

To what extent did the 1926 General Strike and the 1984-5 Miners' Strike constitute a Revolutionary Situation?

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To what extent did the 1926 General Strike and the 1984-5 Miners' Strike constitute a Revolutionary Situation?

Growing up in England, I was raised to have suspicion for any kind of revolutionary activity against the Government in Westminster. Understandably, the England I grew up in was an England still plagued by the IRA (Irish Republican Army), and growing up in Birmingham I was made aware of the experience of terrorist activities in the local area. In school, I was never taught the English Civil War, only discovering from independent study that England had experienced anything similar to the French Revolution that I was taught about the mighty English and British heroes eventually put the revolutionaries to the sword. I was never told in school that there had ever been a General Strike in England, whilst I distinctly remember the news reporting strikes in foreign countries. What I wanted to know from my independent studies was why in recent history there has not been any impetus by the English population to overthrow those who would withhold information about their own history in order to keep control and stay in power.

This thesis is intended to contribute to the debate on why England has not experienced a revolution in the twentieth century, and whether there have been viable revolutionary situations in which they could have occurred. Inspired by the arguments raised by historian of revolutions Charles Tilly and theorist on social and revolutionary movements Bob Jessop, this thesis will examine the extent to which the 1926 General Strike and the 1984-5 Miners' Strike constituted 'revolutionary situations'. The 1926 General Strike and the 1984-5 Miners' Strike have been chosen as the time between the two cases is nearly sixty years, making it easier to identify patterns that are evolving.

In order to understand what a 'revolutionary situation' is it is first necessary to understand what is meant by 'revolution'. My definition of 'revolution' comes from that of Charles Tilly in his work *European Revolutions 1492-1992* and Bob Jessop's work *Social Order, Reform and Revolution*. These works have been chosen as the definitions presented can be used to accurately analyse the character of the 1926 General and the 1984-5 Miners' Strike in the context of revolution. Due to the wide range of definitions available to describe revolutions and the scope allowed for this thesis it is necessary to choose only certain definitions.

Bob Jessop in his work gives an account of what a revolution is and stresses the importance of first distinguishing between reform and revolution. This is necessary as reform and revolution are both types of social change that has seen various arguments distinguishing between the two differently.¹ Jessop highlights three distinctions raised by previous investigations on reform and revolution.

Firstly, writers have argued that it is the content of their belief systems that distinguishes between reformist from revolutionary movements, the more rapid their projected implementation of realisation, the more general their scope-the more revolutionary the movement.² The second argument is the belief that it is in the means used to implement or promote the beliefs and proposals that is the distinguishing characteristic. This would be shown by the actions and language used by a potentially revolutionary group. Jessop argues that typically the criterion is the use or threatened of violence as well as the legality or illegality of the methods used.³ The third argument comes from writers who emphasis the suddenness of the change effected by the movement in question.

1 Bob Jessop, *Social Order, Reform and Revolution*. (London, Herder and Herder, 1972) p. 7

2 Ibid

3 Ibid

Meaning, if a regime rapidly deteriorated in a short space of time, such can be seen in modern day examples such as 'revolutions' that sprung up in Eastern Europe after the fall of Communism, which saw a mass toppling of previously Communist governments or those dependent on the Soviet Union.^{4 5}

Jessop amalgamates these three beliefs in his overall arguments, however he is critical of them being too contingent and therefore believes that if you were to dedicate yourself to any of the before mentioned beliefs then there is too much left to chance and not a focus on necessary features of reform or revolution.⁶ Jessop's belief is that as reform and revolution are types of social change, they can have no sociological meaning outside the socio-cultural context in which they occur. Therefore, the degree of radicalism or the methods employed do not itself make a movement reformist or revolutionary. Instead Jessop argues the defining characteristic is the relationship between these methods and the given degree of radicalism and attitudes of the powerful in society.⁷

Thus, Jessop's criticisms and suggestions on the difference between movements that are reformist and revolutionary shall be used extensively within this thesis. Jessop shares my belief that a simple emphasis on violent or illegal means ignores the extent to which violence is institutionalised in society. Whilst a sole emphasis on radicalism ignores the extent to which the social definition of the revolutionary depends simply on the admissibility of the projected changes into the dominant value system of the society in question.⁸ Therefore, for the 1926 General Strike and the 1984-5 Miners' Strike, those involved with both strikes can only be labelled as reformist or revolutionary depending on whether the society at the time concluded they were or not. The main instigator in declaring whether those involved are reformist or revolutionary is therefore the Government.

Examining Charles Tilly's definition of revolution with that of Bob Jessop's distinction between reform and revolution it is possible to create a concrete definition of 'revolution' and thus also 'revolutionary situations' that shall be used for this thesis. Tilly's definition is that 'whatever else they involve, revolutions include forcible transfers of power over states'.⁹ It can be inferred from Tilly's definitions of revolution that it is necessary for aggression to be used for there to ever be a revolution. However, despite recent European history highlighting that it is not necessary for violence to be used in order for there to be a successful revolution, this thesis will focus on whether there was a willingness to use violence in order to achieve revolutionary objectives. The exact form this violence would come in is focused on in this thesis once revolutionary situations are defined and a defence for this definition is given. Keeping along the lines of Tilly's definition of revolution it is possible to say that if a revolution was to happen as a result of the 1926 General Strike and the 1984-5 Miners' Strike then there would have been the appearance of a willingness by those involved to use force and therefore violence in order to achieve revolutionary objectives.

Now that definition of 'revolution' is agreed it is now possible to define what shall be meant by 'revolutionary situation'. The nature of revolutions and revolutionary situations is useful to understand. According to Tilly, all revolutions are different, with two revolutions never being the same. Tilly compares revolutions with 'traffic jams' and as with traffic jams there are a number of conditions that can be taken into account as to why traffic jams occur just as revolutions occur.¹⁰ When conditions are met for a revolution to be launched then a revolutionary situation comes into

4 Ibid

5 I will not be discussing extensively in this thesis the extent to which Eastern European countries were or were not wholly Communist in their ideology or allegiance. For further reading on such matters there are many different resources available

6 Ibid

7 Ibid

8 Ibid

9 Charles Tilly, *European Revolutions 1492-1992*, (London: Blackwell Publishings, 1995) p.6

¹⁰ Ibid.

being.

According to Tilly, a revolutionary situation is when three proximate causes converge, which are

1. The appearance of contenders, or coalitions of contenders, advancing exclusive competing claims to control of the state or some segment of the citizenry:
2. Commitment to those claims by a significant segment of the citizenry
3. Incapacity or unwillingness of rulers to suppress the alternative coalition and/or commitment to its claims.¹¹

Therefore, this thesis will examine closely whether it can be argued that there actually was an appearance of contenders, or coalitions of contenders advancing exclusive competing claims to control of the state or some segment of the citizenry as well as whether there was a commitment to these claims by significant amount of the citizenry, and finally to assess whether it was possible to suppress those who challenged the state. In order to achieve this, I will focus on three particular areas. First the position of the national leadership of the strikers, second, the position of local strikers, and thirdly the position of the Government of the time. Examining these three areas will enable me to conclude whether it is viable to call the 1926 General Strike and 1984-5 Miners' Strike revolutionary situations.

The aim for examining the national leadership of the strikers is to discover whether it can be argued that the leadership of strikers at the national level considered themselves revolutionaries; and whether there was any instructions that called for actions that can be considered to be revolutionary against the Government. As Tilly argues, revolutions include forcible transfers of power, and so it is inferred that revolutionaries would be willing to use force, an examination of the national leadership will highlight whether force was legitimised. If it appears that there was serious consideration to challenge the state along the lines suggested by Tilly then it would be possible to see at the leadership levels. Sources used to examine the national leadership will be composed of various newspaper source as well as biographies and accounts at the time.

The aim of examining the role of the Government is to understand whether the Government perceived the strikers as a viable threat to the state and therefore making both the 1926 General Strike and 1984-5 Miners' Strike a revolutionary situation. It is not expected that sources explaining the role of the Government would directly state that the Government openly admitted they perceived both the strikes as revolutionary situations. Instead, it is inferred from the actions by the Government in using the complete power of the state to counter to strike as to whether the Government believed to be repelling revolutionaries. The Government in this thesis is viewed as if it represents the state, therefore, if it appears if the Government perceived there to contenders to power then it is viable to argue that there was a revolutionary situation. An examination of military reports as well as actions by the police and other state authorities at the local level is therefore used to understand the position of the Government.

Finally, the aim for examining strikers at the local level is to understand whether those at the local level followed the instructions issued to strikers from the national leadership. Strikers at this level would have been most visible for society as a whole. So if the strikers at the local level were pushing for revolutionary objectives such as an overthrow of the Government and showing willingness to use force, it would have been noted by witness accounts at the time as well as newspaper reports. An examination will also be made of whether there was a strong 'radical' influence at the local level. By the term 'radical' I refer to political movements that traditionally push for revolutionary objectives. For this thesis, the actions of the Communist Party at local level

11 Ibid. 10

have been lightly examined in order to judge whether there was a viable influence on local strikers from radical elements. If the national leadership were pushing for an agenda of moderation but it appeared that strikers were apparently more willing to use radical tactics, then it can be argued that there was significant influence from these radical sources and that the views of the national leadership were ignored. Sources used to analyse the actions of strikers at the local level consist of secondary literature as well as newspaper articles.

Now that we have an understanding of the main definitions used in this thesis, I will finish this introduction with an understanding of the particular type of violence I will be focusing on to deem whether strikers were willing to use force as well as predicting what form the revolutionaries would most be likely to form as. Doing this would further enable me to judge whether the 1926 General Strike and 1984-5 Miners' Strike were revolutionary situations if it is possible to correlate between certain theories on revolutionaries and whether strikers showed symptoms described in these theories. It is also necessary to then define the boundaries of my case studies of the 1926 General Strike and 1984-5 Miners' Strike in terms of which geographical areas I will focus on so as to keep the thesis within the parameters set.

Chalmers Johnson in his work *Revolutionary Change* gives a clear assessment of various theories that describe what kind of people would join revolutionary movements as well as what situations would be necessary to inspire or force individuals to using revolutionary methods. Johnson proposes for basic groups of theories that explain revolutionaries' actions. These are, actor-orientated theories; structural theories; conjunction theories and process theories.¹² A brief examination of all these theories is necessary to understand the current debates on what creates revolutionaries as well as understanding theories that can be used to suggest whether the 1926 General Strike and 1984-5 Miners' Strike can be called revolutionary situations due to the strikers displaying actions attributed to revolutionaries in theories described by Johnson.

First, actor-orientated theories ask 'what sort of individuals or groups commit revolutionary acts and why?'¹³ Johnson highlights arguments that actor-orientated theories believe that an individual is confronted by various causes, but are essentially drawn to become revolutionaries because of their personal beliefs that have been developed. Actor-orientated theories also focus on the impact of strong personalities that draw individuals to them. In context with this thesis, actor-orientated theories can be used when examining the national leadership of both strikes. If individuals in the national leadership displayed strong personalities that draw individuals to them, then it is possible to argue that if the leader was a revolutionary and believed in wanted revolutionary objectives, it would have been shown in strikes who displayed support for an individual leader.

Structural theories of revolution are the opposite of actor-orientated theories in which they hold revolutions to be the attempts of normal or average people to respond to abnormal situations. These theories 'dispose of the human factor' by supposing that any group of people faced with the same unusual circumstances or social obstacles would behave in more or less the same manner, focusing directly on the structural components of the social situation that has brought about the unusual circumstances or obstacles.¹⁴ Structural theory could be used to analyse the actions of individuals at the local level and why they supported the strike. It will be assessed whether the 1926 General Strike and 1984-5 Miners' Strike were abnormal situations in which normal people responded, focusing on the structural component that caused this unusual circumstance.

The theories that have been given by Johnson will be utilised for this thesis in understanding whether the 1926 General Strike and 1984-5 Miners' Strike can be called revolutionary situations.

12 Chalmers Johnson, *Revolution Change (USA: Stanford University Press 1982)* P. 170

13 Ibid

14 ibid p. 173

For this thesis I believe that focusing specifically on the actor-orientated theory and the structural theory will give the best results in determining whether the strikes were revolutionary situations. Identifying whether strikers were revolutionaries due to them following actions because of the strength of personality from specific leaders is possible to examine as given in actor-orientated theory. Structural theory can be used as actions by individuals be explained once it has been examined whether normal or average people have been forced into unusual circumstances that force them to react.

Due to me focusing on the definition of revolution and revolutionary situations given by Charles Tilly and Bob Jessop it is necessary to examine moments of support for forceful transfers of power, and as such I will be focusing on elements of violence as part of this forceful transfer. The specific violence I am focusing on is 'political violence'.

