

The UK Miners' Strike of 1984 - 1985

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ABSTRAKT

Cílem této bakalářské práce je prozkoumat klíčové momenty stávkový britských horníků v letech 1984-1985, která byla významnou průmyslovou akcí v moderní Británii. Práce je rozdělena do tří hlavních částí. Cílem první části je prozkoumat základní příčiny a faktory, které přispěly ke stávce horníků. Vládní politika a přípravy, které sporu předcházely, a zda horníci stávku prohráli ještě před jejím zahájením. Druhá část popisuje klíčové momenty během stávkový a aspekty, které ovlivnili její vývoj, např.: policejní brutalita, role médií a role žen. Poslední část zkoumá dopady na zúčastněné osoby a také změnu v postavení odborů v rámci britské politické scény. Nakonec tuto práci uzavírá stručné shrnutí současné situace v hornickém průmyslu.

Klíčová slova:

Scargill, uhlí, Konzervativní strana, Margaret Thatcher, média, horníci, NUM, odbory.

ABSTRACT

This bachelor thesis aims to explore key moments of the UK miners' strike of 1984-1985, a significant industrial action in modern Britain. This thesis is divided into three main parts. The first part aims to explore underlying causes and factors contributing to the miners' strike. Governmental policies and preparations leading up to the dispute and whether the miners lost even before the strike started, as is often believed. The second part describes critical moments during the strike and aspects that influenced its development, such as police brutality, media, and women's role. The last part examines various impacts on the individuals involved and the change in the position of trade unions within the UK's political landscape. Finally, this thesis will conclude with a brief summary of the current situation in the mining industry.

Keywords:

Artur Scargill, coal, Conservative party, Margaret Thatcher, media, miners, the NUM, trade unions

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I hereby declare that the print version of my Bachelor's/Master's thesis and the electronic version of my thesis deposited in the IS/STAG system are identical

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INTRODUCTION

The miners' strike of 1884 – 1985 stands out as one of the most prolonged and severe industrial conflicts in British history, resulting in a significantly long paralysis of the coal industry in Britain. This dispute, lasting almost a year, revolved around the closure of collieries across the country. It did not end with protestors waving their banners to express their dissatisfaction; the UK miners' strike is characterised by violence and other hardships endured by the people involved.¹ On one side stood the Conservative Government, with Margaret Thatcher as the prime minister, while on the other side stood the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), led by its president, Arthur Scargill, and they strongly opposed each other. The union tried to prevent the pit closure and the inevitable destruction of the entire mining industry that came with it. This destruction would result in many job losses and, therefore, many families living on the verge of poverty.²

Margaret Thatcher stood behind the new attitude of the Conservative Government and their sharpness towards the section of the British working class, known for its resilience. However, it is essential to note that Thatcher's and the Government's decisions were driven by the fact that the mining industry was in a dire financial situation. The industry was making significant losses and it was at odds with Thatcher's primary goal of economic revitalization. The criticism over immoral tactics used by the government persists to this day, mainly the use of mobile police employing brutal riot tactics, as well as the manipulation of media that tried to averse all the support for the miners.³

The strike was perceived as inevitable by both sides, the miners and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. The signs of the industry's decline were evident to everyone, including the miners; they were just uncertain about the timing.⁴ The years of struggle and shrinking of the industry could not be overlooked, with mines closing down weekly in the 1960s and the miners' wages steadily decreasing.⁵ When Margaret Thatcher became the Prime Minister, the clash was near since she had a more radical stance on the loss-making industry

¹ Ken Smith, *A Civil War without Guns: The Lessons of the 1984-85 Miners' Strike* (London: Socialist Publications, 2014), chapter 1, Kindle.

² Eric J Evans, *Thatcher and Thatcherism* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2018), Chapter 1, VitalSource Bookshelf.

³ Beverly Trounce, *From a Rock to a Hard Place: The 1984/85 Miners' Strike* (Cheltenham: The History Press, 2015), foreword, Kindle.

⁴ Robert Gildea, *Backbone of the Nation: Mining Communities and the Great Strike of 1984-85* (London: Yale University Press, 2023), chapter 1, Kindle

⁵ Mark Jenkinson, Mark Metcalf and Mark Harvey, *Images of the Past: The Miners' Strike* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Books, 2014), 1-4.

as opposed to her predecessors.⁶ The Conservatives were determined to take on the mining industry and had no intention of being tied up by the miners' demands.⁷

However, the miners, led by Scargill, had a strong sense of confidence.⁸ Some of the requirements of the coal industry were investments into new technologies, no privatisation of the collieries, and halting coal imports.⁹

This thesis aims to sort out the major critical points of the miners' strike and proposes a balanced perspective regarding this industrial dispute within British history. The focus is on unravelling several layers, such as the motives of the conservative government, employed tactics, and the organisation and mobilisation of the mining community and solidarity. Ultimately, it is essential to note the strike's effects on the nation. The UK miners' strike of 1984 – 1985 brought political and social changes in the United Kingdom. The post-strike United Kingdom significantly differs from the United Kingdom prior to the strike. One of the most significant outcomes of the strike was the shift away from the industrial landscape of Britain, characterised by strong trade unions. Since the strike, trade unions have never regained the same level of importance as they had before.

⁶ Eric J Evans, *Thatcher and Thatcherism* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2018), Chapter 1, VitalSource Bookshelf.

⁷ John Blundell, *Margaret Thatcher: A Portrait of the Iron Lady* (New York: Algora Publishing, 2016), 125.

⁸ Mark Jenkinson, Mark Metcalf and Mark Harvey, *Images of the Past: The Miners' Strike* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Books, 2014), 1-10.

⁹ Mark Jenkinson, Mark Metcalf and Mark Harvey, *Images of the Past: The Miners' Strike* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Books, 2014), 29.

1 PRIOR TO THE STRIKE

The United Kingdom experienced significant changes, resulting in a tremendously different place before and after the dispute. Prior to the 1984-1985 strike, the miners had an important position within the working class; they were considered as an essential part of the nation, because they extracted material necessary for the functionality of the nation. They regarded themselves as the foundation of the nation. Mining was a challenging profession, demanding only the toughest and sturdiest men to handle the extremely harsh and dangerous working conditions. However, coal was needed, and the nation could not operate without it, resulting in miners' confidence in their profession.¹⁰ Coal played various important roles in the economy; it was needed as a source of coke for steel and iron production and different manufacturing industries, e.g., textile mills. Furthermore, railways and coastal transportation relied on the coal supply after the Industrial Revolution.¹¹ However, coal's vital role was weakened with new resources, such as nuclear power, which could be a more efficient.¹² Plus, Britain was in a deepening recession, and unfortunately for the miners, the coal dispute unfolded at a very unfortunate time.¹³

1.1 General Strike 1926

The origin of the 1984-1985 miners' strike can be traced back to the general strike of 1926. Mentioning the impact of the general strike is crucial as it provides a contextual framework for the development of the following six decades.¹⁴ The post-war British coal industry experienced periods of increased activity, followed by a sharp decline in demand, and it had never reached its peak since the period before the First World War. These circumstances resulted in decreased wages, increased working hours, and bad working conditions in general.¹⁵ The strike in 1926 was the miners' response. The conditions under which the industry found itself were unfavourable. Global coal production increased, contributing to a

¹⁰ Francis Beckett and David Hencke, *Marching to the Fault Line: The Miners' Strike and the Battle for Industrial Britain* (London: Constable & Robinson, 2009), 4.

¹¹ Robert Gildea, *Backbone of the Nation: Mining Communities and the Great Strike of 1984-85* (London: Yale University Press, 2023), Introduction, Kindle.

¹² Sheryl Bernadette Buckley, "The State, the Police and the Judiciary in the Miners' Strike: Observations and Discussions, Thirty Years On," *Capital & Class* 39, no. 3 (October 2015): 421. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0309816815603718>.

¹³ Katy Shaw, *Mining the Meaning: Cultural Representation of the 1984-5 UK Miners' Strike* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2012), 28-29.

¹⁴ Francis Beckett and David Hencke, *Marching to the Fault Line: The Miners' Strike and the Battle for Industrial Britain* (London: Constable & Robinson, 2009), 1.

¹⁵ Martin Adeney and John Lloyd, *The Miners' Strike, 1984-5: Loss Without Limit* (London: Routledge, 2022), 8.

global surplus, which led to a decline in demand for British coal. British coal was relatively expensive compared to its foreign competition because of its high-cost production. As a result, the collieries tried to cut the cost expenses, starting with cutting wages. Naturally, the miners responded with resistance; they initiated a strike with the support of the Trade Union Congress (TUC) on May 3. The government, not wanting to be overpowered by the working class, also began to act. Under Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin, the Conservative Government assumed control of the media to promote the government's narrative. They produced the *British Gazette* as a platform through which the government could communicate their stance on the striking situation. The TUC published their *British Miner* in order to oppose the government. Nonetheless, their efforts were in vain because the government seized the *British Broadcasting Corporation, BBC*. These measurements meant that anything from the unions or the Labour Party was restricted from the broadcast.

Moreover, the government supposedly tried to make the army more visible by abruptly ending their leave in order to intimidate the TUC. In the end, TUC resorted to an exit strategy, and the strike ended quickly after nine days. The victorious Conservative Government believed this event dispelled the impression that the Trade Unions could achieve their objectives by organising extensive and widespread strikes.¹⁶

1.2 Coal Industry after World War II

The mining industry transitioned to public ownership on January 1, 1947. Miners had high hopes as they expected many improvements, specifically more secure jobs that were adequately paid. The majority warmly welcomed this change. Flags of the National Coal Board (NCB), which was appointed to control and regulate the industry, were hoisted in front of collieries. However, some people did not support the transition. In previous years, private owners did not invest enough funds and were slow to adapt to competitors; thus, they diminished the competitive ability of the British mining industry. Critics saw the transition as an opportunity for the private owners to leave a crippled industry after years of neglecting it. In addition to that, the private owners were offered government stock till the year 2000 as compensation.¹⁷

¹⁶ Francis Beckett and David Hencke, *Marching to the Fault Line: The Miners' Strike and the Battle for Industrial Britain* (London: Constable & Robinson, 2009), 1-9.

