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The conundrum of colonialism in postwar Germany

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THE CONUNDRUM OF COLONIALISM IN POSTWAR GERMANY

by

Jason Verber

An Abstract

Of a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the Doctor of
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ABSTRACT

After World War II East and West Germans alike contributed to the maintenance and dismantling of European colonialism, whether by means of direct participation or state policy. At the same time, Germans in both states fashioned a variety of narratives about Germany's own colonial period, selectively including and interpreting facts in order to support sweeping pronouncements on Germany's past, present, and future. In this regard Germans were not unique, as other Europeans after 1945 likewise struggled to find their way in a rapidly decolonizing world and to make sense of the history that had led them to this point. Yet, unlike other Europeans, Germans had been without a colonial empire of their own since World War I.

In West and East Germany colonialism permeated political culture. German politicians, bureaucrats, businessmen, and workers dealt with colonialism, its decline, and its aftermath on a regular basis. Colonies were objects of foreign policy-making; decolonization provided an important context for political and economic developments within, between, and beyond both German states; and Germany's colonial past offered redemption and reproach to those willing to find them there. These and other encounters with colonialism dot the historical record, appearing in government archives, political pamphlets, and popular culture ranging from periodicals to film and television. Colonialism's continued relevance for Germans—and indeed the continued relevance of Germans in Europe's waning overseas empires—naturally invites one to compare and contrast the German experience with that in France, or the United Kingdom. However, it also points to the importance such similarities or differences had for Germans. Colonialism certainly helped forge connections between Germans and non-Germans across Europe, Africa, and elsewhere, but more importantly it provided a language for defining Germans' relationships with the rest of the world, not to mention with each other.

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PH.D. THESIS

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INTRODUCTION

In August 1960, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* reported on a new tactic in the fight against South Africa's apartheid regime. Ghanaian diplomats were turning to the German colonial past in an effort to help South-West Africa forge a new future. These diplomats dusted off the British White Book of 1918, a report designed to portray the Germans as unfit colonizers and justify the seizure of German colonies after World War I. According to the newspaper, the Ghanaians wanted to show "that the South African mandate authority has violated the same rights of blacks in South-West Africa that their German predecessors allegedly had violated."[1] Though perhaps unfair in singling Germans out, such allegations were largely accurate. Later that year, an article on Tanganyika's independence appeared in the *Deutsche Zeitung*. In it, columnist Gert Steinhausen traced much of the country's progress and development back to German traders, German scientists, German settlers, and ultimately to the founder of German East Africa, Carl Peters. Steinhausen linked Peters to incoming Prime Minister Julius Nyerere in his headline, describing Peters as an enemy of Arab control and slavery, and therefore a friend to Africans.[2] In reality the brutal treatment Peters meted out to Africans saw him recalled to Berlin and lost him his commission and pension.

Both of these articles suggest a certain degree of skepticism—or even outright forgetfulness—in West Germany about the brutality of the German colonial past. More importantly, however, they also illustrate German relevance in the colonial world after 1945. Germans and non-Germans alike saw in German colonialism an explanation of the past and a lesson for the future, despite disagreement between and within groups as to exactly what those might be. Germans in both postwar states were drawn into debates

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[1] "Wie die Deutschen," *Der Spiegel*, August 24, 1960, 28.

[2] Gert Steinhausen, "Von Dr. Carl Peters zu Julius Nyerere. Tanganjika wird unabhängig / Erinnerungen an die deutsche Kolonie," *Deutsche Zeitung*, December 7, 1961.

about colonialism and decolonization by allies and enemies, and when they were not they often wrote themselves into the story. This was the case not only with former German colonies, but other colonies and former colonies as well. Alone and within their respective blocs both states jockeyed for position in part by appealing to the decolonizing and postcolonial world. Individuals and groups within each did the same. Despite obvious ideological and structural differences between East and West, German overtures toward the colonial world shared a great deal in common, and both were colored by memories of Germany's own colonial past. Likewise, the contents of these memories differed greatly between East and West, but in both states their form and function reflected patterns established in remembering World War II and the Holocaust. East and West Germany, for all their differences, took part together in a kind of decolonization without colonies. That the citizens of states without empires of their own would take part in such a process attests to the shared narrative of European colonialism that encompasses not only both German states but also the entire continent.

Colonialism mattered to Germans after 1945 in large part because colonialism continued to matter to the rest of the world. Colonialism still brought Europeans to the colonies as administrators, soldiers, farmers, settlers, and businessmen. It still brought colonized peoples to Europe, as well, but instead of "educating" Europeans about the rest of the world in "people shows" and other displays, colonized peoples increasingly arrived solely in search of their own education. Colonial trade continued to bring exotic fragrances and flavors to Europeans, advertisers continued to appeal to consumers with colonial imagery, and literature continued to feature colonial themes and settings. Of even greater significance than these continuities, however, were changes. Throughout the first half of the twentieth century the prospect of decolonization sparked debates within Europe's colonial powers and conflicts between those powers and their overseas possessions. World War II and its aftermath exacerbated the situation. Allied propaganda equating the fight against Nazism with the defense of liberty and democracy resonated

with colonized peoples, many of whom saw in their wartime sacrifices proof that they had earned these rights as well. However, colonial powers struggling to recover from the war clung to their colonies in the hope that they might provide desperately needed materials and manpower for rebuilding efforts. They also fought to maintain control or at least influence for fear of what might become of their overseas possessions should they "fall" to Communism. Indeed, for all of the novel dynamics the Cold War introduced—the prospect of nuclear annihilation, for instance, or the polarization created by the emergence of two superpowers—in many ways the conflict resembled an imperial rivalry. Both the Soviet Union and the United States vocally supported the right of colonized peoples to independence. At the same time, both also sought to build an informal empire of satellite states and spheres of influence. Each criticized the other for such actions, with varying degrees of success, and on more than one occasion struggles to maintain colonial rule or establish indirect control served as flash points, inflaming rhetoric on both sides and even prompting military intervention.

Germans, despite their lack of an empire to call their own, did not escape these and other effects of colonialism. Germans went to British, French, and Portuguese colonies to seek their fortunes while others fought for or against continued colonial rule. German schools and universities in both states welcomed colonized and formerly colonized peoples in search of training and education, and Germans in both states established extensive commercial and non-commercial economic ties with the colonial and post-colonial worlds. Perhaps most importantly, both German states became increasingly integrated into alliances with entrenched colonial or anti-colonial interests.

Colonialism also mattered to Germans after 1945 as a result of Germany's own colonial past. After World War II, German histories and memories of colonialism formed in response to a variety of factors and contexts ranging from the Cold War and decolonization to World War II itself, Nazi rule, and the Holocaust. Well into the 1960s Germans who had lived, worked, and served in Germany's former colonial empire

actively shaped West German histories and memories of the period, forging a mythology meant to combat negative stereotypes about Germans and promote a positive sense of identity and connection to the past. In East Germany, by contrast, critics of such positive narratives focused instead on the abuses of German colonialism, drawing connections between colonial violence or exploitation, Nazism, and the politics of postwar West Germany. By the late 1960s similar criticisms of colonial myths emerged in West Germany as well. In both East and West Germany critics proposed more "accurate" histories not only (or, often enough, even primarily) to set the record straight but rather to advance political agendas at the local, national, and international level. Critics and defenders alike continued to instrumentalize history and memory until the fall of the Berlin Wall. Indeed, this instrumentalization continues to this day.

Colonialism's continued relevance for Germans even decades after the demise of Germany's colonial empire is by no means unique; for example, even after—and in fact largely because of—Britain's decline as a global empire and France's loss of Vietnam and especially Algeria, relationships with former colonial possessions such as those enshrined in the Commonwealth of Nations or the International Organization of the Francophonie continue to exert significant political, economic, and cultural influence. Moreover, remembering, misremembering, and forgetting about the colonial past contributed to the formulation of foreign policy and the articulation of national identities in both France and the United Kingdom. These and other parallels, however, do not simply suggest similar experiences. Rather, they point to the common, shared experience of the European colonial project and its demise.

German confrontations with the colonial past were at once typically European and uniquely German, reflecting common attitudes and mindsets about the nature of colonial rule as well as particularly German concerns about the past. Despite commonalities, each nation's relationship with colonialism past and present exhibits peculiarities, and this is no less true for Germans than for other Europeans. Germans participated in colonial wars

and debates over decolonization, for instance, but in ways that reflected not only the absence of a German empire after World War I but also the lack of a unified German state after World War II. Collectively such differences reveal a pattern by which Germans and other Europeans arrived at the same destination but by different routes: Germans and both German states engaged in practices resembling those of other Europeans and other European states but with different motivations. Germans fought in Algeria alongside French troops, for instance, but they wound up there as a result of circumstances unique to occupied Germany. Protesters in both West Germany and France criticized their governments for the roles each played in the conflict, but in West Germany these protesters were as concerned about what that role said about the survival of National Socialist tendencies as they were with the apparent demise of ideals like liberté, égalité, and fraternité. And in the aftermath of empire, while France succumbed to a sort of voluntary amnesia, many West Germans embraced the colonial past to avoid dwelling on other, more painful memories.[3]

In order to explore the changing meanings and functions of "colonialism" for Germans in a variety of contexts, this dissertation examines the entire postwar period from 1945 to 1989/90. While it largely proceeds chronologically, the main divisions are in fact thematic. The first half considers the impact of colonialism on Germans after 1945 and the involvement of Germans in efforts to avoid or hasten the demise of Europe's colonial empires. The first two chapters examine West and East German political, social, and economic involvement in colonialism and decolonization between the end of World War II in 1945 and the early 1960s. In addition to witnessing the creation of two competing German states, the solidification of that division via the Berlin Wall, and the emergence of the Cold War, this was also a period in which a new postcolonial world

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[3] Robert Aldrich, *Vestiges of the Colonial Empire in France: Monuments, Museums and Colonial Memories* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 7. Aldrich argues that in France empire was largely forgetten from the 1960s through the 1980s.

began to emerge, with the partitioning of India in 1947 and the end of French rule in Algeria in 1962. While Germans in the East and the West had their own concerns closer to home, many could identify with the issues involved in decolonization that paralleled their own experiences after 1945: the creation of new states, the role of foreign powers, and questions of sovereignty. More importantly, membership in the Warsaw Pact and the European Economic Community as well as the activities of individuals, groups, and businesses brought Germans into direct political, social, cultural, and economic contact with the colonial, decolonizing, and postcolonial worlds. Perhaps the most direct involvement Germans had in the colonial project during this period, however, came in the form of German service in the French Foreign Legion, which fought to protect French colonial interests in both Vietnam and Algeria. It is that service in the Foreign Legion that is the subject of the third chapter, an in-depth case study of German involvement in the colonial project and its impact on Germans in both the Federal Republic and the German Democratic Republic. The second half of this dissertation deals with the presence of the German colonial past in both German states and societies after World War II. It begins with a chapter analyzing West German myths about the colonial past before moving on to one devoted to efforts by East and West Germans to discredit and displace those myths. Such efforts reflected long-standing ideological commitments in East Germany and important social, political, and cultural changes during the 1960s and 1970s in West Germany, changes manifest in the rise of the New Left and the emergence of new social movements based not on class affiliation but shared concerns for particular issues. While East German Marxism-Leninism and the development of the New Left in West Germany had specific and relatively well-understood implications for the ways in which Germans thought and talked about the Nazi past, these chapters interrogate the place of colonialism and its legacies in these contexts in order to analyze how individuals and groups mobilize other, broader shared pasts and presents in support of much narrower interests. The final chapter is another case study, this time focusing on South-

West Africa/Namibia in order to explore the intersections of colonialism past and present in both public discourse and the actions of Germans and both German states. Between 1966 and 1988 the South-West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) dominated the struggle for independence in the former German colony of South-West Africa. Given their Marxist platform, East German interest and involvement with SWAPO—and West German uncertainty about the group—is understandable. However, German involvement in the region has a history stretching back to the end of the nineteenth century, a history that shaped German actions and reactions as much as contemporary concerns.

Although other aspects of German history in the twentieth century have overshadowed the legacy of colonialism for Germans, they have not buried it. Rather, "colonialism"—German and European, past and present—has been a topic of genuine concern, served as a powerful rhetorical device, and directly affected Germans on numerous occasions over the past six decades. On the one hand, globalization and the integration of each postwar German state into opposing alliances brought Germans into direct contact with European colonialism. On the other hand, political, scholarly, and popular discourses about "colonialism"—specifically German or not—have served to help position Germans and each Germany in relation to their past as well as to Europe and the rest of the world. Such confrontations shed light on not only what may or may not set the German postcolonial experience apart but also the features common to postcolonialism in Europe and the West. Germans on each side of the Berlin Wall—temporally and geographically—have constructed and deployed narratives of colonialism for varying purposes, a number of which have little to do with colonialism and everything to do with the National Socialist past, globalization, local political squabbles, and countless other issues. While they have done so at a considerable remove from that past, these Germans remained embedded in the larger contemporary context of European colonialism's gradual decline. The instrumentalization of history and memory revealed in these confrontations speaks to the ways a large number of Germans have made use of,

come to terms with, or ignored a unique constellation of pasts—the German path to unification, a short-lived colonial empire, and the Holocaust, among others—and more generally to Western notions and uses of history in politics and popular culture.

Traditionally, the question of colonialism's place in German history has been historiographical rather than historical, a product of judgments more concerned with outcomes and comparisons than processes and experience. Beginning in the interwar period, the earliest scholarship on German colonialism—like that on other European colonialisms—portrayed the acquisition and development of colonies as a political or diplomatic strategy, or as an opportunity for big business and investors. These historical narratives did not consider German perceptions of colonies beyond the dreams of businessmen and maneuverings of Bismarck, nor did these narratives explore any impact colonies may have had on Germany and Germans beyond the arrival of imported goods at German ports or the telegrams between European capitals that colonial strategies incited. Thus histories by scholars such as M.E. Townsend, Woodruff D. Smith, and W.O. Henderson portrayed Bismarck's decision to officially extend imperial protection to overseas settlements in Africa as nothing more—or less—than the result of shrewd political calculation. It was, these and other traditional historians argued, simultaneously a facet of Bismarck's broader diplomatic efforts aimed at improving Germany's position vis-à-vis the other great powers in Europe and another policy meant to redirect domestic tensions abroad, appeasing colonialist agitators and distracting working-class Germans with the romantic promise of colonial adventure.[4] In time, the small trading post at Angra Pequeña, the first overseas territory guaranteed the full protection of the German Empire, grew from a strip of land along a small bay north of the Orange River into one of

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[4] M. E. Townsend, *The Rise and Fall of Germany's Colonial Empire, 1884-1918* (New York: Macmillan, 1930); Woodruff D. Smith, *The German Colonial Empire* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978); W. O. Henderson, *The German Colonial Empire, 1884-1919* (London ; Portland, Or.: F. Cass, 1993); Hans Ulrich Wehler, *The German Empire, 1871-1918* (Dover, N.H: Berg Publishers, 1985).

Germany's most important colonies: German South-West Africa. Similarly, the telegram Bismarck sent on April 24, 1884 to the German consulate in Cape Town informing the Consul General of this fact became a foundational policy decision responsible for the creation of Germany's overseas empire.[5]

German South-West Africa became a German colony in part to counter British interests in the region. However, European empires of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were not just the products of competition between states but of international and transnational cooperation as well; this was as true of Germany's colonial empire as any other. In 1884 and 1885, for example, representatives from the great powers of Europe met in Berlin at the invitation of Bismarck to divide the African continent into well-defined spheres of interest. The result of their negotiations was the General Act of February 26, 1885, which not only provided a solution to the problem of competing interests in the Congo River basin but also formalized the borders of Europe's growing African colonies. For Germany this meant international recognition of its fledgling overseas empire. The Berlin Conference was a success for both Europe and Germany, codifying many of the results of the scramble for Africa and emphasizing the young German Empire's new role in Europe and the world.[6] Indeed, the General Act continued to govern European relations in and with the Congo even after World War II.

Bismarck's telegram and the Berlin Conference marked the birth of Germany's colonial empire. Its conception, however, came much earlier. Among the midwives were a variety of individuals and organizations agitating for German colonial expansion.

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[5] Otto von Weber, *Geschichte des Schutzgebietes Deutsch-Südwest-Afrika*, 6th ed. (Windhoek: Namibia Wissenschaftliche Gesellschaft, 1999).

[6] The German Empire was "young" in two senses of the word: on the one hand, Bismarck founded the German overseas empire on April 24, 1884 when he granted imperial protection to Adolf Lüderitz's claims in South West Africa; on the other hand, in 1871 Bismarck led Prussia to victory over France and unified the majority of German states to form the German Empire.

Many, like well-known propagandist Friedrich Fabri, advanced largely economic arguments for Germany's acquisition of overseas territories. Of course, many of these Germans lobbying Bismarck and the German government for colonial gains also figured to benefit personally. The founder of German South-West Africa, for example, was Bremen merchant Adolf Lüderitz, and the colony began, like so many others, as a trading post. Another proponent of German colonialism was Adolf Woermann, owner of the C. Woermann trading firm, who believed direct control of colonies would create and protect even greater opportunities for German businesses like his own. Indeed, Woermann expanded and modernized his fleet of ships after 1884 to transform the trading house he inherited from his father into a modern shipping line serving all of Germany's African colonies. Not all such ventures proved so successful, however. When Bismarck authorized the creation of protectorates like German South-West Africa, he placed private companies in charge of their administration, rather than state bureaucrats. This system, modeled on the British and Dutch companies of centuries past, failed spectacularly, perhaps most notably in South-West Africa. Adolf Lüderitz's own business interests floundered from the start, and the German Colonial Society For South-West Africa that bought him out fared little better. They were unable to turn a profit or effectively administer the colony. Growing tensions among African groups and between Africans and whites eventually forced the German government to step in, sending troops in 1889 and transforming the protectorate into a crown colony by 1891. Similar stories unfolded in Germany's other overseas possessions, and only in Togo did the German colonial project ever turn a profit.

In time, however, scholars of German colonialism began to reconsider the economics of Germany's overseas empire, looking beyond import and export statistics. They have revealed the social impact of colonial economies on both colonized peoples and Germans in Europe. In German East Africa, for instance, efforts to exploit indigenous labor and resources necessitated a certain level of development along

European lines.[7] At the same time, social reformers and government officials in Germany hoped that the cultivation of cotton in the colony would not only free Germany from its dependence on the United States but also cure a host of social ills and reverse working-class moral decay.[8] Colonial trade also produced cultural changes in Germany: for centuries foreign trade had brought exotic goods from Asia and the Americas to colonial goods stores across Germany, but with the acquisition of Germany's own colonies that flow of goods increased rapidly. Suddenly Germans not only had greater access to erstwhile luxuries like coffee and tobacco, but they arrived on German shelves directly from German colonies. Or Germans could order by mail: in 1907, while thousands of Herero continued to suffer and die in concentration camps in German South-West Africa, a cigar manufacturer in Goslar ran advertisements for "Herero" brand cigars in newspapers across Germany, including halfway across the country in Freiburg. For as little as 4 Reichsmark smokers could purchase a lot of one hundred of the cigars. Even after World War I, one Hamburg firm continued to advertise "coffee from our own colonies" and, simultaneously, "the recovery of German *Lebensraum*."

Whatever commercial and economic difficulties Germany's colonies may have posed, German businessmen could not blame their failures on a lack of experience. The trading post at Angra Pequeña was the first to receive German imperial protection, but it was hardly the first German trading post in Africa. In 1682, over two centuries earlier, the Brandenburg African Company established Gross Friedrichsburg in present-day Ghana. German bankers, industrialists, and merchants saw in Africa enormous commercial opportunities. Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries German investment banks, shipping lines, and trading houses took advantage of European colonization in

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[7] Juhani Koponen, *Development for Exploitation: German Colonial Policies in Mainland Tanzania, 1884-1914*, 2nd ed. (Helsinki: Distributor Tiedekirja, 1995).

[8] Thaddeus Sunseri, "The Baumwollfrage: Cotton Colonialism in German East Africa," *Central European History* 34, no. 1 (2001): 31-51.

Africa, the Americas, Asia, and the Pacific. Even after Germany claimed its own colonial empire, theoretically securing a place in the sun for which so many Germans had yearned, Germany still shared that place with many others, and empire did not equate with self-sufficiency. This was especially the case when it came to the leftovers Germany had claimed in the scramble for Africa: present-day Togo, Cameroon, Tanzania, and Namibia never provided much in the way of raw materials, new markets, or settlement opportunities for emigrants. Germany's colonies in China and the south Pacific did no better. Other, more established and arguably more productive empires did not make the metropoles controlling them islands unto themselves, either—not even Great Britain's. Thus, although European powers defined and delineated colonies along national lines, these colonies were both products of and contributions to an increasingly dense network of connections before World War I: economic, but also social, political, and cultural. The trade that flourished between colonies and metropoles during this period brought goods from French colonies to German storefronts and investments of British capital to German colonies.

Germans were widely involved in colonial projects before, during, and after the German colonial period. Germans took part often not as a nation and not with the backing of a single, unified German state, but rather as individuals and groups. Formal and informal transnational cooperation between Germans and other Europeans significantly predated the Berlin Conference on the Congo, and German involvement in colonialism prior to the conference and the founding of a German colonial empire provides a useful example, especially for establishing a comparison with the postwar period.

By the mid-1880s Germans had been involved in Europe's colonization of Africa and the rest of the world for centuries in a wide variety of roles. At the same time German ships and traders were ferrying raw materials and finished goods back and forth between Europe and the rest of the world, German explorers were trekking across landscapes never before seen by Europeans, German scientists were cataloging and

analyzing discoveries in strange new lands, and German missionaries—protestant and catholic—were bringing Christianity to European colonies. German settlers, too, made new lives for themselves in Africa and North and South America, perhaps most famously in Pennsylvania, where their presence sparked concerns as early as the 1750s that German, rather than English, might become the dominant language.[9]

Many Germans played these roles in the service of foreign governments, a fact that is not surprising given the late birth of a strong, unified Germany and the even later birth of a German colonial empire, but also not only a result of these factors. Thus Heinrich Barth crossed Africa and reached Timbuktu while in the employ of the British and Alexander von Humboldt made his expedition to South and Central America with Spanish patronage.[10] German missionaries worked for British, French, and other mission societies besides those in Berlin and Basel, and many more Germans settled in the colonies (and former colonies) of other powers than ever settled in Germany's own overseas territories.[11] Other Germans operated independently as traders, merchants, or simply travelers, and a few even acted on behalf of small pre-unification German states like Brandenburg, which in the seventeenth century established trading posts in present-

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[9] Dennis E Baron, *The English-Only Question: An Official Language for Americans?* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

[10] On Barth, see A. Adu Boahen, *Britain, the Sahara, and the Western Sudan, 1788-1861*, Oxford studies in African affairs (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964) (especially chapter 8); Yvonne Deck, "Heinrich Barth in Afrika - Der Umgang mit dem Fremdem: eine Analyse seines Großen Reisewerks" (Magisterarbeit, Universität Konstanz, 2006); For Humboldt, see Anthony Pagden, *European Encounters with the New World: From Renaissance to Romanticism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993); Gerard Helferich, *Humboldt's Cosmos: Alexander Von Humboldt and the Latin American Journey That Changed the Way We See the World* (New York: Gotham Books, 2004).

[11] Protestant missionary societies in Germany during the nineteenth century included the Basel Mission (originally the German Mission Society), the Moravian Church, the Rhenish Mission Society and the Bethel Mission (the Evangelical Missionary Society for German East Africa). In the mid-nineteenth century the London Missionary Society was the largest operating in Africa and thus attracted a number of Germans.

day Ghana.[12] Germans were not alone in this sort of activity; indeed, from the very beginning European exploration and expansion featured competition between nations represented by non-nationals: Italians Christopher Columbus and Amerigo Vespucci sailed for Spain, John Cabot for Great Britain, and Giovanni da Verrazzano for France; Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan died in the Philippines while attempting to circumnavigate the globe for Spain; Danish explorer Vitus Bering claimed Alaska for Russia.

Moreover, Europeans did not have to leave home to take part in the colonial project. German involvement and interest in colonialism was by no means limited to that relatively small number of Humboldts and Barths; their adventures and those of others captured the attention and imaginations of Germans at home.[13] Germans had always read these stories—fictional or factual—in a variety of periodicals and novels, since long before 1884 or even 1871. From as early as the sixteenth century "colonial fantasies" permeated German culture and imaginations. Suzanne Zantop argues this colonial discourse produced a "colonialism without colonies", fueling the desire for knowledge and colonial acquisition and providing a location in literature for the rehearsal of colonial hierarchies and structures.[14] Manifestations of these colonial fantasies ranged from popular fiction like Joachim Heinrich Campe's German version of Robinson Crusoe to widely read accounts of not only German heroes like Heinrich Barth but others like David Livingstone.

Many of the "colonial fantasies" Zantop describes played out in South America

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[12] Nina Berman, "K. u. K. Colonialism: Hofmannsthal in North Africa," *New German Critique*, no. 75 (Autumn 1998): 7.

[13] Of course, there is some debate as to how much empire mattered to those who had it. See Bernard Porter, *The Absent-minded Imperialists: Empire, Society, and Culture in Britain* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[14] Susanne Zantop, *Colonial Fantasies: Conquest, Family, and Nation in Precolonial Germany, 1770-1870* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 7.

due to its "promise of gold, moderate climates, abundant vegetation, and the relatively easy subjection of its inhabitants to foreign rule," while many German thinkers and academics focused their energies eastward, establishing German intellectual hegemony over the Orient.[15] German colonialism appropriated rehearsal space in the East and the West, but its actual performance primarily took place in the African theater. In German South-West Africa, the largest site of German settlement in the colonies, settlers attempted to transform "colonial fantasies" of a "preindustrial Germanness that preserved the traditional values of patriarchal peasant families deeply connected to the land" into reality; the import of German women and promotion of German culture in the colony were meant to (re)create an ideal German identity.[16] German social scientists found indigenous cultures and societies wanting as objects of study, but the same engineering expertise behind the decades-long construction of the Berlin-Baghdad Railway also took up the development of a railroad infrastructure in South-West Africa and established mines to exploit the natural resources discovered there by German geologists and other physical scientists.

Not only through the actual practice of colonialism, then, but through trade, scientific endeavor, and literature Germans—like the French and British to which Edward Said devotes his attention in *Orientalism*—took part in a broader European discourse about colonialism that not only defined and dominated its subject matter but also shaped and limited the range of thought and expression of those who produced it. Far from limited to the German orientalist scholars Said mentions and then ignores, the systems of

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[15] Zantop, *Colonial Fantasies: Conquest, Family, and Nation in Precolonial Germany, 1770-1870*, 11; Sara Friedrichsmeyer, Sara Lennox, and Susanne Zantop, eds., *The Imperialist Imagination: German Colonialism and its Legacy* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999); Kamakshi P. Murti, *India: The Seductive and Seduced "Other" of German Orientalism* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2001).

[16] Sara Friedrichsmeyer, Sara Lennox, and Susanne Zantop, eds., *The Imperialist Imagination: German Colonialism and its Legacy*, Social History, Popular Culture, and Politics in Germany (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 23.

knowledge that developed about the Orient and other parts of the world were products of a shared European culture, despite any particular national manifestations.[17] Colonialism is never just a German story, or a French or British or Portuguese or Dutch one, and for that reason the story of colonialism in Germany after 1945 is only one telling of a European story. The great success that scholars of German colonialism have enjoyed in borrowing methodological insights from their colleagues working in British, French, and other colonial contexts suggests similarities and commonalities borne out by the analyses these approaches have generated. Naturally important differences existed between the French, British, Portuguese, Dutch, and German colonial empires, but these should not be overstated. After all, significant differences often existed between the colonies in any given empire. German East Africa resembled British East Africa at least as much as it did German New Guinea, and likewise German New Guinea and British New Guinea shared common ground—literally—that did not and could not exist between these colonies and their African counterparts. As Anthony Pagden has shown, the greatest differences in European conceptions of "the other" must be sought not between nations but in changes over time.[18]

German participation in European colonialism also took the form of opposition, and in criticizing the creation and maintenance of European empires Germans once again joined other Europeans in an endeavor that crossed state and national boundaries. By the late eighteenth century the Enlightenment had produced not only a new philosophy of knowledge based on reason and universalism, but also an opposition to colonialism and imperialism supported by these tenets. This line of thought rejected empire as "unworkable, dangerous, or immoral" for a variety of reasons: its effect on free trade, its

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[17] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, 1st ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 3-4, 6, 19.

[18] Pagden, *European Encounters with the New World: From Renaissance to Romanticism*.

impact on domestic politics, its consequences for self-determination and cultural integrity, or even just the "ironic spectacle of ostensibly civilized nations engaging in despotism, corruption, and lawlessness abroad."[19] German intellectuals like Johann Gottfried Herder and even Immanuel Kant produced some of the most important criticisms of European foreign policy and relations with non-Europeans, joined by others like Denis Diderot and Jeremy Bentham.

Perhaps unfortunately, anti-imperialism as a strain of mainstream Enlightenment thought died out by the nineteenth century, as the language of science and reason increasingly served to justify rather than condemn colonial rule. Anti-imperialism did survive, however, in Germany and elsewhere in the thought and writings of more radical leftists, especially socialists and communists. After 1884 the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) spoke out against German imperialism and colonialism with increasing regularity, a tradition best embodied by August Bebel, whose criticism of government policy during the Boxer Rebellion and uprisings in East and South West Africa later served as a touchstone for East German communists after World War II. Similarly, German communists like Karl Marx and later Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht spoke out against colonialism and imperialism, and as historians like Eric Weitz and Catherine Epstein have demonstrated they and other Germans helped legitimize both the existence and the positions of the later Socialist Unity Party (SED) in East Germany.[20] Luxemburg, for example, criticized German socialists in 1911 for allowing fear of electoral implications to dissuade them from criticizing Germany's and France's

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[19] Sankar Muthu, *Enlightenment Against Empire* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2003), 4.

[20] Eric D. Weitz, *Creating German Communism, 1890-1990: From Popular Protests to Socialist State* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1997); Catherine Epstein, *The Last Revolutionaries: German Communists and Their Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).

"colonial adventure" during the Second Moroccan Crisis.[21] Moreover, Luxemburg's thoughts on imperialism, published in 1913 in *The Accumulation of Capital*, anticipate much of Lenin's analysis published some four years later.[22] Colonialism, both held, was but one manifestation of imperialism. Imperialism, in turn, represented the highest stage of capitalism; that is to say, the most developed form of an economy organized around the use of capital to generate surplus value through the exploitation of labor. Lenin, like Luxemburg, defined imperialism as that stage of capitalism in which consolidation of industry and banking gives rise to monopolies that have so perfectly exploited their home markets that they must look elsewhere for growth. Thus the export of capital around the globe and the division of the world between various monopolies—such as occurred at the Berlin Conference in 1884-5—characterizes imperialism. For Lenin and Luxemburg, then, colonialism was simply the most obvious form of imperialism, in which economic exploitation occurred by means of direct political control.[23] Liebknecht, too, shared these views on imperialism and colonialism; he blamed the competition inherent to imperialism, rather than the particular actions of individual states, for setting off World War I.[24]

Dreams of empire may have helped to trigger one world war, but another world war hastened their demise, and in the aftermath of World War II the pace of

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[21] Rosa Luxemburg, "Concerning Morocco. Leipziger Volkszeitung, July 24th, 1911," in *Rosa Luxemburg: Selected Political Writings*, ed. Robert Looker, trans. W.D. Graf (Random House, 1972).

[22] Rosa Luxemburg, *The Accumulation of Capital*, ed. W Stark, trans. Agnes Schwarzschild, Rare Masterpieces of Philosophy and Science (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1951).

[23] W.I. Lenin, "Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism," 1917.

[24] Karl Liebknecht, "Imperialismus," in *Karl Liebknecht: Ausgewählte Reden und Schriften*, ed. Helmut Böhme (Frankfurt: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1969), 25-38; Karl Liebknecht, "Self-Determination of Nations and Self-Defense," *The Class Struggle* II, no. 2 (1918).

decolonization increased and a postcolonial world began to emerge. Research on other European colonialisms—especially the French and British—has recently begun to examine postcolonial relationships and the impact of decolonization on colonizer and colonized. Anthropologist Paul Silverstein finds in the postcolonial period "the changing nature of French national identity from one based in empire to one now centered on Europe."[25] British national identity has faced a similar crisis since the loss of India; tides of immigrants from former colonies and dominions have made new homes in a United Kingdom that has not entirely forgotten (or lost pride in) how much of the map cartographers could color pink at the empire's height. Although the British and French contexts are certainly different than the German one, they suggest that as difficult as it was for Europeans to give up their colonies, forgetting them—or, better yet, moving beyond them—may be more difficult still.

Clearly the impact and importance of colonialism in Germany predated the creation of a German colonial empire. It also survived that empire's dismantling after World War I. Indeed, while the economic and strategic importance of Germany's short-lived colonial empire may have been limited, it continued to inspire German imperial ambitions after 1918, especially among veterans of the colonies, dismayed colonialist agitators, and later within certain parts of the Nazi party. German imperial ambitions were, of course, not confined to overseas territories, and German imperialism writ-large played an important role in the creation of twentieth-century Europe. Just as it had in World War I, Germany's designs on eastern Europe helped precipitate World War II, as Hitler attempted to Germanize and (re)settle Polish lands.[26]

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[25] Paul A Silverstein, *Algeria in France: Transpolitics, Race, and Nation*, New anthropologies of Europe (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 5; see also Todd Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France* (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 2006).

[26] On German designs in the East prior to World War I, see William W. Hagen, *Germans, Poles, and Jews: The Nationality Conflict in the Prussian East, 1772-1914* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980); for an examination of Germanization in the Nazi East, see

It is tempting to argue that German experiments in colonial laboratories ultimately found applications domestically and across Europe. In German South-West Africa some have discovered "the constitution of a 'racial order' in modern German history" as eugenicists sought to replace citizenship with ethnically defined identities as the sociopolitical basis for the (colonial) state.[27] The maintenance of this racial hierarchy meant not only strict policing of sexual relations but harsh reprisals in the face of uprisings. When Africans rebelled against German rule in 1904, killing a number of German settlers, the administration and the military responded. Thousands of Africans died in the fighting, and many more perished from dehydration as they were forced with their families into the desert, or died as a result of forced labor, disease, and malnutrition in concentration camps. Order was restored, but at a terrible price: genocide. In the end some 80% of the Herero people were killed, and approximately half of the Nama people.[28]

Plenty of scholars have been eager to draw lines between German South-West Africa and Auschwitz. Isabel Hull, for example, argues that attitudes towards and treatment of enemy soldiers and civilians in Germany's colonies and during World War I were not dissimilar. In part a reiteration of the thesis put forward by John Horne and Alan Kramer—that "brutality and inhumanity . . . reflected the prevailing doctrines of the

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Elizabeth Harvey, *Women and the Nazi East: Agents and Witnesses of Germanization* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).

[27] Pascal Grosse, *Kolonialismus, Eugenik und bürgerliche Gesellschaft in Deutschland 1850-1918* (Frankfurt/Main: Campus, 2000), 10.

[28] On the uprisings of the Herero and Nama see: Isabel V. Hull, *Absolute Destruction: Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005); Jürgen Zimmerer and Joachim. Zeller, *Genocide in German South-West Africa : the Colonial War (1904-1908) in Namibia and its aftermath* (Monmouth, Wales: Merlin Press, 2008); On the German administration, see: Helmut Bley, *South-West Africa Under German Rule, 1894-1914*, ed. Hugh Ridley, English ed. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1971); George Steinmetz, *The Devil's Handwriting: Precoloniality and the German Colonial State in Qingdao, Samoa, and Southwest Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

German military on civilian involvement in warfare"—Hull also goes further, suggesting that experiences and "lessons learned" in the colonies helped produce and reproduce these military doctrines in Africa and Europe, reflecting a uniquely German military culture.[29] Hull argues against any sort of pervasive racism on the part of the German military, but other scholars have been eager to draw lines not only between South-West Africa and the occupation of France and Belgium during World War I, but all the way to Auschwitz and the Holocaust. Arresting as the similarities in technologies (like concentration camps) and outcomes (genocide) may be, they disguise fundamental differences in the logics of oppression. More compelling are the connections historians have drawn between Germany's overseas colonial expansion and its imperialist ambitions in Europe. Both represented manifestations of Germany's ideological commitment to establishing for itself a place in the sun, to protecting the viability of German political, economic, and cultural interests in the face of global competition.

And colonialism continued to affect and matter to Germans even after the interwar period, the Nazis' appropriation of "colonialism", and the experience of World War II. Yet despite pioneering work by Wolfgang J. Mommsen and Jürgen Osterhammel, and more recently by Sebastian Conrad, scholars of German colonialism have not given postcolonial Germany the attention it deserves as an example of postcoloniality in Europe and, simultaneously, a component of a particularly German postwar experience.[30] One notable exception is Nina Berman, who has explored how military, economic, and humanitarian intervention by Germans in Africa produced forms of domination not so

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[29] John N. Horne and Alan Kramer, *German Atrocities, 1914: A History of Denial* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), 174; Hull, *Absolute Destruction: Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany*.

[30] Wolfgang J Mommsen and Jürgen Osterhammel, eds., *Imperialism and After: Continuities and Discontinuities* (London: German Historical Institute, 1986); Sebastian Conrad, "Entangled Memories: Versions of the Past in Germany and Japan, 1945-2001," *Journal of Contemporary History* 38, no. 1 (January 1, 2003): 85-99.

different from those created by racist colonial interventions. This is a critical insight, but as Berman herself points out, it can only tell us so much: the images Germans in Africa have of that continent and its inhabitants are products of an entirely different context than those of Germans at home.[31] While acknowledging the complexity of meanings and functions Berman finds in Germans' images of Africa, this dissertation shifts the focus to Germans in Germany in order to demonstrate how the legacy of colonialism and the process of decolonization—German and otherwise—affected and continues to affect Germans and Germany.

Indeed, it is not Germany's drive for expansion in the first half of the twentieth century—and certainly not the Holocaust—that justifies the study of German colonialism and underwrites its significance. Colonialism in Germany deserves the attention it has received from scholars not because it was extraordinary, but because it was ordinary. Colonialism infiltrated Germans' everyday lives, and it did so in ways that were far from uniquely German. Germany's colonial empire itself may appear irregular; it was without doubt a German articulation of this European phenomenon. Indeed, even in administration Germans sought to emulate and surpass other European powers, and besides, the exercise of direct political control over other peoples and places was but one manifestation of colonialism, and hardly the most important. Before and after Germany's acquisition of an overseas empire, European colonialism produced and reproduced changes in the ways Germans thought and acted. Perceptions of the world and one's place in it, patterns of consumption, tastes and trends: German culture and society could no less escape the gravity of colonialism than could their French or British counterparts. Even the twin calamities of the First and Second World Wars could not fully dislodge

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[31] Nina Berman, *Impossible Missions? German Economic, Military, and Humanitarian Efforts in Africa* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004).

Germans from this orbit. Only the implosion that was decolonization was enough to set into motion such a change, the effects of which can be felt to this day.

CHAPTER 1: BYSTANDERS TO COLONIALISM? COLONIALISM AS A TRANSNATIONAL PHENOMENON AFTER 1945

The occupation of Germany and the emergence of the Cold War after 1945 did not bring colonialism into the lives of Germans, nor were they responsible for the arrival of Germans in Europe's colonies. Even after the Treaty of Versailles stripped Germany of its overseas possessions, colonialism continued to occupy German minds intent on the return of those territories while a number of Germans occupied themselves in British, French, and other colonies. The arrival of Allied troops and growing tensions between East and West after World War II did, however, change the nature of the German relationship with colonialism. On the one hand, the division and occupation of Germany prompted comparisons that led some Germans to wonder whether they were being colonized. On the other hand, efforts to integrate each postwar German state into Eastern and Western alliances committed those states and their citizens to certain colonial and anti-colonial projects to a greater degree than was possible during the interwar period.

World War II made decolonization inevitable, but it also made colonialism a more attractive proposition than ever before. The weakened state of European metropoles after 1945 emboldened colonized peoples to demand certain rewards for their wartime support and sacrifices, with some success. However, this same weakness convinced many Europeans that the need for colonies was greater than ever before. Colonial powers sought to hold on to empire by whatever means and in whatever form they could, and it was questions about the means and form of colonial rule and not its legitimacy that dominated popular discourse. This was not only the case in France, the United Kingdom, and other colonial powers great and small, but in West Germany as well. At the same time, the Soviet Union and other socialist states encouraged decolonization efforts in Asia, Africa, and elsewhere as they sought to win allies and expand their influence. East Germans, too, took part in these attacks on the status quo. East and West German interest

in and concern for the relationship between metropole and colony were not abstract; rather, they reflected Germans' continued involvement after World War II in a transnational colonial project that post-war reorganization further institutionalized. Although isolated West German voices criticized this system and the oppression and exploitation of indigenous peoples it entailed, the dominant discourse in West Germany accepted European colonialism as a given. By contrast, consistently ardent criticisms of colonial exploitation emerged from East Germany but frequently fell on deaf ears. Ultimately only the confluence of several events, and not anticolonial rhetoric, shifted West German and, more broadly, Western European discourse in such a way as to question the legitimacy of colonial rule itself. The most important of these events was France's war in Algeria.

Two key points from this chapter and the next form the foundation for the rest of the dissertation. The most important is the idea that Germans played certain roles promoting, fighting against, and living with European colonialism despite the fact that Germany lost its colonies after World War I. After World War II Germans focused a great deal of their attention on reconstruction and recovery, not to mention partition and the Cold War, but these did not make colonies and colonialism any less important for Germans. Indeed, it increased their importance as these issues figured prominently in German recovery and Cold War politics. Second, this chapter will show that although the manifestations of European colonialism after World War II changed and evolved, the structures and institutions Europeans put into place tended only to encourage pre-existing patterns of transnational cooperation and participation. Not only did European colonies continue to offer West German businesses and individuals a variety of opportunities, but West Germany's public and private obligations to European colonies increased as well. Not only did struggles against colonial exploitation continue to attract the sympathy and support of German leftists, but East German ties to the socialist camp created new opportunities to fight for decolonization.

Germany Colonized? Allied Occupation after World War II

The Allied division and occupation of Germany after World War II not only made the country one of the biggest stages on which the drama of the Cold War played out but also seemed to cast Germany and Germans in an unfamiliar role: that of the colonized. Germans noted and commented on the similarities between their own situation and that of many colonized peoples. It is not difficult to see why: points of comparison went beyond foreign occupation. The partitioning of India, for example, was not so different from the division of Germany, and after World War II the primitive living conditions of many Germans may have seemed more in keeping with some exotic, far-off land than with European standards. Some Germans took these comparisons seriously, accusing occupying powers of an opposite ideological bent with turning occupation zones into colonies. Other Germans made light of the situation despite its possible ramifications on German society and culture. Regardless of the reaction, however, the occupation brought debates about colonialism to Germany and brought Germans face to face with the colonial project at home. In short, the occupation ensured that colonialism mattered.

Much like the division of Africa in 1885, the drawing of new borders after World War II took place in Germany and occurred without the consent or advice of those affected. In late July and early August, 1945, Harry Truman, Clement Attlee, and Joseph Stalin met at what was referred to at the time as the Berlin Conference—better known today as the Potsdam Conference—to finalize many of the plans for post-war Germany and Europe that the Allies had developed during World War II. These plans included five major aims: demilitarization, denazification, democratization, decentralization, and decartelization. The conference also put the finishing touches on agreements as to the prosecution of war criminals and adjustments to Germany's borders. Perhaps of greatest long-term significance was the division of Germany into four zones of occupation, one each administered by the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, the United States, and France. During World War II many had suggested—and some had even expected—a

permanent dismantling of Germany into some configuration of smaller states more closely resembling the political constellation before 1871 than the Germany of the previous 75 years. Indeed, such a plan would have assuaged Soviet fears of the reemergence of a strong German state. Even President Franklin D. Roosevelt suggested that "Germany had been safer when she was divided into 107 small principalities."[32] In the end, however, what began as a division into four parts quickly became two. First the American and British zones unified politically and economically, forming an entity known informally as the Bizone, or Bizonia. Then the French zone joined as well, creating Trizonia. The Marshall Plan and the introduction of the Deutsche Mark in 1948 represented further efforts by the Western Allies to rebuild a strong and friendly Germany, a Germany that could serve as an ally and a buffer against the communist East. The Soviet Union, understandably more fearful of renewed German strength after massive losses in two world wars, responded by blockading Berlin, pushing the already strained partnership between the Allies to the brink of war. From this point there was no going back, and the joint administration of Germany vanished. May 1949 saw the creation of the Federal Republic of Germany out of the three western zones. In October of the same year the Soviet Union followed suit, creating the German Democratic Republic.[33]

The creation of two German states brought changes to the occupation of Germany, but did not fully end it. In West Germany, civilian high commissioners

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[32] Quoted in Frank King, "Allied Negotiations and the Dismemberment of Germany," *Journal of Contemporary History* 16, no. 3 (July 1981): 585.

[33] A more traditional telling of the division of Germany might lay more of the "blame" for the creation of two states at Stalin's feet. For an updated version of this argument, see Norman M. Naimark, *The Russians in Germany: A History of the Soviet Zone of Occupation, 1945-1949* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1995); For a telling that is much more critical of the United States, see Carolyn Woods Eisenberg, *Drawing the Line: The American Decision to Divide Germany, 1944-1949* (Cambridge [England]: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

replaced the military governors who had administered the occupation zones, and in East Germany the Soviet Control Commission took over for the Soviet Military Administration in Germany. Still, military occupation continued in the western zones until 1955, and even after its official end Western Allies maintained military bases in the Federal Republic. Soviet troops remained in Germany even longer, until 1994. More significantly, neither German state enjoyed full sovereignty; only after all parties involved had ratified the *Treaty on the Final Settlement with Respect to Germany* in 1991 did Germany become a fully sovereign state under international law.[34]

Critics on both sides of the Iron Curtain drew explicit connections to colonialism in their attacks on the occupiers and occupied people opposite them. German critics of the Western Allies wasted no time in attacking the economic policies implemented in the western occupation zones and the Federal Republic, drawing explicit connections to colonial exploitation. In 1950 Georg Dertinger, East Germany's first Minister for Foreign Affairs, suggested to the provisional East German parliament that "the Marshall Plan, the foundation of the western state, the Ruhr Statute, and the Occupation Statute characterize the western regime unambiguously as a colonial system. "[35] As early as 1948, when the western Allies first suggested currency reform, the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED) began to describe the western zones as the United States' "German colony."[36] The SED aimed these criticisms at the West but meant to appeal to Germans. In preparation

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[34] "Treaty on the Final Settlement with Respect to Germany," September 12, 1990; Technically, some limitations of Germany's sovereignty do still exist due to provision in the UN Charter targeting Japan and Germany as a result of their actions in World War II. The General Assembly has indicated it plans to address these at some point."Charter of the United Nations," June 26, 1945.

[35] "Regierungserklärung über Fragen der Außenpolitik," *Provisorische Volkskammer der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik* 1949-50, no. 17 (June 28, 1950): 398.

[36] Zentralsekretariat der SED / Abteilung Werbung, Presse, Rundfunk, "USA bestimmen Wirtschaft der 'deutschen Kolonie'," *SED Informationen. Weltpolitik* 1948, no. 6 (May 20, 1948): 2.

for elections to the National Congress in 1950 the National Front of Democratic Germany published a booklet entitled "National Resistance against the Threat of War and Colonial Exploitation" that claimed to describe the hardships endured by Germans living "in the chains of US colonial rule," Germans "enslaved" by the Occupation Statute and the Ruhr Statute. The National Front called on voters for support as a means to help "free West Germany from the hands of the imperialist occupiers."[37]

Critics in the Soviet Occupation Zone also raised the specter of a US "colony" in western Germany serving as a staging ground for a future war of aggression. One SED publication described West Germany as a "maneuver field for colonial troops," and in almost the same breath that Minister Dertinger described the Western Allies' colonial system he accused them of the "active incorporation of West Germany into the aggressive preparations of the western Allies for a war against the Soviet Union."[38] Fighting in that war, the SED claimed, would be German soldiers; the fact that some US military officials referred to potential German troops as "natives" only reinforced the colonial imagery.[39] While the United States bore the brunt of the "colonizer" accusation in the late 1940s and early 1950s, East German propaganda also demonized the "reactionary" forces working as US puppets in Bonn and labeled nearly every step of West Germany's return to international politics as a signal of aggression.[40] Only the people of West Germany, portrayed as victims of the Allies and of West German

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[37] *Nationaler Widerstand gegen Kriegsdrohung und koloniale Ausbeutung: Referenten-Disposition für die Delegierten-Wahlen zum Nationalkongreß am 25. und 26. August 1950 in Berlin* (Berlin: Sekretariat des Nationalrats der Nationalen Front des dekomratischen Deutschland, 1950), 12, 7.

[38] Zentralsekretariat der SED / Abteilung Presse, "Westdeutschland Manöverfeld für Kolonialtruppen," *SED Informationen. Die Remilitarisierung Westdeutschlands* 1949, no. 1 (September 20, 1949): 1-4; "Regierungserklärung über Fragen der Außenpolitik," 399.

[39] "Entgegennahme einer Erklärung der Regierung der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik und Aussrpache," *Volkskammer der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik* 1. Wahlperiod, no. 47 (May 26, 1954): 2217.

[40] "Stellvertreter des Ministerpräsidenten, Otto Nuschke:," n.d., 2217.

politicians and businessmen, were spared criticism; they along with the people of East Germany were, after all, the intended audience of this material designed to put the party and East Germany in the best light possible.

Critics of the Soviet Occupation Zone and the GDR tended to refer to a "Soviet colony" less frequently than their East German counterparts talked about an American one—after all, many of these same West German critics defended British and French colonial claims, and thus colonialism as an institution. Nonetheless, accusations of Soviet or Russian colonialism in Eastern Europe did surface from time to time in the 1950s and 1960s, and even dogged the Soviet Union on into the late 1980s. Max Becker, a member of the Bundestag from the Free Democratic Party (FDP), was particularly fond of such language. Becker accused the USSR of hypocrisy in its attempts to lead a "crusade" against "old style" colonialism while engaging in "new style" colonialism with the creation of satellite states in the East.[41] Becker and others echoed anti-colonialist demands for self-rule by attacking the Soviet Union's "new colonialism" in which it controlled allegedly independent nation-states through "a uniformly directed and uniformly totalitarian party."[42] Other, non-colonial terminology used to describe the Soviet Zone and especially its successor, the German Democratic Republic, served much the same function. By continuing to refer to the GDR as the "Eastern Zone", the "Soviet Zone", or the "so-called GDR" for years after the creation of the East German state West Germans not only denied the legitimacy of that state—if not to the same extent that describing it as a colony did—but also emphasized the view that leaders in East Berlin were little more than puppets for officials back in Moscow.

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[41] "Beratung des Entschließungsantrags der Abgeordneten Dr. Mommer, Dr. Dr. h. c. Pünder, Graf von Spreti, Dr. Becker (Hersfeld) u. Gen. betr. Gemeinsame europäische Politik in den künftigen Ost-West-Konferenzen," *Deutscher Bundestag* 2, no. 137 (March 22, 1956): 7086.

[42] "Zeite und dritten Beratung des Entwurfs eines Gesetzes über die Eingliederung des Saarlandes; Mündlicher Bericht des Ausschusses für Angelegenheiten der inneren Verwaltung," *Deutscher Bundestag* 2, no. 181 (December 14, 1956): 10028.

Most Germans in the western occupation zones took comparisons of the occupation to colonialism less seriously than ideologues might have hoped. In 1947 or 1948 Karl Berbuer wrote the words and music to "Wir sind die Eingeborenen von Trizonesien"—"We are the Natives of Trizonia." The song, which quickly became a carnival hit in the Rhineland, plays off a number of colonial stereotypes in its description of life in Trizonia. West Germans are the "natives" of this strange land that is filled with wild, sexual women but—fortunately—no cannibals. Indeed, the lyrics do almost as much to differentiate the natives of Trizonia from other natives as it does to compare them:

Doch fremder Mann, damit du's weißt, ein Trizonesier hat Humor, er hat Kultur, er hat auch Geist, darin macht keiner ihm was vor. Selbst Goethe stammt aus Trizonesien, Beethovens Wiege ist bekannt. Nein, sowas gibt's nicht in Chinesien, darum sind wir auch stolz auf unser Land.	But stranger, just so you know, a Trizonesian has humor, he has culture as well as spirit, in that regard he can't be beat. Even Goethe hails from Trizonesien; Beethoven's cradle is well-known. No, such things don't exist in Chinesia, And that's why we're proud of our land/country.

Culture and spirit, Goethe and Beethoven: Trizonia may have been like a colony, but it was still a "land of poets and thinkers" firmly situated in Europe. Comparisons could only go so far.

Berbuer's song pokes fun at the circumstances in which West Germans found themselves after World War II—something that was not necessarily easy to do—but it also points to the one thing many in Germany felt they could, or had to, still hold on to: German culture. Older West Germans especially feared not so much the economic and military "colonization" some of their East German counterparts described, but rather the cultural colonization that was Americanization. The American presence after World War II gave the United States the opportunity to "sell" America to West Germans as the US

occupation and reeducation programs sought to remake Germany in its image.[43] Such efforts often met with resistance; long-held prejudices against Americans' supposed lack of cultural sophistication discouraged West Germans from giving American culture a chance. This resistance was tied not only to preserving the traditional place of Goethe and Beethoven, but also to concerns about how American consumer culture threatened German sexuality and gender roles, and femininity in particular. Such fears went back to the nineteenth century but took on greater urgency thanks to the sexual upheaval caused by war and occupation as well as the need to reconstruct society from the ground up.[44] In the minds of some West Germans, the wild behavior of Trizonian maidens may have been the result of rock and roll, boogie-woogie, American films, and other cultural imports, all of which appeared to undermine German sexual norms, creating feminine young men and overly sexual young women. Ironically, the reactionaries East German propaganda accused of acting as puppets for US imperialist interests were some of the most vocal opponents of cultural colonization—as one would expect if these individuals truly were reactionaries.

Despite the threat posed by US cultural imperialism, however, West Germany did embrace the United States. While younger West Germans sought to Americanize themselves through American films and music, West German businesses adopted and adapted American business practices: the aftermath of World War II and the problems created by the Cold War led West German businesses to be more receptive to American-

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[43] Victoria De Grazia, *Irresistible Empire: America's Advance Through Twentieth-century Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005); S. Jonathan Wiesen, "Coming to Terms with the Worker: West German Industry, Labour Relations and the Idea of America, 1949-60," *Journal of Contemporary History* 36, no. 4 (October 2001): 561-579.

