

## notices

### **Vladimír Vavřínek in the Memories of His Friends and Colleagues**

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The present section, which complements the biography and bibliography of Vladimír Vavřínek, includes (short) memories of his colleagues and friends, which have been sent to *Byzantinoslavica* in the past year. While the published work of dr. Vavřínek remains a testimony to his scholarship, these remembrances present his personality – generous, kind and humorous – which the editors of *Byzantinoslavica* wish to capture and celebrate in order to honour the journal's late editor-in-chief.

#### **Stefan Albrecht**

Als junger Doktorand betrat ich – es muss im Herbst oder Winter 2000 gewesen sein – die Valentinská 91/1 durchaus mit einiger Aufregung, denn ich sollte dem Nestor der tschechischen Byzantinistik begegnen. Günter Prinzing, der mich zusammen mit Jan M. Piskorski zu meiner Arbeit über die Großmährenforschung angeregt hatte, hatte mich dazu ermuntert, den aufzusuchen, der sich am besten mit den hll. Kyrill und Method auskannte und die Situation in der damals virulenten Diskussion um die richtige geographische Zuordnung Großmährens richtig einschätzen konnte. Und so fuhr ich mit dem alten hölzernen, mit eisernen Gittern geschützten Aufzug, der mich in die Anfangszeit des Slovanský ústav zurückzusetzen schien (auch wenn es ja ein ganz anderes Gebäude war), zu meinem Ziel. Als ich Vavříneks Büro betreten hatte, saß da ein freundlicher Herr, der mich mit seinem wunderbaren Deutsch, gefärbt mit seiner typischen tschechischen Sprachmelodie, begrüßte und bei der Gelegenheit so nett war zu behaupten, dass auch mein Tschechisch gut sei (viele Jahre später musste er bedauernd feststellen, dass es ganz schön eingerostet war). Er beeindruckte mich damals weniger durch sein enzyklopädisches Wissen – ich war ja vorgewarnt worden – sondern durch seine vornehme Art, mit der er auf mich zukam, sich für mein Thema interessierte und mir manches erklärte, dass ich nicht verstanden hatte und ohne seine Hilfe auch nie verstanden hätte. Nicht zuletzt ihm und seiner Hilfe am Anfang meiner Karriere verdanke ich es, dass mich beide Themen, nämlich Böhmen und Byzanz, nie mehr losgelassen haben.

In den folgenden Jahren wurde es zu einer schönen Tradition, ihn bei jedem meiner Aufenthalte in Prag zu besuchen, auch, als er nicht mehr in dem großen Büro saß, sondern sich eines teilen musste. Gerne hörte ich ihm zu, wenn der hervorragende Erzähler dort, oder aber auch in einem Restaurant um die Ecke von den Neuigkeiten aus dem Fach, oder aber von denen aus der Politik oder anderen Gebieten berichtete.

### **Petr Balcárek**

It was in the late 1960s that Vladimír Vavřínek, follower of byzantinist František Dvorník, began his research on Byzantine influences brought about by the mission of Sts Cyril and Methodius.

The themes of Dvorník's works on Sts Cyril and Methodius were made known by Vavřínek in communist Czechoslovakia (during the so-called Prague Spring). The latter published academic studies, such as the one focusing on Byzantine influence on architecture in the territory of Great Moravia.<sup>1</sup> He also published a considerable number of popular articles, stimulating interest in what used to be a marginal topic in a socialist society. The Czechoslovak state even granted permission for Francis Dvorník to move from the USA to Czechoslovakia, while in May 1969 the relics of St. Cyril were brought from Rome to Czechoslovakia in a procession that travelled throughout the country.

During the period of 'normalization,' Vavřínek gradually shifted towards a re-evaluation of the role and significance of the Byzantine mission in the territory of the Czech and Slovak lands. This is characteristic of his study published together with Bohumila Zástěrová,<sup>2</sup> in which he finds Byzantium's influence on culture in the territory of then Czechoslovakia to be rather marginal and partial. This interpretation continued after the Velvet Revolution, also given his position at the Institute of Slavonic Studies of the Czech Academy of Sciences in Prague, under whose auspices Byzantine studies in this country were conducted and in whose re-establishment in 1992 Vavřínek played a major role. Vavřínek's interpretation of Great Moravian culture and its Byzantine legacy thus moved further away from Francis Dvorník's view; Vavřínek focused more on the local character of art in Great Moravia and autochthonous Slavic sources of inspiration.

As senior researcher and later director of the Institute of Slavonic Studies, Vavřínek attracted young scholars interested in Byzantine studies. He shared his research projects with some of them, such as the *Encyclopedia of Byzantium* for Czech readers, published together with the author of the present obituary. As long-standing editor-in-chief of *Byzantinoslavica*, which was suspended between 1999 and 2002, he then entrusted the preparation of this journal to

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1 *BSI* 25/2, 1964, 288–301.

2 *BSI* 43/2, 1982, 161–188.

the younger generation with Pavel Milko and Lubomíra Havlíková as main editors. After his retirement, *Byzantinoslavica* has continued to flourish, edited by Petra Melichar and her team.

The Institute of Slavonic Studies, as the only academic institution in the Czech Republic that supports and sponsors Byzantine studies, has successfully sailed through the decades of peaceful and less peaceful history of this country due in part to the significant contribution brought by this outstanding personality in contemporary Czech culture: Vladimír Vavřínek.

### **Albrecht Berger**

Vladimír Vavřínek has made a deep impression on me both as a scholar and as a person, and I will always gladly remember our encounters over the years. Of the many conferences where we met, I have particularly fond memories of the one in Bechyně, which he organised together with others in early 1990, immediately after the opening of the borders. Vladimír Vavřínek was one of the last people to speak German with that wonderful Bohemian accent, which has now died out, and he also had a very special sense of humour that made every encounter with him an experience. I particularly remember a story he once told us about his teenage daughter: her greatest wish was to have her own dog, but instead of a dog, he gave her a dog collar for Christmas, a food bowl for her birthday, and so on, until she had forgotten her original wish.

