Community Carnival or Cold War Strategy? The 1952 Youth Carnival for Peace and Friendship

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In March 1952, four youthful and possibly maverick members of the NSW Police Force contacted Audrey Blake, the national secretary of the Eureka Youth League [EYL]. As a team, they said, they wished to enter several sporting events in the forthcoming Youth Carnival for Peace and Friendship. The national executive of the EYL, which helped organise the carnival, reported that, at first, it 'regarded this request with considerable suspicion, but after discussion with the policemen, found they had a genuine interest in the purpose of the Carnival, namely Youth activity and Peace'. This request, and its response, exemplify two themes of this paper. First, the extent to which the Carnival, one of the longest, largest and most logistically complex carnivals ever held in Australia, embraced broad community interests, extending even to the police services. Second, the degree to which the vigilance and suspicion of the carnival organisers was due to potential participants being policemen, to whom the Labor movement was traditionally hostile or to concerns about the level of infiltration and surveillance by security services. This raises a third issue: how far community involvement in this carnival was limited by the role of the state, in which the role of the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation [ASIO] was only one dimension. The 1952 Youth Carnival has variously been described as a 'notable event in the history of the labour movement', 'the greatest demonstration for peace ever held in Australia', and 'a splendid victory'. It has also received generous attention in the reminiscences and autobiographies of participants. However, it is almost entirely ignored in the literature of the post-war peace movement. In none of the relevant studies by the most authoritative Australian historians of the peace movement, Ralph Summy and Malcolm Saunders, is the carnival discussed. In Barbara Carter's survey of the peace movement was traditionally hostile or to concerns about the level of infiltration and surveillance by security services. This raises a third issue: how far community involvement in this carnival was limited by the role of the state, in which the role of the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation [ASIO] was only one dimension. The 1952 Youth Carnival has variously been described as a 'notable event in the history of the labour movement', 'the greatest demonstration for peace ever held in Australia', and 'a splendid victory'. It has also received generous attention in the reminiscences and autobiographies of participants. However, it is almost entirely ignored in the literature of the post-war peace movement. In none of the relevant studies by the most authoritative Australian historians of the peace movement, Ralph Summy and Malcolm Saunders, is the carnival discussed.1

The Festival will be a magnificent event. The variety of languages, colour [sic] and costume, the breath-taking concerts, the sporting events...will make this festival something never to be forgotten...The young people joining the Australian delegation can see for themselves the dances, the films, the sports of all nations - what a wonderful opportunity. They can see Germany with their own eyes.2

Despite warnings from the Menzies Government that passports would be denied,3 a strategy increasingly resorted to in subsequent years,4 a large contingent of 135 Australians made their way to Berlin in May/June 1951. Most travelled via Austria where some, such as Esther and Malcolm Salmon witnessed "violent attacks" upon British delegates5. One of the better-known delegates was Frank Hardy6, whose celebrated Power Without Glory had been published the year before. Less known was Frank Townsend, a twenty-four year old laboratory assistant at the Commonwealth Serum Laboratories. According to his security file, Townsend was "a very quiet type" who had "a good reputation in his home neighbourhood"; moreover he had "no connection with any political party prior to going to Berlin"7. Students at the Melbourne Technical College, where he had been SRC president, raised funds to assist his trip although most expenses were met by the 'Youth Peace Committee' a subsidiary of the Australian Peace Council. According to its 'very reliable' informant, ASIO learnt that Townsend was "very grateful for all that was done for him...and it was this sense of gratitude and a desire to reciprocate which inspired him to assist in the organisation of an Australian Youth Carnival."8 At a Sydney meeting on 17 October 1951, attended by many of the Berlin delegation, Townsend supported the decision to organise a festival along similar lines - a Youth Carnival for Peace and Friendship.9 On 16 January 1952, he was appointed full time organiser.10
The continuity in personnel, between Berlin and Sydney, was matched in the lofiness of rhetoric:

Sydney, next March, will be the rendezvous for the heart-warming and spectacular “Youth Carnival for Peace and Friendship”. Everything that is good in the Australian tradition will be presented by Australian sportsmen, artists, authors and scientists, side by side with the best in the tradition of the world’s people. Visitors and distinguished artists from many overseas countries will be guests. They will bring the dances and songs which tell of the life of their people. The Australian Carnival will light a torch which will shine in a world where the people’s are kept too much apart from each other. This torch can light up the road to the happy, sane and peaceful Australian that we all hope and strive for.

