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Dream of a Journey to Mars

- [00:00:03](#) 20 years ago he was told he had a few months to live.
- [00:00:07](#) Today you would hardly believe he is 80.
- [00:00:12](#) His energy, vitality and vigour
- [00:00:15](#) could make him the envy of those generations younger.
- [00:00:18](#) He has done all sorts of things in his life
- [00:00:21](#) from flying to experimenting
- [00:00:24](#) with human behaviour in crisis situations,
- [00:00:26](#) which won him credit, but also unwanted attention from the secret police.
- [00:00:30](#) Since childhood, he has had a big dream
- [00:00:33](#) which has not come true yet, but he is still anxious for it,
- [00:00:36](#) though he knows he will perhaps never achieve it: to go to space.
- [00:00:40](#) The story of Jaroslav Sýkora has been recorded by Ivan Bareš.
- [00:01:04](#) I'm entering a room
- [00:01:07](#) where the entrance check-up took place
- [00:01:11](#) and where absolutely all items were taken away from the participants,
- [00:01:16](#) all their things.
- [00:01:20](#) Here was the sanitary section.
- [00:01:23](#) Sanitary sections were really well furnished then,
- [00:01:27](#) though not as economically as in spaceships.
- [00:01:30](#) This room served for living,
- [00:01:34](#) here the hidden group slept
- [00:01:41](#) and stayed throughout the experiment.
- [00:01:44](#) In 1988 the sociologist Jaroslav Sýkora decided
- [00:01:47](#) to lock a group of students in isolated underground rooms
- [00:01:51](#) and simulate a flight to Mars.

- [00:01:53](#) The experiment aimed at mapping and evaluating
- [00:01:56](#) people's behaviour in extreme situations.
- [00:01:59](#) We are in a new underground laboratory of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences.
- [00:02:02](#) It was built in a disused mine tunnel near the city of Brno.
- [00:02:06](#) The place will serve for basic research into extreme psychological load,
- [00:02:09](#) for stress research under the Interkosmos programme.
- [00:02:13](#) I modelled it on the Apollo programme.
- [00:02:19](#) I wanted to try it in the Czech small-scale format.
- [00:02:26](#) Through the Tunnel to Mars project,
- [00:02:29](#) Jaroslav Sýkora got closer to his boyhood dream:
- [00:02:32](#) to fly higher and higher, and finally conquer the space.
- [00:02:38](#) I sometimes think it was destiny that threw me into this world.
- [00:02:43](#) I was born in the military hospital of the 1st Infantry Division in 1934,
- [00:02:49](#) when my father happened to be in a field exercise,
- [00:02:53](#) and besides I suddenly found myself on a carousel
- [00:02:58](#) which included an airplane,
- [00:03:02](#) and it was me, a little boy, sitting in the plane.
- [00:03:08](#) Jaroslav Sýkora started work on his dream
- [00:03:10](#) to fly high right after WWII.
- [00:03:13](#) He decided to become a pilot.
- [00:03:16](#) My future husband, at first a secondary school friend,
- [00:03:21](#) only talked flying.
- [00:03:25](#) And this dream came true.
- [00:03:31](#) This was the first glider I began flying in 1949.
- [00:03:35](#) This is actually how my flying career started.
- [00:03:43](#) When I entered the flight training school,
- [00:03:46](#) the first motor plane was Bücker 181.
- [00:03:53](#) It would climb to some 3,000 m and could not get any higher.