### **Leslie Brubaker**

Vladimír Vavřínek was a kind man and was lovely to me from the first time we met, when I was just beginning my career. He really cared about new scholars and nurtured burgeoning talent throughout his life: once I became more established, he would enlist me to support him in this, which was always a pleasure. Vladimír was a real gentleman, in the old-fashioned sense of the word, and his gentle courtesy was never forced, and never wavered. It coexisted with a steely sense of integrity and Slavic identity that determined the way he approached the past. This could lead to lively and stimulating arguments, but they never ended in tears. His setting in Prague suited him beautifully, and in many ways, like that lovely old building, he was a product of a civilised past that it is easy to romanticise. But Vladimír would have resisted the romanticism, with a small smile of course, because he was above all a true scholar. I miss him.

### **Martina Čechová**

Returning to my scientific work this year I have often been thinking of Vladimír Vavřínek. I realized that the strongest feeling I have towards him is gratitude. I am grateful for everything he taught me about how to think and write about history, and I am no less grateful that he never gave up on me, even though especially the beginnings of my PhD under his leadership were not easy. I am

grateful for everything he taught us about editorial work; Byzantinoslavica was his passion, and we could always ask him for advice. I am grateful I could listen to stories of his life and that I could discuss with him virtually anything; from ancient history to Byzantine Studies, from current political situation inland and abroad to raising children, from haute cuisine to the difficult question of which kind of wine tasted best. I am grateful I could be his student and despite the fact that I remember him saying “old age sucks,” I selfishly miss him.

### **Martina Chromá**

I first started meeting Vladimír Vavřínek during my early professional experiences in the Paleoslavonic department at the Institute of Slavonic Studies of the CAS in 2009. As a former director, with his charismatic demeanour, he stood out significantly from his down-to-earth colleagues in the department. This, however, added a spark to their meetings and the visits from the adjacent room “for a chat.” His communicativeness, with a slightly provocative sense of humour, was one of his strengths, promising an entertaining listening experience as they playfully teased each other.

One of Vladimír Vavřínek’s most remarkable qualities was his humility. He never placed himself above others – even with the youngest colleagues, he interacted as an equal, showing genuine interest in their work and always ready to offer support. His professional concern often extended into the personal sphere, as he sincerely cared about the family lives of his coworkers. He welcomed visitors into his home with warmth, often accompanied by their children, with whom he engaged in lively and thoughtful conversation. These visits left a lasting impression not only on the adults, but also on the children – whether toddlers or older.

I had the opportunity to interact more closely with Vladimír Vavřínek during the last year of his life, when he decided to donate a substantial part of his personal library to the Institute of Slavonic Studies. It was truly an impressive collection, full of rare and hard-to-find titles in the Czech Republic. As we went through the books together, Vladimír Vavřínek often commented on each volume, sharing interesting facts about their topics, the way they were processed, or the authors themselves. He would often say things like, “I’ve spent ages searching for this” or “I’m not giving you this one,” meaning that the book had significant personal value to him and its donation to the Institute was out of the question. Sometimes he would make symbolic remarks such as, “This will be yours – but only after Monika makes that call one day.”

Sorting through his library was one of Vladimír Vavřínek’s final professional tasks. Although it may seem trivial, this task had deep personal significance for him: while going through the books, he reflected on his scholarly life and said a quiet farewell to it. I am grateful I could be part of that moment.

## **Simon Franklin**

I was very sad indeed to hear of the death of Vladimír Vavřínek. I first met him nearly fifty years ago, when I was still a graduate student and he was already a respected and established scholar. He was conspicuously helpful and supportive even to a mere beginner such as myself. He was one of my early mentors – who eventually became a valued colleague and friend. We met mainly at conferences and seminars, though I was also privileged to be able to spend more time with him when he invited me to Prague to assist in a review of the Slavonic Institute. Thus – also with the death, last week, of Igor Pavlovich Medvedev, in St Petersburg, a generation of Byzantinists passes.

## **Pavla Gkantzios Drápelová**

Vladimír Vavřínek and I met during my undergraduate studies at the Department of Slavic and East European Studies at Charles University in Prague. As an external professor, he was invited to provide a series of lectures on Byzantium and the Slavs, which were available to students as an optional subject. We were only a small group of students, yet his lectures were captivating. They included the theme of the Cyrillo-Methodian mission, one of his main areas of expertise, but he also touched upon many other topics – from the siege of Constantinople in 626 to the campaigns of Basil II Bulgaroktonos. As students, we hung on his every word, because listening to his lectures was like listening to a radio play or a mystery crime novel, when you wait for the narrator to reveal who the murderer was. And I must admit that he instilled such respect in me that my classmates and I were afraid to take an exam with him – not because we were afraid of him as a person, but because we feared we would never be able to prepare for the exam in a way that would satisfy someone with such vast knowledge.

Many years later, when I was already employed at the Institute of Slavonic Studies, I had the opportunity to get to know him better. When he no longer came in, I would visit him at home for consultations. I decided to focus more on Byzantine-Slavic relations – which I had previously only studied peripherally, since my dissertation had dealt with a completely different area of Byzantine studies – he assured me that I could always turn to him for help with bibliographic guidance. He explained that he had kept track of everything written on the subject until he was seventy and indeed, he could immediately provide information such as: that in the early 1970s such-and-such person had written on a given subject and that I would find it in this or that journal. But, he continued, I shouldn't be annoyed with him if he was less up-to-date on publications later than 2000, because he hadn't followed them as closely after his seventieth birthday. And this was at a time when he was already ninety years old (!). His mind worked in an astonishing way. What I regarded as one of his great strengths was that, even in his advanced age as in the prime of his scholarly and personal powers, he was always able to look at traditional topics from a new perspective,

while also never being afraid to speak out firmly against certain excesses and attempts at misinterpretation. During our meetings, he often recalled famous Byzantinists whom I had previously known only as great names from book titles, but whom he had had the opportunity to meet in person, to converse and to discuss a variety of topics with. At times, he also shared anecdotes or even bits of gossip from their lives, as well as captivating stories about their destinies. In this way, I heard accounts of Dimitry Obolensky, Francis Dvorník, and many others who, for someone of my generation, seemed almost legendary figures.

My children regularly accompanied me on these visits. My younger son was still too small, but my elder would routinely communicate with Vavřínek, chatting about school, what he enjoyed, boasting about his accomplishments, or complaining about a strict teacher. He expected Vavřínek to share stories from the past, possibly a war-related anecdote. When he was shy sometimes and sat silently at the table, Vavřínek scolded him, saying he hadn't told him much today and hoped he would do better next time. In any case, my son respected him as both an authority and a kind of grandfather. I assume this was shared by all the children of scholars who came to see Vavřínek, who were certainly numerous.

### **Isabel Grimm-Stadelmann**

Ich habe Vladimír Vavřínek ganz am Anfang meines Studiums, während einer Südosteuropa-Tagung in Thessalonike (1994) kennenlernen dürfen – mein Doktorvater, Professor Armin Hohlweg hatte mich ihm damals vorgestellt – und die Tage in Thessalonike sind für mich eine unvergessene, wunderschöne und stets bleibende Erinnerung: da bei dieser Tagung sehr viele Vorträge angekündigt waren, doch nur sehr wenige der Referanten (aus welchen Gründen auch immer) sind dann letztendlich auch erschienen, so dass viele der ursprünglich geplanten Vorträge einfach entfallen sind – und damit auf einmal eine Menge Zeit blieb. Herr Vavřínek hatte mich damals ein bißchen „unter seine Fittiche“ genommen und hat mir vorgeschlagen, gemeinsam mit ihm die Stadt Thessalonike und die wunderschönen Kirchen zu besichtigen, was wir dann auch getan haben – wir sind sogar gemeinsam, mit dem Bus, ans Meer gefahren und waren ein bißchen schwimmen! Diese Tage gehören mit zu den schönsten Erinnerungen an meine Studienzeit: Herr Vavřínek war so liebenswürdig, hat mir so viel erklärt und sehr viel über die Entwicklung der tschechischen Byzantinistik berichtet; er hat mir zugehört und sehr viel Interesse an meiner Begeisterung für die byzantinische Medizin und, generell, für die Heilkunde in den diversen Überlieferungen gezeigt. Meine Fächerkombination aus Byzantinistik und Ägyptologie hat ihn stets sehr interessiert und er hat während der Tage in Thessalonike viele interessierte Fragen zu möglichen Verbindungen, Motiven und Traditionen gestellt, die mir dann viel, viel später, als ich bereits über ein medizinhistorisches Thema (kritische Edition der unter dem Namen Theophilos überlieferten mittelbyzantinischen christlichen Anthropologie über die Struktur des menschlichen Körpers, 2008) promoviert hatte, wieder in den

Sinn kamen und mich auf meinem weiteren Weg durch die byzantinische Medizin stets begleitet haben. An meiner Habilitation im Jahr 2017 über ägyptische iatromagische Motive in der byzantinischen medizinischen Literatur hätte er sicherlich sehr viel Freude gehabt, doch haben wir uns leider, nach einer anfänglichen Korrespondenz nach den Tagen in Thessalonike, im Alltagsgetriebe etwas aus den Augen verloren – was ich nach wie vor sehr bedauere.

### **Jiří Guth Jarkovský**

For a long time – since the mid-1980s – Vladimír Vavřínek was the vague “learned father” of my friend Monika from the Brontosaurus movement at the Faculty of Sciences in Prague. I must admit that I even confused him a little with the similarly “scholarly” archaeologist Jan Bouzek, because I also knew his daughter Šimona from the same circle, or rather the same great group of friends, who meet to this day.

Then, mainly under the influence of natural scientist and philosopher Stanislav Komárek, a desire to visit Istanbul, or Constantinople, with an informed guide began to grow in me. When the opportunity arose in 2021 to go there with a group of art historians from Brno (who specialize in the early Middle Ages), I urgently realized how little I knew about Byzantium and that I needed some theoretical preparation. Not in Brno, but right here in Prague, there is Vladimír Vavřínek! Monika arranged a visit for me, which I would readily describe as pivotal. It lasted several hours, and although I am a complete amateur, I learned about many buildings, mosaics, events, personalities, and, above all, books. I also learned about Dumbarton Oaks and František Dvorník...

After my return, I repeated my visit, showed a slideshow, and talked about my impressions and experiences. Vladimír Vavřínek listened attentively and perhaps even a little emotionally, and in retrospect, he clarified a few things for me. When I complained about the closed gallery in the Hagia Sophia and the entire monastery in Chora, he recommended the nearest “Byzantine” mosaics in Aquileia, Grado, and especially Ravenna (on which there is also a comprehensive book by Judith Herrin), which I am gradually getting to know.

I am now reading the second expanded edition of *Cyril and Methodius between Constantinople and Rome*, and I remember this kind and sensitive man (whom I met only briefly, yet who taught me so much, guided me, and inspired me) with respect and gratitude.

### **Judith Herrin**

The first time I met Vladimír Vavřínek was at a Birmingham Symposium organised by Anthony Bryer back in the 1970s. Of course, the name was familiar as Bryer made sure that his students were all aware of the Czech journal, *Byzantinoslavica*. And even if we couldn't read the articles in Czech or Russian, there was usually a helpful summary in French or English. At that time, while I didn't realise what a vital role Vladimír Vavřínek played in the

journal, meeting him in person clarified his mission to bring the scholarship of his country, often revealed in the contents of *BSI*, to a wider audience. And he delivered this mission in the most gentle, persuasive manner that immediately created a personal bond and a positive responsive.

