the harbor of Kalamata
Константинос Парбенис, 1911
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The first Greek-Australian Review: re-organisation in the Greek-Australian communities of the post-mass migration era

Abstract

Researchers have analysed the post-1950 phenomenon of large concentrations of migrants within certain types of industry by focusing on its systemic impact on the Australian labour force and on the quality of the migrants' lives. In contrast, our research examines the nature and quality of the migrants' own interventions in twentieth century Australian cultural and political life. These interventions have included establishing an extensive organisational and communication network, which the Greek-Australian activists relied upon from the early 1960s to facilitate the absorption of the newly arriving migrants into the established political culture of the Greek-Australian communities in the major cities. In this paper we lend support to our claim that the material preconditions for establishing this network were partly secured in the 1950s following the activists' efforts to establish their own national print media in the form of the publication of the first Greek-Australian Review.

Introduction

From early in the 1960s Greek-Australian activists living in Australia's major cities had at their disposal an extensive organisational and communication network. Its reach extended both inwardly towards their communities in relation to which it played an educative role and outwardly towards
other minorities and the Anglophone society in relation to which it played a spokesperson role (Vassilacopoulos and Nicolacopoulos, 2005: 245-259). In its former capacity this network was to become an indispensable part of the absorption of newly arriving migrants into the established political culture of the Greek-Australian communities of the major cities. This was a culture of defiance against the dominant assimilationist policies and practices; of determination in the aspiration to become Australian in one's own way; and of conviction in the strength of collective resources and action. The fundamental ideas that gave rise to political goals associated with the establishment of a suitable organisational and communication network were initially formulated in the 1930s and 1940s. But their material preconditions were secured in the 1950s (Nicolacopoulos and Vassilacopoulos, 2003/2004: 159-216). From the mid 1950s the idea of active Greek-Australian citizenship was functioning as an organisational principle guiding every area of Greek migrants' activism. By the end of the decade the workers' leagues and the then newly formed newspaper, Neos Kosmos, ensured for the Greek-Australian activists an organisational and communication network that consisted of strong links within the Greek-Australian communities whilst also extending outwardly to important parts of the Australian labour, Left, democratic and reform movements of the time.

As a whole, the decade of the 1950s represents a period in which the Left gradually worked towards, firstly, determining new inter-subjective relations within the Greek-Australian communities, between the "new" and "old" migrants; secondly, establishing new organisational forms of collective action within and between the workers' leagues; thirdly, pressuring for the formation of community organisational networks capable of responding to the urgent welfare needs of the new migrants; and fourthly, providing the collective voice of the Greek-Australian Left with a suitable means of mass communication. This paper recounts part of the history of this fourth dimension of the struggles to shape the Greek-Australian communities into a self-determining force by focusing on the aspirations and achievements of the short lived Greek-Australian Review (hereafter "Review") published from 1951-1953.

Beginning July 1951 the Review was published on a monthly basis and its bilingual editions continued to be distributed throughout the major
Australian cities until its forced closure on politically motivated grounds in mid 1953. According to its published circulation list, the Review was distributed through central bookshops and news agencies in Melbourne, Brisbane, Sydney, Adelaide and Perth. It was sold for two shillings and financed by supporters whose contributions were encouraged as an expression of shared responsibility. Financial contributors were regularly acknowledged in print, no matter how small their contribution. Mr. C. E. Coutoupes was recorded as the founder and editor of the journal, which operated out of the offices at 22 Chaucer Street, St. Kilda and Joseph Waters, Collins House, 360 Collins Street, Melbourne. Consistently with the legal requirements of the time, the Review attributed responsibility for its publication to a private individual, rather than to the collective of Greek-Australian Left activists who were responsible for producing and distributing the journal as part of a wider, ongoing effort to establish a collective voice with national reach. (Prior to the publication of the Review, the Greek-Australian Left published the Democratic Bulletin, a newsletter of the workers’ leagues that was circulated on a state and interstate level and the nationally distributed Democratic Bulletin of the Federation of Greek Workers League and Mercury, an initiative of the Olympic Youth, many of whose prominent members were associated with the Greek Left. These newsletters generally consisted of up to six pages and covered the news, events and issues of concern to the specific organisations’ membership. The decades following the Review saw various attempts to create a commercially viable newspaper beginning with Neos Kosmos and followed by The Unionist, Democratic Voice, New Course and New Directions. Journals published in the second half of the twentieth century with support from the Greek-Australian Left included a second Greek Australian Review, Chroniko and Contact, the journal of the Modern Greek Students’ Association.)

