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THE SWEDISH INTERPLANETARY SOCIETY (1950-1969) AND THE FORMATION OF IAF AND
IAA

Abstract

With a growing interest for rocket technology and space travel after the WW II a number of new “space societies” were formed in the period 1948-51 in addition to the ones already existing since before the WW II (in Germany, UK and US). Soon came the need for a common international platform for exchange of information and experience, and the concept of an international federation of astronautical societies emerged. Sweden was one of 8 countries to sign the original declaration to create an International Astronautical Federation on October 2, 1950 in Paris at the 1st International Astronautical Congress. A few days after the historical event in Paris the Swedish Society for Space Research (Svenska Sällskapet för Rymdforskning) was formed, and the name was to be changed two years later to the Swedish Interplanetary Society (Svenska Interplanetariska Sällskapet, SIS). Sweden was one of 10 countries to sign the IAF foundation in 1951 in London and in the following year the first Constitution of IAF in Stuttgart. The SIS soon grew to a membership of several hundred persons and the membership in IAF promoted an intensive exchange of journals, and the annual participation at the IAC gave growth to start study projects on spacecraft and sounding rockets, and the publication of astronautical journals in Swedish. In 1957 the first Swede was elected vice president of IAF. Soon after the IAF foundation the idea of an international body of distinguished individuals emerged, in addition to the body of “member-societies” (IAF). Upon the initiative of Theodor von Karman, Eugen Sänger and Andrew Haley the IAF council approval of an astronautical academy was given on August 15, 1960 during the 11th IAC in Stockholm. On the next day the first meeting of the International Academy of Astronautics (IAA) took place, confirming the first group of 45 members and electing Theodor von Karman its first president. This 11th IAC in Stockholm gave a large publicity to space research and astronautics in Sweden, and put the activities of the SIS in the focus of the general public. This paper presents the Swedish involvement in the foundation of IAF and IAA. It also gives an overview on the positive influence of these two organisations on the work and progress of the Swedish Interplanetary Society and the diffusion of astronautics to the general public in Sweden.