



## JOSEF SERINEK

(Bolevec, Czech Republic, February 25, 1900 – Svitavy, Czech Republic, June 14, 1974)



© Mediálny Hlas – Media Voice

Josef Serinek was born in Bolevec, Czechoslovakia, and was brought up by his maternal aunt. He lost both of his parents when he was just six months old.

Serinek was a Czech Roma partisan, going by the nickname Černý. During World War I, **he joined the Zelený kádr**, a group of deserters refusing to fight in the ranks of the Austrian-Hungarian army, hiding out in the woods. At the age of 16, however, Serinek was captured and **forced to join the military**.

Later, Serinek worked on various farms under Czech and German owners. Together with his wife, Pavlína Janečková, he had five children.

In August 1942, Serinek and his family were arrested and taken to Lety concentration camp, in the district of

Písek, Czechoslovakia. In just a short time there, he witnessed multiple acts of torture resulting in death. Serinek was convinced that this was to be his fate; however, **he managed to escape the camp**.

Wanting to return for his family, but on the run from the gendarmes, **he hid in the woods for almost a year**. Later he would find out that several members of his family had died in Lety, while the others in Auschwitz, Brezinka. Furthermore, three of his friends, who had also escaped the camp, were all murdered or executed – only Serinek survived.

After his escape, he wished to join the partisans in Yugoslavia but found local support in the Vysočina region. There he got in touch with a local resistance group, Rada tří. Serinek **established a partisan forest division** and in 1943, operated together with General Luž, Lieutenant Colonel Svatoň, and 28 other, mostly Soviet soldiers who escaped from captivity, under the name Čapajev. Some 150 men were involved in the division over the following years, though the core group consisted of approximately 30 members. They managed to build and maintain a stable base, hid in the dugouts, knew how to operate various handguns and were well acquainted with the local terrain. The biggest enemies they faced in this life and death situation were the Czech gendarmes.



In one instance, the division organised an attack on the gendarmes who had shot a key member of Rada tří, General Vojtěch Luža, in October 1944. Serinek's group invaded the gendarme station in Příbyslav. Five gendarmes were locked in the basement and shot. One escaped execution, pretending to be dead.

In 1944, Serinek's division began to cooperate with the Russian paratrooper, Jermak, and the partisan division under the leadership of Dr. Mirolav Tyrš. Some members of Serinek's group joined together with Dr. Miroslav Tyrš' division, while the escaped Russian captives joined Jermak. Serinek became the chief of the supply division in Dr. Miroslav Tyrš group and participated in important meetings with other partisan divisions. At the end of the war, on May 7, 1945, he participated in the disarmament of the army hospital in Bystřice nad Perštejnem, thus saving injured German soldiers from execution. Serinek even provided them with cars and let the officers keep their guns. However, shortly after the arrival of the SS units, the partisans fought for control over the town of Bystřice. Against the better equipped SS units, they were forced to withdraw from the city.

Together with his second wife, Maria Serinkova, he had three kids and lived in Svitavy, where they ran the pub "U černého partyzána".

Josef Tesař, an prominent Czech historian, conducted an **18-hour interview with Serinek**. In 2016, his memories were published by the publishing house Triáda under the title Česká cikánská rapsodie. This is a large, three-volume, 1,400-page work. **No other Roma partisan's life story has been archived so extensively**. The majority of Roma partisans died before sharing their memories.

"Nobody spoke about it. Since he was ten years old, he knew that his grandfather was a Romani partisan." (Zdeněk Serinek, grandson of Josef Serinek)

#### Sources and further information:

1. [https://www.idnes.cz/xman/profily/romove-protinacisticky-odboj.A150518\\_122519\\_xman-styl\\_fro](https://www.idnes.cz/xman/profily/romove-protinacisticky-odboj.A150518_122519_xman-styl_fro)
2. <https://www.dzaniben.cz/files/7157ae6c470dbf6dcf46ef7c098f2950.pdf>
3. <https://a2larm.cz/2016/11/sam-proti-vsem-vzpominky-josefa-serinka/>
4. <http://www.krajinoupribehu.cz/bohy-pribehy-pametniku/>

This biography has been written by Vera Lacková