

Pietro Fortunato Calvi:
The Glorious Battle of Rindemera
May 28, 1848



Il Cadore

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Presentation for the Dante Alighieri Society of Pittsburgh

by Glenn J. Beech

A short distance from Noale, in the middle of a pleasant and bright plain rises the



village of Briana. There from an honest, but not so humble house, on February 15, 1817 was born to Federico and Angela Calvi the son Pietro Fortunato.

In Briana Pietro received the first rudiments of an education learning reading, from the parish priest. His father,

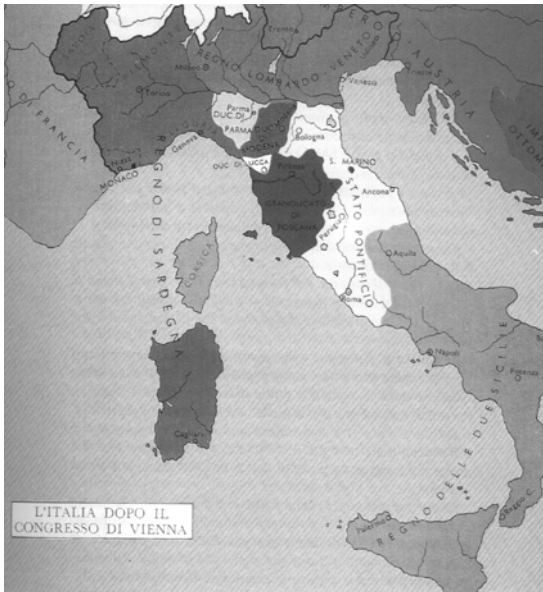
being a political and administrative employee was required to move his family to Padua. After happily passing his elementary studies and having completed the first year of ginnasio, his father, decided to have him educated in a military career. He saw to it that Pietro was admitted to the Military College of Vienna. In 1836, at the age of 19, Pietro left with the rank of ensign and would advance in



rank to become a first lieutenant and then an infantry captain in arms, in the Wimpffen regiment. During his military service, in the Austrian army, he lived in Venice where, with his affable manner and kindness, he became well known and liked. Pietro was an Italian who loved Italy but he was also a captain in the Austrian army.

On one beautiful day near the end of 1846, he received orders to leave for Gratz. Had the suspicious and distrustful Austrian politicians seen in him something that they did not like which led to his transfer? Far from Venice, where he had passed many pleasing hours, in the solitude of Gratz, Calvi developed his plan and in March of that memorable year of 1848 he joined the new national movement. Without delay he tendered his resignation from the rank of captain in the Austrian army and without waiting to see if the

resignation was accepted he departed Gratz. Encountering dangerous conditions he traveled to Trieste where he boarded a fishing boat that took him back to Venice.



In 1818 the Congress of Vienna believed it had arranged Europe in a way that assured, what the diplomats had thought would be, a long period of peace in Europe, if not throughout the world. Instead, this decision was the origin of all of the revolutions and wars of the 19th century. The small region of northern Italy known as “Il Cadore” was not concerned with the movements of the Napoletani, Siciliani, Piemontese and the

Emiliani. But when the Cadorini on business ventures visited the cities of the Veneto they brought back to Cadore reports of the hidden and the obvious events of the Italian political life. When the facts of Padova (February 8, 1848)



were known and the events in Paris, Vienna and Hungary, and then the more interesting events of Venice and Milan (March 17-23) an excitement began to spread throughout the region. When the news arrived that Venice was liberated and that the Austrian gendarmes had departed, the restrained enthusiasm manifested itself and the Cadorini seemed to be born again.

Memorable in Cadorine history is the day of April 1, 1848. On the morning of this day, the square of Pieve di Cadore, the district capital, was filled. It was an unusual public turn out, with people coming from all parts of the region. By the anxious, excited and emotional talk of the

people and the serious and composed faces of the dignitaries one could easily deduce a serious affair would occupy the day and the spirits of everyone. All of a sudden an event occurred that sent a tremor through and aroused the people who were assembled in the square. From the high tower of the Comunita the bell, that had remained silent for more than fifty years, was heard again calling the people of Cadore to the Consiglio. On March 27, a circular was sent from the Municipio of Pieve, inviting all the citizens to come to a meeting to arrive at a decision, on the direction they should take during these serious times.



The citizens had already received the happy news of the liberation of Venice. The officials of Cadore formed the basis of a Civic Guard and gathered arms and ammunitions. It was able to organize a few squads of volunteers that could be sent to defend the poorly secured borders of Ampezzo. Now having volunteers in service it asked the Provisional Government for arms and made arrangements to enforce law and order in all of the villages. A proposal was approved by the Assembly believing the first and most necessary thing in these serious moments of

the fatherland would be unity. They expressed their desire;

"To the Central Government of the Veneto Republic we make directly known the jubilation of the Cadorine people with the revival of the beloved Republic and the impatience to see waving, anew on these mountains, the flag of Saint Mark".

A delegation of six representatives was selected to present these wishes to the Provisional government. The delegation met with representatives of the Venetian Provisional Government, and they so appreciated the noble arrangement, that on the 5th of April the government responded with the

following proclamation written by Niccolo Tommaseo and signed by Daniele Manin.

