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**History of Italian Foreign Policy**

**Italian Military Policy: A  
Historiographical Analysis, 1860-  
1960**

**February 11th, 2015**

# Post-Unitarian Italy

- ▶ **Special relationship of King with Army**
- ▶ **Myth of Garibaldi**
- ▶ **By 1870 middle-class element predominant in Army ranking**
- ▶ **Military unpopular**
- ▶ **First task was occupation of new territories to defend Liberal system**
- ▶ **Military performances: humiliating defeat at Lissa and Custoza**
- ▶ **Victory in social war against Bourbonists, clericals, bandits, peasants**
- ▶ **Piedmont introduced conscription in 1854 and then all over Italy**
- ▶ **Army better at preserving law and order than defending nation, or fighting aggressively for its cause: huge military expenditure had largely domestic purposes**

# III Independence War

- ▶ According to Prussian war plans, Italy was supposed to challenge Austria on Southern front
- ▶ Meanwhile, in light of naval superiority, Italy could threaten Dalmatian coast

# War developments

- ▶ **16.06.1866 breakout of hostilities between Prussia and Austria**
- ▶ **Italy severely defeated at Custoza**
- ▶ **Custoza marked a halt to Italian operations, with decision to get organised against counter-attack**
- ▶ **Following several important Prussian victories (i.e. Sadowa July 3), Austrians gave priority to fight against Prussia**
- ▶ **Battle of Lissa July 20**
- ▶ **First great naval battle with the use of steam battleships and last one with ramming manoeuvres**



