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HISTORY:** The East African Campaign in World War I consisted of a series of battle and guerilla actions which began in German East Africa, the Uganda Protectorate, and the Belgian Congo, German colonial forces under Lieutenant-Colonel Paul von
Lettow-Vorbeck attempted to divert Allied forces from the Western Front. Despite the efforts of the Allied forces, Lettow-Vorbecks troops remained undefeated at the end of the war. In this fascinating work, David Smith documents how a wide array of British, Indian, South African, Belgian, Portuguese and local native forces invaded German East
Africa and slowly ousted the German forces, a process made tortuous by Lettow-Vorbecks masterful management of tactics and movement. Among the events covered are the Battle of Tanga, the scuttling of the Knigsberg, the German railway campaign, and the battles at Salaita Hill, Kondoa-Irangi, Mahenge, Mahiwa and Namacurra. Colourful period
and specially commissioned illustrations bring to life a wide-ranging and eventful campaign in which a high price was extracted for every inch of ground given up. **** Quoted from the back cover of the book. THE BOOK: Osprey Publications has released The East Africa Campaign 191418, Von Lettow-Vorbecks Masterpiece as Number 379 in the
Campaign series. It is a 96-page soft cover book. Included with the text are black and white photographs, color illustrations, maps, 3-dimensional birds-eye-views, detailed captions and more. It has a 2022 copyright, a publication date of June 23, 2022 and the ISBN is 978-1-4728-4891-8. THE CONTENTS: Origins of the Campaign-Chronology-Opposing
Commanders - British - German - South African-Opposing Forces - Orders of Battle-Opposing Plans-The East African offensive - Part II: The British offensive - Part II
TEXT: Author David Smith provides a well written text detailing the World War One East Africa campaign during the years of 1914 through 1918. David Smith provides insight from both sides as well as the outcome of each
battle. David Smith gives a step-by-step narration of each of the battles which with the German tactic of tying up British troops, weapons and supplies to prevent them from being used in Europe and to put a strain
on British resources. David Smith details well the German successes and the British errors such as the German successes and the British which worked in the German successes and the British relying on supply trains which caused them resupply issues. As well
as providing information on the separate incidents, David Smith also details organization, preparation, weapons and equipment used by both sides as well as during the combatants during the combatant
hand accounts from key individuals providing specific details and pertinent information. The text in the book is nicely written and well detailed and provides a wealth of information in an easy-to-read format. As I read through the text, I didnt notice any spelling or grammatical errors. Grammar and spelling might not be an important factor to everyone
however it is something that I take notice of and pass on my findings. I feel that if the text is well written then it shows that the author has taken the time to be professional with their writing. Anyone wanting to add an excellent reference and history book on the all detailing the World War One East Africa Campaign during the years of 1914 through
1918 to their personal library will be pleased with this informative and interesting book. THE PHOTOGRAPHS: A total of 55 black and white photographs are included in this volume. Author David Smith stuck to the title of the book and chose subject specific photographs and did not include photographs that strayed from the
main subject of the book. The majority of the photographs are clear and easily viewable; however, a few have an out of focus look to them and some appear to be too dark, and others appear too light. This is typical for the discussed period of history and consideration needs to be given to the fact that most of the photographs are over one hundred
years old and the quality of the photographs is of no fault of the author and do not take anything away from the book. The photographs range from wide angle photographs will prove to be a wealth of information to the
scale military modeler as well as anyone interested in World War I conflict on the African continent and the uniforms, weapons and warfare of the discussed period due to the details they contain. THE ILLUSTRATIONS: There are three color illustrations by illustrations by illustrator Graham Turner provided in this volume. All three of the color illustrations are
accompanied by a black and white copy of the same illustration on the following page with a well written caption that describes the scene and points out and describes key areas of interest. The illustration showing the German
light cruiser SS Knigsberg under attack by British monitors HMS Mersey and HMS Severn in the Rufiji Delta. Plate BThe Assault on Salaita Hill- A two-page action illustration showing troops of the 5th, 6th and 7th South African Infantry assaulting the German positions on Salaita Hill, which is also being shelled by British artillery. Plate CThe 25th
Royal Fusiliers at Mahiwa- A two-page action illustration is used on the front cover of the book. BIRDS-EYE-VIEWS: There are 2 Birds-Eye-View maps included in this volume and they are: -Battle of Tanga, Second Day, 4 November 1914 -
The Nigerians at Mahiwa, 15-16 October 1916THE CAPTIONS: The captions are well written and explain the accompanying photographs and illustrations in great detail eliminating any doubt as to what is shown. The captions go into very specific individuals names, dates, locations and other such pertinent information. As I read
through the captions, I didnt notice any spelling errors or grammatical errors. I was impressed by David Smiths captions as they are very helpful to the reader due to their detailed content as opposed to other captions that I have seen that are very helpful to the reader due to their detailed content as opposed to other captions as they are very helpful to the reader due to their detailed content as opposed to other captions as they are very helpful to the reader due to their detailed content as opposed to other captions as they are very helpful to the reader due to their detail.
by well written captions and detailed keys that point out specific locations as well as movements and actions by both sides of each conflict. The maps are of: -European colonies in Africa, 1914 -German East Africa, north of the Rufiji, 1914 -Hunting the Knigsberg -The Assault on Salaita Hill, 12 February 1916 -The 1916 offensive -The 1917 offensive -
Von Lettow-Vorbeck in Portuguese East Africa Campaign 191418, Von Lettow-Vorbecks Masterpiece as:eBook (ePub) ISBN:
978-1-4728- 4892-5 and eBook (PDF) ISBN: 978-1-4728- 4893-2 The East Africa Campaign 191418, Von Lettow-Vorbecks Masterpiece is also available as an electronic Kindle version through Amazon.com. PRICE: UK 15.99 / US $24.00 / CAN $32.00 book was provided to me by Osprey Publishing. Please be sure to mention that you saw the book reviewed
here on the KitMaker Network when you make your purchase. Thank you. Insight: AI wrote this piece. Please verify important information yourself. The German East Africa campaigns of World War I constitute a significant chapter in colonial military history, shaped by complex geopolitical and regional factors. These campaigns exemplify how colonial
rivalries and local dynamics influenced global conflicts. Understanding the strategic context of the German East Africa Campaigns The strategic context of the German East Africa Campaigns The strategic context of the German East Africa Campaigns The strategic context of the German East Africa Campaigns The strategic context of the German East Africa Campaigns The strategic context of the German East Africa Campaigns The strategic context of the German East Africa Campaigns The strategic context of the German East Africa Campaigns The strategic context of the German East Africa Campaigns The strategic context of the German East Africa Campaigns The strategic context of the German East Africa Campaigns The strategic context of the German East Africa Campaigns The strategic context of the German East Africa Campaigns The strategic context of the German East Africa Campaigns The strategic context of the German East Africa Campaigns The strategic context of the German East Africa Campaigns The strategic context of the German East Africa Campaigns The strategic context of the German East Africa Campaigns The strategic context of the German East Africa Campaigns The strategic context of the German East Africa Campaigns The strategic context of the German East Africa Campaigns The strategic context of the German East Africa Campaigns The strategic context of the German East Africa Campaigns The strategic context of the German East Africa Campaigns The strategic context of the German East Africa Campaigns The strategic context of the German East Africa Campaigns The strategic context of the German East Africa Campaigns The strategic context of the German East Africa Campaigns The strategic context of the German East Africa Campaigns The strategic context of the German East Africa Campaigns The strategic context of the German East Africa Campaigns The strategic context of the German East Africa Campaigns The strategic context of the German East Africa Campaigns The Strategic Campaigns The Strategic Campaigns The Strategi
was heavily influenced by the broader priorities of World War I. Germany sought to establish and defend its colonial network, control of East Africa was vital for both strategic positioning and economic interests. The campaign aimed
to prevent Allied encroachment and protect vital maritime routes in the Indian Ocean. Furthermore, the geographical challenges and local political dynamics shaped the campaign strategies. German forces in East Africa sought to leverage terrain and local political dynamics shaped the campaign strategies.
