is the most aggressive move, although White may still play positionally in certain lines. The move's basic intention is obvious – White intends to attack the black king. The play very often is similar to the Sicilian Dragon. Usually Black halts the advance of the white h-pawn at once with 9...h5, although there was a time when it was thought that this move was too weakening. He may also strike in the centre with 9...e5 or initiate queenside play with 9...b5.

Although 9...h5 is considered the main line nowadays and will be the subject of our next chapter, 9...e5 and 9...b5 have not been refuted and they lead to complex play. I imagine that these two lines could prove to be unpleasant to face for some white players, especially those who intend to play the positional 9 h4 h5 9 ♘c1 lines of Chapter 16.

A: 9...e5
B: 9...b5

A) 9...e5

Black follows the logic that a flank attack should be met with play in the centre. However, because the d4-square is well protected, it turns out that Black actually cannot play in the centre after all. Indeed, if 9...e5 is to prove viable, it will be by combining defence and counterattack.

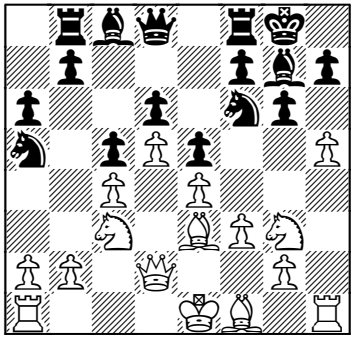


10 d5 ♘a5 11 ♘g3

Geller's old book only considered 11 b3, but this move just weakens the queenside for no reason and Black has good play after 11...c5, intending ...b5. The text move activates White's kingside and threatens 12 b4.

11...c5 12 h5

After 12 ♖b1 I think Black should play Gallagher's recommendation 12...h5!, preventing White from having his way all over the board. Instead 12...b6 13 h5 ♗d7 14 b4 cxb4 15 ♖xb4 ♕c7 16 h6 ♗h8 17 ♕b2 b5 18 cxb5 ♖fc8 19 bxa6! was winning for White in V.Kramnik-V.Isupov, Kuibyshev 1990.



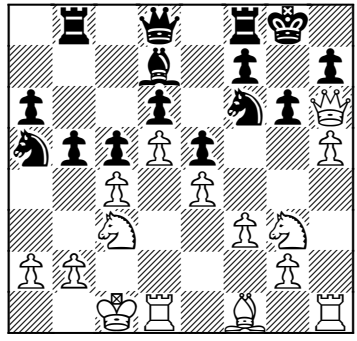
12...♗d7 13 ♗h6

It is hard to believe that 13 ♖c1 can trouble Black after 13...b5, while 13 0-0-0 b5 14 ♗h6 ♗xh6 15 ♕xh6 transposes to the main line.

13...♗xh6

This is a common idea that is also frequently seen in the Dragon. Black invites the white queen to h6 hoping that White's queenside will prove to be more vulnerable from its absence there. It is also possible to play 13...b5!? as after 14 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 if White wants to invade with his queen, he must play 15 hxg6 fxg6 first, which could prove to be premature. After 16 ♕h6+ ♔g8 Black can defend himself laterally along the second rank.

14 ♕xh6 b5 15 0-0-0



White can also play 15 ♗e2 when 15...♕e7 (this is the most popular move, but I do not like it; the queen should hang around because White has ♘f5 ideas in the air, but d8 is a good, flexible square!) 16 0-0-0 ♘xc4 (Black could also try 16...♔h8!? or 16...♖b7) 17 ♗xc4 bxc4 18 ♘f1 allows him a typical

build-up with ♘e3, ♖d2 and g4. More critical is the immediate 15...♘xc4 16 ♗xc4 bxc4 17 0-0-0 ♖b4 when Black's queen can still go to either side of the board.

15...♘xc4

Instead 15...♕e7 16 ♖d2 ♖b7 was seen in Y.Kraidman-H.Westerinen, Gausdal 1983, but this looks too defensive to me.

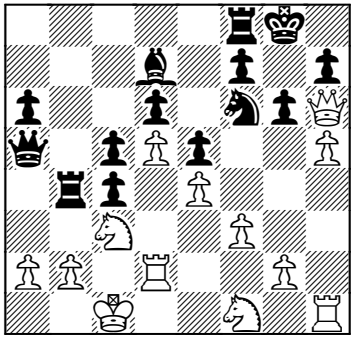
16 ♗xc4 bxc4 17 ♘f1 ♕a5!

Now that there is no ♘f5 to worry about, the queen takes up an aggressive post on the queenside.

