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WHEN THE STUDIES OF GERMAN SPOUSES WERE ENCOURAGED BY THE FRENCH
ASTRONAUTIC PIONNEERS (1927-MID 30'S)

Abstract

After the First World War, Germany is subject to significant constraints related to the "diktat of Versailles", limiting the researches in many areas, with some exceptions such as rockets. Thus, in the 1920s, a lot of gear trials have been performed. At the same time, in France, studies on rockets are organized under the guidance of Robert Esnault-Pelterie. At the end of 1927, Robert Esnault-Pelterie contributed to the creation, within the French Astronomical Society (SAF), of the "Astronautics Committee", an organization in charge, firstly of rocket's research all over in the world, and secondly of the attribution of an International Astronautics Prize (also called "REP-Hirsch" in honor of its President Esnault-Pelterie and his patron-secretary Louis-Hirsch). The Astronautics Committee then follows with great interest the researches carried out in Germany, which have become popular and revealed by media. Not surprisingly, the first International Astronautics Prize was awarded in 1929 to Hermann Oberth for his book *Wege zur Raumschiffahrt*. The author will write a little bit later with astonishment: "I honestly did not believe that in France, one would grant this prize to a German". It was indeed during eleven years after the 1914-18 war ... Links and friendships are thus built between German and French pioneers. On several occasions, the Astronautics Committee sends one of its members to Germany to observe the German studies, especially those concerning the dynamic Verein für Raumschiffahrt (VfR). Subjugated by the German astronautic advances, the SAF is the spokesperson of the VfR in France ... contributing to the Franco-German rapprochement. Unfortunately, Hitler's rise to power in 1933 quickly put an end to scientific exchanges. Rocket studies become confidential and the Astronautics Committee did not survive to the events of the Second World War.