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West German Solidarity Movements and the Struggle for the Decolonization of Lusophone Africa

The violent decolonization of Portugal's colonial empire in Africa was not fought on the battlefields of Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau alone. An important part of the African liberation movements' struggle was the search for political and material support, which they received from independent African countries, socialist states and numerous non-state actors in the West. As part of a broader wave of internationalism, a solidarity movement in support of the liberation movements in Portugal's African colonies emerged in West Germany as well. This was partially a response to the West German governments' close cooperation with the *Estado Novo* regime (Salazar's New State) in Lisbon. This article gives an overview of the development and participants of West Germany's solidarity groups and their activities during the 1960s and early 1970s.

Keywords: African liberation movements; decolonization; international solidarity; internationalism; Portuguese Colonial War; West Germany.

“Hence the positive outcome of this battle that we – European and African Portuguese alike – are fighting without spectacle or alliances, just proudly alone”.¹ That was how the Portuguese dictator António de Oliveira Salazar described the violent decolonization of Portugal's colonial empire in Africa. But contrary to this famous quote, Lisbon's war effort during the *Guerra Colonial* (Colonial War) depended heavily on the support of its Western allies. The same goes for their opponents – the liberation movements in Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau, who were supported by independent African nations, by socialist states and by non-state groups and activists from several Western countries. The armed struggle against Portuguese

¹ António de Oliveira Salazar on 18 February 1965, cited in Torgal (1994: 82; translation by the author). Original quote: “Eis o ganho positivo desta batalha em que – os portugueses europeus e africanos – combatemos sem espectáculo e sem alianças, orgulhosamente sós”.

colonialism depended on money, weapons, medical supplies and, of course, political support.

This paper gives an overview of the West German solidarity movement that sought to support the liberation movements in the Portuguese colonies in Africa and their struggle during the 1960s and early 1970s. As part of a broader wave of internationalist activity among West German students and so called 'Third World' groups, the fight against Portuguese colonialism created a certain rallying potential and press echo in the West German public (Kössler and Melber, 2002: 107).

After a brief introduction to West German-Portuguese relations, the heterogeneous solidarity groups will be described from two angles: focusing first on the development of the movement and its various participants and then on the different forms of protest. The article will follow the emergence of a West German solidarity movement from its first organized activities in the early 1960s until the peak of protest a decade later. Due to the fact that non-state actors rarely kept records, this paper is based on the current state of research and additional sources from archives and contemporary press reports.²

West German-Portuguese Relations during the *Guerra Colonial*

Traditionally, Germany and Portugal had been on friendly terms, and after the Second World War the newly created Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) was glad to easily establish diplomatic relations with the *Estado Novo* regime. The Portuguese government had sympathized with the National Socialist regime in Germany, but had remained neutral during the war. Therefore, the relations between the two countries were not strained after 1945. Moreover, the Portuguese regime and the West German government led by the conservative *Christlich Demokratische Union* (CDU, Christian Democratic Union) shared a strong anti-communist stance (Fonseca, 2007: 23 ff.). By the early 1960s, the two states had developed close economic, military and political ties within the framework of the Cold War and NATO.³ West German exports of military material proved vital for the Portuguese armed forces fighting wars of decolonization in Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau since 1961. In return, the West German army built its first foreign base in Portugal. Profitable economic cooperation and West German

² The archival sources used are from the *Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes* (PA AA, Political Archive of the Federal German Foreign Ministry). A short remark on names: the names of solidarity groups, liberation movements and political parties, etc. will be used in German or Portuguese along with the respective abbreviation or acronym and translation, when first mentioned.

³ This has been the topic of detailed studies. See, for example, Fonseca (2007) and Lopes (2014).

military aid enabled the Portuguese government to keep the war machine in Africa running until 1974. After 1969, a new West German government led by the center-left *Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands* (SPD, Social Democratic Party of Germany) was cautious not to appear as a supporter of Portuguese colonialism and tried to scale down its close relations with Lisbon. But due to economic interests and Portugal's geostrategic value for NATO, the West German government in Bonn wanted to maintain good relations with the Portuguese. Eventually the Carnation Revolution in April 1974 changed Portugal's political landscape completely and brought independence to the African colonies (Fonseca, 2007: 157 ff., 236; Lopes, 2014: 90, 129, 161).

In contrast, the communist Democratic Republic of Germany (GDR) appeared as a natural enemy of right wing Portugal and, like other socialist countries, tried to support liberation movements in Africa and Asia. Both German states competed fiercely for friendly relations with so-called 'Third World' countries. In the early 1960s East Germany developed ties to left-wing liberation movements of Lusophone Africa that were also supported by Moscow: MPLA (*Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola*, People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola), PAIGC (*Partido Africano para a Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde*, African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde) and FRELIMO (*Frente de Libertação de Moçambique*, Mozambique Liberation Front). Delegations of the movements were officially received in Berlin and the East German government sent shipments of civilian and military goods. After independence, the GDR involvement in Mozambique and Angola even intensified, following the escalating civil and Cold War conflicts (Schleicher, 1998: 13, 44-49).

