

That final question seems never to have been answered because the issue did not arise. The dialogue between government and Security Service was confused by some ambiguity over what subversion meant. On 1 February 1971 FJ admitted to Maudling that 'he had always refrained from trying to define subversion.'¹⁴ Subversion was eventually defined in 1972 by Director F (John Jones) as 'activities threatening the safety or well-being of the State and intended to undermine or overthrow Parliamentary democracy by political, industrial or violent means': a definition incorporated in an F Branch instruction in January 1973 and quoted in the Lords by a government minister two years later.¹⁵

During Simkins's farewell call as DDG on the Home Secretary on 28 June 1971, Maudling remarked that he was grateful for the discussions with us about the investigation of subversion in industry. He and the Prime Minister had been a little brash in their approach, but he thought we had kept things on the right lines.¹⁶ The deputy head of Registry minuted to FJ: 'Further to the earlier request of Mr Maudling for improper investigation you will wish to note that ... he, 8c the P.M., recanted!'¹⁷ The leadership of the Security Service remained anxious to avoid what it saw as ill-judged Whitehall attempts to change its counter-subversion responsibilities. Fi/o (the Assistant Director in charge of monitoring the CPGB and other subversive organizations) noted the 'almost complete absence' in the Annual Review of Intelligence for 1972 by the Intelligence Co-ordinator of any reference to the Service's counter-subversion role.¹⁸ FJ responded: 'We deliberately omit a great deal that the Security Service does from the annual review on the ground that we do not want the J.I.C. or the Intelligence Co-ordinator to concern themselves with it.'¹⁹

Despite the Heath government's anxieties about industrial subversion, at the beginning of 1972 Whitehall gravely underrated the threat from the National Union of Miners (NUM). The miners were the last union from which the government had expected a serious challenge to its pay guidelines. 'What we did not anticipate', Heath later admitted, 'was the spasm of militancy from a union which had been relatively quiet for so long.'²⁰ Over the previous decade the NUM had tamely acquiesced in the closure of over 400 pits and the reduction of the labour force from 700,000 to less than 300,000. Militancy in the coalfields seemed a thing of the past. While strikes in the dockyards and on the railways had become a regular feature of the industrial landscape, there had been no miners' strike since 1926. From their traditional place at the top of the earnings league, the miners had slipped steadily down the table. Neither the government nor most of the media initially took the miners' challenge seriously. Bernard Levin in