campaign complex and protracted. Role of Colonial Rivalries in East African Warfare Colonial Rivalries in East African Warfare during the German East African Warfare during t
alliances. German efforts to establish and defend their colony were driven by national prestige and economic interests, prompting them to counteract encroachments from rival colonial powers. The rivalry heightened tensions, resulting in a complex interests, prompting them to counteract encroachments from rival colonial powers. The rivalry heightened tensions, resulting in a complex interests, prompting them to counteract encroachments from rival colonial powers.
presence and secure strategic routes like the Indian Ocean. These ambitions often translated into coordinated military operations against German forces, while attempts to outflank or isolate each other fueled ongoing conflicts. Overall, colonial rivalries in East Africa not only intensified military engagements but also profoundly impacted the scope
and conduct of the campaigns, highlighting the broader imperial competition that characterized World War I-era warfare. German Military Leadership and Organization in East Africa was characterized by a decentralized command structure adapted to the challenging environment. Commanders such as Paul
von Lettow-Vepling coordinated guerrilla tactics and mobility, leveraging local terrain and logistics. The organization of German forces was primarily focused on irregular warfare, with smaller units operating independently to harass Allied supply lines. This unconventional approach aimed to maximize limited resources and extend German resistance
throughout the campaign. Despite initial disadvantages, German leadership demonstrated strategic ingenuity, often employing swift maneuvers and local knowledge to compensate for manpower shortages. Their organization emphasized adaptability and resilience in a difficult colonial landscape, shaping the campaigns unique military character. Key
Battles and Military Engagements during the CampaignsDuring the CampaignsDuring the German East Africa campaigns, several key battles and military engagements significantly shaped the course of the conflict. One of the earliest was the Battle of Tanga in November 1914, where German forces successfully repelled a British invasion, demonstrating the effectiveness
of defensive tactics. The Battle of Kilimanjaro in 1914-1915 was crucial as German forces launched a daring expedition to seize the strategic mountain region, disrupting allied plans. Another notable engagement was the Battle of Mahenge in 1917, where German forces managed a tactical withdrawal to avoid encirclement while inflicting notable
casualties. The Siege of Ngomano in 1916 marked a critical confrontation, leading to the German counteroffensive that limited British advances. These battles underscored the importance of terrain, local support, and logistics in the German East Africa campaigns. Data on some encounters remains limited, but the strategic importance of these
engagements influenced operational decisions throughout the complex nature of colonial military campaigns, with fluid frontlines and challenging environments. Overall, these key battles played a pivotal role in shaping the duration and outcome of the German East Africa campaigns. THE Role of Indigenous
Forces and Local AlliesIndigenous forces and local allies played a significant role in the German East Africa Campaigns, shaping the course of military operations in the region. These groups provided crucial intelligence, manpower, and logistical support, often determining the success or failure of German strategies. Several local tribes and
communities actively supported German forces due to complex regional dynamics and existing colonial rivalries. Their knowledge of the terrain and guerrilla tactics hindered Allied advances, prolonging the campaign and complicating British efforts to establish control. The German military frequently relied on indigenous auxiliaries to complement
their expeditionary units. These forces included both trained soldiers and local militias, whose familiarity with local terrain and customs proved invaluable in irregular warfare. Key aspects of their involvement include:Providing reconnaissance and intelligence on enemy movementsEngaging in direct combat and guerrilla tacticsAssisting with
logistics, transport, and communication within the regionBuilding alliances that influenced local political stability during the conflictChallenges Faced by German Troops in East Africa faced numerous formidable challenges throughout the campaign. One of the primary obstacles was the regions harsh
geographical terrain, including dense jungles, rugged mountains, and expansive deserts, which hindered mobility and logistical operations. These natural features made movement difficulties. The regions extreme heat, high humidity, and seasonal
rainfall led to health issues such as tropical diseases, malnutrition, and fatigue among soldiers. These factors significantly affected troop morale and combat effectiveness. Moreover, limited medical infrastructure compounded these health challenges. Logistics and supply management were critical issues for German forces. The vastness of East Africaet troop morale and combat effectiveness.
made maintaining a steady flow of provisions, ammunition, and equipment challenging, especially given the limited infrastructure and ongoing hostilities. Scarcity of resources often forced German commanders to adapt quickly and rely heavily on local support. Lastly, supply disruptions caused by British and Allied naval blockades further constrained
German operations. Limited access to reinforcements and supplies increased the difficulties faced by German troops, testing their resilience and strategic adaptability under adverse conditions. The Impact of Geography and Climate on Campaigns The geography and Climate on Campaigns The geography and climate of East Africa Significantly influenced the German East Africa Campaigns The geography and Climate on Campaigns The geography and Climate o
during World War I. The regions diverse landscapes, including dense jungles, savannahs, mountains, and vast arid zones, presented formidable obstacles to military operations. These terrains affected movement, supply routes, and communication, often complicating German logistical efforts. The tropical climate, characterized by intense heat and
seasonal rains, compounded these difficulties. Heavy rainfall often led to muddy conditions and impassable roads, disrupting troop movements and supply lines. Conversely, dry seasons facilitated movement but increased challenges related to water scarcity, impacting both soldiers and indigenous populations. Furthermore, the geographical isolation
of certain territories and the widespread distribution of colonial outposts necessitated extensive planning. German forces had to adapt their strategies to the unpredictable terrain and climate remains a key facet in understanding the
complexities faced during these colonial military operations. Supply and Logistics Management in the Campaigns ffective supply and logistics management in the Campaigns ffective supply and logistics management were vital components of the German troops received adequate provisions,
ammunition, and equipment despite challenging terrain and climate conditions. To sustain prolonged military operations, the Germans relied on a combination of local transportation methods, including port facilities, railways, and riverboats, where available. These infrastructure elements were critical in transportation methods, including port facilities, railways, and riverboats, where available.
