

News of the International Phonetic Association

Obituary

LEV RAFAILOVICH ZINDER (1904 - 1995)

It is with great sadness that we report the death of Professor Lev Zinder, a scholar of world-wide reputation, who passed away on 23 August 1995 at the age of 91. Z studied at the University of Petrograd (later Leningrad, now St. Petersburg) where he graduated from the Department of Romance and Germanic Philology in 1938, and where he was promoted to Full Professor in 1955.

From the very outset, all Z's work was permeated by a keen sense of the close and intricate ties between all levels and strata of language. It would be difficult to pull together the various threads of his work that ranged from phonetics and phonology, general linguistics to German dialectology and applied linguistics, but one could say that it was the individual as both speaker and hearer of language that was always at the center of Z's scholarly interests. Undoubtedly, his favorite subject was phonetics and phonology where he was one of the dominant figures for many years, best known even for non-specialists in Russia and many other countries as the recognized leader of the school of phonology associated with the name of Lev Shcherba. Much of Z's inspiration to devote himself to phonetics and phonology came from Lev Shcherba, his professor and founder of the school. In fact, there is every reason to speak of a direct uninterrupted lineage from Baudouin de Courtenay to Shcherba to Z. Shcherba was among the principal founders of phonology as a science in its own right, and it was Z who deepened many of the seminal ideas advanced by his teacher.

Z has always had a taste for monumental tasks. His *Obshchaja Fonetika* ('General Phonetics'), 1960 and 1979, remains decades later an outstanding achievement in the field, where the data of a vast number of most diverse languages are handled with exemplary clarity and rigor, and the insightful presentation of theoretical problems is marked with intellectual honesty. In this and many other publications Z forcefully argues against the too often heard interpretation — or, rather, misinterpretation — of the "Shcherbian phoneme" as, allegedly, a class of phonetically similar sounds. He insisted on the absolute necessity of strictly linguistic criteria in establishing and describing phonological oppositions and phonological rules, being at the same time fully aware of the relevance of experimental and, broadly speaking, behavioral evidence.

The breadth of Z's scholarly interests embraced also his pioneering work in German dialectology begun as early as the nineteen-thirties under the guidance of Prof. Victor Zhirmunsky, in which isolated archaic dialects spoken in the Ukraine and some other regions of the then USSR were identified and described for the first time. In collaboration with Prof. Tatiana Stroeva, he compiled a theoretical grammar of Modern German (1957, 3rd ed.) where some later ideas, particularly concerning the theory of voice in verbs, were crucially anticipated. A monograph on historical phonetics of German (1965), also written in collaboration with Stroeva, was another major contribution of his to the field of Germanic studies. His new book on Modern German phonetics completed shortly before his death will be published by the University of St. Petersburg Press.

In his long and distinguished career, Z scored quite a few firsts. Thus, he was the first, as early as 1958, to organize a new department of mathematical linguistics. It was Z who first introduced special phonetic charts for testing telephonic channels. The number of such firsts to his credit is actually substantial.

He was an eminent teacher. His rich personality influenced many people, both novices and mature researchers, in many ways. He placed ethical values above all others in his personal and scholarly activities. During the Second World War, he served as an army officer. But he never paid the slightest lip service to the ideological expectations of the ruling regime. For this and other reasons, instances of his being passed over for opportunities he undoubtedly deserved were repeated too often.

Yet, Z was not too much concerned about official recognition. Much more important was the admiration of his pupils and colleagues who respected and loved him not only as a brilliant teacher and scholar, but also as a man of character and heart.

L. V. Bondarko, V. B. Kasevich, L. A. Verbitskaya.

Minutes of the General Meeting 1995

Held 12.45 Tuesday 15 August 1995, at the Thirteenth International Congress of Phonetic Sciences in Stockholm. The President, Professor John Laver, in the chair.

1 Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the General Meeting of 22 August 1991 were circulated and agreed as a correct record.

2 Matters arising

The Secretary reported (re. item 5 of the above minutes) that the Executive had considered the matter of subscriptions in those countries where payment was difficult, but had concluded that the administrative complexity of differential subscription rates and/or methods of payment would increase costs and defeat the purpose of the exercise; nonetheless, the outgoing Executive suggested that their successors might want to re-open the matter.

3 President's Introduction

The President introduced the main agenda by reminding members that the two prime functions of the Association were to promote interest in all matters concerning phonetics, and to initiate and oversee international standards in matters to do with transcription and the International Phonetic Alphabet.

4 Secretary's Report

The Secretary reported the following:

(a) the Council had been balloted on a number of matters left over from the 1989 Kiel Convention, and the decisions incorporated in the 1993 chart. The Secretary noted that, whatever the remaining imperfections of the chart, many users now looked forward to a