

ARTICLE

Image Under Fire: West German Development Aid and the Ghana Press War, 1960–1966

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During the 1960s, development aid helped West Germany project a benign image while it discouraged diplomatic recognition of East Germany. In Ghana, however, this effort clashed with the Pan-Africanist aims of President Kwame Nkrumah. Four periodicals under his control attacked West Germany as neo-colonialist, militarist, racist, latently Nazi and a danger to world peace. West German officials resented this campaign and tried to make it stop, but none of their tactics, not even vague threats to aid, worked for long. The attacks ended with Nkrumah's overthrow in early 1966, but while they lasted, they demonstrated that a small state receiving aid could use the press to invert its asymmetric political relationship with the donor.

During the Cold War, development aid served West and East Bloc countries as useful for seeking influence in the Third World. In Ghana, however, a hostile press controlled by the regime of Kwame Nkrumah attempted to cancel the 'soft power' of major West Bloc donors, including West Germany. West Germany thus faced a serious dilemma from 1960 to 1966. On the one hand, frequent press attacks threatened the favourable reputation and good will its Foreign Office hoped to gain by granting aid. On the other hand, withdrawing it or even refusing to back new projects might push the Ghanaian government to do its worst – give diplomatic recognition to the communist-dominated East German government. As it was, Nkrumah repeatedly upgraded relations with East Germany.¹ The press war, spreading a toxic mixture of East German propaganda and the Ghanaian government's own severe critiques of West German policies in sub-Saharan Africa, forced West German officials to pursue various defensive strategies. None of them, not even hints about blocking development aid, could stop it. Only Nkrumah's fall in 1966 brought the press war to an end. Aid, it turned out, had only limited value as a political tool.

This article offers two contributions to the historical literature on international relations and the press. First, it shows that in the Cold War even a small, aid-receiving country could use its newspapers to put a larger donor country on the defensive (in 1960 Ghana had 6,958,000 people to West Germany's 55,433,000).² Second, it reverses the widespread scholarly emphasis on the privately-owned press's autonomy as foreign policy actor.³ In Ghana the West Germans dealt with newspapers under

¹ William Glenn Gray, *Germany's Cold War: The Global Campaign to Isolate East Germany, 1949–1969* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 127–9, 135, 149, 168; Werner Kilian, *Die Hallstein-Doktrin: Der diplomatische Krieg zwischen der BRD und der DDR 1955–1973* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2001), 67–83; Rüdiger Marco Booz, 'Hallsteinzeit': *Deutsche Außenpolitik 1955–1972* (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1995), 181–219.

² For Ghana's population, <https://www.census.gov/data-tools/demo/idb/region.php?T=13&RT=0&A=separate&Y=1960&C=GH&R=0>; for West Germany, Statistisches Jahrbuch für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Zeitschriftenband 1990, 43, http://www.digizeitschriften.de/dms/img/?PID=PPN514402342_1990|LOG_0016&physid=PHYS_0042#navi (both last visited 12 Jan. 2020).

³ Dominik Geppert, *Pressekriege: Öffentlichkeit und Diplomatie in den deutsch-britischen Beziehungen (1896–1912)* (München: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 2007), 52–9, 63–70, 122, 175–6; Daniel Hucker, 'Public Opinion, the Press, and the Failed Anglo–French–Soviet Negotiations of 1939', *International History Review* 40, 1 (2018), 65–85; Alex

the ownership and tight control of a one-party state, unshakably loyal to the policies of its leader. Of course, they were not the only targets; the United Kingdom and the United States also came under fire. In the first case, the papers sought to sabotage a prospective visit to Accra by Queen Elizabeth II or (in the Ghanaian version) retaliated against attacks on Nkrumah by British newspapers that objected to the visit.⁴ In the second, Ghanaian papers blasted American foreign policy, called the US ambassador a ‘cowboy nuclear imperialist’ and accused the US Central Intelligence Agency as well as other Western intelligence services of supporting an assassination attempt against Nkrumah.⁵

Yet West Germany operated under serious vulnerabilities that its Anglo-American allies did not face. Because some former Nazis held prominent places in the diplomatic service, the judiciary, industry and the professions, West Germany was vulnerable to charges of inheriting the legacy of Nazi Germany.⁶ Its vehement claim to sole representation of the whole German people, the basis of its demand that other states shun East Germany, could only worsen this problem. At the same time, West Germany suffered in Ghana the disadvantage of its post-Nazi European alliance politics, as we shall see below. Finally, it kept close ties with white-ruled South Africa into the 1960s due to a long-time admiration for the dominant Afrikaner minority and the presence of German settlers and their descendants.⁷

This article also connects the foregoing history to the small body of literature that finds development aid of limited or little use in modifying the behaviour of recipient governments. US President John Kennedy’s ‘engagement’ policy of trying to win over Third World leaders combined professions of respect with US development aid. Nkrumah, for example, received US loans to dam the Volta River. The policy wore out its welcome under Lyndon Johnson, who expected tangible concessions in exchange for aid.⁸ In India the United States and the Soviet Union wooed different ministries with aid, hoping to pull the government in the direction of free-market capitalism or state-planned industrialisation. Both powers overplayed their hands and alienated their Indian counterparts.⁹ The West German Foreign Office distributed aid to discourage countries from recognising the rival regime in East Berlin or upgrading the latter’s diplomatic status.¹⁰ Yet it thereby opened West Germany to black-mail – in effect, ‘give us aid or we’ll recognise East Germany’.¹¹ It would have even less luck trying to leverage itself a better position in press diplomacy.

Ferguson, ‘Press Management and US Support for France in Indochina, 1950–1954’, *Diplomatic History*, 42, 2 (2018), 228–53; Peter Hoeres, ‘Außenpolitik, Öffentlichkeit, öffentliche Meinung: Deutsche Streitfälle in den “langen 1960er Jahren”’, *Historische Zeitschrift*, 291 (2010), 689–720.

⁴ Scott Thompson, *Ghana’s Foreign Policy, 1957–1966: Diplomacy, Ideology, and the New State* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 186–9; Tawa Adamafo, *By Nkrumah’s Side: The Labour and the Wounds* (Accra: Westcoast Publishing House in association with Rex Collings, 1982), 109–11; Kwesi Armah, *Peace without Power: Ghana’s Foreign Policy 1957–1966* (Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 2004), 64–7.

⁵ Sergey Mazov, *A Distant Front in the Cold War: The USSR in West Africa and Congo, 1956–1964* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2010), 217, 244–5; Matteo Landricina, *Nkrumah and the West: The ‘Ghana Experiment’ in British, American, German and Ghanaian Archives* (Zürich: LIT Verlag, 2018), 238, 311.

⁶ Eckert Conze, Norbert Frei, Peter Hayes and Moshe Zimmermann, *Das Amt und die Vergangenheit. Deutsche Diplomaten in den Dritten Reich und in der Bundesrepublik*, 2nd edn (München: Karl Blessing Verlag, 2010); Norbert Frei, ed., *Hitlers Eliten nach 1945* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2004).

