



JUDICIARY OF
ENGLAND AND WALES

WOOLWICH CROWN COURT

R -V- ALI KOC

SENTENCING REMARKS OF MR JUSTICE CALVERT-SMITH

18 MAY 2012

Between the 5th and the 31st January 2011 there was a series of 7 attacks on men carried out in broad daylight in parks in North London from Alexandra Palace Park in the west to Downhills Park in the East. The attacks were vicious, random and without any motive other than, in the words of one of the victims, “the infliction of violence for violence sake”. The series of attacks, its perpetrator and the victims well illustrate the diverse nature of London’s population and the best and the worst of its citizens.

You, Ali Koc, have been convicted, on what was overwhelming evidence, of responsibility for these attacks. You are a 30 year old inhabitant of this area of London and have lived with your parents at the same address in Hornsey since 1996. You have lived on a combination of state benefits and your parents’ generosity since then. You enjoy watching violent films and you have been convicted in the past of offences involving violence. Your days for some time had been passed either sitting at home watching films or listening to music, wandering the streets, and betting in local bookmakers apart from the days when you needed to visit either or both of the local Job Centre to maintain your entitlement to Job Seekers’ Allowance or the Post Office in Hornsey to draw your fortnightly benefit from your account. According to your parents, who were not called to give evidence for understandable reasons, your behaviour had been difficult for years – in contrast to your siblings who have grown up and left home and are leading responsible and productive lives. In particular – as is borne out by your record but was not revealed to the jury - you have abused drugs for many years.

In September 2010 you confronted a young man, Alex Law, in an alleyway near Queens Wood in Highgate a short walk from your home and abused him, using a term of abuse you were later to use to one of your victims. This young man then took notice of you each time he saw you subsequently, both in Queens Wood, Alexandra Palace Park and, on one occasion in the Job Centre in Wood Green. You always had the same hostile expression, the thousand yard stare as he described it. On the evening of the defendant’s arrest he compiled a photofit and the following day he was the first person to identify Ali Koc at a video identification procedure. The public owes him a debt of gratitude for his powers of observation and his immediate offer of assistance when he heard of the last of the 7 attacks.

In December you attended your GP's surgery with an injury to your hand which you said you had got in a fight. Your antagonist on that occasion has never been identified.

On the 22nd of December 2010 your benefit was stopped for some reason and payment did not resume until after the last of these attacks. Although you clearly have a fondness for fighting and violence generally I am certain that that fondness was increased by your anger at being temporarily unable to spend as much money as you had in the past, even though your mother would help you out if you asked for money. Over the next few weeks you were frequently on the telephone to the DWP, and often visited the Post Office trying to withdraw cash from your account without success.

On the 5th of January 2011 Mr Parsons a 67 year old pensioner living on his own, set off in the morning for a walk from his home to Alexandra Palace Park some 2 miles away. According to his sister his principal hobbies were walking and enjoying nature and visiting the Labour Club in Wood Green where he would promulgate his left wing views to like-minded people. By 10.00 a.m. he had been viciously attacked in a secluded and wooded area of the park and left for dead, until his discovery by a public-spirited grandmother who was out walking her 14 month old grandchild. She at once, with the assistance of another helpful passer by, rang 999 and the victim, then semi-conscious, was taken to hospital. His jaw, in 2 places, and his eye socket, had been fractured by the force of the blow or blows which had rendered him unconscious. The weapon used was very likely a piece of wood which was found near his body and which had a small quantity of blood attributable to the victim on it. The blow or blows had been forceful blows clearly aimed at the head by a blunt instrument whether that piece of wood or some other similar weapon. Mr Parsons never regained consciousness and on 2nd February doctors decided that he should only receive palliative care from then until his inevitable death on 25th February. Mrs Westmoreland, his sister, has described in a recent statement the effect upon her and her family of the news, of the days beside her brother's bed when she nursed some hope of at least partial recovery, and of the 3 weeks between the news that he would not recover and his actual death.

On the 17th January his temper got the better of him and Ali Koc used highly offensive language on the telephone to the DWP calling the person who answered a "nigger" or "fucking nigger" no less than 5 times.

On Friday 21st January Mr Holding, a 30 year old IT worker, was, unusually, working at home. During his lunch hour he took his two dogs out for a walk in Alexandra Park. Ali Koc saw him and shouted at him to "wait there". Mr Holding thought that he might want, as some passers by do, to ask him about his dogs which are of a slightly unusual breed. As soon as Ali Koc came near him, and without another word, he head-butted Mr Holding, knocked him to the floor, and proceeded to punch him while he was on the ground. Mr Holding managed to escape, get to his feet, and run uphill to a more open part of the park where he met a member of the public. In order to distract the defendant he had thrown his mobile phone away. Koc picked it up and took off with what witnesses were to describe in other cases as a brisk, swaggering walk.