landscapes. Key logistical challenges included limited infrastructure, sparse roads, and the vast expanse of East Africa, which increased reliance on supply units and combat troops was essential to maintain momentum and avoid shortages. Strategies to manage logistics effectively
encompassed: Prioritizing supply routes and maintaining key transportation hubsUtilizing local resources and indigenous labor when possibleImplementing stringent inventory controls to prevent wastageResponding flexibly to disruptions caused by terrain and climate conditionsBritish and Allied Responses to German OperationsBritish and Allied
responses to German operations during the East African campaigns involved a combination of military, strategic, and logistical efforts. Recognizing the threat posed by German forces, the British initiated aggressive countermeasures aimed at disrupting German supply lines and territorial control. This included deploying substantial naval and land
forces to cut off German communication routes and engagement points along the coast and inland areas. The Allies also employed a series of coordinated military campaigns, including amphibious landings and strategic offensives, to regain territory held by German troops. These operations were often complex due to the challenging geography and
climate of East Africa, which required adaptable tactics and increased logistical support. Additionally, the British relied heavily on local colonial forces and indigenous allies, integrating them into offensive operations. Their response efforts reflected a broader strategy of containment and gradual encirclement, aiming to weaken German control over
East African territories. These responses played a crucial role in ultimately diminishing German military influence in the region. Outcome and Significantly impacted World War Is military and colonial landscape. Despite limited territorial gains, these campaigns
demonstrated the challenges of colonial warfare, such as logistical difficulties and guerrilla tactics used by indigenous forces. The campaigns resulted in a strategic German retreat and eventual surrender, marking Germanys loss of its East African colonial territory. This outcome underscored the significance of control over colonial resources and
regional influence during the war. Furthermore, the campaigns highlighted the importance of logistics, geography, and local alliances in large-scale military operations. Their outcome influenced future military operations. Their outcome influenced future military operations and underscored the complexities of fighting in diverse environments. Effects on Local Populations and
Colonial TerritoriesThe German East Africa campaigns significantly impacted local populations and colonial territories. Indigenous communities often faced severe disruptions due to military operations, resulting in displacement and loss of life. The conflict severely strained local resources and infrastructure. The campaigns brought about social
upheaval, with many villages destroyed and populations affected by forced conscription or military occupation. Colonial authorities imposed new governance structures, often disregarding indigenous leadership and traditions. This led to long-lasting tensions between local communities and colonial powers. Additionally, the campaigns altered
economic patterns, disrupting agriculture and trade routes. Many civilians experienced hardships due to shortages of food, medical supplies, and basic necessities. The overall effect of the military campaigns was a profound and lasting change in the social fabric and colonial dynamics of East Africa. Legacy of the Campaigns in World War I Military
HistoryThe German East Africa Campaigns significantly influenced World War I military history by highlighting the importance of colonial warfare strategies. These campaigns demonstrated the challenges faced when fighting in unfamiliar terrains and under difficult climatic conditions, which remain relevant in modern military thought. The extensive
use of indigenous forces and local allies by German troops underscored the effectiveness of integrating local knowledge into operations. Such tactics have continued to inform contemporary counterinsurgency and asymmetric warfare strategies. Furthermore, the campaigns emphasized logistical and supply chain complexities in remote regions. Their
lessons regarding logistical resilience remain vital in planning modern military conflicts. Their legacy endures in the
evolving doctrines of adaptability and local engagement in modern military operations. German East Africa Campaigns for Modern Military operations. German East Africa Campaigns for Modern Military operations.
innovative tactics and resourcefulness to counter superior or better-equipped opponents. Understanding the significance of terrain and climate is crucial. The campaigns rugged landscapes and tropical climate affected troop movement, supply lines, and combat effectiveness. Modern military operations can learn the value of detailed operational
planning that accounts for environmental factors. Logistics and supply management proved vital to sustaining long-term military efforts. The Germans logistical struggles underscored the need for robust supply chains, especially in remote or hostile territories. Modern forces should prioritize logistical struggles underscored the need for robust supply chains, especially in remote or hostile territories.
adverse conditions. Finally, indigenous forces and local alliances played a critical role in shaping campaign outcomes. This highlights the importance of cultural intelligence and cooperation with local populations. Successful modern military operations often depend on understanding the socio-political context to gain intelligence, support, and strategic
advantage. In Britain, most of the commemorative anniversaries held to mark events or battles or the First World War have been mainly focussed on Europe and the heavy fighting that took place there. In contrast, the remembrance of faraway theatres has been much more subdued despite the enormous impact and devastation the conflicts had on
the societies that it touched. East Africa is such an example - yet it was the battleground of empires and their African subjects with fighting that ranged from modern Kenya and Uganda in the north through Tanzania to Mozambique in the south, leaving hunger and devastation in its trail. Despite lasting for over four years and impacting the lives of
Kings African Rifles, the British brought in troops from the United Kingdom, India, South Africa, Nigeria, the Gold Coast, Gambia, West Indies, Nyasaland as well as both North and South Rhodesia to fight alongside with those from the Belgian Congo and Portuguese Mozambique. The opposing Germans, cut off by sea and blockade, used ingenuity,
endurance and ruthless exploitation of their colonial subjects to survive in the field until the final Armistice in November 1918. Above: General von Lettow-Vorbeck the Lion of Africa were enormous and troop levels were
low. Although there were a number of set battles, operations in East Africa were dominated by that of patrols and isolated columns moving through dense bush with the nerve-wracking and constant threat of ambush. It was not uncommon for columns to advance a hundred miles through dense bush with their bases far in the rear and dependent on
civilian carriers to move their supplies manually. Most of this had to be accomplished while marching on foot in terrain that ranged from arid deserts to tropical jungles and formidable mountains. Notwithstanding the enemy and inadequate rations and poor clothing soldiers had to contend with dangerous wild animals such as lions, elephants and
hippos as well as the clouds of voracious insects that made life a misery as well as disease. The results were unprecedented levels of sickness, including malaria, dysentery, and pneumonia, for humans, while nearly every single pack animal perished from disease. In 1914, the British brought in substantial reinforcements from the Indian Army to
reinforce the Kings African Rifles and then subsequently two divisions of South Africans for the offensive victory eluded them while disease and overwork ravaged their ranks. It was to be a greatly expanded African force that led the clearance of German East Africa in 1917 and the pursuit through Mozambique in 1918. One of
those serving in 1st Mounted Brigade, Mounted Brigade, Mounted Commandos was Private Jan William Hurter Morkel (1455) who died of dysentery on 15May 1916 age 25 years oldAbove: the pension card for Jan Morkel.Born on 13 November 1890 in Somerset West Cape Province, South Africa, he was better known as Jacky and attended the Hottentots- Holland
school. He later made his rugby debut for Western Province as outside centre. At age 22, Jacky was selected for the 1912 1913 Springboks tour of the United Kingdom and France as outside centre and played in all five tests:23 November 1912 against Scotland in Edinburgh. Springboks won 16 0.30 November 1912 against Ireland in Dublin.
