

2015-11-13

Obituary of Isaak M. Linder



The international community of chess historians has lost one of its prominent figures: The renowned Russian chess historian and author **Dr Isaak Maxovich Linder** departed this life October 31, 2015.

(Postscript added 03-12-2015)

The Austrian-born Isaak Linder (* 20 November 1920) lived in Vienna for five years only, in 1925 his parents emigrated to Moscow which should become his home for the rest of his life. In aspiring Russia he was soon inspired with an enthusiasm for chess, later on he could combine the latter with his profession of an historian (he has completed his education at the historical faculty of the Moscow university). This combination became manifest in numerous professional articles and books, certainly the Russian [Wikipedia page](#) lists only a part of his chess publications.

Apparently a circle has closed when we see that both, his first book (*A.D. Petrov, the first Russian chess master*; 1952) and his last work (*The Chess Odyssey of Alexander Petrov*, probably it will come out posthumously), deal with the same chess master. Of all his other books we would like to mention only the following:

Chess in Old Russia (English edition published in Switzerland 1979) deals with the origins of chess, with "the routes by which chess penetrated into Old Russia and the game's subsequent development there." (I. Linder in his preface);

and

SCHACH - Schachfiguren im Wandel der Zeit (Moscow 1994), an opulently illustrated book which records the results of three decades of own research on the development of chessmen and their interdependency with culture in general.

Moreover Isaak Linder was one of the main authors of the monumental Russian chess encyclopedia *Schachmaty Enziklopeditscheskij slowar* (ed. by A.E. Karpov) from the year 1990.

... as well as those books co-authored by his son Vladimir Linder:

SCHACH - Das Lexikon (Berlin 1996), in German only; a dictionary which (according to the authors) for the first time tries for a more lively writing in this genre.

Korolyi Shakhmatnogo Mira (Kings of the chess world, Moscow 2001), we have shortly appreciated this work in the [Publications of our Members](#).

Father and son Linder also contributed to the big Lasker monograph (Berlin 2009) with a chapter "Emanuel Lasker in Russia", meanwhile the monograph is out of print - rare single copies are presently offered for about the threefold of its original shop price!

For the time being the "World Chess Champion Series" - started in 2010 and critically acclaimed - limits itself to the biographies of the first three world champions *Wilhelm Steinitz* (2014), *Emanuel Lasker* (2010) and *José Raúl Capablanca* (2010), all published in the USA by Russell Enterprises Inc. It seems doubtful if the series will be continued by Vladimir Linder.

Isaak Linder was not only a long-time member of the Ken Whyld Association, but also of our sister organizations *Lasker Society* and *Chess Collectors International* where he actively participated by visiting their gatherings and giving lectures at meetings and conferences. For instance, we may recall the wonderful [chess exhibition](#) in Hamburg, 2005 and the [II International Von der Lasa Conference](#) in Kórník, 2007, where he contributed a talk in German on "Von der Lasa und die Moderne" [Von der Lasa and the Modern Age] - below we give a few photos:

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Isaak Linder (Hamburg, 2005)



Isaak Linder and

Yuri Averbakh in front of the "Russian Big Three" (Emanuel Schiffers, Ivanovich Chigorin and Simon Alapin) from the Cycle "Schach" (1982) by Alfred Hrdlicka



Isaak Linder

with Michael Negele (Hamburg, 2005)

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Isaak Linder

giving his lecture (Kórník Castle, 2007)

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Isaak Linder

Vladimir and

We may still add a short anecdote on Linder's knowledge of German language (provided by Michael Negele): Michael had repeatedly noticed that Linder's explanations in reply to questions in German often missed the point. Thomas Thomsen has now confirmed Michael's perception: sometime he repeated a question to Averbakh in English which he had directly before asked to Linder, Averbakh translated it for Linder who then replied in Russian to Averbakh, who in turn translated into English. The resulting answer proved quite reasonable whereas before (in German) only "nonsense" had turned out. That means, our "Viennese" Isaak was not able to speak by far so good German as he liked to pretend. This also explains with hindsight the many misunderstandings in the course of the Lasker book project where Michael Negele had generally communicated in German.

PS (03-12-2015):



The Russian historian Sergey Borisovich Voronkov has written an obituary on chesspro.ru, as pointed out by our new member David Nudelman. Readers illiterate of Russian may try it with a Google translation which is - in my view - unfortunately quite poor and only partly comprehensible.

