



*Vladimír Vavřínek*  
*5. 8. 1930 – 14. 8. 2024*

## Dedicated to Vladimír Vavřínek

Although I had briefly seen Vladimír Vavřínek at a lecture in 2006, I did not actually meet him until my job interview at the Institute of Slavonic Studies of the Czech Academy of Sciences in December 2011. As we discussed the position, I found him to be very gracious and generally reassuring, but he famously told me that he did not consider the Palaiologan period – the period I had specialized in – to be a part of Byzantine history. Despite this somewhat discouraging beginning, I was offered part-time employment, and with it, a chair, a table and a computer in Dr. Vavřínek's office.

I remember being somewhat anxious about meeting him again. I can picture him entering the office on that first Tuesday in early October 2012. Greeting my colleague, Martina Čechová, and me, he put his hat and coat neatly on a hanger and proceeded to his desk. From the start he was very kind to me, and I soon began to cherish the days when he would join us.

My first year at the Institute coincided with the 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the arrival of Constantine, Methodius, and their companions in Great Moravia. For his part in the commemorations, Dr. Vavřínek was preparing a conference, an exhibit (with its catalogue), and several lectures while I was enjoying the intensity of the commotion that often filled our office at the time. When I was subsequently asked to help translate some of the texts, I found myself immersed in the colorful and fascinating world of the Cyrillo-Methodian mission.

Dr. Vavřínek often discussed research questions with us, approaching facts from a novel perspective and thereby inspiring our own work. When he read my texts, his criticism was always to the point, frank but gentle. Moreover, he was a master storyteller. He could put an audience under a spell and transport them into the ninth-century reality of a historical event from the perspective of a particular character, even offering surmised insights into their thoughts and intentions at a given moment in the story. Visitors came to see him frequently, and then stories from excavations, scholarly discussions, debates over the practicalities of conferences, and memories of shared experiences filled the office, giving Martina and me the added advantage of meeting eminent Czech and international scholars.

Another experience I particularly enjoyed while working in the office was meeting with colleagues from the Paleoslavonic section of our department. At such gatherings Vladimír Vavřínek and another colleague, Václav Konzal, were wont to entertain the “young folks” with their hilarious tales. Even in later years, when I mostly visited Dr. Vavřínek at his home, he retained his extraordinary wealth of knowledge along with his sense of humor, and he was an unfailingly generous and attentive host.

Although his health was deteriorating, my colleagues and I still hoped that we would be enjoying his company for several more years. When I called him on his 94<sup>th</sup> birthday, he mentioned that he was not feeling well. I ended the conversation by promising to call again soon. That was the last time I spoke with him. Sometimes, we meet exceptional people and have only a few years to appreciate their wisdom, kindness and friendship. I was granted twelve years with Vladimír Vavřínek – and I am thankful for each one of them.

My colleagues and I had always hoped to be able to celebrate with Dr. Vavřínek on the occasion of his 95<sup>th</sup> birthday. As we could not do that, we organized an international symposium in his honor,<sup>1</sup> which took place on 3 October 2025 and featured papers by fellow scholars, Marcello Garzaniti, Margaret Mullett, Günter Prinzing and Jonathan Shepard, as well as younger colleagues from the Institute of Slavonic Studies, pupils and continuators of his research themes, Martina Čechová, Pavla Gkantzios Drápelová and Jiří Dynda.

This volume of *Byzantinoslavica* is dedicated to Vladimír Vavřínek presenting his biography, a bibliography and, in the Notices section, the memories that scholars and friends have been sending to *Byzantinoslavica* over the course of the past year.

Eternal be his memory!  
Αἰωνία αὐτοῦ ἡ μνήμη!

Petra Melichar

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1 I would like to thank my colleagues Martina Čechová, Martina Chromá, Markéta Kulhánková, our librarian Dana Pilátová and our secretary Radana Škodová for their active support in organizing the event as well as the Czech Society for Slavonic, Balkan and Byzantine Studies and the Institute of Slavonic Studies of the Czech Academy of Sciences for their generous financial support.