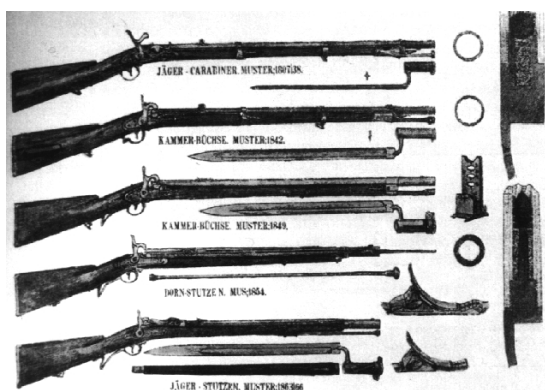


To the People of Cadore

"You who to the foreigner were made to feel, many times, as if your arm was not sufficiently strong to fight the enemy; You who in your churches have kept alive the memories of the victories of our fatherland. You who remain loyal to the old Republic are among the first to unite to the new; you again will see the old privileges. You who, in the pure air of your mountains breath liberty like air, feel more free and happy knowing that at this precious moment you have participated with your

brothers to preserve the sincerity of the old customs from which comes the feeling to live in dignity. The treasures of traditions and of customs are sacred. Cadorine, you believe in us and we in you, because we know well those with a sincere spirit are the most generous and ardent".

The Provisional Government, sped up the Cadorine request, as a result of their passionate plea, and several days later sent five canons, 200 stutzen and



1650 pounds of gunpowder. The Cadorine could provide lead for shot and cannonballs from the mine at Auronzo. The cartridges were provided by the Signore of Pieve. The Alpigiani were ready, lacking only a leader who could lead them in military technique and the use of arms. The Provisional

Government thought enough of the defense of Cadore to issue the decree of April 17, 1848 n. 350, appointing a Capitano.



That Capitano was Pietro Fortunato Calvi.

With the task to direct the arms of Cadore Calvi together with Doctor Luigi Coletti, under the decree of April 13, 1848 n. 627, had been given the authorization to devise a plan and develop a system of defense. On April 19, they departed Venice and on the night of the 20th they arrived in Pieve and took residence in the house of Coletti's brother. The day of the 21st after a motion by Coletti, the Central Municipio of Pieve issued to all the Comunal



representatives of Cadore a circular, which invited them to a general assembly on the 25th. At the assembly they introduced, for the first time, the Capitano sent by the Republic and made evident the desire of the Provisional Government. They discussed the urgent questions of the moment and established a *Comitato di difesa* composed of the citizens Dr. Luigi Coletti of Pieve, engineer Osvaldo Palatini of Pieve, Antonio

Serafini of Valle, Giovanni Battista Cadorin of Lorenzago, Giovanni Osta of Comelico and Osvaldo Vecellio-Larice of Auronzo.



The Austrians, who had abandoned the Veneto Provinces, were beginning to seize them anew. Udine had already surrendered and this unfavorable news arrived at the Assembly at the same time they were forming the Comitato di difesa. This news prompted them to act quickly.

It was festival of Saint Mark and the second feast of Easter. The church of Santa Maria at Pieve di Cadore was adorned for the holiday and welcomed an extraordinary large crowd. The Archdeacon surrounded by many of his clergy raised his hand and blessed a flag unfurled to the right of the altar and then blessed the Italian flag. That act consecrated the

love of the fatherland, and also rekindled, the fire and the spirit, of those present, to fight and to follow the flag.



During the ensuing days Calvi, and the other members of the Comitato, hurriedly visited all of the sights where they needed to prepare a defense. They formed a system of work and made fortifications, reorganized the Civica and began to enlist and organize five *Corpi Franchi* of seventy men each, who were paid by the Comitato, obligated, by oath, for three months and led by ex-military men with experience and knowledge of military exercises and regulations. There are around 350 men, and these were the ones armed with the best rifles, the major part of whom were sent to

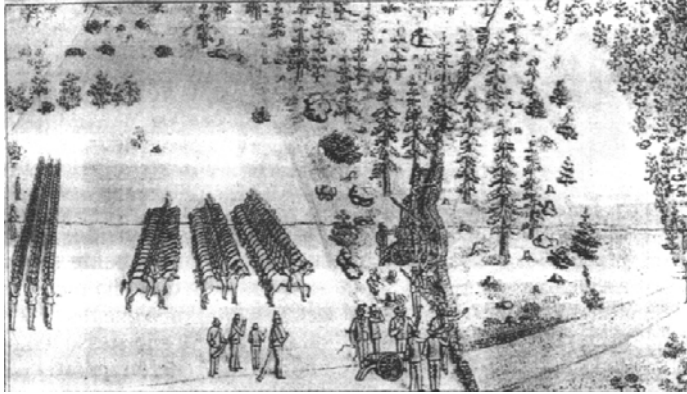
the Ampezzo border. Not having a uniform the leaders decided that the men would raise the brim of their hat and apply to it a twig of fir with a tricolor cockade. Of the five canons, in their arsenal, two are positioned at Chiusa di Venas, two are at Treponte and one is kept at Pieve. Montecroce is guarded by the Civiche of the nearby villages under the direction of Giovanni Coletti. All are at their best. The arrival of Calvi aroused in the Cadorini the will to fight. With his pleasant demeanor he gained the support of all the citizens, and they were



ready to follow him. The moment was not late in coming.

