

OPEN FOUNDATION

AUSTRALIAN HISTORY

Margaret Henry - Lecturer

Tuesday 1.00pm - 3.00pm

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW

CROATIANS IN THE HUNTER

INTERVIEWER - MARICA BATKOVIC

INTERVIEWEE - LUKA DEJANOVIC

DATE - 7th SEPTEMBER, 1989

This is Marica Batkovic, Open Foundation Student at the University of Newcastle. For my regional history assignment I chose to write about the Croatians in Newcastle. I am seated here at Mr. Luka Dejanovic's house, who has been a member of the Croatian community. With this interview we will try and establish who was here, when and what were their experiences.

Marica: Mr. Dejanovic, can you tell me what year did you come to Australia?

Mr. Dejanovic: Yes, certainly I can. We are come to Australia in 18th August, 1949. The first Fairsea ship what arrived in Newcastle, that was er ... about 2300 migrants in a ship, plus ... what was ...

Marica: And they were all different backgrounds?

Mr. Dejanovic: All different kinds of people, mostly the people come from Germany, after the war camp.

Marica: Can you tell me, how old were you when you came, arrived?

Mr. Dejanovic: I was in about 28 years of age. I come with my wife, my eldest daughter, she was about 3 years old.

Marica: Did you marry in Germany, or did you marry in ---

Mr. Dejanovic: Yes, I was married after the war 1945.

Marica: When you came to Australia, where did you initially go. What happened when you came to port?

Mr. Dejanovic: When we came to the port, Newcastle, they send us to Greta camp.

Marica: Everybody?

Mr. Dejanovic: Everybody off the boat, we went with the train from Newcastle to Greta, from Greta we transport us walking, not far to camp is taking in camp, and that was real ... you can say, army camp.

Marica: Like barracks?

Mr. Dejanovic: Like barracks ... long, about 20 families going in one barrack, without separating rooms, with ... you can say nothing, no beds no nothing in them. They gave us 'madrac' (mattress), they gave us some blankets, and was not enough. I went real cranky, walked back to the manager, and tell him about how we separate family from family. He said, 'what's a good idea of mine',

I said, 'mine idea is to give us some blankets, we putting wire through or separate, making like rooms on each families.' That was good idea, even manager said like that, and that how we separate one from another.

Marica: So, when you came here and settled at Greta camp you had no privacy, they weren't prepared for migrants?

Mr. Dejanovic: No privacy, there was no prepared for migrants, no privacy at all.

Marica: What was the food like?

Mr. Dejanovic: Food was ... not that bad, you can say, because we are from camp, Germany, hungry, not enough food, after we send us, I been six months in Italy camp, even there is just the same, bad, no food, and Italian food, not many people of ours like that, and was bad. When we come, there was plenty oil and I think everybody was happy with the food.

Marica: So, who were the cooks?

Mr. Dejanovic: Cooks, I was mostly our, for our people. They started straight away, ask who is a good cooker, to start work straight away in the kitchen.

Marica: So, you could have a variety of ethnic foods?

Mr. Dejanovic: Yes, yes, that's right, ethnic foods.

Marica: When you arrived what happened in relation to work?

Mr. Dejanovic: When we arrived, we came in two, in two weeks, manager ask, who is like to going work in BHP, most married people. He picked about 120 of us, you can see in photos in Newcastle Sun. They photograph us, when we start when we come to the BHP and I still have some of them photos, you can see it in the photos, some of our men, what come started work in BHP.

Marica: How did you transport yourself from Greta camp?

Mr. Dejanovic: That, from Greta camp they bring us by the 'booses' take us back, not to back to wife to Greta camp, took us to Nelson Bay camp. 'Nothers' again separate us from our wives and our families. That what I was not happy, that's all, exactly like I was not happy with the camp, in one barrack 20 families, I did not was happy that's all.

Some things I was not happy and not only me, most of our people, send us to what's a name, Nelson Bay camp. Camp was much better, was not same like in Greta was, was rooms in 'em, was bit better what was in Greta camp.

Marica: How long did you stay at Greta camp?

Mr. Dejanovic: I only stay, I was lucky one of the most of them, I only stay. My wife stay really 3 weeks, after my job when I started to work, I find it room in Stockton, and I went to live in Stockton with my wife and my daughter. Only small room, you can only put bed in, not even chair.