- [00:04:00](#) With this plane I jumped another step higher,
- [00:04:05](#) that is, we got to 5,000 or 6,000 m.
- [00:04:10](#) And when the era of war booties ended in 1955,
- [00:04:14](#) I started flying MiG-15,
- [00:04:17](#) mainstay of the Czechoslovak air force.
- [00:04:23](#) It would reach up to 15,000 m,
- [00:04:26](#) so I again jumped a bit closer to the space.
- [00:04:34](#) Jaroslav Sýkora was also interested in human relationships,
- [00:04:38](#) and managed to get a postgraduate degree in sociology.
- [00:04:41](#) Well, sometimes I would break the rules,
- [00:04:45](#) I remember, for instance, tuning the radio compass to a station
- [00:04:49](#) where Mozart was just on,
- [00:04:51](#) and I could move the machine in line with the music,
- [00:04:58](#) which took me, for instance, into the clouds,
- [00:05:01](#) and only the cockpit and my head could be seen outside the cloud.
- [00:05:05](#) Then I would be at the heights of happiness.
- [00:05:11](#) I would look up, and see
- [00:05:13](#) that it was dark, black up there.
- [00:05:17](#) Of course, I always strived
- [00:05:20](#) to look up and get up there.
- [00:05:23](#) Sýkora's dreams to conquer the space
- [00:05:26](#) as a military pilot perished in the same year
- [00:05:29](#) as the first people stepped on the Moon.
- [00:05:32](#) Unfortunately, my dream career finished subsequently in 1969,
- [00:05:41](#) when I was dismissed from the army
- [00:05:45](#) under Article 39 (c), for political unreliability.
- [00:05:48](#) Before 1969 I became unreliable because
- [00:05:52](#) I held different opinions of the ways
- [00:05:56](#) our society, also the government,
- [00:05:57](#) and of course our army was steered.
- [00:06:04](#) And since I often expressed my opinions aloud,
- [00:06:08](#) these were broadly recorded,
- [00:06:12](#) and then it all added up, in a really 'perfect way'.
- [00:06:19](#) After being dismissed,

- [00:06:22](#) Jaroslav Sýkora made his living as a lorry driver.
- [00:06:25](#) But besides he continued to lead a paddle sports club,
- [00:06:28](#) for which he had a unique white water course in Brandýs nad Labem built.
- [00:06:32](#) Brandýs nad Labem this morning.
- [00:06:35](#) Military music band, festive atmosphere.
- [00:06:40](#) Julius Chvalný, deputy head of the Czechoslovak Union of Physical Education,
- [00:06:43](#) is cutting the white ribbon
- [00:06:45](#) to press the button and let water into the new artificial course,
- [00:06:48](#) which was so needed for our water slalomists.
- [00:06:51](#) Their history of success deserves such a facility.
- [00:06:54](#) Here we started research into sportsmen's load and endurance,
- [00:06:59](#) and we in fact launched
- [00:07:04](#) the basis of the more recent research into endurance, stress and load.
- [00:07:08](#) As a military pilot Jaroslav Sýkora knew very well
- [00:07:12](#) how much stress and mental load the pilots undergo.
- [00:07:15](#) This made him even more fascinated by the idea to discover
- [00:07:18](#) how people would behave in the space.
- [00:07:21](#) In 1976 I was asked by Dr Drahota,
- [00:07:25](#) head of the Institute of Physiology in Prague to take part in their assignments.
- [00:07:32](#) In 1985 we opened the first experiment.
- [00:07:36](#) I think it was a week-long experiment
- [00:07:39](#) with isolating a group of five,
- [00:07:43](#) and then we already started to prepare another experiment.
- [00:07:54](#) When I was invited here and I saw the place,
- [00:07:57](#) I said: Goodness! This is a spaceship,
- [00:08:01](#) a facility to isolate people
- [00:08:04](#) who should really fly one day,
- [00:08:07](#) this is a spaceship!
- [00:08:10](#) Please, give it to me, I will furnish it my way.
- [00:08:13](#) Jaroslav Sýkora was really given a free hand

