

## VASILE MIOC, AS I KNEW HIM

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I met Vasile Mioc in the mid 1980s. I had graduated two years earlier from the University of Bucharest, working as a mathematics school teacher in Medias, and he was a young researcher at the Astronomical Observatory in Cluj-Napoca. I had become interested in celestial mechanics after my graduation, and the only expert in Romania who offered doctoral degrees was Arpad Pal, who was also the director of the observatory where Vasile did his research. Some ten years my senior, Vasile was very nice to me when we first met and, in time, proved supportive of my ideas. I kept seeing him when I went to Cluj-Napoca, two or three times a year, and we both liked to talk to each other when the opportunity occurred.

In 1988 I defected from Romania, fed up with the totalitarian system that loomed large in those days, and succeeded to obtain my Ph.D. degree at the University of Heidelberg in Germany. In 1990 I immigrated to Canada and a year later I was offered a professorship at the University of Victoria. After that I got in touch with Vasile again. He was interested in my research and started using my methods in his research as well. At that time I came up with the idea to study what I called the Manev potential and the more general class of quasihomogeneous potentials, which I called as such due to the fact that they are given by sums of homogenous functions. Vasile saw right away the opportunity to obtain interesting results, so he joined me in developing this new research direction. Moreover he made it known to other experts he got in touch with. He also moved to the Astronomical Observatory of the Romanian Academy in Bucharest, where he later served as director until his premature death in 2013.

In 1996 I invited Vasile to visit me at the University of Victoria in Canada, and he came for a month together with his wife, Magda. They enjoyed their stay a lot and we managed to get some good work together. He went back to Romania with many new ideas, which he spread among his doctoral students, with whom he published several good papers. He helped the growth of this new field, and the number of his collaborators grew considerably.

In the latest years I took my research in another direction, namely that of studying the  $n$ -body problem in spaces of constant curvature. This time Vasile did not

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follow me anymore. With his health failing him, he put all his effort in leading the observatory, so he did not have the energy to start something new. But he kept working on quasihomogeneous potentials and initiated more young people in this field. I kept visiting him at the observatory or at his home whenever I happened to pass through Bucharest, but we did not collaborate on common projects anymore.

The news of his death saddened me. He was a good man with a kind spirit, a good mathematician and a prolific researcher. It is unfortunate that he left this world at an age when he could still bring significant contributions to our community. He will be remembered as a pillar of the celestial mechanics community in Romania and a top leader in Romanian astronomy.

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