



Isonzo (Soca) river valley

the Italian front 1915-1918

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The 10 Form

School №8

Soca /Isonzo

The **Soča** (in Slovene) or **Isonzo** (in Italian) is a 138-kilometre long river that flows through western Slovenia (96 km) and north-east Italy (43 km).

Due to its emerald-green water, the river is marketed as "The Emerald Beauty." It is said to be one of the rare rivers in the world that retain such a colour throughout their length.

An Alpine river in character, its source lies in the Trenta Valley in the Julian Alps in northwestern Slovenia, at an elevation of 876 meters.

Prior to the First World War, the river formed part of the border between Kingdom of Italy and the Austro-Hungarian Empire. During World War I, it was the scene of bitter fighting between the two countries, culminating in the Battle of Caporetto in 1917.



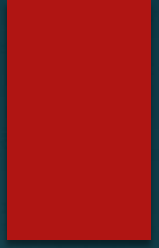
Twelfth Battle of the Isonzo

- ▶ The **Battle of Caporetto** was a battle on the Austro-Italian front of World War I. The battle was fought between the Entente and the Central Powers and took place from 24 October to 19 November 1917, near the town of Kobarid. The battle was named after the Italian name of the town.
- ▶ Austro-Hungarian forces, reinforced by German units, were able to break into the Italian front line and rout the Italian forces opposing them. The battle was a demonstration of the effectiveness of the use of stormtroopers and the infiltration tactics developed in part by Oskar von Hutier. The use of poison gas by the Germans also played a key role in the collapse of the Italian Second Army.



German assault troops at Caporetto

BATTLE



- ▶ The Italian 2nd Army commander Luigi Capello was commanding while bedridden with fever. Realizing that his forces were ill-prepared for this attack and were being routed, Capello requested permission to withdraw back to the Tagliamento. He was overruled by Cadorna who believed that the Italian force could regroup and hold out. Finally, on 30 October 1917, Cadorna ordered the majority of the Italian force to retreat to the other side of the Tagliamento. It took the Italians four full days to cross the river, and by this time the German and Austro-Hungarian armies were on their heels. By 2 November, a German division had established a bridgehead on the Tagliamento. About this time, however, the rapid success of the attack caught up with them. The German and Austro-Hungarian supply lines were stretched to breaking point and consequently they were unable to launch another attack to isolate a part of the Italian army against the Adriatic. Cadorna was able to retreat further and by 10 November had established a position on the Piave River and Monte Grappa, where the last push of the German and Austro-Hungarian forces was met and defeated by Italian forces at the First Battle of Monte Grappa.

Casualties



Italian POWs after the battle

Italian losses were enormous: 10,000 were killed, 30,000 wounded and 265,000 were taken prisoner – morale was so low among the Italian troops, mainly due to Cadorna's harsh disciplinary regime, that most of these surrendered willingly. 3,152 artillery pieces, 3,000 machine guns and 1,712 mortars were lost, along with a vast amount of stores and equipment. In contrast, the Austro-Hungarians and Germans sustained 70,000 casualties.