¹⁷ Mark Jenkinson, Mark Metcalf and Mark Harvey, *Images of the Past: The Miners' Strike* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Books, 2014), 1.

Therefore, according to some, prospects for improvement in the future seemed slim. The demand for coal remained unfulfilled because of the miners' inability to extract enough of it. Additionally, the presence of cheaper oil, made it difficult for the industry to regain its momentum.¹⁸ The industry's decline accelerated because alternative energy resources became more prevalent.¹⁹ Thus, the demand for the coal supply steadily decreased for years, from 287 million tons produced in 1913 to 181 million tons 33 years later.²⁰ Around 400 pits were closed in ten years between 1960 and 1970. This drop in numbers was reflected in the decreasing number of miners. The workforce of miners was over a million in the 1940s. In 1970, the number was not even 300,000, and the number of still-operating pits was 292 from 698 in 1960s.²¹

The industry experienced a fluctuation in the 1970s, due to the oil crisis. This initiated a sharp increase in the price of oil, which quadrupled. However, this coincided with a massive downturn of industrial activity in Britain and the Western countries, resulting in coal surpluses and further mine closures.²² Additionally, wages continued to decrease. Miners used to earn more than the average salary of other working groups, but due to the development of the industry, they faced a significant decrease in their income.

In 1971, the NUM voted for a pay raise at their Annual Conference, but the NCB rejected this. The dissatisfied miners answered by a strike on February 10, 1972. Other manufacturing industries, such as automotive or building workers, went on strike as well in order to support miners. The force of the picketing crowd was overwhelming, causing the NCB to devise compromises in the form of pay raises and additional bonuses. This defeat was humiliating for the Conservative Government led by Edward Heath.²³ The miners' success laid in the economic condition at that time. Over-priced oil and low coal stock attributed to the government's retreat.²⁴

¹⁸ Martin Adeney and John Lloyd, *The Miners' Strike, 1984-5: Loss Without Limit* (London: Routledge, 2022), 8.

¹⁹ Martin Adeney and John Lloyd, *The Miners' Strike, 1984-5: Loss Without Limit* (London: Routledge, 2022), 9.

²⁰ Robert Gildea, *Backbone of the Nation: Mining Communities and the Great Strike of 1984-85* (London: Yale University Press, 2023),

²¹ Robert Gildea, *Backbone of the Nation: Mining Communities and the Great Strike of 1984-85* (London: Yale University Press, 2023), Introduction, Kindle.

²² Martin Adeney and John Lloyd, *The Miners' Strike, 1984-5: Loss Without Limit* (London: Routledge, 2022), 9.

²³ Mark Jenkinson, Mark Metcalf and Mark Harvey, *Images of the Past: The Miners' Strike* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Books, 2014), 4-5.

²⁴ Katy Shaw, *Mining the Meaning: Cultural Representation of the 1984-5 UK Miners' Strike* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2012), 28.

However, the economic was struggling. The 1970s are characterised by ‘Stagflation’ – a combination of economic stagnation and high inflation. Initially, Britain witnessed a mix of economic growth and rising unemployment in the 1970s. The Conservative Government aimed for less government intervention in the economy, just as Margaret Thatcher did years later. However, the government had to change its plans due to high unemployment, and they had to inject money into the economy through tax cuts and increased bank lending, which briefly improved the economy. Nonetheless, this growth was short-lived and ended in 1974 with another economic backdrop.²⁵

In the 1974 General election, the Conservative Party lost their majority by a fraction of the vote. The incoming Labour Government, the NCB and the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), tried to improve the situation. They introduced The Plan for Coal of 1974, in which they promised to avoid threats to the mining industry and help it with security in the future. The aim was to increase coal production to 135 million by the year 1985. Nonetheless, the plan did not work as they had imagined, and production continued to decrease.²⁶ Additionally, the intended goal of the plan was deemed unrealistic since the plan focused mainly on closures of mines and job losses without properly addressing the term ‘uneconomic pit’ and the economic challenges posed by funding them.²⁷

In 1974, another strike also occurred. The NUM voted on a new bonus scheme introduced by the NCB. Incentive bonuses in monetary form caused quite a stir in the mining communities. The bonuses for miners were structured to reflect the amount of coal they had extracted. Some NUM area leaders supported this. However, some had different points of view. Older miners could not compete with younger and stronger miners. The bonus scheme could also influence an increase in casualties in mines. Being over-motivated and encouraged by higher wages, the miners could push over their physical limits. Another point was that the miners had the same objectives, thanks to the unified wages over the past years. As a community, they fought for the same issues. The new bonus system would divide the community, which was always known for its strong bond with each other.²⁸ The National Power Loading Agreement of 1966 ensured equal wages for all miners, resulting in a more

²⁵ “The UK economy in the 1970s,” UK Parliament: House of Lords Library, published April 4, 2024, <https://lordslibrary.parliament.uk/the-uk-economy-in-the-1970s/>.

²⁶ Martin Adeney and John Lloyd, *The Miners’ Strike, 1984-5: Loss Without Limit* (Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2017), 17.

²⁷ Katy Shaw, *Mining the Mining: Cultural Representation of the 1984-5 UK Miners’ Strike* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2012), 33.

²⁸ Mark Jenkinson, Mark Metcalf and Mark Harvey, *Images of the Past: The Miners’ Strike* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Books, 2014), 7.

unified mining community. However, the bonus scheme undermined this and as will be examined later, the bonus scheme ultimately divided the mining industry. It made the workers in more productive mining areas, such as Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire, less inclined to participate in the strike of 1984-1985.²⁹

²⁹ Robert Gildea, *Backbone of the Nation: Mining Communities and the Great Strike of 1984-85* (London: Yale University Press, 2023), Introduction, Kindle.

2 LEADING UP TO THE STRIKE OF 1984 – 1985

As the strike approached, a sequence of events occurred, setting the background for one of the most important labour conflicts in recent history. The role of Margaret Thatcher was crucial for shaping the miners' strike, as her policies and approach significantly influenced the dynamics and the outcome. The Conservative Party secured victory in the elections in 1979, and Margaret Thatcher became the first woman in the role of Prime Minister.³⁰

The economic background of the 1970s played a crucial role in shaping the context of the miners' strike in 1984. As mentioned in previous chapter, the economy was struggling and when was Thatcher elected as the Prime Minister in 1979, her goal was clear – to revive the economy.³¹ Following the miners' triumph during the strikes in the 1970s, which led to the Conservative Government's defeat, they became confident in their ability to achieve their demands through strike action. As a result, the miners were overly confident. Therefore, Thatcher was ready to retaliate against the miners and she prepared thoroughly. The Conservative Manifesto, crafted in 1979, served as an agenda for the upcoming government, outlining the 'Five Tasks' for the Tory parliament.³² Tasks which were relevant for the industrial dispute in 1984 – 1985 are the control of inflation and balancing of trade unions' rights and duties in order to restore economic health, and the emphasis on upholding Parliament and the rule of law.³³ Ultimately, the central ideology of the Conservative Party was the privatisation of nationalised industries in order to strengthen the free market. Thatcher's politics were profoundly unpopular and evoked anger among the public. Both inflation and unemployment grew, which lead to the discontent among the public. As of early 1981, the likelihood that Thacher's experimentation would succeed was reasonably uncertain.³⁴

In 1981, the NCB proposed to close 23 pits. However, this information was not officially published. The NUM leaders, fearing more pits were at risk, overestimated the number to approximately 40 to 50 pit closures. This information angered the miners, and some went on a strike, ignoring the absence of a ballot. As will be discussed in the following chapters, the

³⁰ Mark Jenkinson, Mark Metcalf and Mark Harvey, *Images of the Past: The Miners' Strike* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Books, 2014), 11.

³¹ Eric J Evans, *Thatcher and Thatcherism* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2018), Chapter 1, VitalSource Bookshelf.

³² Katy Shaw, *Mining the Mining: Cultural Representation of the 1984-5 UK Miners' Strike* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2012), 29.

³³ "Conservative General Election Manifesto 1979," Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed January 30, 2024, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/110858>.

