Men-at-Arms

OSPREY PUBLISHING

Armies in East Africa 1914–18

Abbott • Illustrated by Raffaele Ruggeri

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First published in Great Britain in 2002 by Osprey Publishing
Elms Court, Chapel Way, Botley, Oxford OX2 9LP, United Kingdom.
Email: **info@ospreypublishing.com**

ISBN 1 84176 489 2

Editor: Martin Windrow
Design: Alan Hamp
Index by Alan Rutter
Map by Peter Abbott
Originated by Magnet Harlequin, Uxbridge, UK
Printed in China through World Print Ltd.

FOR A CATALOGUE OF ALL BOOKS PUBLISHED BY
OSPREY MILITARY AND AVIATION PLEASE CONTACT:
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NN8 2FA, United Kingdom
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c/o MBI Publishing, 729 Prospect Avenue
Osceola, WI 54020, USA
Email: **info@ospreydirectusa.com**

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RIGHT **An impeccably uniformed Schutztruppe askari with the Reichsflagge used in all the German colonies. It was black over white over red, with a black Imperial eagle in the centre. A 1914 decision to replace the eagle with an individual colony device (German East Africa was to have a shield with the black-on-white eagle in chief and a white lion's head, full face, on red below) was never implemented. (Bundesarchiv, Koblenz)**

ARMIES IN EAST AFRICA 1914–18

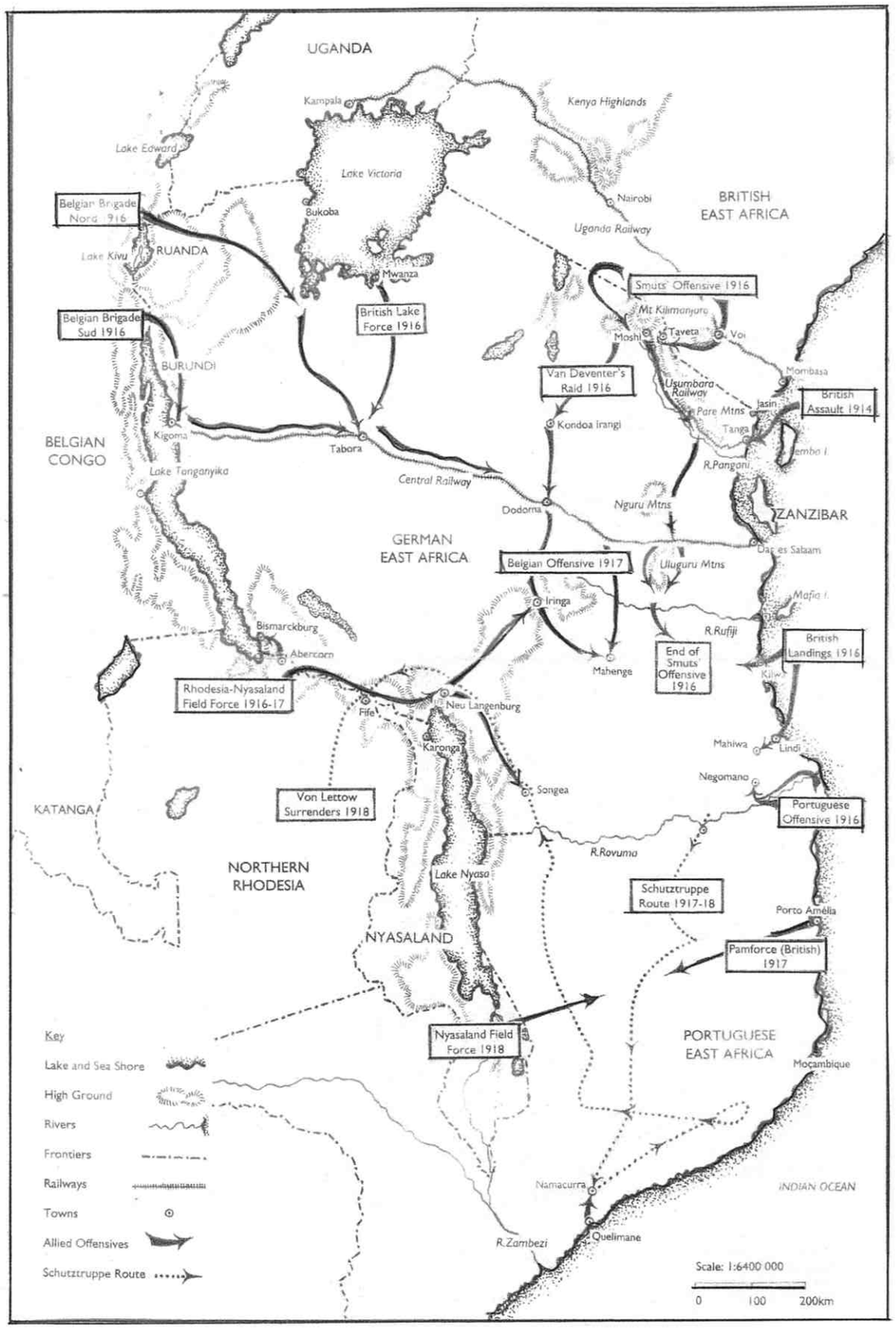
THE STRATEGIC BACKGROUND

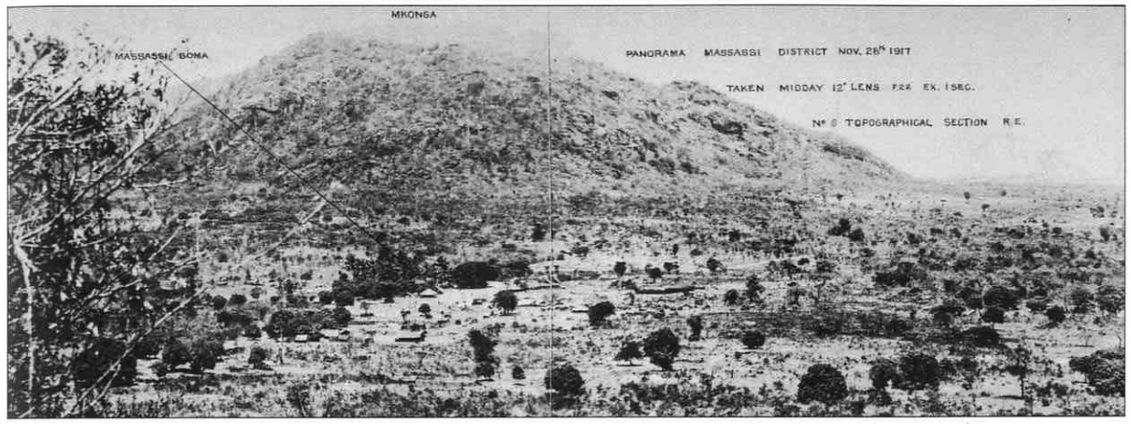
WHEN LIEUTENANT-COLONEL Paul Emil von Lettow Vorbeck stepped ashore in German East Africa in January 1914, nobody guessed that within five years he would not only be fêted by his own countrymen for being the last German commander in the field to lay down his arms, but also admired and respected by his British opponents much as Rommel was to be during World War II.

Von Lettow had arrived to take command of the military forces in German East Africa. This was the largest and most populous of Germany's colonies, a vast territory stretching from the Indian Ocean to the lakes and escarpments of Africa's Great Rift Valley. With the threat of war already looming over Europe and the colony surrounded by potential enemies, it needed a capable commander; and Von Lettow had the right background. The son of a Prussian general, he had General Staff training and overseas experience, having served against the Boxers in China, in combat against the Herero in German South-West Africa, and subsequently with the *Marinirkorps,* Germany's designated Imperial Reserve.

In the overall context of World War I, German East Africa was of little importance. Its harbours might shelter commerce raiders preying on shipping in the Indian Ocean, but they could be blockaded. In any case, one of Governor Schnee's first acts was to agree to a Royal Navy demand that they become open ports. The real reason for the campaign was the Anglo-Belgian calculation that victory in East Africa would provide them with additional colonial territory, or at least a bargaining counter when peace came to be negotiated. For his part Von Lettow saw clearly that Allied troops engaged in East Africa could not be deployed in more decisive theatres. It was thus his duty to engage and tie down as many as possible, for as long as possible. In this he was to succeed brilliantly.

The situation was complicated by the provisions of the Berlin Act of 1885. This had created a Central African Free Trade Area whose boundaries extended to the Indian Ocean and included the Belgian Congo along with British, German and much of Portuguese East Africa. By its provisions, the imperial powers bound themselves to respect the integrity of each others' territories, provided that these were declared to be neutral. This would have been very much to the advantage of the native inhabitants, and both the German and British civil governors were in favour of the agreement. However, their military commanders were not, and at first neither the British nor German governments took any steps to issue such a declaration. The Belgians did; but the Germans had already shown what they thought of solemn





This panoramic photograph shows terrain typical of the region: a rocky hill in the background, with a mix of trees, thorn scrub and grassland covering the plain below. It was easy to hide an entire column in this kind of landscape, especially when the grass was high. The South African Royal Engineers, who took this photograph, were a war-raised corps merged into the main South African Engineer Corps after the war. (South African War Museum)

declarations of neutrality by invading Belgium itself, so when they did make a belated attempt to get the Allies to agree to respect the neutrality of the African colonies, it stood no chance of success.

Strategically, German East Africa was in an impossible position. It was bounded to the north by British East Africa (now Kenya) and Uganda, which together equalled it in terms of military potential. To the west lay the Belgian Congo, with British Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland to the south-west. All these became hostile territories the moment war broke out. The Portuguese to the south were not only Britain's oldest allies but had a more immediate reason for hostility towards Germany: it was an open secret that the Germans coveted their territory, along with the Congo, and dreamed of seizing them to create a vast German Central Africa. The French had no frontier with German East Africa, but they were established in Madagascar, and (unlike the other imperial powers) had been building up their African forces with a view to employing them outside their home territories. In the event, the Portuguese did not enter the war until 1916, and the French had other uses for their African troops; but in 1914 both were threats which Von Lettow had to take into account.[1]

The Germans did have one initial advantage, inasmuch as they had the most efficient of the local forces, and one which was able to operate on interior lines. A swift thrust against the British Ugandan Railway, which ran parallel to the border and was not (as was its German equivalent) protected by a range of mountains, could have dealt a serious blow to the Allied effort. Unfortunately for Von Lettow, Governor Schnee was anxious to avoid any provocation and refused to let him concentrate the necessary troops until war had actually broken out. The Germans did then use the units they had on the northern front to capture Taveta, which commanded the only gap in the mountains; but it took time to bring up the rest of their troops, and by then the British had managed to get their own scattered forces into position and the opportunity had been lost.

1 In early 1915, in one of the least-known episodes of the war in Africa, France did in fact offer to help the British and Belgians, who were clearly not going to be ready to go over to the offensive for at least a year. Paris wanted Madagascar to send a Corps Mobile of four battalions to East Africa – and the governor actually raised two: one of Tirailleurs Malgaches, and a mixed unit made up of Europeans, Creoles, Senegalese and Comoriens – together with artillery and engineers. However, the British had no intention of allowing their chief imperial rival to gain a foothold in East Africa and rejected the offer. The French force was stood down in July 1915, and remains one of the minor 'might have beens' of history.

THE FORCES IN PLACE

Germany

Von Lettow commanded the *Schutztruppe* (Protective Force). Each of the larger German colonies fielded such a force, though they differed considerably in terms of their recruitment and even armament. A degree of standardisation had been laid down in 1895, but its main effect was to facilitate the cross-posting of white officers and NCOs. A General Staff proposal to create an integrated Colonial Army in 1905 had not been approved, and the different forces remained organisationally separate. Like the Navy and the Marinirkorps they were administered directly by the Imperial government rather than by one of the Reich's constituent kingdoms – as were most German units.

The basic unit was the *Feldkompagnie* (field company – the spelling did not officially change to *Kompanie* until 1929). In peacetime this numbered about 160 men, but in time of war it was expanded to 200, divided into three *Zuge* (platoons) of some 60 men each, plus a signals platoon and 20 bandsmen. The *askaris* (soldiers) and most of their NCOs were recruited within the colony, but there were between 16 and 20 German officers and NCOs per company – a notably high proportion compared with most colonial forces, and one which had much to do with the demonstrable effectiveness of the force. These whites were all members of the regular army. The minimum tour was two and a half years, but in practice many served for much longer, generally in the same colony. As a result, they were not only professionally competent but seasoned bush fighters as well. Interestingly, there were still two *effendis* or African officers on the company's strength – a hold-over from the early days when recruits had been sought as far afield as the Sudan and British South Africa.

The African askaris were armed with rifle and bayonet. Although the Kamerun and South-West African forces had been issued with the modern 7.92mm calibre Mauser Gewehr 98, there were only enough of these in German East Africa to equip the white ranks and six of the companies of askaris by the outbreak of war. The others still carried the Mauser M1871/84 Jägerbüsche, an 11mm breechloader with a tubular magazine in the forestock. Its black powder cartridge produced a cloud of smoke, putting the askaris at a disadvantage when facing troops armed with more modern rifles firing smokeless cartridges.

Each Feldkompagnie had two 7.92mm Maxim machine guns, and frequently one or two 37mm quick-firing light field guns as well. Both were commanded by white officers or NCOs, as was usual in the colonial armies of the time. There was no separate artillery corps, and no cavalry either, the ravages of the tsetse fly[2] ruling out the use of horses in most of the colony. This meant that supplies had to be carried on the heads of about 250 porters per company, many of whom (especially the gun carriers) were permanently assigned to the unit. There were usually a number of *ruga-ruga* or irregulars attached in addition; these lightly armed and highly mobile tribesmen undertook the scouting and screening missions in the absence of cavalry. The Feldkompagnie was thus as close to being an all-arms unit as the environment allowed.

Taken before or at the very start of the war, this photograph shows Schutztruppe Polizei in a defensive formation used by patrols ambushed by tribal warriors while moving in single file through thick vegetation. Note the white eagle badge on the fez cover, and the 'P' badge on the upper sleeve – cf Plate B. (Bundesarchiv)

There were 14 numbered Feldkompagnien (FK), stationed at Aruscha (1.FK), Iringa (2.FK), Lindi (3.FK), Dodoma (4.FK), Langenburg (5.FK), Udjidji (6.FK), Bukoba (7.FK), Tabora (8.FK), Urundi (9.FK), Dar-es-Salaam (10.FK), Ruanda (11.FK), Mahenge (12.FK), Koanda-Iringi (13.FK) and Mwansa (14.FK). There was also a depot with 154 men, giving an overall strength of some 260 German officers and NCOs and 2,472 askaris. The number of companies had actually been reduced after 1909 by the transfer of about 60 Germans and 2,000 experienced askaris to the *Polizeitruppe*: this formed a useful reserve, though Governor Schnee wanted to keep them separate.

