

Maîtretrier, recommended as well.⁸⁸⁴ Olympio, still attached to his policy to demilitarize and decolonise the security forces, decided, however, to maintain the separation of the army and the police.

The Togo-Ghana relations, already at a low point, deteriorated even further when a series of bombings rocked Ghana in the second half of 1962. On 1 August 1962, a grenade attack on Nkrumah occurred in Kulungugu, a village in northern Ghana, killing several people and leaving Nkrumah with a shrapnel wound in his back. On 9 September 1962, about 200 yards from Nkrumah's official residence, at Flagstaff House, a bomb exploded, killing 3 and injuring 60.⁸⁸⁵ On 20 September 1962, two bombs exploded in Accra, killing 3 and injuring 100.⁸⁸⁶ On 6 November 1962, in Chorkor, Accra, two explosions were caused by grenades, which according to the Ghanaian investigation were of French manufacturing.

The Ghanaian Government drew up an official note of protest, accusing Togo to harbour the men whose attacks have caused up to that point 21 deaths and 385 injured people. Yet, since the Togo-Ghana relations were so bad, the Nkrumah-Government had to ask the British ambassador in Togo to send the letter to the Togolese Government. Yet, the latter did not accept the letter, stating that the Ghanaian Government must direct itself to the French embassy – the official representation of Togo in Ghana at the time.⁸⁸⁷ On 7 January 1963, another bomb exploded in Accra, which according to the Ghanaian authorities was supposedly of “French origin, and of a type supplied to a neighbouring territory in West Africa.”⁸⁸⁸

6.9.2 Assassination of Olympio (1963)

At this point, the Americans, the British, and even the French were seriously concerned about Olympio's security and had been trying for some time to persuade him to take better security measures for his person.⁸⁸⁹ Yet, Olympio had never bothered to do so. A fatal mistake that would cost him his life. Three theories circulated in the subsequent period about those behind the murder of Olympio and the exact course of events. Since Skinner has already discussed these theories in detail, they will only be repeated very briefly here.⁸⁹⁰

The first, on which subsequent political events developed, emphasised the role of disaffected but essentially apolitical Togolese ex-soldiers, who overthrew the Olympio

884 TNA (London), FO 371/161755, *Army and police remain separate*, 1962, Confidential Letter, O. Kemp to Barbara Miller, 5 October 1962.

885 *The Times*, “News in Brief,” 11 September 1962

886 *The Times*, “100 Injured in Accra,” 21 September 1962

887 PRAAD (Accra), RG 17/1/325, *Note of Protest to the Govt of Togo*, de Freitas to Nkrumah, 7 December 1962.

888 *The Times*, “Four Killed by Accra Bomb,” 10 January 1963, p. 7.

889 TNA (London), FO 371/167647, *Assassination of President Olympio: coup de'etat*, 1963, Secret Letter 0214/24/1G, British Embassy, Abidjan, to FO, 24 January 1963, p. 2; TNA (London), FO 371/155660, *Political relations: Commonwealth countries.*, Confidential Letter ACC.203/278/4, B.A. Flack to H.R.E. Brown, 20 June 1961, p. 2.

890 Skinner, “West Africa's First Coup”

regime to secure better terms with an intimidated and therefore more accommodating successor government. The second theory, popularised by the publication of François Verschave's *Françafrique*,⁸⁹¹ assumes complicity of the French Ambassador Henri Mazoyer and the French Commander of the Togolese Gendarmerie, Georges Maîtrier, in the ex-soldiers' actions, and invokes France's longstanding and actual preference for a government under Nicholas Grunitzky over Olympio. The third theory placed the blame squarely on Ghana. Supporters of this theory cited the hostile public communication between the two presidents and Nkrumah's statement that Togo could become Ghana's seventh region. Skinner, however, opposes a Ghana-centric approach to historical research on the 1963 coup, for regardless of whether the 'military/unideological' explanation was valid or accurate, it seemed compelling for most stakeholders at the time and therefore formed the basis for the future development of the region. Without emphasizing the 'military/unideological' theory as more valid than the others, purely from the interest of the security-focused perspective applied here, the developments relevant in this explanation shall be portrayed.

