

Soviet Instruments Send Back First Venus Information

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By JOHN WEYLAND
Associated Press Writer

MOSCOW (AP)—The Soviet Union achieved another historic space break-through Wednesday by dropping on Venus instruments that radioed back the first information ever received from that planet's surface. The data indicated Venus' temperature was hot enough to melt metal.

U.S. space leaders, awaiting Thursday's flyby of Venus by the American Mariner 5 spacecraft, called the Soviet landing of an instrument package on the cloud-shrouded planet "an accomplishment any nation can be proud of."

OFFICIAL VERSION here of the flight gave no indication of what happened to Venus 4, the 2,438-pound vehicle that carried the instruments into Venus' atmosphere. Presumably it crashed into the surface.

The information relayed to earth showed Venus' atmosphere to be extremely hot—up to 536 degrees Fahrenheit—and made up almost entirely of carbon dioxide, which the earth's living creatures cannot breathe.

The feat with the unmanned Venus 4 spaceship was a big prestige boost for this country's space program, which had suffered a tragic setback April 24 when cosmonaut Vladimir M. Komarov was killed in the crash of Soyuz 1.

IT WAS ALSO a big leap forward for the Soviet Union in the space race with the United States.

Official announcements described the Venus 4 flight this way:

The spaceship, launched June 12, reached the atmosphere of the planet—50 million miles away—at 12:34 a.m., EDT, Wednesday and released its instruments in a separate package.

This braked itself, then put out a parachute. For the next 90 minutes it floated down the 15 miles toward Venus' surface, sending back data through radio signals.

THE TEMPERATURE ROSE from 104 degrees Fahrenheit at the start of the descent to five times that at the end. Pressure rose to 15 times that on earth.

VENUS 4 PROVIDED the Soviet Union with the first significant space success since its predecessor, Venus 3, reached the planet. This was the first man-made object to reach Venus but it failed to radio back anything because of an equipment malfunction.

Both Venus 3 and Venus 4 carried the hammer and sickle emblem of the Communist state to the planet.

This country started the race to Venus on Feb. 12, 1961. The United States joined in and in 1962 got back the first radio information about the planet from Mariner 2, but this passed within 21,000 miles of it.

U.S. Plans Hurt By Space Cuts

The brilliant success of Russia's Venus 4 comes at a time when budget cuts have stymied America's future planetary plans for several years.

The congressional cuts, heavily opposed by many scientific groups, may force America to take a permanent back seat to the Soviets in planetary exploration.

While the United States had no plans to soft-land a spacecraft on Venus, as Venus 4 did Wednesday, this nation had hoped to land two unmanned Project Voyager laboratories on Mars in 1973 and two more in 1975 to study the planet extensively, including a search for life.

Cuts in the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's fiscal 1968 budget request have delayed the first double Mars shot until at least 1975. Also eliminated was a preliminary scouting mission to the red planet by a smaller spacecraft in 1971.

NASA had sought \$71.5 million in the 1968 budget as a starter for Voyager and \$10.1 million for the 1971 Mars scouting trip.

The House wiped out all these funds. But early this month the Senate Appropriations Committee restored \$36 million for Voyager, not enough to fly in 1973.

Congressmen said an over-all half-billion-dollar cut in NASA's budget was necessary because of the rising cost of Vietnam and other national programs.

A Senate-House compromise must still be worked out on Voyager funds. Because of the Venus 4 success, congressmen might be inclined to vote more money than they ordinarily would—just as they have loosened the purse-strings after previous Soviet space successes.

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