



## THE THIRD WORLD IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR EXHIBITION

This remarkable exhibition which was created by Recherche International e.V. is now available in English. It is a **“Decolonised” History of the Third World in World War Two**

The exhibition has been widely displayed in various cities in Germany. It has been translated into English so that it may be shown in numerous venues in South Africa and in Africa and perhaps other countries of the “Third World.” It has audio and video testimonies of participants.

The exhibition was originally funded by the State Chancellery of North Rhine-Westphalia and the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation. NRW has agreed to provide funding for the production of the exhibition in English and some funding for the mounting of the exhibition in South Africa. And the RLS Johannesburg office has agreed to sponsor the exhibition in Cape Town and elsewhere.

The book that accompanies the exhibition has been officially adopted by the Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung (Federal Agency for Civic Education).

This is reputed to be the African Century. For too long Africa has been presented by historians and ideologues as a taker of history. This exhibition shows that Africa and the Third World as a whole has been, and is, a maker of history.

This exhibition sets out to restore the dignity of the people of Africa and elsewhere. It states for example that more soldiers from the Third World fought in WW2 than from all of Europe combined. It shows that colonial soldiers were forced to fight for their imperialist masters. They died in large numbers and their families were not compensated for their loss. Similarly the survivors were not adequately compensated (a bicycle if they were lucky and a pair of boots, for example).

The economies of the colonies were raped to pay for the imperialist wars.

I was asked to open the exhibition in Essen some years ago and I was astounded when I saw the opening placard: a photograph of a black soldier titled “our Saviour” from Nazi oppression. We intend to mount the exhibition in Cape Town, Johannesburg, Pretoria, Port Elizabeth, East London, Durban and Pietermaritzburg, and possible Kimberley and Bloemfontein over the next three years.

A special exhibit is being created directly from South African sources for South Africa’s participation in WW2 with emphasis on the Cape Corps, Native Military Corps and Indian Military Corps.

The intention is for the exhibition to be based in each venue for a minimum of 4 months with funding to enable each venue to bring in high school students and teachers ,and university students. The exhibition will appeal to the general public.

Schools especially the better off ones can be encouraged to pay their own transport costs to the exhibition. Where there is real poverty we must be able to assist with the cost of bussing in the young people.

It should be noted that WW2 is included in the school history syllabus as is the Holocaust but this exhibition speaks to other mass killings as well.

The following topics are covered in the worksheets provided to school goers:

- Role within the colonial armies
- Racism/fascism
- Forced labour
- Atrocities
- Resistance (movements)
- Decolonisation
- Compensation

To accommodate further engagement with a number of these themes or issues in the classroom, different groups may hold presentations incorporating examples from the regions which they have been dealing with, for example, Africa, Asia, Oceania.

With the aid of the general questions at the end of each worksheet, which are the same for all groups, key themes which the exhibition deals with (racism, antisemitism, collaboration, antifascism, anticolonialism, compensation) are to be reflected on. A concluding discussion in class may lead to a deeper and more profound understanding of the issues, in part through an analysis of the contradicting experiences which the populations of the different countries examined may have had.

### **General Questions**

What do you think constitutes an appropriate recognition of the former combatants' endeavours against fascism?

- Award/public honour (also medals, monuments, street names, ...)
- Financial support (annuity/pension)
- Special privileges (free care assistance, tax exemption, ...)
- Do you consider all of these suggestions redundant or wrong?
  
- Which different motives for participation in the conflicts did you learn of?
- Which of those do you find particularly convincing, repulsive or incomprehensible?

We believe that the exhibition deals with issues that are relevant for understanding our current turbulent world and is a powerful plea for tolerance and against racism and religious bigotry.