The return of the soldiers

With the end of the Algerian war, the French colonial armies and legionnaires were demobilized. Yet, even before Togo's independence, it was clear that returning veterans would pose a problem. When a veterans organization was to be formed in 1958, Olympio argued that the returnees should fall under the care of the French and not his government because, after all, they had fought in Algeria and Indochina for France and not for Togo.⁸⁹² The veterans, on the other hand, demanded to be recruited into the Togolese army, which Olympio refused in view of the scarce state resources and the promised UN intervention in the event of a conflict with neighbouring Ghana. On the one hand, Olympio did not want to employ the veterans, because in his eyes they were fighting against peoples who wanted exactly the same thing as Togo: independence. On the other hand, Olympio's austerity policy did not allow for any further burden on the state budget one way or another. With the defence agreements in mind, Olympio declined to tax Togo's limited resources by absorbing the unemployed veterans into the military establishment. The disruption of the important trade with Ghana coming on top of Olympio's budget balancing, deflationary policy, and the reduction of French subsidies led to unemployment and hardship. Similar to the conditions leading up to the Accra riots in 1948, the Olympio-government earned the indignation of the former soldiers, who would later take Olympio's life.

The mercenaries of Togolese origin returning from the Algerian war, who had been discharged from the French army, were recruited mainly from the northern Kabré population group, including the 26-year-old Étienne Gnassingbé, who saw action in Indochina (1953–55) and Algeria (1956–61). He repatriated to Lomé in September 1962. History is unlikely to remember the mercenaries with sympathy, but they were a desperate body of men sitting around unemployed. The Togolese military leaders, Sergeant Emmanuel Bodjollé and the Commander of the Togolese Guard, Kléber Dadjo, repeatedly

891 Verschave, *La Françafrique*.

892 ANOM (Aix-en-Provence), 1AFFPOL/2217/8-B, *Anciens combattants*, Letter N°720/RI, Governor of Overseas France to High Commissioner of the French Republic, 3 December 1958, p. 1.

tried to persuade Olympio to increase the budget so as to recruit more former soldiers of the French army returning to the country.⁸⁹³ He was eventually persuaded by Maïtrier to add 100 men to the army, but even then, he planned to bypass the French Army contingent. He told the Bodjollé delegation: "I shall use unemployed school-leavers, or people who fought for independence and not you mercenaries who were killing our Algerian friends when we were fighting for independence."⁸⁹⁴ On 24 September 1962, Olympio refused the personal request of Étienne Gnassingbé to join the Togolese military.⁸⁹⁵ On 7 January 1963, Dadjo again submitted a written request of former soldiers to join the Togolese Army,⁸⁹⁶ which Olympio reportedly tore up.⁸⁹⁷ The veterans of the 1963 coup were essentially non-political – a reason why Olympio underrated the threat they posed.⁸⁹⁸ Despite the alleged uncovering of various conspiracies by the Ghanaian Government, the Olympio-government thought a military coup not likely. In the end, it was barely 30 soldiers who mutinied under Seargent Bodjollé's command.

The Night of the Coup

It was only a few days after this tongue-lashing that Olympio's house was surrounded. Since a presidential guard did not yet exist and Olympio did not consider it necessary to increase his personal security, only two police officers guarded the house. The putschists tried to force their way into the house through the front door. Since the residence directly bordered the terrain of the US Embassy in the rear, Olympio escaped out the back of the house and jumped over the wall into the compound of the US Embassy, where he hid in or under a car. The putschists did not venture onto the property, but apparently observed it closely from the wall. As day dawned, Olympio left his hiding place to escape into the door of the US embassy, which was only 4 to 5 meters away. However, he found the door locked and was shot by the coup plotters. It is still a mystery and a wide field for speculation, who exactly fired the fatal shots. At the time, there was general agreement in Lomé that it was ex-sergeant Etienne Eyadema, who shot the six bullets into the President in the early morning of 13 January 1963.⁸⁹⁹

Bodjollé announced that the politically inexperienced junta would employ a civilian titular as head of state. In the end, Bodjollé appointed Grunitzky, who had the experience the junta needed and also the backing of the French, and to whom the veterans conveniently owed nothing.⁹⁰⁰

Several African countries condemned the attack and doubted the version of non-political military coup plotters. Due to the preceding conflict between Olympio and Nkrumah, the latter's government was suspected of being involved in the coup and

893 Kenneth W. Grundy, "The Negative Image of Africa's Military," *The Review of Politics* 30, no. 4 (1968): 437, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S003467050002516X>.

