

Red Action

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FALKLANDS?

SICK PAY OFFER FOR HEALTH WORKERS

The response of hospital workers to the call for a one day strike on 8 June in protest at the government's wage offer was an overwhelming success, but already the tactics and orientation of the dispute are beginning to parallel the unsuccessful low pay dispute of 1978-79.

Token stoppages will not change the mind of Norman Fowler (Secretary of State for Social Services) or the bastards backing him in the Tory party. Big business Tories do not listen to or understand concepts like justice and fair play.

Firstly, Fowler is promising a better increase next year if this year's offer is accepted. This is pie in the sky crap aimed at disorientating this year's struggle. **THE STRUGGLE IS ALWAYS NOW.** If they can promise a better increase in a year, they can afford to give one now. The Labour government used the same trick during the 1977 firemen's strike and afterwards reneged on the agreement. Divisions are already being fostered. One offer of 6.4 per cent is being offered to the nurses and one of 4 per cent to ancillary workers. Even the moderate Royal College of Nursing members rejected the offer by two to one. The key to winning this dispute, as with any other, is unity. Activists and militants in each hospital must unite across sectional and union divides to fight for one increase for all.

Even the official claim of 12 per cent is a pittance. Compare it with increases offered to judges and top civil servants and the increase given to the police over the last three years.

PRACTICAL STEPS

The strengths of the campaign far outweigh the weaknesses. The practical steps needed to ensure victory are threefold.

Firstly, the action must be stepped up and intensified to the stage of accident and emergency cover only.

Secondly the control of the dispute must be taken out of the hands of the Trade Union bureaucrats like Spanswick of the TUC and Bickerstaffe of NUPE and the rank and file must build local committees based on the hospitals to build and spread the dispute.

Thirdly, and most importantly, an alliance must be



built with other sections of the organised working class especially with workers in the public sector. Already it is clear that a tremendous untapped reservoir of support exists for the health service workers. On 8 June, 40,000 miners in Yorkshire from 44 out of the region's 59 pits supported the stoppage with a 24 hour strike. Twenty five thousand miners in South Wales took the same action on 16 June.

Many postal workers, rail workers and doctors face the same attacks but the full-timers in each union will only call for a united fightback if forced to. The struggle to build an alliance can best and most effectively be fought in the union branches and on the shop floor. Already dockers have had a well supported one day strike against the Tebbit Bill and the NUR has threatened an all-out strike from 28 June over cutbacks.

The postal workers union has threatened industrial action if any attacks on the over 60s are pushed through and there is festering anger over differentials between their members and management/supervisors pay. Local government workers are faced with cuts and privatisation schemes (plans to hand the work to private companies).

A united struggle in support of the health workers would be the biggest threat posed to Thatcher on the economic front since she took power. The fight could overflow from being a wage dispute into a dispute about power and control, thus leading to a direct political threat to the Tories.

Already Jim Prior's 1980 Employment Act, which made illegal secondary picketing and industrial action by workers sympathetic to, but not directly involved in a dispute, has taken a knock.

Three years of apathy,

sabotage and collaboration could be swept away in one united effort to get rid of the Tories and restore the National Health Service to enable people to receive medical treatment according to their needs, not their bank balances.



London Transport are attempting to introduce new schedules, with the intention of taking 850 buses off the road out of a fleet of 5,000. In order to save their jobs and our public transport, some staff at London Transport garages, are refusing to co-operate with the new schedules. Immediately at

And so the Falkland Islands Saga comes to an end, and after the expected bout of patriotic drum beating, things return to "normal".

Margaret Thatcher will no doubt be lauded and praised by the media, and will perhaps even try to cash in on her new found lease of life by calling an early general election. Meanwhile the odd million or so people pushed onto the dole during her three years of power, will carry on trying to work out how to buy their kids a new pair of shoes.

The squaddies, after their expected heroes welcome home, will soon be back in barracks jumping to the orders of their upper class officers, who in turn will no doubt be in great demand at many "Britain is Great Again" type celebrations. Celebrations thrown by

other upper class jingoists, who spent the whole episode safely ensconced behind their business desks, urging the young working class men who make up most of the armed forces, to die for "their" country.

