

(The letters referred to follow :)

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON AERONAUTICAL AND SPACE SCIENCES,
September 4, 1962.

HON. JAMES E. WEBB,
Administrator, National Aeronautics and Space Administration,
Washington, D.C.

DEAR DIRECTOR WEBB: In the past weeks there have been two reports in the press which have troubled us as chairmen of the House and Senate Committees on Space: (1) The Saturday morning newspapers carried an article reporting that the Soviet Union failed in an attempt to successfully send a space vehicle to Venus on August 25, 1962. (2) On August 30, 1962, Dr. L. I. Sedov, a leading Soviet space expert was interviewed by a professor of Tokyo University. The question was asked: Since the Soviet Union has never made an advance announcement of launchings, some people suspect that there have been unsuccessful launchings in the past; would you tell me the truth, say, confidentially? Sedov: The Soviet Union makes an announcement as soon as a rocket is launched. There is no substantial difference between the Soviet Union and the United States in the way of announcement. If there is any failure, it must be known to the world.

It is our clear understanding that the Soviet Union does not announce all of its shots and therefore Dr. Sedov's answer appears to be in conflict with the information in our possession. Dr. Sedov's statement and the report of the Venus shot failure are so patently at variance that we feel it is important that if the United States Government possesses any information relative to unsuccessful attempts by the Soviet Union to launch a spacecraft to Venus, or other planetary probes, that this information should be made available to our committees and to the American people.

The world must of necessity admire the remarkable achievements of the Soviet Union in the field of space. A shadow is thrown over the entire space effort through their refusal to admit to failures. The United States is not without its failures, but we operate in a free society and our failures, as well as our successes, are made known to all.

We would appreciate an answer to this letter promptly.

Sincerely yours,

GEORGE P. MILLER,
Chairman, House Committee on Science and Astronautics.
ROBERT S. KERR,
Chairman, Senate Aeronautical and Space Sciences Committee.

NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION,
Washington, D.C., September 5, 1962.

HON. ROBERT S. KERR,
Chairman, Committee on Aeronautical and Space Sciences, U.S. Senate,
Washington, D.C.

HON. GEORGE P. MILLER,
Chairman, Committee on Science and Astronautics, House of Representatives,
Washington, D.C.

GENTLEMEN: I agree. The Soviet's broad policy of announcing successes but declining to admit failure does cast a shadow over their entire space effort—remarkable as it might be.

You jointly proposed that if the U.S. Government possesses any information relative to unsuccessful planetary probes by the Soviet Union, that this information should be made available to your committees and to the American people.

In response to this proposal, inquiry was made of appropriate agencies of this Government. The response was as follows:

"The Soviet Union has pursued a vigorous but unsuccessful program to send instrumented space probes to the planets. Thus far, two attempts have been made to send spacecraft to Mars and four to Venus. Of these six attempts, only one probe was successfully launched on an interplanetary path, the Venus probe of February 12, 1961. However, it was only a qualified success because its radio transmission failed after several days, long before it reached Venus. None of the five remaining attempts achieved a successful trajectory because of rocket vehicle malfunctions.