From the Chiusa di Venas to the Austrian border is, about ten miles, it is a large valley, closed to the right, by the threatening lower slopes of Antelao and cut at the bottom by the Boite tributary, which springs from the Tyrolese Alps. After about 20 kilometers the Boite throws itself recklessly into the Piave river near Perarolo. To the left of the Boite, passes the road of Alemagna that leads to Ampezzo and ascends gently towards

the border. The road extends through the middle of thick woodlands and from time to time is blocked by frequent landslides from Antelao. This area of Cadore is the Oltrechiusa, and in this valley one finds for the first time the Cadorine facing a fierce enemy.



It is May 2. The Austrians have already threatened the borders of this area but on the morning of this day they moved forward. There are around 2,000 men of the Provaska Regiment with



mainly Jäger (riflemen) and 52 Uhlanen (lancers) on horses together with a large number of Ampezzani and Austrians from the nearby communities. They crossed the borders, killing the Cadorine sentinel and advanced to occupy the Cadorine territory. The commander of the Cadorine Corpo Franco positioned there is Ignazio Galeazzi. The Austrians ask him and his forces,, to surrender themselves, to vacate the borders and to accept the conditions of the capitulation of Udine. He

refused, adding that he had a Comitato to which he was obedient. As he



arranged for their defense he had sent a messenger to notify the Comitato and to sound the bells of Chiapuzza and San Vito. That news and the sounding of the bells, like a flash of lightening, spread to all of the leaders of the villages of the Oltrechiusa, Venas, Valle, Perarolo, Pieve and Calalzo. All of Cadore would respond to the terrible invitation, young and old, rich and poor, with the priests in front of the citizens who came armed with rifles, lances, spits and pitchforks, to the threatened

borders. And in the villages not even the women or children remained. Quite a few women, although trembling ran beside their husbands or loved ones, ready to fight against the insolent invader. At the sound of the bells the enemy stopped. Already in Cadorine territory, they set up a defensive position in the forest, a condition most favorable for them. The enemy interrogated Galeazzi and they wanted to know the meaning of the pealing bells. He responded: "*the bells are ringing for our agony or for yours*". Meanwhile around nine in the morning Calvi arrived with other members of the Comitato and readied on two wings armed personnel, one above the road in line towards the slopes of Antelao, the other here and there around the Boite. When seeing the enemy was not moving, he ordered the drums to be sounded and cried out, "Avanti!" and at that shout *avanti avanti* was repeated by all and *avanti avanti* echoed off the sides of Antelao. Behind their leader the courageous Cadorine emerged and encountered a squad of Imperial Cacciatori (Tyrolean Imperial Rifle Regiment) lying in the forest, they attacked dispersing them. The Austrians opened fire with *pelottone* but the Cadorine forces threw themselves on the ground avoiding



them, then increased by reinforcements they chased them. The Austrian began a retreat. Now the Austrians are on their land and the Cadorine forces were occupying a position where the road makes a curve and the slopes of the hills are steep and high. Here they are unexpectedly assaulted by the Austrians, who are lying in wait in the thick woods and shot at them with lively fire. The situation of the Cadorine was very grave. But Calvi, who had always been at the front, stood up on the wall of the road and in a rain of bullets raised, on the point of his sword, the printed capitulation of Udine, and tore it in an act of defiance. That act, by the young hero, instilled such courage in his troops that they furiously rushed behind him went up the hillside and made the Austrians flee. The Cadorini cleared the pass and were ready to set sight on Acquabuona.

Victorious, they were able to penetrate as far as Ampezzo but in need of rest they were recalled to the border. As such ended this memorable day.

Such began the defense of Cadore. Except for the sentinel who was killed and five or six wounded the Cadorine forces suffered no other losses. Such was not the case for the enemy.

On the morning of May 3rd, Calvi, saw in the Cadorini the increasing and ardent desire to fight. He agreed with the Comitato that they were prepared to defend themselves and to advance if asked again. When the Comitato was asked to appear before an Austrian commission, the head of the comune of Ampezzo, and other spokesmen agreed to meet. The Austrians declared a war was useless, for the fate of Italy, and requested the Cadorine and Austrians make a pact proposing that for three months they respect the borders. The pact was accepted and the Cadorine returned home singing songs, boasting of having won, and filled with the spirit of following to the death their leader Calvi who had become an idol of veneration and source of Bellunese enthusiasm.

It is now May 6th.