Askaris of the Belgian Congo's Force Publique. Although this photograph was taken in 1916, they are still wearing the blue uniform used at the start of the war. Note the speciality badge on the collar of the bugler (sitting left foreground). The men have French Gras single-shot rifles, which armed nearly three-quarters of the askaris. Two battalions actually carried a mixture of Gras and Mausers, which must have complicated ammunition supply considerably. (Musée Royale de l'Armée)

Great Britain

The British units in the British East African Protectorate (now Kenya), Uganda and Nyasaland belonged to the King's African Rifles (KAR). This corps had been formed in 1901 from units already in existence in the different colonies. Technically, it was not a part of the regular army, since it was administered by the Colonial Office and not the War Office. However, this was merely because experience showed that the African colonies needed troops who were more lightly equipped and thus more mobile than regular infantry battalions (they were also less expensive, which appealed to the Treasury); it did not mean that they were less well armed, nor that their officers or white NCOs were in any way inferior. In fact these men were all seconded from the British regular army and, given Britain's long experience of warfare in the tropics, they brought with them a wealth of experience.

There had once been six KAR battalions, but three had since been disbanded. The remaining units had territorial links, the 1st Battalion being recruited in Nyasaland, the 3rd from British East Africa and the

2 *Glossina morsitans*. It spread a parasite from wild game – which seem immune to its effects – to horses, cattle and humans; the resultant 'sleeping sickness' was often fatal, particularly to horses.

Officers of 1/2nd Bn, King's African Rifles in field service dress. Three wear the KAR officers' distinctive 'kepi' and two the Wolseley helmet. The two on the left have the contemporary bush shirt, ancestor of the later bush jacket; the central man a darker khaki wool shirt; and the two on the right, askaris' smocks. Note the personal equipment, which seems to be a local modification based on the bandolier pattern. Battalion flashes seem to be worn on the left of caps and helmets. (National Army Museum, London)

4th from Uganda. For historical reasons the latter two had a proportion of Sudanese in their ranks, and the latter still had a number of Sudanese officers, who commanded the fourth platoon in each company; their ranks were *yuzbashi* (captain), *mulazim awal* (first lieutenant) and *mulazim tani* (second lieutenant).

The battalions were scattered over the region, 1st KAR having half its strength in the far north-east and 3rd KAR a company in Zanzibar. They had also been reduced in size, so that in 1914 there were only 21 companies in all. These companies were only half the size of the Feldkompagnien of Germany's Schutztruppe, since the KAR still followed the pre-1913 British system of having eight to a battalion. This meant that the force as a whole numbered a little less than the Schutztruppe. The actual establishment in 1914 was 70 British officers, three British NCOs and 2,325 Africans: the lower proportion of Europeans to Africans (3 per cent as opposed to nearly ten) was significant.

If that was a source of weakness, the armament helped to redress the balance somewhat, since the KAR askaris were all equipped with Lee Metford or long Lee Enfield rifles in 1914. They also had one Vickers machine gun per company (since these were half the size of the German companies, the overall ratio was comparable). There were no artillery units as such, though light guns could be attached to columns in the same way as in the Schutztruppe; and no cavalry other than one camel company from 3rd KAR which remained in the far north. There was no organised reserve, and carrier services were arranged on a more *ad hoc* basis than in the Schutztruppe.

Unlike Nyasaland, Northern Rhodesia to the south was administered by a Chartered Company, which was not entitled to maintain a military force as such. However, its armed constabulary resembled one in most respects (in fact, the British South Africa Police in neighbouring Southern Rhodesia was even given 'regimental' status and a colour in 1904). The Northern Rhodesia Police had been formed in 1911 by amalgamating the North-Eastern Rhodesia and Barotseland Constabularies. Although it had a small civil branch it was largely military in character, with a strength of some 450 askaris organised into five small companies along the same lines as the KAR. One significant difference was that each had two machine guns rather than one (the British South Africa Company had shown that it knew the value of these weapons by pioneering their use during the 1890s in Matabeleland). However, the guns were Maxim-Nordenfelts firing the old Martini-Henry .45in black powder cartridge. The rifles were Martini-Metfords, which did at least fire the smokeless .303in round, but were nevertheless single-shot weapons with all the extraction problems of their older parent. In this respect, therefore, the Northern Rhodesia Police were on a par with many of the Schutztruppe.

All in all, the local forces in British East and Central Africa were a fair match for their adversaries in terms of strength and weaponry. Their weakness stemmed from a 1910 decision by the Committee of Imperial Defence that their role in the event of a major war was to be limited to internal security. Preparing them for more would have involved bringing the companies together periodically for battalion exercises, something the straitened colonial budgets did not permit. As a result, the British forces were skilled in small unit actions against tribal opponents, mobile, familiar with the terrain and good at living off the land – but not yet ready for modern warfare. Nor did there seem to be any need, since the British had an alternative to hand in the shape of the Indian Army, which had acted as an Imperial Reserve for East Africa before.

The Portuguese were the only one of the combatants to ship substantial numbers of troops from Europe itself to fight in East Africa. However, they had some experience at this, having sent out a number of smaller Metropolitan expeditionary forces during the 1890s and early 1900s. This group was photographed in October 1916. Most of the men are wearing the undress peaked cap introduced in 1913. (Museo Militar, Lisbon)

Belgium

The Belgian Congo's troops were known as the *Force Publique*. This title derived from the period when the territory had been a cross between an autonomous state and a commercial enterprise under the control of Leopold II, the Belgian king. Belgium had taken over the Free State in 1908, but it had not yet done very much to reform the Force Publique. It was not until 1914 that a commission recomended that it should be divided into *Troupes Coloniales* organised into regular battalions, and a *Police Territoriale*. Even then, this was only to happen in time of war, which the Belgians believed their guaranteed neutrality would allow them to escape.

The Force Publique was divided into companies. During the early days these had borne numbers, but this system had lapsed in 1897 and they were known now by the names of the districts in which they were stationed. In 1914 there were 21 of them, namely Bas-Congo, Cateracts, Stanley-Pool, Ubangi, Équateur, Bangala, Kwango, Lac Léopold II, Lualaba, Kasai, Aruwimi, Rubi, Makua-Bomokandi, Uele-Bili, Makrakas, Stanley Falls, Ponthiérville, Maniema, Ituri, Lulonga and Ruzizi-Kivu, together with six training camps for recruits. There was also a 200-strong *Compagnie d'Artillerie et de Génie* manning a fort at Boma at the mouth of the Congo River: this was armed with eight 160mm guns which were among the largest ever mounted in Africa. Finally, there were the *Troupes de Katanga*. The Chartered Company's *Corps de Police* in that mineral-rich province had been taken over by the *Force Publique* in 1910, but the corps retained a certain autonomy and continued to be much more 'military' in character than the other Congolese units. In 1914 it consisted of four *compagnies de marche,* two other infantry companies, a cyclist company and a battalion HQ.

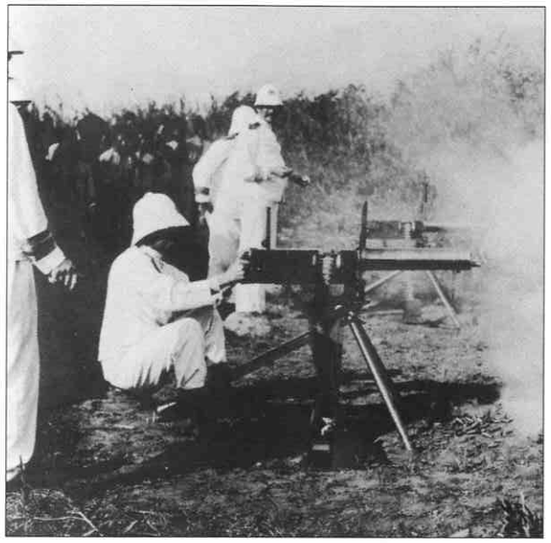
In 1914 the non-Katangan district companies had 12,133 men, the training camps 2,400 and the Troupes de Katanga 2,875, so that the Force Publique as a whole numbered some 17,000. This total far exceeded either the German or the British figures, but it must be remembered that the Congo was an immense territory. The average strength of the companies was close to 600 men, but most of these were supernumeraries who were dispersed in small, static police detachments and had lost much of their military potential. The Belgians planned to bring the core effectives under the control of three more Katangan-style battalion HQs with majors in command, but only one of these was actually being formed when war broke out. Fortunately, it was the one intended to command the field troops in the Eastern Province, which bordered German East Africa, as indeed did Katanga.

A 'marching company' (the field as opposed to the administrative unit) was supposed to have one white *capitaine*, one other white officer and two NCOs, together with eight native NCOs and 100–150 askaris. In theory it was subdivided into *peletons* of 50 men each, but shortly before 1914 reductions in the number of white cadres meant that these actually expanded to 70–75 askaris each. In the field the companies could be supplemented by 'bands' of native auxiliaries, together with trains of porters. There were no cavalry units; but many of the companies had sections with light artillery pieces.

Schutztruppe with a Maxim machine gun – note the single large wheel at the front of the carriage – and a light field piece. The latter appears to be an old breech-loader without any recoil mechanism, typical of the outmoded artillery used by both sides. The machine gunner here is an askari: more commonly he would have been a white NCO. (Bundesarchiv)

The old Force Publique had employed many adventurers from other European countries as officers, and recruited many of its original askaris from Zanzibar and British West Africa, but by 1908 these had all been phased out and the whites were almost all Belgians and the rank and file Congolese. Official policy was to mix the latter up so that no more than a quarter of them came from the province within which they were stationed. Under the previous administration the Free State had been notorious for a ruthless pursuit of commercial gain, and while the Belgian national administration was more enlightened, a desire to keep costs down meant that the Force Publique continued to have an unusually low ratio of white cadres to askaris – in 1914 this was just under 2 per cent.

Most of the Force Publique's askaris carried ex-Belgian Army single-shot 11mm Albini rifles, though its white ranks were issued with Belgian M1889 7.65mm Mauser rifles and Browning pistols. Maxim machine guns were in use, apparently on the usual scale of two per company. The main artillery pieces were the 75mm Krupp mountain gun first introduced in 1883, and the 47mm Nordenfelt. The Troupes de Katanga were better armed, with M1889 Belgian Mausers and Madsen light machine guns.



Belgian NCOs firing Maxim machine guns, with askaris watching in the background. The NCOs wear the old Force Publique hot weather whites, which gave way after 1914 to khaki drill for service and eventually became a dress uniform. (Musée Royale de l'Armée)

Portugal

The Portuguese garrison in Moçambique consisted of ten *companhias indígenas* ('native companies'); the elite *Guarda Republicana de Lourenço Marques* (of white cavalry, black infantry and a mixed artillery battery); and one other artillery battery. The big Chartered Companies which administered much of the territory had some armed police. Although the Portuguese did not enter the war immediately, they prudently sent out metropolitan reinforcements. These amounted to an infantry battalion, a cavalry squadron, a four-gun mountain artillery battery, and engineer, medical and services detachments, in all 1,527 men. This force found the northern region to be virtually undeveloped and the troops spent their time constructing roads and fortified posts along the frontier with German East Africa.

A native company had an establishment of 250 askaris with a white captain, four junior officers and white NCOs down to corporal, producing a ratio of Europeans to Africans closer to that of the German than the British or Belgian equivalents. The askaris carried M1887 8mm Kropatschek rifles, the machine gun sections using the Hotchkiss or Nordenfelt, and the artillery the bronze 70mm M1882 mountain gun – a sturdy but obsolete breech-loader lacking any recoil mechanism. The white Portuguese units were organised along similar lines to other European armies and their weapons were modern, the infantry carrying the 1904 pattern 6.5mm Mauser-Vergueiro and the artillery and cavalry 8mm Mannlicher carbines. The machine gun was the reliable Maxim, and the standard artillery piece was the 75mm mountain gun, a version of the excellent French '75' which could be broken down into sections. Time alone would tell how effectively the Portuguese would be able to use them.

Northern Rhodesia Police crew a Maxim gun on the roof of the prison at Abercorn in September 1914, when the town was under attack and was being defended by Police and settler volunteers. These askaris wear black fezzes and drill order khaki blouses and shorts with bare legs. The fez was replaced later by a khaki pillbox cap. (IWM Q17059)

CHRONOLOGY

1914	
4 August	Belgium and Britain at war with Germany.
Aug–Sept	German raids into BEA, Uganda, Congo, Nyasaland and N.Rhodesia, also Moçambique. Belgians reinforce British in adjoining territories.
2–5 Nov	British landing repulsed at Tanga.
1915	
18 Jan	Combat at Jasin.
Jan–Dec	Germans raid Uganda Railway.
28 June	Germans attack Saisi.
11 July	*Königsberg* destroyed in Rufiji Delta.
1916	
6 Feb	Gen.Smuts replaces Smith-Dorrien.
9 Feb	Allies gain control of Lake Tanganyika.
5 March	British offensive from BEA begins.
12 April	Belgian offensive from Congo begins.
17 April	Van Deventer captures Kondoa Irangi.
20 May	Rhodesia-Nyasaland Field Force offensive begins.
27 May	Portuguese attempt to cross Rufiji repulsed.
29 July	Van Deventer takes Dodoma.
26 Aug	Smuts takes Morogoro.
4 Sept	Dar-es-Salaam surrenders.
19 Sept	Belgians take Tabora. Portuguese cross Rovuma and in following days advance to Nevala.
Sept	British land at Kilwa and Lindi.
30 Sept	British offensive ends.
28 Nov	Portuguese driven out of Nevala and back across Rovuma.
1917	
20 Jan	Gen. Smuts relinquishes command; replaced by Hoskins and later (May) by Van Deventer.
Feb–Oct	Wintgens' foray into northern German East Africa.
March–Sept	German forays into northern Moçambique.
May	British offensive from Kilwa begins.
July	Belgian offensive towards Mahenge begins.
Aug	Col. von Lettow promoted to major-general.
22 Sept	Belgians take Mahenge.
Oct	Costly German victory at Mahiwa (Kilwa). Belgians help to reinforce Kilwa.
25 Nov	Von Lettow crosses into Moçambique and defeats Portuguese at Negomano.
Dec	British land at Porto Amélia.
1918	
July	Germans menace Quelimane and beat Anglo-Portuguese force at Namacurra.
Sept–Nov	Germany tries to supply Schutztruppe by Zeppelin.
26 Sept	Von Lettow recrosses into German East Africa.
Nov	Von Lettow enters Northern Rhodesia.
26 Nov	Von Lettow surrenders near Abercorn.

THE CAMPAIGNS: THE FIRST PHASE, 1914–15

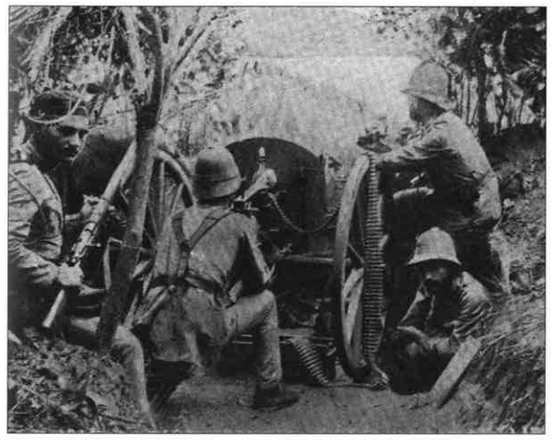
The first major offensive of the war was a British attempt to capture the port of Tanga from the sea in November 1914. This involved Indian Expeditionary Force 'B', consisting of the 27th Indian Army Brigade and another made up of units supplied by the Indian Princely States under the Imperial Service Scheme.[3] The 27th Bde included the 2nd Loyal North Lancashire Regt, the only regular British unit to serve in the theatre throughout the entire campaign.

