

**ANNEX 360:
WITNESS STATEMENT OF ANA BIČANIĆ**

The council reaches

DECISION

evidence proceeding continues on 21 September 1992 at 9:00 a.m. with witness hearing

THE HEAD OF THE COUNCIL (Signature)

RECORDING SECRETARY (Signature)

CONTINUES ON 21 SEPTEMBER 1992 AT 9:00 A.M.

The same people are in attendance.

Witnesses: Ana Bičanić

It is established that the following witnesses didn't come to the main hearing: Joso Matovina – summons are not added to the record, Dane Matovina – summons are added to the record, Nikola Sertić – summons are not added to the record, Zvonko Conjar – summons are added to the record, and the witnesses in attendance state that he is hospitalized.

The main hearing is going to begin in absence of the witnesses who didn't come, and the necessity of their hearing is going to be decided on later, depending on the result of the main hearing.

The summoned witness is ANA BIČANIĆ, the daughter of Jure Špehar, 55 years old, born in Saborsko, permanent address: Warned according to the article 325 of the Criminal Proceedings Law (CPL), that is, she is obliged to inform the court about everything she knows in connection with this case, and that the giving of false statement is a criminal offence, and, according to the article 229 of the CPL she is not obliged to answer some questions if there is probability that by answering them, she herself or some of her close relatives could face a risk of being criminally prosecuted, deprived of material goods, or very disgraced, she

STATES

I know all of the accused and they were the first who did this to us, they are the chief leaders, Plaški and Jesenica were their main base from where they could attack Saborsko. I have known the accused since they were school children, and at that time they used to come to Saborsko, and besides we used to go to Plaški often and buy what we needed.

The main attack on Saborsko began on 12 November at 9:00 a.m.. First they attacked with planes, and after that they bombarded the village and were shooting from machine guns. Moreover, from 5 August we would run away and hide in the wood every day and then we would return, because every day they attacked us. On 10 or 11 November it was peaceful, they weren't attacking, and on 12 November, at 9:00 a.m., they attacked with planes, and we had to hide in the basements. At the time, I was together with the following people: Milan Bičanić, Nikola Bičanić, Petar Bičanić, Ivan Vuković, Jure Vuković, and Jure Štrk in a basement, besides us there were also: Jeka Vuković, Ana Bičanić, Bara Bičanić, Kata Vuković, Kata Štrk, Marija Hodak and Jeka Vuković. All together there were 11 or 12 of us. There were some members of the National Guard with us, and they managed to escape. Well, when a woman came in and said that they were entering the village, members of the National Guard ran away, and the rest of us stayed in the basement. We thought they would pass by us if we kept quiet. However, at one moment we heard a voice coming from the outside and it said: "Give me the matches!" so, because I was afraid that they could burn us, I stepped out of the basement and ran into two soldiers who weren't from our area. They were in uniforms and had helmets on their heads. I joined my hands and told them not to shoot. I also said that there weren't any soldiers in the basement, but only civilians. One of them then told me to call the others to get out of the basement, and I did as he said. The people from the basement were distracted. After we got out of the basement one of them threw a bomb in it.

On the road in front of the house they lined us up in two lines. The men were on the one side and the women on the other. My husband was the first in the line. One of the soldiers asked him who put obstacles at the entrance to Saborsko. He answered that the Army did it, and then the soldier slapped him on the face.

While some of the soldiers stayed in order to keep their eye on us, the others pointed machine guns at the men and took them to a wall of a house approximately 20 meters removed from us. I only saw the soldiers stepped back, and after that I heard two machine-gun bursts. I suppose they were fired at the people. At that moment I said that my poor child would come home and won't find neither mother nor father, because I was afraid that they were going to kill us too. One of them asked me where my child was and I said he was serving his time in the army in Osijek. Then he asked me why he was in the Ustashas' army and I answered him that he went to army in June. After I said it they were silent for a while and then they told us get lost in half an hour. I'm pointing out that my son was in the army but he ran away and joined the National Guard.

We started running each of us in a different direction and so we reached Jesenice at 3:00 a.m., and afterwards we went to Ogulin.

This army stayed and set houses on fire, I point out that there were a lot of civilians among them and I remember an elderly tall man who had gray hair and was in civilian clothes. A lot of them were in camouflage uniforms, with nothing on their heads, and they had white rags in their hands. While we were still there one of the soldiers said to a woman that he killed her son, and that young man was really killed, but the woman wasn't there at the time.

So I don't know what happened to the following people: Milan Bičanić, born in 1927, Nikola Bičanić, born in 1928, Petar Bičanić, born in 1935, Ivan Vuković, born in 1932, Jure Vuković, born in 1930 or 1931, and Jure Štrk, born in 1929 or 1930. I only know that I heard two machine-gun bursts fired at them when they were taken behind the wall.

While we were still in Saborsko I recognized the accused: Nikola Medaković, Miroslav Milaković, whose father was a forester, and Branko Šupica. They were all in camouflage uniforms and went from one house to another, setting them on fire, taking the goods, and they were also throwing away the uniforms of the National Guard when they would find them.

When I saw Miroslav Milaković, Branko Šupica and Nikola Medaković they were setting the hamlet of Bičanići, placed between them and my house, on fire.

While we were running away from Saborsko I didn't see any dead people, the villagers of Saborsko, because there was shooting.

While we were running away Kata Vuković said that her mother-in-law was shot approximately 5 meters away from the house we were hiding in, and on a field, Ana Bičanić, born in 1924, was shot and her body stayed there.

We knew before that Medaković, Šupica, and others were going to attack. Our neighbour Nino Šolaja and Bogdan Šolaja, who had "SAO (Independent Autonomous Region) Krajina" pass, would sometimes come to visit us in the basement, I point out that they had a radio-station and informed the rest of them what was happening. Nino Šolaja said that we civilians could run away and that the army would stay. I said that we couldn't run away because we were surrounded and I asked who would stay with our sons, and he said that we should go to Jasenica. Anyway, Nino Šolaja is the father of Anka Šolaja and his son Željko Šolaja was with the Chetniks for a while and after that he went to Belgrade. Also Bogdan Šolaja's son whom we call Boca joined Chetniks.

Chetniks, on the Borik hill, kept saying that Saborsko was going to be named Ravna Gora, and people who were captured in Lička Jasenica told us, later on, that the sons of the Šolajas were Chetniks. When it comes to Anka Šolaja I don't know whether she was with them, but she was there all the time.

My house was also destroyed. After the fall of Saborsko, some young men went there and said that there were only some house walls left. However, the members of the UNPROFOR were there and they said that the village was completely destroyed and that there was nothing left there. At the entrance to the village, Chetniks put the panel on which it was written "Ravna Gora".

When asked by the deputy OTJ (public prosecutor of municipality) in Rijeka the witness states:

When Medaković, Milaković, and Šupica were burning the village, there were many people, both our local people and strangers. I don't know who ordered the village to be burnt, but they went from one house to another and set them on fire.

When asked by the council members the witness answers:

The members of the National Guard slid the hill down and made an obstacle at the entrance to the village, in the direction of Jesenice, but tanks managed to pass. My house was placed at the entrance to the village, looking from the direction of Jesenice.

Next to my house there were the Šolajas' houses which weren't burnt like ours, they were only damaged by shells. People are saying that their houses are still there.

All of these Šolajas were Serbs, only Anka Šolaja's mother was a Croat woman.

Statement was given by: Anka Šolaja