

THE IMPACT OF WORLD WAR II
ON KENYA:
THE ROLE OF EX-SERVICEMEN IN
KENYAN NATIONALISM

Thesis for the Degree of Ph. D.
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OKETE J. E. SHIROYA
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ABSTRACT

THE IMPACT OF WORLD WAR II ON KENYA: THE ROLE OF EX-SERVICEMEN IN KENYAN NATIONALISM

By

Okete J. E. Shiroya

In recent years, most studies on many facets of life in Africa have tended to conclude that World War II had a tremendous effect on Africa and the Africans. Specifically, it has been stated that the war had a significant impact on nationalist movements and political activities in Africa. The present study is an attempt to investigate the impact of one aspect of World War II, the African ex-soldiers, on political development and nationalism in Kenya.

Data was gathered by means of personal interviews with a randomly selected sample of individual ex-askaris. An adaptation of "oral tradition" methodology was used in collecting data and in checking its "objectivity" and authenticity. This meant, for instance, that ex-askaris' accounts on a particular event or experience were compared to and checked against those of the civilian population; at times the accounts had to be checked against written evidence from such sources as wartime official letters, circulars or despatches.

The study covers roughly the period from 1939 to 1963 i.e. from the outbreak of World War II to the year of Kenya's

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independence. The first part deals with the recruitment of Kenya Africans into the British Armed Forces. The next portion examines the wartime experiences of the askaris and how these influenced askaris' thinking and outlook on life. Finally, the study deals with the problems of demobilization and reabsorption: ex-askaris' reaction to civil life and their participation in anti-colonial or nationalist movements.

Finding and conclusions:

Service in the British Armed Forces, greatly influenced the political thinking of the average askari. Although not making him into a modern nationalist, it certainly made him politically more conscious and enlightened than his non-veteran counterpart.

Wartime contacts between African and European troops tended to lead to the lowering of the prestige of the latter. On the other hand Africans' military service in foreign lands and their contacts with non-European troops tended to sharpen the Africans' anti-colonial sentiments. When they returned to civil life, they turned these experiences and observations into "political weapons" against the colonial rule.

Ex-askaris did not succeed in forming a politically powerful organization. This was mainly due to the government's rigid control of ex-askaris' activities. Consequently, their major contribution to Kenya's nationalism: the spreading of the newly acquired political ideas, was by individual ex-askaris.

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Even in the mau mau uprising in which ex-askaris played a significant part, they joined it as individuals.

Recommendations and implications:

The government's rigid control forced the ex-askaris' "movement" to go "underground" thus forcing ex-askari's to resort to "covert" tactics in their anti-colonial activities. Researchers should therefore turn to these covert tactics. Investigation should emphasize ex-askaris' informal and personal contacts with the non-veterans. Ex-askaris' political influence among different social groups becomes evident only when the subject is approached from this angle. Their influence in trade unions, co-operative societies, political parties, teachers' unions, and most important at the village level, should be investigated.

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I assume full responsibility for any errors that remain in this manuscript.

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Chapter I

Introduction

Most studies on Africa in recent years have tended to show that there were sudden and major changes on that continent immediately following World War II. These studies give the impression that before 1945 there was "darkness," but that after that year there was "light." Specifically, it is shown that during the years immediately following the war, Africans were politically more conscious than any other time before; that they began demanding a greater say and share in the governing of their countries, and when this failed they resorted to more direct protests such as the actual fighting for their national independence.

I found such conclusions rather fascinating and therefore I decided to find out exactly what happened in Kenya at this particular time. I was particularly interested in investigating the impact made on Kenya's political development by the ex-askaris -- 98,000 or more of them. (See Appendix B) Of greatest interest to me was the effect these people had on the political awakening and consciousness of the mass of Africans; the part they played in the nationalist movements

as well as their direct contribution to the fight for their national independence.

Although I seriously began to think about this topic in 1965, it was not until the summer of 1967 that I actually embarked on field research. I spent 9 months -- August, 1967-April, 1968 -- in the field collecting and gathering data. I spent one month in England and the rest of the time was spent in East Africa. While in these countries, I visited libraries, museums, universities and interviewed various scholars interested in recent African history. However, about fifty to sixty percent of data upon which this study is based was derived from my interviews and discussions with hundreds of ex-askaris in Kenya. This meant that these ex-askaris had to recall events they witnessed or experienced some 20 to 25 years ago. For this reason I decided to use the "oral tradition" method which has become in recent years a very valuable tool in the study of history of most of the illiterate societies.

To be sure that the information I was getting from these ex-askaris was balanced, i.e. it was "objective," I applied a number of techniques of which the following were only a part: first I visited all provinces in Kenya and made sure that I interviewed ex-askaris from all major war-theatres, i.e. Northeastern Africa, North Africa, the Middle East and Southeast East Asia. I also made sure that I interviewed

ex-askaris from rural areas as well as those from towns, those from more "advanced" ethnic groups as well as those from the "less advanced" ones. I then checked this information against what the friends, associates, neighbors or employers told me about a particular ex-askari or about a group of them.

In addition, I varied methods of interviewing them. At times ex-askaris were warned in advance of my coming to interview them while at other times interviews were impromptu. Sometimes I interviewed groups consisting of ex-askaris from all war-theatres, while at other times I would interview groups consisting of ex-askaris who served in the same area. Still at other times, I interviewed individual ex-askaris, while at other times I interviewed them in groups, conducting the interviews as if they were seminars or discussion groups.

Through this handling of the topic there emerged certain accounts and experiences that were common to most ex-askaris regardless of where or when they served. In such cases I found it impractical to document or indicate the source of my information since such information tended to be general and can be obtained from any group of ex-servicemen in Kenya. However, in cases where an experience or an account tends to be unique to an individual ex-askari or to a group of men I have furnished the necessary references.

In examining the contribution of ex-askaris to Kenya's political enlightenment, I started my investigation with the methods by which Kenya Africans were mobilized or recruited into British Armed Forces; here I discuss, among other things, British propaganda which these conscripts were deliberately exposed to and through which the British managed to transform them into loyal, brave and skillful soldiers. Then I devote time to discussing askaris' wartime experiences: treatment by their British officers and other ranks, contacts with non-European troops, services in foreign lands, ideas and technical skills acquired during their service, etc.

The second half of the study concentrates on analyzing his experiences and life as an ex-soldier: problems and prospects of demobilization and reabsorption, his reaction to civil life, the reaction of the public to his return to civil life, particularly the European community in Kenya, and the treatment meted him by the government. Finally, I discuss ex-askaris' organizations -- participation or attempt to participate in political, economic and social life of the colony.

My main conclusions are that the average askari returned to East Africa with better general education than his non-veteran counterpart. He was, for instance, better informed and more politically conscious than his friend at home. It is not known if ex-askaris would have succeeded in organizing

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themselves into a powerful anti-colonial force had the colonial government in Kenya left them uncontrolled. What is known is that the government controlled their activities in such a way that they were unable to function in any way as an organized group.

This in turn forced ex-askaris to join "civilian" organizations which were then in existence and which were carrying on anti-colonial activities. They were found in such anti-colonial movements as political parties, trade unions and Mau Mau uprising. Thus in contributing to the fight for independence, whether in ideas or in technical skills, ex-askaris did so not as a group but as individuals.

Although the primary concern of this study is the impact of the Second World War on Kenyan nationalism -- specifically, the role played by the Kenya African ex-serviceman in the political awakening and in the fight for independence -- a brief analysis of African nationalism in general, of which Kenyan nationalism is a part, is in order.

Recent studies on African nationalism have shown that there are several interpretations and explanations of what it is and is not. There are those who feel that there is no such thing as African nationalism, or that if there is, then it is entity all its own. John Gunther, writing in 1955, stated that: "The bulk of the Congolese do not think at all in

nationalist terms, i.e., of freedom from Belgian rule, because they are not educated enough to know what nationalism is."¹ As late as 1962 this same view was presented, although in a slightly different manner, by Margery Perham, otherwise a "liberal" Africanist, who stated that, "We must think of our territories...as being, after annexation, almost or even entirely passive in the hands of their new rulers...I traveled much in Africa between the wars...and yet I never saw any overt signs of discontent or antagonism; everywhere I met friendliness and eager curiosity."²

¹John Gunther, Inside Africa (New York, 1955), p. 666. Gunther contradicted himself on the same page when he said, "The Belgian system works well and organized discontent does not exist.... There are, however, by official statistics some 3,800 political prisoners in the Congo -- not an inconsiderable number.

²Margery Perham, The Colonial Reckoning (London, 1951), pp. 33-34. In her next statement, she showed her bias in favour of the colonial administration when she stated that, "There were very occasional and very local disorders, generally almost reflex actions of individual tribes against some local grievance." This is the line colonial rulers took whenever there was any resistance or rebellion against their rule. For instance, the Portuguese take the same stand in Angola and Mozambique today (1968). These resistance movements were termed "local," "tribal" and said to be engineered by a "small band of possessed natives." This kind of distortion of the scope, aim and strength of African nationalism led to Crocker's conclusion that: "if recent history is any indication, the more nationalism is repressed the more it grows." W. R. Crocker, Self-Government for the Colonies (London, 1949), p. 85.

Secondly there are those who view African nationalism as something which simply happened or came out of nowhere during the inter-war period. "The two decades separating World War I from World War II were formative years of African nationalism -- if the seeds of African nationalism were sown in the two decades between wars, they matured with astonishing speed after 1939."³ Their view is that there was no African nationalism before World War I. However after World War I, they say, African nationalism began to grow, although many people were not aware of this fact: "On the surface, little was to be seen, but pressures and aspiration were building up that broke loose with astonishing force following the end of hostilities in 1945."⁴

Then there is the "evolutionary school" which views African nationalism as having gone through the stages of birth, growth and maturity. Colin Leys observed that, "Nationalism is really a natural evolution with a fixed cycle of growth, and what we are witnessing [in Africa] is an inevitable

³T. Walter Wallbank, Contemporary Africa, Continent in Transition (Princeton, 1956), pp. 51-52. Wallbank concluded that "in the twenty years before 1939 there were hardly any manifestations of African nationalism..."

⁴Ibid., p. 51.

[illegible]

culmination of it..."⁵ Viewed from this angle, the time of annexation of the African land by aliens becomes the "birth-day" of African nationalism, and its growth takes place during the period of colonial rule. Its maturity is reached on "Independence Day."

Finally, there are those who view African nationalism as being in no way different from other nationalisms. Hans Kohn and Wallace Sokolsky have observed that "The manifestations of nationalism differ widely according to the cultural traditions and the social structure of the people involved. Yet with all due difference, the state of mind [italics mine] which manifests itself in nationalism is similar everywhere, in Europe, in Asia, in Africa and in Latin America."⁶ It would therefore appear that those who view African nationalism as totally different from other nationalisms have concerned

⁵ Colin Leys, "Nationalism in Africa," The Listener, LXIII, No. 1627 (June 2, 1960), 961-963. This school of thought characterizes African nationalism as having evolved from "incipient" to "mature" or "developed" nationalism, from "traditional" to "modernist and more thoroughgoing nationalism," its growth "gradual" and its continuity "geometric." See Robert I. Rotberg, The Rise of Nationalism in Central Africa: The Making of Malawi and Zambia 1873-1964 (Cambridge, Mass., 1955), and James S. Coleman, "Nationalism in Tropical Africa," American Political Science Review (June, 1954), pp. 404-426.

⁶ Hans Kohn and Wallace Sokolsky, African Nationalism in the Twentieth Century (Princeton, 1965), p. 8.

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themselves with the analysis of its manifestation and expression, i.e., strategies and tactics employed in the fight for national independence, and not the idea or philosophy of African nationalism. They have not analyzed African nationalism as a "state of mind," that is to say as a national sentiment, the idea of freedom, the spirit of independence, the rejection of exploitation and oppression, and opposition to injustice and subordination. This was articulated by Colin Leys when he observed that "the central idea of these African nationalisms is not fundamentally different from that of other nationalisms -- the idea that foreign dominance, in this case white dominance, should come to an end, and that Africans should rule themselves. 'Africa for the Africans,' 'Freedom,' 'Self-government Now' -- these slogans sum it up more efficiently than pages of explanation."⁷

If we accept the view that social justice and a "place in the sun" are goals men stubbornly pursue within the framework of revolutionary nationalism, then we begin to understand numerous "national" struggles that went on in Africa both before and after European settlement, struggles among Africans themselves and later between Africans and European settlers. It is only when we realize this that Sithole's statement becomes relevant: "African nationalism roots back into history,

⁷Leys, op.cit., p. 961.

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and without this historical foundation, the seemingly sudden African nationalism becomes inexplicable. There are chain causes which may be traced back to pre-European days of Africa."⁸

Because pre-European struggles are outside the scope of the present study, we shall confine ourselves to colonial Africa. What has been stated in the previous two paragraphs can be supported by recent studies which have shown that the "fight for national independence -- the fight for freedom" started immediately following the imposition of foreign rule on the Africans, and continued until national or political independence was achieved. Endless wars of "pacification" which the colonial powers were forced to wage against what has been called African "primary resistance" -- that is to say, the very earliest struggle against the imposition of colonial rule -- occurred frequently and everywhere in Africa throughout the colonial period.

⁸Ndabaningi Sithole, African Nationalism (London, 1959), p. 19. See J. M. Lonsdale, "Some Origins of Nationalism in East Africa," The Journal of African History, IX, I (1968), pp. 119-146. Notice his reference to two aspects of African nationalism: "spontaneous element" of popular initiative and the "conscious element" of direction and control by political leaders. It would appear that most analysts have confined themselves to the latter and have totally neglected the former. It is to the former that Kohn and Sokolsky refer when they speak of "residual nationalism." Kohn and Sokolsky, op.cit., p. 8. Crocker had the same thing in mind when he stated that "the foregoing survey...has been sufficient to illustrate the existence of (African) nationalism as a force which can no longer be neglected. It is primordial." Crocker, op.cit., p. 84.

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Historiography of African nationalism is as controversial today as the idea of African history was several years ago. One is reminded of a statement made in 1963 by Professor Trevor Roper, then Chairman of the Faculty of History at Oxford University that: " [British undergraduates] seduced always by the changing breath of journalistic fashion demand that they should be taught African history. Perhaps in future there will be some African history to teach. But at present there is none, there is only the history of the Europeans in Africa. The rest is darkness ... and darkness is not a subject of history."⁹ He has been accused of having practiced "intellectual imperialism."¹⁰ However, today, five years later, African history and its study are taken for granted.

Until recently most studies on African nationalism have either shown that there is no such thing as African nationalism or if its existence is admitted, then the assertion is made to the effect that it is a thing of its own, that it has no features which it shares commonly with other nationalisms. However, very recent studies have thrown new light on this subject and like the case of African history,

⁹Quoted by Stanley Diamond in his article, "Perspective of Political Anthropology" in Stanley Diamond and Fred Burke (eds.), The Transformation of East Africa (New York, 1966), p. 6.

¹⁰Ibid.

African nationalism may soon be taken for granted.

These studies have certainly illuminated this subject, hence the remarks that "The Black Revolutionary, particularly in its latest phase, has challenged all previous interpretations of the history of black people, not only in the United States but everywhere in the Western World and in Africa."¹¹ In Africa, such studies have mostly been confined to the general area of East and Central Africa. There is no doubt that basic conclusions in these studies can and do apply to most parts in Africa. Through thorough re-examination of such themes as the African reaction, response and resistance to the colonial rule, a new trend in the interpretation of the history of African nationalism has emerged.¹² It is shown

¹¹George Rawick, "The Historical Roots in Black Liberation," Radical America, II, No. 4 (July-August, 1968) p. 1.

¹²J. M. Lonsdale, "Rural Resistance and Mass Political Mobilization Among the Luo of Western Kenya," East African History Conference, Dar es Salaam, 1965 (mimeo.); Alison Redmayne, "Mkwawa and the Hehe wars," Journal of African History, IX, 3 (1968), 409-436. A. B. Davidson, "African Resistance and revellion against the imposition of colonial rule," in Emerging Themes in African History, ed. T. O. Ranger (Nairobi, 1968); J. Iliffe, "The effects of Maji-Maji Rebellion on German occupation policy in East Africa," British and German Colonialism in Africa, ed. P. Gifford and W. R. Louis (Yale, 1968); J. Iliffe, "The organization of the Maji-Maji Rebellion," Journal of African History, VIII, No. 3 (1967) T. O. Ranger, "Revolt in Portuguese East Africa: the Nakonde rising of 1917," in St. Antony's Papers, No. 5, ed. K. Kirkwood (London, 1963); T. O. Ranger, Revolt in Southern Rhodesia, 1896-7 (London, 1967).

[illegible]

that "resistance" movements were indeed a manifestation of nationalism, i.e. struggle for freedom, and that there is continuity and connection between the earliest resistance movements and the latest nationalist movements, which allegedly emerged from nowhere in the 'fifties or 'sixties. In Professor Ranger's words, "Many scholars have employed a rather rigid periodization in their application to African nationalist historiography. The period of resistance is followed by hiatus; then arises the new leadership."¹³

The new school focuses on and stresses continuity in the struggle for freedom. The fight might take on new and various forms but the goal remains always the same: freedom from domination. This assertion is based on the assumption that "revolution" or "struggle" was not a new phenomenon in the African experience; as in any other human society, revolution was part of life centuries before the period of colonial rule: "History of Africa like that of any part of the world is essentially the story of social change. The colonial period is but one of Africa's many revolutionary ages. . . The process of change in African history is an ongoing one."¹⁴

¹³T. O. Ranger, "Connexions Between 'Primary Resistance' Movements and Modern Mass Nationalism in East and Central Africa," Part I, Journal of African History, IX, 3 (1968), p. 443.

¹⁴John Lonsdale, "The Emergence of African Nations, A Historiographical Analysis," African Affairs, Vol. 67, No. 266 (January, 1968), pp. 13 and 28.

The continuity of the struggle, the necessity and importance of resistance movements to the nationalist movements, which the new school emphasizes in the history of African nationalism, is illustrated by what Rawick has said about the black revolution in the New World: "The pre-revolutionary activity was a necessary predecessor to the Haitian revolt; and without Gabriel Prosser, Denmark Vessey and Nat Turner, there could have been no Fredrick Douglas, Rap Brown, Malcolm X and Eldridge Cleaver."¹⁵ The new school rejects as false the common belief that the African responded passively to the establishment of colonial rule on that continent. This is attested to by the large number of primary resistance movements that were organized and carried out throughout colonial Africa. Walter Rodney has remarked that:

It would be impossible to enumerate various popular uprisings -- small and large -- which took place in Angola in the twentieth century. They were unceasing, breaking out in one place and then another. What is equally significant is the persistence of these incidents long after the Second World War.

Nowhere in Africa was European colonial administration accepted without struggle, so in this respect Angola was no exception.¹⁶

Once any resistance movement was crushed by the colonial forces, the "nationalist leaders" would go underground until

¹⁵Rawick, op.cit., p. 4.

¹⁶Walter Rodney, "European activity and African reaction in Angola," in Aspects of Central African History (ed.), T. O. Ranger (London, 1968), p. 65.

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conditions became once more favorable for the launching of a fresh struggle. Sometimes they employed new strategies or forms of struggle. Hence Lonsdale's conclusion that "the apparent African passivity was not passivity at all, but rather a continuing search for effective political and social formulae even if at a local level."¹⁷ Supporting this conclusion, Rawick has elevated it to apply not just to black revolutions but to revolutions everywhere: "The oppressed continually struggle in the forms of their own choosing and surprise all mankind when they transform the day-to-day struggle into monumental revolutionary deeds."¹⁸

These studies have shown that those African groups who militarily resisted European colonization, even though they were eventually subdued, retained pride in themselves, and to this day idealize the leaders who led them into such wars. At any rate, African "rebellions" did much to shatter the early European attitude of masterful complacency. The importance and connection of these struggles to nationalist movements is evident throughout Africa. Hence Ranger's conclusion:

It will be seen therefore that there is a long ancestry behind the attention currently paid by nationalist leaders to the heroic myths of

¹⁷Lonsdale, op.cit., p. 22.

¹⁸Rawick, op.cit., p. 14.

primary resistance. When a man like Nelson Manderla seeks inspiration in tales 'of the wars fought by our ancestors in defence of the fatherland' and sees them not as part merely of tribal history, but 'as the pride and glory of the entire African nation,' he is echoing the response of many of his predecessors.¹⁹

From the foregoing, we can safely conclude that African nationalism -- the idea of freedom -- was not dependent on some "future event" such as European colonialism, World War I or World War II. Reverend George Gay -- writing as an historian -- was correct when he wrote that, "World War II did not give birth to the spirit of independence, but rather gave expression to that spirit which was already there."²⁰ Those other outside influences which allegedly gave birth to African nationalism can be viewed in the same light. Seen in this light, the transformation which was brought about by the Western impact in Africa has been an indispensable precondition for the realization and victory of African nationalism and not for its birth or rise. Through this transformation, African nationalism began to express and manifest itself in new ways.

During the "primary resistance" stage, Africans had opposed colonial rule as relatively small "national" groups (e.g., language or ethnic groups); but later they organized

¹⁹Ranger, op.cit., p. 445.

²⁰Quoted by Sithole, op.cit., p. 26.

themselves into larger national groups. Their nationalism moved from what Kohn and Sokolsky called "residual" level (i.e., ethnic) to multi-ethnic or territorial level: Ghana, Tanzania, Zambia, Malawi, Congo, etc. Earlier the Africans had opposed colonial rule with traditional African weaponry and military organization; later they employed modern weaponry and modern military organization. While they had used traditional Chiefs' councils to negotiate settlements with the colonial administrations, they later agitated for freedom and independence through modern news media and modern political parties and trade unions.

Because of the Western impact, the African found a new way in which to express his nationalism. It became a new "tool" or "language" through which he could effectively communicate and carry on a dialogue with the colonial administration. Expressed in these modern terms, African nationalism assumed a new status -- indeed, a new force -- which colonial administrations could no longer ignore and with which they had to reckon.

It can be stated that as long as African nationalism expressed itself through African traditional symbols, it failed to disrupt colonial rule. But once it modernized its tactics and strategies, it began to express itself effectively and in the end it disrupted the colonial rule, i.e., it achieved its

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goal -- national independence. In order to defeat modern colonialism, African nationalism had to employ modern ways and means.²¹

Some criteria or qualifications have been used in judging African nationalism in order to show that it is unique. For instance, it has been said that in any one African nation people do not share a common language, history, culture, religion, environment and way of life.²² Recent studies, however, have shown that these features, conditions, beliefs or criteria need not necessarily be there in order for a people, anywhere in the world, to call themselves a nation.

²¹In his book The World and the West (London, 1953), A. Toynbee talks about this a great deal. Giving Japan as an example he stated that, "The Japanese were prompters ... opting for, and acting on, this alternative policy of holding their own against the West by learning how to use and make the latest types of Western weapons." p. 53. Margery Perham's paraphrasing Toynbee's general statement made it clearer, stronger and more precise: "The subjected groups have struggled to take over from the West their instruments of power in order to turn them against the West, to regain their independence and to rebuild their own shaken societies. Japan showed the way..." Perham, op.cit., p. 11.

²²See Perham, op.cit., p. 26. "The astonishing fact is that nearly all the new African nations lack all these elements except a common territory." Compare this with a circular letter from the West African National Secretariat in 1947 which stated, amongst other things: "Common problems, common sufferings, and common heritage have made the people of West Africa one in spite of attempts by our detractors to pitch us against each other..." Quoted in Crocker, op.cit., p. 88.

Professor Boyd Shafer has listed ten of these beliefs and concluded that:

All of these beliefs or conditions need not always be present in the same degree and combination. The Swiss may stress their common history and their common defense so much that they do not need the fiction of a common race or the tie of one language.²³

There are numerous examples of this nature from both old and new nations. If, for instance, "race", "stock" or "nationality" were used as a condition or qualification for a nation, then Britain would not be a nation, because Britons in Ireland, Wales, Scotland and England belong to different national or language groups or "racial stocks." In the United States of America there are Asian-Americans, African-Americans and European-Americans. In the last grouping there are Anglo-Saxons and non-Anglo-Saxons; these two large groupings can be further subdivided into particular European "stocks": French, Italians, Germans, English, Dutch, Swedes, etc. Yugoslavia is another good example. There is no such thing as a Yugoslav language. There are five major national and language groups and about twenty national and language minorities. Turning to Asia, Vietnam offers an excellent example: there are at least five major national groups in Vietnam.²⁴ The Masai are

²³Boyd C. Shafer, Nationalism: Myth and Reality (New York, 1955), p. 9.

²⁴Major national and language groups in Yugoslavia are: Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Macedonians and Montenegrins. In Vietnam they are: Kinh, Tho, Nung, Muog, Man, etc.

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to Kenya and Tanzania what the Basques are to France and Spain.²⁵

These examples of nation states demonstrate the complexity of the term nationalism. Shafer, Crocker, Kohn and Sokolsky seem to agree that what nationalism is or is not depends on one's definition of it. Thus Crocker has said, "definitions of nationalism are as numerous as the definitions of poetry";²⁶ perhaps this is an overstatement. Professor Shafer's analysis of modern nationalism calls for serious consideration:

Nationalism is what the nationalists have made it; it is not a neat, fixed concept but a varying combination of beliefs and conditions... It may be in part founded on myth but myths like other errors have a way of perpetuating themselves and becoming not true but real. The fact is that myth and actuality and truth and error are inextricably intermixed in modern nationalism.²⁷

One may also say that intellectuals, in addition to nationalists, have made nationalism what it is today. Nationalism carries a different meaning if its interpretation is either

²⁵This illustrates how at times both old and new nations are faced with similar problems: "United in heritage, divided politically, the seven Basque provinces occupy portions of France and Spain. Of 870,000 Basques, some 750,000 live in Spain. Spanish Basque separatists agitate for a return to their ancient independence. Last spring demonstrations paralyzed San Sebastian." National Geographic, Vol. 134, No. 2 (August, 1968), p. 246.

²⁶Crocker, op.cit., p. 84.

²⁷Shafer, op.cit., p. 7.

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broad or narrow. In his study of African nationalism Hodgkin uses the term nationalistic in a broad sense by which it means:

Any organization or group that explicitly asserts the rights, claims and aspirations of a given African society (from the level of the language group to that of 'Pan-Africa') in opposition to European authority, whatever its institutional form or objectives.²⁸

Analysis of African nationalism, in this study, has been based on the above-mentioned assumptions. Since Kenyan nationalism is an aspect of African nationalism, it was necessary to analyze African nationalism in general before turning to Kenyan nationalism in particular. The primary concern of the study is to analyze the role of the African ex-soldiers in the political awakening and in the fight for independence in Kenya -- their contribution to nationalism in Kenya.²⁹

²⁸Thomas Hodgkin, Nationalism in Colonial Africa (New York, 1957), p. 23.

²⁹Those who need detailed analysis of nationalism in Kenya in general are referred to an excellent study by C. G. Roseberg and J. Nottingham, The Myth of 'Mau Mau' (New York, 1966). My analysis is restricted to the role of ex-askaris in that nationalism.

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Chapter II

Recruitment and Mobilization

The method by which men are brought into any army as soldiers may influence the way they regard their government, their country, their people and even the enemy against whom they are fighting. If we know something about the methods by which Africans were brought into the British Army, we might begin to understand what role they might have played after the war. As late as 1952 Lt.-Col. J. R. Carbonell, with reference to African soldiers in World War II, stated that: "They were typical mercenaries -- Awkward they may have been, but fight they did, and what is more to the point, being the ultimate object of infantry they killed."¹

¹A portion of Lt.-Col. J.R. Carbonell's letter to and quoted by Lt.-Col. H. Moyse-Bartlett in his book The King's African Rifles: A Study in the Military History of East and Central Africa 1890-1945. (Aldershot: Gale and Polden Ltd., 1956) See also Colin Leys, "Nationalism in Africa," The Listener, LXIII, No. 1627 (June 2, 1960), p. 961, where a young nationalist Albert Tevoedje from Dahomey is quoted as having said that "In the name of Africa, mercenary soldiers were drafted to fight in North Africa, as shock troops, in the attack on the life and liberty of other weak people..." Compare this with James Baldwin's statement that "Black soldiers are simply hired mercenaries of a chaotic and irresponsible economy, which as it cannot employ Negroes in any other way prefers to send them out to die." Quoted by Robert E. Staples in his article "Black Mercenaries in Vietnam," in Liberator, Vol. 8, No. 2 (February 1968), p. 10.

The official position on this matter was revealed by the East Africa Command when it stated that, "Let us not forget that the tens of thousands of African soldiers serving in this war came only with the haziest knowledge of the issues at stake and that, in all cases, they came as volunteers."²

One way by which we can establish whether or not African soldiers volunteered to join the Army or whether they joined it as mercenaries is to examine methods used in recruiting them into the Army. Interviews with ex-servicemen reveal various methods by which these young men were introduced into the Army. Some of them recall that they were "captured" by their chiefs -- on District Commissioner's orders -- and told to join the Army. Others recall that they were at labour recruiting centers when they were "ordered to

²East Africa Command, The Infantry of the East Africa Command, 1890-1944. (Nairobi, not dated), p. 1. It is argued further that the African "wanted to help the war ... and earn much honour and civilization." See Russell Smallwood's article, "Native Military Development in East Africa," The Fortnightly, CLXII, No. 935 (New series) (November, 1944), 314-319. He says that East Africans "answered a call for volunteers." See Britain. Hansard's Parliamentary Debates (Lords), CXLIV (1946-47), 678: It is implied here that the African soldier volunteered to join the British Army; "there were those, too, and with them the Jeremiahs, who said that the African would not be willing to fight for the British Colonial Empire. Their croaking was stilled for ever --- in a time when we were incapable of putting pressure upon them to join our cause, they flocked to our standard..."

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get into the lorry" so that they "may be taken to the place of work" only to find that they ended at a military training depot.³ Some state that their European employers, most of whom were farmers, selected them from the rest of the men and forced them "to get onto the military lorry which was standing there waiting for us."⁴ There are those who state that they were removed from school by force and ordered to join the Army:

They came to our school and measured our heights ... any boy who was 4½ feet or taller was ordered to report to the Chief the following day ... from the Chief's center we were taken to the military training depot."⁵

Although the majority of the soldiers were conscripted into the Army, as shown in the preceding paragraph, a small minority volunteered to join the Army. Some of the volunteers

³This same method of obtaining recruits by trickery was employed by British military authorities in East Africa during World War I. Savage and Munro noted that "In the Kisii district of Nyanza almost a quarter of a century after the outbreak of the war [WWI], the district commissioner reported that the local people still recall how the administration secured porters in the early months of the war by tricking the young men into coming into the station to cut grass and then enrolling them as porters." See Savage and Munro, op. cit., p. 317.

⁴Force was also used by recruiting British teams in obtaining askaris in WWI. One of the government officials stated in his report that "Lately in order to fulfill labour requisitions, force has had to be applied; i.e. the young men have been rounded up during the night." See South Kavirondo, Annual Report, 1914-15.

⁵Quite a number of ex-askaris throughout Kenya told me similar stories although this particular one was told by Ruphas Aholi when I interviewed him on February 8, 1968 at Kakamega, Kenya.

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admit that they joined the Army because "Italians and Germans were preparing to invade and conquer our country." Some volunteered because "the king of Abyssinia, the only African king in the whole of Africa, needed more African soldiers from other parts of Africa in order to defeat Italian invaders." Others volunteered because they were unemployed and they thought that to serve in the army was just "another one of the European jobs."⁶ Still others volunteered because they had heard that "once you join the army you need not worry about paying poll tax." There are those who volunteered because they had been told that those who volunteered would not be sent to the front line but that those who waited for conscription would be "sent straight to the front line where the fighting was the fiercest." However, all these volunteers agree on one point: conditions were so difficult that they were left with no other alternative but to "volunteer." Most of them admitted that they volunteered to join the Army because "we were tired of dodging conscription by hiding away from government and military authorities ... we knew that the chiefs would eventually catch up with us and that the consequences would be graver ... we therefore decided to 'volunteer'

⁶Compare this with Robert E. Staples, op.cit., p. 11. "...more American black youths enlist in the armed services because this frequently represents the best opportunity they have in life."

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From this information, it is incorrect to state as the East Africa Command stated, that "in all cases, they came as volunteers." It can be said that a very small number volunteered to join the Army; but even then we have to explain in this case what is meant by a "volunteer." Nor is it correct to refer to these soldiers as mercenaries. They were not mercenaries in the conventional sense of the term. Mercenaries usually sign contracts with their employers, they usually understand terms of their employment, and most important, they are always "soldiers of fortune," i.e., they expect to earn a large sum of money for their military services. None of these conditions applied to African troops.

In pre-World War I campaigns such as the Ashanti and Somali, British colonial authorities tended to recruit soldiers from the "warrior tribes" and from the least modernized ethnic groups. As Professor Schleh has pointed out:

The British officers in the field had long experienced a preference for the "martial races" in recruiting for colonial forces. They often

⁷ Hiding from authorities did not help Africans escape recruitment for both wars. During recruitment for WWI it was reported that "flight to the bush country was one of the few loopholes left open, but it had many drawbacks -- problems of food and water supply, separation from families, and the ever-present possibility of being discovered in a government sweep." See Savage and Munro, op.cit., p. 337.

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viewed Western education as spoiling potential recruits and favored working with men from the least Westernized hinterlands. The average African soldier was illiterate and remained so."⁸

The myth that "non-warrior tribes" were incapable of fighting a modern war had a lot to do with how British military authorities went about recruiting soldiers for the Army during World War I and II. Between 1939-1940 the majority of recruits were Wakamba (the Kamba). They were forced to turn to other ethnic groups because there were no more Kamba men for drafting; as one official put it: "The Kamba tribe is supplying most of our needs for Kenya at present but its man-power is not inexhaustible and if good material is available elsewhere use might be made of it."⁹

The question of man-power forced the British authorities to look elsewhere for "good material" and they found it first among the "Samburu, Markwet and Elgeyo tribes." By the

⁸ Eugene P. A. Schleh, "Post-service Careers of African World War Two Veterans: British East and West Africa with particular Reference to Ghana and Uganda." Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation (Yale University, 1968), p. 11. "The Samburu I saw will please the G. O. C. General Officer Commanding because they are entirely uneducated savages. Few of them even speak Swahili." See a letter from the Chief Native Commissioner (referred to hereafter as C.N.C.), Rift Valley, 10 February, 1940, Kenya National Archives (referred to hereafter as KNA) MD/4/5/136/27(70).

⁹ Letter from Jinja Training Center to Provincial Commissioner (referred to hereafter as P.C.), Rift Valley, 14 December, 1939, KNA. MD/4/5/136/27 (70).

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end of 1940 these "tribes" were recruited for King's African Rifles on a large scale because they were considered most suitable: they were "warrior tribes" and they were the least Westernized.

During the first year or two of hostility, British military authorities tried to find justification for recruiting on a large scale outside the Kamba "tribe." Services in the King's African Rifles were regarded as some kind of a punishment and the Army itself was considered to be a "correctional institution." The Samburu, once more, have provided us with a good example: "The young men in Samburu have not been behaving themselves lately. I consider it would be an excellent thing to recruit for the King's African Rifles among the young Samburu."¹⁰ So wrote the District Officer working among the Samburu.

At first members of agricultural "tribes" were not regarded as "good material" for the King's African Rifles. Thus a circular letter from the East Africa Force stated that "Giriamas are agriculturalists and could not therefore be expected to produce likely gunners."¹¹ This is how agricultural

¹⁰Letter from District Officer Laikipia Samburu, Rumuruti to P.C., Rift Valley, 22 September, 1939, KNA. MD/4/5/136/27 (70).

¹¹Letter from East Africa Forces to C.N.C., 23 September, 1940, KNA. MD/4/5/136/27 (70).

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groups throughout East Africa were regarded by British military authorities. However, later on when more recruits were needed than the "warrior tribes" could provide, the British authorities found a justification for recruiting among agriculturalists. In the case of Geriamas they found themselves joining the war on "geographical grounds": "The Giriamas live in a hot and moist country and would do best in similar country."¹² For one reason or another the officials managed to introduce agricultural tribes into the King's African Rifles, on a large scale.