The Emergence of a West German Solidarity Movement

The first steps of international solidarity in West Germany in the early 1960s were based on personal and bilateral connections and developed especially among students. The number of students from 'Third World' countries in the FRG had grown from 200 in 1951 to 12,000 in 1962. Many foreign students had experienced political struggles against dictatorships, imperialism and colonialism in their home countries. From their peers, West German students learned about the political situation in countries like Algeria, Angola or Iran, and eventually individuals and small groups began to protest and act in solidarity (Slobodian, 2012: 13 ff.).

One of the first events to protest Portuguese colonialism and the war in Angola was a press conference held in 1961 by the *Verband Deutscher*

Studentenschaften (VDS, German Student Union). The VDS had invited an Angolan refugee student to speak about the persecution of African students by the Portuguese authorities and to inform the public about the situation in Portugal's African colonies. Most journalists of the major newspapers left in protest when they realized that the press-conference would criticize a West German NATO ally. The VDS carried on addressing the obvious West German-Portuguese cooperation, which turned into a main focus of protest. In 1963, after a trip to Angola organized by the Portuguese government, the vice president of the West German parliament, Richard Jaeger (CDU), justified Portugal's colonial policy in several press statements. As a reaction, the VDS launched a public statement condemning Portuguese colonialism and calling for an end to West German military aid (Slobodian, 2012: 21 ff.).

Another student organization that got involved in internationalism at this time was the *Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund* (SDS, Socialist German Student Union). In 1961, after the outbreak of hostilities in Angola, the SDS delegate conference adopted a resolution against the "war of extermination in Portugal's colonies" and military aid by West Germany and other NATO member states (*apud* Seibert, 2008: 76).

At about the same time, former VDS chairman and SDS member Klaus Meschkat published an article about the foundation of the *União Geral dos Estudantes da África Negra (sob dominação colonial portuguesa)* (UGEAN, Union of Students of Black Africa under Portuguese Rule), noting that both the president and the vice-president of the organization were students in the FRG. In August 1963, Meschkat travelled to Morocco and took part in the second UGEAN congress, after which he wrote a letter to the SDS head office asking if UGEAN members could speak at the next SDS congress (Slobodian, 2012: 22). This shows how important personal connections and individual commitment were to establish an interest in the situation of Portugal's African colonies.

Individual scholars played an important role in creating a theoretical and scientific basis for the protest and mobilizing fellow students. The Portuguese Eduardo de Sousa Ferreira, for example, began to research the economic ties between Portugal and the FRG while a student in Heidelberg. He came to be an influential theorist for the solidarity movement and published several works on Portuguese colonialism and the FRG's economic interests (Lopes, 2014: 67).⁴

For many West German students, internationalism and solidarity with political struggles elsewhere seemed to be an opportunity to escape their

⁴ These include, for example, Ferreira, 1972, 1974, 1975.

own identity and the conservative society of post-Nazism West Germany. As former activist Richard Jobs explains: “[...] ‘embracing foreignness’ was widespread among young activists in 1968 Western Europe as means of expressing alienation from their own nations and solidarity with foreigners both distant and nearby” (*apud* Slobodian, 2012: 11).

Moreover, the armed liberation struggles in Africa, Asia and Latin America were seen as a model and inspiration for resistance against the Western capitalist system and its conservative societies. This ideal was not only applied by radical leftist groups and left-wing students, but spread among Christian and ‘Third World’ activists as well (Kuhn, 2013: 70). In the case of West Germany, the close cooperation between the FRG and the Portuguese government generated a reason for activists to not only express solidarity but also protest their own government. In light of the German arms used by the Portuguese in Africa and the economic interests of West German companies in Portugal and its colonies, the solidarity movement felt obliged to act and fight the causes and agents that allowed the wars in Africa to continue. Thus, the liberation struggles in Africa and protest in the FRG were tied together as a ‘common struggle against imperialism’, with West German activists feeling a responsibility to act at home (*ibidem*: 76).

In 1969, for example, SDS member Burkhard Bluem demanded that the struggle be brought to Europe to overcome “naïve and romantic identification with the guerrilla movement”.⁵ In a joint publication by the SDS and the Angolan liberation movement MPLA, Bluem called to resist arms exports, explaining that monetary and medical donations were not only a “well-meaning recognition” of the liberation movements’ goals but also a first step to develop cooperation between the movements in Europe and Africa (SDS and Neto, 1969: 14).

Some scholars and former activists have argued that Western solidarity groups were driven by their own dreams of anti-imperialism, revolution and societal change. Accordingly, they projected their own political objectives onto ‘Third World’ liberation movements without realizing the true aims of their ‘comrades in arms’: national liberation (Kössler and Melber, 2002: 107 ff.). Furthermore, the role of foreign students in West Germany should be emphasized, as Quinn Slobodian (2012) argues in his study about internationalism in the FRG. Using ‘Western’ concepts like human rights and political freedom, foreign students and activists played an important role in promoting ‘Third World’ struggles among West German students

⁵ SDS and Neto (1969: 14): “[...] naïve und unreflektierte Identifikation mit der Guerillabewegung [...]”; translation by the author.

and created an audience that felt urged to act in solidarity. Therefore, they have to be recognized as independent agents who facilitated the development of internationalism and solidarity movements in the FRG (Slobodian, 2012: 11 ff.).

