

**ANNEX 97:**  
**WITNESS STATEMENT OF STJEPAN PEULIĆ**

REPUBLIC OF CROATIA  
MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR  
BJELOVARSKO-BILOGORSKA POLICE DEPARTMENT  
No: 511-02-04/V- /96  
18<sup>th</sup> March 1996

MINUTES ON TAKING THE STATEMENT  
Made in Bjelovarsko-Bilogorska Police Department on 18<sup>th</sup> March 1996  
Authorized official person: Dražen Tirić  
Recording secretary: Ana Kunješić

Began at 13.35 hrs

Name, father's name: STJEPAN PEULIĆ, MATO  
Occupation: retired  
Address ...  
Born on 27<sup>th</sup> June 1945 in Ilača, Vinkovci

He gave the following

**STATEMENT**

I have lived in Lovas, at the above mentioned address with my wife Marija until 26<sup>th</sup> December 1991, when I was exiled by the members of the Serbo-Chetnik forces, and since 1992 I have lived in ..., at Zvonko Grgić's, the tenant, where I now live as a refugee.

On 10<sup>th</sup> October 1991 the members of the Serbo-Chetnik forces, mostly from the surrounding villages, came into my village of Lovas for the first time, among them were the volunteers from Serbia. They were all members of the volunteer detachment "Dušan Silni" from Stara Pazova where, according to some, was their training centre. When they came into the village, I, together with my family, my wife Marija, daughter Blaženka, grandson Dominik, niece Ružica Lukić and her daughter Marijana Lukić and the neighbours Vinko Balić and Pavo Hujčić and others, hid in my cellar. There was over 10 of us, mostly women and children. Pavao Mujić and I went outside, and we hid to some safer place, that is into my shed.

I remember that before the Chetniks came to Lovas, two cannon grenades were fired at Lovas from the direction of Tovarnik or Šid, and that when entering the village the Serbo-Chetniks fired a lot from automatic weapons, hand rocket launchers and throwing grenades.

8 members of the Serbo-Chetnik forces came into my backyard, among who my daughter Blaženka recognized the brothers Lukić from Opatovac, who went to school with her. First, they wanted to throw some bombs into the cellar, where women and children were, but they did not, because these managed to answer them. Then they ordered that the gate should not be closed and that on it should be a white cloth, while before the attack the Serbs from the village had already marked their houses with white cloths, about which we did not know anything.

I was hidden in the shed, together with Pavao Mujić, for two days, that is, only on 12<sup>th</sup> October did we report to the Serbo-Chetnik command which was at the Community, in a mechanic workshop. On my road to the command post, first I saw Mičo (Božo) Devčić from Lovas, wearing a blue police uniform, and who has worked until 1991 at the police station together with my son Krunoslav Peulić, who was a member of the reserve of the police and was on sentry duties in Vukovar, and when the police in Croatia had to put Croatian symbols (Croatian coat of arms), Devčić went to work for the police in Serbia because of disagreement.

At the command post, I first had to report to Milan Radojčić, Ilija's son from Lovas and Radovan Tepavac, Dragan's son from Lovas, who were signing in the local people of Croatian nationality. After signing in they arranged us into two working groups, the first one had the duty of picking up the civilians who died during the attack in which there was Ivica Filić from Lovas, my wife's brother, and who now lives in Zagreb, and I was in the other group with Pero Badnjak, Mato Hodak, Mato Somborac, who is now somewhere in Bačka, and Vlado Somborac, who is now in Laz, near Delnice; and had a duty of picking up dead animals. We were picking up dead animals only one day, and we collected: 8 bulls, which we set on fire and about 15 pigs, about 40 hens and 5-6 dogs, which were buried outside the village by Mato Hodak with an excavator.

I heard from my brother-in-law, who now lives in Zagreb, that his wife picked up 20 dead people of Croatian nationality from Lovas, among who were: Tuna Jovanović, Vid Krizmanić, Dana Badanjak and Cecilija, forester Mirko from Tovarnik, Josa Kraljević, Ivan Ostrun, Pava Đaković, Stjepan Maderović, Đuka Poljak, Mato Kesar, Dragoš Pejić, Mija Božić, Stjepan Pejić, Kata Pavličević and Tuna Sabljak, who were all killed on 10<sup>th</sup> October 1991 from the infantry weapons by the Serbo-Chetniks, while on that same day Milan Latas was killed by the grenades and Marija Vidić a who is now in Vinkovci was wounded. The above-mentioned people from the village were buried at Lovas cemetery with the excavator into a mass grave. My brother-in-law, Ivica Filić has the exact list of the dead people.

