

# Roiti's Report

*Time ago I read on the Bollettino del Club Alpino Svizzero an article about the use of skis, that is the wooden skates born in Norway. The weather conditions in this country required an easy and fast means of transportation so as to travel on territories for many months a year covered by snow. Later on the use of skis developed in the other coldest countries as sports. I straight away thought to try them and find out whether they could be of military use on our mountains, particularly whether they could be the solution to the still unsolved problem of marching on the snow. I have, so far, tried skis a few times only and cannot, therefore, assure to have solved the question but I do not hesitate to say that I am on the right path.*

*Going from Balme, in the Lanzo Valleys, to Pian della Mussa with two friends of mine, A. Kind and his son, I had the opportunity to try for the first time these skates. An iced crust that could not support a man on foot covered the snow. In spite of this and even if we had very little experience in using skis, we were able to complete the route in less than an hour and just leaving light tracks of our transit.*

*On the 24th January, in very different conditions, we crossed the spur separating the Sangonetto gully from the Susa Valley. We started from Borgone (398 m on sea level), following the ridge where the Mongirardo houses are, we reached the Monte Salaria crest (2085 m) and finally descended to Giaveno. The snow was certainly thicker than 3 meters (our ski poles plus our arm length were not enough to reach the ground below), powdery and just fallen. It would not have supported a man even if with snowshoes who would certainly have sunk in it to the waist-belt, without being able to walk on.*

*In spite of these very unfavorable conditions, we were able to overcome a 1700 meters elevation gain (we found snow right after Villarfochiardo) in five and half-hours marching. We only left behind a twenty-five/thirty centimeter track on the snow. I thought outstanding the fact that who was opening the march had to press the snow with a certain exertion while the two people following in his tracks, labored only a little and left behind a compact trail on which two persons on foot could have walked easily. Thinking about my military army specialty, I told to myself that our mountain cannons, fixed on specific sleds, could have followed us.*

*I therefore believe that a maximum ten people team, all with skis, could trace a trail enabling troops on foot to pass. I must repeat, though, that the trials I had the opportunity to rehearse do not allow me to be positive on the results. I am sure, though, that in case of reconnaissance missions or orders and information delivery through snow covered territories, skis would be of uncontested utility.*

*The use of skis is not very easy, but with a little practice, with them it is possible to obtain, on flatland, a speed double of that of a walking man. In the mountain, some difficult passages in ordinary conditions, may, if copiously snow-clad, become very easy to be overcome.”*