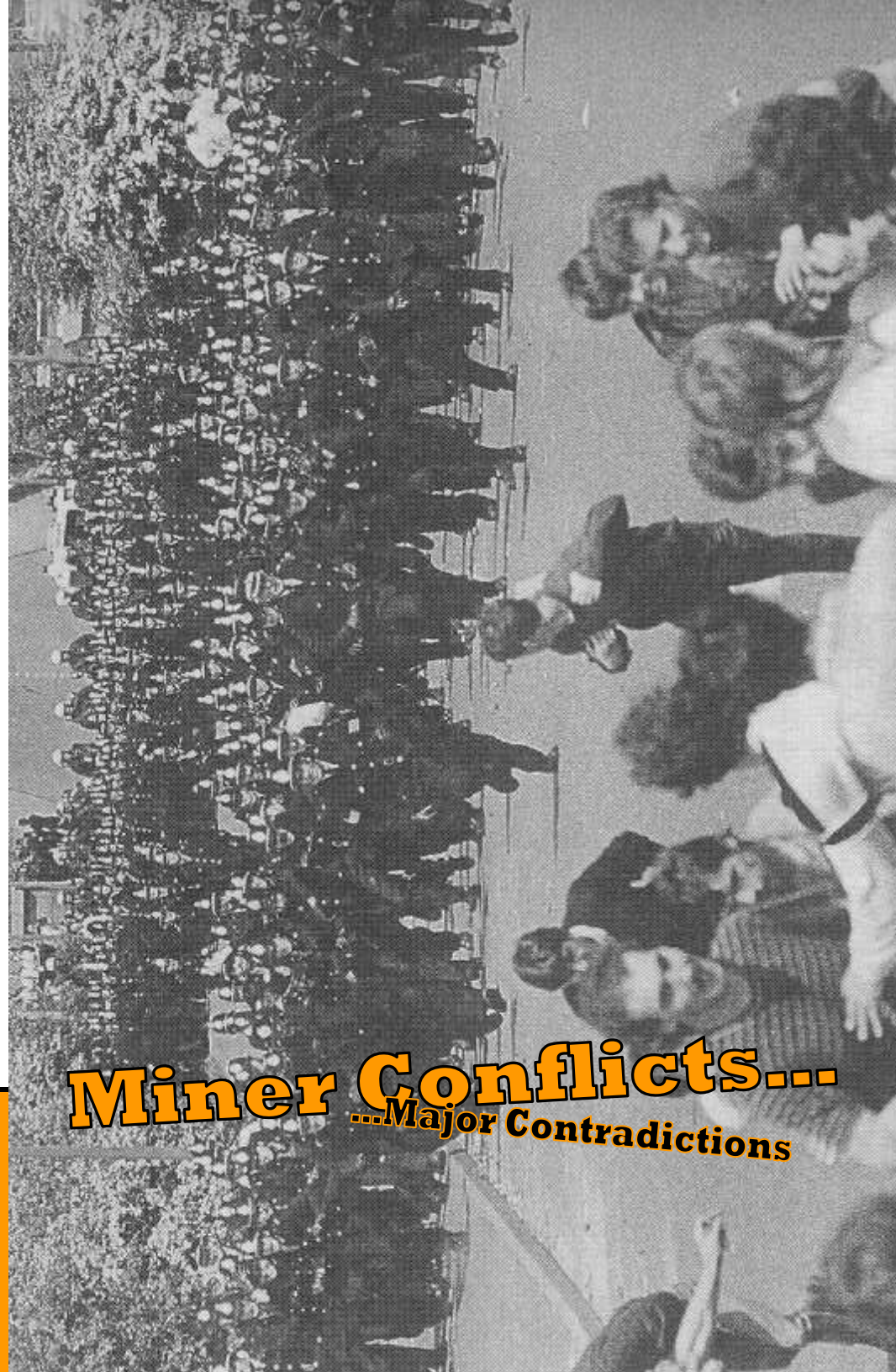


**"MINERS DO IT WITH TELEGRAPH POLES"**  
- bumper sticker

The rulers' greatest fear is coming true: despite all the humiliations the ruling show can think up, the most active section of the striking miners are beginning to prefer life on strike to life at work...

One Thousand Emotions  
PO Box 63333  
St. Louis, MO 63163  
USA

**Miner Conflicts...**  
...Major Contradictions



**First published by BM Combustion, July 1984**  
**Republished by One Thousand Emotions, March 2006**

*This pamphlet does not, as the title might suggest, comprehensively cover the history and context of the 1984-5 British miners' strike. It was first "published 4 months after the start of the miners' strike 1984-5, at the start of July 1984, with the aim of influencing discussions and events. Whether it did so or not - at least in any significant way - is another matter - though it certainly contributed to the subversive atmosphere of that time." We recommend the following texts for further perspectives and context.*

**So Near - So Far** - A recently written chronology and analysis of miners' and others' struggles in Britain from 1926 to the early '90s. Quite lengthy. Includes the excellent personal account by a miner [John Dennis] of a series of incidents in his pit village, which gives some idea of the atmosphere of the mining areas during the mid-60s. It is not the kind of history one is likely to see from those trained to write 'History' with a capital 'H.' It is lived personal history.  
<http://www.endangeredphoenix.com/So%20Near%201.html>

**A Destroyed Miner: Memories of John Dennis** - A remarkable miner from Kiveton Park Colliery, South Yorkshire who kicked the bucket on the 22nd of May, 2002. Originally, this was a pamphlet handed out free in pubs (often stocked behind bars) and gigs mainly in the South Yorks area where there was a great demand for it. This has now been followed by a recent postscript - completed in August 2003 - based on some of JD's final, though often crazed rants which nonetheless are shot through with profound comments.  
<http://www.revoltagainstplenty.com/recent/Local/memoriesof.htm>

**Jenny Dennis Tells Her Tale** - The best account yet of the Yorkshire mining community and of the 1984 strike from a woman at the very centre of this epic struggle. Along with other texts on the 1984 miners' strike, it has been published in a book by L'Insomniac in Paris, Autumn 2004.  
<http://www.revoltagainstplenty.com/recent/Local/jennystale.htm>

**MMMMINERS... AH HUM!** - An account of what is left of the coal mining areas. Cultural and educational recuperation and those who just couldn't adapt. The historical significance of the miners' defeat as springboard for rampant free market totalitarianism.  
<http://www.revoltagainstplenty.com/archive/local/mminers.html>

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for a wage rise, but when marginals riot and also get what amounts to a wage rise, these workerists become purists and put down this expropriation as perpetuating commodity relations. Nevertheless, it's possible that one day survivalism and its "compensations" will be superseded to such an extent that gold bars will end up like the £300 cameras in Wood Green: as ammunition - their only use value. Until then, the theft of gold for reselling merely shocks the dominant class because it mirrors the contradictory irrationalities of the market economy the dominant class is based on. Theft, like hustling, may be necessary but hardly sufficient: such acts assert the self-direction of the masses against the tyrannical misery of the Commodity on one level, yet on another level undermines this practical position by perpetuating its rules, expressing the decomposition of the system and its values without in itself posing an exit. Obviously whilst this world is not opposed by an explicitly intelligent global confrontation, posing practically the supersession of the commodity economy, it would be self-defeating to lob all the gold at our enemies. Until global anger has carried us that far, the necessity of determining our existence will inevitably be riddled with the subtle contradictions of The Market. Until then, theft is necessary: but pumping it up or putting it down are just different ways of pumping oneself up or of putting oneself down, stopping a more profound questioning. Until we truly do go over "the edge of the abyss, beyond which lay anarchy, the breakdown of law and social catastrophe"<sup>18</sup> quite a few more questions are going to have to be posed and answered.

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<sup>18</sup> *The Guardian*, referring to the riots.

human basis. Theft, particularly mass theft, gives you the chance to reinvent the use of a thing beyond the resigned individual's normal submission to the insult of its market value - the use to which the Economy demands the individual sacrifice himself to - for which degrading irrationality all the Property Laws are the tedious justification. Against this complicated normality, the rioters have shown the abnormal simplicity of a creative use of space and time. In Keswick, bikers smashed up the theatre, getting away with some of the costumes. In Manchester we saw something a little better than the ultra-leftists' wet dream of a Free Transport System when rioters stole milk floats and concrete mixers to attack the cops. In Brixton, space invaders machines from 'Space City' were used as barricades against the real space invaders - the cops and the traffic, a neat way of showing how the idiocy of the leisure spectacle can easily be turned against the perpetrators of this idiocy. A whining *Sunday Mirror* hack wrote that whilst standing outside a smashed half-looted clothes shop, a young woman came up to him and said, "May I be of any assistance, sir? I'm sure we can find something your size. And if we can't find anything today, I'm certain we'll have something in stock tomorrow." Here, humour, normally unserious, safely separate, compensatory and evasive, rediscovered its point - sharpened, this time, by life, by reality: here, unlike in *The Young Ones*, *The Comic Strip* or the rest of the Alternative Decomposition crew, the juxtaposition of incongruities was used to directly challenge the irrationality of the present. Not only was nothing prescribed, but the old scripts were spontaneously turned upside down. The parody of politeness, armed by the practical situation of mass subversion, reveals the miserable stupidity of the complicity of individuals with the roles the division of labour demands of them. No wonder the *Sunday Mirror* mercenary moaned about how bizarre it all was: jokes ain't wot they used to be.

Some "revolutionaries" complained that the kids at Finsbury Park looted gold in order to resell it. To them it's an expression of class solidarity when workers go on wildcat strike

*"...The way I look at my TV and video is that if they got burnt I wouldn't lose a moment's sleep... It's when your backs are against the wall and how you react that matters"*

- Keith Boyes, Maltby miner

## **Miner Conflicts... ...Major Contradictions**

*Not at the Margins of What is Collapsing  
Not at the Margins of What is Falling  
But at the Centre of What is Unifying  
At the Centre of What is Rising...*

***All footnotes originally appeared in parentheses in the body of the text. - One Thousand Emotions***

*“It’s a mucky awful job... [but] I’m angry because of the threat... of losing the community,”*

- Kent miner on BBC 2

The dominant image of the lives of striking miners and their communities is one of misery, of sacrifice, of demoralisation: selling ‘precious’ heirlooms, having to return their rented videos, ‘reduced’ to eating in soup kitchens, husbands and wives falling out because of the pressures. Contrary to this contemptuous (and contemptible) misrepresentation, mining communities, and those who identify with the struggle, are actually beginning to discover real life outside and against the commodity-spectacle. Despite all the arrests, the beatings, the killing of two miners by scabs, the media bullshit, the relative poverty, and all the other humiliations, strikers are beginning to discover the joy and dignity of solidarity and struggle. Compared with the new experiences of the most active sectors of the strikers, even a victorious conclusion to the strike, followed by a return to normal work, would be a depressing anti-climax. Compared with the 21 months of demoralisation following the Falklands massacre, the miners’ strike is already a victory, however partial.

