

The Contribution of Margaret Thatcher as a “Woman” in the Debacle of the “Male-Led” 1984-1985 Strike in England

Laounia GOURCHAL*

University of Abou Bakr-Belkaid Tlemcen
(Algeria)

laounia.gourchal@univ-mascara.dz

Laboratory of Dialogue of Civilizations
and Religions in the Mediterranean Basin

Received: 2021-07-06

Prof. Faiza SENOUCI MBERBECHE

University of Abou-Bakr Belkaid Tlemcen
(Algeria)

senoucif@hotmail.fr

Accepted: 2021-11-16

Abstract

In 1984, the governmental reaction against a male-led 1984-1985 Strike represented a watershed in the British history. Margaret Thatcher, the first female Prime Minister, worked on crushing the strike and the strikers although being a “woman” whereas the previous male Prime Ministers, before Thatcher, failed to crush the previous strikes although being “men”. This paper, in fact, aims at expounding the reasons behind the strike. Put simply, it attempts to find out the way Thatcher reacted to the miners’ unrest. Furthermore; it sheds light on whether the debacle of the strike was because of the power of the “female” political intervention itself or only a result of changing the gist of governmental dissent against the strikers. To meet this end, the qualitative method is appropriately hinged on. The findings show that the debacle of the strike went in tandem with the power and role a woman can play in politics.

Key Words: 1984-1985 Strike, Margaret Thatcher, Male-led, debacle, politics.

* Corresponding author

Introduction:

Strikes did not and, in fact, do not take place out of a vacuum, there is always a reason or a number of reasons that triggered a number of people to be involved in their direct action or riots expressing their unwillingness to accept something imposed on them. Strikes represent an occasion to echo for change, calling for a right or an attempt to prevent something before it happens. They are considered as a protest in which the strikers expressed their rebellion, anger and wrath against someone or a number of people.

The twentieth century Britain witnessed a plenty of strikes against government or governmental decisions. They embarked on a process of averting governmental plans to be fulfilled or calling for change. The Miners Strike (1984-1985) is an example. The miners went on strike against a governmental plan to close coal pits. The strike was extended from 1984 and officially ended in 1985 resulting in a total fiasco for the miners and a great success for government.

The Miners Strike (1984-1985) flared up when Margaret Thatcher was the Prime Minister and the leader of the Conservative Party (1979-1990). She was the first elected woman as a prime minister. This female entry to such outstanding political position marked the zenith of female political participation. As a political trailblazer, she introduced radical changes not introduced by her male predecessors and , above all, exercised her authority over the strikers who reacted furiously to one of her political decisions which was the closure of a number of coal pits. Her political power, against male strikers, mirrored her successful intervention in silencing the strikers and made their plans void and invalid.

This paper attempts to shed light on the nature and the reasons that triggered the miners in England to involve themselves in this strike against Margaret Thatcher. Additionally, it tries to investigate the nature of Thatcher's reaction during a one year chaotic era. The most focal point to be elucidated is to know whether the fiasco the strikers encountered had something to do with the unchallengeable role Margaret Thatcher played in politics as a "woman" or the miners' failure was just because of the altered tactics to stop the riots. To meet this end, the following research question are raised. First and foremost, why did the Miners' Strike take place? How did the British government, under Thatcher, react? What about the outcome of the strike? Since the strikers were harshly crushed by Margaret Thatcher, what were the reasons that contributed to the governmental breakthrough against the strikers? Was the fiasco the strikers endured due to the importance of female gender in politics or just a result of changing governmental tactics to overcome the threat of the strikers?

What seemed debatable is the intervention of the female Prime Minister in crushing the strike leading to its debacle. She represented the female authority over the male strikers although being successful in their strikes under previous male Prime Ministers. To meet this end, the following hypothesis is formulated. The only reason that culminated in the debacle of the Miners Strike was the authority that a woman played in politics. To be able to confirm or fail to confirm the

aforementioned hypothesis, the researcher resorts to the reliance on the qualitative method. The latter refers to relying on historical sources and grasp only what is relevant.

1. Margaret Thatcher as a Prime Minister (1979-1990):

Margaret Thatcher became the first female Prime Minister after achieving a landslide victory in the General Election of 1979. She represented the victory of the Conservative Party as the leading one acquiring the majority of seats in parliament. As a Prime Minister and the leader of the Conservative Party, she introduced radical changes especially in the economic field.

1.1.Margaret Thatcher: Brief Biography:

She was born Margaret Hilda Roberts on October 13, 1925 in Grantham, and England. She was educated in Grantham Girls' High School. She was the daughter of a businessman. Her first and early inclination to politics took place due to her father who used to be a member in their town's council. Later on, she was accepted at Oxford University and she studied chemistry at Somerville College. She graduated in 1947 and she started practicing her speciality as a research chemist in Colchester.

She was nicknamed "the Iron lady". The term describes a "strong willed" woman. The iron metaphor was most famously applied to Margaret Thatcher, and was coined by Captain Yuri Gavrillov in 1976 in the Soviet newspaper *Red Star* for her staunch opposition to the Soviet Union and socialism (Definitions for Iron Lady). The Expression "Iron Lady" has a bad connotation in the Soviet Union, but it started to be used in Britain as a kind of glorifying Margaret Thatcher. In a speech at Salborne Hall in London, she celebrated her new nickname. She announced "I stand before you tonight, my face softly made up and my fair hair gently waved, the Iron Lady of the Western World... yes I'm an iron lady" (Fisher, 2013)

The dawn of her foray into politics in general and the Conservative Party in particular dated back to 1950 when she emerged as conservative candidate for a Dartford parliamentary seat in 1950 election, but in vain. In 1952, she started studying another specialty which was law. Later, she became a barrister in 1953. Her first political crowning achievement came in 1959 when she won a seat in the House of Commons. In 1961, she became secretary for pensions and national insurance and secretary of state for education and science in 1970. Her political participation reached its zenith in 1975 when she was elected leader of the Conservative Party in 1975 in the general election. She emerged as the first woman Prime Minister in the British history. (Margaret Thatcher, 2014)

1.2.The 1979 General Election Results:

It was the first election in the British history whose results culminated in appointing a woman as a Prime Minister. It took place on Thursday, May 3, 1979. The Conservatives scored a decisive victory over the Labour Party led by James Callaghan (1912-1990) Prime Minister (1976-1979) and the Liberal Party led by David Steel as Prime Minister from (1976-1988). The results showed also that the leading political Party in parliament was the Conservative Party led by Margaret

Thatcher scoring 13,697,923 seats which represented 339 winnable seats in parliament. (Election news summary, 1997) The following table shows the results of the 1979 Election.

Table 1: The 1979 General Election Results

Party	Votes	Seats	UK Vote Share %
Conservative	13,697,923	339	43,9
Labour	11,532,218	269	36.9
Liberal	4,313,804	11	13,8
Others	1,677,417	16	5,4

Source: (Election news summary, 1997)

During her electoral campaign, Margaret Thatcher promised crushing the trade unions and curbing their power. Even before being a political trailblazer in parliament, her enmity with trade unions was inevitable. She commented “I shall have something more to say when things are entirely clear....” (Apple, 1979). The election was not only a moment that gave the conservative Party an opportunity to win over the other parties, but it opened new horizons for Margaret Thatcher to hold power. It was described as “the most domineering of all post-war Prime Ministers and the longest-serving ...” (Blamont & Paquette, 2000, p. 84)

1.3.The Establishment of the Conservative Party:

The origins of the Conservative Party dated back to the seventeenth century 1783-1830 and originated from the older “Tory Party”. The word “conservative” was suggested by John Wilson Croker (1780-1857) in the 1830’s. The latter was one of the writers writing articles to be published in the *Quarterly Review*. He claims that it was referred to as “conservative” because the party glorified traditional values and practices. (Moulin, 2006, p. 74). The party was established in 1832 going in tandem with the 1832 General Election. It was dissolved in 1834 to restart its political work the same year when it was officially founded. The first conservative government was formed by Robert Peel (1788-1850). The program of the party was ingrained in Tamworth Manifesto written by Robert Peel himself. (Louth)

Tamworth Manifesto refers to the electoral speech delivered by Robert Peel in 1834. One of the issues addressed in the speech was the establishment of the Conservative Party and the beginning of its government. The UK Dictionary defines Tamworth Manifesto as “an election speech by Sir Robert Peel in 1834 in his Tamworth constituency, in which he accepted the changes instituted by the Reform Act and expressed his belief in moderate political reform. The manifesto is widely held to signal the emergence of the Conservative Party from the old loose grouping of Tory interests” (Tamworth Manifesto)

1.4.Thatcherite Economic Policy and the Seeds of Thatcherism:

The economic management of any country in the world is the way to its progress or demise. Thatcher’s government was overshadowed by a series of economic radical reforms. Helen Thompson (1996) points out that the way of economically managing a country determined whether the good or the bad governmental performance. (Thompson, 1996, p. 167)

Margaret Thatcher presided over the Conservative Party and introduced a number of changes that resulted in economic watershed. Her style of government and the policies she introduced and the process of maintaining political and economic sweeping reforms came to be known as Thatcherism. The latter is defined as “Thatcher’s style of leadership and the policies she promoted and enforced.....This was somewhat loose concept which encompassed her policies of strengthening the powers of central government, curbing the power of trade unions and local government and the active advocacy of individualism and private enterprise” (Moulin, 2006, p. 76).

This article, in fact, is not concerned with all the economic strategies Thatcher promoted and enforced, but it attempts to shed light on Thatcher animosity towards the trade unions and the appropriate economic remedy she resorted to for the sake of ceasing their threat to the state. Moreover, the thatcherite government supported the privatisation of industries and the promotion of individualism. The state’s thirst for controlling and owning coal industry triggered the thatcherite attempts to thwart the authority of the miners in the 1984-5 strike.

Climbing the ladder of politics, Margaret Thatcher firstly introduced new economic policy. She encouraged the independence of the individual from the state and curbed the governmental intervention in economy. She worked on turning Britain from a dependent on the state to a self-dependent nation. She glorified the idea of individualism. She supports the fact that the population were no longer in need of the state in every step they would do. Individuals should be free to live their life without the government intervention. She makes it clear “Let me give you my vision: a man's right to work as he will, to spend what he earns, to own property, to have the state as servant and not as master: these are the British inheritance. They are the essence of a free country, and on that freedom all our other freedoms depend” (Bollick, 1995, p. 533)

Additionally ,she embarked on the process of privatizing state-owned industries such as coal as an example. Privatization refers to the case when a government-owned business or property becomes owned by private companies .The Encyclopaedia Britannica (2018) defines privatization as “the transfer of government services or assets to the private sector .State-owned assets may be sold to private owners ,or statutory restrictions on competition between privately and publicly owned enterprises may be lifted” (Britannica, 2018).

If light is shed on labour and trade unions during pre-Thatcher years as a Prime Minister, those unions were saddled with great power that paved the way for them to avoid stark challenges. It was estimated that 55% of workers were members of labour unions. (Bollick, 1995, p. 530) In this vein, trade unions exercised an unchallenged power even over politicians. They were involved in strikes against male MPs in which they were successful. From the start of her government, she expressed her struggle against trade unions believing that the management of the country is the onus of parliament and government, but not the onus of trade unions. Above all, trade unions should be under the authority of government.

She could also be highly pragmatic behind the scenes, moving step-by-step when that seemed like the best way of getting what she wanted: the trade unions, for example, were slowly strangled by a combination of job-losses and separate pieces of legislation before she finally finished them off by confronting the miners in the mid-eighties. (Bale, 2013, p. 10)

It is important to mention that Margaret Thatcher was victorious over the miners in their strike being launched in 1984. Thus, the strikers before Thatcher's administration were powerful to the extent that male Prime Ministers could not overcome their increased authority. Thatcher, as a woman, did her best to make from her gender a key to forestall the threat of the miners.

2. The Female Prime Minister's Reaction to the Miners' Strike (1984-1985):

Margaret Thatcher was the first woman in the UK to serve as a Prime Minister from 1979-1990. Her era of government marked a turning point in the history of trade unions. Her policy was overshadowed by anti-unionism. By the same token, her attitudes towards the miners came to mirror the vendetta against the strikers who wanted to keep exercising an unchallengeable power alongside the parliamentary power. As a political trailblazer and as a woman, she thrived to diminish their efforts

2.1. Miners' Strike: A Key Opening the Gate of Chaos in England:

The Miners Strike was one of the terrible industrial strikes England had ever witnessed. It was an anarchical era not only in England, but also in Scotland and Wales in which coal miners went on strike against a governmental decision by Margaret Thatcher. The strike, in turn, "served as the longest and the most significant dispute in modern industrial history..." (Towers, 1985). It dictated that 25 coal pits (Elin, 2015) should be closed. The strikers were under the leadership of Arthur Scargill (born in 1938) who declared that the strike is a "social and industrial Battle of Britain" (Cowell, 2014). He founded the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) to protest against the state-owned National Coal Board's (NCB) closure of coal mines.

Since the NUM and the NCB were the organizations that represented the confronting parts namely the strikers and the state, it is of great significance to have an idea about each one of them. First and foremost, the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) was not firstly established in the twentieth century. It was firstly established in 1889 being called The Miners Federation of Great Britain (MFGB). Until 1945, its name was altered to become labeled as National Union of Mineworkers (NUM). It took place in three male-led strikes against government 1972, 1974 and the last fruitless one 1984.

Moreover, the second institution representing the state against the strikers was the National Coal Board (NCB). It was not created for granted. Its establishment was pertinent with strengthening the government's ownership and control of the nationalized coal industry. It was formed in 1947 after the nationalization of Coal industry in 1946. It was pointed out that the onus of NCB was to "supply coal in such quantities and at such prices as may seem to them best

calculated to further the public interest in all respects, including the avoidance of any undue or unreasonable preference or advantage...” (Posner, 1962, p. 43)

Things started to change after the nationalization of coal industry during the administration of Clement Atlee as a Prime Minister (1945-1951). The process of transferring coal industry as a state-owned industry took place in 1946 through the parliamentary enactment of the Coal Industry Nationalization Act (1946). It was followed by the establishment of National Coal Board (NCB) responsible for managing coal mining and coal industry.

The strike action did not occur from scratch. There were a number of reasons that triggered the coal miners to strike against government trying, unsuccessfully, to prevent the prime Minister from closing coal mines on the one hand. On the other hand, Margaret Thatcher, represented by NCB, did not resort to closing several coal mines for granted. It is of great importance to note that the NCB’s decision to close 20 coal mines meant the loss of 20.000 jobs; that is why the workers in those coal mines found themselves obliged to express their refusal and protest against the closure. (Miners Strike 1984-1985) The table mentioned below shows statistics of jobs’ loss in collieries before, during and even after the strike. The closure of the coal pits had a catastrophic impact on the workers in coal mines. Losing their jobs in coal pits will, with no doubt, lead to unemployment.

Table Two: Loss of Coal Jobs, 1981-2004

Coalfield	Male Job Loss 1981-2004
Yorkshire	67000
Nottinghamshire	40300
Durham	22800
Derbyshire	13700
Northumberland	10100
S Derbyshire/NW Leicestershire	9600
North Staffordshire	8600
Lancashire	7100
South Staffordshire	5700
North Warwickshire	5500
Kent	3200
England and Wales coalfields	222000

Source: (Beatty, Fothergill, & Powell, 2007, p. 1660)

The Coal Industry Nationalization Act received parliamentary approval and governmental enactment on July12, 1946 for the sake of granting coal industry to public ownership. The placement of coal industry under the state’s control went in tandem with a remarkable halt to the activities of the previous coal companies. This was a turning point that radically attracted the attention of the female Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher to be ready to act. The governmental nationalization of coal mines and coal industry was a must that needed to be urgently accomplished “The Government’s view was that any delay in the take-over of the industry would only result in prolonging the period of uncertainty” (Saxena, 1955, p. 27)

In the light of the placement of coal mining and coal industry at the state's hands, it was the onus of the government to finance the newly-owned industry. By 1980, the local coal production became unprofitable and coal industry itself had been referred to as "unprofitable industry" (Producers, Performance Profiles of Major Energy, 1993). Since the industry required government subsidies, the government decided to shut coal pits.

Instead of financing unprofitable coal industry, money would be invested to run other profitable industries such as gas and oil. The government, in this vein, spent huge funds on coal industry through providing new equipment and new mining strategies. The remarkable decreased need of coal led the governmental decision to shut coal mines and rather financing other profitable sectors. Thus, the decline in the demand for coal was a prelude to a chaotic phase under the umbrella of the miners' strike (1984-1985).

Gouiffess, P (2009, 14) called Coal "the black gold". During the nineteenth and early twentieth century Britain, coal enjoyed multiple functions. It was a source of heat, energy and lighting. Above all, Britain was the cradle of the industrial Revolution that tremendously hinging on coal as a raw material. "the British production of coal jumped from 2.5 million tons (1700) to 10 million tons (1800), 73 million tons (1850) and 230 million tons at the beginning of the 20th century." Through the upcoming years, coal production reached its apogee through a remarkable increase yearly. (GOUIFFES, 2009, p. 14). George Orwell shared the same view about the necessity of coal in peoples' life. He make is clear:

Our civilization, pace Chesterton, is founded on coal, more completely than one realizes until one stops to think about it. The machines that keep us alive, and the machines that make machines, are all directly or indirectly dependent upon coal. In the metabolism of the Western world the coal-miner is second in importance only to the man who ploughs the soil. He is a sort of caryatid upon whose shoulders nearly everything that is not grimy is supported.... (Pettinger, 2016)

All in all, the strike of 1984 was an occasion when male miners emerged as a united class against government to prevent Thatcher from closing the coal pits. The female Prime Minister, if compared to previous male Prime Ministers, did not stand hand-tied. Even before her administration, she started working on surmounting over the power of trade unions. The strike of 1984 was a golden opportunity for her to confront the strikers as a governor and as a woman.

2.2.The Female Opponent to the Strike Action: Bringing the Strikers to their knees:

Margaret Thatcher introduced a plethora of economic reform legislations focusing on curbing the power of trade unions. She perceived their authority as "tyranny" (Bollick, 1995, p. 537). What added insult to the injury was that trade unions did not welcome those economic legislations and those stark governmental challenges on the one hand. On the other hand, they wanted their authority to remain untouched.

a. The Origin of the Governmental Hostility to Trade Unions:

The 1984 Strike was not the first occasions portraying the governmental negative response to the strikers. The Conservatives' hostility and opposition to trade unionism dated back to 1977 through introducing the Ridley Report. As a political leader, she exercised her power against trade unions. "Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher maintained publicly that she had no choice but to stand up to the country's most powerful union, the leaders of which, she argued, were ignoring economic necessity by trying to maintain a raft of uneconomic, nationalized industries" (Rawsthorne, 2018, p. 156)

The Ridley Report known as "Ridley Plan" was not the personal creation of Margaret Thatcher and it was not even introduced during her mandate. It was drafted in 1977 by Nicholas Ridley under the title of "Financial Report of the Nationalized Industries Policy Group" (Berry, 2019). Nicholas Ridley, the one who drafted the report, shared a common issue with Thatcher that was his struggle against the nationalization of industries. His family's coal and steel were nationalized during Clement Attlee period as a Prime Minister. (Berry, 2019). It was pointed out that Margaret Thatcher vehemently favoured privatization and she really did and applied on all the already nationalized industries. By the same token, she absorbed the ideas of privatization from this written report before being a Prime Minister. It can be said that she was conscious and aware of the threat of trade unions before setting foot in parliament as a Prime Minister.

The report was a written document carrying among its folding a detailed version of the conditions and the strategies how to confront the trade unions on the one hand. The report is defined by Phil Rawsthorne as "a Conservative think-tank paper produced in 1977, which appeared to include a detailed blueprint on how to provoke, and secondly win, a battle against Britain's powerful miners' union" (Rawsthorne, 2018, p. 156).

On the other hand, it elucidated the way how to be victorious against trade unions. Furthermore, the most pivotal part in the report sheds light on how to privatize industries.

"It outlines a plan to prepare the ground for privatization by introducing market measures in the running of nationalized industries (such as changes of leadership, targets for return on capital, and new incentives for managers), and fragmenting the public sector into independent units that could later be sold off..." (Berry, 2019)

In this vein, Margaret Thatcher got the theoretical principles of undermining the power of the unions from the 1977 Report and when being a prime minister, it was a golden opportunity to make practice the kernel of the report. Since she was acquainted with the way how to crush and face the threat of trade unions, the strike was an important occasion to practically express her struggle with them

b. Thatcher's Tactics to Crush the Strikers:

Whenever focusing on someone or a group a people being opponents to another one or other group of people, it is preferable always to shed light on the

“how” being against, the “why” being against and the “outcome” of being against. The first female Prime Minister unstable relation with the strikers is one example. From the early stages of the strike, she expressed her hostility to strikers, branded its leader and gave the green light for the outbreak of a war against the minors. She represented herself as a real impediment in the path of strikers on the one hand. She claimed in her resignation speech “one of her greatest achievement in office had been defeating the strikers”. (Shaw, 2015). On the other hand, she devoted her policy to forestall the danger of trade unions that threatened her authority.

Margaret Thatcher worked on avoiding the screeching results of the pre-1984 strikes during the administration of male prime Ministers. As a woman on politics, she wanted to alter the governmental reaction to those peace-breakers through their chaotic riots. She introduced several tactics to make from her intervention in crushing the strike a fruitful one. Before the closure of coal pits, Margaret Thatcher thought of providing coal quantities for future use. She resorted to storing coal supplies for local use before being forcefully stored by the strikers.

It is worth mentioning that the opposition against someone or a group of people took a number of forms depending on the circumstances and the nature of the strike. Thatcher mobilized police and heavily relied on the military power to bitterly crush the strikers:

The government mobilized the police in a highly coordinated military-style offensive against the miners, designed to isolate the Nottinghamshire area and break picket lines elsewhere, for example using mounted police with truncheons to charge down pickets at Orgreave. They occupied mining villages, arrested 11,312 people and tried 5,653 in the courts for alleged offences (most of them miners) (Darlington, 2005)

2.3. The “Female” Gender in Politics: A Fruitful Response to Male Action

The unchallenged female participation in parliamentary politics and the focal role women MP’s played in parliament mirrored the female ability to legislate, to decide and why not to change the local affairs of the country. Not only men were qualified for the political management. Meanwhile, the female perspectives in politics are very pivotal when it comes to the responsiveness to citizens’ needs. If this idea is linked with the kernel of this paper, Margaret Thatcher is proved successful when it comes to her responsiveness to chaos the miners thrived to spread in England. Being able to crush the male miners means, in one way or another, the role a woman leader in the Conservative Party had accomplished. Although women and men did not share a political equality and women were repeatedly characterized by their underrepresentation in parliament, the presence of the female minority in politics contributed to endless goals women realized as political participants. (Didi, 2020)

On the top of that, one of the occupations in which women excel is being a minister and political participant. According to the psychologist John Holland in

his book *Making Vocational Choices* (1992), there are six types of occupations: realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising and conventional. Being a minister or Member of Parliament is classified as a social occupation. In a study conducted by Richard A. Lippa about gender and performance; he found out that women prefer social work more than men. The study encapsulated 14,000 participants. In this vein, one of the jobs in which women can do better and fruitfully involved is being a minister. (A.Lippa, 2005, p. 31)

Shedding light on the female successful political intervention to fruitfully encounter local issues, gender played an integral part in this success through the crowning accomplishments of Margaret Thatcher crushing the Miners' Strike of 1984. Mariane Jane Simms (2008) emphasized the role women played in politics. She depicted the female political leaders as "parliamentary mothers" in politics as "a gendered occupation". Women assuming responsibilities as political leaders will do the same thing as mothers in the home. Being a woman was never a hurdle for her political engagement, but a source of strength. In this paper, the researcher always links the power of that woman in crushing the miners' strikes already threatening her male predecessors in politics "hence being a woman, a mother and a diminutive, even fragile, appearance were turned into political pluses" (Simms, 2008)

As it is previously mentioned, the 1984 strike was not the sole one to take place against government echoing change or forestalling governmental local decisions. It was preceded by other strikes when "male" prime ministers were holding power. But those strikes were not crushed and the strikers were not harshly treated like what happened when a "female" Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher was holding power. As an example, the strikes of 1972 and 1974 was represented a total success for strikers against "male" Prime ministers but when Margaret Thatcher in office, she wanted to take revenge and never grant the strikers an opportunity to spoil the governmental authority and defeated the conservative government. (Spence & Stephensen, 2009). Gender played a vital role during this strike. The latter witnessed the intervention of the two genders men and women. Men strikers supported by women expressing their hostility against a woman in cabinet. Thus, the female gender was of great importance in terms of support and reaction.

Margaret Thatcher, though a woman, but appeared as a winner against millions of male strikers. She described the strikers as being an enemy to be defeated in one way or another. In her speech in July 1984, she claimed "We always have to be aware of the enemy within, which is much more difficult to fight and more dangerous to liberty," (Travis, 2013). She did not solely confront the strikers and forestall the threat of trade unions to the state, but she introduced radical changes never introduced before. Additionally, she governed the UK in ways totally different from the previous leaders.

“The very fact that Thatcher can be lauded as the woman who broke the mould tells its own story, confirming that even today it is thought unlikely that a woman – a mere woman! – can be politically driven, willing to dispense with the advice of more moderate colleagues, and capable of leading a society in new and unanticipated direction” (Phillips, 2013, p. 13)

Being a woman in the corridors of power did not make from her a hesitant administrator to position herself against men. On the contrary, being a female strengthened her to be always ready to overcome any kind of threat to local stability of Britain. Her involvement and her iron will against male strikers in 1984 reflected the idea that even a woman can contribute to the debacle of a plan solely set up by men. Her brave reaction against the strikers mirrored her strong personality and her ceaseless will to be a powerful leader in any kind of war being involved in. Her bitter reaction during a bitter one year of confrontations with male strikers expounds the fact that it is not a matter of being a male or female and it is not a matter of the nature of someone's gender, but the real matter is the role that gender plays. Golder (2019) provided a detailed description of Thatcher as a qualified woman for political participation in a sphere used to be reserved for men only. He wrote:

Margaret Thatcher's portrayal as a strong personality who was, even if excessively, determined to follow her own track puts forward an image of political will and power. As power is generally seen as a political asset, it seems that the caricature elaborated by Spitting Image came to reinforce Margaret Thatcher's legitimacy and reputation (Golder, 2019)

Ostracizing the male-led strike, although supported by women, was one of Thatcher's glass ceiling-shattering accomplishments. Although she did her best to achieve her task as “a Prime Minister” not as “a woman Prime Minister”, the female gender presence in the already male-led political sphere (parliament) proved as a fruitful one and one of the crowning achievements of the female fabrication of political decisions. “Thatcher made an indelible mark on how women candidates are measured.....She was a very successful politician and politicians are manipulators” (Metzler, 2013). She exhibited her ability as a woman to manipulate the chaotic era England had witnessed and dominate the male strikers' rising hostilities.

The male strikers, led by Arthur Scargill, endeavoured to bitterly oppose the female decision of closing coal mines and ousting a great number of workers but in vain due to the unchallengeable intervention of the first woman prime Minister. “Mrs. Thatcher was confident when the strike began that she could outlast Mr. Scargill” (Jr., 1984). It was pointed out that the reason that triggered the governmental reaction against the strike was mainly political not economic.

Thatcher in power, worked on making it impossible for the previous flaws to re-happen. If the government keep welcoming and quenching the strikers' thirst for fulfilling their demands, this means curbing the power and the political authority. Edward Heath (1979-1974), one of the Prime Ministers who served as leaders of the Conservative party, although a man, but he failed to defeat the strikers twice in 1972 and 1974.

Conclusion:

In a nutshell, the strike of 1984-1985 against Margaret Thatcher was an occasion that portrayed several realities about the role played by the female gender in politics. In this vein, Margaret Thatcher contributed to the debacle of the 1984-1985 strike through her female touch and her principles as a woman and as a Prime Minister. Gender, in this case, demarcated the political responsibilities and is considered as defining factor in political equality between both genders although never been realized.

To wrap it up, the female success in crushing the male strikers, thwarting the danger of trade unions does not mirror the ability of Margaret Thatcher as a political leader but , undeniably, as a female successful political trailblazer. This was guaranteed through the defeat of the Conservative party by strikers in the Pre-Thatcher's era. The party was led by a man but easily defeated. Margaret Thatcher, although a woman, proved herself as a successful fighter against the male strikers. In this case, the role of women in politics remains always a debatable topic due to the myriad of contradicting views that women were, are and never be qualified to run political mission. The female gender coexistence with the male gender in politics is not a hurdle to be omitted, but according to this research that encapsulated among its folding realities about the unchallengeable role Margaret Thatcher played in politics, women have to be welcomed in politics and encouraged to climb the ladder of the process of decision-making.

Bibliographic References

- A.Lippa, R. (2005). *Gender, Nature, and Nurture*. New York: Taylor and Francis Group.
- Apple, R. W. (1979, May 4). Conservatives Win British Vote; Margaret Thatcher First Women to Head a European Government. Retrieved June 30, 2021, from <https://www.nytimes.com/1979/05/04/archives/conservatives-win-british-vote-margaret-thatcher-first-woman-to.html>
- Bale, T. (2013). Margaret Thatcher has a fair claim to be called the most influential politician since the Second World War, but her legacy is still hotly dispute today because of her mistakes and weak points. in *The Legacy of Margaret Thatcher* (p. 10). London: LSE Public Policy Group.
- Beatty, C., Fothergill, S., & Powell, R. (2007). Twenty Years on: Has the Economy of the UK Coalfields Recovered? *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* , 39 (7), 1654-1675.

- Berry, C. (2019, October 28). Thatcher had a battle plan for her economic revolution – now the left needs one too. Retrieved July 5, 2021, from <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/oureconomy/thatcher-had-a-battle-plan-for-her-economic-revolution-now-the-left-needs-one-too/>
- Blamont, G., & Paquette, A. (2000). *Les clés de la civilisation britannique*. Paris: Ellipses Edition Marketing.
- Bollick, C. (1995). Thatcher's Revolution: Deregulation and Political Transformation. *The Yale Journal on Regulation* , 528-546.
- Britannica, T. e. (2018). Privatization. Retrieved March 15, 2021, from Encyclopedia Britannica: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/privatization>
- Cowell, A. (2014, January 3). Thatcher Debated Using Military in 1984 Miners Strike. Retrieved April 23, 2021, from The New York Times: <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/04/world/europe/margaret-thatcher-miners-strike.html>
- Darlington, R. (2005). There is no alternative: Exploring the options in the 1984-5 miners' strike. *Capital & Class* , 29 (3), 71-95.
- Definitions for Iron Lady. (n.d.). Retrieved December 13, 2020, from <https://www.definitions.net/definition/iron+lady>
- Didi, Z. (2020, May 4). Why we need more women in politics. Retrieved July 4, 2021, from King's College London: <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/news/why-we-need-more-women-in-politics>
- Election news summary. (1997). Retrieved June 30, 2021, from Politics 97: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/special/politics97/background/pastelec/ge79.shtml> politics 97
- Elin, F. (2015, April 15). Was the British Government's Handling of the 1984/5 Miners Strike "Brilliant"? Retrieved May 2, 2021, from E-International Relations: <https://www.e-ir.info/2015/04/15/was-the-british-governments-handling-of-the-19845-miners-strike-brilliant/>
- Fisher, M. (2013, April 8). 'Iron Lady': How a Moscow propagandist gave Margaret Thatcher her Famous Nickname. Retrieved July 5, 2021, from The Washington Post: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2013/04/08/irony-lady-how-a-moscow-propagandist-gave-margaret-thatcher-her-famous-nickname/>
- Golder, Y. (2019, November 25). Margaret Thatcher in Spitting Image. *Revue Française de civilisation Britannique* .
- GOUIFFES, P.-F. (2009). *Margaret Thatcher and the Miners*. Priva Editions.
- Jr., R. W. (1984, June 20). Strikers Rebuked by Mrs. Thatcher. Retrieved July 4, 2021, from The New York Times: <https://www.nytimes.com/1984/06/20/world/strikers-rebuked-by-mrs-thatcher.html>
- Louth, L. N. (n.d.). Conservative Party: Political Party, United Kingdom. Retrieved July 5, 2021, from Britannica: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Conservative-Party-political-party-United-Kingdom>
- Margaret Thatcher. (2014, April 2). Retrieved from Biography: <https://www.biography.com/political-figure/margaret-thatcher>

- Metzler, R. (2013, April 8). Margaret Thatcher Wanted to be Known for Policies, Not Gender. Retrieved July 4, 2021, from U.S News: <https://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2013/04/08/margaret-thatcher-wanted-to-be-known-for-policies-not-gender>
- Miners Strike 1984-1985. (n.d.). Retrieved November 4, 2021, from Archive Hub: <https://archiveshub.jisc.ac.uk/features/mar04.shtml>
- Moulin, M. (2006). *La Grande-Bretagne contemporaine: Memento bilingue de civilisation*. Paris: Breal.
- Pettinger, T. (2016, December 11). The decline of the UK Coal Industry. Retrieved July 4, 2021, from <https://www.economicshelp.org/blog/6498/uncategorized/the-decline-of-the-uk-coal-industry/>
- Phillips, A. (2013). The very fact that Thatcher can be lauded as the woman who broke the mould is indicative of the challenges which women still face in contemporary politics. in *The Legacy of Margaret Thatcher* (p. 13). London: LSE Public Policy Group .
- Posner, M. (1962). The National Coal Board 1947-62. *Annal of Public and Cooperative Economics* , 33 (4), 45.
- *Producers, Performance Profiles of Major Energy*. (1993).
- Rawsthorne, P. (2018). Implementing the Ridley Report: The Role of Thatcher's Policy Unit during the Miners' Strike of 1984–1985. *International Labor and Working-Class History* (94), 156-201.
- Saxena, S. K. (1955). Some Aspects of Nationalized Coal Industry. In S. K. Saxena, *Nationalization and Industrial Conflict* (pp. 27-56). Dordrecht: Springer.
- Shaw, K. (2015, March 2). *Mining The Meaning: The 1984-5 Miners' Strike 30 Years On*. Retrieved July 4, 2021, from <https://www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/blogs/expert-opinion/2015/03/mining-the-meaning-the-1984-1985-miners-strike-30-years-on/>
- Simms, M. J. (2008, November). Are Women Leaders Different? Margaret Thatcher and Helen Clark. Retrieved July 4, 2021, from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/262263345_Are_Women_Leaders_Different_Margaret_Thatcher_and_Helen_Clark
- Spence, J., & Stephensen, C. (2009, April 17). "Side by Side With Our Men?" Women's Activism, Community, and Gender in the 1984–1985 British Miners' Strike. (C. U. Press, Ed.) Retrieved July 4, 2021, from <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/international-labor-and-working-class-history/article/abs/side-by-side-with-our-men1-womens-activism-community-and-gender-in-the-19841985-british-miners-strike/3682E9B72086E24C0EB9054CD9B33807>
- Tamworth Manifesto. (n.d.). Retrieved July 5, 2021, from Oxfod Lexico: https://www.lexico.com/definition/tamworth_manifesto
- Thompson, H. (1996). Economic Policy under Thatcher and Major. Retrieved June 29, 2021, from https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007%2F978-1-349-24407-2_9

- Towers, B. (1985). Posing Larger Questions: The British Miners' Strike of 1984-1985. *Industrial Relations Journal* , 16 (2), 8-25.
- Travis, A. (2013, August 1). National archives: Margaret Thatcher wanted to crush power of trade unions. Retrieved July 4, 2021, from National Archives: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2013/aug/01/margaret-thatcher-trade-union-reform-national-archives>