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TEÓFILO TABANERA, FATHER OF THE ARGENTINE SPACE PROGRAM

**Abstract**

No other figure was able to organize and catalyze the seminal interest in space exploration in Argentina more than Teófilo Tabanera. Born in 1909, Tabanera showed an early interest in the possibilities of space travel and dedicated most of his life to popularize it in his country. Present in the original first meeting which led to the creation of the International Astronautical Federation, Tabanera was able to bring his enthusiasm in this new discipline. He created the Sociedad Argentina Inteplanetaria (1949) which was the first space enthusiast's organization in Latin America. An avid writer Tabanera wrote the first books about space exploration in Spanish, and organized many courses and conferences on the subject. When the Comisión Nacional de Investigaciones Espaciales (the Argentine Space Agency) was created in 1960 by a decree of President Frondizi, Tabanera was appointed as its first administrator. There, with meager funds he organized launch campaigns and international projects on sounding rockets. Thanks to his knowledge of the international space sector, Tabanera invited many experts to Argentina, among them Wernher von Braun and even the Apollo XI crew, just a few months after their return from the Moon. He continued his activities in the IAF serving as vice president for seven terms, and was a cofounder of the International Academy of Astronautics (I.A.A.). His many contributions both to the Argentine and international space sector are a testimony to his undying enthusiasm and interest in space as a way for the betterment of humankind.