

# Contents

Symbols	4
Introduction	5
<b>Part 1: Strength and Weakness in Space</b>	
1 Weak and Strong Squares	6
2 Strength and Weakness on Files and Diagonals	27
3 Weakness of the First and Second Ranks	48
4 Outposts	60
5 Static Weakness and Attack	68
<b>Part 2: Chess Pieces: Their Strengths and Weaknesses</b>	
6 The King	72
7 The Queen	110
8 The Rook	137
9 Minor Pieces	172
Index of Players	222
Index of Composers	224
Index of Openings	224

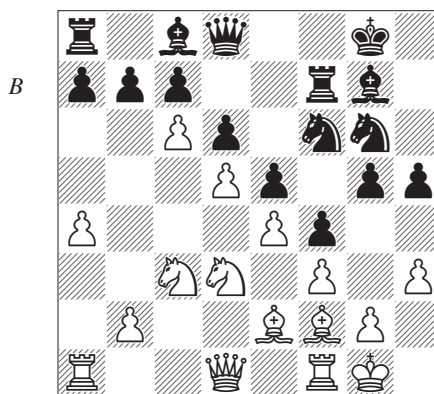
## 5 Static Weakness and Attack

As I stressed earlier, a weak square is a static weakness: its state is relevant only when and if it can be exploited by the enemy pieces. This logical reasoning led to the reassessment of disadvantages and dangers caused by such spatial weaknesses in the process of the dynamic struggle. While an attack is taking place on the other side of the board, far away from the dubious square, its potential weakness as a rule does not influence the fight. It is the property of attacks and counterattacks to impose imperatives, which govern the board at that specific moment. While in progress, an attack, which in general implies some forceful events, suspends all the static qualities in the position, apart from those which the attack targets. If, for instance, Black attacks on the kingside, the outcome of the struggle will be decided by the strength of that very attack. As long as it lasts, any potential static weaknesses become irrelevant. However, we should not forget that such a state of affairs on the board is temporary. As soon as an attack loses its impetus, the static weaknesses start to come to the fore. It often happens that the moment an attack fails, the position burdened with static weaknesses simply collapses. That's why annotators so often speak of players burning their bridges. The following games demonstrate the relation between static weakness and dynamic force. Weaknesses are left behind, sometimes even material offered and hopes placed on an attack. As long as it lasts, one is safe... (see following diagram)

In order to prevent the prepared breakthrough on the kingside, White has just played 17 c6, which seems rather unpleasant. White threatens 18 ♖b5 a6 (or 18...b6 19 a5) 19 ♗a7 and when the light-squared bishop is eliminated, White's king will find peace.

**17...a5!**

"Do not move pawns on the wing where your opponent is attacking!" – says a sacred maxim of positional play, but great players have the ability to find exceptions to such rules. The



**Korchnoi – Kasparov**  
*Amsterdam 1991*

text-move weakens Black's queenside, but Kasparov must have good reasons to do it.

**18 cxb7 ♗xb7 19 b4 ♗c8!**

It is the kingside counterplay that matters! Black obviously considers it vital for his survival and sacrifices a pawn.

**20 bxa5 ♗h6! 21 ♗b4?**

Kasparov proposed 21 a6! in order to divert Black's attention. But White is enchanted by the weakness at c6 and spends two tempi to get there: if he survives the attack, then his position will be won. Unfortunately, the crucial things start to happen on the other side of the board.

**21...g4 22 ♗c6**

Chasing the queen where it is bound for.

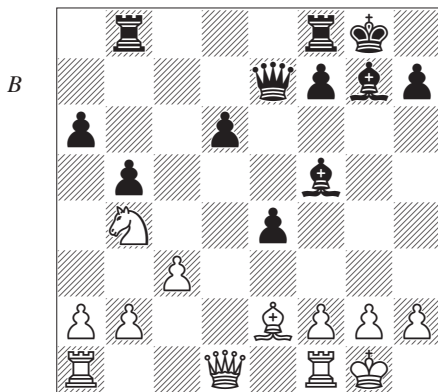
**22...♗f8 23 fxg4 hxg4 24 hxg4 ♗g5 25 ♗f3 ♗h6 26 ♗e1 ♗h4**

The flight from the endangered zone, prepared by 26 ♗e1, will not work any more. To 27 ♗f1 Black responds 27...♗xf3 28 gxf3 ♗xg4! 29 fxg4 ♗h3+ 30 ♗e2 ♗xc3 31 ♗d3 f3+ 32 ♗xf3 ♗c2+ 33 ♗f1 ♗xg4 (Kasparov).

