

International Day of Chess Composition January 04, 2018

by Andrey Frolkin, Kiev

The idea of having a Day of Chess Composition was first expressed by the famous Soviet and Ukrainian IG **Valentin Rudenko** around 2001, I think; if I am not mistaken, the first unofficial celebration was conducted in Kiev in 2002. Rudenko proposed January 4 as the date for the event, referring to information that probably the first-ever publication of a chess problem in a newspaper occurred on that date. This information was challenged by Dr. Formanek last year, but the WFCC Congress voted to keep January 4 as the date. Rudenko chose January 4, among other things, for a practical reason. In Ukraine and Russia, the period between January 1 and January 7 is the Christmas week, contrary to the situation in Western Europe and the United States; January 4 is midway through that period, which makes it a convenient date for celebration. Moreover, very few people here go abroad in this period.

The PCCC officially approved January 4 as the International Day of Chess Composition back in 2007; the first official celebration, with the participation of guests from Russia Andrey Selivanov and Oleg Pervakov, took place in a café near my house in 2008. Thus, this year our meeting marked the 10th anniversary of that celebration. During the entire period since 2002 (unofficial + official), most of the events took place at my apartment. Usually, they were attended by all or nearly all major Kiev composers and sometimes by guests from other places.

I believe that the number of participants this year – 10 – is a record for my apartment, though there could have been even more attendees. For example Mark Basisty (businessman, editor of *The Dictionary of Chess Composition Terms* published in 2004) did not attend on account of flu.



On the photo, the personalities are as follows (left to right):

Peter Novitsky (in Ukrainian: Petro Novytskyi).

He started composing in his 20s; then got back to composing after a severe cardiac attack that he suffered at the age of 43. A couple of years ago he had another cardiac attack and underwent heart surgery; another surgical operation has been recommended for him; yet he traveled 150 kilometers to Kiev just to be with us and then had to cover the same distance back that same day.

Peter composes mostly twomovers. He has won about 40 Prizes, if I am not mistaken. He has been living in a village all of the time; he used to be head of the village council and chief agronomist of that village in Kiev oblast (Kiev province).

Svetlana (family name unknown), lady friend of the next participant.

Gennady Chumakov, aged 75, well-known composer from Tver, Russia, specializing in helpmates, author of Chumakov theme. Previously, we met only once, at the 1998 Congress in St. Petersburg. At that congress, during an excursion to Peterhof, a photo was taken of him, Anatoly Vasilenko and me; this time another photo of the three of us has been taken, but at present it is unavailable to me.

Yevhen Reytsen, Ukrainian delegate to the PCCC in 1996-2009, member of the Ukrainian Academy of Architecture, professor, still lecturing at the National Academy of Construction and Architecture at the age of 82, Ukrainian National Grandmaster for Chess Composition, author of numerous books, articles, poems. He published his first composition on the day of the first-ever manned spaceflight, April 12, 1961.

Anatoly Moisienko, one of Ukraine's leading poets, head of the Chair of Modern Ukrainian Language at the Taras Shevchenko National University of Kiev, specialist in twomovers, author of a "personal" twomover theme. Inventor of "chess poetry" (in Ukrainian: shakhopoeziya), an art form in which a chess composition and the moves of its solution are integrated into a poem. At present, he is working on a Universal Dictionary of Chess in Ukrainian; he has already prepared more than 500 pages of that book.

Alexander Kukush, also a Kiev University Professor, a mathematician who has published numerous books and articles in international mathematical journals. He used to lecture in Belgium and other countries, in particular at the Texas State University – he said he lectured there "alongside of Nobel Prize winners"; he became Doctor of Mathematics at the age of 36, a very young age for that title during the Soviet period. He used to play chess in his younger days, reaching Candidate Master level, but apparently having a much higher potential. Thirteen years ago he took part in a Swiss tournament in Belgium; officially, he had no ELO rating, but at the end of the tourney he was tied in second place with two other participants, ahead of one or two International Grandmasters and just half a point behind IG Epishin, Karpov's coach in 1987-1996. In the last round, Kukush and Epishin ended their game in a draw.

Once Kiev composers got together in a café (also near my house, but other than the café in which the above-mentioned celebration with Selivanov had taken place) for a meeting with Juraj Brabec, who was on a business trip to Kiev. At one point, Kukush said to Brabec, "I only know one person in Slovakia. He is a mathematician and I have published several joint articles with him"; he told Brabec the name of the mathematician and added, "Certainly, you don't know him, but he is my only Slovak acquaintance"; to this, Brabec replied, "How can I be unfamiliar with him if I used to share the same desk with him back at school?"

That was one of the most amazing coincidences I ever encountered in my life.

Kukush composed a few retros (in particular in *feenschach*), mainly involving Dead Reckoning, and some helpmates.

Anatoly Vasilenko, one of Ukraine's leading specialists in the field of aircraft designing, author of #2, #3, #n, helpmates, selfmates, fairy problems and retros.

Viktor Kapusta, one of Ukraine's leading composers in the #3 section, also composing #n, helpmates, endgame studies, retros, etc. In 1990 – 2006, journalist working at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant. Also author of excellent chess poetry (including the book *The Checkered Continent*) and of several other books and poems, including a truly unique sonnet sequence with characteristics unmatched by other Ukrainian poets.

Participants not on the photo:

Natalia Kucherenko, Reytsen's wife, the only active female chess composer in Ukraine.

Andrey Frolkin, retroanalyst and environmental activist. By another remarkable coincidence, January 4, 2018, was the day when the moose was officially placed in the Red Book of Ukraine. Last year, my wife Nina and I took part in several actions conducted by local environmentalists in support of moose hunting prohibition. Amazingly, we won the battle.

Also not on the photo are **Sergei I. Tkachenko** from Slavutich and his wife **Valentina** since they participated remotely via Skype.



From left to right:

Andrey Frolkin, Anatoly Vasilenko, Peter Novitsky, Svetlana, Gennady Chumakov