

## 25 x 100 binoculars- By Anna and Terry Vacani

### Zeiss 25x100 binocular *flm* WWII

#### 1. The short history of binocular production.

#### 2. Production after the WWII

#### 3. The technical information

#### 4. Used in Astronomy

#### 1. The short history of binocular production.

The binoculars were made by Feinapparate Bau G.m.b.H., Werk Thurn (*flm*).<sup>1</sup> This company was founded in 1939, and was fully owned by Carl Zeiss Jena until May 1945.

The first 25x100 models were marked 'Carl Zeiss'. Then marking was changed to '*blc*', and after that was changed to '*rln*'. The last production of this model was marked '*flm*'. The production of 25x100 *flm* began in 1944 in Werk Thurn (Teplice in Czech, at the present time).

The 25x100 was designed to be mounted on a large rangefinder to locate night flying aircraft. The binocular was used at the experiments with the V1 and V2, to follow a trajectory of the missiles V1 and V2.

To the end of the war (late 1944 – early 1945), it was produced about 3.000 binoculars with code *flm*.

#### 2. Production after the WWII

It is difficult to precisely describe the further production history, of the binoculars 25x100, after the war. Never were published any documents from that period.

We have heard information from some collectors who visited the factory, in Czech.

After the war, the factory was nationalized.

In the factory were left many assembled binoculars, which have not been delivered to the Wehrmacht.

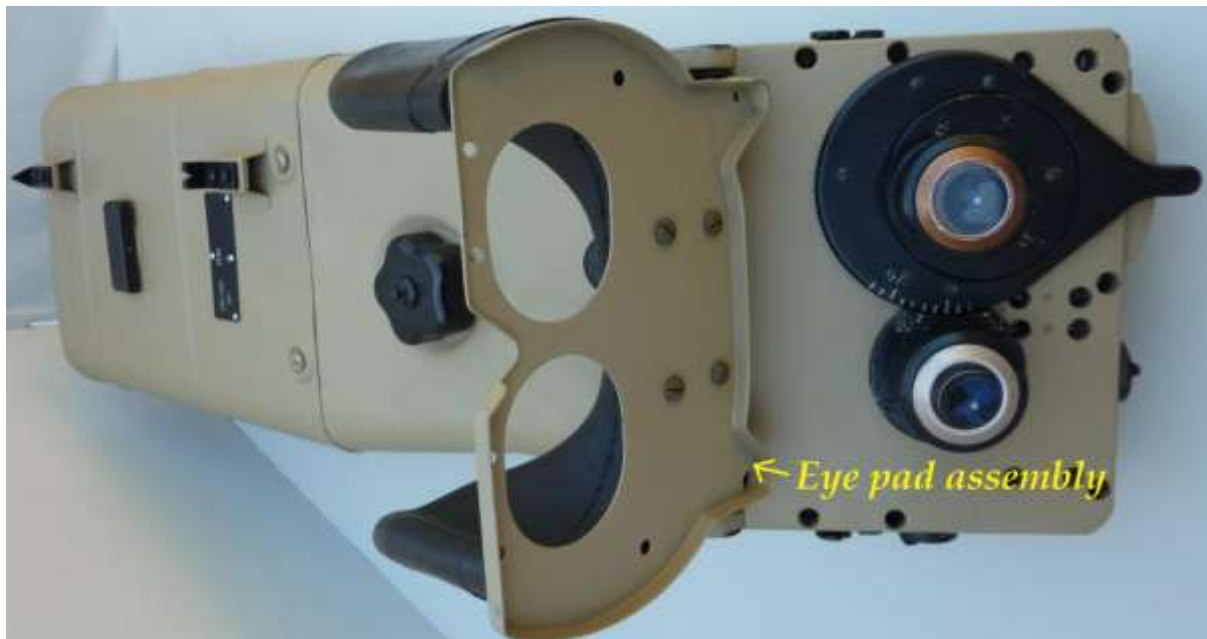
A lot of these binoculars were modified for civilian use. Some were exported to Sweden in original form.

Once which were modified for civilian use was sold under the name "Somert" later "Meopta".

Except the name the binoculars' construction has not changed.