18 ♖d2

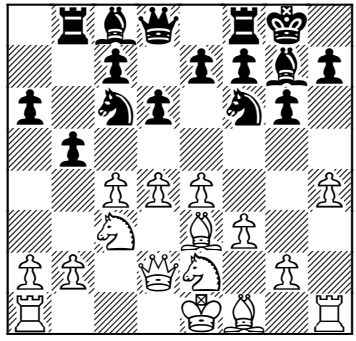
After 18 g4? ♖xb2! (also strong is 18...♗a4! 19 ♖d2 ♖xb2! 20 ♘xa4 ♖b7, winning) White resigned in U.Lenhardt-S.Crowdy, correspondence 1985. Following 19 ♔xb2 ♖b8+ 20 ♔c2 ♗a4+ 21 ♘xa4 ♕xa4+ 22 ♔d2 ♘xg4! 23 fxg4 c3+ White's position falls apart.

18...♖b4



Black has good counterplay. For example, the natural 19 ♕g5 can be met by 19...♖fb8 (19...♘xh5 20 ♖xh5 ♖fb8 21 ♕e3 gxh5 22 ♘g3 is less clear) when Black's attack is the stronger. For example, 20 ♕xf6? ♖xb2 and White will not last long.

B) 9...b5



Black continues with his plan.

10 h5 e5

This seems similar to the previous line, but here Black has played ...b5 to attack c4 first, so the move ...c5 will not be necessary (although it is still possible). There are a couple of interesting alternatives too:

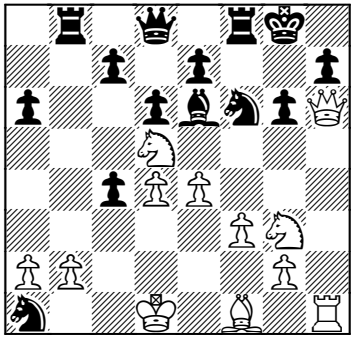
a) 10...bxc4 and then:

a1) 11 g4 ♗xg4!? (Black could investigate other moves) 12 fxg4 ♘xg4 13 0-0-0 ♘xe3 14 ♕xe3 e6 15 hxg6 hxg6 (instead 15...fxg6 16 ♕h3 ♕g5+ 17 ♔b1 ♖xb2+ 18 ♔xb2 ♖b8+ 19 ♔a1 ♘b4 20 ♕xe6+! ♔h8 21 a4 ♘c2+ 22 ♔a2 ♘b4+ 23 ♔b1 ♘d3+ 24 ♔a1 is winning for White) was G.Kasparov-B.Spassky, Niksic 1983, and now 16 ♘g1! looks good for White.

a2) 11 hxg6 fxg6 12 ♘f4 e6 (after 12...♘a5 13 0-0-0 c6 14 g4 White has

the initiative, as shown in some of Murey's games) 13 ♗xc4 d5 14 ♗b3 ♖xb3! 15 axb3 dxe4 16 0-0-0 exf3 17 gxf3 is unclear after either 17...♘e7 or 17...♘a5.

a3) 11 ♗h6 has been considered a bit of a refutation of Black's play. I am not so sure about this, though: 11...♘b4! 12 ♘g3 ♗xh6 13 ♕xh6 ♘c2+ 14 ♔d1 ♘xa1 15 hxg6 (after 15 ♘d5, instead of 15...e6 16 hxg6 which was winning for White in M.Ceteras-D.Elliott, Mamaia 1991, because of 16...exd5 17 ♘h5, Black can play 15...g5! abruptly ending the white attack) 15...fxg6 16 ♘d5 ♗e6 (but not 16...♖f7? 17 ♘xf6+ exf6 18 ♗xc4, winning) and here:



a31) 17 ♘f4 ♗f7 18 ♘fh5 was V.Rajlich-K.Zalkind, Budapest 2000. Here 18...gxh5 19 ♘f5 ♘e8 20 ♖h3 ♗g6 21 ♗xc4+ e6! 22 ♗xe6+ ♖f7 23 ♖g3 ♕f6 would successfully defend.

a32) 17 ♘xf6+ ♖xf6 18 ♕xh7+ ♔f8 19 ♕h8+ ♗g8 20 ♗xc4 e6 21 ♖h7 ♖f7 22 ♗xe6 ♖xh7 23 ♕xg8+ ♔e7 24 ♕xg6 ♕h8 25 ♘f5+ ♔f8 is unclear. Black is up a lot of material, but it is hard to see how he can untangle.

