

FROM THE NOTES ON ACADEMICIAN

VOJISLAV V. MIŠKOVIĆ *

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Abstract. In this part of **The Notes on Vojislav V. Mišković** the subject is some details concerning his first professional experiences acquired at observatories in Nice and Marseille and his successful work which motivated his being elected Professor and invited to assume practical-astronomy teaching at the Faculty of Philosophy at the Belgrade University.

The election of Vojislav V. Mišković, a young man with PhD in astronomy, of January 22, 1925 as practical-astronomy Professor at the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade terminates an exciting and troublesome period in his life, but at the same time filled with a creative enthusiasm and also patriotism.

Looking for education in astronomy V. Mišković, after finishing the grammar school with excellent success came to Budapest, as a Tekelianum fellow, to start his university studies in 1910. After a year spent there he leaves Budapest, since there, at that time, no astronomy department was still founded, to come to Goettingen where during three semesters he attended the lessons of mathematics (professors F. Klein, D. Hilbert and E. Landau) and of astronomy (professors J. Hartmann and L. Ambron) at the Goettingen Observatory. The fourth semester he finished in Vienna in 1913. Since in the meantime an astronomy department was founded also at Budapest he continued his studies there.

Due to his activity in *Kolo mladih Srba*, a patriotic association of young Serbs (vice-president) he was arrested in 1914 by the Hungarian police to be strictly controlled afterwards. On the very eve of the First World War he managed to come secretly to Serbia. He spent all the four years of the war in the Serbian army to go to France from Salonica in late 1918 after he had been released of military duties. There he finished his astronomical studies. In summer 1919 he obtained the bachelor degree at the Marseille University. Only a month afterwards he becomes assistant at the Marseille Astronomical Observatory, where after six months of the training period he was committed the Minor Planets and Comets Service. He was parallelly engaged in the Time and Meteorological Services, as well as in astronomical calculations. As a member of the Editorial Board for the *Journal des Observateurs* he performed all editorial works entrusted to him by Prof. Henry Bourget, at that time Director of The Marseille Observatory.

* *Dedicated to the twentieth year anniversary of after his death.*

Fond of astronomy already since his boyhood days he finds pleasure in an assiduous observational work at the Observatory. Diligent and punctual, responsible and disciplined, he acquired exceptional sympathies of all the members of the Marseille-Observatory's staff.

After Prof. Bourget's death he went (February 1, 1922) to the Nice Observatory where he continued his work in the Meridian-Time Service. About this period of his life, between 1922 and 1925, Mišković says:

"... I was immediately appointed as a member of the expedition whose task was a precise determination of the geographical coordinates for eight basic triangulation points through which Corse should be tied with the map of French Eastern Alps ...

Parallely with these works I finished in 1924 a study of the *first* model of a new instrument, my impersonal astrolab. I made it from my own resources and performed the first observations, being afterwards presented at the French Academy of Sciences ... The following year (1925, note of the authors) I got the annual reward of the French Academy ..." (Adamović, 1975).

Certainly, the most important work of V. V. Mišković is his PhD thesis – the examination took place on July 12, 1924, the supervisors being Profs. P. Humbert, J. Cabannes and Soula from the Montpellier University – its title was *Études de Statistique stellaire*. It was published in the same year in Paris by Gauthier-Villars (Michkovitch, 1924a).

In the two first parts of the thesis considered are fundamental questions of stellar statistics, whereas the third part is devoted to the original research of shortperiod variable stars of the Algol type. The work has 137 pages and a bibliography of 269 units.

A few papers possessing a research character concern the astrolabe application in the astronomical observations and the autor's original construction of the impersonal micrometer (Michkovitch, 1924b).

His other, largely professional, papers from the "French period", by 1925 concern the numerous observations of minor planets and comets. As a total for the period 1919-1924 he had 24 published titles in astronomical journals *Journal des Observateurs*, *Comptes Rendus hebdomadaires de l'Académie des Sciences, Paris*, *Journal de l'Observatoire de Marseille*, etc.

And just when he became mature for more serious scientific research and acquired an exceptional reputation among his French colleagues, occurs the turning point in his life and work. His personal comments are:

"Exactly at that time I got the invitation from Belgrade - Prof. Milutin Milanković invited me to come and take the Astronomy Department. At the faculty, under old Prof. Bilimović worked then Milutin Milanković, Bogdan Gavrilović and Mika Petrović-Alas, splendid mathematicians above all, known throughout the world; known because they earned a high reputation of the Belgrade University. They lived like a unified family.

I came immediately, of course, and became a lecturer. I got into work quickly and I had an especially close cooperation with Prof. Milanković ..."

From a letter of Prof. Mišković, dated September 28, 1924 and sent from Nice to Prof. Milanković, it appears that they, Prof. Milanković and Dr Vojislav Mišković (then engaged as astronomer at the Nice Observatory), met in October 1923. They

probably considered the situation in the next year expected after Prof. Nedeljković's retiring. Prof. Nedeljković worked as a professor at the Department of Astronomy and Meteorology, at the Belgrade Faculty of Philosophy. According to the Clerks Law of September 1, 1923 the right of obtaining a full pension was acquired with 35 years of serving. On the other hand, in early 1924 began the fortieth year of Prof. Nedeljković's engagement since his career started on October 25, 1884 when he became a reader at the Belgrade "Grand School" (future Belgrade University). Therefore, he retired following a decree of January 30, 1924 ("Prosvetni glasnik", 1924, 2, 27).

