

Monte Piano/a. An example for the war Dolomites.



The “Flat Mountain”

The charter document of Duke Tassilo III of Bavaria for the endowment of the Abbey of Innichen is the first recorded use of the name “Monte Plano” (the flat mountain) in the year 769. This relatively small massif lies in the border region of the autonomous province of Bozen and the province of Belluno. It is bounded on the west by the Höhlenstein valley. To the north lies the Rienz valley, to the south, the Val Popena Bassa, and to the east is the Valle di Rimbianco. The plateau is geographically divided into the north crest (Monte Piano) and the south crest (Monte Piana).

The easiest way to access the region is from the north, through the Höhlenstein valley, which runs from Toblach toward Cortina d’Ampezzo and is an important connection between the Puster valley in the north and Veneto in the south. This connection has presumably been around since the crusades (around 1100 to 1300.) The modern road through the Höhlenstein valley was built in 1832. At Schluderbach, a branch road heads off toward Misurina. From there, a path and a road run up to the Rifugio Angelo Bosi. Other ways to get up on the mountain or plateau come from the north, the east, and even from the west.

To avoid border disputes between the Habsburg Empire and Venetia, a border stone was set up on Monte Piana back in 1753. In 1797, Venetia joined the Habsburg monarchy due to the Peace of Campo Formio. When Venetia fell to the Kingdom of Italy after the third war of independence in 1866, Monte Piana became an important strategic military point.

The “South Front”

After war was declared by Italy on Austria-Hungary in May of 1915, both parties sought to

occupy important strategic parts of the front in the mountains. The western part of the massively contested "south front" extends from the Ortler region to the south, crosses the region north of Lake Garda, and runs on to the east until just before the gates of the current small town of Asiago (Venetia, province of Vicenza.) The eastern part of the front then runs from Asiago to the north, up to the Rolle pass, then on over the Marmolada to the Sexten Dolomites. First along the Karnisch Alps to the Julian Alps, the south front is bounded on the east by Isonzo (Slovene: Socá) before the front line runs southward again to the Trieste basin.

Battle Before the "Drei Zinnen"

Because the front runs like this, the region on Monte Piano/Monte Piana became a scene of war and conflict between Austria-Hungary and Italy, starting in June 1915. The north crest (Monte Piano) was occupied by the mountain troops of the Imperial and Royal Monarchy, while the south crest (Monte Piana) was taken by Italian "Alpini" troops. Fierce fighting raged between the enemy positions, with huge consumption of resources.

The objective of the Italian troops was to push forward to Toblach. The battles that took place between summer of 1915 and autumn of 1917, however, brought no territorial gains to either side. Tunnels, trenches, checkpoints, and watchtowers still bear witness to the fighting today, which is thought to have claimed 14,000 dead.

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