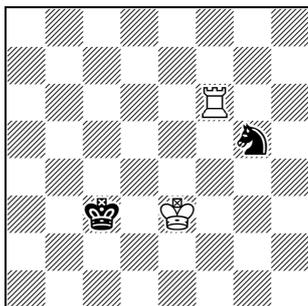


## The Chess Endgame Studies of Richard Réti : Rooks and minor pieces

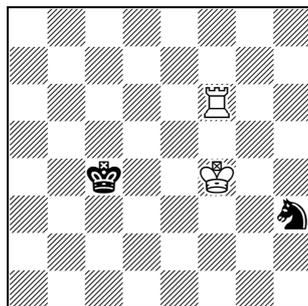
John Beasley, 14 January 2012, latest revision 2 March

6.1 (M 31)



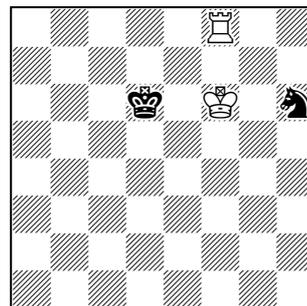
White to play and win

6.1a



6.1 with BK on c4, after 1...Nh3+

6.1b (Mandler "after Réti")



White to play and win

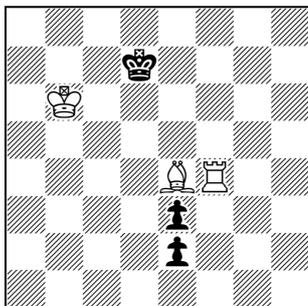
Rook against knight is a win only if the attacker can crowd the defenders into an unfavourable position on the edge, or if the defenders are separated and the knight can be trapped and captured before they can get together. In **6.1** (*Tidskrift för Schack*, 1929, dedicated to L. Collijn), it is the latter tactic which White will use.

The Black king is well placed on c3. If it king were on the b-file, White would have an easy win: 1 Kf4 Nh3+ 2 Kg4 Ng1 3 Rf2 and 4 Rg2. On c2, it would allow 1 Rg6 Nf7 2 Kd4 Nd8 3 Kd5 Nb7 4 Ra6 or 1 Rf5 Ne6 2 Re5. And on c4, it would allow 1 Kf4 Nh3+ (see **6.1a**) 2 Ke4 (if the Black king were on c3, he would have a draw here by 2...Kd2) Ng5+ (2...Kc5 3 Ke3 and 4 Rg6) 3 Ke5 Nh3 (3...Kd3/Kc5 4 Rf5) 4 Rf3 Ng5 (4...Ng1 5 Re3) 5 Rf5.

So all we need to do is to expel the Black king from c3, and the easiest way of doing this is to play **1 Kf4 Nh3+ 2 Kf3** (threat 3 Rg6) **Ng5+ 3 Ke3** getting back to **6.1** with Black to play. Now the knight can move neither to h3 (4 Rg6) nor to h7 (4 Rf5), so it is the king which must give way: **3...Kc4 4 Kf4 Nh3+** (see **6.1a**) **5 Ke4 Ng5+ 6 Ke5 Nh3 7 Rf3 Ng5** and given is 8 Rf4+ K~ 9 Rf5 though **8 Rf5** at once is quicker.

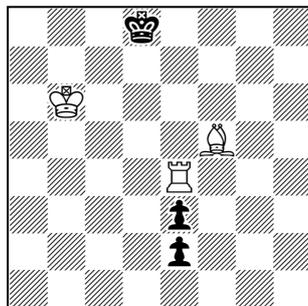
This study was a favourite of Mandler's, who extended it to give **6.1b** (*Československý šach*, 1933): 1 Rd8+ Kc5 2 Rd3 Ng4+ 3 Kf5 Nh6+ 4 Ke6 Ng4 5 Rf3 Kc6 and we have **6.1** reflected top to bottom.

