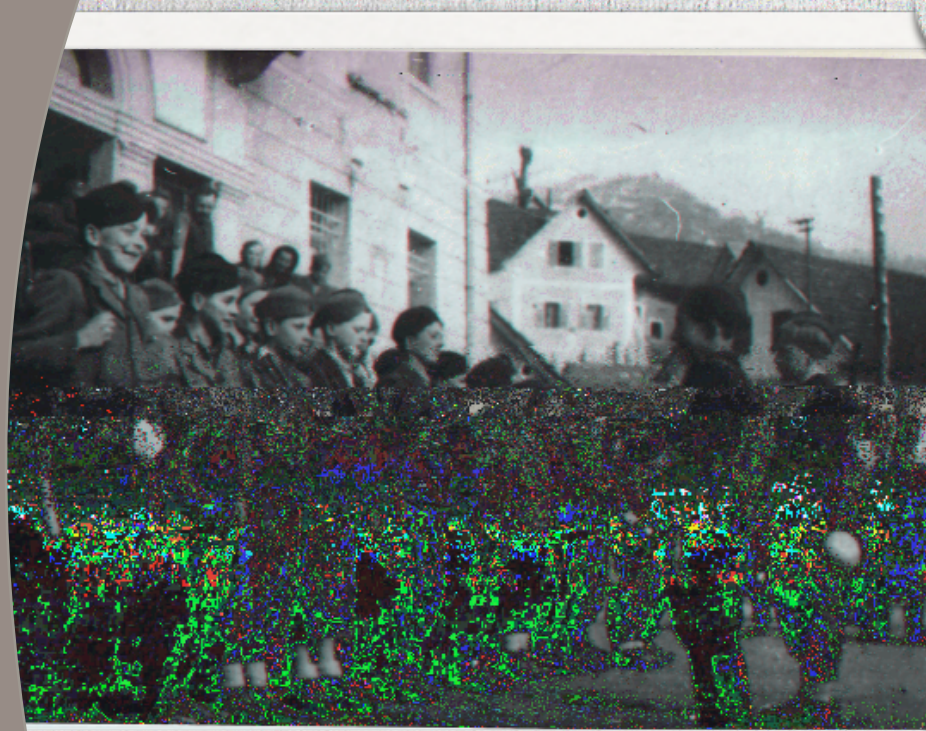


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# Children in World War II

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K

## No matter whose side they were on, children suffered equally?



T

This module is about children in WW2, in the period from 1939 to 1945. It is about partisan children, home guard children, children in camps and courier/soldier children. The sources show us how the children lived and suffered during the war time. We address the pupils of age 14+. This topic is selected since we believe that it is interesting for the pupils. And also this topic can be interesting for work. The topic is controversial, because there are children from both sides involved – Partisan and the other side, who chose to collaborate with the Nazis, and the module represents the whole region.



A

The students acquire knowledge about partisan children, home guard children, children in camps and courier/soldier children. The sources show us how the children lived and suffered during the war time.



L

1. Students achieve knowledge about everyday life of children in World War II.
2. They will be able to compare life and suffering of children in the war time.
3. They will be informed about the destiny of Partisan, Home guards children, children in camps and courier/soldier children.
4. They denounce war activities in the human rights perspective.

T

The teacher will read the introduction to the students and present the theme of the class. The workshop has two phases – first phase is introduction and group work, and the second is presentation of the results.

**STEP 1:** Teacher hands out instructions for work. S/he shortly explains the subject (first worksheet is for a teacher). Students are divided into groups of 4-5.

1. group: Partisan children
2. group: Children in camps
3. group: Courier/soldier children
4. group: Children on the »other« side (home guard children)

**STEP 2:** Teacher introduces assignments for a group work. Students must have some basic knowledge of the WW II. Students examine the map of Yugoslavia and try to determine, which occupier occupied which part of the land in world war II.

**STEP 3:** Teacher asks questions to lead students into the team work:

Write list of things children need for happy and supportive childhood.

**STEP 4:** Teacher gives directions for team work. Students read sources, prepare short presentations and solve assignments.

**STEP 5:** Short presentations of assignments.

**STEP 6:** Conclusion, reflection on the subject (students should, with teacher's help, achieve mutual conclusion – no matter whose children they were, all suffered equally, above all those, who became orphans.

