An Anti-Najdorf system
by Alexey Kuzmin

Sicilian B20: \texttt{1.e4 c5 2.\textit{Ne}2 d6 3.g3}

The variation with \texttt{2.\textit{Ne}2} is named after Capablanca and Keres, but in that era players at first did completely without the advance d2-d4, whereas today’s top players such as Vallejo Pons transpose after \texttt{2...\textit{N}c6} or \texttt{2...e6} into known territory after \texttt{3.d4}. It is only after \texttt{2...d6} that they continue with \texttt{3.g3}, because now Black would lose a tempo with \texttt{3...d5}. So players with White employ this variation principally against players of the Najdorf.

Kuzmin has treated the fianchetto of the \texttt{\textit{Q}f8} as the main line for Black. So \texttt{3...g6 4.\textit{Q}g2 \textit{g}7} and now White wastes no time and by playing \texttt{5.c3} aims to get in the d2-d4 advance straight away. Black can adopt one of several setups.

\textbf{A)} After \texttt{5...e5 6.d4 \textit{c}6} White replies \texttt{7.\textit{e}3} and should have the more pleasant game.

\textbf{B)} The position after \texttt{5...\textit{N}c6 6.d4 cxd4 7.cxd4} has been seen very frequently – by transposition as well. But neither the move \texttt{7...\textit{Q}g4}, which has often been chosen by strong players, nor the more frequently employed continuations \texttt{7...\textit{f}6} and \texttt{7...\textit{b}6} have succeeded in guaranteeing Black a level game. Kuzmin suggests the passive, but solid \texttt{7...e6}.

\textbf{C)} Since Black cannot prevent d2-d4, it is logical to do completely without \texttt{...\textit{N}c6}. After \texttt{5...\textit{Q}f6 6.d4 0-0 7.0-0 \textit{bd}7 8.h3 \textit{b}8} Black can count on fully adequate play“, according to our author. However, the positions are in no way tactical ones and a Najdorf player will perhaps not feel quite so much at home in them.

At the end, our author looks at two moves which are less obvious, but which are nevertheless logical: \texttt{3...h5}, which will please above all those players who are constantly seeking the initiative, and \texttt{3...d5}, which is, in spite of the loss of a tempo, “a reply which must be taken very seriously” (Kuzmin). (RK)