The realisation of such grand visions and inflated ideals was enabled by the intervention of the state in Eastern Europe; in Australia it was thwarted by it. Neither the scale, spirit nor international dimensions of Berlin was recapitulated: as we shall see, this was due not to deficiencies in energy and resources but to the power of institutional opposition. Nevertheless the wide range of activities, events and sponsors did mean that the Carnival organisers reached deeply into community organisations.

The Carnival officially opened on 11.30am on Saturday, 15 March with a gala display and march; the venue was Hollywood Park, a large picnic ground located on the banks of George’s River between Bankstown and Fairfield, seventeen miles from Sydney. A broadly-based sporting programme was soon underway at dozens of different venues across Sydney. All major sports were represented: three codes of football, cricket, tennis, table tennis, basket ball, cycling, motor cycling, athletics, surfing, swimming and diving, boxing and wrestling, chess, billiards and snooker. In each case substantial prize money was awarded to successful competitors.

Consistent with the claim that “this will truly be a carnival of song and dance”, there were four categories (each with a £200 prize) of the Carnival Dance Competition, including dancing by aboriginal performers, as well as several jazz and classical concerts: one was a full string symphony orchestra and featuring notable soloists. In addition to photography and painting exhibitions (which included the Peace Art Prize of £250), a key cultural event was the literary competition. Once again, generous prize monies, totalling £300, were awarded to the best short story, poem, aphoristic verse, children’s book, work with an aboriginal theme, half-hour radio script, and one act drama. A film festival, featuring a film of the 1951 Berlin Festival, an initially banned Chinese film, and Czech, Polish and Russian films, was organised by the New Zealand film director (and president of the Carnival Committee), Cecil Holmes.

Children were not overlooked: the carnival programme included a hobby competition (the best model in plasticsine, match boxes or balsa wood), a children’s Australian art exhibition, the best project book about Australia and a children’s party with international costumes. The participation of their mothers was encouraged: “Ask Mum to help you and tell her the Carnival is for her too. There’s a home dressmaking competition, a mammequin parade and needlework, handicrafts, knitting and embroidery competitions”. An exhibition of basketware, pottery cakes and preserves was also judged. While these activities may not have appealed to the more politicised women cadres, such as Joyce Stevens or Zoe O’Leary, they underlined the attempts of the organising committees to make inroads into the broader community. Such efforts were exemplified by one brochure seeking participation in the concert programme.

Can you, can your friends sing, play a musical instrument? Have you a choir or band? Have you a group who can present a dramatic sketch? If so form an active committee of interested people in your club, town, workplace, etc. to discover and approach the talented people with whom you have contact… Arrange for your local concert to take place in February in the local cinema, hall or whatever accommodation can be secured… [and] select your best representatives as your contribution to your State’s concert in Sydney during the Carnival.

Involvement such as this extended to a variety of ethnic, sporting and cultural groups. The sponsors suggest considerable breadth and diversity: Hellenic Youth Club, Atlas Greek Club, Polish Youth Club, Chinese Club, Italian Club, Pascoe Vale Boys Club, Richmond Motor Bike Club, Melbourne Chess Club, Melbourne Camera Club, Realist Film Group, NSW Ballroom Dancing Academy, NSW Table Tennis Association, Glebe Christian Community Centre, Eveleigh Carriage Workshops Committee, Aboriginal Rights Council, Newcastle Old Age Pensioners’ Association, Yugoslav Charitable Benevolent Society Club, Stothaggi Basketball Team, Geelong Choristers, Horrie Dargie’s Quintet, Redfern Methodist Church, Soccer Association of NSW, the Scarborough Miners’ Women’s Auxiliary and the Esperanto League.

This is a sample; ASIO’s list of “organisations assisting, supporting or represented at the carnival”, extended to six pages.

Some sponsors were called upon to provide ten day’s billeting for up to 5000 interstate and NZ delegates. More often, however, it was individuals unknown to the carnival committee who offered their homes. An ASIO plant inside the committee identified hundreds of these volunteers of whom a typical example was: ‘A Mrs. Edward of Fitzroy Street, Killara, ‘phone UM 8252, has offered to billet two delegates who must be of the same sex as there is only one room available’.

A further if more passive forum by which Sydneysiders responded to the carnival was in the cinema. Given the seeming conspiracy of silence about the carnival on the wireless and in the daily press, this forum was important if widespread community ignorance of the event was to be averted. The ASIO report of one screening is worth citing in full. It indicates that news of the carnival did penetrate otherwise indifferent audiences, that such audiences were immune to the prevailing Cold War atmosphere and that, at least sometimes, quasi-official propaganda could be counterproductive. It makes fascinating reading for it gets us close to that elusive historical figure, ‘the ordinary person’. It also reveals an ASIO field officer with an unusual capacity for independent thought.