[44] Uta G. Poiger, *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels: Cold War Politics and American Culture in a Divided Germany* (Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press, 2000); Jost Hermand, "Resisting Boogie-Woogie Culture, Abstract Expressionism, and Pop Art: German Highbrow Objections to the Import of 'American' Forms of Culture, 1945-1965," in *Americanization and Anti-Americanism: The German Encounter with American Culture After 1945*, ed. Alexander Stephan (New York: Berghahn Books, 2004).

style labor relations and the creation of a broadly-based consumer culture.[45] In the decade and a half after World War II it became clear to most in the Federal Republic that the United States could be trusted to defend West Germany.[46] Not only that: if West Germany was to be an American colony, the United States meant for it to be a model one, with the Federal Republic and Japan serving as "showcases of consumer democracy."[47] Such a fate suited the majority of West Germans better than the transformation they saw taking place in the east, as the Soviet Union did a far more convincing job colonizing Eastern Europe, and East Germany along with it, than the Western Allies ever did.

Postwar Integration and Colonialism

West Germany could not, however, become a "showcase of consumer democracy" without economic stability and political viability. Integration with the rest of western Europe and the West more broadly helped West Germans achieve these goals. That such integration brought with it new opportunities and responsibilities in the remains and remnants of Europe's colonial empires was more than just coincidence. Colonial powers naturally reserved for themselves certain rights and responsibilities in their overseas possessions, but in the late 1940s, the 1950s, and into the 1960s the relationship between metropole and colony became less and less exclusive as increased cooperation in Europe translated into increased cooperation in Europe's dealings with the rest of the world.

The West German state never sought let alone achieved the return of Germany's

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[45] Wiesen, "Coming to Terms with the Worker: West German Industry, Labour Relations and the Idea of America, 1949-60"; De Grazia, *Irresistible Empire: America's Advance Through Twentieth-century Europe*, especially 355-358.

[46] Michael Geyer, "America in Germany: Power and the Pursuit of Americanization," in *The German-American Encounter: Conflict and Cooperation Between Two Cultures, 1800-2000*, ed. Frank Trommler and Elliott Shore (New York: Berghahn Books, 2001).

[47] De Grazia, *Irresistible Empire: America's Advance Through Twentieth-century Europe*, 355.

former colonies, but with membership in the European Economic Community West Germany did get its foot in the door to other colonial powers' overseas territories. Membership was the first step in West Germany's integration with the West, a process meant to establish some degree of international standing for the fledgling state and to ensure the long-term viability of West Germany and a peaceful Western Europe. More significantly, such integration would help make possible the continued rebuilding of West German society and the West German economy. The first steps in this direction came on April 18, 1951 when West Germany along with France, Italy, Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands signed the Treaty of Paris, establishing the European Coal and Steel Community. This initial framework led to the Treaty of Rome and the creation of the European Economic Community (EEC) six years later. Both of these treaties explicitly sought to prevent another European war by making one impossible through economic integration. Such integration meant establishing a customs union and a common external tariff as well as harmonizing agricultural, transport, and trade policies across member states. Per the terms of the Treaty of Rome, the trade benefits that members enjoyed—most notably the customs union—were not limited to the European continent. Rather, member states' colonies—"the non-European countries and territories which have special relations with Belgium, France, Italy and the Netherlands"—were also "associated" with the Community. This "association" meant that the EEC would open up new opportunities to West German businesses not only in Western Europe but around the world. As mentioned above, trade in and with the colonies of other powers was by no means a novelty of the postwar period, but the removal of obstacles such as customs and tariffs was.[48]

Although the EEC promised to inaugurate a new era of economic neo-colonialism for West Germany, membership did not come without a price. While West German

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[48] "The Treaty establishing the European Economic Community," March 25, 1957.

businessmen welcomed easier access to certain overseas markets, West German officials worried during the negotiation of the treaty about the obligations West Germany would have and their possible long-term effects. The purpose of "association," as defined by the treaty, was "to promote the economic and social development of the countries and territories and to establish close economic relations between them and the Community as a whole."[49] Section four of the treaty spelled out member states' rights and obligations with respect to those countries and territories associated with the Community, not only opening up to member states new trade and investment opportunities but also committing them to the economic development of such areas.[50] Walter Hallstein, who participated in negotiating the Treaty of Rome and served as the first president of the Commission of the EEC, raised his concerns about such obligations at a January 15, 1957 cabinet meeting. Hallstein ruled out "cooperation in the political rule of the colonies" but recognized that "a trade policy oriented affiliation of overseas territories with the Common Market is necessary." Such areas needed capital and Europe needed raw materials. The real problem, in Hallstein's view, was differentiating between political, social, and economic infrastructure development. The Federal Republic could not allow itself to become involved in investments "that also produce sovereignty (military installations, police facilities, etc.)" West German politicians saw a real danger in such involvement. At the same cabinet meeting Minister of Finance Franz Etzel described it as the danger "that the Federal Republic might come to have the appearance of a colonial power if it takes part in the development of overseas areas that still find themselves in colonial dependence."[51] For this reason West German officials agreed on the need for language in the Treaty of

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[49] Ibid.

[50] Ibid.

[51] "167. Kabinettssitzung am 15. Januar 1957 TOP 3" ("Kabinettsprotokolle der Bundesregierung" online, n.d.).

Rome alluding to the United Nations Charter in order to invoke the ideals of decolonization and self-determination laid out there.

When negotiations about the possible membership of the United Kingdom began just a few years later, the situation had changed dramatically. The United Kingdom brought with it "special relations" of another sort entirely: the Commonwealth. As State Secretary Lahr noted, until that point the benefits of association had been limited to certain parts of Africa, creating a division. Associating the members of the Commonwealth would address that problem to a certain extent, but create new ones as well. The United States, for example, expressed displeasure with the idea that the "white dominions" like Canada and Australia would enjoy benefits of association, as the United States saw those countries as lying within the American sphere of influence.[52] Moreover, a number of former colonies had already asserted their independence, introducing another, much more complicated relationship. Konrad Adenauer remarked that "when we drew up the Treaties of Rome the former French colonies were still colonies, not yet independent states. Nobody would have thought then that they would become independent in short order. "[53] At least nobody in Western Europe. But these new states had gained independence, and question of association along with development and trade ensured West Germany's participation and continuing interest in the economic aspects of colonialism and decolonization after World War II.

West Germany's continued integration with the West had other colonial costs as well, demonstrated by West German membership in NATO. Twelve countries signed the North Atlantic Treaty on April 4, 1949, but West Germany was not among them. The treaty specified a system of collective defense in the event of an attack by an external

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[52] "40. Kabinettssitzung am 8. August 1962 TOP 3" ("Kabinettsprotokolle der Bundesregierung" online, n.d.).

[53] Ibid.

party, measures clearly meant to deter the Soviet Union. Indeed, the first NATO Secretary General, Lord Hastings Ismay, once claimed the organization's mission was "to keep the Russians out, the Americans in, and the Germans down."[54] Signatories with colonial possessions included Belgium, France, the United Kingdom, Portugal, and Italy. The Treaty applied to certain colonial territories, but not to all member states' colonies. Article six of the treaty defined what, exactly, an "armed attack on one or more of the Parties" meant. Significantly, these provisions explicitly included the "Algerian departments of France" and the rest of North Africa, but by and large excluded all other colonial holdings by limiting the treaty's applicability to attacks north of the Tropic of Cancer.[55] Thus, for instance, France's other colonies—including Vietnam—fell outside the provisions of the treaty, as did all of the United Kingdom's African colonies. By signing the treaty, however, signatories not only pledged to defend those overseas possessions north of the Tropic of Cancer but also implicitly reaffirmed France's claims over Algeria, not just as a colony, but as an integral part of France.

West Germany also made this tacit acknowledgement when it—despite Ismay's famous line to the contrary—signed the North Atlantic Treaty. However, when West Germany joined NATO in 1955 France had already been fighting the National Liberation Front (FLN) in Algeria for a year. This sparked some concern in West Germany, especially as the war dragged on and the horrific nature of the violence there became known. Members of the West German Social Democratic Party (SPD) criticized NATO for complicity in and indirect support of the war. Even a member of the Bundestag from the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) recognized the negative side effects of being associated with the war in Algeria; on a trip through Ghana and Guinea, Heinrich

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[54] Quoted in David Reynolds, *The Origins of the Cold War in Europe: International Perspectives* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994), 13.

[55] "North Atlantic Treaty," April 4, 1949.

Gewandt noted that "as long as the war in Algeria continues all NATO powers count as states that directly or indirectly stand opposed to the Algerians' struggle for freedom."[56] The fears of West German politicians first raised while negotiating the Treaty of Rome were realized.

While West Germany sought integration with Western Europe and the United States, integration that for better or worse also committed the Federal Republic to certain colonial projects, East German leadership pursued similar goals that embedded it not only in the socialist camp but within a worldwide anti-imperialist movement. This movement included not only the Soviet Union and the rest of the Eastern Bloc but also countries such as India and Yemen. East German officials intended their anti-imperialist and anti-colonial rhetoric to secure for East Germany not only a place within the community of socialist countries that emerged after World War II, but a prominent one. In this endeavor the branding of West Germany and its chief ally, the United States, as neo-colonialist was as important as East German self-identification with anti-colonialism. Indeed, the Scientific Archives at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs kept records of West German neo-colonialist statements for use in propaganda and anti-colonialist literature. This list included quotations from politicians as well as other prominent individuals and the West German press. For example, the Scientific Archives quoted conservative member of the Bundestag Dr. Richard Jäger's criticism of the process by which decolonization was occurring: "The rejection of colonial possessions of any kind … was unrealistically romantic. Africa would have needed European rule for at least half if not an entire century."[57] Accusations of West German neo-colonialism often appeared side by side with denunciations of West German militarism, revanchism, and fascism or neo-fascism.

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[56] Heinrich Gewandt, "Eindrücke einer Westafrikareise vom 7.8. - 3.9.1960," n.d 1960, BAK B/136/6205, Fiche 3.

[57] Wissenschaftliches Archiv, Sektion Wissenschaft, "Westdeutscher Neokolonialismus," January 1962, 3, PAAA MfAA C 572/74.

East German anti-colonialist propaganda often bore out the fears of West German politicians by attacking West German integration with the West, focusing on West German participation in the EEC, NATO, and other international bodies. While earlier anti-colonial and anti-imperial rhetoric focused on the United States and Europe's remaining colonial powers, by the late 1950s the focus had shifted. Increasingly, the Federal Republic stood accused of using organizations like the EEC to further the aims of German imperialism in Europe and around the world.[58] As the SED told it, claims that West German leaders were acting to promote the unity of western Europe in the face of communism and that they wanted to promote the spirit of internationalism were "only ideological cover for the hegemonic aspirations of West German militarists and imperialists in Europe. The instruments used to this end are the EEC, Euratom, and the like." According to East German propaganda "integration" was simply a tactic designed to "secure hegemony and claims of leadership among the countries of Western Europe in order to take advantage of their economic potential and their sources of raw materials—even in the colonies—without attracting attention."[59]

Simply defining the Federal Republic as neo-colonialist was not enough, however. Time and time again the SED and the state sought to paint West Germany as the most dangerous neo-colonialist power in Europe, second in the world only to the United States. This SED aimed such propaganda not only at the German people in order to discredit the government in Bonn, but also at the rest of the socialist and anti-imperialist camps in an effort to enhance the place of East Germany within each. Clearly

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[58] See, for example, Lehrstuhl Politische Ökonomie, "Dissertationsthemen des V. Lehrgangs:," January 19, 1959, BAB DY/30/IV 2/9.08/15, 290-291; Abteilung Publikationen, "Betrifft: Publikationen in Auswertung des über die Moskauer Beratung (einschließlich der Beiträge, die für die Konferenz über Militarisierung in Westdeutschland voresehen warn und veröffentlicht werden)," February 17, 1961, BAB DY/30/IV 2/9.08/4, 67-83.

[59] "Die Kriegsvorbereitungen des deutschen Militarismus und der Kampf zur friedlichen Lösung der Lebensfragen der deutschen Nation: Thesen," October 27, 1960, 14, BAB DY/30/IV 2/9.08/3, 158-190.

the Soviet Union had the biggest role to play and was responsible for keeping the United States in check, but by defining West Germany as the biggest ally and second in line to the United States, East Germany became a state not just on the frontlines of the Cold War but at the center of the world struggle against imperialism and neo-colonialism as well. The more dangerous the SED could portray West Germany to be, the more important a contribution East German officials could claim to make. Foreign policy and propaganda planning emphasized this: "The unmasking of West German neo-colonialism requires greater attention. But it is always important to note that in comparison to the period before World War II the balance of power has changed in Germany to the detriment of the imperialists on account of the existence of the GDR."[60] One document setting out Ministry of Foreign Affairs goals for 1958 reminded readers to stress the role of the Federal Republic in the imperialist, neo-colonialist system established through NATO and other organizations.[61]

Despite the involvement of other states in organizations like the EEC and NATO, East German anti-colonialist propaganda came to emphasize the imperialist and neo-colonialist threat posed by the United States and its allies in Bonn. The logic explaining this shift of power from countries like the United Kingdom and France to the United States and West Germany reflected the East German Marxist-Leninist worldview.

> The broad, shared political interests of German and American imperialism are primarily derived from the fact that the two are the most strongly interested in a reordering of the world and are therefore at present the most aggressive powers in the imperialist camp. Their efforts are focused on intrusion into the economies of the other capitalists countries, on the penetration and redistribution of colonial territories, on the subordination of economically less developed countries, on the dissolution of friendly relations between the non-socialist countries . . . and socialist countries, as

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[60] "Beschluss des Politbüros. Betr.: Richtlinien zur Erweiterung und Verbesserung unserer Auslandspropaganda," December 15, 1959, BAB DY/30/IV 2/9.02/25, Fiche 1, 80-90.

[61] "Orientierungsplan des Ministeriums für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten für das Jahr 1958," February 1958, BAB DY/30/IV 2/20/2, Fiche 4, 298-302.

> well as on the splitting of the socialist camp in a vain attempt to dispose of it. In addition, as an occupying power American imperialism exercises a strong influence on developments in West Germany.[62]

The decline after World War II of European empires built up during the nineteenth century created opportunities for the United States and West Germany, above all economic opportunities. But although those in power in Bonn envisioned the realization of their imperialistic goals through "an 'economic penetration' by means of ideological weakening and stronger economic of individual democratic states to the Federal Republic", others were ready to use force and violence. According to East German propaganda, evidence of the militarism and aggressiveness of US and West German policy could be seen in incidents like the "attacks" against the "people's" government in Hungary as well as West German rearmament and discussions about the creation of a European army.

East German officials repeatedly suggested that West German neo-colonialism—especially in Africa—threatened not only the well-being of peoples striving for political and economic independence. Rather, as a part of Bonn's greater imperialistic machinations neo-colonialism presented a clear and present danger to the entire socialist camp.

> The main objective of the neo-colonialist policies of West German imperialism is to involve Africa in the prospective planning and preparation of military ventures against the socialist camp and, by means of economic and military penetration, to develop African states into a military-strategic reserve and raw material bas (southern flank of NATO). West German imperialism is thereby pursuing the goal of consolidating its own economic and military position in the western military alliance.[63]

According to the SED, West Germany posed a special threat: not only did it play an important role in the planning and preparations underway against the peace-loving

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[62] "Expose," May 20, 1957, 3, BAB DY/30/IV 2/20/1, Fiche 1, 67-79.

[63] Günke, "Übersicht über die Aktivität Westdeutschlands in Afrika," March 24, 1965, 1, BAB DY/30/IV A 2/20/795.

peoples living in the socialist camp, West Germany also pursued its own particularly dastardly goals. "The Bonn government is in the forefront of states that want to keep up with new means and methods of colonialism and colonial exploitation."[64] One gets the feeling that were it not for the overwhelming wealth and size of the United States, West Germany would pose the greatest threat to world peace and security, its leadership infected by the seemingly incurable and unusually virulent strain of imperialism that had for too long—at least in the eyes of those in the SED—determined the course of German history.

Colonialism in Question?

While the intensity of East German propaganda vis-à-vis West German neo-colonialism ebbed and flowed, ideological commitment to anti-colonialism remained steadfast among state and party officials throughout the postwar period. In the Federal Republic, by contrast, the 1960s brought considerable changes to West German attitudes towards colonialism. These changes reflected not the success of anti-colonial propaganda emanating from East Berlin, Moscow, or any colonial capital, but rather the realities of colonial warfare and the very real possibility of self-rule and even independence.

To an even greater extent than France's war in Vietnam, the fighting in Algeria made headlines in both German states as countless stories recounted the horrific violence committed there on both sides. The participation of Germans in both conflicts as members of the French Foreign Legion and indigenous liberation armies only reinforced the impact of such headlines. Proximity to the war in Algeria made it possible not only for reporters but politicians to visit the country and gather their own impressions as well. As partners in the EEC and NATO, a number of West German leaders took advantage of

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[64] Abteilung Agitation/Propaganda, "Beschluß des Politbüros zur massenpolitischen Arbeit vom 27.9.1960. Disposition zum Thema:'Der Neokolonialismus, ein Wesenzug des wiedererstandenen deutschen Imperialismus' (Einige Materialhinweise)," October 28, 1960, 2, BAB DY/30/IV 2/20/53, Fiche 2, 109-121.

this opportunity, and what they witnessed disturbed them. Increasing numbers of West Germans inside and outside of politics became skeptical of French claims that Algeria formed an integral part of metropolitan France; SPD Member of Parliament Peter Blachstein visited Algeria at French invitation in 1959 and noted that "the thesis that Algeria is a part of France is abandoned whenever it suits the French."[65]

By the end of the war in Algeria, the frame of the debate in West Germany had changed. No longer would West Germans confine themselves to questioning the tactics of colonialism; the legitimacy of colonialism itself as a strategy was fair game as well. Three years into the war in Algeria SPD politician Rolf Reventlow described the conflict as the beginning of "the trial of colonialism." This trial, he argued, "should thus not be litigated against individual events of a colonial war. It must be litigated as a political trial in all European countries against colonialism."[66] In Reventlow's eyes, not only France but all of Europe—West Germany included—needed to rethink the way they thought about colonialism. Reventlow's opening arguments reflected changing European and West German judgments: even the conservative *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* admitted the difficulty in answering the question "Barbarenaufstand oder Freiheitsbewegung?"—"Barbarian Rebellion or Liberation Movement?"[67] The end of the war in Algeria did not definitively settle the issue, but it did a great deal to bring the case before the court of public opinion.

Algeria was not the only European colony to attract attention for the violent struggle between colonizer and colonized, although its proximity as well as the intensity

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[65] Peter Blachstein, "Algerien — Festung des französischen Kolonialismus. Eindrücke von einer Informationsreise nach Nordafrika: Angst und Mißtrauen beherrschen die Bevölkerung," *Der Gewerkschaftler*, April 1959.

[66] Rolf Reventlow, "Der Prozeß des Kolonialismus beginnt in Algier und Paris," *Vorwärts*, April 12, 1957.

[67] "Barbarenaufstand oder Freiheitsbewegung?," *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, April 8, 1959.

and duration of the conflict ensured it pride of place. The Mau Mau Uprising in Kenya also made headlines in Europe and in West Germany. Initial reports on the uprising focused on atrocities committed against Europeans to an even greater extent than during the initial years of the war in Algeria. It was not until well after the conflict and Kenyan independence that the full extent of European violence became known, but by the closing months of the uprising some details had begun to reach the British—and by extension, West German—press.[68] Of greatest interest was the mishandling of prisoners, many of whom the British rounded up and held without cause or charge. While stories of eleven deaths in Kenyan prisons due to misconduct paled in comparison to reports out of Algeria—and the full extent of events in Kenya, for that matter—they contributed to the idea gaining support in West Germany that maybe, just maybe, exploitation, abuse, and violence were not symptoms of colonial mismanagement but colonialism itself.[69]

The case against colonialism gained additional weight in 1960 with the independence of fourteen African nations. What had begun as a trickle became a flood as decolonization spread from its limited beginnings in Asia to the African continent. Colonial powers hoped that organizations like the Commonwealth of Nations or the French Community as well as the EEC and other bilateral and multilateral agreements would help them to salvage something of their empires, but the "Year of Africa" made

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[68] "Der Kampf gegen Mau-Mau," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, October 24, 1952; Carl Wehner, "Der Mau-Mau-Aufstand kostete 2968 Tote. Darunter 21 Europäer -- Scharfe Sicherungsmaßnahmen Großbritanniens in Kenja," *Schwäbische Landeszeitung*, November 4, 1953; Edgar Stern-Rubarth, "Die Kongo-Tragödie in britischer Sicht. Sind die jungen Völker schon mündig? London denkt nach — Die indischen Lehren — Rätselvolles Afrika — Gärt es auch in Kenya," *Rhein-Zeitung*, July 19, 1960; For more on the uprising and British responses to it, see Caroline Elkins, *Imperial Reckoning: The Untold Story of Britain's Gulag in Kenya*, 1st ed. (New York: Henry Holt, 2005); David Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged: Britain's Dirty War in Kenya and the End of Empire* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2005).

[69] For example, the NZZ ran a series of articles on British treatment of Kenyan prisoners: "Die Gefangenenlager in Kenya," *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, April 26, 1959; "Unterhausdebatte über die Mißstände in Kenia," *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, June 18, 1959; "Debatte über die Mau Mau-Häftlinge," *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, July 29, 1959.

clear that whether or not European colonizers thought Africans were ready for it, African nations could and would seize their independence. In the aftermath of failed uprisings in East Germany (1953) and Hungary (1956) the successful and often bloodless (at least for the time) hand-over of power doubtless held great appeal. "The emancipation efforts in eastern Europe as in Africa and Asia have our fullest sympathies," one West German wrote to SPD foreign policy expert Fritz Erler. "Is it not likewise a gross disregard of international law that France denies the populace of Algeria and England the populace of Cypers self determination? "[70] The much heralded changes to the map of Africa in 1960 made the alternative to colonialism that much more concrete and realistic; however much Europe may still have needed Africa, independence suggested that maybe Africa did not need Europe.[71]

At least, Africa did not need European governance. Many in West Germany remained unsure how well new states would fare without Europe. The Society for the Promotion of Hamburg Economic Interests commented on "the Year of Africa" by suggesting that "the young countries of Africa can only maintain their standards if they continue to work together closely and in a spirit of friendship with western European states . . . The danger that they might fall back into their earlier barbarism is otherwise all too great. "[72] Economic difficulties especially—whether the result of colonialism or not—ensured a continued role for Europe even after the independence of erstwhile

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[70] It is worth noting, however, that the author also suggested the British and French colonial policies were "in need of reform," suggesting at least some role continued role for colonialism. Josef Krane to Fritz Erler, November 9, 1956, 3, NL Fritz Erler / 173; In his response, Erler took a harder line, referring to colonialism as an "evil anachronism." Fritz Erler to Josef Krane, December 19, 1956, 1, NL Fritz Erler / 173..

[71] For example, Herbert Kaufmann, "Das neue Mosaik des schwarzen Erdteils. Wie die Atlanten und Lexika 1960 geändert werden müssen," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, July 6, 1960.

[72] Verein zur Förderung des Hamburgischen Wirtschaftslebens e.V., "1960 - Das Jahr Afrikas?," *Hansa Briefe* XI, no. 21 (May 20, 1960): 5.

colonies. Indeed, the next chapter will demonstrate that aid, education, and training were all ways in which the West German state sought to live up to its responsibilities as a member of the EEC and as a member of the postwar community of nations while pursuing its own goals as well. Similarly, trade, investment, and other business opportunities were some of the ways by which West German businesses took advantage of the opportunities that the EEC and the postwar order made available to them. The at least partial embrace of decolonization and the end of colonial rule did nothing to guarantee the demise of European imperialism. Volker Berghahn makes the case in the introduction to *The Quest for Economic Empire: European Strategies of German Big Business in the Twentieth Century* that West German business after World War II carried on a tradition of seeking to build an informal, commercial empire.[73] Such was the situation in Africa and the rest of the developing world as well, where good works such as subsidized development work opened the door to big profits and access to new raw materials and markets. While West German business and conservative politicians trumpeted the humanitarian nature of major development projects, critics on both sides of the inner German border recognized the aspirations of West German big business and did their best to make their voices heard in opposition.

Aid and development were at the center of debates about colonialism, decolonization, and the postcolonial world after Algeria—debates that now featured a mainstream opposition critical not only of particular colonial policies, but colonialism in general as well. Still, Germans remained involved in the decolonizing and post-colonial world—as the next chapter will show in greater depth—engaging not only in business and trade but also the "white man's burden" of civilizing indigenous peoples. Or, as it came to be known in the post-war period, development and modernization. Although the

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[73] Volker Rolf Berghahn, ed., *Quest for Economic Empire: European Strategies of German Big Business in the Twentieth Century* (Providence: Berghahn Books, 1996).

end of French rule in Algeria and decolonization more generally brought great changes for former metropoles, in West Germany it did more to change the way people thought and spoke than what they or the West German state actually did. Prior to the war in Algeria West German society had by and large accepted Europe's continued need for colonies and indigenous peoples' continued need for European colonialism. Afterwards, the experience of violence in the war fundamentally altered the way people thought about colonialism but did little to alter West German policy towards present and former colonies.

CHAPTER 2: COLONIALISM WITHOUT COLONIES? WEST GERMAN NEO-COLONIALISM, EAST GERMAN ANTI-COLONIALISM, AND POSTCOLONIAL AFRICA

Although a great deal of the impetus for continued German involvement in European colonialism after World War II came from outside Germany, whether in the form of occupation or integration, Germans in both East and West Germany also pursued their own interests. European colonies and, increasingly, former European colonies attracted the attention of a variety of Germans in both states for the many economic and political opportunities they appeared to present. Many citizens and politicians in West Germany and across Western Europe saw in the colonies, and Africa in particular, Europe's future. They believed that Western Europe needed its colonies in the aftermath of World War II more than ever; Africa, they hoped, would provide Western Europe with the raw materials it needed to rebuild, the markets it needed to grow and prosper, and the strategic upper hand it needed to combat Communism. State and party officials in East Germany saw a path towards the future that led through Africa as well, but for them it was a path out of a diplomatic and political wilderness. These officials believed that East Germany's steadfast commitment to anti-colonialism would win the GDR friends and, more importantly, recognition and diplomatic relations in Africa. This would, in turn, provide East German officials with momentum in their efforts to overcome the Hallstein Doctrine and put an end to their isolation on the international stage. To this end East German propaganda emphasized the differences between the neo-colonialist Federal Republic and the anti-colonialist German Democratic Republic, sure that the "truth" about West German motives would convince foreign governments to side with the GDR on the German Question. Moreover, the SED and the East German state initiated a number of programs to reach out to Africans in the colonized and formerly colonized world, and officials tried to contrast these with neo-colonialist efforts out of West

Germany. But similarities in practical application belied any ideological differences, and instead of alternatives East German offerings looked more like cheap imitations. Ultimately it was a change of policy in West Germany, and not the limited success East Germany enjoyed in Africa, that secured East German officials the recognition they craved. Still, Africa and the rest of the colonial, decolonizing, and postcolonial world remained an important rhetorical battlefield for both German states, one in which they would continue to face off until the bitter end.

Opportunities in the Colonial/Post-Colonial World

After World War II many West Germans and other Western Europeans saw a greater need than ever for colonies, especially in Africa. The decade or so after World War II saw a large number of newspaper stories, magazine articles, and even whole books dedicated to describing Europe's need for Africa and the potential of what many authors referred to as "Eurafrica." A great number of Western Europeans continued to believe in colonialism despite the changes and challenges to the project wrought by World War II, and that belief permeated West German public discourse. In 1952, for example, an article on the "upheavals" in Africa appeared in the *Mannheimer Morgenpost* newspaper. The article suggested that despite the changes taking place on that continent, "the prospects for the West are still good." Africa, the author believed, was "a question of life or death for Europe and an indispensible arsenal of raw materials for the free world." Indeed, not only did the author see in Africa a source of raw materials for Europe, but also the possibility of settlement for "all the millions…who lost their homes in Europe."[74] Such a view of the relationship between Africa and Europe was not unusual in West Germany or the western world in the decade or two following World War II; in 1949 the *Frankfurter Rundschau* reprinted an article written for *Harpers*

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[74] J. S.-Mitarbeiter, "Schwarzer Kontinent im Aufbruch. Kolonialherrschaft, Rassenkampf und Fünfte Kolonne," *Mannheimer Morgenpost*, June 20, 1952.

Magazine in which C. Hartley Grattan—"a seasoned expert on the British empire and all colonial questions"—noted that "one of the problems of particular significance in the struggle for European reconstruction is the desperate effort to evaluate the tremendous resources Africa offers for the rescue of our continent."[75] Some individuals and groups framed the issue in a more alarmist manner. Under the banner "Afrika – Deutschland – Vereinigtes Europa!" ("Africa – Germany – United Europe!") the German Africa Institute of the "Society for German-South African Relations" called on the West German government to address the issue—a question of life or death for Europe and Germany—of Africa. The group, made up primarily of academics, petitioned the West German government to consider "how, within the frame of a 'United Europe', Germany can share in the development and use of Africa as a vault of raw materials and a supplementary space for Europe."[76] The Society welcomed the joint development of colonial territories forthcoming in the European Coal and Steel Community and ultimately the European Economic Community (EEC), development they believed was only possible with "Europe's pioneer spirit, sciences and technology, as well as occidental culture and civilization."[77] With South Africa as a partner, they claimed, Africa could help to preserve the independence of the peoples of Europe; the group made no mention of African independence.[78]

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[75] C Hartley Grattan, "Afrika und Europa. Aussichten der europäischen Afrikapläne," *Frankfurter Rundschau*, February 3, 1949; See also:H.D. Ortlieb, *Europas Aufgabe in Afrika*, 4th ed., Übersee-Rundschau (Schloss Bleckede an der Elbe: Meissner, 1950); "Afrika ruft. Die Erschließung des schwarzen Erdteils.," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, June 25, 1952.

[76] Gesellschaft für Deutsch-Südafrikanische Beziehungen - Deutsch Afrika-Institut., "Betr.: Afrika - Deutschland - Vereinigtes Europa," March 23, 1954, 1, PAAA Bestand B 11 (Länderabteilung), 614.

[77] Ibid., 3.

[78] Gesellschaft für Deutsch-Südafrikanische Beziehungen - Deutsch Afrika-Institut., "Betr.: Afrika - Deutschland - Vereinigtes Europa," 3; Theodor Happach to Auswärtiges Amt, "Betr.: Afrika - Deutschland - Vereinigtes Europa," March 23, 1954, PAAA Bestand B 11 (Länderabteilung), 614.

Not all West Germans viewed Africa in terms of its value to Europe; a minority saw there great opportunities for West Germany alone. Despite this somewhat narrower point of view, several of the plans to result from it in the immediate postwar decade were nothing short of grandiose. Business, industry, and private citizens suggested time and time again to the West German Foreign Office new ways and reasons to take advantage of the colonial situation after 1945 or even to regain a German colonial foothold. Some of these may have made some sense; many required the Foreign Office to politely explain the realities of UN Trusteeships and the politics of decolonization. One realist wrote to the Foreign Office about the opportunities for trade that "economically backward" countries in Africa presented, emphasizing the point "that at this time in Africa German foreign trade – from the point of view of market share – does not face such strong competition as in the remaining parts of the world. "[79] The author's thoughts on the subject proved prescient, although his worries about the interference of such countries' colonial rulers were ultimately unwarranted given West Germany's membership in the EEC starting in 1957 and the great swell of newly independent African countries in the early 1960s.

A minority of West Germans took such ideas about Africa's role for Europe and (West) Germany even further, suggesting the at least partial return of Germany's former colonies. One letter to Chancellor Konrad Adenauer made a simple case for colonial expansion: with Germany's eastern territories lost for the foreseeable future to Soviet control and a growing number of emigrants, the Federal Republic had to seek "Lebensraum" somewhere. Why not the former colonies in Africa? "How about former German East Africa! Here there are fruitful and healthy highlands that are well suited for permanent settlement by Europeans and which alone are nearly the size of West

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[79] Oliver von Gajzago, "Gegenstand: Afrikanischer Handel. Memorandum.," 1951, 2, PAAA Bestand B 11 (Länderabteilung), 611.

Germany."[80] In the author's mind, (West) Germany had as much right to "our colonies" as it did to the Saarland and the eastern territories: all were unjustly taken away.

Although such views appeared only rarely in correspondence with the Foreign Office, they were not unique. Thus when the British "Pioneers Association" suggested the use of what had been German East Africa as a home for refugee Germans from the east the Foreign Office received word of it immediately from an excited West German proponent of the plan.[81] And when the United Kingdom made public plans to create two new dominions in Africa that included territory from former German colonies a Hamburg businessman wrote to the Foreign Office to complain that there had not at least been a formal protest. He assured the Foreign Office that it would not be necessary to return to "colonial" methods: "An overseas province along the lines of what Portugal has or as far as I'm concerned even a Dominion of German East Africa or German South West Africa would not only be a first-rate destination to accommodate German emigrants, but also an asset not to be underestimated, especially when one considers the geology of these areas."[82] In all of these cases the Foreign Office wrote back to make it clear that the Federal Republic had no colonial ambitions, that former colonies were now UN Trust Territories, and that the Federal Republic had no intention of preventing emigration of German citizens. Only when suggestions referred to international cooperation, a European-African partnership, or informal empire built atop the existing international framework did the Foreign Office not feel driven to try to quell West Germans' overseas ambitions.

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[80] Günther Senger to Konrad Adenauer, January 15, 1954, 2, PAAA Bestand B 11 (Länderabteilung), 614.

[81] Wilhelm Strobel to Bundeskanzleramt, December 15, 1953, PAAA Bestand B 11 (Länderabteilung), 613.

[82] Eduard E.F. Janes to Auswärtiges Amt, May 18, 1953, PAAA Bestand B 11 (Länderabteilung), 613.

Of course, other West German plans for Africa were considerably less ambitious. For the most part West German businessmen sought returns on investment, not the return of former German colonies. Even after World War I and the loss of Germany's colonial empire, a number of German "colonial societies" continued to do business around the world. Indeed, some remained in operation until the mid-1970s, when West German law finally forced them to reorganize into limited liability or joint-stock companies. The Otavi Minen- und Eisenbahn-Gesellschaft, for example, was founded in 1900 to exploit copper deposits and build a railroad in German Southwest Africa. In 1976 it became Otavi Minen AG and to this day it continues to trade in minerals around the world. This and other surviving colonial companies—as well as newer West German businesses—took full advantage of the new opportunities West German membership in the EEC afforded them. They also took advantage of efforts by the West German government to promote the development of newly independent states, securing lucrative contracts for the construction of infrastructure and other projects in Africa with the help of West German and Western European credits. In Togo, for example, West Germany and the EEC helped finance the construction of a new harbor designed by a firm in Bremen and located in an area surveyed by a West German technical college with the help of a West German drill ship.[83] Similarly, in the late 1960s the Federal Republic, Portugal, and a number of other countries entered into negotiations to build the Cahora Bassa Dam on the Zambezi River in the Portuguese colony of Mozambique. The eventual agreement called for a 400 million DM guarantee for the construction of the dam with the participation of German

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[83] Honf to Mitglieder des Interministeriellen Ausschusses für Entwicklungspolitik, "Betr.: Finanzhilfe für die Republik Togo," February 14, 1961, BAK B/136/3000, Fiche 5; H.J. Mathias, "Togo wartet auf deutsche Hilfe. Der Bau des Hafens von Lomé ist für das Land eine Lebensnotwendigkeit," *Rheinischer Merkur*, October 12, 1962; Westrick, Carstens, and Vialon to Staatssekretär des Bundeskanzleramtes, "Betr.: Kapitalhilfe für Togo; hier: Hafen Lome," November 2, 1962, BAK B/136/3000, Fiche 6; K.E. Schumacher, ed., "Einweihung des aus deutscher Kapitalhilfe finanzierten neuen Hafens in Lomé/Togo," *Aktuelle Beiträge zur Wirtschafts- und Finanzpolitik*, no. 50 (April 23, 1968).

firms such as Hochtief, Siemens, AEG-Telefunken, and J.M. Voith Maschinenfabrik.[84] Plans called for the dam to provide power for white settlers in the area and for South Africa as well, which agreed to build a converter station over 800 miles away near Johannesburg. The dam would also make irrigation possible in nearby areas.

Anti-colonialists in West Germany criticized the government for cooperating with racists and colonialists, but propaganda out of East Germany consistently went further, accusing the West German state itself of racism and neo-colonialism. Such attacks reflected East German ideological commitments, but also a certain pragmatism. Where many in West Germany saw economic opportunities, East German officials saw political opportunities: stymied in efforts to attain recognition and establish diplomatic relations with much of the rest of the world, East Germany turned to newly and not yet independent states. Finding and securing a place in the socialist camp came relatively easy to East Germany after World War II, but the rest of the world proved a harder nut to crack. For decades East German officials found themselves waging a losing battle for diplomatic recognition. Anti-colonialism formed an important part of the GDR's appeal to African, Asian, and Latin-American states, but the fruits of so-called "neo-colonialist" aid from the Federal Republic were simply too tempting and too bountiful in comparison to what East German officials could offer. Indeed, East German programs and aid for the post-colonial world frequently appeared to be little more than poor man's versions of those coming out of West Germany. Although the steadfast anti-colonialism of the East German state and the SED earned it ideological points in much of the international community, ultimately West Germany's new *Ostpolitik* did more to change the GDR's diplomatic situation than anti-colonialist rhetoric and the appearance—if not always the

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[84] Sietse Bosgra, *Cabora Bassa ein Damm gegen die Afrikaner*, trans. Raif Syring (Göttingen: Cabora Bassa Komitee Berlin, Afrika Komitee Bielefeld - Münster, Aktionsgruppe Dritte Welt Bremen, Cabora Bassa Gruppe Frankfurt, Aktion Dritte Welt Freiburg, Gruppe für Internationale Zusammenarbeit Göttingen, n.d.), 54.

reality—of aid ever could.

State and party officials contrasted East German anti-colonialism with the supposed neo-colonialism of West Germany. For the SED, neo-colonialism meant "above all an elaborate system of economic subjugation of underdeveloped countries by the penetration of imperialist capital in one form or another and by the maintenance of the backwardness of their economies."[85] East German critics saw neo-colonialism everywhere in West German society. Sometimes they were right; many West German firms did indeed hope to make a profit in Africa, for example, and often the plans these firms developed did not make successful long-term national development a priority. Other times, what East German criticisms decried as neo-colonialism might more accurately be described as the latent vestiges of a colonial mindset that, by the late 1960s, was quickly going out of style. And finally East German critics frequently employed charges of neo-colonialism simply as an effort to taint West German programs, policies, organizations, or individuals. Whatever the validity of East German accusations, in a national context they were meant to win support from the German people.

> We must make it clear to the German people that colonial politics and imperialist ambitions are not in accordance with the interests of the German people. It is important to demonstrate that Wilhelmine colonial policies were policies that the German taxpayer paid full price for, and that it was demagogy when it was said that German workers need colonies. These were the politics of imperialism and not of the people.[86]

As a form of national politics played out in two states, East German anti-colonialism had one goal: to undermine the authority of the West German state and its leadership. If true, East German accusations of neo-colonialism and imperialism not only

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[85] *Bonn - Feind der Völker Asiens und Afrikas: Eine Dokumentation über die Kolonialpolitik der Adenauer-Regierung* (Berlin: Ausschuß für Deutsche Einheit, 1960), 9.

[86] "Protokoll einer Beratung mit Genossen zur Vorbereitung einer Konferenz über Neokolonialismus in Westdeutschland," October 28, 1960, BAB DY/30/IV 2/20/14, Fiche 1, 23-35.

meant that West Germany had developed a foreign policy that denied self-determination and economic freedom to other peoples in the present; rather, it also emphasized the historical ancestry of a state that explicitly positioned itself as the heir to Imperial Germany and the Third Reich.

> The government in Bonn, which pursues openly neo-colonialist policies, has no right to speak on behalf of the German people, because it is the government and representative of monopolists and militarists. Its politics are in stark contradiction to the national interests of the German people![87]

In a similar vein the Politburo's 1960 plan for political appeals to the masses argued that East German anti-colonialism "conforms to the best traditions of the German working class, the German humanists who always have defended the equality, freedom, and human dignity of peoples of all races."[88] Ultimately, however, the SED failed even in its attempts to appeal to solidarity between West and East German workers, let alone between workers in Europe and Africa.

The United Nations provided one natural venue for the SED to plead its case, both with regards to the continuing injustices of colonialism and in terms of a just settlement of the German question. From its inception the United Nations recognized the need to deal with issues of colonialism; its charter, signed on June 26, 1945 by the 50 states present at the UN Conference on International Organization in San Francisco, deals with colonial issues in three chapters. The most important of these, Chapter XI, the "Declaration Regarding Non-Self-Governing Territories," obligates member states administering such territories to promote the interest and well-being of these territories' inhabitants and "to develop self-government, to take due account of the political aspirations of the peoples, and to assist them in the progressive development of their free

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[87] Komitee der DDR für Solidarität mit den Völkern Afrikas, "Erklärung," May 1961, BAB DY/30/IV 2/9.02/116, Fiche 3, 241-243.

[88] Walter Ulbricht, "Plan der massenpolitischen Arbeit (Beschluß des Politbüros vom 27. September 1960)," September 28, 1960, 3, BAB DY/30/J IV 2/2 727, fiche 1, 15-35.

political institutions." The following two chapters define an International Trusteeship System to replace the mandates created by the League of Nations. Although the Charter explicitly promotes self-determination, the compromises necessary for its creation meant that it did not specify how soon colonial power should grant their colonies independence.[89]

Indeed, the first waves of decolonization after 1945 occurred not as a result of international but rather of national pressures, as indigenous peoples sought and obtained the rights and freedoms enumerated in the United Nations Charter. However, despite such progress—which included a large number of states obtaining independence in 1960—the UN General Assembly felt that decolonization was not taking place as quickly as it should. Thus, in December 1960 the General Assembly approved resolution 1514, a "Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples." The resolution noted the General Assembly's conviction "that the continued existence of colonialism prevents the development of international economic cooperation, impedes the social, cultural, and economic development of dependent peoples and militates against the United Nations ideal of universal peace." With this in mind the resolution explicitly defined "alien subjugation, domination, and exploitation"—colonialism—as violations of the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.[90]

Resolution 1514 also called for immediate action to be taken to "transfer all powers to the peoples of those territories."[91] Almost a year later, however, little had changed. Colonial powers like France and the United Kingdom attempted to side-step criticisms by indicating a willingness on their part but a lack of readiness on the part of

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[89] "Charter of the United Nations."

[90] "Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples," *General Assembly of the United Nations* Fifteenth Session, no. 1514 (December 14, 1960).

[91] Ibid., 67.

colonized peoples. The General Assembly rejected this excuse, "emphasizing that inadequacy of political, economic, social or educational preparedness should never serve as a pretext for delaying independence."[92] Hoping increased oversight might spur on the process, or at the very least provide greater insight into the delays, resolution 1654 established a Special Committee on Decolonization, directed by the General Assembly to observe the application of resolution 1514 and to report to the General Assembly at its seventeenth session with suggestions and recommendations on the resolution's progress and implementation.[93] This committee of seventeen eventually grew to include 24 members. The committee's continued existence today is a testament both to the difficulty colonialism posed as a problem after World War II and the inability of the United Nations to fully address that problem in the face of the Cold War, crises in the Middle East, and countless other issues.

Despite its relative ineffectiveness the United Nations still played an important role in the international debate over decolonization beginning in the 1960s, serving as a forum where all sides could be heard. Although neither German state was a member of the United Nations until 1971, both made use of this forum throughout the 1950s and 1960s. The Federal Republic sent a permanent mission to the United Nations and obtained official observer status in the early 1950s, while the German Democratic Republic frequently addressed the General Assembly in letters and documents condemning the continued abuses of colonialism, supporting the UN Charter and resolution 1514, and laying much of the blame for the problems facing the colonial and decolonizing world at the feet of the United States and, increasingly, West Germany.

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[92] "The situation with regard to the implementation of the Decleration on the granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples," *General Assembly of the United Nations* Sixteenth Session, no. 1654 (November 27, 1961): 65.

[93] "The situation with regard to the implementation of the Decleration on the granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples."

> The United Nations has decided to liquidate the remnants of the colonial system and outlaw the shameful policy of Apartheid in the Union of South Africa. But the Bonn government is today one of the chief supporters of Portuguese colonialists in Angola and Mozambique and a direct ally of the bloody Verwoerd regime. The UN Charter proclaims the principles of equality of large and small states, but the stated objectives of the Bonn government include the domination of Europe and the pursuit of neo-colonialist domination in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.[94]

SED officials contrasted the neo-colonialism of West Germany with the dedication of the East German people—"who also freed themselves from imperialism and thereby overcame all manifestations of chauvinism, of national hatred, and of racial discrimination"—to the cause of independence and self-determination for the peoples of Africa, Asia, and Latin America.[95] Time and time again, the GDR sided with oppressed peoples: in Vietnam, Algeria, Goa, Guyana, and Mozambique. In contrast, East German propaganda argued, West Germany had failed to live up to the principles of the UN Charter.

> In direct contrast are the attitudes of the government of the other German state, the West German Federal Republic. Closely aligned with the colonial powers in NATO, above all France, Holland, Belgium, and Portugal, it supports the continuation of policies aligned with colonialism. By supporting the colonial interests of its NATO partners, it realizes its own as well. Therefore it makes available to the colonial powers in great numbers weapons and funds for the continuation of brutal terror against oppressed peoples and promotes the recruitment of West German citizens as mercenaries for the colonial powers.[96]

Efforts to prove to the United Nations and to the world the degree to which East German anti-colonialism lived up to the principles enshrined in resolution 1514 and the

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[94] "Erklärung des Vorsitzenden des Staatsrates zum Antrag der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik auf Aufnahme in die Organisation der Vereinten Nationen," *Volkskammer der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik* 4. Wahlperiode, no. 20 (March 16, 1966): 644-655.

[95] "Erklärung der Regierung der DDR zur Frage der Beendigung des Kolonialregimes für die XVIII. Tagung der Vollversammlung der Vereinten Nationen," August 15, 1963, BAB DY/30/IV A 2/20/2, 137-142.

[96] Ibid.

UN Charter reflected the desire of East German officials to gain entry to the international body and, more importantly, obtain diplomatic recognition beyond a small circle of socialist countries. In this regard East German protestations failed. Such failure did not prevent the SED from sending envoys to other international organizations to spread the same gospel, however. East German delegations to a number of All-African and Afro-Asian Solidarity Conferences in the 1960s represented a significant example of these efforts to "sell" East German anti-colonialism.

From the very beginning, the Politburo conceived of East German participation as an opportunity to win international support regarding the German question. The party's Central Committee instructed the delegation "exploit every opportunity to establish contacts, disseminate material about the German question, and lead discussions on building relations between the GDR and Afro-Asian states."[97] Delegations to conferences in cities like Conakry, Moshi, and—at the so-called Three Continents Conference—Havanna also reported back on the relative influence the GDR had gained vis-a-vis other states as well as the effectiveness of East German propaganda. One such report described with disappointment that the 1963 Afro-Asian Solidarity Conference had "lost significant political stridency": condemnations of the United States, Israel, France, and Portugal had declined precipitously, and the only mention of West Germany—supposedly a major enemy to the peoples of Africa and Asia—came indirectly in a reference to NATO members.[98]

Naturally, neither German state committed itself solely to political or to economic opportunities in Africa and the rest of the decolonizing world. Instead, they sought to maximize both in whatever combination seemed most effective. Indeed, West German

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[97] Walter Ulbricht, "Protokoll Nr. 11/60 der Sitzung des Sekretariats des ZK vom 7. März 1960," March 7, 1960, 7, BAB DY/30/J IV 2/3/679, 1-11.

[98] "DDR Vertreter:," n.d., 4.

politicians hoped that the strong economic ties forged through business and commerce would ensure similarly strong political bonds, and East German officials used the establishment of trade missions to get their foot in the door diplomatically and politically. Despite ideological differences, both states ultimately pursued policies of political and economic engagement that closely resembled one another. West and East Germans described and justified very similar efforts to make advances in the colonial world in totally different ways, ways permitted by their respective institutional and discursive political structures. In the West this meant a focus on the opportunities colonialism created for colonized and colonizer. In the East, the evils of colonial exploitation had top billing. This deeper resemblance despite superficial dissimilarities emerged time and again as both states sought to promote friendship and cooperation and to provide aid and assistance to newly independent states.

Friendship and Cooperation, Aid and Assistance

In the late 1950s both East and West Germany began to actively court the affections of former colonies around the world, and given the increasing pace of decolonization in Africa, much of their attention gravitated there. Both states sponsored organizations intended to promote friendship and facilitate cultural and social exchange, and both states implemented policies designed to assist in the development of viable economic and political systems. Such practical similarities notwithstanding, however, East German rhetoric persisted in efforts to differentiate the two postwar German states, denying similarities between East and West German organizations and policies and instead decrying West German efforts as neo-colonialist while trumpeting East German anti-colonialist equivalents. Two organizations with nearly identical names provide the clearest parallels. In the Federal Republic the German Africa Society emerged in 1956 to fill the void left by the West German Foreign Office, which dealt with political matters, and the Afrika-Verein, which primarily concerned itself with business and economics.

Recognizing a need to deal with research, culture, and human relations, the West German Foreign Office and the Afrika-Verein cooperated in the creation of the German Africa Society, recognizing that cultural and social questions in Africa had become as pressing as economic and political ones, not only for the United Kingdoms and Frances of the world but "also in particular for countries without colonial possessions in Africa."[99] Despite these original working parameters, the group soon tasked itself with coordinating "all projects and interests related to Africa within the Federal Republic of Germany."[100] The society adopted this expanded scope soon after Bundestag President Eugen Gerstenmeier became the Society's first president—one of a number of prominent West Germans in the German Africa Society or on its steering committee. What began as a group of 32 individuals in its first year of existence grew to over 300 members by early 1959.[101]

In 1961, five years after the founding of the West German Africa Society, the Section for Foreign Affairs and International Relations within the SED created a German-Africa Society, charged with expressing the GDR's solidarity with the peoples of Africa and "total break with the imperialist and colonialist past in Germany."[102] As with its West German counterpart, the focus was on science and culture, but from the very beginning the East German Society meant to do more than facilitate exchange. Indeed, in addition to raising awareness about African history and culture in East Germany the GDR's German-Africa Society also focused on improving the authority of the GDR and

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[99] "Merkblatt über die Deutsche Afrika-Gesellschaft e.V.," November 1956, 1, BAK B/161/5; "Deutsche Afrika-Gesellschaft e.V.," February 1960, 4, BAK B/161/2.

[100] "Deutsche Afrika-Gesellschaft e.V.," 5.

[101] Oskar Splett, "Geschäftsbericht in Stichworten" (Deutsche Afrika-Gesellschaft e.V., March 2, 1959), 4, BAK B/161/94.

[102] Abteilung Außenpolitik und Internationale Verbindungen, "Vorlage für das Sekretariat. Betrifft: Gründung einer Deutsch-Afrikanischen Gesellschaft in der DDR," February 16, 1961, 15, BAB DY/30/J IV 2/3 A/765, 13-28.

its position in Africa through propaganda praising GDR policies and the unveiling of West German imperialists' alleged neo-colonialism. The SED also charged the society with helping newly independent African nations meet their cultural and educational needs, including the training of national cadres.[103]

While its doppelganger in the East focused much of its attention abroad, the FRG's German Africa Society reached out to West German citizens in a number of ways, the most notable of which was its German Africa Weeks. The first of these took place in October 1960 as a means to address a lack of interest in and knowledge about Africa. The West German Society blamed the loss of Germany's colonies for such deficiencies: "The generation of those who came to know Africa before 1914 through jobs and careers and who developed close, personal relationships there is dying out, while the next generation is almost missing entirely."[104] A lack of colonies was certainly not the only cause—the Society also mentioned the effects of both World Wars and a decline in the number of Germans working in Africa as traders, missionaries, and in other professions. Still, the invocation of 1914 and Germans sent to Africa not only professionally but also to do their duty brought to mind colonial troops and governors' mansions. Later allusions to Germany's good reputation in Africa invoked the colonial past, albeit in a much more ambiguous manner: did Germany earn that reputation, as some claimed, due to its fair and capable administration of its African colonies, or did Germany's absence after World War I and the healing power of time have something to do with it?

The West German Society's first Africa Weeks, held from October 6 to November 5, 1960, included 50 events held in 28 cities in cooperation with 26 other organizations. It boasted 171 African guests from 33 countries.[105] Africa Weeks events

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[103] Ibid.

[104] "Bericht über die erste Deutsche Afrikawoche," n.d 1961, 1, BAK B/161/94.

[105] "Bericht über die erste Deutsche Afrikawoche."

over the years ranged from art exhibitions to film screenings to lectures. Unfortunately, despite—or perhaps because of—significant public funding the Society ran into problems by its third Africa Weeks, forcing a postponement.[106] More significantly, as early as the first Africa Weeks in 1960 the German Africa Society began to receive criticism for its organization of the event. One East German scholar wrote that West German monopolists had sponsored the event in order to infect the peoples of Africa with "the poison of anticommunism and anti-Sovietism" which would then, in turn, serve "to make West German neo-colonialism palatable."[107] The Ministry for Foreign Affairs described the Africa Weeks as a joke—the war in Algeria alone disproved West German talk about friendship and partnership—and the SED's Foreign Policy Commission prepared special argumentation for the East German press, radio, and television to address the Africa Weeks and contrast it with East German policy towards Africa.[108]

In addition to such predictable accusations of neo-colonialism out of the GDR, the West German society also had to contend with an indignant German Afrika-Verein. The Afrika-Verein, already upset by the Society's attempts to muscle their way into business and economic matters, disapproved of the guests that the German Africa Society invited; some were inappropriate due to their rank, others because they might alienate whites living in Africa, a group vital to German trade interests. The Afrika-Verein's most compelling criticism, however, was its comparison of the Afrika Weeks to a "modern

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[106] "Anlage: Vorschläge aus Anlaß der Dritten Deutschen Afrikawoche 1966" (Deutsche Afrika-Gesellschaft e.V., n.d 1965), PAAA Bestand B 34 (Referat I B 3/307), 695.

[107] Joachim Peck, *Kolonialismus ohne Kolonien: Der deutsche Imperilaismus und China 1937*, Studien zur Kolonialgeschichte und Geschichte der nationalen und kolonialen Befreiungsbewegung (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1961), 74.