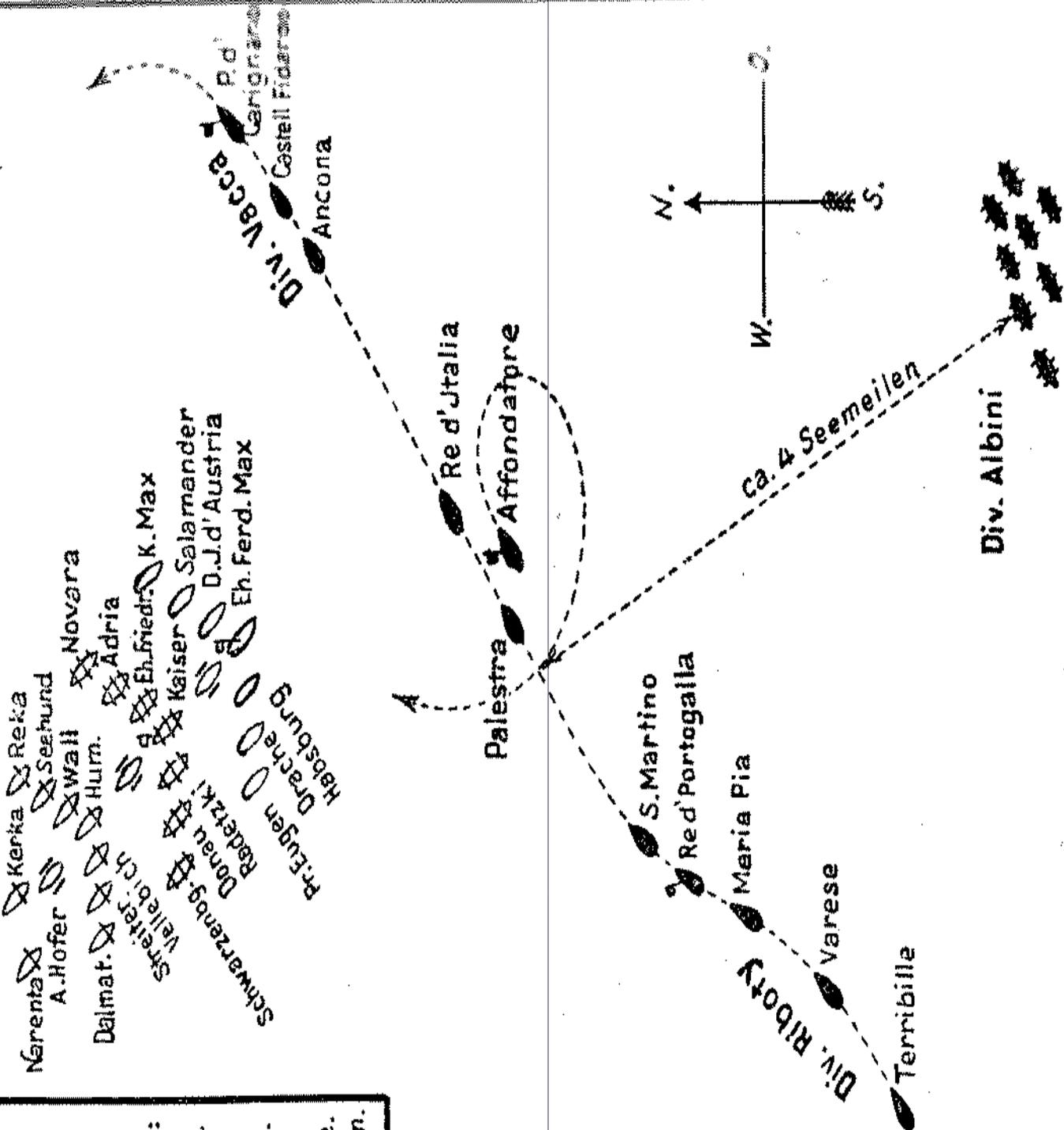


# Schlacht bei LISSA. (\*)

1. Moment.

Zeichen - Erklärung:

- ⊖ Öst. Panzerschiffe.
- ⊕ " Holzschiffe.
- ⊕ " Kanonenboote.
- ⊕ " Raddampfer.
- ⊖ Ital. Panzerschiffe.
- ⊕ " Holz-Fregatten.



