

= Vladimír Remek =

Vladimír Remek ( born 26 September 1948 ) is a Czech politician and diplomat as well as a former cosmonaut and military pilot . He flew aboard Soyuz 28 from 2 to 10 March 1978 , becoming the first Czechoslovak in space and the only Czech in space . As the first cosmonaut from a country other than the Soviet Union or the United States , and with the entry of the Czech Republic into the European Union , Remek is considered to be the first astronaut from the European Union . Remek was a member of the European Parliament between 2004 and 2013 and , since 2014 , has been the Czech Ambassador to Russia .

= = Early life and military career = =

Remek was born on 26 September 1948 in the city of České Budějovice . He spent two years studying at the observatory in Kraví hora , Brno between 1962 and 1964 . Remek was influenced by his father , Jozef Remek , himself a military pilot . Remek was an active member both in the Pioneers and the Czechoslovak Union of Youth . He studied mathematics and physics at middle school in Páslav where he earned awards in track running the 400 @-@ meter , 800 @-@ meter , and 1 @,@ 500 @-@ meter events . Remek graduated in 1966 and proceeded to Vyšší Letecké Učiliště , an aviation school in Košice , where he trained in an Aero L @-@ 29 Delfín . Remek graduated in 1970 and was commissioned as a lieutenant in the Czechoslovak Air Force . Remek served as a fighter pilot , flying MiG @-@ 21s in the 1st Fighter Air Regiment . In the 1970s Remek married his first wife , Czech actress Hana Davidová , the daughter of politician Václav David . They had a daughter together , Anna , in 1980 . He had a second daughter , Jana , three years after the first , with his second wife , also called Jana . From 1972 to 1976 , Remek studied at the Gagarin Air Force Academy . Upon his return to Czechoslovakia in 1976 , he was promoted to captain and appointed deputy commander of his fighter regiment , after which Remek went back to Russia to train for the Soviet @-@ led space program . Following his return from space in March 1978 , Remek spent time in the Czechoslovak People 's Army ( ČSLA ) staff as the deputy director of the Flight Research Institute in Prague . In 1986 , Remek became the deputy commander of a flight division based in Páslav . In 1988 he graduated from Voroshilov @-@ Staff Academy of Soviet Air Force and was appointed to his highest command , as deputy of the 2nd Air Defense Division stationed in Moravia . Following the Velvet Revolution in 1989 , Remek was relegated to a role as Director of the Museum for Aviation and Astronautics in Prague . Following his retirement from the air force in 1995 , Remek represented Czech firm CZ Strakonice and joint venture CZ ? Turbo @-@ GAZ in Moscow .

= = Intercosmos program = =

Remek ( then a Captain ) joined the Intercosmos program in 1976 ; his backup was Oldřich Peláček , the other Czechoslovak cosmonaut selected to participate with the program . During the flight , Remek experimented with the Kristall furnace on board the capsule . The mission , coinciding with the 30th anniversary of the Soviet @-@ backed 1948 Czechoslovak coup d 'état , and including Remek , the son of a Czech mother and Slovak father , had propaganda value in stressing Czechoslovak @-@ Soviet cooperation . Remek himself has not denied this although he retains pride in his voyage regardless of the circumstances . He became the first cosmonaut from a country other than the Soviet Union or the United States , and with the entry of the Czech Republic into the European Union , Remek is considered to be the first astronaut from the European Union . After Remek 's March 1978 flight , he was celebrated in his home country with a series of receptions at factories and other civil workplaces . He was also recognized at a ceremony at Prague Castle as a guest of Gustáv Husák , then the General Secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia . On 16 March , Remek and Aleksei Gubarev , the other member of the crew , were awarded the medal Hero of the Soviet Union . Czechoslovak reaction to Remek 's flight included comments about the media 's inundation focused on Remek and the fact that he was only able to journey with a Soviet

cosmonaut as if Remek needed a minder . One joke went : " Why didn 't the Soviets send up two Czechoslovak cosmonauts ? Because they would 've landed in West Germany . " Remek himself joked that his Soviet counterpart would slap Remek 's hands off of controls if he touched anything without permission . French astronaut Jean @-@ Loup Chrétien experienced this same behavior onboard Soyuz TM @-@ 7 in 1988 .

= = Political career = =

Due in part to his previous business contacts in Russia , Remek was appointed to the Czech Embassy in Moscow as a Trade and Economic Counselor . During the 2004 European Parliament election , Remek was a candidate for the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia and , being second on the list behind Miloslav Ransdorf , was elected into the European Parliament . During his first term ( 20 July 2004 to 13 July 2009 ) , Remek was a member of the Confederal Group of the European United Left ? Nordic Green Left in the European Parliament . He was a vocal proponent of the EU 's Galileo satellite constellation warning that bureaucratic delay could cede opportunity to the BeiDou , a Chinese competitor . He was reelected in 2009 . When Petr Kolář resigned as the Czech Ambassador to Russia in December 2012 , the ambassadorship sat empty for a year until the President of the Czech Republic , Miloš Zeman , appointed Remek in January 2014 . The appointment met with controversy as it was against the wishes of Zeman 's Foreign Minister , Karel Schwarzenberg . Observers have noted Remek has a friendly history with the Russians and although his communist affiliations are a minority in Russia , his appointment represents Zeman 's pragmatic and pro @-@ Russia stance .

= = In popular culture = =

Czech astronomer Antonín Mrkos discovered an asteroid in September 1978 and named it 2552 Remek after the cosmonaut . Remek is featured in a 2009 independent comedy film called Osadné about three residents from Osadné that seek out Remek at his office in Brussels to help tourism in their town . Sculptor Jan Bartoš created a statue of Remek and Gubarev , which is located at Háje metro station in Prague . Another statue of Remek is located in Košice , Slovakia .