The changes were made with the outside features, as:

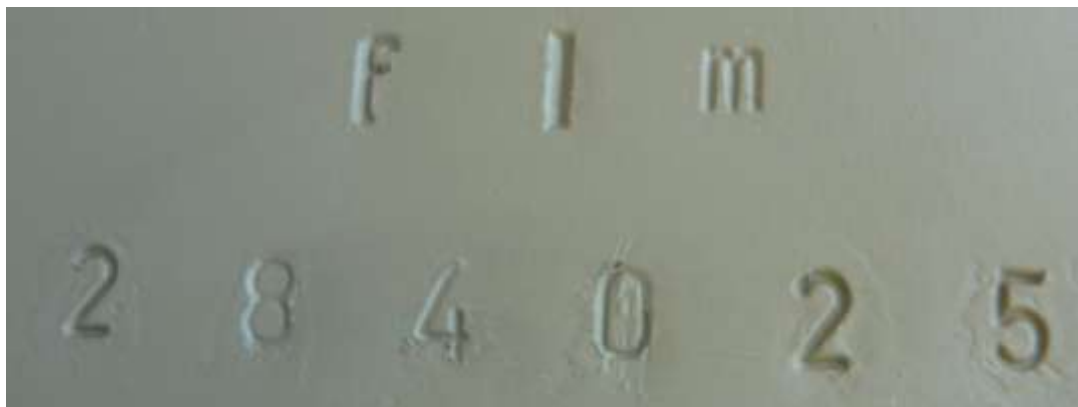
- The colour was changed from German army beige colour; It was repainted with texture paint, some a cream colour, some grey and some dark green;
- The bracket was removed – the bracket and rubber eye pad assembly ;



- The reticule unit and adjusters were removed; The dovetail for the reticle lamp mounting was removed;
- The two air drying ports was removed;
- The holes left by removing these parts were filled up with patty;
- The metal eye piece, focusing rings, had a thread put on the top to take plastic eye cups;
- The top body over the prism box (housing box) was covered with an aluminium pressing plate, painted black, with the name "Somet" or later "Meopta".



Only one feature of outside body was not changed – the code 'flm' and the serial numbers underneath.