- [00:08:16](#) by the Institute of Physiology, Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences,
- [00:08:18](#) and started preparing an experiment of his dreams.
- [00:08:21](#) He set goals that no one had met before.
- [00:08:25](#) Finally, I was most interested
- [00:08:27](#) in Apollo 11 and the landing on the Moon.
- [00:08:30](#) So I even tried to adopt the terminology
- [00:08:34](#) the crew and the control centre was using then,
- [00:08:40](#) and this brought me to an idea
- [00:08:43](#) of simulating the flight of Apollo 11 transferred to Mars.
- [00:08:50](#) The artificial induction of stress is helped by the not very usual way
- [00:08:54](#) of communication between the scientists and those in the tunnel.
- [00:08:58](#) The instructions from the centre are only in writing. The responses too.
- [00:09:01](#) It is not possible to see each other, talk, or call.
- [00:09:05](#) Any information going in and out passes through this chamber.
- [00:09:08](#) The inner armoured door can only be opened by order of the control centre.
- [00:09:18](#) I think no one had done it before
- [00:09:24](#) to this extent, with this intention and in this complexity.
- [00:09:31](#) We designed the experiment
- [00:09:34](#) so that there was a group in one part
- [00:09:39](#) to pilot a spaceship which would not fly anywhere,
- [00:09:42](#) and a group in the other part to look after animals.
- [00:09:46](#) Both groups were subjected to detailed examination
- [00:09:50](#) throughout the experiment.
- [00:09:56](#) There were desks with computers here,
- [00:10:00](#) where the tasks were completed,
- [00:10:07](#) such as elimination of extraordinary events.
- [00:10:12](#) Who was making the crisis events up?
- [00:10:15](#) Well, I did:
- [00:10:17](#) being a pilot I had to make them up.
- [00:10:20](#) And what did you make up?
- [00:10:23](#) For instance, though I perhaps should not say that,

- [00:10:26](#) it was work under oxygen deprivation, which was allowed then, that is,
- [00:10:31](#) under changed atmospheric conditions,
- [00:10:35](#) to find out how such a situation must be dealt with
- [00:10:40](#) so that people are fully capable of work again.
- [00:10:43](#) This was one thing.
- [00:10:46](#) Then there was simulated fire, electricity blackout,
- [00:10:50](#) and failure of the appliances they were supposed to operate.
- [00:10:57](#) When the first Czechs Remek and Pelčák were chosen for space flights,
- [00:11:03](#) he was very envious of them
- [00:11:06](#) and hoped for another chance
- [00:11:13](#) to go there, so there was this desire to fly up,
- [00:11:19](#) and he wanted to take part in the challenge related to Mars.
- [00:11:28](#) If not actively, then passively at least.
- [00:11:35](#) He would always turn the conversation to spaceflights.
- [00:11:38](#) And he told me several times
- [00:11:41](#) that his childhood dream was to become an astronaut.
- [00:11:49](#) He was the spirit of the whole experiment,
- [00:11:52](#) so his role was absolutely irreplaceable,
- [00:11:54](#) and not only from the professional point of view,
- [00:11:57](#) but I saw him also as a source or fireworks of enthusiasm,
- [00:12:01](#) so even when somebody was tired they would immediately forget about that.
- [00:12:06](#) The Tunnel to Mars experiment
- [00:12:08](#) was undertaken together with the Soviet specialists.
- [00:12:10](#) Tunnel 88 was a scientific project.
- [00:12:15](#) It had no military or practical assignments.
- [00:12:19](#) It was a study into the behaviour of groups
- [00:12:23](#) of people performing various activities under conditions of separation.
- [00:12:29](#) But its originality still made it a target of interest