³⁴ Francis Beckett and David Hencke, *Marching to the Fault Line: The Miners' Strike and the Battle for Industrial Britain* (London: Constable & Robinson, 2009), 31-32.

issue of legality proved to be problematic because the national strike was considered illegal without a national ballot, with 55% of NUM area leaders in favour. Without it, it was easier to attack the strike's legality. Thus, the NUM president at that time, Joe Gormley, warned the miners not to do so because the NCB could use it against them later.³⁵ However, they did not listen to his advice and their fierce and well-organised response caught the Conservative Government off guard, causing them to retreat. As a result, the mining industry was offered £300 million in aid support. Furthermore, any other pit closure needed to be discussed with the NUM and the NACODS (National Association of Overman, Deputies and Shotfirers).³⁶ However, this victory was short-lived because the industry continued to decline and since the Conservative Party's victory in 1979, the mining industry witnessed a sharper decline in employment. Despite the election of combative leader, Arthur Scargill, as the National Union of Mineworkers president in 1981, the trend persisted.³⁷

The Argentinian invasion of the Falkland Islands in 1982 unintentionally bolstered the popularity of the Conservative Government. The ownership of the Falkland Islands was creating tension between the two nations for some time. When the Argentinian president General Galtieri took over the islands, Thatcher ordered the British forces to retake control of them. Despite losing around 250 lives, the military operation was successful, and it helped Thatcher and her Government. The victory appeased Britain; people saw this as if the British returned to their significance.³⁸ However, the Prime Minister sparked controversy by drawing parallels between the Argentinian conflict and the situation with the miners: "*We had to fight the enemy without in the Falklands. We always have to be aware of the enemy within, which is more difficult to fight and more dangerous to liberty.*"³⁹ When she referred to Argentina as '*the enemy without*' and miners as '*the enemy within*', she indicated that both were just as dangerous for the nation. This phrase was quickly construed as a direct allusion against the whole industry, and critics accused her of targeting miners as adversaries.⁴⁰

³⁵ Francis Beckett and David Hencke, *Marching to the Fault Line: The Miners' Strike and the Battle for Industrial Britain* (London: Constable & Robinson, 2009), 32.

³⁶ Mark Jenkinson, Mark Metcalf and Mark Harvey, *Images of the Past: The Miners' Strike* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Books, 2014), 14.

³⁷ Ken Smith, *A Civil War Without Guns: The Lessons of the 1984-85 Miners' Strike* (London: Socialist Publications, 2014), chapter 2, Kindle.

³⁸ Mark Jenkinson, Mark Metcalf and Mark Harvey, *Images of the Past: The Miners' Strike* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Books, 2014), 16.

³⁹ Mark Jenkinson, Mark Metcalf and Mark Harvey, *Images of the Past: The Miners' Strike* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Books, 2014), 136.

⁴⁰ Martin Adeney and John Lloyd, *The Miners' Strike, 1984-5: Loss Without Limit* (London: Routledge, 2022), 210.

According to John Blundell (2008), “*The defeat of General Galtieri emboldened her to take on the mineworkers with a robustness she may otherwise not have shown.*”⁴¹

2.1 Government’s Secret Preparations

The miners’ ability to challenge the government during the 1970s contributed to their strong reputation regarding strikes. Thatcher may have anticipated more conflicts based solely on past experiences. However, apart from all the economic factors, some people believe that she was seeking revenge for the 1970s and her aim was to warn all unions that wished to strike.⁴² Thatcher commented on this issue: “*The fall of Ted Heath's Government after a general election precipitated by the 1973-4 miners' strike lent substance to the myth that the NUM had the power to make or break British Governments or at the very least the power to veto any policy threatening their interests by preventing coal getting to the power stations.*”

⁴³ Thus, her and the Conservatives’ desire for retaliation and revenge against the UK’s industrial regions and energy sectors, regardless of the consequences, is believed to be one of the main motives.⁴⁴ However, making such a claim is challenging because the industry's unprofitability and loss-making cannot be ignored.

Therefore, Thatcher took proactive measures in anticipation of potential clashes with the mining industry. She established a secret Cabinet committee named MISC57, the documents of which were revealed in 2013. Its purpose was to prepare and organise how the government would handle future disputes. Firstly, it was ensured that the power stations would not suffer a shortage of coal supply. To guarantee this, Thatcher wanted to mobilise troops to transport coal. Following this, the committee examined the likelihood of an increase in dual power stations using coal and oil. Furthermore, knowing the power of miners, they decided to bring the Scotland Yard National Reporting Centre (NRC) back to use. This centre aimed to enhance police coordination in handling flying pickets. Previous clashes with protesters clearly showed the police were not adequately prepared. Therefore, this committee had plans to improve the training and equipment of police forces. Armoured vehicles and riot shields indicated the force and ferocity for which they were preparing. Lastly, there was the consolidation of anti-strike laws. These gave more power to the

⁴¹ John Blundell, *Margaret Thatcher: A Portrait of the Iron Lady* (New York: Algora Publishing, 2016), 121.

⁴² Francis Beckett and David Hencke, *Marching to the Fault Line: The Miners’ Strike and the Battle for Industrial Britain* (London: Constable & Robinson, 2009), 29.

⁴³ Margaret Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years* (London: Harper Press, 2011), 340 – 341.

⁴⁴ Seumas Milne, *The Enemy Within: The Secret War Against the Miners* (London: Verso, 2014), Preface, Kindle.

government. However, they were only partially used, thanks to the disagreements within NUM.⁴⁵

Another significant step in the government's preparation for the strike was the employment of Ian MacGregor in 1983. He was appointed the role of NCB chairman on September 1, 1983.⁴⁶ However, his persona was somewhat controversial in British politics due to his lack of diplomatic finesse, and he occasionally came out as blunt when dealing with people. He had strong opinions about the efficiency of restructuring unprofitable companies through employee downsizing, and he had a strong aversion to anything associated with organised labour movements or trade unions. He embodied everything that Thatcher stood for.⁴⁷ The enormous amount of money paid for the buyout of his contract fuelled the controversy surrounding him. His previous employer, an American banking corporation, was paid £875,000. With Thatcher, he sought to look after the pit closures.⁴⁸ Before the miners' strike, he successfully reduced the steel industry; therefore, Thatcher relied on him to do the same with the mining industry. In 4 years, he reduced the number of steelworkers from 166,000 to 71,000 and decreased the losses to only £256 million from the original £1,8 billion. He was going to be just as ruthless with the miners as with steelworkers.⁴⁹

Furthermore, the legal context was the next important step in preparation for the miners' strike of 1984. Trade unions had a good and stable position within the UK labour background. The unions had legal status and protection, meaning they could not be sued. They were allowed to engage in various industrial actions without facing legal consequences, given that the industrial action was connected to issues related to the workplace that the union was trying to address. The general election of 1979 and the victory of the Conservative Government brought a notable change regarding the legal position of the unions. New laws, which later influenced the miners' strike, support the claim that the Tory parliament was preparing for the dispute. In 1979, the government had already limited the protection of

⁴⁵ Mark Jenkinson, Mark Metcalf and Mark Harvey, *Images of the Past: The Miners' Strike* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Books, 2014), 14.

⁴⁶ Katy Shaw, *Mining the Meaning: Cultural Representation of the 1984-5 UK Miners' Strike* (New Castle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012), 31.

⁴⁷ Francis Beckett and David Hencke, *Marching to the Fault Line: The Miners' Strike and the Battle for Industrial Britain* (London: Constable & Robinson, 2009), 31.

⁴⁸ Mark Jenkinson, Mark Metcalf and Mark Harvey, *Images of the Past: The Miners' Strike* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Books, 2014), 11.

⁴⁹ Francis Beckett and David Hencke, *Marching to the Fault Line: The Miners' Strike and the Battle for Industrial Britain* (London: Constable & Robinson, 2009), 31.

unions. Additionally, the conservative Parliament introduced the Employment Act, which made secondary picketing illegal.⁵⁰

The limited picketing allowed strikers to picket only at the place of their work. Thus, these measures gave employers more control regarding dismissal of the people involved in industrial actions. Additionally, penalisation of members, who refused to participate in the strike, became illegal. Before that moment, individual workers could be required to join a strike.⁵¹ The previous Labour government even strengthened this right. However, the Conservative government weakened it because they supported the rights of individual workers.⁵² In fact, the government granted individuals the right to work, thereby ensuring that other union members could not use the power of the ballot to prevent others from working.⁵³

Another new implication concerning the unions was an increased use of secret and postal ballots. The aim was to reduce the influence of peer pressure or any bribing that could occur during the voting.⁵⁴ Furthermore, the courts sought to prevent the union from accessing its fund by introducing the right to oversee and inspect the NUM's checking accounts. Therefore, using the NUM's funds to pay fines for illegal action was banned under the trade union legislation. Therefore, if the union member was arrested during the strike, the NUM could not pay for them.⁵⁵

2.2 Trade Unions

Trade unions had a good and stable position within the UK labour landscape and they were recognised for their significant influence in the country. Their formidable force could shape the trajectory of the economy.⁵⁶ When examining the number of members of each union, one of the potential factors contributing to an increase in union membership in previous years could be the state of a particular industry at that time. This suggests a correlation between

⁵⁰ Stephen Cavalier, "The legal legacy of the miners' strike", *Capital & Class* 29, no. 3 (Autumn 2005): 65, <https://doi.org/10.1177/030981680508700106>.

⁵¹ Stephen Cavalier, "The legal legacy of the miners' strike", *Capital & Class* 29, no. 3 (Autumn 2005): 67, <https://doi.org/10.1177/030981680508700106>.

⁵² John Blundell, *Margaret Thatcher: A portrait of the Iron Lady* (New York: Algora publishing, 2008), 127-128.

⁵³ Stephen Cavalier, "The legal legacy of the miners' strike," *Capital & Class* 29, no. 3 (Autumn 2005): 66, <https://doi.org/10.1177/030981680508700106>.

⁵⁴ John Blundell, *Margaret Thatcher: A portrait of the Iron Lady* (New York: Algora publishing, 2008), 128.

⁵⁵ Stephen Cavalier, "The legal legacy of the miners' strike", *Capital & Class* 29, no. 3 (Autumn 2005): 67, <https://doi.org/10.1177/030981680508700106>.