In one letter dated November 1981 that I found recently, Vladimír Vavřínek invited me to participate in the Sixteenth Eirene Conference and enthusiastically approved my suggestion for a paper on the ‘discontinuity of city life’ in the transformation of the Byzantine world. Sadly, I wasn’t able to attend that one although I later visited Prague on a couple of occasions, when we always enjoyed animated conversations. This letter is a model of that restrained pressure – thanking me for planning to review a copy of his ‘modest symposium volume’ and insisting on my coming to the conference: “I’ll be most happy to have you here.”

Later I learned how he had saved the journal and indirectly the entire field of Byzantine Studies in the Czech Republic by moving it into the Classics faculty, where its preoccupation with medieval Greek was appreciated. At the same time Vladimír Vavřínek encouraged scholars from far and wide to send articles to *Byzantinoslavica*, which resulted in a much broader coverage of topics and gained a much larger readership. The present status of the journal is due very much to him and is being maintained in the most successful manner by his successors.

Because of his charming, rather old-fashioned style of delivering hard-headed arguments, I learned a great deal about his expertise in a huge range of fields allied to Byzantine Studies. It was a way of attracting an international following that is prominently displayed in his 1995 *Festschrift*, aptly entitled Στεφανος. He corrected me on numerous occasions, for instance, about the missionary activity of Sts Cyril and Methodios, and strengthened my knowledge of the Slavic regions so familiar to him. It was a great pleasure to attend the conferences he organised in Prague, to meet him at other international events, and to have his personal presence at the one that celebrated my retirement from King’s College London in 2009. He sustained great friendships with a very large number of scholars, and I am truly honoured to have been numbered among his friends.

### **Michel Kaplan**

Le décès de Vladimír Vavřínek me laisse, d’une certaine façon, orphelin. En m’invitant à la conférence qu’il organisait au château de Bechyně, il me fit découvrir la Bohême du Sud, mais surtout la communauté des byzantinistes tchèques, à laquelle je reste profondément attaché. J’en profitais pour visiter Prague. C’était en 1990 et la conférence portait sur *Byzantium and its neighbours from the mid-9<sup>th</sup> till the 12<sup>th</sup> centuries*. Voilà qui me valut une publication dans *Byzantinoslavica*, revue à laquelle je me suis alors abonné. J’y avais publié un article dès 1982. Surtout, la revue ayant demandé à A. P. Kazhdan un compte-rendu de l’ouvrage tiré de ma thèse sur les hommes et la terre à

Byzance, elle reçut une critique tellement virulente qu'elle me permit de publier une réponse. J'ajoute que tout ceci avait créé, entre Vladimír, et moi au-delà de l'admiration que j'avais pour lui, une forte amitié. J'ai donc perdu aussi un ami.

### **Johannes Koder**

So habe ich Vladimír bildlich vor mir und erinnere mich an ihn als einen hervorragenden und hilfreichen Kollegen. Wir trafen uns oftmals seit den späten 60er Jahren bei Kongressen und Tagungen, sowie anlässlich gegenseitiger Vortragseinladungen in Prag und in Wien. Er war für mich ein guter Freund.

### **Taxiarchis Koliás**

Vladimír Vavřínek war ein angesehener Historiker der kulturellen Beziehungen zwischen Byzanz und den Slawen. Seine Studien zu Cyrillomethodiana sind sehr bekannt und wissenschaftlich von großer Bedeutung.

Ich persönlich erinnere mich gerne an unsere Begegnungen und Diskussionen auf wissenschaftlichen Symposien, auch bereits vor der Wende des Jahres 1989/90, an den belesenen und angesehenen Kollegen mit dem sanften Lächeln und dem etwas melancholischen Gesichtsausdruck, geprägt von einer vornehmen Höflichkeit.

Ich schreibe diese paar Worte bewusst auf Deutsch, da ich an die Zeiten unserer Begegnungen zurückdenke, als Wissenschaftler aus verschiedenen Ländern durch ihre Veröffentlichungen und Diskussionen noch in verschiedenen Sprachen miteinander kommunizierten und sich nicht auf die Verwendung der englischen Sprache beschränkten ...

Vladimír und unsere Gespräche werden mir immer in Erinnerung bleiben.

### **Athanasios Markopoulos**

I was particularly saddened to learn of the death of Vladimír Vavřínek. Vladimír was an eminent scholar and a wonderful colleague, always kind, and a true friend. He will be greatly missed!

### **Petra Melichar**

(Please refer to the editorial for my memories of Vladimír Vavřínek.)

### **Margaret Mullett**

I think I first met Vladimír through my teacher Anthony Bryer when I had not yet published anything. He offered a home in *Byzantinoslavica* and I gratefully sent him not my first but my second article. I realised that he took pride in publishing the first article of as many promising Byzantinists as he could! After that there are many happy memories: my first visit to Prague and the Vila

Lanna for his Ekphrasis meeting, his visit to Belfast when we took him to the monastic site of Nendrum in the pouring rain and he ruined his shoes sliding in the mud – and my realisation that he was a favourite at Dumbarton Oaks of the permanent staff, particularly the wonderful Marlene Chazan who ran finance and so much more for thirty years (she had excellent taste). I was sad not to be able to see him again in Prague when Petra Melichar organised a conference on women in 2015 and I couldn't come – and to have missed him this year when I could come. There are many once young Byzantinists who will remember him with affection and gratitude.

### **Dana Picková**

I knew Dr. Vladimír Vavřínek over many years even though I don't remember when exactly and under what circumstances we met. As I was the head of medieval history at the Faculty of Arts at Charles University, Dr. Vavřínek's expertise was sometimes required for consultations on Byzantium, and he was repeatedly asked to review bachelor and master theses.