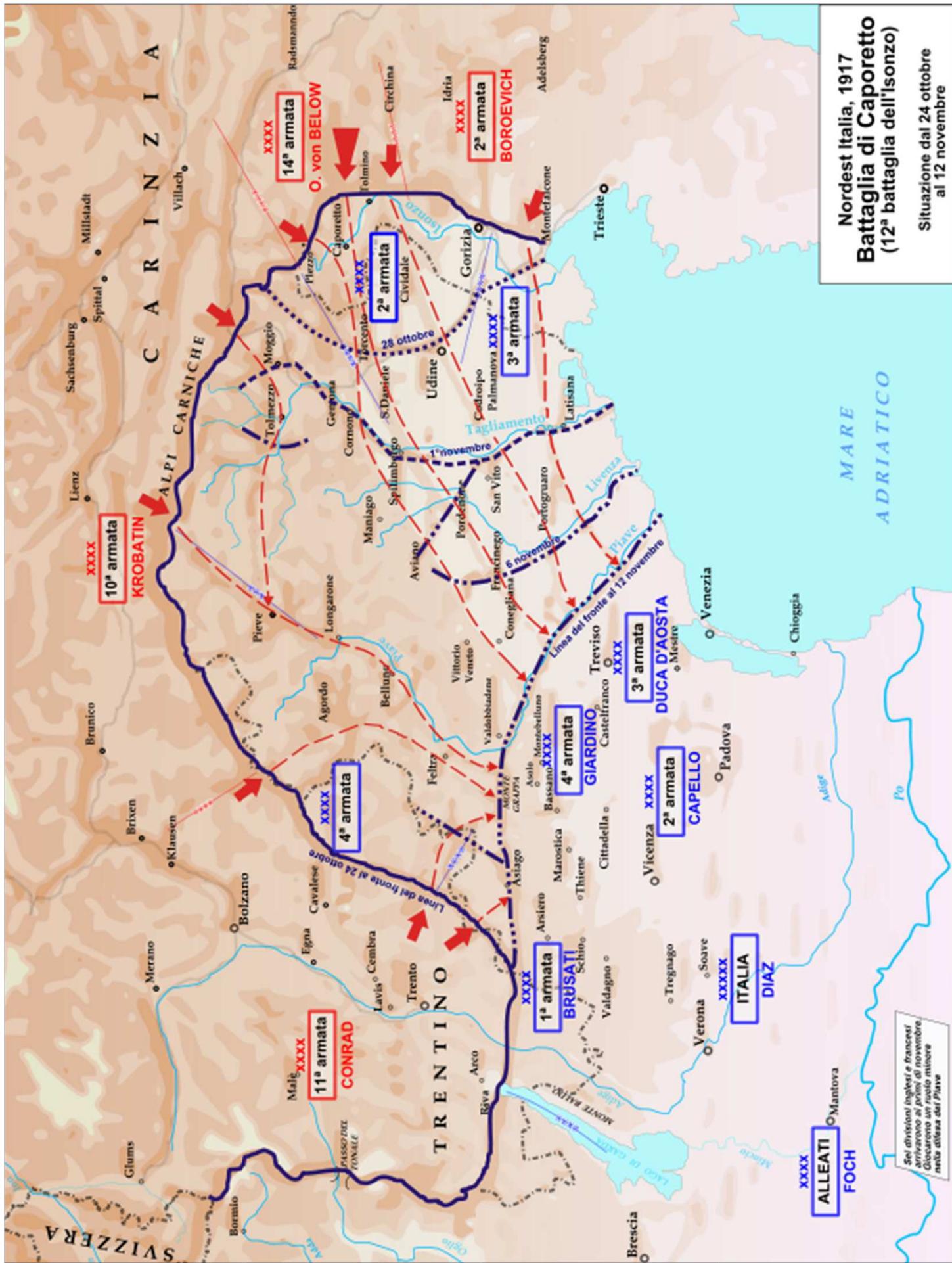


# Giolitti

- ▶ **Though social unrest could provoke suspension of civil rights, with Army behaving like force of occupation, Giolitti tried to hold the balance between employers and social protesters**
- ▶ **Army less openly needed to guarantee survival of State**

# Catholics

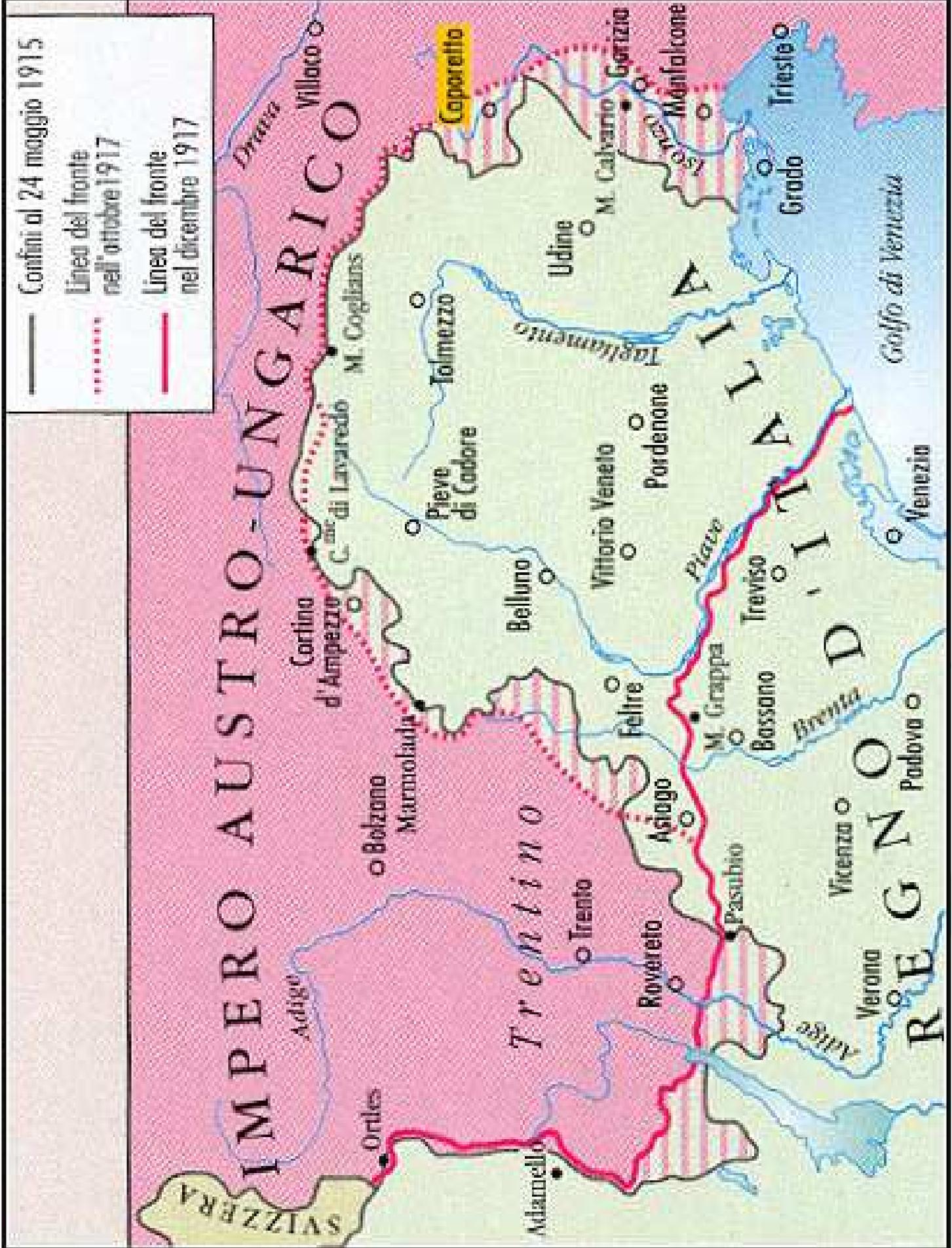
- ▶ **Political Catholicism shared some values with military: conservatism**
- ▶ **Catholic chaplains in war urged forward what they hoped were Catholic soldiers of the army**
- ▶ **Some parts of clergy became fervent patriotic after Caporetto**