The landing was a disaster. The Royal Navy (which had previously agreed with the Germans that Tanga should be an open port) chivalrously insisted on giving them notice that it was coming, and Von Lettow was able to rush troops to reinforce the single company stationed in the vicinity. Some of the Indian troops involved were not of the best, and were stopped by a combination of German small arms fire and a swarm of maddened wild bees (one British signaller was awarded the DSO for continuing to take a message while being stung up to 400 times). On the third day the expedition re-embarked, abandoning considerable quantities of arms and ammunition which the jubilant Germans quickly turned to their own use. Schutztruppe morale soared, while that of the British plummeted.

The defeated troops withdrew to Mombasa to lick their wounds, and were then deployed along the vulnerable Uganda Railway. There they joined the members of Indian Expeditionary Force 'C', which had already arrived in British East Africa. This had one regular Indian battalion and four Imperial Service half-battalions, together with a mountain battery and a volunteer field battery.

Over the following year both sides launched a number of smaller attacks along the other fronts, but these were mostly pin-pricks designed to keep the opposition off balance. One German officer even assaulted a Portuguese post in August 1914, apparently under the impression that the reported despatch of Portuguese reinforcements meant that the two countries were at war. In November 1914 the British attacked German positions on Mount Longido in the Kilimanjaro sector to support their Tanga operation, but were beaten back. There was raiding and counter-raiding around the shores of Lake Victoria, the British eventually landing at Bukoba in June 1915 and destroying its signal station and other installations before withdrawing again. The Germans also raided Belgian posts across Lake Kivu and Lake Tanganyika, helped by having better armed vessels which gave them command of the waters. The Belgians actually had more men than the Germans in the region, but they needed time to organise and equip these, and were in no position to launch an offensive.

Portuguese machine gun position overlooking the Rovuma River, 1917. The weapon is the Portuguese Maxim, here equipped with a shield and wheeled carriage. The soldier on the left carries a Mauser-Vergueiro rifle and wears the old blue undress cap, which remained in use even after the introduction of the grey uniform. (Museo Militar)



3 See Elite 75, *The Indian Army 1914–47*

The Belgians were, however, able to help the British in both the northern and southern theatres. In the first, they sent a platoon to re-inforce the Uganda Police on that territory's border with German East Africa. Similar assistance rendered along the Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland borders in the south was even more important. There the Germans had taken the initiative in September 1914 by attacking Karonga in northern Nyasaland, but this assault was repulsed by elements of 1st KAR. Abercorn on the Northern Rhodesia border was also menaced. The defenders there were Northern Rhodesia Police; although they fought off the attack, it was clear that they needed reinforcements. These came in the form of a Force Publique battalion from Katanga. Belgian troops remained on that border until November 1915, playing an important part in the successful repulse of a German attack on Saisi in June.

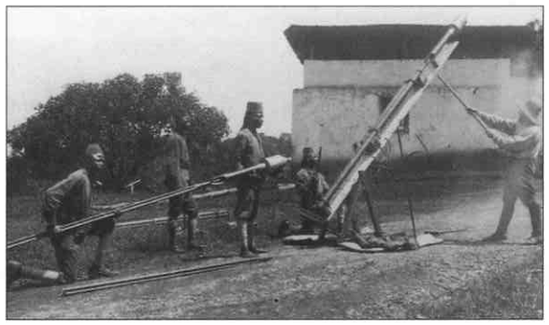
For the British the main focus of the campaign remained the northern sector, where they were forced back onto the defensive by a series of German raids aimed at the vulnerable Uganda Railway. Although these were only small-scale operations (a German demolition patrol typically consisted of two or three whites, eight to 20 askaris and some porters to carry the explosives), they inflicted damage which was hard to repair. Moreover, this threat kept the British forces scattered in small detachments along the railway line, often camped out in unhealthy terrain, under threat from wild animals (some men were lost to lions), and under strain from the need to mount constant patrols. Not surprisingly, morale suffered, and some of the poorer Indian troops proved to be highly susceptible to panic.

One of the early frontier actions was to prove a significant pointer to the campaign to come. The Germans had advanced northward along the coast in September 1914 and overrun some British territory. The British counter-attacked and cleared it again, whereupon the Germans brought up more troops and forced the surrender of the Indian garrison at Jasin in January 1915. This success was dearly bought, for it cost Von Lettow 27 of his irreplaceable Germans, including his own second-in-command, together with large quantities of equally irreplaceable ammunition. Wisely, he concluded that he could only afford to fight three more such actions, and that he would have to go onto the defensive.

* * *

Von Lettow was quick to expand the Schutztruppe as soon as war broke out. The Polizeitruppe were quickly re-integrated (they did not form separate police companies, as was done in Kamerun); and all eligible reservists – including the few Austrians living in the colony – were called up. Many of the older men (and some Afrikaner settlers) volunteered, including the retired Maj. Gen. Wahle. This Saxon officer had been in the colony on a family visit and cheerfully put himself under Von Lettow's command, first bringing his professional talents to organising his communications and then taking over the Western Sector as field commander. Those volunteers not required for the regular companies were formed into *Schützenkompagnien* ('*Schütz*' meaning 'sharpshooter', as opposed to '*Schutz*' as in '*Schutztruppe*', meaning 'protection').

Described as a 'bomb thrower', this early (possibly pre-war) photograph shows a Schutztruppe rocket launcher. Colonial armies had used these throughout the 19th century as a lighter substitute for artillery, and they remained on the inventory. (Bundesarchiv)



These companies varied considerably in strength and effectiveness. Some were simply garrison units (the 1st to 3rd in Dar-es-Salaam, for instance, the latter made up of seamen from the ships the British had blockaded). Others (the 8th and 9th) were tough mounted infantry, who provided many of the men for the offensive raids into British East Africa. There was also a small company of coastal Arabs, though this soon fell apart.

By March 1915 the Germans had formed 16 more Feldkompagnien (numbered 15. to 30.FK) and nine Schützenkompagnien (1. to 9.SchK: a 10.SchK was also formed but was soon split up among the other units in the south-west). There were three *Feldbatterien*, and a number of other units of different types. The number of askaris in the Feldkompagnien had been increased from 160 to 200, but they continued to have two machine guns each. By early 1916 the Schutztruppe had the equivalent of 60 companies and totalled nearly 3,000 Germans and 12,000 askaris. Feldkompagnien numerical designations proper never rose above '30', but there were a number of *Abteilungen*, which were detachments of varying sizes; 'Reserve' companies, which were probably made up of older askaris; and another series designated by letters, which seem to have been provisional units. The distinction between Feld- and Schützenkompagnien was steadily eroded by the cross-posting of both Germans and askaris.

Although the company remained the largest permanent unit, the Germans displayed their usual skill in forming larger tactical groups. These flexible groupings were also known as Abteilungen, but they could be distinguished from their smaller namesakes because they bore their commanders' names (a few of the latter were majors but most were captains). Such groupings varied between two and six or more Feldkompagnien, sometimes with a field battery attached. Since the chief threat came from British East Africa, most of them were concentrated along that frontier. The German order of battle on 5 March 1915 was as the accompanying Table 1.

The arms situation remained precarious, and it was not until the arrival of a blockade-runner in April 1915 that more troops could be equipped with M1898 Mauser rifles. Of the 96 machine guns available in 1915, 17 had been captured from the British and two from the Belgians. Nor were arms the only problem: the troops needed uniforms, and supplies of khaki material soon ran out. Ingenious colonists managed to turn their own raw cotton into cloth and then stain it a yellowish-brown using a dye extracted from tree roots. Local hides were turned into boots, and the vital quinine needed to help the German cadres to fight off the endemic fever was extracted.

* * *

Table 1: German Order of Battle, March 1915

Main Force (British East Africa Front):
Bataillon Tanga: 4.SchK, 17.FK, Feldabteilung Pangani, Landsturmabteilung Tanga, Artillerie Abteilung N
Abteilung Schulz: 6.FK, 9.FK, 15.FK, 24.FK, 30.FK
Abteilung Kraut: 18.FK, 27.FK, Feldbatterie Sternheim
Abteilung Demuth: 1.FK, 10.FK, 19.FK, 6.SchK, 7.SchK, Feldbatterie Fromme
Abteilung Augar: 3.FK, 13.FK, 14.FK
Abteilung Stemmermann: 11.FK, 16.FK
Abteilung Fischer: 8.FK, 28.FK, 8.SchK, 9.SchK (both mounted), Abteilung Arusha
(Attached:) 21.FK, 4.FK, 5.SchK., Abteilung Bahnschutz, Abteilung Rombo & Abteilung Wilhelmsthal

Western Front (Uganda, Ruanda-Urundi & Lakes):
Muansa 'A', 'B', 'D', 'E' & 'F' Kompagnien, Artillerie Batterie
Bukoba 'C' Kompagnie, 7.Reserve Kompagnie, Abteilung Bukoba
Ruanda 7.FK, 23.FK, 25.FK, 26.FK
Urundi 14.ResK, Abteilung Urundi
Lake Tanganyika 29.FK, 22.StammK, Abteilung Möwe
Langenburg 5.FK, 'L'Kompagnie

Other forces:
Iringa 2.FK
Mahenge 12.FK
Dar-es-Salaam 22.FK, 1.SchK, 2.SchK, 3.SchK, Abteilung Königsberg, Küstenschutz Abteilung, Landsturm K
Lindi 20.FK, Abteilung Delta (Rufiji)*

* The Abteilung Delta was formed to protect the *Königsberg*, the light cruiser which took refuge in the Rufiji estuary after a short but eventful career as a commerce raider in the Indian Ocean. The British located the ship and finally destroyed it there in mid-1915. However, its 105mm guns were salvaged, mounted on carriages and used as field artillery by the Schutztruppe.

The two Indian Expeditionary Forces which constituted the first British reinforcements were made up as the accompanying Table 2.

Forced back onto the defensive after their initial setback at Tanga, the British found themselves on the horns of a dilemma of their own making. With every British-born soldier desperately needed in France, the West Africans engaged in Kamerun, the South Africans in German South-West Africa, and the contingents from the other white dominions and India required for more vital theatres such as Egypt and Mesopotamia, there was no immediate prospect of sending further significant reinforcements to a minor theatre like East Africa.

The real answer was to expand the King's African Rifles by recruiting local Africans, as the Germans were already doing for their Schutztruppe. Britain's askaris had quickly shown themselves to be just as skilled at bush fighting as their German equivalents, and they enjoyed a natural immunity to the diseases which were already laying the European and Indian troops low. In January 1915 Col. Henry Kitchener (the field marshal's elder brother) was sent out to review the manpower situation. Although the local military commanders recommended an expansion of the KAR, the civil authorities were against this; and it was their advice which Kitchener accepted, reporting that he did not consider any significant increase in the local forces to be possible. It is true that this would have required more trained white officers and NCOs, both of whom were in short supply at the time; but it is hard to avoid seeing in his assessment an element of racial unease at the prospect of increasing the military potential of the colonial native population – odd though this appears in view of the use the British were continuing to make of black troops in West Africa, not to mention their contribution to his brother's victories in the Sudan in 1898.

The British also turned down a private offer to raise a battalion of Swazis and another of Zulus. The result was that they were restricted to a mere handful of reinforcements. The only additional British troops that the War Office could find were the 25th Royal Fusiliers, a New Army battalion recruited from the Legion of Frontiersmen, an association of former adventurers. Although many were really too old for active campaigning, they were both experienced and 'salted' as far as tropical diseases were concerned. Some other acclimatised white volunteers in the form of the newly raised 2nd Rhodesia Regt also arrived, together with a squadron of the 17th Cavalry and the 130th Baluchis from the Indian Army.

The white inhabitants of the East African Protectorate formed a number of small volunteer units. These were then regimented as the East African Mounted Rifles, and the

Table 2: Indian Expeditionary Forces, 1914–15

Force 'B':
27th Brigade: 2nd Loyal North Lancashire Regt, 63rd Palamcottah Light Infantry, 98th Infantry & 101st Grenadiers

Imperial Service Brigade (unnumbered): 13th Rajputs, 2nd Kashmir Rifles, half 3rd Kashmir Rifles, half 3rd Gwalior Infantry; 61st Pioneers; 28th Mountain Battery RA; two Sapper & Miner Railway Companies; service units

Force 'C':
29th Punjabis; Imperial Service half-bns. from Bhurtpore, Jind, Kapurthala & Rampur; Royal Artillery mountain battery, Calcutta volunteer field battery; service units

German Schutztruppe on the march. This wartime photograph shows the shirtsleeve order typical of whites from both sides in the field. Note that two of them are wearing shorts, not usually associated with the Germans, and – like the Wolseley helmets – possibly captured British items. (Bundesarchiv)

Belgian Force Publique gunners firing a French-supplied 70mm St Chamond mountain gun. This piece could be broken down into five parts and manhandled through the bush, the trail alone requiring five or six porters. (Musée Royale de l'Armée)

East African Regt (an infantry unit with two European and one 'Pathan' company), the former in particular playing an important part in the early clashes. During 1915, however, many had to be transferred to the expanding service units where their local knowledge was more needed, and the Mounted Rifles dwindled from their original six squadrons to four. The whites in Uganda formed the Uganda Volunteer Rifles, and those from Zanzibar joined the Zanzibar Volunteer Defence Force.

Although no new KAR battalions were formed, the 1st, 3rd and 4th were brought up to strength and a number of other native units were created, namely the East Africa Protectorate Police Bn, the Arab Rifles from the coastal region, a Uganda Police Service Bn, the Uganda Armed Levies (later the Baganda Rifles), and Zanzibar's African Rifles, a force raised from the Zanzibar Armed Constabulary. These battalion-sized units were officered by whites from the Protectorate police or volunteer forces.

The same pattern was repeated on the south-western front. The whites in Nyasaland already had a Defence Force organised along rifle club lines. It raised a volunteer company from its younger and fitter members in 1914, and this saw service along the border. The whites in Northern Rhodesia formed a volunteer unit known as the Northern Rhodesia Rifles, with a mobile company and local defence sections. The mobile company also saw service on the border, along with the askaris of the Northern Rhodesia Police service companies. The more numerous whites in Southern Rhodesia provided volunteers for the 2nd Rhodesia Regt (the 1st served in German South-West Africa), and the British South Africa Police raised two service companies for the Northern Rhodesia front.

* * *

The Belgians took even longer to organise their forces. This was understandable, because the Germans had occupied most of Belgium itself. Fortunately for the Allies, the Katangans were better prepared for war than the rest of the Force Publique, which was hard put to it to scrape together a single company to help the French against the Germans in Kamerun. The Katangans quickly organised themselves into three battalions, of which two (1er and 3e) were despatched to the Northern Rhodesia frontier, while the 2e helped to defend the eastern frontier and lake shore settlements.