We had the opportunity to get to know each other better at the end of 2013, when we were, as the only representatives of Czech historians, invited to an international conference on Cyril and Methodius and travelled together to Thessaloniki. During the return flight, we talked about the film series *Cyril and Methodius. Apostles of the Slavs*, which was shot by the Czech Television for the 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the arrival of the Thessalonian brothers in Great Moravia. I must admit that, at first, I refused to watch it. I realize that the script writers of historical films have to fabricate circumstances in order to create a continuous story, but it bothers me when they do not respect known facts. I therefore prefer not to watch historical movies dealing with medieval events.

However, this time my husband persuaded me to watch. As a teacher of Czech and Social Sciences, he was looking forward to a film about Cyril and Methodius especially as the role of Constantine was played by Ondřej Novák, my husband's former student. I was surprised to discover that the script was, from a historian's perspective, quite accurate and I shared this insight with Dr. Vavřínek on the trip from Thessaloniki to Prague. I received a rather laconic reply: "Of course, the script is fine. I was the expert advisor of the scriptwriters! "

I nevertheless learned that the filmmakers made one mistake when they included a scene at the beginning of the story in which people storm a temple and destroy its artistic decoration. It was supposed to remind the audience that, during the childhood of the Thessalonian brothers, the Byzantine society was experiencing the second wave of iconoclasm, which the filmmakers portrayed rather as the looting of churches during the Hussite revolution in Bohemia than the iconoclasm introduced by the Byzantine emperors. I was also told that Adam Novák visited the Institute of Slavonic Studies of the Czech Academy of Sciences during the filming.

Years pass and memories fade. However, this fond memory of the eminent Byzantinist and expert on the story of the Slavic apostles Cyril and Methodius, Dr. Vladimír Vavřínek, will remain with me.

### Günter Prinzing

Meine Erinnerung an Vladimír Vavřínek ist anfänglich bestimmt von meiner 1984 begonnenen (und bis 1994 fortgeführten) Mitarbeit an der Bibliographie der damals von ihm herausgegebenen Zeitschrift *Byzantinoslavica*. Aber seit meinem Besuch in Prag im September 1987 waren wir freundschaftlich verbunden, besonders seit der denkwürdigen Tagung in Bechyně 1990, kurz nach der Wende. Jedes weitere (der leider nicht sehr häufigen) Treffen brachte uns fachlich und menschlich näher, war er doch ungemein gebildet, klug, witzig und zugleich warmherzig, zudem besaß Vladimír eine scharfe Beobachtungsgabe und ein untrügliches Gedächtnis.

Nur ein einziges Mal kam es zwischen uns zu einer kleinen, an sich längst vergessenen Irritation, von der ich glaube, sie hier – trotz der inzwischen vergangenen knapp 30 Jahre – erwähnen zu dürfen, weil mir inzwischen besser als damals bewusst geworden ist, wie bzw. warum es zu dieser Irritation gekommen sein könnte.

Sie entstand im Zusammenhang mit dem von Maciej Salamon (dem hochgeschätzten Krakauer Freund und Kollegen) und mir herausgegebenen Themenband *Byzanz und Ostmitteleuropa 950-1453*.<sup>3</sup> Denn zu unserem großen Bedauern sah sich Vladimír, der am Kongress samt dieser *table-ronde* teilgenommen hatte, außerstande, den vorgesehen Beitrag aus seiner Feder zu diesem Band beizusteuern.

Die Gründe dafür blieben jedoch im Unklaren, jedenfalls wurde dieser Punkt unter uns nicht mehr näher hinterfragt. Doch weil ich 1999 brieflich *en passant* darauf nochmals zurückkam, gab mir Vladimír (im Oktober 1999) dazu, ebenfalls brieflich, folgende Auskunft:

„Du hast die Abwesenheit meines Beitrages sehr nett erwähnt, doch fürchte ich, dass Du mir wegen meines Versagens böse bist. Es tut mir sehr leid. *Der wirkliche Grund war, dass ich mit dem Thema nicht völlig fertig war. Immer noch kann ich nicht mit dem Verhältnis der Begriffe „Mitteleuropa“ und „Ost-Mitteleuropa“ zurechtkommen – und das Verhältnis der Länder in dem entsprechenden Raum zu Byzanz scheint mir, eine wichtige Rolle zu spielen.* [Meine Hervorhebung, G.P.]. Ich bedaure wirklich sehr, dass ich das Thema für Deinen Sammelband nicht rechtzeitig bearbeitet habe. Maciej Salamon hat mich zu einer ähnlichen Tagung in Kraków im nächsten Jahr eingeladen. Falls er damit einverstanden ist, möchte ich zu dieser Problematik noch einmal zurückkehren. Jedenfalls möchte ich darüber noch sprechen – und nicht nur darüber.“

3 *Beiträge zu einer table-ronde des XIX International Congress of Byzantine Studies Copenhagen 1996*, (Mainzer Veröffentlichungen zur Byzantinistik, 3), Wiesbaden 1999.

Diese zweite Tagung fand tatsächlich im September 2000 in Krakau unter dem Thema *Byzantium and East Central Europe* statt.<sup>4</sup> An ihr nahm auch Vladimír teil, doch ohne einen Vortrag während der Konferenz zu halten oder als Text im Nachhinein noch beizusteuern. So dürfte auch in diesem Fall, wie mir scheint, der von ihm selbst (im erwähnten Brief) genannte Grund hinter seiner Absage stecken: Sein offensichtliches Unbehagen über den Begriff **Ostmitteleuropa**, den wir schon im Titel des genannten Kongress-Bandes verwendet haben, mit dem aber Vladimír erklärtermaßen nichts anfangen konnte.

