The First Space-Stations

Issued 10/ 20/71, "Hero Cosmonauts", a Soviet multi-colour, commemorative stamp shows Dobrovolsky, Volkov, and Patsayev - the first men to live in space.

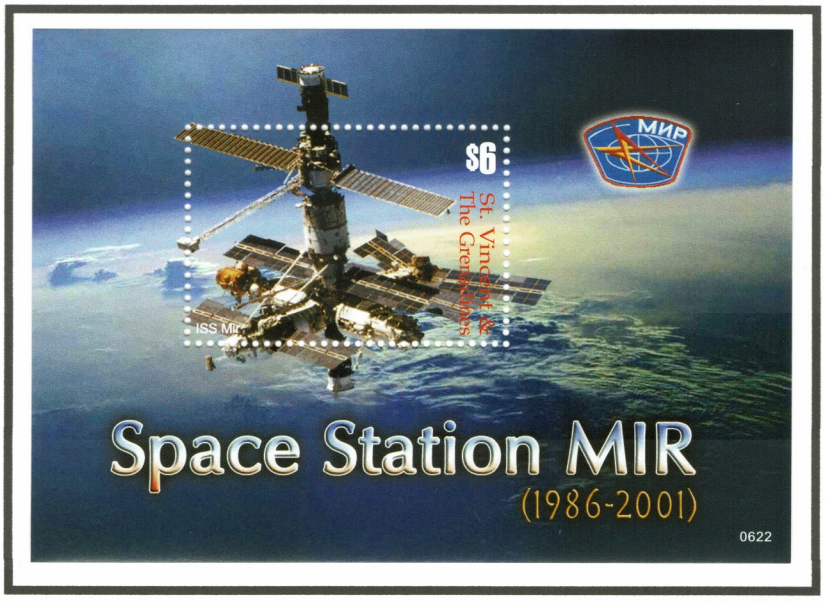
Salyut 1, the first space-station of any kind, was launched into low Earth orbit by the Soviet Union on April 19/71. Three cosmonauts aboard Soyuz 11 rendezvoused with the station on June 7/71 and remained on board for 23 days. The age of man living in space had begun. Salyut orbited the Earth almost 3,000 times during its 175 days in space before being intentionally crashed into the Pacific Ocean.

The Salyut program continued with seven more stations after Salyut 1. The final module of the program, Zvezda, became the core of the Russian segment of the International Space Station and remains in orbit today.

A 1987 Soviet offering commemorating the joint Soviet-Syrian "Guest-Cosmonaut" program on the MIR space station.

Mir, the world's first modular space station, operated in low Earth orbit for 15 years - 1986 to 2001. She was assembled in space over an eight year period and consisted of seven different modules each launched separately. For many years it was the Earth's largest artificial satellite and could easily be seen at night with the naked eye.

In addition to a number of European astronauts, Chris Hadfield, one of Canada's most celebrated astronauts, visited Mir in November 1995 as a Mission Specialist.



In light of the long list of pioneering firsts achieved by the Soviet Union's Space Program, it is indeed arguable that they were the real winners of the space race. It is my preference, however, to look at these tremendous achievements not as a race, but as a service and benefit to all of humanity.