

Curt Eisner, 28.4.1890-30.12.1981

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When the year 1981 came to an end, a long life full of sorrow and joy also came to an end. Curt EISNER was born in another century, and people who were privileged to have known him were in touch with the period in the history of lepidopterology that was dominated by authorities like HERING, BANG-HAAS, STAUDINGER, BRYK, and many others. It was a period full of discoveries and achievements, but also full of unstable political situations and great human tragedies. Eisner's life reflected this period very well. Born in Zaborze in Upper-Silesia he fled from his native country to Holland in 1936 to escape oppression under the political ideas prevalent in Germany at that time. He was not safe in Holland either and during the war was forced to stay away from his collection (which he had brought with him to Holland). However after the Second World War his life calmed down. He was able to continue his commercial activities as Director of the "Verenigde Ertshandelmaatschappij" ("United Ore-trade Company") and to resume work on his beloved collection.

He got his interest in *Parnassius* from his friend and tutor Felix Bryk whom he met in Berlin in 1927. Together with Bryk he published the journal *Parnassiana* (with Bryk as responsible editor) which appeared from 1930 until April 1939. During the wartime years, his collection was kept safe in the Rijksmuseum van Natuurlijke Historie, Leiden. After the war serious attempts were made by North Americans, especially Avinoff, to purchase the whole collection and the amount of money offered must have been very attractive to a man who had not only lost his German citizenship but also most of his property, except for his collection. However Eisner donated his collection to the Leiden museum, partly in gratitude for the help received during the war, partly because he could resume his business work in Holland and did not want to part with his collection geographically. For this donation he was awarded the silver medal of honour for service to public collections by Her Majesty the Queen of Holland. Eisner was brought to the museum weekly in a car with a company driver to work in his collection, which doubled in size after the war. He was in contact with people all over the world and up till his death was eager to improve the collection by exchange, although it was hardly possible to make an improvement, and the people he made the exchange with usually benefited most.

In 1954 he started the series *Parnassiana Nova*, which was printed in the journals "Zoologische Mededelingen" and "Zoologische Verhandelingen", both published by the Rijksmuseum van Natuurlijke Historie. In this series 58 numbers appeared (there were two numbers 55 !), the last three being :

- 1979 – *Parnassiana Nova* 55. *Allancastria louristana boyrahmediensis* subsp. nov. (Zool. Meded. 54 : 277-278) (together with W. BLOM).
- 1980 – *Parnassiana Nova* 56. *Koramius patricius haugumensis*, eine neue Unterart aus Kirgistan. (Zool. Meded. 56 : 279-280).
- 1980 – *Parnassiana Nova* 57. Beitrag zur Ökologie und Taxonomie der Afghanischen Parnassiidae (Lepidoptera). (Zool. Verh., nr. 178, 35 pages, 9 plates) (together with C. M. NAUMANN).

All his previous publications were listed by Eisner himself in *Nota lep.* 2 (1980) : 127-135. However, he omitted a few publications on other butterflies mainly resulting from a study of the butterflies from the collection of the Rijksmuseum van Natuurlijke Historie sent to him during the war, when he could not work on his own collection. He considered this work to be a mere pastime. The publications are descriptions of new forms. They are :

- 1945 – Einige Ergebnisse der Sichtung der Gattungen *Melitaea* und *Argynnis* im Rijksmuseum van Natuurlijke Historie, Leiden. Zool. Meded. 24 : 116-124.
- 1946 – New forms in the Genus *Erebia*. Zool. Meded. 26 : 271-280.
- 1963 – Drei neue *Rhopaloceren*formen. Ent. Ber., Amsterdam, 23 : 136.
- 1964 – *Lycaenopsis argiolus* L., f. *grisea* (f. nova). Ent. Ber., Amsterdam, 24 : 115.

Further, two obituaries written by EISNER should be added :

- 1957 – In Memoriam Felix BRYK. Ent. Ber., Amsterdam, 17 : 78.
- 1957 – Felix BRYK (1882-1957). The Lepidopterist's News, 1957 : 55.

Eisner's knowledge of *Parnassius* was unsurpassed. His approach to taxonomy may have seemed a little out-of-date to many people, but it was founded on a more intimate knowledge than many others could boast of, who thought that a modern approach could counterbalance a less thorough knowledge. Because of his contributions in the field of lepidopterology he was nominated Honorary Member of SEL by the General Meeting of 12th April 1980.

Eisner was never tired of talking about *Parnassius* and he was always willing to help. But he was equally eager to tell anecdotes about persons and situations, drawing on his good memory. Everybody who experi-

enced the hospitality in his big house in The Hague must have noticed that he received much support from his wife. He outlived her by only seven weeks. Now his friends all over the world are left with memories of a most remarkable man, but the pleasures of those memories greatly surpass the sad feeling that a link with a period known to most of us only by hearsay has been suddenly severed.

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