⁷ Reinhard Rode, *Die Südafrikapolitik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1968–1972* (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1975), 21–9; Philipp Rock, *Macht, Märkte und Moral: Zur Rolle der Menschenrechte in der Außenpolitik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland in den sechziger und siebziger Jahren* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2010), 122–3.

⁸ Robert Rakove, *Kennedy, Johnson, and the Nonaligned World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), xxi–vi, 140–1.

⁹ David C. Engerman, *The Price of Aid: The Economic Cold War in India* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), 9–10, 270–1, 301–2.

¹⁰ Gray, *Germany’s Cold War*, 165–6; Christian Jetzlsperger, ‘Die Emanzipation der Entwicklungspolitik von der Hallstein-Doktrin. Die Krise der deutschen Nahostpolitik von 1965, die Entwicklungspolitik und der Ost-West-Konflikt’, *Historisches Jahrbuch*, 121 (2001), 327–34.

¹¹ Young-Sun Hong, *Cold War Germany, The Third World, and the Global Humanitarian Regime* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 216–17, 246. See also Gray, *Germany’s Cold War*, 170.

Finally, this article will emphasise the importance of this press war for West German-Ghanaian relations during the 1960s. West German officials devoted much attention, energy and time to coping with Ghanaian attacks. Most previous accounts have been short and summary.¹² Far more extensive has been a recent book by Matteo Landricina, who rightly treats press war and aid as important topics during the later Nkrumah era. He also discusses Western assessments of Nkrumah's role in fomenting the press war as well as some of the West Germans' countermeasures. Of particular interest is West German journalist Lutz Herold, whose arrest for espionage provoked a resurgence of attacks in late 1965.¹³ On the other hand, Landricina devotes only cursory attention to the contents of Ghanaian articles and the way they forced Bonn to cope in Ghana with blowback from its morally questionable policies elsewhere in Africa. He also misses the urgent, ongoing dilemma that the conjunction of press war with aid presented to the West Germans.

The rest of this article will fall into two sections. In the first I will examine West German development aid in the context of similar programmes by other Western countries. In the second I will discuss the Ghanaian press, the substance of its attacks and West Germany's vain attempts to counter them, including attempts to use aid as a means of pressure. The chief sources are files in the Political Archive of the Foreign Office (PAAA) and the Ghanaian newspapers themselves; I have not been able to consult archives or other sources in Ghana. In all but one case I have reviewed the Ghanaian stories themselves rather than relied on PAAA memoranda. In that one case, not cited here, the story was missing from its place in the relevant microfilm reel.

Development Aid and the Challenge of Ghana

When West Germany became a development aid donor, it joined a US-led coalition of states seeking to gain influence and help prevent or limit the spread of international communism by raising the standard of living among developing countries. The United States itself led the way with President Harry S Truman's famous Point Four inauguration speech in January 1949.¹⁴ Denmark began contributing to multilateral aid through the United Nations.¹⁵ West Germany appropriated its first aid in 1952.¹⁶ Just as the United States established the US Agency for International Development in 1961, so too did its allies create similar agencies – the French and West Germans in 1961, the Danes and Norwegians in 1962, and the British and Dutch in 1964.¹⁷

These states differed, however, in their geographic concentration. The British and French gave most of their aid to their former colonies. The French were especially concerned with perpetuating the *rayonnement* (radiation) of their cultural influence in Africa, maintaining military bases in West

¹² See Kilian, *Die Hallstein-Doktrin*, 79; Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy*, 402–3; Ulf Engel and Hans-Georg Schleicher, *Die beiden deutschen Staaten in Afrika: Zwischen Konkurrenz und Koexistenz 1949–1990* (Hamburg: Verbund Stiftung Deutsches Übersee-Institut, 1998), 203–4, 215–16; Kum'a Ndumbe III, *Was will Bonn in Afrika? Zur Afrikapolitik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Pfaffenweiler: Centaurus, 1992), 116; Matteo Landricina, 'Deutsch-deutscher Gegensatz am Volta: Kwame Nkrumahs Ghana aus der Sicht der Bundesrepublik', *Historische Zeitschrift*, 304 (2017), 383–4, 394.

¹³ Landricina, *Nkrumah and the West*, 79–84, 312, 314, 331–4, 339–45, 354–8.

¹⁴ Engerman, *The Price of Aid*, 46–7.

¹⁵ Peter Brunbech, 'Early Danish Development Assistance Policy, 1945–1962', in Helge Ø. Pharo and Monika Pohle Fraser, eds., *The Aid Rush: Aid Regimes in Northern Europe during the Cold War* (Oslo: Unipub, 2008), 285.

¹⁶ Bastian Hein, *Die Westdeutschen und die Dritte Welt: Entwicklungspolitik und Entwicklungsdienste zwischen Reform und Revolte 1959–1974* (München: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 2006), 30.

¹⁷ Larry Grubbs, *Secular Missionaries: Americans and African Development in the 1960s* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2009), 60–1. Barrie Ireton, *Britain's International Development Policies: A History of DFID and Overseas Aid* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 32; Gordon Cumming, *Aid to Africa: French and British Policies from the Cold War to the New Millennium* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2001), 72; Carol Lancaster, *Foreign Aid: Diplomacy, Development, Domestic Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 149, 191; John Chipman, *French Power in Africa* (Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 192; Helge Ø. Pharo, 'Reluctance, Enthusiasm and Indulgence: The Expansion of Bilateral Norwegian Aid', in Pharo and Fraser, *The Aid Rush*, 55; Marc L.J. Dierikx, 'Policy versus Practice. Behind the Scenes in Dutch Development Aid, 1949–1989', *International History Review* 39, 4 (2017), 641–7; Hein, *Die Westdeutschen und die Dritte Welt*, 47.

and Central Africa, and preserving a special franc zone (the *Communauté Financière Africaine* or CFA).¹⁸ During the 1960s and later, Denmark, Norway and the Netherlands favoured India and Tanzania via bilateral aid, with the first two also targeting Kenya. Norway also selected Uganda, Zambia, Pakistan and Bangladesh, the Dutch Tunisia and Indonesia as special recipients.¹⁹ West Germany, however, had no strong preference for former colonies and no short list of long-term beneficiaries; instead it applied what critics called a ‘watering can principle’ of giving to as many countries as possible.²⁰

More than most Western donors, West Germany had a vital interest in playing the role of global benefactor; in addition to competing with East Germany, it had to distance itself from Nazism and establish itself as an important state. As two Americans wrote in 1968, ‘for Germany, which has struggled with what is now called an “image problem” for two decades with varying success, publicity for the nation’s humanitarianism satisfies a special need’.²¹ Right after asserting that West German aid meant a ‘genuine commitment’ to developing the Third World, one scholar conceded in 2003 that ‘Foreign aid was seen from the perspective of how a “new” Germany presented itself to the world’.²² For ‘new’, read post-Nazi. Lacking colonies since the end of the First World War, West Germany expected to inspire confidence among newly independent states and perhaps serve as a ‘natural mediator’ between African states and their former rulers.²³ In 1965 a US analyst noted West Germany’s ‘longing to cut a dash in the world’ as one of its aid motives.²⁴ West German officials spoke of a ‘radiance’ that projects would give to ‘free Germany’.²⁵ In 1960 one of them told the Bundstag’s Foreign Affairs Committee that he saw development as a ‘means of important cultural policy or a means of publicity work’, especially as a means of ‘direct or indirect political influence’ on developing countries.²⁶ The second minister of the Development Ministry, Hans-Jürgen Wischniewski (1966–8), remarked that sensible project selection would promote a ‘positive policy of self-presentation’.²⁷ Officials abroad agreed. In Togo, for example, the West German ambassador advised embracing an ‘egoistic development policy’ that concentrated on projects with low expense and high publicity value.²⁸

