

teenager," and he criticised one of his speeches as "amateurish and irresponsible". Life under Nasser's authoritarian regime was not easy, and the conduct of diplomatic relations was trying. This contributed to Norman's depression that had started even before he heard reports of the renewal of hostile interest in him on Capitol Hill. His dispatches and telegrammes continued to be informative and balanced until just a few days before the tragedy.

He recognised that he had a challenging responsibility in helping to establish on Egyptian soil the first UN peace-keeping force. His energetic, imaginative and professional handling of this task won the admiration of all. And his reporting, judged to be "outstanding" and without discernible bias, it continued up to a few days before the tragedy.

Was Norman a Member of the Communist Party?

A conservative Canadian who knew Norman at Cambridge, and helped him get a job in 1935, insists that he said he was a member of the Communist Party, and even employed by it. Robert Bryce, who became the top mandarin in Ottawa, reports that while in Cambridge Norman had inquired if he intended to join "the Party"; Bryce interpreted that as an invitation from a member, but concedes that that was not necessarily the case. In his memoirs, George Ignatieff (19) wrote that Norman had been "a member of some Communist cell and openly admitted as much when he joined External Affairs." (119) But who else heard him? More compelling is Norman's own statement in a 1937 letter to his brother that it was under the "tutelage" of John Cornford that "I joined the Party."

Under interrogation, however, Norman consistently denied ever being a member, and police records bear him out; they had penetrated the Party to such an extent that they are confident they know precisely who was in, and Norman wasn't - in Britain, Canada or the United States.

Why did Norman give such contradictory accounts? Cornford, his "closest friend" at Cambridge, was the charismatic leader of the student Communists. His death in battle was a shattering blow to Norman who, in his letters home, was already chastising himself for not fighting Fascism in Spain. In context, the claim to have "joined the Party" reads more like a boast than a confession.

Apart from doubts about Norman's veracity, and subsequent developments involving Pearson, the question of Party membership is trivial. If he did not become a full member, it may well have been because the Party preferred it