

## **Ilir Neziri interview with Pam Dawes (98:05)**

(00:00)

PD: This is Pam Dawes interviewing Ilir Neziri for Voices of Kosovo in Manchester on 28<sup>th</sup> January 2016.

Ilir, you're a later arrival to Manchester. You've married a young lady, from Kosovo, based in Manchester and you came to Manchester in 2015.

Today we're going to talk about your early memories of Kosovo and your experience of war, life in the capital as you were growing up and perhaps a little bit about your arrival in Manchester.

So Ilir could you introduce yourself?

IN: My name is Ilir Neziri. I come from Prishtina, which is capital city of Kosova. I was born in Podujeva, a town in the north of Kosova.

PD: Could you tell us a little bit about your memories of childhood, before the war, perhaps, first?

IN: Ok. Before the war we were living in our village with our parents and grandparents. And I remember the time, as a child, we played a lot with our cousins. We had a small house there. My father, I remember that he worked on the land. And we had a dog and its name was Surki and I loved him a lot. And we had a cat, too. I remember that as a child I played with her a lot. And during that time, I enjoyed... I enjoyed the time playing out. I do not remember a lot of things about that but it... it was a good life living in the village.

PD: Was your village near the Serb border?

IN: No, it isn't. It's in the part of town of Podujeva that is separated with Prishtina. It's near Prishtina.

My father left a job in 1990's because of oppression of Serbians that did at the time. All Albanians left their jobs and my father started to work at home.

He worked at a police station in Podujeva. He was an administrator there. Then he had to leave his job because they didn't want to work with the Serbs because they did a lot of repressions on them.

As all Albanians the Serbs started to take their jobs. They didn't want Albanians to have the rights that Serbs had before the war. I was a child during that time, but I remember some things that my family experienced before the war. As I mentioned before we were living in our village and my father started to work something from woods - how can I say that?

PD: Like joinery?

IN: Joinery. And we lived in that way until 1993 when we moved to Prishtina.

PD: Was your father quite political?

IN: Yes, he was involved in the resistance in 1992 and he had a lot of problems with Serbs. They beat him a lot. As a child I remember the white car, it came to our house and took him. I remember that. I

thought that it was my uncle's - Ismet - but it was the police. And he had to decide what he had to do: to continue the resistance or to move from our village and to let us behind. And he planned to go in Germany but he couldn't leave us there. He thought they will do bad things to us, to our family, if he would go in Germany. And he moved to live in Prishtina. People didn't know about that - he was living in Prishtina. And nobody knew about that, only us, of course. And 1993 he took us to live in Prishtina.

And he rented a house in Prishtina and found a job to work. Same job that he did in village. And our house was close to his job. He knew the police were looking for him, all the time. He had to hide. How can I say that?

PD: So the police had identified as being a young leader of a resistance movement, which developed over the next eight years or so. But your father was in those very early days feeling Kosova had to develop its own force?

IN: Yes. He knew, as all Albanians, that the war is going to happen in Kosova<sup>1</sup>, because it started in Croatia... in Bosnia. They knew it was going to happen. They just wanted to be prepared about it. And they knew that it's going to happen and they started the resistance. They started to think what they had to do to protect us: to protect our country.

And as you mentioned, it was the beginning of a time. And he planned it with his cousins about what they had to do to protect our village and they started there. And they - I don't know why, I don't know how - but police knew about it. And knew who started it.

---

<sup>1</sup> See Timeline

There were Serbs that lived during that time in our village. And I remember that my... they were good neighbours to us. They helped us. We helped them and we had a good relationship with them. But the politics started. Milošević just did these things to us. They knew that my father was one of the Albanians who started to think about resistance, to think about war, to prepare about it. And they didn't want Albanians to start that and they beat him. All the time they came to take him to [from] our house.

PD: Who would come?

IN: The police: Serb's police. And they asked him to give them guns and mentioned that my grandfather was a soldier for Germany in the World War II and they mentioned him, "You have a gun, you have to bring us a gun."

During that time, that was the politics - things that Serbs did to Albanians. Even you don't have the guns so you have to go and buy one or two to give them [Serb police], if you want to save your life and your family. Because if you didn't do that they would come to your house and beat you and maybe kill someone.

(08:27) PD: So just to go back, you grandfather, he was forced to join the army when Germany occupied the region in World War II?

IN: Yes. He was forced to join the German army as a lot of Albanians in Kosova. And after the war - he survived that war - and he came to live, of course, in his house. And that's why I mentioned they tell my father that they have a gun. Because...

He told them he didn't have a gun and they didn't believe him. They just wanted these things because they knew he was a leader of resistance in our village. And that's why they were asking him. They just wanted to find a reason to beat you or to kill you: if you find something to resist them they would do that, at that time.

PD: People thought he was working in Germany?

IN: Yes.

PD: But he was actually in the capital. He moved from the village into the capital.

IN: Yes, my uncles...my uncle helped him to move in Prishtina. People thought that he went to live in Germany. And he'd started to learn German but he couldn't leave us. I know he mentioned that he couldn't leave us. He didn't know what was going to happen to us. Maybe it was a good decision because he took us in Prishtina after.

(10:10) During that time Albanians was... during that time Kosova was a terrible situation. People... Serbians moved all peoples from their jobs. The Albanians didn't have a job. That's why they had to move somewhere to survive, to have their family. And during that time, I remember, that a lot of Albanians went to work in Germany and in Europe to help their families in Kosova.

PD: And Germany accepted these people?

IN: Yeah, Germany accepted. Switzerland accepted.

PD: So that's how you have the diaspora? A lot of people went at that stage in the early '90s.

IN: In the early '90s I remember the time. It was 1993 that my aunt went to live with her family in Germany. And I remember we were in our village with our grandparents and when she came with her children to us to say goodbye; she went with her children to her husband in Germany.

And a lot of Albanians went over there in Germany, went to work in Europe because the situation wasn't good.

PD: Your dad made the decision not to move the whole family. Do you know why that was?

IN: He moved to live in Prishtina. He planned to go in Germany from Prishtina but after he moved in Prishtina police came to our house in village and asked for him. And they said to my grandfather if he wouldn't come to the police station in Podujeva they were going to do something to our family. I remember that they beat too my father's uncle because my father wasn't there when they looked for him. And that's why, I think, my father was afraid for us, for his family, because if they planned to do something to our family, you know, at the last minute he would come and say, "I am here. You don't have to deal with my family. I am here." That's why I think he...he didn't move in Germany. And he mentioned he was afraid for us.