Marica: Was that an Australian family you rented from?

Mr. Dejanovic: That was a Macedonian bloke, what gave me their little small room.

Marica: And how long has he been in Australia?

Mr. Dejanovic: He been, he come in before the war, and know our camp is, and he like to help people, he was very good man. Ilija Acet, he was the name.

Marica: How long did you stay? (Pause) renting his house?

Mr. Dejanovic: I stay in Stockton about 9 months, and I find it a house here in Charlestown, and that's what I shifted from Stockton to Charlestown, and I'm still here in Charlestown. Very happy was stay here in Charlestown, nice place it's, and good position where I am.

Marica: Is this the house we're in now?

Mr. Dejanovic: Yes, that's the house what I'm in now. I built at, after 20 years, I built a new one, pulled the old one down and build at new one, same place.

Marica: So, this house is actually on the land that you first bought?

Mr. Dejanovic: The same land, that's right.

Marica: Were there any facilities for you to learn English when you arrived?

Mr. Dejanovic: No. I've no chance to go to school, I've no chance to learn, only learn from my kids and my wife, and people what I work with them.

Marica: Can you tell me, when you came on the Fairsea ship, how many other Croatians were there on the same ship?

Mr. Dejanovic: Was my brother, and was one more, Ivan Marcic, he live in Cardiff, somewhere there in Glendale, I think, what I remember.

Marica: When you came, were there any other Croatian people that you knew of?

Mr. Dejanovic: What I knew, what I didn't know any, except of us three, could be more, just lot of people today at that time would not say yes I am, or something like that.

Marica: And that was because of politics?

Mr. Dejanovic: Mostly of politics, I think, too, yes.

Marica: When you came, and because of lack of language, and also the place was different, how did you do your shopping?

Mr. Dejanovic: Very hard, very hard, was very hard to going shopping, just my wife was quick learn, she even started learning in a ship, when we came there to Australia, and she was very quick learner, to learn English. She knew it few more languages before, like I do too and was probably easier for us to learn English.

Marica: Because the groceries aren't the same as here and what you're used to eating, how difficult was it to get food that you liked?

Mr. Dejanovic: It was not that easy, butter was in a card ... coupons, same was tobacco. I was smoker and not very easy to buy, just still was some Macedonian shops in Broadmeadow, what I remember people, and you can get, little bit you pay extra, you still can get it.

Marica: So that was the only shop ---

Mr. Dejanovic: That's like black market.

Marica: that catered for ethnic people?

Mr. Dejanovic: Yah, ethnic people, oh no, you have to know the people, to know to go, where you have to go, how you have to buy it and things like that.

Marica: What about the clothes, was there a difference between what you wore?

Mr. Dejanovic: Yes, yes, was difference, very hard, the same to barber to go, they cut your hair just the same like ordinary people they cutting, we didn't like that cut. In short times you find, straight away, our people open a shop or start to cut home, or somewhere else.

You know one of the another, that's how we help one another, to cut hair, to go to shops just the same, different things around.

Marica: What was life like for you before you left the country?

Mr. Dejanovic: Was not bad, was, I was apprentice, like blacksmith, for five years, and I was finish me apprentice jobs, and I went to work for one year like blacksmith and lot of company what I was working for, and they liked mine jobs what I was doing, and was happy with me, and when the war came, I just left the country and that's it.

Marica: While you were ...I know you left and you were landed in Germany. While you were there, before you migrated to Australia, how hard was it to come to Australia?

Mr. Dejanovic: Not very hard was come to Australia, in difference in America, was somewhere else was much harder, what we come to Australia, just you have to go screening.

Marica: Medical?

Mr. Dejanovic: Screening, ask you every questions, from the born even, when you born to the end of the war. Where you been, what army you went to, things like that. That was very, very hard, for me was not hard, that's all, because I've never been in army ... any you know trouble ... with nobody. That was easy, because I was in a Germany, never been in anybodies army, or any things like that, you know.

Marica: While you were there, do you know any people, that weren't . Were there people that weren't accepted to come?

Mr. Dejanovic: Some people was sick, and some people have trouble with the police, or been in a jail, or something like that. They wouldn't accept Australia to bring them in Australia. You have to be clear.

Marica: When you arrived to Australia, was it what you expected?

Mr. Dejanovic: No.

Marica: Was it like you thought it was?

