

GRILLO - The Italian mail rocket launched and recovered in Genoa

Massimo Trenta

In the second half of the Fifties, the aerospace interests emerged in the various European countries, primarily as a result of the success of the International Geophysical Year closed at the end of 1958, began to produce their first results. A boost also came from the progresses in missile military activities and in the the early Soviet and American space race.

The story of the Italian adventure in space and of the Boglio's successes highly contributed to the increased interest in Italy and in the world of Communications without much fanfare Europe in space started to become a reality.

High expectations aroused in mid-Sixties the launch of the small Grillo-2 rocket during the 2nd International Communications Fair, which was held in Genoa from October 30 to Nov. 7, 1965. For one week Genoa was at the heart of a particularly intense European activity, as suggested the motto "Genova Call Europe" chosen for the historic Fair that besides the planned maiden launch of Grillo II, housed in those days, among other, the Conference of the European Coal and Steel Community and the First International Festival of Communication Film.



The official leaflet of the Genoa Fair

Great was the interest of the government for this fair which was inaugurated by Mr. Giulio Andreotti, then Minister of Defense. During the event the Fair was visited by the Prime Minister Aldo Moro, accompanied by Interior Minister Taviani.

And large attention was paid by the media The launch of GRILLO II was given great prominence. The press release of November 3, 1965 announced:

«Today will take place the most spectacular of the events organized by the International Communication Fair, the Maiden Launch of Italian Mail Rocket GRILLO II. The launch will be carried out at 16 on the forecourt of the Palasport, sea side.

The rocket that, as it is known, is propelled by hot water, after a high trajectory will fall into the sea and will immediately be recovered by police's divers who will use two specially equipped lances, one of the police itself and the other provided by firefighters. Everything is now ready for launch, yesterday came from Benevento the special launch pad from where the missile will start and technicians are carrying out the final preparations. They settle and check the chemicals that will trigger the reactions that will develop the vaporization which will have the same properties of a powerful propellant. The launch, which follows the test launch performed early in November in UK, will be followed by several Italian officials and foreign observers interested a possible large-scale use for mail delivery.»

The mail rocket, which was 1.70 meters long and weighed 8 pounds, reached a speed of 800 km / h.