My definition for political violence comes from the works by Joost Augusteijn who uses examples of the revolutionary experience in Ireland. Joost Augusteijn's article *Political Violence and Democracy: An analysis of the tensions within Irish Republican Strategy, 1914-2002* looks at the tactics employed by Irish Republicans to obtain an independent republic during the twentieth century.¹⁵ The article recognises patterns in causes and consequences of splits in the movement over the issue of abstention from political institutions or pressing for cooperation with political institutions; simply, the article looks at why revolutionary movements choose politically violent tactics and why they choose non-violent tactics.¹⁶

In the Irish experience of revolution, the decision to use political violence or not by Irish republicans stemmed from earlier experiences. Violence was considered necessary in 1916 as it appeared that Home Rule was not going to be granted by Britain through parliament, and so signifying a failure in using legal political institutions to push for what revolutionaries wanted.¹⁷ The Rising had received little support from the population at the time, but the objective of the 1916 insurgents, as described by Augusteijn, was 'not to establish an independent state through a *coup d'etat* but to create a larger willingness to desire for complete independence among the people.'¹⁸

Therefore, political violence will only be used when it appears nothing else can be done. Political violence in the Irish case was in the form of terrorist attacks that included bombing military as well as public targets. I will therefore highlight incidents that can be described as political violence in action by the strikers during the 1926 General Strike and 1984-5 Miners' Strike when it appeared that no other action was possible to use. Furthermore, when contemplating whether the act of striking can be counted as a form of violence, it is my opinion that certain forms of strikes can be counted as violence, and even a light form of political violence when strikes turn aggressive. However, as is obvious from the names of the 1926 General Strike and 1984-5 Miners' Strike, the tactic of striking was dominant form protest. What this thesis will further establish is whether the form the strikes came in for both these occasions were aggressive enough to warrant them being categorised as politically violent or relatively peaceful form of protest.

Finally, this thesis will focus entirely on the country of England throughout both the 1926 General Strike and the 1984-5 Miners' Strike. It is noted that the strikes were not only experienced in England but were also experienced throughout the rest of the United Kingdom of Great Britain, most notably in Wales and Scotland. However, whilst within this thesis actions within Wales and Scotland throughout the strikes may be noted they will not be extensively looked at, with the

15 Augusteijn, J. *Political Violence and Democracy: An analysis of the tensions within Irish Republican Strategy, Irish Political Studies, 1914-2002 Vol.18 No.1 (2003) c. P. 1*

16 Ibid

17 Ibid. 3

18Ibid. 4

dominant country looked at being England.

Furthermore to reiterate, this thesis aims to establish the extent in which the 1926 General Strike and 1984-5 Miners' Strike were revolutionary situations. As such this thesis does not aim to give a narrative of all the events that happened within both occasions. Instead I have chosen specific details from each of the strikes and analysed these specific details using the theories discussed by Chalmers Johnson as well as indicate whether the chosen incidents from both strikes follow the definition of revolutionary situation established by Johnson. At the beginning of each of the parts of my thesis I will give a brief overview of what shall be looked at within each chapter.

This thesis is broken up into three parts, the first two parts are established to tackle the 1926 General Strike and the 1984-5 Miners' Strike one at a time, as such there is a part on the 1926 General Strike and a part on the 1984-5 Miners' Strike. The chapters within these parts are organised to generally follow along the lines of the three areas focused on within both strikes. As a reminder the three areas are firstly, looking at the role of national leadership, secondly looking at the role of the Government and thirdly, looking at the local level to establish whether it is possible to call the 1926 General Strike and the 1984-5 Miners' Strike a revolutionary situation.

The amount of information I collected whilst researching in England has unfortunately left me swamped with masses of resources to choose from, attempts in trying to fit all the evidence within this thesis will be counterproductive as I am unable to give every piece the analysis it requires. At the beginning of each new chapter I will explain what resources I have chosen as well as why they have been chosen above other resources that could easily have been analysed. The material gathered for this thesis comes from the United Kingdom National Archives, People's History Museum in Manchester, Sheffield City Library, TUC library at the London Metropolitan University, the TUC archives at Warwick University and the NUM Headquarters in Barnsley.

Part 1: 1926 General Strike

This chapter will begin with an overview of the main causes for the 1926 General Strike as well as events throughout that resulted in how the 1926 General Strike ended.

As with all major historical events, the 1926 General Strike was the result of a variation of factors that accumulated with the General Strike. The 1926 General Strike was arguably the end result of the event known as 'Red Friday'. Red Friday was the consequence of trade union pressure on the Government as a response to planned decreases in wages in the mining industry. The Mining Federation of Great Britain (MFGB) stood firm from pressure from the Government for an extension of the working day from seven hours to eight hours. The Trade Union Congress (TUC) that represented a majority of trade unions across the country, put pressure on the Government to bow to demands of the MFGB by invoking the TUC General Council's right to intervene on its members behalf and immediately established an Industrial Committee that laid the foundations of what should be done if industrial action in the form of a strike was used.¹⁹ The creation of the Industrial Alliance between the mining unions, engineering unions, electrical, shipyard and iron and steel workers meant that unified action of all the trade unions was a certainty. The surrender of autonomy from the miners to the TUC meant that the TUC now became an active player in negotiations with the Government. Red Friday would now get its name when the TUC triggered a national embargo on all coal movements resulting in the Government capitulating announced an inquiry into the reorganisation of the mining industry as well as announcing a subsidy to the industry that would end on 1st May 1926.²⁰

Once this subsidy was due to end the Government returned with the results of the Samuel Commission, aptly named because Herbert Samuel chaired it. The judgement of the Samuel Commission returned with sympathy towards the miners but essentially announced the necessity of pit closures and an end to the subsidy. This was not accepted due to necessity of taking a pay cut in the immediate future and with the idea of nationalisation, which was reportedly supported by miners as the saviour of the industry, was declared to offer 'no clear social gain'.²¹ Following weeks more of negotiation there appeared to be no way to break the deadlock and negotiations were coming to a stand still. On the 2nd May 1926 technicians at the newspaper *The Daily Mail* refused to print an editorial that 'denounced the treachery of a general strike'.²² The Government then saw this as evidence proof that the strike was under way and so ended any chances of continued negotiations with the trade unions. So, on 3rd May 1926 the General Strike was to begin and last until the 12th May 1926. The result of which was to see the trade unions defeated and the Government appear unscathed. What will follow now is an analysis on whether the 1926 General Strike constituted a revolutionary situation or not.

Chapter 1: TUC General Council leadership

The aim of this chapter is to consider the extent to which the TUC General Council considered the 1926 General Strike to constitute a revolutionary situation and may have behaved in a way in which it makes it possible to perceive their intentions were revolutionary. If the General Council showed a belief that they could challenge the state through a forcible transfer of power then it would be viable to call the 1926 General Strike a revolutionary situation. The reason for focusing on the leadership

¹⁹ Anne Perkins, *A Very British Strike*, (London: Macmillan, 2006) p. 52

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid. p.107

of the TUC General Council is viable as evidence suggests that the individual members of the General Council commanded the largest trade unions in the country. If there were support for revolutionary methods to be utilised during the Strike by the national leadership then it arguably would have materialised the actions of the strikers at the local level. Therefore focusing on the beliefs of leaders at the national level is important to understanding how local strikers acted. The evidence used to analyse the extent to which the national leadership supported revolutionary action is predominantly newspaper articles and biographies. I have decided to examine only a cross section of leaders on the TUC General Council to; looking at all leaders on the council at length would exceed the boundaries of this thesis. The leaders chosen to study are those that have been reported to be radical and moderate. I have also highlighted particular instructions sent out by the TUC General Council to strikers to analyse whether these instructions demonstrated a support for revolution by the TUC General Council. I have not chosen to examine the role of the parliamentary Labour Party for this thesis, whilst important for a study on the 1926 General Strike as a whole, I am focusing on the direct leaders of the trade unions involved during the Strike.

From the outset of the 1926 General Strike it appears that there was no impetus from the General Council to use their power over the individual unions as a means to achieve revolutionary objectives. Looking at the letter for circulation of "General Council's proposals for Co-ordinated Action of Trade Unions" written by the chairman of the TUC General Council Arthur Pugh and Walter Citrine as Acting Secretary on the 30th April 1926. The circulation highlights the scope of the proposed general strike as well as which industries are to come out on strike and Trade Union Discipline and reads, 'The Trades Union Congress General Council and the Miners' Federation of Great Britain having been unable to obtain a satisfactory factory settlement of the matters in dispute in the coal-mining industry, and the Government and mine-owners having forced a lock-out'.²³

The document continues to describe which "Trades and Undertakings" are to cease work. These noticeably include transport, the printing trades and metal and iron works that are employed to the construction of plants and materials used by the coal industry. However, the trades that are to be kept working are the building trades that are employed with the building of hospitals and other public utilities as well as electric and gas and the sanatorium industries. The TUC General Council also commands that there be no interference with food and health services. These commands demonstrate how conservative the actions of the TUC General Council were. By calling out only particular trades it showed that it did not want to fully challenge the Government, if at all. Only selected trades that were arguably linked with the coal industry were arguably call out on strike. Furthermore, the document continues with an emphasis on 'Trade Union Discipline', in this section of the document it reads,

'The General Council recommend that the actual calling out of the workers should be left to the unions, and the instructions should only be issued by the accredited representatives of the unions participating in the dispute'.²⁴

The industries therefore called out are industries of production, by keeping those involved with work such a sanatoriums and child welfare it demonstrates that there is no willingness to put the health of the population at risk. There is therefore no evidence in the initial actions by the TUC preceding the General Strike to give the impression that it held revolutionary objectives and did not intend for there to be a forcible transfer of power. There was no centralising of power to the General Council at times of a General Strike demonstrated in the 'Trade Union Discipline' which devolves

23 TUC General Council, The General Council's Proposals for Co-ordinated Action of Trade Union, IN, Mowat, C,L. *The General Strike 1926: The Archive Series*, Edward Arnold Ltd, London pp.24-25

24 Ibid.

power to individual unions to call out affiliated workers. Centralising of power would have meant that the TUC General Council could potentially be in control of an army of strikers and thus could be seen to control a sizeable part of the state. This would have complied with Charles Tilly's definition of a revolutionary situation.

Turning our attention to the role of individual members of the TUC General Council it is possible to see the extent to which members supported any idea of revolution or challenging the Government directly. The noticeable members of the TUC General Council I have chosen to analyse are James Henry Thomas who as head of the Nation Union for Railwaymen (NURW) commanded one of the largest and most important trade unions at the time. Also the account given by Walter Citrine, who in 1926 was the General Secretary of the TUC General Council. From his autobiography *Men and Work* shall be examined in which he describes his own actions throughout the 1926 General Strike as well as others on the TUC General Council.

To begin, I shall focus on a particular speech Thomas gives in the *The Manchester Guardian* where Thomas stresses it is his belief and that of the TUC General Council that the aim for the General Strike is not revolution. An extract from Thomas's speech is reported here and begins with Thomas declaring,

'The only thing the General Council of the TUC asks the Prime Minister to give the negotiators a fair chance, for they cannot conduct negotiations under the threat of a lock-out. Their plea is the withdrawal of the notices. If a ballot were taken in this country I do not believe 2 per cent would vote for a revolution. This is not a revolution; it is a plain economic dispute, in which we want justice. The responsibility to try to save the situation rests upon us all, and it is for Parliament, as representing the people of the country, to try to avert it. A last effort ought to be made'.²⁵

Also, the most solid piece of evidence for Thomas' belief in moderation is shown by the 'Terms of Settlement' between the Railway Companies and the National Union of Railwaymen. With these terms strikers admitted 'that in calling a strike they committed a wrongful act against the Companies and agree that the Companies do not reinstatement surrender their legal rights to claim damages arising out of the strike from strikers and others responsible'.²⁶ As well as promising that the Unions promise to

- '(a) not again to instruct their members to strike without previous negotiations with the Companies
- (b) to give no support of any kind to their members who take any unauthorised action
- (c) not to encourage Supervisory employees in the Special Class to take part in any strike'.²⁷

The terms essentially meant that the NURW could not be utilised as part of a General Strike as well as surrendering any ability to ask others to support them during a strike if negotiations first breakdown. This demonstrates a complete capitulation by the NURW and for Thomas who has head of the union, it reflects his willingness to surrender easily. What can be inferred from both Thomas's speeches and from the terms of settlement with the Government is that there was no push for any

²⁵ 1926, *The Manchester Guardian*, 3 May

²⁶ 1926, Terms of Settlement, *Railway Gazette*, 14 May

²⁷ Ibid.

revolutionary action and no encouragement to challenge the state from the national leadership. Relating to the question whether the 1926 General Strike can be seen as a revolutionary situation, it would appear so far that it is not a revolutionary situation. Preliminary, it would appear that there is no contender to challenge the Government if we are to take Thomas's actions at face value. To confirm whether there indeed was no challenge from the TUC General Council then it can be argued that the 1926 General Strike was not a revolutionary situation.

Walter Citrine's account of the 1926 General Strike illustrates the general sentiments towards challenging the Government as well as how the General Council perceived the 1926 General Strike to be in terms of whether it was a revolutionary movement or solely an industrial dispute. Citrine underlines the fact that the General Council viewed the 1926 General Strike as an industrial dispute, throughout his autobiography he reports of the necessity for negotiations with the Government, this can clearly be seen by Citrine reporting of meeting with Herbert Smith, who had previously headed the review of the coal mining industry that preceded the General Strike. Samuel would then go on to propose the Samuel Memorandum, which was a result of recommendation on how to end the Strike as well as the future of the coal industry. The fact that the General Council is meeting with Herbert Smith demonstrates the willingness to negotiate and to not antagonise the Government.

