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The Unreliable Witness: Clarence Dakin, ASIO, and Espionage

The Royal Commission on Espionage (RCE) was a defining event in Australia's Cold War. Without it, there would have been no public disclosure of what ASIO already knew: an espionage network within a government department. Without it, the temperature of anti-communism would not have risen so sharply. And without it, the political turmoil within the Australian Labor Party would never have been so damaging.¹ The RCE was triggered by the defection of Vladimir Petrov, a Soviet intelligence officer, on 3 April 1954, and announced ten days later by Prime Minister Menzies. The first hearing took place in Canberra's Albert Hall on 17 May 1954, the last in Sydney on 31 March 1955. It examined 119 witnesses and produced a wide-ranging 483-page report in August 1955, released to the public in September. The transcript of proceedings amounted to 3½ million words. Newspaper coverage, both domestic and international (there were sixty representatives of the world's press present), was voluminous and sometimes sensationalised.

Although Petrov was pivotal to the RCE, the guiding precedent was the Canadian Royal Commission eight years earlier, which followed the dramatic defection of Igor Gouzenko, a Soviet cipher clerk.² The classified documents he brought with him from the Russian Embassy in Ottawa in 1945 and investigated by that Royal Commission confirmed the existence of a Soviet spy ring; it sparked a chain reaction, resulting in the arrest of 21 Canadians including parliamentarians, diplomats, scientists and engineers, in addition to a top British nuclear physicist, Alan Nunn May, accused of passing atomic secrets to the Soviet Union. The Menzies government, keenly aware of the Canadian experience,³ used it as a model and expected the Australian RCE would reveal and publicise extensive espionage activities on a similar scale. The Australian commissioners were sent the full and still secret transcripts of the Gouzenko Commission hearings and the senior counsel assisting the RCE, Justice Windeyer QC, remarked on the 'quite remarkable' parallels and similarities between the two.⁴ The documents that Petrov handed over to ASIO would, it was predicted, prove no less important than those Gouzenko provided to the Canadian security service.

In contrast, however, to the Gouzenko royal commission whose hearings were all heard *in-camera*, the RCE hearings were mostly open. The witnesses subpoenaed were overwhelmingly members of the Communist Party of Australia (CPA); those named by Petrov during initial debriefings, mentioned in his pilfered embassy documents or referred to during his testimony; and those identified by ASIO to the commissioners as 'persons of interest'.⁵ Only one ASIO informant was cross-examined in the public hearings. This was Clarence William Dakin.

¹ On the ramifications of the RCE, see David Horner, *The Spy Catchers: The Official History of ASIO, 1949-1963* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2014), 376-8.

² Its official title was Royal Commission to Investigate the Facts Relating to and the Circumstances Surrounding the Communication, by Public Officials and Other Persons in Positions of Trust of Secret and Confidential Information to Agents of a Foreign Power. On Gouzenko, see *inter alia* Amy Knight, *How the Cold War Began: The Gouzenko Affair and the Hunt for Soviet Spies* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2005).

³ For example, when Menzies introduced the Communist Party Dissolution Bill in April 1950, he specifically referred to the final Report of the Canadian Royal Commission.

⁴ *Report of the Royal Commission on Espionage* (Sydney: Government Printer, 1955), 7; 'Royal Commission told of M.V.D.'s work', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 May 1954, 4. Once Petrov defected, the *Sydney Morning Herald* serialised an account of the Gouzenko affair, beginning 14 April 1954.

⁵ The limited *in-camera* evidence at the RCE was given by diplomats, security officers and occasionally the Petrovs.

A 'top secret' memorandum between MI5 and the British Foreign Office predicted that a friendly witness before the RCE (Dakin) was expected to 'provide interesting revelations of Russian penetration of the External Affairs Department' in Australia.⁶ Dakin had been a member of the Communist Party and his evidence before the Royal Commission was potentially important and highly damaging to the accused. Yet Clarence Dakin is not a name known to historians of the Petrov Affair. None of the numerous relevant studies, including the most authoritative, Robert Manne's *The Petrov Affair: Politics and Espionage*, has any reference to him. He is an absent and forgotten figure in the most controversial episode in Australia's Cold War history. This paper will retrieve Dakin from this historiographical silence.

