

# Conservative Research Department

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KB/sgc

Director: ALAN HOWARTH

Mr Derek Howe  
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7th October 1981

CONFIDENTIAL

*Dear Derek,*

*MS*

PUBLIC OPINION BACKGROUND NOTE 59

The results from our latest Gallup 'tracking' study are the same as those published in the Daily Telegraph on 2nd April 1981. They found when "Don't Knows" are excluded that 19% of the electorate said they would vote for the Social Democrats. When the idea of a Social Democratic Party was specifically put to respondents 36% claimed they would vote for them. It is of course a long way from leading in the opinion polls to actually winning elections.

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*Kate.*

D. K. Britto

Enc.

## PUBLIC OPINION BACKGROUND NOTE 59

(produced 5th April 1981)

1. Introduction

The results from our latest Gallup 'tracking' study are the same as those published in the Daily Telegraph on 2nd April 1981. The survey was conducted from 25th - 31st March - largely after the launch of the new Social Democratic Party on March 26th. The standard Gallup voting intention question found (when "don't knows" are excluded) that 30% of the electorate said they would vote Conservative, 30½% Labour, 19% Social Democrat, 18% Liberal and 2½% for "other" parties. This level of support for the two main parties is close to the nadirs of support for them in the post-war period. In the Conservative case the all-time low was 27½% in February 1945 and in the case of Labour 28% in May and June 1968.

When the option of voting for a Social Democratic Party was put to respondents 36% claimed they would vote for them, 25½% said they would vote Conservative, 24½% Labour and 12% for the Liberals (those electors who claimed they would not vote or did not know how they would vote have been excluded). When the idea of a Social Democratic alliance was put to respondents 48% said they would vote for it, 25½% Conservative and 24½% Labour.

Full details of the trend in supporter we have found for all of these questions since early February are shown below - it should be noted that these figures do not exclude don't knows.

VOTING INTENTION  
(including don't knows)

Voting Intention if  
Social Democratic Candidate

	<u>Standard Voting Intention</u>								<u>Voting Intention if</u> <u>Social Democratic Candidate</u>							
	<u>3/9</u> <u>Feb</u> %	<u>10/16</u> <u>Feb</u> %	<u>18/23</u> <u>Feb</u> %	<u>25 Feb</u> <u>2 Mar</u> %	<u>4/9</u> <u>Mar</u> %	<u>12/16</u> <u>Mar</u> %	<u>18/23</u> <u>Mar</u> %	<u>25/30</u> <u>Mar</u> %	<u>3/9</u> <u>Feb</u> %	<u>10/16</u> <u>Feb</u> %	<u>18/23</u> <u>Feb</u> %	<u>25 Feb</u> <u>2 Mar</u> %	<u>4/9</u> <u>Mar</u> %	<u>12/16</u> <u>Mar</u> %	<u>18/23</u> <u>Mar</u> %	<u>25/30</u> <u>Mar</u> %
Conservative	31	32	30	28	27	27	23	27	21	23	24	22	22	21	18	21
Labour	35	31	35	32	32	30	31	27	25	23	25	25	25	22	22	20
Liberal	18	17	19	19	18	16	15	16	11	12	11	13	12	11	11	10
Others	7	8	8	9	3	4	2	3	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	1
Social Democratic Party-*	-	-	-	-	12	12	17	17	22	21	22	21	25	25	27	29
Social Democratic/Liberal Alliance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Don't know/it depends	9	12	9	12	8	11	12	12	19	16	17	14	16	17	20	20

Voting Intention if Social Democratic/Liberal Candidate

	<u>3/9</u>	<u>10/16</u>	<u>18/23</u>	<u>25 Feb</u>	<u>4/9</u>	<u>12/16</u>	<u>18/23</u>	<u>25/30</u>
	<u>Feb</u>	<u>Feb</u>	<u>Feb</u>	<u>2 Mar</u>	<u>Mar</u>	<u>Mar</u>	<u>Mar</u>	<u>Mar</u>
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Conservative	21	22	23	20	22	20	17	20
Labour	24	22	23	24	24	21	22	19
Liberal	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Others	2	2	1	1	2	2	1	1
Social Democratic Party	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Social Democratic/ Liberal alliance	33	36	34	35	36	37	38	37
Don't know/it depends	19	18	20	20	17	21	22	22

N.B. This note normally excludes don't knows (figures are recalculated). It should be noted that this table includes don't knows as a separate category.