How did the Review present itself to readers? What themes and issues did it cover and who wrote for the journal? What were the hopes and aspirations of the Greek-Australian activists in producing the Review and how did they respond to its forced closure? Finally, looking back on this moment in the history of the Greek-Australian Left’s struggles to develop a national communications network within the Greek-Australian communities, what place can we assign to the first Greek-Australian Review? Let us begin to address these questions looking firstly at the cover and layout of its editions.
First Impressions

The Review announces its raison d'être on the cover beginning with a two-line bilingual masthead that reads: “Ελληνο-Αυστραλιανή Επιθεώρηση” followed by “Greek-Australian Review”, though the English language title sometimes appears at the foot of the page instead. On the left-hand side of the cover we see an image of the Southern Cross surrounding the Greek flag and beneath this a dot-point column in both Greek and English reads:

- Monthly Magazine of the Social, Cultural and Sporting Life of the Greek Community in Australia
- To popularize the Greek and Australian way of life
- To promote friendly relations between Greek immigrants and Australians.

The first page also draws potential subscribers’ attention to the Review’s internationalist orientation and educational aspirations:

*The Greek-Australian Review aims to present in its pages the literature of the WHOLE WORLD. Also it welcomes contributions from GREEK AND AUSTRALIAN WRITERS AND ARTISTS. For this reason we will begin presenting original translations of works by ancient Greek, English, Australian, Latin, Russian, Italian, German and other writers from our first issues (Review, July 1951).*

The cover of each edition employs an image to highlight the main theme, which typically addresses some aspect of contemporary Greek-Australian life. Drawing attention to rural areas or city life, the literature and history of Greece or Australia, developments in the arts, we find images of Greek peasants in traditional dress, heroes of the Greek Revolution, images of famous Renaissance paintings and sketches relating to issues such as world peace, the significance of Christmas celebrations or major sporting events. Occasionally the back cover also hosts a painting or photograph depicting Australian rural life.

Along with the contents column, the editor’s name and details of subscription rates, the first page is largely devoted to the editorial, which is set out in Greek and then repeated on the second page in English. Because a significant proportion of the published material had to be translated or written in English, in order to conform to the foreign language publication laws
of the time, the Review relied heavily on the voluntary contributions of the young Greek-Australian activists, members of the Olympiakos Youth, who were competent in both languages. Already by the end of the first year of its existence the Review had declared its success in that “it has been enriched technically and has created a wide circle of new Greek-Australian contributors” (Review, July 1952, “Twelve months”). Thus the journal served as an important training ground for the development of the sorts of skills that would become indispensable to the Greek-Australian Left’s future print media production within the communities.

The Review was dedicated to “uplifting the culture of Greeks in Australia” by familiarizing readers with the Greek and Australian way of life in their various manifestations (Review, July 1952, “Twelve months”). Aside from the editorial, each edition typically hosted bilingual pages on literature, including Australian writers and poets whose work appeared in the original and was translated into the Greek; Greek-Australian literature; presentations of literary figures and writers from Greece and other countries, analyses of the political or economic situation of Greece and Australia and reviews of international politics; articles and commentary on Australian history; on Greek and international history; on the history of Greek-Australian community organisations, a women’s page; a correspondence page; sport news; humor; articles on scientific developments and educational issues; and Greek-Australians’ representations of the migrant experience. This latter took various forms including a column that invited and responded to readers’ questions ranging from assessing the role of the Review to addressing the industrial and educational concerns of the migrants.

Popularising the Greek and Australian way of life

Throughout the journal’s pages the aim of popularising the Greek and Australian way of life was interpreted as a matter of connecting the Greek migrant readership to the ideals, frames of reference and activities promoted by the wider Australian Left and labour movements. Two members of the Communist Party of Australia (hereafter “CPA”), played a leadership role in establishing these wider links. Vasilis Stephanou and Alekos Doukas, who not only played a major part in the journal’s inception but they were also responsible for different aspects of the journal’s policy direction.
Doukas encouraged the broader education of Greek migrants by acquainting them with the arts, most notably, literature and history. At the time, the CPA encouraged members to establish broad-based educational circles to cultivate and support the socialist realist approach to the arts that was favoured amongst members of the CPA. As a CPA member and writer, Doukas adopted this approach in his own writing, maintained ties with its Australian Left advocates and fostered its wider familiarisation amongst the Greek migrants, including through the journal.

