

Australia each day, addressing different aspects of Australian life:

“It was difficult because we had so many different languages. The lectures were given mainly in German or English, and there were various translators for the various countries aboard who tried to translate the lecturers’ talk. However, as you know, with translation you can fudge things quite nicely. I think we were told only about the beautiful things and none of the negative points.”

Sigrid Parlato was 26 years old when she made the voyage to Australia in a cramped cabin with four other women and a child. She remembers being very seasick for the first week of the trip and later had to assist one of the women in her cabin who was very ill, using her training as a nurse:

“She couldn’t get up out of her bed at all for a while and I had to take her over to the doctor. Up, up, up, up, all those steps!”

Sigrid Parlato paid approximately 200 Marks for the voyage, which

was practically nothing. In return she committed herself to two years working in Australia, taking whatever job was available. According to her, the Greeks were put on one side of the ship and the Germans and Scandinavians on the other side. Also, men were segregated from women and children. Even married couples had to sleep with the single men and women. There were no married quarters. She remembers that they were required to learn English aboard the ship, but that they always talked and sang in German and had a good time, “even if we didn’t have one cent of money, which we didn’t.”

According to Sigrid Parlato, seasickness was the worst experience on the journey to Australia. Boredom and monotony were also features of the long sea voyages, as people had little or no money. She remembers that the best part of the voyage was the companionship, so much so that 42 years on she still has friends today from that voyage.

From Camp to Camp – Arriving in Australia

The migrants disembarked in Melbourne or Sydney and most were housed in former army barracks far from the populated centres and major cities. Food was basic, the language foreign, and the accommodation was at best basic. Bep Torkington arrived in Sydney in June 1951:

“Originally my family were not going to the migrant camps, because my father had a job in Brisbane, but it didn’t eventuate. We decided to take the offer of accommodation at the migrant camp for the time being, until we looked around a bit and then settled down. We were there for about a month. It was very cold to start with. We were bundled onto a train to take us to Bathurst, and it was cold when we went through the mountains. We were told in Holland that Australia was a nice, warm country and you didn’t need any winter clothes. But when we were coming through the mountains in the train and arrived the next morning, there was snow lying on the ground. It was obvious that it was

The Dutch Sprakel family, including 11 children, on the deck of the Aurelia at Port Melbourne in 1965.

Photo courtesy of Queensland Newspapers.



already freezing and extremely cold. We were wearing summer clothes. So, our arrival at Bathurst was not all that great. We arrived at about seven in the morning. We all disembarked and were transported to the camp by bus, a distance of between five to ten kilometres. We were herded into this hall, given a lukewarm cup of tea and welcomed by somebody who spoke English to us, a language with which most of us were not familiar.”

Conditions at many of the camps came as a shock to some of the migrants. The food was both foreign and unpalatable to the new immigrants, and many longed for the taste of home cooking. Bep Torkington remembers:

“The accommodation was absolutely shocking. My parents and I had one room to live in with three single iron beds. We were not allowed to cook in the room. It was very minimal. The toilets and the bathroom facilities were worse than I could have ever imagined. Previously the campsite had been

an army camp, and I suppose that the soldiers who had been off to war were not exactly used to luxurious accommodation. This accommodation was not even reasonable. It was terrible.

“We had to get used to different food. There seemed to be a policy in the migrant camp that if you have a particular trade and if there were jobs going, then you would not be employed in the trade that you were trained for. My late father was a chef, but he was not employed as a chef at the camp. After a couple of days, he got a job as a kitchen hand, however not in the block where we were staying, but in a different block. It ended up that while Dad was employed as a kitchen hand, he also did cooking in that block and those people were reasonably fed. We were not so fortunate. We had a communal dining hall and the meals were badly prepared, not to our taste. The only things that were reasonable were bread and cheese.”

Bathurst was a transit camp where migrants were allowed to stay for

short periods before they were compulsorily transferred to one of the other camps, such as those at Greta, which was near Maitland in New South Wales and Wagga Wagga, also in New South Wales. Bep Torkington recalls:

“We wanted to avoid being transferred because both of those camps had an extremely poor reputation, even worse than Bathurst and that was bad enough.” She attended the camp school at Bathurst, where she and other migrants from diverse backgrounds struggled with a new language in unfamiliar and transitory surroundings:

“One of the teachers was a Dutchman, which was very fortunate, but I was not in his class. There were a couple of Dutch people in my class and a few other nationalities as well. These teachers, of course, spoke English exclusively. We spent a lot of time singing songs to become familiar with the language. For instance, ‘Plato Mi Noble’, the Italian song, was

“Polish, Dutch, German and Italian displaced persons made up the largest groups of non-British assisted migrants...”

translated into English and we sang the English version.”