\*Social Democratic Party under standard voting intention is based on those respondents claiming they would vote Social Democratic at a General Election. No mention was made of the term in the voting intention question.

When the idea of a new Social Democratic Party was put to respondents 76% of electors who had claimed they would vote Conservative continued to do so, 9% of previous Conservative supporters said they would vote Social Democrat and 15% did not know how they would vote. Among Labour supporters 71% said they would continue to vote Labour, 15% said they would vote Social Democrat, 1% Liberal and 3% did not know how they would vote. Among Liberal supporters 56% said they would continue to vote Liberal, 23% said they would vote Social Democrat and the remainder did not know how they would vote.

## 2. Standard Voting Intention

The trend in support for the main parties from the standard Gallup voting intention question is shown on the following page.

The proportion of the electorate who claimed (unprompted) that they will vote Social Democrat has increased from 12½% in early March to 19% after the official launch of the new Party.

VOTING INTENTION

(excluding don't knows)

	<u>CON</u> %	<u>LAB</u> %	<u>LIB</u> %	<u>OTHER</u> %	<u>LEAD</u> %
<u>1979</u>					
May (GE)	43.9	36.9	13.8	5.5	+7.0
13/18 June*	42.0	43.5	13.0	2.5	-1.5
<u>1981</u>					
7/12 Jan	34.0	48.0	15.0	3.0	-14.0
14/20 Jan	33.0	46.5	18.5	2.0	-13.5**
21/26 Jan	35.5	43.0	17.0	4.5	-7.5**
28 Jan/2 Feb	32.0	40.0	21.5	6.5	-8.0
3/9 Feb	34.0	39.0	20.0	7.0	-5.0
10/16 Feb	36.0	35.5	20.0	8.5	+0.5**
18/23 Feb	32.5	38.5	21.0	8.0	-6.0
25 Feb/ 2 March	31.5	36.0	21.5	11.0	-4.5
4/9 March	29.5	34.5	20.0	16.0+	-5.0
12/16 March	30.0	34.0	18.0	18.0++	-4.0
18/23 March	26.0	35.0	17.0	22.0+++	-9.0
25/30 March	30.0	30.5	18.0	21.5+++	-0.5**

\*First Gallup Post-election survey

\*\* Published Polls

+ includes 12½% who said they would vote Social Democrat

++ includes 14% who said they would vote Social Democrat

+++ includes 17% who said they would vote Social Democrat

++++ includes 19% who said they would vote Social Democrat

3. Government Record

Our latest Gallup 'tracking' study found almost no change in the popularity of the Government with 22% approving of our record to date and 69% disapproving.

GOVERNMENT RECORD

	<u>Approve</u> %	<u>Disapprove</u> %	<u>Don't Know</u> %
<u>1979</u>			
13/18 June	34	41	25
<u>1981</u>			
7/12 Jan	27	61	12
14/20 Jan	26	63	11
21/26 Jan	28	59	14
28 Jan /2 Feb	26	62	12
3/9 Feb	27	60	13
10/16 Feb	29	60	11
18/23 Feb	29	59	12
25 Feb/ 2 March	26	62	12
4/9 March	23	65	12
12/16 March	23	67	10
18/23 March	23	67	9
25/30 March	22	69	9

#### 4. Popularity of Political Leaders

No significant changes in the popularity of the leaders of the three main parties - Mr Foot remains very unpopular.

	<u>Mrs Thatcher</u>			<u>Mr Foot</u>			<u>Mr Steel</u>		
	<u>Sat.</u>	<u>Dis-</u>	<u>Don't</u>	<u>Is</u>	<u>Is</u>	<u>Don't</u>	<u>Is</u>	<u>Is</u>	<u>Don't</u>
	%	<u>sat.</u>	<u>Know</u>	%	<u>Not</u>	<u>Know</u>	%	<u>Not</u>	<u>Know</u>
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
<u>1981</u>									
7/12 Jan	33	61	6	24	39	36	56	21	23
14/20 Jan	31	63	5	26	42	32	63	19	18
21/26 Jan	34	61	5	23	43	34	57	19	21
28 Jan /2 Feb	32	63	6	21	46	33	62	17	21
3/9 Feb	35	60	6	24	49	27	60	19	21
10/16 Feb	34	60	6	22	49	30	64	16	20
18/23 Feb	33	62	5	20	52	28	58	18	24
25 Feb/2 March	32	62	6	23	50	27	57	22	20
4/9 March	28	66	6	25	52	23	62	18	20
12/16 March	30	64	6	23	52	26	63	15	22
18/23 March	28	67	5	24	55	24	63	18	19
25/30 March	30	66	4	20	55	25	61	19	19

