

INTERVIEWEE

BAZIL MANUNCZAK

INTERVIEWER

DESMOND THOMAS

SUBJECT OF INTERVIEW

THE BACKGROUND OF A DISPLACED
PERSON THAT SETTLED IN THE
HUNTER REGION.

DATE

25th AUGUST 1989

Today is Friday the 25th August 1989, I am at the home of Mr. Bazil Manunczak, 39 Branxton Street, Greta.

Mr. Manunczak would you like to introduce yourself:

(Mr. Manunczak speaking) - "Yes, I am Bazil Manunczak in Ukranian I am Wasyl Manunczak, I born in 1921 and I was born in Ukraine. That part of Ukraine was under the Polish regime at that time so I spent my all years in that part of Ukranian that was the biggest town called Kolomea there and I lived in village Lisna Slobidka - I go to school. My Father was a small farmer, he had a good life. Not, but not very rich, but enough to eat and drink. Before the war in 1939 when the Russians come and occupy our country, that's actually the war between German and Poland everywhere the Germany start waring to the East because they need the other side living room so when the Russian came, the life changed because they bring with their, with them all this Communist idea like collective farm and took all private things away from people. They put them in a collective farm which they, these people was not used to it, you see it, first time. During the collective farm you have to give everything to the collective like that farm or like to the State farm, like all equipment you have, horses and plough, things like that and everything what you have on your farm. So you have to work then like in factory and they don't pay you every day or every month they pay you once a year when the harvest is finished. The first thing what they do, you have to give collective farm you have to sell all grain to State and what is left over you divide, was divided by them, to their collective farmers. Actually it was, you see it was like a quota, every collective farm must give quota to the State because it was nothing on the market. The State doesn't buy on the market they just take the collective farmers so then you work all year you might get for every day couple kilo of grain or potato

or so, everything what they grow, that's all. That's all the collective people face a life because they have a little land around their house, it was allowed to keep about acre, an acre land for their own use so they grow their own. It's another thing to be alive you see, they say if you don't steal in the collective farm you be not alive, you see everybody try to steal and it's still going on, that's a fact, the same is today, still today. So anyway, after that, about 1941, what it was, 1940, 1941 we start the war between Russia and German and the German come and occupy our country which was, which was nearly the same as Russia, no not quite different. You see they carry the attitude that what everything was you grow, they don't force to collective farm, the collective farm was like, uh go, gone, the Germans don't try to, they have every intention to do the same thing later on, but during that period every farmers, was they grow the new quota, you have to grow so much wheat, so much, so much and so much and give to them in this German time. I stayed home about six months and after the Germans occupation they took me to the German, they took mostly all young people to work in their factories because I think their young generation go to the front so they took us like replacement so we worked on the farm and factory, mostly in factories. I was taken to the school in Dresden, they call it like school for three months, you know, to show us how to operate machinery and tools and things like that and took us after three months to operations and put us in the factories where tall building factories, was actually aeroplane buildings, but not also aeroplane, we live in a camp, the camp was about 35, 20, 35 thousand different people, Belgian all nationalities, actually Poland and was funny thing in the camp it was divided too because the German, you see like Poland for example they have to wear on their uniform or their clothes, not because didn't have a uniform, P, and everybody was, every nationality was to be shown except Italian and Belgian they didn't give any signs but they most was the Poland,

very bad treated in that camp and actually my wife was working there too.

(Mr. Des Thomas speaking) - She wasn't your wife at that time?

(Mr. Manunczak speaking) - "No we were not married, we married after the war. But they took boys and girls from Ukrainian, Ukrainian, Russian and every all young people, they grab and take them to the Germany to work for them. It was like civilian prisoners we not, we are not allowed to travel, you can go 30 kilometres in radius without any permit if you like to go any further you have to get special permit which I don't think so anybody get, I never heard that anybody get that permit to travel, like Poland, was not allowed to go to cinema or picture, you see we don't have any cards, you know like to buy shoes or clothing, we mostly buy other things on the black market during that time. You know the Italians from Italy or Czechoslovakia you can get parcels you know and they sell it on the black market so that was the way we get dressed, and it was all very hard. We work 12 hour shift, 12 hour shift was changing from day to nightshift and one week day shift, one week night shift and there was trouble with, ever since 1942 the English or American aeroplane come during the night or during the day, sometimes three four days, times a day and there was bombardment everywhere around us and we mostly run in the bush, was big bush down there and we stay in the bush till alarm, they call it off, but in 1943 they come big. Oh they big, big angrif they call it, in German, you see they all aeroplane come and bombarded that factory where we worked, was really nothing left. Camp everything, camp burn down we stay in the clothes what we have on ourselves you know and the campfire, my shoes, everything and I come back and was nothing left, everything burnt only my dish and spoon was left, I found it in ashes. So after that bombardment we stayed couple of weeks, go around town and actually they decided what to