The most important internationalist topic to mobilize the West German masses during the 1960s was without doubt the Vietnam War, which became a dominant issue after 1964. Before that, influential groups like the SDS kept the focus of their internationalist activities on European colonialism and solidarity with the people of Algeria, Southern Africa and the Portuguese colonies (*ibidem*: 82). Often all these topics and regions were intermingled and seen as a general struggle against Western imperialism. In February 1968, for example, the SDS held the *Internationaler Vietnam Kongress* (International Vietnam Congress) in West Berlin, with 5,000 participants from several countries, to publicly discuss and condemn the war in South East Asia and criticize Western imperialist policy. In his speech, the famous student activist Rudi Dutschke mentioned Portuguese colonialism and West German support for the Portuguese war effort. He characterized the FRG itself as an imperialist power because of its support for ‘white’ regimes in Southern Africa and called on West Germans to mobilize against arms exports to Portugal (SDS Westberlin and INFI, 1987: 114 ff.).

Until 1968/1969, the internationalist solidarity movement in West Germany was dominated by students. But by the end of the decade new groups had emerged alongside the radical left and in the student milieu in general. At the universities more young academics – especially those interested in Africa professionally – joined the protest against Portugal and its colonial policy. Founded in 1969, the *Vereinigung von Afrikanisten in Deutschland* (VAD, Association of African Studies Scholars in Germany) was witness to heated debates about its political positioning and that of academia in general. Many VAD members actively participated in different solidarity movements and protests (Brahm, 2009: 1 ff.).

Other groups, like *Aktion Dritte Welt* (Campaign Third World) in Freiburg were shaped by a humanitarian approach. Many were founded by young development workers who, upon returning from overseas, were disappointed about their government’s policies and the inequality and racism shaping global North-South relationships (Kössler and Melber, 2002: 108). Activists wanted to inform the (West)German public about what was happening in the ‘Third World’. The *Informationsstelle südliches Afrika* (ISSA, Information Center for Southern Africa) in Bonn, for example, was founded in 1971 explicitly to report about Southern Africa and worked extensively on the Portuguese colonies (Bacia and Leidig, 2008: 349).

In light of the conditions in Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau and the stubbornness of the Portuguese regime, even humanitarian and Christian groups became more radical and began to support armed struggle. The unwillingness of the West German and other European governments to put pressure on the Portuguese to end the colonial war was another mobilizing factor. Following a nationwide meeting of internationalist groups in Frankfurt in April 1969, several information and donation campaigns were launched. As a first step of direct material support, solidarity groups collected donations of medical supplies and sent them to the liberation movements in Africa. Driving forces in these campaigns were the *Internationales Nachrichten- und Forschungsinstitut* (INFI, International News and Research Institute), founded by members of the West Berlin SDS, the students' union executive committee, and the local SDS at the University of Heidelberg. In Heidelberg, which had become a hotbed of solidarity with Portugal's African colonies, groups like *Aktion Befreite Gebiete* (Campaign Liberated Zones) emerged. This group, formed in 1968/1969 with a clear focus on Lusophone Africa, was named after another group, *Aktion Dritte Welt*, but had a clear message of support for armed struggle, as indicated by the reference to liberated zones (Seibert, 2008: 76).

Many students and development activists were members of Christian religious organizations and began to integrate these networks into the solidarity movement. Support for and understanding of African liberation movements expressed by international religious organizations like the World Council of Churches (WCC) encouraged these developments. In 1970, for example, the *Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland* (EKD, Protestant Church in Germany) donated Deutsche Mark (DM) 100,000 to the WCC's special program to fight racism, which in turn gave it to liberation movements in Southern Africa. Christian solidarity groups passed resolutions demanding the heads of the Catholic and Protestant church to use their influence to support the independence of the Portuguese colonies in Africa. Christian activists not only organized material and financial support, but also participated directly in the planning of the 'Portugal Tribunal' and the campaign against Cabora Bassa to be discussed below (Lopes, 2014: 77 ff.).

However, not all church members in West Germany backed solidarity with the armed liberation movements. A deep rift between Christian activists and the leaders of the Catholic and Protestant churches became quite obvious at the 'Angola-Sunday' event in 1973. Activist groups had prepared information material about the liberation struggle in Lusophone Africa and asked churches nationwide to present it on Sunday, 23 September 1973, to the congregants coming to mass. Many bishops and church officials

refused this initiative, as they objected to the legitimacy of armed liberation struggle. Some even expressed sympathy for the Portuguese cause. Events like this proved that there was only a certain group of (mostly young) activists with a Christian background who actively engaged in the solidarity movement, while the conservative majority and the leadership of the major churches in West Germany remained silent or even opposed the cause (*ibidem*: 78 ff.).

Solidarity with liberation movements also attracted the attention of West German trade unions and left-wing social democratic groups like the *Jungsozialisten* (Jusos, Young Socialists), the youth organization of the SPD. Following the solidarity traditions of early socialism and the labor movement, activists like trade union official and SPD member Hans-Jürgen Wischniewski (*IG-Metall*, Metal Workers Union) developed ties with anti-colonial liberation movements during the 1950s. These internationalist activities were possible because the SPD was the opposition party and therefore able to act with less regard to international Cold War politics. In the 1960s, the internationalist contacts of West German social democratic organizations were fused in the SPD-affiliated *Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung* (FES, Friedrich Ebert Foundation) (Kuhn, 2013: 76; Lopes, 2014: 76).