#### 5. Published Polls

##### Marplan (Guardian 2nd April 1981)

A Marplan survey published in the Guardian on 2nd April 1981 looked at attitudes among electors who claimed they would seriously consider voting Social Democrat or Liberal at the next election. The research was conducted on Monday March 30th and Marplan interviewed 662 electors.

The sample were asked to identify from a list supplied to them their reasons for contemplating a switch. They were asked first to choose their main reasons, and then to name additional reasons. Leading responses among former Conservatives were:

	<u>Named as</u> <u>"main reason"</u>	<u>Named as</u> <u>"a reason"</u>
Dislike Mrs Thatcher	4	14
Conservatives too Right Wing	13	23
Economic policies	44	60
Not my type of party any more	8	22
Too inflexible/rigid	22	56

Leading responses amongst former Labour voters were:

	<u>"Main reason"</u>	<u>"A reason"</u>
Dislike Mr Foot	5	14
Labour too Left-wing	41	54
Not my type of party any more	19	39
Unions have too much say	18	45

The sample was then asked to choose between four different types of relationship all of which have been canvassed between Social Democrats and Liberals. Replies were:

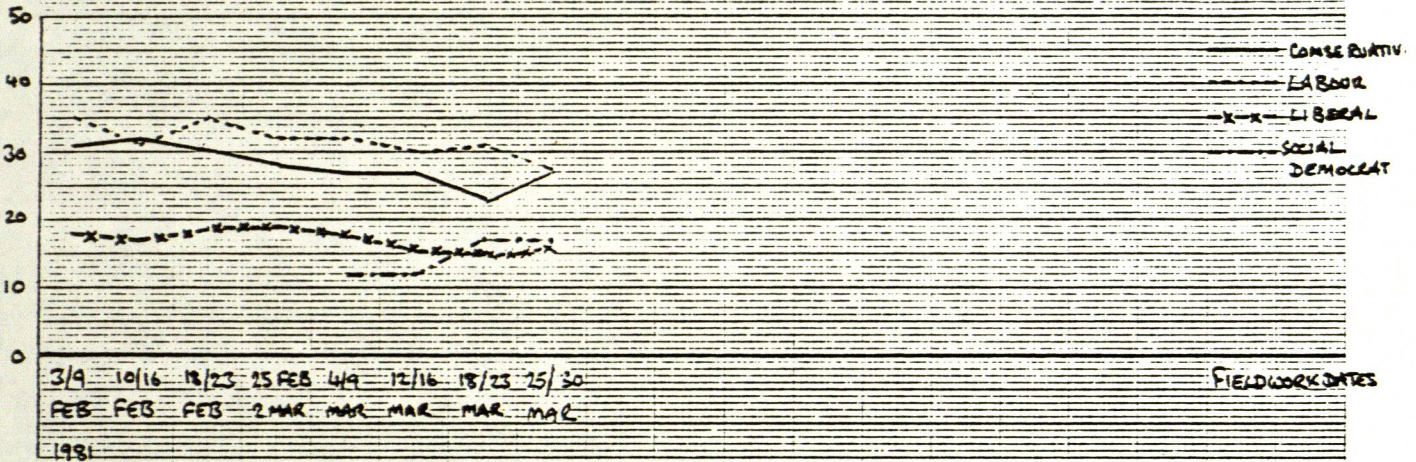
	<u>Total</u>	<u>Past allegiance</u>		
		<u>Con</u>	<u>Lab</u>	<u>Lib</u>
Merge completely	34	31	35	38
Campaign together on agreed policies but remain separate parties	25	23	26	26
Have different policies but only one candidate in each constituency	11	13	10	8
Work entirely independently	21	26	20	15
Don't know	9	7	8	13