⁵⁶ Francis Beckett and David Hencke, *Marching to the Fault Line: The Miners' Strike and the Battle for Industrial Britain* (London: Constable & Robinson, 2009), 28.

the economic conditions of the industry and the density of each trade union membership. Naturally, workers sought a collective representation to support them and improve their working conditions, such as higher wages or shorter working hours.⁵⁷

In 1920, there was a prevailing belief that unions could protect workers. They were perceived as advocates for each industry, protecting workers' wages and overall conditions. During that period, the UK witnessed a variety of strikes. Many of them achieved success thanks to the support they received from trade unions.⁵⁸ Thus, trade unions became problematic, since it was perceived that they contributed significantly to the UK's problems with inflation and inefficiency. When they demanded higher wages, they increased the costs of products and services. Additionally, they were seen as a bad influence on the labour market, with their employment practices and resistance to change that deteriorated productivity.⁵⁹ Moreover, their tactics are often criticised for their aggressive and forceful nature – “*The whole culture was one of getting ahead by brute force rather than serving your customer*”.⁶⁰

As previously discussed, unions enjoyed legal status and protection, meaning they could not be sued. They were allowed to partake in various industrial actions without facing legal consequences, provided the actions were related to problems or concerns within the workplace that the union was trying to address. The general election of 1979 and the victory of the Conservative Government brought a notable change regarding the legal position of the unions.⁶¹ The government's perception of the unions as powerful entities that could sway the labour market enhanced their efforts to change policy regarding them. In order to achieve this change, the conservative government introduced various employment rights laws, such as the Employment Acts of 1980 and 1982, the Trade Union Act of 1984, and another Employment Act in 1988 after the Conservative Party won a big election in 1987.⁶²

⁵⁷ Chris Wrigley, *British Trade Unions since 1933* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 7-8.

⁵⁸ Francis Beckett and David Hencke, *Marching to the Fault Line: The Miners' Strike and the Battle for Industrial Britain* (London: Constable & Robinson, 2009), 2, 4.

⁵⁹ Brian Towers, “Running the Gauntlet: British Trade Unions under Thatcher, 1979-1988.” *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* 42, no. 2 (January 1989): 167. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2523352>.

⁶⁰ John Blundell, *Margaret Thatcher: A portrait of the Iron Lady* (New York: Algora publishing, 2008), 127.

⁶¹ Stephen Cavalier, “The legal legacy of the miners' strike”, *Capital & Class* vol. 29, issues 3 (Autumn 2005): 65, <https://doi.org/10.1177/030981680508700106>.

⁶² Brian Towers, “Running the Gauntlet: British Trade Unions under Thatcher, 1979-1988”, *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* vol. 42, No. 2 (January 1989): 167-169, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2523352>

2.3 Opposing Objectives of the NUM and the Government

Margaret Thatcher made history as the first woman elected as the prime minister of the United Kingdom. She served for three consecutive electoral terms, the longest tenure in the twentieth century. Her supporters believe she transformed the UK and is behind "*the change of the mindset of the nation.*"⁶³

She is the only prime minister in British history whose name became synonymous with distinct political ideology. However, many political analysts agree that Thatcherism is not necessarily one unified ideology, suggesting that it brings together two political approaches. While in economic affairs, it resembles neoliberalism, in political affairs, it resembles authoritarian conservatism.⁶⁴ This means that her policies supported the free market with limited government intervention but, on the other hand, emphasised strong government leadership in social matters. After winning the 1979 election, Margaret Thatcher and the Conservative aimed to stop the recession and the decline of the UK.⁶⁵ An industry as loss-making as the mining one hindered the Conservative Party's plan.

When Margaret Thatcher became prime minister, the government owned many important industries. However, they were poorly managed, and they were losing money. Thatcher and the Conservative government aimed to transform this situation with privatisation. This involved transferring control of public assets, services, and major industries, such as the coal industry, from government ownership to private ownership management.⁶⁶

The NUM stood in the opposition with completely different objectives. In 1984, an issue of Yorkshire Miner published requirements that the miners' union demanded. The main objective was a coal-based national energy policy. To achieve this, the NUM required more investments in coal while reducing investments in costly nuclear power. The new investments were to ensure competitiveness in the international market, shorten the working week for the miners, and improve their overall working conditions. Then, stop coal imports

⁶³ Eric J Evans, *Thatcher and Thatcherism* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2018), Introduction, VitalSource Bookshelf.

⁶⁴ Eric J Evans, *Thatcher and Thatcherism* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2018), Chapter 1, VitalSource Bookshelf.

⁶⁵ Andrew Gamble, "Privatisation, Thatcherism, and the British State," *Journal of Law and Society* 16, no. 1 (1988): 1, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1409974>.

⁶⁶ John Blundell, *Margaret Thatcher: A portrait of the Iron Lady* (New York: Algora publishing, 2008), 99.

and invest in modern uses of coal. Finally, they required that coal remain a public asset, meaning no privatisation of the coal industry.⁶⁷

Arthur Scargill was determined to save the jobs under any circumstances. He was a prominent figure of the NUM. He was much more radical than his predecessor, Joe Gromley. He was Yorkshire NUM president before being elected as the president of the NUM, securing his victory with 70 per cent of the votes. His proactivity during the 1970s strikes made him a household name even before his election as the NUM president. According to some sources, his election was clear message for the government was obvious.⁶⁸ When Margaret Thatcher won another election in 1983, he openly criticised her and claimed there was no need “*to wait until the next election to get rid of her.*”⁶⁹ He held a firm stance that if a pit was uneconomic, it simply needed more investments, suggesting that “*no pit should be closed on economic grounds.*”⁷⁰ However, even the Labour Party, which had always naturally supported miners, had recognised the losses the coal industry was making. After all, it was the Labour parliament that closed 31 pits in 1974 and 1979.⁷¹

⁶⁷ Mark Jenkinson, Mark Metcalf and Mark Harvey, *Images of the Past: The Miners' Strike* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Books, 2014), 29.

⁶⁸ Francis Beckett and David Hencke, *Marching to the Fault Line: The Miners' Strike and the Battle for Industrial Britain* (London: Constable & Robinson, 2009), 40-43.

⁶⁹ John Blundell, *Margaret Thatcher: A Portrait of the Iron Lady* (New York: Algora Publishing, 2016), 121.

⁷⁰ Andrew Marr, *A History of Modern Britain* (London: Pan Macmillan, 2009), 413.

⁷¹ Margaret Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years* (London: Harper Press, 2011). 342.

3 BEGINNING OF THE STRIKE

The beginning of the strike was accidental. The Coal Board director from South Yorkshire, George Hayes, acted prematurely because he misunderstood his instructions. On March 1, 1984, he told the Yorkshire NUM leaders that the pit in Cortonwood was about to be closed in five weeks. It caught them off guard because Cortonwood was deemed economically viable. Approximately eighty miners had just been transferred there from various other pits, with the promise of its operation for another five years. Moreover, investments made into the pit in Cortonwood, which amounted to million pounds, made this situation even more abrupt. Nothing indicated that it was on the list of intended pit closures. The NCB did not intend to close Cortonwood, but they did not admit to the mistake. Therefore, Cortonwood served as the initial catalyst for the strike. Nevertheless, it is essential to put this incident into context, as the situation between the government and the NUM had already been simmering for months. The strike only needed a trigger. This marked the first pit closure by the NCB without the involvement of the NUM. The Strike began on March 6, when MacGregor announced cuts on coal production, totalling four million tonnes, resulting in 20,000 job losses.⁷²

Thus, the miners' strike was initiated in Yorkshire. However, the way the strike spread across the country was uneven, and the integrity of the mining community was tested. Some regions supported the strike more than others. The action was primarily supported in South Wales, Scotland, and Kent and the number of striking miners reached approximately 80 per cent at its highest point. However, some areas remained almost unaffected throughout the yearlong dispute, like Leicestershire or Nottinghamshire.⁷³

3.1 Division Within the Mining Community

The tradition of mining communities was more prominent in areas like Yorkshire. Historically, miners were recruited from rural areas to move closer to collieries, which is how the mining villages gained their prominence. These communities were very close; they established their own clubs and entertainment facilities. They married and started families within each other, and the profession of a miner was handed from father to son.

⁷² Francis Beckett and David Hencke, *Marching to the Fault Line: The Miners' Strike and the Battle for Industrial Britain* (London: Constable & Robinson, 2009), 47 – 49.

⁷³ Diarmaid Kelliher, *Making Cultures of Solidarity: London and the 1984-5 Miners' Strike* (London: Routledge, 2021), 4.

In contrast, this tradition of passing profession from father to son was not prevalent in Nottinghamshire, nor did they live in the mining villages. Firstly, thanks to the incentive scheme, they did well enough not to participate in the strike. Secondly, the Midlands offered more career options, including automotive manufacturing and textile production. Nottinghamshire was not the only area that resisted the pressure from Yorkshire miners; a similar situation could be observed in Leicestershire. Similarly to Nottinghamshire, miners from Leicestershire did not have a strongly tied community, and they also had more career options.⁷⁴

However, the loyalty and the bond were strong among the majority of miners. They protected and looked out for each other. The community was closely and deeply connected. With that being said, some mining communities, such as Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire, were apparently not a part of this tight bond. The difference between the dynamics of these communities was already described – however, the question of why Nottinghamshire was so significant during the strike remains. This coalfield was among the biggest in the nation, and the government needed to maintain the reserves at the power stations. Margaret Thatcher understood the critical position of miners in Nottinghamshire, and she was determined to protect this region from the strike. Essentially, the Nottinghamshire miners were offered monetary benefits to continue working. They were motivated by higher wages and, additionally, by better working conditions in comparison to miners from different coalfields.⁷⁵

In previous disputes, Nottinghamshire miners showed a strong unity. However, this situation was distinct from the conflicts where the discussion was over the pay issues. The threat of pit closures and job security triggered the strike of 1984 – 1985, whereas Nottinghamshire's miners believed that they were not at risk of closure yet. Thus, the combination of weak mining tradition and promising future prospects was not strong motivation order to support the strike.⁷⁶

Nevertheless, they were not untouched, they faced pressure and aggression from other mining communities. Before they could even conduct the ballot regarding the strike, other miners insulted them by labelling them scabs due to their hesitation. The General Secretary

⁷⁴ Robert Gildea, *Backbone of the Nation: Mining Communities and the Great Strike of 1984-85* (London: Yale University Press, 2023), Chapter 1, Kindle.

