



## NADIR DEDIĆ

(Žeravica, Kingdom of Yugoslavia/ Bosnia and Herzegovina, May 7, 1928 – ?)



© Nihad Nino Pušija

Nadir Dedić was born in the village of Žeravica (district of Bosanska Gradiška) in 1928. Due to the war, he dropped out of primary school and began working as a **shepherd for a rich peasant** in Brestovčina. After that, he worked for a German in the vicinity of Bosanska Gradiška.

While grazing cattle in September 1942, he lit a fire which spread uncontrollably, for which he was arrested. He was subsequently transferred to the **Stara Gradiška camp**, and later to the camp in Jasenovac.

In the camp, he was considered a **Muslim**, not a Roma: *“Otherwise, had they known I was a ‘Gypsy’ ... I would have been liquidated one hundred per cent, one million per cent, believe it or*

*not. ... What’s your name, Nadir, you know? Father, Mustafa. Mother, Šehra, a Muslim—that is it.”* (Testimony Nadir Dedić)

Dedić worked in the locksmith workshop in the Jasenovac camp, and at the request of a local Muslim peasant he was **released from the Jasenovac camp**, after which he returned home. The following year he worked again as a shepherd, where he came into contact with the **partisans**. Describing the partisans he later said, *“Because the partisans made contact through Roma villages, it was easy for them to pass; they were not much suspected because they were Roma; those who were collecting food for the partisans, from Kozara, were passing through these Roma villages; they had ties with the Roma since there were three partisan associates among the Roma from that village.”* (Testimony Nadir Dedić)

In October 1944, for fear of being killed by Ustašas who suspected Roma in the area of collaborating with partisans, Dedić’s father managed to move his family (along with other Roma) to Donji Šor, the free partisan area on Kozara, with the help of the partisans. Dedić

and other Roma were then transferred to the village of Gornji Potkrajci, where they stayed in an abandoned house. The Roma who remained in Žeravica were taken to the village of Velika Mlaka on October 22, 1944, where they were killed. Dedić then joined a partisan military unit:

*Well, I joined the Twentieth Krajina Brigade, the Thirty-ninth Division, the Sixth Military District. The brigade, which I joined, was more like OZNA [The Department for People's Protection, A/N]. We attacked Bosanski Novi, we attacked Bosanska Gradiška, but we retreated since everyone knew the likely outcome there, so they transferred us to Bosanska Dubica. There we attacked. I walked all over Kozara, Grmeš, Podgrmeš - I was a horse-leader in the partisans. I did not have a rifle for six months. I was unarmed; I was a horse-leader; I was leading a horse. And ... I was always in the background; wherever there was a clash, well, I was always in the background. I had a horse which weighed in at approximately a little bit bigger than a donkey, it weighed 250 kilos perhaps, believe it or not. It carried a pack-saddle and six grenades. That was me, I took the halter and led it. The guys, one of them was a mortar operator, he would come for those grenades, and I always moved away then. Later I got an Italian rifle, and when, well, the Allies threw that uniform. In 1944, when Prijedor was, well, when Prijedor was liberated, then they threw that uniform off the plane, none of them suited me then, small shoes, small size. Then they gave me some yellow shoes of the Allies, and that small blouse—well, then—I was happy when I put it on. And then, commissioner Boško Đurić read Borba [a newspaper]. He says we will eat from golden spoons. Then, he says, the liberation is approaching, it is our victory, he reads that Borba to us: the Red Army is advancing, and we—well—started dancing, jumping for joy. And on April 22 —well—Banja Luka was liberated. We headed towards Bosanska Gradiška, units from Serbia heading towards Bosanski Novi. And then we met the Serbian units and headed towards Zagreb. He says Zagreb will be the biggest resistance. (Testimony Nadir Dedić)*

In the early 1970s, Dedić helped initiate the **construction of a monument to murdered Roma** from Mokrice (1944) in the village of Žerjavica. Today, Dedić lives in a homeless shelter in Zagreb and occasionally participates in commemorations dedicated to the murdered Roma in Croatia.

#### Sources and further information:

1. Testimony Nadir Dedić (transcript). Jasenovac Memorial Site, 745:JSV DMZ – 3/07, February 12, 2004.
2. Lončar, Drago. 1985. "Romi ipak ne zaboravljaju" [The Roma do not forget after all], Arena, August 7, 1985, pp. 22 – 23.

This biography has been written by Danijel Vojak