George Sudull arrived in Newcastle in February 1950 and recalls that all arrivals from his ship were transported by train to a migrant transit camp at Greta:

“The camp in Greta became well known by the film, ‘The Silver City’. Where did the name come from? There were two sections of the camp in Greta divided by a creek. One section had freshly painted roofs with a zinc-based paint. Hence the name of ‘Silver City’. The other part was called ‘Chocolate’ because of its brown unpainted rusty roofs. The accommodation in ‘Silver City’ was slightly superior to that in ‘Chocolate City’ and was occupied by families and single women, and the ‘Chocolate City’ by single men.

“Accommodation was fairly basic, but after five years in various camps I wasn’t used to any better. Some migrants complained about the food. I don’t know where they had been before they came here, but any

food appeased an empty stomach. I remember my first dinner. It was a rabbit stew and I thoroughly enjoyed it. After one month in Greta, occasionally seeking adventures in the ‘Silver City’, many young men like me were driven to Maitland railway station. There, waiting for the train to take us to the unknown we met our fellow countrymen working on the railways. They introduced us to the Australian ‘plonk’. It was cold and tasted like fruit juice, and we drank it like fruit juice! After about an hour and totally ‘legless’, we boarded the train and went straight to Roma in Queensland. In Roma, nine of us boarded another train, which took us to an address, 501 Mile Railway Maintenance Gang North Western Line, Queensland. It was seventeen miles along the track from Charleville to Cunnamulla. There I commenced my first career in Australia as a fettler.”

Polish, Dutch, German and Italian displaced persons made up the largest groups of non-British assisted migrants immediately after

the war. Not long after their arrival in the migrant camps the first newsletter, roneoed stencils, started to emerge. Produced by the migrants themselves, these newsletters informed fellow settlers about the social, cultural and religious activities organised by migrant associations. The newsletters also contained a digest of foreign news, as well as English lessons. As the rate of immigration increased, these early newsletters moved from the camps into the big cities and were transformed into weekly printed newspapers, supported by subscribers and advertising (Gilson and Zubrzycki, 1967, p. 26).

For new migrants after World War II, the migrant camps became one of their strongest and earliest memories of arriving in Australia. As their first experiences in a land that was to become home for them and their families, the short periods spent in these camps formed an important part of their identity as Australians from diverse backgrounds. Bep Torkington remembers:

A migrant family unpacks at their first Australian home, the Bonegilla Migrant Hostel, c 1955.

Photo courtesy of Queensland Newspapers.



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“I suppose that all the experiences that one goes through in life have some sort of influence. Because of my own experiences in the migrant camp, I’m a little bit more sympathetic than a lot of the Australian people were towards the people who are put in places like the Port Headland and Curtin Detention Centres right now, because I know the sort of conditions that impact on these people. One of the things we were not subjected to, which reportedly these people are being subjected to, was physical cruelty. We weren’t. It came as quite a surprise to me that teachers were allowed to hit students in this country, for instance, because this was an absolute ‘No, No’ where I came from. The practice was considered barbaric.”

Some migrant hostels continued to operate well into the 1970s and 1980s. Bonegilla, in Victoria, did not close its doors until 1971 and the Wacol Immigration Centre, on the outskirts of Brisbane, continued to house migrants well into the

late 1980s, after which it briefly housed Indigenous Australians and then became a privately-run prison.

Tim Kerlin in the *Ethnic Voice*, Radio 4EB’s newsletter, reports that by 1985 the Wacol Immigration Centre aimed ‘to create a community atmosphere’. In the mid-1980s the Centre housed refugees from Poland, Central America and Asia as well as people from Chile who had been accepted under the Special Humanitarian Program. The Centre housed a college of Technical and Further Education, two banks, a cinema, a childcare centre, an office of the Commonwealth Employment Service and a permanent soccer club. Official attitudes towards accommodation and cuisine had undergone a radical change compared to the conditions experienced by the earlier migrants:

“Migrants stay in modern brick units in town-house style, and facilities are available for single people, couples and families. All amenities are provided except for kitchens. Meals are provided in the

*Children on Wacol
receive free milk.*

*Photo courtesy of the Department of
Immigration and Multicultural Affairs.*



main dining room, which seats 500 people. ‘The majority of the staff is multilingual’ said Mr. Cameron [the Centre’s director], ‘... but English is pushed on the menus’. Obviously problems can arise due to various eating habits. For instance, Muslims won’t eat pork, whereas Vietnamese won’t eat mutton, and many Sri Lankans are vegetarians. The problem is solved, however, by having the menu set by a committee comprising of both migrants and staff members, thereby reaching a happy medium” (Kerlin, 1985).