6.2 (M 45, version)



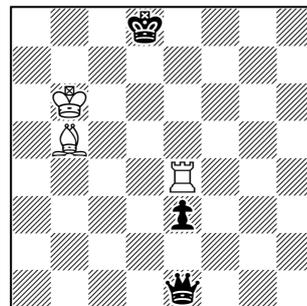
White to play and win

6.2a



After 3...Kd8

6.2b



After 5 Bb5

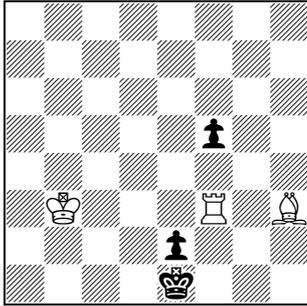
**6.2** (*Kölnische Volkszeitung*, 1928, version by Rinck, *Bohemia*, 28 July 1935) is one of Réti's happiest studies, though it owed something to luck (as have many classic studies from Barbier-Saavedra onwards) and the final touch was added by someone else.

Try 1 Bc6+, followed by 1...Kd6 2 Rd4+ Ke~ 3 Re4+: no, 3...Kd6 4 Rxe3 e1Q, and 5 Rxe1 will give stalemate. And after **1 Bf5+ Kd~ 2 Rd4+ Ke~ 3 Re4+ Kd8**, are we not going to have exactly the same thing (see **6.2a**)?

Not so: White can play **4 Bd7**, and after 4...Kxd7 5 Rxe3 etc there will be no stalemate. But why should Black fool around capturing the bishop, when he can promote straight away by **4...e1Q**? Because White can play **5 Bb5** shielding his king and threatening mate (see **6.2b**), and there is nothing other than the suicidal 5 Qa5+ that Black can do about it.

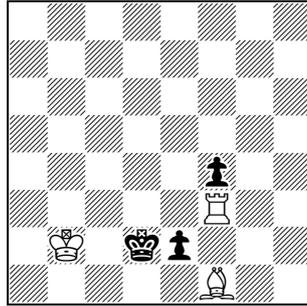
The spectacular move 4 Bd7 was in fact an unintended dual. In Réti's original setting, the rook was on e5, and the intended fourth move was 4 Bd3. According to Mandler, Réti became aware of the dual shortly before the study's publication, but he did not regard it as so serious that its removal would be worth the addition of extra material. Rinck's elegant adjustment took out the original intention, and left just the brilliant dual.

6.3 (M 47, version)



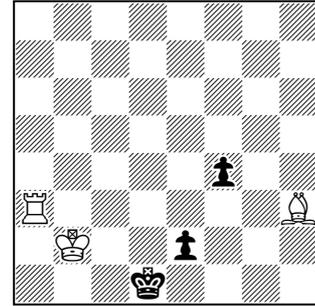
White to play and win

6.3a



After 3 Bf1

6.3b (M 47)

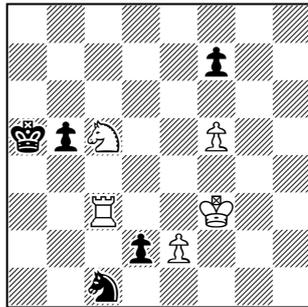


White to play and win (unsound)

6.3 (*Basler Nachrichten*, 1929, version by Benko) was a development of an earlier Réti study (*Bohemia*, 1923): White Ke5, Rc1, Bh6 (3), Black Ka2, Pb3 (2), win by 1 Rc3 b2 2 Bc1 with 2...b1Q 3 Ra3 mate and 2...b1N 3 Rc2+. Here, 1 Kc2 f4 2 Kb2 Kd2 (2...Kd1 3 Bg4 with 3...e1Q 4 Rd3 mate or 3...Kd2 4 Rf2) 3 Bf1 (see 6.3a) with 3...e1Q 4 Rd3 mate or 3...exf1Q 4 Rxf1 Ke3 5 Kc3 f3 6 Re1+ Kf2 7 Kd2 etc.

