

**Interview with Besim Kadriu and Pam Dawes along with Salatin Bogujevci
(16:27)**

December 2nd 2015

(00:00)

PD: This is Pam Dawes for Manchester Aid to Kosovo recording for Voices of Kosovo in Manchester with Selatin Bogujevci

SB: My name is Selatin Bogujevci

PD: We are recording, together, Besim Kadriu.

Besim, could you say your name... where you live?

BK: Besim Kadriu, I live in Manchester, in the Moston area.

Before the war I used to have a very good life. I was in school, I finished my school and I went to university. In the first year of university, in the beginning of that, the trouble in Kosovo just start. I used to have a problem to go to Pristina, it started with school and everything was stopped because of the occupation from the Serbia from the Serbian people.

And I meet Valbona. After a few months we get married. After three months of being married, the war has start. A few days in city after the war starting and we went to the mountains with Valbona and Valbona's family.

We stayed for months over there, just up and down, we never had any station. And after six, seven weeks of the war, the police and military came to my village where I used to stay: name of Zhazha. And on that night we went to the mountain again. The next day, the Serbian people came to the village

and err I been... I was shot. 24 hours after I was shot, I was alone with no one else can help you. No one else can find me. And err, after 24 hours I used to meet a few people. They gave me help to go to a house, which has not been burnt down. I meet some Valbona's family over there. And they've been in shock. We've been in shock. Everyone has been in shock because I was injured in my face. I lost lots of blood and been so weak.

I couldn't find any medication or anything like that.

(2:45) After half an hour after I went to meet my family the police and military has came again. I went to the mountain: stayed for 2 or 3 days, alone. After that, after 2 or 3 days I went to Zhazha, the village where I used to stay before I was injured. I stayed there for 2 or 3 days. I had first aid after 5 days. I stayed in the village for a few days then I just been up and down, 'til the war has been finished. Up and down I mean on mountain.

After the war, the war has been finished, we went to the city. Everything has been destroyed. I didn't have the house, we didn't have... I lost lots of family, members of the family. I went to visit my cousin in a village named Kçia.

After a few days...

SB: Selatin asks about who survived in his family

BK: I got two. Two of my family. I got me and my mum and my wife... used to be...

And after a while we went to a village named Kçia. And then after 2 days the medical, U.S. Medical, came to the school in Kçia and I meet Danny Clay¹. Danny Clay is a doctor from the U.S.A. California. He's been in shock when used to see my face because my face has been destroyed and he

¹ <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,40339-1,00.html>

promised me that he's going to try to help me. He said, "I don't have the power but I am going to try what is the best to help you."

He meet a few of his friends and he came explain to me that he had met someone from the British Army and explained my situation and they accept to see me after a week. The British Army see me: **David Vassallo**². And he said, "I'm going to do the best to do an evacuation to the U.K." And, he did. Thanks to him, thanks to God, he did.

I came on the 10th September 1999: I came to Manchester with my wife and a few other friends: the Bogujevci³ family.

PD: Besim, just before we talk about the evacuation, could you maybe tell us a bit about how you coped with your injury in the mountains. You had no, or very little, medical care? Was anyone helping you at all?

BK: Well, I didn't have any medical care at all except my wife and a guy who had been in the mountain, He used to help me. He finished the school for medicine and he used to help me and my wife, no one else.

PD: To clean?

BK: To clean the wound, yes. We just used to water and the bandages, nothing else.

PD: From the houses or from the streams?

BK: Oh... from everywhere.

PD: Somehow he kept you alive or you managed to stay alive.

² Col David Vassallo recording included in this archive

³ Selatin/Jehona, Fatos and Saranda Bogujevci recordings included in this archive

BK: Oh, I managed to stay alive. It's a miracle. I've been so injured. I lost lots of blood and been so weak. I didn't eat or drink for weeks and weeks. It's a miracle from the God still I'm alive.

Every single day the Serbian forces has came to our village or came around or tried to shot us with the snipers. And we just went up and down to the mountain. We didn't stop one day or one night. We didn't have the same places. We just been up and down.

PD: So, at that time, your face was all bandaged?

BK: Yes, when I was injured it's not been bandaged for a week but after a week, yes, I used to have a bandage on my right side.

PD: Did you have any vision?

BK: Just from the left eye because it's been very weak but I used to have the vision.

(08:00) I meet with Danny. Danny Clay meet David Vassallo they used to discuss. David Vassallo applied to take me to the government to the U.K., to take me to the U.K. and have surgery here.

And, yeah, they did, they took me on 10th September 1999, here. And when I came here everything had been prepared. I came to the Manchester airport and they took me straight to the hospital. My wife - took her to the flat. There's been a new flat. Everything was new inside with furniture. I went to the hospital. They took me to the hospital straight in the morning, 5 in the morning. The doctors came around 8/9 o' clock in the morning. I meet them. They said, 'Yeah, we are going to do - try to do - what is the best' and they did. Thanks to them, thanks to everyone. They did.