So who was Dakin and what led him to the court room in January 1955? Clarence William Dakin was born in 1927 to devout religious parents – both were active members of the Plymouth Brethren sect – and educated at North Sydney Boys High School where he gained his Intermediate certificate. He left school in July 1944 before finishing his Leaving Certificate. That year, he became interested in communism through his friendship with Mrs Edith Newbiggin. She gave him communist literature and invited him to CPA 'cottage' meetings in members' homes. In 1946, of his own volition but accompanied by Newbiggin, he went to the North Sydney branch of the CPA and applied to join the Party. This caused significant family friction.⁷ On the recommendation of Elfrida Newbiggin, Edith's daughter, Dakin relocated to Canberra. She gave him a letter of introduction to Doris Beeby and Rupert Lockwood, both leading communist activists and *Tribune* correspondents at Parliament House. In December 1946 he contacted Beeby who assisted him in gaining immediate employment with the Department of the Interior. In mid-July 1947 his contract ended and Dakin returned to Sydney. During those seven months in Canberra, Dakin attended numerous CPA functions and parties at the Russian embassy. Significantly, he also formed a friendly acquaintanceship with Dorothy Jordan, who in 1946-7 met and married Ric Throssell, a diplomat in the Department of External Affairs (DEA).

Here, we must pause for context. The *raison d'être* of ASIO between its formation in March 1949 and the RCE in 1954-55 was the identification of the nature, extent and sources of the leaks of classified information provided by the British, purloined by Australians and transmitted to the Russians. This counterespionage operation was known internally as 'The Case'. The ultra-secret Venona decrypts revealed that a small spy network coordinated by Wally Clayton (codenamed KLOD by the Soviets) operated inside the DEA.⁸ It included Ian Milner, who fled to Prague, Jim Hill, who admitted nothing to his MI5 interrogator in 1950, and Frances Bernie, who admitted everything to ASIO in 1953.⁹ Another DEA officer was Ric Prichard Throssell. He was the son of writer and foundation member of the CPA, Katharine

⁶ G.R. Mitchell to P.H. Dean, 29 January 1955, The National Archives, UK, KV 2/3448, folio 447a.

⁷ As he told ASIO, 'My parents were bitterly opposed to my association with the NEWBIGGINS and forbade me to visit their house, and also objected to my communist views'. National Archives of Australia (NAA): A6126, 244, folio 76. Similarly, ASIO concluded that he 'is on bad terms with his parents, who are respectable and religiously minded people, and is associating with bad characters in Woolloomooloo'. Regional Director, NSW, to Regional Director, ACT, 11 August 1953, NAA: A6126, 244, folio 23.

⁸ See David McKnight, *Espionage and the Roots of the Cold War: The Conspiratorial Heritage* (London: Frank Cass, 2002), 186-94; Desmond Ball and David Horner, *Breaking the Codes: Australia's KGB Network* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1998), chapters 10-17; Horner, *The Spy Catchers*, chapters 3, 12.

⁹ For Bernie's acknowledgment of espionage and her regular meetings with Clayton, see Royal Commission on Espionage, *Official Transcript of Proceedings* (Sydney: Commonwealth of Australia, 1955) [hereafter RCE *Proceedings*], 1333-41.

Susannah Prichard, was posted to Moscow in 1945 as Third Secretary to the Australian Embassy, knew Milner closely (when he headed the DEA's Post-Hostilities Planning Division) and, in his own words, was a 'very good friend' of Hill.¹⁰ Although assigned a Soviet codename, FERRO, neither the Venona decrypts nor the Petrovs' recollections about FERRO implicated him directly in espionage. But he remained under constant suspicion and surveillance as ASIO relentlessly pursued 'The Case'.¹¹ Any incriminating evidence by a third party, especially a turned communist such as Dakin, could help pin guilt on Throssell.