Wie dem auch sei, heute bin ich mir ziemlich sicher, dass hinter der uns damals irritierenden Zurückhaltung Vladimírs die von ihm nur angedeutete, aber nicht offen artikuliert Abneigung gegen den Begriff *Ostmitteleuropa / East Central Europe* stand. Für ihn, der über ein politisch sehr sensibles Sensorium verfügte, war es vermutlich nur schwer erträglich, dass nun, nach dem ersehnten Fall des Eisernen Vorhangs, der Osteuropa von Westeuropa trennte, die damalige Tschechoslowakei trotz ihrer so stark zentraleuropäisch bestimmten Geschichte und Lage, nun abermals einer als „östlich“ markierten historisch-politischen Struktur zugeordnet werden sollte. Anders gesagt, Vladimír hat möglicherweise, ja sogar wahrscheinlich nicht ganz zu Unrecht befürchtet, dass das aus seiner Sicht wohl als unpassend, ja vielleicht sogar als verletzend empfundene Präfix „Ost“ einer neuen mentalen Trennung dieses Raumes von Mitteleuropa Vorschub leisten würde.<sup>5</sup>

### **Claudia Rapp**

With great sadness we received the news of the death of Dr. Vladimír Vavřínek. He was an eminent and influential scholar and significantly contributed to the high reputation of Czech Byzantine scholarship, not least through Byzantinoslavica. Those of us who were fortunate to meet him, will always remember his kindness and his sense of humour.

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4 Vgl. den Tagungsband: G. Prinzing – M. Salamon (eds.), with the assistance of Paul Stephenson, *Byzantium and East Central Europe*, (Byzantina et Slavica Cracoviensia, 3), Cracow 2001.

5 So ist es wohl auch kein Zufall, dass er kein Problem damit hatte, für die Ausstellung *Europas Mitte um 1000* den folgenden Beitrag zu verfassen: V. VAVŘÍNEK, Mission in Mähren: Zwischen dem lateinischen Westen und Byzanz, in: A. WIECZOREK – H.-M. HINZ (Hrsg.), *Europas Mitte um 1000. Beiträge zur Geschichte, Kunst und Archäologie*, Stuttgart 2000, Bd. I, 304–310. Die Literatur zur komplexen Terminologie ist umfangreich, vgl. J. von PUTTKAMMER, *Ostmittel-Europa im 19. Jahrhundert und 20. Jahrhundert*, (Oldenbourg-Grundriss der Geschichte, 38), München 2010. J. HACKMANN: Ostmitteleuropaforschung, in: *Online-Lexikon zur Kultur und Geschichte der Deutschen im östlichen Europa*, 2014. URL: [ome-lexikon.uni-oldenburg.de/p32789](http://ome-lexikon.uni-oldenburg.de/p32789) (retrieved 23.09.2025).

## Peter und Jana Schreiner

Sicher werden nur wenige Freunde und Kollegen genau festlegen können, wann sie Vladimír erstmals begegnet sind. Dank meiner Notizen im Programm des 14. Internationalen Byzantinistenkongresses, der vom 5. bis 10. September 1966 in Oxford stattfand, weiß ich darüber genau Bescheid, weil ich mir im Namensverzeichnis einige Anstreichungen zu Personen machte, die ich treffen oder hören wollte. Vladimír war damals bereits eine bekannte Persönlichkeit des Faches, während ich noch nicht einmal meine Dissertation verteidigt und gerade meinen ersten Aufsatz veröffentlicht hatte. Leider lassen sich spätere Begegnungen weit weniger genau aus der Erinnerung heraus bestimmen. Da Vladimír eine Autorität im Bereich der kyrillo-methodianischen Forschung geworden war, die damals im gesamten Feld der Byzantinistik noch eine große Rolle spielte, trafen wir uns immer wieder auf kleineren Colloquien, vor allem in Bulgarien, die diesen Forschungen gewidmet waren. In den achtziger Jahren konnte ich ihn dann mehrfach an meinen byzantinistischen Lehrstuhl nach Köln einladen, wo er auch Gast in unserem Hause war und freimütig über die politische Situation in seiner Heimat erzählte.

Seit 1968 war Vladimír eng mit der Herausgabe der *Byzantinoslavica* verbunden, aber erst 1989 konnte er die gesamte Leitung der Zeitschrift übernehmen. Sie hat seit ihrer Gründung 1929 immer eine führende Stellung im Fach eingenommen und konnte auch nach 1948 ihre Internationalität weitgehend beibehalten. Zu ihren Charakteristika gehörte ein umfangreicher Teil mit bibliographischen Besprechungs-Notizen, der auch Publikationen zugänglich machte, die im unzugänglichen „Westen“ erschienen waren. Da auch die 1892 von Karl Krumbacher begründete *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* eine fast gleiche bibliographische Abteilung besaß, entstand zunehmend eine Doppelbibliographie. Dieses immer latente Problem spitzte sich zu, als ich 1992 die *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* übernahm. Der deutsche Verlag (es war B. G. Teubner) drängte auf eine rasche Lösung im Sinne einer einzigen Bibliographie, natürlich in der BZ. Ich trat eine schwere Reise nach Prag zu Verhandlungen an. Wie sollte ich dem Freund und Kollegen Vladimir diesen Standpunkt klarmachen? Mit welchem Recht konnte ich verlangen, dass er auf eine jahrzehntelange Tradition verzichtete? Es kam aber alles ganz anders. Am Bahnsteig in Prag trat mir Vladimír freundlich lächelnd entgegen: „Keine Sorge! Wir verzichten auf die Bibliographie.“ Abends besiegelten wir das überraschende Ergebnis nicht nur mit böhmischem Essen, sondern auch mit einem Besuch der „Nationaloper“, Smetanas „Verkaufte Braut.“ Der Verzicht auf wichtige slavisch-byzantinische Forschungsergebnisse in der Bibliographie tat mir leid. Im Jahr 2001 gelang es mir dann, in der BZ mit einer neuen bibliographischen Abteilung, Nr. 14 „Byzanz und die slavische Welt (bis 16. Jh.)“, Ersatz zu schaffen, und somit einen kleinen Teil der byzantinisch-slavischen Tradition der Bibliographie der *Byzantinoslavica* weiterzuführen.