Teacher draws a straight line on the black board. On one end s/he writes that all children have suffered equally and on the other end that children have suffered differently. Then teacher distributes post-its to all students. With the help of newly acquired knowledge, students decide on which side of the line they will stick their post-it. Each student also explains his or her decision..



90  
minutes

## WORKSHEET FOR A TEACHER

### INTRODUCTION ( )

Growing up during the wartime was not a pleasant experience for many children. Workshop Children in War, as the name itself implies, speaks about children, who lived in the region of former Yugoslavia during the Second World War. Workshop is divided into Introduction part, Group work, and at the end – Presentation of assignments. Students in four groups must analyse and contemplate on Partisan children, who were taken to the concentration camps, children working as couriers and soldiers, and children from the other side. "On the other side" represents their parents, who have worked with the occupier in the time of war – children of Home Guards (in Slovenia), Ustashes (Croatia), and Chetniks (in Serbia). During the war, these children were living "the other side", but suffered severe consequences and major difficulties after the war.

What happened to the children of Home Guards, Ustashes and Chetnik, Partisan children, children working as couriers and soldiers, and children, who were taken to concentration camps?

G 1

### PARTISAN CHILDREN: The analysis of sources about Partisan children

Source 1

S N H

"Slovene National Help" protected children of active fighters. With the help of foster families, this organisation helped about 200 children, also known as '*Illegalčki*', from Ljubljana since July 1941 until the end of the war. Children were given new names and identities, so that the enemies could not find them, take them, and blackmail their Partisan parents. Some of these children changed families more than once. This kind of protection was not only used in Slovenia, but also elsewhere in Europe. Until the end of the war this organisation was hidden and it saved many lives. It protected "bandit's children", as the Nazis called them, from abduction, death, and deportation in re-education institutions.

Rettl, L., *Obid, V. (2006). Partizanski otroci. Celovec/Klagenfurt: Drava, p. 15, 19*

Source 2

S J K , P

"People living around me – grandmothers and aunts, never talked about this. My mother was a taboo subject, something sacred. But I cried often at night. I cried a lot and I wished she were there with me, and not dead. I wished she was somewhere and was coming back and take me with her. Even after my birth, my mother was working in Ljubljana as illegal. In the spring of 1943, Italians arrested her. They locked her in a prison in Ljubljana, sentenced her, and took her to the prison in Koper. She escaped and joined Partisans from Primorska."

Rettl, L., *Obid, V. (2006). Partizanski otroci. Celovec/Klagenfurt: Drava, p. 15, 19*

Source 3

S K , S

»Nada Naumović (1929 – 1942) One sergeant got mad and told my daughter she was a communist and she insulted the Serb army. Another sergeant confirmed she was a communist, and they she was forced into the 'King Peter' primary school where she spend the night. Tomorrow morning, at 07:00, they handed them over to the Germans, so they were shot at 7:30 hours at the estate of Ljubo Markovic.«

<http://www.vreme.com/cms/view.php?id=1015560> (26. 3. 2013), sjećanje: Mileva Naumović, Kragujevac, 20. januar, 1945)

»Lazar Pantelić (1893–1941) "My late husband, Lazar M. Pantelic, was taken from the gymnasium along with the students, on 20 Oct. 1941, by the Germans, and locked in the barracks. After the shooting, name of my husband appeared on the list of people shot. Municipal authorities gave me back his ID card. His student, Milosav Gavrilovic from Kragujevac, brought me my husband's railroad ID card, stained with blood. He lives in the last house on Milanovac road, he was the one who was burying the killed.«

<http://www.vreme.com/cms/view.php?id=1015560> (26. 3. 2013), sjećanje: Miroslava Pantelić, Kragujevac, 26.

#### ASSIGNMENTS:

1. Why was Janez's mother a taboo subject?
2. What kind of organisation was "Slovene National Help" and what were its tasks?
3. Why did they hide Partisan children under different names? What would be their destiny, if the enemies caught them?

#### ASSIGNMENTS:

1. What happened to Mileva Naumović's daughter?
2. Why were students and teachers shot?

## Source 4

T

The destiny of children, taken from killed parents or locked in concentration camps, and then taken to the Reich to German families, was difficult. The base for genocide in the time of WWII in the Middle Europe were Himmler's confidential Instructions for execution of action against Partisans and other bandits in Upper Carniola and Lower Styria, issued in 15 copies on July 25<sup>th</sup> 1942. Based on these instructions, people were killed without hearing, villages were burnt, and many Partisan families deported.