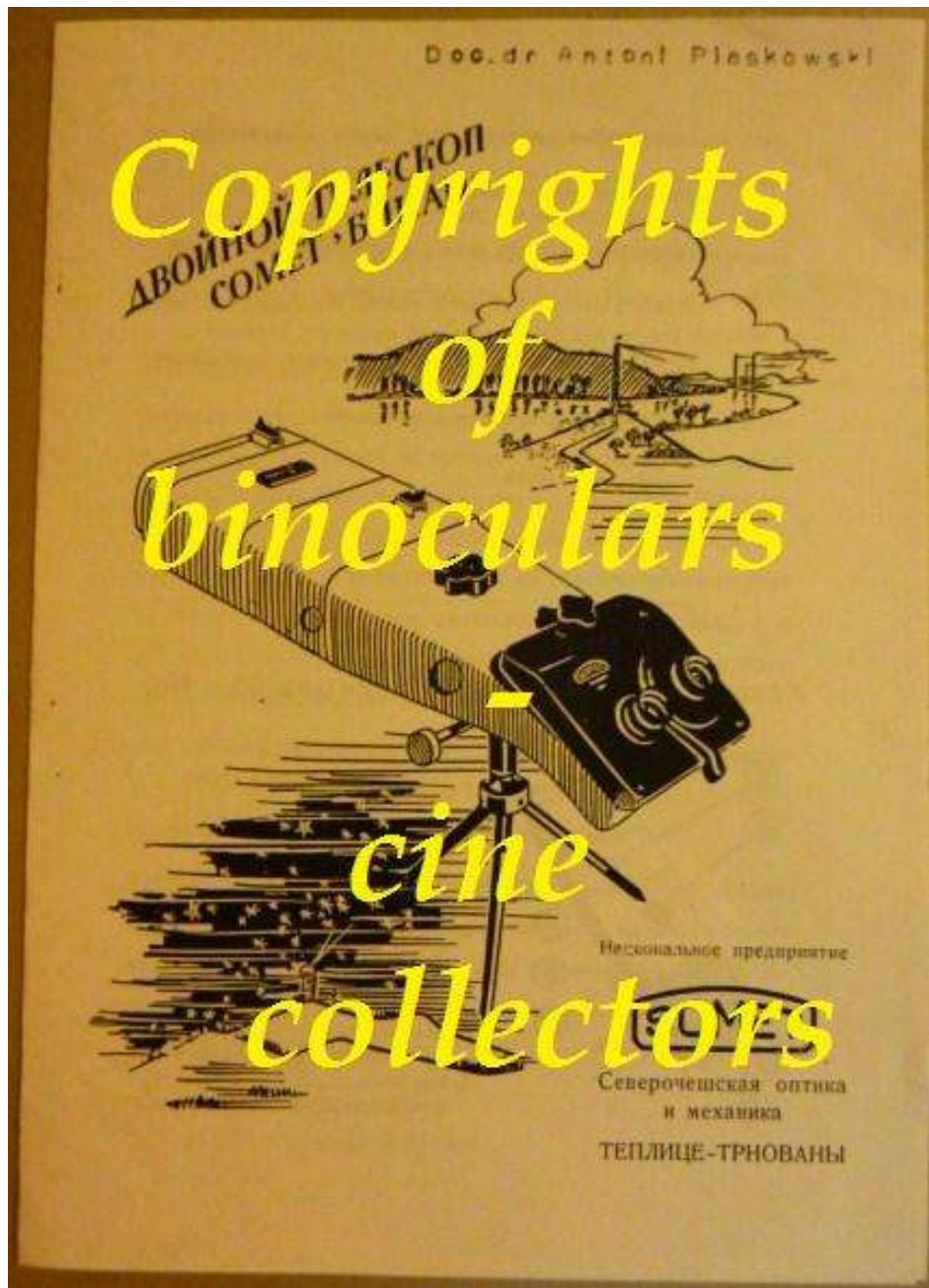


Summarizing the features which were changed, we can say, they were only cosmetics changes. The optical and mechanical constructions, of the binocular, remain the original, as it was designed, previously.

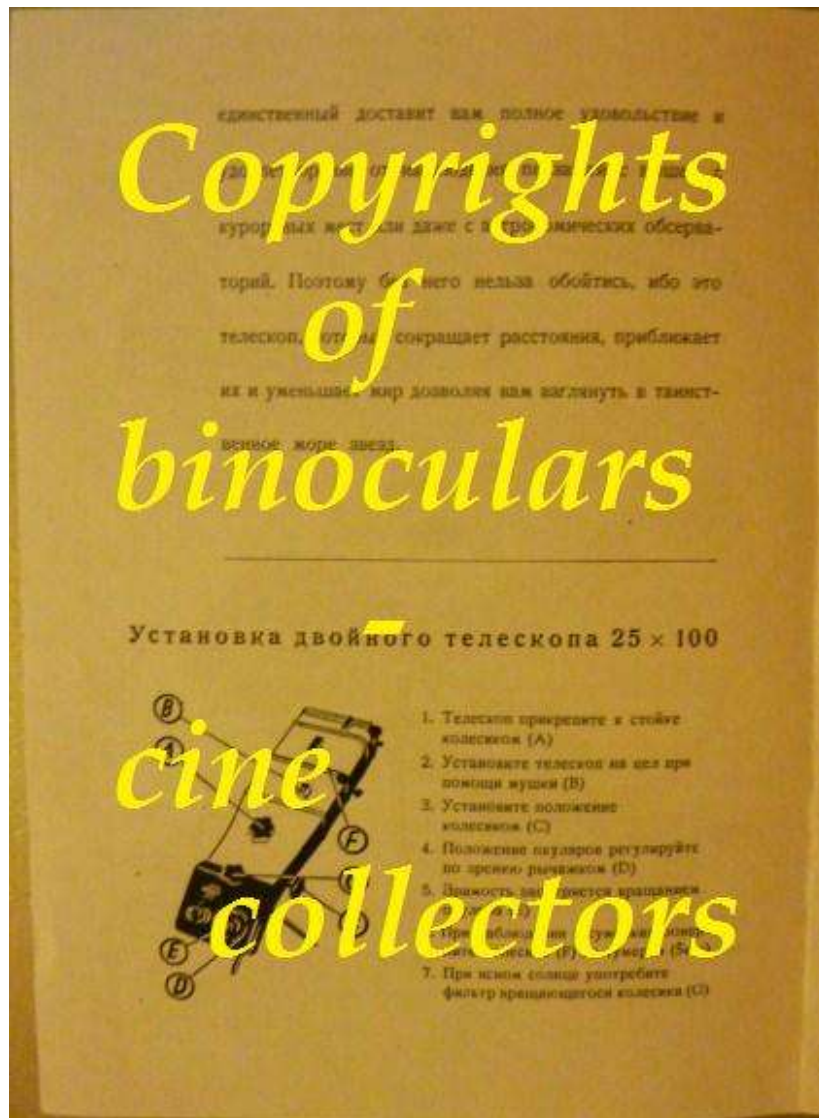
It is difficult to say, when the factory change name from "Somet" into "Meopta". It appears, as the National company Meopta united four factories, among them: Optikotechna (Optikotechna G.m.b.H in Prerau during the war – war time cod 'dov')<sup>2</sup>; Somet and others. Presumably the unification with Meopta took place in the early 50s. It is not specified on the new web site of the "Meopta" company.