From the borders of Ampezzo and the valley of Boite the Austrians are assembled and move into the valley of Pieve between Rucorvo and Termine, here is a new theater of the fight. Since April 22 the Austrians were near Udine on the road of Conegliano, Ceneda and Serravalle and they penetrated into the



Bellunese territory. On May 5th they entered Belluno overcoming any resistance. From there a detachment of Croats were ordered to march against Cadore to keep open the lines of communication, to the Tyrol, by the road of Alemagna. On the morning of the 6th they were

already at Longarone. That the Austrians might assault the Cadorine from the borders was natural, and to drive them back they would be at the ready but to be

threatened from the Piave Valley, this the Cadorine never expected. The day of the 6th finds the Cadorini at Ospitale running from every village at the sounding of the bells with the bold and brave Calvi at the lead.

On the morning of the 7th the Cadorini prepared, at Tovanella, about 150 men armed with rifles on the forested slopes that stood opposite the bridge. Another small number of men were nearby, with the canon, at the curve in the road, which dominated that section from the *Ponte del Tedesco* as far as Tovanella. The men without arms, during the night, attended to preparing rocks that would overhang the road. All is ready. Hearts are beating, impatiently awaiting the moment. Towards seven in the morning about 200 Croats passed Termine, presenting themselves in columns on the road between the *Ponte del Tedesco* and Tovanella. A rifle shot was fired by one of the Cadorine troops, that was the signal for those attending the mines. The mines were fired and a number of the enemy were killed and a section of the road was destroyed. At this terrible event the Croats attempted to withdraw by wading into the river. The Cadorine fire at them with rifles and many were drowned in the Piave. The Cadorine troops abandon their posts and begin an assault. They take some prisoners and gather many bags of booty and equipment. The enemy retreated to Termine with the Cadorine troops in pursuit; some going by the high ground while some proceed by the road attempting to take the small village. The Cadorine forces want to push forward at any cost, in spite of the opposition by Calvi. But the enemy crossed the Piave and saw that the canons were not sufficiently garrisoned. Making the most of the imprudent enthusiasm of the Cadorine troops, the Croation forces open with heavy fire, the Cadorine troops are forced to retake the positions at Tovanella. In this skirmish the Cadorini lost seven men. But the Croats counted many more dead and wounded

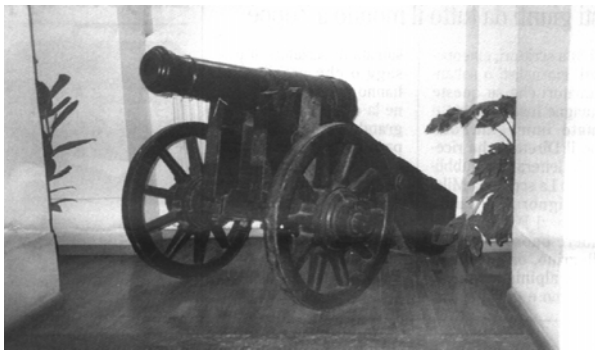
Splendid is the event of May 8th.



Between Rivalgo and Rucorvo, the road of Alemagna, which comes from Belluno to Longarone, follows the Piave. To the left for a quarter of a mile it is bordered by rocks. Landslides are a continuous threat for the passengers who travel along that section of the road as, bare stones are suspended above ones head. This is where Calvi made his troops take up position, deciding it was an opportune location for the resistance, and here the Cadorine improvised a new and singular fortification. Above the road, in a line parallel to it, they made ready stones and boulders,

keeping them suspended by levies so they could easily fall to the bottom. Above the peak of Rivalgo they built with stones and trees a type of blockhouse. Near Rucorvo with timbers and stones they barricaded the road of Venago and to the left of the Piave they placed riflemen, and men to man the *batteria di sassi*, others were near the canon at Rivalgo. They established a signal and waited. The enemy reinforcements appeared at the bend of Candidonopoli. The Cadorine troops saw them marching in an orderly fashion. The Croations were near and all was ready for the attack when to the astonishment of the Cadorine troops the enemy raised the white flag. An official, who is recognized by Calvi and others as Major Genio Cavaia di Haunestein, comes forward to talk. Calvi himself raises a white flag and with others from the Comitato receive the parliamentarian who appears sincere. He expresses his grief over the events of the day before and he asked permission for the passage of his troops over the Alemagna road. Suddenly is heard, Tradimento!, Tradimento! (Betrayal! Betrayal!) being shouted from above. A squad of Croats, taking advantage of the time in which the talks were taking place started to set off over the mountains to surprise the men at the stones. At the cry the talks were suspended, Haunestein

by act of favor was left to go free, he rejoined his troops who had already advanced, having lowered the white flag. When they were near the barricade a discharge from a canon welcomed them. This was the agreed upon signal and in a flash a storm of stones and boulders fall onto the ill fated Croats, who with the idea of betrayal, had placed themselves in a most deadly position. At the same time riflemen open fire. Born is a scene of horror and of blood. The valley resonates with the cries of moribund Croats who remained crushed on the road or are thrown into the Piave. Fear and dismay took over the defeated enemy who, in a hasty escape, did not stop until reaching Longarone.



