

THE THIRD WORLD IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Chronology of the long-term project (1985–2026)

1985

While researching for the book *Hoch die internationale Solidarität – Die Dritte Welt-Bewegung in der Bundesrepublik* (a history of the Third World Movement in the Federal Republic of Germany), the authors at the *Rheinisches JournalistInnenbüro* (a collective of freelance journalists) in Cologne notice that the solidarity of people from Third World countries in the fight against the fascist Axis powers in the Second World War is largely ignored in global historiography.

1990s

The staff of the *Rheinisches JournalistInnenbüro* decide to always collect information about the role of Third World countries in the Second World War during their research trips on current political topics in these countries.

2000

After ten years of research in 30 countries in Africa, Asia and Oceania, hundreds of hours of interviews with veterans and contemporary witnesses are available, as well as extensive historical country studies, non-fiction books, novels, archive materials, photos and films. In order to complete and evaluate the collected materials, the association *recherche internationale e.V.* is founded and the lengthy search for funding begins. A comprehensive project application is prepared in several languages.

2003

After dozens of foundations in Germany and abroad have rejected funding applications over a period of more than two years, the newly founded *Stiftung Umwelt und Entwicklung Nordrhein-Westfalen* (Environment and Development Foundation of North Rhine-Westphalia) approves the application. This allows for further research in Latin America and Asia, particularly on China's role in the Second World War, as well as the evaluation and summarization of the research in a book.

2005

The book *Unsere Opfer zählen nicht – Die Dritte Welt im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Our Victims Don't Count – The Third World in the Second World War) is published by *Assoziation A* (Hamburg/Berlin) with 444 pages and 415 photos. It is voted 'most important non-fiction book of the year' by 25 critics from the press, radio and television. After four hardcover editions by *Assoziation A*, the *Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung* (Federal Agency for Civic Education) publishes several unabridged paperback editions, meaning that the book is still available a decade later (2026). From 2009 onwards, the book serves as a catalogue for the exhibition.

2008

In order to draw attention to non-European perspectives on the consequences of the Second World War in schools and universities, *recherche internationale*, in cooperation with educators, produces the teaching materials *Die Dritte Welt im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (The Third World in the Second World War).

A second, expanded edition – with a world map of the colonies and colonial powers and a CD with original recordings of 32 contemporary witnesses – is published in 2012 (232 pages).

In order to interest a broad public in the topic, work begins on the production of a (travelling) exhibition on the subject.

2009

The May/June issue of the internationalist magazine *iz3w* features a special section on *Nazi collaborators in the Third World and their German apologists*.

On 1 September 2009, the 70th anniversary of the start of the war in Europe, the exhibition *The Third World in the Second World War* premieres in Berlin. In addition to a large version of the exhibition, *recherche internationale* provides two smaller versions in A1 and A2 formats with the same content for schools and initiatives that do not have sufficient space.

Although the organizers in Berlin had been aware of the exhibition's content for over a year, the curators of *recherche internationale e.V.* received news one week before the planned exhibition premiere at the *Werkstatt der Kulturen der Welt* in Neukölln that its director wanted to use her 'house rules' to prevent information boards about Arab Nazi collaborators from being displayed in 'her house'. In order to be able to show the exhibition uncensored, the premiere had to be moved to the *Uferhallen* in Wedding at short notice. The attempt at censorship receives widespread local, national and international media coverage. 400 interested visitors attend the opening, followed by several thousand more. The reactions of the visitors are consistently positive, as can be read in the guest book from Berlin.

The three German-language versions of the exhibition will be shown in more than 60 locations in Germany and Switzerland until 2026.

2011

As a 'supplement' to the presentation of the exhibition at the VHS Essen, a 90-page special edition of the journal *Südostasien* (3/2011) on history and coming to terms with the past in Southeast Asia is published.

2012

The longest exhibition presentation, lasting seven months, takes place at the *Historical Museum* in Frankfurt am Main.

For English-speaking visitors, the museum has the exhibition panels translated into English and offers English-language brochures for loan.

2016

Excerpts from the English-language version of the exhibition are shown at the *Cinekambiya International Film Festival (CIFF)* in Gambia, accompanied by a film programme recommended by *recherche internationale*.

2017

In cooperation with ANC veteran Denis Goldberg, *recherche internationale* creates a complete English exhibition version for South Africa. It premieres on 28 February 2017 at the *Castle of Good Hope in Cape Town*. Further exhibition venues in South Africa include *Freedom Park* in Pretoria, the *Holocaust & Genocide Centre* in Johannesburg, the *Steve Biko Centre* in King Williams Town and the *Desmond & Leah Tutu Legacy Foundation* in Cape Town. From 2026, it may be presented as a permanent exhibition at the Castle Museum in Cape Town.

2020

Due to the tour in South Africa, interested parties from Mozambique register for the exhibition. With the support of the *Rosa Luxemburg Foundation*, *recherche international* produces a Portuguese version of the exhibition for educational institutions in Mozambique, albeit only as a booklet due to the Covid pandemic.

2025

Completion of the long-term project with the presentation of an expanded German version of the exhibition at the *NS-Dokumentationszentrum der Stadt Köln* (Cologne NS Documentation Centre for the history of National Socialism) from 8 March to 1 June.

On the occasion of the exhibition presentation in Cologne, the March/April issue of the magazine *iz3w* from Freiburg features a 24-page dossier with current texts by international speakers from the Cologne accompanying programme.

In addition, *iz3w* publishes a 160-page reader containing all articles on the topic of 'The Third World in the Second World War' that appeared in the magazine between 2005 and 2025.

Follow-up and collaborative events to the Cologne exhibition take place in 2025 in Freiburg, Hamm, Göttingen, Hamburg, Münster, Wuppertal and Darmstadt.

Online versions of the exhibition in German, English, French and Portuguese are launched in May.

After the closing event on 1 June, the project archive is handed over by *recherche international e.V.* to the *Archiv für alternatives Schrifttum (afas)* (Archive for Alternative Literature) in Duisburg.

2026

From 2026 onwards, the German versions of the exhibition in A1 and A2 will continue to be loaned out by the *Forum für Umwelt und gerechte Entwicklung (FUgE)* (Forum for Environment and Fair Development) in Hamm.