Preface

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Preface

The present issue of Folia Zoologica honours a tribute to mammalogy by Jan Zima at the occasion of the 60th anniversary of his birth. At the beginning of this year, when Miloš Macholán invited me to write a foreword, I realised that a quarter of a century has already passed since I met Jan (Honza to his friends) for the first time. It was in the ancient Karolinum of the Charles University, in the Old Town of Prague, when the invitation by Professor Vladimír Hanák to the 4th European Bat Conference introduced me to a group of young Czech mammalogists. Honza was one of them. We were all about the same age and I was accepted most friendly. Hardly any other single event was more fateful for my career than that visit to Prague in the summer of 1987. As a friend and a researcher, Honza deeply influenced my understanding of science and in many respects profoundly shaped my way of thinking. And I am convinced that I am not the only one among the mammalogists who feel this way.

Looking back over the past quarter of a century, I am astonished by the changes we have witnessed. When I met Honza, the world was globally polarised in the East and the West. Borders were impacted by this fact and travelling through the Iron Curtain was not a simple matter. We lived in a world without the internet, the geographic information system, PCR machines, posterior probability supports, statistical programmes, mobile phones and so forth. Even computers were rare, expensive and difficultly accessible. On the other hand, we were blessed by a world still richer in biodiversity than today. Many sites where we collected with Honza only two decades ago are now depleted and degraded, and the animals, so dear to us, have gone. Indeed, much has changed and we were occasionally unintended witnesses of great historical events.

I still remember like it was yesterday. In a chilly Tuesday morning of 28 November 1989, leaving Brno for the Prague airport, we have shaken hands with Honza in front of the Institute of Vertebrate Zoology (actually called at that time The Institute of Systematic and Ecological Biology). We were not fully aware that we shall never meet again in the communist Czechoslovakia. Back home that same evening I heard that the Czechoslovak Communist Party announced that it would relinquish power and dismantle the single party state. Thus, it happened that I experienced the final turbulent days of the velvet revolution as Honza's guest. Europe was never the same again. A year and half later, in June 1991, Honza and Miloš Macholán (one of the editors of the present volume) accompanied me at a collecting trip to Mt Pelister on the Yugoslav-Greek border. Our target was the common shrew and indeed, that trip yielded material which enabled the description of a new chromosomal race, named after Pelister. We spent careless days and nights in an extensive forest of the endemic pine *molika*, until one of us switched on the radio in the car. It was a late morning of June 27 when we heard that hostilities erupted to Slovenia. It was the first day of armed conflict which brought down Yugoslavia at the end of the decade and whipped off many thousands of human lives. Our main concern was to return home as soon as possible. Next day, we reached Zagreb with not much trouble, but without our car. We split there, Honza and Miloš heading north, and I turned towards the west. But the main story of this foreword starts several decades earlier.

Honza was born on 14 August 1952 in Prague, in the Czech part of what was then still Czechoslovakia. In a way he was predestined for natural sciences. His father had a noteworthy research career in electronics and radio communications, and one of his grandfathers published extensively on hop production, an important topic in the country which is producing some of the world's most famous brands of beer. The other grandfather, who was collecting butterflies and beetles, introduced Honza to natural history sciences and evidently influenced him most profoundly. I assume that Honza had a happy childhood since he is always remembering his family with warm gratitude.

In secondary school which he attended in Prague, Honza joined a naturalist club for youth, where he met Ivan Horáček and Jaroslav Červený. Similarly as Honza, Ivan and Jaroslav (Jarda) later on devoted their lives to science, primarily to mammalogy, and made respectful academic careers. The club regularly organised trips and summer expeditions throughout the former Czechoslovakia and numerous anecdotes originate from that period. After the initial interest in geology and speleology, Honza finally turned, under strong influence of

Ivan, to mammals. At that time he was still playing ice-hockey, although, in his own words, he has never been too enthusiastic about sports. In the 1970/1971 academic year he entered the Faculty of Science at the Charles University where he graduated from biology in 1975. Topic of his diploma thesis (karyology of bats) clearly shows that by then Honza already had firmly decided about his future research career. In 1976, he joined the Institute of Vertebrate Zoology of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences in Brno and continued his research on comparative and evolutionary cytogenetics of mammals. Honza defended his doctoral thesis under the mentorship of Professor Oldřich Štěrba in 1981, and submitted his DSc thesis at the Academy of Sciences in mid-1990s and the habilitation thesis at the Charles University in 1997. He was appointed a Full Professor at the Masaryk University in Brno in 2004.

Honza stayed at the Institute from 1976 to 1993. Between 1993 and 1998 he was appointed head of laboratory at the Institute of Animal Physiology and Genetics of the Academy of Sciences. In 1998 he returned to the Institute of Vertebrate Biology (formerly known as the Institute of Vertebrate Zoology), first as the chairman of the Scientific Board, and in March 2000 he was appointed as the Director. In 2009 he was elected as a Member of Academy Council of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic.

