

56th IAA HISTORY OF ASTRONAUTICS SYMPOSIUM (E4)
Scientific and Technical Histories (2)

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THE ORIGIN OF THE GEOSTATIONARY ORBIT CONCEPT

Abstract

The idea to place a satellite into a geostationary orbit is often attributed to Hermann Potočnik, who discussed it in his book “The Problem of Space Travel” at the end of the 1920s. However, it is long known that Konstantin E. Tsiolkovsky mentioned it already in his novel “Beyond the Planet Earth” published in the Soviet Union in 1920, but it was noticed in the West only several decades later and did not influence the early space pioneers. The geostationary orbit as one possible orbit for a space station was discussed among the German-speaking space pioneers even before Potočnik’s publication and can be traced back to Max Valier’s popular introduction to the problems of spaceflight “Advance into Space” of 1924. How he most probably might have arrived at this idea will be outlined in this paper.