In Lower Styria there was a collection centre for deportation to Celje, in former boyish school, today known as 1<sup>st</sup> primary school, where two deportation actions took place, on August 3<sup>rd</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> 1942. 600 children were violently taken from their mothers. These children were mostly from Partisan families, and families of killed hostages. Their destiny varied, but they all went through the same procedure. They were racially examined, then taken to the camp Frohnleiten, north from Graz, and from there they were taken to different concentration camps all over Germany for re-education. They particularly looked after stolen boys that mostly ended up being adopted by Nazi families. Organisation, called Lebensborn took care of babies. Their main goal was to re-educate racially pure children of other ethnics, to create pure Aryan race and acceleration of German babies. The real identity of the stolen children was hidden, so many children were never found again.

Actions in August 1942, when children were violently separated from their mothers, were not the last ones in Celje. Nazis did the same race and nationality separation in December 1944 and in January 1945. At that time children were sent to Koblenz and Burgenland.

After the liberation allies and UNRRE – United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration searched for the missing children also the officers of special Yugoslav army mission in Paris helped. Slovenia organised special repatriacies bases that accepted 4.150 stolen children between 1<sup>th</sup> July and 20<sup>th</sup> September 1945 aged up to 16 years. But many of the stolen children have never been found.

*Mikuž Metod (1960). Pregled zgodovine narodnoosvobodilne borbe v Sloveniji. I knjiga. Ljubljana, p. 62, 187.*

**ASSIGNMENTS:**

1. Who were stolen children?
2. Which country did the most of stolen children come from?
3. What does »Lebensborn« mean?
4. Did these children return home after the war? Why not all of them?

## Source 5

T J Ž K č

Jožica Komerički from Petrovč, born Jurkošek in Podgorica, Vrh above Laško, remembers horrifying events from stolen childhood: "When they came to arrest us, I was only 11, my sister Marija was 17, and my brother Konrad 13 years old. They also deported our mother and 20-year-old sister Tončka. They never returned from Auschwitz. Our father was arrested in July 1942. He was shot on August 15<sup>th</sup>, the very same day we were taken to collection centre in Celje. They also took 7 children from Grančer family, and also from Lapov family, Deželak and others. My hometown was called Vrh above Laško.

First, they sent us to the transitional camp, quarantine at Mur near Graz. Even though it was cold, we had to exercise in shorts and t-shirts every morning. We had to run over the nearest hills. Later we were divided into six children's camps. I was sent to Saldenburg at Tittling, Bayernwald on Bavaria.«

Jožica survived because she was used of hard labour at home on a farm. She understood war as something that needs to happen and she alone cannot change it. She remembers six-month-old stolen Vili from Šentlenart being adopted and a lot of confusion at the end of the war.

Byelorussians were telling to the stolen children not to go back to Slovenian communism. Brother, who was a German soldier, wrote a request before the liberation, for children to return home. But they could not come back to destroyed home. Her brother went to live with their aunt in Rimske toplice, her sister and herself went living to Partisan village Brodnice.

[http://www.dnevnik.si/tiskane\\_izdaje/nedeljski/333577](http://www.dnevnik.si/tiskane_izdaje/nedeljski/333577) (3. 2. 2012)

**ASSIGNMENTS:**

What was destiny of Jožica Komerčki?

## Source 6

**CADETS AND PIONEERS FROM DELNICE**

C ( , 1944)



Fototeka Gorenjskega muzeja Kranj

**ASSIGNMENTS:**

1. What does this picture tell you?
2. What else do you want to know?

## Source 1

S

Stanislava Završnik was born on March 3<sup>rd</sup> 1933 in Berlec family in Loke Village in Tuhinjska Valley. She was living on a farm with her father, mother, older brother, and four younger sisters. When Germans occupied our land, Stanislava was only 8 years old. Her father Ivan was the first organiser of Liberation Front in Tuhinjska Valley and he joined Partisan in 1941. This is why the Berlec family was one of the most wanted hated families by the Germans. In 1942 mother joined the brigade and children were left alone. For several months, children from the age of three months to eleven years, were hiding in the woods, at their relatives, but no one could help them. In July 1942, Germans captured them and took them to the children's concentration camp Seligenporten, where approximately 100 Slovene children were already captured, without parents or other adults.