[108] "Vorlage für die Außenpolitische Kommission, Betr.: Arbeitsgruppe 'Kampf gegen den Kolonialismus'," September 28, 1960, BAB DY/30/IV 2/20/14, Fiche 1, 4; "Erklärung des Ministeriums für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik zur Beteiligung der westdeutschen Regierung am Kolonialkrieg gegen das algerische Volk," November 1, 1960, BAB DY/30/IV 2/20/354, Fiche 2, 94-97.

Völkerschau," with its exhibits and guests putting Africa and Africans on display just as they and other non-Europeans had been during the imperial period.[109]

Time and time again, East German officials included the western German Africa Society in lists of agents and organizations involved in the pursuit of West Germany's imperialist and neo-colonialist goals. One list of the "most important organizations and institutes" carrying out the Federal Republic's political-ideological and cultural-political work in Africa featured the Society at the top of its relatively short list.[110] On other occasions, East German officials described the Society as coordinating the activities of openly colonialist organizations in West Germany, including one headed by former colonial governor Adolf Friedrich zu Mecklenburg and run by Erich Düms, former General Secretary of the German Colonial Society.[111]

The GDR's German-Africa Society contrasted West Germany's alleged neo-colonialism and misleading rhetoric about friendship and partnership with its own anti-colonialism at events such as the numerous Friendship Days held around East Germany. The most important event sponsored by the eastern German-Africa Society, however, had to be the international conference on "Friendship Africa-GDR" in Freetown, Sierra Leone July 15-17, 1969. In addition to providing an opportunity for the German-Africa Society and other East German officials to present East Germany's Africa policy to an audience that included over 120 guests from some 20 African countries, political intrigue surrounding the event further fueled East German accusations of West German neo-colonialism. Forged documents bearing the imprint of the GDR's German-Africa Society,

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[109] H. Hansen to Auswärtiges Amt, "Betrifft: Afrika - hier Veranstaltung einer Afrika-Woche," July 20, 1960, 2, PAAA Bestand B 34 (Referat I B 3/307), 217, PAAA.

[110] Günke, "Übersicht über die Aktivität Westdeutschlands in Afrika," 5.

[111] 4.AEA, "Hinweise für die Presse in Zusammenhang mit der im November/Dezember 1963 in der DDR stattfindenden Solidaritätsaktion mit den demokratischen Kräfte Südafrikas," November 18, 1963, 5, BAB DY/30/IV A 2/20/986.

diplomatic efforts to cancel flights, coordinated information blackouts and the spread of propaganda through the local Hotel and Tourist Board partially disrupted the conference, forcing a delegation from Senegal to turn back. West German tactics, real or exaggerated, ultimately backfired: "many conference participants condemned the constant West German efforts at interference as neo-colonialist machinations."[112]

The German Africa Society/German-Africa Society pairing was not the only example of similar, competing organizations oriented towards the decolonizing and developing world to appear in the two German states. Both the Federal Republic and the German Democratic Republic produced clones of John F. Kennedy's Peace Corps. In West Germany, the aptly if uninspiringly named German Development Service—the Foreign Office almost called it "German Youth Brigades"—took shape in 1963.[113] That same year the East German Free German Youth suggested to the Politburo the creation of Brigades of Friendship.[114] Despite East German insistence to the contrary, both organizations were modeled on the US Peace Corps and featured long-term volunteer stints in developing countries. Unlike the Peace Corps, neither group became wildly popular.[115] Both did, however, become highly politicized. In East Germany this was by design, as the Brigades—like the East German Africa Society—were intended to do as much in the way of propaganda as development work. Both of these goals were frequently expressed in terms of colonialism: members should demonstrate "the

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[112] "Information über Vorbereitung und Verlauf, Inhalt und Ergebnisse der Internationalen Konferenz 'Freundschaft Afrika - DDR'," n.d 1969, BAB DY/30/IV A 2/20/796.

[113] dpa, "deutsches friedenkorps soll 'deutsche jugendbruecke' heissen," *dpa*, December 4, 1961.

[114] E.O. Schwab to Arno Goede, "Bildung und Entsendung von 'Brigaden der Freundschaft'," Hausmitteilung, July 5, 1963, BAB DY/30/IV A 2/16/146.

[115] Zentralrat der Freien Deutschen Jugend, "Information über Erfahrungen und Probleme aus dem bisherigen Einsatz der 'Brigaden der Freundschaft' der FDJ," June 30, 1969, BAB DY/30/IV A 2/16/146; "Vor zehn Jahren wurde der Deutsche Entwicklungsdienst gegründet. 3752 Helfer in die Dritte Welt entsandt," *Die Welt*, June 25, 1973.

humanist, anti-colonialist character of our socialist state" while helping people "in the overcoming of the difficulty imperialist and colonial legacy."[116]

Although West German officials hoped that the German Development Service would also put their state in a positive light—albeit without the anti-colonialist rhetoric—it became a magnet for criticism early on. Conservatives in West Germany attacked the Service for being leftist and sending "red missionaries" overseas who undermined the image and rhetoric of the Federal Republic.[117] Others questioned the effectiveness of the development work done, which in the 1960s and 1970s focused heavily on economic projects and less on education.[118] East German officials, by contrast, claimed that the West German volunteer organization, like its American model, served only to promote neocolonialist policies. Indeed, unlike the German Development Service and the Peace Corps, sent to disguise and dissemble, the East German Brigades of Friendship had the opportunity "to represent the character of their state openly and without any reserve."[119]

In the German Democratic Republic the German-Africa Society and the Brigades of Friendship were both components of a larger network of state and party organizations put into place after 1945 primarily to promote the image and interests of East Germany abroad and at home but also to pursue various academic, humanitarian, and political

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[116] "Vorlage über die Bildung von 'Brigaden der Freundschaft'," 1963, 4, BAB DY/30/IV A 2/20/2, 107-123; "Anlage Nr. 8 zum Protokoll Nr. 2 vom 12. 1. 1965. Betr.: Erfahrungen des ersten Einsatzes von 'Brigaden der Freundschaft' in Afrika mit Schlußfolgerungen für die Weiterführung der 'Brigaden der Freundschaft'," January 12, 1965, 1-2, BAB DY/30/J IV 2/2/970, 47-66.

[117] Udo Bergdoll, "Von 'roten Missionaren' ist keine Rede mehr. Der Deutsche Entwicklungsdienst hat seine Einsätze auf die ärmsten Länder konzentriert," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, September 19, 1975.

[118] Nachrichtendienst der WELT, "Statt Geld sollen jetzt neue Ideen weiterhelfen. Wischnewski fordert Verständnis für Notwendigkeit der Hilfe -- Wieder 71 Freiwillige abgereist," *Die Welt*, April 7, 1967; Hubert Neumann, "Manöverkritik der Entwicklungshelfer. Klage über Wirkungslosigkeit der Arbeit / Fehleinschätzung der Verhältnisse / 60 Rückkehrer berichten," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, November 30, 1970.

[119] "Vorlage über die Bildung von 'Brigaden der Freundschaft'," 4.

goals. The Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee of the GDR operated with the last of these in mind, seeking to maintain good relations with the new states of Africa and Asia and attending conferences such as the 1966 Solidarity Conference of the Peoples of Africa, Asia, and Latin America in Cuba.[120] In the realm of research and academics the Politburo created the Africa Institute in 1960. Originally the Institute for Africanistic at the Karl Marx University in Leipzig, the new Africa Institute had explicitly anticolonialist and anti-West German goals: in addition to studying political, economic and cultural developments and development programs in Africa, the Institute exposed "the imperialistic theories and practical neo-colonialist policies of German imperialism (as well as of other imperialist states)."[121] Similarly, in January, 1961 a conference on "Problems of neo-colonialism in the politics of both German states vis-à-vis the peoples' national liberation struggle" took place with the participation of over 400 East German scholars and other interested individuals.[122] Fighting (or supporting the fight) against colonialism was not enough: new social sciences were needed to properly analyze, explain, and offer advice as to the situation in former African colonies.

Anti-colonialist rhetoric alone, however, could not win the recognition East German officials desired. Talk was cheap. The SED recognized this, and realized that anti-colonialist movements and new postcolonial states wanted concrete assistance and aid. While both German states sent monetary aid to developing African countries, such

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[120] Afro-Asiatisches Solidaritätskomitee in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, "Erklärung des Afro-Asiatischen Solidaritätskomitees in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik zur ersten Solidaritätskonferenz der Völker AFrikas, Asiens und Lateinamerikas in Havanna," December 10, 1965, BAB DY/30/IV A 2/20/113.

[121] Ministerium für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten, "Vorlage an das Politbüro. Betrifft: Entwicklung der Beziehungen der DDR zu den afrikanischen Staaten," February 17, 1960, 9, BAB DY/30/J IV 2/2 682, 27-38.

[122] "Protokoll einer Beratung mit Genossen zur Vorbereitung einer Konferenz über Neokolonialismus in Westdeutschland"; Abteilung Wissenschaften, "Vorlage an das Sekretariat des Zentralkomitees der SED. Betrifft: Konferenz über Fragen des Neokolonialismus," December 15, 1960, BAB DY/30/J IV 2/3 A/765, 29-39.

measures to allow actions to speak louder than words proved difficult for East Germany to maintain; the lagging East German economy made it impossible for the GDR to keep up with West German support. Instead, East German efforts to buy friends took other forms. From the 1960s through the 1980s East Germany sent finished goods to developing socialist countries and desperate communist parties. Moreover, both East and West Germany engaged in a competition to prove which state could better draw on a long tradition of German "Bildung" to offer education and training to students and workers from Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

West Germany quickly became a world leader in providing aid and assistance to developing countries. At least, that is what the Federal Ministry of Economics claimed in 1964 when it reported that the FRG had given 65 countries almost 23 billion DM since 1950.[123] Members of the opposition pointed out that this number included not only reparation payments to Israel but also export credits, good only for the purchase of West German goods and thus more a form of aid for West German industry than developing countries.[124] In either case, however, significant support for the developing world, including former colonies, flowed out of West Germany. Many individuals in the Federal Republic—especially those with political leanings left of center—saw such help as a responsibility and a chance to do for others what the United States had done for Germany after World War II: "Development aid is a task unavoidably confronting the more prosperous nations. European nations should know this from their own experience, since to a large part they have a form of development aid—the Marshall Plan—to thank for their reconstruction after the Second World War."[125] Others, however, described the

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[123] "Bundesrepublik gab 65 Ländern Milliarden D-Mark Entwicklungshilfe. Schmücker: Wir sind eine der größten Gebernationen der Welt," *Die Welt*, January 7, 1964.

[124] Hellmut Kalbitzer, "Betr.: Entwicklungshilfe nur 9 Mrd DM," *Die SPD-Fraktion teilt mit:*, January 8, 1964.

[125] H.G. Ritzel, "Entwicklungshilfe. Nicht nur eine wirtschaftliche Aufgabe," *SPD-Pressedienst*, November 3, 1960, 5.

responsibilities of the West in ways that echoed the civilizing mission of European colonialism. Minister for Economics (and later Chancellor) Ludwig Erhard commented in a 1959 interview that he was convinced that "it is an historical duty of the West to help these countries."[126] Erhard certainly did not see himself as a colonialist; in the same interview he contrasted "the duties confronting the western countries today in the developing world" with the "efforts to develop raw material production during the colonial period."[127]

Not all West Germans, however, felt that the Federal Republic had a responsibility to pay forward the help provided by the Marshall Plan. One letter to Wischnewski complaining about calls for increased aid to developing countries summed up a number of common arguments: "Working people always say: let them work too! Who helped us out? … No rich colonial power—not the British empire, nor the enormous colonial empire of the Dutch, nor the French—came and said: we will help you!"[128] Apparently the author of the letter did not believe in the US colonization of West Germany. The author also did not seem to recognize the role Germans played as businessmen and traders and before World War I as rulers in the colonies, writing that "the former colonial rulers who wrung hundreds of millions and billions out of these lands, they can now give something back in the form of development aid."[129]

While one letter writer disapproved of West German development aid precisely because of the Federal Republic's lack of colonies, others saw in that aid imperialist and

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[126] Der Bundesminister für Wirtschaft, "Artikel, Gespräche, Kommentare, Reden. Entwicklungshilfe in neuer Sicht. Deutscher Wortlaut eines Interviews mit Bundeswirtschaftsminister Professor Dr. Ludwig Erhard, erschienen in 'German International' (Januar 1959). 'Ihre beste Chance - privater Unternehmergeist'," January 21, 1959, 2, DW 4-12e.

[127] Ibid., 1.

[128] E Baumgart to Hans Jürgen Wischnewski, November 8, 1965, NL H.-J. Wischnewski/2.

[129] Ibid.

neo-colonialist motives. Aid and assistance from West Germany often met with skepticism from developing countries and criticism from East Germany. Erhard himself recognized the fears of countries on the receiving end of aid as mistrust stemming from the colonial period, and for this reason encouraged the careful selection of particular economic projects rather than simply dumping large amounts of capital into developing countries.[130] Indeed, it was the alleged use of development aid as a form of capital exports that East German critics attacked. Then Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs Wolfgang Kiesewetter referred to development aid as a "component of Bonn's neo-colonialism," an interpretation reinforced every time state and party officials referred to West Germany's "so-called development aid."[131] This "so-called" aid, official East German sources pointed out, created dependency and curtailed revolutionary forces.[132]

Aid and development were at the center of debates about colonialism, decolonization, and the postcolonial world after Algeria—debates that now featured a mainstream opposition critical not only of particular colonial policies, but colonialism in general as well. As other colonial powers loosened their grasp—or, in the face of France, finally let go after burning themselves badly—Portugal and its empire attracted increasing attention from all sides. In 1963 a group at the Free University in Berlin contacted SPD Member of the Bundestag Hans Jürgen Wischnewski about creating an Angola Committee to counter the Portuguese lobby in West Germany. At Wischnewski's

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[130] Der Bundesminister für Wirtschaft, "Artikel, Gespräche, Kommentare, Reden. Entwicklungshilfe in neuer Sicht. Deutscher Wortlaut eines Interviews mit Bundeswirtschaftsminister Professor Dr. Ludwig Erhard, erschienen in 'German International' (Januar 1959). 'Ihre beste Chance - privater Unternehmergeist'," 6.

[131] ADN, "'Entwicklungshilfe' - Teil des Bonner Neokolonialismus. ADN-Interview mit dem Stellvertreter des Ministers für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten der DDR Dr. Wolfgang Kiesewetter," *Neues Deutschland*, April 8, 1967.

[132] Abteilung Agitation/Propaganda, "Beschluß des Politbüros zur massenpolitischen Arbeit vom 27.9.1960. Disposition zum Thema:'Der Neokolonialismus, ein Wesenzug des wiedererstandenen deutschen Imperialismus' (Einige Materialhinweise)," 16.

suggestion the organization's scope was widened to include all Portuguese colonies, and a year later at the Stern-Hotel in Bonn the group met for the first time. Its chief task, founding member Ignaz Bender explained, was "the preparation of the independence of the Portuguese colonies in Africa."[133] Such preparations proceeded slowly, however, and by the end of the decade greater problems than opportunities had presented themselves in the form of the Cahora Bassa Dam.

While earlier projects like the construction of a new harbor for Togo attracted criticism from East Germany for neocolonialism, it was not until the Cahora Bassa Dam project that the Federal Republic had to endure any significant attacks against its development policies. The project, initially developed during the administration of conservative Chancellor Kurt Georg Kiesinger, ran into heavy criticisms in the early 1970s when the new SPD administration under Willy Brandt choose to go forward with it after other states like Sweden had backed out. Attacks came not only from East German propaganda, but from student and leftist groups in West Germany. Indeed, it was the Cahora Bassa Dam project that mobilized larger numbers of West Germans, especially students and other younger West Germans, to transform the work of the establishment-oriented Angola Committee into a widespread movement in the Federal Republic against Portuguese colonialism.[134] Much of the outcry against the project focused on the cooperation of the West German state with a racist and colonial government as the primary sin. Many worried that the economic gains to be had from the dam would only serve to prop up the Portuguese position in Mozambique indefinitely. Critics argued that

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[133] Franz Ansprenger to Hans Jürgen Wischnewski, December 21, 1963, NL H.-J. Wischnewski/2; Hans Jürgen Wischnewski to Franz Ansprenger, January 28, 1964, NL H.-J. Wischnewski/2; Dieter Bielenstein, "Kurzprotokoll der Gründungssitzung des deutschen Angola-Komitees am Donnerstag, dem 19. März um 16 Uhr, im Stern-Hotel in Bonn," April 6, 1964, NL H.-J. Wischnewski/2.

[134] Edoardo Ferreira, "Cabora Bassa oder der Imperialismus in der portugiesischen Kolonien," in *Portugal in Afrika. Wochenendseminar*, ed. Trikont Hamburg (Sprötze, 1970), 10.

none of the potential benefits of the dam would be made available to black Africans but would instead be exploited by white settlers and used to increase the power and independence of white governments.[135]

Facing a barrage of criticism, SPD Minister of Economic Cooperation Erhard Eppler tried to put the project into the context not of development aid but of West Germany's broadly-defined foreign policy goals.[136] Other attempts at deflecting criticism included the idea that "Just as there is no such thing as a Catholic or Protestant retaining dam, likewise can there be no such thing as a communist, socialist, or even colonialist one" and justifications from companies like Siemens that "infrastructure ... to the extent that it fosters productivity, also serves social progress. Has Kenya, for example, accused the English of developing too much infrastructure in the colonial period? And does Ethiopia to this day still enjoy the network of roads developed by the Italians during the few years of the occupation, roads that have hardly been improved."[137] Implying that development work by Europeans was not only progress for all peoples but also the only way progress was made probably did not do much to convince those protesting the project.

Debates about the Cahora Bassa Dam project reflected the new frame through which West Germans saw colonialism after the war in Algeria, but in their intensity they represented something of an outlier. Only the related issues of South West Africa and South Africa provoked similarly passionate responses. Still, Germans remained involved in the decolonizing and post-colonial world—as the next chapter will show in greater

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[135] Ferreira, "Cabora Bassa oder der Imperialismus in der portugiesischen Kolonien," 3; Joseph Maria Hunck, "Viel Wortfechterei um Cabora Bassa," *Handelsblatt*, January 8, 1971; Bosgra, *Cabora Bassa ein Damm gegen die Afrikaner*.

[136] D.C., "Eppler: Cabora Bassa ausschließlich von außenpolitischen Aspekten belastet. Bonns Interessen in Afrika ausschlaggebend," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, September 12, 1970.

[137] Hunck, "Viel Wortfechterei um Cabora Bassa."

depth—engaging not only in business and trade but also the "white man's burden" of civilizing indigenous peoples. Or, as it came to be known in the post-war period, development and modernization. Although the end of French rule in Algeria and decolonization more generally brought great changes for former metropoles, in West Germany it did more to change the way people thought and spoke than what they or the West German state actually did. Prior to the war in Algeria West German society had by and large accepted Europe's continued need for colonies and indigenous peoples' continued need for European colonialism. Afterwards, the experience of violence in the war fundamentally altered the way people thought about colonialism but did little to alter West German policy towards present and former colonies.

East German propaganda also claimed that changes in the tactics of imperialist countries to include such a heavy emphasis on "so-called development aid" reflected, among other things, the importance and effectiveness of financial and technical aid from the socialist camp in fighting imperialist aggression.[138] Unfortunately for East Germany and the rest of the socialist world system, keeping up in terms of financial aid proved difficult, especially as they directed funds not just to developing countries but national liberation movements as well. By 1969, for example, West Germany had committed over DM 51 billion to developing countries, compared to only DM 530 million from the GDR—a significant portion of which the East German government never actually granted.[139] Although East German critics attacked West German aid as only helping West German business and industry, a great deal of East German assistance for liberation movements and communist parties around the world took the form of East German

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[138] Abteilung Agitation/Propaganda, "Beschluß des Politbüros zur massenpolitischen Arbeit vom 27.9.1960. Disposition zum Thema:'Der Neokolonialismus, ein Wesenzug des wiedererstandenen deutschen Imperialismus' (Einige Materialhinweise)," 8.

[139] Gareth M. Winrow, *The Foreign Policy of the GDR in Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 43.

material goods donated or sold at reduced prices. Some of the more popular items included printing presses and typewriters—given their anti-militaristic rhetoric, the closest the state or party wanted to come to the weapons or ammunition more immediately useful in a liberation struggle was uniforms or motorcycles.[140]

In addition to the tools for the intellectual side of the struggle for freedom, both East and West Germany provided a great deal in the way of knowledge-based aid and assistance, ranging from advisors with experience in industry, business, and politics to on the job training in Germany and university educations. From the point of view of many in the Federal Republic, the former colonies and developing countries where West German advisors and experts served were all too susceptible to influence and coercion from the East. One article on German advisors described them as holding "the West's thin line against the Rubel offensive . . . one hopes to be able to curb the growing influence of the Eastern bloc in these areas. One even feels a little like a garrison along the Siegfried Line facing an eastern attack carried out not with tanks and infantry but with loans and economic advisors."[141] Some, especially conservatives, dismissed accusations of neocolonialism as nonsense. Indeed, the Swiss *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* went so far as to say that if neocolonialism simply refers to Western capital and "know how", then "'neocolonialism' is good for a developing country if there is no political or military control connected with it."[142]

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[140] Ministerium für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten, "Vorlage an das Politbüro. Betrifft: Entwicklung der Beziehungen der DDR zu den afrikanischen Staaten," 3; Walter Ulbricht, "Protokoll Nr. 2/61 der Sitzung des Sekretariats des ZK vom 11. Januar 1961," January 11, 1961, 3, BAB DY/30/J IV 2/3/719, 1-8; "Protokoll Nr. 19/61 der Sitzung des Sekretariats des ZK vom 2. Mai 1961," May 2, 1961, 7, BAB DY/30/J IV 2/3 A/776, 1-10; Barry Ibrahima to Willy Stoph, "Anlage Nr. 8 zum Protokoll Nr. 9 von 2.4.63: Brief an Willi Stoph," February 11, 1963, BAB DY/30/J IV 2/2 873, Fiche 2, 128-132; Abteilung Afrika, "Handmaterial über die Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) Tanganyikas," March 15, 1967, 1, BAB DY/30/IV A 2/20/954.

[141] Dietrich Adler, "Ein Professor fuhr nach Bagdad. Bonn hilft der Welt — Deutsche Berater in vielen Ländern," *Die Welt*, July 7, 1958.

[142] "Ghana im Zwielicht. 'Neokolonialismus' als Segen und Schreckbild," *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, December 27, 1961.

While the West and West Germany tried to sidestep the complications that the appearance or even just the suggestion of colonialism brought with it, the SED naturally emphasized their support for former colonies and groups working towards decolonization. This did not, however, mean the SED had to make a choice between framing their aid and assistance as being anti-monopoly capitalism or anti-colonial. Rather, they were one and the same. East German advisors and experts started to head to Africa in large numbers in 1960 when the Politburo ordered the State Planning Commission to develop a program that included individuals specializing in economics, foreign trade, agriculture, and mining in order to support "newly-formed progressive governments."[143] Although experts in questions of the economy and trade made up the majority early on, over time the importance of training and education led the SED to send increasing numbers of skilled workers and teachers to Africa and the rest of the developing world.[144]

Both East and West Germany also offered positions in German universities and factories to foreign students and workers who would then, it was hoped, bring what they had learned back home with them.[145] Many of these students were supported by the East or West German state, others by their home governments or private means. The SED especially wanted students from colonial and dependent territories to study in East

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[143] Ministerium für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten, "Vorlage an das Politbüro. Betrifft: Entwicklung der Beziehungen der DDR zu den afrikanischen Staaten," 4.

[144] For instance, in the 1980s a number of East German teachers went to SWAPO camps to teach children there. "Protokoll Nr. 11," May 18, 1981, 1, BAB DY/30/J IV 2/3A/3630, 1-9; "Protokoll Nr. 34," July 3, 1981, 6, BAB DY/30/J IV 2/3A/3655, 1-9; "Protokoll Nr. 92," August 4, 1982, BAB DY/30/J IV 2/3A/3826, 1-4; "Protokoll Nr. 102," December 14, 1981, 3, BAB DY/30/J IV 2/3A/3727, 1-5; "Protokoll Nr. 107," September 14, 1984, 2, BAB DY/30/J IV 2/3A/4142, 1-7.

[145] In 1966 Eugen Gerstenmaier noted with concern that many students who had come to West Germany were not going back.Eugen Gerstenmaier to Ernst Schütte and Rudolf Sieverts, November 2, 1966, 2, BAK B/161/3.

Germany.[146] The opportunity to go to either state proved popular in developing countries, especially in Asia and Africa. As of January 1, 1962 there were 575 African students in the GDR alone, including 96 from Algeria, 90 from Sudan, 81 from Guinea, and 46 from Ghana.[147] Unfortunately, as with monetary aid it became difficult for the GDR to support such large numbers of students. At a meeting of the working group "Struggle against Colonialism" in 1961 members tried to find solutions for this problem that would make it possible for the GDR to continue what the group saw as a vital part of the struggle against neocolonialism. Ultimately they suggested having more foreign students pay for living expenses and tuition, focusing on particular areas, and lowering quotas overall, since "many of these students are not welcome in the GDR."

Students from developing countries—especially African ones—were not always welcome in East Germany for two main reasons. The SED played down the first, discrimination and racism, on account of the party's commitment to antiracism and their claims to have overcome such problems with the end of capitalist, imperialist rule in Germany. At the same time, and with the same motivation, the party took cases of discrimination and racism seriously, such as complaints from an African May Delegation that visited the Leipzig Zoo in 1960: "Better you provide us with a cage, since the people appear to be more interested in us than the animals." Conscious of the parallels to the "people shows" of an earlier generation or not, an investigation quickly followed.[148] The second reason foreign students and workers were not always welcome was political in nature: many of the students and workers who went to East Germany formed extra-legal

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[146] "Betr.: Erweiterung des Ausländerstudiums in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik," September 9, 1957, 1, BAB DY/30/IV 2/20/1, Fiche 3, 235-237.

[147] Kulturabteilung, "Fakten über die kulturellen Beziehungen zu Afrika im Jahre 1961," January 31, 1962, 1, BAB DY/30/IV 2/20/53, Fiche 3, 226-230.

[148] W Perk, "Erscheinungen der Rassendiskriminierung in Leipzig," May 31, 1960, BAB DY/30/IV 2/20/18, Fiche 2, 110-111.

organizations that did not always toe the SED party line and often came into conflict with their home countries, making life more difficult for East German officials.[149] The party and the state sought to control or at least guide students' political outlets to some extent, providing avenues to protest continued colonialism and West German neocolonialism as opposed to criticizing potential East German partners.[150] In a similar vein in 1961 the Politburo approved plans to allow African, Asian, and Latin American students and skilled workers to form their own organizations within a defined legal framework.[151]

The East Germans highlighted not only what they were doing with education and training to help in the struggle against colonialism and ease the transition to independence that followed decolonization, but also the ways in which the Federal Republic sought to use the same techniques to train western agents and push a neocolonialist agenda.[152] Other accusations suggested that Bonn tried to make foreign students and workers politically impotent by requiring quarterly renewal of paperwork to keep the pressure on, or that the Federal Republic was responsible for stirring up trouble amongst foreign workers and students in East Germany.[153]

Students and workers from developing countries in West Germany for training did not always feel welcome, either, and East German propaganda—and often West

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[149] Pallas, "Betr.: Hinweise zur Situtation unter den Studierenden aus dem transsaharischen Afrika," October 11, 1960, BAB DY/30/IV 2/20/56, Fiche 1, 1-2.

[150] Horst Brasch to Georg Zinke, "Manifestation zur Unterstützung des Freiheitskampfe der afrikanischen Völker," June 15, 1961, BAB DY/30/IV 2/20/55, Fiche 2, 116.

[151] "Protokoll Nr. 21/61 der Sitzung des Sekretariats des ZK vom 17. 5. 1961," May 17, 1961, 7, BAB DY/30/J IV 2/3 A/778, 1-13.

[152] Abteilung Agitation/Propaganda, "Beschluß des Politbüros zur massenpolitischen Arbeit vom 27.9.1960. Disposition zum Thema:'Der Neokolonialismus, ein Wesenzug des wiedererstandenen deutschen Imperialismus' (Einige Materialhinweise)," 22.

[153] "Bericht über die erste Aussprache zwischen den Delegationen der SED und der KP Algeriens am 27.3.1961 im Hause des ZK," April 12, 1961, 5, BAB DY/30/IV 2/20/353, Fiche 2, 112-118; "Betr.: Ausländerstudium in der DDR," January 20, 1958, BAB DY/30/IV 2/20/2, Fiche 1, 86.

German media as well—paid a great deal of attention to instances of racism or discrimination in West Germany. Some examples of West German "racism" were rather tame, more the result of ignorance than hatred. For example, in 1961 the *Braunschweiger Zeitung* ran two articles on interactions in the city with "citizens of the black continent." After lamenting the decades-long lack of a "bridge" to Africa—colonies—without which Africans became that much more foreign, an article by reporter Klaus Wiese criticizes area residents for, among other things, telling a man from Ghana not to return home in order to avoid starvation—despite the fact Ghana was a net food exporter. The second article recounts many of the same incidents, including questions such as whether or not the African visitors lived in houses back in Africa.[154] Similarly, Nigerian medical students complained in 1958 that all Europeans knew of Africa was "primeval forest, lions, cannibals who snarl before a cauldron in which a poor European stews, darkest barbarity and primitivism."[155] In reporting these incidents, West German papers emphasized the modernity of African cities in an attempt to inform misguided readers and, perhaps, assuage any guilt West Germans might feel about life in the developing world.

Other cases of racism received considerably more attention and reflected more than just ignorance and curiosity. Indeed, while the lack of a "bridge" to Africa might have been to blame for some of the milder incidents in both East and West Germany, such a lack of knowledge does not explain incidents of violence. Rather, such racism seems to have been learned in postwar Germany, inadvertently taught by Americans and hardened by concerns about proper female social and sexual activity in the wake of

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[154] Klaus M. Wiese, "Geographiestunde frei Haus. Begegnungen mit den Bürgern des Schwarzen Erdteils," *Braunschweiger Zeitung*, January 25, 1961; "Afrikanische Gäste kamen als Freunde. Aber manche Taktlosigkeit hat sie von Braunschweig bisher schwer enttäauscht," *Braunschweiger Zeitung*, January 25, 1961.

[155] "Europa sieht Afrika unter falschen Aspekten. Nigeria ist ein modernes Land - Christen müssen von Vorurteilen lassen," *General-Anzeiger*, October 28, 1958.

interracial relationships with black American soldiers.[156] The racism of both American "teachers" and West German "pupils" brought unwanted scrutiny and criticism upon the Federal Republic, such as in October 1962 when American soldiers beat a Cameroonian man, prompting the Cameroon government to protest "with indignation against the nascent racism in Germany."[157] Although West German officials countered that the actions of these soldiers reflected American and not German racism, they could not use that excuse in 1963, when three West German "rowdies" attacked and beat a 30 year-old student from Chad, and a West Berlin hostel banned a Congolese mechanic for fear of the detrimental effects living in "constant fright of the black man" would have on the manager's children. The *Allgemeiner Deutscher Nachrichtendienst* (ADN) or General German News Service—the state news agency in the GDR—reported on these events and the welcoming reception members of the white South African government received three weeks earlier at precisely the time West Berlin mayor Willy Brandt was on an African tour.[158] While the connection drawn between the violence and the South African visit to Berlin represented a political move to discredit Willy Brandt and paint West Germany as racist, the worrying truth of discrimination and racism in both German states remained, threatening to counter the good work being done by the work and study programs in both the East and the West.

For East German officials, however, the true sentiments Germans had for decolonizing and formerly colonized peoples did not matter as much as the image of East Germany as a friendly, peace-loving, anti-colonialist state that had overcome the forces of racism and imperialism that had marred the German past. Of course, East German

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[156] Heide Fehrenbach, *Race After Hitler: Black Occupation Children in Postwar Germany and America* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2005).

[157] J.F. Betayene to Döring, "Protest against racism," January 3, 1963, PAAA Bestand B 34 (Referat I B 3/307), 417.

[158] "West Germans beat Africans," *Evening News*, November 14, 1963.

organizations focusing on Africa, Asia, Latin America, and solidarity with colonized peoples did make efforts to educate East German citizens about the realities of life in the rest of the world, but these efforts paled in comparison to those focused on educating Germans and the rest of the world about the true nature of the two German states. While other distinctions featured in that process of education, the anti-colonialist/neo-colonialist binary became such an important one because it encapsulated both past misdeeds on the part of German imperialists and the struggles of the working class against these injustices as well as present West German activities and East German attempts to thwart them. As a result, accusations of West German neo-colonialism and proud boasting about East German anti-colonialism functioned on a variety of levels and, East German officials hoped, would be appropriate for a number of different audiences in Germany and around the world. Ultimately, however, anti-colonialism gained East Germany little more than sympathy: it did not win East German leaders the international recognition they craved, did little to raise the GDR's stature in Eastern Europe, and failed to capture the minds of Germans in any significant way. Indeed, anti-colonialism would not gain a significant foothold in West Germany until the late 1960s, and not as a result of East German propaganda. Moreover, even after some West Germans—largely students and leftists—began to criticize colonialism and imperialism in large numbers, another group continued to view colonialism and the German colonial past in particular quite differently.

CHAPTER 3: COLONIAL TROOPS OR COLONIZING TROOPS? GERMANS IN THE FRENCH FOREIGN LEGION

Perhaps the best example of German involvement in the maintenance and dismantling of colonialism after World War II is that provided by the French Foreign Legion. Service in the Foreign Legion brought Germans from both postwar states to the battlefields of Vietnam and Algeria, where they fought—and many died—on behalf of a colonial power in decline. Some German Legionnaires, given the opportunity, took up arms against the French, joining the Vietnamese or Algerian struggle against French colonialism. More importantly, responses in both the Federal Republic and the German Democratic Republic reflected the attitudes towards colonialism that dominated the discourse in each society. On the one hand, Germans from both states expressed shock and outrage: at the extent of German participation, at the tactics of recruiters for the Legion, and most importantly at the recruitment of minors. On the other hand, East German reporting and propaganda went further, explicitly criticizing France for treating West Germany as a colony from which to recruit soldiers for its colonial wars, attacking the West German government for its complicity and even cooperation in making these colonial wars possible, and fomenting desertion and defection among Germans serving in the Legion. While some on the left in West Germany expressed similar views—especially members of SPD youth organizations—the closest most West Germans came to colonial critiques was to debate the present and future status of West German sovereignty. The vast majority of West Germans, disheartened as they were to see Germans dying for a foreign power, for France no less, questioned not the legitimacy of French military action in Vietnam and Algeria but rather the legitimacy of French recruitment for the Foreign Legion. West Germans by and large accepted the notion that some peoples had the right to rule over others, so long as those "others" were not Germans.

East Germans and West Germans alike, then, expressed great dismay at the idea that large numbers of young Germans served as members of the French Foreign Legion in Vietnam and Algeria, but only in East Germany did it matter to any great extent that both of these places were French colonies with indigenous populations intent on winning their freedom. In West Germany the Foreign Legion meant involvement in the maintenance of colonialism for recruits and at the very least acceptance of the status quo for the majority of those left behind; in East Germany the Foreign Legion served as a rallying point for East German opposition to colonialism and participation in the dismemberment of France's crumbling colonial empire.

Although they may not have recognized it, for West Germans the French Foreign Legion represented another direct connection to European colonialism. Like more formal arrangements including NATO and the European Economic Community, the Foreign Legion committed West Germans to the maintenance of colonial rule in the face of a threat widely—if inaccurately—understood to be emanating from Moscow. In the case of the Foreign Legion, this commitment came at the level of the individual rather than the state. Still, at any level this commitment reflected not so much an enthusiasm for colonialism as a pragmatism that accepted the logics of colonial rule at face value. Although West German involvement in France's colonial wars did little to promote West German political or economic interests in Vietnam and Algeria—indeed, it did more harm than good—like West Germany's German-Africa Society and other organizations it helped to keep colonies in the public eye without prompting anything more than limited West German anti-colonialist backlash.

Similarly, in East Germany the Foreign Legion served as yet another target for anti-colonialist propaganda. French exploitation of its status as an occupying power provided further evidence that West Germany was little more than a colony for the US, Britain, and France, while the West German government's alleged complicity and cooperation highlighted the continued threat posed by German militarism, imperialism,

and neo-colonialism. As with all of its anti-colonialist propaganda, the SED and East German state's responses to the Legion targeted audiences in Germany and abroad in the hopes that it would bolster support and sympathy from Germans in both the East and the West and win goodwill from other states, or maybe even diplomatic recognition. More than just clever political maneuvering, however, East German responses to the Foreign Legion reflected a genuine belief in the unity of Vietnam's and Algeria's anti-colonial struggle with the broader anti-imperialist struggle waged by communist and socialist parties around the world.

Criticizing the Foreign Legion in West Germany

Although it did not always attract the same degree of attention it did in later years, German membership in the French Foreign Legion predated the post-1945 period significantly.[159] Indeed, Germans had served in the Legion alongside other men from across Europe and around the world since the organization's beginnings. More often than not this collection of foreign and French soldiers fought for France overseas; after Louis Philippe created the Foreign Legion in 1830 in order to circumvent new restrictions on the service of foreign troops in the French army the Legion saw its first deployment in Algeria. For more than a century afterward the French colony served as the Legion's home. In its first few decades Legionnaires fought in Spain, Italy, and even Mexico, but during the Third Republic the Legion began to earn its reputation as a colonial force, expanding and solidifying French control in North Africa, Madagascar, and Indochina.

German membership took off after the Franco-Prussian War ended in 1871 as demobilized soldiers joined the Legion. Indeed, some of the Germans who enlisted at that time may well have fought against the Legion during the Siege of Paris, the first time

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[159] For more on the Legion and Germans serving in it, see Eckard Michels, *Deutsche in der Fremdenlegion 1870-1965: Mythen und Realitäten*, Krieg in der Geschichte Bd. 2 (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1999).

Legionnaires saw action in the metropole. Similar deployments in World War I and World War II brought the Legion back to France to fight against the German army once again, and, as before, when the Legion returned to Algeria and elsewhere after those wars it did so with increased German membership.[160]

Legionnaires joined up for any number of reasons. After its creation in 1831, the Legion provided a destination for soldiers from disbanded foreign regiments. These soldiers—and later Legionnaires, as well—could even earn French citizenship upon completion of a full tour of duty. Those wounded in battle, who had "spilled blood for France", could apply even earlier. Nor was French citizenship the only avenue by which Legionnaires could start a new life: the Legion accepted at face value the identities claimed by its recruits, which often bore little relation to reality. From early on the Legion attracted less desirable elements of French and European society, including criminals, failed revolutionaries, and others eager for a fresh start. Romantic images of the Foreign Legion to this day feature a group of misfit outcasts fighting bravely in exotic locales against barbarous indigenous peoples. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, popular wisdom suggested that the Legion played host to the dregs of society as well as those otherwise respectable elements in search of adventure. As the growth in German membership after the Franco-Prussian War and both World Wars suggests, however, socio-economic factors played a much greater role than personal fortune or misfortune when it came to the Legion's makeup. Soldiers, especially young soldiers or career soldiers with few other skills, found in the French Foreign Legion an opportunity to continue to ply their trade. This prospect of employment proved a powerful draw,

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[160] Many Germans were well aware of this history."Beratung des Mündlichen Berichts des Ausschusses für das Besatzungsstatut und auswärtige Angelegenheiten (7. Ausschuß) über den Antrag der Fraktion der KPD betreffend Anwerbung von Deutschen für fremdländischen Militärdienst," *Deutscher Bundestag* 1, no. 92 (October 18, 1950): 3421; West Erich Richter, "Denkschrift der Sozialistischen Jugend Deutschlands - Die Falken zum Problem der deutschen Fremdenlegionäre," February 1953, BAK B/106/16652.

especially after World War II.

The Legion's draw was so strong after 1945 that not only did German membership grow in absolute terms, but the national composition of the Foreign Legion shifted to the point that Germans formed a near or even outright majority. With hundreds of young German men applying every month, the Legion found itself with a steady flow of soldiers to fight French wars in Indochina and Algeria. Given the large numbers of Germans, however, what might otherwise have been a French effort to maintain control of its empire became a European one. Despite efforts by the French state to downplay the numbers, estimates of German membership in the legion ranged from a quarter or a third of the entire force to as much as 60% or 70%.[161] Even former members of the Legion could not agree, offering wildly varying estimates. One quoted an official figure of 44.5%.[162] Another, however, put the German contribution as high as 80% among enlisted men, and 30-40% among junior officers.[163] Of course, the Foreign Legion did not fight alone in these wars; Legionnaires saw action alongside elements of the French army as well as indigenous troops. Still, in Vietnam and Algeria the Legion accounted for over 10% of French forces; French troops, by contrast, made up little more than a quarter of French forces in Vietnam.

More troubling to many West Germans than the relatively large role Germans were playing in maintaining colonialism, however, were the absolute figures: the number of Germans serving in the French Foreign Legion and the continually large number of recruits each month. Secrecy on the part of the Legion and the French state made it

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[161] "Kein Deutscher mehr in die Fremdenlegion. Jungsozialisten: Algerische Freundschaft und Sympathie für die Deutschen," *Parlamentarisch-Politischer Pressedienst*, December 1, 1958, 1.

[162] Generalkonsulat der Bundesrepublik Deutschland Marseille to Auswärtiges Amt, October 13, 1954, 2, PAAA Bestand B 11 (Länderabteilung), 783.

[163] Berger, "Betr.: Deutsche in der französischen Fremdenlegion," June 23, 1954, 3, PAAA Bestand B 11 (Länderabteilung), 782, 174-177.

difficult for West Germans to know just how many Germans might be serving in the Legion at any one time, let alone where they might be stationed or fighting, or how many had been killed or wounded. Of course, this did not prevent the West German press from guessing. During the war in Vietnam, estimates in the press ranged from 40,000 German members of the Legion in 1948 to 50,000 Germans killed in Vietnam alone by 1949. [164] Estimates two years later put the total currently serving at around 86,000, with approximately 13,500 dead.[165] Another estimate in 1954 suggested as many as 120,000 Germans in the legion.[166] Official word from Paris in 1950 put the number of enlisted Germans at 5000 total, and three years later at 18,000, but few believed either number; even in parliament West German politicians continued to bandy about the 40,000-estimate.[167] Within the West German Foreign Office estimates figured 20,000 Germans fighting in Indochina in 1950 based on reports from US military officers and *Time* magazine correspondent Samuel G. Welles.[168] The West German consulate in Paris, by

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[164] "40 000 deutsche Fremdenlegionäre," *Der Telegraf*, October 27, 1948; "40 000 Deutsche tragen Uniform. Fremdenlegion - das Heer der Vergessenen," *Norddeutsche Zeitung*, November 16, 1948; "50 000 starben in Vietnam. Bedenkenlose Werbemethoden treiben Tausende Verzweifelter in die Fremdenlegion," *Württemburgische Abendzeitung*, December 10, 1948.

[165] "Unser 'Verteidigungsbeitrag' in Asien. 86 000 Deutsche in der Fremdenlegion? 13 500 Tote," *Freiheit*, February 4, 1952; "Stellungnahme zu der von der Regierung der UdSSR den drei Westmächten übermittelten Note zur Frage der Vorbereitung und über die Grundlagen eines Friedensvertrages mit Deutschland," *Volkskammer der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik* 1. Wahlperiod, no. 19 (March 14, 1952): 537.

[166] "120000 deutsche Fremdenlegionäre. Bundesregierung soll Namen- und Gefallenenliste fordern," *Freie Presse*, May 25, 1954.

[167] "Paris gibt Zahl der deutschen Fremdenlegionäre mit 5000 an," *Nürnberger Zeitung*, July 25, 1950; Haut-Commissariat de la République Française en Allemagne. Direction, Générale des Affaires Politiques, "A Propos des Campagnes Contre la Legion Entrangere Francaise," February 4, 1953, 3, BAK B/106/16652; "Beratung des Mündlichen Berichts des Ausschusses für das Besatzungsstatut und auswärtige Angelegenheiten (7. Ausschuß) über den Antrag der Fraktion der KPD betreffend Anwerbung von Deutschen für fremdländischen Militärdienst," 3421.

[168] Alexander Böker, "Vermerk," January 13, 1950, PAAA Bestand B 11 (Länderabteilung), 779.

comparison, suggested somewhere between 48,000 and 56,000 Germans.[169] Four years later a former Legionnaire who had worked in the Legion's administrative offices in Algeria provided figures to the Foreign Office based on the records he had seen of German involvement in Vietnam:

> 14,501 active German Legionnaires (excluding those from Saarland and Austria)
> 6000 missing in Indochina
> 18,900 Germans killed in action (since 1946)[170]

These figures put the lie to the official French line on German membership, as it seems improbable that French administrators would have purposely inflated numbers used for internal record keeping. They also suggest that mounting West German concern about these figures had inspired hysterical overestimation on the part of the press, the state, and even ordinary citizens.

As the war in Vietnam and then in Algeria progressed, the consistently high numbers of Germans recruited into the legion eclipsed the total number of Germans serving in terms of importance within West German public discourse. In 1951 a story appeared in *Die Welt* indicating that the collection camp in Offenburg produced an entire company of 170 men each week—600 to 700 Germans a month.[171] Over a two month period in 1952 officials in the West German city of Dortmund reported 40 missing youths who were assumed to have joined the French Foreign Legion.[172] That same year a series of articles written by Englishman Adrian Liddell Hart, who had joined the Legion,

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[169] Wilhelm Hausenstein, "Betr.: Deutsche Fremdenlegionäre," November 23, 1950, PAAA Bestand B 11 (Länderabteilung), 779.

[170] Generalkonsulat der Bundesrepublik Deutschland Marseille to Auswärtiges Amt, October 13, 1954, 2.

[171] Eberhard Schulz, "Auf Abenteuer in der Fremdenlegion. Nach deutschem Recht verboten - Besuch im Sammellager Offenburg," *Die Welt*, September 22, 1951.

[172] "Stellungnahme zur Note der Regierung der Sowjetunion an die Westmächte vom 23. August 1952," *Volkskammer der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik* 1. Wahlperiod, no. 25 (September 5, 1952): 701.

reported that hundreds of young men were joining every week, some 70% of them Germans.[173] Other estimates put the number of Germans joining at between fifteen and 150 each day.[174] By November of 1958 the SPD suggested that "with certainty still today 500 young Germans are 'purchased' each month for the Foreign Legion and secretly brought over the border to France." The 793 "Legion-willing youths" the police prevented from crossing the border between January and August of that year would only have increased that number.[175]

Within West German public discourse about the Foreign Legion these two issues—the tactics of Legion recruiters and the age of those recruits—became the dominant concerns. West German citizens, the press, and even some politicians criticized the French for abusing their position as an occupying power in order to fill the ranks of the Foreign Legion. Stories of recruiters' tricks, lies, and even more extreme tactics filled West German newspapers and the mailboxes of West German leaders and bureaucrats. Even more outrageous to West Germans was the recruitment of minors into the Legion. Outrage spread as reports of these incidents became increasingly common. The West German state responded to complaints about recruiting tactics and the age of potential Legionnaires as best it could, but given the circumstances after World War II by and large its hands were tied. Even after the occupation ended the state enjoyed little success in dealing with these issues and failed to placate West Germans incensed at the large numbers of young men and even boys dying halfway around the world. That these

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[173] Adrian Liddell Hart, "Bei den deutschen in der Fremdenlegion. Erlebnisse eines jungen Engländers in Afrika und Indochina — I. Warum ich eintrat - Jede Woche kommen Hunderte," *Die Zeit*, August 28, 1952, http://images.zeit.de/text/1952/35/Bei-den-Deutschen-in-der-Fremdenlegion.

[174] "80 Prozent Deutsche in der Fremdenlegion. Täglich werden 15 junge Deutsche geworben - Protest der Bundesregierung," *Lübecker Freie Presse*, November 22, 1952; "Gesetz gegn die Fremdenlegion noch verboten," *Schwäbische Landeszeitung*, December 9, 1952.

[175] "Immer noch junge Deutsche für die Fremdenlegion," *SPD-Pressedienst*, November 27, 1958, 4.

Germans fought and died to maintain a crumbling colonial empire, by contrast, attracted relatively little attention in West Germany; for all the problems West Germans had with the Foreign Legion, its ties to colonialism were not one of them.

For many who joined in the immediate aftermath of World War II, the choice was one born of practicality. After 1945 France exploited its position by heavily recruiting in prisoner-of-war camps. For those Germans who joined, the Legion provided an early escape from these camps and a rare guarantee of steady employment in the form of a five-year enlistment.[176] "First it was the prisoners of the Africa Corps," one anti-Legion booklet explained, "to whom the recruiters for the Foreign Legion offered the alluring possibility of escaping the unmitigated misery of captivity as a prisoner of war. Then they switched over to the hundreds of thousands of young prisoners in the prisoner of war camps in the French motherland." For these hundreds of thousands the Legion offered escape from "hunger, the most primitive of living conditions, threats, and fear of an uncertain future."[177] As POW populations dwindled, French recruiters widened their net, taking advantage of their status as an occupying power to recruit amongst the large population of desperate young men in postwar Germany. The Legion established collection camps, recruiting stations, and other facilities in cities like Kehl, Landau, and Offenburg throughout its zone of occupation, and many Germans from all over the country willingly made their way to these locations. Given the steady drop of the franc between 1945 and 1960 it is difficult to pinpoint how much these recruits earned, but one recruit recalled earning 15,000 francs each month during his training and 20,000 francs during his deployment to Indochina.[178] This did not amount to much, but given the state

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[176] Kutzner, "Vermerk: Betr.: Fremdenlegionäre," January 8, 1955, BAK B/150/5998.

[177] *Menschenschmuggel für die Fremdenlegion. Jagd auf junge Deutsche* (Zentralsekretariat der Jungsozialisten in der SPD, 1953), 11.

[178] Berger, "Betr.: Deutsche in der französischen Fremdenlegion," 1.

of the German economy after World War II or, even worse, the prospect of remaining in a POW camp, the willingness of some German men to accept such an offer should come as no surprise. West Germans recognized the socio-economic forces at work, but anger grew nonetheless; how could the German economy ever hope to recover if young able-bodied men went off to fight in the Foreign Legion instead of remaining in Germany? The feeling that France was taking unfair advantage of the postwar situation permeated nearly all discussions of the Foreign Legion.

West German newspaper reports on the French Foreign Legion in the 1940s and early 1950s focused on the German POW experience, lamenting the lack of other options for German POWs but also pointing out how much worse the situation was for German POWs in Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. Of course, the press also sensationalized these stories in an effort to attract and keep readership, playing up rumors and gossip suggesting that among the POWs joining the Legion were Nazis, SS men, and war criminals.[179] One French newspaper quoted in the West German press quipped that with all the Germans fighting for France in Vietnam, Saigon had become "the only city on earth in which one can still hear the Horst Wessel song."[180] Denials from the Legion itself and more sober reporting in conservative papers like *Die Welt* did nothing to kill such stories; they struck a chord with the German public, in part because they fit with established stereotypes about the Legion as an escape for criminals and others in search of a new life.[181] A small percentage of recruits were, as the stereotype would have it,

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[179] Karl Gärtner, "Die vergessen sein wollen. Deutsche kämpfen in der Fremdenlegion," *Die Welt*, December 6, 1947; "Deutsche SS-Rekruten für 'Panarabien.' Dr. Homsi sammelt menschliches Strandgut / Generale wechseln über die Grüne Grenze / Abenteuerliche Flucht über die Aplen," *Freie Presse (Berlin)*, August 20, 1949; "Deutsche gegen Deutsche in Indochina. Ehemaliger SS-Scharführer Generaloberst der Vietminh-Truppen," *Die Welt*, March 27, 1951.

[180] Hans Philip, "Die ewigen Landsknechte kämpfen. Deutsche SS-Männer in Indo-China," *Die Norddeutsche*, April 8, 1947.

[181] Bernd Ruland, "Der Weg nach Sidi-Bel-Abbes. Flucht ins Ungewisse - Deutsche für die Fremdenlegion," *Die Welt*, October 18, 1947.

running away from something in their pasts or running towards a supposedly romantic and adventurous life. [182] Many more, however, joined the Foreign Legion as a last resort, having nothing in the way of a job or skills to speak of beyond possibly some military experience.[183]

French officials assured Germans early on that recruitment was hardly necessary for the Foreign Legion. Propaganda, they suggested, could hardly enhance the already romantic image of the Legion, and the opportunity for steady work the Legion provided spoke for itself.[184] Within just a few years, however, stories from Germans who had fled the Foreign Legion began to paint a different picture. Contrary to French claims, recruiters made promises to young German men that bore little resemblance to the realities of life as a Legionnaire. "Recruits are promised the moon," one article reported, "pay from 13,000 to 17,000 francs each month and good opportunities for advancement, not to mention the colorful depictions of life in the Legion." In reality, however, Legionnaires earned much less and could only spend their earnings on overpriced goods at the Legion cantina; promotions were hard to come by, and life as a Legionnaire proved nowhere near as romantic as it was made out to be.[185]

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s the West German press reported on a variety of other tactics recruiters for the Foreign Legion purportedly employed when promises and lies failed. These ranged from the use of alcohol or drugs to bait and switch to violence

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[182] "50 000 starben in Vietnam. Bedenkenlose Werbemethoden treiben Tausende Verzweifelter in die Fremdenlegion."

[183] *Deutsche in der französischen Fremdenlegion* (Hamburg: Deutsches Rotes Kreuz, Generalsekretariat, Suchdienst-Leitstelle, March 3, 1954), BAK B/150/5998.

[184] "Paris: Keine Rekrutierungen," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, October 30, 1951; "Paris: Nur Freiwillige in der Fremdenlegion," *Die Welt*, October 30, 1951; Haut-Commissariat de la République Française en Allemagne. Direction, Générale des Affaires Politiques, "A Propos des Campagnes Contre la Legion Entrangere Francaise."

