These words were delivered by Lieutenant Colonel Tim Collins, commander of the Royal Irish Battle Group just hours before he led them into combat in Iraq:

The enemy should be in no doubt that we are his Nemesis and that we are bringing about his rightful destruction. There are many regional commanders who have stains on their souls and they are stoking the fires of Hell for Saddam. As they die they will know their deeds have brought them to this place. Show them no pity. But those who do not wish to go on that journey, we will not send. As for the others, I expect you to rock their world.

We go to liberate, not to conquer. We will not fly our flags in their country. We are entering Iraq to free a people, and the only flag that will be flown in that ancient land is their own. Don’t treat them as refugees, for they are in their own country.

I know men who have taken life needlessly in other conflicts. They live with the mark of Cain upon them. If someone surrenders to you, then remember they have that right in international law, and ensure that one day they go home to their family. The ones who wish to fight, well, we aim to please. If there are casualties of war, then remember, when they woke up and got dressed in the morning they did not plan to die this day. Allow them dignity in death. Bury them properly, and mark their graves.

You will be shunned unless your conduct is of the highest, for your deeds will follow you down history. Iraq is steeped in history. It is the site of the Garden of Eden, of the Great Flood, and the birth of Abraham. Tread lightly there. You will have to go a long way to find a more decent, generous and upright people than the Iraqis. You will be embarrassed by their hospitality, even though they have nothing...

There may be people among us who will not see the end of this campaign...We will put them in their sleeping bags and send them back. There will be no time for sorrow. Let’s leave Iraq a better place for us having been there. Our business now, is north.