Bion biosateUites to study the effect of zero g on plants and ianimals are just one of many Vostok derivatives

o ver the past 30 years, the Soviets

have conducted more than 1,000
space missions using variants of
the Vostok capsule which carried
cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin into orbit in 1961 to become the first man in space.
The Vostok spacecraft, which went on to be used for military photo-reconnaissance, civilian remote-sensing, biosatellite, and microgravity missions, first flew on 15 May, 1960. On that day an SL-3 booster took off from Pad 1 at the Baikonur Cosmodrome

carrying the 4.7t Korabl-Sputnik 1 (known as Sputnik 4 in the West) into orbit.
The spacecraft, on a re-entry test flight, included a 2.46t, 2.43m-diameter, spherical recoverable capsule containing a dummy cosmonaut. Four days later Sputnik 4 fired a retro-rocket which, because it was incor-
rectly oriented, mistakenly fired the capsule
and "crewman" into a higher orbit.
Since then, the spherical Vostok capsule
and double-cone shaped 2.27t, 2.25m-long
instrument module have been put to good

THE DC-3

OF SPACE

The Soviet Union is planning yet another derivative of the Vostok capsule, used for a wide variety of space missions in the 30 years since its first flight, reports Tim Furniss.

use in the Soviet space programme, flying a
variety of over 1,000 missions from spying to
microgravity processing. That these Vostok
capsules are still in use after 30 years is a
perfect illustration of the Soviet policy of
using proven vehicles: "Effective and func-

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