Pursuing the halo of benevolence, West Germany showered gifts upon Ghana. Before 1966, it extended a DM 20 million loan for a bridge over the Volta River. Technical aid projects included a

¹⁸ Ireton, *Britain’s International Development Policies*, 26–8; Cumming, *Aid to Africa*, 67–8, 77–8, 80–1; Lancaster, *Foreign Aid*, 147–8; Chipman, *French Power*, 1–5, Peter J. Schraeder, ‘From Berlin 1884 to 1989: Foreign Assistance and French, American, and Japanese Competition in Francophone Africa’, *Journal of Modern African Studies* 33, 4 (1995), 541–5.

¹⁹ Lancaster, *Foreign Aid*, 193; Jon Pederson, ‘Denmark’s Bilateral Aid, 1962–1991’, in Pharo and Fraser, *The Aid Rush*, 192–94; Pharo, ‘Reluctance’, 65–6.

²⁰ Lancaster, *Foreign Aid*, 196–7.

²¹ Karel Holbik and Henry Allen Myers, *West German Foreign Aid 1956–1966: Its Economic and Political Aspects* (Boston: Boston University Press, 1968), 48.

²² Heide-Marie Schmidt, ‘Pushed to the Front: The Foreign Assistance Policy of the Federal Republic of Germany, 1958–1971’, *Contemporary European History* 12, 4 (2003), 488.

²³ Jürgen Dennert, *Entwicklungshilfe geplant oder verwaltet? Entstehung und Konzeption des Bundesministeriums für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit* (Bielefeld: Bertelsmann Universitätsverlag, 1968), 16–17; Stephen Michael Kirby, ‘The Two Germanys in Sub-Saharan Africa, 1957–1972: Ideological Universalism versus Traditional Statecraft’, PhD Thesis, University of Virginia, 1993, 66–7; Engel and Schleicher, *Die beiden deutschen Staaten*, 35; Holbik and Myers, *West German Foreign Aid*, 90–1; Matteo Landricina, ‘From Natural Mediator to Junior Partner: Perceptions and Self-Perception in West Germany’s Diplomatic Conferences in Africa, 1959–1968’, *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 27, 3 (2016), 455–9, 465.

²⁴ John White, ‘West German Aid to Developing Countries’, *International Affairs* 41, 1 (1965), 75.

²⁵ Michael Bohnet, *Geschichte der deutschen Entwicklungspolitik: Strategien, Innenansichten, Zeitzeugen, Herausforderungen* (Konstanz: UVK Verlagsgesellschaft, 2015), 41.

²⁶ Joachim Wintzer, Josef Boyer and Wolfgang Dierker, eds., *Das Auswärtige Ausschuss des Deutschen Bundestages, Sitzungsprotokolle 1957–1961*, CD-ROM ed. Wolfgang Holscher (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 2003), 21 Jan. 1960, 863 (CD-ROM 1053).

²⁷ Klaus Bodemer, *Entwicklungshilfe – Politik für wen? Ideologie und Vergabepaxis der deutschen Entwicklungshilfe in der ersten Dekade* (München: Weltforum Verlag, 1974), 134.

²⁸ Seeliger to Referat I B 3, Foreign Office, 25 Mar. 1964, PAAA B 34/537.

financial consultant, X-ray equipment for a hospital in Agogo, a training school for auto mechanics in Kaneshie, workers for a slaughter yard and meat factory in Bolgatanga, telecommunications and transportation, and various investments in the fishing village of Biriwa.²⁹ A recipient country's leader should have been grateful and cooperative.

Instead that leader revolted against the West Germans. President Nkrumah and some members of his ruling Convention People's Party (CPP) identified as socialists and therefore sympathised with East Germany as a socialist country.³⁰ He allowed it to open a trade mission in the capital city of Accra in 1959 and in 1963 opened a Ghanaian one in East Berlin. In defiance of the West German claim to be sole representative of the German people, he promoted the idea of two Germanys at the 1961 Belgrade Conference of Non-Aligned Nations. These moves caused considerable resentment in Bonn as well as worry about a possible East German breakthrough to recognition.³¹ Furthermore, press attacks ensured that Ghanaians would not receive positive images of West Germany without considerable interference. But why were there press attacks at all? Nkrumah was not content with developing Ghana alone; he desired the freedom of all Africa from Western colonialism and neo-colonialism.³²

In this light, West Germany blocked the way to the supreme goal. As a member of the European Economic Community, it put itself into league with former or current colonial powers in Africa: Great Britain, France, Belgium and Portugal.³³ As a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, West Germany likewise identified itself with the capitalist bloc.³⁴ To West German diplomats Nkrumah and his officials raised four specific objections. First, they demanded in 1959 and 1960 that the Germans oppose France's atomic bomb tests in the Sahara Desert.³⁵ Second, they accused West Germany of supplying weapons to Portugal's war against anticolonial rebels in Angola.³⁶ West German officials denied doing so.³⁷ In fact the accusations were true.³⁸ Third, the Ghanaian government deplored close West German relations with South Africa, where the white regime brutally oppressed the black African majority.³⁹ Fourth, West Germany might join an American-sponsored 'multilateral force' in which NATO members, perhaps even Portugal, would share control of some nuclear weapons, possibly deployed on surface ships able to cruise off African coasts.⁴⁰ The latter three issues formed much of the content in press attacks.

²⁹ Peter Langer, *Die Außen- und Entwicklungspolitik der Bundesrepublik gegenüber Ghana: Eine Fallstudie zur Überprüfung der neueren Imperialismus-Theorien* (Meisenheim am Glan: Verlag Anton Hain, 1975), 114, 129.

³⁰ Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy*, 13–14, 401–2; Stein, Embassy in Accra to Foreign Office, 22 Aug. 1960, PAAA B 34/136; Brühl, Embassy in Accra to Referat 307, Foreign Office, 28 May 1963, PAAA B34/409.

³¹ Gray, *Germany's Cold War*, 127–9, 149; Kilian, *Die Hallstein-Doktrin*, 67–83; Engel and Schleicher, *Die beiden deutschen Staaten*, 186–219.

³² See Kwame Nkrumah's *Africa Must Unite* (New York: International Publishers, 1963/1970) and *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism* (New York: International Publishers (1965/1966).

³³ Michael Eyinla Bolade, *The Foreign Policy of West Germany Toward Africa* (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1996), 33. See also von Etdorf, Referat 307, Foreign Office, 3 Jul. 1961, B 34/236.