do with us and they took what machinery left over from the factory and already was prepared in one spot in Germany under the ground, it was a big mountain and they dig the hole in that mountain and, it was done by cassette men, you know concentration camp men and we come in and they were still there were working, you see they dug in the stone in the granite you know like tunnels and put all the machinery and we work under the ground and in the entrance was two tanks when we come in, you know, two tanks I don't know what it was for, so we have special permission to go in, and I think, I believe, it was another, another part of that factory, I think that they work with false names at that time. I'm not sure but after the war I find out it was that place, I was already away from that place because I see lot of people with different passports, you know, the passport you show police of every country, different way and I think that was the way they make this rocket. But I found it after the war I didn't know during that time. So during that period I worked down there about 9 months under the ground, was very hard you know really far away and they took us with the trains. When we come not much to eat, hungry all the time so I decided to escape from that place. You see that time I was already speak German you know, I notice some German when it come Saturday, some German people because they been, they been taken, taken from their place like native to that place you know, that place to work during the week and on weekend. I saw them they going back home and so I mixed up with them and brought the ticket and run away about 300kms. I had friend, one friend he know the farmer and introduce me to that farmer and so I get, I ask him can I get job on farm. I been farmer so I can work and I know how to work so that farmer, I agree that Germans farmer agree to take me. He took me to work for three days with him but he has to report me because it was the law, you know, you can't take anyone so then he went to report he got worker. They send policeman and he took me to the Gestapo

and tell me "How I come here to that place to work?" I said "Oh I was evacuated from Ukranian at that time". I make plan before I escape you know, what to say, and I stick to that plan and they keep me one day. All day in Gestapo questioning you know - how, why, how you speak German and things like that. I told them I go to school and I learn in school, oh actually they, they don't believe me much but they don't have anything to prove. You see it was not in Germany during the war Hitler regime it was not court, you see if you go say take, you go to Gestapo, he is your judge, he was everything you know, he decide what to do that's it. Anyway I told them stories, they ask me how I come to the Germany, I say I go over courier train and in one place like in Dresden because I knew Dresden very well. I was before so there it alarm, so I go out from the train go to the, to the you know Cellar and after awhile I come to out, I miss that train. So I come to this place and and I found I had a friend here and introduce me to that farmer and so on and so on and that all, and so, but they dont' believe me much and they say to me "What a day was alarm?" I say "I dont' know exactly but I say maybe 14, 15. I don't keep ah, you records of my day" - and I was very surprised when they brought, go to the shelf and open the book and every day was register alarm. You know where which part of Germany was alarm. I have a luck because on the 14th exactly was that alarm in that place. They took me to the gaol, keep me three months I think it was check up and if anybody look after me or something like that and they, and after that they call me to the Gestapo again and say "Look everywhere, cannot found you", but we give you the job. Now you go on the farm but not to same farm they send me another place, so I stay there till 1945 I live on the farm but work was very hard, but you know food was good and they treat me like, you know, they treat me like their own people. I eat with them together and because I notice in some farmers they

where foreigners work and they sit at the table, they give the foreigner not a place at the table somewhere else, they don't eat together. Some of them you know, but mostly, mostly people around where I was like neighbours and thing they ask me how you, how did Russian and things like that talk and I don't feel anything bad treatment. So 1945 that's American come to that part of German, it was invaded and they stay about three months but after that the American has to leave that part because Russia was take over that part. There was some agreement in together or something divide German in four zone, French, (Italian), English Russian and American and divided by four so I think the American go a bit too far, they have to go back and we didn't want to go under the Russians so we travel with them all with Americans stay in American zone. We stay three years like displaced persons already was International Refuge Organisation in that time, you know, it was about 1 million people you know who wish, who don't want to come back to the Russians. Not even the Russians but Polish people they don't want the Communist regime and they stay about 2,3 years they have to start immigrate you know but some people go to England to America if you have a sponsor, Canada, but you have to have sponsor, it was not like immigration, anyone who wants to go. England for example they took only single people not married no more come to England, but finally Australia make offer to us, first time they took only couples with no children but the next year they start taking children.

