

The Gaseous Environment of the Supernova 1987 A in the Large Magellanic Cloud

A visual inspection of a deep photograph of the region centred on 30 Doradus obtained in the light of the gaseous emission of ionized hydrogen (e.g. the $H\alpha$ pictures by Elliott et al. 1977, *Astron. Astrophys.* **55**, 187 and the multicolour photograph published in the *Messenger* No. 48) clearly suggests that the supernova occurred within the boundaries of that supergiant HII region. This is hardly surprising: the 30 Dor complex is the largest concentration of young, massive stars in the Local Group of galaxies and as massive stars are the progenitors of type II supernovae there was a high chance to observe the first close-by supernova in modern times in that region.

The supernova is located at about 21 arcminutes from the centre of 30 Doradus; the gaseous emission, although not as strong as in the centre of the nebula, is still quite prominent. There is no published study in the literature of the distribution of ionized gas in the direction of the SN. It will be difficult for some time yet to obtain a deep exposure of that area without saturating the detector with the light of the supernova. We circumvented this problem by using a reflecting spot inserted at the position of the supernova in the focal plane of EFOSC, the ESO Faint Object Spectrograph and Camera. A short description of this simple coronagraph is given by Dekker and D'Odorico in this issue of the *Messenger*. Figure 1 shows an example of these masked images. Pictures were obtained in the light of $H\alpha$ [NII], [SII], [OIII] and the continuum. They provide an insight into the complex

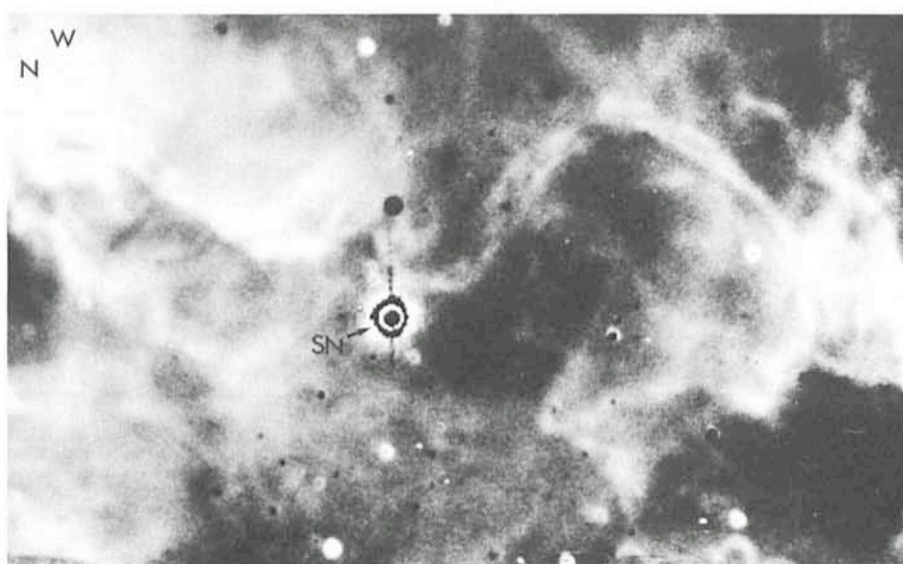


Figure 1: The field of SN 1987A in the light of the O^{++} gaseous emission. The highly ionized gas appears white and diffuse and most of the stars appear as white dots in this picture which was obtained by subtracting from a CCD frame obtained through an interference filter centred at the 5007 Å emission line one other frame centred on the adjacent continuum. The observations are from the ESO focal reducer EFOSC at the 3.6-m telescope. About 99 % of the light of the supernova (still brighter than $V = 4.5$ at that time) was blocked by a reflecting spot deposited on a glass plate mounted in one position of the aperture wheel of the instrument. Residual scattered light is still visible around the SN image. The exposure time of a single CCD frame was 5 minutes.

structure and into the ionization of the gas and will serve as a reference to study the modifications to the ionization to be induced in the coming years by the SN flash and the interaction with the ejecta.