Dakin was interviewed by ASIO on six occasions in 1953 and 1954. The first interview was held on 4 November 1953 and the last on 6 December 1954. The interviewers were 'of the opinion that he was telling the truth'.¹² While residing in a guest house in Canberra, he met Dorothy Jordan who also lived there. They became friendly and, according to Dakin, visited each other 'about two dozen times' over several months in the other's rooms. In her room he 'noticed communist literature' that resulted in discussions of their 'mutual interest in communism'. She told him of her membership of the Communist Party when a student at Melbourne University. His evidence then became more damning.

JORDAN informed him that she worked at the Department of External Affairs and that it was very important that she keep her job and that nobody should know she was a communist. She said she used to go and see Doris [Beeby] every Tuesday night and that Doris set the night aside for her. She said that what she was doing was very important and that Doris did not want her to be known as a communist.

He further stated that Jordan always took a brief case with her and 'appeared to be mysterious' about her visits to Beeby's flat. Moreover, Rupert Lockwood 'was connected with the matter ... [he] was mixed up in it'. When Dakin spoke to Beeby (whom he continued to visit) about the visits, she was 'annoyed that I had knowledge ... and said not to talk about it'. He recalled that once a fortnight, the day after Jordan's visit, Beeby travelled to Sydney. He concluded that not only was Jordan a 'definite' Communist Party member, but 'must have been supplying' classified documents from External Affairs to Beeby – he was 'convinced' of this – who then passed them to CPA leaders in Sydney.¹³

Dakin left Canberra in July 1947 because 'I was worried about what Dorothy JORDAN was doing and did not want to be implicated'. He continued: 'It worried me so much that I mentioned it to [his superior] in the Department of the Interior.'¹⁴ At another interview (25 November 1953), he said 'I was shocked about what Dorothy JORDAN was doing and it was brought home to me when I looked up the [public service] oath that I had made'.¹⁵ Whether shocked or not, he was ready to grass on her. He was willing, he was reported as stating, 'if we [ASIO] think it is really important', to renew his acquaintance with Jordan.¹⁶

¹⁰ RCE *Proceedings*, 2 February 1955, 2030.

¹¹ See Phillip Deery, "'An active and conscious agent"?: Ric Throssell and Soviet Espionage', *Labour History* 124 (May 2023).

¹² NAA: A6126, 244, folio 78. The interviewers were most likely Leo Carter and Max Monkhouse from the Royal Commission Section.

¹³ *Ibid.*, folios 34, 41, 59 and 75.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, folio 58.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, folio 39.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, folio 37. He later repeated his intention to 'look her up' when he returned to Canberra but his ASIO interviewer reported 'To this I made no reply'. *Ibid.*, folio 45.

ASIO took his allegations seriously. In March 1954, subsequent to the three 1953 interviews, the Director-General, Charles Spry, recommended that in view of Dakin's information about the actions of DEA officers, 'which are of an espionage nature', his file should be upgraded to Top Secret and that 'the source [Dakin] should be regarded as Top Secret'.¹⁷ Dakin's ASIO interviewer in 1953 regarded his assertions about Dorothy Throssell's employment in the DEA as one of 'the most disturbing features of the interview' since it related to 'another operational matter at this Office', namely The Case.¹⁸ Moreover, Dakin knew Frances Bernie, Dr Evatt's secretary, from the Newbiggins. 'I was told by [redacted] that BERNIE was passing information to the Communist Party'.¹⁹ Furthermore, he was 'on nodding terms' with Ric Throssell, and had met Wally Clayton, the alleged spymaster, as well as leading Sydney communists Laurie Aarons, Jack Hughes, Bert Chandler and June Mills.²⁰ All this lent substance to his principal allegation about Dorothy Jordan/Throssell. In light of what ASIO already knew about the KLOD group and its espionage activity in the DEA – from Venona cables, MI5 briefings, Bernie's admissions and, soon after, the Petrovs' debriefings – his information about Jordan/Throssell was alarming and serious. It would buttress the public unmasking of espionage activity by the RCE without compromising the carefully guarded Venona intelligence.