The opening of the Carnival at Hollywood Park was filmed by “Cinesound” and the film was shown at newsreel theatres in Sydney, accompanied by a commentary that was obviously intended to belittle the Carnival by ridicule. The opening procession at Hollywood Park, as shown in the newsreel, was not unimpressive, and the film brought it before the eyes of multitudes of people who did not go to Hollywood Park. The commentary itself was so biased and unfair that it drew groans from the audience. The passage I refer to ran “Frankly we cannot see how the cause of world peace can be aided by such a theatrical parade in a picnic ground fifteen miles from Sydney’. The audience consisted, not of Carnival supporters, but of suburban housewives in town for shopping and members of the public and their girlfriends sheltering from the rain, but it knew that the Carnival organisers had made every effort to obtain a ground nearer to Sydney and the obvious injustice of the commentary provoked a sympathetic reaction.

Later in the report the same field officer chastised the ‘opponents’ of the carnival who ‘influenced the mind of the public favourably towards it’ and who thereby ‘contributed significantly to its success as a piece of propaganda’.
community – albeit a potentially sympathetic section – was through factory meetings conducted every day of the working week during the carnival. The itinerary for just morning, Thursday 20 March, exemplifies the high level of organisational planning and juggling that was required of the carnival committee.

W.D & H.O. Wills / N.Z. Cultural Group / Leave 10am / Lyn’s Truck
Glebe Is. / Melbourne UDG [Unity Dance Group] / Leave 11.30 / George’s car
Westinghouse / Sydney EYL Song & Dance Group / Leave 11am / Fred O’s transport
Bond’s Textile / Qld. UAW [Union of Australian Women] / Leave 11am / Bob Evans transport
Woolloomooloo / Newcastle Grp (6), EYL Folk Arts Grp / Leave 11.15 / Taxis
Chullora / Melbourne Jewish Dance Group / 11am train to Strathfield / Fred S. from station
Sydney University / Melbourne Student Group / Leave 11.15 / Ordinary Transport

Each of these seven groups was accompanied by a chairman, a speaker and sound equipment, and it was a format repeated throughout the week.43

A march through Sydney on the following Sunday climaxed and closed the carnival. The EYL paper, Challenge, described the rally, attended by an estimated 30,000 people, as ‘a fitting end to one of the most important events in Australian history’.44 But the gap between rhetoric and realisation was wide. Occasionally, this disjuncture was due to internal problems or oversights by the committee. For example, the ‘Football Section’ had virtually no gear to offer teams, while ‘friction’ in the head office was apparently created by interstate and NZ delegates touring Sydney’s scenic spots ‘instead of reporting to their rostered meetings and sports’ which necessitated the rescheduling of some events.45 But overwhelmingly, the ambitions and objectives of the carnival organisers were circumscribed by the interventions of governments (federal, state and municipal) and the security services (ASIO and NSW Special Branch), who diverted immense resources to thwarting the carnival.

There were three main areas of state intervention: passport restriction, denial of infrastructure and security service surveillance.46 These steps were taken in view of the Menzies’ Government’s unwillingness to ban outright the festival since such a ban would defy the 1950 High Court ruling that the Communist Party was a legal body free to engage in ‘non-subversive’ activities, such as the carnival.

First, passport control. In keeping with the internationalism of the 1951 Berlin Youth Festival, at which over one hundred countries were represented, the 1952 Sydney Carnival organisers sent invitations to a wide range of youth organisations in a large number of countries. Early responses seemed positive and it seemed the following would participate: a delegation of sixty eight Russians comprising chess players, ballet dancers, scientists and athletes;47 a team of athletes from Czechohoslovakia including Emile Zatopek; a delegation of forty Chinese comprising classical dancers, an orchestra, folk dancers and choral singers; a Burmese delegation including Aung Ban, the general secretary of the All Burma Federation of Students; some delegates from the Union of Democratic Malayan Students; and Howard Fast, the famous American communist writer and author of Peeskill: USA.48 All were invited, all accepted: none arrived. The reason was simple: they couldn’t get in.49 The only overseas delegates able to enter were from New Zealand who, being ‘British subjects’, did not require visas.50 The Menzies government was following not only a tradition of passport regulation and closing the doors on ‘undesirables and aliens’ established by American administrations since WW1, but also the recent example of the Attlee Labour government in October 1950, when it successfully sabotaged the 2nd World Peace Congress, to be held in Sheffield, by denying visas to international delegates and thus forcing its last-minute relocation to Warsaw.51 In an attempt to overcome this obstacle and give the impression of ‘overseas delegates’, the Carnival Committee gave prominence to contingents of ‘local foreign communities’ such as Chinese, Czech, Italian, Greek and Yugoslav.52

