

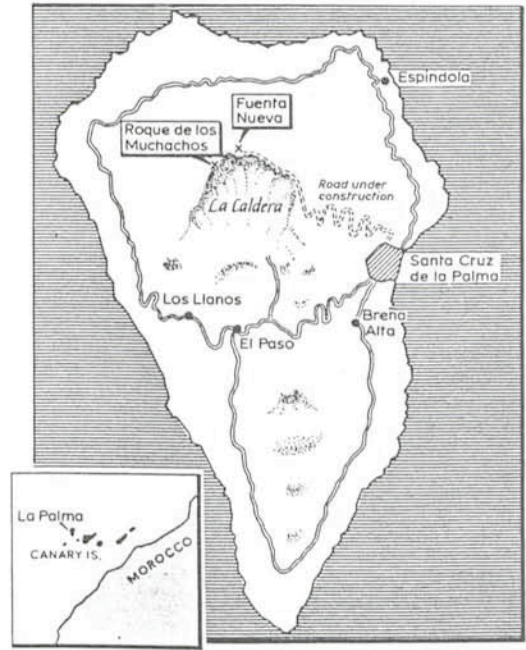
Roque de los Muchachos Observatory

After six years of site-testing and another four of diplomatic activity, an agreement has been reached between Spain, the United Kingdom, Denmark and Sweden about the construction of an international observatory on the island of La Palma in the Canary group. The observatory will be placed on the rim of an extinct volcanic crater, 2,400 m above sea level. It is expected that long spells of exceptional weather will be available here.

The agreements call for the installation of powerful instruments, and a British 4.2 m telescope should come into operation after a number of years. The Isaac Newton 2.5 m telescope will soon be moved from England and a British 1 m telescope is planned. The automatic meridian circle of the Brorfelde Observatory in Denmark will be installed in 1981 and a Swedish solar station is being moved from Capri (Italy) to La Palma.

European astronomers have long been on the lookout for good observing sites in or near Europe. The observatories in Australia and Chile certainly offer excellent conditions for observing the southern sky, but it has always been felt that the distance from Europe contributes significantly to the cost and creates problems for the smooth running. As a result, several sites nearer to Europe have been tested and for instance the Max Planck Observatory at Calar Alto in Spain is a recent, impressive addition to European observational astronomy.

No doubt, many of the astronomers that regularly visit ESO-La Silla will now start thinking about supplementing their observations with future programmes on La Palma!



The Roque de los Muchachos site (reproduced from New Scientist).

XVIIth IAU General Assembly in Montreal

The triennial general assembly of the International Astronomical Union took place in Montreal, Canada, from August 13 to 23. More than 2,000 astronomers and specialists from more than 40 countries were present and about 770 new members were admitted to the Union, bringing the membership to about 4,600. One new country, Indonesia, joined the IAU.

Several hundred meetings were held in the various IAU commissions, the scopes of which range from "Astronomical Telegrams" to "Cosmology" and "Protection of Astronomical Sites". Among the highlights must be mentioned the impressive results that have recently been obtained by spacecraft near Venus and Jupiter and the exciting discoveries with the new X-ray satellite EINSTEIN.

A number of ESO astronomers participated in the assembly and in some of the symposia that took place in USA and Canada, just before or after the assembly. A wide variety of talks were given, for instance about interstellar absorption (A. Danks, ESO/Chile), observations of early-type galaxies (G. Schnur, ESO/Chile), the use of parallaxes and proper motions (P. O. Lindblad, ESO/Geneva), and Seyfert galaxies (M.-H. Ulrich, ESO/Geneva). Observations of X-ray sources were reported by H. Pedersen (ESO/Chile) and M. Pakull (ESO/Geneva). The ESO Director-General, L. Woltjer, reviewed the cosmological significance of recent X-ray observations and R. West (ESO/Geneva) presented plans for a future Space-Schmidt telescope. He was also elected Assistant General Secretary of the IAU.

ESO Users Manual Now Available!

ESO is pleased to announce the availability of the ESO Users Manual. It has recently been distributed to astronomical institutes and contains all the necessary information to enable visiting astronomers to apply for observing time. If your institute has not received a copy, please contact the Visiting Astronomers Section Garching. The manual will be updated periodically, and any errors that should be corrected or information you would like included should be communicated to the editor, Anthony Danks.

A Strange Galaxy

More than 10,000 new galaxies have been discovered on the ESO (B) Atlas of the Southern Sky and catalogued in the ESO/Uppsala lists that are regularly published in *Astronomy and Astrophysics Suppl. Series*. Many of these objects are highly peculiar.

The object shown in the photo was designated as 215-G?14, i.e. No. 14 in field 215, probably a galaxy. Two "nuclei" can be seen in the centre of a diffuse "nebulosity". Since the galactic latitude is only 8° , the possibility of a planetary nebula could not be excluded.

A spectrum has now been obtained with the ESO 3.6 m telescope. It shows that the right "nucleus" is nothing but a normal star, but the one to the left (which is slightly diffuse) is a galaxy nucleus with a radial velocity of $5,600 \text{ km s}^{-1}$. There is therefore little doubt that the underlying nebulosity is a real galaxy. The semi-stellar nucleus has a strong emission-line spectrum and is of the Seyfert type.