First Impressions of a New Life in Australia

For the post-war migrants and the hundreds of thousands who came after them, one of the main attractions of Australia was the prospect of a better life. Despite harsh conditions in a new country and the difficulty of establishing themselves in an unfamiliar business environment, many migrants shared a common desire to succeed and make the best of their new surroundings.

George Sudull arrived in Australia with few expectations:

“I’ve met migrants who complained after their arrival. I have never complained. To me life was good, even though it was a very spartan existence, living in tents and having nothing to do. I don’t think I even had books to read after work. But I was never unhappy.

“Actually when I was dismissed from my first job as a fettler on the Queensland railways, I was disappointed. I had to go back to Brisbane. The reason I was dismissed was that after six months we were required to undergo a medical examination for so-called permanent appointment. When I went the doctor examined me and took off my glasses. I could see the biggest letter on the board and he said, ‘Oh you can’t handle that, with your sight you can’t work on the railway, because the train might come and you won’t see it.’ I don’t know whether he was serious or not, but he certified me medically unfit.”

John Kahlert remembers mixed feelings among the migrants aboard his ship:

“There were people who obviously wanted to get out of Germany. There were displaced persons. We had people from Latvia, Estonia, Poland, Ukraine and Italy. Some wanted to leave Germany and were looking forward to living in a new country. Others already had relatives here who had written to them and they were told how wonderful this place was, so they were quite excited about it. There were others, of course, who were really sad leaving their family and friends behind. But, it was interesting when we arrived in Australia. In Fremantle we were allowed to leave the ship, and it was absolutely fascinating to see the looks on the faces of the people when they saw shops full of food. I remember seeing a group of ladies standing outside the butcher shop which was absolutely filled with blocks of meat, and they were crying that they had never seen so much meat in all their lives! It was exciting to have touched Australian soil, and to be greeted by



Scottish migrants arriving at South Brisbane station in 1962. Photo courtesy of Queensland Newspapers.

quite friendly people, although we did not know the language.”

Heinz Domine immigrated to Australia in more recent times, after being a master butcher and operating his own business in Berlin. His parents first thought about coming to Australia in 1953, and had sewn the seeds of an idea in Heinz that eventually came to fruition. After suffering bitterly cold winters in his homeland, he decided that it was time to move to Australia, and finally did so in 1982.

He remembers that he felt very unwelcome when he first arrived with his wife and children as they did not know anyone in Australia, nor were they familiar with any German organisations to turn to for help:

“My first impression? I said to my wife, ‘Come on, we leave.’ I wanted to go to Canada because I saw Brisbane coming from the airport. It looked shocking. All the houses, blue, yellow houses, wooden houses. You come from Berlin, where there were all brick houses; I hadn’t seen

a wooden house, that’s a weekend home! I said, ‘How you can live like this?’ Today, I love them. I love the Queenslanders, that kind of style of house. But at that time I couldn’t understand that people were living in them, and paying money for them.”

Business, Church and Community

Faced with the many obstacles to success of a new country, many migrant groups over the years have drawn strength from each other. In business, through churches and the formation of community organisations, ethnic communities have sought to maintain their own identities and to assist each other in getting established in Queensland.

For Heinz Domine the only way to get ahead in Australia and overcome the formidable language barrier was to start his own business. When he first purchased his butcher shop, he remembers that Australians laughed at him because he could not speak English.

But his determination did not falter. His philosophy was, “Meat is meat, it doesn’t matter”. He employed an Australian butcher. They communicated with sign language, and word-of-mouth was his only form of advertising. That was 17 years ago, and his good reputation and quality products have led to a successful Brisbane business that has stood the test of time. He notes that 50 per cent of his clientele are of European descent. Australians who regularly visit his shop are mostly those who have been to Germany and love the food.

For many migrant communities dealing with new opportunities, cultures and language, the church was to become an important focus, not just as a place of worship. The community church was to become a social hub, a bastion of identity and a place where assistance could be sought during the settlement process. George Sudull remembers the role of the church in his community:

“I was on the tram and the conductor comes to me. They used to come with the sort of clippers to punch the tickets... And I reckon he was a man, well a young man in those days, with whom I went to school in the camp in Germany. He was already in Brisbane about a year, he came in 1949 and he told me a few things about the Polish. The Polish community was attached to the Church of St. Mary’s in South Brisbane and they used the school buildings. There was a Polish library, so I started going there and sort of gradually got sucked into the Polish community.

“The church had an extremely large role. Without the church we wouldn’t have had the facilities for not only religious activities, but even social activities, because churches usually had church halls, parish halls, schools and school buildings. We were allowed to go there and have our social dances and things like that.”