Springboks won 38 0. Jacky scored 2 tries.14 December 1912 against Wales in Cardiff. Springboks won 3 0.4 January 1913 against France in Bordeaux. Springboks won 38 5. Jacky scored 1 try & 2 conversions. The 1912 1913 Springbok side was the first
Southern Hemisphere team to achieve a Grand Slam of five wins against the four Home Nations and France. Above: Jan Morkel worldrugbymuseum.comThe Morkel family originally came from Somerset West, a town situated 30 miles from Cape
Town in the Western Cape. Although most of the family played their rugby for Transvaal. In all, ten members of the extended Morkel family played for the Springboks between 1903 and 1928. No other major rugby-playing country
has produced so many rugby internationals from one family. When the first World started in September 1914, although employed in an industry deemed essential to the war effort, Jacky joined the South African Mounted Commandos as a Private and served as a scout with the 1st Mounted Brigade under the command of Brigadier-General Jacob van
Deventer in German East Africa. Above: Sir Jacob van Deventer (on the right facing away from the camera) When Jan Smuts took command of the British Forces in East Africa on 12 February 1916, Morkel's brigade was with the 1st Division at Longido, following the unsuccessful assault on the German position at Salaita Hill. The brigade was
transferred to Mbuyuni, arriving 4 March, where the 2nd Division was positioned, to act under the direct orders of Smuts, in the forthcoming move to occupy the Kilimanjaro area, before the rains arrived. The objective was rapidly achieved by 21 March, the 1st Mounted Brigade having played a critical role. Smuts then reorganised his forces into
three divisions: the First, under Major-General Hoskins; the Second, including the 1st South African Mounted Brigade at Aruscha, under van Deventer began to advance southwards, the 1st Mounted Brigade taking
Ufiome on 13 April, and pursuing the enemy until they reached Ssalanga on 17 April, where they paused to rest. By this time, the rainy season had set in, and unable to progress beyond KondoaIrangi. The troops lived off such local supplies as could be obtained, and their health severely deteriorated. The
Germans, under direct command of Colonel von Lettow, the German Commander-in-Chief, took advantage of the situation to attack the 2nd Division at KondoaIrangi, commencing on 7 May and continuing until 10 May, when they withdrew. Meanwhile, van Deventer was unable to counter due to the loss of horses from disease, and the sickness of his
troops. Sickness and disease were a constant problem for troops fighting in this harsh environment and after seeing action in the Kilimanjaro area, Jacky Morkel he fell ill and died of dysentery on 15 May 1916. He is buried in Dar-es-Salaam War Cemetery (c) CWGC 2021 The
entry for him in the International Roll of Honour shows how highly he was thought of:He upheld in the worthiest possible manner the teachings of the rugby game.and his case will stand for all time as a shining example to his countrymen. Close by is buried his friend and team-mate Tommy Thompson, who was shot dead soon after Jacky fell ill. Gerald
Tommy W. Thompson, (3744) 5th Regt. South African Infantry, was also a South African rugby union player and had played club rugby for Somerset West Rugby Club and was selected for the provincial team of Western Province in 1912. He was then selected to participate in the 191213 South African rugby tour to the British Isles and France, and was
capped in three tests, against Scotland, Ireland and Wales, all in 1912. He played in a further 12 matches against club sides. He was considered to be one of the two best of an outstanding pack of South African forwards. At the outbreak of the First World War, Thompson volunteered for service, first in South West Africa, and then in the German East
Africa campaign, with the 5th South African Infantry. He was killed in action at Kangata when fighting the Germans entrenched in a concealed position in dense bush. During the firefight that ensued, Byron's forces took heavy losses, but sustained the attack until night, when the Germans retreated. Thompson was killed in action the following day, 20
June 1916, after a bullet pierced his neck.Article by Robert StoneFurther reading:Pension Records for 'non-UK' soldiersRelated articles on the WFA's website:The Battle of the BeesThe Battle for Latema-Reata Nek, British East Africa, 11 - 12 March 1916Indian
 Volunteers in the Great War East African CampaignThe King's African Rifles at Kibata, German East Africa December 1917 to January 1917Out on a Limb - the road through Tunduru: German East African Rifles at Kibata, German East Africa December 1917 to January 1917Out on a Limb - the road through Tunduru: German East African Rifles at Kibata, German Rifles at Kibata, Germ
1918 First World War - German East Africa Click on the links above for details of the campaigns pursued in each territory occupied today by Rwanda, Burundi and Tanzania. Although the hit-and-run campaign conducted there by Colonel (later General) Paul von Lettow Vorbeck
ended in his surrender to the Allies on 25 November 1918, this clever bush strategist and his overall total of 14,000 men for four long years. Once von Lettow Vorbeck had beaten off an initial landing by British and Indian forces at the beginning of November
1914, he stayed brilliantly on the run. Captured supplies and ammunition maintained his small force - never more than 4,000 at any one time, including a couple of hundred white German officers. German settlers came to join him from Nyasaland -
now Malawi- 2 KAR from Kenya and 3 KAR from Uganda), Indian Army officers, Indian and British troops, and a huge force of well over 600,000 carriers - of whom something like 1 in 15 died of disease or accident. The King's African Rifles were supplied with men from Britain's central and eastern African colonies. (See Sgt Miydiyo, Uganda:4 KAR
and Colour Sgt Kumani, Nyasaland:1 KAR). During the course of the First World War upwards of 30,000 Africans served as fighting soldiers with Maxim gun Imperial War MuseumIn 1915 the German East Africans attacked British
East Africa, Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia). In 1916 an Allied force of almost 20,000 KAR, Indian and white South African soldiers invaded German East Africa. But a combination of difficult roadless country, rains, mud and sickness neutralised their effectiveness and killed many of them. By the end of that year the motley Allied
force inside German East Africa included the Gold Coast Regiment, 3 KAR, two regiments each from Kashmir and Baluchistan, and the 40th Pathans. Still they couldn't find von Lettow Vorbeck and his men were chivvied into Portuguese East Africa (now Mozambique)
