

**Reply from Bavaria — the Sonneberg Observatory
(Translated from German)**

Dr. Richard M. West
Chairman of the IAU Working Group on Wide-field Imaging
European Southern Observatory
Karl-Schwarzschild-Str. 2
85748 Garching bei München

3rd November 1993

Dear Dr. West,

Prime Minister Dr. Edmund Stoiber has requested me to acknowledge with thanks receipt of your letter dated 22 October 1993 regarding the continuation of astronomy at Sonneberg Observatory.

With its systematic sky surveys and the resulting second largest collection of photographic plates in the world, the Sonneberg Observatory has gained undisputed international importance. For this reason, the former Bavarian Prime Minister, Dr. h.c. Max Streibl, was in favour of supporting Sonneberg financially in order to ensure continued scientific research there. However, the Scientific Council[†] has concluded that it would not be scientifically feasible to maintain the Observatory, and the Thuringian Minister of Science, Dr. Fickel, has expressed his intention to follow the vote of the Council.

Thuringia, being fully aware of the local historical significance of this institution, is planning to utilize it as a public observatory with facilities for teachers' and students' seminars as well as for educational tourism. In this case the photographic plate collection will have to be transferred to another location, thus depriving Sonneberg Observatory of a basis for scientific research.

In view of this decision by the Thuringian Government, financial support from Bavaria to maintain research work in Sonneberg must now be considered impossible, also in collaboration [with Thuringia; RW].

Prime Minister Dr. Stoiber sincerely regrets that this important research facility cannot be continued within the original concepts of its founder, Cuno Hoffmeister. He is, however, also sympathetic to the efforts of the Government of Thuringia to find a financially reasonable solution, following the negative vote of the Scientific Council.

With kind regards,

H. HUBER, MdL
Staatssekretär
Leiter der Bayerischen Staatskanzlei
Franz-Joseph-Strauss-Ring 1
80539 München

[†] The 'Wissenschaftsrat', a committee of eminent German Scientists which was set up by the German Government immediately after the reunification in 1990 in order to evaluate all scientific institutes on the territory of the former German Democratic Republic. [RW]