At first they were all together, but later they divided children according to the alphabet. At the end of May 1943 they were also divided according to age and sex. The oldest brother, Milan, was relocated to camp Kastl, the youngest sister Johana in Leipzig, Ana in Meinburg, Justina in Naustift, but Maria and Stanislava were relocated in Saldenburg. In concentration camps children were not aloud to speak Slovene, they were subjected to strict Nazi education. At the end of 1944, when Germans stated losing their powers, some children's camp were abolished and Berlec girls reached the liberty together in Saldenburgu camp. In July 1945 they were all brought home, where they re-joined with their parents.

[http://www.muzeji-radovljica.si/\\_arhiva/mestni/zgibanka.pdf](http://www.muzeji-radovljica.si/_arhiva/mestni/zgibanka.pdf) (3. 2. 2012))

## Source 4

S

A memoir: "Of liquidation of children, I know there were lot of children in the camp, and a doctor's commission was formed, composed of lance corporal Ilija Bukovac and Dr. Buki Kunorti, who were tasked to pick the healthy children to be taken to Zagreb, Sisak, Jaska and Ferice. During the examination, the commission found 63 sick children and recommended them to be killed. The camp commander, Mile Oreskovic, ordered me and Grubisic to perform the execution. Janko Grubisic proposed we strangle the children, but when he went among them he was disgusted, so we jointly ordered the children to be executed using gas. All 63 children, who were in one single room, were killed that time."

*Izjava Ante Vrbana, ustaškog bojnika i člana uprave logora Stara Gradiška, na sudskom procesu Ljubi Milošu i grupi ustaša, 14. srpnja 1948. Borba, od 15. srpnja 1948.)*

## Source 2

D

I

At the time of Ljubljana region ambush, Italian occupiers were locking Slovenes in prisons in Ljubljana and Italy. Representatives of Resistance movement from occupied Italian area – from Slovenia, Istria, Dalmatia, Montenegro and Albania with Kosovo, have met. Prisoners were living in horrific circumstances. Women with small children and pregnant ladies had a lot of problems, because prison cells were cold, dirty, full of bedbugs, fleas, and lice. New-borns were dying of diseases. Among prisoners were also doctors, who tried to save women, children and babies. After 1943, when Italy surrendered, camps organised classes for Slovene children.

Cita Lovrenčič Bole. 1988. Prekomorke. Ljubljana. P. 22 – 174.

## Source 3

M



Cita Lovrenčič Bole. 1988. Prekomorke. Ljubljana. P. 22 – 174

## ASSIGNMENTS

1. What do you see on this picture?
2. What does this picture tell you?
3. What else do you want to know?

Source 5

D S

...At the end of November 1942, we were visited by a commission, and after that we were collected and taken to Zagreb. We were pleasantly surprised at the railway station, for there was a mass of people with expressions of compassion and friendship. They threw us bread and cards with their addresses. We were touched by crying of some people who looked at us, particularly women. We received some clothes and shoes... First we were in Deaf and Mute Institute in Zagreb, Ilica 83, and then in a home in Vlaska 37 st. That was an Archbishop's residence, just below the cathedral... On Sundays they were taking us to a catholic church. Living conditions in Zagreb were far better than those in the camp. We got different names here: Ivan, Mate, Josip, Joso, and other. Although I was a child, I remember it was very difficult to me, as well as for the rest of us...

...After liberation I returned to my hometown. I was heavily struck by the fact that very few of 600 of my inmates from the camp, returned. As for the others, every trace of them was lost in the fascist camps.

*Svedočanstvo Đure Ivetića, objavljeno u Žarko Vujičić, Velika ofanziva na Kozaru 1942. I njene posljedice, Banja Luka 2004, p. 169-175.)*

Source 6

C S D



*http://www.jusp-jasenovac.hr/Default.aspx?sid=5478 (9. 5. 2013)  
Antisemitizam Holokaust Antifašizam, Ognjen Kraus (ur.), Židovska općina, Zagreb, 1996, p. 92.)*

**ASSIGNMENTS:**

1. Look at the picture in source 6 and describe it.
2. What is attached to the girl's coat?
3. What does it mean?

COMPARISON		
	COMMON FEATURES	DIFFERENCES
SLOVENE CHILDREN		
CROAT CHILDREN		

## Source 1

**C**  
(story by Štefan Matek)

Burgar, M. (1972). Torbica partizanskega kurirja. Časopis Naša skupnost (Ljubljana), letnik 13, št. 4. Pridobljeno na spletni strani, (7. 8. 2012): <http://www.dlib.si/details/URN:NBN:SI:DOC-N4BQV50C/?query=%27keywords%3dkurir%27&pageSize=25>

## Translation:

Couriers in the National Liberation War had difficult and responsible assignments. They were always on the road and in a constant danger. Let me describe a part of my tasks as a courier.

