

MIR: After the docking of Progress-39 to MIR/Kvant on 27 Dec.'88 there was less to report than in the period before in which a lot of important operations were executed. This docking was the last one in this sequence. Gradually passes shifted to the nighthours and now we have only 1 pass with possible traffic early in the morning. Soon the first passes in the evening hours will be there. Nevertheless the traffic after 27 Dec. has been interesting enough. The new crew adapted themselves well enough to be worthy successors of the Okeany. Krikalyov, mechanic, was very active, for instance around 1 Jan. when there were problems with the watersupply (smelling water a.s.o.). Certainly they solved those problems and also the problems they had with their ASU (toilet system).

COMMUNICATIONS: A lot of traffic with and/or via tracking ships could be heard (Kosm. V. Komarov, Akademik S. Korolyov, a.s.o.) but they also tried to communicate via the system "Strela". On Jan. 3d MIR relayed a message from the A.S.K. that A.S.K. was in a heavy gale and unable to maintain a good link with TsUP. Working via Strela is still not satisfactory: Jan. 7th Krikalyov told TsUP that he had 200K-byte of information, but he did not trust the link via Strela as he was afraid to loose info. So he asked for permission to use one of the Telemetry channels. Krikalyov asked for the progress in the work to make the Strela system more usable, but TsUP stated this "to be a hanging fire". On 30th Dec. Krikalyov and Polyakov spoke with TsUP about the use of channel VHF-2 for relaying TLM data while someone was on the velo-ergo. The sounds could be heard in background via VHF-1 (143.625) -just like in 1987 with Laveykin- but scanning of all possible frequencies did not reveal the frequ. of VHF-2.

During a TV-interview on Dec. 24th your nice Yorkshire, the town Barnsley was one of the subjects: Volkov showed the doll (or: puppet) Sam, who accompanies them on board MIR. Sam is a gift from the newspaper Barnsley Chronicle. So my congratulations AMSAT-UK friends: the first British cosmonaut is really there!

FATE OF HOUSEHOLD COMPARTMENT SOYUZ-TM6:

Thusfar this compartment -Bytovoy Otsek, or as in English "Orbital Module", separated from Soyuz-TM-s appr.50 mins after undocking from MIR. The experience of Sept. 6 and 7 made the Russians change their modus operandi: this time (S-TM6 on 21st Dec.) they separated this module a few seconds before the Engine block and before entering Earth's atmosphere. So there is no 1988-75C any more! (This module has the possibility for dockings with other s/c in cases of emergency and gives more comfort when landings are delayed).

MANUALLY CONTROLLED LANDING S-TM6 OR NOT?:

There have been messages that due the computer failure the descend of S-TM6 3 hours later was executed MANUALLY- so not computer controlled. In fact it has been a computer controlled landing. They had to reprogram the computer as the memory, in which 2 programs loaded, had to be cleaned. The memory was full and one program corrupted the other one. There has indeed been a conversation in which they were told when they had to switch over to manual control, but ultimately this was not necessary. In the last sentences before entering atmosphere Titov stated that the "guided descend was there", he did not use the word RUCHNO - MANUALLY.

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