³⁴ Lüders, Embassy in Accra, to Referat 307, Foreign Office, 13 Sep. 1961, PAAA B 34/234.

³⁵ Stein to Foreign Office, 10 Nov. 1959, PAAA B 34/74; Stein, Embassy in Accra to Foreign Office, 22 Aug. 1960, PAAA B 34/136.

³⁶ Chief of Protocol, Prot 2, Foreign Office on Ghana's Ambassador, George Eric Kwabla Doe presenting his credentials, 1 Apr. 1963, PAAA B 34/409; Weber, Referat Z A 5, Foreign Office on Meeting of Foreign Ministers of BRD and Ghana, 10 Oct. 1963, PAAA B 34/411.

³⁷ Memorandum of Conversation between Dr. Fritz of Bundestag and Ambassador of Ghana in the Presence of W. Molt, 6 Dec. 1963, PAAA B 34/485; Referat I B 3, Foreign Office on State Secretary Lahr's Conversation with President Nkrumah, 22 Apr. 1964, PAAA B 34/486.

³⁸ Ana Mónica Fonseca, *A Força das Armas: o Apoio da República Federal da Alemanha ao Estado Novo (1958–1968)* (Lisbon: Europress, Lda, 2007), 156–8, 170; Gerhard Grohs, 'Die Unterstützung der portugiesischen Afrika-Politik durch die Bundesregierung', in Rainer Tetzlaff, ed., *Afrika und Bonn: Versäumnisse und Zwänge deutscher Afrika-Politik* (Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1978), 77–8. See also Ndumbe III, *Was will Bonn in Afrika?*, 73–4.

³⁹ Ghanaian Embassy in Bad Godesberg to Foreign Office, 7 Apr. 1964, PAAA B 34/485.

⁴⁰ Memorandum of Steltzer on Meeting with Nkrumah, 15 Jan. 1965, PAAA B 34/485. See Landricina, *Nkrumah and the West*, 344.

Ghanaian newspapers also fell in with themes promoted by the East Germans, who were determined to tie West Germany to the Nazi past it wished to escape. East German leaders presented their rival as the embodiment of imperialism, militarism, fascism, racism and monopoly capitalism, but themselves as champions of anti-militarism, anti-colonialism and international working-class solidarity.⁴¹ In the East German view, West Germany was a danger to world peace.⁴²

The Press War

Since his rise to power, Nkrumah and his radical followers had built up a press establishment that acted as his regime's war machine. He already had the *Evening News*, founded in the late 1940s as the organ of the Convention People's Party then campaigning for independence from Great Britain. Its poor quality led the CPP to set up a second daily in 1956, the *Ghanaian Times*.⁴³ In 1961 these papers had circulations of 18,000 and 30,000.⁴⁴ Their editors conferred daily with Nkrumah's publicity officer and the president himself.⁴⁵ To promote Pan-Africanism, the government's Bureau of African Affairs set up two more publications, the *Voice of Africa* in 1960 and the weekly *Spark* in December 1962.⁴⁶ The latter, named for Vladimir Lenin's famous pre-First World War newspaper, also came out in a French-language version, *L'Étincelle*. Both periodicals were distributed by Ghanaian embassies, allowing them to inflict symbolic damage elsewhere in Africa.⁴⁷ According to a British diplomat in 1963, Nkrumah rather than his followers was the guiding force in anti-Western attacks.⁴⁸

At the same time, Nkrumah had suppressed the possibility of dissent in print. Laws passed in 1959, 1960 and 1963 banned 'false reports' injuring the reputation of Ghana's government or officials, required suspect publications to submit to pre-publication scrutiny and forced all newspapers to operate under state license, renewable annually. The opposition *Ashanti Pioneer* was suppressed in 1961 and taken over in 1962.⁴⁹ Ghana's most popular paper, Cecil King's *Daily Graphic*, with a circulation of 90,000, became the property of a government-controlled trust in 1962.⁵⁰ The West Germans were lucky that it did not join the attacks against them, but they could expect no defence from any Ghanaian publication.⁵¹ I now turn to the attacks themselves.

Beginning in 1963 the regime press reacted strongly against West German military support for Portugal. The *Evening News* and *Ghanaian Times* picked up and conveyed East German news – accurate in this case – that the West Germans stationed paratroopers and fighter jets near the town of Beja.⁵² More serious was alleged West German involvement in Portuguese colonial

⁴¹ Katrina M. Hagen, 'Internationalism in Cold War Germany', PhD Thesis, University of Washington, 2008, 88–96, 103–6; Ingrid Muth, *Die DDR-Außenpolitik: Inhalte, Strukturen, Mechanismen* (Berlin: Christoph Links Verlag, 2000), 42–3.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 53.

⁴³ Frank Barton, *The Press in Africa: Persecution and Perseverance* (New York: Africana Publishing Company, 1979), 24, 35; Rosalynde Ainslie, *The Press in Africa: Communications Past and Present* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1986), 58. See also Kwame Nkrumah, *The Autobiography of Kwame Nkrumah* (New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons Ltd, 1957), 93–4.

⁴⁴ Lüders to Referat 307, Foreign Office, 28 Aug. 1961, PAAA B 34/234.

⁴⁵ Landricina, *Nkrumah and the West*, 81.

⁴⁶ Ainslie, 62; Grilli, *Nkrumahism and African Nationalism: Ghana's Pan-African Foreign Policy in the Age of Decolonization* (Bloemfontein: University of the Free State, 2018), 120; Kofi Batsa, *The Spark: Times Behind Me, From Kwame Nkrumah to Hilla Liman* (London: Rex Collings, 1982), 13–14.

⁴⁷ See, e.g., Embassy in Tripoli to Referat I B 4, Foreign Office, 17 Oct. 1963; Embassy in Conakry to Referat I B 3, Foreign Office, 18 Oct. 1963; Embassy in Niamey to Referat I B 3, Foreign Office, 22 Oct. 1963. All are in PAAA B 34/408.

⁴⁸ Landricina, *Nkrumah and the West*, 82.

⁴⁹ Clement E. Asante, *The Press in Ghana: Problems and Prospects* (New York: University Press of America, Inc. 1996), 20–3.

⁵⁰ Asante, 14–5; Barton, 37; Lüders to Referat 307, Foreign Office, 28 Aug. 1961, PAAA B 34/234; Lüders to Foreign Office, 11 Jul. 1962, PAAA B 34/339.

⁵¹ Brühl, Embassy in Accra to Referat 307, Foreign Office, 29 May 1963, PAAA B 34/408.

