

## VICTORY

The Slovenian resistance and liberation movement was formed and developed within the framework of the coalition of the Liberation Front of the Slovenian Nation, but under the actual leadership of the communists, who largely formed the first resistance guerrilla groups. From these, a diverse Slovenian partisan army emerged, grounded in patriotism and national consciousness, which gradually took on a stronger revolutionary character and, by the end of the war, numbered 37.000 men and women. As part of the wider Yugoslav liberation movement, in March 1945 also formally became part of the Yugoslav Army, and thus of the victorious Allied coalition. Over 30.000 Slovenians lost their lives in the ranks of the partisans and resistance.

The resistance network, which had expanded to Celje in the first months of the occupation, was composed of communists, patriots, and anti-fascists of various ideological orientations. The first partisan group in the immediate vicinity of Celje (Celje Company) was formed at the end of July 1941 but was soon destroyed. During the height of the Nazi terror, in 1942, the resistance movement in the city was decimated, and due to the pervasive fear of German violence, it was unable to reorganize. The resistance continued its activities in the suburban areas, where it carried out its most successful action during the occupation – the liberation of prisoners from Stari Pisker on the night of 14 to 15 December 1944. At the same time, in 1944, after the arrival of the XIV. Partisan Division in Styria, resistance in the broader Celje region, particularly in the Savinja Valley and Kozjansko, significantly strengthened, and the partisan units achieved greater military successes. In the spring of 1945, the organization of the Liberation Front in the city began to revive. In the last weeks before the liberation, it had become well-structured and expanded, and preparations for liberation began as the German surrender seemed imminent.

*"Like the weather, the stories of the partisans were also sorrowful. One had his parents shot, another had his wife taken to a factory in the Reich, an elderly man had to watch his house burn, and many men and women were in some kind of camp. They all had to crawl like wild animals through their home forests, hunted and pursued by the enemy, and whoever was discovered was shot. Often, a partisan who refused to betray his comrades was brutally tortured until, a bloody lump, he was finally allowed to die."*

*(Alma M. Karlin, My Lost Poplars {Moji zgubljeni topoli}, MnZC, 2007, p. 209)*