I also know that on that day Tuna Jovanović's wife was killed, and was set on fire by the Serbo-Chetniks in a barn with those 8 bulls which we found dead and partially burned, but we have never seen her remains.

For the above mentioned crime I find the following persons responsible who I personally know: Željko Krnjaić from Lovas; Obrad Tepavac, Mićo's son from Lovas; Zoran Tepavac, Milan's son from Lovas; Milan Vorkapić, Nikola's son from Lovas; Milorad Vorkapić, Dragan's son from Lovas; Zoraja, Dušan's son from Lovas; Dule Grgović, Gojko's son who was born in Lovas, and lived in Tovarnik; and the already mentioned brothers Lukić from Opatovac, whom my daughter saw. All the mentioned persons I saw after the crime in uniform and with weapons, and the people from Lovas, with whom I talk, relate them to the above mentioned crime. According to my calculations, a Serbo-Chetnik unit participated in the occupation of Lovas, consisting of about 50 men, while we did not fight back.

While I was still in Lovas Dule Grković was saying in front of me how he killed Vid Krizmanić from a "Kalashnikov" and later he boasted around the village, and some said, that in Tovarnik and Lovas he killed about 45 people, and I can also say that he and Željko Krnjajić were some of the most blood-thirsty Serbo-Chetniks in Lovas.

On one occasion I also heard from some Serbo-Chetnik from Pančevo that a certain Kosta from Pančevo, who was a bodyguard of Ljuban Devetak from Ošijek, born in Lovas, and who was a chief commander in Lovas, killed the Tovarnik priest with a "Kalashnikov". I saw this Kosta several times and I could recognize him if I saw him or from a photograph.

On 17<sup>th</sup> October 1991 around 14.30 hrs, three armed Serbo-Chetniks came into my house wearing olive-drab uniforms, one of them said he was from Kragujevac, and they searched the house, under the excuse of looking for weapons and they took all the gold jewelry from my daughter Blaženka and 9 gold ducats which were for her dowry. They questioned me about my son, about who they had information that he was a member of the National Guard and about my membership in the HDZ (the Croatian Democratic Party). I told them about my son that he was in the reserve of the police with Mićo Devčić, and then they answered me that Mićo Devčić himself, who was then a commander of the police in Lovas, sent them to set my house on fire. After that I had to go to the Commander of the police, Mićo Devčić. The police department was located at Boro Keser's house. I went there for some more interrogating and Mićo Devčić, after the interrogation, which lasted for about 10 minutes, cursed at me: "Your fucking Ustasha mother, I will kill you all" and then he sent me home.

When I came home, my wife Marija told me that a proclamation was issued that all men aged between 17 to 50 had to report to the command post of the place in the community. I went to report to the command post, where over 100 of us gathered, and we were all Croats. Before we entered the backyard of the Community, the Serbo-Chetniks searched us, and we had to sit in the back yard on the benches, which were brought from the hunters' hall, in two rows. We spent the whole night under the night sky. First, they started to sign us in. Ljuban Devetak separated about 20 men who he proclaimed to be the members of the labour unit, that is, the ones he assumed to be loyal to him, among them were Šima Pejić, who came out of Lovas in 1995 and he now lives somewhere near Pula; Tuna Lutrović, who came out of Lovas in 1995 and now lives in Stubičke Toplice; Martin Šafarik, who still lives in the occupied Lovas, my brother-in-law, Ivica Filić, who came out of Lovas in 1992, and the others whose names I cannot recall at the moment, who were transferred into Mirko Milić's house.

During the night, the persons who signed us in also beat and tortured us, and I do not know where those who beat us with a cable wire came from. I was hit with this cable wire only

once across my back, and they tortured those who were interrogated at the mechanic workshop more. I remember that Berislav Filić and Luka Balić were taken to that interrogation.

I can also say that during that night two machine guns were pointed at us the whole time, and 6 more Serbo-Chetniks guarded us with the "Kalashnikovs", among them I only recognized Milorad Novaković's son from Lovas, who was then about 16 years old.