Mr. Dejanovic: No, no, no didn't was. Lot of people said in Europe, when I was in Germany in a migrant camp, they tell me snakes, spiders or different things in Australia what

bite you, you die things like that, I never saw it, even snakes or spiders. I saw plenty of rabbits, even in Greta camp. I killed them with a stick, and skin 'em off, and we cook 'em, and bake them, that was already difference, what was people talking in Europe.

Marica: So, you were told it's like a jungle?

Mr. Dejanovic: That's right. That was told a jungle, told was lot of black people, what will kill you and chase you away, or things like that. I never even see them, except in the pictures. In few years later on, I did have contact with 'em. When I started moving Australia every year holiday, or things like that, I find it lot of black fellas ... They are, some of them is alright, most of them is bad. Never see them in BHP, there working ... First thing they like to drink, they like to spend money, mostly on drink. They no like to be work. That's of the black fellas, Aborigines, how they call 'em in Australia.

Marica: How did they accept you as a migrant, the Australian people?

Mr. Dejanovic: Australian people didn't like us, exactly didn't like it black fellas, like Aborigines. They didn't like us just the same, on that beginning few years, when we come to Australia.

Marica: Did they call you names, or?

Mr. Dejanovic: No, I couldn't say, nobody call me names, nobody in my life, nobody tell me I am the wog or things like that. It what I can remember so far, I am 40 years in Australia.

Marica: Did you, could you, mix with Australian people and go to all the social activities that they go to?

Mr. Dejanovic: In the beginning, they didn't like you, in the beginning. Now is different story, in the beginning when we come, 1949, was different story. Today is lot change, difference like was, many of new Australians what come to Australia, I always said, you just come on ready country to settle down and that's true.

Marica: So it was much easier for people that came later?

Mr. Dejanovic: All later, that's right.

Marica: Can you tell me, because there was only a handful of Croatians when you came, when did they start arriving in larger numbers?

Mr. Dejanovic: OOOOhhhh, I know another ships come, what my wife aunty arrived, there in 1951. Some come to Newcastle, was few down there that time, and most people come to Melbourne, Bonegilla. What I got it lot of addresses and then use for me and bring them most of them I bring them to Newcastle, Croatian people. That's how start to arrive to Newcastle, Croatian.

Marica: How did you feel when there were other countrymen coming to live here in Newcastle?

Mr. Dejanovic: I feel happy, I feel happy, because more new Australian more better for them in Newcastle was. That's mine opinion, and Australian people coming much better with them, with us, and like us more better when us more was there. I reckon.

Marica: They get to know who you are and accept you as a person?

Mr. Dejanovic: That's right, that's right. In the beginning year they ask me, did we have train in Europe, did we have double decker buses, and different story like that. What I was just laughing, nothing else.

Marica: So, they were inquisitive about the life ----

Mr. Dejanovic: You can't explain them, to tell them yes, there was nothing or something like that, and if you tell yes, we have double decker buses before you come there, they will be cranky on you, or something like that. I didn't make any trouble with nobody, was lot of funny things.

Marica: You told me before that there was no chance for you to learn English, there weren't any classes. Were there any other services for migrants?

Mr. Dejanovic: No.

Marica: There was nothing?

Mr. Dejanovic: Nothing.

Marica: When did the first Neighbourhood Council start, or anything like that?

Mr. Dejanovic: They started, ooohh, few, few years back, what I remember. I reckon, would be close to about '60, 1960, something like that, what I remember. Neighbourhood Council started to do something for new Australian people.

Marica: When you first arrived, what did you do for social activity?

Mr. Dejanovic: Nothing much, we go on beach on weekend, that's all that you can do. Everything was closed, no picture show, no shops, no nothing open on weekend. It's big change since that.

Marica: So, when there was more Croatians in Newcastle, what happened to them?

Mr. Dejanovic: Then we have our society. We have our clubs. We have, going together and dance every weekend, or things like that. Things was much easier and better. More migrants, more Macedonian, more different nation, Ukrainians and Polish people, and things like that, was difference already.

Marica: When was the Croatian Association first formed in Newcastle?

Mr. Dejanovic: In 1958.

Marica: And how many members did you have at that stage?

Mr. Dejanovic: That stage, I have about 36 members of Croatian people.

Marica: Were they families, or ...?