(Mr Des Thomas) - What did you know about Australia at that stage?

(Mr. Manunczak) - I don't know nothing actually I know that name only because when I go to school they show us on the map that such country Australia but I think I even forgot that but you know after been staying camp immigration start go to Australia we start interesting

looking in the books and you know what people live, we think all
Aboriginals only in Australia, we have an idea but when the first batch
of migrants come they write letters to us, it's good country, no snow
here, it's sunny all the time and oh you say that plenty food, so I decided
I maybe go there and have a look, er you know, because I have nowhere
else to go. So 1949 we come to the Australia and every camp, big
camp, they send their representative you know, select committee or
commission or something like that so they pick up the people so we
have, it was not very simple, we cannot sign your name and go you
know, you have to go to this Australian doctor and they check how
healthy you are. It was like security officers lot of things, which race,
everything you know, that check perfect everything got to be, but
they start taking family with the children so we have 3 children at
this time one two, we have twins was only nine months old so it was
a bit hard with the kids with such a big travel you know so anyway
we decided to go, to go to Australia.

(Mr Des Thomas) - Did it cost you anything to come here?

(Mr. Manunczak) - No that refugee organisation they pay everything
that money because it was like refugee like you remember was the
same as they are now in the Vietnam or anywhere else, you know because
we didn't have money that was the trouble we didn't have any money
not except few German marks that's all what we have.

(Mr. Des Thomas) - What were your first impressions when you arrived
in Australia?

(Mr. Manunczak) - Oh it wasn't quite winter time you know was nice
winter time you look around and it was surprising winter with the word

winter but we see everything's green that was surprising, how you say green leaves and you know, grass growing you see you're used to the word winter, snow up to one metre deep. That was you know, that was very good sign we say its good you not much clothing, we didn't, but we didn't meet much people, first time on arrival you know only the conductor and things like that.

(Mr Des Thomas) - When you arrived into Sydney and from Sydney you were taken to Bathurst?

(Mr. Manunczak) - Yes, from Sydney taken to the Bathurst camp it was soldiers camp before or something it was very cold down there, it start snowing first day and was most another thing was already was rumour that gold here in Bathurst you know what I mean. The next day we take our bag and go in the bush and look for gold you know. In the wireless they say wireless asking speaker in the camp and don't go there because people we see their holes and you know and people dig the gold before or something are we say maybe good country plenty gold here.

(Mr. Des Thomas) - When you got to Bathurst, what happend there, how long were you at Bathurst?

(Mr. Manunczak) - Oh our family was about three weeks and they took them to the Greta camp and we all Father or men stayed down in Bathurst, waiting to get a job and they call at the office and told us the first thing you have to sign the papers that you belonging to union the second thing you sign the contract with the Government so you have to work two years contract anywhere where they tell us to work. So I sign the contract on the railway and I finish my contract on the railway.

(Mr. Des Thomas) - Where did you work when you were on the railway, was it in Bathurst or ...

(Mr. Manunczak) - I work first time in Chullora Railway Shop Chullora but was very hard to travel to see my family in Greta was not very good for me because living in the tent down there in Chullora and our family live in camp and we have to travel every weekend or every second weekend they give us free passes every two weeks you can go and if you want go the week between you have to pay half price, half fare but travel was very hard to get on the train at that time you know when we come to the train at Statfield, the train was already full pack because nearly thousand people go to the Greta camp and when we arrive I in Maitland come about thousand men and only one bus. Some of them walk, some of them stick around bus on spare wheels things like that and that was the worst part so I decided I can't do it anymore, so I ask unemployment office if they can transfer me close to the Greta camp. They don't, they don't want it first time but I tell them I have to do that because I can't, can't do anything else so I say I break the contract if it go like, I can't do it because it was impossible to get in the trains and from trains to the bus. So the employment they agree they allowed me to go to Telarah extra gang, change my job, so I was close to the camp so I can go anytime I want to. So I settled down here in Greta and bought a block of land in Greta and built a house.