In our collection, we have a copy of the leaflet issued by the factory Somet - National Factory "Somet" North Czech Optics and Mechanics, Teplice-Trnovany.

In the leaflet is described the binocular Somet 25x100 with the instruction, how to use the binocular and all technical details. The last page advertised other optical instruments produced in the factory. The leaflet is in Russian language.



*The leaflet issued by the factory Somet from our collection- page 1*



*The leaflet issued by the factory Somet from our collection- page 2*

The Czech astronomer Ludmila Pajduškova had discovered the first her new comet, in 1946 (look into chapter 4), what is mentioned in the leaflet.

When the factory changed name again into Meopta, the name of the binocular changed as well.





As it is visible in the picture, after the war “Somet” made, own construction, a table top tripod.

### 3. The technical information

It was conceded to be one of the finest binocular this is ever built. The real field of view of this instrument in angular measure is 3.6 degree, with an apparent field angle of 90 degrees. Field of view in 1000 meters is 64 meters.

Diameter of the exit pupil is 4 mm. Light transmitting capacity – 16, in the factory’s leaflet is underlined this feature as given an opportunity for observing during the dusk.

The next information, included and highlighted in the leaflet, is possibility of astronomical observation stars like comets, as far as to number 9, in the Morgan-Keenan system, of star classification.

Placing the binocular on the tripod it is possible to observe, in vertical position, the field below the horizon in 45°, and above horizon in 75°.

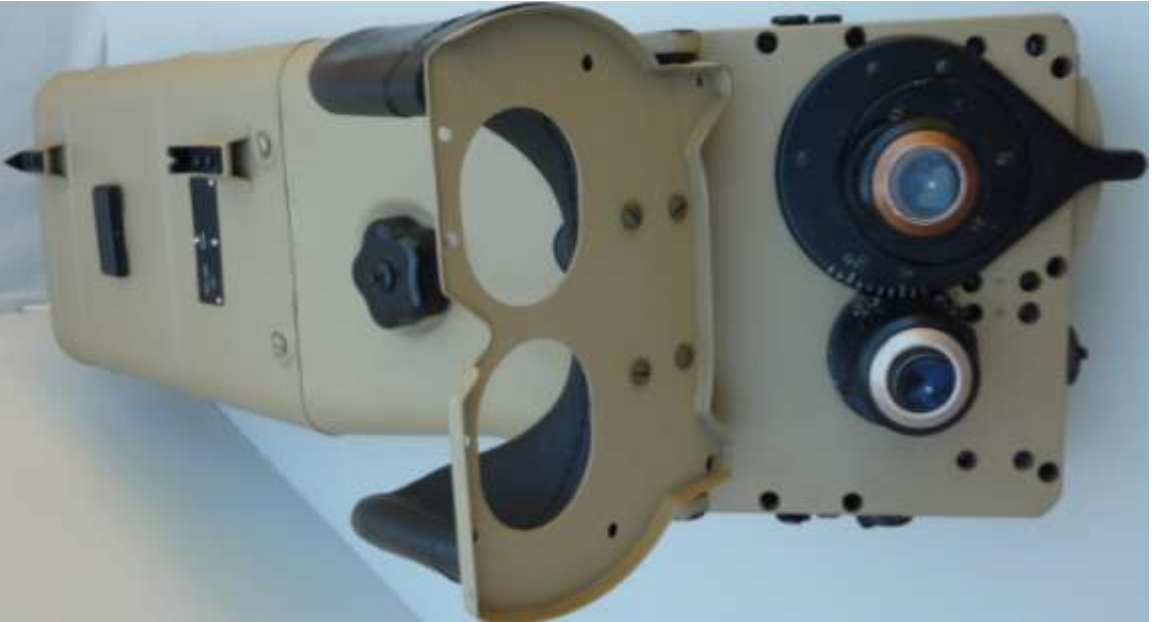
**Film production No 284025 in our collection**

The body was manufactured from two metal parts. One is still casting and the other is welded sheet metal stampings.

The binocular has got a forehead rest.

The condition of the binocular in our collection: The binocular is in good condition. Optically it is very good; no scratches, no chip. The binocular is in very good collimation. The glasses are fully coated. It has built in neutral density filters. Underneath of the prism box is the number. All knobs and mechanisms are working very well.









