

**LARGE MERIDIAN CIRCLE OF THE BELGRADE OBSERVATORY:
FOUR DECADES OF ACTIVITY AND EXISTENCE**

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Abstract. The authors find that the three important Jubilees, 120 years since the foundation of the Observatory, 150 years from the birth of its founder and first Director Milan Nedeljković (1857-1950) and 75 years of the presence and work at the present location appear as a special occasion to present some less known, or till this moment completely unknown, facts concerning one of the three important instruments for fundamental astrometry, Large Meridian Circle, which marked crucial moments during the four decades of its use. In the paper in extenso, which will be published elsewhere, the authors give some photographs of this instrument belonging to a private photodocumentation for the first time, as well as a complete bibliography of papers concerning all the phases of its existence.

It should be emphasized that Nedeljković's merits all astronomical instruments were obtained from Germany as a war reparation (according to reparation agreement 37/AC/100-18899 with company Askania Bamberg Werke since July 14, 1922) among which are three fundamental instruments: Large Meridian Circle (LMC), Large Transit Instrument (LTI) and Large Vertical Circle (LVC). The fact that all the three fundamental instruments are at the same location is of a special importance for astrometric research. Because of deficiency of the financial means, as well as of the cadres, they were mounted after 35 years of storing them in cases.

From 1968 till 1994 several differential catalogues were made with LMC. Some of these catalogues were part of international programmes of special importance aimed at, above all, improving the accuracy of the fundamental catalogues. Besides, from 1974 till 1994, in the framework of a programme of international importance the daily observations of Solar System Bodies - Sun, Mercury, Venus and from 1981 Mars - were performed, also. After 1995 all observations with the Belgrade fundamental instruments were practically suspended, due to the fact that visual and non-automatic observations were not of special interest and it was necessary to make a modernization. In January, 1999 the Ministry of Science approved the necessary means on the basis of compensation contracts and agreements with the Nikolaev Observatory which should have performed the modernization.

Unfortunately, on May 10, 1999 the pavilion and the instrument were completely burnt due to the human carelessness. (The first author notes that the interpretation of the event given in Trajkovska V. and Dimitrijević M. S.: 2000, *Serb. Astron. J.* **162**, 135-150 was incorrect and it had not been accepted before printing). Finally, all the plans for modernization of Belgrade Meridian Circle have gone up in flames!

Acknowledgements

This research has been supported by the Serbian Ministry of Science (Project No 146022 "*History and Epistemology of the Natural Sciences*").