Meanwhile other enemy forces violated the pact of the 3rd, and burst into the territory from the Ampezzo border. There was only one Corpo Franco left to guard the territory, it was led by Don Antonio Pampanin of San Vito. The enemy killed, as

usual, the sentinel and penetrated unexpectedly into the Oltrechiusa. The Corpo Franco was forced to retreat to the Chiusa di Venas, where they find, having arrived from the Piave Valley, two canons prepared for the defense. The enemy advanced committing massacre and torture of every manner. Oltrechiusa is in desolation. Having arrived at Peaio the Austrians ready forces at *Sasso verde*. With five canons they make ready the attack by placing first in line about fifty Cadorine from the invaded villages, who had unfortunately fell into the hands of the enemy. Like the children of Crema they would have to be killed first by their brothers. But from Sasso verde a voice cried out to them *A terra!*, To the ground!, the fifty threw themselves to the ground and the Cadorine bullets whistled over them bringing down the enemy, preserving the prisoners who during the moments of confusion escaped from the Austrians and safely reached their brothers. The fighting lasted until the night and the enemy found unexpected resistance everywhere and eventually retreated. During the night, the Cadorine troops from the hills of Sadorio on the left of the Boite and the

mountains of Rite to the right, kept a large chain of fires going which made a sinister impression on the Austrians. On the morning of the 10th the enemy reinforcements returned to attack the Chiusa with terrible canon fire. The Corpi Franchi numbers 2 and 3 commanded by the courageous Taddeo Perucchi, Sabastiano del Favaro and Giuseppe Giacomelli from the hills of Sadorno defended it vigorously, so much that around midday they broke ranks and chased the enemy from Vinigo, where they had committed unheard of barbaric acts. Before nightfall they pushed them as far as San Vito and from there, beyond the borders.

The day of the 21st the Austrians again crossed the borders of Ampezzo



Parte di una riproduzione dello scontro di Dogana Vecchia in un dipinto ad acquerello

advancing as far as the Chiusa, but when the Cadore troops prepared to

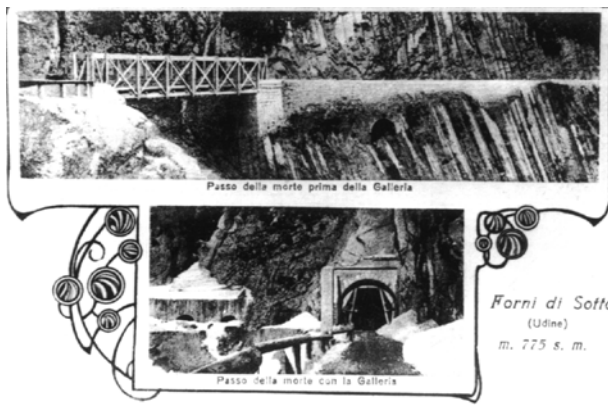
give them a reception they retreated. This may have been a counter maneuver to cover an attempt to make an incursion into the Calalzo Valley. A squad of Tyrolese Cacciatori passed the Forcella d'Antelao penetrating the valley. They arrived as far as the first house of Calalzo. The village, like all of the others, was deserted, with everyone being at the Chiusa. Suddenly it was easy to invade Cadore. But a woman, who became aware of the enemy, grabbed the bells and



sounded them. The bells are heard by the surrounding communities and it sent the Austrians running, trying to escape. That sound was fatal to the Austrians. But they did not leave without showing an act of barbarism by killing an unarmed man who presented himself at the door of his house. Making haste

down the road they are met by a squad of Cadorine troops who chased them and they found that no others had passed the Forcella.

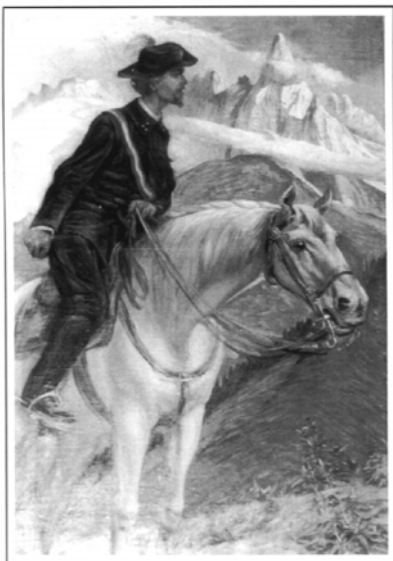
On the night of the 23rd, the Comitato received the news from Forni di Sotto that the Austrians of Nugent were in Ampezzo di Carnia intent on opening the passage to Cadore from that section. Since the 14th the Cadorine and the Fronezzi together had devised a system of defense at the pass in the event of an invasion. For this reason as soon as he received the news Calvi sent Giovanni Battista Cadorin to head the Corpo and a little later he followed with a larger group of men. On the dawn of the 24th those with Calvi and the forces of Cadorin arrive along with many Fornezzi at the Passo delle Morte.



The Passo dello Morte is a narrow gorge between two craggy mountains. In the middle runs the Tagliamento and on the left of the river, supported by high vertical walls and set in the rocks, passes the road that leads to Tolmezzo.

The Austrians arrive at Rio Verde.

They divide themselves in two, above and below the road and make ready 1,200 bayonets, which glisten in the rays of the sun. A small detail precedes them.