Stephanou took the lead on aligning the journal's coverage with CPA policies in response to the arrival of the migrants. For example, the column devoted to industrial issues titled, \( \text{Η εργατική μας σελίδα} \), usually appealed to readers to reflect upon issues from their perspective as workers and to cast their vote taking into account issues such as the impact of decisions on wages, working conditions, future security and so on. It also contained sophisticated analyses on issues like Federal elections, the electoral and arbitration systems, the benefits of unionised labour etc. (Review, December 1952, “The coming elections in Victoria” and “The arbitration court system”). Indeed the Review regularly insisted that the migrants take an interest in the affairs of their new country as a responsibility of citizenship (Review, December 1952: 9). In this way it gave shape to the ideal of active Greek-Australian citizenship.

The Review typically presented the migrant community as consisting of so-called “new” and “old” migrants who were not to be held up as a single group, opposed to the rest of the Australian society, but were in fact differently socially positioned, particularly in relation to their financial, personal and family circumstances. Here is how the Review presented the situation of the Greek migrants in August 1952 with the developing unemployment crisis:

*For a community like the Greek that consists of new and old migrants, for a community which is part of the Australian environment and for a community which is interested in what is happening around her, life presents many questions [...] principally: What effect will the developing political and economic crisis in Australia have on the members of our Community? Who will assist the Community as a whole and what relief will be given to Greeks in the event of a deep economic crisis? The answers to these questions could be the same as those given to the average Australian citizen and Greek for that matter. But something more needs to be said in answer to the Greek*
Migrant's questions because the solution to his problem and that of the Community is more complicated and more difficult. The prewar migrants have merged with the Australian environment and created a better way of life. The then workers in equal proportion to the Australian people developed into small businessmen. During the war those who did not serve in the armed forces may even have created a comparatively small fortune. Those who remained workers linked their fate with that of the Australian worker and during the war when comparative prosperity existed this prosperity was reflected in comparative higher wages. But for the new migrants the scene differs. Few new migrants arrived in Australia and had not borrowed their fare or had no family responsibilities. Few are those that did not borrow to bring out their wives or families. And there are fewer still who do not send money to Greece for the subsistence of close relatives. So the development of an economic crisis and unemployment will have a different effect on the new migrants from the old. The old migrants have assimilated into the Australian life and during the prewar economic crisis and unemployment struggled on the side of the Australian people for better conditions. They have the experience of that situation and have the duty to teach the new migrants the need for solidarity with the Australian people in the battle of life. To prevent the repetition of the unpleasant events of that period when foreign-born workers faced the wrath of Australian unemployed when they (the foreigners) were prepared to work under lower working conditions. The artificial division of new and old migrants does not eliminate the necessity of effort by all to face the developing situation. An economic crisis affects all irrespective of the period of their residence in this country. The fostering of anti-foreign ideas harm all foreign born irrespective of their origin be they Greeks, Italians, Poles, or Jews. For all these problems care must be taken by all. This care must emanate from every organisation and private individual who has a leading role in our community. This care cannot be similar in all cases but must be of a character that responds to the needs of our compatriots and the ultimate aim must be not to worsen working conditions but to preserve a level of self-respect. For these reasons the unemployed of today and tomorrow must contact leaders of our church and of all Greek organisations and present the problems they face and demand guidance as to their best solution (Review, August 1952, "Need for assistance").
Stephanou and Doukas were both “old migrants”, having arrived together in 1927 after they had met on their sea journey to Australia. Their subsequent years of association with the Australian Left and labour movements proved critical for determining the approach that the journal would take on the representation of Australian society, politics and history. This approach did not stop at promoting the interests of the migrants against the mainstream society but also extended to understanding the deeper issues of injustice at the heart of the formation of White Australia. So, for example, unlike the mainstream print media within the Greek-Australian communities and in line with the CPA policy of the time, the Review was keen to create awareness amongst the “new migrants” about the history of Indigenous dispossession, a history about which dominant white Australia had remained silent.

They treated the Indigenous peoples coldly and inhumanely. When they resisted, they killed them. [...] , they would poison them by leaving out food laced with arsenic or pushing him into the bush and burning the area around him. There is evidence that around Swan Hill, the Indigenous peoples died of starvation because the whites would kill the kangaroos, their main source of food. 70,000 kangaroos were killed in just one mass slaughter (Review, 1952: 25.)

