

area lost their lives in the fight against Nazi-fascism. Before World War II, Žužemberk had around 740 inhabitants. 117 people from Žužemberk lost their lives for freedom between 1941 and 1945. Just before the end of the war, the Home Guards brutally murdered 15-year-old Anica Zalašček along with 32 other victims from Žužemberk and the surrounding area. Among the victims were thirteen mothers and wives, nine men, ten youth activists, and an 11-year-old Jurij Lesnik, who were tortured and murdered with wooden stakes, knives, shovels, and pickaxes by the Home Guards on the right and left banks of the Krka River in Žužemberk from January 1945 to April 4, 1945. According to the latest data, 100,015 Slovenes lost their lives during World War II (source: Sistory, last update October 5, 2022), which represented 6.5% of all residents with permanent residence in the territory of what was then Slovenia. This places Slovenia third among the countries with the highest percentage of World War II victims, behind Poland at 16% and the Soviet Union at 14%. The largest number of deaths were among partisans—more than 28,000 partisans were killed, and this number should be added to the 5,000 activists of the Liberation Front and partisan supporters.

As an important document and as a response to attempts to distort the truth and spread lies about the National Liberation Movement (NOB) by surviving members of the Slovene Home Guard, their relatives, and sympathizers concerning post-war massacres, we cite the decree on amnesty (partial or complete pardon), which, until September 15, 1944, gave the Home Guard members and all those intended to receive amnesty the opportunity to join the partisans and thereby avoid the consequences of their previous actions in traitorous military units. There was no response.

This was followed by the declaration of general amnesty, adopted by the Executive Committee of the Liberation Front of the Slovenian Nation on the proposal of the president of the National Committee for the Liberation of Yugoslavia (NKOJ), comrade Josip Broz Tito, on the basis of which the Presidency of AVNOJ (Antifascist Council of National Liberation of Yugoslavia) issued an amnesty decree on November 21, 1944.

The decree granted amnesty to all persons who had served in Draža Mihajlović's Chetnik units or assisted them, or who had participated in the Croatian or Slovene Home Guard units.

There was no response from the Home Guards. By the decree of the Anti-Fascist Council of National Liberation of Yugoslavia on general amnesty dated November 17, 1944, amnesty was granted to all who participated in or assisted Slovene Home Guard units, except for those who committed

war crimes such as murders, arson, robbery, rape, and other war crimes. There was no response from the Home Guards to the amnesty, and they continued to fight against the partisans alongside the Germans until their capitulation. The post-war Decree on General Amnesty and Pardons, published on August 5, 1945, in the Official Gazette of Democratic Federative Yugoslavia, also specifies who is granted general amnesty, including Slovene Home Guards. Had the Slovene Home

Guards accepted the offered amnesties, they would undoubtedly have prevented the post-war events in Slovenia. There was much, too much suffering and hardship, and many victims among the inhabitants of Slovenia and Suha Krajina during World War II. It is thanks to the courage and determination of our parents, grandparents, partisans, activists, and supporters of the National Liberation Movement (NOB) who gave their lives so that we can today live in a free and democratic Republic of Slovenia that we can speak and write in Slovenian. We can be proud that in the decisive days of World War II, crucial for the survival of the Slovenian nation, we made the right decisions. At the end of the war, thanks to the Slovenian (and Yugoslav) partisans, we found ourselves on the side of the Allied Coalition, which, through its victory over Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, defeated the greatest evil in world history and emerged victorious in World War II. It is a fact that Yugoslavia, and with it Slovenia, was the only country in Europe that liberated itself during World War II. The liberation was achieved by Yugoslav and Slovenian partisans. On December 26, 1990, the day the results of the plebiscite for independence were declared, was a turning point and a unique day in the history of the Slovenian nation. Slovenians voted for a free and independent Slovenia. The plebiscite saw a turnout of 93.2% of eligible voters; 1,289,369, or 95%, voted for an independent and sovereign Slovenia, which became independent on June 25, 1991. Slovenians had never before, and never since, shown such unity. The foundations of today's free and democratic Republic of Slovenia were laid between 1941 and 1945 through the fight of Slovenian partisans against Nazism, Fascism, and domestic traitors. The intensity of this fight for the survival of the Slovenian nation is revealed by the fact that, in memory of these events, 8,431 (as of August 2024) memorials and monuments of the NOB (National Liberation Movement) have been built in Slovenia.

