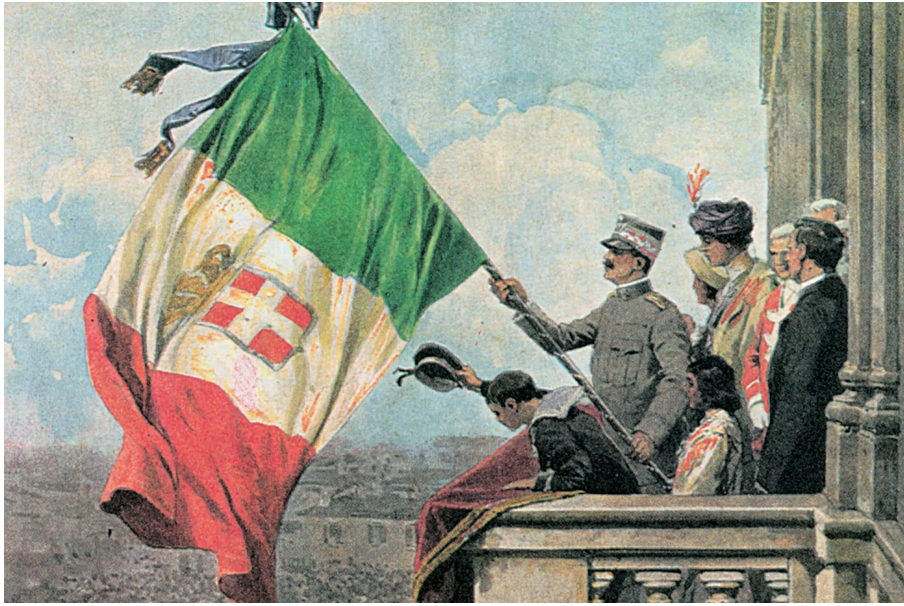




May 24, 1915: Italy enters World War I

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May 24, 1915 is one of the most important dates in 20th-century Italian history: it marks the entry of the Kingdom of Italy into **World War I** against the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

When the conflict broke out in the summer of **1914**, Italy initially decided to remain neutral. Despite being part of the **Triple Alliance** with Germany and Austria-Hungary, the Italian government argued that the agreement was defensive in nature and that Austria-Hungary had acted without consulting Rome before attacking Serbia. For this reason, Italy did not immediately enter the war.

In the following months, the country was swept by a heated political and social debate between **neutralists**, who opposed intervention, and **interventionists**, who were in favor of war. Meanwhile, the Italian government initiated diplomatic negotiations with the Entente powers: France, Great Britain, and Russia. These negotiations led to the signing of the **Treaty of London** on **April 26, 1915**, a secret agreement in which Italy committed to entering the war within a month alongside the Entente, in exchange for territorial promises.

On **May 23, 1915**, Italy declared war on Austria-Hungary. The following day, **May 24**, military operations officially began. From that moment, the Italian front extended over a vast arc, from the Alps to the Adriatic, with particular importance given to the Isonzo and Carso sectors.



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The first actions of the Italian Army

At dawn on **May 24, 1915**, Italian troops crossed the old border with the Austro-Hungarian Empire at several points. The objective was to quickly advance towards enemy positions and occupy strategically important territories before the Austro-Hungarian army could strengthen its defenses.

The first operations developed across multiple sectors:

On the Isonzo front, the Italian Army aimed at the Austro-Hungarian lines along the river, particularly in the area between the middle Isonzo, Gorizia, the Carso, and the Adriatic Sea. This sector would become the main theater of Italian offensives in the following months and years.

In Friuli, Italian troops advanced towards strategic locations such as **Cervignano**, which was among the first centers occupied. The advance aimed to move the front beyond the old border and open the way towards the Isonzo.

In Cadore and the Dolomites, the Italian army occupied some mountain positions and important locations, including **Cortina d'Ampezzo**. The war in these territories soon took on extremely difficult characteristics, fought at high altitudes, among snow, rock, frost, and logistical challenges.

In the Trentino sector, the Italian action was more cautious. Trentino, then an Austro-Hungarian territory, formed a salient that penetrated towards the Venetian plain. For this reason, the Italian Army initially maintained a primarily defensive stance, fearing possible Austro-Hungarian attacks towards Veneto.

Despite the initial enthusiasm, the Italian advance was slower than expected. The mobilization of the army was still underway, the terrain difficulties were enormous, and Austria-Hungary quickly organized its defense. In the first weeks, some areas of southern Trentino, **Caporetto**, **Monfalcone**, and the peak of **Monte Nero** were occupied, but the major offensive against the Austro-Hungarian defenses began only at the end of June 1915.



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The historical significance of May 24

May 24 not only represents the beginning of Italian military operations but also the definitive transition from neutrality to war. It was the moment when the country entered a long, harsh, and deeply transformative conflict.

The war on the Italian front soon became a war of position, fought in extreme conditions: in the mountains, in the trenches of the Carso, along the Isonzo, and in the alpine areas. Expectations of a quick war were almost immediately disproven. The conflict would last until **1918**, leaving a profound mark on Italian society, economy, politics, and collective memory.

Remembering **May 24, 1915** thus means understanding the moment when Italy chose to enter the Great War, opening a decisive and painful chapter in its national history.