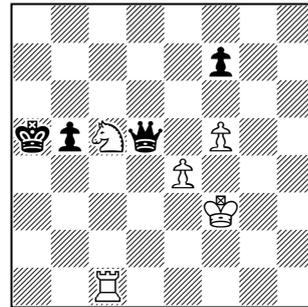
Réti's original setting is shown in 6.3b, the intention being 1 Rd3+ Ke1 2 Rf3 etc but 1 Bg4 K~ 2 Bxe2 Kxe2 3 Kc1 etc being an alternative win. Chéron corrected by moving the rook to g3, setting it *en prise* so that it was forced to move first, but this was frankly crude. Benko's version (*Chess Life*, February 2008, quoted in *EG* 182) is much neater, and even adds something in the shape of the amusing White king manoeuvre.

6.4 (M 49)



White to play and win

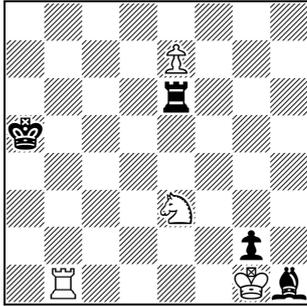
6.4a



After 3 e4

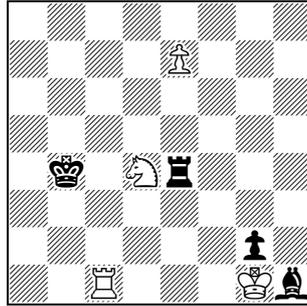
6.4 (*L'Alfieri di Re*, November-December 1922) was one of Réti's earliest studies. 1 Rc2 (not 1 Rxc1, when Black escapes by 1...dxc1N) d1Q 2 Rxc1 Qd5+ 3 e4 (see 6.4a), and where is the Black queen to go? The only temporarily safe moves are 3...Qa2, with 4 Ra1 (pinning) Qxa1 5 Nb3+, and 3...Qe5, with 4 Ra1+ and either 4...K~ 5 N+ and another fork or 4...Qxa1 5 Nb3+ again.

6.5 (M 50)



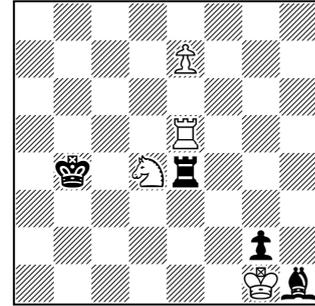
White to play and win

6.5a



After 4 Rc1

6.5b



After 6 Re5

According to Mandler, Réti regarded **6.5** (*Tijdschrift v. d. NSB*, 1924, version) as his best study. White's king is out of play, so his rook, knight, and pawn will have to outwit Black on their own.

Let's look at the main line first. **1 Nf5 Ka4 2 Nd4 Re4 3 Ra1+ Kb4 4 Rc1** (see **6.5a**) **Ka5 5 Rc5+ Kb4** (5...Ka6/Kb6 6 Rc6+ and 7 Re6, 5...Ka4 6 Rc4+ K~ 7 N+ and 8 RxB) **6 Re5** (see **6.5b**) and the rook has been successfully chased off the file. Variations from **6.5a**: 4...Ka3 5 Rc3+ echoing the main line, with 5...Kb4 6 Re3 or 5...Ka2/Kb2 6 Rc2+ and 7 Re2; 4...Ka4 5 Rc4+ etc.

Now let's go back to the start. If 1...Ka6 then 2 Nd6 (or 2 Ra1+ first if desired, but this turns out to be only a mopping-up line and duals in it don't matter) Rxe7 3 Ra1+ Kb6 4 Nc8+.