⁷⁵ Beverly Trounce, *From a Rock to a Hard Place: The 1984/85 Miners' Strike* (Cheltenham: The History Press, 2015), Chapter 1, Kindle.

⁷⁶ Jim Phillips, *Collieries, Communities and the miners' strike in Scotland, 1984-85* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014), 112.

from Nottinghamshire, Henry Richardson, even warned the striking miners, stating, “*Calling us scabs will not help. If Notts are scabs before we start, Notts will become scabs.*”⁷⁷

The discussion over the ballot brought even more disagreements. The NUM could not call for a national strike without conducting the national ballot. Nonetheless, individual areas still had the right to walk out on a strike.⁷⁸ Scargill was concerned about whether to hold the ballot or not. However, he decided to go with “*a domino strategy; the regional strikes would add up to a national strike.*”⁷⁹ According to the Rule 41 of the NUM rule book, local strikes could be organised without the need for the ballot. However, as the strike gained momentum and began to be at a national scale, different opinions emerged within the union. Right-wing NUM members insisted on the ballot because of the expansion of the strike and to prevent potential legal issues. In contrast, the Left-wing members argued against it, saying that the ballot could vote individuals out of work against their will.⁸⁰ However, according to Tyrone O’Sullivan, the branch secretary at Tower Colliery in South Wales, the problem already started with the bonus scheme – “*To this day, I firmly believe that this was the move which effectively destroyed unity within the movement, and was the one which did the miners the most harm. This was our greatest fear realised, as we had always fought to remain united.*”⁸¹

3.2 Flying Pickets

A considerable role in the miners' strike of 1984 – 1985 was the picketers that tried to prevent other miners from going to work, famously known as flying pickets. These groups of protesting miners were a burden to the government. Mass picketing was proven to be effective in previous disputes. However, Thatcher was determined to change this idea, and it was easier to do so with the criminalisation of the mass picketing.⁸²

In addition to the government's preparations, the police also made some arrangement. The function of the National Reporting Centre had been restarted, and around 20,000 police

⁷⁷ Francis Beckett and David Hencke, *Marching to the Fault Line: The Miners' Strike and the Battle for Industrial Britain* (London: Constable & Robinson, 2009), 52.

⁷⁸ Mark Jenkinson, Mark Metcalf and Mark Harvey, *Images of the Past: The Miners' Strike* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Books, 2014), 32.

⁷⁹ Andrew Marr, *A History of Modern Britain* (London: Pan Macmillan, 2009), 414.

⁸⁰ Francis Beckett and David Hencke, *Marching to the Fault Line: The Miners' Strike and the Battle for Industrial Britain* (London: Constable & Robinson, 2009), 51, 53.

⁸¹ Mark Jenkinson, Mark Metcalf and Mark Harvey, *Images of the Past: The Miners' Strike* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Books, 2014), 8.

⁸² Katy Shaw, *Mining the Meaning: Cultural Representation of the 1984-5 UK Miners' Strike* (New Castle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012), 79.

officers were ready to protect the miners who wished to continue working. The police officers outnumbered the flying pickets at most of the clashes during the strike. They were stopping coaches full of pickets, and also, arresting and interrogating them on a daily basis. The number of arrested miners exceeded 11,000 by the end of the strike, with the majority being arrested for minor charges such as breach of the peace. While facing the charges, the judiciary could control the miners' actions more and impose bail.⁸³ In many cases, this meant that a miner could only picket at their home pit or that they could not picket at all. Breaking this meant immediate imprisonment. Naturally, the high number of offences caused a strain on the judiciary, meaning that some miners waited months for their trial.⁸⁴

The violence between the pickets and the police was brutal, as well as the violence that the working miners had to face. The attempt of protesting miners to convince working miners to support the strike triggered a lot of aggression and harassment. When interviewed on April 9, Margaret Thatcher described the dispute as a conflict between miners themselves.⁸⁵ The first casualty came shortly after the start of the strike on March 15, 1984. David Jones, a flying picket from Yorkshire, was killed at Ollerton in Nottinghamshire. He was killed by a brick that had been thrown at the striking miners. Exactly three months later, on June 15, 1984, another striking miner died. His name was Joe Green, and he died at Ferrybridge Power Station after being trapped under the wheels of a truck.⁸⁶ Casualties also occurred on the other side. A taxi driver, David Wilkie, was killed when he was transporting a working miner to work. He was killed by flying pickets, who threw a concrete block from a bridge over the road where a police convoy was passing.⁸⁷

3.3 Solidarity with the Miners

The Miners' Strike of 1984-1985 witnessed more significant support from different communities outside of the working class. Feminist advocates in London established connections with women in the mining areas, and they organised meetings and events in order to raise money for the mining communities. Similarly operated the LGSM, which stands for Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners. Trade unions and the Labour movement

⁸³ Mark Jenkinson, Mark Metcalf and Mark Harvey, *Images of the Past: The Miners' Strike* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Books, 2014), 42.

⁸⁴ Mark Jenkinson, Mark Metcalf and Mark Harvey, *Images of the Past: The Miners' Strike* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Books, 2014), 47.

⁸⁵ 1. Margaret Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years* (London: Harper Press, 2011). 351.

⁸⁶ Mark Jenkinson, Mark Metcalf and Mark Harvey, *Images of the Past: The Miners' Strike* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Books, 2014), 39-42.

⁸⁷ Mark Jenkinson, Mark Metcalf and Mark Harvey, *Images of the Past: The Miners' Strike* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Books, 2014), 162.

also aimed to expand on the support they had previously provided to the miners, for example, by offering space for meetings and creating leaflets. One support centre in London was even able to support four mining communities. Additionally, various initiatives emerged independently to help in other cities, such as Leeds, New Castle, and others.⁸⁸

Women were a massive support for their striking husbands. The role of women in the mining communities was to be stay-at-home wives and their primary responsibilities were to look after their kids, and take care of their husbands when they returned from work. While there were few exceptions, most women only worked part-time jobs. It is worth mentioning that many miners' wives were also miners' daughters, which strengthened the tight bonds within mining families. Nevertheless, the significant role of women during the miners' strike was recognised quickly. To this day, women's roles remain to be one of the central points of research on the miners' strike and mining communities. It is fair to say that the strike would not have lasted as long without women's efforts to prevent pit closures.⁸⁹

When the strike began, women mainly fought for security and did not see the strike as an opportunity to advocate for feminism. They simply fought for their husbands and, therefore, for their whole families. They hardly ever shared their opinions outside their circle of friends and family. Nonetheless, as they engaged in various activities, they discovered that the public was listening and that their opinion mattered as much as their husbands'. They delivered speeches, hosted meetings, provided food for striking miners, and helped to raise money. As their collective power expanded, they united and formed a protest group, Women Against Pit Closure (WAPC).⁹⁰ Initially, the media tried to portray women as victims of reckless striking, suggesting they were begging their husbands not to participate in the strike. Women were not pleased with these articles, and eventually, the media could not overlook their dissatisfaction.⁹¹

However, according to some sources, the support the miners needed the most from the Trade Union Congress (TUC) and the Labour Party was insufficient, claiming that this betrayal played a significant role in the miners' defeat. Similarly, despite feeling sympathy for miners, the steel industry did not fully support the miners' strike as they did previously.

⁸⁸ Diarmaid Kelliher, *Making Cultures of Solidarity: London and the 1984-5 Miners' Strike* (London: Routledge, 2021), 73-74.

⁸⁹ Robert Gildea, *Backbone of the Nation: Mining Communities and the Great Strike of 1984-85* (London: Yale University Press, 2023), Introduction, Kindle.

⁹⁰ Triona Holden, *Queen Coal: The Women of the Miners' Strike* (London: Lume Books, 2018), Introduction, Kindle.

⁹¹ Mark Jenkinson, Mark Metcalf and Mark Harvey, *Images of the Past: The Miners' Strike* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Books, 2014), 66.

They experienced defeat in their own strike; thus, they were more hesitant and less likely to participate in actions that could jeopardise their own jobs and followed the general sense of the trade unions to retreat. Therefore, miners were lacking enough supports in regards of direct industrial action.⁹²

3.4 Media Manipulating and the Orgreave Incident

One of the weapons used against the miners during the strike was the use of media. The way the media manipulated public opinion could be illustrated by the manipulation of the incident at the Orgreave. However, it is essential to mention how the media portrayed the miners during the entire strike. Most of the media condemned the miners and the whole NUM even before this incident. They heavily criticised both the NUM leader, Arthur Scargill, and the self-proclaimed ‘Arthur’s Army’.⁹³ This nickname fed into the negative portrayal of the miners. The media linked the industrial action to a war. This instilled a negative image of the miners among the public, whose primary source about the strike was only the media coverage. The majority of the public had no other option to learn about the events at picket lines, and phrases and titles such as “*bitter pit war*” or “*bloody four-hour war on police*”, used in the tabloids, did not make it easy for them to form a nonbiased opinion.⁹⁴ When it comes to Arthur Scargill, the media referred to him as a bully or as a dictator who forced his followers into mass picketing. For instance, the tabloid magazine *The Sun* aimed to publish a controversial image showing Arthur Scargill raising his right arm in one of its publications, which resembled the Nazi salute, making Scargill look like Adolf Hitler. Displeased printworkers refused to print and spread the picture thought. Ironically, Margaret Thatcher had a good relationship with the owner of the tabloid, *The Sun*.⁹⁵ When *The Sun* reported on the murder of taxi driver David Wilkie, they indirectly accused Arthur Scargill of his death – “*We would not have had a murder if Scargill had called a ballot.*”⁹⁶

Furthermore, the manipulation of public opinion could be observed in the amount of press coverage of the miners’ strike. The press coverage of the miners’ violence was

⁹² Ralph Darlington, “There is no alternative: Exploring the options in the 1984-5 miners’ strike”, *Capital & Class* 29, issue 3 (Autumn 2005): 82-83, <https://doi.org/10.1177/030981680508700107>.