**Nordest Italia, 1917**  
**Battaglia di Caporetto**  
**(12ª battaglia dell'Isonzo)**

Situazione dal 24 ottobre  
 al 12 novembre

Sei divisioni inglesi e francesi  
 arrivarono ai primi di novembre.  
 Giocarono un ruolo minore  
 nella difesa del Piave.



# The Navy

- ▶ **Initially ignored**
- ▶ **Navy League established in 1897**
- ▶ **Except in some coastal cities (Arsenal in Taranto 1889), navalism had little popular appeal – aftermath of fiasco at Lissa**
- ▶ **No pivotal role played by the Navy in WW1**

# First World War

- ▶ **Massive war effort**
- ▶ **5.7 men involved**
- ▶ **Around 600,000 dead**
- ▶ **Some 500,000 wounded or mutilated**
- ▶ **Govt spent more than double than total military expenditure 1861-1913**
- ▶ **Peasant soldiers gave highest contribute (casualty rate 39.8 %)**
- ▶ **Low pay and brutal discipline (decimation)**
- ▶ **State fighting merely for dynastic advantages (sacro egoismo)**
- ▶ **Nov 1918 – more Italians than previously found identity in nation**
- ▶ **After Caporetto, Italy began to fight something like modern war, with propaganda determined to forge mass involvement in national idealism**

# Fascism

- ▶ **More militant view of the world**
- ▶ **Paramilitary youth organisations as example of totalitarian achievement**
- ▶ **Education system to serve neither middle class, not proletarian truth, but rather national truth based on culture of people inspired by eternal values of Italian race and civilization**
- ▶ **Textbooks full of military culture**

# Pietro Badoglio

- ▶ **Chief of General Staff 1919-21, despite claims of his military incompetence leading to some extent to Caporetto disaster**
- ▶ **After March on Rome, his future seemed doubtful, because of his ideology, his military record, and because Fascists ideologues wanted to bring revolution to military hierarchies**
- ▶ **Outcome was continuity and tradition: Badoglio Chief of General Staff 1925, with a fervent fascist as his deputy**