Mr. Dejanovic: Oohh, half and half. Mostly single, if you would like to say, mostly single.

Marica: Can you tell me if many of those people from 1958 are still living in Newcastle?

Mr. Dejanovic: Yes, they still living in Newcastle. A lot of them went back to Sydney and live in Sydney, most of them you can say went to Sydney. They reckon it's more opportunity to live in Sydney than Newcastle.

Marica: Since there were more Croatians in Newcastle and after the formation of the Croatian Association, what were the other developments that the Croatian Community saw?

Mr. Dejanovic: We got, er, er, Croatian Centre, that it's in Tighes Hill.

We bought that and repair it and done it lot of work on 'em and little Catholic church. After that we got it folklore group, and after that we got it soccer club, and just bought it, er ... couple years ago... bowling club, for soccer club. Done lot, I reckon, in such a time.

Marica: And for a smaller community.

Mr. Dejanovic: Smaller community, what they are in Newcastle, anyhow.

Marica: How many do you think there are now in the community?

Mr. Dejanovic: In a community, I'm not very sure, because I'm not have much contact in mine health lately, but still I reckon in, in Newcastle that, 1500 Croatian people live in Newcastle, that's mine opinion, about.

Marica: The folklore group, that has been here for a while, hasn't it?

Mr. Dejanovic: That's right, that's late '70 I reckon.

Marica: All these various activities that have been developed in the Croatian community, are really good for the youth, to carry on and learn the language. These things weren't around for your children. So did they maintain their language and how did they?

Mr. Dejanovic: Oh yeh, oh yeh, mine children were speaking both languages if you like to know, my eldest daughter was speaking Polish and Croatian language, and no problem. Was and learn only from us, because my wife is Polish and I'm Croatian, see, and that's how she learn.

Marica: In those days ---

Mr. Dejanovic: In those days.

Marica: what kind of activities were there for your children?

Mr. Dejanovic: Was very good, because when I start to bring more young boys, she learn with them. Talking in mostly Croatian language and that's how she knows Croatian language. Was very good in er beginning, after when I formed a Croatian like society there.

Marica: When it developed ---

Mr. Dejanovic: When it developed, yes.

Marica: How did you come? Did you come with paying your own passage to Australia, or did you come as a displaced person?

Did you come as a chain migrant? How did you come?

Mr. Dejanovic: I come like displaced person. I come from the German camp, a war camp and we're not want to, my wife didn't want to go back to Poland, because Poland was under communist, and I didn't like to go back to Yugoslavia, just the same, we not. I been with the Russian soldiers in Germany after the, even war time, they didn't like to go back to Russia. He said to me, not only one, thousands of them, we going back even just send us to Sibir (Siberia) or kill us. What's a good to go from this country, that was not propaganda, that was true story.

Marica: So you come to Australia for survival?

Mr. Dejanovic: That's right. To my children have it good life in Australia.

Marica: Between what years did the displaced people come, between '48 and '58?

Mr. Dejanovic: They started ... I have same ... friend, they started from the camp going in 19 ... '47 - '48, went to Canada, first displaced went there, there was mostly girls. I have some, not my cousin, some relatives of mine, she was a girl, she went that plane to Canada. She still in the Canada. I don't have address, lost address, she stop writing to me and I stop writing to her.

Marica: And how did some of the other Croatian migrants come?

Mr. Dejanovic: Same, same way come to Australia.

Marica: Later on I mean, you know, in 1970. How did they come?

Mr. Dejanovic: Lot of 'em went through from ... Yugoslavia to Austria like my brother went, through, from Austria they immigrated to Australia.

Marica: You sponsored your brother, though?

Mr. Dejanovic: Yeh, I did, I did, and Zvonko too. I still have paper there.

Marica: Zvonko is today's Croatian president?

Mr. Dejanovic: That's right, president of Croatian, what I was in 1958, that true. This is very ... no have much time. Today people have more time to do some business work, what have to do with some kind of club or society, to do spend it more time there.

I was working hard in my time, more try to do it for the society what I was doing for them when I'm work.... that's it.

Marica: The way the Croatian community developed, what do you see for them as the future?

Mr. Dejanovic: I see the good future, of them to develop. I see the clubs. I see the folklore group. I see radio station. I see lot of things. I will listen to meself, quarter past 10, tonight, Croatian language, news of Croatian people. They come from Sydney, the channel what I listen in radio.

