

Battle of Asiago by most and the Straffe [Punishment] Expedition by some began on May 15, 1916. Asiago will be the subject of another major article on La Grande Guerra and will not be discussed here in detail. It did, however, have some dramatic effects on the Isonzo Front and these need to be outlined briefly.

Memorial at Monte Sei Busi

At first the Austrian attack in the Trentino looked dramatically successful. Comando Supremo delayed further its plans for offensive operations and moved troops to reduce the threat to their rear. The deployment from the Isonzo to the Asiago Plateau was done fairly quickly since the Italian forces were travelling over shorter, interior lines. By early June the Austrian offensive was grinding to a halt. The Italian situation was further helped by the Russian response to their call for pressure on the Austrian Army on the Eastern Front. The subsequent series of actions known as the Brusilov Offensive were so successful that Austrian Supreme Commander Conrad von Hotzendorf was forced to give up his Trentino Offensive and move troops to distant Galicia. Italy's responded in turn by mounting a counter-offensive which ultimately regained part of the Asiago Plateau. .

Back on the Isonzo Front, General Borojevic had decided to strengthen some local positions and the Italian Third was directed to mount attacks to discourage the Austrians shifting more men to the Trentino. Italian operations at Monfalcone were fairly low-scale, but the concurrent Austrian attack on the Carso marked a turning point for the Great War on the Italian Front. In their assaults on the Italian IX Corps at Mte San Michele and San Martino they introduced gases of the asphyxiant type leading to some quick local successes with heavy losses casualties amongst their opponents. The Italian killed, wounded and gassed totaled 4,600 men in just a few days. As the Italian counteroffensive on the Trentino slowed, the focus of Comando Supremo shifted back to the Isonzo. Now, they decided, the time was at hand to capture strategic Gorizia. Again, they used their shorter interior lines to shift troops, this time back to the Isonzo sector. In August they would be ready to mount what would turn out to be the most successful of their eleven

Isonzo Offensives.

Gorizia, Looking North to Monte Sabatino

Sixth Battle of the Isonzo

August 4 - 17, 1916

The Sixth Battle of the Isonzo is also know as the Battle of Gorizia after Italy's sole objective for the operation. For once, by practicing the Principle of Mass or Concentration and limiting the initial battlefield to an eight-mile wide front, General Cadorna was able to align 10 of his divisions against only 2 of his enemy's. This was made possible by the secrecy surrounding the preparations and his speed in switching back units from the Asiago sector.

The battle began with what was intended to be a diversionary artillery barrage and an infantry feint by units of two corps against Monfalcone to the south. The fighting got out of control, though, resulting in over five days of tough combat. The diversion failed to draw any Austrian units around Gorizia south.

The main advance began two days later from the towns of Oslavia and Padgora and featured the capture of Mte Sabatino and Mte Padgora despite strong resistance and heavy counterattacks. On August 8th, units of the 12th Italian Division were the first to enter Gorizia. The next day the Isonzo was crossed in force and the city secured. On the southern perimeter, the front broadened, growing to a width of fifteen miles. The fierce fighting characteristic of the Carso was once again renewed. Mte San Michele and Mte Sei Busi were finally seized, but at tremendous loss of life. The Italian advance on the Carso continued several miles to the dry river bed of the Vallone.

General Cadorna turned a bit cautious and Borojevic brought up reinforcements who dug-in at strong locations, and the operation ended fairly quickly. The advance of 3 miles depth over the 15-mile front with the capture of several strategic targets was the first major offensive success by the Italian Army during the Great War. Italian morale temporarily soared and on August 29th the government finally declared war on Germany. For their gains, the Italian Army had suffered 50,000 killed and wounded; on the defense, Austria-Hungary lost 42,000. Planning was initiated by Comando Supremo to expand the Gorizia bridgehead as soon as sufficient ordnance could be collected.