



# Rockets and People, Vol. 4: The Moon Race

*Boris Chertok*

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## **Rockets and People, Vol. 4: The Moon Race** Boris Chertok

In this last volume of his four-volume set of memoirs, the famous Russian spacecraft designer Boris Chertok, who worked under the legendary Sergey Korolev, continues his fascinating narrative on the history of the Soviet space program, this time covering 1968 to 1974, the peak years of the Soviet human lunar program.

Chertok devotes a significant portion of the volume to the origins and development of the N-1 rocket, the superbooster developed by the Korolev design bureau in the 1960s as a counterpart to the American Saturn V. Chertok's department at OKB-1 was responsible for developing the control systems for the N-1, a monumental and challenging task made more complicated by the use of 30 rocket engines on its first stage. Chertok's descriptions of the four failed launches of the N-1 combine a keen sense of the technological issues with the human dimensions of scientific and technical work.

One of the values of this volume is Chertok's lengthy description of the origins of the Soviet space station program, which began with the Salyut space stations in the early 1970s and concluded with the multimodule *Mir* complex in the 1980s. Chertok shows how the space station grew out of a combination of dissatisfaction with the Moon program, available hardware from a military space station project known as Almaz, and the initiative of a group of senior designers (including Chertok) at the Korolev design bureau. Perhaps the most poignant chapters here are the ones on the tragic Soyuz-11 mission when cosmonauts Dobrovolskiy, Volkov, and Patsayev were killed on reentry.

Chertok concludes the book with a lengthy description of the end of the N-1 program and the birth of the Energiya-Buran program under the leadership of Valentin Glushko. His account provides a fascinating inside look at the political, technological, and personal conflicts at a time when the Soviet space program was at its zenith.

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