

the preparation of F.O.C.A.S.' Harbour Inspection, four days later. On the day Divisions were held on the Tank Deck at the conclusion of which Rear Admiral Treacher presented the Fleet Seacat Aimers Trophy to Leading Seaman Collins who was the joint winner in 1971.

Our considerable industry in the period prior to the Inspection had its reward for it was evident that the Admiral was very satisfied with what he saw. This belief was confirmed in a subsequent enthusiastic signal from Fort Southwick. With the inspection behind us the ship's company concentrated on the more pleasant of a sailor's pursuits and it was soon evident that the local Brown Brew packed more of a punch than the average contents of a N.A.A.F.I. can. The Geordies looked after us well and we for our part entertained too. Perhaps our most popular visitors were the glamorous models who, despite the cold, demonstrated the Royal Marines Commando 7 Keep Fit exercises for Tyne Tees Television. Needless to say there was no dearth of enthusiastic admirers but their chaperone, the Aviation Officer, whisked them away long before anyone had the chance of a closer look.

The latter part of our Newcastle visit was taken up with the embarkation of 24 Brigade who were to form our embarked force for the forthcoming visit to the West Indies. This period was perhaps the highlight of the Commission but once again we were subjected to appalling weather across the Atlantic and the Doctor's supply of sea-sickness tablets was exhausted long before our arrival in Puerto Rico. After our 10-day voyage we eventually made it to Roosevelt Roads which is reputed to be the largest Naval Base in the world. The PX proved an



F.O.C.A.S. presents the Fleet Seacat Aimers Trophy to LS Collins



The Deep Hard Winter



Clare by courtesy of Second in Command (A.D.)



The Coathanger cum Clubswinger  
Commando exercises around the Capstan



irresistible attraction to most of us and having bought the rabbits we got under starters orders for a prolonged period of Bronzy Bronzy time. For many of us it was our first taste of those exquisite Caribbean beaches, together with some of their less pleasant aspects. Despite warnings from the old hands, sea eggs, and coral took their toll during the first few days. In the sick bay there seemed an endless row of feet soaking in vinegar, their owners gallantly attempting to reduce the painful effects of sea egg spines. It was the fate of the Commander's bathing party to argue with the coral, for having selected a suitable beach which was well stocked with bikini-clad natives, they manoeuvred in the Captain's Huntress. Unfortunately, she stopped rather sooner than anticipated and all hands were required to separate boat from coral. The Commander succeeded in straining his back as a result and all future business was conducted from a horizontal position on his cabin deck.

Our two-day stay at Roosevelt Roads enabled the remainder of the British ships to assemble prior to the commencement of Exercise Sun *Pirate*, in the American and British Virgin Islands. Whilst the embarked force toiled with their exercises many of the ship's company took advantage of the environment by swimming, sailing, fishing or just renewing their fading Mediterranean sun tans. A few even managed a run ashore in Tortola to sample the local brew in the lone Island pub. Fishing proved a rather frustrating sport in these waters as the Barracuda were very hungry and invariably on reeling in a "bite" it was only the head that remained.

The clear water, hot sun, and golden beaches proved an irresistible magnet and resulted in the organization of two banyans, the first being on Beef Island and the second at Vieques. On each occasion an L.C.M. was loaded with the recreational boats and a N.A.A.F.I. beer team. An advance party prepared the beach and Commander "S" took charge of the Bar-be-que supper of pork and lamb. Apart from returning on board ravenous and too late for supper we all had a fantastic day. Still! That was one up to the Chief Caterer.

With the Exercises completed we accompanied the L.S.L. *Sir Bedivere* to Bridgetown, Barbados, where we paid a five-day visit. Here again the beaches were fantastic and with rum cheaper than Coke and an abundance of gorgeous birds-well Paradise couldn't have more to offer. The Captain was an old hand on the Caribbean Station and prior to our arrival produced both a screed and a TV Programme on what to do and where to go. We also learnt of his distant cousin Emile Straker, who is the leader of the Merry-men, a well-known West Indian folk group who were performing at the Caribbean Pepper Pot. A considerable amount of hospitality was afforded to us by the proprietors of the Coconut Creek Country Club who extended their 5-star facilities to us during



