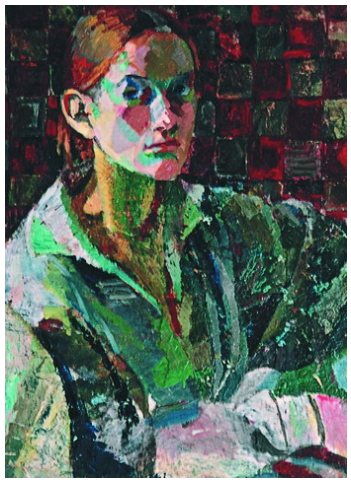
Aleksandr Evgen'evič ("Sasha") Kibrik

* 26 March 1939, in Leningrad on the eve of war
† 31 October 2012, in Moscow, 73 years old

the son of painters Evgenij Adol'fovič Kibrik and Lidija Timošenko



survived by his wife, Antonina Ivanovna Koval, linguist and Africanist, and son Andrej Aleksandrovič Kibrik, linguist, and daughter Antonina Aleksandrovna Kibrik, painter

profession: **linguist**

profile: descriptive grammar & lexicography
(of [Ø/the] un-/under-described, endangered, "interesting" languages of Russia, from Archi, Alutor, Bagvalal to Tsakhur, some 45 in all)
(N.E.) Caucasiology
field linguistics
theoretical syntax, incl. inflection
typology and historical linguistics

sideline: producer of ethnographic films

sadly, the last:

http://www.philol.msu.ru/~languedoc/assets/movies/film-xin2007-eng.rm

Growing up with art all around him, has the early ambition to become a film director; therefore studied Classical Philology to acquire the relevant knowledge (makes you wonder what sort of film projects he was contemplating – *The Iliad & Odyssey*? *The Fall of the Roman Empire*?);

realised he was not "unable **not** to be an artist" (the only valid reason to become an artist, as his father would tell him), perhaps already sensing that what **he** was unable **not** to be was a linguist;

supplementing Classics with mathematics, wrote a diploma thesis on the "Spectral analysis of the vowels of Modern Greek", which got him into linguistics and earned him early recognition;

since 1961 in the newly founded Department of Structural/Theoretical and Applied Linguistics (OSiPL/OTiPL) of Moscow State University (MGU); despite early antagonism, on political and personal grounds, soon to become its spiritus rector and, from 1992 until his death, its head;

since the mid 60s, leader of numerous (now legendary) annual **expeditions** of his department (and guests) to the Caucasus, the Volga region, the Pamir, Kamchatka, and Siberia, developing the characteristic "Moscow" fieldwork methodology;

since 1965 centrally involved in another new venture, the Linguistic **Olympiad**, attracting secondary school students to linguistics and inaugurating a movement eventually to spread across the world;

academic **teacher** extraordinary, with scores of his students rising to eminence, at home and abroad;

Problems from Linguistics Olympiads 1965-1975
http://www.mccme.ru/llsh/books/olimp-1965-1975/lingv_1965_1975.pdf

Four young men conceiving the first of these problems:
Would **any**body be able to solve them?

in due course recipient of academic honours: corresponding member of the Russian Academy of Sciences; foreign member of the British Academy; life member of the Linguistic Society of America;

... and not to forget:
founding member of the Association for Linguistic Typology, present at ALT 0 (Konstanz, 1994), ALT 1 (Vitoria-Gasteiz, 1995), etc., sadly missed at ALT 9 (Hong Kong, 2011) and ALT 10 (Leipzig, 2013);
Associate Editor of *Linguistic Typology* (1997–2001)

Required reading and viewing:

"How I became a linguist"
http://linguistlist.org/fund-drive/2011/linguists/AleksandrKibrik.cfm
Linguist List, Linguists of the Day 2011

Adapted from an interview with POLIT.RU, autumn 2010 (condensed, paraphrased, and translated by Vladimir Borschev, Aleksandr Kibrik, and Barbara Partee):

http://polit.ru/article/2011/03/09/kibrik/
http://polit.ru/article/2011/03/16/kibrik/