

MACEDONIAN AGENDA



16 essays on the development of Macedonian culture in Australia. Includes cultural values, language, religion, arts, identity, women's issues, the elderly, immigration, politics, the "child refugees", human rights and more

**Editor
Victor Bivell**

MACEDONIAN AGENDA

MACEDONIAN AGENDA

16 essays on the development of Macedonian culture in Australia. Includes cultural values, language, religion, arts, identity, women's issues, the elderly, immigration, politics, the "child refugees", human rights and more

**Editor
Victor Bivell**

MACEDONIAN AGENDA

Published by
POLLITECON PUBLICATIONS
PO Box 324
Five Dock NSW 2046
Australia

ISBN 0 646 22162 0

Copyright 1995

*Front cover: February 2, 1960, Bitola Railway Station, Macedonia:
Mr Aleksandar Kolupacev is farewelled by his village, Gjavato, as he
sets out for a new life in Port Kembla, Australia.*

Printed by Southwood Press Pty Limited
80-92 Chapel Street, Marrickville, NSW 2204

Introduction

The 1990s mark the 100th anniversary of the arrival of the first Macedonians in Australia, believed to have been in 1893. In this period, Macedonian-Australians have produced a considerable body of writing, a growing percentage of which is in English. While a good number of books and periodicals have been preserved, there have been few anthologies to record the many theses, essays and articles also produced.

With 16 essays by 14 writers, *Macedonian Agenda* is the most ambitious effort to date to fill this need. It is however only a beginning. The essays in *Macedonian Agenda* were written between 1988 and 1995 and represent a selection of the best writing by Macedonian-Australians during the period. The essays were all written in English and have as a common theme the development of the Macedonian people and culture in the Australian setting.

The essays give an insight into a range of topics close to the Macedonian heart. These include: cultural values, language, religion, arts, identity, women's issues, the elderly, settlement, politics, human rights, and the "child refugees" from Greece, among others.

Macedonian Agenda is suitable for general readers and researchers wishing to learn about the Macedonians in Australia as well as for readers of Macedonian background. The essays may be read in the order presented or according to the reader's own order of interests.

All of the writers are Australians of Macedonian background. The 14 authors comprise 11 individuals and three organizations. Among the individual authors are seven men and four women. The writers come from all major Macedonian settlements around Australia: Perth, Adelaide, Geelong, Melbourne, Canberra-Queanbeyan, Wollongong, Sydney and Newcastle. They are also representative in that their origins are in both the Republic of Macedonia and Aegean Macedonia (northern Greece).

Australia has been very good to its Macedonian immigrants, particularly in terms of educational opportunities and economic prosperity. The fact that most of the authors were born in Australia indicates how Australia has allowed the Macedonian spirit to find a freedom and expression that has too frequently been denied in its divided homeland.

The Editor

CONTENTS

Introduction	5
Macedonian Values in Multicultural Australia <i>Zoran Coseski</i>	9
Some Observations on the Speech of Bilingual Macedonian- Australians <i>Betty K Stewart</i>	15
The Australian-Macedonian Drama Group <i>Stefo Stojanovski</i>	27
The Macedonian Orthodox Church: Its Role in the Moulding and Maintenance of Ethnic Identity in Australia <i>Dr Christopher Popov and Michael Radin</i>	36
Barriers to Social Change for Macedonian Women <i>Malina Stankovska</i>	53
A Study of Women Activists in the Macedonian Community <i>Malina Stankovska</i>	62
The Macedonian Elderly: A Needs Study of the Macedonian Elderly in the Western Region of Melbourne <i>Macedonian Community Welfare Association of the Western Region Inc</i>	74
Features of Settlement in Australia by Macedonians from the Aegean Region <i>Michael Radin</i>	113
Proud of the Macedonian Heritage <i>Faye Kolev</i>	132
Assimilation and the Public and Private Identity of Macedonians: A Dialectical Expose <i>Pandora Petrovska</i>	135

Declaration of the "Child Refugees" <i>The Association of Refugee Children from the Aegean Part of Macedonia</i>	185
Submission on the 28,000 Ethnic Macedonian "Child Refugees" <i>Aegean Macedonian Association of Australia</i>	189
A Political Strategy for the Macedonian Diaspora <i>Victor Bivell</i>	204
The Political Future of the Macedonians in Australia <i>Zoran Coseski</i>	213
Australian Law, International Treaties and the Government's "Slav" Prefix <i>Risto Balalovski</i>	215
Why Australia? <i>Bob Spasenovski</i>	223
The Authors	226

Why Australia?

Bob Spasenovski

This speech was delivered at the Macedonian rally held at Parliament House, Canberra on June 1, 1994

Ladies and gentlemen, special guests and supporters.

Thank you for attending this peaceful protest, organized by the Macedonian community from all over Australia, and aimed at showing our disgust and displeasure towards the Australian Government's recent attempt to refer to us as "Slav Macedonians". It is important to note that in this year when nations such as South Africa have gained equality and democracy, and the Palestinian people limited autonomy, the Macedonian nation has been returned to the dark ages of dictatorship and denial of basic human rights. The difference between South Africa, Palestine and Macedonia is in the fact that what is done to the Macedonian nation is in fact done here, in Australia, in our so called democratic and multicultural homeland. Ladies and gentlemen, through its Minister for Foreign Affairs, Senator Evans, Australia decided to embark on an unprecedented path and attempt to rename the Macedonian community. This decision was made without any consultation with the Macedonian community, but under strict requests by the Greek lobby, and implemented through the Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, Senator Bolkus. The Government's decision is unprecedented because it is the only country, the only government, apart from Greece, that has decided to take this divisive, unjust, and inhumane approach.

