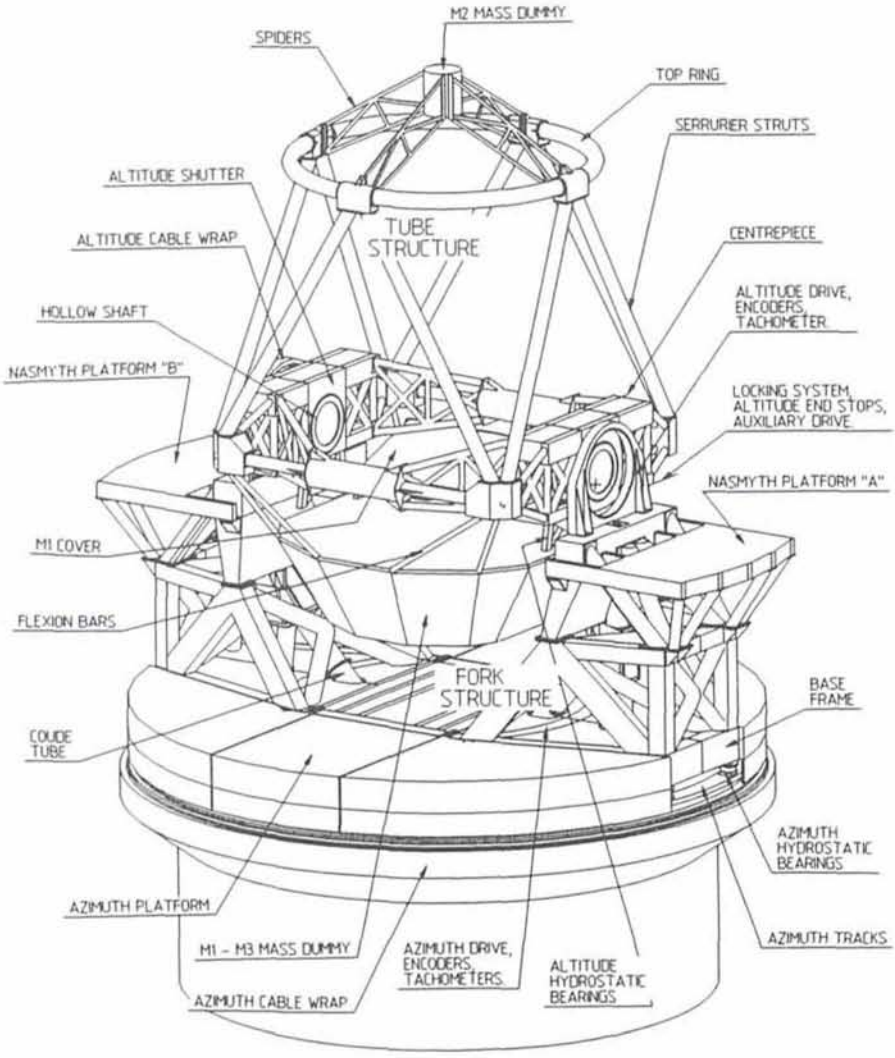

Figure 2: *Definition of telescope structure components and subsystems.*

engineering work including buildings, roads, site development and energy systems, the main elements of interferometry (e.g. auxiliary telescopes and delay lines). By the end of 1992, 80 per cent of the VLT capital budget is expected to be committed.

STAFF MOVEMENTS

Arrivals

Europe

BALLEMANS, Irma (NL), Programme Documentation Assistant/Archivist
FILIPPI, Giorgio (I), Software System Engineer
FREUDLING, Wolfram (D), Fellow
STEFL, Stanislav (CS), Associate
ZHU, Nenghong (RC), Associate

Chile

MATHYS, Gautier (B), Associate
STORM, Jesper (DK), Fellow
VAN WINCKEL, Hans (B), Student

Departures

Europe

BAUER, Harry (D), Electronical Engineer
BECKER, Joachim (D), VLT Project Manager/Head, VLT Division

The Paranal Observatory Becomes Reality

M. J. DE JONGE, ESO

In the middle of September the first VLT contractor to execute work on the Paranal site, Interbeton from the Netherlands, started to move its earth-moving equipment and basecamp to the site.

Interbeton, contracted for the levelling and landscaping of the mountain top, had prior to beginning the actual earth-moving work, to reestablish new topographical references. The only topographical reference in the Paranal area is namely on the peak of the mountain and would disappear with the start of the levelling work.

While the survey work was going on, the base camp was finished and the contractor's staff moved into their temporary homes.

Drilling rigs, bulldozers and front loaders moved to the mountain top and started to make a first platform, of a size big enough to turn the trucks, to be used for the transport of excavation material.

The levelling work, consisting of removing approximately 250000 m^3 from the mountain top to create a 20000 m^2 flat area on which the telescopes, the optical laboratories and the interferometer tracks will be located, had really begun.

The first drillings led to the first earth removal by explosives and on September 23 the silence of the Paranal area was broken, which initiated the VLT construction activity which will last till the end of the century.

The excavation material will almost all be used to make an artificial platform to the east side of the telescope area on which the last part of the access road will be constructed.

This platform needs to be rather large since the road requires a 12-m clearance width in order to allow the transport of large telescope parts and the main mirrors.

As from the moment the Contractor moved to the site, also ESO staff belonging to the VLT Division's Staff and Building Group installed themselves on the site in order to ensure permanent supervision of the levelling work. In particular the compacting of the road platform requires intensive follow-up and

Figure 1: *First earth removal by explosives, September 23, 1991.*

Figure 2: *The Interbeton base camp.*

Figure 3: *Drilling rig in operation, preparing the next earth removal.*

Figure 4: *Excavation material loading.*

compaction density tests are continuously made to verify that the specified loading capacity of the road, needed for the heavy transports, is obtained.

The ESO staff furthermore initiated sub-soil investigations at the location of the telescopes and started with survey work of the road leading to the Paranal area in view of improving the road, which is of paramount importance for both the construction and future operation of the VLT Observatory.

Last but not least, the ESO staff was involved in designing, contracting and in the installation of the construction base camp which provides offices, dormitories and living quarters in which they will work and live for a number of years, until the new Observatory Buildings, under design with COWI Consult in Denmark, are available.

A Report on the Second ESO Conference on High Resolution Imaging by Interferometry

J.M. BECKERS and F. MERKLE, ESO

Over 200 scientists and engineers participated in the October 15 to 18, 1991 ESO Conference on "High Resolution Imaging by Interferometry", a conference devoted to ground-based optical interferometric imaging in astronomy. This was the second conference on this topic, the first one having been held also in Garching in March 1988. In addition to four introductory and review talks, the conference included 150 contributions on single- and multiple-aperture interferometric imaging and three working sessions on adaptive optics, detectors and path-length compensation. Sixty of these contributions were given orally, the rest by means of poster presentations. To keep the size of the conference within reasonable limits and to avoid parallel sessions, the scope of the meeting excluded related topics like astrometry by interferometric means and contributed papers on astronomical adaptive optics. The latter topic will be a major topic at the April 1992 ESO meeting in Garching on "Progress in Telescope and Instrumentation Techniques". Attendees included participants from Australia, Canada, China, Japan, Mexico, the USA, the USSR, and of course many European countries.

Tutorials

As was the case in the first conference, it was preceded by a day of tutorials intended for newcomers to the field. It is becoming very clear, however, that these tutorials have a much broader function. They are also attended by "oldtimers" (old in this field means more than half a dozen years!), including a Nobel Laureate, who wanted to catch up on recent developments in the more