In early 1964, Holden Roberto, leader of the Angolan liberation movement *Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola* (FNLA, National Front for the Liberation of Angola), approached West German politicians. The CDU-controlled Ministry of Foreign Affairs hoped that a link to Roberto would secure West German influence in a possibly soon independent Angola, as he was considered to be a pro-Western anti-communist and supported by the US government. But the West German diplomats made clear that Roberto could not be officially received by the Ministry, out of respect for relations with Portugal. Therefore, Roberto was welcomed by the FES in January 1964 and met, among others, SPD politician Wischniewski, who was by now a Member of Parliament (PA AA, 1964a; Fonseca, 2007: 130).

For the West German trade unions, it seemed easier to side with their persecuted counterparts in Portugal than to support the armed liberation struggle overseas. The *IG-Metall*, for example, tried to mobilize Portuguese immigrant workers in West Germany to protest against the dictatorship and the war in Africa. But growing public attention in the early 1970s brought the topic back to the agenda. Following their tradition of international solidarity, officials of the trade union federation *Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund* (DGB, German Trade Unions Confederation) and *IG-Metall* occasionally took part in protests against the Cabora Bassa project. In 1973, *IG-Metall* reported extensively on the Wiriyamu massacre in Mozambique and in

August of the same year union officials received a delegation of FRELIMO. Due to the strong connections with the now governing SPD, the trade unions acted very cautiously in the field of internationalism. Owing to their anti-communist stance, itself a consequence of Cold War politics, trade unionists feared associating themselves too openly with Marxist liberation movements. As a result, their solidarity remained rhetorical in character, with the official position of the SPD always kept in mind (Kuhn, 2013: 76; Lopes, 2014: 76).

The Peak of Solidarity

The West German solidarity movement reached its climax in the late 1960s and early 1970s with several high-profile events, public protests and massive media attention. The Cabora Bassa project in Mozambique became a focal point of the solidarity movement and the object of intense public criticism.

In the mid-1960s, the Portuguese colonial administration planned to build a huge dam at Cabora Bassa, in Mozambique's Northwestern Zambezi valley. This infrastructural project was intended to not only produce electricity to export to Apartheid South Africa, but also create a natural obstacle against the advancing FRELIMO guerillas and more European settlements. Cabora Bassa was financed with South African capital, with an international group of companies participating in the promising business. Among them were several big enterprises from the FRG, like the electronic manufacturers Siemens and AEG-Telefunken and the construction company Hochtief. The involvement of West German companies was worth DM 680 million and the government in Bonn issued export guarantees for more than DM 400 million. In 1970, construction began and West German engineers worked alongside colleagues from 13 other countries and thousands of Mozambican day laborers. Just as with the arms exports, the protest against Cabora Bassa aimed not only at the situation in Africa but also at the West German support for Portugal's colonial policy (Schliehe, 2016: 116 ff.; Kuhn, 2013: 76).

Again the SDS was on the forefront of the protest. In January 1969 the student organization published informational material to draw attention to Cabora Bassa. At the same time, public and political protest in other European countries successfully upset the plans for the biggest infrastructure project in Portugal's colonies. In Sweden, massive public opposition supported by members of the ruling social democratic party led to the withdrawal of the major Swedish electric company, ASEA, from the construction project. The Italian company Società Anonima Elettificazione made the

same decision, after the Italian government cancelled export guarantees due to intense pressure from the Italian Communist Party (Kuhn, 2013: 75-76).

Other groups picked up the Cabora Bassa topic, too. INFI started to address the construction project in Mozambique in May 1969 and the local SDS group at the University of Heidelberg became heavily involved in May 1970, naming their frequent informational journal after the construction site (*Cabora Bassa-Blatt*) and opening an exhibition about the project (Seibert, 2008: 80).

The events that followed in Heidelberg, in the summer of 1970, eventually led to nationwide attention for the protest against Cabora Bassa. In June 1970 a development aid conference was held in Heidelberg. Many solidarity and 'Third World' groups criticized the concept of development aid and considered it to be based on asymmetrical North-South relationships, racism and neo-colonialism. The local protest groups in Heidelberg organized a protest march with 600 to 1,000 participants that tried to reach the venue of the conference but was stopped by the police. Stones and paint bombs were thrown and scuffles with police officers broke out. Later that day, the police headquarters was attacked and the local SDS group was subsequently banned by the government of the federal state of Baden-Württemberg. The forced shutdown of the Heidelberg SDS – which had been one of the last active local groups after the dissolution of the federal SDS in March 1970 – led to massive public protests in Heidelberg, with 10,000 people on the streets. The crowd demanded the revocation of the ban on the local SDS, the unrestricted right to protest and an end to the Cabora Bassa project ("Aufhebung des SDS-Verbots. Für uneingeschränkte Demonstrationsfreiheit. Nieder mit Cabora Bassa"). The protesters in Heidelberg were joined by solidarity rallies in West Berlin, Munich, Stuttgart, Frankfurt, Mainz, Gießen, Marburg, Tübingen, Bonn, Aachen, Göttingen, Hannover and Hamburg. The public protests successfully linked domestic and international matters and the broad press coverage informed the whole country about the opposition to Cabora Bassa (*apud* Seibert, 2008: 84 ff.).