There on the road is Calvi in front of his faithful Cadorine. At the first shot by the Austrians, the Cadorine troops respond. Suddenly falling down from above, onto the enemy, are huge boulders along with this horrible crash is the noise of the discharge of guns. At that shower of falling stones the Austrians waned and returned to the confines of the Chiusa. Drawing back and with very heavy firing from incendiary rockets they keep open the passage from the other side but find even there Cadorine riflemen who ardently

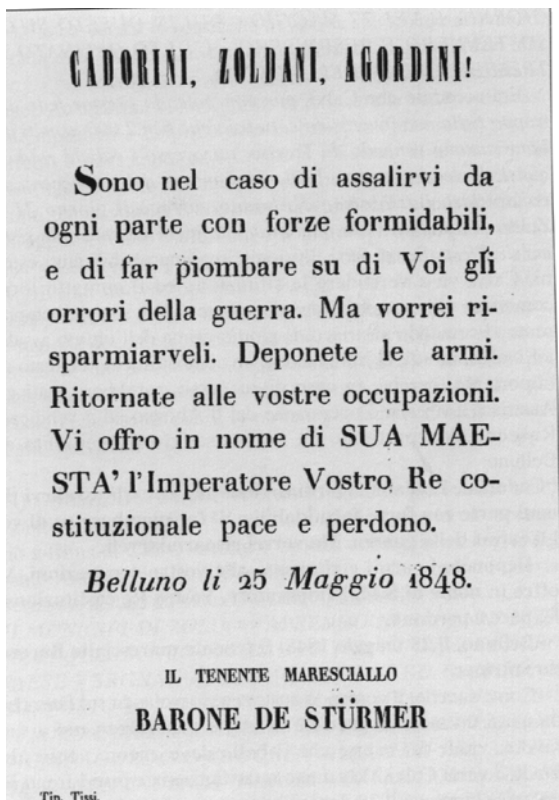
push them back. They abandoned the undertaking of the Passo.

On his white horse Calvi appeared to be everywhere and he would fly to wherever the danger was the greatest. Assured of this victory Calvi returned to Pieve where urgent needs required his presence. He left his lieutenant Cadorin in charge.

Things were beginning to tighten more than ever. Almost all of the Veneto territory is reoccupied, lines of communication have been broken since the 6th. Cadore is truly alone, besieged from all passages, with little ammunition and few provisions. The Comitato believed the resistance could have been continued longer. Lacking bullets, they make them from lead from mine of Auronzo. Lacking gunpowder they make it, with the help of ingenious mountaineers, taking potassium nitrate and sulfur, from the mountain caves, they mix it with charcoal from hazel trees. The food provisions were also scarce. Here it was not necessarily ingenuity but a great risk, on the part of the Agorsini citizens who, from time to time, would send sacks of grain. Even if they were suffering the Cadorini had hope.

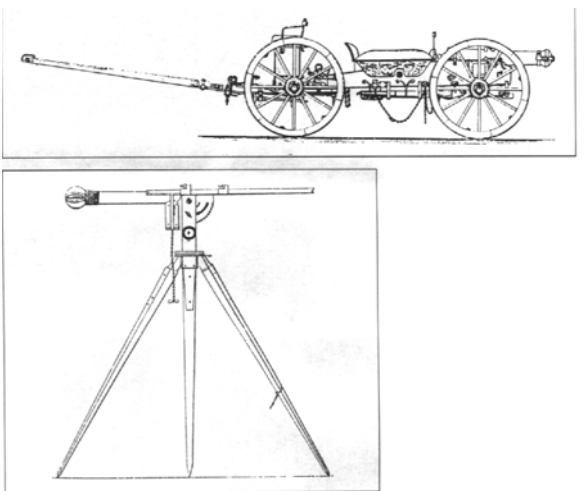
From Belluno, on the 25th General Sturmer proclaimed, "*Cadorine, Zoldani, Agordani. We have the opportunity to attack you from every side with formidable strength. To crash down upon you the horrors of war. But if you want to save yourselves from it to you is offered in the name of our Majesty constitutional peace and forgiveness.*" The proposal was not accepted.

May 28! This was both an awful and glorious day. The last of the Cadorine victories but the most famous. In the Zoldo Valley, the Pra del Bosco, Rivalgo, Chiusa di Venas, in the Calalzo Valley, the Ansiei Valley, at Montecroce, Rindemera and Passo della Morte the Austrians



were all around. Twenty thousand bayonets besiege Cadore like a circle of iron. At dawn on the 28th, all the passes were guarded. In the valleys of Calalzo, Ansiei, Montecroce and Passo della Morte the enemy made their appearance and finding resistance, retreat humiliated after the first exchange of gunfire. They also make an attempt up the Zoldo Valley but the Zoldani who took up the cause with the Cadorini and were always with them courageously keeping the enemy far from their passages. The formidable points are attacked, all at the same time Rivalgo, Pra del Bosco, Chiusa di Venas and Rindemera.