# Air Force

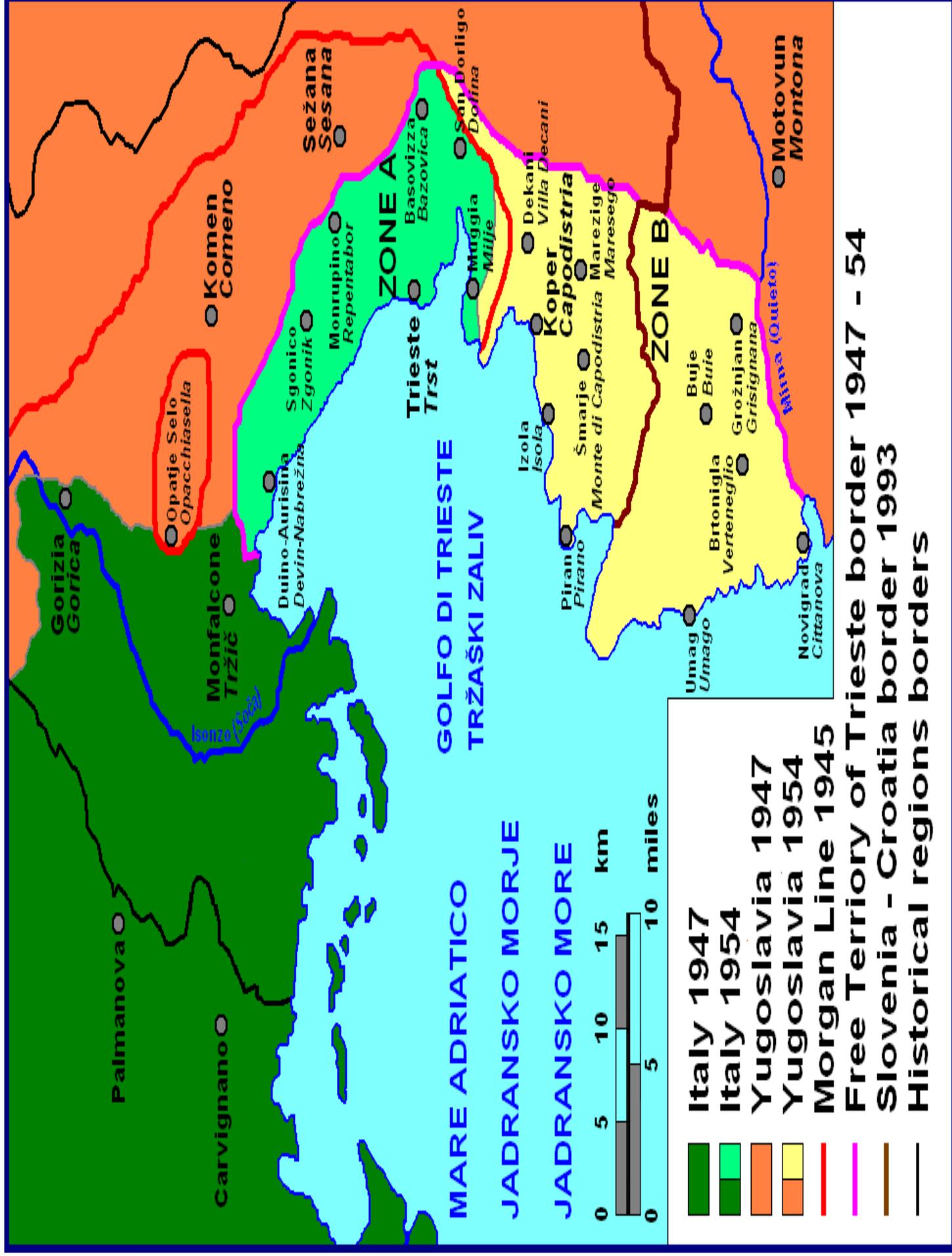
- ▶ **Example of strength and weakness of Fascist military policy**
- ▶ **A pilot's life seemed ideal to new Fascist man: modern technology, speed and daring – still a knightly crusader for the nation**
- ▶ **Air Ministry set up 1925**
- ▶ **Gap between theory and practice**
- ▶ **Air Force not ready for blitzkrieg**
- ▶ **In 1939, Italy possessed 840 war planes**
- ▶ **Low aircraft production – 1942 US produced in a week more war planes than Italy did in a year**

# Fascist War and social classes

- ▶ Italian society still nourished pre-1922 beliefs
- ▶ Middle class sought to save its sons from military service in war
- ▶ Proletariat rediscovered sense of self in 1943 strikes
- ▶ Intellectuals began to doubt Mussolini's charisma
- ▶ Peasantry, still the most likely to fight and die in war, dreamt of family, village and America
- ▶ Rome's population sought hope and comfort from Pope after 1943 bombings

# Early Republic

- ▶ **Italian military relationship with wider world ended in 1945, though Italy was granted membership of NATO**
- ▶ **New Army established and sent to Trieste in 1953 to negotiate fate of that city**
- ▶ **Italian soldiers only occasionally attracted attention of politicians**
- ▶ **Military had lost pretension to strut on wider stage**



Italy 1947  
 Italy 1954  
 Yugoslavia 1947  
 Yugoslavia 1954  
 Morgan Line 1945  
 Free Territory of Trieste border 1993  
 Slovenia - Croatia border 1993  
 Historical regions borders