



The US seeks help as the Cold War enters space

Clip taken from 'The Satellite Story', BBC Four.

NEWSCASTER:

Observations of Bleep in flight have been made in many parts of the world. Pictures too. Here in a composite story are the first films of the Red Moon – a fascinating glimpse of a man-made moon blazing the trail of outer space.

IAN MORISON:

I doubt whether they would have seen Sputnik itself, it was only about this sort of size. But the rocket that actually put the Sputnik into orbit, the third stage, was about 17 feet long, and that would have been, I think, visible.

NARRATOR:

The American establishment could listen to the Red Moon as it flew over US airspace. They even believed they could see it. But they could not track it. In desperation, they turned to Britain, who had just finished building a new bit of space-age hardware.

NEWSCASTER:

In another scientific field, the giant radar telescope at Jodrell Bank in Cheshire was built as an aid to probing of outer space. In the event, it had scarcely been completed before its services were urgently required in charting the course of the Russian Earth satellites.

IAN MORISON:

Surprisingly, the Americans didn't have any large radio telescopes that could do this job. The Mark I telescope here was the only one in the world at that time. And so we were used by the Americans before they were able to build their own large space tracking antennas.

[Archive footage of Sputnik courtesy of Movietone]