

1



ORBIT

4



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ASTRO SPACE STAMP SOCIETY

Voshkod 1: The most absurd adventure in space ever.

Upon learning the news that the Americans at the end of 1963 had announced the launch of the Gemini project with two astronauts, Soviet Premier Khrushchev summons Korolyov and orders him to fly not two but three cosmonauts before November 7, the anniversary of the October Revolution: *"If the Americans have a vehicle for two, we prove our superiority by flying three men."* explains Umberto Cavallaro, Editor of our on-line sister journal (in Italy) **AdAstra**.

Korolyov uselessly tries to explain that in a few months it is impossible to prepare a new spacecraft and a new rocket powerful enough. Khrushchev is not interested in these implementation details.

What is important is the spectacular side: *"to launch into space three Soviet citizens before the Americans can launch their two astronauts."* The threat is clear: if Korolyov is unable to fulfill the *"task entrusted to him by the party and the government"* the task will be passed to another person in position to do so. Once again the shadow of Chelomei lingers around. The biographies say that "SP" (nickname of Korolyov among its employees), already known for his bad temper, in those days is intractable. Voskresenskij would like Korolyov to try to convince Khrushchev to direct manned flights programmes towards the construction of new scientific space stations.

Russian experts know that by this way the race has no chance of success, and would like to avoid it. Voskresenskij can't handle the nervous strain and is hospitalized.

Korolyov is working on a brand new spacecraft, but completing it will still take time. The only spacecraft available so far is the one-seat Vostok, whose internal diameter is less than two metres at the widest part. The only possibility that remains in such a short time is to modify it, by removing all the scientific equipment, and minimizing the



survival reserves and safety systems. Vostok is renamed Voskhod to simulate the construction, within a very short time, of a brand new spaceship, about which it is absolutely forbidden to disseminate any information or drawing.

It becomes immediately clear that even by choosing the smallest of cosmonauts, it is impossible to compress three people within the Voskhod.

Konstantin Feoktistov, the chief engineer of the department for return equipment, makes a daring and risky proposal bordering on madness: to press into the ball the three astronauts without space suits, trusting only the seal of the spacecraft. To the question of Korolyov: *"Who ever would accept to fly without a space suit?"* Feostikov answers: *"Me, to begin with."* Thus the eminent engineer, a man far from good health and with obvious sight problems, all of a sudden becomes a cosmonaut. In addition to Feostikov also are chosen as crew the young and petite doctor Boris Yegorov, the first physician in space, and Vladimir Komarov, the best of all the cosmonauts of the time. With surprising rapidity for each of them is manufactured a chair perfectly adapted to their body.

A triangular arrangement is studied to insert the three seats in the sphere. In the front seat – raised with respect to the other two – is placed Dr. Egorov, the youngest of the crew. The "pilot" cosmonaut sits crouched under him, since he has no role in driving the vehicle. Being impossible to eject the three cosmonauts without space suit, Korolyov studies how to bring down the whole capsule with a parachute. This allows the elimination of the many expulsion bolts. Unfortunately, there is no emergency system to rescue the three cosmonauts during the first 27 seconds of flight. Three months before the launch, the future Voskhod still weighs 220 lbs more than the 11.700 lbs that the existing rockets can launch. In the lab there begins a real race to eliminate any superfluous ounces. They devise the oddest of tricks, putting the future cosmonauts on a diet.

The first test flight of an unmanned Voskhod spacecraft is launched October 6th 1964, under the name of Cosmos 47,





carrying a dog and the mannequin "Ivan Ivanovich". This unique test is considered sufficient and only a few days later the first capsule fitted with three cosmonauts can be launched.

On the morning of October 12th, 1964 a bus carries three cosmonauts to the foot of the 38-metres-high rocket. The cosmonauts wear light jackets. After the official greeting, Korolyov hugs and kisses the cosmonauts one by one, something never done before. The official explanation for this unusual behaviour is that in the previous flights it would have been impossible, as the cosmonauts wore their spacesuits.

The cosmonauts fumble and squeeze themselves into the spacecraft and, for the first time, the hatch is hermetically closed from the inside.

The rockets operate normally and Voskhod completes 17 orbits around the Earth, according to the well tested routine. Crammed into the sphere, the three cosmonauts suffer for "space sickness". For the first time in a space mission cosmonauts have no task to perform. During the flight, they greet the athletes of the Olympics in Tokyo, and – according to the tradition – they speak by phone with Khrushchev, connected from his dacha on the Black Sea.

Korolyov's biographers point out that, despite its uselessness ("Yes, Nikita Sergejevič ... You are right, Nikita Sergejevič ... At your command, Sergejevič Nikita, ... Thanks, Nikita Sergejevič!") this conversation is worthy of mention because it is the last public conversation of Khrushchev. On October 13th 1964, Voskhod lands in Central Asia and the next day Khrushchev is suddenly summoned to Moscow. Taken from the runway where it landed, the "irresponsible voluntarist" Khrushchev is brought directly into the building of the Central Committee of the CPSU, where he is relieved from all party and government positions.

