



From Victory to Defeat, from Defeat to Victory
The Austro-Italian Front from Caporetto to Vittorio Veneto

Ljubljana, October 12 and 13, 2017

By the summer of 1917 the fighting on the Austro-Italian Front had been going on for two years. At first sight, the Italians were largely unsuccessful in their endeavours as the Austrian forces could prevent a large-scale breakthrough. However, the position of the Austrian army was increasingly precarious as it was threatened by the Italian advance along the Lower Isonzo and the exhaustion that was a consequence of a gruelling war on three fronts.

Therefore, the Germans finally decided to help their ally on the Italian Front. On October 24, 1917, the two Central Powers started an offensive, centred on the front sector between Bovec (Flitsch, Plezzo) and Tolmin (Tolmein, Tolmino). The offensive was a resounding success; Austrian and German troops advanced as far as the Piave River, capturing more than a quarter of a million Italian soldiers as well as large quantities of arms, ammunition, and other materiel. However, they were unable to knock Italy out of the war; the Piave line held and the Italian army was reinforced by a sizable French and British contingents. Also, the Italian Chief of Staff Luigi Cadorna was forced to resign and the Italian Army reorganised.

In June 1918, The Austrians started another offensive on the Piave, hoping to finally achieve a decisive victory. Yet their poorly supplied army was not able to achieve a breakthrough and the offensive ended in a failure. As the situation in Austria-Hungary continued to deteriorate, the balance of power swung decisively and four months later, as Austria-Hungary was effectively falling apart, the Italian Army launched a successful offensive that culminated in the final defeat of the Austro-Hungarian Army in the Battle of Vittorio Veneto.

Although the year 1917 did not prove to be the decisive year on the Italian Front, the breakthrough had an important impact on the development of the war in 1918. Our conference – the third in a series of conferences on the Austro-Italian Front during WWI – thus aims to bring together new research on the developments on both sides of the front in the period from the Battle of Caporetto to the Battle of Vittorio Veneto, in a contextual frame of a victory and/or defeat. We are interested in new research on military developments, reorganisation of the armed forces, the functioning of military and/or political alliances, the fates of civilians in occupied Italian territories or displaced inside the Kingdom, the Austrian administration of occupied Italian provinces and the return of Austrian refugees, propaganda, the peace movements and proposals, as well as other aspects of the final year of the Great War on the Austro-Italian Front. All of this should provide us with a better understanding of the development from victory to defeat and from defeat to victory.

The conference language is English.

Abstracts no longer than 300 words together with a short biography should be sent to: ljubljana.conference@outlook.com. The due date for proposals is April 30, 2017.

Accommodation and meals during the conference will be provided. Travel costs will not be covered.

The conference is organised by:

Department of History, University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts

Milko Kos Historical Institute, Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts,
Ljubljana

Science and Research Centre, Koper

National Museum of Contemporary History, Ljubljana

UMR Sirice, Paris

LabEx EHNE, Paris

Institut national des langues et civilisations orientales, CREE, Paris

Istituto Storico Italo Germanico – FBK, Trento

Università di Padova