The transfer of the Belgrade Observatory took a good part of 1924 in which in addition to Prof. Nedeljković took part also Professors: P. Vujević, M. Milanković and M. Popović, as well as an accountant of the State Main Controle, D. Jovanović. In the middle of the same year, more precisely on July 27, according to a decision of the Council of the Philosophy Faculty the Observatory (having been mainly a meteorological one, though it included other activities too – astronomical and geophysical – but only preparatory) was divided into an astronomical and a meteorological one, Prof. Vujević being appointed as the Director of the latter while the corresponding post of the former was vacant (Djokić, 1988). As a confirmation that the Grand-School Observatory, i.e. later University Observatory, conducted largely meteorological activity one can mention, in addition to a report of Prof. Nedeljković himself, also a part of Prof. Milanković's memoirs in which the three-year period during the First World War, when the Observatory was under Prof. Viktor Konrad's direction, is related. Therein reference is made of a rich, but scientifically not used, meteorological observational material found by Prof. Konrad and later on published by himself as a first study on climate in Serbia in an edition of the Vienna Academy of Sciences (Milanković, 1952).

During the same year - 1924 - the instruments ordered by Prof. Nedeljković in Germany as the war reparations began arriving in Belgrade. The scope of this order, which imperatively required the foundation of an astronomical observatory as a separate institution, was the subject of letters exchanged during the autumn 1924 between the University Authorities, the War Damage Committee and Prof. Vujević through whom the receipt of the instruments took place (Djokić, 1993).

In the letter of September 28, 1924, mentioned above, Prof. Mišković asked whether it is necessary for him to come to Belgrade again because "it may be, at least for the sake of information, useful to come since here I know very little about the circumstances and events in our country". In his letter of October 4, 1924 sent to Prof. Mišković Prof. Milanković said: "I find it unnecessary that you to come to Belgrade now, but only after the faculty decides in your matter. I wish the faculty elected you by invitation, not by announcing, because that possibility is much more attractive". He also advised Prof. Mišković against leaving his position in France until the complete matter in Belgrade is favourably resolved. The election of Prof. Mišković as lecturer of practical astronomy at the Faculty of Philosophy took place early in the following year (1925) and it also ment that he had been elected as Director of the Astronomical Observatory too (Protitch-Benishek and Djokić, 1989). In his letter of February 2, 1925 sent from Nice to Prof. Milanković Prof. Mišković, after his election at the Faculty of Philosophy was proposed, said: "allow me, please, to keep my conviction

that for this success and confidence I have above all and most of all to express my gratitude to **you**" and "be sure, dear Professor, that nothing depending on me will be neglected by myself in order to be worth in my future position of the confidence and honour offered to me by you, the Belgrade University and our country."

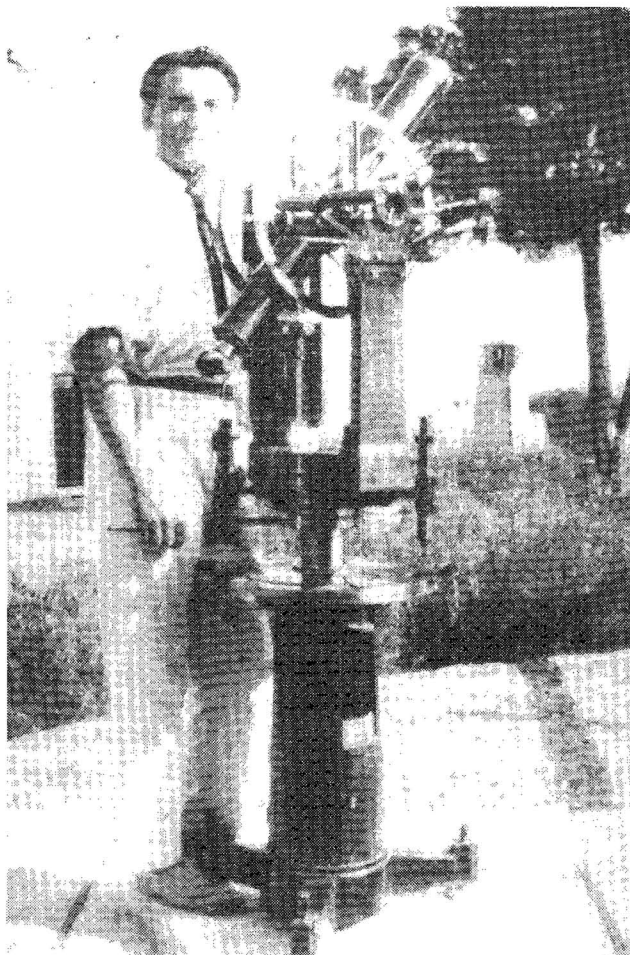


Fig. 1. V. V. Michkovitch at the Nice Observatory in 1924.

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