The early 1970s witnessed rising integration and cooperation between local solidarity groups and the genesis of nationwide networks. In many cases activists were interested not only in the Portuguese colonies, but also in the situation in Apartheid South Africa and Rhodesia, thus combining regions and topics as well as audiences and activities (*ibidem*: 77). Following the example of other European solidarity groups like the Dutch *Angola Comité*, active since 1961, the *Deutsches Komitee für Angola, Guinea Bissao und Mosambik* (AGM-Komitee, German Committee for Angola, Guinea and

Mozambique) was formed in Bonn on 4 June 1971.⁶ The network wanted to unite different solidarity groups in order to develop more efficient and coordinated actions, and became one of the most active and visible protest groups. It was well connected to the FRG's political sphere, due to the participation of such SPD Members of Parliament as Hans Matthöfer. In its founding manifesto, the AGM-Komitee mentioned two main goals: to inform the German public about the situation in Portugal's African colonies and to organize humanitarian help for the African population, especially in health care and education (Lopes, 2014: 68; *Afrika heute*, 1971a: 254-255, 1971b: 275-276).

Even organizations that were traditionally conservative and on friendly terms with late European colonial powers, like the *Deutsche Afrika-Gesellschaft* (German Africa Society), saw a remarkable shift in their position. During the 1960s, the *Deutsche Afrika-Gesellschaft* had been dominated by conservative members like the CDU-politician and president of the federal West German parliament Eugen Gerstenmeier, who had a clear pro-Portuguese stance and justified Portugal's colonial policy in public (Fonseca, 2007: 148 ff.). But in the early 1970s, more and more young academics – many of them members of VAD – joined the Society and changed its political position. The journal *Afrika heute* (Africa today) in particular, which received federal funding, was influenced by sympathizers of the liberation movements and began to voice criticism against the governments in Lisbon and Bonn in nearly every issue. The FRG's SPD-led government was very displeased that a publication backed by federal funds had become a vocal critic, and reduced its financial support by early 1973 (Lopes, 2014: 68, 73; Brahm, 2009: 7).

In late 1971, several collaborating groups developed the idea of holding a public trial to raise awareness for the situation in Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau and generate support for the solidarity movements' demands: Stop all West German military aid to Portugal, cancel export credits for the Cabora Bassa project, offer asylum to Portuguese draft evaders, provide support for the liberation movements, and discontinue West German-Portuguese economic relations. The idea of organizing a 'Portugal Tribunal' was inspired by the 'Russel Tribunal', held in the United States in

⁶ Apparently an *Angola-Komitee* had already been founded in Bonn in March 1964 by students with connections to VDS and the World University Service. The group was supported by members of the West German parliament and had links to the Roman Catholic Church. At this point in time the Foreign Ministry did not consider it a threat but rather hoped that it would help to improve relations with independent African countries. It remains unclear whether there was a connection between the Angola-Committee of 1964 and the AGM-Committee of 1971. See PA AA (1964b).

1967 to publicly protest the Vietnam War. The West German Ministry of Foreign Affairs feared that a big display of public opposition could damage relations with Portugal, which were already strained at this point (Lopes, 2014: 68-69). Staff of the Foreign Ministry in Bonn asked the Federal Ministry of the Interior to ban the event and demanded additional security measures for institutions like the Portuguese embassy (PA AA, 1972).

Because the event was protected under the freedom of assembly provided for by the West German Constitution, the Ministry of the Interior was not able to prevent it from taking place. But the West German authorities created serious problems for the organizers by sabotaging their search for a venue in Bonn. The 'Portugal Tribunal' had to be postponed several times and relocated to the city of Dortmund until a venue and a date could be found. The Foreign Ministry furthermore planned to minimize the public impact of the tribunal by collaborating with journalists who were sympathetic to the government's position. Attendance by several African participants who were travelling to West Germany via Belgium was prevented by not issuing visas to them. Meanwhile, activists from more than 40 cities in West Germany and of diverse political backgrounds had joined the preparations for the event, creating numerous organizational problems. The multitude of political and ideological positions – from Christian and development aid to solidarity and human rights, to pacifism, anti-imperialism and communism – made it difficult to reach common ground on basic decisions. In July 1972, the idea of holding a tribunal was dropped and the event was renamed 'Congress for the Freedom of Angola, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique'. On 13 January 1973, more than 700 participants from 80 different organizations opened the congress in Dortmund, after 1,000 protesters had marched through the city. Delegates from the MPLA, FRELIMO and the Dutch *Angola Comité* spoke to the audience. But the main focus of the conference was West Germany's support for Portugal. Eventually, the outcome of the event was hampered by ideological infighting. Some activists who had been involved in the organization from early on criticized the congress for having been taken over by groups closely affiliated with the *Deutsche Kommunistische Partei* (DKP, West German Communist Party), while others complained that the overall message put too much emphasis on West Germany's domestic situation instead of the conditions in Africa and the capitalist system and Western imperialism in general (Lopes, 2014: 69 ff.). The behavior of the West German authorities, however, showed how repressively the SPD-led government reacted to domestic criticism. The efforts to sabotage the event show the importance the FRG's government placed on West German-Portuguese relations.