By the end of 1941 the policy of recruiting from "martial races" had virtually been abandoned and recruitment, on a large scale, was being carried on throughout Kenya among most, if not all, ethnic groups, although a few regions remained most favoured hunting grounds for Army recruits.

This massive and all-out recruitment of men for the King's African Rifles throughout Kenya alarmed civil agencies. Because all able-bodied men were being conscripted into the Army, non-military agencies began to experience a serious and acute shortage of labour. European farmers were the first to be affected. For instance, the Kenya Tea Growers Association sent a letter to the Government complaining about the unfair practices on the part of military authorities:

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"In the event of conscription for Pioneer and Labour Corps being resumed, this should be carried out on a population basis, as far as possible, in the reserves as this Association understands that the recruiting in Nyanza Province was on a higher percentage basis than any other Province in the colony."¹³

Numerous complaints along the same line were sent to the Government by various farmers' organizations throughout Kenya: dairy, sisal, wheat, coffee, etc. Farmers had one of the strongest, in fact, the strongest lobby in the colony and in the Legislature. For this reason their complaints were bound to be taken seriously, as indeed they were. In and for their own interest, they put great pressure on the Kenya Government (it should be remembered that a large number of the Legislature members were themselves farmers) until the Government yielded to their demands:

In view of the reports from labour difficulties which many farmers are experiencing . . . His Excellency the Governor is now able to announce that arrangements have been made with the Governors of Uganda and Tanganyika and military authorities where by all recruiting in Kenya for East African Military Labour Service and the African Auxiliary Pioneer Corps (East Africa) will be suspended until early in 1942.¹⁴

¹³ Letter from the Kenya Tea Growers Association to C.N.C., 6 November, 1941, KNA. MD/4/5/140/27 (70).

¹⁴ "Government and Labour Shortage," East Africa Standard, October 4, 1941. Reports from World War I show that massive and all-out recruitment among East Africans attained alarming and serious proportions: "As regards replacements the future was looking gloomy, since the Civil Administrations

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British military authorities had abandoned their policy of "selective recruitment" to that of "all-out recruitment" among the tribes of East Africa. They needed more Africans in uniform and these greater numbers could not be obtained solely from "martial races." The Chief Secretary in Dar es Salaam spoke for the rest of the British officials in East Africa when he declared that "the present methods of recruiting are inadequate and must be changed forthwith."¹⁵ It can be accurately stated that these words ushered in a new policy: the policy of "all-out" recruitment throughout East Africa.

This shift was necessary because of "the hard-pressed white man-power of the Empire," thus the increase of black troops "offered an opportunity for reducing the burden" on

of British East Africa (i.e., Kenya) ... and Uganda were unanimous in declaring that further demands on native tribes would probably end in an uprising and additional operations. In this quandry an appeal was made to the Portuguese Government to allow recruiting north of latitude 22..." See "Report on the Period from August 4, 1914 to September 15, 1919 by Lt.-Col. O. F. Watkins, C.B.E., D.S.O., presented September 30, 1919," Director of Military Labour to B.E.A. Expeditionary Force (Typescript), University College Nairobi (hereafter referred to as U.C.N.) HD-RPA/F/1/2.

¹⁵ From Chief Secretary (referred to hereafter as C.S.), Dar es Salaam, 19/9/1940, to P.C.'s Tanganyika KNA. MD/4/5/136/27 (70).

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European man-power.¹⁶ It is also argued that by 1941 the African soldier in the field and on the firing line had proved himself; he had demonstrated that he was a brave, skillful and able soldier. This made his services more appreciated and needed than ever before. Hence General Platt's conclusion: "So it became our bound duty to develop native manpower to the full."¹⁷

Military authorities began to recruit among Westernized peoples for this same reason. They needed the know-how of the schooled African. Many hundreds of clerks, artisans and drivers were needed, not to mention schooled men to serve as communications operators, artillerymen, medics, etc. Military authorities needed these people in large numbers and therefore they were forced to turn from less to more Westernized peoples.¹⁸

This large increase of African recruits to the King's African Rifles was opposed by a large section of Europeans

¹⁶Gen. Sir. William Platt, "Studies in Wartime Organization: (6) East African Command," African Affairs, XLV, No. 178 (January, 1946), p. 29.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 31. See KNA. MD/4/5/140/27 (70), a letter from G.H.Q. Middle East Forces, 18 March, 1942, to Chief Secretary (hereafter referred to as C.S.) to the Governors' Conference, Nairobi, in which a request was made for more African troops to the Middle East: "It is a platitude to say that this war is becoming one of manpower ... examine the possibility of making still further large contributions..."

¹⁸Schleh, op.cit., p. 12.

both in Europe and in Africa. This, of course, was not anything new. Opposition to the participation of African troops in European conflicts had been raised before on several occasions. France was bitterly criticized by other European nations for having used African troops in Europe against Germans and Russians; for compelling "him to kill or be killed in the white man's quarrel."¹⁹

To train a man for war is to train him in violence. This was the crux of the matter: it was the underlying factor in all this opposition and debate on African participation in European wars. It had been argued that great involvement and wide participation by Africans in these wars would destroy European prestige. It was further argued that military training could provide ex-servicemen with the means and the know-how to translate his new appraisal of Europeans and of themselves into direct, immediate and destructive action.²⁰ This

¹⁹Norman Angell. "France and the Black Power," The Contemporary Review, CXXI (February, 1922), 226-229. The article concluded that the use of Black troops in Europe "is dangerously like the introduction of slavery for military purposes." See also Britain. Hansard's Parliamentary Debates (Lords), CXLIV (1946-47), 678: Here reference is made to the heated debates that went on regarding the participation of African soldiers in European wars. "The African has made his debut into 20th century war; he has shown himself to be a soldier of courage and capacity. When this war started a very natural doubt existed as to whether he could take his place in the hideous tempo and complexity of the modern battlefield. Those doubts were dispelled in Abyssinia, Madagascar and on the battlefields of Burma."

²⁰Schleh, op.cit., p. 9.

was the general view of Europeans particularly those in East, Central and South Africa. This was especially true of the periods before and after World War I and II. During the actual hostility, when African troops were needed to help defend European empires, this view changed somewhat; but as soon as the hostility ended this line of thought was resumed and expressed openly both in private and public circles. Thus Daniel F. Malan, the former Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa stated in 1954 that Europeans of his country could not "afford to militarize the African natives ... why should we give them weapons? The French, in their African territories, trained a great many natives between the 2 World Wars. These natives went to Europe, and now they are back to Africa. But what they saw doesn't make them love the European. They're a danger to the white man..."²¹ This statement is at variance with that made by Prime Minister Jan C. Smuts, delivered at the height of the Second World War. In that speech entitled "Retreat from Segregation" he in effect declared an end to segregation in South Africa: "Isolation has gone and

²¹"Why South Africans Want Stricter Segregation," interview with Daniel F. Malan, United States News and World Report, XXXVI, April 16, 1954, p. 61. See Donald S. Rothchild's article "The Effects of Mobilization in British Africa," Duquesne Review (Fall, 1959), p. 6, in which he stated, referring to Malan's statement, that "It represents accurately the lengths to which European apprehensions of military training for Africans go during periods when no crisis threatens the African scene."

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I am afraid segregation has fallen on evil days too."²²

Because Malan was not speaking at the height of a world war that threatened the very survival of his country and people he could afford, in 1954, to make such a statement. On the other hand, Smuts made his at the height of World War II; his major concern was to win the war and thus save the country, ensure its survival and the safety of his people. He needed black soldiers -- to defend, fight for, protect and safeguard his country -- and he was prepared to renounce, although only as a tactic, any law, tradition or custom that would prevent their full support and loyalty to his war aims. Although this case demonstrates European mentality in South Africa, it was nevertheless very typical of Europeans, in varying degrees, throughout colonial Africa: during the war the African soldier was a friend to the European community; after the war, he became a "danger" to that community.²³

It can be stated that Kenyan soldiers, like their

²²Edward Roux. Time Longer than Rope (London, 1949), p. 314. Nobody took Smuts' statement seriously. By 1945 he was once more speaking the truth: "It was fixed policy to maintain white supremacy." (See Cape Times, March 15, 1945). Quoted in African Transcripts, No. 4, July 1945, p. 120.

²³One official suggested that because the ex-soldiers were an "undisciplined lot, giving dumb insolence to the District Officer" they should on resuming civil life continue to be watched and supervised by military officers. See "The Returned Askari: Problem of Demobilization in East Africa," The Times (London, August 21, 1945), p. 5.

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fellow African soldiers elsewhere, were neither mercenaries nor volunteer soldiers in World War II. They were, at the time of joining the army, conscripts. As it is always the case with conscripts, the rate of desertion (euphemistically called "over-stayed leave" by the military authorities) among Kenyan soldiers was high. It was reported at one time that as many as 15,000 Kenyan soldiers had "over-stayed leave" and that the military authorities took energetic measures to round them up and send them back to war.²⁴

Perhaps the African soldier in World War II, at different times and places, was a conscript as well as a mercenary. Moyse-Bartlett was closer to the point when, referring to African soldiers in Southeast Asia, he stated that:

It must be realized that the attitude of an African askari serving so far from home was essentially that of a mercenary soldier. This did not imply any lack of interest in the cause for which he fought, in so far as he was able to understand it, or any failure in loyalty.²⁵

Africans might have joined the army as conscripts; they might have shown "an attitude of mercenary soldiers" but

²⁴See African Transcripts, No. 7 (January 1946), p. 31.

²⁵Bartlett, op.cit., p. 680. See Britain. Hansard's Parliamentary Debates (Lords), CXIV (1946-47), 680: In some British circles, African soldiers were regarded as mercenaries. Lord Tweedmuir speaking in the House of Lords on December 5th, 1946, noted that the inclusion of great numbers of African soldiers in British Armed Forces, would be the solution to the shortage of man-power in war time, because "in Africa there is a great reservoir of stalwart men who have shown that they have not only courage, but capacity as soldiers in 20th century warfare."

one thing is clear: after a few months in the service, most African soldiers went through a kind of transformation -- they were transformed into committed and loyal British soldiers with an interest in the cause for which they fought.

Through intensive propaganda the British succeeded in mobilizing African recruits from mere conscripts into loyal, committed and gallant British soldiers. At first, this propaganda was intended to convince the African soldier that he joined the army in order to defend his fatherland. They were told that the invasion of their homeland by the Italians was imminent and inevitable. In this respect the invasion by Italy of Ethiopia served as a good example of what the British were talking about. All news media -- the radio, the press and the Chiefs' councils (Barazas) -- conveyed to the Africans the dangers of the impending Italian invasion. Therefore African young men were urged and called upon to defend their homeland. The African, as a result of this propaganda, felt that he had a stake in the war; he had to fight for his own survival.

As long as North Eastern Africa remained the only major war theatre in which East African soldiers fought, this argument made some sense. Yet the British used the same argument when East Africans were sent to fight in the Middle East and Southeast Asia. It is interesting to note that long

after the Italians had been defeated in North Eastern Africa, Major General Fowkes told those soldiers who went to fight on foreign soil that their wives, children, friends and homes "will never be fully safe until the armies of the Germans and the Japanese have been beaten and shut up too ... although they are a little farther away the Germans and the Japanese are worse enemies of askaris than the Italians ever were."²⁶

However, under these circumstances, this type of argument was not quite convincing to Africans. The British had to shift the emphasis from the defense of the fatherland to the defense of a cause, an idea, a principle. A cause could be defended anywhere; it could be defended on one's own fatherland or on a foreign territory. In this they succeeded because most African soldiers came to believe that they were defending and dying for a cause. As the East Africa Command remarked at the height of the war:

It is part of the inevitable price of liberty that men must suffer and sometimes die, so that the cause may go forward. The African soldier has

²⁶Major General Fowkes' statement quoted by K.G. Dower in his book Askaris at War in Abyssinia (Nairobi, East African Standard Ltd., not dated), p. 55. Interviews with ex-soldiers in Kenya show that they were told that German laws were barbaric, "an eye for an eye," and that under German rule African men would be castrated. "We had been told our country was threatened with invasion by the Germans and Italians, whom we could imagine to be the worst monsters on earth," see Waruhiu Itote, 'Mau Mau' General (Nairobi, 1967), p. 14.

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shown on countless occasions that he is ready to suffer -- and if necessary to die gallantly -- as any other soldier of any race or creed.²⁷

Africans were no longer recruited for the direct protection of their home territory or fatherland, but to defend a cause elsewhere.²⁸ The African soldier was loyal, committed and fought gallantly -- and if necessary died fighting -- for a cause. Through calculated and intensive propaganda the British succeeded in convincing the African soldier that they were fighting for the same reason and against a common enemy, that British victory meant victory for the Africans; it meant freedom, peace and prosperity for the soldier and his people. At the same time, it was stressed that German victory meant enslavement, oppression and poverty for the African.

For the sole purpose of disseminating propaganda information, the East Africa Command began to publish a weekly news review as a supplement to their East Africa Command General Routine Orders. At first it appeared under the name of "Credit Side" and later it changed its name to "Off Parade."

²⁷ East Africa Command, The Infantry of the East Africa Command 1890-1944 (Nairobi, East Africa Standard Ltd., not dated), p. 30.

²⁸ African soldiers were called upon to defend an "international cause, variously defined and expressed but usually called by some such phrase as 'the preservation of liberty and democracy,'" See C. G. Roseberg, Jr. and J. Nottingham, The Myth of 'Mau Mau' (New York, 1966, p. 191.

In either case the primary aim was to "bring entertainment and information on world affairs to the troops in outlying areas of the Command." The information in these weekly news reviews was to be used as the basis for lectures, talks, conversation and radio broadcasts to and among the troops.

Germans, Italians and Japanese were featured in these weekly news reviews as the "bad guys" while the British and Americans were the "good guys."²⁹ It was emphasized that "aggressor nations" had caused the war and that the British were simply defending themselves -- in Europe, in Africa and elsewhere. One report stated that, "This 'all-in' war will end only when the world gangsters have been wiped out ... we will not be satisfied until the beastly disease of Nazism and Fascism is cleaned from the face of the Earth."³⁰

²⁹These were some of the headlines that appeared in these news reviews in connection with the Axis Forces: "Japs are not super men," "Germans do not like their allies," "Germans are scientifically setting about to exterminating the Polish nation," "Evil things being done by the Nazi." For the Allied Forces the following appeared: "Epics of British Bravery," "British and American air superiority," "The British nation can be relied upon," "Turkish journalist paid tribute to people of Britain," "East Africans [British Forces] are welcome in Madagascar." See East Africa Command General Routine Orders published between January 1942 and December 1943.

It is a fact that British and American troops were equally exposed to intensive propaganda. But there is a difference: British troops were British citizens while African troops were British "subjects." There was another difference: propaganda specifically aimed at the African soldier tended to emphasize Hitler's racism.

³⁰See "Credit Side" No. 12 in East Africa Command General Routine Orders, No. 219 (February 2, 1943).

This type of propaganda had its desired and direct effect on the African troops. Most of them came to believe that Germans were truly their "natural" enemies. That the soldiers thought, believed and acted in this manner was reflected in the many letters they wrote back home.³¹ Contents of these letters are supported by interviews with ex-soldiers who agree that "by listening to what our British officers told us about the Germans, I came to hate them the Germans to their bones." The mood of East African soldiers in the Middle East was captured by a Kenya soldier in a letter he sent back home:

Do not listen to anybody but listen to what I write to you. The German has started the war upon Britain... Germany is a wild nation looking for war... Now the British is lion-hearted, a big fight is taking place, and Germany shall be beaten.³²

Another Kenya soldier wrote:

We are working hard and we are assailing the enemy day and night. Our enemies will soon be in Germany and we will surprise the tyrant... Don't be angered when you pay higher prices ... it is war time and we must all accept inconveniences. Even here an orange costs a shilling.³³

³¹Military authorities in East Africa carried out strict mail censorship. At times some letters would be read, translated, copied and filed. Copies of some of these letters are available in Kenya National Archives, Nairobi.

³²Quoted in "Credit Side" No. 23 in East Africa Command General Routine Orders, No. 200 (October 12, 1942).

³³KNA. MD/4/5/116/24 (69); Censorship Reports (African),

Positive effect (from the point of view of British military authorities) of propaganda among African soldiers was manifested in various ways. Many songs which were sung by askaris, especially marching songs, showed a marked pro-British propaganda influence. Note its influence in these marching songs:³⁴

We are suffering because of war
 Things are hard to get
 But Kenya is still the country of the King
 And Mussolini could not enter
 Have you ever seen the war
 Wake up or you will lose your people.

The following song was sung first by Nyasaland (Malawi) askaris; but later it was sung by most East African askaris in all war theatres:

We don't know where we are going
 But we are going away
 Perhaps we are going to Kenya
 We are sorry we are leaving home,
 But this is war. Time of trouble.

1943. (East Africa Command Special Censorship summary on mail written by E. A. personnel in the Middle East. The Report is based on mail of approximately 30,000 letters. The mail bore dates ranging from 27 March to 5th May, 1943) A soldier from Uganda wrote that "We are sure to beat our enemy and after conquering him we shall have freedom under our King George VI." Another one from the same country wrote that "It won't be many months before I come to you because the "mshenzi" Swahili for barbarous German is being badly beaten without loss to our Government... There is no danger except for the Indian Japan (sic) but he can do nothing as he has nothing."

³⁴See Gerald Hanley, Monsoon Victory (London, Collins, 1946), pp. 142 and 164. Most of the songs by the East African troops were sung in Swahili. I have reproduced the two songs as they appear, in translated form, in Hanley's book.

Young men are going away to war.
 We go to defend Kenya and AFRICA.
 Because the ENEMY is near.
 Time of trouble.

Whether it was in the letters they wrote back home or in songs they sang, East Africans demonstrated that they were committed to a cause.³⁵ Judging by these examples just given above, those views held by most African soldiers were to a very large extent colored by British propaganda to which they were subjected.³⁶

In addition to those propaganda methods previously cited, the British military authorities used African chiefs for disseminating propaganda among African soldiers. For instance, chiefs from East African territories were sent to the Middle East and to Southeast Asia as the "spokesmen" for the civilian population in East Africa.³⁷ In actuality they

³⁵Seen in this light, Morse Bartlett's statement makes a lot of sense: "Though their African soldiers' attitude may have been primarily that of mercenary soldiers, it is wrong to assume that the change of principle went unrealized among the askaris, or that its implications were without effect." Bartlett, op.cit., p. 685.

³⁶As we have demonstrated by these examples, ideas or contents in askaris' letters and songs were similar to those which appeared in official news media which conveyed official anti-Axis propaganda.

³⁷Sixteen East African Chiefs visited troops in Burma and sounded "their frame of mind, requirements, etc...." See East African Standard, November 2, 1945, quoted in African Transcripts, No. 7 (January, 1946), p. 31. For the Middle East, see East Africa Standard (n.d., newspaper clippings), KNA.MD 4/5/65-I. Reference is made to five East African chiefs who visited the Middle East.

were British agents with the sole purpose of spreading British propaganda among East African troops serving in these foreign lands. Chief Amoth from what was then Central Nyanza District in Kenya, in his speech to the troops in the Middle East stated that:

If you were asked to ahead into Europe, I want the name sent to me of any man who is afraid... All people at home are wanting to join up ... I visited Tanganyika when it was ruled by Germans and I know from my experience the advantages of British rule. I have seen in the desert tours the destruction of war; we do not want that destruction to come to our villages.³⁸

He was speaking for the other chiefs on that tour when he made this statement. It should be understood that most East African chiefs, and especially those who were chosen and sent to visit troops, were, for obvious reasons, strong supporters of British war policies and aims. It was no surprise that the General Commander in the Middle East made the following observations in connection with the chiefs' attitude toward the war and African troops: "I felt that loyalty to King and Government which exists strongly in East Africa was reflected in the way the chiefs handled the councils."³⁹

While the African soldier was being told that his

³⁸KNA. MD 4/5/137/27 (70), letter from Captain F.E.R. Ross, G.H.D., Middle East Forces, October 3, 1943, to East Africa Command, Nairobi.

³⁹Ibid.

homeland would have a more just form of government -- which meant democracy or self-rule and which should not be confused with independence -- after the war, he was personally promised a better and fuller life after the war. Financial aid was promised: funds with which to begin business in trade or any other commercial enterprise; land or settlement and employment were also promised to the soldiers: "We will find jobs for those who don't want to work on their farms or who don't wish to be self-employed."⁴⁰

When the time came the British authorities in East Africa failed to honour these promises: "We were badly let down . . . the Government cheated us . . . and when we demanded these things, they called us enemies of the state."⁴¹ All the Government could do at this time was to deny that it ever made such promises.⁴² This, of course, was not true. It might be

⁴⁰ Typical accounts by many ex-askaris in Kenya. However, a group of Nandi ex-soldiers whom I interviewed on February 22, 1968 at Kapsabet had the best account.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² It is true that toward the end of the war British military authorities, through a project called "Lectures to Troops," tried to correct the sweeping statements and promises they had made; but it was too late. These revised and belated lectures were designed to put the East African war effort in its "right perspective" and to give some idea of post-war development and what "it is reasonable to expect." See "Lectures to Troops," KNA. MD/4/5/80-I.

argued that these promises were part of the war propaganda to promote British war aims; but to deny that they were ever made is far from the truth. That these promises were made is evident from information obtained by interviewing ex-soldiers, which in turn has been strongly supported by documentary evidence. If anything at all, one learns from these interviews and studies that the soldiers refused to be oversold on these promises; they were certainly suspicious and skeptical about these statements. They could not take the authorities seriously on these matters because experience had taught them that the Government had never "kept any of its promises to the Africans." They refused to believe that the Government would act differently in their case.⁴³

The British Government realized at the very beginning of the war that loyalty of the East African civilian population was just as important to its war aims as that of the troops. Consequently civilian population was not exempted from a

⁴³For detailed and excellent analysis see Rothchild, op.cit., p. 6 with quotations from Great Britain, Report of The Commission of Enquiry into Disturbances in the Gold Coast, 1948. See also Gerald Plange's statement (he was war correspondent in India and editor of the Daily Echo) quoted in Schleh, op.cit., p. 106. Compare these analyses with "Negroes in 'the Nam'" by Thomas Johnson; and "The Returning Vet" by P. Pierce and P. Bailey in Ebony, Vol. XXIII, No. 10 (August, 1968), pp. 31-40 and 145-151.

barrage of propaganda. They were told that Britain was invincible and that her soldiers were in East Africa for the sole benefit of the East Africans. Eventually, African civilians came to know the truth of the matter: they at least came to know that Britain could be defeated. They became dubious as to the ultimate British victory, especially after the defeat of France, the fall of Moyale and the British Somaliland. Radio broadcasts from Italian occupied territories were transmitted to British East Africa. This of course alarmed the British because these broadcasts were spreading anti-British propaganda in East Africa.

The first reaction was to stop Africans from listening to such radio news broadcasts. Consequently, listening to such broadcasts was declared unlawful. This was ineffective because the Government found it impossible to enforce such a law. It was decided instead that Italian propaganda should be fought with British counter-propaganda. The Governor of Kenya, for instance, made special broadcast news to "Indian and African communities in Kenya" in which he stated among other things: "Our soldiers and our airmen may be relied upon to fight bravely and protect us adequately and with God's help we shall win."⁴⁴

⁴⁴ For the first time Africans learned that a representative of the British Government (Serikali) could ask for "help from God." Until then they had been told that Britain

With this broadcast, counter-propaganda became an open and official policy of the Government. Four months later (October, 1940), intelligence reports by Kenya Police Department showed that Italian propaganda via radio was a "threat to the security of the state." The report concluded that there was only one solution: calculated, well planned and organized counter-propaganda. The Commissioner of Police warned that "properly conducted propaganda would help enormously ... there is no question that counter-propaganda is essential."⁴⁵

Uganda Government had made its own investigations and concluded that effects of Italian propaganda in East Africa

was invincible and they had believed it. However, a month before the Governor's news broadcast (May, 1940), it had become apparent to the Africans that all was not well within the British Empire, at least not in Kenya, because Kenya Government had drawn up "plan for evacuating areas which may in certain eventualities become the scene of military operations." These plans and arrangements were being made on behalf of European and Indian communities only; those in western Kenya would proceed to Uganda and those in southern and south eastern Kenya were to proceed to Tanganyika (now Tanzania). See circular from the Secretariat, Nairobi, 6 May, 1940, to all P.Cs, Kenya; KNA. DC/EBU/10/4. See "Evacuation of School Children" KNA.DC/EBU/10/5.

Arrangements were not made for evacuating or protecting Africans. In case of enemy attack, "Chiefs should do all possible to shelter their people from violence ... to bear in mind that they are suffering under temporary disabilities, waiting for the day when his forces will drive out the enemy...." See circular from P.C. Central Province, 13 July, 1940, to all D.C.'s in Central Province: KNA. DC/EBU/10/4.

⁴⁵KNA. MCI/8/7/118-I, letter to C.S., Nairobi,
? October, 1940.

were "already of a character demanding restriction or rigorous counter-action." In view of this the Government suggested that counter-propaganda in Swahili be made available in East Africa with "strength, frequently and appeal" which would suffice "to outdo the enemy transmission."⁴⁶

By January 1941 East African Governments had intensified their counter-propaganda machinery. Practically all "native" broadcasts were based on war news items and matters related and concerned with the war. Some officials questioned this practice and wondered whether it was really the correct approach. Some felt that the broadcasts "would be far more valuable if the time was divided into news and propaganda of educational value." This idea of "balanced programme" was later suggested to the Secretary of State for Colonies, not as a matter of principle but "in order to obtain and maintain native interest." Because of the monotony and dull nature of such broadcasts, Africans had stopped listening to them. Thus the Government was forced to do something to these broadcasts in order to make them appealing and attractive to Africans.⁴⁷

⁴⁶KNA. MCI/8/7/122, letter to C.S. to the Governors' Conference, Nairobi, ? October, 1940.

⁴⁷KNA. MCI/7/8/118-II, letter from Governor of Kenya, ? January, 1941, to Secretary of State for Colonies.

Propaganda campaigns were further intensified by the introduction into propaganda machinery of motion pictures. These were organized and operated by the Mobile Propaganda Unit of the East Africa Command. Their stated aim in showing these films was "emphatically not recreating ... but to encourage an intensified war effort by the civilian population."⁴⁸ These war films would create "fear, mingled with wonder at the incredible inventiveness of the Europeans ... and show horror at the destructiveness of [European] bombs."⁴⁹ Thus through fear of the European might, the Unit hoped to turn the African civilian population into loyal supporters of the British war aims.

Of all the aspects of British propaganda that which capitalized on Hitler's racism was the most emphasized and preached about. Along with this, officials promised the civilians all sorts of "developments" and reforms in return for their help in defeating Hitler. Except in details, it was

⁴⁸A. G. Dickson, "Studies in War-time Organization: (3) Mobile Propaganda Unit, East Africa Command," African Affairs, XLIV, No. 174 (January, 1945), p. 9.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 10. In addition to these films, military shows and exhibitions were organized in various parts of Kenya for Africans to see and appreciate British weapons and other military equipment. Military parades were organized in different centers, all over Kenya during which time soldiers would demonstrate to civilians the destructive nature of weapons and machines. This was another way of creating "fear and wonder" in the African mind.

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the same story the military authorities had told askaris. As Crocker has correctly observed:

There was launched amongst the colonial people a barrage of propaganda on the necessity to beat Hitler because of Hitler's racism, accompanied by promises about the Century of Common Man and ... Freedoms for all the little people ... the doctrine was proclaimed that 'the top priority is to raise the standard of life.' The colonial subjects were informed that they should as a right, have certain social services ... Grandiose plans for economic development were foreshadowed.⁵⁰

A host of orators from both military and civil branches of the Government made these sweeping statements about prosperity and "full stomach" for all after victory was achieved. In retrospect, all these statements were made simply to justify the cause for the Allied nations: it was clear and simple propaganda aimed at winning the loyal co-operation of the Africans during the war.⁵¹

⁵⁰ W. R. Crocker, Self-Government for the Colonies (London, 1949), p. 18. See Ndabaningi Sithole, African Nationalism (London, 1959), p. 20; he points out that colonial people were taught to fight and die for freedom rather than live and be enslaved by Hitler. He concludes that they learned this lesson well, because when the war ended Africans began to direct their "British-aroused anti-domination spirit against the Allied Powers." Africans reminded the British what they had learned: 'You said it is wrong for the Germans to rule the world. It is also wrong for the British to dominate Africans.' See also T. W. Wallbank, Contemporary Africa: Continent in Transition (Princeton, 1956), p. 52; and Marlin L. Kilson, Jr., "Behind the Mau Mau Rebellion," Dissent, III, No. 3 (Summer, 1956), p. 272.

⁵¹ Russell Smallwood, "Native Military Development in East Africa," The Fortnightly, CLXII, No. 935 (January, 1944), p. 314.

Like the soldiers, the civilians were not oversold to these promises; they remained skeptical and cautious about these statements. Well informed Africans such as Kakembo dismissed the whole idea:

If the British Government is sincere in what they say, if this is not war-time propaganda ... let the Government ... instruct the people in the necessary things and fit them with the necessary equipment of modern civilized life.⁵²

The intention here was not to debate whether or not British propaganda should have been used in Africa or elsewhere. Nor was the aim to compare British propaganda and that of other nations. The aim here was to try to answer the question: 'Why would oppressed and colonized people fight so bravely for their colonial masters? How could these conscripts turn into loyal and committed British soldiers?' It has been shown here that part of the answer lies in British propaganda and propaganda methods in Africa during the war. The next section deals with what and how the askari performed in the war.

⁵²Robert H. Kakembo, An African Soldier Speaks (London, The Livingstone Press, 1947), p. 12. Kakembo was a Regimental Sergeant Major, 7th Kings' African Rifles and Army Education Corps. He was born in Buganda Province of what was then Uganda Protectorate. He was a pan-Africanist. He intended to publish his book in 1944 but the British Government refused to allow him because it was "too radical." A copy of the typescript (1944) of his book can be found in Kenya National Archives, DC/NN.6/1.

Chapter III

Wartime Treatment and Experiences

One aspect of the war which appears to have influenced the askari's thinking on social, political and economic matters was the picture he had of himself as a soldier. Although not as important, the picture others had of him greatly influenced his thinking and ideas, also.

Interviews with ex-soldiers show what they believed -- and still believe today (1967) -- that they contributed more than their share to the British victory in World War II. When the war ended and the askaris returned to East Africa, they claim that they demanded "more political, economic and social rights" from the Government in return for the great contribution they had made to the defeat of Hitler. Ex-soldiers maintained that they had "paid their dues" by fighting Hitler.

Askaris started forming these opinions at the height of the war. When one askari wrote back to his home from North Africa stating that, "know that the enemy is at last cleared from Africa and I'm proud of being one of the brave men who did it,"¹ he captured the mood of the majority of African soldiers.

¹ KNA. MD/4/5/116/24 (69), Censorship Reports (African),

They felt the same way when they beat the Italians in North Eastern Africa and later when they beat the Japanese in Southeast Asia.²

British people in general, and British Government officials in particular, greatly appreciated the askaris' contribution to and support of British war efforts. This fact was directed and publicly communicated to African soldiers by officials from both military and civil branches of the British Government. As General Platt was to remark later, "Eulogies had been passed to him askari in the press, in public-speaking by Governors and Generals, and in Parliament."³

Ethiopia was the scene of the first significant setback to Axis plans for world power. Askaris insist to this

1943. See George Kinnear's article, "Askari Are Making Their own Post-War Plans," East African Standard (July 10, 1945). Referring to askaris, he wrote, "They know that they are not just Africans, but recognized as part of a great modern army of many races contributing equally to the great victory. They know they have achieved much as individuals and as a group."

²See E. E. Sabben-Clare, "African Troops in Asia," African Affairs, Vol. 44, No. 177 (October, 1945), p. 155. Sabben-Clare, then a D. C. in Tanganyika, visited East African troops serving in Asia; later he wrote: "Taken all in all, the military record of the African in the Far East is one which they may be proud of."

³General Sir William Platt, "Studies in War-time Organization," op.cit., p. 30.

day that they played a major and crucial role in driving Italians from Ethiopia. This, they insist, was recognized by British military authorities and that the honors they won from them are a testimony to their "outstanding performance." These allegations are supported by what Major General Fowkes said: "The decisive factor in the fall of Gondar in Ethiopia was the resolution and determination of our African troops.... Our African soldier has proved himself superior, men to man, to Italian."⁴

From the Southeast Asia war theatre came the following statement made by General Slim as he addressed one of the decorating parades: "The 11th East African Division had ... the honor of achieving what up then had been considered impossible. It was thought that no major formation could move or fight in the worst possible jungle country through a monsoon. They did it."⁵

The General Headquarters, Middle East Forces, reported

⁴ Quoted by K. C. Gander Dower in his book Askaris at War in Abyssinia (Nairobi, East African Standard Ltd.), p. 54.

⁵ Quoted by Bartlett, op.cit., p. 682. See E. E. Sabben-Clare, op.cit., p. 155: "It is doubtful whether any but African troops could have made such good progress as the East Africans during 1944 monsoon in the Kabaw Valley or the West Africans through the numberless tidal creeks and swamps of the Arakan."

that: "You have probably heard from various sources how the E. A. A. A. P. C. company have, from the start, given a very favourable impression of being capable units and they are extremely valuable to us."⁶

These eulogies and praises on behalf of the askaris, led many Africans to believe that the European had, at last, gained better and greater knowledge of Africa and the African. Consequently, Africans expected a lot better treatment from the Europeans after the war.⁷

African soldiers excelled in their performance partly because of the intensive training they had received. Never had the African soldier been so highly trained in the use of modern weapons and equipment of all kinds. Military units of all arms and services -- armored cars, artillery, engineers,

⁶Letter to C. S. to the E. A. Governors' Conference, Nairobi, 18 March, 1942. KNA. MD/4/5/140/27 (70). Askaris received praise from non-Government sections of the public. See KNA. MD/4/5/65-I, East African Standard (newspaper cuttings, n.d.). The missionaries stated that "No tribute could be too high for the work these men have done on behalf of the British Commonwealth." They maintained this position throughout the war. See Andrew B. Doig, "The Christian Church and Demobilization in Africa," The International Review of Missions, XXXV, No. 90 (April, 1946), p. 174.

⁷Kakembo wrote that: "The European is seeing Africa and Africans for himself instead of being fed on lies made as black as possible to convey a picture of the dark continent of Africa as it is generally known in Europe and Africa." Kakembo, op.cit., p. 5.

ordance, signals, service corps, infantry and medical -- were badly needed and had to be raised, equipped and trained to serve overseas.

Naturally some of the conservative elements within European communities in Africa were unhappy about these eulogies that were being bestowed on African soldiers. A "native" soldier, they said, did not deserve such praise. To such criticisms the East Africa Command had one clear and direct answer:

Only those who have had the handling and training of these men can testify to the astonishing manner in which they have shown their resourcefulness, adaptability and bravery in action.⁸

However, British authorities seem to have held this policy of eulogizing askaris only temporarily. It can be demonstrated that this position was firmly adhered to at the height of the war when the askaris' full support was needed. Towards the end of the war the British authorities began to steer away from this "liberal" policy to a more "conservative" one. For instance, they instituted a project by the name of "Lectures to Troops" which was designed to put the East African war effort in its right perspective. The stated aim and objective of this project was to

⁸The Infantry of the East Africa Command 1890-1944, op.cit., p. 31.

... correct the perspective of the askaris in regard to the part they have played in the war and the reasons why they went to war. They are too apt to say: 'We won the war for King George, what are we going to get?'⁹

This meant, in effect, that they were going to "correct" or "review" or simply deny some of the things they had promised to do, on behalf of the askaris, after the war.

Askaris were reminded that East Africa was fortunate in being spared direct damage, and that this was so because Britain defended her. On the other hand, it was pointed out to them that "British homes and factories had been damaged." African soldiers were reminded that they were fighting for the benefit of their people as well as for their own personal gain.¹⁰

⁹See "Lecture to Troops," KNA. MD/4/5/80-I.

