

**IN MEMORIAM**  
**MIRCEA MIHAILESCU**  
**Honorary Member of the IASS**



10 October 2006 was a mourning day for the Romanian academic community. We believe, Mircea Mihailescu – a *spiritus rector* of the academic community – left us for a better world. At his age of 86, which he reached only a short time earlier, Professor Mihailescu was satisfied to dwell on his recollections of the past; instead, being endowed with a tremendous energy, he worked until his last moments, leaving behind unfinished projects.

To condense in a panegyric Professor Mihailescu's career of over 60 years is nearly impossible.

Had he dedicated his life exclusively to science, many pages could be filled with his contributions to the field of the theory of the thin shells made of reinforced concrete. In the *Manual for the Constructions Calculus* – the fundamental book of civil engineers in Romania – he was the author of the chapter dealing with that topic. In 1957, he was awarded the Aurel Vlaicu Prize by the Romanian Academy in recognition of his work in this domain and, in 2005, he was awarded the last and most

impressive international title, that of Honorary Member of the IASS. He published over 175 papers in the field of reinforced concrete spatial structures in Romanian and foreign journals or in the proceedings of 38 international congresses and symposia in which he participated.

He was a respected professor and head of the disciplines of Reinforced and Prestressed Concrete Structures, Thin Shells, and History of Structural Technique at the Faculty of Civil Engineering, the Technical University of Cluj-Napoca. He taught 26 series of graduates, his course being real performances as he was highly skilled and dedicated to the teaching profession. He supervised the theses of 32 doctoral students, many of whom have now become European authorities on science and technique. As a sign of special appreciation for his entire life dedicated to his department and science, the Technical University of Cluj-Napoca awarded him the title of “*doctor honoris causa*.”

If we regarded solely his practice as an engineer and designer of structures, we could admire yet another exceptional career. Among the many landmark buildings that he designed are the locomotive shed in the Braşov railway station, the square and gymnasium in Oneşti, the exhibition hall in Cluj-Napoca, and the drug factory in Târgu Mureş. For the quality of these projects he was awarded many national prizes and decorations: the prize of the Ministry of Education (1967), the prize of the Ministry of Industrial Constructions (1978), the Diploma and the Jubilee Badge of the Institute for Research and Design in the Chemical Industry (1979), the Diploma of the “Builder of the XX century” (2001). His exceptional achievements were also internationally recognized, for example by his name being included in the volume *Ingénieurs du siècle* published in 1997 by Georges Pompidou publishing house.

As a long-time member of IASS active in Working Group 5 (Concrete Shell Roofs) he was elected to the Advisory Board of this Association. Moreover, he was the organizing chair of the 2005 IASS

Symposium held in Bucharest and Poiana Braşov. In addition to the IASS, he was a member of FIP (Fédération Internationale de la Précontrainte), IABSE (International Association for Bridges and Structural Engineering), and IAHS (International Association for Housing Sciences).

Some additional biographical data are worth mentioning. Mircea Mihailescu was born in Braşov on 1 October 1920 into a family of intellectuals in which he received a distinguished education. From his father, a general in the pre-war Romanian army, he inherited a strong feeling of patriotism, a spirit of a fighter for justice, honesty, and self-control.

He graduated at the Andrei Şaguna High School in Braşov where Emil Cioran, his teacher of philosophy, had a considerable influence on the young disciple. He attended the Faculty of Civil Engineering at Bucharest Polytechnic, graduating in 1944 with remarkable results. For his diploma design he was given the Vasile Karpen Prize of the University.

He took several jobs in institutes of research and design. In spite of his remarkable qualities, he was forced to leave these positions because he could not

adapt to the rigors of the communist régime of that period. In 1964, when a less repressive period started, he was appointed as Professor at the Technical University of Cluj-Napoca, where he worked until his peaceful end.

In 1989, after the collapse of communism, he became involved in politics, too. He was one of the regional leaders of the Peasants National Christian Democrat Party. He was close to the leader of the party, Corneliu Coposu. They endeavored to implement a European project for Romania's development towards democracy.

By the passing away of Professor Mircea Mihailescu, Romanian education, science, and engineering practice have lost a valuable, dynamic personality. Fortunately, due to his vocation of a master, he has left behind a great school. His followers will surely continue his exceptional work.

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