General Sturmer with 500 men, canons and rockets arrive at Rivalgo from



Longarone around eight thirty. The inhabitants had already deserted the village. Near that village and in the other villages the men were prepared to strike and battle. The Cadorine forces kept some provisions there from the day of the 8th, along with a canon. They formed a barricade at Rucorvo where Calvi is located with others from Pieve. This time the Austrians are first to open fire. At the first launching of rockets, the Cadorine forces, stunned by this new instrument of war, begin to tremble but were soon to

see that the method had little effect on them. This provided them with a kind of confidence and with every rocket projected at them and with every explosion they resound with the shouts of *Viva Italia! Viva Pio!* Then a new and formidable shower of bullets from machine guns came from the Austrians. The Cadorine canon responds from time to time but the enemy does not dare depart from the village of Rivalgo, which was constructed like a fortress. A heavy, persistent and lively shower of bullets was directed principally against the small fort of Cadorine troops. This assault lasted until the night when they saw the attempt was in vain. The general ordered a retreat to Longarone. The whistle of the Cadorine troops accompanied them. As they leave Rivalgo they set it on fire in a vain effort to take away shelter. Rivalgo is destroyed.

At Pra del Bosco, situated above Ospitale the Corpo commanded by



Antonio Coletti and Sebastiano del Favero, was attacked twice by the Austrians but two times, not withstanding the fierce assault, the enemy was repelled from that front.

Also at the Chiusa di Venas the Cadorini courageously fought. At Sadorno about 3,000 Austrian assaulted the Cadorine troops, for

a third time, with rockets and canons. The efforts are in vain even here. The courageous Olterchiusotti, who arrived, determined to avenge the memory of those who were tortured, act with valor so that the enemy at night retreated and crossed the border.

But the best, and the most brilliant event occurred at Rindemera. Since the 27th, eighteen men from the Comunita di Vigo, on orders of the Comitato had been sent as scouts to Razzo, where they suspected a possible penetration by the enemy. Also on the 27th about 1,300 men from the Hohenloke regiment, who were repelled from the Passo della Morte, ascend Mont Pura and find themselves on the plain of Razzo. They see the Cadorine scouts. *I Tedeschi! The Austrians!*, cried the scouts as they hurried to warn the village but two of them Paolo Da Rin-Chiantre and Giovanni Battista Antonio Cadorin, who were ahead of the others and closer to the enemy were taken prisoner. Meanwhile taking the warning of the advancing enemy, 22 Auronzani led by Giosaffatte Monte, from the village of Ansiei had orders from their captain to retreat to Losco. At 10 o'clock at night, on the 27th, they pass Pelos, Vigo and Laggio and with some men from Oltrepave take Valle. At about 4 o'clock in the morning they find themselves at the top of Losco and can see the Austrians advancing one by one on an open path, leading in front of them, the two prisoners heading to Vigo. Going down to Selva they meet a group of another 40 Auronzani who were sent to the Passo della Morte, led by Virgilio DaVia from Vallesella. While Monte

prepared his 64 troops with battle orders, the Austrians came down from Roda advancing placidly being certain of not finding any opposition. But as soon as they arrive Cadorine troops open fire and a volley of shots bring down the Austrian advance guard. The Austrians were surprised and also opened fire, this battle lasted for a while. The Austrians formed a chain above and below the road and joined to engage the left wing of the troops, who were not ready to retreat. Eventually, they became encircled and were taken prisoners.

Those from Laggio took the road, which leads to Losco, Campo, Razzo, and then to Sauris they crossed a long valley extending from Monderon to Antoia



then to a place called *Valle*. At the bottom runs the small stream of Piova and to the left of it direction parallel passes the road. Almost in the center of the valley the road makes a large curve because of an opening in the mountain and from it descends headlong into the

Piova, from the rocks of Starezza, a small stream. This is Rindemera and on the right, above a steep edge, the Cadorine troops stopped to wait for the enemy. To reinforce their small number they garrisoned another small squad of men from Lozzo, Lorenzago, Vigo, Lozzo and Pelos led by the spirited and brave priest Giovanni Battista Annetti who played a large part in the events of that year. They also find a number of people from the neighboring villages are running up with lances, gaffs, forks and axes to prepare a small fort, while on the surrounding high ground swarmed the women, children and old people eager to see the event. The Austrians made them wait for some time. They came through the forest in the field opposite and took position situated on the left bank of the stream. The major force was around a barn. There are eighty Cadorine rifles against 1,300 of the enemy. They open fire from both sides and begin a vivid

fight. The valley roared from the explosions of the bullets and the shouts of the combatants. The forest, where the Cadorine troops stood, is bombarded from every side. The fight seemed to have little effect on the Austrians. Then from Riguetto, elevated above the positions of the enemy comes a horrible crash of boulders, trees and beams falling onto the Austrians. They are the brave Comeliciani led by Dr. Agnoli and his brother Bettino. The sounds of the despair from the enemy was mixed with the shouts of joy from the Cadorine forces who send frenzied salutes to their gallant brothers. The fight is renewed more fiercely. The Austrians make an enormous effort to push themselves forward. The Cadorine troops were no less ardent in their response and more than one of them lay dead. Then one hears the beat of the drum. It is retreat. While some of the Cadorine troops obstruct the pass others come up the steep slope of



Starezza. The Austrians gather to turn back. At the sound of a horn from the direction of the Cadorini they begin a retreat, they place in front of their troops the two prisoners from Vigo and arrive in Selva. As a last sign of their ferocity, they make Paolo Da Rin kneel, blindfold him and with a salvo of bullets they lay him out dead, on the road, in sight of his desolate companion for whom it was harder at that moment to be alive rather than dead. They followed the mountain road to Loseo to go up to Campo and then penetrate into Comelico from the Valley of Frison. There they find the Comeliciani to give them the ultimate greeting. They take the road of Razzo and ascend up Sauris but are counterattacked.

