

Report from Bonn by Rainer Apel

Perfidious Albion

Some among the German elites are breaking the taboo on publicly exposing British dirty tricks.

German politicians and media commentators have long been extremely reluctant to criticize the British in any way, shape, or form. Even former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's nasty remarks, in her memoirs, about the alleged danger of German reunification, provoked scarcely a word of protest on the part of Germany's media and the political parties.

This is the result of the Allied "re-education" of Germans in the immediate postwar period, and of the fact that many influential journalists got their start within the British occupation zone, e.g., in Hamburg, or were trained by journalists who subscribed to British liberal ideology.

Although publicly, the Germans have not made much of President Clinton's June 1994 declaration of the end of the Anglo-American "special relationship" and the beginning of a new era of U.S.-German cooperation, the mere fact Clinton is generally pro-German, while his predecessor, George Bush, was not, gives the Germans a certain amount of leeway to—as Chancellor Helmut Kohl put it—"even be in a position to risk some controversy with our dear European partners."

While criticism of the British role is still the exception, some recent events would have been unimaginable before 1994.

One example is in the sensitive domain of secret intelligence: On Jan. 22, the Munich-based weekly *Focus* leaked that three agents of a Nuremberg-based undercover unit of German foreign intelligence (BND) were caught selling "explosive data" on the

Russian military to a British MI-6 (foreign intelligence) agent. The affair created a big headache for the BND. *Focus* wrote: "Do we blame the friendly Secret Intelligence Service? Finally, BND chief Porzner flew to London and asked his British counterparts to drop such James Bond operations in the future. As a sign of goodwill, the German Federal Prosecutor dropped plans to put the English spy on trial." The Hamburg weekly *Der Spiegel* followed with a similar report, even naming the MI-6 official as Rose Sharpe. The British media were quite embarrassed by this leak.

In another unprecedented move, Johann G. Reissmüller, one of the chief editors of the daily *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, used a front-page editorial on Jan. 22 to attack the British media's leading international role in a German-bashing campaign around an alleged "neo-Nazi" hand behind the Jan. 19 arson attack that killed 10 Africans in Lübeck. Reissmüller singled out the London *Times* and the *Guardian*. On Jan. 20, the latter claimed that the Lübeck incident was the "worst racist inferno in postwar Germany." By Jan. 21, the Lübeck police investigators had already found evidence that the lethal fire was not set by neo-Nazis, but rather by a Lebanese resident of the building. The media stories were thus pure propaganda.

Then, on Jan. 24, Bavarian Gov. Edmund Stoiber attacked London's economic warfare methods in an interview with the daily *Frankfurter Rundschau*: "For me, it is a crucial point that Great Britain also has to join the [European Union] Social Protocol.

We cannot allow an individual country in Europe to say: 'Let's open the borders, but we won't join the Social Protocol,' and that is how we are now luring German firms into England: Welcome, Siemens, BMW, you'll only have half the labor costs here. Why? Of course we don't have the same costs for labor, since we don't pay for health insurance costs. And in Germany, the social welfare State is overburdened by this."

Anti-Kohl British circles took revenge a week later, when the notoriously Germanophobic media, such as the *Daily Telegraph* and *Daily Mail*, distorted a speech given by the chancellor on Feb. 2 at the University of Louvain, Belgium, in such a way as to claim that he had threatened all of Europe with war, early in the coming century.

The German response to these allegations came in the form of another exposure of certain peculiarities in Britain's secret intelligence. The *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, which often serves as a semi-official mouthpiece of German government views, voiced skepticism on Feb. 12 about London readings of the latest "IRA" bombings. When the IRA claimed responsibility following the first bomb explosion, "everything was almost too authentic to be true," correspondent Bernhard Heimrich wrote.

Heimrich revealed that "in its telephone contact with the authorities, the IRA customarily inserts a code word, which only it and the enemy know. The system of arranging this code is one of the best-guarded secrets of this war in the dark." Britain's secret services know more than they would like to tell the public, Heimrich added (see article, p. 52).

These cases indicate, however, that there are also some Germans who "know more than they would like to tell the public"—so far, at least.