It wasn't easy for our family. For a lot of families, that didn't have problems with Serbs, they could move. They could move in Europe. But as I mentioned before, my father was... had a problem with Serbs. That's why it was hard to change your identity and to move forward in

Europe. They needed documentation. They needed passport - Serbian passport - and that's why you had to change your identification. You wanted to go abroad.

Before we moved to live in the capital in Prishtina, my uncles took us to his village and we stayed there three months. After that... during this time my father was looking to rent a house in Prishtina. And when he took it my uncles took us to Prishtina and we started to live in Prishtina in 1993.

(13:50) PD: What was Prishtina like in 1993? I know you were a little boy but what are your memories of it?

IN: I remember at that time I was a little boy, my sister started school at that time in Prishtina.

PD: Is she older than you?

IN: Yes, she's older than me and she started Primary School in Prishtina. And I loved... I was jealous that she started before me at school. And I wanted to go to school. I always wanted to go in school. And I remember that time when we started to live in Prishtina we didn't know anyone there. Neighbours... neighbourhoods were good with us as a new family that came to live there. My father's... his work was near our house. And we started a life in Prishtina.

After a year, my father, registered me in school and...

PD: How old would you be?

IN: Seven.

I was seven-years-old when I started school in Prishtina registered as Illyria<sup>2</sup>: that's my name Ilir (laughs) and I love school. I started... I was passionate to go to school. In our school there were Serbs too that were learnt.

PD: Serb students? Were you educated together?

IN: We were educated together. We shared the same school. We Albanians learned in first and second floors and the Serbs had the third floor to them.

PD: So you were in the same building but you were separated?

IN: Yes. We were in the same building and just they separated us.

PD: Is that because of language?

IN: Yes it's because of the language because we learnt in Albanian and they learnt in Serbian.

PD: How did you mix in the playground? Or didn't you?

IN: No they didn't mix us. We learnt in our language. We had our teachers, Albanian teachers. They had Serb teachers and we were separated but we shared the building.

PD: At playtime? Did you have different play times?

---

<sup>2</sup> North-Western part of the Balkan Peninsula, inhabited from about the 10th century BC onward by the Illyrians, an Indo-European people

(16:26) IN: We didn't play with Serbs. We didn't like them; they didn't like us.

We, Albanians play... during that time we played with Albanians. I think it's good to mention that when I say we played (we played football) sometimes, sometimes they...older people - how can I say that - they planned to play a game with Serbs.

PD: Against?

IN: Against Serbs. I remember... remember when I was a child. All people came to see what was going to happen. Serbians put their flags, and our side, and they started to play but always at the end of the game they started to beat Albanians and they bring police because they control policy - that's why they could do that - and we were forced to go at home and not to go out.

(17:40) I don't remember a lot of things. During that time, before the war, I remember that my father wasn't secure to go out... he had... because the police were looking for him. And sometimes, I remember as a child, that when he wanted to buy food for us he took me with him to buy food. I remember we were walking together to bring for family. These things I remember.

PD: Going back to your father and your mother's generation - in the village schools were Serb and ethnic Albanian children educated separately?

IN: Yes, in my village we had a school but they're just Albanians there. They didn't separate the same school. Serbs had their buildings. Albanians had their buildings. They didn't share the same buildings.

PD: So actually having contact and making friends was doomed from the start because you just weren't seeing or really having any relationships with each other, even from being very young children.

(19:20) IN: Yes. During the nineties, we couldn't do that. But before, I remember, my parents mentioned that they could have relationships with Serbs. They played with them. They spent a lot of time with them. But during the nineties, you know, Yugoslavia was separated and the war started everywhere. We couldn't stay with Serbs. They couldn't stay with us. And these things happen. The war started to do these things to us. Because they had a good time together before but after that, and during the nineties, we couldn't play with Serbs. We couldn't have Serb friends. That's why...

PD: Would you say the real division and separation, and fear of each other, in a way, was that very much led from Belgrade by Milošević? Is that what was filtering through?

IN: Yes. He started these things. He started these things and I remember at the time, as a child, my family watched TV a lot and wanted to know what was going to happen in Yugoslavia at all. And he started this in Kosova in Fushe Kosove which is a city near Prishtina. When Milošević came there and I remember that he started things<sup>3</sup>. And it was in 1989 and...

PD: When speeches were made?

IN: When speeches...

---

<sup>3</sup> 24/4/89

[http://www.trepca.net/english/2006/serbian\\_memorandum\\_1986/slobodan\\_milosevics\\_speech\\_in\\_kosovo\\_polje\\_24\\_april\\_1989.html](http://www.trepca.net/english/2006/serbian_memorandum_1986/slobodan_milosevics_speech_in_kosovo_polje_24_april_1989.html)

PD: In Kosova.

(20:50) IN: In Kosova. It started. Before the war that started in ?

Milošević planned to start war in Kosova. But it started happening in Slovenia and Croatia and then in Kosova.

PD: So you were in Prishtina being educated in the same building as Serbs. The Albanian children had two floors, did you say?

IN: Yes two floors.

PD: The Serb children were on the top floor?

IN: Top floor.

PD: So what was the ratio of Albanian to Serb children, roughly. Two third Albanian?

IN: Sorry?

PD: Was it two thirds Albanian? A third Serb? Or how do you remember it because you have two floors, they had one.

IN: Yes, I remember that they wanted the third floor. They felt superior to us. Sometimes during that time we didn't have a good time with them. They wanted to control our school and from the third floor they thought they can controll us. They can put some things to us in the third floor when we played in the garden; I remember that they did it a lot of times.

PD: Was there a Head Teacher over the whole school?

IN: Yes, it was. There was an Albanian and a Serb who controlled our school.

PD: An Albanian and a Serb Head Teacher?

IN: Head Teacher, yeah. Head Teacher.

PD: So that must have been an interesting relationship between those two.

(22:30) In: Yes because I think it was a hard job for them to do because they had to control this emotion that it's going to happen to us, because, during that time, we were allowed to learn in schools when Albanians used to learn. But students, they couldn't go in their faculties; they learnt at houses. The Albanians, patriotic Albanians - during those times - gave their house to students to learn in their house because Serbians didn't let Albanians to go in to University. They took all our University and students couldn't use it as a research tool. And they started to learn in Albanian houses. And I remember near our house my neighbourhood, I can't remember his name, Hoxha, it was Hoxha, yes, who gave all his house for students and pupils who learnt during that time.

PD: Was this being done secretly?

IN: No, they were doing parallel.

PD: Parallel system. But would the police tolerate that or would they be at risk, the teachers?

IN: They tolerated them but sometimes they beat a lot of students, a lot of professors and teachers; I remember that.