It can be inferred by instances mentioned in Citrine's autobiography that there were arguably potential moments that could have seen the 1926 General Strike behave more like a revolutionary situation. The incidents in question are related to the actions of Ernst Bevin, who as the General Secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union (T&GWU) represented one of the most powerful unions. In one instance Bevin recommends that 'we must move as an army and bring our people in just at the right moment'.²⁸ This raised the debate on whether 'our people (the strikers)' were sufficiently disciplined to obey the instructions which were issued from headquarters.²⁹ Therefore, there was arguably a belief that it was useless to even consider the strikers as a kind of army as there was not enough discipline. It can be inferred that such thoughts meant that it was considered by the TUC General Council to form the strikers into a fighting force.

It can be argued from this that there were sentiments within the General Council that the strikers could be turned into something more other striking workers. However, there is not considerable material on the subject and the scope allowed for this thesis means that I am not able to suitably analyse all members of the General Council's views on turning the strikers into a kind of force. If further research were to find evidence that supports this, it would demonstrate there was a genuine belief in utilising the strikers to force a transfer of power and achieve revolutionary objectives.

From my own research at the National Archives, it was the discovery that the TUC General Council rejected money sent from the Soviet Union that demonstrates the absolute unwillingness for the General Council to even contemplate use of revolutionary tactics let alone consider creating anything that looked like it could challenge the Government. Whilst many writers on the General Strike will highlight their knowledge of the rejection of money, it is another to see it personally. The file HO 12/83 holds the telegraph interception from the *Soviet Representative to the Peoples Commissariat of Foreign Affairs, Moscow*. The importance of the telegram is highlighted by the fact the words 'Copy to Stalin' appear within. The telegram reads

28 Citrine, W, *Men and Work*, Hutchinson & Co Ltd, London, 1964 p. 180

29 Ibid.

'Copy to Stalin

Immediately inform me all circumstances relating to transfer of money to England in aid of the strikers. Including the money refused by General Council of Unions.¹³⁰

The fact that money was refused from the Soviet Union demonstrates the lengths in which the TUC General Council did not want to be affiliated with any revolutionary movements, and so confirming that there were no revolutionary intentions by the TUC General Council. Had money been accepted then it could have been possible to argue that there could have been an appearance of a threat to the state along the lines mentioned by Tilly.

Summarising this chapter, it is difficult to see how the 1926 General Strike can be considered a revolutionary situation. There appears to have been no impetus from the national leadership with it being stated in speeches by prominent members of the General Council of how it was not a revolution or revolutionary situation, with the 1926 General Strike being essentially an industrial dispute. Citrine's evidence that there was a belief in the need to negotiate with the Government highlights a belief in legal structures and thus a belief in non-violence and therefore no support for forceful transfers of power. Following the definitions of revolutionary situations given by Tilly it is clear that the TUC General Council did not actively present themselves an alternative to the Government and neither did they aim to control even a segment of the state. It would appear that if the 1926 General Strike were to be considered a revolutionary situation, then it would have to have been by the actions of the Government or individuals at a local level.

Chapter 2: Government Actions during the General Strike

As has been stated in the introduction, it is possible for there to be a revolutionary situation if it is perceived to be. The most likely of institutions to perceive a revolutionary situation would be the Government. Noting Jessops comments that it is important to note the values of the most powerful in society, the Government arguably represents the most powerful in society. Therefore, deciphering whether the Government saw the strikers as radical who wished to oppose the state would increase the chances of understanding whether the Government perceived the 1926 General Strike as revolutionary situation. Sources analysed from this chapter include the different resources the Government had at its disposal. Examining whether the Government used these resources in a way so that it appeared the Government were responded to a revolutionary threat would prove critical in answering to what extent the 1926 General Strike was a revolutionary situation. The Government could count on a plethora of means of control during the General Strike that made arguably diminished the scope in which strikers could build support for revolutionary action. I shall focus on two main resources utilised by the Government in controlling the strikers.

There were other resources that I could have focused on including the printing of the Government newspaper the *British Gazette*. The *British Gazette* was a Government issued newspaper that was established to report the actions of the Government as well as to slander the strikers who supported the Strike. I have decided against focusing on the *British Gazette* as it is difficult to gauge to what extent the *British Gazette* actually fulfilled its role in representing the Government or whether it just shows the prejudices of one particular man. The role of Winston Churchill in the creation and printing of the *British Gazette* makes it difficult to fathom what the actual Government voice was.

30 Home Office, *Intercepted Telegram* [telegram], HO 12/83, 1926 National Archives, London

However, I feel that the main resources available to the Government at the time was the Emergency Powers Act and the use of the military as the Emergency Powers Act gave the Government legitimacy to arrest strikers and the military could be used as a show of force and so intimidating strikers.

To begin we shall look at the Emergency Powers Act. Established in 1920, the Government could exercise wide powers under Orders in Council once a state of emergency had been proclaimed. The Emergency Powers Act could be enacted when,

'1. -(I) If at any time it appears to His Majesty that any action has been taken or is immediately threatened by any person or body of persons of such a nature and on so extensive a scale as to be calculated, by interfering with the supply of distribution of food, water, fuel or light, or with the means of locomotion, to deprive the community, or any substantial portion of the community, of the essentials of life...'³¹

The Emergency Powers Act goes on further to say that authorities were required obey any regulations or instructions given by the Government once the Emergency Power Act has been declared. But importantly the Act states, 'no such regulation shall make it an offence for any person or persons to take part in a strike, or peacefully to persuade any other person or persons to take part in a strike'.³²The Emergency Powers Act therefore underlines how emergency powers can be enacted as well as why they should be used. It is necessary to highlight the Emergency Powers Act does not count strikes to constitute a situation when the Act can be used, but that when 'extensive a scale as to be calculated, by interfering with the supply of distribution of food, water, fuel or light, or with the means of locomotion, to deprive the community, or any substantial portion of the community, of the essentials of life'. Therefore showing that the Government predicted such a time as when a large body of people would threaten the industries and resources at a national scale.

The Emergency Powers Act was enacted on 30th April 1926 showing the Government felt they were threatened enough to do so. Segments of the the King's proclamation of the Emergency Powers Act is shown here with

'George R.I

'Whereas by the Emergency Powers Act, 1920, it is enacted that if it appears to US that any action has been taken or is immediately threatened by any persons or body of persons of such a nature and on so extensive a scale as to be calculated, by interfering with the supply and distribution of food, water, fuel, or light, or with the means of locomotion, to deprive the community, or any substantial portion of the community, of the essentials of life, We may, by Proclamation, declare that a state of emergency exists:

And Whereas the present immediate threat of cessation of work in Coal Mines does, in Our opinion, constitute a state of emergency within the meaning of the said Act'.³³

31 British Government, Emergency Powers Act, IN, Mowat, C,L. *The General Strike 1926: The Archive Series*, Edward Arnold Ltd, London pp.26-27

32 Ibid.

33 British Government, Proclamation of Emergency, IN, Mowat, C,L. *The General Strike 1926: The Archive Series*, Edward Arnold Ltd, London pp.27-28

The Emergency Powers Act was used extensively throughout the General Strike with arrests of strikers taking place through out England. Looking at reports from *The Birmingham Post* from the 11th May 1926, it reports that 'Nuneaton men sent to prison- sentence two months hard labour for impeding the means to transit', as well as 'Joseph Bull (22) miner, found guilty of a breach of the Emergency Powers Act, and of assaulting two constables. Six months hard labour...Ball incited the crowd at Market Place to rush police who then drew their staves'.³⁴

The fact that the Emergency Powers Act was utilised by the Government demonstrates how much of a threat the Government perceived the strikers to be. This gives solid evidence that the Government perceived there to be a revolutionary situation in existence, utilising the definition given by Tilly of revolutionary situations it is possible to argue that because the Government perceived there to be an appearance of contenders advancing claims to control the state or some segment of it. It is also demonstrating a willingness of the Government to suppress such claims to the state. Using the Emergency Powers Act extended the control the Government had over the strikers, and so was able to keep control. However, use of the Emergency Powers Act would not have been the only actions needed in order to control a strike as big as the one during the 1926 General Strike.

I believe the most notable of all government resources was the availability of the military. The military appears to have been used extensively throughout the strike, and was an obvious show of force by the Government. I am putting emphasis on the use of the military due to my belief in Bob Jessop's arguments that it is necessary to understand that a revolutionary situation could only be perceived by the Government- in their capacity as representing the most powerful in society- if they deemed the strikers radical enough. Incidents of aggression or intimidation by the strikers could have shown sufficient radicalism in the eyes of the Government and therefore it could be argued Government perceived the 1926 General Strike as a revolutionary situation.

The WO/32/3455 file is a military report of the 'Aid to Civil Power' by military forces. The report is useful as a source as it reports on the level of political violence and tactics employed by strikers during the General Strike in London as well as how the military was utilised. Files from the report also show the response to General Strike by the Government and how the strike was observed by the military.

To begin, by examining the 'General Comments' of the report, it is possible to identify the characteristics of the General Strike in London. What follows is a representation of the strike from the viewpoint of the military in London.

'It is clear that strike leaders in no way carried out a planned campaign against the troops, there were no previously thought out offensives or plans of sabotage, incendiary, etc., General Paralysis was their scheme. Public opinion was undoubtedly overwhelmingly on the side of law and order and behind the police and troops as long as they were reasonably lead'.³⁵

So far, the file supports the argument that there was no planned revolution by strike organisers either at the local level or at the national level. It also emphasises what was discovered in the previous chapter that the TUC General Council did not send any orders that would show open attacks on the Government. The report continues,

'There was gross and outrageous intimidation everywhere against loyal workers trying to

34 1926, Nuneton Men sent to Prison, *Birmingham Post*,

35 War Office, *Aid to Civil Power*, [military report], WO/32/3455 National Archives, London

run essential services. This intimidation was completely successful, and in no case was it until strong police and military protection was given that workers had sufficient confidence to carry on. Once this confidence was gained however, others flocked to work. Also once protection was given, it had to be continued'.³⁶ Furthermore the report continues 'it was therefore necessary to use troops freely, but if possible to avoid any incidents which might give any excuse for the public to think that soldiers had used their weapons'.³⁷

The report highlights that there were incidents of intimidation against workers that did not join the Strike. Despite there being reports of this intimidation, the report does not mention these acts of intimidation flaring up to physical violence. Had there been incidents of open aggression against workers that did not support the Strike then it could be potentially argued that the tactics employed by strikers were violent, and therefore the argument could be made that there were clear aggressive tendencies amongst the strikers that could be translated as radicalism.

Fear of the strikers is clear to see in the report. Most noticeably, the collection of arms was seen as paramount by the military as well as keeping the Territorial Army (TA) happy. A disenchanted force such as the Territorial Army would have proven to have been a useful resource for the strikers had the General Strike turned to revolution. The importance of keeping the Territorial Army happy and collection of arms can be seen within the section discussing the 'Territorial Force' under 'collection of arms',

'I recommend that all Territorial arms should be collected into the Tower and Chelsea Barracks. This saves all anxiety and temptation to strikers to raid the small guards. Whilst it is naturally a source of great pride to Territorial units to guard their own arms, if matters become more violent and the strike lasted longer, Territorial Armouries would have certainly become objectives to hot-heads'.³⁸

The report demonstrates that the military wished to keep the support of the TA with this being demonstrated by allowing the TA the prestige of guarding their own weapons. The report also highlights how attacks by radical elements within the strikers or 'hot heads' as the military report calls them were planned for. Highlighting the level of preparation for the 1926 General Strike by the Government.

The extensiveness of the preparation by the military is shown by it being reported that the military even considered options for propaganda. This can be seen in the report when it talks of the inclusion of a propaganda division attached to the military force

'All propaganda during the present emergency was conducted by the Civil Authorities, and, from a military point of view based on experience of the War 1914-1918, was all but negligible. On the 10th May 1926, the services of a Sub-Editor of *The Times* were obtained and this office with the limited opportunities at his disposal proved of great value. Certain articles were written on the work of the troops during the strike, the conduct of the Convoy and its effect on the food supply of the Civil population, and were published in the *British Gazette*'.³⁹

36 Ibid. Section VI point 1

37 Ibid.

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid.

Although I could not find the particular edition of the *British Gazette*, the necessity for propaganda shows that the Government wished to spread its own information amongst the strikers. Reporting of the activities of the army for the general public to see shows a strong response by the Government to the challenge of the Strike and how the Government wanted to show strikers and normal citizens that it was in control,

From the 'Use of the Troops' section the fear that strikers could become violent is confirmed. This is shown by the precautions taken by the military when on patrol. It was agreed that there should be a minimum for the amount of troops stationed together at any particular time. From the report it is said,

'An old lesson brought out once again during the Strike was that no small body of troops should ever be used. Two Platoons under an officer is the minimum for a guard. Two Platoons or a Company for an operation. Such a body with bayonets fixed and rifles unloaded is really formidable in appearance and could clear any crowd. Except in very exceptional cases, Lewis Guns and Machine Guns should not be taken. They decrease the bayonet men, and are unsuitable for strike work in this country. The stronger the body of troops sent, the less likely is there to be an incident. It is only tempting "hotheads" to send small bodies'.⁴⁰

With it being decided that two Platoons with an officer being agreed would be the minimum for a guard when, it highlights the minimum amount of men the military wished to commit to guard when passing through crowds of people. The report does not specify the size of crowd necessary in which only a minimum guard should be present, nor does it state how many soldiers would form an individual platoon. However, it does state the necessity for their to always be a guard no matter how many there are in a crowd. This reiterates the perceived threat presented by the strikers during the 1926 General Strike.