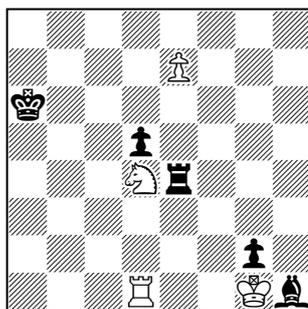
If 1...Re5 then again 2 Nd4, with (a) 2...Ka6 3 Nc2 (threat 4 Re1) Rxe7 4 Nb4+ and 4...Ka~ 5 Nc6+ or 4...Kb~ 5 Nd5+, or (b) 2...Re4 3 Nb3+ with another fork or discovered check, or (c) 2...Re3 3 Rc1 Re4 (3...Ka6/Kb6 4 Rc6+ and 5 Re6, 3...Ka4 4 Ra1+ Kb4 5 Nc2+) 4 Rc5+ transposing back into the main line.

If 1...Re4 then yet again 2 Nd4, with (a) 2...Ka6 3 Nc2 as before, or (b) 2...Ka4 3 Ra1+ Kb4 4 Rc1 giving **6.5a** again, or (c) 2...Re3 3 Rc1 Re4 (3...Ka4 4 Ra1+ and a fork, 3...Ka6/Kb6 4 Rc6+ and 5 Re6) again transposing back into the main line.

And if 1...Re2 then once more 2 Nd4, with 2...Re3 (2...Re4 3 Nb3+ with a fork or discovered check) 3 Ra1+ (simplest) Kb6 3 Nf5 Re~ 4 Nd6, and 4...Rxe7 will be met by a fork.

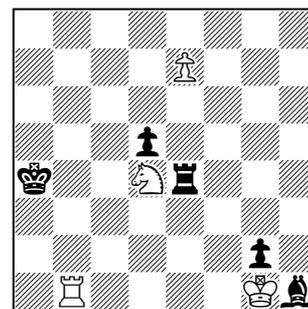
Rook moves to a dark square e3/e5/e7 at move 2 in the main line are met by 3 Ra1+ and a fork, and there is no variation at all at move 3, so we have shown the win in all lines. And if 1 Nd5 instead of Nf5, the answer is not 1...Re5 as given, when 2 e8Q+ Rxe8 3 Ra1+ Kb5 4 Nc7+ wins, but 1...Ka4 with perhaps 2 Rc1 Re5 3 Rd1 Re6 4 Rd4+ Ka5 (a line given in Harold van der Heijden's "Endgame study database IV").

6.6 (M 50a)



White to play and win

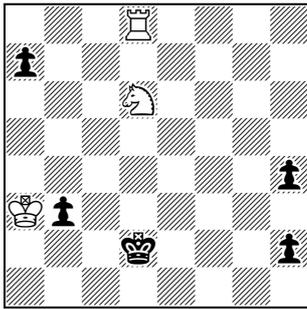
6.6a



2...Ka4, after 3 Nd4

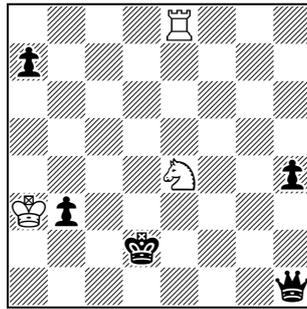
**6.6** is a variation on the same theme. The given main line is **1 Nf5 Ka5 2 Rb1 d4 3 Nxd4 Ka4 4 Ra1+ Kb4 5 Rc1**, after which we have **6.5a** in the previous study and everything is known. No mention is made of 2...Ka4, but 3 Nd4 gives **6.6a** and this appears adequate; everything proceeds much as before (3...Ka3 4 Nc2+ and 5 Re1, 3...Ka5 4 Nb3+ with a fork or discovered check, 3...Re3/Re5/Rxe7 4 Ra1+ and a fork), and the extra pawn proves to be of no help to Black.

