

50th Anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution October 23, 2006

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for welcoming me here this morning. It is with a tremendous sense of privilege, reverence and respect that I speak to you on such a symbolic day for Hungary, Hungarians and a day that's ramifications hold tremendous importance for Canada.

Fifty years ago this month, Hungarians armed with rudimentary weapons valiantly battled against Soviet tanks in the streets of Budapest. They were fighting to reclaim their sovereignty. Today, October 23rd, commemorates the beginning of the Hungarian Revolution, an uprising against oppression and tyranny that led to tremendous acts courage and valor. The forceful effort of the Hungarian people to rightfully reclaim their freedom and independence was nothing short of honorable and heroic.

Although the revolution was quelled by Soviet forces, Hungarians can feel proud that they, as a people, resisted injustice and demonstrated to the world the value of human freedom. The revolution impacted the lives of many. Roughly 2500 Hungarians are estimated to have been killed while over 13 000 others were wounded and hundreds of thousands more displaced, many of whom came to Canada.

Over 37 000 (approximately one in six of the roughly 200 000) Hungarian refugees fled their homeland to Canada in the hope of beginning a new life. Normal immigration procedures were waived and the passage across the ocean was provided for. Many arrived at the port of my home town of St. John, New Brunswick.

Those events have since passed into the pages of history, but many of us still remember it well, especially those here today that lived through the ordeal, came to Canada, and in making their new lives here, greatly contributed to the social fabric of our nation; a nation you can proudly call your own. To those of you who were born Canadian-Hungarian, I hope you are proud of the heritage from which you come and the struggle and sacrifice made by your parents and grand-parents so that you could enjoy a life of free from oppression. Though the revolution may have passed into history, the impact that it had is forever present through people across the world like you.

Commemoration ceremonies such as this stand as a testament to the trials and tribulations experienced by all those who took part in or were affected by those revolutionary events; either directly or indirectly. As I stand here reflecting on the overall impact of the revolution while looking out at you, I can see the good that came from it. The fact that you are now here, in Canada at this

commemoration ceremony, represents all that those who were less fortunate than yourselves would have wished for you.