

Open the Second Front

Martin Wright

1984

Contents

State of play	3
How to achieve this worthy task	5

State of play

In the terrain of industrial dispute we can claim, without the slightest fear of contradiction, that the miners strike has gone far beyond anything seen on mainland Britain. No mere wage struggle this, with everything played according to the book (i.e. mostly non violent excepting of course by the police). The positive aspects of this strike, that have on occasion erupted into brutal *class war*, are evident even for those of us who rely upon the sickening diet of newspapers and television for our misinformation.

So, what do we regard as positive?

1. Mass proletarian violence that has ranged from set-piece confrontations involving thousands of massed pickets and police. Not only the classic push and shove tussle, but full scale riots with intensive stone throwing, barricade building, wreckage and arson.
2. Violence not only at colliery gates and power plants, but police stations in pit villages attacked without warning, police and scab convoys ambushed, the birth of 'Paramilitary' Hit Squads causing vast amounts of damage to NCB¹ property. Cowboy outfits profiting from strike breaking and related activities have also been visited. Nothing within living memory has ever happened here on such an extensive scale. Not only have the police deployed riot equipment but such scenes have become commonplace. A precedent for the future?
3. The spirit of determination exhibited by the strikers, holding out against the massive police onslaught while showing no sign of caving in to intimidation.
4. Allied to this is the fact that the communities in solid areas are standing together with no intention of slinking back to work defeated. The strength of this struggle derives not only from the workplace but the community. (By community we don't mean the idealistic pipe dream of some inner city lefty gentrification, but a vibrant living entity). The impressive involvement of womens support groups is a product of this.
5. As an added bonus, scattered reports and rumours, somewhat difficult to substantiate at the moment, have been percolating down to us that some groups of miners no longer care whether they return to work or not. Others, in spite of the obvious hardships, are enjoying the longest break in their working lives. The re-possessed videos and t.v. sets haven't caused mass outbreaks of despair contrary to expectations. Violent class conflict has temporarily freed a section of the working class from hollow consumerism. We've also heard that small groups of miners are beginning to show an interest in anarchist politics.

We don't see the miners as passive victims of police brutality. In the heat of class war many are indeed on the receiving end of police boots and truncheons but as far as we're concerned the more violence and injuries the miners inflict on the police the better. However, the strikers have shown extraordinary signs of autonomous initiative, ignoring union pleas to keep within limits that have crippled the working class.

Hit squads, attacks on police stations, incidents during mass pickets such as Orgreave are an indication, a pointer to unknown territory. Its not the purpose of the article to 'criticise' Scargill

¹National Coal Board

and the N.U.M.² Sufficient to say that we don't in any way regard the unions as a revolutionary organisations. The time for post-mortems will be after any sell-out. But neither is it our task to berate other comrades for their rightful criticisms.

At this point we'd also like to mention some of the negative aspects of this struggle.

1. The striking miners are not questioning, so far, the nature of unionism, its role in capitalist society, the system. This probably won't happen until the final phase of the dispute, particularly if any sell-out or compromise is too blatant.
2. There's no denying that the police, in some areas, have constituted themselves into a virtual army of occupation, employing a terror so far only experienced by the rebellious young of the decaying inner cities. The police have also had the chance to perfect the future strategy of state repression. Still, its better the pigs suffer their casualties in a genuine struggle that in riot training. The strikers, not without cost (over 5,000 arrests) have also learnt a thing or two.
3. The ferocity of the struggle has tended to obscure a glaring fact. The miners stand alone. Below we hope to indicate an untried path that could remedy this situation. Drastic action that doesn't require the assistance of the T.U.C.
4. Perhaps the most repellent aspect has been the behaviour of the self proclaimed leftist vanguards. Swooping like trained hawks, they see conflict in terms of paper sales and eventual recruitment. It goes without saying that the majority of these individuals are from a background far removed from that of the proletarian fraternity. Nevertheless the amount of demoralisation they are capable of causing is tremendous, perhaps more so in the wake of strike. Even when performing what appears to be useful tasks such as collecting 'for the miners' rumour abound about misappropriation of cash raised, some of it apparently being hived off into party projects.
5. Even more revolting (if such things can be imagined) is the attitude of the TUC and Labour party, whose leaders are more concerned with preventing proletarian violence than winning the strike. Kinnock is even resorting to form a left-nationalism in his pathetic attempts to curb the healthy development of class violence. Its "alien to the temperament and the intelligence of the British trade union movement". Nor will ballots. Instinctively, if nothing else, the strikers are aware of this, yet still they listen and tolerate Labour politicians prattling on about 'victory' at their rallies. Politically the strikers have yet to make the break. But that's not to say it won't happen.

Never mind the Left, Labour party and TUC. What has the anarchist contribution been? Collecting for the miners may ease the conscience of some anarchists. Sure, we all give money for food but really there isn't all that much of a difference between collecting for the strikers and the starving of Africa. Going to the picket lines makes no real overall difference. What's another couple of dozen here or there mean? Most anarchist papers do little but pour out irrelevances. A class war raging and one calls for a ballot! Others go to the other extreme and print articles offering full support- to the NUM bureaucracy! Another idiot writes that the miners can be starved into revolution!

²National Union of Miners

So, after 6 months of this momentous strike, with the prospect of it lasting in 1985, we seriously propose a state of minor insurgency as the real anarchist contribution.

In the past, we of the autonomist/ class war type current have been ridiculed when we predicted mass political violence on the streets during the comparatively tranquil mid-70s. With the struggle against the Nazis, the foundations were laid for the uprisings of '81. Again we predicted this occurrence fairly accurately. Far from being passive commentators or spectators many of us were part of the events. Simultaneously we looked forward to insurgent strikes of a continental variety. And to a certain degree its been blazing away for months.

So as the strike enters the winter months with the possibility of power cuts, we put forward these as yet rough suggestions to genuine revolutionaries and anarchists who aren't of the wally variety.

1. To organise from within the movement, as we've done in the past by word of mouth and the usual informal contact meetings involving delegates from as many trustworthy anarchist groups as possible.
2. Planning deliberate spectacular mini riots as soon as the power cuts arrive (or failing that, late afternoon darkness). The aim being to spark off trouble in the major urban areas, thus drawing police out of the mining areas.

How to achieve this worthy task

As proved on the July anti-Regan demo we can cause thousands of pounds worth of damage without suffering a single arrest, if well planned and co-ordinated. Judging by 'Stop the City' turnouts and our own interventions we can raise a force of at least 200 in London alone. This may be a conservative estimate. Obviously we don't intend squandering people in face to face confrontation, as we may need to repeat the performance. Besides, we're not of the martyr material. In case the sceptical reader may wonder how such a plan could be achieved, here's a brief scenario. Of course its only by comrades working together that we can oil out the mechanics of the operation.

1. Thanks to the Electricity Board publishing where the blackouts occur , we could assemble in a certain area at a pre-arranged time. Any sign of abnormal police presence would mean postponement.
2. The ideal area would be a shopping area such as a high street. The crowds providing perfect cover when assembling our teams. Plenty of escape routes would be necessary. Gloves, scarf's and balaclavas wouldn't arouse suspicion during winter.
3. At a pre-arranged signal upon the advent of lights out, the mob could condense within seconds, swinging into action. Parked cars should be dragged across the road turned over, or even set alight, forming barricades, and causing traffic chaos there by making police access more difficult. Windows must be smashed, looting encouraged. Those police first on the scene if small in number could be resisted with bricks and other throwable material. Before they can gather sufficient strength, again at a pre-arranged signal, we'd disperse into darkness.

4. Headlines captured it wouldn't take long for the example to spread. Against this background we'd blend, time to add our political dimension.
5. Propaganda urging the opening of a second front, with the attendant looting and rioting, must appear beforehand. It should be made clear that these actions are a deliberate effort to spread class conflict as opened by the miners' strike. While the spreading of propaganda is an important task, we can't afford to dilute our numbers by having some engaging in their own individual actions simultaneously as has happened in recent times. Not only do they draw numbers away but these alternative actions mysteriously fail to appear. As a side interest this would show who really meant business and who was just all mouth. No one group should lead it, this is our common task. We've just contributed with this suggestion, now's the time to discuss the matter seriously.

There is no alternative as far as we can see. It's all right to sloganise about setting up factory committees or community councils and call for a general strike. As these don't seem to be materialising it all remains a comfortable abstraction. We're not the vanguard but as a tiny fraction of the class the plan mapped out above is the only realistic action we can indulge ourselves in, gain results for the miners AND ourselves.

The Anarchist Library
Anti-Copyright



Martin Wright
Open the Second Front
1984

Retrieved on September 14, 2010 from gawainwilliams.wordpress.com
Published in 'Class War', September 1984.

theanarchistlibrary.org