¹⁰This was of course a far cry from the days of eulogies, promises and propaganda to the askaris. A number of books written after the war had undavourable remarks on askaris. See Monsoon Victory, p. 142: "Askari is unimaginative and insensitive compared to European soldier ... because of his askari's natural development." Also see Moyse-Bartlett, op cit., p. 864: Compared to a European soldier, an askari was unpredictable and naturally slower ... easily thrown off balance."

These unfavourable comments are in conflict with the eyewitness reports and "field notes" taken on the battle grounds. See East African Standard (newspaper cuttings, n.d.), KNA. MD/4/5/65-I: It was reported that "there seems to be something about soldier's life which appeals to these East African men." After an attack by enemy aircraft one British officer reported that "their behavior and discipline under very trying circumstances is to be admired. He proves himself to be keen and vigilant." See reports to C. S. to the Governors' Conference, 21/3/1942, KNA. MD/4/5/140/27 (70).

Propaganda and eulogies aside, there were realities of everyday life to be faced. Askaris and their British officers had to relate to and interact with each other as persons. This interaction created some practical problems which had to be dealt with on a day-to-day basis. For instance, there were the wages to be earned, and orders as well as responsibilities to be given and taken. The underlying factor in these matters was the fact that the army leaders -- generals, officers and sergeants -- were invariably Europeans, while the soldiers were Africans. The former belonged to the "colonizing" group while the latter belonged to the "colonized." Therefore, in most cases, European-African relationship in the army was very much patterned after that which existed between them in civil life.

This is another way of trying to answer the question: what treatment did African soldiers receive from their European comrades-in-arms during the war? Answers to this question are important in the understanding of the mood of the ex-soldier, because the askari's opinion of the British authorities, both during and after the war, depended on how he was actually treated or how he thought he was treated by the British. His opinion also depended on why he thought the British treated him the way they did.

Although it had always been known in some British circles

that most askaris had very strong feelings about some aspects of the treatment they received from the British military authorities, it was not until 1943 that the askaris managed to present their case openly to the highest ranking military officials in East Africa. Those serving in the Middle East sent what has been referred to as a "very important and historic" petition to the East African Commanding Officers. The document stated among other things that:

There are a few things which keep on worrying our minds and tend to detract us from our one aim of defending Freedom ... Since we left our country, East Africa, our minds have not been happy... we are now serving in foreign countries, in the same way that a European or an Indian when he comes to work in our country his salary must be twice as much as that of a native in our country ... where are our wages?

If one is a soldier of our Great Empire, there should be no such discrimination as that of saying 'because this is a European and this is an Indian and this is an African' ... perhaps we are not well treated because we have no [African] leaders of our own.

If one offers himself to become His Majesty's soldier and agrees to his Government that he is prepared to meet his death, if necessary, is it right that this man should be treated like a slave? ... If this color-bar cannot be removed, it would be better for us to be returned to our country and wait for a war in Africa only, rather than be sent to foreign places¹¹

¹¹KNA. MD/4/5/137/27 (70). A Petition, 1943, to the East African Commanding Officers. Interviews with veterans of World War I indicate that treatment accorded to them was similar to that given to those who served in World War II. This is supported by an official account which stated in part: "Where a medical officer had to deal with White and

The document concluded by asking the Government to "remove such slave treatment." Askaris said that they could not understand why His Majesty's soldiers were "subjected to such hardships" which made them "wish to die rather than live." The importance of this document is the fact that it showed clearly that askaris were keenly aware of some of the political and economic problems that faced them and their countrymen. They demanded equal if not better economic and political opportunities; they also began to think seriously if the solution to some of these problems did not lie in developing African leadership to bargain with the British military authorities. It is also important because in subsequent investigations by the British authorities, it proved to have been a very representative of the askari mood, not just in that one company but in the entire Middle East Forces.¹²

Black patients the latter suffered ... when tentage or blankets or transport or food or medicines were scarce, the white patient who was convalescent was apt to be given preference before a black man in a critical condition." See Lt.-Col. Watkins, "Report to the British East African Expeditionary Force on the Period from August 4th, 1914 to September 15th, 1919." UCN. HD-RPA/F/1/2.

See KNA. MD/4/5/137/27 (70): Report to C. S. to the Governors' Conference, Nairobi, March 31, 1943. It is stated that certain drugs were not issued to African troops, simply because they were Africans, while the troops were serving in Ceylon.

¹²KNA. MD/4/5/137/27 (70): Letter to C. S., Entebbe, March 18, 1943. The letter concluded that the "Jo-Luo and the Tanganyikas" held similar views to those contained in the document ... and that they were felt by all members of the company and that "it was not intended to be the petition of a part only, but of everyone."

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Even more important was the fact that the petition occasioned a series of investigations which confirmed that grievances contained in the document were felt by most askaris serving in East Africa and Southeast Asia.

The reaction and position of the Governments of the three East African Territories was summed up by the British Resident in Buganda who said:

It seems to me that the points raised amount more or less to exact equality of treatment both as regards food, amenities, pay, liquor and general freedom of movement, for all persons without discrimination of race, who are doing the same type of work. I have not myself a great deal of sympathy for demands put forward.¹³

One of the things that made askaris resentful and bitter about the way they were being treated was the obvious disparity which existed between wages earned by British and African soldiers. The pay rates for Africans were very much lower than for the British soldiers. Naturally enough, since Africans were fighting side by side with the British, many of them demanded equal pay. Military authorities, however, rejected these demands stating that the African soldier had less good reason for "his grumbles" than any other group "for he was at the beginning of the war, and he has remained throughout it, in a better position financially than those Africans doing agricultural or other work at home."¹⁴

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Sabben-Clare, op.cit., p. 156.

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According to interviews with askaris, this same argument was invariably used whenever African soldiers demanded any improvement in their situation. They insist that it was on this basis that many of their "rights" -- such as higher salaries, better facilities and adequate resources and supplies -- were denied them. If, for instance, they asked for an extra pair of military boots, they would receive the following reaction from the British officers:

How many of you even knew the use of boots before you joined the army? You did not know anything about boots. You should be thankful for the one pair you now own.

It was always the same hostile response whenever "we asked or demanded our rights."¹⁵

When compared with troops from other areas of the British Commonwealth, African troops, as a group, received the lowest pay. However, within the African group itself, there were great differences in pay. Within the English-speaking African troops, for instance, troops from West Africa and the High Commission Territories in South Africa received higher pay than their fellow-soldiers from East Africa. On the average, an East African soldier received a total of Shs. 26/- (about \$3.87) a month, while a soldier from the High

¹⁵Sebi S. Fadamulla's account when I interviewed him in Nairobi on November 10, 1967. This was typical. Many ex-soldiers all over Kenya related similar accounts.

Commission Territory received Shs. 72/- (about \$10.00) a month.¹⁶

Interviews with East African ex-soldiers support the above-mentioned official estimates. They stated that an infantry askari (average askari) received Shs. 28/- a month, while a tradesman askari (carpenter, artisan, engineer, etc.) received Shs. 60/- a month. Regimental Sergeant-Major (R.S.M.) was the highest rank in the army that an askari could ever hope to attain. Naturally, he was the highest paid askari; for example, an infantry (R.S.M.) received Shs. 150/- a month and a tradesman (R.S.M.) received Shs. 160/- a month.

Interviews with ex-askaris revealed another belief which is very prevalent among them. Most ex-soldiers said: "We did the fighting and the dying, while the British officers simply commanded." They immediately explained this statement by saying that each Company (120-130 askaris) had one British officer and that a Battalion (1000-1200 askaris) had 10 to 12 British officers. They also admit that on many occasions

¹⁶ KNA. MD/4/5/65-I: Letter to Governor, Nairobi, May 28, 1942. The East African soldier received "6d. a day pay and 4d. remittance" while the soldier from the High Commission territories received "9d. a day pay, 9d. in remittance and 9d. accumulating in pay books." In the same file, see also "Extracts from the Proceedings of the Man Power Conference held at Nairobi on 30th September, 1942."

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when conditions were so "unbearable and intolerable" they considered or actually planned a rebellion against the few British officers that commanded them.

They offer several reasons why a rebellion would and could not have been successful. In the first place, they say that most of them through propaganda had become "committed loyal British soldiers" who would not have thought of rebelling against the British. The average askari saw himself as "a soldier of the Great Empire ... His Majesty's soldier" and therefore he could not think of rebelling against authority. There were also those promises and rights which he would get after the war. These great ideas kept the soldier in line. Secondly, they say that many of them came to realize that in order for any revolt to succeed they had to have as many askaris in the Air Force and in the Navy as they had in the Army. "If the rebellion succeeded, how could we, for instance, have travelled from the Middle East or Southeast Asia to East Africa without the use of ships or planes?"

Thirdly, they stated that "no revolt succeeds without planning" and yet in the army they were not permitted to assemble -- there was no freedom of assembly -- therefore could not "organize for any action." They recall that the British were very keen and strict on discouraging any "unnecessary meetings" among soldiers. For instance, they recall that they

were forced to wear their uniforms on all off-duty trips and that during such trips they were forbidden to associate with soldiers from other Companies, including their fellow East African soldiers. Fourthly, they say that they were most of the time without their weapons, that weapons were always kept away from them under lock and key and only handed to them just before they attacked or they were attacked. They realized that without their weapons their revolt would not be successful. They recall that the British were so much worried about what to do in order to prevent askaris from learning how to make a gun that askaris were not allowed to learn how to repair or clean their own guns. Ex-soldiers say that in each Company there was only one askari whose sole duty was to clean and repair guns; as for the rest, their business with the gun was only one: to use it.

Finally, most askaris would never have thought of a revolt because "we did not want to experience what the 1st and 2nd Pioneer Corps experienced." Almost every ex-askari has heard of the sad story that befell the "1st and 2nd Pioneer Corps -- all of them from Kenya." According to most ex-soldiers, these people reached Moyale (a town on the Ethiopia-Kenya border) and refused to obey orders from their British officers. They actually staged a strike. They told the officers: "We came to fight using guns but not to dig

ditches, clear bushes and build roads." British officers ordered askaris from "5 K.A.R. and 6 K.A.R., all of them from Kenya" to break the strike; but they refused because they did not want to kill "their brothers." Nyasaland (Malawi) soldiers obeyed orders and thereupon broke the strike. When it ended so many soldiers from the "1st and 2nd Pioneer Corps" had been killed that the East Africans decided never to strike again unless "we are sure that nobody will obey orders to kill his own brother." Apparently, this resolution was taken seriously because they did not recall any other big strike which took place following the "sad events at Moyale."¹⁷

As the war went on and the askaris continued to receive this type of treatment -- "slave treatment" as they called it -- they began to have second thoughts about their British comrades-in-arms. They began to wonder whether African and British soldiers were actually fighting for the same thing. Under such trying conditions askaris had to re-examine most of what they had learned through propaganda.

¹⁷I did not find any written evidence to support this oral account. In all my interviews, this was a classic example of oral tradition or history. As in most cases of this sort, details differed; but the core of the account always remained the same. Most ex-soldiers, in various parts of Kenya and who served in different war theatres remembered something about the "sad event" in Moyale. The other important thing to remember about this account is that the askaris really believed it; and I have no doubt that it influenced their thoughts and actions during the war.

When, for instance, one askari was asked by one of the visiting British officers what he was fighting for (he was in Southeast Asia), he said: "To get more land for Kingi George [King George]." ¹⁸

Another askari protested when being told in a lecture that he was fighting for democracy. He was fighting for King George, he said, and if he was fighting for democracy, he must have extra pay. ¹⁹ Most marching songs, sung by askaris, reflected the official line of thought with regard to the war; however, when the askaris began to have second thoughts on British war aims, they started to sing what seemed to be counter-propaganda songs. One such song consisted of these words: ²⁰

Swahili:

Unaona tunachek wa watu weupe,
Wanaziri zao hawambii watu wengine.

¹⁸Gerald Hanley, Monsoon Victory (London: Collins, 1946), p. 73.

¹⁹E. E. Sabben-Clare, op.cit., p. 157. The soldier implied that "democracy" meant "equality." How could one fight for democracy (equality) and at the same time fail to practice it? If soldiers are fighting for democracy then they must practice it among themselves and that (democratic) equal pay would be the "place to start from."

²⁰Ex-askaris said that toward the end of the war, there were "many anti-British songs composed and sung by askaris everywhere." Implied in this particular song was the fact that the African was fighting in the wrong war -- that while the Europeans knew what they were fighting for (their secrets), the African did not know these things. They could not be his secrets since he did not know them. Therefore the European must be laughing at the African because he (the African) is fighting for something that is not his.

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English (translation):

See, white people (must) be laughing at us,
They have their secrets which they don't
reveal to other people.

Many ex-soldiers believe that it was during this period -- when they were "revolting" against their bad treatment by preaching and singing anti-British propaganda -- that suspicion and distrust between them and the British authorities was, for the first time, openly expressed by both sides. The suspicion and distrust, ex-askaris say, developed into "enmity between us" after demobilization.

Another common belief among ex-askaris is the one connected with the "high death tolls" among African soldiers. They believed very strongly that British officers actually executed askaris. They have all sorts of "eye-witness" accounts of the alleged killings. While they gave all kinds of reasons why they thought these events happened and under what conditions they occurred, there was one particular version of these accounts that was remembered and repeated by most ex-soldiers regardless of where they served. They seemed to believe that the following conditions and circumstances generally led to askaris being executed:

If say a Company of 100 askaris is attacked and 95 askaris are killed by the enemy, the remaining 5 will be executed by the British officers so that they do not go back to the camp to tell others of the terrible death of those 95, thus frightening and lowering the morale of those who remained at the

camp. The officers would then report that such and such a Company moved to a different camp or location.²¹

Some of the accounts which ex-askaris give concerning their enemy in Southeast Asia -- the Japanese -- have racial overtones. For instance, some of the ex-askaris who served in Southeast Asia believed that Japanese soldiers were "most reluctant" to kill African soldiers.²² They insist that they killed askaris only when it was absolutely necessary, such as on the battle grounds or simply as a matter of self-defense. On the other hand, when askaris were on patrol duties or simply carrying out reconnaissance work, the Japanese spared them their lives even if they had every opportunity to kill them.²³

²¹Again, this is one of those oral accounts for which I do not have any written evidence. I have included these accounts in my study not because they are "true" or "false" -- I do not have enough information or evidence as of now to make me believe one thing or the other -- but because the ex-askari strongly believed in these accounts and their perceptions of the British people were definitely influenced by these beliefs. On the other hand, accounts of this nature are not infrequent in racially mixed wars. The most recent example is the war in Vietnam. See "The Returning Vet," Ebony, Vol. XXIII, No. 10 (August 1968), p. 151. It is reported that a black American ex-soldier who served in Vietnam told "eye-witness accounts of black GI's being executed by white officers."

²²See Waruhiu Itote, "Mau Mau" General (Nairobi, 1967), p. 24. He states that Japanese always fired on "our leaders, the British officers. He goes on to say that "Europeans covered their faces with black boot polish" because they did not want to "stick out." At that particular time, it was "safer" to be black. Compare these views with those of some of the black American soldiers in Vietnam. Some of them believe that the Viet Cong is most reluctant to kill them simply because they are "members of the black race." See Ebony, XXIII, No. 10 (August, 1968), pp. 32 and 120.

²³Apparently military authorities recognized the fact

Ex-soldiers also stated that the Japanese prisoners of war always reminded them that they were "fighting on the wrong side." They would then tell them that "Asians and Africans must cooperate to drive Europeans out of Asia and Africa.

"We Japanese are driving them out of Asia; you should go back to Africa and drive them out."

These racial problems that arose between European soldiers or officers and African soldiers should not be taken to mean that there was never sincere and genuine friendship, trust and co-operation between the two groups. Ex-askaris would be the first ones to agree that there were moments or days or even months when suspicion and distrust between Africans and Europeans would and could not exist. Ex-soldiers admit that such friendship was, in general, experienced only when it was a "matter of life or death." Itote's statements are very representative of what most ex-askaris say about integration in the army:

Among the shells and bullets, there had been no pride, no air of superiority from our European comrades-in-arms ... we drank the same tea, used

that it was "safer" for an African soldier to do patrol and reconnaissance work. Therefore more and more African soldiers were assigned to do the work, a responsibility which, hitherto, was invariably for "Europeans only." See Bartlett, op.cit., p. 682: "African platoon commanders and the N.C.O.'s did excellent patrol work, a duty that took excessive toll of the comparatively few British ranks."

the same water and lavatories, and shared the same jokes. There were no racial insults, no references to 'niggers,' 'baboons' and so on. The white heat of battle had blistered all that away and felt only our common humanity and our fate either death or survival.²⁴

In matters of formal education and training askaris received a different type of treatment. There is a general belief among people in East Africa (both Africans and Europeans) that the average askari increased his level of education during the service. Investigation has shown that most of those who were illiterate when they joined the army remained so throughout their military career. Most African soldiers did not receive training in reading or writing. What most of them received was training in practical skills because these skills were needed in the army.

Whether the African soldiers should or should not receive education was fiercely argued and debated by most

²⁴Itote, op.cit., p. 27. In recent history, black and white Americans in Vietnam have proved this point. See The Nation, Vol. 205, No. 1 (July 3, 1967), p. 9. It was reported that close friendships between "white and colored" soldiers were frequent under combat conditions, but in the big base, camps or off duty, the "old prejudice returned." For additional accounts, see Whitney M. Young, Jr., "When Negroes in Vietnam Come Home," Harper's Magazine, Vol. 234, No. 1405 (June, 1967), pp. 63-64. See also Thomas A. Johnson, "Negro Expatriates Finding Wide Opportunity in Asia," New York Times (April 30, 1968), p. 18.

Racial insults: Ex-askaris recall that people in Asia wanted to know "if you have tails and if you eat people, that is what your British officers tell us." See New York Times (April 29, 1968), "White Americans in Vietnam" tell other foreigners as well as the Vietnamese that "Negroes have tails" and that they refer to them ("Negroes") as "animals."

Britons, just as the recruitment of massive numbers of Africans into the British Armed Forces had been debated. There were those who argued that history had proved that education turns most men into better soldiers. They therefore recommended the kind of education that would direct askaris "into valuable channels."²⁵ On the other hand, there were those who were opposed to the whole idea of educating askaris. They argued that Africans were influenced more by indirect than by direct means, and that "didactic teaching is foreign to them."²⁶

When in 1941 the East African Governments decided to form the East African Army Education Corps, it was obviously influenced by some of these prevailing philosophies of education. However, it seemed that those advocating education for the askaris had won the battle, except that the type of education the officials had in mind for the African soldiers was one designed to direct them "into valuable channels," not from the point of view of the askaris but from that of the British authorities. The type of education which was

²⁵ General Sir William Platt, "Studies in War-time Organization," op.cit., p. 31.

²⁶ KNA. MD/4/5/151-I/27 (70): "Welfare Economy and the Significance of Education among Askari serving in Ceylon" (June, 1943). See also Smallwood, op.cit., p. 316: the assertion that an askari's mind is like that of a child.

recommended was that which would

improve the askari as a soldier and potential junior leader and to instil conceptions of citizenship which will be of value when he leaves Army. The subjects ... the war, the East African campaign, regimental history and duties of citizenship and social life.²⁷

The first target given was the production of two African Education instructors per infantry batallion. Later a conscious effort was made by British regimental commanders to encourage Africans to take lessons in reading and writing. This sort of encouragement was given only to a few selected askaris whose training in special practical skills required that they be literate. Above all, the encouragement was given to those who had already had some elementary lessons in reading and writing -- those who were semi-functionally literate. In a way, they were receiving further training in literacy. On the other hand, the majority of those who were completely illiterate were never given a fresh start in such lessons.

Therefore, most of the African soldiers had to be content with the opportunities in practical training because war conditions had created a great demand for this type of training. It can therefore be said that most askaris received their

²⁷ KNA. MD/4/5/151-I/27 (70): Letter to C. S., Nairobi, November 25, 1941. See Kakembo, op.cit., p. 6. He opposed the idea of education for "junior leader" because that would mean that Africans become "mere good servants for the whites."

vocational training because the war had created a functional need for technically trained personnel. On the other hand, there was no pressing need for those who could read and write. As a result, the military authorities did not see any necessity in training an African in an area that would not add to his skills as a soldier. Had literacy been considered functionally needed for the army, no doubt most askaris would have had adequate training in reading and writing.

Ex-askaris recall that those who could speak some English when they joined the army were encouraged to speak it and take further training in it. This was so because they were needed as translators for the British military personnel. Because they were providing this service, they received preferential treatment, especially with regard to pay. Because of this treatment, many soldiers were eager to start learning English. British authorities anticipated the problem of having to deal with the thousands of askaris who would come to demand higher pay because they could speak English, and therefore passed strict regulations forbidding any askari who was not a registered English speaker to speak it.²⁸

²⁸I have no written evidence for this, but the majority of ex-askaris believe that this is what happened. They say that registered English-speakers wore the letter "E" on their uniforms to distinguish them from non-English-speakers. Ex-askaris believe that all this was due to the fact that British wished to keep their secrets to themselves, because "the majority of us were forbidden to learn English; and those who knew it were branded so that the British officers would not say a word in their presence, for fear that we might hear what they were discussing, thus learn about European secrets i.e. British war aims."

We can safely conclude that the average askari was illiterate when he joined the army and was still so when he got out. Apart from practical skills he did not get anything more except that which he got in the form of propaganda during "lectures to troops" sessions.

This section's primary concern is to examine the askaris' war-time experiences. In a way, it will endeavor to answer the question: What lessons did they learn in the army? Of course, askaris acquired a number of practical and modern skills which were essential to them as soldiers. However, the emphasis will not be on these practical skills; it will be on the new ideas and values they acquired -- the new loyalties, identities, impressions, attitudes, sentiments, etc. that they acquired during the war. Above all, this chapter will examine the influence which these experiences might have had on the political and nationalistic awareness of the askari.

The most important change which took place in the mind of the askari as a result of his war-time experiences would seem to be his re-evaluation of the British in particular, and Europeans in general. This change was not, by any means, confined or unique to World War II askaris. Their predecessors, the World War I askaris, had to a certain extent undergone very much the same change. Lloyd-Jones summed up their experiences and how they were affected by them:

Without doubt the African soldiery has been greatly impressed by the ability and tenacity of the German leaders. Hitherto the askari was inclined, and was perhaps encouraged to believe, that Englishmen were immeasurably superior to all Europeans, and that Europeans were a race of supermen. Now though still retaining this confidence in his English leaders, he is puzzled or rather unsettled. Europeans of types quite new have appeared, and he knows that, though eventually successful, the British Empire had to fight desperately for its very existence.²⁹

If this could be said of the askari in World War I, then a lot more should be said in connection with the World War II askari. The former came into contact with just one type of enemy -- the German. Almost all of the askaris in World War I were illiterate and their military services did not take them outside East Africa. On the other hand, a fair percentage of World War II askaris could read and write both in Swahili and English; about one third of them served outside East Africa. They fought against, and later evaluated, not just the Germans but the Italians and the Japanese as well. Finally the world of 1910 was less enlightened than the world of 1930 and 1940. For instance, East Africa was, during the first decade of this century, by comparison far less politically mature than the East Africa of three or four decades later.

²⁹W. Lloyd-Jones, King's African Rifles (London, 1926), p. 224.

In view of this, askaris in World War II were impressed by what the Germans, Italians and Japanese had done to the British world power and prestige. Above all, they were proud of themselves because they had enabled the British to defeat their enemies. "We did the fighting. Without us Britain would be a German or Italian or Japanese colony." They began to feel that they had proved themselves by defending somebody else. Askaris recall that as the war was drawing to a close, they liked to talk a lot about their role in the war: "If we have fought this hard to defend others, we can fight even harder to defend ourselves."

In short, the African soldier began to question the whole idea of the British or any other European deciding for him what kind of life he should lead. He searched for but did not see or find any special qualification that gave the (Mzungu) European the right to rule over him. Interviews with ex-askaris indicate that thoughts and questions of this type pre-occupied their minds during the war. That contention has been supported by official on-the-spot reports by those who worked and lived with them. One of such accounts was that by Capt. E. Broadbent, who reported among other things:

It is a safe generalization that formerly they [African soldiers] came into contact with only three types: officials, traders and missionaries. Now they realize that there are much greater differences of upbringing, education and

and status among white people than they were previously aware of. In this respect, as many others, they had a new sense of values, which make them less ready to accept without demur the opinions and decisions of Europeans.³⁰

These new experiences amounted to nothing less than a "revolution" in the thinking of the askari. Back home -- in the "Reserve" -- the D.C. had simply regarded him as a "native;" now he regarded himself, and was regarded by his officers and comrades-in-arms, as a great soldier. Back home, he was only familiar with a select group of British "gentlemen and ladies;" in the army he came into contact with an assorted group of Britons under very different and trying conditions. As one ex-askari told me: "The war forced the British to stop pretending that they were something else ... something different from human beings."³¹ This could have been said by any ex-askari. This revolution which occurred in the mind of the askari was summed up by one of the African nationalists when he wrote that:

³⁰Capt. Eric Broadbent, "Africans in India," Letter in The Spectator, CLXXIII, No. 6070 (October 27, 1944), p. 384. See Leys, op.cit., p. 961.

³¹Man to man, askaris despised British soldiers. They say that they would not like to have a British soldier in their platoon because during a crisis or when the "going is rough" he is a liability. They particularly noted that a British rank could not stand "rain, heat, jungle, hunger, thirst," that they could not walk a mile and that they worried too much about their lives. See also Moyse-Bartlett, op.cit., p. 682: Officers said that European soldiers were clumsy in the jungle, therefore a liability.

During the war the African came into contact with practically all the peoples of the earth. He met them on a life-and-death-struggle basis. He saw the so-called civilized and peaceful and orderly white people mercilessly butchering one another just as his so-called savage ancestors had done in tribal wars. He saw no difference between the primitive and the civilized man. In short, he saw through European pretensions that only Africans were savages. This had a revolutionizing psychological impact on the African.³²

Experiences that led to this re-thinking and re-evaluation on the part of the askari were many and varied. Some of the askaris wrote to their friends about their experiences and from their letters we are able to learn something about what they saw, thought and did while in the service. The most popular subject in these letters was the way of life of the inhabitants of their host countries. There was a marked tendency for them to make comparisons between the new life in the army and the old life they knew back home. Most of the letters quoted herein were sent from the Middle East.³³ The following are portions of two different letters:

The Arabs are very poor and we are much richer than they are. They sleep outside and have no houses, so that begging is their duty. They are very cunning.

The French people [Syrians] have nothing to eat and have plenty of diseases. They even eat the food we throw away.

³²Sithole, op.cit., p. 19.

³³KNA. MD/4/5/116/24 (69): Special Censorship ... (E.A.) Personnel in Middle East.

The next most popular subject was the relationship between askaris and the British personnel. It is quite clear from these letters that they did not like Kenya Europeans. The other type of European whom they did not like was the English as opposed to the Irish or to the Scottish. Surprisingly enough, askaris found South African Europeans very friendly. Here are excerpts from letters written by three different soldiers:

I am very annoyed with the Europeans we have now, they are no good at all -- they are very bad indeed.

Here Egypt there is no racial discrimination: we feed on the same food, eat at the same tables and so with dressing ... our uniform is the same as that worn by the officers.

Here all races have the same privileges, and we got rid of Kenya Europeans.

Askaris ~~were~~ fond of evaluating their host countries. They used to point out both bad and good aspects of the country in question. They always admired the cities because they were "owned" by the inhabitants themselves and not by "strangers or foreigners as in our country." Letters from three soldiers read in part:

Egypt is a very bad country ... it has never rained not a single drop. No tree, no grass is seen here, just bare sand.

All the daily man's necessities are found in this Great Capitol -- Cairo.

I am far away in India. It is a bad place.
Since we arrived we have been in great trouble.³⁴

For security reasons the use of certain information or names when writing letters was forbidden. However, askaris always found a way by which such information would be communicated to their friends back home. A good example of this was when they were in the Middle East. They communicated ideas to their friends back home by making references to the Bible:

I cannot tell you where we are, we have been forbidden to mention where we are; but it is the place where Jesus Christ was crucified ... and we reached the place where he was born, too.

It is true that askaris were surprised at and disturbed by the extent of poverty in some parts of the Middle East and the Far East. It is also true that they were amazed with what the people in these countries had in their own big cities. They recall that, in general, the local people, the inhabitants themselves, were running the show in these towns. Ex-soldiers remember that these people were free and more independent in their business life than the Africans were in their own cities and towns. They also noticed that big stores and banks were owned and controlled by the local people. As a result of this observation, most askaris began to think in terms of becoming economically independent once the war was over. However, they

³⁴KNA. MD/4/5/116/24 (69): Special Summary on 11 (E.A.) Division Mail from Ceylon, 13 June, 1943 to 19 June, 1943.

realized that the time to start planning and organizing was not after the war but in the course of it. Therefore, as far back as 1943, askaris in various groups had started planning for their post-war economic life.

These groups or societies, though mainly "tribal" in structure and appeal, were not confined to formations in Southeast Asia or in the Middle East. Some of them had ramifications in Ceylon and East Africa. Among Uganda askaris, for instance, a society called "Buganda Bewayo" was one of them. This society pledged to find "better jobs and salaries and better social conditions and trading opportunities" for Africans. They agreed that what their organization needed in order to succeed was "money, unity and trust-worthiness."

In another section of Uganda, the "New Busoga Association" was started with the primary aim of improving the "conditions of the people" after the war. It went even a step further by setting a membership fee at 25 and, for its motto it had: "Not to be dragged backwards but to be a good road for Uganda to follow." In Kenya³⁵ the "Wakamba Soldiers' Society" appealed for funds to build a school in their area.³⁶

³⁵Luo ex-askaris claimed that "Luo Ohala" (Luo Business) which was started by Luo soldiers while they were serving in Southeast Asia was the forerunner of the Luo Thrist and Trading Corporation.

³⁶George Kinnear, "Askari are making Their Own Post-war Plans," East Africa Standard (July 10, 1945). See newspaper cuttings of this in Kenya National Archives MD/4/5/80-I.

In making all these plans, askaris were quite aware of the problems ahead. They realized that there would be the question of capital and trained man-power. They always said, "There are very many of us [askaris] who can do this and that kind of work because of the training we have received." In case of the lack of trained man-power, they were prepared to import the necessary know-how from "America, Italy, Britain and Poland."³⁷ As for the capital, they planned to raise as much money as they could by themselves; however, they realized that savings from their meagre incomes would be far from enough for the realization of their great plans. Their highest hopes, therefore, were in their Government: "We hope to get a big loan from the Government because we will be working for the benefit of our country as a whole."

Those who accuse the ex-soldiers of not having thought sufficiently of where the capital would come from are simply ignoring the importance these people attached to the question of money or capital. Askaris always discussed the two questions of capital and know-how. "The only other thing is money," they would always caution each other. Writing in 1945, George Kinnear caught the askari mood when he observed that:

³⁷Ibid.

The guiding central theme is unity backed by money and a desire for progress of themselves, their country and people in directions comparable with the bustle and prosperity and employment they have seen abroad.³⁸

The more the askari tried to find answers to what was going to be his post-war economic life, the more he found himself faced with numerous political questions. Again it was from Asia that the first official report was received warning East African Governments of the "dangers" of exposing the askaris to the political situation in Asia. As early as 1943, one Army Chaplain who had lived with askaris for some time and who had, no doubt, observed their movements and listened to their speeches, warned that:

The whole concept of political rule is being modified by observation and discussion of conditions in Ceylon. Prolonged contact with the political situation in India and Ceylon may induce corresponding sentiments with regard to the administration in East Africa. The problems in Africa are complex enough without introducing further reaction from the East.³⁹

Interviews with ex-askaris have supported this observation. Most of what the askari got in the way of political education was through conversations, discussions and observations. Although the askari found that Arabs and Indians, for

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ KNA. MD/4/5/151-I: "Welfare Economy and Significance of Education Among Askari Serving in Ceylon." (June, 1943), by an Army Chaplain.

instance, were generally poor, there were individuals and groups among them who had attained positions or ranks or status that no Africans, either in the army or back in Africa, would have dreamed of attaining. Askaris could not understand why in Africa individuals or groups of individuals were not given the same rights or opportunities. They were determined to be the first, after the war, to demand these rights for themselves and for their people.

In India, for instance, askaris saw that besides great numbers of individuals belonging to the depressed castes and classes whose standards of living were visibly inferior to their own, there were nevertheless innumerable "men of color" who had attained positions of trust and responsibility. In the Army, for example, they observed hundreds of commissioned officers who lived on terms of equality with their British colleagues; yet Africans did not have a single commissioned officer. This must have encouraged them to desire similar opportunities and wider educational facilities which would enable them to realize these conditions.⁴⁰

In some cases askaris made intellectual rather than eye observations. Whenever this happened they were forced to discard the old beliefs and acquire new ones. Ex-askaris have innumerable accounts of this type of observation. A good

⁴⁰Broadbent, op.cit., p. 384.

example is that of Bildad Mwaganu Kaggia who said that because of his visit to the Middle East he began to see Christianity in a different light:

Having been to the Middle East I looked at Christianity in a different way ... I saw the establishment of foreign religion through missions as a stepping-stone to colonialism and I therefore thought that the first move in the struggle for independence must be liberate our people from foreign religious beliefs.⁴¹

Equally important -- if not more important -- were the new ideas that askaris acquired by holding discussions and conversations with foreigners. Again there are many askaris whose ideas were changed by this process. Typical are the experiences of one ex-soldier. When Warahiu Itote⁴² was serving in Asia, he remembers three most important conversations, with foreigners, that had a great impact on him.

He remembers an English soldier who wanted to know, among other things, what the Africans were fighting for in World War II. The Englishman reminded him that he (the Englishman) was fighting to preserve the national independence of England and of the British Empire. He could not see why the Africans were fighting to protect the British Empire instead of fighting to free themselves. He concluded by saying:

⁴¹Quoted in Myth of "Mau Mau," op.cit., p. 192.

⁴²Itote, op.cit., pp. 10-13.

"Years from now, maybe, your children will fight a war to preserve the national independence of your country, but before that it's up to you to see that they get an independence in the first place, so they can preserve it later."

On another occasion he had the opportunity to meet and discuss issues with a black American soldier. The latter talked about color-bar in America as well as the history of Haiti, pointing out that in Haiti black men had fought and won freedom from Napoleon. He concluded by telling him that: "I know you will suffer in future if you do not have your own freedom ... White Christians are fighting each other right now, so don't you worry when they tell you not to fight for your own freedom ... Heroes in this war will be Europeans. If you want to be heroes, why don't you fight for your own countries." Later on Itote remarked that listening to that American had been to him like being in school and that the American had been a good teacher at an important moment in Itote's life.

Finally, he held a conversation with an Indian in Calcutta and in the course of it the Indian admitted that Indians were fighting for others in the war, but that in return they had received a promise of independence. He therefore wished to know what promise the Africans had received. When he learned there had been no promise, he said, "You were colonized because you had no education and no weapons

to match the Europeans. Now some of you have got education and some of you know how to use European weapons -- is there anything else you have got to wait for?"

There is not the time and space to give more personal accounts of this type. Interviews with ex-soldiers showed that revolutionizing experiences such as this were quite common in the army. Askaris say that conversations with black Americans had the strongest impact on their lives. Next in importance were the discussions they held with soldiers from India, Mauritius and the Seychelles Islands. Also cited as important, although very rare, were the meaningful talks they held with Italian and Japanese prisoners of war.

There is a general belief in some circles, especially in East Africa, that only those askaris who could speak and read some English benefited from international conversations; and that since there were so few askaris of this type, the influence from such discussions was limited. Askaris found a natural and practical solution to this: those who spoke English reported whatever relevant news they got from each discussion to those who could not speak it. Admittedly they missed the details of the discussion but never the central theme. Conversation centered around colonialism, color-bar, jobs, freedom, salaries, war casualties, etc. Most important, they came to know something about what was recommended as the

best way of solving these problems.

