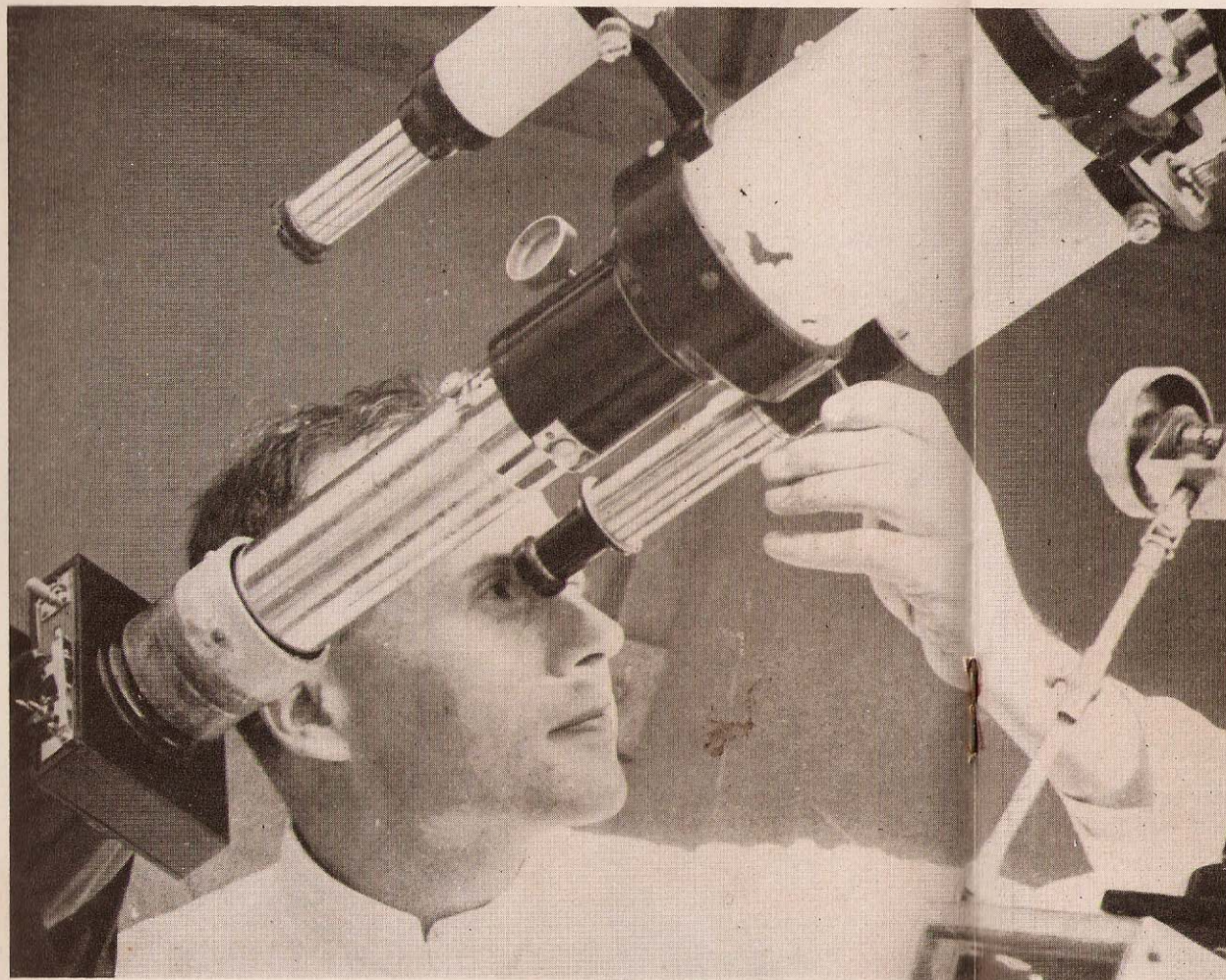


Sputnik was in the heavens and the
Jesuits of the Observatory on their toes
and most of the Philippines seemed to be on the phone

JAMES J. HENNESSEY S.J.

Moonwatch on Mirador



"Now just what is that up there?" Father Richard Miller S.J. of Rochester, N.Y., keeps more than a weather eye open at the Manila Observatory in Luzon. Doing their part in the International Geophysics Year, the Jesuits who man the famed Observatory were called upon for extra duty when the Sputniks and Explorer were launched into space. Formerly located in Manila, the Observatory has a new and better site on the hills of Mirador near Baguio City.

I PICKED UP THE PHONE at our Manila Observatory at Mirador, outside of Baguio City in the Philippines, and waited for a connection. When it was made I said, "Operator, this is the message: 'Sputnik observed two degrees East of star Altair . . .'"

In that way I began a report on a visual observation of the Russian satellite. But the operator, in a very friendly manner, immediately broke in, "When did you see it, Father?"

"This morning, a few minutes ago."

"We saw it last night," she replied.

"At what time?"

"Oh, six, seven and eight o'clock."

That last reply of the fair lady was disarming and disillusioning for, though there had been an evening passage of Sputnik II which might have been seen, Sputnik was not visible at Baguio at all those vague times. The courteous operator had seen something else. Besides, a good prediction of the time and position of Sputnik for the previous evening was at hand from official reports.

This was not the first time an operator had broken in on our report about Sputnik sightings. Nor was it an isolated instance—a mild understatement—of phone calls about objects mistaken for Sputnik in this region. Perhaps the objects most frequently and erroneously reported as satellites were, surprisingly, the planet Venus and the sounding balloons of the local Weather Bureau.

For several months after October