Ein letztes Mal traf ich Vladimír, als 2012 die tschechische Übersetzung meines Buches „Konstantinopel. Geschichte und Archäologie“ in der Tschechischen Akademie präsentiert wurde. Ich weiß nicht, wie viel Vladimír dazu beitrug, dass diese Publikation in tschechischer Sprache erscheinen konnte.

Fast 60 Jahre wissenschaftlicher Tätigkeit in der Erforschung der slavisch-byzantinischen Beziehungen haben Vladimír und den Verfasser dieser Zeilen verbunden.

### Jonathan Shepard

Although he was a much younger contemporary and friend of Francis Dvorník, not a pupil, Vladimír Vavřínek took up the torch and carried on his work of investigating the impact of Eastern Christian teachings and law on the Slavs of Central Europe and beyond into the twenty-first century. Some of his publications were in English or German, and the light they shed on the Old Church Slavonic *Lives* of Constantine-Cyril and Methodios will shine brilliantly long after his departure from the scholarly scene. They range from a monograph on the *Lives* to a brief yet highly suggestive piece demonstrating the prominence of rhetoric and disputations in the *Life* of Constantine-Cyril.<sup>6</sup> And his study ‘The role of the Slavonic liturgy in Byzantine missionary policy’ remains a model of clear thinking and low-key revisionism on source materials that tend to be daunting to the general historian.<sup>7</sup>

Vladimír’s scholarly legacy is, however, a matter for appreciation elsewhere. This is more the time to record a few snapshots from memory, taken over some fifty years in circumstances whose permutations reflect something of his own life pattern. My final image of Vladimír dates from the autumn of 2022, of him sitting in his apartment. He was alert and intellectually curious as ever, albeit frustrated that he could no longer walk freely around the Pankrác suburb of Prague or dart into the city centre and the Slavonic Institute at Valentinská 1, *Byzantinoslavica*’s base-camp. Solace, though, came from his daughter Monika and grandson Jakub, and the lunch party she organized in his apartment saw him still savouring lively conversation with white wine. This was almost a world away from my first encounter, at a reception in the halls of the Fourteenth International Congress of Byzantine Studies, in Bucharest in September 1971. Vladimír was standing amidst a throng of hopefuls, each with some pressing interest in the august journal he was already co-editing. He found time for us all, including a rather pushy young student from Oxford, eager to peddle his

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6 V. VAVŘÍNEK, *Staroslověnské životy Konstantina a Metoděje*, Prague 1963 (reviewed favourably by F. DVORNÍK in *BZ* 58, 1965, 124–127). V. VAVŘÍNEK, A Byzantine polemic against Islam in Old Slavonic hagiography, in: V. Christides – T. Papadopoulos (eds.), *Proceedings of the Sixth International Congress of Graeco-Oriental and African Studies, Graeco-Arabica* 7–8, Nicosia 2000, 535–542.

7 V. VAVŘÍNEK, The role of the Slavonic liturgy in Byzantine missionary policy, in: V. Vavřínek (ed.), *Beiträge zur byzantinischen Geschichte im 9.–11. Jahrhundert*, Prague 1978, 255–281.

wares. A few years later, having submitted a piece to *Byzantinoslavica* and, to my surprise, gained acceptance for publication, I spotted a factual error together with the omission of the new edition of a text. I made the necessary revisions and sent them with a plea for the alterations to be made. Vladimír's response was as brief as it was kind: 'It happens.' Not long afterwards, he proved willing enough to take a stand when serious objections were raised against my review of Hilda Ellis Davidson's *The Viking Road to Byzantium*, apparently because of its endorsement of the author's 'Normannist' reading of the early history of Rus. The review was published, regardless of the cold wind that was blowing from the East.

I witnessed many more instances of Vladimír's scrupulousness, efficiency and courage in the years between that first meeting in Bucharest and our last encounter. But perhaps the most striking images belong to quite a narrow band of time. Those last years of Soviet rule, known to East Germans as *Die Wende*, more or less vindicate the dictum often ascribed to V. I. Lenin: 'there are decades in which nothing happens, and weeks in which decades happen.' The year 1988 saw several conferences convening to mark what was supposedly the millennium of Prince Vladimir Sviatoslavich's conversion to Christianity. I attended the conference held in Rome in May under the auspices of the Polish Institute of Christian Culture and the Italian Historical Institute for the Middle Ages but had to leave early so as to resume teaching in Cambridge. Hurrying forth from the conference building I literally bumped into Vladimír with his wife, who had only just arrived, cameras in hand. A brief and breathless exchange of greetings was all that time allowed, along with expressions of disappointment: one never could tell if or when another meeting outside the Iron Curtain would be feasible.

In the event, the following eighteen months saw mounting expectations oscillate with fears of reprisals. Vladimír paid me a visit in Cambridge in the early spring of 1989, after the 23<sup>rd</sup> Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies in Birmingham, a convivial affair much to his taste – and not just because of his friendship with its Symposiarch and inspirational 'godfather,' Anthony Bryer. The outlook seemed bright, and Vladimír told me of embryonic plans to hold a conference on Byzantine diplomacy. However, memories were still green of another spring that had not ended well, the Prague Spring of 1968. Letters from Vladimír in the autumn of 1989 (which I lamentably failed to keep) signalled that he was bracing himself for a crackdown. Furthermore, there was every prospect of a kind of office coup entailing his removal from the editorial board of *Byzantinoslavica* to the advantage of a colleague and his daughter. His position was, in effect, saved by the Fall of the Berlin Wall and, within a few weeks, the Velvet Revolution. Vladimír joined the crowd of students and citizens thronging Wenceslas Square with – he later told me – every expectation that they would be dispersed by means of batons or bullets. His reasoning was correct: for some days the army stood ready to intervene, while the demonstrators, with Vladimír among them, held their ground. However, the Defence

Minister abruptly backtracked and a recording of an address by Václav Havel was shown on TV. Within a few days the Communist grip on Czechoslovakia slackened and then fell away.