## ***Some Victories***

1. The growing confidence of increasing numbers of wage slaves to push for their own demands, however reformist.
2. The increasing sense of solidarity. Three examples: (a) The development of ‘international blacking,’ in particular, the blacking of imports and exports of coal from and to the UK by dockers and seamen in Australia and New Zealand. (b) When four men, three of them miners, were arrested at Grays Inn Rd. on the miners’ demo on June 7, a third of the demonstration - about four thousand or more, including a large brass band - stopped and refused to budge until they

the “Thank you” and “Please” (and the occasional smile) lurk petty-minded shriveled little tyrants, who think they’re free because they’re ‘their own boss,’ content with their island of illusory dictatorship, where power is reduced to short-changing. Regardless of their longing for some fantasised former simplicity and local autonomy, regardless of the fact that, like Covent Gardens’ “Alternative Bookshop,” they might call themselves anarchists and certainly moan about central government, almost invariably they call the cops. Such dreary respect for the graveyard of the present was smashed with every stone thrown. Until the proletariat seizes and transforms the economy, pillage will always be the minimum expression of life.

*Gdansk, Poland, December 1970: Workers looting a state-owned store*



Looting implies mass communal *direct* power, unmediated by buying and selling, by cops and specialists: it is the necessary ‘chaos’ through which we must pass in order to organise the distribution of things on a rational and playful

such as teachers, parents, shopkeepers, local businessmen, publicans, etc., made the job of the cops a fuck of a lot easier: one way or another people were always 'known' to each other. But increasing anonymity has meant that the local shop could be done in without much risk of being made to pay the cost. Behind the veil of good intentions there's that inherent class bias in which small business interests come first in their apparently damning indictments of urban development. They just want to try to recreate the conditions which they pretend once bound otherwise class-divided 'communities' together. That's why they tend to sensationalise street crime. But their greatest fear is the kind of explosion of class war which has no compunction about attacking small businesses, which is exactly what happened on Britain's streets between July 4 and July 13, 1981. In response, one M.P. suggested that "...corporations might engage in marketing studies... They might suggest to neighbourhood retailers how they could make the shopping precinct more attractive, and they might wish to get involved in giving the area a facelift... improve, say, the appearance of the shop frontage" (Anthony Steen, July 16, 1981). Doesn't this show the poverty of all aestheticised architecture? It's all just fancy icing coating the rotten cake of market relations, the appearance of an attractive facelift hiding the contempt of the commodity.

The basic disgust youth developed then for the petit-bourgeois mediocrity of shopkeepers was also disgust for the polite policing which is encouraged not only by the reformers but also by the dominant class - after all, Thatcher's father was a grocer. This disgust often transcended racial considerations also. For instance, the same Asian shopkeepers who had a 'sympathetic' meeting with Thatcher in Southall after the white fascist attacks on their shops, got smashed up a week later by Asian kids. Those who identify with their present means of survival, always side with the perpetrators of their misery in the end, regardless of their colour - and black and white youth are beginning to recognise it. It's not too difficult to see that behind the shopkeepers' "May I be of any assistance sir?" and behind

were released one and a half hours later. This brought much of the area to a complete standstill, since the buses refused "to cross picket lines." (c) Also on June 7, railway men at Charing X spontaneously went out on strike after the arrest and assault of a driver, and also because railway men had seen the police brutality outside the Shell building that day. This is the first instance since the war of a wildcat strike over police brutality. Cunningly manipulative as ever, LBC invented the idea that the miners were "embarrassed" by this inspiring example of class solidarity.

3. The increasing bypassing of exchange and money relations amongst strikers and their friends. For example, the relatively informal communal allotments springing up, where food is grown and distributed free to those involved, a practical example of the old slogan, "From each according to their ability to each according to their needs."
4. The breaking out of the isolation of single miners which has developed as a result of communal eating, and other ways of living differently.
5. The fact that proletarians are talking to each other a lot more and are generally more hopeful than at any time since the riots of '81. Even many of those husbands and wives, for whom the strike has emphasised conflicts that already existed and have thus broken up, have discovered they prefer to develop new relationships than continue petrified ones.
6. The development of self-managed schooling, without specialist teachers, in Wales, because families can no longer afford the cost of school buses. A more profound critique of miseducation is shown by the riots of school kids in mining areas. In Edlington kids came out on strike in support of the miners. Teachers called the cops to push them back into school. This didn't stop the kids coming out again the next day and playing hide and seek with the cops as they chased them up and down the High Street. In Mexborough, kids rioted and smashed up some of the school over the banning of punk clothes and hair. Then they all decided to come out

on strike in support of the miners. In a village in Fyfe, school kids decided, on their own, to go off after school and march to stop scab coke lorries traveling through to get to Ravenscraig. They were stopped by the cops. But the initiative was taken up by old age pensioners, both men and women, who harangued and battered on the lorries to such an extent that the next day several drivers reported to 'their' haulage firms that they felt too ashamed to continue delivery of scab coke.

7. The increasing initiatives to occupy NCB property, and even NUM property dominated by Right Wing scab stewards. The increasing tendency to not take police violence and intimidation without a riot - e.g. in Maltby, or at Orgreave.

The Family: The First Factory of Alienation, The First Factory of the Alienation of Men from Men, of Men from Women, of Women from Women.

8. The massive autonomous involvement of women in the strike, often presented by the media as heroic, but though "one's heart goes out to them" they seem a little "too bitter, over-emotional, and not really rational like the working miner's wives... not really feminine," as doubtless many passive spectators would patronisingly put it. Unfortunately, too many of the women in mining areas have not gone beyond the traditional nurturing feminine role in the strike: sure, a few get nicked on picket lines - but few have gone beyond the non-violent image of women pushed by the sacrificial feminists at Greenham.<sup>1</sup> Shortly before her murder by the State, at the combined hands of the fascists and the no lesser thugs of the 1919 German equivalent of Kinnock, Benn and Hattersley - Noske, Scheidemann and Ebert ("Socialism means working a lot"), Rosa Luxembourge stated "The worst mistakes of the masses are far more useful than the very best correct lines of the very best of Central Committees." Applied to the relations between men and

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<sup>1</sup> The women who threw eggs at the Maggot this June are the exceptions that hopefully will prove to be the rule.

subjective participants can experience that. Meanwhile, specialists in 'objectivity' content themselves with teaching the masses. "Youth is a force which can be used for the destruction of society, or for the rebuilding of society. That is what the House and the Nation should be about. That is what our leaderships should be about, on both sides of the House. The art of politics is to change the negative or destructive to the positive. The young should be turned to a proper purpose that will benefit us all," said Sir Hugh Fraser, Tory M.P.<sup>17</sup> Didactic arrogance is not, however, the prerogative of the Right. Leftist SWP leader, Tony Cliff, said at a meeting in Liverpool at the time, "Because they have not been organized, the kids have been attacking shops when they should have been attacking factories. We must teach them to take the bakery and not just the bread." The Left, left behind by a movement of kids who were teaching their parents, had to pretend they knew it all as usual, and that the kids were too thick to make the revolution according to their blueprints. Again the Right was a bit clearer: "The French revolutionaries were most interested in securing bread; they were asked to eat cake, but they wanted bread. They are surely strange revolutionaries in our streets today, whose first motivation is to steal the products of a capitalist consumer society. I do not see those people as the traditional vanguards of the proletariat. I see them as people who have... rather less of a need for bread." (John Butcher, M.P.).

Then there are those urban reformers who were really frightened by the extent to which urban dereliction contributed to the trashing and burning of those nice little shops in poor neighbourhoods, the "horrific" consequences of high rise estates, desolate spaces, barren streets. After all, such conditions destroy that convenient informal network of vigilance and surveillance which, including authority figures

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<sup>17</sup> Of course, the art of attacking politics is to try to make sure that the negative or destructive don't get changed into "positive" forces (like the Falklands War?) whose proper purpose is to turn the intimidation of youth into a profitable unit which would be of benefit to the leadership of commodity society.

attractive strangers who, by means of such give and take, were no longer so strange. But shopping keeps us apart, making everyone the policeman of their own encounters, reducing everyone to the banality of shop assistants and customers, workers and consumers, enervating queues and digits on a till. Products of competing businesses and the separation of production from distribution, shops perpetuate the nonsensical degrading form of organising things, the commodity form, which not only insults everyone's imagination and dignity, but is also bureaucratic, inefficient and wasteful. Any proletarian with an ounce of audacity rightly goes out and liberates them on the basic class recognition of a simple redistribution of wealth. But it would be merely ideological cheerleading to sociologically 'justify' looting in terms, say, of bridging the gap between the haves and have-nots. Such moralistic reformists want to turn looting into a struggle for equality under the law of exchange, and thus usually reduce the explanation for looting as being to do with unemployment, and *only* unemployment. That way looting can become 'safe' and not really the concern of those workers who are a bit higher up the commodity's ladder than the unemployed. "Understandable, but inexcusable," as Claire Doyle from the Militant Tendency condescendingly put it. The Right, since they had no reason to express any sympathy for the rioters, was usually a bit more sussed. Breakfast TVs' fuehrer, Tory M.P. Jonathan Aitken, complained about what "took place in the prosperous and peaceful towns of Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells," where "hundreds of teenagers ran amok in the streets" and "petrol bombs were thrown and a number of shop windows were smashed." Choosing his words carefully, he stated, "I do not think that any objective observer could see there any of the symptoms of decay, deprivation and degradation that we have heard so much about in inner cities in other parts of the country." Of course, it's never "objective observers" who experience the prosperous passivity of sweet English towns as symptomatic of the decay of their desires, the deprivation of their intelligence and the degradation of their humanity: only

women today, "The worst initiatives of men and women in their struggle to determine their lives against hierarchy are far richer than the very best 'correct' roles developed by the very best feminist and/or syndicalist and/or leftist ideologies."

During this strike conflicts become collective and public, which is progress of some sort: that arguments over who does the organising of food, who looks after the kids, who



does the cleaning, and who goes on the picket lines, over resentment towards the classical masculine insensitivity of some of the miners in their silly chant, "Get Yer Tits Out For The Lads!" - that these basic inequalities and contradictions have become openly discussed is a beginning. But solidarity and common struggle has yet to arrive at anything much more than a one-way unity, with women providing harmony and continuity and support without getting any reciprocal encouragement from men, at least not without a big uphill struggle. Even if their collectively doing the cleaning and cooking is more fun than doing it on their own at home, listening to Jimmy Young, Brian Hayes, John Peel or whatever, despite the inadequacies of this amelioration of the division of labour, there are still, at the moment, far too few women in the strike demanding that men be far more willing to share these activities, whilst the women go off and fight on the picket lines (like in the mining strikes in Harlan County, USA, in the 1970s).