Throughout his career Honza was simultaneously working as a scientist, administrator, and since 1996 also as a lecturer. When I met him in 1987, he was already appointed Scientific Secretary at the Institute of Vertebrate Zoology which posed great pressure on him. He was working hard, coming to the Institute early and working late. In the morning he was administering, sitting behind the microscope in the afternoon and writing papers afterwards. Not much changed since then, except that his responsibilities multiplied, allowing him hardly any time for science. Honza has been a member of scientific councils at seven universities and faculties and at four research institutions in the Czech Republic. He is also active as a chairman or a member of supervisory boards at other four research institutes of the Academy of Sciences. At each of these responsible positions, he has been invariably willing to give support beyond the call of his duties. As an efficient organiser, meticulous administrator and patient interlocutor, Honza has gained the respect of a wide circle of his collaborators.

Between 1978 and 2011 Honza was active in organising 17 international scientific meetings, either as a (co) organiser, member of organising or scientific committees, or convener of thematic sessions. At the faculties of science of the Charles University and the Masaryk University in Brno Honza has been lecturing vertebrate zoology, biological diversity, evolutionary biology, and genetic methods in zoology. He advised 27 students for final MSc or PhD theses at three universities in the Czech Republic, and served as a reviewer or external examiner for PhD theses at various universities abroad: in Switzerland, Sweden, UK, Ukraine, France, Germany, and India. He also co-authored several excellent textbooks, most notably the "Vertebrate zoology" and "Genetic methods in systematic zoology" (both in Czech language).

Considering the plethora of activities, duties and responsibilities, one can hardly understand how Honza ever managed to find time for science. Despite this, his work is well known to anyone with interest in the systematics and evolution of Palaearctic mammals. Honza is an excellent field biologist and he trapped a significant proportion of small mammals which he karyotyped. He attended a number of expeditions to various parts of Europe (besides Czech Republic and Slovakia, also Romania, former Yugoslavia, Poland, and Ukraine), Central Asia (Kirghizstan, Tian Shan and Pamir Mts.), Siberia (a journey from the Ural Mts. to Lake Baikal), and Mongolia. Honza is most probably best known for his cytogenetic research on mammals. A review of the karyotypes of European mammals co-authored with Bohumil Král and published in three issues in 1984, remains a standard work on the topic and is still widely cited. Although Honza actively worked on the karyology of nearly every genus of European mammals, he was perhaps most interested in chromosomal polymorphism in a common shrew, a genetic variation in *Microtus* voles, and the presence of supernumerary chromosomes in *Apodemus* mice. He described for the first time the karyotype in about 20 species of mammals and participated in the descriptions of nine new chromosomal races of the common shrew. The majority of research was implemented through the international cooperation and Honza co-authored papers and books with almost 300 collaborators. Among others, he also took active role in some influential compilations. He co-edited "The Atlas of European mammals" (1999) and co-authored the "Mammals of Europe, North Africa and the Middle East" which was reprinted since 2008 in several languages. It is not an easy task to briefly summarise the essence from 17 monographs and books, 23 book chapters, over a hundred original papers in international journals, and several hundred other publications, but I will take on the challenge. Throughout his research career Honza utilised the best available tools to define objectively the taxonomic and phylogenetic scope of

mammalian diversity. Although employing a wide range of (epi)genetic markers, he always regarded himself a zoologist. He explored molecules and chromosomes as tools to understand the animals, and note the other way round. Only from this point one can appreciate Honza's interest in topics ranging from taxonomic issues, hybrid zones, phylogeographic patterns, red lists of threatened taxa, distributional patterns, faunal compilations, and long-term monitoring of small-mammal populations. As a museum zoologist I deeply respect the care which Honza, while a Director of the Institute of Vertebrate Biology, devoted to the maintenance and expansion of research collections.

The Institute of Vertebrate Zoology was under the directorship of Academician Josef Kratochvíl at one of the leading institutions in mammalogy. In 1978, i. e. only two years after he joined the Institute, Honza joined the organising committee of the 2nd International Theriological Congress. This event brought the leading mammalogists from both sides of the Iron Curtain to Brno. In his own words, he entered the international stage of mammalogy and established contacts which were important in his future career. In 2003, a quarter of a century after the 2nd International Theriological Congress, Honza organised and hosted the 4th European Congress of Mammalogy. He regarded this splendid event as a symbolic handover of Czech mammalogy into the hands of his successors. Working with junior scientists was always high on his list of priorities. Honza offered them opportunities for careers in various aspects of population biology and the phylogeny of animals. This volume of Folia Zoologica consists of papers of his former students or younger colleagues who have collaborated with him at various times.

When the Congress in Brno was concluded, Honza accepted new responsibilities in organising and administering Czech science. But a brief look at his recent papers shows that he cannot do without mammal research. Truly, a genuine zoologist!

Boris KRYŠTUFEK, Ljubljana

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