Although a good relationship with Lisbon was a focal point of its foreign policy, the SPD government itself tried to approach the liberation movements. They did not expect the Portuguese colonial rule to last much longer and criticism from members of the party's left-wing like development minister Erhard Eppler kept growing. Again, the *Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung* was considered to be the right tool to create a 'back channel', as the SPD government could not do this officially due to the formal relations with Portugal (Seibert, 2008: 83; *Der Spiegel*, 1970: 32). In 1970, the FES' deputy director Heinz Kühn, travelled to Southern Africa to offer humanitarian and material support to various Southern African liberation movements. At the same time, the SPD government declared that it would continue its cooperation with Portugal, in order to ease rising tensions with Lisbon. FRELIMO outright refused to meet with Kühn, whereas the MPLA accepted his offer and received a shipment of food and medical supplies in late 1970 (*Der Spiegel*, 1970: 29 ff.; Vinnai, 2007: 38 ff.). In August 1973, a FRELIMO delegation was invited to West Germany by the FES for talks, but returned without results. Further shipments for the MPLA were planned in 1974, but were never realised due to the revolution in Portugal. Overall the results of the FES's aid and 'good will' campaign were limited, because of the two-pronged strategy of West Germany's social democrats and their unwillingness to stop supporting Portugal (Vinnai, 2007: 38 ff.; Lopes, 2014: 222 ff.).

Some solidarity groups maintained direct contact with the liberation movements through their information offices abroad, and in the early 1970s material support was organized on a regular basis. In the wake of the Dortmund congress in early 1973, a nationwide campaign collected funds to help build a hospital run by the MPLA and put together shipments of school materials as well as medical and transport equipment. The broad campaigns against Cabora Bassa helped to raise donations among the public, as mostly Maoist and communist groups turned to organizing material support (Lopes, 2014: 71; Kuhn, 2013: 77). Material aid showed clear ideological preferences. Maoist groups in West Germany tended to support FRELIMO and occasionally FNLA and UNITA (*União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola*, National Union for the Total Independence of Angola) because of their ties to Beijing. The MPLA, on the other hand, was considered to be a partner of the West German communist party, DKP, and of communist East Germany and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). However, FRELIMO, MPLA and South Africa's ANC (African National Congress) were also supported by 'nonaligned' trade unions, as well as by Christian and other solidarity groups (Kössler and Melber, 2002: 114).

In the years 1971 to 1973, the West German solidarity movement with Portugal's African colonies reached its peak. When the Lusophone countries in Africa finally gained independence, in 1974 and 1975, the activity of most solidarity groups came to a sudden end. Their support had focused on the struggle leading up to independence. The social transformation and construction of independent nations sparked less interest among West German activists, and many solidarity groups saw a decline in the number of members and activities. Others moved on and changed their focus to Apartheid South Africa (Kössler and Melber, 2002: 124-125; Seibert, 2008: 87 ff.). Some activists, however, carried on, and a few groups are still active today, as is the case with ISSA, for example. Eventually, in 1975, two members of the AGM-Komitee participated in Mozambique's official independence festivities (Seibert, 2008: 95 ff.).

New Kinds of Protest?

As a first field of activity, most solidarity movements started out with the basic work of information and education. 'Third World', left-wing and student groups produced a multitude of leaflets, wall newspapers and self-edited journals to inform the public about the liberation struggle in Portugal's African colonies and West German involvement. Only a few of these self-edited print publications illustrated with photographs, maps and self-drawn cartoons are preserved today, but those that are clearly show the solidarity groups' educational role and critical position.⁷ Furthermore, speeches and writings by leaders of the liberation movements like Amílcar Cabral (PAIGC) or Eduardo Mondlane (FRELIMO) were translated, to emphasize their political goals (Seibert, 2008: 77). Overall, the military and economic cooperation between West Germany and Portugal was a focal topic of these information campaigns. Most of the public relations efforts aimed at generating outrage about West German support for Portugal's war effort and the situation in the colonies. The plan was to influence public opinion so as to force the government to change its policy. Activists tried to

⁷ Since these materials are rarely found in traditional archives, there are a number of non-profit organizations devoted to the preservation of printed material of West Germany's left-wing 'non-parliamentarian opposition', such as *Materialien zur Analyse von Opposition* (Material for Analysis of Opposition – <https://www.mao-projekt.de/>) or *Archiv für alternatives Schriftgut* (Archive for alternative documents – <http://afas-archiv.de/>), both accessed on 19.06.2018. See, for example, *Zeitung zur Proklamation der Republik Guinea-Bissau* (Journal for the proclamation of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau), published in January 1974 by *Freiburger Komitee zur Unterstützung des Befreiungskampfes in den portugiesischen Kolonien* (Freiburg's Committee for the Support of the Liberation Struggle in Portugal's Colonies), accessed on 19.06.2018, at https://www.mao-projekt.de/BRD/BW/FRE/Freiburg_1974_Guinea_Bissau.shtml.

approach policy makers directly as well. In mid-1973, the AGM-Komitee published information material about a government-authorized business deal with a Portuguese ammunition factory. At the same time, the group wrote to the Foreign Ministry, and in the absence of a reply it called upon the Federal President of the FRG to complain about the deal (Lopes, 2014: 72).

Activists tried to create international pressure on the FRG's government too. In early 1973, groups involved in the organization of the 'Portugal Tribunal' publicly called upon African states to vote against West Germany joining the United Nations if its government did not stop all arms deliveries to Portugal and Apartheid South Africa (Lopes, 2014: 71).

