

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**

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*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.*

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Proud Of The Macedonian Heritage

Faye Kolev

This article was first published in the Australian Macedonian Weekly, October 18, 1994

My name is Faye Kolev. My surname was formerly "Saros", but I chose to revert to "Kolev" because it is the original Macedonian surname my family held before the Greek governments of Yiannis Metaxas and others changed the names of all Macedonians of Aegean Macedonia to Greek names between the 1920s and the 1930s.

I want to explain that I am Australian born. My parents came here to Australia from the village Neret (Lerinsko). Like many of us born here, I grew up very traumatized learning English in school and how to be an Australian, and then going home to a Macedonian household.

Weighing up my life as I grew older I chose to live the Australian way of life, but I must add I was nearing my 30s when I made this choice.

I also want to say even though I made this choice, I have never, ever, been ashamed of my Macedonian heritage and I speak the Neretski dialect as well as one who was born in Neret.

After almost 16 years of not associating in anything Macedonian, other than weddings or funerals, I was asked to go to the Macedonian rally in Melbourne on July the 30th, 1994. Prior to this, watching and reading the news of a free Macedonia being put on the world map was stirring my Macedonian heritage somewhat.

I went to the rally with my relatives, Neretski born, and one born in Kalinik, but by a Neretka mother, my father's sister. Yes, I went to protest about the "Slav" slogan given to us by the Australian Government because they were gutless and bowed to Greek pressure. The funny part is the Australian Government does not realize that of the people they think are Greek, half are Macedonians who had to come out on a Greek passport, because the word "Macedonian" was completely wiped out in Greece, until recent events.

I went to the rally, but I witnessed something else which was a feeling that stirred every bit of Macedonian pride in me, that was lying dormant in me for many years.

There were no Aegean, Vardar, or Pirin Macedonians. Wherever I

looked or as far as the eye could see, we were all just Macedonians. I didn't hear one person say "what part are you from?"

It was just great. It stirred me so much that I will stand and fight to have the Macedonians of Aegean and Pirin Macedonia free in any way I can. I hope to live to see the day that Macedonia is all one again.

I also would like to say that there are many Aegean Macedonians who migrated here, who know that they are Macedonian, but still have a fear of reprisal by the Greek Government. Don't look down on these people as traitors. Many of them have seen and been through terrible tragedies.

My mother's brother was a Macedonian partisan and he was executed by the Greeks. The people of Neret lost many young men and some women, married and not married. And not just Neret. Many villages lost people for a free Macedonia. Their lives weren't lost in vain. What they fought for has begun to happen.

The other thing I would like to stress is to all the younger first and second generation Aussie Macedonians. Yes, we are Aussie and I am sure some of us couldn't speak Macedonian to save our lives. It is just like the ones in Aegean Macedonia - Greek is now easier for them.

There is just one difference: we have a choice, those in Aegean Macedonia have not. We who were born here have never been denied our heritage. Actually, people born here of all nationalities are told to keep their heritage. We were born in a freedom-loving country.

I just want to say: let's be proud of our Macedonian heritage, let's combine it with our Aussie way of life, let's not forget the people who have passed away. Yes, they brought their traditions with them, some bad, but some very good ones also.

The parents, the grandparents, the uncles, aunties, cousins who didn't live to see a free Macedonia, even though it's not Aegean Macedonia yet, they would have been full of pride to see it.

I also say to anybody from 50 downward who was born to Neretski parents, both or one, who reads this letter, the Neret club needs you. We all have someone who gave to build the club, but didn't live to see it erected. The club needs its younger people. If anyone is guilty of not supporting it, I am the first to admit that I for one am guilty.

There is definitely a culture problem within us and the elders that run the club, but they are good people. They are Neretski and Macedonians. These are the people who taught us about our Macedonian heritage, as have those that have passed on. I am sure they would be prepared to hear some of our grievances so that we can combine both Australian and Macedonian cultures together. Neret needs us as does the Macedonian movement.

The last thing I want to write, although I know many Macedonians won't agree with: the Greeks are human beings, every Greek cannot be blamed for the terrible treatment of the Aegean Macedonians. There are Greeks who have been sentenced to prison in Greece for speaking up for us. We must use our voice for these people.

Also only up to a few days ago I had an intense hate for the "Grkomans". I now only pity them. They have been brainwashed beyond reality. The Greeks who were sentenced to prison, who told Greece we are Macedonian, that we have our own language, our own culture, have been brave enough to prove this.

God bless them, Macedonia and this country Australia that I am also very proud to be a part of.