Marica: So you think they've done well?

Mr. Dejanovic: They've done well, too. In Sydney, you must thinking is ... about 150.000 Croatian people in Sydney. You can know some clubs in Sydney what worth about 5 million or 6 million dollars today.

Marica: And that's because, ----

Mr. Dejanovic: Because, there more Croatians, all the time coming and coming. They got a soccer club, what worth it lot of money, just the same and got it not only one club in Sydney, what I know, is about 4 of them, all big clubs.... even more.

Marica: How did you come across articles or newspapers that were in our language, Croatian language?

Mr. Dejanovic: Yah, we get it, contact with Europe people overseas, America, a most Argentina. Because I ordered newspapers from Argentina and America, regularly that was coming, every month. And you pay so much a year, and I'm still member of newspaper that coming from Spain, that's called 'Hrvatsko Pravo'.

Marica: Now, there are newspapers as well that are made weekly and published weekly.

Mr. Dejanovic: Yeah, they made in Sydney, yeah, yes.

Marica: So it's much easier to keep in touch now?

Mr. Dejanovic: Yah, or yes, much easier now. Paper you getting, you can say, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, lot of capital cities you can get newspapers, even Canberra too, I think, yeah.

Marica: Mr. Dejanovic, I would like to thank you very much for allowing us to tape you and interview you.

Mr. Dejanovic: You welcome, any time you want it. I always tell the truth story, what I know.

Marica: I'm sure. I'm sure there was a lot more we could have covered and asked -----

Mr. Dejanovic: Oh yeah, is if you want to know a lot of story, just have to take it with the more longer time, to tell you all that of migrant people what come to Australia.

Marica: I hope that we have another opportunity to discuss this later, but I think that this may be enough for now. I thank you very much for taking the time to share some of your knowledge and experiences with me here today. Thank you.

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AUSTRALIAN HISTORY

Margaret Henry - Lecturer

Tuesday 1.00pm - 3.00pm

CROATIA, Showing the Current Boundaries within Yugoslavia



CROATIANS IN NEWCASTLE

MARICA BATKOVIC

1969/3(11)

Today, the Socialist Republic of Croatia is one of the six Republics within the Federal Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia. It is lying between the Adriatic and the Danubian Plain. The capital city of Croatia is Zagreb. Croatian migrants come not only from the republic that is today termed Croatia, but from all areas occupied by Croatian people, such as; Bosnia, Hercegovina, Srijem and Bačka, which have in the past been Croatian territories but are today in separate republics of Yugoslavia, and also from Baka Kotorska, which since 1945 has not been considered part of Croatia.

Lifestyles of Croatian people differ substantially from one region to another and so do their customs, attitudes and traditions. Until the Second World War, most Croats lived in small villages with mixed farming as their main occupation. For centuries the mobility of the population was minimal. Most Croats are Catholic, and religion is very important to them, it substantially influences their lifestyles.

Some of the first migrants to Australia were young men anxious to earn money for a year or two and then return home; many of them were Dalmatians who visited Australia, virtually by accident. They were mostly young coastal and village men, who thought they could acquire the money they needed by signing on for two or three years as seaman on a long distance sailing vessel. It was only after they spent weeks ashore, waiting for their ships to be re-fitted did they decide to stay and earn money on this continent.

Most Croatians migrated to Australia in the three separate waves. First wave arrived in Australia during 1890's and settled mainly on the sugarcane farms in Northern Queensland, on gold mining field, Kalgoorlie (West. Aust.) also in Dubbo and Young (N.S.W.). This was when the process of chain-migration commenced. Croats already leaving here wrote to their relatives in Croatia about life in Australia and then assisted them to come to Australia. A lot settled

at Broken Hill (N.S.W.) for the mining. There are no records to suggest if any were in and around Newcastle at that time. These first immigrants were from the Croatian coastline and surrounding islands.