b) 10...♘a5 11 ♘g3 (11 ♘f4?! prevents White from playing ♗h6 and makes little sense) 11...♘xc4 12 ♗xc4 bxc4 and now:

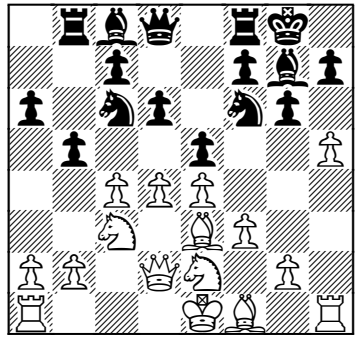
b1) 13 0-0-0 c6! 14 ♗h6 ♕a5 15 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 16 hxg6 fxg6 17 ♕h6+ ♔g8 18 e5 dxe5 19 ♘ge4 was J.Peters-A.Matikozian, Los Angeles 2004, and here 19...♖f7! looks good for Black.

b2) 13 ♗h6 ♗xh6 14 ♕xh6 and here:

b21) 14...g5 15 ♕xg5+ (15 e5!? may also be good) 15...♔h8 16 0-0-0 c6 17 ♖d2 ♖g8 18 ♕f4 ♕a5 19 ♘f1 ♗e6 20 ♘e3 gave White some advantage in P.Van der Sterren-M.Bosboom, Brussels 1993.

b22) 14...♖xb2!? is a sharp try: 15 e5 (or 15 hxg6 fxg6 16 e5 dxe5 17 0-0-0 ♖xa2!?) 15...dxe5 16 0-0-0 (not 16 dxe5 ♕d4!) 16...exd4 is unclear. If 17 hxg6 (or 17 ♘ce4 ♗f5) 17...fxg6 18 ♘ce4 ♖f7 19 ♔xb2, Black could try 19...c5, 19...♕d5 or 19...♘xe4 20 ♘xe4 ♗f5, in all cases with a total mess.

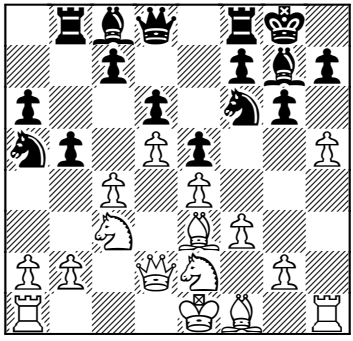
We now return to 10...e5:



11 d5

Invariably played, but 11 0-0-0 must also be possible. Indeed, we'll briefly discuss it in the notes to White's 11th move in Line A of Chapter 18.

11...♘a5

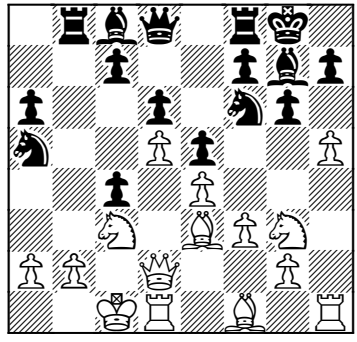


12 ♘g3 bxc4

It can be difficult to decide whether to take with the pawn or the knight. Taking with the pawn keeps the offside knight, but this knight is more likely to participate in an attack than White's light-squared bishop, which does not have much of a role. Taking with the knight can still make some sense, though, especially when White has already spent a tempo moving his bishop or when the black queen can go to the a5-square. Here neither of those factors come into consideration, so it is not surprising that taking with the pawn is correct.

Instead after 12...♘xc4 13 ♗xc4 bxc4 14 0-0-0 ♘d7 15 ♕e2 (15 hxg6 fxg6) 15...♘b6 (some correspondence play has shown that 15...f5 16 hxg6 f4 17 ♘h5! is promising for White), both 16 ♖h2, from J.Tarjan-L.Nezhni, USA 1982, and Gallagher's suggestion 16 ♘f1, with the idea of ♘d2xc4, favour White.

13 0-0-0



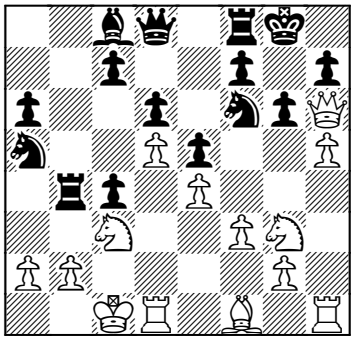
13...♖b4!?

