

08/01/08

P R E S S R E L E A S E

**Man Culture War
Multi Cultural Aspects of the First World War**

It's hard to picture a landscape made up of diverse ethnic groups, cultures and nationalities on the battlefields of Flanders during the First World War. It is little known that in fact, over fifty diverse multi cultures, hailing from far flung places of the world played important and invaluable assistance to their colonial rulers during this time. Now, a new exhibition entitled MAN CULTURE WAR catalogues how these people viewed issues such as war and peace, life and death. The In Flanders Field Museum in Ypres has brought together artefacts, photos, films, graves and witness statements to produce a fascinating insight to the multi-cultural aspects of the First World War.

The earliest troops from the Empire came in October 1914 from North and West Africa, soon followed by the Indians and later more from the Caribbean. Eskimos and Indians from Canada as well as Maori and South Pacific Islanders fought alongside the British. The workforce behind the Front originated from Vietnam, Madagascar, Egypt and Fiji. The largest group of workers was the Chinese who remained in the area until the end of 1919 to help clear the battlefields and bury the dead.

The concept of multi-culturalism is now a common feature of modern day Britain and Europe. However in the early 20th Century, many Belgians had never set eyes upon a foreigner let alone one with a different skin colour, racial features and language. Likewise, the experience for many of the foreign soldiers from outside northern Europe was as alien. Coping with the adverse climate conditions, fighting with nationalities that were equally as unfamiliar and being so far from home was a difficult concept for many.

It seems fitting that in our modern, fast changing world where international borders are less of a barrier, the stories of these long forgotten allies are told for the first time.

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Images available on request

Notes for Editors:

Man War Culture

01 May - 7 September 2008

In Flanders Fields Museum

Cloth Hall

Ypres

Tel 00 32 57 23 92 20

www.inlandersfields.be

Admission:

Adults: €5.00

Children 7-15 yrs: €2.50

Children under 7: Free