It was not always true that those who could speak and write English were politically more radical than those who could not. Again this is not the place to discuss the relationship between literacy and political radicalism; but interviews with ex-askaris revealed that those who belonged to the radical group, according to the conventional use of the term "radical", belonged to both the literate and illiterate groups. In fact, the literate tended to be less radical since they received somewhat special and better treatment because they were able to read and write English. It should also be remembered that politization or radicalization of a person does not so much depend on his ability to read as on what he reads. Most of the literature that was available to the askari was not the revolutionizing type, since its aim was to propagate anti-German and pro-British propaganda.

It should be concluded that one's political awareness was not always determined by one's level of education or rank in the army. The Askari's life in the army and his personal experiences, exposed him to new ideas, loyalties and sentiments.⁴³ He came to realize that the new world in which he

⁴³R. Fane, "The Return of the Soldier: East Africa," Journal of the Royal African Society, Vol. 43, No. 171 (April, 1944), p. 57.

found himself was not the type of world in which he could survive or even fit simply as a member of a "tribe." Time and again it had been pointed out to him that he was defending the British Empire, a larger unit, and not just England. It began to dawn on him that the modern man defends greater entities such as Empires, Nations, Republics, etc. and not "tribes." Because he was faced with these realities, he began to think of something greater⁴⁴ that he could defend in the same manner the British were defending their Empire. He began to search for a new entity to which he could attach his loyalty and with which he could identify. When it came to making the decision as to what this entity should be, many askaris came up with different ideas, although not necessarily mutually exclusive. There is a group which thought that the solution lay in territorial nationalism, in which case territories such as Tanganyika, Uganda, Kenya, etc. would become nations; some thought that regional nationalism was the answer -- by this they meant that East Africa would become the nation; still others thought that continental nationalism was the answer -- the idea that there should be one African nation.⁴⁵

Most askaris decided in favour of territorial nationalism. Interviews with ex-soldiers show that during their

⁴⁴Doig, op.cit., p. 176.

⁴⁵African Transcripts, No. 5 (September, 1945), p. 171.

military careers most Kenya askaris felt, for the first time, that they were Kenya Africans, as opposed to feeling that they were just members of a "tribe." Once more Itote's comments will serve as an example of how most Kenya soldiers felt:

Perhaps most important, I had become conscious of myself as a Kenya African, one among millions whose destinies were in the hands of foreigners, yet also one who could see the need and the responsibility of changing the situation.

As an experience, this emotional force of territorial nationalism was not confined to Kenya askaris. Those from Nyasaland (Malawi) began to speak of "dzikho la Nyasaland."⁴⁶ Soldiers from Tanganyika (Tanzania) identified themselves with Tanganyika as a whole: "We are all Tanganyika men here."⁴⁷ Soldiers sought to weaken, and eventually, break ethnic barriers, partly because of philosophical reasons and partly because of practical ones. Ex-askaris came to believe that there were different European "tribes." They gave Britain as an example of a nation in which different "tribes" lived. They also learned something about antagonism that existed

⁴⁶George A. Shepperson, "External Factors in the Development of African Nationalism, with Particular Reference to British Central Africa," Phylon, XXII, No. 3 (Fall, 1961), p. 220.

⁴⁷Russell Smallwood, "Native Military Development in East Africa," The Fortnightly, CLXII, No. 935 (New series) (November, 1949), pp. 314-319.

among them. They concluded that if the Irish, the English, the Scottish and the Welsh could live in one country, then African "tribes" should be able to live together. Therefore askaris decided to be the first both in removing ethnic barriers and in promoting territorial unity.

Some askaris thought of even larger political units than territories. Many askaris entertained the idea of one African nation. These Pan-Africanists argued that since Africa was the home of the black race, it should evolve into one black nation. Admittedly only a few of the African soldiers seriously thought of the possibility of such unity. However, the influence of such ideas was observable and noticeable among most soldiers, hence Capt. Broadbent's remarks:

Of the immense importance ... is the acquisition by these native troops of a new pride of race, a consciousness which is almost akin in essence to a sense of nationality.⁴⁸

Some soldiers thought that the idea of race was not strong enough in itself to create and hold a nation together; together with the idea of race must be considered that of common history. In this respect, they emphasized recent African history -- the history of the relationship between Africans and Europeans in Africa. They concluded that they were deprived of their freedom because they were Africans,

⁴⁸Broadbent, op.cit., p. 384.

and that in order to reclaim the lost freedom they must unite as a people. One of the Africans wrote that:

It will be recorded by history that it was during the war that the Africans started to think more in terms of a race than as a tribe ... we suffer the same privations -- we are treated in the same way.⁴⁹

African soldiers found that their common history as Africans was also shared by other blacks outside Africa. Therefore, there began to develop among black soldiers -- Africans and black Americans -- a kind of "pan-blackness" which until then had been unknown among black soldiers. While "pan-Africanism" aimed at political union among Africans, "pan-blackness" aimed at creating awareness among blacks, throughout the world, of their common interest. It is true that the majority of black soldiers did not fully comprehend the meaning of these ideas although they were extremely sensitive about them.⁵⁰ Kakembo's observations have been supported by the information obtained from other ex-soldiers. He wrote, "We have begun to think together as a race. We are concerned when we hear of some misfortune happening to Africans in some part of Africa or outside."⁵¹

⁴⁹ Kakembo, op.cit., p. 5.

⁵⁰ Kinnear, op.cit.

⁵¹ Kakembo, op.cit., p. 5.

Discussions between black Americans and Africans were not always centered around political problems. At times they were centered around personal and individual problems. Americans, for instance, promised to send for their African friends after the war, so that they could get education in America and then return to Africa to help their people. They discussed the possibility of importing the "Negro know-how" into Africa for the purpose of helping modernize African societies.⁵²

According to askaris, black Americans were of immediate and practical use to them in yet another way. Americans sympathized with askaris because of their extremely low pay. Askaris recall that in some cases Americans would take a group of African soldiers, with their pay-books, to their British officers and demand higher pay for askaris. They also remember that these same Americans used to come to their help whenever there was any misunderstanding at the camp between them (Africans) and their British officers. Even more widespread among ex-soldiers are accounts about African deserters who were helped to escape by black Americans. Most of these deserters, so the askaris say, went to America with the aim of getting some form of training and then returning

⁵²Kinnear, op.cit.

to Africa to help fellow-Africans.⁵³

Because askaris were receiving this sympathy and support from Americans, British officers at first discouraged, and later forbade, any further meetings between these two groups of soldiers.⁵⁴ However, this succeeded only in preventing African soldiers from visiting American camps; Americans continued to visit askaris since the British did not have control over American soldiers.

Although African soldiers tried to minimize their ethnic and regional differences by emphasizing their similarities, the relationship between them was not always cordial. There remained a good deal of misunderstanding and suspicion. Professor Schleh's study showed that there was still ethnic animosity between the Tive and Hausa ex-servicemen in Ghana. He found the same situation between the Banyoro and Baganda in Uganda.⁵⁵ In my investigation in Kenya, I found that the situation there was very much similar to what he found in the other two countries.

⁵³I did not come about any official or written evidence to support these accounts; however, ex-soldiers very strongly believe in them.

⁵⁴See M. Koinange, The People of Kenya Speak for Themselves (Detroit, 1955), p. 42: A statement is made to the effect that "Negro GI's" were not allowed to mix with Kenyans of any race when American troops were stationed near Nairobi during World War II.

⁵⁵Schleh, op.cit., p. 204.

However, when pressed on this issue, ex-askaris are very quick in offering this explanation: they point out that ethnic interests or rights are not necessarily in conflict with national unity. And as if to prove that they learnt their lessons well from their Irish or Scottish friends, they immediately offer Britain as an example of a nation in which "tribal" and national obligations exist side by side.

As for ethnic solidarity during the war, they quickly point out that they deserve credit for the amount of understanding they were able to promote among themselves. They recall that, even under military conditions, British officers continued to emphasize traditional animosities among different ethnic groups. Thus, in Kenya, the Luo-Baluyia, Nandi-Kisii and Masai-Kikuyu traditional differences were capitalized upon. In spite of all these difficulties, askaris say that they found it possible to weaken ethnic barriers.

As for regional differences, West and East Africans afford an excellent example. Ex-soldiers say that the British enforced strict separation between them. However, just in case they happened to meet, the West Africans had been told that the East Africans were less civilized because they did not speak English, and that association with them was out of the question. On the other hand, the East Africans were told

that West Africans were cannibals;⁵⁶ naturally, there was to be no association with them unless one wanted to lose one's life. Because of this doctrine of "divide and rule," East and West African soldiers remained ignorant of each other. It is small wonder that East Africans say that they knew and liked black American soldiers better than they did their fellow-West Africans. It would not be surprising if West African ex-servicemen said the same thing about the East Africans.

It is, of course, understandable why the British military authorities discouraged any solidarity between different ethnic or regional groups. It was not in their interest for the soldiers to exchange ideas, political or otherwise, regarding British rule in their respective parts of Africa. There was also the question of the treatment they received in the army; the British would not be anxious to see them exchange ideas on this very touchy and immediate problem. It

⁵⁶That they were "cannibals" was just one of the many horrible things that West African soldiers were supposed to be. Some civilians in East Africa still believe these stories. It was not the first time that cannibalism had been used to keep Africans apart. Throughout East Africa, communities had been kept apart because of alleged cannibalism. It is interesting to note that when African soldiers went to Asia, Asians were warned for one reason or another to stay away from them. See Broadbent, op.cit., p. 384.

is only when one recognizes these unfavourable conditions for the promotion of any ethnic or regional solidarity that one begins to understand why African ex-servicemen demand credit for the little, but meaningful, solidarity they managed to achieve among themselves during the war.

Those who blame or criticize ex-soldiers for not having used opportunities they had in the army for their political education, should remember that the British did not aim at creating African nationalists; their aim was to train soldiers who would bravely and loyally defend the British Empire. Professor Schleh, in a way, gave African soldiers credit for having made some progress in spite of unfavourable conditions under which they were trying to promote some understanding among themselves. Although his remarks were meant specifically for Uganda and Ghana, I believe that they hold true for other parts of Africa. He made these keen observations:

Here one can recall that the military's intention was to create loyalty to King and Emperor or to field officers; that any results along the latter lines [understanding among different ethnic groups, etc.] were unplanned side-effects of a policy designed for military efficiency.⁵⁷

In concluding this section, one point should be emphasized: there was a direct relationship between the askari's war-time experiences and his civilian -- particularly political --

⁵⁷ Schleh, op.cit., p. 203.

activities after the war. For one thing, these experiences exposed him to the value of discipline, obedience and organization. Army life prepared him to accept responsibilities both as a leader and as a follower. He had learned that he could fight and, if necessary, die for a cause greater than that of a family or an ethnic group; in other words, he had learned to fight for an idea, for a principle. Most important, these experiences transformed him from a "tribesman" into a black or African nationalist. Admittedly, he might have not fully grasped the real implications of his newly acquired ideas; nevertheless he had accomplished something for himself by the mere fact that he had acquired them, that he had thought and talked about them, and that he had believed them.

The reason for his believing in these ideas was not the most important thing. What mattered was that he had equipped himself with a new psychological and emotional force. Acquiring this new force put him in a much better position, at least when it came to appreciating political agitation, than his civilian counter-part who had never been in the service. Referring specifically to Malawi soldiers during World War II, G. Shepperson made an important conclusion which applies to Kenya ex-askaris as well:

For some ... it might have been sentimental rather than political; but it created a mould

which would endure and into which politics could be poured when the right mixture was ready after the war.⁵⁸

Kenya askaris did not have to wait long for the right mixture of politics. It had already been mixed for them because, while they were busy fighting and dying, British officials in Kenya were planning how effectively and efficiently the askari would be reduced from one of the great soldiers of the Empire to a "tribesman" in the African "Reserves." Officials were able to plan efficiently for this because of various predictions that were made in connection with what was believed would be the way the returning soldier would think, behave and act. What these predictions were and what followed them are the main topics of the next section.

⁵⁸G. Shepperson, "External Factors..." op.cit., p. 220.

Chapter IV

Demobilization and Reabsorption: Government Policies and Programs

During the war, most Europeans in Africa became gravely concerned about the askari because of the wide range of experiences to which he was being exposed. They all wondered what type of person the soldier would be after the war. Almost every European was somewhat apprehensive about the fact that these askaris had been trained in violence. They wondered if the soldiers would resort to violence, after the war, as a means by which to challenge the European position in Africa; hence Gerald Hanley's observations: "Many white people in Africa asked: 'What are they going to be like when they come back? Difficult?'"¹

However, what concerned most Europeans was not so much the fact that askaris had been trained in violence as the fact

¹Hanley, op.cit., p. 75. Compare this with what has been said about black American soldiers in Vietnam: Whitney M. Young, Jr., "When the Negroes in Vietnam Come Home," Harper's Magazine, Vol. 234, No. 1405 (June, 1967), pp. 63-69; Karl H. Purnell, "The Negro in Vietnam," The Nation, Vol. 205, No. 1 (July 3, 1967), pp. 8-10; Thomas A. Johnson, "The U.S. Negro in Vietnam," The New York Times (April 29, 1968), pp. 1 and 16.

that they had acquired new ideas and a new sense of values. They had learned that askaris would return to civil life after a great widening of their experience and after the enjoyment of better living conditions. The realization that the African had acquired habits of modern living worried Europeans because they very well knew and understood what that would mean; it would mean fierce competition between Africans and Europeans for the limited economic resources which, until then, had been reserved for Europeans only.

This is how a typical civilian European regarded the askari. The European in the military service regarded him in a slightly different manner. In the army he lived and fought side by side with the African soldier; and, at times, his life depended on the askari's cooperation and performance. He therefore began to sympathize with the askari's situation. He wondered what kind of political, economic and social life the askari would lead after the war. He realized and felt that the askari deserved reward for his necessary contribution and help. Some thought that this had to be done not because it was a reward but because it was an obligation that had to be met or answered. This, it was argued, was due to and because of the new and different outlook on life which the askari had acquired.

As early as 1941, a number of British officers held

these views because by then African soldiers had "proved" that they were able, loyal and brave soldiers. However, these views were popularized only at the height of the war when askaris' full support and cooperation were required. It is therefore small surprise that it was the military authorities who, during the war, were the first in seeking reassurance from civilian authorities that askaris would get better and special economic, political and social opportunities after the war. As early as 1943 the military authorities went on record as having recommended that the askari return to "an Africa with wide scope and more facilities after the war."²

While the military authorities were predicting that askaris would need a better standard of life, civilian authorities seemed to be convinced that they would return to their old way of life without any difficulties. Predictions as to what kind of life askaris would like to lead after the war were contained in a report put out by Kenya Government in 1944. Although the Government recognized that askaris had been exposed to modern living conditions, its major conclusion and recommendation was that "the majority of them will return to their old work as agriculturists" and that if any

²KNA. MD/4/5/137/27 (70): Letter to East Africa Command, March 10, 1943.

improvement had to be made in their standard of living it would have to be made in "their own homes."³ Some Government officials thought that the idea of re-settling ex-askaris in the "Reserves" was most realistic and practical, since most of them would not seek paid employment because they "are lazy unenterprising persons who might not want to be employed."⁴

While some of the military authorities believed that askaris should return to "an Africa with wide scope and more facilities," which meant that askaris would settle in any place in the territory which would offer them a better standard of living, civilian administrators planned to return these people to specific areas -- "their homes" -- where facilities for modern living were very much limited.

This, as we shall see later, was the first open blunder which the Kenya Government made in dealing with its returning askaris. The idea started in somebody's mind; it then became a prediction; and later it actually became the policy of the Government: the idea that the ex-askari must be socialized back into just another "native"; otherwise he would become difficult and unruly. When, for instance, the Government was

³Kenya, Preparation of Development Plans: Secretariat Circular Letter, No. 44 (April 29th, 1944).

⁴KNA. DC/EBU/10/5: Letter to P. C. Central Province, December 30, 1944.

recommending that askaris should go back to agricultural life, they actually meant peasant or subsistence farming, and not modern farming. When they talked of "their homes," what they had in mind was the "African Reserves" or the "tribal" lands.

By the end of 1944, therefore, the Government had publicly made its position on the question of returning soldiers quite clear: in spite of a great widening of their experience, they would be treated in the same way the rest of the Africans were being treated. A few Europeans, of course, saw the danger that was ahead if such a policy was carried out. George C. Turner (then Principal of Makerere College, Uganda) spoke for this group when he wrote that, "War is doing what some people fear: 'It is putting ideas into the African's head.' And it will be futile to treat him as though those ideas were not there."⁵

However, this was the view of a very small minority. For the majority of Europeans -- especially Kenya settlers -- it was the duty and responsibility of the Government to see that askaris were "smoothly" demobilized from great soldiers and heroes of World War II into "natives," just as it had been possible for them to be mobilized from reluctant "tribesmen" into brave, skillful and loyal soldiers. The importance

⁵Kenya: Progress Report on Demobilization (February, 1944).

of this point cannot be overemphasized. It was the most important factor which determined the future relationship between ex-soldiers and the Colonial Government in Kenya. It was on this basis that the Government determined which project suited ex-soldiers and which one did not. Projects that tended to prepare the ex-askari for rural and agricultural life were most encouraged; those that tended to prepare him for life outside the "Reserves" or for paid employment in towns tended to be least encouraged.

As it was pointed out earlier in this study, the educational program that was recommended for the askari during his military service was such that would train him to become a "junior leader" after the war; therefore the average European expected ex-askaris to be "junior partners" in the building of Kenya.

Hand in hand with these various predictions came the plans and arrangements to reabsorb soldiers into civilian life after the war. On the basis of these predictions, recommendations were made and programs set up in preparation for the day when the soldiers would return to civilian life. In October 1940, the Government appointed a committee to advise steps to be taken for the formulation of vocational training for demobilized European men and women. A similar committee for Asians was appointed in June, 1941; and a sub-committee

was appointed in June, 1942 to deal with the Africans.⁵

Later a short preliminary progress report on demobilization was submitted to the Government in July, 1943, which indicated that existing arrangements for reabsorption of members of the Armed Forces of "all races left much to be desired."⁶

The Government responded to this report by submitting proposals for consideration by the Legislative Council for the appointment of a Development and Reabsorption Authority which would collaborate with the Commissioner of Labour and the Demobilization and Civil Reabsorption organizations so as to ensure that sufficient attention was given in the matter of employment of men and women discharged from the services.⁷

By the end of 1944, it had become quite clear to the Government that ex-soldiers would not find paid employment as skilled and semi-skilled employees. A survey of departmental needs for skilled employees had shown that there were only limited opportunities in that area. And as one District Commissioner noted: "I would submit it is a colony wide problem rather than a District one. Those that cannot be absorbed in trades outside the District will have to become farmers within

⁵Kenya: Progress Report on Demobilization (February, 1944) .

⁶Ibid.

⁷Preparation of Development Plans (29th April 1944) .

the District."⁸

He made correct observations because as it turned out later he had actually spoken on behalf of every District Commissioner in the Colony. His conclusions became the official policy of the Government. Each and every District Commissioner had to see to it that when "his ex-askaris" returned from the service they were re-settled in their respective districts in their "tribal" lands.

This policy fitted in very well with the proposed post-war development plan for the Veterinary Department which stated that the national income of Kenya must be won from the land: "Since Kenya is predominantly an agricultural country ... agricultural development must come first. Social uplift, political emancipation and other refinements should follow."⁹

However, for many Europeans one most important question had not been answered: what position would the ex-soldier occupy in the political affairs of the country? It should be pointed out once more that in the opinion of many Europeans,

⁸ KNA. DC/EBU/10/5: Letter to P.C. Central Province, December 1, 1944. Also see KNA. DC/NFD5/1/7: "Coast Province 5 Year Development Plan 1944." Recommended that askaris should be returned to the Districts after discharge.

⁹ Post War Development Plan for the Veterinary Department (August, 1944).

the returning soldiers were a group of "difficult" men, and therefore Europeans found it "desirable at this stage to know the ultimate destiny of the African."¹⁰ It was pointed out that the African's political growth, or any other advancement, must depend entirely upon his responses to European lead and example. It was therefore the duty of the Europeans during the "succeeding decades" to educate the African "in the broadest sense toward becoming a better citizen."¹¹

As the war was drawing to a close, Kenya Government had a very clear picture of how it wished to deal with its returning African soldiers. First, it defined for him what kind of society he was going to live in; secondly, the Government had defined for him the type of social, political and economic life for which he could hope.

On the basis of these predictions, the Government concluded that an unemployed askari would be difficult; but that an employed one would be content with life and therefore easy to control. The type was not the question; the important thing was that the askari should and must be employed, or at least be occupied. Once again the Government failed to take into consideration the wide range of experiences to which these

¹⁰ KNA. PC/NFD5/1/4: "Nyanza Province Five Year Development Plan" (Kisumu, 1944).

¹¹ Ibid.

people had been exposed. This deliberate refusal on the part of the government to recognize that the average askari was "a concrete symbol of the new African"¹² was at the root of all the difficulties that arose between the ex-servicemen and Government officials.

These speculations were ended long before demobilization had been completed. Those who had been warning the Government that the returning askari would be a symbol of the New African were proved right when in February, 1946, as the demobilization was just short of the halfway mark, it seemed desirable for the military officials to visit the areas in which the large numbers of ex-soldiers had been discharged, with a view to ascertaining their reactions to their return to civilian life. These visits brought officials face to face with the newly demobilized askaris whose memories about their military services were still fresh. They patiently listened to askaris' questions, complaints and demands. A record of the major demands and complaints was kept by the Government and has become one of the most important documents on the question of ex-servicemen in Kenya. The document is to the postwar era what the petition from askaris serving in the Middle East was to the period of the war. If the 1943 document showed that askaris were getting politicized, that

¹²African Transcripts, No. 5 (September, 1945), p. 170.

of 1946 showed that they were more politicized and articulate than during the war. The tour took officials to various parts of Kenya, and in about a week they had managed to give audience to about 10,000 ex-askaris. The following were the Districts which were visited:¹³

Kericho	80
Kakamega	2,500
Kisumu	200
Kangundu	800
Sianthani	200
Tawa District, H. Q.	2,800
Fort Hall	1,500
Nyeri, Karatina, and Kitui	<u>2,000</u>
Total	10,080

At the end of the tour, officials agreed that ex-askaris were frustrated and bitter. They also agreed that the ex-soldiers seemed to have similar demands or questions regardless of where they served during the war and regardless of what District in Kenya they came from. Because the report is so important, I would like to quote it at length. Note the undoubtedly political, economic and social implications in askaris' demands and questions.

In Burma, General Fowkes told us that we had fought well, and that on our return our DC's would meet all our requirements. Where are all the surplus Army vehicles going to? In the army we were told that we would be able to purchase old Army lorries freely.

¹³ Kenya: Labour Department Annual Report 1946, p. 28. See also "Interim Report on African Demobilization" given on February 28, 1946. KNA. MAA/2/1/49-I.

We see them being sold to Indians in great quantities.

You Europeans seem to be in two groups -- those in the military, who promise us many things, and those in civil life who now say the opposite.

In the army we gave answers to questionnaire stating what work or what training we would like on discharge. What action is being taken on this?

You say 'where is the money to come from,' but there was plenty of money for war -- why is it not forthcoming for peace?

Why was the ex-servicemen with a good long service record not made use of in the Government?

We have heard of and appreciate schemes for the skilled ex-soldier, but what was being done for the ordinary combatant?

Why do we get so few opportunities of asking questions at Baraza Chiefs' Councils ? We have many questions to ask but our mouths are stopped.

When we bring a case before a Tribunal we are told we are swollen headed ... we wish to have soldier members of Local Native Council, and of Tribunals.

We want more hospitals and schools.

When would livestock control cease?

We want Clubs which we can run ourselves, and which can be meeting places just as they have in England.¹⁴

Obviously, the officials did not have the answers to all of these questions. They had, however, noticed that askaris made these demands because, as they put it, of their great contribution to British victory. In the officials'

¹⁴KNA. MAA/2/1/49-I: "Interim Report on African Demobilization."

judgement, such a belief was dangerous for it would only encourage the ex-soldiers to be more difficult to deal with. Therefore their first responsibility was to destroy this belief among the askaris:

It was not only the ex-askari who had helped to win the war. Civilians who had stayed behind, and helped to grow food, had made their contribution, and comparatively speaking, the ex-servicemen were better off."¹⁵

This indeed was an important official pronouncement which later developed into the Government policy. It was used in denying ex-askaris most of their claims and demands. If there was any group that needed aid because of its contribution toward victory, it was the civilians and not the ex-soldiers, because the soldiers were "better off" due to their military services. During their military careers askaris claimed that they had been promised loans with which they would begin their own business after the war. The touring team made clear to them that there were no loans for the askaris although they assured them that "only those who had sufficient money to start shops"¹⁶ would be given elementary training in business administration. The bulk of ex-askaris was advised to work either on their farms or on "someone else's land producing crops and food."¹⁷ For the most part, however, the touring team failed to respond

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Ibid.

to most of the askaris' questions that required specific answers; instead the officials gave general answers that were not of any immediate use to the frustrated and bitter askari: "Because of your greater knowledge, your travels and experience, your greater strength, I look to you to be leaders of your tribe ... Turn your strength and knowledge to the good of your tribe..."¹⁸

The importance of the tours did not lie in how the officials handled the askaris' questions; rather it lay in the fact that it gave the Government an opportunity to assess the reactions of the ex-servicemen to civilian life. They had learned that the ex-askari was bitter and frustrated; but, above all, they had learned that he was determined to see that his demands were met in one way or another.

Although, in their report to the Chief Secretary, the touring officials would admit that the average ex-serviceman was more advanced than most of the people in the "African Reserves," including some of the Government officials, they still recommended and insisted that askaris on returning to civilian life must return to these "tribal" lands. They observed that "Often it will mean the impact of an African -- educated and widely travelled -- on an administration which in some respects has not progressed with him."¹⁹

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹KNA. MAA/2/1/49-I, Speech by Director of Man Power and Civil Reabsorption Officer.

In spite of this fact, Government officials had no intention of abandoning their war-time policy on demobilization which had been based on speculative information. That information said, in part, as we have seen that ex-askaris would seek to return to their pre-war social, political and economic life. And on this basis they would be demobilized from loyal British soldiers into loyal British subjects residing in the "Reserves": that was the policy and had to be carried out.

If this policy was to succeed, it was recommended that early action be taken in order to forestall "unhealthy unrest," as a result of askari's impact on his "tribal community." Measures which were to be taken in order that the negative impact of the ex-askari could be avoided were among other things, "closer administration, welfare and development."²⁰ It looked as if the Government had, at last, found the answer to the question: how does one keep an enlightened ex-soldier in the "Reserves?" First, one must control him through closer administration which meant supplying the "Reserves" with additional administrative officers such as the District Officers and Reabsorption Officers. Secondly, one must cater to his social life by building social centers and promoting sports and games; and thirdly, one must teach him better methods of

²⁰ Ibid.

agriculture not for the production of better crops but for the conservation of soil and natural resources.

Most ex-askaris were opposed to these Government policies and Government-sponsored programs because, as they put it, these things were not in their best interest. They were not in their best interest because they were not intended to help them achieve their goal, which was a higher and better standard of living. Thus Kakembo wrote that:

I would like to urge our trustees to direct their mind not to a plan for getting rid of the demobilized soldier as quickly as possible, but to the laying of a new foundation for society -- now.²¹

This demonstrates clearly how far apart the views of the Government and ex-servicemen were regarding post-war Africa. Ex-askaris planned for and looked forward to a new Africa, while the Government was busy preparing to re-settle him in the old Africa -- rural, agricultural and "tribal" Africa.

The importance of this point cannot be over-emphasized. These opposing views about the direction into which post-war Africa should move became one of the underlying factors in the relationship between ex-askaris and the Government. The question which the ex-askari was asking was this: was he going to define his own life or was the Government going to do it for

²¹ Kakembo, op.cit., p. 6.

him? The answer was not long in coming: the Government meant and continued to define, for the ex-askari, what kind of life he was going to live.

By the time demobilization started, East African Governments had instituted the Civil Directorate of Demobilization specifically for giving information to the soldiers regarding the intentions of their own Governments and to provide in-training of a specialized type for suitable ex-Army tradesman of all races on inter-territorial lines.²²

Kenya Government set up the Development and Reconstruction Authority (DARA) which was to meet post-war conditions and the primary problems of development and reconstruction. It was, however, responsible to the Governor for the co-ordinated execution of approved development and reconstruction plans.

In practice it was found that facilities for the training of Europeans and Asians were not available in East Africa, and therefore the Government had to look to Britain and South Africa for assistance. However, meanwhile it recommended that Egerton School of Agriculture at Njoro (Kenya) be expanded for the training of Europeans in agriculture. As for the training of Indians in agriculture, the Government agreed to go into

²²KNA. MFD/12/19/165-II, "The East African Governments Need Training Staff."

partnership with the Government of Tanganyika (Tanzania) in a training school which was to be started at Morogoro (Tanzania). As regards African training, the Government established two main training centers: Kenya Center "B" Kabete Technical and Trade School was established for training individuals who would set up individual businesses in their villages or be employed by firms or farmers in rural areas. In 4 years, i.e., 1946-1949, it had trained 2837²³ ex-servicemen -- blacksmiths, carpenters, plumbers, tailors, etc. Kenya Center "C" Jeanes School was established for skilled men preparing for primarily Government employment. During the same period, it trained 813²⁴ ex-soldiers -- teachers, welfare workers, agricultural instructors, health inspectors, etc.

From 1946 to 1949 about 3,700 men (4% of the total of veterans in Kenya) had been trained at the two centers and had taken posts in civilian life. In Uganda at least 6,500 veterans received vocational or professional training in reabsorption courses; this was approximately 8% of the total number of veterans in Uganda.²⁵ The aim here is not to discuss the

²³Kenya, Labour Department Annual Reports 1946, 1947, 1949. See Schleh, op.cit., p. 77.

²⁴Annual Report of the Welfare Organization Kenya Colony 1949 (Nairobi, Government Printer, 1950), p. 14. See also Schleh, op.cit., p. 78.

²⁵Schleh, op.cit., p. 76.

mechanics of these projects. The discussion centers around the economic and political benefit, if any, of these centers to the trainees.

It should be pointed out at the outset that in the opinion of the majority of the ex-soldiers, the idea of further training in vocational and professional schools was a failure. Interviews with ex-soldiers revealed that there were too few training centers; what the training offered was, in most cases, inadequate; and that the total number of ex-servicemen who went through them was too small to have any significant value. This view has been supported by statements made by some of the contemporary officials in Kenya Government itself.²⁶

From enquiries made while askaris were serving, it was apparent that most of them hoped to establish themselves in civil life in their trade. However, when the East African Governments enquired regarding absorption capacity of the territories they found that opportunities for paid employment were limited: "The figures showed that in comparison with the number who would be seeking training, only a few would, even if they were given further training, find employment or

²⁶ Kenya: Labour Department, Bulletin, No. 1 (May, 1947), p. 31: Training for the majority, especially, the infantry ex-askari not available.

be able to earn a living as a private tradesman."²⁷

The Government had these statistics on employment opportunities long before demobilization started, yet they continued to prepare tens of thousands of African soldiers for further training at the end of the war. As late as January 1, 1945, the Director of Training in an article in East African Standard could still write that "in the majority of trades the African will need further training ... and a much wider knowledge of the subject is required."

As soon as the soldiers returned to civil life, they demanded paid employment or further training, that they had been promised during the war. Publicly, officials told them that the majority of them were ill-prepared for paid employment or for further training. They therefore told the askaris that only "first class" tradesmen would undergo further training. Privately, however, officials understood thoroughly what the problem was. They knew that according to employment statistics, a system of selection for training had to be introduced because it would have been "uneconomic to train more men than could possibly be absorbed into the various trades."²⁸

²⁷ KNA. MAA/2/1/49-I: Letter to Under Secretary of State for the Colonies, May 6, 1947.

²⁸ Ibid. See also in the same file: "Interim Report on African Demobilization."

Therefore it was recommended that each of the three East African territories plan its training so that over a three year period its centers could produce a supply of trained men in selected trades approximately equal to the numbers that the territory was thought to be capable of absorbing.

As noted above, this forced Kenya Government to enroll only a small fraction (4%) of the veterans for further training. One would have thought that the few ex-soldiers fortunate enough to be enrolled in these vocational schools would have received the best and most advanced training possible. The government training courses were "mostly designed for simple skills such as mat-weaving or improvement in agricultural technique and hygiene."²⁹ One would also expect these trainees to be thoroughly qualified in their trades by the time they finished their training since they were dealing with simple skills; yet by the time they finished their training they were still "half-baked."³⁰

²⁹African Transcripts, No. 7 (January, 1946), p. 32.

³⁰KNA. MFD/12/19/165-II: Letter to Major F. W. Cavendish-Bentinck, July 5, 1947. This issue was very fiercely debated among Government officials themselves; and at times between Government officials and private employers. An official of the African Central Employment Bureau stated that: "In the U.K. unskilled men are given as little as 3 months training (in the building trades) and then are sent to work with contractors for a further period of 21 months. During this time they are still regarded as being in training. "If employers in this Colony were prepared to regard

While the Government claimed that it was selecting "first class" tradesmen for advanced training, in fact it gave inadequate training in elementary skills. As a result of this double weakness in these government-sponsored programs, a good number of those who received the training did not get jobs. One other reason why some of these ex-Kabete trainees did not get jobs was that there were no opportunities for paid employment for them.³¹

Nevertheless, the sharpest criticism which was directed at these programs was the one connected with the number of ex-askaris that benefitted from them. Four per cent was too small a figure for the ex-servicemen themselves, as well as the Colony as a whole, to have gained anything from such programs. It was pointed out that those who managed to go for the training were "in such small numbers as to be of little material use"³² to Kenya.

It would appear from this analysis that these programs

ex-Kabete ex-askari who had further training at Kabete trainees in the same light they would be doing a service to the community as a whole." Kenya: Labour Department, Bulletin, Vol. II, No. 1 (1948), p. 38. See also Kenya: African Affairs, Report 1946-47, p. 55, "The Center has never aimed at turning out completely trained artisans..."

³¹See statement by Director of Training in East African Standard (January 31, 1945); newspaper clippings available: KNA. MFD/12/19/165-II.

³²Letter to F. W. Cavendish-Bentinck, op.cit.

were instituted primarily for political and not for economic purposes. Any economic value that was derived from them was a by-product. If we remember the Government's conclusion that an unemployed ex-soldier would be "difficult" then we realize the value of these centers. They were for the few that would slip out of the "Reserves" into towns; and if they find no employment in towns they must be taken to these vocational schools before they get out of hand. This was not unique in Kenya; in Uganda it was found that "the programs were invaluable as 'a cooling off' period."³³ They served the same purpose for Kenya. As one observer put it, with special reference to Kenya, the programs served as "maintenance of morale during the period before mustering out."³⁴ It was important that the ex-soldier should be kept in such programs until the political climate changed or, at least until their memories of military service were no longer so vivid and fresh. Professor Schleh was correct when he stated that:

Inherent in the discussions was fear of political disruption. Above all others, veterans who congregated in urban areas seeking employment, if unsuccessful, would provide dissatisfied recruits for anti-colonial movements.³⁵

³³Schleh, op.cit., p. 87.

³⁴African Transcripts, No. 7 (January, 1946), p. 32.

³⁵Schleh, op.cit., p. 58.

Like most political programs, they were publicity or propaganda projects aimed at making the ex-askari in particular and the African in general believe that the Government was seriously interested in the welfare of the ex-askari. This propaganda about Kenya having solved its ex-soldiers' problems by instituting special programs reached other English-speaking territories who wished to benefit from Kenya's experience. The Governor of Nigeria³⁶ wrote to Governor of Kenya wishing to know the exact special ex-askari programs that Kenya Government had employed in solving ex-soldiers' problems. Kenya's Governor in reply said that they did not have any special programs for their ex-askaris; that their ex-askaris were regarded just like any other African.