- but they turned the tables by attacking both their unwilling hosts and the British, before emerging in Northern Rhodesia towards the end of 1918. After the 11 November general armistice, it took the British two weeks to trace their enemy so that they could tell him the war was over. He still had 1,750 men ready for action, along with a gaggle of
camp followers. In his net of bush bamboozlement von Lettow Vorbeck had, over his 4-year campaign, tied up almost a million men from the Gold Coast, The Gambia, Nigeria, South Africa, British East Africa, Uganda, Zanzibar, the Belgian Congo, Portuguese East Africa, India, the West Indies and Britain. Published: May 25, 2024written by Greg
Beyer, BA History & Linguistics, Journalism Diploma The First World War is primarily remembered for its gruesome battles and heavy trench warfare in Europe. In the west, the muddy fields of Belgium and France hosted the intense slaughters etched in the memories of those who fought, while in the east, the Russians paid a heavy price in their want france hosted the intense slaughters etched in the memories of those who fought, while in the east, the Russians paid a heavy price in their want france hosted the intense slaughters etched in the memories of those who fought, while in the east, the Russians paid a heavy price in their want france hosted the intense slaughters etched in the memories of those who fought, while in the east, the Russians paid a heavy price in their want france hosted the intense slaughters etched in the memories of those who fought, while in the east, the Russians paid a heavy price in their want france hosted the intense slaughters etched in the memories of those who fought, while in the east, the Russians paid a heavy price in their want france hosted the intense slaughters etched in the east, the Russians paid a heavy price in their want france hosted the intense slaughters etched in the east, the Russians paid a heavy price in the east, the Russians paid a heavy price in the east of the east
with the Germans and Austro-Hungarians. Meanwhile, far away from these cold and wet trenches were the hot and dusty plains, thick grasslands, and forests of East Africa Campaign was a very different kind of war, but one that deserves historical recognition
MittelafrikaBefore and during the First World War, the German East Africa was the foundation from which this plan could be enacted, for it was there that the Germans were the most powerful. Map showing Africa
in 1914. German possessions are light blue, British are orange, French are purple, Portuguese are yellow, Italian are light green. Source: Diercke Despite the Maji Rebellion from 1905 to 1907, German control remained firm. Tens of thousands had risen up against German colonial rule when the Germans
tried to force them to grow cotton for export. With a force of just a few thousand, which comprised trained Schutztruppe (protection troops), numbering just 260 soldiers, 2,700 European settlers, and 2,470 Africans. It is estimated that the rebellion forces were in the region of 90,000 combatants. Despite this massive numerical advantage, the German
colonial forces were victorious and pursued their control using starvation, resulting in genocide. Colonial militaries across the continent were weak and used obsolete weapons. They were intended to be paramilitary forces rather than frontline soldiers, so the effort to fight an effective campaign was dogged on both sides from the outset. In Britains
favor, however, was a bigger colonial empire with more resources to draw from. Of note was the contribution of South Africa was essentially independent at this point, the decision was made to take sides against the Germans
Two years before the First World War began, the Germans had a plan in place. General Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck, in charge of the German forces, would threaten the British Uganda railway and force the British to divert valuable resources from Europe to Africa. From this point, the Germans would withdraw and prepare to fight a guerilla war,
grinding down the British in the thick African terrain. The War BeginsA statue of an East African Askari soldier by Vivien Mallock. Source: vivienmallock.co.uk On July 31, three days after the war began in Europe, the German cruiser SMS Knigsberg sailed from its port in Dar-es-Salaam with the intention of attacking British commerce in the Indian
Ocean, narrowly avoiding two cruisers from the Cape Squadron, which had been ordered to shadow the German ship. Once the way was open, the HMS Astraea sailed towards Dar-es-Salaam and opened fire on the city. This resulted in a ceasefire agreement. The Germans and the British started mobilizing ground forces. The British sent an
expeditionary force, bolstering their regional forces to between 12,000 and 20,000 troops, with heavy support from the Kings African Rifles, the forces made up of local Africans. The Germans had their own version of this local force, but both sides referred to native African soldiers as Askaris. On November 3, the British Expeditionary Force launched
an attack with 4,000 British Empire troops in an attempt to capture German East Africa quickly. With reinforcements over the coming hours and days, the size of this force swelled to 9,000 troops. Opposing them, the German forces numbered just 1,000. The wreck of the Knigsberg by William Lionel Wyllie. Source: National Maritime Museum,
Greenwich, London, Caird Collection Because of the ceasefire, the Royal Navy, with knowledge of British plans, felt it dishonorable not to warn the Germans of the British started the assault on the city of Tanga on the coast while another 1,500 troops to the
northeast pushed southward to the town of Longido to the east of Mount Kilimanjaro. This two-pronged attack was an abject failure. Despite being outnumbered with an average of eight to one at Longido, the Germans prevailed at both points. These two battles became known as the Battle of Tanga and the Battle of
Kilimanjaro, respectively. Meanwhile, off the coast, the naval Battle of Zanzibar began. The Knigsberg managed to sink an old British cruiser, the HMS Pegasus, but the Knigsberg was cornered by the Cape Squadron and attempted to escape towards the Rufiji River, where it was sunk. The Germans managed to salvage the main battery guns of the
Knigsberg and were able to use them in the years to come. TanganyikaAllied soldiers in East Africa. Source: National Army Museum 1915 was a relatively quiet year for ground forces in East Africa, with no major battles being fought. The Germans were heavily outnumbered and relied on guerilla-style actions to keep their enemy occupied. In the
water, however, the British achieved an incredible feat. The Germans controlled Lake Tanganyika with three steamers and two unarmed motorboats. Challenging the notions of what was actually possible, the British hauled two motorboats. Challenging the notions of what was actually possible, the British hauled two motorboats.