What was impossible to disguise was the extent of state and local government interference in the use of innumerable halls, stadiaums, ovals, parks and sports grounds. ‘Never was any public gathering of any kind’, alleged Tribune, ‘organised under such difficulties’, and this allegation was not without basis.53 Two weeks before the opening ceremony, permission to use, as the main venue, the Harold Park trotting grounds was withdrawn.54 The frantic, almost desperate, efforts to set up on time the alternative venue, Hollywood Park – a privately-run picnic ground – have been described by one closely involved with the construction work.55 Even then, on the eve of the opening, the Fairfield Council refused the lessee, Mr Bigood, permission to allow the use of the Park for the carnival. At virtually the last minute the legal advisor for the Carnival Committee, Harold Rich, was granted an injunction against the Council from restraining Bigood.56

On that same day, Friday 14 March, the day preceding the carnival opening, the State Minister for Transport, directed the cancellation of all permits to private bus companies contracted to ferry the anticipated huge carnival crowd from the city, from Fairfield and Cremorne Park railway stations and from from neighbouring districts (already visited by the Unity Dance Group57) to Hollywood Park.58 It was too late to serve an injunction. So, for fifteen hours on the opening day, in what was a major logistical feat, hundreds of private cars, lorries and trucks shuttled thousands of participants to and from the carnival site.59 This battle was won, but other skirmishes were lost. Twenty five city and municipal councils withdrew permission, previously granted, to use a wide variety of sporting and cultural venues; as a security report noted, ‘this caused considerable difficulty to the [carnival] organisers and resulted in the abandonment of most of the scheduled sporting events’.60 One major event cancelled was a surf carnival which the Newcastle Surf Life Saving Association had agreed to organise – until the Newcastle City Council refused to allow the use of its beaches.61 Another important event, a symphony concert in the main hall of the Sydney Town Hall, was relocated. Organisers and participants remained convinced that the security services worked effectively to subvert the success of the carnival.62 They argued that the vast number of security police visited frequently the carnival site.63 This battle was won, but other skirmishes were lost. 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domain. Webberley’s report, therefore, gives us an exceptional glimpse into surveillance operations which may have been humdrum to the perpetrator, but intimidating, even fearful, to the subject.

I proceeded to Sydney on the 14th [March 1952] and arrived at Mascot aerodrome at 6pm where I was met by Sr. Det. Longbottom of the Sydney Special Branch. During the evening in a patrol car he showed me the various Communist meeting places in Sydney... The following day the 15th was the opening day of the Carnival... Our object was to keep a close watch on all persons and vehicles attending the Carnival and all known Communists were pointed out to me, but no Tasmanians were observed that day. The 17th of March I spent tailing numerous Communists who were travelling about the city and suburbs in cars... A visit was made to the Sydney A.S.I.O. Headquarters, and we were introduced to the officer-in-charge, Mr. Ron Richards, also his staff. The purpose of this visit was the examining of all photographs which were taken of the Youth Carnival by press photographers and A.S.I.O. officers...

The remainder of the time I spent in Sydney was working in teams of two and four giving special attention to the numerous Communist representatives from the Youth Carnival and their activities in many places, including the Public Library, Museum, Taronga Zoo, dance at Paddington Town Hall, dancing exhibitions on the street and loud speaker addresses to workers during their lunch hour period... Whilst at Sydney I was able to obtain the names and addresses of a large number of Tasmanians who have communist interests and will report on them accordingly on the following form.65

Coming hard on the heels of the closely-fought and bitterly-contested campaigns in 1950-51 to defeat the federal government’s attempts to ‘ban the Reds’, the events of March 1952 appeared, to most communists, to confirm one thing: that Menzies was leading ‘communist threat’... The Youth Carnival was a ‘communist front’67 then and, by default, the Communist Party’s own actions and desires and policies of the Soviet Union. But it was also something else, something that the myopia of the Cold World could not permit its detractors to see. The carnival represented an endeavour by young political activists, mainly communists, who were infected with enthusiasm and motivated by idealism, to connect with others via culture, sport and a small dose of ‘non-sectarian’ politics. It was to embrace an international community, until stymied by passport controls, as well as the community of Australian youth. It was to demonstrate that behind the immediate hands one reached out to grasp, there was a whole world of people who were ‘our people’.77