So far we have been dealing with what the Government tried to do or actually did for the 4% of its veterans. Mainly, we have been dealing with the section of the veterans that hoped to get or actually got paid employment. We must turn now to the question of the majority of the veterans who went back to the "Reserves."

Kenya Government was well aware of the difficult living conditions which the majority (95%) of its veterans would, after the war, encounter in the "Reserves." As one of the prominent correspondents connected with the East Africa

³⁶KNA. MAA/2/1/49-I: Letter to Governor of Nigeria, July 19, 1948.

Command wrote in the London Times:

It is questionable how many of these thousands who have been jerked out of their traditional environment and had their entire outlook on life and the world changed will be content to return to the dominance of illiterate old chiefs and that standard of living that an eroded, barren environment and an overcrowded peasant existence alone render possible.³⁷ [*Italics mine*]

In spite of this knowledge that the ex-soldier's outlook on life had drastically changed, and that the "Reserves" could only offer them peasant existence, the Government insisted that the ex-askaris return to those areas, and as the same correspondent just referred to observed:

The civil administrations ... want to see them absorbed back into tribal life with the least fuss and inconvenience.³⁸

The Government was able to think along such lines because it was convinced that the problem of reabsorption was

³⁷ "The Returned Askari: Problem of Demobilization in East Africa," London Times, August 21, 1945, quoted in African Transcripts, No. 5 (September, 1945), p. 170. Between July and September 1945, many periodicals and newspapers were pre-occupied with the problems of demobilization. See "Post-war Reconstruction in East Africa: Vocational Training of Africans," East African Standard (July 13, 1945); "Governments' Advice to East African Askari: Comprehensive Statement on Post-war Employment Problems," East Africa and Rhodesia (August 16, 1945); "East Africa's Plans for Released Soldiers; Training to be Given at Special Centres," East Africa and Rhodesia (August 23, 1945); "Africa Demobilizes," African World (August 25, 1945); "Askari Teach New Ways to East African," The Crown Colonist (September, 1945).

³⁸ Ibid.

neither an economic nor a political one, but that it was a social problem. The Government regarded the demobilization of so "many thousands of native askari ... as the greatest social problem ... for East Africa since the abolition of slavery."³⁹ Since the problem was a social one, all the Government needed to do, so the officials thought, was to institute social welfare programs that would meet askaris' social needs. In short, the Government believed that what the ex-askari did not gain in his economic and political life would be compensated for in his social life. This, of course, did not reflect a new trend in thinking on the part of the Government, because as early as 1944 it had decided that the major contribution of the askari when the war ended would be "social development of their villages."⁴⁰

In view of this, upon demobilization askaris were to be stopped from drifting into towns because they were regarded as being invaluable material for helping in the establishment of "social centres and assisting generally in rural development" in the districts.⁴¹

Although most of the problems in rural and village life were economic and political, Government officials acted

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ KNA. PC/NFD5/1/7: "Coast Province 5 Year Development Plan" (1944), p. 149.

⁴¹ Ibid.

on the assumption that it was "the extreme barrenness of recreation that constitutes the biggest factor in the decay of village life."⁴² And since it had been concluded that "rural or village life" would be the pattern of African life "for years to come," it seemed logical for the Government to conclude further that the best thing to do was to institute social welfare programs. The idea that top priority must be given to social development was not arrived at overnight; it took the Government a long period of time to develop it. It was based on the assumption that the African "will always" prefer the life in the "Reserves." What was required in such areas were things such as sports, choirs, and games, and not things that were on "the purely utilitarian side," such as those the Medical and Agricultural Departments seemed to be anxious to do.⁴³

There was also another practical justification for establishing these social development projects. It was repeatedly stated that during the war the askari had been used to modern social amenities and it was, therefore, concluded that the most practical thing to do after the war would be to build social development schemes throughout the country specifically for the use of ex-askaris. As one contemporary

⁴²Dickson, "Studies in War-time Organization...",
p. 14.

⁴³Ibid.

observer noted:

None of us who took part in the development of information and recreation rooms in the army will forget the askari's growing enthusiasm for them, the happy centre of life they came to be ... Here is a valuable instrument that could easily be organized at strategic centres throughout a territory ... These community centres would leave ample room for development of all kinds of youth work, which would seem an essential part of the future of African society.⁴⁴ [Italics mine.]

It was on this basis that the Government recommended that the development of Social Welfare Information and Mass Education Scheme "was of the greatest importance to the African community."⁴⁵ Through this the Government hoped that Africans would be able to understand the nature of and the reason for the "Government's agricultural, economic and development policy."⁴⁶ This was considered most important because, according to the Government, it would have meant economic or political disaster "unless the African mind can be brought to the pitch of being able to comprehend the broad requirements of the rehabilitation and development program."⁴⁷ From this point

⁴⁴Doig, op.cit., p. 179. See also Kenya: Education Department, Annual Report 1946 (Nairobi, 1948), p. 7. The Government hoped that askaris' wartime experiences would lead to "considerable social progress in the future."

⁴⁵Kenya, Summary of the Report of the Development Committee (Nairobi, 1946), p. 9.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 5.

on, it would appear that the Government focused its attention on and stressed the importance of "bringing the African mind to the pitch" rather than the actual building of the community centres and providing the said social services to the ex-askaris. To do this to the African mind, the Government hoped to turn once more to propaganda. As one former Provincial Commissioner stated, "such drastic changes are likely to encounter difficulties, therefore well directed and skillfully planned propaganda should not be overlooked."⁴⁸

In February, 1946, Provincial Commissioners in Kenya held a meeting to discuss the problems of reabsorption of ex-servicemen into civilian life. It is not surprising that the most important item on their agenda was "propaganda and propaganda methods." They concluded that the increase of administrative staff in the districts was an absolute necessity. "It was the considered view of the PC's that no other method of propaganda was satisfactory or efficacious as oral propaganda by the PC's and DC's."⁴⁹

⁴⁸ A. M. Champion, "Native Welfare in Kenya" (1945), p. 32. KNA. MAA/2/1/24. He recommended that various methods of spreading propaganda be used. "All the services at our disposal, the officers and staff of all Government Departments, by printed and spoken word, the schools, the hospital, the cinema and even the pulpit."

⁴⁹ KNA. MAA/2/1/49-I: Extracts from Minutes of the Meeting of PC's Held on 29th, 30th and 31st January and 1st February, 1946.

The Government was quick in responding to these proposals. A month later, after having reiterated that the question of the smooth reabsorption of the ex-askaris was a matter of the first importance, the Government "had agreed that, as a means of assisting DC's, additional staff shall be provided ... in the form of Reabsorption Officers and African Reabsorption Assistants."⁵⁰

Although by mid-1947 the Government would report that "social welfare is new to the African, and at first came under a certain amount of suspicion,"⁵¹ this was only part of the problem. In the first place, there were too few community centres in the "Reserves" to serve ex-askaris, let alone Africans as a whole. Moreover, in some cases it meant walking twenty or more miles to get to the nearest community or social centre. However, a great majority of Africans did not show interest in most of the courses which were being offered at these centers because, as one Government report concluded, "much attention is being paid to team games and athletics."⁵²

That the African did not show great enthusiasm in what was being offered is understandable. To him these courses were

⁵⁰KNA. MAA/2/1/49-I: Circular to all PC's, March 8, 1946.

⁵¹Kenya: Labour Department, Bulletin, Vol. I, No. 1 (May, 1947), p. 31.

⁵²Ibid.

completely irrelevant to those economic, social and political problems which faced him in the "Reserves." The Government had promised that the establishment of social centres would bring progress to rural areas. In the first place, ex-askaris were disappointed because there were not enough community centres built for them; and secondly, they were disappointed because the few centres that the Government was able to establish offered either irrelevant courses or inadequate services.

While these programs seemed to be failing, at least from the point of view of the ex-askari, the number of Europeans on the local administrative staff kept growing at a rapid pace. Interviews with the ex-askaris revealed the presence of too many Europeans in the "Reserves" at this time was not in the best interest of the reabsorption projects. Many Africans questioned the motive of these Europeans and wondered if they were really that interested in the welfare of the African. Most of them concluded that Europeans were in the African areas not for the interest of Africans, but for their own interest. As a result of this, most ex-askaris remained indifferent or refused to co-operate. As the East African Commission Report noted:

With the ending of the war the momentum of government activities increased. Technical officers and their assistants penetrated to the remotest villages. But, at present, suspicion remains a great deterrent to progress, and everything possible must

be done to overcome it.⁵³

That is how bad the situation was. When those Re-absorption Officers flocked into the "Reserves" to help the African understand "problems of development," the results were exactly the opposite. We might conclude that these projects and programs were to a large extent a failure. However, before we come to such a conclusion, we would want to know what the Government's aim was in recommending and instituting these projects. From the point of view of the administration, the projects were a great success because through them the Government accomplished its goal, i.e., "smooth" reabsorption. In the administration's eyes, any project that contributed to "smooth" reabsorption was a successful one.

The idea that "smooth" reabsorption must be achieved at any cost was not anything new. The Government began planning for it when the war was still in progress. It was, however, articulated in 1946 after the Man Power and Civilian Reabsorption Officer had visited the newly demobilized ex-askaris and had ascertained their reactions to civilian life.⁵⁴ He

⁵³ Britain, East African Royal Commission 1953-1955 Report (London, 1955), p. 427.

⁵⁴ KNA. MAA/2/1/49-I. Letter to Chief Secretary. It stated among other things: "There is a natural reaction and they [ex-askaris] are searching for a peg upon which to hang their discontent. So far as they can see, it is the Civil Government, through its local representative, the D.C., which is responsible."

recognized the fact that the target of the frustrated and bitter ex-askaris would be the Government. Therefore the Government must act fast and do everything in its power to avoid this by ensuring "smooth" reabsorption. After his tour of the "Reserves," he wrote that:

Any organization for reabsorption must maintain close contact with the ex-soldier in the early stages of his reabsorption, and until such time as administration, through an increase in strength and by means of propaganda, welfare, etc. had adjusted itself to this new element [*italics mine*]. This contact can, I suggest, be best achieved by making full use of staff available, i.e. European Dispersal Officers, Family Remittance Officers and the like.⁵⁵

His recommendations were immediately adopted by the Government and were later formulated into official policy of the administration. From that point on, additional European officers were sent to Provincial and District administrations in order to help in bringing about "smooth" reabsorption using any means, especially propaganda. The Government was aware of the fact that, seen from the African point of view, some of these reabsorption projects were a complete failure; however, it realized that it needed these projects as "cooling-off" occupations, if not for anything else, until the Government was strong enough to deal with the "difficult" ex-servicemen.

From this analysis, we can safely conclude that vocational training and social welfare programs were both conceived

⁵⁵Ibid.

by the Government for one and the same reason: they both served a political purpose. They were "cooling-off" services aimed at making the ex-askari believe that the Government was truly and sincerely interested in his welfare; while, in fact, the Government was only biding its time and meanwhile growing stronger so that, in the end, it could if necessary control the "unruly element" among the ex-askaris with assurance and confidence.

The bulk of the ex-servicemen, however, returned to their respective rural areas and started farming just as they had done before they joined the army. Very few ex-servicemen were allotted new plots by the Government -- the number is too small to call for any consideration. As regards Government loans for progressive farming, the ex-askari, like his civilian fellow African, was not qualified to receive such aid, so the question of loans was completely out of the picture.

The situation was further complicated by the introduction in Kenya of a new agricultural policy. In 1946 the Government set up a program which gave priority to promoting the "proper utilization of the soil, water and forest."⁵⁶ Main goals of the policy were to stabilize the soil and to restore and maintain fertility. As the Government pointed out, through

⁵⁶ Kenya. African Development in Kenya 1946-1955: Land, Livestock and Water (Nairobi, 1955).

this policy it hoped to accomplish: "soil conservation and reclamation, good husbandry and extended veterinary services together with the development and conservation of water resources and the proper development of the colony's forest estate."⁵⁷ This was a conservation-oriented program rather than a production-oriented one. It hit the Africans harder than it did the Europeans because, as the Government was quick to point out, the European land was in better condition than the African land.

In practical terms, it meant that the African spent more of his time carrying out "conservation measures" on his farm, while the European produced goods from his farm. This is why the "save-the-soil-campaign of the years immediately following the war"⁵⁸ was felt and resented more by Africans than by Europeans.

Save-the-soil policy was in effect for ten years, i.e. 1946-1955. It was not until the end of the ten-year plan (1955) that the Government reversed this trend. It called the ten-year plan "unrealistic" and recommended that "in the present planning period more attention can be paid to the problem of improving methods of farm management."⁵⁹ At last,

⁵⁷Kenya. Report of the Development Committee (Nairobi, 1946).

⁵⁸Kenya. Sessional Paper No. 51, 1955: The Development Programme 1954-1959 (Nairobi, 1955), p. 27.

⁵⁹Ibid.

the Government realized the damage which this policy was inflicting on the Colony's agricultural development. For the African, however, there was not very much he could do except, accept the fact that for the last ten years agricultural development in his area had been markedly retarded by an ill-conceived policy.

Therefore in agricultural development, as in vocational training and social welfare projects, the Government was only interested in stop-gap or "cooling-off" measures. These measures, it must be admitted, produced the desired effect. During the first several months of demobilization official reports regarding reabsorption were quite optimistic and encouraging. By the end of 1947, the Government declared publicly that reabsorption had been "smooth," and that, in effect, it was completed. The Provincial Commissioner, Nyanza Province, reported that by the end of 1946 he had welcomed "back home" some 35,000 demobilized askaris. However, he noted that "many of the ex-soldiers have found conditions a little different after their period of expatriation, but they have behaved exemplarily."⁶⁰ Central Province reported that "it is universally true to say that by the end of the year [1947] there was no distinguishable difference between the ex-askari and his civilian brother."⁶¹

⁶⁰Kenya: African Affairs Department, Report (1946-1947), p. 3.

⁶¹Ibid.

However, some of these reports seemed to be contradicting themselves. This served as an indication that everything was not well with reabsorption. For instance, the Government stated that "the majority of ex-soldiers resumed very thankfully their pre-war roles," however in the same paragraph it was stated that "few of the applicants [for assistance] had resources, experience and capital commensurate with their ambitions, and gradually the disappointed, who were many, settled down to their former way of life."⁶² It is difficult to believe that the same group of people could be thankful and at the same time disappointed. One more example of these opposing views was the report from Central Province. This report noted that by 1947 reabsorption had been successfully completed; and yet in the same report the following comment appeared: "The events of 1947 in Central Province conformed to a pattern. The pattern ... is one of political unrest... This extremely uncomfortable condition became evident immediately after the war and grew in intensity during 1946."⁶³

These sensational and overly optimistic official reports were, evidently, used for publicity and propaganda purposes. We must realize that for Kenya Government, reabsorption was a crisis; and like any government faced with a crisis, it

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³Ibid.

tried to emphasize the positive side of reabsorption; conversely, it de-emphasized the negative side. That propaganda was one of the means by which "smooth" reabsorption was achieved is evident from the foregoing discussion. From the point of view of the Government, "smooth" reabsorption meant the administration's ability to control the life of the ex-askaris in such a way that the latter would not cause any "unrest," political or otherwise, which would disrupt British rule in Kenya. The question was not whether these reabsorption measures were in the interest of the ex-askari; rather the question was if they were or were not in the interest of the Government. Anything that promoted reabsorption measures was encouraged and that which interfered with it was discouraged or stopped.⁶⁴

Therefore when assessing the success or failure of reabsorption programs, we must always remember what the aim of the Government was in instituting them. Were they intended to benefit the Government or Africans? Were they supposed to meet African political, economic and social demands? The fact of the matter is that the primary concern of the Government was the achievement of "smooth" re-settlement of ex-askaris;

⁶⁴Kenya. Report of Native Affairs 1946-1947 (1949), p. 3. The Government could boast of "its well-designed machinery for demobilization."

any other outcome would have to be incidental or simply a by-product of the main concern. "Smooth" reabsorption did not mean the meeting of ex-askaris' demands; it meant controlling their "unrest" without meeting their demands. Four years after the war, P. W. Harris, then Chief Native Commissioner, stated clearly and exactly what the administration had done in order to bring about "smooth" reabsorption:

Immediately following the war, Provincial teams and District teams consisting of the Officers of the Administration, and of departments stationed in the areas concerned, were set up and it was the zeal and drive of those officers which enabled progress to be made in practically every sphere, in spite of the difficulties of political activity and economic instability.⁶⁵ (Italics mine.)

From the point of view of the Government, giant progress had been made through its well-designed machinery, i.e. the officers of the administrations and departments. But Africans and their sympathizers regarded these "Provincial Teams and District Teams" as a "great deterrent to progress."⁶⁶ Interviews with ex-askaris showed that they had known all along that these projects were not meant to benefit them. They stated that "courses" which were offered in music (actually

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 2.

⁶⁶East African Royal Commission 1953-1955 Report, p. 427. See also Champion, op.cit., p. 32. He states that Africans did not readily co-operate with the Government because "they still distrust our motives."

mere singing), dancing and games as the main part of the social welfare program could not solve their major problems which were political, social and economic in nature. Kakembo spoke for the rest of the ex-askaris when he wrote:

It regrets me to say that with the exception of a few things done or being done here and there, the general attitude of our trustees is still just to quietly amble along, with no sign of hurry.⁶⁷

Up until now we have been dealing with those programs through which the Government planned to assist the ex-askaris. We can at least say that the Government had good intentions, that it made positive gestures in trying to do something about the plight of the ex-askari. The government might not have been fully interested in seeing an African make progress, but at least it denied him this right in a rather indirect and subtle way; that is to say, they used, among other things, propaganda in denying him his rights.

Consideration must now be given to those programs or areas in which opportunities for progress were firmly, systematically and openly denied the ex-askari. This, in effect, amounted to outright, rigid and stringent control by the Government of the ex-askari's political, economic and social life. Before we analyze the means employed by the Government in controlling his life, let us briefly examine the mentality or

⁶⁷ Kakembo, op.cit., p. 6.

"political philosophy" of the average European in both pre- and post-war Kenya. The type of social and political system which most Europeans wished to establish in Kenya was first conceived around the turn of the 20th century; and fifty or sixty years later most Europeans still espoused these beliefs and ideas. Until Kenya's Independence Day, the average European in Kenya believed firmly in what Sir Charles Eliot had said about Kenya and the Kenya Africans at the turn of this century:

We are not destroying any old interesting system, but simply introducing order into blank, uninteresting brutal barbarism.⁶⁸

This type of thinking was amplified and articulated by Kenya Europeans immediately following World War I. The type of Kenya they hoped and planned for after World War I was a Kenya that did not have any room for the African; it was the type of Kenya that would disregard Africans' aspirations and interests. Perhaps by understanding the way they visualized a post-World War I Kenya, we might begin to understand why Kenya Europeans decided to control development in Kenya so firmly after World War II.

In 1919 a report was published by Kenya Europeans which summed up their views on what kind of social system they

⁶⁸Quoted by Fred Majdalany in his book State of Emergency: Full Story of Mau Mau (London, 1962), p. 15.

wished to establish in Kenya. In the 1950's, and even beyond, as I shall shortly demonstrate, the majority of the Europeans still held these views. The report stated among other things:

British East Africa [Kenya] from the white man's point of view is a young country just entering, after twenty-one years of adolescence, the adult period of serious ideals, enterprise and development... In a land possessing vast hordes of coloured subject peoples, two requirements appear prominently as essentials to the permanency of the white man's rule. The first, is the necessity for creating openings that will comfortably support a sufficient number of members of the dominating race to enable it to hold its own in perfect safety, no matter what crises may arise, without recourse to outside assistance; and secondly, that these overlords shall prove their superior civilization by being a powerful brotherliness, undivided by those economic disputes and divergencies of interests that have split and shaken the solidarity of even the most progressive and democratic sections of the race in other parts of the Empire.

Now if this young country can adapt in respect to its main industries, i.e. those of land, that will permanently amalgamate and identify the interests of its white inhabitants and make them pull cordially together it will stay ahead of all competitors in the tug-of-war for white population that must take place at the close of the war.⁶⁹

This was the Kenya desired by most Europeans at the end of World War I. They did not wish less at the end of World War II. That this would be the case was predicted by many observers both in and outside Kenya. Judging from what had happened after World War I, many observers concluded, quite

⁶⁹ Kenya. Report of the Land Settlement Commission (Nairobi, 1919), p. 93.

correctly, that life for Africans would be made even more difficult after World War II than it was after the First World War. One critic noted that:

We may expect reverberations ... since the entrenched interests of European settlers are inimical to the growth of native African strength, economic and political. Those interests have enforced a relatively low ceiling on aspirations of the non-European population in the past.⁷⁰

The "settler problem" has made the history of Kenya quite unique and different from that of its neighbours. It remained a problem from the early days of European settlement to the day that country attained its independence. As two of the most authoritative scholars on Kenya nationalism have stated: "Post-war i.e. World War II nationalism in Kenya developed in an environment marked by the efforts of settler leaders."⁷¹ This meant that any African political or nationalist organization was met with well organized and powerful settler interest. African nationalists were a danger to the "established order of the State" and, therefore, must be dealt with quickly and firmly; they must be shown "their place." From the settlers' point of view, the "good native" was the one who was willing

⁷⁰ African Transcripts, No. 5 (September, 1945), p. 170.

⁷¹ Fred G. Burke, "Political Evolution in Kenya" in Transformation of East Africa, Stanley Diamond and Fred G. Burke, eds. (New York, 1966), p. 189.

and ready to learn from the European by watching his "civilized" way of life. The "good natives" would be civilized by the "proximity and example of the settlers."⁷² They would be taught to know "their place" and to accept the status of a docile and compliant working-class.

Above examples illustrate the continuity of uncompromising settler mentality among Kenya Europeans from the earliest days of their settlement in Kenya to early 1960's. It shows clearly that the thinking of the average European in Kenya was greatly influenced by the "political philosophy" of men such as Sir Charles Eliot. Referring to Eliot's ideas and their impact on Kenya, Fred Majdalany wrote (in 1960) that:

It is of historic interest that his doctrines -- which were fundamental to Kenya's thinking for the next fifty years -- were an early and symptomatic example of what was to become of the Colony's besetting and recurring weakness, failure of imagination, for the doctrine of white supremacy was to persist long after it had been renounced by the British Government itself as obsolete.⁷³

Such was the political philosophy that prevailed in Kenya as World War II was drawing to a close. In view of this, Kenya could not be classified with any other country in Africa except South Africa and Rhodesia. It was therefore small wonder

⁷²Majdalany, op.cit., p. 15.

⁷³Ibid., p. 16. The 1923 White Paper "Indians in Kenya" stated that primarily Kenya was an African territory and therefore the interests of the Africans must be paramount.

that ex-askaris were greeted with such rigid and stringent controls.

These controls were basically measures taken by the Government to ensure that the European community in Kenya would maintain and strengthen its power. Their aim was to keep the African from gaining any power; this meant that Europeans were prepared to go to any length to make sure that they had the power and the African did not. One way by which power could be maintained was through European population -- the greater the number of Europeans, the better the chances for maintaining power. This is why Kenya Europeans preferred Italian prisoners of war to their own African ex-soldiers who had helped defend the British Empire. They would open opportunities to Italians rather than to ex-askaris. This issue was fiercely debated in Kenya. A few Europeans, led by the Director of Man Power, were opposed to the idea, and recommended that Italians be repatriated.⁷⁴ By June 1945, the question of Italian co-operators had become so controversial that it had to be referred to the British Government in London. But before that, the Director of Man Power wrote to one of the most powerful agricultural organizations in Kenya:

Responsible farmers are stating that the retention of the good type of Italian co-operators

⁷⁴There were about 30,000 Italian co-operators in Kenya; see East African Standard, February 28, 1946.

is more or less essential for even the long term production policy. To allow, however, such a policy would be deserving of a maximum adverse criticism. It would be pandering to the individual, under an exaggerated excuse of national interests, whilst being most unfair to the British and Empire ex-servicemen who would find themselves in the position of being 'outed' in peace by the very people whom they defeated in the war.⁷⁵

Supporters of this policy argued that experience in the war years of prosperity in farming and certain industries appeared to show that there was a need for the "white working class type of man." However, it was argued that in practice the need was only temporary because the askari coming back from the war, with his added experience and training, would give a far better service to Kenya farmers and industry than was the case before the war.⁷⁶

From the point of view of the majority of Europeans in Kenya, especially the settlers, the Directorate of Man Power had taken a dangerous path that would undermine European position. Settlers' opposition to these recommendations was firm and immediate: "Farmers have been somewhat nervous for some time past that their production would be seriously affected were such a hiatus to occur."⁷⁷ However, farmers were not

⁷⁵KNA. MD/4/5/129-I/26 (70); Letter to Secretary to Agricultural Production and Settlement Board, June 22, 1945.

⁷⁶Ibid.

⁷⁷KNA. MD/4/5/129-I/26 (70); Letter to Ag. Chief Secretary of State for the Colonies, July 14, 1945.

prepared to stop at that. They sent their complaints to the British Government through Kenya's Chief Secretary. It would appear that the latter was under settlers' pressure when he presented their case to the Colonial Office in London. At any rate, he did not present a strong case for the Africans as the Director of Man Power had done. He simply stated that:

Representations have been made by Kenya farmers for the retention until last in the order of repatriation of Italians who are doing key-jobs...

The Kenya Government considers that this decision will be detrimental to the colony's production and war effort, whilst it might also hinder the plans for the reabsorption of African-servicemen into civil life. It is hoped that the trade training which the African soldier has had during his service in the Forces will go a long way fitting him to take the place of the Italian, but it is recognized that special training courses will be required to fit him for civilian needs.⁷⁸

Thus the dispatch decided the case in favor of the settlers. All they were wishing for was for the Government to agree with their allegations that the ex-servicemen were not fully qualified to be fitted into the key-jobs; that his war-time training could not be readily converted into use, in civilian life, without further training. Farmers' pretext that ex-askaris were "half-baked" tradesmen had, in effect, been sanctioned by the Government. From this point on, private employers, including farmers, would refuse to employ an ex-askari

⁷⁸KNA. MD/4/5/129-I/26 (70); Dispatch to Secretary of State for the Colonies, July 14, 1945.

on account of his sub-standard training.⁷⁹

While it was alleged that the ex-askari was denied employment because of his inadequate training, and that work on the farms required skilled labourers, it was reported that by 1946 there were 1400 Italian prisoners of war employed on farms in Kenya and that at least half of them were unskilled labourers.⁸⁰

As previously stated, the wish and dream of the average European in Kenya was to make Kenya appear as "European" as possible. It would therefore appear that Europeans in Kenya, especially farmers, decided to promote Italian interest because they recognized Italian success and strength would eventually strengthen and consolidate European power in Kenya.

However, there was a second reason why settlers preferred Italian labourers to African labour. As a contemporary observer noted: "there seem to be far too many Europeans who are dependent on their Giovannis and want to keep them as long as possible."⁸¹ Most Italians in Kenya at that time were

⁷⁹One of the farmers wrote that: "The suggestion that trained, experienced and skillful Italian artisans and farm hands can be replaced by irresponsible, inexperienced, hastily trained natives is too unrealistic to merit comment." KNA. MD/4/5/129-I/26 (70); Letter to Chief Secretary, August 28, 1946.

⁸⁰KNA. MD/4/5/129-I/26 (70); Letter to Deputy Chief Secretary, Nairobi, July 19, 1946.

⁸¹KNA. MD/4/5/129-I/26 (70); Letter to C. N. C., June 19, 1945.

classified as either prisoners of war or as co-operators. Settlers took advantage of this situation and created cheap labour out of these helpless foreigners. It was because of this that farmers, as individuals and as a group, fought so hard for the retention of Italians in Kenya after the war.

There developed a heated debate among Europeans themselves -- settlers against non-settlers -- on this very issue. This would, of course, be expected since the only group that was really benefiting from the cheap labour was the farm community. The non-farmers' position was reflected in an article in East African Standard which stated among other things:

As was the case of German prisoners of war in England, the man retained should be paid in full wages for the job. There should be no question of the individual farmer gaining by the deal.⁸²

In taking this position, the opposition did not have African interest at heart. It did so solely on behalf of Italian labourers. For instance, they did not demand repatriation of Italians so that Africans could get employment. In this respect, the debate among Europeans was about a "family misunderstanding" which did not concern itself with African interest. Many Italian co-operators were never repatriated; they remained and lived in Kenya indefinitely. As a matter of

⁸² "Position of P.O.W. Co-operators," East African Standard (February 28, 1946).

fact, some of them who had been repatriated were later re-admitted to Kenya. A clear example of this was the Government's statement, made in 1947, that "early in the year, the Government decided to readmit up to 200 Italian ex-prisoners of war and internees to take up employment in vacancies in work which was of national importance and of an urgent nature."⁸³

Publicly the Government claimed that these people were needed because of their skills or trades, that they were needed in key-jobs. In short, the Government argued that Italians were retained in or returned to Kenya on economic grounds. The truth of the matter is that Italians received this treatment not so much for economic reasons as for political ones. Europeans, understandably, attached great importance on their population; hence the decision that Italians should be retained. They realized that the greater their number in Kenya, the better the chances for their continued domination of life in Kenya.

This becomes clear when we examine what was happening to other Europeans in Kenya. In the case of Italians, the Government could use economics as an argument for their being retained in or returned to Kenya. But what pretext could they give when they invited the Zionists and the British ex-service-men to go and settle in Kenya? In this particular case, and there were several cases of this nature, Kenya Government could

⁸³Kenya. Labour Department: Annual Report 1947, p. 23.

not hide the fact that the invitation and the intended settlement were politically motivated. As Fred G. Burke has observed:

Instead of the British compensating African troops for service during the war ... 3,300,000 acres of Kenyan land was offered to the Zionists as a home for the Jews. Furthermore, Kenyan land was offered to British ex-servicemen but not to their African comrades.⁸⁴

Ex-askaris reaction to all this was predictable. The Director of Man Power had warned that if Italians were retained, ex-askaris would feel "outed" in peace by the very people whom they had defeated in the war. This is exactly what happened. Consequently, ex-askaris felt that the Government, in doing so, regarded them as "worse enemies than Italians." For years, Africans had been demanding a greater participation in the life -- economic, political, social, etc. -- of the Colony; they had hoped after the war more opportunities would be extended to them. Yet the Government was prepared to frustrate them by denying them these opportunities even if it meant importing European personnel to Kenya in order to block or prevent a greater participation of the Africans in the affairs of the Colony. Above all, Kenya's most important problem -- land -- became more pressing than at any other time in the past. It is ironical that at the very time Europeans were being invited to come and settle in Kenya, some of the Kenya

⁸⁴ Burke, op.cit., p. 208.

Africans were landless because some of the "Reserves" were already over-populated. The Government was well aware of this fast growing problem; a good example of this was the report from Central Province in which officials stated that "the basic problem for solution ... is one of excess population."⁸⁵

One would expect that some of the land for which Europeans were being invited, would have been used for the settlement of the increasing number of landless Africans, but the Government would not do that. Instead it imported Europeans to Kenya and exported Kenya Africans to other parts of Africa. Thus an official from Central Province recommended that: "something might be done by encouraging migration to Tanganyika."⁸⁶ Indeed the Government adopted this recommendation and consequently some Kenya Africans were sent to settle in Tanganyika (Tanzania).

Thus the Government succeeded in controlling askaris' great plans of settling and farming in Kenya "White" Highlands. On the other hand, the Government had weakened its age-old argument that Europeans settled in Kenya because the land was allegedly empty and that Africans did not really want the land. When the Government refused to allow Africans -- especially

⁸⁵KNA: "Post-war Five Year Development Plan, Central Province," p. 15.

⁸⁶Ibid., p. 16.

ex-servicemen -- to settle in some of the empty areas in the "White" Highlands, it did not have a good excuse for doing so.

Interviews with ex-askaris revealed that they were extremely bitter and sensitive about this. They reasoned as follows: at the turn of the century, European settlers took land from their grand-fathers because the latter were helpless and powerless; but that World War II veterans who had had widening experience and better knowledge of Europeans could not, in a post-Second-World-War Kenya, sit back and let the European rule and dominate Kenya in the same way he had done for the past fifty years. The veterans insisted that they were not as helpless or powerless as their grand-fathers and therefore decided that something should be done to change the situation.⁸⁷

The Government used loans, taxes and credits as ways of controlling ex-soldiers' economic activities. In the early years of the war it had become evident to the Government that more money would have to be spent on general development in Kenya after the war if ex-servicemen had to continue enjoying the standard of living to which they had become accustomed during the war. Most Europeans, of course, were opposed to the idea of spending public funds on African development.

⁸⁷ See Koinange, op.cit., p. 62; Reference is made to "our land was given to Italians and Germans after World War II."

Instead they suggested that Africans -- especially ex-askaris -- must be taxed for this development. Taxes would have been raised in 1944 had the officials not been warned against possible unrest among the ex-askaris if such a plan were effected. The Government therefore adopted recommendations contained in the report from Nyanza Province which had stated that: "Increased taxation at this stage, which would take effect during the demobilization period, might be interpreted by returning African soldiers as directed toward taking from him his earnings accumulated while defending the Empire, and might have serious repercussions."⁸⁸

Ex-askaris insist that the Government stifled their business activities by refusing to extend loans and credits to them. There were hundreds of thousands of African soldiers who had saved money during the war, men who had learned the value and beauty of work. They were prepared to form trading companies, co-operative societies, to run private firms or keep shops. And as one contemporary observer remarked, "All these men will look up to the Government for help."⁸⁹ Ex-askaris stated that military authorities had assured them the Government would give them help in the form of loans and credits so that they could begin private business. Evidently most

⁸⁸KNA. PC/NFD5/1/4, "Nyanza Province Five Year Development Plan" (1944).

⁸⁹Kakembo, op.cit., p. 14.

ex-askaris put their hopes in such promises because, as they quickly pointed out, they realized that their meagre savings would not be enough for starting the "big" businesses they had in mind.

After the war the Government did not extend the promised aid to ex-askaris. In fact, loans to Africans as a whole were unknown until 1950, and even then the number of Africans receiving these loans was negligible. A good example of this is what was known as "Agricultural Credit." As late as 1950 it was reported that "the use of credit by the African agricultural community is still on a very small scale... At the outset, however, we must state emphatically the dangers inherent in any attempt to make credit available in an agricultural community at that stage of development."⁹⁰ Loans for non-agricultural enterprises were even harder to obtain since Africans were encouraged to get into no other industry but farming.

Here ex-askaris encountered the usual argument used by the Colonial Government in denying the colonized people their rights; the Government could not help in the development of African agriculture because it was still at a "backward" level. Yet the development was at this level because of lack of capital. The African was caught up in a vicious cycle. Only the

⁹⁰Kenya: Report of Committee on Agricultural Credits for Africans (Nairobi, 1950), p. 5.

Government could break the cycle; but it chose not to because it was in the Government's interest that the African should remain there.

In spite of this vicious cycle, and although the Government could refer to African "Reserves" as "barren environment," the ex-askari was expected by the Government to maintain the high standards of living he had become used to during his military career. It was made clear that he should not expect these standards to be maintained by a "benevolent and omnipotent Government," but that he should "do what is necessary to contribute to the progress himself."⁹¹ Having refused to spend public money either directly or indirectly in the development of African areas, the Government turned around and put the responsibility of developing these areas on the African population. "If as we hope he [the African] is increasingly to enjoy the emenities of civilized life ... he must be prepared to shoulder the responsibilities, financial as well as social, which these privileges entail."⁹²

While Africans were being reminded that development and progress in their areas depended on their own efforts and finances, the Government was doing everything in its power to

⁹¹Sabben-Clare, op.cit., p. 156.

