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In memory of Victor A. Zakharov

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Although this article is primarily intended as a personal remembrance, I would like to begin by briefly recalling Victor A. Zakharov's scientific career and his contribution to the study of the Jurassic and Cretaceous in the Boreal regions.

Prof. Dr. Sci. Victor A. Zakharov (13 November 1936, Kimry, Tver Region, Russia – 29 March 2026, Moscow) devoted his scientific career to the geology and paleontology of the Jurassic and Cretaceous, with particular emphasis on the Boreal regions of northern Russia. He studied geology at the Mining Institute in Leningrad and continued his academic training at Novosibirsk State University, where he received his PhD in Geological and Mineralogical Sciences in 1965 and his DSc in 1979.

For almost four decades, Victor A. Zakharov was associated with the Trofimuk Institute of Petroleum Geology and Geophysics in Novosibirsk, where he progressed from technician to senior research fellow and, from 1982, served as Head of the Laboratory of Mesozoic and Cenozoic Paleontology and Stratigraphy. At the same time, he developed a distinguished academic career at Novosibirsk State University, serving as Professor and Head of the Department of Historical Geology and Paleontology. In 1999, he continued his work at the Geological Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences in Moscow, where he later headed the Department of Stratigraphy.

His research covered Jurassic and Cretaceous geology, boreal biostratigraphy, paleobiogeography and paleoclimatology, with particular attention to the paleontology and paleoecology of bivalves. A characteristic feature of his work was the integration of paleobiological, sedimentological, eustatic and paleogeodynamic evidence in reconstructing the evolution of the Jurassic and Cretaceous continental shelves of northern and eastern Russia.



V.A. Zakharov (right) and Finn Surlyk (left) in 1977. Field trip in the Yatriya River – Jurassic/Cretaceous transition, Northern Ural. Courtesy of M.V. Rogov

Victor A. Zakharov was actively involved in international research, including projects supported by the U.S. National Science Foundation and the Russian Foundation for Basic Research. From 1992 to 1996, he chaired the International Working Group on the Jurassic–Cretaceous Boundary and served as a voting member of the IUGS Subcommissions on Jurassic and Cretaceous Stratigraphy. He was also a member of several international and national scientific societies and councils and served on the editorial boards of *Stratigraphy and Geological Correlation* and *Geology and Geophysics*.

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PERSONAL MEMORIES OF V.A. ZAKHAROV

I first began communicating with Victor Aleksandrovich Zakharov in 2002, initially at the initiative of Dr. Václav Houša, then Director of the Institute of Geology of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic. Our common interest was the identification of the Jurassic–Cretaceous boundary in the Arctic region and the possibility of correlating it with the Tethyan realm using paleomagnetic data. Very soon, our intensive correspondence laid the foundations for a joint expedition to the Nordvik Peninsula on the Laptev Sea. The expedition took place in 2003 and marked the beginning of our collaborative research on the Jurassic–Cretaceous boundary interval, in which Victor's younger colleague M.V. Rogov also played an important role.

The expedition was accompanied by a number of adventures and amusing situations – as well as a few moments of genuine concern, for example when a bear appeared near our camp and we had nothing but a shotgun to defend ourselves with. Fortunately, everything ended well, and the expedition was highly successful. Based on the samples collected during the expedition, a pilot paleomagnetic profile was established and calibrated by biostratigraphic and chemostratigraphic data. The Nordvik profile (Urdyuk-Khaya Cape) continues to be intensively studied and serves as a reference section for the Boreal–Arctic transition at the Jurassic–Cretaceous boundary.

Our professional relationship gradually developed into a genuine friendship, and our families even began visiting each other. Victor and I met not only at international conferences but also during working visits to Moscow and Prague.

Victor A. Zakharov was internationally recognized as a leading specialist in the Boreal buchiid fauna. In his later years, he also devoted considerable attention to Late Cretaceous inoceramids. His expertise opened opportunities for research stays and fellowships abroad, and he often spoke fondly of his time in California and other places he had visited during his scientific career. Among his foreign colleagues, he particularly appreciated the work of Annie Dhondt (1942–2006).



V.A. Zakharov in 2007 at the GSSP of the Sinemurian Stage in Somerset, England. Courtesy of M.V. Rogov

Apart from scientific matters, our families were often the main subject of our conversations. Victor always spoke fondly of his native town of Kimry, to which he occasionally returned. His wife Tamara was a great source of support, as were, of course, his children – his daughter Dasha, who made her home in the USA, and his son Arkady and his family in Moscow. He was also immensely proud of his granddaughter Bella, who was beginning to make her mark at the highest level of football in the USA.

We also had many long discussions about world politics and history. Victor was never afraid to be critical of both the past and the present. He would sometimes return to the invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968, which he consistently condemned, regardless of changing official attitudes. We greatly respected him for this, too.

Victor enjoyed good wine, and if you really wanted to make him happy, there was nothing better to accompany it than French-style cheeses. During one of his visits, we organized a trip to a traditional wine cellar in Moravia, which he remembered fondly and often mentioned afterwards. I also remember vividly the celebration of his 80th birthday in Moscow in 2016, when we surprised him with our unannounced arrival. He celebrated his final, 89th birthday in 2025 only with his immediate family. He still managed to complete his autobiography and the history of his family.

Around 2019, we decided to prepare a joint research project focusing on the Late Cretaceous sedimentary archives of the Taymyr region. It was a subject we had discussed many times, and we were well aware of its potential for improving our understanding of greenhouse climate conditions at high northern latitudes during the Cretaceous. It was a shared dream, and we were truly only one step away from another expedition. Sadly, it was also the last time we met in person.

We were successful in obtaining funding for the project in the spring of 2021. Then came the COVID-19 pandemic, followed soon afterwards by the senseless Russian invasion of Ukraine. Victor and I both realized that we would probably never meet again. When we had to decide whether to terminate the project or continue, it was Victor's personality and his commitment to science that ultimately convinced us to carry on. Much of the credit also belongs to Victor's younger colleagues and successors, particularly Mikhail V. Rogov and Alexey I. Ippolitov, whose dedication extended far beyond the fieldwork itself. The project has already resulted in several publications. The most important papers are still in preparation, but they will gradually appear, with Victor's name remaining among the authors.

Victor A. Zakharov was an exceptional personality not only in the world of science. His character, broad outlook, sense of perspective and extraordinary breadth of knowledge had a profound influence on his younger colleagues and collaborators. For all of this, he deserves our deepest gratitude.

Victor, you will remain in our memories. I still remember your favorite motto, which you often used to say with your characteristic sense of humor: **"It is good to live, but living well is even better"**.

As Editors of the Volumina Jurassica, we fully support the IUGS Statement from March 2022, about freezing any involvement of scientists from Russian institutions in IUGS groups, because of the Russian aggression against Ukraine. However, we have decided to publish the obituary in memory of Prof. V. A. Zakharov, written by Martin Košťák of the Institute of Geology and Palaeontology, Faculty of Science, Charles University in Prague (Czechia). This is a tribute to an outstanding geologist and author of numerous papers on *Buchia* bivalves and the Jurassic–Cretaceous stratigraphy that are still widely cited. One of us (Hubert Wierzbowski) knew personally Viktor Zakharov, remembering him as a great man and leading scientist, who did not support the official political line, believing in democracy. We hope that cooperation with Russian researchers will be possible, once the Russian Federation returns to the path of peace.

H. Wierzbowski, J. Grabowski