

SPACE DISCOVERY

SPUTNIK SETS UP A NEW DEAL

THE USA IS SCARED AND CHALLENGED

The standard Sputnik story goes like this: It was the launch of this metal ball that forced the United States to elevate the pursuit of science. But that's not quite true.

5 Technically speaking, Sputnik was no more sophisticated than a cheap transmitter from Radio Shack attached to 120 pounds of batteries. It was the R-7 launch vehicle that scared the pants off the U.S. military. The Soviets proved they not only had a rocket with precise guidance systems, but one that could launch a heavier payload than anything the Americans had.

10 The launch system on Oct. 4, 1957, was a one-shot deal. It was preset before takeoff and its trajectory could not be changed during flight. The Russians had to fire and pray.

15 Despite its apparent simplicity, the impact of the R-7 rocket cannot be overstated. Sputnik was the first satellite humans launched into orbit, and it stunned the world.

By the time the United States had launched 20 pounds into orbit, the Russians had already launched Sputnik 2, at 1,118 pounds, more than 50 times as much.

20 Even a month before the Sputnik launch, many of the military, political and academic leaders in the Soviet Union saw no merit in putting such a rudimentary artificial moon above the Earth.

25 But the maverick bunch of engineers who built Sputnik predicted its political impact. In the Cold War mentality that took hold following World War II, Sputnik had a purpose: to show Washington that Moscow had a lead in the arms race and the technical wherewithal to face up to the United States.

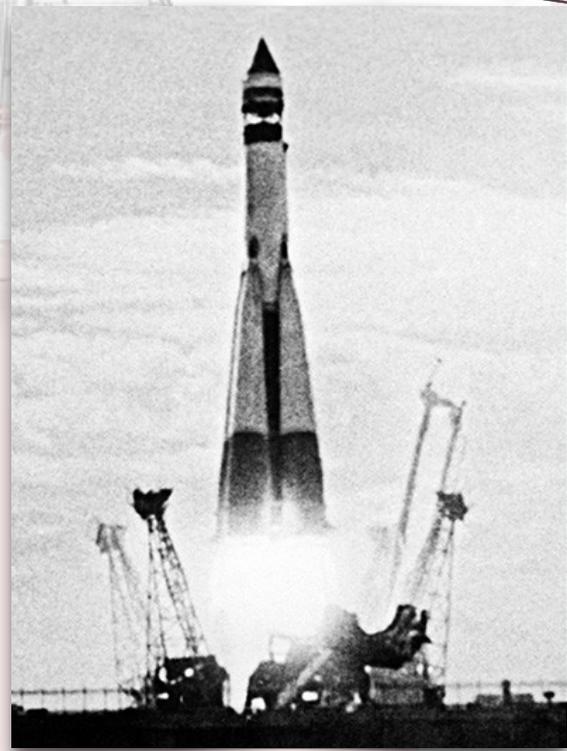
"The Soviet Union must be first," Sergei Pavlovich Korolëv, chief designer of the Soviet missile program and the chief proponent of sending Sputnik into orbit, told dissenters the month before the satellite's launch, according to Matthew Brzezinski's book *Red Moon Rising*.

Robert Lemos, WIRED.com, October 3rd 2007



Places and Forms of Power

The Idea of Progress



1. Introduce the document.
2. What is Sputnik?
 - Give the «technical» definition of the author.
3. What was the reaction of the U.S. military?
 - Explain what was the threat for the Americans.
4. What were the technical limits of this first launch for the Soviets?
5. Finally, what was the reaction of the world?
6. Can you compare the achievements of the 2 nations?
7. What was the purpose of the Russians engineers in this Cold War context ?
8. Who was Korolëv and what was his intention?