Language Barriers

For most new migrants to Australia, the first battle they had to overcome

was learning a new language. Even those who had learned some English before their arrival struggled with a strange and foreign Australian dialect. The struggle with language had two major results. It forced many migrants to take jobs that they otherwise would have been overqualified for. It also brought migrant communities closer together as they struggled with a foreign tongue and found comfort and familiarity in sharing their home language with friends and family. Father Dimitri Tsakas, from the Church of Saint George in South Brisbane, reflects on the use of language:

“When Greeks first came to Australia, Greek was their main language of communication. My generation grew up with hardly any spoken English because our parents couldn’t speak the language. That’s changing in many respects as the second generation Greeks who were born here are being spoken to in English by my generation. It has been an uphill battle, particularly in places like Brisbane where the

Greek community is a lot smaller than Sydney and Melbourne. When I went to Greek school, we were taught the Greek language in a Greek environment. Now, we’re looking at teaching Greek to our children as a second language, using English as the main medium of communication to teach Greek.”

Heinz Domine also felt the hardest part of immigrating to Australia was the language barrier:

“The language... and you had to start a completely new life. I think that was the hardest part, yes. You were cut off from everything, because you couldn’t speak English. As a German we liked a bit of political life... discussing politics and so on. That was the hard part, you couldn’t understand the news. You tried to read the paper and you felt, for about two years, that it was very hard.”

Heinz Domine did not feel that the German Club helped him much in his early years in Brisbane, because their publications were all



*Migrant Education English classes
in Brisbane.*

*Photo courtesy of Department of Immigration
and Multicultural Affairs.*

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printed in the English language, and everyone at the club spoke English. Therefore, he preferred to mix with the general community, the majority of whom were non-Australian:

“Austrians, Hungarians, Polish, lots of Polish and lots of Russians. Here in this area there were a lot of Russians. The old people passed away and the young people became Australianised.”

George Sudull was one of many migrants who had trouble communicating when they arrived in Australia, even though they had learned English before they arrived:

“It wasn’t the kind of English that was spoken here. To start with my teachers who taught me spoke with very heavy accents. When I first arrived in Australia, for example, I worked in Brisbane. A chap put a cigarette in his mouth and said, ‘Gotta match?’ I didn’t know what he was asking for. If he said, ‘Have you got a match?’ then I would

have understood. Once I was on the tram and I was purchasing a ticket to Woolloongabba. The conductor said, ‘The Gabba?’ to which I replied, ‘No, Woolloongabba’. So that was the kind of English we had to get used to.”

When John Kahlert arrived in Australia his English was limited to ‘Yes’, ‘No’ and a few schoolboy phrases that were in a form of English that other Australians did not understand:

“If you approached someone and said, ‘How do you do?’ the people didn’t switch onto this. We did look for German people, but the little country village that we landed in, a place called Narbethong, about one-hundred kilometres outside Melbourne, was a typical Australian settlement, a sawmill settlement right on the bush. There was no one who could speak German. Bear in mind that fifty years ago there was a lot of anti-German feeling, as there were anti-Japanese feelings, because of

the war. It was fairly tough to communicate with people because quite a number of them had lost their families in the war. The prevalent thinking was that it was those bloody Germans who killed them, and to have one among them was not comfortable. Therefore, we didn’t want to talk to them. But there were enough people there who helped you along and taught you. You had to learn the hard way.”

In the small country school John Kahlert attended, he was able to learn English through an Austrian teacher who helped teach him to understand the language’s structure:

“I had no difficulty with maths because figures are figures. Geography was interesting for me because I could point to maps and I knew a lot about the subject. With biology, you worked a lot on pictures. With language, of course, I had difficulty writing essays, English vocabulary and sentence structure. Things of this nature were difficult at first, but it’s

amazing what you can learn. In fact, I learned a lot through comic strips. In those days, we could buy various comics and there were many ‘Hop Along Cassidy’ and ‘Butch and the Sundance Kids’. I always had difficulty in finding out words like ‘kapow’ and ‘boom’ because they were not in the dictionary. They were slang words, but it’s amazing what you can do with picture and word associations.”

For migrants who had settled outside the capital cities, the sense of isolation was particularly acute, as John Kahlert remembers:

“In Melbourne, there was a German consulate and it had the addresses of people who were from the country and who corresponded with these people by letter and telephone. We arranged group meetings through picnics, cafes or cocoa and we gradually amassed a circle of German people around us as friends, but we were also keen to integrate into the Australian community. We didn’t pursue the



German side too much. Back in those days as well there was no German media, no German newspaper, radio stations or anything of this nature, so the only way to get information from Germany was by the normal mail or newspapers and magazines which take six weeks to send by sea. Airmail was too expensive. So we always had old news. The problem that we had was that most commercial radio sets did not have short wave facilities, or if they did then their transmitters were not strong enough to pull in Europe. It was mainly the Asian-South Sea region. It was very difficult to get news directly from Germany.