**27 ♗xh4 ♗xh4**

White has been outplayed.

The queenside weaknesses remained irrelevant: the successful attack suspended and in the end simply annulled them.



**Adams – Kramnik**  
*Wijk aan Zee 2001*

We are out of the opening. A glance at the position suggests that Black has gone too far in search of active play: his d-pawn is backward and the square in front of it has been surrendered to the b4-knight; besides, his queenside pawns are in danger. However, this quick first glance proves to be deceptive...

**18... ♖g5!?**

Leaving two pawns *en prise*, Kramnik rightly seeks compensation in a kingside counterattack. The threat of 19... ♗h3 takes care of the a6-pawn, while 19 ♖xd6?! ♗bd8 would just further activate Black's pieces.

**19 ♗h1**

The alternative was 19 f4 exf3 20 ♗xf3.

**19... ♗e5 20 a4?**

In view of the growing pressure on the kingside this must be too optimistic, which could also be said of 20 ♗xa6, when 20... ♗b6 21 ♗b4 d5 opens the sixth rank to move the rook into an attacking position on the other side of the board. Sensing the peril, White should continue 20 ♗c6 and eliminate the e5-bishop.

**20... a5 21 ♗c6 bxa4!**

A nicely conceived idea. By sacrificing an exchange, Black gets rid of his positional weaknesses. Now 22 ♗xb8 ♗xb8 23 ♗xa4 (if 23 ♗c2 then 23... e3) 23... ♗xb2 24 ♗xa5 ♗d2 could hardly satisfy White, while the exchange 22 ♗xe5 dxex5 comes in the worsened circumstances.

**22 f4**

White finally feels that the situation is getting out of hand and reacts properly.

**22... exf3**

22... ♗xf4 obviously loses to 23 g3.

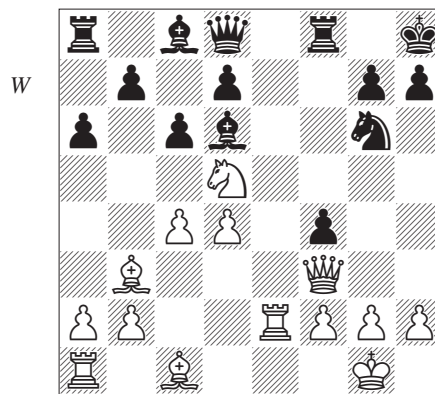
**23 ♗xf3 ♗e4 24 ♗xb8?**

This time White goes too far. It was high time to eliminate the e5-bishop, although Black would still be comfortable in that case.

**24... ♗xb8 25 ♗xa4**

Black could now have reaped the fruits of his excellent play by 25... ♗xf3 26 gxf3 ♗h6 27 ♗g1+ ♗f8 with a clear advantage in spite of the relatively reduced material. Notice also that, as it happens many times, the existence of opposite-coloured bishops enhances Black's prospects.

By relying on his counterattack, Black was able to cover his positional weaknesses.



**Vygodchikov – Alekhine**  
*corr. 1908-9*

Black's previous move, 15... c6, weakened the enticing b6-square and White was certain he could take advantage of it:

**16 c5?! ♗b8! 17 ♗b6**

Instead of retreating the knight to c3, White is seduced by the hole on b6 and the prospect of winning material. Black, on the contrary, preserves his dark-squared bishop and puts his hope in the counterattack.

**17... d5! 18 ♗xa8? ♗h4**

White's greed is quickly shown to be misplaced. His king is under attack.

**19 ♗c3**

19 ♗h5 would not give White any respite due to 19... g6, when 20 ♗h6 ♗f5 21 ♗h3 ♗g3 traps the queen.