Marplan then displayed a list of policies on which Social Democrats and Liberals might campaign and asked the sample if they agreed with them. Responses were:

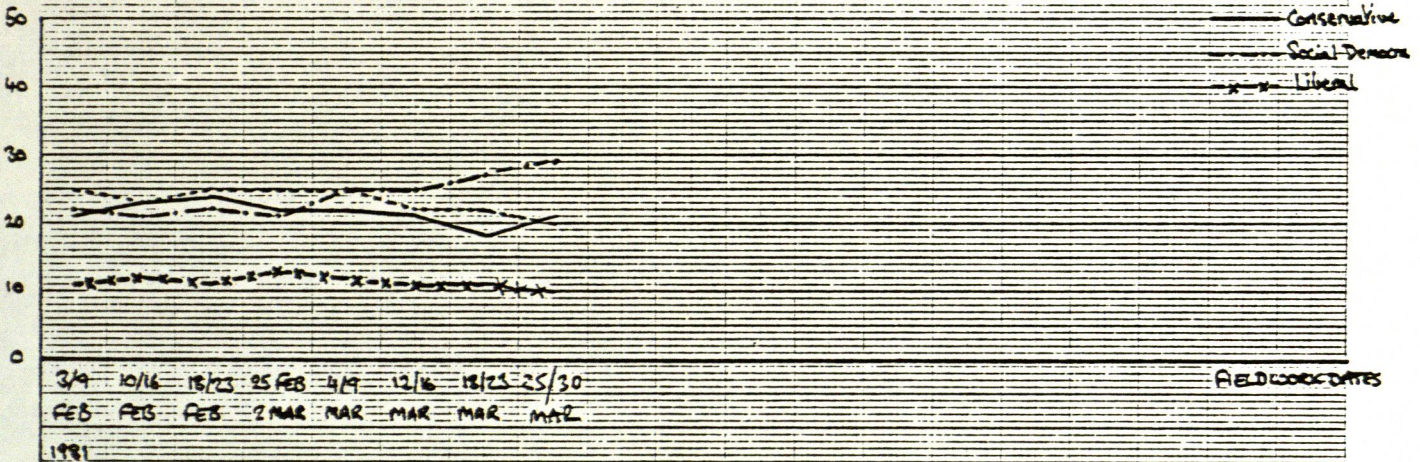
	<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>AGE</u>		<u>CLASS</u>		<u>Past support</u>		
		<u>18-24</u>	<u>35+</u>	<u>AB/C1</u>	<u>C2/DE</u>	<u>Con</u>	<u>Lab</u>	<u>Lib</u>
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Stay in EEC	43	44	42	55	34	53	35	46
Maintain our nuclear defences	64	59	67	61	66	74	62	58
Spend more on social services	66	74	62	59	71	47	77	70
Spend more on education	78	86	74	71	83	67	84	81
Have an incomes policy	68	64	71	68	68	72	66	67
Change the electoral system to PR	62	64	60	63	61	66	60	66
Halt further nationalisation	74	76	74	79	71	83	65	82

