

**Prof. Svetlana Medeanic**

19 February 1950 – 8 August 2011



Phot. Nicolai Mirlitan

On 8<sup>th</sup> August 2011 Professor Svetlana Medeanic, Doctor of Geological Sciences, passed away. Professor Medeanic was an outstanding Moldavian and Brazilian scientist in the field of palynology, with a great international reputation. On this sad occasion we lost an excellent scientist, who devoted her whole life to many new and rather difficult applications of palynology. Each new publication of Svetlana Medeanic was a special event in science and aroused keen interest among scientists. More importantly, her publications are constantly on the desks of many palynologists since they are very useful and helpful to their work.

Svetlana Medeanic was born on 19 February, 1950 in Brest, Belarus. She graduated from the Geology Faculty of Moscow University as a palaeontologist and palynologist. Her practical professional activity began at the Geological Survey of the USSR in Komi Republic in the European North of the Russian Federation. The first projects she carried out in the Palynological Laboratory of the Komi ASSR Geological Survey were on the Upper Devonian Palynostratigraphy of the Kolvinskii Megastructure and the Frasnian Palynostratigraphy of the Timan Anticline.

She completed research on Lower Devonian miospores from the Kolvinskii structure and Middle Devonian miospores of the Verkhnevezenskaya oil-gas-bearing structure, before leaving for Moldova in 1980. In 1981 she obtained her PhD from Moscow University with a thesis entitled “Palynological study of Devonian deposits in the Timano-Pechorski region”.

Once she was at the Moldavian Academy of Sciences, Svetlana had to change from palynological studies of the Devonian stage to the study of the much younger, Pliocene-Quaternary geological period. At the Moldavian Academy of Sciences, in the Palaeontology Division, she worked on the topic, “The early Pleistocene Palynology and Palaeoecology of Moldova”. In 1984, she returned to practical work at the geological survey of Moldova as head of the palynological laboratory. Svetlana’s principal scientific interest during that period was the elaboration of a stratigraphic scheme of the Quaternary based on palynological study. In 1988, she returned to the Academy of Science as the senior scientist in the Botanical Institute and, until 1991, she was involved in projects related to the palynology of the Moldavian Miocene and Pliocene. She also started the first palynological investigations into local archaeological studies of the Stone Age. In 1991, Svetlana left the Botanical Institute for the Geographical Institute of the Moldavian Academy of Sciences. There she worked on a detailed stratigraphical scheme for the Holocene in Moldova, based on palaeogeographical methods. The principal topic of her studies for the next seven years became the palaeoecology and palaeoenvironmental development of Moldova during the Atlantic Period. She also developed research on the vegetation and palaeoenvironment of Stone Age human populations during the Last Glacial period (Würmian) in Moldova, based on the study of cave sediments and archaeological excavations. Unfortunately, the dissolution of the USSR was followed by the decline and demoralization of mainstream science in newly

independent Moldova. Severe economic problems and the unstable socio-political situation forced Svetlana and her family to consider emigration. Thus, in the late 1990s, she and her husband moved to Brazil.

In Brazil, Svetlana began the most dramatic, but also the most productive, period of her life. In 1999 Svetlana became a visiting researcher in the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul in Porto Alegre. The principal topic of her studies in Brazil was the use of palynology for palaeoenvironmental and palaeoclimatic reconstruction on the coastal plain of southern Brazil. She also taught courses in Quaternary palaeogeography and Quaternary palynology. In this new country and climate, Svetlana soon became familiar with local flora, creating a pollen atlas for the coastal zone and also filling the gaps in Brazilian palynology. She devoted much time and effort to the investigation of dune sediments. Besides pollen and spores in dunes, many types of non pollen palynomorphs were studied. First of all, these were phytoliths that had not previously been used when studying quaternary sediments of coastal part of Brazil. Besides phytoliths, Svetlana Medeanic studied cysts of dinoflagellates and acritarchs, coenobias and colonies of Chlorophyta, euryhaline and mixohaline diatoms, zygospores and fungal palynomorphs. Microforamenifera were particularly interesting objects of investigation on the Brazil coast. These palynomorphs may serve as indicators of sediment deposition in marine environments or in environments subject to marine influence. An extremely important conclusion of the investigations of coastal areas is that the palynomorph assemblage is allochthonous in origin and can be distinguished by taxonomic diversity and the frequency of taxa, which are connected with ecological characteristic of the lagoon, terrestrial and aquatic vegetation adjacent to lagoon areas, ocean influence, and proximity to the drainage basin. The algal palynomorphs are more abundant in the pre-limnic part of lagoon, but greater diversity is encountered in the limnic part.

Prof. Medeanic passed on her experience and knowledge to numerous younger colleagues. She supervised graduate students and both Master's and Doctoral courses. In 2009, Svetlana became a permanent professor at the Federal University of Rio Grande in the Oceanography Institute. With characteristic enthusiasm, she started several new projects and teaching courses for students of oceanography, archaeology, and environmental engineering. Prof. Medeanic planned to begin many further projects including involvement in the Pollen Monitoring Programme and the introduction of new methods of palynology to the archaeology of Brazil. Unfortunately she could not realize her plans, as she contracted a terrible illness. She struggled for life until the end, but her illness never abated.

Prof. Medeanic was a Member of the Quaternary Association of the USSR, Member of the Quaternary Association of Moldova, Member of the Ukrainian Palaeontological Association, and Member of the Brazilian Association of Quaternary Studies over the years. She published 59 scientific articles, 5 books and 29 chapters in various books. She was also very active in promoting the Russian language and literature in Brazil, publishing the first Russian-Portuguese-Russian dictionary in Brazil, and translating the great novels of Alexei Tolstoy and Ivan Bunin into Portuguese.

Svetlana always lived an interesting and exceptionally creative life, although it was often difficult. She was a very sincere and friendly person, who leaves behind many grateful colleagues and students.

We, her colleagues and friends, will be always grateful to Svetlana Medeanic, not only for her tremendous scientific activity and excellent publications, but also for the help and attention she always gave to us, as well as for her boundless love for palynology and her colleagues.

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