The Force Publique remained on the defensive throughout 1915, but it was expanded and reorganised with the aid of officers and NCOs sent out from Belgium. The non-Katangan battalions were assembled from a miscellaneous collection of old and new units, the 11e Bataillon, for example, being formed from the 2e Compagnie de Marche de Bas-Uele, the Compagnie du Haut-Uele, and the 3e Compagnie du Camp de la Tota. The battalion was originally numbered the 3e, but this designation was subsequently changed to 11e to avoid confusion with the Katangan unit. The overall plan was to organise the forces in the east into three Groupes (roughly, brigades), to be known as 'Kivu', 'Ruzizi' and 'Tanganyika'. Between them these were to have a total of 15 battalions

An East African Mounted Rifles patrol in about 1915. These settler volunteers are surprisingly uniform in appearance; it took the authorities some time to equip their unit properly and even afterwards many men remained individualists, retaining items such as slouch hats and cutting the sleeves off their tunics. Note the bandoliers slung round the horses' necks. (IWM Q45733)

structured along the same lines as the Katangan units. These had three rifle companies each, a support section with two Maxim machine guns and two 47mm Nordenfelt cannon (the Force Publique was traditionally strong in artillery), a doctor and a chaplain. The Belgians also had to create a supply and transport organisation almost from scratch.

The Belgian askaris were to be rearmed with modern rifles instead of their antique Albinis, ammunition for which was already becoming scarce. However, this proved to be a problem because the Germans had overrun Belgium's armaments factories. The French came to the rescue, and although the Katangans retained their Mausers, most of the new Force Publique battalions were equipped with single-shot 8mm Gras rifles, with 8mm Hotchkiss or St Etienne machine guns instead of Maxims, and 70mm St Chamond guns in place of the 47mm Nordenfelts. The French also provided some of their Delattre system mortars, and the Belgians formed a *compagnie de grenadiers* to operate them. These askaris were drawn from the men who had been fighting in Kamerun, and were transferred to the east with their new equipment. The Belgians also began the immense labour of transferring two of their 160mm guns from the fort at the mouth of the Congo River to the shores of Lake Tanganyika, though by the time they finally got them there the German threat had receded.

* * *

Portugal remained neutral throughout 1915, and the single German company in the south was kept there more to deter a native revolt than out of any fear of the Portuguese (Von Lettow even wanted to bring it north, but Governor Schnee refused to permit this). The European troops of the first expeditionary force soon began to succumb to fever, so Lisbon sent a second contingent to replace them in October 1915. It was similar in composition to the first except that a machine gun group was added, no doubt on the basis of reports from the Western Front.

The colony began to organise its own additional units. These were called *Companhias Indígenas Expeditionárias* because they were meant to operate outside the confines of the colony proper (i.e. within the northern part of the territory, which was controlled by the Nyassa Company, or possibly in German East Africa). There were also five *Batarias Indígenas de Metraladores* (machine gun batteries). The two main Chartered Companies also began to form their armed police into infantry companies; the Moçambique Company eventually raised four of these and the Nyassa Company two.

THE 1916 ALLIED OFFENSIVE

By the beginning of 1916 the Allies were ready to go over to the attack. Lord Kitchener was opposed to any diversion of effort away from Europe, but the British government had overruled him. A South African Expeditionary Force was arriving in East Africa, while the Belgians had nearly finished reorganising their forces. The British command was entrusted to Lt.Gen. Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien (a survivor of Isandlwana in 1879, who had distinguished himself as a corps commander in the retreat from Mons); but he contracted pneumonia on the way out, and was replaced by South Africa's Lt.Gen. Jan Smuts in February 1916. 'Slim (i.e. clever) Jannie' had been one of Britain's most elusive opponents during the Boer War: now he found himself in the position of a gamekeeper trying to capture an equally elusive poacher in the shape of Von Lettow.

His South Africans gave Smuts a comfortable margin of superiority in the north. Initially they consisted of one mounted and two infantry brigades, plus an artillery brigade of five batteries. These troops were all white. There was also a Cape Corps battalion recruited from the Cape Coloured population and paid for by the British government, though officered by South Africans (in all, some 18,000 Cape Corps personnel were to serve in East Africa, indicating that many must have been on detached duties). Two more Indian Army battalions, extra artillery and a number of armoured cars arrived as well. The South Africans also sent two infantry battalions and a battery of field artillery to join the Rhodesia and Nyasaland Field Force. The infantry were paid for by the British government and known as 'Rifles', while the gunners were from a regular South African unit which had been re-equipped with six German 75mm mountain guns captured in South-West Africa.

The Allies planned a number of concentric attacks. The main assault was to come from Smuts' own British Imperial and South African army in the north-east, but a smaller British column from Uganda was to drive southwards from Lake Victoria, while the Belgians were to advance into Ruanda and Burundi and then on Tabora. Another British force was to thrust north-eastwards from the Northern Rhodesia border, while yet more troops would land along the coast to try to prevent the Germans receiving any more seaborne supplies.

In February 1916 the British had 27,350 men on the British East Africa front, with 1,900 more in Uganda's Lake Force. By May there were another 2,593 men operating out of Northern Rhodesia, albeit at the end of very slender lines of communication. The Belgians mustered a strike force of 12,417, with more troops covering the western lake shores. By this time the Germans had 2,712 Europeans, 11,367 askaris and 2,531 irregulars, including armed porters. The British and Belgians were therefore putting nearly 45,000 men into the field against some 16,000 Germans – odds of nearly three to one.

A Belgian lieutenant and his men on the march. It is cold enough in the uplands of Ruanda and Burundi for the former to wear his serge uniform (albeit with non-matching shoes). The second askari in line seems to be wearing dark blue serge, and has a small badge on his fez; this can be seen in a number of contemporary photographs and was probably a Belgian cockade. Most of the others are dressed in the mixture of faded blue cotton and khaki drill typical of 1915–16. (Musée Royale de l'Armée)

Lieutenant-General Smuts (second from right) at the Pangani River, 1916. He and his staff wear standard British officers' uniforms, mostly in khaki drill, with goggles round their necks – companion photographs show that they were travelling by open staff car. The signallers operating the heliograph wear shirts and breeches, though the seated figure behind the telescope appears to wear an Indian *pagri*. (South African War Museum)

The Belgians had pointed out the value of a Portuguese advance from the south. Portugal was not yet in the war, but tension was growing between Germany and Portugal. It was resolved by a German declaration of war in March 1916; the Portuguese then sent out a third and stronger expedition which added 4,538 European troops to the 5,000 or so Africans available by 1916 (11,926 askaris were raised in Moçambique during the war as a whole), though neither the Germans nor the British seem to have taken either very seriously.

Smuts' strategy was to use his superior strength to pin the enemy by a frontal attack while sending another force around his flank. The Germans were supposed to stay still and allow themselves to be enveloped; but they refused to be so accommodating. Time after time they managed to slip away before the outflanking force could work round to their rear. The basic problem was that the country was difficult to move across quickly, and Von Lettow had the shorter interior lines. This was demonstrated as soon as the main offensive began in February 1916. The obvious gateway into German East Africa was through the Taveta Gap in the line of hills just to the south of Mount Kilimanjaro. Smuts tried his preferred tactics there, sending his 1st Division to loop around the northern slopes of the great volcano to take the German in the rear. Von Lettow simply evaded this ponderous encircling movement and moved a little way down the Usumbara Railway, which connected the fertile Kilimanjaro district with Tanga.

Smuts thought he had a secret weapon in the form of his South African Mounted Brigade, which he calculated would give him the advantage of strategic mobility. He knew that the tsetse fly would eventually kill its horses, but underestimated the speed with which this could happen. He asked for a second mounted brigade from Cape Town (it arrived in May), and then launched Gen. van Deventer with the first brigade across country towards Kondoa Irangi, a communications centre half way between the two German railways. This bold advance succeeded, but only at great cost in horseflesh, which left the brigade immobilised. Fortunately its supporting infantry managed to reach it before Von Lettow could concentrate his own troops for an overwhelming counter-attack. The force facing Smuts' main advance continued to retreat down the Usumbara Railway, fighting delaying actions as it went.

The campaign continued along these lines. Van Deventer's troops eventually got going again, mostly on foot, and reached the Central Railway at Dodoma, cutting Von Lettow off from his forces in the west. The main German body continued to inflict casualties and then slip away, evading Smuts' attempts to encircle it. Smuts hoped that Von Lettow would retreat as far as Tanga or Dar-es-Salaam, then fight one final battle before negotiating an honourable surrender; but the wily German had no intention of doing any such thing. Instead, he slipped away towards the Rufiji River, past the Nguru and Uluguru Mountains and then even further south, drawing Smuts' troops after him.

Meanwhile the Belgians were advancing. In April they moved into Ruanda and Burundi and began a two-pronged advance on Tabora. Their Brigade Nord struck towards Lake Victoria and then turned south, while Brigade Sud marched down the eastern side of Lake Tanganyika to Kigoma, then began to move down the Central Railway. Britain's Lake Force landed at Mwanza in July and also headed for Tabora, but the Belgians won the race, capturing the town in mid-September.

The Belgian advance was facilitated by a remarkable feat of inter-Allied, inter-services co-operation. German armed steamers dominated Lake Tanganyika and would have been a threat to Belgian communications. In June 1915 the British shipped two fast armed launches to the Cape; these were then transported by rail to the Belgian Congo, and dragged the rest of the way overland to the lake. They sank one of the German steamers in February 1916, and the other shut itself up in port, where it was eventually put out of action by bombs from a Belgian seaplane.

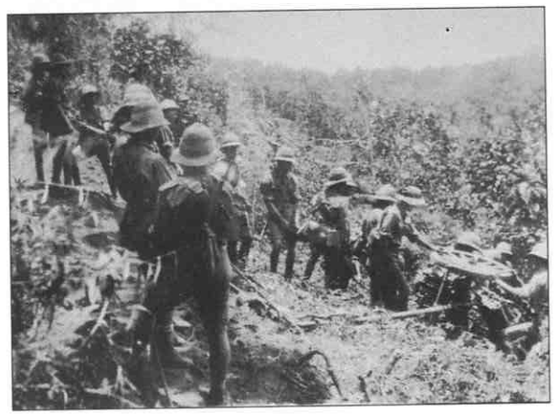
The German Gen. Wahle's Western Force was too weak to do more than fall back before the Allied advance, conducting the usual skilful fighting retreat. With Van Deventer's South Africans now astride the Central Railway, Wahle had to head south-eastward. This took him across the line of advance of Northey's Nyasaland and Rhodesia Field Force, which had begun to move north-eastward towards Iringa in May. For once the Germans in the region outnumbered the British, but Smuts quickly despatched Van Deventer to Northey's aid, and Wahle's one serious attempt to take a lightly garrisoned supply depot was fought off by a KAR company with three antique muzzle-loading guns.

By September 1916 the Germans had been confined to the southernmost third of their colony. The British had occupied all their ports, and they were beset on all sides. At this point the Portuguese made their move. An attempt to cross the Rovuma River back in May had been repulsed. However, Lisbon urged its commanders to take the offensive again, saying that failure to do so would lower the nation's military prestige. Although sickly and dispirited, the Portuguese troops made another effort. This time they managed to cross the river and launched a drive towards Lindi. However, they were counter-attacked at Nevala in October and driven back across the Rovuma in disorder. They settled down to try to hold its line.

South African Field Artillery 13-pounder gun in typical bush country. This was the standard piece used by British mounted batteries, and it also equipped most of the regular South African Mounted Rifle batteries at the start of the war. These used horses and mules, but both quickly sickened and died in East Africa, where the chronic infestation of tsetse flies spread 'sleeping sickness'. (South African War Museum)

A South African machine gun detachment; the men's breeches suggest that they belong to one of the mounted regiments. The khaki shirt with breast pockets and collar (with or without tie) was typical of South African troops and more practical than the collarless 'greyback' worn by British soldiers in other hot theatres. (South African War Museum)

Originally captioned 'Why did we join the South African Mounted Rifles?', this photograph shows the kind of country with which the troops had to contend. The effort involved in getting field guns and wheeled vehicles through this terrain can be imagined. (South African War Museum)



War in the bush

By now the British Imperial troops were exhausted. It was not so much battle casualties as disease which had worn them down. The land harboured tsetse flies, malaria-bearing mosquitoes, burrowing jigger fleas which caused intolerable itching and then ulcers, ticks and countless other pests, as well as dangerous wild animals. Water was often scarce, and frequently bad. Fever and dysentery were endemic. The South Africans and Rhodesians were no more immune to these ills than the British or Indians, and most of the European and Indian units had been reduced to mere cadres by October 1916.

The incidence of disease was increased by the privations imposed by the land itself. The 'bush' which covered the theatre varied from a largely waterless steppe to razor-edged grass which could grow to shoulder height, interspersed with thickets of impenetrable thorn scrub. There were jungles and swamps by the coast and along the river courses, and steep, rocky hills with plunging escarpments further inland. Worst of all was the fact that the land produced little in the way of a food surplus at the best of times, and the retreating Germans scoured it clean. The Allied troops were forced to depend on provisions brought forward along increasingly tenuous supply lines. The tracks were poor to start with, and rapidly collapsed under the weight of traffic. Horses and mules died, oxen were slow and refractory, and mechanical transport broke down or became bogged. Food, ammunition, clothing and boots were in short supply. One British officer sent back a series of increasingly angry complaints about the way his front line troops were being starved. When he finally got back to the base he insisted on apologising: having seen the track, he said, he was amazed that anything had been got up to them at all.

In these circumstances there was no alternative to head-portering. However, as another British officer recalled, the carriers sickened and died at an alarming rate. His concern seems to have been more for the supplies than for the porters themselves, but it must have been a great deal more alarming for the latter, since most were unwilling conscripts with little interest in the outcome of the conflict. Part of the problem was that the Allies' carriers were taken away from the wives who normally cooked for them, and they had neither the time nor the skills to prepare their staple grain ration properly. It was some time before the problem was diagnosed and a special, 'quick-cook' porridge meal was made available. The German carriers' wives accompanied their men, and the latter seem to have been better motivated, probably because they were assigned to specific companies. They remained loyal throughout, many stepping up to become askaris themselves when the opportunity arose.

The carrier elite in all armies consisted of the machine gun porters, who commonly wore uniforms and were part of a well-drilled team. In the Northern Rhodesia Police the tripod bearer followed the gun's No.1 (a white officer or NCO), with the No.2 and the gun carriers immediately behind and the ammunition porters in the rear. As soon as action was joined (most were ambushes where the need to return fire as quickly as possible was imperative), the No.1 selected his spot, the tripod bearer put his burden down there and the gun carriers doubled forward to set the pre-loaded gun on it. Similar drills were used in the other armies.

Belgian provisions being brought up. The escort at right wears the early Force Publique blue uniform, while the central figure has a vest in the colours of the Congo's flag – blue with a yellow star. This seems to have been not uncommon among askaris, and was probably a form of undress. The third figure may be an officer's groom. (Musée Royale de l'Armée)

The heavy, tripod-mounted machine gun with its fixed elevation was found to be the most effective weapon in the bush, because even well-trained riflemen from both sides tended to fire too high, and the difficulty of transporting and supplying anything heavier meant that the artillery barrages of the Western Front were unknown. Hand grenades, light machine guns and mortars were relatively late in reaching the theatre, and since the Germans were cut off from the outside they never got any at all, although they could – and did – improvise land mines. The result was that this remained a rather old-fashioned infantry war. Skirmish lines were the norm, and the cover afforded by the thick vegetation meant that bayonet charges could be surprisingly effective. However, both sides entrenched themselves enthusiastically whenever they had to hold a fixed position.

