

Fear Of Peace?
Australian Government Responses
to the Peace Movement 1949-1959



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Fear of peace? : Australian
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ABBREVIATIONS

ALP	Australian Labor Party
ANZCICD	Australian and New Zealand Congress for International Co-operation and Disarmament
APC	Australian Peace Council
ASIO	Australian Security Intelligence Organisation
CIS	Commonwealth Investigation Service
CPA	Communist Party of Australia
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
NAA	National Archives of Australia
NLA	National Library of Australia
SEATO	South East Asian Treaty Organisation
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
USA	United States of America
WPC	World Peace Council

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SYNOPSIS

This thesis is concerned with the Menzies Government and ASIO's responses to the threat posed by the Communist inspired peace movement during the early Cold War period, between 1949 and 1959. The thesis will particularly focus on the Government's efforts to restrict the movements of peace activists through the imposition of travel controls, most notably passport bans.

The first chapter will focus on the background to the establishment of the Menzies Government, ASIO and the Australian Peace Council during 1949. It will look at the forces and circumstances which led to the establishment of these vastly different reactions to the prevailing Cold War climate. Chapter two will commence discussion about the Menzies Government's travel policy during the first three years of the administration. The Government's actions in regard to peace initiatives such as the Second World Peace Congress in Warsaw in 1950 and the Berlin Youth Festival in 1951 will be looked at in an effort to determine the Government's attitude toward travel abroad by peace activists. The Government's response to proposed visits to Australia by foreign peace activists for peace conferences, most notably the Melbourne Peace Congress in 1950 and the Sydney Youth Carnival for Peace and Friendship in early 1952, will also be discussed in an effort to establish the Government's attitude toward travel policy. It is the aim of this chapter to illustrate the birth and early development of the Menzies Government's travel policy in relation to the intense Cold War atmosphere.

Chapter three will focus on the Government's travel policy between 1952 and 1955. The most controversial event of the period, the 1952 Peking Peace Conference will be discussed in this chapter. The Government's decision to implement passport bans against the Australian delegation will be looked at, as will the efforts of the Australian delegation to subvert the ban. This chapter will highlight the evolution of the Menzies Government's travel policy, and will show how this policy affected the peace movement throughout the period. Discussion will also revolve around how the changing Cold War climate affected

the Government's activities in the sphere of travel controls. The influence of events such as the Korean War and the Petrov affair will demonstrate how the Government was influenced by external circumstances.

The discussion in chapter four will revolve around ASIO's role in monitoring and hampering the efforts of the peace movement. ASIO's understanding of the threat posed by the peace movement and its response to this threat will be the focus of this chapter. Of particular interest will be the security organisation's response to the various peace conferences which were held at regular intervals throughout the period. The way in which ASIO's understanding of the peace movement evolved over time, and the ways in which the Government actions were influenced by the work of the security organisation will also be discussed. Chapter five will look at the controversy surrounding the Australian and New Zealand Congress for International Co-operation and Disarmament. This chapter will disclose the Government's activities in regard to this Congress, with particular emphasis being placed on the roles played by acting Minister for External Affairs Garfield Barwick, and the Director-General of Security, Charles Spry, in relation to the Congress. This aspect of the Government's 'war on Communism' has largely been ignored.

INTRODUCTION

IN THE SHADOW OF PETROV: MENZIES, ASIO AND THE PEACE MOVEMENT IN HISTORICAL STUDY.

In the historiography of the 1950s little attention has been given to the relationship between the peace movement and the forces of the Government during the 1950s. As David Lowe suggests '[h]istorians have... found it difficult to discuss any aspect of the 1950s without getting caught up in the Petrov affair - often at the expense of other prominent features of Australia's Cold War.'¹ One aspect, often neglected, is the role played by the peace movement and, in particular, the Australian Peace Council [APC]. The purpose of this chapter is threefold. First, to examine the available literature on the peace movement, the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation [ASIO] and the Menzies Government during the 1950s in an attempt to illustrate how these aspects of the period have been represented. Second, the predominant themes in the existing literature will be addressed in order to demonstrate the location of the thesis in an historiographical context. Third, this chapter will detail the ways in which the thesis will contribute to, and in some important respects challenge, the commonly-held perceptions of the peace movement, ASIO, and the Menzies Government.

The peace movement

The literature on the Australian peace movement, especially in the 1950s, is limited. It does not really concern itself with the degree to which the movement was stifled by the actions of the Menzies Government. The main concern of writers has been to identify the degree of Communist involvement and control of the peace movement during the 1950s. One of the most widely-used sources is *The Australian Peace Movement: A Short History*, co-authored by two of the more prolific writers in the field, Malcolm Saunders and Ralph

¹ David Lowe, *Menzies and the Great World Struggle: Australia's Cold War 1948-1954*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 1999, p. 126

Summy.² This work provides a striking example of the extent to which the peace movement in the 1950s has been neglected. As its title suggests, this is a short history of the movement. However, even when this is taken into account, it seems a gross oversight that the crucial period in question, the early Cold War era, receives an account of only two and a half pages.³ A brief outline of the development of the APC is given with fleeting reference made to the accusations of Communist control. The impact of the Menzies Government and ASIO on the peace movement is entirely ignored except for a passing reference to problems surrounding the peace conference in Peking in 1952⁴ - problems that will be extensively discussed in chapter three of the thesis. This work must be looked upon as being a very limited review of the period in question which underlines the need for a more substantial analysis of the peace movement in the 1950s.

Summy and Saunders also co-authored 'Disarmament and the Australian Peace Movement: A Brief History'.⁵ This article is similar to their previous effort, and similarly provides little substance to its discussion of the peace movement in the 1950s. A more expansive study of the peace movement in the period is provided by Summy in his chapter 'The Australian Peace Council and the Anti-Communist Milieu, 1949-1965'.⁶ The title of the chapter accurately depicts its content and illustrates the degree to which studies of the peace movement at the time revolve around the question of Communist infiltration and control, to the exclusion of other areas. In these various works, Summy and Saunders give insufficient attention to the impact of accusations of Communist infiltration upon the peace movement and they neglect to examine the degree to which the peace movement was monitored and stifled by the Menzies Government and ASIO. ASIO is rarely mentioned in relation to the peace movement something that this thesis intends to rectify.

² Malcolm Saunders and Ralph Summy, *The Australian Peace Movement: A Short History*, Peace Research Centre, Australian National University, Canberra, 1986

³ Ibid, pp. 32-3

⁴ Ibid, p. 33

⁵ See Ralph Summy and Malcolm Saunders, 'Disarmament and the Australian Peace Movement: A Brief History', in *World Review*, No. 26, December 1987, pp. 15-52. A similarly toned piece by Saunders and Summy, entitled 'From the Second World War to Vietnam and Beyond', appeared in *Peace and Change: A Journal of Peace Research*, No.3/4, Fall/Winter 1984

⁶ Ralph Summy, 'The Australian Peace Council and the Anti-Communist Milieu, 1949-1965', in Chatfield and van Dungen (eds) *Peace Movements and Political Cultures*, University of Tennessee Press, Knoxville, 1988

Summy and Saunders' account of the 1959 Melbourne Peace Congress is of direct relevance to the thesis. They are particularly concerned with the supposed Communist nature of the event. One of the most important points raised by their account is the suggestion of government interference in the Congress, the main allegation being that the Menzies Government induced a number of withdrawals, such as that of Sir Mark Oliphant, which undermined the event.⁷ However, Summy and Saunders do not elaborate on their discussion of this area. They are more concerned with determining the extent of Communist control exerted on the Congress. In contrast, the role of government interference in the peace movement is a key theme of this thesis. Thus, the lead-in to the 1959 Congress, including the activities of both the Government and ASIO in attempting to stifle the Congress, will be given extensive treatment in chapter five.

One of the more sustained discussions of the peace movement is Barbara Carter's chapter entitled 'The Peace Movement in the 1950s'. Carter gives an account of the establishment of the APC and a number of the peace conferences that were a feature of the period. However, she tends to focus on the nature of the relationship between the APC and the Communist Party of Australia [CPA] to the exclusion of other areas. She argues that the APC was supported but not necessarily controlled by the CPA. Carter briefly addresses the controversy surrounding the peace conference in Peking in 1952.⁸ The extent of opposition that greeted the National Convention on Peace and War, held in Sydney in 1953, is also referred to.⁹ Carter then describes the efforts of the peace movement to become more diverse due, in large part, to a number of events, such as the Labor split in 1954-55 and the Hungarian crisis in 1956.¹⁰ While Carter does not directly refer to ASIO in her study, she still provides a useful discussion of the development of the peace movement throughout the 1950s that can then be juxtaposed against the development of ASIO and Government attitudes toward the peace movement.

⁷ Ralph Summy and Malcolm Saunders, 'The 1959 Melbourne Peace Congress: Culmination of Anti-Communism in Australia in the 1950s', in Ann Curthoys and John Merritt, (eds), *Better Dead Than Red: Australia's First Cold War, 1945-1959*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1986, p. 79; the controversy surrounding the Congress is also addressed in David Marr's biography, *Barwick*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1980, pp. 147-9

⁸ See Barbara Carter's chapter, 'The Peace Movement in the 1950s', in Curthoys and Merritt, op cit, pp. 62-3

⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 65-6

Robin Gollan's *Revolutionaries and Reformists: Communism and the Australian Labour Movement 1920-1955*, makes some telling remarks about the peace movement in the period under study. Most notably, Gollan provides a fairly full account of the controversy surrounding the Peking peace conference in 1952¹¹ although, as indicated earlier, this conference has been mentioned in a number of works without adequate discussion.¹² The thesis will rectify this by extensively detailing the activities of the peace movement, ASIO and the Government in this affair in chapter three. Gollan, along with almost every other writer on the peace movement in the 1950s, focuses on the Communist infiltration of the peace movement to the exclusion of other areas, especially government interference through passport controls.

The argument here, that studies of the peace movement in the 1950s have been almost exclusively concerned with accusations of Communist control is confirmed by two other works, both published in 1964. *Fifteen Years of Peace Fronts*, by J.P. Forrester, provides a detailed account of the activities of the peace movement during the period, with particular emphasis being given to the many peace conferences that were held. However, Forrester's sole purpose in writing this analysis is to provide evidence that the peace movement was Communist infiltrated and controlled. As the title of the book suggests, Forrester was adamant that the peace movement functioned as a front organisation for the Communist Party. Forrester's account is important, in that it details a number of the incidents and controversies surrounding the peace movement, such as the Peking affair, but it is still lacking in analysis of the Government and ASIO's role in monitoring and suppressing the peace movement. A study that is similar in emphasis to that of Forrester is *The Peace Movement*, by Fred Wells. It is narrower in focus than Forrester's in that it concentrates solely on the 1959 Melbourne Congress but, like Forrester, details the extent to which the Congress was Communist infiltrated. Both their accounts appear to be coloured by their

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 67

¹¹ Robin Gollan, *Revolutionaries and Reformists: Communism and the Australian Labour Movement 1920-1955*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1975, pp. 272-4

¹² In addition to the aforementioned works, this conference has also been addressed in a number of memoirs and biographies of participants, most notably the Reverend Victor James' memoir *Windows on the Years*, Unitarian Assembly of Victoria, Elwood, 1980, pp. 298-300

closeness to the period in question and by the fact that the Cold War was then very much still being fought.

The account given by J.E. Owen of his involvement in the 1953 Australian Convention on Peace and War, *The Road to Peace: An Experiment in Friendship Across Barriers*, is even more entrenched in the Cold War climate, given it was published in 1954. Owen uses his discussion as a means of defending the Convention against the Communist smear which was placed on it by Menzies and his Government. Owen's account is of great importance to this thesis in that Owen discusses the fact that Menzies tried to stifle the Convention by making a provocative speech in Parliament, linking the event to the Communist Party, just before the opening of the Convention.¹³ Owen discusses his objections to Menzies' actions and also details a meeting he had with the Prime Minister where Menzies gave his reasoning for his actions and also provided Owen with ASIO evidence which proved his accusations of Communist infiltration were correct.¹⁴ This episode will be discussed in chapter four.

The memoir of Bill Gollan, a prominent member of both the Communist Party and the Peace Council, touches more substantially on the efforts of the Menzies Government and ASIO to circumscribe the activities of the peace movement. Gollan described the extensive security that existed at airports and the denial of passport and visa facilities to individuals travelling both to and from Australia.¹⁵ Gollan asserted that the Menzies Government 'continued a policy of establishing elements of a police state by persecution of dissident opinion' and that leaders of the peace movement were subjected to 'telephone

¹³ See J.E. Owen, *The Road To Peace: An Experiment in Friendship Across Barriers*, Hawthorn, 1954, pp. 10-14

¹⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 18-20

¹⁵ Bill Gollan addressed the passport issue in his memoir, *Bond or Free: The Peace and Disarmament Movement and an Independent Australian Foreign Policy for Peace and Security*, NSW Teachers Federation, Sydney, 1987, p. 39. Similar sentiments, about the denial of passport and visa facilities and the general restriction of the peace movements activities, can be found in the memoir of Audrey Blake, *A Proletarian Life*, Kibble Books, Victoria, 1984, p. 85; in Ralph Gibson's *My Life in the Communist Party*, International Bookshop, Melbourne, 1966, p. 189; and in Peter Sekules' biography, *Jessie Street*, University of Queensland, St Lucia, 1978, p. 155-6.

tapping and various forms of police harassment and surveillance'.¹⁶ He makes little effort to substantiate his claims. However, the thesis will investigate the accuracy of Gollan's allegations in chapter four where ASIO surveillance and monitoring of the peace movement will be discussed in detail.

ASIO

That the historiography of the Cold War in 1950s has often been in the shadow of the Petrov affair is especially evident in studies of ASIO. In recording his experiences as an ASIO officer in the 1950s, Michael Thwaites, in his memoir *Truth Will Out*, focuses almost entirely on the Petrov affair to the exclusion of other areas. However, Thwaites' account is important in that it gives first hand evidence of some of the methods employed by ASIO during the 1950s. Thwaites also provides an insight into some of the motivations that drove him, and his colleagues, into working for ASIO. Thwaites fleetingly mentioned the peace movement when he expressed his concern at 'the number of intelligent, high-minded, not to say admirable people, who seemed prepared to ignore, accept, even defend this palpable duplicity.'¹⁷ Thwaites does not elaborate on his feelings by giving further evidence of ASIO's role in relation to the APC, instead choosing to focus his energies on the Petrov affair. The thesis will seek to identify how, and why, ASIO sought to deal with the apparent menace of the peace movement, as represented by the APC.

Another account, similar to that of Thwaites, is *Tale of the Scorpion* by Harvey Barnett. Barnett joined the Australian Security Intelligence Service in 1957 and was later the Director-General of ASIO. Although his relationship to the intelligence network did not begin until late in the period under study, Barnett's memoir does cover the creation of ASIO and its activities in its formative years. In so doing he gives a general account of the formation of ASIO but does not discuss either the peace movement or the APC in any detail. He chooses instead to focus on the organisations' role in the Petrov affair. Barnett's

¹⁶ Bill Gollan, op cit, p. 42

¹⁷ Michael Thwaites, *Truth Will Out: ASIO and the Petrovs*, Collins, Sydney, 1980, p. 31.

book, as a whole, is interesting in that it provides a first hand account of the workings of Australia's intelligence organisations but it does not contribute to a deeper understanding of the relationship between ASIO and the APC.

ASIO: An Unofficial History by Frank Cain is a basic account of the history of ASIO. Cain's work is a further casualty of the inclination of writers to become excessively preoccupied with the Petrov affair and the subsequent Royal Commission on Espionage. The peace movement is addressed only in relation to restrictions placed on passports during 1950, and even then there is little elaboration. There is some discussion devoted to the ways in which ASIO sought to suppress the Communist Party. Cain explains that had the Communist Party Dissolution Act been put in place, ASIO would have had the task of dissolving fringe groups of the CPA, one of which would have been the APC.¹⁸ Cain also described attempts by Menzies to condition the public to believe in the existence of an external threat to the nation.¹⁹ This point is important to a study of the peace movement in that it could be deemed that the movement was obstructing efforts to satisfactorily defend the nation against a threat, which would give justification to adverse actions taken by ASIO and the Government. Cain's study also demonstrates some of the methods employed by ASIO during the 1950s. He writes about how ASIO monitored certain sections of the community which were believed to be communist infiltrated, such as writers and intellectuals. Yet, he does not devote any of his discussion to the way in which these methods were employed against the APC or the peace movement overall. The thesis will attempt to correct this situation by investigating how these methods were applied to the APC and those involved with it. Desmond Ball and David Horner also extensively discuss the methods and activities of ASIO and its predecessors, such as the Commonwealth Investigation Service [CIS], while also providing a detailed discussion of the establishment of ASIO.²⁰ However, Ball and Horner are concerned primarily with the

¹⁸ Frank Cain, *The Australian Security Intelligence Organisation: An Unofficial History*, Spectrum, Richmond, 1994, p. 97

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 97

²⁰ See Desmond Ball and David Horner, *Breaking the Codes: Australia's KGB Network, 1944-1950*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, 1998

security network in relation to its efforts to crack 'the case', which involved attempts to uncover Soviet espionage in Australia.

Richard Hall's *The Secret State* is rather dated in its discussion and also follows the tendency to focus on the Petrov affair. However, there is one section of particular significance to the thesis. Hall discusses the incorporation of special branches of the police force into ASIO and the effect this action had on ASIO infiltration of Communist front organisations, of which 'the Peace Councils were perhaps the main targets'.²¹ Hall goes on to ask 'what possible harm could Peace Council motions do to Australia', then suggesting that 'by Captain Blood's rules on subversion anything that opposed the government had to be infiltrated'.²² Hall is one of the few authors who addresses the role of ASIO in monitoring and attempting to subdue the peace movement. While Hall raises questions about how and why the Peace Councils were under ASIO surveillance, he does not succeed in giving any answer significant answer. Hall neglects to expand upon his discussion of the interaction between ASIO and the Peace Councils. It is the goal of the thesis to correct this situation by investigating the methods and motives which underlay ASIO's attempts to regulate the APC and the peace movement. Greg Pemberton's chapter 'An Imperial Imagination: Explaining the Post-1945 Foreign Policy of Robert Gordon Menzies', gives an effective outline of the nature of the political climate during the post-war period which led to the establishment and continuing importance of organisations such as ASIO. The section describing the exclusiveness of foreign policy making is notable in that it gives an indication of the degree to which Menzies and ASIO sought to suppress debate.²³ Pemberton does not go so far as to suggest how these methods were applied to the peace movement, an aspect that will be tackled in the thesis.

A study that does confront the question of how ASIO responded to the perceived threat of the peace movement is *Australia's Spies and Their Secrets*, by David McKnight. He cites

²¹ Richard Hall, *The Secret State: Australia's Spy Industry*, Cassell Australia, Stanmore, 1978, p. 45

²² *Ibid*, pp. 45-6

²³ See Greg Pemberton, 'An Imperial Imagination: Explaining the Post-1945 Foreign Policy of Robert Gordon Menzies', in Frank Cain (ed), *Menzies in War and Peace*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, Australia, 1997, p. 170

Menzies' allegation that peace movement activities 'are calculated to have a softening up effect on the democratic world... and are calculated to weaken Western defence efforts'.²⁴ McKnight also suggests that the peace movement was unique in that it operated during a period of 'virtual war psychosis'.²⁵ This idea of 'war psychosis' is more sophisticated than the perspective of historians such as Cain, who argue that Menzies sought to engineer deliberately an atmosphere of foreboding doom in order to justify an assault on communism. The degree to which ASIO was concerned about the involvement in the peace movement of prominent figures, such as clergymen, is also mentioned by McKnight; this concern was expressed by Thwaites. McKnight gives, perhaps, the most detailed, useful and insightful account of the ways in which Menzies and ASIO viewed the threat from the peace movement.

The Menzies Government

Accounts of the Menzies Government in the 1950s have frequently centred around its attempt to ban the Communist Party, its involvement in the Petrov affair and the subsequent Royal Commission. These accounts are too numerous to itemise here, but one area of debate about Menzies and his Government, of relevance to the thesis, concerns the motivations for Menzies' attacks on the Communist Party. One school of thought suggests that Menzies' stance was simply the result of an ardent desire to destroy the Communist Party at all costs. CMH Clark believed that that the Menzies Government's stance represented 'a war to the death against the Communist Party'.²⁶ Clark also believed that the Liberal Party 'had no inhibitions or agonies of mind on the communist issue'.²⁷ Frank Cain and Frank Farrell similarly argued that the Communist issue

was pursued by Menzies with a single-minded determination which for some observers cast serious doubts on his often-voiced belief in freedom of speech; it also questioned the sincerity

²⁴ See David McKnight, *Australia's Spies and their Secrets*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, p. 114

²⁵ *Ibid*, p. 114

²⁶ Manning Clark, *A Short History of Australia*, Penguin, 1986, p. 222

²⁷ *Ibid*, p. 220

of his own previous criticisms of the proposal to ban communism on the grounds that, in time of peace, doubts ought always to be resolved in favour of free thought.²⁸

Bill Gollan agreed with Cain and Farrell. He described Menzies as an obsessed anti-communist who 'attacked the peace movement in all its aspects while posing throughout his life as a genuinely liberal man'.²⁹ Gollan also outlined his interpretation of 'Australia's McCarthyism', where he suggested that, although 'the hysteria never reached the same level' as in the United States, a form of McCarthyism was 'promoted by the Liberal-Country Party Government led by R.G. Menzies...'.³⁰ David Lowe acknowledged – but did not subscribe to – this school of thought: 'In the hands of the left, the Cold War has long been characterised as the means to Menzies' end of destroying Australian communists and Communist-influenced unions...'.³¹ This thesis will attempt to determine whether this interpretation of Menzies' character is, at least in relation to the peace movement, correct.

The proposition that Menzies exploited the anti-Communist issue is a recurrent theme in the literature on Menzies. Writers as diverse as Brian Galligan³², Geoffrey Bolton,³³ F.G. Clarke,³⁴ Bill Hayden,³⁵ Bernie Taft³⁶ and Don Whittington³⁷ all argue, albeit to differing degrees, that Menzies precipitated Communist scares – scares that 'were more shadow

²⁸ See Cain and Farrell's chapter, 'Menzies' War on the Communist Party, 1949-1951', in Curthoys and Merritt (eds.), *Australia's First Cold War: 1945-1953*, p. 109

²⁹ Bill Gollan, op cit, p. 44

³⁰ Ibid, p. 41; reference to the McCarthyist nature of Australia in the early 1950s can also be found in Don Watson's biography of Brian Fitzpatrick, *Brian Fitzpatrick: A Radical Life*, Hale and Iremonger, Sydney, 1979, pp. 225-51

³¹ Lowe, op cit, p. 4

³² See Brian Galligan, 'Constitutionalism and the High Court', in S. Prasser, J.R. Nethercote and J. Warhurst, (eds) *The Menzies Era: A Reappraisal of Government, Politics and Policy*, Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1995, p. 153

³³ Geoffrey Bolton, *The Oxford History of Australia, Volume 5, 1942-1988*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1990, p. 80

³⁴ F.G. Clarke, *Australia: A Concise Political and Social History*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1989

³⁵ Bill Hayden, *Hayden: An Autobiography*, Angus & Robertson, Pymble, NSW, 1996, pp. 92-3

³⁶ Bernie Taft, *Crossing the Party Line*, Scribe, Newham, Victoria, 1994, p. 73 Don Whittington, *The House will Divide*, Lansdowne Press, Melbourne, 1969, p. xi

³⁷ Don Whittington, *The House Will Divide*, Lansdowne Press, Melbourne, 1969, p. xi

than substance' - in a cynical attempt to give the 'public what it wanted'.³⁸ Typical was Dennis Phillips who argued that '[t]he Menzies government realised that the communist issue could be exploited ruthlessly and effectively in election campaigns', and that 'kicking the Communist can was a sure-fire election winner'.³⁹ According to Phillips, Menzies used 'the communist bogey to exploit historic tensions within the Labor Party'.⁴⁰ Phillips' views are mirrored by Cain and Farrell who alleged that Menzies was driven by

...a realisation that the pursuit of the issue of anti-communism made extremely good electoral sense and was of central importance in bringing the Liberal and Country parties to power and consolidating them in office.⁴¹

In contrast to these harsh judgements of the Menzies Government's anti-Communist stance, another school of thought suggests that Menzies' actions were sincere rather than calculated. A.W. Martin, in particular, is critical of those writers who attacked Menzies' motives:

More ambiguous is the critical question of Menzies' approach to the communist issue. His detractors, then and since, have in varying degrees sought to judge his actions in 'McCarthyist' terms: assuming that for him anti-communism was a primary element in his political armoury, useful to 'smear' opponents, a 'can' always to be 'kicked' with predictable results.⁴²

Martin did not deny that Menzies' use of the Communist issue for electoral advantage, but affirmed that Menzies' 'deep and genuine' abhorrence of Communism was 'beyond question'.⁴³

³⁸ Ibid, p. ix

³⁹ Dennis Phillips, *Cold War Two and Australia*, Allen & Unwin, Nth Sydney, 1983, p. 31

⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 31

⁴¹ Cain and Farrell, op cit, p. 109

⁴² A.W. Martin, *Robert Menzies: A Life, Volume 2, 1944-1978*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1999, p. 575

⁴³ Ibid, p. 576

David Lowe also believed that the image of Menzies had been misrepresented by writers such as those cited above: '[i]n the hands of the left, the Cold War has long been characterised as the means to Menzies' end of destroying Australian communists and communist-influenced unions, and discrediting the left by association'. Menzies' critics, states Lowe, depict his efforts to ban the Reds in 1950-51 as 'an assault on democracy', and ASIO's surveillance and harassment as 'part of his efforts to wield the powers of a police state'.⁴⁴ Lowe dismisses this characterisation of Menzies and his Government believing that it is a mistake to 'over-stress the 'anti' in the Menzies Government's anti-communism'.⁴⁵

To see conservative rhetoric about the menace of international communism merely as a pretext for bashing Australian communists and the left is to rob it of its multifaceted depth in ministers' thinking and its linkage to fears of impending war.⁴⁶

Lowe focuses on the manner in which the Menzies Government reacted to, and contributed to, the intensifying Cold War climate. Throughout his study, Lowe argues that Menzies and his Government adhered a genuine fear that a third world war was imminent. One of the most important features of the early Cold War period, according to Lowe, was 'the waxing and waning of the fear of another world war, probably atomic and apocalyptic and inevitably involving Australia, in the eyes of the most important Australian politicians and policy-makers'.⁴⁷ The trajectory of this thesis is in close alignment with the critique provided by *Menzies and the 'Great World Struggle'*. It will argue that Menzies was driven to attack the peace movement, particularly in the area of travel controls, by a combination of adverse circumstances rather than by an obsessive desire to crush Communism at all costs.

⁴⁴ Lowe, op cit, p. 4

⁴⁵ Ibid, p, 127

⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 5

⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 9

Studies of the peace movement have tended to concentrate on the Communist nature of the movement, without investigating fully how the Government responded to this situation. This thesis is not concerned with determining Communist infiltration of the peace movement, it will be taken as a given that the peace movement was heavily influenced by Communists. A study of Government responses to the peace movement will provide an insight into the depth of the Menzies Government's 'war on Communism' in that the peace campaign represented a lesser target when compared to the Communist Party itself. If it can be found that the Government attacked the peace movement with the same fervor that it attacked the CPA, then those that argue that the Menzies Government was an obsessively anti-Communist administration will be vindicated. However, if the Government was not as forthright in its attack on the peace movement, then it could be argued that the Menzies Government's anti-Communism was not as resolute as has often been suggested.

As has been detailed, writers have focused heavily on the Menzies Government's attempts to implement the Communist Party Dissolution Bill and the subsequent effort to win the 1951 referendum campaign. In these areas, writers have generally been dealing with possibilities; speculating about what the Menzies Government might have done had it been successful in implementing its Dissolution Bill. An examination of Government responses to the peace movement, particularly in terms of the way in which travel restrictions were imposed on peace activists, provides an opportunity to investigate an area where the Government still had the means to attack the Communist menace, as represented by its front organisation, the APC. Passport and travel control provided the Government with an avenue to restrict the Communist Party and fellow travellers which was legislatively possible regardless of the success of the Dissolution Bill. The peace movement is particularly relevant to an analysis of travel restrictions for the reason that peace activists were the most mobile individuals associated with the Communist Party, as is illustrated by the proliferation of peace conferences that were held around the globe during the 1950s. An investigation of travel restrictions imposed on the peace movement

will shed new light on Menzies' attitudes and responses to the Communist threat during the early Cold War period.

As indicated earlier, Lowe identified the neglect historians have shown toward particular areas of 1950s Australia. To a large degree Lowe's important book rectifies this oversight. Nevertheless, he bypasses the impact and significance of the APC, and the peace movement as a whole. Lowe also gives minimal voice to the role played by ASIO in subduing and suppressing the perceived Communist menace. Lowe mostly refers to ASIO in terms of the role it would have played had the proposal to ban the Communist Party been legitimised, or in regard to its role in the Petrov affair. This thesis is situated within the framework of this historiographical gap. It will discuss the methods and motivations of the Government and ASIO in attacking the peace movement. It will discuss how Menzies' handling of the peace movement contributes to an overall understanding of the motives behind his anti-Communist stance. And it will examine the relationship between the Menzies Government, ASIO and the peace movement, each of which has been studied separately but not in conjunction with the other. It is hoped that an analysis of this relationship will make a contribution to an understanding of the methods and motivations of both the Menzies Government and ASIO during the crucial early Cold War period.

CHAPTER ONE

WATERSHED, 1949:

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ASIO, THE AUSTRALIAN PEACE COUNCIL AND THE MENZIES GOVERNMENT

1949 proved to be a watershed year in Australia's involvement in the deepening Cold War crisis. Two vastly different organisations were established which were a response to the prevailing atmosphere. The Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO), was established in February of that year. Within months of this development, while this fledgling organisation was still finding its feet, the Australian Peace Council (APC) was formed. However, the most significant development of 1949, which would have a significant impact on both of these organisations, was the installation of Robert Menzies as Australia's Prime Minister in December. The APC, with its diametrically opposed understanding of the Cold War, immediately found itself in conflict with the Menzies Government and ASIO. This chapter will briefly outline the background of each of these bodies in order to illustrate how their different responses to the Cold War emerged and why each became such an ardent adversary of the other.

Security concerns: the establishment of ASIO

An important Australian response to the Cold War was the establishment of an effective security organisation. In the years following the Second World War, the maintenance of national security had been the responsibility of the Commonwealth Investigation Service (CIS). However, this situation changed in March 1949 when Prime Minister Ben Chifley announced the formation of ASIO, under the guidance of Director General, Justice Geoffrey Reed. Reed believed that

As a result of certain information considerable alarm was felt in certain quarters at the weakness of the security measures in Australia, and the very indifferent attempts being made to protect the country. Certain representations were made and finally Mr. Chifley, then Prime

Minister, gave an assurance that steps would be taken by the Australian Government to set up an entirely new security service.¹

The decision was motivated by two specific factors. Firstly, it had come to the attention of authorities in the United States, through Venona decrypts, that there was evidence of Soviet espionage in Australia. The Director of Central Intelligence in the US, Rear Admiral R.H. Hillenkoeter, believed that, 'Indications have appeared that there is a leak, in high government circles in Australia, to Russia'.² As a result of this situation, the US decided to gradually isolate Australian authorities by denying them access to information of an important intelligence nature. As of August 1947 Australia had achieved a security rating equivalent to that of India or Pakistan which caused considerable consternation.³ Of particular concern was that the existing situation could jeopardise the proposed Australian-British Guided Weapons Project, in light of the close relationship between US and British information.⁴

Late in 1947 Australian participation in Anglo-American talks on strategic cooperation in the Far East and South-east Asia was stalled due to the US belief that Australian security was of suspect character.⁵ It was in these circumstances that the British Government chose to send the Director-General of MI5, Sir Percy Sillitoe, and the Director of MI5's protective security division, Roger Hollis, to Australia in an attempt to rectify the situation. Over the ensuing twelve months, the insistence of British authorities, combined with the continued embargo on US intelligence forced Chifley to take positive action. Chifley admitted that it was 'an invidious position for a Government to be placed in, if the flow of information is to be arbitrarily stopped, as has occurred at present...'.⁶ In the context of the growing isolation of Australia, in intelligence terms, Chifley decided that 'developments in the international situation, and consultation with other Governments of

¹ NAA, A6122/43, 1428, see document written by Reed entitled 'Outline of the Foundation and Organisation of ASIO', p. 2.

² Ball and Horner, *op cit*, p. 175.

³ *Ibid*, p. 176.

⁴ *Ibid*, p. 176.

⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 274-5.

⁶ *Ibid*, p. 290.

the British Commonwealth have convinced me that it is necessary to re-establish a distinct security service'.⁷

ASIO represented the Australian Government's attempt to significantly strengthen its security network. At its inception ASIO was mainly concerned with trying to discover the source of Soviet espionage in Australia, an task which became known as 'the case'.⁸ Reed detailed the initial role of ASIO when he stated that, 'The decision to establish the new Security Service was arrived at largely because very little progress was being made with 'the case', and the position regarding security generally was not satisfactory'.⁹ ASIO essentially took on the role of an information gathering surveillance network. Reed stated that 'ASIO is not part of any Department as it functions entirely outside the public service'.¹⁰ Reed was implored to ensure that his staff 'have no connection whatever with any matters of a party political character and that they must be scrupulous to avoid any action which could be so construed'.¹¹ Reed also emphasised that ASIO was 'non-political as well as non-executive'.¹² It was made inherently clear that ASIO did not constitute a secret police force. The organisation was, in fact, 'divorced from law enforcement'¹³ and any issues of law enforcement must necessarily be the concern of some other agency'.¹⁴ ASIO therefore attempted to take on the role of an efficient, independent, security service.

However, ASIO was faced with significant problems during its early period. Most notably, the new security organisation experienced a great degree of hostility from its predecessor, the CIS. Reed expressed the degree of ill feeling between the two organisations when he stated that

⁷ See L.F. Crisp's biography, *Ben Chifley: A Political Biography*, Angus & Robertson, London, 1977, p. 360.

⁸ Ball and Horner, *op cit*, p. 275.

⁹ *Ibid*, p. 295.

¹⁰ NAA, A6122/43, 1428, 'Outline of the Foundation and Organisation of ASIO', p. 5.

¹¹ McKnight, *op cit*, p. 20.

¹² NAA, A6122/43, 1428, 'Outline of the Foundation and Organisation of ASIO', p. 7.

¹³ *Ibid*, p. 7.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 29.

Ever since its inception ASIO has been regarded with very considerable hostility by a good many of the staff of CIS. Indeed many attempts have been made to hamper the work of ASIO and to discredit its personnel....It is quite obvious that CIS has hoped and possibly expected that the decision to establish a new Service would soon be found to be unsound, and CIS would once more be entrusted with the responsibility for security measures.¹⁵

ASIO also found that ‘the records taken over from CIS are in a most unsatisfactory condition’.¹⁶ Therefore, it is clear that in its formative period ASIO was faced with considerable problems in establishing itself as an effective force. Reed acknowledged that ‘the situation is not yet satisfactory’ in his outline of the foundation of ASIO, produced in June 1950. David Lowe, in his study of the early Cold War period, also supports this argument: ‘the Australian security state, although growing, was a clumsy, inarticulate beast in comparison with its British and American counterparts’.¹⁷ The lack of cohesion in ASIO’s early activities will be of particular relevance to the thesis in its discussion of the interaction between the security service and the peace movement in the early 1950s.

The Menzies Government

While ASIO was in the process of defining its *modus operandi* and strengthening its organisation, the Australian political scene was undergoing considerable change. In December 1949 the Liberal Party, led by Robert Menzies, won the federal election over the incumbent Labor Party after an election campaign in which the spectre of Communism had been used to secure votes. Menzies emotively declared that

This is our great year of decision. Are we for the Socialist State, with its subordination of the individual to the universal officialdom of government, or are we for the ancient British faith that Governments are the servants of the people, a faith which has given fire and quality and direction to the whole of our history for 600 years.¹⁸

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 27.

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 24.

¹⁷ Lowe, op cit, pp. 41-2.

¹⁸ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 November, 1949.

Throughout the election campaign Menzies canvassed his plan to institute a ban on the Communist Party should he come to office. He believed that 'Communism in Australia is an alien and destructive pest. If elected we shall outlaw it'.¹⁹

Nevertheless, Menzies was not always devoted to the idea of abolishing the Communist Party. While there had been a significant push within Liberal ranks to advocate the banning of the Communist Party in election pledges in 1943 and 1946, Menzies and a number of his colleagues had resisted the urge to institute a ban. Menzies' stance was based on two main arguments.²⁰ Firstly, he believed that banning would simply drive the Communists underground where they would become more threatening. Secondly, Menzies maintained that to ban any political system would be a violation of the basic human right to freedom of thought.

However, by 1948 the Liberal Party had become united in its determination to outlaw the Communist Party.²¹ The attitudes toward Communism of wavering Party members had been altered by world events. Menzies later explained his position when he stated that

...for some years I and other persons resisted the idea of a communist ban on the ground that, in time of peace, doubts ought to be resolved in favour of free speech. True, that was my view after the war. But events have moved. We are not at peace today, except in a technical sense.²²

Of particular concern were events which had taken place in Czechoslovakia. In late February 1948 the independent Czech Government succumbed to the Soviet Union after a coup.²³ Further to this, Jan Masaryk, the foreign minister who had fought to maintain Czechoslovakia's independence and who had advocated American aid through his acceptance of the Marshall Plan, was found dead after falling from the window of his

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Martin, op cit, p. 81.

²¹ Ibid, p. 81.

²² Ibid, p. 143.

²³ Ibid, p. 81.

bedroom.²⁴ The circumstances surrounding his demise remain clouded. The events in Czechoslovakia represented the first evidence of the Soviet Union establishing a satellite administration by covert means and the suspicious death of Masaryk added to the foreboding atmosphere.

In addition to these events, Menzies was also significantly influenced by the crisis occurring in Berlin throughout 1948. On 24 June 1948 the Soviet Union commenced its blockade of Berlin, in an attempt to force the Western powers to either adhere to Soviet demands on how the city should be run or relinquish their hold on their allocated sections of the city.²⁵ On 26 June, the Western powers set about breaking the blockade through the airlifting of supplies into the Western held sections of the city. While Menzies would no doubt have been concerned by these events in any circumstances, his anxiety was heightened by the fact that he was visiting the UK during the initial period of the crisis.²⁶ This provided Menzies with a profound insight into just how volatile the Cold War was becoming. The events in Berlin further cultivated Menzies' belief that the Communists were adopting a coordinated world strategy and that a third world war was, at the very least, a possibility.

The Cold War deepens

While the Berlin Blockade and the events in Czechoslovakia provided the initial impetus for the change in Liberal policy, there were a number of incidents during the ensuing period, in particular in the lead-up to the election in December 1949, which further exacerbated the prevailing Cold War atmosphere and further enhanced Menzies' campaign against the Communists. In March 1949, the general secretary of the Communist Party of Australia (CPA), L.L. Sharkey, responded to a journalists question by declaring that

²⁴ See Issacs, and Downing, *Cold War: An Illustrated History, 1945-1991*, Little, Brown and Company, New York, 1993, pp. 55-6.

²⁵ *Ibid*, p. 69.

²⁶ Martin, *op cit*, p. 576.

...if Soviet forces in pursuit of aggressors entered Australia, Australian workers would welcome Soviet forces pursuing aggressors as the workers welcomed them throughout Europe when the Red troops liberated people from the power of the Nazis.²⁷

The degree to which the Cold War was gripping the Australian psyche is evidenced by the fact that Sharkey's outburst resulted in him being prosecuted for using seditious language and he was then sentenced to three years gaol, although this was later reduced to eighteen months. In the immediate aftermath of the Sharkey incident, another furore erupted surrounding claims made by Cecil Sharpley, a former member of the Victorian State Committee of the Communist Party. In a series of articles, Sharpley sought to illustrate his understanding of how the Communist Party of Australia conducted its affairs.²⁸ Sharpley's most potent claim was that the Party had been responsible for ballot-rigging in union elections. Sharpley's account provided the impetus for the State Government of Victoria to call a Royal Commission on Communism.

On June 27 the Miners Federation called a coal strike. The miners sought to institute a 35 hour week, long-service leave and a pay increase of 30 shillings a week. In a climate where post-war shortages were already the norm, the strike had an immediate adverse impact on the population. Among the effects were the enforcement of power restrictions and the crippling of the railways. It was estimated early in the strike that for every week the action continued five million pounds in wages was being lost as well as fifteen million pounds in goods.²⁹ The three main unions which supported the action - the Miners' Federation, the Waterside Workers' Federation and the Federated Ironworkers Association - were largely Communist controlled which added considerable fuel to the already blazing Cold War fire. The strike continued throughout July and was only resolved, on August 15, after Chifley sent in the Army to man the open-cut mines with troops. With the election looming, the Liberal Party's attack on the Communist Party continued to gain momentum.

²⁷ Cited in Robin Gollan, *Revolutionaries and Reformists*, op cit, p. 243.

²⁸ Ibid, p. 243; and also Martin, op cit, p. 111.

²⁹ Martin, op cit, p. 107.

On the international scene the Cold War climate continued to intensify. In the US, in August 1948, the naming of Alger Hiss as a Communist agent caused a sensation. Hiss, a former State Department official, had also been involved in the establishment of the United Nations.³⁰ The naming of such a prominent individual as a Communist agent, and the subsequent trial, further enhanced the climate of fear cultivated by the Cold War, in particular in the minds of US citizens. Moreover, the Berlin Blockade continued to grip the imagination of the world throughout early 1949, persisting until 12 May. If there were hopes that the lifting of the blockade would provide some respite from the stifling atmosphere, they were short-lived. Within months of the blockade being lifted it was discovered that the Soviet Union had acquired the atomic bomb.³¹ This development increased anxiety considerably, as the United States no longer held a monopoly over the weapon. Equally as significant as this development was the gradual disintegration of the Nationalist Government in China, led by Chiang Kai-shek. Despite the US pouring more than \$2 billion into maintaining the Nationalist regime, it became increasingly clear throughout 1949 that the Communist forces of Mao Zedong would be triumphant.³² In October Mao claimed victory, proclaiming that 'We, the Chinese people have now stood up',³³ and soon after Chiang Kai-shek fled to Formosa. The world was well and truly in the grip of the Cold War, which provided fertile ground for Menzies', and the security service's, war on Communism in Australia.

The Communist Party Dissolution Bill

Once Menzies and his Party adopted the goal of banning the Communist Party, it set about conducting its campaign with vigour. Throughout the election campaign Menzies maintained his stance that the Communist Party of Australia should be banned. The degree to which the Cold War had penetrated the national psyche is perhaps demonstrated by the Liberal Party's win at the polls in December. Emboldened by his win, Menzies set about making his Communist Party Dissolution Bill law. Menzies first introduced the Bill in the

³⁰ Walker, M. *The Cold War*, Fourth Estate, London, 1993, pp. 68-9.

³¹ Issacs and Downing, op cit, p. 81.

³² Ibid, p. 85-6.

House of Representatives on 27 April 1950.³⁴ Essentially, the Bill sought to make the Communist Party and associated organisations unlawful. The Bill included a provision by which the Governor-General could 'declare' an individual Communist.³⁵ If this circumstance arose, the individual would be barred from obtaining Commonwealth employment or from holding office in a union of a 'key' union. If the declared individual wished to dispute the charge they could lodge an appeal to the High Court. Most contentiously, the Bill determined that the onus of proof would lie with the accused, meaning that the individual would be guilty until he or she could prove otherwise.³⁶

Initially the bill was unable to pass through the Labor dominated Senate. However, on 19 October the Senate succumbed to the pressure, in particular in the face of the outbreak of hostilities in Korea, and passed the Bill. The CPA, with the support of ten unions, immediately challenged the validity of the Bill in the High Court and were vindicated when six of the seven judges found the Act to be unconstitutional.³⁷ The decision was based largely on the understanding that Australia was not in a state of war. The loss in the High Court did not quell the determination of Menzies. Firstly, Menzies forced a double dissolution election which resulted in the Government gaining control of the Senate.³⁸ A referendum was then conducted with the intention of altering the Constitution so as to enable the Act to be free of the misgivings of the High Court.³⁹ The referendum was only narrowly defeated.

After the initial shocks which occurred in 1949, events continued to present themselves which increased anxiety. Firstly, in 1950, the outbreak of the Korean War provided the first real evidence of a hot war between the forces of the West and Communism. Most significantly, Australia found itself involved in its own spy drama with the defection of Vladimir Petrov in 1954. All of these developments will be discussed in more depth

³³ Ibid, p. 86.

