

FIRST SPUTNIK IS DIM IN RUSSIANS' MEMORY

20th Anniversary Marked by Few in Moscow, but Government May Take Some Action Today

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Special to The New York Times

MOSCOW, Oct. 3—The launching of Sputnik 1 20 years ago was an event that few Americans, surprised and humbled by it, will ever forget. But in Moscow today, many Russians seem to have forgotten what all the fuss was about.

"Sputnik?" said a grandmother walking a little girl in the park when she was asked what she felt when she heard the news on Oct. 4, 1957. "You mean Yuri Gagarin?"

Colonel Gagarin's orbital space flight in 1961, also a first, seems to be more widely remembered here than the 184-pound satellite with which the Soviet Union opened the space age four years earlier.

The occasion, so far, has been marked here with surprisingly little fanfare. On Sept. 29, the Russians launched a seven-and-one-half-ton unmanned space station called Salyut 6, and, recalling the space spectaculars of earlier days, many people here expect a manned launching to follow soon, perhaps in time for the Sputnik anniversary tomorrow.

"We are preparing astronauts now to work on board the orbiting stations," said Vladimir A. Shatalov, a senior Soviet astronaut, at a news conference today, "and a launching will follow soon, but we cannot say anything more specific."

Talk After the Event

"The Soviets talk freely about their space shots—after they've happened," said an American official who was here last spring as part of the growing exchange of space data between the two countries. The Americans were also told by Soviet officials that secrecy was part of the national tradition.

There was no such exchange of information in 1957, and as Nikita S. Khrushchev, the Soviet leader at the time, later wrote in his memoirs, "The United States might have been willing to cooperate with us, but we weren't willing to cooperate with them." He added, "We knew that if we let them have a look at our rocket, they'd easily be able to copy it and soon have more than we had."

The big booster that sent Sputnik into orbit was believed at the time to be more powerful than anything the United States had in its arsenal, and to this day Soviet space-launching technology emphasizes brute power over sophistication.

Secrecy is still an obsession, while perhaps no longer a fetish. American and Soviet space scientists have exchanged samples from the moon, American astronauts have been taken to see the mission control center at Kaliningrad, 15 miles northeast of Moscow, and they visited the Soviet launching pads at Baikonur in Central Asia in April 1975. Finally, that July, Russian and American crews met in space and docked their Soyuz and Apollo space ships for two days.

Not Even a Hint in 1957

Col. (now Brig. Gen.) Aleksei A. Leonov, the commander of the Soyuz crew on that flight, said later, "In 1957 no prophet would have predicted that Soviet and American astronauts would be working together in space."

Soviet space science strove for and achieved an impressive number of firsts in the early days with the first unmanned flight to the moon in 1959 and Colonel Gagarin's pioneering space flight in 1961. But the Soviet Union apparently conceded the "race" to put a man on the moon to the United States. It sent the first automatic probes to Mars and Venus in 1970 and 1971, but the quality of the data transmitted back to earth from those planets was far inferior to the American missions five years later.

"We are not planning to send a space ship with a man aboard to the moon," Roald Z. Sagdeyev, director of the Institute of Space Research of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, said today. The Russians maintain that their automatic lunar landers do the job better.

Oleg G. Gazyenko, a leading space medicine expert here, said that the emphasis now would be on long-term manned space flights around the earth, and the effects — physiological and psychological—on astronauts.

Joint Biological Experiment

Last month the United States put an experiment using live mice aboard a Soviet satellite carrying out biological experiments, and there have already been discussions this year about operating an international space station in the 1980's after the American space shuttle goes into operation.

Soviet automated moon exploration vehicles have used American-made maps and Russian and American scientists have exchanged lunar samples from many areas of the moon to get a better idea of its origins. "The Soviets have plans, it seems, to send more ground probes to Venus next year," a Western diplomat said, "and we've had some cooperation with them on that program, but we could have more."

The Russians gave pictures taken by their last short-lived Venus probe to Western scientists in 1975.

When ordinary Russians do remember the original Sputnik, it is with pride. The writer Lev Kopelev, for instance, had been in Stalin's prison camps from 1945 until 1954, in a case of injustice typical of those times. But when Sputnik was launched, he said: "I felt very proud, in spite of all I'd gone through at the hands of the system that produced it. I had expected that the Americans would launch the first satellite and when the Soviet Union did instead, I felt proud—in spite of everything."