The fact that, in the summer of 1981, women here were seen in the riots fighting, in however relatively proportionally smaller numbers, alongside men, was a memory the spectacle of Greenham Common came to repress. In those July '81 days, women often got genuine warmth and comradely recognition in the streets, even if by August the usual sexist crap was back to normal. The temporary defeat of a common enemy - in '81, the cops - develops men and women's consciousness of their real unity, their strength and sensitivity, and always wipes out the most superficial hierarchies between men and women, which have been manipulated by ruling morality in order to divide and rule, fragment, isolate and repress. The defeat of the cops on the streets helps to defeat the cops in our heads: in Brixton April 1981, gays fought alongside 'straights,' blacks alongside whites, men alongside women... It is *this unity* that neither misogynist macho-stereotypes nor feminist stereo-type-casters ever talk about because it would mean the end of their 'perfectionist'

from grasping them. When we smash a shop window, it's not only the miraculous display of things (with their artistic image association and their ideological free gifts) that gets shattered, but also the 'reasonable' cops in our head. The objects become what they always were - just objects - whilst the bourgeois rationale that hypocritically distinguishes between theft and property also appears for what it is: bullshit to keep us impotently yearning. How can those who resign themselves to a world which is meant to be expectantly gazed at know the simple beauty of the delightful anger of hurling the brick, shattering the repressive splits of this fragmented, vicarious life? Perhaps they mutter "Greed... Resentment," as they greedily clutch onto their narrow resentment of those who are having a smashing time. One guy during the riot days of '81 smashed every window in Barkers on his own - and never tried to even take anything. Often people smashed shop windows in order to nick nothing more than what they could far more easily steal from Woolworth's on a crowded shopping day with little risk. And the greedy slander this contempt for the law and order of things as 'greed.' When stolen cameras were used as missiles (Wood Green) and TVs were dropped onto the heads of cops (Liverpool), it was the Holy Trinity of the Commodity, the Media and the State which were being wrecked. When a thirsty kid in Brixton swapped some jewelry for a can of cold coke, exchange value was being subverted by the value of desire. Yet still 'socially aware' pedagogues could smugly moralise about 'greed' along with the *Daily Mirror* and the rest of the capitalist media. Greed had fuck-all to do with it - and only "socialist" specialists, and other politicians, had a material interest in belittling the looting to this lowest common denominator. It is the game of dare that shatters the vulnerable veil separating the dispossessed from the "wealth" this world has to offer, at the same time shattering the ideology of exchange that separates people from each other; looting is a collective activity that unites us on the basis of an immediate break with our habitual submission to space and things. In those July days, youths often stole things in order to give them away as presents to



would be boycotted if they didn't. The ambiguous position of shopkeepers, often opposed to central power yet supporting it ultimately as a 'necessary evil,' means that they generally feel threatened by any serious radical opposition, since the mentality associated with their mode of survival tends to make all reality outside of the 'reality' of the market completely incomprehensible to them. That's why many of them identified with the Falklands/Malvinas War, the spectacle of all the daring they lack, a sacrificial 'courage' which makes all their trivial banal sacrifices seem somehow worthwhile, a spectacle that compensates for and insures their timidity before the 'great' nation which shits on them as much as most of the rest. In the months April to July 1981, these petit-bourgeoisies were given a shock which still haunts them. In those heady days, looting, a practical solution to the poverty imposed on the strikers by the State and the NUM's lack of strike pay, became almost as commonplace as a traffic accident, and infinitely more friendly.

## Summer Sales

*"Shopping should be an emotional experience. People should want to drop in."*

- Mr. Quayle, director at Woolworths' "21st Century Shopping Ltd.," new name for Woolies in Bristol (*The Times*, February 14, 1982)

*"Just doing a bit of window shopping."*

- Wood Green rioter, 1981 (LBC, July 1981)

There are certain situations when dropping into a shop is a truly emotional experience. That's when people start to smash that blatantly seductive parader of the beauty of possessions, the shop window, which reflects back to you the ugliness of your fundamental dispossession. Don't the vast majority dream of wrecking that fragile separation? At the same time as it titillates us with things we've been told we want, it prevents us

models of human behaviour: if revolution also means a process of deconditioning it must also imply that the revolt against the separation of men and women can only be developed by *historical decisions*, by individual and group *interventions against habitual contradictions*. The most habitual separation is that between politics and the critique of everyday life, to the point whereby most men know how to formulate this separation but are going to have to be given a kick up the bum if they are to go beyond simply 'clever formulations.'

9. The pleasure of inventing methods of avoiding the police blockades, having to use the imagination adventurously.

### **Police Sell Bus to the Picket**

**Daily Mirror**

**Monday, May 21, 1984**

Striking miners have tricked police into selling them a bus. Officers thought it was meant for a group of pensioners. They even had a whip-round to pay the road tax. But miners had made a deal with the old folk at St. Helens, Merseyside. They agreed to £1,000 for the bus - and give it to the pensioners AFTER the strike is over. The bus was waved through picket lines at Parkside colliery, Merseyside, by officers who thought the pickets on board were their own reinforcements.

***Despite all this (like the delightful incident to the left) it would be uselessly optimistic to understate the enormity of the problems and contradictions involved in this struggle.***

The conflict between miners and miners pumped up by the monologuers of the media and maintained by the cop's prevention of communication between striking miners and working miners, is a conflict in miniature of a global conflict, and the conflict within the lives of each proletarianised

individual: the conflict between the perspective of resignation, of life reduced to each against all, of life reduced to survivalism, - and the perspective of class struggle, of the dignity of individuals against all that insults them, of the movement towards community.

Partly because of the confusion and insufficient explicitness on the part of striking miners about what is involved in this struggle, the working miners who epitomise the perspective of petrified impotence, seem to have a monopoly of “reasons” for running scared across the picket lines. The working miner has all the reasonable lies of the commodity economy on his side: he knows that £1,000 for every year worked isn’t bad compensation for having slaved his guts out to be able to consume the videos and three-piece suites of his choice. The cynical dreariness and hierarchical ‘security’ of an isolated family ‘life,’ filled with all the sleep-inducing consolations that bureaucratically manipulated bonus schemes can buy, seems almost ‘natural’ to those who see their own narrow immediate interest as separate from their class interest. It is not merely the cops and ruling ideology which break up the possibilities of class solidarity: the Notts miners are not victims - they have consciously chosen to accept all the hypocrisies of the State. They know all the media crap about the cops protecting their “Right To Work” (read: Right To Be Exploited) is bullshit, even in its own terms: it’s a “right” their continuing to work is going to take away from thousands of others. They know that all the media crap about “Democracy” (read: the right of each isolated intimidated individual to choose who is going to isolate and intimidate him) is bullshit: when, in 1977, all the miners voted overwhelmingly against productivity deals, Nottingham area voted separately, and undemocratically, for their own bonus scheme. They know that they too will be the victims of pit closures. Some of them also know that their collaborationist past - the forming of the breakaway boss union in 1929 - didn’t stop Notts’ miners being sent to prison in 1936 for going on an unofficial stoppage.<sup>2</sup> Those who choose, with the support of the whole weight of the commodity-spectacle, to reduce their lives to a narrow survivalist notion of their immediate interest

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<sup>2</sup> Unofficial strikes had been prohibited under a law passed in 1927 as a response to the vast unofficial strike which developed the day after the TUC called off the ‘26 General Strike.

per week. By March, each Yorkshire miner has lost £360. NCB coal stocks are estimated at 50 million tons.

**Jan/Feb 1984:** Action by Scottish miners at Bogside and Polmaise pits against closures. Spontaneous walk-outs throughout Scotland in response to new shifts and productivity deal. Scottish NUM executive meeting refuses to call an all-out strike, saying there is no support. Polmaise miners storm out of the meeting and attack McGahey.

**March 1984:** The confusion during the present strike is just the culmination of years of confusion caused by the NUM’s divisive manoeuvres.

The NUM, like other unions, defends its own power and influence within the capitalist system, the same system whose crisis has caused the run-down of the coal industry. Thus, the ‘victory’ McGahey claimed at Monktonhall was simply *an NCB agreement to consult the NUM before making further closures*. The NUM accepts the need for these closures. It supports token actions by miners, but has consistently opposed or sabotaged any *effective* action.

The need of the NUM to “take the heat out of the situation” (Scargill) is shown in the apologetic defensive reaction to the riots in Maltby over two weekends this June, which the Union blamed on “skinheads,” presumably because of their unwarranted fascist connotations. In the face of massive State repression, the killing of two pickets by scabs, and the growing ‘rational’ violence of the irrational market economy, so-called ‘mob violence’ is a minimal expression of self-pride and class consciousness. Only those who wish to preserve a ‘pure’ image, which means doing fuck-all against the brute force and cynical intimidation of the State, wish to pretend that miners are merely victims, that they’re not out to do anything but win support for their just cause, that this support is dependant on presenting a moral case. That shop windows were smashed in Maltby might threaten the ‘support,’ usually merely pragmatic, of shopkeepers giving food on credit, mainly because the shops

# ***Some Facts Concerning the Recent History of the NUM***

**1977:** The Labour Government forces miners to accept a productivity deal in exchange for ‘guarantees’ against closures. These ‘guarantees’ were forgotten, but the miners have yet to recover from the divisions sown by the productivity deal.

**1981:** The NUM call off the South Wales miners’ action in exchange for worthless promises from the Tory government. Scargill, as President of Yorkshire Area NUM, opposed attempts by South Wales pickets to spread the strike to Yorkshire.

**January 1983:** The NUM sabotages a growing rank and file movement against pit closures. In Scotland, as pickets from the Kinneil pit gain support for their sit-in, McGahey calls off the strike. Kinneil pit is closed. In Wales, the NUM ignores an 80% vote for strike action against job losses. Miners at Selby are persuaded to join the strike by Welsh pickets. The decision is overturned by NUM officials. The threatened pits are closed. In Kent, the NUM opposes strike action against a compromise deal over redundancies at Snowdon pit.

**March 1983:** Scargill calls for a national strike against pit closures!

**November 3, 1983:** Start of the overtime ban. Coal stocks are 60 million tons.

**Oct/Nov 1983:** 7-week strike against redundancies at Monktonhall pit in Scotland. The NUM negotiates what they call a ‘victory.’ None of the strikers’ demands are met.

**January 14, 1984:** Scargill says the overtime ban is “having a devastating effect.” It is, it is... for the miners. Derbyshire face-workers’ wages are down to a basic £76

obviously regard history, both past and possible future, with equal indifference. For the same reason, it’s pointless asserting a simple rationalist argument that if proletarians don’t resolve to destroy the commodity economy the exigencies of international competition have an even chance of assuring the survival of hardly anybody - either through nuclear war or through ecological collapse: these possibilities are just as likely to reinforce people’s helplessness, which, if accepted, always leads to a mercenary expedient attitude in the present, just as they are likely to incite proletarians to recognise that their own sense of strength and contact in the present can only come from a class conscious attack on the world that constantly threatens them with death and destruction.

