

# Space Dogs

## The First Soviet Superstars



### 1. THE DAWN OF THE SPACE AGE

As part of the International Geophysical Year, on 4 October 1957, the Soviet Union launches the first artificial satellite. The second Sputnik follows only a month later. The race for space is on!

### 2. LAIKA : FIRST LIVING BEING IN ORBIT

After the first 'manned' orbital flight with Sputnik 2, a four-legged rocketeer experiences true fame: Laika becomes the most famous dog in history. Unfortunately, her fame comes posthumously.

### 3. BELKA AND STRELKA : THE FIRST SPACE POP STARS

Emblazoned on postcards Belka (Squirrel) and Strelka (Little Arrow) become cult figures in the Soviet Union of the 1960s, embodying the spirit of the country's pursuit of space exploration.

### 4. LESSER KNOWN SPACE DOG HEROES

Only a few canine cosmonauts are shown to the world, or their names revealed to the public.

### 5. HOW ABOUT THE FUTURE?

Will space dogs accompany their masters when they leave Earth?

### BIBLIOGRAPHY :

- Soviet Space Dogs (Olesya Turkina)
- Animals in Space (Burgess and Dubbs)
- The Cold War, Sputnik and Soviet Space Dog Laika (George Bailey)



# 1. The International Geophysical Year (IGY)

1 July 1957 - 31 December 1958:  
67 countries participate in the IGY:  
an international scientific project  
marking the end of a long period  
during the Cold War when scientific  
interchange between East and West  
was improbable.



"USSR - 1958 - artist: E. Gundobin - text: International Geophysical Year"

For the IGY both  
the Soviet Union and  
the US launch their  
first satellites. The  
3 Russian Sputniks  
start their flights  
from Baikonur. The  
word 'sputnik' means  
satellite or companion.



"USSR - 1958 - photomontage artist: V. Sveshnikov - text: Happy New Year"