³⁴ McKnight, op cit, p. 65.

³⁵ Martin, op cit, p. 145.

³⁶ Ibid, p. 145.

³⁷ McKnight, op cit, p. 65.

³⁸ Ibid, p. 65.

³⁹ Ibid, p. 65.

throughout the thesis. As will be outlined later, Menzies maintained, in particular in the early 1950s, that Australia and the world were, in essence, in a state of war. Much of Menzies' adverse treatment of the Communist Party and the peace movement was based on this assumption. The characterisation of the Menzies Government as an ardently anti-Communist administration has been based mostly on its attempts to implement the harsh Communist Party Dissolution Bill. The thesis will discuss this perception of the Menzies Government further and will, in certain cases, seek to challenge the accepted assessment of Menzies and his Government.

Spry takes charge of ASIO

The installation of the Menzies Government had a profound effect on the functions of ASIO. While Chifley had been a reluctant supporter of the security organisation, Menzies was more ardent. As has been demonstrated, ASIO was racked by problems during its formative period. In addition to the problems with CIS, there was also a question mark over the ability of Reed to run an effective security force. Michael Thwaites, who was recruited by ASIO in 1950, believed that Reed was 'a man of the highest principles, but possibly unable to exercise the close personal supervision called for in the head of such an unusual organisation employing such a varied staff'.⁴⁰ Of course, Thwaites' sentiments must be understood in the context of the timing of his recruitment. Thwaites was recruited in the period immediately following Reed's departure from the security organisation, when Menzies appointed Colonel Charles Spry as Director-General. Spry had a distinguished military career which had led him to attain the position of Director of Military Intelligence in 1946.⁴¹ Spry was also an ardent anti-Communist.⁴² Thwaites contended that 'with Spry's appointment as Director-General in July 1950 there was an immediate change'.⁴³

⁴⁰ Thwaites, op cit, p. 38.

⁴¹ NAA, A6122/43, 1428, for a detailed account of Spry's background see document entitled 'Appointment and Re-organisation by Colonel C.C.F. Spry as Director-General of Security', pp. 1-2; see also McKnight, op cit, pp. 38-42.

⁴² NAA, A6122/43, 1428, op cit, p. 1, It is explained that, on his appointment as Director-General of Military Intelligence, Spry 'set about ridding his own Directorate of Communists'. Spry was also highly regarded as a lecturer on the threat of international Communism.

⁴³ Thwaites, op cit, p. 38.

Upon Spry's appointment, Menzies outlined his understanding of the role of ASIO. Menzies stressed that ASIO was

...part of the defence system of the Commonwealth, and save as herein expressed has no concern with the enforcement of the criminal law. Its task is the defence of the Commonwealth and its Territories from external and internal dangers arising from attempts at espionage and sabotage, or from actions of persons and organisations, whether directed from within or without the country, which may be judged to be subversive of the security of Australia.⁴⁴

While Menzies advocated that ASIO would be 'free from any political bias or influence and nothing should be done that might lend colour to any suggestion that it is concerned with the interest of any particular section of the community...'⁴⁵ he also emphasised that there would be a close relationship between himself and the Director-General. Menzies stated that

As Director-General of Security you will have direct access to the Prime Minister on all matters of moment affecting security which you think should be considered by or on behalf of the Government as a whole.⁴⁶

Thus, while the security service was to be free from political bias the door was left open for a close relationship to be fostered between the Director-General and the Prime Minister. The extent of this relationship will be discussed in more detail throughout the thesis.

Spry immediately set about instilling ASIO with a more a more professional outlook. A complete re-organisation of the staff was undertaken and a properly constituted headquarters was established in Melbourne, due to that city holding the Head Offices of

⁴⁴ NAA, A6122/43, 1428, see document entitled 'Charter of the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (A directive from the Prime Minister to the Director-General of Security)', dated 6 July 1950, p. 1.

⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 1.

⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 1.

the Departments of Supply, Defence, the Armed Services and the Intelligence agencies.⁴⁷ Most notably, in the context of the thesis, one of Spry's first recommendations to the Minister for Immigration, only four weeks after taking office, was to establish strict travel controls, whereby passports would cease to be valid for specific countries in Eastern Europe and Asia.⁴⁸ As will be demonstrated, this undertaking would have a significant impact on the peace movement in particular.

The rise of the peace movement

At the same time as the security force was establishing itself, and in the climate of increasing tension surrounding the Cold War, the Australian peace movement was born. The peace movement in Australia during the early 1950s was based largely around the activities of the Australian Peace Council. The APC immediately came under the scrutiny of security forces, and later the Menzies Government, due to the fact that it was heavily influenced by the Communist Party, which essentially ran the APC as a front organisation. The APC was a part of the burgeoning international peace campaign and was linked to the Communist-led World Peace Council (WPC). Representatives of the South East Asian Treaty Organisation (SEATO) were under no illusions as to the background of the WPC, coming to the conclusion that

This is perhaps the most notorious of all Communist front organisations. By seizing upon the most universally-cherished word "peace", and using it as a weapon in the Communist onslaught on the non-Communist world, the WPC has revealed itself as a particularly cynical hoax. "Peace" in the Communist dictionary, and in the interpretation given to it by the WPC, has been well defined as a state of affairs in which there is no resistance to Communism.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Ibid, see 'Appointment and Re-organisation by Colonel C.C.F. Spry as Director-General of Security', p. 3.

⁴⁸ McKnight, op cit, p. 43.

⁴⁹ See document, compiled in 1960, entitled 'SEATO Confidential: Organising A Peace Congress', p. 2, NAA, A432/15, 63/2279.

In 1950 the Reverend P.J. Ryan, an avowed anti-communist, asserted that the APC was 'the spearhead of the Cominform Peace drive in Australia'.⁵⁰ He also contended that, although 'parlour pinks, fellow travellers and well-meaning but muddle-headed ministers of religion act as a facade...the real control rests with the Party'.

The WPC was an initiative which grew out of the conclusions of the World Congress of Intellectuals for Peace, held in Wroclaw, Poland, in August 1948.⁵¹ The links between this Congress and the international communist movement were demonstrated by statements in the Cominform journal of September 1948:

The Congress decisions confront the Communist Parties and especially the Communist intellectuals with the important and honourable task of being in the forefront - in bringing together the intellectuals of their countries for the defence of peace and culture.⁵²

The journal called on 'all professional workers in all lands to organise congresses and set up committees for defence of peace'.⁵³ In accordance with this call, the first World Peace Congress was held in Paris in February 1949. The conference was universally accepted to be an integral part of the Communist Party's front activity. Communist peace activist Alec Robertson asserted that the initial meeting in Paris was attended by an Australian delegation 'consisting almost entirely of communists'.⁵⁴ Robertson's evidence is of particular note considering the fact that he had held the position of national organising secretary in the APC.⁵⁵ A significant number of delegates, 384 in total, were unable to attend the Congress due to the French Government's decision to deny visas on security

⁵⁰ See pamphlet by the Reverend Patrick John Ryan, *Communism and World Peace*, Renown Press, Melbourne, 1950, p. 13. Found in the papers of the National Catholic Rural Movement at Melbourne University Archives, L58/1, BS 4/2/11.

⁵¹ See J.P. Forrester, *op cit*, p. 2.

⁵² *Ibid*, p. 2.

⁵³ *Ibid*, p. 2.

⁵⁴ Robertson, 'CPA in the Anti-War Movement' in *Australian Left Review*, October-November, 1970, p. 40.

⁵⁵ Saunders and Summy, 'From the Second World War to Vietnam and Beyond', *op cit*, p. 60; a list of officials of the APC can also be found in Jan Sullivan-Talty's unpublished BA thesis, 'The Australian Peace Movement 1949-1964: A Study in Social Protest with Specific Reference to the Australian Peace Council', University of Wollongong, 1982, p. 82.

grounds.⁵⁶ As will be demonstrated in later chapters, this method of obstructing peace conferences became a common practice of governments, including the Menzies Government, due to the fact that, in subsequent years, the international peace movement conducted a number of international peace conferences at contentious venues, most notably in Peking at the height of the Korean conflict.

The APC was established on 1 July 1949, at a meeting at the home of the Unitarian Minister, the Reverend Victor James. Also present at that first meeting was John Rodgers,⁵⁷ who was a member of the CPA. There is little question that Communists took an active role and interest in the Australian arm of the peace movement. However, debate has raged over the degree of Communist influence of the Australian peace movement, and in particular the Peace Council. In the *Communist Review* in October 1949, Lance Sharkey stressed that ‘the Communist party will take its full share of the work of such a movement and give it its fullest support’. Alec Robertson confirmed the degree of control exerted by the Party by stating that

The first half-year or so called for concentration of CPA effort literally on the convincing and mobilising of the communists themselves, and large numbers of ex-communists and close supporters.⁵⁸

Alastair Davidson contended that the APC was formed ‘after considerable groundwork by party intellectuals’.⁵⁹ Davidson’s view was shared by Ian Turner, a member of the Communist Party as well as being the first Organising Secretary of the APC. Turner stated that

⁵⁶ Forrester, op cit, p. 3.

⁵⁷ See Ralph Gibson’s, *One Woman’s Life: A Memoir of Dorothy Gibson*, op cit, p. 66.

⁵⁸ Robertson, op cit, p. 40.

⁵⁹ Alastair Davidson, *The Communist Party of Australia: A Short History*, Hoover Institution Press, Stanford, 1969, p. 104.

The post-war Australian peace movement had its origin in a top-secret meeting of party members and close sympathisers in Melbourne early in 1949. That meeting agreed to initiate a broadly-based Australian Peace Council.⁶⁰

Similarly, David McKnight described the APC as ‘an initiative of the CPA and the small group of non-communists initially prepared to work with it’.⁶¹ Saunders and Summy, agreed that ‘the renaissance of an Australian disarmament movement was specifically initiated by the Communist Party of Australia’.⁶² Further to this, Summy and Saunders credited the CPA with performing ‘a major share of the organisational work’.⁶³ This point was supported by the evidence that ‘the first three national organisation secretaries - Ian Turner, Alec Robertson, and Stephen Murray-Smith - were all members of the party’.⁶⁴ Turner confirmed that the Communist Party effectively manipulated the peace movement when he suggested that ‘sometimes we were over-manipulative...’ and that this led to the departure of individuals such as Jim Cairns and novelist Leonard Mann.⁶⁵ Amirah Inglis also demonstrated the extent of Party control of the Peace Council when she described how her husband, Ian Turner, was forced to relinquish his position in the Council by the Party leadership.⁶⁶

Valerie O’Byrne disputed the common conception of Communist control, believing that although Communists were involved in the peace movement their motives were sincere. She stated

⁶⁰ Ian Turner, *Room for Manoeuvre: Writing on History, Politics, Ideas and Play*, Drummond Publishing, Richmond, Vic, 1982, p. 127.

⁶¹ McKnight, op cit, p. 114.

⁶² Summy and Saunders, ‘Disarmament and the Australian Peace Movement’ op cit, p. 25.

⁶³ Saunders and Summy, ‘From the Second World War to Vietnam and Beyond’, op cit, p. 60.

⁶⁴ Ibid, p. 60.

⁶⁵ Turner, op cit, p. 128.

⁶⁶ Turner was replaced as National Organisation Secretary by Alec Robertson; see Inglis’ memoir *The Hammer and the Sickle and the Washing Up: Memoirs of an Australian Woman Communist*, Hyland House, South Melbourne, 1995, p. 108.

It is clear from the beginning the Peace Council included communists, intellectuals, left-wing political activists and clergy, an alliance not without strains, but ready to organise and work for peaceful co-existence between capitalism and communism.⁶⁷

Alastair Davidson also subscribed to this view, believing that the Party's influence on the peace movement was less pronounced in the years after its inception. Davidson stated that

although the APC was certainly influenced by communists at its formation, it had become a genuine mass movement in which various Christian denominations were also prominent and it was clearly a very strong movement.⁶⁸

The APC vehemently denied accusations that it was controlled by the Communist Party. In response to an ALP ban on the peace movement in 1950, the Victorian Executive of the APC released a pamphlet entitled *You Can't Ban Peace*. In this pamphlet it was stated that

The Communist Party did not establish the Australian Peace Council, does not control its policy or activities and cannot use it for ends other than advancing the cause of world peace. These are matters of fact, capable of proof.⁶⁹

The APC also denied that the Communist Party had provided any kind of financial support to the organisation. However, the Peace Council did acknowledge that it had received moral support from the Communist Party. The APC Executive stated that

We welcome the support of any section of the community. We do not apologise for the fact that the Communist Party and its paper have urged their members to support our activities; we welcome it, and regret that your [the ALP's] Executive has not given a similar lead to the hundreds of A.L.P. members who are individually assisting us.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ See Valerie O'Byrne's unpublished MA thesis, *The Peace Parsons: The Involvement of the Clergy in Peace Movements During the 1950s*, Monash University, 1984.

⁶⁸ Davidson, op cit, p. 105.

⁶⁹ See pamphlet *You Can't Ban Peace*, p. 2, This pamphlet, compiled by the Victorian Executive of the APC, can be found in the papers of the Rev. Francis Hartley, Box 20, File 6, at the Melbourne University Archives.

⁷⁰ Ibid, p. 3.

The rhetoric propounded by the APC further emphasised the degree of bias towards the Soviet Union. The United States was constantly represented as a war-mongering Government which stubbornly refused to negotiate peace with the Soviet Union. On the other hand, the Soviets were presented as peace loving people who were open to discussion. Examples of this type of rhetoric can be found in a pamphlet released by the APC in support of the World Peace Committee's Stockholm meeting in 1950. In this document it is stated that 'The bar to agreement on disarmament does not come from the Soviet side'.⁷¹ It is argued that 'the dominant American political and military circles are still holding up agreement'. Further to this, the December 1950 pamphlet *Working for Peace*, included an interview with Professor Winston Rhodes, an Associate Professor of Literature at the University of New Zealand who had visited the Soviet Union. Rhodes detailed the extent to which the people of the Soviet Union sought peace. Rhodes described how 'you could walk the streets and see where the people of different nationalities inside the Soviet Union mingle together easily...'.⁷² Rhodes also stated that

They only wish that the people in other countries could understand that the Soviet Union wishes for peace and that the whole people loathe war, but there was no sign of any attempt to build up a war hysteria - either for aggression or even for defence.⁷³

While the Australian Government characterised the Soviet Union as a shadowy menace covertly manipulating world events, the peace movement clearly envisaged the Western powers, most dominantly represented by the United States, as the true enemies of peace. With such opposing interpretations of the Cold War situation, it was inevitable that the Government and the peace movement would clash. The examples given are only some of the many instances of apparent Soviet bias which can be found in the rhetoric of the Australian Peace Council in its formative years.

⁷¹ See pamphlet entitled, *In support of the World Peace Committee's Stockholm meeting, the Australian Peace Congress challenges those who are preparing for war*, Australian Peace Council, Melbourne, 1950, p. 20.

⁷² See pamphlet entitled *Working for Peace*, published by the Australian Peace Council, Melbourne, 1950.

⁷³ Ibid.

It is clear that the historiography of the peace movement in Australia has centred on the degree to which the movement was Communist dominated. Menzies made his position clear in 1950 when, in introducing the Communist Party Dissolution Bill, he stated that

The Soviet Union...has made perfect the technique of the 'Cold war'. It has accompanied it by the organisation of peace demonstrations designed, not to promote true peace, but to prevent or impair defence preparations in the democracies.⁷⁴

Menzies clearly attributed great importance to the peace campaign as an instrument of Communist policy. His fear of the peace movement was shared by members of ASIO. Michael Thwaites believed that

The word 'peace'- one of the most beautiful and evocative in the English language-was suffering even worse disfigurement. The World Peace Council...was the prototype Communist front. Its basic aim was simply to present Soviet policies without exception as 'peace-loving', and anything that opposed them as 'warlike'. I found myself muttering the prophet Jeremiah's warning about those who say 'Peace, peace, where there is no peace'.⁷⁵

Thwaites was particularly concerned about 'the number of intelligent, high-minded, not to say admirable people, who seemed prepared to ignore, accept, even defend this palpable duplicity'.⁷⁶

The weight of evidence and opinion suggests that the figurehead of the Australian peace movement, the APC, was essentially Communist controlled at its inception and was heavily influenced in subsequent years, although there is clearly debate as to the extent of Communist influence. Considering the amount of discussion already conducted on this topic, the thesis will not focus on the degree of Communist influence in the peace movement. Regardless of the debate, it is evident that ASIO and the Menzies Government had sufficient reason to be interested in, and concerned about, the APC's activities. The

⁷⁴ Martin, *op cit*, p. 143.

⁷⁵ Thwaites, *op cit*, pp. 30-1.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, p. 31.

fact that the APC openly welcomed Communist participation in its efforts would have been reason enough for the Government and ASIO to closely monitor the activities of the peace movement. In the context of the events of the time, Communist participation on any level would have constituted the distinct possibility of Communist control and influence in the minds of the Government and the security organisation. The coup in Czechoslovakia in 1948 had clearly illustrated that the Communist Party was capable of covertly infiltrating and influencing organisations and Governments. The ability of the peace movement to generate wide popular support for its initiatives, separated as it was from the main body of the Communist Party, would have heightened Government anxiety considerably. The thesis will demonstrate how the Government and ASIO sought to monitor and subdue the activities of the peace movement.

The increasing influence and confidence of the security forces and the election of an openly anti-Communist administration in Canberra, combined with the rise to prominence of the Communist-inspired peace movement, set the scene for a Cold War showdown between the forces of the Government and the Australian peace movement in the early 1950s. In the heightened atmosphere of anxiety provided by the events of the Cold War, a clash between the forces of the Government and the peace movement was inevitable. It is evident that ASIO and the Menzies Government had sufficient reason to be interested in, and concerned about, the peace movement's activities. However, other events and circumstances during the period, such as the Petrov affair, have been focused upon by historians to the exclusion of discussion of the peace movement, as was illustrated in the previous chapter. The thesis will not concern itself with attempting to disseminate the degree of Communist influence in the peace movement. It will be taken as a given that Communists were involved. The thesis is more concerned with the ways in which the Government and ASIO responded to the threat posed by the peace movement.

CHAPTER TWO

THE GATHERING STORM

PASSPORT BANS AND TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS : 1949-1952

A passport is an official document which entitles the holder to travel under the protection of the issuing government. Throughout the 1950s, the Menzies Government, particularly Immigration Minister Harold Holt, sought to deny this protection to a number of Australian citizens, most notably members of the peace movement. The Government also chose to deny access to foreign visitors involved in peace initiatives. The sheer frequency of peace conferences, both on a national and international scale, during the 1950s meant that the travel arrangements of members of the peace movement were always going to come under intense scrutiny from the Government and Security forces. As indicated earlier, studies of the early 1950s have tended to overlook the peace movement and, in particular, the travel restrictions imposed on members of the movement have been vastly ignored. It is the intention of this chapter to discuss how the Menzies Government sought to enforce passport bans and travel restrictions as well as demonstrating the reasoning behind its policy. The ways in which this policy evolved over time, in the face of changing circumstances on both a local and international scale, will also be investigated.

During the early 1950s Menzies expressed the conviction that Australia needed to be on a 'semi-war footing' which in turn would result in 'many restrictions of civil liberties'.¹ Menzies believed that Australia had less than three years to prepare for the next global conflict.² Travel restrictions on peace workers represented one of the Menzies Government's most successful attacks on civil liberties during this period. Menzies and his post-war Government have been represented in the relevant studies as deeply anti-communist in their approach. Menzies' attempt to ban the Communist Party is clear evidence of this. However, it will be argued that the Government's passport policy was implemented as a result of external circumstances, rather than being the result of a pre-

¹ M. Hartley, *The Truth Shall Prevail: The Rev. Francis John Hartley*, Spectrum, Melbourne, 1982, p. 71.

² Lowe, *op cit*, p. 74.

conceived, conscious determination by the Government to extinguish the civil liberties of peace activists and communists.

Testing the water

Upon taking office in December 1949, the Menzies Government chose, initially, to maintain the policy of the preceding administration in regard to the passport issue. This involved the belief that 'passports should not be withheld on the basis of Communist beliefs or like grounds'.³ Considering that the Menzies Government's election mandate had been to check the spread of communism, this lack of action on passport matters appears to be peculiar. However, the Government's apparent complacency was not simply due to a lack of interest. The Government was still attempting to formulate its policy during this period. Harold Holt,⁴ described the period between December 1949 and July 1950 in these terms:

This was a period of careful examination of the legal, security and administrative situations. During it, no change was made to the policy which had been followed by the previous Government, whereby passports were issued to communists and there were no restrictions on travel to communist territory.⁵

While the new Government attempted to prepare its policy on travel control, ASIO also was endeavouring to establish its stance. The tension between ASIO and its predecessor, the Commonwealth Investigation Service (CIS) was still very much in evidence. Until 31 January 1950, the CIS had been responsible for making reports to the Commonwealth Migration Officer 'from the Security point of view, upon persons referred by [the Commonwealth Migration Officer] to CIS as applicants for naturalisation or for passports

³ NAA, A445/1, 253/24/64, folio 6.

⁴ Holt, the MHR for Higgins from 1949, was Minister for Immigration in the Menzies Government between 1949 and 1956. He also held the Labour and National Service portfolio between 1949 and 1958. See the 1959 edition of Joseph A. Alexander (ed) *Who's Who in Australia*, Herald and Weekly Times, Melbourne, p. 393.

⁵ NAA, A4940/1, C460, see Submission No. 308 'Passport Policy'.

and visas...'.⁶ Initially the CIS continued to be responsible for 'the security 'vetting' of individuals in various aspects'. It was understood that the Commonwealth Migration Officer would 'continue to communicate direct with CIS' in regard to his inquiries. As of 31 January, ASIO took full control of this vetting process, and was subsequently furnished with all details of passport and visa applications.⁷ However, the Government's policy of allowing unlimited access to travellers, regardless of their communistic beliefs was maintained.

The Red Dean

The first true test of the Menzies Government's resolve came with the visit of the Dean of Canterbury, The Reverend Hewlett Johnson. Johnson had established a prominent reputation in preceding years as an outspoken advocate of the Soviet system, so much so that he came to be known as the 'Red Dean'.⁸ Johnson was to visit Australia as a guest of the newly formed Australian Peace Council (APC) with his most important engagement being his role as lead speaker at the Australian Peace Congress held at Melbourne's Exhibition Building during late April 1950. This event was condemned by the Government, with Tasmanian Senator Bill Morrow coming under particular scrutiny due to his participation.⁹ The first indication of adverse sentiment in parliament toward the Congress was expressed by a member of the Opposition, the member for Hoddle John Cremean, on 16 March.¹⁰ Cremean believed the Congress to have been 'organised by

⁶ NAA, A6980 T1, S250244, folio 171.

⁷ Ibid, folio 171.

⁸ Born in 1874 and dying in 1966, Johnson was Dean of Canterbury from 1931-1963. He visited Russia in 1937, which would inspire him to publish *The Socialist Sixth of the World* in 1939. In 1951 he would receive the Stalin Peace Prize, see *The Concise Dictionary of National Biography 1901-1970*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1982, p. 366. See also Johnson's autobiography *Searching for Light*, Joseph, London, 1968. Amirah Inglis gave an indication of the impact of Johnson's writings when she stated that *The Socialist Sixth of the World* had 'made many Party members', Inglis, *The Hammer and the Sickle and the Washing Up: Memoirs of an Australian Woman Communist*, pp. 90-1.

⁹ A description of the Government's attack against Morrow, and his subsequent defending of his actions, can be found in Audrey Johnson's biography, *Fly a Rebel Flag: Bill Morrow 1888-1980*, Penguin Books, Australia, 1986, pp. 193-4.

¹⁰ John Cremean was an anti-communist campaigner who held the seat of Hoddle from 1949 to 1955, when he joined the Anti-Communist Labor Party (later Democratic Labor Party). He was also the brother of Herbert Cremean who had first suggested that Catholic trade union groups should combine in an effort to combat communism. This would lead to the formation of 'the Movement'. See Geoff Browne's entry on

Communists for the purpose of providing a vehicle for red propaganda'.¹¹ Cremean was particularly concerned with the proposed involvement of Madame Sun Yat Sen and Paul Robeson. Cremean wished to know if, 'in view of the sentiments attributed to each of them, will action be taken to prevent them from entering Australia?' Cremean's comments provided the first indication that the Menzies Government would be placed under pressure to enforce restrictions on peace workers. While Holt acknowledged the 'origin and character of the peace conference',¹² he made no commitment to exercise restraints upon participants.

The issue became more pronounced in the House of Representatives on 16 March, when it became clear that the 'Red Dean' had accepted an invitation to speak at the Congress. Holt was asked by Athol Townley¹³ if Johnson would be permitted to enter Australia. Townley was most concerned by Johnson's remarks that 'northern Australia should be handed over to the Japanese'.¹⁴ Holt responded to this by stating that 'assuming the dean had a valid British passport, he would be eligible for admission to Australia'.¹⁵ Further to this, Holt asserted that he had been informed by security authorities that there was 'no objection' to the Dean's visit. Holt stated that, although the Government did not subscribe to the views of the Dean, the Government 'are not called upon to sanction the view of all the people who are admitted to Australia under our present immigration laws'. The Dean was therefore free to enter Australia if he so desired.

Once it became publicly known that the Dr. Hewlett Johnson planned to speak at the Congress, debate as to whether he should be permitted to enter Australia intensified. The Government was called upon by a number of individuals to uphold their election promise

Herbert Cremean in *The Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 13, A-De, Melbourne University Press, pp. 529-30.

¹¹ CPD [H of R] vol. 207, 16 March, 1950, p. 859.

¹² Ibid, pp. 859-860.

¹³ Townley was the MHR for Denison in Tasmania and would later become the Commonwealth Minister for Air and Civil Aviation, in 1954. See *Who's Who in Australia* volume 15, 1955, p. 759.

¹⁴ CPD [H of R] vol. 207, 16 March, 1950, p. 867.

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 867.

to combat communism. On 18 March, Herbert Godwin wrote to Holt insisting that the Government should prevent Johnson from visiting Australia. Godwin stated that:

During the Federal election campaign Mr. Menzies always had a very apt reply to Communist interjectors - "You are on the way out". It must be admitted that the Liberal Party received much support on account of the promise to deal with Australia's No. 1 menace - Communism. Whilst having confidence in the Government to act when they are prepared, it is little consolation to find that in the meantime Communists are on the way in. Surely it is time to take a stand right now.¹⁶

In addition to this, on 24 March Holt received correspondence from A.W. Duffy, who expressed his disappointment that the Government, in allowing Johnson to enter Australia, had failed to comply with its election promise to deal with the communist menace. Duffy was 'sure that old Members of the party, such as myself, are shocked, at your announcement'.¹⁷ Duffy also questioned why the Dean had not been permitted to visit the United States. Duffy asked Holt to alter his decision, suggesting that 'most supporters of the Government, would like to see some of the "Reds" sent away from this country, and let us have some industrial peace, instead of letting in the disturbing element'. A telegram was also received on 12 April in which the Prime Minister was asked 'in the name of democracy' to ensure that 'the Red Dean of Canterbury an apostle of Communism be prevented from landing in Australia'.¹⁸ Although these examples represent the sentiments of more extreme elements of the community they indicate that the Dean's visit was causing consternation.

Despite the increasing protest surrounding Johnson, the Government remained firm in its determination to allow him to visit Australia. On 11 April, in response to the letter of Godwin, the Secretary of the Department of Immigration, T.E. Heyes, outlined the Government's position on the issue. Heyes stated that

¹⁶ See letter dated 18 March 1950, in file on protest against Johnson's visit at NAA, A436/1, 1950/5/2067.

¹⁷ See letter received on 24 March 1950, NAA, A436/1, 1950/5/2067.

¹⁸ Copy of telegram addressed to the Prime Minister on 12 April 1950, NAA, A436/1, 1950/5/2067.

...it has never been the practice to debar British subjects of European race from paying a visit to Australia because of the political views held by them. The Commonwealth Security authorities have advised that, so far as they are concerned, there is no objection to Dr. Johnson visiting Australia.¹⁹

Notwithstanding the strength of Heyes' and the Government's conviction, the matter would not end there, with Johnson's arrival in the country adding further fuel to the debate. On 19 April Senator George Rankin²⁰ stated his objection to the Dean's visit.²¹ Johnson had stated that Australia should give the northern portion of the continent to the Japanese so that 250,000 Japanese could settle there. In light of the sentiments expressed by Johnson, Rankin wished to know if the Government would consider 'deporting this sanctimonious hypocrite before he is given the opportunity to preach his Communist and traitorous doctrine in this country?' In response to this, Senator Neil O'Sullivan²² stated that Johnson was in Australia on a British passport and that the nature of his visit was fully understood, but 'I do not think that at the moment the Government intends to take action in this matter'.²³ This further indicated that, despite protests, the Government was maintaining its stance of not enforcing restrictions on visitors, regardless of their apparent convictions.

However, the protests against Johnson's visit continued. In the House of Representatives, also on 19 April, the member for Henty, Henry Gullett²⁴, expressed grave concerns about

¹⁹ Letter from Heyes to Godwin dated 11 April 1950, NAA, A436/1, 1950/5/2067.

²⁰ Rankin became a Senator for Victoria in 1950, and was Chairman of Committees in the Senate from 1951-1953, *Who's Who in Australia*, 1955, p. 637.

²¹ CPD [S] vol. 207, 19 April, 1950, p. 1505.

²² Neil O'Sullivan, a Senator for Queensland since 1946, was Minister for Trade and Customs and was also the Leader of the Government in the Senate. See *Who's Who in Australia*, 1955, p. 596.

²³ CPD [S] vol. 207, 19 April, 1950, p. 1505.

²⁴ Gullett became the MHR for Henty in 1946 and was appointed Chief Government Whip in the House of Representatives in 1950, *Who's Who in Australia*, 1955, p. 335. Also see his autobiography *Good Company: Henry "Jo" Gullett, Horseman, Soldier, Politician*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1992. In the chapter 'Canberra Days - Politics and Personalities', Gullett describes his role in the Menzies administration in the 1950s. Gullett was avowedly anti-Communist as is illustrated by his close relationship with 'young Bill Wentworth' who will become a dominant feature of later discussion, in particular in the chapter on the 1959 Melbourne Peace Congress.

the nature of Johnson's speeches.²⁵ Gullett was unequivocal in his determination that action should be taken to prevent Johnson, and others of his ilk, from spreading apparent Communist propaganda. This led Gullett to clearly articulate the idea of imposing travel restrictions on Communists and peace conference delegates. He asked Holt if he would

...consider overhauling the laws relating to immigration and entry into this country, in such a way as to prevent people from coming here to disseminate Communist propaganda under the guise of religion...or, indeed, under any other guise?²⁶

Despite this, the Government was unmoved in its stance against the imposing of travel restrictions. Holt expressed the policy of the Government, while highlighting some of the difficulties involved with applying travel restrictions, when he stated,

I see very great practical difficulties in attempting to adopt the course which the honourable member has proposed, as it would necessitate officers of my department making themselves familiar with the views of all sorts of people who may desire to come to this country. The practice which I have adopted in this instance, and would adopt in similar appropriate cases, was to inquire of the security service whether any objection was taken to the Dean's visit to Australia.²⁷

Holt clearly envisaged that the task was too big for his department to handle alone. The increasing importance of the security service to the area of travel control and immigration is demonstrated by Holt's assessment of the situation. However, the Government still refused to take a tough line, in terms of applying travel restrictions, against supposed Communist sympathisers in the peace movement. In the case of Johnson, the reasoning for this apparent leniency was that,

The Dean possesses a British passport. I was assured by the officers of the Security Service that no security objection was raised to his mission in Australia. They said that his pro-Soviet

²⁵ CPD [H of R] vol. 207, 19 April, 1950, p. 1570.

²⁶ Ibid, p. 1570.

²⁷ Ibid, p. 1570.

views were so widely known that his presence here would merely focus attention on the real character of the congress which he is attending.²⁸

It seems that the security service was of the belief that the Dean's notoriety may do the cause of the peace movement, and the APC, more harm than good in that his presence highlighted the communist nature of the Congress. It is also evident that the Government had yet to devise a suitable, and efficient, way to impose travel restrictions, which explains the apparent lack of action in the case of Johnson, despite the protests.

Yet, the Dean's visit continued to cause consternation, and not just among junior members of parliament. Menzies himself was less than impressed with the Dean, describing him as 'a singularly foolish person'.²⁹ Menzies believed that 'the greatest misfortune attending his visit to Australia is the amount of publicity which his views are receiving'. Further to this, Menzies stated that, 'nothing nauseates me more than to discover the skill with which these Communists can put into their vanguard some deluded Minister of the Christian religion'.³⁰ Despite the obvious displeasure of the Prime Minister, Johnson's visit to Australia was allowed to proceed. In the context of the loose passport and visa laws applied at the time, the Government appeared to have taken ample steps to determine the eligibility of the Dean as a visitor to this country.

The apparent leniency of the Australian Government toward Johnson was not mirrored by its counterpart in the United States.³¹ Following his visit to Australia Johnson planned to visit New Zealand. From New Zealand he intended on flying to Canada via the United States, due to a necessary stopover in Honolulu. However the US government refused to allow Johnson a visa to Honolulu and went so far as to deny him the right to sit in the plane on the tarmac while it refuelled. Johnson accurately assessed the absurdity of the situation: 'I was travelling from one British country to another British country, in a

²⁸ Ibid, p. 1570.

²⁹ CPD [H of R] vol. 207, 19 April, 1950, p. 1774.

³⁰ Ibid, p. 1774.

³¹ For a description of Johnson's problems with United States authorities, see Johnson's autobiography, *op cit*, p. 279.

British plane'.³² Johnson believed the intention was to prevent him from attending a conference he was due to address in Canada. As a result of the US Government's action, Johnson was forced to abandon his visit to New Zealand so he could make a hurried journey to Canada via Singapore and London.

The vehement hostility expressed toward Johnson in the US was almost certainly exacerbated by circumstances which, at that time, were unique to that country. Senator Joseph McCarthy had made his first publicised attack on Communists in the preceding February and this was followed by a series of attacks on Communists which made the Senator, and his charges, front page news by March.³³ By the time of the Dean's proposed visit, the US was fully immersed in McCarthyist paranoia. In Australia the situation had not deteriorated to the same extent as it had in the US. The most celebrated attempt by the Menzies Government to attack Communism, the Communist Party Dissolution Bill, had only just become a subject of debate upon the Dean's departure from Australia. This fact, combined with the Government and ASIO's lack of a clear strategy of how to conduct travel policy, explains the Menzies Government's less stringent stance against Johnson. Its lack of action is also the first indication that Menzies' policy on travel control was dictated more by circumstance rather than by an irrational desire to crush Communism.

Not Valid: Passport policy tightens

In the months following the visit of Johnson circumstances would alter dramatically, forcing the Menzies Government to toughen its stance on travel control. By the end of June the Korean War had commenced and within a month Australia had pledged its support with an offer to supply ground forces.³⁴ Against the background of these new developments Menzies reintroduced the Communist Party Dissolution Bill, declaring that

³² Ibid, p. 279.

³³ J.T. Patterson, *America in the Twentieth Century: A History*, Harcourt Brace, Orlando, Fl, 1994, p. 330.

³⁴ Lowe, op cit, p. 63.

...most of the people of this country believe that Communists are enemies of Australia, and very few people in this country believe...that this country is neither at war or in any danger of war.³⁵

In light of Australia's involvement in Korea and with the Communist Party Dissolution Bill still a legitimate prospect, the Menzies Government sought to tighten its passport programme. Initially, the Government decided to deny passports to Communists regardless of their itinerary. According to Holt

The outbreak of hostilities in Korea in July, 1950, necessitated a more restrictive policy in the interests of security. The Solicitor-General gave an opinion that passports could legally be withheld from communists, and it was decided to consider on their individual merits applications by any persons of security interest.³⁶

However, this arrangement only lasted until 31 August, when a revision of passport procedure was devised. Holt stated that

...acting on the advice of the Director-General of Australian Security Intelligence Organisation, I directed that the countries within the Soviet orbit, and certain other danger areas should be excluded as a general rule from the validity of Australian passports. Australians wishing to visit those countries were to be required to submit a statement giving the objects of their journeys, and their statements were to be submitted to ASIO for advice as to whether a security risk was involved...³⁷

If a passport applicant was determined to visit a country which had been excluded, it was left to the discretion of the Minister for Immigration as to whether the application would be approved. This effectively gave Holt the right to dictate the travel arrangements of Australian individuals he considered to be undesirable. However, Holt understood that this new policy had considerable limitations:

³⁵ Ibid, p. 44.

³⁶ NAA, A4940/1, C460, Submission 308, 30 March 1955. In this document, which is discussed in detail in the next chapter, Holt, in revising passport policy, outlined a brief history of passport policy up to 1955.

³⁷ NAA, A4940/1, C460, see Agenda No. 151, 'Revision of Passport Procedure in Relation to Security'.

It was fully appreciated when the new procedure was adopted that the exclusion of the orbit countries from passports would not necessarily prevent the bearers from visiting those countries, if the latter's Governments collaborated to that end.³⁸

Despite this flaw, Holt was reluctant to include more stringent measures within the revised policy. He acknowledged that there was no provision in the Passport Act that made it an offence to visit a country not included in a passport's validity, and argued that

...no great benefit would result from the enactment of such a provision, since it was unlikely, even where a breach came to our notice, that we could secure proof with which to obtain a conviction.³⁹

It therefore appeared that the revisions made to the passport policy were little more than a smokescreen, aimed at deterring individuals from visiting countries of suspect virtue. If an individual was determined to visit an excluded country, the Government had little chance of preventing this occurrence. This policy was to be instituted for a trial period of twelve months.

Passport ban: The Second World Peace Congress, Warsaw, 1950

However, this new arrangement almost immediately had an impact on the peace movement when delegates sought to make their way to Warsaw for the Second World Peace Congress. The event had originally been scheduled to take place in Sheffield, England, but was relocated to Warsaw when the Attlee Labour Government enforced an entry ban on overseas visitors to the Congress.⁴⁰ The British Government expressed grave doubts about the intentions of the Congress alleging it was an initiative of the World Peace Council, widely acknowledged to be Communist dominated and controlled. The

³⁸ Ibid, Agenda No. 151.

³⁹ Ibid, Agenda No. 151.

⁴⁰ For discussion of the circumstances surrounding the proposed Sheffield peace conference see Lawrence Wittner, *One World or None: A History of the World Nuclear Disarmament Movement Through 1953*, Stanford University Press, California, 1993, p. 283-4. See also Forrester, *Fifteen Years of Peace Fronts*, op cit, p. 14.

British Government believed that holding the Congress in London represented an effort by the peace movement to ‘conceal the Communist influence in the Peace Campaign under a veneer of popular support in the West’.⁴¹ It was concerned that allowing the Congress to take place on British soil would effectively undermine the British Government’s stance in relation to its role as a signatory of the North Atlantic Treaty. While the British Government had ‘no legal powers to ban the Congress altogether’ it was decided that no foreigner would be ‘allowed to come to the United Kingdom for the purpose of organising the Congress’.⁴² In addition to this, it believed that

It is, of course, impossible to refuse admission to anyone who in his visa application does not disclose that he is coming to the United Kingdom to attend the preparatory Commission, but if it is subsequently found that he is participating he will be deported.⁴³

The UK Government was clearly intent upon ensuring that the Congress faced the greatest possible opposition. In the circumstances, organisers were forced to relocate the Congress to Warsaw.

Holt was also under no illusions as to the true nature of the Congress. He believed that it

...fits with earlier and similarly spurious conferences into the pattern of a predetermined Communist programme. It is not merely a vehicle for Communist propaganda. There can be no doubt that it will, at the same time, provide a convenient opportunity for treacherous conspiracy and covert planning.⁴⁴

Holt, and the Menzies Government, clearly perceived that the peace movement and its attendant conferences were an instrument of the Communist Party designed to weaken the resolve of Western nations and their citizens. In a climate of impending war, the peace movement, in the Government’s eyes, constituted a Trojan horse which could contribute

⁴¹ See ‘The Second “World Peace Congress”, Memorandum on the Policy of His Majesty’s Government in the United Kingdom’ NAA, A1209/23, 1957/4225, p. 1.

⁴² *Ibid*, p. 3.

⁴³ *Ibid*, p. 3.

to the downfall of the Western powers. In these circumstances, and upon hearing of the decision to relocate the Congress, Holt decided to act. He found that he had few options which could be used against the delegates, but he did retain one power,

...that is the authority to cancel the passport of any offender. Our passport is an official travel document....It requests in the name of the King those whom it may concern "to allow the bearer to pass freely without let or hindrance, and to afford him every assistance and protection of which he may stand in need". We feel under no obligation to continue this request and to maintain this privilege for those delegates who have proceeded to Poland and apparently imagine they can defy their Government with impunity.⁴⁵

Australian delegates who possessed restricted passports, invalid for Iron Curtain countries, had their passports cancelled. British authorities were then asked to seize the passports of these delegates if they sought to re-enter the UK. Australian Immigration officers were also ordered to do the same on the delegates' return to Australia.

Holt's decision to apply a passport ban was not taken lightly. It was based on the understanding that

We Australians cannot regard ourselves as living in a normal period of peace when Australian troops are fighting and dying in Korea, and when the democratic world is strengthening itself to resist the menace of aggressive Communist imperialism. It is against this background that the issue raised by Australians who have proceeded to Poland for the so-called peace congress, must be viewed.⁴⁶

In addition to this Holt stated that

It was a carefully considered decision, reached after consultation with security authorities here and elsewhere, and upon the recommendation of our own security service. It was made

⁴⁴ CPD [H of R] vol. 210, 15 November, 1950, p. 2639.

⁴⁵ CPD [H of R] vol. 210, 15 November, 1950, p. 2639.

⁴⁶ Ibid, pp. 2638-9.

quite clear that if an applicant for a passport had a legitimate reason for visiting any of the excluded countries and he was not regarded as a security risk, the question of whether or not his passport should be endorsed accordingly would receive consideration on the merits of the case.⁴⁷

These statements suggest that the Australian Government's actions in this case were not dictated by strident anti-communism. The Government was only concerned with targeting those individuals whom it saw as the greatest risk in the particular circumstances. Had the Government wished to, it could have taken the much more stringent stance of denying passports to Communist countries *per se*. Furthermore, the Government based its decision to impose travel restrictions on circumstances outside of their control. The implementation of this policy was not based on an irrational fear of Communism; in this case the external threat was real. The conviction that the peace movement was being used as an instrument of communism at a time of incipient war was genuine and, it seemed, soundly based. Menzies had received a clear picture of the gravity of the situation during a visit to London in September, 1950, where his counterparts in the British Government contended that the 'Communist menace has shown itself in a new guise since the action in Korea. None of us can afford to ignore the risk of total war'.⁴⁸ It was in this climate of impending war, that the Menzies Government chose to implement its passport ban.

Despite the Government's efforts, the passport ban did little to prevent Australians from participating in the Congress. Despite warnings that their passports had been cancelled, on 17 November twenty-five Australians left, or were about to leave, London with the intention of attending the Congress in Warsaw.⁴⁹ It was reported that the delegates reacted to the warnings of migration officers in London with 'coolness and an attitude of not much to fear'.⁵⁰ Holt responded to this by stating that, 'no Government with a shred of responsibility could disregard this impudent refusal to observe prescribed

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p. 2638.

⁴⁸ A. W. Martin, *op cit*, p. 165.

⁴⁹ 'Peace Talks Cover Treachery - Minister', *Melbourne Sun*, 17 November, 1950.

⁵⁰ See article 'Govt. Cancels Passports of Delegates', *Daily Telegraph*, 17 November, 1950.

conditions'.⁵¹ However, there was little the Government could do to stop the delegation, as was highlighted by the Chairman of the APC, Rev. Alfred Dickie, who expressed the position of the delegates in a letter to the Prime Minister. He stated that

While it is not denied that current Australian passports are marked "Not Valid" for a number of countries, including Poland, nevertheless we are aware that only the Polish Government, in this case, is the legal arbiter as to who shall enter Poland and who shall not. Any Government has the right to admit any person, whether or not they carry a passport.⁵²

Exploiting this flaw in the policy, which Holt had identified from the outset, the Australian delegation proceeded to attend the Congress and sought to ignore the preventative measures imposed by the Australian Government.