The second wave arrived in Australia between 1947 and 1961, majority were from Lika, Slavonia, Bosna and Hercegovina.. Many had experiences of war and most had spent at least a few years in the refugee camps of Western Europe. They came here as Displaced Persons. A large number were well educated and had enjoyed a high social status in their own community. The majority of the second wave settled in the industrial suburbs of Australia, Newcastle being one of them. Between 1947 and 1961, ABS censuses saw that the Yugoslav population rose from 59 to 1,040.(1) It is hard to estimate how many of them were Croatians, but considering the political situation in Yugoslavia a large number would have been from Croatia. Also, if we look at the Savez estimates for the 1933 census of the percentages of Yugoslav-born in Australia, we could be forgiven to assume that a large number of Yugoslav immigrants are Croatian. The Savez estimated that, 52 per cent were Dalmatians and 15 per cent other Croatians.(2)

The third wave of Croats arrived since 1962. These people come as documented immigrants, who left their country because it was confronted by high unemployment. This was an era when the numbers of Croats really grow in Newcastle. In 1977 number of Yugoslavs in Newcastle rose to 3,146.(3) The majority of Croatians arrived in Newcastle in the years 1967-1971. This ethnic group is said to be between 1,500 and 2,000 people who are born overseas.

(1) Newcastle Comity Task Force, UNEMPLOYMENT AMONGST NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES IN NEWCASTLE, 1983 p.3

(2) JUPP James, THE AUSTRALIAN PEOPLE, Australia 1988 p. 337

(3) IBID Footnote No. 1, p.4 table 2.

Most Croatians experienced various hardships when they arrived to Newcastle. The early migrants were very isolated, lonely and depressed as they didn't and couldn't mix with the Australian people, and the number of Croatians at that time was ~~very~~ minimal. In those days they weren't very well accepted by the host society. Most of the arrivals after the World War 2 were displaced persons or war refugees, who kept to them selves, mainly for political reasons.

Some left their country as there was a constant fear that the Russians might invade Yugoslavia and overthrow the independent regime. The newly arrived immigrants were housed temporarily in hostels or migrant camps provided by the government, often ex-army camps, like Greta and Nelson Bay camps, also the Mayfield Hostel, until they could find their own accommodation. "The conditions in Greta camp were very bad, not many facilities and no privacy"(4), this is how the early Croatians described life in camps.

When the Croatians arrived most had little or no possessions, so family heads were always anxious to find employment, often of any kind at all. As they were prepared to do anything for less money and longer hours, most of them generally found work very quickly. The initial and common expectations of settlement are basically those of finding a satisfying job, saving for a deposit to purchase a home and mainly to provide their children with better opportunities in life. Amongst those who worked both overseas and in Australia thirty percent accepted as their first full-time jobs in Australia, occupations of lower ranking than those that had overseas. Croatians in Newcastle have adopted very well to the new country most have established themselves reasonably well. No doubt the policy changes and the increase in services for migrants have played a large role in helping migrants in their settlement here.

(4) *BATKOVIC Marica, INTERVIEW WITH MR. DEJANOVIC, Charlestown 07/09/89.*

The lives of Croatians are usually centered on their families, relatives and friends and, to great extent, around the activities of their own community. Community is organised around two institutions - Croatian Clubs and the Catholic Church. The church services, important coming events concerning the local community are mentioned, names of young couples to be married are announced, and proposed ethnic community projects or activities explained. The Church is viewed by many as a guardian of Croatian traditions, customs and ethnic identity. Folksongs have always had a special significance for Croats, for they reflect their country's history, aspirations, sufferings and hopes. The Church with a community hall has been established at Tighes Hill, 15 years ago. The building when purchased was a Public School, which the community altered to facilitate it's needs. But, the Croatians have enjoyed a weekly mass in their language for more than 20 years now. It was originally held in Australian Church in Mayfield. The Croatian Folklore group was established in 1978, which till now has had over 70 participants. Five years ago a Croatian Soccer team was established and just this year a purchase of the Wickham Bowling Club has been made, which has it's own soccer field. The community also enjoys the fortnightly radio broadcasting of one hour, in Croatian language which has been produced locally on the 2NURFM, through Newcastle University. Also they listen to the 2EA, which broadcasts twice a week, which is a Sydney station. With Australia bringing in the Multicultural Policies and with the better acceptance and understanding of migrants, in this country, we are hopefully looking towards less discrimination and a more friendlier society. Our migrants, like the others, came with the intention of making a permanent home here.

Many of them are already Australian citizens, or have the intention to become Australian citizens, and their children born here were born as citizens of this country. It is, therefore, essential that they should be looked upon as an integral part of the Australian community.



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07/09/89.

