



Rededication of Vimy Memorial on the 90th Anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge, April 9, 2007

Ladies and gentlemen,

In any national story there are moments and places, sometimes far from home, which in retrospect can be seen as fixed points about which the course of history turns, moments which distinguish that nation forever. Those who seek the foundations of Canada's distinction would do well to begin here at Vimy.

Until this day ninety years ago, Vimy Ridge had been impregnable, a lesson learned at terrible cost to the armies of France and Britain. For the Allies, this ridge had become a symbol of futility and despair. It was against this forbidding challenge that the four Divisions of the Canadian Corps were brought together as a single army for the first time.

Within just a few hours, on that cold and gloomy Easter Monday morning, the Canadians became masters of this ridge, managing what most thought impossible. Their victory was not only the result of an ingenious battle plan devised by their Canadian commanders, but also of the courage and determination with which those Canadian soldiers carried out this mission.

No fewer than four Canadians were awarded the Victoria Cross for conspicuous bravery during the battle, though it could easily be said that every soldier in the field demonstrated conspicuous bravery, such was the verve of the Canadian attack. It was a stunning victory. More, in capturing this formidable objective, the Canadian Corps transformed Vimy Ridge from a symbol of despair into a source of inspiration. After two and a half years of deadly stalemate, it now seemed possible that the Allies would prevail and peace might one day be restored.

Here on this ground made sacred by the sacrifice of so many, we commemorate their courage and success. Their victory did more than restore hope, it allowed Canada, having earned it, to take its rightful place at the international level as a proud and sovereign nation, strong and free. The Canadian National Vimy Memorial is a testament to Canada's great strength and its attachment to freedom. It also speaks of the great solidarity shared between Canada and France. Lastly, it testifies to the valour, courage and sacrifice of the brave Canadians who inspired a young country to become a magnificent nation.

To their eternal remembrance, to Canada, to all who would serve the cause of freedom, and to those who have lost their lives in Afghanistan, I rededicate this magnificently restored memorial.