# BACKGROUND GRAPHS

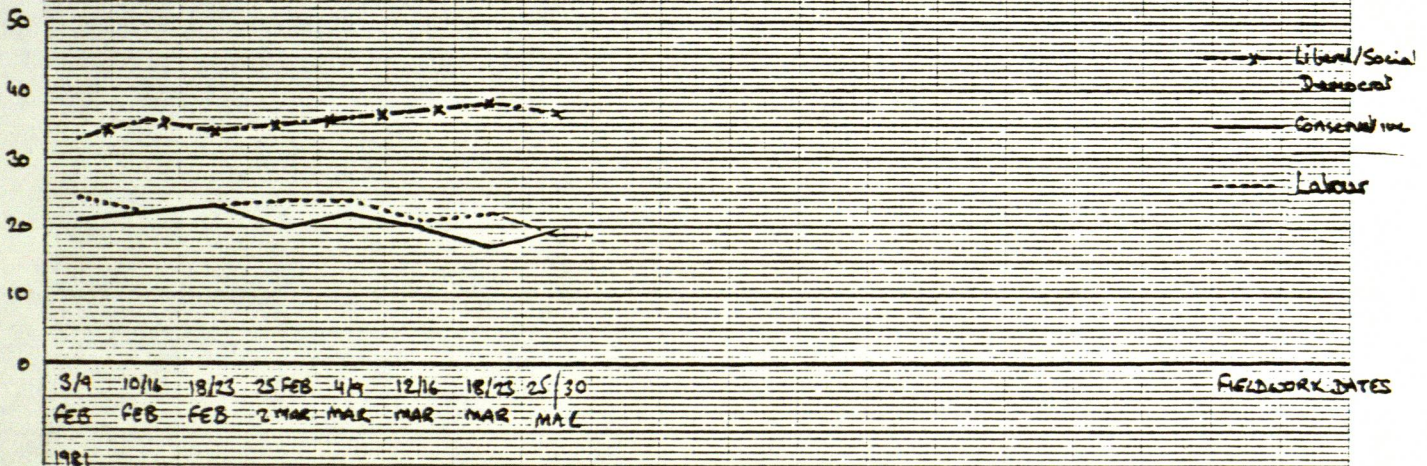
## STANDARD VOTING INTENTION



## VOTING INTENTION IF SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATE

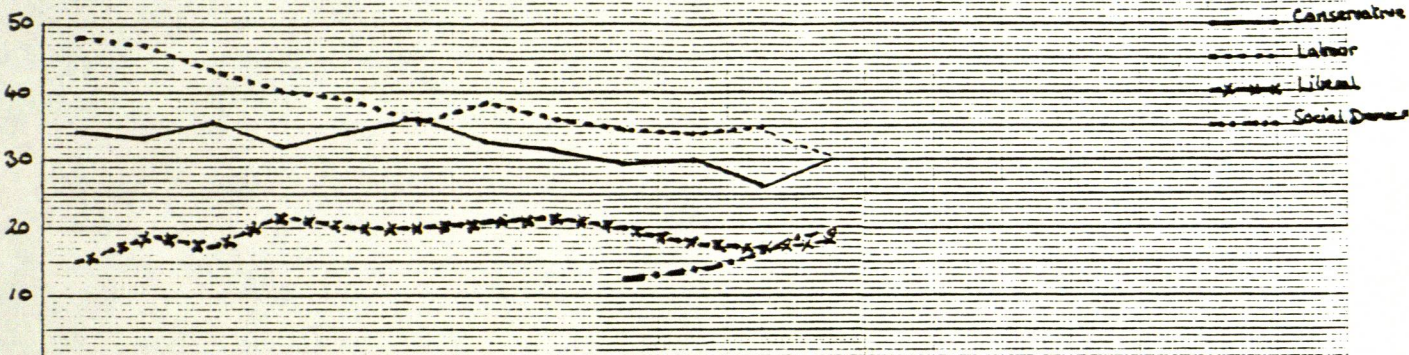


## VOTING INTENTION IF SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC/LIBERAL CANDIDATE



# BACKGROUND GRAPHS

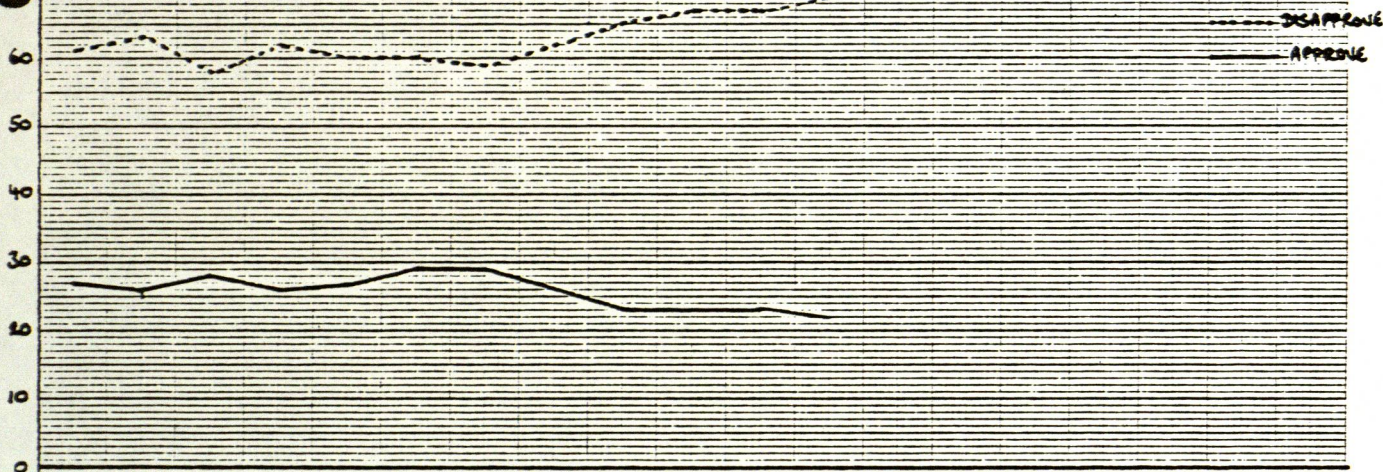
## VOTING INTENTION (excluding don't know)