⁹³ Beverly Trounce, *From a Rock to a Hard Place: The 1984/85 Miners’ Strike* (Cheltenham: The History Press, 2015), 1st chapter, Kindle.

⁹⁴ Elaine Wade, “The Miners and the Media: Themes of Newspaper Reporting,” *Journal of Law and Society* 12, no 3. (Winter 1985): 274 – 275. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1410121>

⁹⁵ Beverly Trounce, *From a Rock to a Hard Place: The 1984/85 Miners’ Strike* (Cheltenham: The History Press, 2015), 1st chapter, Kindle.

⁹⁶ Elaine Wade, “The Miners and the Media: Themes of Newspaper Reporting,” *Journal of Law and Society* 12, no 3. (Winter 1985): 278. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1410121>

significantly longer compared to the length of coverage of the police violence. Furthermore, the NCB was more prepared for the contact with media. While the NCB had a team of 40 professionals to deal with the press, the NUM had only one, Nell Myers.⁹⁷ Ultimately, the NUM failed to win over the public because they did not understand that public opinion is essential. The NUM press officer, Nell Myers, even addressed the media as one of their main enemies after the strike. This indicates the strained relationship between the NUM and media.⁹⁸

The negative framing of the NUM leader continued even after the strike. The framing of Arthur Scargill is described as “*one of the most savage media and legal campaigns against a public figure in Britain in recent times.*”⁹⁹ The Daily Mirror and Central Television made an allegation against Arthur Scargill, claiming that he used Libyan donations to repay his mortgage. Another false accusation claimed that, apart from money, Scargill demanded guns.¹⁰⁰

The battle at Orgreave cockpit was a heavily manipulated situation. This particular occasion is important for various reasons. Many infamous and disturbing scenes originated here. It showcased perfect examples of the violence and police brutality, media manipulating and framing of the miners.

Firstly, the focus will be on the violence that occurred at the Orgreave Coking Works. On June 18, 1984, when 8,000 miners gathered at Orgreave for a mass picketing, they were surprised by how friendly the police officers were to them. They even assisted them in directing people to the picket lines, but it was a trap.¹⁰¹ As the police allowed pickets through without any questioning, one of the most brutal and violent battles of the miners' strike of 1984-1985 started. What happened at the Orgreave coking plant closely resembled a military-type of battle.¹⁰² Supposedly, one witness overheard an officer being addressed as corporal, a rank used in the military rather than by police. However, the involvement of army

⁹⁷ Sheryl Bernadette Buckley, “The state, the police and the judiciary in the miners’ strike: Observations and discussions, thirty years on”, *Capital & Class* 39, no. 3 (October 2015): 429. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0309816815603718>.

⁹⁸ Francis Beckett and David Hencke, *Marching to the Fault Line: The Miners’ Strike and the Battle for Industrial Britain* (London: Constable & Robinson, 2009), 67- 68.

⁹⁹ Seumas Milne, *The Enemy Within: The Secret War Against the Miners* (London: Verso, 2014), Introduction, Kindle.

¹⁰⁰ Seumas Milne, *The Enemy Within: The Secret War Against the Miners* (London: Verso, 2014), Introduction, Kindle.

¹⁰¹ Mark Jenkinson, Mark Metcalf and Mark Harvey, *Images of the Past: The Miners’ Strike* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Books, 2014), 89.

¹⁰² Ken Smith, *A Civil War without Guns: The Lessons of the 1984-85 Miners’ Strike* (London: Socialist Publications, 2014), chapter 6, Kindle.

forces remains a sole rumour, and there is no sufficient evidence to prove this claim.¹⁰³ The violence in this particular riot, which went beyond picketing, is evident due to the involvement of police horses and dogs. The use of dogs is considered inappropriate for industrial actions as fierce as this one due to potential danger. Nevertheless, police dogs were reportedly present at the scene, and they were allegedly allowed off their leash and attacking miners.¹⁰⁴ It is believed that the Orgreave was supposed to be a warning sign for the miners.¹⁰⁵

Secondly, the way the Orgreave situation was presented in the media demonstrates media manipulation. The media coverage was different from the reality. The media aimed to portray the miners as violent thugs. Out of seventeen national newspapers, only one chose to publish a photo capturing a woman being attacked with a truncheon.¹⁰⁶ However, as reported by *The Daily Mirror*, the miners constructed burning barricades and attacked the police with stones, sticks, and bottles. One of the most disturbing scenes was when miners attacked mounted police and their horses, using sharpened wooden stakes in order to hurt the horses and metal hawsers between lamp posts aimed at the riders' necks. The way this situation was portrayed completely justified the police attack, making it look like they were protecting themselves from the outrageous attack. The *BBC* aired footage from Orgreave as part of their main report. At the same time, the *Daily Mirror* essentially backed the police action, stating that the picketing had crossed acceptable boundaries and referred to it as a riot. It was later proven that the footage was manipulated, and the miners attacked the police only after the police initiated the battle. To this day, the events at Orgreave raise questions about the tactics of police and the government's role in that. Reasonably, this event deepened already existing tension between both sides.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ Mark Jenkinson, Mark Metcalf and Mark Harvey, *Images of the Past: The Miners' Strike* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Books, 2014), 154.

¹⁰⁴ Sheryl Bernadette Buckley, "The state, the police and the judiciary in the miners' strike: Observations and discussions, thirty years on," *Capital & Class* 39, no. 3 (October 2015): 426. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0309816815603718>.

¹⁰⁵ Ken Smith, *A Civil War without Guns: The Lessons of the 1984-85 Miners' Strike* (London: Socialist Publications, 2014), chapter 6, Kindle

¹⁰⁶ Francis Beckett and David Hencke, *Marching to the Fault Line: The Miners' Strike and the Battle for Industrial Britain* (London: Constable & Robinson, 2009), 99.

¹⁰⁷ Mark Jenkinson, Mark Metcalf and Mark Harvey, *Images of the Past: The Miners' Strike* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Books, 2014), 89-92.

3.5 The End of The Strike

In August 1984, some men returned to work as the NCB intensified their efforts to allure miners back to work. However, it sometimes did not take long before the miners engaged in the strike again. The persistent police brutality prompted the rejoining of the strike because the police started intensive searches of the houses of the families that provided shelters to the striking miners.¹⁰⁸ During this time, two Yorkshire miners began legal proceedings against the Yorkshire NUM, a move that proved highly favourable for the Government. They did so because of the violation of the NUM's rules by striking, on a national scale, without conducting a ballot. This questioning of the legitimacy of the strike eventually led to the sequestration of NUM's assets.¹⁰⁹ Both sides were in desperate situations at this point. The NUM was running out of money, and the government, motivated by a severe coal shortage, decided to offer money to each miner who agreed to return to work. In October, the stockpile of coal was enough for approximately six weeks. On November 11, NCB offered a Christmas bonus of £650 to any miner who would return to work within a week.¹¹⁰

The period after Christmas of 1984 was the turning point of the strike. Each day, more and more men returned back to work. Finally, at the delegate conference on March 3, 1985, the NUM voted 98 to 91 for the strike to end after almost twelve long months. Scottish representatives, together with those from Kent, Yorkshire and the Midlands, remained solid and they voted against the end of the strike.¹¹¹ The NUM leader, Arthur Scargill, spoke to the miners: "*I thank you all from the bottom of my heart. The strike is over – but the dispute over pit closure and jobs goes on.*"¹¹² However, the question about the dismissed miners still remained. The miners who lost their jobs or had been convicted of crimes during the strike made the decision even more difficult for the NUM, evoking the feeling of internal conflict. The amnesty for the dismissed miners was refused, and the miners active in the strike were told to return to work on March 5, 1985.¹¹³

¹⁰⁸ Mark Jenkinson, Mark Metcalf and Mark Harvey, *Images of the Past: The Miners' Strike* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Books, 2014), 151.

¹⁰⁹ Margaret Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years* (London: Harper Press, 2011), 362.

¹¹⁰ Mark Jenkinson, Mark Metcalf and Mark Harvey, *Images of the Past: The Miners' Strike* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Books, 2014), 150, 162.

¹¹¹ Diarmaid Kelliher, *Making Cultures of Solidarity: London and the 1984-5 Miners' Strike* (London: Routledge, 2021), 173.

¹¹² Mark Jenkinson, Mark Metcalf and Mark Harvey, *Images of the Past: The Miners' Strike* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Books, 2014), 185.

¹¹³ Mark Jenkinson, Mark Metcalf and Mark Harvey, *Images of the Past: The Miners' Strike* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Books, 2014), 185.

The strike and its conclusion left a profound impact on all who were involved in it, both positive and negative. The mixture of relief and disappointment, further division and eventual destruction of the mining industry will be explored in the following chapters, as well as the influence this industrial conflict has to this day.

3.6 Exploring Factors Contributing to the Miners' Defeat

Naturally, different variants and options have been explored, in attempt to discover what the cause behind the miners' defeat was. Some suggest that one of the main factors is the limited empathy from different unions compared to the strike in 1972. Despite considerably helpful support groups, such as LGSM or WAPC, different donations, and financial collections in the streets, they needed more support. This type of help could improve the miners' situation just for a limited period of time. However, the miners lacked support from other trade unions.¹¹⁴ The absence of support from the Trade Union Congress (TUC) was rather noticeable. They did not address the miners' strike until August. When they finally got involved, they did not do much when they condemned the violence.¹¹⁵

Convincing other trade unionists was challenging, especially considering the internal struggles within the NUM itself. Therefore, the lack of unity was another major factor blamed for the miners' defeat. The absence of the ballot is generally believed to be one of the main culprits in their loss. This misstep cost the NUM's position within the rest of the trade unions.¹¹⁶

Now, it is obvious that the decline of the coal industry was inevitable, and coal was not going to be sustainable in the long term because of other resources, such as oil. However, the miners' strike reduced the trade union's power to negotiate a more sympathetic handling of the situation. This may have caused the decline of the industry to be much faster.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ Ralph Darlington, "There is no alternative: Exploring the options in the 1984-5 miners' strike", *Capital & Class* 29, no. 3 (Autumn 2005): 87. <https://doi.org/10.1177/030981680508700107>.

¹¹⁵ Ken Smith, *A Civil War without Guns: The Lessons of the 1984-85 Miners' Strike* (London: Socialist Publications, 2014), chapter 7, Kindle.

¹¹⁶ Ralph Darlington, "There is no alternative: Exploring the options in the 1984-5 miners' strike", *Capital & Class* vol. 29, issue 3 (Autumn 2005): 72. <https://doi.org/10.1177/030981680508700107>.

¹¹⁷ "Political journalism expert explains miners' strike significance on BBC show", University of Leicester, last modified March 6, 2024. Accessed April 8, 2024. <https://le.ac.uk/news/2024/march/miners-strike>.

4 AFTER THE STRIKE

The state of the coal industry after the strike swiftly declined. The government continued in its efforts to reduce the mining industry.¹¹⁸ They offered long-serving miners a compensation of £80,000 if they quit their jobs. Some miners seized the opportunity and left, but there were also those who remained in the industry. They stayed behind and kept battling in small ways.¹¹⁹

The number of coal mines in the United Kingdom was 170 before the strike, two decades later, only thirteen remained.¹²⁰ More than one hundred pits closed within seven years after the end of the dispute. By 1992, there were only fifty operating pits in the United Kingdom. The Conservative Government led by John Major, who took over the minister post when Margaret Thatcher left, announced that they planned to close thirty-one out of the remaining ones. Therefore, Arthur Scargill's predictions were correct after all.¹²¹

Moreover, the loss of influence that the NUM experienced after the strike meant that it was unable to protect its members from the negative impacts of the strike and that the pits that survived the closure were privatised.¹²² In 1994, the British coal mining industry was privatised.¹²³ Despite the vital role of coal during industrialisation, the coal industry had ceased to exist by the end of the 20th century. The last deep coal mine in the UK, Kellingley, closed in December 2015. This happened the same week as the signing of the *Paris Agreement*. This agreement acknowledges the importance of a gradual decrease in the coal and oil production in addition to the reduction of emissions in order to fight climate change.¹²⁴

The trend showcasing a development of the share of coal in the nation's energy supply revealed a dramatic decline of 87% between 2000 and 2022. The proportion of energy

¹¹⁸ Mark Jenkinson, Mark Metcalf and Mark Harvey, *Images of the Past: The Miners' Strike* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Books, 2014), 195.

¹¹⁹ Mark Jenkinson, Mark Metcalf and Mark Harvey, *Images of the Past: The Miners' Strike* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Books, 2014), 195.

¹²⁰ Sheryl Bernadette Buckley, "The state, the police and the judiciary in the miners' strike: Observations and discussions, thirty years on," *Capital & Class* 39, no. 3 (October 2015): 431. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0309816815603718>.

¹²¹ Mark Jenkinson, Mark Metcalf and Mark Harvey, *Images of the Past: The Miners' Strike* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Books, 2014), 195.

¹²² Robert Gildea, *Backbone of the Nation: Mining Communities and the Great Strike of 1984-85* (London: Yale University Press, 2023), Chapter 13, Kindle.

¹²³ "Miners and mining communities," UK Parliament, House of Commons Library, published February 5, 2024. Accessed April 7, 2024. <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cdp-2024-0015/>.

¹²⁴ Gavin Bridge, "The Shadow of the Mine: Coal and the End of Industrial Britain," *The AAG Review of Books* 11, no.1 (January 2, 2023): 21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2325548X.2022.2144691>.

provided by coal in relation to the total energy supply was 3,2% in 2022.¹²⁵ This trend indicates that the UK is moving away from coal as an energy provider. The UK government is scheduled to quit using coal-fired electricity in October 2024 to accelerate the process of decarbonising process of the energy sector to eliminate pollution contributions by 2050.¹²⁶

4.1 Trade Unions After the Strike

Trade unions never returned to their prosperous times as before the strike and Margareth Thatcher. Regarding the unions' membership, the post-war period was a successful era for trade unions. They experienced growth and reached their peak, until Margaret Thatcher became prime minister in 1979. However, following the miners' strike, the numbers decreased. Under Thatcher's administration, continuously followed by Major's, the circumstances surrounding trade unions became hostile. New anti-union laws implemented by the Tory government meant that trade unions diminished in significance, power and size within the UK's political landscape.¹²⁷

However, despite the weakening of unions, they never fully diminished. While they were apprehensive about their position within the UK, they maintained their assertive demeanour. Hence why, there were a few disputes after the great strike in 1984.¹²⁸ The two most militant groups that caused troubles for the government were dockers and, unsurprisingly, miners.¹²⁹ The year 1992 brought another wave of dispute when the Conservative Government announced more pit closures. In October, thousands of people, mainly miners and their supporters, demonstrated in London. What is surprising is the fact that more people attended this demonstration than any other protest during the miners' strike in 1984-1985. The pressure was so strong that it forced the government to pause its process of pit closures. Ultimately, the pause was beneficial, as fewer people focused on the cause, and the government then could proceed with its plan.¹³⁰

¹²⁵ "Where does the United Kingdom get its coal?" IEA, accessed April 2nd, 2024,

<https://www.iea.org/countries/united-kingdom/coal#where-does-united-kingdom-get-its-coal>

¹²⁶ "End to coal power brought forward to October 2024," GOV.UK, accessed April 2nd, 2024,

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/end-to-coal-power-brought-forward-to-october-2024>.

¹²⁷ Chris Wrigley, *British Trade Unions since 1933* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 18, 28.

¹²⁸ Ken Smith, *A Civil War without Guns: The Lessons of the 1984-85 Miners' Strike* (London: Socialist Publications, 2014), chapter 10, Kindle.

¹²⁹ Diarmaid Kelliher, *Making Cultures of Solidarity: London and the 1984-5 Miners' Strike* (London: Routledge, 2021), 181.

¹³⁰ Diarmaid Kelliher, *Making Cultures of Solidarity: London and the 1984-5 Miners' Strike* (London: Routledge, 2021), 183.

4.2 The Conservative Government After the Strike

The Conservative Government enjoyed its victory over the most radical union. Nevertheless, the question of what would occur to the Tory government if they were to experience another potential loss to the trade unions remains. The general public could have started questioning if the Conservative Party was competent enough to lead the Parliament. The public's confidence in the Conservative Party's leadership abilities might waver under such circumstances. Without the procedures taken by the government, the UK could still be swayed by powerful Trade unions, meaning that they could still use their significant power to disrupt the government.¹³¹ Fortunately for the Conservative Party, they managed to handle the miners and won the general election in 1987. Nevertheless, during these elections, “*the growing trend towards two nations*” became apparent, with Southern and Midlands voting primarily for the Conservative Party, whereas Scotland, Wales, and northern industrial areas voted for different parties.¹³² Moreover, the Conservative Government continued in its efforts to deindustrialise the UK, aiming replace profits from manufacturing jobs by profit from North Sea Oil.¹³³

Eventually, Margaret Thatcher resigned in 1990. Some argue that the reason was the poll tax.¹³⁴ However, claiming that poll tax is what ultimately made Thacher leave the office might be an overstatement, but it did not help her popularity. She was replaced by Jon Major, and regardless of the Tories' tarnished reputation, due to the poll tax, they again won the General election in 1992.¹³⁵ While Thatcher's downfall cannot be solely attributed to the poll tax, the internal division within her party might be. The Conservative Party was divided over European policies, which weakened her position as the leader of the Tory Party and eventually pressured her to resign.¹³⁶ Ultimately, regardless of her resignation, the Conservative Party led by Margaret Thatcher, was successful. People saw her as a strong leader. Despite some negative connotations to her nickname *Iron Lady*, her strong political presence and determination made her a reliable leader in the eyes of the nation. According to a public opinion poll, Thatcher is regarded as the greatest prime minister in the post-war

¹³¹ John Blundell, *Margaret Thatcher: A portrait of the Iron Lady* (New York: Algora publishing, 2008), 125.

¹³² Eric J Evans, *Thatcher and Thatcherism* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), Chapter 1, VitalSource Bookshelf.

¹³³ Ken Smith, *A Civil War without Guns: The Lessons of the 1984-85 Miners' Strike* (London: Socialist Publications, 2014), chapter 10, Kindle.

¹³⁴ Ken Smith, *A Civil War without Guns: The Lessons of the 1984-85 Miners' Strike* (London: Socialist Publications, 2014), chapter 10, Kindle.