The prism system it is a roof-deviation combination with 60 degree exit face. In the book 'Militärische Ferngläser und Fernrohre in Heer, Luftwaffe und Marine' by Dr Hans T. Seeger is the drawing of the prism system: <sup>3</sup>

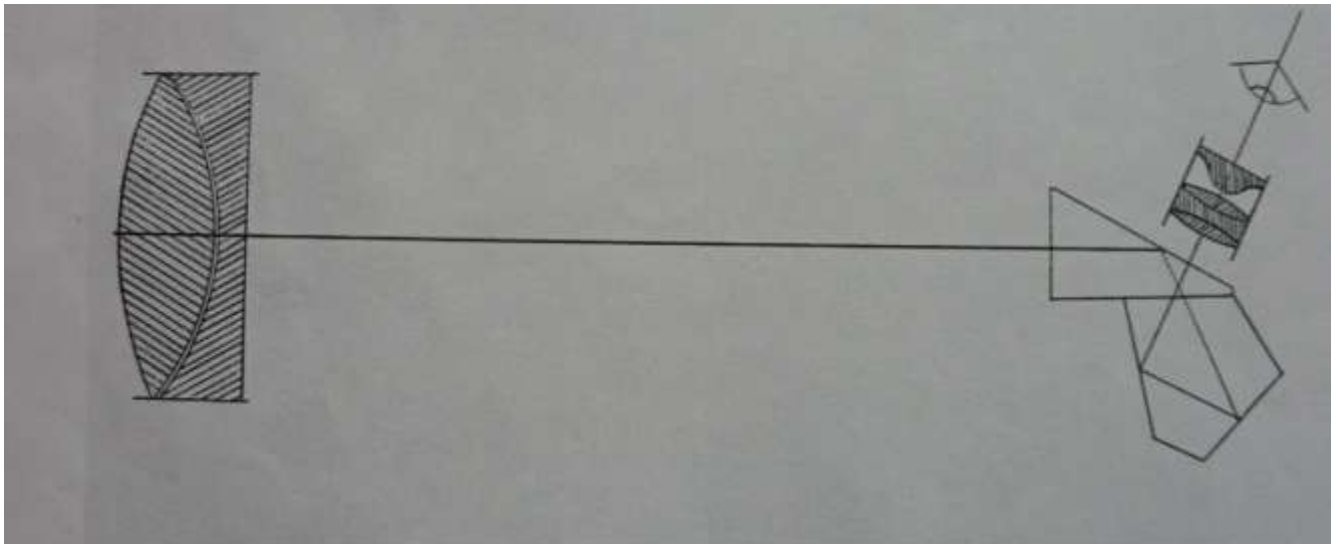
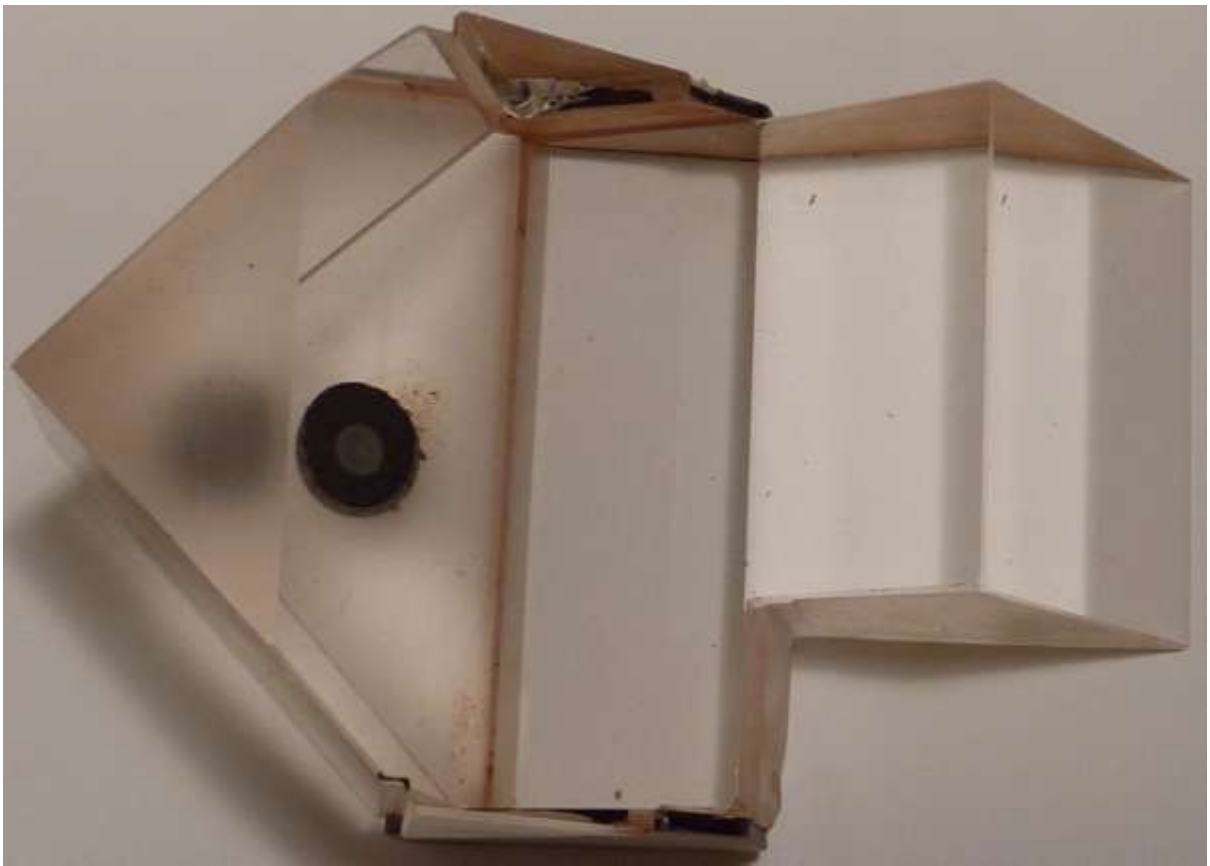
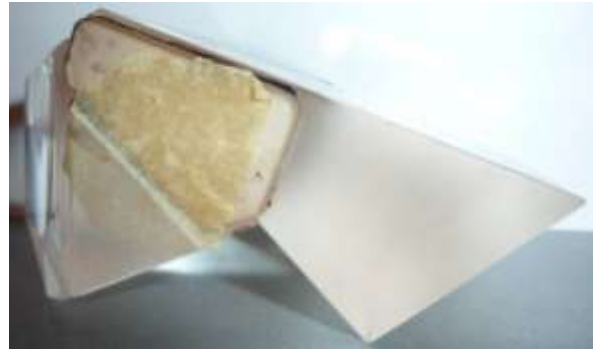
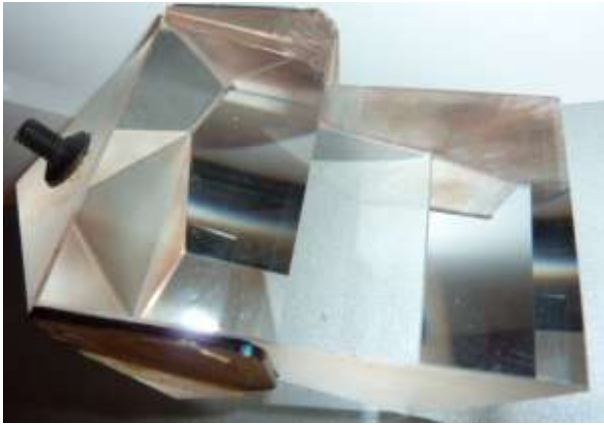
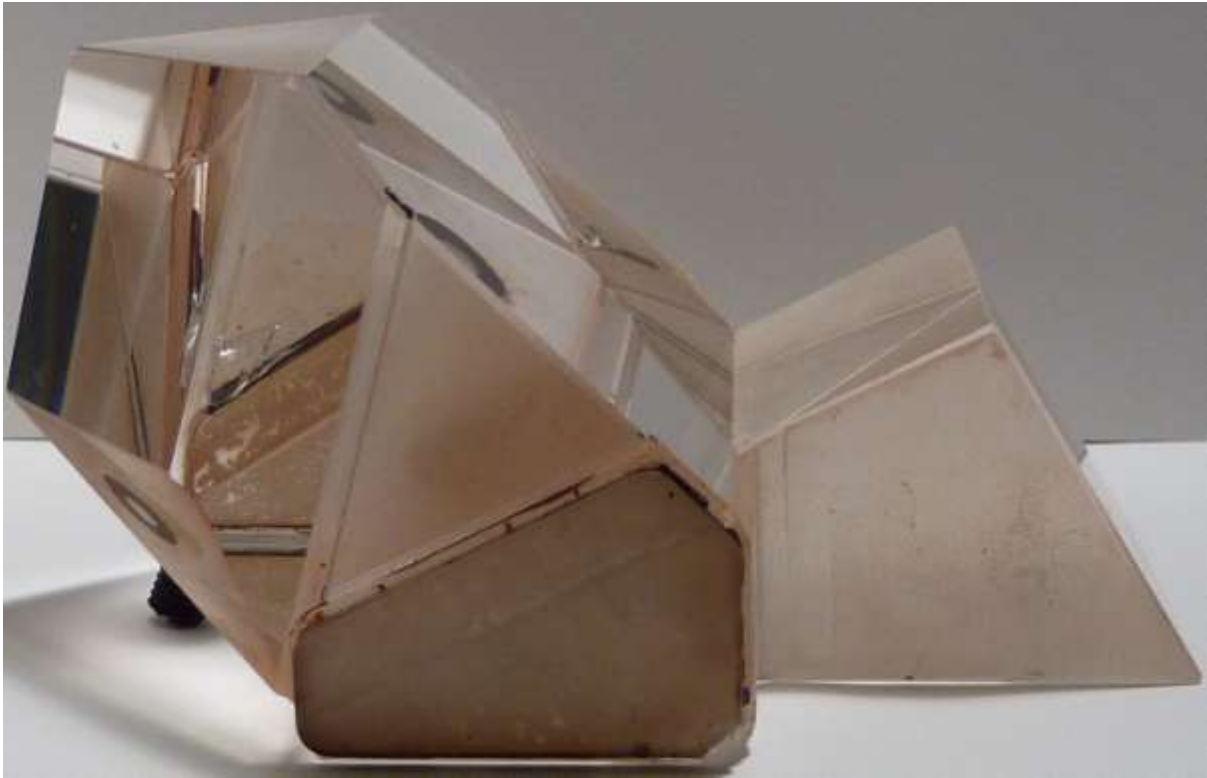


