

IN MEMORY OF THE PALAEONTOLOGIST RNDR CTIRAD SVITÁK

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INTRODUCTION

RNDr Ctirad Sviták was our colleague and friend in the field. Although he was not widely known in the broader scientific community, he was an active and engaged person. He was a member of several organizations, including Palaia, the Guard of Nature for Prague and the Central Bohemian Region. His interests went far beyond micropaleontology, he was also a journalist, a Ministry of Education official, a nature conservationist, and a keen observer of history and politics.

This text is written in remembrance of his active and diverse life, and to ensure that his work, curiosity, and personality are not forgotten.

STUDENT YEARS

Ctirad Sviták was born in Brno 12 December 1960, where he attended secondary school. As a successful participant in the national secondary-school natural science and ecology competition *Natura Semper Viva* (1977, 1978), he was offered the opportunity to study at Lomonosov Moscow State University in 1978. During his first year, he focused on learning Russian while simultaneously beginning his studies at the Petroleum Institute.

One year later, in 1979, he transferred to the Department of Palaeontology at Moscow State University (MGU – *Moskovskij Geologičeskij Univerzitet*), part of Lomonosov Moscow State

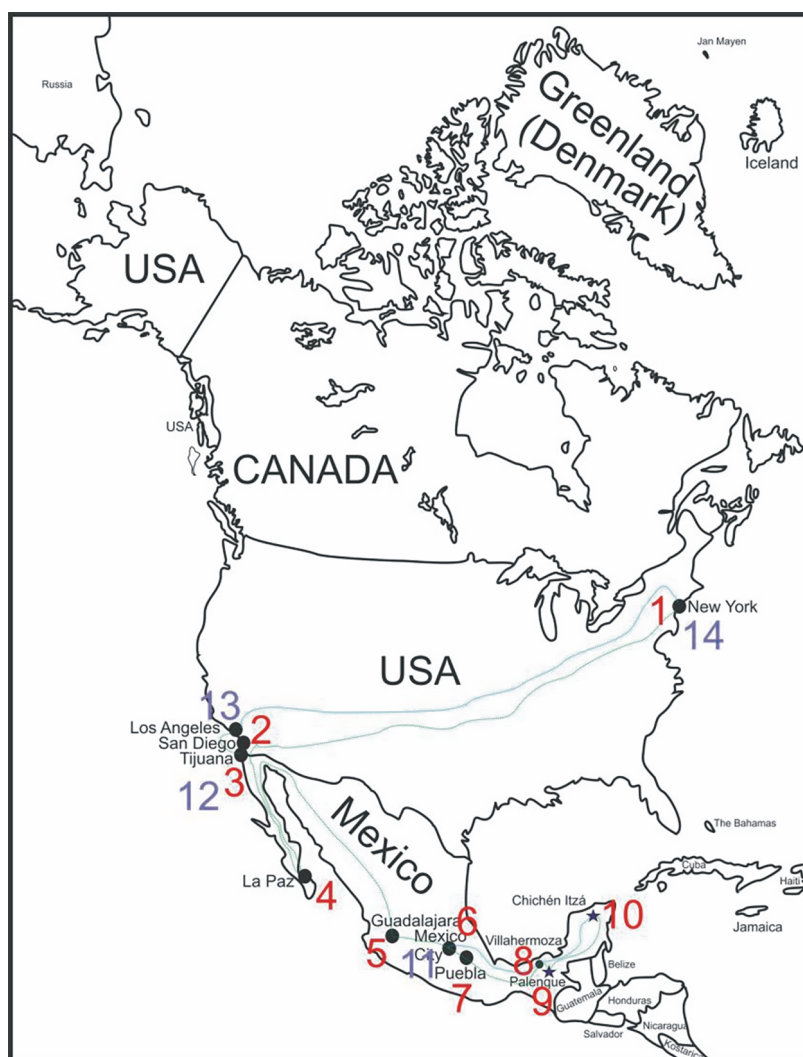


Fig. 1. RNDr. Ctirad Sviták and RNDr. Jiří Bek's trip to the USA and Mexico in 1991.



Fig. 2. Students of palaeontology at MGU who graduated in 1984. From the left: Barinov, K. B. (Баринов К.Б.); Čuleckij, M. Ju. (Чудецкий М.Ю.); Dubova, T. B. (Дубова Т.Б.); Evgenova, O. D. (Евгенова О.Д.); Sviták, C. (Свитак Ц.).



Fig. 3. Palaeontology students of MGU who graduated in 1984. Ctirad Sviták is first from the left in the upper row.



Fig. 4. Ctirad Sviták (second from the right) at the gate of the Karaim city of Chufut-Kale, Crimea, in the summer of 1981 (to Ctirad's right is his fellow student Bordunov and to his left is his colleague Protasevich).

University. He completed his studies there in 1984 with a diploma thesis on bivalves of the genus *Trigonia*, alongside several fellow students who later became palaeontologists and geologists.

From his time studying geology at MGU, a photograph has been preserved from geological mapping work in Crimea in the summer of 1981, showing Ctirad at the gate of the ancient Karaim city of Chufut-Kale.

After finishing his studies at Lomonosov Moscow State University, he undertook one year of compulsory military service in Mikulov, South Moravia. His academic period in the Soviet Union concluded in 1984, when he obtained the degree of Doctor of Natural Sciences at Lomonosov Moscow State University.