In the morning of 18<sup>th</sup> October 1991, after 8.00 hrs, the Serbo-Chetniks began gathering around us. The commander Ljuban Devetak went to his office and some men Aca and Petronije from Pančevo began torturing us. Petronije first slammed me several times, and then he kicked me with his boot on my chin, where I have a scar now, and he then broke my two teeth and then he continued kicking me fiercely with his boots. During that time Ljuban Devetak started calling out the people that were taken out and beaten in front of us with iron pipes and stabbed with the bayonets. I remember that Mato Hodak, Marko Sabljak, Iva Sabljak, Ivica Mujić, Mirko Keser, Boško Bosanac, Josip Turkalj, Pero Badnjak and others were taken out on that occasion, and they were tortured by the mentioned Aca and Petronije from Pančevo and one more person who is said to come from Borovo. I would surely recognize those three men if I saw them. Dr Jovo Stanimirović was present at this molesting and torturing by the Serbs, he came from Tovarnik and worked at the Vukovar hospital, and as far as I have heard, he now is a head of the hospital.

Around 10.00 hrs they told us to go picking in the vineyard, and I immediately thought that they were taking us for shooting, because I saw that some Serbo-Chetniks came in new mottled uniforms and with some new guns, which I had not seen so far. Among them I did not recognize any of them, but I later heard that there were Milan Rendulić, Franjo's son and Ilija Kresojević, Mihajlo's son, both from Lovas. When we started going out of the backyard, they grouped us to walk in two groups and we set off on foot outside the village in the direction of the plant of the factory "Borovo", that is, in the direction towards the woods. On the road the Serbo-Chetniks killed Boško Bosanac, who could not walk because he was stabbed with a bayonet and all beaten up, as I have already said. They brought us to a community field, which is near the road, to the community orchard and the plant of "Borovo". They ordered that we all had to, and there was about 60 of us, walk on in a convoy up the hill in the direction of the field which is the property of Jakša Poljak. When we climbed the hill, they told us to watch out because the army would fire at us and ordered us again to hold hands and go in a line towards the plant of "Borovo". Before we started in the direction of "Borovo", they told us to watch out, because our people, and they had in mind people from Lovas, which was not true, had set a mine field, and that we should search the area with our legs. Behind us were 20 armed Serbo-Chetniks in mottled uniforms among whom were the mentioned Rendulić and Kresojević. Around 11.00 hrs, when we activated the first mine, someone shouted "Lie down" and we all probably did lie down, and the mentioned Serbo-Chetniks started firing at us fiercely from all their infantry weapons, and the shootings lasted for about 15 minutes.

On the mentioned mine field we were around 2 hours. Later I heard that further torture in the mine field was prevented by some two Serbo-Chetnik officers that were passing by in a military jeep, but I did not see them. When the mentioned officers prevented further shooting, we had to clear the field of mines, and we stayed there until we cleared the way towards the road. I noticed that the mentioned unit was commanded by some Dragan who had three stars on his shoulders, that is, he had the rank of a captain. When we who survived came to the road, that Dragan ordered us to pick up the surviving wounded ones. I took out from the mine field, together with Dragan Krizmanić, the wounded Ivica Mujić,

who was wounded in the stomach from a mine. On that occasion I stepped on a mine with my right leg, and my toe of my right leg was torn off. When the mine exploded, I fell on the ground, but I managed to pull myself together. I saw that the mine torn half of my shoe off. I remember that Luka Radočaj pulled me out of the minefield. I was put into a truck with the other wounded, among them were the mentioned Ivica Mujić, who was wounded in his stomach; Emanuel Filić, who was wounded in the back from a gun and who is now in Novi Vinodolski; Stanislav Franković, who was wounded in the arm from a gun and who is now in Zagreb; Zolika from Opatovac who is now in Križevci; Ljubo Solak, who is now in Zagreb; Milan Radmilović, who is now in Vinkovci; Kika Kraljević, Josip Turkalj, who was wounded in the back from a gun and who died in the hospital in Šid; Mirko Keser, who is now in Pula; Marko Filić, who is now in Primošten; Joco Sabljak, who is now in Slatina and others; overall 13 of us wounded. We were all taken to Šid to a clinic, where our wounds were dressed and after that we were returned to the clinic in Lovas at Dr Slobodan Kačar's where we lay down for two days, after which Dr Kačar called out me, Ivica Mujić, Stanislav Franković and Zolika, who were seriously wounded and then we were transferred to the hospital in Sremska Mitrovica. The next day, on Sunday, the other wounded were brought to the hospital to Sremska Mitrovica. I stayed in the hospital in Sremska Mitrovica until 20<sup>th</sup> November 1991.

I can say that 17 people from Lovas died on the mine field, among them I can recall Marko and Iva Sabljak, Sabljak Tomo, the Panjik brothers, Ivo Palijan, Mijo Šalaj, Mato Hodak, Pero Badnjak, Marko Vidić, Nikola Badanjak, Marković, I cannot recall his name, Slavko Strangarević and others whose exact information only my brother-in-law can give, who was in the group that buried them later in a mass grave in Lovas cemetery.