⁵² 'Angola: West German Federal Eagle in Angola', *Evening News*, 6 Feb. 1963; 'Portugal Offers Bonn Military Bases', *Ghanaian Times*, 19 Oct. 1963; 'W. Germany Gets Bases in Portugal', *Evening News*, 19 Oct. 1963.

wars.⁵³ One report claimed straight out that Bundeswehr soldiers were guarding Angolan diamond and ore mines from the rebels.⁵⁴ Various articles established the arrival of West German military equipment, including aircraft, Uzi automatic rifles purchased from Israel but marked with the 'West German Federal Eagle', gunboats with heavy machine guns, armoured vehicles and mortars. There were also West German trainers in Angola, it was alleged.⁵⁵ The rhetorical support that Portugal received from Richard Jaeger, Vice-President of the Bundestag and member of the Christian Democratic Union, also inspired outrage.⁵⁶ He publicly argued that Portuguese rule should not be considered 'foreign' to Angola and Mozambique because it had been there for 500 years.⁵⁷ Complaining that Jaeger had called Portuguese rule 'entirely harmless', Obotan Awuku of the *Spark* wrote that 'It is no wonder that a Naziist [sic] should see no harm in such humanities [sic]. Even the extermination of the Jews was to Nazis an imperious necessity for the preservation of civilization and the advancement of man!'.⁵⁸ West German Ambassador Walter Reichhold (1963–4) conceded internally that 'These strong words [by Awuku] are an expression of the agitation that reigns in black Africa against Portugal and South Africa'. West Germany should do nothing to heighten this mood, 'especially because our past offers more openings for attack [*Angriffsfläche*] than that of other nations'.⁵⁹

West Germany's cordial relations with South Africa raised at least as much ire. The *Times*, *News* and *Spark* consistently labelled the government of Prime Minister Hendrik Verwoerd as 'fascist' or 'Nazi-like' and often drew a connection to Germany's dark past.⁶⁰ In August 1963 the *Spark* called a West German aid package to South Africa a 'vicious stab in the back' and 'the unkindest cut of all'. Under a photograph of former chancellor Konrad Adenauer captioned as 'Enemy of the African Revolution', the paper warned that West Germany was a threat to world peace as well as to African freedom.⁶¹ When word of a cultural treaty with South Africa came out in March 1964, the *Spark* claimed that West Germany had a 'vital interest' in cheap African labour and called it 'party to the plot to enslave the African forever'.⁶² The *Voice of Africa* called the agreement a 'serious crime'. 'It seems as if Germany has forgotten the horrors of Nazism and the bestiality of the Hitler regime, in spite of the reminders of the current Frankfurt trial [related to the Auschwitz death camp]'.⁶³ VOA also revealed the existence of a secret military cooperation agreement signed in July 1961, to be implemented by Major General Wilhelm (actually Friedrich) von Mellenthin, resident of South Africa and a former member of the Wehrmacht's general staff.⁶⁴ In August the *Ghanaian Times* claimed that German corporations Siemens and Telefunken were helping the South African Institute of Rocket Research.⁶⁵ Six weeks later it published accusations by a visiting East German official that West Germany was building bases in South Africa.⁶⁶ According to communist Pat Sloan in

⁵³ '1,200 Troops for Angola Today', *Ghanaian Times*, 12 Mar. 1963; 'West German MPs Select Mozambique as "Mecca"', *Ghanaian Times*, 12 Aug. 1963.

⁵⁴ 'Who Poisons the International Atmosphere?', *Spark*, 7 Aug. 1964.

⁵⁵ 'Angola: West German Federal Eagle in Angola', *Evening News*, 6 Feb. 1963; 'W. Germany Backs Colonial War', *Ghanaian Times*, 23 Jul. 1964; 'W. German Military Advisers in Angola', *Ghanaian Times*, 30 Jul. 1964; 'Who Poisons?', *Spark*, 7 Aug. 1964.

⁵⁶ 'West German MPs', *Ghanaian Times*, 12 Aug. 1963; 'Who Poisons?', *Spark*, 7 Aug. 1964.

⁵⁷ See Grohs, 'Die Unterstützung', 72.

⁵⁸ Obotan Awuku, 'West Germany & Portugal Against Africa', *Spark*, 30 Aug. 1963.

⁵⁹ Reichhold to Referat I B 3, Foreign Office, 6 Sep. 1963, PAAA B 34/409.

⁶⁰ See, e.g., Pat Sloan, 'Time for Extra Vigilance', *Evening News*, 18 Nov. 1965.

⁶¹ 'West German Wedlock with Apartheid', *Spark*, 16 Aug. 1963.

⁶² 'Bonn Stabs Africa', *Spark*, 13 Mar. 1964.

⁶³ Franz J.T. Lee, 'Bantu Education in South Africa', *Voice of Africa* 4, 9 and 10 (1964), 16.

⁶⁴ 'What is the Truth about Bonn and Pretoria?', *Voice of Africa* 4, 9 and 10 (1964), 8, 11. See Ndumbe, *Was will Bonn in Afrika?*, 98.

⁶⁵ 'Germany has £600m in S. Africa', *Ghanaian Times*, 7 Aug. 1964. See also 'West German Factory to Produce Ammunition for Pretoria Soon', *Ghanaian Times*, 11 Jan. 1965, and 'Unholy Alliance of the Fascists', *Evening News*, 23 Aug. 1965.

⁶⁶ 'W. Germany Has Built Bases in S. Africa – Scholz', *Ghanaian Times*, 30 Sep. 1964.

June 1965, Nazi emigres had ‘merged with the racist ruling class of South Africa with whom they share a similar ideology’.⁶⁷

In 1965 newspapers also faithfully echoed Nkrumah’s deep concern about the multilateral force. The *Ghanaian Times* warned in mid-January that ‘We know, in our own time, what treasures German militarism has left for the world’. It cited the Ghanaian’s leader’s fear that nuclear-armed warships could appear along the African coast to aid Portugal’s war against African liberation movements.⁶⁸ Three days later South African communist H.M. Basner argued that the MLF’s only purpose was to allow the United States to share nuclear weapons with West Germany, where the same industrialists and militarists who unleashed war in 1914 and 1939 now wished to forcibly reunite Germany and who still saw Poland, Czechoslovakia and the Baltic states as German colonies.⁶⁹ The *Spark* warned that a nuclear-armed West Germany might provoke a Third World War and that it planned to dismantle collective farms and state-owned industries for the benefit of Prussian Junkers and West German monopolists should it ever take over East Germany.⁷⁰ It is hard to imagine this latter prospect worried Africans of any political stripe, but the story certainly reflected a willingness to channel East German concerns.