- [00:12:32](#) for the political secret police.
- [00:12:35](#) Naturally, they chiefly focused on the project author,
- [00:12:38](#) Jaroslav Sýkora, the dismissed pilot.
- [00:12:41](#) A potential major problem was
- [00:12:47](#) that even the secret police failed to have a clear idea of him,
- [00:12:51](#) because it was typical of him
- [00:12:54](#) that once, somewhere in a reception, and this was later on, I think,
- [00:12:57](#) he put his one arm round a Soviet general's shoulder,
- [00:13:02](#) and his other arm round an American general's shoulder.
- [00:13:05](#) And everybody was watching it in astonishment.
- [00:13:12](#) So they couldn't figure out whether he was a spy for one side
- [00:13:15](#) or the other, or both.
- [00:13:20](#) My first distinction for doing the experiment
- [00:13:23](#) was being found guilty under Articles 100, 105 and 107,
- [00:13:26](#) subversion of the republic, espionage, and so on,
- [00:13:29](#) because I handed in properly
- [00:13:31](#) the videos with the experiment outcomes
- [00:13:35](#) in 4 languages
- [00:13:40](#) to be ready for distribution at embassies,
- [00:13:44](#) so that Czechoslovakia could prove to be really doing something in space research.
- [00:13:47](#) The videocassettes with the experiment records
- [00:13:50](#) got through one of the embassies to Max Planck Institute.
- [00:13:53](#) It was based in West Germany,
- [00:13:57](#) which was a sufficient reason for restrictions by the secret police.
- [00:14:00](#) But Jaroslav Sýkora had made good contacts round the world
- [00:14:06](#) through the successful experiment.
- [00:14:09](#) When after the Tunnel I was once with Sýkora in Moscow,
- [00:14:13](#) Dr Sýkora met the head of the Moscow institute,
- [00:14:18](#) who called a general, who called another one,
- [00:14:23](#) so a direction was sent to Prague
- [00:14:28](#) to leave Sýkora alone for some more time.
- [00:14:31](#) We are searching the archives to find out

- [00:14:33](#) why the secret political police was so interested in Jaroslav Sýkora.
- [00:14:37](#) The file says the reason for watching him
- [00:14:40](#) was a suspicion of contacts with the right and with foreign citizens.
- [00:14:43](#) It follows from the file that he met a few times
- [00:14:46](#) his co-worker Jiřina Šiklová, who had signed the Charter 77 initiative,
- [00:14:49](#) which was a political crime then, and that he met foreign citizens
- [00:14:53](#) who had somehow taken part in the experiment.
- [00:14:56](#) At that time 12 people in 4 cars were watching him.
- [00:15:02](#) Later on I asked the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes
- [00:15:05](#) to show me my file.
- [00:15:08](#) It was only then that I became scared,
- [00:15:11](#) because I found I was a spy in fact,
- [00:15:14](#) a person disclosing state secrets,
- [00:15:18](#) and a right wing exponent.
- [00:15:22](#) The nasty thing was that many people making such statements
- [00:15:26](#) were not only strangers but also people I worked with.
- [00:15:31](#) The 1989 fall of communism freed Jaroslav Sýkora of all accusations
- [00:15:35](#) and he could go on to follow his space dream.
- [00:15:38](#) The Tunnel to Mars experiment was duly appreciated at last.
- [00:15:41](#) But not in the country of its origin.
- [00:15:44](#) Immediately invitations to Paris followed,
- [00:15:47](#) one, two, three, and then it moved off.
- [00:15:50](#) And the experiment was very well received in Paris.
- [00:15:57](#) I think his problem was that he was too much ahead of time.
- [00:16:02](#) We are trying to find a sort of common denominator,
- [00:16:05](#) an answer to the issue of aggregate loads
- [00:16:09](#) in terms of their identification and intervention, of course.
- [00:16:20](#) His project was a success
- [00:16:23](#) in all the conferences.