“Television, of course, didn’t exist. So a friend of mine who is a radio hobbyist used his huge radio set that had an enormous antenna on his roof to call various wavelengths. Finally, we got onto a radio station in Bremen. We talked to people in Bremen and that became a fairly regular feature. Once a week we used to contact each other by radio. We received a lot of information and news through that.”

Familiar Words on the Page – Ethnic Press and New Migrants

For migrants struggling with a new language, the ethnic press became a valuable resource. However, the emergence of foreign-language newspapers and periodicals did not go unnoticed by the Federal government. *The War Precautions Act 1920-8* contained the ‘Publications of Newspapers in Foreign Language Regulations’ which required Prime Ministerial consent for any foreign-language publication. The main concern expressed in the Regulations related to content which “was likely to foment disaffection or sedition, or to cause a breach of the peace, was offensive or objectionable, or was in conflict with the government’s policy of assimilation of new settlers” (quoted in Gilson and Zubrzycki, 1967, p. 40).

The legislation proved difficult to police and it was repealed on January 1, 1956. Two years later the Commonwealth Immigration Advisory Council set up a

Committee to review foreign-language newspapers. The Committee conducted a survey of the migrant press and concluded that:

“The newspapers in general tend to assist the assimilation of migrants. They provide a valuable safety valve for migrants for letting off their grievances. They tended to be critical of the preference we gave to British migrants and employment opportunities. They commented favourably on such things as citizenship conventions and the Queen Mother’s visit, and various aspects of Australian life” (quoted in Gilson and Zubrzycki, 1967, p. 41).

Gilson and Zubrzycki (1967, p. 41) note that it took 110 years for the Australian migrant press to be formally recognised as a “fully responsible and mature institution that had a vital role to play in the process of adjustment of the new settlers”.

In Brisbane, a number of newsletters and newspapers were set up to meet the needs of new migrant

Chapter Two: The Emergence of the Ethnic Press: World War II and Beyond

Far Left: Brisbane German Club circa 1956.

Photo courtesy of the John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, neg no. 20715.

Left: Mr Schweitzer polishes the honor roll of the German Club in Brisbane.

Photo courtesy of Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs.

communities. The Polish weekly, the *Polonia*, was published in stenciled form between November 1951 and April 1952, after which it changed its title to *Tygodnik Polski* and became a supplement to the *Catholic Leader* until 1953. George Sudull remembers working on a monthly Polish newsletter:

“There has always been a Polish monthly bulletin. It was produced in the old fashioned stencils called roneos. I remember I used to operate it by hand, just crank it up. I was one of the publishers, well, one of the workers at least. I wasn’t into writing in those days. Now it’s being published on computer, but the Polish newspapers, there were only two in those days. One was being published in Sydney, the other in Melbourne.”

Between 1950 and 1952 Brisbane’s *Hellenic Australian News* was the only Greek newspaper in Australia, and in 1953 *Il Corriere d’Australia* was established by Italian businessman and shipping agent Giuseppe Luciano. The paper’s

readership was largely in northern Queensland where it filled the gap created by the closure of the *Italo-Australian* before the war. The paper closed its doors in 1961. According to Miriam Gilson and Jerzy Zubrzycki (1967, pp. 26-39), post-war foreign-language press was proliferate, but short-lived. Publications were established wherever migrants concentrated. Although early newspapers were set up to meet the needs of migrants locally, they were often in competition with interstate publications. The greater number of migrants in Sydney and Melbourne meant that newspapers were more likely to survive in those cities, and they therefore increasingly targeted to nationwide readers.

An example is that of John Jacobi, born in what is today Romania and who migrated to Australia in 1950 (Reimann, 1989). He started a small German newspaper in 1957, in Sydney. Now 45 years old, *Die Woche* is an example of a successful community-based publication that has evolved to meet the needs of a specific community:

“Before we started *Die Woche* it used to be *Der Anker*. *Der Anker* was a German newspaper, but the people were not satisfied. I decided to start a German Newspaper, *Die Woche*. I felt a German paper must have the flavour of the German culture, which comes from the three countries of Switzerland, Austria and Germany. We didn’t want to make the people homesick, so we had to try to explain the way of life in Australia to the people. And when they saw the paper *Die Woche*, they were very happy.”

Like many of the other publications servicing migrant communities, *Die Woche* had two important functions. First, it brought ethnic communities news from home to help maintain a link to their roots and culture. And, importantly, it provided an insight into issues and events in Australia at the time and was phrased to meet the needs of a specific ethnic community, as John Jacobi notes.

