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YONATAN MASS, THE FATHER OF ISRAELI REMOTE SENSING SATELLITES

Abstract

A German born, Dr. Yonatan Mass (1922-2003) fled Germany on 1933 after Hitler's ascent. He was a brilliant engineer at RAFAEL, Israel's leading military R&D organ for decades. He was involved with various missile projects, and won the national prize for defense for his accomplishments. He started to dream about Israeli space endeavour's long before a national space program was a reality. Since the early 1960's he was advocating for Israeli space activities, including a satellite ground station. He was a visionary and pioneer of the idea of building an Israeli satellite, and in 1980 he proved that a light weight remote sensing satellite could provide the high quality images, like those of a much larger and heavier satellite. Mass's work was adopted to a PDR status, before turned over to RAFAEL's competitor - Israel Aircraft Industries, where the basic design was used to build the first Israeli satellite in 1988. On April 1995, Israel launched "Ofek 3", it's first operational remote sensing satellite, based heavily on Mass design.

Mass was called "the father of Israel's remote sensing satellite" even though the satellite was not built at RAFAEL. Mass was awarded a special honorary award from the Israeli national R&D council on 2001.

The life and work of Dr. Mass will be portrayed on the paper, as a continuation of the author's series of biographies of Israel's space pioneers.