- [00:16:26](#) The problem was that he was not equally successful at home,
- [00:16:29](#) because the situation at the institute was getting worse.
- [00:16:33](#) Dr Sýkora's department
- [00:16:36](#) was becoming a sort of metastasis to them
- [00:16:41](#) as it had a bigger publicity, which annoys most people.
- [00:16:48](#) It was not forged, it was not useless,
- [00:16:51](#) and as far as I heard,
- [00:16:54](#) the papers they had in international conferences
- [00:16:59](#) made a very positive impact.
- [00:17:07](#) The Tunnel to Mars experiment sparked off
- [00:17:10](#) a series of follow-ups to the findings
- [00:17:13](#) of Jaroslav Sýkora and his team.
- [00:17:16](#) A crucial one is the international Mars 500 project,
- [00:17:20](#) finished in 2014, where Jaroslav Sýkora also took part.
- [00:17:23](#) Because he always wanted to fly to Mars.
- [00:17:27](#) So we decided in the institute
- [00:17:29](#) on this really unique experiment, because such an experiment
- [00:17:33](#) had never been and is not done anywhere else.
- [00:17:37](#) It is 526 days and 6 people in strict isolation.
- [00:17:43](#) So when he and his co-workers took part
- [00:17:47](#) in the experiment with his methods, it resulted
- [00:17:52](#) in many useful data on how the people in isolation behaved.
- [00:18:00](#) He will hardly get into a rocket
- [00:18:03](#) and get to Mars or the Moon.
- [00:18:05](#) I think it is well-known
- [00:18:08](#) that he works very hard on the Mars 500 project
- [00:18:11](#) because it is his huge dream,
- [00:18:13](#) and I think he will live with it till the end of his days.
- [00:18:16](#) Today Jaroslav Sýkora is 80 years old.
- [00:18:19](#) 20 years ago he was diagnosed with cancer,
- [00:18:22](#) and predicted to have 3 months to live.

- [00:18:27](#) He always sang
the ‘We are the steel birds’ song,
- [00:18:30](#) it went somehow like that in the past,
- [00:18:33](#) and he said he was simply made of iron,
so nothing could beat him out.
- [00:18:40](#) And then another year came and another,
and now it has been 20 years
- [00:18:42](#) and I am still trying
- [00:18:45](#) to get into the space
with my eyes at least,
- [00:18:47](#) when it is not possible any other way.
- [00:18:58](#) If he had an opportunity
to fly to the space, he would.
- [00:19:05](#) I am even afraid,
and he has claimed this a few times,
- [00:19:08](#) that he would not mind staying there,
- [00:19:11](#) it was this crazy idea
with the one-way flight to Mars.
- [00:19:14](#) I think he would go in for that.
- [00:19:19](#) -We are on Mars.
-Well, and I am happy.
- [00:19:34](#) We have just landed on Mars.
- [00:19:37](#) And why have we chosen Mars?
We have chosen Mars,
- [00:19:46](#) because it is our best peer planet
- [00:19:49](#) and is invaluable for us,
- [00:19:52](#) and its immense value is
- [00:19:55](#) that we people, or we the mankind
- [00:19:58](#) are destroying our planet so fast,
- [00:20:02](#) that sooner or later,
- [00:20:06](#) maybe after centuries but definitely,
- [00:20:11](#) the Earth will be exhausted one day,
exploited to the marrow.
- [00:20:18](#) Then it will be
necessary to look for a new homeland
- [00:20:22](#) for the mankind.
- [00:20:28](#) It is estimated
that the man could get close to Mars
- [00:20:31](#) or land on Mars not sooner
than 2030, let’s say in 2035.
- [00:20:36](#) This year should see
the launch of a new experiment
- [00:20:39](#) monitoring the behaviour
of a spaceship crew.
- [00:20:43](#) This follow-up to the tests
started by Jaroslav Šýkora in the 1980s
- [00:20:47](#) should be held right in low Earth orbit.
- [00:20:51](#) The visionary and dreamer
Jaroslav Šýkora will be at it again.

- [00:20:55](#) This man has always longed to fly to the stars.
- [00:21:01](#) What only matters is
- [00:21:04](#) that something good has been done and appreciated by the world.
- [00:21:08](#) I think this is the greatest satisfaction,
- [00:21:11](#) although I was really looked down upon here at that time.