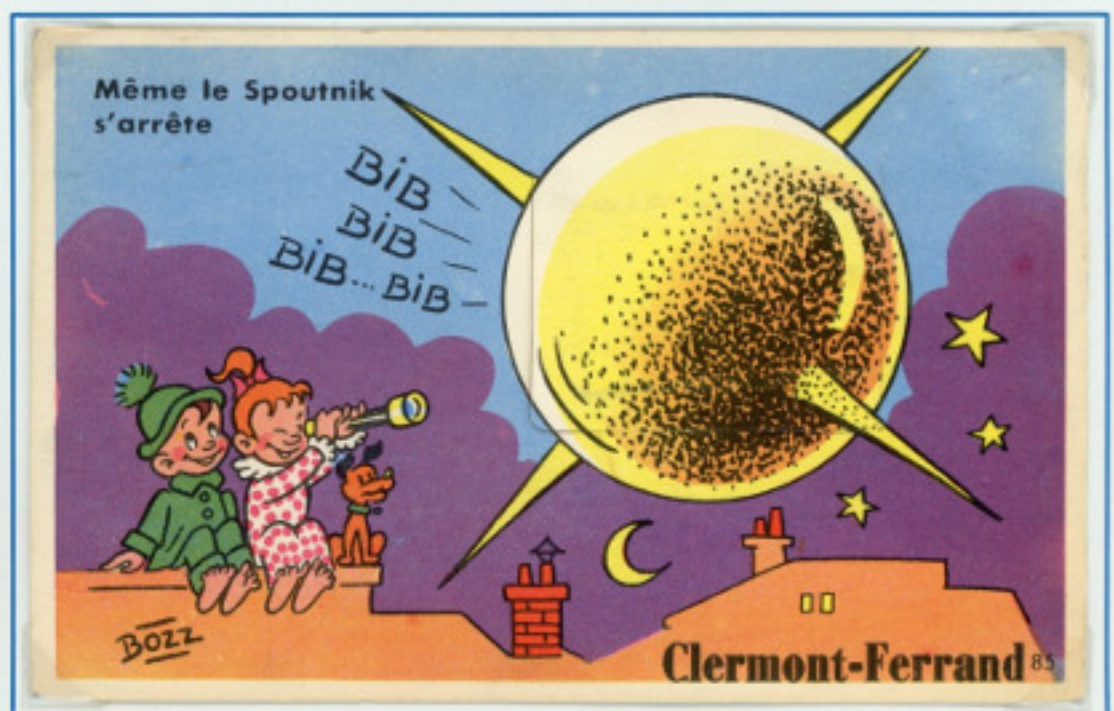
# 1. Sputnik 1 is a worldwide sensation

4 October 1957 : The Soviet Union takes an early lead in the space race by launching the first artificial satellite.



*"USSR - 1957 - artist: M. Kominarec - text: Happy New Year!"*

People from all over the world follow Sputnik 1 and listen mesmerised to that odd, mysterious 'Beep-Beep-Beep'.



*"France - CAP (Cie des Arts Photomécaniques) - artist: Robert Velter"*



## 1. Sputnik 2 is soon to follow



*"USSR - 1957 - photomontage artist V. Sveshnikov with Sputniks 1 and 2 - text: Happy New Year.  
Caption on the reverse reads: The Soviet flag seen from space"*

Khrushchev orders the scientists to launch another satellite for the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the October Revolution (celebrated on 7 Nov. '57). Sputnik 1 is followed by Sputnik 2 only one month later, on 3 November 1957.



*"USSR - 1959 - the artist, I. M. Semeonov, links fact with fiction - text: Catch them if you can"*

The Russian fairytale characters, all with rapid means of transportation, attempt (and fail) to match the superior speed of Sputniks 1 and 2: Baba Yaga (broomstick), Vakula, Baron Munchausen, Ivan and Prince Hussain.



## 2. Planning the first orbital flight of a canine cosmonaut



*"USSR - 1960 - artist: A. Dudnikov - text: The one who did not collect old metal will not be taken to the moon!"*

All workers are called back from vacation and Sputnik 2 is prepared in a frantic rush, the engineers sleeping at their place of work. The rocket is made up of bits and pieces, leftovers and remainders of former missiles.



*"USSR - 1959 - artist: V. Suteev - card from a series of 12 : (what children do in) October"*

Laika is described as a young mongrel, with thin legs, a short tail, and a naïve, dumbfounded face. She is photogenic, an important factor for a dog who is soon to appear on the front page of every newspaper around the world.



## 2. Laika : A Space Oddity

On 3 November 1957 TASS reports on the successful launch of the second man-made Earth satellite. The fact that a dog has entered orbit causes a worldwide sensation.



*"USSR - 1982 - painting by: A. Sokolov - title: Start of Satellite (Sputnik)"*

The Americans call her Muttnik, but her original name is Little Curly (Kudryavka).

In the Soviet press she is renamed Laika, which means Barker.



*"France - from the series: Great Events - text: 1957 - The USSR sends the dog Laika in space"*

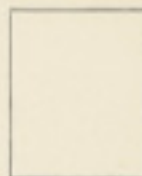


## 2. The only cosmonaut ever sent into space to die



POST CARD

THE ADDRESS  
TO BE WRITTEN ON THIS SIDE



The Soviet authorities are surprised by the worldwide protest and the concern for the unlucky space dog's fate. Unfortunately the scientists have not yet developed a way to recover the passenger.

Laika, sacrificed in space  
British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection,  
47, Whitehall, London, S.W.1.  
Literature sent on request

*"UK - 1957(?) - Pravda newspaper  
photo - animal rights protest card"*

This postcard from the GDR series 'Triumph of Socialism in outer space' depicts Laika and an artistic version of Sputnik 2.



*"GDR - 1961 - photo: Machatscheck, Berlin - publisher: Society for German-Soviet Friendship"*



The first memorial to Laika is built in a pet cemetery near Paris in 1958. The granite column is erected in front of the Paris Society for the Protection of Dogs.

*"France - 1958(?) - Collection Mortali no. 506 : Villepinte (Laika in capsule of Sputnik 1)"*



## 2. The space hero canonised

Laika perishes after a few hours in space, due to overheating.

This fact is obscured by the Russian space agency. During the 7 days that Laika is officially alive, newspapers keep reporting about her health.



*"Romania - 1985 - text on the reverse: The first biological satellite 'Sputnik 2' and puppy Laika"*



When denying Laika's death is no longer possible, the only option for Soviet ideology is to immortalise her. Empathy for this small, courageous, 'loneliest dog' lays the foundation for an overwhelming global admiration of Laika.