The working miners have to be attacked for what they are: not simply as ‘scabs,’ but as the personification of all those proletarians who, through their resignation and survivalism, support the hierarchical violence of the State and the commodity.<sup>3</sup> Contrary to the advice of the union officials who patronisingly tell “their lads” to cool their anger towards the working miners, anti-hierarchical violence towards those who prefer computer games and dining out to comradeship and friendship, is the only sane response. Those who, by their complicity, support the brutality of the cops and the repressions of the magistrates, the suicidal desperation of much of the unemployed and the mutilations and killings that take place on the Youth Training Schemes, deserve everything they get, and a lot more. This is the most immediate way of confronting those who choose to accept the status quo, who choose to remain indifferent to their own misery, as well as that of others, who choose to pursue an idea of their self-interest isolated from the self-interest of other proletarians. But such a confrontation must

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<sup>3</sup> That a working miner in Ollerton killed a striking miner, David Jones, with a brick, is the most obvious symptom of this sickness; that a 55 year old miner, Joe Green, who stood to gain over £30,000 redundancy pay, got killed by a scab truck-driver at Ferrybridge, a death belittled by the cops as “a traffic accident,” illustrates how sick all the scabs collaborating with the State to break the miner’s determination are.

also be *theoretically* armed if the struggle is to break the internal coherence of the ideologists of capitalist progress, such as MacGregor or Thatcher: the working miner has all the rationale of the irrational commodity economy on his side, whilst the striking miners have yet to link their immediate struggle to any coherent long-term goal. In fact, Scargill's economic arguments (import controls, etc.) are completely incoherent - they merely show how he can speak the rulers' language, the language of commodity production and wage labour, in order to hold out the possibility of dialogue with these scum who constantly seek to break up any dialogue amongst the slave class. An *explicitly anti-economic* consciousness has so far not developed. Of course, so long as capitalism continues, the ruling thought which rules the minds and bodies of the masses the world over, maintains the belief that not only is a successful anti-hierarchical revolution impossible, but also that any immediate anti-economic revolt is 'unrealistic,' pointless, pure wishful thinking doomed to defeat. Nowhere is this impotent pessimism contested with anything better than an impotent optimism, at least on the level of ideas. The fact that many union officials' speeches come out with phrases like "defeat is unthinkable," as if they could avoid defeat simply by striking it from their minds, does nothing to undermine the resignation of the pessimist. Those striking miners who recognise that the possibility of defeat, like the possibility of success, is dependant on their own initiatives<sup>4</sup> have yet to initiate a general questioning of class society which could also challenge all the 'justifications' for submission.

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<sup>4</sup> For example, the first flying pickets - which were not controlled by the NUM, the saboteurs of working pits, the organisers of motorway "chaos," the smashing of TV cameras and general attacks on the media, the wives' boycotts of shops not giving credit - and other forms of solidarity activity done by the women, occupations of various buildings, etc.

to sacrifice them wherever it helps to further their pseudo-oppositional careers. It is the nostalgia of the union leaders who somehow hope to become as central a part of the running of the commodity economy as they did from '76-'79. But, as the Winter of Discontent showed, it is dangerous for capital to have the unions too closely associated with the government of the day, for, without the pimps of wage labour *representing* an opposition to the State, autonomous opposition tends to develop with far greater speed.

"How dare you say that people like Malcolm Pitt, who've been imprisoned for refusing to submit to the Tory magistrates' vicious bail conditions, are merely a *false* opposition to capital? What about Scargill, getting beaten up, getting nicked on the picket lines. Haven't they laid themselves on the line like many others?" you may well ask. But, of course, being arrested has never been *in itself* indicative of a rejection of hierarchical aspirations. The rulers arrest pseudo-oppositional leaders as often as they arrest people who pose a real threat: sometimes this is even a conscious decision on the part of the rulers, a way of getting the real threat to identify uncritically with a figurehead. Besides, to believe that the enemy's enemy is our friend is to take our judgmental criteria from the rulers, even if we invert such criteria. By this method, one can end up supporting Emmanuel Shinwell, because he was imprisoned after Red Clyde in 1919. Or Kadar, imprisoned and tortured by Stalin, brought in as leader to crush the Hungarian revolution of 1956 precisely because of his anti-Stalinist past. Prison or martyrdom is no indication of radical credibility: those who hold it up as such are those who will be demanding worse sacrifices from their followers in exchange for the sacrifices they've made 'for' them.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> This need for a credible image is the obvious reason behind the decision of the bureaucrats to suspend payment of their salary for the duration of the strike; whether this gesture of equality will also mean they'll refuse back-pay once work in the mines resumes is another question.

General Secretary, has been quoted as saying, in relation to the miner's strike, "If the Brigade of Guards goes down, what chance has the light infantry?" Malcolm Pitt, Kent NUM leader, seems to be the person most fond of quoting this military metaphor. For bureaucrats and leaders, class struggle is reduced to classical military battles because they are fearful of all initiative that escapes their discipline: for the Left bureaucrats, it's always a question of using the troops to promote their own authority. That various factions of the left-wing of the NUM are competing not just with the Right, but with each other, and using different sections of the miners as ideology fodder in these power battles, is the result of this military mentality. As part of this power battle between different sects who have different plans for when they get to control the State over the miner's backs, a large section of miners were deliberately sent to Nottingham when the first battles of Orgreave were getting off the ground, thus helping the cops to maintain the thick blue line. The manipulators, nostalgic as ever for '72-'74, when miners were in an objectively far more powerful position, hope that the troops will somehow cause a sufficient threat to the present organisers of British capital, that they will be able to come to power on their backs, led by the 1980s' equivalent of Wilson-Callaghan (Benn? Livingstone? Scargill?) to counter the 1980s' version of Heath (Thatcher).

The image of the past victories of '72 and '74 is like a great weight on the backs of the miners, the idea that they alone hold the key to working class victory. But the miners hardly have any greater a part in the maintenance of the economy than any other sector nowadays: the 'crisis of over-production,' partly a conscious choice on the part of the more foresighted managers of the commodity economy, undermines any notion of the miners as an avant-garde. Either they seek the practical recognition of a common necessity to wreck proletarianisation in all its forms - from every sector of the class who are prepared to make solidarity a *practical* force and to recognise a common attack on this world as *their only possible hope*. Or they allow themselves to be used as the pawns of chess-players prepared

## **Picket quoted in 'Socialist' Worker April 14, 1984**

"We were the first branch in the Doncaster area to go out picketing into Nottingham and we went to Harworth colliery. And that was the only time I've seen a trade union official on the picket line. Jim Tierney from Castlehill Pit in Scotland reported things were very much the same up there. At pithead meetings the Friday before the strike started, we were told the best thing for us to do was to enjoy a long lie-in on the Monday, leaving it to the branch committees to make sure all the pits were out in Scotland. Fortunately we ignored that, but it was the Tuesday before we got all the pits out. Again last week our area strike committee, of two delegates per branch, booked eight buses to come down to Sheffield to picket the executive meeting. But then we were told we weren't getting any money for the buses. The Scottish leadership had taken a political decision they didn't want people down there! At the same time, pickets were being sent out when they weren't really needed, as when they were sent to Northumberland after the coalfield had voted to strike. Or again, when there was a plan to send hundreds of them to Longannet power station at ten in the morning just so that two representatives of the Scottish TUC could pose in front of cameras. Fortunately on that occasion, the strike committee got people there for half six in the morning and stopped the place."

For example, it's purely defensive to reject calls for a national ballot on the basis that no one has the right to vote other miners out of a job. If the more rebellious proletarians (whether miners or not) don't initiate some real democracy - some form of mass democratic dialogue - by occupying large buildings or any other large area, and attack both the dictatorship of the media, and the confusions of the Union bureaucracy, as well as the limitation of the strike to just a miner's struggle, then any rejection of the dominant notion of democracy will appear abstract, an argumentative manoeuvre. To be sure, the first flying pickets, initially opposed by the Stalinist bureaucrat Jack Taylor, were set up by a mass meeting of the miners. Yet in not retaining this initiative, in allowing the Yorkshire NUM to bureaucratise the flying pickets, these miners had to inevitably

suffer the manoeuvres of the NUM in repressing unofficial actions: as one miner said. "We were getting things organized... there was no problem with filling petrol tanks" until control was centralised (*Socialist Worker*, April 21, 1984).

For example, saving pits isn't the real reason for the strike, even though it's the inevitable starting point (after all, all attacks on this society begin on the enemy's terrain). The cries about the 'Dignity of Labour' are basically lies which most miners don't believe. The real reason behind their rejection of the £1,000 for every year worked, held out as a bribe and compensation by the NCB, is the fear and horror of the isolation, of the loss of comradeship, of the sense of futility, of the destruction of the element of community amongst the most historically subversive section of the working section of the British proletariat, of the indignity of having the ruling class disorganise proletarians here any further. Miners know full well that, because the work is miserable, it's the friendship and solidarity between them that makes life worthwhile - "Because," as a Kent miner put it on TV recently, "it's all we've got." When the BBC reporter interviewing him smugly asked whether the average one and a half hours sleep a night some of the pickets were getting was "really worth all the trouble," the picket said, "Well, if we don't do this one and a half hours of sleep a night now, we'll be having 15 hours a day in bed, staring at the 4 walls." Even with thousands of pounds in the bank, unemployment is generally more desperate than employment not because wage slavery is "dignified" or "useful" (to whom?) but because in the desperate conditions of separation imposed by this society, the false choice between work or dole is the choice between the *possibility* of a common recognition of common enemies and common problems, of a common struggle, and, outside of riots, the choice, mostly, of staying stuck and isolated swamped by the degrading bullshit of TV and the 'consolations' of records, and other drugs. Of course, all proletarians can struggle - in work or out of it: but in the face of a deliberate - and largely successful, so far - attack by the ruling class on the solidarity and survival standards of

Nevertheless, King Arthur hasn't always been so reasonable and image-conscious. Before climbing up the ladder of the NUM, seeking a power position with its own investments in British industry, he participated as a brilliant strategist when the miners defeated the cops at Saltley Coke depot in 1972. This defeat for the State was organised not merely by the miners, but by the mass of the whole of the working class 'community' - a community based, of course, on defending itself, rather than one based on individuals realising themselves in a collective destruction of all the lies of external power, which can obviously only happen on any vast and irreversible scale from the revolutionary moment onwards. In '72, this struggle became autonomous because it refused to confine itself to the legal limits demanded by the union bureaucracy. At that time, even if many involved propagated trade unionist ideology, their practice, and Scargill's as one of them, was to confront many of the aims of integration that trade unions had developed in order to save and perpetuate capitalism. During this period, miners showed their contempt for work and the violence of commodity production often by explicitly rejecting the same economic reasoning with which Scargill, and others, compromise themselves nowadays. For example, during the '72 strike, miners were asked if they realised that by refusing to do maintenance work they were putting the future of the pit in danger. One replied, "So what, who wants to go down the bloody pit, anyway?" whilst another said that, in closing down the pits, they had already saved several lives. And after the dispute had been 'settled,' some sections of the miners refused to go back to work, despite a 20% pay rise, thus showing as much a resistance to forced labour as contempt for the Union hierarchy that negotiated the deal. Naturally, the real abolition of forced labour could only take place if workers seized the mines along with all the other things that are theirs anyway.

Joe Wade, famous for his condemnation of the riot at Warrington, which followed the cops' dismantling of the loudspeaker system belonging to the NGA, of which he was

resigned to being always right - but too late - content with a posthumous truth.

**Waiting For the 'Sell-Out?'**

**No More NGA-type Cop-Outs!**

**Waiting For the Next Spectacle of the 'Just' War?**

**No More Falkland-Malvinas Con Tricks!**

**Waiting For The Next State Manipulated Terrorist Atrocity?**

**No More Reichstag Fires!**

**No More Lies!**

**No More Waiting!**

the masses here, to fight pit closures is one of the possible starting points for reversing the demoralisation of the past 8 years, accelerated by the Thatcher government.

## Unemployment: Its Causes and Some Results

Unemployment is obviously one of the most central means of intimidating the proletariat which capital has developed globally over the last ten years or so. That it is also a means of running down uncompetitive forms of fixed capital gives unemployment an image of an unfortunate, but inevitable, result of the market economy - a partial truth which not only ignores how the various rulers are capable of consciously manipulating the market in varying degrees, but also ignores the fact that the world market is the essential 'fate' which proletarians have no choice but to utterly destroy if the world is to be consciously transformed and recreated to express the desires and possibilities of the masses of individuals.<sup>5</sup> One of the few expanding industries after the law and order industry and the new technology industry is the overwhelming commentary on the misery of unemployment. Everywhere the results of unemployment are denounced - atomization, the big leap in suicidal tendencies and breakdowns, intensified survival panic, speed-ups at work, vastly increased productivity, cheap labour, a big increase in the criminalisation of the survival means of the dispossessed, a great increase in vicious, and ultimately self-destructive, desperate behaviour on the streets

<sup>5</sup> That coal stocks are the highest ever is one example of how impotent any attempt is to fight the symptoms of capital whilst arguing in capital's terms: the rationale of the commodity economy forces the rulers to pull the rug out from under every alienated labourers' feet in order to rationalise the unprofitable contradiction of over-production, which, of course, is only possible in conditions of alienated labour.



**Daily Mirror, Wednesday, September 14, 1984**

Arthur Scargill is basically a shy person. The reason many people find him arrogant and offensive is that he is trying to compensate for his natural diffidence. The miners' president himself is the source of enlightenment in yesterday's issue of *The Derbyshire Miner*, a union newspaper. In an interview he told the editor, Mr. Bill Moore, that to overcome basic shyness he talks quite a lot and puts his views forward in a positive manner to avoid seeming totally ineffective "and that's regarded by most people as being offensive, particularly on TV, and as being rather arrogant," he said.

and at home, greater paranoia about the State and mistrust of 'friends,' a general sense of retreat (exemplified by the big leap in marriages) not yet matched by a sense of the self-defeating nature of such retreat (exemplified by the big leap in divorces), a massive increase in one of the most dangerous forms of commodity fetishism - drug addiction, often with the deliberate collaboration of sections of the State, etc., etc.

One result of this retreat into pure survivalism increasingly imposed by capital is the growing tendency to valorise one's means of survival as an escape from recognising and reversing one's retreat, and the retreat of the rest of the class. In this defeat before the crisis of the commodity economy, proletarians hide this sense of defeat by justifying positively the specialisation of abilities proletarians are forced to develop in order to compete on the ever-shrinking market. The inevitable compromise involved in surviving in this society, and the indignity of this compromise, which everyone with any sense seeks to destroy *in time*, is hidden by an ideology which pumps up such skills, and makes them superior to other forms of slavery. Legal skills are ideologised as better than illegal ones, or vice versa. Plumbing, piano-playing, or inventing such novel commodities as the 'kiss-o-gram,' are hailed as somehow more 'dignified' or 'creative' than burglary, shoplifting, insurance fiddles or whatever.

And the more marginalised sectors who burgle or shoplift to survive claim that their *illegal* forms of survival are more 'dignified' - because *autonomous* - than the others, as if in all cases it's not the alien economy, and its increasing pressures, that calls the tune. This simply reinforces the ruler's moral hierarchy, even if the more marginalised sectors reactively invert this moral hierarchy by asserting an anti-morality which pretends that illegal work is not really work, contemptuously dismissing the 'mugs' who are 'into' straight work. Either way, divide and rule. This support for commodity relations is most clear amongst those marginalised who resort to mugging - a substitute for the slightly more difficult and risky task of ripping off businesses, the State or the rich. Mugging is an expression of

- John Nott, Minister of Defence, in the House of Commons, the day after the Argentinean occupation (see Hansard for April 3, 1982)

More immediately possible is the closing down of one of the steelworks - a closure conveniently blamed on the miners' strike but which was a move British Steel had already contemplated before the strike. Bill Sirs, who, in 1980, the *Sunday Times* praised for his handling of the steelworkers' strike, is doubtless getting the thumbs up from the government to sacrifice the miners on the altar of his career: he can be guaranteed to scapegoat the miners for any closure he collaborates in as a way of evading accusations of "Collaborator!" Doubtless the steelworkers have forgotten that being good and submissive and doing what the bosses tell them didn't save the whole of Consett being sacrificed on the altar of Sir's paycheque. The rulers, and their guard-dogs in the Trade Union bureaucracy, quite rightly regard respectable good behaviour, that of the Good Citizen, the Good Worker, as a sign of weakness, and reward such timidity with the kick in the balls it invites.

Another possible future is that a big build-up in the Gulf War is allowed to happen, paving the way for a compromise on the basis of pulling together for the National Interest: if oil is threatened, coal will be needed, particularly if the country starts moving towards a war economy. NUM propaganda about *British* coal is as nationalist as any Tory's: developing British coal could be the basis for a massive intensified collaboration of unions in policing their members "in the National Interest," of course - a new Social Contract (probably *without Thatcher*). Even anti-Americanism could be manipulated to assure the acquiescence of large sections of the Left, perhaps a National Government. Possible possibles, possibly. Of course, what happens in the future is usually the possibility you least expect - mainly because each person's actions can change history: unless predicting possible futures is used to prepare for such predictable futures and to intervene to challenge them, then all the predictor ends up being is a useless prophet, a Cassandra,



wholesale repression which saw thousands arrested (few of them terrorists) and many more very successfully intimidated.

It could happen here. If the State can get away with the Falkland-Malvinas War, with all its obvious incongruities, then they could easily get away with blowing up a working colliery and blaming the massacre on pickets. After 1981, the show of State power in the South Atlantic not only made death seem attractive, not only made sacrifice seem brave, not only demoralised the massive rage which clearly hoped for a qualitative extension of the '81 riots into '82, not only demoralised millions into an overwhelming sense of retreat and helplessness, but based this intimidation on the horrific sense that if they can get away with that they can get away with anything. But they can only do this if each proletarian allows them - which is one reason to speculate on the possible manipulations the State will get up to in order to head off the present wave of class struggle. The killing of scabs by provocateurs claiming to be striking miners might sound far-fetched, but it's probably nothing compared with the conspiracies they could hatch up. A terrorist bombing blamed on the strike movement could force a blanket repression of all forms of class anger, justifying armed raids on whole mining communities and elsewhere, and could very easily force a return to work (like the nurses did after the IRA's Hyde Park and Regent's Park bombs of '82).

## ***The Truth About the Falkland-Malvinas War***

*"If we were unprepared, how is it that from next Monday, at only a few days notice, the Royal Navy will put to sea in wartime order and with wartime stocks and weapons? ...preparations have been in progress for several weeks."*

the ability of the rulers (the organisers of the paucity of normal survival means) to force the more fatalistic sections of the masses to seek immediate means of survival which not only insure no long-term solutions but also hopes to insure that the only solutions are bourgeois ones. Muggers use the desperate times to justify their own self-defeating 'contribution' to the suffocating 'good neighbourliness' of pseudo-community policing.<sup>6</sup> Whilst proletarians do not seek to break with and attack the objective miserable weight of the immediate, this immersion in the everyday assures that everyday is just one more nail in the coffin. Tonight's mugger could become tomorrow's mugged - or else prison. If successful, the muggers' sense of achievement is about as self-defeating as that of "our boys" in the Falklands: pure image to compensate for the impotence and isolation. Whilst the lads in the Falklands were given a moral face to hide the sickness, the mugger asserts his amorality as something less hypocritical, more "honestly" cynical than the dominant show. Resigned to the present decomposition, he proudly asserts his reduction of others to commodities as being just the same as the bosses who force OAPs to die of hyperthermia as a punishment for not paying their electricity bills.

This separation amongst the 'marginalised' and the 'straight' proletariat still tends to manifest itself in the conflicts with the State: the unemployed who see rioting as their form of attack, tend not to identify with, even less intervene in, the strikes of the traditional sectors, just as the strikers tend not to identify with riots. Amongst the more class conscious sectors, not so tainted with leftism on the one hand or anti-workerism on the other, this separation is breaking down, especially amongst the young: e.g. the youths who supported the picket at Warrington by burning barricades and attacking the cops, or the school kids at Mexborough who smashed up their school

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<sup>6</sup> Of course, as the Newham 8 found out, any response to street violence not sanctioned by the State will be dealt with by the State even more forcefully than the State deals with the attacks themselves - if the State can get away with it.

over the banning of spiky hair and then came out in support of the miners. The conscious breakdown of this separation, with the rising tension in Liverpool offering the most likely opening on this front, is the sole possibility for any successful subversion of capital, a movement of riots, strikes, occupations and mass assemblies - the example of which could fire the imagination of proletarians internationally.

The supercession of this separation is dependant on recognising how our enemies benefit from us seeing work, legal or illegal, as the solution to unemployment.<sup>7</sup> Unemployment has partly been the ruler's conscious weapon to divide proletarians off from each other, roll back the tide of proletarian subversion exemplified by the massive successful strike and occupations movements of the early '70s, and the Winter of Discontent of '78-'79, and make British capital competitive again. Loss of the memory of this history (in particular, of one's memory of one's own relation to this history), impotent despair and cowardly self-contempt are the predictable fates of all those who leave the *implications* of their resistance to class society to be determined by the perpetuators of this society. Unemployment and the economic crisis a social crisis which is partly a result of the struggle against the miseries of work and State domination, just as it is partly a conscious attempt by the ruling classes to find a solution to this massive resistance on the part of the producer-consumers to their allotted role as competitively-priced objects in the World Market, is the most blatant of these implications. Absenteeism, sabotage, pilfering, and general, commonplace, forms of resistance, have always played an important part in undermining the system of commodity production, which is why the rulers are doing their

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<sup>7</sup> A good example of the contradictory nature of accepting the rulers' false choices was given in a TV interview with a Young Liverpudlian heroin addict, who claimed he started his addiction when he had a "good job," which he lost because of the addiction, and that if only he could find a "good job," he'd be able to kick the habit.

*spectacle forces. Nothing befuddles and angers Power more than a refusal to acknowledge its authority."*

- from a revolutionary video, *Call It Sleep*

## **Future Shocks**

In the summer of 1981 - with there having been riots over the previous 18 months in Amsterdam, Copenhagen, Lyons, Berlin, Switzerland and throughout Britain, as well as a mass movement in Poland - there was sufficient practical critique on the streets to make thousands, maybe even millions, feel optimistic about a revolutionary movement. Few then anticipated martial law in Poland. Or, more vitally for us here, few anticipated the Falkland-Malvinas War, prepared with even greater calculation than the Polish military put into martial law, prepared with even greater finesse than sections of the Italian State put into kidnapping Aldo Moro in 1978, prepared to intimidate with a far superior subtlety than Goering put into the Reichstag Fire. After every subversion of hierarchical power, sections of the State manipulate a crisis, or 'allow' an obviously avoidable crisis to occur, in order to confuse the masses of individuals from the real internal threat with a common external enemy.

Terrorism ends up creating within regional areas the same conditions of conservatism and nationalism that is initiated by international wars. In Italy in 1978, after several years of riots, strikes, occupations, a general resistance to work and to political forms of organisation, the Prime Minister was conveniently kidnapped and killed by a section of the Red Brigades, a section that had been partly infiltrated and manipulated by one of the more right-wing gangs that dominate the Italian State hierarchy. Supported by an outraged public opinion, trumped up by the political parties, by neo-fascist bombings attributed to anarchists and the left, and, above all, by the Italian press, the Italian police unleashed a

argument it is best able to dominate. The nostalgia that the bourgeoisie condemns in the miners, the same bourgeoisie evokes when it suits it to assert the only form of community it is capable of asserting: the hierarchical 'community' united behind the ruling class of which World War II was *the* model. In this context it's not surprising that in January 1984, the TUC issued an internal document urging recognition that "strikes hurt the community and they hurt workers" and urges the bureaucratic machine to model itself on its collaboration with Churchill's National Government in World War II, when health and safety regulations at work were suspended, workers were not allowed to change their place of wage-labour without permission, overtime was forced and the wages earned thereby had to be lent to the government, and strikes were effectively made illegal and punishable for "sedition." Nevertheless, to label this possibility as "fascist" is to ignore the tendency of all States in the present crisis, whether State capitalist, social democratic, monetarist or whatever, to intensify their repressive means of divide and rule as a way of trying to insure the survival of the commodity economy, even if it means little else survives. Nevertheless, unlike in fascism, false opposition is still necessary because not all forms of real autonomous opposition have been repressed and demoralised, which would be the only basis for the total integration of trade unions into the State, which was the hallmark of fascism. This is not to make light of the fact that all strands of the commodity economy here are increasingly losing their pluralistic face: that there has been a virtually complete blackout of all the mini-riots here since 1981 and of most of the previously mentioned events in Europe, is just one instance of this intensified repression. Fortunately, proletarians are becoming increasingly aware of this unity of lies: that's why even Channel 4 newsmen were threatened by Yorkshire pickets.

*"The active refusal of Power's attempts at categorisation and the reinvention of a language of revolt which is necessarily incomprehensible to the State, insure an increasingly clear polarisation between pro- and anti-*

best to reduce these forms of opposition to the bare minimum.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, in themselves, these acts of resistance have hardly ever considered themselves as strategically or objectively significant, and therefore have hardly ever known how to become a more consciously strategic opposition to capitalism. That's why capitalism can straight-forwardly wipe these pockets of resistance out - which is why the ASLEF drivers got flexibly roasted, with the help of the TUC, in response to their resistance to work.<sup>9</sup> That flexible rostering has not produced any increased profitability for British Rail shows that the intention of such 'progress' is not just governed by immediate economic considerations; the tendency to impose an almost military rigidity of time-control on the railways was aimed not merely to speed up the circulation of commodities and prepare for the exigencies of a possible war, but also aimed to demoralise all autonomous resistance to capital and wage slavery here in the aftermath of the Falkland-Malvinas War. Whilst those sectors of the working proletariat who are still capable of resisting work do not coordinate their agitation, and on the basis of its most class conscious possibilities, they will inevitably watch this agitation die a slow death. In avoiding the conclusions, both theoretical and practical, of their struggle against a humiliating world, the masses of individuals are forced into a retreat where they feel they have to *justify* their constantly frustrated anger at capitalism's *inevitable* hypocrisy. In response to the economic crisis, many workers now feel somehow forced to guiltily excuse wage demands - which mean wage cuts - when 13 years ago they were demanding 3 times the amount merely as an excuse to avoid what most people openly recognised as the tyrannical meaninglessness of work -

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<sup>8</sup> For example, containerisation of the docks not only vastly reduces the number of workers, but also makes the perks of ripping off, as well as the chances of international solidarity through the blacking of particular imports and exports, virtually impossible.

<sup>9</sup> Likewise, a similar imposition of the disorganising rigours of commodity time is being imposed on the scene-shifters at the BBC, who'd also worked out various fiddles.

of the production of surplus value for a boss. Nowadays, so the Trade Unions, the Labour Party and all the rest of the capitalist institutions tell us, all the workers should be happy about is that they have a job, even if there still remains a little contest over how *much* they should be fucked over. So that you can compete with your fellow wage-slaves in Japan or wherever, money, exploitation, bureaucracy, capital accumulation, exchange and trade relations - and the States which determine these - all these have to be taken as *fate*, the *unquestionable*.

If the class struggle is to get off the defensive, it must learn from its own history, that unemployment is partly capital's answer to the vast resistance to work, and that confidence that goes beyond merely reacting to the rulers' moves, can only come from openly refusing the false choices they pose. The humiliation of coal dust or the humiliation of the dole? During the '72 strike, miners were asked if they realised that by refusing to do maintenance work they were putting the future of the pit in danger. One replied, "So what, who wants to go down the bloody pit, anyway?" whilst another said that in closing down the pits they had already saved several lives. And after the dispute had been 'settled,' some sections of the miners refused to go back to work, despite a 20% pay rise, thus showing as much a resistance to forced labour as contempt for the Union hierarchy that negotiated the deal. Naturally, the real abolition of forced labour could only take place if workers seized and transformed the mines along with all the other things that are theirs anyway.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Of course, when leftists talk of "workers' power" or of having "less work, more leisure," they can only see this in terms of developing State power, which, whether by violent or peaceful means, they aim to paternalistically use as a means of reforming the flagrant irrationalities of the of the current capitalist crisis.

moments, is ironic when one considers how much scab coal is being imported from Poland.<sup>14</sup>

At the same time as some of these events were happening, the BBC news show, *Sixty Minutes*, itself the target of recent physical attacks by Yorkshire miners in Barnsley, broadcast a speech by Thatcher made whilst opening the bunker where Winston Churchill and his cabinet met during the war. In it she said that it was essentially Britain's "sense of humanity which triumphed over evil." Her speech was followed by a clip from Churchill's during the 'Battle of Britain,' "United We Stand - Divided We Fall."<sup>15</sup> When it comes to anti-fascist rhetoric the bourgeoisie are far better at it - and ironically it is anti-fascism that unites both East Europe and West: it was, after all, the basis of the spectacles' harnessing of the proletariat to the interests of national capital, whether the capital be bourgeois or bureaucratic.

That World War II is being evoked now is illustrative of the various competing capitals' attempts to tie the desire for community to the interests of various national capitals, whilst crushing the real affirmation of proletarian community now being fought for internationally: this spectacle of unity under the State, via the use of war and the threat of an external enemy, has already been tested in the Falklands-Malvinas war manipulated by the State. Ironically, Scargill, who supported Argentina's' militarised capital during the 1982 conflict, now conjures up the very same anti-fascism that Thatcher was able to manipulate. Certainly the spectacle is totalitarian - its primary forms, the market and the State, dominate the world's citizens everywhere. But to suggest that the British spectacle has become fascist merely hands over to the dominant class an

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<sup>14</sup> Which is also ironic from the point of view of the scabs with Polish connections: their anti-proletarian stance is objectively supported by their Polish enemies - Jaruzelwski & Co.

<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, as all the bourgeoisie know, Churchill, who had once hoped that Britain, in its hour of need, would have a Hitler to unify it, had his private plane waiting to take him to Canada should Britain have ever fallen to the Nazis.

party headquarters was attacked, though not burnt down as the Poles did to the CP headquarters in 1970. Two other socialist Party HQ's were attacked in France in April, whilst in Caen a Tax Office was swamped by tar unloaded from a lorry. Also in Caen, there has been a big riot, and the Post Office was occupied by Post Office workers trying to sabotage the growth of the new technology. Meanwhile, there have not only been mass walk-outs on the trains in Liverpool, but also looting there, as well as in Derry (condemned, of course, by the petit-bourgeoisie of the IRA). 'Battle of Britain?' The real struggle - to defeat the inevitable humiliations and isolation and survival miseries the crisis of competing national commodities impose on the proletariat everywhere - can only be affirmed internationally and with an increasingly desperate negativity. Demanding reformism in one country, the pseudo-community of the dispossessed's attachment to their existing position in the economy, insures merely a rearrangement of insults, usually at the expense of other proletarians elsewhere. Proletarians of all lands have nothing to lose but their resignation to false choices. Recently a Barnsley miner tried to get Scargill to express solidarity with some miners in Sheffield's twin town in the Donetz basin in the USSR who'd been sent to a lunatic asylum for their opposition to the State. Scargill's retort was to ask him why he didn't show support for El Salvador. The global spectacles' competition between eastern State capitalism and the 'democracies' of the wealthier capitalist nations is inevitably supported by the pseudo-oppositional bureaucrats of the West.<sup>13</sup> Scargill's effective solidarity with the East European ruling class which he tames at pragmatically opportune

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<sup>13</sup> That many Nottingham miners have Polish family connections - as high as 50% in Ollerton - is certainly one of the reasons why they've not come out on strike: the scabbing can't all be put down to bonus schemes, media manipulation and complacent consumerism.

## ***Row Over New Think Tank. "Ministry of Truth" Report Leak!***

***By Our Political Correspondent, Manny Pulation***

A row blew up yesterday over a new leak from the Governments' secret Think Tank, a body set up to make tentative proposals for the development of the isolation and degradation of the individual at the hands of the State and the hierarchical exchange economy it manages. The Prime Minister was quick to pretend to be enraged about the leak. Apparently, though she was genuinely enraged about a leak that claimed that she herself had leaked the Ministry of Truth proposal just to test our public reaction.

The controversial Think Tank report supports "the setting up of a Ministry of Truth whose task will be to ensure the coordination, elaboration and perfection of the work already being very well achieved in denying the possibility of organising a world without alienated labour, the State and all external authority."

The report went on to suggest the inclusion of two departments within the Ministry: "...a Department of You-Don't-Like-This-Society-But-What-Else-Can-You-Put-In-Its-Place, whose task shall be to repress the memory of history: that of yourself, that of your relation to the history of others, that of the society as a whole and that of interactions between them." Part of the function of this department will be, the controversial report continues, "to obscure all the positive and negative achievements of every revolt since the Ranters of the English Revolution to the rioters of Brixton and Toxteth, via the revolutionaries of Hungary '56 and France 1968."

The report went on to suggest a further department: "A Department Of Fatalism, whose task will be to present the problem of alienation as merely an existential crisis, the "human condition," something absurd to be dramatised in an artistic or cocktail party anecdote form."

Immediately the Labour Party complained that the report failed to suggest "A Department of Harmony, Community and Humanity." A Labour Party spokesman suggested that "the task of such a department should be to present an illusory togetherness based on a repression of the essential conflict between those who wish to live and those who wish to preserve the Grand Mausoleum of Commodities."

