

CHILDREN

During the war and wartime violence, children, as one of the most vulnerable groups of the population, were also exposed to these horrors. Whether with their parents and families or directly, as individuals. Celje is particularly marked by tragic fates of children, as it is associated with both the "stolen children" and the "children from Petriček," two of the most well-known and historically preserved groups of children – victims of wartime or postwar violence. However, these are not the only ones.

Already among the patients of the psychiatric hospital in Novo Celje, who were relocated in June 1941 to the institution at Hartheim Castle near Linz and executed there, there were fifteen children aged between six and fourteen. These are not the only child victims of the cruel Nazi social engineering, which did not stop at institutions but also reached out to children's homes for children with special needs.

Among more than 1.200 deportees from Celje, who had to leave their homes in the summer of 1941, entire families with children were mainly involved. As many as 175 of them were under 14 years old. The youngest deportee from Celje, Jožef Gregorič, born on 29th April 1941, left his homeland with his parents and two sisters on 25th September 1941, in a transport via Rajhenburg. Even younger was Olga Omerzu from nearby Petrovče, who was not even two months old when deported.

Among the casualties of the bombings in Celje, at least twelve children under the age of fourteen were killed. The youngest among them, barely seven-month-old Ana Skale from Teharje, died with her mother during the first bombing on 25th February 1944. The most devastating bombing on 14th February 1945, claimed the lives of seven children.

Many other children suffered in fear, pain, and deprivation in various ways. Many were left orphaned, without one or both parents, and the scars of war marked them for the rest of their lives.