*"CARD FLOWN IN SPACE - Russia - 2007 - artist: V. Grigorenko - name: 50th Anniversary Sputnik 2 - card has flown with Soyuz TMA-11 to the ISS with cosmonaut Yuri Malenchenko, spending over 191 days in space"*



### 3. A fairytale with a happy ending



*"USSR - 1960 - photomontage artist: V. Sveshnikov - text on flags: Happy New Year, text on the wings of the rocket: USSR, inside the cockpits: Strelka - Belka"*

The images of Belka (Squirrel) and Strelka (Little Arrow) evoke smiles and a deserved sense of pride: they are the first cosmonauts who went into orbit and returned safely, living incarnations of the achievements of Soviet technology.



*"USSR (found at a Ukrainian market) - probably 1960 - artist: unknown - text: Happy New Year"*

Their rocket launched on 19 August 1960, the dogs remain in flight for over 24 hours and they complete 18 orbits. The Soviet authorities are feeling so confident that they show the dogs live on TV: the first transmission from space.



### 3. Showing the heroes to the world



*"USSR - 1961 - photo from the press conference, showing the cage with space mice (right)"*

The day after their triumphant landing, Oleg Gazenko, on his own initiative, takes the space celebrities to Moscow for a specially organised international press conference. The complete spectrum of the press is interested in their story.



БЕЛКА И СРЕЛКА



БЕЛКА И СРЕЛКА

*"USSR - 1960 - postcards featuring photographs taken at the first press conference in Moscow - Text: Belka and Strelka"*



### 3. The merchandising starts



The variety of space dog ephemera and the speed with which they are produced is amazing.

While Laika souvenirs have a certain dignity to them, the Belka and Strelka ones are of a more playful and cartoonish nature.

*"USSR - 1961 - artist: M. Abramov - Belka holds a sign that reads: We're going to land, Strelka and Belka; Strelka holds a ribbon with: Greetings from space; text on the Earth: Triumph of Soviet Science"*

Belka and Strelka appear on cards, pins, clocks, vases, toys, and myriad other items.

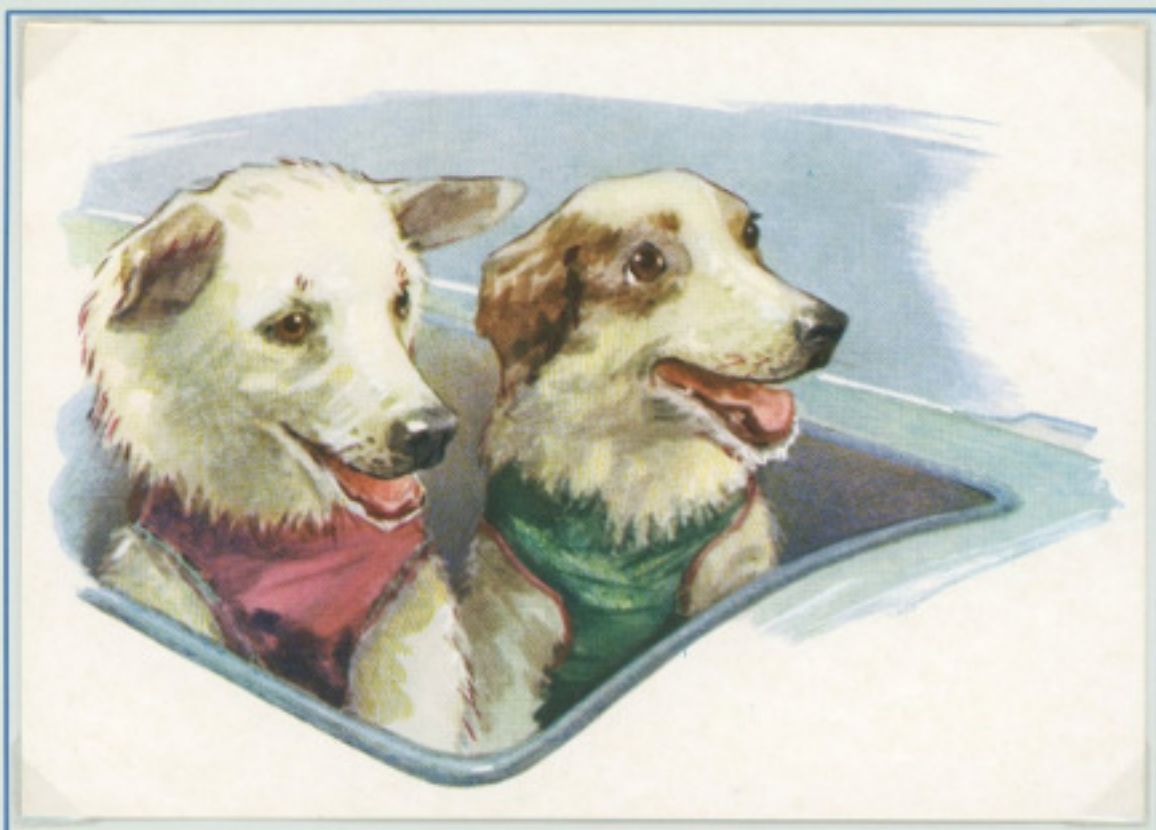
With these vast amounts of merchandise, memorabilia, books and films produced in their honour, the cult of the space dog is born.