Mr. Luka Dejanovic was 28 years old upon his arrival to Australia, in 1948. He migrated with his Polish wife and a 3 year old daughter, from Germany, as a displaced person.

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International Refugee Organisation. He had been in various German camps since 1945.

AUSTRALIAN HISTORY

Margaret Henry - Lecturer
Tuesday 1.00pm - 3.00pm

The ship he arrived on 'Fairfax', was the first ship destined for Newcastle. There were about 2,300 migrants, all different nationalities, but the only Croatians on the ship.

SUMMARY OF TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW

and another fellow that they met while in German camp. Upon arrival in Newcastle, all transported to Green Bush, by train.

CROATIANS IN NEWCASTLE

When for them, they were housed in long barracks,

approximately 1000 Croats. There were very few facilities, and no privacy.

Soon after INTERVIEWEE - MR. LUKA DEJANOVIC in N.S.W.

They were transported to and from, by bus. Life in camp was terrible.

DATE - 7th SEPTEMBER, 1989
He considered himself very lucky for coming in touch with a Macedonian man, who offered him and his family a small room in his house, in the station. They stayed there for 3 months, in which time Mr. Dejanovic worked very hard, and managed to save a small deposit for his own house in Charlestown.

Mr. Luka Dejanović was 28 years of age upon his arrival to Australia, in 1949. He migrated with his Polish wife and a 3 year old daughter, from Germany, as a displaced person, with the assistance of IRO, International Refugee Organisation. He had been in various German camps since 1943. Before the war, Mr. Dejanović had finished his apprenticeship^{ship} as a Blacksmith in Yugoslavia.

The ship he arrived on 'FAIRSEA', was the first ship destined for Newcastle. There were about 2,300 migrants, all different nationalities, but the only Croatians on the ship, as far as, Mr. Dejanović knew, were his brother and another fellow that they met while in German camp. Upon arrival to Newcastle they were all transported to Greta camp, by train. Greta camp was a huge disappointment for them; they were housed in long barracks, approximately 20 families in one, with very few facilities, and no privacy.

Soon after arrival they were offered jobs in B.H.P. They were transported to and from, by busses. Life in camp was terrible, Mr. Dejanović considered himself very lucky for coming in touch with a Macedonian man, who offered him and his family a small room in his house, in Stockton. They stayed there for 9 months, in which time Mr. Dejanović worked very hard, and managed to save a small deposit for his own house in Charlestown.

They still live at the same address, but the house they live in, was built by them 20 years ago.

Mr. Dejanović and his family lead a very isolated and a lonely life for the first 10 years, as during that time there were no social clubs that they could attend. In those days migrants were not welcomed or looked upon favourably, in most cases. The language was a huge problem and a barrier. What you learnt and how much, depended largely on where you worked and how well you interacted. There were no English classes in those days, which of course is different now.

The handful of Croatians that new each other in those days found it very exciting when other Croatian countryman were arriving to Newcastle. With the increasing number of Croatina people, Mr. Dejanovic and some of the other earlier immigrants formed the first Croatian Association, in 1958, of which Mr. Dejanović was a president for 4 years. It had 36 members, some married couples, but mostly single men. This helped them overcome the loneliness and isolation, as the Association organized regular dances and outings. Through this interaction they were able to help the new immigrants with settling in, paying bills and so on.

People were drawn together, because of the similarity in what they experienced. They all knew how hard the process of migration is, and adaptation a person had to undergo, because of changed environment and the non-acceptance by Australian people.

Mr. Dejanović is proud of the progress that the Croatian community has made in this country. As it is, there are at this moment various developments in Newcastle. Such as the establishment of a soccer club, folklore group, their own hour, fortnightly, on the local radio station, they have also bought the Wickham Bowling Club. They have had their little church and hall for over 15 years, where a lot of the earlier functions have been held.

Mr. Dejanović feels that this is a good country; people have learnt to ^{acc}except migrants, which has made life more bearable to all the new immigrants. The changes in policy^{ies} have helped bring about the changes of attitudes. Also, all the services that exist now for migrants have made life much easier; better late than never, he feels.

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I, LUKA DEJANOVIC..... give my
permission to MARICA BATKOVIĆ.....

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for the use of other bona fide researchers

Signed L. Dejanovic.....

Date 7th September, 1989.....

Interviewer MARICA BATKOVIĆ.....