Yet it was, in the words of the woman who conceived the carnival, ‘an attempt to break through to a whole new section of the working class movement, we were trying something new and it was terribly exciting... we hoped it would be a new start’.78

Endnotes
1 National Archives of Australia (ACT) [henceforth NAA:], A9108/3, ROLL 15/3.
3 See Tom and Audrey McDonald, Intimate Union. Sharing a revolutionary life (Sydney: Pluto Press, 1998); Ralph Gibson, My Years in the Communist Party (Melbourne: International Bookshop, 1966). Len Fox, Australians on the Left (Sydney: Len Fox, 1996); Audrey Blake, Notes on the Development of the Eureka Youth League and its Predecessors (unpublished 161-page manuscript, 1956; afterword, 1993); Audrey Blake, A Proletarian Life (Melbourne: Kibble Books, 1984; Oriel Gray, Exit Left (Ringwood: Penguin, 1984); Bill Gollan, Bond or Free. The peace and disarmament movement and an independent Australian foreign policy for peace and security (Sydney: NSW Teachers Federation, 1987). For a contemporary and highly hostile account by a leading member of the ALP, see J.P. Forrester, Fifteen Years of the Peace Fronts (np, nd [1964?]), pp.18-21.


6 Hal Colebatch, *An examination of the sources, ideologies and political importance of peace movements in Australia from approximately 1950 to approximately 1965*, MA thesis, Department of Politics and History, University of Western Australia, 1974, pp.82-7. Forrester's 62-page booklet, *Fifteen Years of the Peace Fronts*, has no publication details but appeared in 1964; it is liberally used by Colebatch.

7 Forrester, *Fifteen Years of the Peace Fronts*, p.20. The same view was put at the time by the editor of *The Sun* (Sydney) 14 March 1952, p.3.


10 Correspondence, Ken to Beth Gott, K.D. Gott Papers, State Library of Victoria (SLV) MS 13047, Box 3770/2,4; NAA: A6119/1, *Youth Voice*, 17 September 1949, p.3.

11 Correspondence, Stephen to Nina Murray-Smith, 20 September 1949, S. Murray-Smith Papers, SLV MS 8272, Box 2742-1. This ten page private letter illustrates how utterly transfixed Murray-Smith then was with Hungary where he spent a month.

12 Nancy Wills, *Shades of Red* (Brisbane: Communist Arts Group, 1980), pp.82-3

13 Bernard Smith, *Noel Couthinan: artist and revolutionary* (Melbourne: OUP), pp.254-6; 262-3 (which deals with his reactions to the Rjak show trial conducted in Budapest during the Festival).

14 Conversation with Michael Marcumach, 4 April 1999.

15 Leaflet, *How to find out all you want to know about the World Festival of the Young Defenders of Peace* (Sydney, [1951]), Mitchell Library (henceforth ML), MSS 2011 112(155).

16 NAA: A1838/1, 851/19/1 Pt.IA. J.T. Lang's *The Century* (22 June 1951) was critical of the Government's inability to prevent the delegates' departure; in contrast, the Melbourne *Herald* (4 June 1951) editorialised against 'the totalitarian idea that only "politically sound" people should have the right to travel abroad'.

17 See for example NAA: M1205/1, 1282.

18 See the 23-page booklet *The Innsbruck Story* (republished by the Victorian Democratic Rights Council [February 1952] with forward by Malcolm Salmon).

19 Hardy Papers, National Library of Australia MS 4887, Series 26. Another was Noel Ebbels, who had just returned from overseas and was working in support of the carnival when he was killed in a road accident. *Challenge*, Vol.1, No.11, 20 February 1952, p.1. See also R.N. Ebbels, *We went to Moscow* [1951], pub. by Australian Student Labor Federation, in ML MSS 2389 Box 6(8). A Noel Ebbels Memorial Committee was subsequently established.

20 NAA: A6119/0, 2553, folios 6, 11-13, 44.

21 Ibid., folio 11.

22 See 19-page ASIO document, 'Youth Carnival for Peace and Friendship' (pp.1-2 'History'), NAA: A9108/3, ROLL 15/1; Harry Stein, *A glance over an old left shoulder*, p.100.

23 Ibid., folio 44.

24 Leaflet, *Make it a Date. Youth Carnival 1952*, S. Murray-Smith Papers, SLV MS 8272, Box 282/3-1.

25 The full programme is contained in ibid, Boxes 280/1-6 and 283/3-4 and in *Tribune*, 5 March 1952, pp.5-7.

26 Ibid.

27 Demonstrating the Communist Party's early support for aboriginal issues, Len Fox and Edgar Ross organised a photographic display showing, *inter alia*, 'how the Tasmanian aboriginals were wiped out', 'the colour bar against aboriginals', and their culture 'including songs and dances'. Report No.723, 12 March 1952, NAA: A9108/3, ROLL 15/3.

