Shots of the Week

An all-Italian crew successfully launched Italy’s San Marco I satellite from Wallops Island, Va., Dec. 15. The launch, employing a NASA-supplied Scout booster, marked Italy’s entry into the international space club and was the first time in the NASA international cooperative program that a satellite launch was conducted by a team of foreign nationals.

Apogee is 510 mi.; perigee, 128 mi.; period, 95 min.; and inclination to the Equator, 38 degrees. Apogee is some 90 mi. greater than had been expected (M/R, Dec. 7, p. 10), but perigee was close enough to the intended 155 mi. to accomplish the key objective, conduct of an atmospheric drag experiment.

Because of the low perigee, the satellite is expected to have a lifetime of only a few weeks.

SAN MARCO satellite being checked out with Scout vehicle before launch Dec. 15. See “Shots of the Week” at left.