Certain right-wingers and liberals supported the aims of the proposed ministry but suggested that the name should be changed to one more in keeping with democracy: "Ministry Of Truth smacks too much of 1984. How about "Ministry of Freedom Of False Choices Under The Law & Order Of Things, Their Price & Their Owners...?"

# ***New Technology - Same Old Living Death***

*“It’s bloody miserable working here, and all that work could be replaced by microchip... Still, if that happened we’d all be unemployed... If we’re going to be able to use the technology, we’d have to have a revolution... but that’s another matter...”*

- Ford Dagenham shop steward during the Ford strike in November 1978 against the Labour government’s Social Contract.

The development of the new technology is part of running down industries where large amounts of proletarians have been *dangerously brought together*. New technology not only speeds up the rate of profit, but also functions as a way of developing a much smaller amount of skilled labour. The bourgeoisie can afford to compensate this relatively small isolated sector with comparatively higher wages, particularly as they hope to assure the acquiescence of this sector by force-feeding the whole population on vast overdoses of bureaucratic-scientific ideology. From the moment we learn to switch on a T.V., we are encouraged to model our lives on the patterns of organisation and consumption employed by hierarchical power. We are all encouraged to play the role of bureaucrat and scientist in the discomfort of our own home, and to view our lives as a series of processes and procedures existing independently from our own good sense.

This is how and why the rulers need to develop nuclear power, for example, which in this society requires the same mass policing year in year out that some of the Nottingham collieries have been getting recently.<sup>11</sup> In developing nuclear

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<sup>11</sup> Of course, it’s not a moral question as the ecologists would have it, hoping thereby to reduce their ‘opposition’ to narrowly defined symptoms of the irrationality of capitalism, so as to encourage the development of

# ***Dispossessed of All Countries Unite!***

***We Have Nothing To Lose But Our Illusions That We Have Something To Lose!***

*“‘The miners,’ said Scargill, were fighting ‘the social and industrial Battle of Britain.’ Once that was joined, the Government could not afford to lose - not only this Government, but government... Thus no chances have been taken.”*

- Peter Jenkins, SDP comedy writer for *The Guardian*

Since early April this year, there have been four mass strikes in Europe (Asturias in Spain, Lorraine in France, a General Strike in Belgium - their third in 8 months, and a mass strike of print and engineering workers in Germany). Outside of Europe, there have been massive riots in the Dominican Republic and Haiti; Indian dockers have seized arms and attacked the cops as part of a national dock strike there; and the National Guard have been called out to attack picketing copper miners in Phoenix, Arizona, USA, who’ve been on strike for ten months. In Asturias, the barricades and battles with the cops have also been over pit closures: there they went way beyond the unions by extending the strike long beyond the time limit the bureaucrats had stipulated. And in Madrid, construction workers seized the chance opened up by the miners and blocked roads with bricks, cement and plaster, whilst in Valencia, steelworkers went on a wildcat strike against redundancies. Yet Scargill still talks of import controls (which undermine international solidarity) and the ‘Battle of Britain.’ In France, steelworkers have covered roads with coils of metal, whilst in three towns (Marseille, Metz and Longwy) steelworkers have pulled up the railway tracks, like their comrades in Poland had done 8 years previously, whilst in Toulon a union controlled job centre got trashed, and in Metz the local socialist

stomach. Their refusal to remain polite spectators was an implicit rejection of those tedious rituals where you're meant to keep still and listen, where no one really meets at all. A good reason why paid scribblers servile to their masters and to their detached 'reflective' role would clearly find such impolite disrespect for the domination of the hall by the stage and by microphones so nerve-wracking. After all, people were meeting, and without hierarchy: not only did the poor imbecile feel excluded, but also he couldn't play the role of good journalist and report the monologues from the platform. But, more importantly, it's a sign of the striker's confusion that, despite their excellent attacks on BBC cameramen, journalists and even threats to the liberal-leftist careerists of Channel 4, that they should cheer the media's defender in this situation, Scargill, who, though obviously critical of the media, indulges in a polite dialogue with what he claims are his enemies. Are they so blind to his patronising vapid flattery? "The young miners of this country represent the finest in trade unionism," which is implicitly nationalist, and pumps up miners as a 'radical' elite. Are they so blind to his classic inversion of reality? "When the Coal Board told me I was getting nothing, I had the right to come and ask my members for your support," as if he hadn't been opposed to a strike at the beginning, as if it hadn't been the 'members' who had taken the initiatives in the first place, thereby going beyond being mere 'members.' Our enemies' apparent enemy, in this case, Scargill, is no friend. Each proletarian must see through their own eyes if they wish to avoid the trap of identifying with the present rulers' opposite numbers.

power, the present government is merely continuing the process pursued by the last Labour government, when Tony Benn, as Minister of Energy, even armed the Atomic Energy Authority.<sup>12</sup> It's worth recalling the minutes of a Cabinet meeting leaked to *Time Out* not so long after the '79 election. In it Thatcher said that developing nuclear power was necessary to combat the militancy of the miners. This, and not the global energy crisis, was her main reason. It is because of this that much of the media attack the miners for a "nostalgia for their opposition to the progress" of nuclear fuel. This is a clever ploy in so far as 'nostalgia' implies fondness for past battles that many young miners have little chance of critically appreciating and a defence of a 'craft' status attached to one's wage slavery that few young miners identify with. This nostalgia is particularly debilitating when miners, and those who support them, believe they still have a greater potential for attacking the ruling class than any other sector of the proletariat, and at the same time it helps them suppress the consciousness of their *own* interest, which can only be to reorganise the basis of the economy so that *no one* has to go down the mines and inhale the coal dust that the new machinery has vastly increased. To defend this misery is nostalgic, in the sense that nostalgia is a sentimental fantasy about the past which can only be defended by forgetting the miserable part of this past. Rather than repeating the mistakes of the old Luddites, the miners could learn a lot from the new Luddites, who had no position in this world to defend - the rioters of 1981. An explicit attack on all the false choices of the commodity economy, 'progressive' or 'nostalgic,' is the only way of posing a future in which the whole of the working class could recognise itself.

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commodity production and alienated labour in 'socially concerned' guises - Boeing's investments in solar energy, for example.

<sup>12</sup> The opportunism of this patronising ponce is shown by his celebration of the miner's struggle, and even of the "great Liverpool uprising of 1981." When he was part of Callaghan's Cabinet, more pits were closed than by the Tories by far, just as riots were put down with the full force of the government of which he was a part.

## **Life Under the Last Labour Government** **Some Excerpts from 'This England,' 1978**

*The suffering is there of course. A young stockbroker told me: 'The difference in my standard of living has been enormous. I bought a house on a £27,000 mortgage two years ago and now I cannot keep up the payments.' At 28, he is used to making about £20,000 a year. Today, he is making nothing - except his basic salary of about £5,000.*

- The Times

*Crawley council, in Sussex, is to scrap its heating scheme for old people. 'I am afraid some pensioners will have to make a choice whether to eat properly or keep warm,' Councillor A.C.W. Crane said. This year the subsidised scheme would have cost the council £4,500 and costs were going up all the time. 'We just could not continue it.'*

- The Times

*Very conveniently for part-time doctors and private patients, the hospital has 18 pay-beds in a separate unit of 10 single beds and four double rooms. Patients pay £28 a day for hotel and hospital charges, and hospital staff say that most come through one of the private medical insurance schemes: 'We get people from all walks of life: we had a coalminer in once.'*

- Observer

*When he gets a chance, Mr. Anthony Wedgwood Benn, our Secretary of State for Energy, likes to sit by an open fire at his home in Holland Park, London, sipping a large mug of tea and reading his official papers. His blazing grate is symbolic, an indication of sympathy with the miners.*

- The Times

*Coal Board Chief Sir Derek Ezra collapsed from heat during a visit to a Kent pit yesterday. When he recovered, he delivered a speech criticising Kent miners for their low productivity.*

- Daily Mirror

teams, and which helps the boss's divide and rule - but, more vitally, they act as a way of dismissing all the excellent critiques of Scargill, amongst which is his need for the media, even a hostile media. In repressing their own misgivings about this creep under the pretence of an image of unity, the more radical miners allow the media to take up this critique, in a manipulative form. A good example of these contradictions was expressed in a recent meeting of miners reported by the smug drone, Terry Coleman, in *The Guardian*, April 16, 1984 (see boxed text). So refined are the middle class sensibilities of this hack that the vulgar disdain of the miners for an orderly 'meeting' was really too much for him to

## **Excerpts from the Terry Coleman Article in The Guardian**

**April 16, 1984**

There were some older men, but the marchers were mostly young, and they began to look like a football crowd. They ran through the open doors of the hall, scrambled for seats, then changed their minds and scrambled for other seats in other parts of the hall. Two men jumped from the balcony into the stalls... A TV camera was spotted, and at once there was a chant of "Get out, you bums, get out," and "Press out, Press out." This was a ritual chant. The miners turned on a TV crew and ran them out. Arthur Scargill himself was very nearly shouted down when he intervened... Mr. Scargill and Mr. Benn were to be the principal speakers, but four others spoke first, though they were barely given a hearing... A voice was raised to defend the Nottinghamshire miners, at which scuffles broke out, and then scattered fights, and amid the pandemonium a man on the platform, having noticed a camera recording this, hurled himself off the platform and down the aisle at the cameraman. Mr. Scargill tried to restore some order, this time shouting through a loudhailer, but even with that it was three minutes before he could be heard... Only bits here and there were audible. Even then, groups round the hall hardly listened at all, but engaged in their own conversations, arguments, and skirmishes... It took all of Mr. Scargill's popularity, strength of will and strength of voice, amplified by the loudhailer, to produce anything like order, and still sporadic scuffles continued... There was not quiet even when Mr. Benn rose to speak. He is the most eloquent and reasoned of speakers, but even he did not get an attentive hearing... and then the audience took up the chant of "Arthur Scargill, Arthur Scargill, we'll support you evermore, evermore."



trivialising and brutal world of domination and submission in its totality. Those who only half rebel and who do not draw more daring experimental conclusions from their rebellion and the failures of this rebellion, merely dig their own graves. It's either All or apologies for Nothing. What else is Scargill's programme for the rejuvenation of British capital by means of import controls, etc.? It's simply a programme which perpetuates workers' illusions of some external hope within the false choices of the commodity economy. As usual for someone with a hierarchical niche, he can only reduce people's margin of choice to that of two 'evils.' It's precisely his kind of 'reasonable' Leftist nationalism which breaks up the British proletariat's possible unity with the proletariat of other countries - the only practical unity, which, in undermining capitalist competition and the inevitable disasters which follow, could maintain even the present defences against the degradations of capital. Luckily for bureaucrats like Scargill, most people have been demoralised (by a daily life colonised more and more by external authority and the media that confuses this situation by presenting false choices which perpetuate the disease) so that struggling to destroy this irrational world of money, investment, trade and mass starvation seems like a romantic dream. Having censored this possibility from their minds, they feel 'happy' merely to cheer radical-sounding Leftists, who represent something apparently more dignified than the usual apologetic stance with which many feel obliged to present themselves.

The best 'reason' for the pathetic cowardice of the scabs is the nauseating spectacle of striking miners chanting "Arthur Scargill, Arthur Scargill, we'll support you evermore, evermore..." particularly amongst the Yorkshire miners. Perhaps they see this as simply for the media - a tactical display of unity - whilst behind the scenes the reservations towards this hypocrite are kept personal, in the form of sarcastic jokes behind his back. Nevertheless, even as a tactic, such displays are worse than useless: they reinforce not only the idea of the regionalism and parochialism of the Yorkshire miners, over-developed by the rising success of many Yorkshire football

## 1926 & All That

Almost 60 years ago, in 1926, British wages slaves contested the power of Capital to determine every aspect of their shattered lives. The combined weight of the mine owners, the whole of the capitalist class and its Tory governments' control over the means of intimidation, the servile strike-breaking fodder in the Army, the mercenary troops of student careerists, the power of Winston Churchill's media-muggers, a gang of collaborators called the TUC, a protection racket of political opportunists called the Labour Party - all, *without exception*, combined to weigh down, defeat and demoralise the masses of individuals in struggle. But despite the fact that, on the day *after* the TUC called the General Strike off, there were 100,000 *more* people on strike than on any previous day of the strike, despite the fact that their morale was also much tougher, despite the fact that many strikers had improvised local councils of action and developed spontaneous and widespread mass picket lines without the control of the Unions, when the TUC said, "It's all over" it was the *habit of obedience* which blinded them from seeing their own initiative and pushed them back to forced labour. Proletarians sell themselves out by putting their faith in bureaucrats who invariably "sell them out."

It is an evasion of reality to blame leaders (of Trade Unions or of political parties) for 'selling out' those they claim to represent. 'Sell-Out!' is a habitual complaint which, in not taking direct responsibility for the course of a struggle, merely functions as a complaint by those who want to be led, those who still believe that there is someone who could save them from their misery. Like the Malcolm X chant in the song "No Sell-Out," people vaguely hope that if they repetitively mouth the name of a famous leader and demand "No Sell-Out!" like a hypnotic mystical incantation, they can magically insure that they don't get sold out. When individuals resign their power to bureaucrats, the bureaucrats *inevitably* manipulate the

authority which these masses insufficiently contest. The failure to grasp the moment, or at least sharpen ones' grasp over what people have already achieved, is the retreat and defeat of class consciousness which is the basis for all demoralisation. Of course, it's easy, even if necessary, to denounce the obvious shits, just as it's so obviously essential to attack the masses own worst enemy - their lack of audacity. Nevertheless it's only easy to do this if the ivory tower of hindsight blocks you to seeing what's at the base: *here* is 1926, and *here* we must jump. As in 1926, today you and I are up against similar enemies (though often they're more subtly confusing). Today also, the central failure of those proletarians who consider themselves the most conscious is to actually communicate their critique to others in struggle, not only against all political, union and cultural manipulations of these struggles, but also against their own narrow arrogance which thinks itself "less resigned" than "the others." Proletarians are not going to break with their demoralisation and extend their revolt without also extending the *consciousness* of what they've done and haven't done - and that applies to those proletarians who consider themselves "class conscious" as much as to those who pretend to themselves that they're not.

Of course, 1984 both *is* and *isn't* 1926. For one thing, the stakes today are infinitely higher: the '30s at least had some street life - the '90s look like having neither streets nor life, if our rulers and their false opposition have their way this time round. Today, the *whole* of our truth, our friendships, our critiques, our desires, our loves, are at stake. Today, it's either All or the Nothingness of accepting our fate, and the lying apologies that go with this acceptance.

In 1926 a small group of strikers tried to set fire to *The Times* with lighter fluid from a tiny can. Shall the masses of today repeat the same mistake? Or shall we see something more than the Deptford Fire marchers of '81 shattering the windows of Fleet Street scum, or the ASLEF drivers refusing to distribute their lies early 1982? Or shall we be reduced to thumbing our noses at an increasingly intimidating world? The

because they have already sold their own voice, their anger and their desires, to bureaucrats like Scargill, who, in representing these points of view in the Courts Of The Bourgeoisie (the media and the negotiation rooms), acts as an immediately secure link with what appears to be realistic. Everywhere there are people acting for themselves in various ways, but very rarely speaking for themselves. Because hierarchical security appears everywhere as the only realistic and apparently *safe* path, the masses of individuals demand what seems secure according to the criteria demanded by that omnipresent God, the World Market (hallelujah!). Realism leads people to demand retirement at 55, no pit closures and £115 basic - which, even if accepted, which they won't be, are pretty minimal compensations for a wasted life. Moreover, these kinds of demands inevitably succumb to the logical implications of the contradictions of a globally competitive capital. In fact, any struggle against the graveyard of the Old World which is not to become self-defeating can only find the help and recognition of other struggles in the world by explicitly opposing the



Scargill speaks, cameras roll.

decomposition of the capitalist economy. Like Christ, 'rebels' like him who set themselves up as models, always end up as saviours of hierarchical power, even if they personally get nailed to the cross for a while. But, as the 1981 riots show, the masses are growing weary of apparently well-meaning, 'honorable' failures. Perhaps, horror of horrors, they might learn some of the basic lessons of these riots, the memory of which was meant to have been crushed by the great show of State power launched by the Task Force. Learning from history would mean that not only Mrs. T.'s skin would be at stake, but perhaps even the skins of the Leftists also. In September, 1982, Arthur Scargill, star of screen and negotiating table, acted like the Dixon of Dock Green that he is: when miners, on their own initiative, occupied the National Coal Board, he rushed along and politely, but firmly, ordered everybody out or else... The miners preferred to avoid the alternative choice by reluctantly obeying. But Scargill did at least make up for it by having a little tiff with Ezra later that afternoon. Such behaviour is typical of a man in his position: bureaucrats always have to *represent* opposition so as to better defuse it. As his predecessor, and apparent rival, Joe Gormley said during the '74 strike which kicked out Heath, "If [the strike] was called off, the members might walk all over us" (*Times*, December 9, 1974). Scargill has to appear militant merely to maintain his position. He certainly can't repeat the mistake he made in the spring of '81, just before the riots, when he steadfastly refused to encourage 'his' Yorkshire miners to strike against threatened pit closures, an order ignored by 'his' lads in four of the Yorkshire pits, and much resented, though relatively privately, by many sections of the Kent miners. Sure he may boast that he got nicked at Grunwicks, and even fantasise aloud about it having been a "victory" (like Dunkirk, no doubt), but that's so that you can forget about that awkward incident during the strike when he led the masses of miners *away* from the picket line because it was more important for him to play out the usual sheepish demo show than actually win a real battle. Of course, nobody simply gets 'sold out:' rebellious workers get 'sold out' partly

defeats of '26 softened the masses for the degradations of the Depression, the massacres of World War II, and the utterly boring passivity of the consumer society. Today the consequences of defeat could result in a qualitative deterioration of human communication that will make Auschwitz seem like a vicar's tea party. The consequences of victory, which will have to be global and irreversible, will have to result in a qualitative explosion of human communication that will make a vicars tea party seem like Auschwitz. Between the two what's the choice? All or Nothing.

In the early '70s, *Strikes 1926* (now simply *Strikes*) became a gruesome chain of restaurants where the modern proletariat can momentarily become the Master of the Menu, whilst someone else plays the servant. Here, we can choke on our mono-sodium glucomated hamburgers in the luxurious discomfort of glossy vinyl furniture, gleaming mirrors to dramatise each frozen gesture, and large posters of proletarian demonstrations from the 1920s - men running from the cops, kids and women begging for scraps, hunger marches, images of defeat and despair, to give us the feeling of comparative progress, perhaps. After all, the modern poor don't need the cops to chase them away: the minimum charge just to keep in the warm and have a cup of tea, the polite smile of the management telling you to fuck off in the nicest possible way, and the anxious stares of one's 'fellow' customers are all enough to kick those lowest in the hierarchy out into the welcoming streets. For those of us 'privileged' enough to be able to afford to provide the management with a profit, the surroundings invite us to console ourselves for our present impotence with an image of an even greater one. After all, if we didn't have this consolation we might remind ourselves that, even if the management condescendingly 'allows' us to consume to the rhythm of the Muzak, we still remain desperate for some meaningful contact. Sure, *things* have changed: but outside of class struggle, our domination by things and their price has become increasingly confusing and subtly debilitating. The essential degradations of daily life, of the inability of

human creativity to qualitatively transform the world about us, has vastly deteriorated - in many ways, because capital has been able to integrate the image of opposition, based on past defeats, into its horror show, into the development of the tedious passivity of a 'consumer' capitalism which is now decomposing faster than a vampire in daylight. Will today's proletarian struggle become yet another commodity for the consumption of future slave-spectators? Or...?



*The 20th anniversary recreation of The Battle of Orgreave by the conceptual artist Jeremy Deller: "Every aspect of the reenactment was designed to be as accurate as possible, with no political 'spin.'"*

## ***The Confusions of Unions***

*"It is the organisational form itself which renders the proletariat virtually impotent and which prevents them from turning the Union into an instrument of their will. The revolution can only win by destroying this organism, which means tearing it down from top to bottom so that something quite different can emerge."*

- Anton Pannekoek

*"Our quarrel is not with the unions... Our quarrel is only with the extremists who want to destroy the moderates in the unions - who want to destroy the unions themselves as they exist in this country."*

- Edward Heath, February 10, 1974

Even if the media bills Scargill as extremist, he clearly has much in common with Edward Heath, the former P.M. Both of them have realised how Trade Unionism is the enemy of the real unity of the proletariat, which rears its violent head every time the masses of individuals band together against work, against forced unemployment (like the occupations of the early '70s, particularly at Fisher Bendix) and against being policed, bossed about and insulted by two-faced functionaries. At Pilkingtons, in 1969, the workers on strike wrecked 'their' union office. In Port Talbot, the same year, steelworkers told the press that they had neither leaders nor spokesmen: "We are our own leaders," they said. In 1972, dockworkers tried to do over Jack Jones, who, inevitably, had sold them out. In 1977, firemen, fucked over as usual by the deal the bureaucrats fixed for them, went "on the rampage," hurling smoke bombs, damaging engines and smashing glass in their fire stations. Nowadays, the media bills Scargill as extremist to hide people from the authentic extremist position. Scargill isn't even as verbally extreme as the trade unionists who were around at the time of the '26 General Strike, like Purcell, who said, two years before the strike, "Workers must organise specifically and universally in direct opposition to capitalism and its political methods. Our patriotism must be that of loyalty, unashamed and unflinching, to our class the world over..." or Swales, who said at the Trade Union Congress nine months before the General Strike, "We shall be wanting neither machinery nor men to move forward to the destruction of wage slavery and the construction of a new order of society..." But in 1926, they were so scared of an autonomous movement that they ended up selling out on even the most measly attempts at proletarian self-protection. Nowadays, Scargill's rhetoric doesn't sound even as daring as these creeps. Everyone can be completely sure that, just so long as they let him, he'll end up just the same as the Purcells and Swales of this world - selling a demoralising defeat to his followers, possibly in order to get them to participate in an election for the bosses of the Labour party, but certainly in order to preserve his miserable role of House Rebel in the