The reporters on the "Sun" newspaper will soon forget screaming headlines about the "Argies" and will get back to giggling, 'nudge wink' stories about tits and bums.

Yes, things will soon be back to normal - except for the wives whose husbands won't be coming home, and the children growing up with faded photographs of the father they once knew. The husbands and fathers, their names already forgotten by most, who will never return from a place they had never even heard of three months ago.

As the victorious fleet returns home.

Why Red Action?

WHEN Red Action was formed late in 1981, we had no choice but to organise ourselves as some of us had been kicked out of the SWP.

The reasons given for our expulsions were many and varied, and often ridiculous, but the enactment was always the same; the intellectual mostly middle-class, ex-student leadership showed their distaste for the raucous manners of their working class membership.

We are proud of the image of being able to back up our words with action, but we have been accused of being no better than the fascists, a squad of "macho boot-boys". This is particularly insulting to the courage and commitment of the women in the group.

We believe that we can justify our existence to the most critical and cynical audience of all - the working class.

We believe that socialism belongs to the working class and that any true socialist organisation, must be able to give a lead to the class, but it must also be able to reflect the spirit and consciousness of the class.

stake are over 400 inside staff jobs, plus over 350 craftsmen and apprentices jobs. Operating staff could face similar 'cuts'.

The fight for jobs is also a fight to save public transport. We must give every support to London Transport workers refusing to operate the new schedule.

Red Action seeks to become an organisation in that image. To win the trust and respect of ordinary, working class people by proving its consistency and dedication in action.

We do not seek to imitate the traditional left, we seek to work in areas that they neglect. We will be attempting to present socialist politics in a way that identifies with working class people in their life, their work and their leisure.

We will continue to physically defend socialist initiatives from fascist disruption and attack, and we will support, where we can, the struggle for Irish liberation.

We do not attempt to romanticise or underestimate the task we are undertaking, but we believe we can take the first steps towards creating a real workers organisation.

We have few members, no financial backing and no resources. We do have the total dedication and commitment of all our members. If you agree with, or have sympathy with us, please support us - by joining us, contributing financially or supporting our activities.

The London Transport Trade Union Defence Committee, supported by the T.U.C. Transport Industries Committee are organising a march and rally on Saturday, 10th July, assembling at 11.30am at Speakers Corner, Hyde Park. March to a rally at Trafalgar Square at 2pm.

**RED ACTION CONGRATULATE THE BRADFORD 12 ON THEIR AQUITTAL
SELF DEFENCE IS NO OFFENCE!**

NEITHER JOHN BULL NOR JUAN GAUCHO

What would have been hard to imagine a few weeks back has now happened. Out in the South Atlantic, the Falklands/Malvinas war, fought over a bit of land which, quite honestly, most people had never heard of before, claimed the lives of hundreds of working class people. The war, and all the blood and brutality associated with it, eclipsed everything else — the health workers pay dispute, the fight of the three million unemployed for the right to work, and decent social security benefits — and has given one of the most unpopular governments this century a new lease of life.

It must be recognised that there was a degree of popular support for the war, though not to the extent that the popular press would have us believe. But what was the war fought for and why do we in Red Action think that it was not in the interests of working people?

For a start the war had nothing to do with self-determination for the 1800 Falklanders. British Governments until recently had never really cared for them, most of them are tenants of the Falkland Islands Company and they have to leave the islands when they are too old to work. For all Thatchers talk of them being British, her very own government pushed through a law, (the 1981 Nationality Act) denying them the automatic right of entry to Britain. And until the war blew up, talks had been going on with the Argentinians aimed at handing the islands over to Argentina — talks which did not take into account the wishes of the islanders.

It must also be recognised that geographically, historically and economically, the islands are tied to Argentina, and just because some drunk sailor or smuggler put a union jack on a bit of land a hundred or so years ago — doesn't in any way make that island British!

The war also had nothing to do with resisting the fascist dictatorship of Argentina or with international law. Britain used to supply arms to Argentina, and still does to Chile, one of the most right wing, repressive countries in the world. It was people like

Prince Phillip, Tory and Labour M.P.s, who wined and dined with Galtieri, while thousands of trade unionists and socialists were being butchered by his regime.



Same problems, same solutions, she wins, he loses.....

