

Illinois State Treasurer Dan Rutherford Honors Sikhs' Contributions to the World Wars

83,005 Sikh soldiers died and 109,045 were wounded while fighting for the Allied forces

Sikh soldier's photo exhibition held at State of Illinois building in Chicago

Chicago, May 17, 2013
R.S.Mago

To celebrate the Asian and Pacific American Heritage Month of May, Illinois State Treasurer Dan Rutherford and members of the Chicago area Sikh community co-sponsored the exhibit, *Sikhs' Contributions in World Wars*, at the State of Illinois Building James R. Thompson Center in Chicago May 13- May 17. This five day exhibit featured photos and quotations which highlight the contributions of Sikhs to the success of the Allied Troops during World War I and II.



Dan Rutherford and members of the Chicago-area Sikh community gathered on May 17 to view and celebrate the exhibits. Rutherford was honored with a large thank you banner and a bouquet of flowers by the community leaders Bhai Mohinder Singh, Dr. Jagjit Singh Teji, and Kulwant Singh Hundal.



Mr. Debashish Banerjee from Consulate of India in Chicago also attended the function and congratulated the community for a successful event.



Sikhs Contribution in World Wars



“In the last two world wars, 83,005 turban-wearing Sikh soldiers were killed and 109,045 were wounded for the freedom of Britain and the world during shell fire with no other protection but the turban, the symbol of their faith.”

*General Sir Frank Messervy KCSI, KBE, CB, DSO
From the foreword of Colonel F.T. Birchwood, OBE, The Sikh Regiment in the Second World War*



Officers and men of the Sikh Infantry marching through London's Admiralty Arch on their way to Buckingham Palace during the 1919 Peace Day Celebration.

Remembering Sikhs of All Wars

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.....By R. S. Mago

“Sikhs showed great patriotism and sacrifice during war,” said Rutherford. “It is important to understand the culture and history of our neighbors. It is easy to not realize how much we share when our appearances differ.” In the two world wars, 83,005 Sikh soldiers died and 109,045 were wounded while fighting for the Allied forces.

Rajinder Singh Mago emceed the event, and said, “Sikhs due to their core value systems of upholding social justice and human equality are most American of the Americans, and it would be ironic not to let them serve their country in uniform due to their beards and turban.”

Sarwan Singh, a member of the Chicago-area Sikh community, and the organizer said that the objective of sharing these historical photos with a broader community is to better educate the public. “Sikhs are often the victims of mistaken identity, especially due to turbans being a fundamental part of their religious observance,” said Singh. “This lack of understanding has often led to violence against the Sikh community.

The purpose of these posters is to educate the community about not only the religion of Sikhism, but also about the history of public service and patriotism that defines the Sikh community.”

Prof. (retd.) Jaginder Singh Ramdev Said, “India’s Sikh population is only 2% but the Prime Minister and Chief of Armed Forces are Sikh.”

By Ragu Shastri:

Sir Winston Churchill Praises Sikh Sacrifice In World Wars for Britain and France?

Sir Winston Churchill was very well conversant with the bravery of the Sikhs, who had fought for Britain in the World Wars. Churchill while speaking in the British Parliament said:

".....It is a matter of regret that due to the obsession of the present times people are distorting the superior religious and social values, but those who wish to preserve them with respect, we should appreciate them as well as help them. Sikhs do need our help for such a cause and we should give it happily. Those who know the Sikh history, know England's relationship with the Sikhs and are aware of the achievements of the Sikhs, they should persistently support the idea of relaxation to Sikhs to ride a motorbike with their turbans on, because it is their religious privilege."

Churchill, further added:

"...British people are highly indebted and obliged to Sikhs for a long time. I know that within this century we needed their help twice and they did help us very well. As a result of their timely help, we are today able to live with honour, dignity, and independence.

By Surinder Mehta:

Sikhism is the fifth largest religion in the world. The Sikh religion is also one of the newest and has only been in existence for about 500 years. There are about 25 million Sikhs living around the world. Sikhs live in almost every major country. About half a million Sikhs live in the United States.

Historically the Sikhs stood up for oppressed peoples subjected to forced conversion. Ninth Guru Teg Bahadar sacrificed his life on behalf of Hindus being forcibly converted to Islam. The Sikh Temple/gurdwara or Sikh worship place is open to all people regardless of faith. Sikhism does embrace anyone regardless of caste color or creed who wishes to convert to the Sikh way of life by choice.