(Mr. Des Thomas) - You have finished the two year?

(Mr. Manunczak) - I finish the two years contract on, was at Telarah, but it was still on the railways that belong to the railways and I built my house and changed the job go to they call it Burlington Mills in that time, textile industry and I work till I retire down there.

(Mr. Des Thomas) - *The lifestyles that - ah compared to the Ukranian lifestyle compared to the Australian lifestyle, Christmas time, how different are celebrations at Christmas?*

(Mr. Manunczak) - *Oh the big difference, you see every nation has different culture you see we like Ukranian we celebrate it mostly Christmas Eve except Christmas like Australian do the Christmas dinner. So that was different and another thing because all Ukranian like Yugoslav they have different calendar too. You see our Christmas come on Seventh on January "yeah" because that was old calendar and with the Church we live or count on new calendar but the Church doesn't change you see that calendar was everybody was celebrating that old calendar, it got 14 days, 14 days later, so you have a 25th and we have 7th of January in old calendar it is 25th of December.*

(Mr Des Thomas) - *You've been here now 40 years, in actual fact there was a celebration at Greta army camp for the 40 years this last weekend wasn't it?*

(Mr. Manunczak) - *Yes*

(Mr. Des Thomas) - *Do you feel now that this is your home and obviously if to go with that, do you have a sense of belonging now that you've been here that length of time and your family has grown up here?*

(Mr. Manunczak) - *Oh yes that's right you see I'm like they call acclimatised now.*

(Mr. Des Thomas) - *Repeat that, sorry.*

(Mr. Manunczak) - *Acclimatised you know - climate.*

(Mr. Des Thomas) - Oh, acclimatised.

(Mr. Manunczak) - Acclimatised.

(Mr. Des Thomas) - Right.

(Mr. Manunczak) - You see and if I go home now I not be feeling the same because after 40 years everything changed there so I have to accept that country and my children grown here and they go to school and I have Australian friends here I feel now like, like at home only one thing I wish I go for week or two just look around that's all what is interesting me because I don't think I be any good there now its winter time it just lot better here yes at home.

Well thank you very much Mr. Manunczak

Thank you.

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1989.

I, Wasył. Marunczak..... give my
permission to DISMONI THOMAS

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Signed W. Marunczak

Date 25-8-1989

Interviewer D. Thomas

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AUSTRALIAN HISTORY

OPEN FOUNDATION 1989

WEDNESDAY 7pm

LECTURER MARGARET HENRY

REGIONAL HISTORY

IMMIGRATION

DESMOND THOMAS

Australia has been historically dependent on immigration because it has been unable to generate sufficient labour reserves to satisfy labour requirements during periods of economic boom. After World War Two there were important changes in the immigration policy. A new obsession with boosting population through industrial development replaced the concern for land settlement and to obtain immigrants in sufficient numbers the government had to cast a wider net. Immigrants earlier classified as barely tolerable or prohibited had to be officially reclassified as acceptable and encouraged.

The government still maintained a preference for the British and North European offered immigrants, often granting assisted passage at a far greater percentage than to the Southern and Eastern European immigrants. The less favoured immigrants suffered many disadvantages; they often had difficulties with the language, their qualifications were rarely recognized in Australia and they were discriminated against socially and in employment. They were put into unskilled jobs where they had to work at government direction for two years before they were free to work where they liked. Many of these immigrants felt they had been enticed to Australia by false promises. Some as soon as they were able left to return to Europe or to the United States of America.

Populate or perish tapped genuine fears among Australian people when it was used to justify the immigration programme. Six in ten of the people added to Australia's population since 1947 have been migrants. They have come from a diverse range of countries, experiences, periods, circumstances, class backgrounds, cultures and religions.

The Ukrainian community is of the smallest of the migrant communities in Australia. Almost all of the Ukrainian immigrants came to Australia between 1948 and 1952 from the Displaced Persons Camps in West Germany and Austria. Most of the new arrivals had little in the way of material possessions and they were therefore fully assisted migrants bound under a two year labour contract to work wherever directed by the Commonwealth Employment Service. Initially because of nonrecognition of qualifications acquired by them in Europe, a large portion of them were employed in unskilled and semi-skilled jobs in private industry and in public Utilities and services.