However, it will be soon realized that, with the overthrow of Khrushchev, the Soviet space programme has lost its main sponsor.

On October 15 the cosmonauts were to be solemnly welcomed in Moscow, but they don't arrive there either that day or the following days, kept back in the steppes of Central Asia, pending new orders. They will be received by the

Brezhnev-Kosygin partnerships in their first public appearance a week later.

Still, another first has been achieved. The propaganda emphasizes the ability of the USSR to send three cosmonauts in space, while the Americans have announced, but not yet implemented, a programme with only two astronauts. The fact that only one of the three cosmonauts of the crew is a trained pilot is presented as a clear demonstration of the absolute reliability of the new Voskhod spacecraft. The cosmonauts have flown without spacesuits, because Russian spaceships are now so safe that they do not claim them anymore.

The Western world reacts to the news, wondering which kind of revolutionary spacecraft had been developed by Russians.

But Korolyov asks that the propaganda stop mentioning that unlucky light jackets and he is finally given ear.



"Fake French" commemorating Voskhod 1 mission

Philatelic Media for the Mission



Commemorative Envelope canceled at Silute (Lithuania) October 12th 1965, on the first anniversary of the launch of Voskhod-1

Commentary on the cover above and on the following illustrations is taken from an article by [Lodovico Sacchi](#) in [AdAstra #22 for October 2014](#)



The crew of Voskhod-1 is featured in the Austrian postmark serviced on June 14, 1968 by the Association of Philatelic Southern Burgenland to celebrate 50 YEARS OF THE USSR.



Cuba was the first among the satellite countries to philatelically celebrate the event on October 17th, 1964 by overprinting its 50 cents rocket mail stamp with the silver shape of a rocket, and the date of the launch of Voskhod 1. Almost two years later, on the Cosmonautics Day (April 12th) 1966, it dedicated to the mission another 10 cent stamp

featuring the three cosmonauts. Finally on Cosmonautics Day (April 12th) 1981 in which the 20th anniversary of Gagarin's flight was celebrated, a third 13 cents value was issued

On November 6th 1964 Hungary issued an allegorical booklet featuring the portrait of the three cosmonauts along the bottom edge. Also available imperforated.



Five commemorative stamps were issued by the Soviet Union immediately after the conclusion of the mission, between 13 and 19 October 1964. The first three featuring each one of the three cosmonauts Komarov, Yegorov and Feoktistov (Scott # 2952-2954), the fourth with the team of three (Scott # 2955) and the last representing an allegory, according to the Soviet tradition (Scott # 2956)

A new commemorative booklet with the portrait of the three heroic cosmonauts—shown opposite top left—was issued by the USSR a month later, on November 20th, 1964 (Scott # 2957).

Also Czechoslovakia followed on November 12th, 1964 with a booklet. A few days later, on November 20th, 1964, it was the turn of Poland which issued a block with the portrait of the three cosmonauts.



On January 5th, 1965, Romania dedicated to Vostok-1 two of the six stamps of its new series on the satellites, shown left.



Jordan followed on February 11th, 1965 by issuing a commemorative booklet for the three cosmonauts. The block exists in two versions: one with the black overprint "Voskhod-1" and the names of the three cosmonauts.

Between 15 and 25 February 1965 Bulgaria issued 5 values which respectively feature the portrait of Komarov, Feoktistov, Egorov, the crew of three, and a fancy icon of representing the Voskhod-1 spacecraft (since it was forbidden to illustrate it). Also an imperforated version is available.



On March 30th 1965, North Vietnam dedicated to the mission 2 stamps, which also exist as imperforated.

Even Niger devoted to Voskhod-1 a 50 L. stamp which was issued on October 14th, 1966.



A stamp featuring the three Voskhod-1 cosmonauts was also part of a large set of dozens of stamps that Sharjah (UAE) issued on September 22nd 1970 to tell the story of space ("History of Spaceflight"). Actually this stamp is part of a minisheet of 6 stamps, which is also available imperforated.



Lodovico's article does not attempt a comprehensive listing but is merely illustrative. Below right is Harvey Duncan's summary listing as issued with Orbit in 1999.....



Captioned in Stamps of the World as "Voskhod rocket"

Voskhod 1		
Antigua (Barbuda)	77	369
Bulgaria	65	1503-07
Bulgaria	66	1641
Cuba	64	1153
Cuba	66	1348
Cuba	81	2709
Czechoslovakia	65	MS.1445a
Hungary	64	MS.2023a
Hungary	66	2253
Niger	66	235
Poland	64	MS.1527a
Rumania	65	3241-42
Russia	64	3045-49
Russia	64	MS.3049a
Vietnam North	65	N356
Vietnam North	65	N357
Yemen Kingdom	64	R55-57
Yemen Kingdom	64	MS.R57a
Yemen Kingdom	67	R313-15
Yemen Kingdom	67	MS.R316