HMS Mimi and the HMS Toutou captured the German steamer SMS Kingani and re-christened it the HMS Fifi. The Belgians then joined in the action, aiding the British with two ships of their own. The SMS Hedwig von Wissmann was cornered and sunk, while the unarmed motorboat SMS Wami was run aground. The last German ship, the SMS Graf
von Gtzen, was scuttled later that year. It was later re-floated and now serves as a ferry, run by the Marine Services Company Limited of Tanzania under the name the MV Liemba. It is the only ship of the German Imperial Navy still sailing today. Bigger BattlesSouth African General Jan Smuts in 1918. Source: National Army Museum For the first year
and a half of the war, forces were being built up. A quick end to the fighting in Europe did not emerge, nor did it emerge in East Africa. In 1916, General Horace Smith-Dorrien was assigned the task of commanding the Allied troops and leading a new campaign against the Germans. On the way to Cape Town, South Africa, however, he developed
pneumonia and had to be replaced. South African general Jan Smuts took over. He had fought against the British in the Second Anglo-Boer War and was well versed in the ways of guerilla warfare, a style which he now had to face from the enemy. His experience made him well-suited for the job. The initial forces assigned to the campaign were mostly
South African Boers, British, Rhodesians, Indian, and African troops, with a large contingent of logistics and supply troops. In total, about 73,000 troops were mustered, with 13,000 of them being combat-capable. In addition, hundreds of thousands of Africans were conscripted to serve as porters. These numbers increased throughout the conflict to
the point where, by the end of the War, around 90 percent of the Allied force was made up of native Africans. A postcard depicting General Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck. Source: CC / Public Domain / rawpixel Although the campaign was considered an operation under the flag of the British Empire, it developed into what was essentially a South African-
controlled initiative. The Allied forces invaded German East Africa from several directions, including the Belgians, who invaded from the west. Von Lettow-Vorbeck pulled his forces back quickly and gave ground to the vastly superior numbers facing him. He evaded capture while his troops continued their guerilla war. Mired in terrible conditions, the
Allied forces began to take heavy casualties as disease set in, felling tens of thousands of troops. General Smuts could not stay to resolve the situation, as he was called to serve in the Imperial War Cabinet in London. The forces in Africa found themselves briefly under the command of Major-General Arthur Hoskins of the Kings African Rifles, who was
replaced four months later by South African Major-General Sir Jacob Louis van Deventer. Meanwhile, the Belgian forces captured the territories of Rwanda and Burundi and pressed further into German East Africa, defeating the British and
Belgian forces and proved a significant logistical asset. Breakthrough of the German Schutztruppe at the Battle of Ngomano in November 1917. Source: Public Domain / Wikimedia Commons Major-General Jacob van Deventer began a renewed offensive in July 1917, pushing the Germans back another 100 miles south. The offensive was halted in
October when the Germans, outnumbered two to one, managed to defeat the Allied forces at the Battle of Mahiwa. The Allies were forced to abandon their defensive positions due to unsustainable losses. With dwindling supplies, the Germans turned their attention to
plundering Portuguese assets in colonial Mozambique. Before reaching Mozambique, however, a section of 1,000 German troops were forced to surrender after running out of food. Despite this major blow, the rest of the German forces carried on, marching through Mozambique. They defeated the Portuguese at the Battle of Ngomano and spent theorem.
next few months on the march, pillaging Mozambique for supplies, but they failed to gain the necessary strength to get back into the fight with the Allies to the north. Surrender & Death TollBritish troops monitoring the Germans learned of a cache of
supplies in a warehouse in Northern Rhodesia. They began probing attacks on November 12 and captured a British dispatch rider who informed them of the Armistice signed the day before. Stunned by this information, Von Lettow-Vorbeck struggled to understand how Germany had lost the war. He nevertheless called off the attack. Two weeks later
he offered his surrender. The war was over. In military terms, the campaign in East Africa was much smaller than the operations in Europe. Although it took place over a much bigger area, there were comparatively few soldier deaths. The British, Belgians, and Portuguese lost somewhere in the region of 20,000 soldiers killed, while the Germans lost
just over 2,000. The real devastation, however, was the effect on the local conscripts and civilians. Over 100,000 porters died in the service of the Allied forces, while 7,000 died in the service of the Germans. Civilian casualties were the worst. An estimated total of 365,000 Africans lost their lives to famines brought about by the war. With so many
conscripted porters, there was nobody left to tend the farms. The lack of food ended up affecting the Allies and the German rationed troops as well, and with only rudimentary medical supplies in most cases, malaria and sleeping sickness took their toll, along with other more common diseases such as dysentery. Aftermath of the East African
CampaignAskari monument in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania. Source: Commonwealth War Graves Commission The aftermath of the East Africa Campaign signified a shift in thinking for many Africans. European weaknesses became evident, and the idea that the Europeans were somehow superior faded away. This gave rise to an increasing anti-colonia.
and nationalistic sentiment that would foment rebellions in many of Africa colonies. With the defeat of Germany, the Second Reichs imperial ambitions were scuppered, and its African Colonies were divided between South Africa and European colonial powers. Askari of the 1st (Central Africa) Battalion, Kings African Rifles, watercolor by Margaret
Metcalfe, ca. 1914. Source: National Army Museum For military historians, there is much to digest in studying the armies and the battles of the East Africa Campaign. For many others, the campaign in East Africa was just another example of colonial forces throwing away the lives of Africans in a dynamic that had lasted for centuries. Perhaps it was
this monumental death toll that is far more important than whether the campaign was a victory or loss for any of the European powers or even the South Africans who imposed colonial mores on the African majority for decades to come. World War I evokes dreary images of trench warfare, where both sides strategy was simply to feed more and more
troops into the mincing machine. But in the forgotten theater of German East Africa, an entirely different kind of battle was fought. This was a war waged by maneuver, not attrition, where creativity was more important than material and inspired leadership was the driving force behind it all. It was an obscure and lonely campaign, conducted over
immense distances, often through unexplored and unmapped areas, in jungles where man-eating lions could pose a worse danger than any human enemy, and it would produce a story of endurance and defiance against almost insurmountable odds. When the war broke out, Germanys limited colonial holdings were quickly mopped up by the British,
with the exception of German East Africa (now Tanzania, Rwanda, and Burundi). It was an area of 650,000 square miles of jungles, forests, and bush, where the lack of roads, and maps, the difficulty of the terrain, dangerous animals, and disease were all were formidable defensive weapons. There were the natural dangersrhinoceroses, elephants,
lions, crocodiles, mosquitoes, tsetse flies, chiggers, and ticks. Malaria and sleeping sickness rampaged through the colony, which was surrounded by enemy territory. British East Africa to the south. In time, the Germans in Africa would find
themselves facing the combined might of India, Great Britain, South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria, Belgium, and Portugal. There were only two railroads in the German colony, one leading from the most settled and developed part of the country. A second ran through the middle of the
through the bush, it was also a highly inefficient system. The farther the porters traveled, the more food and supplies they consumed. A flood of goods at the beginning of the supply line would become a trickle by its end. These long, narrow columns also required protection, both from enemy raids and the ever-present natural dangers. South African
General Jan Christian Smuts ended the war as a member of the Imperial War Cabinet inLondon. Even worse than the logistics problems was the weak and ineffectual British leaders in East Africa would prove to be
unimaginative, lethargic, and lacking in foresight. The British leadership was fracturedoften more involved in infighting amongst themselves than against the enemy. At the beginning of the war, the British consul East Africa, Norman King, reported breezily that the Germans had no stomach for fighting, and that the colony would allow the British to
occupy it peacefully as long as they were guaranteed security from native unrest and naval bombardment. Unfortunately for King, the government in London had never signed on to such a political agreement, and the captain of the HMS Chatham, Sidney R. Drury-Lowe, mistakenly bombarded the port of Dar es Salaam in late October 1914 after
 receiving an erroneous report that the German battle cruiser Konigsberg had been spotted hiding in the harbor. Little physical damage was done, but the breaking of the supposed gentlemans agreement further stiffened German resolve. Compared to this ineffectual group of colonial soldiers, the Germans could not have asked for a more capable.
