

FIRST MAN IN SPACE

5-122001

All Russia's just wild about Yuri Gagarin, first man to conquer space. Modest, just a family man. It was no secret, either in Moscow or anywhere else, that Russia was ready to make the attempt. At seven minutes past seven a.m., our time, the 450-ton rocket went up.

Russian diagrams show how a previous space rocket functioned. It sheds stage one... then stage two, leaving the space-ship to go into orbit at 18,000 an hour. Gagarin was in radio contact with the ground. In his 4-and-a-half-ton nose cone he orbited once, and was back again a hundred and eight minutes after taking off. At Cape Canaveral, the Americans, (though dissatisfied at not being first), are training these men to be astronauts, and may still have a man on the moon before anyone else. How the intense heat on re-entering the atmosphere is withstood had been carefully studied.

At 500 degrees Fahrenheit one of the astronauts suffered no harm, though water boiled in the glass he held.

Moscow prepared to give Major Gagarin a hero's welcome. Nobody talked or thought of anything else. Mr. Khrushchev interrupted his Black Sea holiday to be present. He gave Russia a toast to the man who has won immortal fame, the conquerer of space, Cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin.