

LEFTIES AND COMMIES AND BLACK SHIRTS...OH, MY.

**MODERN BRITISH POLITICAL HISTORY ON-LINE
FROM MICROFORM ACADEMIC PUBLISHERS**

Parliamentary Labour Party Papers, 1968/69-1993/94

The Parliamentary Labour Party is the organisation of Labour members of Parliament (MPs) founded in 1906. Included in this collection are all the minutes of the Party Meetings, the Liaison Committee and the Parliamentary Committee (Shadow Cabinet) for the period 1968-1994.

This period represents a turbulent one in British politics, during the early part of which Labour were twice in power. It begins with the latter half of a Labour government under Harold Wilson, followed by the Conservative government of Edward Heath, which brought Britain the three-day week and into the EEC. Less than a year after Labour returned to power in 1974, the Conservative Party elected a new leader. The Margaret Thatcher years appear in their entirety, including the Falklands War and the miners' strike. In the Labour Party, leadership moved from Jim Callaghan to Michael Foot to Neil Kinnock. Initially policy shifted to the left. However, after the Party's heavy defeat in the election of 1983, the concept of "New Realism" started to emerge. In its wake came Tony Blair, whose progress to the top is charted by these papers, which culminate in Margaret Beckett's caretaker leadership after the death of John Smith.

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The Communist Party of Great Britain Archive

Communism was one of the defining movements of the 20th century and one unique in its international scope and political ambitions. Britain was no exception; and, from its formation as a section of the Moscow-based Communist International (Comintern) in 1920, the British communist party provided a pole of attraction for tens of thousands of activists on the British left.

For decades, the party's archives were a closed book to researchers, and the full story of its activities proved impossible to tell. With the dissolution of the party in 1991, however, the decision was taken to deposit the archives alongside those of the Labour Party in Manchester's People's History Museum. Catalogued in 1993-1994, these turned out to be one of the outstanding national collections for the political history of the British left and have since aroused considerable scholarly interest. For the period from the 1940s, records of the party's central leading bodies have been meticulously preserved and include notes taken at meetings by leading party officials. In addition there are extensive records of central departments like the industrial department, which dealt with the trade union activities which were the most visible and controversial sign of the party's influence, and the international department, which maintained links with communist parties overseas.

With a very few exceptions (e.g. the congress series CP/CENT/CONG from 1920), the institutional papers of the CPGB now held at the Labour History Archive and Study Centre (LHASC), Manchester, date from 1943, the year when the earlier archives were transferred to Moscow, up to 1991 after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Part 2 includes the institutional papers from the start of 1969, the year of the CPGB's 31st congress at which was debated the crushing of the Prague Spring in 1968 by the army of the Soviet Union. It comprises: agendas, minutes and supporting papers, the papers of the two main committees, the Executive Committee and the Political Committee, together with selected regional and sub-committees including the National Cultural Committee with its subsidiary bodies (e.g. the History Group); YCL; Women's Dept; London District Committee; Industrial Dept; International Committee; Organisation Dept. Insofar as copyright and data protection legislation allows, all surviving papers are reproduced excluding personal & disciplinary files.

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The British Union of Fascists : Newspapers and Secret Files

On Thursday the 23rd of May 1940, after a lengthy period of surveillance by the security services, Sir Oswald Mosley leader of the British Union of Fascists (BUF) together with his chief lieutenants was arrested by police under Defence Regulation 18B of the Emergency Powers Act (1939). He was interned, initially in Brixton Prison and thence in Holloway. The reasons for his internment lay in his position as leader of the BUF, a political party which he had founded in 1932 and which he used to incite racial hatred and violence.

Throughout the 1930s the British Union of Fascists became increasingly pro-Nazi in its orientation, supporting the appeasement of Hitler and the Third Reich in blaming the Jews for the rising tension across Europe, and urging his followers and countrymen not to fight in a "Jews' war." The British Union of Fascists continued to function throughout the "phony war" but the invasion of France in May 1940 and the imminent invasion of Britain, which was feared at any moment, led the authorities to act swiftly against Mosley and the British Union, which was seen as a focus for Nazi collaboration.

Although the case against Mosley was never tried in court, there were a number of hearings at which he attempted to overturn the order of arrest and internment. In addition to reproducing the three principal organs of BUF, Action (1936-1940), Blackshirt (1933-1939), Fascist week (1933-1934), together with a wealth of evidence gathered by the authorities against Mosley and also his second wife, Lady Diana Mosley, who was arrested and interned just over a month later, on the 29th of June, the present collection contains the files relating to the hearings, comprising recently released secret papers from the Home Office, the Police, MI5 and the Cabinet Office, now held at the National Archives, Kew.

Read together, these newspapers and previously classified documents provide detailed insights not only into the threat that home-grown fascism posed to Britain during the early stages of the Second World War, but also of the network of political and financial relationships built up between British fascists, the Nazis in Germany, and Mussolini's fascist party in Italy, as well as elsewhere in Europe.

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