[185] "Die Legion - das graue Elend. Was die Werber versprechen - was die Legion hält / Wie lange noch?," *Westfälische Rundschau*, April 18, 1952.

and even kidnapping. "Time and again alcohol," wrote one reporter: recruiters enjoyed such great success "because they work with methods that fit better in a detective film but are effective all the same."[186] One article in the *Hannoversche Presse*, for instance, recounted the fate of a young man from Stuttgart who, after drinking two shots too many, awoke the next day in a French police station to find that he had allegedly signed over his life to the Foreign Legion for the next five years. [187] Alcohol nearly cost a group of young men from Hildesheim their liberty as well while on a bike tour that took them through Lindau in 1954. As the group set up camp they received word of a local restaurant where they could eat and drink their fill for next to nothing. Upon further investigation, however, they discovered that the restaurant—located at the end of a narrow ally and patronized by Frenchmen in uniforms—had a reputation. Drugged beer as well as rigged card games and other tricks brought the proprietor more than enough revenue per head to make up for the cheap food and drink he advertised to travelers.[188] Not even Munich's annual Oktoberfest celebration provided a safe haven; in 1951 recruiters coaxed six drunken young men at the event to sign enlistment papers. Fortunately they were able to escape, returning to Germany from Marseille via freight train.[189]

Other reports told similar stories of young German men who inadvertently joined the Legion when they expected something else entirely. In 1948 the *Hannoversche*

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[186] Rolf Buttler, "'Bis gleich' - und dann kommt Post aus dem Wüstenfort. Werbung für die Fremdenlegion geht in der Bundesrepublik weiter - Die Agenten sind schwer zu fassen," *Westdeutsche Allgemeine*, November 19, 1952.

[187] "Wein, Weiber und Fünfjahresverträge. Werbemethoden der Fremdenlegion / Entflohene berichten," *Hannoversche Presse*, December 11, 1948.

[188] "Billiges Essen - sehr verdächtig. Junge Hildesheimer fast in ein WErbernest der Fremdenlegion geraten," *Hildesheimer Presse*, August 3, 1954.

[189] "Aus der Fremdenlegion entkommen," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, November 6, 1951.

Presse told the story of Theodor Hoffman, a young German from the Nuremberg area who decided to seek out work in France. French recruiters wined and dined him along with some 200 other Germans, throwing the new "laborers" a "Farewell From Germany" party before registering them and asking them to sign contracts written up in French. Hoffman and his compatriots were then transported to the German city of Kehl, just across the Rhine from Strasbourg. From Kehl the recruits were to be taken to Marseille, but the night before Hoffman escaped and fled to the American occupation zone.[190]

Deceptions and other techniques designed to trick potential recruits into joining the Foreign Legion were one thing, but by the early 1950s West German papers began to run more disturbing reports about violence and kidnappings perpetrated by the French Foreign Legion. One reporter experienced Foreign Legion violence firsthand: after photographing a Legion camp and asking too many questions he was arrested and beaten before ending up in the custody of somewhat more sympathetic French officials.[191] Germans who agreed to join the Legion were not spared such violence either, as those with second thoughts were persuaded with "kicks, floggings, unending name-calling, examinations, interrogations; brutal violence forces each to sign the certificate of obligation."[192]

Such stories were not just the stuff of tabloids looking to capitalize on existing anti-Legion sentiment; even a more serious daily newspaper like *Die Welt*, which had previously come to the Legion's defense on more than one occasion, reported on a series of alleged kidnappings in Bad Lippspringe. Both victims were young and in fact were

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190 "Wein, Weiber und Fünfjahresverträge. Werbemethoden der Fremdenlegion / Entflohene berichten."

191 "'Du lügst, verdammter Bandit': Menschenfang in Offenburg, der Stadt der Fremdenlegionäre - Sonderbare Erlebnisse eines deutschen Journalisten," *Württembergische Abendzeitung*, August 11, 1950.

192 "Die Legion - das graue Elend. Was die Werber versprechen - was die Legion hält / Wie lange noch?."

legally minors under West German law. The first, Hans Krüll, was eighteen years old when he disappeared. The second, Paul Berendes, vanished while still only seventeen years old, but letters received by his parents suggested the young man worked as a laborer for the Legion until his eighteenth birthday, at which point he became a soldier.[193]

Not all of the recruiting techniques the Legion employed were illegal of course, nor were all—or even the majority—of recruits forced to join against their will. A survey of 40 Germans who escaped the Legion in 1955, for example, found that none had been forced into service.[194] When the West German Foreign Office conducted inquiries into Foreign Legion recruiting tactics, they found no evidence to support claims of violence or the use of alcohol or drugs.[195] This did not, however, leave West Germans feeling any less like the French authorities had taken advantage of them. In addition to the mere presence of the French as an occupying force, which created opportunities in and of itself thanks to the proximity it created to potential recruits, French sovereignty in its zone of occupation poked holes in West German laws that might otherwise prevent citizens from joining the Legion. A particularly upsetting abuse of authority in the minds of many was the use of French military transports to bypass border checkpoints and bring German recruits to France.[196] French officials also helped recruits cross the "green border" of thick forests "under cover of darkness." In one case at a border crossing near Schweigen, West German officials became aware that the vehicle in question contained a number of

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[193] "Futter für Fremdenlegion? Zweite Anzeige wegen Menschenraubs in Bad Lippspringe," *Die Welt*, March 14, 1952.

[194] Hermann Ziock, "Keiner wurde zur Legion gezwungen," *Westdeutsche Allgemeine*, March 5, 1955.

[195] Find citation.

[196] "Beratung der Großen Anfrage der Fraktion der SPD betreffend Grenzzwischenfall Schweigen," *Deutscher Bundestag* 1, no. 248 (January 29, 1953): 11856-11857.

Germans when an escaped recruit warned them of the planned crossing. When asked to allow the Germans to present their papers, the driver refused and sought the assistance of the nearby French gendarmerie. Despite West German efforts, the French officers raised the barrier and allowed the transport through.[197] This form of "people smuggling", though less extreme than outright kidnappings, further solidified West German feelings about the less than honest techniques the Legion employed.[198]

Foreign Legion recruitment tactics—legal or not—angered West Germans, but France and the Foreign Legion were not the only targets of that anger. A number of West Germans turned with increasing frustration to the West German state. Ernst Kraemer wrote to Chancellor Adenauer in 1950 complaining about the lack of action in combating recruitment for the Legion; "it would be . . . strongly desirable if finally something decisive would occur in this matter."[199] Writing the same year, Wilhelm Langhammer went further in his criticisms. "It would be a matter for the German government to intervene appropriately," he argued, "and not to sanction through silent acquiescence the recruitment of Germans for difficult service as colonial troops while at the same time German militarism is otherwise damned clear into the ground."[200] While letters such as these and increasing coverage of the Foreign Legion in the press prompted a great many debates in the West German parliament and a flurry of intra-agency activity, it produced little in the way of results, and even a decade later similar complaints continued to arrive in the mailboxes of government employees and politicians. When Adenauer failed to win

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[197] "Mit dem Omnibus in die Legion. Amtlicher Bericht über den Grenz-Zwischenfall von Schweigen," *Westfälische Rundschau*, December 17, 1952.

[198] "Menschenschmuggel für die Fremdenlegion. Mit Militärtransporten und bei Nacht und Nebel über die grüne Grenze," *Deutsche Zeitung*, November 8, 1952.

[199] Ernst Kraemer to Konrad Adenauer, March 25, 1950, PAAA Bestand B 11 (Länderabteilung), 779.

[200] Wilhelm Langhammer to Theodor Heuss, March 16, 1950, PAAA Bestand B 11 (Länderabteilung), 779.

concessions regarding the Foreign Legion in his negotiations with the French, especially the release of Germans less than 21 years of age, the uncle of Legionnaire Klaus Klapetek complained "the fact that this demand was not incorporated into the German-French Treaty of Friendship is incomprehensible to me."[201]

West German efforts to curb recruitment for the Foreign Legion ran into problems from the very beginning. Some of these were the products of limitations put on the West German state as a result of World War II and the occupation, but others were the result of political calculations on the part of the Adenauer government. West German law technically contained provisions outlawing the recruitment of Germans for service in foreign armed forces. Like much of West German law, the *Strafgesetzbuch* (StGB), or criminal code, actually dated back to the criminal code of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Imperial Germany, which in turn built upon the laws of the North German Confederation. From the very beginning this code included paragraph 141, stipulating that "whoever recruits a German for military service to a foreign power or delivers him to the recruiters of the latter . . . is punished with imprisonment from three months to three years."[202] However, after World War II the Allied Control Council repealed a variety of laws including paragraph 141.[203] Combined with the sovereign rights afforded to the occupying powers, these provisions limited the options available to West German officials:

> There exists at this time no legal basis for interfering with recruitment. There is nothing contained in the Basic Law against recruitment for foreign military service. Allied Control Council Law Nr. 11 in fact forbids such interference.[204]

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[201] Karl Bernt to Hans Jürgen Wischnewski, May 22, 1963, NL H.-J. Wischnewski/2.

[202] "§ 141," *Deutsches Reichsgesetzblatt* 1871, no. 24 (May 15, 1871): 154.

[203] "Gesetz gegn die Fremdenlegion noch verboten"; *Aufhebung einzelner Bestimmungen des deutschen Strafrechts*, *Kontrollratsgesetz Nr. 11*, 1946.

[204] Eugen Feihl, "Betr.: Deutsche in der französischen Fremdenlegion," September 8, 1951, 16, PAAA Bestand B 11 (Länderabteilung), 779, 111-144.

The West German press and West German politicians alike lamented the inability of German authorities to do anything about the situation.[205] The police in Offenburg directed one reporter eager to learn more about recruitment tactics to head to the train station or a bar: "there you will find everything you need: recruiters, Legionnaires in uniform and civilian dress, those desperate to enlist, those released. You will not receive any protection from us."[206] Mothers and fathers wrote to the West German Foreign Office asking for any and all help in ensuring the return of their sons, but unfortunately there was often little the public servants working there could do. As one internal document noted, "parents who want to determine if their son has signed up for the Legion are referred by the Foreign Office to the Administrative Office of the Foreign Legion in Sidi-bel-Abbès. They usually receive no answer to their letters."[207] Even after the changes to the West German criminal code in 1953, the dissolution of the Allied High Commission in 1955, and the lifting of the Occupation Statute, West German officials had few options: paragraph 141 returned to force, preventing open recruitment, but many Germans continued to volunteer and there was nothing police could do about what went

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[205] "Beratung des Mündlichen Berichts des Ausschusses für das Besatzungsstatut und auswärtige Angelegenheiten (7. Ausschuß) über den Antrag der Fraktion der KPD betreffend Anwerbung von Deutschen für fremdländischen Militärdienst"; "Die gnadenlose Heimkehr der vier Legionäre. Sie kamen aus Indochina, flohen aus der Sowjetzone und wurden in Westberlin den Franzosen ausgeliefert," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, August 23, 1951; Renner, "Antrag der Fraktion der KPD betr. Freilassung der an Frankreich ausgelieferten deutschen Staatsangehörigen, Einsetzung eines Untersuchungsausschusses zur Überprüfung der Begleitumstände dieser Auslieferung und Schließung der WErbebüros für die Fremdenlegion usw.," *Deutsche Bundestag Drucksache* 1, no. 2541 (September 3, 1951); "Beratung des Antrags der Fraktion der KPD betreffend Freilassung der an Frankreich ausgelieferten deutschen Staatsangehörigen — Einsetzung eines Untersuchungsausschusses zur Überprüfung der Begleitumstände dieser Auslieferung und Schließung der WErbebüros für die Fremdenlegion usw.," *Deutscher Bundestag* 1, no. 162 (September 13, 1951): 6588-6591; Schulz, "Auf Abenteuer in der Fremdenlegion. Nach deutschem Recht verboten - Besuch im Sammellager Offenburg."

[206] "'Du lügst, verdammter Bandit': Menschenfang in Offenburg, der Stadt der Fremdenlegionäre - Sonderbare Erlebnisse eines deutschen Journalisten."

[207] "Fremdenlegion Angelegenheiten," 1954, PAAA Bestand B 11 (Länderabteilung), 783.

on behind closed doors.[208] "It is regrettable," noted one government report, "that the police have no possibility of preventing entrance into the Foreign Legion."[209] Within a few years West German courts had tried 150 cases under paragraph 141, of which only 10 ended in convictions.[210]

Opposition parties within the West German parliament seized upon West German concerns about the French Foreign Legion despite the difficulties the occupation posed. The SPD especially as well as other, smaller parties repeatedly asked the government whether it was aware of the problem and how it intended to respond.[211] Eager to take advantage of an issue the Adenauer government could not adequately address, politicians from these parties employed increasingly harsh rhetoric in parliamentary speeches and debates. Failures on the part of West German officials to affect any change when it came to German service in the French Foreign Legion came not for wont of trying. Politicians and bureaucrats in West Germany made efforts to secure the return of German Legionnaires, limit recruiting, and warn young men about the dangers posed by the Legion. Efforts to retrieve Germans recruited into the Foreign Legion gravitated around the West German Foreign Office. By August 1951—just months after resuming operations in March of that year—the Foreign Office had received some 95 applications for assistance in freeing Germans from service in the Foreign Legion, including 36 for

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[208] Hendus to Blomeyer, "Betr.: Deutsche Fremdenlegionäre; Beratung des Antrages (Drucksache 591) und der Grossen Anfrage (Drucksache 606, neu) im Bundestag," November 2, 1954, PAAA Bestand B 11 (Länderabteilung), 783.

[209] W Reimherr, "Bericht," September 21, 1956, 2, BA-MA BW/9/745, fiche 5, 223-223a.

[210] "Notiz. Betr.: Fremdenlegion," April 6, 1955, 1, BA-MA BW/9/746, fiche 1, 11-12.

[211] "Fragestunde," *Deutscher Bundestag* 1, no. 247 (January 28, 1953): 11773-11774; "Fragestunde," *Deutscher Bundestag* 1, no. 257 (March 25, 1953): 12456; "Fragestunde," *Deutscher Bundestag* 3, no. 16 (March 12, 1958): 729; "Fragestunde," *Deutscher Bundestag* 3, no. 77 (June 19, 1959): 4228-4229; "Fragestunde," *Deutscher Bundestag* 3, no. 81 (October 14, 1959): 4394-4395, 4399-4400; "Fragestunde," *Deutscher Bundestag* 4, no. 28 (May 9, 1962): 1173; "Fragestunde," *Deutscher Bundestag* 4, no. 84 (October 9, 1963): 4093.

young men less than 18 years old and 45 for men between 18 and 21. Between January 1952 and December 1954, over one thousand additional applications arrived, fifty of which resulted in the release of the Legionnaires in question.[212]

West German officials' lack of success reflected the limits within which they worked after Nazi Germany's defeat in World War II, including the legal environment and the foreign policy demands of Western integration. Limitations on West German sovereignty not only prompted these officials' efforts, but hindered them as well. Such limitations made progress difficult on many fronts; only in its efforts to inform and warn German youths did the state enjoy anything more than a small degree of success. In reality, however, the government lacked not only the ability to get tough on recruitment but also, to some extent, the will: West German officials did not want to push the issue too far and risk endangering the state's relationship with such an important Western European partner.[213] So great was the concern that the Foreign Office passed along word to the leadership in parliament to avoid debates and discussions about the Legion.[214]

Debate about one issue in particular, however, could not be quelled, and that was the recruitment of underage Germans into the Foreign Legion. Indeed, nothing produced

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[212] Eugen Feihl, "Die Französische Fremdenlegion. Zweckmässigkeit eines offiziellen deutschen Schrittes bei der Französischen Regierung in der Frage der Werbungen und der Entlassungen," August 7, 1951, 34, PAAA Bestand B 11 (Länderabteilung), 799; Referat 302, "Vermerk. Betr.: Fremdenlegionäre," December 4, 1954, PAAA Bestand B 11 (Länderabteilung), 783.

[213] "Große Anfrage der Fraktionen der DP, GB/BHE betr. Werbug zu Fremdenlegionen (Drucksache 606 [neu]) in Verbindung mit der Beratung des Antrags der Fraktion der FDP betr. Deutsche Fremdenlegionäre (Drucksache 591)," *Deutscher Bundestag* 2, no. 58 (December 8, 1954): 2958; "Beratung des Mündlichen Berichts des Ausschusses für auswärtige Angelegenheiten (3. Ausschuß) über den Antrag der Fraktion der SPD betr. Junge Deutsche in der Fremdenlegion," *Deutscher Bundestag* 3, no. 60 (January 30, 1959): 3266.

[214] Heinrich von Brentano to Eugen Gerstenmaier, "Entwurf eines Schreibens den Herrn Bundesministers an den Präsidenten des Deutschen Bundestages, Herrn Dr.D Eugen Gerstenmaier," January 1959, PAAA Referat 204/I A 3, 322, 217-218; Carstens, "Aufzeichnung. Betr.: Debatte des Deutschen Bundestages über den Antrag der Fraktion der SPD betreffend: Junge Deutsche in der Fremdenlegion," January 21, 1959; Heinrich von Brentano to Will Rasner, January 24, 1959, PAAA Referat 204/I A 3, 322, 221-222.

a reaction in the press and among the public quite as extreme as the growing number of reports about West German minors ending up in the Foreign Legion. Key differences between French and West German law complicated the issue; like West German law, French law set the age of majority at twenty-one years. However, the regulations governing the Foreign Legion permitted the recruitment of members from the age of eighteen without restriction. In West Germany, by contrast, Germans under twenty-one years old could only sign the sort of contact committing them to service in the Legion with the assent of their parents. Due to its status as an occupying power, however, French law trumped West German law, and throughout the 1950s and 1960s West German responses to inquiries made by parents remained overwhelmingly consistent: only in the case of minors under the age of 18 could the government of the Federal Republic intervene with any hope of success. Even then chances were slim.[215] Otherwise all West German officials could offer was an address and perhaps news of whether the young man in question was still alive. Still the letters came, from the parents of Heinrich Balzer, 18 years old, and of Klaus Klapetek, 20. They arrived on the desks of officials at the West German Foreign Office, at the Ministry of Justice, and the Ministry of Expellees, Refugees, and War Victims, among others. Secretaries read and passed these letters along to members of parliament, the president, and the chancellor. Some parents, desperate to make an impression, pleaded for help on account of special circumstances. One letter from Willy Hoffman told of his wife's declining health and his hopes that the return of his son might aid her recovery.

Concern about the age of German recruits for the Foreign Legion did not appear fully formed in the German psyche. Initial press coverage of the issue mentioned the fact that underage Germans were serving in the Legion almost in passing; *Die Welt*, for instance, published a story noting that only in the case of minors under eighteen years of

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[215] "Minderjährige in der Fremdenlegion," *Die Welt*, April 28, 1951.

age did the West German government have any recourse. The headline, however, simply indicated "5000 in the Foreign Legion: Federal Government achieved release of minors" without qualification. The *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* ran a piece entitled simply "The Foreign Legion" in which it reported that "even countless seventeen- and sixteen-year-olds, still half children, are seduced into joining the Legion."[216] A similar story in another newspaper left even greater room for ambiguity, informing readers only that the government "is making efforts to have contracts signed by underage German youths annulled in 150 to 200 cases."[217]

In time, however, a growing number of reports about underage Germans and the Foreign Legion began to appear in West German newspapers, reports that reflected and precipitated growing concern among West Germans. In September, 1952 a seventeen year old boy in Cologne seeking work narrowly avoided recruitment by two foreigners promising work in Koblenz.[218] In 1953, the state Welfare and Youth Office in Rheinland-Pfalz surveyed 199 young adults who had decided to join the Legion: 135 were less than twenty-one years old, and 41 of those were not even eighteen.[219] The *Westdeutsche Allgemeine* newspaper published the story of 20 year-old Eugen Rudzinski in 1954, admitting it "may be that this report about the fate of a German boy who barely escaped dying as canon fodder in the jungles of Indochina sometimes reads like an adventure novel."[220] Rudzinski's story included well-dressed men "who drink cognac out

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[216] "Die Fremdenlegion," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, July 17, 1952.

[217] "Strafandrohung für Legionäre," *Lübecker Freie Presse*, July 17, 1952.

[218] "Warnung vor Werbern der Fremdenlegion. Vorsicht walten lassen - zur Zeit der einzige Schutz," *Frankfurter Rundschau*, September 13, 1952.

[219] Walter Kopp, "Entwurzelte Jugend, anfällig für Werbungen der Fremdenlegion. Eine Untersuchung über die Gründe der Bereitschaft zum Eintritt," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, September 30, 1953; Fritz Reichard, "Aufklärung über Fremdenlegion. Aktion im Bundesgebiet geplant - Jugendliche sollen gewarnt werden," *Die Welt*, March 13, 1954.

[220] Ludwig Doering, "Die Werber sind unter uns! Essener entrann der Fremdenlegion aus einer Kaserne in Koblenz. Unter Alkohol gesetzt und im Wagen zur Annahmestelle

of silver tumblers" and "drive foreign cars" as well as barracks on German soil in which "seventeen-year-olds sit and cry."[221] These and many other cases made clear to West Germans that the true cost of service in the French Foreign Legion was not one paid by individuals recruits, but rather one society as a whole had to bear.

Disproportionate German contributions to French colonial wars in Vietnam and Algeria sparked strong reactions from the press, citizens' groups, and individual West Germans—especially when young men less than 21 or even 18 years old made those contributions—but in West Germany criticisms of France and the Legion did not dovetail with critiques of French colonialism as often as one might expect. Rather, West Germans continued to accept colonialism, questioning not France's continued colonial presence but the means by which France sought to secure it. In addition to criticizing French recruitment tactics, West German parents and politicians attacked the very notion of Germans fighting for France in the colonies. Some critics argued that enough Germans had already died in World War II; others simply objected to the idea of Germans fighting under a French flag, often against other Germans. Few raised the issue of colonialism, except to contend that the French should defend their own empire rather than having Germans do it for them.[222] Outright condemnation of French colonialism, even from politicians in the SPD, was relatively rare during France's war in Vietnam. Only the far left called into question French claims that Vietnam represented not a conflict between French colonial-imperialism and a national liberation movement but one—like the war in Korea—fought to protect the western world from communism.[223] The focus remained on

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gefahren," *Westdeutsche Allgemeine*, May 5, 1954.

[221] Ibid.

[222] "Deutsches Blut für fremde Erde. 40 000 in der Fremdenlegion - In Offenburg werden wöchentlich 500-700 angeworben," *Schwäbische Landeszeitung*, January 18, 1950; "Bundestagsdebatte über die Fremdenlegion. Verbot der Werbung für fremden Militärdienst verlangt - 'Kolonialekrieg nicht unsere Sache'," *Stuttgarter Zeitung*, February 22, 1952.

[223] "Deutsche in fremden Uniformen. Seelische und wirtschaftliche Not der deutschen

questions of (West) German sovereignty, rather than the sovereignty of colonial peoples.

Even when West German commentators questioned the degree of sovereignty the nascent Federal Republic truly enjoyed the vast majority did not seriously pause to consider whether or not West Germany had become a French colony, or a colony for the Western Allies for that matter. French exploitation of a combination of legal limitations imposed by the Allied Control Council and illegal activity along the French border to fill the ranks of the Foreign Legion provided plenty of fodder for discussions about West German sovereignty. The smuggling of German recruits across the border near Schweigen, for example, occurred only weeks before parliamentary debates about the ratification of the General Treaty intended to restore to the Federal Republic nearly all the rights of a sovereign state. The incident ensured that this debate about sovereignty took place not only amongst West German politicians, however, but in the public. Still, most critics worried not that West Germany would soon resemble France's overseas territories and colonies, but that West German contributions to the defense of Europe had not received the recognition and respect they deserved. "France is waging in Indochina a desperate battle for colonial rule," one commentator wrote. "This jungle war is only of general interest because behind the freedom fighters of the Viet Minh stand the communists. Tens of thousands of Germans are dying there for the glory of France without France once mentioning this German contribution."[224] West Germans could and would help contain the spread of communism through the defense of Europe's empire, but they wanted to have that participation duly noted and they demanded that it occur on their own terms, not as a result of treacherous recruiting or the exploitation of troubled youths. In short, West Germans felt they had earned a place as full-fledged partners in the

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Jugend darf nicht fremdem Kolonialimperialismus dienen," *Freiheit*, November 9, 1951; "Unser 'Verteidigungsbeitrag' in Asien. 86 000 Deutsche in der Fremdenlegion? 13 500 Tote."

[224] "Fremdenlegion und Souveränität," *Schwäbische Landeszeitung*, November 20, 1952.

West with all the rights and responsibilities that came along with that role; West German responses to the Foreign Legion reflected that sentiment.

East German Anti-Colonialism and the Foreign Legion

In the German Democratic Republic, the press, politicians, and ordinary citizens responded to the recruitment of so many Germans into the French Foreign Legion in many of the same ways West Germans did. Like their counterparts in West Germany, they expressed outrage at the tactics recruiters used and the age of those they recruited. They watched with alarm as unemployment and other societal shortcomings drove Germans to make a living by putting their lives on the line—perhaps not for the first time—and doing it for a foreign power, no less. What set the East German responses apart, however, was the addition of a strong anti-colonialist bent. At the prompting of SED leadership the East German press and state officials criticized France for using Germans to fight a colonial war, attacked the West German government for its complicity and even cooperation to this end, and appealed to those Germans who ended up in the Foreign Legion to abandon their posts or even defect and join the fight against French (and West German) colonialism and neo-colonialism. Even as France cast large numbers of Germans into the role of colonizer, East German propaganda attempted to use this fact to discredit colonialism and imperialism, unmask rampant militarism in the West German government, and spread the anti-colonialist cause.

East German focus on the French Foreign Legion's colonial ties colored every response and interpretation. East German statements condemning the tactics of recruiters or lamenting the extent to which such tactics succeeded represented concerns shared with West German citizens, politicians, and members of the press, but the language and context in which East German propaganda expressed these sentiments returned time and time again to French imperialism and French colonialism. Thus, for example, the Free German Youth argued that "impressment" into the Foreign Legion occurred "under false

pretenses, by exploitation of [the] difficult circumstances as a French prisoner of war" at the hands of "agents of French imperialism."[225] In the East German parliament, politicians and party officials condemned France's "dirty war" in Vietnam—where, they believed, as many as 46 000 young Germans had died—and the new war in Algeria where the burden of fighting "is naturally again shifted to the Foreign Legion, indeed to the young Germans who have let themselves be recruited there."[226] Deputy Minister President Otto Nuschke told the parliament in 1954 that it was "with deep distress" that "all patriotic-minded Germans have learned in recent days that the majority of prisoners, wounded, and killed at the hopeless battle in Dien Bien Phu, which the French imperialists waged against the Vietnamese people, were German Legionnaires."[227] In these and other, similar statements East German propaganda tied the exploitation and suffering of German youths to that of Vietnamese and Algerian victims of French imperialism and colonialism.

Defending young Germans from the French Foreign Legion was good politics. Domestically, it touched a nerve that ran through East and West German society; given the devastation and loss of life that occurred during World War II, children and young adults had become even more important to societal reproduction than otherwise might have been the case. More broadly speaking, keeping young Germans out of the Legion meant not only hindering French efforts to maintain a crumbling colonial empire but also the promotion of an alternative relationship between peoples that no longer depended on exploitation and inequality. Nuschke touched on both of these dimensions later in his

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[225] Eva Volland, "Protokoll Nr. 56 der Sitzung des Sekretariats des Zentralrates der Freien Deutschen Jugend am 21.2.1950," February 21, 1950, BAB DY/24/2395.

[226] "Gesetz zur Änderung des Paßgesetzes der Deutschen Demokratischen REpublik," *Volkskammer der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik* 2. Wahlperiode, no. 30 (December 11, 1957): 925-946.

[227] "Entgegennahme einer Erklärung der Regierung der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik und Aussrpache," 2217.

speech before parliament:

> Our youth are much to precious to us that we could sacrifice them for dirty colonial wars or deliver them to German militarism to serve as canon fodder. Our youth should not die for profit interests, but live for Germany! Our youth should not be the enemy of another people, but rather should live strive in beautiful friendship with the youth of all nations towards lasting peace.[228]

Naturally, taking up a stance opposed to France's colonial interests and West Germany's alleged neo-colonialism created potential opportunities to differentiate the two German states and lay the groundwork for friendship and cooperation with other anti-imperialist states and organizations. Doing so in the interests of the German youth—of Germany's future—opened up the possibility of also shoring up support in East Germany and maybe even winning the sympathies of some in the Federal Republic.

To these ends, East German propaganda presented the French Foreign Legion as agents of colonialism and imperialism that oppressed and exploited not only the peoples of Vietnam and Algeria, but of Germany as well: "The same measures of terror that are applied to the heroic people of Vietnam on a daily basis should prevent the ascent of our people into the circles of the peace-loving nations."[229] The Foreign Legion, this propaganda suggested, represented just further proof of the Western Allies' designs on a permanent dismemberment of Germany and the development of their zones into a colony with material and personnel resources to use and abuse as they saw fit. French imperialists were thus "the chosen enemy of a unified and peace-loving Germany," who, in cooperation with American imperialist interests, "help to transform West Germany into a colony."[230] While it is difficult to gauge the effectiveness of such comparisons between occupation and colonization, the reasoning underlying them is not difficult to understand.

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[228] Ibid., 2219.

[229] Volland, "Protokoll Nr. 56 der Sitzung des Sekretariats des Zentralrates der Freien Deutschen Jugend am 21.2.1950."

[230] Ibid.

France had a long tradition of using colonial troops in European wars. Indeed, many Germans likely remembered only too well the stationing of African soldiers in occupied Germany after World War I, a decision that triggered harsh, racist backlash.[231] Instead of Senegalese troops fighting for France in Europe, after 1945 German troops fought for France in Asia and Africa.[232] Whatever the impact as propaganda, however, such comparisons had little in the way of historical validity. The occupation allowed French recruiters unique advantages in recruitment, but as the French government never tired of reminding West (and East) Germans, the decision to join the Legion was a voluntary one—at least most of the time; the same cannot be said of French colonial troops. Furthermore, complaints about recruitment tactics after World War II were not unique to occupied Germany; similar stories appeared in Switzerland, Denmark, and other countries which clearly were not in danger of becoming French colonies. Moreover, German troops did not fight in the regular French army, which allowed only French citizens and subjects; instead, they fought in the Foreign Legion, not as colonial subjects, but as colonizers.

As though recognizing this discrepancy, by the mid 1950s East German propaganda largely gave up on the idea of West Germany as a colony in favor of a view that portrayed the West German state as an ally of Western colonialism and imperialism—indeed, as a neo-colonialist power unto itself. The French Foreign Legion provided the means for West German and French imperialists to seek to maintain their

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[231] Carol Blackshire-Belay, ed., *The African-German Experience: Critical Essays* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1996); Clarence Lusane, *Hitler's Black Victims: The Historical Experiences of Afro-Germans, European Blacks, Africans, and African Americans in the Nazi Era* (New York ; London: Routledge, 2002); Marianne Bechhaus-Gerst and Reinhard Klein-Arendt, *Die (koloniale) Begegnung: AfrikanerInnen in Deutschland 1880-1945, Deutsche in Afrika 1880-1918* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2003); Tina Campt, *Other Germans: Black Germans and the Politics of Race, Gender, and Memory in the Third Reich* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2004).

[232] Myron J. Echenberg, *Colonial Conscripts: The Tirailleurs Senegalais in French West Africa, 1857-1960* (London: Currey, 1991).

grip on Vietnam and Algeria, but also an escape for the worst of the lot—a cadre of "former SS officers and officers of the fascist German army"—who "for years have battled the National Liberation Army with bestial methods."[233]

Alongside this cadre, of course, were "hundreds of thousands of young Germans" who represented "cannon fodder" for the Legion, victims not only of French but also West German imperialists.[234] As Chancellor of the Federal Republic, Konrad Adenauer bore the brunt of East German criticisms of the "dishonorable trafficking in human beings" that led these Germans to colonial battlefields.[235] And if accusations of imperialism and neo-colonialism were not enough, Adenauer also faced charges of princely absolutism: "Once German princes sold their subjects to foreign powers as soldiers. Now Herr Adenauer wants to do the same on a larger scale . . . to trade the children of his own people for foreign military aims!"[236]

According to East German propaganda, Adenauer's willingness to sell German youths into foreign service represented a harbinger of things to come: a Western army poised to attack the Soviet Union and certain to devastate East Germany in the process. When the French government officially admitted that 13,250 Germans had died in

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[233] Ausschuss für deutsche Einheit, *Adenauer-Regierung unterstützt den schmutzigen Krieg gegen das algerische Volk: Eine Dokumentation* (Berlin: Ausschuss für deutsche Einheit, 1961), 4.

[234] Ibid.

[235] "Entgegennahme einer Erklärung der Regierung der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik und Aussrpache," 2217; See also, for example: "Stellungnahme zu der von der Regierung der UdSSR den drei Westmächten übermittelten Note zur Frage der Vorbereitung und über die Grundlagen eines Friedensvertrages mit Deutschland"; "Stellungnahme zur Note der Regierung der Sowjetunion an die Westmächte vom 23. August 1952"; "Ein 'Wort an die deutschen Wähler'," September 11, 1957, BAB DY/30/IV 2/20/353, Fiche 3, 200-202; Löbel, "Vermerk einer Beratung über die weitere Zusammenarbeit mit dem Algerischen Rückführungsdienst für ehemalige Fremdenlegionäre und damit in Zusammenhang stehender agitaterischer Aufgaben am 13.4.1960," April 14, 1960, BAB DY/30/IV 2/20/354, Fiche 1, 3-5.

[236] "Entgegennahme einer Erklärung der Regierung der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik und Aussrpache," 2217.

Vietnam, one East German parliamentarian—after questioning the accuracy of that total—called these young men the "first division" of Germans sacrificed for imperialistic goals; the first, but not the last. Their fate, he suggested, was "a sad warning to the West German youth who Adenauer wants to deliver for Eisenhower's twelve divisions of the American Foreign Legion."[237] Indeed, another parliamentarian blamed Adenauer and the government in Bonn—and them alone—for the deaths of over 40,000 young Germans in the Foreign Legion. A representative of the Free German Youth, he argued that in West Germany "the Bonn government and the entire state apparatus have only the goal of misusing the youth for imperialist interests."[238]

Plans for a European Defense Community seemed to bear out East German claims: West Germany would rearm, but its military would come under the authority of a group of Western European states including France, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg. While it was intended as an alternative to West German membership in NATO and aimed at defense against a potential conflict with the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc, East German propaganda painted the European Defense Community as another example of Adenauer and the West German state selling out, sacrificing the interests of the German people for their own imperialistic and militaristic ends. It would mean "enslavement and brutal exploitation" and ensure that German youth would continue to "play the role of Foreign Legionnaires."[239] Although these plans and these fears ultimately amounted to nothing when the treaty failed to win ratification in the French parliament, West German membership in the European Economic Community (EEC) and NATO reanimated such criticisms. West German membership in these

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[237] "Abg. Goldenbaum (DBD)," n.d., 537.

[238] "Gesetz über den Staatshaushalsplan 1958," *Volkskammer der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik* 2. Wahlperiode, no. 31 (January 8, 1958): 1009.

[239] "Entgegennahme einer Erklärung der Regierung der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik und Aussrpache," 2233.

organizations not only contributed to the maintenance of French colonialism, East German propaganda explained; it played a vital role in its very survival. In materials prepared in 1957 for upcoming West German elections, one East German radio broadcast included an appeal from an Algerian citizen to oust Adenauer:

> It is the Adenauer government that makes it possible for our oppressors to continue to deploy the Foreign Legion in battle against the Algerian people. It is the Adenauer government that makes millions of Marks available to the French government in order to rescue it from the financial, social, and political abyss to which the criminal war in Algeria and the brave resistance of the Algerian people have led it. And therefore the French colonists can only continue their war of exploitation against our people with the help of their allies, the government of West Germany foremost among them. And only thus can the French paratroopers still commit their atrocities against the civilian population of Algeria, because the German soldiers in the Foreign Legion help them.[240]

Only West German aid and assistance through its formal obligations and alleged informal willingness to turn a blind eye to Foreign Legion recruitment made the war in Algeria possible. Adenauer and the West German government, then, were as guilty as any French imperialist. East German officials used such complicity and guilt not only in its appeals to West Germans but also as a part of its foreign policy propaganda. In a meeting with a delegation from Cameroon, one East German official made sure to mention "that the West German Federal Republic has given hundreds of millions of Marks in loans to France, so that it can continue its war in Algeria and moreover there are tens of thousands of young Germans from the Federal Republic in the ranks of the French Foreign Legion, who are waging the war against the Algerian people."[241]

The SED and the East German government also appealed directly to those Germans who ended up in the Foreign Legion. Some of the message intended for this

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[240] "Ein 'Wort an die deutschen Wähler'," 1-2.

[241] Kirschey, "Betr.: Aktennotiz über einige Aussprachen mit dem Delegierten Kameruns auf der Konferenz der Völker Afrikas, Herrn André Marie Mbida," April 21, 1959, 3, BAB DY/30/IV 2/20/418, Fiche 1, 1-5.

audience resembled the sorts of statements critics of the Legion were making in East Germany on a regular basis—and in West Germany, as well, albeit without the anti-colonialist slant. For example, materials for German Legionnaires criticized recruitment tactics: "By means of deliberate deception, joblessness, hunger, and need these enemies of humanity try to win over willing mercenaries for their criminal objectives."[242] Similar talking points appeared all over Germany, but when aimed at Germans in the Legion they served not so much to stir up outrage as to earn a full hearing by demonstrating an understanding of (and sympathy for) the plight of Legionnaires.

Unlike the materials intended for other groups, however, East German propaganda aimed at German Legionnaires also encouraged desertion and even defection. As it encouraged desertion, the state and the SED also played up the GDR, selling it to Germans second-guessing their decision to join the Legion: "Know that your homeland, through the appeals of the government of the German Democratic Republic, has smoothed a path of return into the ranks of people. Anyone who leaves the Foreign Legion now will enjoy the amnesty of the government of the German Democratic Republic and receive work and bread in the homeland."[243] Not only would the East German state forgive these Legionnaires; it would also provide them with work and bread, guarantees meant to directly address some of the reasons Germans joined the Legion in the first place. What was more, East Germany offered not simply employment but "a great and inspiring building site for a life in peace and prosperity"; not just jobs for all, but "for every young person a rich and interesting line of work in industry and

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[242] Volland, "Protokoll Nr. 56 der Sitzung des Sekretariats des Zentralrates der Freien Deutschen Jugend am 21.2.1950"; Unemployment was, of course, a "result of American colonial policies": Zentralsekretariat der SED / Abteilung Presse, "Arbeitslosigkeit in Westdeutschland - Folge der amerikanischen Kolonialpolitik," *SED Informationen. Industrie - Handel - Transport* 1949, no. 13 (October 12, 1949): 7-8.

[243] Volland, "Protokoll Nr. 56 der Sitzung des Sekretariats des Zentralrates der Freien Deutschen Jugend am 21.2.1950."

agriculture, in the areas of science, research, and art."[244] For Legionnaires in Vietnam or Algeria, it must have sounded like a paradise.

Desertion was not the only option East German propaganda suggested to Germans in the Foreign Legion; defection provided an alternative that not only freed Legionnaires from serving the interests of French and West German imperialists but also afforded an opportunity to fight back against imperialism and colonialism. Materials aimed at encouraging this sort of behavior used familiar rhetoric accusing the Western Allies of exploiting West Germany for their own gain. Fighting against the "oppressors of the Vietnamese people," then, was equated with fighting against "the imperialist oppressors of West Germany."[245] One appeal to German Legionnaires implored them to longer allow themselves to be "misused" as "mercenaries": "Aim your guns at the enemies of Germany, at the stooges of French, English, and American imperialism!"[246]

Some Germans actually joined the anti-imperialist cause, to the delight of the East German press and the consternation of West German newspapers. By 1950 the West German Foreign Office had received reports of numerous defections.[247] Sometimes, however, such victories were hollow, as in the case of Ernst Schröder. In addition to becoming a general in the Vietnamese army, Schröder also became Ho Chi Minh's son-in-law when he married the Vietnamese leader's daughter a few short years after leaving the French Foreign Legion. These facts alone would have been enough to capture the attention of East and West Germans, and indeed Schröder's became perhaps the single

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[244] Präsidium der Nationalrats der Nationalen Front des demokratischen Deutschland, "Aufruf an die deutschen Angehörigen der Fremdenlegion in Algerien: Ruf aus der Heimat," January 2, 1957, BAB DY/30/IV 2/9.02/116, Fiche 3, 223-224.

[245] Volland, "Protokoll Nr. 56 der Sitzung des Sekretariats des Zentralrates der Freien Deutschen Jugend am 21.2.1950."

[246] Ibid.

[247] Böker, "Vermerk."

most widely publicized case of a German defecting from the Foreign Legion. Schröder's past, however, attracted nearly as much attention and permanently tainted his decision to join the struggle against the forces of imperialism: during World War II, Ernst Schröder had served as a squad leader in the SS.[248] Given these ties to the Nazi past, Schröder was of no use to East German propaganda.

No less problematic was the fact that German defections combined with a large German contingent in the Foreign Legion created the possibility that Germans could end up fighting other Germans. Thus, for example, in 1951 Germans fighting with the Vietminh ambushed and nearly wiped out a Foreign Legion battalion consisting largely of German Legionnaires.[249] Former SS squad leader Ernst Schröder sought to minimize the risk of such incidents, sending Germans in the Legion advance warning of future attacks—"We have a plan! Tell your comrades! Beatit! Schröder"—or instructing his troops to spare the lives of German soldiers.[250] Thus, after one attack Schröder contacted his French counterparts to inform them that he and his men had "attacked yoru convoy, 200 vehicles. euren Konvoi überfallen, 200 Wagen. Everything wiped out, save for the Germans. Them you can pick up!"[251]

Despite the dangers, East German propaganda persisted, encouraging Germans fighting first in Vietnam and then later in Algeria to defect. Whether Germans in the Legion needed such encouragement or whether they went of their own accord is difficult to determine, but reports from Vietnamese and Algerian representatives suggested they

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[248] Hausenstein, "Betr.: Deutsche Fremdenlegionäre"; "Deutsche gegen Deutsche in Indochina. Ehemaliger SS-Scharführer Generaloberst der Vietminh-Truppen"; "Der Vietminh-General aus Kitzscher," *Berliner Morgenpost*, February 17, 1954.

[249] "Deutsche gegen Deutsche in Indochina. Ehemaliger SS-Scharführer Generaloberst der Vietminh-Truppen."

[250] "Der Vietminh-General aus Kitzscher."

[251] Ibid.

were joining the anti-colonial cause, and in growing numbers.[252] Through their involvement these former Legionnaires transformed the limited, largely indirect involvement of Germans in efforts to tear down the colonial system into a much more active role.

German Legionnaires Come Home

One incident in particular involving Germans serving in the French Foreign Legion perhaps best exemplifies the ways in which West and East Germans reacted to German involvement in the Legion—and, by extension, to French efforts to maintain the French colonial empire. When, in 1951, the Viet Minh released German prisoners-of-war into Chinese, then Soviet, and eventually East German custody, the SED and the East German state had a field day. East German propaganda claimed that these Legionnaires had in fact heeded calls to defect and contrasted the treatment of these Germans with the atrocities committed by French forces, including the Foreign Legion. When a number of these former Legionnaires returned to West Berlin, however, they were arrested and imprisoned, charged with desertion. This turn of events seemed a coup for East German officials who condemned not only French imperialists for their exploitation of Germans in the continued oppression of Vietnam but also British and West German officials for their cooperation to this end. These arrests, they argued, were the ultimate example of the lengths the British and the capitalists running the show in West Germany were willing to go to in order to aid the French and further proof that West Germany had become little more than a colony of the Western Allies. West Germans, too, reacted to the arrests of these former POWs forcefully. However, in West Germany condemnation of French, British, and even West German officials rarely made reference to the larger colonial

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252 "Deutsche Legionäre kämpfen für die algerischen Rebellen," *Neue Rhein-Zeitung*, February 26, 1957; "Deutsche Legionäre bei den Rebellen? Eine Behauptung der algerischen / Die Exilzentral in Tunis," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, February 26, 1957.

context coloring French interests and actions; criticism of that context was rarer still.

East German officials had no illusions about the opportunity presented to them by the return of German Legionnaires from Vietnam. Immediately upon their arrival in Dresden state and party officials implemented a two-pronged propaganda blitz aimed at winning over these veterans and using them to put a face on the problem of Germans serving in the French Foreign Legion for the benefit of colonialism and imperialism. The event deserved "the greatest possible publicity" and, perhaps, the presence of official government representatives.[253] After the Legionnaires' arrival East German officials put together a press conference featuring several of their number. One West German paper with a correspondent present noted it appeared "that from this chapter of the Foreign Legion story a great propaganda coup might be scored."[254] Indeed, East German media outlets dutifully picked up the story of these young Germans and portrayed them as heroes "who had turned their backs on the imperialist warmongers."[255] Viet Minh guerillas had welcomed the Legionnaires, and Chinese and Soviet Communists had helped them on their long journey home.

Portraying these Legionnaires as defectors rather than prisoners of war was not strictly necessary; East German propaganda had long distinguished between the treatment prisoners received from Viet Minh captors and that apportioned by the French military—if prisoners were even taken. The former was exemplary and stood in sharp contrast to stories of French brutality and mistreatment that appeared elsewhere in East German broadcasts and the East German press. Stories emphasized that German prisoners of war in Vietnam were "healthy and were treated well," that the food provided was "the same if

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[253] Keilson, "Betreff: Rückkehr ehemaliger in Vietnam eingesetzten deutsche Söldner der französischen Fremdenlegion," March 27, 1951, NY/4182/1269, 5.

[254] "Ostzonenpropaganda mit der Fremdenlegion," *NWDR*, April 6, 1951.

[255] Blankenhorn to Joseph E. Slater, August 6, 1951, BAK B/122/651.

not better than that of the Vietnamese soldiers." The reason for such excellent treatment: the friendship and solidarity that existed between the peoples of Vietnam and East Germany.[256]

Using the return of some 70 German Legionnaires to condemn French imperialism was easy; convincing all of these young men to remain in East Germany, however, turned out to be a much more difficult battle. Economic opportunities and, often enough, familial ties beckoned in the West. It was nonetheless vitally important to East German officials. An important component of East German propaganda sent to Vietnam and, later, Algeria had focused on differentiating the two German states and extolling the virtues of the workers' and farmers' paradise developing in the German Democratic Republic. With the arrival of German Legionnaires in East Germany these propaganda efforts multiplied as East German officials hoped to convince these high-profile individuals to make new lives in a new German state, giving up their last ties to Western imperialism in the process. "It will be necessary," one East German official wrote in a letter to Walter Ulbricht, "to once again point out to all rural and urban districts in the republic the importance of supervising the former Legionnaires so that their transition to a regular life is made easier." [257] By no means could the state or the SED allow insufficient help to serve as the grounds for a Legionnaire's return to West Germany. Many of the Legionnaires did in fact choose to remain in the East, and officials offered each other congratulations for the political and material support that led these individuals to make that decision and helped them to "settle in" so well.[258] Those who remained wrote to East German President Wilhelm Pieck to thank him for making possible their

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[256] Abt. Internationale Verbindungen, "Übersetzung: Gesuch an den Vorsitzenden der SED," April 20, 1951, 1, NY/4036/712, 5-6.

[257] Pleni to Walter Ulbricht, "Betr.: Aufnahme und Behandlung ehemaliger Fremdenlegionäre aus Vietnam," August 18, 1951, NY/4182/1269, 8.

[258] Ibid.

"return home out of the misery of the imperialist camp." "We stand therefore together in a common front against imperialist aggression and will take an active role in buiding our German homeland," they wrote, promising "as eye witnesses to convince the youth of West Germany of the true face of imperialism and to awaken in them, with the help of lived experiences, an abhorrence for the degrading system of capitalism and a will for peace."[259]

The media in West German took note of the arrival of German Legionnaires in the "Soviet zone" as well, but cast the story in an entirely different light. News stories emphasized the "rescue" of these German prisoners of war, dismissing or at the very least questioning East German claims that they had deserted to join the fight against French imperialism.[260] The Legionnaires' own accounts discredited East German efforts to paint them as deserters: "The former Legionnaires assert credibly that the propaganda campaign took place without their knowledge and against their will," wrote one West German politician familiar with the story, "the [have] in no way deserted, but rather fell into regular captivity as prisoners of war."[261] While the press and official propaganda in the East appealed to anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism in their portrayals of the Legionnaires' story, in West Germany the press played to Western anti-communism: "In French-Indochina they were deployed against red Vietnamese rebels and were captured by the Communists."[262] Nor did West German press coverage contrast the relatively good treatment these prisoners received with the fate that might befall Viet Minh

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[259] "Ehemalige Fremdenlegionäre danken Präsient Pieck," *Tägliche Rundschau*, April 22, 1951.

[260] "Die gnadenlose Heimkehr der vier Legionäre. Sie kamen aus Indochina, flohen aus der Sowjetzone und wurden in Westberlin den Franzosen ausgeliefert."

[261] Blankenhorn to Slater, August 6, 1951.

[262] "Die gnadenlose Heimkehr der vier Legionäre. Sie kamen aus Indochina, flohen aus der Sowjetzone und wurden in Westberlin den Franzosen ausgeliefert."

prisoners of war who fell into French hands. Indeed, while the means of warfare in Vietnam did at least merit some passing reference in the West German press, the ends received little attention or analysis and almost nothing in the way of condemnation. Of greater importance was the notion that Germans perhaps unfairly tricked into risking their lives were once again safely on German soil—even if it was East German soil.

When Martin Dutschke, Jack Holsten-Plichta, Siegfried Richter, and Heinz Müller returned to West Berlin (and two other fellow Legionnaires returned to West Germany), their decision to leave appeared at first to be a blow to East German pride, or at the very least to efforts aimed at taking advantage of their story. Indeed, the decision made by Jack Holsten-Plichta to leave East Berlin was a direct result of shortcomings in East Germany as he sought better treatment for a severe case of malaria.[263] East German officials sought other explanations for their departure, going so far as to suggest that if these former Legionnaires wanted to leave the workers' and farmers' state then "the grounds are probably to be found in the fact that these were people who wanted to avoid proper work."[264] Soon enough, however, it became clear that this flight to the West provided an unexpected boon to East German propagandists. On June 22 and 23 West German criminal police arrested Dutschke, Holsten-Plichta, Richter, and Müller in the British zone.[265] With the permission of British authorities they turned these young men over to French military personnel. French officials, in turn, jailed the young men on charges of desertion. Their cases had, it turned out, been tried in French military courts

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[263] "Deutsche Legionäre an Frankreich ausgeliefert," *Das grüne Blatt*, 1951, 6.

[264] Pleni to Ulbricht, "Betr.: Aufnahme und Behandlung ehemaliger Fremdenlegionäre aus Vietnam."

[265] Some commentators in the West suggested that the arrests also made it easier for East German officials to convince the other returned Legionnaires to remain in East Germany. Blankenhorn to Slater, August 6, 1951; "Bonn fordert Freilassung verurteilter Legionäre," *Westfälische Rundschau*, August 23, 1951; "Vier Fremdenlegionäre: In West-Berlin als 'Deserteure' festgenommen," *Hamburger Abendblatt*, August 24, 1951; "Noch keine Entscheidung über Fremdnelegionäre," *Frankfurter Rundschau*, August 31, 1951.

shortly after they disappeared in Vietnam, and with their convictions had come sentences of ten years in prison.[266]

East German officials immediately criticized the move, condemning French, British, and West German slavish indifference to anything other than the imperialist cause. More significantly, the SED and the state mobilized public outrage against the fate of these former Legionnaires, attracting the attention of East and West Germans alike. "The so-called National Front, directed by the SED, uses the arrest and extradition of Legionnaires as an excuse for a broad protest action," reported *Die Welt*.[267] In Leipzig, for instance, white- and blue-collar workers employed at the central station protested the "abduction" of Jack Holsten and his comrades. "These young people did only that which ever true Geran must have done," they claimed: " they commited themselves to freedom people."[268] Employees at Leipzig post office C 10 expressed similar views, and the Cottbus chapter of the Association of Democratic Jurists condemned French actions as "a deprivation of freedom inconsistent with international law."[269] Protests were not limited to SED members and officials, either; other parties and groups in the ruling National Front coalition became involved as well. The East German CDU, for instance, criticized French and German officials for their actions and appealed to catholic and evangelical bishops alike to intercede.[270]

In the West German press significant protest appeared as well, but the focus of

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[266] "Zehn Jahre Zuchthaus für deutsche Fremdenlegionäre. Westberliner Polizei lieferte Heimkehrer aus. Sind Deutsche denn vogelfrei? Wie lange noch gute Meine zum bösen Spiel," *Der Stern*, November 18, 1951.

[267] "Dibelius bittet für Legionäre," *Die Welt*, August 25, 1951.

[268] "Geistliche protestieren gegen die Verhaftung der Fremdenlegionäre," *Leipziger Volkszeitung*, September 18, 1951.

[269] Ibid.

[270] "Vier Fremdenlegionäre: In West-Berlin als 'Deserteure' festgenommen."

these complaints was largely on the injustice of the charges and the inexplicable cooperation of British officials and West German police. "Jail – that is the reward that France wants to offer to its Legionnaires for their struggle in the jungle-hell of Indochina," wrote one reporter for *Stern*, "And it was German criminal police who helped with the dispersal of this reward."[271] The press also reflected public outrage. Several papers covered the West Berlin Bürgerschutzbund (Alliance for the Protection of Citizens) and the Kampfgruppe gegen Unmenschlichkeit (Task Force against Inhumanity), both of which vocally protested the arrests. The Kampfgruppe brought their case to the federal government in Bonn, demanding the state provide for the legal defense of these Germans.[272] The Bürgerschutzbund, by contrast, focused on the actions of West Berlin police and called for the resignation of police president Dr. Johannes Stumm.[273]

Even appeals to the West German state by the parents of these Legionnaires left out the colonial and imperial context of their children's return and arrest. For Rita Holsten-Plichta and Emma Richter, the mothers of two of the imprisoned Legionnaires, the chief concern was the safety of their sons. They leveled their only criticisms at the intractable bureaucracies that stifled their attempts not only to secure their sons' release, but even to gather information about what had happened. "All public authorities refuse to take any responsibility," they wrote to West German President Theodor Heuss, "and we are snubbed with the excuse, that Herr So-and-So is not present . . . not to be spoken to or is otherwise busy."[274] The unwillingness of French, British, or West German authorities

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[271] "Zehn Jahre Zuchthaus für deutsche Fremdenlegionäre. Westberliner Polizei lieferte Heimkehrer aus. Sind Deutsche denn vogelfrei? Wie lange noch gute Meine zum bösen Spiel," 6.

[272] "Rechtsschutz für Fremdenlegionäre beantragt," *Die Welt*, August 21, 1951.

[273] "Polizeipräsident soll zurücktreten. Protest gegen Auslieferung deutscher Fremdenlegionäre an Frankreich," *Westfälische Rundschau*, August 25, 1951; "Bitte und Protest," *Hamburger Abendblatt*, August 25, 1951.

[274] Rita Holsten-Plichta and Emma Richter to Theodor Heuss, July 21, 1951, PAAA Bestand B 11 (Länderabteilung), 779.

to take responsibility was not limited to these private inquiries. Even in their dealings with one another it remained unclear who had authorized what action. British officials at first denied any involvement before later admitting that they had in fact authorized the arrests that took place in their occupation zone. A federal inquiry cleared the West Berlin criminal police of any wrongdoing, but in other respects the West German state was slow to react: the Foreign Office took so long to get up to speed that Dutschke, Richter, and the other returned Legionnaires were only days from transport to Algeria before officials began to look into the entire matter in earnest.[275]

It was in this regard that mainstream public discourse in West Germany came closest to criticizing the Foreign Legion's intimate ties to European colonialism and imperialism. West German impotence in the case of Dutschke and his comrades reflected the state's long-term inability to deal with the problem of continued German membership in the French Foreign Legion. At the same time, the ability of French occupation authorities to manipulate the system and, in effect, have the police in West Berlin do their "dirty work" for them emphasized the power the Western Allies continued to have over the new West German state and its people. Few, if any, West Germans pointed to this incident as proof that West Germany was nothing more than the Western Allies' jointly run colony, but some did wonder exactly what kind of state the Allies had allowed them:

> Are we still today so without rights that we must tremble before the long arm of the foreign Legion, which today reaches for Berlin and tomorrow here amongst us—and at its own discretion selects who it wants to seize. Are we then so without rights, as we were in the first days of the "unconditional surrender"? Have we not shown again and again in the last six years that we are ready to advocate for a united Western Europe.[276]

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[275] Eugen Feihl, "Aufzeichnung Betr.: Verhaftung von sechs aus der Kriegsgefangenschaft in Indochina entlassenen deutschen Fremdenlegionäre durch die französische Behörden," August 3, 1951, PAAA Bestand B 11 (Länderabteilung), 779; Heinz Trützschler, "Aufzeichnung. Betr.: Sitzung des Auswärtigen Ausschusses des Bundestags am 28. September 1951," September 29, 1951, PAAA Bestand B 11 (Länderabteilung), 779.

[276] "Deutsche Legionäre an Frankreich ausgeliefert," 6.

West Germans clearly realized that they were not "natives of Trizonia" conscripted to fight for France overseas, but the issues raised by the recruitment and service of Germans in the French Foreign Legion in general and the case of Dutschke, et al in particular suggested that West Germans were also not yet partners, either.

Through their presence in French Indochina and Algeria as members of the French Foreign Legion, German citizens from both states contributed directly to the maintenance of colonialism in the postwar world. In East Germany public and official responses demonstrated the SED's commitment to anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism by attacking not only the French government but the one in Bonn as well. Moreover, the party and the state encouraged German contributions to the resistance and even active dismantling of colonialism through the desertion and defection of German Legionnaires. German participation in the Foreign Legion also provoked impassioned responses in West Germany, but these tended to have little to do with colonialism and everything to do with the numbers of Germans fighting overseas and the means by which they came to do so. The question of whether or not Europeans should continue to exert control over other peoples and places did not dominate West German public discourse the way it did in East Germany. Instead, the majority of West Germans accepted this practice, indeed all the more readily because of a Cold War context that turned the maintenance of empire into the defense of the West. Instead, West Germans chafed at the control over West German citizens and West German territory that French recruitment tactics made explicit. Like perhaps nothing else after World War II the continued German presence in the Legion during both the war in Vietnam and that in Algeria brought empire home to Germany and illuminated both the ways in which Germans were affected by and reacted to the realities of colonialism in the postwar world.

CHAPTER 4: GERMANS AS IDEAL COLONIZERS: MYTHS OF GERMAN COLONIALISM IN WEST GERMANY

In the twentieth century colonialism endured assaults not only on the battlefields of Europe's far-flung empires but in the realm of discourse as well, as colonized peoples and their European allies repeatedly pointed out the injustices, abuses, and exploitation of the colonial system, and proponents continuously defended it. Germans fought on both sides, just as they did in Vietnam and Algeria. At stake, however, was much more than the justification or repudiation of colonial rule. After World War II, Germans on both sides of the debate marshaled Germany's own colonial past in order to make arguments that had as much to do with the legitimacy of German identity and of the two systems that emerged in East and West Germany after 1945 as with colonialism past or present.

For their part, in the first two decades after World War II West Germans seized upon and repurposed a pre-existing colonial mythology in order to defend (German) colonialism and, more importantly, redefine Germanness. The most recognizable figure in this pantheon was German Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck. During the First World War, Lettow-Vorbeck led a group of 3000 German soldiers and twelve companies of Askaris (indigenous African troops) in a guerilla campaign against British and Belgian forces that were both better equipped and numerically superior. Despite the odds, Lettow-Vorbeck won a series of battles, earning him a promotion to *Generalmajor*. Lettow-Vorbeck surrendered his undefeated army on 23 November, 1918, two days after the armistice in Europe; fewer than 200 Germans and 1,200 Askaris remained under his command. Even before the end of World War I, Lettow-Vorbeck had become something of a living legend. His exploits provided a rare silver lining to the seemingly inexplicable clouds that were Germany's defeat in the war, and he literally became the poster child for German colonialism (his likeness graced advertisements for a colonial veterans' fundraiser). Lettow-Vorbeck became the embodiment of the ideal German colonizer not only—or

even primarily—on account of the treatment he doled out to his enemies; rather, his treatment of Africans under his command and the relationship it fostered came to stand in for the entirety of the colonial encounter in Africa.

This was as much the case after World War II as it was after World War I. For many Germans after 1918 and West Germans after 1945, proof of Germans' benevolent treatment of Africans and the affectionate relationship it inspired came in the form of Askari loyalty during World War I. Given the British blockade, German officers in East Africa could hardly afford to buy such loyalty, a point emphasized in one fictionalized retelling of Lettow-Vorbeck's campaign published in 1959:

> What did it matter that they [the Askaris] had not been home in years and had not received payment in half a year? That they had to hunger, thirst, march, and fight. They trusted in their German friends, who did not send their Askaris ahead alone but rather themselves were at the front when they attacked the enemy. There were no better companions in arms, and therefore they followed them wherever the journey may lead.[277]

According to the myth, General Lettow-Vorbeck and other German officers earned the loyalty of their troops. And not only on the battlefield. Lettow-Vorbeck's African troops loved him—would follow him to the ends of the Earth—"because he knew their worries and hardships and tended to them as best he could."[278]

Even decades later Africans in former German colonies had not forgotten German rule, a fact not overlooked by the West German press. In late January 1957 Peter Grubbe, foreign correspondent for the conservative newspaper *Die Welt*, published an article on "The German Legend in Africa." In seeking to explain why the Germans remained so beloved, Grubbe came to the conclusion that neither later British mistreatment or misrule, nor German kindness before or after 1918 explained the phenomenon. Indeed, much the

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[277] Johannes Schulz, *Heia Safari! Lettow-Vorbecks Schutztruppe kämpft in Ostafrika*, Soldatengeschichten aus aller Welt 41 (Munich: Arthur Moewig Verlag, 1959), 12.

[278] Ibid., 23.

opposite seemed to be the case. One English official interviewed by Grubbe wondered whether the stricter German rule was not in fact better. "We are so damned liberal," he complained. "and liberalism is only something for educated people." Grubbe's summary unpacked this idea further:

> The Germans in Tanganyika became a legend, a myth, a saga. The German administration in German East Africa was certainly just and energetic and purposeful. But it was also harsh and primitive and not seldom brutal. It was appropriate and good at a time when Africa still slept. But it is more than doubtful whether today, in the era of the Bandung Conference, it would still be tolerable.[279]

Historians interested in the administration of Germany's colonies have come to similar conclusions about its severity, if not its appropriateness. And scholars working in those former colonies have similarly confirmed the positive impression that has remained despite this harsh reality, though that sentiment is not nearly as universal as West German reports made it out to be.[280] Still, similar stories from other former German colonies ran in West German newspapers throughout the 1950s and early 1960s.

Reporting on the respect and affection for Germans shown by Africans even forty years later contributed to similar legends and myths in West Germany. Significantly, however, until the 1960s most West Germans were quick to forget that German colonial rule might have been "harsh" or "brutal", and instead focused on how "just" and "appropriate" it was. Myths about the German colonial past proved so convincing that Grubbe's suggestion that such memories of the past were one-sided provoked an immediate response. Eduard Schmid, for example, felt he could prove the truth of Germans' exemplary administration in the colonies:

> The degree to which they [the Africans] were attached to us is demonstrated by the fact that our Askaris remained true to us to the

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[279] Peter Grubbe, "Die deutsche Legende in Afrika. Daressalam 1956 - Wie denkt der schwarze Mann heute über seine einstigen Kolonialherren?," *Die Welt*, January 26, 1957, sec. Die geistige Welt.

[280] Dennis Laumann, *Remembering the Germans in Ghana* (New York: Peter Lang).

> bitter end in 1918, even though the native prefers to stick with the strong, at that time the British. Even our boys wrote to us for years and stirring devotion greeted General von Lettow[-Vorbeck] several years ago when he visited. Those are facts, but of legends or myth there can be no talk.[281]

Schmid rejected the suggestion that Germans' treatment of colonized Africans had not been better than that of other powers and pointed to continued loyalty and affection for Lettow-Vorbeck as proof. Such affection and loyalty was real and genuine, but in no way did it disprove Grubbe's main claim: that the German colonial past had become the stuff of legends in Tanganyika. The same was true in West Germany. Indeed, Germans' legendary status in former colonies like German East Africa along with the loyalty of Askaris and "boys" prior to and during World War I provided a great deal of the content and evidence for this myth in West Germany.

Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck helped to produce and became a product of the myth of German colonialism, a collection of memories about German colonial rule that tended to overlook German shortcomings and overstate German successes. Between the wars this myth served as a justification for the return of Germany's colonies, but in the first two decades after World War II West Germans repurposed the myth, remaking it into a defense of German character and culture. This transformation of purpose occurred without substantial changes in content or form; the myth's dominant theme—Germans' suitability as colonizers—featured in the imagination of Germans even before 1884, and the narrative of German colonialism presented by the myth in the 1950s and '60s closely resembled the one produced by German colonialists in the 1920s and '30s. Indeed, after World War II many of the same proponents of the myth, including Lettow-Vorbeck, used the same technologies of memory they always had in promoting their version of history.

What did change after World War II was the relationship of (West) Germans to their past. Desolated cities, Allied denazification programs, and Germans' own

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[281] Eduard Schmid, "Eine Anerkennung," 1957, BAK B/161/249.

experiences under Nazism accomplished after World War II what the war guilt clause failed to after World War I. The recent past dominated by the rise and fall of Nazism became an object of shame and, much to the horror of many, something best forgotten. In its place many West Germans turned to their own colonial past.

That the dominant narrative of that past well into the 1960s was one best described as myth reflects both form and function. In form the narratives of German colonialism that survived World War II represented not just propaganda but a largely coherent set of intertwining stories told with greater regard for "truth" than "facts". In their function, these narratives fit Claude Levi-Strauss's definition of a myth as the description of a specific pattern that "explains the present and the past as well as the future." This was precisely what West German proponents and adherents saw in the myth of German colonialism after World War II: an alternate explanation of Germany's past, present, and future than that provided by National Socialism. This explanation gained currency even among West Germans with relatively little knowledge of or interest in the colonial past, and it only began to wane when these myths themselves came under the same sort of attack as the more recent past. These myths could paper over the cracks of self-doubt and insecurity that riddled West German identity in the 1950s, but in the storm of questions about the past that whipped up in the 1960s their ultimate lack of substance offered little in the way of additional structural stability as they proved just as susceptible to criticism. Still, many West Germans clung to them just the same. That such myths dating back to World War I helped to fill the vacuum created in West Germany speaks to the durability of historical memory and the flexibility of its explanatory power, but also to the selectivity of memory. Proponents and adherents of the myth not only overlooked or misrepresented certain aspects of Germany's colonial past; they also ignored the inconvenient truth of the myth's ties to Nazism prior to World War II.

By the mid-1950s, Germans had been without a colonial empire for longer than they had possessed one. Nonetheless, in West Germany that brief colonial encounter

served as a touchstone of German character and culture. The West Germans (re)producing and consuming myths about the colonial past intended them to rescue Germans' reputation by demonstrating a history of exemplary race relations in the colonies. This had always been a part of German myths and fantasies about colonialism that had posited the superiority of the German as colonizer, but after World War II these myths put a special emphasis on Germans' supposedly irreproachable treatment of Africans, demonstrated most often by the affection and loyalty of African troops (Askaris) serving under German officers in Africa. Thus in the 1950s and 1960s West German myths of colonialism served a social and cultural function similar to that Rita Chin ascribes to the West German guest worker program, which ran from 1955 to 1973: both made it possible for West Germans to demonstrate that race and racism were not, or were no longer, problems in the Federal Republic.[282] Myths of colonialism did this by suggesting continuity, the guest worker program by instigating change. The very language of both, however—German "colonizers'" treatment of the "colonized", "guest workers" to whom the state never planned on granting citizenship—simply postponed any real confrontation with racial definitions of Germanness still rooted in notions of the Volk and legally codified in terms of bloodlines. However, while Chin argues that the immigration of laborers from countries like Italy, Portugal, and most significantly Turkey produced a discourse about difference that was fundamentally unlike those triggered by the arrival of colonials in the United Kingdom or France, the survival and flourishing of myths about the colonial past and the intensity with which they were later debated suggest that even though guest workers in West Germany were not former colonial subjects, the colonial past still informed the relationship between West Germans and non-Germans. Indeed, some West Germans viewed the historical relationship between Turkey

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[282] Rita Chin, *The Guest Worker Question in Postwar Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

and Germany in explicitly colonial terms. At least one author saw Turkey as a kind of "colonial zone" in which Germans had pursued not settlement nor an exclusively economic-oriented foreign policy, but rather "a peaceful penetration."[283] At the same time, these myths about the colonial past were meant to at least partially obscure that other, more immediate past with far greater influence: the Holocaust.

Superior Colonizers: Colonial Myths before World War II

The idea that Germans made superior colonizers originated at a time when Germany did not yet exist as a unified state, let alone possess colonies. As Suzanne Zantop demonstrates in her book, *Colonial Fantasies*, German pre-colonial literature not only imagined the existence of a German colonial empire, but also posited the superiority of Germans as colonizers. Stories such as that found in Joachim Heinrich Campe's German version of Robinson Crusoe presented readers with a portrait of both the ideal German and the ideal colonial man: "Unlike the British, the Spanish, or the French, he does not indulge in excesses; he craves neither material gains and luxury, nor sex and power. Unlike the cannibals, he does not devour human flesh or dance around fires. Instead, he is frugal, industrious, pious, Protestant."[284] In the nineteenth century these fantasies represented German claims to a colonial empire of their own based not only on those traits they shared with other Europeans that set them apart from savage indigenous peoples, but also on those things that set Germans apart from other Europeans. After the unification of Germany in 1871 colonial agitation became more intense, inspired in part by Germany's successes in Europe: one propagandist argued it was only right that any

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[283] Emil Schäfer, *Erdteile erwachen: Roman der Kolonisation* (Darmstadt: Franz Schneekluth Verlag, 1954), 304; the sexual connotation was no accident, and was a common trope of German (and other European) colonial fantasies. See Zantop, *Colonial Fantasies: Conquest, Family, and Nation in Precolonial Germany, 1770-1870*.

[284] Zantop, *Colonial Fantasies: Conquest, Family, and Nation in Precolonial Germany, 1770-1870*, 119.

unclaimed territory remaining should fall to those most deserving of them, the "conquerors of Strassburg and Paris."[285]

Myths about the superiority of Germans as colonizers proved to be the most enduring, but other myths existed as well. From the very beginning agitators promised that a German colonial empire would solve Imperial Germany's problems by providing Germany with an abundant source of raw materials as well as markets for finished goods. Organizations like the *Deutscher Kolonialverein*, the *Gesellschaft für deutsche Kolonisation*, and their successor the *Deutsche Kolonialgesellschaft* promoted the economic benefits of colonialism while private companies like the German East Africa Company administered Germany's fledgling colonies in their early days. Other, earlier groups like the *Hamburger Kolonisationsverein* and the *Südamerikanische Kolonisations-Gesellschaft* supported German settlers and argued that German colonies would provide an outlet for German emigrants who might otherwise leave for the United States or elsewhere. Given the slim pickings left for Germany in the late nineteenth century, however, such optimism seems overblown; the areas Germany ultimately acquired were often inaccessible leftovers of relatively little value and only minor appeal to German settlers. And as it in fact turned out, Germany's colonies failed to meet proponents' expectation. Very few Germans ever settled in South West Africa or East Africa as compared to the numbers that continued to leave for North America, and trade with the colonies almost never produced enough revenue to recuperate the investment they required, let alone to compete with Germany's trade with other powers' colonies.[286]

Colonial propagandists in Germany refused to give up hope, however; they clung to the belief that desirable colonies were yet to be had for a people as deserving and

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[285] Quoted in Ibid., 194.

[286] Smith, *The German Colonial Empire*; Henderson, *The German Colonial Empire, 1884-1919*.

capable as the Germans. Adolf Fick suggested it was "banal by now to warm up to the old wife's tale of a partitioned world, at a time when a Heinrich Barth, Livingstone, Stanley, Robert Flegel, Nachtigal, Rohlfs, Buchner, Schweinfurt and others have shown a whole continent to be most promising territory for colonization." According to the myth of the German as superior colonizer, it was in that territory that Germans' "organizational talent, patience, and daring" would come to bear. As some Germans' colonial fantasies became reality, the portrayal of the abstract German as the ideal colonial man only intensified the interplay between colonialism and nationalism. To criticize or attack the German colonizer or the German colonial project was to criticize the German nation. Germany's numerous colonial scandals in the early twentieth century reveal how powerful the linkage could be. Although criticisms from the far left had dogged the German colonial establishment since the founding of Germany's first colonies, it was Matthias Erzberger, a Reichstag deputy from the Catholic Center Party, who exposed many of the worst colonial scandals to public scrutiny. These included cases of abuse and violence, such as that perpetrated by Governor Horn in Togo and Captain von Besser during long marches through Africa; cases of immorality and poor administration, as with Cameroon governor Jesco von Puttkammer and Eugen Brandeis, governor of the Marshall Islands; and cases of outright greed, such as the concessions granted to railroad companies and the monopolies given to shipping lines.[287] In addition to these individual incidents came the widespread violence associated with the suppression of the Maji-Maji rebellion in East Africa and the near extermination of the Herero and Nama in South West Africa. Erzberger exposed these scandals in an attempt to obtain greater influence for the Reichstag over colonial administration, but his efforts ultimately failed: Chancellor Bülow dissolved the Reichstag in 1907 and through clever campaigning won

[287] Klaus Epstein, "Erzberger and the German Colonial Scandals, 1905-1910," *The English Historical Review* 74, no. 293 (October 1959): 641-646.

increased support in the subsequent "colonial election."[288]

Germany's colonial scandals briefly tarnished the image of the ideal colonizer but did not erase it. Even many of the Germans upset by the news, including Erzberger himself, saw in these examples of colonial abuses exceptions rather than the rule. Indeed, Erzberger believed that with additional oversight as well as specialized training and preparation the German colonizer could indeed by an ideal colonizer who, like Campe's hero, would resist excesses and seek neither material gains, nor sex, nor power. Such a view found a receptive audience in left-liberals convinced of the civilizing mission they saw driving German colonial expansion.[289] In addition to overhauling the training of colonial officials and careful review of current personnel, Erzberger also proposed specific reforms in the treatment of indigenous peoples.[290] Erzberger sought to change German colonialism, not undermine it.

However, although some of the reforms Erzberger proposed ultimately materialized when banker Bernard Dernburg took over the Colonial Office, Erzberger's attempts to expand Reichstag oversight of the colonial empire failed precisely because his opponents portrayed his criticisms of actual German colonizers as an attack on the ideal German colonizer, and thus as anti-national. Chancellor Bülow and organizations like the *Kolonialpolitisches Aktionskomité* (Colonial-political Action Committee) accused Erzberger and the Catholic Center Party of having never really given colonial policy any support and of failing to understand the importance of national expansion. Proof came in

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[288] For perspectives on the way Germany's colonial scandals and so-called colonial crisis fit into the broader picture of German colonialism, see:Townsend, *The Rise and Fall of Germany's Colonial Empire, 1884-1918*; Smith, *The German Colonial Empire*; Henderson, *The German Colonial Empire, 1884-1919*.

[289] Helmut Walser Smith, "The Talk of Genocide, the Rhetoric of Miscegenation," in *The Imperialist Imagination: German Colonialism and its Legacy*, ed. Sara Friedrichsmeyer, Sara Lennox, and Susanne Zantop (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 107-123.

[290] Epstein, "Erzberger and the German Colonial Scandals, 1905-1910," 642, 646-7.

the form of not only Erzberger's criticisms of individual administrators and military officers, but also the Center Party's opposition to the creation of a colonial ministry and support of reductions in appropriations for the colonies. By appealing to Germans' sense of national pride—as well as widespread anti-Catholic sentiment—Bülow managed to increase government support in the Reichstag to 216 out of 397 seats.[291] Despite the scandals, the German as colonizer remained a popular figure. More importantly, defense of the colonial project and defense of German national identity had become closely intertwined, a fact that would not change for decades.

The end of World War I brought with it not only the end of Germany's formal colonial empire but also even greater challenges to the image of Germany as colonizer. Indeed, these challenges helped ensure the loss of Germany's colonies. As with so much else in the Treaty of Versailles, the creation of League of Nations Mandates from Germany's colonies represented not so much efforts towards a just peace, but the punishment of Germany. It certainly went beyond the provisions US President Woodrow Wilson set out in his "Fourteen Points." Presented to Congress on January 8, 1918, the "Fourteen Points" included calls to abandon the secret treaties that had drawn so much of Europe into World War I and to build the post-war peace on the foundations of free trade, democracy, and self-determination. The last of these applied only partially to Europe's colonies, however; Wilson suggested in point five that "a free, open-minded, and absolutely impartial adjustment of all colonial claims" required a balance between self-determination and "the equitable claims of the government whose title is to be determined."[292] This formulation and the call to side "against the Imperialists"

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[291] Epstein, "Erzberger and the German Colonial Scandals, 1905-1910," 660-1; Erik Grimmer-Solem, "The Professors' Africa: Economists, the Elections of 1907, and the Legitimation of German Imperialism," *German History* 25, no. 3 (July 1, 2007): 313-347.

[292] Woodrow Wilson, "President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points" (presented at the Joint Session of Congress, Washington, D.C., January 8, 1918).

theoretically gave indigenous peoples greater consideration than they had received at, for example, the Berlin Conference of 1884, but it by no means annulled European rights to overseas territories—or German rights, for that matter.

Many Germans expected point five to result in favorable treatment for Germany when it came to colonial questions; Germans had proven themselves superior colonizers not only in their administration of colonial lands and treatment of colonial peoples but in their relationships with other colonial powers. It was, they would contend, the United Kingdom that had broken article XI of the General Act of the Berlin Conference, stating that those territories covered by the act be neutral during a war between signatories. British troops had in fact been the first to cross into German colonial territory, as Germans were quick to point out. They waged an efficient and brief war against the German *Schutztruppe* (colonial armed forces; literally, protection troops) and other forces in Germany's African colonies except in German East Africa. Here General Lettow-Vorbeck's guerilla tactics helped the *Schutztruppe* hold out until after the signing of the armistice. Many Germans during and after the war complained that these troop movements violated the clause in article XI stipulating that belligerent states would abstain from "extending hostilities to the territories thus neutralized, and from using them as a base for warlike operations."[293] At least in Africa it appeared that Germany, more than any other European nation, had been aggrieved.

Standing in the way of a return of Germany's colonies after World War I were, however, French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau and British Prime Minister David Lloyd George. Their countries and citizenry affected more profoundly by the war than the United States, these leaders had quite different ideas about a just peace than did President Wilson. Chief among these ideas was the moral and material punishment of Germany, evidenced by the war guilt clause, Germany's lost territory in Europe, and the forfeit of

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[293] "General Act of the Berlin Conference on West Africa," February 26, 1885.

Germany's colonial empire. Wilson's "Fourteen Points" may have been the first—and only—articulation of allied aims in World War I, but they were by no means a blueprint for the Treaty of Versailles. Still, after Wilson's high-minded idealism the European allies' desire for vengeance—not to mention colonial ambition—did not suffice as justification for Germany's permanent loss of its colonies.

Rather than take Germany's colonies for any of these baser reasons, the European Allies orchestrated a campaign designed to smear Germany's image as a colonial power—a campaign that directly challenged the idea that Germans were superior colonizers. Such a campaign was not overly difficult to put together; the colonial scandals a decade earlier provided sufficient evidence that Germans had not looked out for the interests of indigenous peoples mentioned in Wilson's fifth point. British and South African agents working in German Southwest Africa pieced together a case against German rule in the colony drawing on Africans' stories of mistreatment and Germans' detailed records of their administration, including the "concentration camps" constructed in response to the Herero and Nama uprisings. Known as the 1918 Blue Book, the work appealed to Wilson's ideals of self-determination by balancing stories of atrocities committed by German soldiers and settlers with narratives of African resistance. Through its text and accompanying photos the Blue Book achieved its purpose, moving not only popular opinion but also changing the mind of President Wilson, who had been inclined to leave Germany its colonies prior to learning of Germans' misdeeds in Africa.[294]

Despite criticisms—past and present—of the Blue Book's credibility in light of its value as propaganda, the biggest problem with the report was not the poor light in which it put German colonial rule. Scholars of African history have verified the authenticity—

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[294] Oskar Hintrager, *Südwestafrika in der deutschen Zeit* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1956); Jan-Bart Gewald and Jeremy Silvester, *Words Cannot Be Found: German Colonial Rule in Namibia : An Annotated Reprint of the 1918 Blue Book (Sources on African History, 1)* (Brill Academic Publishers, 2003).

and value—of the stories and documentation presented in the Blue Book through careful archival research. Rather, the great dishonesty was the way in which officials in London sought to present German colonialism as somehow unique in its abuses and misdeeds. Even one of the Blue Book's primary authors criticized British actions in the former German colony after World War I, thus ending his career in government service.[295] Sir Harry Johnston, at one time the British Governor of Uganda, admitted in 1914 that, in terms of colonialism, "it is difficult to make a distinction between the Germans and the English." Johnston thought the Germans had treated indigenous peoples "no worse and in some dealings better," and believed that if Germany lost its African colonies it was not "the result of any misdeed."[296] Most scholars today agree that despite the atrocities committed against the Herero and Nama, German colonialism was no worse—or better—than other European colonialisms. Germans in the years immediately following World War I naturally had a slightly higher opinion of their legacy as colonizers and used all means available to rebuke the accusations against them, including lists of offenses committed by British and French colonial officials. These included a German "White Book", *Die Behandlung der einheimischen Bevölkerung in den kolonialen Besitzungen Englands* (*The Treatment of the Indigenous Population in England's Colonial Possessions*), published by the Colonial Office and presented for consideration at Versailles. This "White Book" outlined the crimes committed in Egypt, India, and elsewhere—including forced labor and enslavement.

More significant than attempts to sully the reputations of other colonial powers were those Germans made to repair the image of the German as colonizer. More than ever, Germans interpreted British and French affronts to the German colonizer as affronts to the German nation. German propaganda responses to the British Blue Book included

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[295] Gewald and Silvester, *Words Cannot Be Found*.

[296] Paul Rohrbach, "Der Raub der deutschen Kolonien," 1951, 9-10, N/1408/105.

indigenous, British, and French sources praising the fair, even-handed, informed administration of the German government. A 1925 quote from the French Vice President calling for the return of Germany's colonies became quite popular in colonialist propaganda, as did commentary on the matter from US President Theodor Roosevelt. The constant theme: German administration and treatment of indigenous peoples was "good and just, indeed … exemplary for Africa." The loyalty and bravery of African soldiers fighting under German commanders in Africa was proof enough of that, many argued.[297] As with colonial scandals, the transformation of colonialism into an issue where national pride was at stake rallied support but also discredited and dismissed valid criticisms.

More than any alleged slandering of German colonizers' reputations, however, the occupation of the Rhineland after World War I by African soldiers from the French colonies not only injured national pride but outraged many Germans. At the same time, however, it reinforced the notion that Germans understood better than other European powers how to appropriately rule a colonial empire. As Jared Poley has shown, in the eyes of many Germans this occupation threatened to destabilize long-established racial hierarchies by inverting the relationship between white and black, colonizer and colonized. Germans protested the use of African troops, claiming the soldiers engaged in widespread rape of German women, further endangering the racial balance between Europeans and Africans. Yet amidst these and other fears about the dangers overseas colonies could pose to the European metropole Germans did not lose faith in the underlying system that was colonialism. Poley shows that instead, Germans criticized the French for failing to civilize and discipline colonial subjects, showing once again the superiority of Germans as colonial rulers.[298]

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[297] Ibid., 10, 6.

[298] Jared Poley, *Decolonization in Germany: Weimar Narratives of Colonial Loss and Foreign Occupation*, Studies in modern German literature v. 99 (Oxford: P. Lang, 2005).

German individuals and organizations eager to see Germany reassert itself overseas also reiterated their contention that colonies would provide the space needed for the settling of excess population, the acquisition of raw materials, and the sale of finished goods. The *Deutsche Kolonialgesellschaft* and other organizations continued to operate after World War I, putting out articles, pamphlets, and brochures decrying the mandate system and agitating for the return of those territories so necessary for the survival of the German people.[299] As with so many other of the "injustices" done to Germany by the Treaty of Versailles, Adolf Hitler's Nazi Party seized upon the issue of colonialism and attempted to make it its own. Point three of the party program adopted in 1920 demanded "land and territory (colonies)" for the sustenance and "colonization" of the German people.[300] Hitler later told a London newspaper "There are a great many things that Germany must obtain from the colonies, and we need colonies as much as any power needs them."[301] Later events made clear that Hitler saw the bulk of that land and territory to the East. Nonetheless, after Hitler came to power in 1933 several organizations including the *Deutsche Kolonialgesellschaft* merged to form the *Reichskolonialbund* (Reich Colonial Association, RKB), in line with the general process of coordination that took place across German society. While Hitler gazed eastward, members of the RKB had their eyes on Africa, developing plans not only for the return of Germany's lost colonies but also their expansion, culminating in the creation of a German Empire in Africa that stretched clear across the continent from the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean.[302]

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[299] For one example among countless others see "Wir müssen Kolonien wieder haben!," *Badische Presse*, October 19, 1928.

[300] "Die 25 Punkte des Programms der NSDAP," n.d., http://www.dhm.de/lemo/html/dokumente/nsdap25/.

[301] Wilhelm Winterer, "Aus der deutschen Kolonialgeschichte," *Freiburger Zeitung*, June 16, 1935, Sonderausgabe edition; Reichskolonialbund, *Deutschlands Kolonien Wandkarte*, 1936, UB Frankfurt, Bildnummer 044-7601-01.

[302] Friedrichsmeyer, Lennox, and Zantop, *The Imperialist Imagination: German Colonialism and its Legacy*, 16-17; Woodruff D. Smith, *The Ideological origins of Nazi*

In 1939 the RKB commissioned a series of posters promoting the return of the colonies Germany lost after 1914 on the grounds that they would contribute to the strength of the German economy and provide much needed space for a growing population. The posters focused on the role Germany's former colonies could play in meeting the Nazi Party program's demands. The posters depicted each of the former colonies with easy to read and decipher iconography representing what raw materials and food stuffs came from each part of each colony. Further graphics indicated changing non-native population trends. Two of the posters, one for Togo and Cameroon and the other for the South Sea colonies, also featured rhyming slogans that reinforced the visual message. The first proclaimed that "our colonies are important sources of raw materials. Our colonies will order German goods."[303] The second made the even more dubious claim that "Our colonies will free our economy. Our colonies need German energy to prosper."[304] Given past performance, such hopes were likely misplaced.

Despite the focus on *Lebensraum*, food production, and raw materials—as indicated in the RKB poster series by tables and figures hand-picked to put the colonies in the best light possible—the myth of Germans as superior colonizers persisted under the Nazis as well. Compared to statements made by colonialists, Hitler's 1933 comment that Germans were "just as capable of administering and organizing a colony as other peoples" seems almost humble. The 1939 RKB poster series appealed to the myth of the German as superior colonizer more openly, with slogans on the posters for South West

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imperialism (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); *German Imperialism in Africa: From the Beginnings Until the Second World War* (London: C. Hurst, 1986); J. Adam Tooze, *The Wages of Destruction: The Making and Breaking of the Nazi Economy* (London: Allen Lane, 2006).

[303] Reichskolonialbund, *Kamerun / Togo*, 1939, http://www.traditionsverband.de/download/poster/kamerun_100dpi.jpg.

[304] Reichskolonialbund, *Südsee-Kolonien*, 1939, http://www.traditionsverband.de/download/poster/suedsee_100dpi.jpg.

Africa and East Africa alluding to German suitability for colonial rule. The former argued that Germans had not acquired their colonies through violence, and more importantly, that Germans and "blacks" had died side by side for those colonies.[305] References to African loyalty, especially African soldiers' loyalty, as proof of German superiority dated back to World War I and continues to feature in the arguments of defenders and apologists for German colonialism to this day. Similarly, the poster for East Africa praised the loyalty that the colonies, or rather, Africans and remaining Germans had shown towards Germany. It also claimed that "our colonies esteem the black race."[306] That these particular slogans appeared on the posters for the two colonies in which Imperial Germany experienced the greatest problems with indigenous populations is likely more than coincidence. Rather, it seems to suggest a continued effort to combat post-World War I propaganda and reaffirm the place of Germans not (just) as a superior race, but as superior colonizers.

Colonial Myths after World War II

Myths about German colonialism survived World War II relatively intact. This occurred thanks in large part to the survival of many of the myths' proponents, who continued to promote their version of colonial history just as they always had. These individuals included politicians and veterans of the colonies of all kinds, ranging from famous commanders like Lettow-Vorbeck to unknown members of the *Schutztruppe* to administrators and settlers. They promoted the myth of German colonialism in the same ways they always had before 1945: in traditional print media, in public commemoration through monuments, memorials, and other reminders, and in meetings of like-minded

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[305] Reichskolonialbund, *Südwest-Afrika*, 1939, http://www.traditionsverband.de/download/poster/swafrika_100%20dpi.jpg.

[306] Reichskolonialbund, *Ost-Afrika*, 1939, http://www.traditionsverband.de/download/poster/ost-afrika_100dpi.jpg.

individuals. Popular histories of the period celebrated the heroism of German adventurers, school books taught West German children about the colonies' role in securing Germany a place in the sun, and memoirs and novels entertained readers with countless other tales. Newspapers eager to whip up interest appealed to the romantic vision of the colonial past in their stories on former German colonies. Veterans groups and others erected and visited memorials, made pilgrimages to funerals, and gathered in groups large and small to swap stories and remember. Little had changed; for myths of German colonialism, like so much else in West Germany, there was no "zero hour."

These established technologies of memory served those West Germans well who sought to preserve the myth of German colonialism but they struggled to reach new audiences. Significantly, when real opposition to the myth of German colonialism arose in the mid- to late-1960s it made use of modern media like television and film in addition to new manifestations of older technologies. Thus the new types of academic research and writing that appeared in the 1960s found an audience in the new, larger and more politically-aware student body on campuses around West Germany. Cornered in this way by both popular culture and academia the myth of German colonialism was forced into retreat, taking refuge in increasingly rare sites of memory.

More than any other group, the aging veterans of the *Schutztruppe*—some 30 years removed from service in the colonies—preserved a positive memory of German colonialism through their local and national meetings, their journal and other publications, and their public commemoration of the colonies and those who served there. The group continues to do so to this day, despite opposition from scholars, students, and the political left beginning in the 1960s and demographic changes in the group itself in the 1970s and 1980s, as more and more members passed away as a result of old age.

The *Traditionsverband ehemaliger Kolonial- und Überseetruppen* (Tradition Association of Former Colonial and Overseas Troops) was formed in 1956, uniting a number of local organizations reformed in the years after World War II. The group was

careful to avoid any accusations of a desire "to turn back the clock" and did not advocate a return of Germany's old colonial possessions. Rather, they returned to the myth of the German colonizer: "we want to say to our youth and to the entire world, that the men and women who settled in the colonies back then and operated there did their work with a clear conscience and selfless dutifulness."[307] In the *Mitteilungsblatt* that the Association published first bi-monthly, then quarterly, and finally twice a year, their attempts to keep alive the memory of Germans in the colonies took the form of reminiscences, biographical sketches of colonial heroes, glowing accounts of *Schutztruppe* bravery, and reports on the celebration of anniversaries and birthdays, mourning for the dead, and the dedication of memorials. Germans should be proud of their colonial history, the group argued; it was nothing of which they should be ashamed.

Creating pride in the German colonial past meant first creating awareness and interest. Some in the Association promoted awareness and interest in colonial history through the collection and presentation of historical artifacts of all kinds: uniforms, maps, weapons, and more. In 1984, on the 100th anniversary of the founding of the German colonial empire, a special exhibition took place in the Gunzenhausen local history museum designed to raise public awareness in the colonies. Veterans' Association member Reinhold Siebentritt put together an exhibit of his own private collection and other materials lent to him for the occasion. Other groups displayed stamps and postmarks from the colonies. As one observer noted, Siebentritt's extensive collection offered an introduction to German colonial history through

> maps, historical outlines, flags, uniforms of white and black German soldiers, their weapons and equipment, but also through

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[307] "Was wir wollen — und was wir nicht wollen," *Mitteilungsblatt des Traditionsverbandes ehemaliger Kolonial- und Überseetruppen*, no. 1 (November 1956): 2; Similarly, the German Soldiers League Kyffhäuser eschewed "restoration" of Germany's colonial empire in favor of repairing the "damaged reputation of Germanness". Drange to Hans Georg Steltzer, "Betr.: Hilfe für Askaris (Deutscher Soldatenbund Kyffhäuser eV. to Auswärtiges Amt)," February 6, 1964, PAAA Bestand B 34 (Referat I B 3/307), 527.

> personal writings of leading personalities of German colonial and maritime history, their medals and decorations, old photos and picture postcards, coins and banknotes, colonial files and coupons.[308]

Such a complete collection existed nowhere else in Germany at the time, not even in museums, and the special exhibition attracted the attention not only of the local mayor and University of Bielefeld Professor Volker Lohse but also Bavarian Parliamentary Vice President Ernst Lechner and Bundestag Vice President Richard Stücklein.[309] Four years later Siebentritt further helped to promote public awareness by opening a small museum of his own in Gunzenhausen featuring the materials he had collected over the years as well as those he had borrowed for the 1984 exhibit. The overall message was positive; for instance, the museum prominently featured the sword the Sultan of Zanzibar gave to General Hermann von Wissmann for his work fighting the slave trade. The museum also boasted a library and archive rivaling all others in West Germany.[310] Siebentritt and the Verband hoped that the support of "history" would strengthen their efforts to protect the memory of German colonial rule.

Other groups took it upon themselves to keep the memory of German colonialism alive in their own ways. Beginning in March 1948 the newly formed *Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Sammler Deutscher Kolonialpostwertzeichen im Bund Deutscher Philatelisten* began publishing a journal entitled *Berichte für Kolonialbriefmarkensammler*. Although the group was not as focused on preserving the positive image of German colonial rule, it did reflect the continued interest of many West Germans in the colonial period. Most of the group's correspondence featured discussions about recognizing various stamps and

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[308] "Jubliläums-Sonderausstellungen mit internationaler Beteiligung über Post- und Zeitgeschichte sowie Orden und Ehrenzeichen," *Berichte für Kolonialbriefmarkensammler*, no. 81 (October 1984): 1431.

[309] Ibid.

[310] "Das Museuem für deutsche Kolonialgeschichte in Gunzenhausen," *Mitteilungsblatt des Traditionsverbandes ehemaliger Schutz- und Überseetruppen/Freunde der früheren deutschen Schutzgebiete e.V.*, no. 70 (May 1992): 239, 241.

postmarks, spotting forgeries, and explaining differences and rarities. Still, the *Berichte* did promote an uncritical appreciation of the colonial period and colonial rule as exciting and exotic; on the few occasions philatelic analysis made way for historical narrative it was to feature heroic tales such as that of Marine Airship L59, a blockade runner intended to bring mail and supplies to General Lettow Vorbeck in East Africa. The ship never reached the colony, turning back for Germany after losing contact with the East African *Schutztruppe* despite having traveled more than halfway to its destination. This story and others like it characterized the Working Group's engagement with German colonial history as well as that of many West Germans: colonialism had been an adventure, one it was no longer possible to pursue in the same way after World War II, but which memorabilia like stamps—or the uniforms and weapons of Reinhold Siebentritt—could make come alive.[311]

The cooperation of the Working Group and Veterans' Association in 1984 represented the end result of a long process of gradual change on the part of the Association. By the early 1960s, after less than ten years of operation, the Verband recognized that in order to continue to protect the memory of German colonialism—and the reputations of German colonizers—they needed to expand their membership and extend their reach. In 1965 in Hannover the membership decided to invite women, especially widows, to join the group. Additionally, the Verband made possible the membership of other Germans whose life and work put them firmly in line with the Verband's own goals and took steps to increase cooperation with the West German army

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[311] Erwin Eschrich, "Marine-Luftschfit 'L 59' 1917 als Blockadebrecher unterwegs nach Deutsch-Ostafrika," *Berichte für Kolonialbriefmarkensammler*, no. 4 (October 1951): 49-51; Josef Schlimgen, "Mit Marine-Luftschiff 'L 59' Deutsch-Ostafrika entgegen," *Berichte für Kolonialbriefmarkensammler*, no. 64 (May 1976): 1097-1098; "Die Post für Deutsch-Ostafrika von 'L 59'," *Berichte für Kolonialbriefmarkensammler*, no. 64 (May 1976): 1117-1120; "Nach Deutsch-Ostafrika mit 'L 59'," *Berichte für Kolonialbriefmarkensammler*, no. 64 (May 1976): 1109-1117.

and border police.[312] Between the 1960s and 1980s the group continued to further open up membership until it became "an active group of former soldiers, researchers, collectors, and friends of the past German colonial history."[313] The veterans opened their doors to anyone who shared their interest in and vision of the German colonial past.

A number of individuals in the Federal Republic also directly or indirectly helped to keep memories of German colonialism alive. Two of West Germany's senior statesmen, Chancellor Konrad Adenauer and President of the Bundestag Eugen Gerstenmaier, each figured in the maintenance of such memories. Adenauer, for his part, served as Vice President of the *Deutsche Kolonialgesellschaft* (German Colonial Society) from 1931 until its absorption into the *Reichskolonialbund*. The Society itself was the creation of a merger in 1887 between the *Deutschen Kolonialverein* and the *Gesellschaft für Deutsche Kolonisation*. A tireless proponent of German colonialism before World War I, it boasted presidents such as German East Africa founder Carl Peters and Duke Johann Albrecht zu Mecklenburg. After World War I the group promoted the return of Germany's colonies until its absorption into the RKB. Though a member and president of the Society before World War II, after the war Adenauer did little to actively promote the memory or myth of German colonialism, but his role in the society did serve as another bullet point for East German critics convinced that Adenauer was a neo-colonialist, serving the interests of either US or German imperialism.

Bundestag President Eugen Gerstenmaier, by contrast, had little involvement with German colonies or Africa prior to his role in the German Africa Society after World War II. However, Gerstenmaier's involvement with the Federal Republic's German Africa Society brought him into direct contact with exactly the types of individuals

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[312] "Wiedersehensfeier 1965 in Hannover," *Mitteilungsblatt des Traditionsverbandes ehemaliger Schutz- und Überseetruppen*, no. 36 (November 1965): 32.

[313] Heinz Spangenberg, "Die Geschichte des Traditionsverbands und sein Selbstverständnis heute," November 9, 1996, 12, BA-MA MSG/3/1361.

looking to promote a certain view of past and present relations with Africa. The German Africa Society certainly did not promote the return of Germany's colonies, but on several occasions it came out in defense of the German colonial project and the rule of Germans in the colonies. So, for example, in 1966 Gerstenmaier—prompted in part by correspondence with several concerned citizens—called the Intendant of Western German Broadcasting (WDR) and great grand nephew of Chancellor Bismarck to complain about the portrayal of German colonial rule in the film "Heia Safari" and try to prevent the second half from airing.[314] The German Africa Society was not alone in its complaints; the Africa-Verein pointed out uncomfortable similarities between parts of the film and recent works on colonial history published in the "Eastern Zone".[315] The *Schutztruppe* veterans' association put out a special edition of its journal attacking the portrayal of German brutality as inconsistent with reality; German administrators and officials worked to root out such abuses, and the association claimed that the real legacies of German colonial rule should be the ending of the slave trade, infrastructural and agricultural development, and Germans' civilizing effect.[316]

One of the individuals singled out by the wide-ranging, hand-picked critiques in the documentary was General Lettow-Vorbeck, famed leader of the *Schutztruppe* in German East Africa and symbol for the myth of German colonialism. Lettow-Vorbeck served the myth well not only through his leadership in a prolonged struggle against the British during World War I, nor the loyalty he and his African soldiers felt for one another, but also for his warm reception time after time on trips back to Africa after 1945.

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[314] For more on the documentary and the scandal it produced, see: Eckard Michels, "Germany's Colonial Past as TV Scandal: The Documentary 'Heia Safari' in 1966/67," in (presented at the German Colonialism Conference, San Francisco State University, 2007).

[315] W Paproth and P Colberg to Bismarck, October 12, 1966, BAK B/161/3.

[316] "'Heia Safari'," *Mitteilungsblatt des Traditionsverbandes ehemaliger Schutz- und Überseetruppen* (November 1966): 2-8.

This more than anything, some contended, proved the truth of the myth. German President Heinrich Lübke sent his congratulations to Lettow-Vorbeck on the occasion of his ninetieth birthday along with a handwritten note praising the retired General not only for his military accomplishments, but also "the associated outstandingly humane bearing that has found esteem and sympathy all over the world."[317] The whole world, Lübke suggested, recognized the characteristics of an ideal colonial ruler that Lettow-Vorbeck embodied. That a documentary should target and seek to tarnish the image of this beloved figure angered many West Germans, not least because Lettow-Vorbeck had died two years earlier. Indeed, the documentary included footage of his burial, criticizing the way Minister of Defense Kai-Uwe von Hassel eulogized an alleged colonial adventurer and exploiter as an example for young West Germans.[318]

Other survivors of the German colonial past embodied the myth of German colonialism in similar ways. Duke Adolf Friedrich zu Mecklenburg, former explorer and governor of Togo, made frequent trips to Africa after World War II, encountering warm and well-reported receptions on each trip. Of particular interest in the West German press was Mecklenburg's 1960 visit to Togo for the festivities surrounding that country's independence. One reporter traveling with Mecklenburg described Togolese friendliness towards Germans as "sometimes downright alarming," and hundreds showed for Mecklenburg's public appearances hoping for a glimpse of—or better yet, to touch—the former governor.[319] One elderly man, elated to shake the hand of the man once his superior, told reporters "I have waited my whole life for this day – tomorrow I can

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317 "Ehrungen für Lettow-Vorbeck. Hassel gratuliert dem 90jährigen General in Kisuaheli," *Deutsche Zeitung*, March 21, 1960.

318 "'Heia Safari'," 8.

319 Dietrich Mummendey, "Mit Pickelhauben und Ulanenhelmen. Afrikaner sangen: 'Heil Dir im Siegerkranz.' Sentimental Reise des letzten deutschen Gouverneurs durch Togo," *General-Anzeiger*, May 26, 1960.

die!"[320] Togolese admirers did not long for the return of German rule, of course; independence was preferable by far. But that did not prevent the Togolese—or, by extension, the West German press—from comparing and contrasting German and French colonial rule: "When the Duke was governor we did not love him very much," one member of parliament admitted. "but then we saw that the others were worse."[321] Togolese and West German reporters alike recognized the sentimental nature of such memories; German rule had long since ended, and independence brought with it a euphoria bound to moderate even the harshest critic. Nonetheless such praise for figures like Mecklenburg and Lettow-Vorbeck went a long way in the West German press.

In addition to the old guard of established statesmen and colonial veterans, a younger generation of politicians also did their part to maintain the memory of Germany's colonial past. CDU politician Kai-Uwe von Hassel had a personal stake in the matter: he was born in German East Africa just a year before the start of World War I, the son of a farmer and former captain in the *Schutztruppe*. Forced to leave East Africa by the British Mandate Administration in 1919, Hassel returned to farm in 1935, only to be interned in Dar es Salaam beginning in 1939 and forced to return to Germany in 1940. After World War II Hassel climbed the political ladder quickly, serving from 1954 to 1963 as Minister President of Schleswig-Holstein before terms as Minister of Defense (1963-66), Minister for Expellees, Refugees, and War Victims (1966-69) and President of the Bundestag (1969-1972).[322] However, Hassel did not forget his roots: politically he took an interest in foreign policy towards and aid for Africa, and Tanganyika in particular. Personally he maintained relationships with a number of Germans from the

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[320] Ibid.

[321] Ibid.

[322] Volker Koop, *Kai-Uwe von Hassel: Eine Politische Biographie* (Köln: Böhlau, 2007).

colonies, not least of whom was Lettow-Vorbeck. Hassel also kept in touch with the *Traditionsverband*, whether through contributions to a fund for a new memorial to Carl Peters or by speaking at the group's yearly meeting in Bad Lauterberg.[323]

Others of this later generation took an interest in Africa as well, even if they did not have the same ties to bind them to the colonial past. Bavarian Minister President Franz Josef Strauß was one such politician who took a particular interest in Togo. A former member of the Bundestag who played several roles in conservative cabinets of the 1950s and 1960s, the Christian Social Union politician became Minister President in 1978 after nearly a decade of work in opposition to SPD led governments.[324] In this office, which he held on to until his death in 1988, Strauß struck up partnerships between Bavaria, Bavarian businesses, and Togo in order to provide for education, infrastructure development, and more. In addition, Strauß made a great deal out of the tradition of German-Togolese friendship he saw dating back to the colonial period: "The unencumbered memories of the German colonial period as well as the growing developmental-political engagement of the Federal Republic, but also of individuals firms, means a great deal for the relationship of both peoples."[325] Strauß represented both a product and purveyor of the myth of German colonialism.

Popular histories of colonialism—German or European—were not so crass as to

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[323] "Aus dem Verbandsleben," *Mitteilungsblatt des Traditionsverbandes ehemaliger Schutz- und Überseetruppen*, no. 38 (May 1966): 17-23; Kai-Uwe von Hassel, *Europa und Afrika, 1884-1984*, Beiträge zur deutschen Kolonialgeschichte 4 (Berlin: Traditionsverband ehemaliger Schutz- und Überseetruppen/Freunde der früheren deutschen Schutzgebiete e.V., 1985); Spangenberg, "Die Geschichte des Traditionsverbands und sein Selbstverständnis heute."

[324] Wilfried Scharnagl, *Franz Josef Strauss: A Portrait of the Man and Statesman*, ed. Walter Schöll, trans. Michael Evans and Barbara Evans (Percha am Starnberger See: R.S. Schulz, 1985); Stefan Finger, *Franz Josef Strauss: Ein politisches Leben* (München: Olzog, 2005); Mark S. Milosch, *Modernizing Bavaria: The Politics of Franz Josef Strauss and the CSU, 1949-1969* (Berghahn Books, 2006).

[325] Sepp Prentl, "Beziehungen mit Tradition. Vom Grafen Zech bis zu heutigen Kontakten," *Bayern Kurier*, April 28, 1979.

completely ignore the shadowy side of colonial rule, but they nonetheless presented the colonial project as a beneficial and ultimately successful one. One such history, *Erdteile erwachen. Roman der Kolonisation*, noted that "blood and tears" accompanied colonial expansion. Still, the author refers to colonialism as "a life changing chapter in the novel of universal history."[326] This "novel of colonization", written by Emil Schäfer in 1954, admits that Europeans were at times brutal conquerors, but insists that "the consideration of the light and shady sides still yields the conclusion that Europe has contributed to the progress of Africa, which thereby won a place in history."[327] The best proof of European success: the desire for self-rule—significantly, not independence (*Unabhängigkeit*) but self-rule (*Selbstverwaltung*). "Europe has succeeded," Schäfer writes, "in cultivating a continent so thoroughly, that it no longer shies away from taking part in the competitive environment of world politics with its own areas."[328] Given this success and others, Schäfer is disheartened by post-war developments, lamenting the end of European-ization and fearful not only of Bolshevization but Americanization as well.

Schäfer's tale truly is a novel; his account is as much drama as it is history: "The storm howls its wild melody in the face of the sailors. With great haste the sails are shortened. Worried the captain looks to the mast. Will they splinter in the violence of the storm? "[329] Schäfer's heroes naturally include Germans. He describes the events that led to German rule in East Africa as an "adventure on a grand scale": Carl Peters and his associates traveling in secret under false names from Zanzibar to the mainland, slipping past the British. In Schäfer's mind, this was the stuff of legends: one had to think of

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[326] Schäfer, *Erdteile erwachen: Roman der Kolonisation*, vii.

[327] Ibid., 186-187.

[328] Ibid., 187.

[329] Ibid., 55.

Odysseus and the ingenuity behind the Trojan horse.[330] Schäfer's heroes included not only German colonizers, but others as well. Explorers and scientists such as Heinrich Barth, Leo Brobenius, and Alexander von Humboldt receive treatment similar to Peters.[331] Schäfer did not draw the line at misrepresenting his heroes in his efforts to paint a dramatic portrait of German overseas heroics, either. In addition to leaving out many of the specifics that led to the blood and tears he describes in passing, Schäfer also coopted figures like Albert Schweizer. Schweizer, a German physician and critic of colonial rule, appears in Schäfer's novel as another agent of progress, bringing to Africa "the blessings of the European continent" and "an excerpt of the cultural work that Europeans perform in Africa."[332] With Carl Peters's misdeeds and Albert Schweitzer's misgivings out of the picture, Schäfer and other West Germans crafted compelling colonial narratives featuring heroes who made it easy to feel good about German identity and German colonialism.