Stranded: The delegation attempts to return home

While a number of delegates had successfully subverted the ban, they still faced problems on their return journey. Those who had been targeted by the ban had been informed that authorities would not 'interfere with their return to Australia as it is not in our power to direct transport companies to withhold passages'.⁵³ However, individuals experienced considerable duress due to shipping companies informing them that they 'must have valid documents which they cannot possess because their passports were cancelled by Minister Holt'.⁵⁴ Therefore, while the delegates had managed to circumvent the ban by attending the Congress, the Government exacted revenge by contributing to the stranding of offending delegates in the UK following the Congress. Those left stranded claimed that they were severely affected by the ban. The Australian High Commission was informed that '...some of the Delegates are without resources and accommodation. They propose seriously to consider taking up quarters at Australia House until the matter is adjusted'.⁵⁵

⁵¹ See article 'Peace Talks Cover Treachery - Minister', *Melbourne Sun*, 17 November, 1950.

⁵² Letter from APC dated 17 November, 1950, NAA, A462/19, 696/6.

⁵³ See cablegram dated 16 December, 1950, NAA, A462/19, 696/6.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

In addition to this the delegates responded to the ban by engaging legal counsel in an attempt to secure a writ and injunction against the High Commissioner. The affidavit of one delegate, Thomas Robertson, gives an indication of the charges directed at the High Commissioner.⁵⁶ Robertson had previously booked a passage with a steamship company but had subsequently been instructed to cancel his passage due to his lack of valid documents. Robertson believed that

...if I do not cancel my passage as aforesaid it is the intention of the said Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Co. Ltd. in breach of their contract with me to allot my berth to someone else and I further believe that they have been incited in this matter by the defendant...and I respectfully apply to court to grant an injunction to restrain the defendant from such action.⁵⁷

In response to the plight of the delegates, the Department of Immigration expressed no sympathy. A.L. Nutt, responding on behalf of the Secretary, clearly outlined the Department's understanding of the situation when he stated that,

As you are probably aware the passports of these persons were restricted by the express exclusion of the Iron Curtain countries from their validity....By journeying to those countries they defied the Commonwealth Government's decision which was prompted by Security reasons and accordingly they were considered to have forfeited their right to valid passports. Their position now is that it is a matter between the individuals concerned and shipping companies whether the latter book them for travel...⁵⁸

The pleas of the delegates that they were stranded without sufficient funds also fell on deaf ears at the Department of Immigration. Holt was

⁵⁶ See cablegram dated 18 December, 1950, NAA, A432/80, 1951/2001.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Letter from A.L. Nutt, Department of Immigration, to A.S. Brown, Secretary of the Prime Minister's Department, dated 18 December, 1950, NAA, A462/19, 696/6. Arthur Leonard Nutt became First Assistant Secretary of the Department of Immigration in 1946.

...doubtful of the claim by these people that they are stranded in London and virtually without funds bearing in mind that special 'planes were chartered to take them between London and Poland and that they are about to enter into litigation against the Commonwealth.'⁵⁹

The Crown-Solicitor argued that the Minister had no power to cancel the passports of citizens who had already departed Australia.⁶⁰ However Holt did not subscribe to this point of view. He believed that 'Section 8 of the Passports Act enables cancellation to be made at any time and need not be before departure from Australia'.⁶¹ When the delegates were eventually able to return to Australia their passports were impounded and cancelled. In addition to this, Holt determined that, on the return of the passport-holder to Australia, the Government would 'withhold subsequent travel facilities for such periods as we may determine'.⁶²

It is evident that Holt intended on keeping a tight reign on those individuals whom he considered to hold suspect motives, however, he attempted to retain a liberal stance. He expressed the belief that '..the right of a person to receive a passport for travel abroad should not, as a general rule, be interfered with...'⁶³ His actions appear to have been as a direct result of the deterioration of the international atmosphere, as represented by the outbreak of the Korean War, combined with the overtly Communist nature of the Congress. While the Australian Government's passport policy during this period caused peace delegates some degree of duress, it was still unsuccessful in preventing the delegates from attending the Congress. However, this apparent lack of success only served to strengthen the resolve of the Immigration Department or ASIO.

Berlin Youth Festival, 1951: Criticism intensifies

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Memo from Crown Solicitor to Secretary, NAA, A432/80, 1951/2001.

⁶¹ Ibid, p. 1.

⁶² CPD [H of R] vol. 210, 14 November, 1950, p. 2312.

⁶³ Holt made this comment about how he had previously approached passport matters when he was revising passport policy during November 1951. See NAA, A4940/1, C460, Agenda No. 151, p. 1.

During the next twelve months, throughout 1951, overseas travel by the peace movement became less pronounced. However, there were cases where the Government sought to exercise passport control. The most prominent undertaking by the peace movement during 1951 was the conducting of a Youth Festival in Berlin during August. This event was brought to the attention of the Government in June when Cremean asked Holt a number of questions concerning the proposed Festival.⁶⁴ Cremean wished to know how many applications for passports to attend the Festival had been received and whether these applications had been approved. Initially Holt could not identify any individuals who had sought to attend the Festival. However, he highlighted that passports now contained restrictions for certain countries, and noted that 'if it comes to our notice that any one holding a passport is using it for travel in those specified countries, we take action to cancel it, and we impound it as soon as we can do so'.⁶⁵ Thus the Government remained determined in its attempts to prevent citizens from visiting certain countries.

Yet, Holt conceded that 'there are no powers available to me which would enable me to prevent an Australian citizen from going abroad', although he admitted that he 'had a discretion in the issue of a passport, and that discretion has been exercised on some occasions'.⁶⁶ The Government later received information suggesting that attempts were being made by Australians to attend the Festival but due to the circumstantial nature of this evidence no action could be taken.⁶⁷ Instead Holt stated that, in the event that delegates did make their way to the Festival, '...action will be taken against any such person in respect of the passport issued to him if he travels with it to any one of the countries for which it is stated to be not valid'.⁶⁸ Essentially the Government could not take action until after the delegates had attended the Festival. This illustrates the ineffectiveness of the Government's new policy. Despite efforts to prevent delegates from attending peace conferences, Australian representation at these conferences was unflinching.

⁶⁴ CPD [H of R] vol. 213, 20 June 1951, p. 130.

⁶⁵ Ibid, p. 130.

⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 131.

⁶⁷ Answer to question 22 in the House of Representatives on 27 June 1951, NAA, A442/1, 1951/14/5234.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

Criticism of the Government's passport policy became more pronounced at this time due to its inability to prevent participation of Australians at 'suspect' conferences. One of the more vocal opponents of the Government's policy was the member for Dalley, John Rosevear. He asked

What action does the Minister propose to take in relation to their passports? Does he propose merely to cancel them and, if so, is it expected that this will have any more effect on future excursions into Communist territory than similar action has had in the past?⁶⁹

Cremean also expressed fears about the influence the Berlin delegates could have over the Australian public upon their return. He questioned whether

...approval of the issue of passports from Australia in this instance automatically mean[s] the unhampered return to this country of the dupes and intriguers who attend the festival with the subsequent dissemination by them of anti-Australian doctrines throughout this country?⁷⁰

Regardless of this criticism, Holt was reluctant to take further steps to stiffen provisions of the passport policy. He believed that

The general principle which guides us is that the right of any citizen of Australia to travel outside this country is one which should not be arbitrarily interfered with by any government, except in circumstances in which the security of the country may be involved.⁷¹

This further demonstrates the extent to which the Government's passport policy was dictated by circumstance rather than repressive intention. In the face of criticism the Menzies Government refused to use the device of passport control simply as a means of attacking Communists. Holt believed, in regard to freedom of travel, that 'it is a very good thing that this freedom should exist and I believe that no government should be in a

⁶⁹ CPD [H of R] vol. 213, 27 June, 1951, p. 498.

⁷⁰ CPD [H of R] vol. 213, 20 June, 1951, p. 130.

⁷¹ Ibid, 20 June, 1951, p. 130.

hurry unduly to restrict it'.⁷² Considering the mood of the time, and in light of the Government's election mandate to fight Communism, the Government's handling of the passport issue demonstrates a more rational mind-set toward Communism than the traditional representation of Menzies and 'McCarthyism Downunder'⁷³ during this period. This assessment also disproves the common theory that Menzies 'exploit[ed] anti-Communism throughout the 1950s'.⁷⁴

Jessie Street

Of the delegates who had managed to attend the Second World Peace Congress in Warsaw, Jessie Street's involvement caused the Government the most consternation. Street's Communist sympathies were widely acknowledged, as demonstrated by her becoming known as "Red Jessie".⁷⁵ Former Victorian Communist Party official Cecil Sharpley listed Street as one of a 'number of well-known Australians on whose views it [the Communist Party] can sometimes trade'.⁷⁶ In addition to this, Street's status as the wife of the Lord Chief Justice of Australia gave her a measure of respectability which concerned the Government. Holt described her presence in the delegation as a 'Communist move to embarrass the Federal Government on the passport issue'.⁷⁷ Street travelled to Warsaw in defiance of the Government ban and, to add to the Government's concern, Street was elected to the Bureau of the World Peace Council during her attendance at Warsaw.⁷⁸ At the time Holt had been unable to restrict the travel of Street, or take action against her, due to the fact that she carried a passport which had been obtained prior to 1 September 1950, when the ban on Communist countries began to be written into passports.⁷⁹ Holt asked the London office of the Department of Immigration

⁷² Ibid, 20 June, 1951, p. 131.

⁷³ See Don Watson's biography of Brian Fitzpatrick, *Brian Fitzpatrick: A Radical Life*, for an example of the adverse sentiment expressed towards the Menzies Government and accusations of McCarthyism. Bill Gollan also wrote about 'Australia's McCarthyism' in his memoir, op cit, p. 41

⁷⁴ See Galligan's chapter, 'Constitutionalism and the High Court', op cit, p. 153

⁷⁵ Sekules, op cit, p. 146.

⁷⁶ Ibid, p. 148.

⁷⁷ Forrester, op cit, p. 14.

⁷⁸ Sekules, op cit, p. 155.

⁷⁹ CPD [H of R] vol. 210, 14 November, 1950, p. 2312.

to contact Street and ask for her passport to be surrendered so that the restriction could be written into it.⁸⁰

Nevertheless, this development failed to stop Street from continuing to travel freely behind the Iron Curtain. This was due to the fact that Street was in possession of a British passport by virtue of her British father and her birthplace being India.⁸¹ However, Holt did not diminish his efforts to harass and hamper Street's efforts to travel to communist countries. A year later, on 22 November 1951, Gullett asked Holt, upon notice, a number of questions regarding Street's intended visit to Paris to attend meetings of the United Nations.⁸² Gullett wished to know what passport Street intended to use in this trip and whether her Australian passport was, in fact, cancelled. In response to these questions Holt directed a series of serious accusations at Street.⁸³ Holt claimed that Street had obtained her United Kingdom passport under false pretences. Holt believed that

In connexion [sic] with Mrs. Street's application for a United Kingdom passport, some one in London telephoned the United Kingdom Passport Office, representing himself to be the High Commissioner for Australia in London, and asking that the Passport Office should help Mrs. Street. It is perhaps hardly necessary to say that the High Commissioner did not make such a telephone call. It must have come from some person interested in ensuring that Mrs. Street's application....was successful.⁸⁴

Holt later suggested that the telephone call may have come from the Communist Party rooms in London.⁸⁵ Holt speculated that Street did not want to use her Australian passport, which was still in her possession, because she knew that it would be marked invalid for Communist countries if she produced it. Upon hearing of Street's success in obtaining a United Kingdom passport, Holt declared that her Australian passport should

⁸⁰ Ibid, p. 2312.

⁸¹ Sekules, op cit, p. 155.

⁸² CPD [H of R] vol. 215, 22 November, 1951, p. 2643.

⁸³ Newspaper reports of the accusations made against Street, and her subsequent efforts to clear her name can be found in Street's papers at the National Library, MS 2683, Box 13, folio 1.

⁸⁴ CPD [H of R] vol. 215, 22 November, 1951, p. 2643.

⁸⁵ See article 'Mrs Street Says Phone Call "Imaginary"', *Adelaide Advertiser*, 24 December, 1950.

be seized at the earliest opportunity due to the Government's belief that 'no Australian should hold two British passports at once'.⁸⁶ To prevent this circumstance from being repeated, Holt contended that

Arrangements have been made with the United Kingdom authorities to ensure that, in future, any holder of an Australian passport who is about to be granted a United Kingdom passport will first be required to surrender the Australian document.⁸⁷

Holt's accusations against Street were never substantiated by concrete evidence and no action was taken against Street, beyond the cancellation of her Australian passport. However, Holt's adverse comments did have a detrimental effect on Street. On attempting to visit France, Street was

...prevented from entering France because, although a resident of Australia, she had British passport without a visa and they had reason to believe that the "passport had not been obtained by her personally but for her by someone else".⁸⁸

Street vehemently denied the accusations levelled at her by Holt. She claimed that she had applied for a United Kingdom passport due to her desire to save time and money on her travels throughout Europe.⁸⁹ While her Australian passport required her to obtain visas for most countries, British passport holders were exempt from this restriction due to 'reciprocal arrangements' Britain had with most European countries. Following the incident in France, Street claimed that she 'reported the matter to the British Foreign Office and they gave me a special letter saying that my passport was in order'.⁹⁰ This suggests that Holt's accusations, made under the protection of Parliamentary privilege, may have been nothing more than a baseless attempt to obstruct Street's movements, in the face of a previous lack of success in achieving this objective.

⁸⁶ CPD [H of R] vol. 215, 22 November, 1951, p. 2643.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 2643.

⁸⁸ NAA, A6119/15, 362, p. 103.

⁸⁹ 'Public Opinion', *Canberra Times*, 15 January, 1952.

⁹⁰ 'Mrs. Street v. Mr. Holt', *Argus*, 12 January, 1952.

The 'Gold Curtain': US denial of a visa for Marcus Oliphant

Viewed in isolation, it could be argued that the Australian Government's position on passport policy during the early 1950s was unnecessarily harsh. However, when compared to the initiatives being undertaken by their counterparts in the United States, the activities of the Menzies administration fare more favourably. At the same time that the Australian Government was attempting to revise its passport policy Marcus Oliphant,⁹¹ the eminent Australian scientist, was seeking to attend a nuclear physics conference Chicago during September 1951.⁹² Despite extensive efforts, Oliphant was unable to obtain a visa. On 21 September 1951, Oliphant received correspondence from Harold Cox of the Melbourne *Herald*. Cox informed Oliphant that he had received information which suggested that Oliphant's visa application had been denied due to 'a serious security reason'.⁹³ The security officials did not imply that Oliphant had 'any communist affinities', however they believed that 'his repeated criticisms of the way in which America handled atom projects has given communists bullets to fire'.⁹⁴ This version of events was confirmed by Oliphant when he appealed to the Counsellor at the American Embassy in Canberra, Avery Peterson. Oliphant was initially told that his application had not been refused, it 'had merely been delayed'.⁹⁵ However, on further prompting, Oliphant was told a similar story to that which was presented to him by Cox, that he was 'providing bullets for the Russians...to fire back at the US'. Samuel Allison, of the Institute for Nuclear Studies at the University of Chicago, believed that 'the action

⁹¹ Oliphant was a leading nuclear physicist who worked on the Manhattan Project. He was described as being a 'leading member of the team of British scientists who assisted in the development of the atomic bomb', Anna Rothe (ed) *Current Biography: Who's News and Why 1951*, The H.W. Wilson Company, New York, 1952, p. 468. He later became an advocate for peace, seeking to ban the atom bomb. See also Cockburn and Ellyard's biography *Oliphant: The Life and Times of Sir Mark Oliphant*, Axiom Books, Adelaide, 1981.

⁹² Cockburn and Ellyard, op cit, p. 188.

⁹³ Cox was relaying information that he had received, via London, from Daily Express representative, Chapman Pincher, who had cabled from Chicago. NAA, A1838/300, 1252/2/99.

⁹⁴ The report also noted that the French atom scientist Dr. Leo Kowarski, and two British scientists had been unable to attend the Congress due to visa difficulties. NAA, A1838/300, 1252/2/99.

⁹⁵ See Cockburn and Ellyard, op cit, p. 188.

was taken on an unbelievably inconsequential and petty point', although he could not elaborate on what the point was.⁹⁶

On 27 September, in the House of Representatives, Evatt asked Holt why Oliphant had been denied a visa.⁹⁷ Holt replied that the Government only knew as much as that which had been reported in newspapers. He also denied Evatt's implication that the Government may have played a part in the episode. Holt felt that the matter was 'for the Government of the United States to determine'. Evatt also put pressure on Casey to give reasons for Oliphant's inability to obtain a visa, but answers could not be provided.⁹⁸ Oliphant believed that the Menzies Government was instrumental in the denial of his passport, embroiled as it was in the 1951 referendum campaign. He conceded that 'while no paper says so, the connection is plain'.⁹⁹

Yet, despite Oliphant's misgivings, various attempts were made by representatives of the Australian Government to discover why Oliphant's application had not been accepted. However, answers were not forthcoming, illustrated by A.S. Watt, the Secretary of the Department of External Affairs, who, in correspondence with Australia's Ambassador to the United States, P.C. Spender¹⁰⁰, stated that 'the State Department has volunteered little information in regard to the refusal of a visa'.¹⁰¹ Watt had been asked by his Minister, Richard Casey¹⁰², to contact Spender in an attempt to clarify 'the somewhat obscure position obtaining at the moment'. Casey believed that it was necessary to question US authorities, and that any approach should be made informally but at a high level'. Subsequently, Spender sought to find out 'unofficially just what the score was', from the

⁹⁶ Allison wrote to Oliphant on 2 October 1951, NAA, A1838/300, 1252/2/99.

⁹⁷ See CPD [H of R] vol. 214, 27 September 1951, pp. 141-2.

⁹⁸ See CPD [H of R] vol. 214, 3 October 1951, p. 244.

⁹⁹ Cockburn and Ellyard, op cit, p. 189.

¹⁰⁰ Spender became Ambassador to the US in 1951. He had previously been the MHR for Warringah in NSW, from 1937-1951, and he had held the External Affairs and Territories portfolio in the Menzies administration between 1949 and 1951. See *Who's Who in Australia*, 1955, p. 712.

¹⁰¹ Watt made this comment in correspondence with the Australian Ambassador to the United States, P.C. Spender, on 31 October 1951. NAA, A1838/300, 1252/2/99.

¹⁰² Casey was MHR for La Trobe in Victoria. He became Minister of External Affairs in 1951. He had a significant record; having been a member of the British War Cabinet in 1942-3, the first Australian Minister

Under-Secretary of the State Department.¹⁰³ Spender told the Under-Secretary that he believed there 'had been an administrative delay for the purpose of preventing him [Oliphant] coming to U.S.A.' Spender was assured that this was not the case and that 'the visa had not yet been refused, and that it could not be assumed that it would be'. On 24 March 1952, there had still been no reply to Spender's inquires, at which time, Casey stated that he did not want 'to push the Americans for a reply unless they vouchsafed one themselves'.¹⁰⁴ The matter thus remained unresolved and unexplained.

At the time that Oliphant was seeking to travel, the United States was implementing travel restrictions through the auspices of the Internal Security Act, otherwise known as the McCarran Act, after its main proponent, Senator Pat McCarran. The McCarran Act was passed on 23 September 1950, despite the veto of President Truman. The Act determined that the 'U.S. "Communist organisation" was a "clear and present danger" to national security', although the Act stopped short of outlawing Party membership.¹⁰⁵ Further to this, the Act 'required "Communist action" and "Communist-front" organisations to register with the Attorney General and divulge the names of their officers and members'.¹⁰⁶ Most importantly, in the context of present discussion, the Act barred 'covered individuals' from holding passports, and also denied entrance to 'aliens who had ever belonged to Communist or totalitarian parties or advocated the violent overthrow of government'.¹⁰⁷ Samuel Allison touched upon the problems created by the Act when he described the situation with Oliphant as a failure 'to penetrate the "gold curtain" which the McCarran Act has erected around the United States'.¹⁰⁸ Therefore, the Australian Government's passport and visa measures appear far less severe in comparison to those being instituted by their US counterparts.

to the US, from 1940-42, and the Federal President of the Liberal Party in 1948-49. See *Who's Who in Australia*, 1959, p. 161. See also W.J. Hudson's *Casey*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1986.

¹⁰³ Spender to Watt, on 8 November 1951, NAA, A1838/300, 1252/2/99.

¹⁰⁴ C.T. Moodie, of the Australian Embassy in Washington, to J.C.G. Kevin, of the Department of External Affairs, on 24 March 1952. NAA, A1838/300, 1252/2/99.

¹⁰⁵ See Richard M. Fried's *Nightmare in Red: The McCarthy Era in Perspective*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1990, p. 117.

¹⁰⁶ Thomas C. Reeves, *The Life and Times of Joe McCarthy*, Madison Books, Lanham, 1982, p. 330.

¹⁰⁷ Fried, op cit, p. 117.

¹⁰⁸ Allison to Oliphant, 2 October 1951, NAA, A1838/300, 1252/2/99.

New measures: No restrictions

The Australian Government's position on travel restrictions appears even more restrained when we take into account Holt's revision of the passport procedure during November 1951. Holt fully accepted that the previous system, in place for little over a year, had failed to achieve any considerable success. He stated that

It has in fact transpired that a considerable number of Australian's have visited Iron Curtain countries, though their passports were not valid for them. Cases in point are the delegates to the Warsaw Peace Congress in November, 1950, the Berlin Youth Festival in August of this year and individual travellers such as J.J. Brown, of the Australian Railways Union, who went to Moscow.¹⁰⁹

Holt also acknowledged that there had 'been some criticism of the fact that these persons have succeeded in reaching the Communist countries'.¹¹⁰ In fact, W.C. Wentworth¹¹¹ went so far as to compile a list of his own suggestions of how the Passports Act should be amended.¹¹² Wentworth's suggestions included the undertaking that 'everyone wishing to leave Australia would either have to apply for an exit endorsement or else renounce Australian citizenship'. Those individuals who renounced citizenship would not be permitted to re-enter the country. In addition to this, 'a person visiting a country for which his passport was not valid would be liable to a fine of 5,000(pounds) or ten years imprisonment'. Wentworth also believed that individuals leaving Australia should be required to 'give an undertaking not to visit an excluded country' and that

¹⁰⁹ NAA, A4940/1, C460, Agenda No. 151, p. 1.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 1.

¹¹¹ Wentworth, the great-grandson of his namesake the noted Australian explorer and statesman, was MHR for Mackellar between 1949 and 1977. He was a backbencher during this entire time, apart from the period between 1968 and 1972 when he was Minister for Social Services and Aboriginal Affairs. He was described as being 'outspoken and a rabid anti-communist'. See John Arnold and Deidre Morris (eds) *Monash Bibliographical Dictionary of 20th Century Australia*, Reed Reference Publishing, Port Melbourne, 1994, pp. 542-3. According to Keith Dunstan 'Mr Wentworth for more than 30 years had the reputation of being Australia's number one anti-Communist, as a man who would almost 'froth at the mouth' at the mention of the word Red'. See Dunstan's *Ratbags*, Golden Press, Sydney, 1979, p. 95. Wentworth constantly made appeals to the Government to take a harder line against the Communist menace, which will be amply illustrated by his activities in later incidents, most notably in the lead-up to the 1959 Melbourne Peace Congress.

...any person who gives such an undertaking may on his return be required to declare that he has not broken his undertaking, and “shall be detained until he does so. After the first seven days such detention shall be in the form of imprisonment with hard labour”. False declarations would constitute perjury.¹¹³

In responding to Wentworth, Holt was uncertain of the Government’s ability to enforce such extreme measures. In regard to the proposal to prevent the return of individuals to Australia, Holt wondered ‘whether such a provision would be within the Commonwealth’s Constitutional powers’, and determined that this would be a question for the Solicitor-General.¹¹⁴ Regardless of the Constitution, Holt believed that to enforce a measure which required every traveller to apply for an endorsement would ‘raise great administrative difficulties....in time of peace when departures are approaching 100,000 per annum’. Wentworth’s proposals relating to visitation of Communist countries were also dismissed by Holt due to the fact that such proposals

...would prove ineffective because of the impracticability of proving in a Court of Law that a person had visited a Communist country - particularly if (as has been and would be the case) that country collaborates with the offender to ensure that no visas or other stamps appeared on his passport.¹¹⁵

Holt also believed that ‘...Communists would not hesitate to say that they had not broken their undertakings, whether they had or not, and again proof would be impossible to secure’. Wentworth’s proposals were therefore summarily dismissed by Holt as unworkable. Despite this, Wentworth’s suggestions show that there was opposition to the existing passport policy and this example demonstrates that Holt and the Government were beginning to experience pressure in light of the ineffectiveness of the present system.

¹¹² NAA, A4940/1, C460, Agenda No. 151, pp. 2-3 of Annex.

¹¹³ *Ibid*, p. 2.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 3.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 3.

At this time, Holt, in cooperation with ASIO, decided to adjust the Government's approach to passport control. Holt sought the advice of Spry in his effort to define a more suitable passport procedure. The Director-General determined that

I have given further consideration to the security aspects of this question and would recommend that since the present policy of excluding 'Iron Curtain' countries from Australian passports has proved ineffective in preventing personnel reaching such countries, that no attempt be made to prevent the travel of holders of Australian passports to those countries. So long as the countries concerned are willing to permit their entry and departure with or without documents, no similar scheme would appear effective.¹¹⁶

It therefore appears that the Security Service and the Government were prepared to admit defeat on the issue of travel control against peace workers and suspected Communists. However, Spry still envisaged a role for ASIO in passport procedure. Spry proposed that unhindered travel be prefaced by the provision that

...any passport may be made valid for an orbit country upon the bearer completing a statement of his reasons for visiting that country - the statement to be referred to A.S.I.O. for information only and the grant of facilities not to be dependent upon a prior security check.¹¹⁷

Holt concurred with Spry, believing that 'from a purely administrative point of view, this procedure will be very simple and will be much more convenient for our overseas passport issuing officers especially'.¹¹⁸ However, Holt was concerned about the effect the new procedure would have in a political context. Holt believed that 'to freely permit Communists to travel to Communist countries will no doubt evoke criticism even stronger than that levelled at our present procedure'. In response to the inevitable criticism Holt believed that

¹¹⁶ Ibid, p. 1-2 of main document.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, p. 2. Emphasis in original.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, p. 2.

The answer would be that the latter has proved ineffective in hindering the movements of those it is meant to hinder, and therefore represents unjustified interference with the movements of those Australians who constitute no security risk; the only other alternative is outright refusal of all travel facilities to those who are a security danger, and this is considered unwarranted as a general rule.¹¹⁹

On 6 November, 1951, the 'Revision of Passport Procedure in Relation to Security' was adopted by Cabinet.¹²⁰ Subsequently, cablegrams were forwarded to the relevant officers which outlined the Government's new approach. Authorities were informed that

In future passports will continue to be restricted by excepting from their territorial validity the countries at present excepted but as from receipt of this advice applications for endorsement to make them valid for any such excluded country will be granted immediately without prior reference to this Department or Security provided the applicant submits a statement in writing setting out the objects of his visit.¹²¹

It is clear that the revised policy represented a significant lightening of the Government's position on passports. Had this policy been in place in 1950, during the Peace Congress in Warsaw, Australian delegates would not have been adversely affected. Holt further emphasised the Government's stance when he introduced the revised policy to parliament on 29 November. He stated that

Causing inconvenience to, and placing restrictions on the movements of, nationals travelling abroad can be justified only if they are an unavoidable consequence of measures regarded as both essential and effective in the national interest.¹²²

This further suggests that the Australian Government only wished to act on passports in exceptional circumstances, regardless of the apparent Communist character of the

¹¹⁹ Ibid, p. 2.

¹²⁰ See Cabinet Minute, Decision No. 23, NAA, A4940, C460.

¹²¹ See Cablegram dated 9 November, 1951, NAA, A1838/1, 1252/10/3.

¹²² CPD [H of R] vol. 215, 29 & 30, November, 1951, p. 3148.

individual traveller. This confirms that passport policy was dictated by circumstance, not blatant anti-Communism.

Regardless of criticism directed at the Government's passport policy, Holt and the Security Service had chosen to embark on a policy which was effectively a "watering down" of the previous procedure. A note on the Cabinet submission on the revision of the passport procedure emphasises that

Visits by Australian communists to the Russian bloc will evoke political criticism but it would seem that this cannot be avoided unless we revert to the war-time practice of prohibiting persons from leaving Australia except with the consent of the Government and on such terms as the Government imposes. The decision appears to involve a choice of the lesser of two evils.¹²³

Either way, it was clearly understood that the action being undertaken by the Government was undesirable, however, the least adverse course of action was decided upon. That Holt was not prepared to embrace more stringent measures is further evidence that the Menzies Government, in regard to the imposing of passport policy, was not dictated by an intense desire to crush Communism. Despite the perceived security risk attributed to some travellers, Holt was reluctant to impose restrictions which would have infringed upon the human rights of individuals. In the area of passport policy, the Menzies Government appears to have demonstrated an element of restraint towards Communists that had not been apparent in other areas of its administration.

Despite the Cabinet endorsing the revised passport policy on 6 November, Holt did not announce this development in parliament until the session of 29-30 November. This is despite the fact that Holt had been urged, in particular by Rosevear, to make an announcement about the new policy.¹²⁴ Holt blamed the delay on the fact that 'it is necessary to provide certain notifications to officers overseas before a public statement

¹²³ NAA, A4905/1, 151.

can be made on this subject in Australia'.¹²⁵ While this may be a plausible excuse for the three week delay in announcing the revised policy, Holt may have had ulterior motives. For instance, the announcement came just before the House was due to rise for Christmas which meant that the likelihood of criticism being levelled at the revised policy, which Holt had envisaged, would be vastly reduced.

There also appears to be a correlation between the timing of the accusations directed at Jessie Street and the introduction of the new passport policy. Holt attacked Street on 22 November 1951, in the lead-up to the announcement of the new passport policy. Holt had had knowledge of the allegations against Street on 16 November but had not publicised them until the following week.¹²⁶ This suggests that Holt may have delayed his attack on Street so that the debate surrounding her passport could deflect criticism directed at the new passport policy.¹²⁷ In addition to this, in light of the Government's decision to introduce a revised, watered down, passport policy, Holt's attack on Street may have been based on a desire to demonstrate that the present policy was failing due to the ability of individuals to subvert the ban, despite the Government's best efforts. Holt had faced criticism over the lack of success of the passport programme and the Street case represented an example of how loopholes and the "cunning" of Communists could be used to subvert the existing system. It also demonstrated that more stringent measures would simply be a waste of time. These factors could explain why Holt chose to publicly attack Street despite there being little substantial evidence to prove his accusations.

Passport and visa warning lists

While the Government appeared to be lessening its influence in the area of travel control, ASIO was taking steps to increase its surveillance of travellers. On 1 November, 1951,

¹²⁴ For example see CPD [H of R] vol. 215, 28 November 1951, where Rosevear asked Holt if he had 'contrived any means by which the tactics to which I have referred can be circumvented in future'.

¹²⁵ CPD [H of R] vol. 215, 29-30 November, p. 3148.

¹²⁶ See Sekules, *op cit*, p. 155.

¹²⁷ Sekules was surprised by the delay. He believed that 'It was odd for a minister with a good story to let it dribble out in that fashion - particularly Holt, who usually capitalised on opportunities to expose what he saw as leftist calumny'; *ibid*, p. 155.

Spry wrote to the Comptroller-General about the need to heighten security at Australia's first points of entry, by land and sea.¹²⁸ Spry felt that there was a need for ASIO to exercise 'some oversight from a security viewpoint, over travellers entering Australia by sea and air'. Spry felt that

It is becoming increasingly important, in the light of overseas developments, in order to ensure effective internal security that some form of control of travel be introduced, which will detect illegal and undesirable entrants prior to their landing and also to provide a machinery for prompt notification of such persons to my Organisation.¹²⁹

David Lowe argued that during 1951 ASIO was involved in intensive preparations for war. The prospect of the Government's Communist Party Dissolution Bill becoming law increased the efforts of the Security Organisation. One of ASIO's main undertakings, in the event of the Dissolution Bill becoming law, would have been to identify subversives and foreigners who would be interned during war time.¹³⁰ Despite the defeat of the Bill in the High Court in March, the fear of global conflict remained and ASIO's efforts to identify subversives continued unabated. It is in this context that Spry's plan to monitor sea and air ports must be understood. Spry's plan, presented to the Comptroller-General, involved

...a member of A.S.I.O. staff to work in co-operation with your passport staff at first ports of entry such as Fremantle, Sydney, Darwin and Mascot. This officer would possess a black list of individuals and would be trained to identify passport stamps or visas of security interest, thus supplying A.S.I.O. with the information relating to travellers which is essential to its proper functioning.¹³¹

Spry clearly intended to maintain the presence of the security organisation in the area of travel, despite Holt and the Government appearing to have reduced their own role,

¹²⁸ Letter from Spry to W.T. Turner, Comptroller-General, NAA, A11852, 97.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Lowe, op cit, p. 118.

¹³¹ NAA, A11852, 97.

through the implementation of the revised passport policy. The Comptroller-General expressed no reservations in regard to the proposal of Spry.¹³² The adoption of Spry's proposal necessitated that measures be taken to compile passport and visa warning lists, which would be used by security officers to ascertain the adverse credentials of travellers.¹³³ It was determined that such measures were long overdue. Holt stated that

The United Kingdom passport and immigration authorities and those of other countries, circulate to their overseas posts lists of persons in respect of whom some special action is required if they should apply for passports and visas; such special action may range from refusal of passport or visa, to mere notification to the central authority of the fact that such facilities have been sought and granted.¹³⁴

It is apparent that, despite the Government's intention to grant passports to travellers unhindered, mechanisms still remained to restrict the travel of individuals. It was determined that the only reason such measures had not been previously implemented was the fact that the Department of Immigration was of 'comparatively recent growth'. Passport Warning Lists would apply to two categories. Firstly, individuals who had relinquished their Australian citizenship, an example being those who had gained naturalisation in another country, would be listed as being no longer entitled to an Australian passport.¹³⁵ Jessie Street would immediately fall into this category. The other category would involve

Australian citizens whose characters, security record or activities abroad, require that only limited facilities should be granted to them, or at least that their movements should be immediately brought to the notice of some authority, such as Australian Security Intelligence Organisation, Police, Trade Commissioners, Customs and Immigration Officers at Australian ports, etc.¹³⁶

¹³² Ibid, 'Department of Trade and Customs Minute Paper'.

¹³³ See Agenda No. 152, 'Preparation of Passport and Visa Warning Lists', NAA, A4940/1, C461, pp. 1-2.

¹³⁴ Ibid, p. 1.

¹³⁵ Ibid, p. 1.

¹³⁶ Ibid, p. 1.

In addition to this, the Visa Warning Lists would be activated in two specific circumstances.¹³⁷ Firstly, cases where an individual of foreign origin had been deported from Australia, which prevented that person from gaining a visa in future. The second, more contentious, category applied to individuals

...who are reported from overseas sources to be of bad or doubtful character, security risks, etc. and who are known to be seeking to come to Australia; information available may be so full as to warrant instructing officers, through the Warning List, that visas are to be refused outright - or it may be such that officers will be asked only to refer any application received to Canberra, or even to grant the visas and report the intended movements of the person concerned.¹³⁸

Essentially, the Warning Lists appear to have been created as a precautionary measure used mainly as a source of information on suspect travellers. Holt stipulated that 'warning lists would be in the nature of an administrative measure only'.¹³⁹ However, it is clear that in sufficiently adverse circumstances the Government and the Security Organisation still exercised the right to enforce stringent travel control procedures. It was decreed that the lists 'should be handled with the utmost secrecy'. Holt was particularly concerned about the possibility that the compilation of the lists could be either misinterpreted by the wider community; or the existence of such lists could be used as detrimental propaganda against the Government. Holt stated that

...despite the obvious advantages of and the administrative necessity for warning lists, the fact remains that they inevitably carry a suggestion of secret condemnation which would be most distasteful to Australians generally and which could, if the existence of the lists should become publicly known, be distorted in various ways by interested persons.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷ Ibid, p. 1.

¹³⁸ Ibid, p. 1.

¹³⁹ Ibid, p. 1.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 2.

The Government was still wounded by the loss of the recent referendum, and may have been reluctant to present the opposition with any more ammunition to attack its policies. In light of these circumstances, Holt believed that it was necessary to inform Cabinet of the proposal, 'so that Ministers will be fully aware of the nature of the lists, in case their use should at some future time be criticised'.¹⁴¹ It is clear that, despite the Government's outward efforts to promote unhindered travel, measures were still being taken, covertly, to facilitate means to impose travel restrictions, if the need arose.

Access denied: Youth Carnival for Peace and Friendship, Sydney, March 1952

The first test of the Government's new passport policy came in the form of a Youth Carnival set to take place in Sydney during March 1952. The Carnival had been instigated as a response to the 3rd World Youth Festival held in Berlin in August 1951, with one of the main goals being to "immeasurably strengthen the unity of our youth for peace and a better life."¹⁴² One of the main proponents of the Carnival was the Eureka Youth League, the youth organisation of the Communist Party. This invariably brought the Carnival under close scrutiny from both the Government and the Security forces. The Carnival first came to the attention of the Parliament on November 29, 1951.¹⁴³ The member for Lilley, Bruce Wight, asked if the Prime Minister was aware of the impending Carnival and immediately applied pressure by asking if Menzies would

...request security officers to investigate the nature of the festival and ascertain the character of the organisations responsible for its inspiration? If security reports indicate that the festival is Communist inspired, will the right honourable gentleman take steps to ensure that no Communists shall be admitted to Australia from overseas to participate in the festival? Will he also place every possible obstacle in the way of the efforts of the festival organising committee?¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹ Ibid, p. 2.

¹⁴² Forrester, op cit, p. 19.

¹⁴³ CPD [H of R] vol. 215, 29 November 1951, p. 3054.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 3054.

Menzies responded to these questions by admitting that a report had been received about the Carnival and that the report indicated that 'the festival is Communist-inspired and Communist-organised'. He proposed that the Government would deal with the festival in due course. Despite the Government's new passport policy, which, incidentally, was introduced to Parliament in the same session as Wight's questioning, the spectre of passport restrictions and travel control continued to hang over the efforts of the peace movement.

In the lead up to the Carnival, the Government and its attendant Departments compiled a number of reports detailing the nature of the Carnival, and the avenues open to the Government to oppose it. On 11 January the United Nations Section presented an appraisal of the Carnival outlining the course open to the Government.¹⁴⁵ This document was concerned with

...whether politically the Australian Government should refuse visas for overseas delegates...and whether a decision of this nature is in the best interests of Australia's foreign relations.¹⁴⁶

It was determined that there were three approaches the Government could take: it could forbid entry to all overseas delegates, permit them all, or implement a selective ban which would target particularly controversial delegates such as the Chinese. A complete ban could be justified on the grounds that the Carnival was 'purely a communist stunt designed to aid the foreign policies of the Soviet Union...'.¹⁴⁷ It was argued that the actions of the United Kingdom Government, in banning delegates from attending the conference scheduled to take place in Sheffield in 1950, provided a precedent by which the Government could justify its actions. The arguments in favour of a total ban appear to be rather superficial, relying more on the need to protect the Australian public from Communist influence. A total ban would have represented the most glaring indication

¹⁴⁵ NAA, A1838/1, 69/1/3/7/1, pt 1. See document entitled 'World Peace Council - Australian Youth Carnival', p. 1

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid*, p. 1.

that the Government's actions on travel restrictions were dictated by an obsessive fear of Communism. Substantial evidence justifying a total ban appears to have been lacking.

The arguments in favour of allowing unrestricted entry to foreign delegates demonstrate a more reasoned approach. It was believed that those foreign delegates who did attend the Carnival 'would be so conspicuous as to be hardly a Security problem at all'. More importantly, it was explained that

To ban overseas delegates will be possibly to cause the Government to be misrepresented overseas as a war-mongering Government opposed to peace - particularly likely in this connection is that any ban on Asiatic delegations will be interpreted as exclusion on the grounds of colour alone.¹⁴⁸

It was also believed that 'banning often creates martyrs and may swing certain emotional sympathy to the Communists'. The UN Section was concerned that a total ban would be contrary to the Government's stance on human rights.

The course of action eventually endorsed by the UN Section was that of a selective ban which would be directed at proposed Chinese delegates in particular.¹⁴⁹ It was acknowledged that a selective ban could operate in a similar way to that which was adopted by the UK Government in Sheffield which decided to 'ban so many of the foreign leaders, that the Peace Council was forced to change the venue from Sheffield to Warsaw'. However, it was decided that 'the policy of the Australian Government should be to permit the entry of all but the Chinese...'. The grounds for this decision mirror the Government's justifications for its earlier passport policy. Firstly it was resolved that 'we are really at war with China in Korea, as we have never accepted the thesis that the Chinese troops there are "volunteers".' The fact that the UN had declared the Chinese Government to be an "aggressor" increased the stance against the Chinese in that

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 1.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 2.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 3.

Australia 'could not permit the "nationals" of an "aggressor" nation to attend a subversive "peace" conference.' Lastly, and most pointedly, it was understood that

...internally within Australia there would be a great outcry from the families of members of the armed Services in Korea, as well as the Service Associations etc. against the admission of fellow nationals of those who are killing Australians in Korea.¹⁵⁰

It is inherently clear that the ongoing Korean War was again at the centre of attempts to institute a ban on foreign delegates. In this instance it appears that, had the War not been an issue, the likelihood of travel restrictions being endorsed would have been remote. The UN Section recommended that 'the above views be taken up with the Secretary and Minister, and that the Department or Minister should consult on the highest level with the Immigration Department and Minister'.¹⁵¹

On 23 January Cabinet discussed its plan of attack for the impending Carnival. The guidance of ASIO was sought and it was asserted that

ASIO has an overall security objection to this Communist sponsored Youth Carnival, including as it does, the attendance of Communists from overseas. The presence of these overseas Communists would greatly increase the propaganda value of the Carnival. A particularly undesirable feature is that it coincides with the Royal Visit to Australia.¹⁵²

The combination of the Royal Tour with the continuing Korean conflict no doubt increased the Government's resolve to place restrictions on the Carnival. Advice was sought from the Attorney-General as to whether the Carnival as a whole could be banned. However, the Attorney-General decreed that

...there is no existing Commonwealth law under which action could be taken to prohibit the holding of the Carnival, and that what is at present known about the objects of, and about the

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 2.

¹⁵¹ Ibid, p. 3.

¹⁵² NAA A4940/1, C489, p. 1, Agenda No. 200, compiled by Holt on 18 January 1952.

special invitees to, the Carnival does not suggest that, having regard to the decision of the High Court in the Communist Party Dissolution Case, any new Commonwealth law under which the holding of the Carnival could be prohibited could in present circumstances be validly made...¹⁵³

The Government was clearly hampered by its failure to implement the Communist Party Dissolution Bill. Had the Bill become law, the stance of the Government on issues of travel control would no doubt have altered considerably. In view of the constraints placed on the Government, it was determined that 'the holding of meetings and assemblages is in general a matter for the States and not for the Commonwealth'.¹⁵⁴

While the Attorney-General had dismissed the idea of banning the Carnival in its entirety, he did not 'intend to imply in any way that no administrative action was possible through immigration and passport controls to restrict the entry of persons who might be security risks'.¹⁵⁵ The Government understood that, in the face of the attendance of prominent foreign delegates, the 'question will arise whether all or any of such persons should be prevented from entering Australia, with a view to thwarting the subversive aims of the Carnival as far as possible'.¹⁵⁶ In response to this question it was decided that overseas visa-issuing posts should be informed of the impending Carnival and that efforts should be made to

...circulate to all posts the names of persons known to be prospective delegates to the Carnival, and to instruct the posts that such persons and any others who may disclose an intention to attend the function should not be granted travel facilities without reference to Canberra.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵³ Ibid, p. 1.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, p. 1.

¹⁵⁵ NAA, A432/80, 1952/2001, 'Youth Carnival : Cabinet Agendum No. 200'.

¹⁵⁶ NAA, A4940/1, C489, Agenda No. 200, p. 1.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, p. 2, This directive bears striking resemblance to the actions taken by the UK Government in 1950, in attempting to hinder the proposed Sheffield peace conference, which further illustrates that the actions of the Australian Government were not overtly adverse in the context of the time.