PD: So you were still in the same building in the primary school but being taught in different languages on different floors and not really connecting with each other, the Serb and ethnic Albanian children - up to the age of, what, thirteen, would that be, at primary?

(24:10) IN: I was... when I started school I was seven and I learnt there 'til 1998. And when the war started I was ten years old. And during that time I remember that the protests in Prishtina started everywhere, as in Kosova. And sometimes the biggest protests that happened in Prishtina, I remember it quite well. It was in 1997. And as a child, with my friends, we went to see what was going to happen. It was a place called Velani where students and the professors started this protest against the repression of Serbia that started in Kosova because in some places in Kosova the war started. In Drenica they killed the family of Adem Jashari<sup>4</sup>. And that's why in Prishtina happened a lot of protests by people. Albanian people wanted to do that. And that protest in 1997 it started from Albanian students. They wore a white t-shirt, all of students they have to wear a white tshirt, and they had to walk...in that road...in Velani. And the police were waiting for them. We were looking - how can I say - in a hill... like a hill. In that place there are a lot of hills and the end of hills there are the road. I and my friends, we were looking in the hills and we saw everything that happened there.

---

<sup>4</sup> After three days of shelling, Adem Jashari, a founding member of the KLA, and more than 50 members of his extended family were killed in their village compound.

When the people came, protestors came to the end of the road the police started to beat them. And one of the leaders of that protest was Albin Kurti the President of Vetvendosje now.

(26:50) PD: A political party in Kosova?

IN: A political party now in Prishtina, in Kosova.

PD: A youth party.

IN: A youth party. And when they started to beat students. Students started to move from protest, they put a lot of gas there. And we, as a child, we remember that we helped them. We gave them - I don't remember the name of - gave... we helped the protestors because if they put the gauze...

PD: For the tear gas.

IN: The tear gas, yes.

PD: Of protection?

IN: Their protection.

PD: Of the mask?

IN: Yeah, for mask, and we help them. I remember that. And we were afraid of that.

PD: The students had organised. And did they wear these white t-shirts for university or was that say the plan that they would wear white on that day?

IN: Yes on that day they planned to wear that because they wanted to give a statement - how can I say that? They wanted to say, "We want peace."

They were peaceful protesters. And they were all students, young people.

And they wanted just peace; they didn't want a war because Serbs started to kill Albanians in part of Kosova like Drenica and Peja.

(28:26) PD: Could you explain how the funding in houses - that you talked about for University students - how was that financed? Were people donating money for that sort of cause?

IN: Yes. Yes. I remember that the people helped students to continue their studies. They couldn't go in University because Serbs took them from them. And they started this parallel system to learn at Albanians' houses. I remember the diaspora helped them; they started to give money to people.

PD: So it was partly funded from outside Kosova?

IN: Yes funded from outside because I have to mentioned that we have a government. We have our own government, an Albanian government.

PD: The parallel system?

IN: A parallel system. They were working in diaspora. We have our government that works in Germany... in Switzerland, and they planned these things. They had - Albanians who work in Europe - they had to give a little bit from their salary to help their country in Kosova. And this government working in Europe with Prime Minister Bujar Bukoshi and our President was Ibrahim Rugova. And he planned these things.

I think I have to mention that Minister of Finance was the Prime Minister of Kosova now: the Prime Minister Isa Mustafa

They organised these things to take - all Albanians in Europe - they give their money to help our government. And the governments help the Professors in Kosova. As I remember they paid they fifty euros... or fifty marks.

PD: A month?

IN: A month, yes.

PD: Could you explain what happened with the build up of tension in the city?

IN: (sighs) In 1998 they said to us, in our school, we couldn't go to our schools to learn, to continue our learning.

PD: So that decision would come from?

IN: The Serbians.

PD: The Serb... ?

IN: Serbians and Slobodan Milošević. They planned everything that was going to happen.

PD: Was the instruction from the Head Teacher?

IN: Yes. The Head Teacher and... it happened everywhere in Kosova. The war started in Kosova. People were killed from Serbians. KLA started the war against the Serbians.

PD: The resistance developed?

(31:38) IN: The resistance developed. And it started in Prishtina, too. In the city - I remember that - Serbs started this repression. They didn't let us go in our schools. We were closed. Some Albanians who wanted to fight, they started to go in KLA.

PD: Kosova Liberation Army?

IN: Kosova Liberation Army. And...

PD: Were young people joining?

IN: Yes a lot of young people joined the Liberation Army.

PD: Even school children? Children of school age?

IN: School kids, yeah. School age and some of them they were killed. And...

(pauses). We knew what is going to happen. We started to prepare about it. We didn't know exactly what was their plan to do with us,

because they had a strong army. And they started this repression in all of Kosova: all of cities in Kosova. But in Prishtina they started in villages: not in the city.

(32:55) People who lived in Prishtina, Serbs planned for them to move... they separated. 50% they sent them in Macedonia. 50% they left to live in Prishtina. And my family - I with my family - we survived the war in Prishtina. We were in Prishtina during the end of the war.

PD: Could I ask you about the presence of the Serb army because I saw the bombed barracks - the Serb barracks - in the capital, in Prishtina. And the size of it astounded me. There was about two miles of barracks, if I remember. Is that your memory as a child? Seeing huge military presence of Serbia in the capital, in Prishtina?

IN: Yes. There were a lot of police and soldiers in Prishtina. They brought a lot of soldiers from Serbia in Prishtina and they put it there in our buildings, administrative buildings in Prishtina.

And we knew what's going to happen and we know it's...

PD: When the tanks actually have a presence in Prishtina? Was that well before the war?

(34:20) IN: Yes. Before the war they brought the tanks in Prishtina. And we - as a child, I can remember that they started to bring the tanks in Kosova. And the planes we saw all days the planes that travelled in our sky. And as a child we started to put two fingers in this way and said, 'Democracy! Democracy!' - it was the word that we used at the time - when we saw the planes that travelled in our sky.

PD: From the Serb air force?

IN: From the Serb air force.

PD: So you're talking well before '99 and the bombardment, the N.A.T.O. bombardment? Earlier?

IN: Yes, I think it was in 1995, 1996 and 1997.

(35:10) They wanted to show us their power and we knew what was going to happen.

PD: Were there tanks in the streets?

IN: No, there were no tanks in the streets but in... during the war they brought that out the barracks. And I saw a lot of tanks during the war in Prishtina because, as I mentioned, we were all the time in Prishtina.

PD: Could you tell us about your life in Prishtina during the war and when you felt the war really began for you in Prishtina?