This was the glorious day and night of May 28, from Pelmo to Peralba resounded the most beautiful hymn of victory, which from the forested valleys was being sung and heard.

But they arrived too late. The enemy forces were divided into three columns. The Cadorine troops reached their last grains of powder and their last morsels of bread. The Fornezzi, who together with the Cadorine, had taken part

true! The Forno militia retreated into the country diverting the reinforcements. Last to retreat were the Cadorine on the night of June 2nd and 3rd, they started, with their dead, toward Mauria. Meanwhile, Calvi arrived with 220-armed men and headed for Forni. But already the last hours for Cadore had sounded, the Austrians are at Forni di Sotto. Calvi asked quickly from all sectors that men and ammunition retreat to the top of Mauria to prepare themselves for the last act of



heroism but by now it is an indefensible resistance. It is impossible! The Austrians push forward and of the three columns, one climbs up the rocky and sandy slopes that lead to Val di Toro for Domegge, the other comes to Mauria, the third by Daulei goes up the fields of Stabbie. At midday the Austrians are at the peak of Mauria and signal their

passage with a fire of the haylofts. The poor inhabitants are all hiding in the mountains and wait from one moment to the next to see if there are flames from the uninhabited villages. Calvi arrives in Pelos and asked the Comitato if he should destroy the bridge. Signor Luigi Coletti, who from Mauria where he had been with Calvi, went to Lozzo to report to the Captain it would be useless to



destroy it since the enemy could head to Pieve by other passages. The Austrians are at Laggio, Vigo, and Lorenzago. The sacrifice of the fatherland is consumed. Calvi knew it was finished. He released the Corpi Franchi from their oath.

Jumping onto his legendary white horse, he went to Pieve passing from village to village to the applause of the population,

who even in their moment of fear and discouragement, of the advancing enemy, wanted to demonstrate the proper recognition to Calvi, who had commanded them for the past 45 days. They wanted to salute their hero. Calvi arrived at Pieve and met with members of the Committee of Defense, he discharged himself saying, "arriverderci" and departed for Venice.

The Comitato had fallen, the Austrians were at Pieve and Belluno, and it is reported an Austrian official proudly enters a local cafe, hitting a table and cries out, *"We also now have Cadore!"*

Calvi, after having participated in the resistance of Venice, successfully gained refuge in Greece, Piemonte and Switzerland. In 1853 he believed the time was opportune to come to the relief of Lombardia and Venice. Calvi agreed to penetrate into Venice to secretly reach Cadore, certain to be able to easily rise, still another time, the Cadorini against the Austrians. He knew the Cadorine well. He was able to appreciate their love of one's country in moments of

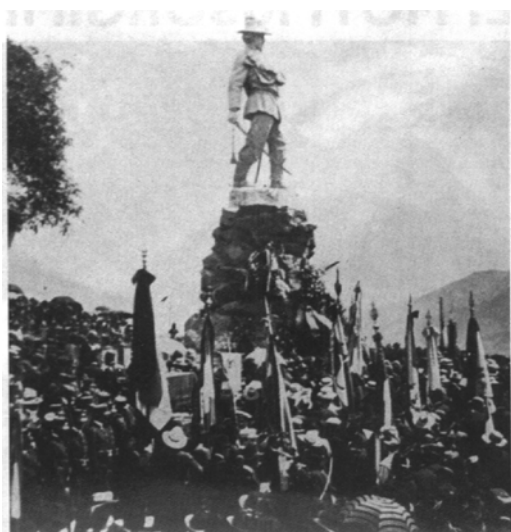
exceptional difficulty. But on the night of September 18 he was arrested in Trentino, and for two years endured oppression and imprisonment in the fortress of Mantova. His trial was closed and during it Pietro always maintained the character of a man who was sincere and frank. He did not reveal the names of his compatriots.

On July 1, 1855 Pietro Fortunato Calvi is condemned to death. When asked if he wanted to appeal the decision to the grace of the king, he refused.



Ritratto di P.F. Calvi

July 4, 1855. Pietro Fortunato Calvi, the hero of Cadore, the invited soldier of Venice, the exile, the untiring conspirator for the independence of Italy was put to death at the gallows, on the grounds of the fort of San Giorgio, in Mantova.



Pieve, inaugurazione del monumento a Calvi il 14 luglio 1899, distrutto dagli austriaci nel 1918.





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