6.7 (M 52, version)



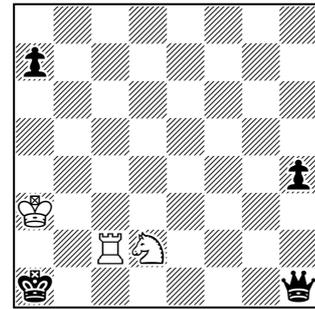
White to play and win

6.7a



After 2 Ne4+

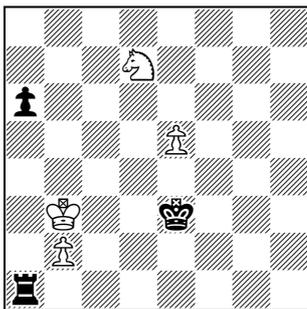
6.7b



After 7 Rc2

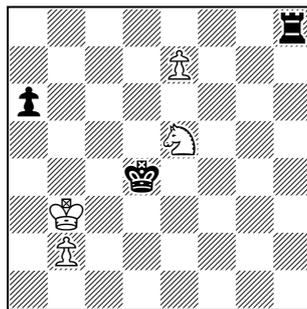
I quote **6.7** (*Wiener Schachzeitung*, 1923, dedicated to Dr Emanuel Lasker, version) in the form in which it appeared in a tribute article to Réti in the July 1929 issue of *Československý šach*. “The author very subtly deceives the solver by the prepared battery position [composers’ jargon for a position allowing a discovered check], of which the solver – vainly, of course – tries to take advantage. Only later, perhaps, does it emerge that in this situation the battery is effective only on the e file.” **1 Re8!** (stopping the Black king from moving eastwards, which is why an immediate **1 Ne4+** fails) **h1Q 2 Ne4+** (see **6.7a**) and the Black king seems to have plenty of freedom, but any move to the d or e file loses the queen to a fork or a discovered check, and after **2...Kc2/Kc1** the king is quickly driven into the corner: **3 Rc8+ Kb1 4 Nd2+ Ka1 5 Nxb3+ Kb1 6 Nd2+ Ka1 7 Rc2** (see **6.7b**) and Black will have to sacrifice his queen to prevent immediate mate.

6.8 (M 33, version)



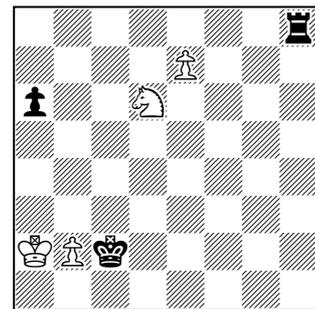
White to play and win

6.8a



1...Kd4, after 3...Kh8

6.8b



Main line, after 6 Nd6

Some of the play in **6.8** (M 33, *Denken und Raten*, 1928, version by Benko after Chéron) is reminiscent of that in **6.5**, though here White has no rook and his king is in play. Obvious and correct is **1 e6**, and let’s look first at **1...Kd4**. The answer to this is **2 Ne5**, so that Black’s threatened **...Re1** can be met by a fork, and if **2...Kxe5** then **3 e7** and promotes (here and later, the wins with queen and pawn against rook and pawn give no trouble). So Black must get back to his first rank: **2...Rh1 3 e7 Rh8** (see **6.8a**). However, it is soon seen to be to no avail: **4 Nf7 Re8** (throwing in a check by **...Rb8+** doesn’t help) **5 Nd6 Rxe7 6 Nf5+** and the pawn has duly cost Black his rook.

Much the same occurs after other Black moves, but **1...Kd2** introduces some new motifs. **2 Ne5 Rh1 3 e7** is as before, but **3...Rh3+** forces **4 Ka2** (if the king goes to the fourth rank, say **4 Ka4**, he will lose touch with his pawn, and after **4...Rh8 5 Nc4+** Black will have **5...Kc2** attacking it). Now, after **4 Rh8 5 Nc4+ Kc2 6 Nd6** we have **6.8b**, and Black can threaten mate by **6...Rh5**. This potential mate bust one of the previous settings, but here it presents no problem: **7 b4**, and all will be well.

Réti had the White king and pawn on b4/b3, the Black rook on b1, and the Black pawn on b7. Chéron bust this with a line starting (1 e6) Kf2, and moved the White king and pawn to b3/b2 to defeat it. Unfortunately this let in the mate on the a-file in one line, but Benko’s correction (*Chess Life*, February 2008, quoted in *EG* 182) appears to have made all sound.