It was acknowledged that this course of action would not necessarily prevent all delegates from entering Australia. Firstly, there was the problem that 'British subjects of European race do not as a rule require any prior authority to come to Australia...'.¹⁵⁸ The proposal was also heavily reliant on the honesty of the applicant in expressing their intention of attending the Carnival. The problems inherent in the Government's previous attempts to enforce travel restrictions were re-occurring in this instance. It was also considered that it may be 'unwise to prevent a person, particularly a prominent one not previously on record as a security risk...' since this would 'afford valuable propaganda material to the Communists'.¹⁵⁹

In a press statement on 24 January, Holt voiced his opposition to the Carnival, stating that the Government would 'do whatever it can to prevent such a carnival being held in Australia'.¹⁶⁰ In this statement, Holt touched upon the idea of denying visas to foreign delegates. However, he did not endorse a blanket ban on proposed delegates, stating that

To prohibit the entry of these people solely because they proposed to attend the carnival would only provide valuable propaganda material for the Communists, and it is not, therefore, intended to place any restriction on those who are not on record as a security risk.¹⁶¹

However, this did not mean that the Government had completely eliminated the idea of visa denials. It was determined that

Action will, however, be taken to have an intensive security check made of all persons who are known or suspected to be delegates to the carnival and those whom it is considered constitute a security risk to Australia will be refused travel facilities.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 2.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 2.

¹⁶⁰ Press statement by the Minister for Immigration (Mr. H.E. Holt), 24 January 1952, NAA, A462/12, 211/2/16; see also 'Govt. Will fight Red Carnival', in *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 January 1952, for a report on the Ministers statement.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

Thus, the Government chose to impose a selective ban, which was directed only at those delegates who posed the greatest risk to national security, regardless of their intended attendance at the Carnival.¹⁶² The precedent of the Sheffield Congress was again used as justification for instituting a partial ban, as is demonstrated by the statement that

This policy was adopted by the United Kingdom Government when the communists sought to hold a Peace Congress at Sheffield last year and resulted in the organisers abandoning their original plan and transferring the meeting to another country.¹⁶³

Various measures were employed to ensure that the proposed passport procedure was adhered to. A circular was sent from the Passport Control Office in New York demanding that 'no repeat no visas for Australia should be granted to attend this conference without prior authority from the Department of Immigration, Canberra'.¹⁶⁴ The Australian Government also asked overseas Governments if they would be prepared to refuse travel facilities to prospective delegates who wished to come to Australia. The US Government was forthcoming, however, the Canadian Government found that it had 'serious administrative, practical and other difficulties' with this request.¹⁶⁵ It therefore refused to deny travel facilities to individuals but it agreed to furnish the Australian Government with any information it had on prospective delegates. A number of foreign delegates were denied entry, an example being the American Communist writer Howard Fast, although Fast was hampered by the US Government rather than the Australian Government.¹⁶⁶ Ilya Ehrenberg, a leading Russian publicist was to have been denied a visa¹⁶⁷, however, he did not apply for one.¹⁶⁸ Leading British Communist William Gallagher was granted a visa,

¹⁶² See also NAA, A4940/1, C489, Agenda No. 200, p. 3 for evidence of the Government's plan to institute a selective ban.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Circular from Passport Control dated 20 February 1952, NAA, A5461/3, 602/3/6 Part 1.

¹⁶⁵ Cablegram from Australian High Commissioner's Office, Ottawa, dated 6 February 1952, NAA, A1838/275, 1542/263.

¹⁶⁶ See Phillip Deery's chapter 'Community Carnival or Cold War Strategy? The 1952 Youth Carnival for Peace and Friendship', in Raymond Markey(ed.), *Labour and Community: Historical Essays*, University of Wollongong Press, 2001, p. 323; see also *Sydney Sun*, 4 March 1952 for evidence that Fast was denied travel facilities by the US Government.

¹⁶⁷ Cablegram from Immigration Department dated 18 February 1952, NAA A1838/275, 1542/263.

¹⁶⁸ Message to the Secretary of the Department of External Affairs from the Australian Embassy, Moscow, 19 March 1952, NAA, A1838/275, 1542/263.

which demonstrates that the ban was not total.¹⁶⁹ Holt stated that no restriction would be placed on British subjects who wished to enter Australia.¹⁷⁰

Despite the fact that other individuals were targeted, the ban was primarily on the Chinese delegation. In essence it would appear that the Government had chosen to take a similar initiative to that proposed by the United Nations Section. The fact that the Government decided to focus its ban almost exclusively on the Chinese delegation, considering the Korean situation, is further evidence that the Government only instituted draconian travel measures when there were particularly extenuating circumstances. Had the Government been forthright in its conviction to use travel restrictions as a method of attacking Communism then it would have implemented more stringent measures. For example, it could have emulated the more far reaching (and more devious) measures of its UK counterparts, which denied access to the leaders of the delegation, and thereby effectively halted the progress of the Sheffield conference. However, the response to the Youth Carnival for Peace and Friendship in 1952 demonstrates that the Government was becoming increasingly forthright in its approach to the peace movement. This suggests that future endeavours by the Communist-led peace movement, in particular in cases where China was involved, would provoke a robust reaction from the Menzies Government.

¹⁶⁹ *The Sydney Sun*, 4 March 1952.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER THREE

THE EYE OF THE STORM

PASSPORT BANS AND TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS : 1952-1955

During the first two years of the 1950s, the Menzies Government had tried and failed to implement a passport policy which would successfully hinder the efforts of Communists and their allies in the peace movement from travelling to and from Australia. In the following years the Government would find itself under pressure to tighten its passport policy. The events surrounding the Youth Carnival for Peace and Friendship provided early evidence of the Government's increased resolve. However, this chapter will largely focus on the event which proved to be the greatest test of the Menzies Government's travel policy during the 1950s; the Peace Conference for Asia and the Pacific Regions in Peking. Discussion will also centre on how the Menzies Government's passport policy continued to evolve, firstly in the face of the ongoing Korean War, and also after the explosion of the Petrov affair, and the subsequent Royal Commission. It will be argued, as it was in the previous chapter, that despite the pressures from external forces, the Menzies Government continued to treat passport matters with a degree of expediency and leniency that is, perhaps, not in keeping with the popular representation of Menzies' anti-communism.

Behind the "Bamboo Curtain": Preparatory Conference for the Peace Conference for Asia and the Pacific Regions, Peking, June, 1952

The events surrounding the Youth Carnival demonstrated that, although the Government had relaxed its passport policy at the end of 1951, its apparent leniency did not extend to all regions, in particular China. Within months of the Youth Carnival, concerns would become even more intense with the proposal to hold a peace conference in Peking, first mooted in 1951. On 8 April 1952, a group known as the 'Australian Peace Partisans' accepted an invitation to attend a preliminary conference in Peking in June.¹ The

¹ Forrester, *op cit*, p. 23.

controversy surrounding this delegation was exacerbated by the inclusion of Dr. John Burton,² former head of the Department of External Affairs and an endorsed member of the Labor Party, as the leader of the delegation. In accordance with the passport policy which had been adopted by the Government in November 1951, the delegates to the Preparatory Conference were granted passports to travel to Peking. This caused consternation in Parliament. On 6 May, in the House of Representatives, Holt was asked by Mr. Robertson if he was aware that the issue of passports to the delegates was causing 'grave public concern?'.³ It was also put to Holt that

Since conferences of this kind are convened by the enemies of democracy, can the Minister advance any sound reason for the issue to delegates from this country of passports that will allow them to take part in those nefarious proceedings? Are passports freely issued by the Soviet Union to persons who desire to escape from the terrors and persecutions of communism?⁴

The depth of ill feeling in these remarks is plain to see. Holt was clearly being placed under considerable pressure to clarify the Government's stance on the issue of passport control. Holt remained resolute in his determination to stand by the Government's existing policy. He detailed a number of reasons why the Government would not take action in this case.

First, it has been the practice of British countries to permit their own citizens to travel freely, that is, without any restriction being placed upon them by their own country, in any part of the world. Secondly, the Australian Government has at this time no power to prevent any of its citizens from travelling, in time of peace, to any other part of the world to which they desire. Thirdly, it has been the invariable practice, so far as I am aware, to grant passports to

² Burton was Secretary of the Department of External Affairs between 1947 and 1950, and acted as the High Commissioner to Ceylon in 1951. During his time in the Department of External Affairs he attended a number of international conferences, such as the Paris Peace Conference in 1946. He wrote *The Alternative: A Dynamic Approach to our Relations with Asia* in 1954. See *Who's Who in Australia*, 1955, p. 141.

³ CPD [H of R] vol. 217, 6 May 1952, p. 9.

⁴ *Ibid*, p. 9.

Australian citizens upon request....In accord with such considerations every Australian citizen is issued a passport as a matter of right.⁵

Holt acknowledged that there had been an attempt made to restrict the movements of Australian citizens, by including provisions in passports which denied access to Communist countries. However, he further expressed the conviction that these attempts had been fruitless. Holt believed that this policy had resulted in

Australian citizens who had no Communist affiliations or views, but who were travelling in Europe, found that they were placed at some inconvenience, whereas other people whom the Government might have thought to discourage were not similarly inconvenienced.⁶

If the passport policy adversely affected ordinary citizens, the Menzies Government was unprepared to enforce restrictions. Holt maintained that 'we have no power to restrict the movement of our own citizens from Australia...'.⁷ The Government had demonstrated during the circumstances surrounding the Warsaw Peace Congress that they could impound or cancel passports if the need arose, even if the individual concerned could still enter foreign countries without the aid of a passport, yet it refused to take such action in the case of the Peking delegates.

The steadfast refusal of the Government to take action against the Peking delegation continued to cause controversy in Parliament. On 13 May, the Member for Lang, Daniel Mulcahy, asked Holt a number of questions about the delegation. Most pointedly, Mulcahy asked if the members of the delegation travelled to Peking 'in an aircraft with Australian soldiers who were going to Korea'.⁸ If this were true, Mulcahy wished to know if Holt would see that the passports of the delegates were cancelled so as 'to prevent the return of these Communists to Australia?'. In reply, Holt again contended that he was powerless to act against Australian citizens who had 'left Australia for a temporary

⁵ Ibid, pp. 9-10.

⁶ Ibid, p. 10.

⁷ Ibid, p. 10.

⁸ CPD [H of R] vol 217, 13 May 1952, p. 279.

sojourn abroad'.⁹ He expressed the belief that the High Court 'held that such persons are not immigrants and are not subject to the Immigration Act or the immigration power in the Constitution'.¹⁰ This does not explain how Holt had managed to cancel passports in the previous instance at Warsaw. Richard Casey further illustrated the relaxed attitude of the Government toward the delegation when he stated that

I believe that a great deal too much public attention has been given to this matter. Half a dozen individuals have accepted this invitation and, in doing so, have fallen for the bait. Except for one individual, who, I believe, is a distinguished ornament of the Labour party, I do not think that those who have accepted the invitation are people of any political importance, nor do I believe that their names are known outside the very limited circles in which they normally move. There is a lunatic fringe in every country and recent events have shown that Australia is no exception.¹¹

Casey gave every indication that, had it not been for the involvement of Burton, there would be no reason at all to even acknowledge the apparent threat of the Peking delegation, let alone take action against them. Casey clearly adhered to the belief that the delegation was better left alone, rather than giving its 'sojourn abroad' unnecessary prominence.

Debate in the House, 20 May, 1952

Following days of enduring strident criticism of its policy, and after vainly attempting to ignore the importance of the delegation's journey, the Government went on the offensive. In Parliament, on 20 May, Henry Gullett led an attack by the Government aimed, almost exclusively, at discrediting the Opposition due to its links to Burton. Gullett described Burton as 'misguided' during his term as head of the Department of External Affairs and, more acrimoniously, described Burton's influence on the foreign policy of Australia as

⁹ Ibid, p. 279.

¹⁰ Ibid, pp. 279-80.

¹¹ CPD [H of R] vol 217, 20 May 1952, p. 465.

'almost wholly evil'.¹² Gullett stated that Burton's 'attendance at Peking is embarrassing to his country and to all true Australians'.¹³ After smearing the character of Burton, Gullett sought to describe the link between Burton and the Leader of the Opposition, Evatt. He felt that, '[w]orst of all, his action is the logical result of the partnership between him and the right honourable member for Barton (Dr. Evatt)'.¹⁴ Gullett then proceeded to attack the character, and record, of Evatt. On Evatt's time as Minister for External Affairs, Gullett decreed that, 'On almost every occasion of note, he came down on the side of those who, to-day, are our enemies'.¹⁵ Through the auspices of Gullett, the Government sought to deflect the debate away from its own reluctance to take a stand by turning the tables on the Opposition.

Evatt swiftly denied any collusion between himself and Burton, saying that, '[h]e had no authority from the Australian Labour party to attend the conference'.¹⁶ Evatt then counter-attacked by throwing the emphasis of debate back on to the Government's reluctance to take action against the delegation. Evatt asked

Does the presence of those Australians at such a conference in Peking at this time when China, although technically at peace with this country, is actually engaged in fighting against the United Nations forces, which includes Australians, involve the element of a security risk or a defence risk to this country?...I contend that the Government, if it considers that the answer to the question is "Yes", has a duty to prevent Australians from attending such a conference.¹⁷

Evatt's opposition to the delegation was made even more explicit when he stated that a Labor Government, placed in the same situation, would 'prevent the delegates from proceeding overseas'.¹⁸ Evatt voiced his objection to the delegation more definitively when he stated that given the opportunity he would 'do everything that I could to prevent

¹² Ibid, p. 508.

¹³ Ibid, p. 508.

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 508.

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 508.

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 509.

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 510.

them from going, and I beg the House to take no notice of the assertion that there is no legal power to do so'.¹⁹ Holt was unconvinced of Evatt's contention that the Government had the power to act. In response to Holt's hesitancy, Evatt pleaded that 'You have plenty of power, if not in the present statute....then legislative power. The Government has legislative power. No alteration to the Constitution is needed'.²⁰ Holt questioned the ability of the Government to deny passports during peace-time, to which Evatt responded that the Government had the power 'to prevent anybody from leaving this country in peace-time'.²¹ Evatt believed that

...if the Government holds the view that the defence of this country or the security of our troops in Korea is injured by the holding of the conference at Peking, the defence power is immediately applicable and legislation can be passed to prevent Australians from attending it.²²

Evatt effectively threw down the gauntlet to Holt, and the Menzies Government as a whole, by challenging them to take a forthright stand on the issue of passport control. However, Holt refused to alter his position. In response to Evatt's charge against the Government, Holt stated that

Whatever the right honourable gentleman's legal advice may be, the advice that has been tendered to me through my department is that the Government has no constitutional authority other than that conferred by the defence power....to restrict the free movement of Australian citizens in times of peace. This Government has always adhered to the principle that we should never restrict the movement of our own citizens in times of peace.²³

Holt's insistence that the Government was powerless to act appears odd when the Warsaw episode is taken into account. Although the cancellation and impounding of

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 510.

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 512.

²⁰ Ibid, p. 512.

²¹ Ibid, p. 513.

²² Ibid, p. 513.

²³ Ibid, p. 514.

passports in that case did not completely solve the problem, which necessitated the change in policy, it is still clear that the Government were not completely powerless in matters of passport control. Arthur Calwell understood that the Government had the ability of to take action against delegates:

The Minister has the necessary power. Let him use it! But do not let him hide behind this spurious appeal to old-time liberalism. Let him believe in the freedom of individuals, but let him also believe in the safety of his nation.....If he[Holt] has the power to impound the passports of people who have gone to Europe and, without permission, have visited countries behind the "Iron Curtain", he can refuse passports to people who want to go behind the "Bamboo Curtain". There is logic in that contention.²⁴

Even in the face of concerted criticism Holt maintained his view that the rights of the Australian public to have access to free movement was of paramount importance, except in the most grievous of circumstances. Evatt, in a move which appeared contrary to his status as a fighter for liberal values, had taken the more conservative position against the Government. Holt certainly recognised the irony of the situation, expressing the belief that

In this Parliament and in this country, the Leader of the Opposition has set himself up as a champion of freedom and liberal principles....The right honourable gentleman has talked about power to deal with these matters. When the Government parties asked the Australian people to extend the powers of the Commonwealth to combat the Communist menace, it was he who led the attack upon us, on the ground that he was trying to preserve the freedom of Australian citizens. But now to save his political skin when he finds himself embarrassed by a protege whom he so readily disowned, he has turned his back upon the principles that he preached to this country.²⁵

²⁴ Ibid, pp. 516-17.

²⁵ Ibid, pp. 514-15.

Holt clearly laid the blame for his inability to act at the feet of the Labor Party, using this debate as a means of attacking the Labor Party's, and particularly Evatt's, role in bringing about the defeat of the referendum.

Holt painted a picture of the Menzies Government which represented it as the voice of reason against a wave of conservatism coming from the Opposition. Considering the common portrayal of the Menzies Government as stridently anti-Communist, and in light of the Government's 1949 election mandate to scotch Communism, it is surprising that the Government chose to maintain its liberal position on travel control in the face of such intense opposition. This episode also demonstrates that the sentiments of writers such as Manning Clark, who believed that Menzies and his Government 'had no inhibitions or agonies of mind on the communist issue'²⁶, were not entirely justified. The juxtaposition of the Government's point of view against that of the Opposition, in particular Evatt, is of considerable interest. Evatt is generally recognised as the standard bearer for an individual's right to freedom of speech and basic human rights, a characterisation exemplified by his role in helping defeat the Government's referendum campaign. Yet, in this case he represented the opposite end of the spectrum, seeking to deny individuals the right to freedom of travel. The strength of Evatt's conviction highlights the degree to which the Government's attitude can be considered to have been extremely liberal under certain circumstances.

The conviction with which Holt declared his liberal values is also interesting in the context of the Government's previous decision to ban Chinese delegates from attending the Youth Carnival. His simple answer to this would be to say that the Government was not prepared to act against Australian citizens. Holt had made this clear previously when he stated that

²⁶ See Clark's *A Short History of Australia*, op cit, p. 222

We have no power to restrict the movement of our own citizens from Australia, but we have power to restrict the entry of other people to this country and that power has been exercised in cases to which its application has been considered appropriate.²⁷

However, it has been amply shown that the Government did have sufficient means to at least hinder the progress of the Australian delegation, evidenced by the events surrounding the peace conference in Warsaw. So what had changed in the interim which influenced the Government to maintain a liberal view? A significant factor which could have influenced the Government's decision to allow the delegation to proceed was the role of Burton and his relationship to the Labor Party. Burton's inclusion in the delegation accorded the Government a priceless opportunity to launch a full-scale assault on the Labor Party and its apparent Communist allegiances, in particular considering that the failure to win the referendum was still fresh in the minds of the Government. A further example of how the Government used this debate to attack the Labor Party can be found in the statements of W.C. Wentworth:

It may be that the Government should pass legislation to give itself power to act in this matter, but what is clear is that the Leader of the Opposition has power himself to move for the expulsion of members of the Labour Party who are concerned with this affair.²⁸

Wentworth clearly acknowledged that the Government may need to take action but he was more concerned with the role of the Labor Party. Of course, Wentworth's sentiments cannot be taken as a true representation of the Government's overall viewpoint, given his more extreme political position, but this still demonstrates the extent to which the Government was using this affair as a means of attacking the Opposition. Further to this was the timing of the Government's criticism of Burton and the Labor Party. Rather than raising the matter before the departure of the delegation, the Government chose to commence its assault after the delegation had left the country. This therefore gave the Labor Party no chance either disassociate itself from, or attempt to overturn, Burton's

²⁷ CPD [H of R] vol. 217, 6 May 1952, p. 10.

²⁸ CPD [H of R] vol. 217, 20 May 1952, p. 520.

decision to join the delegation. Members of the Opposition were not blind to the Government's apparent motives in the debate. The Member for Port Adelaide, Albert Thompson,²⁹ stated that

I understand that the Government had knowledge of Dr. Burton's pending departure . It did not say to the Labour Party beforehand, "Here is a man who intends to go away to a conference like this. Cannot you do something to stop him? The Government would not take that action. It wanted to throw mud over the Leader of the Opposition."³⁰

Holt's statements, cited earlier, attacking Evatt for his role in defeating the referendum suggest that Thompson's sentiments may have been well placed.

It seems that, in the case of the Preparatory Conference in Peking, the Government had significant ulterior motives for its liberal stance, which seemed so out of character. However, was its stance really that much of a departure from the Government's previous policy? In his previous decisions on passport matters, Holt had always maintained that the Government, intent on upholding civil liberties, was against any restriction which would hamper the movements of ordinary Australians. Despite the Government's use of the Peking Conference to attack the Labor Party, it would be safe to argue that the action taken by the Government in this case was irrespective of whether or not Burton was a delegate. The Government not only saw Burton's involvement in the delegation as a serendipitous opportunity to attack the Labor Party; it also sought to use his involvement as a means of deflecting criticism from its standard passport procedure. If this is the case, the Government's refusal to act aggressively against the delegation to the Preparatory Conference in Peking, in particular in light of its response to the Chinese delegation to the Youth Carnival, testifies to the leniency of the Government's passport policy. This further suggests that the Menzies Government only applied travel controls inconsistently.

²⁹ Thompson was MHR for Hindmarsh from 1945-1949 before becoming the MHR for Port Adelaide in 1950.

³⁰ CPD [H of R] vol. 217, 20 May 1952, p. 525.

Germ warfare?

While the Preparatory Conference had come under considerable attack in Parliament, the storm of controversy surrounding the delegation became even more marked when the Conference commenced on 3 June. Days before the opening of the Conference, Burton telegraphed a statement to the Parliamentary Press Gallery which accused the United States of using germ warfare in Korea.³¹ Burton's allegations received extensive coverage in the press. In Melbourne, for example, the *Sun*, the *Age* and the *Argus* all contained prominent headlines concerned with Burton's claims.³² This prompted an immediate response from Casey, as Minister for External Affairs. Casey dismissed the allegations stating that

This charge has been made by the Communists and replied by the Americans many times before Dr. Burton sprang to the support of this blatant piece of Communist propaganda....Dr. Burton's action is clear evidence he has swallowed the Communist bait.³³

In dismissing Burton's accusations Casey was sure to make the link between Burton and the Labor Party, asking if Dr. Evatt would 'comment on the sanity and judgement of his protegee'.³⁴ Evatt responded by again questioning the Government's decision to allow the delegation to travel to Peking. Evatt stated that

The Labor Party strongly deprecates unsupported imputations against U.N. troops fighting alongside Australians in Korea....I should add that the judgement of Mr. Casey and the Government in knowingly permitting the outpouring of this propaganda is open to the gravest criticism.³⁵

³¹ NAA, A1838/266, 563/5/1, pt 1, folio 1, see 'Korea - Alleged use of Germ Warfare. Statement by the Minister for External Affairs, Mr. R.G. Casey'.

³² See for example *The Age*, 2 June 1952, 'Germ-war Evidence, says Dr. Burton', *Argus*, 17 June 1952 'Chinese believe Germs used' and *Melbourne Sun*, 17 June 1952, 'Burton Can't Prove Germ Claim on China'.

³³ NAA, A1838/266, 563/5/1, pt 1, op cit, folio 1.

³⁴ *Ibid*, folio 1.

³⁵ *Age*, 2 June 1952, 'Germ-war Evidence says Dr. Burton'.

Casey suggested that it was 'now a little late in the day for him to complain about our not having stopped Communist propaganda....when he fought against, and was instrumental in denying us, adequate powers to do so'.³⁶

The Government again came under attack in the House of Representatives in ensuing days. The Federal President of the Returned Sailors, Soldiers and Airmen's League of Australia had complained that the Government should have denied passport facilities to members of the delegation. The Labor Party drew upon this complaint as a means of further attacking the Government.³⁷ The Member for Yarra, Standish Michael Keon,³⁸ stated that 'sooner or later, no matter how reluctant the Government may be, it will be forced to make a decision in relation to this matter'.³⁹ Keon was particularly upset by the fact that the Government had allowed the delegation to travel with passports which, as was common practice, contained a letter of recommendation. Keon suggested that Holt 'might not have been able to prevent them from going away, but he could have refused to give them passports. He did not do so'.⁴⁰ In defending his policy, Holt again voiced his belief that 'the right of Australian citizens to travel overseas shall be free and untrammelled'.⁴¹ Holt also questioned the apparent contradiction of the Labor Party on issues of civil liberties. Holt stated

Suppose I had refused to issue a passport to him [Burton]. I very much suspect that if my decision were challenged in the courts the first man to come forward to defend Dr. Burton's right to a passport would be the Leader of the Opposition.⁴²

³⁶ NAA, 1838/266, 563/5/1 pt 1, Reply to Dr. Evatt, 2 June 1952.

³⁷ CPD [H of R] vol. 217, 3 June 1952, p. 1290.

³⁸ Keon was the MHR for Yarra between 1949 and 1955 when he became the Deputy Leader of the Anti-Communist Labor Party, *Who's Who in Australia*, 1955, p. 432. See also Anthony Abate's unpublished MA thesis, 'A Man of Principle?: A Political Biography of Standish Michael Keon'.

³⁹ CPD [H of R] vol. 217, 3 June 1952, p. 1291.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p. 1292.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, p. 1292.

⁴² *Ibid*, p. 1293.

Holt attacked the Labor Party's position by referring to comments made by Calwell, as Minister for Immigration, while Labor was in office during 1949. Faced with similar circumstances Calwell stated that

The Australian Government....gives Communists, as citizens, the same rights, including passports and travel facilities, as other citizens receive. That position will obtain until action is taken to declare that the Communist party is not a legal organisation-if such action is ever taken.⁴³

Further to this, Evatt had stated that, 'the laws of this country do not give discretionary power to the executive to refuse passports to Australian citizens who want to go overseas'.⁴⁴ Holt therefore demonstrated that, when placed in a similar situation, a Labor Government had taken an identical position to that of the Menzies Government. This gives the impression that it was, in fact, the Labor Party which had altered its viewpoint in the case of the Peking delegation, which somewhat vindicates the stance of Holt and the Menzies Government. Calwell disputed Holt's suggestion that the Government was powerless to enforce passport controls during "peace-time". Calwell argued that

The Government has continually claimed that an enemy is about to attack us, and that, therefore, we must incur a huge defence expenditure to prepare against the possibility of aggression. So the Minister cannot claim, with justification, that the principles he enunciated in his speech should apply to-day in this matter, because in the view of his own Government, we are not enjoying normal peace-time conditions....We have been, at best, in a state of no war.⁴⁵

Calwell also dismissed the comparison made between the situation in 1949 and the situation faced by the Government in 1952. Calwell was concerned that it was 'one thing

⁴³ Ibid, p. 1294.

⁴⁴ Ibid, pp. 1293-4.

⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 1295.

to go behind the Iron Curtain and another thing to go behind the Bamboo Curtain at the present time'.⁴⁶ Calwell emotively voiced his concern about the present situation with his statement that

The Australians who were going to Peking, where they were to be received with flowers and feted by the Chinese Communist Government, travelled on the same aircraft as 30 other Australians who were going to Korea, where they would be greeted with bullets fired by soldiers of Chinese Communist armies.⁴⁷

Kim Beazley Sr. also spoke passionately about the need for the Government to take action against the delegates, for the reason that the conference was 'designed, amongst other things, to justify the killing of Australians'.⁴⁸ Beazley also questioned the Government's motives in the debate, expressing his appreciation that 'the Government is able to make a great deal of political sport by using Dr. Burton as a means of embarrassing the Opposition'.⁴⁹ Beazley felt that party politics must be set aside while 'every Australian soldier who has died in Korea is being defamed'. Given the context of events which were being played out overseas, and considering the vehement criticism being levelled at the Government on the matter of travel control, it is surprising that the Menzies Government maintained its liberal and apparently lenient outlook for so long. However, with the main conference only a matter of months away, the Government's position would come under much greater pressure in ensuing months.

Passport ban

By the end of June, the Government sought to clarify its position in regard to the impending conference. The Government compiled a document outlining the arguments for and against the attendance of an Australian delegation at Peking.⁵⁰ One of the

⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 1295.

⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 1295.

⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 1298.

⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 1298.

⁵⁰ NAA, A1838/2 563/5, pt 2, see document entitled, 'Peking Conference, September, 1952', p. 1.

foremost arguments in favour of attendance was that '[t]o ignore the Conference is to play the Soviet game and to "demonstrate" that only Communists are working for peace'. In addition to this argument, it was suggested that 'Chinese Communists are muddle-headed [and] deplorably ignorant of the facts re Soviet Union and East-West relations'. In light of the perceived deficiencies of Chinese Communists it was argued that the sending of a "strong", anti-Communist, delegation 'might open the minds of Chinese delegates to the hard facts concerning the Soviet Union and East-West tension and help cure their muddle-headedness'. It was also believed that the presence of a reliable delegation could be beneficial even if it were found that the Chinese were unable to be swayed. In these circumstances the delegation would be capable of discrediting the conference in the eyes of other delegations while also revealing the true nature of the conference to the Australian public on their return.

In opposition to these arguments, it was found that the likelihood of being able to influence the conference was remote. Past experiences in Berlin and Warsaw dictated that there would be a number of expert organisers behind the scenes who would ensure that the conference was manipulated to suit the goals of the Communist-led peace movement, regardless of the strength and reliability of the Australian delegation. According to the document: 'Expecting to alter the direction of the Peace Movement by argument in Conference is equivalent to expecting to alter Soviet foreign policy by arguing with Vyshinsky'.⁵¹ Moreover, the peace conference would be used as a means of influencing the Australian delegation rather than vice versa, and Australians, regardless of the quality of the delegation, may form the opinion that the Chinese were not unreasonable or abhorrent.

A major problem which arose from the proposal to send a "reliable" delegation to Peking was that there were few, if any, individuals with the necessary experience and expertise who could be trusted to adhere to the Australian Government's position.⁵² One of the most significant arguments in favour of attending the conference was thereby undone by

⁵¹ Ibid, p. 2.

an inability to find suitable candidates to undertake the mission. There was great concern that there 'would appear to be weighty objections to such a course so long as Chinese "volunteers" are fighting United Nations troops in Korea'.⁵³ The Government was clearly beginning to reach the conclusion that the nature of the conference, combined with the continuation of hostilities in Korea, necessitated that a more convincing stance on passport matters was required.

Menzies enters the debate

An early indication that Menzies was ready to take action against the Peking peace conference came when he spoke to the Rev. J.E. Owen, who was an invitee to the conference. Owen recalled in his memoir, *The Road to Peace*, that Menzies had told him: 'Have nothing to do with it. You'll do no good by associating with Communists'.⁵⁴ Owen chose to accept the Prime Minister's advice on this occasion, although he remained adamant that he could not renounce his 'interest in peace, nor cease to be active on the matter because the Communists are in the field'.

On 10 September, Menzies outlined his decision to deny passports to those Australians who sought to attend the conference. Menzies stated that

...the Australian Government will not be a party to assisting any Australian to attend the Peking Conference. Accordingly, the Government will deny passport facilities to all prospective delegates.⁵⁵

In justifying his decision, Menzies used words very similar to those of Opposition members during the debates in May and June as to whether the delegation to the Preparatory Conference should have received passport facilities. Menzies decided that,

⁵² Ibid, p. 3.

⁵³ Ibid, p. 4.

⁵⁴ Owen, op cit, p. 16.

⁵⁵ CPD [H of R] vol. 218, 10 September 1952, p. 1187.

There are certain peculiar features about such a conference in China under present circumstances which the Government felt it could not overlook in considering whether assistance should be given to delegates. The simple fact is that at this very moment Australian servicemen are participating in an armed conflict in Korea in which United Nations forces are fighting against forces the major part of which are under the control of Chinese authorities at Peking.⁵⁶

The continual barrage of criticism, most prominently from the Opposition, had finally convinced Menzies that the circumstances in Korea dictated that action must be taken against the delegation. Evatt appreciated the contradiction between Menzies' present policy, and his lack of action in May and June. Evatt contended that 'the Prime Minister....has done little more, although he has done it more carefully, than point out what I pointed out at that time on behalf of the Opposition'.⁵⁷ Furthermore, in endorsing the Government's action, Evatt stated that

...this proposed action of the Government is purely a precaution of a defence character designed to secure Australian troops, in common with the troops of other members of the United Nations, who are fighting in Korea. It only remains to be said that the Government's action, which might have been taken three months ago, has been taken to-day.⁵⁸

Evatt believed that this new undertaking constituted a 'somersault on the part of the Government'.⁵⁹

The influence of UK and US initiatives

However this 'somersault' was not simply as a result of pressure from the Opposition. The Australian Government's decision was significantly influenced by developments in the United States and the United Kingdom. On 15 August the UK Government informed Australia's Minister for External Affairs, Casey, that it was devising means to prevent its

⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 1187.

⁵⁷ Ibid, p. 1187.

⁵⁸ Ibid, pp. 1187-8.

citizens, and those of other nations, from attending the conference. The UK Government was making

approaches to non Communist governments in Asia to ascertain whether such governments would be prepared to refuse exit facilities to their own nationals and deny transit through their territory to other delegations.⁶⁰

The UK authorities also inquired if the governments in question would be opposed to their nationals being denied transit visas through Hong Kong and Singapore. These appeals were also made to the Australian Government. Casey, in correspondence with Australia's Ambassador to the US, Percy Spender, decided that 'we are very much inclined to action somewhat along the lines proposed'.⁶¹ In closing, Casey told Spender that it would 'be of assistance if you could ascertain discreetly any action which United States (Canadian) Government is likely to take in regard to attendance at Peking Conference'.⁶²

By the end of that day Spender, after consultation with US authorities, informed the Department of External Affairs that, if a US citizen sought to visit China 'for any reason' the request would be denied.⁶³ It was also determined that any US citizen with a 'doubtful background' who requested a passport to an area such as Hong Kong would be denied a passport. The US authorities also stated that they 'regarded with favour' the Australian Government's proposed course of action.⁶⁴ It is therefore clear that the apparent 'somersault' that Evatt had spoken of, had been prompted by the activities of the US and, in particular, the UK Governments. Without the influence of the decisions made by US and UK authorities, the Menzies Government may have stood by its earlier conviction.

⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 1188.

⁶⁰ Telegram from Casey to Spender, Australian Ambassador to the US, dated 21 August 1952, NAA, A5461/3, 235/5 Part 1.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ See telegram from Australian Embassy, Washington, to the Department of External Affairs dated 21 August 1952, NAA, A5461/3, 235/5 Part 1.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

Although the Government had finally decided to institute passport controls, Menzies reiterated his belief that citizens should be entitled to freedom of movement. He stated that

The Government believes that Australian citizens should have the utmost freedom in travelling about the world, but that this freedom must be limited where their movement actively assists those who are fighting against Australia. Further, the Government wishes to avoid all inconvenience to the great majority of travellers who neither intend nor wish to go near these phony "peace" conferences. For this reason it does not propose to issue any general restriction on travel.⁶⁵

Menzies clearly still wished to maintain the liberal stance of his Government toward freedom of travel. This is further supported by a letter written to John Burton, on the day after the Government announced its decision. Burton had not given any indication that he would attend the conference but, in light of his past history with the preparation of the conference, it would not have been surprising if, in the new circumstances, the Government sought to cancel his passport. However, the letter stated that

It is desired to avoid withdrawing the passport of any person who is not to attend the conference, and if I may have your immediate assurance that you do not propose to travel to Peking, no action will be necessary in regard to the passport now in your possession.⁶⁶

This makes it clear that the Government's ban was as minimal as possible, with only those people known to be delegates affected. In comparison to the more extensive measures taken by the United States, where it was impossible for any individual to travel to China, the Australian Government's actions appear mild. The refined nature of the ban illustrated how the Australian Government sought to maintain the civil liberties of travellers.

⁶⁵ CPD [H of R] vol. 218, 10 September 1952, p. 1187.

⁶⁶ NAA, A6980 T1, S200565, A.L. Nutt to Dr. J.W. Burton, 11 September 1952.

Attempts to subvert the ban

Despite the Government's efforts to prevent Australians from attending the conference there were individuals who were able to subvert the ban by virtue of their holding British passports.⁶⁷ Cabinet had been informed that other Commonwealth nations, including the United Kingdom and Canada, 'were not taking action to prevent their nationals from attending the Peking conference'.⁶⁸ The Australian Government had proceeded with its plan of action regardless of this fact. It was therefore possible for British passport holders to flout the ban. Questions were asked as to whether anything could be done to prevent British passport holders from attending.⁶⁹ However, Howard Beale,⁷⁰ acting as Minister for Immigration in the absence of Holt, believed that the Government had no means by which it could hinder the travel of British passport holders:

...as far as I am aware no agreement exists between the Australian and British Governments whereby the Australian Government could interfere with the right of persons who hold British passports that entitle them to travel to and from Australia.⁷¹

The Government therefore was forced to resign itself to the fact that there would be individuals who would be capable of slipping through the net.

Yet, although the Government had been incapable of instituting bans against those who already held British passports, efforts were made to ensure that individuals who were eligible for a British passport would be unable to obtain one. Sister Gertrude Gardner, an Australian resident of New Zealand birth, had unsuccessfully applied for an Australian passport.⁷² It was then feared that she may attempt to gain a New Zealand passport. On 8

⁶⁷ One such candidate was the Rev. Victor James, who gave his account of the episode in his memoir *Windows on the Years*, Unitarian Assembly of Victoria, Elwood, 1980, pp. 298-300.

⁶⁸ NAA, A4940/1, C460, Cabinet Minute, Decision No. 531, 9 September 1952.

⁶⁹ CPD [H of R] vol. 218, 12 September 1952, p. 1380.

⁷⁰ Beale became the MHR for Parramatta in 1946. He was the Minister for Supply and acted as the Minister for Immigration in 1952 and 1954. *Who's Who in Australia*, 1955, p. 77.

⁷¹ CPD [H of R] vol. 218, 12 September 1952, p. 1380.

⁷² See memorandum from the Department of Immigration to the Department of External Affairs dated 8 October 1952, NAA, A1838/2, 1542/337.

October, the Department of Immigration asked the New Zealand Government to deny Gardner a passport if she were to apply for one. A similar request had been made to the UK Government in regard to the passport of unionist Jim Healy, a dual UK/Australian citizen.⁷³ The UK Government agreed to deny a passport to Healy if he applied for one. The reasoning for this decision was that, since Healy was an Australian citizen 'the United Kingdom Government have felt obliged to comply with the Australian Government's request', regardless of the fact that Healy was entitled to a UK passport under normal circumstances.⁷⁴ Thus, the Australian Government was able to find methods to hamper delegates who were eligible for British passports, but those individuals who already held a British passport could not be touched. Despite this, Beale remained confident in the revised policy. He asserted that

...it may happen that a person may elude the Government's prohibition and succeed in going to Peking. However, I consider it to be better that an odd case of that kind should occur rather than that the Government should interfere unduly with the traditional right of travel of individuals.⁷⁵

The Government was prepared to accept that its attempts to hamper the travel arrangements of the delegation may not be entirely successful but, so long as all other travellers could proceed unhindered, this was an acceptable result.

It is clear from the evidence provided that the Australian Government did not take the decision to enforce passport bans lightly. The Government only acted when obliged to. Even then, the most minimal action was taken, with only those individuals who were attending the conference affected by the ban. The Government's obvious reluctance to institute passport bans, combined with the minimalist policy which was eventually implemented, is a clear indication that, despite mounting pressure, Menzies wished to maintain the right to free travel for Australian citizens as much as possible. Thus we can

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ See 'Aide Memoire' from the Office of the High Commissioner for the United Kingdom, dated 19 September 1952, NAA, A1838/2, 1542/337.

⁷⁵ CPD [H of R] vol. 218, 12 September 1952, p. 1380.

see once more that, in the area of travel control, the Menzies Government's policy was restrained and rational - qualities often not associated with its conduct in other areas of its 'war on communism'.

Treasonable ground

At the same time that Menzies was introducing his passport bans, belated moves were being made by representatives of the Government against the delegation which had attended the Preparatory Conference to Peking during June. On 11 September both Houses of Parliament were presented with a report which suggested that the laws against sedition or treason may have been breached by the delegation when it signed a joint declaration which was issued by the Preparatory Conference.⁷⁶ This accusation was made by the Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs, under the direction of Casey.⁷⁷ The report concluded that

The Committee considers the Attorney-General might examine this document to ascertain whether there has been any infringement by the Australian signatories of our law against sedition or treason.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ *Telegraph*, 'Treason Charge Investigation', 12 September 1952. A description of the delegations visit to the preparatory conference and a copy of the declaration can be found in the pamphlet *We Talked Peace With Asia*, published by the Rev. G. R. Van Eerde, Redfern, NSW, 1952.

⁷⁷ On 18 October 1951, a motion was submitted to the House of Representatives by Casey which provided for the establishment of a Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs. The Committee was intended to 'consider such matters concerning foreign affairs as are referred to it by the Minister for External Affairs'. See NAA, A5954/09, 1948/15. The Committee was initially opposed by the Opposition, but was eventually established in March 1952. The Committee would represent 'all parties in an effort to exercise surveillance over government activity on behalf of the Parliament', although 'policy formulation and execution' would be left to the Government. It was hoped that the Committee would help to improve 'the calibre of debate' on international affairs in the two Houses of Parliament. Casey regarded the Committee as a 'study group'. See Hudson's *Casey*, pp. 282-3. The Committee was chaired by R.S. Ryan. The most notable member of the Committee, in the context of the thesis, was W.C. Wentworth.

⁷⁸ See p. 7 of the 'First Report from the Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs relating to the Peking Peace Conference', compiled by the Chairman of the Committee, R.S. Ryan on 20 August 1952, NAA, A1838/266, 563/5/1 pt 2. The report determined that the Peking Conference would be 'stage-managed' and that this was proven by the example of the proposed Sheffield conference, where the conference was moved when 'some prominent stage-managers' were refused visas by the Atlee Government. See p. 4.

On 12 September the accusation against the delegation was presented by Casey to the Attorney-General, J.A. Spicer.⁷⁹ Spicer promised Casey that he would review the matter. Spicer faced problems in coming to his conclusion as to whether the delegates had in fact committed treason or sedition. He stated that

In considering whether the Australians who subscribed to these texts have been guilty of treason or sedition, I have had considerable difficulty in drawing a clear line of demarcation between extreme political controversy, which the law permits, and utterances which the law regards as amongst the most serious crimes that British subjects can commit.⁸⁰

Despite these problems, Spicer was still greatly concerned by the content of the declaration, particularly in the context of the time it was written. He believed that

In this case it is difficult to overestimate the seriousness of the statements. They were made at a time when Australian troops are suffering heavy casualties in the conflict in Korea. The general effect of the statements seems clearly to be to brand this country, and its Allies, as aggressors. Finally the declaration was made in a country which is supplying troops to oppose our forces in Korea and in circumstances in which it was clear that the utterances would be, as they in fact were, broadcast behind the lines of the enemy.⁸¹

With these factors taken into account, Spicer deemed that a jury could find that the declaration constituted both treason and sedition. However, Spicer also determined that 'it is impossible to say whether a jury would convict'.⁸² Spicer believed that a jury

...might well come to the conclusion that the words used keep the matter within the category of permitted political controversy, or at best, are such that a well-meaning citizen might have subscribed to without any intention of undermining the defences of the country.⁸³

⁷⁹ NAA, A432/75, 1952/2172, Letter from Spicer to Casey, 15 September 1952.

⁸⁰ NAA, A432/75, 1952/2172, See untitled document marked 'Confidential', p. 1.

⁸¹ Ibid, p. 2.

⁸² Ibid, p. 2.

⁸³ Ibid, p. 3.

Although Spicer believed that there may have been a degree of treason and sedition within the declaration, the ambiguous nature of much of the sentiment in the document forced him to reach the conclusion that it was 'doubtful whether a conviction would be obtained...'.⁸⁴

The attempt by the Government to institute charges of sedition and or treason against the delegation to the Preparatory Conference in Peking is a clear indication of the degree to which the Government's attitude had altered between the holding of the two conferences. The Government had steadfastly refused to take action against the delegation in regard to passports and had basically denied that the delegation was in any way a threat to the security of the nation. Yet, months later some three the conclusion had been reached that the delegation may have been guilty of one of the most serious crimes possible. The delegates' decision to sign the declaration provided the Government with an opportunity to attack the delegates on an individual basis, whereas action over passports could have adversely affected innocent members of the community. The Government's actions in this matter do not alter the argument that the Menzies Government chose, when at all possible, to avoid impressing travel controls upon Australian citizens, regardless of their political backgrounds or beliefs.

Cat and mouse: efforts to evade the passport ban

Within hours of the Menzies Government announcing its intention to ban passports, the delegates commenced efforts to attempt to fight the ban. A meeting of Victorian delegates, hastily convened on the same night as Menzies' announcement, declared in a prepared statement that the Government's action 'establishes a precedent of a most sinister kind'.⁸⁵ With this in mind the delegates vowed to fight the ban and called upon the Australian public to 'make every possible protest to the Federal Government...'.⁸⁶ The delegation outlined a number of avenues by which they could either overturn the ban

⁸⁴ Ibid, p. 3.

