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FRENCH SPACE POLICY: THE FORMATIVE YEARS, 1945-1965

Abstract

French Space Policy: The Formatives Years, 1945-1965

Fifty years ago, in December 1961, the decision taken by the French Government which has marked the entrance of France in the space activities, with the realization of a national launcher, christened Diamant, and the creation of the Centre national d'études spatiales (CNES) which started its activities on the 1st March, 1962, with the mission to coordinate all French activities in relation with space. In the first part of this paper we propose to recall the national circumstances and the conditions which have conducted the Government to commit itself in this field of high technology. Then, we will examine the birth of the French space policy and the first years of activities which have conducted, four years later, to the launches of A1 and FR1 the First French satellites; two successes which have placed France among the space powers after the Soviet Union and United States. We will limit our paper in the middle of 1960's, when the French space policy change to enter into a new phase taking account the development of space applications and the evolution of the international space activities, especially in Europe.