IN: (sighs) I remember my uncle with his wife and our grandmother came to live with us in Prishtina because they didn't feel safe to stay in our village. And we were preparing for war. We didn't know what is going to happen but I remember that my parents said to us that we had to stay all the time with clothes on our body. And they started to buy food - to keep more food in our house - because the war had just started in all of Kosova. And they knew it was going to happen in Prishtina, too. But they didn't know what was going to happen with us.

PD: What sort of date would you put on this when your mum and people started buying food and telling you to wear clothes all the time? Was this even at night to keep your clothes on?

IN: Yeah. At night we slept with our clothes because they didn't know what was going to happen?

PD: When was that?

(37:23) IN: It was in 1999. In the spring of 1999. Yeah. And...I remember that Serbs said to us that... they separated us. Albanians who were living in buildings [apartment blocks] they sent them in trains to back in Macedonia. And Albanians who were living in houses they sent in hills.

And my family and our neighbourhoods... I remember that day they came to us and said we have to leave our house. And we were ready for that. We had a lot of foods and we had to walk in the hills and to go... to go in Mramor.

Mramor is a village near Prishtina. I don't think it's too near but... during that day, I remember that we were afraid. We were afraid what is going to happen to us. As a child I wanted to help my parents to take more foods, take more clothes because we were going to stay in hills. And they gave us some foods in our bags, a lot of clothes, water and my little brother - I remember - he keeps a lot of things in hands.

My grandmother couldn't walk. All family had to help her to walk because we had to walk... during all day in the hills. There were a lot of people that walked until we arrived in Mramor in the evening. And we... when we arrived there, there were a lot of Albanians who helped us. And they shared their homes with us... with a lot of people.

PD: What sort of date was this, Ilir?

IN: I can't remember the date but I know it was in March.

PD: Was it after the bombing of Serbia by N.A.T.O., do you think?

IN: No. I think it was before the war: before the N.A.T.O. started bombing Serbians. And maybe it was in February, I can't remember the date.

PD: So it was mid winter.

IN: Yes mid... it was spring.

PD: Did you have to walk in the snow?

IN: No it wasn't... there wasn't... it wasn't snow. It was a good day.

PD: What was the temperature 'cause Kosova is very cold?

IN: No. During that time it was a good temperature. I don't know why but it was a good temperature.

PD: Could have been worse.

IN: Yeah, could have been worse. And we walked all day. A lot of people walked in the hills. And we arrived in Mramor they organised these things, they knew that they will... all of that people will come from city. And they started to prepare about it. And some people shared their homes with us. But I remember that we... that night we

was tired and we couldn't go anywhere. They put us in... we slept in mosque. We slept in a mosque. We slept on carpet. But we were tired and we slept there.

PD: You were about ten years old?

(41:33) IN: Yes, I was ten years old.

PD: And you have been carrying as much as you possibly could?

IN: Yeah, so I was carrying a lot of foods.

PD: What sort of food did your parents give you to carry?

IN: Bread. It was rice. Some... some... I don't know... I can't remember. I think it was a lot of food in my bag and clothes, too.

PD: Did you bring anything special that was very personal for you like a toy or was there no room for that?

IN: No there was no room for that. I couldn't take anything of my toys or books or something like that. Just food and clothes.

PD: What happened next after you'd been sleeping in the mosque?

IN: We slept in the mosque only one night. After that we met our uncle Ismet in Mramor and he found a friend. He took us to his house. And we stayed there a month, maybe a month, three weeks or a month, in his house. And they were good people; they helped us a lot; they shared everything with us, food, and to sleep and to wash. Everything. They helped us a lot.

They took us from mosque and...

PD: How many of you were living in their house?

IN: It was sixty people or seventy people.

PD: In a farmhouse?

(43:30) IN: In a farmhouse and, as I mentioned, it was good people. They shared everything with us. They ... in that house we were with my uncles: maybe fifteen or so members of my family. And there was a lot of people that they kept there: all their relatives [as well], of course, their cousins, they shared their house for them because they couldn't let them out. And they shared their food with us.

PD: Did Serbs come anywhere near that house?

(44:20) IN: Yes. After a month that we stayed there. I remember the day when the Serbs came to us. And I got up in the morning, early in the morning, and I was staying in the garden when I saw the helicopter who were flying. And I didn't know what was going to happen and I asked my father. And I know that people were prepared about that. I didn't know, as a child, but after that I knew that... because my father told me, "You have to go to get up your... to get up your mother and everybody" ( because they were asleep) and because we had to move from there. All people from there, their villages, they had to move.

PD: So it was a Serb helicopter above you?

IN: Yes, and after that we understand that they started the war near our village in Marec and they killed a lot of Albanians there. And then they were coming to us and we had to move. We had to move<sup>5</sup>.

PD: So they were bombing from the air?

IN: Yes. No. They were bombing with their tanks.

PD: But the helicopters were perhaps guiding them?

IN: Yes. They just...the helicopters were just....

PD: Surveillance.

IN: Yes and seeing what's going to happen and where are people staying. And we prepared very fast and took our things. And they put us in tractor - some with cars, some with tractors - and started to move from there. They wanted to go in Prishtina. I can remember that day; it was a raining day. We were afraid a lot. We didn't know what was going to happen. And they put us in tractors; there were a lot of tractors. You know Mramor is a village that is placed in-between Podujeva and Prishtina. And people from Podujeva they sent that road to bring in Mramor and people from Prishtina they sent too in Mramor and we met together in Mramor.

And the... we planned to go in Prishtina. We didn't know where to go but they said that we had to go in Prishtina. But the offensive started from Serbs and there were a lot of injured and they killed a lot of

---

<sup>55</sup> During the 78-day war, NATO crews flew 33,000 combat missions over the region, dropped more than 20,000 laser or satellite-guided weapons and concluded that 99.6% found their targets. Of the more than one thousand planes used in the operation, 725 were American. Four hundred and fifty precision Tomahawk and 90 air-launched Cruise missiles were used. All told, 79,000 tons of explosives were dropped, including 152 containers with 35,450 cluster bombs, thermo-visual and graphite bombs.

Albanians, I remember that. As a child, I remember that. It was a raining day. I was afraid for my father because he couldn't come with us in tractor. He stayed behind us but I couldn't see him. And...

PD: He was walking?

IN: He was walking with my uncle, younger uncle. And we were, child and our mums, we were in tractor.

(47:48) And your grandmother?

IN: And my grandmother, too. And we had to continue that way, all peoples: somebody walking; somebody in tractor; somebody in cars; and they forced to leave their villages and their houses to go in Prishtina.

PD: So how big was the group?

IN: A lot of people. A lot of people. I can remember that you could see people just walking, walking and maybe you can see... you can stay there and see all day people just walking the road. Because there were...

