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VLAISAVLJEVIĆ, Rade
Former Yugoslavia Witnesses Documentation Project
Serbian
RG-50.585*0021

Box 1, Tape 1

In this interview, Rade Vlaisavljević, born in 1933 and a native of Veliko Nabrđe, describes the Ustaše invasion of his village. He also discusses the deportation of the local population, including himself, to concentration camps at Jasenovac and Stara Gradiška. Further, he talks about his time spent at an orphanage in Zagreb and later as a servant on a farm that belonged to a member of the Ustaše movement, where he stayed until the end of the war.

[00:] 00:31:00 – [00:] 09:34:19
00:00 – 10:09

He introduces himself and gives his date and place of birth as February 21, 1933, in Veliko Nabrđe; talks about life in the village before the war; says people farmed, they did not involve themselves with politics, and that there were not any political persecutions; remembers the beginning of the war on February 11, 1942, when Ustaše surrounded the village; says three Ustaše soldiers walked through the village in the early morning with a whistle, and people came out to see what was happening; describes how people, following orders given by the Ustaše, gathered in front of the local school and then went to Levanjska Varoš, where they were joined by civilians from other nearby Serbian villages: Paučje, Čenkovo, and **Borovlje**, and then together in a long line of carriages they headed for Đakovo; says that the journey was peaceful because they were told that they were going to Đakovo for a census; describes how men and older boys were separated from women and smaller children, and were then boarded onto a train near the Đakovo marketplace; describes the Ustaše uniform and mentions two Ustaše members from his village; remembers only that one of them was named **Andrija**; estimates that between 1,500 and 2,000 people were brought from Levanjska Varoš to Đakovo; says that the men were taken to Jasenovac and women and children to Stara Gradiška; describes how they were brought to Okučani by train and then had to walk to Stara Gradiška without food or water; says that they drank water from the polluted stream Stara Sava, and because of that many of them got sick and some of the children died.

[00:] 09:34:20 – [00:] 18:35:14
10:10 – 19:32

Says that his father and two older brothers were taken to Jasenovac, and his mother and the younger children went to Stara Gradiška; says that mothers and children were separated after the arrival at Stara Gradiška, and the children were taken to a triangular yard; remembers seeing boys, 12–14 years of age, dressed in the Ustaše uniforms; mentions how he traded his leather belt for a piece of bread with one of these boys, but was later beaten by a prison guard who thought

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that he had stolen the bread; says he spent 3–4 months in the concentration camp before he was transported to Zagreb together with other children; describes the time spent in the concentration camp; says there were only female guards and occasional visits by nuns who would tell them they would soon be released, that their parents were all right, and that the Ustaše regime was just; names members of his family imprisoned in Stara Gradiška: mother and sisters **Nedeljka**, **Mara**, **Milica** and **Mirjana**; says that some women, including his sister **Nedeljka**, were taken from the camp, and that his cousin **Milan Kovač**, a member of the Croatian Home Guard, “Hrvatsko Domobranstvo,” told him they were sent to Germany as laborers; says his sister **Mara** stayed in the camp together with their sick mother; mentions testimonies by **Jeca Ramisavljević** and **Milka Petrović**, both of whom were saved from the camp by their sons who were in the Home Guard but are now deceased, about the raping of female prisoners, including his 15-year-old sister.

[00:] 18:35:15 – [00:] 26:40:19
19:33 – 27:58

He talks about coming to Zagreb and being placed in a home for deaf-mute people on **Ilica Street**; says his younger sister, who was 15 at the time, was with him, but was soon taken away by an unknown woman; presumes she was adopted and given a new identity; says he tried to find her after the war, but was unsuccessful; talks about his life in the orphanage; describes an incident in which a boy tried to reach for an apple on the other side of a barbed wire fence, but a guard pulled him and he was stabbed by the barbed wire; he does not know if they boy died or survived because the other children, including himself, were immediately chased away; says that children were guarded by female guards and nuns; mentions occasional visits by strangers who would take some of the children; says some of his sisters were taken away and brought back to their home village, but he remained; describes how one day a group of children, including himself, escorted by nuns was taken to **Koprivnica** and then to **Novigrad Podravski** where they were assigned different duties; explains how he became a servant at the estate of **Mate Kovaček**, a member of the Ustaše movement, in **Delovi** near **Novigrad**, and stayed there until the end of the war.

[00:] 26:40:20 – [00:] 36:07:21
27:59 – 37:48

He describes the time spent with **Kovaček** and mentions an incident in which he was beaten up by **Kovaček**'s nephew after an unsuccessful attempt to escape and join the Partisan movement; says that **Kovaček** received two Italian soldiers as laborers after the capitulation of Italy; describes how he took one of the soldiers to the local tailor who knew Italian and could communicate with them, but the tailor soon refused the contact; says he later learned that the tailor was a member of the Communist Party; recounts his family's fate: his sister **Mara** and his mother were killed in the concentration camp, one sister was adopted in Zagreb, and his brother **Pero**, father, grandfather, and cousins were killed in Jasenovac; says that after the liberation he returned to his destroyed village, where he met **Milka Petrović** who told him about the rape of his sister in the concentration camp; says soon afterwards he moved to an orphanage in Đakovo.