The efficiency of the Government's use of the military is demonstrated in the article that appeared in *The Manchester Guardian* on the first day of the General Strike on 3rd May 1926. The article reads as,

'A suggestion in some periodical that the Government were going to use "naked force to smash the miners" is resented... it is declared that the forces if the Government will probably do more to protect the wives and families of the strikers than anybody else. The Government believes that its organisation is working well. It is perfectly well prepared... The trade union offer to distribute supplies and see to equitable distribution is met with the answer that that is for the Government. There is only one authority for the maintenance of order to supplies in each district, and that is the Civil Commissioner who is in each area the Government'.⁴¹

It is necessary to note the impact of the military on the strikers at the time in order to assess how successful the military was in intimidating the strikers from threatening what the Government wanted to protect.

Analysis of the impact of the military can be included here by using an article by *British Worker*

40 Ibid.

41 1926, *Manchester Guardian*, Emergency Plans – Satisfactory Throughout the Country- 'Appeal To Public, 3 May

newspaper. The response by the strikers taking part in the General Strike was reported by the *British Worker* to be one of 'Quiet Dignity'. The article from the first issue of the *British Worker* printed on the 5th May 1926 titled *Wonderful response to the call* shows an emphasis on moderation and praises the support from workers in coming out on strike. The article reports that 'the conduct of the trade unionists, too, constitutes a credit to the whole movement. Despite the presence of armed police and the military, the workers have preserved a quiet orderliness and dignity, which the General Council urges them to maintain, even in the face of temptation and provocation which the Government is placing in their path'.⁴²

Looking at the military report from the National Archives, it is possible to see the preparations against any potential use of violence by strikers during the 1926 General Strike. The scope of the military presence shown demonstrates an image of Government organisation, which would have been obvious to see by strikers. The demonstration of strength was there to intimidate strikers from using any violent tactics to achieve their objectives. There can also be seen a recognition of the potential for strikers to turn violent, this is shown by the necessity to store arms in secure locations. Also, by storing the weapons of the TA demonstrates the necessity for professionals to be on control of such an eruptive event like the 1926 General Strike; it has already been shown there was an acknowledgement of potential violence against the state. This coupled with the moderation preached by the national leaders in the TUC General Council therefore created an atmosphere not conducive for support of political violence to grow from.

What can be concluded from this chapter is that. The strong reaction to the strike by the Government signifies that they wished to control the strike and were scared of the potential violence of the strikers. The strikers were arguably perceived as a viable threat to the Government and therefore the 1926 General Strike constituted a revolutionary situation. As such the Government responded as it did, as it was strong enough to repel any potential revolutionaries. The Government succeeded in doing so by use of the Emergency Powers Act that gave the Government the power to arrest strikers and the military that was utilised in intimidating strikers.

Chapter 3: Local Level

It is now clear that there was arguably no impetus from the national leadership for any revolutionary activity. However, it is still viable for there to have been potential for violence aimed at the Government by strikers at the local level. What will follow is an analysis of potential influence from the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) as a unit to promote a radical agenda at the local level. Analysis of the influence of the CPGB will give an understanding of whether the orders of the national leaders for moderation appeared to be emulated by strikers. The CPGB has been focused on as they were most widely reported on during the 1926 General Strike and appeared to be the most active at the time. The influence of the CPGB therefore will be measured against the activities of local strikers in the industrial area of Sheffield during the 1926 General Strike. The chapter will also focus on one interesting case of potential political sabotage by strikers, with the incident known as 'The Cramlington Incident'. If it is decided that The Cramlington Incident did indeed constitute political violence then it can be argued that the Government really were against a segment of society that supported revolutionary aims.

The article *The Reds and the General Strike: The Lessons of the First General Strike of the British Working Class* by Brian Reid can be used to understand the actions of the Communist Party during the General Strike. The article maintains that 'for years the Communist Party has been advocating a

42 Wonderful Response To The Call, *The British Worker Wonderful Response To The Call 5/5/1926*

united working class struggle against reductions'.⁴³ Thus the 1926 General Strike itself was a partial victory of the Communist Party that represented a more radical and left wing agenda than that offered by the 'Right-Wing' of the Labour Movement.⁴⁴ According to Reid's article, the Government responded to the threat posed by the Communist Party by arresting their leadership, this is shown by the arrest of Saklatava, the Indian Communist MP for Battersea. This also affected the ability to print strike bulletins, as such actions were seen as an arrestable offence as it was deemed to be an act 'calculated to cause disaffection among the civil population'.⁴⁵

G.A Phillips measures the influence of the Communist Party and similar organisations in his work *The General Strike the politics of an industrial conflict*. Phillips argues that the Communist Party influence on local strike centres was negligible, this is demonstrated by the 'general lack of partisan rivalries at local level' that for Phillips represents the relative ineffectiveness of the Communist Party's central control over its constituent and auxiliary bodies.⁴⁶ Phillips believes the reason behind this ineffectiveness is due to before the stoppages, the leadership had discouraged a revolutionary posture. This is shown by the quote from 'to entertain exaggerated views as to the revolutionary possibilities of this crisis and visions of new leadership' 'arising spontaneously in the struggle", etc. is fantastic'.⁴⁷ Furthermore, once the General Strike began, the central committee of the Communist Party found the task of co-ordinating its forces impossible, the Party admitting that contact with the districts outside London was 'rudimentary'.⁴⁸

Looking at the Special Strike Bulletin printed by the Sheffield Communist Party, it is possible to show how active the local Communist Party was as well as understand how far members wished to see the General Strike go in terms of revolutionary objectives.

From the 3rd issue of the Special Strike Bulletin published on 7th May, an article titled 'The Political Meaning of the General Strike' gives insight on the extent to which the local Communist Party followed a 'radical' agenda. The article comments that

'The General Strike is not only a magnificent act of brothers support to the miners, it is an act of self defence on the part of the working class. The first watchword of the General Strike... and remains: All together behind the Miners: Not a Penny off the Pay. Not a Second on the day'.⁴⁹

Thus, it can be argued that the Communist Party did not advocate a full revolution, and as can be seen, held a comparative moderate stance compared with the Russian Revolution. The Communist Party is seen to be supporting the line taken by the TUC General Council, which is that the General Strike was called to support the miners. The Communist Party was not advocating to use the 1926 General Strike as a vehicle for a revolution, and to organise the working class into potential users of political violence to fulfil their objectives. This is shown in the article by the mentioning of the working class in the context of 'self-defence', inferring that the working class was under attack and thus in a conflict. However, in the same article, it is implied that it is not enough to simply support the miners against the mine owners now; it is essential to stop them altogether. This is shown with

43 Communist Party of Great Britain, *The Reds and the General Strike: The Lessons of the First General Strike of the British Working Class*, Marxist Internet Archive, London Dorrit Press Ltd

44 Ibid.

45 Ibid.

46 Phillips, G. A. *The General Strike: The Politics of Industrial Conflict* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1976 p.192

47 Ibid.

48 Ibid,

49 Sheffield Communist Party, *Special Strike Bulletin no.3* 7 May 1926, Sheffield City Library

'The guarantee against the ravenous and soul-less greed of the coal owners is to break their economic power... 'Nationalisation of the mines without compensation for the Coal Owners, under Workers' Control through Pit Committees'.⁵⁰

Therefore, it was not the objective of the Communist Party to use the General Strike now as a vehicle for a successful revolution; instead it called for the instalments of institutions that would centralise power with the workers. This is shown through the advocating the nationalising of the coal pits and thus ending mine owners control over mines, destroying employers abilities to subjugate the miners, and indeed working class as a whole.

The inclusion of the slogan 'Resignation of the Forgery Government, Formation of a Labour Government' demonstrates the full demands of the Communist Party for the General Strike. The formation of a Labour Government sticks out as it demonstrates that the Communist Party were willing to go through Parliament to achieve their aims. The 'Forgery Government' is in response to the Labour Party in 1924 resigning from government as a result of the forged Zinoviev Letter, which implicated the Labour Party with the Soviet Union. Furthermore, as the Government at the time of the strike appears to be backing all businesses that are subjugating the working class, then it is necessary then to replace the current government.

The demands by the Communist Party are confirmed with the slogan at the end of the article with

'Not a penny off the pay, not a second on the day: Nationalise the mines without compensation under workers' control! Formation of a Labour Government'.⁵¹

Thus, bringing together of the three main components which see the defence of the miners against the mine owners (Not a penny off the day, not a second on the day). To centralise power with the working class in defence against business as a whole that aim to subjugate workers (Nationalise the mines without compensation under workers' control). Finally to allow the formation of a Labour Government that will be able to uphold these changes.

The Special Strike Bulletins do not restrict themselves to only give general over views of the strike, but also report on the immediate situation of the strike in Sheffield. Looking at the articles relating specifically to Sheffield during the General Strike, it is possible to understand the context in which the community were living in and whether it contributed to the unwillingness to push for political violence or secession at a local level.

In the third issue of the Special Strike Bulletin, it is reported of the 'Movement of Troops' and 'Young Workers and Apprentices Blackleg on Adult Workers'. Firstly, the movement of troops writes that there were 'extensive movements of troops- with machine- gun equipment- have taken place today'. The fact that this received a so small a space within the paper indicates that this was unsubstantiated, however it was deemed necessary to inform the community of the possibility of there being troops with machine guns in Sheffield either as a warning against starting violence, or informing those who did want to start violence it was necessary to deal with troops with machine-guns.

50 Ibid.

51 Ibid.

There is evidence that there were advocates of violent tactics within the Sheffield Communist Party, in the second issue of the *Special Strike Bulletin*, the heading 'Provocative Tactics' appears. In which it is written

'Yesterday we warned our readers against incitement to riot. To-days news brings reports of provocative action on the part of the police in London and Glasgow. The necessity for [a] Workers Defence Corps is now recognised in these centres. Mass defence is the only remedy on such occasions. May we repeat our warnings'.⁵²

Therefore, as has been demonstrated, at the local level, it was possible for the Communist Party to print and deliver news briefs that not only went against the line held by the Government, but also advocated revolutionary aims for the General Strike. Due to there being no revolution as a result of the General Strike, it can be argued that despite the Communist Party being able to spread its revolutionary views amongst communities, there was an unwillingness by the majority of the community as a whole to be taken in by the words of the Communist Party. Also, the violence advocated by the Communist Party was that of self-defence against Government policies.

Through my research it has been difficult to unearth examples of potential use of political violence being used against the state. However, the incident in which the train 'The Flying Scotsman' was derailed by a group of striking workers is potentially a case demonstrating an act of political violence by striking workers. File HO 144/10671 unearthed from the United Kingdom National Archives shows that the act of derailing The Flying Scotsman train not only shows potential use of political violence but also the revolutionary zeal of the strikers.

Within the file contains the official police report regarding the crash as well as telegrams from New Scotland Yard to the Home Office. Also, newspaper cuttings from local newspapers that covered the event are enclosed by the Chief Constable of Northumberland to A.L Dixon Assistant Secretary of the Home Office.

From the information taken from a letter written on 10 May 1926 (day seven of the General Strike) regarding the derailment by Sergeant Jas R.Graham of Cramlington Police Station to The Chief Constable at the County Police Office. In the letter Sergeant Graham writes

"Proceeded on my cycle to the scene ... There were a number of men, women and children from West Cramlington colliery in a field on East side of the railway... A number of volunteer cars, Gosforth Fire Brigade, Doctors from Newcastle and Morpeth and extra police were soon on the spot and rendered assistance... The window of this cabin had been smashed and all the tools taken out. On examining the railway I found that the fish plates had apparently been removed and the keys knocked out of the chairs for one length of rails, thereby causing the accident..⁵³

Sergeant Graham therefore gives a detailed overview of the event in which there is a case of sabotage of the track. The appearance of 'volunteer cars' can be taken to mean volunteer police who

52 Communist Party of Great Britain, *Special Strike Bulletin no.2*, 6 May 1926

53 Home Office, '*Express derailed at West Cramlington*', National Archives, London

were recruited during the General Strike, or volunteer helpers who were aware of the derailment and were willing to help the wounded. The suspects of the derailment are eventually discovered and are put on trial. It is at the trial when it is possible to measure how revolutionary zealous the individuals responsible of the derailment were and whether the event is being treated as a case of political violence.

The coverage of the trial by the *Newcastle Evening Chronicle* demonstrates the quirks of the event. The trial accused nine young miners from the local area with wrecking the train, there is no mention of it being a revolutionary act or the men involved were acting on behalf of a political organisation supportive of revolution; only that the newspaper reports that they were charged with 'feloniously, unlawfully, and maliciously displacing a certain rail and other things'.⁵⁴

The men accused did not openly admit they were acting in response to their political beliefs, it appears that the incident happened on a whim by those responsible. If those accused possessed revolutionary zeal I do not believe that they would have started accusing each other of the crime as they did during the trial, this can be seen with 'does the witness remember saying to me and other lads when we were lifting the rail out: 'Haadaway lads, we will lift the rail out?' as well as 'why are you standing there telling a pack of lies?'. Furthermore, within the piece the views of the local community are arguably shown, by the inclusion of a Robert Taylor who was a local miner as a witness against the accused. He declared that 'he saw men on the line, bending down and tampering with the 'way".⁵⁵ Intuitively, if the local community supported a revolutionary cause, then arguably this would have been shown by no witnesses coming forward to give statements accusing those involved. However, as it is a miner, someone who it can be thought should have been supporting those accused, who comes forward as a witness it shows that within the local community that the authority of the law was being respected.

Within the summing up of the trial by the prosecutor and the defence, it is possible to identify that the defendants argued that it was the fault of a mob and not the accused as individuals. The prosecutor, a Mr. Lowenthal, said to the jury 'it was inconceivable that if accused were innocent they would have given the answers they did when first charged... the answers were 'I was nowhere near the smash', 'I was not there'. With the speech for the defence, by a Mr. Archibald Wilson, saying 'it is difficult to understand mob psychology. So far as the four accused men for who he appeared were concerned...there was hardly evidence that they were on the line'.⁵⁶ The defendants therefore blame the local community for their situation and were following the 'mob'. The closing statements also highlight the potential lack of evidence against the accused. According to the *Sunday Worker* in its article 'Was Train Wreck A Frame-Up?' there was evidence that the rail was tampered with after smash with 'provocative agents' being 'responsible for Boss plot to involve strikers'. The *Sunday Worker* was a socialist supporting newspaper, and so would naturally be on the side of the strikers.⁵⁷ However, the newspaper raises the issue of the strikers being framed and interestingly, a year later the accused sentences are then reduced.

Therefore, it is possible to argue that the Cramlington crash was potentially an example of political violence by a group of striking miners. There is no evidence that the accused were revolutionary

54 Home Office, 'Cramlington Miners in Dock' *Newcastle Evening Chronicle* 7 May 1926

55 Ibid.

56 Ibid.

57 HO 144/10671 'Was Train Wreck A Frame-Up?' *Sunday Worker*

zealous and according to their defence appeared to be following a mob mentality. However, as my only evidence for their lack of revolutionary zeal being from quotes reported by newspapers during the accused trial, I do not know whether the accused discussed political violence amongst themselves or in private. Nevertheless a large crowd formed to watch the removing of tracks, and so there are hints of revolutionary or at least anti-authority sentiments in the local area. However, the inclusion of local miners as witnesses against the accused demonstrates a willingness amongst individuals of the local labour movement to speak against those whom you would assume they would support.

It is possible to conclude that despite there being a measurable influence branches of the Communist Party, it did not inspire any revolutionary action amongst strikers at the local level. The closest event that can be argued was an act of political violence, can at the same time be argued was just a spur of the moment event. I believe 'The Cramlington Incident' though should be viewed as what strikers were capable of. If strikers could organise themselves to sabotage train lines then they were capable of other tactics that can be considered threatening. Therefore, it is possible to argue that the Government logically concluded that the strikers did indeed represent a threat to the state because they could organise themselves.

Conclusion

After examining the evidence presented throughout this investigation of the 1926 General Strike, it is possible to argue that the 1926 General Strike can be partly called a revolutionary situation.

Looking at the national leadership of the 1926 General Strike it would appear that the leadership did not believe that the Strike was even close to being a revolution. Thomas's speech declaring that the Strike was essentially an industrial dispute highlights the moderate line taken by the TUC General Council. The official instructions given by the General Council show that there was emphasis on keeping calm and did not push for any radical tactics to be utilised against the Government. In the definition given by Tilly on what constitutes a revolutionary situation it is possible to say that from the point of view of the TUC General Council, there were no contenders to the state as it was not the aim of the leadership to push for any revolutionary action that would threaten the Government. Thus, it is difficult to argue that through the actions of the TUC General Council the 1926 General Strike was a revolutionary situation.

However, examining the action of the Government during the 1926 General Strike then there is a strong case for arguments that the 1926 General Strike did constitute a revolutionary situation. It is clear from the actions of the Government and how they responded to the organisation of the strikers that the Government believed that they were dealing with a revolutionary threat. The use of the Emergency Powers Act made it easier for the Government to arrest strikers and established control of the Strike. This control over the Strike was strengthened by the use of the military that showed the physical presence of the Government in the face of the strikers. Strikers therefore were intimidated by the presence of the military and the lack of reports indicating the military being openly attacked. Therefore, because the Government perceived there to be a revolutionary threat, it could be argued that the 1926 General Strike was a revolutionary situation. Also as the Government obviously had the capabilities to repel any potential attacks it demonstrates the fulfilment of second definition of a revolutionary situation.

Finally, when examining the extent to which the actions of strikers at the local level it is possible to see how the Government could perceive the strikers as a threat to the state. Incidents like the Cramlington Incident highlighted the capabilities of the strikers, had there been a greater impetus for more political violence and revolutionary actions, then the strikers could easily have posed a serious threat to the Government. However, it appeared that any radical influences at the local level could not encourage sufficiently strikers to aim for revolutionary objectives.

In summary, I understand why the Government perceived the 1926 General Strike to have been a revolutionary threat. The potential of the strikers when organised towards the goal of achieving revolutionary objectives would have been a threat to the state. Also the willingness to use force by the Government further demonstrates the extent to which the Government perceived the 1926 General Strike to be a threat to it.

Part 2: 1984-5 Miners' Strike

The 1984-5 Miners' Strike, like the 1926 General Strike, was the result of an accumulation of events. The main event being the previous strikes by miners in 1972 and 1974. These strikes resulted in victory for the striking miners over the Government, which was then led by Ted Heath. The striking miners were able to win concessions from the Government which many at the time saw as a massive defeat for the Government and cemented the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) as a trade union power.

According to Alex Callinicos and Mike Simmons in the work *The Great Strike: The Miners' Strike of 1984-5 and its lessons*. The twelve months preceding the Strike, the National Coal Board (NCB) had closed twenty-three pits and destroyed twenty one thousand jobs. Then on 1st March 1984 they announced the closure of Cortonwood colliery in Yorkshire with just five weeks notice.⁵⁸ The Yorkshire miners decided to go on strike in opposition to the closure of the colliery and were eventually joined by the majority of the NUM in support. Although, this support came without a national ballot that was traditionally used to sanction a national strike. The result of this was to see the Nottinghamshire pits remain open. For almost a year until

It is important to note that this chapter and indeed this thesis as a whole does not intend to give a narrative of all events that took place throughout the 1984-5 Miners' Strike. Similar to the arrangement in the 1926 General Strike chapter, I have examined only noticeable moments throughout the 1984-5 Miners' Strike where it could be argued that they either do or do not show the strike as a revolutionary situation.

Chapter 1: National Leadership

Unlike in for the 1926 General Strike, I will focus solely on the role of one specific individual leader of the 1984-5 Miners' Strike with the leader that will be focused being Arthur Scargill. The structure of the NUM of course does not mean that Arthur Scargill was the only individual worthy of study, however the level of divisiveness in the debate surrounding Scargill means that he remains an outstanding individual of study. Other leaders such as Peter Heathfield will also be mentioned, just not analysed as deeply as Scargill.

Evidence of Scargill's persona and influence have been collected from biographies as well as comments from Scargill's anti-thesis at the time Ian MacGregor, whom as head of the National Coal Board (NCB) represented the enemy for the striking miners. The account given by Ned Smith, the NCB's Director-General of industrial relations, is useful as it gives the perspective of those who are in the NSB but not directly involved with the negotiations between the NUM and NCB.

Examination of Scargill's personality as well as a number of his actions throughout the strike makes it possible to offer a conclusion on whether his actions inspired strikers to behave in a manner suggested by the actor-orientated theory suggested by Chalmers Johnson and therefore actions that can be seen to show the 1984-5 Miners' Strike as a revolutionary situation.

Mike Adeney and John Lloyd's work *Miners' Strike 1984-5: Loss Without Limit* gives an account of Scargill's personality and his drive throughout the strike. Adeney and Lloyd examine Scargill along the lines of the actor-orientated theory and show this in their work when they raise the question, 'would the strike have taken place without Arthur Scargill?'⁵⁹ Adeney and Lloyd add that this

⁵⁸ Alex Callinicos and Mike Simmons, *The Great Strike: The Miners' Strike of 1984-5 and its lessons* (Netherlands: Krips Repro, 1985) 11

⁵⁹ Adeney, M, Lloyd, J. *Miners' Strike 1984-5: Loss Without Limit* pg 28

question derives from the belief that 'many believed it would not: more believed that, while it might have been inevitable, it would have lasted only a few weeks and had been settled with fudge'.⁶⁰ This initially highlights that there is an existing debate on the results of Scargill's influence over the NUM and striking miners during the Miners' Strike. It is thus possible to examine whether Scargill's persona and influence.

Adeney and Lloyd view Arthur Scargill as a 'political animal' with the result of the 1984-5 Miners' Strike being solely his doing. According to Adeney and Lloyd 'it is common belief in [the] government, the labour movement and in the NCB that Scargill, by sheer personal force, greatly prolonged strike and greatly raised the stakes; that he, largely alone, turned the strike from what it might have been- a partial victory- into a complete defeat because *he* had to be beaten. *He* was the embodiment of the enemy within'.⁶¹ This view is therefore one that negatively portrays Scargill but at the same time gives testament to his personality. This is shown in the emphasis in which Adeney and Lloyd accuse Scargill solely leading the NUM to a defeat.

Adeney and Lloyd acknowledge the difference in opinion between commentators on the 1984-5 Miners' Strike surrounding the role of Scargill. However, the reverence shown by the striking miners towards Scargill is remarkable. Adeney and Lloyd comment on this, noting that 'for his followers...the relationship was like a modern equivalent of King Arthur and his knights'. This relationship with his 'followers' will now be examined closely in this chapter. If it indeed appears that there was a close bond between the striking miners and Scargill, then it is possible to say, using actor-orientated theory, that Scargill's personality was a key factor in attracting supporters and therefore could present the 1984-5 Miners' Strike as a revolutionary situation.

The strength of support for Scargill needed to be shown by striking miners would have to be substantial if the 1984-5 Miners' Strike was to be considered a revolutionary situation. To begin, Adeney and Lloyd comment that on 30th May 1984 after Scargill was released from Rotherham court after being arrested at a picket line, it is reported that 'miners surged about him in the hot sun. He put out his hand to them, shaking theirs. After such an encounter, one young miner in his 20s held up his hand in the air, waving it in the faces of his comrade. 'I'll bit was this! 'He cried'.⁶² Adeney and Lloyd highlight how Scargill was celebrated and singled out by striking miners.

Newspaper reports from the 1984-5 Miners' Strike give testament to the influence and appeal of Scargill amongst the rank of striking miners. An article by *The Guardian* newspaper from 16th April 1984, the headline of 'Scargill the Hero Calms Rampaging Ranks' and writes

'Physical assaults on the press, fighting between miners, pleas for order from Mr Scargill, and nearly twenty standing ovations were packed into the two hour meeting...Arthur Scargill is not merely liked by many young miners-he is idolised. His arrival into the hall to the singing of "Arthur Scargill, we'll support you evermore: we can win, we can win and here we go, here we go".⁶³

Scargill is portrayed here as the natural leader of the movement, with the creation of chants demonstrating the support for Scargill. The article highlights how well received Scargill was amongst striking miners, and especially young striking miners. Whilst it is difficult to confirm whether the reception Scargill received from young striking miners was the norm, looking at the following evidence is able to substantiate the support Scargill had from the young.

Poems by the children of striking miners in the pamphlet *More Valuable than Gold* gives evidence

60 Ibid.

61 Adeney, M, Lloyd, J. *The Miners' Strike: Loss Without Limit* pg 28

62 Ibid. 29

63 1984. Scargill the Hero Calms Rampaging Ranks. *The Guardian*, 16 May

of the reverence Scargill held by the young. A poem by Neil Gitsham aged eleven from Nottinghamshire reads

'Scargill is like a god that walks on water
Scargill is the god of the pickets
He supports us well as we support him
He's like an emperor of the pickets
Scargill lives on
When Scargill dies, he will live on
Through the National Union of Mineworkers'⁶⁴

The pamphlet *More Valuable than Gold* contains more of such similar poems like those of Neil Gisham. As the child who wrote the poem was only eleven years old, then the influence of the parents would have been strong. Whilst I do not know how actively involved Neil's parents or close relatives were with the strike, but it is still possible to infer that they would have been strong enough supporters of Scargill to have influenced their son.⁶⁵ Within the poem it is obvious to see that the child who wrote the poem hold Scargill in very high regard and even referring him as the 'God of the pickets'. This contributes greatly when questioning whether the influence Scargill held was enough for people to perceive there to be a revolutionary threat.

For this thesis I was fortunate to have been able to interview a close associate of Arthur Scargill. This associate is Phillip Thompson who is head of the archives at the NUM's national headquarters in Barnsley and was and is still a close friend to Arthur Scargill.⁶⁶ Phillip Thompson gives a full and varied account of Arthur Scargill and the 1984-5 Miners' Strike as a whole. Having been employed by the NUM for sixty years, at the time of the 1984-5 Miners' Strike, Thompson was attached to the Yorkshire Area NUM based in Barnsley. Thompson gives a very positive account of Scargill during the 1984-5 Miners' Strike, noting that Scargill was an extremely charming and charismatic and a good public speaker. To quote Thompson's 'had Arthur [Scargill] every met with Margaret Thatcher then they would have got on like a house on fire, he would have charmed the pants off her'.⁶⁷ Thus, Thompson supports the notion that Scargill possessed a strong personality that made him easy to gain supporters, with Thompson arguing that Scargill could even have charmed Margaret Thatcher who was Prime Minister of the United Kingdom at the time and can be considered the enemy of Scargill.

Thompson further comments on whether Scargill would have used his influence and support amongst the striking miners to push for revolutionary objectives. Thompson accounts that Scargill would 'never have authorised the use of political violence or any kind of violence during the strike, the key thing for the strike was the protection of jobs for the miners and a future for mining communities'.⁶⁸ The account given by Thompson on whether it is possible to call the 1984-5 Miners' Strike a revolutionary situation is that it appears that there was never any intention for a push for revolutionary objectives. Therefore, it is possible to argue so that despite the evidence suggesting that Scargill commanded respect and reverence amongst the striking miners, he would never have used this influence to push for revolutionary objectives. Thus so far, it would possible to suggest along the lines of the actor-orientated theory presented by Johnson, that it may be possible to view the influence Scargill had and the strong personality he possessed, as the perfect conditions to recruit potential revolutionaries. However, despite this, there was no impetus from Scargill to ever

64 Gitsham, N, Childrens Poetry, *More Valuable than Gold*, p 13

65 This thesis will not mention any debates on how much influence parents have on their families

66 So close is this friendship that Arthur Scargill paid for Phillip Thompson's eye surgery

67 Thompson, P. (2012) *Phillip Thompson's views on Arthur Scargill and the 1984-5 Miners' Strike*. Interviews by Jonathan Turton [in person] NUM Headquarters, Barnsley, 26/4/2012

68 Ibid

push for revolutionary objectives, blunting the effects of the strike as a potential revolutionary situation.

Further evidence is needed on whether Scargill could actually be considered a revolutionary. Looking at the account given by Ian MacGregor, who as head of the NCB during the 1984-5 Miners' Strike is arguably the anti-thesis of Arthur Scargill in that he was on the side of the Government during the strike and was pushing for the pit closures wanted by the Government but rejected by Scargill.

Ian MacGregor argues that Scargill consistently antagonised the Government over the mining issue and was a supporter of revolutionary tactics that derived from Scargill's belief in Marxist theory. Within his work *The Enemies Within: The Story of the Miners' Strike, 1984-5*, MacGregor states that before he took up his role as head of the NCB on the 1st September 1983, Scargill had already decided 'to have his strike'.⁶⁹ The confidence Scargill had for the success of the Strike derived from his three main core beliefs, 'in Marxism, in the might of the NUM [and] in revolution in the streets'.⁷⁰ However, these beliefs were 'out of date' according to MacGregor. Thus, MacGregor portrays Scargill as representing the left wing ideology of Marxism within the NUM and was therefore turning the Strike into a ideological battle between left and the right. When considering MacGregor's account it is important to remember that MacGregor and Scargill can be considered enemies. It is possible that MacGregor would try and discredit Scargill in later years, and with his work being published in 1986, it was published immediately after the 1984-5 Miners' Strike, and so tensions would have remained high between MacGregor and Scargill. However, MacGregor's account contributes to information on Scargill's personality, and helps in the research for this thesis as it gives testament whether Scargill would be willing to push revolutionary ideology on his supporters.

The account Ned Smith gives as Director-General of Industrial Relations is useful. Ned Smith highlights that the belief that Scargill and the left wing of the NUM engineered the strike is 'quite wrong'.⁷¹ Ned Smith believes that the miners were inherently conservative by nature and would not have challenged the NCB through a national strike. Smith in his belief that had a national ballot been held, then individual miners would have exercised prudence and a continued mode of acquiescence, resulting in no action.⁷² However, it was only due to the situation the miners were put in due to the closure of Cortonwood Colliery that bought the Yorkshire miners out on strike meant that the 'volcano did not erupt, the lava spilled out of the crater and continued to flow'.⁷³ Ned Smith is therefore raising the notion that the striking miners did not want revolutionary action, this is demonstrated by the way there was no great explosion of activity and instead compares what happened with lava calmly escaping rather than erupting. What can be inferred from this is that as the leadership of the NUM, which I believe is personified in Arthur Scargill, did not push for revolutionary objectives, if they had, the striking miners would have showed it.

To finish this chapter, it is possible to look at what Arthur Scargill thought about whether the 1984-5 Miners' Strike was a revolutionary situation. Looking at Scargill's speech at the NUM'S Extraordinary Conference in 1984. Within his speech Scargill declared

'This extraordinary Annual Conferences takes place during the eighteenth week of the most bitter dispute seen in the mining industry since 1926...a strike sparked off by the Coal Board's announcement on March 6th that it intended to close twenty pits and destroy twenty-thousand jobs

69 MacGregor, I, Tyler, R. *The Enemies Within: The Story of the Miners' Strike, 1984-5*. 1986, p.116

70 Ibid. p.117

71 Smith, N, p.185

72 Ibid. p.195

73 Ibid. p.196

over the coming year alone, ... Delegates will not need reminding that our Union has pledged itself to fight against pit closures and reductions in manpower levels, while at the same time demanding decent wages and conditions for British miners'.⁷⁴

Scargill talks about the 1984-5 Miners' Strike as an industrial dispute; he makes no threats against the state and does not call striking miners to use violence. For the debate on whether the 1984-5 Miners' Strike can be called a revolutionary situation the fact that Scargill sees the strike more so as an industrial dispute means that it is not impossible to argue that his supporters would be inclined to also see it as an industrial dispute. Had Scargill seen the strike as a political conflict and directly threatened the Government and the state apparatus then he would have made measures for his supporters to also think the same. Scargill does not make any claims along political ideology and states that the strike is in defence of jobs and not advocating a Marxist revolution across the country as Ian MacGregor believed.

As part of my research I was allowed access to the local and national NUM minutes held at the NUM headquarters in Barnsley. There appears to be no notions in support for violence and no mention of advancing any revolutionary objectives. However, it is not surprising due to the minutes being deliberately edited for legal reasons. They do however show a willingness to negotiate with the Government and the NCB. An example of one of the many that can be found in the national minutes concerns 'Proposals for Tripartite Discussions'. In these tripartite discussions the NUM along with the NCB and the Government would amongst other proposals 'seek to establish the common ground between the Board and the Unions, to provide a basis for an approach to Government for a Tripartite meeting'.⁷⁵ This demonstrates that the NUM was willing to negotiate with the Government and therefore showing the moderation at the leadership level NUM who would have been present at negotiations. The willingness to negotiate demonstrates that the NUM wished to achieve their objectives through peaceful means, and therefore did not want to push for a forcible transfer of power or other revolutionary acts.

It can be concluded by this analysis of the role of Arthur Scargill that so far the 1984-5 Miners' Strike did not appear to be a revolutionary situation. Using theory by Charles Tilly, there appeared to be no impetus from above for a forcible transfer of power that would have resulted in a revolution. If there was no impetus for such an action then surely there is no revolutionary situation to speak of, instead the 1984-5 Miners' Strike was wholly an industrial dispute. It could be claimed that the reverence commanded by Arthur Scargill could be utilised to create revolutionaries if we Johnson's actor-orientated theory on revolutionaries. Scargill's strong personality and presence could have meant that revolutionaries could have been recruited. However, as Scargill makes clear himself in his speech, the 1984-5 Miners' Strike is an industrial dispute, and so Scargill refuses to use any revolutionary rhetoric to spur support to oppose the Government and state. Although, Tilly's theory on revolutionary situations emphasises the need to 'perceive' revolutionary threats, so it is entirely possible that despite the leadership of the strikers not wanting a revolution, if the Government chooses to interpret things differently then it is still possible to argue that the 1984-5 Miners' Strike was a revolutionary situation.

Chapter 2: The Government

This chapter will assess whether it can be argued that the Government perceived the striking miners as a revolutionary threat. I have been unable to retrieve evidence from Government sources including Cabinet Minutes and instructions to the army, as the files needed have not yet been released to the general public. Instead, I have collected various sources relating to the actions by

74 NUM, 1984. *NUM Extraordinary Conference Sheffield England 1984*, available at: <http://www.num.org.uk/page/History-HistoricSpeeches/id/30>, accessed [30/5/2012]

75 NUM National Minutes from 16/4/1984, NUM Headquarters, Barnsley

local authorities such as the police that attempted to control the striking miners on the picket lines. The brutality shown by the police as well as the methods utilised to counter the pickets means it is possible to infer from these actions how the Government perceived the 1984-5 Miners' Strike and the striking miners.

The majority of the sources gathered as evidence of how the Government perceived the striking miners has been collected from the People's History Museum in Manchester. From the archives found at the museum, I have utilised greatly the notes that formed Martin Walker's work *State of Siege: Policing the Coalfield in the First Six Weeks of the Miners' Strike* and *A State of Siege: Politics and Policing of the coalfields: the miners' strike* that gives an account of local communities and their relations with the police throughout the Strike. Martin Walker worked as a consultant for the NUM throughout the Strike and advised on how to cope with the police as well as informed NUM members of what their rights were and what powers the police had. A result of this is that the notes left in the archive by Walker consisted of interviews with striking miners who have had experience with the police and give first hand accounts of their experiences.

To begin, I examined what Walker established were the legal powers of the police. A pamphlet created by Walker for the Hardware Society Conference, the aim of the pamphlet was to inform people of what the legal boundaries of the police were as well as how you should react if the police overstepped their powers.⁷⁶ According to Walker, the police powers and strikers rights when addressing the police were,

1. *The Right to silence.* The general rule is that you do not have to answer any questions from the police at any time. The exception is that you are sometimes obliged to give your name and address to the police.

2. *When you must give your name and address-* You are driving a vehicle or riding a bike- you are suspected of having illegal drugs- you are suspected of creating a disturbance at a public meeting- you are suspected of having an offensive weapon- you fail to produce your train ticket or pay your fare- you are in breach of Royal Park Regulations- You are suspected of having a firearm without certificate...

3. *When you can be searched.* The police have no power to search you *before* arrest *unless* they suspect you of having -illegal drugs-firearms-documents relating to terrorism- stolen goods (in London and some other cities)

4. *Search of Premises.* *The Police can only lawfully enter premises (including tents and caravans of* – they suspect someone is there whom they have the right to arrest with or without a warrant...[or] they are invited in by someone whom they believe is entitled to give them permission- they can produce a search warrant

5. *The police should give a reason for arresting you*

6. *At the police station after arrest, The Police Should:* caution you that anything you say may be put down in writing and used in evidence against you- Tell you as soon as possible what offences you are charged with- allow you to contact by phone your family, a friend or a solicitor. The police can only refuse if they think it will "hinder their enquiries"... Allow you to talk to your solicitor out of their hearing- Provide food and drink for you... Give you bail (I.e release you) or take you to a Magistrates Courts for them to consider bail within Twenty-four hours (Forty-eight hours at weekends)

7. *Until you have taken advice from a solicitor you should:-* refuse to give your fingerprints. Unless you consent, the police can only take your fingerprints if they have a court order- refuse to

76 Walker, M, Haldare Society Conference, *Police Powers*, July 1984, MS84/MW/7/1 NUM/, People's History Museum, Manchester

take part in an identity parade. You cannot be forced to take part- refuse to be photographed. The police may photograph you anyway but they have no right to use force- Not speak to the police or make a written statement about the picket. If you do there is a risk that what you say or write will be altered or distorted. You have a right to silence and you cannot be forced to answer questions. The police may try to persuade you to admit offences by promising to give you bail or let you off with a caution or a lesser charge. Do not trust them. They are not allowed to bargain with you and they will frequently deny that they did so once they have got what they wanted from you'.⁷⁷

Martin Walker therefore gives an explanation of what rights striking miners had when confronted by the police or arrested by the police as well as the powers and legal necessities the police had to comply with. It is now possible to compare the police powers with the witness testimonies collected by Walker and examine whether the police behaved as they were supposed to by law or whether they can be considered to be aggressive. If it is judged that the police behaved aggressively towards the strikers and did not act within their legal limits then it can be considered that the Government were behaving as if they were curtailing a revolutionaries.

Evidence that the police over stepped these powers is shown by personal accounts of individuals experience with the police. The experience of an S. Crawford demonstrates the actions of the police and how they overstepped their own legal authority as had been demonstrated by Martin Walker.

"13th May 1984 Ollertan Colliery

The Policemen stood round us started pushing us around. They were trying to move the pickets across the road. The Pickets at the back surged forward and I was thrown into a Police Constable. A Chief Inspector that was stood behind this Policeman reached through the Police ranks and grabbing hold of me said "I'm arresting you, you're under arrest"... The Policeman never read me my rights... a Policeman asked me to sit on a seat. The arresting Officer sat next to me and a photograph was taken...When we arrived [at the police station] ... they started to process us at about 3.30. 3.45 they came for me and took me into a room and processed me... Two men interviewed me and asked me what I was lifted for...I was then taken outside into the corridor and charged with obstructing a Police Officer in the course of his duty. At 8.30 the Solicitor saw us collectively. We briefly filled him in on what happened. He left at 9.00 p.m. When we were in Court I was given conditional bail. I have no idea what conditions of bail I am on. S.Crawford".⁷⁸

It would appear that according to Martin Walker the police overstepped their powers as they did not give a reason as to why they were arresting the interviewee, there is no mention of the interviewee receiving any food or water during his internment at the police station, but he did appear in Court where he was given bail, however the fact he had no idea of the conditions of his bail potentially highlights an unwillingness by the police to co-operate fully with the strikers and not telling the interviewee the conditions of his bail may have been so that they could arrest him again in the future. However, this account alone does not show entirely that the Government sanctioned aggressive actions by the police and therefore showing that the Government were acting as if the striking miners were a revolutionary threat.

Evidence that the police were allowed to use any means necessary to control the striking miners can be seen by incidents of phone hacking throughout the Strike. Martin Walker investigated incidents of phone hacking throughout the Strike and again collected witness statements as evidence of how

⁷⁷ Ibid

⁷⁸ Crawford, S (1984) Interview by Martin Walker, MS84/MW/2/1, People's History Museum, Manchester

widespread the practice was.

Walker reports that because of the very nature of phone tapping and the state's interest in keeping it secret it would be impossible to know that it was happening or even surmise its extent'. However, 'we are quite sure... that there has been a massive blanket operation involving every strike centre and the personal phones of many union activists'.⁷⁹ Walker then gives an example of how the owner of a bus company in Derbyshire was rung by the police only minutes after speaking to a striker who was organising transport.⁸⁰

The particular method of phone tapping that was employed made it possible for the person subject to this method to be aware that this was occurring. Martin Walker reports that in order to tap phones the police engineers first have to cut them off for a short period. Giving the example that at one strike centre an organiser related to him the conversation which he had with the Post Office Engineering Union (POEU).⁸¹

"When we first came into the building the phones were cut off then they were connected again. We had a visit from our friend in British Telecom, he told us that they had put a tap on our phone and that though he could remove it there was no point because they would only put it on again. He told us to guess at the code words and then use them as much as possible in a random way."⁸²

Martin Walker believed that the practice of phone tapping was so recurring that the police became notoriously quick and were capable of easily knowing those supporting the striking miners. Martin Walker gives an example of a Nottinghamshire worker who gave Walker this statement.

'I am a member of the Yorkshire NUM but I work for a private contractor...I went to one of the pits in Nottinghamshire with my wife to give support to the pickets... When I arrived the forty or so pickets were completely encircled by a double row of police, there were about 120 police. I was allowed through...I was asked by a picket leader to make a phone call to the strike centre telling them that the police would not let them disperse. I invited the picket leader back to my home to make the call. An inspector allowed us to leave...When we got home about twenty minutes later I showed the picket leader where the phone was, he tried to use it but it had been cut off'.⁸³

This led Martin Walker to conclude, 'anyone involved in the miners strike should take it for granted that their homes are being tapped. They can also expect the police to copy any information they have in their possession when they are arrested. They will be photographed at every opportunity and possibly their mail will be intercepted. The growth in the activities of the Special Branch and other 'internal security' organisations is an integral part of this governments policy of criminalising large numbers of working people. Intelligence is the key to control and containment'.⁸⁴

79 Walker, M, *Phone Hacking*, MS84/MW/4/8, People's History Museum, Manchester

80 Ibid.

81 Ibid.

82 Ibid.

83 Ibid.

84 Ibid.

The widespread use of phone tapping suggests that the Government wanted to control the actions of the strikers. Through phone tapping it would be possible to know the plans of the strikers and so could counter these plans with an increased police presence in areas or marking an individual for arrest as soon as they were identified. Similarly, the police could keep track on who was affiliated with the NUM and supported the Strike. From Martin Walker's notes, it is possible to argue that the Government viewed the striking miners as a viable threat to the state, this is shown by the lengths in which the police went to in order to control the strikers. Therefore, from examining the evidence presented by Martin Walker it is possible to say that the 1984-5 Miners' Strike was a revolutionary situation as it appeared that the Government perceived it to be so, if they had not then they would not have reacted as strongly as they did.

Further evidence on the lengths the Government went in controlling the strikers by newspaper articles as well as comments made by then member of parliament Tony Benn on the issue of the Government using the army instead of the police against the strikers. Whilst initially thought of as a rumour, it was eventually reported by *The Guardian* in the article 'Military in Pc's uniform' printed 7th May 1984 the article reports the Miners' union General Secretary Peter Heathfield asking for a full inquiry into the deployment of soldiers and RAF police on picket lines. It is reported

'A young Yorkshire miner has seen his brother, a soldier thought to on active service in Northern Ireland, in police uniform outside Harworth in North Nottinghamshire... According to the report the miner approached his brother, whose response had been. 'I have a bloody job to do.' He (Heathfield) claims that soldiers were bolstering the police lines was proved, then it would another example of Britain heading towards a fascist state'.⁸⁵

Tony Benn's account of this is found in his published diaries. Within his diary Tony Benn writes,

'Keith Harris, a miner, drove me to Nottingham... told me that one miner had go to Felixtowe port in Suffolk to join the picket ... and in the line of policemen he had seen his own son, who is in the Welsh Guards. I have heard so many stories of this kind that I am persuaded that this is what is happening because there just are not that many police available to move about. The authorities must be using the army'.⁸⁶

The rumour that the military were being used in areas instead of the police appears to have been widespread. So widespread that Tony Benn made a note of it in his diaries during the Miners' Strike. The fact that the Government were apparently willing to use the military as substitutes for the police demonstrates the lengths the Government was willing to go in order to control the striking miners.

It can be argued that these particular incidents undertaken by the Government confirms that the Government perceived the strikers to be a viable threat to the state and therefore fulfils a criteria for a revolutionary situation as explained by Charles Tilly. Also, the willingness for the Government to show that it was strong enough to repel such a threat further demonstrates how the Government saw the 1984-5 Miners' Strike as a revolutionary situation as there appeared to be a willingness by the rulers to suppress this perceived coalitions commitment to its revolutionary claims. If there was a

85 1984. Military in Pc's Uniform, *The Guardian*, 7 May

86 Benn, T, *The End of an Era: Diaries 1980-90*, Hutchison, 1992, p.346

willingness to use excessive actions to control the striking miners then it would be possible to trigger a revolutionary response by the striking miners. An examination at the local level of the tactics employed by the strikers throughout the Strike will show whether it is indeed possible to potentially describe revolutionaries who are only acting in a revolutionary way as they are reacting to abnormal events as stated by Johnson in 'structural theory.

Chapter 3: Local level

This chapter will establish what the tactics employed by the strikers were during the 1984-5 Miners' Strike as well as examine whether indeed the attitudes towards the strike by the national leaders of the NUM were emulated by strikers at the local level. The evidence used for this chapter is compiled from newspapers from the time as well as witness statements. What this chapter aims to do is to essentially illustrate any sentiments that can be inferred from the evidence given in this chapter of any attitudes that would suggest a support for revolution. The Communist Party has not been focused on in this chapter as it was when discussing the 1926 General Strike. At this time the Communist Party was in a state of collapse, instead the newspaper *Militant* is looked at as a role of being a radical influence at local level.

To begin, I shall examine the tactics predominantly used by the strikers what will follow is a description of what a 'picket' is allowed to do and how it should be organised. A picket is when groups of strikers attempt to persuade workers who are not on strike to come out on strike, or in the case of the Strike, attempts were made to stop any workers entering places of work and stop the shipments of coal throughout the country.

The tactics employed in a picket are shown in the leaflet of the NALGO (National And Local Government Officers Association) *Guide to Picketing in an Industrial Dispute*. Whilst I was unable to acquire any official instructions from the NUM on how their pickets should be organised, the NALGO union went on strike in support of the NUM and joined their picket lines. Thus, examining how NALGO pickets were organised it is possible to understand how picket lines were used by the NUM during the 1984-5 Miners' Strike. The aim of the leaflet was to ensure every striker who wished to picket was fully prepared as to what to expect as well as how to organise themselves in a picket. The leaflet begins by quoting the *Employment Act 1980 Section 18* that explains that it is lawful that a person who wishes to further or is considering a trade dispute to attend only near their own place of work or when only an official of a trade union, are they allowed to accompany someone who is. Importantly however, it is for 'the purpose only of peacefully obtaining or communication information, or peacefully persuading any person to work or abstain from working'.⁸⁷ Therefore highlighting the peaceful nature of pickets and the legality of picketing at the time. The guide continues with how a picket should be organised

'Picket Rota – Must include all members on strike, but try to ensure that each picket contains branch officers and/or experienced activists.

Picket Registrar – To keep a record of attendance on picket duty

Picket Duty – To begin not less than ½ hour before normal office hours and split into shifts eg a.m and p.m

Identification – Pickets should wear a badge or arm band indicating that they are on duty.

87 NALGO *Guide to Picketing in an Industrial Dispute*

Placards and posters should be displayed stating OFFICIAL PICKET.

Police – The police must be advised of where picketing is to take place and as a general rule should be consulted as early as possible in order to avoid misunderstanding later. The establishment of good relations with the police is important in the event of problems arising on picket lines.⁸⁸

The Guide then clearly states the non-violent methods that must be used when confronting workers approaching the picket line. This is seen with

'Approach all persons and vehicles who appear to wish to enter the premises. State that you wish to speak with them. Ask if they are members of a trade union. Explain you are on official strike. Ask them to not to cross the picket line. Explain why you are on strike. If they agree not to cross the picket line, be polite and thank them. If they attempt to cross the picket line, restate your case'.⁸⁹

By examining the *NALGO Guide to Picketing in an Industrial Dispute* it is clear what a picket consists of and what is expected of picketers. The picket is essentially a form of non-violent protest and is used as a way of persuading dissenting members or individuals against a trade union responsible for picketing from going to their place of work. However, it is widely reported throughout the Strike that pickets became violent. Looking at newspaper articles it is possible argue whether violence was used by picketers only when pushed by the police into a situation where there was no other choice. If this is the case it is possible to use the structural theory illustrated by Johnson in explaining whether picketers were action as revolutionaries.

The effectiveness and controversy of pickets can be seen by examining various newspaper sources that write about picketing activity. Looking at articles by *Manchester Evening News*, at the time 'Britain's biggest regional newspaper', it is possible to see the effectiveness of picketing as well as moderation shown. The article reports

'Flying Pickets from 'strike solid' Yorkshire notched up another success today. And within minutes of closing a second pit in traditionally moderate Nottinghamshire, they had moved on. Their apparent plan was systematically to sweep through the coalfield closing all pits in their path. Hundreds more Yorkshire miners were reported to be on standby for picket duty in other areas...Fists flew in an ugly confrontation last night when about two hundred and fifty pickets forced the closure of Hanworth Colliery...Police were unable to clear a way for miners arriving for work and eventually a local NUM official told his men not to try to cross the picket line'.⁹⁰

From this article it is possible to see the effectiveness of pickets in that they were able to force the closure of individual collieries that were defying the strike. It is reported of aggression by the pickets but it is not clear whether the pickets were forced into this aggression or not but it can be implied that they were as it is reported that the police attempted to clear a way for miners who wanted to work.

It is possible to see that violence was more likely to be seen by the police than by the pickets at a picket line by examining the *Sheffield Policewatch*. It remains unclear from my research when the

88 Ibid

89 Ibid

90 1984, Picket Pose Sweeps on, *The Manchester Evening News*, 13 April 1984

Sheffield Policewatch was established during the Strike, but the aim of it was to give reports of actions by the police in the local area against striking miners and to record any incidents of police brutality. Report number four is important as evidence of police brutality against picketers as it covers the event prior to what was to be called the 'Battle of Orgreave'. The Battle of Orgreave occurred on 18th June 1984 when picketers attempted to stop work at the Orgreave Coking Plant, this resulted in the police attacking en masse against the picketers that resulted a great number of injuries for the picketers as well as the police.

Leading up to the Battle of Orgreave it is clear that the police in the area were openly aggressive towards the pickets. The incidents on the 29th May 1984 are reported by the *Sheffield Policewatch* and can be seen here,

'At 7.35 am, entirely without provocation... a force of mounted police rode into the crowd and moved them with the help of dogs. At 7.40 am mounted officers rode through pickets in an attempt to move them; they failed, but did succeed in raising tension and ill feeling among the pickets. A line of mounted police was placed in a field...These mounted police trotted at speed ... into the crowd...for no apparent reason. Panic ensued...Nobody moved very far away: when the police turned their horses around to go back...their was a lot of jostling, shouting and pieces of broken fence flying through the air. Tension was greatly increased; there seemed to be a feeling among pickets that a violent confrontation was inevitable because of this unprovoked demonstration of force by the police.⁹¹

I would now like to link an article from the *Daily Express* that shows evidence of violent tactics being used by picketers during the Strike. The front page of the *Daily Express* on 11 April 1984 shows a person holding pieces of wood with nails attached to it and nails welded together to form a chain of nails. The article is headed 'Peaceful Picketing?' and suggests that the weapons are for use against police horses. It is written, 'the nail clusters were found yesterday at Silverdale colliery, Staffordshire, where mounted police were called in during scuffles on the picket line'.⁹²

It would therefore appear that the picketers were only forced to use violence when they were confronted with aggression by the police. Evidence presented by the *Daily Express* lends weight to arguments that picketers would come prepared to use violence and therefore had previously planned to use violence anyway against the police. However, as the weapons found were meant to be used against mounted police, those who made the instruments would have had to have first experienced what it was like when put against mounted police officers. It is therefore possible to argue that when considering structural theory, it is possible to say that the 1984-5 Miners' Strike was a revolutionary situation. The reason for this is that the picketers had to react to abnormal situations, with the abnormal situation being the aggression shown by the police.

Finally, it is necessary to look at accounts shared by individuals of their experiences from the 1984-5 Miners' Strike. The aim of looking at the accounts of these individuals is to see whether the it was believed that the 1984-5 Miners' Strike was indeed only an industrial dispute as it was believed by Arthur Scargill. The following accounts show the striking miners put emphasis on their families and believing they were protecting their future as the reason why they were on strike. Through my research, I have found it difficult to find any accounts of striking miners believing they were on

91 *Sheffield Policewatch*, 29 May, 1984

92 1984, Peaceful Pickets, *Daily Express*, 11 April

strike in order to gain political objectives. Instead it appears that the majority just wanted to protect their jobs and their communities.

The account given by Phillip Thompson can be used to highlight how striking miners emphasised how they wished to protect their own families and were at pains to put them through hardship. Thompson spoke emotionally about his own role in the organising of the children's Christmas party in Barnsley, and organising the presents that had been sent to the children from trade unions from all over the world but mainly from France and Cuba. Thompson tells of grown men crying at the sight of their children with presents at Christmas after they had long feared they would not be able to afford them due to being on strike. He also tells of the fact that local Conservative Councillors in Barnsley not allowing the NUM to use the local town hall as a place to host the children's Christmas Party and so the local church next the NUM headquarters 'opened its doors' to the local children.⁹³ From the discussion with Phillip Thompson it is possible to see that the striking miners were essentially moderate and were not willing to see their children be hurt because of the strike. The fact that the men were brought to tears at the sight of their children with presents illustrates what the strikers really believed was important and therefore displays moderation rather than any revolutionary zeal.

Looking at the *Right to Reply* special editions of *The News of the World* and *The Sun*, it is possible to highlight the role played by families and the general conservative nature of the striking miners who emphasised the 1984-5 Miners' Strike as an industrial dispute. An article by Brenda Arnold who as the wife of a striking miner shows support for the Strike as an industrial dispute. Arnold argues that they need to be 'steadfast' and tells of the how she will keep collecting money in support of the Strike arguing, 'our collecting will go on until the dispute ends, however long it takes, to protect the children from hardships, while their fathers fight for their jobs and their children's futures'.⁹⁴ It is possible to infer from this article alone that there was an emphasis on protecting the children as well as the emphasis in the article in describing the Strike as an industrial dispute shown by Arnold referring to it as 'the dispute'. When analysing this article as an article typical of the *Right to Reply* newspapers it is possible to see that the striking miners were essentially moderate with their approach and did not want to put their families in too much risk. It is also possible to infer the inter-community response to the hardships forced on families as a result of the Strike. It is thus possible to look at the actions undertaken by women such as Brenda Arnold as revolutionary as they are acting against an abnormal situation that is forced on them.

Looking at any influence at the local level that could be considered a radical influence that presented the views of strikers that supported revolutionary action is arguably shown in the newspaper *Militant*. Looking at extracts from *Militant* it is possible to argue that there remained a radical influence throughout the Strike.

Militant called for striking miners to take more direct action due to what *Militant* perceived as the failure of the trade union system and most notably the failure of the TUC in supporting the striking miners. This can be seen in an article in the edition printed the 4th April 1984 in which it can be quoted, 'Most miners today have already realized that the majority of the present TUC general council are no better than the leaders of 1926. Their policy of 'new realism' has meant little more

93 Thompson, P. (2012) *Phillip Thompson's views on Arthur Scargill and the 1984-5 Miners' Strike*. Interviews by Jonathan Turton [in person] NUM Headquarters, Barnsley, 26/4/2012

94 Arnold B, 1984. I had to help the innocents, *Right to Reply*, September 1984

than abject surrender'.⁹⁵ Instead, striking miners were encouraged to focus on putting pressure on leadership at the top.

It would appear that the support for *Militant* was widespread. The newspaper boasted that the success of its 'Fighting Fund' was critical for the success of the paper, and further boasted large quantities of financial support. This is shown by the success in an appeal for 'thirty-five thousand pounds' to add to the sum of 'one-hundred and forty thousand pounds' already raided. Apparently, due to these efforts by *Militant* supporters and readers it became possible to buy large premises in Hackney Wick and gather together all the operations involved in the production of *Militant* in one building. Previously they had been scattered over three buildings. However, as I have failed to find mass evidence of striking miners openly discussing following the advice given in *Militant* and support greater direct action it is difficult to say whether the *Militant* inspired striking miners to use direct action.

Conclusion

To conclude on whether it is possible to view the 1984-5 Miners' Strike as a revolutionary situation it is possible to argue on the one hand that it is. When considering actor-orientated theory to describe how people would be attracted to revolutionary movements then the force of personality shown by Arthur Scargill is clear and is shown by the support he generated as well as the reverence he appeared to command in his supporters. This is shown by the creation of popular chants and songs concerning Scargill as well as the amount of standing ovations he received. The support for Scargill from the striking miners is however crystallised in the poem by Neil Gisham in which he calls Scargill the 'God of the Pickets'. The support for the Strike from the child's family would have influenced him and so demonstrates how the child was potentially taught to revere Scargill. Had Scargill advocated tactics that can be considered revolutionary then it is possible that he would have commanded sizeable support in which to challenge the Government. However, the fact that Scargill himself believed the 1984-5 Miners' Strike to be essentially an industrial dispute, as shown by his 1984 speech, it is not possible to argue there was an actual threat to the Government in terms of forcible transfers of power. Therefore, it can be argued that the 1984-5 Miners' Strike was not a revolutionary situation.

The fact that the Government reacted to the 1984-5 Miners' Strike shows that the Government perceived the striking miners as a threat to themselves. The extensive use of police brutality showed in the individual witness statements in which the police exceeded their legal powers is an indicator of how much the Government viewed the strikers as a threat. The use of phone hacking demonstrates the length in which the Government was willing to go in order to control the strike and to curtail striker's movements. The widespread rumour of the use of the army further demonstrates the lengths the Government were willing to go to counter the strikers. Along the lines of Charles Tilly's definition of a revolutionary situation, it is therefore possible to argue that because the Government perceived there to be a revolutionary threat and behaved as if they were facing a revolutionary threat then it is possible to call the 1984-5 Miners' Strike a revolutionary situation.

Finally, looking at events at the local level, it is difficult to argue that the 1984-5 Miners' Strike

95 Socialist Initiative, 2012, *The Miners' Strike 1984-5*, [online] Available at [Accessed at 30/5/2012] <http://www.socialistalternative.org/literature/militant/ch25.html>

constituted a revolutionary situation. The use of pickets demonstrates how there was an emphasis on non-violent action, although it was possible for pickets to turn violent and the demonstration that some picketers came prepared with weapons, it is difficult to call the Strike a revolutionary situation considering the evidence that the emphasis was on believing the Strike was essentially an industrial dispute. The reason for strikers to believe it was an industrial dispute is because the leadership at the top saw it as an industrial dispute, but also because there appeared to be a belief amongst strikers that the reason for the strike was to protect the future of their families.

In summary, I personally find it difficult to see the 1984-5 Miners' Strike as an revolutionary situation. The fact that there was no support for any forcible transfers of power at the leadership meant that local strikers did not have sufficient support for any revolutionary actions and therefore resulted in there being a general lack of political violence throughout the Strike. The only viable reason as to why the 1984-5 Miners' Strike can be called revolutionary situation is because the Government appeared to view it as one. If the Government had not acted as though it was defending itself against revolutionaries then it would have been very difficult to even contemplate the 1984-5 Miners' Strike was anything but an industrial dispute.

Part 3: Thesis Conclusion

To conclude this thesis, through my research I have found various sources that demonstrate how the 1926 General Strike and the 1984-5 Miners' Strike could have been considered revolutionary situations. When examining these sources with the definition of revolutionary situations given by Charles Tilly as well as with the recommendations of Bob Jessop on how to separate a reformist movement with a revolutionary movement. It is possible to offer a judgement on the extent to which the 1926 General Strike and the 1984-5 Miners' Strike constituted revolutionary situations.

Looking at the national leaderships of both the 1926 General Strike and the 1984-5 Miners' Strike, it would appear there was an unwillingness by both sets of leaderships to ever believe that the Strikes there were leading would ever amount to anything other than an industrial dispute. The instructions given by the TUC General Council to strikers during the 1926 General Strike highlight how there was never going to be a challenge to the Government by the TUC General Strike, or at least not whilst the particular leaders of the General Council were still leading. Instead of revolutionary methods in which to achieve their objectives, the TUC General Council instead favoured negotiations. The result of which was to see humiliating defeats for individual trade union such as the NURW. For the 1984-5 Miners' Strike, Arthur Scargill despite being accused of being a Marxist revolutionary showed that he was quite the opposite. Never encouraging revolutionary tactics, he did not take advantage of the reverence and respect he appeared to command in order to challenge the Government. However, this reverence that Scargill did receive does show to an extent that the 1984-5 Miners' Strike could have become a revolutionary situation has Scargill pushed for revolutionary tactics. Actor-orientated theory explains why strikers supported Scargill so diligently. His charm and personality was also made reference to by witnesses such as Philip Thompson.

The actions of the Government makes it easier argue that indeed both the 1926 General Strike and the 1984-5 Miners' Strike constituted revolutionary situations. The Government arguably perceived both sets of Strikes as revolutionary situations and reacted accordingly. The strong response by the Government during the 1926 General Strike was most notably shown by the presence of the military being used against strikers. The military was an intimidating force and achieved two purposes of to first protect whatever it was that the Government wanted protecting against the strikers. Secondly and notably in the military report given, the propaganda unit that was attached to the military was there to record the actions of the military and then to spread news of the effectiveness of the military throughout the population. This would have resulted in a reduced risk from strikers to attack the military directly, as well as intimidate strikers from any new strikes in the future. Throughout the 1984-5 Miners' Strike the Government utilised the police and all activities attributed to it to intimidate as well as to spy on strikers in order to counter the moves made by the strikers. The Battle of Orgreave demonstrates how the Police antagonised pickets into behaving aggressively and would lead to anger amongst the pickets. Utilising structural theory it is possible to explain that the strikers and those on the pickets were behaving revolutionary because they were reacting to situations they would never normally encounter.

Finally, for both the 1926 General Strike and the 1984-5 Miners' Strike it would appear that for the striker at the local level both strikes did not constitute a revolutionary situation. Local strikers during the 1926 General Strike failed to react to the apparent influence from radical elements. The failure of local Communist branches to inspire revolutionary objectives in local strikers demonstrates how disinterested the local strikers were in making the 1926 General Strike a revolutionary movement. The most noticeable event that arguably shows any support for

revolutionary tactics and the political violence that comes with them was The Cramlington Incident and even that fails to show that the saboteurs were revolutionary zealous. Throughout the 1984-5 Miners' Strike it would appear that there was greater emphasis on the protection of the strikers families, cementing the belief that like their national leader, they too saw the Strike as an industrial dispute and refused to be drawn into actions that would hurt their families. Aggression at picket lines could be argued constituted revolutionary violence, as it would appear there was only aggression when pickets were provoked by the police and so reacted to this abnormal situation.

In summary, the extent to which you could argue that the 1926 General Strike and the 1984-5 Miners' Strike constituted revolutionary situations depends on firstly how you define a revolutionary situation as well as noting which point of view you wish to emphasise. The clearest argument on whether both strikes constituted revolutionary situations is if you take the viewpoint of the Government. Groups of organised strikers would be intimidating for the Government and in their bid to keep power they would have utilised the power of the state in order to counter any moves by strikers. It would also appear that individual strikers were capable of revolutionary tendencies when they are forced to. This is arguably the case for strikers during the 1984-5 Miners' Strike, with their actions at the picket lines coupled with the suffering of their families it meant there was nothing left to do other than be aggressive to Government forces.

It would be interesting to see if this conclusion is applicable to a more general study of revolutionary studies in England. Having taken only two possible examples of potential revolutionary situations in England, further studies could demonstrate that all revolutionary situations in England follow the same lines.

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