*"USSR - 1962 - edited by Moscow Toy Research Institute - artist: L. Zinovieva - text on reverse side: Soviet Spacecraft Passengers"*





### 3. Belka and Strelka : darlings of the nation



The space dogs proved that a cosmonaut can safely return to Earth.

The recognition for this success, owed to the scientists and engineers of the space program, is bestowed entirely on the dogs.

*"USSR - 1972 - artist: L. Aristov, showing the dogs in the rocket 'cockpit', from the series Friends of Man"*

Until now, there has been no pop culture in the USSR. Now there is a universal wave of adoration for the four-legged cosmonauts.

Merchandise is emblazoned with their image, they are all across the media, every Soviet citizen feels an overwhelming desire to meet the space dogs in person.

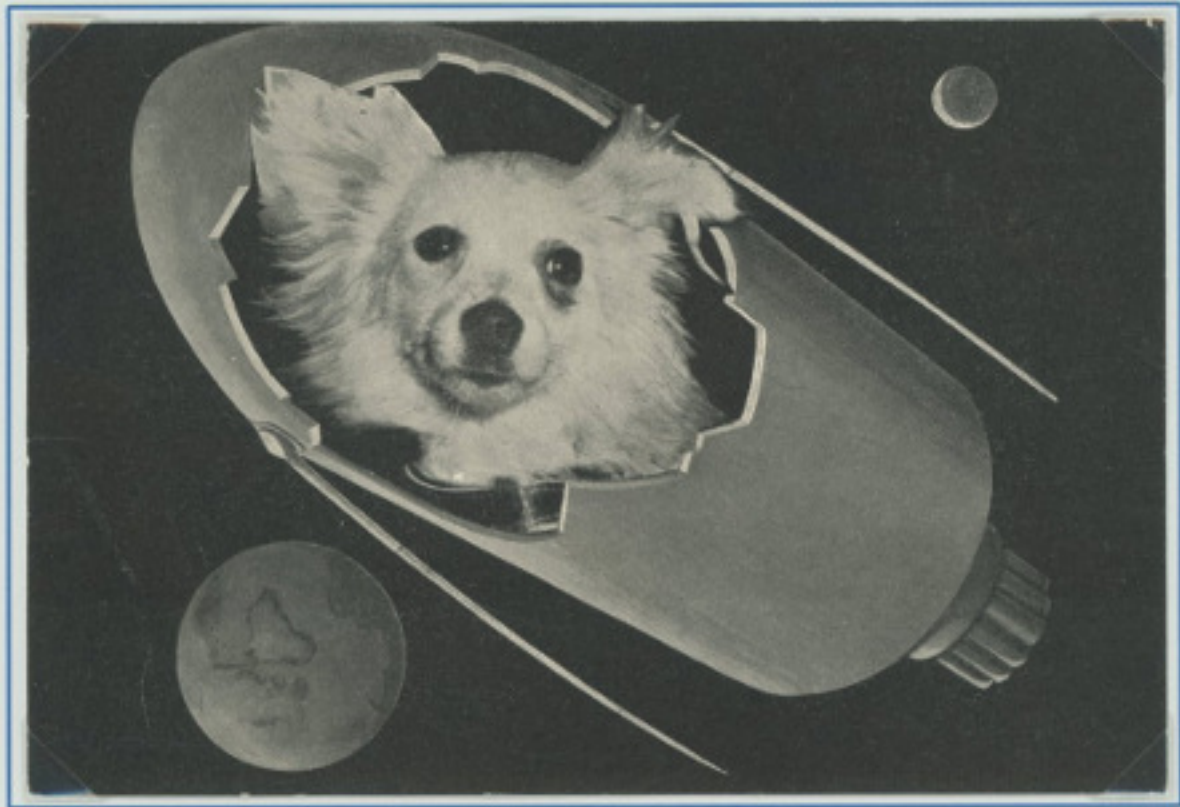
All these elements together make Belka and Strelka the first real Soviet pop stars.