We ask ourselves, why? The answer is because the Macedonian community has been loyal, has been fair, has not shouted and screamed as loud as the Greeks, has not burned churches, and has basically left the matter in the hands of the democratic process of Australia. Or at least we thought democratic. And what did we get for being patient and law abiding? We received a recognition package which can only be described as a Clayton's recognition. A recognition when you don't want a recognition. The Prime Minister, Mr Keating, said at our meeting with him, "You ought to be pleased about our efforts to recognize the FYROM," as he called it "and you should be very happy". I ask the Prime Minister, what

is there to be happy about? You give with one hand and you take with the other. The only group that can show pleasure and happiness as a result of this decision is the Greek community and the Greek Government. They got exactly what they requested. I ask you, ladies and gentlemen, is that a decision which shows that the Government is for all Australians or is it one that is divisive and biased?

There are no illusions, this government has done its homework, it has done its sums, and obviously decided to take the ball and run with the Greek lobby. It has decided to cause the biggest division within our multicultural society, and has denied the Macedonian community a basic human right, the right to call itself as it feels. It is ironic that this year, the year when the Australian Government attacks human rights violations in China for instance, they themselves commit the biggest human rights violation against their own citizens.

They spend millions of dollars telling other governments how to run their households, however they have not got their own house in order. It is a shameful act, an act that will haunt this government for the rest of its term. And out of office at the next elections. The Macedonian community has been known as Macedonian since the very first arrival of a Macedonian immigrant on the shores of Australia, which by the way was in 1893. The Macedonian community had formed and indeed registered churches, social and sporting clubs, dance groups and many other organization, and these have always been known as Macedonian. No previous Australian government has ever questioned our nationality and our ethnic background, no other government except this current Labor Government.

The Prime Minister, Mr Keating, when claiming victory at the last election, said "This is a victory for the true believers, this is a victory for all Australians". I remind the Prime Minister, we, the Macedonian community of Australia, are a part of those true believers, we are part of Australia, how come we missed out on our government's pledge? How come you abandoned us as if we were an insignificant leftover? Well, let me tell you, Mr Keating, Macedonia is not a leftover, but a part of the world, in fact it is one of the oldest nations on the Balkans. It is a bit like the Aboriginal nation, the rightful owners of Australia. You have introduced the Mabo legislation which goes a long way in addressing the question of the plight of the Aboriginals, and yet, with a stroke of your pen you have driven Macedonia back into the dark ages, you have decided to rewrite history, you have invited yourself to be our modern day godfather, unwanted by us, uninvited by us. Who gave you the right, Mr Keating, to place yourself above every other head of government in the world?

Where is your logic for attempting to rename us? If it is based on the fact that Macedonia was part of former Yugoslavia, then you must be aware that your government recognized other countries from the same Yugoslavia, without any preconditions and renaming. If on the other hand your logic is based on any threat of territorial pretences by Macedonia, then I must also draw your attention to the war in Bosnia. What is the cause for that war, Mr Keating? Territory, territory sought by the Serbs, yet you still recognized the new Yugoslav republic. And again this shows that any logic that you may utilize to excuse your inhumane treatment of the Macedonian community does not stand up to the very basic test. Does this then mean that there is one set of standards used in determining policy for Macedonians and another for other nationalities? Obviously so. I suppose you will now rename every person who originated from the former Soviet Union as Soviet Russian or Soviet Georgian. Or every German that lived in the former East Germany will now become East German, or maybe former East German. How ridiculous. Wake up to yourself, Mr Keating, reverse your unjust, inhumane decision, or at least, if you are too embarrassed to reverse it, then rescind the entire recognition package. We would rather be unrecognized by your government than have our pride and dignity attacked. Better no recognition than a Clayton's recognition. It is better to die standing up than to live on one's knees. We will not accept and obey your decision, we will fight it all the way, and believe us sooner or later you will see it our way and you will recognize your mistake. Only one thing will change by then, you will be out of office, you will have lost all support from the Macedonian voters. So if you plan a visit to Athens, we suggest to you to get it over and done with as soon as you can, or at least whilst you are still the Prime Minister.

You are in the process of turning Australia into a Republic. How would the Australian people like it if some governments in the world decided to rename Australia as the Former British Colony of Australia? I for one would stand up and protest most vigorously against such a decision, and I would like to think that every other Australian would do the same.

I conclude by saying - history cannot be rewritten. Many have tried in the past but fortunately for the human race they fell by the wayside. Don't let history repeat itself, don't allow yourself and your government to be remembered as the only government in the world, apart from Greece, that has imposed its will on another nation in this way. Reverse your decision, or rescind the entire package. There is no such thing as a "Slav" nation or country, there is only Macedonia and it belongs to the Macedonian nation. Makedonija na Makedoncite.