PD: Thousands of people?

IN: Thousands of people that came from Prishtina and Podujeva too. And we forced to leave Mramor and we went near Prishtina. But it was a village too: Marec it's called. No, Makovc, Makovc. And we slept there in an Albanian house; he let us sleep in his house, in a carpet. And I remember that we didn't have to eat anything and that he even brought us some potatoes. And we eated them because we were

hungry. We were travelling all day from Mramor to there. And we didn't know what to do. My parents and my uncles didn't know what to do. Are we... it's better for us to stay there or walk in Prishtina? Because... a lot of... thousands of people started to walk. They didn't stop, they just walking... walking to Prishtina.

And that night we slept there and in the morning people continued to walk... to walk to Prishtina. And we didn't know what to do and my uncle decided that we had to leave Makovc. We walked with groups of people that continued to walk.

And I want to mention that... that when we left Makovc that the group of people that were last, a group of people that were there walking...

PD: At the back?

IN: Yes, at the back. Serbs assaulted them.

PD: Serbs?

IN: Assaulted them. Killed them. And in Kosova there is now a massacre of Makovc

PD: They shot them?

IN: They shot them. Slaughtered them. Slaughtered. One hundred and fifty.

PD: So the people at the back of this, sort of, caravan...

IN: Yes, caravan of people that were...

PD: People actually did get caught?

(50:50) IN: Yes and when we...when we remember that time, we think that it was luck to be our family. And we were with luck that we left Makovc and we started to walk. We walked to Prishtina. And when we left Makovc I remember that we had to walk to Prishtina. And when we came near to Prishtina there were soldiers of Serbia and they separated young people and they killed them, killed them there. If they saw someone they... I can't remember how they decided to separate but they had a plan that they had to do. They had to kill some Albanians there. And there was a block - how can I say it, a position?

PD: Checkpoint?

IN: Checkpoint, yes. A checkpoint there. It was a building of soldiers: a lot of tanks, a lot of soldiers, Serbian patrols, soldiers. And they separated in that group a lot of people that were walking in the road, they separated: one, two, three, four... and they killed a lot of people. The name of that place is Llukar.

PD: Did they separate out the men and boys?

IN: Yes. They took only the men. Just the young people.

PD: Young men?

IN: Young men. Just young men. And it was... that place is near Prishtina. And we... when we entered in Prishtina, there was two checkpoints who separated people. People who were from Podujeva they had to continue to walk in Podujeva. People...

PD: Back to Podujeva?

IN: Back to Podujeva. They had to walk back to Podujeva. And people who come from Prishtina, they could stay in Prishtina.

PD: Were they asking you this or did you have some kind of document?

IN: Yes we had a document. My parents had I.D. documents.

PD: So they checked these?

(53:20) IN: They checked these and they decided if you had I.D.s where it's written you are from Podujeva you had to walk.

PD: With your father's background in resistance was he carrying I.D. in his real name or had he had any problems with that?

IN: Yeah. He had to keep his name; he had to give his I.D. document. And I remember that when we came to the checkpoint, they took his I.D. and at that moment I thought they knew about him. But they said to us that we had to walk to Podujeva, because in my parents I.D. it's written that we've from Podujeva.

PD: Oh, I see, because in a way you'd secretly moved from Podujeva to Prishtina. You were actually from Prishtina but your I.D. said Podujeva so you were sent back to Podujeva some, what, 40k north east of Prishtina?

IN: Yes.

PD: So that was another long walk?

(54:30) IN: Yes, another long walk. Another long walk. I think this walk from

Mramor to Prishtina was something about fifteen or twenty kilometres but to walk to Podujeva it's another thirty or forty kilometres. And when they controlled us and saw our documents, they said that we had to walk to Podujeva and we started to walk there for Podujeva but my uncle thought it was better to stay in Prishtina and we left the group of people walking to Podujeva and started to hide in some houses until we found my grandfather's aunt's house. And when we found that house we stayed there about three months. We stayed there about three months.

(56:00) And, as I mentioned, we decided to stay in Prishtina. And that place is in Prishtina, near the centre of Prishtina. But the police didn't know that we stayed there. We were hidden from them until... a lot of Albanians stayed there... a lot of Albanians stayed there who were from Podujeva, they started to walk to Podujeva and then they just came back and stayed there.

PD: Circled back?

IN: They came back and stayed there.

PD: How did you manage for food?

IN: We were with luck when we went in that house we found there a lot of food. Our relatives they went in Macedonia and they left their house empty but they left a lot of food there and we were with luck because we found a lot of food there.

PD: Could you leave the house at all during that period?

IN: We could leave but we weren't sure what to do, where to go.

PD: I mean on a daily basis, could you go out onto the street?

IN: No. No. (emphatically)

PD: So you were living secretly?

IN: We were living secretly. We had to stay in only the house and don't do the noise or anything.

PD: No light?

IN: No lighting.

PD: No heating? No fire?

IN: No fire or anything. Just had to stay there to eat and do not make any noise or anything that Serbs would know that we were there.

PD: So during that period Prishtina was being bombed by N.A.T.O. What was that like to actually experience that?

(57:37) IN: Yes, I experienced that. As I child I remember the time that N.A.T.O. started bombing Prishtina and we couldn't sleep. We couldn't sleep. It was... it was terrible moments. It was a lot of noise from bombings.

PD: So they were trying to knock out the Serb presence and the Serb control of the capital there. So they were hitting...?

IN: Yes, they were hitting buildings. For example they hit... how can I say... telecommunication?

PD: Yes, it's the same.

IN: Telecommunication. They wanted to stop the telecommunication and they bombed that building. It was in the centre of Prishtina. That building is placed in the centre of Prishtina. There were a lot of buildings that Serbs had put their tanks and their soldiers and N.A.T.O. started to bomb there. And there you could hear... you could hear bombing during the night and during the day.

PD: Constant bombing?

IN: Constant bombing. And we were afraid a lot. We didn't know what's going to happen. And...

PD: Which part of Prishtina was the house?

(59:04) IN: It was near the road that sent us to Podujeva called Xhamia e Llapit - it's a mosque.

PD: Near the old mosque?

IN: An old mosque, yes. And we were staying there and I remember that Serbs understood that we were staying there and one day they came to our houses - because there were a lot of Albanians staying in the house - and they came one day and killed an Albanian there. I

remember that, as a child. They killed our neighbourhood [neighbour?] how can I say in that way? And we were afraid of that. Sometimes there was a house they had the house... next to the house was a new house but not finished. And we planned... the Serbs came to our house and we had to hide and we planned to hide in the new house, in the loft. Yes, in the loft. And they did it four or five times. I remember that, when the Serbs came to control the house.