894 Warren Howe, "Togo: Four Years of Military Rule"

895 J. A. Lukas, "Olympio Doomed by Own Letter: Sergeant Whose Job Appeal Failed Slew Togo Head," *New York Times*, 22 January 1963, p. 3.

896 Lukas, "Olympio Doomed by Own Letter: Sergeant whose job appeal failed slew Togo Head," p. 3.

897 Grundy, "The Negative Image of Africa's Military," p. 437.

898 Warren Howe, "Togo: Four Years of Military Rule," p. 9.

899 Warren Howe, "Togo: Four Years of Military Rule," p. 9.

900 Warren Howe, "Togo: Four Years of Military Rule," p. 10.

assassination. The Nigerian Foreign Minister, Jaja Wachuku, hinted at such things immediately after the coup and made it clear that Nigeria would intervene if Ghanaian troops invaded Togo during the state crisis. Other accounts conflated the distinct versions of the coup. For example, the fugitive Minister of Interior, Théophile Mally, claimed in a letter to Secretary General U Thant that the French ambassador, Henri Mazoyer, and the French Commander of the Gendarmerie, Georges Maïtrier, had been accomplices in the coup, which was primarily organised by Ghana. Mally pleaded for a United Nations fact-finding mission and United Nations peacekeepers to maintain order.⁹⁰¹ Yet, despite the many assurances previously given to Olympio, this did not come to pass while the version of the coup by non-political veterans had gained the widest acceptance. Olympio's mistake was to put too much faith in his defence agreements and incur the wrath of the military.

6.9.3 Aftermath: Rise & Demise of The Togoland Liberation Movement

The assassination of Sylvanus Olympio, Togo's first president and former supporter of Ewe and Togoland reunification, in 1963, and the subsequent coup by Ghanaian security forces against Nkrumah, Ghana's first President, in 1966, were the first military coups in the newly independent states of the former French and British territories of West Africa. Both coups led to a period of instability in the region: After Olympio's assassination, the successor government under Nicholas Grunitzky was marked by instability, prompting another coup in 1967, which brought Gnassingbé Eyadéma to power. When two years later, in 1969, the National Liberation Council brought Kofi Busia to power in Ghana, he appointed none other than Senyo G. Antor, the former mouthpiece of the Togoland unification movement, as Ghana's ambassador to Togo from April 1970 to January 1972. When once again the Busia government was overthrown in 1972, Antor, together with Alex Odame and Kofi Dumoga, found themselves in exile in Togo.

Thus, it was no coincidence that in the same year, Togoland and Ewe nationalism revived as activists of the *Togoland Liberation Movement* (TOLIMO) attracted much attention. Since the unification movement had been refining its strategies of influencing international opinion for decades by now, in 1972, TOLIMO petitioned the Organisation for African Union for support in reversing the 1956 plebiscite that accorded British Togoland to Ghana, citing the fact that in Ghana the Ewe were among the poorer classes in the country, while in Togo they were the leaders in economic life.⁹⁰² Also, in 1976, TOLIMO sent a delegation to the United Nations General Assembly to inform international opinion on the latest developments regarding Togoland unification.⁹⁰³ The Eyadéma-regime supported TOLIMO, on the one hand, to prevent political unrest among the Ewe population and, on the other hand, because reunification would have promoted

901 UN ARMS (New York), S-0884-0021-11-00001, *Togo*, Cablegram ACR6/CT1460, Mally to Secretary-General, 31 January 1963.

902 Brown, "Borderline Politics in Ghana"

903 National Liberation Movement of Western Togoland, "Movement of Western Togoland (NLMWT)," *New York Times*, 15 October 1976