

## The fight of Partisans

One of the first forms of resistance by the Carinthian Slovenians was their refusal to military service. The Carinthian Slovenians fled out of or away from the German Armed Forces over the Green Line to Yugoslavia. Many of them originated from the areas around Eisenkappel/Železna Kapla and Zell Pfarre/Sele. After the occupation of Yugoslavia in 1941, several joined the partisans and returned to Carinthia in order to take up arms there. People such as Ivan Županc-Johan from Ebriach/Obirsko and Jozef Šorli from Lobnig/Lobnik created the first resistance cell [Widerstandszellen] with relatives and friends of the family. While Jurij Pasterk, Karl Prušnik-Gašper, Franci Pasterk-Lenart, Jožef Weinzirl and Jože Blajs took part in one of the OF's (Osvobodilna fronta = liberation front [Befreiungsfront]) first village committees in Lobnig/Lobnik. The first conflict between the partisans and German troops on Carinthian soil (in Robesch/Robež) took place on the 25th of August 1942. The partisans succeeded in fending off the NS unit's attack; albeit at the cost of several losses. News of the partisan victory contributed to the diffusion of the resistance amongst the local population. During the course of 1942, the Carinthian Slovenian civil population joined the resistance in the ranks of the fighting units of the OF.

Because the partisans fought against the National-Socialist regime, the segment of the civil population which supported the latter was against the partisans from the very beginning. However, the more the inevitable defeat of NS Germany and its allies appeared the more people began distancing themselves from the NS regime. In the end, life as a partisan—hidden in the forests and mountains—was characterized by a fight for one's life. The fight for survival was made possible by a well-coordinated ground organization [Bodenorganisation], which—under great danger itself—cared for the troops by providing nourishment, pharmaceutical drugs, and information about particular regional and political occurrences and developments. In order to prevent taking advantage of the emergency

services that were provided, it was necessary to mutually organize the provisions. Despite their efforts, it was not uncommon that the scarceness of provisions and the cold and wet conditions of winter led to the complete exhaustion and death of many.

The significance of women for the PartisanInnenkampf was rather great. Women and men were fundamentally considered equal in all matters. The individuals who took part in the struggles of the Carinthian partisan movement were not only from Carinthia, but stemmed from several countries and were of various nationalities. In many cases, prisoners of war camps and forced laborers escaped and joined the resistance. Similarly, several detainees of the Loibl South and North concentration camps were able to flee and join the partisans.

### **The Fight against the Partisans**

From the very beginning, the fight against the partisans in the occupied regions of Slovenia was jointly led by the SS and the Armed Forces and the Police. In the early phase, the local security forces—that is, the Gestapo and the Gendarmerie—appeared sufficient to combat the resistance and the burgeoning PartisanInnenbewegung. Later on the Stadt and Landwacht—instituted by the SS Reichsführer and Chief of German Police Heinrich Himmler—came to act as the auxiliary police. With the withdrawal of Italy from the war, the fear of the encroaching PartisanInnenbewegung became stronger in all of Carinthia.

In August of 1944, the Police Regiment 13 was transferred to Carinthia and Oberkrain. In addition to police officials, recruits from various countries were given admission. Members of the unit who had participated in the Peršman massacre remained at their location in Feistritz and Beliburt until the first days of May. The unit then relocated north in order to avoid falling into the hands of the Yugoslavian army. After Germany's capitulation the unit was taken into captivity by the British. Several stayed in Carinthia for a longer period of time; that is, until they returned to their homeland or emigrated abroad after the proceedings against them

ended.