

Astronomy Report  
03/02/2016  
Arthur Lillo

Sky Conditions:  
Partly Cloudy  
Wind Conditions:  
Slight  
Observation Start Time:  
4:15 A.M.  
Observation End Time:  
5 A.M.

#### Summary:

Today we decided to wake up quite early in the morning to enjoy a new view of the winter sky: around 4 A.M., Mars, Saturn and the Moon rise on the horizon, and the Milky Way shows us its center (partly hidden behind dark gas clouds).

We were able to see through the newly fixed telescope the spectacular rings of Saturn, it was marvelous! We could also spot the yellow glow of Titan in the vicinity. Not far away (from our point of view), we explored the Moon's chaotic surface, with the terminator revealing the craters' deepness. As we watched our satellite, we evaluated the probability of a hidden Nazi colony on the far side of the Moon (I don't know what gave us this idea, maybe the movie Iron Sky that we watched the night before...). Anyway, Nazi or not, the Moon was really beautiful tonight. Next planet we observed: Mars. Wait... we are supposed to be on it right now, this bright orange circle in the sky must be a collective hallucination given by the beans of the dinner! Or someone launched a giant mirror into space. Perhaps the Nazis, who knows...?

When moving the telescope around, I spotted through the eyepiece a slowly-moving dot: thanks to the software Stellarium, I came to the conclusion that I have seen Okean-3, a Russian satellite launched in 1991 for oceanographic observation.

After the closing of the observatory, we tried to find the center of the Milky Way, but the Moon was too close to it in the sky and too shiny, so we could not distinguish the dark gas clouds. That was our only deception of tonight. We plan to try again the night between Friday and Saturday, our last night on Mars.

#### Objects viewed:

Saturn and Titan, the Moon, Mars, Milky Way

#### Problems encountered:

We have had difficulties closing the dome's shutter. Although we had turned off the black box during our observation to save the battery, the shutter seemed not to have enough power to move. We had to turn the box off and on many times to make the shutter move, about 5cm each time. I had similar difficulties during a previous night but at the time I did not report them: indeed, I knew that I had let the box turned on during the whole observation. Now, we have an unsolved issue.