Monuments, Cycling and Walking Paths, Facts and Truth about the National Liberation Movement



Cvibelj Monument to the Victims of the National Liberation War (1941–1945)

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SLOVENIA, SUHA KRAJINA AND ŽUŽEMBERK BETWEEN 1941 AND 1945



*"The truth about the Second World War, although some now claim there were multiple, is very simple and singular. Only the partisans were the liberation army of the Allied Nations, and only the partisans fought for the freedom of their nation."
Dr. Martin Premk*

On April 6, Nazi Germany, Fascist Kingdom of Italy, and Hungary attacked the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, which signed its capitulation on April 17, 1941. All three occupiers shared the common goal of erasing the Slovenian nation as an ethnic group. When the German war machine, in all its might, defeated, occupied, and literally trampled most of Europe except for neutral Sweden, Switzerland, Spain, and Portugal, the foundations of today's Slovenian independence were laid during the night of April 26 to 27, 1941, in the villa of writer Josip Vidmar in Ljubljana. At the founding meeting, representatives of fifteen groups gathered and established the Liberation Front of the Slovene Nation. This marked the beginning of preparations for armed uprising in Slovenia. It was a pivotal and courageous decision, worthy of all respect, as the existence of Slovenians as a nation was threatened. On

April 26, 1941, the leader of Nazi Germany, Adolf Hitler, personally visited Maribor. Hitler addressed a crowd during his visit to Slovenia, proclaiming "Make this land German again". They aimed to achieve this by deporting 80,000 Slovenians to Croatia and Serbia. The Italians also implemented a policy of denationalization and destruction: around 26,000 Slovenes were interned in Italian concentration camps on Rab and in Gonars. During World War II, more than 65,000 Slovenians were held in German and Italian concentration camps. At least 13,169 Slovenians lost their lives in concentration camps, forced labor or exile. Among the victims of the German and Italian camps were at least 949 Slovenian children—680 boys and 296 girls, mostly relatives of partisans. On January 1, 1941,

Slovenia had a population of 1,451,673 (source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia). In August 1941, there were between 700 and 800 fighters in the Slovenian partisan units; by the end of 1941, there were approximately 2,000, and by September 1943, just before Italy's capitulation, there were 5,500. The number of partisans increased to 30,000 by the summer of 1944. In the winter of 1944/45, the number of Slovenian partisans reached its peak with 38,000 members.

The Slovenian Home Guard (Slovene anti-Partisan collaborationist militia), under the command of the German occupiers, had around 17,000 members at its peak as part of the German SS units. On the territory of present-day Slovenia, soldiers from more than twenty countries across Europe and other parts of the world fought in Slovenian partisan units. In addition to the Jews, Slovenians faced the most tragic fate

under occupation, as the occupiers condemned us to death and extinction. This led to resistance: the Liberation Front united and brought together Slovenians in the fight against the occupier. The Liberation Front of the Slovene Nation accepted all who embraced the relentless fight against the occupier as the fundamental point of resistance.