⁹²Fane, op.cit., p. 60.

develop European areas using public funds.⁹³ European farmers and businessmen had always received loans from the Government. For instance, after World War I, most Europeans who arrived in Kenya without enough capital to develop their land, received loans from the Government. The question of such Government loans was referred to in 1919 in a report which stated among other things: "The only body that has a direct interest in keeping him [newly arrived European] on the land will be the state ... the state will in his or its own interests be compelled to lend him his developing capital."⁹⁴

This was simply to reiterate and confirm a practice that was already in progress. During World War II, the Government made sure that when the war ended and the askaris returned to the "Reserves," they would be excluded from agricultural loans or credits. The test came in 1942 when an ordinance to provide for the increased production of crops in Kenya was passed.⁹⁵ For the purpose of granting loans, the ordinance defined a farmer as "any European or Indian or any body corporate

⁹³ Kenya: The Development Programme 1954-1957. Sessional Paper No. 51 of 1955. 1955, p. 28.

⁹⁴ Kenya: Report of the Land Settlement Commission (Nairobi, 1919), p. 93.

⁹⁵ The reference here is on "The Increased Production of Crops Ordinance, 1942."

engaged in the business of farming, is the registered owner or leasee of land granted or leased by the Crown under an agricultural use..." African farmers -- at whatever level of farming -- were not considered as farmers. And yet the Land and Agricultural Bank of Kenya, from which these European and Indian farmers received loans, was not a private bank but a bank that dealt with public funds. This remained effective long after the war and was responsible for the failure and frustrations which the majority of the would-be ex-askari farmers experienced.

Through these controls on public loans the Government was able to retard African development while at the same time speeding up that of the Europeans. In 1949, for instance, when the ex-serviceman with his fellow African was being advised to develop his own area, using his own "effort and finance," the European community was developing their areas with public funds: "The jump of five places achieved by European settlement arises from the fact that European Agricultural Settlement (Amendment) Ordinance provided for the establishment, in 1949, of a revolving fund of £1.6 million as of 1st April, 1950."⁹⁶

Africans, especially the ex-askaris, insist that there was yet another way by which the Government controlled the

⁹⁶Kenya: The Development Programme 1954-1957. Sessional Paper No. 51 of 1955. 1955, p. 26.

circulation of money in the "Reserves." They firmly believe that the Government purposely "robbed" ex-askaris of their money by selling them army vehicles that were too old to run; but which the Government claimed to have reconditioned.

Ex-askaris say that this was not only "robbery" but it was "deceit" as well. According to what they were promised during the war, these vehicles were supposed to be sold to them at the lowest possible price. The price was supposed to be so low that the whole transaction would, in effect, be considered a reward or a gift for the ex-askari's contribution to British victory. It is true that many ex-soldiers lost their savings by buying the old army lorries which "simply died on the roads"⁹⁷ after a short period of time. Nationalist leaders capitalized upon this loss and made it one of the major grievances against British rule in Kenya. That the issue was "politicized" is obvious from the following remarks by one of the Kenya nationalists:

During the 1939-1945 war, Africans were able to make some money ... and Europeans were worried how to reduce this African money circulating in the reserve. As soon as the war was over a secret plan was made to sell to Africans reconditioned military vehicles on terms of cash without credits... Africans who wanted to better their economic position fell into this trap and within a very short time every road was covered with lorries that did not really last long... African earnings returned

⁹⁷ Schleh, op.cit., p. 46.

to the Europeans through these reconditioned lorries.⁹⁸

There is no question that the lorries were in very poor conditions and that they had "a short life."⁹⁹ However, part of the problem was that since the African could not purchase these lorries on credit terms, he was forced to use the whole of his savings on purchasing them, and when they broke down he could not repair them since he did not have any money left for this purpose.

African economic nationalism found itself on a collision course with Indian commercial activities in East Africa. During their military careers, ex-askaris were quite aware of the commercial strength of Indians in East Africa. As far back as 1944, after having observed that African soldiers were saving money with the aim of beginning their own business at the end of the war, R. Kakembo made these significant remarks:

They will want to help to save them from the rich Indian traders -- the middle men who have over-run East Africa.¹⁰⁰

The first thing the Government wished to do was to control the number of traders by issuing licenses to businessmen. At first, it appeared as if the major reason for this move was

⁹⁸Koinange, op.cit., p. 17.

⁹⁹Kenya: African Affairs Department, Annual Report 1948 (Nairobi, 1950), p. 51.

¹⁰⁰Kakembo, op.cit., p. 14.

the fact that many "ex-servicemen wished to start business,"¹⁰¹ and that this control would aid them in entering business.

Soon it became evident that the question of ex-service-men entering business was not the main reason for trade licensing. The principal justification for taking this step was that by "its means positive equilibrium can be maintained between supplies available."¹⁰² This did not immediately or directly affect or involve ex-askaris. It was to control supplies between Indian and European traders. Indians demanded that trade licensing be abolished while the Europeans pressed for its continuation. The Government sided with the European traders, which meant that trade licensing would continue until post-war conditions had improved.¹⁰³

The African retail trader was left unprotected against Indian wholesale merchants. As the Government observed, "The retailers' greatest difficulty is to purchase trade goods on a wholesale market, and it is in this field that co-operation can be of the greatest assistance."¹⁰⁴ No doubt the Government

¹⁰¹KNA. MAA/2/1/49-I, circular to all PC's, March 18, 1946.

¹⁰²Ibid.

¹⁰³KNA. MAA/2/1/49-I; Letter to Chief Secretary, March 12, 1946.

¹⁰⁴Kenya: African Affairs Department, Annual Report 1948, p. 50.

was aware of the problems that faced ex-askari traders. It addressed itself to these problems; but it did not do much to alter the situation. When it is remembered that Africans did not get Government loans when they entered the business world, it becomes obvious that by now he had two major obstacles in his commercial undertakings: first, he had insufficient capital, and secondly, he was at the mercy of the wholesale market. As Professor Schleh noted:

Such competition added to burdens imposed by insufficient experience and resources, resulted in hundreds of commercial failures... Africans who survived in trade were generally still not prepared to compete with Asian merchants on the latter's home grounds, the urban market, and most often established themselves in rural areas, frequently on a very small scale.¹⁰⁵

However, carrying out trade in the rural areas had its own problems. For example, there were so many retail shops in these areas that it became uneconomical to operate them, and eventually the weaker traders, and they were many, were forced to drop out of business altogether.¹⁰⁶ In some rural areas, the entire group of African traders dropped out only to be replaced by Indian traders.¹⁰⁷

In this matter of economic competition between the Asian and African communities in Kenya, the European community

¹⁰⁵Schleh, op.cit., pp. 53-54.

¹⁰⁶Kenya: African Affairs Department, Annual Report 1948, p. 50.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., p. 51.

was, to a certain extent, in alliance with the African group. This was so partly because Europeans envied the dominant role the Asian community was playing in the commercial life of the colony; and partly because they wished to transfer to, or at least to share with, the Indian the guilt of exploiting Africans. Some Europeans suggested that Kenya was the land of Europeans and Africans, and not Indians; that the Indians should either return to India or else relinquish their economic positions and opportunities to ex-askaris.¹⁰⁸ Many Europeans came to believe that if Indians acted according to these suggestions then ex-askaris' reabsorption problems would be solved immediately. Most Europeans realized that unrest among ex-askaris would be disastrous to their privileged position in Kenya; that is why some of them were willing to sacrifice Indian interests if that meant the retention of the European easy way of life in Kenya.

It was argued that it was the Indian and not the European who was occupying "African" jobs; and therefore before Africans could get any jobs or economic opportunities, the Indian must make room for him. Archdeacon L. J. Beecher said that:

¹⁰⁸ See Fane, op.cit., p. 57. She warned that "the situation is complicated by the fact that in many of the jobs for which the returning African soldier might be fitted, competent Asians are securely ensconced."

Perhaps the biggest question which arises here is whether or not the Indian trader and artisan will be prepared to give place to them and allow (dare one hope even encourage them?) to fulfill their ambition to exercise their technical skills which they have acquired during their service in the army."¹⁰⁹

The Government also controlled ex-askaris' political activities. The aim here was to exclude him from participating in the affairs of the Government. A number of Europeans thought that the African soldier on demobilization would join the existing African local government machinery, should he desire to participate in the political affairs of the colony. However, there were those who were totally opposed to this idea. In 1945 the Director of Man Power could write that "I still mention that there is an objection to the employment of these ex-soldiers as additional 'Native Headmen.'"¹¹⁰ According to him, the reason for the objection was "an administrative" one; nevertheless, there is reason to believe that the objection was on "ideological" rather than "administrative" grounds. As we have seen elsewhere in this study, the returning soldier had supposedly acquired "bad" ideas during the service, and consequently, had become "difficult;" therefore he was not "qualified" to

¹⁰⁹A. L. J. Beecher, "The East African Political Scene: The East African Prospect," African Affairs, XLV, No. 180 (July, 1946), p. 149.

¹¹⁰KNA. MFD/12/19/165-II; Letter to Chief Secretary, September 20, 1945.

join the Government for he might use his position to spread the "bad" ideas among his fellow Africans.

So when the askaris returned to civil life, only a few Government officials suggested that the educated ex-askaris be absorbed into the government as members of the "tribal" police force, members of tribunal courts, clerks, etc. However, the Government policy was that such men should be carefully picked so that only those with a "good military record" could be employed by the administration. They were quick in pointing out that it would be dangerous to hire too many ex-servicemen for local administration. One official warned that: "There is a move to identify the educated ex-soldier with the administration ... but this for obvious reasons must be a very slow process."¹¹¹ On the assumption that ex-servicemen might become "difficult" chiefs, clerks, etc., the Government kept most of these men out of the Government machinery.

However, the most effective way by which the Government controlled or stopped ex-askaris from gaining power, political or otherwise, even in the "Reserves," was by alienation of these men from the civilian population. Ex-askaris believe that in this case, as many other cases, the Government used its doctrine of "Divide and Rule" by sowing suspicion, mistrust and hatred between ex-servicemen and the rest of the

¹¹¹KNA. MAA/2/1/49-I; "Interim Report on African Demobilization," February 28, 1946.

African population.

Ex-servicemen said that the Government spread propaganda among the civilians that ex-soldiers would take land from them by force, if necessary, since they had the power of "money and the gun," that ex-askaris had become dangerous killers and murderers and, therefore, they must be avoided or at least must be carefully watched. Chiefs were told that if they did not watch ex-askaris, they would "overthrow" the chiefs and occupy their positions.

Studies in the reabsorption of Malawi ex-servicemen have shown that the Government there carried out some form of anti-ex-servicemen propaganda. A. G. Dickson found out that "Nyasaland" Railways protested against ex-askaris refusing to show their tickets. The police complained that ex-askaris "won't walk" and that the medical officers were afraid of ex-askaris bringing venereal diseases into the "Reserves."¹¹² In Kenya the story was more or less the same. Ex-askaris have accounts to this effect, and there is written evidence to support this. We can infer this from the type of complaints ex-askaris brought before the Government. For instance, the Government reported that ex-askaris had complained that "when we bring a case before a tribunal we are told we are swollen

¹¹²Dickson, op.cit., p. 14.

headed"¹¹³ and that they had a lot of things to say in Chiefs' councils, but "our mouths have been stopped."¹¹⁴

In 1945 an article written by a correspondent connected with the East Africa Command reflected the typical European reaction to the return of African soldiers to civilian life:

The return of the askari today helps little to give stability to such a society. With his slouch hat perched on his head (but still with a belief in magic planted firmly in his heart), he cuts only too often the figure of an undisciplined lout, giving dumb insolence to District Officers, flouting the authority of the chief ... The return of those men in their thousands ... and without their officers ...¹¹⁵ may well jeopardize the whole fabric of indirect rule.

It will be seen from the foregoing that for the ex-askari, life was extremely difficult for the first one or two years of his civilian life. He found a hostile European community and a suspicious African group. Ex-askaris correctly attributed this to the administration and let the Government know their feelings about this situation. As the Director of Man Power reported, "They now feel they are strangers in their own homes and to their own administration. They feel that there is a wide gulf between them and the civilian authorities... So far as they can see, it is the Civil Government, through

¹¹³KNA. MAA/2/1/49-I; "Interim Report on African Demobilization," February 28, 1946.

¹¹⁴Ibid.

¹¹⁵"The Returned Askari," Times (London), August 21, 1945; quoted in African Transcripts, No. 5 (September, 1945), p. 171.

its local representative, the D.C., which is responsible."¹¹⁶ Ex-askaris were well aware of the game the Government was trying to play with them. They realized that the aim of the Government was to create as many problems and institute as many controls as possible in order to frustrate them in every possible way.

The Government used educational opportunities as an additional control on the advancement of ex-askaris. By 1942 the Government had already made plans for furthering education of European soldiers once the war ended. It decided that "it will be necessary to make generous provision for overseas bursaries on demobilization and suggest that at least 50 per cent of such bursaries be awarded to men and women to enable them to obtain qualifications which are required in pensionable posts in Government departments."¹¹⁷ At this particular time further education and training for the would-be Asian and African ex-servicemen were not discussed or even considered.

In 1945 the Government reiterated its interest in granting scholarships to ex-servicemen for further education and training. At this time the Government was prepared to consider further education not just for European ex-servicemen, but for

¹¹⁶KNA. MAA/2/1/49-I; "Interim Report on African Demobilization," February 28, 1946.

¹¹⁷Kenya. Progress Report on Demobilization, No. 2, January, 1945.

Asian and African ex-servicemen as well. However, the Government was quick in defining, for each of these groups, what "further education" meant for them. For Europeans and Asians, further education meant "education beyond the secondary school standard" and for the Africans it meant "education beyond the primary school standard."¹¹⁸ Once more the line had been drawn for the ex-askari; he had been reminded that the only education that was good for him was that which would keep him in "his place," that which would train him to become a "junior partner" in Kenya's development.

By 1948, at least 80 bursaries had been awarded to European ex-servicemen, one bursary to an Indian ex-serviceman and none to African ex-servicemen. Interviews with ex-askaris show that quite a number of educated ex-askaris applied for these bursaries. The Government, as usual, was ready to explain why African ex-servicemen did not qualify for these bursaries: "A number of applications have been received from Africans and attempts made to obtain vacancies, in all but one case to date, it has been found that they lack certain requisite academic qualifications."¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ Kenya: Labour Department. Annual Report, 1946 (Nairobi, 1948), p. 38.

¹¹⁹ Ibid. See KNA. MFD/12/19/165-IV; Letter to Accountant General, Entebbe, March 4, 1949. Three ex-askaris received bursaries to enable them to pursue further education

Interviews with ex-askaris show that the argument by the Government that they lacked certain requisite academic qualifications was not convincing to them. They reasoned that when the Government needed them in the defense of the Empire, it found them "qualified" for training in almost everything -- in everything that would make them better soldiers. Therefore, they could not understand why, after the war, they could not "qualify" for training in anything, especially if it is remembered that the best of the educated ex-servicemen were the ones who were applying for these opportunities for further education and training.

Ex-askaris were naturally quite bitter about this treatment. Their views and reactions can be summed up by what a recent observer has said about black American soldiers fighting in Vietnam. Although the two cases are quite different, reactions to them, surprisingly enough, are almost similar. With a hope that these problems would be avoided when black

at Makerere College. The college received a total of Shs. 8280/-. The recipients were:

Murigu Ndoria	2760/-
Matheri Njoroge	2760/-
Paul Ngei	<u>2760/-</u>
	Shs. 8280/-

See also (same file) Sebastian Michael Ogutu (ex-askari) who studied engineering at Loughborough College, England.

American soldiers return from Vietnam, the observer stated that:

The sad fact is that what has limited their advance in the Army also handicaps them in trying to better their education in civilian life... For men who have graduated cum laude in life-and-death examinations of self-discipline, professional skill, and, above all, hope, ambition and new maturity, this criterion is no longer valid. It would be a tragic mistake if those capable and potentially outstanding young men were judged simply on the basis of their previous high-school records in their aspirations to higher or technical education.¹²⁰

There is a general belief that European settlers were fully responsible for keeping the ex-askari in "his place," i.e. they were the ones who denied ex-soldiers better opportunities. The settler's responsibility is only part of the story. Indeed they were vocal and direct in denying ex-askaris their legitimate rights; but other Europeans, including Government officials, were just as responsible, although they might have been more subtle and indirect in carrying out the same policies and practices. Non-settlers might have used different strategies, but all Europeans had one common goal in mind: pre-eminence of European interest in Kenya.

Again these controls were not unique to Kenya. Ex-servicemen all over colonial Africa received more or less the same treatment. In Kenya, for obvious reasons, these controls were more thorough, more rigid and more strict. We have already

¹²⁰Young, Jr., op.cit., p. 65.

made reference to ex-soldiers in Nyasaland (Malawi). The situation in West Africa was not very much different, either. Taking Nigeria as an example, the policy of Nigerian Colonial Government toward its ex-soldiers was reflected in the remarks of one of the Government officials who said: "It appears to be quite widely held that the ex-serviceman has had his opportunity ... not without profit to himself ... and that now he should take a back seat."¹²¹

This view that the ex-soldier should have been grateful to British Government for having recruited him into the Army was prevalent among British people in Africa. Ex-servicemen were reminded that they had, among other things, made tremendous economic gains by serving in the British Army. They were therefore expected to return to civilian life and quickly settle down without making further demands on the Government. In Kenya, for instance, when the ex-soldiers demanded aid from the Government, they were quickly told that "It was not only the ex-askari who had helped to win the war. Civilians who had stayed behind and helped to grow food had their contribution; and comparatively speaking, the ex-servicemen were better off."¹²² [*Italics mine.*]

¹²¹Nigeria, Annual Reports for the Northern, Western, Eastern Provinces and the Colony 1946 (Lagos, 1947), p. 26; quoted in Schleh, op.cit., p. 94.

¹²²KNA. MAA/2/1/49-I; "Interim Report on African Demobilization," February 28, 1946.

The foregoing is a brief analysis of how Europeans controlled ex-askaris' contribution to economic, political and cultural nationalism in Kenya. Quite understandably, Europeans were out to stop any organized or formal progress or "African development" that had any signs of nationalism. In a way, the British succeeded in thwarting these nationalistic tendencies on the part of the ex-askaris. In short, they made conditions unfavourable for the ex-askaris to organize effectively and make direct contribution to nationalism in Kenya. Indeed, as I hope to demonstrate later, it is one of the main conclusions of this study that the major contribution which ex-servicemen made to Kenya nationalism was not in direct and organized form, but in an unorganized and indirect way. Because the contribution took this form, because it manifested itself in this manner, it was less obvious, although quite effective in its own right. Again I wish to emphasize the fact that although it took a less obvious form, it was nevertheless a very important aspect in the fight for Kenya's national independence.

That ex-askaris' direct, organized and formalized "resistance" or nationalism was effectively controlled during the years immediately following the war was something that Kenya Government did not deny. They could report later that reabsorption of ex-soldiers had been "smooth" and successful.

Needless to say, this was the Government's interpretation of how reabsorption had been implemented. For the ex-askaris, reabsorption had been a total failure; it failed because, as they put it, through it they had been betrayed by the Government -- a government for which they had fought so loyally and bravely, and for which many of them had lost their lives.

One of the top ranking officers in Kenya Government -- Chief Native Commissioner -- explained later on exactly how these rigid controls by the Government brought about "smooth" reabsorption:

During the war there had been much speculation as to the effect which the many thousands of ex-soldiers would have on post-war Kenya. Many hoped that they would have a profound progressive influence on the civil life of their communities, while others pessimistically predicted that they would constitute an unruly element in the Native Areas beyond the powers of the Chief or Local Authorities to control.

In the event, neither happened exactly as predicted... Lack of skill, and more often lack of application [italics mine], prevented many of them from earning the rewards that they considered their due....¹²³

Adversaries of nationalism have called it all sorts of names and have expressed it in various ways. In this particular case the phrase "progressive influence" meant "nationalism," and "unruly element" meant "nationalists." As it is clear from what the C.N.C. said, the Government was fully aware of

¹²³Kenya. Report of Native Affairs 1946-1947 (Nairobi, 1949), p. 2.

this and was therefore prepared to control or curb it in whatever form it appeared -- whether in the form of economic nationalism, political nationalism, cultural nationalism, etc., it had to be controlled. In order to control it, the Government made sure that ex-askaris found it almost impossible to apply or make use of their newly acquired skills and ideas.

Ex-askaris must have been embittered and frustrated by these policies and practices. Toward the end of the war, however, most of them had managed to convince themselves that in a post-war Kenya, there would be struggle between Europeans and ex-soldiers, that settlers would try to control or curb their progress and development. However, they had hoped that the Government would always sympathize with them in recognition of their contribution to the defense of the Empire and help them in their competition with settlers. So when, after the war, the very Government they had hoped would help them, allied itself with settlers, and ex-askaris simply lost hope in the Kenya system as it was then constituted. Kakembo spoke for the rest of the East African askaris when just before World War II ended, he stated that:

It will be grand to have finished the war; but that will not be the end of life. Men will look back home and think of their future. They will ask themselves, many of them, whether they have really been fighting for a good home, good food, good government and peace of mind. The Government must step in and

raise the spirits of men whose lives have been broken and gone forever.¹²⁴ [*Italics mine.*]

The Government chose not to side with the ex-service-men. It was a government of and for the Europeans and therefore it decided to ally itself with the European community. The British authority forgot its promises to these ex-service-men when they were "Imperial" soldiers, i.e. when the Empire needed them for its very survival. Not all Europeans in Kenya were enemies of the ex-askari. In the next chapter we shall examine some of the recommendations made by "friends" of ex-askaris. This group had their own alternative suggestions and views as to how problems of rehabilitating ex-askaris should be tackled and eventually solved. The group consisted of a handful of individuals from the Kenya Government and individual European professionals; but the majority were European intellectuals from both inside and outside Kenya, and the rising Kenya African nationalists.

All of these people had one thing in common: they sympathized with the ex-askari. They offered suggestions and recommendations for alternative programs which they hoped would solve reabsorption problems in Kenya. In short they were opposed to the type of policies and programs the Government was trying to follow in attacking the problem.

¹²⁴Kakembo, op.cit., p. 14.

However, the Kenya Government, which was under the full control of European settlers, turned a deaf ear to these recommendations; instead they came up with programs that were aimed at frustrating the ex-askari, programs that stifled his progress rather than aiding him.

When Kenya Government instituted programs that impeded rather than aided or facilitated ex-askari advancement, it was not because it lacked the relevant or necessary information; it was not through ignorance. The Government instituted them in spite of the facts, because it chose to do so.

Chapter V

Demobilization and Reabsorption: Alternative Policies and Programs

The Kenya Government, later, admitted that reabsorption programs had failed to solve major and basic problems confronting ex-askaris. Writing in 1962 and commenting specifically on events in Kenya during the years immediately following demobilization, Fred Majdalany concluded that:

Only the African (five and a half million by this time) seemed to be left out in the cold. For the second time in twenty years he had experienced the 'emancipation' of war... Now what was there for him back in his country? The same old bwana to shout at him ... not enough jobs to go round for the likes of him, and if he did get the work, it would be for pitifully low wages.¹

He was simply confirming a fact which many observers, including those within the Kenya Government, had noted in connection with demobilization and reabsorption problems in that country. It is true that during the first year or two after demobilization the Government fiercely defended its reabsorption policies and the resulting programs. After that period, however, individual members and some departments of the Government were forced to admit publicly that reabsorption policies

¹Majdalany, op.cit., p. 23.

and programs had failed. The Labour Department issued a report in 1947 which clearly showed why and where the Government had failed, and what the Government did and did not do to save the situation. The report stated in part:

No one should be under the impression that re-absorption is proceeding smoothly and that the ex-soldier is reverting once more into his pre-war civilian status... There is little of a constructive nature going on in the Reserve which can hold and fire the imagination of the ex-soldier ... we have so far kept the ex-soldier quiet ... and we have prevented him from causing general dissatisfaction and disturbances in his community, but we have ... only scratched the surface of the more difficult task of imparting his experience to others ... [italics mine].

We have, however, built up considerable bitterness among the rank and file of ex-soldiers by failing to provide them with any means, or even the hope of such means ... This bitterness is real, and no mere talk will suffice to eradicate it ... this bitterness may descend to posterity in the native mind as a typical example of exploitation.²

In a way, the Government was reflecting its own weakness. It was admitting, by making such "confessions," that it had actually failed and wronged the ex-askaris. It had failed because it had refused to implement alternative programs which were recommended by better informed individuals and groups. These observers had warned the Government -- both during and after the war -- that reabsorption projects would be doomed to failure if they were conducted along the lines proposed by

²Kenya: Labour Department, Bulletin, No. I, May, 1947 (Nairobi, 1947), pp. 28-30.

the administration. In the words of a contemporary critic:

The observer is perhaps first impressed by the great gaps which exist between (i) the rich field data revealed to the scientist ... and the slender knowledge the administration appears to possess; and between (ii) the basis of information on which administration is conducted and the much wider basis it could utilize if technical help were sought.³

There is no question that the Government had knowledge of these facts. By 1943, Kenya Government itself was so much interested in understanding what kind of life the returning soldiers would like to lead that it set up a sub-committee to study this problem. On completion of its survey, the sub-committee came up with the following findings: that askaris' reputation had definitely improved as a result of the war, and that his capacity for taking responsibility and skilled work had "surprised those who knew him only as a manual labourer;" that he had shown his worth and that it would not be surprising if he expected to see it acknowledged. As for his standard of living, the sub-committee concluded that "his desires will be such that he will not generally be content with the low standard with which most Africans were content before the war."⁴

To those Europeans who had been saying that askaris

³W. E. Stanner, "The Kitui Kamba: A Critical Study of British Administration" (not dated, in KNA), p. 104.

⁴Kenya: Post-war Employment Committee and Report of the Sub-Committee on Post-war Employment of Africans (Nairobi, 1943), p. 5.

"will rush to their homes" after the war, it was clear from the report that this would depend on one's age. The older ones "with a wife and a family and stake in the land and owning stock" would desire to remain at home. It was further stated that the second factor which would influence askaris would be the training they would have had in the army; that skilled men would gravitate to centres of employment. It concluded that, "provided the life an African can lead in his own home meets most of his needs we think it is the life he will choose to live."⁵

If the Government had formulated its reabsorption policies on the basis of these recommendations, perhaps results would have been different. However, this was not the only realistic information the Government had about the soldiers. It was, also, aware of the fact that the African soldiers had contributed a lot to the British war effort and to her final victory. Above all the Government knew that British military authorities had recognized the contribution on the part of the askari and that they had honoured him, praised him and promised him a better life after the war. All this gave askaris new hopes and ambitions for a better and fuller life. Lt.-Gen. Sir William Platt once told the askaris that:

⁵Ibid., p. 6.

You have earned a high reputation in your actions that resulted in the destruction of the Italian East African Empire. You are now moving to another field of action. Difficult tasks lie ahead of you. In facing them remember that not one of your homes and not one of your people will be safe to lead a life of peace and liberty until forces of evil are finally subdued. The future of your children depends on you. Go forth knowing that your cause is right.⁶

"Orders of the day" such as this were not infrequent during the war. They were issued to askaris by high ranking British military officers whenever they had the opportunity to do so. It is not always easy to control ambitions, aspirations and hopes of people to whom such great honours have been bestowed and to whom so many promises have been made. Therefore the Government knew that the ex-askaris deserved special consideration and regard; they had earned it through life-and-death struggles.

However, it was not just the military leadership which sought a better life for the ex-askari. Some individuals from the general public, and they were many, warned the Government to do everything in its power in order to reward the ex-askaris for their contribution in the defense of the Empire. These people sympathized with the African soldier, and always reminded the Government that a fair share of the victory was the right of the ex-soldier. In the words of one of the

⁶Quoted by Kenneth G. Dower in his book The King's African Rifles in Madagascar (written for East Africa Command, Nairobi, n.d.), pp. 13 & 59.

contemporary writers:

if the African should prove a very difficult person to handle and guide after this war, we are responsible. It may be difficult for history to approve our leadership of the African in these past years unless we can prove to him in the days to come that 'peace hath her victories no less renowned than war.'⁷

There were those within the general public who regarded the power of the settlers as the greatest threat to ex-askaris' advancement and progress. This group warned the Government that before askaris could realize their legitimate aspirations after the war, the Government had to make sure that the askaris were protected against the settlers. At least the power of the settlers had to be controlled, weakened or destroyed. This was necessary if these programs, to meet and deal with re-absorption problems, were to be effective. As long as the settlers had this massive power, the ex-askaris would find it impossible to make progress either for themselves or for their people because progress would be against the settlers' interest. The situation was articulated by Stanner when he wrote that:

The desire shown in the prewar period by powerful sections of the colonists of Kenya to hold aloof in their highland fastness from a world fast taking on an undesirable shape and form of mind, will in the post-war world be a dangerous and destructive anachronism ... the dream so dear to so many colonial hearts of Kenya, as a white man's country on the mode which the greater part of the colonists from 1920 to 1940

⁷Doig, op.cit., p. 182.

had in mind is likely to become only a dream of a cloud cuckoo.⁸ [Emphasis mine]

Had the Government seriously taken recommendations such as this -- and there were many -- Kenya's reabsorption problems would have definitely taken a different direction; perhaps for the better, from the point of view of the ex-soldier. Nevertheless, the power of the settlers was never disrupted and so when the askaris returned to civil life, they found a well organized settler section determined to hold onto their power and thus keep the ex-askaris in "their place."

The critics of the administration's policy on reabsorption based their argument on the fact that they knew and understood ex-askaris better. Most of them had visited or lived with askaris during their military service. Critics insisted that by instituting such inadequate and make-shift projects, the Government had ignored askaris' contribution to British victory and their newly acquired standards.

Ex-askari sympathizers argued that ex-askaris' wide experiences in the army had, in many incidences, shaped them into better leaders, planners and organizers as well as better workers. "The African ex-soldier has achieved a degree of intelligence rarely seen before"⁹ and therefore could not

⁸Stanner, op.cit., p. 104.

⁹KNA. MAA/2/1/49-I, Circular from Man Power and Civilian Reabsorption Officer, February 28, 1946.

appreciate the inadequate programs the Government was offering him. It was therefore concluded that "with his health and intelligence," the ex-askari deserved better treatment, greater opportunities and more careful handling.¹⁰

One basic point the critics put forth was that ex-askaris as man-power -- as a resource -- had not been fully utilized. While the Government referred to ex-soldiers as potential "trouble-makers" or an "unruly element," the critics of the administration's policy regarded the return of the askaris to civilian life as "an opportunity ... to effect a real economic advance."¹¹ These opposing views marked one of the major differences between Government officials and their opponents.

Critics recognized the fact that before ex-askaris could fully utilize their talents, certain basic changes had to be made. They argued that the ex-askari's outlook on life had changed drastically and therefore he could not be forced to return to the "Reserves" where living conditions were inferior. They pointed out that the ex-askari was ready and willing to be hired for paid employment; however, they were quick in warning the Government and private employers that "he is not going to work for the same wages, or under the

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid.

same conditions of housing and feeding, etc., as before ... not on present day conditions."¹²

With this kind of reasoning, the problem of reabsorption assumed completely new dimensions. It ceased to be an "ex-askari problem;" instead it was recognized for what it indeed was -- a "European problem." In the words of a contemporary observer: "The main pillars of colonial activity in Kenya so far have been almost wholly European privileges and profit"¹³ and this was the problem, so the critics insisted. If askaris' legitimate aspirations were to be realized, then "European privileges and profit" must end. This was the main cause of most of the problems in Kenya. It was clear that the European would have to learn that the situation had changed, and that ex-askaris would want to share fully in the development of Kenya. Referring specifically to employers who would import foreign labor to Kenya rather than use ex-askari labor, critics insisted that "employers, too, will have to be educated."¹⁴

In spite of these constructive criticisms, despite these proposals and suggestions which might have offered alternative and better programs for the advancement of the ex-askaris, the Government continued to carry out its pro-European policy.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Stanner, op.cit., p. 104.

¹⁴KNA. MAA/2/1/49-I; Circular from Man Power ... Officer, op.cit.

It is within this context, against this background, that the following remarks by one of the British officials who served and lived with askaris in India during the war, becomes relevant. He warned Europeans, especially those in Africa:

It would be an unhappy thing to make of men who have served the Empire so well a disillusioned and subversive element in their own country in the years immediately following the war.¹⁵

Critics were warning the administration of the danger that indeed must come if such a policy were not replaced by one which would consider the interests of all the communities residing in Kenya. The Government was being reminded that the denial of opportunities to ex-soldiers could create antagonism because they would interpret the Government's intentions as being hostile to them: "It will be regarded as yet another instance of the exploitation of the African by a white settler. It is bound to give rise to a feeling of unrest on the part of the African."¹⁶ They also argued that the unrest, if it came would be more disruptive than ever, because the ex-soldier having fought so hard for a cause for someone else, would be moved and determined to fight even harder for his own survival. Because of his wartime experiences, critics insisted,

¹⁵Anthony G. Saville, Letter in African Affairs, XLV, No. 179 (April, 1946), p. 98.

¹⁶KNA. MAA/2/1/49-I; Circular from Man Power ... Officer, op.cit.

the ex-soldiers were nationalists. They had seen how others lived and how they fought, and died if necessary, for what they believed. Above all, it was the "age of nationalism;" nationalism was sweeping through the entire colonial world, and Kenya could not escape it. Hence Europeans in Kenya had to come to terms with the rising African nationalists. In the words of one of the Kenya Government officials: "Modern conditions do not allow us to stand still: we advance, or we are destroyed."¹⁷

One of the main reasons for the failure of reabsorption programs was the fact that the Government was unwilling to allocate money for their development. Theoretically, plans and policies seemed feasible; but in actuality, they were empty pronouncements designed for publicity and propaganda purposes. Referring generally to East Africa, but to Kenya specifically, the East African Royal Commission made the following observations in connection with post-war development in East Africa: "What is important is not that there should be development plans; but that there should be capital resources available to promote expansion."¹⁸

In 1946 when soldiers were returning to civil life and the Government was publicly declaring its plans for "massive"

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸East African Royal Commission 1953-1955 Report, op.cit., p. 398.

development in Kenya, it was confidentially known that such massive development was not contemplated, and that the possibility of such development indeed was very slim. For instance at that time, the Development Committee would report that "with the limited funds available ... it is not possible to recommend any more extensive or intensive development,"¹⁹ and that the recurrent expenditure might have to be diminished "for no other reason than the shortage of finance."²⁰

Nevertheless, the problem was more complicated than this. It was not always true that there was a lack of funds in the colony. The problem was often one of allocation of these funds. Almost invariably, capital for development was spent on developing projects in European areas. From 1944 on, Kenya received £250,000 annually from Britain; this financial aid was specifically designated for the general development of the colony.²¹ Instead of spending the money on those critically needed improvements in the colony, especially in African areas, the Government spent most of the money developing European areas or projects. What was most disturbing from the

¹⁹Kenya, Report of the Development Committee 1946 (Nairobi, 1946), p. 35.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Kenya: Preparation of Development Plans: Secretariat Circular Letter No. 44 of 29th April, 1944 (Nairobi, 1944).

point of view of the African and his sympathizers was the fact that the Government refused to spend such funds on crucial projects in African areas and instead spent it in European areas on what might be termed "luxury" projects. For instance, the Government stated in one of its reports that "The slow progress made with the medical ... programmes was mainly due to the higher priority given to the construction of staff quarters and Government offices."²² Reports of this nature were not uncommon in Kenya in those days.

It was also pointed out that the Government was not interested in the African progress or advancement since it did not have an organized plan by which such progress could be brought about. In 1945, A. M. Champion made special reference to this situation. He called for "the formulation and putting into practice of a plan or mode of life leading to a higher standard of living socially, economically, culturally and morally than which now obtains and to make life worth living for the African."²³

During the years immediately following the war, the Government did nothing to improve the situation so that by 1950 signs of "unrest" were evident in most parts of Kenya, especially in towns. An article which appeared in "Baraza"

²²Kenya: The Development Programme 1954-1957: Sessional Paper No. 51 of 1955 (Nairobi, 1955).

²³Champion, op.cit., p. 32.

(June 3, 1950) summed up post-war problems in East Africa, with special reference to Kenya. Since it is important and relevant, it is here quoted at length. It stated among other things:

We believe that although the immediate cause of the recent strike in Nairobi was political agitation ... and although the immediate cause of murders in Suk country was political agitation masquerading as religion, the deep underlying cause was one, and that cause was a plain matter of s. d."