From the persons who took us to the minefield I could not recognize anyone, but only what I heard that there were the already mentioned Rendulić and Kresojević and the mentioned captain Dragan, whom I saw from a distance.

Later I heard that they took us to the minefield because on the first day of the attack on Lovas not enough people were killed.

For our taking to the mine field I consider Ljuban Devetak the chief commander in Lovas to be responsible, Mićo Devčić, the commander of the police, Milan Radojčić and Radovan Tepavac, who signed us in for the forced labour, which means that they had a greater role and Đuro Prodanović, who was the chief representative of the municipal authorities.

At the hospital in Sremska Mitrovica Dr Vladimir Basariček treated me kindly – I later heard that he was a Croat. When I was released from the hospital, I was allowed to stay at home until 23<sup>rd</sup> December 1991, but every day I went on crutches to Dr Kačar's to dress my wounds.

When I came home, on the 8<sup>th</sup> day a policeman Đorđe Ivković came together with two Serbo-Chetniks who interrogated me about the condition in the village and relationships, that is about the alleged responsibility of some Croats.

On 23<sup>rd</sup> December 1991 around 14.00 hrs when I was at Emanuel Filić's, Radovan Tepavac came wearing a police uniform and arrested Emanuel Filić and took him to prison which was in the municipality building in the cellar. Then I saw when I was going home on crutches, the Serbo-Chetniks taking Filip Durek, Zvonko Balić, Vjekoslav Balić and Slavko Lukić to prison by car. When I came home, I decided to report to the police, but in the meantime, two unknown Serbo-Chetniks came into my house and took me to the municipality, from where Radovan Tepavac, who was wearing a police uniform, took me to the prison. About 14 people stayed over the first night in that prison, and in the meantime

Petar Sabljak, Anđelko Filić and Berislav, Zvonko Pejak, Ivica Bogat and others were brought in.

In the evening of 24<sup>th</sup> December 1991, the Serbo-Chetniks began torturing us. Vjekoslav Balić, Mato Mađarević and Emanuel Filić were taken for separate interrogation to the police, and there was Đuka Radočaj, and they were fiercely molested and tortured there and they were told that they would be killed.

In the mentioned cellar some unknown men tortured us, and some said that they were from Knin. They beat us with butt-ends, chains, wooden bats and they were kicking us. They even put knives against our throats. This torturing lasted the whole night. I only managed to see that Radovan Tepavac from Lovas, who I know well, come and beat us for a while.

On Christmas day they did not beat us. In the evening they let us go and we could go home, and allegedly, some commander of the police from Ilok let us go, and they told us that the next day, on 26<sup>th</sup> December 1991, we would be taken on a bus to Bijeljina. In the morning about 50 of us from Lovas got on the bus, all Croats, but they did not take us to Bijeljina, but they let us go in Šid and told us to go to Kljujić's and "Fuck him".

We managed somehow in Šid and we paid for a bus to Tuzla, from where we left to Zagreb.

During the stay in the occupied Lovas 1991, I heard that the Serbo-Chetniks interrogated the women, who were then tortured and raped, but I do not have any concrete information on that, that is, I do not know who did that.

Of the other crimes that the Serbo-Chetniks did in Lovas, I heard about the murder of Slavica Pavošević, Jozefina and Marijana, who were murdered in the cellar of their house, and about the murder of Ankica Lemunović who was also killed in the cellar of her house. About the murder of Stipe Luketić, who was murdered when going out from the village to Vukovar. About the murder of Marija Fišer, who was murdered in the garage of Ivica Krizmanić, and about the murders of Đoko and Alojz Krizmanić, Pero and Đuka Luketić, Joja Rendulić, Rudolf Jonak, Katica and Marin Balić and about the murders of many others whose names I cannot recall, and who were murdered by the Serbo-Chetniks in October and November 1991, but I did not hear concerning any of these cases who did it.

When I came to Zagreb, I went to a doctor, because I was all beaten up, where I was given a check up. Because of the physical injuries and because of what I went through, I acquired, in the meantime, a status of a Croatian war military invalid with the permanent physical invalidity of 30%.

I enclose to this statement my own handwritten statement that I recently gave to the municipality authorities in Lovas with the centre in Đurđevac.

I have listened to the dictation of the statement so that there is no need for its reading, and I sign it.

Done at 15.15 hrs.

Statement was taken by authorized official person: Dražen Tirić

Statement was given by: Stjepan Peulić