Forces in place, 1916

There were no major changes to the German line-up. The sequence of lettered Schutztruppe companies reached 'S', but a number of the earlier ones disappeared, along with some of the regular units. The 28. Feldkompagnie surrendered to Van Deventer's troops after trying to oppose their advance to Kondoa Irangi, while 6., 8., 12., 16., 25., 26., 27. and 30. Feldkompagnien and 7. Schützenkompagnie had all vanished by October 1917. On the credit side, more of the askaris had been equipped with modern rifles captured from their opponents, while the sunken *Königsberg*'s 105mm guns had been retrieved and mounted on carriages to add weight to the artillery. Von Lettow and his men were in good heart, and a good deal better fed than their opponents.

There was no fixed or regular order of battle above the company level. The Abteilungen were reshuffled almost daily to meet the needs of the moment. Moreover, they increasingly split up into separate columns on the march so as to cover as much food-producing territory as possible.

* * *

The South African Expeditionary Force arrived at the beginning of 1916, together with more Indian battalions, further British artillery units, three sections of armoured cars, more services, and a Royal Naval Air Service detachment with both aircraft and four armoured cars. In March 1916 the main British Imperial strike force operating out of the East Africa Protectorate was organised into 1st and 2nd Divisions, together with a Flank Force composed of the 1st SA Mounted and 3rd

SA Infantry Brigades. With the exception of the last, the different nationalities were mixed up together. However, Smuts then reorganised his command so that the British and Indian troops were concentrated in the 1st Division with the South Africans in the 2nd and 3rd Divisions. Apart from the admirable Kashmiris, the Indian Imperial Service units were restricted to line of communications work. The order of battle at the beginning of April 1916 was as the accompanying Table 3, although it continued to change throughout the year.

The locally raised white units decreased in importance during 1916, even though East Africa had introduced conscription in late 1915 – the first British possession to do so. The East African Regt disappeared, while the East African Mounted Rifles continued to dwindle, falling to a strength of only one company by the end of the year, the men either returning to their civilian occupations or being transferred to staff the ever-increasing and vitally important service units.

The authorities continued to oppose any significant expansion of the KAR, despite the proven prowess of the existing askaris in bush fighting and their immunity to the local diseases. East African settler opposition had a good deal to do with this, but the South Africans also disliked the idea of arming Africans, and it was not until Smuts' white and Indian troops had been decimated by disease that the policy was changed. The 2nd and 5th KAR were re-raised during the first half of 1916, and the 2nd, 3rd and 4th were then 'doubled', but that was as far as expansion went for the time being.

The campaign as a whole provided the white South Africans with a bigger culture shock than most. Not only did many of them arrive expecting to make short work of a bunch of 'kaffirs', but they also began with little respect for their Indian comrades in arms. These attitudes did not survive their first clash with Von Lettow's askaris, when they had to be rescued by the 130th Baluchis. The latter then added insult to injury by returning the machine guns the South Africans had abandoned, with a note reminding them that their benefactors were 'sepoys, not coolies'. However, the poor regard in which Smuts and his fellow Afrikaners held the average British general was amply borne out during the early stages: the disaster at Tanga had already cost one his job; subsequent events led an exasperated Smuts to ask 'Are they all like this?', and send three more of them packing.

(continued on page 33)

Table 3: British Imperial Order of Battle, April 1916

MAIN FORCE:

1st Division

1st EA Brigade: 2nd Loyal North Lancashire Regt, 2nd Rhodesia Regt, 130th Baluchis, part 3rd KAR, composite bn Kashmir Rifles, volunteer MG coy

2nd EA Bde: 25th Royal Fusiliers, 29th Punjabis, 129th Baluchis, Cape Corps contingent, part 1st KAR, East Africa MG Coy

1st Artillery Group: 5th SA, 6th & 7th RA Field Batteries, 27th RA Mountain Bty, section 38th RA Howitzer Bde

2nd Division

1st SA Mounted Bde: 1st, 2nd, 3rd & 4th SA Horse

3rd SA Infantry Bde: 9th, 10th, 11th & 12th SA Infantry

2nd Arty Grp: 2nd & 4th SA Batteries, 28th RA Mountain Bty, 12th RA Howitzer Bde

3rd Division

2nd SA Mtd Bde: 5th, 6th, 7th & 8th SA Horse

2nd SA Inf Bde: 5th, 6th, 7th & 8th SA Inf

3rd Arty Grp: 1st & 3rd SA Batteries, 8th RA Field Bty, section 38th RA Howitzer Bde

LOC troops

17th Inf, 40th Pathans, 61st Pioneers, 63rd Palamcottah Light Inf, 98th Inf, 101st Grenadiers (all Indian Army bns); Bharatpur, Gwalior, Jind, Kapurthula & Rampur Inf (all Imperial Service units); elements of 1st, 3rd & 4th King's African Rifles; local defence forces

(Other)

South Africa also supplied two unbrigaded mounted regiments (9th & 10th SA Horse), and a SA Motor Cycle Corps. The 5th Light Inf (an Indian Army unit fresh from the Kamerun campaign), 38th RA Howitzer Bty and three more armoured car batteries arrived in March 1916; the 33rd Punjabis in May; and the 57th Wilde's Rifles (Frontier Force) in July, the latter in exchange for 101st Grenadiers. Later the 5th Light Inf, 40th Pathans and 129th Baluchis were employed on coastal operations, along with some Royal Marines and the locally recruited Zanzibar and Mafia Rifles.

The other two British forces were much smaller:

LAKE FORCE:

98th Inf (Indian Army), 4th KAR, Uganda Police Service Bn, Baganda Rifles & Nandi Scouts

Rhodesia & Nyasaland Field Force:

1st & 2nd South African Rifles, two companies of British South Africa Police (Europeans); 1st KAR & five companies of Northern Rhodesia Police (askaris); SA Field Arty bty

GERMAN SCHUTZTRUPPE

1: Sergeant

2: Unteroffizier

3: Matrose, Imperial Navy SMS Königsberg

4: Offizier

5: Matrose, Abteilung Königsberg

GERMAN SCHUTZTRUPPE

1: Schausch, Musikkorps, 1914
2: Schausch, Polizeitruppe, 1915
3: Ombascha, 1914
4: Ruga-Ruga
5: Ombascha, Polizeitruppe, 1914

BRITISH TROOPS

1: Officer, 3rd Bn, King's African Rifles
2: Corporal, East African Mounted Rifles
3: Masai warriors
4: Dorobo warrior

BRITISH TROOPS

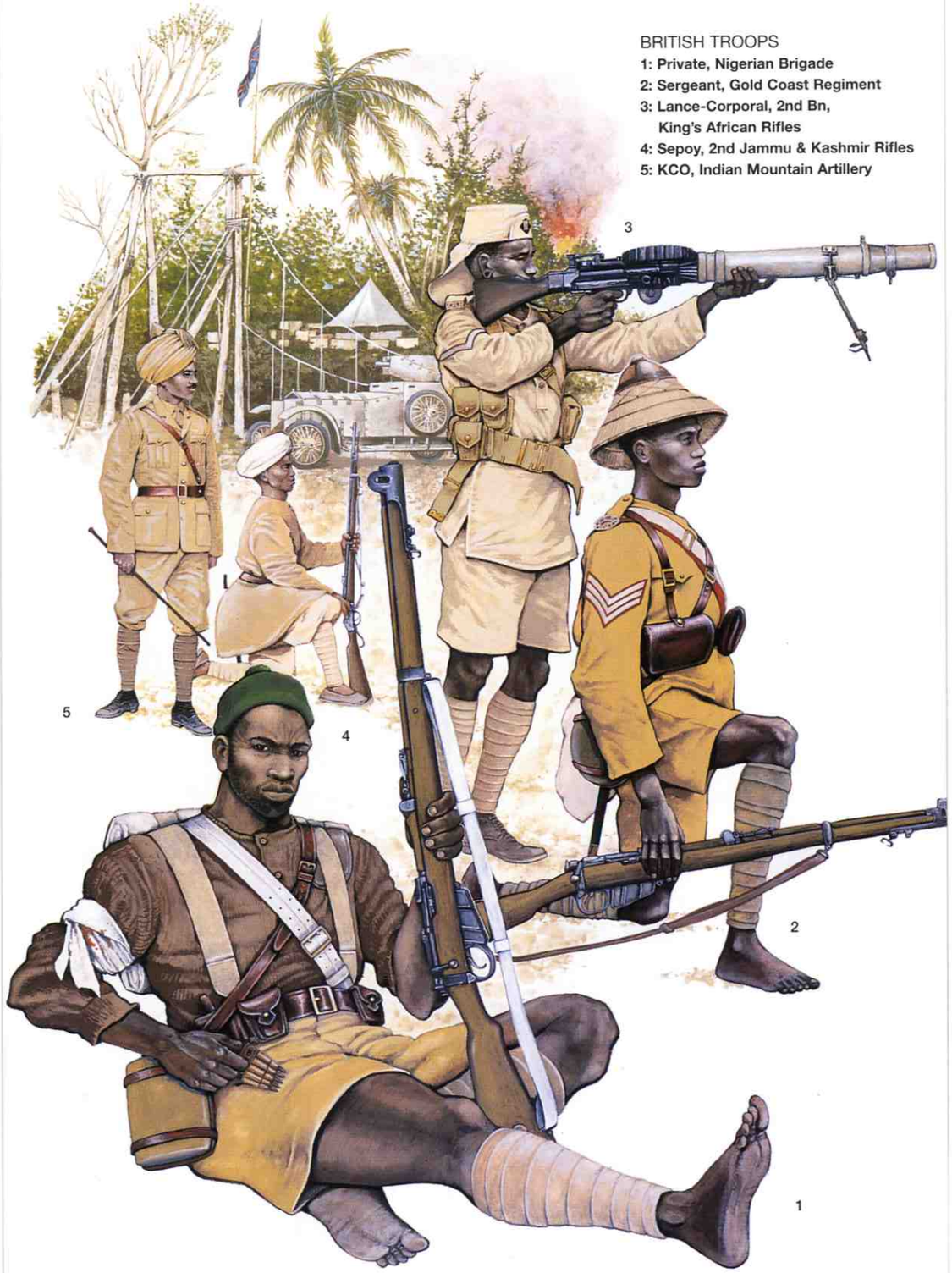
1: Askari, 3rd Bn, King's African Rifles
2: Lance-Corporal, 25th Bn, Royal Fusiliers
3: Naik, 30th Punjab Regiment
4: Askari, Northern Rhodesia Police

SOUTH AFRICAN TROOPS

1: Bombardier, SA Field Artillery
2: Private, SA Infantry
3: Officer, SA Infantry
4: Officer, SA Royal Engineers
5: Corporal, SA Horse

BRITISH TROOPS

1: Private, Nigerian Brigade
2: Sergeant, Gold Coast Regiment
3: Lance-Corporal, 2nd Bn, King's African Rifles
4: Sepoy, 2nd Jammu & Kashmir Rifles
5: KCO, Indian Mountain Artillery



BELGIAN TROOPS

1: Capitaine
2: Caporal, 1914
3: Askari, 1915–16
4: Caporal, 1917
5: Officer

PORTUGUESE TROOPS

1: Tenente, Colonial Army
2: Soldado, Colonial Army
3: Primeiro Cabo, Metropolitan Army
4: Soldado, Metropolitan Army

French-supplied trench mortar and its Force Publique crew. The Belgian officer wears typical field service dress, the askaris one of the transitional uniforms – cf Plate G3. The original mortar crews were veterans of the Kamerun campaign, as suggested by the service stripes worn on his upper sleeve by the NCO behind the officer. Again, the badge on the uncovered fezzes is probably the Belgian cockade. (Musée Royale de l'Armée)

By April 1916 the Belgian Congo's *Troupes de l'Est* had been organised into two brigades, as follows:

Brigade Nord

3e Régiment (8e, 9e, 10e Bataillons); 4e Régt (11e, 12e, 13e Bns); 1e & 3e Batteries

Brigade Sud

1er Régt (1e, 2e, 3e Bns); 2e Régt (4e, 5e, 7e Bns); 2e & 4e Bts

Others:

6e Bn (Lake Tanganyika shore defence); 14e & 15e Bns (occupation troops); 16e, 17e & 18e Bns (retained in Congo for internal security). Once command of the lake had been assured, 6e Bn was able to cross and take part in the advance.

Each brigade had a pioneer, signals and service company, and each regiment had an engineer and a machine gun section. The mortars were attached to the Brigade Nord. The troops continued to be armed with a mixture of Gras and Mauser rifles.

Although they were more immune to the local diseases than Europeans or Indians, the Belgians' askaris suffered almost as badly from the privations imposed by the Allies' tenuous supply lines. By July many of the companies were down to 50 men. However, matters improved once they were astride the Central Railway and could bring supplies down from its Lake Tanganyika terminus.

* * *

The second Portuguese expeditionary force was still in Moçambique in March 1916, and some of its members were involved in the initial fighting. It consisted of the 3rd Bn of Regimento de Infantaria No.21; a machine gun *grupo* (No.7); a squadron from Regimento de Cavalaria No.3; a mountain artillery group; and engineer, medical and service units.

The third and larger expedition arrived in July 1916. This was made up of the third battalions of Regimentos de Infantaria Nos.23, 24 & 28 and two reinforcing companies for No.21; three more machine gun groups (Nos.4, 5 & 8); five artillery groups (Nos. 1 & 2 plus three more from the Mountain Artillery Regt); and engineer, medical and service units.

The Portuguese also took steps to expand their askari units. Those involved in the crossing of the Rovuma included the Guardia Republicana, a number of Companhias Indígenas Expeditionárias (notably Nos.17 & 19 to 24), and the Nyassa Company's 1a Companhia. The European battalions provided the main mass, but askaris accompanied them and they were screened by a 'black column' consisting of a European mounted infantry company and four African companies. Some Portuguese troopers from Cavalaria No.3 formed part of the advance towards Nevala, but little was heard of this arm thereafter.

The askaris suffered more battle casualties than the Europeans, but the latters' losses from disease were ten times those of the Africans. Apart from Capt. Curado's 21a Companhia Indígena, which showed what the askaris could do with good leadership, the Portuguese demonstrated that they were no match for the Germans. Indeed, the German conclusion was that 500 German troops could safely take the offensive against 1,500 Portuguese.

STALEMATE, THEN PURSUIT, 1917–18

By the end of 1916 the combination of sickness and exhaustion had brought the British Imperial and South African advance to a halt. The Belgians had gone as far as they meant to go, and the Portuguese offensive had been stopped in its tracks. Von Lettow might have retreated into the southern third of his territory, but he was still at liberty there and quite capable of inflicting damage on the Allies. Moreover, there was always the risk of his breaking loose. One part of his force did exactly this when Hauptmann Wintgens and his detachment struck out on their own account, cut through the British cordon and headed back north in February 1917. For the next eight months this little force led the Allies a merry dance until they were finally caught and forced to surrender near the British East Africa border on 1 October (interestingly, by mounted troops: the region was relatively tsetse-free, and only horsemen were able to overhaul the fleet-footed German askaris). Von Lettow disapproved of this foray, but it helped to keep the Allies off balance. Meanwhile, other German columns were raiding northern Moçambique for food.