“We needed to bring news from Europe to the German people living in Australia. At the same time we explained the way of life in

“The success of the ethnic press lies in a unique blending of cultural content.”

Australia. We said, ‘Alright, forget everything about what happened in your homeland; when you are in Australia you must try to understand Australian life.’”

The early ethnic press also played a vital role in helping new migrants settle in Australia. Newspapers and newsletters contained information on how to get in touch with migrant organisations, where to get access to appropriate services and how to become part of a functioning community in a new and often hostile country. John Jacobi notes:

“The people who read the paper were German-speaking people from Germany, Austria, Switzerland and from other countries which were homes to displaced people. We called them ‘Volks Deutsche’. In the advertising we had the German Clubs, the German Churches and the German Saturday School. They were all supported by the paper. And the people could find out about these places through the paper.”

Some 45 years on, *Die Woche* is still published as a 28- to 32-page newspaper. According to John Jacobi, despite a declining readership, the newspaper is making efforts to attract new and younger readers:

“The readership has declined a little, because people are dying and others have migrated back to Europe. We are supporting [a younger readership] because the German newspaper now has a foundation, and I don’t want to see the paper dying after I die. We have a foundation which has the duty of doing what I did for the German paper, and now we are supporting the German School and German children who are learning German.”

John Jacobi’s approach of aiming his publication at language students has also been adopted by other ethnic newspaper publishers. The Italian newspaper *Il Globo* has identified that some 100,000 Australian students learn Italian and the French newspaper *Le Courier Australien* is sought out by schools and other educational groups (Fox, 1990).

In a survey conducted in 1990, the *Australian Financial Review* found there were 110 ethnic newspapers in Australia, published in 39 different languages (Fox, 1990). The largest newspapers were those serving European migrants who had settled in Australia not long after World War II. All of these were facing a declining readership as the children of migrants preferred to communicate in English, rather than in the language of their parents. The ethnic press also faced competition from ethnic and multicultural broadcasting, which for many people has become the main source of news and information. However, the traditional ethnic press has also taken advantage of other trends (Fox, 1990). For instance, the Italian newspaper *Il Globo* is sold to Italians working in the building industry in the South Sea Islands and Papua New Guinea, while people from Arabic-speaking countries visiting their Australian relatives make up a significant proportion of the readership of the Lebanese newspaper *El Telegraph*.

The success of the ethnic press lies in a unique blending of cultural content. In the age of the Internet and rapid international mail, it would be easy for ethnic communities to access or buy magazines and newspapers from their home countries. Yet, it is doubtful that these publications would provide the appropriate information for an ethnic community living in Australia. At the same time, the increase in Australian media's coverage of international news and issues still fails to meet the depth of expectations of ethnic communities. It is up to the ethnic press in Australia to walk this middle ground, providing the right balance of coverage of local and home country content. In the words of John Jacobi, *Die Woche's* longevity and success is because:

"... it is about the special flavour of the country. Now if you have the English people in Germany, they will definitely go and buy the English paper, or go to an English club. In the beginning, Australian papers, like the *Sydney Morning Herald* or the *Telegraph* or the *Sun*, contained



hardly any news from Europe. Today we get a little bit more, but you don't get the same news that we have in the German newspaper. This is the same for all countries, and all nationalities' papers."

Meeting the Needs of Recent Arrivals - The Asian Press

With the changing face and composition of Queensland's society, new publications have entered the media marketplace, in order to meet the growing needs of our Asian communities.

Christopher Leung is editor of the *Queensland Asian Business Weekly*, founded in 1992 and now the oldest existing Chinese-language newspaper in Queensland. Unlike many other migrant communities, Christopher

Italian migrants celebrate their arrival in Australia in 1969, 11 years after they first applied to emigrate.

Photo courtesy of Queensland Newspapers.



Leung notes that despite a long history of settlement in Queensland, the Chinese community does not have a long tradition of publishing newspapers:

“People started a Chinese newspaper in the early 1990s when a large number of migrants started to settle in Queensland from Hong Kong, Taiwan, China, Singapore and Vietnam.”

The *Queensland Asian Business Weekly* targets a wide range of Chinese-speaking readers. Importantly, the paper’s content is phrased in terms of an Australian readership, as opposed to a solely ethnic readership:

“The paper targets all those people that have mastered the Chinese language, including people from China, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia. We organise our paper in an Australian way, and our point of view about politics and society is as Australians, not as people from Hong Kong. We try to avoid talking about our own home country,

because we are now Australians and we should educate people to stay here, be proud and say we are Australians. There is no use saying something nostalgic all the time, such as missing home or missing the people in Hong Kong.”