The precursor star appears to have been located at the edges of a bright ridge of emission on one side and of a bubble on the other. The latter could be the result of a previous SN explosion or

the effect of mass loss winds from massive young stars. It appears too extended to be attributed to the mass loss in the SN precursor alone. This type of structure is quite common in 30 Dor, where such energetic phenomena are relatively frequent. Their physical association with the supernova has to be proved by a detailed kinematical study, a chance projection being also a possibility.

S. D'Odorico

Updating and New Functions of EFOSC

This last August three new features have been tested in EFOSC and are now fully implemented in the instrument. This brief report is intended to make users promptly aware of the new possibilities.

A New Field Lens to Reduce the Scattered Light

The most serious shortcoming of EFOSC in the first two years of operation was possibly the so-called sky concentration, a diffuse spot of light 5–20 % above the background in the centre of the image which is caused by

light – from the sky background and stars – reflected by the CCD back into the camera and returned by some optical surfaces, the main contribution coming from the field lens.

Careful flat-fielding could take care of this effect, which however remained the main limitation to the photometric accuracy of the instrument. Following a new design by Bernard Delabre, a new field lens has been manufactured and has been successfully integrated in the camera. The first tests show that the sky concentration is now reduced to 1–5 % depending on the CCD and the filter

used. The scale of the instrument is now very slightly modified (0.674 arcsec/30 μ m pixel). As of the end of August, the new lens is routinely used in the instrument.

A Coronagraphic Option in the Direct Imaging Mode

A simple coronagraph provides now a new observing mode option in EFOSC. It consists of a coated glass plate on which 6 reflecting spots have been deposited. The current diameters are 1.5, 2, 3, 4, 6 and 8 arcseconds. The plate is

mounted in the focal plane of the telescope in one of the positions of the aperture wheel and it is therefore compatible with the other observing modes. It is used in conjunction with a pupil mask mounted in the grism wheel which reduces the contribution of the scattered light acting as a Lyot stop (1, 2). Due to bad weather during the test period the performance of the system could not be explored in depth. We would welcome feedback comments from future users.

A Spectropolarimetry Option

Following the positive experience with field polarimetry with a Wollaston prism (3) a second Wollaston of larger size (to avoid vignetting when mounted on the grism wheel) has now been installed. It can be used in combination with any of the standard slits and grisms for spectropolarimetry of objects as faint as 19th magnitude. The separation between the two images (or spectra) of perpendicular linear polarization is 20 arcseconds. If

sky subtraction in the spectra is essential, special care must be taken in the alignment of the Wollaston to obtain an image separation along the rows of the CCD. *H. Dekker and S. D'Odorico*

References

1. F. Vilas and B.A. Smith, 1987, *Applied Optics* **26**, 664.
2. F. Paresce and C. Burrows, 1987, *The Messenger* **47**, 43.
3. H. Dekker and S. D'Odorico, 1986, *The Messenger* **46**, 21.

Remote Control from Garching

As an alternative to travelling to La Silla, remote control from ESO Garching has been offered to astronomers with observing time at the 2.2-m telescope since 1st July 1987. The instruments available are a Boller & Chivens spectrograph with a CCD detector and the CCD used directly with the 2.2-m adapter.

The same control consoles as those in the 2.2-m telescope control room are

available to users in Garching. They can obtain field monitor, finder telescope frames and CCD images on-line, and are able to send commands to instruments and telescope (see picture). This is made possible by a leased line, which is also used for telephone communication.

Although most of the allocated July nights turned out to be almost unusable due to bad weather, several as-

tronomers had the opportunity to become familiar with the system.

Field identification of fairly faint objects ($m_v = 19$, seeing = 2") was also attempted satisfactorily with a B & C in a test night in August.

By October 1987, the CES spectrograph (using the CAT telescope) with CCD will also be available by means of remote control from Garching.

G. Raffi



Remote control consoles at ESO Garching.