Rather less exciting but no less important in perpetuating myths about the German colonial past was the version of colonial history presented in many West German textbooks. This closely resembled other popular histories, presenting negative aspects of colonialism as part of a general criticism of the system as a whole while associating German colonialism with particular good works. The *Reise in die Vergangenheit* series written by Hans Ebeling, for example, became incrementally more critical of colonialism in its several iterations between the early 1950s and early 1960s. In part a result of coverage devoted to developments during this period, Ebeling's textbook devoted to "Our Age of Revolutions and World Wars" went from describing the inconveniences and problems for European metropoles in the maintenance of empire to the effects of colonial

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[330] Ibid., 299.

[331] Ibid., 305.

[332] Ibid., 186.

rule on indigenous peoples. "In order to develop the country culturally and economically England had set up a series of schools and high schools in the largest cities in India," noted the 1952 edition, but despite such efforts India became a "pestering problem for England."[333] In 1961, by contrast, the text argued that "the ruling white races had hardly a clue about the uniqueness and to some extent very old and high culture of those who were now being oppressed."[334] Yet in both editions discussions of Germany's colonial empire included little more than lists of the territories acquired. The only details of German overseas activity served to confirm the myth of the German colonizer: the story of Dr. Robert Koch's medical discoveries around the world, including his work on sleeping sickness and malaria in Africa.[335] Interestingly, while the text is sure to mention his Nobel Prize in medicine (1905) it neglects to point out that Koch conducted much of his research in German East Africa.

Memoirs painted a similarly positive picture of German activities overseas and even of German colonialism. The popularity of General Lettow-Vorbeck and the story of his struggle against the British led to a number of books written by men who had served with or under him in Africa. Lettow-Vorbeck's own memoir appeared in 1957.[336] Many of these works, including Lettow-Vorbeck's *Mein Leben*, included information or stories about Lettow-Vorbeck's time in German South-West Africa during the Herero and Nama uprisings, but naturally none of them reflect at any great length on the massacres used to put down those revoltes. Instead, the focus is on Lettow-Vorbeck's guerilla tactics East

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[333] Hans Ebeling, *Deutsche Geschichte* (Braunschweig: Georg Westermann Verlag, 1952), 237.

[334] Hans Ebeling, *Die Reise in die Vergangneheit* (Braunschweig: Georg Westermann Verlag, 1961), 136.

[335] Ibid., 101.

[336] Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck, *Mein Leben* (Biberach an der Riss: Koehlers Verlagsgesellschaft, 1957).

Africa and the ability of the General and his men to hold on against all odds. These stories were not only popular among West Germans; they had an international audience. For example, in 1950 *The Mombasa Times* began running a series written by the General himself about his adventures in East Africa. Other papers picked up the series as well.[337]

The ingenuity of Carl Peters and heroism of Lettow-Vorbeck were not the only stories out of East Africa, however. Missionary P. Clodwig Hornung's *Ali Kacheka: Historischer Missionsroman* told the story of an East African convert to Christianity forced to take sides during the Maji-Maji rebellion. More than the story of one African, Hornung's novel recounts the good—though imperfect—work done by European missionaries and German colonizers, first and foremost the abolishment of slavery. In this context, Hornung portrays the Maji Maji rebellion as the result of greedy Arabs taking advantage of ungrateful Africans. The novel, like Hornung's other writing and the fiction of other authors set in Togo, Cameroon, South-West Africa or Germany's other possessions, celebrates the work done in the colonies. The flawed nature of this work, manifest in exploitation or violence, makes the characters in all of this literature that much more human and more believable.[338]

These characters' imperfections were less obvious when they were hewn in stone and stood up in a park or a boulevard. While the first half of the twentieth century represented the heyday of German colonial monuments, after World War II groups like the *Traditionsverband* cared for those West German monuments that had survived and

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[337] Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck, "300 women, terrible! Once tricked, but they returned. So Became Bribes for Recruits," *The Mombasa Times*, August 25, 1950; Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck, "Fighting, Fatigues and Marching for 3 Years. Hunger dogged them but they learned to live off the country," *The Mombasa Times*, November 8, 1950; Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck, "German Guerilla Warfare 35 Years Ago. Russians studied it: was it their model?," *The Mombasa Times*, April 8, 1950; Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck, "How German Sailors Joined Land Forces. And the airship that turned back," *The Mombasa Times*, August 18, 1950 See also XXX.

[338] P. Clodwig Hornung, *Ali Kacheka: Historischer Missionsroman* (Münsterschwarzach: Vier-Türme-Verlag, 1951).

even erected new ones. Thus in 1950 the city of Hannover returned a Carl Peters memorial to its rightful home.[339] A brief newspaper story in a series highlighting Hannover monuments noted that Peters was the founder of the Society of German Colonization and founder of East Germany but nearly ignores that scandals that led to his dismissal, writing only that he was let go and that in 1914 he was "rehabilitated."[340] More than a decade later, the *Traditionsverband* collected donations for the restoration of the Carl Peters monument on Helgoland, the North Sea island Germany acquired when Peters signed a treaty waving any and all German claims to Zanzibar. Funding difficulties, including a lack of contributions from Schleswig-Holstein, endangered the project, but contributions from individuals including former Minister President Hassel made it possible for the return of the memorial on September 25, 1966.[341]

Carl Peters was not the only German colonizer so honored. Monuments to General Hermann von Wissmann, Major Hans Dominik, and others survived World War II, and new or refurbished monuments appeared not only in West Germany but in former German colonies as well. So, for example, in August 1957 the Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge succeeded in bringing to Dar-es-Salaam a new memorial for the German and African soldiers killed in East Africa during World War I. The new memorial, which replaced an older tablet, was crafted in Munich and made its way to

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[339] Claus Harms, "Neuer Guß der Reihergruppe. Auch neues Fabel-Tier in Arbeit / Carl Peters-Denkmal wird gerichtet," *Hannoversche Allgemeine Zeitung*, November 21, 1950, sec. Stadt Hannover.

[340] "Unsere Denkmäler (26). Carl-Peters-Denkmal," *Norddeutsche Zeitung*, April 17, 1956.

[341] "Das Carl-Peters-Denkmal auf Helgoland," *Mitteilungsblatt des Traditionsverbandes ehemaliger Kolonial- und Überseetruppen*, no. 28 (November 1963): 2; "Aus dem Verbandsleben," *Mitteilungsblatt des Traditionsverbandes ehemaliger Kolonial- und Überseetruppen*, no. 31 (August 1964): 23-31; "Aus dem Verbandsleben," *Mitteilungsblatt des Traditionsverbandes ehemaliger Schutz- und Überseetruppen*, no. 35 (August 1965): 22-31; "Aus dem Verbandsleben."

Tanganyika thanks in part to the assistance of the West German Foreign Office.[342] The unveiling ceremony featured the reading of an address sent along by General Lettow-Vorbeck to a crowd featuring a number of surviving veterans, German and African alike.[343] More tellingly, in 1962, the Colonial Veterans Association in West Germany celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the famed *Reiterdenkmal* in Windhoek, Southwest Africa, built to commemorate the soldiers and civilians killed during the uprisings of the Herero and Nama. The description of the monument published in the Association's journal reveals the extent to which the iconography of the colonial period helped to reinforce the myth of German colonialism after World War II.

> Atop a high pedestal of great quarry stones stands the metal monument, steed and rider a cohesive whole. The horse, the loyal battle and sorrow companion of every Southwest trooper, lifts its head with certainty, ears perked forward – the rider, a picture of die-hard strength, his weapon in his right hand, casts his gaze in the distance – battle ready and ready to intercede on behalf of the achievements of culture and civilization that serve all humanity – to be a pioneer and pathfinder for coming generations.
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> Seen in this way, the monument embodies the commemoration of the dead and the duties and accomplishments of the German *Schutztruppe* for Southwest Africa.[344]

This focus on duty and accomplishments "in the service of all mankind"—by no means unique to this monument—recalls once again the fabled fairness, selflessness, and overall superiority of the German colonizer that dates back to the pre-colonial period.

Other monuments, including those in West Germany, used similar symbols to convey this same message; more importantly, at least some West Germans—like those in

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[342] Marcus, "Notiz. Betr.: Denkmals-Einweihung für die gefallenen Deutsch und ASkaris des Ersten Weltkrieges in Daressalaam," June 19, 1957, BAK B/161/252.

[343] Beye, "Betr.: Einweihung des Gefallenendenkmals in Dar es Salaam," August 16, 1957, BAK B/161/249; Franz Schmidt-Dumont to Deutsche Afrika-Gesellschaft e.V., "Betr.: Einweihung des Gefallenendenkmals in Dar es Salaam," August 29, 1957, BAK B/161/249.

[344] "Das Reiterdenkmal in Windhuk," *Mitteilungsblatt des Traditionsverbandes ehemaliger Kolonial- und Überseetruppen*, no. 19 (August 1961): 2-3.

the Veterans Association—interpreted these symbols as they were intended. Thus these monuments contributed to the myth of German colonialism not only in their portrayal of the brave German colonizer but also in their portrayal of the relationship between German and African. The statue of former colonial governor Hermann von Wissmann on the campus of the University of Hamburg, for instance, featured an African soldier at the foot of the pedestal looking up to his superior with, many would have it, loyalty and respect.[345] Other monuments and memorials in West Germany and even others in Hamburg made explicit the loyalty and camaraderie of Africans and Germans in inscriptions.[346] Just as in the RKB's interwar propaganda, these monuments—themselves artifacts of the colonial period—continued after World War II to portray a particular vision of German-African relations, on that supported the myth of Germans' superiority as colonizers.

Given the reporting in the West German press on the overwhelmingly positive reception figures like Mecklenburg and Lettow-Vorbeck received whenever they returned to Africa after World War II, it is not difficult to see why West Germans might accept the myth of German colonialism. West German reporters focused not only on the enthusiasm of the crowds that turned out but also on the survivals of German culture that confronted them at every turn: greetings and conversations in German, for example, with everyone from African government officials to taxi drivers and school children. Moreover, reporters delighted in telling West German readers about the survival of German architecture, German street names, and the like. Such artifacts were to be expected in Southwest Africa as a result of the continued presence of a significant German

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[345] "Hermann v. Wissmann," *Mitteilungsblatt des Traditionsverbandes ehemaliger Kolonial- und Überseetruppen*, no. 9 (March 1959): 6-12.

[346] See, for example, Heinrich Jünemann, "Deutsch-Ostafrika-Gedächnismal in Aumühle-Friedrichsruh bei hamburg," *Mitteilungsblatt des Traditionsverbandes ehemaliger Kolonial- und Überseetruppen*, no. 28 (November 1963): 12-14.

population, but the same turned up in Togo, Cameroon, and the former German East Africa.[347] For many in West Germany such survivals were further evidence of the type of relationship Germans had built with Africans as well as reassurance of the continued value and viability of German culture in the face of growing postwar Americanization.

Such coverage was not, however, the only way in which the West German press contributed to the production and reproduction of the myth. In stories on the changes to British colonial rule, the demise of the French colonial empire, or the postcolonial struggles of new African states, the West German press returned time and time again to German contributions to colonial development. With increasing Western and specifically West German aid flowing to European colonies and former colonies in the decades after World War II, West German newspapers noted historical parallels and contrasted pre- and post-World War I development in former colonies. So, on the one hand, stories about the new harbor built in Togo with the help of West German firms and funding also listed the improvements made during the colonial period, including the previous German-built harbor and how many miles of railroad had been constructed under German rule. Stories about development aid for Tanzania, on the other hand, compared the relatively miserly character of the British administration not only with expenditures to the north in Kenya, but also to German development projects before World War I.[348]

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[347] *Möglichkeiten Deutscher Sprachpolitik in Togo*, Denkschriften und Berichte der Forschungsstelle für Nationalitäten- und Sprachenfragen 14/60, 1960; Burchard to Süddeutsche Zeitung, January 15, 1960, BAK B/161/93; "Junger Afrika-Staat hat große Sorgen. In Togo wartet man auf deutsche Ärzte. Bau eines Krankhauses wird erwogen / Nach 46 Jahren noch gute Erinnerung an die Deutschen," *Allgemeine Zeitung Mainz*, December 29, 1961; Rebberg, "Bericht über den Aufenthalt der Maidelegation 1962 der TANGANYIKA FEDERATION OF LABOUR," n.d 1962, BAB DY/30/IV A 2/20/956; In 1977, the government of Togo assured the Federal Republic that the German language would continue to have a place in the educational system. Hans-Dietrich Genscher, "Besuch des Außenministers der Republik Togo," *Bulletin der Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung*, no. 88 (September 20, 1977): 813-814.

[348] Peter Grubbe, "Ruheloses Afrika (III). In Kamerun träumt man von der großen Eisenbahn," *Die Welt*, January 20, 1960; "Togo - ein neuer unabhängiger Kleinstaat. Entlassung as der Treuhandschaft der Vereinigten Nationen," *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, April 29, 1960; Mathias, "Togo wartet auf deutsche Hilfe. Der Bau des Hafens von Lomé ist für das Land eine Lebensnotwendigkeit"; Grubbe, "Die deutsche Legende in Afrika. Daressalam 1956 - Wie denkt

Repurposing Colonial Myths

For West German proponents and adherents, the myth of German colonialism played two roles after World War II. On the one hand it served as a past Germans could look back to with pride. The desolation and deprivation of the immediate postwar period made the harsh reality of defeat impossible to ignore. Moreover, West Germans were not allowed to forget that Germany was at fault, nor could they avoid reminders of the evils Nazism had unleashed. Such reminders included not only well known examples of Germans forced to tour liberated concentration and extermination camps and the highly publicized Nuremburg Trials but also a string of lesser trials as well as a variety of other Allied denazification and reeducation efforts. Delegitimized in this way, the recent past could no longer function as a locus of national pride, and as a result some West Germans turned to the colonial past to fill this void. On the other hand, the myth of German colonialism presented a counter-narrative to the story of racism and violence that seemed to threaten to caricature Germans. The idea that Germans had been not only superior colonizers, but exemplary in their treatment of Africans to the point of earning loyalty and affection that endured for decades suggested that Nazism and the Holocaust were aberrations, not reflections of German character. Hitler and his henchman were not typical Germans, they were individuals; someone like General Lettow-Vorbeck, by contrast, was but the best known example of the sort of Germans that had served all over Africa, and indeed lived all over Germany.

The myth of German colonialism was, however, but one vehicle for presenting an alternative vision of German relations with non-Germans. Emphasizing Germany's lack of colonies—at least since World War I—was another. For the West German state, the dangers associated with the myth were clear: at home colonialism may have seemed a grand adventure and legitimate past of which Germans could be proud, but after World

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der schwarze Mann heute über seine einstigen Kolonialherren?."

War II much of the world was actively engaged in seeking an end to colonialism, not celebrating it. While on the one hand the West German state sought a role as the sole legitimate representative of the German people and claimed the mantle of successor to the German Empire established in 1871, on the other hand in dealings with African, Asian, and Latin American states it frequently downplayed, ignored, or even denied its colonial history. In short, West German officials did their best to pass off the Federal Republic of Germany as an anti-colonial state.

Playing the role of anti-colonial state did a great deal to smooth relations with former colonies wary of European imperialist ambitions. West German politicians were quite aware of the truth; even SPD members in the late 1950s spoke not necessarily of being but rather appearing to be anti-colonialist: one member of the Bundestag and former ambassador wrote "Everything that still carries the appearance of colonialism or appears to be related engenders a deep disappointment amongst the one-time colonial peoples, and especially with regards to Germany, because since World War I we have had no colonies after our short colonial tenure."[349] Another SPD politician worried that the Federal Republic's reputation as an anti-colonial state was put in jeopardy by the state's close relationship with France; by contrast, East German rhetoric, more so than even its actual policies, had built sympathy in current and former colonies.[350] West German claims of anti-colonialism portrayed the Federal Republic as the successor to an enlightened and liberal interwar Weimar Republic that itself had never possessed any overseas territories—or at the very least had long since given them up, albeit by force. Officials meant for this portrayal to counteract the Nazi legacy of imperialist expansion and exploitation and their associated justification through racist ideology.

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[349] Ernst Wilhelm Meyer, "Die Entwicklungsländer und wir," *SPd-Pressedienst*, January 13, 1959, 6.

[350] "Kolonialismus vor Toresschluss? Im Schlepptau Frankreichs wird unser guter Ruf in Afrika verspielt," *Der deutsche Eisenbahner*, August 1, 1959.

West German claims of anti-colonialism were also rhetorical tactics of the Cold War. West Germany's supposed lack of a colonial history created new opportunities for the West in developing countries increasingly courted by the outspokenly anti-colonialist Eastern bloc. Moreover, West Germans contrasted their brand of anti-colonialism with that of the Soviet Union and its tight control over Eastern Europe. Thus West German officials lamented an opportunity lost when, less than a week after Soviet tanks rolled into Budapest in 1956, British, French, and Israeli forces attacked Egypt, kicking off the Suez Crisis. For a few short days it had appeared that world attention would focus on the oppression of Soviet imperialism in Eastern Europe, but all too quickly outrage in Africa and Asia turned towards the imperialist aggression targeting a much more traditional colonial target.[351]

Of course, hiding the German colonial past was impossible in places that had not only been German colonies but also remembered the period only too well—often fondly—and it was in these cases that West German officials embraced the myth of German colonialism. When West German officials or the West German Foreign Office dealt with leaders from Togo, Cameroon, or Tanzania they frequently made reference to the "tradition of friendship" that bonded Africans and Germans together.[352] Even then, however, the West German state tried not to focus on the colonial past lest guilt by association with colonialism be pinned to West Germany or, as mentioned earlier, a strain develop between West Germany and other colonial powers.

For all the irregularity with which the myth of German colonialism appeared in

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[351] See, for example, the correspondence of SPD Bundestag member Fritz Erler, then vice chairman of the Defense Committee: Fritz Erler to Werner Hoffmann, December 11, 1956, NL Fritz Erler / 173; Erler to Krane, December 19, 1956.

[352] Oskar Schlitter and S. Maswanya, "Abkommen zwischen der Regierung der Bundesrepublik deutschland und der Reigerung von Tanganjika über Kapitalhilfe," September 11, 1962, BAK B/136/3001, Fiche 7; Lahr and Meatchi, "Abkommen zwischen der Regierung der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und der REgierung der Reublik Togo über Kapitalhilfe," July 9, 1963, BAK B/136/3000, Fiche 7.

West German foreign relations, for West Germans at home the myth served its purpose by providing a sense of continuity with a past apparently untainted by racism and violence. Time and again the relationship between Askaris and German officers served as the primary symbol for this counter-narrative and evidence of its veracity. In 1959, for example, a volume of the pulp-fiction series *Soldatengeschichten aus aller Welt* appeared that focused on Lettow-Vorbeck's campaign in East Africa. A German officer, Captain Zerres, observing his "brave Askaris" and the 14 German officers assigned to his company, reflected on how it happened that these "blacks endured with the *Schutztruppe* for so long?"

> Why did they suffer along with all the exertions and deprivations of the yearlong campaign? Why did they not remain with their families in their home villages? Were they impelled by the drive towards unknown steppes, towards mountains not yet climbed and primeval forests not yet measured, towards safari and adventure, by the inextinguishable longing called Africa that no one can rid themselves of? Or was it not in fact the loyalty that they had sworn to the Germans as good soldiers?[353]

While the adventure that was Africa may have appealed to its indigenous inhabitants as much as it did to its German rulers—a comparison implying that Captain Zerres (and other Germans) saw more similarities than differences between the two peoples—Zerres concludes that the Askaris' willingness to endure so much was a product of their loyalty to Germans. In that view he—or rather, the author—was not alone.

The camaraderie and loyalty of German officers and Askaris appears again and again throughout the story, in battles and around campfires: "At first only a few Askaris sang. Then more and more joined in, and then the Germans sang with, too, until the singing rose booming to the heavens."[354] In the story and the myth of German colonialism in general, the relationship between Germans and Africans, more than

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[353] Schulz, *Heia Safari! Lettow-Vorbecks Schutztruppe kämpft in Ostafrika*, 5.

[354] Ibid., 12.

anything, explains the loyalty of African soldiers. Indeed, during World War I Germans could not afford to buy such loyalty: proponents of the myth happily recount how Lettow-Vorbeck took such an interest in his troops that he worked to secure his former soldiers their pay into the 1920s and '30s.[355] Such concern extended to the postwar period as well. The same year Lettow-Vorbeck died, a television program entitled '*Reichsadler und Giraffe*' reported on the hardships of Askaris in former German East Africa. White West Germans from all walks of life wrote letters to the Foreign Office and donated money to help these black Africans who had fought for Germany.[356] Other efforts targeted Africans previously employed in the German administration who had fallen on hard times after 1945.[357]

The myth's function in providing an alternative past devoid of racism and racially motivated violence is nowhere as clear as when it came under attack beginning in the mid- and late 1960s. Suddenly faced with criticisms of the colonial past, both West Germans who actively promoted the myth and some of those who for years had passively accepted it leapt to its defense. When, in 1966, West German television aired "Heia Safari", a documentary explicitly aimed at uncovering the ugly truth behind the "legend of the German colonial idyll in Africa" and in the process impinged the good name of

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[355] Rohrbach, "Der Raub der deutschen Kolonien," 6-7; Steinhausen, "Von Dr. Carl Peters zu Julius Nyerere. Tanganjika wird unabhängig / Erinnerungen an die deutsche Kolonie."

[356] Ilse Schulz to Deutsche Fernsehen, ARD - 1. Programm, "Betr.: Sendung vom 11.1.1964 um 15 Uhr Die Reporter der Windrose, 'Reichsadler und Giraffe'," January 15, 1964, PAAA Bestand B 34 (Referat I B 3/307), 527; Balken to Troßmann, "Betr.: Hilfe für Askaris der ehemaligen deutschen Schutztruppe in Ostafrika. (Auswärtiges Amt to Bundestag)," March 19, 1964, PAAA Bestand B 34 (Referat I B 3/307), 527; Harting to Auswärtiges Amt Referat I B 3, "Betr.: Besuch von zwei Askaris aus Tanganjika (Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung to Auswärtiges Amt)," May 14, 1964, PAAA Bestand B 34 (Referat I B 3/307), 527.

[357] Hans-Clausen Korff, "Betr.: Zuwendungen an ehemalige afrikanische Bedienstete des Deutschen Reichs in Togo und Kamerun; hier: Zustimmung zur Leistung einer außerplanmäßigen Haushaltsausgabe bei Kap. 05 02 Tit. apl. 963 im Rechnungsjahr 1962," November 14, 1962, PAAA Bestand B 34 (Referat I B 3/307), 338.

Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck, letters and phone calls criticizing the program poured into the office of WDR Intendant Klaus von Bismarck.[358] West Germans mounted a similar defense of Germany's colonial past when in 1967, and again in 1968, West German students attempted to topple a Hamburg memorial to Hermann von Wissmann, founder of the German colonial *Schutztruppe*. Not only colonial veterans but West Germans of all backgrounds criticized the students' actions, questioning their grasp of history in newspaper editorials and numerous letters. One letter to *Die Welt* described Wissmann as a role model for people of all colors and as a man who enjoyed the trust and love of Africans both during his life and afterwards.[359] A number of newspaper articles pointed to Wissmann's role in fighting the slave trade in eastern Africa, with *Die Welt* going so far as to compare the slave trade, rather than colonialism, with some of the crimes being committed in Africa in the present.[360] Wissmann, like Lettow-Vorbeck, had earned respect, loyalty, and affection through superior treatment of Africans; they were examples of the kind of superior colonizers Germans had been. More importantly, they were counter-examples to the racism of the Nazi regime. Wissmann and Lettow-Vorbeck represented real Germans; Hitler had been an exception.

Perhaps the best illustration—literally—of the sort of loyalty the myth of German colonialism portrayed appeared on the cover of the issue of *Soldatengeschichten aus aller Welt* dedicated to Lettow-Vorbeck's East African exploits. With Kilimanjaro in the background, a German officer lies exhausted on the ground in the midst of a barren wasteland. An Askari is at his side, canteen at the ready, looking back to another African

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[358] Michels, "Germany's Colonial Past as TV Scandal: The Documentary 'Heia Safari' in 1966/67."

[359] Hermann Götze, "Aus Briefen an die Lokalredaktion: Was hat Wissmann den Studenten getan?," *Die Welt*, November 8, 1968.

[360] "Denkmäler," *Die Welt*, November 5, 1968; "Forscher und Offizier," *Hamburger Abendblatt*, November 7, 1968.

soldier coming to aid the fallen German. A long line of porters carrying *Schutztruppe* supplies trails off into the distance. Photographs inside the front and back covers portray the excitement and heroism of battle that was the more familiar fare of a publication like *Soldatengeschichten*, but the image of black soldiers helping their white officer sums up the argument against Germans as racists made by the myth of German colonialism after 1945.[361] Beginning in the mid- and late 1960s, however, critics of the myth began to paint a very different picture of Germany's colonial past, one that portrayed not the loyalty of Askaris in the East African desert, but the brutality of German soldiers and officers and the death of countless Herero and Nama in a Southwest African one.

[361] Schulz, *Heia Safari! Lettow-Vorbecks Schutztruppe kämpft in Ostafrika*.

CHAPTER 5: INSTRUMENTALIZING THE COLONIAL PAST: COMBATING MYTHS OF GERMAN COLONIALISM IN EAST AND WEST GERMANY

Critics, too, held up colonial "heroes" like Lettow-Vorbeck as prototypical German colonizers. For these Germans, however, Lettow-Vorbeck represented not an alternative example of German race relations, or even an exception, but rather a terrible predecessor to Heinrich Himmler or Reinhard Heydrich. Germans seeking to combat mythologized narratives of German colonial history argued that German colonialism, like all forms of colonialism and imperialism, had been as tainted by violence and racism as the Third Reich. Nazism, they suggested, had not been an aberration but the product of a natural progression. West Germans' inability or unwillingness to acknowledge the true nature of the colonial past, then, was as damning and as dangerous as their stubborn refusal to fully come to terms with the Nazi past.

Advocates and opponents of myths about the German colonial past all accepted the immorality of racism and racially-motivated violence. They differed, however, in their assessments of how serious a problem these two phenomena had been before the rise of Nazism and, more importantly, since World War II. While proponents of these myths saw the racism and violence of Hitler's Third Reich as unique, opponents saw them as pervasive; proponents advocated myths about Germany's colonial past as alternative historical narratives of Germanness that more accurately reflected German race relations past and present, but opponents saw in such myths the glorification of violence and the denial of German racism both before and after the Nazi period. In effect, both groups sought to rehabilitate German society: the former from the stigma of racism, the latter from its continued presence.

East and West Germans alike participated in attempts to combat the myths about Germany's colonial past that circulated in West Germany throughout the 1950s, 1960s,

and beyond. Germans from both states met with resistance, as their attacks on popular collective memories inspired angry rebuttals and prompted accusations of the misuse—and misrepresentation—of history in the service of contemporary political goals. Such accusations were not without merit: as pointed as some attacks were, many jibes at West German myths about the colonial past were little more than the means towards an end or a tiny piece of a much larger campaign. Of course, much the same could be said of those West Germans who advocated or subscribed to the myths these "misrepresentations" targeted. Moreover, "history"—at least in points of fact—was on the side of those Germans who would undermine these myths. German colonialism had featured racism and violence as much as any other brand of European colonialism, and in that regard it did little to serve as an alternative past to that of the Nazi period.

Truth is not, however, the sum of historical fact. Indeed, the mobilization of history as a means to combat myths about the colonial past may have hindered such efforts as much as they helped. Historian of memory Pierre Nora argues that history, by its nature, tends to be an impersonal product of discontinuity, a means of differentiating between now and then, us and them. In the hands of those Germans who opposed mythologized retellings of Germany's colonial past this was all the more true; they used history to argue that not only the Nazi past but the colonial past as well had no place in the present, be it in the form of myth, policy, or person. In East Germany this approach had the chance to succeed in large measure because state and party officials replaced this unacceptable past with an alternative narrative, one that emphasized Communist victimhood and heroism. In West Germany, however, myths of German colonialism were the alternative narrative. They were collective memories that served as a primitive, social act of connection to the past. With nothing to offer in their stead—at least nothing the majority of West Germans would accept—critics of these myths struggled to advance their agenda.

That is not to say that these critics did not enjoy some success, especially among

West German students and leftists. These groups already tended to view themselves as separate from and less tied to the past, and younger West Germans especially proved more susceptible to the tactics employed by opponents of colonial myths. While myths about the German colonial past found their expression in the stories veterans told one another, the mainstream press, and other established outlets as they had for generations, by the mid to late 1960s challenges to these myths began to take advantage of newer media. They appeared in film and television, both of which produced more graphic, immediate representations of the past. Even in literature, postmodern colonial narratives took on staid, traditional accounts of German heroism in the colonies. All provoked arguments about the colonial past that won over some West Germans but alienated many others. At the same time the politically-charged spaces that were West German universities in the 1960s and 1970s provided intellectual and emotional fuel for anti-colonial and other ideologically-driven fires. West German students flocked to professors unafraid to cast a more critical eye towards the German past and they joined these professors in questioning that past and the connections their leaders, teachers, and parents had to it.

This chapter explores German efforts to combat West German myths about the German colonial past beginning with those that emerged in East Germany immediately after World War II. East German attacks on West German views of the colonial past continued without pause or much in the way of change all the way through the fall of the Berlin Wall until the end of the German Democratic Republic. Although addressed to West German "neo-colonialists" and their hangers-on, the minds behind East German scholarship and propaganda attacking mythologized histories and memories intended not so much to sway opinion in the Federal Republic as to discredit the moral authority of the West German state and West German society. The more progressive and scientific—and therefore accurate—histories of colonialism produced in East Germany would by contrast help legitimate state and society in the German Democratic Republic, both in the eyes of

its citizens and the rest of the world. Next the chapter turns to West German efforts to combat colonial myths. These began much later than in East Germany, really taking off only in the mid-1960s. While not dissimilar to efforts in the East in their content, these attacks on myths about the colonial past in West Germany reflected inspiration not from scholars and officials in East Berlin but rather from revolutionary leaders in South East Asia, Africa, and Latin America, and from a new generation of professors and other faculty on West German campuses. As intensely political as similar work in East Germany, West German criticisms of mythologized narratives of German colonialism likewise employed history to undermine the credibility of the status quo in West Germany. Although these efforts sought to produce real change to a much greater extent than the self-promotion of East German scholarship and propaganda, in both states German criticisms of West German colonial myths ultimately proved full of sound and fury, signifying nothing in terms of a real engagement with the colonial past beyond what could be gained in the short run through references to a disturbing legacy of violence and racism.

New Colonial History Texts in East Germany

History is not only written by the victors. Historians in both German states wrote or rewrote their own histories after World War II, limited to some degree by the pressure of national and international sentiments about the German past but largely free of any direct interference from the victorious Allies. In fact, after 1945 history became a battlefield, and in East Germany historians, other scholars, and a variety of state and party officials went on the offensive. These East Germans marshaled a variety of sources to write their history of the Nazi period and indeed rewrite the history of the German people and western civilization. They replaced traditional narratives of German unification under Bismarck or the industrial revolution with Marxist-Leninist interpretations of the past as a series of struggles between progressive and reactionary

forces. At the same time, East German historians and politicians alike criticized the more traditional histories that continued to appear in West Germany and the relationship with the past these histories reflected. This criticism reflected both deeply felt ideological commitments as well as shrewd political calculation. On the one hand, East German communists believed that their new state, committed to the interests of Germans, represented a clean break with the past, the sort of break that had not occurred in the West. The scientific approach to history embedded in Marxism-Leninism made this break possible, they believed, by revealing the laws and forces at work in historical developments, truths intentionally omitted from West German histories. On the other hand, state and party officials believed they could exploit differences in the way each state and each society approached history and the past in order to distinguish between the nascent Federal Republic and the German Democratic Republic. Drawing this distinction, they believed, would help to build a new national identity amongst the German people and win support at home and abroad by putting East Germany in a positive light while at the same time burdening West Germany with all the unresolved issues of a troubled German past. The most obvious target for East German propaganda was, of course, the Nazi past, and countless broadcasts, articles, books, posters, speeches, and other media blasted West German leaders for their supposed ties to the Nazi period. These same sources praised the heroism of German communists and emphasized the changes they had brought with them when they came to power. East German historians and other scholars backed up these claims with the necessary evidence, condemning both contemporary capitalists and the nobility of another era for their involvement in German imperialism and their ties to Nazism.

Germany's colonial past, too, attracted the attention of East German scholarship and propaganda. Officials and politicians contrasted the continuity of West German colonialism and neo-colonialism against East Germany's successful break with the

imperialist past.[362] They argued that misrepresentations inherent in the myths about the German colonial past circulating in West Germany after World War II made it that much easier for West German politicians to advocate an imperialist, neo-colonial foreign policy. Exposing and combating these myths, then, served a dual purpose, simultaneously discrediting the historical basis justifying these policies and revealing their true nature. One set of Politburo suggestions about how best to accomplish these goals noted that

> to conceal their neo-colonial ambitions, German imperialists today make the claim that they are not burdened as colonial masters like other imperialist states. In reality the development of German imperialism is inseparable from the cruelest of colonial policies and colonial exploitation.[363]

According to the SED, German colonial policies led to terror and oppression in an effort to make up for lost time; Germany had, after all, arrived on the scene comparatively late and at a distinct disadvantage. Far from earning the trust and loyalty of Africans, German rule ultimately led to abuses including—but not limited to—the near extermination of the Herero and Nama in German South-West Africa. Moreover, the Politburo noted that "one of the *Afrikaner*," General Lettow-Vorbeck, "is now glorified in West Germany again"—despite the fact that he was "decisively involved in the suppression of the Herero uprising against the whip of the German colonizers."[364]

Scholars and party members alike used German colonial history to explain the evils of German imperialism both during the Nazi period and after 1945. Indeed, although East and West German efforts in Africa after World War II shared a great deal in common, East German politicians and historians used Germany's expansionist past to

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[362] Wilhelm Pieck and Otto Grotewohl to Central Comitee der KP Süd-Afrikas, "Anlage Nr. 6 zum Protokoll Nr. 61 vom 16. Dezember 1949," December 16, 1949, BAB DY/30/IV 2/2/61, 44.

[363] Abteilung Agitation/Propaganda, "Beschluß des Politbüros zur massenpolitischen Arbeit vom 27.9.1960. Disposition zum Thema:'Der Neokolonialismus, ein Wesenzug des wiedererstandenen deutschen Imperialismus' (Einige Materialhinweise)," 4.

[364] Ibid., 6.

condemn West German activities. In much of the literature produced in East Germany, it seems that West German imperialism was not revealed through behavior, but rather that West German behavior was imperialistic because West Germans were imperialists. This is the case in Manfred Nussbaum's study of German colonialism in Togo, in which the author lumps together Imperial Germany's colonial project with Hitler's Eurocentric imperialism and even West German economic aid programs. Nussbaum writes that German losses in both World Wars may have deprived it of any African territory, "but as in the depths of the sea, where thousands of terrible monsters refuse to release their prey, so too can German imperialism not voluntarily release this tiny country on the west coast of Africa from its grip."[365] Obviously Nussbaum's characterization of West German aid differed considerably from prevailing attitudes in the Federal Republic, where West German reporter H.J. Mathias described Togo as "waiting for German aid" in the construction of its new harbor.[366] But East German politicians came to similar conclusions. Walter Ulbricht condemned German imperialists for laying the groundwork for Nazi ideology. German imperialists, he told the East German parliament, "mapped out the design for the conquest of foreign countries, the design for the domination of Europe, the design for their domination of the world."[367] And these imperialists maintained power in West Germany after 1945. In 1960 the *Ausschuß für Deutsche Einheit* described the Adenauer regime as filled with Germans true to the Kaiser, fascist colonial-militarists, and colonial ideologues. Of greater concern, however, was the fact that ordinary West Germans were being exposed to "a flood of publications spreading

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[365] Manfred Nussbaum, *Togo - eine Musterkolonie?* (Berlin: Rütten & Loening, 1962), 133.

[366] Mathias, "Togo wartet auf deutsche Hilfe. Der Bau des Hafens von Lomé ist für das Land eine Lebensnotwendigkeit."

[367] Walter Ulbricht, "Erklärung des Vorsitzenden des Staatsrates der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik," *Volkskammer der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik* 4. Wahlperiode, no. 13 (May 5, 1965): 459.

colonialist ideology."[368]

East German scholars and politicians attacked not just the colonial past but also interwar and later West German attempts to mythologize that past; Nussbaum argued that "attempts to play down the colonial past" served the interests of West German neo-colonialists looking for economic expansion in Africa.[369] Historian Kurt Büttner's study of colonial rule in East Africa explicitly addressed West German historians' distortion of the colonial past:

> They [historians] write under the maxim: sacrifice the non-essential and incidental in order to save the quintessential. They distanced themselves, though often coyly, from the most infamous of "colonial heroes" in order to justify the colonial policies and colonial exploitation of German imperialism as a whole. Peters, Schröder, and this or that society were just exceptions, individual cases. No, they were no exceptions and individual cases. In their practices and actions—and even through them—the legality of imperialist colonial exploitation as a specific form of exploitation established itself. Peters and his backers differed from other "colonial heroes" only externally, in their form.[370]

Misdirection by West Germans eager to protect the myth of German colonialism could not stand, scholars like Nussbaum and Büttner argued. Individual German colonizers dismissed during Germany's colonial scandals or by later historians as exceptions were nothing of the sort, because even the most ideal of German colonizers—"colonial heroes" like Lettow-Vorbeck—remained imperialist exploiters.

After World War II East German leaders took immediate steps to avoid the kind of mythologizing or glorification of the colonial past that they saw in the West. This included not only rewriting history but changing the memory landscape around them.

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[368] *Bonn - Feind der Völker Asiens und Afrikas: Eine Dokumentation über die Kolonialpolitik der Adenauer-Regierung*, 8.

[369] Nussbaum, *Togo - eine Musterkolonie?*, 133-134.

[370] Kurt Büttner, *Die Anfänge der deutschen Kolonialpolitik in Ostafrika: Eine kritische Untersuchung an Hand unveröffentlichter Quellen*, Studien zur Kolonialgeschichte und Geschichte der nationalen und kolonialen Befreiungsbewegung 1 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1959), 5.

While West German cities repaired and replaced monuments to German colonial "heroes" like Hermann von Wissmann and Hans Dominik, East German communists eliminated them once and for all. East Germans broadly interpreted Allied Control Council Order #30, issued in 1946 to deal with Nazi and other war-related monuments.[371] Although the order explicitly limited itself to monuments honoring military activities that took place after August 1, 1914, East German leaders meeting in Potsdam in 1946 decided to apply the order to all reminders of Germany's militaristic past, including its colonial past.[372] The Culture Office in Frankfurt (Oder), for example, removed nine monuments, including one near the train station honoring local colonial hero Hans Dominik.[373] The office also renamed a number of streets. In addition to obvious candidates like Kaiserstrasse (which became Rosa-Luxemburg-Strasse) Hindenburgstrasse (August-Bebel-Strasse) and Junkerstrasse (Stresseman-Strasse), the Culture Office changed Dominikstrasse to Fontanestrasse, a street named for infamous colonialist Karl Peters to Zschokkestrasse, and one honoring the founder of Germany's first colony, Adolf Lüderitz, to Maxim-Gorki-Strasse.[374]

While Peters, Lüderitz, and Dominik had their names erased from public spaces in

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[371] Robertson et al., "Alliierte Kontrollmacht Kontroll-Rat Direktive Nr. 30. Liquidation der deutschen Kriegs- und nazistischen Denkmäler und Museen," May 15, 1946, StAFfo Bestandsabteilung II, Nr. 153.

[372] Kulturamt to Oberbürgermeister, July 22, 1946, StAFfo Bestandsabteilung II, Nr. 153.

[373] Minklen?, "Betr.: Beseitigung faschistischer u. militaristischer Denkmäler. Verfügung der Provinzial-Verwaltung Potsdam vom 28.9.1946" (Stadtbauverwaltung Frankfurt (Oder), December 16, 1946), StAFfo Bestandsabteilung II, Nr. 153; Fehrmann, "Telefonische Durchsage aus Eberswalde am 9. Januar 1947, 1530 Uhr bestimmt für Kulturamt," January 9, 1947, StAFfo Bestandsabteilung II, Nr. 153.

[374] "Tagesordnung des 2. öffentliche Sitzung des Rates," August 29, 1946, StAFfo Bestandsabteilung II, Nr. 65/17; "Umbenennung von Straßen," *Märkische Volksstimme*, September 6, 1946, Stadt-Ausgabe Frankfurt (Oder) edition, sec. Frankfurter Tagesecho; "Zschokke-Straße," *Märkische Volksstimme*, November 20, 1946, Stadt-Ausgabe Frankfurt (Oder) edition, sec. Frankfurter Tagesecho.

cities like Frankfurt, they did not vanish from East German histories. Rather, they and the endeavor they represented became the subject of intensely critical research. A considerable amount of East German scholarship actively engaged in uncovering the truth about the colonial past and, simultaneously, shedding light on the distortion and celebration of that past. Büttner's was the first publication in a series of "Studies of Colonial History and the History of the National and Colonial Liberation Movement" that Akademie Verlag published between 1959 and 1964. The series survived under a variety of other names until the collapse of the German Democratic Republic. All told, over the course of 31 years the series came to include some 65 volumes. Colonial history and especially German colonial history also had an important place in the broader academic literature beyond this series. Nussbaum's book, for example, appeared in 1962 and set out to examine the legend of a Togo as a model colony. The reemergence of this legend in West Germany, Nussbaum argues, represented "the historical continuity of German colonial policy" and served "to 'historically' justify West German imperialism's claims to influence in Togo."[375] In deconstructing the legend Nussbaum compares the positive view of German colonialism that survived in both West Germany and Togo with the realities of colonial rule. Nussbaum readily admitted that interviews conducted in Togo yielded a positive image of peaceful trade, schools and hospitals, streets and railroads, houses and just government, with no mention of bloody battles or mistreatment.[376] But, he writes, "Naturally it interests us whether that was actually the case. Therefore we are trying to inform ourselves in greater detail and find enlightenment in the literature from those years about Togo." Unsurprisingly, Nussbaum discovers that life had not been so perfect under German rule; Africans had rejected the same German rule they so fondly remembered in favor of British or French control. The same Herzog von Mecklenburg

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[375] Nussbaum, *Togo - eine Musterkolonie?*, 136.

[376] Ibid., 7.

warmly greeted on the occasion of Togo's independence had angrily rejected indigenous participation in the administration of the colony before World War I. Despite Nussbaum's efforts at exposing the truth, however, he could not have been more wrong when he predicted that "surely even the Duke of Mecklenburg will soon be shown that he has no more place in Togo today than he has for some time in Mecklenburg."[377] As we have seen, Mecklenburg and other former colonial officials were met with enthusiastic crowds on their return trips to Africa.

Other scholarship sought to put the lie to myths of German colonialism in similar ways. These included, for example, Büttner's collaboration with Christian Rachel in 1974 to uncover *Ten Lies about Africa*. The authors described their task—"the constant exposure and refutation of imperialist fabrications about Africa, particularly the true nature of German colonialism and neo-colonialism"—as one close to the heart of all socialist scholars of Africa.[378] Even East German textbooks attacked not only the practice of German colonialism but the myth surrounding it: using the brutal suppression of the Herero as an example, one eighth-grade text suggested "that German colonial rulers lived no less barbarically in the colonies than did other imperialists. But in newspapers and books they hypocritically alleged that German colonial rule was a blessing for the colonies."[379]

While the scholarship produced by East German historians did shed light on aspects of German colonialism that had attracted little attention in Germany before World War II, such as the massacre of the Herero and the Nama in German Southwest Africa, the realities of postwar politics meant that these contributions went unnoticed or at the

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[377] Ibid., 138.

[378] Kurt Büttner and Christian Rachel, *Zehn Lügen über Afrika* (Berlin: Verlag der Nation, 1974), 5.

[379] Erich Pape, ed., *Lehrbuch für Geschichte der 8. Klasse der Oberschule* (Berlin: Volk und Wissen Volkseigener Verlag, 1960), 177.

very least under-appreciated in West Germany. While hard sciences such as astronomy and physics benefited from limited cooperation between East and West, interpretive disciplines like history were simultaneously too immovable and, many feared, too ideologically permeable to make such exchanges possible. In West Germany, especially, the academic establishment was too set in its anti-Marxist-Leninist ways to allow for even the possibility that some research thus tainted might be of value. Few of even those scholars who challenged the status quo beginning in the 1960s went so far as to embrace the research being produced in East Germany, let alone endorse a Marxist approach to history. For scholars in East Germany, of course, the SED's constant surveillance of all academic output made the advocacy of interpretations counter to the party line not only career suicide, but impossible to publish.

The dismissal of East German criticisms of the colonial past as East German propaganda was made easier by the extremes to which some East German scholars took their commitment to the party line. Research into the massacre of the Herero and Nama got lost amongst other accusations aimed at the many imperialist enemies of socialism. In 1963, for instance, Heinrich Loth published another volume in the "Studies of Colonial History and the History of the National and Colonial Liberation Movement," this one investigating the role of the Rhenish Mission Society in Southwest Africa. Rather than crediting the Society for its opposition to the German military's treatment of Africans, Loth attacks the Society for its alleged contributions to the underdevelopment of indigenous peoples and the failure of African resistance to the establishment of colonial rule. The Mission Society, Loth argues, undermined indigenous processes of state formation before 1884 through the exercise of political and economic power and the exaggeration of internal divisions amongst Africans.[380] While the merit of such an

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[380] Heinrich Loth, *Die Christliche Mission in Südwestafrika. Zur destruktiven Rolle der Rheinischen Missionsgesellschaft beim Prozess der Staatsbildung in Südwestafrika (1842-1893)*, Studien zur Kolonialgeschichte und Geschichte der nationalen und kolonialen Befreiungsbewegung (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1963).

argument could be debated, other East German scholarship descended to personal attacks, such as those made by Kurt Büttner against West German historian Wahrhold Drascher. Büttner's response to Drascher's *Perioden der Kolonialgeschichte* relied as much or more on accusations of racism and ties to Nazism as it did on evidence and argument.[381] Such obviously partisan attacks did little to encourage Western historians to put much stock in East German scholarship. Indeed, association with such scholarship was meant to discredit; the Afrika-Verein accused Ralph Giordano's television documentary *Heia Safari* of closely following the "diction" of several recent books published in the "Eastern Zone," and asked WDR Intendant Bismarck to investigate so as "to rebut or substantiate our presumptions."[382]

New Kinds of Colonial History Texts in West Germany

Whatever the "diction" of Giordano's documentary, it represented the first salvo in a new offensive aimed at West German myths about the colonial past. While much of the coverage of German colonialism in old media like newspapers and books tended to reproduce these myths, by the 1960s new media began to challenge both their popularity and their message. *Heia Safari* struck the first major blow on October 5 and 6, 1966, when West German television aired the two-part documentary aimed at determining what was "behind the legend of German colonial history." The documentary set off a firestorm of controversy, generating more letters to the television station than nearly any other program. Giordano's critics portrayed him as a Communist borrowing from the Marxist-Leninist scholarship of the East and misrepresenting the past in much the same way the British had after World War I. Other West Germans, however, expressed dismay at

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[381] Kurt Büttner, "Neo-Nazism in West German Colonial Historiography," in *Theories on Africa and Neo-Colonialism*, ed. Kurt Büttner, trans. Christopher Salt (Leipzig: Karl-Marx-Universität, 1970).

[382] Paproth and Colberg to Bismarck, October 12, 1966.

learning about the violence that characterized not only German responses to African uprisings but also everyday colonial administration.

Early on in the first half of the documentary Giordano explicitly lays out his agenda: a thorough interrogation of what he refers to as the legend of the German colonial idyll. That such a thing is necessary seemed obvious to the filmmaker: "the legend of the German colonial idyll is so unanimous, so clear, that we can spare ourselves a demographic survey."[383] Throughout the first half vultures serve as a recurring symbol of German colonial rule as the documentary examines the illegality of treaties drawn up with African leaders, military conquest in the colonies, the war against the Herero and the Nama in Southwest Africa—which the documentary refers to as the first genocide of the twentieth century, a significant new charge in 1966—and finally the Maji-Maji rebellion in East Africa. The second half, by contrast, focused not so much on the violence of conquest as that of exploitation, with the lash replacing vultures as the visual cue connecting various portions of the film. Finally Giordano turns his attention to the period after Germany lost its colonies, arguing that the legend of German colonial rule emerged only then in response to Allied allegations of brutality that resulted in the loss of Germany's colonies.

A lack of extant colonial footage forced Giordano to rely on more modern images and film, including interviews with Africans and montages of landscapes, wildlife, and everyday life in Africa. German voices, by contrast, appear only rarely. Much of the material in the documentary came from the files of the *Reichskolonialamt* in East German archives. With the help of Hartmut Pogge von Strandmann, the documentary's historical advisor and a PhD student working under famed and controversial historian Fritz Fischer, Giordano meticulously supported his claims with primary sources from these files, going

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[383] Quoted in Michels, "Germany's Colonial Past as TV Scandal: The Documentary 'Heia Safari' in 1966/67."

so far as to provide detailed citations in the program's voice-overs.[384]

Public response to "Heia Safari" was immense, but could not have been entirely unexpected. Giordano intended his work to be provocative; he cites the outcry against a series of articles in *Welt der Arbeit* that were critical of German colonialism as one of the motivating factors behind his own interest in the subject (the outcry forced editors to cut the series short.) Already on the first night of the two-part program WDR received an "unusually high" number of telephone calls complaining about the program. Among these callers were Bundestag President and German Africa Society chair Eugen Gerstenmaier and Franz Joseph Strauss, head of the CSU in Bavaria. Within two weeks of the program WDR had received 249 letters from viewers, three quarters of which were critical of the program. Much of this criticism came from individuals with first-hand experience in the colonies. Among younger viewers, however, responses were more positive, and those younger viewers writing to comment on the program expressed gratitude for the service Giordano had done by informing West Germans about the realities (and perhaps even the existence) of Germany's colonial past. Surveys conducted by Infratest in Munich revealed that these younger viewers, rather than the older veterans of colonial service, were more representative of the German public: a majority of those questioned found the documentary good or excellent, a typical response for such a program. In another measure, the documentary received a "plus 4" and a "plus 3" for its first and second halves on a scale from "minus 10" to "plus 10."[385]

Despite these positive indicators, the extraordinary number of complaints prompted WDR Intendant Klaus von Bismarck to suggest a panel discussion of the

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[384] Ibid.

[385] Friederika Raventlow to E Gerstenmaier, October 7, 1966, BAK B/161/3; Paproth and Colberg to Bismarck, October 12, 1966; von Bismarck to E Gerstenmaier, October 21, 1966, BAK B/161/3; "'Heia Safari'"; Michels, "Germany's Colonial Past as TV Scandal: The Documentary 'Heia Safari' in 1966/67."

program. Filmed in December of 1966, the discussion included the filmmakers, specialists on African history, and some 30 viewers critical of the documentary. It eventually aired in February 1967. The discussion's first hour saw agreement amongst the panelists about the apologetic nature of published histories of German colonialism after 1918, but little else. In the second hour the discussion was opened up to include viewers in the audience who attacked Giordano's one-sided recounting of events and defended German colonial rule with the familiar tropes of the myth of German colonialism: the benefits of economic development, the lasting gratitude and affection of Africans to this day, and the simple fact that nothing had been as Giordano portrayed it.[386]

Bismarck concluded the program by suggesting that "Heia Safari" and the resulting discussion had "undoubtedly led to the stimulation of the debate about a largely unknown part of German history."[387] Indeed, in the years that followed a wealth of scholarship on German colonialism emerged in West Germany, the product of a younger generation of scholars, the same generation producing new, more critical examinations of the Nazi past. Of particular importance was Helmut Bley's book on *South-West Africa under German Rule*, published in 1968. In much greater detail than a two-part miniseries aimed at a popular audience could ever aspire to, Bley presented a convincing argument against the myth of German colonialism built not on anecdotal evidence but an analysis of German colonial rule and the social structure put into place in South West Africa.[388]

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[386] Heinrich Meyer, "Heia Safari," *Mitteilungsblatt des Traditionsverbandes ehemaliger Schutz- und Überseetruppen*, no. 42 (September 1967): 2-31.

[387] Quoted in Michels, "Germany's Colonial Past as TV Scandal: The Documentary 'Heia Safari' in 1966/67."

[388] Originally published as Helmut Bley, *Kolonialherrschaft Und Sozialstruktur in Deutsch-Südwestafrika 1894-1914*, Hamburger Beiträge zur Zeitgeschichte Bd. 5 (Hamburg: Leibniz-Verlag, 1968); Translated into English as Bley, *South-West Africa Under German Rule, 1894-1914*.

Reviewed favorably in publications like *Die Zeit* and *Der Spiegel*, Bley broke new ground not only for his careful attention to an aspect of the colonial past often overlooked in popular discourse but more importantly for his willingness to investigate apparent parallels between the violence in South West Africa and the social structures that produced it on the one hand and violence under National Socialism on the other.[389]

Bley's book kicked off an academic offensive against the myth of German colonialism. In 1970 Atlantis Verlag, based in West Germany and Switzerland, published the first book in its four year-old series "Beiträge zur Kolonial- und Überseegeschichte" that focused on German colonial rule. Over the next several decades additional titles focusing on individuals (Bernahrd Dernburg, Friedrich Fabri) or particular aspects of German colonialism (such as the relationship between imperialism and Christian missions) appeared in the series alongside more "traditional" research on British and French colonialism and imperialism.[390] The scholarship produced in the late 1960s found

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[389] Positive reviews included praise from renowned history Hans-Ulrich Wehler. Hans Ulrich Wehler, "Wider die deutsche Koloniallegende. Der Vernichtungskrieg gegen die Herero," *Die Zeit*, October 25, 1968; This and other positive reviews sparked protest from those who felt Bley was as bad as Giordano. See, for instance, "'Der Spiegel' und die Wahrheit," *Mitteilungsblatt des Traditionsverbandes ehemaliger Schutz- und Überseetruppen*, no. 46 (1969): 19-21.

