

2.40 *Vsevolod Viktorovich Stratonov (1869–1938) –  
an astronomer and science popularizer  
on his way to exile from Russia to Berlin and Prague*

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Vsevolod Viktorovich Stratonov (1869–1938) graduated at Odessa University after studies of mathematics, physics and astronomy. For almost 15 years until 1905 he served as observing astronomer at various observatories: 1891–1892 at the observatory of Odessa university, 1893–1895 at Pulkovo Observatory and then in Tashkent. He made major achievements in astronomical photography, but an eye disease forced him to interrupt the observations. An appointment of vice-director of administration of Caucasus region followed – he organized the military geodetic service, reformed the High technical school in Tbilisi and lectured astronomy at a girls' school. In 1911 he became Head of the Russian State Bank. After 1917 revolution the Moscow State University elected him immediately the full professor of astronomy. In 1920 he founded the „*Main State Astrophysical Observatory*” and adjoined observatories in Kutshino (by Moscow), Novotsherkask (at river Don) and Tashkent to it as filial observatories. Until 1922, the year of a forced exile for many intellectuals from Soviet Russia, he succeeded to organize the Turkestan University, the largest scientific publishing house in the state, and the meteorological service for soil improvement in Upper Volga region. Aside of this, he had to fulfill duties of a consultant by Commissariat for public enlightenment, of the Head of Department for Physics and Mathematics of the Main State Library in Moscow and of the Dean of Faculty of Sciences of Moscow State University.

First year of exile he spent in Berlin, where he founded Russian scientific institute to enable continuation of studies and research for refugees. Since 1923 he lived in Prague. He lectured at the Russian National University of Prague, and on many other places in Czechoslovakia, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. Having finally the Czechoslovak citizenship, he was appointed professor of descriptive astronomy at the Technical University of Prague (on 1st March 1938). His other activities were oriented to Prague stock-market where he acted as consultant and direct participant on transactions. The office was situated in the centre of the city, in Vodickova Street, showing evidence of his successful trades. Professor Stratonov was a person of high charisma, a lounge lizard, an excellent story-teller and tutor, all the time surrounded by many people. Perhaps an anticipation of the war, perhaps anticipation of mental decline, or a transient depression led him to

his sudden suicide on 6th July 1938. In course of a party, he shot himself in the adjoining room. He found his last rest on the Olsany Russian cemetery. Interesting details from the life of Professor Stratonov were described in memoirs of his daughter-in-law which were recorded 20 years ago when she was interviewed by one research worker from the Institute of Slavonic Studies (Academy of Sciences of Czech Republic) and the second author of this article.

Professor Stratonov used to give popular lectures and published plenty of papers and valuable books: The study „Sur le mouvement des facules solaires" was honoured by the Grand Award and Medal of Tsar, the book „*The Stars*" (Moscow 1918) won a renowned international prize for popular science literature. His book „*Astronomy*" appeared in Czech and German versions (1927), and it was the only extensive popular work on astronomy (639 p.) published in Czechoslovak Republic during the period between World War I and II.