Although overshadowed by contemporary events, the Western German solidarity movement with Southern Africa has to be considered a mass phenomenon. The mass marches in support of African liberation movements were not something experienced in major cities alone. Even smaller university cities saw protest marches with 1,000 participants and developed lively activist settings. Among such hubs of solidarity were cities like Bielefeld, Bremen, Frankfurt, Freiburg, Göttingen, Hamburg, Marburg, Münster, Tübingen and, of course, Heidelberg and West Berlin (Kössler and Melber, 2002: 108 ff.).

It has been shown that the solidarity movement consisted of groups and activists from diverse backgrounds. In Frankfurt, for example, the campaign against Cabora Bassa brought together left-wing students and engineers from the electronics company Siemens who opposed the participation of their employer in this project (Seibert, 2008: 85).

Economic relations in general, and Cabora Bassa in particular, led to the development of new and creative forms of protest. In the early 1970s, activists called to boycott companies participating in the construction project. Whereas a campaign in the Netherlands to boycott coffee from Angola successfully led to a stop of imports by the union of Dutch coffee roasters in 1972, the boycotts in West Germany failed because the targeted companies were too big and the movement itself too small. Although the boycott was not successful, the campaign attracted attention and a broad media echo. Siemens took this very seriously and sent a five-page letter to every signatory of the call to boycott (*ibidem*: 85 ff.). Mail service was also used to carry the protest to the directors of West German companies doing business with Portugal, when activists called for the sending of thousands of protest postcards (Kuhn, 2013: 76).

Opposition also emerged in the field of culture. The local SDS in Frankfurt, for example, awarded an alternative Peace Prize to Amílcar Cabral at the 1968 Frankfurt Book Fair (Seibert, 2008: 77). The writer

and painter Peter Weiss wrote a play about the colonial war and West German cooperation with Portugal. *Gesang vom Lusitanischen Popanz* (The Lusitanian Bogeyman) was premiered in Stockholm and became the most successful play at Stockholm's Scala Theatre in 1967. By 1974 the play had been performed in 14 West German cities and in two venues in East Germany, as well as in theaters in Switzerland, Austria, Norway, USA, Uruguay, Italy, Argentina, Hungary, Egypt, Iraq and Yugoslavia. Weiss explicitly picked the theme of West German economic and military support for Portugal and the West German airbase that was built in Portugal in exchange (Weiss, 1974: 57 ff., 65 ff., 82). In May 1973, F.A.U.S.T., a Frankfurt-based street theater group, toured through West Germany with *Erdnussparty* (Peanut Party), a play about Guinea-Bissau, where peasants were forced to grow peanuts as a cash crop for the colony's economy (Lopes, 2014: 72; Klaiber and Elschner, n. d.).

One of the most successful actions of opposition involving private West German businesses was the 'shareholder protest' of the anti-Cabora Bassa campaign. In March 1971, at the Siemens shareholder meeting in Munich, a group of students and young academics unfolded posters that condemned the company's involvement in the construction project as support for the Portuguese colonial rule in Mozambique. The activists had bought company shares so that they could use their rights as shareholders to challenge the company's management in public. In June 1971, similar incidents took place at the AEG-Telefunken meeting in Berlin and at the shareholder conferences of Brown, Boveri & Cie. and Hochtief in July 1971. In some cases the police were called to the scene to remove the activists. Most shareholders present at the meetings were outraged about the disturbance and sided with the companies' surprised managements. Nevertheless, the protest had a wide media impact (*Der Spiegel*, 1971a: 29ff., 1971b). In 1972, activists repeated the shareholder protest. At Siemens they were allowed to voice their concerns but were cut off by the management. The ensuing occupation of the stage was disbanded by the police and once again the West German media reported widely (Seibert, 2008: 87 ff.). In the early 1970s, some West German companies began to worry about the harm being done to their reputation due to the massive public protest and even approached Lisbon's colonial propagandists for help to justify the Cabora Bassa project (Lopes, 2014: 75 ff.).

In rare instances the protest turned violent. As explained above, in June 1970 the crowd reacted with violence against the repression of their protest march in Heidelberg. In most cases the violence was directed at property that was deemed symbolic of the Portuguese regime or of West German

capitalism. On 30 January 1969, a group of 200 protesters threw stones at the Portuguese consulate in Cologne during a demonstration. In June 1970, during a protest against Cabora Bassa in Hamburg, stones were thrown at an AEG-Telefunken information center (Lopes, 2014: 67).

By far the most sensational of all was the violent protest aimed at military supplies destined for Portugal. In the late 1960s, the Blohm+Voss shipyard in Hamburg built vessels for the Portuguese navy. Although West German authorities claimed that the corvettes under construction were part of NATO military cooperation for the defense of Portugal's European shores, they were clearly designed for service in the African colonies. In April 1969, the MPLA published a letter that demanded the shipyard to stop construction. Students at the University of Hamburg protested and mobilized the shipyard workers. Some workers questioned the moral background of the deal with Portugal and were subsequently fired. In the early hours of 13 October 1969, an anonymous caller warned the foreman at the dockyard that a bomb had been planted on the corvette João Coutinho. Shortly thereafter, an explosion rocked the ship's hull. Nobody was hurt and the vessel sustained only minor damage, but it took the shipyard an additional eight months until it could be delivered. The perpetrator was never identified and the João Coutinho served as expected, first in Angola and later in Mozambique (Lopes, 2014: 74; Seibert, 2008: 93 ff.).