Published in 1952, this account of the genocide formed part of a series of historical articles that were published under the title “The background of Australian life”. Educating the community about its socio-historical position had been considered indispensable to Greek-Australians’ political emancipation from the time of the formation of the first workers leagues in the 1930s. The representation of the plight of Indigenous Australians mirrored similar accounts that had been published by the CPA. The CPA insisted on viewing the Indigenous peoples, like the migrants, as workers and hence as victims of Australia’s capitalist ruling class and, hence, called upon all workers to demonstrate their class solidarity. In aligning itself with the minority of white Australians who sought to break the silence on Indigenous dispossession at a time when the mass migration program was in its early implementation phase, the Review did not simply propagate CPA policy. To be sure, its pages reflected the tension evident in the CPA’s willingness to acknowledge Indigenous dispossession at the same time as singing the praises of the white Australian labour movement, which was of course heavily im-
complicated in the racist nation building process that had been constitutionally embedded at Federation. For example, the editorial devoted to the celebration of the 50th anniversary of Australian Federation (*Review*, August 1951, “Commonwealth Jubilee Year”). Still, this rather brave act in naming the genocide marks the first migrant community effort openly to link the future of a just society with the fate of politically vocal migrants. In showing sensitivity to the tragedy of the first Australians, the Greek-Australian activists were at once insisting on the rights of equal citizenship for all.

The *Review* offers a prime example of what we might call a “practical multiculturalism grounded in solidarity”. Although the term was not used, every aspect of this publication served to invite the creative construction of a new identity, what the editors called, “μια καινούργια Ελληνοαυστραλιανή ζωή”, a new Greek-Australian way of life, (*Review*, July 1951, Editorial; *Review*, December 1952: 9). This way of life was to become a matter of practical politics in the sense of a public and collective doing, rather than as mere official policy. In other words, the practical multiculturalism that the *Review* fostered was to result from the self-determining activity of this relatively autonomous group for whom public recognition was never conflated with or reduced to governmental/bureaucratic recognition. Because, public recognition in this sense confers a kind of objective universality to the products of the activity in question, the appeal to cultivate a new Greek-Australian way of life referred neither to the adoption of merely subjective choices nor to a set of fixed and pre-determined values. Rather, it referred to the enactment of an active and constructive citizenship practice. From as early as 1949 the Greek-Australian activists had publicly differentiated Australian citizenship from the substantive values of this or that particular ethnicity or from the national origins of Australians, to use the language of the time (Nicolacopoulos and Vassilacopoulos, 2002). But when the *Greek-Australian Review* called upon Greek-Australians collectively to shape a new Greek-Australian way of life the call marked the first attempt to translate the demand into a political goal.

This was an important alternative to the more widely familiar idea of the “new Australian” that was also being advocated in the 1950s and 1960s (Murphy, 2000: 149-167; Sheridan, 2002: 143-151). With the idea of the new Australian, the dominant Anglophone discourses effectively treated
the category “Australian” as self-subsistent. That is, it was represented as containing a fixed and pre-given substance, namely Australian living standards and Anglophone Australians’ life styles. Here, the word “new” in the term “new Australian” attached to the migrant body. This body was, in turn, represented as either having recently been reshaped, or as still in the process of being reshaped in accordance with the pre-given substance of what it is to be an Australian. In the first case this was the old pre-mass migration migrant who had demonstrated successful assimilation and in the second it was the newly arriving migrant who had been selected for his or her capacity to assimilate to a pre-given understanding of Australianness. By comparison, the pages of the Greek-Australian Review related the term “new” to the category, Australian, itself rather than to its specific newly constructed or incomplete embodiments. We see this in the discussions of literary works just as much as in the social and political commentary. Greek migrant activists thus signaled the relative indeterminateness of the category, Australian. Herein lay its potential for generating new meanings by those who were willing to position themselves appropriately.

Promoting friendly relations

This is why the second stated aim of promoting friendly relations between Greek migrants and the Australian people could not be met by simply providing the two groups with information about each other’s history, habits and cultural practices. Instead it was given a particular meaning by drawing upon universal values of solidarity and democratic rights and an internationalist vision that focused on world peace and resistance to all forms of oppression. Whether recounting the recent history of Greece, or celebrating national and religious days, such as Greek Independence Day and Christmas, the Review took every opportunity to link such events to the revolutionary spirit of peoples’ from Europe and elsewhere and to highlight the protagonists’ radical transformative practices. The same connections were also reinforced in the coverage of events involving members of the wider Australian community.¹ This approach encouraged Greek migrants, firstly, to see their own history and current situation as offering them opportunities to position themselves as active agents who could draw on their traditions as a resource for creative self-definition; and, secondly, to see their agency as belonging to a collective of Australians who took responsi-
bility for creating a just and democratic society. In this way the journal also distinguished the potential relationship of Greek migrants to the Left and labour movements from the dominant white Australian institutions and discourses that positioned them as perpetual foreigners-within (Nicolacopoulos and Vassilacopoulos, 2004a).