It was May 1917 before the British got going again, and then it was from the southern ports of Lindi and Kilwa which they had captured earlier and which Von Lettow had been investing for months. By now the very complexion of their army had changed. The white troops had been relieved by African units from West Africa, just as skilled as the Germans' askaris at bush fighting, and for the most part blooded in the Kamerun campaign. Even so, the Indians had to remain for the time being, otherwise British numbers might actually have fallen to less than those of the Germans. The decision to withdraw them entirely was not taken until the end of 1917. Their replacements were to be new battalions of the King's African Rifles, whose recruitment had been set on foot as a matter of urgency by Gen. Hoskins as soon as he took over from Smuts in January. Hoskins was an experienced East Africa hand, but he was pulled out and replaced by Van Deventer in May, even though practically all the South African troops had left by then.

The Belgians also set off again in July, this time driving down to take Mahenge. Not only did they help to close the ring from the north, they also sent a couple of battalions to help the British at Kilwa in October. The British needed assistance because their offensive had run into Von Lettow's askaris concentrated at Mahiwa, near the port of Lindi. The Germans had constructed trenches and dug-outs and the British attacked them frontally in mid-October. The fighting approached Western Front intensity, and the British lost more than half of their 4,900 men. German losses were lighter, but still amounted to one-third of their

Portuguese troops manning entrenchments. The infantrymen are members of the Metropolitan expeditionary force and wear the old blue undress cap. Some of the gunners, at left, are wearing the wide-brimmed hat used by the Colonial Army, and probably belong to that force. Their antique recoilless breech-loader also suggests this, as the Metropolitan artillery had the more up-to-date French '75'. (Museo Militar)

1,500 soldiers. Von Lettow claimed the day, but he had to withdraw nonetheless, knowing that he could not afford many more such victories.

The Allies were now pressing him hard on all sides. Their forces had been built up again; they had more motor transport, and new weapons such as mortars and hand grenades. Moreover, their African troops were more resistant to the local diseases and better able to live off the land. By November, Von Lettow had been hemmed into the southernmost corner of the German colony, and it seemed that he could twist and turn no longer.

Masai warriors in British service drinking blood from a kill. Both sides used tribal irregulars as scouts and guides. The white bystanders are not identified in the original caption, but may be from the East African Mounted Rifles; under magnification the right-hand man seems to have 'MR' in dark letters on the side of his helmet. (IWM 45702)

However, those who thought he might surrender had underestimated his devotion to duty. His task was to keep Allied forces engaged in this minor theatre. The British, Indian and Southern African troops deployed there might have been withdrawn, but most of them were so debilitated by fever that they were unlikely to be able to fight again anywhere else. Moreover, the askaris who were replacing them had to be trained, officered, and equipped with weapons and munitions, all of which represented a drain on the Allied war effort. The Schutztruppe, on the other hand, had learned to live off their enemies and the land. Von Lettow did not hesitate: he purged his force of all but its fittest and most determined elements, and in late November 1917 he led these across the Rovuma River and into Moçambique.

The Portuguese had been asked to hold the river line, and had a post at Negomano in the path of the German advance. Although warned of the German approach, its commander inexplicably neglected its defences until it was too late. The battle-hardened Schutztruppe quickly stormed it and captured food, clothing and weapons before marching on southwards. They continued to overrun and sack isolated Portuguese posts as they did do, collecting more arms and equipment each time. Most of these victories were relatively easy, but at least one garrison (that of Serra Mecula) put up a resistance stout enough to earn the Germans' respect.

Some 1,500 British 'tribal transport' porters setting out towards Songea. All the armies involved in the campaign relied to a very considerable extent on head-carrying to get their supplies forward; the porters were often coerced into serving, poorly paid, and not always well treated. (South African War Museum)

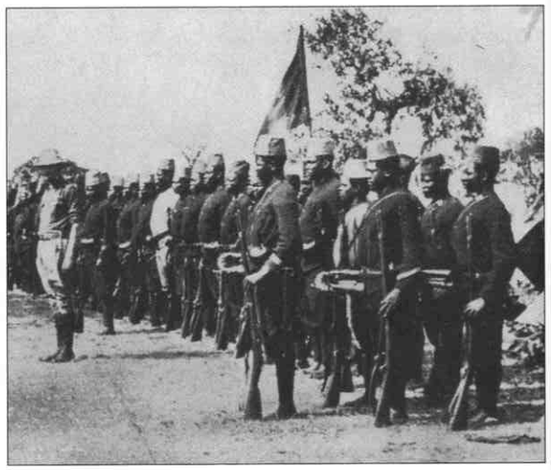
Once again, the Allies had to shift their forces and reorganise their cumbersome supply arrangements. The British landed troops ('Pamforce') at Porto Amélia, established a base there, and began to move westwards. They also shipped Northey's force

down to the southern end of Lake Nyasa and set it to operate eastwards from there. Von Lettow slipped past this attempted pincer movement long before the arrangements could be concluded, and headed southwards for Quelimane. Once again, the British had to shift their forces southwards and land there. Von Lettow descended on a newly established supply depot at Namacurra in July 1918, drove off the Anglo-Portuguese garrison and looted it thoroughly. Then he feinted eastwards towards the old capital, Moçambique town. As soon as the Allies reacted, he swung back westwards and then headed north.

Caribbean troops of the 2nd West India Regiment embarking from Freetown for East Africa in mid-1916. Note their 'greyback' shirts and Wolseley tropical helmets. Unlike the KAR and WAFF, who were local forces which came under the control of the Colonial Office in peacetime, the English-speaking West Indians were British regulars and were dressed, equipped and treated as such, leading the puzzled local inhabitants to describe them as 'black Europeans'. (IWM Q52378)

By now, however, the writing was on the wall. Von Lettow knew that Germany itself was reeling under the weight of the Allied offensives on the Western Front, and her allies were beginning to collapse. The Germans made one last attempt to help him by sending a Zeppelin laden with supplies from Turkey; unfortunately for them this was tricked into turning back when it was over the Sudan. Von Lettow soldiered on, evading the British columns which were trying to pin him down, or checking their pursuit with brief, vicious rearguard actions. He continued to slip away, crossing the frontier back into German East Africa again at the end of September 1918, and then heading westwards until he entered Northern Rhodesia. Some considerable way into that territory, and still uncaught, he received news of the Armistice in Europe. The incredible odyssey of the Schutztruppe was at an end – but not Paul von Lettow Vorbeck's personal adventure, however.

The general returned to Germany to be acclaimed as a hero. Before long the post-war chaos there inspired the irrepressible Prussian to raise his own Freikorps, named Schutztrupp Regiment 1 and with an African lion's head, crossed spears and a native shield as its badge. The general led this unit with all his old energy, but it did not last long[4]. He continued to be active in politics, however, and although born in 1870 he survived until the remarkably late date of 1964, visiting East Africa again in 1953 and being hailed by his old askaris.



OPPOSITE Force Publique parade at Kigali, Ruanda. Congolese units carried the former Free State's yellow star on a mid-blue flag until they were issued with this black, yellow and red Belgian national tricolour in 1916. Note the officer's shirtsleeve field service dress, and the mixture of blue and khaki uniforms still being worn by the askaris at this date. (Musée Royale de l'Armée)

4 See Elite 76, *The German Freikorps 1918–23*

Table 4: German Order of Battle, October 1917

Abteilung Wahle (Mahiwa):	
Abteilung Rothe	19.FK, 20.FK, Kompagnie Tanga
Abteilung v.Lieberman	3.FK, 14.FK, 'S' Kompagnie
Other units	9.FK, 4.SchK, 'O' Kompagnie, 1.Batterie, 5.Artillerie Abteilung
Abteilung v.Ruckteschell	10.FK, 21.FK
Abteilung Göring	4.FK, 13.FK, 14.FK, 17.FK, 8.SchK, 2.Batterie
Abteilung Köhl	18.FK, 6.SchK, 4.Batterie
Abteilung Kraut	2.FK, 25.FK, 3.SchK, 5.SchK, 'I' Kompagnie, Abteilung Schulz
Lines of Communication	11.FK
Westbefehlshaber:	
Abteilung Schoenfeld	23.FK, 24.FK, 2.SchK, Abteilung Arusha
Abteilung von Brandis	5.FK, Abteilung Pangani
Abteilung Aumann	22.FK, 'L' Kompagnie
Abteilung Otto	1.FK, 7.FK, 15.FK, 29.FK, Batterie Vogel
Abteilung v.Heyden	1.SchK, Kompagnie Königsberg
Other	6.FK

Forces in place, 1917–18

During the last campaign there were no major changes to the organisation of the Schutztruppe; the order of battle in mid-October 1917 was as the accompanying Table 4.

When von Lettow decided to cross into Moçambique with a reduced force of no more than 300 Germans and 1,700 askaris, with 3,000 carriers, he organised them into 15 companies. These were 2., 3., 4., 9., 10., 11., 13.,14., 17., 19. & 21. Feldkompagnien; 3., 4., 5. & 6.Schützenkompagnien; and 2. Batterie. Of these, 14. & 19.FK and 5. SchK were disbanded during the subsequent campaign. By the time Von Lettow surrendered, the remaining companies had only 155 Germans and 1,168 askaris between them. The Germans still had some of their old M1871/84 Jägerbüsche rifles with them, together with seven of their original Maxims, but most of their other weapons had been captured from either the British, the Belgians or the Portuguese. They had a Portuguese field piece and some shells, together with some captured mortars, although the last of the *Königsberg*'s guns had been blown up before the force left German East Africa.

* * *

The composition of the British Imperial forces continued to change. By the beginning of 1917 the two British battalions had been withdrawn. So had most of the South Africans, leaving only 3rd SA Artillery Bty, a Composite Mounted Regt, the 7th & 8th SA Infantry, and De Jager's Scouts. The 1st Cape Corps battalion was relieved by a 2nd, which remained until 1918.

The new units from Africa were led by the single-battalion Gold Coast Regt and the 2nd Bn West Indian Regt from Freetown, which disembarked in July 1916, the seasoned Gold Coasters joining the main force and the West Indians (who had not fought in Kamerun) being employed on coastal operations. A four-battalion Nigerian Bde (1st, 2nd, 3rd & 4th Nigeria Regts, many of them also Kamerun veterans) arrived in late 1916. The Nigerians left in mid-1918, but the Gold Coasters (plus a separate mounted infantry company formed for service there in 1918) and West Indians remained until the Armistice.

The 2nd Rhodesian Native Regt arrived in 1917, and was amalgamated with the 1st (transferred from garrison duties in South-West Africa) as the Rhodesian African Rifles in 1918. These two battalions were officered by members of the British South Africa Police.

Even so, the withdrawal of white units meant that more Indian units had to fill the gap between late 1916 and mid-1917. These were the 30th Punjabis, 55th Frontier Force Rifles, 75th & 109th Infantry and 127th Baluchis, together with the 25th Cavalry (replacing the 17th Cavalry squadron); and a Kashmiri Imperial Service Mountain Battery (specifically requested by Gen. Hoskins because of the fine performance of its infantry comrades).

A Portuguese observation post along the Rovuma River. Two of the men's collars bear the small gorget patch worn by the Colonial Army – cf Plate H1. The tropical helmet worn by the standing figure on the right was increasingly issued in place of the slouch hat. The figure in the foreground wears the folding sidecap introduced in 1914. (Museo Militar)

Two of the Indian units involved in this campaign had been sent to East Africa to redeem themselves. The 130th Baluchis had mutinied in 1914 when warned for Mesopotamia; the 5th Light Infantry did so in Singapore in 1915, then being shipped to Kamerun and subsequently on to East Africa. Others were Moslem units, sent because the British did not consider it safe to use them against the Turks. This was the case with the 40th Pathans and 129th Baluchis, who were detached from the Indian Corps when that formation was withdrawn from France and sent to Mesopotamia in late 1915; and the 30th Punjabis, who had been known as the 'Punjabi Mahomedans' up to 1903. All these units fought loyally in East Africa.

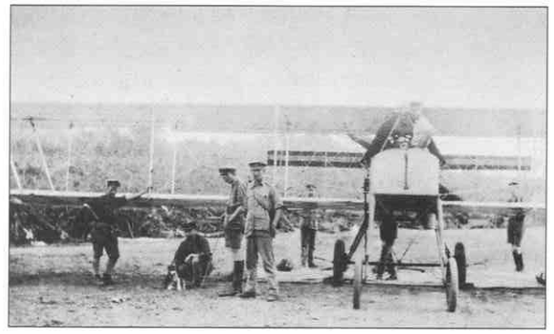
General Smuts' replacement Gen. Hoskins had served as Inspector General of the KAR before the war, and it was he who started to build that force up in earnest at the beginning of 1917. To begin with, 1st KAR became a two-battalion regiment as did the 2nd, 3rd and 4th, though in the British way each battalion continued to operate seperately. The 5th KAR remained on British East Africa's northern border as a single-battalion unit. In mid-1917 a new 6th KAR was raised from captured Schutztruppe askaris and was also quickly 'doubled', while a single-battalion 7th KAR was formed from the Zanzibar Armed Constabulary and the Mafia Constabulary. Later in 1917 each of the first four regiments added a third battalion, and in 1918 a fourth (training) battalion, while 4th KAR went on to raise two more when Uganda proved to be a good recruiting area. There was also a KAR Mounted Infantry unit which had been formed as part of 3rd KAR in 1914 but subsequently operated as a separate entity; and a KAR Signals Company.

The delay in expanding the KAR led to problems, because the new battalions were raised in a hurry and were consequently not as good as the veteran pre-war units. As a result, some were roughly handled when they came up against the Schutztruppe. Nevertheless, the KAR were largely responsible for the pursuit of Von Lettow through Moçambique and back to the borders of Northern Rhodesia. By November 1918 there were 22 KAR battalions, which were divided between Western Force (1/1st, 2/1st, 3/1st, 1/4th & 2/4th KAR), Eastern Force (1/2nd, 2/2nd, 3/2nd, 1/3rd, 2/3rd, 3/4th & 4/4th KAR), German East Africa Garrison (3/3rd, 5/4th, 2/6th & 1/7th KAR), British East Africa Garrison (1/5th & 1/6th KAR), and Training (4/1st, 4/2nd, 4/3rd & 6/4th KAR). Significantly, the two battalions raised from 'turned' askari prisoners of war were assigned to garrison duties, though one found itself involved in the hunt for Wintgens and his band.

The Northern Rhodesia Police continued to serve with the Rhodesia & Nyasaland Field Force. There were still five companies in May 1917, and a sixth was organised later. Only in late 1917 were they brought together to form a battalion.

One problem that was taken in hand was the organisation of the African colonial units, which was progressively brought into line with the new 'double company' pattern already adopted by the European and Indian imperial battalions. This meant that a British Central, East or

West African company was now equivalent to a Belgian, German or Portuguese company, with a similar allocation of machine guns. The British also increased their ratio of white officers and NCOs to askaris until it equalled the German figure, although they experienced difficulties in finding white personnel familiar with the country and able to speak Swahili, the regional *lingua franca*. Many of the most suitable men had joined the early white volunteer units and become casualties: in this respect Von Lettow's practice of cross-posting between Feldkompagnien and Schützenkompagnien turned out to be much more practical.



British Royal Naval Air Service 'Flying Bedstead' at Lindi. The machine is a Voisin, four of which arrived in March 1916 to relieve the primitive Curtiss and Sopwith seaplanes (later supplemented by Caudrons) which had helped to locate the German cruiser *Königsberg*. There was also a South African squadron equipped with BE2c machines. (South African War Museum)

The local white volunteer forces themselves had practically disappeared by the beginning of 1917 (the East African Rifles lost all its personnel except for its commanding officer), though the local defence sections of the Northern Rhodesia Rifles remained in existence until 1919.

British, Indian and South African units carried Short Magazine Lee Enfield rifles (SMLEs), though some only received these at the start of the campaign. The KAR battalions carried the Lee Metford or long Lee Enfield at the start of the war but had all been re-armed with SMLEs by 1918. The West Africans had a similar experience: they actually received the new rifles while they were en route to East Africa. The Northern Rhodesia Police also received SMLEs during the war. The standard medium machine gun remained the Vickers, but Lewis light machine guns were introduced in 1917. Hand grenades and Stokes mortars had begun to arrive in 1916, though they did not come into action until the end of that year.

Britain took German East Africa after the war; they renamed it Tanganyika, and it is now the mainland part of Tanzania.

* * *

The Belgians reduced their troops in German East Africa after they captured Tabora, but the continued German resistance led to the further campaign against Mahenge in 1917. The Belgians had absorbed the lessons of the earlier campaign, and it was a slimmed-down, much more mobile force which marched south. The rifle companies had been reduced to 133 askaris each, but the brigades now had cyclist companies (the pre-war Belgian Army was more enthusiastic than most about these, and the Troupes de Katanga already had them in 1914). Moreover, the proportion of white cadres to askaris had been raised close to Schutztruppe levels – the Belgians had absorbed that lesson too.

Men of Britain's 25th Bn, Royal Fusiliers (Frontiersmen) in late 1917. Standard daytime field service dress consisted of Wolseley helmet, shirt, shorts and puttees; it was often all the men had with them, and their bare knees exposed them to insect bites to a greater extent than the German breeches. (IWM Q45743)

The force consisted of Brigade Sud (now 1er Régt

plus 5e Bn), and Brigade Nord's 12e Bataillon. The remainder of Brigade Nord (plus 10e Bn) were employed in the hunt for Wintgen's marauding Schutztruppe company, which lasted until the beginning of October. With Mahenge taken, the 4e & 9e Bns, a cyclist company, field hospital and artillery were sent to reinforce the British at Kilwa, remaining in the south until the end of the year.

The Force Publique troops made a good impression on the Portuguese, who ranked them ahead of the British colonial units and second only to the Germans. They also impressed the latter. As early as October 1914 Wintgens, then commanding the Western Sector, had warned Von Lettow that the Belgian askaris were much better than the Germans had thought. Overall, the Belgians not only achieved all their objectives, but rendered invaluable help to the British on more than one occasion. Belgium's reward after the war was to be the fertile and thickly populated territories of Ruanda and Burundi.

* * *

The Portuguese were completely exhausted by their efforts during the disastrous Nevala campaign, so Lisbon sent out a fourth expeditionary force, which arrived during the first half of 1917. It took the same form as the previous one, namely the third battalions of three infantry regiments (Nos.29, 30 & 31), two mountain artillery batteries and a company of engineers, in all 4,058 Europeans. There were also white cadres for one locally recruited cavalry squadron and 20 more infantry companies. The former does not actually seem to have been raised, but further infantry companies certainly were – their title numbers went up to 45a. However, figures for the campaign as a whole show that the proportion of whites to askaris in the provincial forces was under 6 per cent, which was significantly below the initial German figure, as well as those reached later in the war by the British and Belgians. The Guarda Republicana field unit disappeared. No further reinforcements arrived apart from a Naval Battalion in 1918; this was made up of exiled mutineers, so its value was doubtful.

The Kashmiri Mountain Battery at Mahiwa in October 1917, in one of its last actions. Unlike some other troops from Indian princely states, the Kashmiris earned consistently good reports. The gunners were equipped with the 10-pounder 2.5in (69mm) mountain howitzer. This was the last of the 'screw guns', so called because their barrels could be unscrewed into two separate pieces for transportation. Note that – unusually – the Indian sepoys seem to be wearing the 'spine pad' usually issued to British troops as protection from the sun – cf Plate E4. The Indians suffered just as much from the East African climate as the Europeans and in November 1917 it was decided to withdraw them all. (IWM Q15457)

OPPOSITE **A Feldkompagnie of Von Lettow's Schutztruppe on the move somewhere in the dry interior. Although this photograph epitomises the marching powers of these indomitable troops during the latter years of the war, it was probably taken much earlier – few horses survived the later treks for long. Note the standard-bearer towards the head of the column. (Bundesarchiv)**

Photographs from this period showing Portuguese African troops are rare. Although not of the best quality, this picture of a Portuguese captain does at least show the informal shirtsleeve order worn by many Europeans in the field. The uncropped photo shows that his men all carry rolled blankets over their shoulders, which was also common practice in the King's African Rifles. (Museo Militar)

The new Portuguese commander hoped to renew the offensive and actually organised two battalion-sized *grupos das companhias indígenas* with this in mind, but the British only wanted him to hold the Rovuma River line. The white troops remained near the coast while the native companies were stationed in the interior. Many of the latter remained along the Rovuma even after Von Lettow broke through at Negomano in November 1917, because the Allies believed that he would soon turn back north again. The Portuguese continued to be used as static garrisons while British columns pursued the Germans. Officially, this was because a shortage of porters made it difficult to maintain both armies in the field, but privately Gen. van Deventer made it clear that he was unhappy with the quality of the Portuguese troops and did not think that they should be used outside entrenchments.

This was, as the Portuguese admit, a fair assessment. A few of their units were good (it was Capt. Curado's 21a Companhia Indígena Expedicionario which put up stiff resistance at Serra Mecula, and there were others, like the 11a Companhia Indígena which fought off another German attack); but as a general rule they were inferior in terms of combat power to those of the other countries involved. This was not due to deficiencies of equipment (in fact, the askaris were all re-armed with 6.5mm Mauser-Vergueiro rifles during the campaign, and its relatively small calibre does not seem to have attracted any criticism), but rather to a poor level of training and low morale. The Portuguese themselves concede that many of their officers were reluctant to serve in Africa (medical boards had to be suspended when the expeditionary forces were being assembled because so many tried to use these to get out of going). However, it must be remembered that Portugal was politically divided over the wisdom of participating in the war at all. From late 1917 onwards the country was actually ruled by a military dictatorship which was reluctant to take any further part, and only did so for fear of losing the colonies it did possess. In this at least the Portuguese effort was successful, though Portugal's only territorial gain was to be a muddy triangle of land at the mouth of the Rovuma which the Germans had taken from them in 1894.

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Generalmajor Paul von Lettow Vorbeck (first rider from left) during the triumphal parade in Berlin which celebrated his return to Germany in 1919. He wears the cross of the Pour le Mérite at his throat. The two mounted figures in the foreground are Governor Schnee and Kapitän Looff of the *Königisberg* – both strong characters with whom Von Lettow clashed throughout the campaign. He was undoubtedly the main architect of the German resistance, but it was nevertheless a remarkable team effort. (Bundesarchiv)

THE PLATES

A: GERMAN SCHUTZTRUPPE

A1: Sergeant

The white band on the grey home service undress cap was the Schutztruppe facing colour for Deutsch-Ostafrika. The blue piping was common to the white and khaki uniforms worn by all the German members of the force, irrespective of colony. As an Imperial force, the Schutztruppe wore only the black, white and red Reichskokarde, and the same colours were intertwined to form the shoulder straps. The NCOs' chevrons (worn on the left sleeve only) were silver backed with blue.

A2: Unteroffizier

The Imperial colours were also worn as a cord on the tropical helmet. Khaki puttees replaced the earlier blue ones before 1914. Manning a Maxim MG08 machine gun, this corporal wears a machine gunner's *Tragegurt* or drag strap. The white shirt was normal wear under the tunic at the start of the war.

A3: Matrose, Imperial Navy SMS *Königsberg*

This seaman is dressed in *Landungsanzug* or landing party dress. The use of the blue uniform was by no means uncommon in tropical climates (British sailors wore them as well); however, this rating has at least rolled his sleeves up and replaced the regulation black leather marching boots with ankle boots and canvas gaiters. As a machine gunner, he is equipped with the Modell 1904 Marine pistol.

A4: Offizier

Europeans of all ranks usually wore khaki shirts in the field instead of the regulation tunic. Many of the original white shirts were stained khaki using a locally produced dye extracted from tree roots; later a great many captured garments were worn. This officer carries the Pistole 08.

A5: Matrose, Abteilung Königsberg

The crew of the cruiser *Königsberg* were incorporated into the Schutztruppe as a separate detachment. Like his shipmate A3, he wears *Landungsanzug*, in this case in white. The tropical helmet is of the older pattern with a less pronounced peak and neck shade. The machine gun is set on an improvised anti-aircraft mounting in an attempt to protect the ship (seen in the background) from British aerial reconnaissance while it was hidden in the Rufiji Delta. Later its upperworks were painted green and covered with branches.

B: GERMAN SCHUTZTRUPPE

B1: Schausch, Musikkorps, 1914

Many of the original East African askaris were Sudanese, and the Schutztruppe continued to use the Turkish titles common throughout North-East Africa. An African officer was an *Effendi* (three silver stars on the shoulder strap), a Feldwebel was a *Sol* (four flat-topped chevrons), a Sergeant was a *Bet-Schausch* (three chevrons), an Unteroffizier a *Schausch* (two chevrons), and a Gefreiter an *Ombascha* (one chevron). Later pattern NCOs' chevrons were brown instead of red. The Feldkompagnie number was worn on the fez cover when in field dress. Bandsmen wore the traditional 'swallows-nests' at the shoulder. This one carries the Mauser M1871/84 Jägerbüsche with the appropriate cartridge pouches.

B2: Schausch, Polizeitruppe, 1915

Although by this date he has acquired a captured bandolier and a non-regulation hat, this NCO has retained his older red sleeve chevrons. He is armed with a Mauser Modell 98 Infanterie Gewehr with the later model cartridge pouches.

B3: Ombascha, 1914

This senior private carries the *Reichsflagge* in an oilskin cover, and wears the field equipment that was regulation at the start of the war. Later the fez was either replaced by a shapeless hat (see B2); or else camouflaged with grass stems or leaves so that it resembled a tall clump of vegetation. Hauptmann Tafel, one of Von Lettow's most experienced aides, seems to have been the first to suggest this measure, which helped the askaris to spring a good many successful ambushes.

B4: Ruga-Ruga

Like their opponents, the Germans made use of tribal irregulars. This warrior is from the Wahehe, a tribe that had been responsible for the worst reverse the Germans suffered during the colonial period, and who were not finally defeated until 1898. He carries a single-shot, black powder Mauser Modell 71 carbine.

German askaris of 21.Feldkompagnie; cf Plate B2. The photograph shows the mixture of uniforms and equipment characteristic of the Schutztruppe after the first year of the war. Several carry captured bandoliers, while the miscellany of headdresses is worth noting. (Bundesarchiv)

B5: Ombascha, Polizeitruppe, 1914
The Polizei were re-incorporated into the Schutztruppe proper soon after hostilities began, but this man has retained his red-on-white 'P' sleeve device. The spread-winged eagle badge on the fez cover had the Imperial crown above, and a shield bearing a second eagle on its breast; it resembled that worn by the Marinirkorps except in having no anchor motif. He carries the Mauser M1871/84 Jägerbüsche.

C: BRITISH TROOPS

C1: Officer, 3rd Battalion, King's African Rifles
This kepi-like cap with a fold-up peak was introduced in about 1912, at the same time as a low 'pillbox' field cap in the same colour for askaris; the idea may have been to make it harder for enemy snipers to single out the white officers, but in practice the cap never wholly replaced the distinctive tropical helmet. The tunic was standard British Army pattern tropical drill with the open collar introduced in 1913; the only unit device was the Arabic battalion numeral on a red patch on the left side of the headgear – here '3' on a diamond shape – though note the matching red lanyard. The 4th KAR wore an Arabic '4' on a green diamond, but the 1st's officers had a black square bearing '1st KAR' in green. The re-raised 2nd KAR wore dark blue flashes; the colours for the 5th, 6th & 7th Bns do not seem to have been recorded, though the first two were probably light blue and brown respectively.

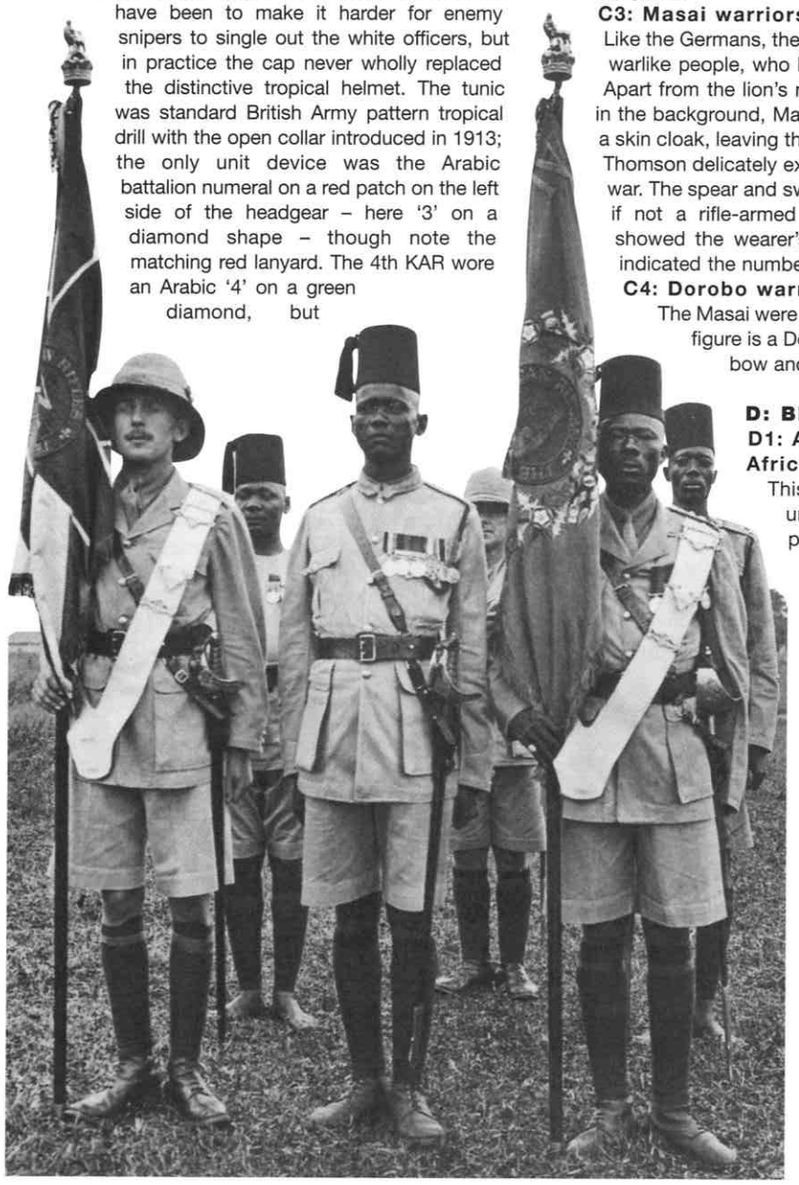
C2: Corporal, East African Mounted Rifles
This local volunteer unit was not fully equipped until July 1915, and its first members wore a mixture of items. The slouch hat with its leopard skin *pagri* is civilian, as are the laced riding boots. The collarless pullover shirt is the British 'greyback' with added breast pockets, while the leather equipment is the standard 1903 bandolier pattern for mounted troops. The weapon is the volunteer's own, a heavy double-barrelled sporting rifle intended for hunting big game.