leader than Colonel Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck. At 44 years of age, he was an experienced Prussian officer and a veteran of the Boxer rebellion of 1900-01 and the Herero campaign in German Southwest Africa in 1904-06. It was in Southwest Africa that Lettow-Vorbeck learned first-hand the classic
principles of guerrilla warfaremobility, surprise, avoiding pitched battles, self-discipline, strong command, and personal leadership. He also understood just how difficult it could be to completely defeat such a force. Lettow-Vorbeck knew that outright victory over the overwhelming resources of the British Empire was simply out of the question. Cut off
from reinforcement or re-supply, and tremendously outnumbered, Lettow-Vorbeck and his army, or Schutztruppe, would be forced to live by their wits. His long-term strategy was to force the British to commit as many troops to East Africa as possible, for as long as possible, to prevent them from going to more important theaters. This was the only
way they could have an impact on events in Europe, where the war ultimately would be decided. These are jolly fellows to go fighting Germans with The basic unit of the Schutztruppe was the company, which contained 16 to 20 German officers and 200 Askaris, or native soldiers. The Germans had learned quickly that Africans made excellent bush
fighters. They required less supplies andperhaps more important could withstand the harsh climate. Each German company had a supply and transport sub-unit, two to four machine guns and 250 carriers, making it a fully self-contained operational unit. In late September, Lettow-Vorbeck seized the initiative by attacking the Uganda Railroad, which
ran parallel to the German border from the port of Mombassa to Nairobi and on to Lake Victoria. This artery was vitally important to the British and threats to it could not be ignorednor could they be stopped. The Germans used self-sufficient 10-man mounted patrolsto cross the waterless wasteland that separated the two colonies. In one two-month
period, 30 trains were derailed and 10 bridges destroyed. More and more British troops were sent to guard the railroads, making them unavailable for offensive operations and leaving the initiative firmly in Lettow-Vorbecks grasp. Prussian-born Col. Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck commanded German forces in East Africa throughout the war. Faced with the
surprisingly stiff resistance, the British attempted to use the same strategy in German East Africa that had worked well in the other German colonies: capture the seaports first, cutting the German colonies: capture the seaports first, cutting the German colonies.
northern railroad to Kilimanjaro, taking the most developed part of the colony and eliminating the bases for German raids on the Uganda railroad. The British put together an 8,000-man expeditionary force of inexperienced troops comprised of British put together an 8,000-man expeditionary force of inexperienced troops comprised of British put together an 8,000-man expeditionary force of inexperienced troops comprised of British territorial and Indian units. In command was Maj. Gen. Arthur Edward Aitken, an old Indian hand
who was more concerned with his soldiers appearance than their battle readiness. I will not tolerate the appalling sloppiness in dress allowed during the late war with the Boers, he announced at his first staff conference. With no evidence or experience to support his claims, Aitken airily pronounced the quality of his opponents to be poor. He should
have worried more about his own troops. Captain Richard Meinertzhagen, chief of British intelligence on what they would face on the ground, and no cooperation from naval forces that feared German
mines in the harbor. Hoping that overwhelming numbers would make up for their other shortcomings, the British force landed on the East African coast on the night of November 2-3. The Germans reacted guickly and rushed reinforcements into the area by rail. Unused to fighting in the bushthey had not even known their ultimate destination until
they set foot on African soilthe British troops quickly became separated and disorganized in the thick terrain, and the wily Askaris began to take a heavy toll. The leading British units, the 13th Rajputs and the 61st King Georges Own Pioneers, blithely walked into a machine-qun crossfire. Their African porters, showing better sense, threw down their
supplies and ran back toward the beach. The Indian troops quickly followed, leaving behind several dead or wounded officers who had tried unsuccessfully to rally them. These are jolly fellows to go fighting Germans with, one disgusted British soldier observed. Lettow-Vorbeck, arriving that night, reconnoitered out front with a bandolier worn across
his chest and a brace of pistols on his hips. As fresh reinforcements arrived, he personally placed them in line, regretting as he did that he had no artillery on hand with which to bombard the British beachhead a mile away. Here in the brilliant moonlight, at such close range, the effect would have been annihilating, he lamented. His counterpart,
Aitken, was not so actively involved. Having set up headquarters in a white house on the bluff overlooking the bay, Aitken leisurely plotted the next days moves. He would attack en masse all along the frontno thought to any misdirection but only after everyone had had a good breakfast. It was mid-morning on November 4 before the British resumed
their advance. The subsequent attack was a laughable disaster. Indian units broke and ran, exposing the flanks of their neighboring regiments to German counterattacks. The battle rapidly became a rout. Even nature turned against the British, as the North Lancashire Regiment found their flanking attack stopped cold by swarms of bees. The
manmade hives were placed high up in the trees, but errant bullets disturbed the nests. Thousands of angry bees swarmed the soldiers below, inflicting dozensand in some cases hundredsof stings. One officer, knocked unconscious by a German bullet, was actually stung awake by the bees and staggered groupily back to the beachhead. Forced to
retreat ignominiously, the Lancashires blamed their failure on a German dirty trick. We dont mind the German fire, one soldier told Meinertzhagen, but with our own bloody crowd firing into our backs and bees stinging our backsides, things are a bit hard. As it was, the unaffiliated bees had also caused the German to evacuate some forward
positions, but unlike the British units, the Askaris managed to maintain their battlefield cohesion. In this period illustration, Lettow-Vorbecks troops are shown repelling the British landings in German East Africa in November 1914. Although outnumbered eight-to-one, Lettow-Vorbeck was eager to counterattack. As soon as new units arrived by train,
he pushed them into action. No witness will forget the moment when the machine guns of the 13th Company opened a continuous fire, he recalled. The whole front jumped up and rushed forward with enthusiastic cheers. In wild disorder the enemy fled in dense masses, and our machine guns, converging on their front and flanks, mowed down whole
companies to the last man. Several Askaris came in beaming with delight with several captured English rifles on their backs and an Indian prisoner in each hand. Other Indian troops, not so fortunate, were found later lying dead with their own bayonets protruding from their backs stark sign of Askari contempt. By nightfall, the battle was over. While
Aitken and his staff withdrew to their troop transport, Karmala, for what the general shamelessly termed a good nights sleep, the beaten soldiers, English and Indian, spent a decidedly less comfortable evening, hiding in mangrove swamps and trying to make their disoriented way back to the beach. One officer observed: It is too piteous to see the
state of the men. Many were jibbering idiots, muttering prayers to their heathen gods, hiding behind bushes and palm trees and laying down face to earth in folds of the ground with their rifles lying useless beside them. I would never have believed that grown-up men of any race could have been reduced to such shamelessness. As for their
commander, the ever-observant Meinertzhagen found him to be tired out and disgusted with the whole business. His ambition seemed to be to get away. Eventually, the War Office would grant Aitken his wish, reducing him in rank to colonel and placing him on half-pay, without active duty, for the rest of the war. In this, their first major battle in
Africa, 8,000 British troops, armed with 16 machine guns and a mountain battery, had been decisively defeated by 1,000 Germans armed with four machine guns and 54 Askaris. The haste of the British evacuation led to a
material windfall for the Germans. Left on the beach were 12 machine guns, 600,000 rounds of ammunition, hundreds of rifles, and enough coats and blankets to last the rest of the war. Alhough well-trained, the Schutztruppe began the war poorly equipped with 1871 model Mausers that still used black-powder
cartridges, leaving a telltale cloud of smoke to give away their firing position. The spoils of victory at Tanga allowed three full German companies to be rearmed with much better British Enfields. Realizing the shock caused by the disaster at Tanga, Lettow-Vorbeck was guick to follow up his astounding success. Keeping a firm grasp on the initiative.