28 The sponsorship of the Literary Section, whose secretary was Zoe O'Leary, was impressive: it included Gavin Casey, Eleanor Dark, Dame Mary Gilmore, Oriol Gray, Frank Hardy, William Hatfield, Eric Lambert, Alan Marshall, John Morrison, Walter Murdoch and Katherine Susannah Pritchard. One sponsor, the author Colin Simpson, requested O'Leary to remove his name from the group and dissociated himself from the Carnival; she was 'grieved and astonished'. Letters accompanying statutory declaration, dated 8 December 1954, submitted to Petrov Royal Commission, NAA: A6201/1, 344. The carnival also hosted a three day writers' conference on 18-20 March. See NAA: A9108/3, ROLL 15/2.

29 Holmes, who was to direct the popular 1953 Australian film *Captain Thunderbolt*, left New Zealand in 1949 after being blacklisted by the NZ National Film Unit due to his membership of the NZCP. See documentary film *Seeing Red* (James Wallace Productions for Television New Zealand, 1995). In 1952, he directed a documentary for the trade union movement, *Words for Freedom*. (Andrew Pike and Ross Cooper, *Australian Film 1900-1977* (Melbourne: OUP/AFI, 1980) pp.282-3).

30 Leaflet, ML MSS 5021 112(155) A special women's function, with 'prominent speakers and singing, dancing and drama' was also held in the Manchester Unity Hall, Newtown, towards the end of the carnival.

31 Leaflet, *How Women can take part in the Carnival for Peace and Friendship*, ibid.

32 Leaflet, ibid. For further examples of 'local' activity see successive issues of *Carnival Newsletter*, a onepaged broadsheet, throughout January and February 1952. One issue reported the formation of the 'Carlton United Youth Carnival Committee' with representatives from the Jewish and Greek communities. SLV MS 8272 Box 282/3-1.

33 There were several ASIO reports concerned with 'Support for Carnival from Greek Community': see Reports Nos. 706 and 718, 6-7 March 1952, NAA: A9108/3, ROLL 15/3.