⁸⁵ *Argus*, 'We'll Fight Ban on Passports', 11 September 1952.

⁸⁶ *Age*, 'Delegates Will Fight Ban', 11 September 1952.

or, in the event legal manoeuvres failed, to subvert the ban. The Government, through ASIO, was kept well informed of the delegations thoughts and movements. On 15 September, ASIO reported that the delegates would attempt to 'test the legal right of Qantas to refuse tickets'.⁸⁷ Qantas had refused to issue tickets on the grounds that the airline required passengers to hold a valid passport. In 1950 Holt had openly admitted, during the Warsaw incident, that citizens could travel without a passport.⁸⁸ Effectively, the decision to allow individuals into a foreign country was up to the discretion of the country in question. The Australian Government could only refuse to endorse the traveller. ASIO also admitted that 'A Shipping or Airline Company can disregard the absence of a passport if it wishes'.⁸⁹ Despite this, Qantas continued to deny tickets to delegates who did not have passports. The delegation also investigated the possibility of taking High Court action to force the Government to issue passports.⁹⁰ The inclusion of British passport holders in the delegation provided organisers with one avenue to ensure the presence of Australians at the conference without fear of Government intervention. Through these means, delegates such as the Reverend Victor James were able to make their way to Peking unhindered.

The most daring activity undertaken by members of the delegation involved attempts to arrange a passage out of Australia by covert means such as chartering a flight or arranging a passage by ship. Speculation surrounding these efforts was rife in the lead-up to the conference.⁹¹ On 17 September ASIO reported that

Wild rumours are circulating among "Party" members to the effect that the two delegates who have already departed from Australia on British passports, will arrange certain travel facilities for those delegates who have been refused Australian passports and are still in

⁸⁷ NAA, A6122/44, 1456, folio 144, the events surrounding Qantas' denial of tickets and the delegation's attempts to overturn the airlines directive were detailed in the article 'No Planes For Peking - Airlines' in the *Melbourne Herald*, 11 September 1952 .

⁸⁸ See 'Passports "Not Permits But"', *Melbourne Herald*, 11 September 1952.

⁸⁹ NAA, A6122/44, 1456, folio 144 .

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 144.

⁹¹ A number of newspapers reported on the efforts of members of the delegation to subvert the passport ban, see for example 'Peking Ban Hard to Dodge', in the *Age*, 12 September 1952 and also 'Peace Group's Plane Plan', in the *Daily Telegraph*, 16 September 1952. .

Australia....It is considered that a flying boat will be routed to Northern Queensland waters from Overseas, to pick up the remaining delegates.⁹²

In the heightened atmosphere surrounding the delegates' attempts to subvert the ban, ASIO took on the pivotal role in Government efforts to sabotage the delegation's efforts. In previous months ASIO had taken on a purely consultative role in regard to passport issues. However, with the prospect of delegates seeking covert ways to subvert the ban, ASIO moved to the forefront, monitoring the activities of the delegation in an effort to prevent them leaving the country. While the Government had proven reluctant to institute passport bans, the security organisation was quick to keep tabs on the delegation's every move, noting on 18 September that

There is a strong suspicion that Denis Courtland Jacob and John Pierce Callaghan travelled to Cairns under the names of Sutton and Owens respectively on 16th September, 1952, and that Sister Gertrude Gardner, Dr. Clive Sandy and Jules Meltzer are proceeding by flying boat from Brisbane to Cairns today, 18th September 1952, under the names of Gaynor, Mellor and Hughes respectively....There is a possibility all except Sandy will leave the flying boat at Townsville.⁹³

Speculation about the movements and activities of the delegation led to a flurry of reports in the press. The delegation's migration northward was documented in both the *Age* and the *Herald* on 19 September, with the *Herald* describing the 'Cat-and-mouse game' being played by the government and the delegation. The press was also fully aware of the efforts of security officers in 'shadowing the delegates and reporting their movements to Canberra'.⁹⁴ In response to suggestions that the Government was taking more direct action to hamper the delegates' efforts, Casey replied that 'I think it would be more accurate to say we are looking for positive means of getting these people to comply with the law'.⁹⁵ When challenged over which law the delegates were breaking, Casey altered

⁹² NAA, A6122/44, 1457, folio 1.

⁹³ NAA, A6126/24, 261, folio 65.

⁹⁴ *Herald*, 'Party for Peking Splits Up', 19 September 1952.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

his view, stating instead that, '[w]e are trying to find means of getting them to comply with the Government's wish that Australians should not attend the Peking conference'.⁹⁶ Speculation was also rife in Parliament. Frederick Osborne, the member for Evans, asked Beale a number of questions concerning the whereabouts of the delegation. Osborne asked, 'Is it true that a substantial number of members of the delegation are now sojourning at a well-known holiday resort in the Barrier Reef? Are they conducting a peace conference?'⁹⁷ Beale's response was:

...the delegation is still in Australia, although there has been a certain trek northward. My present information is that some are in Townsville and some in Cairns, but as far as I know, none has left Australia.⁹⁸

In the knowledge that the press, the Government and, most importantly, ASIO were tracking their every move, the delegation intensified their efforts. Given its fruitless efforts to charter flights, the delegation concentrated its renewed efforts on gaining passage on the ship the *Changte*. D.C. Jacob, travelling under the alias of Sutton, arrived in Cairns on 17 September.⁹⁹ ASIO ascertained that a man name "Sutton" had

...called at the office of the shipping company, agents for the "Changte", and requested a passage on that ship. When asked for his passport he stated that he would produce that when he got the ticket. He was informed that no business could be done unless he produced his passport and he then left the office.¹⁰⁰

The efforts to find alternative transport from Cairns had therefore failed. The role of ASIO in ensuring that this means of transport would be denied is made clear by this statement:

⁹⁶ Ibid .

⁹⁷ CPD [H of R] vol. 218, 19 September 1952, p. 1783.

⁹⁸ Ibid, p. 1783.

⁹⁹ NAA, A6122/44, 1457, folio 16, see document dated 19 September 1952.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, folio 16.

Concerning the ship “Changte” it was intended that this vessel would call at Cairns on 18th September, 1952, but owing to berth being unavailable it was diverted to Townsville arriving there 17th September, 1952, and departed at midnight same date for Manila. Appropriate action was taken to prevent unauthorised persons boarding the vessel and similar action has also been taken in respect to water craft which could be used in an attempt to leave the Commonwealth at Townsville and other northern ports.¹⁰¹

Despite the setback, the delegation continued its attempts to subvert the ban. The day after the *Changte* had departed, six individuals arrived in Townsville. In an attempt to thwart ASIO attempts to monitor the delegates, two of their number, Sandy and Meltzer, acted as decoys, attempting to draw attention away from their colleagues.¹⁰² ASIO was fully aware of the intentions of Sandy and Meltzer. ASIO reported that the two

...continued throughout the afternoon and evening to make themselves conspicuous (apparently inviting attention to themselves) by booking their luggage at the Railway booking office under assumed names while their correct names were most obvious on the luggage.¹⁰³

These actions succeeded in covering the activities of the other delegates, ASIO admitting that ‘the four (4) remaining persons who disembarked the flying boat the previous day were not observed’.¹⁰⁴ The other delegates made their way to Cairns in an attempt to slip out of the country unnoticed. ASIO was concerned about the activities of Sandy and Meltzer:

It is worthy of noting for future reference that the two (2) delegates who remained in Townsville Meltzer and Sandy, have deliberately set out to attract notice to themselves by their activities in order to invite attention away from the remaining delegates, who had apparently proceeded to the Cairns area by some means unknown.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ Ibid, folio 14.

¹⁰² Ibid, folio’s 15 and 16.

¹⁰³ Ibid, folio 55, See document dated 24 September 1952.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, folio 53.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, folio 53.

Despite the efforts of Sandy and Meltzer, attempts to depart the country proved fruitless. In an effort to give delegates more time, organisers of the peace conference postponed it until 2 October.¹⁰⁶ It was hoped that this would allow the delegations to the conference to be as strong as possible. Victor James believed that the arrival of more delegates 'even at a late hour' would provide an 'effective answer to those Government's which tried to "ham-string" the Conference by delaying the granting of passports'.¹⁰⁷ This example demonstrates the lengths to which the delegates were prepared to go in an effort to subvert the Government's passport ban. More importantly, this episode is a clear indication of the extensive measures which were taken by ASIO to uphold the passport ban. While the Government had been slow to institute restrictive measures, it had no reservations in allowing the security organisation to become physically involved in efforts to restrict the delegation's movements. ASIO's role in ensuring that transport companies denied travel facilities to individuals who sought to covertly depart the country appears to extend beyond the general understanding of ASIO's identity; which is that of an information gathering security force. This evidence suggests that, while the Government outwardly cultivated its image as an upholder of civil rights, ASIO covertly maintained the Government's fight against the Communist menace.

Evatt was unconvinced by the Government's use of the Security Organisation to implement its passport ban. Evatt felt that there was

...something undignified, incorrect, and, indeed, wrong in the method that the Government has adopted of bringing influence to bear upon shipping companies and others who might be able to provide transport for persons to a conference which *ex hypothesi*, in the opinion of the defence authorities, involves some risk to the security of the nation.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ See letter from Victor James dated 25 September 1952, in Hartley papers, Box 13, file 4 at Melbourne University Archives.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ CPD [H of R] vol. 218, 25 September 1952, p. 2112.

While Evatt was not impressed with the Government's use of the security forces, he still maintained that those delegates who sought to subvert the ban should be dealt with. He proposed that

If the action of these persons is contrary to defence security, action should be taken against them by law and not by surveillance or by putting pressure upon private interests, or by intimidation, attack or slander. It was said in the course of the debate in this chamber some time ago that the Government does not possess the requisite legal power in this matter, but I do not think that that view would commend itself to any responsible lawyer.¹⁰⁹

Beale, as acting Minister for Immigration, expressed no remorse in regard to ASIO's efforts to prevent the delegation from subverting the ban. Beale detailed the entire chain of events for the House of Representatives.¹¹⁰ He described how the delegation was thwarted in its efforts at every turn and stated that 'the Government's action, undoubtedly, had the overwhelming support of the Australian people'.¹¹¹ Beale defended his Government's actions within the context of the Korean War:

We hope that it will demonstrate one thing at least, which is, that while the husbands, brothers and sons of Australian citizens are fighting and dying in Korea in a war against Communist aggression, we are not prepared to assist misguided citizens to go to phony peace conferences behind the enemy lines, where their presence would certainly be used by the Communists in their cold war propaganda against us and our allies.¹¹²

The emotive language used by Beale mirrors the sentiments expressed by the Opposition during the attempts to persuade the Government to institute passport bans against the delegation to the Preparatory Conference. The Government had clearly changed its tune in the intervening months between the two conferences. This may be attributed, in part, to the continued pressure being applied by the Opposition. The statements of Beale and Menzies, when announcing the ban, provide clear evidence that the Government's policy

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, p. 2112.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, p. 2111.

¹¹¹ Ibid, p. 2111.

was dictated by events outside of its control. Had there been no conflict in Korea it seems certain that the Government would not have taken such action. By the same token, if the conference had been held anywhere else, other than inside the borders of an “aggressor” nation, the Government’s intervention would not have occurred. This point is amply proven by the example of a conference scheduled to take place at Moscow and Vienna in the months following the Peking conference. When the question of whether passports should be granted to prospective delegates to these conferences was raised, Cabinet came to the conclusion that ‘these conferences were different from that being held at Peking where the conference was, for all practical purposes, being held behind enemy lines...’.¹¹³ It was therefore decided that ‘passports should not be refused’.

In the Senate the Government was questioned about its suggestion that Peking was, in fact, behind enemy lines. A Labor Senator from Tasmania, William Aylett, stated that ‘We are not fighting in China. We are fighting in Korea are we not?’.¹¹⁴ Aylett further suggested that if Peking was considered to be enemy territory then Russia should also be in this category. However Senator Neil O’Sullivan, the Leader of the Government in the Senate, attempted to clarify the Government’s position when he stated that

At the present time, we conduct diplomatic relations with Russia. We are not at war with that country. There is a Russian ambassador in Australia, and Australia is represented in Moscow. I repeat that delegates were refused visas to attend the Peking conference because the conference was being held behind enemy lines.¹¹⁵

The passport ban on those individuals who had been prospective delegates to the conference was lifted immediately after the conference ended.¹¹⁶ On 16 October Heyes,

¹¹² Ibid, p. 2112.

¹¹³ NAA, A4940/1, C460, Cabinet Minute, Decision No. 554, 2 October 1952.

¹¹⁴ CPD [S] vol. 218, 7 October 1952, p. 2502.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, p. 2502.

¹¹⁶ NAA, A445/1 253/24/64, p. 2, ‘Developments in Passport Matters During Present Government’s Term of Office’; see also NAA A6122/44 1457, p. 214, where it was detailed that prospective delegates J.D. Campbell and his wife could only receive passports at ‘the completion of the Peking peace conference’.

of the Department of External Affairs, informed the Department of Immigration, in reference to the passport of prospective delegate Sister Gertrude Gardner, that

It has now been officially confirmed that the Peking Peace Conference has ended and consequently restrictions which had been placed on the travel of intending delegates have now been lifted. Sister Gardner will now be able, if she so desires, to secure an Australian passport.¹¹⁷

This provides the clearest evidence that the Government was only concerned with the travel movements of individuals in so far as this one conference was concerned. The Government's decision to implement a passport ban on delegates to the Peking peace conference can therefore be seen to have been a reluctant exception to the Government's general policy on passports. Essentially the Government's hands were tied by circumstances in this instance. This provides further evidence that the Menzies Government's passport programme during the 1950s was based, in general, on the belief that Australian citizens were entitled to enjoy freedom of movement, except in the most exceptional of circumstances.

Ceasefire: 1953

In the immediate aftermath of the Peking affair the Government returned to its previous understanding of passport matters, which dictated that all travellers would receive passports irrespective of their destination or political beliefs, so long as they furnished authorities with information as to their reasons for their prospective journey. The decrease in international tension, produced by the cessation of hostilities in Korea, helped to reduce the Government's resolve on issues concerning travel. During May 1953 the Department of Immigration were faced with the decision of whether to deport Demetrios Anastassiou. This case raised the issue of whether action should be taken against individuals who were known members of the Communist Party, or who were engaged in

¹¹⁷ T.E. Heyes to the Department of External Affairs, 16 October 1952, NAA, A1838/2, 1542/337.

'activities which further Communist aims'.¹¹⁸ In correspondence with T.E. Heyes, Spry stated that Cabinet had already determined that

it has not been the practice to consider a person's lawful political activities as a ground for deportation, no matter how undesirable they may appear to the Government; consequently membership of the Communist Party, association with communists, or participation in activities designed to further communist aims, which did not amount to breaches of existing laws should not, of themselves, be regarded as sufficient to justify recourse to the deportation provisions of the Immigration Act.¹¹⁹

It was therefore decided that no action should be taken against Anastassiou.

At the end of 1953, the peace movement conducted a Convention on Peace and War in Sydney. The authorities chose to tackle this event in the same way in which they had tackled the Youth Carnival in 1952. Prospective delegates were to be screened by security to determine if they constituted a risk.¹²⁰ If an applicant for visa were found to be a security risk they were to be refused entry.¹²¹ In the event that there was no objection from security, the applicant 'will be approved subject to the usual requirements for visitors of the nationality or race concerned'.¹²² It was 'not proposed to take any action to prevent British subjects of European race from attending the Convention'.¹²³ Subsequently, the conducting of the Convention was not affected in any significant sense by travel authorities, with no mass bans such as had occurred in the case of the Youth Carnival. In the aftermath of the furore which had surrounded the delegation to Peking, it appears that the Australian Government had somewhat decreased its attack on the peace movement in 1953, in so far as travel restrictions were concerned.

¹¹⁸ See correspondence between Spry and Heyes, of the Department of Immigration, dated 5 May 1953, NAA, A6122/47, 1874.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ 'Circular Memorandum' from Heyes to Commonwealth Migration Officer, Melbourne, dated 29 July 1953, NAA, MP 1139/1/1, 53/38/1113.

¹²¹ Cablegram from Immigration dated 27 July 1953, NAA, A1838/2, 1542/591.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ NAA, MP 1139/1/1, 53/38/1113.

ASIO manoeuvres

While outwardly the Government appeared to have lessened its resolve on travel issues, ASIO used the atmosphere of decreased tension as an opportunity to refine and tighten its role in the monitoring and surveillance of travellers entering Australia. In December 1952, representatives of ASIO, the Immigration Department and the Department of Trade and Customs held a conference ‘dealing with matters of travel control’.¹²⁴ This conference was most concerned with ‘the degree of control by the Security Investigation Office of persons arriving from overseas’.¹²⁵ ASIO wished to institute means by which security officers could establish and maintain close liaison with ‘the Department(s) controlling persons proceeding to and from Australia’.¹²⁶ It was believed that there was a need to ‘introduce specialised security knowledge into the machinery of travel control’.¹²⁷ ASIO believed that this undertaking was in accordance with one of the principle tasks of the security organisation, which was

to protect Australia from external and internal dangers arising from attempts at espionage or sabotage or from activities of persons and organisations whether directed from within or without the country which may be judged to be subversive to the security of the State.¹²⁸

ASIO was most concerned with ‘those persons whose presence here is considered prejudicial to the security of the Commonwealth’. As with the implementation of passport and visa ‘warning lists’, ASIO considered that an increased role for security at first ports of call would provide an opportunity to ‘obtain security intelligence information including observation of persons of security interest, where considered necessary’.¹²⁹ Thus, ASIO sought to maintain its vigilance in the area of travel control.

¹²⁴ NAA, A11852, 97, folio 19, Minute Paper written by S. Laney, Assistant Collector (Shipping).

¹²⁵ *Ibid*, folio 19.

¹²⁶ NAA, A11852, 97, folio 8, ‘Objects of Travel Control’.

¹²⁷ *Ibid*, folio 9.

¹²⁸ *Ibid*, folio 8.

¹²⁹ *Ibid*, folio 8.

It was maintained that ASIO's role would be limited to 'advisory, liaison, co-ordination and associated duties'. One of the more prominent duties ASIO set itself was

To liaise closely with the Department of Customs in the examination of travel documents of all persons arriving and leaving Australia at sea and air ports, including both passengers and crews.¹³⁰

Further to this, ASIO wished to ensure that all travellers were 'checked with the Security Index and with ASIO Office Records as appropriate'. In the event that a traveller was believed to be of security significance, ASIO also desired to 'subject suspect persons to interrogation, search, surveillance or other similar measures'.¹³¹ It was considered that this procedure would provide an excellent opportunity to 'collect security intelligence information including interviews with ships' officers and selected travellers'.¹³²

The actual conducting of this procedure would involve ASIO field officers acting 'in conjunction with Customs staffs at the various sea and air ports'.¹³³ It was originally intended that security officers would 'board all passenger carrying vessels with Customs Boarding staff and be present at the time passports and other travel documents are being examined'.¹³⁴ It was deemed that the identity of the security officer and the nature of his work must be concealed and, 'he should therefore appear to all intents and purposes as a member of the Customs Department'.¹³⁵ In accordance with this new procedure, it was requested that facilities be created, or made available, for the ASIO officer to conduct his business. As a result of this, a room was built at Darwin airport.¹³⁶ It is clear that, despite the Government's outward attitude of ambivalence toward travel control, covertly, through ASIO, it remained alert in this area. ASIO was not simply concerned with hampering the movements of individuals, it is also evident that the monitoring of travel

¹³⁰ Ibid, folio 8.

¹³¹ Ibid, folio 8.

¹³² Ibid, folio 9.

¹³³ Ibid, folio 9.

¹³⁴ Ibid, folio 9.

¹³⁵ Ibid, folio 9.

¹³⁶ Ibid, folio 32, Letter to Comptroller-General dated 22 April 1953.

provided an essential method of gathering important information on individuals of security interest.

Restrictions renewed: 1954

Political developments in 1954 obliged the Government to again consider instituting travel restrictions and passport bans. Holt stated that

The events of April, 1954 - including the defection of Petrov, the appointment of the Royal Commission on Espionage, and the threatening situation in the Far East (particularly in Indo-China) - led me to seek Cabinet's view on future passport policy.¹³⁷

Holt was particularly wary of the situation in Indo-China, believing that it 'held the possibility of an outbreak of hostilities'.¹³⁸ The Government's actions in this instance can again be found to have been dictated by extraneous circumstances, rather than being as the result of innate desire to attack Communism and its 'front' organisations. Holt stated that the Government favoured 'the preservation of the individual Australian's right to travel where he pleases'.¹³⁹ However, he believed that 'in times of emergency the rights of the individual may have to be subordinated to national security'.¹⁴⁰

Holt was concerned about the prospect of a number of individuals attending a meeting of the All China Federation of Trade Unions to be held in Communist China.¹⁴¹ In the atmosphere of renewed tension, Holt questioned whether the Government should provide passport facilities to the delegation. Cabinet decided to deny passports to the delegation. Subsequently,

...there followed other applications, by not only travellers to communist countries but by intending delegates to communist-inspired "peace" conferences. After discussions with the

¹³⁷ NAA, A4940/1, C460, Submission No. 308, 'Passport Policy', compiled on 30 March 1955.

¹³⁸ NAA, A4940/1, C460, Cabinet Minute 30 March 1955, press statement relating to Submission No. 308, p. 2.

¹³⁹ NAA, A4940/1, C460, Agenda No. 197, 'Passport Policy in Relation to Security Considerations', p. 1.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 1.

¹⁴¹ NAA, A4940/1, C460, Submission No. 308, p. 1.

Prime Minister and other senior Ministers, I [Holt] directed that passports should, until further notice, be refused...¹⁴²

This ban was directed at three categories of traveller.¹⁴³ Apart from Communists, Holt wished to also ban 'persons intending to proceed to communist countries without good and sufficient reason'. The ban also targeted 'intending delegates to communist-inspired conferences'. This last category was directly targeted at members of the peace movement. In the event that individuals persisted in their request for a passport, it was determined that

...it will be necessary for them to make a detailed statement of their reasons for travel to the communist countries concerned, including the nature of business to be transacted, the names and addresses of persons companies or banks in Australia who can verify those reasons and such information as may help to establish their claims.¹⁴⁴

The passport warning lists, which had been initially created for information purposes, gained added importance in the face of the altered passport policy. Instructions were sent to Commonwealth Migration Officers which outlined the revised passport policy. It was stated that

Included in the Passport Warning List held by you are the names of a number of persons of "security interest". The action required in these cases until now was to "report intended movements". It is now desired that all future or current applications for travel facilities by such persons be dealt with as follows-

(a) if the applicant intends to visit communist territory, without reference to this office or to ASIO, that his application is not for approval under existing policy....¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² Ibid, p. 2.

¹⁴³ Ibid, p. 2.

¹⁴⁴ NAA, A6119/83, 1652, p. 97.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 96.

ASIO therefore sought to prevent individuals who were named on the Warning List from travelling to communist territories. The passport holders retained their passport so long as this provision was adhered to. Spry later sought to strengthen the policy even further:

As the present policy is that passport facilities are refused to 'communists' and the persons named on the passport warning list all fall within this category it would appear that their passports should be withdrawn or cancelled in order to ensure compliance with existing passport policy, and I recommend that this be done.¹⁴⁶

In the event that the passports of individuals could not be physically seized, it was decided that

...an order can be made cancelling the passports and all shipping and air line companies could be advised that the passports are no longer valid. It would not matter then if the actual documents were not impounded.¹⁴⁷

Subsequently, individuals were advised by letter to surrender their passports within 24 hours of receiving the letter.¹⁴⁸ Ralph Gibson, a prominent member of the peace movement and the Communist Party, refused to comply with the Government's wishes.¹⁴⁹ All transport companies were advised accordingly and Commonwealth Migration Officers were informed, so that Gibson would be unable to receive travel facilities despite retaining his passport. As early as 13 May, Government and security sources were contemplating whether to issue a search warrant in an attempt to retrieve Gibson's passport, although, at that stage it was decided to wait before taking action.¹⁵⁰ In the event that Gibson produced his passport, it would immediately be impounded. ASIO's

¹⁴⁶ NAA, A6980T1, S250244, Letter from Spry dated 18 June 1954.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, Letter from T.H.E. Heyes, entitled 'Persons of Security Interest Holding Passports', p. 1.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, Telegram from Spicer, 'Secret and Immediate', 10 August 1954.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, Telegram to Spicer, 13 August 1954. For more information on Gibson see his memoir *My Years in the Communist Party*, International Bookshop, Melbourne, 1966; as well as his later memoir *The Fight Goes On*, Red Rooster Press, Melbourne, 1987. Although Gibson touches upon the passport issue in both books, he makes no mention of his own role in the events, preferring to focus on the circumstances surrounding Neil Glover's attempts to obtain a passport, which will be addressed later.

¹⁵⁰ See file entitled 'Re cancellation of Passport Ralph Gibson', NAA, B741/3 V/9419.

efforts in the area of travel control had therefore paid dividends in the altered circumstances, providing ASIO and the Government with adequate means to implement a successful and widespread ban on passports.

Exceptions to the rule?: Josef Hromadka

Despite the increase in passport controls during 1954, there were instances where the Government refused to impose restrictions. The most notable example of this was the case of Josef Hromadka. Hromadka was a clergyman from Czechoslovakia who was Dean and Professor of Theology at the Comenius University in Prague. Hromadka was set to tour Australia as a guest of the APC during 1954. Once word of Hromadka's proposed visit spread, a number of appeals were made to the Government to prevent him from touring Australia. On 13 July Miss M. Mutkins asked the Federal Government to 'do something on this issue immediately'.¹⁵¹ Mutkins was particularly concerned about Hromadka's visit in the aftermath of the Petrov affair and the Communist advances in Indo-China. She believed that 'if we allow this type of person to enter our country we are only aiding the Communists plans of corrupting our minds by false preachings and eventually over-riding us'. On 15 July B.J. Waring wrote to the Government in the hope that something could be done to prevent 'a visit which can be regarded with suspicion'.¹⁵² Waring considered that Hromadka's 'visit of ostensible goodwill could very well be a blind to fill, temporarily at least, some gap caused by the recent hurried departure of Canberra's Little Moscow'.

On 21 July, Menzies was informed by George W. Brain, of the Legislative Assembly of New South Wales, that he had received 'several letters concerning the proposed entry into Australia' of Hromadka.¹⁵³ Brain wished to draw the Prime Minister's attention to the 'anxiety of certain people should this event take place'. Ex-Communist Tony McGillick, also identified considerable opposition to the visit of Hromadka among the Australian

¹⁵¹ Letter from M. Mutkins dated 13 July 1954. NAA, A6119/90, 2622.

¹⁵² Waring to F. Downing, MLA, Parliament House Sydney, dated 15 July 1954. NAA, A6119/90, 2622.

¹⁵³ George W. Brain to Menzies, 21 July 1954. NAA, A6119/90, 2622.

public.¹⁵⁴ McGillick quoted a Mr. Beycek, editor and publisher of 'the official organ of the free Czechs, *Pacific*. Beycek stated that Hromadka's visit represented an 'affront to this country, and will split church adherents'.¹⁵⁵ Further to this McGillick claimed the support of Dr. P.J. Ryan of the Catholic Social Science Bureau in Sydney. In the lead-up to the visit of Hromadka, McGillick had warned that 'there was a great danger of civil disturbances developing', if Hromadka were permitted to enter Australia.¹⁵⁶

McGillick believed that, 'one feature of the Hromadka visit was that the Liberal politicians who gave lip-service to the fight against communism, failed to take practical measures against it'.¹⁵⁷ Of course, McGillick's sentiments must be understood in the context of him being a man who had fallen out with his former comrades, and who had taken up the anti-Communist campaign with unbridled relish. In spite of his, and others, opposition to the visit, and in contrast to its strengthening of the passport policy in regard to overseas travel by Australian citizens, the Government chose to maintain its progressive attitude in regard to the granting of visas to overseas visitors. On 20 August, the Chief Migration Officer of Melbourne advised security that 'the recommendation made in Canberra to the acting Minister for Immigration was that Professor Hromadka should be issued with an Australian visa'.¹⁵⁸ Hromadka then toured Australia throughout September 1954.¹⁵⁹ This further illustrates that the Government was only moved to take action when circumstances called for it.

¹⁵⁴ McGillick discussed the circumstances surrounding the visit of Hromadka in his memoir *Comrade No More*, T.C. McGillick, West Perth, 1980, pp. 243-48.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p. 245.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p. 245.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p. 245.

¹⁵⁸ Note For File, from Mr. Dempsey (Chief Migration Officer Melbourne), 20 August 1954. NAA, A6119/90, 2622.

¹⁵⁹ During his visit, Hromadka was faced with considerable opposition, in particular from Czechoslovakians who disputed his representation of their homeland. See, for example, 'Czech's Call Professor "Liar, Spy"', in the *Argus*, 16 September 1954, and also 'Czech Professor Faces Fierce Demonstration' in the *Age*, 16 September 1954. Police were forced to break-up altercations in the crowd during a meeting at Norwood Town Hall in Adelaide. See 'Demonstrations At Czech's Meeting', in the *Adelaide Advertiser*, 24 September 1954. An ASIO report on this meeting described the 'tense atmosphere', and highlighted that police supervision was required, in particular in dispersing the crowd at the meetings end. ASIO were clearly concerned by Hromadka's visit, as is demonstrated by the security organisations constant surveillance of him, in an effort 'to prevent a meeting between Hromadka and the Communist Party'. NAA, A6119/90, 2622.

A thorn in the Government's side: The case of Neil Glover

While the Government proved to be reluctant to take action against overseas visitors to Australia, it remained determined to maintain its newly strengthened policy against travel to Communist countries and conferences by Australian citizens. Among the names appearing in the passport list were two of the most prominent members of the Australian Peace Council, the Reverends Alf Dickie and Frank Hartley.¹⁶⁰ Another name which appeared in the Passport Warning List was that of the Reverend Neil Glover, of the Anglican Church.¹⁶¹ Glover came to the attention of the Government when he applied for a passport in May 1954, so that he could travel to Europe to attend meetings of the World Peace Council. Glover was duly informed by the Passport Officer that his request had been denied.¹⁶² Glover was informed that, 'your application for a passport may not be approved if you intend to proceed to Communist territory or to a Communist inspired conference'. On 13 May, Glover responded that his intention was to attend 'a Peace conference in Berlin and an international meeting for the relaxation of world tension in Stockholm'.¹⁶³ He also protested against the Government's action, suggesting that it constituted 'a denial of my right of travel and freedom of movement'. Despite Glover's protestations, the decision to deny him passport facilities was upheld.

The debate over Glover's passport did not end there. The conflict over denial of passports came to a head during a heated verbal clash between Holt and Glover at an election meeting in the Moorabbin Town Hall, on 19 May.¹⁶⁴ The argument started when Holt began to discuss the difficulties involved in combating Communism. He declared that

The Government had to decide in the light of the Petrov inquiry and events in Indo China, whether it could afford to have Australians going abroad to take part in Communist conferences.

¹⁶⁰ NAA, A6980T1, S250244, letter dated 10 May 1954.

¹⁶¹ NAA, A6119/83, 1652, folio 95.

¹⁶² NAA, A6119/82, 2173, letter from Passport Officer to Glover, 12 May 1954.

¹⁶³ Ibid, letter from Glover to Mr. O'Donohoe, 13 May 1954.

¹⁶⁴ The following account is based on the report in the *Age*, 'Minister Clashes with Cleric', 20 May 1954.

Holt commenced his attack in full knowledge that Glover was present in the audience. In fact, Holt was pleased that Glover was present, 'as I have never before had time to speak to him frankly'.

The fact that Holt had effectively diverted attention away from the actual topic of the meeting, the coming election, was not lost on the audience, with one interjector stating 'You have been speaking about the Communists for 20 minutes. How about the Liberal Party?'. Following this, Holt chose to make a direct attack on Glover, suggesting that Glover had told him that he had received his Archbishop's permission to travel to the conferences, when in fact this wasn't the case. This statement drew the first response from Glover, who exhorted: 'that is typical of the lies we have heard all night. Produce the letter. I made it clear the Archbishop did not approve of my mission'. Holt declared that although he had 'been attacked from several quarters about this', he was laying his cards on the table. Glover stated that Holt had 'no right to restrict the liberties of conscience of any individual in the country'. Glover also resorted to personal attack when he expressed disbelief that the Government could be run by 'discourteous, impatient people like this'. Holt concluded his attack by suggesting that the 'Declaration of Human Rights is not observed in Russia'. Glover later admitted that he understood the Government's stance against him, stating that he 'was able to see some justification, as the Indo-China war was causing concern'.¹⁶⁵ Glover's guarded endorsement of the Government's initial reasoning for applying passport restrictions further suggests that the Government's actions were driven by external circumstances.

Despite this confrontation between Holt and Glover, the Government maintained its vigilance on the issue of passports. Some months later, in October, Glover renewed his request to receive a passport. He desired to travel to Europe to take part in 'an international conference'.¹⁶⁶ He felt that, considering the situation in Indo-China had subsided, the Government may have altered its position in regard to passport restrictions. However, Holt himself responded to Glover, stating that 'the policy in question is still in

¹⁶⁵ NAA, A6119/82, 2173, folio 58, letter from Glover to the Minister for Immigration, 5 October, 1954.

force'.¹⁶⁷ Holt therefore required Glover to inform the Immigration Department of 'the countries which you intend to visit and the nature of the conference which you propose to attend'. Glover's reply to Holt stated that he intended to attend a conference 'convened by the World Council of Peace' and Glover also suggested that he had acquired the permission of the Archbishop of Melbourne.¹⁶⁸ The matter was referred to ASIO, and Spry concluded that

I understand that the Rev. Neil Glover was informed in May 1954 that he would be refused a passport to attend any overseas conference which is communist inspired. As he has again applied for a passport to attend a conference of this nature, I recommend that the previous refusal to grant him a passport should be maintained.¹⁶⁹

A review of passport procedure in November, 1954, resulted in the Government maintaining its policy of restricting passports.¹⁷⁰ Regardless of the fact that the situation in Indo-China had subsided, the Government was reluctant to lift the passport restrictions due to the continuing Royal Commission into Espionage.¹⁷¹ In addressing a possible revision of procedure, Holt discussed the difficulties posed by 'delegates to Communist-inspired "Peace" Conferences and the like'.¹⁷² Holt suggested that

These people are often not recorded as Communists but are the dupes of the Cominform "Peace Front". One clergyman is a persistent applicant for passport for such conferences, and others are prominent in the Australian Peace Council.¹⁷³

While Glover had been unsuccessful in changing the Government's policy, his opposition had clearly been impressed upon Holt. In light of the considerable publicity surrounding

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, folio 58.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, folio 63, letter from Holt to Glover.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid, folio 62, letter from Glover to the Commonwealth Migration Officer, 18 October 1954.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid, folio 67, letter from Spry to the Secretary of the Department of Immigration, 1 November 1954.

¹⁷⁰ NAA, A4940/1, Submission No. 308, p. 2. In this document, produced on 30 March 1955, Holt reviewed the previous decisions made on passport policy stating that Cabinet had decided in November 1954 that the policy 'should remain unchanged for the time being...'

¹⁷¹ In a press statement on passport policy, set to be delivered on 5 April 1955, Holt stated that the Government would review policy 'as soon as practicable after the evidence in the Royal Commission terminated', NAA, A4940/1, C460.

¹⁷² Ibid, Agenda No. 197, p. 3.

the Petrov Royal Commission, it is not surprising that the Government was reluctant to allow known Communist sympathisers to travel freely. The escalation of the Cold War in Indo-China also clearly concerned the Government. Although Glover and his companions were travelling to Europe, which somewhat dilutes the Government's argument that the situation in Indo-China shaped its position, it is still evident that the Government's reluctance to allow unrestricted travel to known Communist sympathisers was driven by external circumstances. Thus, the ebb and flow of Cold War tension influenced the manoeuvres of the Government in its policy on travel.

The tide turns: Criticism of Government policy mounts

The Government's decision to deny passport facilities to Glover began to draw wide condemnation, in particular from the Anglican Church, in ensuing months. The outcry against the Government's treatment of Glover climaxed on 24 March, 1955. In the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the Archbishop of Perth, Rev. R.W.H. Moline was quoted as saying that 'No one seriously believes that his [Glover's] journey would endanger public security'.¹⁷⁴ Further to this, Moline believed that 'intolerance and fear are the real enemies of freedom and they are bad counsellors'. The Bishop of Bendigo, Rev. C.L. Riley, considered 'it vital that any Australian citizen should have the right to a passport for travel overseas in time of peace'.¹⁷⁵ The Bishop-elect of Gippsland, Canon E.J. Davidson, believed that it was necessary to 'seize this opportunity of intensifying our feeling for liberty'.¹⁷⁶ The depth of Davidson's ill-feeling toward the Government was made clear when he suggested that, 'To be told that liberty is being infringed only for our own good should not only leave us cold, but stiff with outrage'.¹⁷⁷ The degree of press exposure given to Glover's passport battle had not been ignored by the Government and the security organisation. Spry noted that 'Recent press items have referred to the decision of the

¹⁷³ Ibid, p. 3.

¹⁷⁴ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 March 1955.

¹⁷⁵ *Age*, 25 March 1955.

¹⁷⁶ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 March 1955.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

Department of Immigration to refuse a passport to the Reverend Neil Glover'.¹⁷⁸ Spry particularly noted the publicity that *The Anglican*, a publication of the Church of England, was giving to the affair.¹⁷⁹ However, Spry remained unmoved by the criticism. He maintained that the conference Glover wished to attend was 'Communist inspired' and he determined that 'Glover's case has been dealt with under Section B(iii) of the passport policy, i.e. non-Communists proceeding to Communist inspired conferences abroad'.¹⁸⁰ The continued defiance of Spry, in the face of increasing hostility toward the Government's policy, was not shared by Holt. On 30 March, Holt compiled a document concerned with the passport policy of the Government. Holt explained that

In recent weeks pressure, from a variety of points, for revision of the policy, has accumulated and I feel a review by Cabinet should be made without delay. There is a general expectation among the friendlier of our critics that this review will be made at the conclusion of evidence in the Petrov Royal Commission. The report of the Commission may take months to prepare and there would be much objection to our continuing to withhold passports from persons whose movements could not reasonably be regarded as constituting a security risk.¹⁸¹

The torrent of criticism had clearly begun to take its toll on Holt and the Government. Holt acknowledged a number of sources of criticism in coming to his decision. One of the more telling sources of criticism, and quoted by Holt himself, was a group of Professors from the University of Melbourne. They expressed the hope that 'the Government may decide that such restrictions are not worth the loss of faith in democratic pretensions which they occasion'.¹⁸² The Australian Committee for Cultural Freedom, presided over by Sir John Latham, was also damning of the Government's policy. This criticism was given particular importance, considering that this organisation had been created for the purpose of 'combating communism and countering its propaganda'.¹⁸³ The Committee

¹⁷⁸ NAA, A6119/82, 2173, folio 106, letter from Spry to Menzies, 29 March 1955.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid, folio 106.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid, folio 106.

¹⁸¹ NAA, A4940/1, C460, Submission No. 308, p. 2.

¹⁸² Ibid, p. 3.

¹⁸³ Ibid, p. 3.

stated that 'it is wrong that a Minister should prevent any person from leaving Australia because he (the Minister) does not approve of his journey'.¹⁸⁴ In stronger terms, it argued:

We object to such a policy when enforced by Russia, and we should not copy Russia in this respect, even if we may not individually approve the reason for a person wishing to leave Australia - either permanently or temporarily. It cannot reasonably be said that the refusal of a passport to Mr. Glover is justified by considerations of security.¹⁸⁵

Holt acknowledged that the case of Glover, and the publicity surrounding it, had presented him with a quandary which could not be solved while the existing law remained. Holt realised that 'no ground for the exercise of a discretion exists in the case of Glover which would not open the door to every non-communist applicant'.¹⁸⁶ Holt also conceded that 'Glover's case is by no means an isolated one'. In the face of extensive opposition, Holt had little option left open to him. He declared,

My own feeling...is that the issue of passports should now proceed on the same basis as before the current policy was adopted; that is, passports would not be refused to any of the categories ineligible at present, but all intending travellers to communist countries would be required to state the countries they intend to visit and the objects of their journeys.¹⁸⁷

On April 1, Holt's revision of policy was adopted by Cabinet. In the press statement, introducing the revised policy, the Government made no secret of its feelings toward the "so-called" peace movement. It was stated that

The 'Peace' campaign and the branding of Western Government's as war-mongers form an essential part of the general campaign conducted by the Communists against the Western democracies. The object is to weaken the defence efforts of democratic countries by

¹⁸⁴ Ibid, p. 3.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid, p. 3.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid, p. 3.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 4.

fomenting discontent against defence measures and by organising and encouraging pacifist sentiments of whatever origin.¹⁸⁸

The Government clearly maintained its ardent opposition to Communism and its front organisations. However, the Government prefaced its decision to allow free travel to all citizens by declaring that

...as a Government dedicated to liberal principles, we are very conscious that there are risks of another kind which develop if Governments appear to make use of their restrictive powers which the circumstances might not fully justify.¹⁸⁹

Holt determined that the Government would 'revert to the policy which applied prior to the imposition of the special restrictions of April, 1954'.¹⁹⁰

Ronald Mendelshon¹⁹¹ further emphasised the liberal position of the Government, and the need to abolish the existing travel restrictions, in his notes on the Cabinet Submission. He suggested that 'the policy now adopted ought to be one which can be sustained through the years. There is no present crisis, apart from the fact that we are in permanent crisis'.¹⁹² Mendelshon declared that 'we must have a care not only for the present but for the future'. He believed that this care would

...best be served by a re-affirmation on the part of the Government of the Liberal principle of freedom to travel, and the statement that only in a time of conflict or where the hostile intentions of the would-be travellers are definitely proved will there be a restriction on travel.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁸ NAA, A4940/1, C460, Cabinet Minute, 30 March 1955, Press statement relating to Submission No. 308, p. 1.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid, p. 1.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid, p. 2.

¹⁹¹ Mendelsohn was a member of the National Security Resources Board and took over from Ronald Walker as the executive member of this organisation in 1953. See Lowe, op cit, p. 144.

¹⁹² NAA, A4940/1, C460, 'Notes on Cabinet Submission No. 308', p. 1.

¹⁹³ Ibid, p. 2.

Mendelsohn was particularly concerned that the Government must avoid going down the same path as their enemies behind the Iron Curtain. He stated that 'it is our duty always to make sure that we ourselves are not erecting such a curtain'.¹⁹⁴ Mendelsohn reinforced the Government's belief in civil liberties when he stated that the best course of action, which involved re-implementing free travel, involved a 'calculated risk', but 'our potential loss of liberty far outweighs the advantage'.¹⁹⁵ Thus, the Menzies Government maintained its belief that the basic right of individuals to have access to free travel must be upheld, except in times of particular distress. This demonstrates that attacks against the Menzies Government by writers such as Bill Gollan, who believed that Menzies 'attacked the peace movement in all its aspects', were not entirely valid. The weight of criticism, combined with lessened tension on an international and domestic scale, had finally reduced the need to institute travel restrictions. In the remaining years of the 1950s, the issue of travel restrictions and passport controls became almost non-existent. The Government's reversion to its previous, almost completely unrestricted, policy represented the last major action of the Menzies Government on the issue of travel control in the 1950s. As Ralph Gibson was moved to comment, in the aftermath of the Glover episode, 'less was heard of passport bans for some time'.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁴ Ibid, p. 2.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid, p. 2.

¹⁹⁶ Gibson, *My Years in the Communist Party*, op cit, p. 189.

CHAPTER FOUR

'PEACE, PEACE, WHERE THERE IS NO PEACE'¹: ASIO SURVEILLANCE OF THE PEACE MOVEMENT IN THE 1950s.

During the 1950s, there can be little doubt that ASIO was particularly wary of the peace movement. According to ASIO officer Michael Thwaites, "The word peace - one of the most beautiful and evocative in the English language - was suffering....disfigurement."² This chapter will investigate why an organisation dedicated to peace came to be of such concern to Australian security forces. A study of the relationship between ASIO and the APC will shed important light on the role of both organisations in the 1950s. This chapter will also help to highlight the nature of the relationship between the Government and the security organisation. It will be argued that, while ASIO maintained constant pressure on the peace movement throughout the period, the Government only chose to become involved at times when there was undeniable evidence against the peace movement, or when external pressures dictated that a response was necessary. This will develop the argument that the Menzies Government was, at least outwardly, less strident and single-minded in its anti-communism than is customarily assumed, at least in regard to its responses to the threat posed by the peace movement.

