

SPUTNIK, "MUTTNIK" and GAGARIN: THE RACE TO OUTER SPACE

During the Cold War, the battlefield shifted to a race between the Soviets and the Americans to be the first to conquer outer space, orbit the earth and land on the moon. In October, 1957 the Russians made the first successful launch of a man-made satellite to orbit the earth. They named it "Sputnik" which means "traveling companion." Sputnik made 1400 revolutions of the earth before disintegrating in January 1958.

Sputnik marked the beginning of the Space Age, and was followed one month later by Sputnik 2, this time with a separate sealed cabin containing an experimental dog called Laika, dubbed "Muttik" by the press. In those early days of space exploration, the Soviets tested their rocket capabilities using dogs because they believed they could endure long periods of inactivity better than other animals.

The Russians made history again with the first manned space flight of cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin in 1961. He was greeted as a hero in Great Britain and other trips abroad following this momentous event.

Though the Americans were the first to land a man on the moon in 1968, subsequent space exploration in the following decades involved several joint ventures with astronauts and cosmonauts, starting in 1975 with the orbital link-up of a Soviet "Soyuz" capsule and a U.S. "Apollo" spacecraft.

A model of the original "Sputnik 1" is displayed in the UN Public Lobby, a gift presented to the UN by the Soviet Union in 1959.