



ŽARKO JOVANOVIĆ

(Batajnica, Serbia, December 26, 1925 – Paris, France, March 26, 1985)



Photo published by Kalezić, Miško. 1984. "Ministar na koljenima". <http://www.tambura.com.hr/No2/jagdino.html>

Žarko Jovanović was born on December 26, 1925, in Batajnica (Serbia), and died on March 26, 1985, in Paris.

During World War II, he was imprisoned in **three concentration camps**: Banjica, Sajmište and in Trepča, from where **he escaped and joined the Ibar partisan movement**. During the war, most of his family were killed.

After the war, he distinguished himself in the Roma movement, especially as a **participant in the First World Roma Congress in London, 1971**. At

the Second World Roma Congress in Geneva, 1978, he was elected **Roma Minister of Culture**. From 1964, he lived in Paris where he was known for playing the balalaika, a traditional Russian instrument.

Author of the song "Đelem, đelem", he wrote and first performed it on Radio Belgrade in 1949. It's original title is "Opre Roma" ("Hold on, Roma"). The poem mentions, among other things, the crimes of the Ustaša military unit of the Black Legion against Roma in Croatia during World War II; it was this military unit that killed his family. The song was chosen to be the **Roma national anthem** at the First World Roma Congress in London. The melody was taken from a love song by Serbian Roma, which was made world-famous during the 1960s thanks to the film *Skupljači perja* (meaning, "the feather pickers"), released under the English title *I Even Met Happy Gypsies*, directed by Aleksandar Petrović.

"During World War II, I was detained in three concentration camps. I am a participant in the People's Liberation Struggle. During the war, I lost almost my entire family." (Kalezić, 1984).

"There is no wealth left behind a man, but only what he has given." (Tomaš, 2019)

Sources:

1. Kalezić, Miško. 1984. "Ministar na koljenima" ["Minister on his knees"]. <http://www.tambura.com.hr/No2/jagdino.html> (accessed July 15, 2020)
2. Tomaš, Marko. 2019. Svjetski dan Roma je prošao, skinite maske i nastavite sa licemjerjem [The International Romani Day is over, take off your masks and continue with the hypocrisy], <https://www.direktportal.com/svjetski-dan-roma-je-prosao-skinite-maske-i-nastavite-sa-licemjerjem/> (accessed July 15, 2020)

This biography has been written by Daniel Vojak