My path took me 3 hours of walk in one direction, and 3 hours back, with a heavy backpack on my back, often with packages, rifles, and hand grenades. I had to be cautious. I barely got any time to rest, because I had to protect myself. We were not supposed to be seen during the day. If it rained, I was wet until rain stopped and clothes on me dried.

Every other night, when I wasn't on my way to countersign, I was delivering mail, literature, and newspapers.

One time, when I was returning home on my regular path, I was so tired, I sleepwalked. I was wandering the entire night in the woods. Occasionally I stumbled on a root and it woke me up, but then I just fell back to sleep standing up. I walked across a stream and had to make a bigger step. I was too tired to see when I stepped in the water, fall and came out on the other side. In that moment rifle rested above my head. At first I thought I was attacked, but then I realised, my rifle has triggered when I fell in the water.



## Source 2

**C**

*Fototeka  
Gorenjskega  
muzeja Kranj*

## Source 3

**A**



*Fototeka  
Gorenjskega  
muzeja Kranj*

## Source 4

**C**

**M**

## FANA PETRA KOČOVSKA – CVETKOVIČ 1927–2004

She was a member of League of Communists of Yugoslavia since 1943 and cooperated with the Yugoslav Front since 1941 in Macedonia. Her most notable action took place when she was only 17 years old, when she, together with combatant's volunteers, attacked and disabled the hardware of Zletovski mine.

This group was assigned to destroy the hardware and disable the activities of the mine and to shatter enemy's outpost in it. They succeeded. Prior to that, Fana held on the 20-days long quest from Kofuž to Kozjak in high snow and cold. Many of the oldest and experienced combatants fall behind or ended this mission, but the young girl held on and became an example for others.

## IBE ŠERIFA PALIKUČA

She received the recognition at the age of 15 – the acceptance in the Young Communist League of Yugoslavia, a stage between youth and members of Communists, for protection of battalion, when ballistic missile hit her. She was severely injured, but healed soon and returned back to her position. She went back to underground, where she worked in her birthplace, Debro. The young Albanian helped to achieve victory and revolution.

## ASSIGNMENT:

1. What kind of work was done by couriers?
2. Describe the courier on the picture.
3. Is there anything unusual about him?
4. What kind of work did children do?
5. Why was the work of couriers hard and responsible?

*Materijali su uzeti iz knjige Heroine Jugoslavije izdavačka kuća Spektar, Zagreb 1980 god. (abstract)*

## Source 1

T H G U ,

In the spring of 1945, after German soldiers left the region, scared Yugoslavs moved to Austria and Italy. Amongst them were also Slovenian Home guards, Montenegrin and Herzegovina Chetnicks, and many Croatian Home guards and Ustaša. There were a lot of families and individuals, who committed war crimes, and also a lot of ordinary families and individuals running from horrifying destiny. The paths lead them through Mislinja, Drava, and Mežica valleys to Austria, where they were often send back. Thousands of people has ended their lives in desolated mines, tank ditches, Kočevje woods and elsewhere. Children were re-educated similar to children in German concentration camps years before. The biggest centres for people from the other side were in Vetrinje, Teharje, and Kočevje Rog, and for children in Petriček in Celje. Other centres were also in Ormož, Ptuj and in other towns all over Slovenia. Most of them were located in old barracks, abandoned mansions, and old bars, such as Petriček in Celje. Centres were full of refugees, soldiers and their families, civilians, women, girls, children and older people.

Tolstoj N. Klepec M. Kovač T. 1980. Trilogija Vetrinje – Teharje – Rog. Maribor. P. 13., 27.)

## Source 2

P

Communists demolished a part of the wall behind the mansion, so that they could lead groups of people through this gateway at night. They were taking them over the meadows to the nearby scaffolds and thusly avoid the main road.

Peasants and other people from Teharje were under the horrifying impressions of June and July 1945 even after the firs couple of years after the war. People were screaming, yelling, seeking help, sigh, cry, submachine guns were rattling, and bombs were exploding. Even today people do not dare to speak of these events because they are afraid of communist reprisals.

