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News from Paranal and Current Status of VLT Construction

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On Sunday, 30 July 1995, at 1.15 hours local time, an earthquake shook northern Chile near the city of Antofagasta. The earthquake was estimated to be of magnitude 7.8 on the Richter scale. Most damage was concentrated around Antofagasta. The Paranal Observatory was also affected although no severe damage occurred as the structures under construction resisted as foreseen to the violence of the vibrations. A week later the ESO photographic team visited the site; their photographs which are shown here record the current status of construction.

Figure 1.

Figure 1 shows Unit Telescope No. 1 with its foundation complete and the fixed part of the enclosure's steel structure already in place. In Figure 2, detail of the Nasmyth Access Platform is visible. Figure 3 shows the inner part of

Figure 2.

telescope No. 1 with the inner and outer rings that will form the base for the telescope structure. The work on telescopes 2, 3 and 4 is proceeding as planned. Figure 4 shows the advanced stage of telescope No. 2 whose concrete foundation will be ready towards the end of October. In the background one can see work commencing on the foundations for telescope No. 4.

The interferometry complex has progressed considerably during the course of the last months. Figure 5 shows the building that will be used as the laboratory to combine the beams both in the coherent and incoherent way. On the right below ground level the interferometric tunnel is visible. Progress has also been made on the construction of the steel structure of the control buildings seen in Figures 6 and 7. *(Photographs by H. Zodet)*

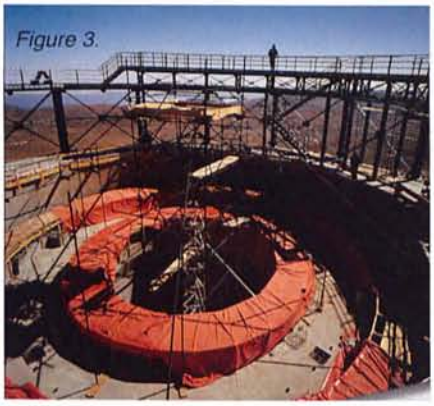

Figure 3.

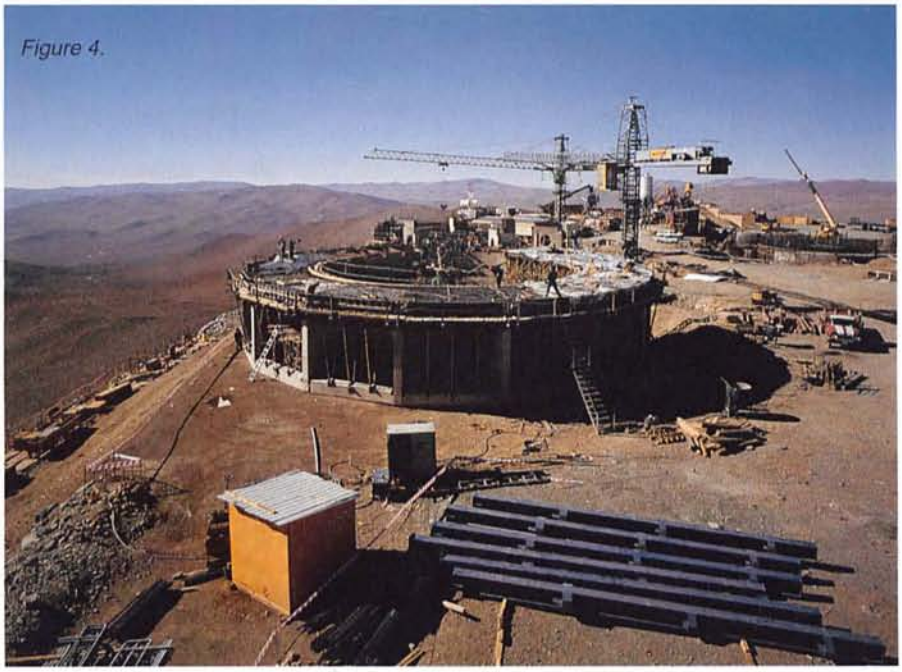

Figure 4.

Figure 5.

Figure 7.

Figure 6.