Neither had the war anything to do with "detering the aggressor" or putting off the bully boys. As right wing Tory M.P. Alan Clark put it, the effects of the war will be judged by the number of countries lining up to by the Seawolf and Exocet missiles. The war, if anything, will strengthen the view that might is right, and all tinpot dictators and warmongers must arm themselves with even more determination.

It is the height of hypocrisy for Thatcher to talk about self-determination, when Britain has denied that same right to the Irish people for so long, and maintains an army of occupation in the north of Ireland. It has been precisely scumbags like her, Reagan and, yes, Brezhnev, who have maintained all sorts of brutal repressive regimes around the world. While Thatcher ranted and

raved about the "Argy aggressors", she has not said much to condemn the Zionist war offensives in Lebanon and the Middle East — yet another legacy of Britain's imperialist past.

At the end of the day, while Thatcher may enjoy short term popularity, she cannot escape the fact that the islands are completely dependent on Argentina for supplies and communications. This, coupled with her natural alignment with the likes of Galtieri, in her and Reagans "world crusade



against communism", may lead her to make some sort of deal with the Argentinians, some time in the future.

No, the war was all about saving faces and diverting

people's attention from the economic mess which both Britain and Argentina are in. The Argentinian junta, faced with runaway inflation, and rising unemployment, and an increasingly restless working class — who could no longer be kept in their place by mass executions and torture camps — launched the invasion of the Malvinas in the knowledge that it would bring them support, and divert attention from the country's problems. As for Thatcher, the war was all about saving her face and keeping her Iron Lady image intact (after all what was a few hundred lives worth?) — and she has partly succeeded in this. The real issues for us in Britain are mass unemployment, wages, anti-union laws, attacks on the N.H.S. and the welfare state, the nuclear arms race and so on. Not, by any stretch of the imagination, whose flag flies on a small island 8,000 miles away! The war was also an opportunity for our rulers and generals to show that Britain — their Britain — is still 'great' and wipe out memories of the Suez Canal debacle of the 1950's, when a similar military adventure in the Middle East led to a humiliating defeat for Britain.

We in Red Action are international socialists. We made no bones about opposing the war. It was not a mad war — far from it. It was a carefully planned war, and not the result of some irrational decision. We

National Interest

say that the war had nothing to do with the real problems facing working people in both Britain and Argentina. When people talk of "the national interest", whose interest is it? Did the people who run this country fight the war? The answer is no. The national interest is theirs and not ours. For us the main enemy is at home. A war which served the interests of Thatcher and the like, a war whose effect was to unite us with the bosses, a war which took away attention from the fight against unemployment, the fight for a better world — is not our war.

Saying that the main enemy for us is Thatcher, the Tories and the Labour members who follow her so slavishly, does not mean that we supported the Argentinian regime in any sense. We would hope that the Argentinian defeat might lead to the overthrow of the junta by the only force capable of overthrowing it — the Argenti-

nian working class. We have more in common with them than with Thatcher and Co. We both face the same problems and cannot see our struggle in isolation from theirs. The struggle of the Polish workers against the so-called communist government of Poland, the struggle of the low paid workers in Britain, and the struggle of the Argentinian workers is all part and parcel of the same

fight against the common enemy — the ruling class.

Inevitable Wars

While we opposed the war we are not in any sense pacifists. We believe that wars are inevitable under the type of society and the system we live under. War is politics continued by violent means, and is basically the way in which different ruling classes defend their interests and their profits.

The sort of war that we believe in is the class war, the war against Thatcher and the bosses, and everything they stand for. That is why for us, as the German socialist Karl Liebknecht said at the outset of the First World War, 'the main enemy is at home'.

NOR BEGIN'S BOMBS

The recent assassination attempt on the Israeli ambassador in London led to immediate retaliatory air-raids on Syria and to an Israeli invasion of Lebanon.

The deaths of hundreds of innocent Syrian and Lebanese civilians in response to an attempt on the life of a government official, is no more than a repeat of methods used by the Nazis against Jewish and gentile communities during the Second World War. The state of Israel has invaded neighbouring Arab territory countless times since its formation in 1948. The excuse for this latest invasion is the usual one — Israel has to flush out Palestinian "guerillas".

The so-called terrorists are, in fact, Arab people kicked out of their homeland by the Israeli state during the past 35 years. In that time Israel has taken over large areas of Arab territory and forced thousands of poor Arab people into refugee camps.

The captured land is used to accommodate immigrating Jewish people coming to settle in their 'promised land' of Israel. The Israelis firmly believe they have a God-given right to the area while the Palestinian Liberation Organisation, backed by Arab governments and Soviet imperialists, are fighting for the right of their people to return to their homeland.

Londoner Frank Leigh recently visited Israel and told Red Action how the war affects ordinary people on both sides of the Arab/Israeli divide.

"Arabs who remain on Israeli occupied soil are deprived of almost all rights. Very few have proper jobs and even fewer are allowed to vote. Jobs are reserved for Jewish immigrants who are settled further and further away from the original Jewish areas in the west of the country as less

space becomes available. When the present attack on Lebanon is over, you can bet that Israel will hold on to a lump of Lebanese land to accommodate Jewish immigrants.

"Arabs are kept in a position of political and economic slavery. The inflation rate is 160 per cent and was recently as high as 1000 per cent. The cost of living is similar to ours yet the typical wages of an Arab working in a Jerusalem tourist bar is £15 for a 91-hour week!

"Most Arab families in Jerusalem and the occupied Jordan West Bank try to make a living running a market stall, which in places literally line the roads, or else they become taxi-drivers.

"But so many have to resort to this that prices are kept so low as to make it impossible to earn a living wage at all.

"Jericho, the largest city on the West Bank is terrible. The houses are ancient, falling down and insanitary. Begging is rife and there are no proper roads because the Israeli government won't build them in Arab areas unless they need to transport troops there. The whole West Bank is crawling with troops and military



vehicles. Checkpoints operate every few miles at which Arab taxi drivers swear under their breath at the heavily armed soldiers and then take out their hatred of the occupiers on innocent passengers whose governments support Israel.

"Five kilometres from the Dead Sea on the occupied West Bank/Jordanian border there starts an area of curfew where everyone must leave the border area between 4pm and dawn. Dead Sea swimmers are interrupted by distant shelling. Fighting or training? No-one is sure.

"The disputed city of Jerusalem, holy to Jews, Moslems and Christians is reasonably safe. No-one dare damage it. When Israel took it in 1967 both sides used only handguns. Yet the air-raid sirens are still likely to sound during the night. Locals take no notice. Everyone else panics. A flight

goes over, the all-clear sounds. Syrian reconnaissance? No-one knows.

"Israeli censorship is so strict that even Jews prefer to illegally tune in to Jordanian TV for news of the war. Arabs are kept completely ignorant of the P.L.O. and school-children who consider it a prank to raise the Palestinian flag are jailed. For this reason a visitor who mentions the P.L.O. or its leader Yasser Arafat is first told off for getting you both into possible trouble by even saying it and then meets delight of your awareness of the struggle.

"But the air of intimidation does not just exist in Arab areas. Everywhere in city and countryside, there is someone with a sub-machine gun. Girls and boys are trained at 14 for the Israeli militia and actually patrol the streets with full responsibility for the loaded weapons. At the slightest sign of trouble, a soldier comes running pointing his gun and ready to use it.

"All Israelis, men and women are conscripted into the army at school leaving age and the Jewish people are indoctrinated with this desperate survival and siege mentality.

"Yet most of the population of Tel Aviv and other west coast towns are from European families who went to Israel to forget their suffering at the hands of Hitler's Nazis and start a new life at the end of world war two. It's a tragedy that this persecuted people should find it necessary to oppress the impoverished and invaded Arab people."

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On Saturday, 24th April, the National Front held their annual Saint George's Day march, this year in Blackpool. A very half hearted attempt was made to organise an Anti-Nazi League counter-demonstration which turned out to be a depressing failure. Ultimately a group of about 150 anti-racists held a short march around the town and were grateful to have the police between them and several hundred aggressive and confident fascists. And so the steady demise of the A.N.L. goes on and on.

From the heady days of 77, 78 and 79, when thousands turned out in London, Leicester, Manchester, etc, and forced the Front to be completely dependent on the police to be able to march at all, we now see anti-racists needing police protection themselves. How - and why - has this happened?

The A.N.L. was founded in late 1977 and soon found itself riding on the crest of a popular wave. It succeeded in uniting various shades of political opinion under one banner. Its specific aim was to expose the National Front (who at the time were attracting growing electoral support) as a fascist organisation run by confirmed Nazis.

A large number of show business and celebrity figures lent their names to it, some of them as nominal leaders, but they were never more than figure heads to attract support. All real policy decisions were taken by the political figures responsible for the day to day running of the League.

The 1979 election proved how successful the League had

What have Hitler, Mussolini, and France in common? Fascism is the likely answer, but there is another, the Catholic Church. Both Catholicism and Fascism are autocratic (ruled by one man). Both insist on the submission of the individual to the system. Both see communism as the main enemy, and both were to be close allies from the early 1920's to the 1940's.

As soon as Mussolini took power in 1922 he set about smashing the workers' organizations, from the peasants leagues to the workers syndicates. All were ruthlessly suppressed with many murders and disappearances.

The Vatican's response: "The Vatican realises that Mussolini is the only man who can steer the ship of state into smoother waters, and give Italy the strong hand she needs." Foreign Office report 25th February 1925. The official Vatican newspaper 'Observatore Romano' wrote, "the new currents, new forces, the new attitude of the government stand out prominently and undeniably above all the old petty party notions." 4th Nov 1925.

Cardinals and bishops were clamouring over each other to praise the fascist regime. Even the Pope referred to Mussolini as "the man sent by providence". In 1932 Mussolini received the Papal Order of the Golden Spur.

When Mussolini's armies in-

A.N.L.

been, when the Front completely failed to achieve their hoped for breakthrough, and for a short time retreated in disarray, the respectable image they were looking for firmly nailed.

Since then the League has slowly but surely slid closer to oblivion, whilst the Front have re-emerged alongside the British Movement with a more openly aggressive and violent character.

The A.N.L. leadership has totally failed to re-organise the League to face this new emergence. No-one would expect to maintain the massive Carnival turnouts indefinitely, but there were still many committed anti-fascists up and down the country, who have been left high and dry with little or no direction or leadership.

It is difficult to know for certain why this has happened. Perhaps those responsible saw the A.N.L. as a pool from which they could fish for new members for their own organisations, and they are no longer interested now that they have played that for all it is worth. Possibly they do believe that the fascists are no longer a threat, now that they are not facing imminent electoral success, although it is difficult

YOUR SLIP IS SHOWING



to imagine how anybody could hold such a view, in the face of the constant and rising numbers of attacks on racial minorities - and socialists - over the last two or three years.

Whatever the reasons may be, if the A.N.L. leadership have no intention of attempting to reactivate the League, they should come out and say so to the grassroots A.N.L. activists. Why has no conference been called this year? Could it be that one or two people are apprehensive about the criticisms they would face?

For our part, in Red Action, we will continue to be active in the tradition of the A.N.L. We

have had some moderate success in uniting isolated anti-fascists already, and we will continue to assist anti-fascist activity wherever we can. Where A.N.L. groups are still in existence we urge them to try and get some kind of response from the leadership. To win the trust and respect of the immigrant community, and indeed the working class as a whole, consistency is absolutely vital. Nothing will alienate people more than giving them the impression that we are just jumping on and off bandwagons. We in Red Action will oppose fascism wherever we can, whenever we can, in any way we can.

PAPAL BULLSHIT!



'Ere John, what does tarmac taste like?

vaded Abyssinia (Ethiopia) the Catholic Church gave its blessing to the war saying, "these soldiers, who on African soil, will conquer new and fertile lands for the Italian genius, thereby bringing them Roman and Christian culture." 24th Oct. 1935.

In Spain, with possible exception in the Basque region, the Catholic Church sided with Franco. On the Nationalist (Franco) front the clergy, according to the British representative with the nationalist forces were "exploiting the superstition and emotional character of the crowds, who would chant 'Viva Christo Rey' in unison with 'Viva Franco'".

The Catholic Church had been a decisive factor in the Civil War, and helped set up and maintain Franco's totalitarian state.

9th May 1931, even before Hitler had assumed power, Hermann Goring was having an audience with the Pope. The Vatican paper 'Observatore Romano' had this to say about Goring, "that he fought valiantly against Bolshevism and, as police chief of Prussia, had taken firm measures against corruption and immorality."

Hitler had managed to destroy all opposition to him, bar the Catholic dominated Centre Party. To gain absolute power he had to convince the Vatican to dissolve its political party. No problem, the Pope and Hit-

ler signed a Concordat (agreement) to do away with the Centre Party in return for a few privileges for the Church.

Within six months of its birth, the Third Reich had been given full approval by the highest spiritual power on earth!

Many pleas were made to the Pope to condemn the invasion of Poland, and then Belgium, Holland, and France. They fell on deaf ears. When Italy joined the war, the Vatican, Italian bishops, and clergy became vocal - but not against the war! The Italian press were printing daily pastoral letters from bishops expressing their patriotism. Thirty bishops sent a telegram to Mussolini rejoicing at the "inevitable victory of Italian arms". Others announced that "Obedience to the state in war time is ordained by God as a religious duty". Millions died as a result of those religious duties.

The Pope on his visit to Britain was heralded as the people's Pope - the Catholic Church represented peace and freedom. The bloody history of the Vatican from the Conquistadores in Latin America 1519, to the support of fascism in the 1920's - 1940's shows the Vatican's real reactionary face.

PARADISE LOST

Work - the curse of the drinking classes.

Visitors to these shores must be amazed and bewildered by the behaviour of the natives when 'last orders' are called. They could be forgiven for imagining from the reaction of the punters that the last bell was connected to some electrical impulse in their seats. Faces contort and twitch and the glazed eyes take on a fanatical gleam. They race to the bar where they alternatively grovel and growl at the heartless bar staff.

Occasionally having bribed or intimidated they will return to their table beaming victoriously, to the heartfelt congratulations of their mates, having spent the rent on a vast amount of booze they couldn't hope to consume in the allotted time. If you have ever miscalculated because the bar clock has stopped and in consequence you suffered the numbing psychological shock of being booted out of the pub at eleven on a Saturday night still half way sober you will sympathize and understand such scenes of seemingly erratic behaviour.

other European country. People are conned into imagining that because the law is so old and has become institutionalized that changing it, would be interfering with nature or something.

The assumption is of course that though people may raise families, hold down responsible jobs, etc, they are still incapable of deciding when they've had enough to drink. The people who hold these opinions can drink themselves stupid in private clubs (and judging from some other laws passed by some of them it must remain a permanent condition). It is a similar attitude that curtails our freedom through censorship in other fields (ie. media, cinema, literature, etc.) People drink because they want to, and if it lessens the monotony of an otherwise mundane existence then it is a good thing.

Some socialists would argue that people instead of forgetting temporarily the reality of their own existence through alcohol they would be better employed changing society. I disagree. Freedom is so infectious that the less control



This ancient British custom has its origins in the early years of the First World War. Emergency powers were introduced by the government to limit the drinking time of the working classes from 19½ hours to the savage 15%. This they hoped would ensure they would be fit for work in the munitions factories.

In the late 19th century and early 20th century the temperance movement had tremendous popular support and was much larger than CND is today. It was their influence and the mentality of prohibition which allowed the Establishment to bring in the Licensing Law on that black date in 1921. This piece of infamous legislation restricted opening hours to 9½ a day. This has basically remained unchanged to the present day.

Now a campaign has been started to end this archaic law. It has substantial backing already, including the G.L.C., the London Tourist Board, C.A.M.R.A., Victuallers, some M.P.s, Red Action, etc.

While the middle class leisure is impaired it is the working class who really suffer. For it is they who basically build their whole social life around the pub. "It's for your own good" paternalistic attitude that allows the State to govern our lives is a situation that would not be tolerated in any

ordinary people have on their leisure the more intolerant we will become of the other illogical restrictions imposed on us.

The Scots who are NOT renowned for their temperate behaviour, have recently had their own archaic laws liberalized. The dire consequences predicted by the opponents of the change have not materialized.

(i) prices would go up due to increased overheads - prices have in fact remained stable due to more revenue, the introduction of food etc.

(ii) alcoholism would increase: - judging by surveys people seem to be drinking less more slowly.

(iii) drink related crimes would increase dramatically: - in fact they have gone down.

There must surely be a connection between Glasgow's reputation for violence and the fact that the pubs were turned out at 10 o'clock on Saturday night and remained closed until Monday morning. Licensing laws like that couldn't improve anyone's temper.

Just remember, comrades, as you ponder over this fascinating article the words of that famous Irish philosopher (T. Wogan), "you are never drunk while you can still lie on the floor without holding on."

BELFAST - BE THERE!

On Friday 6 August, the Troops Out Movement is sending a mass delegation to Belfast to join the annual demonstration held to commemorate the introduction of internment without trial in 1971.

This is the third year this trip has been held and here we print the impressions of two people who attended in previous years - Danny, who went in 1980 and Liz, who joined the delegation last year.

First Danny: "One side of my family is Irish so I have always felt a great sympathy for the Irish struggle. When I heard about the trip, I straight away decided to go although I would be lying if I said I wasn't a bit nervous. We reached Belfast on the Saturday morning and got one of the 'people's taxis' to the Republican Centre in the Low-er Falls Rd area.

"As we got out of the taxis, there were fires burning in the road from rioting the night before and we were told that someone had been rolled about 30 yards from where we were the night before. So straight away, you had this feeling of stepping into something very, very different from what you were used to. "There was this massive slogan that seemed to stretch the entire length of this side street off the Falls: **THIRTEEN DEAD BUT NOT FORGOTTEN, WE GOT EIGHTEEN AND MOUNTBATTEN.**

It was really impressive, about 20 feet off the ground. I wondered how they had got up there to do it, just off the main road and round the corner from an army camp. It looked as if it needed a scaffold built!

"Me and a few mates decided to go for a drink in a couple of pubs in the Falls. To tell you the truth, I had been wondering how the local people would react to us - whether they might think we were just trying to be flash coming over. After all, the nationalist community of northern Ireland haven't got much reason to be in love with the British - but I couldn't have been more wrong.

"The overwhelming reaction of almost everyone there was one of warmth and welcome. I can't think of anywhere in England where you could take a large bunch of strangers and get such a friendly response from the locals.

Skinheads

"But then the people are different. They are a united community from the oldest down to the very young. At

the rally on the Sunday, I saw a bunch of skinheads carrying a banner saying **VICTORY TO THE ARMAGH WOMEN.** Can you imagine that over here, a bunch of up and coming young lads, well conscious of their tough image, carrying a banner in support of the women instead of the much more publicised blanket men?

The armoured car sped off and then all the kids stood aside and clapped and cheered us as we drove off. **THEY CLAPPED AND CHEERED US!** Us, who had been lying on the floor while kids of 16 and 17 chased off an armoured car. What a joke!

"I try not to be romantic about it all, but it's difficult. For me, it was an exciting and

I even began to know what it meant.

"West Belfast is a community at war. It is a war that consumes everything and involves everyone. There are rows of ordinary terraced houses, blocks of ordinary council flats - and every wall is decorated with graffiti, or beautiful intricate political murals. I went at the time of



"I suppose it was the teenagers who impressed me most really. What they have seen and experienced seems to have given them a wisdom, maturity and courage far beyond their years.

"As we were leaving the rally in a van to make our way back to the station, a Saracen armoured car stopped us and the soldiers got out and started questioning us. Suddenly a gang of teenagers came round the corner and started throwing stones at the squadies.

"They dived back in the Saracen and started firing plastic bullets at them. We all dived on the floor of the van but these kids just kept on coming, diving behind cars and garden walls but all the time advancing.

illuminating experience but, for those who have to live with it and face it every day, it is neither exciting, nor illuminating, nor romantic.

"The people I met in West Belfast are the noblest and bravest I have ever met. I can only feel proud that I have spent just one weekend among them, and humble when I remember their fantastic courage and spirit. It was the most moving experience of my life and I will never be quite the same person again."

Courage and Humour

Liz says:-

"I had never experienced war before. I had heard and used the phrase 'the war in Ireland' but it wasn't until I went to Belfast last year that

last years hunger strikes, and from every other bedroom window there hung a black flag, and almost every house showed a poster supporting the hunger strikers.

"I saw the British army in occupation. Seventeen year old 'fighting men' toting rifles and lounging on street corners, or peering out of military vehicles. Sometimes they appeared young and timid, but most were swaggeringly arrogant, and always threatening and frightening, constantly creating feelings of fury and resentment. And then there were the police. No panda cars here, but grey, menacing armoured cars, patrolling constantly and always in twos, while the surveillance helicopter created a perpetual buzz over head.

"The people I met astonished me with their resilience, strength, bitterness and courage - with a sense of humour that somehow surfaced readily, even through all of this. The war touches them all - from the old women dressed in their best clothes to go to mass, whom I met on Sunday morning, to the children - some so small I would be worried about them crossing the road on their own - out in the streets building bonfires and barricades, toting make-believe guns and trading plastic bullets for badgins, sweets or hard cash."

RED ACTION IN ACTION

BOBBY SANDS

May 8th saw the largest Irish Republican demonstration in London for a number of years. 5,000 marched to commemorate the courageous hunger strikers including Bobby Sands MP, who died opposing the attempts by the British government to criminalise Republican prisoners. The Nazis who had been leafletting Brick Lane and other areas in an attempt to organize an attack on the march failed utterly to get it together. A group of Nazis did turn up but Red Action supporters and members of one of the Glasgow flute bands soon drove them off, slightly the worse for wear. Following this Red Action were given the honour of stewarding the excellent flute band at the front of the march.

The turnout on the march was all the more remarkable and inspiring for two reasons; first, the pro-British war hysteria created by the Falklands/Malvinas crisis, second the absence of any significant support from a number of British socialist groups.

BLACKPOOL

Red Action supporters from London, Manchester and Bristol travelled to Blackpool for the Anti-Nazi League demonstration on St George's Day. Along with most people there, we were concerned with the very disappointing turnout. Reports have reached us that in the absence of a mass counter demonstration a few anti-racists later made sure that at least a few goose steppers had the smirk wiped off their faces. All true lovers of law and order will join us in deploring this "squadist" behaviour!

C.N.D.

An estimated 250,000 turned out for the June 6th C.N.D. rally in Hyde Park. Red Action supporters sold papers and gave out leaflets condemning the attempts by the Argentine fascist junta and the British Tory government to channel the growing discontent of working people into war hysteria.

SEARCHLIGHT!

Red Action supporters were glad to be of assistance in stewarding an anti-racist/anti-fascist conference dedicated to the memory of a great and consistent exposé of the Nazi menace - Maurice Ludmer (editor of the excellent monthly anti-fascist magazine 'Searchlight'). An overwhelming majority of the conference felt that the present leadership of the ANL had failed to demonstrate a similar consistency.

FALKLANDS

A small group of Red Action supporters dealt with 25 Young Conservatives in Hyde Park. The Young Conservatives, covered in Union Jacks, were opposing an anti-war demonstration. While the anti-war demonstrators politely chanted at these true blue shit bags, the Red Action supporters decided a more militant approach was needed. After a brilliant strategic manoeuvre in the finest Falklands tradition, their flags were captured and destroyed! Before the jobs could be finished the police stormed in and Red Action withdrew. Some of the more adventurous demonstrators immediately came and bought copies of 'Red Action' - while others (typically) resorted to slagging off the Red Action initiative.

These two reactions are fairly representative of most of the people that we have spoken to. Every one stressed the warmth of the welcome from the community and the overwhelming effect of being amongst something that has become so familiar, in the papers and on the television, that we sometimes forget what it actually is - a war being waged on our doorstep.

Everyone of us in the socialist movement in this country has much to be ashamed of when we think of

Ireland, and it takes more than a weekend trip once a year to wipe away a year of pious talk and no action. But at least it is a start. The British army of occupation are our sons and brothers, acting in our name. If, because of us going over there, just one of them begins to question his role, then it will have been worthwhile. Red Action will be there. We urge you to be there too. Take this opportunity to show the Nationalist people of Northern Ireland that their struggle is not forgotten over here.

... 6TH - 9TH AUGUST

Red Action will be organising transport for the Troops Out delegation to Belfast and hope to arrange it cheaper than usual. For the latest information contact Box 44, 136, Kingsland High Street, E8, as soon as possible. The Troops Out number is 267 2004.