According to the press, the West Germans acted in other ways as a neo-colonialist power either on their own behalf or in association with other powers. At the end of 1962 the *Times* accused Bonn of conspiring with Washington to remove Nkrumah, and when that failed, of colluding to leverage trade and aid against Ghanaian state control of enterprises and enable penetration of West German and US capital.⁷¹ West Germany supported Portuguese colonialism, claimed Awuku in the *Spark*, to advance the interests of ‘Krupp, the DEMAG and Rheinstahl’. ‘Cheap African labour’ would ensure ‘colossal profits’ for these companies.⁷² On 23 April 1963 the *Evening News* quoted at length a Soviet writer who accused West German ‘monopolists’ of exploiting official economic and technical aid to resume control of former German colonies in Africa.⁷³ In November the *Evening News* cited a story from the East German organ *Neues Deutschland*, which complained that ‘The notorious “Goethe Institute” [sic] is establishing its colonial branches, dishonouring the great humanist’.⁷⁴ In January 1964, celebrating a referendum that approved making Ghana a one-party state, a columnist rejoiced at Nkrumah having foiled hostile foreign powers, including ‘that inferno of modern capitalism, Western Germany’.⁷⁵ In March the *Spark* called West Germany one of the ‘imperialist wolves’ who were ‘putting their dirty snouts into everything – and always pretending to be your friends’.⁷⁶ Six weeks later it accused West German companies Siemens, Ferrostaal and Krupp of seeking to continue colonialism by other means. Furthermore, the paper complained, the Bundestag required as a condition of aid that African countries respect the West German claim to sole representation of the whole German people, while the East Germans set no such condition.⁷⁷

Apart from African issues, West Germany came under more general attack for its militarist and Nazi heritage. The *Voice of Africa*, in denouncing the European Economic Community as a pawn of ‘big industrialists, bankers – militarists of West Germany’, called that country ‘an expression of revived German imperialism, and of all those sinister forces which unleashed two world wars and the monster of Hitlerism’ as well as the ‘spearhead and instrument’ of US imperialism.⁷⁸

⁶⁷ Pat Sloan, ‘Anti-Imperialists Must Unite’, *Spark*, 4 Jun. 1965.

⁶⁸ ‘Multilateral Force’, *Ghanaian Times*, 15 Jan. 1965.

⁶⁹ H.M. Basner, ‘A Week of Provocation in Berlin’, *Ghanaian Times*, 18 Jan. 1965. See also ‘Notes of the Week’, *Spark*, 12 Nov. 1965.

⁷⁰ Spark Correspondent, ‘Bonn’s Nuclear Blackmail’, *Spark*, 23 Jul. 1965.

⁷¹ ‘Americans and Germans Want Nkrumah Removed’, *Ghanaian Times*, 31 Dec. 1962.

⁷² Obotan Awuku, ‘West Germany & Portugal Against Africa’, *Spark*, 30 Aug. 1963.

⁷³ ‘“Bonn’s Tentacles in Africa”’, *Evening News*, 23 Apr. 1963.

⁷⁴ ‘W. Germany Diabolical Activities Exposed’, *Evening News*, 14 Nov. 1963.

⁷⁵ Rambler, ‘Accra Diary’, *Evening News*, 25 Jan. 1964.

⁷⁶ ‘Wolves in Sheep’s Skin’, *Spark*, 9 Mar. 1964.

⁷⁷ ‘Africa and Its “Friends” from the Banks of the Rhine’, *Spark*, 17 Apr. 1964.

⁷⁸ Jalang Kwena, ‘Africa Looks at the Common Market’, *Voice of Africa* 2, 10, 11 and 12 (1962), 16.

Basner accused West German Defence Minister Kurt-Uwe von Hassel in June 1963 of seeking to incite the '*furor teutonicus*' in a venomous speech at Koblenz. Hassel is supposed to have said that there could be no doubt about German hostility toward peoples living under communism and urged that military academies remain in military rather than civilian hands, to inculcate the proper spirit.⁷⁹ Three months later the *Times* attacked President John Kennedy's call for German reunification.

Does he mean that Hitler's generals still in command of the West German Reichswehr must have the power to launch a new assault on Eastern Europe or that Hitler's administrators must have the power to build new gas ovens for the few Jews remaining in Germany? That is, at present, still the dream of many Germans in high positions.⁸⁰

The *Spark* warned in mid-July 1965 that 'Powerful forces in West Germany are dreaming of regaining Hitler's lost frontiers'.⁸¹ That country, strengthened internally by a new emergency law, might attack as soon as 1967!⁸² In 1965 newspapers also discussed East Germany's Brown Book, a directory of some 1,800 former Nazi officials, many of them war criminals, holding high positions in West Germany's government, industries and media outlets.⁸³

West German Countermeasures

Throughout the hostile press campaign, the West Germans tried to make it stop. Their embassy wrote letters to editors offering corrections or objections, which the newspapers sometimes printed or referenced.⁸⁴ It also delivered at least seven written protests to the Ghanaian Foreign Ministry from 1963 to 1966. The Foreign Office wrote to the Ghanaian embassy on 7 April 1964. On at least twenty-four occasions, West German officials complained in person to Ghanaian officials, including Special Ambassador Michael Dei-Anang, Foreign Minister Kojo Botsio, Ambassador Doe in Bonn and President Nkrumah himself.⁸⁵ On at least one occasion, in 1962, the West Germans joined in a 'concerted démarche' with the United Kingdom and the United States.⁸⁶

They defended themselves, though not always accurately, with denials to Ghanaian officials, Ghanaian newspapers, and each other. West Germany was not shipping weapons, they claimed (falsely as we have seen), or military advisers to Portugal's colonies.⁸⁷ It was not arming South Africa or helping to build a weapons factory, and German firms Siemens and Telefunken were not aiding South Africa's army in developing rockets.⁸⁸ There certainly was not a secret arms agreement

⁷⁹ H.M. Basner, 'Hoch der Kaiser! Hoch der Führer! All Over Again', *Ghanaian Times*, 14 Jun. 1963.

⁸⁰ 'Tripping Over the Moon', *Ghanaian Times*, 23 Sep. 1963.

⁸¹ Spark Correspondent, 'Ominous Echoes of Nazi Aggression', *Spark*, 16 Jul. 1965. See also D.N. Pritt, 'Bonn Prepares for Aggressive War', *Spark*, 31 Dec. 1965.

⁸² D.N. Pritt, 'Where Nazis Are still in Office and Why', *Spark*, 29 Oct. 1965.

⁸³ Ibid. See also 'Glimpses of Neo-Nazi West Germany', *Spark*, 12 Nov. 1965, Pat Sloan, 'Time for Extra Vigilance', *Evening News*, 18 Nov. 1965, and Frei, *Hitlers Eliten nach 1945*.

⁸⁴ Foreign Office files contain only one such letter (Brühl, Charge d'Affaires, Embassy in Accra to Editor-in-Chief, *Ghanaian Times*, 31 Aug. 1964, PAAA B 34/484), but memoranda reference other letters. See, e.g., Steltzer, Embassy in Accra to Referat L 3, Foreign Office, 3 Dec. 1964, PAAA B 34/484.

⁸⁵ See various memoranda in PAAA B 34, files 408, 409, 484, 485, 488, 572, 573, 574, and 41.

⁸⁶ Landricina, *Nkrumah and the West*, 312.

⁸⁷ VLR I Steltzer, Referat I B 3, Foreign Office, 10 Apr. 1963, PAAA B 34/409; Referat I B 3, Foreign Office on State Secretary Lahr's Conversation with President Nkrumah, 22 Apr. 1964, PAAA B 34/486; Referat I B 3, Foreign Office to All Embassies in Africa, 13 Aug. 1964 and Brühl, Chargé d'Affaires, 'Arms Shipment', *Ghanaian Times*, 25 Aug. 1964, both in PAAA B 34/484.