¹³⁵ Diarmaid Kelliher, *Making Cultures of Solidarity: London and the 1984-5 Miners' Strike* (London: Routledge, 2021), 181.

¹³⁶ Peter Clarke, *Hope and Glory* (London: Penguin Books, 2004), chapter 11, Kindle.

era and the defeat of the miners and the restriction of the trade unions are considered as one of her most significant accomplishments.¹³⁷

4.3 Labour Party After the Strike

The miners also felt a deep sense of betrayal from the Labour Party. An active photographer during the coal dispute, Peter Arkell, commented on the Labour Party's involvement as such: "*Labour leaders hardly lifted a finger in support*".¹³⁸ Their contribution during the strike was seen as "*fairly irrelevant*".¹³⁹ Considering that the Labour Party was established by working-class members for the working class, this approach was perceived as a disappointment. However, regardless of this, the NUM still remains an affiliated union with the Labour Party.¹⁴⁰

The lack of support for miners by the Labour Party might have been caused by internal conflicts when a breakaway faction known as the 'Gang of Four' separated from the Labour Party on March 26, 1981.¹⁴¹ Margaret Thatcher accused the Labour Party of "*[trying] to minimise Labour embarrassment than to bring the end of the dispute any closer to the end*" when Labour's energy spokesman tried to resolve the violence during the strike.¹⁴² However, Arthur Scargill's radical character and strong beliefs were probably too problematic for the Labour Party. Not only, was the strike too negatively portrayed for the Labour Party to support them, but also the Labour leader Neil Kinnock probably recognized some Thatcher's objectives. After the strike, Kinnock aimed to update the Labour Party and make it less left-wing. He accepted some policies of Thatcherism, e.g. promoting the free market. This significant change might have led to the Labour Party losing in both the 1987 and 1992 elections.¹⁴³

¹³⁷ "Margaret Thatcher: the public view 40 years on", YouGov UK, accessed April 20, 2024, <https://yougov.co.uk/politics/articles/23206-margaret-thatcher-public-view-40-years>

¹³⁸ Beverly Trounce, *From a Rock to a Hard Place: The 1984/85 Miners' Strike* (Cheltenham: The History Press, 2015), foreword, Kindle.

¹³⁹ Ralph Darlington, "There is no alternative: Exploring the options in the 1984-5 miners' strike", *Capital & Class* 29, no. 3 (Autumn 2005): 77.

¹⁴⁰ "Affiliated Unions", The Labour Party, accessed March 31, 2024, <https://labour.org.uk/about-us/affiliated-unions/>.

¹⁴¹ Francis Beckett and David Hencke, *Marching to the Fault Line: The Miners' Strike and the Battle for Industrial Britain* (London: Constable & Robinson, 2009), 33-34.

¹⁴² Margaret Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years* (London: Harper Press, 2011), 362.

¹⁴³ Ken Smith, *A Civil War without Guns: The Lessons of the 1984-85 Miners' Strike* (London: Socialist Publications, 2014), chapter 10, Kindle.

4.4 Social Impact of the Strike

The situation that followed the end of the strike was not the same for everyone. Various resources describe the situation differently. However, they all agreed that the result of the strike brought many burdens upon the people who were active in the strike. Ken Smith's book *A Civil War without Guns* (2014) describes the hostile impacts of the strike. The discontent with the outcome in various areas was obvious. Deep scepticism and disappointment could be observed throughout these regions. Miners felt betrayed by the Trade Union and Labour leaders for their lack of involvement during the strike. They believed that they failed to support and protect their interests. Many communities witnessed an increase in issues like poverty, unemployment, drug use, and high crime rates after the accelerated pit closure that followed the unsuccessful strike.¹⁴⁴ Tragically, some men involved in the strike could not handle the emotional strain connected with its outcome, and they chose the most extreme solution: suicide.¹⁴⁵

Furthermore, it was not easy even if they wanted to find jobs in different industries. During Thatcher's time in office, unemployment was high. Therefore, there were limited job opportunities available.¹⁴⁶ Even those who managed to get re-employed faced long-term consequences anyway. For example, a miner who worked in a pit his whole life, accumulating enough for his pension was deprived of the money. Due to his prosecution during the strike for a miner offence, stealing a bag of coal dust.¹⁴⁷

The list of things perceived as offences expanded, and returning miners were closely watched, even outside their pits. The use of the word *scab*, which was vastly used during the strike as a slur for the strike-breakers, could have them arrested. Nevertheless, they found different ways to indicate their bitter feelings towards the strike-breakers. The dynamics in Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire were once again distinctive from the other areas. The situation was reversed, and supporters of the strike were harassed. Working miners felt that striking miners risked their jobs and wanted to take revenge. Strike-breakers' retaliation led to striking miners being treated harshly; some even confessed that the treatment they

¹⁴⁴ Ken Smith, *A Civil War without Guns: The Lessons of the 1984-85 Miners' Strike* (London: Socialist Publications, 2014), chapter 10, Kindle.

¹⁴⁵ Diarmaid Kelliher, *Making Cultures of Solidarity: London and the 1984-5 Miners' Strike* (London: Routledge, 2021), 174.

¹⁴⁶ Diarmaid Kelliher, *Making Cultures of Solidarity: London and the 1984-5 Miners' Strike* (London: Routledge, 2021), 2.

¹⁴⁷ Sheryl Bernadette Buckley, "The state, the police and the judiciary in the miners' strike: Observations and discussions, thirty years on," *Capital & Class* vol. 39, issue 3 (October 2015): 431, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0309816815603718>.

received upon their return was worse than anything during the strike. Although, unlike the strike-breakers, they lacked support and protection from the pit managers; in fact, the situation was quite the opposite. Some pit managers would willingly put striking miners in groups full of strike-breakers.¹⁴⁸

On the other hand, some authors focus on the more positive consequences of the strike. For example, Robert Gildea took the more positive stand in his work *Backbone of the Nation: Mining Communities and the Great Strike of 1984-85* (2023). The strike affected involved people's lives, careers and relationships between neighbours and families. One of the groups that was deeply affected by the strike was the mining wives. When discussing the positive impacts of the strike, the empowerment of women should not be omitted. As discussed in previous chapters, women found their voice during the strike. It opened their eyes and brought a sense of feminism within the working class. Many women who previously did not go to work in order to look after their families started working full-time and continued their studies or training in different fields. They aspired to broaden their horizons outside their households and to contribute to their communities. Several of them became nurses or teachers, a profession that could benefit their community. As much as they were heard during the strike, they were heard afterwards. On March 16, at their meeting, the WAPC stated that the group is firmly established and will remain active and continue in its endeavours. The German miners' union invited WAPC delegates to visit Erfurt in East Germany. Furthermore, WAPC members, together with Arthur Scargill's wife, had been invited to the USA for a conference about women's rights in American mines.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁸ Beverly Trounce, *From a Rock to a Hard Place: The 1984/85 Miners' Strike* (Cheltenham: The History Press, 2015), chapter 11, Kindle.

¹⁴⁹ Robert Gildea, *Backbone of the Nation: Mining Communities and the Great Strike of 1984-85* (London: Yale University Press, 2023), chapter 12, Kindle.

CONCLUSION

This year marks the 40th anniversary since the beginning of the miners' strike of 1984-1985, reminding us of the importance of industrial action, which had various lasting impacts on Britain. Even though many years have passed, scholarly work, documentaries, and books continue to be published, enduring the effects of the strike. This thesis has sought to describe the pivotal moments in this prolonged and intense strike, which brought the coal industry to a grinding halt. The strike highlighted deep social division and disunity within the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM).

The miners' strike changed Britain, reshaping its industrial landscape. Once heavily industrial nation underwent a transformative shift; trade unions lost their powerful position within the UK. Before the strike, they enjoyed many advantages, such as legal immunity. Nonetheless, the Conservative Government, headed by the *Iron Lady* Margaret Thatcher, diminished their power. Her strong beliefs, unwavering determination, and, according to some, her craving for revenge made the miners lose their most significant battle. Miners were known for their strikes; they saw them as a potent weapon, and their strikes were usually successful, but Margaret Thatcher ended this perception. After the miners' defeat of the Conservative government in 1972 and 1974, the tension between the two sides grew even stronger. These defeats made Thatcher and the Conservative Government focus more on preparation for future clashes with miners. Thus, many people, especially miners' supporters, still believe the strike was Thatcher's revenge. However, looking at the state of the industry and the economy back then, paired with the availability of alternative energy sources, and the increasing price of coal production, the decline of the coal industry became inevitable. Margaret Thatcher did what other politicians were afraid of doing and the infamous miners' strike of 1984 – 1985 was the miners' answers.

Nevertheless, the tactics used by the government still raise many questions to this day. The Conservative Government used courts, media, and police in order to suppress the most militant group of workers. An example of unprecedented police brutality and media manipulation can be seen in the Orgreave incident. Due to the brutality and radical approach of the police, this conflict resembled a military battle. Most media reported this incident in a way that was strongly against the miners. The police brutality, media manipulation of the reality, and laying the legal foundation for the strike are the main reasons why it is believed that the miners' strike was a lost war from the beginning.

Mining industry faced sharp decline in years following the strike. However, considering current efforts to protect the environment, it is reasonable to suggest that the mining industry would have faced the same fate regardless. Still, the speed and process of this transformation might not have been as dramatic if the strike had not occurred.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

NBC	The National Coal Board
NUM	The National Union of Mineworkers
TUC	The Trades Union Congress
NACODS	The National Association of Colliery Overmen, Deputies and Shotfirers
LGSM	Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners
WAPC	Women Against Pit Closures