[390] Werner Schiefel, *Bernhard Dernburg. 1865-1937 Kolonialpolitiker und Bankier im wilhelminischen Deutschland*, Beiträge zur Kolonial- und Überseegeschichte 11 (Zürich, Freiburg i. Br.: Atlantis, 1972); Klaus J Bade, *Friedrich Fabri und der Imperialismus in der Bismarckzeit. Revolution - Depression - Expansion*, Beiträge zur Kolonial- und Überseegeschichte 13 (Freiburg i. Br.: Atlantis, 1975); Karin Hausen, *Deutsche Kolonialherrschaft in Afrika. Wirtschaftsinteressen und Kolonialverwaltung in Kamerun vor 1914*, Beiträge zur Kolonial- und Überseegeschichte 6 (Zürich, Freiburg i. Br.: Atlantis, 1970); Albert Wirz, *Vom Sklavenhandel zum kolonialen Handel. Wirtschaftsräume und Wirtschaftsformen in Kamerun von 1914*, Beiträge zur Kolonial- und Überseegeschichte 10 (Zürich, Freiburg i. Br.: Atlantis, 1972); Klaus J Bade, ed., *Imperialismus und Kolonialmission. Kaiserliches Deutschland und koloniales Imperium*, Beiträge zur Kolonial- und Überseegeschichte 22 (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1982); Dieter Brötel, *Französischer Imperialismus in Vietnam. Die koloniale Expansion und die Errichtung des Protektorates Annam-Tongking 1880-1885*, Beiträge zur Kolonial- und Überseegeschichte 8 (Freiburg i. Br.: Atlantis, 1971); Toni Schönenberger, *Der britische Rückzug aus Singapore 1945-1976*, Beiträge zur Kolonial- und Überseegeschichte 20 (Zürich, Freiburg i. Br.: Atlantis, 1981); Armin Reese, *Europäische Hegemonie und France d'outre-mer. Koloniale Fragen in der französischen Außenpolitik 1700-1763*, Beiträge zur Kolonial- und Überseegeschichte 42 (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1988).

a receptive audience in the growing student bodies at West German universities. At the prompting of new revelations about the Nazi past and of their own volition these students and other young people questioned their leaders, teachers, and parents about their own pasts. Scholarship by Bley and others undid much of the work of the myth of German colonialism by causing West German students and other Leftists to compare the colonial past with the Nazi past. No longer an aberration, the Holocaust came to be seen by these young West Germans as the culmination of a terrible pattern of racism and violence, a pattern that needed to be broken.

Not all the ideas in this new wave of scholarship on German colonialism were new, of course. While East German scholarship found little resonance amongst West German academics, in the late 1960s a growing number of West German students and Leftists became gradually more open to Marxist historical interpretations of colonialism and imperialism. Student anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism were closely tied to support for independence movements and the struggles of working peoples in places like Vietnam. Although not all of the increasingly political generation after 1968 embraced Marxism, even the significantly milder criticisms of West German historians provoked anti-colonialist responses from students. In 1967 Hamburg students failed in an attempt to tear down a statue to former colonial governor Hermann von Wissmann; at their trial historian Helmut Bley testified as an expert witness on their behalf.[391]

Students in Hamburg used the Wissmann memorial as a platform (sometimes literally) from which to express solidarity with the Third World and espouse their anti-colonialist beliefs. Such was the case on 8 August 1967, when students temporarily toppled Wissmann. Peter Schütt, one of the event's organizers, climbed the memorial to

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[391] Peter Schütt, "Der Denkmalssturz," *Hamburg*, August 7, 1992, sec. Thema; Ingo Cornils, "Denkmalsturz. The German Student Movement and German Colonialism," in (presented at the War, Genocide and Memory Conference, Sheffield, 2006), http://www.german.leeds.ac.uk/gsm/campus/Denkmalsturz.htm.

the cheers of onlookers. He perched himself on Wissmann's shoulders and began to recite anti-colonialist and anti-militaristic slogans borrowed from Ho Chi Minh, Che Guevara, and Patrice Lumumba, much to his audience's delight.[392] One flyer promoting the August 1967 attempt to tear down the memorial proclaimed that Wissmann's crimes in East Africa were being reproduced in the present-day by mercenaries in Africa and General Westmoreland in Vietnam.[393] While a memorial to a revered figure from Germany's colonial past may have been the object around which Hamburg students tied ropes, their real target was much larger and situated in the present, not the past. Hamburg students saw in the Wissmann memorial the glorification of an ideology of racism and exploitation that stretched from the colonial period across the Third Reich and into the present. Students criticized Wissmann both for his own misdeeds and as a symbol of a system of Western imperialism that they saw continuing around the world. They certainly had history on their side: Wissmann's victories often became massacres, and many who opposed the German vision of peace and security were tried and sentenced to death. Wissmann's reputation nearly cost him the position of governor: Wilhelm II only grudgingly approved his appointment. Still, for Hamburg students the past served as the means to an end—in this case, righting a series of long-standing wrongs summed up in one word: imperialism.

Solidarity with victims of Western imperialism motivated initial attempts to tear down the Wissmann memorial, but the memorial also became a vehicle for another branch of student movement politics, one which questioned and criticized the establishment with regards to both shortcomings and failures in the present as well as possible links to the Nazi past. Indeed, it was not until after members of the Hamburg

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[392] Schütt, "Der Denkmalssturz."

[393] "Studenten wollten das Wissmann-Denkmal umwerfen. Kleine Demonstration vor der Universität," *Die Welt*, August 9, 1967.

Political Police—present at the August 1967 demonstration all along—stepped in at the last minute to save Wissmann and arrest seventeen students that anti-Wissmann sentiment became widespread.[394] As was frequently the case elsewhere in West Germany and Western Europe, police action attracted attention and sympathy from the anti-establishment elements, and the ensuing legal proceedings turned into a circus. The university pressed charges, and when the court refused the defendants' request for a larger courtroom the defendants decided not to appear in court on 6 November 1968, the day the trial was scheduled to begin. Instead, they joined hundreds of other students on campus for a trial of their own, one in which the political justice system, the police, the university's rector, and the *Hochschulabteilung* (department of higher education) stood accused.[395] The charges: preventing a public trial, glorifying colonialism, injuring the autonomy of the university, and failing to act according to the will and best interest of the student body by bringing charges against the would-be statue-topplers.[396] Student outrage, particularly at Rector Ehrlicher's 'absolutist and autocratic behavior,' was part of a larger conflict at the university and across West Germany. [397] Ehrlicher's defense of suspected Nazi ideologue Professor Hans Wenke and his stance regarding Wissmann suggested an unacceptable pattern to Hamburg students, one in which Ehrlicher stood by Nazis and colonial conquerors. Clearly—to Hamburg students, that is—he had to go. No

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[394] Schütt, "Der Denkmalssturz."

[395] "Vermerk: betr. Demonstration am Mittwoch, 6.11.1968," November 11, 1968, StAHH Universität II Abl. 1981/02 91-54.3 (4) Bd. 1; Münzner, "Auszug aus dem Protokoll über die Sitzung des Universitätssenats vom 8. Nov. 1968," November 8, 1968, StAHH Universität II Abl. 1981/02 91-54.3 (4) Bd. 1.

[396] SHB, SDS, and Arbeitskreis Justiz, "Wissmannprozess. Verhandlung verlegt: Vom Justizpalast ins Audimax," November 6, 1968, StAHH Universität II Abl. 1973 90-70.11 Bd. 5.

[397] Anonymous to Ehrlicher, January 10, 1968, StAHH ZAS A 144 - Wissmann-Denkmal; Also see Ingo Cornils, "Denkmalsturz. The German Student Movement and German Colonialism," in *German Colonialism and National Identity*, ed. Michael Perraudin and Jürgen Zimmerer (New York: Routledge, 2010).

longer would students 'allow themselves to be terrorized by an oligarchy of *Fachidioten*,' chief among them Ehrlicher himself.[398]

Thus not only solidarity with the Third World and with the victims of western colonialism and imperialism but also with the victims of a 'fascist' administration and unjust system led to the toppling of Wissmann's statue. On 31 October 1968 the Steering Committee for the university's Student Parliament addressed the issue of the Wissmann memorial and the impending trial of those arrested in August 1967. While the motion brought before the committee did indeed condemn Germany's colonial past in no uncertain terms, it once again focused on the memorial's role as 'a symbol for colonialist endeavors . . . that we reject in every form, for example in Vietnam and Angola.' This motion carried by a wide margin; a more contentious issue was exactly how best to express solidarity with those about to stand trial. Indeed, it was this debate that broke down into chaos, leading the meeting to dissolve and resulting, ultimately, in Wissmann's toppling at the hands of a group of student parliamentarians.[399]

Decades later, in 2001, novelist Uwe Timm included the toppling of the Wissmann monument in *Rot*, his acclaimed novel about the student movements in the late 1960s of which he had been a part. This was not the first time his writing had dealt with the German colonial past, however. Indeed, he tackled the issue head-on in 1979 with the publication of *Morenga*, a prize-winning novel about the bloody suppression of Herero and Nama uprisings in German Southwest Africa. In 1985 this novel became a film, which in turn earned a Golden Berlin Bear award nomination. Both presented the German public with a very different image of Germans as colonizers than that of the myth of German colonialism. Timm's German administrators were ignorant of the territory they

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[398] Ibid.

[399] König, "Studentenparlament der Universität Hamburg Präsidium. Kurzprotokoll der 247. Sitzung am 31.10. 1968," October 31, 1968, 13-14, StAHH AStA der Uni. / 199.

ruled, his German officers unprepared for African conditions. He depicted German settlers eager to take advantage of the indigenous population, plying African leaders with liquor to wring concessions from them. Perhaps most importantly of all, Timm's depictions of German concentration camps set up to collect African prisoners and his portrayal of the violence of German officers and troops suggested a racism totally at odds with the myths of German colonialism that dominated popular discourse in the 1950s and 1960s. *Morenga* did not escape the notice of the *Traditionsverbandes ehemaliger Schutz- und Überseetruppen*, and in a highly critical review member Volker Lohse attacked both the accuracy of the novel and the motivations of its author:

> In general the *Morenga* novel has as good as nothing to do with reality. It deals in fact with an alienated representation of contemporary issues by means of colonial war. Indeed, one-sided sources are meant to simulate reality, but in reality the 38 year-old Timm carries over his Vietnam obsessions to South West Africa at the beginning of the century and tries to write his way out of the German nation that was his childhood home.[400]

Lohse's dismissal of the novel's claims to historical accuracy naturally reflects his steadfast belief in a mythical German colonial past and in the German as an ideal colonizer; in fact, however, *Morenga* presents a much more balanced and accurate—though still fictionalized—account than previously published by the German military before World War I or in memoirs and other celebratory histories published between the wars and after 1945. However, while Lohse's analysis of the novel as historical narrative may be flawed, his analysis of that narrative as a product of a particular context is spot on. *Morenga* indeed reflects not only a concern with the colonial past, but Timm's very real concerns about contemporary geo-politics such as Western imperialism in Vietnam and elsewhere as well as the inescapability of that other chapter of German history much more closely associated with "concentration camps" than German colonialism: the

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[400] Volker Lohse, "Buchsprechung," *Mitteilungsblatt des Traditionsverbandes ehemaliger Schutz- und Überseetruppen*, no. 59 (August 1979): 28.

Holocaust.

As this chapter has argued, *Morenga* was not unique in this regard. Beginning in the mid- to late 1960s, a number of West Germans began to question and to criticize myths of German colonialism, which had to that point dominated public memory of the colonial past. West German efforts to combat these myths reflected larger shifts in the relationship between West Germans and the past as well as the politics of the day. No longer content to sit by passively and allow the past to be ignored, West Germans—especially of the younger generation born after World War II—began not only to actively investigate the Nazi period but to search for antecedents. At the same time, new media made it possible for new versions of German history to be presented to the public in engaging ways. This applied to histories of National Socialism as well as rebuttals to the myth of German colonialism, which not only appeared in television and films but also actively sought to dismantle older technologies of memory like colonial memorials. In addition to mirroring and extending West German queries into the Nazi past, attempts to undermine the myth of German colonialism also reflected West German concerns about the relationship between the West and the rest of the world in the present day. Although parallels between the colonial past and neo-colonialist present made West German use of that past as a political tool understandable, in practice analogies were often carried too far and similarities exaggerated. More importantly, West Germans also began to instrumentalize the colonial past in debates that had next to nothing to do with colonialism past or present. Although the politicization of the colonial past in West Germany paralleled the highly political use of Germany's colonial past in the East, the evolution of efforts to combat colonial myths betrayed little in the way of common ancestors. Both sides certainly opposed colonialism and were critical of the postwar Federal Republic. However, East German criticisms emerged much earlier, the product deep ideological commitments and competition with the West. While later West German attacks on myths about the colonial past were meant to affect relatively well-defined

political change, East German critics deployed the German colonial past as part of a larger, more general critique of the West aimed not so much at convincing West Germans they were in the wrong as demonstrating to the world that East Germany was in the right.

CHAPTER 6: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES: GERMANS AND SOUTH-WEST AFRICA/NAMIBIA

In the 1960s, ‘70, and ‘80s Africans in the former German colony of South-West Africa advocated and fought for their independence from South Africa, ultimately succeeding in 1990 with the creation of Namibia. In both the Federal Republic and the German Democratic Republic this long and difficult process elicited responses from the state and from society born of this collision. On the one hand these responses acknowledged the colonial and post-colonial context of the Cold War and its many hot spots. On the other hand, they also recast the colonial past along lines that reflected contemporary concerns and more recent experiences, interpreting and instrumentalizing it in the same manner—and to the same ends—as other elements of German history. East and West Germans reacted to and became involved in the process of decolonization in ways that reflected both the economic, political, and cultural interests each group developed after World War II as well as the influence of each state’s memories of German involvement in the former colony.

German responses to developments in South-West Africa/Namibia grew out of and reproduced feelings of identification with and responsibility towards particular groups living in the former German colony, feelings rooted in Germans’ views of the colonial past. In West Germany the myth of the German as ideal colonizer persisted—despite challenges from students, leftists, and others—and that myth contributed to West German concerns about the fate of German and German-speaking settlers. Just as important in shaping West German responses, however, were the economic interests of West German businesses and the political allegiances born of the Cold War. In East Germany, by contrast, state and Socialist Unity Party (SED) officials promoted identification with Africans based on a shared history of anti-imperialist struggle. At the same time, of course, commitments to Communism and anti-colonialism as well as

efforts to build and extend an international reputation provided the real impetus for East German responses to the situation in South-West Africa/Namibia.

The presence of the colonial (or anti-colonial) past in the present was important but by no means was it spontaneous. Germans manipulated memories and histories of the German colonial past, using them as explanations or justifications. West German anti-communists argued against the recognition of Marxist liberation groups on the grounds that they posed a threat to Germans and German-speaking settlers for whom the Federal Republic was still in some sense responsible. East German officials touted their state's decisive break with the imperialist past as they explained the roots of their aid and assistance to such groups. Yet even these and other efforts to instrumentalize the past reflected its influence, for despite manipulations the colonial past explained a great deal about the present, not least of all the very interests involved in shaping competing narratives of that past.

German memories of the colonial past bore the imprint of contemporary concerns, but in both East and West Germany they were cast in the mold of German memories about the Holocaust and World War II. After 1945, East and West Germans developed patterns of remembering (and forgetting) that persisted and repeated. The application of these patterns in the context of South-West Africa/Namibia was particularly apt; in what scholars have since identified as one of the first genocides of the twentieth century, German colonial troops in South-West Africa very nearly exterminated the Herero and Nama peoples. Yet the common thread of genocide is not enough to explain similarities between German memories of the Holocaust and of German South-West Africa. Too many differences set the one apart from the other, chief among them proximity in terms of time and space: one genocide had occurred long ago and far away, the other in living memory before Germans' very eyes. Despite contemporary comparisons, the application of existing East and West German patterns of memory reflected not similarities in the content of these two chapters of the German past but rather the transformational impact

the Holocaust had on Germans' relationship with the past. That is not to say that memories of Germany's colonial past or histories of German rule in South-West Africa always contained subtexts dealing with the Holocaust, although they often did, as demonstrated in the previous two chapters. Rather, German memories of colonialism reflected methods of addressing, dealing with, or ignoring the past learned in response to World War II.

South-West Africa/Namibia represents an ideal case study, but like Germany it is also located at a unique intersection of multiple overlapping contexts. The presence of a significant German population in the country was a legacy of the German colonial period, one that turned South-West Africa/Namibia domestically into a kind of German Algeria, as Germans weighed the fates of European settlers versus indigenous peoples. Unlike the case of France and Algeria, the violence that rocked the streets of West Germany was not a direct extension of the violence on the African continent, but perpetrators and victims alike saw a certain degree of common cause. At the same time, the racist Apartheid policies of the South African state in both South Africa and South-West Africa/Namibia drew global attention and censure. The Marxist bent of leading independence movements, however, ensured that the liberation struggle in South-West Africa/Namibia was also a theater in the Cold War, one in which both German states competed with each other individually and as part of their respective alliances. Although cooler heads may have prevailed in Europe, efforts at détente meant to prevent tanks from rolling across Germany and nuclear warfare from breaking out did little to ease tensions in places like South-West Africa/Namibia.

Making German South-West Africa into Namibia

The process by which German South-West Africa became independent Namibia was long and far from straightforward. Certain scholarship, including much of that produced in East Germany, traces its origins all the way back to the uprisings of the

Herero and Nama, largely in an attempt to build a pedigree for the liberation movement of the post-World War II era.[401] Indeed, this is not all that different from East German histories of the German Democratic Republic itself. A less ideologically-driven assessment might locate a starting point at the end of World War I, when Germany's colonies became League of Nations mandates. Responsibility for what had until that point been German South-West Africa passed to the Union of South Africa. The Union itself was a recent creation, the product of the British Parliament's South Africa Act of 1909, which joined together Great Britain's four southern African colonies into one dominion under the British crown. To these four provinces the League of Nations added South-West Africa, which, while not a province itself, the Covenant of the League of Nations deemed "best administered under the laws of the mandatory as integral portions of its territory."[402]

This language describing the roles and responsibilities of mandatory powers with regards to "class C" mandates—including also Germany's former South Pacific territories—largely determined South-West Africa's fate for the next half century. The Union and later Republic of South Africa maintained a firm grip on the territory, never outright annexing it but treating it in almost all other respects as part of the country. While the provisions of the Covenant foresaw such close control, the duration of that control was not necessarily a foregone conclusion. The League of Nations intended its mandates to provide a sort of transition for "peoples not yet able to stand by themselves

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[401] Dieter Schaknies, "1904: Als die Herero und Nama zur Waffe griffen. Ein Kapitel aus dem antiimperialistischen Befreiungskampf des Volkes von Namibia," *Neues Deutschland*, March 30, 1974; Kommunistischer Bund Westdeutschland, "Programm Aktionswoche vom 21.4. - 1.5.1978," *Kommunistischer Volkszeitung*, April 20, 1978.

[402] Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations. The Covenant itself comprised the first part of each of the treaties signed in and around Paris after World War II; see:"Treaty of Trianon," June 4, 1919; "Treaty of Versailles," June 28, 1919; "Treaty of Sèvres," August 10, 1919; "Treaty of Saint-Germain-en-Laye," September 10, 1919; "Treaty of Neuilly," November 27, 1919.

under the strenuous conditions of the modern world."[403] While mandatory powers like Great Britain and France also saw in former German colonies the opportunity to extend their empires, in time the mandate system became not an extension of those powers' colonial projects but rather a moderating and reforming influence. International oversight in the form of the Permanent Mandates Commission fostered a greater sense of accountability and responsibility to the interests of indigenous peoples in places like Tanganyika, Togo, and Cameroon. A growing emphasis on "trusteeship" rather than annexation found further impetus after World War II as the United Nations replaced the League of Nations and the trusteeship system replaced the mandate system. This new system explicitly prescribed "progressive development towards self-government or independence" for trust territories, which included nearly all of the former mandates.[404]

The exception: South-West Africa. South Africa refused to submit to the closer international scrutiny of the trusteeship system. Although South Africa's National Party did not implement its program of Apartheid until 1948, decades of discrimination and segregation in the Union had spread to its mandate as well, and such policies would not sit well with a Trusteeship Council tasked with ensuring that trustees "encourage respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion."[405] Numerous efforts to end South Africa's mandate and bring South-West Africa into the trusteeship system proved fruitless. In 1960, for instance, Ethiopia and Liberia brought a case before the International Court of Justice, only to have the case dismissed. In 1966, the United Nations General Assembly passed resolution 2145, declaring the mandate terminated as a result of South Africa's failure to fulfill its

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[403] Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations.

[404] Michael D Callahan, *Mandates and Empire: The League of Nations and Africa, 1914-1931* (Brighton [U.K.]: Sussex Academic Press, 1999); Michael D Callahan, *A Sacred Trust: The League of Nations and Africa, 1929-1946* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2004).

[405] "Charter of the United Nations."

obligations. Five years later the International Court of Justice ruled again, this time deciding that South Africa's presence was illegal and calling for immediate withdrawal. Neither of these decisions by international bodies succeeded in forcing South Africa to relinquish control of the territory.

Within South-West Africa/Namibia, organized indigenous resistance to South African rule began to emerge in the late 1950s. A shifting constellation of organizations including the Ovamboland People's Congress and the Ovamboland People's Organization gave way by the 1960s to two competing liberation movements. The first, the South West African National Union (SWANU), drew the majority of its membership from the Herero people. The second, more successful group was the direct successor to the Ovamboland People's Organization and had its strongest support among the Ovambo people: the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO). Historian Lauren Dobell attributes part of SWAPO's success to the organization's decision in 1962 to demonstrate its mettle by moving away from simple protest and politics and towards an armed struggle. More important, however, was SWAPO's ability and willingness to appeal to the international community for aid and assistance.[406]

Historians, political scientists, and others have made much of the international nature of the conflict in the scholarship on SWAPO and South-West Africa and Namibia, and with good reason. On the one hand, this scholarship has noted the success with which SWAPO parlayed its own limited goals of majority rule into a regional and worldwide crusade against the Apartheid and the remnants of colonialism. Such support won SWAPO everything from funding and equipment provided by various socialist states and

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[406] Lionel Cliffe, ed., *The Transition to Independence in Namibia* (Boulder: L. Rienner, 1994); Colin Leys and John S Saul, eds., *Namibia's Liberation Struggle: The Two-Edged Sword* (London: J. Curry, 1995); Laurent C. W Kaela, *The Question of Namibia* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996); Lauren Dobell, *Swapo's Struggle for Namibia, 1960-1991: War by Other Means*, Basel Namibia studies series 3 (Basel, Switzerland: P. Schlettwein Publishing, 1998); Colin Leys, *Histories of Namibia: Living Through the Liberation Struggle: Life Histories Told to Colin Leys and Susan Brown* (London: Merlin Press, 2005).

left-leaning parties to military training and bases of operations in neighboring countries. On the other hand, historians and political scientists have also analyzed South-West Africa/Namibia as a proxy for the Cold War, one in which western powers including the United States and West Germany held their nose to a greater or lesser extent while supporting South Africa in the face of communist uprising and even intervention.[407] South Africa did its best to pass itself off as a last bastion of democracy in southern Africa and, more significantly, as a last strategic position and source of raw materials in the struggle against Communism.

West German Ties to South-West Africa

Even when Vietnam and Algeria no longer dominated the headlines and the last German Legionnaire had returned home, colonialism and its decline continued to attract attention in West German public discourse and provoke involvement on the part of West Germans in European attempts to prevent or at least manage its collapse. For example, Portuguese efforts to maintain control of its African territories by any means necessary prompted debates about the containment of Communism and the principle of self-determination while West German business ventures in those colonies and the supply of weapons and supplies to the Portuguese government transformed West Germans from bystanders into participants.[408] Similarly, political and economic interests in South-West

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[407] Lauren Dobell argues that SWAPO's success came as a result of its ability to balances a variety of contexts and speak a variety of "languages"--an African one, a UN-idiom, the language of the Cold War, and so on.Dobell, *Swapo's Struggle for Namibia, 1960-1991*.

[408] "Labanta Negro," February 10, 1968, BAB DY/30/IV A 2/20/920; "Überall Deutschland," *Der Spiegel*, December 15, 1969; Jens Gundlach, "Bonn steht zu seiner Bürgschaft für Cabora Bassa," *Die Welt*, April 8, 1971; Deutsches Komitee für Angola, Guinea-Bissao und Moçambique, "Betreff: 1) Militärhilfe BRD - Portugal. 2) Mitarbeit einer 6. deutschen Firma am Cabora Bassa Projekt. 3) NATO-Mitglied Norwegen unterstützt Befreiungsbewegungen in den portugiesischen Kolonien," November 1971, 2/BTFF000391; "Fragestunde," *Deutscher Bundestag* 6, no. 164 (January 21, 1972): 9456-9461; "KLEINE ANFRAGE der Abgeordneten Walkhoff, Däubler-Gmelin, Hansen, Schäfer (Appenweier), Prof. Dr. Slott, Möllemann, Dr. Bangemann und Genossen betr.: Lieferung von Waffen und militärisch verwendbaren Ausrüstungsgütern durch die Bundesregierung und Firmen der Bundesrepublik Deutschland an Portugal und deren Einsatz in den portugiesischen Kolonien Angola, Guinea-Bissau und

Africa/Namibia motivated West German responses to developments there, as well, responses that were by no means limited to discussion and debate.

Political ties to the regime in South Africa played perhaps the largest role in determining the stance the West German state adopted regarding South-West Africa/Namibia. West Germany's relationship with South Africa was a product of anti-communism's cynical pragmatism. Like their counterparts in the United States, West German leaders accepted gross imperfections in the conduct of some of their allies for the sake of presenting a united front against the threat posed by Communism. In the case of South Africa this meant overlooking Apartheid policies that, upon closer examination, all too closely paralleled the racism and discrimination of the Nazi period. Forgiving white South Africans this shortcoming was necessary in the minds of many West Germans, however, because South Africa supposedly represented a last bastion of democracy in southern Africa. Communist uprisings in neighboring Mozambique and Angola in the 1970s threatened to spread, and indeed after these Portuguese colonies achieved independence in 1975 they served as bases of operation for groups advocating Namibian independence and majority rule in South Africa. Communist rule in South-West Africa/Namibia would only exacerbate this threat, opening the door for Communist uprisings in South Africa backed by leaders in Moscow, Havana, and Berlin. Given South Africa's strategic position on the tip of Southern Africa, a position that brought with it access to and control over the sea lanes between the Atlantic and Indian Oceans as well as a wealth of natural resources—including those in South-West Africa/Namibia—many

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Moçambik," n.d 1973, 2/BTFG000166; "Fragestunde," *Deutscher Bundestag* 7, no. 21 (March 16, 1973): 1007-1020; "Nr. 695 Imperialismus - heute" (Deutsche Fernsehfunk, July 30, 1973), E084-05-02/0003/032; "Keine Waffen für Unabhängigkeitskrieg. SPD-Abgeordnete fordert Druck auf Portugal / Hilfe für Südwestafrikaner," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, September 14, 1973; "Anlage 12," *Deutscher Bundestag* 7, no. 52 (September 21, 1973): 2952-2953; "Nr. 799 Kolonialisten geben nicht auf" (Deutsche Fernsehfunk, August 11, 1975), E084-05-02/0003/135; "Nr. 1245 Menschenhändler und Waffenhändler" (Deutsche Fernsehfunk, July 2, 1984), E028-00-06/0004/027.

in West Germany (as well as western Europe and the United States) felt that South Africa was a linchpin of the Cold War: as two conservative politicians put it, "if southern Africa should fall under the control of the Soviet Union the West itself would face an acute threat." Ignoring that threat—or worse, consorting with Marxist terrorists like those in South-West Africa/Namibia—would bring only disaster.[409]

Of course, by the early 1970s the nature of the Cold War had changed. This change manifested itself in the Federal Republic in the form of a thaw in West German policy towards East Germany. For decades the Federal Republic had refused to recognize the existence of a competing German state—a denial institutionalized in 1955 by the Hallstein Doctrine. This denial ended when Willy Brandt and the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) came to power in 1969 and implemented a new eastern policy—the *neue Ostpolitik*—that stressed rapprochement. Beginning in Moscow and Warsaw in 1970 West Germany finally recognized Europe's postwar borders and gave up claims to territory east of the Oder-Neisse Line. Negotiations between the two German states in 1972 led to the establishment of diplomatic relations, and East-West rapprochement ultimately culminated in the admission of both German states to the United Nations.[410]

Brandt's *Ostpolitik* coincided with a general thawing in the Cold War; in the aftermath of the Cuban Missile Crisis and in the midst of the Vietnam War, detente offered a reduction in tensions through treaties promoting global security and trade.

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[409] Leo Ernesti and Willi Weiskirch, "In Afrika muß der Westen an sich selbst denken. Die Überlebnschance des Westens steht auf dem Spiel," *Deutschland-Union-Dienst* 33, no. 48 (March 9, 1979): 2.

[410] Wilhelm Grewe, "Erläuterung der sog. 'Hallstein-Doktrin' durch den Leiter der Politischen Abteilung des Auswärtigen Amts, Ministerialdirektor Wilhelm Grewe," interview by Hans Wendt, Nordwestdeutscher Rundfunk, December 11, 1955; Rüdiger Marco Booz, *Hallsteinzeit: Deutsche Aussenpolitik 1955-1972* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1995); Werner Kilian, *Die Hallstein-Doktrin: Der diplomatische Krieg zwischen der BRD und der DDR 1955-1973: Aus den Akten der beiden deutschen Aussenministerien*, Zeitgeschichtliche Forschungen Bd. 7 (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2001); William Glenn Gray, *Germany's Cold War: The Global Campaign to Isolate East Germany, 1949-1969*, The new Cold War history (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

Successes such as the SALT I treaty and shipments of US grain to the Soviet Union, however, could only patch over the continued divisions between the two superpowers and the political-economic systems they represented. Wars and coups in South Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America continued throughout the 1970s. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the election of US President Ronald Reagan may have marked the end of detente, but its limitations made themselves evident much earlier.

Despite détente, the United States and its allies continued to oppose the spread of Communism, as demonstrated by US involvement in Vietnam and the secretive assistance West Germany and other western European states provided to Portugal as it struggled to fend off Communist-backed liberation movements. Indeed, in West Germany a relaxed attitude towards East Germany did not mean an entirely new approach to Communism. The Prague Spring of 1968 remained fresh in the minds of many, illustrating the limits the Soviet Union was willing to impose on change. Even West German efforts at rapprochement with East Germany were in fact meant to destabilize the East German system in the long run through greater exposure to western style capitalism and democracy.[411] West Germans' own experiences with Communism and communist organizations at home did little to encourage an alternate approach. West Germany's Federal Constitutional Court declared the Communist Party of Germany illegal in 1956, a decision leading to numerous arrests and the closure of several newspapers and affiliated organizations. By the 1960s and early 1970s a variety of new communist parties and other organizations had emerged, but these attracted little popular support. Rather, the tactics of radical groups like the Red Army Faction only increased public hostility towards these organizations as West Germans in the late 1970s witnessed a string of terrorist activity including kidnappings, bombings, and murders.[412] Given this context,

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[411] Footnote

[412] Wolfgang Kraushaar, ed., *Die RAF und der linke Terrorismus*, 1st ed. (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2006); Willi. Winkler, *Die Geschichte der RAF* (Berlin: Rowohlt, 2007);

many in West Germany might have sympathized with South African claims presenting the white-run state as a last bastion of democracy and capitalism fighting the good fight; after all, groups within South Africa and South-West Africa/Namibia like the African National Congress (ANC) and SWAPO received support from the Soviet Union, East Germany, Cuba, and other communist countries, and their tactics included acts of terrorism ranging from car bombings to attacks on the government, police, and the military.

Many West Germans, especially on the right, accepted and reproduced this interpretation of African liberation movements, shifting West German focus away from the continued denial of equality and self-determination and towards the supposed dangers of Communism. Members of the SPD and other parties interested in working with groups like SWAPO ended up on the defensive time and time again as policy debates in parliament and public shifted from the abuses of Apartheid to the politics and tactics of those fighting against it. Conservative members of parliament unleashed a deluge of questions on the SPD governments in power during the 1970s, examining in every detail its stance towards and any relationship with so-called terrorist organizations. In 1974, for example, CDU/CSU member Carl-Dieter Spranger demanded to know "is it true that the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation made available to the terrorist organization SWAPO half a million DM, and is it known to the federal government that with these monies weapons appear to have been purchased from the eastern bloc?"[413] In 1977, the same year the Red Army Faction unleashed its worst wave of violence in West Germany, the issue of support for terrorists in southern Africa came to a head in the West German press. Debates about humanitarian aid to fund transit camps for Namibian refugees hit

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Stefan Aust, *Der Baader Meinhof Komplex*, 3rd ed. (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 2008).

[413] "Fragestunde," *Deutscher Bundestag* 7, no. 81 (February 20, 1974): 5320.

West German headlines as "Tax Money for Terror Bands."[414] "No Money for Terrorists" another demanded.[415]

Thus, although West German leaders and the West German public claimed to recognize that the age of colonialism had come and gone, opposition to Communism and terrorism led both to throw much of their support—however unenthusiastically—behind a South African regime dedicated to preserving white settler control. That this colony had asserted its independence and declared itself a republic did nothing to change the realities of colonial rule. The continued occupation of South-West Africa/Namibia only compounded the situation. West German integration into Western Europe and membership in NATO and the EEC brought with them certain commitments to colonialism, of course, but for all their significance such commitments had been ancillary. By contrast, support, even indirect support, of South Africa meant above all the support of settler colonialism. In the case of South-West Africa/Namibia, West German support was lukewarm at best, but time and time again West German political interests led government officials to sidestep opportunities to apply pressure on the regime in South Africa to immediately withdraw from the former German colony. When, for example, the United Nations passed a resolution in 1976 recognizing the right of Namibians to fight for their independence, West Germany abstained from voting but was quick to remind other nations that it agreed South African occupation was illegal.[416] Instead, these officials supported negotiations with South Africa that would also involve other, less extreme political parties as well as the participation of white settlers living in the country. Besides representing a more peaceful solution, such negotiations promised to

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414 "Steuergeld für Terrorbanden. Immer noch nicht genung 'befreit'?," *Neue Bildpost*, November 13, 1977.

415 "Kein Geld für Terroristen," *Deutsches Monatsblatt*, November 1977.

416 Lenelotte von Bothmer, "Keine Hilfe durch Waffen. Die deutsche Haltung zu Namibia," *SPD-Pressedienst*, December 28, 1976.

reduce the instability and unrest of a transition to independence and to decrease the influence of Marxist groups like SWAPO.

Not all West Germans accepted the primacy of anti-communist imperatives. Many on the left, ranging from students to communists to social democrats, opposed South African control of Namibia and protested against the continuing injustices of Apartheid, calling for nothing less than the immediate withdrawal of South African forces and the implementation of free and fair elections in both South-West Africa/Namibia and South Africa itself. Their language was largely one of anti-racism and self-determination rather than anti-colonialism, but that made little difference; they advocated the end of minority rule, of exploitation and white domination, the end of laws and policies designed not to ensure justice and the general welfare but to maintain the status quo and protect racial hierarchies and power structures. In short, they called for the decolonization that had not occurred when South Africa became an independent state.

Second to politics in shaping West German responses to the ongoing situation in South-West Africa/Namibia were the interests of West German businesses and, more broadly, the economic interests of the West German state. These influenced West German policy even as they attracted unwanted attention and criticism. On the one hand, many West Germans feared what would become of such interests in South-West Africa/Namibia should the country descend into unrest or, worse yet, fall to Communism. On the other hand, West Germans also viewed these interests in the broader context of South Africa as a whole. Maintaining good relations with South Africa was good for business, and when it came to South-West Africa/Namibia maintaining good relations with South Africa meant making it possible for South Africa to withdraw on its own terms, rather than those set by guerrilla fighters or the international community. Such a weak stance towards South Africa of course did nothing to satisfy West German and international critics.

Within the boundaries of South-West Africa/Namibia itself there were—and still

are—a number of rare and valuable raw materials, materials many in West Germany and Western Europe feared would become more difficult to obtain should South-West Africa/Namibia become independent. Chief among these was uranium, useful on its own in the creation of both nuclear power reactors and nuclear weapons or as a stepping stone in the production of plutonium. Additionally, the former colony served as a significant source of other minerals including copper, gold, silver, lead, and tin, as well as diamonds. Moreover, some feared the "fall" of South-West Africa/Namibia to Communism could endanger South Africa itself, cutting off not only South African natural resources but also the shipping lanes needed to bring other supplies, including oil, to West Germany and all of Western Europe. Indeed, some feared the Eastern Bloc had already made great inroads politically and militarily in southern Africa, putting it in a position to "jeopardize the raw material supply and fundamental security interests of Europe" over a sustained period of time.[417]

In addition to the availability of South-West Africa/Namibia's natural resources, West German businessmen pressured politicians to consider the continued viability of West German firms operating in the former colony as well as the economic interests of Germans and white settlers of German descent. As the Swiss *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* newspaper pointed out, economic relations between Windhoek and Bonn were close and intensive.[418] Some of the largest West German firms involved in the area sought to exploit its uranium deposits. In 1976 the Rössing Uranium Mine began operations in South-West Africa/Namibia with the support of an international consortium of investors, including the West German firm Urangesellschaft and, indirectly, the West German

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[417] Herbert Werner, "Aggressive Machtpolitik des Ostblocks in Afrika. Bundesregierung verschleiert statt zu informieren," *Deutschland-Union-Dienst* 33, no. 244 (December 20, 1979): 9.

[418] C G, "Ungewisse Zukunft für Namibias Deutsche. Schwierige Identitässuche der 'Südwester'," *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, July 17, 1983.

government. Between 1976 and 1986 the mine provided fuel for reactors belonging to Nordwestdeutsche Kraftwerke AG and Rheinish-Westfalisches Elektrizitatswerk AG and fulfilled as much as 30% of West German demand for uranium.[419] Other West German firms provided finished goods to South Africa and the territory it occupied, especially to the German community.

Finally, West German policy towards the Namibia question also reflected the economic partnership the Federal Republic had developed with South Africa as a whole, a partnership that outright support for an organization like SWAPO would certainly have endangered. West German officials played down the economic cooperation that existed between the two states on account of growing international pressure to implement sanctions and boycotts against South Africa in response to the continued injustices of South African Apartheid policies. Statements to the United Nations noted how small a percentage of each state's foreign trade that relationship represented, and West German officials sought to have their cake and eat it, too, by arguing that the West German trade with South Africa was a matter of private enterprise in which the West German state was not involved.[420] While trade with South Africa truly did not amount to much in terms of absolute figures, it was significant in particular sectors, and these economic interests prevented the West German government from doing much more than paying lip service to the international anti-apartheid movement. This fact would return to haunt the West German government in a series of embarrassing episodes ranging from the controversy over West German businesses' relationship with South Africa in light of the European

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[419] "Eppler warnt vor Bundeshilfe für Südwest-Uranprojekt," *Die Welt*, November 19, 1970; "Nr. 799 Kolonialisten geben nicht auf"; "Teufels Großmutter," *Der Spiegel*, June 30, 1980; Joachim Drews, "Wie zwei gefährliche Skorpione in der Flasche," *Deutsches Monatsblatt*, July 1982.

[420] "Namibia / Südwestafrika," 1970, PAAA Bestand B 34 (Referat I B 3/307), 857; "Note des Beobachters der Bundesrepublik Deutschland bei den Vereinten Nationen, New York, an den VN-Generalsekretär vom 18. Juni 1970 betreffend Südwestafrika/Namibia," June 18, 1970, PAAA Bestand B 34 (Referat I B 3/307), 857.

Community's 1977 Code of Conduct to scandals regarding the development of nuclear weaponry and sales of military plans and equipment to the South African military.[421]

Although West Germany had a number of very practical reasons for its support of a slower, more drawn-out decolonization process that better protected South African and other white interests in South-West Africa/Namibia, these reasons did not make such support particularly popular. Few observers failed to recognize West German reluctance to push for immediate withdrawal—as well as support for what was described as a more inclusive settlement—as concessions to South African and West German interests at odds with the ideals embodied in the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and espoused by the West German state. One reporter for the SPD newspaper *Vorwärts* noted that with its stance towards southern Africa the Federal Republic had joined the West in "falling between all stools": liberation movements should be supported, but not with weapons; Apartheid should be condemned verbally, but concrete commercial interests should be protected.[422] In addition to protests within the Federal Republic, criticisms poured in from East Germany in particular as well as the socialist camp and the rest of the Third World more generally.

It was to some degree in anticipation of—and in response to—this unpopularity that West German politicians latched on to the idea of the Federal Republic's responsibility to Germans and German-speakers in South-West Africa/Namibia. These artifacts of Germany's colonial past provided a far more appealing justification for official West German responses to developments in the former colony than did the crass

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[421] Revelations about the possible sale of submarine plans to the South African government provoked a particularly vocal reaction in 1986 and 1987, both within the West German press and the government. Countless newspaper reports covered the story as it developed, especially after the SPD and the Greens forced the parliament to launch an investigation. See, for example: "U-Boot-Affäre: 'Es geht um Gesetzesbruch'," *Die Zeit*, December 19, 1986.

[422] Richard Kießler, "Ohne Waffen für die Freiheit. Bonns Politik gegenüber den Frontstaten im südlichen Afrika," *Vorwärts*, April 21, 1977.

political and economic interests of the present. Indeed, allusions to West Germany's responsibility to this group proved effective, and concern for the fate of these Germans and German speakers spread into public discourse. However, the presence of the colonial past in the present was not only the result of machinations on the part of certain West Germans; the explanatory power of that past was very real.

Unlike other instances of decolonization, the process by which South-West Africa became independent Namibia brought with it historical baggage for West Germans. Germany's colonial past had left behind two important legacies, one of which resonated with West Germans in the 1960s, '70s, and '80s and another which went largely unmentioned. The former was, of course, the survival of a significant German population in the former colony and along with it German culture and ties to West Germany.[423] The latter was the genocide Germans committed against the Herero and Nama peoples at the beginning of the twentieth century. In many ways the attention West Germans paid to the former group helped them to forget or ignore the misdeeds committed by whites in South-West Africa/Namibia in both the past and the present.

Germans arrived in South-West Africa even before the creation of the colony in 1884, but large-scale settlement did not begin until the turn of the century. Ultimately, however, the colony attracted more German settlers than any of Germany's other colonies. One and a half times the size of "the fatherland" in Europe, the colony's climate offered the best opportunities for farming while mineral riches including attracted mining interests. In addition to settlement, administrative staff for the colony as well as soldiers and officers stationed in German South-West Africa contributed to the colony's German population. Despite these factors, however, the total number of Germans living in the colony before World War I remained relatively low, around 12,000. By contrast, more

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[423] Daniel Joseph Walther, *Creating Germans Abroad* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2002).

than ten times as many indigenous peoples lived in the colony, a number artificially lowered by the genocide against the Herero and Nama.

The continued presence of a German contingent in South-West Africa after World War I ensured a special interest on the part of the German state in affairs within the new mandate. During the war, South African forces transported German settlers to prison camps near Pretoria and Pietermaritzburg. Afterwards, British forces in South Africa and South-West Africa expelled 4,941 Germans, including military and police personnel and "undesirables." Another 1,433 left the former German colony by choice, leaving approximately 6,000 Germans in the territory. Despite these setbacks, however, colonial agitators in Germany continued to see in South-West Africa the possibility of a distinctly German colony as a destination for German emigrants. As a growing number of Germans began to return to South-West Africa or settle there for the first time after World War I, the new Weimar Republic took an interest, negotiating with South Africa on the behalf of settlers and potential settlers in order to reduce the restrictions limiting German access to the territory.[424]

Ties between Germans in Europe and those in the former colony also encouraged the maintenance and expansion of commercial ties first established during the colonial period. When South Africa took over control of the new mandate in 1920 policies towards Germans loosened considerably, and South African officials welcomed the return of former settlers and the arrival of new ones as these Germans could provide some of the manpower needed to develop South-West Africa. The same was true after World War II, and South African officials bragged that South Africa—including South-West Africa—had become the number one destination of German emigrants ranging from financial experts and industrialists to mechanics and craftsmen. One South African

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[424] Guido G. Weigend, "German Settlement Patterns in Namibia," *Geographical Review* 75, no. 2 (April 1985): 163; Walther, *Creating Germans Abroad*, 112-114.

official went so far as to claim that "if the federal government had not banned the transport of machinery abroad and close bank accounts to transfers many German industrialists would have dismantled entire factories and relocated them to South Africa."[425]

In addition to serving as the foundation for some of the interests that led to West German involvement in the decolonization of South-West Africa/Namibia, the German colonial past and its legacy helped to orient public opinion and served as a source of justification and explanation for West German policies for officials and politicians at home and abroad. Time and time again West Germans situated their responses to the situation in the former German colony in terms of responsibility, and for those West Germans advocating responses that benefited or appeared to benefit the regime in South Africa the chief object of West German responsibility was the German and German speaking population of South-West Africa/Namibia.

Although West German political parties disagreed on a great deal when it came to the situation in South-West Africa/Namibia, there was widespread agreement that West Germany had a special responsibility to its former colony, or rather to the German element there. Conservative politicians promoted this sense of responsibility most strongly. "In South-West Africa there are considerable western interests at play," wrote one CDU/CSU politician in 1976, "but also the fate of numerous Germans."[426] Many conservatives saw great cause for concern, not only in the possibility of a communist takeover but in the means used to achieve that end. At times SWAPO spoke well of the Germans still living in the former German colony, but when evidence of weapon

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[425] Rudolf Holzhausen to Auswärtiges Amt, "Betr.: Bisheriger Commercial Secretary bei der Südafrikanischen Gesandtschaft in Köln, J. Smit," March 21, 1952, 1, PAAA Bestand B 11 (Länderabteilung), 986, 90-91.

[426] "Zu dem Problem SWAPO (South West Africa People's Organization) erklärt der CDU-Bundestagsabgeordneter Dr. Alois Mertes (Gerolstein):," *CDU/CSU Fraktion im deutschen Bundestag Pressedienst*, March 5, 1976.

deliveries to South Africa made headlines in 1981 SWAPO leader Sam Nujoma threatened that "if the escalation of the war (in South-West Africa) continues, Namibia-Germans will die."[427] Direct threats such as these were rare, but in combination with the realities of guerilla warfare they drove conservative politicians in West Germany to support a peaceful solution to the situation. "On account of historical ties to this country and because of the German citizens and ethnic German *Südwester* [South-Westers] living there the Federal Republic of Germany has a special interest in a peaceful solution on the basis of free elections," declared one group of CDU/CSU members—so long as those free elections did not favor SWAPO candidates.[428] Both in opposition and, beginning in late 1982, in the government the CDU/CSU appealed again and again to this interest or responsibility in its struggles to discredit SPD suggestions of negotiation and cooperation with SWAPO: "Time and again the federal government—the previous one as well as the current one—has expressed its special responsibility for this part of the world: because this area was once German and today many German settlers still live there."[429] Nor were conservatives in the CDU/CSU the only ones who believed in "a special responsibility" to South-West Africa/Namibia because of the German minority living there.[430] Voices on the extreme right used similar tactics to attack government policies friendly to SWAPO. Thus, for example, in one far-right newspaper an article appeared accusing

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[427] Bernt Conrad, "Nujoma droht Deutschen in Namibia. Swapo-Chef attackiert Bonn wegen angeblicher Waffenlieferungen nach Südafrika," *Die Welt*, May 29, 1981.

[428] Manfred Wörner, Hans Stercken, and Hans H. Klein, "In Hinblick auf die Beratungen über die Unabhängigkeit Südwestafrikas/Namibias, die jetzt in ein entscheidendes Stadium treten, erklären der stellvertretende Vorsitzende der CDU/CSU-Bundestagsfrkation, Dr. Manfred Wörner, sowie die Mitglieder des Auswärtigen Ausschusses Dr. Hans Stercken und Hans Klein (München) (CSU) folgendes," *CDU/CSU Fraktion im Deutschen Bundestag Pressedienst* (March 24, 1981): 3.

[429] Karl-Heinz Hornhues, "Namibia - 1989 unabhängig? Unsere besondere deutsche Verantwortung," *Deutschland-Union-Dienst*, no. 154 (August 15, 1988): 4.

[430] Karl-Heinz Hornhues and Alois Graf von Waldburg-Zeil, "Namibia braucht Unterstützung der Bundesrepublik Deutschland," *Deutschland-Union-Dienst*, January 27, 1989.

Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher of concerning himself "more with the well-being of black terrorists than the future of peaceful German South-West Africans, who have earned with their hard work the same right of residence as, say, the Danes in South Schleswig."[431]

West German conservatives emphasized the Federal Republic's responsibility to Germans and German speakers in South-West Africa/Namibia earlier and more often than politicians further to the left, but they did not have a monopoly on such language. For all their disagreements with West German conservatives, the SPD accepted the premise that this minority deserved as much if not more consideration than indigenous peoples in the formulation of West German responses and policy regarding South-West Africa/Namibia. "On one fundamental point in the highly controversial discussion about Namibia there is unity amongst all the parties represented in parliament" noted one newspaper account: "on account of the historical debt vis-à-vis the former German colony the Federal Republic has a special responsibility to international efforts towards a solution to the decolonization conflict."[432] Still, the SPD maintained the belief that SWAPO, for all its flaws, was the best representative of African interests in South-West Africa/Namibia. As a result, the party walked a fine line: Willy Brandt, the head of the SPD, assured SWAPO leader Sam Nujoma this his party was aware of its responsibility—to Namibia and the Germans living there.[433] Other parties interested in a more inclusive solution than the CDU/CSU was willing to support also nonetheless latched on to the language of responsibility. The Free Democratic Party (FDP), for

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[431] "'Lump, Verräter, Schwein!' Genscher im Siedekessel südwestafrikanischen Volkszornes," *Deutsche-National-Zeitung*, October 20, 1978.

[432] Henning Melber, "Namibia-Politik: Umgang mit einer 'historischen Hypothek.' Afrika-Experte bilanziert das Bemühen Bonns um einen Unabhängigkeitsplan für die ehemals deutsche Kolonie," *Frankfurter Rundschau*, June 22, 1987.

[433] Conrad, "Nujoma droht Deutschen in Namibia. Swapo-Chef attackiert Bonn wegen angeblicher Waffenlieferungen nach Südafrika."

instance, generally advocated a policy that would include SWAPO in any and all negotiations. Nonetheless, responsibility to Germans in South-West Africa/Namibia crept into FDP rhetoric, perhaps in part because of the party's cooperation with the CDU/CSU in coalition governments throughout the 1980s. "Our country bears a special responsibility for the fate and future of Namibia," wrote one FDP politician:

> This principle has been emphasized repeatedly by all factions. The close ties between us and this country in southern Africa result on the one hand from history, on the other from the fact that many Germans still live in the former German colony, some with a passport from the Federal Republic of Germany in their pockets, but many others no longer as German citizens yet still with close ties to the homeland of their ancestors in their hearts and, literally, on their lips.[434]

Even Foreign Minister Genscher, the target of right-wing criticism for his willingness to work with SWAPO, expressed concern for so-called "Namibia-Germans."[435]

Concern for the fate of Germans and German speakers in South-West Africa/Namibia gradually spread from the realm of political rhetoric to West German public discourse. West German news sources capitalized on public interest in this group: far away unrest suddenly hit closer to home—and helped to sell newspapers—when it affected people who spoke the same language and shared the same traditions, people who were not so different from ordinary West Germans. As with the Foreign Legion two decades earlier, the West German press made a great deal out of the numbers involved: "In the country two times the size of France live amongst 700,000 coloreds 6500 Germans with Federal passports, 1500 dual-citizens with a West German and another passport, and 17,000 ethnic Germans." These populations, one article suggested, explained why the West German government felt so "especially obligated . . . to the

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[434] Ulrich Irmer, "Irmer: BGS-Entsendung ausgesprochen nützlich und notwendig," *FDP Plenum heute*, no. 926 (September 15, 1989).

[435] "Genscher: Sorge um Namibia-Deutsche. Treffen mit Swapo-Führer Nujoma in Paris / Für UN-Lösungsplan," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, February 20, 1984.

Kaiser's old possesion."[436] Not only the government, though; the West German press attributed to the public at large feelings of a special responsibility: "Germany is connected to Namibia by one hundred years of shared history," wrote reporter Volkmar Köhler in 1989. That history, he argued, began in 1814 with the missionary work of Johann Heinrich Schmelen, continued through the declaration of a protectorate in 1884 and even beyond the capitulation of the German *Schutztruppe* and the end of the German colonial period in 1915. It survived because of the 25,000 Germans still living in the former colony.[437] Despite some disagreement on the exact number of Germans in South-West Africa/Namibia—was it less than 20,000 or perhaps more than 30,000, should one include ethnic Germans or only citizens, and so on—in the press like the political sphere there was agreement that among the states actively involved in trying to find a solution to the Namibia question, West Germany had a "special position," a position derived from the Federal Republic's special status as a "second home or at least a kind of cultural and emotional point of reference" for the many Namibia-Germans there.[438]

Although many West German citizens accepted this explanation and even embraced a sense of responsibility, some felt it had been misplaced. As the toppling of the Wissmann memorial in Hamburg demonstrated, a number of students and leftists in the Federal Republic argued that West Germany had a responsibility to black Africans, not white settlers. One handout promoting freedom for Namibia posed the rhetorical

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436 "Genschers Schwenk," *Der Speigel*, May 16, 1977.

437 Volkmar Köhler, "In einem Jahr wird Namibia unabhängig. Bonn ist zu tatkräftiger Unterstützung bereit Geschichte verpflichtet," *Deutsches Allgemeines Sonntagsblatt*, March 24, 1989.

438 "Genschers Afrika-Kurs," *Der Spiegel*, November 3, 1975; Harald Ganns, "Afrikapolitik," *Bayern Kurier*, August 13, 1977; "'Südwester' zwischen Tradition und Aufbruch. Verantwortungsvolle Rolle der Deutschen in Namibia," *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, November 8, 1980; Florian Stumfall, "Hoffnungen nach der Bonner Wende. Deutsche in Südwestafrika," *Bayernkurier*, October 9, 1982; G, "Ungewisse Zukunft für Namibias Deutsche. Schwierige Identitässuche der 'Südwester'."

question "why does that [the illegal occupation of Namibia] concern us?" The answer: "As early as the German colonial period the natural resources of Namibia were exploited, the population oppressed. The Hereros, who resisted this domination, were put down by German colonial armed forces, 80% of them exterminated."[439] At an anti-racism congress in Cologne organizers argued that given their history it was Germans' duty to join the struggle against Apartheid and for Namibia's freedom.[440] In the 1960s and early 1970s the use of Germany's colonial past in West German political critiques had frequently involved broad comparisons between Germany's colonial past and decolonization in, for example, Portugal's colonies. By the 1980s, however, criticisms of policies towards South Africa drew more directly on the apparent pattern of racism represented by German South-West Africa and the Holocaust in an effort to foster a sense of responsibility for victims of racism past and present.