At the final re-interrogation of Dakin by ASIO on 6 December 1954, he was informed that he would be called to give evidence before the RCE. This was a decision made by the Royal Commission Section of ASIO. 'He showed obvious signs of concern, was somewhat upset and sweated profusely'. He said he would prefer not to appear, which would trigger the end of his friendship with Edith Newbiggin, but ASIO pressured him: he was told 'he had a duty to perform which was clear and unmistakable'.²¹

One month before his RCE appearance, he contacted the NSW office of ASIO and a member of the Royal Commission Section met him outside a Chatswood shop on 4 January 1955. He apologised for calling the meeting, which was not for any specific purpose, 'just to get his ideas straight'. He queried if Mrs Newbiggin or Dorothy Throssell knew of his imminent appearance ('I replied I did not know, but thought not') and whether they would dredge up his past ('I said clearly that was impossible to predict'). The ASIO officer asked whether there were 'any skeletons in the cupboard' that he was afraid would become public, but Dakin 'declined to say'. However, Dakin did comment, 'I don't think Dorothy (THROSSSELL) can do me much harm'. He also mentioned that his father was 'very displeased' and refused him advice or money to engage a solicitor.²² This meeting contained warning signs and, arguably, would have undermined ASIO's hope of Dakin being a convincing or reliable witness.

Other warning signs were apparent in an ASIO officer's assessment of his character: 'he is living on his wits, is unstable, and can be regarded little better, if at all, than the Kings Cross type of bodgie hoodlum'. This was apparently confirmed by the fact that he was 'constantly begging cigarettes and often borrowing money'.²³ Dakin was also prone to wildly fluctuating shifts of loyalties and allegiances. Despite not wishing to jeopardise his

¹⁷ Spry to Regional Directors, NSW and ACT, 3 March 1953, *ibid.*, folio 51.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, folio 32. Dakin was unaware that Ric Throssell was also being interrogated in this same period.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, folio 59.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, folio 38.

²¹ *Ibid.*, folio 78.

²² *Ibid.*, folios 83-4.

²³ *Ibid.*, folios 31-2.

relationship with the Edith Newbiggin by appearing before the RCE, he told the RCE that he 'deplores Mrs. NEWBIGGIN now'. And despite the support and assistance both Newbiggins provided him (introductions, employment, accommodation, companionship) Dakin lashed out at them. They were 'bitches who would go to any lengths to rake up dirt'. In 1946 Jordan/Throssell was a 'good friend'; in 1953, she was not only a 'convinced communist' but also was 'not a stable type of person'.²⁴ Doris Beeby was his 'best friend in Canberra'; she was 'very kind', loaned him money, permitted him to stay in her flat until he found accommodation, and turned to her when he needed advice. Yet he told ASIO: 'I could not stand Doris Beeby. She was a frigid person. She was a deficient person'.²⁵

Dakin's own deficiencies were on full display in the RCE courtroom. If ASIO's last meetings with him provoked anxiety, his testimony over three days in February 1955 amply fulfilled those concerns. One who was present in the courtroom on 4 February was Ric Throssell. 'For two hours', he later wrote, Dakin 'hedged uncertainly, hesitating, qualifying every answer he gave, going back on what he had said a moment before ... One moment having forgotten the woman who introduced him to the Communist Party, the next naming her ... Every contradiction was exposed'.²⁶ The extent to which this was an exaggerated judgement from a partisan observer and whether his testimony against Dorothy, his wife, was simply 'puerile imagination', can be assessed from the official transcripts of evidence.

Dakin frequently backtracked from the signed statement made at his ASIO interview in 1954. For instance, he then explicitly confirmed that he had been given a letter of introduction to communist journalist Rupert Lockwood.²⁷ The counsel assisting the RCE, George Pape, read the relevant part of this statement to the Court and questioned:

MR PAPE: I ask you again was that true – what was said in that statement?

THE WITNESS: I would not – I am afraid I cannot absolutely swear that it was true. Miss Beeby was not with Mr Lockwood.

THE CHAIRMAN: You mean you are not sure whether you took an actual letter of introduction to Lockwood: is that it?