PD: Had you already got out of the old house?

IN: It was behind the old house, just... this house wasn't finished and we hid in there in the roof. And when the Serbs go, we went to go back and live in the old house.

And one day they knew that we were there and we had to open the door. We couldn't hide and they took my father and my uncles. We were afraid... we don't know what's happening. I remember that the police came with their guns in old house, in that house where we were staying and they showed their guns to us and said...

PD: Would these be Kalashnikovs<sup>6</sup>?

(1:01:40) IN: Kalashnikovs. Yes. And we were afraid for our... for my uncle's girl because she was young and we were afraid that they were going to do anything to her. But they didn't. They started... when they came to our house they started to drink and we were... I couldn't go out. I just - I remember - my uncle started to speak with them and they sat there in our garden and started to speak. And they took my... they said that they had to take my father and my uncles went with them. We were afraid that they were going to kill them. And in the end of the

---

<sup>6</sup> The AK-47 or Kalashnikov was designed to be a simple, reliable automatic rifle that could be manufactured quickly and cheaply, using mass production methods that were state of the art in the Soviet Union during the late 1940s.

road, when they came then we said good bye to them and at the end of the road they.... my father, at that time, saved some money from his jobs and he said to them that he would give all of his money to them just to release them. And they accepted that. They accepted that and they came back home again with my father and my uncles. And they started to have a celebration - how can I say that - and started to drink again. And we had to give them food.

And they gave us some I.D.s. - I remember that it was green I.D.s and they wrote their own names and these I.D.s they said to us that we can go free and walk in Prishtina... you know? After they leave, they left our house. We decided that it's not secure to stay there and we planned to move to Macedonia.

PD: Can I ask you, Ilir? When your father offered the German marks, they would be, to the Serb soldiers and they accepted the offer... he didn't have the money on him? So he said, "We could go back to the house..."

IN: Yes, he said to them, "I will give all my savings."

PD: Was it a lot?

IN: Yes. No. It was one thousand marks. One thousand marks.

PD: And then the soldiers came back and then you said you celebrated?

IN: They. They celebrated then. They said, "We've saved your lives." You gave us money and now we will celebrate here and then...

PD: And you had to give them some food?

IN: And we gave them some food and served them because they...

PD: How extraordinary.

(1:04:40) IN: It was hard. And I remember that my father... I didn't know that he... he had hidden his money in our shoes and he took them and cut them and took his money and gave to them. And after a week after that we planned to move on to Macedonia.

PD: How many were in the group of Serb soldiers?

IN: There were five of them.

PD: Do you remember what sort of age they would seem to be?

IN: Yeah they were something like thirty to forty.

PD: Not so young. Thirty to forty.

IN: Yes. I remember a tall guy who entered in my room. I was there with my grandmother and I just stand up and he put his Kalashnikov to us - I didn't know what to do, what to say - and he left our room and went out and started to speak with parents, as I mentioned before. And we were with luck that day. They left our house. They gave us that identification. And we understood later that the I.D.s they gave us, they just want to know how many Albanians are there in Prishtina and they planned to do something with that. And we decided that it's not secure to stay there and we wanted to move in Macedonia.

At that time, there was a train that sent a lot of people to Macedonia and a lot of buses that took a lot of Albanians and sent to Macedonia. And I remember a day when we decided to leave. My uncle Ismet didn't want to go with us - stayed back with his son, Genc, there. And we decided to move. And we walked in the centre of Prishtina to find a bus that would send us to Macedonia but we couldn't find a bus, because there were a lot of Albanians when we...I remember that day when we started... when we found the bus there were a lot of people inside but they wanted to take... to take some of them out. But we couldn't go, we couldn't separate because there wasn't a lot of space on the bus.

And we came back in the house because we couldn't find a place on the bus to go to Macedonia. And after that my father decided that we couldn't stay there, in that house. We had to find a way to go to our house in Prishtina that we were living in before. And one day he went to see if there is anybody and he found there were Albanians too. And we decided that we had to go to continue to hide there - it's better to move there because the police will come again to the house that we were staying together with my uncles and we left... We left our uncles there and we moved with my father and mother, and sister and brother in our house that we were living before the war and during the war.

(01:09:10) And there were a lot of neighbours that came back to live there at their houses. And we had to hide there, too. We couldn't do any noise or any lights or anything. We had to hide there. And I remember that day that Milošević signed the capitulation; the Serbs started to celebrate quite a lot because they were afraid from bombs - N.A.T.O.'s bombing - and they, I remember, that night they just shot it in the air. All night, drinking, singing because they were afraid of the war.

And Milošević ended the war and signed the paper that he will end the war. And the soldiers that were in Kosova they celebrated it because they were afraid that they will die from bombing - N.A.T.O.'s bombing - and they celebrated that night with their Kalashnikovs and their guns...

PD: They celebrated the war was ending even though they were on the losing side?

(1:10:22) IN: Yes. Yes because they were afraid. And I remember all night they shot in the air. Drinking, singing: you could hear their music from far away. And the next day - 12<sup>th</sup> June, the Liberation day of Prishtina - N.A.T.O. troops came in Prishtina. I remember that day. I remember that day when they came in Prishtina (huge sigh of relief). Oh it was... all Albanians started to celebrate.

They left their houses, went in the road and they started to help them. They started to give some flowers to them. I remember they landed with their helicopters - how can I say that - in the hills and started to walk to the centre. They landed there in the hills and left the soldiers and they started to walk this way. And I know... I remember that they were walking in the middle of the street and all Albanians started to go out and celebrate a lot and give them a lot of flowers. I remember that they... during that day, as a child, I helped them. I tried to help them. I tried to keep their bags because they had big bags.

PD: To help them carry them?

(1:12:00) IN: Yes. To help to carry them. I remember the helicopters.

PD: What nationality were these soldiers?

IN: They were British. I remember that. I can see their flags on their arms. They was British. I tried to help them. They gave us some chocolates, some water. And we were kids. We just celebrated with our parents and just wanted to be useful to help them. "What we can do? What... let's help with something."

And because they sassionated [were stationed]... they... they... it's interesting, there is a place - piece of Prishtina - that is called Permendore - we used to call Permendore - and there was a park and they [were stationed] there. The soldiers brought a lot of camps, stands and helicopters brought a lot of bags and food there and they [were stationed] there. And I remember that we wanted to have... stay all day with them and they were very friendly. And they started to play with kids. It was... it was... I... I never forget that day.

We were with luck that we survived the war.

We survived, our family, the war. And we were with luck.