After World War Two immigration became as important as natural population growth. In the period 1947-72 migrants provided 61-2 per cent of the increase in the Australian Work force and 2-3 million of 5-6 million added to Australia's population. In the period 1947-1961 over 80 percent of new jobs for men were taken by migrants as were

over half the new jobs occupied by women.

Immigration was at its lowest level in 1975 since the post war immigration programme began. Yearly averages 1950's 83,000. 1960's 100,000. 1971 to 1976 57,000. Changes in the Federal government saw the figures increase in the years 1976 - 1980 70,000.

Until 1961 the white Australia Policy, ~~the~~ legacy of anti Chinese discrimination originating in the gold-rush period of the mid 1880's had been successful in excluding non-Caucasian immigrants. In the 20 years from the post War period there were only 1785 Asians admitted into Australia. The general opinion seems to be the types of people here who can most readily be absorbed, so that we can mould Australia into an Anglo-European community. One of the major concerns in the changing of this ~~policy~~ policy was it also discriminated against the aboriginal population as well as the non-caucasians.

Australia now has a new wave of immigrants these being mostly from the non-caucasian countries, They are not coming from the European displaced persons camps of the Second World War but from countries torn by wars, political oppression and human indignities. The number of these migrants may be small compared with post World War Two figures but they are on the increase with the 1981 census figures showing 10.9 percent of the

Australian population to be ~~of~~ none European homogeneity.

The story of Australia in the last two centuries has been that of the coming of convicts, settlers and workers from across seas, Immigration since the Second World War has been unprecedented, so that today Australia has one of the most ethnically and linguistically diversified populations in the World.

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SUMMARY

The purpose of this tape is to record the true story of a man whose life began in the Ukraine before World War Two, and has led to his retirement here in the Hunter Valley in N.S.W. Australia. His wealth was his health and his living was from day to day seeking, ^{was} doing and helping. }

Mr Manunczak is of Ukrainian ~~extraction~~ ^{extraction}, with his wife and three children ~~he~~ ^{she} arrived in Australia in the year 1949. His knowledge of Australia was very limited; he once thought that the people of Australia were all ~~Aborigines~~ ^{Aborigines}, He knew little of the ~~land down under~~ ^{land}. He found himself and family in a new land, with different customs, with a few German marks in his pocket, the clothes they were standing in, and little else, and spoke English to about 4th grade standard.

Like most of the displaced persons ~~that~~ ^{who} arrived in Australia Mr Manunczak had to sign a two year contract with the Australian Government. He was to work on the ~~railways~~ ^{railways}, for a period in Sydney and then at Telarah. His family were in Greta camp. He brought land at Greta and on completion of his contract with the railways he obtained a position with the Rutherford Textiles where he worked until his retirement. After buying his block of land at Greta with the help of some new found Australian ~~Friends~~ ^{Friends} he built his modest home and went about becoming an Australian.

Its 40 years since the Manunczak family came to Australia Mr Manunczak's recollection of the past is very vivid and clear.

[Through this recollection, I am trying to relate, to we born Australians, the type of person that came to our land and that settled in the Hunter Region.] In a time when family trees are being investigated by so many I see this tape as so important for some of the background, is real family heritage.]

*Corrected
in summary
of
interview.*

There are some 35,000 to 50,000 Ukrainians in Australia, most arriving between the years of 1948 to 1952. They are one of the smallest ethnic communities in Australia. They are hard working people, most have fitted into the Australian way of life, owning their own home and consumer goods.

Although this tape is unique to Mr Manunczak he was not alone. It is estimated that 100,000 people pass through the Greta immigration camp, most settling in the Hunter Region. They

all have their own stories to tell, for some, the memories are too painful to recall.

↳ It is hoped that through the recording of this tape and the experiences related to us that we, the people of the Hunter Region will have a better understanding of, and for, the people who settled here.

If I can gain a better understanding of them then I may have a better understanding of myself.

The summary of this tape could be condensed to the words of the teller (Mr Manunczak) "If I can tell my story"]