Next day Saturday 22nd January Victor Aguilera a 38 year old Spanish scientist living in London, went jogging in the same park. He had his earphones on and was listening to music. Not far from the place where Mr Holding had been attacked he became aware of a man coming towards him. The next he knew he had received a heavy blow – almost certainly a head butt - from Ali Koc. This knocked him to the ground. Ali

Koc then attacked him viciously with both kicks and punches while he lay on the ground. The victim was terrified, since the violence seemed to be violence for no purpose other than to inflict violence. He was able to escape and get to his feet and he ran away. Ali Koc followed him, and knocked him to the ground again. On this occasion his I-phone came out of his hand and was taken by Koc. Mr Aguilera got up again and ran away, covered in mud, in the other direction. Ali Koc meanwhile walked off in the same brisk way and was seen by a Mr Bush who had just walked into the park with his wife and their dog at this time. Both Mr Aguilera and Mr Bush identified Ali Koc at video identification parades following the arrest of Ali Koc.

Next Sunday 23rd January Rashid Meizongo, a 35 year old construction worker, went jogging in Priory Park, the entrance to which is across the road from the end of the road in which Ali Koc lived. He had done a number of circuits of the park and as he was running through a wooded area for the last time he was confronted by Ali Koc who barred his path. Koc had a can of Fosters lager in his hand. Mr Meizongo moved to the edge of the path to pass him and Koc said as he ran by "Hey you nigger where do you think you're going. Come back here you pussy." Understandably enough Mr Meizongo's reaction was to stick his middle finger up at him and run on. He ran to an open area of the park where he finished his run in case Koc followed him and wanted to continue his abuse. When he got there Ali Koc approached him, took off his jacket, put his fists up and attacked him. Mr Meizongo punched him back. When Koc realised he might not win the fight he picked up a piece of wood and struck Mr Meizongo with it. It broke and he went to the undergrowth to look for another. Mr Meizongo took the opportunity to make his escape. A month later Mr Meizongo too identified Ali Koc as his attacker.

On either 24th or 26th January Mrs Thompson who lives close to Queens Wood in Highgate was walking her dog there when she saw a man standing in the undergrowth glaring at her. Although she failed to identify Koc at a parade later the way in which this man behaved was typical of the behaviour described by Mr Law.

On Friday 28th January Mr Carey a 63 year old solicitor, and another local dog owner, was walking one of his dogs in Queens Wood. He was confronted by Ali Koc whom he had first seen standing in the undergrowth and off the well worn or paved paths which criss-cross the wood. Koc picked a piece of wood one or two feet long and attacked Mr Carey, first to the legs and later higher up his body before giving up when he realised that Mr Carey was not going to collapse in the face of his attack. Koc shouted "Fuck off" to him and made quickly for an exit from the park which would have taken him further away from his home. Mr Carey later picked Koc out at an identification parade.

On Saturday 29th January Mr Chinhirun, a 52 year old originally from Thailand living and working in London, was returning from an art class he attended at a local college. His route took him through Downhills Park. He was walking through an open area of the park but like Messrs Aguilera and Holding he became aware of a man in front of him. It was Ali Koc. He said – completely without justification - "You are following me". Then without warning Ali Koc punched him in the face. Mr Chinhirun fell over and Koc proceeded to kick or punch him – he could not say which – several times before walking away fast.

All 5 of the victims suffered injuries – cuts, abrasions, bruises – although fortunately none of them was seriously hurt.

On Monday 31st January after breakfast Keith Needell an 84 year old retired quantity surveyor set off from home to go the Family Records Office in Islington. Although 84

Mr Needell was extremely active both physically – he can be seen on the CCTV footage taken on the day of his death walking at a good speed - but mentally, interesting himself in family history, doing part time work in a London museum restoring old bookbindings, and active in their local church in Highgate. By 1.30 or just after he had reached Highgate Underground station after a morning's work at the Records office and he was captured on CCTV leaving the station to go into Queens Wood on his way home. His route would have taken him through the wood and out into Wood Vale the other end. Tragically he never got home. He was confronted by Ali Koc, whom another witness had seen waving a stick about in a strange way earlier. Koc attacked him savagely with a piece of wood, which broke into 3 pieces in the course of the attack. The attack left Mr Needell unconscious and with many comminuted fractures to his cheekbones. Koc – just as he had with Mr Parsons – left him for dead. He was found minutes later by a cyclist who stopped to see whether the man on the ground was asleep or ill. Others arrived and the ambulance was summoned. Mr Needell was taken to hospital. Like Mr Parsons he never recovered. As the statements read to the court made clear both Mrs Needell, his wife of 57 years, and their son have been devastated by the cruel loss of their husband and father and by the added torture of more than 6 months of waiting and hoping that he might recover.

That morning Ali Koc had telephoned the DWP constantly from before 9.30 in the morning until 1.15 pm. On two of those occasions he had called his respondent a “nigger” amongst other abuse. The calls had been interspersed with 999 calls to complain about the service he was getting from the DWP. In one of those 999 calls he was so abusive that the operator reported him to the police. The police traced his call and visited him at home only an hour or so after he had attacked Mr Needell. Soon after a call 1.15 he must have left home and gone straight to Queens Wood. At 1.26 the DWP called his home and there was no reply.

