

HOW I BECAME A PARTISAN



A FILM BY
VERA LACKOVÁ

90 mins / 2021 / Slovak, German, Czech, English Subtitles / Czech Republic, Slovakia



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FILM FESTIVALS AND AWARDS

Prize for Cultural Diversity of the Federal Foreign Office - goEast Film Festival, Germany
Best Film - AKE DIKHEA? International Festival of Romani Film - Germany
National Film Prize IGRIC in the Category of Film and TV Production - Slovakia
Best Documentary - Tatra Bank Foundation Award for Audiovisual Art, TV and Radio, Slovakia
Tatra Bank Foundation Award for Audiovisual Art, TV and Radio - Slovakia
The Golden Kingfisher Award for Best Doc - Finále Plzeň Film Festival - Czech Republic
Special Mention – Pavel Koutecký Award - Czech Republic
Special Mention – ARAS - Czech Republic

One World Slovakia - Slovakia
Ji.hlava International Documentary Film Festival - Czech Republic
CinEast, Central and Eastern European Film Festival - Luxembourg
Kassel Documentary Film and Video Festival - Germany
Borderlines Film Festival - United Kingdom
Eastern Neighbors Film Festival - Netherlands
One World International Human Rights Documentary Film Festival - Czech Republic
Kino on the Border - Poland / Czech Republic
Khamoro World Roma Festival - Czech Republic
Middle Point Europe Film Festival - Germany
This Is How We Make Spring - Germany
ELBE DOCK International Film Festival - Czech Republic
Sofia International Film Festival - Bulgaria
Lubuskie Film Summer - Poland
One World International Human Rights Documentary Film Festival - Czech Republic
Verzio International Human Rights Documentary Film Festival - Hungary
Slavonice Fest - Czech Republic

SYNOPSIS

Numerous stories from WWII remain untold, and some might remain forever unknown. The fates of Roma partisans in the former Czechoslovakia is one such story. The fates of Roma partisans in the former Czechoslovakia is one such untold story. While uncovering her family's partisan past, director Vera Lacková learns about other forgotten Roma fighters. During her search, she comes up against deep-rooted prejudice, indifference, and hatred towards the Roma community. She aims to change the misconception that Roma were merely victims of the war and show that the heroic deeds of the Romani deservedly form a part of European history.

PRODUCTION NOTES

The Second World War still hides numerous stories, some of which will clearly remain a secret forever. One such mosaic of memories are the fates of the Roma partisans in the former Czechoslovakia. Film director Vera Lacková, who is also the great-grandchild of one of these forgotten fighters, learnt about her great-grandfather's deeds when she was a small child and her grandmother would tell her fairy tales about his adventures. While uncovering her family's history, Vera finds other Roma partisans. In addition to her great-grandfather Ján, the film tells the stories of three other people. Their dramatic stories are far from the sort one tells to small children. Imprisonment in concentration camps, the murder of family members, bloody battles during the liberation of Slovakia, partisan activity, cooperation with the American secret service, as well as what happened after the war – all this we follow through interviews with their descendants and those who remember, or with the help of documents from the archives. Vera moves from the archives to Slovak villages and mountains and to the Czech Republic, where some descendants live. Then she returns to the archives to confirm their testimony. During her search she comes up against deep-rooted prejudice, indifference and hatred towards the Roma community, both in the memories of those she interviews and during her search in the present. The author's motivation is to demolish the long-held stereotype of Roma as mere victims of Nazism. We are shown Roma whose deeds go beyond the history of a minority ethnic group and deservedly form part of European history.

DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Vera Lacková is a Roma director and film producer. Born in Slovakia and based in Vienna, Austria, she is the founder of the Czech-Slovakian production company, Media Voice. Her background working with Roma people, sharing their stories and movements, enables her to bring a unique insider perspective on important and timely ethnic and political Roma themes for the community. A participant of the 2019 IDFA Academy, her film, *How I Became a Partisan*, was her feature length documentary debut and is about searching for the fate of forgotten Roma partisans. Her own search for and exposure of Romani partisans' stories is primarily based on the life of her great-grandfather; Ján Lacko. The film premiered at goEast Film Festival in Wiesbaden in 2021, where she received the Federal Foreign Office for Cultural Diversity award. The project was developed at the Ex Oriente film workshop, pitched at the 2020 East Doc Platform, and is a part of the distribution program, East Silver Caravan, supported by Institute of Documentary Film.

PRODUCTION CREDITS

Film Director	Vera Lacková
Executive Producer	Jan Bodnár
Director of Photography	Petr Racek
Film Editor	Hana Dvořáčková
Music Composer	Jan Šikl ml.
First Camera Assistant	Laco Korbel
Sound	Klára Jašková
Script Editor	Jan Gogola ml.
PRODUCER SK	Media Voice (Vera Lacková, Jan Bodnár)
COPRODUCER CZ	Film a Sociologie (Jarmila Poláková)