I remember that my father wanted to know what's happening with our relatives and he went in Podujeva to see what's happening there with them. And after that I can't remember a lot of things but I know that we started to go in school. There I missed a lot of my friends in class. Most of them went abroad. And we started a life. My father started to work with UNMIK an organisation that came to administrate Kosova.

PD: United Nations.

(01:14:30) IN: United Nations Mission in Kosova. And my father...and, my father found there a job and started to work there.

PD: What did he do?

IN: He repaired the doors, the windows and these things. And he was with luck he found that job because it helped us to bring our life.

PD: But you were living in a completely bombed out city?

IN: Yes. Schools the buildings were...

PD: They were intact?

IN: Yes.

PD: They were bombed a lot in the villages?

IN: The villages and the centre of Prishtina. I remember... there were a lot of buildings that they were bombed. And the people started to clean them after the war. And soldiers controlled them, in case there was any mine or anything.

But, I can't remember a lot of that time.

PD: Just one thing I wondered about, Ilir, when you were in your house during the occupation during the bombing. You were hiding, in effect, with no lights and no fire. What sort of things did your family do to pass the time? Did you.. Could you remember... did you play any games, for example or tell stories? Is there anything that you can remember that you did?

IN: (sighs) I can't remember a lot but I remember that my sister, my sister started to write what's happened in the war. All the time she was praying for us, praying for her family. And she started just to write, write. And pray. And I, with my little brother, I played some games in house. We couldn't go out. And we stayed inside. And we couldn't do any noise or anything the Serbs would know that we were there. But I can't remember a lot of things there.

(1:17:00) I remember that we were afraid. We didn't know what was going to happen. We stayed up during the night because we didn't sleep. We didn't know. If something were to happen we had to be ready to move. And I remember that we slept during the day - sometimes during the night - but we couldn't feel safe there.

PD: Was your sister the eldest of the three?

IN: Yes she was. She is older than me.

PD: Then you, then your little brother.

IN: Yes my little brother.

PD: And could you tell me how Kosova got back on its feet? President Rugova was still alive?

IN: Yes.

PD: The city somehow assumed some kind of normal daily routine?

(1:17:54) IN: Yes, people started to... started the new life. I remember that when President Rugova came back in Kosova - I was a little boy,

but I remember that - there were a lot of people who went out to wait for him. He was in Italy and after the war he came in Prishtina and people went to wait for him to celebrate the Liberation and that the war ended. But I remember too that the KLA forces came in Prishtina too and they celebrated too.

And I remember one day that I was in the football stadium of Prishtina there was a concert that Hashim Thaçi with his soldiers did it - with their soldiers the U.C.K the KLA, Albanian soldiers who fought against Serbs - and as a child I were in that concert. I didn't know what was going to happen next but I know they continue their work in politician way. They opened their party: P.D.K., obviously there was Hashim Thaçi.

And Rugova continued his work with L.D.K.

And in 2001 Kosova had an election and the... Ibrahim Rugova was the first President of Kosova after liberation. I remember that.

PD: Do you remember Independence?

(1:20:00) IN: Independence? Yes. I remember.

It was 7<sup>th</sup> February 2008. I was twenty years old. And we celebrated all day. We didn't know that it was going to happen that day. Nobody knew that it was going to happen that day. But the politicians, you know, they... in the morning they said to people in the news that they are going to independent Kosova.

PD: Sign the Declaration?

IN: Sign the Declaration of the Independence of Kosova and they showed the flag of Kosova. We didn't know what...

PD: The new flag?

IN: The new flag. We didn't know what it was going to be but they showed us the new flag of Kosova. We didn't know it was going to happen but we loved at the beginning it and thought that we will have our country and we will continue a better life.

And it was a snowy day. We celebrated all day. There was a lot of concerts in Prishtina. A lot of people there. I remember the 'NEWBORN' a monument of independence of Kosova<sup>7</sup> : we were there. And we were celebrating there.

PD: The 'NEWBORN' sculpture for a newborn country.

IN: The 'NEWBORN' sculpture, yeah, for newborn country. That is the symbol of independence of Kosova and we were there. And we enjoyed it. And we celebrated as well with national flags, with eagle and with new one.

And we were happy... we were happy...

PD: Do you think Britain and the United States were two of the first countries to recognise Kosova as an independent Republic? And the numbers have increased over the years. Approaching something like a hundred...

---

<sup>7</sup> Newborn monument (Fisnik Ismaili – Ogilvy) is located in Prishtina in front of the Palace of Youth and Sport. Unveiled on 17 February 2008, the day that Kosovo declared independence from Serbia, those celebrating were invited to sign the installation.

IN: A hundred... a hundred and ten<sup>8</sup>.

PD: It has to be a little bit higher for the U.N. to accept Kosova as an independent state?

IN: Yes. They...we thought that in the beginning when we signed the Independence of Kosova that it's going to continue in that way. Because the next day there were 34-35 countries that recognised us and we thought it's going to finish. We will a member of organisation of OKB<sup>9</sup>. But it stopped. I don't know why it stopped.

Serbia did a lot of things to stop that.

PD: Some countries were nervous about their own independence movements weren't they like like Spain with the Basques?

IN: Yes. Yes.

PD: There was Spain. There was Slovakia, Cyprus, Romania - they had problems in their country. But I think that the problem came from Serbia and Russia. They did their job in that way that they wanted to stop us to continue as an independent place. And they did everything to stop that.

(1:23:40) I remember all things they did. They planned to show the world that Kosova did that in their own. They thought that we had to ask Serbia to do that. And they considered Kosova a part of the Serbia. And they tried hard to stop the new countries to recognise us. And I think they achieved that because they stopped.

---

<sup>8</sup> 2016 Formally Recognized by 111 UN Member states. (Formally recognized by 23 European Union (EU) Member states)

<sup>9</sup> UN

PD: What happened to Milošević?

(1:24:29) IN: (sighs) Milošević? He had to leave Serbia too. I know that what we saw on the news - they opened his trial in Hague - how can I say that?

PD: In The Hague?

IN: In The Hague, yes - from war in Yugoslavia. And they accused Slobodan Milošević the main responsible people who did the wars in Yugoslavia. And I remember that there were a lot of witnesses from Kosova in that trial. But we... I think Serbia was with luck because he died because he couldn't... I think it would be better he got a decision of trial, but he couldn't live to learn. And for us it's not good news because we wanted that to be punishment for that what he did.

PD: He died in prison during the trial?

IN: Yes. He died in his prison in trial and the court couldn't decide his case, and that is bad.

PD: Because the hearing was not complete?

