

SPACE PIONEERS

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Since ancient times, people, looking at the sky, thought about the infinity of the universe, sparkling stars, the hot Sun and the night Moon. Our ancestors, like today's inhabitants of planet Earth, wanted to know what was happening in space, where the gods lived, how cosmic bodies were formed, etc. Later, there were people who took the first steps in space exploration and sky flights. Let's recall the myth of Icarus, the creation of the first simple aircraft, parachutes, artificial Earth satellites. The achievements of Soviet scientists who were able to carry out the first human space flight are great here. The space age began in the Soviet Union with the launch of the first artificial satellite on October 4, 1957, and with the first Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin, who made his famous historic flight on April 12, 1961.

The first living creature launched into orbit was the dog Laika on November 3, 1957. After making several turns, Laika died from overheating at the apogee of the orbit. On August 19, 1960, Sputnik-5 was launched in the USSR, with dogs Belka and Strelka on board. It was the world's first return animal orbital flight. In the USA, in 1961, a spacecraft with the chimpanzee Ham on board was launched. Ham returned alive. In 1968, two Central Asian turtles were on board the Soviet Zond-5 spacecraft, which flew around the Moon [1]. In addition to dogs, monkeys and turtles, rabbits, guinea pigs, rats, mice, quails, newts, frogs, snails and some fish species have also visited space. There are also known attempts to launch hamsters and geckos. And the first animals of the Earth born in space are cockroaches.

On April 12, 1961, Gagarin made the first orbital flight on the Vostok-1 spacecraft. This flight is full of myths. Many details of the flight and rocket were classified, as the spacecraft was nothing more than a modified intercontinental missile designed to launch a nuclear strike on

America. Also, the myth that Gagarin is not the first person is an absolute lie. Only animals and “Ivan Ivanovich” had flown before him. That's what scientists called the mannequins that flew into orbit. It wasn't just a doll: the doctors tried to stuff it with all sorts of sensors. As for the flight itself, it has never been normal. A total of 14 emergency situations are known including quite serious ones.

As a result, human attraction to space has allowed us to obtain new data for research, and technologies created for space exploration and solving problems in it have found applications on earth. In addition to scientific and technological achievements, space programs have resulted in an impact on politics and social life: a) ideological rivalry between the USSR and the USA; b) the threat of using outer space for military purposes; c) the creation of international treaties and agreements on space activities – that space is the property of all mankind and no country has the right to claim it [1].

Space flights have had a more than positive impact on the lives of ordinary people. They allowed to create entire book and film genres, and also contributed to the popularization of science. Space flights brought people together, they were interesting to everyone, from young to old. Every third child in the USSR dreamed of becoming an astronaut. Space was very mysterious to the average person. As a result, being a citizen of the country where your compatriot was the first in history to go into space, you will be proud of your Motherland. In addition to all of the above, Yuri Gagarin himself has become a global figure. Almost every major city has a Gagarin Street or avenue.

When a huge country with tremendous geopolitical influence, almost limitless resources and high scientific development takes on a task, success is more than guaranteed. The achievements of Soviet scientists are still used by the whole world. Their names, and the names of other figures in the space industry of those years, are still widely known and not only in the post-Soviet space. The last century is rich in historical events, and definitely, human spaceflight occupies a very important and significant place in it.

References

1. Remembering Yuri Gagarin 50 Years Later // NASA. – URL: <https://www.nasa.gov/history/remembering-yuri-gagarin-50-years-later/> (date of access: 13.03.2025).