Fig. 163 25 x 100 Zeiss Binocular. Vertical section

- Drawing: Kevin K. Kuhne -

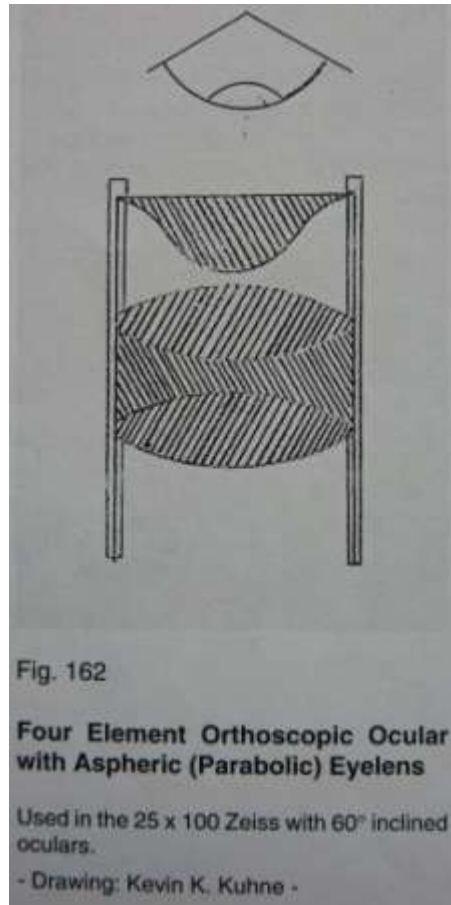




*The pictures of the original prism – it is damaged in a few places.*

The prism has extremely flat surface. It is assembled only by vacuum without balsam-glued. It has two sides' plates of glass, stacked on with a plaster.

The ocular is built up from four elements including an aspheric lens. The eyepieces are of orthoscopic design with the eye lens having an aspheric curve, in this case parabolic, consequential in a large evident field angle:



The left – hand ocular is provided with an illuminated reticule.

The binocular has a very high light transmission, which gives a lot brighter picture than the 'kqc' Schneider 25x105.

#### 4. Used in Astronomy

This extremely high light transmission of the binocular gives the possibility to observe the sky in the night. In July 1992, Magazine 'Sky & Telescope' published an article about the members of the Czech Astronomical Society, who discovered 18 comets, from 1946 to 1959, using 25x100 binoculars, produced in Czech, by Carl Zeiss Jena, during the WWII. Here is the article and the pictures, from our collection:

# Amateur Astronomers

*Conducted by Stephen James O'Meara*



Ludmilla Pajdusakova ranks third among women comet discoverers, yet her name survives only in relative obscurity. Brian Marsden photographed her in 1967 at Skalnaté Pleso Observatory in Czechoslovakia. She's looking through the 25 × 100 binoculars with which she discovered six comets.



## THE FORGOTTEN COMET HUNTER OF SKALNATE PLESO

EVERYONE in today's astronomical community is likely to recognize the name Carolyn Shoemaker. With the sole exception of the great 19th-century French observer Jean-Louis Pons, she is the most successful comet discoverer in history. Certainly, in a field dominated by men, Shoemaker's accomplishment shines all the more extraordinarily.