THE WITNESS: No.²⁸

This was typical. Under cross-examination, Dakin prevaricated, dissembled and evaded. His answers were punctuated with 'possibly', 'probably', 'I'm not sure', 'I suppose', 'I gathered that impression' and, frequently, 'I cannot recall'. On whether Dorothy Jordan took anything to Beeby's flat for their regular, apparently clandestine, weekly meetings, Dakin responded with 'Not that I recall, actually, no'. Justice Philp queried the imputation that the documents carried were from the DEA. 'But you actually had no evidence of that at

²⁴ This suggests he knew her well. Dorothy whispered to Louat in court when Dakin took the stand that 'I was asked to look after him. I hardly knew him'. Ric Throssell, *My Father's Son* (Melbourne: William Heinemann, 1989), 315.

²⁵ NAA: A6126, 244, folios 33-4, 41, 83; RCE *Proceedings*, 7 February 1955, pp. 2068, 2090, 2092-3.

²⁶ Throssell, *My Father's Son*, 315. We only have Throssell's description of Dakin: 'a slight, nervous young man, slicked-back hair, short back-and-sides, tight grey suit ... quite good looking in a shifty sort of way'.

²⁷ Lockwood was of particular interest to the RCE as the author of Document J, provided to ASIO by the Petrovs; see Robert Manne, *The Petrov Affair: Politics and Espionage* (Sydney: Pergamon, 1987), 141-3.

²⁸ RCE *Proceedings*, 3 February 1955, 2043-4.

all? – I had no evidence at all. Just an inference you drew? – Yes, that is correct’. But did she take ‘a brief-case or an attaché case of any kind’? – which Dakin had forthrightly told an ASIO interrogator – he replied, ‘No I do not know that at all’. Dakin admitted that he never knew Jordan was in the DEA, never saw her at any of the Party meetings in Canberra, and never saw her go to Beeby’s flat but nevertheless ‘gathered the impression’ that they were secretive. And despite what he had previously informed ASIO, now he was unsure of the regularity with which Beeby visited Sydney with the alleged documents. To the (accurate) proposition that Jordan let her membership of the Melbourne University branch of the Communist Party lapse at the end of 1944 when she graduated, he replied ‘Yes, that is possible’.²⁹

The following exchange, which highlights Dakin’s readiness to renege on earlier statements, would have left the ASIO officers attending the hearings wringing their hands in despair:

MR. PAPE: Did you ever, during the course of your interviews with the Security officers, tell them that there were two members of External Affairs who made copies of documents which they sent to Communist Party headquarters?

THE WITNESS: Did I ever say those words?

MR. PAPE: Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: Or to that effect?

THE WITNESS: No, I did not say that ... I do not recall having made a statement like that. I certainly have no real foundation for it.

THE CHAIRMAN: You say “no real foundation”, but you did believe it to be the fact?

THE WITNESS: No, I do not.

PHILP, J.: Did you?

THE WITNESS: No ... Actually, if I believed such a thing – I may have had suspicions, but that is quite another matter from believing.³⁰

Under cross examination from Dr Louat QC, who acted as counsel for both Throssells, the reliability of Dakin’s testimony was further undermined. Like Pape, he exposed the discrepancies between his ASIO statement and his courtroom testimony. As Louat put it, resorting to semi-obscure euphemism, ‘his might be a mental approach to circumstances which would not command the fullest reliance from the Commission’.³¹ And as Ric Throssell observed more starkly: ‘With sweat pouring from his face under Louat’s probing, the young man was forced to reveal the shallowness of his life as pimp, informer; the absurdity of his delusions were exposed; his secret accusations to [ASIO] were shown to be worthless suppositions’.³²

When Dorothy Throssell took the witness stand, she admitted her friendship with Dakin but denied the regularity, secrecy or conspiratorial intent of her meetings with Doris Beeby. There were no stolen documents, she said, no clandestine membership of the Communist Party, no briefcase, and no connection between her lapsed membership and her joining the DEA.³³ None of this, nor Dakin’s vague and contradictory answers, deterred the

²⁹ Ibid., 2045-6, 2051.

³⁰ Ibid., 2047.

³¹ Ibid, 7 February 1955, 2093.