Teething problems?: 1949-50

In March 1949, the Chifley Government announced the formation of an Australian security service designed to combat espionage.³ ASIO was largely based in offices on Collins Street in Melbourne.⁴ Within months of these events, on 1 July, the APC was established in Cathedral Place, just a few streets away from the intelligence organisation.⁵ While most historical studies of ASIO, during the Cold War have focused on the security

¹ Thwaites, M., *Truth Will Out*, op cit, p. 31.

² *Ibid*, p. 30.

³ The events surrounding the formation of ASIO were discussed in more detail in chapter 1.

⁴ Thwaites described his first meeting with Director-General Spry at ASIO's Collins St headquarters in his chapter 'Invitation to ASIO', in Thwaites, op cit, p. 17.

organisation's role in the Petrov affair and in attacking the Communist Party, the relationship between ASIO and the peace movement has been largely ignored. The first major undertaking of the Australian Peace Council was the organising of an Australian Peace Congress in Melbourne during April 1950.⁶ However, this event provoked little response from ASIO.

The lack of action by ASIO can be explained by a number of circumstances which conspired to occupy much of the security organisation's time. ASIO, in its infancy at the time, was still in the process of establishing its intricate security network. One problem faced by the new security organisation in its formative years was the hostile relationship which had developed between ASIO and its predecessor, the CIS.⁷ ASIO also found that the records taken over from CIS were 'in a most unsatisfactory condition'.⁸ At this stage, ASIO was still under the direction of its first Director-General, Justice Reed. The man who would become synonymous with ASIO's operations throughout the remainder of the 1950s, Brigadier Charles Spry, would not take up the position of Director-General until 17 July, 1950.⁹ As a result of this, ASIO's early days were 'plagued by an anxious secretiveness, which had seriously reduced the Organisation's effectiveness.'¹⁰ These circumstances may have contributed to ASIO's lack of action in regard to the APC's early activities.

These were not the only problems that diverted the attention of the new security organisation. At the same time as the Peace Council was holding its Congress, the newly

⁵ For a description of the establishment of the APC, see the pamphlet *You Can't Ban Peace* distributed by the APC in 1950.

⁶ See Saunders and Summy, *The Australian peace movement: a short history*, op cit, p. 32; and Marion Hartley, *The Truth Shall Prevail*, op cit, pp. 68-69.

⁷ The problems experienced by ASIO were discussed in more detail in chapter 2, most notably when Reed remarked that 'Ever since its inception ASIO has been regarded with very considerable hostility by a good many of the staff of CIS. Indeed many attempts have been made to hamper the work of ASIO and to discredit its personnel....', NAA, A6122/43, 1428, 'Outline of the Foundation and Organisation of ASIO'

⁸ NAA, A6122/43, 1428, op cit, p. 24.

⁹ As was illustrated in chapter 1 of the thesis, Thwaites described Reed as 'a man of the highest principles, but possibly unable to exercise the close personal supervision called for in the head of such an unusual organisation employing such a varied staff.' The importance of Spry in increasing the efficiency and professionalism of ASIO is also further detailed in chapter 1 of the thesis.

¹⁰ Thwaites, op cit, p. 38.

elected Menzies Government was attempting to put into place the Communist Party Dissolution Bill. Menzies introduced the Bill into the House of Representatives on 27 April, within days of the opening of the Melbourne Congress. The security organisation was expected to play an integral part if Menzies' legislation to ban the Communist Party were passed.¹¹ In the event that individuals accused of being Communist challenged this accusation, it was expected that ASIO would be able to detail the apparent Communist connections of the accused. Added to this, ASIO also had to prepare for the prospect of internment camps for those accused of being Communist, which further increased the need for ASIO to be prepared to establish fully the Communist credentials of those accused.¹² In the face of such extensive manoeuvres, and considering the infant nature of ASIO, it is perhaps understandable that the APC managed to avoid significant contact with security forces in its initial stages. However, ASIO's lack of action in regard to the peace movement would not last for long.

Identifying the 'enemy': ASIO's perception of the peace movement

Although ASIO's response to the activities of the APC during its formative years was limited, ASIO still considered the peace movement to be a threat. ASIO was well aware of the dangers posed by Communist 'front' organisations.¹³ ASIO understood that 'Front Organisations have a major part to play within the general scheme of the Communist Party program'.¹⁴ Moreover, the function of front organisations was 'to forge a link between other classes...in an attempt to obtain the necessary mass support for the Party'.¹⁵ ASIO was quick to identify the World Peace Council (WPC) and its offshoot, the APC, as being prime examples of the prototype Communist front organisation. It was

¹¹ For a description of ASIO's intended role in the event of the CPA dissolution being made law, see Cain, *ASIO: An Unofficial History*, op cit, pp. 96-7; and also Lowe, op cit, pp. 117-8.

¹² The issue of internment camps is addressed in McKnight, *Australia's Spies and their Secrets*, op cit, pp. 117-122.

¹³ A history of ASIO's understanding of front organisations was detailed in a 1956 document entitled 'The use of Front Organisations for the Communication and Implementation of Communist Policy', NAA, M1508/1, 39

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 2

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 2

noted that, in a meeting of the Cominform in 1949, a resolution was passed directing Communist Parties throughout the world that:

The struggle for a stable and lasting peace, for the organisation and consolidation of the forces of peace against the forces of war, should now become the pivot of the entire activity of the Communist Parties and democratic organisations.¹⁶

Following this directive, the WPC was, in the words of ASIO, 'formed to co-ordinate and control Peace activities throughout the world'. However, ASIO was not deluded by the Communists' appeals to peace. The security organisation understood that Communist conceptions of peace were vastly different from those of the greater population. ASIO identified the Communist understanding of peace through a pamphlet published by the Soviet Ministry of Defence in 1954. This pamphlet suggested that 'in order to remove the inevitability of wars, it is necessary to destroy imperialism'.¹⁷ It was also argued that 'Communists link the cause of peace with the cause of the victory of the proletarian revolution...'.¹⁸ ASIO therefore was left with little doubt that the Communist inspired and led peace movement, epitomised by the WPC, represented an area of great concern for the security organisation.

ASIO was under no illusions that the APC, formed soon after the WPC, was inextricably linked to the global Communist peace initiative. In assessing the APC, it determined that the Peace Council was 'affiliated to and closely follows the directives of the World Peace Council, which is clearly under Communist domination'.¹⁹ Furthermore, ASIO asserted that

...there is very good reason to believe that it was created by the Communist Party of Australia in line with the current foreign policy of the Soviet Union. Its intention was to

¹⁶ The establishment of the WPC and the APC was discussed under the heading 'Organisations of Mass Appeal', *ibid*, p. 6.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 6. The pamphlet by the Soviet Ministry of Defence was published on 20 March 1954.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 6.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 6.

control the Peace Council from behind the scenes, but as far as possible to make it appear that the control of the Council was being exercised by non-Communists.²⁰

Evidence had also been discovered which further strengthened ASIO's belief that the CPA was controlling the new peace body. Firstly, important positions in the Council had been filled by 'Party members or sympathisers'. ASIO was also concerned by the proportion of Communists who appeared to be involved with the Peace Council. It was noted that the number of Communists working for the Council was 'far greater than the relatively small proportion of the community who are Communists would justify'.²¹ The degree of favourable publicity in the Communist press further condemned the APC in the eyes of ASIO.²² Concern was also expressed that 'the support of prominent citizens and clergymen is enlisted and their patronage loudly proclaimed to assure the public of the Movement's respectability'.²³ As suggested earlier in the thesis,²⁴ the association of prominent individuals with the peace movement was a persistent thorn in the side of both ASIO, and the Menzies Government, which heightened the campaign against the Communist inspired peace movement.

It is therefore clear that, although ASIO was preoccupied with other matters at the time of the APC's inception, the security organisation was still acutely aware of the dangers posed by the newly formed peace body. The experiences of Michael Bialoguski,²⁵ who would play a prominent role in the Petrov affair, also suggest that the peace movement was not completely neglected by security forces during this early period. Bialoguski gave an account of how he sought to infiltrate the New South Wales Peace Council (NSWPC) in about 1949. His account provides an interesting insight into the methods of security

²⁰ Ibid, p. 6, ASIO also believed that the APC 'closely follows the Communist Party line' demonstrated by its support for campaigns initiated by the Communist Party, such as the "Ban the Bomb" campaign.

²¹ Ibid, p. 6.

²² Ibid, p. 7.

²³ Ibid, p. 7, ASIO was concerned that, although many members of the peace movement genuinely sought peace believing 'that it is necessary to co-operate with all groups including Communists....', the CPA used this situation to its advantage.

²⁴ For example see chapter 1 where Thwaites expressed concern at the 'number of intelligent, high-minded, not to say admirable people', who were prepared to support the Communist inspired peace campaign.

²⁵ Bialoguski was a part-time agent for ASIO who was drafted to ASIO from the CIS. See Richard Hall, *op cit*, p. 44.

forces and the lengths to which they would go to monitor supposedly subversive organisations.²⁶ Bialoguski first claimed to have become a member of the Asian and Pacific Peace Movement which then led to him being accepted into the NSWPC after a couple of months. Bialoguski goes so far as to claim that he was elected to the Council executive and held the position of treasurer. Bialoguski provides an example of how ASIO sought to compile information on the peace movement and its origins. He claimed that,

when attending a meeting of the Peace Council numbering thirty people, I had to remember the time the meeting commenced; the names of those present; and whenever possible, their addresses and occupations.²⁷

If the agent was unable to establish the identity of any of the individuals present at the meeting he had to give a detailed physical description of the person so that the person in question could be put on record. Bialoguski raised one of the enduring problems with the work of a security agent when he claimed that, 'one can never be sure whether an incident or a remark is, or is not, of a security interest.' This therefore resulted in the need to observe and record absolutely every aspect of the meeting being attended. This example from Bialoguski gives an indication of the lengths to which members of security forces were prepared to go to infiltrate and monitor the peace movement. While ASIO had been unable to have a substantial presence at the initial Congress conducted by the APC, it is still apparent that the security forces were aware of the threat posed by the peace movement, and in particular the Australian Peace Council.²⁸ This evidence is particularly important in understanding why ASIO saw the peace movement as such a threat. While avowed Communists were considered a menace, at least they were relatively easy to identify. In the case of the peace movement there was much more scope for the line

²⁶ Bialoguski writes of his experiences in the peace movement in his memoir, *The Petrov Story*, William Heinemann, Melbourne, 1955, pp. 56-60; also see Richard Hall, *op cit*, pp. 45-6.

²⁷ Bialoguski, M. *op cit*, p. 60.

²⁸ The extent to which ASIO was concerned with peace movement in this early period was illustrated by comments made by Thwaites, which were addressed in chapter 1 of the thesis. Thwaites believed the WPC was 'the prototype Communist-front', and 'Its basic aim was simply to present Soviet policies without exemption as 'peace loving,' and anything that opposed them as 'warlike.'

between Communist sympathiser and peace loving citizen to become blurred. The blurring of this line also meant that the peace movement was much more capable of influencing a wide variety of people who did not, in their right mind, seek to support Communism. In some ways, this may have made the peace movement a more formidable and feared opponent to ASIO than the actual Communist Party itself.

During the latter part of 1950 and throughout 1951 there was little significant activity by the peace movement which attracted the notice of ASIO. The Warsaw Peace Congress in late 1950 provided one instance where ASIO became concerned by the peace movement, however this was largely a case which was controlled by the Immigration Department rather than by the security organisation.²⁹ ASIO's interest in the peace movement became more evident in 1952. In May of that year ASIO identified the development of a Scientists Peace Council Committee. ASIO compiled a report on this committee which identified each individual involved, how they were involved and what their connections were in relation to the Communist Party or its sympathisers.³⁰ Llewellyn John Howells was one individual identified by ASIO as being a member of the Committee. It was noted that he was reported to be a secretary of a suburban branch of the APC and also suggested that he was an associate of known Communists. A remark he made in support of Ian Milner, where he suggested that Milner had 'done well for himself', was also noted. The case against Howells appears to have been a matter of guilt by association.

ASIO ascertained the backgrounds and associations of other members of this Committee in an attempt to establish the Communist sympathies of the group. It concluded that

The extent to which the Communist Party of Australia have infiltrated the Scientists Peace Council Committee cannot be accurately determined at this stage due to lack of evidence. However it would appear from the information available that a number of

²⁸ See chapter 2 of the thesis for more detail on the circumstances surrounding the Warsaw Peace Congress.

²⁹ NAA, A6122/39, 1404, folio's 38-40.

known Communists and suspected Communists have been closely associated with the Scientists Peace Council Committee.³¹

This agent's statement gives the impression that ASIO considered that Communist involvement in an organisation was tantamount to Communist control. For example, it was determined that if Jack Legge and John Walker were found to be associated with the Committee, then it would be almost certain to be communist controlled. It was decided that it would be necessary to keep 'a close watch on the activities of the S.P.C.', and every effort should be made to establish the identities of all those involved in the Committee.³² It is clear that ASIO only sought to establish the links between the organisation and Communism rather than attempting to gain an accurate, objective review of the organisation's activities. It is interesting to note the degree of concern expressed by ASIO about the activities of this committee considering its seemingly minute scale and its lack of any real significance. However, ASIO's concern almost certainly stemmed from the fact that those involved had significant scientific credentials. Firstly, scientists constituted an increased security risk due to the fact that their knowledge could be of considerable value to Communists. In addition to this, ASIO seems to have been particularly worried about the peace movement due to its ability to attract eminent, upstanding, citizens who could exert influence over unwitting members of the public. The credentials of those involved could potentially dupe people into giving their support to a disguised Communist venture. The idea that ASIO feared the peace movement due to the involvement of prominent, respected, individuals will be explored further throughout the chapter.

The Peking Peace Conference, 1952

As was demonstrated in the previous chapter, ASIO was extremely interested in the events surrounding the peace conference in Peking in 1952. Apart from the external security matters of travel restrictions and passport control, which have been discussed in

³¹ Ibid, folio 38.

³² Ibid, folio 38.

detail, on the home-front ASIO was concerned with the involvement of Dr John Burton in organising the peace conference. With Burton's credentials as the former head of the External Affairs Department and his prominence in the Labor Party, ASIO took a particularly keen interest in his activities. ASIO officers met Burton and his fellow delegates at the airport in Sydney on their return from a preparatory conference in Peking and promptly seized allegedly offensive material from the delegation. ASIO was particularly worried about the publicity Burton had garnered for his accusations that the United States was employing germ warfare in Korea.³³ ASIO was also concerned that the Communist Party was attempting to use Burton's prominence and his credentials as a means of giving respect to what, in ASIO's eyes, was essentially a Communist controlled and orchestrated peace conference. In June 1952, a report was made regarding a meeting of the Yarra Section Committee of the Communist Party of Australia.³⁴ In this report, it was noted that the CPA was seeking to focus its efforts toward 'the building of the peace organisation', and that 'preparations are to be started for the forthcoming Pacific Peace Conference...'. While this information would have concerned ASIO in itself, it was also observed that,

The recent case of Dr Burton is to be used as the basis of organisation and resolutions supporting Dr Burton are to be carried in factions and organisations and sent to Dr Evatt and the Council for Peace in the Pacific...³⁵

ASIO's belief that the CPA was exploiting the involvement of Dr Burton was reinforced by a report obtained from the Central Committee of the CPA in July 1952.³⁶ In this report, the Central Committee expressed its concern about the degree of publicity being generated by Burton's involvement in the conference, due to the possibility that 'it might 'go wrong' from a party point of view'.³⁷ ASIO reported that:

³³ The debate surrounding the involvement of Burton, including his accusations of germ warfare, was addressed by Robin Gollan in *Revolutionaries and Reformists*, op cit, pp. 272-3; and also by Barbara Carter, op cit, pp. 62-3.

³⁴ NAA, A6122/39, 1455, folio 76.

³⁵ Ibid, folio 76.

³⁶ NAA, A6122/44, 1455, folio 186.

³⁷ Ibid, folio 186.

Towards the end of July...the Central Committee of the Communist Party became perturbed that the build-up created around Burton had placed him in virtual control of the situation and appeared likely to result in the selection of a delegation which did not contain a majority of Left-Wing supporters.³⁸

As a consequence of this, it was found that 'Burton's proposals were overruled by the Communist fraction, who then took control'.³⁹ The committee then chose to include James Healy in the delegation due to 'his standing in the C.P. of A. and his experience in handling people and delegations of this nature'.⁴⁰ These documents demonstrate two prominent reasons why ASIO was so concerned with the peace movement. Firstly, there is the Communist Party's exploitation of Burton's involvement in the preparation of the conference. However, there is also the clear indication in this document that the CPA sought to include individuals in the delegation who were experienced at controlling and influencing delegations. This information presented ASIO with considerable evidence that the Communist Party was, in fact, attempting to influence the peace movement. This would have further increased ASIO's concern with the peace movement as a whole. Evidence such as that which was provided in the document, gives a degree of justification to the assault which ASIO, and the Menzies Government, made on the peace movement.

The case of Burton was given further exposure by ASIO in August of 1952 when he undertook a speaking tour of Australia in support of the Peking peace conference. ASIO monitored every movement and activity Burton made during this period, exemplified by a document which detailed his visit to Perth.⁴¹ The backgrounds of the men who booked Burton's flight, and also met him at the airport, were identified, with a Dr Alfred Jacobs being revealed as a Communist Party member. This report went into extensive detail about the itinerary of Burton's tour and how permission was gained to use certain halls. Certain points made by Burton during his speeches were highlighted as evidence of his Communist sympathies. One such point was Burton's belief that, 'he regarded Mao Tse

³⁸ NAA, M1508/1, 33, in ASIO monthly summary for August 1952, p. 8.

³⁹ *Ibid*, p. 8.

⁴⁰ NAA, A6122/44, 1455, *op cit*, folio 186.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, folio's 258-261.

Tung as the greatest philosopher of all time.’ His inability to criticise Communists or communism was also considered by ASIO to be an indictment on his character. Further to this, ASIO sought to describe the ways in which Burton’s tour could be linked to the CPA. The clearest indication of a link was that,

At a meeting of the Perth branch of the C.P. of A. on 8 July. 1952....Annette Aarons stated that a sponsorship had been set up for the impending visit of Burton. She said that the party was behind the sponsorship although this fact will not be known to the people who in general way will be connected with it.⁴²

Added to this was the fact that Burton was kept ignorant of the involvement of the CPA due to the belief that he would withdraw his participation if he knew of Communist involvement. This evidence emphasises how the Communist Party manipulated the peace movement. It also further illustrates the fact that the CPA was using prominent figures such as Burton in the peace movement as a means of promoting the Communist controlled peace movement. ASIO concluded that

Burton is an able speaker and was well received by his audiences. If not a Communist he is considered to be sympathetic to Communism and certainly proved to be an efficient propagandist of the Party line.⁴³

In the case of Burton it is clear that ASIO had a number of reasons to be concerned about the influence of Communists. Most notably, Burton’s high profile assured that his role in peace initiatives obtained prominence nationwide in the media.⁴⁴ This case appears to be an example of the Communist Party seeking to exploit the involvement of creditable and respected figures in the peace movement. Considering the prevailing atmosphere, and with the Korean War still being fought, it is understandable that ASIO became so concerned with the activities of the peace movement. In the context of the increasing

⁴² Ibid, folio 258.

⁴³ Ibid, folio 259.

⁴⁴ See, for example, the *Herald*, 17 May 1952, which reported that Deputy Leader of the Labor Party Arthur Calwell, had called on Burton to resign from the Party.

information being provided by his security organisation, Menzies' infrequent attacks on the peace movement were, in hindsight, more justified. It could be argued that attacks on the peace movement were the result of mounting evidence, rather than being an attempt by the Menzies Government to stifle peace workers' human rights through the enforcement of a calculated policy.

However, it must also be taken into account that ASIO only isolated the facts and events which corresponded with its aim of identifying Communists and their sympathisers. As was demonstrated in chapter 1 of the thesis, ASIO existed at this time almost exclusively due to the need to combat the communist menace. ASIO documents were often biased in their evidence, and can not necessarily be taken as unequivocal fact. Extenuating circumstances and other factors, may have been excluded from ASIO analysis in an effort to present the Communist menace as being more pronounced than it in fact was, thereby justifying the existence of the security organisation. Fiona Capp highlighted some of the inherent problems in studying ASIO documents in her book *Writers Defiled*, in which she discussed ASIO's attitude towards writers during the early Cold War period.⁴⁵ Despite this, ASIO documents represent a crucial source of information which cannot be discounted, in that these documents provide some of the most detailed primary source evidence of otherwise obscure events and occurrences.

The official conference in Peking seems to have attracted less attention from ASIO than the actual lead-up, when there had been extensive activity in an effort to prevent the delegation from going to China.⁴⁶ A complete list of all the potential delegates and their associations was compiled, with particular emphasis on connections with the Communist Party.⁴⁷ However, the actual conference and its aftermath do not appear to have concerned ASIO as much as the preliminary conference.⁴⁸ Apart from the passport

⁴⁵ See Fiona Capp, *Writers Defiled: Security Surveillance of Australian Authors and Intellectuals 1920-1960*, McPhee Gribble Penguin Books, Australia, 1993

⁴⁶ See chapter 3 of the thesis.

⁴⁷ NAA, A6122/44, 1455, folio's 274-6.

⁴⁸ A report of the proceedings of the conference can be found in the Communist Party of Australia papers, 1st Accession, Box 15, at the Melbourne University Archives. On page 21 of the report Victor James attacked the Australian Government, saying that 'the government which refuses...passports is the same kind

restrictions placed on delegates, which were largely handled by the Immigration Department, ASIO seems to have reduced its activities. This could be put down to a number of reasons. Most notably, the actual conference received very little coverage in the media whereas the preliminary conference, with a prominent individual like Burton linked to it, had received widespread notice. This further supports the proposition that ASIO became most concerned with the peace movement when it managed to attract the support of prominent and respected individuals or parties. Added to this, the delegation to the main conference had been so thoroughly discredited, and decimated by passport bans, that ASIO most likely considered that little threat was posed by the conference and its outcomes. In any event, ASIO chose to give the main conference in Peking only cursory attention in comparison to its efforts to circumvent Burton and his delegation.

The 1953 Convention on Peace and War

In 1953 the biggest undertaking of the APC for the year was the holding of a Convention on Peace and War, set to commence in Sydney in September. The Convention was understood to have been the idea of ten clergymen, most notably the Reverend Dr. A.H. Wood and the Reverend J.E. Owen.⁴⁹ This Convention would see the most vehement and concentrated attack yet perpetrated by both ASIO and the Menzies Government. In July of 1953, ASIO conducted a number of raids on the premises of the Communist Party and its supporters which uncovered seemingly substantial evidence that the Convention was not only Communist influenced, but effectively Communist controlled. On 17 July a letter was found at the home of H.B. Chandler indicated how the Communist Party was seeking to subvert the peace movement and use it to its own ends and means.⁵⁰ The letter, believed to have been correspondence between known Communists Alec Robertson and William Gollan, was mostly concerned with the peace movement, in which both men

of government which helped arm the Japanese militarists in 1937 and right up to the time of the Japanese attack on Australia in 1941'.

⁴⁹ Forrester discusses the preparations for this Convention in *Fifteen Years of Peace Fronts*, p. 27.

⁵⁰ NAA, A6122/2, 219, folio's 65-6.

were activists, without openly referring to the role of the Communist Party.⁵¹ An example of this can be found when Robertson identified that 'the financial burden of peace movement dates from that busy 1950 period, when interstate and then Warsaw expenses were very heavy'.⁵² Although he did not directly say that the financial burden was put upon the CPA, his further comment that the delegation to Warsaw was 'not broad', suggested that he fully understood that the peace movement was largely dominated by Communists at that time. However, there is one passage which would no doubt have concerned ASIO. In discussing Alan Brand, a non-Communist clergyman, Robertson declared that,

...he has come a long way under influence of yourself and me. We haven't tried to meddle with his own line of approach to peace, we have respected it- and now he publicly asserts his respect for us. Well, if all our people can work in this direction, in time, what a tremendous force will develop.⁵³

This extract demonstrates how Communists such as Gollan and Robertson sought to gradually gain the confidence of non-Communists in the peace movement. It would have further heightened ASIO's anxiety about the ability of the peace movement to covertly push Communist sensibilities onto unwary individuals. The proposition that a 'tremendous force' could be developed by these methods would have concerned ASIO. While it could be argued that Robertson was referring to the peace movement in this statement, the document must be recognised in the context of ASIO's role within the prevailing Cold War climate. ASIO would have read the underlying intention of the letter as being a reference to Communist initiatives, strengthening its perception that the Communist Party and the peace movement were interchangeable entities.

The discovery of Robertson's letter would have caused ASIO considerable concern. However, its level of anxiety would have increased further when, on the same day that

⁵¹ A handwritten note at the top of the document stated that 'This appears to be a note written by Alec Robertson...before his departure to the Third World Peace Congress in Vienna 1952', *ibid.* folio 66.

⁵² *Ibid.*, folio 66.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, folio 65.

this letter came to light, ASIO also discovered a number of papers on the desk of J.D. Blake at 40 Market Street Sydney.⁵⁴ These documents related to the efforts of the Communist Party to organise a peace convention in Sydney in late September or early October. Blake clearly and extensively set out how the Convention would be conducted, where support would be gained from, and how the Convention would be financed. It was suggested that the sum of 20,000 pounds could be raised to run the Convention.⁵⁵ More importantly, Blake placed great emphasis on the involvement of the clergy in the Convention. Under the heading of "Concrete Propaganda Campaign," Blake proposed that the ideal scenario would be to gain the support of thirteen ministers of religion.⁵⁶ Considering the fact that the Convention which eventually came into being was reputedly inaugurated by ten ministers, it would not have been difficult for ASIO to draw the conclusion that the Convention being organised by Blake was in fact the Convention which eventuated. This is particularly understandable given that the discovery of Blake's papers coincided with the seizure of Robertson's letter .

In ASIO's monthly summary of July 1953, a number of important links between the CPA and the Convention were made by ASIO. E.G. Robertson, a member of the Central Committee and the State Secretary of the South Australian Branch of the Party, stated that:

The Peace Convention, which was started in Sydney by a delegate to the Third World Peace Congress in Vienna has given the Party a weapon that will defeat the warmongers and the Menzies' Government.⁵⁷

Robertson also believed that the CPA's most important work was 'to build the peace forces, and we must concentrate on the Convention'. Although not unequivocal proof that the Party was in complete control of the Convention, this still constituted substantial evidence that the CPA would seek to exert itself upon proceedings. Further to this, it was

⁵⁴ NAA, A6122/30, 1270, folio's 240-246; and also see NAA, 6122/30, 1271, folio's 86-8.

⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 243.

⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 243.

found that Sydney District members of the CPA had resolved that peace agents should be found in a variety of areas such as factories, industry, clubs, unions and churches.⁵⁸ This move was clearly designed to give the Convention the appearance of being more broadly based than it in fact was. It was made clear that these 'agents' should be oblivious to the true nature of the Convention when it was stated that:

These agents are not to be approached by known Communists or Party members, but their names are to be submitted to Section Secretaries who will ascertain agents' addresses from Commonwealth Electoral Rolls and submit them to the Convention Convening Committee. The Convening Committee will then send out letters of invitation and brochures to these persons, asking them to become agents for Peace, sell buttons, raise finance, distribute literature, and become delegates to the Peace Convention.⁵⁹

This information adds substantial weight to the proposition that the Convention was being manipulated and controlled by the Communist Party. It also illustrates the methods the Communist Party sought to use in its efforts to conceal its role in the convening of the Convention. An even greater indication of this can be found in the statement that:

Party members are to receive brochures about the same time as the agents so that unity will be achieved and so that agents will think that a non-Communist organisation is in control of Peace activities and the Peace Convention.⁶⁰

It was then determined that the Party would undertake its own peace campaign until 'the Central Committee orders a linking up with the Convention Convening Organisation'. It was also made clear that efforts should be made 'towards broadening the front of the Convention...'.⁶¹ In addition to this, certain statements made by J.D Blake would have done little to allay the fears of ASIO. In attempting to defend the Convention, Blake stated the Communist position thus:

⁵⁷ NAA, M1508/1 35, ASIO Monthly Summary No. 7/53, p. 4.

⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 4.

⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 4-5.

⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 5.

⁶¹ Ibid, p. 5.

Our view is that lasting peace and peaceful competition between different social systems will clearly establish the superiority of socialism over capitalism, and this will aid our advance to socialism in Australia.⁶²

In light of these sentiments it is not surprising that the security organisation in Australia took such an adverse view of the peace movement. The mounting evidence certainly pointed toward a heavy Communist input into the conducting of the Convention of Peace and War, which set the scene for a showdown between the forces of the Government and the organisers of the Convention.

Menzies attacks the Convention

On 16 September 1953, the Prime Minister made a statement in the House of Representatives condemning the Peace Convention as a tool of the Communist Party. Menzies' speech gives an important insight into the Prime Minister's understanding of the threat posed by the Communist-led peace movement. Menzies declared that the peace movement's 'propaganda and its conferences in the western world serve Communist aims - and Communist aims only'.⁶³ Menzies also stated his belief that peace conferences were 'calculated to have a "softening-up" effect on the democratic world and on the unity of that world'.⁶⁴ Menzies again addressed the problem of prominent and respectable individuals becoming involved in the peace initiative, stating that the association of such people with these conferences was 'an end in itself' for the Communist Party.⁶⁵ Menzies also sought to impress upon Parliament that Communists sought to conceal their role within peace conferences and organisations. Menzies suggested that, 'the less "political" such a conference can be made to appear, the more chance there is of insinuating Communist and "Peace" propaganda into it and of making that propaganda effective'.⁶⁶

⁶² NAA, A6122/30, 1272, p. 65.

⁶³ CPD [H of R] vol. 1, New Series, 16 September 1953, op cit, p. 257.

⁶⁴ Ibid, p. 257.

⁶⁵ Ibid, p. 258.

⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 258.

The holding of this type of peace conference on Australian soil was clearly not going to go unchallenged by the Prime Minister.

Menzies commenced his attack on the Convention for Peace and War by pointing out that both the CPA and the APC had 'made strenuous efforts to avoid being identified as originating the Convention'.⁶⁷ Menzies stated that the efforts of the APC and the CPA had resulted in many people being duped into believing that the Convention was a legitimate peace initiative. Thus, Menzies sought to bring the true origins of the Convention to the attention of the Parliament, and the general public. Firstly, Menzies noted that the Central Committee of the CPA had decided in August 1952 'to organise an Australian Peace Congress to take place in 1953'.⁶⁸ The Prime Minister then began to list a number of events which had occurred which strengthened the Government's understanding that the Convention was covertly Communist controlled. The nature of Menzies' list is a clear illustration that Menzies based his attack on the information provided by ASIO. Menzies quoted the two excerpts, from E.G. Robertson and also the Sydney District members of the CPA, that had been included in the ASIO monthly summary for July.⁶⁹ Menzies also stated that the Government was in possession of a 'draft National Plan for Youth Participation in the Peace Convention', which outlined that 'if the sponsoring committee of the Convention fails to take the proper action, Communist Party representatives will do so'.

These examples represent a situation where a direct correlation can be identified between the work of ASIO and the actions of Menzies. Menzies made this clear himself when he stated:

Another document shows that the Communist Party has set up its own working committee for the Convention; has detailed one of its members to devote the whole of his attention to the organisation of the Convention; and has named another member, who, from other sources, is

⁶⁷ Ibid, p. 258.

⁶⁸ Ibid, p. 258.

⁶⁹ Ibid, p. 258.

known to be a member of the Central Committee; to bear the general political leadership and responsibility of the Convention.⁷⁰

Although Menzies was not prepared to directly name ASIO, the implication is clear. Menzies' attack on the Convention was based on the conviction that the Communists efforts to use the Convention as a propaganda tool, and as a means of recruiting new disciples, would fail, if 'their objectives and their connection with the convention are publicly and authoritatively known'.⁷¹ The evidence provided by ASIO, and voiced by Menzies, demonstrated that there was a substantial degree of Communist activity surrounding the conducting of the Convention for Peace and War. The fact that Menzies was prepared to use ASIO's information in a public forum such as the House of Representatives is a clear indication of the degree of confidence Menzies and ASIO must have had in their evidence. If Menzies had been unsure of the legitimacy of the documents, then he may have been reluctant to use them considering his previous gaffe, in 1950, when he incorrectly named a number of individuals as Communists.⁷²

Menzies was not alone in his condemnation of the Convention. Upon hearing the Prime Minister's evidence, the Opposition Leader, Evatt, commented that Menzies' statement was 'of great importance'. Evatt agreed with the sentiments of Menzies and was quick to add that the Labor Party in NSW had reached a similar conclusion and would thus oppose the Convention.⁷³ Evatt voiced similar sentiments to those of Menzies, in defending the actions of the Government, when he stated that

We must either clamp down on this convention and regard the very word "peace" as being synonymous with communism, which is unthinkable, or let it be widely known that there is a definite connection between the Communist party [sic] and the proposed convention.

⁷⁰ Ibid, p. 259.

⁷¹ Ibid, p. 259.

⁷² Lowe, op cit, p. 66.

⁷³ CPD [H of R] vol. 1, New Series, 16 September, 1953, p. 259.

Evatt thus characterised the actions of Menzies as being the most rational response to the Convention in that the Government had simply chosen to warn the public about the true nature of the Convention, rather than attempting more adverse action, such as an outright ban on the proceedings.

J.E. Owen confronts Menzies

There were those who disputed the data gathered by ASIO, and presented by Menzies, as convincing evidence that the Convention on Peace and War was Communist inspired. J.E. Owen, one of the clergymen who instigated the Convention, made a request for a personal meeting with Menzies to discuss the charges brought against the Convention.⁷⁴ Menzies accepted this request. At the meeting Owen presented his side of the story to the Prime Minister, highlighting the safeguards that had been put in place by the organising committee of the Convention to ensure that it remained unbiased.⁷⁵ He concluded by asking Menzies to tell him what else could have been done 'to safeguard the situation'.⁷⁶ Menzies insisted that Owen should see the evidence of 'Communist activity associated with the Convention' possessed by the Government. When Owen was presented with the incriminating papers by security officers, he told them:

I believe that you have evidence here that the Communist planned to hold one of their Peace Conferences in Sydney early this year; that subsequently they got wind of the fact that we were in the field; that they then decided to drop theirs and swing in behind ours; that they have been very close to the movement in Sydney in the planning of the machinery of the Convention, but there is no evidence that they have either wished to influence the nature of the Convention, the matter to be discussed, the manner of discussing it, or the conclusions to be arrived at, or have succeeded in doing so.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Owen discusses his involvement in the Convention, along with his meeting with Menzies, in his memoir *The Road To Peace: An Experiment in Friendship Across Barriers*, Hawthorn Press, 1954.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, p. 17.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, p. 17.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 19-20.

The incriminating documents included a statement by the Chairman of the Convention Committee which praised Alec Robertson, a known Communist, for 'the entire organisation behind our efforts to convene a Peace Convention'.⁷⁸ Menzies later alluded to the evidence against Robertson in a speech on radio, when he stated that the Security Service had found out that

...one of the men whom the Convention Committee praised for the organisation behind the convening of the Peace Convention, was...specially designated by the Communist Party, and attended the National Congress of the Central Committee of the Communist Party in June 1953.⁷⁹

However, Owen remained unconvinced that the evidence represented undeniable proof that the Convention was Communist controlled. The ASIO officer who spoke to Owen compiled a draft paper, intended for the Prime Minister, which documented the meeting with Owen. The officer involved was unnamed, however, the tone of the paper suggests that the person in question was closely linked to the Prime Minister, which makes it plausible that the writer may have been the Director-General or someone of a similar standing in the organisation. The officer believed that although Owen was not completely convinced by the evidence, he had been at least perturbed by what was presented to him.⁸⁰ While Owen asserted that he could not withdraw from the Convention, he was sufficiently persuaded by the evidence to suggest that he 'would see that an even closer watch was kept for Communist influence'.⁸¹ Owen did not consider Communist involvement to be proof of Communist control. He felt that the best way to deal with Communists was 'not to withdraw from men because they are dangerous, but to get in among them for their own good'.⁸²

⁷⁸ See undated draft paper intended for R.G. Menzies. NAA, A6119/1, 85, folio 21.

⁷⁹ Transcripts of R.G. Menzies' 'Man To Man' speech, delivered on radio on 25 November 1953, can be found in Menzies' Papers at the National Library of Australia, MS 4936, Man To Man Broadcasts 1953. See also the papers of the Campaign for International Cooperation and Disarmament at the Melbourne University Archives, Box A34, file 4, Australian Convention on Peace and War.

⁸⁰ NAA, A6119/1, 85, folio 21.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Owen, *op cit*, p. 28.

Menzies found that he could not fault the Owen's efforts to safeguard the Convention, nor could he dispute his character or credentials. The Prime Minister therefore offered the clergymen a qualified apology in the House of Representatives after their meeting. Menzies stated that Owen had taken

...all the precautions that had presented themselves to his mind; but it will be understood that matters are known to the Government in relation to these affairs which cannot, in the nature of things, be known to private citizens.⁸³

However, Menzies never at any stage, suggested that the Convention was not a Communist controlled affair. He simply sought to reduce the damage his allegations had done to the character of Owen, in his role as an organiser of the Convention. On 25 November, Menzies gave a speech on radio which again attacked the Convention. In this speech he stated that 'the last Peace Convention in Sydney was presided over by men whose judgement I regret, but whose integrity is beyond doubt'.⁸⁴ Menzies clearly felt that, although Owen's intentions were honourable, he had been duped.

Owen's rejection of Menzies and ASIO's assertion that the Convention was Communist controlled seemed reasonable. The evidence does not establish a clear link between the Convention being planned by the Communists and that which eventuated. However, the circumstantial evidence does suggest strongly that Communists were exerting an extensive influence over proceedings, which could not be overlooked by the security organisation. Communist Party involvement was certainly strong enough to justify continued ASIO interest in the Convention, even if it was unable to completely convince Owen. Menzies' decision to send a security officer of high standing to visit Owen highlights the Prime Minister's confidence in the evidence provided and also illustrates the degree of concern in Government and security circles. Owen's assertion that there was no evidence that the Communist Party would or could influence discussion could not be

⁸³ Ibid, p. 22.

⁸⁴ 'Man To Man' speech, op cit.

fully dismissed until proceedings were under way, which meant that an ASIO presence during the Convention was inevitable.

ASIO's Convention report

ASIO compiled an extensive report on the Convention on Peace and War which documented all aspects of Communist influence and control throughout the duration of the Convention.⁸⁵ Fourteen organisations were named in the document as being represented, of which over half, allegedly, were Communist-controlled. For example, the Australia Soviet Friendship Society and the Eureka Youth League were both represented.⁸⁶ It was also estimated that 15% of delegates to the Convention were members of the Communist Party.⁸⁷ A number of examples were presented as evidence that the Convention was Communist controlled. ASIO believed that:

...prior to the Convention, instructions were given to Party members as to the sessions of the Convention on which they should concentrate. This instruction appears to have been adhered to because the Chairman of one of the Sub-Commissions chosen for concentrated effort is believed to be a Communist Party member.⁸⁸

This example was hearsay, in that the credentials of the supposed Communist in question are not confirmed. A further, more succinct, piece of evidence is that the Party informed members before the Convention that:

There must be no attacks or outbursts if we are provoked. This is supposed to be on the level and we are supposed to have nothing to do with it. However, we must guide leaders and speakers along the Party line.⁸⁹

⁸⁵ NAA, A6122/30, 1273, folio's 164-168.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, folio 168.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, folio 167.

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, folio 167.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, folio 167.

While this statement is not attributed to any one person in this document, it still would have added to the circumstantial evidence which suggested that the Conference would be influenced by the Communists.

ASIO described the way in which John Callaghan, a well known member of the Communist Party, sought to exert his influence over one of the sub-commissions. ASIO found that, 'it was noticeable that...Callaghan unobtrusively directed proceedings, ably assisted by two Communists, Elizabeth Vassilieff and Stephen Murray-Smith'.⁹⁰ ASIO also noted that there were a number of Communists present with previous experience at overseas peace conferences and, more importantly, there were members of the Central Committee of the Communist Party present. In addition to these observations, ASIO was also concerned by the degree of favourable coverage which the Convention, and its findings, received in the Communist press.⁹¹ While much of ASIO's evidence against the Convention on Peace and War seems to be vague and insubstantial, there is still sufficient evidence to suggest that ASIO's concerns about the character of the Convention were justified. When all of this evidence is combined, it weighs heavily in favour of the Convention being under some degree of Communist influence.

Tension eases: 1954-55

In the years following the Convention on Peace and War, the interaction between ASIO and the peace movement became less pronounced.⁹² This is primarily due to the diminished activity of the peace movement in 1954 and 1955. ASIO also found itself preoccupied with the Petrov affair and the subsequent Royal Commission. The peace movement became less noticeable following the tumultuous period experienced in 1952 and 1953. This is not to say that ASIO neglected the peace movement. In October 1954, ASIO turned its attention to the Melbourne University Peace Club. A visit by J.E. Owen

⁹⁰ Ibid, folio 166.

⁹¹ Ibid, folio's 164-5.

⁹² However, as was detailed in the previous chapter, efforts were made to impose travel restrictions on prospective delegates to overseas conferences.

to the University Peace Club was recorded by ASIO on October 5, 1954.⁹³ Owen's speech revolved around a discussion of the visit to Australia of Josef Hromadka, which had drawn opposition from both religious and official circles.⁹⁴ It was noted in this report that Owen 'decried Communism in all its aspects, and stated that there was only one thing worth fighting for today, and that was - peace'. ASIO cast Owen in a favourable light, going so far as to compliment him on his efforts: he 'dealt very well with the questions put to him, and the meeting was, to some extent, quite a personal triumph for him.'

However, ASIO did express concern with other aspects of the Melbourne University Peace Club. In September 1955, ASIO compiled a brief report on the origins and history of the Peace Club.⁹⁵ The Club was clearly understood to be the result of a Communist decision. It believed that 'the Communists wanted this Club to be as broad as possible. They regarded this as an important recruiting and propaganda ground'.⁹⁶ This document also expresses a clear indication of why ASIO was hostile to the Peace Movement. It stated that:

The Peace Movement had a strong effect on many people who regarded it as the only effective force for peace in the world. It represented a gigantic propaganda force and contact ground - no less so at the University.⁹⁷

Thus, peace movement sought to prey upon the need and hope for peace among common citizens while secretly indoctrinating these people to support the principles of the Communist Party. While the Party itself represented a clear and present danger, the peace movement's more ambiguous nature made it a harder target for ASIO to fight. ASIO was clearly concerned with the ability of the peace movement to recruit unwary citizens into the Communist campaign. The emphasis placed on such a small and seemingly insignificant peace activity, such as the University Peace Club, is a further demonstration

⁹³ NAA, A6122/39, 1404, folio 157.

⁹⁴ The circumstances surrounding the visit of Hromadka to Australia were detailed in the previous chapter and can also be found in Tony McGillick's memoir *Comrade No More*, pp. 243-48.

⁹⁵ NAA, A6122/39, 1404, op cit, folio 162.

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, folio 162.

of the degree of anxiety aroused by the activities of the peace movement. ASIO was not simply concerned with large scale, public activities run by the peace movement, such as the Convention on Peace and War. While ASIO may have been more anxious about these activities, due to their ability to attract substantial media and public attention, this did not mean that ASIO ignored less prominent efforts by the Communist Party to infiltrate and control the peace movement. As with the Scientists Peace Council Committee in 1952, it seemed determined to keep close tabs on activities at a grass roots level in an attempt to stifle Communist infiltration at its source.

The Assembly for Peace, 1956

Late in 1955, the peace movement began to increase its activities in the lead-up to a proposed peace conference in 1956. ASIO bore witness to this increase in peace activity in its quarterly summary, compiled in September 1955. In this document it was reported that

It is now obvious that the peace campaign with its demands for the banning of all nuclear weapons and the opposition to the sending of Australian troops to Malaya is to become one of the Party's major policies during forthcoming months.⁹⁸

The conclusion that peace activity would become more prevalent was supported by the subsequent organisation of the Australian Assembly for Peace, set to be held in Sydney in September 1956. The Assembly represented the first significant activity undertaken by the peace movement since the split of the Labor Party in 1955, and since the denunciation of Stalin by Krushchev at the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). A study of ASIO's interpretation of the Sydney event is extremely important given the context of the time in which the Assembly took place.