The paper’s major function is to inform Queensland’s contemporary Chinese community, employing around six full-time staff and distributing 10,000 copies in the greater Brisbane and Gold Coast areas. The paper provides an essential service to migrants who are unable to read English, and is also a tool to help encourage children of migrants to preserve their language and culture, as Christopher Leung explains:

“We can safely say that the readership covers almost every family in Queensland. There are about thirty thousand Chinese people state-wide and the paper is disseminated free of charge. The paper services primarily those first generation migrants who were brought up in Australia. Most

Chinese families have the problem of making their children enthusiastic to learn Chinese. At most, they just speak or listen. They can rarely read or write [Chinese] if they were born in Australia.

“Most of the kids who were born here generally do have the problem of understanding the language of their parents. Their parents want to very much maintain the language, but the most they can do is to maintain it at home.”

All of Queensland’s ethnic newspapers share a distinct motivation. Aside from the inevitable desire to succeed as commercial enterprises, they also seek to fill identified gaps in the media, providing information to those communities that are unserved or inadequately served by the mainstream press. Ms Ritsie Ito, previously a school teacher and now Managing Director and owner of the *Southern Cross Times*, recently bought the successful Japanese-language newspaper from its previous owner:

Chapter Two: The Emergence of the Ethnic Press: World War II and Beyond

Far left: Pastor Kokkonen (left) and Mr Saari (right) printing the Finnish language newspaper on the newspaper's own flatbed press.

Left: Mrs Saari, setting the Finnish language newspaper on her linotype machine.

Below: A montage of some of the major ethnic newspapers printed in Australia.

Photo's courtesy of Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs.

“This business had been established for thirteen years already. Speaking for myself, I was in trouble when I came to Australia from Japan. There was no information at all. That was why I bought the business and expanded the contents to become better. I came to Cairns first and the town did not have enough information for people from overseas. Now they have, including our paper.”

Targeted at a demographic of 18 to 50 year-olds, the paper primarily meets the needs of Japanese students and tourists in Queensland. Published monthly, the *Southern Cross Times* contains local sport and news, mixed with a regular page on health issues and news from Japan:

“We use the Internet to get current information from all over the world. Some people don't use the Internet, so we have to provide news for them; half is from the Internet. The rest is taken from the local paper and our contacts from Japan. Using the email, it's very easy to get current information in English.

“We also have Australian news nation-wide, but mostly it is about Queensland because it is more familiar to us, and most of our readers are in Queensland. We also have world news.”

The 20-page monthly paper has a circulation of 15,000 copies and is distributed widely in Cairns and on

the Gold Coast, where there are large concentrations of Japanese people. Each edition devotes a page of the paper to each region. Contacts in these areas volunteer time to help write local copy.

Châu Trân, publisher and editor of *Người Việt*, the Vietnamese-language fortnightly magazine, has a long





history in the Australian ethnic press, working for the *Vietnamese Herald Newspaper* in Sydney before identifying the need for a similar Queensland publication:

“After finishing my travel around Australia, I wrote a book about the lives of the Vietnamese community in Australia. Coming here to Queensland, I found out that there was no Vietnamese newspaper circulated around the state. So I set up *Nguói Viet*, the first and only one in Queensland.”

Nguói Viet was first published on 7 February 1997, and the publication services a Vietnamese community in Queensland of around 15,000 people. Originally set up in Châu Trân’s garage, the paper’s circulation is now 10,000 copies. Of these, 5,000 copies are distributed to other states and 5,000 throughout Queensland. As Châu Trân explains, the magazine has a broad format designed to encourage wide readership across the Vietnamese community:

“My magazine targets the Vietnamese family as a whole, because it covers

a lot of sections, news, education, sports, cooking and the like. I also target the younger ones between ten to twenty years, because they study in the Vietnamese language school every Saturday. The older ones at the age of twenty-five or more read the news, sports, politics, and so on.”

Châu Trân adds that the magazine’s news format includes both general news and news about the Vietnamese community:

“We have staff who look for all the news, while some of the news is faxed to me from various government and private offices. It is general news as well as from different sections of the Vietnamese community. We mainly get Vietnamese news from international newspapers in the United States and Vietnam, sourced from the Internet.”

Importantly, Châu Trân says that the magazine also helps members of the Vietnamese community through providing information on

taxation, legal advice and other information services:

“We have a Vietnamese solicitor who writes a column. If the readers have problems with some laws in Australia, they send their letters to me and I send them to the solicitor. She reads the letters and answers the questions.

