

The “Northern Frontier Defense System towards Switzerland,” often incorrectly referred to as the **Cadorna Line**, was a vast preventive defense system built in Italy starting in 1915 on the initiative of General Luigi Cadorna during First World War.

- **Function:** It was not a front line, but rather a preventive defensive system designed to **counter a potential German or Austro-Hungarian invasion** through neutral Switzerland, thus protecting the crucial industrial and logistical centers of the Po Valley (Turin, Milan, Brescia). The **Mera-Adda** sector (Orobie Alps) was considered fundamental.
- **Scale:** The scale of the project was impressive, with 72 km of trenches, 88 artillery positions, and almost 700 km of roads and mule tracks, construction required a significant investment (over 105 million lire at the time) and employing over **40,000 men**.

However, despite its vastness and the massive investment of resources, the system **was never involved in actual combat**. Following the defeat at Caporetto in 1917, all military efforts were redirected to the Piave front, leading to the gradual and definitive abandonment of the Northern Frontier.

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**ON THE TRAIL
OF MEMORY**


 **Parco
delle Orobie Valtellinesi**

Photo: Genassa

**CADORNA
LINE:
The “Northern
Frontier”**



BELVISO VALLEY

Belviso Valley, located in the heart of the Orobie Valtellinesi Park and divided between the municipalities of Aprica and Teglio (SO), is not only a treasure trove of natural beauty, but also the setting for an extraordinary story: that of the First World War.

Since 1915, as part of the Northern Frontier defence system (Cadorna Line), Belviso Valley was identified by the Military Engineers as a strategic point for control and observation of the Alpine access routes, serving as a crossroads between the current provinces of Bergamo, Brescia and Sondrio. The military structures built (trenches, firing positions, shelters and a vast network of military mule tracks) were designed to be camouflaged, lightweight and perfectly integrated into the terrain, following the military logic of the Cadorna Line.

The structures recovered by the enhancement project offer a lesson in the alpine engineering of the time. They include:

- Mule tracks and walkways: ancient communication

routes, often carved into the rock, designed to connect the front line with logistical points and thus allow supplies to be delivered.

- Trenches and emplacements: the restored defensive lines offer a tangible perspective on the military strategy of the time, revealing not only the defensive architecture but also the difficult living conditions that soldiers had to face in these high-altitude outposts.
- Shelter areas: remains of barracks and shelters where soldiers found refuge, providing concrete evidence of everyday life at high altitude.

Despite its initial strategic importance, Belviso Valley was gradually abandoned after the defeat at Caporetto and the shift of the front to the Piave.

Today, its structures are recognised as a unique historical and territorial document, at the centre of conservation and enhancement projects.

Photo: Donati

FROM OBLIVION TO PUBLIC HERITAGE

The project “**Sulle tracce della memoria**” (On the Traces of Memory) is an initiative that goes beyond simple restoration. Promoted by the Orobie Valtellinesi Park in collaboration with the Municipalities of Aprica and Teglio, the Aprica Pro Loco, and with scientific support from the **University of Bergamo** (funded by the Lombardy Region), its goals are:

- 1. Study and Analysis:** To trace, map, and document all military remains (trenches, shelters, cableways) hidden or reclaimed by vegetation.
- 2. Recovery and Valorization:** To clear the artifacts and ensure the paths are safe and accessible, explaining their original functions.
- 3. Dissemination:** To create a permanent “Memory

Itinerary” for hikers, transforming the mountain into an “**open-air museum.**”

Innovative Methodology:

The project combines historical research with modern engineering. Advanced Remote Sensing techniques, including drones and LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) technology, are used to penetrate the forest canopy and pinpoint military remains with millimetric precision.

MEMORY BELONGS TO THOSE WHO WALK THESE PATHS

We invite you to walk the paths of Belviso Valley and step into the shoes of the soldiers and workers who shaped this landscape a century ago. Discover a hidden chapter of our history, where the beauty of the Alpine wilderness meets the indelible traces of memory.

Photo: Ganassa