Conclusion

This article has followed the development of West Germany's solidarity movement and analyzed its protest techniques. It shows that the solidarity movement consisted of a heterogeneous group of activists from diverse political and social backgrounds. International solidarity in West Germany started as a project of individual student activists and small groups and eventually became the mobilizing factor for a larger group. The forms of protest ranged from information campaigns to armed sabotage. Activists were especially driven by the FRG's cooperation with Lisbon and the economic relations of West German companies with Portugal and its colonies. One of the main goals of the protest was to influence the policy of the government in Bonn. With the anti-Cabora Bassa campaign and the 'Portugal Tribunal', the years 1971 to 1973 were the peak of public protest in West Germany. But the activities of the solidarity groups rapidly declined after independence in 1974/1975 (Seibert, 2008: 87, 97). Although the movement was a mass phenomenon and at times received wide media coverage, it was never a high priority in West German public consciousness. In the broader context of the social and internationalist movement of the time, it consisted

mostly of a group of specialists and enthusiasts who focused on the liberation struggle in Africa (Lopes, 2014: 91; Kössler and Melber, 2002: 107). However, compared to other West European countries, protests in West Germany began to focus on Portuguese colonialism before they emerged in places like Britain, for example, where protests only gained momentum after the visit of Portugal's prime minister Marcello Caetano in 1973 and the dissemination of the reports on the Wiriyamu massacre (Lopes, 2014: 73). An obvious reason for this fact was the close cooperation between the Portuguese and West German governments, which led West German activists to get involved.

For some activists, the independence and further development of the former colonies brought a bitter realization about themselves. Against the backdrop of the civil wars in Angola and Mozambique, the editors of *Blätter des Informationszentrums Dritte Welt* (Papers of the Information Center Third World) in Freiburg wrote in 1978: "Our hope that free societies without exploitation and alienation could be built was proved wrong. [...] The hope that we have invested in the people of Indochina and the Portuguese colonies was unrealistic because we turned them into proxies of our own longing for liberation." (*apud* Seibert, 2008: 96-97). This awareness, combined with the increasing Cold War entanglement of post-independence civil conflicts and the decrease of open West German involvement, may have been reasons why active solidarity declined so rapidly after independence. Further research about this is necessary. Many activists from West Germany identified with the liberation struggles and saw the wars in Africa and their own situation in Europe as a common global struggle against imperialism. This raises questions about the relations between solidarity and liberation movements. How did the African liberation movements view solidarity? Did the Western solidarity movement actually have an effect on the decolonization process itself? Further investigation will also be necessary to ascertain whether there was in fact an egalitarian exchange, as imagined by Western activists, or whether cooperation was rather shaped by the global North-South power structures that the movements sought to overcome (Kuhn, 2013: 80).

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Solidariedade da Alemanha Ocidental e a luta pela descolonização da África Lusófona

A violenta descolonização do império colonial português em África não foi travada apenas nos campos de batalha de Angola, Moçambique e Guiné-Bissau. Uma parte importante da luta dos movimentos de libertação africanos foi a procura de apoio político e material, que receberam de países africanos independentes, Estados socialistas e numerosos atores não estatais no Ocidente. Como parte de uma onda de internacionalismo mais ampla, surgiu também na Alemanha Ocidental um movimento de solidariedade em apoio aos movimentos de libertação nas colónias africanas de Portugal. Isto foi parcialmente uma resposta à estreita cooperação do governo da Alemanha Ocidental com o regime do Estado Novo. Este artigo apresenta uma visão geral do desenvolvimento e dos participantes dos grupos de solidariedade da Alemanha Ocidental e suas atividades durante a década de 1960 e início da década de 1970.

Palavras-chave: Alemanha Ocidental; descolonização; internacionalismo; guerra colonial portuguesa; movimentos de libertação africanos; solidariedade internacional.

Les mouvements de solidarité ouest-allemands et la lutte pour la décolonisation de l'Afrique lusophone

La décolonisation violente de l'empire colonial portugais en Afrique ne s'est pas déroulée uniquement sur les champs de bataille de l'Angola, du Mozambique et de la Guinée-Bissau. La recherche d'un soutien politique et matériel émanant de pays africains indépendants, d'États socialistes et de nombreux acteurs non étatiques occidentaux constituait un élément important de la lutte des mouvements de libération africains. Faisant partie d'une vague internationale plus large, un mouvement de solidarité en faveur des mouvements de libération dans les colonies africaines du Portugal est également apparu en Allemagne de l'Ouest. Cela répondait en partie à la coopération étroite des gouvernements Ouest-allemands avec le régime de l'*Estado Novo* (le Nouvel État de Salazar) à Lisbonne. Cet article donne un aperçu général du développement et des participants aux groupes de solidarité ouest-allemands et de leurs activités au cours des années 1960 et au début des années 1970.

Mots-clés: Allemagne de l'Ouest; décolonisation; guerre coloniale portugaise; internationalisme; mouvements de libération africains; solidarité internationale.

