

SPEECH NOTES FOR THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON. E.G. WHITLAM, Q.C. M.P.  
FOR THE GREEK COMMUNITY CENTRE, SOUTH BRISBANE  
SUNDAY 17 NOVEMBER 1974

---

1. I SPEAK TO YOU TODAY AS YOUR COUNTRYMEN IN GREECE VOTE IN A DEMOCRATIC ELECTION FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE 1967. I REJOICE THAT DEMOCRACY HAS BEEN RESTORED IN THE COUNTRY OF ITS BIRTH. THE ELECTED GOVERNMENT OF GREECE WILL HAVE THE FIRM SUPPORT AND FRIENDSHIP OF AUSTRALIA, ITS GOVERNMENT AND ITS PEOPLE.

2. I KNOW THAT MANY GREEKS IN AUSTRALIA FEARED FOR THE POLITICAL STABILITY OF THEIR HOMETLAND DURING THE RULE OF THE COLONELS AND EVEN AFTER THE MILITARY REGIME WAS OVERTHROWN. MANY GREEKS WHO FOUND THEMSELVES IN AUSTRALIA AS TEMPORARY VISITORS DURING THE RECENT TURBULENCE IN GREECE HAVE BEEN RELUCTANT TO RETURN HOME UNTIL THE SITUATION IS CLARIFIED. THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT HAS NOT ENFORCED THEIR DEPARTURE AND WILL NOT DO SO. THOSE WHO DO NOT WANT TO RETURN HOME IMMEDIATELY HAVE HAD THEIR VISAS EXTENDED AND THIS PRACTICE WILL CONTINUE FOR THE TIME BEING. THE MINISTER FOR LABOR AND IMMIGRATION, MR CLYDE CAMERON, HAS GIVEN THIS ASSURANCE TO THE GREEK COMMUNITY, AND I AM HAPPY TO REPEAT IT TODAY.

3. MANY GREEKS IN AUSTRALIA HAVE BEEN DISTURBED BY THE RECENT EVENTS IN CYPRUS. AUSTRALIA HAS CONTRIBUTED A POLICE CONTINGENT TO THE U.N. PEACE KEEPING FORCE IN CYPRUS SINCE ITS INCEPTION IN 1964. QUEENSLAND, LIKE EVERY OTHER STATE AND TERRITORY, CONTRIBUTED TO THAT FORCE. ONE OF THE FIRST DECISIONS OF MY GOVERNMENT WAS TO KEEP THE FORCE IN BEING, THOUGH THE LIBERAL GOVERNMENT HAD DECIDED TO PHASE IT OUT DURING 1973. IN JANUARY 1973 I WROTE TO THE PREMIERS OF QUEENSLAND, N.S.W. AND VICTORIA ASKING THEM TO MAINTAIN THEIR POLICE CONTINGENTS IN THE FORCE. SIR ROBERT ASKIN AND MR HAMER AGREED TO DO SO. MR BJELKE-PETERSEN WAS THE ONLY PREMIER TO REFUSE. THE FORCE NUMBERED 35 IN JUNE 1974. LAST WEEK AN AUSTRALIAN SERGEANT WAS KILLED AND ANOTHER INJURED BY A MINE EXPLOSION DURING SERVICE IN CYPRUS.

4. NOTES ON GREEKS IN AUSTRALIA

SOME OF THE FIRST GREEK SETTLERS IN AUSTRALIA WERE SAILORS WHO LEFT THEIR SHIPS DURING THE FIRST GOLD RUSH IN THE 1850'S. A NUMBER OF IONIAN GREEKS WHO MET AUSTRALIAN TROOPS DURING THE BOER WAR EVENTUALLY SETTLED IN AUSTRALIA. MANY LINKS BETWEEN AUSTRALIANS AND GREEKS ESTABLISHED DURING THE EVACUATION OF GREECE IN WORLD WAR II ARE STILL REMEMBERED IN BOTH COUNTRIES.

AT THE END OF 1973 THERE WERE ABOUT 153,000 GREEK-BORN PERSONS IN AUSTRALIA. ABOUT 88,000 HAD BECOME AUSTRALIAN CITIZENS SINCE 1945.

SIR GEORGE BOWEN, THE FIRST GOVERNOR OF QUEENSLAND (1856-68), SPENT MANY YEARS OF HIS LIFE IN THE IONIAN ISLANDS. HIS WIFE, DIAMANTINA ROMA, WAS BORN ON ITHACA. SHE WAS PARTICULARLY ACTIVE IN THE PUBLIC LIFE OF QUEENSLAND AND IS REMEMBERED IN THE NAMES OF THE TOWN OF ROMA, THE DIAMANTINA RIVER AND ITHACA SHIRE.

GEORGE GEORGES, BORN IN DARWIN OF GREEK PARENTS, HAS BEEN AN AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY SENATOR FOR QUEENSLAND SINCE 1968.

NICHOLAS LAURENTUS WHO BECAME A MILLIONAIRE THROUGH REAL ESTATE HAS MADE CONSIDERABLE DONATIONS TO CHARITABLE ORGANISATIONS AND GAVE A LARGE SUM TO THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY TO ESTABLISH A CHAIR OF MODERN GREEK.

MICHAEL KAILIS HAS ESTABLISHED A CONSIDERABLE FORTUNE THROUGH HIS SHIP BUILDING, FISHING AND SEAFOOD PROCESSING INDUSTRIES IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA AND THE NORTHERN TERRITORY.

THE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH HAS FORMED THE BACKBONE OF ORGANISED GREEK LIFE IN AUSTRALIA SINCE 1908 AND HAS PROVIDED THE FOCUS FOR SOCIAL COHESION.

(FOR BACKGROUND ON MIGRANTS GENERALLY SEE ATTACHED NOTES ON ITALIANS.)