

ESO, the European Southern Observatory, was created in 1962 to . . . establish and operate an astronomical observatory in the southern hemisphere, equipped with powerful instruments, with the aim of furthering and organizing collaboration in astronomy . . . It is supported by eight countries: Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden and Switzerland. It operates the La Silla observatory in the Atacama desert, 600 km north of Santiago de Chile, at 2,400 m altitude, where fourteen optical telescopes with diameters up to 3.6 m and a 15-m submillimetre radio telescope (SEST) are now in operation. The 3.5-m New Technology Telescope (NTT) became operational in 1990, and a giant telescope (VLT=Very Large Telescope), consisting of four 8-m telescopes (equivalent aperture = 16 m) is under construction. It will be erected on Paranal, a 2,600 m high mountain in northern Chile, approximately 130 km south of the city of Antofagasta. Eight hundred scientists make proposals each year for the use of the telescopes at La Silla. The ESO Headquarters are located in Garching, near Munich, Germany. It is the scientific-technical and administrative centre of ESO where technical development programmes are carried out to provide the La Silla observatory with the most advanced instruments. There are also extensive facilities which enable the scientists to analyze their data. In Europe ESO employs about 150 international Staff members, Fellows and Associates; at La Silla about 40 and, in addition, 150 local Staff members.

The ESO MESSENGER is published four times a year; normally in March, June, September and December. ESO also publishes Conference Proceedings, Preprints, Technical Notes and other material connected to its activities. Press Releases inform the media about particular events. For further information, contact the ESO Information Service at the following address:

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ESO's Early History

The recent series of eleven articles about the early history of ESO, written by Professor Adriaan Blaauw, have been collected in a book. The text has been thoroughly revised and includes photos which were not in the *Messenger* articles.

The narrative begins with the developments in the early 1950's when leading European astronomers initiated a search for the best possible observatory site under the comparatively unexplored southern sky. Ten years later, in 1962, ESO was established by an international convention and soon thereafter a remote mountain top in the Chilean Atacama desert, La Silla, was acquired. It took another decade to transform this site into the world's largest optical observatory.

ESO exemplifies the highly successful European integration in a fundamental field of

science, providing European scientists with modern facilities for front-line investigations beyond the capacities of the individual member states.

Professor Adriaan Blaauw, well-known Dutch astronomer, has been closely associated with ESO during all of this time. He actively participated in many of the events described and as a former Director General of ESO (1970-74) he possesses first-hand knowledge of the organization and the way it works. A scientist of international renown, Professor Blaauw is also a noted amateur historian in his home country.

The book is available from ESO; the price is 25 DM, which must be prepaid by cheque or bank transfer to ESO account No. 2102002 at the Commerzbank in Munich (BLZ 70040041). Please be sure to indicate "ESO History" in your order.

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