³² Throssell, *My Father’s Son*, 317.

³³ RCE *Proceedings*, 7 February 1955, 2074-7.

media from the dramatic report or radio announcement. The Melbourne *Argus* and the *Canberra Times* carried headlines such as 'Spy Witness Accuses Mrs. Throssell', 'Diplomat's Wife Secretive Over Reds' and 'Witness Denies Regular Meetings with Red Journalist'.³⁴ His testimony concerning Jordan, and presented as statements of fact, also featured in that evening's national news broadcast on the ABC. Dr Louat protested in vain about press misinterpretation and misreporting, arguing that it represented 'a striking example...of a breach of elemental fairness'.³⁵ As with many others named at the RCE, in the Cold War atmosphere of the 1950s such headlines and reports carried the potential to cast a dark shadow over one's life. Suspicions linger and that sobriquet 'person of interest' was not easily shed.

But a central question remains beyond the issue of how far Dakin was systematically discredited as a witness. Why did ASIO desire that Dakin take the stand? Unfortunately, we can only conjecture. FBI informants in the United States had been used as witnesses, often with devastating effect, during the Smith Act trials of Communist Party leaders from the late 1940s and the congressional investigating committees (Joseph McCarthy's Permanent Investigating Subcommittee, Pat McCarran's Senate Internal Security Subcommittee, and the House Committee on UnAmerican Activities) during the early-mid 1950s. The most heralded witnesses were the serial testifier, Louis Budenz, and the serial liar, Harvey Matusow. Both were former communists who became professional anticommunists.³⁶ ASIO, we can assume, followed closely these trials and hearings that sought to unmask and thwart the 'communist menace'.³⁷

Clarence Dakin may have been less articulate, confident and knowledgeable than the American informer-witnesses, but by focusing on the Throssells he would assist the RCE's brief of investigating espionage activity without compromising the carefully guarded Venona intelligence. He was worth the risk. Moreover, Dakin was not an ongoing, active, paid informant whose public appearance would 'expose' him and immediately render him worthless as a future agent. However, his information related back to 'The Case' and the issue of espionage within the DEA in the 1940s and this, as we have seen, was all-important to the Royal Commission Section of ASIO and the RCE itself. When his previous forthright statements to ASIO incriminating Dorothy Jordan/Throssell fell apart under cross-examination at the REC we can assume that ASIO washed their hands of him. The *Report of the Royal Commission on Espionage* curiously excludes him from the index and therefore the report itself. No other public witness was similarly airbrushed from the commissioners' report.

³⁴ *Canberra Times*, 4 February 1955, 4; *Argus*, 4 February 1955, 10; *Canberra Times*, 5 February 1955, 5.

³⁵ RCE *Proceedings*, 7 February 1955, 2063.

³⁶ For portraits of both, see John E. Haynes, *Red Scare or Red Menace? American Communism and Anticommunism in the Cold War Era* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1996), 180-3. Another was Matt Cvetic; see Daniel J. Leab, *"I was a Communist for the FBI": The Unhappy Life and Times of Matt Cvetic* (Penn State University Press, 2000). The closest Australian parallel was the former communist leader, Cecil Sharpley, who precipitated and gave evidence to the Lowe Royal Commission into Communism in Victoria (1949-50).

³⁷ A FBI file obtained under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA Request #1414410-000), which included exchanges between the US and Australia security services between 1945-55, is so heavily redacted that firm conclusions cannot be drawn. See File 64-HQ-211 SUB 303.

There is a final question that remains: why did he become an informer? Again, the answers must necessarily be speculative, and there is insufficient evidence for a psychoanalytic probing. However, in the scholarly literature on informants, which avoids any general theory of explanation, one motivation is persistent: ego – the sense of importance and sense of belonging it gave, especially if the individual were psychologically insecure or low in self-esteem.³⁸ The other motivating elements that often cluster around the acronym, MICE (money, ideology, coercion in addition to ego) were not apparent in Dakin's case, although a degree of coercion may have been involved in ASIO insisting that he appear before the RCE.