Coconut Creek, Barbados



845 at play. Clear West Indian waters



our brief stay. On the morning of our departure a Helicopter from 845 Squadron gave a short flying display over the club and hoisted in a gallon jar of rum punch. The W.A.F.U's., however, living up to their name, succeeded in breaking the bottle and losing the contents before it could be returned on board. That was their story anyway! Besides all this activity we managed to squeeze in some sports fixtures. Even with such a useful batsman as the Captain in the Cricket team their successes during the season had been limited. All was to change, however, in Bridgetown where, with the help of a few imported players from the Embarked Force we took on the High Commission XI and proceeded to inflict on them their first defeat in three years. It was evident on our return to U.K. that sport of another kind had been taking place to some degree in Nelson Street and from the doctor's figures we seemed to be the losers by a wide margin!

Alas, all good things must come to an end and our Caribbean jaunt was no exception for on 29th February we commenced the ten-day haul back to Liverpool. During our deployment in the West Indies a lottery was organized with the ultimate aim of providing funds for the British Olympic Appeal Fund. The draw for 16 prizes was made by Captain Straker at the conclusion of a televised variety show on the eve of our arrival in Liverpool. The lucky winner was the Electrical Officer, Lieut. M. Davies, who picked up a cool £320. The Olympic Appeal Fund did quite well too as they received a cheque for £100.

Recent I.R.A. activity cast a shadow over our Liverpool visit but the city lived up to its reputation of being one of the best "runs" in the country. Things got off to a good start on the first night when the proprietors of the Clubship Landfall (a converted L.C.T.) laid on a swinging Dance for the ship's company. This was such a success that another was held on the eve of our departure. The Advance Easter Leave Party left us on arrival and with no shortage of Weekenders travelling south the ship's numbers were depleted. For those who remained there was plenty of entertainment but our visit to Merseyside was all too short and on 13th March we slipped to a volley of gay sirens in recognition of Captain Straker's last voyage and made our way south to Pompey.

Rivalry between Pompey and Guzz natives is never more evident than when a Plymouth ship is sent to Portsmouth for a leave period. A gentle drizzle accompanied our arrival for an A.M.P. and as we passed Nelson's Flagship an avid Westcountryman confided pessimistically, "They took that in for a refit over a hundred years ago so what hope have we got?" Despite this man's coloured views we did emerge on schedule and with a new skipper too for, during the main Easter leave period, Captain Bryan Straker was relieved by Captain Simon Cassels. Captain Straker was heading for Admiralty so we put him at a





Bryan Straker with Emile Straker and the Merrymen, Caribbean Pepperpot



Sterngate down. Every boat away as usual

desk on the back of a pusses lorry, providing him with a quill pen and some brandy, then pointed him in the right direction. Rumour has it that he arrived safely and is now the Director of Plans.

So *Fearless* emerged under new management and her first assignment was a social visit to Bordeaux accompanied very appropriately by H.M.S. *Bacchante* (the goddess of wine). Our purpose was to help celebrate the 25th anniversary of the twinning of the cities of Bordeaux and Bristol and we, being Bristol's adopted ship were to represent the city during our stay. We did our best to be sociable and certainly the French helped by allowing us to visit their vineyards and cognac factories where



Captain Straker off to a desk job

the proprietors were very generous with their free samples. F.O.C.A.S. (Rear Admiral J. D. Treacher) was also embarked for the visit together with the C.-in-C's. Band. who performed to their usual high standard throughout. Inevitably ceremonial was a prominent feature of the visit but the guard was quite surprised to witness a French Naval Officer emerge over the brow and proceed to salute each one of them with his left hand. All change for the Common Market chaps!

On 17th April we steamed back down the Gironde and made our way to Gibraltar where we remained for a few hours before sailing farther east to our, by now well known anchorage, at Dhekelia. With our old friends HQ 3 Commando Brigade embarked and accompanied by H.M.S. *Albion* with 42 Commando resident we took part in landing and withdrawal rehearsals in preparation for *Dawn Patrol*, our next big exercise.

Previous visits to Dhekelia have been synonymous with the organization of a variety of pre-dawn sporting activities. These mainly involved tuition for the non-swimmers or a workout for Captain Straker's tennis party. Perhaps understandably, the tennis players on this occasion were not very much in evidence following the departure of their leader, but for the poor unfortunates who remained non-swimmers the routine was unchanged. The water was bitterly cold but Clubs persisted with lessons in the belief that the colder the water the quicker the candidates would graduate.



