

## OBITUARY

### VIKTOR ALEKSEEVICH DOMBROVSKII



On February 1, 1972, Professor Viktor Alekseevich Dombrovskii died suddenly. He was on the editorial board of this journal and Director of the Astronomical Observatory of the Leningrad University.

In his person, Soviet astrophysics has lost one of its most eminent workers, who was an energetic observer and a talented teacher of young scientists.

Dombrovskii was born September 30, 1913, in the ancient Russian town of Rostov in the Yaroslav province. Here, he completed middle school, at which he studied mathematics under the guidance of a remarkable teacher — his father. It was his father who awakened his interest and love in astronomy. In 1931, wishing to specialize in astronomy, Dombrovskii entered the Physics and Mathematics Faculty of the Leningrad University. At the end of his university studies he remained at the Department of Astrophysics, to which he devoted his entire future work.

Viktor Alekseevich began scientific work while still a student. His first interest was variable stars. He then made valuable photometric investigations of nebulae. He achieved particularly important results when he started studying celestial bodies by the polarimetric method. To make the polarimetric observations, Dombrovskii created a very fine method, which he himself and also his students used. This laid the foundation of the development of a new direction of astrophysical investigations in our country.

Dombrovskii's work on the polarization of the light of stars and nebulae is widely known. He (together with M. A. Vashakadze) made one of the most notable astronomical discoveries in the middle of our century — the discovery of polarization of the Crab Nebula.

It is less well known that even earlier, at the same time as American astronomers, Dombrovskii concluded, on the basis of his photographic observations made at Byurakan, that the light of certain hot

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giants is polarized. These results were published. However, his insistence on a high accuracy of the observations was the reason why he himself regarded the photoelectric discovery of this effect made independently by other astronomers as more convincing.

A great service of Dombrovskii, as Director of the Astronomical Observatory of the Leningrad State University, was the building of the Astrophysical Station near the Byurakan Observatory. The instruments, with original construction, set up here made it possible to carry out photometric and polarimetric observations of various objects, of which the observations of quasars and the nuclei of galaxies are of particular interest. In recent years a start has been made here on the observation of the emission of stars in the previously inaccessible infrared part of the spectrum.

Dombrovskii was a member of the Astronomical Council of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, and he directed the work of the group on extragalactic astrophysics; he was also a member of the Scientific Council of the Pulkovo Observatory.

As a man, Viktor Alekseevich was remarkable for the wide range of his interests. He understood and appreciated music, literature, and art. He traveled widely in our country, taking a particular interest in its historical monuments. Treasured companions of his life were books.

The premature death of Viktor Alekseevich Dombrovskii is a great loss for our science and for all those who knew him and worked with him.