C3: Masai warriors
Like the Germans, the British employed the services of this warlike people, who had long dominated the arid interior. Apart from the lion's mane headdress worn by the figures in the background, Masai warriors wore nothing more than a skin cloak, leaving them, as the Victorian explorer Joseph Thomson delicately expressed it, ready alike for love or for war. The spear and sword were useful against wild beasts, if not a rifle-armed enemy askari. The shield pattern showed the wearer's clan and status: the small 'suns' indicated the number of men he had killed in battle.

C4: Dorobo warrior
The Masai were not the only tribe to be recruited; this figure is a Dorobo elephant hunter equipped with bow and arrows as well as a short sword.

D: BRITISH TROOPS

D1: Askari, 3rd Battalion, King's African Rifles
This askari still wears the pre-war uniform, with a blue jersey and puttees intead of drab, Slade Wallace



Colour party, 4th Bn, King's African Rifles; cf Plates C and F. This Uganda-based battalion was descended from Emin Pasha's Sudanese, cut off by the Mahdi's revolt and taken into British service. It still had some Sudanese officers, one of whom is the colour-bearer on the right; he wears the same uniform as the British officers except for the fez, which was red. Note that the RSM in the centre has a closed-collar tunic. (IWM Q67814)

Two officers inspect South African infantry in full marching order just prior to departure for East Africa in December 1915; cf Plate E. This shows the regulation field dress and equipment; very few soldiers continued to wear it for very long. Note the diamond-shaped battalion flash on the Wolseley helmets, and the fact that each man is wearing crossed bandoliers. (South African War Museum)

leather equipment, and a Martini-Enfield rifle. The fez under the khaki cover was red; the Roman numeral 'III' on this cover was also a pre-war distinction – an Arabic '3' on a red diamond (see C1) replaced it on the pillbox field cap. Wartime KAR battalions wore differently shaped patches: the standard sequence seems to have been a diamond (1st), rectangle (2nd), triangle (3rd), semicircle (4th), star (5th) and disc (6th), though there were variations; the 1st KAR's askaris had a black band, and the Rhodesian African Rifles a yellow one. The blanket was usually worn over the left shoulder in field order.

D2: Lance-Corporal, 25th Battalion, Royal Fusiliers (Legion of Frontiersmen)
He wears regulation British khaki drill service dress, with 1908 pattern web equipment; in the bush, shirt sleeves and shorts were far more common. The 1895 long Lee-Enfield rifle was soon replaced by the Short Magazine pattern.

D3: Naik (Corporal), 30th Punjab Regiment
Indian troops wore a khaki turban with khaki drill *kurta* (a long-sleeved blouse with a low collar), baggy breeches and khaki serge puttees. Rifle equipment was of the 1903 bandolier pattern, with a brown waist belt bearing two pouches on either side. At this period few Indian rank and file wore headdress badges, the only regimental insignia being a brass shoulder title. This NCO carries the 1895 long Lee-Enfield.

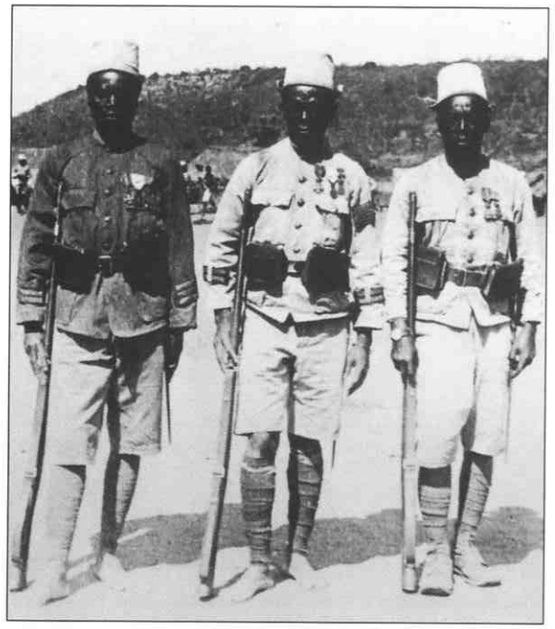
D4: Askari, Northern Rhodesia Police
Normal service dress throughout the war for this force consisted of a short-sleeved blouse and shorts, with bare legs and feet. The black fez typical of Central African units (it was also worn by 1st & 2nd KAR) gave way later to a khaki pillbox cap with a narrow red band. Otherwise, the only unit distinction was an 'NRP' shoulder title. Leather bandolier pattern equipment remained in use for most of the war. However, this man has been issued with the Short Magazine Lee Enfield.

E: SOUTH AFRICAN TROOPS

E1: Bombardier, South African Field Artillery
This corps' cap badge was similar to that of Britain's Royal Artillery, except that the upper scroll bore laurel leaves instead of 'UBIQUE', and the lower one read 'SOUTH-AFRICA'. A small brass grenade badge was worn on the collar (obscured here by the bandolier equipment). A gun badge was worn with NCOs' badges of rank; before 1920 a single chevron identified bombardier, equivalent to corporal. Some gunners wore blue puttees. The 5th Battery came from the Union's pre-war regular South African Mounted Rifles and had the helmet flash colours reversed. The rifle is the Short Magazine Lee Enfield.

E2: Private, South African Infantry
The shirt, shorts and puttees were normal wear for dismounted troops; since units in the field quickly outstripped all but the most essential of supplies, they were often all that they had, and the bush thorns left them in tatters. The general service badge on the helmet was a springbok's head facing to the wearer's right within a circlet inscribed 'UNION IS STRENGTH – ENDRACHT MAAKT MACHT' (irreverent Australians dubbed this the 'goat in a porthole'). The battalions were distinguished by helmet flashes: the 5th had a green and white diamond, the 6th a blue and gold diamond, the 7th a white and maroon diamond, the 8th crimson and gold diagonals, the 9th green and gold divided vertically, the 10th a white saltire on a blue diamond, the 11th a black and amber triangle, and the 12th green and black with a maroon and gold diamond.

E3: Officer, 9th (Sportsmens) Battalion, South African Infantry
Departures from the regulation uniform like the white shirt



Three decorated askaris of the Belgian Force Publique wearing late-war campaign uniforms; cf Plate G4. Note the shorts (known as *capitula*); the NCO ranking above the cuffs; and the fact that those two (left & centre) still prefer to go without boots or sandals. (Musée Royale de l'Armée)

worn by this officer were not unknown. The battalion flash described under E2 above was worn on the left side of the helmet; but the unit also wore one on the right, in green on khaki, showing a crowned '9' over 'SA' over a scroll reading 'SPORTSMEN'. The walking stick was a popular accessory among officers of all the armies involved.

E4: Officer, South African Royal Engineers

The khaki shirt was the one more commonly worn by South African troops of all ranks; note the buttoned-on 'spine pad', believed at that time to be an essential protection against the tropical sun. The corps' badge was the general service springbok's head but surrounded by a circular wreath with a crown above, an upper scroll with 'SOUTH AFRICA' and a lower scroll with 'ROYAL ENGINEERS'.

E5: Corporal, South African Horse

As with E2, the shirt was more usually khaki. When shoulder titles were worn they read 'SAH' on the right and 'ZAR' (Zuid Afrikaanse Ruiters) on the left, both with the regimental number above. Flashes were worn, normally on the left side of the helmet. All were yellow, the 4th bearing a diagonal red stripe, the 5th a diagonal green stripe, the 6th two diagonal green stripes, the 7th three diagonal green stripes, the 8th four horizontal green stripes and the 9th a yellow diamond. This trooper, presumably from the 7th Horse, seems to have worn a variant.

F: BRITISH TROOPS

F1: Private, Nigerian Brigade

The four single-battalion 'regiments' which made up this formation were field units raised from the West African Frontier Force's Nigeria Regiment. Both the WAFF and the KAR were outfitted by the Crown Agents, but although the smock-like khaki blouses and shorts were common to both, the WAFF had a zouave jacket for dress wear, its red fez was lower, and its undress cap was the green 'Kilmarnock' shown here, along with a woollen jersey meant to be worn under the drab smock in cool weather but frequently used by itself. The equipment is a version of the 1903 bandolier pattern modified for use with the Short Magazine Lee Enfield.

F2: Sergeant, Gold Coast Regiment

This NCO, distinguished by both sleeve chevrons and diagonal red sash worn under the equipment, wears the straw hat which had long been common service wear in the savannah regions of West Africa, together with the standard smock, shorts and puttees. His Slade Wallace pouches demonstrate that much obsolete equipment remained in use, though he too carries the Short Magazine Lee Enfield.

F3: Lance-Corporal, 2nd Battalion, King's African Rifles

Like the 1st KAR, this Nyasaland battalion wore a black fez in full dress. The regulation equipment for machine gunners was a single pouch and a service revolver in a leather hoster, but this Lewis gunner still has a rifleman's webbing. He wears the regulation pillbox field cap and uniform; in practice, the askaris were seldom so well attired. Uniform shortages were so serious in 1917 that the 4th KAR's depot actually issued recruits with khaki drill kilts.

F4: Sepoy, 2nd Jammu and Kashmir Rifles

The well-regarded Imperial Service Kashmiris wore the standard khaki turban, kurta and baggy breeches common to the regular Indian Army. This infantry battalion's shoulder title was probably '2/J&K'; the Mountain Battery certainly wore 'KMB' with a '1' above. The weapon is the .303in Martini-Metford.

F5: King's Commissioned Officer, Indian Mountain Artillery

The mountain batteries were Indian Army units with officers drawn from Britain's Royal Artillery. 'Indian Officers' proper were long-serving Indian NCOs promoted to an intermediate category of ranks – Viceroy's Commissioned Officers – which acted as the model for the KAR's 'African Officers'. They wore closed-collar tunics; this figure is one of the small number of Indians who were given temporary King's Commissions during the war (though without any command authority over British ranks), and accordingly wears the open-collar tunic, shirt and tie of his British equivalents.

G: BELGIAN TROOPS

G1: Capitaine

The Belgian Army in Europe did not adopt khaki until spring 1915, but it was authorised for white ranks in the Congo in late 1914, along with the Belgian national cockade, collar rank and branch insignia, and a new Force Publique headdress badge consisting of a wreathed and crowned shield bearing a rampant lion (in gilt for officers, silver for NCOs and bronze for men) below the red, yellow and black cockade. A *fourragére* in the old Congo Free State colours of blue and yellow was worn at the left shoulder in some orders of dress. This officer wears the 1915 Belgian rank insignia (three gilt six-point stars) and an infantryman's crossed rifles; the Force Publique does not seem to have worn unit numbers.

G2: Caporal, 1914

This native NCO wears the old Force Publique cotton field dress. A darker blue serge version was on issue, but officially only for parades. Photographs suggest that a small Belgian cockade was added to the red fez in 1914. The first wartime modifications were the abolition of the red cummerbund formerly worn under the waistbelt, and the addition of a light blue fez cover, which became bleached in service. The M1873 Albini rifle with its 'yataghan'-style bayonet were still carried by most askaris at the start of the war, only the Katangan units having the Belgian Mauser.

G3: Askari, 1915–16

Uniforms went through a number of changes between 1914 and 1917. As an interim measure the blouse began to be made in khaki material, with red piping around the collar and down the edges of the chest opening; breast pockets were also added. The old single ammunition pouch gave way to ones more suited to magazine rifles like the Belgian Mauser. A mixture of blue and khaki clothing was common in 1915–16.

G4: Caporal, 1917

The final stage in the development of askari uniforms was the adoption of a khaki tunic. This was worn with either breeches or shorts, together with puttees. Shorts had been introduced by the Katangan cyclist companies in about 1912 and eventually became standard. However, these uniforms did not become universal until 1917. Supplies of British web equipment were also received. Some Force Publique troops wore cloth unit flashes on their fez covers, as shown here, but the details remain unknown.

G5: Officer

Standard field dress for Europeans on both sides was a khaki shirt. This officer wears the Belgian peaked cap with a smaller version of the Force Publique device as a corps badge.

H: PORTUGUESE TROOPS

H1: Tenente, Colonial Army

This impeccably turned-out officer wears the field uniform laid down for Portugal's overseas forces in 1900. The fly-fronted tunic with breast pockets was common to all ranks, but Europeans wore felt hats and *ascaris* (the Portuguese spelling) a red fez. The black collar patches indicated infantry; artillery wore red, cavalry red with a gold or yellow braid superimposed, engineers black edged red, medical crimson and staff blue edged white. In practice, many officers wore tropical helmets and khaki shirts as field dress.

H2: Soldado, Colonial Army

This wounded askari wears the standard tunic and breeches with a simple khaki drill pillbox cap which was the usual field and undress headgear. Portuguese Chartered Company troops wore similar uniforms. Like most British and Belgian colonial troops, his feet remain bare: African recruits found it difficult to get used to wearing boots, but the Allies' tolerance in this respect exposed their mens' feet and legs to debilitating pests such as 'jiggers'.

H3: Primeiro Cabo, Metropolitan Army

The cork helmet and grey cotton uniform were actually introduced in 1911 for field service in Portugal itself rather than the colonies. The material was a mixture of black and white threads, which in fact produced more of a tweed-like than a corduroy effect when seen at close quarters. It

Although this Portuguese *soldado* of the Metropolitan Army being seen off by his grieving relatives in Lisbon was actually taking part in an expedition to Angola, his grey cotton uniform is identical to that worn by his comrades who were shipped to Moçambique; cf Plate H3. The cork helmet had a short brass spike which was usually (though not always) removed for field service, and the helmet bore a red and green cockade; the unit number was worn on the collar. (Museo Militar)

proved unsuitable when Portuguese troops went to Flanders in 1917 and was replaced by blue-grey serge (two companies of convicted mutineers sent to Moçambique arrived there in such uniforms). The regimental number is worn here on the collar, and the corporal's rank is indicated by the two transverse black stripes on the shoulder straps.

H4: Soldado, Metropolitan Army

Like H3, this infantry private wears the home service grey cotton uniform, in this case with the peaked cap adopted in 1913. The *Marinha* (naval) battalion which arrived in 1917 wore the same uniform except that the tunic had a seaman's collar. The rifle is the 6.5mm Mauser-Vergueiro; this calibre had been adopted because the contemporary Portuguese soldier was smaller than most Northern Europeans, but it was far from being a disadvantage in the thick bush country where many actions were fought.

INDEX

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One of the least-published campaigns of the Great War was that fought in East Africa by forces of colonial troops – British Empire, German, Belgian and Portuguese. Short of resources due to the priority given to other fronts, European, African and Indian soldiers recorded epics of endurance as they hunted the outnumbered but brilliantly led German colonial forces across a vast, disease-ridden wilderness. The achievements of Paul von Lettow Vorbeck – the last German commander in the field to lay down his arms in 1918 – brought him fame and respect comparable to that won by Rommel in World War II. The events and the forces are described here in concise detail, and illustrated with rare photographs and striking colour artworks.

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ISBN 1-84176-489-2