Mauna Kea Eagerly Awaits Its Eclipse

■ Astronomers are already anticipating a rare chance to study the solar atmosphere during an 11 July total solar eclipse that will occur directly over the Mauna Kea Observatories, one of the world's largest collections of astronomical instruments.

Robert McLaren, associate director of the Institute for Astronomy at the University of Hawaii, says he expects nearly 30 astronomers to carry out 9 experiments with the observatories' telescopes. The teams will study the eclipse with a variety of instruments in the visible, infrared, and submillimeter radio spectra. The objects of all this attention are the solar corona, the outer layer of the sun's atmosphere, and the chromosphere, a cooler inner layer lying between the corona and the solar surface.

National Optical Astronomy Observatories

The Mauna Kea eclipse will be the first in 25 years to occur at a major observatory.

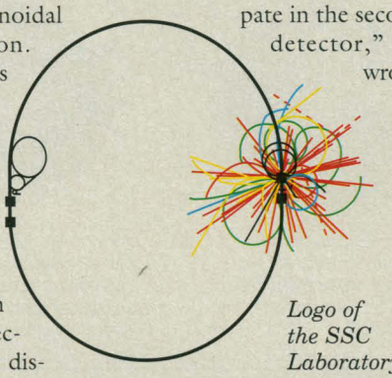
Since astronomers usually have to carry portable instruments to wherever the shadow of an eclipse happens to fall, a chance to observe the solar atmosphere with 3.6-meter and 2.2-meter optical telescopes will be quite a treat. These large telescopes will allow astronomers to use narrow-band filters, extremely short exposure times, and high magnifications in order to watch the dynamics and magnetic fields of the corona—a strategy the researchers hope will help them unravel the mystery of why the corona is more than a thousand times hotter than the chromosphere.

The SSC's Soviet Vote of Confidence

■ The experimental program at the Superconducting Super Collider (SSC), shaken by the charges of European and Soviet physicists that the SSC Laboratory treats its international partners badly (*Science*, 17 May, p. 908), has received a welcome vote of confidence from an unlikely corner: the Soviet Academy of Sciences.

Science has learned that Academy vice president A.A. Logunov wrote to SSC Laboratory director Roy Schwitters last week to note that groups from more than five major Soviet research institutes are now considering a collaboration with Lawrence Berkeley physicist George Trilling, leader of the already approved Solenoidal Detector Collaboration. Trilling says no Soviets have yet joined his team, but that he has high hopes for "significant collaboration" with Soviet physicists.

Logunov is also confident that other groups will also show interest in a proposed second detector, now scheduled for discussion at a workshop on 11–13 June: "No doubt there will be groups that meet with enthusiasm your invitation to participate in the second detector," he wrote.



Logo of the SSC Laboratory

Cheap Chemistry

■ A reservoir of Soviet chemistry talent may soon become available to Western researchers at a nice price—although the financial savings could carry some ethical baggage. Soviet chemists, faced with a terrible funding crisis, have recently sought the help of the International Solidarity Association (ISA), a new citizens' group that plans to match them with international clients. The lure? ISA offers prospective buyers cheap, high-quality chemical services and products that otherwise might be expensive and hard to duplicate in the West.

Gene Kantor, ISA's U.S. representative, says his roster of Soviet scientists for hire includes about 40 chemists with particular skill in custom chemical synthesis. While several researchers and companies have expressed interest in the ISA program, he says, no deals have been sealed as yet.

But will this example of East-meets-West chemistry leave guilt complexes in its wake? Kantor admits that one reason Soviet chemists can undercut their Western competitors is that their labs are unburdened by many of the health and safety regulations that exist in the West. But he adds that restrictive "administrative decisions" made in Western nations have not historically served as models for other countries. "Chemistry is not exactly fun and games," he says.

Coming Up: A Long, Hot Summer of AZT Lawsuits

■ Lawyers for the Burroughs Wellcome Co. will have a busy summer as they defend the pharmaceutical company's exclusive patent rights to AZT, the only drug approved by the Food and Drug Administration for combating the AIDS virus.

Just last week Burroughs Wellcome filed suit in North Carolina against Barr Laboratories, a U.S. generic drug firm, asking the court to deny Barr Laboratories permission to sell AZT in this country. In April Barr petitioned the FDA for a license to market a generic equivalent of the drug. An earlier legal assault, launched in March by the Ralph Nader-founded consumer group Public Citizen, seeks to give AIDS patients the right to obtain AZT from a Canadian generic drug manufacturer (*Science*, 29 March, p. 1554).

Both suits are based on the claim that since federal scientists were partly responsible for discovering AZT's potential as an anti-HIV therapy, they deserve to be named on the patents as co-inventors. If either suit proves that, the government will share Burroughs Wellcome's patent rights to AZT and could allow the price of a year's supply of the drug to drop well below the $2,500 it now costs.

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