But she is not the first of her gender to achieve comet fame. Two centuries ago, for example, Caroline Herschel, the astronomically proficient sister of William Herschel, discovered eight comets. Likewise, during the mid-19th century Maria Mitchell of Nantucket Island received a gold medal for her discovery of Comet 1847 VI, and she is known to have independently sighted several others.

Yet, in a field with such potential for lasting fame, fate can be very fickle indeed. The names of some comet discoverers have remained familiar literally for centuries. Yet other people, sometimes equally distinguished when they were pro-

ductive, have slipped into obscurity. Ludmilla Pajdusakova is one of the latter. She deserves to be better remembered, however, both for her individual successes and for her contribution to a unique comet-hunting program conducted in Czechoslovakia.

During World War II observatories were understaffed, and new instruments were essentially unobtainable. New institutions were small and often poorly equipped, few flourished, and many others succumbed even before the echoes of war had faded.

In 1943 Antonin Becvar founded Skalnaté Pleso Observatory, a relatively modest (even austere) stone structure with large domes appended to either end. The observatory's location in the craggy, windswept Tatra Mountains gave it a singularly inhospitable, almost sinister appearance, particularly in winter. At an elevation of 5,850 feet, the observatory was well placed for astronomical research, but it was short on equipment. A 24-inch

Zeiss reflector served as the main telescope, which was supplemented largely by small, wide-field astrocameras.

In early 1946 Becvar obtained a few pairs of giant binoculars. Called Somet-Binars, these 25 × 100 instruments had Zeiss optics that provided a huge, yet well corrected 3°.7 field of view. The eyepieces were tilted at a 60° angle to the optical axis, so they were ideally suited to scanning the heavens in relative comfort.

Becvar worked with a limited staff of mainly young astronomers. Among them was Pajdusakova, then a 28-year-old specialist in solar research. At the end of the war the focus of Czech astronomy was rapidly turning toward comets and interplanetary matter, and Becvar thought his staff should proceed with such studies. And to what better purpose could these wonderful binoculars be put than comet hunting?

A systematic program of comet sweeping was quickly established. The procedure called for nightly searches using multiple observers. In the tradition of comet hunters since the time of Charles Messier, the Czechs made horizontal sweeps of the sky, starting low in the west after dusk and working up to 50° altitude. The technique was reversed when examining the eastern sky before dawn. Each session required 60 to 90 minutes of sheer concentration. Most of the Skalnaté Pleso staff participated in the program, including Becvar.

Pajdusakova was the first to succeed; on May 30, 1946, she discovered a 7th-magnitude comet in the morning sky. It was the first of five comets that by 1954 would

carry her name. Pajdusakova actually found six comets, for late in September, 1956, she swept up a 10th-magnitude object that proved to be Periodic Comet Crommelin, returning after a 27-year absence. In a situation not unlike that of Periodic Comet Brorsen-Metcalf in 1989, Crommelin was some 10° from its anticipated location when Pajdusakova spotted it. Officially credited as a recovery, it was the last comet she was to find even though the Skalnaté Pleso comet-hunting program continued until 1959. The operation lasted 13 years and produced an astonishing 18 discoveries by five observers.

Pajdusakova died in October, 1979, but little note seems to have been taken outside her native country. The obituary in the *Bulletin* of the Astronomical Institutes of Czechoslovakia cites her work on sunspots, coronal asymmetry, and comet discovery. Equally lauded is her presidency of the Slovak Astronomical Society from 1962 until 1974, through which she acted as an adviser to public observatories and astronomy clubs popularizing amateur astronomy throughout her country.

The fact that her comet-hunting efforts, by time-honored visual methods, brought her within two discoveries of Caroline Herschel's old record should be enough to save Pajdusakova's name from obscurity. That she was a part of one of the most innovative programs ever instituted at a professional observatory should assure it.

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<sup>1</sup> Liste der Fertigungskennzeichen für Waffen, Munition und Gerät (Nach Buchstabengruppen geordnet) Berlin 1944 Gedruckt im Oberkommando des Heeres. Originalgetreuer Nachdruck, herausgegeben von Karl R. Pawlas, Publizistisches Archiv für Militär- und Waffenwesen. Nürnberg 1977 (ISBN 3 – 88088 – 214 – 2)

<sup>2</sup> As above

<sup>3</sup> Hans T. Seeger - Militärische Ferngläser und Fernrohre in Heer, Luftwaffe und Marine; Military Binoculars and Telescope for Land, Air and Sea Service. Germany Hamburg 1995; ISBN 3-00-000457-2.