*"CARD FLOWN IN SPACE - USSR - 1962 - artist: V. Victorov - card was taken to the ISS by Soyuz TMA-6 commander S. Krikalev on 14 April 2005 and flown back to Earth by Soyuz TMA-5 commander S. Shapirov on 24 April 2005"*





#### 4. Lesser known dogs: Kozyavka (Little Shrimp) and Zhemchuzhnaya (Pearly)



*"Italy - c. 1957 - artist unknown - published by the Organisation for the Protection of Animals, Venice section - on the reverse, a caption mistakenly reads: 'Laika' The pioneer of space 1957"*

In 1956, Little Shrimp flies 3 times up to 100 km - the boundaries of space, where one experiences weightlessness - together with her best friend Albina (Whitey). Her last flight takes place two years later, on 19 September 1958.



*"USSR - 1959 - photo studio Izogiza - Otvazhnaya (Brave One) and Zhemchuzhnaya (Pearly), photographed after their flight of 10 July 1959 - caption on the reverse reads: They went up in a ballistic rocket to the upper layers of the atmosphere. It is the 4th flight for Otvazhnaya"*

Brave One and Pearly (later renamed Snowflake) are experienced and successful space dogs. They are always lucky to be recovered safely and after completing their tasks, like most space dogs, are adopted and enjoy retirement.



4. Otvazhnaya (Brave One), Snezhinka (Snowflake) and space rabbit Marfusa



"USSR - 1959 - artist: V. Baluev - text: Happy New Year"



"USSR - 1959 - artist: V. Sveshnikov - text: They were in space - dog names on ribbons: Otvazhnaya - Snezhinka; on rocket: USSR"

Snowflake is adopted by doctor and space scientist Oleg Gazenko. Space dog Kusachka (Biter) had a bad reputation, but her trainers never give up on her. On 2 July 1959, after her 3<sup>rd</sup> successful flight, she is renamed Brave One.



"USSR - 1959 - photo taken by N. Rahmanov, showing Otvazhnaya (Brave One) and Marfusa"



## 5. And how about the future?



*L'avenir est à nous !*

*\*Belgium - artist: Lois Varhez -  
text: The future is ours!\**

Will dogs follow human cosmonauts when they leave Earth to explore exciting, unknown places? Tsiolkovsky did not think so. But then, he could be wrong.



*Nous irons aussi tous dans la lune,*

*\*Belgium - artist: Lois Varhez -  
text: We will also all go to the  
Moon\**

Animal lovers know that the place of dogs is at their master's side, wherever they go. It has always been that way.

*\*Belgium - artist: Lois Varhez  
(Spanish artist) - text:  
Do not tell anyone...  
I have a bit of stage fright\**



*No le dites à personne...  
J'as un peu le trac !*



5. Will space pets follow their friends to strange new worlds?



*"Shanghai (People's Republic of China) - 1950's - artist: Yang Fu Zhu - name: Flight to the Stars - edited to celebrate the agreement of friendship between the USSR and China, signed in 1950"*

Surely pets, in the future, once again, will leave Earth, this time together with their human cosmonaut-friends...



*"Finland - c. 2017 - artist unknown - name: Space Pets"*

...because, after all, they have already proven themselves to be experienced space travellers!