



La Silla, October 1966 . . .

The main weakness of our organization then appeared very clearly: the absence of a project office with engineers and technicians devoting all of their time to the study of the instruments, the preparation of the demands for tender, the choice of the manufacturers and the supervision of the work.

A small group of astronomers and a few administration staff were very busy during the creation of the organization.

The Instrumentation Committee tried in vain to act as a project office but it had neither the means, nor the abilities to do so, in spite of all the individual willingness.

The creation of a project office was then envisaged, but it was already late; fortunately, at the initiative of the French delegation and especially of Mr. M. Alline, representative of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, contacts were established with the CERN Director-General, then the late Professor B. Gregory. They led to the creation of a project office for the organization, located in Geneva and strongly supported by the large CERN design departments.

There is no doubt in my mind that it was the installation in Geneva which saved our organization. The efforts of the successive Directors-General, Professors O. Heckmann, A. Blaauw and L. Woltjer, who devoted all their time to ESO, were of course essential.

The initial project for the large telescope was completely revised by this project office, under the direction of S. Laustsen. We should not, however, forget the role of other colleagues, especially of J. M. Ramberg.

The large telescope suffered serious delays, due partially to this lack of a project office, but also to the scattering of the services: in Europe, Hamburg and Geneva, without mentioning the small Marseille group; in Chile, Santiago, La Serena and also La Silla!



. . . and La Silla today.

This was ungovernable, in spite of all the willingness of the Director in Hamburg and Geneva and of B. Westerlund in Chile.

Particularly, the three centres in Chile were the cause of endless travelling by the personnel from the mountain to La Serena and to Santiago.

For a time, evil tongues were saying that Astronomy was an alibi for the administration.

These circumstances are now out of date. La Silla is the heart of our organization – the transfer from Geneva to Munich, regretted by some, including myself, will certainly be beneficial.

This article has been originally written in French; the editor takes full responsibility for the poor translation.

FAINT OBJECT CAMERA BOOKLET

"The Faint Object Camera for the Space Telescope" booklet is now available to qualified scientists free of charge. This booklet describes the technical and operational characteristics of the FOC which is the European contribution to the instrument complement on the Space Telescope. In addition, the booklet describes various possible scientific programmes which should be feasible with the FOC. Interested persons should write to ESA at the following address:

ESA Information Retrieval Service
8-10, rue Mario-Nikis
F-75738 PARIS
France

P. C.