Assault on the Band



The Handover





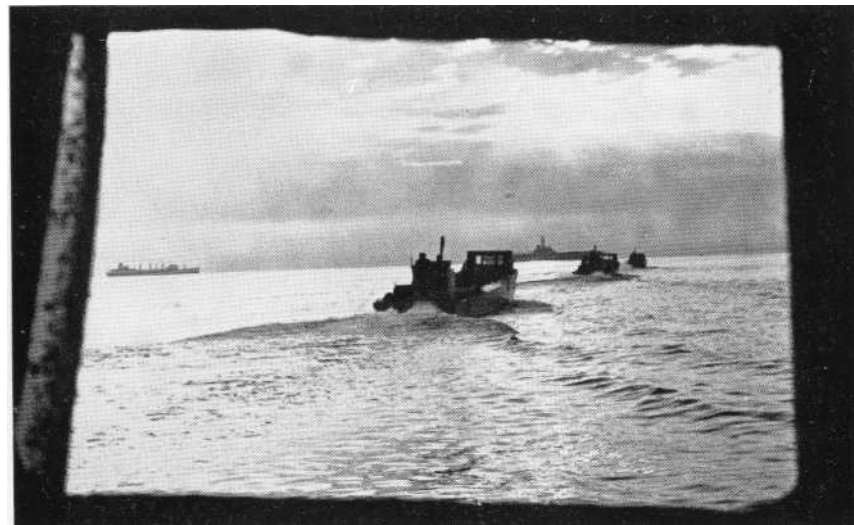


F.O.C.A.S. presents C.-in-C's. citation to A.B. Crossdale

From Cyprus we sailed north-west in order to carry out a further landing rehearsal near to the Greek town of Kavalla. This town was referred to in the Bible as Neapolis and it was visited by St. Paul on his pilgrimage from Asia Minor. His teachings in nearby Philippi constituted the beginnings of the spread of Christianity throughout Europe. Many went for a quick run ashore there but there was little of interest apart from sea-food restaurants and ouzo.

The time had now approached for the exercise proper and we steamed south to Souda Bay in order to rendezvous with the main task force. By a combination of the marvels of modern science and the diligence of the radio branch we were, during this passage, afforded the privilege of watching the F.A. Cup Final live. This was a treat which not many of us had anticipated. Leeds won!

*Dawn Patrol* was predominantly a Naval N.A.T.O. exercise which involved 100 ships from seven countries and the whole Mediterranean was used as its training area. A wide variety of amphibious ships congregated at Kiparissia in western Greece for the main landing and these included the L.P.H.U.S.S. Guadalcanal which featured in the recovery of the Apollo 6 project. On completion of this very satisfactory exercise the force made its way to Athens for a 5-day visit which was the climax of our Mediterranean deployment. Phaleron Bay was jammed with ships of every nationality but the boat routines were good and the city centre was within easy reach.



Assault on Albion



Blue Beret Patrol

Athens is, of course, a mecca for historians and archaeologists and we were given the opportunity of having a conducted tour of the city which included visits to the Acropolis and the Temple of Zeus. There were also tours farther afield to the ancient city of Corinth and to Mycenae. For the less academic the Flea Market held its attractions for compulsive "rabbits".

Since leaving Bordeaux Rear Admiral Treacher had relinquished his position as F.O.C.A.S. and was relieved by Rear Admiral R. D. Lygo who briefly visited us just prior to our departure from Athens.



Sea Knight-- CH46 at work



Dawn Patrol. Soudha Bay. The N.A.T.O. Fleet





On 20th May we weighed after a most enjoyable stay and made our way over to Malta arriving in time to entertain the advance party from U.K. who were picking up the threads again following the forces withdrawal from the island. Our stay was a very brief 2 days for we then steamed back to sunny Plymouth where we remained for a two-week maintenance period.

Visits to home ports always pass too quickly and it seemed no time before our old friends from HQ 3 Commando Brigade were clambering back aboard in preparation for Exercise *Strength Trial* which was to be held in the Orkney Islands. During this Commission we have played host to many foreign units and this time we saw some new faces, those of the Royal Netherlands Marine Corps. The Dutchmen together with elements of 45 Cdo were embarked at Rosyth where we also had a short visit from the Grand Duke of Luxembourg who was on a state visit to Britain at the time. Beard-growing contests are quite common to us but the Dutchmen seemed to have organized a hair-growing contest to coincide with their visit. Either that or they were taking extreme precautions against the rigours of the frozen north. Being the perfect hosts we accepted the situation and even went as far as to advertise hair nets but none were anxious to restrain their flowing locks.

On 20th June we sailed for Exercise *Strength Trial* in the Orkney area and arrived in Scapa Flow the same day after the very satisfactory completion of our Operational Readiness Inspection on passage. We were accompanied by H.M.S. *Albion* and H.M.S. *Salisbury* together with the R.F.A.s *Olna* and *Retainer*. Two SRN6 Hovercraft belonging to the R.C.T. also joined us and they practised docking procedures whilst the L.C.M.s were away. The weather during the exercise was far from pleasant and the Dutchmen spent a very uncomfortable three nights ashore in conditions which were far from summery. Perhaps their long hair had its advantages after all! Following a brief run ashore in the very



The Dutch land with wet feet in the Orkneys



The Grand Duke of Luxembourg visits the Tank Deck

pleasant town of Kirkwall we bade our Dutch friends a temporary farewell and steamed south to Plymouth in order to disembark HQ 3 Commando Brigade. This too was a lightning visit for virtually as soon as the last Bootneck was ashore we moved on to pastures new, this time in the form of a visit to Lisbon as Flagship of the Commander-in-Chief Fleet, Admiral Sir Edward Ashmore. Officially, the Admiral was visiting Lisbon in his capacity as CINCEASTLANT for the opening of the new headquarters of IBERLANT which is the N.A.T.O. area between Spain, Portugal and the Azores. Unofficially (according to a report in the *Daily Telegraph*) the visit was political for it was the first flag visit by an R.N. ship since 1966 thus reflecting the way in which emotions over the Rhodesian issue have changed in Lisbon, though the Portuguese have extended their facilities to our ships on Beira Patrol throughout its existence. Inevitably there was plenty of ceremonial and on the forenoon of our arrival a Captain's Guard was paraded no less than seven times. That must be some sort of record. There was no shortage of recreational pursuits and the weather was superb apart from an icy Procedure Alpha up the Tagus. Bus trips took us to the old Moorish town of Sintra and to the modern holiday resort of Estoi. The local British community also did well in providing plenty of good "grippos". Portuguese life is reputed to revolve around what is colloquially known as the three F's. It was close season at Benfica so many of us sampled



Admiral Ashmore with the Fleet Chiefs

another F the Fadu which was most entertaining. This is essentially a folk evening during which one eats a local dish (usually pyella) drinks plenty of wine and listens to the guitar-playing performers dressed in their national costume. And the third F.

All good things must come to an end and it was soon time to return to Plymouth for a long weekend before playing a Meet the Navy visit to Swansea. We again embarked a force of schoolboys for the voyage from



Perfection at Lisbon

Plymouth as part of the recruiting aspect of the visit. Our period in South Wales coincided with the annual conference of the British Dental Association held at Swansea University so Toothy was regularly to be seen touring the ship with groups of his sadistic colleagues-some of them rather attractive. Judging by the number of railway warrants made out to the Gower long after our departure it seemed on reflection to have been a highly successful visit.

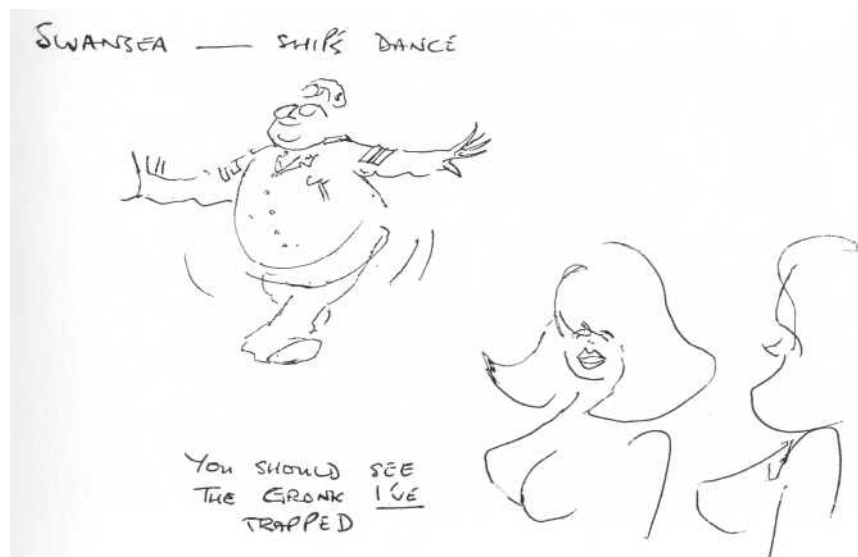
We squeezed ourselves back out through Swansea's narrow locks on 17th July and then headed north for Rosyth again this time to participate in their Navy Days. On our passage, however, we had an important date to keep with our sister ship *Intrepid* off the west coast of Scotland. During the afternoon an intership sports day was held on *Intrepid* and some 50 men were transferred by light jackstay. Although we seemed to be winning most of the events the opposition's scoring system (which we never managed to fathom) had us losers by a short head.

Rosyth greeted us with some typical Scottish summery weather. It rained incessantly. This obviously affected the number of visitors to Navy Days for the crowds which are normally associated with these open days were nowhere to be seen.

Our next appointment was at Cape Wrath for an annual naval gunnery exercise called *Wrathex*. This exercise had amphibious undertones for HQ 3 Commando Brigade were also embarked; in fact our participation in it was curtailed on receipt of a signal instructing us to steam immediately to the Gareloch on the west coast of Scotland. Speculation as to our immediate future ran riot but many suspected our ultimate destination at an early stage. Information was conveyed in



R.S.M. Dargie and M. Davies-Scots Guards to Belfast



Together at last



small tidbits over the main broadcast prefaced by the words "Captain speaking" a phrase guaranteed to silence the noisiest of mess mates. Gradually the jigsaw puzzle of events was assembled and it transpired that we were required to embark the 2nd Battalion Scots Guards and transport them to Belfast. This we fulfilled on a very wet and windy evening and we wasted no time admiring the scenery from Belfast Lough for we were soon returned to the Irish Sea following a mere couple of hours alongside.

At this stage the first leave party were becoming rather anxious for it was becoming increasingly evident that our arrival in Plymouth would be delayed. Further instructions were then received which resulted in our returning to the Gareloch to await more news. Second leave was beginning to look best.

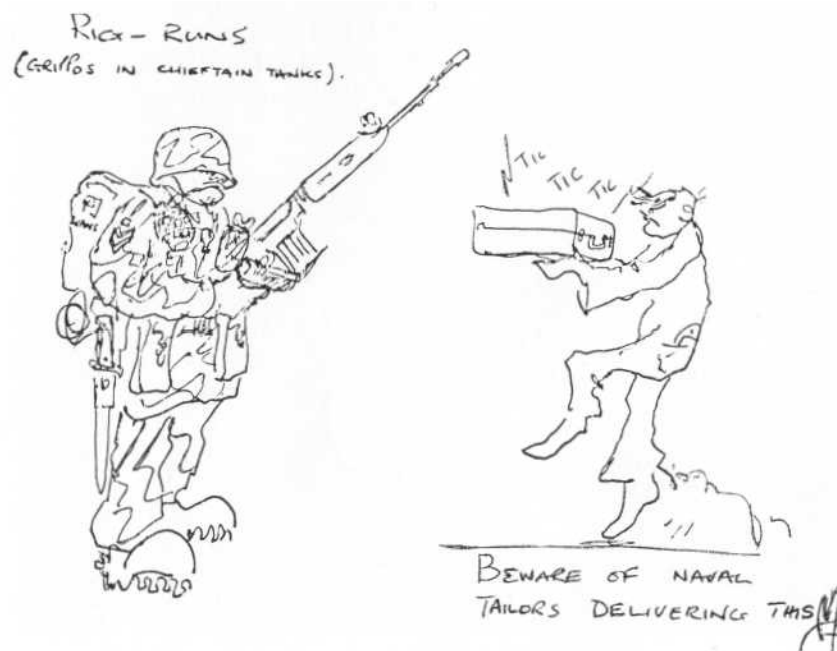
With the receipt of additional signals our part in operation *Motor-man* began. This required us to transport four armoured bulldozers (known as A.V.R.E.s) from Scotland to Londonderry. The bulldozers which belonged to the Royal Engineers were to spearhead the removal of the barricades in the "no go" areas of Londonderry. Our interest in the operation reached a pitch as the four L.C.M.s which each contained an A.V.R.E., prepared for their 25-mile journey at night in fog from *Fearless* down Lough Foyle to a hard on the outskirts of Londonderry. Weapons were drawn, ammunition issued, and an escort in the form of the minesweeper H.M.S. *Galviston* was provided. The craft reached their destination, however, without incident and the A.V.R.E.s were



O.C. A.V.R.E., Captain Stephen Taylor, celebrates on return from the Bogside



Embarking having removed the Barricades in Londonderry



driven ashore shortly before midnight on the start of their journey to the Bogside and the Creggan. Their mission was completely successful for all the barricades were removed and the dozers were ready for re-embarkation at 0700. The operation went remarkably smoothly and *Fearless* received many messages of appreciation for the part she played.

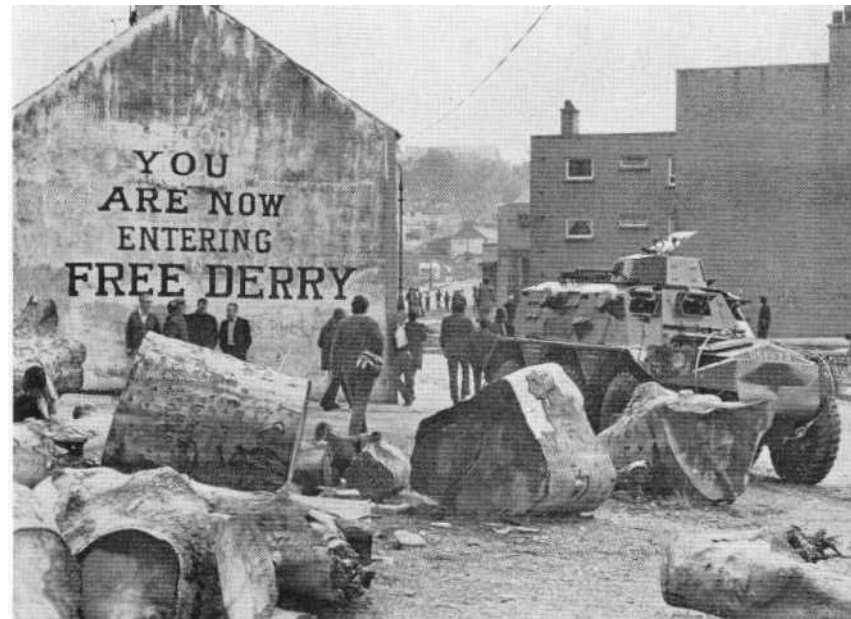
At last we had leave in our sights again and the ship arrived in Plymouth on 1st August, three days behind schedule so concluding the most exciting few days of the Commission.

During our days off Ireland buzzes were rife but with Belfast behind us new buzz material was sought and this centred on a possible extension of the commission with visits to all the most exotic places imaginable. Buzzes apart it was clear that industrial disputes in the Royal Dockyards were having an effect on ships refitting and it gradually became apparent that our refit date would have to be deferred. Just prior to sailing the Captain gave us the full details so that our families would be in the picture. H.M.S. *Bulwark* was unable to sail on time due to engine room difficulties so it was proposed that we step into the breach and complete her programme in the Mediterranean. To the minority of the ship's company who were eagerly anticipating being R.A. in Guzz, this additional involvement was a disappointment but the prospect of missing part of an English winter was at least some compensation.

EDITORIAL NOTE: For most of us who do not live in the West Country, Devonport is the same as being on a foreign commission anyway, but it has the additional disadvantage of always being in a raincloud.



Sunny return to Oggieland



(Courtesy of the Daily Telegraph)

Operation Motorman



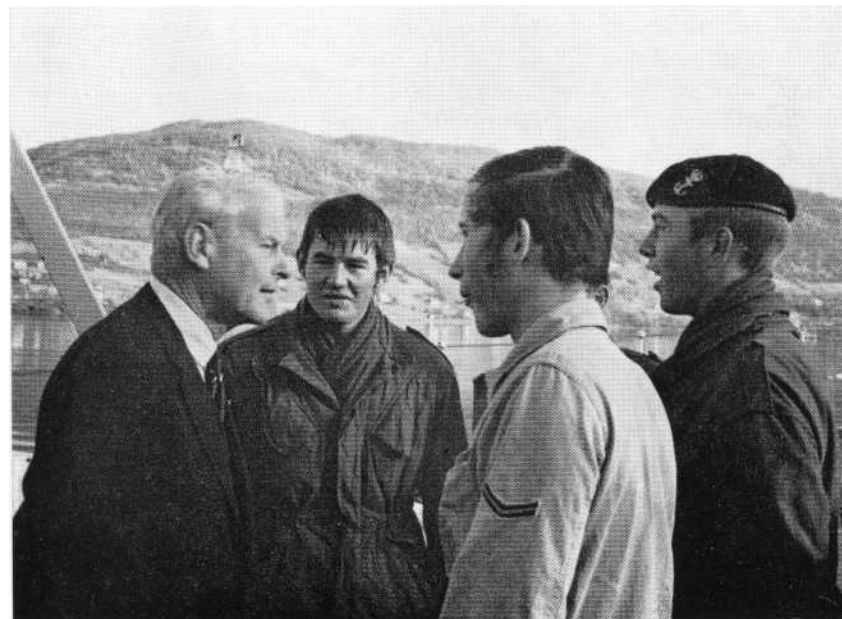
( Courtesy of *The Associated Press Ltd.*)

Operation Motorman

During our August leave period in Devonport the ship went into dry dock in order to have the stern glands repacked. We also participated in Plymouth Navy Days when a record 27,000 Oggies poured on to *Fearless*, during what must have been one of the most successful open days in recent years.

With Navy Days behind us our thoughts were once again focused on preparing the ship for sea, in readiness for an extremely busy September. During these next few weeks we were programmed to take part in N.A.T.O.'s largest exercise since its formation in 1951. The exercise involved some 64,000 men, 300 ships and 700 aircraft and was code named *Strong Express*. Our task was to land our embarked force in the Lofoten Peninsula so as to reinforce the northern flank of N.A.T.O. in Norway. Once again HQ 3 Cdo Bde were embarked together with our Dutch colleagues from the Royal Netherlands Marine Corps who we picked up at Europort. We could be forgiven for not recognizing them on this occasion for, since our last encounter, they had visited, a barber much to the delight of the Commander.

The British force assembled at anchor off Rosyth as an industrial dispute in the dockyard prevented us going alongside yet again, but this did not deter the Dutch who took Edinburgh by storm on each of our two nights there.



**Dutch Minister of Defence, De Koster, and Dutch Marines**



**Just got under the Forth Bridge**



**Mr. De Koster and Sergeant-Majors Zweers and Van Dorgen**



On 11th September we sailed for Norway to commence our part in the exercise and two days later received the first of what seemed to be an endless stream of V.I.P. visitors. The first guest was the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the Royal Navy, Mr. Peter Kirk, who dropped in on us for half an hour. During his stay he was photographed with Mr. Wilson's picture in the background and this happy scene subsequently appeared in a copy of the *Daily Telegraph*.

On 15th September we arrived in the Harstad area and landed our Royal Marine contingent who set up the Amphibious Beach Unit. Meanwhile life on board was becoming increasingly tedious so a short afternoon expd. was arranged to take in a nearby hill. The Commander commandeered a Scout helicopter for an airlift of beer which was dropped at a strategic position and this sustained the walkers at the half way point. Meanwhile the war continued.

Conditions ashore were extremely wet and the Dutchmen spent a very uncomfortable few days away from *Fearless* during their landing. With the memory of the Orkneys exercise fresh in their minds *Fearless* must have held, for them, some soggy memories. Added to that one of H.M.S. *Albion's* helicopters with about 10 Dutch Marines on board ditched into the sea just after dawn. Fortunately all were saved but the trend of soaking the Dutch was continued much to our embarrassment. It is just as well they had had their hair cut.



The Brigadier, Mr. Peter Kirk and the Commodore

Daily Orders for 19th September included a very impressive list of V.I.P.s who were expected on board during the day. We started by receiving C.-in-C. Fleet, Sir Edward Ashmore, and proceeded to entertain Lord Carrington (Secretary of State for Defence), Sir Edward Peck (Ambassador to U.K. delegation at N.A.T.O.) and Lt.-Gen. Gourlay (C.G.R.M.) to mention but a few. Over the next two days Dr. Rechlin,



Mirrored in Vaags Fjord