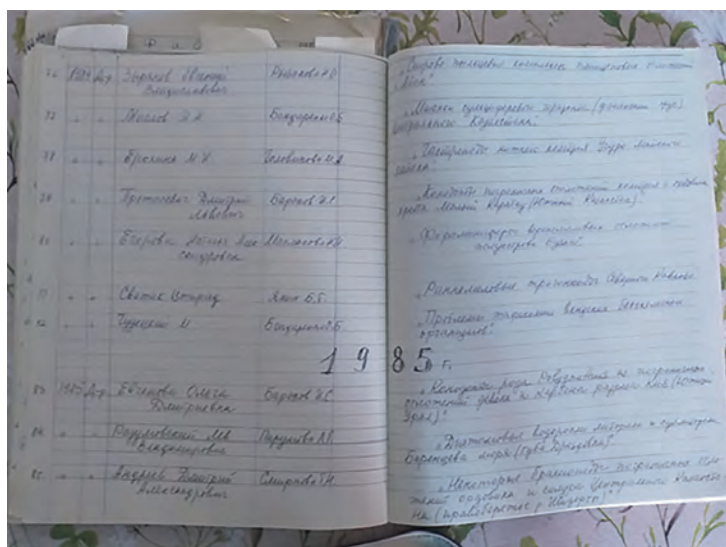


Fig. 5. Record of the supervision of Ctirad Sviták's diploma thesis (listed under No. 81).

PALAEONTOLOGICAL YEARS

Following his studies, from 1984 to 1992, he worked as a palaeontologist specialising in Mesozoic foraminifera at the Department of Special Research of Geoindustria Prague, at that time the largest geological enterprise in Czechoslovakia. During this period, he regularly consulted with Dr J. Hercogová (Czech Geological Survey), who served as his supervisor and scientific advisor.

At Geoindustria Prague, he processed extensive material from numerous boreholes, particularly in central Bohemia (the Kladno-Rakovník, Plzeň, and Mšeno-Roudnice basins), and authored several dozen expert palaeontological reports that form part of the final documentation of many drilling projects carried out by Geoindustria Prague.

Between 2015 and 2021, Ctirad contributed to the palaeontological community by providing and updating hyperlinks to open-access periodicals on

the jurassic.ru website. In his free time, he undertook numerous field trips to rocky coastal shallow-water and nearshore localities of the Bohemian Cretaceous Basin, for example at Velim and Vítězov. During these field trips, he collected a large amount of material for his long-term personal research on Cretaceous foraminifera, carried out independently as rescue research.



Fig. 8. RNDr Ctirad Svíták at the “Veronika pocket” profile (Žítt et al. 1997) in the western part of the Velim quarry during rescue research, 23 July 2019 (photo: Tomáš Kočí).



Fig. 6. Ctirad Svíták (1985).



Fig. 9. RNDr Ctirad Svíták at the Vítězov locality (August 2021), removing invasive woody vegetation as part of nature protection activities during rescue micropalaeontological research (photo: Tomáš Kočí).



Fig. 7. Ctirad Svíták and his good friend Zbyněk Šimůnek, 1985.

ECOLOGICAL YEARS

Although Ctirad devoted himself primarily to fossil organisms, he also had a strong interest in modern nature. In the late 1980s, he became involved in environmental organizations (e.g., *Brontosaurus*). As a nature conservation officer, he took the official oath of the Nature Guard

on 18 August 2008 (receiving a badge and official stamp) and regularly submitted brief reports to the Prague City Hall (MHMP), addressed to Mr O. Vítek.

He was also active in educational outreach, particularly with children, and prepared a palaeontological stop for the World Ranger Day in 2021 at the Slatina pond.

MEXICAN JOURNEY

In 1991, together with his then colleague from Geoindustria, Dr Jiří Bek, he undertook an extensive journey across Mexico, focusing primarily on



Fig. 10. *Styracosaurus* and Ctirad Sviták in the palaeontological exhibition at the Natural History Museum, New York, during the journey to Mexico in 1991 (slide photo: Jiří Bek).



Fig. 11. *Tyrannosaurus* and Ctirad Sviták in the palaeontological exhibition at the Natural History Museum, New York, during the journey to Mexico in 1991 (slide photo: Jiří Bek).

visits to Maya pyramids. They travelled by local bus lines, carrying only backpacks and sleeping bags, and slept wherever possible, often in the open countryside. During this journey, they also visited the palaeontological exhibition at the Natural History Museum in New York.

Over more than six weeks, they covered approximately 10,000 km along the route:

Tijuana – Baja California – La Paz – Guadalajara – Mexico City – Teotihuacán – the active Popocatepetl volcano (4,500 m) – Oaxaca – Palenque – Villahermosa – Campeche – Mérida – Chichén Itzá – Uxmal – Tulum – Chetumal, and back to Mexico City and Tijuana.

Ctirad often recalled this journey as the greatest adventure of his life.

JOURNALISTIC YEARS

Already during his employment at Geoindustria Prague, where he befriended journalist and colleague Šárka Neumannová, he began to pursue journalism, following in the footsteps of his mother, a well-known journalist from Brno. After leaving Geoindustria and professional palaeontology in 1992, he worked for the daily newspapers *Práce* and *Český deník*.

He later joined the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports as a member of the advisory team to Minister Petra Buzková, a period he remembered



Fig. 12. Funeral reception; the last Saturday in January 2023. From the left: Zdeněk Pobuda, Tomáš Král, Jana Klementová, Zbyněk Šimůnek, Jan Sklenář, Tomáš Kočí (photo: Romana Mikuláštková).

fondly. Between 1995 and 1998, he regularly attended sessions of the Czech Parliament, reporting on domestic political developments and writing political commentary.

As a journalist, he also reported from disaster areas, including the earthquakes in Georgia and Armenia in 1988, where he travelled to assist with relief efforts. His final major journalistic topic was the serial killer Andrei Chikatilo, about whom he intended to write a book, a project he unfortunately did not live to complete.

Ctirad passed away unexpectedly in December 2022 after a short and acute illness. His loss deeply affected those who knew him and worked with him.

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