*Tolstoj N. Klepec M. Kovač T. 1980. Trilogija Vetrinje – Teharje – Rog. Maribor. P. 108.)*

## Source 3

T H G K š (C )  
K , 30. 5. 1945

Fototeka Gorenjskega muzeja Kranj

**ASSIGNMENTS:**

1. Why did some people decided to escape from Yugoslavia after the war?
2. What happened to the Home guard children? Describe the picture above – who is on it, when was it taken, ...?



## Source 4

E

The first day in exile was like a normal day, when I am in a deep sleep and nothing can wake me up, neither the creaking of old wheels, nor the tremor of a cart. Goodbye Ljubljana. Goodbye my friends, schoolmates. I am too tired to think of you. I only wish to sleep.

While I was sleeping, a large group of refugees arrived to Drava and crossed Yugoslav-Austrian border. There were 10.000 Germans, 13.000 Slovenes, 4.000 Serbs, and 4.000 Russians.

The day was turning in the night. The valley next to Vetrinje has lost its primary semblance. Like mushrooms after the rain tents were pitch, accompanied by horses, other cattle, and people. Fires were glowing in the half-light. Bogus idyll. I heard a children's scream in front of our tent. "Help, help, Janez! Janez!" What happened to Janez? I grabbed a little girl and shook her. She told me in tears, how Janez went to the bridge at the river full of hand grenades. Janez did a few steps when it exploded. Janez's body flew in the air and landed on the riverbank. "In vain, all hope is in vain!" People just stood there, a man took his rustic hat off of his head and turned it nervously in his hands, while two nurses held Janez's mother. She shed no tears nor did she scream. They took her away from her son's dead body.

Everyone knew we were going back to Yugoslavia, even I, eleven years old child. But where we were going couldn't been predicted even in our wildest dreams. Partisans, who were making personal investigations, were amongst captives. They took everything valued away from us. Partisans were youngsters, almost children. One of them was perhaps 12 or 13 years old. He bowed his head and smoked a cigarette.

People were too numb to feel the pain. Civilians were no different. Women were falling in the dust of the Teharje road. Children were the strongest. The little ones were carried in their mothers' laps, older, around my age, were walking with small burden of their bodies. The distance between Celje and Teharje was perhaps 10 kilometres. But to us it seemed like an eternity. We dragged ourselves with the final strength, like beaten dog, to the last stop.

Ott, Ivan (2008). *Otroci s Petrička – ukradeno otroštvo. Celje: Mohorjeva družba*, p. 35, 36, 69, 79, 112, 147, 194, 197.)

**ASSIGNMENT:**

What happened to the Home Guards' families, captured and returned after the war?

## Source 5

B U

(these are children-orphan, whose parents were killed by Ustashes, and children were forced to wear Ustasha hats.)



Mihovilović, Đ., Smreka, J. (2006). *O poimeničnom popisu žrtava Jasenovac prema do sada prikupljenim i provjerenim podacima. Spomen područje Jasenovac*, ur. Tea Benčić Rimay, str. 219

" Those were Serb boys taken from their parents by Ustashes in 1942. A part of their parents were killed in Jasenovac camp, and a part was deported for force labor to German factories. The boys were dressed in Ustasha uniforms, upon order from the commander, Vjekoslav Max Luburic, though it was the Ustashes who were responsible for their own and their parents' suffering.."

(Dr. sc. Robert Skenderović (Hrvatski institut za povijest), radionica "Stradanja žena i djece u logoru Jasenovac", Zagreb, 2007. CD, koji je u izdanju MZOŠ, a u sklopu seminara "Poučavanje o holokaustu" koji se svake godine održava u Zagrebu krajem januara.)

## Source 6

T

When the youngest children were taken from their parents and out mothers were beaten with rifles, here was so much crying and yelling. My father was praying with rosary behind the fishnet fence and watched how my mother was holding on tight to my younger brother and me. Children were loaded on a bus, where we had to sing Partisan songs. I know my mother was crying even harder than the night before, because she undoubtedly felt she was going to be killed. The next day at five o'clock in the morning she was taken away with another woman, who also had to separate from her three children. At that time my father was taken to the shack; when he wanted to see his wife, women told him she was already taken away, like so many others.

Tolstoj N. Klepec M. Kovač T. 1980. *Trilogija Vetrinje – Teharje – Rog. Maribor*. P. 99)

**ASSIGNMENT:**

1. Look at the picture in source 5 and read the explanation. Then read source 6.

2. Compare both sources – try to determine similarities in re-education of children that are mentioned in both sources.