The real issue ... is the country's ruling wage-rates ... the feeling of frustration caused by differential rates of pay for members of the different races.

In raising the cry of 'Communist' or 'Dini ya Msambwa' or 'Bataka Union' or what-have-you, the real issue becomes fogged and people tend to forget it. They begin to think all is well -- and they could not be more mistaken. This is the root cause of all the bother, and must be put right. Who is to start the ball rolling, obviously, the Government. They are the largest single employers of labour, from skilled and qualified to unskilled and unqualified, and have a duty to set examples.

But above all, let the Governments and let the employers ... see that the present wage structure in East Africa is simply asking for trouble.

Even though the Government was aware of the fact that more important and pressing reabsorption problems had not been touched, let alone solved, it continued to act as if these problems did not exist. This policy of remaining indifferent or ignoring pressing problems was, by 1950, still in practice. As the article just quoted pointed out, the administration and those who supported it simply preferred to think that all was well, while in fact the opposite was true.

In short, ex-askaris' organized or formal contribution to Kenya's development was minimal. This was so because Europeans, especially the Government, kept them out of the modern exchange economy, modern political machinery and modern social dynamics. That was the price the colony had to pay for assigning top priority to political objectives and relegating other objectives, such as economic and social, to secondary positions. A report by the East African Commission pointed out the weak spots in Kenya's development policy which had made the solution of the colony's post-war problems impossible. In order for the administration to deal effectively with development problems,

the pattern of economic relationship now typified by European employers on one side and African labourers on the other, must be replaced by a common objective ... only thus can the economic and political dangers which threaten East Africa be avoided. Without the development of African productive capacity, the relatively isolated modern exchange economy of Europeans and Asians is not viable.²⁴

In the matters concerning loans to Africans, the report reminded those who argued that loans would not be made, or more generally, that the African was incapable of utilizing resources productively; that they were in effect saying that a transition from the restrictive subsistence economy to the modern exchange

²⁴E. A. R. Commission 1953-1955 Report, op.cit.,
p. 398.

economy was not possible "except under compulsion." The Commission insisted that to argue in this way was to argue contrary to the observed facts that the "indigenous" peoples in many areas were making great effort to acquire money income and that they showed considerable aptitude in utilizing their money resources effectively over a wide range of activities.²⁵ In concluding, it noted that:

The economy and social policies must be based on the realization that the development of East Africa basically depends on the extent to which the indigenous population can ... be integrated into the world economy.²⁶

Such recommendations were, of course, in direct conflict with Kenya's development policy; indeed, they threatened European easy life in Kenya. Kenya Government speaking, naturally, on behalf of the settlers, quickly and firmly rejected most of these recommendations. In Uganda and Tanzania (then Tanganyika), reaction was slow and mild. This goes a long way to illustrate how the thinking of Europeans in Kenya was worlds apart from that of Europeans in the rest of East Africa. In short, as late as 1956, Europeans in Kenya still believed that Kenya was a "white man's country." This was made quite clear when the Governor of Kenya, commenting on the East African Commission report, stated that:

²⁵Ibid., p. 81.

²⁶Ibid., p. 414.

Such disagreement as we have expressed with the Commission's recommendations is due, in most cases, to one of two reasons; either we do not consider their proposals ... are likely to be successful in economic terms, or we feel that the Commission have under-estimated the probable psychological impact of the economic changes and that the time is not yet ripe for the removal of those safe-guards which have developed over the last half century.²⁷ [Italics mine.]

When the Government took this rigid position, it confirmed once and for all its alliance with the settler section of the European community in Kenya, in its exploitation and oppression of the African. It became clear to everyone, including those who had until then refused to believe that there was such a relationship, that Kenya Government and the settlers were one and the same thing. This position also proved that the main objectives of the Government were not to develop Kenya as a whole, but to give special and top priority to European development. That is to say, it was first and foremost interested in safe-guarding European privileged position and power.

This explains why the Government of Kenya had deliberately frustrated ex-askaris by instigating the keep-ex-askari-in-his-place campaigns with which he was greeted on demobilization and which continued to limit and control his advancement

²⁷KAN. "Despatch from the Governor of Kenya Commenting on East Africa Royal Commission 1953-1955 Report," February, 1956.

during the period immediately following demobilization. The Government was interested only in maintaining "safe-guards" through which Europeans had assumed their power, and not in the progress of or the high standard of living for the ex-askaris. Europeans were prepared to maintain, and if necessary defend, the status quo rather than institute reforms that might weaken or undermine their powerful position. As C. Rosberg and J. Nottingham observed: "With the failure on this level to achieve substantial reform, militant leaders and covert organizations assumed the dominant role in challenging European and colonial control."²⁸ Referring specifically to ex-askaris, F. Majdalany noted that they too became militant and revolutionary when they realized that the Government was not ready to institute any meaningful reforms. He wrote that ex-askaris began "listening to the growing body of educated African politicians who raved and ranted about independence and African nationalism and the legitimate aspirations of the African people."²⁹

Up to this point our discussion has been centred around the European reaction to the return of African soldiers to civil life. Let us turn to the ex-askaris' reaction to civil life. As a group, ex-askaris were allowed to channel

²⁸Rosberg and Nottingham, op.cit., p. 189.

²⁹Madjalany, op.cit., p. 23.

their complaints and grievances through one Government-sponsored ex-servicemen organization: the King's African Rifles and East African (Kenya) Old Comrades' Association. (See Appendix A) Immediately following the war, members of the association were almost entirely British ex-servicemen living in Kenya. However, ex-askaris were allowed and encouraged to join as full members. Interviews with ex-askaris indicate that toward the end of the war, their officers had informed them of the existence of the organization and its willingness to accept ex-askaris as members. Ex-askaris say that they were assured that the association would be the "final court of appeal" for them in situations in which civilian authorities were unable or unwilling to meet ex-askaris' demands. For this reason quite a number of African soldiers became members of the association long before the war ended. According to ex-askaris, membership fee was five shillings.³⁰

From ex-askaris' accounts, they understood this to mean that the organization would, during reabsorption, fight for their rights and legitimate aspirations -- political, economic, social, etc. However, when they returned to civil life, they found that the organization was more or less a "social" organization and therefore unable to assist them in

³⁰Mr. Francis Soi, an ex-askari himself, had the best account on this issue when I interviewed him on January 25, 1968 at Machakos, Kenya.

securing their economic or political rights. Those who joined the association discovered that they really did not have any voice in what was being discussed, and that most of what was being discussed was neither useful nor relevant. For this reason the number of ex-askaris who joined the organization was extremely small. At any rate, very few of those who joined ever became active members, because while the organization was centred in Nairobi with branches in several towns in Kenya, the majority of ex-servicemen as we have already seen were in the "Reserves;" thus great distances between the towns and the "Reserves" almost prevented them from participating in the affairs of the association.

Because the association failed to address itself to ex-askari problems and because it was strongest in the cities, especially in Nairobi; groups of ex-askaris in various parts of Kenya started thinking along the lines of forming an independent and separate association which would address itself to the needs of all ex-askaris. Ex-askaris claim that these attempts failed because the Government would not grant permission to found an independent association. They stated that the Government insisted that there was only one official ex-servicemen organization and that all ex-servicemen in the colony were welcome to join it. Although the ex-askaris could point out that the organization was controlled by British

ex-servicemen and that it was not being run in the interest of the ex-askari, the Government still refused to grant them permission to form their own organization. As early as 1946 disagreement between the Government and the ex-askari on this issue was evident because of their demand, and complaint to the Government that "We want Clubs, which we can run ourselves."³¹

In spite of this cry, ex-servicemen were not permitted to organize and run their own clubs. It was not until 1953 that a separate ex-servicemen's association was registered by the Government. However, one thing was clear: although separate from the Government-sponsored one, it was not to be independent of the Government. Nevertheless, "the Nyanza African Ex-Servicemen's Organization and British Legion, African Section" was established in Kisumu in that year. One suspects that the reason why the Government granted permission for its registration was its connection with the British Legion; without this "alliance," possibilities of its being registered would have been very slim. In such cases, the Government was quite sure that the organization would be watched and its activities controlled, thus minimizing possibilities of "subversive" activities. However, its registration appeared to have been cancelled in 1958 for a reason which was known only to the Government. This meant that between 1958 and 1961

³¹KNA. MAA/2/1/49-I, Circular from Man Power ... Officer, op.cit.

there was just one registered ex-servicemen's organization. However, in 1960 application for registration by an organization which called itself "Kenya African Ex-Servicemen's Union" was refused by the Government. Between 1962 and 1963 the colonial Government in Kenya had granted registration to two separate ex-askari organizations: "North Nyanza African Ex-Servicemen's Union" registered on July 12, 1962 and "Kenya Ex-Servicemen Union" registered on March 13, 1963. Since independence, Kenya has granted registration to one more ex-servicemen's organization: "National Ex-Servicemen Union of Kenya" which was registered on July 8, 1964.³²

From the foregoing, it becomes clear that in the 1940's and 1950's the Government encouraged ex-askaris to join the Government-sponsored ex-servicemen association and discouraged them from forming any rival organizations. From the Government's point of view, to allow the formation of such organizations would be unwise because they might be turned into anti-colonial and, therefore, anti-government "political" clubs. It was not until 1961, two years before Kenya gained its independence, the colonial Government reversed its policy and began granting registration for the formation of ex-askari organizations. The Government had no reason to worry any more

³²For detailed information on these organizations see the following documents in the office of the Registrar of Societies (Kenya Government): File Nos. 5310, 3162, 3043, 4403, 371 and 3219.

about political repercussions from ex-askaris' activities, because in another year or two Kenya would be independent. In spite of this, the Government would still insist that ex-askaris' organizations must not be "political," that their only objective must be "promotion of unity and understanding among ex-servicemen."³³

Because ex-askaris organizations, as such, did not exist, because they were rigidly controlled by the Government between 1946 and 1961, their direct impact on Kenyan political events and nationalism seems to have been rather slight. When they were finally allowed to organize -- after a period of roughly 15 years -- it was too late for their political or economic activities to have any significant impact on Kenya. By then "civilian" organizations, such as political parties (Kenya African National Union and Kenya African Democratic Union were the two most important political parties at this time) were already very strong and effective as anti-colonial

³³To make sure that these organizations would not engage in "political" debates, the organizations were supposed to state in writing when applying for registration that they would never engage in politics, that the Government could send its representative to any of the meetings, if it so desired, and that a copy of the minutes taken at every meeting must be sent to the Government. It should be noted that King's African Rifles and East African (Kenya) Old Comrades' Association on February 15, 1966 changed its name to Kenya Armed Forces Old Comrades' Association. However, long before that it had formed an Employment Bureau through which it tried to find employment for ex-askaris. Between 1963 and 1967 only about 25% of ex-askaris who sought employment through the Bureau were able to get any employment.

organizations, for it had become apparent that in a year or two the country would be independent. Therefore when ex-askaris began to organize in the 1960's, their aim was not so much the disruption of colonial rule in Kenya as to try to organize themselves so that when independence finally came, they would have a voice in independent Kenya.

Perhaps the situation would have been different had the Government allowed the ex-askaris to organize themselves along these lines immediately following the war. Interviews with ex-askaris indicate that as soon as they returned to civil life, the first thing they wished to do was to meet, organize and plan -- on a colony-wide basis -- what they should do for themselves and for Kenya. As we have seen, the Government at first discouraged such meetings and later actually outlawed them. Solidarity and the "comrade-in-arms" feeling among ex-askaris was frowned upon by the Government. The Government eventually launched campaigns against it and came very close to destroying it. Ex-servicemen were reminded that their complaints should be sent to the Government either through their District Commissioners or through the Government-sponsored ex-servicemen's association.

This is to say that ex-askaris major contribution -- political, economic, social, etc. -- the Kenya was not channeled through ex-askaris' organizations. Because of the

Government's rigid control on ex-askaris' organized or group behavior, their major contribution seems to have been on individual or a small group basis, i.e. in indirect and informal ways. Individual ex-soldiers, in most cases because of their war-time experiences, played significant and important roles in anti-colonial movements and activities. The next chapter deals with that aspect of the ex-askari.

Chapter VI

Conclusion: Ex-askaris' Participation in Nationalist Movements

Ex-askaris did not succeed in forming a colony-wide organization through which they could voice their demands and complaints. Thus they were unable, as a group, to contribute to or influence economic or political development. They never managed to organize themselves so effectively that the colonial government had to reckon with them as a united front or force. Ex-soldiers themselves knew this and they would be the first ones to admit that their newly acquired skills and ideas were not fully utilized after demobilization.

As stated above, ex-soldiers contend that this failure was due to the Government's policies which aimed at frustrating them by denying them their legitimate rights and the utilization of their talents. This, in a sense, is an answer to those who inquire as to what use the ex-askaris put their newly acquired knowledge when they returned to civil life. This should also be considered by those colonial officials who supposedly were disappointed at the ex-askaris' failure to contribute to the progress and development in the "native Reserves." Professor Schleh was quite correct in remarking

that: "Colonial administrators expressed disappointment that the return of veterans did not lead to immediate (and 'positive') transformation of their home societies. What they saw, or what they failed to see, was, in part, the result of the success in their own colonial administrator's resettlement efforts."¹

Ex-askaris' reaction or attitude to all this was one of bitterness and resentment towards the Government, the feeling that they had been betrayed, left out and forgotten. However, ex-askaris were not the first nor the last group to have had these feelings. Apparently, throughout history, veterans of major wars have felt the same way. A recent article in Ebony illustrates this point:

By 1800, the war services of the Revolutionary War veterans had been forgotten and the sons and daughters of the black veterans of 1776 had been excluded from the prizes their fathers had helped to win. Richard Allen, the churchman and pioneer black leader, cried out against the betrayal of the dream, citing an old poem:

God and a soldier all men adore
In the time of war and not before;
When the war is over and all things righted
God is forgotten and the soldier slighted.²

Again there is no intention here to confuse black American soldiers in the Revolutionary War with the African soldiers

¹Schleh, op.cit., p. 100.

²"These Truly are the Brave," Ebony, Vol. XXIII, No. 10 (August, 1968), p. 169.

in World War II. However, there seems to be one aspect which was common to both groups: the feeling that they had not been rewarded for their contribution to the victory. At any rate, this attitude was obviously widespread among ex-askaris in East Africa.

For the purpose of making their demands listened to and their impact felt, ex-askaris turned to other forms of organizations and tactics. In small groups and as individuals, ex-askaris began to influence non-veterans, the mass. It must be admitted at the outset that it is difficult to assess the impact made by the greatest bloc of exservicemen, those who did not become political activists. It is true, however, that "their most widespread role and again, the most difficult to evaluate with precision, was as general agents of political development."³ It was easier for ex-askaris to transmit ideas as individuals than it was for them, due to government policies, to do so as an organization. They might have needed capital before they could practice their trades or before they

³Schleh, op.cit., p. 99. That it is difficult to assess the impact simply means that it involves a lot of work; it does not mean that it is impossible. The basic information about the askari's life before and after the war: This might involve interviewing, among others, his friends, his employers, his co-workers, his comrades-in-arms, residents in his village and, of course, the ex-soldier himself.

could make use of their technical skills; they might have needed licenses before they could convene meetings; but these obstacles were not placed in their way when they engaged in private discussions or conversations. It was mainly through these private contacts that ex-askaris managed to have their greatest impact on the non-veterans, the mass. The most valuable "gift" the ex-askaris brought back to their non-veteran brothers was the ideas they had acquired while in the service. As C. Leys has observed: "Apart from playing a large role in these organizations i.e., nationalist and political organizations ... what counted most was ideas which they brought home."⁴ [Italics mine.]

As we have seen elsewhere in this study, askaris underwent numerous new experiences while they were in the army so that when they returned home to civilian life they had a lot to share with their friends and relatives. Discussions centered around actual military operations, countries they visited and the people they met; but the most popular subject of discussion was their relationship with or their new evaluation of (Wazungu) Europeans. Doig was correct in stating that:

This African who has envisaged the development of his own future has become a shrewd observer and critic of Europeans and European ways of life and we have definitely fallen in prestige. He has seen the moral weakness of our civilization often in distressing ways and never again will he accept the white

⁴Leys, op.cit., p. 961.

man at face value. In future any one who would be a leader of African society must win his place by his own character and worth... He will have many ideas in his head, not all of them acceptable to the white man.⁵

There are those who have doubted the far-reaching effect which the lowering of European prestige had on the African thinking. One is left with the impression the effect was tremendous, in fact, revolutionary. The colonial European attached too much importance to his prestige. This meant almost everything to him. It was a strong "weapon" in his hand, a powerful force with which he had conquered the African psyche. Through it, colonial Europeans had launched and won a kind of psychological warfare over the Africans; this was shattered by World War II experiences. That is why Europeans, correctly and understandably, felt that they had lost some power while

⁵Doig, op.cit., p. 176. Compare this with a report in Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) in which a small number of Europeans who were governing that country "on prestige" were warned about the returning ex-soldier who would no longer recognize this, because of his contacts with "white enemies, despised Asians and egalitarian British other ranks." The report noted that although only a small number was exposed to this, they would still cause ferment on their return to civil life. It concluded that: "Automatic white prestige as a mechanism of adjustment will continue to serve for years, but its fate is ultimately sealed." (*Italics mine.*) For this information see Sec/Misc/62, "Demobilization and Resettlement of Africans" (Copy of memo on reabsorption signed by one H. McDowell, Lusaka (11/11/42) entitled "some Psychological aspects of Resettlement"). I am indebted to Dr. James Hooker, my major academic advisor, for this information. The material is part of a large collection of data and notes which he collected during his field research in what was then Northern Rhodesia.

the Africans felt that they had gained some of it. Things were never quite the same after World War II; at least the "weapon's" efficiency had been reduced, if not actually lost. How correct was McDowell's remark (see footnote 5) that its fate was ultimately sealed. As one ex-askari put it, "It was like breaking into a securely locked and guarded building supposedly filled with previous things like gold, only to find that it was empty."⁶

In short, ex-askaris had learned and observed that without modern technology, "a European was no better than an African." They believed it; and they carried this belief, to their friends and relatives. They had observed that suffering was not a black man's monopoly (the impression which colonial Europeans tried to create). In the war they saw the brutality of all -- especially, how Europeans killed and tortured each other. They had heard that Haiti had "defeated" France and that Ethiopia had "defeated" Italy. Japan was used as an example of a non-European nation which almost conquered the British Empire "had we not been called upon to defend it" so ex-askaris claim.⁷

⁶Mr. Kiplagat Arap Tarus said this in his interview on February 26, 1963, at Kapsabet, Kenya. Many ex-soldiers said the same thing in their own words, but Mr. Tarus' words were outstanding.

⁷This claim, which no doubt made ex-askaris as well as non-veterans very proud of themselves, was also expressed by ex-soldiers in Zambia who claimed that only they were

There is no doubt that ex-askaris spread new ideas among non-veterans. The difference lay in the way they presented their information: some ex-askaris were more sophisticated than others, in any case they were still performing the same job. The typical feeling of most ex-askari in Kenya can best be represented by what one of them has written:

The older men thought this was wild talk and only calculated to make things more difficult. But we younger men from the army *italics mine* and from the new schools saw it as a realistic and open possibility if only we could unite the country and if all our fellow-Africans could believe us when we told them what we had seen. [*Italics mine*] When could they learn that the whole world was not like Kenya; indeed that Kenya was one of the last outposts of feudalism, racialism and minority privilege and domination? When would they understand that things could be changed and within our lifetime?⁸

It is true that exposure of African soldiers to massive and superior modern arms tended to make askaris "fear" Europeans. However, this was welcomed by most askaris as a challenge. First, they would have to buy or manufacture modern weapons; secondly, they would employ guerilla warfare tactics. It is no surprise that during the Mau Mau uprising, ex-soldiers found pistols and bullets their most treasured possessions⁹ and that they were required to show others "the

victorious -- the comparison here is with the British soldiers. See Sec/Misc/66, "Public Opinion," December 7, 1942, Broken Hill. Once more I am grateful to Dr. James Hooker for allowing me to use his notes.

⁸Itote, op.cit., p. 39.

⁹Ibid., p. 48.

'jungle' methods used by the Japanese in Burma."¹⁰

The ex-askari might capitalize upon the sights he had seen and the tales he had to tell, which, temporarily at least, kept the interest of his neighbors focused on him. No doubt the information added to the general political awakening which was then taking place in Kenya. Though the Government banned all public and political meetings by Africans during the Mau Mau uprising, this information kept most Africans politically alive. When political parties reappeared in the late 'fifties the ordinary African was ready to support and co-operate with these organizations because he had come to know exactly for what they were fighting and who their political enemy was.

How exactly were the ex-servicemen able to do this? One way by which they did this was through their occupational choices. A few ex-soldiers managed to build their own shops, others became teachers, clerks, carpenters, etc. Those who became teachers, for instance, spread these ideas to their fellow non-veteran teachers. This was also true of other occupations. Even more important was the role which shops played within a given community. What Professor Schleh has said about this situation in Uganda applies very well to Kenya:

The African bus and freight service was an important vehicle for the dissemination of ideas which

¹⁰Ibid., p. 51.

were then the subjects of debate and analysis in the roadside 'clubs' and African dukas ["shops"]. The economic aspects of the concern might indeed be secondary to its value in terms of a center of 'political' activity for the surrounding community.¹¹

In most cases, information was passed from one person to another or from one group to another in the traditional network of personal word-of-mouth communication. This mode of communication should not be underestimated. Recent studies have shown that even in a highly advanced and developed society, the dissemination of any new idea "depends not only on the publicity it is given in the mass media but also on conversation and discussion about it among people, face-to-face."¹²

The use of this type of communication, i.e., word-of-mouth, is more widespread and more efficient in less developed societies than in advanced ones. It was the most popular, practical, and at times, the only way these ideas could be conveyed or dispersed among the East Africans. The dissemination took basically two forms: planned, conscious "political" education, where ex-askaris' objective was to influence their listeners politically; and the unplanned form where the ex-askaris would tell their tales for fun or enjoyment, and it was left to the individual listener to draw out any conclusion

¹¹Schleh, op.cit., p. 56.

¹²Ithiel de Sola Pool, "Communications and Development," in Myron Weiner (ed.), Modernization: The Dynamics of Growth (New York, 1966), p. 101.

he desired. In either case, the listeners were bound to be influenced; at least, they became more politically enlightened than before.

Throughout history, when faced with crises, men have acted or spoken in the name of a greater "cause," i.e. they tend to be nationalistic or altruistic, whatever the case might be. Ex-askaris were no exception to this "human rule." In spreading anti-colonial ideas, they did so, to a certain extent, in the name of a greater "cause" -- they were educating the non-veterans politically so that they could fight for Kenya and Africa. However, they also engaged in these activities for their own personal reasons. Hence the correctness of the assertion that "The African ex-askari wants an outlet for these skills and qualities he has developed for the good of his country and perhaps even more for his own advancement."¹³

In recent wars, that in Vietnam again furnishes us with an excellent example of what we have been discussing above. It has been shown that black American veterans are transmitting the ideas they acquired while fighting in Vietnam, and that they use the same methods and have the same motives in doing so:

It may be that the most seriously listened to black men in the United States to-day are the thousands of veterans returning from action in Vietnam.

¹³Doig, op.cit., p. 175.

One of the reasons for this is their feeling, readily evident in their conversation, that they have 'paid their dues' and are now ready to collect from the American society for which they have caught hell.¹⁴

That ex-askaris were very eager to share their new experiences with kin is beyond doubt. As we saw previously, this desire to share ideas and experiences was evident in the letters askaris wrote home from foreign lands. When they returned to civil life, this same eagerness was evident everywhere they went in the country. Oral accounts from ex-askaris have been supported by what was reported in a contemporary newspaper: "Many of the East African natives were full of strange sights they had seen when on leave in Cairo, Jerusalem, Baghdad, Damascus and many other places in the Middle East, most of them familiar place names to Christian Africans."¹⁵

¹⁴Pierce and Bayley, op.cit., p. 145.

¹⁵KNA. MD/4/5/66. "Askari of Pioneer Corps Return from Mid-East" (Newspaper cuttings without date and no name of newspaper). Comparison between other countries and East Africa was a popular topic of discussion between ex-soldiers and non-veterans. If a country was more advanced or richer than East Africa, the ex-askaris expressed a desire to emulate the people; when the case was to the contrary, it would cause pride, for East Africa, on the part of the ex-askari. In either case, the ex-soldier ended up feeling "nationalistic." As far as the civilians were concerned, the tales they heard about other countries and peoples amounted to nothing less than "revolutionary" ideas.

This should be expected of civilians since the soldiers themselves were "shocked" by what they heard about or saw in these countries. For instance, one of the leading Kenyan ex-askaris was shocked when he heard that Jerusalem was in Palestine, "for I had always believed that Jerusalem to be in Heaven." See Itote, op.cit., p. 13.

The foregoing demonstrates clearly the validity of the assertion that, "The organization and tactics employed by African leaders to change this restrictive situation in Kenya took various forms, both overt and covert."¹⁶ It can be concluded that individual ex-askaris or those in small groups used "covert" tactics in contributing to political awakening in Kenya. For this reason, we would do well to look for ex-askaris' contribution to Kenya's nationalism not in "overt" organizations such as the ex-servicemen's association, but in some other areas in which individuals or small groups, using their wartime experiences, contributed to Kenya's struggle for national independence. In Kenya, these individuals and small groups, either consciously or unconsciously, shouldered the responsibility of transmitting the ideas, thus proving Broadbent's words prophetic. In 1944, using West African troops as an example, he had observed that:

Few readers have considered what the effects will be upon the future development of West African soldiers during their stay in India. There is hardly a class or tribe in the four colonies of British West Africa which is not represented among these native troops who though for the most part unlettered, have unique gifts of observation and perception. They have been quick to form opinions which they will take back to West Africa and which, one ventures to think, will have a widespread influence there.¹⁷

¹⁶ Rosberg and Nottingham, op.cit., p. 119.

¹⁷ Broadbent, op.cit., p. 384.

This applied equally to East African troops. All ethnic groups, in fact all villages, in Kenya were represented; and when askaris returned to civil life their reappearance was felt by everyone in the colony.

But this was not the only role that ex-askaris played. Spreading of ideas went hand in hand with the actual involvement and participation in various anti-colonial movements which were going on in Kenya at that time. There are numerous tales -- some of which have become part of Kenya's "oral tradition" -- told by ex-askaris about the things they did, and the measures they took to change the restrictive situation which the colonial rule had imposed on Kenya. A number of these accounts have been supported by written evidence and the following accounts will serve as an example of this. An article in New Africa (March, 1947) captioned: "Kenya Government Breaks Mombasa Strike -- Askari soldiers shot down at Gilgil" tells part of the story of ex-askaris as participants in the fight for the African rights:

The general strike of African labour in Mombasa, Kenya ... came to an end on January 25th after two weeks during which practically every African worker in the city stopped to work... The strike was reportedly led by a group of African ex-servicemen [*italics mine*] and the general demand was for increase of wages and lower rents and better living conditions.

Elsewhere in Kenya at a military base at Gilgil, five askari soldiers were killed and eleven wounded early in January following the refusal of a large

number of the soldiers to obey orders of their commanding officers. The action was in protest against delay in their release from services. Fourteen so-called ringleaders were placed under arrest and held for trial following the shooting.¹⁸

Although only a few such incidents were reported in the local newspapers or by the Government, however, one is inclined to believe ex-askaris' accounts that there were frequent incidents of this nature. For propaganda purposes, the Government -- as all colonial governments did then and do now -- refused to regard these happenings as signs or manifestations of nationalism. They quickly dismissed them as "local" incidents, which were started by a few frustrated ex-askaris. Confidentially, the Government regarded these happenings as signs of impending danger. Consequently, it always took the necessary steps to avert these dangers. The aim of the Government was to prevent solidarity among ex-soldiers which might lead to the collective use of their new skills and ideas in anti-colonial activities. It succeeded in preventing the formation of a militant ex-askari organization. However, ex-askari sought and found alternative means by which they challenged the colonial rule.

Using frustration as a "spur," ex-askaris began channeling their energies into civilian anti-colonial activities. In Dr. Burke's words, "Frustration of this nature, the acquis-

¹⁸New Africa, Vol. XVI, No. 3 (March, 1947), p. 5.

ition of organizational skills acquired during the war ... all contributed to a movement to establish a Kenya-wide political organization."¹⁹ It was not just national politics which attracted ex-servicemen. There was a quickening interest in public affairs, a desire to have more control over local matters.²⁰

It was not always easy for ex-askaris to climb the political ladder. First of all there was the anti-ex-askari propaganda. This tended to alienate ex-askaris from their fellow-Africans. The conditions of the war had brought a ferment of ideas and in almost every village there was hostility between civilians, especially the elders, and the ex-soldiers. These elders had a large following, but they were far out of sympathy with those younger men, of whom the ex-askaris were typical, who were at the same time the most important and the least attractive element in village or rural life. It might be said that councils of chiefs were democratic in the sense that they seemed to represent the bulk of the population, but in doing so, the creative minority was excluded from both power and influence.²¹

¹⁹Burke, op.cit., p. 208.

²⁰J. C. D. Lawrence, The Iteso: Fifty Years of Change in a Nilo-Hamitic Tribe of Uganda (London, 1957), p. 38.

²¹I. C. Jackson, Advance in Africa: A Study in Community Development in Eastern Nigeria (London, 1956), p. 59.

In assessing the participation of ex-askaris in anti-colonial movements, local and historical factors which influenced the growth, scope and direction of such movements must be considered. In his study of the West and East African ex-servicemen, Professor Schleh correctly observed that:

Recruitment of veterans as a group into modern nationalist movements and mass parties depended on: existing levels of political development at the time when ex-servicemen cohesion was most possible...

In those territories where active parties developed only later, the 'era of the servicemen' had passed. Parties rising in the 1950's did draw on individual veterans under a different title (e.g. trade unionist, teacher or co-operative member), but the effort of organizing veterans per se would have been of possible value only if other functional groups could not have been found.²² [Emphasis mine]

The type of European settlement, the percentage of the Europeans in the population and their "ideology" directly affected the involvement and participation of ex-servicemen in nationalist or political activities. Some of the differences which existed between the activities and organizations of the West African ex-servicemen and those of the East Africans were mainly due to this factor. Even within East Africa itself, this accounts for the differences that existed between different territories. While, for instance, Kenya Government succeeded in controlling overt ex-askaris' organizations, it failed to control the covert tactics to which ex-askaris were

²² Schleh, op.cit., p. 104.

forced to resort. In short, rigid control succeeded only in making ex-askaris more resolute and more militant. At times, ex-askaris were simply reacting to what the Government was doing to them as a group. Thus Itote writes that the struggle for independence was taken up by Kenyans among whom were ex-askaris "whose outlook had been changed radically by their service overseas and who had survived death and much hardship in the cause of a colony which now seemed determined to block and humiliate them at every opportunity."²³ At other times, ex-askaris in Kenya opposed the colonial rule not because it denied them their rights as a group, but because the future of Kenya, indeed the destiny of the Africans, seemed to be in the hands of foreigners. With special reference to ex-askari young men, Itote wrote that:

The militant spirit among younger men was fostered by attitudes and actions of the European settlers at this time. They had proclaimed a "Kenya Plan" which was nothing more nor less than a scheme for taking over the country and ruling it on South African apartheid lines. This pamphlet was widely circulated among our group and read out even to those who were illiterate. It had a profound effect on our thinking and on our plans.²⁴

These same European attitudes and actions made the non-veteran Africans in Kenya more receptive to ex-askaris' "teachings" than their counterparts in the neighbouring terri-

²³Itote, op.cit., p. 38.

²⁴Ibid., p. 39.

tories. These feelings tended to polarize issues and communities in Kenya. European community was pitted against African community; African interest clashed with European interest. This, of course, was nothing new except, that at this time, the struggle was sharper and fiercer than before. As a result of this, there was considerable cohesion among Africans that had not been known in Kenya in recent history. It made it easier for the flow of information from African "leaders" -- especially the ex-servicemen -- to the African mass. This is why the impact of ideas spread by ex-servicemen cannot be lightly dismissed. This light dismissal might be valid for other territories, it seems that Kenya's case was quite different: ex-askaris, at all levels, spread their ideas; the ideas received sympathetic response from non-veterans because of the rigid policies the Government was carrying out at this time.

No impression should be created that the ex-askari was constantly seeking or waiting to play the role of a leader. He was just as much a leader as he was a follower. War-time experiences and frustrations during the reabsorption period made ex-askaris a "natural focal point for any general movement against authority."²⁵ Because the Government had failed

²⁵Report of the Commission of Enquiry into Disturbances in the Gold Coast 1948, Colonial No. 231 (London, 1948), p. 7, quoted by Rothchild, op.cit., p. 6.

to address itself to their problems, ex-askaris began to look for alternative means by which their aspirations would be realized. For many of them, politics seemed to be the answer: "He sought new means to express his sense of grievance. Whether he found himself at odds with traditional authorities upon returning to his village or simply discontent with employment opportunities, he seemed to find in political action -- even agitation -- some satisfaction for his pent-up frustration."²⁶

On the other hand, it was easier to mobilize ex-askaris into an anti-colonial movement partly because they were antagonized by the Government and partly because they were used to discipline; at least they knew and understood what fighting for a "cause" meant. Above all, they could be mobilized by simply calling upon them. Their special knowledge and training made them a unique and special group. Itote remembers that when the responsibility of training future "Mau Mau" fighters was placed on him, he was told:

You learnt many things in the army ... now you can lead our people... If you had died in Burma no one would have remembered you. But should you die tomorrow in our struggle, you will die for your own people and your name will live in our hearts.²⁷

In stating that the ex-askari transmitted ideas to his non-veteran fellow-African and that he joined and participated

²⁶Rothchild, op.cit., p. 6.

²⁷Itote, op.cit., p. 46.

in anti-colonial activities, it should not be interpreted to mean that the result of large-scale African service in British forces during World War II was the radical transformation of the troops into modernized, politically active citizens with a national outlook. It has been shown previously that the British aimed at mobilizing African soldiers into loyal, brave and skillful soldiers and not into African nationalists. It has also been shown that when the war ended, the British aimed at demobilizing African soldiers into loyal British subjects and not into African nationalists. What has been shown here, however, is the fact that in spite of all this, the average ex-askari in East Africa -- particularly in Kenya where the struggle between Europeans and Africans was most intense -- was, comparatively speaking, more advanced than his non-veteran counterpart. Thus Professor Schleh has concluded that: "This exposure [service in British forces] moved them up on a scale of social mobilization and increased their potential for recruitment into political activism."²⁸ In Kenya, the desire and determination to participate in anti-colonial activities was fostered by the attitudes and actions of the Europeans at the time of reabsorption of the ex-askari into civil life.

As for the difference in political impact of World War I veterans and World War II veterans, the following observations

²⁸Schleh, op.cit., p. 204.

can be noted. In the first place, the World War I veteran returned to a Kenya that was, comparatively speaking, less advanced -- politically, economically, socially, etc. -- than his World War II comrade. Therefore when World War I veterans returned, they seemed to be the most "advanced" and modern group among the Africans. For this reason, they tended to occupy positions of leadership without any serious competition from other functional groups. Although opportunities were rare, this tendency was particularly true in political leadership.

The situation was quite different for the World War II veteran. In 1946 Kenya was in many ways far more advanced than in 1919. In the inter-war years African organizations were formed which began to advance the African cause in more effective ways than ever before. These assumed all kinds of names: clubs, societies, labour unions and independent churches. Whenever they were formed, they represented a precise response to the challenge of colonial rule. They were both an urban and a rural response -- both "tribal" and "atribal." In Rotberg's words: "The associations were led by men who had drifted to the cities... Gradually they sought redress for wrongs to their people. They learnt vulnerabilities of whites. They learnt to deal with the white man on his own terms; they agitated, drove shady bargains, talked and wrote."²⁹

²⁹Robert I. Rotberg, "The Rise of African Nationalism: The Case of East and Central Africa," World Politics, Vol. XV, No. 4 (October, 1962), p. 78.