This is a good, active move. Moreover, the alternatives may leave the a5-knight looking vulnerable:

a) 13...♘d7 14 hxg6 fxg6 15 ♘b1! ♖b5 (15...♘b7 16 ♗xc4 just looks good for White) 16 b4 cxb3 17 ♗xb5 c5 18 dxc6 (18 ♗e2 is also strong) 18...axb5 was J.Timman-G.Kasparov, Bugojno 1982. Here 19 cxd7 ♘c4 20 ♗g5! would be decisive.

b) 13...♗d7 14 ♗h6 (White has an extra option in 14 ♘b1 or 14 hxg6 fxg6 15 ♘b1, although the latter is not so clear after 15...♖b5: for example, 16 b4? ♕b8! and White was in some trouble, V.Rajlich-E.Kahn, Budapest 2000) 14...♗xh6 15 ♕xh6 ♖b4 16 ♖d2 ♕e7 (but not the 16...♕b8? of A.Harakis-E.Kahn, Budapest 2000, because of 17 ♘f5! ♗xf5 18 exf5 with a winning attack) 17 ♗e2 leads back to the main line.

14 ♗h6 ♗xh6 15 ♕xh6



15...♕e7

The alternative is 15...♔h8. Black does not commit his queen and creates the possibility of chasing the white queen away with ...♘g8. After 16 hxg6 fxg6 17 ♗e2 (not 17 ♕xg6? ♖g8) 17...♗d7 18 ♘f1 Black has sometimes played the funny 18...♔g8!?. This looks like a silly waste of time, but Black is happy to resolve the tension on the kingside so that he may defend laterally along the second rank. Thus he moves the king back so that the g6-pawn is no longer hanging. After 19 ♘e3 ♕b8 20 ♖d2 ♕b6 the position was unclear in H.Rauch-J.Stephan, correspondence 1996. Here Black could also consider 18...♖g8, although using the rook to protect the g6-pawn looks rather inefficient. After 19 ♘e3 (19 g4 is given as good for White by Djurhuus, but this is still not so clear) 19...♕f8 20 ♕h2 ♘h5! 21 g3 ♕h6 22 ♕f2 ♕g5 23 ♖hg1, as in L.Psakhis-R.Djurhuus, Gausdal 1994, both 23...♖f8 and 23...♖gb8 give Black decent play.

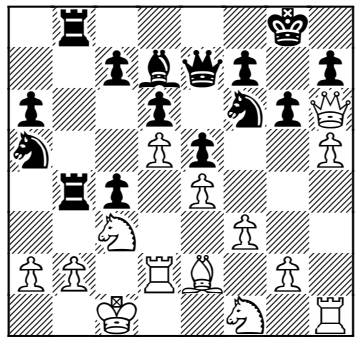
16 ♗e2 ♗d7

Instead 16...♘d7 17 ♖df1! is given by Kasparov. White intends to play f3-f4 with the initiative.

17 ♘f1

This is a typical regrouping, especially when it is clear that the knight will not be hopping into the f5-square. If White starts instead with 17 ♖d2, Black can try 17...c6!? (instead 17...♖fb8 18 ♘f1 heads back to the main line) 18 ♘f1 when, instead of 18...♔h8? 19 hxg6 fxg6 20 ♕xg6 cxd5 21 ♘e3! with a big advantage for White in J.Lautier-P.Svidler, Internet 2004, Black should have played the logical 18...♖fb8.

17...♖fb8 18 ♖d2



White has solidified his castled position and is ready to build up on the kingside. Black has:

a) 18...c5?! (this does not do much for the black cause) 19 ♗d1! (after 19 g4 ♗a4, with the idea of ...♕b7, Black can hope to create some counterplay) 19...♘e8 20 hxg6 fxg6 21 g4 ♕g7 22 g5! and White has the initiative even in the ending. Now 22...♕xh6 23 ♖xh6 ♘g7

24 f4! prevented ...♘h5 and after 24...exf4 25 ♖dh2 White was much better in G.Kasparov-V.Loginov, Manila Olympiad 1992. Thus Black should probably leave the c5-square open for a knight.

b) After 18...♗e8 Kasparov gave 19 g4 ♘d7 20 hxg6 fxg6 21 ♘e3 as much better for White. Matters are not so clear, however, following 21...♘c5 22 g5 ♗d7 (to stop ♘g4) when White cannot regroup so easily because both 23 ♗d1? ♘d3+ and 23 ♗f1? ♘ab3+ are good for Black.

c) Another possibility is 18...♗a4 19 g4 ♘d7 20 hxg6 fxg6 21 ♘e3 ♘c5.