

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

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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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The Political Future Of The Macedonians In Australia

Zoran Coseski

*This article was published in the Australian Macedonian Weekly of
October 12, 1993*

In the past few decades the Macedonian community around the world has had unprecedented freedom of expression for its unique culture; not only in the Republic of Macedonia but most countries where Macedonians live, including Australia, USA and Canada.

In Bulgaria, Albania, and the cradle of democracy, Greece, no such cultural rights exist for the Macedonian people and recently the Greek state has intensified its anti-Macedonian campaign to the extent of Greek officials stirring up trouble in other countries. Something the Australian authorities are well aware of but conveniently choose to ignore.

Assume for the sake of argument that there are regimes whose ends seem to be irrational. It is a mistake to think that because a Government has irrational ends it must be clumsy, erratic or incompetent. Greece's aim to jeopardize Macedonia's capacity to exist as a viable political and economic unit is an example of how efficient the menagerie that calls itself the Greek Government is when it knows that it can get away with almost anything against the Macedonians in Australia and the world. This is mainly because the Greek community is more nationalistic and well organized than the Macedonians, who think the world evolves around Macedonia - how wrong can one be?

The menacing anti-Macedonian sentiment being fostered to obscenely hysterical levels by the Greek Government is more than an exercise in intimidation of a relatively peaceful and impoverished people. It is arguable that Greece's reckless and chauvinistic foreign policy is deliberately calculated to make the deteriorating situation attractive for a Serbian military intervention in Macedonia. Such a conflict also provides a pretext for involvement by Greece.

Here again the Australian Government chooses to keep quiet and not upset the large Greek lobby in Australia.

In the past the Macedonian community in Australia has been more than loyal to the Australian Labor Party. However, the Labor Govern-

ment has remained unresponsive and unsympathetic to the logical arguments being put before it in support of the recognition of the Republic of Macedonia or the opening of a Macedonian Government office in Australia - simply because it remains captive of the formidable Greek lobby in Australia.

The Labor Government does not deserve any further support from the Macedonian community for the following reasons:

1. Prime Minister Bob Hawke in a radio interview in Perth in October 1991 said that as soon as Macedonia fulfilled the requirements for international recognition Australia will be amongst the first to recognize it. Macedonia fulfilled these requirements on 15 January 1992.

2. Prime Minister Paul Keating in July 1992 said that as soon as the European Community recognizes Macedonia, Australia will follow. All 12 European countries including Greece have either recognized Macedonia, though they have not yet established full diplomatic relations, or have a Consulate in Skopje. Australia is yet to make any move.

3. Around 200,000 Macedonians in Australia are discriminated against by the Australian Government in the lack of assistance for travel, family, trade and other related problems that could be provided by a Macedonian Government office.

4. The federal seat in Wollongong is one of Australia's safest seats because of the Macedonians. What have Macedonians gained from this?

5. Gareth Evans as Foreign Minister visited Kutlesh (Vergina in Greek) at a politically inappropriate time.

Macedonians must view the Australian Government's position on Macedonia with suspicion and resentment. In other words, it is only using the Macedonian community for its own political convenience.

The Labor Government needs to re-earn the respect of the Macedonian Australian community and respond more comprehensively to logic and international law.

Meanwhile the Australian-Macedonian community must become more sophisticated in the art of political lobbying.

Macedonians must consider very carefully the support given to them by their local member of parliament in support of Macedonians being equal with everyone else in Australia. An example of this inequality was the listing of Macedonia under the letter "F" in the Telecom directory so the Greek community could be satisfied. Macedonians need to turn to all political parties who will lend a sympathetic ear to the concept of equality.

Macedonians need to form business and trade bodies in Australia and undertake the cultural development of young Macedonians through private, mainstream schools where the Macedonian language, culture and religion will be taught on a daily basis.