⁹⁷ Ibid, folio 162.

⁹⁸ A copy of ASIO's report on the activities of the peace movement during 1955 can be found in NAA, A6122/2, 219.

In July 1956, ASIO compiled a report on those individuals purported to be associated with the Assembly for Peace.⁹⁹ The main intention of this report was to document where and when those involved had been referred to in newspapers across the nation. The particular emphasis was to discover the degree to which the Communist press had given prominence to these people. An example of how detailed this report was can be found in the case of the Reverend Alf Dickie.¹⁰⁰ Between 23 April 1948 and 17 November 1955, Dickie was reported to have appeared in either the *Guardian* or the *Tribune* thirteen times. In the case of Myra Roper, who had been associated with a number of Australian Peace Council initiatives, it is mentioned that her contribution to the *Age* was in the form of a letter condemning the denial of passports for Australian delegates to Peking.¹⁰¹ The extensive nature of this document and the fact that it extends as far back as the late 1940's clearly demonstrates that ASIO's interest in the peace movement had not decreased.

However, in a report on the Australian Assembly for Peace, ASIO gave a significant indication that it had recognised a distinct broadening of the peace movement. In opening discussion of the conference it is mentioned that,

Whilst many of those who attended were representing Communist frontal organisation, a considerable number were Pacifists. A notable feature was the wide representation and support from Trade Union and official Labour Party elements of the community, in addition to the usual Church and Pacifist supporters, and extreme-left activists.¹⁰²

ASIO believed that the participation of diverse elements such as the trade unions, scientists and the churches had 'given the Communists the idea that the peace movement is no longer suspect'.¹⁰³ The Communist Party believed that it had achieved a significant

⁹⁹ NAA, A6122/30, 1276, folio's 33-39.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, folio 37.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, folio 39.

¹⁰² NAA, A6122/30, 1278, folio 117.

¹⁰³ Ibid, folio 115.

victory by diversifying the peace movement. However, ASIO was far from convinced by this supposedly more open movement. This is made clear by the following statement:

The tactics of the C.P. of A., as represented by W.E. Gollan, were to give the impression to the Prime Minister and the public of Australia, that the compass of the Assembly was very broad, and that it was not dominated by the C.P. of A. The findings of the Assembly must be shown as a demonstration of broad support. In fact, the whole proceedings were dominated by the C.P. of A. members present. Gollan, who is a member of the Central Committee of the C.P. of A., acted as co-ordinator of the Plenary Session held on the final afternoon.¹⁰⁴

In spite of the best efforts of the CPA to broaden the nature of the conference, ASIO remained convinced that the peace movement was Communist dominated and controlled. This demonstrates ASIO's inflexibility on the issue of Communist control of the peace movement. Communist involvement still equated to Communist control. This is further illustrated by the comment that,

Unlike the previous national peace gathering, the C.P. of A. was prepared to allow the inclusion of other than its own ideas. It was pointed out from the platform, however, that these other ideas were those of a "small minority."¹⁰⁵

ASIO saw the attempts to broaden the peace movement as nothing more than a Communist ploy to try and disguise its real intentions. ASIO was incapable of taking into consideration any other probable reason. ASIO continually viewed the peace movement as attempting to undermine the Government's Cold War position. In the example of the Convention on Peace and War, ASIO had justifiably acted upon seemingly substantial evidence which suggested that the Convention was Communist inspired. The lack of activity on behalf of Menzies himself in regard to the Assembly may indicate that the information against the Assembly was not as substantial as the evidence against the Convention for Peace and War in 1953.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, folio 115.

In a summation of the events of 1956 in the peace movement, ASIO came to this conclusion:

The Assembly could be more correctly called a Communist inspired move to broaden the scope of the peace movement in Australia by attempting to gain the support of as many respected public figures as possible, and thus indirectly increase support for the Communist Party and further its cause.¹⁰⁶

This example gives perhaps the clearest expression yet of the way ASIO viewed the threat of the peace movement in the 1950s. In the face of a concerted effort to diversify the movement, ASIO expressed the belief that the use of public figures was giving the movement undue credit and respectability. ASIO was concerned that the concentration of more creditable organisations and individuals seen to be supporting the peace movement would lead a great many people to be 'convinced that the Assembly's aims were quite legitimate'. ASIO concluded its report on the Assembly for Peace with an ominous warning:

It seems most likely therefore that the Australian Assembly for Peace itself will develop into, if it is not already, the usual type of Communist "front" organisation, though on a much broader scale than the existing Australian Peace Council.¹⁰⁷

Despite, or perhaps because of, attempts to broaden the peace movement, ASIO maintained its vigilance in its battle to contain the perceived spread of Communism throughout the broader community. Whether ASIO's stance was justifiable, in the context of developments on both a local and international scale, is questionable.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, folio 114.

¹⁰⁶ NAA, A6122/30, 1280, folio 144.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, folio 194.

Changing circumstances: The influence of events on official responses to the peace movement

A number of studies of the peace movement have argued that, following the events of 1955-56 in both the Communist Party and Labor Party, the peace movement became less evidently Communist influenced. Malcolm Saunders suggested that:

...suspicions that the movement was controlled by Communists were somewhat allayed in 1956, where prominent pacifists condemned the Soviet Union's intervention in Hungary...¹⁰⁸

Barbara Carter also stated that the peace movement became more diverse as a result of the Labour Party split. Carter believed that, '...the 1955 split was potentially of much greater importance to the peace movement in Australia than any of the changes which were taking place outside Australia at that time'.¹⁰⁹ Carter also suggested that 'a more diverse peace movement' emerged following the turmoil created in both the Communist Party and the peace movement by the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956. Such studies therefore appear to suggest that the peace movement became less dominated by the Communist Party after the events of 1956.

In the lead up to the Assembly a number of articles and editorials were written which questioned the validity of the Assembly. ASIO kept a record of all these clippings, as it had done for previous events, which demonstrates the degree to which newspapers were used as a source of intelligence. One such editorial, from the *Sydney Morning Herald*, gave an important indication of a conservative viewpoint of the peace movement in the context of changing events.¹¹⁰ The editorial denounced previous efforts made by the peace movement to run successful peace conferences, but it believed that Communists

¹⁰⁸ Saunders, M. op cit, p. 33.

¹⁰⁹ Carter, B. op cit, p. 67.

¹¹⁰ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 July, 1956.

'have been encouraged by recent developments at home and overseas to try again'. The writer's interpretation of recent events in Russia was that:

A thaw has set in on the Cold War front. In Russia, the Communist Party has sought to purge itself of countless crimes and iniquities by sacrificing Stalin in the temple of Marx and Lenin.¹¹¹

Rather than seeing these actions by the CPSU in positive terms, the writer believed:

Communist self criticism and disavowals have helped to create a deceptive aura of respectability. The crawling conformity of the Australian Communist Party...seems, indeed, to have given its members a certain brash confidence instead of humiliating them.¹¹²

The ALP split had simply exacerbated this situation by giving Communists added confidence. The editorial was fearful that the Assembly for Peace would be used by the Communist Party as a first step in its effort to unite with the Labor Party. The basis of this belief was a comment made by J.D Blake in his report to the Communist Central Committee: 'The important thing now in our relations with the Labor Party is for us to really move out to meet each other'.

The fear was expressed that the Assembly for Peace would represent the ideal opportunity to achieve this meeting. This editorial led to a number of personal responses being printed in the paper. J.D Blake, on behalf of the CPA, stated that:

Participation of representatives of all such people in the Assembly for Peace, whether they come from the ALP or any other organisation, will clearly mean that Communists will be a small minority.¹¹³

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ *Sydney Morning Herald*, July 11, 1956.

The Communist Party clearly sought to take advantage of the changed circumstances by attempting to broaden the nature of the peace movement while reducing the prominence of Party members. As has been demonstrated, the efforts of Party members to broaden the movement did little to alter ASIO's perception of peace initiatives. An example of an individual who remained unconvinced was an unidentified ex-Communist who wrote in response to Blake's assessment that:

...the Communists contrive to involve as many as possible, well meaning humanitarians-clergy, men of letters, prominent and semi-prominent citizens from all walks, men and women, too, whose idealistic leanings and whose kindly disposition in the past would indicate sympathetic consideration of the avowed aim of the assembly.¹¹⁴

Again, it can be seen that the increased popularity of the peace movement, in particular among prominent citizens, induced greater concern in some sectors of the community. Despite efforts to broaden the peace movement it is clear that ASIO, and certain members of the public, remained unconvinced of the movement's character.

Lessening concern? Labor support and Government inactivity

Yet, there is evidence to suggest that the peace movement was creating less concern in official circles. Firstly, the Labor Party, led by its leader Evatt, had chosen to give its support to the Assembly. In a message to the organisers of the Assembly, Evatt expressed his 'regret' that he would not be able to attend proceedings. Evatt stated that

It is important that all sections of the community should frankly and fully discuss all aspects of international affairs. It is only in this way that a free exchange of ideas will enable humanity to survive. We must always maintain the right to "come, reason together".¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ *Sydney Morning Herald*, July 14, 1956.

¹¹⁵ NAA, A6122/30, 1280, folio 80. Letter from Evatt to the Peace Assembly dated 8 September 1956.

Evatt's sentiments represent a distinct change of heart from those he had expressed during the time of the Convention for Peace and War. At that time Evatt had concurred with Menzies' actions in warning the public about the proposed Convention. Of course, Evatt's change of attitude would have been considerably influenced by the 'split' in the Labor Party, which had allowed the Opposition leader to voice his support for the Assembly without fear of recriminations from the extreme right of his Party. Evatt's condemnation of the 1953 Convention had also been based on the fact that the Communist Party had sought to conceal its role.¹¹⁶ As has been shown, the Communist Party took a less prominent role in the conducting of the Assembly and the Party did not seek to conceal its movements to the same degree that it had at the Convention for Peace and War. Evatt's, and his Party's, support for the Assembly is a clear indication that the mood surrounding the peace movement had altered by 1956.

Menzies and his Government also appeared to be reluctant to condemn the Assembly. As was detailed earlier, Menzies had been quick to attack the previous major activity of the peace movement, the Convention on Peace and War. However, there is little evidence to suggest that the Prime Minister, or members of his Cabinet, displayed such strong feelings in 1956. This could be attributed, in part, to the fact that in 1953 ASIO had provided substantial evidence which suggested that the Convention was Communist controlled, whereas in 1956 no such evidence was forthcoming. It could also be due to the changing climate of the Cold War, represented by the sentiments expressed at the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU. However, it is clear that Menzies and his Government had not been swayed by events such as Krushchev's speech. For example, correspondence between the Australian High Commission in London and the External Affairs Department shows that the revelations of Krushchev had had little effect on the prevailing perception of the Communist threat. It was argued that the 'New line should be regarded as tactical' and that the reversion to Leninism should be regarded with trepidation due to the belief that 'Leninism may be more insidious than Stalinism', due to

¹¹⁶ CPD, [H of R] vol. 1, New Series, 16 September 1953, p. 260.

its perceived flexibility.¹¹⁷ ASIO sources expressed similar sentiments in a summation of the Twentieth Congress, when it was stated that:

Whilst the speeches at the Twentieth Congress may be interpreted as an indication of future foreign policy, possibly more flexible than that obtaining under the Stalin regime, there would appear to be no doubt that the final objective is still Communist supremacy.¹¹⁸

Menzies was also unconvinced by the seeming changing direction of the Russian leaders. In the Parliament he stated that 'we are witnessing...a demonstration of the truth of the old proverb that, under current circumstances, it is better to be a live dog than a dead lion'.¹¹⁹ Although Menzies appeared to have softened his approach toward the peace movement, exemplified by his response, or lack thereof, to the Assembly for Peace, he clearly remained convinced of the dangers posed by Communism. Thus it is apparent that future activities by the peace movement, still seen to be Communist controlled, would continue to be closely scrutinised by the forces of the state.

¹¹⁷ NAA, A1838/1, 69/2/3/2 Part 1, see Savingram sent on 24 February 1956, from the Australian High Commission in London.

¹¹⁸ NAA, M1508/1, 38, ASIO quarterly summary no. 1, 1956 (on information to 31 March), under heading 'Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union'.

¹¹⁹ CPD [H of R] vol. 9, 21 March 1956, p. 962.

CHAPTER FIVE

CUTTING ACROSS THE PATTERN:

BARWICK, SPRY AND THE 1959 ANZ CONGRESS FOR INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION AND DISARMAMENT

In the years following the Assembly for Peace in 1956, the peace movement in Australia reduced its activities. However, in 1959 the peace movement again sought to take centre stage in the Australian community by proposing to hold a peace congress in Melbourne. This undertaking stirred ASIO and the Government into action, producing an unprecedented official response. Much of the historical literature on the Congress has chosen to focus on the debate as to whether the Congress was Communist infiltrated and controlled.¹ However, this chapter will emphasise the actions of the Government and ASIO in an attempt to understand the reasons for the increased importance given to the activities of the peace movement in 1959, as opposed to the relative lack of opposition levelled at the Assembly for Peace in 1956. This investigation will also shed light upon the relationship which had developed between the Government and the security forces. The Congress itself will not be discussed in any significant detail, as it has already been the subject of a number of studies. Rather, this chapter is concerned with the role played by ASIO and members of the Government in the lead-up to the Congress.

Origins of the Congress

During July 1958, a Congress for International Co-operation and Disarmament was conducted in Stockholm. The driving force behind this Congress was the World Peace Council, the widely acknowledged Communist front organisation.² A delegation of twenty Australians, endorsed by the APC, was in attendance at this Congress.³ Most prominent among the delegation were APC members Sam Goldbloom and the Rev. Frank

¹ See, for example, Summy and Saunders, 'The 1959 Melbourne Peace Congress' and Barbara Carter, 'The Peace Movement in the 1950s' in Curthoys and Merritt(eds), *Better Dead than Red*, pp. 74-95 and pp. 69-70; J.P. Forrester, *Fifteen Years of Peace Fronts*, pp. 40-44; and Harold Crouch, Peter Samuel, Leon Glezner and Jim Jupp, *The Peace Movement: A Dissent Pamphlet*, Dissent Trust, Melbourne, 1964.

² See chapter 2 for discussion of the Communist origins of the WPC.

³ Summy and Saunders, 'The 1959 Melbourne Peace Congress' op cit, p. 75.

Hartley. During the Stockholm Congress, the Disarmament Commission advanced the recommendation that regional conferences should be conducted in an attempt at 'bringing together all movements and organisations in a given area to promote action on particular problems affecting the area'.⁴

Security interest

The proposed Congress first came to the attention of security authorities when the Communist newspaper *The Guardian*, on 18 September, reported that 'a recent meeting in Melbourne of interstate representatives of various peace organisations throughout Australia agreed to sponsor an Australia-New Zealand Congress to coincide with Hiroshima Day next year'.⁵ ASIO identified the organisations represented at this initial meeting as: the Australian Assembly for Peace, the Victorian Peace Council, the Queensland Peace Assembly and the South Australian Peace Committee. ASIO concluded that these organisations were 'all Communist "front" organisations'. ASIO also noted that the Victorian organisation was the only one which had retained the name Peace Council, 'a name now generally recognised as synonymous with the Communist "front" movement for peace in Australia'. Despite the changes in name made by the other bodies, ASIO believed that they still retained 'a Communist element in control and their basic character'.⁶ The security organisation was clearly in no doubt as to the origins of the Melbourne Congress. ASIO's initial concern with the Congress was the involvement of respectable and prominent individuals on the Sponsoring Committee such as 'clergymen, scientists, educationalists, trade unionists and members of Parliament'. ASIO was concerned that

the "respectability" of this Committee will no doubt be used by the Communists controlling the "front" organisations, which - as mentioned previously - originally sponsored the

⁴ Ibid, p. 75.

⁵ NAA, A6122/39, 1292, folio 27, document entitled 'Secret: Australia-New Zealand Congress for Disarmament and International Co-operation'.

⁶ Ibid, folio 27.

Congress, to gain the support of the general public for the Congress and to mask their own activities in it.⁷

The reservations of ASIO were shared by members of SEATO, who acknowledged that a number of public figures had been approached in the hope that they would 'enhance the prestige of the Congress and stimulate public interest'.⁸ SEATO also believed that the Congress organisers deliberately avoided including the word peace in the name of the Congress for the reason that, 'sections of the public whom they wished to inveigle would be conscious of the notorious slant of the WPC and of the Communist exploitation of "peace" movements'.⁹ From the outset, official interest in the Congress was stimulated by the belief that it was attracting a degree of respectable support which could adversely influence the general public. In these circumstances it was inevitable that members of the Government would become involved in efforts to limit the success of the Congress.

Casey on the attack

On 4 December 1958, the Minister for External Affairs, R.G. Casey, contacted ASIO after receiving information that the peace movement was preparing a 'gathering at the Exhibition Building in 1959'.¹⁰ Casey wished to discover the level of ASIO awareness as well as more detail about its sponsorship. In ensuing months ASIO and the External Affairs Department maintained constant contact in an effort to develop an adequate response to the upcoming Congress. On 4 May ASIO was informed of Casey's intention to take action in an attempt to adversely affect the Congress. ASIO was advised that

...the Minister is concerned at the anticipated size of the Congress and has expressed the desire to give as much publicity as possible to the aims of the Congress and to the persons

⁷ Ibid, folio 26.

⁸ See 'SEATO Confidential: Organising A Peace Congress', p. 6, NAA, A432/15, 63/2279.

⁹ Ibid, p. 3.

¹⁰ NAA, A6122/39, 1292, folio 28.

responsible for organising it who are communists or Communist sympathisers, in order that Australians may be left in no doubt as to the true motives of the promoters of the Congress.¹¹

This proposal was put to the Director-General who subsequently endorsed it, although Spry believed that 'the exposure of the Congress and its organisers ought to be approached with some care, especially as to the method and timing'.¹² Spry conceded that the Congress represented 'a major Communist effort in the "Front" field...', and he concluded that, 'As an immediate step, I would suggest a Ministerial statement which would at least advise innocent persons as to the true aims of the Congress'.¹³ The close relationship between ASIO and the External Affairs Department will be discussed in more detail later.

On 18 May Casey delivered a press statement which 'revealed' the true nature of the Congress.¹⁴ According to Casey,

As with all activities of the Communist dominated World Peace Movement, behind a facade of appeals to humanitarian sentiments, the purpose seems to be simply to advance the policies of world Communism and to exploit for this purpose the natural desire of all sensible and responsible people for peace.¹⁵

Casey believed that the organisers of the Congress were attempting 'to enlist persons of goodwill in cultural, educational, religious and industrial circles'.¹⁶ He stated that any persons targeted by the Congress organisers should 'inquire closely into the motives behind the Congress before they are induced to promise their support and identify themselves with it'.¹⁷ It is clear that the Government, as represented by Casey, was

¹¹ NAA, A6122/39, 1292, folio 95, Draft letter from Spry to the Secretary of the Department of External Affairs.

¹² Ibid, folio 95.

¹³ Ibid, folio 94.

¹⁴ Ibid, folio 170, letter from P.R. Heydon to the Director-General of Security.

¹⁵ NAA, A10302/1, 60/151, see 'Statement by the Minister for External Affairs, Mr. R.G. Casey' dated 18 May, 1959.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

especially concerned by the ability of the Congress to attract high profile, respectable, sponsors. Casey's actions resemble those of Menzies in 1953, in response to the Convention for Peace and War, although the Cold War climate had significantly altered in the intervening period.

The debate begins

The Rev. Alf Dickie, in his role as Chairman of the Congress, immediately attacked Casey, firing off a number of letters to the newspapers and to the Minister himself. On 21 May, in reply to Casey's statement that people should inquire closely into the motives of the Congress, Dickie stated that 'this is precisely what we want people to do'.¹⁸ Further to this, Dickie extended an invitation to Casey 'to meet with us to clear up any doubts in your mind'.¹⁹ It was also proposed that organisers would welcome Casey's involvement at the Congress 'either as a participant planner for the Congress or as an observer'.²⁰ On the same day that Dickie wrote to Casey, a letter from Dickie to the editor of the *Sun* was published. In this letter Dickie suggested that it was not the fault of the organisers that the Communist press had chosen to give the Congress extensive coverage.²¹ Dickie concluded by stating that 'men will no longer be prevented by insinuation as to motives, from exercising their democratic privileges and responsibilities on the question of world peace'.²² In a follow-up letter on 2 June, Dickie foreshadowed continued Government action when he stated that 'we request that there be no Government sponsored interviewing or intimidating of Congress sponsors'.²³ As will be demonstrated, the Government and ASIO ignored Dickie's request.

¹⁸ NAA, A10302, 60/151, see letter from Alfred M. Dickie to the Rt. Hon. R.G. Casey MP. Dated 21 May, 1959, p. 2.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 2.

²⁰ *Ibid*, p. 2.

²¹ *Melbourne Sun*, 21 May 1959, letter to the Editor titled 'New Congress seeks talk with Casey'.

²² *Ibid*.

²³ NAA, A10302, 60/151, letter from Dickie to Casey dated 2 June, 1959.

²⁴ *The Herald*, 3 June 1959, 'Dr Babbage Hits Reds'.

Despite Dickie's protestations that the Congress was not Communist controlled, Casey's statement produced immediate results. On 3 June, the Dean of Melbourne, Dr. Barton Babbage, chose to withdraw his sponsorship of the Congress.²⁴ Babbage clearly heeded the advice of Casey by investigating the character of the Congress more closely:

I am perturbed about the political implications of this congress, and I am embarrassed by the fact that some of those who are acting as organising secretaries in various States are active members of the Communist Party.²⁵

Babbage concluded that he was not prepared to allow himself to 'be an unwitting and unwilling agent of Communist propaganda'.²⁶ At the same time that Babbage withdrew his sponsorship, Prof. Marcus Oliphant and Prof. Walter Murdoch both expressed reservations about the Congress, with Murdoch adamant that he would withdraw should the Congress prove to be a Communist front.²⁷ Casey's actions were having the desired effect.

The withdrawal of Babbage prompted Dickie to make further attempts to defend the Congress. On 4 June, Dickie appealed to the public on theological grounds, believing that 'the activity of loving service on the part of Christians to men involves collaboration and a measure of identification with those who are outside the fellowship of believers'.²⁸ Dickie also made an appeal on democratic grounds, claiming that 'our traditional freedom of assembly and speech are precious to us - I hope'.²⁹ In this area, Dickie made direct reference to ASIO, expressing his hope that 'the Security service of this country is not going beyond its purpose of keeping Australia secure and using dossiers...to interfere with the free assembly and speech of citizens'.³⁰ This makes it clear that the peace campaigners were acutely aware, even at this early stage, that ASIO and the Government

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ NAA, A6122/39, 1293, folio's 51-2, 'Statement to Press by Rev. A.M. Dickie', 4 June 1959.

²⁹ Ibid, folio 51.

³⁰ Ibid, folio 51.

would go to extreme lengths to hamper the progress of the Congress. As will be demonstrated, their fears were justified.

Dickie repeated his challenge to Casey to take an active part in discussing the Congress. Dickie realised his previous offer to Casey had fallen on deaf ears when he stated that 'to my knowledge, no reply or acknowledgment has been received to this invitation'.³¹ Dickie completed his appeal to Casey by stating, 'what better examination could Mr. Casey make himself than at this early stage of the Congress's history'.³² Dickie's continued badgering finally forced Casey into making a response. On 5 June, Casey wrote to Dickie in an attempt to present his side of the story.³³ In his earlier correspondence, Dickie had claimed that Bertrand Russell had given his support to the peace initiative.³⁴ Casey responded to this by pointing out that Russell had expressed grave reservations about the Stockholm Congress and had in fact severed all ties with WPC in the aftermath of the executions of Imre Nagy and General Pal Maleter in Hungary.³⁵ Casey quoted Russell as saying that

I joined the Movement at a time when things looked more hopeful but they do not now...I told them that if they would pass a resolution condemning a Government that could execute a man after guaranteeing him safe conduct I might reconsider my decision, but that is not likely to happen.³⁶

Evidently, Russell could not envisage the WPC divorcing itself from its stance of defending, or at least ignoring, the exploits of the Soviet Union. Casey, with the understanding that the Melbourne Congress was closely linked to the Stockholm Congress, shared the view that the peace movement was merely a puppet of Soviet foreign policy. Casey claimed he had 'no quarrel' with the basic objectives of the

³¹ *Ibid*, folio 51.

³² *ibid*, folio 50.

³³ NAA, A10302/1, 60/151, letter from R.G. Casey to Dickie dated 5 June, 1959, p. 1.

³⁴ *Ibid*, p. 1.

³⁵ *Ibid*, p. 1.

³⁶ *Ibid*, p. 1.

Congress, those being ‘the promotion of international peace and goodwill’.³⁷ However Casey believed that in conferences of the type being prepared for Melbourne,

the emphasis tends to move towards condemnation of the policies of such countries as Great Britain and the United States of America....while no similar condemnation is ever voiced of such countries as the Soviet Union which engage in measures for self-defence on quite as comprehensive a scale as the countries which Australia has much greater sympathy.³⁸

Casey concluded that, considering ‘the close connection of your projected Congress with the World Peace Movement...I can see no useful purpose being served by my availing myself of your invitation to discuss the matter with you further’.³⁹ Three days after writing his letter to Dickie, Casey wrote to the *Age* and the *Sun*.⁴⁰ The letter was almost entirely based on that which had been written to Dickie, with Casey reiterating his belief that support for the peace movement entailed condemning the ‘war-mongering’ exploits of Western nations while ignoring similar activities being perpetrated by Communist nations.⁴¹ Casey finished with the statement that, ‘in these circumstances, I can only repeat my warning to those considering associating themselves with this Congress’.⁴² Dickie’s protestations had obviously failed to quell the conviction of Casey.

On the same day that Casey drafted this letter, he also wrote to one of the sponsors of the Congress, the famed scientist Sir Marcus Oliphant.⁴³ Casey was responding to earlier correspondence from Oliphant, who had written to the Minister to express his continued support for the Congress. In this letter, Casey denounced the forthcoming Congress by highlighting the links between it and the Stockholm Congress. Casey used the example of the Rev. Frank Hartley, the leader of the delegation to Stockholm and now treasurer of the Melbourne Congress, who had said that ‘we positively support the resolutions

³⁷ *Ibid*, p. 1.

³⁸ *Ibid*, p. 1.

³⁹ *Ibid*, p. 2.

⁴⁰ The official statement was issued to the press on 16 June 1959, see NAA, A6122/39, 1293, folio 124-25, for a copy of the official statement.

⁴¹ NAA, A10302/1, 60/151, Draft letter to the editors of the *Age* and the *Melbourne Sun*, p. 2.

⁴² *Ibid*, p. 2.

adopted by the Stockholm Congress and we denounce the American and British imperialists for their intervention in the Middle East'.⁴⁴ Casey also stated that

From a study of publications issued by the World Peace Council over a substantial period I have not yet been able to find a single instance of deviation from a line of uncritical support for the activities of Communist governments, in particular for those of the Soviet Union. The case is quite different when it is a matter of making serious allegations against such regional defensive bodies as NATO and SEATO.⁴⁵

Thus, Casey's opposition to the Melbourne Congress was based on the Congress' close relationship to the Stockholm Congress, which was recognised to be little more than a Communist stunt.

Oliphant had previously made it clear to Casey that, 'if evidence appears of Communist dominance or influence' he would withdraw his support for the Congress.⁴⁶ However, at the time of his letter, Oliphant maintained that he had acquired no such evidence. Oliphant believed that the involvement of a wide range of individuals could allow the Congress to maintain an even handed nature.⁴⁷ In this quest Casey supported Oliphant:

I should like to assure you that you have my full support in whatever efforts you make to ensure that the Congress adheres formally to the pursuit of its stated objectives and remains genuinely free of political partisanship.⁴⁸

The correspondence between Oliphant, as a sponsor of the Congress, and Casey, as a representative of the Government, is one expression of the fears that were voiced by the Rev. Alf Dickie, who feared that the Government may try to influence sponsors. However, it is clear that Casey was responding to the misgivings which Oliphant had first

⁴³ NAA, A10302/1, 60/151, letter from R.G. Casey to Sir Marcus Oliphant dated 9 June 1959 .

⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 1.

⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 1.

⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 2.

⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 2.

⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 2.

presented to him. The correspondence between Casey and Oliphant establishes a link between the two which will be important to later discussion. In this instance there seems to be no evidence that Casey, or the Government as a whole, were seeking to unduly manipulate or influence sponsors of the Congress into forsaking their support. Casey expressed his support for Oliphant's decision to remain involved with the Congress. Therefore, up to this point, Dickie's fears that the Government and the security service would try to sabotage the Congress remained unsubstantiated. Whether this would remain the case is another question entirely.

Wentworth weighs in

On 1 July W.C. Wentworth contacted Casey, requesting information regarding the upcoming Congress.⁴⁹ Wentworth was particularly concerned with discussing with the Minister how the Government should be 'organising in connection with this'.⁵⁰ Casey responded to Wentworth by noting that he had already made two press statements about the Congress 'which received fairly wide publicity in Melbourne anyway'.⁵¹ Casey believed that his statements had 'had the effect of making some of the sponsors of this Conference re-examine the desirability of their association with it'.⁵² Despite this, Wentworth remained unsatisfied with the progress of the Government's campaign against the Congress. He stated that

It is not much use however just making a statement of this kind without seeing that it is adequately followed up by publicity and use in the appropriate quarters. It is not much good just putting out an automatic statement and hoping that something will happen.⁵³

Wentworth was clearly unsatisfied with what he saw as a lenient approach to the Congress by the Government. Wentworth wished to know 'what exactly is our follow-up

⁴⁹ NAA, A10302/1, 60/151, letter from W.C. Wentworth to Casey dated 1 July 1959.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ NAA, A10302/1, 60/151, letter from Casey to Wentworth dated 7 July 1959.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ NAA, 10302/1, 60/151, letter from Wentworth to Casey dated 10 July 1959.

machinery for anti-Communist work of this character'.⁵⁴ Wentworth also suggested that there should be some form of anti-Communist conference established in opposition to the main Congress aimed at 'stealing its thunder'.⁵⁵ Of more importance to this discussion, Wentworth gave voice to the idea that the Government should be 'seeing that there is the correct intervention at the Communist Conference'.⁵⁶ What Wentworth had in mind was left unspoken, although later discussion will shed light on the lengths Wentworth was prepared to go to in an effort to sabotage the Congress. Wentworth concluded by stating that

You know that I feel very strongly about points such as these. One of the main reasons why we are losing on almost every front in the cold war is because of the comparative incompetence of our propaganda directed toward our own people.⁵⁷

Wentworth clearly subscribed to the view that extraordinary measures would be necessary to oppose the Congress and the Communist threat presented by it. Although Wentworth was essentially a maverick politician who held extreme views, it will still be seen that his influence, as well as that of others, would have considerable bearing on how official opposition to the Congress would be composed.

On 31 July Casey wrote to Sir John Latham with a proposal that was aimed at increasing Government pressure on the Congress. Casey detailed discussions he had had with B.A. Santamaria 'with regard to the possibility of inviting Anna Kelthy to visit Australia' at about the same time as the Congress would be conducted.⁵⁸ Kelthy had acted as a member of the Ministry of Imre Nagy in Hungary and had appeared at the United Nations during discussions of the circumstances which resulted in the death of Nagy.⁵⁹ Casey hoped that 'she might attend the "A. & N.Z." Congress...and take the initiative in

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ NAA, A10302/1, 60/151, letter from Casey to the Right Honourable Sir John Latham dated 31 July 1959.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

speaking before this body on the Hungarian massacres'.⁶⁰ Casey wished to test the resolve of the Congress, which had claimed that it would 'not deny anyone entry to their "Congress" nor, presumably their right to address the "Congress"'.⁶¹ So, as the Congress drew closer, the Government intensified its opposition.

'A third blast'

Casey was due to leave for overseas on 16 August and would not return until after the Congress had commenced. On 22 July, he met with ASIO to arrange the compilation of a statement which he could make about the Congress.⁶² He asked ASIO to provide him with 'a draft of the sort of thing that I could say publicly about the A. & N.Z. Congress'.⁶³ Casey acknowledged that he had had 'two blasts' at the Congress, but he believed that 'a third blast just before I leave might be good thing'.⁶⁴ On 3 August he visited ASIO offices in Melbourne where he met with the acting Director-General to discuss what information could be disseminated.⁶⁵ ASIO presented Casey with a paper about the Congress. Casey agreed with the sentiments of the paper and offered to present it as a press statement if all facts contained in it could be verified. The paper was aimed at detailing the close links between the Communist Party and the Congress which had come to the attention of the security forces. It commenced by reiterating the Government's understanding of the peace Congress's conception of peace. It stated that the peace movement, as represented by the organisers of the Congress, would use their calls for peace and disarmament as 'a slogan to cover propaganda for a well-organised group of undemocratic governments dominated by the Soviet Union and China'.⁶⁶

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² NAA, A6122/39, 1295, folio 27, Note for files.

⁶³ NAA, A10302/1, 60/151, letter from Casey to Sir Arthur Tange dated 3 August 1959.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ NAA, A6122/39, 1295, folio 16, ASIO Minute Paper dated 4 August 1959, in which ASIO presented Casey with a draft statement that was intended to be presented to the press.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, folio 15.

The paper claimed that there were 'authentic reports' that showed that the CPA had built a number of plans around the Congress.⁶⁷ It was asserted that 'the leadership of the Congress is to be a Communist Party of Australia responsibility'.⁶⁸ Further to this, 'the Party will co-ordinate the activities of the Peace Assembly and Congress "activists"'.⁶⁹ It was also contended that the CPA would seek to

develop the "Peace" movement on a larger scale and at the same time strengthen the Communist Party of Australia campaigns designed to place emphasis on the summit talks and the struggle for peace.⁷⁰

The Party wished to 'develop and exploit the present situation already created by the Communist Party of Australia whereby the "Peace" movement has become an intrinsic part of trade union activity'.⁷¹ It was believed that an effort would be aimed at the scientists on a national scale 'in order to educate the "masses" about the Cold War and the under-development in scientific fields in Australia which are unconnected with war'.⁷² Although essentially hearsay, the contents of this statement, combined with the already established links between this Congress and the Stockholm Congress, indicate that the Government was compiling an extensive case which suggested that the CPA intended taking control of the Congress so as to use it as a vehicle to further the Communist cause.

ASIO and Casey remained adamant that the Congress was 'nothing more than a cleverly designed, and disguised, instrument of communist propaganda'.⁷³ Attention was drawn to the fact that, at a Festival of the Arts Sub-Committee meeting during April, 'no less than four persons out of the eight present were current or past members of the Communist

⁶⁷ Ibid, folio 15.

⁶⁸ Ibid, folio 15.

⁶⁹ Ibid, folio 15.

⁷⁰ Ibid, folio 15.

⁷¹ Ibid, folio 15.

⁷² Ibid, folio 15.

⁷³ Ibid, folio 14.

Party of Australia'.⁷⁴ Two reasons were given as to why the Government was targeting the Congress:

Firstly, to underline the degree of Communist organisation behind the Congress and secondly, to point out to those who believe that they can "take over the Congress" that the Communists intend to use the Congress for their own purposes and are highly organised to achieve this object.⁷⁵

The second part of this statement appears to be directly addressed to individuals such as Oliphant who had believed that they could somehow diminish Communist influence at the Congress. In this instance, Casey was seemingly attempting to adversely influence Congress sponsors, although he appears to have done so on the basis of available accurate evidence which supported his claims.

Phase 2

While Casey's statement of 4 August was initially intended to be the basis of a press release, it was later decided that a fresh course of action might be preferable. The Secretary of the External Affairs Department, A.H. Tange, believed that 'the better tactics are for you not to make another statement but for us to do something else'.⁷⁶ Tange believed that

Phase 1 was a statement by you soberly pointing out the history of these conferences and advising people to be on their guard. This was good - but you can easily overdo things. Too many statements, and particularly ones that use strong language, will, I think, get the backs up of the people of repute who have allowed their names to be associated with the conference - and, if you get their backs up, they will be supported by independent-minded

⁷⁴ Ibid, folio 14.

⁷⁵ Ibid, folio 14.

⁷⁶ NAA, A10302/1, 60/151, document 'For the Minister' from A.H. Tange dated 6 August 1959.

people who have a natural tendency to think that conservative governments bring out the cry of Communism unjustifiably.⁷⁷

Tange acknowledged that Phase 1 was having its effect, noting that the *Observer* had published an article highlighting Casey's warnings about the Congress. However, he believed that it was time to institute Phase 2. Phase 2 would involve giving the material to 'some selected individuals who will be attending the Conference'. Among those proposed were Sir Mark Oliphant and Myra Roper. Tange felt that the only information that should be presented to these individuals was the actual evidence of Communist activity. While this sort of activity could constitute a case where the Government attempted to unduly influence sponsors of the Congress, as Dickie had feared, Tange tempered his proposal by suggesting that

...the objective is not to dissuade such people from going (because I doubt whether they will be dissuaded); but rather to give them an opinion and forecast of how the Conference might go, to enable them to accept it or not as they think fit.⁷⁸

The targeting of individuals such as Oliphant, who had freely expressed their reservations to the Government previously, demonstrates that Casey and his Department were concerned with giving interested individuals an opportunity to assess the Government's side of the story. Considering the previous correspondence between Casey and Oliphant, among others, this does not seem to have been an extreme measure on behalf of the Government. In light of the information which the Government had in its possession it is reasonable that they should wish to inform interested citizens of new developments. This further illustrates that, even in the face of mounting evidence such as that presented by ASIO which suggested that the Congress was Communist controlled, the Menzies Government chose to act within reason. This image of the Menzies Government is in stark contrast to the popular perception of Menzies', voiced by writers such as F.G.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid. Emphasis in original.

Clarke, who believed Menzies was 'a supreme political opportunist appealing to the Australian electorate time after time on a rabidly anti-Communist platform'.⁷⁹

Despite Tange's suggestion that Casey should refrain from making another speech, the Minister believed that 'I should make a short statement before I leave emphasising the straight communist design and control of this "Congress"'.⁸⁰ On 14 August, responding to a request for information from H.C. Nicholson of the Ringwood branch of the Liberal and Country Party, Casey detailed what he would say in his press statement. The statement claimed that

The simple fact is that this "Congress" has been organised by the Communist Party of Australia, which will run the meeting from behind the scenes. They will of course do their utmost to defeat any resolution which is critical of international Communism, whilst encouraging any resolution that is critical of the Democratic countries.⁸¹

Casey therefore continued to apply pressure to the Congress by attempting to highlight its 'true' nature in the press. At the time of his departure this was the extent of Government efforts to hamper the Congress. On 20 August, while Casey was out of the country, the planned letter to Sir Mark Oliphant was sent. It opened by referring to the previous correspondence between the two, and gives the impression of being nothing more than a follow-up letter seeking to inform Oliphant of new information. This is demonstrated by the closing remarks which state that

Mr. Casey thought it right and fair to you to send you the forgoing notes, so that you would be all the more readily able to help towards ensuring that the meetings serve their publicly stated purposes and do not slip away into channels that would defeat those very objectives.⁸²

⁷⁹ See Clarke's *Australia: A Concise Political and Social History*, op cit, p. 223

⁸⁰ NAA, A10302/1, 60/151, letter from Casey to Tange dated 10 August 1959.

⁸¹ NAA, A10302/1, 60/151, letter from Casey to H.C. Nicholson dated 14 August 1959.

⁸² NAA, A10302/1, 60/151, letter from P.R. Heydon, on behalf of Casey, to Oliphant dated 20 August 1959.

Casey gave no indication that he believed Oliphant should withdraw from the Congress. This letter was simply designed to give Oliphant, and others of a similar disposition, the opportunity to view all the facts before committing themselves to the Congress in the hope that, should they attend, these individuals could contribute to ensuring that the resolutions of the Congress remained balanced. In the context of the evidence provided by ASIO, the Government's actions appear reasonable.

Parliamentary debate begins

While Casey was still overseas, the Congress became a matter of conjecture in the Federal Parliament. On 6 October in the House of Representatives, Mr. Aston brought the Congress to the attention of the acting Minister for External Affairs, Sir Garfield Barwick. Aston asked to be informed of the links the Congress had to the APC and the Assembly for Peace, 'both known Communist front movements', and whether there were 'Communists actively engaged in preparation for this congress'.⁸³ Barwick responded by noting that Casey had made a number of statements on the matter, and conceded that 'this congress is truly a Communist front'.⁸⁴ Moreover, 'it is not intended to be a vehicle for any impartial discussion of a topic with which we are all most concerned - disarmament and peace'.⁸⁵

Barwick subsequently dismissed the Congress as nothing more than an attempt 'to get highly respectable citizens to associate themselves with the congress in the hope that their association will benefit Communist propaganda...'.⁸⁶ This gives further evidence as to why the Government was justifiably concerned by the activities of the peace movement. Barwick explicitly detailed the Government's position when he stated that Communists conducted the Congress in the hope that 'those people who have high and philanthropic motives will not observe the boundary which will exist between their high-mindedness

⁸³ CPD [H of R] vol. 25, 6 October 1959, p. 1749.

⁸⁴ Ibid, p. 1749.

⁸⁵ Ibid, p. 1749.

⁸⁶ Ibid, p. 1749.

and some Communist ideology'.⁸⁷ This highlights the Government's concern that the peace movement afforded the Communist Party the opportunity to infiltrate the psyche of the general population through covert means. In concluding Barwick emotively highlighted the previous record of international Communists on the issue of peace, when he stated that

When they speak of peace they do not mean peace of the kind that we know. After all, Hungary was at peace with Russia; Tibet was at peace with China; India was at peace with China; and, as far as I know, no one suggests that Laos was not at peace with Viet Nam.⁸⁸

The introduction of Barwick into the debate, in the absence of Casey, would prove to be a crucial point where the seemingly restrained actions of Casey would be replaced by more intensive efforts to sabotage the Congress, as will be demonstrated in more detail later.

The Opposition, led most vociferously by Cairns, the member for Yarra since 1955, attacked the Government's perspective on the Congress. In an adjournment on the following day, Cairns answered Barwick's comments of the previous day by noting that the opinion of the Attorney-General was 'a particularly illiberal opinion'.⁸⁹ Cairns went on to document the number of notable individuals and organisations which had provided their support for the Congress: the Methodist Church of Victoria, the Baptist Church in Victoria, and the Australian Labor Party's Victorian Branch, among others.⁹⁰ Among the individuals Cairns named were Sir Mark Oliphant, Professor Walter Murdoch, Air Marshal Sir George Jones and Professor A.K. Stout. Cairns wished for 'the House and the public to contrast the opinion of those distinguished Australians with the opinion of this little man, this Minister. Has he no respect?'.⁹¹ Cairns also drew on the spectre of the McCarthy period in the United States, stating that:

⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 1749.

⁸⁸ Ibid, p. 1749.

⁸⁹ CPD [H of R] vol. 25, 7 October 1959, p. 1889.

⁹⁰ Ibid, p. 1889.

⁹¹ Ibid, p. 1889.

I thought that McCarthyism had finished. The world is crying out for co-operation, for international understanding and for an end of suspicion, but this pint-sized McCarthy who is temporarily the acting Minister for External Affairs, comes in here and spits in the eye of all those who are concerned to improve international relations.⁹²

Cairns commented that the actions of the Minister were not the actions of 'an objective observer, but of an illiberal politician, a reactionary one, one who is again introducing into this community an upsurge of McCarthyism'.⁹³

The member for Lilley, Bruce Wight⁹⁴, commenced his response to Cairns by casting aspersions on his character, contending that

...no one is at all surprised when the honourable member for Yarra (Mr. Cairns) rises...to launch an attack on the person who has had the presumption to attack his friends of the Communist Party.⁹⁵

Wight also questioned the validity of Cairns' comments. Wight noted that the Labor Leader of the Opposition in Victoria, Mr. Stoneham, had made it clear that he had absolutely no association with the Congress and its organisers.⁹⁶ Cairns interjected that Wight was lying, but after the Deputy Speaker intervened Cairns was forced to withdraw his statement, although he maintained that Wight's comment was at least 'an untruth'.⁹⁷ Wight then turned his attack onto the character of the Congress and its organisers. Wight was particularly concerned that the Congress organisers were falsely claiming that a number of the proposed sponsors of the Congress were in fact established sponsors. Wight believed that, 'it would appear from a cursory examination of the letterhead, that

⁹² Ibid, p. 1890.

⁹³ Ibid, p. 1890.

