

43rd HISTORY OF ASTRONAUTICS SYMPOSIUM (E4)
Memoirs and Organisational Histories (1)

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THE SEREB, 1959-1969 - THE FRENCH COMPANY WHICH HAS OFFERED SPACE ACCESS TO
THE FRANCE

Abstract

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E4. – 43RD HISTORY OF ASTRONAUTICS SYMPOSIUM

E4.1. Memoirs

THE SEREB, 1959-1969 The French company which offered space access to the France.

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Fifty years ago, the French government establish a new company to study and develop the future ballistic missiles for the French nuclear forces, decided earlier by the General de Gaulle. This company, the SEREB (Société pour l'étude et la réalisation d'engins balistiques), created on September 17th, 1959, was composed with engineers and technicians teams coming from main French companies in Aeronautics and propulsion fields. Under the presidency of Charles Cristofini, the SEREB set up a program called Etudes balistiques de base EBB (Basic Ballistic Studies) in order to gain competences in the different technology needs. With these objectives, the SEREB conceived and realised a whole of liquid and solid propelled test vehicles, more and more complex. This serie known under the generic terms "Pierres précieuses" (Precious Stones), has lead around sixty test launches from Hammaguir (Sahara), with great success. In 1960, the SEREB Office of advanced studies, lead by Bernard Dorléac, proposed a project of satellite launcher which was endorsed, in 1961, by the French government, and gave birth the Diamant program. The first of the fourth Diamant launchers, launched on the 26th November, 1965, has offer the open space access to the France, then became the third space power in the world, after USSR and United States. Later, the SEREB served as CNES consultant for the Diamant B program, before to participate in the development of Coralie, the second stage of the European launcher Europa. Then, it carried on many researches on different new launchers concepts. On the January 1st, 1970, the SEREB company vanished by merge with Nord Aviation and Sud Aviation companies, giving birth to the Société nationale industrielle Aerospatiale (SNIA or Aerospatiale, today part of EADS). Its ground test means were transferred to Aerospatiale and its employees form the main part of the Division des systèmes balistiques et spatiaux (Ballistics and Space Systems Division) of the new company. During its ten years life, the SEREB employed around one thousand peoples, located partly in the neighbour of Paris and for the main part in southwest region, near Bordeaux. The authors of this paper, all three former SEREB employees, are proposing to recall the story of the SEREB company, with a special highlights on its main realization and its important role in the early beginning extension of the French space activities.