Within the somewhat more traditional political sphere, the West German Green Party also maintained that Germany's colonial past obligated West Germany to more actively support Namibian independence. In fact, opinion polls showed that Green Party members felt a sense of responsibility to Namibia—rather than to Germans in South-West Africa—to a much greater extent than other West Germans. Green Party politicians reflected this commitment. Uschi Eid, one time deputy whip, accused other parties of painting too rosy a picture of Germany's colonial history.[441] Even some members of the SPD were willing to admit that the Germans living in South-West Africa/Namibia were not the real victims. When rumors spread about the use of West German tax money for

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[439] Anti Apartheid Bewegung in der BRD und West Berlin e.V., "Freiheit für Namibia," *Anti Apartheid Bewegung Mitgliederrundbrief*, December 12, 1975.

[440] "Kölner Antirassismuskongreß fordert Solidarität mit Befreiungsbewegungen," *epd ZA*, no. 200 (October 15, 1984).

[441] "Bonn will Namibia umfassend helfen. Bundestag betont deutsche Verantwortung für das Land," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, February 25, 1989.

the relocation of these Germans to South America, parliamentarian Brigitte Erler noted the government's denials with some satisfaction; these Germans had benefited from racism, she argued, and making money available for the exploiters instead of the exploited would send the wrong message.[442]

Despite suggestions that Africans, rather than Germans, deserved the feelings of responsibility many claimed in West Germany, the state continued to justify its behavior in terms of the effects of actions (or inaction) on Germans and German speakers. This was as true internationally as it was domestically, as the West German state leveraged the colonial past for political cover as well as increased standing. Prior to its acceptance into the United Nations, the Federal Republic sought to dodge questions about its relationship to South Africa and its stance towards South-West Africa/Namibia. When it became no longer feasible to sidestep the issue, West German officials tried to use the idea of a special responsibility to Germans and German-speakers in South-West Africa/Namibia as an excuse for apparently less than idealistic policy decisions. For instance, the Federal Republic maintained a consulate in the former German colony for years after it officially condemned South African occupation on the grounds that this diplomatic presence served the interests of Germans living and travelling in the territory and in no way legitimized South Africa's position. SWAPO saw the situation quite differently, demanding the closure of the consulate.[443] West German officials also exploited the presence of a German population in South-West Africa/Namibia and Germany's history as a colonial power to obtain a greater degree of international standing through a greater role in

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[442] Brigitte Erler, "Rassismus wirt nicht exportiert! Deutsche können zum Aufbau eines unabhängigen Namibia beitragen," *SPD-Pressedienst*, May 12, 1977.

[443] "Konsulat in Windhuk steht vor Schließung. Bonn rechnet jetzt mit bis zu 10 000 namibia-Deutschen," *Westfälische Rundschau*, October 29, 1976; Bernt Conrad, "Die Gratwanderung der Bonner Politik in Afrika," *Die Welt*, May 13, 1977; "Amtsflucht," *Die Welt*, May 23, 1977; "'Südwester' zwischen Tradition und Aufbruch. Verantwortungsvolle Rolle der Deutschen in Namibia."

western attempts to solve the Namibia question. The German population provided much of the impetus for West Germany's involvement in the Western Contact Group along with the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and Canada. This group sought to bring together all the parties involved for negotiations towards a peaceful solution to the Namibia question in line with UN resolutions on the matter. Despite its ultimate failure, for West Germany the Western Contact Group provided an opportunity for direct involvement in the stuff of international conflict resolution after years on the sidelines as a mere observer at the United Nations.[444]

Widespread focus on Germans and German-speaking settlers in South-West Africa/Namibia reflected larger patterns in the role the past played in West German society, patterns created in the mold of West German memories of World War II and the Holocaust. Efforts on the part of the state and society to define who the victims were in South-West Africa and who the perpetrators were featured not just the politics of the day but the logics learned after 1945. In the aftermath of World War II, US, British, and French denazification efforts ultimately sacrificed a thorough cleansing of West German society in favor of rapid recovery, attributing the role of perpetrator to only high-profile and high-value Nazis. The demands of reconstruction and recovery demanded a focus on the present and the future, an outlook that West Germans in positions of economic and political power were only too happy to embrace.[445] West German society, when it did

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[444] The United Nations Transition Assistance Group ultimately implemented many of the measures outlined in the Western Contact Group's Settlement Proposal, but this occurred some ten years later. UN Security Council, 33rd Session, "Letter dated 10 April 1978 from the representatives of Canada, France, Germany, Federal Republic of, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and United States of America addressed to the president of the Security Council" (Official Record, April 10, 1979), S/12636; For more on West Germany's role in the Western Contact Group see Vivienne Jabri, *Mediating Conflict: Decision-Making and Western Intervention in Namibia* (Manchester University Press ND, 1990); Jochen Prantl, *The UN Security Council and Informal Groups of States: Complementing or Competing for Governance?* (Oxford University Press, 2006).

[445] Jürgen Danyel, ed., *Die geteilte Vergangenheit*, 1995; Wulf Kansteiner, *In Pursuit of German Memory*, 2006; Norbert Frei, *Adenauer's Germany and the Nazi Past: The Politics of Amnesty and Integration* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002); S. Jonathan Wiesen,

look back, tended to see not the perpetrators of war and genocide but innocent bystanders and victims: of Nazism, of the Red Army, or of postwar anti-German sentiment.[446] Only later did West Germans, typically younger West Germans, begin to ask questions about the past and the roles Germans had played under the Nazi regime.[447]

For the state, responsibility for the Germans of South-West Africa conferred continuity and long-term legitimacy and deflected attention away from the victims of German colonialism. This fit very well the patterns for dealing with a difficult past that the West German state established at its foundation. With the creation of the Federal Republic, West German politicians accepted the baggage associated with succeeding the Nazi state in order to also establish a historical claim to legitimacy as the German state representing all German people. West German assistance for German refugees entering the Federal Republic reinforced the idea that Germans had been victims, too, conveniently ignoring the crimes committed in the areas from which ethnic Germans had fled. Like ethnic Germans from eastern Europe after World War II, ethnic Germans in South-West Africa attracted the majority of the West German state's attention and assistance. Africans in the former colony, by contrast, received next to nothing from the state, and victims like the Herero and the Nama even less.

Within West German society, acceptance of the state's claims meant identification with Germans and German-speakers in the former colonies and sympathy for their hardships, making it easier to overlook the crime of genocide or the injustice of

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West German Industry and the Challenge of the Nazi Past, 1945-1955, 2004; Philipp Gassert and Alan E. Steinweis, *Coping with the Nazi Past*, 2006.

[446] Robert G. Moeller, *War Stories: The Search for a Usable Past in the Federal Republic of Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

[447] Konrad Hugo Jarausch, "Critical Memory and Civil Society: The Impact of the 1960s on German Debates about the Past," in *Coping with the Nazi Past: West German Debates on Nazism and Generational Conflict, 1955-1975*, ed. Philipp Gassert and Alan E. Steinweis (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006), 11-30.

Apartheid; by contrast, rejection of official explanations and policies fostered demands for a more critical confrontation with the past. The combination of a romantic, mythologized view of settler life and the twin threats posed by SWAPO violence and assimilation into South African society drew attention away from ethnic Germans' place in the racial hierarchy. Some individuals and groups in the Federal Republic did point out that the West German state and society were ignoring the horrific truth about Germany's colonial past and criticized both for continuing to reproduce colonialist and neo-colonialist narratives and policies. As with the calls for a more critical engagement with the Nazi past, however, many of these critiques of memory reflected not so much a genuine interest in "mastering" the past as the recognition of another means to pursue political goals.

East German Ties to Namibia

In contrast to West German concerns about German and German-speaking settlers in South-West Africa/Namibia, East German responses to the decolonization process focused on those Africans fighting to end South Africa's occupation, and on SWAPO in particular. The East German state and the SED did their best to position SWAPO's efforts to achieve independence as the most recent episode in a shared worldwide anti-imperialist struggle dating back to the nineteenth century. This characterization reflected both Cold War political pragmatism and Marxist-Leninist idealism. On the one hand, the language of solidarity and the promotion of co-identification between socialist nations and oppressed peoples helped to further East German efforts to establish and extend political and economic ties beyond the Soviet Union's cloud of satellite states, which in turn helped the Eastern Bloc in its competition with the West for influence in the developing world. East German leaders also believed the delineation of a clear contrast between the anti-imperialism of the GDR and the neo-colonialism of the West German state would win over the hearts and minds of Germans. On the other hand, many within

the SED, the state, and East German society believed in their shared struggle with the oppressed peoples of Africa—that is, they believed not only in the goals of the anti-imperialist struggle itself, but in the idea that the socialist countries of the world, the working class in capitalist states, and the colonized or formerly colonized peoples of the developing world were all taking part in a common fight.

Until 1972, East German activities in the developing world continued to reflect the GDR's quest for international diplomatic recognition. This was as true in Namibia as elsewhere. Even after both German states joined the United Nations, a great deal of East German foreign policy focused on selling East Germany as a potential political and economic partner. Within the framework of the Cold War this work often proved difficult. However, the creation of new states as a result of decolonization—and with it the emergence of the Non-Aligned Movement—provided new opportunities. Thus in southern Africa independence for Mozambique and Angola meant new partnerships, or rather the transformation of old partnerships. Namibia, too, was a potential opportunity; while East Germany could never have close economic or political ties to South Africa so long as it remained under minority rule, a close relationship with an independent Namibia could provide many of the same benefits and increase pressure on South Africa for reforms—or help to foment revolution.

The East German anti-colonialist, anti-imperialist message found a receptive audience among many of the organizations struggling to overthrow colonial rule in Africa. In 1969 at a conference hosted in East Germany the assembled African guests drafted a resolution to express their "satisfaction at the fact that on the German soil a socialist, anti-imperialist, antifascist, and anticolonialist German state has been established and is developping (sic)."[448] The East German state and the SED received

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[448] Die Konferenz Freundschaft Afrika - DDR, "General Resolution," n.d 1969, 1, BAB DY/13/1728.

high praise for their "anti-imperialist, antiracist, anticolonialist, and antineocolonialist stand" as demonstrated by their relationships with liberation movements in Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde, Mozambique, Angola, Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Namibia.[449] More important than the "satisfaction" and "appreciation" of foreign dignitaries, however, were the long-term benefits of these relationships. East German contributions to the "struggle against colonialism, racism, and apartheid" certainly helped to "enhance the international reputation" of the GDR, but they also helped to open doors.[450] Looking back at the development of East German foreign relations from the vantage point of 1988, Minister for Foreign Affairs Oskar Fischer noted that "the GDR has at its disposal in southern Africa political positions that are the result of long term, all-around cooperation and fundamental political commonalities with independent states and national liberation movements."[451] These positions, these partnerships, were especially important in producing opportunities for trade. East German society occupied a precarious position, balanced between the readily visible patterns of consumption in West Germany and Western Europe and the much lower standard of living—at least in terms of material goods—that dominated the Eastern Bloc. Despite the best efforts of the SED and the East German state, the East German economy could not compete with the Federal Republic. Just maintaining the standard of living East German society did achieve—which was still considerably higher than the rest of Eastern Europe—required the import of everything from raw materials to consumer goods. Resulting trade imbalances only

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[449] Ibid., 2.

[450] DDR-Regierungskommission für das "Internationale Anti-Apartheid-Jahr", *Bericht über die Teilnahme der DDR am Internationalen Anti-Apartheid-Jahr (21. März 1978 - 21. März 1979)* (Berlin, May 2, 1979), 2, BAB DY/30/J IV 2/2A/2228, Fiche 2, 141-153.

[451] Minister für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten and Abteilung Internationale Verbindungen, "Vorlage für das Politbüro des ZK der SED. Betreff: Maßnahmen zur Entwicklung der politischen und ökonomischen Zusammenarbeit mit Namibia.," December 7, 1988, BAB DY/30/J IV 2/2A/3183, Fiche 1, 73-78.

increased the need to develop trade with potential markets for East German goods. Officials in East Germany saw in Namibia just that sort of potential: "Out of the long term, traditional solidarity the GDR has shown SWAPO arise useful possibilities for the development of mutually advantageous political and foreign trade relationships with independent Namibia."[452] To a certain extent the very same economic interests that motivated West German responses to the situation in South-West Africa/Namibia motivated East German responses as well.

One should not, however, underestimate the genuine dedication to Communist ideals that existed in East Germany and the Eastern Bloc more broadly speaking, including a shared commitment to fighting imperialism and ending racism. When the SED and the state directed propagandists in how best to draw connections between East Germany's "humanistic policies with regards to colonial peoples and young nation states" and its "principled struggle against the neo-colonialist policies of West German finance capital," they sought to draw attention to principals in which they actually believed.[453] Attempts to "use" a visit by UN High Commissioner for Namibia Sean McBride to "demonstrate the principled stance of the GDR towards the struggle against colonialism, neo-colonialism, and racism" did not diminish East German commitments to those principles.[454] The way in which propaganda presented East German policies—and indeed the policies themselves—frequently reflected pragmatic choices, but the ideals from which they drew inspiration were authentic more often than not.

Despite the importance of the politics of the present, however, the state and the

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[452] Minister für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten and Abt. Internationale Verbindungen, "Vorlage für das Sekretariat des ZK der SED," n.d 1989, 1, BAB DY/30/J IV 2/3A/4821, 15-20.

[453] Ulbricht, "Plan der massenpolitischen Arbeit (Beschluß des Politbüros vom 27. September 1960)," 4.

[454] Oskar Fischer and Markowski, "Vorlage für das Sekretariat des ZK der SED. Betreff: Einladung des UN-Hochkommissars für Namibia, Sean McBride, in die DDR," April 11, 1975, BAB DY/30/J IV 2/3A/2647, 9-11.

SED couched these politics in familiar terms. East German attempts to draw parallels between SWAPO, the uprising of the Herero and Nama, and German communists and other workers' movements before 1945 fit perfectly within the framework created after World War II to define the relationship between East Germans and the German past. When the SED came to power in the new East Germany it sought to make a fresh start, to break with the past and write a new German history. The politically motivated wholesale replacement of administrative and economic structures painted targets of denazification with a broad brush. Bureaucrats, businessmen, and others lost their jobs, replaced by working-class East Germans prepared for their new positions in specially designed crash courses. Over time, this reversal of fortune became further institutionalized as children of working-class families received educational and professional opportunities previously reserved for the wealthy and well-connected. These and other enormous changes in East Germany enabled the nascent German Democratic Republic to claim complete success when it came to denazification. Indeed, officials went further, pushing a version of German history that emphasized the role of Germans not as perpetrators but as victims and even heroes. German Communists had, after all, been an early target of Nazi persecution and had provided some of the best organized resistance.[455] East German scholarship and propaganda expanded on this, portraying the suffering of working-class Germans—the kind represented by the East German government—at the hands of German imperialists—like those still in power in Bonn. Schoolbooks, history texts, newspapers, movies, and of course state-sponsored propaganda reproduced and expanded on this narrative, developing it into an underlying trope of East German society.[456]

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[455] The SED and its leaders exploited this fact to full advantage. See Weitz, *Creating German Communism, 1890-1990: From Popular Protests to Socialist State*; Epstein, *The Last Revolutionaries: German Communists and Their Century*.

[456] Naimark, *The Russians in Germany: A History of the Soviet Zone of Occupation, 1945-1949*; Danyel, *Die geteilte Vergangenheit*; Alexander Sperk, *Entnazifizierung und Personalpolitik in der sowjetischen Besatzungszone*, 2003; Kansteiner, *In Pursuit of German Memory*; Gassert and Steinweis, *Coping with the Nazi Past*.

East German narratives of the German struggle against imperialism easily stretched to include anti-colonialism, as well. Like East German communists, workers, and farmers, SWAPO and other liberation movements came to appear in East German propaganda as the successors to a long line of anti-imperialist fighters. The notion of a shared struggle served many functions; in addition to putting East Germany in the best light possible on the international stage it also helped to justify and explain East German involvement in Africa and other parts of the world. Appeals to a common struggle stretching back for generations provided a degree of historical legitimacy, promoting East German identification with oppressed peoples around the world and fostering a sense of responsibility for what happened to those peoples.

East Germans could not, of course, claim pride of place in the grand narrative of anti-imperialist struggle. That had to be reserved for the Soviet Union, and it was, not only in the GDR. At the "International Conference of Solidarity with the Struggle of African and Asian Peoples against Imperialism" in 1978 many of the speakers "recognized the historic role of the Soviet Union, beginning with the Great Socialist October Revolution, the victory over fascism in the Second World War up to active political, moral, and material support of the liberation struggle of afro-asian peoples in the present."[457] Somewhat disappointingly, only ten speakers mentioned the solidarity shown by the GDR.[458]

A poor showing did not dissuade East German officials from continuing to highlight the commonalities between the struggles of East Germans against imperialism and those of colonized peoples. Above all that struggle was being fought by the SED

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[457] Abteilung Internationale Verbindungen, *Bericht der Delegation der DDR zur Internationalen Konferenz der Solidarität mit dem Kampf der afrikanischen und arabischen Völker gegen Imperialismus und Reaktion vom 14. bis 17. 9. 1978 in Addis Abeba/Äthopien* (Berlin: 1978.9.22, n.d.), 3, BAB DY/30/J IV 2/2A/2179, Fiche 2, 102-122.

[458] Ibid., 4.

itself; according to East German propaganda the SED was "the German party with the longest traditions—stretching back decades—of resolute struggle against imperialism and colonialism."[459] According to this propaganda, SED leadership united the anti-imperialist forces of the entire German people, making possible the realization of national self-determination and providing the necessary foundation for "imperialism and racism to be exterminated along with their roots." [460] Naturally, the anti-imperialist forces of the German people included the working-class, and the SED explicitly drew connections between "the historical successes of the revolutionary workers' movement and the national liberation movement."[461] These successes had come as a result of unity and solidarity.[462] East Germans had learned from experience, officials claimed, "that every step, every progress on the path towards the happiness of working people is only achieved through determined and consistent struggle against imperialism and neo-colonialism."[463]

Such comparisons were not only writ large; East German propaganda also drew direct parallels between East German experiences and those of Namibians. Addressing representatives from South-West Africa/Namibia and other Front Line States in Africa, SED leader Erich Honecker described how Berlin and all of East Germany "emerged out

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[459] Afro-Asiatisches Solidaritätskomitee in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, "Tagung der Afro-Asiatischen Solidaritätskomitees der DDR am 10.12.1965. Referat," December 10, 1965, 8, BAB DY/30/IV A 2/20/113.

[460] Ibid.

[461] Afro-Asiatisches Solidaritätskomitee in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, "Erklärung des Afro-Asiatischen Solidaritätskomitees in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik zur ersten Solidaritätskonferenz der Völker AFrikas, Asiens und Lateinamerikas in Havanna," 2.

[462] Afro-Asiatisches Solidaritätskomitee in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, "Tagung der Afro-Asiatischen Solidaritätskomitees der DDR am 10.12.1965. Referat," 5.

[463] "Begrüßungsrede zum VIII. Parteitag der Demokratischen Partei Guineas (25. 9. - 2. 10. 1967)," 1967, 2, BAB DY/30/IV A 2/20/914.

of the ruins of the Second World War" thanks to the energy of and rebuilding efforts of East German citizens. "For you the struggle against the Apartheid regime, for the liberation of Namibia is even more difficult than our daily struggle towards reconstruction. But now we have come this far and want to continue to act with success in this direction."[464] The long hard fight against imperialism was no abstract concept, then, but a daily struggle waged around the world by people in South-West Africa/Namibia and East Germany alike.

Propaganda suggested that East Germans were particularly implicated in the global struggle against imperialism on account of their relationship with German imperialism past and present:

> And we never forget . . . that it is in the end German imperialism, the government and the monopolies of the West German Federal Republic, that have concluded a particularly close political, nuclear-military, and economic alliance with Vorster, Smith, and Salazar. An alliance that goes back to the traditions of Hitler-fascism, back to its ideological sources and political practices, carried out and perfected by its successors.
> Therefore we see in those fighting for the liberation of Africa from its last colonial-fascist oppressors comrades, allies, and friends.[465]

The German Democratic Republic had, as one letter to the South African Communist Party put it, "drawn a line under the imperialist past." German imperialism remained alive and well to the West, however; in the words of one East German delegate to an international conference in Ehtiopia, "the GDR lies at the junction of both world systems and has been confronted with the chief imperialist powers for three decades without time to breathe. From this daily struggle and our own history we have learned, that only unity

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[464] "Stenografische Niederschrift des Gesprächs des Generalsekretärs des Zentralkomites der SED und VOrsitzenden des Staatsrates der DDR, Genossen Erich Honecker, mit einer Delegation der afrikanischen Frontstaaten am Dienstag, dem 21. April 1987 im Amtssitz des Staatsrates," 4, 1987, 19, BAB DY/30/J IV 2/2A/3012, Fiche 1, 24-44.

[465] Hartmut Schilling, "Beitrag auf der Internationalen Konferenz zur Unterstützung der Völker der portugiesischen Kolonien, Südafrikas, Südwestafrikas und Zimbabwes (Khartoum, Sudan, 18.-20. Januar 1969)," January 13, 1969, 2, BAB DY/30/IV A 2/20/796.

and solidarity and the unshakable alliance with the Soviet Union, the socialist countries, the international working class, and the national liberation movement protect us from harm and lead to victory."[466] In their efforts to combat West German imperialism, East Germans made "the most important contribution to the political support of the national liberation struggles of the peoples of Africa and Asia."[467] Again and again East German propaganda at home and abroad reinforced the notion that the East German stance towards decolonization—"the brotherly bond and attitude of solidarity of the GDR vis-à-vis the national liberation struggle"—was a natural extension of the state's anti-imperialist character.[468] It was only natural that a progressive state like the GDR would help usher African nations into a new era.[469]

East German appeals to a common anti-imperialist struggle also suggested lessons from which national liberation movements might learn. In the case of South-West Africa/Namibia, East German officials hoped that the history of East Germany in general and the SED in particular might serve as an example for rival independence movements. In a 1965 meeting with the Vice President of SWAPO, Wolfgang Beyreuther explained how the SPD and the Communist Party of Germany (KPD) joined together to form a unified party—although he likely left a number of important details, such as the fact that this unification was forced upon the SPD and left members of the much smaller KPD in control. The example was meant to demonstrate "that in the past, the German working

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[466] Abteilung Internationale Verbindungen, *Bericht der Delegation der DDR zur Internationalen Konferenz der Solidarität mit dem Kampf der afrikanischen und arabischen Völker gegen Imperialismus und Reaktion vom 14. bis 17. 9. 1978 in Addis Abeba/Äthopien*, 1.

[467] "Entwurf: Arbeitsplan des Afro-Asiatischen Solidaritätskomitees der DDR für das Jahr 1964," n.d 1964, 2, BAB DY/30/IV A 2/20/112.

[468] Ibid.

[469] "Gesetz über den Vertrag vom 19. Februar 1979 über Freundschaft und Zusammenarbeit zwischen der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik und der Volksrepublik Angola," *Volkskammer der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik* 7. Wahlperiode, no. 9 (June 28, 1979): 209.

class always succumbed to its enemies when it was divided. The existence of the GDR and its constant further development show that the politics of unity were and are correct."[470] Rival groups SWAPO and SWANU, this lesson from German history suggested, would enjoy greater success in combating imperialism if they joined forces. Differences between the situation in the Soviet occupation zone after World War II and South-West Africa/Namibia in the 1960s made little or no difference; the anti-imperialist struggle was similarity enough to justify the transposition of experience.

Since East Germans were neither the perpetrators behind Germany's imperialist expansion in Africa nor their heirs, East Germans directed their feelings of responsibility at political allies rather than the victims of German colonial wrongdoing, all the while accusing West Germans of perpetuating the sins of the father. In Namibia, SWAPO received a great deal of material aid in addition to moral support from East Germany, but political expediency rather than colonial legacies motivated the East German state and the SED. Indeed, the help East Germany provided to SWAPO did not substantially differ from that it gave to other liberation movements and communist parties in other parts of southern Africa.

SWAPO was not the only organization working for independence in South-West Africa/Namibia, but it became the group with which the SED and the East German state developed the closest relationships. In the 1960s SWAPO's chief competitor was SWANU, and for some time East German officials kept tabs on and worked with both groups. The ultimate decision to focus the GDR's efforts and attention on SWAPO had nothing to do with any sort of colonial legacy. Indeed, if East Germans had felt colonial guilt they would have aligned themselves more closely with SWANU, as the majority of

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[470] Abt. Internationale Verbindungen, "Aktennotiz über eine am 29.9.1965 erfolgte Aussprache zwischen dem Koll. W. Beyreuther und dem Koll. Nelengani, Vizepräsident der Südwestafrikanischen Volks-Union (SWAPO)," October 8, 1965, 4, PAAA, Bestand MfAA, Nr. A 16043, 17-21.

its membership came from the Herero people, the same group massacred by German military forces at the beginning of the century. Instead, politics motivated East German decision-making. The SED and the state sided with SWAPO "because it represents the more progressive force," but also for a number of other reasons: closer ties to the working class in South-West Africa/Namibia, greater support from the international community, and most importantly alignment with the Soviet Union—as opposed to the support SWANU received from the People's Republic of China.[471]

Having settled on SWAPO, East German officials provided aid and support for the liberation movement in a number of ways. The most important of these were the "solidarity shipments" sent via Interflug, the East German state airline. These included supplies ranging from the most basic of everyday needs to complex products not available or difficult to come by in the developing world. So, for example, one "solidarity shipment" in 1975 included two tons of blankets and one ton of medication.[472] East Germany also produced uniforms for SWAPO fighters and provided other non-weapon military supplies.[473] In addition, East German know-how was put to use for SWAPO's benefit: SWAPO fighters and even SWAPO President Sam Nujoma received medical treatment in the GDR, a number of SWAPO members had the opportunity to take part in vocational training in East Germany, and East German educators taught SWAPO children

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[471] Stange, "Aktennotiz über ein Gespräch mit Gen. Gotschew, Rat der Botschaft der Volksrepublik Bulgarien im MfAA, 3. AEA am 4.3.1965," April 2, 1965, 2, PAAA, Bestand MfAA, Nr. A 16043, 13-14.

[472] Solidaritätskomitee der DDR, Abteilung Internationale Verbindungen, "Vorlage für das Sekretariat des ZK der SED. Betrifft: Übergabe von Solidaritätssendungen an die SWAPO in Dar es Salaam und die FRELIMO in Loucernco Marques sowie an die Regierung Madagaskars und die AKFM in Tananarive (2 Sondermaschinen der Interflug)," 1975, 1-2, BAB DY/30/J IV 2/3A/2766, 56-58.

[473] "Vermerk über die Begegnung des Generalsekretärs der SED und Vorsitzenden des Staatsrates der DDR, Erich Honecker, mit dem Präsidenten der SWAPO, Sam Nujoma, am 18. 2. 1979 in Luanda," 1979, 9, BAB DY/30/IV 2/2.035/146, Fiche 1, 5-14.

in South-West Africa/Namibia and in East Germany.[474]

The arrangement by which hundreds of SWAPO children travelled to East Germany to be kept safe from the fighting while receiving a first-class education perhaps best demonstrates the lengths to which the East German state and the SED were willing to go to be of assistance in the anti-imperialist struggle. At the same time, however, it reveals the extent to which East German responses to developments in South-West Africa/Namibia resembled East German responses to other liberation struggles. The education of SWAPO children in East Germany began in 1979. At the request of SWAPO President Sam Nujoma, the SED converted a special party school in the village of Bellin into a children's home for four to six year olds. Eighty children arrived on December 18, 1979—fewer than the 200 Nujoma had hoped, but enough to make a start. They came with a number of Namibian women charged with helping their East German colleagues to care for the children while at the same time training to become kindergarten teachers.[475] This initial experiment in Bellin, intended to last only two years, gradually

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[474] "Protokoll Nr. 53," May 16, 1977, BAB DY/30/J IV 2/3A/2979, 1-6; Paul Markowski, "Information 156/1977 für das Politbüro. Betrifft: Gespräch des Genossen Kurt Seibt, Vorsitzender der Zentralen Revisionskommission der SED und Präsident des Solidaritätskomitees der DDR, mit Genossen Sam Nujoma, Präsident der Südwestafrikanischen Volksorganisation (SWAPO) von Namibia," November 28, 1977, BAB DY/30/IV B 2/20/66; "Protokoll Nr. 32," June 30, 1981, BAB DY/30/J IV 2/3A/3652, 1-6; Abteilung Internationale Verbindungen, "Vorlage für das Politbüros des ZK der SED. Betreff: Bericht über den Besuch des Präsidenten der Südwestafrikanischen Volksoganisation (SWAPO) von Namibia, Sam Nujoma, vom 11. bis 26. Februar 1982 in der DDR," March 16, 1982, BAB DY/30/J IV 2/2A/2464, Fiche 1, 66-75; Abteilung Internationale Verbindungen, "Vorlage für das Politbüro des ZK der SED. Betreff: Bericht über den Besuch des Präsidenten der Südwestafrikanischen Volksorganisation (SWAPO) von Namibia, Sam Nujoma, vom 08. - 25. September 1983 in der DDR. Solidaritätsleistungen gegenüber der SWAPO 1983/84," September 1983, BAB DY/30/J IV 2/2A/2601, Fiche 1, 28-40; "Protokoll Nr. 94," August 27, 1987, BAB DY/30/J IV 2/3A/4587, 1-9; "Protokoll Nr. 32/79," March 26, 1979, BAB DY/30/J IV 2/3A/3281, 2-6; "Protokoll Nr. 8," January 20, 1981, BAB DY/30/J IV 2/3A/3581, 1-4; "Protokoll Nr. 11"; "Protokoll Nr. 34"; "Protokoll Nr. 102"; "Protokoll Nr. 92"; "Protokoll Nr. 92," August 15, 1983, BAB DY/30/J IV 2/3A/3977, 1-6; "Protokoll Nr. 107"; "Protokoll Nr. 57," May 28, 1987, BAB DY/30/J IV 2/3A/4551, 1-7.

[475] Abteilung Volksbildung, "Vorlage für das Sekretariat des ZK der SED. Betr.: Errichtung eines Kinderheimes für namibische Vorschulkinder in der DDR," September 12, 1979, BAB DY/30/J IV 2/3A/3366, 64-71; "Information zum Stand der Realisierung der Beschlüsse des Sekretariats des ZK zur Weiterführung der Arbeit des SWAPO-Kinderheims Bellin," n.d 1982,

expanded to include primary school education for the eighty children who arrived in 1979 and the smaller groups that came later in the following years. Eventually, however, the facilities available in Bellin became cramped as more children continued to arrive while their predecessors stayed on for further education in East Germany.[476]

Officials in the SED solved this problem by moving older SWAPO children to another, similar facility: the "School of Friendship" in Stassfurt.[477] The complex was certainly large enough, featuring 150 living units designed to house 1000 children, their teachers, and their guardians. The school itself contained 28 classrooms, a sports hall, and 30,000 square meters devoted to playing fields and playgrounds.[478] Approved by the SED leadership in late 1980 as one of several measures to promote economic and technical cooperation with Mozambique, the school represented the "living expression of the close bonds between the countries of socialism and the national liberation movement."[479] Educating children from Mozambique was a *Kampfaufgabe*, a duty in the anti-imperialist struggle. That sense of duty applied to children from Mozambique no less

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BAB DY/30/5756.

[476] Abteilung Volksbildung, "Vorlage für das Sekretariat des ZK der SED. Betrifft: Erweiterung der Aufnahmekapazität des Kinderheimes Bellin für namibische Kinder in der DDR," July 6, 1981, BAB DY/30/J IV 2/3A/3657, 13-21; "Protokoll Nr. 36," July 13, 1981, BAB DY/30/J IV 2/3A/3657, 1-9; *Bericht über die Realisierung des Beschlusses des Sekretariats des ZK der SED vom 13.7.1981 über die Erweiterung der Aufnahmekapazität des Kinderheimes Bellin für namibische Kinder in der DDR (Beschluß des Sekretariats des ZK vom 28. 1. 1982)*, n.d 1982, BAB DY/30/5756; "Information zum Stand der Realisierung der Beschlüsse des Sekretariats des ZK zur Weiterführung der Arbeit des SWAPO-Kinderheims Bellin"; "Protokoll Nr. 13," January 28, 1982, BAB DY/30/J IV 2/3A/3746, 1-6.

[477] L Oppermann et al., "Vorlage für das Sekretariat des ZK. Betreff: Sicherung der Weiterführung der Betreuung, Bildung und Erziehung von Kindern der SWAPO in der DDR," January 27, 1984, BAB DY/30/J IV 2/3A/4045, 10-13.

[478] "Entwurf. Vorlage Politbüro," December 5, 1980, BAB DR/2/13990.

[479] Abteilung Volksbildung, "Information. Betriff: Zur Arbeit der Grundorganisation der SED in der 'Schule der Solidarität' (Objekt Mocambique)," September 2, 1982, 1-2, BAB DY/30/5756.

than those from Namibia.[480]

East German responses to SWAPO activities and requests did reflect a sense of responsibility, but not one unique to SWAPO on account of German involvement in South-West Africa's history. In the same 1975 shipment that brought two tons of blankets and one ton of medication to SWAPO were similar quantities for the Liberation Front of Mozambique (FRELIMO), plus five tons of ready to serve meals and 4.5 tons of material for uniforms.[481] Medical treatment was not limited to SWAPO fighters, and vocational training was also made available to liberation movement members from South Africa, Zimbabwe, and other countries as well.[482] In word and deed the East German state and the SED maintained the idea that East German responsibilities to oppressed peoples emanated not from guilt but from the solidarity born of shared struggle. East Germans had overcome German imperialism at home, were standing up to West German and Western European imperialism in Europe and around the world, and they would help others to that end as best they could.

Despite the East German state's own lack of particular concern for the victims of German colonial misdeeds, however, East German propaganda did attempt to use those misdeeds—in combination with the Federal Republic's questionable dealings in the present—to tar West German politicians and the West German state with the shame of colonial and neo-colonial guilt. East German propagandists never tired of reminding the world that the horrors of the Holocaust drew on "the most reactionary, misanthropic

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[480] Ibid., 2.

[481] Solidaritätskomitee der DDR, Abteilung Internationale Verbindungen, "Vorlage für das Sekretariat des ZK der SED. Betrifft: Übergabe von Solidaritätssendungen an die SWAPO in Dar es Salaam und die FRELIMO in Loucernco Marques sowie an die Regierung Madagaskars und die AKFM in Tananarive (2 Sondermaschinen der Interflug)"; See also, for example, Angola: Gerhard Weiss, "Vorlage für das Politbüro des ZK der SED. Betreff: Solidaritätssendung für die Volksrepublik Angola," February 2, 1976, BAB DY/30/J IV 2/2A/1951, Fiche 2, 108-119.

[482] "Protokoll Nr. 06," January 21, 1977, BAB DY/30/J IV 2/3A/2930, 1-5; "Protokoll Nr. 32/79."

traditions" developed during the colonial period.[483] Worse yet, these traditions continued after World War II: "one of the butchers of Africans, General Lettow-Vorbeck, who played a decisive role in the suppression of the Herero rebellion against the whip of German colonizers, is once again glorified in West Germany."[484] Instead of condemning the colonial past outright, West Germans tried to rewrite it.[485] East German propaganda did not claim that all West Germans were racist, of course, but it condemned the dominant status of pro-imperialist views, especially those recurring in the West German media. Just as West Germans overlooked the crimes of the past, they were willing to do so for the criminals of the present:

> [For West Germans] The racist regime [in South Africa] is indeed an encumbrance, but one still admires it. Class ties bind. Thus one mixes half-hearted criticism with attempts to apply makeup to the ties to Pretoria and to Tel Aviv and to imperialist partisans elsewhere, to whitewash them, to minimize their crimes.[486]

For East German propagandists, West German concerns for the German and German-speaking settlers of South-West Africa/Namibia only confirmed that West German involvement in finding a solution had more to do with protecting economic and political interests than ensuring a peaceful transition to a freely elected government.[487]

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[483] Alfred Babing, ed., *Gegen Rassismus, Apartheid und Kolonialismus: Dokumente der DDR 1949-1977*, Institut für Internationale Politik und Wirtschaft der DDR (Berlin: Staatsverlag der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, 1978), 46.

[484] Abteilung Agitation/Propaganda, "Beschluß des Politbüros zur massenpolitischen Arbeit vom 27.9.1960. Disposition zum Thema:'Der Neokolonialismus, ein Wesenzug des wiedererstandenen deutschen Imperialismus' (Einige Materialhinweise)."

[485] "Nr. 967 Und wieder mal: 'Freie Wahlen...'" (Deutsche Fernsehfunk, December 18, 1978), 3, E084-05-02/0003/303.

[486] "Nr. 1218 'Reformer' und andere Betrüger" (Deutsche Fernsehfunk, December 19, 1983), 4, E084-05-02/0003/553.

[487] "Nr. 967 Und wieder mal: 'Freie Wahlen...'," 2-3.

West Germany, East Germany, and UNTAG

Eventually, however, a peaceful transition did come. It arrived in part with the help of East and West Germans. In September 1989 the Federal Republic sent fifty officers of the Federal Border Guard (*Bundesgrenzschutz,* BGS) to Namibia as a part of the United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG). UNTAG's mission in the fledgling country was clear: to keep the peace, ensure the rule of law, and oversee free and fair elections. The participation of armed, uniformed German officers, however, naturally invited comparisons with the past. An article in the *Frankfurter Rundschau* provided one of the best:

> "German '*Schutztruppe*' arrived" was the title of the *Allgemeine Zeitung* [the German language newspaper in South-West Africa/Namibia] by way of greeting, and even the quotation marks did nothing to change the fact that with it fatal memories of the past were awoken. Beneath the gilded pictures of this *Schutztruppe* in "Café Central" on Kaiserstrasse there now sit blue berets from all continents who as part of the UN troop for Namibia are supposed to safeguard the independence process.
>
> So by breakfast they can see how Friedrich von Ekkert and his men took to the field on camels at the beginning of the century against the Nama leader Simon Kopper. The BGS officers of today and their commanders lack not only the camels—they are, as part of UNTAG and as police "from a democratic state" . . . in Namibia not to wage war but as part of a peace keeping mission, which is why their pistols remain holstered and may only be used under explicit orders and for self defense.[488]

For the West Germans who took part in UNTAG, *Schutz*—"protection" or "defense"—meant something very different than it had for members of the colonial *Schutztruppe*, which put down Herero and Nama uprisings that threatened German property and control—as well as German lives. Nearly a century later the term referred to democracy and justice, both of which desperately needed protection and assistance in Namibia. Yet in some ways the old and the new *Schutztruppe* were not so different. The fate of

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[488] Brigitte Kols and Hans-Helmut Kohl, "Von einer ganz anderen 'Schutztruppe' zeugen vergilbte Bilder. Pistolen unter Verschluß und nur keine falsche Handbewegung: die bundesdeutschen Blaumützen in Namibia," *Frankfurter Rundschau*, September 21, 1989.

Germans in South-West Africa/Namibia had weighed on West German minds as much as the fate of Africans, and the Federal Republic sent West German police units to Namibia not only to oversee elections but also, to a certain extent, to defend German interests and protect the lives of Germans and German-speakers. In the months and years leading up to the deployment of BSG officers debate within the Federal Republic as to the proper stance for West Germany returned again and again to the special responsibility born of Germany's colonial past. More often than not, however, West Germans referred not to surviving Herero or Nama with this rhetoric, nor to the other victims of German and white South African colonial rule. Rather, that responsibility was one owed to those Germans and other whites of German descent who still lived in the former German colony. In the Federal Republic, the question of Namibia was as much an inquiry into the fate of this tiny minority as it was a concern for the rights and liberties of indigenous peoples. The maintenance of order and establishment of a stable new state served both interests equally well.

The GDR would not be outdone. Like the Federal Republic, East Germany sent police units to participate in UNTAG. Ideologically, the East German state and the SED displayed a much greater level of commitment to the cause of decolonization. For years East German aid and support had found its way into the hands of SWAPO, and East Germans in the government and the press proved vocal critics of South African rule and the indifference or even complicity of the West. Yet support for SWAPO, even the housing and education of SWAPO children in East Germany, was the result of anti-colonialist ties, not colonial ones. East Germany did as much if not more for other liberation movements in Africa and the SED and East German state repeatedly put their rhetoric and action in the context of an anti-imperialist struggle that encompassed the entire world and stretched back into the past to include nineteenth-century German workers and Communist resistance in World War II. Of course the East German state and the SED had their own interests as well. Officials not only hoped that UNTAG would

represent "a definite contribution to the realization of Namibia's independence" but also that it would bring with it the "elevation of the GDR's international prestige."[489]

From the time the situation in South-West Africa began to heat up in the 1970s through the creation of an independent Namibia both West and East Germany became increasingly embroiled in a situation that sparked national and international debates. The form and content of these debates reflected the myriad contexts in which they took place. Southwest Africa was, after all, not just a former German colony but also one of the front lines along which the Cold War had heated up. White rule there represented not just one of colonialism's final vestiges but also an outpost for South Africa's policy of Apartheid. Ties to West Germany were not simply the result of heritage but also significant business arrangements and partnerships. The role colonialism and Germany's colonial past played in both East and West German discourse points to their continued significance for Germans taking part in a world that still bore the imprint of European colonialism even as it sought to rid itself of any remaining colonial artifacts. At the same time, the way in which Germany's colonial past emerged in responses to and debates about South-West Africa/Namibia reveals the enduring impact the more recent past had in shaping the ways Germans not only remembered and forgot but also sought to instrumentalize the past.

After World War II both East and West Germans attempted to limit responsibility and carefully delineate who had played what roles in the Holocaust. Efforts in East Germany to emphasize the role of German communists frequently led to the neglect (but not denial) of the fate of Germany's and Europe's Jews. A similar focus on the hardships of life under Nazism and during or immediately after World War II produced an equivalent silence in West Germany. While the East German state ensured the

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[489] Minister für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten and Abteilung Internationale Verbindungen, "Vorlage für das Politbüro des ZK der SED. Betreff: Teilnahme der DDR an der UN-Polizeibeobachtereinheit im Rahmen der zivilen Komponente der Gruppe der Vereinten Nationen zur Unterstützung des Übergangs Namibias in die Unabhängigkeit (UNTAG)," September 8, 1989, BAB DY/30/J IV 2/2A/3239, Fiche 1, 86-91.

perpetuation of the party line, in the Federal Republic increasing social pressure in the 1960s forced a reexamination of the Nazi past in general and the Holocaust in particular. Much the same could be said for the ways in which both German states and societies dealt with questions of roles and responsibilities when it came to South-West Africa/Namibia. The East German state's insistence that it emerged in 1949 unencumbered by the legacies of previous German states meant that, as a matter of course, East Germans bore no special responsibility for what had happened at the beginning of the century. East Germany was a country of farmers and workers, not imperialists. Indeed, according to the state and the party, East Germans shared a common anti-imperialist history with the people of South-West Africa/Namibia, and based on that role East Germany's only responsibility was not one born of unique historical guilt but rather of a larger present-day moral imperative: to help peoples all over the world escape the oppression of colonialism and neo-colonialism. Similarly, in West Germany answering questions of responsibility regarding South-West Africa/Namibia involved a sleight-of-memory not so different from that which occurred immediately following World War II; rather than focusing on African victims, many in government and society at large looked to German ones. In 1970s and 1980s South-West Africa/Namibia, this meant Germans and white settlers of German descent, threatened by SWAPO violence and a potentially unstable or worse, communist, independent Namibian state. In both domestic and international political realms West German leaders justified their involvement in UN attempts to find a solution to the problem of Namibian independence on the basis of West German responsibility to that vocal minority. At the same time, however, a minority within West German society criticized the West German state for inaction, calling for the Federal Republic to support a speedy resolution to the situation in favor of the Namibian people precisely because of Germany's previous role in Namibian history.

Despite the apparent singularity of the Holocaust, the example of South-West

Africa/Namibia demonstrates that its place in German memory is not quite as exceptional. Unique characteristics of that memory notwithstanding, the politics and culture of remembering (and forgetting) the Holocaust represent not exceptions but exemplars, indeed perhaps even defining factors in framing all of German memory. This is a result not only of the space the Holocaust occupies in German memory but also deliberate attempts to link it to the genocide in German South-West Africa. In both the Federal Republic and the German Democratic Republic these patterns led very few Germans to accept responsibility for the misdeeds of the colonial past. Beginning in the years immediately following Namibian independence and German unification, however, increasing demands from within both countries for the recognition of guilt and the acceptance of responsibility—including financial responsibility—ensured that Germans and the German state continued to deal with their colonial past well into the twenty-first century.

CONCLUSION

Colonialism still mattered to Germans after World War II. The occupation of Germany, the integration of both German states into postwar alliances, and Germans' own pursuit of economic and political opportunities brought colonialism to Germany and Germans to European colonies. Germany's own colonies and the German colonial period survived in memories and histories produced in the shadow of the Holocaust either to rehabilitate German identity or discredit the precursors and successors to Nazi rule. On the one hand, these encounters with colonialism in the postwar period were typically European: Germans fought alongside Swiss recruits in the French Foreign Legion, German businesses competed with Dutch firms for lucrative contracts, and German anti-colonialists attended the same international conferences as their Polish, Hungarian, and Czechoslovak counterparts. Germans remembered and misremembered their colonial past in ways that were self-serving and more focused on utility than accuracy, in the process revealing a great deal more about contemporary politics and concerns than about German colonialism. Yet, at the same time, Germans had a unique relationship with colonialism after World War II. Germans, unlike much of the rest of Western Europe, had no colonies of their own. Perhaps more significantly, Germany did not lose its colonies as a result of some long, drawn-out process of decolonization but rather in one fell swoop at Versailles. Thus Germans operated as both insiders and outsiders when it came to European colonialism. Germans participated as fellow Europeans in the maintenance and defense of colonialism, but at the same time they enjoyed a greater emotional and political detachment: the idea that Algeria was a part of France, for example, did not matter to a German the same way it might to someone in France (although a similar view of the Saarland or Germany's former eastern territories certainly did.) Emotions did run high in debates about Germany's own colonial past, and not only as a result of the attachments formed by personal experience and national affiliation. Rather, the interjection of the

Holocaust into the timeline of German history forced defenders and critics of German colonialism to offer explanations for the past and the present that described the Nazi period as an aberration or the result of continuities underlying German society.

Germans after 1945 built new relationship with colonialism in the shadows of the Nazi past and the Iron Curtain. However, examining this relationship reveals that the impact of these contexts was not only, or even primarily, limited to the appropriation of the terms of one discourse and their use in another. Of course, this did occur: debates about Germany's colonial past served as proxies for debates about the Nazi past, and disputes over West German neo-colonialism and East German anti-colonialism always had more to do with the German question and Cold War politics than the fates of indigenous peoples, whatever either side's moral or ideological commitments. Just as importantly, however, genuine debates about colonialism were translated into the languages taught to Germans by these wider contexts. Thus, for example, few West Germans took seriously the notion that they had been colonized by the occupying powers, and although West Germans realized German soldiers in the French Foreign Legion did so to help maintain a colonial empire France was not yet willing to give up, they also saw that service as a German contribution to the Western struggle against Communism. Similarly, East German propaganda and West German protestors cast Germany's colonial past not in its own terms, but rather as an integral part of a larger, more sinister historical arc. The suppression of uprisings in German Southwest Africa or German East Africa became not products of their own time and place, but markers along the road that led to Nazism. After World War II colonialism past and present frequently became a tool for dealing in one way or another with the Holocaust and the Cold War, but this was only possible because these contexts so strongly colored German views of the colonial past and colonialism's slow demise.

Even to this day German historical memory of the colonial past remains closely bound to the Holocaust. Debates in parliament and among the German public about

Herero demands for *Entschädigung* (reparations) not only parallel much earlier discussions about how to compensate the victims of the Holocaust but gravitate to the same language; some Germans have begun to use the term *Wiedergutmachung*, which after World War II became closely associated with the payment of reparations to Jews and other victims of the Nazi regime. Herero leaders have sought to exploit connections to the Holocaust as a both a means of building moral support and a source of political and legal precedent, while German officials have attempted to strike a balance between on the one hand finally admitting German guilt and responsibility and acknowledging the events as genocide and, on the other hand, avoiding the acceptance of reparations claims.[490] On a local level, efforts by a number of organizations to remember Germany's colonial victims through the rededication of colonial monuments or the creation of entirely new memorials reflect the culture of commemoration that has evolved in the Federal Republic since the Holocaust, while the controversy surrounding parallel attempts by other groups to honor those Germans who fought and died in the colonies calls to mind debates about the degree to which soldiers were implicated in the crimes of the Nazi regime and how best to remember their sacrifices during World War II, if at all.

No memory, then, exists in a vacuum. This is as true of German memories of World War II and the Holocaust or French memories of Vichy or Algeria as it is of the colonial memories of West and East Germans. Particular collective memories inform and reflect a constellation of other memories that may or may not have anything in common.

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490 "Deutschland entschuldigt sich für Kolonialverbrechen," *Der Spiegel*, August 15, 2004, http://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/0,1518,druck-313373,00.html; Susanne Sporrer, "Wieczorek-Zeul bat um Vergebung," *Die Welt*, August 15, 2004, http://www.welt.de/print-wams/article114391/Wieczorek_Zeul_bat_um_Vergebung.html; Heidemarie Wieczorek-Zeul, "Rede von Bundesentwicklungsministerin Heidemarie Wieczorek-Zeul zu den Gedenkfeierlichkeiten der Herero-Aufstände in Namibia" (Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung, 2004), http://www.bmz.de/de/presse/reden/ministerin/2004/august/rede20040814.html; Thilo Thielke, "Wie die Hereros um Wiedergutmachung kämpfen," *Der Spiegel*, June 25, 2008, http://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/0,1518,druck-561657,00.html.

Collective memories are also components and products of the culture in which they exist. They are susceptible to changing attitudes and assumptions, waxing or waning interest, and a variety of other factors that may alter their content or meaning. Yet collective memories also serve as the source material for common knowledge, the creation of beliefs and traditions, and the construction of identities. As a result, collective memories may be stable or exist in a state of flux, widely accepted or hotly contested. Producers and consumers of memory do not operate in isolation, neither from one another nor from the outside influences of other collective memories or other aspects of their cultural milieu. West German veterans could not help but create a memory of colonialism that reflected memories of the Holocaust

Of course, with the fall of the Berlin Wall the context of the Cold War and a divided Germany vanished, replaced by the emergence of an ever more closely knit European Union, itself a product of both postwar attempts to avoid future wars through economic integration and Cold War efforts to win them through military cooperation. The participation of Germans in European colonialism after World War II and the presence of Germany's own colonial past in present-day collective memory suggest that the postcolonial baggage of member states like France or the United Kingdom may not burden the European Union as greatly as one might expect; despite differences of political responsibility and attachments born of national pride, that baggage closely resembles that carried by Germans and, one might imagine, other Europeans. Such similarities point to shared understandings—changing as they may be—of the relationship between Europeans and non-Europeans, which in turn may make the difficult task of putting together common policies on everything from international relations to citizenship and immigration that much easier.

More important, however, is the recognition that the institutionalization of European unity that has culminated in the European Union did not produce shared values and mindsets, nor did it initiate cooperation between the various nations of Europe.

Rather, it is simply the ultimate product of such commonalities and cooperation, a fact sometimes lost in the excitement produced by the admittance of new member states or the initiation of new steps designed to increase political and economic unity. Institutions like the EEC helped to integrate West Germany with the rest of Western Europe, for instance, but even before its creation Germans had already made economic inroads, in the colonies and elsewhere. Moreover, as economic historians have shown, world markets were even more interconnected in the late nineteenth century than in the so-called era of globalization, and Germans played their part then as well.

Indeed, while the European Union can by no means be credited with the creation of Europeans, it may not be too far off the mark to bestow European colonialism with that honor. It is in opposition to the "Other" that the "Self" is most easily defined, and with the age of exploration and the birth of modern imperialism large numbers of Europeans came into extended contact with a variety of "Others" for the first time. At home they might be Frenchmen or Germans, but in the bush explorers and settlers were white men. In dealing with indigenous peoples, the nationality of administrators, missionaries, and businessmen was not important; their identity as Europeans was. Europeans remained Europeans—whether or not they self-identified as such—despite the rise of nationalism and the divisions produced by wars. In that sense not only the German relationship with colonialism after World War II but increasing European unity and the emergence of a nascent European identity represent long-term continuities in European history.

The postwar involvement of Germans in the European colonial project suggests that, in the future, scholars must not only consider the colony and metropole in a "single analytical field" but also broaden their understanding of the metropole's borders. Just as scholars of indigenous societies have looked beyond the lines Europeans drew to divide up the world amongst themselves, so too must those interested in the European side of the colonial relationship move beyond the lines Europeans drew to divide up their continent

amongst themselves. The impact of the periphery on the center was not confined by artificial boundaries constructed by nationalism and reified by the projection of state power. German society before and after World War II was tied to Europe's colonies not only via the intermediation of the French state or British commerce, but directly as well.

Continuities in Europe have persisted despite incredible changes in what was once the colonized world. Over the course of the twentieth century the nature of the relationship between Europeans and non-Europeans changed as the latter demanded and seized increasing political and, to a lesser degree, economic power. Germans and other Europeans recognized these changes: some worked to promote them, others to prevent them. Yet despite their recognition of the changing nature of the colonial relationship Europeans were slow to change the terms with which they described and understood that relationship. This was not only a case of West Germans and other Western Europeans failing to accept the idea that colonialism had become untenable after World War II, but rather a broad perpetuation of modes of thinking that saw in places like Africa both opportunities for Europeans and problems crying out for European solutions. Europeans might no longer seize indigenous labor and resources, but even after 1945 many continued to view the colonial and postcolonial world as a well of economic and political prosperity, offering raw materials and new markets to West German businessmen and diplomatic and political capital to East German officials. Likewise, talk of civilizing missions and the white man's burden might no longer have been politically correct after World War II, but invariably Europeans believed they had some insight into the difficulties facing newly independent states, offering up competing economic models and steering development through aid, education, and training. This despite the fact that Europeans had nothing in the way of experience when it came to establishing a postcolonial state.

Thus the continued involvement of Germans in colonial affairs after 1945 and, indeed, after the majority of Europe's colonies obtained their independence calls into

question the temporal boundaries associated with colonial studies. The loss of colonies did not bring with it for Germans or other Europeans the immediate erasure of colonial mindsets. Similarly, nominal political and economic independence did not free former colonies from unequal power relationships with European states, nor did the rejection of outright political and economic control necessarily imply the severing of social and cultural ties. The process of decolonization, it turns out, is much longer than the path to independence, for both the colonized and the colonizer.

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