Initially, Dakin belonged to religion. His parents were committed Plymouth Brethren and their upbringing of young Clarence was strict. When he exchanged religion for communism, he embraced another set of doctrines with a defining worldview. He still belonged. The Newbiggins, both communists, became his default family. When he moved, on their encouragement and with their assistance, to Canberra he sought friendships that ensured his need to belong was satisfied. Dr Louat asked him, 'You needed the coping stone of membership of the Party, but you had the doctrines of the Party?', to which he answered 'Yes'.³⁹ After he 'lost interest' in the Communist Party and returned to Sydney in 1949 – and despite thereafter attending 'several' Party functions with Edith Newbiggin 'just to please her'⁴⁰ – he joined the Pymble branch of the Liberal Party (again indicative of belonging). In what may have been an attempt to engage in his own mythmaking, he told the RCE 'that I have no objection to being known as an ex-communist'.⁴¹ The next chapter in his life included informing on Dorothy Jordan/Throssell to ASIO, which, arguably, enhanced his sense of self-worth. In the eyes of ASIO, at least, he was somebody of importance who was taken seriously.

Why Dakin singled out Dorothy can only be surmised. As the RCE cross-examinations revealed, his evidence against her was, at best, flimsy. It is possible he felt jilted or spurned by her when she met Ric. We glean a hint of this in his statement to ASIO. He was friendly with her, he stated, 'until THROSSELL came on the scene and from then on she was always out with THROSSELL in his car'.⁴² In response to Louat's question concerning his attachment to Dorothy and why that ended ('I do not want to ask questions which you may feel are too personal'), Dakin stated that she 'was hardly ever home ... It was just that Miss Jordan saw Mr. Throssell more, and hence less of anybody else'. This 'interfered' with their acquaintanceship. Thus, it is possible that he felt rejected and that this was the reason, as Louat implied, that he reported his 'suspicions' about her to his departmental superior and, later, to ASIO when 'each time [he] added a bit more'.⁴³

³⁸ On the motivations of ex-communist informers in the US, see Robert Genter, 'Witnessing Whittaker Chambers: Communism, McCarthyism and the Confessional Self', *Intellectual History Review* 18:2 (2008), 243-58; Robert Lichtman and Ronald D. Cohen, 'Harvey Matusow, the FBI, and the Justice Department: Becoming a Government Informer-witness in the McCarthy Era', *American Communist History* 1:1 (2002), 43-68; Gary T. Marx, 'Thoughts on a Neglected Category of Social Movement Participant: The Agent Provocateur and the Informant', *American Journal of Sociology* 80:2 (1974), 402-42; Herbert L. Packer, *Ex-Communist Witnesses: Four Studies in Fact Finding* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962), 216-7.

³⁹ RCE *Proceedings*, 7 February 1955, 2068.

⁴⁰ NAA: A6126, 244, folio 33.

⁴¹ RCE *Proceedings*, 7 February 1955, 2068. After his RCE appearance, he was described by one communist, Joyce Roberts, as a 'rat', thus conforming to the stereotype of the apostate. NAA: A6126, 244, folio 82.

⁴² NAA: A6126, 244, folio 34.

⁴³ RCE *Proceedings*, 3 February 1955, 2049.

Ultimately, Dorothy's reputation was not badly damaged, although some in ASIO continued to believe that she, as well as husband Ric, had been involved in espionage on behalf of the Soviet Union.⁴⁴ After 1955, Clarence Dakin disappears from the historical record. The last entry in his ASIO file is dated 5 January 1955. He travelled from Cooma, where he was employed by the Snowy Mountains Authority, to Sydney to speak, at his request, with an ASIO officer. He had 'a bad hangover' and, according to that officer 'was in a highly nervous state, his hands shook, and he smoked incessantly'.⁴⁵ This was prior to his three days before the RCE in early February. Given his lamentable performance there, we can only guess at his state of mind thereafter. But presumably he had moved on from being a 'Kings Cross type of bodgie hoodlum'.

⁴⁴ See her ASIO file, NAA: A6119, 2378.

⁴⁵ NAA: A6126, 244, folio 84.