the Germans attacked the British border town of Yassini in January 1915. It was near Tanga and could be used as a forward base for a land assault on that port. Its proximity to the German railroad system allowed nine companies to be rapidly transferred into the area. Lettow-Vorbecks plan at Yassini was to set up the British and put them in a position
where a conventional response would be a serious mistake. The Germans quickly encircled the 250-man garrison and occupied the hills around the town. Repeated British were forced to withdraw after suffering heavy casualties. The canny Lettow-Vorbeck also used
heat and thirst as weapons against the encircled British forces. On January 19, the British garrison at Yassini caused heavy losses for the Germans, too, losses Lettow-Vorbeck realized he could not afford to take if his forces were to last out a long war. For the time being,
however, the British remained on the defensive, leaving the initiative firmly in Lettow-Vorbecks hands. Traditionally-clad and armed African auxiliary troops made up a large part of Lettow-Vorbecks constant raids
on the railroad north of the border, were a festering insult to British prestige, and far-reaching changes were made in May 1916. The ineffectual Wapshare, Aitkens replacement, was replaced in turn by South African general Jan Smuts, who had fought a guerrilla war of his own against the British during the Boer War at the turn of the century. Smuts
was an entirely different type of soldier than Aitken or Wapshareforceful, aggressive, and determined to achieve victory. Along with him came the South African Expeditionary Force, 18,700-men strong. This was part of a concerted British buildup that would total almost 45,000 men by the spring of 1916. Facing this huge force on the northern border
were a mere 6,000 German troops. It was only a matter of time before the weight of those disparate numbers would make themselves felt. Beginning in April 1916, the German colony was invaded from all directions. The British launched a two-pronged assault from the Kilimanjaro area, taking the developed northeast section of the colony and cutting
the northern railroad. To add to Lettow-Vorbecks woes, another invasion was launched from Northern Rhodesia, while a Belgian column moved from north of Lake Tanganyika, and another British column headed south from Lake Victoria. In addition, seaborne landings took Dar es Salaam and other minor ports in the south in September, completely
cutting off the Germans from the outside world. With their only choice retreat or fight major battles against tremendous odds, the Germans withdrew from the northern part of the colony. This set the pattern for the future campaign. Lettow-Vorbeck would slowly retreat, fighting just enough to weary and tax the British, always careful not to suffer too
many casualties himself, taking every advantage of the terrain, and using every ounce of guile and wiliness he possessed to keep the enemy tied down in East Africa. As more troops were dispatched, the sheer size of British forces in the African theater became a supply nightmare and its own size became self-defeating. This difficulty in supply often
meant that smaller forces advanced from different supply bases, and the inability to concentrate their forces guickly and attack converging columns one at a time from interior lines. He could also anticipate the British since they had to base their supply system on
a port or railroad. Moving away from their bases meant using human carriers or at best horses and mules. The British were to use tens of thousands of carriers, of whom nearly 50,000 would die by the end of the war, primarily from disease. In addition, nearly 140,000 horses and mules diedand still the supply system failed. The British outstripped
their supply lines and were often reduced to starvation rations. Short rations, shortages of medicine, and ever-present disease led to a steady attrition of British forces, whether or not they came into contact with the enemy. As the Germans withdrew, Lettow-Vorbeck tried to exploit all food resources in a given area so that it could not support the
enemy. From May 1916 on, the campaign in German East Africa became known by those who fought it as the hungry war. Map 2006 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MNIsolated from the outside world, the Germans became increasingly self-reliant. Lettow-Vorbeck compared the improvised German economy to the industry of the
Swiss Family Robinson. Motor fuel was made from coconuts. Boots were made from skins of cattle and game, the soles cut from captured saddles. A cottage weaving industry was established to produce cloth for uniforms. Quinine, the all-important drug used to treat malaria, was made from wood bark. Among the troops it was jokingly known as
Lettow-Schnapps, and many complained that its flavor was worse than the disease. Any and all assets were put to work. The British cruiser Pegasus in Zanzibar harbor. The British sent two 6-inch Monitors all the way from Malta to sink her, which they did in
In The Germans salvaged the guns, built carriages for them, and used them until October 1917, when they finally gave out. Unable to bring Lettow-Vorbeck to bay, the British steadily pursued the Germans. Pushed into the southeast corner of the colony. Lettow-Vorbeck faced an agonizing decision. With the Allies in control of almost the entire
colony, there was no shame in surrendering after a well-fought campaign. But as long as a German army could remain in the field, his original mission of tying down British forces was still viable. Even after the long retreat, morale among the Askaris was still high. Lettow-Vorbeck was not one to give up and it was his indomitable spirit that the troops
followed. There is almost always a way out, even of an apparently hopeless position, if the leader makes up his mind to face the risks, Lettow-Vorbeck said. Given the options, he decided to evacuate German East Africa and invade Portuguese East Africa and invade Portuguese East Africa. It was a plunge into the unknown. The Germans had neither maps nor any real idea of what they
would face on they got there, but Lettow-Vorbeck was undaunted. If we succeeded in maintaining the force on the new territory, he reasoned, the increased independence and mobility, used with determination against the less mobile enemy, would give us a local superiority in spite of the great numerical superiority of the enemy. Accordingly, he
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reduced the size of his force to one that could be handled well in the bush. German doctors picked the healthiest men, not necessarily the best soldiers, since endurance would be totally independent of supply dumps and could rely only on what it could capture. His reorganization complete, Lettow-Vorbeck crossed the Rovuma River on November 25, 1917, evacuating the German colony and invading Portuguese East Africa. The tone for the new phase of the campaign was set immediately. There was a Portuguese fort at Negomano less than a mile from where the Germans were crossing the river. Although his forces were still in the process of making the cover of the woods. The 900-man Portuguese garrison did not put up much of a fight. The

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