34 The large Victorian delegation used the Italian Club, at 727 George Street, as its headquarters during the carnival. There were several reports on 'Support for Carnival from Greek Community': see Reports Nos. 706 and 718, 6-7 March 1952, NAA:: A9108/3, ROLL 15/3.
35 This was one of five Anglican churches in Sydney that agreed to hold special church services for carnival delegates on Sunday 23 March.
36 NAA: A9108/3, ROLL 15/4. There were several reports on 'Support for Carnival from Greek Community': see Reports Nos. 706 and 718, 6-7 March 1952, NAA: A9108/3, ROLL 15/3
37 Appendix 12, ibid, ROLL 15/4.
38 Report No 833, 16 March 1952, ibid, ROLL 15/2. The Carnival registration was £4 if billeting was required, of which £2 was offered to those billeting to offset costs. See leaflets Sydney Homes Become Carnival Homes! and Have You Any Room, MLMSS 5021 112(115).
39 A close examination of the Sydney Morning Herald, Daily Telegraph, and the Sydney Sun points to a virtual news blackout, a fact acknowledged by ASIO when referring to the carnival committee issuing press statements to all newspapers every day in order to 'break the silence' of the press and make it 'print something about the Carnival'. Report No 449, 30 February 1952, NAA: A9108/3, ROLL 15/1. It was due to this blackout that print runs of Challenge, according to its editor, were in the tens of thousands and distributed widely in universities, and amongst church and trade union youth groups. Half a million copies of a special carnival issue (No 10) were printed. Conversation with Cecil Grivas, 12 July 1999.
40 NAA: A9108/3, ROLL 15/4, pp 4-5 of undated report. This Cinesound film was quite distinct from both a film sympathetic to the carnival, produced by 'Quality Films' (conversation with Cecil Grivas, ibid) and an ASIO newsreel ('for future reference') of the final procession, in which 'two soldiers were observed marching' (Memo, 9 April 1952, Director of Military Intelligence to ASIO HQ, NAA A9108/3, ROLL 15/5.
41 The field officer stopped short of directly identifying the federal for Carnival from Greek Community': see Reports Nos. 706 and 718, 6-7 March 1952, NAA: A9108/3, ROLL 15/3
42 Ibid., p 8.
43 See 'Plan for Carnival Days in the Factories', NAA: A9108/3, ROLL 15/2. The function at Woolloomooloo was stopped by the NSW police: see [Frank Hardly], What happened at Woolloomooloo (Sydney [nd]), MLMSS 5021 112(115). Factory visits ran in tandem with other levels of the Carnival Programme; that same morning, the following was planned: Manly ferry trip, excursion to the zoo, films at Federation House, jazz concert at Bankstown Capitol Theatre, cricket matches, tennis tournament at Blighs Courts, Clovelly.
44 Challenge, Vol 1, No 16, 26 March 1952, p 1. Adam Ogston, one of the organisers of this 'grand finale' was reported as saying that it 'will be extraordinarily colourful, there being 250 flags, 88 banners of all languages, and 100 symbols of peace and friendship'. Report No 721, 13 March 1952, NAA: A9108/3, ROLL 15/3.
45 NAA: A9108/3, ROLL 15/2. Similarly, another report noted that rural and interstate delegates 'looked on the Carnival as a cheap holiday in the "big city"', and only joined up with the others when there was a trip to Taronga Park Zoo or some other place of interest'. Undated report, p 8, NAA: A9108/3, ROLL 15/4.
46 Thus, it is not my concern to discuss here the actions of 'private' groups and individuals such as: the Presbyterian Church Property Trust, which refused the playing of 'Advance Australia Fair', of which it was the royalty holder, at any carnival function; the Nationalno-Trudovoj Soyus, or 'Free Russian Partizans of Peace', a White Russian group which distributed leaflets at the carnival opening (see Stephen Muirmary-Smith papers, SLV MS 8272 Box 280/1-4 for copies) and whose members – already in contact with ASIO – were involved in an ugly brawl (see the sensationalist front pages of both Sunday Telegraph and Sunday Sun, 16 March 1952); or the action of a Mr Laurence H. Morrison, of Edgecliff.e, who sent to the Attorney-General's Department a roll of 35mm negatives which 'contained 28 excellent photographs of Youth Carnival participants' (Memo, ACT Regional Director to ASIO HQ, 4 April 1952, NAA: A9108/3, ROLL 15/5).
47 The Soviet delegation had been booked into the Oriental Hotel, Kings Cross, and were expected to stay in Australia for one month.
48 For a superb evocation of Fast during this early Cold War period see the memoir by his daughter in Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro (eds.), Red Diapers. Growing Up in the Communist Left (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998), pp 124-34.
49 In the case of the delegate from Pakistan, the reason was different: he was jailed before he was able to leave for Australia.
50 An overseas guest of honour at the opening ceremony of the carnival was the chairman of the Communist Party of Great Britain and former Communist Member of Parliament for the Scottish seat of West Fife (1935-1950), Willie Gallacher. However, he did not come specifically to attend the carnival and, indeed, does not refer to the carnival in his diary (held in the CPGB archives, Manchester, CP/IND/GALL/ 04/02). See Phillip Deery, 'A British Communist Down Under: the visit of William Gallacher to Australia, 1952', Recorder, No 197, June 1996, pp 13-18. During his six-week stay in Australia, he was closely watched by ASIO, indicated by the 228-page file on his visit; see NAA: A6119/90, 2561.
51 Archival files on this action have recently been released by the Public Record Office; see PRO PREM 8/1150 and PRO CAB 130/65. It was closely followed in Canberra which contemplated the cancellation of Australian passports to those delegates who travelled to Warsaw; see NAA: A432/80, 1951/2001 and NAA: A3904/1, 23/ 8. Two years after the carnival, when one of its organisers, Harry Stein, applied to travel to China, his passport was cancelled; see NAA: A6119/91, 1245.
52 This phrase was used in an ASIO report on 'Carnival Highlights' that concluded that the Government's action 'contributed greatly' to undermining the success of the carnival.; see NAA: A9108/3, ROLL 15/2. The Director-General of ASIO also wrote to the Police Commissioner in South Africa (and presumably other countries) recommending exchange of information about any South Africans intending to attend the carnival.(Ibid) A similarly ominous letter, dated 17 March 1952, was received from the Australian Commissioner for Malaya requesting information from ASIO about some Chinese students in Australia who might be approached to attend the Carnival on behalf of the barred [Chinese] delegates'. Ibid, ROLL 15/5.
53 Tribune, 19 March 1952, p 1. These difficulties tested the limits of experienced organisers such as Max Heide, who openly wept – and 'he was tough' – after one ball was lost for the second time. Conversation with Audrey Blake, 13 July 1999.
54 See letter, Cecil Holmes (President, Carnival Committee) to E.C. O'Dea (Sydney Lord Mayor), 20 February 1952, MLMSS 5021 112(155); Tribune, 27 February 1952, p 1.
55 Tom and Audrey McDonald, Intimate Union, pp 72-4.
56 See 'Events at Fairfield, ASIO Report [undated], O.F.3/7/1a, pp 5-7, NAA: A9108/3, ROLL 15/4. The Council had nine ALP and six Liberal members; all were opposed to the carnival.
57 One who performed in local shopping centres to drum up interest was Mavis Robertson (conversation, 13 July 1999).
58 Approximately seventy buses had been hired. Special trains had already been denied to the carnival organisers. There were also successful attempts to curtail the sale of train tickets (from Central to Fairfield Station) to carnival patrons. The Guardian, 17 March 1952, p 6.
This conviction persists today: conversations with June Goss, Cecil Grivas, Mavis Robertson, and Audrey Blake, which featured prominently in the early Carnival Programme, and which was controlled not by a council but by the Chief Secretary's Department, was cancelled. When stadiums for boxing and wrestling were refused, matches were not rescheduled in available halls as these were not covered by compensation; this indicates the nature of some of the difficulties faced by the Carnival Committee.