The opening months of the New Year were, for me, packed with preparations for what served as a kind of prelude to the event that Vladimír was preparing: the 24<sup>th</sup> Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, dedicated to ‘Byzantine Diplomacy’ and held in Cambridge, with me taking on the role of a somewhat drier Bryer. By the time Vladimír’s conference convened in September 1990, the Velvet Revolution was many months in the past and, wondrously, next to no blood had been shed. Nonetheless, through the windows of the conference coach one seemed to be observing the aftermath of a hurricane: monumental stairways leading to now empty plinths in the city of Prague and, as we moved through the countryside, utterly deserted Soviet parade-grounds and barracks. The conference venue at Bechyně gave off similar intimations of sudden change. The Habsburg-era hunting-lodge that had offered a splendid retreat to apparatchiks and other members of the Czech version of the nomenklatura (academics included) was now bereft of Party insignia, leaving only the portraits of nineteenth-century worthies and, hanging on the dormitory walls, trophies of past hunts and field sports in the form of antlers and the heads of beady-eyed moose. Throughout most of the conference proceedings the skies outside were overcast, discharging bouts of heavy rain, while elaborate dark wooden furniture and panelling deepened the gloom.

Gloom was not, however, the predominant conference mood. There were certainly expressions of relief and emotional release, but pervading all was a lingering disbelief and a dream-like feel to things: how could such a gathering be taking place in what had been a privileged retreat for the Party faithful? The glee was most palpable among the German-speakers who constituted by far the majority of the 60 or so attendees, not least because Easterners and Westerners could now mingle freely. The spectacle gave rise to a certain unease in some older participants. Vladimír himself would later own up to initial apprehensions: he had, after all, watched as a boy from his family’s apartment balcony as the Nazi troops headed for Wenceslas Square in Prague in March 1939, wondering why his parents did not share his excitement at the massed ranks and marching bands. Happily, such apprehensions about the future would turn out to be wholly unfounded.

In stark contrast to the jubilant Germans was a small contingent of Russians, hovering on the fringes of the conference rooms. They were, understandably, taciturn and looked generally downcast. Their leader, Genadii Litavrin, had not been a devotee of the Communist Party. He was a gentle spirit – what would have been termed in the nineteenth century a ‘Westernizer.’ He clearly relished the opportunity to converse openly and freely with an old friend, Dimitri Obolensky. For other Russians, though, the conference brought the first opportunity to meet Obolensky and one of them, a middle-aged scholar with tears in her eyes, told me of her surprise upon hearing him speaking his mother-tongue: not

merely the cadences of pre-revolutionary Russia, but a revelation of how limpid the language could be and the nuances it could convey, once rid of cumbersome phraseology and Soviet-era jargon. Thus, there were glimmerings of hope that Russians might recover their voice.

Such were the cross-currents in a gathering that, by chance, became a marker for the ending of the Cold War. Vladimír himself wrote, in the preface to the fascicule of *Byzantinoslavica* devoted to the Conference Proceedings, of ‘the truly amazing atmosphere.’<sup>8</sup> What he characteristically omitted was his own role in conjuring up that atmosphere – a light yet constant presence flitting through the conference chambers, encouraging shy speakers and spicing up coffee breaks with mischievous humour and a touch of gossip, reading the room with his bright blue eyes. Happily, his role as *genius loci* did receive recognition. Franz Tinnefeld had noticed that the conference was taking place only a few weeks after Vladimír’s sixtieth birthday; and so one evening turned into a kind of birthday party. Franz presented him with a cake and offered words of praise for his accomplishments that spoke for us all. Not that this buoyant party spirit was at the expense of scholarship. In fact, the quality of the papers and the keenness of the discussions and questioning probably owed something to the ‘amazing atmosphere.’ The eventual publication contains important studies on many aspects of the eastern empire’s dealings with other peoples and powers. This volume, edited by Vladimír with his usual meticulous care, stands as a monument to his perseverance and talent for bringing out the best in a widely variegated band of scholars young and old.

This whirlwind of events did not mark ‘the End of History,’ as some commentators fondly supposed at the time. Indeed, the future of *Byzantinoslavica* was not fully assured and publication was suspended for a while after Vladimír retired in 1999. It is, however, the quiet yet firm stand he took under a totalitarian regime that sets him apart from his academic counterparts in the West of the time. In the grimmest conditions Vladimír kept the lights on, and it is to be hoped that the beacon he tended so caringly at Valentinská 1 will carry on gleaming, whatever the cold winds blowing hard again from the East.

### Alice-Mary Talbot

I was saddened to learn of the recent death of Vladimír Vavřínek, whose name will always be linked with *Byzantinoslavica* and the promotion of Byzantine studies in Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic. I first met him in 1966–1967 when he was a fellow at Dumbarton Oaks at the same time that I was a junior fellow. We always enjoyed each other’s company and I learned a lot from him about the political situation in Czechoslovakia at the time.

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8 V. VAVŘÍNEK, Preface, in: V. Vavřínek (ed.), *Byzantium and its Neighbours from the mid-9<sup>th</sup> till the 12<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, (BSI 54/1), Prague 1993, 4.

Over thirty years later we met again at the Congress in Moscow where he helped me and my husband on several occasions by serving as a Russian interpreter and intervening on one occasion on our behalf when a waiter at our hotel refused to serve us dinner (I guess because we were Americans). After the congress during a brief stopover in Prague Vladimír treated us to a personalized tour of the historic sites and sights of Prague. We could not have had a better informed and more passionate guide. May he rest in peace.