After Italy's capitulation, on December 13, 1943, the 9th Corps of the National Liberation Army of Yugoslavia (NOVJ) was established, playing a significant role in the liberation of the Slovene coastal area, with a composition of between 7,000 and 12,000 fighters. The 7th Corps of the NOVJ (the National Liberation Army of Yugoslavia, which in 1945 had more than 650,000 fighters) carried out combat activities in the area of Suha Krajina, operating in the regions of Lower Carniola, White Carniola, Inner Carniola, and Slovenian Istria. Established on October 3, 1943, it consisted of the 14th, 15th, and 18th Divisions and the Lower Carniola, White Carniola, Inner Carniola, and Kočevje Detachments. On January 6, 1944, the 14th Partisan Division, which consisted of 1,112 well-armed fighters, set out in the harsh winter from Suhorje near White Carniola on a 310 km journey across Croatia, without firing a single shot, and penetrated the eastern part of Styria, which was occupied territory of the German Reich. Thus, the 14th Shock Division, part of the Yugoslav National Liberation Army, became the first large combat unit of the anti-Hitler coalition to penetrate deep into Reich territory. On May 7, 1944, the Artillery Brigade was formed within the Corps, in the summer of 1944, a Non-Commissioned Officers School, and later a Replacement Battalion. In December 1944, the Italian Fontanot Brigade and the Austrian Battalion also fought within the Corps. In mid-April 1945, the 1st Division "Garibaldi" and the "Fontanot" Brigade merged into a new division named the "Garibaldi Fontanot" Division. At the end of the war, an Engineering Brigade was also formed within the Corps. The 7th Corps was the largest partisan unit in Slovenia, which, at the peak of its strength in April 1944, had around 25,000 fighters. When it was ordered to attack Ljubljana in April 1945, the Corps had only 11,853 fighters.

On May 3, 1941, about 300 soldiers of the Italian Royal Army and some fascists arrived in Žužemberk and settled in the granary in the town square. On the morning of July 13, 1942, Žužemberk was liberated for the first time, and this day was celebrated for many years as the holiday of the former Municipality of Žužemberk and the Local Community of Žužemberk. On the evening of July 16, 1942, the townspeople erected ten large spruce maypoles with slogans in front of the former castle granary, such as "LONG LIVE THE FIRST FREE ELECTIONS" and "LONG LIVE PEOPLE'S GOVERNMENT!".

The Liberation Committee was elected by secret ballot in the first free elections in Slovenia. During the war, authority changed hands 17 times in the town, as partisans clashed with Italians, Germans, White Guards, and Home Guard members for control of Žužemberk. During the war, Žužemberk, along with Novo Mesto, was the most fortified enemy outpost in the eastern part of Slovenia. The Germans occupied Žužemberk on October 27, 1943. Due to its strategically important location at the intersection of roads to Ljubljana, Novo Mesto, Trebnje, and Kočevje, Žužemberk was bombed twenty-two times during World War II. From 1942 until the end of January 1945, it was bombed by the Italians and Germans, and on February 1, 1945, it was bombed by Allied aircraft for the first time. The Allies continued the attacks almost every day until the end of the war. On April 20, 1944, on Hitler's birthday, the Slovenian Home Guard swore allegiance to the occupiers during a ceremony at Plečnik's stadium in Ljubljana. The Home Guard swore allegiance to Hitler for the second time on January 30, 1945, the anniversary of the Nazi takeover in Germany, by which time it was already clear that Germany would lose the war. At the Nuremberg Trials in the German city of Nuremberg, which took place from November 14, 1945, to 1949, war criminals were tried, and the SS was recognized as a criminal organization, which the Slovenian Home Guard was also a part of, being under the command of German officers throughout World War II. Suha Krajina during World War II, is often portrayed as a stronghold of village guards, MVAC (Voluntary Anti-Communist Militia or Milizia volontaria anticomunista in Italian; negatively referred to as the White Guard, established in the Province of Ljubljana on August 6, 1942, which was part of the Italian fascist occupation regime in Slovenia from 1941 until Italy's capitulation on September 8, 1943, and which collaborated with the Italian occupiers from August 1942 onwards), and the Home Guard (Slovene Home Guard, in German Slowenische Landwehr; abbreviated as SD, was a police-paramilitary formation formally established on December 6, 1943, and remained under the command of German SS officers until the end of the war and the capitulation of Germany on May 9, 1945). The Slovenian Roman Catholic Church, under the leadership of Bishop Gregorij Rožman, played a significant role in the establishment of both.

The truth is far from this. From the wider areas of Ajdovec, Dvor, Hinje, Šmihel and Žužemberk, there were 231 fighters in the partisans from 50 known settlements, of whom 69 were killed. Among the civilian population, 143 victims of the occupiers and local collaborators lost their lives. There were 261 people interned, 31 of whom died. During World War II on Slovenian soil, 243 residents from the broader Žužemberk