

Why, when and how Norman "matured" beyond these simplistic views is not fully explained in the family correspondence or in the interrogation of January 1952. "I didn't have," he said, "any sudden light on the road like St. Paul." He did come to see that tyranny within Russia was worse than before the Revolution, and not justified by the backward social conditions. He also claimed, a bit belatedly, to have found the Trotskyite trials "repugnant." I don't recall him discussing the Hilter-Stalin pact of 1939, but his wife has said that this was the decisive turning off point for them both. Norman explained how he had tried to apply Marxism "as an X-ray" in his quest for historical truth. Increasingly, however, he had found it inadequate as a philosophy of life, a guide to political action, or a clue to what makes history "tick."

That Norman had outgrown crude Marxism is further evidenced in his diplomatic reports. His judgment of men and events are far from naive even though naiveté was the only excuse the RCMP were prepared to consider for Norman's choice of left-wing friends and stubborn loyalty to them. He clearly preferred to appear naive or forgetful than to expose associates from earlier times to the embarrassment and pain that he was enduring. They were no more guilty of ignoble motives, he thought, than he himself.

Norman told Ferns that, after the banning of the Party in 1939, he had worried that he and his life long friend, Charles Holmes, might be arrested. On entering External in 1939, however, he had drastically curtailed his contacts with Communists and fellow travellers, notably Alexander MacLeod and Philip Jaffe. He formed a new close friendship with Ferns who, although not a Party member, continued to be a "Marxist historian" and sympathiser with the Party (letter). This was while Ferns was in the Prime Minister's Office, however, and the relationship was restricted by more than distance after Ferns was eased out by Norman Robertson. When, after the war, Norman called in Cambridge on Victor Kiernan, still a Party member, he asked him to be discreet about the visit especially if talking to Ferns.

Career preservation, even more than intellectual development, probably explains Norman's increasing caution in his social contacts. However, those who are tempted, like Barros, to see this as a step on the way to becoming a mole, must explain Norman's relatively carefree behaviour in the years 1935-39. He was suspect in the 1930s, it seems, for having had left-wing friends but became even more suspect for cutting them off in the 1940s! Norman might have resolved his dilemma by denouncing his past, and identifying all his early associates. This worked for many ex-Communists, but would have been inconsistent with Norman's character.