⁸⁸ Memorandum on 28 Apr. 1964 Lahr-Botsio Meeting, 6 May 1964, PAAA B 34/485; Jansen, Foreign Office to Embassy in Africa, 18 Aug. 1964, PAAA B 34/484; Brühl, Chargé d'Affaires to Editor-in-Chief, *Ghanaian Times*, 31 Aug. 1964, PAAA B 34/484; Steltzer to Referat Z B 6, Foreign Office, 18 Sep. 1964, PAAA B 34/485; Steltzer to Referat I B 3, Foreign Office, 8 Oct. 1964, PAAA B 34/488; Steltzer to Referat I B 3, Foreign Office, 11 Dec. 1964, PAAA B 34/484; Steltzer to Referat I B 3, Foreign Office, 8 Jan. 1965, PAAA B 34/572; Török, Referat III B 5, Foreign Office to Embassy in Accra, 14 Jan. 1965, PAAA B 34/572.

with South Africa, they claimed.⁸⁹ Outgoing Chancellor Konrad Adenauer was no ‘enemy’ of the African revolution; during the Nazi era he had even spent time in a concentration camp with ‘men of the left’, though this claim was not true; Adenauer merely suffered arrest and was soon released.⁹⁰ Defence Minister von Hassel’s speech was falsely rendered, said the West Germans; he had in fact stressed the Bundeswehr’s defensive mission and its subordination to civilian control.⁹¹ The multilateral force was no threat to Africa, and even with it West Germany would still not possess or have exclusive control over atomic weapons.⁹²

The West Germans called on the services of the famous Hanna Reitsch, but to little effect. A decorated Luftwaffe test pilot during the Second World War and an admirer of Adolf Hitler, she became an intimate friend of Nkrumah in 1962 and the operator of a glider training school until his overthrow in 1966.⁹³ In March 1963 Ambassador Carl-Heinz Lüders (1961–3) partially credited her with an apparent stop in ‘defamatory’ attacks on West Germany but offered no specifics.⁹⁴ She certainly made a go at it in December 1964 during a breakfast with Nkrumah, Dei-Anang and Ambassador Hans-Georg Steltzer (1964–8).⁹⁵ Unfortunately, this and whatever other interventions Reitsch may have made in private did not stop the attacks.

The last card in West Germany’s hand was development aid, which was a weakness as well as a weapon. Because it represented a financial investment in West Germany’s image abroad, its officials had to pay careful attention to newspaper attacks. As France’s ambassador in Ghana remarked to Lüders, ‘We can completely ignore all that [i.e. anti-Western press campaigns], but we can do that because we are not giving Ghana one franc of development aid or offering any otherwise advantageous trade relations’. In Lüders’s view, neither the German public nor other developing countries would understand why West Germany should continue aid in the face of such negative publicity.⁹⁶ On the other hand, aid might serve as a club if, by threatening to withdraw it, the West Germans could bring Nkrumah’s regime to heel. Unfortunately, carrying out the threat might push (or free) him to recognise East Germany, something that they must avoid at all costs. As Ambassador Reichhold wrote in November 1963, trade sanctions would carry no weight because Nkrumah knew that West Germany would continue buying Ghana’s cocoa. Development aid was useful to Ghana, but not indispensable. If Nkrumah rejected it while loudly insulting the West Germans as ‘reactionary’, ‘warlike’ and ‘neo-colonialist’, he would find people who would applaud him and then tear the West German embassy apart.⁹⁷

They never went so far as to cut or refuse aid, or to explicitly condition aid on an absence of defamatory coverage, as Ambassador Lüders suggested in his final report; instead they took a middling course of making dark and sometimes vague allusions while continuing to discuss and approve new projects.⁹⁸ One week after the *Evening News* story on 6 February, ‘Angola: West German Federal Eagle in Colonial War’, Ambassador Lüders delivered and read aloud a *démarche* protesting this as well as a story on 31 December 1962 in the *Ghanaian Times* titled ‘Americans and Germans Want Nkrumah Removed’. It said, ‘my Government is under the impression that the Ghanaian Government has either

⁸⁹ ‘No Military Pact with South Africa’, *Ghanaian Times*, 26 Sep. 1964, PAAA B 34/485.

⁹⁰ Reichhold to Referat I B 3, Foreign Office, 22 Aug. 1963, PAAA B 34/409. See Charles Williams, *Adenauer: The Father of the New Germany* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2000), 278–85.

⁹¹ Steltzer, Talking Points for Meeting with Ghanaian Ambassador, Referat I B 3, Foreign Office, 28 Jun. 1963, PAAA B 34/409.

⁹² Steltzer, Meeting with Nkrumah, 15 Jan. 1965, PAAA B 34/485; Schaad to Referat I B 3, Foreign Office, 28 Jan. 1965, PAAA B 34/573.

⁹³ Jean Allman, ‘Phantoms of the Archive: Kwame Nkrumah, a Nazi Pilot Named Hanna, and the Contingencies of Postcolonial History-Writing’, *American Historical Review* 118, 1 (2013), 104–30. See also David Rooney, *Kwame Nkrumah: Vision and Tragedy* (Accra: Sub-Saharan Publishers, 1988/2007), 311–12, Kilian, *Die Hallstein-Doktrin*, 77–8 and Landricina, *Nkrumah and the West*, 323–6.

⁹⁴ Lüders to Referat 307, Foreign Office, 25 Mar. 1963, PAAA B 34/408.

⁹⁵ Steltzer to Referat I B 3, Foreign Office, 11 Dec. 1964 PAAA B 34/484.

⁹⁶ Lüders to Referat 307, Foreign Office, 25 Mar. 1963, PAAA B 34/408.

⁹⁷ Reichhold to Referat Z A 2, 27 Nov. 1963, PAAA B 34/408.

⁹⁸ Lüders to Referat 307, Foreign Office, 25 Mar. 1963, PAAA B 34/408.

acquiesced in the publication of these articles or has even instructed the Party Press to follow this general line', and that the government could stop the attacks if it wanted to. It warned that 'decisions which are now under consideration will be influenced by the pressure of German public opinion following these grave, renewed press attacks'. Lüders reported that the Ghanaian Foreign Ministry officials present – State Secretaries Richard Akwei and Quarcoopome, as well as Mr. Brew, manager of the Europe section – were 'strongly impressed, perhaps even distressed' by the statement. Asked which 'decisions' were meant, Lüders referred to economic negotiations in progress, including the grant of Hermes export guarantees. Akwei promised to inform Nkrumah while Mr. Brew, in seeing Lüders on his way out, said, 'It is a shame to ask for development aid and at the same time start this disgrace in the press'.⁹⁹

One week later, on 20 February 1963, the Foreign Office held a press conference in Bonn. Leaving nothing to chance, the Foreign Office prepared in advance a question on the press war, as well as a detailed answer.¹⁰⁰ When a reporter failed to act as scripted, the Foreign Office spokesmen, a Dr. Hille, raised the issue himself.¹⁰¹ By claiming that West Germany had participated in a bomb plot against Nkrumah and that it was supplying weapons and mercenaries to suppress the right of self-determination in Africa, he said, the Ghanaian government press had injured its own neutrality by making a communist thesis its own. The federal government had warned that German public opinion would probably force it to examine the maintenance of friendly relations with Ghana. A reporter now asked whether this examination might affect development aid. Dr. Hille warned that while West Germany set no political requirements for development aid, such a departure from Ghana's official neutrality in the Cold War would force the Foreign Office to 'reassess' (*prüfen*) its aid policy.¹⁰²

The embassy issued another warning in October 1963. The Ghanaian embassy in Tanganyika had distributed copies of the *Spark*, which claimed that West Germany lent South Africa £650 million, that it had given Portugal military aid to suppress the rebellions in Angola and Mozambique and that it was preparing for a third world war. According to the West German note, 'It is a recognized rule that diplomatic missions shall not exercise any propaganda against Governments to which the country they are accredited to entertains friendly relations'. Such press attacks would make an improvement in relations impossible and 'considerably disturb [sic] economic co-operation between the two countries'.¹⁰³ The Ghanaian Foreign Ministry's reply, on 19 October, did nothing to satisfy the Germans. It merely took 'cognisance' of their position.¹⁰⁴ Another *démarche* followed in mid-December, again without result.¹⁰⁵

Steltzer worked hard to win over Nkrumah, but he too invoked aid in an effort to discourage bad press.¹⁰⁶ In late 1964, he warned the president's cabinet chief that continuing malicious and unjustified accusations in the press 'would make it harder to convince the German government of the usefulness of close economic cooperation with Ghana'. According to rumour, this threat prompted Nkrumah's personal intervention.¹⁰⁷ In September 1965 Steltzer asked the Foreign Office to reprimand Ghana's ambassador in Bonn, writing that it was not appropriate to ask a country for help and then trample on it.¹⁰⁸ When he met with Nkrumah, the governor of the Bank of Ghana and Nkrumah's economic and technical advisers to decide on capital aid priorities, Steltzer asked him to stop press attacks on West German development aid as exploitative. Even Ghana's finance minister,

⁹⁹ Lüders, 'Mündlicher Vortrag des Botschafters, Dr. Lüders gegenüber dem Staatssekretär des ghanaischen Aussenministeriums, Mr. Richard Akwei', 13 Feb. 1963; Lüders, Embassy to Referat 307, Foreign Office, 13 Feb. 1963. Both are in PAAA B 34/409.

¹⁰⁰ 'Entwurf einer Anfrage für die Bundespressekonferenz', no date, PAAA, B 34/409.

¹⁰¹ Alexander Böker, Dg I B, Foreign Office, 27 Feb. 1963, PAAA B 34/409.

¹⁰² Press Conference, 20 Feb. 1963, PAAA B 34/409. See Ndumbe, *Was will Bonn in Afrika?*, 116.

¹⁰³ Brühl to Referat I B 3, Foreign Office, 9 Oct. 1963, PAAA B 34/408; Embassy in Accra to Ghanaian Foreign Ministry, undated, PAAA B 34/408.

¹⁰⁴ Schirmer, Referat I B 3, Foreign Office to Embassy in Accra, 22 Nov. 1963, PAAA B 34/408; Referat I B 3, Foreign Office to Ghanaian Embassy in Bonn, 25 Nov. 1963, PAAA B 34/408.

¹⁰⁵ Reichhold to Referat I B 3, Foreign Office, 14 Dec. 1963, PAAA B 34/408.

¹⁰⁶ Landricina, *Nkrumah and the West*, 339–58.

¹⁰⁷ Steltzer to Referat L 3, Foreign Office, 3 Dec. 1964, PAAA B 34/484.

¹⁰⁸ Steltzer to Referat I B 3, Foreign Office, 24 Sep. 1965, PAAA B 34/572. See also Landricina, *Nkrumah and the West*, 354.

he said, recognised loan terms of three and a half percent over fifteen years as favourable to Ghana. Addressing the Foreign Office, Steltzer claimed that a previous written protest and this verbal complaint to the leader showed that German patience was not unlimited, though he cautioned that ‘threats like withdrawing development aid must absolutely be avoided’.¹⁰⁹

End of the Press War

West Germany’s diplomatic position improved almost as soon as the Ghanaian Army toppled Nkrumah on 24 February 1966. The new regime, headed by an eight-man junta calling itself the National Liberation Council, was determinedly anti-communist.¹¹⁰ It not only shut down the East German trade mission in Accra and its Ghanaian counterpart in East Berlin, it expelled more than a thousand Soviet technicians and forced a drastic reduction of personnel at the Soviet and Chinese embassies.¹¹¹ NLC chair Lieutenant General J.A. Ankrah soon publicly endorsed German reunification, which Ambassador Steltzer took as an endorsement of the ‘sole representation’ claim. The press war against West Germany ended immediately; Steltzer reported with satisfaction two weeks after the coup that the *Spark* had ceased publication and that columnist H.M. Basner and other pro-East Bloc journalists were in prison.¹¹² The war of nerves over decolonisation and apartheid was at an end.

Conclusion

This article has advanced two arguments. Not only have newspapers acted as a significant force in international relations, as earlier scholarship has already established, but in the Ghana press war they were able to turn a small West African country’s asymmetrical relationship with a wealthy West Bloc country upside down. Representing the Pan-African and socialist policy priorities of Kwame Nkrumah, they imposed discomfort on West Germany as punishment for its misbehaviour, real or alleged, in central and southern Africa. Through party ownership of friendly papers and government control or suppression of unfriendly ones, Nkrumah’s regime ensured a consistent message as well as being able to turn the pressure on and off at will, like a water tap. It took advantage of West Germany’s peculiar weaknesses as well, the need to compete with East Germany and the historical continuity with the Third Reich. In this way the benefactor was made to look like an adversary in public and forced to act like a wounded supplicant in private, demanding again and again an end to the pain. Second, development aid for a regime could do very little against it, in the sense of diverting it from the definition of its vital interests or its ideological aims. Loans, experts, equipment and training programmes for Bolgatanga and Biriwa in Ghana could not outweigh, in Nkrumah’s mind, the rightful grievances of black Africans in Angola or South Africa. The West Germans could not overcome the misfit between the implicit assumption behind aid, that the host government was content with securing its borders and improving its resources, and a regime with continental ambitions that crossed West German interests.

Further research could add more to both sides of the press war. Ghanaian archives may hold documents clarifying how and why President Nkrumah or his subordinates directed press attacks against West Germany and how they weighed their desire for aid against their need to change West German behaviour, please East German officials or fulfil other objectives. A thorough review of West German reporting on Ghana and Nkrumah might reveal to what extent newspapers in that country took notice of Ghanaian attacks, responded to them, or perhaps provoked them by unfavourable portrayals and commentary.

¹⁰⁹ Steltzer to Referat I B 3, Foreign Office, 3 Dec. 1965, PAAA B 34/574.

¹¹⁰ Roger S. Gocking, *The History of Ghana* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2005), 148.

¹¹¹ Kilian, *Die Hallstein-Doktrin*, 81, 83; Steltzer to Referat I B 3, Foreign Office, 7 Mar. 1966, PAAA B 34/641.

¹¹² Steltzer to Referat I B 3, Foreign Office, 3 Mar. 1966, PAAA B 34/641.