Therefore when askaris returned to civilian life after World War II, there were already leaders in the civilian population. To make the matter worse, most ex-askaris lacked one of the most valuable and vital attributes for receiving and holding power: formal education. The few that had formal education vied very well, and at times did better than, non-veterans of the same academic qualifications. This meant that most of those who lacked any training in formal education remained behind in the race for personal advancement in economic, social or political spheres. The importance of formal education at this particular time in the history of the continent has been stressed by Oliver and Fage:

During this period a new generation of Africans was putting itself to school, and from it a few were to emerge equipped not merely for participation but for leadership in the new Africa. Some white men in Africa began to speak scornfully of 'troused blacks' and 'handfuls of examination-bred students;' yet ... their appearance was the most important event in African history.³⁰

In part, this is the answer to those who wish to know why fewer leaders emerged out of World War II veterans than emerged from those of World War I. In Kenya, as we have already seen, ex-servicemen were forced to join civilian anti-colonial organizations;³¹ but their chances of assuming

³⁰Roland Oliver and J. D. Fage, A Short History of Africa (Baltimore, 1962), p. 215.

³¹We do not know if during the "era of the ex-service-

leadership were limited partly because most of them lacked formal education and partly because they were regarded as "newcomers" to these organizations. Therefore, they could not be given leadership in organizations which regarded them in this light. However, an ex-askari, solely on his wartime experience and knowledge, was far better off in such organizations than a non-veteran member who had attained the same level of formal education. The ex-askaris were always next in rank to the leaders and wielded a lot of influence in such organizations.

It was not just the ex-askaris themselves who were a major factor in the fight for Kenya's independence. Their service in the British forces itself became an issue on which African leaders, especially the rising nationalists, challenged

men" ex-askaris in Kenya would have organized themselves into a strong political group had the Government not interfered with them; but we know that on their return to civil life many of them joined the Kenya Africa Union which was, at that time, the most important political organization among Africans in the whole colony. Even "The Forty Group" which operated mainly in Nyeri and Fort Hall was not exclusively for ex-soldiers although many of its members were ex-askaris. Shortly after 1949 it had disappeared and apparently most of its members had joined KAU. Most ex-askaris would have preferred militant organizations, but they had no choice except to join the "old" organizations. An example of this is Itote's views of KAU in those days: "In 1946, I had joined the Kenya African Union (KAU). Although many of us had great hopes for this organization, past experience had taught us that it might well not be enough. Still, it was the only public and national political organization we had." See Itote, op.cit., p. 38.

the Government. As early as 1945, Sauti ya Mwafrika, organ of the Kenya African Union, published among its correspondence the following letter from one Mwaniki Mugweru:

The African Soldier has sacrificed his life for our King-Emperor. He has fought many battles in various battlefields in Abyssinia, Middle East and Far East. He has fought these battles under the same conditions as the white man. Now the war is over. Everyone is happy and awaits to see what will happen.

This war has taught the African a lesson -- that all people in this world must be accorded equal treatment irrespective of their colour and race provided they do things equally as the others. The African ex-soldier who is now staying at home has a very uncertain future. He has been made to consider himself nothing more than cheap labour in the civilian market. Nothing specific has been planned for him. Those are the thanks he has received for the sacrifice of his life to defend his country.

In his historic baraza His Excellency the Governor pointed out at Kisumu that this war is not the white man's war but it is a war against slavery. The African has therefore fought for the freedom of mankind. But the freedom for which he has fought cannot be seen and that is why some Nyanza Africans told His Excellency that this war has nothing to do with them because they knew that after the war the African people would not benefit anything.

If the African is going to be frank, he would query the gratitude of the white man in this country. This is evidenced from the treatment given to the African soldier just now. The African soldier has no land reserved for him where he could go and farm. Some time ago His Excellency invited South Africans to come and settle in Kenya on the grounds that they served in East Africa, but the African soldier served in many battlefields with the South African soldier. Now the war for equality of mankind is over. Will the African reap the benefit thereof?³²

³²Sauti Ya Mwafrika (October 15, 1945), quoted in African Transcripts, No. 9 (May, 1946), p. 84.

That service in the British forces would be an issue upon which anti-colonial elements would capitalize had been expected by the Government when it stated that: "With his [i.e. ex-askari's] help which we can hope to obtain through sympathetic handling, we may have a measure of success, with his opposition, which is only too easily come by, and which is capable of unlimited exploitation by those who wish us ill, we shall indeed go through a bad period."³³ [Italics mine.]

As an issue it was not just confined to World War II; it went, at least, as far back as World War I. One way in which World War I was connected with World War II was the participation of some of the World War I veterans in World War II. They served in all war theatres including the Middle East.³⁴ There was another link between the First World War and the Second World War: when the war broke out in 1939, bitter memories of the hardship and suffering experienced during the First World War were still lingering in the minds of many East Africans. "The memory of these terrible events lived on in the traditions and folk-lore of the Africans, and as Europe, a quarter of a century later, began to move towards war once again, the old fears revived."³⁵

³³KNA. MAA/2/1/49-I; "Interim Report on African Demobilization," February 28, 1946.

³⁴See East African Standard (n.d.), news clippings in KNA. MD/4/5/65-I.

³⁵D. C. Savage and J. F. Munro, "Carrier Corps Recruitment in the British East Africa Protectorate," Journal of African History, VII, 2 (1966), p. 341.

Participation of the Africans in World War I was a political issue in East Africa throughout the 'twenties and the 'thirties. In 1927 the East African Governments tried to appease ex-soldiers by building "war memorials" in recognition of their contribution to British victory over the Germans in East Africa.³⁶ In the 'thirties the question of war pensions remained a thorn in the side of ^{the} Government so that when the war broke out, the issue had not been resolved.³⁷

In the inter-war years, Africans made a big issue of their participation in World War I. They used it as leverage in trying to force the colonial Government in Kenya to institute some reforms which would enhance African progress and advancement. By the time the Second World War broke out, the Government had done very little in instituting these reforms.

In the course of World War II, the Africans pressed the Government even harder for reforms. At this particular time, they used their participation and contribution to both wars as their bargaining point. The Government needed the cooperation and support of the Africans in its war aims and

³⁶"Notes from Documents on the Carrier Corps and the German East African Campaign" (Typescript), UCN/HD-RPA-F/1/3. (See original copy in Tanzania National Archives, Dar es Salaam, Secretariat File, Ref. W1/U-19351.)

³⁷Savage and Munro, op.cit., p. 340.

efforts; for this reason it was forced to at least listen to African demands for reforms. Various African groups took this opportunity to voice their complaints. Most of them spoke fearlessly and made direct demands. In 1942 one of such groups -- the Kavirondo Taxpayers Welfare Association -- sent a memorandum to the Governor of Kenya signed by its chairman, J. S. Nyende, which stated among other things:

With regard to the request of the war supplies of income, we beg to state Your Excellency that, we have concentrated ourselves on offering any support at all we could to our Government in every requirement.... We request that some of the natives who are able to enlarge their cultivations be given certain loans from the Agricultural Land Bank ... increasing our produce is essential in the support of war [author's emphasis] -- after all rich Europeans get loans.

In the war of 1914-18, we were given various verbal assurances by Government officials ... that if we could help His Majesty to win the war, our numerous grievances would be considered and complied with as soon as peace was restored. When the war was over, after we have helped with all our effort and might and every sacrifice of person and property, none of the assurances was fulfilled. But in spite of such good assurances: our Lands were taken and distributed to the European ex-soldiers including the enemy subjects; and we were ordered to work for them at a reduced rate of pay. Our Protectorate status was reduced to a Crown Colony without Reference to us.

In the present war your representatives have asked us to help in men and property without a word of protest or murmur ... Due to the experience gained in the result of the war of 1914 to 1918, we earnestly request Your Excellency that, while we are still amidst us, you should consider that this time we should be provided with a written assurance concerning our Lands, war widows and orphans; and the general well-being, etc. We request that this assurance be handed over to our Head-Chiefs that are to be for preservation.³⁸ [Italics mine]

³⁸KNA. MAA/2/5/101. The Kavirondo Taxpayers Welfare

In doing this, Kenya Africans had chosen an issue that was vital to Africans in other territories. In 1944, Africans in Nyasaland (Malawi), for instance, had demanded through their Nyasaland African Association that "We beg to state that we have served loyally in any war which His Majesty ... has asked our boys to serve and we think this is the time that we should ask for justice ... we ask you to give us the right to speak for our people be it in the mission [church] councils or in the bodies that govern our country... We have paid for the price and we must be compensated accordingly."³⁹

By the time the war ended, specifically during the period immediately following demobilization, when most ex-soldiers were bitter because they were unemployed as well as poor, the issue had become so vital and central that, in Kenya, it was second only to that of the land. From that time on, these issues became the two most important and pressing political questions in the entire colony. That this was the case is shown by the number of African leaders who constantly

Association, Nyanza Province Memorandum Presented to H. E. the Governor on 13th February, 1942.

³⁹_{1a/1423}: Minutes of a Meeting of a Committee of Nyasaland African Association, 21st January, 1944, quoted in Robert I. Rotberg, The Rise of Nationalism in Central Africa: The Making of Malawi and Zambia 1873-1964 (Cambridge, Mass., 1965). In 1942, Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) African could

referred to the question of African participation in "European war." An example of the points they stressed are here stated in the bitter remarks made in the early 'fifties by an old ex-chief who observed that:

I can remember when the first European came to Kenya. I worked along side your father (pointing to a European) ...

In the First World War you asked our young men to go to fight with the British against the Germans and many were killed. In the Second World War you came again and asked us to fight the Germans and the Italians, and our young people were again ready to go.

Now there are Italians and Germans in Kenya and they can live and own land in the Highlands from which we are barred, because they are white and we are black.⁴⁰

So the ex-askari both as a participant and as an "issue" was helping in the struggle for Kenya's freedom. In spite of all these demands, the Government refused to institute any meaningful reforms. Sweeping reforms, which the nationalists were demanding for the Government, would have meant the paving of the way, by the Government, for Kenya's freedom. It was not prepared to go that far because "the colonial goal

demand that, "We Africans are not good enough to be sold articles by the European storekeepers, but if Northern Rhodesia [Zambia] is invaded by the enemy, will only the European storekeepers fight to drive them out or will we Africans be expected to do so?" See Sec/Misc/66, "Public Opinion," Broken Hill, 7 December, 1942. Once again I am indebted to Dr. James Hooker for this information.

⁴⁰Quoted in Mbiyu Koinange, The People of Kenya Speak for Themselves (Detroit, 1955), p. 62.

in Kenya was not to create an African state."⁴¹ African leaders had hoped that through peaceful negotiations, the Government would institute reforms that would be satisfactory to the majority of the people in the colony; therefore "with the failure on this level to achieve substantial reform, militant leaders and covert organizations assumed the dominant role in challenging European and colonial control."⁴²

The Government refused to compromise even on the most modest reforms. Many people in Kenya, including those ex-servicemen who were politically alert, gave up the hope that Kenya's problems would be solved politically or by peaceful negotiations. As the majority of the politically conscious ex-askaris began to reflect on their military careers, they were forced to remember Kakembo's ideas stated: "Having fought for liberty, equality and for freedoms expressed in the Atlantic Charter, we are determined not to remain behind in the world's race."⁴³

Those ex-askaris who thought seriously along such lines decided to carry the struggle for Kenya's freedom beyond the negotiating table. As soldiers, they had been trained in violence both in terms of technological skills and in ideas;

⁴¹Rosberg and Nottingham, op.cit., p. 189.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Kakembo, op.cit., p. 14.

therefore they decided to turn to violence -- to a military solution -- believing that the Colonial Government in Kenya had left them no alternative, no choice, but to resort to violent means.⁴⁴ The Mau Mau uprising was the main result of this resolution. One is reminded of George Kinnear's remarks made in 1945 with special reference to the returning askari: "If it turns out that his ideas are on the wrong lines then there is nobody to blame except his authorities who have failed."⁴⁵

It is not within the scope of this study to discuss whether or not these ideas were on the "wrong or right lines." But one thing is clear: ex-askaris played an important role in the Mau Mau uprising. The full story of their role in the uprising is yet to be told; but there is already enough information to show that, indeed, ex-askaris played an important part in it. Itote's book ('Mau Mau' General), for instance, has thrown some light on this subject. No doubt there were

⁴⁴The colonial Government and its supporters were "surprised" when violence was resorted to. Compare this with Purnell's remarks that: "Having been taught that it is possible to fight and even die for a cause of freedom, these veterans [black American ex-soldiers] are coming home determined to receive fair and equal treatment. The tragedy is that an unconcerned and uninformed public will be taken by surprise if they resort to the violence they learned in Vietnam." Purnell, op.cit., p. 10.

⁴⁵Kinnear, op.cit.

many others like him whose stories have not yet been, and might never be, written. However, there is no doubt that a core of ex-servicemen furnished the necessary skills both technological and organizational as well as the "ideology" on which the "revolutionary army" depended. Kilson has correctly pointed out that:

Furthermore, many Africans now enjoyed the knowledge of modern warfare (particularly guerrilla warfare, learned in Burma) and the ability to master modern arms. In fact, they were even capable of manufacturing their own arms from rudimentary household equipment, as evidenced by Mau Mau arms captured by the British forces. Thus the post-war African possessed some of the ideological and practical requirements necessary for moving an oppressed people along lines of armed rebellion.⁴⁶

Elsewhere in East Africa, ex-askaris have at one time or another, played very significant roles in their respective countries. They were certainly important in the revolution in Zanzibar as has been shown in John Okello's book.⁴⁷ In the final confrontation between Kabaka and Uganda Government, it has been reported that the majority of those in Kabaka's force were ex-askaris.⁴⁸

⁴⁶Kilson, op.cit., p. 273.

⁴⁷John Okello, Revolution in Zanzibar (Nairobi, 1967).

⁴⁸See M. Crawford Young, "The Obote Revolution," African Report, Vol. XI, No. 6 (June, 1966), pp. 8-14. In French-speaking Africa, the Algerian case seems to support this generalization. See Franz Fanon, A Dying Colonialism (New York, 1965). When shooting occurred in Cleveland, Ohio (USA) in August 1968, it was reported that "a former Ranger sergeant in Korea...had organized a small band of militants called the Black Nationalists of New Libya" and that they had started the shooting. See Newsweek, Vol. LXXII, No. 6 (August 5, 1968), pp. 24-26.

It is one of the main conclusions of this study that the returning askari introduced new ideas to East Africa. The reference here is not to such modern ideas as Communism, Socialism, Democracy, etc. The ideas we are referring to are those that the askari learned as a result of his day-to-day contacts with other people, i.e. those he learned from his own personal experience. As a result of this, the askari started to reassess others as well as himself. It was not through radical ideas; he had never heard of those. The "simple" knowledge did it: the political history of other peoples or the knowledge of the "causes" for which other people have fought wars or the realization that he was one of the "greatest soldiers on Earth" or simply through the re-evaluation of his "colonial master." Someone else might not find such ideas "revolutionary" or "radical;" but to the African under colonial rule -- specifically the colonial rule in Kenya -- these ideas were enlightening -- they made him politically conscious.

Services in the British Armed Forces tended to make askaris "nationalistic." It certainly promoted a feeling of "territorial nationalism," hence such remarks as "We are all Tanganyikans," etc. Although ethnic hostilities could (and can) still be found among ex-askaris, veterans tend to be more "rational" about these problems than their non-veteran

counterparts. In Kenya, for instance, most ex-servicemen's organizations, at least on paper, since they were never allowed to be politically active, tended to organize themselves on colony-wide rather than on ethnic lines.

Ex-askaris did not succeed in forming their own powerful organizations, hence the failure to produce their own "political" leaders. This was partly due to the Government's policy and partly due to African civilian organizations such as political parties or trade unions which, at the time of demobilization, were already carrying out anti-colonial activities. Therefore individual ex-askaris who wished to contribute to the fight had no choice but to join "civilian" organizations. They usually never became leaders of such movements although they were influential and prominent members.

Technical and practical skills learned in the army were not put to full use by the majority of ex-askaris. The economy could not absorb them, i.e. they could not be hired by someone else or they did not have the capital with which to begin private business. However, those who joined the Mau Mau uprising made full use of their technical and organizational skills, thus distinguishing themselves, in the uprising, as an essential and indispensable group.

APPENDIX A

Ex Askaris' Organizations in Kenya

This section is based on the information obtained from Files Numbers 371, 3043, 3162, 3219, 4403 and 5310 at the Office of the Registrar of Societies, Kenya Government, Nairobi. Notice the mushrooming of ex-servicemen's organizations in the early 1960's. This, in part, is due to the lifting of the ban on political organizations by the Government; it was also due to the anxiety on the part of the ex-servicemen as to what would become of their "interests" when Kenya became independent. They were organizing so that when that time came they would be powerful enough to defend their "interests." Many ex-askaris must have been disappointed at the results because what emerged was not one united body but several "powerless" ex-askaris' organizations.

I. KING'S AFRICAN RIFLES AND EAST AFRICAN FORCES (KENYA) OLD COMRADES ASSOCIATION. (File 3219)

This was the first ex-soldiers' organization in Kenya. It remained the only one until 1953 when the second organization was founded. It was closely affiliated with the Government although not under its sponsorship. Originally, it was intended only for the British ex-soldiers living in Kenya; but after World War II, ex-askaris were encouraged to join it.

Aims and Objectives, 1960 (18,000 members)

1. To bring about the unity of all those ex-service-men whatever their rank or race who have served, at any time, in any branch of East African military forces of Kenya.
2. To assist them, their widows and dependents in all their difficulties, in pension matters, in the relief of distress, in finding employment and in re-establishing them on their return to civil life.
3. To foster and organize re-unions and functions.

On 2nd November, 1966, it changed its name to Kenya Armed Forces Old Comrades Association (K.A.F.O.C.A.).

Office-Bearers, 1966 (20,000 members)

Chairman, Brigadier Ndolo

Vice Chairman, Colonel J. K. Mulinge

Executive Committee:

The Chairman and the Vice Chairman

Lt. Col. Kakenyi

Lt. Col. J. K. Nzioka

Major Birgen

Secretary/Treasurer, J. A. Campbell

The organization has an employment bureau (Kenya Armed Forces Old Comrades Association Employment Bureau) which

assists ex-askaris in finding employment. Proportionately very few ex-askaris have been able to find employment through this organization. Part of the reason is that the bureau operates only in Nairobi while the majority of ex-askaris live on their farms hundreds of miles from Nairobi.

Only a small percentage (10%-25%) of those who applied actually got the jobs through the bureau. The number of applicants is extremely small when it is remembered that about 98,000 Kenyans participated in World War II.

The number of ex-askaris who applied
for jobs through the Bureau*

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>No. of applicants Feb. 1963-July 1966</u>	<u>No. actually employed Feb. 1963-July 1966</u>
Watchmen (Headmen, etc.)	1844	724
Drivers (vehicle mechanics, etc.)	899	209
Clerks (telephone opera- tors, etc.)	278	116
Domestics (cooks, etc.)	432	147
Artisans (tinsmiths, etc.)	<u>421</u>	<u>88</u>
Total	3874	1284

	<u>No. of applicants Feb. 1963-Jan. 1967</u>	<u>No. actually employed Feb. 1963-Jan. 1967</u>
Watchmen	2009	607
Drivers	944	190
Clerks	299	108
Domestics	463	130
Artisans	<u>438</u>	<u>46</u>
Total	4153	1081

	No. of applicants <u>July 1965-Nov. 1967</u>	No. actually employed <u>July 1965-Nov. 1967</u>
Watchmen	2000	250
Drivers	1000	200
Clerks	400	125
Domestics	<u>600</u>	<u>200</u>
Total	4000	775

*See "Monthly Record Figures O.C. A/27" at the K.A.F.O.C.A. Bureau Office, Nairobi, Kenya

II. THE NYANZA AFRICAN EX-SERVICEMEN'S ORGANIZATION AND BRITISH LEGION, AFRICAN SECTION. (File 371)

It was first registered by the Government in 1953 with its Head Office at Ndori Junction, Post Office Asembo-Bay.

Its Objectives (1953)

To promote mutual understanding and unity between ex-servicemen and those who are not ex-servicemen in the Province. This will help widows and orphans.

Anticipated Property

Dispensary, Ferry Boat, Garage, African Liquor shops everywhere in the colony, Transport Lorry, Posho Mill and some which are not mentioned.

Aims and Objectives (1957)

1. To co-operate with Government by offering independent opinion on any questions affecting the ex-servicemen in representation in Councils or Government works in the colony.

2. Building school for ex-servicemen's children
where they could be taught at reduced fees.
3. Shall do trades of any kind in the whole Kenya
Colony.

Kenya's political climate seems to have been reflected in what the above organization called its "aims and objectives." In 1953 the objectives were less political owing to the Mau Mau uprising which was then in progress and which had caused the Government to declare a state of emergency in Kenya. It was unsafe and unwise for any African organization to be overtly "political." The uprising officially ended in 1957, hence the political overtones in the "aims and objectives" which were formulated in that year.

Office-Bearers

President, Okeyo Ogara

Secretary, F. Oloo Odero

Chairman, Cpt. S. Ogola Okuku

Total Annual Membership

<u>Year</u>	<u>Membership</u>
1953	1185
1954	1390
1955	1565
1956	?
1957	?
1958	250

The Government cancelled the registration of the above organization on 6 October, 1958 (which meant that they were

officially barred to hold any meetings anywhere in the Colony).

III. KENYA AFRICAN EX-SERVICEMEN'S UNION. (File 3043)

This particular organization was never recognized by the Government. Application for its registration was refused by the Government on 13 December, 1960.

Office-Bearers

President, A. Magina Magina

Peter W. Obanda

Laban Mucka

W. Rading

James Kinyanjui

Aims and Objectives

1. To promote unity among ex-soldiers. To bring understanding between ex-soldiers and those still serving and the public.
2. Build independent schools.
3. To encourage self-help and co-operation among ex-servicemen particularly in the matters of improving their economic conditions by means of better trade.

IV. THE NORTH NYANZA AFRICAN EX-SERVICEMEN'S UNION. (File 3162)

It was officially registered by the Government on

12 July, 1962. It seems as if it had been functioning as an unregistered "society" since 1960. Its registered address was (is) Kyavakali Market, Plot No. 14; its mailing address was (is) Post Office Box 126, Maragoli.

Aims and Objectives 1960 (250 members)

1. Employment of ex-servicemen.
2. Improve living conditions of ex-servicemen in the way of loans (a) Buildings [shops] (b) Farming (c) Trade.

Office-Bearers 1962 (? members)

President, Herman Indusa, P.O. Box 39, Maragoli

Robert Shago, P.O. Box 144, Maragoli

Zakayo Asamba, P.O. Box 39, Maragoli

Office-Bearers 1963 (70 members), Mailing address: Kyavakali Market, P.O. Box 126, Maragoli, North Nyanza

President, Robert Shago

Sgn. Zakayo Asamba

Herman Indusa

Organizing Secy., Laban Kitungulu

Chegero

Joram Kiziiri

Office-Bearers 1964 (700 members)

President, James Mukhwana, P.O. Box 290, Kagamega

Vice President, Joshua Kitakwa, P.O. Box 188, Maragoli

Gen. Secretary, M. Robert Aseri, P.O. Box 290, Kakamega

Deputy Secretary, Clement Chiboli, P.O. Box 56,
Kakamega

Ass't. Deputy Sec'y., William Mumbo, P.O. Box 290
Kakamega

Treasurer, Benjamin Libese, P.O. Box 188, Maragoli

Assistant Treasurer, Joseph Chiekelo, P.O. Box 188,
Maragoli

Nat'l. Organizing Sec'y., Henry Ingunzi, P.O. Box 290,
Kakamega

V. KENYA EX-SERVICEMEN UNION. (File 4403)

The organization was officially registered by the Government on 26 March, 1963.

Office Bearers

President, Alex Oloo (Magina Magina)

Vice President, Laban Onyango

General Secretary, Eliud Onyango

Assistant Secretary, Robert Mbogwa

Treasurer, Hatsan Mohamed

Office-Bearers - Western Branch

Chairman, M.A.W. Ekaya

Vice Chairman, W. Khachina

Secretary, P.O. Mutsoli

Vice Secretary, J. Nambwaya

Treasurer, H. Washiali

Vice Treasurer, Z. Musungu

Organizing Secretary, W. Mumbo

Office-Bearers - Ramisi Branch, Kwale District

Chairman, Albert Ominde

Vice Chairman, J. Khamisi

Secretary, P. V. Oplot Odeke

Assistant Secretary, Richard Oluoch

Organizing Secretary, Korinel Mwai

Treasurer, William S. Tinazile

Assistant Treasurer, S. Mashiri

Executive Officer, S. Oniya

VI. NATIONAL EX-SERVICEMEN UNION OF KENYA. (File 5310)

It was officially registered by the Government on 8 July, 1964. However, it had been functioning as an unregistered body for at least a year when J. N. Osore and J. Indidi Waga served as its Chairman and Secretary respectively. Its registered office was Kaloleni Social Hall, Kisumu, and its mailing address was (is) Post Office Box 105, Kisumu.

Office-Bearers, February, 1964 (1000 members)

President, J.S.P. Okeyo Ogara

A. Aloo Magina Magina

Arap Koria, P.O. Box 19, Kapsabet

Ex. Sgt. P. Orinda Mboya, Post Office Homa Bay

Office-Bearers, June, 1964 (1358 members)

President, J.S.P.O. Ogara, P.O. Box 105, Kisumu

P. Orinda Mboya

Jackton K. Kamto

Sebi Siruru, Kibira, Nairobi

W. Maunda Obaka, Bukhayo, P.O. Busia

Office-Bearers, 1966 (no membership record)

President, J.S.P.O. Ogara, Trader

Vice President, W. Munyao Kini, Trader, P.O. Box
Machakos

Gen. Secretary, J. Kokaka Ogundu, Trader, P.O. Box
105, Kisumu

Ass't. Sec'y., Bernard Karie, Trader, P.O. Box 30199,
Nairobi

Treasurer, Sebi Fadamulla, Trader, P.O. Kibira,
Nairobi

Ass't. Treasurer, John Asalache, Inspector of Police,
P.O. Box 105, Maragoli

There are no lists for the names of office-bearers
for the years 1965 and 1967. However, the record shows that
there were 2225 members in 1965 and 2238 in 1967.

APPENDIX B

World War I and II: Enlistment Figures

In 1942 the Government tried to analyze, on an ethnic basis, the number of Kenya Africans who had until then been drafted into the Armed Forces. The following figures were submitted by the Officer Commanding, Military Records, for the month of January 1942.*

Luo	11,270
Bantu Kavirondo (Luyia)	5,570
Kisii	1,505
Nandi	978
Lumbwa	1,275
Akikuyu	5,581
Akamba	11,024
Meru	722
Embu	207
Masai	70
Teita-Taveta	747
Digo-Duruma	418
Giriama	798
Swahili-Bajune	159
Marakwet-Elgeyo	340
Turkana-Suk	47
Kamasia	111
Somali	145
Other N.F.D. Tribes	343
Miscellaneous	41
Total	41,351

*KNA. DC/EBU/10/5. Circular from the Secretariat, Nairobi, February 18, 1942, "Recruitment for the Armed Forces, Tribal Composition and Analysis."

In June, 1945, recruitment figures were based on what the East Africa Command called "Districts in Kenya." The

following were the results**

Giriama	468
Teita-Taveta	431
Pare	781
Kamba	14,470
Masai	237
Kikuyu	13,921
Meru	2,185
Kericho	2,240
Kisumu	13,605
Luo	20,602
Embu	658
Kisii	2,397
Kapsabet	1,205
Marakwet-Elgeyo	584
Kamasia	253
Turkana and Suk	318
N.F.D. Tribes	461
Somali	165
Nandi	1,205
Bajun	<u>211</u>
Total	89,857

**KNA. MD/4/5/80-I. Circular from H.Q. East Africa Command, June 23, 1945. The use of "Kisumu" and "Luo" is confusing; perhaps what is meant here is that "Kisumu-Luo" means Nyanza Province excluding Kisii. There is also confusion with regard to the use of "Nandi" and "Kapsabet."

Another source of information regarding the number of soldiers recruited in East Africa during World War II is the telegram, July 25, 1947, from Civil Director and Demobilization and Training East Africa to Civil Reabsorption Officer giving information on military previously sent to the Secretary of State for Colonies. The telegram reads:***

Question (1) Numbers of men and women members of colonial Forces who were mobilized during the 1939-1945 war.

Answer: As adequate records of the mobilization figures are not available, the total ENLISTMENT figure is given instead. Total number of men and women enlisted during the 1939-1945 war is 333, 224.

Territorially split as follows:

	<u>Europeans</u>	<u>Asians</u>	<u>Africans</u>	<u>Total</u>
Kenya	3,100	1,500	98,238	102,838
Uganda	600	900	76,166	77,666
Tanganyika	1,006	210	86,003	87,219
N. Rhodesia	1,700		14,579	16,279
Nyasaland	700		29,890	30,590
Extra-territorial	25		18,607	18,632
Total	7,131	2,610	323,448	333,224

Question (2) Numbers who actually served outside their particular colony.

Answer:	<u>Europeans</u>	<u>Asians</u>	<u>Africans</u>	<u>Total</u>
Kenya	2,000	500	61,500	64,000
Uganda	300	220	50,500	51,020
Tanganyika	424	194	70,600	71,218
N. Rhodesia	800		8,800	9,600
Nyasaland	400		15,200	15,600
Extra-territorial	25		8,000	8,025
Total	3,949	914	214,600	219,463

Question (3) Casualties sustained in the case of each colony and Branch of service.

Answer: Casualties include killed in action, died of wounds, death from battle accidents and death from normal causes and diseases.

	<u>Europeans</u>	<u>Asians</u>	<u>Africans</u>	<u>Total</u>
Kenya	176	35	2,935	2,687
Uganda	11	4	1,935	1,950
Tanganyika	25	19	2,358	2,402
N. Rhodesia	49		26	75

Nyasaland	9		156	165
Extra-territorial	<u>18</u>		<u>350</u>	<u>368</u>
Total	288	<u>58</u>	7,301	7,647

World War I Recruitment Figures

A. Total number of men raised in East Africa during the war or the campaign against German East Africa:

	<u>Europeans</u>	<u>Native Combatants</u>	<u>Native non-combatants</u>
Kenya			
Uganda	2,300	24,000	400,000
Zanzibar			
Nyasaland	<u>800</u>	<u>10,000</u>	<u>200,000</u>
Total	3,100	34,000	600,000

B. Men raised in East Africa and were killed or died of wounds or diseases during the campaign:

	<u>Europeans</u>	<u>Native Combatants</u>	<u>Native non-combatants</u>
Kenya			
Uganda	175	3,000	44,000
Zanzibar			
Nyasaland	<u>60</u>	<u>1,500</u>	<u>4,000</u>
Total	235	4,500	48,000

C. Total number of casualties (exclusive of Indian and African followers) up to 15th December, 1918, were:

	<u>Officers</u>	<u>Other ranks</u>
Killed and died of disease	397	9,051
Wounded	480	7,294
Missing and Prisoners	<u>30</u>	<u>911</u>
Total	907	17,256

"Followers"

Killed, died:	Indians	286
	Africans	42,318
Wounded:	Indians	11
	Africans	1,322
Missing:	Indians	13
	Africans	<u>622</u>
Total		44,572*

*See "Askari Statue Dar es Salaam" (typescript), UCN/HD-RPA/F/1/3 (1) or original copy in Tanzania National Archives, Secretariat File, Ref. W1/A/23428. Above recruitment figures are based on the information obtained from this document.

World War I figures have also been analyzed on district basis (for Kenya only, then known as British East Africa):

Carrier corps recruitment by districts,
1915-1918**

Nyanza Province

	<u>Central</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>South</u>	<u>Kericho</u>
1914-1915	4,572	4,372	8,917	78
1915-1916	8,888	7,459	6,822	719
1916-1917	5,604	6,469	9,558	269
1917-1918	8,922	10,036	8,758	68

Kenya Province

	<u>Fort Hall</u>	<u>Nyeri</u>	<u>Embu</u>	<u>Meru</u>	<u>Chuka</u>
1914-1915	?	?	?	500	?
1915-1916	2,021	2,774	?	?	?
1916-1917	2,296	3,671	2,027	216	?
1917-1918	4,098	5,940	4,200	3,500	1,097

Ukamba Province

	<u>Machakos</u>	<u>Kitui</u>	<u>Kiambu</u>
1914-1915	477	?	None
1915-1916	1,618	3,064	1,598
1916-1917	4,285	3,885	2,515
1917-1918	4,915	3,470	2,552

Seyidie (Coast) Province

	<u>Mombasa</u>	<u>Teita</u>	<u>Vanga</u>	<u>Malindi</u>	<u>Rabai</u>
1914-1915	?	300	?	289	1000 (Giriama fine)
1915-1916	952	Exempt	64	439	
1916-1917	1,763	Exempt	482	62	1,163
1917-1918	2,175	2,648	473	?	2,256

**These figures are based on the information derived from Donald C. Savage and J. Forbes Munroe, "Carrier Corps Recruitment in the British East Africa Protectorate, 1914-1918," Journal of African History, VII, 2 (1966), pp. 323 and 338.

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The following is only a partial list of the references consulted. As far as it is known, very little has been written on this particular subject and therefore there was not very much secondary material to consult. This meant that most of the data had to be obtained from primary sources. Owing to the nature of the documents, it was impossible to list all of them under bibliography. What has been done, however, is to document thoroughly the sources in the footnotes so that they can be used as references.

The bulk of the data was derived from numerous interviews conducted among Kenya ex-soldiers. No extensive interviews were conducted among British ex-officials. However, their views are contained in many of the official letters, circulars and despatches written at that time. Most of the documents consulted can be found in Kenya National Archives, Nairobi. Additional documents, especially those connected with World War I as well as the campaigns in Malaya are available at the 3rd Kenya Rifles Regimental Museum, Nanyuki. The Department of History at the University College, Nairobi, has its own archives which contain particularly useful material on World War I.

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Africa Today
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African Transcripts
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East Africa and Rhodesia
The New African
Journal of Modern African Studies
Journal of African History

The following newspapers and periodicals were directly relevant to this study:

East African Standard, daily and weekly, 1918-1964.
Kenya Weekly News, 1940-1963.
Mwalimu Annual, 1945-46.
Baraza, 1940-1952.

In the years immediately following the end of the war but prior to the Emergency (Mau Mau uprising) in 1952, a large number of vernacular papers were published at different times. Whenever I was fortunate to find old copies, they were of great benefit to me. Among these papers were:

Mumenyereri
Sauti ya Mwafrika
Mwaraniria
Mucemania
Nyanza Times
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Ramogi
Gikuyu Times
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August, 1967 - April, 1968

A partial list of the Africanists interviewed:

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- Lonsdale, John M. Cambridge University.
- McIntosh, Brian G. University College, Nairobi.
- Mazrui, Ali A. Makerere University College.

Moyse-Bartlett, Lt. Col. H. Folkestone, Kent, England
(written interview).

Munro, J. Forbes. University of Glasgow, Glasgow
(written interview).

Nottingham, John. East Africa Publishing House, Nairobi.

Ogot, Bethwell A. University College, Nairobi.

Rosberg, Carl G. University College, Dar es Salaam.

Schleh, Eugene P. G. Gorham State College, Maine.

Shepperson, George. University of Edinburgh (written interview).

Were, Gideon. University College, Nairobi.

A partial list of the ex-askaris interviewed: (See Appendix A)

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Itote, W.	National Youth Service, Nairobi
Kayaga, Clement	P.O. Mogoma via Kisii
Arap, Koria	P.O. Kapsabet
Mngeno, Tiongit A.	P.O. Box 840 Eldoret
Munyao, William	P.O. Machakos
Mwamba, Naftali	P.O. Nyaribari Chache Location, Box 290, Kisii
Ndolo, Brigadier	Army H.Q., Nairobi

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