BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF MANILA OBSERVATORY'S SPECTROHELIOGRAPH WHICH PHOTOGRAPHS SUNSPOTS AND SOLAR DISTURBANCES.

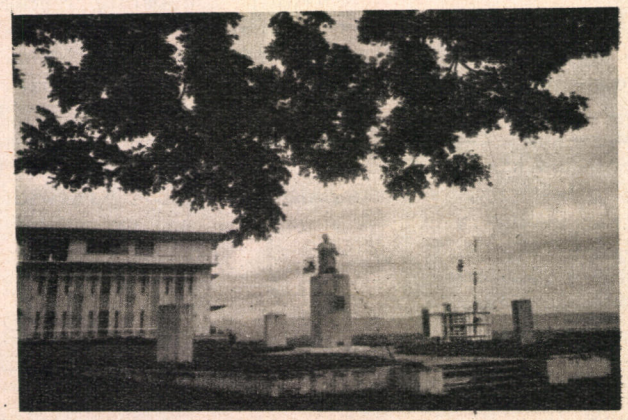
The Manila Observatory: 98 Years After

ALMOST a century has passed since Rev. Fr. Federico Faura, S.J., scanned skies trying to divine the weather as it fluctuated from fair to awful. The main interests of science have vastly changed since then, new windows have opened up, what once seemed forever beyond man's reach now flutters at his grasp. The Manila Observatory which the remembered Jesuit founded as a weather bureau now scans the skies for other things.

Even home is no longer Manila. After a long itinerant past encompassing war and ruins, the Manila Obsevatory presently sticks out of the sprawling Ateneo campus in Loyola Heights, Quezon City—an imposing structure of white buildings rimmed in four hectares of land. New minds man its likewise new facilities. Between its walls, day in and day out, Jesuits and laymen alike manipulate modern instruments and observe the sun, the ionosphere, and the seismic condition of the earth.

Still, in a significant sense, the new Manila Observatory remains moored to her past. The tradition of excellence which persists as the point of reference for every observatory project continues to this day as a tradition borne by competent hands. Important too, is the fact that the observatory is still, first and foremost, existent in the interests of scientific research. It may be for this reason that during 90 years of off-and-on existence, the observatory has turned from weather forecasting to astronomy and now to the field of geophysics.

Three present projects of the observatory are concerned with this vital field. First, the daily 24-hour observation of ionospheric (the upper atmosphere) conditions of the Philippines. Cosmic noises, magnetic fields in the upper air and large quantities of electrically charged particles which affect radio communications are detected by the observatory's scientists.



HOME FOR the Manila Observatory at present is the Ateneo campus in Loyola Heights, Q.C.

Second, the daily optical watch of the sun's activity. A relatively new field, the solar research conducted by the observatory maps, records, and photographs sunspots and other solar disturbances by means of a spectroheliograph. Through the results, scientists are able to foresee atmospheric disturbances above the earth.

Third, the graphic recording of earthquakes and conditions in the Pacific basin with seismic instruments stationed at Loyola Heights and Mirador Hill, Baguio City. The Manila Observatory relays their findings to other members of the Seismic Warning System of the Pacific.

Nourishing all these research projects is the observatory staff of 35. To their work, they bring years of education and experience and steadfast dedication. It will take of course some time for us outsiders to understand the full impact of what these people are doing in relation to our lives and the demands of our times. Consider in confidence, however, that every sunspot or earth tremor they may be observing is important, one more attempt of man to bring himself closer to the world about him.