

NOV-1977



Ulster Volu

LONG K

REMEMBERANCE

11th NOV

delivered to UVF
Long Kesh Camp by
AUGUSTUS

In military style and precision 250 Officers and Volunteers of the Ulster Volunteer Force lined up solemnly to pay homage and honour to Ulster War Heroes of the Great Wars of 1914-1918 and 1939-1945, and lately of the many Ulster folk who have died since the start of the present I.R.A. campaign.

Men (and even boys) of the imprisoned U.V.F. personnel in Compounds 18, 19 and 21 Long Kesh, each adorning a Remembrance Poppy, heard the C.O., Mr Augustus Andrew

We are gathered here this morning to pay homage to the slain. How to best do that and in what period in our history do we begin? The mass slaughter of the First World War pricked the consciences and in response the Government of the day set aside the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month as a national day of remembrance, forswearing that the fallen would never be forgotten.

We can never repay those who gave their lives for us and it is futile to try. We can, however, keep faith with those who have passed on, solemnly and in a manner befitting their passing whilst at the same time promising that their sacrifice has not been in vain and further deaths are completely unnecessary in the name of patriotism.

This is not a morning for overt militarism but by our calling we are soldiers and therefore can only offer soldiers often inadequate words. The only true testimony to the dead is the abolition of war, fear, oppression and injustice. The dead were no different from you and I, having had the same hopes and fears, likes and dislikes, loves and hates, and simply aspired to a better way of life for their loved ones themselves; and yet they were caught in the net and finished their lives bleeding to death in some place long forgotten.

Sassoon comments thus: —

*"You smug faced crowds with kindling eye,
Who cheer when soldier lads pass by,
Sneak home and pray you'll never*

know,

The hell where youth and laughter go."

In the name of Government we are expendable and simply cannon fodder, and no gentlemanly war can gloss over the fact that evil and without depth. We are well acquainted with incompetency — a commodity that is not peculiar to class or race. It must be wonderful to be without fault and being mere mortals we will never know that feeling. Our constant companion, hypocrisy, is ever present and the best of us must always be on our guard against its subtle traps, and it is always easy to cast up another's faults whilst conveniently forgetting one's own.

When we are labelled 'terrorist' we will smile the smile of the knowing and know that in a so-called legitimate war we would be dressed in a uniform of their choosing — having been stupid enough to have volunteered in the first place and having listened to their impassioned patriotic and intimidating appeals questioning our manhood if we had not willingly volunteered. The war situation in Northern Ireland has changed dramatically and requires serious and radical re-appreciation on the part of the para-militaries.

Further violence is useless and counter-productive since the aim of the loyalists of self-determination has been achieved. There is a need now for reconciliation with our neighbours whose aspirations differ from ours. Negotiation and dialogue can fill the

vacuum of violence. It will take courage of course and will mean give-and-take on both sides, but I am confident that with honesty and good will a breakthrough can be achieved in our present polarisation log-jam. We must have more resolution in the pursuit of peace than we have in the pursuit of violence, and we must become accustomed to, and welcome, the discordant shrills from the wings and match their



Volunteer Force

LONG KESH CAMP

THE DAY ORATION

SEPTEMBER, 1977

Major J. C. Spence, Prisoners-of-War at
The Commanding Officer
S. A. SPENCE

Spence, give the customary oration to the men of Ulster who gave the supreme sacrifice in defence of freedom to all men of all religions, of all classes, of all creeds.

Many of those who died were direct descendants of the lads who were now imprisoned in Long Kesh for the same defence of freedom against the I.R.A.

Reference was also made to the many men of the Ulster Volunteer Force who have given their ultimate since 1969 for Ulster's great cause

arguments with our own and we must succeed.

Again, Sassoon comments

"We're none of us the same the boys reply.

For George lost both legs, and Bill's stone blind,

Poor Jim's shot thru' the lungs and like to die,

And Bert's gone strange: You'll not

*find,
A chap who's served that hasn't found
some change
And the Bishop said, 'The ways of God
are strange'*

In our new awareness we preach dignity amidst our chaos and respect even though from time to time we inadvertently lapse. Man was never meant to kill his fellow man or himself be killed whilst attempting to do so; and it is inexcusable, and no amount of inspirational rhetoric, can make it otherwise.

War is obscene and there is no glory in it and in its wake there follows bitterness and recrimination, sorrow and heartbreak, hatred and vengeance.

It is so simple to be destructive, and bitter and it takes very little courage, so let us therefore be courageous and constructive, even should we stand alone. We are all victims of the violence permeating our society. We are the living dead entombed in many cases for a lifetime, and a broken mind can be equated with the handicap of a broken body. Like the paraplegic we do not want pity — just understanding and patience.

The only true testimony to the dead is peace, otherwise their passing has been for no purpose.

Let the rattle of oratory and the volleys of words be heard instead of bombs and bullets — we need the strategy of political policies in the place of battle plans and let us face one another across the negotiating table as opposed to no-man's land. Let us reconcile and permit the grass and flowers to grow over the battlefields just as they have at the Somme and

Pasthendaete. And lastly, let us forget past dissensions and resolve to pass on to our children the fruitful lessons which cost us so high a price in life and human misery so that they may never know the hell and barbarity through which we had to pass.

I break with tradition this year with closing words from Siegfried Sassoon, who himself went throughout the 14-18 war from start to finish. It is entitled,

"AFTERMATH"

*'Have you forgotten yet?
But the past is just the same and wars
a bloody game*

*Have you forgotten yet?
Look down, and swear by the slain of
the war that you'll never forget.*

*'Do you remember the rats and the
stench*

*Of corpses in front of our front line
trench*

*And the dawn coming, dirty white,
and chill with a hopeless rain*

*Do you ever stop and ask, 'is it all
going to happen again?'*

*'Do you remember that hour of din
before the attack*

*At the anger, the blind compassion
that seized and shook you then*

*As you peered at the doomed and the
haggard faces of your men,*

*Do you remember the stretcher cases
lurching back*

*With dying eyes and lolling heads —
those ashen grey*

*Masks of the lads who once were keen
and kind and gay?*

**"HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN YET?
LOOK UP, AND SWEAR BY THE
GREEN OF THE SPRING THAT
YOU'LL NEVER FORGET."**