At that time, my wife, she's been pregnant. It's 6/7 months pregnant at the time of the war. Yeah, she's been... (pauses)

It's been very difficult time. It's not been easy time.

It's very hard now to explain.

PD: The team who took you into hospital, who was that headed up by Besim? You were evacuated by the British Army Medical Corp? [RAMC and DFID]

BK: I think so, the British Army.

PD: They co-operated with?

BK: North Manchester General Hospital.

PD: So, it was the team there?

BK: Yes.

PD: And, I think someone called **Tony Redmond**⁴, who's now at Manchester University was overseeing this as well and he is based here now.

BK: Yes, yes, definitely. Yes, yes. It's been Tony Redmond.

PD: And, what... do you mind telling us what the program of medical care was? Was there a lot of surgery?

⁴ Prof Tony Redmond recording included in this archive

BK: Yeah, it's been, after a month when I first came to Manchester, after one month I had the first surgery. It's been 15 hours. Then after the first surgery, in a three year period, I had 15 more operations.

(09:59) But everything has been good to me, everything has been successful because I was... my wound has been so deep. And it's been so difficult. I know that, I understand the medical.

PD: So you made a fantastic recovery.

BK: Yes, they made the best, fantastic. OK.

PD: And, a lot of willpower on your part as well. And your family's.

BK: Yes, that's right.

PD: Is it on-going?

BK: It is on-going. I just had it now, another operation for the face reconstruction. And it's been successful.

Now I live in Manchester, I got family. I got four kids. I got mum. I got wife: I got beautiful wife. She has been caring after me 24/7. She's never let me down even in mountain: even in city, after the war. And, when we came to the U.K., she's been 24/7 after me and I don't have any complaint for her or anything. Thanks to her, thanks to God, she's the best.

I've got four girls, the first one is Alberina, she born in 1999, two or three months after we came to the U.K. The second one is Arlinda, she is born in 2002; the third one is Artiola, she is born in 2005 and then I've got the little one is Anesa - the beautiful Anesa - she's just had three years now.

PD: And, are you feeling that they're all Mancunians or do you think they are Kosovar children?

BK: (laughs) It's very hard to say. I think they are Kosovar children but they live in the U.K. They learn the language skills, thanks to them, they are learning good. They are learning both the languages at the same time. At the school time they speak English but at the house they only speak our language, Albanian, which is perfect.

PD: How did it feel, Besim, when you first arrived in Manchester on that plane? Can you tell us a little bit about your first reactions?

BK: Well, when I was on that plane, when I came to the U.K. Manchester, the first time, I couldn't believe myself. It's been some miracle for us, for me and my wife. Because the plan, it's been just for me to come to the U.K..And Valbona came to say goodbye to me. But on that time... but when she said goodbye to me, the doctor said, "Why are you saying goodbye to him? You're gonna go as well."

Oh! She was in shock.

"How's that?"

"Yeah, yeah, you're together: you're going to be at Valbona's side. You're going to be there, Valbona. You're going to be with Valbona."

It's been so good for us, to keep together and enjoy the life.

(13:04) When I went back for the first time, after the war, 2001, I think. Everything has been different. I left the Kosovo destroyed, everything has been destroyed, whatever I see had been destroyed but when I went in 2001, after one and a half years after the war, everything has been changed.

Now I am going every year. Every single year I see the different, I see it's better than it used to be.

I was living in North of Mitrovica in a flat.

PD: Is that North or South?

BK: North of the river.

PD: North of the river. Do you go back there?

BK: No. I was just once but not in my flat. I've just been all around; I walked all around because I miss that place: I miss my childhood, that's why. But, I can't go. Still it's not free to go there. I miss that place a lot.

PD: Do you plan to stay in Manchester?

BK: It's very hard to say, 'Yes'. The children is growing up but definitely I'm going to say, 'Yes'. Because the children now, the big one is 16 and she's going to get married soon. She's going to have the children and definitely I'm going to stay for my future. I'm thinking for my future that I'm going to open a business or we're going to do something. We're going to stay here. Yeah, this is home.

It's very important because to tell the truth and to know - our children, and to know, our grandchildren, what's happened at that time - what the Serbian people did to us. We've been occupied for a very long time; we've been killed; we've been injured from them. That's why it is a truth, somebody to know exactly what happened that that time.

PD: When you returned to Kosovo, do you feel optimistic about progress there?

BK: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Everything is fine now. It is a big progress. It used to be - before the war - it's not been like that. It's not been free country. It's not been free to go outside your house. Now it is fine. I am so happy. Every single year I go down there, I stay three or four weeks but it's perfect. I like that place.

I'm going to say thank you to everyone who helped me; who tried to help me; who came to visit me. Everyone: I'm not going to specify the names but everyone, thank you to everyone, because I passed very bad period during the war.

But after the war, since 1999 'til now, 2015, end of 2015, thank you to everyone. Thank you to U.K.: thank you to people in U.K., to the government. It's been so kind to me including the hospitals people, staff... everyone.

PD: Thank you very much, Besim.

BK: You're welcome.