



JÁN LACKO

(Turček, Slovakia, June 18, 1901 – August 18, 1969)



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My great-grandfather was born on June 18, 1901, in Dolný Turček, in the Turčianske Teplice District, where our family had lived side by side with the majority for centuries. Dolný Turček was a German village, and Germans and Roma had good relationships at that time. In fact, my great-grandfather's godfather was German. With the beginning of the Second World War, however, the relations between the inhabitants of German origin and local Roma people began to change.

According to Slovak State law, the term "*Gypsy*" was used to describe a member of the "*Gypsy race*", who had both parents of such origin, and led a nomadic life, or, was settled down, but avoided work. It was up to the subjective evaluation of the authorities to decide who was "*Gypsy*". As a result,

many Slovaks were labelled "*Gypsy*" and sent to labour camps, while many Roma were categorised as Slovak, and had to join the Slovak army, and later joined the Slovak National Uprising.

My great-grandfather made his living from the door-to-door sale of fabrics and was a musician. He played the violin, cello, and bass. Roma people who did such things for a living were regarded as "vagrants and idlers" by the authorities, and he was imprisoned several times.

On the first occasion, on September 12, 1942, the Dolný Kubín District Council assigned him to the labour crew in Dubnice nad Váhom. **My great-grandfather escaped from the camp** but was arrested again on March 9, 1943. He was released on June 4, 1943.

Later, my great-grandfather **joined the partisan movement**. According to the stories told to me by my grandmother, and the documents I discovered in archives, he was a member of the Kremnica Unit of Gejza Lacko, I. Partisan Brigade of M. R. Štefánik under the command of P. A. Veličko, and of the Jegorov Group, II. Partisan Brigade of M. R. Štefánik, led by Major Žingor. Both partisan units contributed to the defence and securing of rebel-held territory.

For his participation in the resistance movement, my great-grandfather was **imprisoned** in autumn and taken to Ilava, and later to the detention (concentration) camp at Dubnica nad Váhom. In the meantime, they torched his house. When the family returned from the

Banska Bystrica region to Turček, the Gestapo took them off to be interrogated on suspicion of harbouring partisans. The next day, the Gestapo took them to the mountain of Puš (in the village of Turček) and shot them in cold blood – Valéria, two months old, Rozália, two years old, Gabriela, 14, Margita, 17, Rozália, 36 and Mária, 69.

In spring 1945, **my great-grandfather returned from the concentration camp and learned about the tragedy** that had befallen his family. He found his mother, wife and children lying inert in the forest, covered with leaves and needles. To bury them, he had to take them to the cemetery himself.

“In her hands, she held a duvet and secretly pulled out the feathers so that anyone could follow their traces.” (Anna Lacková, daughter of Ján Lacko)

Sources and further information:

1. <http://filmpartizanka.eu/>
2. <https://dokweb.net/articles/detail/801>

This biography has been written by Vera Lacková