Foreword

The Fourth Symposium of the Romanian Society of Paleontologists was held in Cluj-Napoca, at Babeş-Bolyai University, between 5-7 September 2003. The Romanian Society of Paleontologists, Cluj-Napoca branch and the Department of Geology-Paleontology of Babeş-Bolyai UniversityCluj-Napoca, organized it.

If we envisage the wide list of participants –122 paleontologists-, as well as the large number of countries represented by them, one can conclude that this symposium was the hard evidence that the first Society symposium held in Bucharest in 1997, continued by the ones from Cluj-Napoca (1999) and Jassy (2001), was nothing else but the beginning of a fortunate tradition for the Paleontology in our country. We hope and we wish that this tradition will continues long time in the future, for many, many years!

However, Paleontology isn't for instance the sciences' spoiled child, neither in Europe, nor in our country. It would be unrealistic to ignore that Paleontology lost a lot of terrain if compared with other fields. Obviously, each year it's more and more difficult to access financial supports for the researches carried on in Paleontology. The scientific community seems to be preoccupied mainly by other trends. Why? Maybe because Paleontology is a bit too difficult: for some people to learn it (please, ask geologist commoners!), for others to understand its aims. Finally, it seems that it isn't easy at all to be paleontologist… In spite of this reality, Paleontology survives due of two categories of people: professionals – unfortunately less and less numerous-, and enthusiastic amateurs, collecting every year new gorgeous fossils in the field.

In such a professional climate, we can observe however, some remarkable results obtained by the Socitey in the last years. One can note the last scientific reunions, like the symposium dedicated in 2002 to Professor Petrescu's 60 anniversary. Each of them revealed that in the field of Paleontology in our country, there are notable results.

As we already mentioned, people coming to this symposium are not from Romania only, but from very diverse countries. We thank to all foreign colleagues who came, because we clearly realize the efforts they did to join this scientific meeting. Their presence here reveals also another reality: in the last years, a lot of collaborations started between teams of Romanian paleontologists and colleagues from elsewhere. Now, the results of such kind of work begin to be apparent: each of us had the opportunity to enrich his own experience. We are extremely pleased to observe that these co-operations are running well, because we still keep fresh in our minds the years when such contacts were nearly impossible to develop, due to the stupidity of the former Romanian regime… We are convinced that this trend will continue, because our territory still hides a lot of paleontologic treasures: some of them could represent the missing bricks in the large European knowledge wall.

For us, this symposium represents also a personal valuable experience. We want to address our warmest thanks to all colleagues involved in the symposium organization and preparation of the proceedings volume. it is obvious that the symposium success belongs to them!

We are extremely grateful also to our sponsors' generosity: without their financial support, the volume never issued…

Finally, this volume represents the work carried on by the editorial board during nearly half a year. Why the preparation time was so long? The answer is not too difficult: it is simply because we tried to do a harshly selection of contributions. In this train of thoughts, we are thankful to all autochthonous or foreign reviewers. Due to their critical observations and discussions, the volume content was considerably ameliorated. However, some of colleagues had obvious difficulties in keeping the publication rules: to them, we are not thankful at all, because they delayed a lot the issue!

Finally, we wish a lot of success to the following Society symposiums and hope that many others will follow this volume.

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