Just as the selection of Australian news coverage encouraged a critical awareness of the different sections of Australian society, so too life within the Greek-Australian communities was represented as offering the potential for a collective transformative practice to migrants who were willing to recognize their social responsibility. Thus in informing readers of the Greek organisations' activities, the journal regularly promoted the life of those community organisations that fostered the innovative development of Greek-Australian cultural life. For example, when the Olympic Youth expanded its activities to incorporate the arts, theatre and education the Review reported on the decision with significant praise (Review, October 1951: 9).

At the same time the journal launched a scathing criticism of the Greek establishment, which it presented as ignoring the needs of the growing migrant communities. Characteristically, in a column entitled "Critical notes", the Review drew attention to the indifference of the established community organisations to the immediate needs of the new migrants, particularly in relation to housing assistance, and called on the Greek Orthodox Community of Melbourne and Victoria (hereafter "GOCMV") to advocate for an efficient migrant reception program in the face of increasing numbers of new arrivals who often found themselves in desperate circumstances. It expressed disappointment in the lack of member participation at the general meeting of the GOCMV (200 out of 600 members) despite the fact that the meeting's purpose was to discuss the immigration program. It also expressed disappointment in the general meeting for failing to grant women the right to vote. In a similar vein, it ridiculed the newspaper, The Australian-Greek, for reporting "the educational society should stay above the mud that surrounds us" and that it was not the place of GOCMV to organize lectures addressing migrant issues and grievances. The Review responded with a plea for full transparency and acknowledgement of the realities of life:
Let’s build our house from glass. [...] Life is such that both flowers and mud are next to each other. We are willing to consider all the aspects of life without the fear that someone could throw a stone at our glass house and that we will thus find ourselves naked in front of reality (Review, October 1951).

Noting that the established community organisations were largely led by the old, more established migrants, a later edition once again raised the question of the responsibility of the “old migrants” to the “new migrants”, lamenting the indifference of the former and characterizing the impact on the latter as “tragic” (Review, December 1951: 9).

In sum, the Review sought to welcome the new migrants into a part of Australian society that was not readily apparent at first glance. Elsewhere we have argued that whereas the dominant white Australian discourses of the times sought to position the newly arriving migrants as at best compliant foreigners, the conservative Greek-Australian community organisations and institutions appealed to them to adopt the standpoint of submissive foreigners. In contrast, the Review’s understanding of “friendly relations” was based on a principled promotion of a set of demands for equal citizenship.

The “Review” could not ignore the social development of our communities and not describe it. [...] And as twelve months ago we claim “The publication of this periodical has no aim to develop into a profitable commercial enterprise.’ so today we add that we will try to serve our compatriots honestly and without gain. We will try not only to describe life as far as possible in real colours but also to defend the interests of the Greeks, which are closely linked with the progress and happiness of the Australian people. We will try to expose any attempt emanating from any quarter, which would bring the division of our Community and the underestimation of the Greeks in the eyes of the Australian People (Review, July 1952, “Twelve months”).

Forced closure

The Review took every opportunity to speak out on behalf of the humanitarian, democratic and citizenship rights of migrants despite, the climate of anti-communism. At a time when the Menzies Government sought Referendum approval to outlaw the CPA (Review, December 1951), the Review campaigned against the government’s attempts to deport migrant
activists who were demonstrating in support of the democratic rights, and it exposed the intolerable circumstances of the migrants in holding camps, such as Bonegilla (Review, February, 1953, "Stop the menace of deportations"). Thus presenting as a problem for the authorities who were promoting Australia as a great destination for European migrants, in mid 1953 the editor's publication license was revoked, despite strong protests against the forced closure (Literature Review, July 1953:4). A few attempts were made to keep the journal in circulation under the names, Literature Review (July 1953) and The Cultural Review (October 1953) without ongoing success. It was not until the end of the decade that the Left was able to re-establish its national communication network with the publication of Neos Kosmos.

Notes
1 For example, the Review presents an extensive interview with the Reverend Victor James, Rector of the Unitarian Church of Melbourne and member of the ministers of religion Victorian Peace Quest Forum. The Reverend recounts his participation at the Peace Conference of the Asian and Pacific, which was held in China in 1952. Review, December 1952.

2 For example, there is a piece on the willingness of the people all around the world to fight fascism and oppression in Review, October 1951, "28th of October"; another on the significance of the 25th of March celebrations in Review, March 1952, "25th of March"; on the heroic resistance to the German invasion (Review, April 1952, "April 1941". Leading into the festive season there are pieces on the importance of world peace in Review, December 1951, "Christmas 1951"; on the revolutionary message of Christ in Review, December 1952, "Christmas 1952"; and on hope for the future in Review, January 1953, "New year".

3 See also: Review, April 1952 "The Greek Orthodox Church in Australia"; Review, April 1952, "Twenty years of Zenon"; Review, April 1952, "Orpheas".

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