From the descriptions given to the police by Messrs Law and Carey – and of the man acting strangely on 31st January, police officers saw Ali Koc walking near Alexandra Palace Park and arrested him. He was interviewed over the next 3 days and denied all the offences, admitting only that he had been in a fight – but in self defence – with one of the complainants. Over the next week and months the identifications to which I have referred were made and diligent scientific work revealed that in two cases in which there was no identification there was compelling scientific evidence to connect him to the attack on Mr Chinghiru and the murder of Mr Needell. DNA and or blood which could only have come from Messrs Chinghirun and Needell was found on his right trainer and Mr Needell's blood on his jeans. Shortly before trial examination of wood left at the scene which he had used to attack Mr Needell was found to contain fibres which had come from his gloves.

Although there was and remains no evidence to connect Ali Koc directly with the killing of Mr Parsons the similarities between this attack and the others clearly convinced the jury that this series of attacks was the work of the same man.

I therefore have to sentence Ali Koc in respect of 2 offences of murder and 5 of attempting to cause grievous bodily harm with intent.

The offence of murder carries a mandatory life sentence.

When a defendant has been convicted of two murders and – as in this case - with other associated offences - the court must pass a single minimum term to reflect the fact of the second conviction and the associated offences. Thus the seriousness of the

offending as whole is to be reflected in a single sentence which sets the minimum term to be served before release can be considered.

The starting point for each murder would be 15 years.

The murder of Keith Needell and the other cases have the following aggravating features.

1. Keith Needell was an elderly and vulnerable victim. 2 of the other victims, including of course Mr Parsons, were in their sixties.
2. The attack on him – and on all the others involved a significant degree of premeditation. Ali Koc clearly went out on the days in question looking for victims.
3. The commission of so many offences within such a short period and in such a small area was likely at least to cause widespread fear and anxiety beyond the immediate circle of victim and family.
4. The offences were all committed in public places set aside for people of all ages to enjoy themselves. I accept the Crown's submissions that this too amounts to an aggravating feature of the case.
5. The defendant is a man of bad character with 18 convictions in all, 5 for burglary or attempted burglary, 3 for assaults, one for obstruction of police, one for possession of a craft knife and a large number for possession of cannabis. On 5 occasions he has served short custodial sentences.
6. The attack on Mr Meizongo was racially aggravated and by s 145 of the Criminal Justice Act 2003 the sentence should be increased to reflect that fact.

Although it is likely – in particular in the case of Mr Needell - that you intended to kill the two of your victims who died, I will sentence you on the basis that that was not a settled intention, although leaving elderly men lying on the ground unconscious having inflicted the injuries you did to them was in the highest degree reckless.

This was a brutal campaign of violence carried out for the sake of showing that you could intimidate and hurt other human beings.

There is no other mitigation within the offences themselves. There is none in your conduct of the trial. Even when, albeit late in the day, evidence became available that you had held the piece of wood used to kill Keith Needell you declined to avail yourself of the mitigation of a guilty plea. So far as personal mitigation too there is none. Members of your family believe that it was what amounts to an addiction to cannabis which started you on the wrong track. That, as they effectively concede, amounts to no mitigation either.

In the case of Malasi 2009 1 Cr App R (S) 51 the Court of Appeal commended the trial judge's decision to indicate what the individual sentences would have been before the application of the principle of totality.

In my judgment the murder of Keith Parsons, had it stood alone, would have merited a minimum term of 15 years. The murder of Keith Needell would have merited a minimum term of 20 years. The series of unprovoked assaults on 5 strangers which carry the same aggravating features and the same lack of any mitigation beyond that which is integral to the offences such as the comparative lack of serious injury in each case would have merited sentences, had they stood alone and after taking account of the principle of totality, of 12 years imprisonment in total made up as follows:
27 months on both Counts 2 and 6,
30 months on count 4 (6 months of which to reflect the racial aggravation) and

30 months on both counts 3 and 5 to reflect the vicious nature of the assault in Count 3 and the use of the weapon in Count 5 making 12 years imprisonment.

That series of offences on its own would likely have merited an indeterminate sentence under the Criminal Justice Act 2003 with a minimum term to be served of 6 years. Having regard to the principle of totality I will reduce what would therefore have been a minimum term of 42 years months to one of 35 years.

Accordingly on counts 1 and 7 I sentence you to life imprisonment and I fix the minimum term to be served before your release may be considered at 35 years less 468 days spent on remand awaiting trial thus 33 years 262 days. In respect of counts 2-6 I pass sentences of 27 months imprisonment on counts 2 and 6, 30 months on Count 4 and 30 months on counts 3 and 5. These sentences are to run consecutively with each other but concurrently with the life sentences on counts 1 & 7.

I order that the PSR and the statements of the five members of the family accompany the papers to prison together of course with the psychiatric report of Dr Oladinni.

The investigation became a homicide investigation following the news that Mr Parsons would not survive his attack. Although no doubt there will be a look back at the investigation to see what lessons may be learned and what might have been done better in what was a unique case, it seems to me that this was a thorough and thoroughly competent investigation for which the team as a whole and its leader deserve commendation.