⁹⁴ Bruce McDonald Wight became MHR for Lilley in Queensland in 1949 and he was also a member of the Parliamentary Foreign Affairs Committee in 1959. See *Who's Who in Australia*, 1959, p. 846.

⁹⁵ CPD [H of R] vol. 25, 7 October 1959, p. 1891.

⁹⁶ Ibid, p. 1891.

⁹⁷ Ibid, p. 1891.

the people whose names are listed were supporters of this Communist-front organisation...'.⁹⁸ Wight suggested that

If an organisation is able to place a list of highly reputable people on its letterhead, one automatically concludes that it is a reputable organisation, that a reputable conference is to be held because it is to be supported by those people. On a closer examination of the letterhead one finds that the said people are not associated with the Communist front organisation at all, that they have been invited to be associated with the Communists in this peace conference.⁹⁹

Wight further stated that the tactics being used were a common Communist tactic designed to 'inveigle simple-minded people into believing that it is supported by prominent people'.¹⁰⁰ Wight's views reflect the kind of reservations which had continually been expressed by the Government about the peace movement throughout the entire 1950s. The Government maintained its belief that the peace movement represented an insidious attempt by the Communist Party to infiltrate the greater population. The attempt to associate reputable organisations and individuals with the peace movement clearly remained an area of great concern to the Government, which would need to be addressed. However, despite continued reservations about the peace movement, the Menzies Government had yet to take any kind of substantial action against the impending Congress, in contrast to its earlier actions in regard to the 1953 Convention for Peace and War.

The Opposition attempted to maintain the moral high-ground. The member for Lalor, Mr. Pollard, suggested that it should not matter if the organisation is Communist inspired. Pollard stated

Is it not all to the good that members of church organisations, bona fide Labour organisations, the Liberal Party and all well-disposed bodies should go in among these

⁹⁸ Ibid, p. 1892.

⁹⁹ Ibid, p. 1892.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, p. 1892.

people and see that the activities of the congress are directed along sound Christian lines, with the Christian objective of peace.¹⁰¹

These views were similar to those of Oliphant, who believed that the best way to combat the Communist involvement in the Congress was to attend it with the intention of providing opposing voices to those of the Communists. Pollard also drew parallels between the meeting being held in Melbourne and international gatherings: 'It is not very long since Her Majesty the Queen entertained Bulganin and Krushchev at Buckingham Palace'.¹⁰² Pollard believed that 'according to the view of the Government supporters, it is a pity that her Majesty did not know that it was a part of a Communist front'.¹⁰³ Pollard also noted the conferences which had been conducted between Macmillan, Eisenhower and Krushchev.

The Opposition's argument is questionable. Pollard could not understand how the Australian Government could oppose a Congress involving Communists at a time when Communist and Western Powers were on speaking terms. However, it is clear that, in the example of the Queen's meeting, the Queen knew the character and beliefs of the men she was meeting with. On the other hand, the Government had amply demonstrated that their opposition to the Congress was due to the fact that the Communist Party had sought to conceal its role in the development and running of the Congress. Therefore the Government's stance can partially be explained by the fact that, although they had substantial information that pointed to Communist control of the Congress, the Communist Party had attempted to conceal its role, which gave the impression that they had suspicious motives for conducting the Congress. Mr Freeth gave voice to this opinion when he stated

¹⁰¹ Ibid, p. 1893.

¹⁰² Ibid, p. 1893.

¹⁰³ Ibid, p. 1893.

I say that there is no objection to conferences of any sort as long as people who go there know the kind of thing they may be committing themselves to, and the kind of use that may be made afterwards of what they said.¹⁰⁴

These thoughts are similar to Casey's, in his letter to Oliphant, where he claimed he did not want to dissuade Oliphant, he simply wished to warn him of his reservations about the Congress. Considering the existing relationship between Oliphant and Casey this did not appear to have constituted a case where the Government acted irrationally, considering there had been no substantial attempt to prevent the participation of individuals at the Congress. In this initial period of parliamentary debate, the Government continued to hold its ground against the attack from the Opposition. However, circumstances would conspire to place the Government on the defensive in subsequent debates.

Exposed! The covert activities of Barwick, Wentworth and Spry

The conflict over the Congress which had been simmering for some time, exploded on 24 October when *Nation* reported an incident which proved that the fears of Dickie, and others, who believed that the Government was covertly trying to sabotage the Congress had come to fruition. *Nation* had found evidence that there had been a meeting between one of the sponsors of the Congress, Professor A.K. Stout,¹⁰⁵ and the Director-General of ASIO, Spry, at the University of Sydney.¹⁰⁶ Stout was Head of the Department of Moral Philosophy at the University. *Nation* stated that Spry 'and a member of his staff appeared at the University, and had a polite discussion with Professor Stout, attempting to persuade him to withdraw his sponsorship'. It was then suggested by *Nation* that 'the use of public servants to propagate the well-known views of the Liberal Party on the Congress has a pre-history'. The pre-history being referred to was the fact that letters had been sent by the Department of External Affairs to a number of sponsors. As has already been demonstrated, this practice was not necessarily outside the boundaries of fair play in that

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, p. 1896.

¹⁰⁵ Alan Kerr Stout was the Professor of Philosophy at the University of Sydney, a position he had held since 1939. See *Who's Who in Australia*, 1959, p. 765.

¹⁰⁶ *Nation*, no. 29, October 24 1959, pp. 3-4, 'For You Must Know Security...'

the Government was in fact responding to requests for information, rather than forcing their view on sponsors.

Nation went further with its accusations, claiming that ‘the operations of the Security Service have extra-ministerial assistance’. *Nation* was particularly concerned about the fact that W.C. Wentworth ‘knew all about the impending visit before it took place’. *Nation* was damning in its assessment of the tactics of the Government in this case, believing the ‘use of public servants in this issue is reprehensible’.¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, it was argued that the apparent relationship between Wentworth and the security organisation was ‘contrary to the bi-partisanship of Security’. It concluded that

Government members may hold their own discussions with persons like Professor Stout if they want to. Better still, if Mr. Menzies has evidence that the Peace Congress is run by invisible strings from Moscow, and will do serious harm if non-Communists participate, we shall welcome the evidence on the table in the House. If not, he should deploy Brigadier Spry into fresh fields. In either case, the use of a Public Servant as a messenger boy for a Liberal Party group is an insult to the service as well as to Australian citizens.¹⁰⁸

It has been demonstrated in previous cases, most notably in the lead-up to the Convention on Peace and War in 1953, that Menzies had not been reluctant to voice his disapproval of certain activities of the peace movement. His silence in this instance, hinted at by *Nation*, is worth further questioning.

Menzies' change of heart

Why then did Menzies choose to remain silent about the impending 1959 Congress? In the period leading up to the Congress Menzies had become an increasingly vocal advocate of summit talks between Communist powers and the West. On 30 June 1959, while visiting London, Menzies commented that he was ‘convinced that continued

¹⁰⁷ Ibid p. 3.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, p. 4.

meetings and conferences between the Great Powers will eventually find the solution of our problems'.¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, he believed that 'we have nothing to fear, nothing to lose, and everything to gain from face to face meeting'. On his return, Menzies presented a statement to the House of Representatives about certain aspects of his journey. He commented that he was 'delighted' to find that US President Eisenhower had 'arranged an exchange of visits with Mr. Krushchev and that he would also take the opportunity of personal consultation with European leaders'.¹¹⁰ Menzies also addressed the recent visit by British Prime Minister Macmillan to Moscow. Menzies believed that:

Mr. Macmillan's visit to Moscow, though I have no doubt it was the subject of some criticism or reservations both in Europe and in the United States, was in my opinion a real stroke of statesmanship.¹¹¹

Menzies' beliefs in regard to communism had clearly altered significantly in the period between 1953 and 1959. The success of the communist inspired peace movement, in gaining wider acceptance among the community, was a pivotal reason for Menzies' decision to endorse increased interaction between communists and the wider community. He stated:

I have changed my mind because, in the past two years, we have seen such a tremendous acceleration of the Soviet propaganda about a peace offensive - as if only the Communists wanted peace and we didn't...It is a terrible thought that the Communists should be able to represent themselves, and themselves alone, as wanting peace.¹¹²

Menzies thus believed that it was time for 'a democratic peace offensive' which would involve talking to Communists 'anywhere and at any time'. Although he was advocating meetings on an official level, it is still possible that Menzies' sentiments extended to increased meetings between Communists and non-Communists in the wider community.

¹⁰⁹ *Melbourne Sun*, 30 June 1959, 'PM has "New Hope of Peaceful Future"' .

¹¹⁰ CPD [H of R] vol. 24, 13 August 1959, p. 185.

¹¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 189.

The actions of Casey, when he freely accepted Oliphant's decision to attend the Congress is a reflection of this change of heart by the Menzies Government. However, this change of heart had clearly not filtered down to some areas of the Government and intelligence communities, as had been demonstrated by the episode reported in *Nation*.

Debate intensifies in the House of Representatives

While the Opposition had been unable to get the upper hand in the previous discussion about the Congress, it was not about to let this opportunity slip. On 27 October, the next session of Parliament had barely opened before Frank Crean¹¹³ saw fit to raise the issue with the Prime Minister. Crean immediately asked if the Prime Minister had initiated Spry's visit to Stout.¹¹⁴ Crean had given his own support to the Congress and thus asked the Prime Minister if, in light of the circumstances, he should withdraw his support. Crean was also concerned that ASIO was being used to further Government causes. He believed ASIO's evidence must be of a seditious nature if the security organisation was intent upon making personal visits to sponsors, that is of course unless 'the service is to be regarded as a purely political instrument'.¹¹⁵

Menzies chose not to respond, immediately deflecting the debate onto the shoulders of the Attorney-General, and acting Minister for External Affairs, Garfield Barwick. Barwick set about presenting his side of the story. He stated that he had wished to inform those individuals who had been named as sponsors of the real nature of the Congress, as he understood it.¹¹⁶ Barwick claimed that a newspaper had denigrated the Congress and that Professor Stout had wanted to confirm the accuracy of the allegations he had read. Stout had been, until this point, unaware of the true nature of the Congress. On being told of Stout's interest, Barwick then

¹¹² *Age*, 26 August 1959, 'Mr. Menzies Calls for Peace Offensive - West Should Take Initiative in Talks by World Leaders'.

¹¹³ Frank Crean was the MHR for Melbourne Ports, a position he had held since 1951. He also became an executive of the Parliamentary Labor Party in 1958. See *Who's Who in Australia*, 1959, p. 201.

¹¹⁴ CPD [H of R] vol. 25, 27 October 1959, p. 2279.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 2279.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 2280.

...asked the head of the security service whether he was prepared to afford information of a kind that could be given publicly if need be. He said that he would, if Professor Stout indicated clearly that he wished to see him.

Spry then proceeded to visit Stout. Barwick indicated that 'he had no instructions from me other than that he must not attempt to persuade the Professor. He was simply to put before the Professor facts as he knew them'. Barwick believed that it was 'within my province to offer that information'. Further to this, Barwick stated that he had received similar requests from the Archbishop of Sydney and a Methodist clergyman, and that they had also been furnished with information about the Congress. Barwick felt that his actions were justified, for the reason that 'in my view this congress was travelling under false colours and it was of concern that it should travel under its right colours'. Now that the information had been provided to those who sought it, Barwick argued that 'those who wish to be associated with it are as free as air to do so'.¹¹⁷

Dr. Evatt then questioned Barwick. Evatt was worried that Barwick, in his general condemnation of the organisers and sponsors of the Congress, may be casting aspersions on individuals who were undeserving. Evatt thus called on Barwick to 'make a considered statement to the House of the nature and character of the information given by the Director-General of Security'.¹¹⁸ Evatt believed that if Barwick refused to respond 'the matter has all the features of McCarthyism at its worst'.¹¹⁹ Barwick promised to do as Evatt had asked. Later on that night, during an adjournment, the matter was raised again. Crean was again the instigator, voicing his concern that another sponsor, Sir Mark Oliphant, had withdrawn his support.¹²⁰ Oliphant had continued to give his support to the Congress, despite the warnings of Casey. However, the withdrawal of Stout and the sentiments of the Anglican Bishops had finally prompted him to end his sponsorship of the Congress. Oliphant wrote to Dickie that the developments which had taken place would

¹¹⁷ Ibid, p. 2280.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, p. 2280.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, 2280.

...serve to drive still more people from the Congress and will make it inevitable that there will be very little representation of the points of view of those who oppose communism. Therefore, it seems to me that the Congress can achieve very little, if anything, for whatever conclusions it promulgates will already bear the stamp of Communism.¹²¹

Oliphant did not blame his withdrawal on the participation of Communists or the endorsement of the Congress by the Communist Party. He instead stated that 'the organisers have not done all in their power to ensure that membership of the Congress is truly representative of Australian opinion'.¹²²

ASIO: Intimidator or information gatherer?

Crean presented an excerpt of Oliphant's letter of withdrawal in Parliament and then drew the House's attention to the fact that Secretary of the External Affairs Department, P.R. Heydon,¹²³ had previously corresponded with Oliphant on the nature of the Congress, giving the impression that Heydon's letter had somehow influenced Oliphant's decision. The fact that the letter to Oliphant had predated his withdrawal by some months suggests that Oliphant's motives for his withdrawal must have lain elsewhere. The assertions in this letter have already been discussed and require no further elaboration. In light of the letter and its contents, Crean wished to know where the Department of External Affairs would obtain information of the type presented in the letter. Surmising that ASIO must have been responsible for providing the information, Crean asked 'what is the nexus, as it were, that exists between the security service and the officers of the Department of External Affairs? Where does one begin and where does the other end?'.¹²⁴ In the circumstances, Crean believed that

¹²⁰ Ibid, p. 2344.

¹²¹ *Herald*, 28 October 1959, 'Another Sponsor Withdraws from Peace Talk'.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Peter Richard Heydon became Assistant Secretary of the Department of External Affairs in 1959, following a stint as Australia's High Commissioner to India between 1955 and 1959. See *Who's Who in Australia*, 1959, p. 380.

¹²⁴ CPD [H of R] vol. 25, 27 October 1959, p. 2344.

The Prime Minister has a case to answer here to-night. He must say what he believes the role of the security service to be. Is it purely to cover seditious activities about which, if they can be proved, action can be taken in the courts of law, or is it, as I can believe it is becoming, a body to intimidate by intruding upon the political views of certain sections of the community?¹²⁵

The continued persistence of Crean forced Menzies to respond. Menzies commenced by outlining his understanding of the role of ASIO. He stated that the security service

...operates in a direct sense under the Prime Minister, but is attached to the Attorney-General's Department for certain administrative purposes. It reports to me on matters about which it thinks I should be informed. It undoubtedly maintains contact with the department of External Affairs. It would be a very remarkable state of affairs if it did not, since the Department of External Affairs is charged with responsibility for our relations with other countries and is in charge of a general policy which...consists of resistance to Communist aggression.¹²⁶

Menzies' response provides an important insight into the workings of ASIO. Firstly, it is clear from this statement that the close relationship between ASIO and the External Affairs Department, which was described earlier, was within the boundaries of Government protocol. Menzies' statement also provides an insight into Barwick's ability to influence Spry into delivering the information to Stout.

Cutting across the pattern: The relationship between Barwick and Spry

Barwick's role as Attorney-General, which entitled him to have close contact with ASIO, gave him a working relationship with the Director-General. The nature of the Attorney-General's role in regard to ASIO was explained by Menzies when he outlined ASIO's charter in July 1950. Menzies explained that, 'the Organisation forms part of the Attorney-General's Department, and the Attorney-General will be responsible for it to

¹²⁵ Ibid, p. 2344.

Parliament'.¹²⁷ The strength of this relationship was reiterated on 1 November 1956 when Spry detailed his understanding of the control and direction of ASIO. Spry stated that

Under the charter given to the Director-General, the Attorney-General was responsible for ASIO to the Parliament and the Director-General of ASIO has always sought his directions where it has been necessary.¹²⁸

This makes it clear that Barwick, as Attorney-General, was capable of exerting a considerable degree of influence over Spry. Barwick acknowledged this in his autobiography when he stated that, as Attorney-General, he 'became closely associated with ASIO'.¹²⁹ He described himself as being in 'direct control' of the organisation with Spry, with 'all the contacts between the Prime Minister and the organisation' being made through Barwick.¹³⁰

However, Barwick's relationship with the security organisation had its roots in 1954, when Barwick worked with ASIO on the Petrov Royal Commission. Barwick, in his position as a QC, was asked by Menzies to accept a brief for ASIO during the Commission.¹³¹ In his time working with Spry and the security organisation, Barwick formed a high opinion of the Director-General, considering him to be 'energetic, imaginative and efficient'.¹³² David Marr also recognised the existence of a relationship between Spry and Barwick. He emphasised that, when Barwick became Attorney-General he had become responsible 'for the administration of his old client ASIO, and on entering the ministry renewed his acquaintance with its director-general Brigadier Charles

¹²⁶ Ibid, p. 2345.

¹²⁷ NAA, A6122/43, 1428, folio 25 'Charter of the Australian Security intelligence Organisation', written by Menzies on 6 July 1950, p. 1.

¹²⁸ Ibid, folio 3, document entitled 'Circumstances Leading to the Enactment of the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation Act 1956', p. 7.

¹²⁹ See Barwick's memoir, *A Radical Tory: Garfield Barwick's Reflections and Recollections*, The Federation Press, Sydney, 1995, p. 134.

¹³⁰ Ibid, p. 134.

¹³¹ For discussion of Barwick's role in the Petrov Royal Commission see David Marr's biography, *Barwick*, pp. 113-14; see also Barwick's memoir, *A Radical Tory*, p. 132.

¹³² See *A Radical Tory*, p. 133.

Spry'.¹³³ Marr acknowledged that this relationship between Spry and Barwick 'cut across the pattern' of normal contact, whereby the Prime Minister had direct contact with ASIO.¹³⁴ Thus, when Barwick took his place as the acting Minister for External Affairs, in the absence of Casey, he was able to exploit his previous association with the Director-General and ASIO by gaining Spry's compliance with his plan to adversely influence Stout. Despite Barwick's protestations that Spry was simply acting as a messenger, it would be naive for one to believe that sending the most important member of the Security Service would not unduly influence an individual. In this case it is clear that Barwick had overstepped the mark.

Menzies understood the role ASIO should be playing. Menzies described ASIO as the nations 'principal weapon for gathering knowledge about Communist activity'.¹³⁵ Menzies conceded that the circumstances surrounding Spry's visit to Stout were an 'exceptional case'.¹³⁶ Furthermore, Menzies realised that it was 'not the function of the Security Intelligence Organisation to go around persuading people. It has no instructions to do so and, with that one exception on request, it has not done so'.¹³⁷ It therefore appears that Menzies was in fact admitting that the Stout incident was a matter which should not have been handled by ASIO. In his outline of the ASIO charter, Menzies made it clear that ASIO's activities should remain politically neutral. He stated that

...the Organisation should be kept absolutely free from any political bias or influence, and nothing should be done that might lend colour to any suggestion that it is concerned with the interest of any particular section of the community, or with matters other than the safety of Australia.¹³⁸

¹³³ Marr, *op cit*, p. 147.

¹³⁴ *Ibid*, p. 147.

¹³⁵ CPD [H of R] vol. 25, 27 October 1959, p. 2345.

¹³⁶ *Ibid*, p. 2345.

¹³⁷ *Ibid*, p. 2345.

¹³⁸ NAA, A6122/43, 1428, folio 25.

A statement by Spry in 1952, concurred with Menzies beliefs:

Purely from the point of view of A.S.I.O., the public dissemination of information by it is contrary to the very purpose of the Organisation. The function of my Organisation, amongst others, is to safeguard important Government information from reaching unauthorised sources - in other words, a protective rather than an aggressive role.¹³⁹

This shows that the activities of Spry in 1959 were in contradiction to his own understanding of the role of the security forces. It is therefore apparent that Spry must have been unduly influenced into breaking protocol due to his relationship with Barwick. The activities of Barwick, in seeking to use the security service to achieve specific ends which were not concerned with the immediate safety of the nation, clearly constituted a breach of the normal procedure which should be adopted by Government officials in regard to ASIO. This incident provides an example of a case where a Government official overstepped the mark in his fight against the Communist menace, as represented by the peace movement. However, the activities of Barwick do not necessarily reflect poorly on the Government as a whole, as it is unlikely that the situation would have eventuated had Casey still been at his post. This was reiterated by a member of the Opposition, Les Haylen¹⁴⁰, who stated that 'the Minister for External Affairs (Mr. Casey) would not have made such a faux pas'.¹⁴¹

Wentworth's role

Meanwhile, in Parliament Haylen turned the focus onto the role W.C. Wentworth.¹⁴² Haylen addressed the statements made in the *Nation*, in particular the suggestion that Wentworth had colluded with ASIO in the matter of providing individuals with information about the Congress. Haylen introduced fresh evidence to the House that

¹³⁹ Letter from Spry to the Secretary of the Prime Minister's Department, A.S. Brown, dated 27 March 1952, NAA, A1209/23, 57/4416.

¹⁴⁰ Leslie Haylen was a former journalist turned Labor politician who won the previously strong Liberal seat of Parkes in 1943. See his memoir *20 Years Hard Labor*, Macmillan, South Melbourne, 1969

¹⁴¹ CPD[H of R] vol. 25, 27 October 1959, p. 2348.

Wentworth had been disseminating information. This involved a statement made by W.J. Latona, a member of Wentworth's electorate and also joint secretary of the Preparatory Committee of the Peace Congress. Latona's statutory declaration centred around a phone conversation with Wentworth which aimed at gaining more information about the Congress. Wentworth told Latona that 'the congress was Communist-dominated, and that he had proof'. When Latona asked to know the nature of this proof, Wentworth 'offered to send a security officer to see me'. Latona refused such a measure for the reason that '...I considered that their employment as an instrument of political pressure by Mr. Wentworth or his party was too reminiscent of Hitler's tactics'. Wentworth defended his attempt to use the security service on the basis that the Communists in the peace movement 'are our enemies'.

Haylen expressed his extreme displeasure with the state of affairs, noting that 'the machinations of the honourable member for Mackellar' were behind the withdrawals of Stout and Oliphant, among others.¹⁴³ Haylen believed that

Things have reached a pretty pass when the members of the security service...are allowed to become the police officers of a police state. This development has been encouraged by the activities of the honourable member for Mackellar. What a tragedy, and what a pity, to see a security officer being led to every little bung-hole by the honourable member for Mackellar, who dances like a ferret in front of a burrow and says, "There is one in there. Bring him out".¹⁴⁴

In the face of Haylen's comments, Wentworth was forced to concede that he had played a role in the events. Firstly, Wentworth acknowledged that he had been responsible for drawing Stout's reservations about the Congress to the attention of Barwick.¹⁴⁵ Barwick had then acted upon this information by arranging for Spry to meet with Stout. On this matter, Wentworth defended his actions by commenting that 'we have not been doing

¹⁴² CPD[H of R] vol. 25, 27 October 1959, pp. 2347-8.

¹⁴³ Ibid, pp. 2347-8.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 2348.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 2349.

enough in these matters. We have not been telling the people what the Communists are doing and who the Communists are'.¹⁴⁶

On the matter of W.J. Latona, Wentworth agreed that he had been contacted by Latona but denied that he had specifically consented to send a member of the security service to furnish him with information.¹⁴⁷ He instead intended to send someone 'who would know something of the background of this congress'.¹⁴⁸ In response to Wentworth's admissions, Cairns rightly attacked the Prime Minister, who had given the impression that the Stout incident was an 'isolated case'.¹⁴⁹ Cairns wished to know if the Prime Minister approved of the activities of Wentworth, a man 'whose political bias and fanaticism is well known', in using ASIO as an 'instrument of political intimidation to attempt to secure the ends of Liberal Party political policy'.¹⁵⁰ Cairns also drew the attention of the House to the fact that

The Minister for External Affairs (Mr. Casey) advised Professor Oliphant on 29th August to go to this conference to see that its aims were not defeated; but to-day, the honourable gentleman who is in his place, the Attorney-General, is doing everything he can to intimidate and dissuade people from going to the conference.¹⁵¹

Cairns commented that the 'conflict in attitude is worth noting'.¹⁵² Until his departure overseas, Casey had given no indication that he would take action of this kind, seemingly content with his efforts, to that stage, to highlight the nature of the Congress. On the evidence provided it appears that the events which had occurred in the absence of Casey were directed entirely by Barwick, in collusion with Wentworth and Spry.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 2349.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 2349.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 2349.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 2350.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 2350.

¹⁵¹ Ibid, p. 2351.

¹⁵² Ibid, p. 2351.

Wentworth and Spry

On face value, it would appear that Wentworth may have played a significant role in getting the security service to visit certain individuals. The evidence provided earlier, of correspondence between Wentworth and Spry, with Wentworth attempting to impress his opinion upon the Director-General, indicates that there was a history of correspondence between the two. However, this does not mean that Spry was open to the advances of Wentworth. Wentworth had a habit of pestering the security organisation, and in particular Spry, on matters regarding the communist 'menace'. As early as 4 July 1950, Wentworth was seeking to gain access to the 'Security Library' so as to examine the 'filing system in so far as it relates to publications'.¹⁵³ He was then informed by the acting Prime Minister that Ministers should 'not concern themselves with the workings of the Security Service', and that 'it would be most undesirable...for any Minister or Member to embark upon an examination of any part of the Organisation or its affairs'.¹⁵⁴

During March 1953, Spry spoke to Attorney General Spicer about his displeasure with Wentworth's persistent badgering of ASIO. Spry asserted that he had 'not found one case in which Mr. Wentworth has given valuable authentic information', although he did concede that 'it is better to receive a lot of useless information in order to obtain something of real value on rare occasions'.¹⁵⁵ However, Spry was particularly concerned about Wentworth's penchant for asking 'for available security information concerning individuals'. Spry determined that, in future, Wentworth would need to make 'a statement of the reason for the request and the use to which the required information would be put'.¹⁵⁶ On 11 March 1953, Spry compiled a memorandum which detailed his discussions with the Attorney-General. He detailed that he had told Spicer that Wentworth 'was given to outrageous conclusions on very small inferences' and that no information would be

¹⁵³ See letter from Wentworth to the Prime Minister dated 4 July 1950, NAA, A1209/23, 57/4416.

¹⁵⁴ See undated letter from the Acting Prime Minister to Wentworth which refers to the letter from Wentworth dated 4 July 1950. NAA, A1209/23, 57/4416.

¹⁵⁵ Page 1 of a letter from Spry to Attorney-General Spicer, March 1953, NAA, A6119/64, 500.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p. 2.

supplied to him 'unless there were very good reasons for such'.¹⁵⁷ Furthermore, Spry had reinforced that 'A.S.I.O was completely non-political and we prided ourselves on such, and that requests for information from Mr. Wentworth were making me very uneasy'.¹⁵⁸ This statement particularly highlights Spry's discomfort with Wentworth's advances toward ASIO. Spry's sentiments toward Wentworth, suggest that it was Barwick's role in the affair which was pivotal to gaining the support of the security service. In effect it appears that Barwick acted as the middle-man between the security forces and Wentworth.

Despite the clear breach of protocol that had occurred through Barwick's use of ASIO to aid his and Wentworth's cause, there were mitigating factors. For instance, it is apparent that in both the Stout and Latona cases, Wentworth had been the one who had been approached. Wentworth argued that Latona had 'been frequently in touch with me before in regard to matters of this character'.¹⁵⁹ On the particular occasion in question, Latona had contacted Wentworth's secretary to try and organise a meeting. Latona then asked Wentworth to 'please tell me the facts'.¹⁶⁰ Therefore, this episode bears striking resemblance to the events surrounding the correspondence between Casey and Oliphant, in that on all occasions the Government officials were responding to requests rather than instigating actions. However, while Casey had chosen to respond in a discreet and rational manner, Wentworth and Barwick had overstepped the mark by inducing the involvement of ASIO, through Spry.

Menzies made his feelings on the matter clear in a press conference on 13 November. Menzies was asked if Barwick's decision to ask Spry to visit Stout was an exercise of administrative authority or whether it was a matter of policy. Menzies replied that he did not consider Spry's visit to be 'normal practice'.¹⁶¹ Menzies stated that

¹⁵⁷ Memorandum from Spry for 'Record Purposes' dated 11 March 1953, NAA, A6119/64, 500.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ CPD [H of R] vol. 25, 27 October 1959, p. 2349.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 2349.

¹⁶¹ *Melbourne Sun*, 13 November 1959, 'Spry Visit Not Normal'.

The normal practice is that the Security Service reports to me. The Security Service exists to inform the Government and does not normally inform other people about the matters for which it is responsible.¹⁶²

However, in this case the Attorney-General and the security organisation chose to use the incriminating evidence in their possession to try and directly dissuade people from taking part in the Congress. Previously ASIO had been prepared to play out the part of the shadowy accomplice, working behind the scenes to provide the Government with information to attack the peace movement. However, in this case ASIO took a more hands-on approach to its prey, with Spry being prepared to become directly involved in the attempt to undermine this particular Congress. The fact that Spry was prepared to take this action, at a time when the Cold War was less intense than previously, further emphasises that ASIO became more concerned with the peace movement in the face of the seemingly diminished threat from the Communist Party itself.

Despite Menzies' apparent admission that Barwick had acted outside the boundary of normal Government procedure, the Prime Minister believed that, in the circumstances, the actions of the Security Service were probably justified. Menzies also maintained that the evidence given to Stout by Spry was 'information which had already been published in newspapers'.¹⁶³ Menzies thus tried to rationalise the activities of Spry. Barwick echoed these thoughts when he stated that 'there is nothing in any way reprehensible in the communication by the Security Service of information, having no security classification, to a private citizen at his own request'.¹⁶⁴ Despite the apparent inconsequential nature of the information presented, the use of Spry to convey the message was clearly designed to illustrate to Stout the degree of importance which should be afforded to the information. Regardless of the nature of the material, the use of the most important member of the Security Service to deliver this information was a significant breach of the normal

¹⁶² *The News*, 13 November 1959, 'PM Criticises Barwick, Spry'.

¹⁶³ *Melbourne Sun*, 13 November 1959.

¹⁶⁴ Barwick wrote this in response to a letter from MP P.J. Clarey, who was acting on behalf of the Bendigo Trades Hall Council, which had drafted a resolution condemning Barwick's use of the security forces. Barwick ensured Clarey that 'no coercion, persuasion or intimidation took place'. NAA, M1505/1, 38.

relationship between the Government and ASIO, as Menzies himself admitted and has been demonstrated previously.

Government fears justified? The aftermath of the Congress

The question that remains is whether the Government was correct in its assumption that the Congress was Communist infiltrated and dominated. In 1960, SEATO documented the degree to which the congress had been influenced by Communists. It was argued that 'the election of Communist delegates was avoided as this was considered a dangerous step'.¹⁶⁵ Further to this the Party had chosen to remain 'in the background' in the lead-up to the Congress.¹⁶⁶ However, in the weeks immediately preceding the Congress the Communist Party chose to increase its activities. This assertion was supported by ASIO which reported on 5 November that 'the Communist Party has been forced to show its hand more openly'.¹⁶⁷ SEATO argued that Communist tactics 'revealed themselves from the outset' with the passing of a recommendation which prohibited 'reference to the past actions of any nation'.¹⁶⁸ SEATO believed that this move was designed to 'preclude discussion on Hungary, Tibet and similar skeletons in the Communist cupboard'.¹⁶⁹

An example of how SEATO came to the conclusion that the Congress was covertly controlled by the Communist Party can be found in its outlining of the make-up of the Management Committee of the Citizens Conference of the Congress. SEATO determined that, of the twenty-nine members of this Committee, 'six were current members of the Communist Party, two were former members and four were known Communist sympathisers'.¹⁷⁰ Moreover, 'Party members and sympathisers were dispersed throughout the four sub-committees of the management Committee, in such a way as to influence the procedure at every level'. This illustrates that SEATO had considerable evidence which

¹⁶⁵ NAA, A1838/2, 563/5 pt 1, folio 250.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, folio 249.

¹⁶⁷ NAA, 6122/39, 1301, folio 184.

¹⁶⁸ NAA, A1838/2, 563/5, pt 1, folio 249.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid, folio 249.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, folio 249.

pointed to a large degree of Communist involvement at a high level in certain sectors of the Congress. While this does not mean that the Communists exerted total control over the Congress, it does give some justification to those who believed that the Communist Party would attempt to influence the Congress.

While SEATO provided a variety of other evidence which pointed toward Communist influence over the Congress, if not control, it determined that the 'most effective public evidence of the Communist bias of the Congress was provided by the resolutions which it rejected'.¹⁷¹ Among the rejected resolutions were;

- (b) Freedom of the press, including freedom from Government control;
- (c) withdrawal of national forces to their own territories, including withdrawal from Algeria, Hungary and Tibet;
- (d) Release of writers and others imprisoned for their political views;
- (e) Freedom of the people of Formosa to decide their own form of Government.¹⁷²

A resolution aimed at dissociating the Congress from the WPC was also defeated. This adds further weight to the argument that the Communist Party did exert a considerable degree of influence over the Congress.

One of the invited guests of the Congress, J.B. Priestly, concurred with the sentiments of SEATO. Priestly and his wife expressed the conviction that they wished to associate themselves 'with the minority opinion expressed at the writers' and artists' commission'.¹⁷³ While this commission had resolved that every 'true artist' should be entitled to freely express themselves, Priestly, among others had sought to add that 'we recognise that many writers in a number of countries do not yet have this freedom'.¹⁷⁴ The Commission was also asked to make a protest on behalf of the imprisoned Hungarian

¹⁷¹ Ibid, folio 248.

¹⁷² Ibid, folio 247.

¹⁷³ *Herald*, 13 November 1959.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

writer Tibor Dery, however this request was denied.¹⁷⁵ It therefore seems clear that Communists were able to influence the Congress, as the Government had feared. However, Priestly's reservations about the Congress did not translate into support for the actions of the Government and ASIO. Priestly commented on the seeming irrationality of the Government and ASIO's activities, observing that 'I think your political atmosphere down here is a little out of date. You know, Joe McCarthy is dead'.¹⁷⁶ Ralph Summy and Malcolm Saunders also agreed that the Congress had been influenced by Communists. However they were not convinced that the Party had gained total control of proceedings. They contended that 'while the CPA did exert influence-and this was reflected in the conducting of the ANZ Congress- this should not be equated with control'.¹⁷⁷ Despite the assertion that the Congress was not totally controlled, it is still clear that, in the context of the time, the Government was justified in being wary of the ANZ Congress.

The controversy which surrounded the Government's attempts to stifle the congress produced a profound effect. The SEATO pamphlet was presented to the Department of External Affairs with a view to publishing the findings. While Tange admitted that the pamphlet was valuable, he believed that its value to the Australian community 'might be outweighed by the potential controversy and possible political difficulties which the representation of the issues might raise'.¹⁷⁸ Tange had expressed similar concerns in a letter to Casey on 3 November, when he stated

I can see that one of the difficult tasks of Government in the future will be to support, on the one hand, negotiations with Communist Governments but oppose public debates in which Communists are involved....It is no more than a truism to say that the conduct of diplomacy and public explanation of policies towards the Communists are going to be more difficult in the future than they were when we had Stalin and everything Communist could be painted black without any ifs or buts.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁵ Ibid. The appeal on behalf of Dery was made by visiting Hungarian writer Tibor Meray.

¹⁷⁶ Marr, op cit, p. 149.

¹⁷⁷ Summy and Saunders in Curthoys and Merritt, op cit, p. 94.

¹⁷⁸ NAA, A432/15, 63/2279, document entitled 'Proposed SEATO Pamphlets on Communism In Australia', p.1.

¹⁷⁹ NAA, A10302/1, 60/151, letter from Tange to Casey, 3 November 1959, p. 2.

Tange's concern partially explains why the 1959 ANZ Congress proved to be a watershed in terms of opening up the peace movement. The events surrounding the 1959 Congress set the stage for the peace movement in years to come. Barbara Carter touched upon this with her statement that the importance of the Congress lay 'in the role it played in starting to break through the strong anti-communist feeling of the 1950s'.¹⁸⁰ The controversy surrounding attempted Government intervention clearly contributed to this break-through.

¹⁸⁰ Carter in Merritt and Curthoys, *op cit*, p. 70.

CONCLUSION

Over the course of the 1950s the position of the Menzies Government in relation to the peace movement, especially regarding travel controls, did not change substantially. This thesis has shown that the Government persistently attempted to maintain the civil liberties of peace activists. The Government only chose to implement travel restrictions when circumstances, such as the outbreak of the Korean War, necessitated a response. It is also clear that the Government's actions were heavily influenced by the existence of substantial evidence which linked the APC to the Communist Party. In 1953, when ASIO had uncovered evidence of Communist control of the Convention for Peace and War, Menzies had been prepared to make public statements denouncing the event. However, in 1956, when the evidence of Communist control was less prevalent, the Prime Minister had not seen fit to comment on the Assembly for Peace in Sydney.

The consistency of the Government's outlook is further illustrated when compared to the changing views expressed by the Opposition, most notably Evatt. As chapter three revealed, Evatt was extremely critical of the Government's reluctance to institute passport bans on the delegation to Peking. Yet, just prior to this affair, Evatt had battled to defend the civil liberties of individuals during the referendum campaign. While Evatt supported Menzies' attack on the Convention for Peace and War, by 1956 he endorsed the Assembly for Peace. Of course, the Labor Party's changing attitudes can be put down, in large part, to the split in the ALP during 1955. Menzies did not display such inconsistency; constantly maintaining that the peace movement was suspect. The Prime Minister simply timed his attacks to coincide with moments when evidence against the peace movement, or external events, dictated that a response was necessary.

The Government's response to the APC and the peace movement actually appears to have mirrored the development of its outlook in world affairs. Menzies' harshest reactions to peace initiatives, the passport ban on Peking delegates and the denouncement of the 1953 Peace Convention, both occurred at the time that he believed ardently that the world was

on the brink of war. In addition to this, Australia was also involved in armed conflict in Korea during this period. Conversely, as the Cold War climate eased, and Menzies began to embrace the idea of Summit talks between world leaders, the Prime Minister's perspective in regard to the peace movement mellowed. This was most prominently evidenced by his admonishment of the activities of Barwick and Spry during the lead-up to the 1959 ANZ Congress. This softening of the Government's position was also demonstrated by the fact that, as the decade wore on, the issue of travel restrictions became increasingly less significant.

As chapter two illustrated, the first two years of Menzies' government's policy on travel control were highlighted by uncertainty and experimentation. His administration made various attempts to implement a successful passport policy. However, in this initial period, its attempts were largely unsuccessful. For the most part, Australian peace workers were able to travel behind the Iron Curtain, regardless of efforts to hinder their progress. Despite the fact that the Government possessed the ability to impose passport bans and travel restrictions, Menzies exhibited relative restraint considering the circumstances in which the Government was elected, and in light of the international atmosphere of impending global conflict. The Government's position on travel control was not influenced simply by a desire to eradicate the Communist menace. It only implemented more vigorous action when faced with a set of circumstances beyond its control. Despite appeals to toughen its response to passport control, most notably from W.C. Wentworth, the Government chose to dilute its passport policy, so as to allow unhindered travel to citizens. As argued through the thesis this demonstrates that, despite Menzies' avowed anti-communism, his government's passport policy was dictated by circumstance rather than by an anti-Communist doctrine.

There can be little doubt that the failure to implement the Communist Party Dissolution Bill, and the subsequent loss of the 1951 referendum campaign, influenced the Government's restrained outlook. However, developments in the passport policy in November 1951, with ASIO's instigation of Passport and Visa Warning Lists and the

decision to increase the presence of Security personnel at ports, suggests that the climate of tolerance may have been short-lived. It could be argued that the Government softened its public outlook on travel control so as to attract less criticism, while allowing ASIO to take a more active role in the area of travel restrictions. The events surrounding the Youth Carnival provided further evidence that the Government was toughening up its passport policy. While the Government outwardly presented a face of leniency, moves were being made which could significantly affect the peace movement in years to come.

Yet, evidence suggests that the Menzies Government's attitude towards travel restrictions throughout the period 1952 to 1955 continued to be shaped by external factors. In the example of the Peking peace conference, the Government delayed its action against delegates until the last minute and, when it was decided that restrictions would be necessary, the actions taken by the Government were designed to affect only those individuals directly involved with the conference. The Government's hesitation is even more surprising when we acknowledge the intense criticism its response engendered, in particular from the Opposition which, ironically, accused the Government of being 'soft on Communism'. The Government's decision to impose a passport ban in this case was directly influenced by the continuing war in Korea, and the fact that the conference was taking place within the boundaries of an 'aggressor' nation. As soon as the offending conference had ended the ban was lifted. The situation during 1954 and 1955 was undeniably influenced by events in Indo-China combined with the Petrov revelations and the subsequent Royal Commission. It seems plausible to presume that, had the Petrov affair and the crisis in Indo-China not occurred, no action would have been taken by the Government.

Throughout the entire period from 1949 to 1955, the Menzies Government maintained its ideal that the rights of the individual to have access to free travel was of paramount importance, except in the most extreme of circumstances. Considering the Government's 1949 election promise to repel the Communist menace, its continued upholding of the right of the individual to have access to free travel, regardless of intended destination or

political beliefs, is clear evidence that the customary image of Menzies Government as authoritarian and dictatorial, concerned only with crushing Communism, needs revision. In the area of travel control, the Menzies Government's policy incorporated a degree of restraint and rationality not necessarily associated with its conduct in other areas of its administration.

As chapter four illustrates, ASIO attacked the peace movement with as much intensity and vigour as it did the Communist Party itself. The peace movement and the Communist Party were clearly regarded as inseparable. ASIO found it rather easy to label organisations and individuals as communist. However, once labelled, it was almost impossible for these organisations, in this case the peace movement, to alter such a perception of their character. Although the peace movement attempted to broaden its appeal and diminish its apparent Communist connections, ASIO continued to see only this connection. ASIO was particularly concerned by the inclusion of prominent, respected, individuals within the ranks of the peace movement. The harder the APC fought to disassociate itself from the Communist Party, the more concerned and sceptical ASIO became, thus creating a vicious cycle from which there was no escape. The broader the peace movement became, the more fearful ASIO would become. This circumstance presented the peace movement with a contradiction that would plague its existence throughout the 1950s and into the 1960s.

Through an analysis of ASIO's relationship with the peace movement we can see the inflexibility of the organisation's views. ASIO was myopic as far as the peace movement was concerned, only seeing its perceived Communist links to the exclusion of other factors, such as the weakening of the Cold War climate, which may have affected the character of the movement. ASIO's *raison d'être* was to combat the influence of Communism in all its forms. An examination of ASIO's monitoring of the peace movement also throws light on the relationship between ASIO and the Government. The events surrounding the 1953 Convention on Peace and War revealed the degree to which the Menzies Government relied upon the security organisation to provide it with ammunition to attack the peace movement. In this circumstance, with substantial

evidence pointing toward Communist control, Menzies was able to attack, confidently, the Peace Convention.

Circumstances surrounding the 1959 Congress for International Cooperation and Disarmament, demonstrated that certain members of the Menzies administration acted outside the boundaries of normal procedure in their attempts to stifle the Congress. This does not necessarily condemn the administration as a whole. Before the departure overseas of Richard Casey, there had been no unreasonable action. Casey and his Department of External Affairs had acted upon request and had been careful not to dissuade individuals from attending the Congress. Yet, once Casey departed the scene, and Garfield Barwick took control of the Department, the situation deteriorated. The efforts of Barwick and Wentworth to suppress the Congress, through the use of Spry, were unquestionably unorthodox, regardless of the fact that they had been approached first. However, these men clearly acted of their own volition. Menzies' decision to distance himself from Wentworth and Barwick's activities - to the extent that, in effect, he publicly admonished Barwick - further indicates that the Menzies Government, in general, did not resort to, or condone, extreme action in regard to the peace movement. This was demonstrated by the calmer approach of Casey while he was in the country. It would seem that the controversial events that occurred prior to the Congress were the result of two politicians and a Director-General of Security who had overstepped political boundaries.

So in general, the response of the Menzies government during the 1950s was marked by restraint more than bellicosity, circumstance more than ideology. This applies less to the surveillance and intelligence arm, ASIO. Many commentators would prefer to see a consistency, a pattern of strident anti-communism extending from the 1950s into successive Liberal governments' assaults on the anti-Vietnam war protest movement in the 1960s. But the peace movement in that decade and beyond was qualitatively and quantitatively different from the peace movement in the 1950s. Correspondingly, the role

of ASIO was enlarged and, until the election of the Whitlam government in 1972, the response of Australian governments was draconian.

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