



THE THIRD WORLD IN WORLD WAR II || A long term project for a decolonised history of WWII

Contact: Recherche International e.V., Cologne, Germany ☐ Karl Rössel, Kuenstr. 35, 50733 Köln
Tel: ++49 (0) 221 - 239714E-Mail

I: l.roessel@rjb-koeln.de [kar](#)

For more than 20 years a collective of free-lance scientists and journalists, based in Cologne, Germany, has been trying to overcome the eurocentric views on the history of World War II, supported by a group of researchers called "recherche international e.V."

The book "Our victims don't count" (2005 - 2016) The first result of the research in 30 countries of Africa, Asia and Oceania over a whole decade was the publication of the book "Unsere Opfer zählen nicht – Die Dritte Welt im Zweiten Weltkrieg" ("Our victims don't count – The Third World in World War II") in 2005. The book was selected by 24 critics in Germany as the most important non-fiction book of the month, when it came out and it got dozens of positive reviews underlining that it finally describes a so far almost forgotten chapter in the history books on WWII. After four hard cover editions the Federal Agency for Civic Education published two more paperback editions in 2015 and 2016. A third paperback edition followed in 2019.

The German version of the book:

[here](#)

Educational book (2008 / 2012) In 2008 a special educational edition for teachers and schoolkids was published in German, followed by a corrected and extended version in 2012. The German version of the instructional material see:

[here](#)

The German version of the exhibition (2009 – 2017) In 2009 an exhibition on the forgotten role of third world countries and people was presented for the first time in Berlin to tour afterwards in three different sizes (A0, A1 and A2) through more than 60 locations in Germany and Switzerland. It has been shown in historical museums, documentation centers for Nazi history, schools and universities and there are further bookings of this exhibition till the end of 2019.

Locations of the A0-Version of the exhibition:

[here](#)

Locations of the A1-Version of the exhibition:

[here](#)

Locations of the A2-Version of the exhibition:

[here](#)

Photos of the exhibition and guest books from several locations:

[here](#)

The content of the exhibition The exhibition is based on the book “Unsere Opfer zählen nicht”, which is therefor also used as a catalogue. The exhibition has 8

chapters:

1.

Prologue: A Short introduction

(with an video-installation called “forgotten liberators”, which shows portraits from 200 men and women from third world countries, who fought against the facist powers and a world map of the colonial powers and the colonies at the beginning of WWII).

This is followed by the three main chapters of the exhibition:

2. Africa in WWII

3. Asia in WWII

4. Oceania in WWII

The last, smaller geographical chapter is:

5. South America and the Caribbean in WWII

This is followed by two thematic chapters:

6. The persecution of jews outside of Europe

7. Collaboration

8. Epilogue

(with a statement of Prof. Kum’a Ndumbe titled: “The right to remembrece”)

English version of the exhibition for South Africa In 2016 an English version of the exhibition has been produced (size A1). In January

2017 it was sent to South Africa for presentations in different cities over several years to premiere on February 28, 2017 in the Castle of Good Hope in Cape Town. It was shown in Cape Town till June, from July 2017 in Pretoria (Freedom Park), from January 2018 in Johannesburg (Holocaust & Genocide Centre) and from mid-2018 to mid-2019 in the Steve Biko Centre in King Williamstown.

Presentations in further cities in South Africa might follow.

(See: [Places and dates of the exhibition in South Africa](#)) recherche international hopes, that the exhibition will also tour to other anglophone countries in Africa and elsewhere.

Table of content of the exhibition in English: [here](#) Setting up the exhibition – instructions [here](#) Content of the flight case of the English exhibition:

[here](#)

Photos of the flight case of the exhibition:

[here](#)

Instructional material: Work Sheets for Students & Teachers Answer Sheets:

[here](#)

Posters to annouce the exhibition in South Africa:

[here](#)

Presentation of the exhibition in South Africa by ANC-veteran Denis Goldberg:

[here](#)

Live Performance of MOMENTS IN A LIFE (autobiographical tales) by Denis Goldberg (initiator of the exhibition in South-Africa) set to music and performed at the Stellenbosch Chamber Music Festival in July 2016:

[here](#)

Website of Denis Goldberg:

www.denisgoldberg.org

Bio of Karl Roessel, curator of the exhibition

[here](#)

Reactions and criticsAs for the books on the subject the reactions of visitors of the exhibition in Germany and in Switzerland also where overwhelmingly positive, as can be seen in the guest books from different cities.

Mostly people are astonished, if not shocked about all the facts about the colonial history of WWII they never ever had heard about before, because there are not even mentioned in most history books.

The only negative criticism of the exhibition came from a few people, who can't cope with the fact, that the exhibition also mentions collaborators of the fascists in different continents. But in the more than 60 places, where the exhibition was shown so far, this criticism was only a tiny minority.

The website www.3www.deTo accompany the exhibition this website was created, which provides background information and recommendations (films, literature etc.) for all those interested in the subject and in presenting the exhibition.

The historical backgroundMost standard history books on World War II contain lists of casualties, which do not include those from Africa, Asia, Latin America and Oceania. Some statistics even fail to mention those millions of people who died in China during World War II. For more than 60 years the number of victims from the Third World that this war caused has nowhere been investigated systematically, the main reason being that most of the countries concerned were then still under European, American, or Japanese tutelage or control. Their casualties were lumped together with the victims of the colonial powers (and thus reduced significantly), or they were simply never counted.

This is all the more appalling since World War II was fought in many Third World countries. Many historians at best mention black soldiers in World War II as exotic footnotes - be they "Senegalese bowmen" from West Africa or Australian Aborigines. Usually, veterans from the colonies are not invited to attend V-Day celebrations. And until today, they normally do not receive veterans' pensions, or if they do, they just make up a fraction of "white" soldiers' pensions. The French government still pays the equivalent of ten U.S. dollars per month to an ancien combattant from Dakar, Senegal, who had been fighting for four years in the French army in Europe.

English edition of the bookThe book "Unsere Opfer zählen nicht" is the first publication, which gives an overview about the millions of people in the former colonies who served, suffered and died in World War Two. There are talks with a publishing house in Great Britain, which might be interested to publish an English edition of the book.

Recherche International e.V. hopes to also be able to produce versions of the book and the exhibition in other languages, so that they could be presented in most of those countries in Africa, Asia and Oceania, where the forgotten victims came from and

For copies of the English version of the exhibition, please contact: [recherche international e.V.](mailto:recherche.international@recherche-international.de)