IN: Not complete and I remember that our President Rugova was there as a witness and a lot of Albanians were there... and we saw that in the news... we used to see that all day - I remember that - with families. Say, "What is going to happen with him?" We were watching the trial all days, all years that he was there. But we aren't happy that he didn't get what he deserved.

PD: There was no verdict

IN: No verdict

PD: from the court, anyway.

IN: From the court. Yes. There was no verdict from the court.

PD: You saw the emergence of a new youth party. You talked about Albin Kurti in the demonstration? Could you tell me how that party developed?

(1:26:50) IN: At the beginning, this party - this wasn't a party - it was an organisation, you know. They started their work against this, you know, UNMIK, because they planned to do things; they didn't let us decide for our country.

PD: This was the United Nations?

IN: The United Nations Mission in Kosova.

PD: Which took over the administration in Kosova?

IN: They took... yes... they took over our administration and we wanted to sign our independence but they didn't let us. They planned another thing for us. And the way they planned to give us our independence, it wasn't good, and that is why the Vetvendosje<sup>10</sup> started their work to say to international nations that we have to decide for our country. We know what's better for us. We want to live with Serbs; we don't want to separate our country. The ways that Ahtissari - you know, the person who was, that was sent from the international organisation to prepare

---

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.vetevendosje.org/en>

constitution of Kosova - he did a lot of mistakes. As I mentioned before Vetvendosje started their work as an organisation - a non governmental organisation - and they started their protest against these things because they thought that it is better for us to decide for ourselves. Because we suffered from Serbia and then Serbia tried to interrupt [intervene] in our problems in Kosova, because, of course, there are Serbs who live in Kosova but they couldn't decide for themselves. There was Serbia and the government who interrupted [intervened]. They couldn't do anything without asking Serbia.

And that's why we wanted another country, another way of Kosova. And Vetvendosje - now it's a party. In 2009, they decided they had to move forward, they have to go as a party because they couldn't say anything as an organisation, a non government organisation. And in the election in 2009 they won 11% of elections and they started their work for the best of Kosova. But they couldn't do a lot. They couldn't do a lot because the international organisation and foreign countries, they wanted another thing for us, and we wanted another thing for our country. They wanted something. They wanted to keep Balkans and countries like Kosova stable - not to care what's happening inside of them - and Vetvendosje proclaimed they wanted to build another country. They wanted... We want to build our country with Serbs who live there, to be independent, not to leave Serbia to control things that they did before the war. Because they did it in Bosnia and we don't want to do the same thing that is going to happen in Bosnia and Herzegovina. And the Serbia is trying to do the same things in Kosova.

And Vetvendosje and their programme, they wanted to stop that. They wanted Kosova to work for itself - not to be interrupted from Serbia. Vetvendosje wanted... wants to work with Serbs who live in Kosova for

their best - not for the politics things of Serbia. And that's why, I think, they are growing. Prishtina is under Vetvendosje

And there is in local government Shpend Ahmeti a new leader who...

PD: He's much admired, isn't he?

(1:31:29) IN: Yes, he is. People admire him because from his brave... he's a good guy who graduated in America and came back to work for his country in Kosova. And he's a good guy; he is a good worker; he is doing the best for Prishtina; people admire him a lot. Nobody believed that he was going to win in Prishtina. He was a young boy but with - how can I say - good plans, good character. He had good plans for our city: good plans for our country. And that's why people believe in him and they voted for him.

And we were happy. We felt happy that day when he won in Prishtina.

PD: You were at University and a lot of students got behind him, did they?

IN: Yes. A lot of students.

PD: Would you like to see him as President one day?

IN: Of course I want to see him as President. He is our hope that things are going to change in Kosova because in Kosova now, it isn't in a good position. Corruption is going the job with these politicians.

PD: President Rugova died, sadly.

IN: Yes, Sadly.

PD: Just before independence.

(1:32:55) IN: Yes. He died in 2006. We did independence in 2008. I think we got what he wanted but he couldn't see that.

PD: Now, Ilir, you're in Manchester. So you went to Medical School and you qualified as a dentist, fell in love with one of the Kosovar girls who was medically evacuated to Manchester - met in Kosova when she was visiting - and you started a new life in Manchester. How are you finding things here?

IN: Yeah, I came to live here three months before. And I am married to Jehona. I met her in Kosova, in Podujeva, when she came with projects with MaK<sup>11</sup>. I remember that day when I met her in 2009.

PD: Yes, that was 'Ten' the Remembrance event, ten years after the war but also the loss of many members of her family in a massacre, and we were all together in Podujeva in March: March 28<sup>th</sup> 2009. That's when you met.

IN: Yes, I met in 2009.

PD: That's when you met?

IN: Yes, I met in 2009. Of course, I liked her and I planned to meet her and in 2010 we were in a relationship. I was in a relationship with her and I have good relationship with her. We love each other. We plan to continue here in Manchester.

---

<sup>11</sup> <http://makonline.org>

PD: Where she is a graphic designer?

IN: She is a graphic designer and I graduated last year in dentistry. And we are planning to continue our lives here in Manchester. She loves Manchester and England - well Britain too - and I'm liking too. I am waiting but I am going to find a job and start a life here.

PD: You have to do a few more exams?

(1:35:00) IN: Yes I have a few more exams to do for my certification of my diploma. And after that let's hope that I get a job and continue here my profession. I like a lot, Manchester. I was here last year and we visited the centre of Manchester. I liked the gallery. I like the centre of old city. And I like the people here. They are good people. It's a quiet place and good nature. But I think we are going to have a good life here with Jehona.

PD: Is it difficult to be separated from your parents and your brother, and your sister... your grandmother? Is she still alive?

IN: No. Grandmother died last year. I found it difficult separated from them. In the beginning they found it difficult, too. They have bad days; I have bad days where I have some days where I cry. And they have days where they cry. But we started to speak on the internet and share our life. Maybe next month I'm going to meet them.

PD: They know all this but they'll be able to listen to this, which is nice.

IN: Thank you very much, Pam.

Thank you a lot from... we've received a lot of support from you, and Jehona too.

PD: You were very kind to agree to be recorded. Do you think Oral History is important, capturing the records of people like yourself with your own story?

IN: I think you are doing a great job. I didn't know what exactly it is until I met you and you explained what is going to happen. This thing is huge and it's going to be very interesting for us: for Albanians and Albanians who live here in Manchester that their history is shared. And I think that after ten years or twenty years if we plan to hear or to see what you did, I think we will understand that. That is a great job that you did and there is a place where we can find something and there will be a record that will be kept there all the time that we want it to be and that will be safe.

PD: Ilir, thank you very much for recording today.

IN: Thank you very much, Pam, a pleasure.