Tribune (19 March 1952, p.3) described this as 'the quickest and most extensive mobilisation of private transport ever known in Australia'.

The booking of Centennial Park, which was controlled not by a council but by the Chief Secretary's Department, was cancelled. When stadiums for boxing and wrestling were refused, matches were not rescheduled in available halls as these were not covered by compensation; this indicates the nature of some of the difficulties faced by the Carnival Committee.

One specific incident of 'security police pressure' is recounted in Harry Stein, A glance over an old left shoulder, pp.104-5; see also Audrey Blake, Notes on the Development, p.152-3.


Secret and Confidential Report, 26 March 1952, NAA: A9108/3, ROLL 15/5

Conversation with Mavis Robertson, 13 July 1999. However, she continued, this conviction 'hid the essence of what was happening in the Soviet Union'. On the Carnival Committee she was treasurer and responsible for the opening day.

ASIO was able to provide clear and abundant evidence of Communist Party involvement, which increased further when repressive action intensified. Evidence included transcribed statements of CPA Central Committee members at 'closed' branch and other meetings; at one Party meeting on 29 January 1952 H.B. Chandler stated that 'the Youth Carnival was as important to the Party as the Referendum...never before had such an excellent opportunity been available to get young people interested in the Party'. Report No.602, 4 February 1952, 'Communist Party Direction of Youth Carnival for Peace and Friendship', NAA: A9108/3, ROLL 14/28.

See above-mentioned studies by Blake, Fox and Gibson, although Stein (p.107) adds a twist by arguing that the Menzies government 'wanted revenge' for the defeat of the Communist Party Dissolution Bill.


In particular, the trials of Nunn May and Fuchs in Britain and the Rosenbergs in the US; by 1952, the Director-General of ASIO and Prime Minister Menzies had been informed by MI6 of the Venona Operation which pointed to espionage activity in Australia.

For the context of Menzies' controversial call, in September 1950, to prepare for war in three years' time, see A.W. Martin, Mr Menzies' Anticommunism, Quadrant XL:326 (1996), pp.47-56, esp. 53-55.


David Lowe, 'National Security State', p.44.

See 'The World Peace Council and the Australian Peace Council', NAA: M1505/1, 87; 'History and Aims of the Soviet Peace Offensive', NAA: A1838/1/69/1/1/16/1 Pt.1; 'The Peace Movement', NAA: A1838/1, 69/1/1/16/1, Pt.5; 'Soviet Foreign Policy and the Peace Movement', NAA: A4311/5, 43/1; 'The World Congress of Partisans for Peace', PRO FO [Foreign Office], 110/271; 'CPA Interest in the Peace Movement', NAA: A6122/2, 219. ASIO set up a sub-section devoted exclusively to the peace movement which it successfully infiltrated (conversations with former ASIO officer, Jim Love [deceased], c.1975).

See above-mentioned studies by Blake, Fox and Gibson, although Stein (p.107) adds a twist by arguing that the Menzies government 'wanted revenge' for the defeat of the Communist Party Dissolution Bill.


See, for example, Intelligence Summaries, 1950, NAA [AWM]: AWM54, 665/7/30 Pt 41. For the context of Menzies' controversial call, in September 1950, to prepare for war in three years' time, see A.W. Martin, Mr Menzies' Anticommunism, Quadrant XL:326 (1996), pp.47-56, esp. 53-55.

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