“We also have a column by an accountant. He lives in Queensland and writes on taxation issues and answers all the readers’ questions. People were calling me and complaining about the confusion with the GST paperwork, so I told them to send me their questions. I send the questions to the accountant and he answers the questions through the paper.”

Like many ethnic publications, *Nguói Viet* confronts sensitive historical or contemporary community issues from a culturally-sensitive viewpoint. One of the most powerful aspects of ethnic press is this ability to respond effectively to mainstream

Chapter Two: The Emergence of the Ethnic Press: World War II and Beyond

Encouragement for prospective emigrants outside

Australia House, London, 1968.

Photo courtesy of Queensland Newspapers.

stereotypes of ethnicity. For the Vietnamese community, *Nguoi Viet* has provided an insightful review of the boat people's emigration from Vietnam. As Châu Trân explains:

"In one edition we compiled a two-series story about the boat people when they escaped from Vietnam. We took a photo and put it in so that readers could understand better what the boat people were going through.

"The older people always like to remember the homeland. If they can write anything for the next generation, they'll write stories as to why they left their motherland and why they decided to live here."

Nguoi Viet recently tackled the issue of drugs and crime, which the mainstream media have often associated with the Vietnamese community. This is an important issue for the Vietnamese community, according to the publisher:

"I think the big problem is in Sydney and Melbourne and not so much in Brisbane. The Vietnamese

community in Queensland talks frequently with the police, with the government, with the youth and with the families. Government departments in Queensland are talking with the Vietnamese community leaders, and if there is a problem they talk things out together."

Despite the crucial role that ethnic newspapers and magazines play in keeping communities informed, many external and internal pressures are threatening their existence. Running on tight budgets and with few staff, many are struggling to attract enough advertising. Specifically, the lack of support from mainstream Australian businesses is narrowing their income stream considerably. As Châu Trân explains:

"We find it hard to get advertisements. With Vietnamese or Australian businesses, it's very cheap and it's not long-term.

"I think the Vietnamese customer is interested in Australian

companies like A-Mart or Harvey Norman because they are the suppliers of furniture and computer equipment. But Harvey Norman, for example, has its own agent for advertising, so we can't get advertising from them. We only get advertising from large companies if they have Vietnamese staff that can put an ad in for the Vietnamese community, but even then it's only a small one."

Many ethnic publications are also facing the prospect of dwindling readerships, as the next generation of migrant families living in Australia adopts English as their preferred language. As Christopher Leung notes:

"At present, the paper is doing fine. But the worry about ethnic language newspapers is about the ageing of the readers. Most of our younger generation is not fond of reading Chinese at all. But in my mind, over the next twenty years we will be all right."

Ms Ritsie Ito realises the importance of attracting the



Italian migrants using the vernacular of their adopted country to welcome the President of Italy in 1967.

Photo courtesy of Queensland Newspapers.

“...with a proud history
and an uncertain
future, the ethnic press
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younger generation to her newspaper:

“I really need more readers because the *Southern Cross Times* had a very bad reputation before for younger people, because the contents were only for older people, over thirty-five. That’s why young people didn’t like the *Southern Cross Times*. But I want to target younger people, because there are many young people in Brisbane, Gold Coast and Cairns. They need the information and they want to read the information in Japanese.”

As a section of the Australian media with a proud history and an uncertain future, the ethnic press deserves both wider recognition and greater support from mainstream business. The many ethnic newspapers and

magazines that still exist in Queensland today do so predominantly because the owners, editors and publishers recognise that their roles are vital to their respective communities. Often, the editor of an ethnic newspaper will function as a leader within a community, a sounding board for community issues and a conduit for community information. Working long hours on limited budgets, these people fill an essential gap in the Queensland media, providing culturally-appropriate community, national and international information to the many ethnic communities around the state.

The emergence of the ethnic press relied on the presence of a community that could support it. Once established, ethnic newspapers, magazines and

newsletters contributed news and information back to their community. Churches, businesses and the variety of migrant organisations supported, and in turn were supported by, the ethnic press. Meanwhile another community focal point for many new migrant communities would fulfill the role of cultural maintenance, while at the same time establishing bridges between ethnic groups as well as with mainstream society. As new communities established themselves in Queensland and the southern states, they brought with them a love for Soccer. This passion resulted in the establishment of local sporting clubs throughout Australia. As central points for communication amongst and between migrant communities, these clubs were to help shape multiculturalism in

Australia throughout the second half of the 20th Century, and it is the role of Soccer and its relationship with the media that is explored in the next chapter.



Benjt Johnsson, migrated in January 1967, to Brisbane to join Hollandia Soccer Club. He had seen an advertisement in the British Daily Mail inviting European soccer players to apply to join the club.

Photo courtesy of Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs.