

Oration delivered

by the

Commanding Officer,

Ulster Volunteer Force in Long Kesh,

Mr. Augustus Andrew Spence.

12th July 1977

Cage Twentyone,
Long Kesh Prison Camp,
12th July 1977.

**THE ORATION DELIVERED BY THE COMMANDING
OFFICER, ULSTER VOLUNTEER FORCE IN LONG
KESH, MR. AUGUSTUS ANDREW SPENCE.....**

We never tire of celebrating the advent in history when William of Orange achieved for us in 1690 Civil and Religious freedom. We, the Protestants of Ireland, were the persecuted in those days and now things are somewhat reversed. But is persecution necessary for the establishment of the inherent freedoms of mankind? Has persecution ever changed a person's views? Do we really want freedom and the pursuit of happiness at the expense of some other unfortunate soul? Should we not be defending the rights of all men whatever their calling in Ulster? These are the questions that we must answer inwardly at first and then outwardly for all the world to know. I submit that it is fear which makes one people oppress another and until such times as we abolish fear in our society we are always going to have oppressive and misguided persons to implement it. We are living in the most socially and legalistically oppressive society in the Western Hemisphere, the manifestations of which are strewn over that society like scabs. Polarisation complete with one section of the community cut off from the other except for some middle class contacts which appear to be concerned more about their class than community. Jails filled to overflowing and legislation that the apartheid countries would envy. We are a police state with the accompanying allegations of torture and degrading treatment to suspects undergoing interrogation in the many centres reserved for the purpose. Even yet we still have men, prostituting the name of politics and religion, calling for more oppressive legislation and nonsensically counselling that victory is just around the corner. Victory over whom - the I.R.A.? Or do they mean victory over the Roman Catholic community? Over whom do they really want victory? The fears of the Roman Catholics will not go away because a bunch of bigoted Unionist politicians say so; and make no mistake about this word Unionist, because we are unionists too, even though we could never agree with those fascists who hold the reign of power. Do they not realise that the I.R.A. was a natural manifestation of Catholic fears just as the U.V.F. & U.D.A. were born from Loyalist fear?

We in Northern Ireland are plagued with super-Loyalists who are not content to be ordinary. These people are the witch hunters - the Ulster Senator McCarthy's - who enter debate and the newspaper columns armed with the tar brush, the innuendo, and the lie; and you will find that they can usually shout louder than most. If one does not agree with their bigoted and fascist views then one is a "haig lover" at best, or a "communist" at worst. They are adept at labelling those who disagree with them. We must, therefore, take a stand against this evil in our midst and risk their slander in the hope that the decent person in our land will support right instead of not bothering lest they become the subject of attention. Unfortunately - and it must be said - we have had too many of these people in our own ranks. No fascist or bigot can expect sympathy or understanding in the U.V.F. Compounds of Long Kesh. The sooner that we realise that our trust has been abused and the so called political leadership we followed was simply a figment the sooner we will attempt to fend for ourselves politically and to commence articulation in that direction. We can do without the immature, emotionally unstable and bigoted element within Loyalist circles. As a political leadership they are a sick joke - a mixture of imane hacks and power hungry clerics who would not recognise the truth if it kicked them in the face. These are the men who have cunningly and purposefully fused religion with politics and fostered fear amongst the Loyalist community for their own designs and to retain power. They have adroitly manipulated the Orange institution and other working class organisations to serve such ends hinting that when the time came for action they would not be found wanting. All along the line they have shut up instead of putting up and now the influence that such organisations could have had has been assuaged by their tepid leadership. The only thing that they are good at is division and fear.

I am sure that you on parade this morning have broken free from that vicious syndrome and are thinking for yourselves and since you have been called almost every evil name under the sun you have ceased to worry. We know why we are in Long Kesh today even though we may have had doubts in the past. No group has been more vilified by those who led us here than ourselves and we have been attributed with all manner of motives except the

one word which our detractors detest like the plague - patriotism! Savour that word - let it roll off your tongue - look your height and feel your strength, you patriots!! Acknowledge and relish your incorruptibility in that you cannot be bought or bullied! Declare openly and with pride that your involvement in Ulster's war was not financially subsidised and that you did your duty without hope of reward. Imprisonment has been your only reward and even then you are unconquerable.

Your OFFICIAL title is patriot - acting unpaid! How many soldiers or policemen, or even prison officers, would do their duty without the inevitable pay day as promised and delivered by the Government for the services rendered? I suggest very few if any.

The POLITICAL prisoners and the paramilitaries cannot be made the scapegoats for our society's ills because ours was a sick society long before the fighting men came on the scene. In many aspects, life in Ulster before the troubles was artificial and it was only when it was tested that the scabrous cracks began to show through. We can no longer paper over the cracks because the gulf is too wide. We can never go back to the society that once was, even if we had a wish to. We want employment and decent homes like all human beings, and Loyalists will no longer suffer their deprivation stoically lest their outcries be interpreted as disloyalty. Before we can reconstruct we must have peace with a modicum of trust in order to bind the wounds created by eight, nay, three hundred years of strife, hatred, mistrust and oppression with no one side having monopoly on good or evil. The politicians seemingly cannot or will not give us the peace we so earnestly desire so I therefore call upon all the paramilitaries - all the warring factions - to call a universal ceasefire. To open up dialogue with each other in order to pursue ways and means of making such a ceasefire permanent. Eventually Loyalist and Republican must sit down together for the good of our country if we claim to be patriots. There is no obstacle that is insurmountable. I do not know what shape or form such talks would take but I do know that they will have the blessing of every person in Ulster who desires peace and justice.

I realise of course that my proposal will invoke a furore from the usual productable quarters and to these people I say "what have you got to offer except your usual negative utterances"? Granted the paramilitaries are not elected representatives of our people, but they are capable of stopping the violence and could not possibly have survived without support and comfort from within their respective communities. We have nothing to lose in such a summit, and who knows, the adversaries may even learn something from one another.

On this occasion I presume to speak for no one. I am speaking purely on an individual basis and let no man tell me that I do not have the right. Before the cries of traitor bellow forth let me remind all and sundry that Sir James Craig, our first Premier, went alone to Dublin in 1922 and had talks with Eamon de Valera and Michael Collins precisely along similar lines to those which I refer. Who could dare call such a man a traitor? It is time we stopped listening to doubting Thomases and acknowledge deep down in our hearts that dialogue will have to come about sometime, so why not now? There is no victory in Ulster, not for the I.R.A. or the U.V.F., the police or the army. There is only victory for humanity and common sense. I personally welcome any criticism of myself and simply ask my critics to be original. To the paramilitaries I say, "please do not be hasty and dismiss my proposal out of hand. Debate it and discuss among your membership the realities of the situation remembering that no one expects you to concede principle. I would not do it nor would I expect anyone else to."

I thank each of you on parade for the allegiance and confidence that you have placed in me over the years and I am humble. I ask you to trust me further and even though my motives may not be immediately discernible or evident I ask you to stand by me just as you can be completely sure that I will be by your side however hard the going may become and despite the reprobation and criticism which may come in our direction, I am proud of you as men, as Volunteers, and as Ulster Loyalists.

As far as in you lies enjoy this festive time even though you are behind bars and continue to confound your keepers by agreeable demeanour and good naturedness. Remember that praise is nothing until it comes from your enemy.

MAY GOD BLESS YOU ALL.