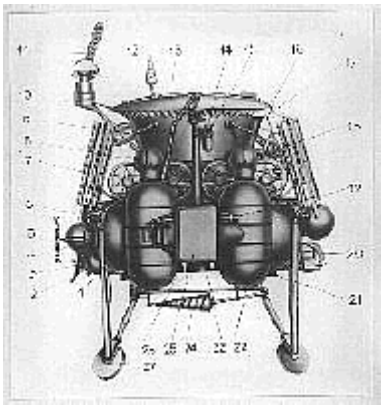
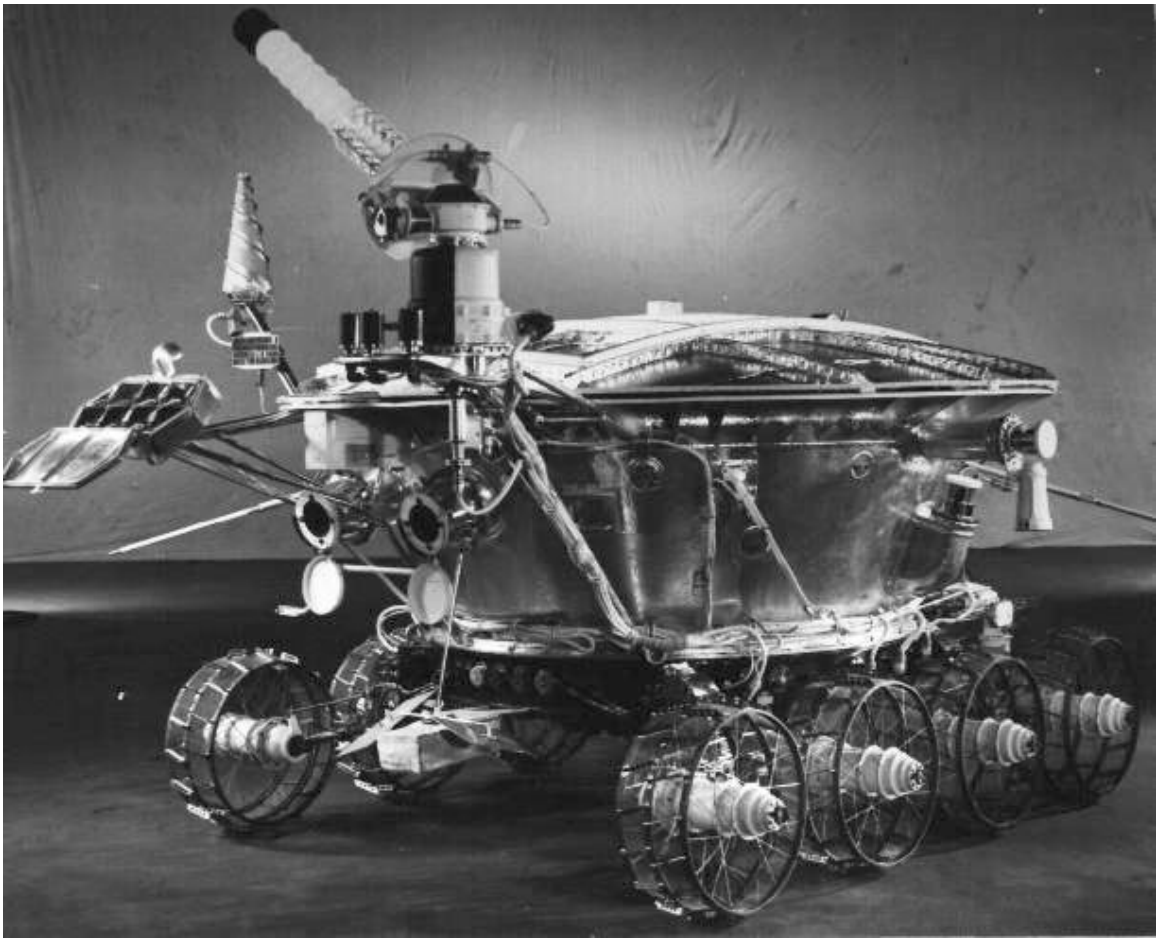
The Russian lunar probe, Luna 17, launched on November 10, 1970, landed on the Moon on November 15, 1970, to the south of Cape Heraclides in Mare Imbrium, in the Sea of Rains (Sinus Iridum).



The spacecraft had dual ramps by which the payload, Lunokhod 1, descended to the lunar surface. This was the first wheeled vehicle on the Moon.

Lunokhod 1 was a lunar vehicle formed of a tub-like compartment with a large convex lid on eight independently powered wheels. It weighed just under 2000 lbs and was designed to be guided by a 5 person team. Lunokhod was equipped with a cone-shaped antenna, a highly directional helical antenna, four television cameras, and special extendable devices to impact the lunar soil for soil density and mechanical property tests. An x-ray spectrometer, an x-ray telescope, cosmic-ray detectors, and a laser device were also included. The vehicle was powered by a solar cell array mounted on the underside of the lid. Lunokhod was intended to operate through three lunar days but actually operated for eleven lunar days. The operations of Lunokhod officially ceased on October 4, 1971. Lunokhod had traveled 10,540 m and had transmitted more than 20,000 TV pictures and more than 200 TV panoramas. It had also conducted more than 500 lunar soil tests.



Though not widely known at the time, the Lunakhod series was part of the Soviet's manned lunar program. These rovers would serve in the construction of the first lunar bases. It was, in short, a highly successful mission and one of the high points of the Soviet moon program.