7/12 14/20 21/26 28 JAN 3/9 10/16 18/23 25 FEB 4/9 12/16 18/23 25/30  
 JAN JAN JAN 2 FEB FEB FEB FEB 2 MAR MAR MAR MAR MAR  
 1981

FIELDWORK DATES

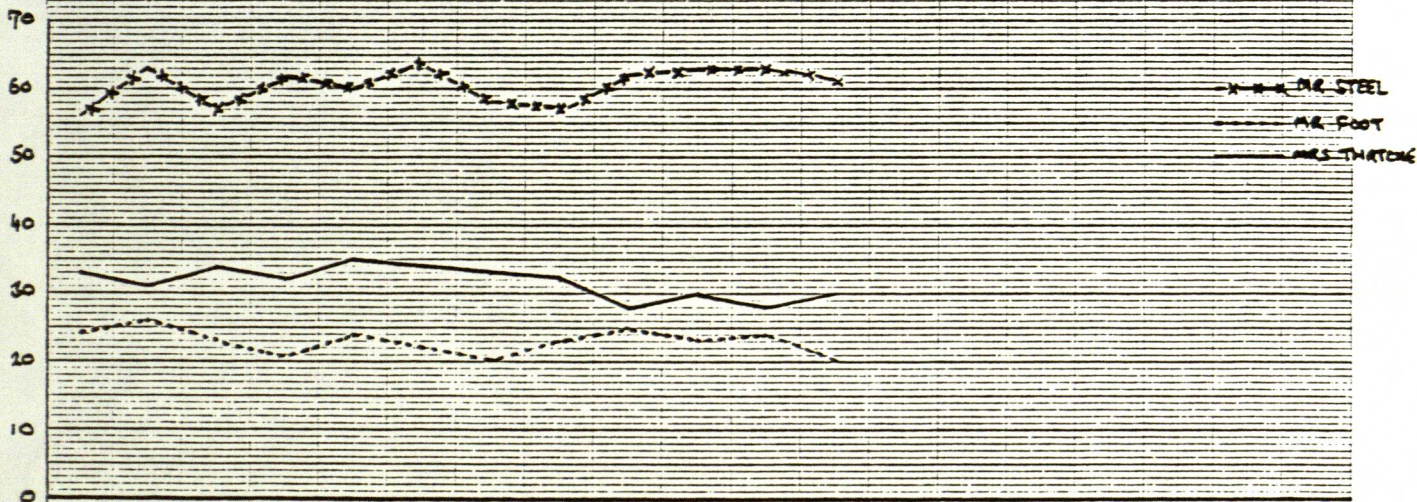
## GOVERNMENT RECORD



7/12 14/20 21/26 28 JAN 3/9 10/16 18/23 25 FEB 4/9 12/16 18/23 25/30  
 JAN JAN JAN 2 FEB FEB FEB FEB 2 MAR MAR MAR MAR MAR  
 1981

FIELDWORK DATES

## POPULARITY OF POLITICAL LEADERS



7/12 14/20 21/26 28 JAN 3/9 10/16 18/23 25 FEB 4/9 12/16 18/23 25/30  
 JAN JAN JAN 2 FEB FEB FEB FEB 2 MAR MAR MAR MAR MAR  
 1981

FIELDWORK DATES